

The Barrowmaze

Session 70 03-07-25 Jelenneth

Next Session 10-07-25 19.00

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

Well pleased with their solution to the problem of the elemental plane of water ring, they take a moment to reflect on their new friends, Shenjurath the Nixie and Shiraz the Ranger. After meeting Shiraz, it occurs to them that Haranshire does seem to have an unfair share of beautiful women and they muse upon the availability of similarly attractive men for Fenella to admire, indeed Lyntern Parlfray was a very fine-looking young man and a noble to boot. Awarding both Gerald and Leo a significant stare, Fenella announces that she's not particularly interested in men at the best of times and so far considers the elegant and charming Ironguard Motte official, Beryl Pizzak as her interest, after all there did seem to be a spark of chemistry she remembers, musing on the whispered phrase, "Hern be with you, Fenella," and indeed the manner of its saying.

Enjoying the natural beauty of the mountains on this cold yet beautifully clear day, completely devoid of precipitation of any sort, they begin their trek back to Milborne discussing their plans as they walk. Gerald wants to investigate the abandoned mines but thinks they should report back to Milborne so that should they go missing there is a chance of an investigation. The others agree that it's a good plan so they descend to the river valley and make camp at the confluence of the Oldscutt and Churnett rivers. With their good numbers and a blazing fire, they are untroubled overnight.

Friday 17th day of Vadrius 11:00, Milborne

Reporting Back

As they arrive at Milborne a young lad informs them that Garyld would like to see them urgently. Gerald wants the boy to inform Carman that they would like to see him but the boy says he was asked just to deliver the message to them. Gerald, fearing the worst hurriedly leads them to Garyld's where the Constable is packing up his gear. He has received a message from Kuiper, Jelenneth has been found and is currently at Krynen's farm. Apparently, she arrived exhausted, badly beaten and mistreated but she's alive and stable and being tended to by the Krynens. Kuiper requests a Priest for healing if possible.

Garyld assumes they will accompany him but Gerald and Leo insist they need to see Carman first. Garyld appears nonplussed by this and says, "very well, I'll go ahead," before leaving quickly. The Hammers go to Carman's manor house and are immediately seen by The Master of Milborne. Smiling in satisfaction he congratulates them on their disposal of the ring and provides the agreed upon sum for the successful conclusion of the matter. They also tell him about Jelenneth and he says he will be interested to hear her story. Thanking them again, Carman has Jasper show them out.

Heading quickly for the stables they notice a pair of Dwarves equipped with clipboards and surveying equipment deep in discussion as they walk towards the half-built bridge. Grinning to themselves The Hammers collect their horses and set off to catch up with Garyld, joining the well-armed Constable riding for Kuiper's farm, finally arriving at nightfall. Kuiper has left a message that he is at Krynen's place. His staff make The Hammers comfortable in a now bone-dry barn and first thing the next morning they ride for Krynen's farm.

Saturday the 18th day of Vadrius 10:00, Krynen's Farm

Arriving at Krynen's farm they meet Maxim Krynen, their friend, the werebear, who greets them warmly and assists Shadwell stabling the Horses. Fenella, Gerald and Garyld are shown into the bedroom by an anxious Mrs Krynen who fusses around as they enter. Jelenneth lies upon the bed and it is clear she has been beaten and ill-used, with deep grazes around her neck and wrists and many cuts and bruises including a nasty black eye. They also note some intricate symbols have been carved into her forearms. She looks weak and exhausted.

Jelenneth wakes and greets them weakly, "oh Garyld... and friends." Sir Leo suavely distracts the overly solicitous Mrs Krynen, steering her away. Subjected to the full force of the handsome Knight's charm and chivalric manners she instantly forgets everything and simply melts. "Oh, Sir Leo... would you like tea, a scone, a cake, two cakes?" she burbles happily as Leo chats affably with the good lady.

A bruised and battered Jelenneth lies on the bed before them. "I'm sorry, I've been through it a bit," she says weakly. Fenella quickly attends, noting the cruel manacle marks around her neck, wrists and ankles and her many cuts and bruises, additionally two matching symbols have been carved into the flesh of both inner forearms. Although they are quite fresh cuts they don't seem to bleed very much and the design is clearly visible. Tutting briefly to herself, the Druid casts her Cure Serious Wounds and Jelenneth's worst wounds are magically healed, the bruises fading and the cuts sealing, she will still not look her best for a day or two but as Jelenneth sits up in bed to thank Fenella all can see the immediate change. Gerald Lays Hands upon her to complete the healing to full health as Jelenneth pulls herself up straight to relate her story. Garyld flips his notebook open and nods at her to proceed.

Jelenneth's story

She was gathering herbs by the Hog Brook intending to visit Kuiper, then return to her studies at Thurmaster when she was surprise attacked and hit from behind. She lost consciousness and the next thing she remembers is waking in a cage in some sort of dark cavern, manacled at the wrists, ankles and neck.

There were several guards who didn't speak to her but just brought her food and water and she found herself feeling groggy and confused, probably drugged, loosing track of time. After a while she was dragged off and shackled to a big stone where a man in dark robes chanted and cut these marks in her skin. As she lay there she felt as if her essence was being drained, her spellcasting abilities slowly becoming dragged out of her. She struggled and resisted eventually blacking out and waking in the cage. This repeated with the man cutting open the same marks and making new ones on her arms while chanting and again she felt drained and blacked out.

Feeling that her spells were fading from her mind she still had a charm spell memorised but hadn't had the chance to use it since her captors had only ever arrived in groups but they slipped up one time sending only one guard and she was able to charm him. He released her and guided her through some tunnels to where an underground stream emerged into a waterfall. After using her charm to convince her captor that he'd just arrived and found the cage already open she leapt from the frightening height, luckily hitting deeper water and almost drowning with the stunning shock of icy cold.

Crawling ashore, shivering terribly, she found herself at a fast-running river in the forest, the stream cascading down the rocks which she followed in the downstream direction. Looking back nervously, she could just see a curiously broken spire atop a semi-ruined keep. She continued following the river for a while until it occurred to her that she might be pursued and along the river would be the logical place to look, so she left the riverside and went into the forest in what she thought was a northerly direction, travelling until she was found, exhausted and shivering by The Wild Girl of The Woods who patched her up and escorted her most of the way to Krynen's farm. She thanks you profusely for your help in searching for her and healing her and Gerald congratulates her on her amazing escape.

They wonder about this broken spire keep. Garyld says it rings a bell; he's read about it or heard the term somewhere but he can't recall the specifics. Gerald asks if Jelenneth noticed any detail in the caves where she was held, was it perhaps a mine? She doesn't really remember too well, saying she wasn't herself after drinking the drugged water. Kuiper can confirm that the location of Jelenneth's abduction was the area they had previously searched together a few weeks ago.

Poring over the map of Haranshire they try to find a plausible location for Broken Spire Keep. Leo wanders in, munching a cake and listens to their discussion as he catches up. Thinking out loud Fenella surmises, it must be on a river where she could jump from the cliff, now which way along the river she was walking, Jelenneth replies that she had the river on her right.

Gerald suggests the Woldcote River and Jelenneth says that would make sense, the river was on her right and she did reach Krynen's by heading north into the forest. Gerald realises that the map isn't detailed enough to show the crags and cliffs, just the main flow of the river so not to bother searching for marked crags or cliffs. Leo starts to narrow it down to around the southern Blessed Woods area and thinks he has found the spot and Jelenneth agrees that this location would fit her experience.

Fenella asks about the types of people keeping her prisoner. Jelenneth says, they were a mixed bag, some elves, humans, some like farmers; a mixed bandit band and what she took to be an evil Priest. She has no idea about the symbols carved in her arms. Leo thinks the evil Priest is very bad news and Jelenneth can only agree as for the first time she realises quite how handsome and graceful Leo actually is, looking him down and up again and losing track of her story as she looks down with surprise from the handsome Knight.

Satisfied with Jelenneth's statement, Garyld flips his notebook closed and wishing them well, informs them he must file his report back in Milborne. Taking Kuiper along with him he leaves.

Gerald proposes escorting Jelenneth to Thurmaster and in reply she asks what will they do after? Gerald growls, "find the bastards and make them pay!" Looking up as she rubs the fading marks on her wrists she says, "yes, well, hmmm... Gerald asks if she wants to come with them and she informs him that her spellbook is in the possession of the bandits and she cannot let that go. She is a Magic User and her spellbook is absolutely as precious as any holy item would be to a follower of a god.

"Ok," says Leo, "you're going with us aren't you." Nodding, she looks up and Leo notices that she really is a very pretty young woman now the bruises on her face are subsiding... "hmmm, charming manner too," thinks the Knight, temporarily stowing this notion as he returns to the matter in hand, suggesting that Jelenneth should write a short note to Tauster so he knows she's alright. Gerald and Leo discuss whether to tell Tauster everything and Leo is not sure as he makes a rough sketch of Jelenneth's forearm wounds for the elderly Mage to examine. Eventually they decide to fully inform Tauster and Jelenneth scribbles off her note, sealing it and the drawing in an envelope.

Leo wonders why were they were draining her... essence? Was there a benefit? Was it perhaps her magic asks Gerald. To possibly power some magical device... thinking it through he realises it's likely that the missing Priest is also imprisoned at the same place. Jelenneth thinks they were trying to drain her spells and maybe her spellcasting ability? And with the mention of this, they see her determination to get her spellbook back, she now appears a very different woman to the battered and wounded one they first met, now resolute and determined.

Gerald asks, "permit me to be brutally honest but what use is a Magic User without a spellbook on an expedition, you'd just be one more body we'd have to look after." Apparently unoffended at this, Jelenneth explains she would stay at the back and keep in cover, "I'm quite good at hiding and I'm the only one able to identify my spellbook," she says. Seeing Gerald is not quite convinced she asks to be given a dagger and demonstrates some highly dexterous practice moves and flourishes that show she can handle the weapon with skill. "I can carry four, two to throw and two to fight in close quarters," she states with some pride as Gerald nods his assent.

They think it would be a good idea to find Oleanna and Leo proposes going to Hog Brook where they first met her, although that would be backtracking. Jelenneth asks why they want to find her and Fenella says to discover where she found you. Jelenneth asks for the map and after perusing it for a moment points to where she thinks she left the river and turned north.

They decide to set out first thing in the morning to head south into The Thornwood, down to the river. They pass some time chatting with Maxim and the young werebear lends them a suit of leather armour that's now too small for his younger brother, finding it fits Jelenneth very well while Shadwell signs out four daggers from his inventory for the now roguishly attired Mage as he entrusts Gerald with the care of the Bag of Holding.

Sunday the 19th day of Vadrius, 08:00 Krynen's Farm

Into The Thornwood

Leaving at first light they enter the forest and while Fenella enjoys the ambience of the forest, observing the many cues nature leaves for her Druid's eye, she doesn't notice any sign of Oleanna. With her ability to rapidly scout ahead and her affinity with nature, Fenella guides the others to the easiest passage and The Hammers are able to make much better time than they first imagined. After just over a half day of travel they catch a glimpse of the river below them to the south and almost immediately after, a grinning Oleanna emerges from a bush making jokes in broken common about "waiting here all day". Jelenneth rushes over to thank her as the two Druids chatter away in the Druidic tongue with Fenella translating Oleanna's observations to the party.

Oleanna found Jelenneth via a bird's message that a human was dying in the forest so she came to investigate. She found her a little further north on the axis between here and Krynen's Farm. Oleanna explains it is wilder further to the south and that is the natural state of this forest, wild tribal orcs to the south and human settlements to the north. She knows of several ruined buildings in the forests but doesn't know what a spire is until Fenella describes a thing like a thorn with the top broken. Once this is understood Oleanna tells them there is indeed such a keep, on the river and further to the southwest.

With information and pleasantries exchanged, the wild Druid disappears once more into her domain and the Hammers continue southwards to the river making camp inside the treeline.

Monday the 20th day of Vadrius 08:00, camped at Woldcote River

Broken Spire Keep

After a peaceful night they continue southwest towards the site indicated by Oleanna, remaining inside the treeline but in view of the river. Over the next hour the land starts to rise into rocky outcrops, gradually rising onto the beginning of a cliff face. With the choice of continuing either at river level or ascending to the top of the cliff line they chose the higher path, coming soon to a split in the river where their side runs narrow and faster. Jelenneth frowns, "yes, I remember this place, where the streams meet, it's not much further."

Moving cautiously onwards, they clamber up some overgrown rock terraces before Fenella spots a ruined watch tower about 100 yards distant. Remaining in cover they observe for about twenty minutes. There is no sign of smoke from a fire, no movement and the tower seems to be partially collapsed. Jelenneth whispers, "I don't remember anything like this," as they cautiously approach. The tower is completely ruined and clearly unused but from this vantage point they can see another also ruined fortified position about fifty yards further on and dropping away below them, an open bay, with an abandoned and overgrown village and rising above on a promontory, a decrepit fortified keep, with a broken spire.

They settle down to observe from cover as, thinking out loud, Gerald mentions he has a pair of Gauntlets of Swimming and Climbing however whilst very effective they are not 100% reliable and when the drop is measured in hundreds of feet maybe it's not such a good idea to rely on them so he shelves this plan for now. Spotting another ruined watchtower a bit to the north that offers an even better view they withdraw and move around to view the bay from this angle, noting that there are two boats moored at the jetty in the overgrown village and a roadway curving around between the keep and the village.

Jelenneth supposes that her escape route must have been on the far side of the keep, on the cliff above the river. Fenella recalls her Commune with Nature spell which will allow her to survey the keep and the surrounding area, even the possible caverns below, however she will need to wait for this to be available until the next morning.

They keep watch and wait for the next day to see what Fenella's spell will reveal.

Monday the 20th day of Vadrius 14:00, The Ruined Watchtower, Broken Spire Keep