

# **The Blood of Winterhold**

**Stephen Almekinder**

**Hard Shell Word Factory**

For Mom and Dad, very special parents.

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PO Box 161  
Amherst Jct. WI 54407  
books@hardshell.com  
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## Chapter 1

HE SPIRALED OUT OF the trance and his fingers spiraled up the familiar curve of the prayer horn. He passed through one layer. His thumb and forefinger caressed the S shaped curve which represented eternity. He emerged from another layer. The tight button of truth slid beneath his ring finger and little finger. He broke through the last layer and his palm brushed the symbols of beauty and despair and love in rapid succession.

The prayer horn slipped from his hands and settled between his crossed legs. He opened his eyes, but just barely. The sun off the endless snow slashed through the slits, fuzzed by his eyelashes. As a matter of discipline, he did not close his eyes but held them half open. The cold burning light filled his eyes and seemed to penetrate deeper and deeper into his skull. He let it dig in.

Even as the hard edge of the light off the Waste drove a wedge up into his sight, he became acutely aware of the uneven surface of the frozen snow beneath him. It tilted him to one side and he discovered the muscles on the left side of his body were pulled taut to keep him from tipping over. He shifted his buttocks, which only served to reveal a new set of ridges in the snow beneath him. He forced himself to sit still in the new position.

The conspiracy of sensations was completed by the dead weight of his breather mask tugging at his neck. He had pulled it down and off his face just before he entered the trance. He needed to breathe unimpeded and, since he was in a shallow cave out of the wind, he did not need to circulate the frigid air through the baffles of the breather mask to keep his lungs from icing over.

Trys myr Lyn pyr Drun sat in a cave in the Northern Range and faced south. Using the techniques learned from his training to be an Interpreter of the Caynruhl clan, he had entered his trance in an attempt to lay to rest some of the doubts which had plagued him of late. The breaking of the trance by what he considered to be minor irritations only intensified the doubts. All of his life he had wanted to be an Interpreter; one who read, comprehended, and interpreted the words of the Chronicles of Blood through the Rituals, and by means of ceremonies helped to fulfill the spiritual aspirations of his clan. But was he meant to be an Interpreter? His fingers were numb from rubbing his prayer horn over and over in an attempt to answer that one question.

