The Barrowmaze

Session 108 21-10-26 Oceans Underground

Next Session 28-10-26

Thursday 29th day of Haenubrius, 12:00, Barrow 43, Room 1.

The water sloshes around following the defeat of the Water Weird, leaving everyone soaking wet except for Fenella at the top of the stairs. At least it isn't cold and the water is warm enough to be almost pleasant, although it is uncomfortable to be fully clothed and completely drenched.

Leo notes that the only exit is a bronze door in an alcove to the west featuring a blue wavy symbol embossed into its surface while Fenella uses her Druidic ability to check the water, finding it perfectly pure and fresh. It is a weirdly pleasant environment for a supposed underground burial barrow.

Looking down into the shallow water from above, it looks just like free flowing water streaming over a pebbly and water smoothed rocky bed, yet the floor feels just like flagstones beneath them, it is very attractive but disconcertingly odd.

The Symbol on the Door

Luna sloshes over to the western alcove and now clearly sees the stylised blue elemental symbol for water on the attractively patinaed bronze door. It seems familiar and Fenella remembers it was the symbol featured on the water producing ring of the Goblin tribe in the Haranshire hills, that they traded for a perfect copy of the same ring to the tribe's shaman so he wouldn't lose face with the tribe whilst also solving the problem of an open portal to the elemental plane of water gushing into the Goblin's tribal home.

They have also seen the same symbol in the Barrowmaze whilst exploring the southern part of the complex, pushing further east after they had passed through some natural caves. They found an area where the various elemental symbols were prevalent but were forced to retreat by the rather high difficulty of the opposition at the time. This exact same symbol was used throughout to indicate the element of water.

Gerald sensibly asks if they have anything within their respective gear that might be in anyway useful against, principally drowning, but any other ill-effects of immersion in water? He points out that the Water Weird creature was definitely trying to drag him below the surface and he is certain it wanted to drown him. With this in mind, Leo looks more carefully at the fountain and notices that it seems to be incredibly deep, as if there is no bottom to it. Luna considers putting something over the top to prevent anything else popping out but it's 10 ft in diameter and rather too big for that.

Leaving the fountain for now, Leo and Gerald team up to look at the door as Fenella, intrigued by the description of the bottomless well steps daintily down into the water, a look of mild distaste on her face as her feet get wet. She wanders over to the fountain for a closer look.

Leo notes there is no handle on the door. He tries pushing it but finds it solidly sealed and also featureless, no holes or seams. Gerald wonders if they should try something "watery" for which he is briefly ridiculed as Leo strokes his beard, gazing at the door from different angles hoping to find a place for a crowbar. As Leo's patience gradually evaporates, Luna also examines the door. Her Thiefly expertise discerns that the door can open in either direction, east or west.

Frustrated by the obstacle, Leo has arrived at the brute force phase of his analysis but Gerald thinks it would be a shame to bash it, it seems that the pleasant spa and tasteful decoration is rather agreeable to him and he suggests that not everything has to be evil and deserving of violent intervention. Calming his mind he projects his Paladin's Detect Evil sense and performs a clockwise scan of the barrow up to a range of 60 ft, unfortunately noting a significant spike in Evil to the NNW.

Into The Depths

Fenella is still examining the fountain as Luna wonders about lowering somebody into the "well" and their helpful Druid points out that she could change into an aquatic animal to explore beneath the fountain, clearly Fenella's curiosity is also piqued. Gerald recalls that Fenella cannot talk to them whilst in animal form so suggests some sort of a pre-arranged signal when Fenella's animal form returns. They settle on going to Gerald if the outcome is good and to Leo if… not good.

Fenella first thinks of a small dolphin but realises an amphibious animal such as an otter would be at home in both environments, plus it is even cuter than a dolphin! Climbing onto the fountain Fenella transforms into an otter and slips effortlessly beneath the surface. The water is considerably cooler but still fresh and comfortable to her animal form although humans would find it very cold.

She quickly finds this isn't a well, it's a huge open waterscape, an ocean of water with a pleasant background glow, rather similar in tone to the barrow above. She also notes feeling a slight tingle as she passed beneath the surface, as if traversing a portal of some kind. She doesn't have any actual experience with extra-planar portals but she has certainly read of them and would guess that she might have passed into the elemental plane of water. Looking up she notes with relief that the shimmering circle is still above her so swims on to explore a little.

The waterscape seems to be just that, no sign of any seabed but with abundant sea life swimming around and many familiar kinds of fish… "mmmm fish, yummy," thinks Fenella the otter. She swims around briefly considering a quick snack before returning until her sharp animal senses note a subtle change of pressure from below. Looking down she sees a large streamlined shape racing up towards her and Fenella recognises… Shark! As the Fenella-human part of the Druidic otter wonders what a shark is doing in fresh water the otter-Fenella part screams, "Swim! Escape! Flee!" and to the shark's disappointment, the tasty morsel flashes upwards at lightning speed, disappearing through the bright circle.

Back in the barrow room an otter spurts out of the fountain and scampers over to Gerald, standing up on its hind legs and looking unbelievably cute. Overcome, Gerald pets and tickles the sweet little animal which unfortunately transforms back into grumpy-face Fenella who firmly removes his hand from behind her ear. "Er, sorry," Gerald apologises, unable to conceal his disappointment as the cute little otter vanishes. Fenella reports back and Gerald thinks he was lucky to avoid being dragged into the plane of water and Fenella confirms that he would not have lasted long dragged down into the cold water.

Leo is still musing on how to open the door as Gerald takes a cup and fills it with water from the fountain which he then throws over the symbol on the door, causing the door to swing open into the new room. "Watery… not so silly now is it," beams Gerald as the rest are grudgingly impressed by his insight. In the octagonal room beyond there is a pedestal in the centre with a pile of sparkling gems on it. Again, it is the same spa-like environment.

Leo leads, taking all precautions as they move into the octagonal chamber. Leo spots an identical door to the west, also one in an alcove to the north. Luna approaches and identifies the gems as aquamarines, 900 gp worth, elegantly arranged in a wavy pattern. Leo notices some text inscribed on the northern door but he ignores it for now, more interested in searching for secret doors. Luna checks the pedestal, no traps and then listens at the west door but just hears the sound of running water.

Leo suggests the others help him search for secret doors and most of them join in, as Gerald and Luna's exploration lead them to the north door, close enough to read the inscription, written in common.

"Here Lies Glossmira, Cursed Bitch of The Deep"

Luna quickly backs up several steps as Gerald guards the door; certain he has located the evil he detected earlier. Leo scoops up the aquamarines and deposits them in a Shadwell-provided sack before suggesting they go through the north door but Gerald first wants to clear out "behind" them, to the west.

Waterfall

Gerald sloshes some water over the symbol on the door and it swings open, revealing an east/west rectangular room with a louder sound of water from the west, where the paddling pool water is somewhat more agitated. As their light reveals all, they are amazed to see the western wall is flowing with water in a sort of controlled waterfall, flowing down from top to bottom and originating from seemingly nowhere, causing only a minor disturbance at the base of the fall. The water moves very smoothly, hardly disrupted in its flow and therefore reveals what lies beyond, even more surprisingly, an ocean seascape with a seabed and fish swimming past with crabs and other seabed denizens moving across the scene.

Luna walks up to the waterfall trying to check for secret doors… somehow. She reaches out and places her hand into the flowing water, finding it much colder than the barrow… and with a definite salty aroma. The chaotic in her wonders if she would be underwater if she pushed into it but she decides not to as she notices some of the crabs are quite close to where she is standing.

As Luna steps back, she trips slightly on a raised flagstone which wobbles as she stumbles over it. Gerald comes over, guessing there might be something beneath it and sheathing his sword, calls Leo over to help him lift the stone. Leo joins him, also sheathing his sword and crouching down just as three Giant Crabs emerge from behind the waterfall.

Crab Salad

Bella sees the crabs and considers casting Bless but realises she is not in a good position to catch the majority of the party so she decides not to. Fenella considers her Wall of Thorns but since they might soon be facing "Glossmira, Cursed Bitch of The Deep" decides to hold it back for now.

Battle commences as Gerald and Leo, caught flat footed without readied weapons, stand and draw their swords. Phineas lands a crossbow hit for good damage on a crab as Shadwell moves in to support Leo and Gerald, hitting with his broadsword for good damage.

Now battle ready, Leo attacks and instantly kills a crab, yelling, "get me a steamer!" as he imagines freshly cooked crab recipes. Crab claws rattle off his shining armour as he licks his lips whilst Gerald takes a minor wound from multiple crab attacks. Fenella worries whether the crabs are natural creatures or extra-planar and whether she should use her scimitar's speciality attack and the indecision doesn't help as she misses her attack.

Bella gets in a mighty blow hitting hard with her mace as Morgaine supports Gerald, stabbing with her dagger. Shadwell climbs on top of Leo's potential dinner to attack to the north and lances the crab with his Barrows Broadsword, killing it instantly as two more crabs appear through the waterfall. Leo takes a glancing wound as Gerald fends off multiple attacks. Leo asks loudly if the group has any chili in the supplies as he slams a huge blow into the nearest crab. Gerald stabs mightily finishing off Leo's work as he notices he is also feeling a little peckish for some reason or other.

Luna is gouged badly by crab claws as Phineas takes down another of the creatures and the loud ringing of Shadwell's steel signals the end of another crab as five more crabs emerge from the waterfall, one of them right onto Leo's sword.

Gerald shouts about the flagstone to Fenella as he moves to attack a newly emerged crab while another one wounds Luna who is now bleeding quite copiously. Luna disengages from melee and blows the Horn of Valhalla. The sonorous tone is answered from afar as the wispy tendrils of black mist begin to coalesce around them. "This is so wrong," mutters Gerald as the first two Draugr appear, immediately forming a protective guard around Luna.

Having heard Gerald's shouted request, Fenella realises she is standing on the wobbly flagstone so she steps aside, crouches and feels around the stone. Getting her fingers beneath the flagstone she prises it up, tipping it over and splashing it into the water.

Morgaine does her part with her trick flying dagger, wounding a crab quite well as Phineas steps in with his Broadsword, finishing off Morgaine's attack and finishing the crab. Shadwell yet again slices a perfect stroke with his brutal Broadsword almost finishing yet another crab in a single strike as four more Draugr appear, first screening Luna and then deliberately advancing on the nearest crabs.

Several crabs attempt to attack Leo but he easily fends them off, crying out, "pincer this!" as he strikes mightily in return while Shadwell dances past, fencing with a crab as another two Draugr appear and failing to find a route to an enemy, move to the entrance and guard it, blocking the way to protect Luna more fully.

One of the crabs flees back into the waterfall as Gerald slams another mighty strike into the nearest crab and struggles not to attack his undead allies.

The Draugr attack along the front, doing good damage when they hit. Leo notes that also have a single spear each, which would give them a missile attack too, "hardly surprising, the dishonourable dogs," he chuckles to himself, wondering if it's possible to spit roast crabs as another cowardly creature scuttles off back through the waterfall.

Searching beneath the flagstone, Fenella finds something in a tightly tied leather pouch which she recovers but in the heat of battle she fumbles unwrapping it and can't untie the cord. She makes a sensible retreat behind the screen of Draugr who eagerly surge forward to replace her.

Leo hits and kills another crab with a huge sword sweep as any crabs still living flee, hotly pursued by Shadwell but they make it back into the waterfall before the raging man in beige can get to them. Luna stays safe with her escort, calling out jauntily, "we're just being all chaotic back here!" Phineas gets the last kill plunging his sword down into the remaining crab and killing it just before it could escape.

Fenella opens the bag finding a ring with the blue water symbol on it. This one is a simple band with the enamelled motif mounted. Fenella worries about the ring creating lakes of water but Gerald says it might not do the same thing, it is after all, quite a different ring, just a simple band with the motif, much less elaborate than the goblin ring.

Fenella is a bit fixated on the ring producing water and puzzles over what to do with it but eventually she just puts it on without noticing anything special and perhaps most importantly, not noticing any rise in the water level. Fenella thinks, "what could it do... make it rain... summon water from here?"

As Leo organises searches for secret doors Gerald points out that Luna has a few injuries gaining Bella's attention in more ways than one. Quickly changing the subject, he suggests to Fenella that perhaps the ring could have a water breathing property? "It's easy to test, just stick your head underwater," he smiles helpfully.

Sighing miserably, Fenella puts her head underwater messing up her carefully arranged druidic chic but it's worth it, since she discovers she can breathe perfectly well underwater. Gerald is certainly on a roll with the ideas today.

Now they have ruined Fenella's hair they wonder if it might be more useful to someone else since Fenella can transform into creatures that can easily breathe water. Something to ponder they think. In the meantime, Bella casts CLW on Luna for a full cure putting her back almost to full health.

Leo notes that Shadwell didn't even take a scratch despite being in the thick of it and killing several crabs, he congratulates the recently promoted Fighter and indeed the rest of the team for their prowess in the fight.

Luna notices it is not so late in the day and they have their Draugr support summoned already, so perhaps they should move on to the northern room's "Bitch of the Deep" before the hour is up?

Leo eagerly agrees, as indeed do the others... sounds like a plan.

Thursday 29th day of Haenubrius, 13:15, Barrow 43, Room 3.