

Grimwald's chronicles part 87

As we search the hall scouting for skeletal guardians Felina makes a discovery. A complex trap guards the way to a secret door. A trap which can deal enough damage to kill a giant four times over. Fortunately it doesn't take long to find the proper way to pass through and we find ourselves in a burial crypt.

The great room is lined with sarcophagi and stretches away into the darkness. We split up to explore the room following the contours of the walls. In the center there are tables, benches and a throne as if for a great feast in honour of the king. Behind the throne there is a great stone gate leading deeper into the tomb. It is proclaimed this is the tomb of their immortal first king. The walls of the tomb are lined with the sarcophagi of heroes of the giant kingdom, with descriptions of their deeds and also the sarcophagi of the king's favorite administrators.

It is clear that some kind of sacrificial ceremonies were held here to gain the blessings of their ancestors by the giants. We gather what provisions of food and wine we have and set the table for a feast so we may pass through the gate without giving offence. As good as we can we translate the great deeds of the heroes into heraldic proclamations to appease their spirits before trying to open the gate.

As soon as we touch the gate we hear sarcophagi opening and booming footfalls drawing near. Fortunately not the sixty or so for which we set the table, the ranks of the heroes we honoured are almost silent, but the servants we ignored have come for their revenge. Using the magical power of my *steadfast boots* I position myself before the gigantic stone gate root myself to the ground and start heaving to find a way out for us all.

I feel the power of the earth and my ancestors course through me as I strain to overcome the giant's defences. Slowly but surely the stone starts to yield to my power. When the gate opens wide enough for a humanoid to pass through I step back to appraise the situation. I find that I have opened the gigantic stone doors by myself since Cuura left to help her troops. Behind me my companions are effectively cutting down the mummified remains of the giant's servants. Before me I see not the burial vault I had expected, but rather an alchemical laboratory. In one corner perched in a cage hanging close to the ceiling is a miserable looking emancipated gnome.

I enter the laboratory and make my way past the alchemical apparati to the gnome's corner when he shouts a warning. A steaming liquid pulses out of a vat and almost engulfs me. It is almost like a water elemental but the substance sears the skin. It is living acid! The alchemical golem now comes after us spraying acid and pummeling us. Nethander's blade hisses and smokes, but remains intact. The acid washing treatment has cured it so it can withstand this creature. Still his crafty twisting of the blade in the wound does not work as well on a glob of acidic goo. I turn my *rod of dwarven might* into an adamantine maul which rips loose great chunks, but with every hit I too am sprayed with the acidic goo. The goo runs off the blueshine of my armour, but bites into my flesh.

A voice in the back of my head tells me I should be able to use my armour to shield myself from the acid, but my body does not remember how to react to that knowledge. What am I thinking? How could my body remember something it has never done before?

Then the alchemical golem backs off and a new horror enters the scene. A horrible collection of bodyparts sewn together into a great misshapen humanoid body. So that is what happened to the mercenaries! But instead of a lump of flesh, which is a normal head for a flesh golem, the body is crowned with a clear crystal bowl, from which a giant's brain regards us with malevolent eyes. The immortal king kept alive by some alchemical liquid! So this is the secret the gnome sought to discover!

A great pressure builds up in my head, but then bleeds away harmlessly as water running off a mountain. The giant's brain has some psionic powers! Nethander and Reed decide to take down the king, leaving me to deal with the alchemical golem. The sounds of battle from the other side of the door are receding so the battle of Cuura, Kendalan and Felina against the mummies must almost be over. The alchemical golem has grabbed a cask of similar goo seeking to replace the bodymass he lost due to our attacks, but a swift *mountain strike* shatters the cask causing the golem to run towards another one. I also smash the next one, but the golem makes it to yet another cask and is about to add it to it's being as I whirl the great maul around and smash the cask and the golem into a fine acid rain.

Turning around I see Reed incinerating the body of the flesh golem. Nethander has smashed the crystal bowl causing the brain to flop onto the floor where it is trampled into an unrecognizable gray paste.

Thus is ended the immortal first king of the giants.

Just when I think the battle is over I see a rotting carcass limp towards me. I grab my hammer firmly, but then I notice I sense no evil from the abomination. Why is that zombie wearing Felina's armour? Ah mummy rot! Gods I heard about it, but I hadn't imagined the effects to be so severe and swift. I overcome my distaste at the puss oozing horror in front of me and start administering healing which halts the process. With restoration magic Felina will be herself again in a day or two, well physically at least. If she will ever be willing to face a mummy again I am not so certain.

In gratitude the gnomish master alchemist from Waterdeep grants us many gifts of his art.