

Parable of the Unwary Traveller and the Maiden of Despair

:edda n' dehr dromannion; pe'neth; a' dehr vana u nar keld:

Long before the coming of Men there lived in the far south of the world a great Chieftain, known to his people as Braga, or Arm of the Gods. In his way he was a Jotun of great renown, a strong leader and a mighty warrior, a being whose power grew to encompass all the lands of the Oldemai Jotun. To his people he was a leader, a firm foundation upon which the communities of the Jotun flourished, but in his own home life was in uproar.

Braga ruled his lands but he did not rule his home. Within his Kraal he had eleven sons, all but one of whom would grow in their time to be great warriors. The youngest however, had no ambitions for leadership or the honour that could be found in combat. For him, life was an exercise in indulgence, one where the advice and remonstrations of his father held little weight. He was a Jotun, but he carried himself with the same lack of care or discipline as any of the Ancients. Within the Kraal of his father he was despised by all.

For Braga there was little that could be done. Without discipline and honour a Jotun was nothing but a brute, a creature of the Trell'sara fit for nothing more than digging in the pits of their ancient masters. The Chief knew that he needed to teach his youngest a lesson and after much indecision issued an *isdari* against his son. For the Oldemai it was the worst of punishments. Banished to the roads and wastelands the youngest son of Braga became a being without name or honour, to be shunned by all for might meet him. His fate that of a traveller without home or heritage, to be given no comfort or succour in the long years that the edict would remain in force. In Braga's mind his youngest would need to learn self-reliance and discipline in the hardest way possible. And so it was that the Jotun that now had no name was thrust out into a harsh world, there to learn for himself the meaning of hardship and discipline.

In this way the years passed, and the Jotun, who became known to latter generations as the Unwary Traveller, walked the long paths of the wastelands, finding food where he could and harbouring a deep hatred for his father and the honour of his ancestors. Such would have been the way of his life but for a chance meeting upon the open road. It would be his doom that on a bitterly cold night he would cross paths with the Maiden of Despair.



Within the blustering winds of an encroaching winter the Unwary Traveller heard the soft sounds of sobbing. In the vast spaces of the grasslands it came to him as a mournful, plaintive call wafting upon the breeze, drawing him to an outcrop of rock and then into a small enclave of stone within. There he found wrapped in moonlight a maiden, crouching upon the ground beside a small withered tree. Her sobs came as rivers of tears that flowed onto the enclave floor and settled around the dying roots of the plant.

Such was the travail in her eyes that the Unwary Traveller could not resist. He asked her what was wrong and she answered him.

"Sire, I have been banished from my home and find myself here in the dark recesses of this outcrop, without friend or family. How can I live in such a barren place? What is to become of

me?"

The Unwary Traveller took pity on the maiden and gave her the last of his food and water. In gratitude she hugged him and ran from the outcrop into the dark of night. The Jotun followed but found her gone, disappeared into the shadows of the evening. With a shrug he turned back to the enclave and decided that if he was to be hungry he might as well use the shelter of the outcrop to sleep away the night. The maiden would need it no longer.

With the sounds of a storm growing upon the horizon the Unwary Traveller made himself comfortable to sleep. Outside the storm grew and then overtook the Jotun's shelter. It was a great tempest that lashed the lands around him, but within the protection of the enclave he was safe. For the first time in many months he slept well, sure in the knowledge that the solid walls of the outcrop would protect him.



In the morning he awoke to find a most wondrous boon before him. During the night the withered tree had grown strong and tall, its branches reaching to cover the roof of his shelter. As he stood he noticed also the tree was heavy with fruit, and within the confines of the outcrop it gave off a heady sweet smell that was irresistible. Hungry and without the means to obtain food it was a boon that the Jotun could not ignore. He took one of the fruit and bit hard into its soft flesh. Then he took another and another. Such a feast he had never experienced. Each fruit gave off a different taste and soon his mouth was full of the flavours of meat, cake and more fruits than he had thought existed in the wide world.

The privations of his life, and the lessons he had learned on the road, were forgotten as the fruits took a hold of him. It was a spell that they weaved, one that kept him within the enclave, feasting on the tree's bounty for many days. The bone and sinew of his hard existence disappeared beneath the effects of his gluttony. Too long deprived of the indolence he so greatly craved he fell back into sloth, eating from the tree and relaxing beneath its spreading branches. The tree was all too happy to provide, but never once did the Jotun think on what was happening. In his mind life owed him an existence and this, he thought, was his repayment for the hardships of his banishment. All too soon he would find that everything has its cost.

The day came when the Unwary Traveller had eaten his fill and could eat no more. Satiated to a point that even the spell woven by the tree could not force him to eat another piece of fruit, he lay upon the ground of the enclave and pondered his good fortune. Today however, would be the day that he would pay the cost for his indulgence.

In the darkening hours there came from outside the soft voice of the Maiden. In the lilting tones of her approach the Jotun heard the sorrow and despair that she still felt, and called her to come inside and eat from the fruits of the Tree. For indeed it was in his thoughts that such a feast would make even her black mood falter. But it was not the Maiden that entered the dark enclave. In her place passed the malevolent form of a *dweo'gorga*, a shape-shifter of the ancient days, its body formed as a Reaver and its appetite one to match. "Do not worry," it said in the same soft voice as the Maiden, "I shall indeed feed upon the bounty of the Tree."

In those morning hours the screams of the Jotun echoed across the plains but there was no-one to hear. The *dweo'gorga* took its time. It had been waiting for its prey to take its fill of the tree, and now it would enjoy the fruits of its patience. In those hours the son of Braga paid the

cost of his gluttony, and he was never heard of again.

It is said that for the Jotun this is a cautionary tale, one that reinforces the idea that it is only discipline and honour that keeps a Jotun alive in a harsh world. The son of Braga had chosen to ignore the one rule that governs the lives of the Oera'dim in Arborell, and had paid a high price for that oversight. In a world ruled by magic anything is possible, and nothing need be as it seems. In Arborell you can take nothing for granted.



Here can be found the first four paragraphs of this tale as found in their original Haer'al

:edda n'dehr dromannion; pe'neth; a'dehr vana u nar keld:

:thaal u amaar dehr comm'el nar me'duine pelloth duel'il o'dehr peneth suud emurion e' tuan; surgis; maat'en ahn me'du duril ce' ,braga,: oel me'du velle hae vas e' jotuni nar surgis mara, e' tuan; hedjel; a' e' hresh'na; hed'da; e' oera'dim dueneth u shaneth ashan'a ahn menon alle dehr orelim o'dehr jotunii; oldemai: ahn me'du duril hae vas e' tuan, e' vor nethelas hald u volsh dehr kraalim n'dehr jotunii kumanil, ilen oel me'du mahren heim duil vas oel fe'onath:

:braga, regil me'du orelim ilen hae va'el phenath regem me'du heim: ne'esal me'du kraal hae taag faer'marim; en'kel'en;, alle ilen en nar daen tanah ashan oel duath sol ahn cem hresh'na; surgis: dehr allasaal aphall, taag se'we y'sahda la'el tuanwch y'al dehr honorum gehl lenen cem iphar oel mauil: la'el ma'duine, duil vas del inena oel vastal, en voher dehr ka'haer nar me'du pahda menah oph malad: hae vas e' jotuni, ilen hae maa'gil u ma'cayor naman dehr u'im hunn nar pad y'al he'pard ce' ahna n'dehr trell'sara: ne'esal dehr kraal nar me'du pahda hae vas u ne'laniel nelm alle:

:la'el braga pelloth u vas oph gehl lenen cem arbel: vidut he'pahd a' honorum e' jotuni vas nuul ilen e' morda, e' oera' n'dehr trell'sara share la'el nuul paar melaph duri'el o'dehr ahbeth nar pelloth maturim; aald: braga ma'et u gehl hae sala'il ahn elimus me'du allasaal e' pahdon a' calaph u caal ne'aphana shenil del isdari fendel me'du faer'ma: la'el dehr jotunii; oldemai; et vas dehr dweo'pheth nar pel'kaan: isdaril ahn dehr culwim a' tyrveld dehr faer'ma; allasaal; nar braga hevon e' oera'dim vidut muath y'al honorum, ahn u cem ne'laniel nelm alle: me'du ah'met u gehl nar e' dromannion vidut heim y'al melloth, ahn u cem y'nethul se'we vallor y'al cip o'dehr feonim; thaal; u gehl dehr isdari tanah shuun oel menin: oel braga; palothim me'du allasaal tanah salal ahn shadel he'pahd o'dehr kepfaal velle cordahl: a' se et vas u gehl dehr jotuni u gehl rein taag se'we muath vas adaphil oel'va e' emur; veden;, pelloth ahn shadel u la'el ma'cayor dehr cahna nar kepaal a' he'pahd:

:oel viis valle dehr feonim enkath'il, a' dehr jotuni, duen hevon maat'en ahn kahnenon faer'duim ce' dehr dromannion; pe'neth;, narm'il dehr thaal hoewim n'dehr tyrveld, cryen'el edas voher hae lenen a' fe'dath e' raas u lan'feor la'el me'du pahda a'dehr honorum n'dehr feo'allim: venen tanah eron sindur dehr velle nar me'du duil ilen la'el e' elj moot hald dehr ahno culwch: et u tanah cem haes morga u gehl pa e' ke'eshon dalem u dreya'heim hae tanah avandil hoewim naman dehr vana u nar keld:

