

## 66: Maze of Rage and Bane

It's time we take the fight underground. After being hunted down on the surface and the treason from Kakanos, it's time we'll face some new challenges in a different environment. Grimwald is making sure we all understand the dangers of the underdark, blah blah blah.

Actually I do listen and try to prepare as best as possible, since I live by my sword and my wits, the preparation was minimal. We did however switch a bit with the treasure recovered from the Thayans. Grimwald is still very vulnerable with only my bracers of armour and we still had a ring of protection that went to Grimwald until he was able to finish his new armour.

The horses were sent back to the inn and Kendalan's Bear was sent to some druids for care-taking. With that we were ready for the journey.....

The tunnel down quickly opened up to a magically created wide staircase going down, opening up into a large cavern with a skeleton warning us against proceeding further. Apparently the poor guy had been standing there for thousands of years bound to warning visitors against proceeding.

He did however point us to the correct way. Three routes going west, the five others were not. Of these three routes we had a maze, a long route and a route that went down towards death. Yet all routes were equally dangerous. Against my wishes the group chose to face the perilous Maze. Before leaving Reed somehow released the skeleton from his duty and he crumbled to dust.

Upon entering the maze, Felina and I tried the "always keep left" approach to the maze. That didn't work because we were walking a circle, returning to the door we entered the maze in. Strangely enough the actual door had changed. This Maze did not follow the normal rules of logic so I changed my approach of navigating this maze to "Follow Lady Luck" This approach brought us through some new doors. The walls of the maze were covered with glowing runes or tribal signs. The runes were glowing green at first, but after we passed through the doors and entered a new part of the maze, the runes were glowing blue. Lady Luck navigated us through the maze until we struck a dead end.

Upon returning to the last crossing a new pathway had opened up. Then suddenly Grimwald starting swearing in foul languages and immediately the runes on the walls turned to red. This swearing attracted a Minotaur that charged right into Zhae taking him on the horns. After the initial damage to Zhae the monster was caught in the middle of our combined attacks and brought down very quickly. After the kill the runes turned to white and lady Luck led us to another doorway. I opened the door and we were back in the first part of the maze.

Kendalan then decided he knew better and decided to take the lead. He led us through the maze in a way that was certainly not making sense, but somehow the Elf was sure of his plan. Any way he led us through a garden with mushrooms and a small fountain.

Grimwald explained that some mushrooms were nutritious and pointed out some poisonous ones. He reacted shocked when I suggested to pick some of the edible ones to replenish our waning stock of food and when I tried to prepare my fathers sword with poisoned spores I felt very bad for deliberately making the blade dirty?????

In the meantime Odvar decided to drink from the fountain declaring that it was delicious beer. That was odd because it appeared different to anybody who smelled it. In my case it smelled

like very fine wine. While Odvar drank the stuff, I decided to fill an empty water-skin and wait for any negative side effects to Odvar.

Kendalan led us deeper and deeper into the maze until we encountered a new door. I heard heavy breathing behind the door and we discovered a second Minotaur. The runes turned red again and we prepared for a new fight.

Having analysed the last fight against the minotaur I concluded several things. The first one was: Don't get charged by the thing because that hurts badly. Next matter of importance was the huge amount of damage it takes to bring it down, followed by the almost impossibility of missing the huge beasts. Last but not least I found out that It couldn't be flanked.

With these lessons in our mind we stepped back from the door and waited for the minotaur. But all preparations in spite, the fight took a different turn. The Beast didn't charge the door, but took a detour to charge us from behind. Fortunately I discovered it quickly enough and unleashed a bane on my enemies. The mazes liked that and I felt my body strengthen in preparation of the fight. Far to the back of my comrades the Minotaur appeared and took a few arrows from Kendalan. Odvar on the other end started to enter battle rage and went crazy, planting his axe into the back of the poor Elf. In the meantime I was standing on the far end of the room and knew when I was fighting on the defensive, I could fend off the attacks of the Minotaur the best. I goaded the beast into focusing his attacks purely on me, while I fought defensively, allowing the others to mangle the creature without risk of being wounded themselves.

The plan worked to a point. Cuura joined me in the fight and we brought the thing down quickly, however I the beast was able to hit me more frequently than missing me despite my impressive defences. Mangled, but satisfied I concluded that my friends had calmed down Odvar, the runes turned white and Cuura was kind enough to lend me her belt of curing.