

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY SIKU



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Barrington

First published in 2022 in Great Britain by Barrington Stoke Ltd 18 Walker Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7LP

www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

This edition based on *The Ghost of Shadow Vale* (Barrington Stoke, 2009)

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library upon request

ISBN: 978-1-80090-165-0

Printed by Hussar Books, Poland

# For Edward, Henry and Harvey with love

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#### CHAPTER 1

#### THE VALLEY OF GHOSTS

This is something that happened in Iceland way back. People still talk of it, but not after it gets dark.

In the north of Iceland, there was a long, deep valley that ran from the hills down to the sea. In winter when the sun was low, the bottom of the valley never got any light, so people called it the Shadow Vale.

A farmer named Thorhall lived here with his wife and servants. He was a rich man who owned a large flock of sheep, but he was unlucky too, because the valley was haunted by a monster.

One day Thorhall went to see a friend of his, Skapti the Wise.

"I need some help, Skapti," he said.

"What's the problem?" Skapti asked.

"I can't find anyone to be my shepherd,"
Thorhall said, scratching his chin. "We've
had trouble high up in the valley. There's
something wicked up there, hidden among the

rocks and stones. Men have come back hurt, goggle-eyed, scared almost to death. They've packed and left without a word, and now I've no one up on the hill to look after my sheep."

Skapti looked into the fire and thought for a moment. "Here's my advice," he said. "See what you think. I know a fellow named Glam. He came here from Sweden last year. I've never met anyone stronger or more stubborn. He won't be put off by talk of ghosts or trolls. He needs a job too, but I warn you he's not a nice man."

"That doesn't bother me," Thorhall said. He stood up. "How can I find him?"

"He's up on the hillside, collecting wood,"
Skapti said. "You'll know him when you see
him."

Thorhall set off up the hill. It wasn't long before he saw a man coming towards him carrying a big bundle of twigs and branches.

Right away, Thorhall saw there was something odd about the stranger. Should he forget his plan? The man was almost seven feet tall, with a chest like a beer barrel and great strong arms. His head was huge, with eyes as dark as night and a shock of hair streaked grey like a wolf's skin.



The two men stopped and stared at each other.

"I'm looking for someone named Glam,"
Thorhall said.

The tall man said nothing. But his eyes seemed to cut right through Thorhall.

"I've a job to offer him," Thorhall went on.

"If he wants it."

"My name is Glam," the man said. "And I'm not afraid of work, if my terms are met."

"What are your terms?" Thorhall asked, feeling nervous.

"That no one bothers me," Glam said. He turned and spat on the stones beside him. "I don't like people getting in my way."

"That's fine by me," Thorhall said. "I need a shepherd, but the hill above my farm is haunted. No one else wants to work there."

Glam laughed, showing his teeth. "Old wives' tales won't put me off," he said. "Anyway, I find ghosts better company than most men."