

## *The Tragedy of the Burns Family and the First Expedition to Saltmarsh\**

### *Chapter XXII: History of the Elves*

**L**ong ago, our ancestors waged war against Mitth'raw'nuruodo, the great black dragon whose malice darkened the skies and whose shadow brought ruin. For generations, the struggle raged. Until the bronze dragons heeded our call. Together, we pushed back the tide. The final battle shook the earth. At its end, Mitth'raw'nuruodo was cast back.

**T**o mark this victory, we raised the bridge, binding it with ancient magic as the bronze dragons returned home. It was to be a monument to our alliance, a seal upon the battlefield. The bridge was meant to be cool stone, yet came out onyx. None could have known—that even as he fell, the black dragon's hatred remained. His essence clung to the bridge, a poison lingering unseen, a curse.

**C**enturies passed, and the corruption festered. We did not see it at first; it crept like ivy in the



night. Those who lingered near spoke of whispers in the wind, unseen eyes watching from the shadows. Hunters vanished, patrols lost their way, and still, we did not listen. We were blind to the warnings until it was too late.

**A**t last, we sent an expedition—our finest warriors, wisest scholars, and most gifted mages. It was a trap. The bridge was a tether. As they stepped upon its stones, the will of Mitth'raw'nuruodo awakened. A tide of greed and hatred surged forth.

**S**ome fought, calling upon the strength of those who had come before, but the bridge was relentless. It consumed their resolve, smothered their spirits. Others wavered, entranced by whispers promising power beyond reckoning. And some... some embraced it. They drank deep of the dragon's corruption, let it coil around their hearts, and in that moment, they ceased to be Elves.

**T**hus were the Drow born—twisted reflections of what they once were, forever cursed to hunger for power, yet never be sated. They fled the light, retreating into the deep places of the world. Their spirits, once bright as the dawn, now smoldered with an endless thirst, and their souls bore the stain of the dragon's greed. They were no longer our kin; they were lost to us, their names struck from our songs.



**T**hey call themselves the children of Th'raw'n, wielders of an evil power. They are our great sorrow, the wound that festers beneath our histories. Some among us sought to purge them, to erase this blight from the world, but the fight continues. The corruption had taken root, and the Drow flourished in their exile. As for Mitth'raw'nuruodo himself—he did not stir. His will had shaped them, but they were not his purpose. They were merely a failed consequence.

**A**nd still, the bridge endures. It hungered for something greater to capture souls.

**T**here are humans who believe these are ghosts of another age. They build their settlements near the bridge, dismissing our warnings, blind to the whispers that still linger. But we know better. The name of Mitth'raw'nuruodo has not faded from our tongues, nor has the weight of his wrath left our hearts. He is patient. He waits. And one day, a fool will come.

**W**e recall, too, the first time the humans set foot upon our shores. They were strangers then, wide-eyed and hungry for land, ignorant of the truths we have long known. We watched them from the trees, wary but curious, for they seemed harmless—until they settled too near the bridge. At first, nothing happened.



**T**hen one night, their camp was caught in a battle between the Drow and the Elves. A young boy was seen being rushed to the bridge, his small form dwarfed by the ancient structure. And then, the flames came.

**G**reen fire erupted without warning, searing through the gathered humans, their screams swallowed by the unholy roar. The bridge itself seemed to pulse, its onyx surface marred by veins of sickly green streaks. Yet the boy did not burn. He stood unscathed in the inferno, his eyes wide with something beyond understanding, his skin aglow with the same emerald hue that had devoured his kin. And then, as if sated, the flames retreated, not to the bridge, but to the boy.

**W**here once it had been pure black, it now bore patches of green, the sickly veins like open wounds in the stone. From that moment, we knew. The bridge was not merely waiting. It was watching. And it had found something... rather someone.

**W**e do not know what became of the boy, after the incident he simply sat waiting. The next day, a ship arrived. The humans, terrified with the scene of bodies, fled with him, whispering of omens and curses. But we remember. And we fear. For the bridge still stands, and its master still waits. And when the time is right, the darkness will rise again.