

### **The Rift - Tveir**

Just outside the city of Rosewood was a small village named Bush Hollow. It was nuzzled in the heart of all four of Delahden's lands, and was the location of this year's Meeting of the Leaders. It was well into the fourth night, and even though most were asleep, the Norsemen were still wide awake celebrating another year of peace. Among them were a few of Daealla's older sons, Orrowyn Brovkos, and Alexander Rudland himself.

Along with Alexander, were a few of his fathers men; all of whom had taken a liking to the young man early in his life. He was a remarkable boy - loved as much, if not more, than his father among the human race. He was one of the most talented bowman in the northern part of Delahden, which was an exceptional feat for someone only seventeen years of age. He was still a boy at heart and thoroughly enjoyed the frivolities of drinking with the men.

He had been talking with Harald Leif for most of the night now, and the two quickly developed a friendship. Leif was much older than the king's son, yet that did not seem to matter to Alexander. There was somewhat of an age gap, but both seemed to have many similar tastes and interests, especially when it came to women.

One of the barkeep's daughters busted through the inn's door with more ale for the men, and both Alexander and Harald were mesmerized. She was a short girl, probably closer in age to the Norse leader, yet very youthful in her looks. She had long, dirty blonde hair that hung to her waist and a smile that lit up the entire room.

"Beautiful girl, come here. I want to ask you a question," Harald yelled over the din of the group's debauchery. She slowly made her way through the drunk men handing over the flagons of ale that she had brought from the store rooms and up to the table where the Norse leader sat.

"Good Evening Sir, is there anything I can do for you?" She didn't seem tense at all that she was talking to one of the most dangerous men in the realm. That or she just had no idea who he was, which was probably better for her anyways.

"You can come sit on my lap, that's what I'd like!" The men within the bar guffawed at their leader's answer to the woman.

“I... I...”, and before the girl could react, Harald pulled her over to him and attempted kissing her. She pulled away almost immediately and ran off through a back door of her fathers bar.

“Hahaha,” the Norse leader laughed. “Seems as if the girl doesn’t have a taste for northern flesh tonight. Maybe I’ll convince her to warm my sausage for me on the morrow.” He looked out at his men who, Once again, were dying at the remark from Harald.

Alexander’s look of amusement dissipated almost immediately after the barkeep’s daughter had left. Harald asked him a few more idiotic questions, but Alexander was barely paying attention. He excused himself from the table and stumbled out of the bar deciding that he was going back to his Father’s tent for the night. His father’s men began to follow, but were quickly distracted by another one of the establishment owners daughters who had clumsily just spilled all of the drinking horns she was carrying.

Harald had paid no mind to the boy leaving, and didn’t even notice he was missing until he had finished three more of the clumsy girl’s horns of ale. He decided he was going to go find the barkeep and make him a proposition for his daughter. She was one of the most alluring women he had ever seen and Harald wanted her to finally make him a father. He had been unlucky in that regard with his prior three wives all dying in childbirth, and the children shared the same fate as their mothers.

He stumbled drunkenly around for a few minutes before noticing what appeared to be a lit lamp in the shed near the backside of the bar. He slowly made his way over, but stopped for a piss about halfway to the door. As he stood in silence attempting to urinate, he noticed could hear two voices in the shed, one of which sounded like Alexander’s.

Excited, Harald quickly pulled his trousers back up and rushed over to the door. “Ahh my boy! Alex who’ve you found for yourself ton...”, and as he shoved open the door the two of them stood there stark naked. Harald’s excitement quickly turned to disgust as the two love birds attempted to put their clothes back on. “What in the fuck are you doing with my woman?” he grumbled.

“She is not your woman, Leif. She has no interest in you, and the way you threw yourself at her earlier was plain disrespectful to her. And not to mention...”. Harald backhanded the boy before another word could leave his mouth.

“How dare you talk to me that way, boy. You should watch your tongue... just because you’re the son of a king doesn’t mean shit to me. He is not my King, and I will NOT tolerate insolence from a child.”

Alexander spat blood from his mouth. “A child!? I’m nearly eighteen and a man grown. My father will hear of this. He will remove your hand and feed it to you for laying it upon me.” Harald violently pulled his sword from its hilt, and then the girl screamed. In the blink of an eye, Harald had plunged the sword deep into her left breast. As he pulled it out blood spurted all over his face as the innocent woman dropped to the ground. He licked the thick, wet blood from his lips as he turned towards Alexander.

“You do not frighten me you coward. You... you... you will be punished.” Alexander bent down to grab his shirt from the ground, but before he stood upright again there was a flash of steel. The boy’s head was removed with such force that it flew through the thin wood of the shed. Harald sheathed his sword and then bent down to grab the blood soaked head. He slowly made his way back to the bar, wondering what he had just done. He lost his temper rather quickly, as most nordic men, and when he saw red everything typically went black.

Upon entering the bar Harald noticed a lot of men had left, with all that remained being his men, Orrowyn, and Alexander’s guards. At first, no one noticed that Harald was drenched in blood, or that he was holding the boy’s severed head. After a minute or two, one of the king’s guards noticed that Harald had returned holding a head, and then he noticed who it belonged to.

“What have you done!?” He yelled as he reached for his battle axe leaning on the wall behind him.

“Kill them, kill everyone besides him”, Harald mumbled to his men as he pointed at Orrowyn. Before the guards could react they all had axes and knives wedged into their bodies. Harald shifted his gaze back to Orrowyn and then slowly walked towards him. “You will tell them what happened here tonight mage, and if you’re smart... you will side with me in the battles to come. Men, pack up your things. We leave tonight.” Harald briskly walked to the door of the bar, turned back to give Orrowyn one last menacing lance, and then walked out. His men followed soon after, but first they hung the dead men from the rafters and carved their tribal signs into each body.

Orrowyn stayed within the bar after they had left for quite some time. He wasn't sure how long after he stayed, but he pondered everything that had happened that night. He had his own issues with Abel and Daealla, but he would never go so far as to kill the king’s only son. As he walked outside into the muggy

dawn air and back towards the camp, he noticed that all of the Norsemen's tents were gone and in their place stood two spikes. On the first spike was the barkeeps daughter. They had removed her clothes, and it looked as if they had their way with her. She was impaled through the stomach with her intestines oozing from multiple wounds on her back. On the other... Alexander's head. As Orrowyn walked near the heads he noticed a rolled piece of parchment in the boys mouth.

*This is what happens when you overstep a TRUE king. I am through with your childish peace treaty. I'll be waiting.*

*-Harald Leif, Ruler of Delahden*

Orrowyn rolled the piece of parchment back up and stuffed it into his robe. As he made his way towards Abel's tent, he decided that he did not want to be on the bad side of Harald. He turned around and went to a few of his men that were awake on their side of the camp. "Pack your things, and tell the others to do so as well. Leave as soon as you can, there will be bloodshed if you don't." As those last words sunk into his men, Orrowyn turned and vanished into thin air.

Abel Rudland awoke that morning to his steward telling him that the mages and the norse men had vanished in the night. He quickly donned his armor and went out to see for himself, knowing that something awful must've happened. He roamed the fields and contemplated why the two groups would leave in the midst of the renewal of their annual treaty until he noticed a group of people encircling something off in the distance. Abel pushed his way through the crowd before he finally saw the two spikes. At first. He did not realize what everyone was staring at, it was just some bodies left behind to scare his people. But as he walked closer to the severed head he noticed the crest of his family on the boy's earrings, he dropped to his knees and wept.