

# Infernal Zoo 12 Back Ground Stories

## John Leeman

In the icy expanse of frozen wastes, far beyond the lands of men, Ogres have long been a primal force of destruction. For centuries, they survived by raiding and pillaging among themselves, ruled by the strongest and fiercest. That was until Urag, a shaman unlike any other, rose to power. He was not the largest nor the most brutal, but he claimed a gift far greater than strength — Urag could hear the grotesque whispers of their only god, "The Great Maw", an ancient, insatiable deity of hunger and destruction.

Urag's prophecies foretold a time when the ogres would leave their frozen hell and descend upon the world of men, devouring all in their path. Under Urag's unshakable leadership, the scattered tribes unified into a fanatical horde, following his every word as if it came directly from the Maw itself. Their army swelled, bolstered by the terrifying presence of the largest and most feared beasts of the northern land. Frost mammoths and man-crusher giants learned to head Urag's every command.

The heart of the army were Urag's personal warriors, "The Flashtakers," a savage cult of ogre fanatics who believe that consuming the flesh of their enemies will bring them closer to the Maw's power. They obey any command from Urag, even if it would lead to their own deaths, trusting that through him, they served the will of The Maw.

Now, with winter's cruelest breath at their backs, the army of ogres marches south, driven by the Maw's unquenchable hunger and Urag's visions of conquest. The lands of men tremble, for soon the frozen hordes will arrive, and nothing will sate their hunger.

### Greasy Gold'digga (Zach Brooks OK)

Greasy was a runt of an ogre, and nobody liked him, so they dumped him in the cave with the scraplings. Deep in the cave Greasy found a hidden vein of gold, he rallied the scraplings promising to free them from the grip of the mean ogres if they would help him mine the precious metal and they agreed.

Soon enough Greasy had enough gold to hire a rival ogre mercenary band and with it he crushed the bullies that tossed him in that dirty cave. He's the khan now, he goes by Greasy Gold'digga and he searches for any gold he can find to keep his mercenary army satisfied.

## **The Lost Expedition of Dun Gromar**

R. Scott Levin

It is known that the race of dwarves who live deep within the mountains are master storytellers, and keep meticulous records of past events and wrongdoings. Tales of victory are sung throughout their halls, and during times of great triumph their most storied

warriors are immortalized in ballads to recall their heroic deeds. But not all stories are of victory. Amongst the dwarves there is one pain felt stronger than any physical wound... the grudge.

Dwarves do not take a grudge lightly. A simple misunderstanding, or a sideways business dealing would not incur such wrath. Even a minor defeat on the battlefield would rarely find its way into the eternal record of the grudge keeper. No, only the most heinous and terrible act can warrant the diction of a grudge. The grudge is a debt owed by its author, one that can only be crossed out by the ink of bloody vengeance. A grudge is passed down from generation to generation, from father to son. And no grudge cuts deeper in the racial memory of the nation of dwarves as the loss of the fortress of Dun Gromar.

Nearly fifty years have passed since the fortress fell to the corrupted worshippers of the dark gods. Dun Gromar was known as the jewel of the dwarven empire, with mines three times more profitable than any other hold. The hold was a hub for trade and commerce, with vast income earned through its dealings with the budding Empire of Sonnstahl. Dun Gromar also held tremendous strategic value. Nestled deep within the icy northern mountains, the fortress held the only pass in many leagues, and acted as a bulwark against the rampaging northern orc and goblin tribes. It was thought that the fortress was nigh impregnable, and so held a tremendous vault of the most powerful runic weapons, armor and priceless artifacts, as well as an innumerable wealth of gems, and gold. King Morri Ursunthrone ruled with a soft hand behind the plated glove of his elite warriors. Known

he led his warriors into battle born by a gigantic northern bear of war, earning him his namesake.

During the end of the eighth age, the fools of the runic temple attempted to harness *The Device*, tearing the veil itself apart, and

unleashing the demonic forces of the Immortal Realm upon the physical plane. The kingdom of Dwarves was split apart, with the southern holds being completely cut off from their northern kin. Countless thousands of warriors died in the weeks following the breach in the veil, and all communication lines were lost with the fortress of Dun Gromar. Nothing was known of the fortress, until nearly three years after the tearing of the veil, when King Ursunthroner returned to the southern kingdom aboard a fleet of flying gyromatic machines.

For over a month, the king locked himself away in his chambers and took neither food nor drink. Only his loyal bear would feed, and it roared with fury at any who attempted to reach the king's door. Finally, Ursunthroner emerged. Carved on his bare chest were bloody markings written in the ancient dwarven tongue, which few still speak. He uttered no words. His grudge was born on his very flesh.

Many things occurred over those next months, but in the end, the King never spoke. The news of the fall of Dun Gromar reached out like a stormcloud amongst the kingdom. Taverns were empty. Wives and children wept. The cult of seekers found new acolytes showing up to their temples with bloody runes carved in their bodies to imitate the king. For nearly a year, the shock of loss held the dwarven people trapped in a black malaise.

But the dwarven people do not forget. They are a relentless race, and they will throw themselves back at their enemies until their foe is defeated or until they themselves have been slain. The Grudge of Dun Gromar has never been written in the record of the grudge keeper. No such record need be kept. The memory alone is unforgettable agony.

Finally, the King and his forces took flight in mighty airships. Dozens of gyromatic machines lifted off into the air, bearing the mightiest airborne force the kingdom had ever seen. Elite Skyhammer Marines

moved across the decks of a dozen craft, with the runes of the vile grudge engraved into their hull. Gyrocopters buzzed around in escort like angry wasps. Leading the fleet was a massive flagship, the Skyhammer of Dun Gromar, the largest and mightiest flying machine ever created. The Expedition to Dun Gromar flew north.

Nearly fifteen years have passed since King Morri Ursunthron and his fleet flew north to settle the mighty grudge. Nothing is known of the final fate of the king and his men. Amongst hushed voices and quiet tables, rumors are spread. Some of victory, some of tragic fate. Whether the King is alive is nothing more than the stuff of gossip. The dwarven people will continue to live their lives, but the fate of King Morri Ursunthron, and the grudge of Dun Gromar are never far from their minds. Perhaps in time, some truth will come to be known of the King, and the fate of the Lost Expedition of Dun Gromar.

## **Micah Pier**

The crone's council met to discuss the supply chain problems. Inevitably, the discussion turned to the usefulness of the male elves, or lack thereof.

Dabmorra maintained that male elves were entirely unsuited to war, and provisioning them was a foolish waste of resources. She pointed out that a male's essential cowardice and ineptitude were indisputable qualities of that sex, and no amount of discipline, even threat of death by flaying, could cure those inherent defects.

Crone Fortys, one of the more ancient members of the council, deigned to provide counterpoint. She maintained that males had always been useful as cannon fodder. For example, if crossing an exposed position, pickets sent directly in front of the temple regiments could absorb arrows, bolts, and even spells that

otherwise would have felled witch elves. It was unimportant what the males' nominal training was in this regard- corsairs were as good as black guard for this duty.

Dabmorra argued that even in this role, the inherent cowardice of the males betrayed their usefulness. Shielding pickets were known to panic, a rout of the males could slow an assault, and it could be somewhat demoralizing for witch elves to dispatch them as they fled. There was general agreement on this point, and examples of this sort of thing happening were recounted by various council members, who never tired of telling war stories.

Vorgyva, one of the younger and more vicious lieutenants, spoke up. She argued that males could be useful if given a weapon more suited to cover their deficiencies, such as a missile weapon. Shooting the enemy at a distance required but little courage, in the event a male so armed could not figure out how to avoid being charged, well, that was not great loss. The council debated Vorgyva's position, and a general agreement was reached that it made sense, at least in theory. Vorgyva, though young, was beginning to be listened to by some on the council.

In the end, a tenuous compromise on the present supply crisis was reached. The male elves would remain on this expedition under penalty of death, but the crones would cease to provision them. It was theorized, with some good sense, that forcing them to exist solely on what they might plunder would be sufficient motivation for them to contribute to the expedition.

## **Josh Guirin**

Ever since the great leader of Chaos and his mount fell at the infernal gates of Dun Gromar to that rag tag collection of floating stumpies, the warband has been regrouping and rebuilding. Terrible beasts have joined, one even larger than any they had yet seen, and a Mage unburdened by the need to cower behind rank-and-file has lent his power to aid their path of destruction to its inevitable course. They all seem to move more swiftly now, racing towards their foes with the same rapidity as when one realizes their fate has already been sealed.

## **Dave Kaiser**

Wizard Lord Gustav Adolphus is on a monster hunt, for magical research purposes of course. His personal guard, consisting of a large force of mercenary ogres, has been supplemented by Knights from the Order of the Fiery Heart whose Chapter Master owes Gustav a large debt, along with a steam tank from Gustav's contacts in the Engineers Guild in Nuln. Gustav intends to collect as many monster trophies and spell components as possible, and he has plotted a path which should take him directly into contact with several monster populations in these wild lands. His divinations have even hinted that there might be a giant or two who would be amenable to a short-term alliance...