

Winter's Daughter

Session 3 7-6-23 Barrow delving and beyond

Next Session 15-6-23

In the hounds room Vlad easily heaves open the stone doors to the south. The torch carried by Fenella is burning out so she lights a new one and raises it to light the room as the doors swing open.

The Waltzing Bones

They enter the southern room which is of similar proportions to the statues and weapons room and are surprised to see two skeletons sedately waltzing around in a circle, hovering in mid-air! The skeletons seem to vaguely notice them but continue their slow waltz as if moving to the tune of some long dead orchestra. They note the pearl necklace and gold chain around the necks of the skeletons and also that they are slick with some sort of moisture. The room appears to be a crypt with five stone coffers arrayed around the walls, two of them on the west wall are open while the three along the eastern wall remain closed. There is also a fissure partially splitting the floor, above which the skeletons are slowly waltzing. A colourless translucent slime drips slowly from hairline cracks in the ceiling down upon one of the opened coffers and into the fissure. Each coffer has a brass plaque set into it at the north end. Taking in this scene they agree for both moral and practical reasons that any grave robbery at this location might be a bad idea so they confine themselves to examining the fissure and the brass plaques. The fissure in the floor spreads from the northwest corner to around the centre of the room and descends about 15 ft before becoming a scintillating white background vista much like sunlight reflected off snow. The slime drips down from the ceiling into the fissure on the northwest side leaving the rest of the fissure clear of the substance. It flows down and disappears into the white background below.

The engraved plaques on the stone coffers read as follows...

A: Lady Amaranda : Tall, elegant, stick-like, big nose, holding a book.

B: Lord Brigforwith : Stocky, round head, chunky beard.

C: Brandywith the Good : Bespectacled, head bowed, leaning on a staff.

D: Brigford the Wise : Chainmail, hound at his side, bow in hand.

E: Emaline the Chaste : Petite, mourning veil, cradling a cat.

Fenella remembers that according to the records she now possesses that Brigford the Wise, Sir Chyde's younger brother, is her ancestor thereby granting her title to the contents of the tomb specifically including the fabled sword and ring of Sir Chyde. Vlad thinks that these must be the companions whose names need to be spoken in the hall of hounds despite the evidence indicating that these are the family of Sir Chyde, he also thinks the hound in Brigford's plaque is significant. So they go to the hounds room and try calling out all the names from the coffers but with no effect other than their voices echoing loudly around the tomb.

Carefully avoiding the slime, the fissure and the dancing skeletons they exit via the stone doors to the south and emerge in the entrance room where they fought the statuettes or icons. Perhaps they now recall the words, "Most Dear" inscribed on the doors of the room? Standing around wondering what to do next (because they have definitely been everywhere and looked at everything) they finally notice the unexplored west corridor leading from this room and set off down it emerging into a similar room to the circular mirror room with exits to the north and stairs leading down to the northeast. There is a statue in the southwest quarter of a now familiar fair maiden with long flowing hair and a star upon her brow with her hands raised beseechingly, one finger raised to her lips. Oddly the statue is blindfolded with a piece of velvet cloth that has not yet fully decayed. Vlad steps up to the task and decisively removes the blindfold which just reveals the statue's eyes, nothing else appears to happen. They take a quick look up the northern corridor confirming that it leads to the chapel room and also confirming the symmetrical nature of the tomb complex.

Returning to the statue room they investigate the stairs leading down to the northeast. The stone here is pristine and perfectly chiselled in contrast to the rougher appearance of the rest of the tomb and is also miraculously free of dust. Carved into the entrance to the stairway is a finely chiselled representation of tree branches and leaves, lending an aura of the forest to this underground barrow. Descending the stairs they immediately notice a shimmering wall of ghostly candles floating in the doorway as if warding the way to the room. Beyond, the room is circular and completely filled by a shimmering pool of water in the centre of which stands a statue of the now familiar maiden. Angus, attempting to walk to the statue in the centre passes through the candles and disappears. The others discuss following but decide to give him some time in case he returns relatively quickly. Fenella finds herself musing on the words and rituals of mourning for some reason or other.

Through the portal

Angus finds himself alone, emerging into a cold snow-covered landscape in a forest clearing with a frozen lake and a tower at the centre, the scintillating candles still flickering behind him. He looks around for a minute and then steps back into the candles and reappears before the others who are relieved to see him apparently unharmed. Angus quickly and urgently demands the beautiful (magical) sword from Vlad who wonders what happened through the portal and why Angus needs the sword but it must be for the good and it seems very urgent so he hands it over. Angus owns up and admits that he was just joking, it's a very nice sword and he really wouldn't mind having it but can't in good conscience deceive his companion so he returns it to Vlad who makes a mental note regarding Angus's sense of humour.

They decide to all pass through the portal emerging in the snowy landscape at the frozen lake with the tower. Looking around more carefully, now they are all present, they see they are standing in the southwestern quarter of a circular clearing in a heavily wooded dark pine forest with a frozen lake and white marble tower in the centre of the lake. Behind them the ghostly candles still shimmer in the cold fresh air and to the southeast a similar doorway of candles sparkles in the bright daylight. Above the other candles, hovering high up in the air is a purple crack in the sky, slowly dripping a viscous purple substance onto the snow below. Discovering that the lake is frozen solid they walk over to the tower seeing the door opening as they approach to reveal a huge lumbering figure emerging from within. The creature grunts and gestures in sullen semi-hostility at them until a little goblin face appears over its shoulder and asks them what they want. There is a bit of chat to and fro before the goblin informs them that they need an invitation to the Princess's wedding... unless... perhaps... they want to eat one of the mushrooms in his pouch? If they do this then they can come in. They discuss this for a while with Fenella quite keen to have a go at the mushrooms but the others not so much inclined to. Angus worries that they might become trapped in Fairy lands after accepting food. Fenella isn't impressed however and calls them a bunch of wussies as they head off to the second set of candles to try their luck there as the hulking figure and its goblin rider disappear back into the tower.

Delving and searching

Passing through the second candle doorway they are quite surprised to emerge in the covered mirror room, apparently it should be the hall of hounds although where they thought they would emerge from remains a mystery. Perhaps the geography doesn't tie up exactly across the portals? They discuss their next move, pretty much agreed that they need the names of the hounds (companions) to open the sealed northern door in the hall of hounds but they have carefully searched every.... oh searching?... yes, we could do that couldn't we. With a renewed purpose the party head north into the statues room and examine the occluded tapestry in search of hidden information. Following Fenella's warnings regarding unpleasant spores they settle on a plan to cover their faces with cloth while carefully scraping the mould onto a burning torch, what could possibly go wrong? Fortunately for the party, Angus is particularly dexterous today and manages the task without a problem, revealing the entire tapestry where they are able to see a hefty collar around one of the hounds bearing the inscription "Chaedr".

With this victory they are so overcome with happiness it obviously clouds their minds regarding hidden information on tapestries such that they pause wondering what to do next. Eventually they meander into the chapel, finally taking note of the hanging tapestry and finally thinking to look behind it, they finally discover a door! Not a secret door... just a concealed door... behind a tapestry... fiendishly cunning!

The fiendishly concealed room

The wooden door is locked and warped and swollen into the frame but Vlad applies his muscle forcing the door open with no problem revealing another room of similar proportions to the chapel. In the northwest corner the wall and ceiling have collapsed leaving rubble and earth strewn over the ground. There is a narrow (2 ft) dirt tunnel leading upwards which they surmise probably matches the one they found on the surface to the west of the mound. On the southern wall is an old wooden desk but Vlad notices a flagstone move beneath his foot in the northeast corner so he prises it up revealing a concealed space containing a metal box. Removing the box Vlad finds it locked but bracing it on the floor he uses his crowbar to prise it open, unfortunately triggering the poison needle trap. Fortunately for Vlad his hardy constitution takes no account of the poison and he shrugs it off without a problem.

Looking inside they find...

A silver holy symbol (50gp).

A clerical spell scroll - not useful to a Druid but certainly has good resale or trade value.

A prayer book of stamped gold leaf (worth 500gp).

A box of 20 holy wafers, perfectly preserved.

GM's Notes

Torches

I should have been informing you of this as we go through the adventure but I lost track. The torches last about 1 hour each and during the time you were underground and needed a light source you went through a total of three torches including the one you lit at the start. Perhaps you can sort out your pool of torches between yourselves, they are recorded on your character sheet.

Player notes

Just as if we're playing face-to-face it's a good idea to keep notes of things you discover and the loot you acquire. I am also keeping track but it's a good habit to get into and it makes a handy check if I forget to account for anything. You can record this on your character sheet, there is a notes tab where you can record this and other information.