

Grimwald's thoughts part 34

While Kendalan and Reed scout out the forest to set a trap for the blighter by threatening to undo his work the rest of us meet with the untrustworthy shift boss of the mine. He informs us he has a map to the mines and a key to two gates leading to closed off levels. Apparently the kobolds serving the Iron Throne were laired on these levels and besides the gates they have collapsed some shafts for greater security. He asks us for 400 gold pieces to give us the key and map. An exorbitant amount! In the discussions it becomes clear he makes about 40 gp a month and that he is confident there are valuables in the mine, offering to take 200 gp and a 10% share of the loot. After some close calls with him almost walking out of the negotiations, Cuura (not Felina) takes charge and settles the deal on 200 up front and 200 upon our return, but I managed to get use of the smelter out of it as well to process the ore we find.

I try to point out that since this is a social situation it should be left to Felina, since last time Cuura interfered she almost organized a lynch mob against us. But apparently everyone feels that the deal is good and that Cuura is quite entitled to act as she did.

I have trained them well since before descending down the mine Cuura makes sure all equipment is checked, ropes, mining gear, lamps and lamp oil. She almost makes it all the way to marching order, delegated command and contingency plans, but she is not quite there yet. It is however a great improvement and step towards her generalship. After passing through the gates we find ourselves in abandoned shafts with a thick layer of dust and debris after a mere decade of unuse. Shoddy workmanship, they don't know how to build to last, but I've seen much worse in human mines. The beams are holding and the rock is stable. The shafts don't dip and weave to follow veins, but are straight and at 90 degree angles as if the miners were blindly exploring hoping to hit a vein.

I lead the party along the left hand paths so we are in a defensive advantage against right handed attackers. Soon we find a shaft where the debris is disturbed and there are cuts in the rock less than a year old. There is no telling what they took out of the rock, but these abandoned tunnels are not abandoned any longer. We cautiously proceed until our scouts Felina and Snake report back hearing high pitched Draconic, probably kobolds. I guess those sloppy adventurers a few decades ago must have left an egg or two, which have bred into a new tribe or they have tunneled their way in for somewhere else. We silently pursue them to find their lair. We lose them but after some searching around the area we spy a half hidden cleft near the ceiling which they must have crawled through.

Since the cleft is extremely dangerous having no room to fight or maneuver and also with the kobold tendency to trap such places it is decided we will all stay here and send Snake through the shaft alone to make sure it is safe. Reluctantly I suggest we tie a rope to his ankle so we can find him in a cave in with my burrow spell and keep him from falling into pits. He makes it through and reports it is safe and ending in a huge cave with small fires, probably their camp. We decide to reconnoiter the camp en force with me taking the rear guard. When I exit the tunnel I notice a spiked pit which Snake "failed to see". Luckily we have not alarmed any sentries forcing us to fight from a disadvantageous position.

In the cave we find a big mushroom farm and a small peninsula in a lake with two rope bridges. On the peninsula there is a debris mound which is their warren. I inform Cuura kobolds have the tendency to run whenever faced with bad odds so we need to seal off their avenues of escape or else we will be in for many traps and ambushes. To this end Cuura dispatches Felina and Snake to scout the lay of the land. But they set off another pit trap. To prevent the kobolds exploiting the situation Cuura decided we need a diversion. I fire a dragon's breath arrow to set fire to the warrens, but the oil and phosphor splatter on a stone missing the wood. Jay however starts to charge up the peninsula while Cuura turns up the light on her lantern. Although stunned by their actions I just manage to step out of the bright lantern glow as a barrage of stones and bolts lashes Jay's and

Cuura's armor. Without Dumathoin's blessing I am sure they would have been severely wounded, but even with it through sheer force of numbers they manage to hurt my friends.

Seeing we meet strong opposition I decide we need Dumathoin's aid in this battle. Having a safe shadowy spot I raise my axe and yell "To me" as I have often seen done with great success by captains. Jay however charges into the warren and Cuura decides to charge after him, leaving me standing alone feeling quite silly. Then I notice Felina and Snake rushing up behind me and I decide blessing them with Dumathoin's aid is better than nothing. Thus emboldened we set forth.

Meanwhile we spot flashes of magical missiles, but as we draw closer the kobolds beat a hasty retreat over the rope bridges. Snake manages to stab one of their leaders in the back as he rushes for safety while Jay runs after another group. We manage to drop only a few while most of them run away into the darkness of a maze of tunnels they know and we don't. Cuura decides we should at least search the warrens and sets up a lantern, which sets her up as a target for an acid arrow. The kobolds are hiding around us sniping rather than have really retreated in fear as Cuura must have presumed. Searching the leader's body Snake turns up with two adamantine crystals. There is indeed a great wealth hidden in these reaches. With this adamantine I will be able to forge a adamantine warhammer if we find enough.... the ultimate weapon of Moradin and many of his children in the hardest metal know to us..... and perhaps some maces or short blades for the others.

We discuss what is to be done next. Cuura and Jay being severely wounded request healing. If only they would have listened and waited for Dumathoin's aid and sealed off the escape routes first by cutting the rope bridges we would not have to prepare for a next fight. They just never listen. I just hope this was a learning experience. Some voice we should wait for Reed and Kendalan so we are stronger, but I tell them that while we wait for reinforcements the kobolds can do the same and prepare many more traps for us to dodge. Now having been left alone for decades they are probably at their weakest in prepared defenses. Given that there are too few of us and we don't have a map it is virtually impossible to corner them, but if we burn down their food sources they will either move away of fight to protect them. The rest is reluctant, but they see no other way and we continue to search for other mushroom farms.

We find a store room where we find some cattle pens with lizards, cut mithril veins, I just could not believe something like this could be here! And a blocked passage which by the air seems to lead to deep, deep caves. Probably the underdark realms. I wonder why my ancestors did not stay here with all these valuable ores around. What drove them to move further north? The temptation is there in rich ore, but what are the hidden dangers?

While we ponder our treasure we are struck at from the darkness with magic. I whirl around and fire a bolt at our assailant hidden in darkness back tracking his attack and am rewarded with a satisfying wail and patter of feet running away. These kobolds are tougher than usual! Cuura thinks she understands the lay of the tunnels and decides we should attempt a hammer and anvil maneuver. I lead one group down the tunnel our attacker came from and she will lead another group to box them in in the tunnel. We find nothing but some murderholes until we hear the sound of battle from an unexpected direction. When we finally find our way to the other group the battle is over. They caught a group of ten kobolds in a cave and this time the first thing they did was seal off the exits letting none get away.

The kobolds have been dealt a severe blow losing a third or maybe even half of their number and their mushrooms and lizards. The remaining sorcerer may decide to abandon these caves. The thing that worries me is the deep passage leading to the underdark. Kobolds have no skill in working adamantine or mithril so they must have traded with others. How will these others react to their source of ore disappearing? We will return now to deal with the blighter, but if there is a chance to gather enough adamantium to forge a warhammer we cannot abandon such an opportunity. I just hope our kobold prisoner will be able to tell us more so we can go in better prepared next time.