

Baltic

It thundered like a heart straining against its cage of bone. It dragged a thousand teeth across the crust of the earth. Writhing for eons beneath the floor of the Baltic Sea, the divers freed unknowingly the mountain of-

“That’s not how it goes ya wordy oaf! Ya’ve butchered it!”

“I certainly have not you great bearded bear!”

“Haha! The name’s Robert. Buy me a round and I just might be givin’ ya a proper education.”

“An education indeed. I am called Bradford. Barkeep, a drink for my new friend!”

“Good on ya mate! Gather ‘round, the lot of ya, and let me tell ya how the story really goes.”

“It was one of those dark and stormy nights ya hear about so much. The waves were crashing all around in the dark as the group of divers leapt off the edge of their rusted out bucket they called a ship. Pirates beneath the waves, they were, seekin’ out all matter of treasure.”

“They couldn’t go far, mind. They had to bring down a great iron lung with ‘em, swimmin’ back quick like before their chests filled up with the drink. The deeper they went the blacker that sea got, thick with oil and grease.”

“There was less light the deeper they got. It got so black they couldn’t see: no treasure, no iron lung, and after a bit... not even each other.”

“It’s the captain’s first mate who lived to tell about it. He said it was in that black that he lost his breath. Blind as a bat he was, chest fillin’ up with the thick, unnatural water. All sudden

like it clears. As deep in the Baltic as any man has been and the water breathes like air and brightens up like the clearest day.”

“Driftin’ through the clear he gets down to the sandy floor and sees a door of a kind. All covered in words and pictures it was. He dug his fingers in the sand, lookin’ for some give. Swimmin’ ‘round the door he hears a sound, a scrapin’ or a knockin’. He follows it ‘round the other side before he finds a crack in the floor.”

“Pushin’ his fingers through the crack he starts pullin’ with all his might. The door gave and what do ya think he saw on the other side? No, not some great beastie covered in teeth like Bradford was sayin’. Instead, what he finds on the other side... *is himself.*”

“Himself, Robert!? Preposterous!”

“Nothin’ to it Bradford! What that first mate found was a window. A window leadin’ to another world, another Baltic.”

“Ridiculous! If a man had found his way into another world, as you claim, surely fame would be his? Why have we not heard of this man until now?”

“Well Bradford, that is truth of a kind. But if the monster ya came up with crawled up out of a hole do ya think our harbor’d still be in one piece?”

“I did not merely invent a beast, I-”

A great rumbling shook the tavern as the candles smoked out one by one. A great knocking railed against the tavern door, surging rhythmically through its patrons.

“Will ya listen to that...? I think we’re about to find out who’s right.”