

# The Barrowmaze

## Session 8 23-11-23 Reading The Runes

Next Session 30/11/23 19.00

In world time 10:30, The Barrowmaze, hallway 11 Q2

Kicking the Crab Spider corpse aside, Gerald and Leo search the room, turning up a small bag filled with 163 sp in the remains of a human skeleton in an otherwise empty room. After Fenella's observation that the Barrowmaze might join up with other entrances and exits around the Barrow moors, they discuss Leo's proposal to hire a dwarf to survey the passageways with a view to making an overland map. Various interesting ideas and points of view are exchanged but finally they decide to at least shelve this plan for now.

Noting the bricked-up archway at the eastern end of the corridor, they take a closer look. The archway is topped by the upper half of a skull chiselled in stone, which gapes down at them. Gerald asks for silence as he listens carefully with his ear pressed against the brick wall, just managing to hear a faint bumping sound but from the south, not through the brick wall to the east.

They decide to explore the last remaining door in the northern side of the corridor, which opens easily, revealing a 10 x 10 room with a stone slab in the centre, upon which lies a broken human skeleton. Around the room lies an assortment of detritus and the walls are covered with faded frescoes depicting human figures ascending to the afterlife, which have been crudely and vulgarly defaced.

As Gerald and Leo enter, they hear a low keening sound, gradually rising in pitch as two stones from the floor rise into the air and hurl themselves at the adventurers. Leo is struck and slightly wounded but Gerald's whizzes past his head to crash into the wall. Both step forward quickly, Leo to investigate the skeleton and Gerald attempting to find the source of the sound, now increasing to a threatening screech as more stones rise into the air. Following his best guess, Gerald swings with the dark iron shortsword and feels it bury itself into something vaguely flesh like causing a terrible scream to rend the air as the creature is assaulted by both Gerald's attack and the holy power of Bella's turn undead.

Stones fly at Gerald but he ducks and weaves as Leo, amazed that the skeleton didn't stand up and fight him, rushes in to deal the killing blow on their invisible foe which subsides with a chilling scream. Dutifully, Gerald takes a moment to give thanks to his higher power as Bella smiles approvingly.

Unfortunately the noise has attracted the attention of another denizen of the dungeon as a Zombie lurches from the gloom in the corridor, its arms outstretched and menacing Fenella. Dashing from the room, Bella calls down another turn undead, stopping the Zombie in its tracks as Fenella grumpily stabs at it with her spear and fully expecting to miss, is pleasantly surprised as she impales the hapless creature without a problem. Leo charges into the corridor and with a blow from the sword of Sir Chyde, the Zombie collapses to the floor. Smirking, Fenella kicks it for good measure.

### **Just a little look**

Peering into the room and noting the defiled frescoes Fenella wonders about the reasons behind this, feuding cults perhaps? Searching, Gerald discovers a bag with 67 gp and another runic tablet. Since he wasn't present at the meeting with Mazzahs he isn't aware of the wizard's warning regarding the potential effects of perusing the inviting common runes and before he knows it, he finds himself reading the tablet. A wave of magical energy washes over him as the runic tablet deals him one of its detrimental effects. As he feels a wave of enfeeblement ripple outward from the tablet, Gerald's faith and strength of purpose stand fast and the holy Paladin resists the effect as the runes crumble to dust in his grasp.

"I told you not to do that!" complains Fenella from the doorway as an astonished Leo blurts out, "Gerald, you can read... that's amazing!". Gerald is content to give thanks as a concerned Bella attends to ensure the Paladin's wellbeing. As they leave the room Gerald finds himself pondering the potential beneficial effects of reading the runes... what good could be done with this?

Back in the corridor they discuss breaking down the brick wall but decide not to considering the amount of noise it will make so they return to the main entrance corridor and explore further. Immediately to the east are doors to the north and south so after taking the usual precautions they open the northern door. A 10 x 10 room is revealed with a large wooden table standing in the centre. Upon the table sit 3 polished human skulls facing to the north. Leo searches the room and discovers a secret door in the northwest corner on the northern wall. Opening it reveals a small chamber containing a desiccated corpse that had apparently been trying to claw its way out of the trap. Noting this they risk the noise and hammer in a spike to secure the door before searching and finding 300 pp (1500 gp) in a bag slung over the corpse's body.

Gerald, didn't like the skulls when he entered the room and likes them even less now so he strides to the table and using one of the sledgehammers, smashes each one. It makes noise but then, they've just hammered in a spike anyway. As Gerald completes his rampage he finds Leo examining the table with interest. "Planks", says Leo, "the table is made of planks, and we need a plank to cross the pit trap to the south". Everyone is mightily impressed with Leo's clever idea and they quickly set about another round of noisy activity to dismantle the table, ending up with two 8 ft long sturdy wooden planks. "We can lash them together to cross the pit", explains Leo as the party look upon the Knight with a new respect for his intellectual prowess.

Leaving the planks propped against the wall for now they return to the corridor and the southern door. Opening it rather casually they are surprised as it more or less collapses in pieces with a swarm of giant rats gushing from the room beyond. In furious melee with waves of rats pouring out Fenella, Reme, Leo, Bella and Gerald are all wounded yet all throw off the effects of the rats' vile disease, which merely amuses Gerald's disease resistance. Fenella casts her CLW in combat on Leo as rats fall hither and thither to flashing, stabbing blades and crushing mace, as even Shadwell is menaced by one of the revolting vermin until the party find themselves standing amidst a pile of uncharacteristically brave and now very dead giant rats.

Gerald lays hands upon Leo, fully healing him with his miraculous power as Bella casts her last CLW on Fenella, both Bella and Gerald, still wounded, healing others before themselves. They pause to relight Bella's torch and refill Shadwell's lantern and take stock of their situation.

In world time 12:30, The Barrowmaze, corridor room 5

### **Notes**

Malcolm absent.