

Grimwald's thoughts part 54

As I inspect the fallen honor guard Nethander and Felina are searching the walls. My decision to trust Nethander for the moment turns out to be wrong. It is not just secret doors he is after. It is almost as if he does it on purpose, do something noble and then fall prey to his corruption again. Was he trying to lull me into a false sense of security? It was somehow easier when I **knew** he was not to be trusted, this noble behavior now and again is highly confusing and misleading! Still the Voice of the gods told me I should not judge him, but offer him a chance. Well this is what he did with it!

Fortunately Kendalan caught him marring the beauty of the hall by letting his greed get the better of him. I immediately turn to the authority in this case Felina. To my amazement she does not scold the Tiefling, appropriately named I must say, but argues in his favor. I feel taken aback and torn by her refusal. I have to obey our leader, but also must defend the realm and properness of conduct. I could not hope to displace her as Jay tried with Cuura. I feel frustrated and powerless, betrayed by our social leader and myself also betraying my duties. Then the elf rescues me and the situation by snatching the stone from Felina's and replacing it in the wall. The room feels whole again and Kendalan picks up an untarnished short sword from amid the remains of the battle.

I sense a relatively weak enchantment on the blade. It takes a little while to decipher the ancient runes. They are an enchantment hardly used anymore around the north. Blood runes drinking both the blood of the wielder and his enemies. Weapons for hardy warriors rather than more fragile creatures such as elves. Still the runes only work if the power of the blood is strong enough and the elf has ample capacity for fiery consuming hatred so it should work for him. I hope the justice made evident by this event will not be wasted on the others.

Still this is a valuable lesson for me as well. In some cases one cannot serve two masters, nor four as I am now trying. There will be other cases where I will have to betray one or several of my lords. Oh I dread the day, but Kendalan will not always be able to save me. One day I myself will be an elder without one older than me to guide me. If I had known what doom of betrayal lay before me as a young dwarf I would surely have become a troll slayer rather than have to endure this fate. Still metal is formed by hammering it and I have faith that Moradin will hammer me well to make me a more perfect creation.

We find a very intricate machine with many levers, but no obvious function. My magic helmet allows me to comprehend gnomish writing, but not the gnomisch mind. The levers are marked with words like bampf, zoing and pling. I try to comprehend the code, but nothing comes to mind. Obviously we will have to dig deeper. Felina is however reluctant to chance it, but we prevail on her that the pursuit of knowledge is valuable. When I turn the machine on a hellacious earsplitting noise overwhelms us. While the rest of have had more than enough and nurse our hurting ears, Felina of all people decides to take an interest and after a while manages to get the machine to play a march.

We discover a trophy room which provides us with valuable historical information about the clan which once held this tower. Nethander champions my research and his way of words prevails on the others. His words have saved us many times, his tongue is as swift and sharp as his blade. But probably as deceptive and treacherous as well.

I try to convince Kendalan of the use of blunt weapons against skeletons and manage to convince him to hold some other weapons. But the way he swings them make it obvious he is a specialist, rather than a militia trooper who has to learn to fight with whatever he gets pressed into his hands. His stance and speed just don't match the weapons weight and reach. Perhaps I can make a practice sword for him one day. It won't do much damage with his fighting style, but at least he will be comfortable with it.

Jay unexpectedly strikes up a conversation with an elder fire elemental guarding a bridge over a lava flow. His conversation technique betrays his lack of planar knowledge, but also shows his respectful attitude. He can speak outwardly what Reed does internally. I do feel he and Reed are indeed a match made in heaven. If only they would manage to manage themselves. So much power in each of them, but so little control outside of their domains of skill.

Once past the fire elemental we find a dwarven burial site and there on the casket lies an adamantite mountain plate. The others think it may be another illusion, but I can smell the strong bitter adamantine in the stale air and feel it's immovability in my very bones.

Rare adamantine gathered by an entire clan over many decades or even centuries to be finally forged into the most massive armor in existence. I feel my knees go weak and kneel in admiration of this treasure. But as I kneel down before this pinnacle of creation I notice the surface is marred by more than the hair thin streaks of hardened steel blades impacting adamantine. A warning, yet I know I was supposed to find this armor so I cannot simply back down. A curse can be broken if one is willing to bear it and proves stronger. Yet even the king's son succumbed, how could I prevail? With the help of Moradin I find that he forged the key to this riddle into me. By carefully reconsidering the crafting of every seam, joint, bolt and plate I feel that this is not according to the laws of the craft laid down by my master. I favor a lighter, more mobile, armor, but it is not the weight that is the problem. It is well distributed and borne by the structural components of the armor. The stance and protection are just as good as my teacher's, but it feels his lessons are not in it. It has a different approach to being a dwarf somehow.

Kendalan's knowledge of animals tells him that it is not a natural stance. Of course I want to argue with an elf commenting on fine dwarven armor craftsmanship, but I find that I lack arguments. I go over the armor again and indeed the armor is too good. The armor holds up it's own weight and the joints allow it to shift position by small motions. The warrior does not wear the armor or use it, but is just an element of it's operation. This armor must have been crafted by the master who forged the automatons. But we dwarves are not meant to be used as machine parts and both our minds and bodies would suffer from it lacking proper stimulation.

Now that I know the flaw I can reforge the armor to make is suitable. Feeling immensely grateful I reclaim this dwarven treasure and dedicate it to Moradin and Dumathoin and give it a new purpose: "As the mountain stands between the chaos and the dwarves, so this armor will stand between the evil and the innocent". As I claim it my breastplate disintegrates and it's magic reforms itself into a gem. Just like Nethander's rapier this armor does not tolerate others. It wants to be enough all by itself. I remember Nethander's problems with the skeletons and remind myself that on reforging I should take extra care so I will always be well prepared.

Feeling rather naked without my armor I approach the others who went ahead. For some inexplicable reason Jay is carrying Felina in a weird way. It somehow reminds me of.... No! That can't be it. When I come closer to investigate Felina suddenly grabs me by the beard! How dare she! She who should know better than grabbing a dwarfs' beard! I try to pull loose off but it is as if she has four hands. Every time I pry a bit lose the rest becomes more deeply entangled. In despair I call for a rope so I may tie her up since she is clearly not herself. She seems to cooperate and I wrap the rope around her arms and legs, but suddenly find that with every movement I am pulling myself tighter to her. Then she snaps out of it and leaves the rope cocoon she trapped us in.

My armor definitely needs spikes, no better, blades, many of them!

We continue to find a dwarven temple in chaos and set to restoring and repairing the altars and shrines. Once our task is fulfilled we can continue to our next appointment.