

# The Barrowmaze

## Session 64 28-04-25 The Patchwork Hills

Next Session 08-05-25 19.00

Friday the 27th day of Setherius, 21:00, Milborne

Arriving late in the evening they go to The Baron of Mutton Inn and fortunately their previous accommodation is still available. Shadwell supervises the stabling since the stable kids have left for the day. Food is served and they are attended even though the hour is late. Gerald asks the few available yawning staff if they have seen somebody answering Jelenneth's description but they have not. The Hammers discuss what they might do tomorrow and don't come to any particular conclusion so they go to bed.

Saturday the 28th day of Setherius, 08:00, Milborne

Over breakfast they are more properly welcomed by Andren the duty Innkeeper. They find the Inn staff are a little more cooperative in daylight and they are again informed that although Jelenneth is from Milborne she usually is studying in Thurmaster with the wizard there.

They go to speak with Garyld finding him in his workshop. He greets them and puts a kettle on the fire. "So Hammers, any news?" They tell him about their victories over the Giants and the Wild Dogs and their visits to Parlfrays Keep and also Lyntern Parlfray's brief time with them as an apprentice adventurer. He is very interested and impressed, particularly by their defeat of the Giants. They tell him that Thurmaster seems to be on the up and up and Garyld seems quite pleased, "the people deserve a decent life."

He asks, "did you meet Semheis (The local Priest of St Ygg) on the road?" Gerald points out he hasn't seen him and the others didn't meet him on their first visit to Milborne, Garyld adds, the Priest does move around for his ministry but he is usually in Milborne however he can be away for a while but let's see until Sunday anyway. Gerald questions him a bit and Garyld wonders, if perhaps he's becoming overly sensitive since a few people have disappeared, but anyway this man is a Priest not a Wizard.

They discuss Jelenneth's disappearance and he says they have no leads despite extensive searches along the river. Kuiper had already reported back that The Hammers had looked around south of the river.

Leo asks if he's been to Harlaton and Garyld replies he had already sent a guard there, "we are searching the area when we can spare the people." On reflection Gerald wonders about Harlaton... perhaps it might be a good idea to look there?

They ask about the rising waters and Garyld thinks they are still rising. There is an auction of farming equipment in the square, the Denfast family are selling up and moving on now their farm is flooded. While they are talking a message arrives, summoning The Hammers to meet Master Carman so Garyld shows them to The Carman Manor and hands you over to the Carman's butler, Jasper.

They are shown into the solidly designed Carman House, which is of a style that could be considered as either plain or elegantly minimal depending upon the viewer's aesthetic sensibilities. They notice some of the furnishings and fittings have a feminine touch in their design and arrangement, presumably Master Carman's eye for a clean line is also complimented by his wife's taste in furnishings and decoration.

## **The Master of Milborne**

Jasper shows them into Carman's office on the first floor. Darius Carman, The Master of Milborne, is a stern looking bearded gentleman of about 60 years of age. As they enter, he rises and asks Jasper to serve tea. "The Helix Hammers I believe... take a seat," he says, gesturing to the chairs before his desk.

"So, I hear you've been having some success in Haranshire." They briefly relate recent events and he nods, "yes, I've heard about it. Seems you've been getting things done for Parlfray and Thurmaster. As you might have noticed there are some problems around here, namely flooding."

Leo asks him if he knows what's causing it and Carman is obviously irritated by the question. "If I knew what was causing it, I'd have had it stopped," he exclaims as if explaining to a child. Leo asks how long the flooding has been going on and Carman replies two years. His up-country accent must be somewhat difficult to understand because Sir Leo hears ten years until Carman makes show of repeating it slowly and clearly. They sit, regarding each other, sipping their strong, sweet tea.

Leo asks if it's been continuous over two years, just more flooding and no ebbing of the waters? Carman replies, working up to an irate bluster, "apparently, yes! Enough to put about half a dozen farms out of business! We can't be having that and it needs looking into! I hired a consultant from that Ironguard Motte and he turned up and said he was an arcane surveyor and said he can understand all of this but he just wandered around the mire chanting and jangling little bells and said, yes there's definitely something magical here but he had no solution to offer so I paid him and had my guards march him out of town!" Calming himself, he takes a breath and continues...

"It occurs to me that it might be something that people such as yourselves might be able to do something about, not to tell me that there is something... we know there bloody well is something, but to find out what it is and put a stop to it! The people are suffering under this phenomenon, farms are going out of business, we can't be having it!"

They recall that this blunt (almost to the point of rudeness) man is very well spoken of in the area, people have several times mentioned in passing at how the taxes and levies are fair and that Carman takes his duties very seriously and seeks to protect and care for the law-abiding people. Indeed, it seems a lot of his indignation is directed at how the people of the area have been affected by the flooding. They also notice that whoever speaks, he stares them directly in the eye, giving his full attention, favouring none in particular, even the party's very own Sir Knight.

Gerald thinks The Hammers could well take this task on and especially from his point of view as a Paladin it is his duty to investigate if the local people are suffering.

Carman says he can offer payment... not riches that the likes of Parlfray can offer but he can pay honest wages for honest work, 50 gp per head whilst they search for the problem and 1000 gp as a reward for the group if they can solve the flooding problem.

They briefly discuss the missing people, concluding with the aid of Carman's sharp judgement and forthright attitude, in summary; the attempted kidnap of a Magic User (Felicity Short), a missing Magic User (Jelenneth) and a possibly missing Cleric (Semheis).

"But more importantly, right now people are having their livelihoods taken!" Carman exclaims. Leo asks where? And Carman, losing patience barks, "under bloody water!" He explains, most recently, The Denfast Farm and The Hammers recall they noticed it, boarded up upon their entry into Haranshire, when they also noticed the unnatural looking body of water.

Gerald asks how much the Denfasts will make for the farm equipment and baffles the exasperated Carman with his question. "How should I know, Gerald!" It seems that the Paladin was trying to see if he could provide some aid to the family but perhaps it would be better if he asked them directly?

They decide on 50 gp each to search for a solution and 1000 gp as a reward if they can solve the flooding problem.

Leo again asks where they should go, which yet again irritates Carman, "he points out he hasn't got any idea, it's their job to find out. Carman says he is the man that lives here, who doesn't know what's going on and they are the people he's hired to find out what's going on, so why do they keep asking him where to go? Go about your business and find a solution and you shall be well-paid," he states, as he empties his teacup and glares at them.

With this cleared up, Carman explains that the rivers themselves don't seem to be responsible for the phenomena but he doesn't want to mention river related things that don't seem to be connected in case he influences their investigation but Fenella tells him just to go ahead, they will take that into account, so he describes the Eelhold reservoir and dam on the Oldscutt river. The Oldscutt used to cause flooding but is now controlled thanks to his late father's construction of the dam... "you see what I mean, I don't want to send you up the garden path." So, the conundrum is that if the Eelhold dam and reservoir were somehow responsible for the flooding then all of the valley around the Oldscutt would be under water... but it is clearly not.

Fenella thinks they should go and investigate the source of Cutter Brook in the Patchwork hills, visit Harlaton enroute and see what they can find, whilst also enquiring after Jelenneth.

Carman describes the Patchwork hills and the farming Terraces in the foothills, and the landscape of the high fell Patchwork Hills. "Hmmm good hiding place for bandits and bad guys," thinks Leo.

Gerald wonders if they should skirt the mire or head directly to Harlaton but Fenella says they should first go to Harlaton and then decide upon their approach.

Carman concludes by bluffly wishing them luck. "I hope you can do half as well as you did for Parlfray." Jasper shows them out and asks, "will that be all?" They thank him and leave.

Asking around they find out that Harlaton is only a small place but it does have an Inn, The Pitcher and Pitchfork, that is more of an expanded house really, but not a bad place to stay. They can stable their horses there. It's the Brent family's place and Mabel runs the kitchen. Apparently they should try Mabel's famous dumplings.

They take the good southern road to Harlaton, riding through farmland, passing people on the way, arriving at 15:00. Above the village there are indeed an impressive line of hills with a patchwork appearance and many farming terraces.

### **Harlaton**

Darren Brent, the Innkeeper greets them. Leo says they might be in the area for several nights so Darren calls over a stable girl to lead the horses off. The Pitcher and Pitchfork is actually rather nicer than they have been led to believe. Modest but pleasantly appointed and also clean and with the smell of good food wafting on the air.

Asking around nobody's seen anyone with Jelenneth's description and the Priest hasn't been seen since a month ago which is not actually unusual. Harlaton is only small and he doesn't visit too often.

They quiz the Brents about rumours and gossip but don't get anything special. A little later however they overhear some children shouting at one boy who is boasting about seeing a horde of fiends, rampaging through the hills... huge and blue they were!

Approaching the children, the others run off leaving the boy awkwardly regarding them, "I haven't done anything wrong" he claims nervously. He admits he is Derek Munsen, and he was trying to climb as high as possible in the hills to see all of Haranshire! Asked about his story he begins by making grand claims as to the size and numbers of the creatures he has seen but this is eventually brought down to a more realistic scale by Gerald and Leo's gentle encouragement and careful questioning. In the end it seems he has seen four smallish figures, a bit bigger than him but not as big as Gerald and Leo, with lots of teeth and swords and armour... and they were blue. His claims of proximity also seem to be bogus and it appears that he spotted them from cover quite a long distance away, fortunately he has excellent eyesight. And rather than "rampaging" they seemed to be scouting.

It seems he has been telling this exaggerated story for some time so the incident wasn't exactly recent. Gerald gives the lad a silver piece and he runs off. Fenella observes that it's not the first time a kid's story has led them to something that the adults would have dismissed. Fenella goes on to wonder what colour Lizardmen would be, "blue?" And they all conclude that they thought they would be green or grey although none of them have actually ever seen one.

Leo asks around about the big infestation of Lizardmen that plagued them in the past and is informed, "that was in the wilds of eastern Haranshire, this is civilised western Haranshire." Enquiring about the flooding, the consensus seems to be, "Why isn't Old-Man Carman doing something about it!" Gerald declares confidently that something is being done, leading the villagers to conclude that The Hammers must be here to investigate the matter. Having experienced the previous "investigation" they reserve their judgement for now and just nod politely.

In the evening they enjoy a nice meal with Mabel's magnificent dumplings. Leo jokes that they are famous for "Mires" around which even makes Arnd chuckle. Gerald pays in advance for a week's stabling.

They decide to head south into the hills and plan to leave Shadwell at the Inn despite Gerald initially insisting he should come along. Since Shadwell is employed as a porter, lantern bearer and bookkeeper it seems he won't be needed for an upland search. After his recent near-lethal adventure Shadwell doesn't seem to mind a slightly longer recuperation period, caring for the horses and chatting with the locals. Arnd seeks confirmation he doesn't have to carry any lanterns if Shadwell's not coming since it always seems to be the shortest person carrying the load. He is re-assured that his murder skills will not be compromised by any load bearing duties.

### **Sunday the 29th day of Setherius, 08:00, Harlaton**

It's a cloudy, cold day with a light, misty drizzle as they depart into the hills, well-equipped for winter camping with Fenella enjoying the luxury of her cloak of cold resistance. They climb past the terraces into the hills, trying their best to go due south for a few hours before turning southeast to try and find the source of Cutter Brook. Leo looks for trails but there aren't any beyond the terraces.

By 12:00 they just see hills all around them and conclude that Derek's sighting must have been closer to Harlaton since they are now a good way into the wilds. By their best reckoning they think they have covered about five or six miles by the time the light starts to fail.

Leo looks for wood for a fire but there's nothing available in this high, wet fenland so they resort to the small supply of light wood they carry for a small early evening campfire to heat a warming soup. Overnight the camp would be dark except they decide to use Fenella's Continual Light pendant for whoever is on watch thereby signalling their presence to the entire area.

It is Leo's watch in the small hours of the morning when he perceives a large shape moving at the edge of the light and as he rouses the others a large creature with the form of a bear but a wicked beak and talons, an Owlbear, attacks them.

Squealing horribly it races to attack Leo and instantly gouges him with its cruel beak, Leo swings but misses as Arnd activates the Clasp of Elvenkind and disappears from sight as he races to get into position for a backstab but in his haste he trips and misses his strike. Gerald steps up and wounds the creature with his deft shortsword attack as Fenella jogs back a little and hurls her spear, unfortunately missing the creature.

The Owlbear again strikes at Leo with its beak, tearing into him, jumping back the agile Knight avoids both slashing claws but misses a riposte with his sword. Arnd backstabs from concealment and plunges the Stoutblade Dagger into the screeching beast, quickly ducking as the wounded monster flails around with its claws seeking its invisible tormenter. Fenella lets fly with her sling but misses as Gerald raises the Black Iron Shortsword high, plunging it down to finish the Owlbear in a gout of blood.

Leo bears significant wounds from the battle so Gerald Lays Hands on him curing him back to full health with the healing power of St Ygg.

They resume their rest, waking at 07:00, cold and damp but not as cold as the Owlbear.

Continuing the search through the morning, eventually Fenella spots the sparkle of water to the southwest, a small tarn, the first evidence of the head waters of the Cutter Brook.

The land is marshy and damp and Fenella investigates carefully finding nothing out of place or magical, just a headwater to the source of the brook, a perfectly natural feature.

They begin to follow the emergent brook to the west, maintaining reasonable field precautions against being easily seen which is fortunate since as they turn into a valley they see a cave entrance about 50 yards distant and standing outside are two small figures with weapons and armour. They crouch down and observe, noticing the creatures fit Derek's (small scale) description and have apparently dyed their faces and arms with blue woad. Their stature, pointed ears and sharp teeth identify them as Goblins, albeit woad-stained.

Gerald asks Arnd if he wants to reconsider carrying the lantern and Arnd replies, "I'll be ok Gerald, ye just be worryin' about yerself."

## **Notes**

### **GM Ruling - Laying On of Hands**

Gerald's Laying on of Hands is bestowed upon him each sunrise, regardless of sleep or rest since it is a power bestowed by a holy deity. It does not function like a Cleric's spells which require rest and morning devotions.