

## ***Grimwald's chronicles part 86***

I warn my fellow party members about the dangers of Waterdeep, but Nethander looks at me with scorn. How could anyone not know? Well I guess in his mind there is constantly the thought of treason, theft and murder. Fortunately most of them aren't tainted in this way.

While looking for a place to stay we run into a gnome whose uncle has disappeared. He is more than willing to let us stay in his uncle's home in exchange for our help. Unfortunately Jay is far too impulsive for his own good! While our gnome host is explaining how to use the nose in alchemy, Jay eagerly follows his example and sniffs a concentrated sleep gas knocking him out.

My companions quickly find out his uncle hired some mercenaries and left to explore some ruins. Our host was sent an ancient magical ring of giant manufacture so the ruins may be of giant manufacture as well. A site from before the founding of the northern kingdoms by the dwarves. What wonderful knowledge must be stored in such ruins. What secrets could the giants have which are of interest to an alchemist? The notes he left behind suggest he was researching a long-leivity concoction.

We prepare ourselves and I check our excavation equipment before setting off in pursuit of the alchemist. Even though the alchemist's party passed through weeks ago and it has rained heavily it doesn't take our elf long to find their trail again. A comforting thought we will never lose a member of our group as long as the elf is alive. We find the remains of a campsite abandoned to the elements and a heap of rubble from a tunnel they excavated but no signs of recent activity.

The rubble indicates they desecrated various tombs and pillaged them. Reed and I try to lay their souls to rest before setting off to find the plundering barbarians hired by the alchemist.

The first part of the tunnel is through a thick layer of dirt which has settled over a human necropolis. The supports left by the barbarians are rather crude, but after some reinforcement work we can proceed in safety. After several hundreds of feet the tunnel comes to a rock face and follows the surface to an entrance. How did they know where the entrance was? Commune with earth would reveal it of course, but such a prayer is not granted to those of little devotion. The ruins are warded so I have to leave Rock behind after asking him to make sure our exit doesn't collapse.

The entry hall is of, literally, titanic proportions. The light we carry is swallowed up by the distance and doesn't even reveal the ceiling. The barbarians have hammered a breach into the 6 foot thick stone doors guarding the entry. One by one we start squeezing through into the halls beyond.

I stand in awe of a grandeur which may have been a match to the great halls of ancient deep Shanatar. Gigantic columns of stone, each 30 feet across, chiseled with runes and decorations spiraling up towards dim heights where the light never reaches. Eagerly I start translating the texts. These ruins are the burials halls constructed early in the history of the giants. They had just started carving out their empire when these halls were constructed. Imagine the glory they must have achieved at the height of their power!

Then a deep rumble reverberates through the ground and one of the gigantic pillars starts to move! Cuura quickly backs away and all of us retreat as a pillar reveals itself to be a gigantic guardian golem of sorts. Reed however manages to soothe the golem with her music reciting the reverence to the ancient kings inscribed in the walls and pillars. A good thing she can read giant! Now the golem believes we are here merely to bring our sacrifices it resumes its old position holding up the ceiling.

We slowly and much more reverently make our way deeper into the great hall. From time to time we pass another stone guardian which we dare not pass before reciting the proper formula.

Then goblets of sticky goo rain down on us. Before I can get away from the bombardment the goo hardens holding us in place and then fire starts to rain down on us. In the initial disarray we cannot see our enemy, but clearly they can see us. Damn those weak eyes surface dwellers with their lanterns! Reed flies up and with her dancing lights discovers we are being bombarded by skeletons armed with bottles of alchemical fire and tanglefoot. Careful not to disturb any gigantic golems we start picking off the skeletons by breaking their jars and torching them and soon we manage to clear a path through the ambush. Many of the skeletons seem to be in remarkably good condition for a tomb this old. Perhaps some of the barbarians have been turned into skeletons, but what happened with their flesh?