

Grimwald's chronicles part 77

I have allowed my companions time to find some way to make themselves useful in the city, but now I will need their aid. The preparation of their armor is at the point where I will need *heartwire* to reinforce the mail to protect their vital organs, tendons and arteries. But allowing the forges to cool down and then reheating them is a time consuming disruption. Fortunately Jay has learned enough about forging that I can let him watch the tempering process while I am gone for a short while. I know it is a disappointment for him not to have the chance to meet some great heroes, but I try to console him that even though great heroes they may be, they are not skillful, methodical or disciplined in their profession.

The lore is that Haella Brightaxe does not allow her dwarven battleragers to remain in Dumathoin's halls, but leads them to another domain more suited to them. Fortunately! I would hate to try to receive guidance from the ancestors only to be rewarded with drunken banter! A shameful lot, hardly any sense of duty and no use outside of battle. According to the priests of Clangeddin they have their uses for the clan though. Well they do manage to give the enemy pause and can be quite intimidating in their drunken rages I suppose.

At least Cuura should be pleased and may decide to turn away from her pandering to Sune. More a goddess for decadent empires than for a proud barbarian. Bah. After she turns to Haella Brightaxe maybe we can turn her to a proper warrior god like Clangeddin or perhaps Helm or Tyr. Still it is a good thing those idiot battleragers have a goddess watching over them.

According to the lore this outer plane is one directly influenced by the gods who bend some chaotic power to their will. I found some accounts of adventuring parties and even clerics of Clangeddin going there to experiment with new battle techniques in the fury of combat without risking crippling injury or death. The plane has great restorative powers removing injuries in minutes and even curing dismemberment and death in a day.

I have crafted tuning forks which according to the tomes I studied in Candlekeep should take us there and back again. I am a bit nervous about allowing some human tome to guide us to another plane of existence, but according to the divinations I carried out they should work. At least the vibrations which should take us back have been verified by Reed as indeed being of this place.

Our commander gathers her forces in a circle, we join hands and I strike the master tuning fork. As the secondary forks start to resonate I feel the vibration spread through my body and immediately sense the disharmony it is causing in me. The rising vibration brings me out of tune from my native world and with growing discomfort I feel the chaos lapping at my very foundation. In my mind's eye I see the ravishing wastes of Limbo yawning under me and I feel myself plummeting away from my god's presence. The strength of the group's resonance drags me down through the astral quickly. The vibrations start to fade into the background so we must be nearing our destination without having disturbed, the foul Githyanki, the evil hunters of the crossroads between the planes.

We arrive in a blinding blizzard on a frozen river or lake with the ice cracking beneath us as a voice batters our mind demanding justification of our intrusion. Reed tries to appease the furious power who controls this domain, but her civilized ways are not welcome here. Then Cuura steps up and challenges the greater being calling it a hiding coward and daring it to show itself so she can fight it. Such a power could crush her for her impudence and us along with it and I expect the worse, but a great laugh roars through my head and the blizzard clears.

The world's edge mountains, the greatest and wildest peaks in Fearun, I grew up there, but the unfolding landscape at least rivals it, if not surpassing it. No gentle foothills but great mountains of rock jutting out of the landscape at steep angles with gigantic trees. Ribbons of fire lining the sky and two suns making a mad dash through the heavens. It is clearly not nature nor even mortal magic which formed this landscape but the whim, impatience and crudeness of some mad deity dotting the landscape with caricatures of what it happens to fancy at the time.

In awe I start making my way with the rest to a nearby village when suddenly the snow and ice under our feet spring to life. The misshapen creatures lash out with great strength using claws of razor sharp ice splattering blood all over the place. Reed quickly shows that fire and ice cannot coexist and Kendalan seems to cast a *call lightning* spell, but a great metal hammer plummets from the skies and with a thunderclap strikes the ground throwing sparks all over the place.

As we battle our assailants the villagers respond with cheers for good blows or boo's for Kendalan's reliance on magic. The snowmen are dispatched and our wounds heal up quickly. As we approach Cuura's victory roars are seen as challenges by what may be a local chieftain of this motley collection of huts and slipshod defenses.

Cuura is trust into a ring with a dire bear and some insane brute. She however seems to be enjoying every moment of it, a worrying observation how even one who has grown so mature as Cuura can so easily revert to her bestial nature. This place is more dangerous than I thought! The combatants spend some time showing of their strength and courage more than actually trying to defeat their opponent and then suddenly after an exchange of incoherent, spittle launching roars it appears to be over and settled.

Kendalan finds an elf and some others to play some archery games with and everybody else starts exchanging boasts, rather than coherent stories. During the festivities which seem to have sprung up we learn that heartwire is mined from the heart of a magic-wielding ice giant. Further queries show these being different from the frost giants of our world. When we ask where we might find such a creature we are pointed to the glacier resting on a nearby mountain. Since I cannot see any structures I ask if these ice giants live in caves within the glacier, which apparently is extremely humorous. By listening to more fragments of knowledge being thrown about we learn that the glacier IS an ice giant of about half a mile tall resting on an even larger stone giant who is the mountain. Fortunately the giants here are at least as dim as in our world and their shape changing magic has often been used against them. These giants, like our dragons, sleep most of the time, but when the gods are away for a while they are prone to waking and rampaging.

We create a plan whereby Reed will fly as close as possible to the giant's heart, then exchange places with me so I can try to mine as much heartwire without waking the giant and then get the giant to change shape so I will be thrown free with the heartwire. Some alteration and illusion magic should confuse it long enough for us to escape.

As we approach the ice giant we cannot help but be in awe of it's size. It's malignancy it almost tangible to everyone and shudders from more than mere cold pass through the group. Reed flies up and struggles a bit with strong chaotic winds on her way. She tells me to swing back and forth to attune to the motion. Then I feel I should switch and I do so. Immediately I find that while we harmonized our rhythm of motion we are in exact counter-position and I start to topple, but then miraculously I regain my footing.

The ice around me has frozen warriors encased in it on all sides staring with unseeing eyes. Before me lies a pulsating mass of ice with thin metallic wires running through it. Using my experience in mining veins although never so literally I find the best way to get to them while using my experience as a healer to ensure the ice heals almost as fast as I cut it so as not to wake the giant by injuring it. After several minutes of stressful working on a pulsating surface I feel I have gathered enough for our armor and signal Reed. Not much later I hear the familiar Bamphf of an exploding fireball and a great rush of wind flies past me. I can barely hold on as even the ice stalagmites break are turned into wind propelled ice daggers probably launched at Reed.

Then I am falling amidst frozen warriors plummeting to the rocks far below as a gigantic white dragon flaps into the skies above me. I make a safe landing amidst a field of carnage which is quickly being cleared by Cuura and villagers before we gather in a circle and fade out to the sound of home as a gigantic white dragon drops towards us.