

EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARY OF D'GRAN

- KELASHIEN HAS OFFERED ME THREE POTIONS AND A PAIR OF BRACERS IN EXCHANGE FOR ALERTING HER TO TESSIMON'S TRAVELS THROUGH THE GATE. "WHAT SHALL I DO WITH THESE TRINKETS?" I SCOFFED, "SHALL I TAKE TO COOKING THE MEATS AND LIFTING MY SKIRT FOR RAC AND DECH AS WELL?" SHE KNEW SHE HAD FAILED, BUT LEFT THE ITEMS AS A GIFT. AS LONG AS THOSE TWO WILY WITCHES ARE AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS, THERE IS A RICH PROFIT TO BE MADE FROM BOTH OF THEM. PERHAPS SLAZH CAN FORM THE BRACERS INTO SOME SORT OF STEIN...
- TWO WAGONS ARRIVED FROM RASTOR. EVERYONE IN THE VILLAGE IS DRUNK - THEY FOUND THE BODY OF THE SWAMP HAG ADrift NEAR LOGGER'S BAY. THAT SHOULD EASE TRAFFIC THROUGH THE SWAMP. THE GIANTS HAVE BEEN COMPLAINING ABOUT NOT GETTING ENOUGH MACHIK, THOUGH THEY EAT FOUR DOZEN DAILY AS IT IS.
- DAMN HEONAR AND TITTESH! I'D BREAK THEIR FINGERS IF I DIDN'T NEED THEIR STEELS. THEY GAVE SOME NEW CONCOCTION TO THE BUGBEARS THAT GOT THEM DRUNK FOR TWO STRAIGHT DAYS AND HAD THEM ALL SNEEZING SOME BLuish GAS THAT BURNED THE EYES. HALF MY TROOTS WERE DRUNK AND THE OTHER HALF COULDN'T SEE PAST THEIR SWOLLEN CHEEKS. EVEN I HAD TO MAN A POST! AS PUNISHMENT, I'M HAVING THE WIZARDS CLEAR UP THE VOMIT WITH THEIR HANDS TIED BEHIND THEIR BACKS AND THEIR ANKLES SHACKLED. SOME CREATIVE PRESTIDIGITATION WILL BE REQUIRED TO GET THAT TASTE OFF THEIR TONGUES.
- THAT VAIN WITCH KELASHIEN FINALLY BROUGHT ME SOMETHING WORTH MY SERVICES - A FINE PAIR OF MAGICAL GLOVES. I GLADLY TOLD HER OF TESSIMON'S VISIT TO THE FAME - AND OF THE DELIGHTFUL NEW ARM SHE BORE. KELASHIEN FLUSHED WITH ENvy. SHE ASKED ME IF I COULD STARE SOME TROOTS TO STRIKE AT THE FIRE TEMPLE WITH HER, BUT I DECLINED. I WONDER WHAT TESSIMON WOULD PAY FOR THIS KNOWLEDGE. ANYONE WITH HE DRACK'S EAR MUST HAVE ACCESS TO FAR GREATER GIFTS THAN A SIMPLE PAIR OF MITTENS.
- HE DRACK'S DEMANDS WEAR ON ME! FIRST HE REFUSES TO INCREASE MY PAY, THEN HE DRAFTS TWO GIANTS AND HALF MY BUGBEARS FOR SOME SORT OF DITCH DIGGING OPERATION! NO TIME TO HIRE REINFORCEMENTS - THE TROOTS LEAVE IMMEDIATELY. "CONSIDER THEM PERMANENTLY REASSIGNED" HE TELLS ME IN THAT PRIM TONE OF HIS. MY BLOOD IS BOILING. THERE HAD BEST BE AN EXTRA LEFT IN THE WAGON THIS WEEK.
- THE BUGBEARS NEARLY SHOT TWO DARK ELVEN AMBASSADORS LAST NIGHT. THEY SMUCK UP TO THE MAIN GATE AT THREE IN THE MORNING AND SPOOKED THE GUARDS. I NEARLY GOTTED ONE OF THE IMPUDENT BASTARDS MYSELF, BUT THE OTHER STOKED THE PASS PHRASES FOR THE FAME BEFORE I COULD AS MUCH AS SCRATCH HIS SMOTTY COMPAION. THEY WERE ACCOMPANIED BY A RED-HAIRED WOMAN AND A YOUNG BOY WITH TURTLE EYES. PERHAPS WE SHARE THE SAME FATHER. NEITHER THE WOMAN OR THE BOY STOKED THE ENTIRE TIME THEY WERE IN MY COMPANY, ALTHOUGH SHE TOOK SOME WINE WHILE WAITING FOR THE ESCORT TO ARRIVE. FROM THE SOUNDS OF IT, THE DOOMDREAMERS MUST BE PLOTTING ANOTHER MEETING. HE DRACK TOLD ME TO EXPECT A WAGON WITH A "SPECIAL VISITOR FROM OUR FRIENDS TO THE NORTH."
- OUR "SPECIAL FRIEND" IS LATE, PERHAPS DELAYED BY THE THUNDERSTORM THAT POUNDED THE MOUNTAIN LAST NIGHT. I'LL SEND OUT A PATROL THIS MORNING TO SEE IF HIS WAGON WAS STRANDED IN THE WEATHER.

- NIGHTFALL AND THE PATROL HAS NOT RETURNED. THIS IS UNUSUAL. I HAVE DRILLED MY TROOPS FAR BETTER THAN THIS. IT IS LIKELY THEY HAVE BEEN PRESSED INTO FOOT SERVANTS OF THAT BEASTED BEHOLDER AND THAT'S CAUSED A DELAY. I AM SUSPICIOUS, HOWEVER. WE'LL LOCK DOWN THE MAIN GATE AND DOUBLE THE WATCH UNTIL THEY RETURN.
- GONE FOR A DAY AND NO WORD OR SIGNAL, THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE ROAMED THAT FAR WITHOUT REPORTING IN. I CAN ONLY ASSUME THEY'RE DEAD OR RUN OFF - WHICH IS WORSE THAN DEAD WHEN I FIND THEM. ONE OF THE WATCH SHOT AT AN OWL THIS MORNING. CURIOUS BAD OMEN. I HAVEN'T SEEN AN OWL ON THE MOUNTAIN IN YEARS...
- TOOK TEN OF MY BEST BUGBEAR SHOCK TROOPS OUT AND FOUND THE MEN DEAD IN THE DITCH THREE MILES DOWN THE MOUNTAIN. MOSTLY SWORD WOUNDS - ONE MAN HAD BEEN CUT FROM HIS NECK TO HIS KNEE. WE RECOVERED WHAT EQUIPMENT WE COULD. WENT ANOTHER FEW MILES AND SPOTTED THE WAGON DUMPED IN THE BRUSH BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD. LOOKED LIKE IT HAD BEEN FIREBALLED - ALTHOUGH IT WAS ALSO STRANGELY WET INSIDE. THE BEHOLDER HAD BEEN SKEWERED THROUGH THE MAIN EYE. WE LET SOME OF THE DOGS WORK THE AREA AND FOUND A FRESH GRAVE CONTAINING A MALE HUMAN. LOOKS LIKE HE WAS RIPPED IN HALF BY THE TROOP. WE TOOK THE CORPSES BACK TO THE TEMPLE OF ALL CONSUMPTION. HOPEFULLY THERE'S ENOUGH OF THE EYE LEFT TO RAISE. I'M SURE SOMEONE WILL GET THE HUMAN TO TALK OR WALK. EITHER WAY IT SERVES US NOW.
- HOW MANY MASTERS MUST I PLEASE?? FIRST HE DRACK DEMANDS A FULL DETAILED REPORT, IN PERSON! HE WAS QUITE DISTURBED ABOUT THE AMBUSHES. HE SEEMS UNUSUALLY EDGY LATELY. I'M GLAD THE DUTY OF PATROLLING THE MOUNTAINS FALLS ON THIGTAR'S SHOULDERS AND NOT MINE. HE CERTAINLY WILL NOT BE GETTING ANY ELVES THIS WEEK. NONETHELESS HE DRACK WANTS EVERY WAGON SEARCHED AND THE MAIN GATE BARRED AT ALL TIMES. SUCH NEEDLESS INCONVENIENCE! I SCARCELY RETURN FROM MY DEBRIEFING AND USKATHOTH IS HISSING ABOUT INTRUDERS AND SOME MASSACRE AT THE EARTH TEMPLE, DEMANDING I TAKE A SQUAD AND INVESTIGATE. THAT SCALY FIEND HASN'T OFFERED ME A SINGLE GIFT OF GOODWILL SINCE HE OUSTED TESSIMON'S SPIES. HE'LL HAVE TO EARN MY COOPERATION OR BEG HIS CASE WITH OAMARTHIS IF HE SUDDENLY NEEDS MEN SO DEARLY.
- THINGS ARE AFOOT AT THE FIRE TEMPLE, TESSIMON HAS BEEN TO SEE HE DRACK THREE TIMES IN AS MANY DAYS. NO WORD WHAT THE PROBLEM IS, I SHALL HAVE TO TELL HER WITH SOME FINRIEGEL WINE. SURELY SUCH AN IMPORTANT ISSUE WOULD BE WORTH AN ENCHANTED BLADE IF KELLASHEIM WERE PROPERLY BAILED. THIGTAR MAY GET HIS ELF THIS WEEK AFTER ALL - SOME OF HIS WAST RIDERS SPOTTED A STRANGE OUTCROPPING IN THE ROAD, WASHED UP BY THE RECENT RAIN. TESSIMON GLOATED SOMETHING ABOUT "TERRENGIT'S SUCCESS" AS SHE RELAYED THE NEWS. PERHAPS I CAN BARTER THIS INTO A BLADE AND A NICE CHAIN SHIRT.

- THE STINK OF THAT OVERAMBITIOUS LIZARD UREMIL AND HIS PRIDE OF SPOILED KITTENS STILL REEKS IN THE HALLS. HEDRACK DISPATCHED UREMIL TO HELP HIS BROTHER DEAL WITH THESE INTRUDERS THAT STRUCK AT THE EARTH TEMPLE. THE TROGS ARE COMING BUT WEAK, I SHALL HAVE TO FORTIFY THE NORTHERN FLANK, JUST IN CASE. BUT HOW SHALL I FORTIFY, HEDRACK? HOW!? ONCE AGAIN YOU HAVE ROBBED ME OF MY BEST MEN. TWO MORE GIANTS AND ANOTHER TEN BUGBEARS!! I CANNOT RULE MY POSITION WITHOUT TROOPS! I HAVE WORKED FIERCELY TO BREAK THESE MEN AND THEN YOU STEAL THEM FROM ME AND SEND THEM OFF ACROSS THE SWAMP? THEFT, HEDRACK, THEFT! THOSE ARE MY SOULS, THAT IS MY SWEAT ON THEIR BROWS AND MY BLOOD ON THEIR BACKS! FINE THEM, ROB ME OF MY WORK. THEY WERE BUT MUD WHEN I FOUND THEM AND I CRAFTED THEM INTO TEMPERED STEEL. I CAN DO IT AGAIN.
- NO WORD FROM KELASHIEM IN NEARLY A WEEK. SHE HAS PROMISED ME A NEW SWORD AND A PLATINUM BELT. SHE SHALL PAY FOR HER LASSITUDE - I MAY NEED SOME FINE PLATINUM EARRINGS TO MATCH THAT BELT. NO MATTER, I'VE LEARNED FROM THIGGAR THAT NONE OTHER THAN THE SECOND OF THE TRIAD ITSELF IS OVERSEEING THE TRANSPORT OF THE OBELISK TO SCORITHRA. THINGS MOVE FAST. THE RECKONING TIME IS NIGH WHEN THE FOUR MOONS SHALL DANCE AROUND THE SON AND OUR DARK FATHER WILL WALK THE LAND AGAIN.
- TROUBLE. DORRESK OF THE EARTH TEMPLE REPORTS A COMPLETE ROUT OF THE TROGS. THE INTRUDERS ARE POWERFUL, WITH MIGHTY WARRIORS AND STEEL CASTERS AMONG THEM. I MUST PREPARE...