

The Phargol-Horn

Volume 66

www.krystonia.net

e-mail: krystoniaclub@hotmail.com

The Search Continues

Just entering the cavern was more than enough to make Graffyn nervous. The sounds that they had heard were definitely coming from an area inside. How far inside was the question? A range of emotions flooded Graffyn's body. Among them was excitement, curiosity and quite a bit of fear.

Groosh's wings had slowly begun to spread open. This is a common occurrence when dragons get excited. Groosh was definitely moving into battle mode. He was all about getting the job done with a no fear attitude. Charging into a situation head first, take no prisoners, my way or the cartway was what he was known for. Graffyn on the other hand was a research, analyze and analyze again kind of wizard. Some say opposites attract, in this case there was little choice. They both did have a common goal. Wherever the noise was coming from must be found and would hopefully lead them to where the captives were being held.

But before they could move another step Graffyn had encountered a strange problem that he must address. His legs seemed to have become wedged together. No matter how hard he tried to separate them he could not. He grunted and groaned but no amount of effort produced results. Groosh watched from the stairs above with a most puzzled look.

It was as if Graffyn had a large clamp around his thighs. On his robe a wrinkled circle around his thighs was visible and his whole body seemed to be shaking uncontrollably. Graffyn wondered if some sudden ailment had afflicted him. He had heard of an illness that older wizards would sometimes get. An elder wizard at the Obelisk did and shook so hard that he was no longer allowed in some of the more poorly constructed huts for fear they would collapse.

Panic can cause strange thoughts to enter your mind. Maybe N'Borg had become aware of their presence and Graffyn had become the victim of a spell? Was he partially paralyzed? It was obvious that Graffyn was in some sort of peril.

Seeing Graffyn's distressed expression Groosh sprang into action. He picked up Graffyn and began to shake him vigorously. Groosh was known as a dragon of action, even if it might not always be the right one.

Graffyn's robe began to regain its shape. Graffyn legs shot apart like a spring that had sprung. It must have been slightly painful for the old wizard since the word "ow" echoed off the cavern walls in a voice that was not usually his.

Graffyn thought that Groosh might have strained himself when he picked him up as he also heard the high pitched "ow".

Both turned their attention to something that was appearing on the steps below them. With their eyes still slightly out of focus from the earlier flash it took a moment to see who or what it was. Sitting on the floor below them rubbing his head was someone they knew very well. It was Poffles.

Poffles had obviously not joined, as he had been instructed, the group that was to return to the Obelisk. He actually did go back to the carpet with Pree and Sal. Then he had used his powers of invisibility to slip away as the carpet started to rise from the ground. He had remained invisible since then and followed Groosh and Graffyn into the cavern. The flash of the Kogan in the cavern had not only blinded Graffyn and Groosh but Poffles as well.

Poffles had lost his balance and grabbed for whatever he could to keep himself upright. He wrapped himself around Graffyn's thighs so he would not tumble down the stairs. This explained why Graffyn's legs were stuck together. When Groosh picked Graffyn up and shook him Poffles was thrown loose. As Poffles bounced off the wall he no longer concentrated on staying invisible. Groosh and Graffyn could not help but smile as they looked at their giggling companion sitting on a stair rubbing his head.

The last thing Graffyn and Groosh needed was a mischievous companion but there was no time to think about it now. They were now three and as such would continue on their mission.

Sal and Pree continued their flight back to the Obelisk. They wondered if Poffles had found his way back to rejoin Graffyn and Groosh. It concerned them that he may be in trouble. They knew that he had made his own choice and would have to live with the consequences. Past history had shown that Poffles and his buddy Trumpf always seem to make out ok no matter what troubling situation they found themselves in. A benefit to Sal and Pree was with less weight on the carpet they were making faster time on their trip. At this pace they would be back at the Obelisk much sooner. As the warm wind blew against them it seemed quite calming. This calm did not last long.

A large fireball blazed across the sky. Then another came so close that it literally singed Sal's hair. A third fireball landed in the middle of the carpet. Sal and Pree grabbed blankets from their stores and began to try to smother the fire. Waving them frantically they were eventually able to extinguish the fire but the damage had been done. A huge hole was now evident in the center of the carpet. The carpet began to bounce wildly. The wind whipped it in one direction then another. They were losing elevation fast and needed to land soon. The carpet might tear into two pieces at any moment.

If not for someone with Sal's experience they would surely have been doomed. It was in the many battles with N'Borg's forces and battling Krystonia's every changing climate that gave him the experience to take on this difficult situation. He slowly guided the carpet to the ground. They had encountered something that they had no good explanation. Lately there had been many reports of fire rocks falling from the sky. The rocks seem to come out of nowhere with great force. This very well could be the explanation for what had just befallen them but another option bothered Sal.

A dark shadow had passed over the carpet a few moments before the fireballs. The twin moons were very bright and the shadow that crossed the carpet seemed to not be round but was shaped like wings, large wings. Sal knew he had many enemies from his battles. This is the price you pay when you fight evil. Whatever the reason for the fireballs was, it mattered little at this moment. The carpet had been badly damaged.

It was late and both Sal and Pree were tired. Sal knew that they must get back to the Obelisk but to travel by ground would be slow and treacherous. On the other hand making repairs to the carpet would take much time and require materials. They would rest for the night and try to figure out their next course of action when they woke.

There were some advantages to having Pooffles added to their group. The staircase in front of them curved continually. This made it very difficult to see what they might encounter around the next bend. With Pooffles being small in stature and having white fur it would make him hard to spot. His invisibility would definitely be a plus. One drawback to this was his powers could only be used for various amounts of time. Sometimes they would run out without any notice. Regardless he was a logical choice to be their scout. Groosh argued briefly to be the scout but Graffyn convinced him that a large dragon with big wings would be hard not to notice.

With this issue put to rest it was decided that Pooffles would go ten steps ahead of the party and then report back. If it was all clear they would then all advance the ten steps and repeat the same process.

The first time was uneventful. The second also, the third not so much, Pooffles was gone approximately ten seconds before he came running back as fast as his furry paws would allow. He jumped directly into Graffyn's arms knocking him backwards and sending his hat flying. The hat landed on Groosh's head. Who in turn tried to knock it loose with his wing but instead swung around knocking Graffyn forward with Graffyn landing on his knees. Trying to brace himself before he fell Graffyn threw Pooffles into the air. Pooffles grabbed onto one of the wall sculptures. This caused the crystal that had been part of the sculptures eyes to dislodge. The crystal started to bounce. Luckily Groosh's quick hands grabbed it on the third bounce. The thought of the crystal bounding down the stairs and alerting someone to their presence gave all three great causes for concern.

After Pooffles settled down Graffyn asked what had caused such a panic. Pooffles could not speak but tugged on the wizard's robe. They followed him. Even Graffyn was surprised by what he saw. It was easy to mistake it for a real creature at first glance. Evidently that was all Pooffles had given it, one glance.

The statue stood close to eleven feet tall. It was similar to a Hagga-Beast but not the ones that travel on all fours. This one stood as erect as any creature could on two legs. It wore armor plated battle gear. In one paw was a wooden rod with the end possessing a large metal ball. In the center of the ball three wooden spikes pointed in opposite directions. Metal gloves covered the paws except for small openings where sharp claws protruded. Covering most of its feet were sandals with sharp blades coming from their

sides. If this wasn't frightening enough from its mouth protruded two sets of teeth. Maybe N'Borg had an added a new weapon to his arsenal. A Hagga warrior would be a terrible creature to face in battle.

*

It was difficult for Sal to sleep. The night sky was beautiful and the site that they had landed was full of soft fluffy leaves and enough kindling to make a fire. So obviously it was not the surroundings that were causing him not to fall into a sound slumber. It was his mind thinking of what Pre and he could do to get back to the Obelisk. Finally out of fatigue sleep overtook him.

Sal rose early. He felt great pressure for them to get on their way. Out of the corner of his eye he noticed Pree stretching his arms to the sky. He knew that Pee and he shared the same goal but Pree had a more pressing concern. What was for breakfast? Sal was more worried that each moment they delayed could result in those they had left behind at the Krak to be in greater danger. Pree worried more that the growling from his hungry belly could be heard by anything or anyone for quite a distance.

Sal looked over the carpet. It was in good shape if you ignored the large hole in the middle. He plopped down on a stump, withdrew his pipe and began to try to devise a plan. His thoughts were disrupted by his nostrils. The smell of fresh herbs was filling the air. He looked around for the source and noticed Pree standing over a boiling pot.

Pree had gathered some herbs from the surroundings and was boiling them over a fire. The kindling was composed of very intricately woven twigs, vines and branches. Sal asked Pree where he had found the bundle. Pree had not found anything but had made it himself. Pree went on to explain that he was a member of the Dragon Quest Club. Sal had never heard of this. Pree continued that it was a club for young dragons to learn to live in the wilds with nothing but nature to support them. He had even won the top award in his class.

Sal looked at the woven kindling. It might just work he thought. He asked Pree how large a weaving could he make. Pree said he had done a tent once. Off to work went Pree and Sal. Sal gathered while Pree wove. It was amazing how fast Pree worked.

They placed the tent on the carpet. It fit perfectly over the hole. Pree then wove the bottom of the tent to the carpet. The carpet now looked like a hat.

Sal still had concerns. The added weight would make their travel slower and his crystals had lost some of their power. Little did any of this matter if this new contraption would not hold together and fly.

They loaded essential supplies onto the carpet and Pree stood on one side and Sal the other. It was now seemed good that Poffles had chosen to stay behind. Sal bundled his crystals in a bag and placed them at the carpets end. He leaned over and began to spoke.

Mighty crystals raise us high,
Above the clouds let us fly,

The carpet began to rise and stretch. The strain was obvious. Sal held his breath as it slowly rose and leveled off above the trees. He began to guide it slowly forward. He would not push his luck. He would have no more rest until they returned to the Obelisk.

To be continued.....