

The story of Grimwald

Chapter 25: Best laid plans

Snake's devious mind concocted the plan to poison our enemies and butcher the goblin females and young. Reed for some strange reason felt uneasy with this plan. She agreed with us the only thing to do with goblins is to butcher them all, but somehow her heart wasn't in it. Our leaders decided to leave Jay with the book so Cuura could lead us into battle. Because of the taint the book already inflicted Jay with Felina felt the sergeant should be left behind as well to keep an eye on Jay, a wise decision although I wonder if her champion could match Jay's skill at arms. Still two guards are much harder to deal with than just one.

Snake and Felina decided to sneak back into the camp to poison the water, while the rest of us made ready. A goblin guard however spotted them and only the swift and deadly actions of our archers prevented the alarm from being raised. Snake spent some time desecrating the goblin's body, probably devouring it's dark soul, before continuing with his mission. Reed's gifts managed to mislead a curious ogre after I prompted some phrases in Giant.

After they moved deeper into the camp I could not see what happened, but on their way out Snake was carrying a goblin on it's back. This must have been the silliest attempt at disguise I have ever seen. Before Felina and Snake with his strange burden managed to sneak back to us one of the ogre's started waving a dead goblin about and roaring that there was betrayal in the camp. Several of the other ogres failed to wake or started slumping over due to the potent poison taking hold.

Their leader quickly dispatched a patrol to hunt us down and started gathering the remaining warriors. I prayed to Dumathoin that his gifts would not betray me to my enemies and my armor seemed to blend more easily into my surroundings and could no longer be heard, praise to Him who keeps the Hidden.

We managed to ambush the patrol and all of them fell before being able to betray our position. Then I left with Snake and Felina to sneak closer while our archers tried to take out their leader. Felina ordered us, rather than forming a line formation to shield the archers, to split the enemy in two. We allowed the ogres to rush past and rose up between them and the supporting goblins. I felt that this was a dubious tactic, but battle is no situation to start questioning orders. I rushed after a passing ogre but when I swung my axe the ogre suddenly started hopping on one leg as did others. Some spell similar to entangle, but more suited to giants must have been cast to intercept them. The ogre had however noticed my attack and he tried to brain me with a huge tree trunk.

I half expected to be smashed like metal between hammer and anvil between the ogres and goblins, but apparently Felina and Snake proved distracting enough. Ogres I found are quite different from trolls. Although their great bulk allows one with good footing to outmaneuver them with they are far more difficult to land blows on. Unlike a troll which knows no fear for the blade and closes in to fight with tooth and nail the ogre is wary and uses the reach of his arms and club so I could not close in to land a solid blow without exposing myself. A mere two blows of the brute were enough to have me spitting teeth and blood. I inhaled deeply ignoring the grating pain of my cracked ribs to call for the aid of my companions. Cuura having already dispatched their leader rushed to my aid and quickly settled the matter of who ruled the field.

Belatedly I recalled the rhymes and songs of my childhood before I was trust away to the surface and could feel the cadence being sung by the ancestors. These were no mere heroic tales about killing ogre's, these were similar to Jay's martial scripts. Instructions on how to combat the enemies of our people. What a fool I have been to listen all these many years, but never understanding their deeper meaning. Almost I would never have understood at all doomed by my blindness. What stupidity to combat them as a warrior, while I should have followed the hidden knowledge. Thank you Oh Hidden Keeper for allowing me to find this rich vein.

After a brief prayer we rushed in to finish of the goblins which turned and ran, but were quickly overtaken and dispatched by Cuura. We warily waited for her foaming at the mouth to subside before coming closer and investigating where the females might have hidden themselves. The cave itself was a piece of art. Elven script flowed naturally with the rock's features and although I could not read it I felt mesmerized by this unparalleled show of skill. I learned so much about stone working in the time I stood there studying that I was startled to see the other's leaving through a trapdoor. Suddenly many things I had never understood about the power of stone fell into place. Me, a dwarf, learning things from elven art. This is a secret I must never let past my lips. Who were these elves to have such knowledge of stone? Certainly not those primitive brutes in the forest.

The trapdoor led to a spiral staircase. Snake slithered ahead and discovered a trap set by a group of gnolls entrenched behind a heavy table. We lopped several flasks of oil Cuura had thought of bringing. She learns quickly and her wisdom grows, how unfortunate her soul will be lost after her death to such an unsuited goddess. Still when I pray for her the favor of Dumathoin remains with her, apparently the slaying of the enemies of our people have brought her lasting support. Snake darts around the corner and fires a dragon's breath arrow which immediately alights the splattered oil and scatters the gnolls in great confusion. We immediately rush at them through the smoke and flames and within moments they all lie dead.

Reed stands looking oddly at me as I wipe the hyena's blood from my axe. Is she having another vision? Then she turns away without speaking, is that confusion clouding her? I hope her growing magic won't cause her to lose her sanity or her divine sight. What can I do to preserve her? Is Jay perhaps a key? I force myself away from my delvings and focus on the gaping doorway behind the barricade. A foul smell wafts from it, rot, putrefaction and goblin. What waits in this strange elven hall? What was it's purpose?