

The Barrowmaze

Session 58 27-02-25 The Fighter of Parlfray's Keep

Next Session 06/03/25 18.45

Thursday the 19th day of Setherius, 18:00, Thurmaster

Relaxing at the Hound and Tails

At the Hound and Tails, the Hammers relax and make their plans. Gerald is still quite seriously wounded due to his slightly suicidal strategy of healing others at all costs rather than healing himself. Leo's armour is in a bit of a state, covered in serious dents and scrapes and will require a full service the next time he is anywhere near a smithy that works with armour, it is however still fully effective despite looking somewhat battered so he does what he can with his armour maintenance kit. Led by Gerald, they take the opportunity to congratulate Arnd on his backstabbing prowess in their recent battle, where the Dwarven Thief really had a chance to shine, providing invisible backstab attacks courtesy of the Clasp of Elvenkind attached to his Cloak of Defence. The Dwarf heartily accepts his colleagues' compliments and consumes the congratulatory ales with gusto.

Sir Leo once more considers it a Knightly duty to introduce himself to the local lord so he assumes that they will travel to Parlfray's Keep at the earliest opportunity. The others agree but Gerald raises the matter of searching for Jelenneth as an obligation. Fenella agrees but points out that it's rather difficult to search when one has very little idea of where to look. They have a stretch of river between Milborne and Kuiper's farm to search and so far have spent a few hours on the south bank, in the Thornwood Forest and that's it, although they have enlisted the assistance of Oleanna, the Wild Girl of The Woods, who promised that the birds and animals would look out for any sign of a woman fitting Jelenneth's description.

Gerald has the bright idea of hiring a messenger to take a note to Krynen's farm and the others concur, quite a good idea actually and they realise that they could do this sort of thing more often since apparently the usual charge for a quickest foot delivery around the shire is 1 gp. Haranshire has no official postal system but people are available to carry letters and notes and are willing to do so, and in a largely Lawful Neutral province one can expect the contents to remain unread although a decent wax seal is always a good idea. Weismar, the Inn's landlord considers it his pleasure to make the arrangements for them so they compose a document to be sent to Krynen's Farm, with a possible forward to Kuiper's farm via their new friend Maxim, with the following points...

- We arrived at Thurmaster. Met magician Tauster, no sign of Jelenneth and Tauster was worried to hear she's missing.
- Please send word if any news from your end. Can you also send word to Kuiper's farm about our arrival and find out if any news.
- We are leaving Thurmaster but we will visit you in a few days.

Gerald also takes the opportunity, with a little ribbing courtesy of Leo, to compose a heartfelt missive to the lovely Bella in Helix. Gerald is aware that as soon as a message bearing his mark and particularly given the recipient, arrives in a location with a presence of the clergy of St Ygg, they will take responsibility for the safe delivery so he can hope for delivery within the week... remarkable!

Leo takes a stroll to the wharf area of Thurmaster and chats to the workers there who are more than a little starstruck at the presence of the charismatic Knight and very happy to talk to him. They discuss matters of barge movements and trade in general along the river. The workers inform Leo that most of the goods arriving by river are for delivery to Parlfray's Keep and that no particular barge schedule is maintained. Leo returns to the Inn and enjoys a few drinks with Arnd before turning in.

Friday the 20th day of Setherius, 08:00

Gerald wakes bright and early and attempts to find somebody else to heal by Laying on of Hands but after persuasion from the rest of the party settles for using his power on himself to return himself to almost full health.

Parlfray's Keep

They set off for Parlfray's Keep, following the good road to the northeast. The journey is about 11 miles with the second half being over rising ground as they move into the foothills of the dark, craggy Halfcut Hills, which look rather more like mountains than hills. Following the now winding road as it ascends into the foothills they eventually arrive at the picturesque spot that is Parlfray's Keep in mid-afternoon. They ride to the gate and introduce themselves to the courteous guards.

They are joined by a secretary/administrator who introduces himself as Maurice. He takes their names and records the purpose of their visit after listening to Sir Leo's extended and somewhat baffling waffle regarding various activities that one might indulge in if one were a Knight in Haranshire which causes the secretary some confusion as to what they are actually there to do. Eventually with Gerald and Fenella's assistance Leo recalls the cover story of buying some land and more or less explains it to Maurice who seems well enough satisfied.

Maurice informs them of The Sheridan Inn, an excellent establishment fit for a Knight where they can stay. Dismounting and leading their horses along the winding main road, they admire the fine houses and obvious prosperity of the place. The fresh mountain air is invigorating rather than chilling and they imagine that in the spring and summer this is a wonderful place to spend some time.

They are greeted at the Inn by Barclay, the proprietor who shows them to their suite of rooms, which are somewhat similar to their pleasant accommodation in Ironguard Motte but perhaps even finer, certainly the prices are finer being double that of Ironguard Motte. Clearly, they have re-entered into the gold economy in Parlfray's Keep.

Gerald finds himself rather impressed by the luxury and comfort of the Sheridan Inn but catches himself before drifting too far into temptation, merely admiring the soft furnishings and excellent service from a suitably paladinic distance. To assuage any guilt he might feel at indulging in such comfort, he visits the small chapel of St Ygg and performs his devotions at the picturesque shrine before returning to the Inn.

A note arrives from Squire Sandior Parlfray inviting them to an informal drinks and dinner at 18:00 this very evening. Dressed suitably for the occasion and bearing only daggers as sidearms they proceed to the impressive Parlfray manor house. Parlfray meets them almost immediately, greeting them in a friendly manner, encouraging his guests to partake of the good things on offer. He seems very relaxed and informal in his approach, in the manner of some wealthy persons who see no need to stand on ceremony, being secure in their status and position. Still, he is a landed Squire and lord of eastern Haranshire so behind that informal manner is a feudal lord with a feudal lord's powers and position.

They converse pleasantly, Parlfray's face falling somewhat when they describe themselves as adventurers but the conversation moves onto property and land, subjects where he is more comfortable. After they have enjoyed the delicious buffet, they follow Parlfray to some comfortable leather chairs arranged around a great fireplace and as post-prandial drinks are served they discuss the beautiful location of the keep. Parlfray can only agree and as they chat informs them that he has encouraged the development of Parlfray's Keep as a resort for those with sufficient coin to enjoy the fresh mountain air, splendid views and excellent services of the town.

While they are talking they are joined by a handsome young man of around 20 years whom Sandior introduces as Lyntern, his son and only heir, since his dear wife passed away some years ago. Lyntern is an earnest young man and seems most excited to meet the visitors. He immediately turns the conversation away from boring discussions regarding land tariffs and estate management to adventuring. With an excited glint in his eye Lyntern asks them to recount their adventures. As they describe their recent activities Lyntern is entranced, hanging onto every word as his father rolls his eyes and looks away.

Lyntern is thrilled with the story of their victory over the giants as a wincing Sandior also pays careful attention, asking about the details and ensuring that the menace has been dealt with. He also seems rather impressed that Marlen raised the muster and turned out the force of Thurmaster.

As Leo asks Lyntern about himself, Sandior interrupts quite forcefully that Lyntern is the imperially educated and trained heir to the Parlfray estate and is therefore essential to the future of the Parlfray Squire's domain as it stands. "It is essential that he takes on his responsibilities as Squire in waiting and not... not, under any circumstances, galivant off to some sort of perilous adventure!" he stridently declares.

Sandior becomes quite agitated making sure they understand... "I'll hear no more of this adventuring foolishness Lyntern, you must remember you are the heir to the Parlfray estate." With this Lyntern departs and the conversation returns to more general matters including the apparent improvements in population and lifestyle in Thurmaster. Sandior explains that the place seems to be doing a bit better and he is beginning to gently encourage its development. Sandior and Leo discuss possible land locations for purchase, mainly to the south. It becomes clear that although Sandior can freely discuss matters regarding the east of Haranshire, the west side is entirely Carman's domain and they should speak to him regarding it.

Talking further about eastern Haranshire they discuss the Howler's Moor legend of the great ghostly hound, to which Sandior places little credence, just a folk tale in his opinion. Leo asks about banditry and Sandior says they haven't had any bandit problems but they do have the annoying problem of a pack of wild dogs who seem to have come down from Howler's Moor to The Redwood. Since the people of Thurmaster and the surrounding farms use the abundant berries as a free food source in the summer, something will need to be done, probably a definitive culling such that the pack would flee the area. One report has described that some of the dogs might be rabid. Sandior wonders if perhaps The Hammers have been sent by St Ygg whilst looking at them significantly.

You hear a voice, "father, I could accompany them, I could be their guide," cries Lyntern springing excitedly into the room, which kicks off the father/son argument again. Gerald intervenes on Lyntern's behalf explaining that with a party such as themselves he would be safer than with any group of militia or indeed regular soldiers. Leo explains that he has commanded many times in the field and would take command of this particular mission.

Sandior again banishes Lyntern to his room and calls for brandy. Sighing mightily, he declares that he has the utmost respect for what they have achieved near Thurmaster and expresses his gratitude enough that... this time... this once, he can accede to Lyntern's request but they must ensure his safety as the heir to the Parlfray estate. Sandior specifically asks Fenella if she can heal in an emergency and whether Gerald would also Lay on Hands and they both reply emphatically in the affirmative.

So Parlfray asks them if they would undertake this mission to clear the wild dogs and protect his son as he accompanies them. To which they agree, providing Sir Leo is in command. Leo pledges to protect Lyntern providing he obeys his orders to which the young man readily agrees and his father somewhat more reluctantly mumbles his assent.

Leo also informs Sandior of the missing Jelenneth who he has never heard of but he gets a servant to jot down a description of the missing woman and agrees to have his people look out for her.

Sandior also describes the Great Rock Dale to them, the great rocky valley to the north inhabited by warring tribes of Orcs, Hobgoblins etc. They attempted an incursion some seven years ago but were repulsed with heavy losses. He has no idea what happens in Hardlow Woods which is a wild tangled woodland. He also has no knowledge regarding the rising waters of the New Mire and suggests they speak to Carman about that.

Returning to the Sheridan Inn they spend a comfortable and peaceful night.

Saturday the 21st day of Setherius, 08:00

Sparring

They come down to breakfast finding a fully equipped Lyntern already there, dressed in chainmail, with an expression of unbridled delight on his handsome face. He has a crossbow, a longsword, a steel shield and a full pack of adventuring gear which he bears without any problem whatsoever.

Leo immediately calls Lyntern out behind the Inn for a sparring match to test his prowess. Declaring flat blades Leo and Lyntern square up to each other and the fight begins, both armoured men moving with grace and skill as they manoeuvre for advantage. Leo gets in the first attack but Lyntern deftly avoids the stroke while Gerald and Fenella chuckle from the sidelines, enjoying the spectacle.

Lyntern strikes back with a firm hit that would cause serious damage with an edged attack and swiftly he takes another stroke but it glances ineffectively off Leo's armour. Smiling beneath his Corinthian helm Leo takes a step back and flashes the Sword of Sir Chyde at dazzling speed, striking Lyntern a flat blow that would have been a major injury.

Leo declares the sparring has finished and the two warriors salute each other. It is clear Lyntern can fight.