

THE DOLMEN OF LITANY

In a field of ice so large it takes many cycles for a Shoveltusk herd to cross it, one may find a standing stone—pulled from beneath the frozen tundra by a strength fueled by tears of devotion which still glow inside of it. The stone glows each time a breeze presses into its sharp and shining indentations and pulses each time the earth shakes. It wants to share its song with any brave or wandering soul that comes upon it. Its memory is perfect, and it knows the Pyroi in a way few Pyroi do.

The earliest recorded Pyroi tribe was a nomadic society that hunted great game and gathered the lichen and sparse flora that grew in the crags and creases of rock. These folk proved a vigorous

and successful stock and it was not long, as such things are measured, that they became a huge and unwieldy horde. In time, their food and other perishable resources started to buckle and vanish beneath the weight of the great tribe's needs. No herd was large enough, no gathered bounty plentiful enough, and it became apparent, for the sake of everyone, that the great tribe would need to divide and seek out distant locales.

It was at the revelation of this truth that the rotund and venerable Jata – called Mother of Tribes by the Volcano Priests – came to the center of that field of ice, dropped to Her knees, and sang Her lineage as She breathed Her last breath.

As She sang, Jata's loyal Firerock Shaman Ogmern wept tears at his elder's fading, and so



issued a call deep into the heart of Pyre itself that it might come forth and witness his lament. And so a great tongue of stone burst forth from the ground at the side of the dying elder and heard Jata's words, like a child bending ear to the whispered wishes of a dying parent.

When Her song was over, Her body murmured with the flickering last embers of the rock's warmth. So passed the high elder of the largest Pyroi tribe that had ever been or ever would be.

Her light expired and the winds of the open tundra took Her dust to every corner of the shard. Within that standing stone, Jata still sings Her song for all Pyroi to hear. Here then is the tale of the Dolmen of Litany, inadvertently created by the shaman Ogmern. It preserves the hunting and fighting songs of an ancient and honorable tribe of Pyroi, long before the Folk had permanent settlements. The Dolmen is the last memory of that tribe before it was split in three, the unity of the First Tribe forever sundered.

The Dolmen of Litany is of most value to the Pyroi that treasure it for all it is—a monument, a record, and a relic of magical power. Historians from other Folk find the

thing a fascinating document of an era rarely spoken of to outsiders. And as is so often the case with such artifacts, there are always those unscrupulous and honorless sorts who would seek to chop it up like a vein of precious metal. Such fools would be well-served hiding their desires from any Pyroi.

But what does the ancient stone do?

If a Pyroi (born of Pyre) sings the names of their known ancestors or even a single relation, the stone will pick up the song where the singer's knowledge ends, joining verses to the ancient lineage through a hypnotic dance of flame, light, smoke, and rumbling bass.

Although many Pyroi know their lineage and wear it as a badge of honor, those ignorant of their family's past are often looked down upon as being without worth unwilling to commit to tradition. A Pyroi who makes the long pilgrimage to the Dolmen of Lineage is showing a true passion and honorable commitment to knowing their place among their people.

(The Firerock Shamans would in time grow to become the choir of Volcano Priests, but that is a tale for another fire.)