

## **Grimwald's chronicles entry 146**

### *The breaking of Grimwald's mind.*

It seemed like a good, strong mind. Didn't it? Slow and steady, well founded on tradition, hammered into shape by a smith devoted to Dumathoin. Where and when did it start to go wrong? I guess the signs have been there all along. What dwarf would willingly give up his clan, not once, but twice? Smash sacred objects, break ancient vows? Swear fealty to an elf? Count a demon amongst his companions? Looking back at it like this perhaps it is not so strange that the mind was twisted beyond it's ability to bear and just snapped like that. The battle with the lich must have been the final push which caused me to plummet from the ledge of sanity I must have been tenaciously clinging to. Still just like a soul a mind can be forged, and thus reforged. No use sitting here weeping over broken metal. I must find the flaws and correct them or I will snap again. Where did it all start to go wrong?

Ah yes. The thought that Nethander is good and noble sacrificing prized possessions to the representatives of the good gods. Then somehow it went downhill quickly after that. He turned into my enemy and I was throttling him. With him being good and noble that would make me evil and twisted. Then somehow he turned into my servant. I could feel I was a master of him and his like. So I must have become even more depraved and fallen than he for such a thing to happen. Which is not that strange if indeed he is good, but if he were really good surely he would not follow one so fallen. So he must only have seemed good. Yes, just a deception. That is the only logical conclusion. Then I ran away in horror, of him, of myself, of what was happening?

There was also something about Reed... I abandoned her in a toxic cloud. My god, how could I even think of such a thing? I hope it is merely a symptom of my twisted mind and not reality. No, I remember it, foggily but with certainty. Why? I felt threatened by Reed and to a lesser degree by Cuura. Oh dear ancestors, these are feelings of traitors and mutineers! My grandfather's stories about the clanless were true. They cannot be trusted! I cannot be trusted. Was I corrupted and thereby became clanless or did I become corrupted as a result of being clanless? Does it matter? Before that fateful moment on spirit mountain I was fine, but after that the corruption must have been eating away at what my grandfather forged. Morality is but a poor substitute for clan. And then there was Reed, towering over me menacingly. Reaching out with a giant hand trapping and crushing me, squeezing me back into the deepest, most hidden crevices of the underdark.

Yes, only when I had returned to the depths I started to find my older, sane self again, buried by layers of madness. I should have heeded my grandfather's warning. My heart and mind are not ossified enough to withstand the adventuring in the open air. I am still too young. My mind has gone air-touched, all bendy and twisty like an elf's. I have started to lose my dwarvishness, my essence. Sure elves go traitor more easily, but some also manage to resist. How do they manage? No I cannot risk losing myself even further by following the elven ways or is there no other way open for me now? Perhaps there is still time. If I spend enough time underground perhaps I can be reforged. I could just go out on the surface for quick jaunts. Like tempering steel in water until I can stand it better.

But there is another way, risky for sure, but it feels like my one chance at salvation. Yes, the BOOK. It holds the ancient secrets of the essence of mind and soul. With that knowledge I could heal myself, I just know it! To become a true dwarf once more instead of an insane, clanless, surface dweller. Perhaps I could even learn how to heal other clanless dwarves and restore them to our people. But at the moment I am too weak and unprepared. I must prepare first before attempting anything.

What to do now? I am a danger to my companions. Trying to strangle Nethander, abandoning Reed. They are better off without me. My ancestors might be able to help. Even through all my travails they have never abandoned me. I should seek counsel by inviting them to come to my aid. These

towers are poor substitutes for dwarven crypts, but I will have to make do for the ceremony.

I don't know what can be done for one who has lost his clan. Those with honor usually go out alone to slay the enemies of their race until they themselves are killed. Should I also go on my last delve? Is there salvation in becoming a grudge bearer, like the elf did, who takes the anger and pain of his people onto himself to set right? The grudge bearers and battleragers may have lost their sanity, but their honor is intact and they still enjoy the favor of the gods. It is at least preserving something of their essence and usefulness. But is there a way back for them? Are there enough greenbloods and giant-kin available for slaughter to ever make them alright again?

I should end my idle speculations and surrender to the guidance of my ancestors. As soon as the other's are gone about their duties I will commence the ceremony. Already I feel my ancestral friend's counsel rising to my mind saying that he will help me become strong and powerful again. More powerful and strong than ever before. More powerful and strong than I could ever have imagined...

Cleric 4/Crusader 1/Prestige Paladin 3/Stalwart Champion 5