

The Barrowmaze

Session 37 25-07-24 Exploring The Caves

Next Session 01/08/24 19.00

Wed 27th Besemius, 10:40 in The Barrowmaze 47/3, Chamber D

Gerald gives himself a mental once-over. Does he feel any different since claiming the orb, compelled perhaps? No, he judges himself as he expects however he does feel a strong affinity to the orb as if it would have the same noble aims as himself. "So, you're going to keep it then?" quips Leo as Gerald, smiling, tucks the orb safely into his backpack.

Leo and Arnd search the chamber while Bella reviews the blood-written runes on the sarcophagus confirming that they were indeed intended to act as a prison for the orb, so presumably the powers that incarcerated the orb were unable to destroy it or turn it to evil purpose, instead hiding it away in a remote corner of the dungeon protected by guardians and dark runes... interesting. Leo scouts the two northern exits to the chamber finding that they join and loop around then return to the chamber with the dangling filament. As he methodically searches the cave passageway, Arnd comments on the unlikelihood of discovering a secret room or passage in any natural rock formations but the Knight ignores him, cheerfully tapping and listening to the rock for a further ten minutes.

Returning to examine the filament from what they hope is a safe distance they discuss what to do about it. Leo is interested in climbing up to the ledge to see what could be dangling such a lure and Gerald wonders what would happen if he torched the filament. Fenella thinks about creeping past it to check the western exit to the chamber but becomes less keen when she notices that the filament is swaying gently in the slight breeze. In the end they decide to leave it well alone, especially since Gerald is becoming convinced that it's just a natural animal hunting for food so they leave via their original entrance to the south and make their way back to the cave egress into the vault passageway. Gerald strides confidently ahead, even arriving in the main vault by himself while the rest are still considering the unexplored cave passage to the east. Leo is interested, at least for a sense of completion, to see if the corridor leads to the other side of the dangling filament so they enter the eastern rock passage while Gerald, realising that he is alone with just his relatively short-range light source, returns to join them.

Stirges!

The short passageway ends with a dead end but there is also a branching tunnel to the north which quickly turns east. After another 20 ft or so the tunnel splits into southern and northeastern exits. They follow the southern passage finding a short western tunnel as again Gerald strides confidently ahead and right into a Stirge nest! The Stirges swoop down, mobbing him as they attempt to suck his blood but Gerald manages to fend them off although failing to inflict any damage in the process. In the cramped confines of the cave the Stirges press their attack, two of them striking and clamping onto the beleaguered Paladin, eagerly guzzling his tasty blood. Leo tries a precision strike to knock them off but misses completely as Reme shoulders his way past Gerald to attack the still hovering Stirge. Slicing down fiercely with his Broadsword, Reme easily dispatches the creature as Gerald carefully stabs one of the Stirges on his face, skilfully impaling it rather than himself and killing it outright in a shower of blood. Fenella stabs forward with her Spear, lancing the last one off and killing it while carefully avoiding stabbing Gerald in the process. A blood-soaked Gerald tries holding the orb to see if it has any healing powers but apparently it does not.

Rock Tapping

As he mops himself down Gerald asks if anyone else would like to lead since his natural exuberance seems to be getting him and therefore the party, into trouble. Leo says he will but only after he's searched this cave passage which he proceeds to do, drawing a comment from Arnd, "Ye'll be famous Sir Leo, the first man to discover a secret door in a natural cave system, we could even have tabards made with the insignia, we were there when he found it!". Leo ignores Arnd's ribbing and continues merrily tapping away at solid rock until he is satisfied that nothing is concealed. Rock tapping successfully concluded, Leo leads the party to the south and east eventually discovering the other side of the dangling tendril exit. Content in this knowledge Leo, backed up by Gerald take the point and return to the north, investigating an eastern side tunnel which leads to another nest of angry Stirges!

Stirges Again!

Four Stirges swoop to attack the pair as Leo neatly slices the first in two and Gerald destroys the second. Crazy, the two remaining Stirges press their attack against two capable armoured foes with one making an exceptionally lucky strike, clamping onto Leo's neck and getting blood all over his splendid armour. Leo swiftly despatches the creature as Gerald similarly runs his through. Tut-tutting and muttering in irritation, Leo dabs at his armour with a cloth getting the worst of it off as Bella patches his wound.

Carcass Scavenger

Leading them off through the northern tunnel, Leo also gets a little far ahead as Fenella warns him, "I'm not wasting healing on you if you're too reckless". Pausing a moment, waiting for them to catch up, Leo is surprised to hear some sort of chewing and slurping sound further to the north. Ruling out two dead-end side passages they continue to the north, the slurping and chewing becoming a little louder as they emerge into a large chamber that is obviously not part of the natural cave system.

Clearly hearing the slurping ahead of them in the gloom Leo and Gerald do what always works so well and light a torch, flinging it in the direction of the sound. The room lights up revealing a large slug-like creature feasting on the gruesome remains of a body. As the light brightens the chamber the thing heaves itself around as Leo and Gerald charge!

Swinging mightily with The Sword of Sir Chyde Leo slices into the creature wounding it badly as it shrieks and wails in pain. Gerald also swings but the orb hasn't improved his luck and the blow goes wide. The creature's multiple tendrils lash out at Leo, the first one striking and instantly paralysing the Knight, freezing him where he stands as the vile creature presses tightly against him with its lamprey like mouth parts. Joined by Fenella, Gerald attacks again, wounding the Carcass Scavenger and sending quivers through its repulsive bulk as Fenella drives The Spear of The Druid deep into the creature to finish it off. With a disgusting slurp the thing releases Leo and collapses into a blubbery mass. Examining the paralysed Knight, Bella and Fenella decide to try a CLW before committing any of the anti-poison spells and indeed as Bella casts the spell it works to clear the paralysis but in this case doesn't restore any health.

Back in The Dungeon

Looking around they are now sure that this is a constructed chamber however there are no apparent exits, which they are not prepared to believe so they conduct a detailed search of the room. At first they don't discover any secret doors or passages but they do uncover a sizable trove of loot gathered from the creature's victims...

4,113 gp

Four Rubies (75 gp, 25 gp, 1,000 gp, 10 gp)

Still not convinced by the lack of exits they take the time to search again and this time Fenella finds a panel in the eastern wall. This leads them into a short corridor to the north which turns east to a dead end. "Yeah, right," they think and immediately set about searching, quickly discovering another secret door. It opens into a large chamber with a high vaulted ceiling. They emerge into the chamber directly behind a massive 16 ft tall statue of a demon which Bella identifies as Zuul, crouching malignly above them. In each of its four clawed hands it grasps a skull, bearing respectively the motifs of the elemental forces; water, earth, fire and air. There are corridors exiting to the north, south and east.

Gerald takes out the orb from his pack and holds it up such that it fills the chamber with its clear, bright light and staring up belligerently at the statue jeers, "in your face Zuul!" as Bella quietly reminds them that saying the names of demons aloud is probably not a good habit to get into.

Wednesday the 27th day of Besemius, 14:10, The Barrowmaze Room 286