

Grimwald's thoughts part 42

Damn Reed's plans! If she weren't the voice of the gods I would tell her a thing or two about leaving the wagon and putting me on a horse. She is right of course, but still, a dwarf should be underground and if not underground at least on the ground. What was Moradin thinking of when he forged horses? He can't have meant for us to ride them as we ride lizards. They bounce in strange ways and are far too difficult to climb on. It's just not natural.

We hardly leave sight of town and eight people in red robes appear with 4 guards with magical armour and weapons. If we fight at least a few of us won't survive. I guess they are upset at our trashing their place or they decided not to leave it to their underlings anymore to grab the books.

Cuura starts to scream "Ki..!" but the order dies half-way her throat. Fortunately they are not impressed by her and everybody is wise enough not to provoke them. One of them steps forward and tell us they want the chest. At least they are quite civil about it. His words are interrupted by a crow squawking.

Somehow this has quite an effect on them. Time seems frozen. Perhaps it's a high druid or something. Still usually wizard's have little respect for druids. The bird lands on my helmet and the wizards disappear. Cuura tells me to take good care of the bird and I give it some sausage. The bird changes into a woman. Well it seems a woman, but I feel power flowing from her, strange unbridled power. It feels unearthly somehow. Still this is no goddess or is it? Then she turns to Nethander and speaks with him. How is it that such a mighty creature knows about him? His ancestry must be powerful indeed. Well I had sensed this, but I underestimated it since he looked so runty, deceptive... Perhaps his doom will doom all of us?

We ride on but then our elf spots something, fire in the forest. The riding was bad enough, the "canter" is torture and this "galloping" thing is just too much. How can anybody think while on a horse? Being on a bouncing wagon was bad, but this is just too much! Probably Cuura's impulsiveness is due to having been on a horse too much. I can't even focus on any prayer let alone do the proper gestures.

The horse sways up and down bouncing me up in the air and out of the saddle as if I'm some bird. I try to hang on to the saddle but it's wrested from my grasp and I taste the earth again in my mouth. Ah, finally home again. Why don't Jay, Nethander and Felina ever end up with their face in the mud? They fall and jump and bounce all over the place! I stand up hoping they have learned dwarves belong on the earth, but no Cuura decided I should go on the horse with her.

I need my hands to cast spells. I can't do that holding on to some saddle for dear life. They let me cast some spells on them before hoisting me up on the horse again. We ride up to some armoured caster. From what they tell me it is a kind of specialist in damaging spells called a warmage. I see a little red ball streaking straight at me. I want to duck aside but I'm on a bloody horse with nowhere to go! The fire washes over us, fortunately most of it is blocked by my resist fire prayer. Cuura lets go of the horse with her hands and starts shooting at bugbears. Fascinated I watch, how can she shoot straight with the horse bouncing around like that? How does she keep on it? Here I'm stuck being pelted with spells unable to do anything but hang on to the stupid beast!

Cuura unleashes a fierce war cry. My blood boils in my veins. I want to do something! Damn those horses! Argh! The mage must have noticed our horses did not collapse so the next spell is a cloud of noxious fumes. I feel light in the head and a burning sensation and shivers running all over my body. I scramble of the horse and into fresh air. Cuura is not with me and I turn my to see if she collapsed in the killer cloud. To my amazement she stands in the cloud and calmly nocks an arrow and shoots a bugbear. The she strides forward pulling a fresh arrow from her quiver. Only when she strides clear of the fumes I see the pallor of her complexion and red welts breaking out all over he skin. Beautiful in her bearing of her pain.

The bugbears are quite close now, but they don't attack. They just continue bringing down trees as if they are automatons. They must be charmed or dominated. They are not responsible for what they are doing. What did I just think? Bugbears are evil bastards and I would gladly punish them, but I cannot punish them for this. I just cannot lay the crimes of their ancestors on them. What the hell is wrong with my thinking? I hate them for what they did to my people! Is this because I am now clanless? I feel like I am going insane. No time to worry about it now though. Let's get into range of that wizard and he'll feel the power of prayer! I see Nethander starting to rush towards the mage and I tell him not to resist as I draw my wand and cast a silence, 15 foot radius on him. I start the chant to invoke Moradin to smite the evil warmage, but then I remember that Nethander is not of this world and Moradin frowns on intruders into his realm. So I change my prayer, as I intone my prayer to let him feel the hammer which forged him a shadow separates itself from a tree and attacks Jay so I send the hammer to smite the undead abomination, which after a few blows dissipates.

Jay rushes over to the mage, which is mangled between Nethander, Jay and Felina. Somehow it doesn't feel completely right. I know he is evil, but stabbing him in the back like that and ganging up on him with three against one. Butchering a fleeing opponent, stabbing him in the back. I know we cannot afford to take any risk with a powerful mage since a single spell could kill, but still it doesn't feel as if this is the proper way, but what is? I just don't know anymore.

Drunk with their victory the party now tears into the bugbears. Part of me says I should join them and butcher all of them, an old part. In my confusion I turn to Reed. She understands and is sad. I think of my teachings in healing, they must have been mind burned. Their own will and thought burned out of them so only a body remains. Kind of like a zombie, but alive. Only a powerful psionicist could have done this. I guess death is better than this existence, a release for the soul.

Suddenly a shape tears out of the underbrush and charges at Felina. Who is this mad person charging an entire party by himself? Well whoever he is he is actually managing to hit Felina which is a feat few of our enemies can boast of. Kendalan however keeps on shooting arrows into his body. The enchantment of her bow is really doing well, she seems to have become faster at it as well. Nethander and Jay rush at the attacker and for a moment he manages to stop their charges, but as the warmage discovered being trapped between three hard hitting enemies is a quick way to die. It is Reed who gives the "finishing touch". What a wonderful instrument of the gods she is. Smaller imperfections are ground away by her words as if using sand paper, slightly bigger imperfections are hammered out, but the greater flaws cause them to be molten to be recast.

Cuura is looking a lot worse for wear and I'm not feeling too perky either, but we overcame some powerful individuals. I'll pray to have our health restored. I'm guessing the warmage is symbolized by the fire so that leaves a mindflayer or duergar in the area. I hope we can swing by to tackle him as well. If his friends are anything to go by he alone could cause too much trouble for Nashkel to handle. It will be difficult for he will hide behind his mindless slaves. Fortunately three of our party are experts at slipping past guards.

Even though we are doing well and I feel my understanding grow I feel for the first time since I left Neverwinter that the way is blocked. It is as if Dumathoin does not want me to pry the secret of the runes out of the ancestors. I feel I am no longer worthy having abandoned the path of knowledge to serve good instead. The power of the eternal runes will not be given up easily by the Silent Keeper. I notice a momentary struggle as if some force, it must be Moradin, supports me and tries to shelter me from harm, but the road of a rune caster belongs to the Silent Keeper and he holds fast to his judgement. I must find a new road, but how? I sense another shift Moradin's blessing reforging my body to sustain me through hardships to compensate the withholding of the knowledge of how to turn aside blows. I must prove worthy of Moradin's blessings and atone for my deeds to Dumathoin.