

“Great Skelg came to Absalom from our homeland five weeks ago. He came to take service as an officer with the Taldan Longaxes. He pulled up roots and brought all his possessions with him. As such famous warriors do, Skelg had a lot of enemies back in the Lands of the Linnorm Kings. Some of them followed him here. Their leader’s name is Bengeirr. Skelg plundered a ship belonging to a petty jarl named Haldyr Bjornson before he accepted the offer with the Longaxes. Bengeirr is apparently one of Haldyr’s sons. That business all started about four days ago. Skelg had several retainers serving him. I’m all that’s left. We were still moving in. One night we heard people in the basement. We grabbed our weapons and Skelg led the men down to surprise the thieves. They were in the vault where he kept the trophies from his reaving days. The intruders were speaking our tongue, which was not what we expected. It was Bengeirr and some other Northmen. Skelg is not called “the Ripper” for naught. He set upon them like a ravenous wolf. The lanterns were accidentally knocked out in the confusion. Someone called for light, and one of the thieves managed to light a ship’s beacon. It was a prize from Irrisen [spit] called The Beacon of the North. It shines light through a lens, like a focused beam to guide a ship through foul weather. We never knew it had magical properties; our inattention may have doomed our master. When its cold light shined forth, the beam first fell on Skelg. It was like it struck him a physical blow, he was brought to his knees—but by what we knew not. Something else significant had happened. After Skelg fell, it shone upon a tapestry hung on the wall outside of the vault. A shimmering doorway opened up. The thieves took the opportunity to escape, taking the beacon with them. We counted our dead and tried to get help for Skelg. He said it felt like the

frozen fingers of midnight were clutching his heart. His skin was as cold as ice, like he was freezing from the inside out. He sent one of the men through the portal, believing perhaps some cure lay beyond. After about half an hour poor Tirfyr hadn't returned and the portal closed. Now the tapestry on which it shone is frostburned with the image of a longship trapped in an iceberg. We had no time to investigate further, as Skelg's condition worsened. The clerics were able to grant him respite, but it never lasted long. They said he was cursed and the beacon was the key somehow. To make matters worse Bengeirr must have learned about Skelg's condition. He raided in the middle of the night again. This time, without Skelg to lead us, we were slaughtered. Bengeirr might have killed Skelg then and there but when he beheld the state that Skelg was in he changed his mind. He told Skelg that he would spare him, only so that Skelg would die in his bed like an old woman. His vengeance nearly complete, he looted the vault and set the guards outside to prevent help from reaching Skelg. They were to return to Bengeirr with word of Skelg's demise. I used an *animal messenger* to reach out to the Pathfinder Society since I could see the Grand Lodge from the rooftop. Skelg does not have long to live, I fear. His wealth is gone, we can purchase no respite from the freezing curse. Will you aid him in his time of need?"