

Grimwald's chronicles part 103

Rock has barely returned from delivering Reed to safety when I hear Kendalan cry in dismay as suddenly the Pitfiend towers over the elf. A strange calm, but also elation comes over me. There is only one path left: to die here honorably buying the army precious moments and securing the escape of my friends. To live and die serving my people standing between the innocent and evil as I swore to do when I removed Osthalion from its rest. Now I and Osthalion will fulfill our destiny.

I order Rock to charge placing me between Kendalan and the Pitfiend. I summon all my skill into one fell blow smiting his evil with a mountain hammer strike which pierces his damage resistance. Knowing I must bind this evil to prevent it from harming my companions I proclaim my boast that it will have to leave this spot before me. The cunning in the balefully burning pits which are its eyes show he understands he has been trapped and cannot leave before killing me or lose face in front of his army. Rather than honorably face me in a duel he gets his henchman to flank me so they can tear me apart between the two of them. I ask Moradin to protect me with his blessings and throw a vial of holy water high up into the air unleashing a *holy storm*. The holy water raining down is however quickly dispelled by his infernal power and they both start hammering into me. I move into *roots of the mountain stance* and weather the storm of attacks having to use every inch of knowledge and skill my ancestors have poured into me at this glorious moment not to be ripped apart.

When the fiend finds that they cannot penetrate Osthalion's defenses while I am guiding the armor to react to their blows he cunningly decides to grapple me. We struggle for long moments, but his greater size and formidable strength proves to be no match for Osthalion's spikes and the *roots of the mountain* which lets me withstand his power. Frustrated the Fiend tries to bull-rush me forcing me to move thus breaking my boast, but my steadfast boots, massive armor, shield and the *roots of the mountain* stance prove to be one layer of defense too much for his powerful rush and I remain rooted where I stand. The Horned Devil's tail slices deep into my arm between two plates and I start bleeding heavily and Valnogrod becomes slick from my blood. Then a lovely clear light appears above me becoming greater and greater with each attack that the fiends make upon me. Clearly dismayed at this divine interference the Fiend dispels the light, thus sparing me four vicious blows.

Then Reed appears out of the *plant growth* and persuades the orc chieftain to halt his attack. The Pitfiend is torn for a moment and is then forced to yield to my boast as he teleports to the orc chieftain to intimidate him to continue with the plan. He savagely turns to Reed triumphant that his savagery and fear overpower her suggestions. Reed however merely smiles and beckons him to follow her into the *plant growth*. For a moment I wonder what to do if the Pitfiend would rush Reed. The thought of moving is horrid to me, to break one's word, but then I realize that the Pitfiend moved first and that now I am free to act as I will again having bested a Pitfiend in a boast! From being stunned by my victory I am moved into a different kind of stun as the Horned Devil's chain whips around my neck and with a sharp snap makes me reel for a moment. Valnogrod slips from my grasp and the Horned Devil smirkingly reaches out to take my beloved weapon from me. Then he yelps and drops it again as the sacred energy I imbued the weapon with discharges into the fiend.

Being methodical the Fiend does not take the Reed's lure but seeing me stunned continues his efforts to destroy me. Meanwhile Reed yells to the orc chieftain to scatter his troops and the Pitfiend's plan is in tatters as his army disintegrates while on the verge of victory. The word is indeed mightier than the sword! The Pitfiend turns on me intent on at least ripping my soul from my body as meager compensation for this insult. While the world is still blurry and blood rushes from my body I move to retrieve Valnogrod, then swiftly cast an *updraft* taking me from their reach and gulp a potion of gaseous form from my potion bladder leaving the Fiends with nothing but a scattered group of orcs running in all directions.

With difficulty I manage to stop the bleeding after returning to solid form behind our lines. The army has a head start now and with our forced march we should be able to stay ahead of them.