

# The story of Grimwald

## Chapter 17: Past finds present

We made it back to civilization. The village Greenest is a combination of mud cottages and halfling burrows. No walls, no palisades, no watchtowers or moat even, I don't know if this is because of the lack of decent building materials on this plain or to maintain their dependence on the Zhent's military.

There seems to be some festival since the town is gaily decorated and there are lots of little stalls. The Zhentarim commander orders the halfling mayor to take care of our afflicted who delegates this task to the village priestess. At least they have some sort of a chain of command. It is rather odd though that the military commands the mayor rather than the other way around, yet I do not sense any friction. The commander then stalks off to procure a new wagon for us from one of the caravans, while his men raid the market for supplies. Apparently they plan to make off before nightfall towards Amn. The commander still seems tense and hurried. I wonder what news their master has brought them.

Most of the populace engage in activities which seem to be excuses for sitting around, playing, betting, talking and eating. These halflings have little sense of duty during their holidays, I doubt it will be much better on other days. The Elf however has decided to stand guard rather than carouse which is rather a surprise to me. I guess the elves who have not fled to the west have more sense of duty and I should judge him by a different standard. His guarding seems to be walking around and chatting with other caravan people, which is not very guard like, but I notice his sharp senses focusing on our new wagon every now and then. Rather than standing guard to deter he is apparently setting a trap to gain the initiative. Cunning Elf!

The village blacksmith doesn't know the first thing about metallurgy and annealing when it comes to his blades, yet his kitchenware is made of interesting materials which he swears improves the taste. I should make a similar set for Kendalan. This could be a good product to sell in towns, halfling design cookware. I have an interesting talk with Paul about the processes involved in cleansing the ore to improve the taste and durability while we shop for supplies. Later Reed joins us and helps us to get good deals. Goy's stall is doing good business and he is glowing almost as much as Cuura.

In the evening while we repack our supplies in our new wagon Goy lets us know he will join one of the other caravans. To my surprise Felina starts negotiations for buying Rebecca! Instead of hiring Bruno who is a stout fighter she decides to hire a pretty dancing girl! It is improper to attack the decisions of your leader in public, but I am most stunned by this turn of events. I try to draw her attention and failing to do so turn to Reed, but they are too engrossed in their negotiations to notice me.

The amount of gold is enough to buy the materials for a fine full plate armor for, surely a fine armor is more valuable than an other mouth to feed! I decide to turn to Jay since he surely must see my point, but just as I open my mouth he offers up his masterwork swords to help! Well this clearly shows that his possession is now spreading from his dreams into his waking consciousness. What warrior would willingly and sanely give up such fine blades? The others will see how some evil force is robbing us of our strength! Kendalan joins in, but rather than notice this weird behavior he too now seems caught up in it. The Dwarven mind is more steadfast, but seeing my companions, both male and female, all being overtaken by this strange desire for Rebecca I feel that I should flee this strange compulsion rather than succumb to it. Study so I may free my companions. Rebecca to all appearances is just a meek slave being bartered over by others, perhaps Felina spied some hidden powers or is she under her spell?

Reed and the Elf decide to return to the wilderness in the evening. Even one day in town seems to be too much for them after the solitude of this endless rolling plain. Reed and I agree on a signal should they get into trouble. At last they are learning the value of good preparations! Soon I will be able to stop speaking so plainly so they can start digging for wisdom as they are now already doing in Reeds predictions.

In the middle of the night we hear Reed's horn sound signaling they are in trouble. We rush to their aid and I see Kendalan facing a huge half-orc. Two arrows are protruding from it's chest, but it doesn't even seem to notice. As I rush in to flank the orc the dancing around of the Elf fails to confuse the orc's mighty great axe and Kendalan falls to the ground with guts spilling through her ripped armor. He bellows victoriously: "Bring me another Elf. This one split!" I use his momentary distraction to see if any life is left in Kendalan. Just a frail glowing ember, which can go out any second! I pray to Dumathoin to grant his blessing so the ember may spark the fire of life anew. Surely Dumathoin will see that this Elf has a sense of duty and is thus worth saving. For a tantalizing moment which seems to last forever I feel the power searching and straining to connect, then the power flows to mend the broken vessel. The orc however has noticed me and strikes a fell blow swiping my shield aside and planting the axe deep within my side. I cough up blood. He has the strength of a battlerager, I cannot take another such blow. Hatred fills me and I start hammering at the foul greenskin. A few moments later I stand, the Elf stands, while the Orc lies dead on the ground. I bleed even more.

I look around and notice Jay fighting some weird creature composed of whirling shadow. Jay makes a lightning lunge into the darkness and when it whirls away I see his motionless form. I rush over to him. His skin is unbroken, but I cannot sense any signs of life. As I pray to Dumathoin to awaken his hidden strength. An arrow strikes me from behind. I remember seeing a glowing archer while rushing towards the orc as I sag to my knees. I will myself to remain conscious. The Elf will take care of the archer. The shadows now closes on Reed, I don't think I have seen her so fearful and shocked even through our many battles. The shadow seems to be talking or performing some kind of magic I do not recognize. He taps Reed with three outstretched fingers and Reeds body trembles and becomes motionless. She is lost if I do not act! I lurch to my feet and with sheer willpower drive my hammer towards the creature in a fine swing if I do say so myself, but the shadow shifts and I find myself looking up at the stars with the feeling my jawbone has been broken, while the rest are bowed over me or fearfully watching the surrounding area.

We decide to follow the will of the gods and haste by Halfling Green before we are overcome by this strange menace. Why did we linger? We are lucky we are still all alive. We must heed Reed's warnings more seriously in the future or is it the very future she tells?