

The story of Grimwald

Chapter 21: Skirting Danger

After our deeper research into the masters of Jay and Snake we move on enriched by the experience both materially and a bit the wiser about how dangerous and unpredictable water is. Fortunately they are learning to use proper precaution and preparation!

Now I have observed more of these various styles some of the chants of the ancestors in the Halls of Dumathoin seem to fall into place. I feel they have a connection to some things Jay does. The praises of stone have a deeper meaning I am just beginning to fathom.

I find myself with an unexpected ally in bringing discipline to our group. While investigating some burning hovel the elf spotted the masked killer sent after Reed. He has defeated most of us with just his bare hands and uncanny skill to kind of know where you will strike even if you strike from behind. According to Jay and Reed this is an ability taught in monasteries in the east. According to Jay his technique requires darkness or shadow so he is unlikely to attack during daylight and since we are not as blind as a fully human group surprising us even at night will be difficult. The fear and certainty that any of us can easily be undone by his powers if we do not band together and remain vigilant, disciplined and organized will start to shape this group as it did my ancestors many millennia ago. Even though he does not even suspect it he is helping us in our growth towards perfection. I feel certain he will find our weaknesses and exploit them and if we survive we shall be armored by more wisdom for the future.

But still even many dwarven kingdoms fell and so we may be also overcome regardless of our work. I shall pray to Dumathoin this search for wisdom shall be rewarded, but even with His blessing we must craft this wisdom into a means to survive.

Snake has developed a sudden taste for necromancy to augment his unholy abilities and seeks the power of the book of the dead. I object to creating an even worse monster than he is, to which he replies he will study the incantations for summoning demons instead if do not relinquish the book. I look for support to my fellow travelers, but they seem to have formed the idea that knowledge and the books are for each of us to do with as they please. Cuura and Felina are not even paying attention to this escalation of the power of evil in our midst.

I stall for time claiming I need to finish the chapter I am studying, but rather than to continue my study on the application of divine energy to the willpower of the undead I decide to study the rites of the hunters of the dead to safeguard myself from Snake's growing dark powers. I pray to Dumathoin to hide the necromantic knowledge from the evil one who seeks it's power. During the prayers I feel that Dumathoin agrees such knowledge should be held safe and hidden, but also that hard work, skill and perseverance must be rewarded. Let us see if we can disparage Snake from paying the price to know what is hidden...

As I delve into the chapter it reveals many warding sigils and swift prayers which will protect my life force. The ancestral chant grows more clear as I turn the pages made of mummy wrappings with a small reading stick. Although at first I felt overwhelmed by the book's power I now see how limited it's scope is compared to the ancestors. There is nothing about how to shield yourself from the other powers the undead posses, while my ancestors chants are filled with tales of the power of ghouls, vampires and stranger creatures still. One voice seems to become more clear than the other voices and it's chant of the roles of lore seems to speak to me more clearly cautioning me to be aware of the limit of these protections and not to undertake any rash action with powers such as these. I wonder which of my ancestor's feels such kinship with me and why I am to be blessed more than others with his wisdom, rather than forced to delve it from the deep rumble of Dumathoin's Hall. It must be these books we transport now were know to the dwarves at some time and it responds to their treat to the clan

even across the deep sleep of Dumathoin. No ward is unbreakable and no prayer all powerful so even though I may now resist and even escape these otherwise damning baneful powers of the undead the need for more protection has never been more evident to me. More knowledge on how to keep the undead at bay must surely lie in the book of life!

Over the days we discuss how to ambush the oriental assassin. We learn that his trade is called ninja in the orient. He would seem either to await our moment of weakness or a chance to recruit more help since even for one like him battling a group of ten skilled in fighting, prayer, alchemy and magic is a daunting task to undertake by himself. Reed is sure he is loathe to kill us one by one to reach his goal since this would reduce his honor. Apparently his purpose is not merely to kill Reed, since he could have done so. His purpose must be to poison Reed and to do so without making any more victims. Apparently killing her protectors as well is seen as an imperfect assassination and thus to be avoided if possible. However failing in the mission is worse so if no other path to success presents itself he will start killing of all who stand in his way.

On the up side we have the bait, Reed, to lure him and we know he will use poison and try to enlist help to create an opportunity for him to strike at Reed. So now we must guard both the books and Reed. Paul says he could start working on some antidotes with the proper materials, perhaps he could make some in Naskhel. In the meanwhile I will inspect our food and drink daily and pray to Dumathoin to reveal any poisons in them. Also Reed has some magic she learned for home which will blunt his greatest power, that of darkness. I wonder if this is that karma Reed is telling us about, since this Ninja probably killed her aunt and yet will be defeated by her. I like the idea of the knowledge outliving her and exacting it's toll against her foe.

We have to change our guard schedule since Reed and I both wish to study the Book of Life and cannot do so at the same time. She has found some chapter on how to know what makes other's happy or some such nonsense. I wonder why anyone would bother to write such dribble? I even asked if it could be used to lay traps or ward against them, but not even that.

I on the other hand have discovered a powerful treatise on the link between life and the gods and goddesses. Apparently every living being has various connections to divine energy, but we generally are not able to use these. The book contains exercises, passwords for the gates between the worlds and prayers to activate these channels to enhance our power to drive away the undead, which seek to extinguish our life force. There are many more treatises on this subject, but this seems to be the most fundamental and as such the best place to start. Again I feel how the ancestral wisdom eases the book's lore into my mind. The kinsman's voice shows clearly how the book's power if ill contained could bring ruin, much like overheating the metal while tempering it.

Not far into the forest of sharp teeth we find out why it is called that. As our wagon makes its way through some dense underbrush the horses panic. The group immediately spreads out to engage their unseen assailants. Reed discovers a herd of small predators no larger than hedgehogs, taking nips out of the horses and drives them away from our wagon by mimicking the sound of group of wolves. We try to retrieve the scared horses, but one of them has run into a whole hive of them and was already half eaten by the voracious creatures before we could get to it. We now know to avoid high grass and bushes in these woods. Avoiding this peril will make our journey through these woods much slower than expected. We happen upon a small hut. The man seems to be at a loss for words and quite astonished to see anybody, let alone our mixed group. Reed offers him some supplies, but he refuses to accept charity and we agree to let him pay with his knowledge of the surrounding area. Surely a great bargain!