

## Grimwald's chronicles part 75

After being penned into the killzone between the outer and inner gate some monks come to test us. Very sensible since they guard a great treasure trove of knowledge. After passing the test we are allowed to pass through the inner gate. Here the strong stone martial aspect of the Candlekeep is replaced with the softness I would expect from city folk and scholars in particular, disgusting in itself, but artistically well arranged. I guess Cuura might like it: shielding beauty behind strength. Still the way she eyes the fluffy bunnies show her barbarian ethos has not left her yet.

After a journey past many halls and doorways we come to a room clad in arcane symbols. Huh, they feel their arcane knowledge can prevail where the holiness of the Abbey of Lathander failed. Fools! When Reed and Felina inform them we also bring part of the elven tome and a sword imprisoning another part of the demon there is quite some upheaval and the news is passed up the chain of command.

Finally the First Reader is summoned, at least he is able to balance duty with civility and kindness. The change in atmosphere after he arrived reminds me much of my own transformation. I can hardly believe I was once as callous as the monks knowing duty but nothing of mercy. After sending away those unfit to be entrusted with our secrets we can relax and Reed and Felina begin passing our tale into historical record. We came a long way from the unknown band of adventurers in Berdusk to braving many ambushes and breaking blockades. How our hidden inner strength has been revealed over the last few months. Praise Dumathoin!

When the story is finished a long silence hangs in the air. Surely they too must sense the hand of the gods in our quest. Slowly some mutterings about prophesy start to circulate, they know... But what?

Before we can catch much of the discussions we are led to another chamber, slightly larger with a more varied and dense array of arcane symbols. Kendalan mutters something about high elven magic, but I can't make head or tails of it except recognizing some warding symbols. Cautious and well prepared they offer us black gloves and request us to place the items in various positions. Some of my companions find it hard to relinquish the charge which has been in our care for so long or have they become lured by its power? They grow fearful and herald doom since too many know of their location. Little do they realise all happens according to the will of the gods and fate which even the gods cannot ignore. Still it is good they are becoming more cautious.

I ask if these wards would allow one to examine the Tome of Malevolence, but the monk merely shudders at the thought. As I thought well prepared, but still not prepared enough. Perhaps a combination of arcane and divine magic? This is what Azatoth must have used.

While our pursuers slowly disband outside the walls of Candlekeep we are allowed to roam through the libraries. I request the aid of the gods so I can study longer, read books with a mere touch, assist my understanding and won't have to waste time on eating and start gathering knowledge.

The first thing I do is to deepen my knowledge of metallurgy and the crafting of weapons and armor of legend. I soon find some metals are only found on other planes and are thus almost impossible to procure. I work my way through the descriptions of great arms and armour, occasionally having a strange sense of *deja vu*, but the thought of the Tome of Malevolence escaping and the lure of Frystaline, the metal embodying the power of Good keep calling. Soon I find my way to the extraplanar section of the libraries. Perhaps here I can find the key to rid the world of the evil tome once and for all, yes it feels right. Maybe it will be my fate. Maybe it has been prophesied. The knowledge here won't suffice of course, but it will be a good start. I feel deep inside I must do this.

I learn that to fathom the ancient mysteries *mindblank* and *anti-magic shell* are prerequisites. I look towards Reed and Felina sitting under a tree trading tunes with some bard and feel a wave of desperation come over me. How will they ever master these intricacies of magic wasting time like that instead of studying? Still I must persevere until my fate is fulfilled.

Reed apparently went looking for some hidden lore and she and I are summoned and questioned regarding our experience with the Neogi vessel. This hidden lore, known as *spelljamming* concerning a realm called *wild space* is apparently known only to a select few of those races who mastered this art. The spread of this knowledge would shatter the trade networks, monopolies and economy of worlds if it were allowed to fall into unwise hands. Since the working of these vessels either require powerful mages or priest or the life/souls of slaves one can imagine which would be the easier and cheaper to acquire for unprincipled individuals. Reed and I assure the monk we understand the need to keep this knowledge from *groundlings* as the uninitiated are known. Still the images I got of flying mountains turn out to be based on truth after all. Did an ancestor come from the realm called *wildspace*? It seemed so vivid as if I were there myself.

I bump into Reed a few times as we research the history of Azatoth together and share our information. Clearly an individual who had his mind warped by too much magic. Trying to turn our world into an afterlife, robbing the gods of the souls of their followers. No wonder he was never heard from again. I was shocked to find that an entire country called Narfell came to worship and summon demons for their power. According to more recent accounts it is desolate wasteland filled with unfriendly people. Good riddance I say. Still we may be forced to travel there to find out more about what the mad Lich knew.

Reed also questioned me about my journey past the high moor some time ago. All I can tell her is that they brought me as an extra guard because raids on caravans became more frequent. Horrible rotten place with waterlogged limestone everywhere. No ore, no good stone, not even wood! Worthless dump. Ideal breeding place for goblinkin though. Hardly surprising there are so many raids. Time to do some culling and reduce their numbers. Feels like home except they come raiding from the moor instead of from the mountains and there are mainly goblins on the moor and mainly orcs in the mountains. Still I don't see why Reed feels so interested in culling goblins. Hardly her kind of thing. More likely work for me Cuura and Kendalan. Perhaps the gods have something in store for us?

Some monks come to inquire if I would be willing to quest for the lost part of the elven tome should they find any leads as to where it might be. They share some more lore about the guardian books, but apparently they have no clue as to what may be recorded in the Tome of Malevolence itself. They think it contains the mind of a Demon Lord. What knowledge could such an ancient creature have amassed from all the souls it devoured? It's knowledge would dwarf the lore hidden in this keep. What a weapon it could make to eradicate evil from this world knowing how the lower planes work so intimately. Uncounted true names helping the faithful to banish them from this world.

Reed found someone who could break the code and is having the book we took from the ogre cave translated. Apparently it is a ledger with business transactions. It names various tribes with their chiefs, shamans and witchdoctors as well as tribal customs. Provisioning orcs is hardly the kind of thing the Red Wizards would like to be known to the general population. Most transactions are rather minor, wand of magic missiles, potions, scrolls. It is not always clear what if anything they got in return. Perhaps services such as providing provisions for adventuring parties searching for something or just access to their territory? Browsing through the ledger's transcription we do come across one larger transaction: 60 scrolls traded for an ancient golem. The orcs or goblins probably worshipped it as an idol. What are the wizards looking for in a stinking bog? I'm sure the elves we will meet in the elemental tower will know more about the area. Especially the grudgebearer would be interested to find mages crawling around her own backyard.

While in the middle of an interesting account of a journey to the deep underdark a monk comes up to me telling me that our tending is passed already. I have barely managed to ingest a small portion of the library! I must find a way to return to read the rest. Perhaps this quest is a good way to regain access. At the very least I should study the chapter on defending against lower planes magic in the book of the brotherhood before we go to Narfell.