

# The story of Grimwald

## *chapter 4*

While the rest is lazing about only Cuura and I realize what must be done. Where have the other's been living all their lives? They think that by merely winning a fight a war can be won. They do not realize we must utterly eradicate all traces of our enemies to maintain our safety and that of civilized races. I would have thought that at least the Elf would realize this. Luckily the barbarians are more used to butchering orcs, otherwise I would have had to do it all by myself, not that I mind doing it at all.

Unfortunately though Cuura seems to have caught blue tongue. One of the more hidden dangers the orcs carry, perhaps now the others will realize better the danger even dead orcs still pose. She is still young and strong so the disease should spend itself on her body's defences quickly, especially since we managed to brew a fortifying herbal infusion. Not desiring to delay any of us from our tasks and duties she orders us to continue without her guidance. It would have been better if she had assigned a replacement leader, but given the unresolved issues with Jay I can see why she postponed such a decision for the moment.

As we awaken it is as if some ancient power has awoken in this place and is now receding again. The Elf and Reed who kept watch don't seem to be alarmed by it, but I feel it quite strongly. I wonder what secrets lie in the remains as I pray to the Hidden Keeper.... I am disturbed from.... What was I doing? There was this overwhelming sense of.... What? It was overwhelming, but why can't I recall what it was. I don't feel afraid. If anything I feel fine. In an odd way more fine. Restful somehow, as if I have fulfilled my duties for the day, but without next day's duties preparing me. I think I should feel lost, but I don't. It feels oddly calm, yet not ordered. How can this be? Even the horrendous chaos in which the group is as usually immersed does not trouble me anymore. It feels as if the group could guide itself. What the hell am I thinking? These are the thoughts of the clanless who renounce the bonds of history, blood and duty. How can this feel good? Yet it does. As if I can see more. As if I can see more clearly the whole. I am frightened and yet drawn to this feeling. As things happen around me I wander around without conclusions, just observing. I feel lost not being guided into judgement or action, but somehow I feel that there is value and merit in being so. It reminds me of some of holy men of the tribes of the North how they could see all around them and guide true regardless of species, culture or tribal allegiance. I feel uplifted somehow, but also cut off. I remember wandering through the tunnel complex and investigating places. How could I have done this without making a map and search grid to work by. Yet I have done it, so I can do it. I feel liberated and more strong somehow. As if I could see more and enjoy more, being more open somehow. I should be confused yet I do not feel my mind being clouded. Yet Felina has to point out details I have missed, am I too clouded to realize my surroundings? Or am I just seeing Felina more truly as a talented asset to our group? Even as I prayed to have secrets of the complex revealed to me Shoun magic assailed me but even without structure I easily gathered my will to fight of the attack. It felt natural somehow. This weird feeling, might this be what humans describe as peacefulness.

Even as Elven death cries echo through the ancient halls and I speed towards them my mind feels dangerously open. We find the Elf huddled in a corner, but I can not find any monster to have caused this. I heard stories of great Dragons breaking the minds of people so they can do naught but cower in abject terror, but I neither see nor smell such a beast. The Elf must have stumbled upon a similar warding magic as the one which tried to assail me, but fared more

poorly. He doesn't seem his normal self at all. As if he is afraid of the very rock itself. I try to calm him and correct his feelings about the tunnels, but his mind is closed to their beauty. What a terrible curse has befallen the Elf. Such a cruel trap....

Even the next day the effects still linger on the Elf although they have abated somewhat he is still very nervous. Cuura is still hot with fever, but coherent and healing. I on the other hand feel more like my usual self, my mind is more ordered and focussed. Most secrets are not uncovered without a price. I can hardly believe I have wandered about an entire day in such a lazy state of mind.

Well there is work to be done so we will investigate Felina's findings. At first the dead end tunnel puzzles me as I can not detect anything abnormal in its construction. But as others wander about a pattern emerges from the flickerings of light and I can construe the larger structure from the hints. It follows the litany of Dumathoin's Sleep, used to march with the fallen warriors back to the Soul Forge to be recast. As we set out on our own march the power of the holy words etched in my mind by my grandfather allows us to pass the ancient warding magic.

When we pass an alcove I can hardly contain my eagerness to search it to see what it holds, but the litany is not complete so I urge myself onward. Again and again I am lured from my path by tantalizing welcoming darkness in doorways, but I remain true to my duties and complete the litany. I am dumbfounded though to discover a door which lies three steps beyond the litany's end. A great mystery, it should not be here, it is unfitting, but still it is here... Well first things first I explore the doorway to which the words have guided me and find a great history of the Dwarf resting here. There are clues as to who he is and what happened in these lands, but I cannot even make out from which of the fallen kingdoms of the North this Dwarf hailed. It spoke of the great migration from Deep Shanatar and the troubles in the lands between the new and old kingdoms. This would place his life between five and seven thousand years ago. Little has remained of the lore of the lost kingdoms of the North, though ancient lore of the Dwarves of Delzoun spoke of a great wealth in gems they encountered. It is unclear however over what and with whom they fought. The mountains to the east and north may hold more clues, but one can wander for many years and not find a well hidden hold. I will need to mine this vein of knowledge carefully to be lead to the secrets under the mountain.

Luckily the remains of the dwarven leader have not been disturbed by looters although his axe has fallen from him. This is an unparalleled chance to study the ancient craft of the lost clans... Ah here apparently they used tongs and stone rollers to fold the rim around the breastplate instead of using the light hammer my grandfather uses. The grain of the metal shows a slowed tempering process rather than the water or oil annealing used these days. Perhaps they buried it in mineral sands to anneal and absorb the properties... It seems my companions are unable to comprehend the importance of my studies and wish to press forward. Usually I would welcome such devotion to work, but I can only reluctantly apply myself to the continuation of our voyage.

One great mystery remains before us. The door which should not be there. It does seem dwarven in construction so what is it doing here? I feel slightly offended by its disorderliness in existing, but standing here pondering it will not provide the answers we seek. As I approach the table in the room which should not be I see it is consecrated to Abathor, the renegade God of Greed who renounced the leadership of Dumathoin, this is so wrong! All

around us unlife awakens and seeks to take us as we hasten back. I pray to Dumathoin to restore the natural order to these skeletons but there are too many of them. I must find the source since fighting them is like battling a tribe of orcs. You may crush a few, but more spring up every moment! I set myself to uncovering the rune circle which animates them while the others get to safety. It has been long since I shoveled ore, but the strength and rithme come back to me naturally as I quickly delve through the writhing mass. Earth's blood! It is not just one circle, but eight interwoven circles set in hard stone. I cannot hope to disable all of them before I fall to the undead beasts so I set to furiously shoveling my way towards the closing portal when suddenly I find myself standing in the hallway. I turn around in amazement and find Reed at the spot I just vacated.

I note that the force which cast such a confusion over me imbued the Elf and Reed both with magical powers, but too little to escape this trap. Luckily the strength of our sinew and bone keep the portal from closing and the swiftness and magic of Felina aid Reed's escape. The world is still full of mysteries, but any God or Goddess rewarding our group with magical powers for butchering orcs is a welcome support. I would like some more time to study this place, but our leader is recovering quickly so I do not know if I will get the opportunity.