

# The Barrowmaze

## Session 55 06-02-25 The Wild Girl of The Woods

Next Session 13/02/25 18.45

Monday the 16th day of Setherius, 16:00, Kuiper's Farm

### Into the Forest

Before crossing the Churnett river they hand their horses over to one of Kuiper's farmhands as the man himself emerges, dressed in leather armour and bearing a good longsword and shortbow. He poles the big skiff expertly over the river using the current to do most of the work. Smiling, he says, "this one's for free." On the southern bank it doesn't take them long to reach the line of trees and they enter the forest, heading towards the southeast area near the Hog Brook where Kuiper says the herbs can be found. The dense forest is almost impassable except for the forest paths which meander through the woods. Fenella of course, just strolls where she pleases since no plant growth can obstruct a suitably skilled Druid.

After searching for a while they rather oddly hear a giggle from a thorn bush and you see a very young girl step out of the foliage as if it isn't there. She is dressed in hides, leather and fur, festooned with small animal bones, feathers and little skulls. Her grubby face is finger painted with vivid colours in abstract designs.

With a nervous start Kuiper spins around, "oh my!... the wild girl of the woods... er, it's alright she's not dangerous... to us, at least... I think". Kuiper explains, some time ago he was foraging in the woods when he was bitten by a poisonous snake and thought he was done for. As he was losing consciousness he remembers this girl tending to him, slicing the wound open, sucking the poison out and pressing an ointment to his wound. The last thing he remembers was her grinning at him, saying "Oleanna" and smartly slapping his face to make him stay awake. As soon as he could stand, she just melted back into the woods.

The girl stands before you and in halting common introduces herself as Oleanna, "woods... girl... wild", which she seems to find quite amusing. Kuiper describes Jelenneth to Oleanna, she seems to understand common much better than she speaks it, and she replies that she hasn't seen any sign of this woman recently but she has seen her here before, maybe a year ago, gathering herbs. Oleanna notices Fenella and with the introductions now made in common, proceeds in fluent Druidic to explain to Fenella what has recently happened and why she has sought them out.

After an animated conversation between herself and Oleanna, Fenella explains to the rest that Oleanna is a wild Druid, closely connected with nature. She does not attend to affairs beyond the lands she shares with nature but she will help those who are in distress nearby, hence her saving Kuiper's life. She says she has seen a local boy from a nearby farm in some agitation near the woods, seeing him shape change into a black bear. It seems this boy is a werebear transforming for the first time and is in a state of high anxiety since there was nobody else to guide him. He crashed madly into the forest and Oleanna has heard his panicked growls and roars of pain. She is worried that he is hurt and would like the group to help her find and subdue him since he will be too dangerous for her to manage by herself.

Kuiper adds that it must be Maxim from the Krynen farm and he believes that his grandfather might have had this trait so perhaps it has skipped a generation. Maxim is certainly a dark-haired and sturdy young man so Kuiper is not surprised as to the type of were creature he could become.

It occurs to the Hammers that Kuiper could be the sort of person who might, in another life, have become a Ranger. His woodland lore and skills are evident but of course not all are called to the dedication of the Ranger way. In any event, both his and Oleanna's words ring true and the party agree to help them find the wayward werebear.

## Werebear? There bear!

Oleanna suggests the werebear's last location would be about 30 minutes along tracks to the southeast, close to the river. Kuiper points out that this a boy they will be dealing with so they should attack to subdue, using only the flats of their blades and no deadly powers, he looks pointedly at both Fenella and Oleanna, causing Oleanna to giggle again. As they move cautiously to the southeast, Oleanna hands Kuiper a weighted net to use in subduing the bear. Gerald suggests using Arnd as bait receiving a glare from the Dwarf but Oleanna suggests listening carefully and Arnd enthusiastically agrees.

Shortly after they hear a great animal cry from the southeast. With a worried look Oleanna says, "wounded... dangerous in pain" and gestures the party forward with urgency. They search cautiously with the two Druids scouting to the sides through the dense undergrowth without any problem or hinderance.

As they go further to the southeast, they hear crashing noises ahead. The Hammers are a bit indecisive over whether to force through the foliage or follow the meandering paths and try to move vaguely to the southeast as Fenella and Oleanna wander around scouting, unimpeded by the undergrowth.

Leo wants to force through the undergrowth into which Fenella has just disappeared but Kuiper explains that going around will be better than trying to force through such heavy growth just as Fenella pops out again. They work their way further along to the northeast noticing that the track turns south. Fenella mutters to herself regarding people unable to walk freely in the forests as they follow the path turning to the south. There is a relatively thin blocked area ahead that Leo can force his way through with the benefit of his considerable strength and head to toe plate armour. He shoulders his way through, protected by his armour, clearing the way for the others.

Hearing the growling and crashing noises coming closer Kuiper reminds them that the bear won't know their intentions are good and will attack them without restraint as suddenly a large black bear crashes into the clearing before them.

Quick off the mark, Arnd draws his weapons and moves to flank the bear about 20 ft away, Kuiper runs up readying the net. Oleanna moves into the undergrowth close to Kuiper.

Fenella, with an idea for a quick win, runs forward brandishing her skull of paralysation and commanding the cone of paralysis, shoots the bright violet light towards the creature but the bear resists the ray's paralysing effect. As the bear rears up they notice that one of the beast's rear legs is caught in a cruelly barbed scissor trap. The bear seems to have wrenched the stake holding the trap free of the ground and now in considerable pain rages and rears up towards the one who sent the paralysing beam. The bear charges Fenella, clawing and biting the Druid and wounding her quite badly. Unfortunately the heavier fighters are too far back to help right away so Gerald and Leo just move up as fast as they can.

With his sprightly dexterity on show again, Arnd acts first, disappearing from view and moving around to the rear of the bear. The bear senses something move past him but enraged and in pain and with the others clearly visible in front of him ignores the momentary distraction. Arnd takes a good swipe but misses. Oleanna rushes out waving her arms and shouting, attempting to draw the bear's attention away from Fenella.

Leo squares up in front of the bear and thwacks it a mighty blow with the flat of the sword of Sir Chyde knocking it back a step or two. Kuiper throws the net, narrowly missing and drawing the net back for another try. Gerald runs up further from the back as Fenella takes a few steps back into the impenetrable undergrowth thereby becoming completely protected from attack. The bear attacks Leo, clawing one good strike and missing another while failing to bite him.

Arnd takes another swipe at the bear but misses again as the concept of subdual damage isn't something he's much good at. Kuiper slings the net again and throws so badly he almost nets Leo getting a stern reproof from the armoured Knight. Gerald attacks but missing his step after sprinting in, swings wide.

The bear rears up again at Leo, missing both claw attacks but biting fiercely. Oleanna comes closer, still trying to draw the bear off. Leo lifts his sword and shield and does what he does best, striking hard with his sword as the bear wails in distress.

Gerald swings again finally striking with the black iron shortsword smacking a good hard blow which sends the bear reeling. The bear strikes back in reflex targeting Gerald for a glancing blow with its claws and missing the bite. Arnd misses yet again as Leo swings missing completely. This time however Kuiper's net lands well and the bear subsides to the ground tangled in the net where it lays still, its breath heaving as Oleanna rushes in to attend to it.

Gerald calls Fenella out of the gorse bush where she had been lurking and performing Laying on of Hands recovers her injuries completely. Oleanna first addresses the trap, fiddling and probing with two metal picks until there is a click. She calls for a strong person to help and Leo strides over where the wild girl indicates the trap should be forced open. Leo takes a good grip and performing a suitably muscular Knightly flex, easily parts the trap's cruel jaws, forcing the heavy iron mechanism open then twisting it into a harmless figure of eight before triumphantly placing it delicately on the ground which entertains Oleanna no end.

Examining the bear's wound Oleanna casts a CLW on the trap damage. She asks Fenella if she can also help so Fenella casts a CLW on the bear, repairing almost all of the damage and causing Oleanna to grin and clap at the more powerful Druid's prowess.

Kuiper comes over and kneeling down next to the bear talks softly to the resting animal of the name of the boy, Maxim and about his life and explains to him that he has changed and he will change back. Hearing this and with the care of the Druids the bear calms and breathes more easily as the net is carefully removed and the bear regains consciousness, now appearing to be docile and calm amongst them.

As they stand and walk slowly, they travel towards the edge of the woods with the bear following. Kuiper says he thinks the bear is about to change and they observe the bizarre sight of the bear shrinking and changing into the shape of a naked 14-year-old boy. Kuiper puts his cloak around the lad and talks quietly with him. The young fellow was already reasonably calm but Kuiper's words appear to do him some good and he gathers the cloak around himself giving the group a resigned smile. You notice a recovering wound on his leg.

As the light is fading Kuiper advises they return across the river to his farm. Tomorrow he can travel with Maxim to the Krynen farm to talk to the family. Oleanna says she will inform the animals and birds of the woods and grasslands to look out for Jelenneth. If she hears word of her she will make contact.

Taking their leave of the forest and their new Druid friend, they return to Kuiper's skiff and cross the river, making themselves comfortable in the nice dry barn which makes an excellent camp. He suggests they travel together tomorrow at first thing since the Krynen farm is on their way to Thurmaster.

Before they turn in Fenella uses her remaining CSW to patch up Leo.

Monday the 16th day of Setherius, 19:30, Kuiper's Farm