

The Barrowmaze

Session 66 15-05-25 The Goblins of The Ring

Next Session 22-05-25 19.00

Tuesday the 31st day of Setherius 09:00, Outside a cave with two Goblins on guard... again.

The Hammers lurk behind a rock in the drizzle, observing the Goblins' guard rotation, noting that there always seem to be Goblins on lookout at the mouth of the cave. They decide to make an approach with just Gerald and Leo; Fenella and Arnd will remain concealed. Gerald thinks they could just ask the Goblins about the water and suggesting something he might later regret, he volunteers Sir Leo for the negotiation since, "you're the charismatic one".

Leo is quite convinced that he will be able to entice the Goblins out into the scope of Fenella's deadly Wall of Thorns spell. With the plan of enticing them out firmly imprinted, the two heavily armoured warriors stand from cover and advance down the valley towards the Goblin cave. They are immediately noticed and there is a sudden flurry of activity with the Goblins shouting in the Goblin language and gesturing with their spears. More Goblins pour out and join them, forming a shield wall across the mouth of the cave.

Shouting from about 30 yards away, Leo tries to ask them about the water situation but unfortunately the Goblins don't seem to understand common, certainly not at this distance, and the Hammers don't understand Goblin. With the two heavily armed and armoured fighters under observation from behind the shield wall the shouting dies down a little as the Goblins try to decide what to do about this peculiar situation.

Leo wonders if they should call Arnd up to provoke a reaction, as if the current situation is not sufficient disruption but Gerald cautions against this, citing the well-known enmity between Dwarves and Goblins as a reason to leave him well-concealed. Leo thinks the Goblins don't look very disciplined to him although the shield wall doesn't seem to be a bad tactic given the Goblins' situation. In any event, they did form up into this formation quickly and effectively, with their overlapping shields set quite well and a bristling line of spears projecting outwards. The Goblins' armoured porcupine looks quite secure in fact.

Leo and Gerald still think they want the Goblins to come out into the open where they can be easily massacred by Fenella's Wall of Thorns so they call and gesture in what they imagine is some form of enticing manner but the Goblins see no reason to abandon their defensive position just because a couple of metal-clad vagrants tell them to. The shield wall remains solid with much banging of weapons and gesturing of spears. It's almost as if they are trying to drive the unwanted visitors off.

Leo decides to match action with action so he draws the Sword of Sir Chyde, his magnificent magical weapon and bangs it on his shield causing an uproar in the Goblin line, which takes a pace back, locking more tightly against the cave entrance as a frantic and somewhat panicked Goblinic argument is heard from behind the line. The Goblins continue to shout and gesture as Gerald takes a couple of steps forward. Leo thinks he should call Fenella and Arnd down since he and Gerald are obviously not provocative enough to entice the Goblins to pour from the cave into Fenella's hedge of death.

Gerald is not so sure and settles for taking a step forward while Leo continually advocates provoking the Goblins into some sort of fight but Gerald's conscience is beginning to bother him, nevertheless he doesn't think of anything different to try other than his current shouting of over-enunciated common from a distance.

With his chaotic nature highly in evidence, Leo comes up with his own bright idea of setting and lighting a nice campfire about 20 yards away from the Goblin line. The Goblins peer at him with baffled fascination as he builds a fire, lights it and sits down, warming his hands and beckoning enticingly. Fenella observes the scene from her concealed position, equally baffled as Arnd considers taking a nap.

There is a disturbance and a loud announcement from behind the Goblin line and a well-armoured Goblin figure with an impressively large sword emerges from the line. Standing tall (about ½ human height) in front of the shield wall he introduces himself in broken common as Grundlegek, the Goblin leader. He stares them down and with some effort asks in common, "What you want?"

Shouting from 20 yards away, Leo confuses him with the use of the long word "investigate" when he tries to describe what they are here for. Gerald condenses Leo's speech down to shouting, "Why much water? You do?" The shouted conversation continues with each side half-understanding each other as Gerald tries to explain their reasons for coming, causing confusion, bafflement and amusement in turn however it does seem that some of the initial tension has simmered down, replaced by a guarded curiosity.

The Goblin leader tries to explain in his simple common that there is no river, it is just a Goblin cave. Leo again beckons the Goblins to come over to his lovely campfire but the shield line doesn't budge and the Chief begins to doubt his basic abilities in the common language. After a moment the Chief disappears into the group and after some muttered Goblinic, is raised up on the shoulders of his guards so he can look down at Leo. From this vantage point he slowly and deliberately mimics Leo's beckoning gesture. Gerald takes a timid step forward but the Goblins just remain, looking at him from a 20-yard distance while the Chief chews a tasty rat on a stick. Time passes and eventually having had enough of the Hammers intransigence the Goblin leader descends and moves back inside the cave.

Another stalemate is reached and persists for a while until another figure emerges from the shield wall. He is dressed in robes and carries a staff decorated with small trinkets and charms. Leo tries to explain their mission to him and it is clear he can speak and understand common to a higher standard than the Chief so they begin to shout about the water situation at a 20-yard distance which is a bit awkward to say the least.

"Come over here," the Shaman shouts, introducing himself as Burukkleyet, the Shaman and Priest of this tribe. "Come and tell me why you threaten our house?" Since Gerald and Leo don't approach to any sort of easy speaking distance, he crosses his arms and looks pointedly at the sky. Leo says, come to us and we can discuss in peace. Fixing Leo with a stern gaze he replies, "No!" Since both Sir Leo, a fully armoured and powerful Knight and Gerald, the Paladin of St Ygg, both loaded down with multiple magical protections and attacks, seem to be nervous of approaching a handful of Goblins, Leo instead shouts back "then we'll just keep shouting." With this Burukkleyet turns and disappears back into the cave.

With the Hammers refusing to approach the Goblins and the luring them out plan in tatters, Leo again suggests calling Fenella and Arnd down. As Gerald shrugs, he waves at them and they both emerge and walk down the valley down towards them. As soon as the Goblins see Arnd they go berserk, stamping and banging shields and shouting and gesturing towards a hated Dwarf. Arnd gives both Leo and Gerald his best, "see!" look. The Goblins also retreat back further into the cave entrance and Arnd regards them sulkily as they hurl Goblinic insults at him.

Leo continues to try to explain things at shouting volume to a pack of Goblins who don't understand him as the Goblin leader re-emerges through the shield wall and pulls his sword, brandishing it and complaining vehemently at the presence of, "a vile, stinking Dwarf!" Leo continues to shout his explanations at the angry Goblins 20 yards away as the Shaman re-appears and slowly and clearly bellows, "Make! It! Go!" as he points at Arnd. "Then... we... talk." Fenella politely asks Arnd to piss off. Leo suggests 20 yards but the grumpy Dwarf is already halfway up the valley as he returns to the meagre shelter of the rocky outcrop that concealed them earlier.

Gerald yells hypocritically, "no more games, now we talk" and Burukkleyet shouts back disdainfully, "You play games, not Goblin... walk to Goblin home, light fire, shout at Goblin, bring..." and with this he sputters, "Dwarf!... you play games, not us!"

Burukkleyet goes on in a more even tone to explain that peaceful discourse is possible, "just walk some steps forward so we don't need to shout." As he says this both Burukkleyet and Grundlegek step forward as the Goblins attempt to teach the humans how diplomacy works. Eventually Gerald wanders over and Leo and Fenella follow, leaving the two parties about 10 yards apart where they can finally see each other clearly and are able to communicate without shouting.

From their closer vantage point Gerald is the first to notice that several of the blue woad-smeared Goblins also have tattoos in the form of two blue waves. "Looks like water to me," mutters Fenella. Gerald asks whether they make water. The Shaman asks in some confusion why do they keep asking about water? Gerald begins to explain and as he mentions magical water the Shaman shifts awkwardly and fiddles with a ring he wears on his left hand. From this closer vantage point, they can't help but notice that the ring also has the same double wave insignia with a sapphire set above.

With an exceptional burst of insight, Gerald wonders whether the Goblins don't know what they have here and whether they are accidentally causing the excessive water. Gerald pressures the Shaman to explain the ring, "making water eh?" The Shaman raises his ring hand and tells his story of receiving the ring from mighty Maglubiyet himself (the Goblin god) making a present to his faithful servant Burukkleyet of his will and honour in a ring specially crafted for the Shaman, as all the goblins, including the Chief, mutter in obeisance before his speech, helpfully delivered in Goblin and common.

In general, the situation has calmed down and the goblins are less twitchy around them now but the Shaman is a little discomfited that they have noticed the ring and are questioning him about it and continues to twiddle with it nervously. At the end of the speech... from the corner of his mouth Burukkleyet stage whispers to Gerald in his best "the game's up" voice, "we need to talk, alone." He continues in a hoarse whisper, "you come inside, parlay, no danger, you with Burukkleyet we make parlay." Gerald says he needs Fenella with him and the Shaman agrees.

The Shaman makes another short speech and exchanges a few words with the Chief. He explains to Gerald that he has told them he will meet in private with the strangers' Shaman, Fenella and her guard, Gerald and there is no danger from the strangers. They notice weapons being lowered at the Shaman's words, including the Chief sheathing his sword. The Shaman hisses at Gerald, they won't accept me coming with you, you must come with us. Gerald decides to proceed he has to trust them and Fenella doesn't seem to be at all bothered so they accompany Burukkleyet into the somewhat smelly cave. They enter a large Goblin cave settlement noticing the additional defences inside commanded by the Chief, it appears that he knows his business as regards defensive positions. The Chief nods them by but it is becoming clear who really is in charge, at least behind the scenes.

The Shaman leads them back into a curtained area where there are a few chairs and they sit and talk. Burukkleyet explains that their tribe of Goblins does not fight with humans and seeks no conflict. Looking at the ring the Shaman says, "makes water you say." Gerald explains about the water beneath the caves to the west and the bad flooding in the human land. He continues to explain it has been happening for two years and when he mentions this Burukkleyet looks even more uncomfortable. He looks Gerald in the eye and asks if he is "of Law" and when Gerald informs him, he most certainly is, Burukkleyet confirms that he is also Lawful so they should be able to make an honest bargain. After an uncomfortable pause he finally admits that his tribe arrived here two years ago, just before the flooding began.

He explains that the ring is his artifact, the symbol of his power over the tribe and he has made a cult of it to secure his position and strengthen the tribe. Fenella asks where he got it from and the Shaman begins to recite his gift of the god story which Fenella sees right through as a palpably false tale of convenience. She diplomatically agrees that his god might well have willed him to get the ring but perhaps his god left it for him somewhere, eh? In the glare of Fenella's polite yet incisive gaze he realises the game's up and looks at them and admits he found it in a cave on a dead bloke. The cave was a long way to the south when they were travelling away from the tribal schism that caused them to migrate north.

He accepts that the ring must be making a water problem for the humans. But his tribe follows the ring cult now and he needs this symbol of his power and favour with Maglubiyet. Gerald thinks quickly and asks Fenella about making a duplicate ring, she agrees that they could have a duplicate made, an exact replica in fact. The shaman helpfully provides a good drawing he has made of the ring. They guess the most likely place to have it made would be Ironguard Motte.

Gerald asks if Burukkleyet would be happy with this as an exchange and he indicates he would be but there is, "one thing... ring is magic, new ring is not magic, Burukkleyet will need also a magic item as condition of trade." He is not particular about what sort of magic item but requires that he exits the deal owning a replacement magical item. Gerald explains it could take them about a month to arrange this and Burukkleyet agrees that it is an acceptable time-period so they shake hands on the deal.

Gerald and Fenella leave the cave and rejoin Leo outside where he is searching the Bag of Holding for marshmallows to toast over his campfire. Rejoining a clearly disgruntled Arnd they depart the valley at midday and head north in the direction of Harlaton. They camp overnight with a medium campfire for the first part of the evening and spend a mostly peaceful night, Leo hears some noises on his watch but nothing emerges from the gloom to challenge them.

Wednesday the 1st day of Vadrius 07:00

Return to Milborne

They continue to Harlaton arriving at 12:00. Leo considers telling the villagers about the Goblins but Gerald and Fenella advise not to. Given the location of the Goblins and their assurances of not troubling humans it seems very unlikely that they will present any form of threat to the human communities. Pausing to pick up a fully recovered Shadwell and collect their horses, they set out for Milborne arriving around 19:00.

At Milborne they enquire if Master Carman might be available now and hear from his butler, Jaspar, that he is indeed eager to speak to them immediately. They are shown up to Carman's office where he awaits their news. Drinks and tea are served and Gerald explains about the ring, the unintentional effect of the magical item and their deal to make an exchange. "Well, I'll be buggered!" Carman exclaims. He's not surprised to hear of Goblins in the hills but the ring is quite the surprise and "it sounds like you really have found the source of the problem."

They discuss the particulars of the plan. Fenella thinks perhaps her ring of Controlling Plants might be a good exchange since she can control plants anyway. Leo thinks that doesn't sound very useful but Fenella points out that the agreement is for any magical item and anyway, controlling plants is very useful and interesting, quite fascinating in fact and extremely powerful as you have seen with Wall of Thorns. She would continue but Carman interjects, "seems to me you need a good jeweller." He doubts that Parlfrey's Keep has something like that so he advises Ironguard Motte would be the place. "There will be several jewellers," he scribbles off a couple and adds a note explaining that Master Carman of Milborne would appreciate an expedited job. Gerald suggests sending it by courier but Leo disagrees and advises that they should go themselves and on reflection Gerald agrees.

Leaning back in his chair and taking a good sip of his whisky Carman smiles and says, "I take it the mission's going according to plan?" The Hammers shift a little uncomfortably in their seats as he goes on, "an actual Knight and a Paladin of St Ygg, no less, and a Druid and a Dwarf come into Haranshire and set about clearing out any and all problems that might be troubling the community, slaying giants and packs of wild dogs and investigating missing persons. Doing this out the goodness of your hearts are you?" As Gerald protests he is only doing his Paladinic duty, Carman winks at them and smiles, "you can tell Kell we're very grateful."

Gerald enquires after the family that were selling up their farm equipment but regrettably, they have already completed their business and left the area so Gerald's kind concern is unfortunately too late. They leave and go to their rooms at The Baron of Mutton.

Wednesday the 1st day of Vadrius 21:00, The Baron of Mutton Inn, Milborne