

# Shadows from the East

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*Natalie Englehart*

Kilo is a travelling merchant. He lives a quiet life pushing his cart from village to village, selling the variety of goodies that every traveller needs. He has herbs, blankets, tents, and even small hunting weapons.

His only family are his aging adoptive parents, whom he makes sure to visit once a season (mainly for his mother's homemade stew.) He is a happy fellow; content with his life, never seeking more. He has made many friends during his travels, and seems to make more in each village he visits. Whatever the weather, Kilo is known as a reliable merchant who always shows up on time.

His skills lay in knowing a good bargain when he sees one, and being able to talk anyone into a sale. He also has strong survival skills, (after all, whether from natural dangers, or the smugglers who roamed the lesser used paths, travel between villages could be treacherous). He isn't a particularly good fighter, but he knows how to use the environment around him to ward off any trespassers, and is an excellent bluffer. He does, however, carry a short sword with him.

Kilo is a fair headed man. Where most people of this land have dark brown or black hair, he has a reddish blonde that is very distinctive. His eyes are blue and have an almond shape to them. This is a clear indication of his adoption and that he is not from around this area... or even of full human decent, but his adoptive parents never spoke of his blood parents, and he has no interest in finding out. He is not a curious person - why chase after things that clearly were not meant to be? He loves his life and does not wish to risk ruining it.

## Chapter 1 – The Stranger

It's been a rainy day in the village of Cartha. Winter is fast approaching, so people have been buying lots of equipment to get prepared, and you've been selling it to them by the bucket load. You've had a very good day's sales today, so to celebrate, you've spent the last few hours in the town's local tavern drinking your favourite beverage; coffee with a mix of whiskey.

You are busy catching up with the bartender, learning of all the local news, as well as watching a loud and rowdy game of poker at one of the tables between groups of dwarfs. With the mountains being only a couple hours hike north, Dwarfs were pretty common in this area, unlike Elves however, who were as rare as anything got. In fact, so few had been sighted outside their land to the east, people began to wonder if they truly existed. The east was a dark area that no one wished to venture into to find out.

Suddenly, a huge gush of wind causes the tavern doors to burst open. Silence fills the tavern as everyone turns to stare at the door. A few moments pass, but as soon as everyone realises nothing is going to happen, return to their business.

No one sees the dark cloaked figure slide gracefully through the door. No one sees it move toward you. You don't even see it until it's behind you, waiting patiently for you to notice it.

When you do, after a few moments of uneasiness, you turn around and come face to face with what you think must be a wraith. The shock forces your hand up, launching your mug in the air, before coming down and smashing on the floor. Your mind races with dark images of the horrors you fear are about to become, although once you realise that this figure is quite solid, and realise that everyone is looking at you, you calm down and take a seat in shock.

The stranger is the same height as you, yourself being a good foot taller than the average man. You clear your throat and ask the stranger what you can do to help. A gloved hand containing a piece of paper slowly emerges from robes of the stranger, without even being aware of it; you reach out and take the paper.

Then as swiftly as he entered, he turns and leaves. (Stories afterwards claim he merely disintegrated into thin air). You open the paper and find a short unsigned message written on it.

"Your life is in peril. Meet me in my room two doors to the left of yours."

You fold the paper back up and placed it in your pocket.

### **Paths**

- Ignore the letter and head to your room to lie down.
- Decide to find the stranger in his room.