

# The story of Grimwald

## Chapter 01

After my grandfather send me out into the world I decided to return to my clan hold in the Spine of the World. In Neverwinter the caravan to Sundabar did not need any more guards, but they offered to take me along if I pulled some guard shifts in exchange for room and board. The trek was uneventful even though I am sure we were spied on by those foul orcs haunting the Silver Marshes during the last part of the trek.

Sundabar is a fine city with formidable walls in good repair and with a well disciplined army. Even now new layers of defense are constructed. Finally a human ruler who heeds the wisdom of the Dwarves. Helm Dwarf-friend is a fine king for a human. I had hoped to continue my apprenticeship with a battle smith of the Everfire, famous for their magical craft, but my skills are to meager to be accepted, even as an apprentice.

I have learned though that my Grandfathers creations were instrumental in reconquering Citadel Felbar three years ago and his craft is well known amongst the masters of the Everfire. Now I know why he laboured so hard for many years. A groups of clans dwarfs trading their ore to Waterdeep told me tales of Berdusk. According to their tales there are fewer Dwarves in the region and my craft should be in high demand so I can spend some years forging and amassing gold so I may be more ready and skilled when I return to learn the secrets of the craft.

I joined the caravan of my clans dwarfs in their long trek to Waterdeep. We passed through the city of Silvery moon, strongest city of the alliance keeping the greenskins at bay. It is not too bad for a city. Although humans are still so weak they need to rely on magic they have also amassed some wisdom amongst all their knowing. The conversations I overheard between the scholars and ordinary people in the city have given me much to ponder about. Most of them know little of how their ancestors fell to the green hordes which crushed the mighty empires of Dwarf, Elf and Man in this region. While the Dwarfs have tenaciously held on and hidden in their holds and the Elves retreated the humans died, but have returned more numerous than before and driven the orcs into the most barren places where humans could not thrive.

The continuous battles which spring up every few years prevent the orcs from becoming too numerous, but also keep the civilized races from mounting great purges into the Spine of the World. If we were to push into the badlands of the spine our brothers in Icewind Dale and the Great Glacier would feel the burden of the driving out of the Orcs. If however we could strengthen them we could force them out of the Spine of the World, safeguard the tombs of our forefathers as well as finally committing genocide against the orcs of the North..

The humans however seem not to appreciate the great bare mountains with snow capped peaks and have no interest in eradicating these orcish breeding grounds and holding them to prevent their return. They have forgotten how the orcs can go quiet for decades before unleashing a tide which will drown them when granted breeding space. Far greater are the Empires of old crushed by the orcs, yet the humans feel they are masters of the land and pretty safe. Indeed ignorance is bliss, I am glad we Dwarves are not a blissful people. Which does bring me to wonder about those prancing carefree Elves.

I had heard of Waterdeep before. How it has become the greatest city on the Swordcoast and by force enforces an uneasy peace between the other cities. My grandfather told me he had been to Waterdeep in his youth and from his tales I imagined it to have a great harbor, but otherwise be pretty much like Neverwinter. I was amazed at the city's size. It is at least ten times greater than any city I have seen and

there seem to be more people here than in a dozen orcish hordes.

Unfortunately though most people here seem not to be interested in anything of importance. They produce many goods and lug them back and forth through the city from the harbor to caravans and back. Often I have seen identical goods being moved in both directions. How woefully inefficient these humans are! Even though there is much industry the true art of the craft does not seem to be in high regard here. The waterclocks of the craftsmen of Neverwinter are in high demand here as are the prized armors and weapons from the Silver Marches and Mirabar, but they seem more interested in buying and selling rather than learning the craft themselves. They actually seem to prefer things coming from far away places for some strange reason. I do not know who oversaw the construction of the city itself, but it is rather messy in style. It is not as wildly chaotic and senseless as nature, but still I wonder at the wisdom of not having a king when this is the result.

My grandfather told me of all the infighting between the powerful humans in the city, but I have not seen much proof of this, most people seem merely loyal to themselves not to their lord or clan though. I am glad I grew up in Neverwinter rather than this mess. I guess that peace is indeed the worst enemy of a people. Few of them seem to be properly trained in war and although there are many of them they seem more like sheep than like wolves.

I worked here all through the winter making mostly trinkets in silver and gold and adorning blades and armors, which the humans here value over a sharp blade and tough steel. These people have little steel left in their souls. I find myself actually longing now for those brawls which ensued in Neverwinter when a group of Barbarians came into the city. I used to hate their rowdy unseemly behaviour, but at least they were strong men and their claim that civilization is weakness seems to hold some value in respect to these humans.

I had hoped that come spring I would be able to set up a smithy upon arriving in Berdusk having saved gold and gathered supplies during the winter. Business has not been as brisk as I had hoped, since there are many more established smiths in the city so prices are tight and business scarce. One day when I returned to the workshop after my daily walk to the market it turned out to have been looted and my gold and supplies stolen. I was lucky I was still carrying some of my grandfather's tools in my tool belt or they too would have been gone. Luckily they did not find the small vault I carved into the floor where I keep my grandfather's axe and my armor. Praise be to the Hidden Keeper for reminding me of the wisdom of the hidden ways and safeguarding the craft of my race. Strangely enough the people in the workshops next to me claimed not to have seen anyone and the guards were unimpressed by my complaints and suspicions about competitors being behind this crime. I feel it is time to leave before worse things befall me.

I had not imagined that a land could be more boring than this. Day after day there are just soggy pools of muck, endless grass and never ending wind. Not a decent mountain in sight. I have spotted some rotting ruins and collapsed quarries so this High Moor must at one time have held more than sheep and trolls. Perhaps there are even some remains of fabled Haunghdannar lost beneath the mucky vegetation.

I do hope the lands around Berdusk are not like this. When I finally saw a hamlet I both hoped and feared we would finally have arrived, but we turned out not even to be halfway there. Even though magic was used the houses were at least made of stone and uniform in design and well defendable. The endless moors and running and stagnant water all around are an abomination to the Dwarven soul. There is not even a decent oak anywhere in sight and I am told the only woods for days are infested with trolls. Truly only a crazed wizard would be foolish enough to make such a place home. Which just goes to prove how correct my grandfather is in his analysis of Elves and the effects of magic on the soul.

We are getting closer to Berdusk. I am told this area is known as the Western Hearthlands. There are

some scattered gatherer's and woodsmen huts as well as shepherds and farmers. For some odd reason some of the humans here seem to be solitary rather than banding together for protection as any sensible dwarf would do in such a wild land. They call it frontier spirit, probably some kind of mental disease wanting to live in nature instead of in a village or town.

## ***Meeting the Party***

I was wondering if it was a mistake to come here to this land which will soon probably hold more greenskins than people if it doesn't already. When I met a Barbarian called Cuura. I do not recognize her armour's markings, they seem more military than tribal, perhaps the equipment was picked up from some place along the caravan trail she traveled. The tales of my brothers from the Spine of the World are true: the Barbarians are brave allies against the foul greenskins. It also proved true that indeed Barbarians can survive on anything they find, no matter how bad it tastes, but I as a Dwarf will not be less hardy than her and shall endure the same foul food if need be. Fern soup, blech. After swapping some tales and beers we decided to protect the weak and make fame and fortune together. Hardly had we decided on this course before Dumathoin showed his approval and brought us to a secret to be uncovered. A guardsman of sorts hired us to scout out the hills to the east to uncover the secret behind the disappearance of caravans. Cuura is clearly a human of good quality and treated with awe and respect by her fellows as a brave warrior should. Even our employer immediately deferred to her judgment. She is a bit rash we could have tried to get even more, but well she was successful, which even my most founded arguments usually are not.

Unfortunately she has a disdain for knowledge but not skill, which is why her people shall endure but never rise, but it is not their fault, they were crafted incompletely. At least they have the wisdom to mistrust the magic which has brought down countless of Empires of Man and Elf.

The foolish Barbarian misconception that good protective gear shows a fear or even respect for the enemy's weapons is unfortunately also held by her. If she lives perhaps she will come to understand that protective gear and good weapons lead to greater glory against mightier foes, not less glory. No doubt with her attitude she will come to rest under stone. I just hope I shall be alive to carve her tomb. Also she understand the importance of the tribe. While it is a poor substitute for the dwarven clan it shows a greater wisdom than most humans show in their selfish ways. She will be a good companion to travel with. Perhaps through her courage and skill she will rise to become a leader. She has the right instincts since she, as any good leader intuitively knows, that the second most important person in the tribe is he who speaks for the Gods, namely me. No one can lead their people to prosperity if not through the guidance and protection of the Gods.

The strange guardsman hiring us introduced us to an especially useless half-Elf called Felina and her useless cat. It is obvious she can not survive on her own. Perhaps she will be inspired by example and learn to make herself useful. I try not to be disgusted by her weakness and lack of battle training and skill, but allowing such a one to endure has something perverse. I hope she will apprentice soon. This shows the grim humor the Gods have in hearing our wishes. I said we would only be hired to protect one who is unable to protect themselves. Well at least she bought tents and supplies for us so she sees the importance of the group. I hardly see any reason for her to have come along though. If she stayed home it would have saved us that annoying whining. The most annoying thing about her complaints is that I generally agree with them. The ever changing clouds, cold and heat, light and dark, dry and wet, muck and rock and don't get me started on the plants growing all around the place instead of in assigned plots and animals roaming about instead of being in their proper pens. It disrupts the order of the mind and plays havoc with industrious planning. There is nobody here to show proper respect for

Creation by ordering, crafting and adorning it like there is in the dwarven halls or cities. It is much better to be underground or in a city. I have heard of a city nearby which apparently has some interesting stonework. Perhaps we will travel there someday.

We also have traveling with us one of the Elves who stayed. Those foul Mosgrim Gold Elves deserted the other Elves, Dwarves and Humans to the Green Tide who conquered the North centuries ago, but at least this is not one of them. I wondered when it fired a single arrow at the scouts spying on our camp if it had simply missed. It seemed to me to make no sense to waste an arrow and just drive them off, but it must have felt strongly about killing something innocent. Crazy Elf ideas, you wonder how they have endured so long. Apparently his aim improves though when overcome by loathing and hatred as I can well imagine. He forgot to shoot for the legs and slew the orc spy instantly and masterfully. Strange how Elves can remain so calm and serene outwardly while so consumed by hatred they cannot think straight, a mysterious people. The stories of Elven skill in crafting armor and weapons also seems to be founded in truth. It is not as good as dwarvencraft of course, but well crafted none the less. I shall make some things the Elven way, perhaps this will grant me greater insight in how and why Dwarvencraft is superior. I hammered some arrowheads for the Elf, I had expected at least to be challenged a bit in crafting whistling arrows, flame arrows, bodkins, loose shaft arrows, woodbiters, stonebiters, barbed arrows, poison tipped, but apparently she has enough of those and just needed some regular leaf, twinridge, hardened point arrows. Bows are not as useful as crossbows, but I guess that without a ceiling their arced firing disadvantage is not so bad anymore.

The last two humans seem to be from some land further to the East. They cannot be foul Calimshans from the south since Jae speaks with high regard about the Dwarves so South is out of the question. I am both amazed and appalled at the desecration performed by Humans of our noble history. They have some knowledge, but it is incorrect and they do not understand the historical significance. Can you even imagine King Warcrown having fought in the Third age of Shanatar? Despite what fellow Dwarves say about the fickleness of Humans and Elves this Jae does seem to have the respect and attention needed to gain some understanding. It is rare to find such discipline in a non-dwarf. Although it is frowned upon to share our lore with other races I cannot let this abomination of the truth and order continue and feel compelled to give those worthy and hard working a chance to understand the fading Glory of our people.

His fighting style is unlike any I have even heard about, but even though it seems impressive he does not yet grasp the importance of battlefield formations and so will need some time to become a proper soldier. Maybe he will gain some understanding when after a few months I have finished the Litany of Taark Shanat and start the Litany of the First Spiderwar proving the importance of the different formations depending on ground, clan tradition, regimental code, fatigue and morale. I find that now that I am relating the Litany's in common before someone without the fear of being hit with a poker if I make a mistake in my High Dwarven or forget some detail I have more opportunity to reflect on them.

The woman Reed who has connections to a high mage is somehow being fooled into wasting her time with false arcane teachings. Those mages always trying to lure each other into traps and thinking they are so bloody smart; they can't see what they are really doing; serving the evil Gods in disrupting the Order. It must be a blessing of the God's though so it will be revealed to her that magic is not worth wasting your time on. Cuura is foolishly being too kind in her teaching. How can a mind grow strong if it is not exercised but pampered? Instead of the whole pointing and explaining I just speak Dwarvish to Reed. If she needs to learn a language anyway it may as well be a good one straight away. Fortunately she has the wisdom to try to learn the proper words for things and to listen to the Litany's of the Silent Keeper. I sense some higher power trying to restore her usefulness, which was no doubt corrupted by the influence of too much magic. Perhaps we should take away that magic headband thing from her and put it on the half-elf, she is useless anyway.

May the fire of the Gods burn the dross from Reed. I do think the Litany's of the Silent Keeper are helping her to find the secrets of this new part of the world she has come to. In time the gem will reveal itself if only we delve deep enough. Praise be to Dumathoin and to the mountain holding his blessings.

## ***The Mission***

It is a good thing too I am coming along with this bunch. Without me they would have had to buy expensive dried rations and make many detours to find fresh water each day. Dumathoin's blessings make their work more effective. It was a hard decision not to charge them the proper guild price for the crafting of metal, but to regard them as part of my group. With such a small group in the wilderness though we need to think about the group, not ourselves if we are to survive. I wish I had the time and money to buy proper supplies and outfit the group with better armor and weapons. As it is I am just hurriedly making some simple mining and stoneworking tools which we might need in case of a cave in or if we find a collapsed entrance. If we get some good spoils I am going to buy those leather breaches, hat, greatcloak and coat I saw when we get back to Berdusk. Wool is good in the forge, but stays wet far too long after being rained upon, especially when it gets windy after the rain. All those pockets should also help bring order to my spellcomponents. 10 gold pieces is a lot of money though for a piece of clothing though. Luckily it does not get as cold here as it does around Neverwinter and the Spine.

I said it before and I am saying it again "This is bad stone". I just know there is more to this than meets the eye. At the very least the sudden appearance of Reed. If a high mage sends someone there must be some scheme afoot. Well at least the guardsman should have learned not to rely on magic too much if he has a grain of wisdom. Old battles were fought here and vile magics thrived. Even the mountains weep under the burden placed on them through the ages. At times I think I should have stayed in Berdusk and plied my trade. Surely I would have made more gold, but somehow there are ancient secrets here to be found. I just feel it. I do not know where the Silent Keeper holds them hidden, but I am sure that our hard work shall be rewarded in time. I do not like this land. There could be an army hidden in a valley two miles away and we would not know about it. In such wild places the greenskins thrive and will soon form a great horde. We must pit their strong against each other and when they are weak kill every last one of them to secure the safety of the region. As it is we would be hard pressed to defeat a small warband, let alone a warlord and his guards. Their spies found us, but we do not know the terrain or where their base lies. I worry we may fall into a trap and fail to report the nature of the treat to the guardsman in Berdusk. I shall pray that the Knower of Secrets will bless my companion's seeking of the enemy when darkness comes to hide all that is.

Our group is too small to benefit from a combined arms approach. We are too lightly armored and armed to form a daunting heavy infantry block, We have not enough ranged weapons to make a good archery unit. We only have one mount so cavalry is out of the question for now so all we can aim for is a skirmishing or light infantry fighting style. Losses for skirmishers and light infantry are extremely high when faced with a specialized unit unless we can choose the ground or have a distraction to create a weakness in the opposing order of battle. I wish we had a priest of Clangeddin here to guide us in this. I guess the cunning of the Barbarian and Elf will have to do since this is their trade.