

# The Confrontational Diplomat

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This is set in the uneasy times of the War of the Five Realms (Seasons III). The Dwarves are one of several new faces in this ongoing war, and they have yet to publicly emerge from their mountain holds. They have not been noticeably seen on the battlefields nor in the diplomatic hall for ambassadors of every Realm to try to negotiate for peace.

As this peace begins, Jean Marcel - ruler of the Western Realm, largest of the 4 remaining realms of old Bretonnia, and seen by most as the primary opposition to reunification - has had a remarkable change of heart and has begun to make reforms in his life and his kingdom that will likely see peace restored in Bretonnia.

At the delicate juncture, in the Chapel of Marienburg, the diplomatic meeting ground of all the Kingdoms drawn into this war, the first contact with the Dwarves is made, as one arrives at the Chapel and approaches the situation in the taciturn Dwarf manner.

A calamity of voices broke the tranquil air of the Chapel. Inside the semi-serene chamber, it could not be heard entirely what the commotion was precisely about. However, it was clear that one particularly deep and gruff voice was contesting with several others.

After a few moments, a nervous looking captain opened the door and quickly stepped inside. It seemed he would be the type of man that would prove the lynch pin in maintaining a hard pressed battle line, and yet his face bore a most pitiable look of pleading towards the Lord Von Hellsink.

The Confederacy delegate rose to speak privately with the captain about the enigmatic disturbance. Hushed voices are all well and good, but in a large empty room like the chapel, even whispers are delivered to the ears of the occupants. Incomplete phrases rebounded off the stone, but most all heard enough to understand the problem.

"I'm sorry my lord, but there is trouble outside the Chapel."

"But I trust in you to keep security here, why can't you? If it was an army then the city's defences would have been alerted, so it can't be that many."

" There is naught but one"

"One!?" Von Hellsink calmed his voice quickly amidst the concerned stares. "How could one man be so damn troubling for Marienburg's finest?"

" No man could, but he is a Dwarf milord."

"Well show him immediately. We have waited too long for their delegation's arrival"

"But he is barbaric, wild with his head shaved, and nearly naked, heavily tattooed." The captain's voice was edged with panic now, even as he tried vainly to maintain discretion.

"Heinrich," Von Hellsink sighed heavily with obvious disappointment, "we are here to bring all our varied cultures closer together. To bring about understanding and respect, not judgment."

"He is armed sir!"

"Well disarm him, fool," chastened the Marienburg lord, motioning for Heinrich show better restraint and quiet his tone

" But we can't!"

" What?!"

" His axes are permanently attached, being chained to his wrists."

"What?" the perplexing situation was causing even Hellsink to forget the need for decorum

"He carries a letter for you and demands to be let in but he won't - or can't - take off the chains"

"This is most unsettling, and just when we are nearing peace, the Dwarves send such a volatile representative. Stand with me and follow my actions, but let me speak directly to him."

The two flustered Marienburgers opened the inner doors and retrieved their swords from the stewards there. Drawing them from their scabbards, they held them directly in front of them, tips resting on the stone floor. Then at his signal, the guards opened the outer door, and everyone got a glimpse of the ruckus being caused out there. 4 sentries were trying to contain a nearly unseen opponent. A flash of black metallic chain would be seen flying up above their shoulders, and between the guards, a small muscular form, was partially discernible, but the view was not clear owing to the movement and irregular blue tattoos on the assailant.

"All stand down!" commanded Von Hellsink. The conscripted guards all backed away eagerly. There standing in the archway was a heaving mass of muscle, rage, and blue paint, topped off by a magnificent orange mohawk.

He wore naught but a pair of tattered leather breaches, which showed holes, rips, and stains of battle. One foot was a mangled mess of scar tissue and didn't even seem to have all of the toes. The scars continued up his body, across his very broad chest, and his scowling face, and down both arms. Here at his wrists were the defining oddities about him. Manacles were clamped about his forearms, and chains slung from them connected to the two magnificent dwarven axes he held in his hands. These armaments were both striking in appearance as they were in their attachment to his person. First was the unmistakable fact that he was permanently connected to his weapons, and though he held the axes with their blades turn toward himself, this was no less comforting. But to add to this was the contrast in the axes he held and the chains that bound them to him. The axes were gleaming and bright, with gold and gems inlaid and the clear potency of dwarven rune lore worked upon them. Yet the chains were a dull blue black, and while shiny, they also lacked the majesty and splendor of the axes. The chains and manacles appeared an entirely different form of metal, something totally undwarvish in nature, and one could only wonder why he wore such devices.

With the chains still swinging below his hands, the maniacal dwarf regarded this new figure with a careful eye. Without moving a muscle he scrutinized his surroundings. The Dwarf stood there without labored breath or bulging muscles. Except for the creaking of the black chain and gasping of the guards who had been vainly containing him, not a sound could be heard for at least a half minute.

"You must be the lord of these tin cans," he said without altering his gaze. His pronunciation of the words was careful and correct, but heavily laden with his accent. Obviously he was not accustomed to speaking in human tongues.

"These soldiers . . ."

The dwarf would not let him speak and curtly interrupted, "I am Daemonslayer Gromzaki. Order your men to let me pass for I have a dispatch here from the Clan Lord of Karak Norn, Lord Thraki Kazaktromm, addressed to the manling Lord Von Hellsink. Also I am duty bound to inspect these premises to certify their safety meets the expectation of Lord Kazaktromm. These errands I am oathsworn to fulfill and you can spare all your lives by hindering me no further."

Von Hellsink was noticeably shaken by the gruff and impolite nature that he had just been maligned with. Nonetheless he parlayed on with grace and practice of years of diplomacy.

"As I was saying, Master Dwarf, these soldiers are my hand picked conscripts, and answer directly to me," said the calm Marienburger. "They may not be so accomplished as you, judging from your many . . . conflicts." He outwardly made a point to gaze at the innumerable battle scars of the dwarf to drive his point home. "But they have not lived nearly a tenth of the years you must have. They may seem feeble warriors to one of your experience but please do not think them inept. My men are accomplished and disciplined warriors and keep order here to aid me in my own oath, specifically to

guard this hall for all the ambassadors within."

"Manling warriors, bah, call them what you will. But stand aside that I may deliver my post to Lord Hellsink. I was told he is within, or did your city's citizenry speak falsely."

"I am Lord Hellsink!," he bellowed. It was clear that grace and delicacy were foreign concepts to this dwarf. "I am he who has sworn to keep this hall safe. My people are not liars or deceivers. I was within the chapel, but owing to the disturbance you have caused, it can no longer be said that I am inside negotiating but here dealing with you" Hellsink raised his sword in just accusation towards the Slayer. The tension was palpable in the air and Captain Heinrich nearly wet himself as he mimicked the motion of his Lord.

Gromzaki regarded this defiant display for a moment before white shine of his smile showed through the orange beard.

Seeing this, Hellsink lowered his sword again, and gesturing to the doorway he stood in, "Of course while I am not within the chapel, one cannot say that I am truly without it, either."

"Ha! Well said man lord," chuckled the Slayer. With that he threw both axes out and began to spin in place. Weapons were lowered all around him, but as soon as they had adopted fighting stances, they saw that the Slayer had deftly guided the two axe chains to entangle themselves such that his left hand grabbed both of them by the butts, appearing as if he held a single axe shaft that had a head on either end. With his right hand free, he produced a sealed parchment case from beneath his beard and approached the stunned Lord Hellsink.

Motioning his men to relax he took a step forward to receive the letter. Taking a quick minute to review the letter, he then responded to the waiting Slayer. "I see no problems with the special accommodations Lord Kazaktromm requests for his ambassador. Let it not be said that we are inflexible in respecting the traditions of others."

"Good," responded Gromzaki. "Then let me pass and I can be done with my oaths for today."

"No, I cannot"

"NO! You would defy a Dwarf his duty. His order from his king! I am a Slayer, and I will not be Unbaraki again. I will fulfill my Oath!"

"And I will fulfill mine!!!" Von Hellsink was quaking inside but outwardly he held himself as still as a lake without a breeze. "I have given my oath to your king, to the Emperor in Altdorf, and to the lords of every other realm that their ambassadors would be safe under my care." He saw the objection of the Dwarf coming and cut it short. "AND, I swore that no weapon would be permitted past this door. As you can see not even mine is allowed. All armaments are held here in this entryway. So tell me Gromzaki of the Elder Race, with all your centuries of wisdom, if your axes are unremovable from your wrists, hence you cannot surrender your arms, how can we resolve this impasse."

The Slayer stared at him for an age, with all the rage and vexation of a trapped Griffon. He clearly was trying to work out a solution to the paradox that was posed to him.

Finally he took two steps back, loosed the grip of his left hand and let the rune axes fall. Starting slowly, he spun the chains free and began to swing them over and around him, in a vortex of lethal steel. All the guardsmen began to encircle around behind him but none could see an opening through the flying blades. With one final grunt, the Slayer swung his arms in a large outward arc, around toward the standing figures of Von Hellsink and his captain, Heinrich.

Heinrich was taken back and shrunk down to duck the coming blow, while his lord took a more proactive approach. Giving little heed to his own safety Von Hellsink leaped out and bodily rammed the dwarf in an attempt to drive him out of the entryway. His speed and timing were perfect but beyond belief, the small mohawked warrior took the blow and remained standing. The sound of the hit was that of a mighty thunderclap and yet the dwarf was still solidly on his feet.

"Are you daft manling? What customs do you have that a man attacks another without declaring his hated foe's life is at an end? I never promised you your death, nor even gave so much as a warcry."

Then the picture became clearer. The massive crack that was heard was not the bodily collision of man and dwarf but the sound of both axes biting into the stone of the outer archway. Easily half of each axe head had been driven into the masonry. With a mighty groan the Slayer strained every muscle within him and pulled on both chains that had him now affixed to the entryway. With an unnatural exertion, he succeeded in breaking both of his bonds, leaving only about a half meter of chain attached to each wrist.

"There manling," he said with no small measure of satisfaction, "now my weapons are kept in the same place as the rest. I am unarmed, with naught but the chains I was forced to wear in the Druchii dungeon I languished in for 80 years. They are my token reminders of my failed oath of victory and I cannot remove them so long as I live. Yet I challenge anyone here to try to call these remnants of my bondage 'weapons'. So do I have your leave to enter."

"By the Goddess," mused Lord Von Hellsink, "you are full of surprises. Master Dwarf, you have bested our impasse, and in total equality to everyone else that has passed here. Enter as my guest and fulfill your king's errand."