

The Barrowmaze

Session 72 17-07-25 Relieving the guard

Next Session 21-07-25 19.00

Wednesday the 22nd day of Vadrius 11:00, The Southwest Tower of Broken Spire Keep

Crouching in the cover of the southwest tower they review the tactical situation.

Out of the six or so guards that Fenella sensed on the keep battlements they have accounted for three so far. Leo reckons the next stop is the Broken Spire tower. Gerald considers just making a frontal attack but is quickly outvoted by the rest who decide to remain with the dishonourable sneaking around and murdering plan that has served them well so far. Fenella underlines this whilst giving Gerald a stern look. With a slightly sarcastic smile, Leo carefully unties and separates the two ropes and hands one to Gerald, nodding significantly. Again, using the cloak, Leo moves almost invisibly, over the tower wall and down to the battlements connecting to the broken spire to the east.

The others can observe from their vantage point that the manor is built in a classical villa style with a courtyard, although the higher floor and roof is badly collapsed and looks dangerous. They also notice they are above the stables and there are a few horses there but they don't appear to be making any disturbance or reacting to The Hammers' creeping around.

Leo sneaks stealthily, making his dishonourable way towards the broken spire which looks like it was half torn off and half exploded from within. The others give it two minutes before beginning to creep along behind. Looking back, they see Jelenneth expertly rifling the bodies of the fallen guards, "looking for keys," she whispers as she pockets some gold and Fenella is quite impressed by her thinking. Hugging the exterior side of the battlement they creep along after their invisible Knight.

Arriving at the base of the spire, Leo hears a quiet conversation from above. He can't make out any words but it sounds like two men discussing something. After a couple of minutes, the conversation stops and he hears footsteps moving away. Looking around the edge of the spire, Leo briefly sees a figure moving behind the battlements walking slowly from the steeple towards the square-shaped tower to the north.

Leo climbs carefully and briefly pops his head up, seeing an armed man apparently on lookout and facing directly in his direction but looking over him (and the rest of the team), into the distance but it will be only a short matter of time before he sees them so Leo realises he needs to move fast. With nimble dexterity, Leo springs up and surprise attacks the guard, killing the man quickly and quietly. From below, the others see Leo's surge of action as he breaks cover, gently laying yet another adversary to the ground as he waves them over.

Looking north along the battlement Leo sees what he assumes to be the second man strolling towards the next tower as a woman atop the eastern tower leans over and greets him. Another figure is also at the top of this tower, patrolling dutifully north and south. Leo watches the man walk to the tower and signals The Hammers to stay put for a minute. The man has good armour and quite a few weapons on him. He enters an opening at the base of the tower and quickly appears at the top of the eastern tower where he is soon deep in discussion with the woman. Leo notices she is quite big and strongly built and also has good armour and weapons.

After a while they notice the heavily armoured man leaves and the two women discuss something for a minute or so before separating and resuming their watches, the archer walks up and down the external eastern wall while the bigger armoured woman goes to the northwest corner of the tower and looks in that direction.

Gerald concludes that the man moving around must be some sort of sergeant at arms or watch leader. Since he seems to be checking in with each watch location it can only be a short time before he reaches the northwest tower and discovers Leo's first victim so the clock is ticking!

Leo approaches the middle tower managing to remain hidden as he crosses the battlement. The rest follow on, and again Jelenneth frisks a bandit's body, soundlessly pocketing a few items.

Popping up through the trapdoor at the top of the tower, Leo scrapes a boot over the flagstones but the archer guard doesn't hear him so he springs forward and dishonourably attacks her from behind, backstabbing like a Thief. Stumbling a little on the uneven floor as he makes his strike, he only wounds the archer causing her to scream out in shock as the other woman turns and with a furious expression on her face, draws her sword and runs to attack, bellowing the alarm as she comes.

Yelling and shouting, she swings on Leo but he ducks the blow, smoothly continuing his motion to finish the archer. As the archer collapses, a bell starts to ring in the courtyard below. Leo turns to the other warrior and wounds her badly but her good armour deflects enough of the blow to keep her in the fight. The others rush up the ladder and run forward to join the melee on top of the tower. The armoured woman snarls at Leo, "dog, vermin, you won't stand against us!" and hits him for a good wound, stepping back to heft another blow.

First out of the trapdoor, Fenella leaps forward and thrusts with the Spear of The Druid ending the big woman on the spot as the bell continues to ring for another few seconds before abruptly stopping. They hear shouts from around the manor house below them, then running feet and the sound of a couple of slamming doors. Gerald concludes they are locking themselves in. Leo agrees but Jelenneth complains, "they've got my fucking spellbook!" as she rifles the two fallen guards. Leo asks if she recognises the keep now they're inside and she says she still doesn't, as she pockets the guards' possessions.

Gerald asks if they have anything that can smash down a door and the others all turn to look at him. Fenella points out Leo, Morgaine, Phineas and of course Gerald himself, constitute four heavy fighters. Together they can take down most doors without a problem.

Leo decides he wants his full plate back on so pulling the mail shirt over his head starts changing his gear since it's all gone quiet. As the handsome Knight discards his chain mail Jelenneth takes a seat and watches the show with a lecherous gaze, as every ripple of muscle is examined by the young woman's discerning eye. Glancing back Leo notices but of course with his fine looks and charm it has certainly happened before but what Leo is not so used to is quite how brazen she is about it, practically licking her lips as the Knight strips off and fits his plate armour. "Shame, shame," whispers Jelenneth to herself.

Twenty minutes pass while this happens and all is quiet below... perhaps they have fled?

Gerald thinks it will still be a good idea to scout ahead so he asks for the Clasp of Elvenkind for his cloak so he can take his share of the dishonourable scouting. Leo agrees, a little reluctantly it seems, but hands over the clasp, and The Gauntlets of Swimming and Climbing. Suitably equipped, Gerald takes over the role of hidden, skulking scout.

Leo seems quite sure that the villains haven't escaped yet, assuming that the access routes they are aware of must be the only routes in and out of the caves and the ruined keep. "Oh! The village," says Gerald, also assuming a single possible escape route. Jelenneth grumbles, "if you're not going after them, then I'm going by myself!" Continuing his stream of consciousness, Gerald blurts out, "Let's get the horses and ride to the village, they must be escaping in the boats!" whilst Jelenneth looks at him as if he is mad. Under the young woman's unsettlingly intense stare Gerald quickly changes his mind and says he was just thinking out loud and they should indeed attack the manor house.

While they delay, deciding exactly what to do, Jelenneth again reminds them, "I don't want them getting away with my spellbook!" as Phineas and Morgaine chuckle away to themselves, "just like old times eh, wandering around arguing what to do next."

Galvanised into action they descend to the floor of the keep and follow the path around to a sturdy pair of wooden doors at the manor house. Gerald growls, "let's just kick the doors down!" before finding that the doors are not actually secured and can be opened easily.

The Manor House

Examining the doors they find a familiar set of heavy iron fixtures that are normally used to secure this type of door from the inside but in this case the metal hooks are on the outside and look as if they have been freshly installed. Glancing around they see a sturdy length of wood resting against the wall a short distance away which could be used to bar the door closed. That's weird they think, why would the bandits want to lock anything inside? Eventually Gerald pushes the door open revealing an overgrown courtyard. The area is ruined and broken down but there are new barrels and crates standing around and the few visible doors seem to be in reasonably good condition.

Jelenneth hangs back outside but Leo calls her over to take her place in the marching order as they prepare to enter. Jelenneth grins, "you just want me standing close to you, don't you Sir Leo, after all I'm only admiring the view," she says, asking to swap places with Fenella who is right behind Leo. "No," snaps Fenella, "now behave yourself."

Leo beckons them all in until Gerald points out that this could be a trap since the doors can be barred from the outside and Morgaine agrees with him, so pulling a short-handled sledgehammer from her pack she walks outside and smashes the new metal fixtures. Within two minutes she has utterly destroyed the fittings, rendering the doors incapable of being barred from the outside.

Trying a nearby door Gerald finds it unlocked but it's dark inside. Fenella wanders over, revealing her continual light source and they see a room with assorted crates and barrels piled high. Trying a few more doors they find similar rooms, all a bit dingy and dusty but used to store containers that seem to be quite new. Gerald eyes up some more doors in the dimly illuminated courtyard, explaining he doesn't like having unexplored doors behind him when moving forwards. There is the sound of a barrel popping and Jelenneth reports, "hmmm ale... fresh too."

With Phineas and Morgaine standing back-to-back covering the surrounding area with crossbows the others perform a cursory search of the courtyard area. Morgaine nudges Gerald and nodding at Jelenneth, mutters, "boss, that girl, she's not serious, eh?" In turn Jelenneth observes, with some bemusement, the manner in which The Hammers somewhat randomly search the area, apparently unconcerned of danger.

Opening a door in the eastern wall of the courtyard they find a room with a table and stools and a still warm fireplace. Noticing doors to the north and south they open the northern door, finding a short corridor with a door to the west and a set of spiral stairs leading to the wrecked roof and descending into darkness below.

Gerald again mentions how he doesn't like leaving unexplored areas behind him as they continue to do exactly that, moving into the spiral staircase room. Leo points out that there were indeed other doors in the courtyard but Gerald is getting excited at the prospect of cornering the villains and wants to descend into the darkness, "death or glory" fashion.

Gerald moves quietly down the stairs, unconcerned at the number of unsearched areas behind him. He descends into a 20x20 room with a door in the southwest corner. There is a dim glow from Fenella's light above and a slight light emitting from the crack at the bottom of the door. Gerald listens but doesn't hear anything so he cautiously opens the door, peeking into a long corridor from the eastern end. About 30 ft along the northern wall is another door whilst a little further along and to the south is an open arch where a soft glow emanates. He returns quietly and briefs the others.

Wednesday the 22nd day of Vadrius 13:00, The Northeast Spiral Staircase Room