

Norbert's Notes **Pretty Button (138)**

In which my companions act more erratic than ever

This tower and its mysteries. I was sure - sure - there would be a hidden door. As I set about to search for it, probably just to distract me, Nethander starts flitting about the room like a maniac, randomly knocking on walls and tapping on the floor. I instead divide the surface of the room in thirty-two quadrants. Going over them twice, I try not to get upset by the tiefling's antics. But Efira, the idiot girl, disrupts my methodical search again and again, swinging her club at the wall, and very nearly at my head.

Still; I complete my search, finding nothing. I have faith in my abilities, and, adding the minor chance that Nethander or the jungle woman's efforts would have had at exposing any hidden doors or mechanisms, my calculations of probability indicate that there is indeed very little sense in continuing to search this room for hidden doors. There is nothing here, or at least, nothing that will reveal itself to us.

We regroup, trying to gather our senses. I argue we should finish what we started, and explore the corridor of my heroic exploits to see why the thirty kobolds - not ghosts or guardians, kobolds - had been waiting for us in their ambush. Yet they do not follow me; instead, Grimwald rushes off 'to fight evil', and the rest of us follow. We burst into a room where flying garments and equipment try to strangle and bash us to death. I shoot for a crown, seemingly of gold; if there is a leader among them, this must be it. I nab it and throw a net around it, stuffing it in my Haversack. With some athletic stunts and priestly powers, Nethander and Grimwald figure out a way to reach, and shatter, a malevolent glowing crystal, and the intelligence of the animated objects disappears.

Ten minutes later, and siege engines, twenty feet tall and more, tower above us; magic-mechanical marvels, half-aware of their surroundings, a fantastic puzzle and a powerful weapon at the same time. I'd like to meet the thinkers and tinkerers who engineered them.

I would have a word with them, to be sure, about the fact one of these machines nearly crushed me under its wheels as I was trying to hide inside for protection from the sudden death-trap they had become after Grimwald and Nethander ran inside them. A death-trap of our own making.

Of our own making.

I have a terrible sinking feeling. The sudden irrational exuberance of Nethander and Cuura, after passing through that heavily trapped door through which they entered this evil keep, their insistence that we should follow them because it was 'perfectly safe', Nethander's recurring strange suggestion not to step on one of the steps... just not to step on that one step and then we would be ok... and then Cuura forcing Grimwald to

come along by *ordering* him. Was it natural for them to act this erratic?

I cannot say for sure if anything has affected them, but it is a fact that both Nethander and Cuura have acted *very* impulsively, rushing on, almost as if they were trying to get us into danger. Grimwald, atypically, also was rushing off directly after the grim battle against the ancient corrupted heroes and the evil spirit, at the infested pool, giving us no time to rest and strategise, though he explained out of some mind-numbing loyalty to his god. Cuura, typically, but to the extreme, bashed open the door to this room even as *Nethander and I were trying to pick the lock*. And then both Grimwald and Nethander, who may be impulsive but whom I doubt to have a death wish, especially so soon since returning from the Afterlife, started *jumping in siege engines they knew nothing about, and pushing and pulling all the pretty buttons and levers, with is still standing around them*.

Am I getting paranoid? Is this group in need of a clear-headed leader even more than I thought? Or are they acting out of character, and has some magic been worked here, by that door? If it has, I believe it has been very subtle. But it is now clear to me all three of them have acted more impulsively than before; all three of them may still be under some spell to move ahead just a little bit too quickly, to do things they would not otherwise do, to endanger the mission.

In the end, I am nearly crushed under the treads of one of the machine. It is Reed who saves me, endangering her own life. I am thankful to her, but I do not know whom to speak to about this potential threat. Not to her, not after what happened in the forest. Efira has not the werewithal to grasp the severity of the situation; Kendalan seems too remote to do anything about it. Neither of us, I believe, would have the skill or power to remedy a mind-affecting spell woven as subtly as this one. Am I losing myself to heroic impulses? Am I getting paranoid? I need to meditate.