

The story of Grimwald

Chapter 23: Trolled with Class

Besides some superficial wounds which I tend, only one of us is afflicted in a way requiring divine blessings. Felina who's feeble body could not hold on to her strength. We pray to Dumathoin to restore her strength, but the Hidden Keeper's blessings have little effect on Felina. She is indeed VERY far removed from being dwarven, frail, lazy and magic dabbler. I pondered how to help her without going against my god's wishes.

She honors the gifts of Dumathoin! After praying with her to show gratitude for the gems Dumathoin has put in the earth and the crafters who work his gifts the blessing become much more powerful and Felina comes at least a bit closer to the dwarven image of strength. Perhaps her appreciation of rock will one day become strong enough she may want to become more like one herself so she can grow closer to us dwarves. Even Jay understands this idea by measuring himself against the strength of the stone.

We set up camp and fall into our usual routine when suddenly the sergeant is struck by two arrows. The arrows do not merely pierce his armor, but go through him as well. While I pray for him I notice the fletchings of the arrows are not unlike those used by Kendalan. Is this the wood elf way of warning us to stay away? We did not see anyone and they are renowned for their stealth!

Suddenly a glittering mist blankets the forest, the mist fades but one troll shaped glittering stays visible half hidden behind a dead tree. While I grab my weapons I ponder this strange phenomenon. Trolls are known for throwing rocks, sometimes a spear or javelin but hardly for using bows. The troll, once discovered, does not as usual engage in a charge against it's tormentors as they normally do, but seeks to escape with long loping strides I cannot not keep up with. Everyone knows trolls know no fear, why is this one running away?

The sergeant having been trained in military doctrine tries to maintain unit cohesion. He realizes that if we engage the troll one by one we will all be slaughtered. We should strike as one! The others however lose themselves in the joy of the chase and dash after it like a lynch mob. I look around for our battle leader Cuura to take command and bring her unit into shape, but I don't see her anywhere. The sergeant decides to shore up our front line and starts outpacing me.

Far ahead the Troll is run to ground by Reed, but instead of slashing around with it's big claws it draws a fiery blade! Apparently this troll has bested experienced troll hunters before and took their weapons! The troll is still backing away waving his fiery sword, but now I finally start closing the gap rather than losing ground. Foolish, but what a sight frail little Reed slashing away and pushing back a huge troll all by herself. Such bravery!

Bravery is hardly the word I would use for the Elf dashing away from the fierce beast at full speed past me back to the camp. The longer lived races are possessed of more wisdom and I doubt my own in not following the elf and abandoning my companions in a fight as he does. Still it is not the dwarven way to desert one's allies like the fickle elves who run when things get difficult. I had thought this one had more steel in him! If not for their treacherous retreat the Kingdom of Three Crowns might have stood against the green tide!

The fierce barbarians who held back the evil washing over the north after the retreat of the elves are however absent today. Where the hell is Cuura? Will we fall as the kingdom did? This does not bode well! Not falling back and regrouping is sometimes necessary against a regenerating opponent, but without Cuura, me and the Elf they are lacking half their number and the troll does not look like it will fall quickly. It even fashioned mail for itself! This is no ordinary troll at all.

The troll makes a stand and they rush at it. With great deftness it avoids their blows, while moments ago it seemed to blunder about. We have been tricked! Separate a few, lure them away, finish them

of and eat them. Suddenly I remember the stories of the “Great Hunters” my grandfather told. Solitary trolls propping up their last victims and making campfires during bad weather in the mountains to lure travelers, scratching cavern walls with ore so distract and lure unexperienced miners, abducting cattle to trap shepherds. These trolls do not see animals merely as food, but as tools to trap the enemies of their kind! My knowledge has come to late, damn my lazy mind! We are doomed! I pray to Dumathoin to save us from certain death.

The Great Hunter grins evilly and smacks his lips as his blades reap a bloody harvest and the sergeant is flung back staggering and Jay is brought down. Only Snake has the skill to foil the Great Hunter. I arrive too late to save my friends. The troll tells Snake to leave since he has no interest in eating him and Snake tumbles away into the underbrush. I ready myself for the end, recalling the many times I played “Beware of the Troll” as a child with my clan's dwarves in the hold to bring the lessons fresh into my mind. For a moment I savor the irony that the only one to survive this will be the cowardly Elf and that... thing called Snake while the valiant perish. Then the troll quickly lopes of past me. What trick is this? The look on it's face puzzles me. But I do not waste any time and rush to Jay to see if he still lives.

Jay's wounds have been cauterized by the heat of the blade so he is in no immediate danger. My mind is not focused enough and my prayer lacks the strength to restore Jay. I concentrate more fully on my next prayer and Jay's strength starts to return. I turn to look at the troll and he seems to be tending to a big wolf... and not by eating it as trolls normally do. The stories are true, he is not after food, but after the humans and the wolf is his tool in this. Like any good craftsman he takes good care of his tools.

We are together again but I would not call this regrouped, rather huddled together in desperation. Finally Cuura arrives. We must find a way to deal with the time it takes to put on armor or to enhance it so we can rest in our armor. These delays have already once held back the much needed aid of Jay and now we have been left leaderless to our almost certain demise. And I insisted on Cuura wearing a breastplate rather than her flimsy leather! If we live through this I will devote myself to a solution, light armor for those not on guard duty to rest in? Magical blessings so we will still be rested? Dumathoin allow these crafts to be done to your greater glory! Save us!

Darkness. Darkness hiding us from the trolls piercing arrows. My prayers have been answered! I hear the rumbling of our wagon and stumble towards it. The troll does not give chase. Two miracles! Blessed is he who keeps hidden what is of value!