

Grimwald's thoughts part 52

While Nethander and Felina are searching for traps and prying open locks I take a few minutes to pray to Moradin. I thank him for caring for his creation, a common enough prayer, but this time with a strange effect. The buzzing confused feeling in my head clears and even though I am clanless I feel a strong connection to the ancestors, but in a very different way from before.

When I prayed to Dumathoin I could hear the ancestral songs in his halls. Their wisdom guiding me and revealing secrets. I always felt less than those who went before. Especially now that I am an outcast and have defiled their legacy.

This time I felt myself not merely a continuation from that honoured line. I felt as if I was not merely a poor copy of greater glory, but rather a culmination of craftwork. I guess this is how the new generation must feel, those who were gifted by Moradin with the ability to craft the Weave. Excitedly I try to grasp the strands of magic flowing through the earth, much like the elf must be doing in the woods, but my grasp has not improved and my hands hold no power.

I search my feelings more deeply as I had been taught. I am indeed new, but rather as a new combination of tried and true techniques, not something fanciful, but rather serious. I feel the new part of me is old. From the time our people moved away from the great rift.

We come into a room with a destroyed painting of the tower, unfortunately I have not sought the blessing to make whole when I prayed. But the painting is not all that is off. A big block of stone depicting a great scholar, who must have watched over what was the library is out of place. Seeing no way to set things right myself I ask the strange man in the room if he can aid us. I feel no fear at his strangeness, just the imperative that things should be set right and he seems to sense my resolve and complies. He transforms into a Firbolg and puts the block of stone in place. I ask him if we can aid him, but he seems to need none. From his changing so swiftly I deduce he may be a Fasm, powerful shapechangers, but rather unpredictable. The others bring him some food he seems to enjoy and we leave him to his musings.

My meditations on my changed state are interrupted by the party opening a door to a room with a pedestal inscribed with "For the Righteous" bearing an axe with a golden glow and a corpse suspended close to it. Cuura tries to convince me to take the axe, but I know I am not worthy, yet who among us is? Only the gods can decide who is or isn't so I start to prepare an augury asking Cuura to light the incense while I take the rune sticks and scroll out of my pack. In the background I hear Nethander muttering: "perhaps it is an undead playing dead" followed by a startled scream. The young fool has a sharp mind, but no patience nor respect for the dead nor for the gods! When I look up he is in the grasp of the undead and Jay charging to the rescue is lashed by foul innards lashing out of it's mouth. A Morgh! A person so twisted by evil in life, that he is now being twisted by evil in his unlife. A criminal, from the glee upon its twisted face I surmise a murderer! Jay is caught by surprise and paralysed by the lashing innards. I put away the rune sticks and grasp my holy symbol ordering the abomination to back off and yield his prey while going for the axe so I can give this criminal his righteous punishment, thinking this must be what is intended.

Damn their rushing my actions! This is clearly not the course Moradin has intended for me to take. The Morgh blatantly ignores my words of power and holy symbol continuing screwing Nethander's limbs off and where my hand sought the axe it passes through an electrified shimmering jolting me. Ashamed at my failings I abandon my own will and put myself in the hands of the Maker...

I feel myself marching with the legendary Iron Guard of Taark Shannat, the most formidable shield wall fighters of ancient Shannatar. I feel young, not yet arrived at Shannatar, but searching out new lands and braving dangers to guide the people to a new home. Each dwarf shielding the dwarves next to him, foiling attack with skill of axe and strength of shield. In a trance I take my position in the shield wall, although the dwarf next to me looks remarkably like Cuura. I hear the ancient battle song going through the ranks dictating strike and defence. I set up the Morgh for the strike of our

forces lashing fiercely into his leg twisting him off balance making him vulnerable. The Morgh backs away from my axe daring him to strike at my shield mate and lashes out from the distance beyond my reach. Not just my axe, but also my shield is ready for him and with a quick bash I send his attack wide of my shield mate, who still looks remarkably like Cuura. I feel he must pay for what he did to my people and repay the life he stole and my axe bears down on him, but at the last moment he twists away. With intense hatred and blood lust the Morgh rushes at me, but I remain unperturbed and calmly catch him on my shield and throw him back. Then a rage comes over me at how he still defies justice and I wind up for a powerful strike, but before I can bring it home Cuura's blows chop him down. Justice is served.

As soon as the battle is over the visions leave me and I have no idea of how I managed to block so swift a strike or weave a defence around Cuura, but I feel this ancient part crafted into me will awaken by the will of the gods when the cause is right. Still shaken by this discovery of new found talents we continue our search. This must be how Moradin aids his chosen warriors, compensating my inability to pray in this tower. I fervently pray my gratitude and appreciation to the Soul Forger for making me into such a wonderful dwarvencraft being. And I pledge myself more fully to his cause and guidance renouncing the ways of the "Hidden" and accepting the ways of the "Wanderers". For a moment I think I feel Moradin's smile upon me...

We have barely put down one twisted murderer when Nethander starts complaining on how he wants something alive so he can kill it. I wonder if Reed's hope for him will prove idle? Has some of the evil of the murderer Morgh spilled over to Nethander or is it awakening a slumbering evil in him, just as it awoke the slumbering shield fighter guardian in me? I will have to watch him closely, he is sliding again and the time may come when he will turn. He cannot escape his fate, but who knows what harm he may do the party before then?

We come upon a room which was protected by acid traps upon the door. Unfortunately Nethander's ploy to shield Jay from the acid do not work, but Jay's blow shatters the lock none the less. In this trophy room our systematic searches lead to the discovery of a silver mirror in which reflection you can see through illusionary walls. A useful tool in this tower!

In another room is a hooded woman who says she has been locked up here for a week. I watch Nethander closely to see if the Morgh's or his own blood lust will get the better of him. As far as I know he has not consumed a living soul for sometime, probably undead are inedible for him. My hand hovers near my hold person wand as I move into the room, wary of both the woman and Nethander. I wonder if the wand will work or will it merely free the fiend from his troublesome human inhibitions? Nethander sees me watching and shifts his attention away from his intended prey to me. Good.

With a swift movement the lady throws off her robes, for some unfathomable reason this causes the rest of the party to shrink away in fear hiding their faces. My thirst for knowledge is satisfied as I gaze upon a woman with intense eyes and writhing snakes for hair. We lock eyes for a moment, but she is the one who looks away. For a moment I sensed the power of stone rising up in me again. A pleasant sensation of invulnerability, but uncalled for and easily dismissed. A moment later the realization sets in: Medusa.

The Medusa must have sensed and feared Nethander's murderous blood lust and turns him into stone instantly. I cannot afford to allow the Medusa to ravage our group anymore and call upon my Lord's most powerful blessing: the sound of the soul hammer to strike her. The concussive force with which Moradin forges our essence rolls over the Medusa and her spirit cannot stand against it's power and she crumples onto the floor.

Dwarves sacrificed themselves to block an evil from entering the tower by collapsing a tunnel. We do not sacrifice ourselves lightly and it is probably best we never find out what is on the other side. I am curious though and have thought of burrowing through, but the others are impatient and we have enough troubles as it is. Perhaps later. I will add it to my list.

I feel a burden lift from me as I watch the statue of Nethander. If I were not in this tower I am certain I would sleep more soundly tonight. No longer will his volatile emotions and actions creep so dangerously close to the edge of what is right and proper. Now I have the power to help him, make him human, make him stronger, tougher, remove his tainted heritage from his body if not his spirit. Would I be helping him or dooming others by creating a wolf in sheep's clothing? Fortunately I brought my tools, it is just a pity I did not pray for the power to reshape stone or I would be able to help him more. But we have time, plenty of time to help poor Nethander. Time to meditate on this, uninterrupted augury rituals to find what is to be done with him.

We wander into the Fasm and it informs us that there is a way in the treasure room to turn his stone into flesh again. There are enough of us left to get past the traps if we are willing to sacrifice ourselves to save our friend. He has braved traps for us so now it is our turn. I do not look forward to it, but I cannot escape the justice in this. I survived the first trap before and I have lesser restoration prayers to aid my recovery, but who will risk to have their mind burned?