

# The Barrowmaze

Session 69    12-06-25    The Eelhold

Next Session    03-07-25 19.00

Wednesday the 8th day of Vadrius 09:00, The Master's Manor, Milborne

## **The Story of The Half-Built Bridge**

In answer to Leo's question, Carman explains how the half-built bridge came to be...

As a young man he had a good friend by the name of Morten Carmody. He and Carmody had gone to school together and had both been very competitive. Carmody had been courting a beautiful young woman named Celeste and proudly introduced her to Carman who found himself falling in love at first sight. It turned out that the feeling was mutual and Darius Carman and Celeste were married soon after and remain a happy couple to this day. Morten Carmody never forgave Carman, interfering in his business endeavours wherever possible.

Years ago, Carman invested heavily in a venture that included the bridge building as a part of its remit since the navigation of the ford was becoming increasingly difficult due to sediment build up. Unknown to Carman, his rival Morten Carmody was secretly involved and after Carman had committed even more funding, Carmody caused the consortium to collapse by revealing publicly that the underlying funds were backed by junk bonds. The consortium collapsed, Carman lost a lot of money and Milborne was left with a half-built bridge as Carmody became fond of telling all who would listen in his gentlemen's club.

Carman turned the ploy to his advantage by employing an expert dwarven building company to install the heavy-duty winching system and by charging a toll on barges passing. He maintains the limited navigability as a profit stream and he profit shares with the townspeople so they are reluctant to question the status quo. Leo, in particular, recalls the townspeople's reluctance to elaborate on the matter of the bridge and the winching system when he was first asking about it on their initial visit.

Carman goes on to explain that the silting is not that bad these days and could easily be controlled by a bit of dredging that the dwarves thought would clear the problem permanently. He confesses to having a bit of work done to keep the river stream a bit choked. I expect you noticed this when you were poking around.

Ultimately however he is quite sure that Lord Ironguard would not like this and guesses that this is why you were asking these questions, "eh, Sir Leo?" Carman goes on to say that he thinks the joke's probably over by now and he wouldn't want to try Lord Ironguard's patience either so the engineers will soon be visiting Milborne for a river clearance and bridge building project.

Leaving Carman, they wonder if Carmody might be behind the recent events in Haranshire but conclude it seems to be unlikely for a "white collar" criminal and in addition he is persona non grata in Ironguard Motte these days due to his questionable business dealings.

## **Off to see The Goblins**

Eager to continue their exchange of the magical ring they set out for Harlaton arriving at 13:00. Shadwell stays behind to manage the horses as the others ascend into the Patchwork Hills. They follow the now more familiar route working their way steadily over the high ground without incident before making camp in the freezing cold hills, with their light dusting of snow. Wrapped up in her cloak of Resist Cold, Fenella is nice and warm whilst the others feel the wind in their bones despite their good winter gear. Leo is glad of the large supply of firewood they are carrying in the Bag of Holding.

They make camp, setting a blazing fire and as they settle in Leo notices that Gerald is still wounded so exhorts him to "do something!" Gerald recalls he hasn't used his Laying on Of Hands today so reluctantly cures himself back to full health and they spend a peaceful night.

Thursday the 9th day of Vadrius 08:00, The Patchwork Hills

Up with the light, The Hammers continue, eventually finding the Goblin valley then heading down to the cave to meet with the tribe. There is a bit of confusion as the Goblins try to make sure that it's the same group of humans since humans all look alike to them but they remember Leo's heraldry and shining armour so eventually Burrukleyat the Shaman comes out and invites Fenella and Gerald inside for another private meeting.

Fenella shows the ring and Burrukleyat compares the two rings very carefully taking great care to keep them apart. His face breaks into a broad grin as he slips the duplicate onto his finger, "very good, you are very clever," he says. Fenella completes the deal by producing her ring of Plant Control, over which the Goblin Shaman waves a decorated totem stick, casting a spell which must be some sort of Detect Magic since the ring glows with its magical aura. Fenella explains the ring's powers to the Shaman who listens intently before commanding a pot plant in the corner to walk across the floor, which he is delighted by, slamming the table and shaking hands enthusiastically with Gerald and Fenella, declaring The Hammers as friends of the tribe. Settling down, he goes on to carefully and solemnly ask them to tell other human friends that this tribe lives in peace and means no harm to humans. With these assurances they take their leave with the troublesome ring in their possession as some of the guards even wave to them as they depart.

### **Taking the ring to Thurmaster**

Fenella urges that they should get the ring to a Mage as soon as possible. Gerald suggests Thurmaster although Leo mentions Ironguard Motte would also be possible but in either case it would be an overnight stop and at least they already know Tauster so they make camp and decide to head to Thurmaster the next day. They spend a peaceful night with any predators wisely avoiding the roaring fire and the heavily armed humans around it.

Friday the 10th day of Vadrius 08:00, The Patchwork Hills

Arriving at Harlaton at 11:00 they regroup with Shadwell and continue to Milborne riding with haste along the good road. They get to Milborne around 16:00 but the winter season light is already fading and they decide to stay the night at The Baron of Mutton where, of course, roast boar is on the menu.

Saturday the 11th day of Vadrius 08:00, The Baron of Mutton, Milborne

Morning finds it raining quite heavily and the rain continues as they travel. Leo wonders why the weather has turned so unpleasant before realising... oh, the ring, water... sighing he pulls up the hood of his cloak and rides on in the direction of Kuiper's place and Thurmaster. They spend the night at Kuiper's farm and ferry.

Sunday the 12th day of Vadrius 08:00, Kuiper's Farm and Ferry

They notice that there are a few puddles in the barn as they leave and it is raining lightly. Since it's a long push to Thurmaster they decide to start early before first light with the bank of the river to guide them.

Fenella considers using a Control Weather spell but unfortunately it would only work as long as she concentrates which also means she wouldn't be able to move without losing concentration so she decides it's not helpful for this situation.

They travel through the Redwood along the river for the whole day eventually bumping into a small group of farmers enroute to Milborne. The farmers tell them it's lovely sunny weather ahead, as they stand together in the rain. "Funny, this shower just started up around here, It was quite nice and sunny back there," one says. The farmers recognise them as the "Haranshire" Hammers and wish them a good journey. Leo has a "feeling" that the weather will improve for the farmers in the next half hour or so.

## **A Consultation with Tauster**

Arriving at Thurmaster after dark, they go directly to Tauster's house and bang on the door. He lets them in, slightly lowering on his heels when he notices there is no Dwarf to be taller than.

As Tauster puts the kettle on Gerald explains about the ring, informing him of the details. Tauster mentions, "it's just started to rain here, you mean that's because you've just arrived? And the whole New Mire is because of this?" Gerald informs him it is but over a period of two years as realisation dawns on the old Wizard's face.

Tauster deftly casts a Detect Magic and you see the ring glow, "yes definitely magical, rather strong actually," he says, "I'll need overnight to delve deeper." Gerald warns him about storing it inside due to puddles so Tauster puts it in a window box and agrees to identify overnight. "Hmmm makes a lot of water, interesting, I wonder," he mumbles to himself as he sets about his work as if The Hammers are not even there so they discreetly let themselves out.

They stay at the Hound and Tails where Weismar is looking thoroughly exhausted with all the work brought about by the various building projects in progress around Thurmaster. Gerald suggests he gets more help but he says he has help but he's not really cut out for a life of work. Sighing heavily, he directs them to their rooms. It seems that Weismar is discovering the price of success.

Monday the 13th day of Vadrius 08:00, The Hound and Tails Inn, Thurmaster

Bright and early next morning they visit Tauster who has successfully identified the ring as a Ring of Water Elemental Control. It is however malfunctioning and you can't help but notice a large puddle beneath the window box. He excuses himself for being somewhat vague and tired since the identification process is exhausting. He goes on, "it taps into the elemental plane of water, you see. Normally one could summon a water elemental with it but it has gone quite badly wrong... I'd say you've got a hole in the multiverse that goes to the elemental plane of water... if you keep moving it will probably just be light showers or something but if it stays still for too long it will start to open the sluice gates so to speak." With this he collapses in his armchair and regards them with heavily lidded eyes.

Leo asks about blocking the magic but Tauster explains that it is quite a powerful object, originally forged as an elemental ring, not forged and then enchanted so really not possible to block. Fenella confuses the sleepy Wizard for a moment by suggesting they throw the ring into a fictional volcano she has read about but Tauster has apparently read the same books and doozily ignores the Druid's meandering daydream.

Gerald asks Tauster what the solution to their problem would be, to which the Wizard simply suggests finding a lot of water and putting it there, in a place that doesn't mind having more water. Gerald wonders about the sea but none of them have even once seen the sea so it's probably quite a journey and even then, it could wash up somewhere and begin the whole problem again which surely would not be acceptable to a Paladin of Lawful Good.

Gerald raises the possibility of dumping the ring into The Eelhold, the deep reservoir of water in The Blandryde Hills, created by the Carman family's great wooden dam. It's at least 5 miles across and very deep as far as he has heard. As Tauster falls asleep, muttering about deep water and hidden things, they depart, taking the ring with them.

Gerald likes the idea of the Eelhold but he is also keen to check the abandoned Garlston mines "on the way", even though it would be more of a detour. Fenella worries about how they would ensure the ring is fixed in place in a deep lake, also whether they could get it back again if it all went horribly wrong. In a highly un-Paladinic manner, Gerald attempts to shrug off their responsibility for the ring by suggesting delivering it to The Ironguards and leaving them to sort it out. Noble Knight, Sir Leo also seems to be of the same opinion, favouring handing it off to Sagrath, the court magician who has recently passed through Thurmaster enroute to his negotiations with Inzeldrin.

Fenella reminds them both that they have been hired as troubleshooters and problem solvers and that they are even contracted specifically for this brief. They are supposed to make the problem go away rather than return it to the person who has hired them to eliminate the problem.

Regardless of any evidence to back up his supposition, Gerald is sure that the abandoned mine is a location for a whole gang of “bad guys” and again states that they should go there, “on the way.” Leo quite strongly disagrees; he wants to go straight to Eelhold and he’s not very keen about being underground with a magical item that causes flooding. Eventually, Gerald reluctantly agrees, so to The Eelhold it is.

They decide to go by the most direct cross-country route and they find their way to Krynen’s farm by sunset.

Tuesday the 14th day of Vadrius 08:00, Krynen's farm

It’s around 28 miles to Milborne and pushing the horses a bit they make their destination just before dark.

### **Deciding how to dispose of the ring?**

They provide Carman with a much-appreciated update and he doesn’t have any objection to their plan of somehow keeping the ring at the Eelhold and wishes them luck finding a solution. Leo buys some lengths of chain which he hopes might secure the ring in the reservoir and during the evening they discuss the conundrum of how to safely dispose of the ring.

Leo considers a fishing net but Gerald says they decay and rot over time, he prefers a crab pot which he presents to the others as if he were a crab pot salesman, seemingly not considering that this will also decay over sufficient time. Fenella points out that the ring can produce water at a distance from itself so she thinks it should be sunk a good way into the reservoir. Leo asks whether they want it to be retrievable but Fenella worries about somebody else finding it? Leo agrees; they can’t just leave a chain under a rock so maybe just drop it quite a way into the reservoir?

They huddle around their table, deep in discussion as their after-dinner drinks arrive. Gerald asks if Fenella can hide things in the wilderness. Fenella points out that there isn’t a “Hide in the Wilderness” spell so she’s as good at it as anyone else. Increasingly desperate to find a solution Gerald imagines a small island conveniently in the middle of the reservoir which becomes increasingly real to him the more he hopes it is. Fenella thinks about using her Transmute Mud to Rock spell to lock the ring into a rock that they could sink but they drop the idea when they realise that water pressure from the ring will quite quickly crack the rock open.

Fenella asks the Inn staff if there are any boats at The Eelhold and is informed that they use light skiffs every April during their eel fishing season and there will be a few of them left up there so it might be possible to boat out onto the lake if they want to drop the ring well into it. Leo wonders if there is a dam keeper but although there are maintenance visits the dam is not routinely supervised by anyone.

Fenella can use a spell to breathe underwater but unfortunately her cloak wouldn't keep her warm while submerged, and it is the middle of winter and it is a very deep reservoir so it she would be killed by the cold in quite short order. The more she thinks about it the more she is convinced that it's probably not necessary to be able to retrieve the ring. Leo asks if a Detect Magic spell could locate the ring but that would only make it glow and be visible for a short distance and anyway, that’s a Magic User spell and Fenella is a Druid.

In the end they decide just to go and take a look.

Wednesday the 15th day of Vadrius 08:00, The Baron of Mutton Inn, Milborne

They depart on foot for the Eelhold. At the confluence of the Oldscutt and Churnett rivers they turn to the north and begin the ascent into the snow-topped Blandryde hills trekking up through a steep-sided valley. After a day’s hike they camp peacefully overnight warmed by a blazing fire.

Thursday the 16th day of Vadrius 08:00, Camped south of Eelhold

## **An Encounter at the Eelhold Dam and Reservoir**

A damp snow falls around them as they sight the dam, an impressive wooden structure that regulates the water flow down into the Churnett valley and the fertile lands below. Following the steep path around it they behold the beautiful sight of the reservoir, a five-mile-wide mill pond of fresh mountain water. They pause for a while to admire this scene of natural beauty before descending to the gravelly beach. They stroll around the peaceful scene wondering what to do with the ring. Gerald tries a taste of the bracingly cold water and finds it clean and refreshing, with a pleasing hint of various minerals.

As they pause, still discussing various solutions they suddenly become aware of an extra person in their midst who has somehow approached right into their group without detection. She is a dark-haired woman of medium height, dressed in white winter gear and furs, decorated with a few white feathers. She bears a bow and quiver of arrows and a longsword. Smiling she introduces herself as Shiraz, a Ranger who often spends time here in the mountains. Perimeter guards Phineas and Morgaine look around, highly perplexed... where did she come from?

She explains that she has been following them for a while and since they clearly intend no harm came to introduce herself. "Let's go to my field camp and we can discuss your problem away from this snowfall," she says, smiling and indicating the way. After a short walk they arrive at her camp, nestling naturally into the hillside. She prepares hot tea and over their steaming drinks she asks, "I understand you are trying to dispose of a magical object of some sort in the reservoir, what type of thing is it?" Gerald nudges Leo, the charismatic Knight to relate the story of the ring but then frequently interrupts him as he tries to explain. Amused, Shiraz pays close attention to Leo and eventually with the full story related to her she asks to see, "this troublesome thing."

Examining the ring she thinks out loud, "hmmm, so it makes water and it's going wrong you say, and therefore you've brought it to where there is a lot of water... finish your tea and I think we can go and see somebody who might want to help you."

Shiraz walks to the water's edge and firmly slaps the surface a few times with the flat of her hand. Quite quickly afterwards you see a dim shape below the surface dart with a fish-like grace back and forth a few times before slowly floating upwards. Peering into the water you see the small face of a Nixie, a water sprite, emerge from below. Looking at the group she says, in halting, oddly cadenced common, "Hello Shiraz, who are these?"

Shiraz introduces them to Shenjurath and explains the situation to the water sprite. Bobbing gently in the water, Shenjurath smiles, "interesting because... some problems with water elemental... lives here in lake... becomes disturbed and becomes angry and throws water into air." Shiraz explains she is trying to describe a waterspout and Shenjurath continues, "thing of water plane might help... elemental be happy, I can take it... nice you come here." Shiraz and Shenjurath confer for a while in what they take to be the language of the Nixies.

Shiraz explains that the ring can make massive amounts of water here with no problem, "I don't think you have a problem." Fenella hands it over to the little Nixie who tells them, "I will put... somewhere safe... it will stay, very deep." Carefully slipping the ring over two of her small fingers, the Nixie submerges below waving.

Finally, Shiraz asks a favour of you. "Please don't tell anyone about Shenjurath. Just say you disposed of the ring here." She says they can mention her own involvement to Garyld or Kuiper who are both friends.

Saying goodbye to their new acquaintance, they head back to their camp.

Thursday the 16th day of Vadrius 14:00, Camped south of Eelhold