

Grimwald's chronicles part 67

As we proceed to find our way through the maze we come upon an ancient mumbling netherese mage. His mind is long gone but in his mumblings he mentions the name of a traitorous Netherese lord who first established trade between the Netherese empire and the dwarven kingdom of Delzoun and then started enslaving dwarves leading to bitter strife.

His mind no doubt holds parts of the ancient history of the dwarven kingdoms of the north, but his mind is lost to himself and also to any historians. Given the emanation of evil he has around him it is a good thing he cannot focus his mind's power anymore.

From his babbling we gather he sees us as his slaves, which should help him get past a door he trapped himself. The Voice of the Gods knows how to pass the mage's barrier. As we enter into the room beyond we find it is strewn with body parts. Strangely enough they are not decomposing, nor bleeding. Reed, who undoubtedly feels the call to cleanse this den of evil, with fire starts lopping her fire balls around catching a hand in the process. Then we hear a yelp of pain.

The disjointed body is still alive and the head is screaming because Reed is burning his hand. Moradin reveals the evil nature of the insane mage's rival. I can scarcely think of any crime which would not have been repaid by such torture over many centuries and Reed releases him to be purified and reforged. We decide that the other mage should be laid to rest as well and Nethander and Felina accept this duty. The mage however turns out to have strong magical defenses, which drain the life out of Nethander and rebuff Felina. Although the mage has barely registered their attack we cannot risk him achieving whatever dark goal he has been brooding on for centuries. I pray to Moradin and the ancestors and they guide my *Foe Hammer* attack which breaks through the mage's defenses striking a crushing blow. The mage then disappears, my attack must have triggered another contingency causing him to relocate. Since he is probably healing, rearming and reorganizing we quickly set up guards and search the premises.

Since he was heading for his desk Nethander quickly seizes the opportunity to make sure there will be nothing left for him to use. He quickly finds some levers, I am not quite sure Nethander is more comforting to have sitting behind an evil mage's desk than the mage himself. What would he like to have at his finger tips? A treacherous way of disposing people who come to him in trust! I manage barely to dodge the spiked pit trap Nethander opens where I was half a second ago. Not much difference between the mage and Nethander behind the desk. I knew it!

The other levers open a hidden doorway, which we quickly scout to find the mage, but instead I find a drow who just butchered some orcs, but amazingly enough is dressed in the uniform of the Neverwinter nine. For a moment I succumb to conflicting impulses, kill drow, the enemy of my enemy is my friend, obey the chain of command. Since I sense no evil the best way to go about it is just to obey the chain of command so I identify myself as specialist Grimwald of the Neverwinter militia hoping the situation will become more clear. Unfortunately my superior, as usual, sees no reason to inform the lower ranks and decides she must depart.

We quickly scour the complex, but find only the shambling husks of slaves which we can finally release from their bondage. Reed leaves a marker so may track down the mage if he collects his remaining possessions.

After leaving our scouts find a group of Neverwinter mercenaries who claim they have been tracking the drow for more than a month through the underdark. An unlikely story, but I cannot catch them on any lies. They seem to believe they were hired by a captain of the Neverwinter guard to catch a thief who stole items belonging to the nine. That could be true but I can hardly believe a group of humans manage to keep up with a drow passing through the underdark. Kendalan manages to follow the drow's trail, but he is convinced the drow is leading us somewhere rather than being hunted. Are we being led into an ambush? Why would a drow try to eliminate mercenaries from Neverwinter in that way?

Felina manages to unpolymorph the group's tracker. Unfortunately I know the man. He chewed me out several times on field training and is an uncaring bastard who was willing to leave wounded recruits by the trailside for being a burden to the rest of the group. We cared for our fellows dragging them along and were denied food as we finally reached camp as punishment for being late. Rotten bastard! I thought I wouldn't have to face him again, but here we are. He is good as his job though. Perhaps too good for the drow's tastes since she singled him out.

It doesn't take long for our two trackers to come to blows. Kendalan is calling him a fraud since he is using methods the elf doesn't know. Kendalan feels he may be toying with the group just like the drow is doing. Reed attacks him as well. I try to mend the tension as a group watching each other will easily fall prey to the underdark's predators. Division is a topside luxury we can't afford down here! I thought Reed of all people would be able to harmonize the group rather than tearing it apart! Nethander decides to make a bad situation worse by starting childish competitions between himself and the tracker.

Gods. I don't care how this guy does it, but he always does get the job done. Maybe it is divine guidance, an arcane spell, loot marked by a tracker just as we did with the mage. I just don't understand why my companions feel the need to make this situation worse by sowing dissent. I know he is an asshole, but bearing burdens just makes you stronger! My grandfather is right about keeping knowledge to yourself! Has the insanity of the mage afflicted most of our group? I just hope the leader of the other group has more sense and stability to take joint control if I back her up.