

Blue Blossom

Raeg'ald was knee-deep in the snow, moving one foot after another, looking for large depressions. The shaman midwife had told him she needed a blue blossom to cure his newborn daughter. He had to go into the Little mountain to find a rift, where it grows shielded from the wind. He had left during the night, just taking his cloak and some rope. Now, the sun was well past noon, and he had not found any blossoms. Even with his Shad'alar resistance and his heavy fur cloak the harsh wind was freezing him deep to the bones. *I have to keep fighting. I must find it*, he told himself, *I will find it*.

Raeg'ald heard a deep crack, followed by a thunderous roar. He turned and saw an avalanche rushing toward him. With no time to seek shelter or to outrun it, he looked for something solid to hold on. He saw the head of a rock, ran as fast as the snow allowed him and embraced it. The avalanche struck him like a raging boar and the rock broke into pieces. The flow took him. He tried to keep his head up but ice blocks and rocks were constantly ramming into him. Something struck him in his head and knocked him down.

Raeg'ald awoke. His whole body felt broken. Opening his eyes, he saw that he was hanging in a huge rift; he could not see the bottom. He saw his rope below. *Damn it, it's too far, I can't take it back*, he thought. He looked up and saw that a sharp rock had skewered his cloak. Turning his gaze to the opposite side, a good six feet away, he saw a blue dot to the left.

His cloak started to tear down; Raeg'ald felt himself falling several inches. He put his feet on the wall and pushed—he felt a

deep pain in his knee. Getting momentum, he heard his cloak giving way and the tension on his shoulders disappeared. He started to fall but he quickly grasped a fissure with his hand—scorching it in the process.

Raeg'ald could see it clearly now: a blue blossom just three feet on his left. He gripped the fissure with two hands and stabilized himself. Using his feet, he heaved himself up. The pain in his knee deepened. With a cry, he grasped the blossom. *That's done*, he thought. *Now, I must come back quickly.*

He slowly and painfully climbed the dozen feet from the surface. The snow had stopped falling. The avalanche had brought him only a couple of hours from Shad'alar, and from his daughter. He ran through the snow, like a boar plowing with his tusks, leaving behind a trail of blue blood. He entered the city at dusk and ran towards his lodge, in the hunter district.

He opened the door and rushed inside. Everyone looked at him.

“Do you have it?” the shaman asked.

He didn't answer and gave her the blossom. She took it in her leathery hands, and squeezed it while murmuring some incantations. His wife was holding their pale daughter. *Too pale*. The midwife forced the blue mixture into the newborn's tiny mouth.

They waited, hearing no sound but the creaking fire and the pounding of their heart. He heard a cough. The best sound he has ever heard. Life was blooming into their daughter and she began to cry. Colors have regained her cheeks. She looked alive and beautiful, like a blue blossom.