

# The Barrowmaze

## Session 93 13-05-26 Poking the Hornet's Nest

Next Session 20-05-26

Saturday the 10th day of Haenubrius 13:30, The Barrowmaze, Rooms 190 - 191

### The Chained Chest

As Luna examines the safe area on the far wall of the fire trap room, the rest of The Hammers discuss how they might gain access to the contents of this very well-protected chest. Gerald thinks the chain to the wall indicates a secondary trap that will apparently cause the floor to drop away. He explains further that he doesn't mean the fiery bit, just the "safe" strip along the wall.

Leo thinks about another way in, maybe in the far corner of the room? Fenella wonders what Luna thinks but doesn't get any answer as the Thief is busy following Leo's suggestion, climbing across the back wall thereby avoiding touching the chest. She then checks the other side of the safe strip but doesn't find any concealed or secret exits.

Luna asks to have a rock thrown over so she can drop it on the chest to see if anything happens. Leo is impressed since he thinks it might be dangerous to do so but Luna reminds him she has just climbed a sheer wall over a fire trap of near certain death so chucking a rock onto a potential trap is probably not too bad. Leo notes that the rocks they have thrown previously onto the fire trap have cracked and splintered and are now largely broken down by the intense heat.

Gerald theorises about the chain and the chest without reaching any further conclusions beyond his assertion that the floor might drop away so he moves onto more practical matters, throwing over a couple of rocks for Luna to use to toss onto the chest. As she prepares to do this, he further suggests that she might do this while hanging from the wall? Luna manages to wedge herself into the corner of the room and lifting her feet from the floor hefts a rock over at the chest, landing it neatly on top... nothing happens, it just rests there.

Gerald then proposes that Luna could hang from the wall and poke at the lock with a sword or a spear thinking that the trap might be "triggered" by poking it. She has a good look at the wall and the position of the lock on the far side vis-a-vis the wall and concludes that gravity is against her for this particular athletic miracle.

She takes a closer look at the chain, which is about 5 feet long and hangs slack behind the chest. She judges there is about 5 ft of slack in the chain. She stands looking at it thinking what she might do and wondering why it is a 5 ft length... maybe it is just the length of chain that was available when securing it?

Leo doesn't have any bright ideas beyond the poking the lock with a spear plan that gravity unhelpfully invalidates. Both Gerald and Leo think this could spring the trap.

Leo asks if Luna could push the chest to the side and see what's beneath it? She checks if it could be safe to touch by chucking another rock at the side of the chest, which just bounces off so she shoves the chest a few feet to the side revealing a less dusty patch of floor noticing that the chest pulls the chain tighter as it is now positioned more in view of the door.

Luna doesn't trust the lock but she is happy enough that the chest itself is safe and it's not particularly heavy given her strength so it's quite easy to move.

Luna suggests that if she pushes it forwards, it will set off the fire trap floor, maybe that will burn through it? She is worried that it might damage any fragile items within, such as scrolls or spellbooks but it's the best idea she can think of to get access.

In the meantime, the others try Gerald and Leo's theory that shooting arrows at the lock might either open the lock or trigger the trap, until the chest is covered in arrows but the chest remains stubbornly locked.

Eventually Luna pushes one corner of the chest out onto the floor and as expected the intense jets of flame burst forth, immediately catching the corner of the chest in the incandescent blaze as she presses herself back to the wall against the intense heat.

The heavy hardwood of the chest glows fiercely as it gradually breaks down in structure under the thermal assault. Luna sees the chest beginning to break down so she pushes it a bit further out causing a good third of the chest to ignite. She dithers over what to do, losing what remains of her eyebrows to the heat, until Leo suggests pulling it back to see if she can now break into it, which she does, much relieved as the inferno subsides. She prises a short pry-bar into the glowing wood which breaks apart and comes to pieces.

### **My New Mace**

Looking inside she sees the shiny silvery remains of a Clockwork Cobra snake trap which has been destroyed by the heat. Lying just behind it is a plain black metal mace. "That is not a normal mace," says Gerald. Luna retrieves the weapon which is completely unharmed so once it has cooled down a little, she tosses it over to the others with Bella taking an avid interest before starting to pray to St Ygg in thanks for providing. Gerald complains that he could also use a, no doubt magical, mace... also in the service of St Ygg by the way... just saying.

Leo wonders if it's time to head for Helix since it's Haenubrius, still technically winter despite the recently milder weather, and it will therefore be getting dark in a couple of hours but Gerald and Luna aren't so sure about returning.

With Bella and Gerald both looking at the mace, Bella gives in to her impulse and quickly grabs it, segueing into some elegant fighting moves with the new weapon... guiltily, she notices that Gerald is looking on so she tries instead to present it to him however Gerald magnanimously refuses and tells her to keep it and use it to serve St Ygg since he can also use edged weapons so it seems only fair that she should receive the mace. Bella can't contain her elation at this gift from Gerald and St Ygg so she resumes her practice manoeuvres, clearly keen to get into battle with the hated undead.

They wonder about their next move... against the possible petrifying creature or through the portcullis, or even heading back to Helix?

Fenella realises with her very high intelligence that since descending below Barrow 35 almost everything they have encountered has been some sort of magically enchanted guardian, the sort of thing created by high-level Magic Users. She is of the opinion that they are fighting the automated security of something in an area where intruders are not wanted. Also, the ravenous zombies were clearly a trap or alarm... presumably somebody or something will notice these traps have been set off? Leo thinks this is exactly what he wants to happen, swinging his sword for emphasis and grinning broadly.

Luna would like to explore some more but since they have set off potential traps and alarms, she would prefer another area in the Barrowmaze or another Barrow perhaps. Gerald dismisses this, since they are here now and it would take ten or twenty minutes to get to another area and they might as well leave in that case to which Leo nods, again suggesting that it wouldn't be a bad idea to head back to Helix.

Leo also considers Luna's idea of exploring another area but Gerald goes on to point out that everywhere in The Barrowmaze is dangerous, although they are well aware that east is more dangerous and west is less so and their recent encounters have been somewhat challenging, but still, Leo doesn't want to leave that eastern portcullis unexamined and Gerald just wants to look into anything around here.

Fenella sides with Leo, so against Luna's misgivings they head towards the portcullis. They don't see any lock so Luna takes a close look at the portcullis but doesn't find anything notable, it just looks old and rusty. Looking through she sees a 40 x 40 ft room with a closed door in the far wall. Gerald and Leo find it lifts up and moves reasonably easily but makes a lot of noise, squealing and squeaking as it goes up, echoing throughout the passageways as Gerald prepares to hammer in a spike to secure the portcullis open.

## **Alarm Bells**

In the distance an alarm bell starts to ring as the portcullis lifts from Gerald and Leo's hands and opens fully up by itself as Gerald looks up in surprise, holding the hammer and spike. The door across the room flies open and a troop of Zombies and Juju Zombies march into the room with the sound of shouting behind them, people's voices and the sound of running feet accompanying the shouts.

Gerald informs everyone that the running people can easily slip over if they run onto a pool of oil of slipperiness. He is very pleased with the idea but it seems nobody is sure who actually has the oil.

Fenella considers running away but decides not to as Leo loudly points out he suggested going home, as he unsheathes his sword. Gerald just laughs, perhaps a little too maniacally and Luna complains she just wanted to explore.

Bella can see the first 6 zombies so she runs straight into the room and Turns them as Luna calls out how many opponents she can see with her Darkvision and the bell continues its strident ringing. Bella completes her Turn, instantly vaporising 5 of the Zombies as she calls down the wrath of St Ygg, grinning broadly whilst hefting her new mace menacingly. Fenella stays back in room 207 outside the portcullis.

Both The Hammers and the Zombies are quite unlucky at first but soon the blows start to land as Phineas and Luna run in to support Bella. Morgaine charges in alongside Gerald, immediately wounding the Zombie Gerald is fighting which alarmingly bursts into flame unfortunately wounding the Paladin.

Leo attacks, running in and calling for extra light, then proves he needs it by missing as Shadwell steps into the room raising his lantern high. Various Zombies are repelled by Sir Leo's shining armour. Luna notices two people behind the Zombies one of whom is gesturing and chanting and immediately after, a 15ft radius of Darkness appears in the middle of the room, shutting down the effect of Shadwell's lantern.

Fenella notices with alarm a further 4 Zombies approaching her from the northern corridor outside the portcullis. Leo takes a wound as Gerald dodges and Fenella tosses her continual light pendant to Luna before transforming into a Wolf and mauling the nearest Zombie to the north.

Morgaine stabs a Juju Zombie with her magical dagger, reminding the others that Jujus are only hit by magical weapons. Bella hefts her new mace and strides in to support Gerald, attacking the burning Zombie and instantly annihilating it with a massive hit, squealing joyfully as she dares to believe that she might have a special weapon against undead. Phineas moves up to support Fenella the Wolf at the back wounding a Zombie.

There is the sound of shouting from behind the open door to the east and the sound of marching armoured figures is heard. Gerald immediately thinks of the oil of slipperiness but can't remember who has it. With the effect of the Darkness, Gerald can only see the Zombie fighting Leo so he moves up to help, attacking with the Barrows Broadsword and wounding the Zombie.

Luna shoots an arrow at the Juju Zombie next to Morgaine. The sound of marching becomes louder and she sees the two human-like figures at the back retreating from the room as the marching sound increases. Shadwell notices the Darkness spell lift as his lantern lights the rest of the room and Bella slips Fenella's Continual Light pendant around her neck while the Druid continues to savage the northern Zombies.

Luna moves to the portcullis entrance stabbing a Zombie which immediately wounds her in return as Bella smashes a Juju Zombie, slamming it brutally and rocking it back as she beams joyously. In a mighty blow, Leo destroys the Zombie before him as Phineas disposes of another to the north.

In the midst of the melee, Leo's melodious baritone pipes up, "we could have just gone home."

Saturday the 10th day of Haenubrius, 14:40, The Barrowmaze, rooms 207 and 208