

Grimwald's thoughts part 47

Nethander is heedless to the word of the Voice of the gods who desired not to harm the other spiders and sets fire to the webs. The webs however are interconnected and the web which fell on Jay is also set on fire. A shuddering boom resonates around the gatehouse and Jay stops his flailing at the burning webs and drops like a stone stricken by the thunderous noise.

Then Nethander is yanked up into the air. The others rush towards Nethander and sever the cord hauling him away while I douse the flames consuming Jay. The way Nethander was yanked away reminds me of the story of Olgard Hrimborns expedition into the domains of the drow who lost one of their members to a beast called a cave fisher. Apparently they are able to haul up a fully armoured dwarf so it is quite stunning Nethanders frantic wriggling managed to keep him close to the ground. Duplicitous little fellow not gainsaying Reed, but still striking with deadly force. He cannot even help lying to himself asking for another weapon while denying it at the same time. I guess his truthful side is trying to surface despite his efforts to keep on lying.

The knowledge of the ancestors about battling vermin races into my mind as I rush to the aid of Cuura who is trashing on the ground pinned by big spider. Unfortunately my ancestors lore doesn't include predicting the wild movements of an enraged barbarian and my kick doesn't connect strongly enough to dislodge the vermin. I notice however that the cutting spikes I forged onto her armour leave deep bleeding gashes in the beast as with every thrashing movement it gets impaled onto her breastplate.

Reed, to my amazement, grabbed her polearm and starts hacking at the beast. We are struck by a piercing shriek by a sonic spider still hiding in the gatehouse. Confused about Reed's change in strategy is step aside and quickly *silence* the spider and ask her if use of deadly force is authorised by the gods. She quickly answers it was merely her wish no to harm the spiders.

After a moment's hesitation I decide to apply the lessons I received in archery. I grab my bow and arrow. Then an amazing thing happens, this must be what the elf feels like. Suddenly there is just me and the spider hiding up in the gatehouse, no more thrashing barbarian distracting me, then there is just me and the spider, then there is just me and the narrow crack between his chest and rear carapace and I feel encased in utter silence, the vulnerable spot my ancestors whisper into my mind just there at the narrow part aim for the yellow spot, suddenly I see an arrow deeply embedded in the crack and I notice I have released it. I must have achieved the Zen Archery trance, now if only I can do it again.

With the sonic and jumping spider dispatched we decide to search the gatehouse. The cavefisher makes a run for it, but Kendalan tries to kill it none the less. A few weeks ago I would have done what Nethander and Kendalan did or I would have cheered their actions. Genocide against our enemies, because they might harm us. No longer do I see it as just or justifiable. I ask Kendalan how many species the elves have made extinct for being harmful, but he does not answer. A dagger is found forged from a strange material. The material used alludes me for the moment, but it does not rust. I cleanse the cavefisher bite and give Nethander some herbs to chew on against the poison already in his system. Since he does not suffer a (near) fatal heart attack as usually happens after a cavefisher bite it seems to work.

There is a discussion if we should camp here or continue. I argue against allowing the enemy to reinforce their side of the narrow bridge and our scouts push forward. It is almost as if they listened to my arguments. Strange. Jay's wounds are just superficial, but he seems to be suffering from a heavy concussion of the brain and is still not coherent. I wonder if his master used to hit him over the head a lot, but I do not see enough scars to prove my hypothesis that this is an aggravation of a chronic condition.

Suddenly the portal bursts into a wall of flame. I guess our scouts have to work on their skills a bit more. The rest of us move closer to aid them, but it seems that the traps did not bring the skeleton

guards running. I call upon the Master of the Forge to shield us against the heat and approach the trapped gates. Up close however I notice magical runes in the stonework "say my name and enter". Since this is Durlag's tower I speak his name and the password allows me free passage. Felina follows my example and likewise passes through. Just when I think I may have acted hastily and asked Moradin's blessing without need Kendalan squeals something which he must think is dwarven and comes bolting through the gates triggering the traps which would have fried Felina and me were it not for my timely prayer.

The gate house is empty and we decide to set up camp for the night. Reed wants to spend charges of the curing wand to aid our party, but I ask her to allow me to use Moradin's blessings instead since His blessings are endless, while the wand is limited. Quickly however we find out why the Voice of the gods acted in this way. Piercing howls echo from the tower waking everybody. Spending the night this way will befuddle our minds so we cannot focus on our prayer and spells. There is some discussion if we should go back past all the traps at this late hour, but having expended half my spells I feel we should only continue well prepared. For some strange reason we end up voting, ugh, what weak leadership, but at least clearer heads prevail and we turn back.

Weary and sleep drunk we blunder through the cold trap and shadow tentacles with Kendalan pulling me through with a rope. On the other side I say we should find a better way through this trap for the morrow. Then we remember Reed's fireballs safeguarding us last time. Yes it is clearly time for our minds to get more rest. Even the usually so nimble Nethander almost trips over his own feet from fatigue trying to slip through the lightning web. Mumbling some curses he tries to get his static spiky hair back in order and his muscles to stop shaking, but his sacrifice allow the rest of us safe passage and Moradin rewards him for his bravery and selflessness by mending his wounds.

The next morning we arise well rested and manage to slip through the lightning web without difficulty. But are shocked, not so much by lightning, but to find ourselves assailed by arrows from respawned skeletal guards. Well most are shocked, Nethander is actually hurt. Recalling yesterday's battle my ancestral knowledge flows into my mind and muscles with perfect clarity. Arrows, sling stones and fireballs quickly put an end to the archers and we start to scuttle across the bridge. Nethander went first into the danger, but manages to dance away from the doom guard's blows in a way which would infuriate any living opponent. He even disarmed the doom guard, but the undead minion merely summons the blade back to his hand. One by one we arrive and take flanking positions around the doom guard and whittle him down. Finally our groups is working like a well oiled machine supporting each other. With another skull shattering blow from the tighbone Nethander gave me we end the doom guards unlife. Restoring Nethanders acidic wounds takes all the power of Cuura's healing belt, but we still have a full complement of spells and Nethander is looking exceedingly smug and pleased with himself. We'll make a true hero out of him yet! Nethander may be resistant to fire, but apparently not to acid. I wonder if this also holds true when we meet his parents? A thing to remember.

We pass with minimal damage through the cold trap and deserted gatehouse and trusting my dwarven I pass through the gate and haul up the rest of the party. Jay is no longer looking cross-eyed, maybe he is coming to. Now to make our spells last through till the end of our explorations...