

# The Barrowmaze

## Session 62 08-04-25 The Queen of The Mire

Next Session 22-04-25 19.00

Monday the 23rd day of Setherius, 12:00, Thurmaster.

They ensure Shadwell is comfortable and well attended to, it will be a full night's bed rest before he can be healed so they will stay overnight at Thurmaster.

A guard comes to the Hound and Tails and summons them to see Marlen. Gerald and Sir Leo try to tease the man, regarding Marlen's rather self-centred attitude to appointments, but he is a very literal fellow and just keeps repeating his orders so after a short while they put the poor guard out of his misery and follow him to Marlen's office.

Marlen greets them in typical Marlen fashion, nodding in particular to Lyntern, his future liege lord. He offers them chairs and greets them in order; "Sir" to Lyntern and "Hello" to the rest. He says he has heard of their activities in The Redwood and he has sent a pair of his guards to check the forest is fully clear since the people of the area use it during the season to gather the abundant berries.

Marlen asks them to describe what happened and Gerald suggests that Lyntern explain it. Lyntern excitedly tells the story of the last few days, standing, posing and acting out the most significant parts. It's almost as if a Bard has wandered in to give a performance and the more observant in the party notice Marlen sigh as he politely listens to the "performance" whilst trading poisonous glances with Gerald, the instigator of this theatrical event. It takes about 15 minutes for Lyntern to subside.

Marlen says he was going to ask them to clear the dogs out but they, er, seem to have already done it and also apparently offed the Great Hound of Howler's Moor. "Er, well... done... everyone," Marlen grimaces. Then, on reflection, brightening a little, "Thank you... and well done again, I do appreciate everything you've done". Gerald explains that Squire Parlfray had asked them to do this job, hence their somewhat prescient intervention and the presence of Parlfray's son, Lyntern.

Leaning forwards, placing his elbows on the table and steepling his fingers, Marlen explains that the Hammers have made a big difference to Thurmaster and the surrounding area in a very short time. He has received several applications for building and business permits in the past two days alone... in fact, "good fortune seems to follow you people around," he ruminates, peering quizzically over his pile of ledgers at them. He finds he has to say, "that.. in fact, we are grateful for your presence."

### **A Sighting in The Mire**

With this surprisingly positive utterance there is suddenly a loud banging on the door and the sound of a noisy familial argument as the Barclay family are shown in by a nervous guard, "I'm sorry sir, I couldn't stop them," he apologises. It seems young Tam Barclay, a somewhat overly energetic and curious little tyke, had been "patrolling" The Shrieken Mire, hoping to see the dead bodies of the recently defeated Fomorian Giants, which he had managed to do, before witnessing an amazing sight. He says he saw, far to the south, a Green Dragon, flying in circles, before dropping close to the ground then rising and flying away. The family argue loudly, Tam's father explaining that his son makes things up all the time, while his mother keeps telling him, he's a very naughty boy whilst also claiming that he is an honest boy... there does indeed seem to be a grain of truth in the boy's account which certainly grabs Lyntern's rapt attention.

Leo asks how big this "Dragon" was and Tam replies that it was really really big, bigger than a house and admits to having been quite frightened.

Marlen emits a gigantic sigh and mutters something about a special memorandum authorising an investigation into the Dragon sighting, as Lyntern springs to his feet, enthusiastically volunteering himself and the Hammers for the task of a Dragon hunt!

Both Gerald and Sir Leo remind Lyntern that firstly, he is not in command of The Hammers and secondly, he is only supposed to be with The Hammers for one task and that task has been completed however Lyntern insists that this is just a minor diversion, after all The Hammers weren't complaining when it became necessary to stay overnight while Shadwell recovered so what's the difference if they just go and take a look at the Dragon? Lyntern quickly instructs Marlen to send a message to his father that he will be slightly delayed, somewhat reminding the Hammers of his authority here in town. Gerald chips in that the head of The Great Hound could also be delivered at the same time and Marlen agrees but points out that Ironguard Motte would be the place to send it for a proper treatment. Lyntern agrees and scribbles out another note to cover the shipment and taxidermy work with a reputable practitioner in Ironguard Motte.

Leo suggests they call on Tauster and see what he thinks of this Dragon story and if he has heard any news of his missing apprentice so they visit the elderly wizard. He is pleased with their clearance of The Redwood which he didn't think would cause them too much trouble, he is however rather impressed by the demise of The Great Hound. Unfortunately he hasn't heard any further news regarding his wayward apprentice Jelenneth. "...such an exceptionally gifted student," he muses, gazing off into the distance.

The Hammers inform him of the young boy's Dragon sighting, which he finds somewhat disturbing, quickly retrieving a set of hefty tomes relating to the gigantic flying creatures. Flipping through the pages he points out some of the received knowledge regarding Dragons, green ones in particular. It seems they are, in general, more interested in keeping territory rather than laying waste and ravaging. Not a fire breather but instead a breath weapon of toxic chemicals and of course they are highly capable spellcasters. He thinks it unlikely that there actually is a Dragon but thinks they should go and take a look anyway... just to be sure.

Fenella points out, if there is a Dragon then it doesn't seem to be doing any harm. Tauster explains that there are occasional disappearances of livestock from the surrounding farms that had been put down to Lizardmen but on reflection the Lizardmen haven't been seen in an age and the great battle led by Parlfrey's adventurers eliminated their warlike chief so... hmmm, perhaps something else is taking the livestock. He explains the missing livestock is not so much, just a bit here and there but regularly taken. So there's livestock disappearing and no Lizardmen... he hadn't really thought of it like that before.

Fenella reminds them again that even if it does exist, this Dragon hasn't caused any trouble so it really might not present any threat or danger. Tauster does point out that this type of Dragon is invariably highly self-interested and not known for acts of spontaneous beneficence (Lawful Evil). As they take their leave, Tauster reminds them that Dragons are highly intelligent but they are vain creatures and therefore susceptible to flattery if delivered graciously enough.

They re-supply their miscellaneous items at Barranas' town shop. It's about 1.5 times the usual Haranshire prices at this particular establishment.

Returning to the Hound and Tails they eat a reasonable supper of the Inn's stew and ale. It's all quite regular and bland but there's nothing wrong with it. They notice that there are a few more people now in the Inn, mostly discussing new building projects involving families and businesses moving into Thurmaster and the surrounding area.

Tuesday the 24th day of Setherius, 08:00

Shadwell does quite well overnight and looks a lot better but he's not yet fully recovered.

They discuss what they might do for the day. Sir Leo seems to think they should go back to Parlfray's Keep and report back to the Squire (and get Lyntern off their hands) but Lyntern excitedly suggests they should instead leave Shadwell to recover in Thurmaster and set out to look for the Dragon, which would be plausibly deniable to his father as just a side-quest on the way back to the Keep. After all Lyntern has already instructed Marlen to send a fast messenger to his father informing him that all is well and Marlen would have executed this order with his customary efficiency.

Fenella thinks they should get out there and take a look to establish whether this Dragon is indeed a threat and also to let Lyntern get some more adventuring experience, "surely that can't be a bad thing," she remarks. Gerald expresses scepticism that this is indeed a Dragon and guesses it is probably a Wyvern or some other winged beast. Still... something to take care about, Wyverns are deadly foes with a nasty poisonous tail. Eventually Sir Leo is convinced to forget Parlfray's Keep for today so they organise themselves for an expedition into Shrieken Mire.

Whilst making their plans, Gerald points out that if Fenella uses two of her CLW spells they can cure up the wounded in the party (Fenella and Leo) to full or close to full health whilst retaining her Cure Serious Wounds plus Gerald's own Laying On of Hands. Now, should they leave today or delay until tomorrow? Gerald argues that they could leave today and potentially bivouac down in the field. Overnight, even in a field camp Fenella can recover spells. In the end, Gerald's persuasion prevails and Fenella casts her CLWs, bringing herself and Leo to full health.

### **Dragon Hunt**

They leave Thurmaster around 09:00 and head south into Shrieken Mire, passing the remains of the Giants and continuing further to the south. Gerald finds himself wishing that they had a Ranger with them.

Several hours into the Mire they notice something... Emerging from the light mists, Fenella and Gerald spy a large circular mound of at least 200 yards diameter ahead and also the faint acrid scent of chlorine or ammonia occasionally wafting through the air.

Leo wants to circumnavigate the mound clockwise at around 200 yards using the sun to establish when they have made a complete circuit which he is able to manage quite accurately. There's nothing special to see he concludes but periodically they again catch a whiff of chlorine and their eyes also water a little. Leo wonders whether they should stay here overnight when they are suddenly surprised by a voice, unnervingly close behind them...

"Well, I don't often have guests." The gigantic form of the green Dragon appears out of thin air, towering above them. The majestic creature gazes down at them with interest.

"Shall we go up onto the mound, it is my throne," it declares and with a beat of its powerful wings, The Dragon ascends above the mound. The creature lands gracefully and curling up languidly, closely observes The Hammers.

Gerald wants Lyntern to go back to Thurmaster however one look at Lyntern is enough to see he doesn't want to go back, plus sending him off by himself in the swamp also doesn't seem to be the best way of ensuring his safety. With this reluctantly decided, the group head off towards the mound, Lyntern studiously ignoring Gerald and gazing in fascination at the wondrous creature before them. They get to the top, observing the slightly domed plateau then approaching to about 10 yards from the huge creature.

"So, you are the adventurers who disposed of those repulsive Giants, I enjoyed the spectacle."

Leo asks, were you there?

"Yes," answers The Dragon, "well done. For a while there, I thought you were goners... Anyway, you missed a couple." Noticing their surprise, she provides a short lecture on Fomorian Giant family groups and how hateful and cruel they are in general before admitting, "I killed the children... Essentially, after your worthy work disposing of the parents, I tidied up my domain... I am Queen Inzeldrin of The Mire... My Mire... You could say you are trespassing," she chuckles almost malevolently.

Gerald explains they are here because a small child spotted her and she replies, "Yes, I probably should have been invisible for that... I must be getting old." She sighs and goes on to explain, "I've lived a very very very long time and I am now content to remain in my own domain... as I just told you, the Mire... all of the Mire."

They ask Inzeldrin regarding her thoughts on the Thurmaster villagers to the north of the mire to which she replies, "they can come in as far they do, sometimes they are amusing to watch, I don't object to their presence in my domain." She continues, explaining some of the history of the area pertaining to the Lizardman war. She was here and observed events. After the defeat of the Lizardmen by the adventurer-led muster raised by Squire Parlfray, she has considered herself a sort of peacekeeper, maintaining the status quo to her own satisfaction and desire for peace and quiet. She points out that she has no interest in any further wars in her backyard so she "discourages" the Lizardmen from any attempt to move further north, "they are doing perfectly well where they are," she drawls.

Gerald, in his usual Paladin's fashion of determined self-righteousness, addresses The Dragon asking, "Would I have your word regarding the mutual respect of each other's territories?" Inzeldrin twitches in irritation and uncoiling her huge tail, flexes in a cloud of eye-watering gas. "My word?... my word! Impertinent human... who do you think you are?" Gerald answers firmly, "I am Gerald, a Paladin of St Ygg."

Inzeldrin replies scathingly, "A Paladin of St Ygg... apparently that's something quite amazing where you come from. Well, for your information, it means nothing at all to me," and hissing softly, she settles her huge form back down into a more comfortable position. "No... no, you don't have my word... You would have to come with a better bargain wouldn't you, there would have to be something in it for me... to have... My Word."

"But you should know... my word stands, my word is absolute... my word is trusted by kingdoms!" her voice raising into a roar, unfurling and shaking her mighty wings for emphasis as she speaks. "What you have is the evidence of your senses... that small village is there, untouched... unharmed. I could raze all of Haranshire to a wasteland if I so wished, yet it stands unmolested. Does that not tell you something?"

"But if you did that you would have the wrath of the kingdoms of man and that would not go well for you," states Gerald with confidence. Inzeldrin considers and gazing directly at Gerald declares, "it could be a fascinating end to a long and eventful life... eh?" she says, looking like she might even be briefly considering the possibility... "if I had that urge," and she smiles her huge Dragon smile, all the while looking directly at Gerald.

Leo points out, "But you would be harrassed and harried..." but Inzeldrin interrupts him, "you seem to be trying persuade me out of doing something I am not doing? Why is that?" Sir Leo charmingly points out that the human settlements might like some reassurance... something to take back, a truce or a settlement, that the borders are safe, that she must not venture closer.

Gazing back at the Knight quizzically, Inzeldrin asks, "I am trying to understand how you think you need to agree anything. I have told you, the village has remained unmolested for many years apart from some livestock that they can easily spare and they barely notice the loss of."

"So, Paladin of St Ygg, Sir Knight and... Witch... and," looking at Lyntern, "is that your squire there... and who's that little man?" Arnd tries but cannot prevent himself from correcting her... "I'm nae a man, I'm a Dwarf!" To which she replies patronisingly, "Of course you are dear."

Looking over the whole party as she speaks, she states, "No agreements... no words, it is already good faith... I like the quiet and that is final... Nice to meet you. Do come again one day, perhaps when you might think of something to ask me... but don't come too quickly."

Leo asks if there is anything she wants.

"I really couldn't tell you... what does a Queen of a Mire need, I think I have it all... just, whenever passing this Mire make proper representation, at least in your minds that you traverse the domain of a Queen. Now, Farewell."

With this they leave peacefully, heading back northwards, guarding their dignity by walking calmly until they are hopefully out of Inzeldrin's sight, picking up the pace to get back to Thurmaster before the evening fully sets in. They return safely to Thurmaster at about 19:30.

"Holy Shit," mutters Sir Leo, do we have a story.

Tuesday the 24th day of Setherius, 19:30, Thurmaster