

Grimwald's chronicles part 84

After the acceptance of my final offering on the altar I pick up the *restful crystal* and set in the breastplate of my armor. A fitting last item which will allow me to rest peacefully as well as safely. I feel my body and mind are still quite strained from all the endurance spells which allowed me to work 16 hours a day for the last few months. I guess there is a limit to the endurance of the flesh and mind even with divine assistance. Fortunately the ancestors have found excellent remedies to relax after great struggles.

For a moment I feel a hesitation. I should tutor my companions on proper rules of engagement and conduct in war, especially towards prisoners. I am not really worried about Felina or Reed, they dislike violence, and Zhae will stop when his opponent doesn't pose a challenge anymore. For Cuura it is a difficult choice, if she becomes known for compassion it will harm her capability to intimidate her enemies. We should find someone in the party who's role it will be to plead for mercy so she can remain strict and firm like a proper warleader. Kendalan and Snake are just too bloodthirsty. Well yesterday showed that Snake is willing to spare his demonkin, but it quite willing to run humans through from behind without giving them a chance to surrender. Reed is working on him and I guess it would be presumptuous of me to interfere with the work of the Voice of the gods. Kendalan however I understand. His people just like mine learned that there is no room for sentimentality when your race's survival is at stake. Of course there is nothing wrong with following tradition, but perhaps he can be convinced to follow justice and mercy as well as tradition. May be the drinking will help in my talk with Kendalan. Make me come across less stern.

Kendalan, who's people also have the wisdom of the ages, quickly comes to agree with me that the variability of humans can be quite problematic, but also offers opportunity for redemption. We have seen marvelous examples in the Abbey of Eternal Light where a human who sold his soul, and became a demon no less, was made whole again. We also agree that the defense of our people should be paramount and not all can be safely redeemed. I hope this will keep hapless underlings from being ruthlessly hunted down by Kendalan, while indeed the greater villains have to pay for their crimes. We are just celebrating our deepened understanding when Cuura informs us she found a way to get the blue starmetal doors further up the coast towards my grandfather. I gather up the boy and head for the smithy to pack. We deliver the doors and when I am done Cuura orders me to sit on a bale of straw, while Kendalan tells me to lie on a piece of cloth suspended in the air. Elves are known for their age old wisdom, but Cuura is our leader. For a while confusion besets me before my sense of duty compels me to follow orders. I like orders. The floor starts to do a imitation of a mountain path. Yes I should practice for heading north towards the mountains. Good idea of Cuura. It is a pretty poor imitation though, a real mountain path indeed also goes up and down but hardly so randomly. I am glad I am wearing my newly made *steadfast boots* or else it might have become a tricky exercise!

After a while Cuura comes up to me with a worried look and tells me we are surrounded by salt water. Bless her, she starts to care about the danger of metal corroding, it may take a while for her to become a dwarf, but some day in some life soon I think she will be granted this blessing. Dwarfencraft, metallurgy and *blueshine* should be sufficient preparation so I tell her not to worry. She is quite upset at being on a ship apparently, must be her first time. She keeps on repeating it and trying to busy herself not to think about it too much.

Brings back memories when my father took me from the mountains the first time to Neverwinter. I had never seen the ocean before and I was appalled at the danger of flimsy wood being the only shield against huge amounts of water. It took me a few years to get used to the idea. Cuura is managing quite well I must say. I must say I never enjoyed the harbor duty in the militia, no good footing on a ship.

I wake up to a woman's scream and set out to investigate. Apparently just nightmare so I go back to sleep. My own dreams were probably a bit unsettling with no good stone around and I don't wake up as rested as usual. Maybe being at sea does that to people. Just like magic, takes your mind eventually. According to Felina and Nethander the ship is carrying some mysterious cargo. I sense no evil, but the crew seems to be a bit off somehow. Kendalan and Reed also had nightmares. Reed's was quite severe. Hmm, perhaps the chest contains something in stasis, something psionic maybe? Fortunately not everybody is suffering nightmares. Cuura and Snake think it may be a targeted attack on the spellcasters. But they think our fellow sufferer, a woman called Ella, was only faking it and we are the only true victims here. How do these twisted little evil plots enter their minds? I worry when Cuura and Snake start thinking alike. A bad dream is hardly an attack, although looking at Reed it might be, but it certainly is not upsetting Kendalan or me very much.

Never the less we decide to keep watch over our vulnerable little Reed. You can never be too cautious or prepared. In the morning I will pray for some enlightenment so we can unearth this little mystery. Perhaps a *true seeing* will reveal not all of us are who we seem to be. When the time comes to assign watch duties we find out just how much we have come to depend on Cuura's leadership. Even arranging this little thing ourselves flares the tempers of Kendalan and Jay. Kendalan tries to take over Jay's self assigned position as Reed's defender. If it weren't the middle of the night and on a ship I would suggest a duel. I try to get Kendalan to let Jay have his position a while longer, even though Kendalan is sure, and possibly right, he would do a better job at it. Elves just don't understand sticking to your position. I'll explain it to him in the morning. Jay seems rather defensive so I huddle up in a corner so not to encroach on his position any further.

After a few hours Kendalan suddenly bolts through the door pursued by one of the passengers. Before I tear myself from my position Jay and Felina have blocked my access to the hallway and our enemies. A quick prayer to Moradin to aid us in the good fight results in a warm golden hue protecting us from the blows of our foe. But here without the power of stone the *sound lance* seems to lack it's usual power in battering our enemy. Then the whole cabin is engulfed in flame. I feel the hot adamantine searing my flesh and suddenly know that my ancestors have found a way to prevent this. How your armor can absorb the energy without transferring it to the body. Ancient memories of the spider wars against the drow. But before I can grasp them I feel the more recent ancestors who stood against the green tide demanding I honor their knowledge before delving deeper. How to withstand superior numbers, before learning how to withstand magic. A new flash fizzles out before engulfing us and Reed tells us she cannot hold back the fire anymore so I pray for *resistance against fire* for us all while I take up the position Jay vacated in the front-line. I want to get to the hostile mage but the priest is blocking my access to Ella, who is the source of the hostile magic.

I start hammering my way through the hostile priest intend on getting to Ella when Snake suddenly appears to block my path. What is it tonight with everybody getting in my way? As the priest is collapsing under my *foe hammer* and my companion's blows and arrows I sense an opportunity to pray for a *holy smite* on Ella, but again the power of the spell is weak if not supported by the power of stone. Even though we brought down the priest Snake is now keeping me from reaching the mage, but this time I am prepared! With a quick flick of a button I turn my warhammer into a dwarven warpike and slash past Snake's interference and land a decent blow with my *mountain hammer*. Meanwhile Ella has managed to *confuse* and *charm* Snake and not being very strong in his loyalties he turns on me (again!). Even though I have come to expect his treachery his feints are masterful to say nothing of his finding the finest seam between my hardened adamantine plates and plunging his rapier through it. When fighting me he is suddenly capable of moves I never see him use against any other. His hatred against the goodness I represent is clearly very inspiring and brings him to fighting perfection. I get the feeling he may be the death of me one day. I should talk with grandfather about the secrets of amour fortification!

Just when my situation seems untenable Cuura storms in and subdues Ella. Snake is distracted for a moment in which I use a *dispel evil* to remove his confusion. Fortunately this works, I learned that *remember truth* will just allow his hatred against all that is holy and good to break free as he recalls his demonic heritage. When he is in such a state and I would not survive another thrust of his rapier. After this narrow escape I wonder how to proceed. Reed's wailing "Noooo!" seems to have kept Kendalan from doing what is probably necessary in the end.

Snake is keeping us from bringing any harm to Ella, looking wild eyed, sword in hand. Just like he kept us from harming the Hezrou demon. Hmm, at the moment he is at least acting compassionate and lawful, protecting the prisoner rather than torturing or killing her. Perhaps it is good for him to have as much consideration for a human as much as for his demonic kin, whom he let slip from our clutches to wreak untold harm upon the innocent. Sad that he has to be forced into this behavior with magic, but at least now he gets to practice it. I decide to go see if I can restore the captain to his wits so he can do justice to our prisoners before I free Snake's mind from the good behavior Ella forced on him. On deck I notice Bear is using another of the passengers as his chew toy. Cuura quickly puts a stop to this and I manage to restore the captain's sound judgment.

Cleric 4/Crusader 1/Prestige Paladin 3/Stalwart Champion 3