

## Trollius And Grunt

Trollius was a little peeved at his twin. “This is the last time, Grunt – and this time I mean it, bellowed Trollius.

Grunt, to give him some credit, did look sheepish. Well, as sheepish as a 120cm goblin could look, especially with those fearsome teeth, pointy ears, scarlet eyes, and scabrous nails. Not to mention the stone like scales pitted all over his body.

Trollius, his dwarven cousin was the King of the Latter-Day dwarves. He was always thundering and ‘damming’ the eyes of his brother, but usually it was a ten minute lambast and that was it. The courtiers had diplomatically all backed out of the throne room as this bombardment of bellowing had lasted for almost an hour. Admittedly destroying the throne and cracking the Ancient Spear of Demetrius was a bit much, even for Grunt. So, he stood his ground and let the King shout himself hoarse. Why not, he was still hung-over anyway.

Twenty minutes later Trollius finally ran out of steam and Grunt shamefacedly backed out of the throne room. We hasten to add only shamefacedly because he had just vomited all over the King’s best pair of unicorn boots. And, in fact, his face showed a little terror. Even though Grunt was twenty three seconds older than his brother, because he took after the Goblin side of his father, and not the dwarf side of his mother, he had been relegated to a prince of the Realm – in title only.

Trollius looked at his boots, and tutted. That brother of mine will give me a heart attack one of these days. Many of the courtiers had chastised Trollius into removing Grunt from the court, but Trollius had a liking for his sibling that withstood their badgering. Grunt could always make him feel better about himself when times were bad. And times had been bad lately. The near destruction of the Spear would have been disastrous for his administration, and would have certainly led to the removal of Grunt from the City-under-Stone.

Bilious Funkle Vater loathed Prince Grunt with a special animosity, ever since the day that Grunt had bested him in the Year of Challenges drinking contest. The Year of Challenges lasted for 235 days – nearly the full year minus two days for resting in the middle of the festivities. The Challenges could be martial, spiritual, in fact just about anything that could be thought up in the twenty-one years the Challenges were separated by. Three years ago the “Beating Heads” alehouse had come up with the drink a pint of Gator blood contest. Now Gator blood was a vile tasting brew at 375 volume, and could usually only be drank at sip level. To drink a whole pint usually took a strong stomach, a stronger bottom, and a degree of death wish. There were eighteen contestants for the coveted Cup of Mongroth (an ancient pint pot said to be inhabited with the spirit of an ancient warrior named Mongroth). And Grunt had out sipped Bilious by four seconds. Four seconds. Bilious was fuming. To be beaten was bad enough, but to be beaten by a Goblin. He was laughed at for weeks afterwards.

On hearing that Prince Grunt was in the King’s bad graces for the umpteenth time this year made Bilious happy. Very happy, indeed. So happy he nearly bought a round of drinks. Nearly.

When Artor Gilgraven mounted the doorstep of the Beating Heads and saw Bilious chortling happily to himself he thought his search for an assassin may just about be over. Sitting down next to him he bellowed for a few tankards of the 'Happy'. The most expensive brew in the City-under-Stone. Bilious was all ears as he listened to the proposition put to him.

For nearly fifty years Trollius had ruled, mostly benevolently, the City-under-Stone and the surrounding mountain range of Nemesis. Keeping the sixty two thousand odd dwarves, goblins, and orcs happy was a monstrous position as they were usually at each others throats. The Union of Blacksmiths was his major pain at the moment as he had just disbanded the Utheran arm of the Union and they were not best pleased, to put it politely.

The Latter day dwarves had been the ruling religion for almost one thousand years in the ????? constellation and was lately being overruled by the smaller religious political parties. The Utherans had recently been found to be conspiring with the Trolls to the East of the Nemesis ranges. In a bid for what, only the Lutherans knew. And they weren't telling. So the other parties had backed, for once, their King and threw the Lutheran leaders in Cling – meaning the mines of Mythril – for the next ten years. Not long by dwarven standards as they usually reached 300 easily.

Artor and Bilious were standing in the plaza, just outside the Inn of One Thousand Pleasures when they saw Grunt being thrown out the left hand front window. They looked at each other gleefully as they could see that he was clearly Pissed as a Lycanthrope on two week old blood and decided now was the perfect opportunity. They tip-toed forward, not easy for two 300 pound, 4 foot dwarves.

They were just about to jump on grunt when out a side alley an arrow flew past them and landed in Grunt's side. Grunt screamed. The two looked at each other, dazzled like a meow in a carriages lights. Out of the window of the inn they could see many faces appear. They ran and left Grunt slip wearily into unconscious.

Artor and Bilious were arrested two hours later trying to escape the City-under-Stone. They were routinely tortured and when they didn't have anything of significance to say were placed in the Mines of Mythril for at least fifty years. For to attack a royal was considered one of the Heinous Crimes, along with attacking, and blasphemy in Kirk.

Grunt survived the attack, and when he eventually woke he was borne to the throne room to be interrogated by his brother. "What did you see, Grunt" asked his brother, a little tenderly. He did have a soft spot for his brother, everyone knew that. "All I can remember was this big bloody spear shooting towards me". "KO, you can hypnotize him now, Mephisto", ordered Trollius.

The Mythril mage, Mephisto, looked into Grunt's eyes and whispered, then he blew the seeds of Mythril into Grunt's face and watch him fall into a deep trance.

"Who did you see in the dark" commanded Mephisto. "I saw, why, I saw my brother, King Trollius throw a spear at me" The throne room did a collective gasp.