

Grimwald's chronicles part 97

We finally have a solid base of operations where we can easily hold up the enemy by collapsing some caves and a *spike growth* blockade. But do we use it? Oh no. We get out into the open to **sneak** up on the enemy as if we were common **thieves** or **assassins** rather than standing fast against overwhelming numbers. Well at least the tribes-people will be well defended by our preparations and Zhae and Cuura can deal with any intruders while we are away... **sneaking!** Bah!

We try to bypass the enemy left when we run into a skirmish line of goblins. Cowardly running back to their masters is indeed something they have a talent for. I sit down to wait for Nethander and Felina to either report or to make a hole in what I am afraid won't be a fair fight. To my amazement I hear high pitched goblin squeals quickly cut off, but clearly too late. It is not long before the whole line yelps in alarm and rushes to safety. I move closer so I can shield Kendalan who is enjoying the venting of his race's hatred against the foul greenskins. Before we can regroup wolvis howls indicate reinforcements rushing in.

Reed tells us to keep back and diverts the wolves but the enemy is commanded by a devil and no easily swayed from his planned approach. The enemy response group had a vanguard of wolfriders and is composed of orcs on the flanks and ogres in the center. Although Nethander manages to kill the bearded devil in a duel the ogre's blows land heavily on Felina and Reed. Fortunately Reed manages a binding spell. With the orcs are unwilling to commit themselves without their leader the battle quickly turns in our favour.

Then a group of great hulking devils teleports in at our rear. Metal plates have been bolted to their bodies to act as armor, the wounds seep with blood, puss and maggots. The front-line is armed with many bladed polearms, while the second line starts winching large crossbows. According to the *Libris Potentis Infernalis* which I read in Candlekeep these beings are most likely Orthons, a type of warrior devil. Besides their physical strength their skill in cooperating as a unit is phenomenal. They are often used as guards and now seek to block our line of retreat.

While the second line of the orthon fires their crossbows at Kendalan who is causing lightning balls to spark around the unit with his elven magic the front-line closes to within striking range of my position. My *dismissal* fails to disrupt their formation and they are just too heavy for Rock to trip them so they reach me with their unit intact. Unfortunately that is their striking range not mine, given their large size and polearms. Their skilled coordinated attack quickly shows me that closing and retreating will be costly as will any prolonged confrontation. I throw a vial of holy water in the air and summon a *holy storm* to rain down on my position. The holy water immediately causes red welts and eats away their skin and the orthon withdraw.

Then Nethander decides to join me in the front-line against these vile creatures. The holy rain and the continuous barrage of lightning have left deep wounds, but it is best not to rush in unprepared. I heal my wounds and prepare to rush their position, but the crossbowmen who have noticed Kendalan is too well protected now aim their fire at me. I fully expect their bolts to deflect of my armor and am stunned they pass straight through from back to front, burning with an unearthly all consuming fire. This must be the fabled hellfire harnessed as a weapon. Reed gives us her blessing and after the healing I join Nethander, but the unit commander sees he is outmatched and the unit teleports away.

We return to the caves to tend our wounds and manage to evacuate without further harassment by the enemy who has only now become aware of our true strength and the depth of our resources. They will be better prepared next time, but so will I! For a moment I wonder if there may be courage and honor in Nethander, but then I realize it is probably just insane hatred which he inherited as a legacy of the bloodwar between demon and devilkin. Still his blade has found it's path!