

# The story of Grimwald

## *chapter 4*

Through skill, courage and the blessings of the hidden keeper Cuura managed to mislead our foes and rejoin to lead us again. My suspicions about Cuura being a worthy leader are confirmed by the Silent Keeper, as I pray to reveal the health hidden in her body an usually powerful surge restores her strength. It is good we have not lost our leader. I really don't know whom we would have had to follow otherwise. Even though I often have my doubts about her decisions she is still the best choice. Jay seems even more inexperienced as a leader, but he seems to be the only one whose profession is warcraft. We can hardly have an elf hiding in the trees as our leader or some women who are obviously too weak. A leader needs to be brave and strong, cunning in war and able to keep order in the ranks. I guess the brave and strong are not really the problem, the cunning might come if we survive and build experience but I despair at their lack of skill in keeping discipline in the ranks. Perhaps I should try to prepare Jay to fulfill his role as second in command when we have the time, he seems more inclined to discipline than Cuura.

My plan to ambush a patrol and interrogate them is seen as too dangerous since it may put powerful enemies onto our trail. I cannot argue with this reasoning, but the alternative plan of me and Felina sneaking in to a hidden Orc lair while the rest observe from a safe distance is far more dangerous! Why don't they listen to me? I tell them to concentrate our fighting power to gain local battlefield supremacy and they decide to spread out in case the powerful mage shows up. Without the amulet Reed is wearing he would have tracked us down days ago. We would be dead anyway if he shows up and mine is a tried and proven anti-Orc tactic. It's as if they simply don't hear me the way they ignore my comments. I might as well be speaking to ugra! If I did not know better I would think Cuura has little understanding of war, placing forces in a position where they cannot aid each other on the battlefield. She wears military uniform and the barbarians are well known for their cunning in war so I obviously cannot comprehend her plans or is there another reason why she started adventuring? Anyway arguing has proven pointless, a waste of time as well as a disruption in discipline so I will obey our leader.

I hope they pay more attention than they usually do to me when I instruct them on working and fighting underground or they will be in trouble. Perhaps they will be wise enough to take some time for proper training and practice with me for a few weeks. They are helping me in my sneaking practice pointing out I should put back the twigs I removed from my path so as not to leave a trail so they are already becoming more wise as to the benefits of proper preparation. None of them has a lantern though so they do have a long way to go in learning proper precautions, but I shall try to guide them in this.

I am quite worried at the prospect of working our way to the entrance over a narrow trail of slippery stones. An ideal spot for traps and I am mindful of what happened to Reed when she nearly drowned. Felina offers to aid me with her magic, my fear of drowning wins over my worries about arcane magic. When the arcane magic flows over me I don't feel much different, but when I experiment indeed my balance is much improved and I feel more secure. Then I suddenly remember my grandfather's caution that arcane magic leads to folly and I catch myself standing on one leg while about to sneak into an orc lair. I have heard tales of magical items which will enhance speed and dexterity, I should research the runes and materials needed in their crafting so I won't need this arcane magic for long.

Felina proves she has some talents besides leather working as she silently knocks out the guards with her spells and swiftly and silently reconnoiters the lair. It is a truly ancient place and excellent planning

and craftsmanship were used in its construction. The complex seems to be carved into an old karst so as to be more durable than the surrounding slate. The original crafters have followed and polished the natural grain of the rock creating a wonderful swirl of jet black intrusions adorning the hallways. Later stone workers, probably dwarven have corrected for the tension cracks which started to appear by redistributing the weight of the ceiling in hidden arches creating beautiful bass-relief geometrical formations making you feel the walls are closing in on you. What a wonderful feeling to be in the embrace of His domain again. Unfortunately some idiots have disrupted this orderly harmony with crude crampoms and supports which have decayed over the ages and now serve more to weaken the structure rather than enhance it. I manage to draw myself from my studies and just as I am about to set myself to my duty of slaying foul greenskins Felina stops me. Clearly all the use of magic is indeed making her foolish, but this is neither the time nor the place to argue so we let the guards sleep and make our way into the complex. It is clear I should practice more so I can keep up with Felina, even though she takes foolish risks not preparing her path she is skilled or lucky enough not to be discovered. Once I saw my grandfather craft an enchanted armor for the deepwarden messenger of our clan. The armor seemed to soak up sound and blend into shadows, such a blessing would negate my need for this arcane magic. I shall follow the dwarven way in this proving that knowledge and craft will maintain us! Just as I am pondering the intricate history of construction efforts and workmanship used in this vault and trying to recollect the runes used I am disturbed by Felina reporting at least a score of active creatures up ahead so I am forced to postpone my investigations.

We search for other entrances and tracks to make sure this hidden Orc lair is the one we are looking for. The very lack of tracks and other signs of Orc habitation makes clear that these Orcs are led by powerful masters enforcing tight discipline so it is more than likely we have found them but we have to be thorough and make sure. The elf claims that some snails crawling around are sure proof many corpses were moved along this path. Hrmpf like that is going to please our employer: "Found this snail sir!", we will be laughed out of Berdusk. Luckily we manage to find some solid proof, an iron bridle bolsterpin. I had to forge a few traveling with caravans, I can still make out the guild mark, but it is not one I know. Clear proof a caravan wagon passed this way, just what we need!

The journey back went by quickly and without incident, but since there is still danger I dare not practice my craftsmanship and have to spend my time pondering the litany's my grandfather taught me. While walking I try in vain to teach proper heavy infantry tactics, formations and marching drills to my group but their minds keep on wandering and they fail to pay attention. When they do finally listen it is only to change the subject or even ask questions and interrupt. How chaotic their minds are! But I shall prevail, I will recite the Neverwinter soldier's handbook which I know by heart each day during march until they finally know it too. My grandfather used to tell me that one doing his proper job is as if invisible, I certainly feel like it many a time.

When we finally reach the city Cuura again shows a terrible lack of discipline preferring to rest before having completed her duties. Although I don't think she is listening to my tales on the virtue of duty I at least manage to drag her to our employer who is well pleased with our timely report. Our meager salary satisfies the other members of our group well enough. They just don't understand the amount of resources needed for a proper expedition! I am torn what to do with these few gold pieces, so many things I cannot do without, metal engraving tools, a decent warhammer, a crossbow, a warpike, alchemist's fire. Finally I decide to end my deprivations from the cold and wet environment and clothes snagging on ugra by purchasing an explorer's outfit. Ah fine sturdy wind and water tight leather. No more wet feet stepping in puddles and wringing my clothes dry after a shower and a wide brimmed hat hiding the sky from my sight. I feel more enclosed now, much better.

Our employer has had the wisdom to entrust the leadership of the punitive expedition to a cleric of Tempus, the next best thing to a warpriest of Clangeddin. He has fine plate armor and a beautiful

warhammer. The engraving is quite fine and his equipment is well kept. An example to us all, even Cuura realizes this.

When we arrive the priest of Tempus makes clear he wants several orcs to escape so they can be pursued to other lairs. A sound genocidal tactic, but his comments lead me to believe they are more interested in killing leaders of the Orcs rather than eradication of the species in this part of the world. I start quoting historical cases where handfuls of Orc survivors have grown into vast hordes over mere scores of years, but I find nobody pays attention to me. Jay chooses this moment to challenge Cuura's leadership by showing disobedience. Cuura quickly manages to get him back into his appointed place in the formation again. It worries me though "united we stand, divided we fall" is an old and proven dwarven proverb.

I pray to the Silent Keeper to reveal the secret entrance to me. I feel how the blessings I am able to contain struggle to overcome the ancient magic guarding this site. I have come prepared for battle neglecting to pray for his blessing in overcoming defensive magic. What a fool I am, failing in the very specialty I should have by not seeing the wisdom in letting the priest of Tempus take sole control over the combat blessings. I try to make amends by finding the stonework door, but as I am pondering its exact location and manner of operation another finds it. I will humbly follow the priest of Tempus into battle and with the blessing and protection of Dumathoin spill as much blood as I can as an offering to the Silent Keeper for disappointing Him and my group.

I heard about the carnage arcane magic could wreak, but I had never imagined it to be so very effective. What a glorious sight, twitching corpses all around, the stench of charred Orc hide mingling with the stench of those who were gutted by the blades of my fellows. Teams of Orc bowmen wiped out in an instant, charges broken with a flick of the wrist. The raw savagery of the arcane might overcoming the raw savagery of orcish sinew and bone. I don't think I have ever been so happy in my life giving deathblows to wounded orcs crawling into hiding. It is hard to imagine a creature as feeble as Felina wielding such a devastating whirlwind of destruction one day. I now see the wisdom in Moradin's bestowal of this might upon his people. When the thunderchildren become of age we will purge the world in tides of greenskin blood and gore! Then finally there will be a time for the keepers to restore the ancient halls as I will do here, one step upon the long road to genocide! This is however not a breeding lair so unless the other group finds them the Orcs will recover these losses in a few years.

The battle ends quickly and while the other group continues the hunt we are left here to clean up. Cuura has already done a splendid job in preventing the Orcs she slew from ever rising as undead by crushing their bones, but there are many more bodies which have to be seen to. I still feel a darkness lingering in these lands so we had better not postpone this task. Perhaps one of them still has my warhammer! The wards and runes we can see are unfortunately beyond repair and so ravaged little can be gleaned from them. Perhaps when we open up those collapsed passages we can uncover this vaults secrets and begin repairs to those areas which can still be saved.