

## An Introduction to Tomb Of The Dundel Chief Or...How Did We Get Here?

*“Sire, this place that the ship's captain calls “The Dundel”, is possibly the most inhospitable land I’ve encountered these many years in your service. The weather is akin to a stoked forge and fresh water is as rare as a comely orc wench. The natives are friendly, willing to trade and otherwise uninterested in our doings. The native women are favored by the ship's crew, and if I'm truthful on the matter, aren't completely unattractive to me. The wildlife is scarce and doesn't seem at all interested in eating me, so there is that.*

*Possibly the strangest thing about this thrice cursed land is that we seem to be the only folk to have ever found it. There are no signs of other visitors. I know the human natives had to come from somewhere but I've no idea how long they've been here. They don't know either, as they have no written records and only measure the passage of time as yesterday, today and tomorrow. They travel their desert, forage, mate, and pray to their Dundel god. And yes, that is her godly name. Dundel is what they call this place, their goddess, their people and possibly their damned furry housepets.*

*I hate it here and look forward to returning to our halls. However, the ground is rich with gold and silver. I found several small, lesser gems by simply digging the toe of my boot in the dirt. I feel the wealth of this place. I think it is what you seek.*

*I think we can delve in peace so long as we don't disturb their ways.”*

Excerpted from a 600 year old letter to King Rudaken, from Dimsik Ferrous, Cartographer to The Crown

### Prelude

The stench of waste and sweat hung in the air like a thick cloud.

The guide wove past vendor stalls and around street merchants. You could feel the heat of the street stones rising up, like it was trying to burn you through the soles of your boots. He moved at a slow and steady pace, whistling and muttering to himself, as if he were unaware of the miserable heat.

He had set up this job, then arranged to deliver you to the appointed place at the specified time, so he could collect his finder's fee. "No chance of not collecting the coin if you do the work yerself and present the bill all timely and in person", he had said. A professional. Shabby and odoriferous, but professional.

The sound of barter came from every direction in a never ending din and clash of noise that left your ears ringing. Overhead, the sun had reached its zenith, beating down like the fire of a cruel oven. The Dundel was always hot, but at least it's a dry heat.

You walked, unchallenged, through the West gate exit of Sorholde. The guards barely looked up from their dice as they passed their afternoon in the shade of the city wall, enjoying some cool watered wine. It was too hot to bother with a group of adventurers leaving the city.

It is questionable that the guards would have duly challenged anyone entering the gates, either. No one would have blamed them; an enemy army would never attack from the desert side of the city. No army could survive that march. The survivors would come to the gates on their knees, begging for water...or even a quick death.

Marching toward a parked caravan you see wagons and carts arranged in rows. Small makeshift stalls were set up around their sides and back gates. The sound of a blacksmith bravely working through the sweltering day rang and echoed through the air, mixed with the calls of stall keepers selling warm goats' milk and fine white goats' cheese. A merchant in the back of a guarded wagon was selling red gepaya fruit. The smell of the succulent blood oranges was almost enough to chase away the smell of the city. Almost, but not quite.

The recruiter/guide led you right up to a low cart of Dwarven manufacture, covered with heavy canvas stretched over bows and a few stout ponies hitched to the front. A few small steps at the back led to a stout wooden door with an iron grate for a window.

He banged his fist on the door before pulling it open and gesturing for you to follow him into the cool, dim interior.

As your eyes adjusted to the dimness, you saw the old guide collect a bag of coins from a low table and then turn for the door. The guide winked at you as he strolled past and then you heard the door close behind him.

From the shadows blanketing the other side of the room, a gravelly voice asked, “Have you ever heard the tale of The Dundel Chief and his Lost Tomb”?

Then an ancient dwarf moved out of the shadows and leaned across the heavy table. He looked you in the eyes for a long moment, as if taking your measure, then his gravelly voice rumbled, filling the room.

“When I was young”, he began, “Good King Rudaken of the Kynwall was lookin’ to expand the influence of the Northern Kingdoms.

After a time his eye turned South, toward Dundel and her great desert. His counselors said they had studied the place and the great desert would wield the finest gems and purest ore ever found. His engineers told him that any mine shaft would have to be dug in the desert proper. His ambassadors told him the people who lived in the desert were not delvers and would not oppose the building of a mine.



Expeditions were sent forth but the results were always the same. A mine would be started and then the desert would reclaim the ground. An earthquake here, a sandstorm there. Catastrophe would fall over the working dwarves and after it was over, there would only be undisturbed desert remaining as if nothing had happened. A few would survive if they ran for their lives. King Rudaken spoke to his advisors about giving up on the desert and looking elsewhere.

Then, almost by happenstance, one of the expeditions crossed paths with a group of friendly tribesmen. The Dwarves explained their mission and the nomad leader didn't seem at all surprised at the tales of disaster and misfortune.

“Our people have the blessing of the goddess, Dundel”, the nomad leader said, “She will allow anyone to walk on the sand. If you live or die she does not care, but only her people may take from the desert.” The adventurers, although skeptical, immediately sent missives to their king communicating this information.



So Rudaken sent his most trusted advisors to Rēta Vākara, the greatest Dundel chieftain, to arrange an accord that would allow dwarves to walk and take from the land.

A gathering was arranged on the edge of the desert and after many hours, a deal was negotiated. Rudaken's emissary was given one copy of a deed conveying the right of the Northern Dwarves to sink a great mine in the desert. The other copy swiftly disappeared into a pocket in Vākara's cape. The dwarves would be allowed to build their great mine, unimpeded by the desert, and in return, The chieftain Vākara would receive the first 35 Talents (about 1 ton) of pure refined gold brought forth from the mine as well as the first bushel of faceted and polished ruby gemstones.

Time passed. Great caravans came from the North, carrying digging implements, food, water, supplies and even wood for fires. Everything had to be brought from the North. The desert provided nothing. Many Dwarves settled in the new mine. They even brought their families to give comfort and ease their hearts. A small city was built around the mine. A school was built, then a temple. The digging and mine building continued.

After a few years a rich vein of gold was found and followed to a larger vein. Soon, stacked ingots of pure gold were sitting beside great piles of fine iron ore. Rubies were found in thick deposits. Some of the gemstones were the size of a closed fist. The Dundel Mine, as they called it, was quite a successful venture.

Wagons were loaded with the treasure that had been promised to Rēta Vākara. A trusted emissary was chosen and the heavily laden caravan crossed the desert with its precious cargo. The payment was delivered and then quickly secreted away by the Dundel Chief.

There was a great celebration when the treasure was delivered. Rēta Vākara was not humble. He had been true to his goddess and felt he was the greatest of her acolytes, therefore deserving of privilege. He understood and craved wealth and position like no Dundel before him and possibly since. He thought of himself as a sort of king and not a common nomad chief.

After several days of revelry the Dwarves returned to the site of the great Dundel Mine and found nothing. The mine was gone. They searched for days before finally accepting a terrible truth. The desert had swallowed the mine, surrounding city and the deed. Many search parties were lost as only the Dundel can reliably find their way in the desert.

King Rudaken immediately ordered all dwarven folk back to the North. It was only days later that he gave the order to build this cursed city. We, the Kynwall, would spend our wealth and even our lives making the few “people” who live here dependent on our everlasting charity. It was a disgusting command and without end. To make matters worse, under Rudaken’s command, no dwarf has crossed the barrier set by the South Gate since that day. We are not even allowed to search for what is rightfully ours.”

The dwarf gives a low wheeze and weak cough at this point in his oratory before continuing.

“I was the emissary appointed by King Rudaken. I followed him to his secret hiding place, thus I know where the treasure paid to Rēta Vākara lies. I even stole a key to the place in case we ever needed to return.

I want you to go into the tomb. Find and bring to me the deed conveying the right to sink a great mine into the Dundel. With that document, we can reestablish our contract. We can prosper once again and be rid of this foul city. In the process you can fill your purses with gold pieces. All of the gold and treasure you find is yours to keep.”

He rolls a map into a tight cylinder and pushes it across the table, along with a small bag of coins and an oddly shaped disk with a triangular void in its center.

“If you give this map and coins to the caravan master Kāfalē he will take you to the location of the tomb. This key will gain you entrance.

I will have that deed.”

**To be continued in...**

## **GG2 - Tomb Of The Dundel Chief**

By Heidi Gygax Garland and Erik Garland