

## 51: There be traps

The two disc like keys opened the hatch leading down to the lower levels. Reed explained that with Grimwald downstairs carrying the last key, just two of them were enough.

The sturdy dwarf was looking up two us, bruised and battered from the fall, but apparently nothing serious was damaged in his body and after a minor healing spell from Reed he was ready to continue. He told us that we were entering the living area of the keep and traps were less likely to be here. Fortunately Felina and I were keeping our guard up, because there were traps here indeed!

Then the sliding door upstairs closed and our Elf started whining about his irrational fear of being locked up below the ground. Our Elven friend stands in the path of a charging dragon with nothing more than his bow, loosing a steady flow of arrows into it, without faltering and without loosing as much as his concentration, but when he is underground, he loses his resolve. Somehow such irrational fears are not becoming his stature as the hero we are all striving to become.

In the meantime Felina and I start to scout the area. Guard rooms and defensive corridors open up to a throne room. Several doors lead out to further corridors and a strange structure was in the centre of the room. The floor inside the structure was made of a different kind of stone and I figured this was our way down. After a quick discussion I was able to give Zhae a mental push to become the parties guinea pig and he entered the structure, but nothing happened.

After a quick search of the room I discovered an illusionary wall leading into the keeps kitchen. All kind of delicious looking foods were kept in stasis all these years. But these foods were made of strange ingredients, like nightingale tongues, kitten tails and butterfly wings. One of the stasis pillars contained filthy looking dwarven waybread. I remembered this tower being a test and decided I would eat this “proper” food together with Zhae. The bread didn’t even taste bad!

The remaining rooms in the kitchen didn’t reveal anything useful and we continued our search. The other rooms contained some strange automated machinery of which one was a grape press, the other one the power source. It looked like one was powering the grape press, the others probably powered the gun on top. Two more machines were not connected at the time and we left them as they were.

Another corridor led us to the Keeps treasure room heavy traps were in place, one of them being the mind burn trap that probably got the better of the other parties fighter. Another one was a trap that attacked the life force of the unfortunate being who tripped it. The famous constitution of the dwarfs was probably what saved Grimwald life when he set that trap off. Wisely we decided to search for a key first and we continued into another corridor. This one too was trapped with fire, but we were able to dodge that one. A room opened up with four automatons standing the guard.

Such creatures are not susceptible to my precision strikes and I kept my defence up. While doing my utmost best to keep one of them busy enough, to allow the others to cut the automatons down I watched the splendour of Zhae’s fighting technique. He shifted into the preparations of what I think is called the mountain hammer. He uses a combination of brute strength in combination with precision. His fist slammed down squarely in the centre of the automatons breast plate! All his strength, weight and momentum concentrated on the correct spot. After the blow he stopped completely, it was like watching a billiard game I once saw in Calimport. Normally you would suspect the automaton to falter back from the onslaught of

that blow. But strangely enough Zhae placed the blow so perfectly that all that power was transferred completely into damaging the construct. It just stopped there, standing perfectly still for a second before just falling apart. He is truly becoming a master.

Then Grimwald called us back from the room and we continued our search and found an ugly shrine of a dwarven goddess. I decided that it would not be wise to steal the golden idol of the goddess and used my time to taunt Kendalan a bit with this fear of confined space a bit. He should just snap out of it. His fears may present a threat for us in the future, he already forgot the fire trap we just discovered and paid dearly for it when setting it off. Reed reprimanded me for torturing the Elf with his fears, she was probably right, it wasn't going to help the party.