

The Story of Grimwald

Chapter 18: Love and Fear

We are all still alive after the ambush. Thank Dumathoin the group has found a vein of wisdom or the Banshee or these assassins would have been the end of us. Much to my amazement Reed believes this is not one of the groups we know is after us, but her family or that of her fiancé. I have to say that she is not bearing her doom in a proper dwarven fashion to merely acknowledge it with a grunt but rather wails for quite a long time. What a lot of emotions to come out of such a slight person!

It is unfortunate I cannot be more of an example to Reed and Jay as to how to bear such a dark fate in a dwarven fashion. Perhaps I should relate to them how I was ordered to abandon my ancestral home as well, before Obould Many Arrows was finally driven away. I just fear they might do something foolish such as hope an unbearable doom can be lifted as happened in my life. It would be just like them to flee in fantastic hope rather than accept the crushing weight of it and grow strong by bearing. Just as I never learned to be dour and taciturn like my grandfather who spend his entire life hiding in exile, while I only tasted its benefit for a few decades. Still I can aspire to be like him in duty to my people and clan and now this group of traveling companions. Perhaps I judge them too harshly for not having the proper knowledge... I shall pray to Dumathoin they might be rewarded by asking the right questions of me. The search and reward should be their own craft!

Snake is sleeping longer than usual and for a moment I thought he might have fallen victim to some foul magic, but nothing is amiss so I let him sleep. Lazy Bastard!

When we finally halt to recover Felina commands me to perform an augury. I perform several other prayers as well so our group will benefit from the strength of the earth which we came from. I see some of them yawning as I repeat the holy phrases, how degenerate they are that they can no longer feel their connection with the ore they sprang from! Still their strength and speedy recovery shall serve all in the group. Dumathoin shows us through the runes how by being guided by our duty to travel to Candlekeep we shall build a strong basis and grow. Our goal is clear! I invoke the power of the deeper darkness to hide Cuura, but the magic which flowed into her from the book of light does not allow for any such anathema to be near her and the stone which carried the spell shatters and I feel the fire rolling towards my mind. I instantly know what to do to make my mind invulnerable to such an attack and the fire cannot find purchase. I feel a gratitude to the ancestor who watched over me so closely and shared his knowledge or was this a memory from the book of the dead?

For all its dangers the book of the dead fascinates me. It is frustrating to know that the power of death inside it is so strong I cannot read it all and live. I should discuss this sometime with our leaders so that perhaps as a group we can bear the weight of such knowledge. There is a part in it about an initiation for the hunters of the dead. Perhaps these protective rites from the various books can form a web of charms. Azatoth the Lich who wrote the book of the Watch wielded such power and knowledge and more, so it can be contained. It is just a matter of knowledge and proper preparation... 'and age' my grandfather would add. How to get the rest to remain in Candlekeep long enough so I can do proper research on the subject? Oh well first things first: let's get there and study what I can along the way.

Kendalan calls me to take a look at that lazy Bastard. He says his breathing is strange for a sleeping person. Pah what isn't strange about him? Horns, tail, who pays attention to how demons breathe? Grandfather would be angry, thoughts: 'Know yourself and know your enemy' he always said and indeed I still know very little about this... thing... which crawled out of some Abyss. When we pick up his arm it is completely limp and he does not wake up. Kendalan spots a tiny needle protruding from

his back and finds some more which were fired at our wagon, but failed to penetrate. My prayers reveal the hidden poison, but even my ancestors do not tell me what poison affects Snake or how to cure it. I heard demonkin and other outsiders are immune to earthly poisons, so there must be at least some mortal in him diluting his foul nature with something which is not totally dark and (un)fortunately vulnerable. I bleed and clean the wound, but the poison has traveled through his body already. We make him as comfortable as possible, and decide to monitor his condition. If we are forced to return to Greenest it might be worse for our entire group, but like it or not he is part of our group...for now.

We are pursued and Cuura decides to confront the hunter. It is some barbarian who felt honor bound to inform Cuura that her lack of respect has incurred the wrath of the Zhentarim commander. Fortunately his troops were ordered south. He won't trouble us for a while and he won't be foolish enough to send a few of his soldiers after us piecemeal. However he has witnessed how we fight and what powers we possess and I feel certain that when he strikes it will be with overwhelming force and brutality.

How to prepare for all of this? Undead, demons, gnolls, soldiers and assassins. Fortunately the book has a grip on just Jay, Cuura although shining or perhaps because she is shining is no longer under its influence. I hope we can shake further pursuit by making better speed. All this traveling at night made for slow progress which allows our adversaries to catch us quickly.

Jay claims to recognize the area we travel through. I feel certain that this is igneous rock, which is quite different from the sediment rock in the surrounding area. Strange phenomenon. I am glad Jay is developing an interest in rock though. Cuura on the other hand is developing an interest in Sune. While Sune is a fine goddess, who supports an interest in finely crafted decorations and clean proportions, she is not one of practical application of force, which is the essence of leadership as well as smithing. Strike well timed when there is a weakness which can be exploited to shape the enemy or metal. One little mishap with a deeper darkness causes Cuura to waver in her trust in Dumathoin, I had hoped she was carved from sterner stuff! Perhaps she is indeed not cut out to be a dwarf. Perhaps besides her rough and rugged exterior there is insufficient in her deep down where it counts.

Reed however has fathomed new depths and has become some kind of elemental as well as a healer. Her healing is strange. It is not dissimilar to that granted by Dumathoin who reveals new layers and veins of power and strength previously hidden in us. It is a power that awakens what is already there, but in a strange way I cannot fully comprehend yet. There's clearly some ordering principle though.

I heard of the forge heart dwarves who carry fire in their interior and of course of the ore cutters who are one with the rock. I did not know these gifts were bestowed on mere humans as well. Also it is different somehow. With a dwarf the fire and earth are very much a part of them, while Reed is apparently not a container, merely a conduit. Even though she is a cast out both by Moradin and by her own family her heritage is impressive. Her aunt imposing exile on her although this will mean her doom is our blessing for as long as it may last.

Jay and I prevail on the others to search for the location Jay's master may have visited so Jay can search deeper into the mystery of his disappearance. We enter a warded area which requires a brave heart and strong will to breach and press forward assaulted by phantasms. Felina of course quails and cowers in the arms of her sergeant, Jay and I steel ourselves and press onwards. Cuura to my amazement becomes unsettled and wishes to avoid the danger! That is what you get for abandoning the deep powers of Dumathoin and focusing on superficial beauty! The strength of steel lies in its forging, not its engraving! Well except for runes of course which seem superficial, but have a depth which reaches into the divine worlds. I feel I am able to reach deeper and deeper and soon I will be able use their divine power rather than mere materials in my prayers.

The site we find seems to be a practice ground of some sorts. Apparently Jay's master taught others as well or even was taught by others!