

The Barrowmaze

Session 4 17-10-23 The New Party

Next Session 26/10/23 19.00

In world time 16:00 Helix

Arriving back in Helix Fenella and Reme are comforted by the kindness of the townsfolk as they make their arrangements to lay their comrades to rest. They are further cheered by the arrival of their good friend Sir Leonidas, a noble knight errant in the service of Lord Chekhov. He brings further good news advising that another of their ilk, Gerald, the goodly Paladin of Law is also expected to arrive in Helix by tomorrow. Retiring to their lodgings at the Tavern they rest and recuperate.

The Next Day

Gerald arrives in town around midday and takes over the funeral arrangements, standing in vigil over his fallen friends before seeing them to their final resting places in the adventurer's corner of the cemetery of St Ygg. Smiling to himself, he fancies he can almost hear their faint ghostly bickering as he turns to rejoin the others.

Leonidas and Gerald entreat Fenella and Reme to allow them to join their party as it seems that fate itself has guided their paths to this moment. Fenella approves enthusiastically and Reme considers himself honoured. Together they clasp hands and seal the compact of the new party:

Fenella - Druid, 4th level

Reme - Ranger, 4th level

Gerald the Stalwart - Paladin, 3rd level

Sir Leonidas - Knight, 3rd level

Taking care of business in town and particularly since Fenella doesn't approve of stiffing tradesmen, Sir Leo is able to arrange that Vlad's plate armour order be amended to his size, so the Dwarven smithy takes his measurements and sets to with alacrity - so good for business to have a noble Knight as a customer.

Fenella hands out the Sword of Sir Chyde (+2) to Sir Leo and Gerald receives the dark iron shortsword (+2) and battered shield (+2) from the Incandescent Grottoes.

The party discuss the tactical problem offered by a fast mobile enemy with a deadly poison attack and the ways they might deal with it. They settle on hiring two adventuring retainers armed with crossbows to stand off and pepper any such enemy as the front-line pin it in melee. Hopefully the combined arms and spells of the party will do enough damage to take down the creature before the chance of any poison attack and for any dungeon delving the pair can remain standing rear-guard on the surface. With this in mind Leo and Gerald set about choosing a suitable pair and hire them on, starting the very next day.

The party is joined by the retainer crossbow henchmen:

Phineas (male) - Fighter, 2nd level - 1 gp per day, 1/4 share

Morgaine (female) - Fighter, 2nd level - 1 gp per day, 1/4 share

The party's existing retainers:

Shadwell - Torchbearer and Bookkeeper, 0th level - 1gp per day

Bella - Cleric, 2nd level - 1 gp per day, 1/2 share

The Next Day - Off to The Barrows

Up bright and early the next morning they manage to avoid any encounters with hostile monsters or wildlife and make their way to the Barrows in about 3 hours. Fenella would like the open barrows at least surveyed before moving on to opening up any more of the sealed ones so they set off to the northeast, finding their way to a mound about 200 m to the north-northwest of the large standing stone that dominates this part of the downs. Shadwell notes this down as Barrow 12 for some reason or other, who can tell how this man's meticulous mind works... anyway, the party has now visited barrows 1, 2 and 12. On closer examination this mound is encircled by smaller standing stones with the large stone door lying broken in two upon the ground before the dark entrance, clearly overgrown and in-place for some time. There are also some loose cairns arranged about the barrow and old broken bones scattered across the ground.

Shadwell lights up his lantern-on-a-stick and the party descends cautiously into the space below, Gerald and Reme leading followed up by Leo and the rest. They discover a 60 x 60 feet chamber with four large pillars supporting the construction. Standing in the centre is an old rusty tripod with a block and tackle suspended over a hole in the floor. A rope descends down into the darkness.

As Phineas and Morgaine set up a small camp and keep watch over the moor, the party examine the hole and the iron structure, dropping a lighted torch below to see a room with a vaulted ceiling through which they now peer. The floor lies 35 feet below and the western side is partially collapsed leaving a pile of rubble and bones. The walls are covered with faded frescos depicting a burial procession leading to a barrow mound. The iron tripod seems sturdy enough and the block and tackle works well enough too so Gerald carefully eases himself down the rope to the floor. Looking around he sees a long dark corridor to the east.

Joined by the others they form into order and examine the corridor, led by Leo and Gerald. Ahead the corridor leads into the gloom but after 10 ft a passageway heads north. The whole place feels eerily silent and reeks of damp, decay and death... 20 ft into the corridor they find a heavy wooden door with iron bands, clearly very old and swollen into the door frame. Leo sets his shoulder against it and is slightly surprised to feel it give without much resistance, revealing a 20 x 20 ft box room with a similar door to the north.

Leo and Gerald decide to scout ahead but since there is no other light source they are temporarily incommoded until Bella offers to accompany them with a torch, literally holding a torch for the Paladin. Displaying more animation than any in the party has previously seen, she eagerly joins them as they step on a loose flagstone triggering a trapped stone wall to drop from above, cutting off the advance party from the others, simultaneously the northern door swings open unleashing a parade of skeletons brandishing rusty swords who rush to attack!

Acting quickly Gerald raises his holy symbol and calls down the righteous power of the gods upon the hated undead, successfully turning all 7 of the attacking mob! Stepping in quickly both Leo and Bella swing but they both miss as the skeletons try to climb the walls from the awful terror of the holy Paladin.

Outside, Fenella and Reme hear the shouts and sounds of warfare as they frantically search for a way to reset the trap but they fail to find any mechanism. On the other side Gerald swings mightily and cleaves a skeleton in twain as Leo smashes another to pieces as Bella fails to land a strike, possibly just enjoying the spectacle of the hapless turned undead trapped in a small room with a Paladin and a Knight! Meanwhile Fenella and Reme hear the shouts and clashes of steel and bone, fearing the worst as they search but still they can't find any way to open the door.

Fencing around elegantly, in the manner of a training session, Leo dispatches another set of bones as Bella finally clobbers one with her new mace, sending bones flying. In a tumult of action the team of three dispose of the last opponents just as Fenella finally discovers the concealed lever to reset the trap. Listening carefully she waits until it goes quiet before pulling the lever to reveal the grinning faces of the three, a decisive win for the forces of good!

In world time 11:40 beneath Barrow 12