

The Story of Grimwald

Chapter 31: Red Dawn

Work on our equipment is progressing well. Jay and Reed are quite impressed with the quality of dwarven steel. I have had to reschedule my work several times though. The cold iron which Felina was going to secure weeks ago still has not been released. She has managed to meet the mayor of the village, but apparently the negotiations have proven more troublesome or she is taking it easy.

Jay is starting to get better with his buckler and the dragon scales design looks quite impressive if I do say so myself. I have fixed up the breastplate Cuura wants to use and added the spikes, but until she shows up I cannot finish the adjustments on the riding straps or begin the blessing rituals, which will sustain our leader even if she falls and strike fear in the hearts of her enemies. Most of the silver and steel work is done so I hope the cold iron arrives soon so we can finish forging the necessary weapons. Reed's blade is quite unique, light and flexible and decorated with bright colors. Quite a challenge to damascene it with metals and enamels which do no crack when the blade is flexed. I fear the decoration may be less durable than is usual for a dwarvencraft weapon. It saddens me to think that in a mere few generations it might crack and become marred, but given her doom I do not know if the sword will become a family heirloom of her house. After much deliberation I decided not to start with the forging of a warhammer, but rather to search for ore worthy of being made into a symbol of the hidden strength of Dumathoin. I do not know where or when I might find some adamantium ore, but Dumathoin rewards the hard working. Meanwhile I have started on an Urgosh as a symbol of dwarven might rather than my trusty waraxe. If my designs are correct it will be a weapon bringing honor to my clan and our god!

Tired, but contend after a day's hard labor I went to sleep, but was roused by Reed's voice crying out "Fire Breath" in draconic. I searched for signs of a dragon, but apparently Reed was having a prescient dream. When asked when she answered "little sister disappears" and continued dreaming. I started to prepare for the advent of the beast and determined the mines would be the safest place. When Reed awoke she was able to divine that the moment would be a few hours from now. Jay however felt we could not abandon the people and should stay.

I felt torn myself since dragons are ancient nemeses to our people and have caused much harm to those greater and better prepared than we, but to abandon your community in a time of need is a vile thing to do. My plight must have been heard even in the halls of the ancestors, since they awoke fully and the lore of our people lay spread out in chants half remembered until now. And with that knowledge came dread, singed beards, unpiercable scales, great towers laid to waste and heavy gates blown asunder by fiery onslaught of great beasts and many a clan heirloom lost to the greed of the evil beast. We decided rather to chance our lives in the defense of the community than seek the safety of the hidden Keeper's realm even in the face of this knowledge.

The elf told me that I should rest to be ready for the beast. Good advice and I tried, but the weight of our doom come upon us overcame my calm. I tried to force myself to rest, but my ancestors whispered of death, fire and doom. Little knowledge I gained from those whispers, since even my great ancestors have triumphed but rarely over them. Never before I have felt the burden of knowledge as I did in those hours of night. Trapped in waiting as if after a cave in, but here no rescuers would come, but a great doom advancing with our chances of flight evaporating every second. When the elf said the time was upon us it almost felt as a relief to end this waiting for our doom. How often have our clans faced this over our the course of our history? I cannot count the times that we stood awaiting the approaching hordes and beasts. They stood fast and I must not disgrace their legacy and face my death with dignity.

When we convened our warcouncil we concluded that since the beast strikes after most adventuring parties have already left it might not have felt confident enough to take on all of them. This would mean we are not dealing with a full blow adult, but rather a young dragon. We tried to convey the urgency of our plight to the guards, but if it were not for the elf they would have gone back to sleep disbelieving my claims. Even so they were slow to act, but the villagers are well disciplined and took shelter. I determined that militarily the best place to strike would be the guardhouse and temple since this would break the defenders morale routing the population so we took up station on the dragon's path.

I heard a high kobold bark to the south and the elf said he spotted the dragon and started firing arrows into the distance. I prayed to Dumathoin to protect us and give us tenacity and courage and after a while the dragon came into view. As it came closer I noticed an arrow sticking out of the side of it's neck and glanced at the elf. Recently his heart hadn't been in his archery and his workmanship had become shoddy, but now I saw his features in a rictus of hate, just like the time he nailed the orc scout through the head. The power of elven hate is not something I shall ever forget. It can pierce a dragon's scale even though it is barely at the horizon! Firing into the air is not something I practiced much and it showed.

Reed however threw her mighty magic at the great beast and it became wreathed in acrid fumes as flesh boiled away. How she managed to get her magic past the beasts defenses is beyond me, but it writhed in pain in midair. Gouts of flame washed over us, but the holy protection kept us from being scorched to a crisp like those who dare stand in Reed's way. In anger it tore the roof of the guardhouse and wheeled to engulf us in it's breath again. All opened fire at the beast and another magic lashing send the beast on it's way. Not a moment too soon, for the guards were downed and even Dumathoin's blessings had not been able to keep all the beasts fire at bay and my companions started looking rather scorched.

We had no time to recover for a horde of kobolds tried to wash over us like a tide. Jay, obviously inspired by my tales of dwarven linebreakers and seeking to prove himself worthy, charged at them and quickly became surrounded. The elf and me possessing the wisdom of the elder races stood back to back covered by good stone wall. The kobolds were just the distraction the dragon might use to get the drop on us so I decided that although spilling their blood is very pleasurable we needed a quick victory. I threw my circle of blades rune to Jay and they sliced and diced the kobolds surrounding him. Jay's focus on speed now served him well and the kobolds scattered in fear, but could not outrun him. At least now he got a taste of being a true linebreaker, crushing all who stand before him and scattering his enemies to the winds.

After the battle Jay looked crestfallen rather than elated, since he could not accomplish the linebreaking yet through his craft and the dragon stayed out of range. Reed was badly hurt but Kendalan's wolves kept her safe during the battle. I wonder how Jay feels about the use of bows or throwing weapons....

The people of the village are rather stunned, but grateful at how little damage was inflicted upon them. Perhaps this will convince the mayor that we need and deserve to delve the iron from the deep mines. I hope Cuura show up to mine it soon.