



# The Tales of Lindla

Dovahzul Storybook Contest Winners

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## Introduction

Stormcloaks gather around their campfire and whisper stories of Ysgramor and his Five Hundred Companions. Dunmer spread tales of living-gods and treasure beneath timeless ruins. A Redguard sings a song of golden lands now lost to the sea.

The Elder Scrolls series is rich with mythology and legendary tales. In this contest, the community at Thuum.org created their own myth set in ancient Atmora, following the life of a shield maiden named Lindla. Everyone crafted their part of the tale based on the outline below.

## The Myth

**Lindla's Birth** - Lindla is born in the ancient hold of Haafsrik to the Snow-Stone Clan, in a time of turmoil.

**Lindla and the Pine Ghost** - As a child, Lindla becomes a skilled hunter and pursues a mythical creature known by her folk as the Pine-Ghost. She hunts it through Forelgrim Forest and slays it, but with its dying breath, the Pine-Ghost sets upon her a curse.

**The Fall of Haafsrik** - Haafsrik comes under attack from a neighboring clan, led by the Raven King of Einmor. Haafsrik falls after a fierce battle. Her family slain, Lindla escapes to the woods and swears vengeance.

**Lindla Among the Wolves** - In Forelgrim Forest, Lindla joins a band of outlaws called the Wolves. There she comes to learn the sword and shield and the secrets of the wild. She eventually becomes the leader of the Wolves, and with them, endeavours to take back Haafsrik.

**Lindla and Tahagrel** - Lindla climbs a nearby peak and encounters the dragon Tahagrel. She does speak with the wyrm and wins him to her cause.

**Lindla's Vengeance** - With all her strength gathered, Lindla descends on Haafsrik and the Raven King. With the aid of the Wolves and Tahagrel, she slays many foes and kills the Raven King himself. but her wrath is too great, and Haafsrik is reduced to rubble.

**Lindla's Fate** - Her home destroyed, Lindla fades into the woods. What becomes of her?

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## The Myth of Lindla

As interpreted by Azzod of Alik'r

by 3EyeStudios

During my travels and adventures in the vast land of Skyrim, I came across a barrow with many of the carvings in the Hall of Stories still relatively intact. Using a vast amount of paper and charcoal, I managed to get a rubbing of every single carving, which detailed a legend of a great warrior and huntress named Lindla Frost-Born of Atmora. I sought the Greybeards for a translation and they were able to translate the seven carvings that detailed her story. The carvings and their translations follow:

*Lindla Fo-Kiin do brod Od-Golz ko Haafsrik,  
kiin mindin faal Lot Gral.  
Ek bormah, fin brod-in. Ek monah, fin heimiik.  
Neben fin vulom do aan lot vulon ko sul,  
rek lost dez wah kos sahrot ahrk suleykaar.*

Lindla Frost-Born of clan Snow-Stone in Haafsrik,  
born after the Great Disaster.

Her father, the clan-master. Her mother, the blacksmith.

Under the darkness of a great night in (the) day,  
she was destined to be mighty and powerful.

While there are no known records of this “great disaster” this first carving speaks of, the circumstances of her birth, a “night in day,” perfectly describes an eclipse that would've happened towards the middle of the Merethic Era. Though, which moon that caused the eclipse is not given.

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*Aan suleykaar ah, Lindla naram kotin pahlok kiir,  
yahtaas wah nir faal Galik-Gaaf,  
aan sahrot sunvaar tol rovaan fin feykrohe do Forelgrim.  
Nostaas fin sunvaar tum,  
faal Galik-Gaaf ris dur nau rek ahrk ek brod,  
dantaas niin pah.*

A powerful hunter, Lindla grew into (an) arrogant child,  
seeking to hunt the Pine-Ghost,  
a mighty beast that wanders the forests of Forelgrim.  
Striking the beast down, the Pine-Ghost placed (a) curse on her and her clan,  
dooming them all.

Not much information on what this "Pine-Ghost" is, but legends stated that it was a mythic beast that wandered the southeastern peninsula of Atmora that eluded capture for centuries. The fact that she managed to kill the Pine-Ghost is a great feat in its own right.

*Iidahtaas ko fin dilon do vulom,  
fin duraal Ruvaak-Jun do Einmor nos,  
agtaas fin hiim ahrk krintaas fin sahsunarre  
voth fin suleyk do deyra kulaan, Mehrunes Dagon.  
Lindla krif voth ahkrin,  
nuz ek lafanne togaat wah bovul med nikrinne.  
Faal Ruvaak-Jun druth niin okmaar,  
fod Lindla filok wah Forelgrim, vataas wah daal.*

Attacking in the dead of night,  
the accursed Raven King of Einmor struck,  
burning the city and slaying the villagers

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with the power of (the) Daedra Prince, Mehrunes Dagon.

Lindla fought with courage,

but her parents attempted to flee like cowards.

The Raven King executed them himself,

while Lindla escaped to Forelgrim, swearing to return.

The Raven King, Mrallund Grey-Blood, was quite the prominent figure in Atmora, conquering nearly half of the entire continent in his name, holding everything east from the Broadwall mountain range. This carving stating that he had Daedric assistance would surely taint his name throughout history.

*Ko fin feykro, Faal Grohikke, aan tah do sovrahzunne ahrk mungrohikke,  
lov Lindla, bologtaas fah ek hiif.*

*Niist kinbok, Rogrod fin Sahqo, lost meyz vorohah ahrk kriin griindol pah  
nuz fin geinne wo tinvaak wah ek.*

*Rek far mok med sunvaar ko fin volgge ahrk krii mok,  
ofaltaas fin hindah do Nir-Drog Hirsine ahrk haavneyz fin tet do kinbok.  
Rek lost urid voth fin Sunvaar-Sos, bolaavtaas rek fin mulaag do sahrot grohiik.*

In the forest, the Wolves, a pack of mercenaries and werewolves,  
approached Lindla, begging for her help.

Their leader, Rogrod the Red, had gone insane and slew near to all  
but the ones who spoke to her.

She tracked him like (a) beast in the wilds and killed him,  
gaining the favor of Hunt-Lord Hircine and inherited the title of leader.

She was rewarded with the Beast-blood, granting her the strength of (a) mighty wolf.

The way this is phrased, it doesn't seem like she was given the gift of beast-blood willingly. Although, she was given great power, as the eclipse did foretell.

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*Prantaas ahst fin naar do faal Hilseatmora,  
Lindla yah fin lot dovah Tahagrel,  
onik ahrk aan meyvitaan.  
Koravtaas fin joor us mok,  
rok lost sahref wah ag ek wah fin golt voth mok Thu'um.  
Rek jur fin dovah ko vukein,  
ahrk fusrot tol rok hiif ek orkron Haafsrik.  
Tahagrel krif voth vur, nuz lost viik naal suleyk do mungrohiik.  
Vojahaal rek rolur wah frey fin joor.*

Resting at the peak of the Heart of Atmora,  
Lindla sought the great dragon Tahagrel,  
wise and a trickster.  
Seeing the mortal before him,  
he was tempted to burn her to the ground with his Thu'um.  
She challenged the dragon in combat,  
and demanded that he help her take back Haafsrik.  
Tahagrel fought with valor, but was defeated by (the) power of (the) werewolf.  
Unwillingly, he agreed to aid the mortal.

Seeking the help of a dragon was a rather wise move, but expecting one to keep to his word is just asking for trouble. The carving even indicates that Tahagrel was a trickster. Was this a lesson to teach children that you shouldn't trust absolutely everything?

*Daltaas wah Haafsrik, Lindla fonaar kotin hiim,  
fusrotaas aan rot voth faal Ruvaak-Jun.  
Nel volaav, Lindla uth faal Grohikke,  
mungrohikke tumbotaas von fin deinne,*

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*fod Tahagrel nivos filok vodeiniik.*

*Lindla kriin faal Ruvaak-Jun, pirantaas nahkriin.*

*Nuz, ko aan sahrot stavseruth ahst fin saan do ok zok mid aar,*

*Mehrunes Dagon kaag fin hiim, al pah nuz Lindla ahrk Tahagrel.*

*Nir-Drog Hirsine govey rek nol fin staad, savtaas rek nol fin gral.*

*Rek lost naalein.*

Returning to Haafsrik, Lindla charged into (the) city,

demanding a word with the Raven King.

Quickly denied, Lindla ordered the Wolves,

werewolves descending upon the guards,

while Tahagrel kept deserters from escaping.

Lindla slew the Raven King, claiming revenge.

But, in a mighty fit of rage at the loss of his most loyal servant,

Mehrunes Dagon demolished the city, destroying all but Lindla and Tahagrel.

Hunt-Lord Hircine removed her from the area, saving her from the devastation. She was alone.

While there are no records of this great destruction in any bit of history I could find, I did discover that a village in the place where Haafsrik would've been rests near a perfectly circular bay, suggesting that an explosion or impact did indeed happen there. Quite interesting indeed.

*Ahst fin saan do ek hofkiin, Lindla daal wah fin feykro,*

*voth nunon zos do ek Grohikke ko ek zeymahzinmaar.*

*Tahagrel heim ek aan sonaak rahvook fah ek, nuz rek volaav,*

*sagtaas tol rek drey ni praag nii.*

*Ko tiid, pah fin Grohikke dir, liftaas ek wah meyz faal yun Galik-Gaaf.*

*Wah daar sul, rek rovaan fin feykro, mahfaeraak ko faaz naal fin saan do ek joriin.*

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At the loss of her home, Lindla returned to the forest,  
with only seven of her Wolves in her companionship.  
Tahagrel forged her a priest mask for her, but she refused,  
saying that she did not need it.

In time, all the Wolves died, leaving her to become the new Pine-Ghost.  
To this day, she wanders the forest, forever in pain by the loss of her people.

Interesting. Lindla was given the opportunity to become a dragon priest, but knowing this dragons and his trickster nature, this mask might've forced her into Tahagrel's service, forever becoming a dragon priest rather than becoming the Pine-Ghost. It is also worthy to note that the carving suggests that Lindla may yet still be alive, either by a cruel curse by Mehrunes or by the protection of Hircine, none can be sure unless someone actually goes to the Forelgrim Forest to find out.

At the end of the barrow, I managed to get a rubbing of the word wall, which seemed to commemorate the tale of Lindla.

*Nonvul bron dahmaan fin tey do Lindla Fo-Kiin,  
rek-grohiik ahrk Galik-Gaaf.  
Mahfaeraak mindok fin kriid do faal Ruvaak-Jun,  
ful tol hi aal neh kos viik naal nahkriin.*

Noble Nord remember the tale of Lindla Frost-Born,  
she-wolf and Pine-Ghost.  
Forever know the slayer of the Raven King,  
so that you may never be defeated by vengeance.

A most valuable lesson, for past peoples and present.

## The Fall of Haafsrik

Story and art by Benjamin Storni

*Finally home!* Lindla thought. She was beginning to get hopeless after her intense battle with the Pine-Ghost. *Bet Mom is at the temple, and Dad must be somewhere training his men.*

As time went by, and she found nobody, she decided to go search for them. And she found them.

“Is everything alright?” Lindla asked after seeing the map widely spread on the table, and the concerned faces of the people.

“Oh Lindla, I’m glad you’re finally home,” her Dad began, “but I’m sorry that your arrival is not received with a warm welcome as you deserve. Words say that the Raven King of Einmor is preparing an attack on Haafsrik. We will be ready when the time comes.”

“Where’s mom?” Lindla asked, noticing that she was not among the crowd.

“She is getting ready for the battle,” he answered. “Remember that she has her methods! Ha, if you can call praying ‘methods.’ Anyway, you should get some rest, you don’t look so well.”

“I will. Thank you. Make sure you get some rest, too. You’re looking old...”

And so the days continued unchanged, with no sight of an attack. The days became weeks, and the weeks turned into months. The hope of an attack was disappearing, until the moment when the attack occurred.

It was getting dark, and the people sleeping, when a loud battle cry was heard from the distance. The Raven King was here, with his thousands of troops. Every man took their weapons and prepared the defense of the hold. To their advantage, although time had passed, they still had the place prepared for this moment.

The Raven King was at the horizon observing the humble defense the people of Haafsrik had mounted. He commanded his army to move slowly towards the hold. Shield men were in the first line, followed by two rows of archers, and finally the cavalry.

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Women and children of Haafsrik were evacuated inside the fortress. However, there was one woman who refused going in, and that woman was ready to fight. Like her father, Lindla was a natural leader, and commanded the defense of the first hit.

Catapults were set in place, charged with huge stones covered by a fur soaked in oil. The fire stones were launched into the enemy, but the army of the Raven King was out of reach. They failed to use the only stones they had.

Lindla couldn't believe they had missed. She was sure that the enemy was closer. She didn't let this discourage her, and sent the archers to the borders of the hold.

"This is the time when you decide whether to live or die!" she began. "Beyond this wall lays a powerful enemy, whose power we ignored. Fight for your women and children! Fight for your lives, and the lives of those you love! Fight for your home! Fight for Haafsrik!"

These words set the men in motion, and they were all ready for the battle. Meanwhile, Lindla's dad was taking care of the defense in the lower levels, making sure that the soldiers were ready for what was coming.

None of them was ready for what happened.

Out of nowhere, behind the Raven King, a huge creature appeared. A giant lizard with a pair of wings flew over them in a flash. They couldn't believe their eyes.

After all, they thought Dragons were only a legend. Lindla ordered her men to fire the arrows, but none of them managed to pierce the natural armor of the beast.

In a blink, the world that Lindla and her family knew disappeared.

Everything was turned to fire and ashes, suffering and despair, death.

Wherever Lindla saw, she only found death among her men. She ran to find her Dad. He was helping the wounded to get under a shelter. No weapon could beat that Dragon.

When the people of Haafsrik least expected it, the troops of the Raven King entered the hold, and finished what the Dragon had started.

In a moment for Lindla, everything stopped. An arrow struck her Dad through the helmet. He was gone. Next to him, Lindla's Mom was hugging her husband. She had come out of the shelter to be with him in his last moment, but she never expected that moment, too, would be her last.

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To kill an unarmed woman mourning her husband – it was worse than cowardice. It was monstrous. When Lindla saw this, she ran towards her parents, killed the cold-blooded monster that murdered her mother and keeled with them. Tears went down her cheeks.

She couldn't ignore this. This was something she was not going to let pass. So, in her rage, Lindla started a slaughter. Whatever got in her way, she took them down. She kept on killing enemies all the way to the guard's tower. She went up, grabbed her bow, drew an arrow, and fired at the Raven King, who was confident of the victory.

The accuracy was perfect, the timing... not much. The Dragon that everybody thought had fled flew between Lindla and the Raven King and stopped the arrow with its mighty scales.



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The majestic beast landed next to Lindla in the tower. And, for the surprise of the girl, the Dragon spoke in Dovahzul, the Dragon Language, one that only Dragonborns can understand and speak, without being taught.

*"Ahnok, Dovahkiin,"* the Dragon began. *"Zu'u saraan wah tinvaak hi. Hi lost unadaan fah nuft. Sav jul, uv al nii."*

Lindla answered, *"Wo los hi? Fahvos kent nii kos zey? Bonu Dovah, uv zu'u fent kriin hi."*

*"Dirun, mun, dahmaan hin zun los brahnu wah,"* the Dragon responded. *"Do hin laan, hi los gein wo kent yah niist fahraal."*

*"Zu'u fen ni ahraan stahraal joriin, nuz hi vis dahkriis tol zu'u fen al enook hokoron zu'u rund tum het. Hin Jun fen kos diist,"* Lindla answered bravely, putting aside that she was talking to a Dragon.

*"Rok los ni dii jun!"* The Dragon was getting tired of this senseless conversation. He grabbed Lindla from the tower, and took her far.

Lindla's last view of her hometown was painful. Haafsrik was burning to the ground and no survivors were found. Lindla fainted and when she woke up, found herself in the middle of nowhere, alone.

Or at least she thought she was alone.

## Tahagrel

by Mulhahlor

After reaching the peak of the *strunmah*, Lindla met the *vahlok* of the mountain she sought, the *dovah* Tahagrel.

She asked the *lot diiv* for help, and as was expected, the *dovah* refused. The *dovah* had simply snorted a gust of smoke at her. Lindla drew her *zahkrii*, and Tahagrel reared back, preparing for a *krif*. However, the shield-maiden did something that surprised the *dovah*. She pointed her *zahkrii* at her gut and proclaimed that if she could not find help from him, she would die by her own hand, as there was no hope.

This made the *dovah* curious, so he lowered his head to the level of the young *miil*. She told him that her *ragnavir* had been slain when she was but a youth, and her *hofkiin* taken. It was now the *dovah*'s turn to surprise Lindla. He responded simply, "*Zu'u fen krif, goraan gein.*"

He told her his *tey* of how he was once *kinbok* of a *tahsedovah*. They were a *tah* for they hunted more like *grohiik* than a *saalum* of *dovah*. He was the most ferocious of them all, dominating them through strength and fear. Those who wouldn't, *ag*.

One day, they went to toy with some *jorre* at a hold, as they normally did. The *jorre*, however, were *rodraan*. They had placed many barrels of *karon* and *niidam* around a courtyard, which the *dovah* were baited to by *kendov* waiting to be sacrificed. All but Tahagrel had been slaughtered. Ever since, he had resided on his *strunmah*, shamed at the *gral* of his *tah*, his *ragnavir*.

The *dovah* opened his *jot* and breathed *yol* onto Lindla, but it did not burn her. He told her that he has granted her use of their *lu*, use of the *Thu'um*, as a sign of comradery. Lindla returned to the Wolves, and after some planning, they attacked Haafsrik and its false *jun*. The attack went well and many of the enemies had fallen, until the *vul jun* had joined the fray.

The Raven King took one of the Wolves by the *ruus* and used a *vul lu* on him, causing him to writhe in pain while his *kopraan* slowly turned to *kii*.

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Lindla, *gerahgol* at the cruel end granted to the Wolf, unleashed a Thu'um of incredible *mul* at the King of Ravens. Her *rahgot* made her Shout too great, for the *rein* caused her once great Haafsrik to *tumah* around the *grah*.

And so it came to pass that the *dur* she brought down upon herself all those years ago came to pass: She brought the *gral* of her *hofkiin*.

After the *viiz* had settled, It was revealed that the Raven King had fallen, as had most of his *brod*, save the few who ran away in *nikrinaar*.

*Getiiraaz* by the *gral* of her only true *hofkiin*, she flew across the *Okaaz do Gaaf* with Tahagrel, who took the name of Tahkrenal for himself, in *sovaat* of his own past *vosod*.



Art by Sahkrahfaas

## Lindla and Tahagrel

by CheeseLord

After the fall of her home, Haafsrik, and after becoming the leader of the outlaw band The Wolves, Lindla seeks the aid of the powerful dragon Tahagrel. Following the information gathered from the myths and legends of the great beast's lair, she locates the peak of the fearsome wyrm.

Starting the climb up the mountain, Lindla encounters a couple of bears on the lower slopes. As they are asleep, Lindla is able to sneak by. As she nears the peak of Tahagrel's lair, Lindla hears the sound of the dragon's breath as he sleeps. She rounds the corner and there, in front of a *qethsegol*, she beholds the powerful form of Tahagrel.

With his ebony scales and ivory fangs, Tahagrel's aura created a sense of dread in Lindla's gut. His monstrous size easily made her feel intimidated but, straightening her form, she focused on one thought: *Defiance*.

As she approached Tahagrel, the ancient dragon awoke. His eyes were the color of liquid gold, and his sheer size made Lindla feel insignificant and small.

"And what, small human, brings you to my lair? Where I have lain asleep for the past millennia?"

"I require your aid in taking back my home and avenging my parents!" Lindla shouts at Tahagrel.

"Ah, a tale of vengeance and a lost home, eh?" Tahagrel taunts as he slithers around his lair, "and what gives you authority and power of *me*?"

"My Voice is stronger than yours, wyrm." Lindla speaks defiantly.

"Arrogant young thing, aren't you? Well, in that case we shall see whose Thu'um is superior. As is tradition among the Dov, the elder speaks first, then the defiant youngling." And, opening his great maw, Tahagrel speaks: "*Yol Toor Shul!*"

Tahagrel's Voice shakes the mountain to its core, nearly knocking Lindla down, and the *qethsegol* barely holds its shape as Tahagrel's flame turns it red, inscribing his Thu'um upon it.

"Your turn, girl."

"Very well. *Yol, Toor Shul!*" Lindla's voice sounds pathetic compared to Tahagrel's, but inscribes the stone as well.

"Impressive. But can you use more than just flame?" Tahagrel speaks: "*Fo Krah Diin!*"

The *qethsegol* is covered in ice, and the Words are inscribed.

Turning to Lindla, Tahagrel waits. *You can do this, Lindla. You need Tahagrel on your side. "Fo, Krah Diin!"* Lindla shouts. Also freezing and inscribing the stone, Lindla starts feeling accomplished.

"Flame and Ice are truly mastered by you, young mortal. How about force, though?"

Lindla's heart sinks as she hears this. Unrelenting Force was not her strong suit. *It appears that Tahagrel's Thu'um is unlimited.* Lindla, gasping for breath, straightens up. *There is one more thing I can do.*

"*Tahagrel, Ziil los dii du!*"

Tahagrel's eyes widen at the words spoken by Lindla. Had he been a lesser dragon, he would have perished.

"*You DARE speak my name with the words of slaying?! I will CRUSH you! FUS RO DAH!*"

Lindla barely jumps out of the way of the dragon's Unrelenting Force vortex. *That was a mistake!* Lindla runs to Tahagrel's side and: "*Yol, Toor Shul!*"

Tahagrel goes from vehemence to humor. Chuckling to himself, he says: "I thought you would have picked it up earlier. When the elder speaks to the *qethsegol*, the youngling speaks to the elder. By speaking to what I spoke, you were challenging me to dominion of my *strunmah*. By speaking my name with *Ziil Los Di Du* you were attempting to slay me and steal my soul as if you were *dovahkiin*. No matter. Your Thu'um is strong, but not stronger than mine. However, you have courage. I will help you."

At these words, Lindla's heart flew. "I thank you, great Tahagrel. You may join us at midnight tomorrow at the edge of Forelgrim Forest."

"Very well, girl. May we avenge your parents and retake your home."

Bowing to Tahagrel, Lindla leaves his lair and hurries down the mountain. "That was too close!" she says to herself.

## Nahkriin

Story and art by paarthurnax



The stillness of the forest broke beneath crunching footsteps through the snow. A figure weaved between the naked birches, cloaked in gray with a shield on her back. She was a veteran of a dozen battles. Starving, exhausted, alone, none of those battles mattered now – none except the one she had lost.

The cold kept her companion over the miles. Not even her sealskin gloves could keep out Atmora’s biting frost. Dreams of long green summers warmed her thoughts; how long ago they seemed. The howling wind made her wish she had braved a voyage across the Sea of Ghosts when she had the chance. Her duty was here in Atmora, though, and she would sooner freeze than abandon her cause.

For now, that cause was survival. Soon, it would be vengeance. Soon, she promised herself.

She followed a frozen stream to the mountains, to a frozen pool and frozen falls. Everything frozen, no sound but her labored breaths and her heart struggling to keep up. Beneath the falls, she paused, and let out a sharp whistle.

A small head poked from the ridge above. The child’s eyes widened from beneath her hood. “*Lindla daal, Lindla daal!* You’ve returned!”

Lindla managed a smile. The children had a habit of slipping into the dragon tongue whenever they were excited or angry, which often resulted in a lecture or two on respect from the elders.

*“Drem yol lok, Frryha,”* she said in kind. *“Zu’u lingrah wundun ahrk mulaagi nu evenaar.* I’ve come a long way and, I’m afraid my strength is exhausted. Will you help me up?”

Frryha turned. *“Cymma! Come here, you clumsy horker, and bring the rope!”*

Feet shuffled through the snow, and moments later, Cymma appeared beside his sister. He stood twice as tall and as much as wide, though these days that was more so due to the bundles he wore to keep away the winter. *“Ruth ahrk faaz, Frryha, I’m here,”* he huffed. What remained of his breath left him as Frryha drove her elbow into his gut.

*“A clumsy, rude, nikriin horker,”* she scolded, jabbing a gloved finger at him. *“Old Wutharth would hit you harder than that if he heard what you just said.”*

Cymma grumbled and uncoiled the rope in his hands. He disappeared behind the ridge for a moment, then shuffled his way back and tossed the rope to Lindla. Whatever else Cymma was, he was strong, and with his help, Lindla climbed the rocky heights with ease.

*“Kaan kogaan, Kyne’s blessings for your help,”* she said after she pulled herself onto the ridge. She patted Cymma on the shoulder. The boy swelled with pride as he gathered the rope. Frryha folded her arms and stuck her nose in the air. Lindla gave her a pat, too. *“You were both helpful.”*

*“Someday I’ll be big and strong like you, and I’ll be able to pull you up all myself,”* Frryha said.

*Let’s pray that when you are big and strong, we will no longer need to hide in the woods,* Lindla thought. *“I’m sure you will. Come, we should head back. I’ve kept Wutharth waiting for too long. You know how he gets.”*

Frryha led the way, her brother trudging behind her. The ridge snaked around the mountainside until it reached a narrow mouth in the rock. The three slipped inside, and the Atmoran winter washed away.

Within, huddled around crackling fires, were what remained of Lindla’s clan. A handful of elders, orphans, and hunters were all that had escaped the battle that saw their Haafsrik conquered, the battle that had driven them into the woods, the battle that Lindla had lost.

Old Wutharth knelt over a fire. His eyes glimmered with firelight and distant memories. He raised his gaze from the flames as Lindla approached, grey beard twitching as he searched for the words to greet her. "You're empty-handed," he eventually said.

"*Drem yol lok*, Wutharth." She laid her palms bare. "There is nothing left to hunt. It is so cold, not even the hares venture from their burrows."

Wutharth worried a hand over his bare scalp. "*Krosis*," he sighed. "The hunt goes on."

Lindla lowered to the cavern floor next to him. She pulled off her gloves and stretched. It was good to finally rest. "I bring news from Haafsrik. The Raven King sent half his warband back to Einmor before the snows piled too high. He is waiting out the winter until he can hunt us down. While we cower in the woods, he drinks our wine in our own halls – "

"Lindla..."

"– and leaves our own dead as food for the crows – "

"Lindla!" Wutharth's expression sharpened. "How much of your time scouting could have been spent hunting? Seeking new shelter? How far will vengeance take you before you see your doom, or ours?"

"I have told you, Wutharth, our goal is to survive. The Raven King's men are a threat if they ever find us. Is it not wise to keep an eye on them?"

"Look at me, Lindla. If I live to see another winter, I will be truly blessed. After I am gone, I trust you to lead our people to whatever safety can still be found in these lands. Do not lead them into your folly. We have friends in the west, people who would shelter us from winters and Raven Kings. When winter breaks, you should lead our people there, away from these cursed woods."

Lindla shook her head. "*Mu piraak nid mulaag wundun*, we don't have the strength to make that journey. The road is tough and we would be slow going. The Raven King would be on us before we set foot outside the forest. No, we must stay."

"Look around you, if not at me." Wutharth gestured to the cave, to the dozens shivering around their fires. "We elders will not last long, the children not much longer. Would you have little Frryha someday take up a sword and end up as food for the crows like her mother and

father? Your mind is filled with dreams of vengeance and fears of cowardice. *Nikriin ahrk nahkriin*. How little difference there is between the two."

"I bow to your wisdom," Lindla sighed as she rose to her feet. "A few weeks' rest and I will return to the hunt. If a way west exists, one safe and hidden enough to cross, I will find it. *Zu'u vaat Kaan*."

Wutharth lowered his gaze once more to the flames. Their glow returned to his eyes. "*Grik los lein*, do what you must, Lindla. For all our sakes."



The red and silver crescents of the moons guided Lindla west. Stars gleamed behind the trees - warrior, steed, and serpent watching her hurry through the snow. She paused at the sound of a wolf calling to the night. There were not many in these lands, but if there were wolves, there was also prey. So long as the prey wasn't her.

She kept her bow in hand and her fingers poised over the arrows strapped to her leg. There were worse things than wolves; trolls that would eat a man bones and all, wild-men just as vicious as the trolls, and if Lindla was especially unlucky, dragons.

*Dovah*. The ancient word trembled on her lips. Dragons did not like strangers in their domain, but if she could find one, prove her worth, perhaps she could descend upon the Raven King with more than just a rabble of hunters.

"*Ruth*," she cursed. She was supposed to be finding safety for her people, not dwelling on vengeance.

## The Tales of Lindla

The wolf's howl came again, closer. The sound sent a chill down Lindla's spine. She nocked an arrow. Step by slow step, she crept to cover behind a fallen pine, held her breath, and listened.

Heartbeats. Groaning branches. Howling, this time the wind.

It was then that a voice called from the darkness. "Do you know how many arrows it takes to fell an ice wolf?"

Lindla pulled the arrow back, whirled, and took aim at the shadow crouched in the tree above. "I will only need one to kill you," she said.

"It's not me you must worry about, brave hunter," the shadow replied.

A low growl was the only hint Lindla had that a wolf was behind her. She froze in place, arms trembling, arrow still pointed at the man in the tree.

"If you turn quick enough, you might be able to land a single shot," he said, "but that would only make her angry. By the time you reached for your second arrow, her jaws would be around your throat."

Slowly, Lindla lowered her bow. The breath she released took to the air like a ghost.

"Much better," the man said. He leapt from the branches and landed in the snow with a crunch. Furs covered him from head to toe, a patchwork of bear, wolf, and fox. He brandished a spear, long and barbed. Wild hair flowed from his hood.

A whistle, and the wolf padded to his side. The beast stood higher than his waist, bristling with a silver mane. Its golden eyes narrowed on Lindla, burning.

"Her pack was killed by hunters the same as you," the man explained as he ran a hand through the wolf's coat. "You're lucky she obeys so well, or she might have killed you anyway."

Lindla did not know whether to thank or curse him. She hardened her stance and asked in the tongue of dragons, "*Wo los hi*, who are you?"

The man's laughter curled into the air. "Am I meant to trust the speech of conquest and tyranny?"

"I still have my one arrow. It seems you must earn my trust as much as I must earn yours."

## The Tales of Lindla

He did a bow. "If I must indulge you, so be it. *Krolik zu'u do Brod-Grohiik, ahseahhe ahrk deinsegalik*. Krolik I am, of the Wolf-Clan, hunter of hunters and keeper of the pines. *Wo volaan?* Who are you to intrude here? A servant of the Raven perhaps? *Zaamseruvaak?*"

Lindla spat. It froze before it touched the snow. "*Lindla zu'u,*" she replied, "*do Brod Od-Golz. Ni pogaan,* we are few. *Zu'u yah miiraad zeim feykro*. I seek a way through the forest when spring comes, to lead my people to safety from the Raven King in Haafsrik."

Krolik leaned on his spear, nodded. "Perhaps what you say is true, perhaps not. We shall see." He scratched the wolf behind the ears. "Avoid looking at her the wrong way, and she may spare you."

The wolf raised her head to the night and howled for all the world to hear. The forest became alive with calls echoing in answer. Ghostly shapes bounded over the hills, wolves and wolf-men alike. Soon, Lindla was surrounded. She let her bow fall to her side; one misstep, and no number of arrows would save her.

"Come," Krolik said, beckoning with his spear. "There is a way out of the forest where the Raven King cannot catch you. We will lead you to it."

"Is it safe?" Lindla asked.

He flashed a smile. "For some. But you will need to be brave, Lindla Hunter. The way is through the mountains, and it is guarded by a dragon."



The Wolves would go no further than where the pines ended. Icy ridges laid the path ahead, glistening beneath the midday sun. How far away it seemed, powerless against the wind

that tore at Lindla's cloak and the frost that gripped her to the bone. One hand pressing her scarf to her face, the other clutching the handle of her sword, she pressed onward.

She scanned the ice for any sign of a dragon. Nothing, yet. This wedge between two peaks was more desolate than anywhere she had seen. Walls of sheer stone rose beyond the ice. The wind had worn the peaks until they hunched over like old men. How anything could live here, much less a dragon, was beyond her. As the Wolves had promised, it was hidden from the Raven King, though, and that was all that mattered.

Ahead, the ice gave way to a foot of the mountain, dark rock in a blanket of snow. Its shadow fell over the chasm. Statues carved from ice stood in the banks beneath, scores of them, old warriors with their swords raised to the sky and warhorns to their lips. As Lindla neared, she could see strands of their hair coated in frost, and beneath the icy veil, the whites of frozen eyes.

Not statues.

Snow shifted above. Lindla glanced up as the mountainside began to unravel. Clawed wings stretched across the sky and a head crowned in horns twisted to meet her.

Heart beating like a hammer, she lowered her scarf to the cold and mustered her voice. "*Lot dovah! Zu'u laan tinvaak!* I would speak with you, great dragon!"

The dragon considered her for a moment, tail swaying, before it opened its jaws and let loose a roar that shook the earth.

Its Thu'um threw Lindla from her feet. Ice pelted her as sharp as daggers. Frost enclosed her. She struggled against the cold, shouting, and broke free.

"Lindla *Fo-Kiin zu'u!* I am Lindla Frost-Born," she cried, "and I will not bow to death so easily." She pulled free her sword and raised it to the sun. "*Neh qiilaan us dinok!*"

The dragon reared back. A growl rumbled from its throat, laughter. "*Ful, laan tinvaak? So you want to talk?*" he sneered. "*Tinvaak zu'u ofan.* I will give you talk!"

His wings stirred the snow as he took flight and sailed over the chasm. He skimmed the slopes, wheeled about, and descended on Lindla like an arrow. Jaws opened once again with a clap of thunder. She raised her shield just in time against the dragonfire that swept the

mountain pass. The fur on her gloves singed. The ground beneath her turned from snow, to water, to ice.

She barely remained on her feet as the dragon crashed before her.

“*Zu’u Tahagrel!*” he roared. His eyes met hers, piercing, lit with a cunning and malice no mortal creature possessed. “*Qiilaan dinok uv qiilaan dovah*. Bow before death or bow before me, but you shall bow all the same.”

Another booming Word, and dragonfire engulfed her. She raised her shield, but the iron melted in her grasp. Screaming, cursing, she cast it into the snow, misshapen and glowing hot.

The dragon’s mouth curled into what could have passed as a grin. “*Koraav yol kosil*. I see a fire burn within you; *bahlok*, hunger.” His tail slashed through the snow and sent Lindla and her sword flying. Blood filled her mouth. She struggled to one knee.

Tahagrel lumbered towards her. “*Qiilaan, joor! Qiilaan!*”

It was neither fear nor bravery, but instinct that made Lindla reach for her bow. She nocked a single arrow, pulled and let it fly. Tahagrel crumpled to the snow, hissing, as the arrow pierced his eye. His rage shook the chasm.

“*Ruth! Faaz! Nah!*”

He slithered and writhed, sending snow into the air. Fire spewed. At last he curled together and stilled. A red eye fixed Lindla with a furious gaze.

She nocked a second arrow and approached. “Perhaps no one has told you that you talk too much, Tahagrel One-Eye,” she said. “If we are done with your manner of *tinvaak*, then hear my plea, or I will make you Tahagrel No-Eyes.”

Tahagrel grumbled. “*Geh, tinvaak oblaan*. We are finished with our...introductions.”

Lindla paused before the beast, arrow at the ready. She met the dragon’s gaze. “My people must cross your pass when spring arrives. Will you see them to safety? Or must I bring more arrows and more hunters?”

“*Bolaav*, I could allow it,” Tahagrel answered. His lone eye narrowed on her. “*Bovul hi?* Why should the mighty hunter Lindla flee?”

“My clan was driven into the wilderness by the Raven King of Einmor. I must find safety before he hunts us down. He dwells in our castle, but when spring comes, he will not sit

idle for long." A thought began to kindle. "Once my people are safe, if I were to return, would you fight alongside me against the Raven King? Would you make him bow?"

That grin returned. The eye widened. "*Bahlok*," Tahagrel said. "You reveal your hunger." He rose from the snow, drawing a deep breath through his snout. His scales bristled with renewed strength. "I could let your people pass unharmed, or I could turn this Raven King of yours to bones and ashes, but I do not owe you both. *Gein miin, gein miiraad*. One eye is left to me, and one way is left to you. The choice is yours. Cowardice, and flee? Or vengeance, and reclaim what you have lost? *Nikriin uv nahkriin?*"

Lindla let out a slow breath into the winter and shut her eyes. Wutharth's words echoed in her mind. Survival was their only goal. But there was safety down both roads. She imagined Frryha and Cymma running through Haafsrik's halls once more, a fire in every hearth and a song in every heart. No more would they need to cower in the woods like starving wolves. No more would the Raven King threaten their future. Soon, she had once promised herself. But the time for vengeance was now.

She looked the dragon in the eye. Her answer was a single word.