

The Barrowmaze

Session 74 28-07-25 The Lock and Key Montage

Next Session 28-08-25 19.00

Wednesday the 22nd day of Vadrius 18:00, Various cells and rooms beneath Broken Spire Manor

From his close association with Priests of St Ygg, Gerald realises that it was the Light spell that was used to blind them. The spell can be used to create mundane light sources but can also be used aggressively to cast upon an opponent's eyes resulting in temporary blindness. Gerald wonders if Fenella could get this spell but she explains that she's a Druid not a Cleric.

Meanwhile, Leo and Jelenneth are having a wonderful time. Jelenneth assures him that his friends are perfectly alright and they can talk tomorrow but, in the meantime... They dine off bandit plundered luxuries and enjoy excellent wines, and after, Jelenneth leads Leo into her bed chamber. It is a fabulous night for them both.

Back in the cells where Gerald and Fenella are incarcerated, there is a sudden banging on the cell door and it flies open admitting a short muscular woman, with a pipe clenched between her teeth and a cudgel prominently displayed in her right hand whilst her left hand grips a leash restraining an eager, snarling, slavering guard dog. Two heavy-set bandits also armed with cudgels enter behind her as Hakhan drawls lugubriously from the door, "Fenella, it would be nice if you could just come out without any fuss, we'd hate to make a mess." "You've got him there have you, Barzl?" Hakhan adds, yawning theatrically.

"Yes, I've got him," snarls Barzl, grinning unpleasantly, as they shoulder their way into the cell, "I can unleash Fido here on you anytime, he'll tear your gizzard out!" Spitting on the floor for emphasis, she cackles, "you know what a gizzard looks like? Well, you will soon, if you make a move," she laughs evilly.

Fenella capriciously decides she doesn't want to come out so Barzl and one of the guards come over and stand in Gerald's face while the other restrains Fenella and begins to manoeuvre her out. Fenella concludes that a little resistance would be theatrically appropriate so performs the necessary weak ineffectual struggles as she is guided to the door. Hakhan standing in the doorway sighs, "There's no need for all this nastiness," just as Gerald, in a furious rage of righteous indignation tries to headbutt the guard in front of him, missing as the guard twitches back in alarm. Barzl swings her club at the incensed Paladin but misses since she's laughing too much. Fido leaps forward, snapping at Gerald for a slight wound as Fenella is led carefully into the corridor.

Gerald seizes the initiative and lands his headbutt, knocking the guard back a step. Fido, liking the taste of fresh Paladin takes a bigger lump out of him, snarling and drooling and probably passing on rabies if Gerald wasn't protected from disease by his devotion to St Ygg. Gerald ducks the bandit's dizzy swing and tries to grab his cudgel as from her short height Barzl smacks a vicious blow into Gerald's legs, laughing malevolently, "not so tough now, eh Paladin, ha!" while Fido enjoys a dessert of fresh Paladin leg.

Hakhan shouts, "That's enough, back off!" Gerald is bleeding badly but still standing after the beating. The Bandit Captain steps in and moves Barzl and the other bandit away from Gerald. "Enough now... you, Paladin, stay there." Barzl crouches submissively before Hakhan, whining, "yes master," before backing off into the corridor, slapping her barking, snarling dog around the head, "shut up Fido," she spits as the guard also steps quickly out of the cell at Hakhan's command.

Giving Gerald a cursory look over and deciding that he will probably survive, Hakhan leaves, locking the door behind him.

Gerald Lays on Hands to patch himself up, he's still bloodied and beaten but in considerably better shape thanks to the power of St Ygg.

Fenella is led from the cell into the guard room at the end of the corridor where she is slightly disturbed to see one of the Priests that Leo had killed earlier is now guarding the corridor. The Zombie regards her with lifeless eyes, shuffling aside in awkward zombie fashion as they approach. As she passes, Fenella beholds the terrible open wound that Leo inflicted, gashing her from shoulder to hip but still, she stands and moves aside in her ghastly zombified state.

Fenella is hooded and led off through corridors and rooms and doors until she notices that the ambience has changed and her feet detect an uneven floor, she imagines it is one of the caverns she sensed when communing with nature the previous day.

Gerald, defiant and partially healed searches his cell, noticing a piece of paper peeping out of the bedroll. He's pretty sure it wasn't there before Barzl, Hakhan and the two guards entered. Unfolding the slip of paper he finds a scrawled message, clearly intended to disguise the writer's handwriting and education. It says, "Not Awl Are Enemy Time Will Come."

Gerald tears the paper up into tiny bits and distributes it throughout the bedding.

Meanwhile in the caverns below Fenella is unhooded. She finds herself in a large underground cavern and she notes the roots of large plants and trees intruding around some of the walls and floor. Ahead of her, surrounded by animated skeletons is a large stone altar with a shining gemstone inset in the centre. Ranchefus the Priest of Nergal greets her and gestures towards the altar as the skeletons move aside mechanically. The bandit guards nervously hand Fenella over to a pair of Ranchefus' Acolytes who tie the Druid to the stone.

In his susurrating, ophidian voice, Ranchefus observes, "so Miss Fenella, you have taken your place on our altar of Nergal. You are so lucky to nourish our great god of death today and to experience your new servitude as a thrall of Nergal." With this his voice rises and he begins to chant in a harsh guttural language. At first Fenella doesn't feel anything until suddenly a wave of dizziness strikes and she feels a powerful force of energy plunge into her, from the gemstone she thinks, as she struggles against the invading power, feeling the gem pulse like a heartbeat as her mind is assaulted. Struggling forcefully in return she is unable to prevent icy fingers of energy wrapping themselves around the Wall of Thorns Spell, dragging it from her memory. After what seems to her to be hours of resistance the chanting finally stops and she slumps barely conscious against the stone.

Back in a solitary cell and completely exhausted from her ordeal, Fenella briefly wakes to survey her surroundings before falling into a troubled sleep.

Thursday the 23rd day of Vadrius 08:00

Fenella searches her cell not finding anything. Gerald wakes still bloodied and Lays Hands to return to full fitness. He fully intends for his enemies to see he is cured by the power of St Ygg.

Leo and Jelenneth wake, simultaneously exhausted and refreshed having had what must have been the best night of both of their lives. Jelenneth shows Leo to her improvised bathroom where they can freshen up and informs him that it's time for him to see his friends now but not to forget that he should also behave as if he is a prisoner. She explains that it's necessary for Ranchefus to believe that all is well. He is a crazed, fanatic, cultist but much too powerful to deal with without major risk, which probably means Jelenneth considering her own wellbeing as the risk involved. She admits to Leo that she's not sure about Hakhan but we shall see.

Jelenneth unlocks the door leading from her apartments into the corridor alongside the chapel of Nergal. Leo follows her to a door at the end of the corridor which she opens revealing the guard room with Barzl and Fido both licking bones and two bandit guards also in attendance. With alarm Leo also notices the woman he killed yesterday is now performing guard duty and he instinctively reaches for his sword that isn't there before realising that necromancy is of course a thing, where Priests of Nergal are concerned.

Barzl looks up and cackles at Leo, "you'd better not get into trouble, you... we knows what to do with trouble." Jelenneth gives her a fierce look and she cowers back over her bones, noisily slurping at the marrow whilst simultaneously sucking on her pipe.

Jelenneth clicks her fingers right in the Zombie's face and orders it, "out of the way." It looks back at Jelenneth blankly and the imperious Mage repeats, louder and with more malice, "I said, out of the way!"

As the Zombie shuffles reluctantly aside. Jelenneth hisses, "it would not be difficult to kill you again!" scowling malevolently into its impassive face as she strides past.

Leo is taken to Fenella's cell and left inside with her for a few minutes. Asking her if she's alright, yields a stream of muttered Druidic curses and a strident declaration in common, "no, I'm fucking not ok! That bastard Necromancer stole one of my spells and he wants more!"

While Fenella is venting at Leo, Jelenneth slides open the viewport of Gerald's cell. Seeing the Paladin glaring back she asks. "Hello, how are we getting on?" "Perfectly fine," Gerald growls "and about my colleagues..." as she briskly interrupts him, "very good then," quickly sliding the screen back and smiling wickedly to herself. As she strolls away, she calls back, "we can just leave you there to starve to death," which amuses her even further.

Meanwhile Leo explains to Fenella that Jelenneth is playing a complex game of deception with the keep's factions and she's actually on their side. Fenella is not at all sure, but Leo is absolutely positive that Jelenneth will sort everything out and take down the evil priest, "she's definitely on our side," he repeats confidently.

Fenella wonders why Leo would believe somebody who isn't who she said she was and who has lied for as long as they have known her. Leo is confident however that everything will turn out fine but Fenella is not convinced and remains highly sceptical of the devious Mage's ultimate intentions.

Jelenneth rejoins them and explains, "dear Ranchefus is a little bit busy at the moment and the undead and his other minions are not too perky first thing in the morning so if you quickly come with me, I can show you what this is all about." Anything but sitting in a cell thinks Fenella and Leo can think of nothing better than going somewhere with Jelenneth so they leave together.

Sweeping past the guards Jelenneth leads them down the corridor past the altar room. Pausing, she asks Leo to move a step to the side as she opens a secret door in the south side of the corridor.

"Ranchefus' private quarters and the only way I know down, stick with me, there will be a guard," she whispers as she closes the door behind them. Opening a door to the next room, a bedroom chamber where there is an acolyte guard standing in the southeast corner. Jelenneth snaps her fingers and the guard kowtows and moves out of the way nodding, bobbing and saying, "yes Jelenneth, of course," as Jelenneth opens another secret door revealing a passage going down into a natural rock tunnel.

She asks Fenella, "that nutter was draining spells from you last night, wasn't he?", "yes he bloody well was," Fenella replies bitterly, not letting on that they have all returned to her again this morning. Passing confidently through the rock tunnels, Jelenneth leads them to the large cavern.

They see the altar before them, surrounded by an honour guard of at least 25 skeletons... "this is the problem, you see I can't charm the undead, so I can't get to the altar," complains Jelenneth, going on to explain, "the idiot doesn't know what he's got here. He thinks that stone is connected to power of some sort, a ley line that connects him with his dead god into the heart of the earth, well if he wants to believe that it's up to him but what he does have is that gem in the middle of it which he doesn't seem to think is important and that is where he's very wrong. It's the subject of my research and ultimately why I'm here." Looking right at Fenella, Jelenneth says, "It is a very powerful magical artifact, it can store spells, powers, knowledge and memories. I want that gem and I will have it... just so you know it's mine." She smiles disarmingly at the Druid's questioning frown.

Fenella asks what's stopping her and again she waves her hand at the skeletons. "Influence, subterfuge and intelligence are my methods, hmm? So why am I showing you?" She goes on, "I'm not personally interested in you people. I was brought here by bandits in the service of their master who thought he would drain my life and power but at least some of us are a little tougher than he thinks. I resisted and then I charmed him. Unfortunately, he's rather capable and very stubborn, no matter how hard I work on him he resists. I suspect his mind is struggling to wonder why he is at least partially serving me."

Jelenneth further explains that she was taken prisoner and brought here and she overcame them from inside, she's charmed a few of his people but the biggest problem is half of them aren't people and this place is full of dead and bones... something terrible must have happened here in times gone by but he has an abundance of raw material to raise up if he feels threatened.

She says she tried this plan with Hakhan but he and the other bandits seem to be too scared of the undead, so, "I came up with the brilliant plan of getting you to come here."

Perhaps as a gesture of cooperation Jelenneth explains the incident a few weeks ago where Fenella was poisoned. Apparently, she was supposed to have had a strong sleeping draught added to her drink so she could be carried off overnight but the Assassin responsible made a terrible blunder, administering a deadly delayed poison by mistake. This of course was simple for Fenella to treat once she realised what it was. Jelenneth explains his head is on a stake outside the keep somewhere. "Ranchefus is so intolerant," she smiles.

Fenella agrees Ranchefus has got to be stopped. Undead are anathema to Fenella's Druidic views of natural balance however she tends to proceed a little more carefully than the kick the door down technique favoured by the Priests and Paladins of St Ygg. As Fenella regards the skeletons, considering her options, Jelenneth points out the plant growth intruding into the cavern. Fenella of course had noticed this even when tied to the stone but leads the Mage on a little as Jelenneth suggests, "perhaps you could use that to your advantage in a fight?" Fenella agrees she could, replying, "Entangle, we call it." Jelenneth says, "well, whatever it is you can use it here, for some of the area at least."

Jelenneth sums up, "so then, we shall keep this quiet. I will let you know when to act." Fenella says, "I don't see how much choice we've got in the matter." "None at all," replies Jelenneth confidently.

They return through Ranchefus' apartments, back past the guard. "Not a word," hisses Jelenneth, staring directly at the acolyte. "Yes, yes mistress Jelenneth, of course" she replies, gazing adoringly at the devious Mage.

"So, I suppose you would like to see your own little glory of St Ygg?" Jelenneth asks as they walk back to the guard room. Both Leo and Fenella indicate they would indeed like to see Gerald so with Jelenneth keeping the guards either intimidated or hopeful or any combination of both, she sends them down to talk to Gerald.

Gerald is twitching with suppressed energy and fury and seeing Leo and Fenella apparently free causes him to immediately demand weapons and armour and for Leo to smash down the heavy metal door. Leo does his best to explain it's not as easy as that and anyway, Jelenneth has this plan that will sort everything out.

Gerald is furious, "you mean the backstabbing, traitorous bitch who led us into a trap! That Jelenneth?!" Fenella informs Gerald of the shrine to Nergal below in the cavern and that Jelenneth only wants to get the gem and needs our help to destroy the undead protecting the shrine and serving as Ranchefus' bodyguards but Ranchefus has really got onto Fenella's shit list and she's therefore very keen to take him down and to that end she is prepared to work with Jelenneth.

Gerald goes from furious to aghast, "have I fallen into the abyss? You want to ally with that treacherous bitch? Let me out, let me out now!" he shouts. Leo chuckles and says, "hey he's cute when gets angry isn't he, Fenella."

Fenella explains to the fuming Gerald that they didn't do so well when it was just them against the evil Clerics and that maybe an alliance of convenience will be a better idea if we are serious about taking down Ranchefus.

Scowling in frustrated resignation, Gerald, with great reluctance, takes Fenella's point, "but!" he says, thumping the door for emphasis, "if that necromantic bastard gets within arm's reach of me all bets are off! He is dying and if necessary, I'll kill him again!"

Jelenneth walks back down the corridor and slides the view port shut without even looking at Gerald. "Now Leo, come with me please," she says, smiling at the Knight. "And that means I can go free then?" says Fenella beaming innocently. Jelenneth tsk tsks in mock irritation, "come now Fenella, back in your cell, just for a little while longer, with a mind like yours you can keep yourself occupied."

Leo blurts out, "after all, Jelenneth's got a great plan and actually she's got great er... er...."

Thursday the 23rd day of Vadrius 14:00, Various cells and rooms beneath Broken Spire Manor