

The Black Furrow Clan

Surésh was a small farming village in the Kráa Hills populated by the Black Furrow Clan. It was typical of the agricultural settlements that help sustain the Great Temple in Sárku. They obediently sent in the harvest every season and were grateful to live their lives with a minimal amount of attention from the City. Then one night, that all changed.

Clanmaster Zagár hiSerénkel was wakened by the insistent rapping on his door. He thought, “Only a fool such as Visán would keep up with such an annoying activity. Hopefully this time it will be important.”

“What do you want, Visán?” he said.

“Esteemed One, there is a visitor at the gates who requests your presence,” said the obviously flustered Visán, “his documents introduce him as Qusúnchu Dijátlal hiNatál, a clan-cousin from the City!”

Zagár leapt up and thought “What would a High Priest from the Temple want from us?” Quickly, he dressed in his best clothes and rushed to meet this unknown cousin.

As he entered the meeting hall he was struck by the plainness of this priest, dressed in the simple traveling clothes of the monks on a pilgrimage with only quality of the cloth and symbols of his office embroidered into it giving any hint of his status. The shorter figure next to him was even more nondescript. “Perhaps a low level acolyte?” he thought.

“Greetings, cousin. Welcome to our clanhouse. How may we serve the Great Temple?” Zagár said in as formal a term as he could determine from their status.

“Thank you for your kind hospitality. This is my assistant and our clan-cousin Su’umél Treshmélu hiNatál. We bring a great gift from the Temple to your house.” Dijátlal said.

Zagár could hear the rustling and whispering of the clan members as they started to gather in the meeting hall and stared out at this unique sight. “Please Benevolence, let us join the rest of the clan in the hall so that you may present this boon.” He said and ordered that refreshments be brought for their guest.

As they took their seats, Dijátlal began, “I was sent here to inform you that The Great Temple has determined that your village deserves a singular honor for the service that you have provided through the years. In keeping with my instructions I stopped at your tombs earlier this evening and cast a powerful spell. Within two kirén all of your members who have died within the last five years shall travel from their resting places to join us here, in the hall.”

The following silence was stunning and then began to be broken by assorted gasps, groans and crying. Zagár using the quick-wittedness that got him to his position said, “Quickly, prepare a feast for our brothers and sisters that will soon arrive!”

The room burst into a flurry as preparations were made. Zagár took this time to sidle up to Dijátlal and said, “As you may know cousin, my brother Maghán, the previous clanmaster died only last year.”

“ I am aware of that, and as the last one to die he will be the first to arrive here.” he replied.

Slyly, Zagár continued, “I hate to speak ill of the dead, but Maghán was a poor clanmaster. He drank too much and did not spend enough time tending to business. Our clan suffered for it and it would be a shame to return to that position.”

“And it would also be a shame if you had move out of the clanmaster’s quarters?” Dijátlal added.

“Precisely,” Zagár whispered, “would there be any way to uncast the effects of the spell?”

“You will have to speak more clearly, Elder.” requested Dijátlal.

“I do not wish my brother to return. What would it take to stop him?” Zagár blurted.

“Ahh, such a spell would require great ability and money.” said Dijátlal.

“I understand. Could you perform such a feat for perhaps, 50 weight of copper?” asked Zagár.

“I believe it could be done for say, 150 weight.” replied Dijátlal.

“Can we settle on 100 weight?” countered Zagár.

“Done!” agreed Dijátlal.

After sealing the bargain, Zagár turned and went to make sure of the preparations. Soon after his departure, Visán came up to Dijátlal and pleaded, “Great Sir, please forgive me, but I beg you for a great favor.”

“Does this concern the imminent return of your dead wife, Sídla?” he questioned.

“Yes, Benevolence. For you see that I am now married to her sister Ta’ana and Sídla’s return would cause great jealousies between the two.” moaned Visán.

“And you would miss Ta’ana’s company in your bed?” queried Dijátlal.

“Yes, Benevolence.” Visán said meekly and added, “All that I have to offer is 20 weight of copper to prevent this return.”

“I appreciate your position.” spoke Dijátlal in an understanding one.

“Revered One, there are many others in the clan who also wish to avoid this rendezvous. May they make their requests?” squeaked Visán.

“There is no need, cousin. Just write down their names, collect the copper and quietly bring it to Treshmélu and it shall be done.” Dijátlal said assuredly.

After the coins were surreptitiously delivered to his assistant Dijátlal rose and said, “They are late. Something must have gone wrong. I shall return to the tombs and ascertain the problem. Please begin the feast and we shall join you when we return.”

Zagár accompanied Dijátlal to the door and asked, “Do you go now to perform what we discussed?”

“Do not worry, Elder. Your troubles shall soon be over. The Temple will not hear of this from me. Please give my regrets to the clan as I will not be returning.” Dijátlal replied. He then turned and made his way up the path towards the tombs with Treshmélu following.

Zagár rejoiced and thought, “I knew that I was cleverer than that priest. Now back to the celebration of my stunning leadership.”

On the hill above the village next to the tombs the departing pair stopped and looked back at the clanhouse. The taller of the two remarked, “What an fascinating group of people. They profess one belief and yet when they are offered a Great Gift from their God they try their hardest to avoid accepting it. I’m sure that they will come to understand the true meaning of what was offered. That is why we must continue to test them, eh, Lord Durritlámish?”

“Yes, my Lord Sárku.” he replied.

As they continued on the path they could hear the stones rolling away from the graves and the shuffling of many feet down the hill.

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