

The Watch Campaign

Session 23

23 July 2015

26 Deepwinter 1166

Jools has now been promoted to the fifth Sergeant in the party.

Caius applies his powerful bardic brain to the hydra problem, but can't come up with any additional information about the beast. Our complete complement is now the eight members of the Watch, six members of the Moorcot militia and the local sheriff, Kerrinwell. We discuss plans while en route: Flay suggests trying to sneak in via another tunnel and take out the necromancer and work out if there is a prisoner in there. Could we wait until the hydra is asleep and then kill it?

Flay also advocates no namby-pamby pussing around severing heads or waving torches. He advocates some good old-fashioned hacking at the giant beast. However, he is still concerned about the missing noble who could possibly be the Queen. He suggests sending a rider to Nyr'Danr to tell them what's going on in case everyone dies. We write a note and send it off with a very relieving member of the Moorcot Militia.

We head up to the cave. Nerull, Adam, Amatlo, Flay and Caius scout around looking for a second (smaller) entrance. They don't find anything, so new plan is to go in the main entrance and hope for the best. Anyone who can successfully sneak will try to get past the hydra and look for the wizard. Meanwhile everyone else makes a lot of noise and attacks the monster.

While scouting around, Nerull speaks to a local badger. It confirms that there is no other way in for anything as large as a human, but surprisingly the badger is glad that the hydra is there. Why? It keeps everything else in... what other things? "The dead things that move!" Damn. Damn. Damn.

Nerull, Adam and Jools sneak in, all carrying concealed light spells. We are in contact via the message spell. The rest of the party and their allies mass at the cave mouth. The hydra is at the rear of the cave, asleep... Could we kill it while it sleeps? A sound plan if we can pull it off. Nerull ascends the rock face behind the hydra and lets a rope down for his companions. Then Jools and Adam climb up the rope. Nerull uses the light stone to illuminate the area subtly. Then they sneak off toward the wizard.

The trio take the passage in to a natural cavern. There are a further eight exits from this chamber. Good grief.

Meanwhile the rest of the group reach the ropes and climb it to the hydra. Flay, Caius, Yorgill and Amatlo climb up. But two of the ropes give way (the knots were evidently not tied properly). Caius and Yorgill fall to the ground. The hydra is now awake.

Adam starts looking for tracks to see which of these eight passages are regularly used. Jools lies in wait in case the necromancer appears. Nerull uses her prodigious proboscis to sniff the air; she says that that four of the tunnels are most likely to have been used recently. Adam

eventually manages to narrow this down to one tunnel, and he gestures madly at it. There's human tracks leading into it! Goodness knows where Nerull and Jools are (they have hidden themselves so well), but Adam presses on into the cave mouth with the reasonable assumption that they'll follow him.

Back at the fight, Amatlo quickly scurries up the rope to join Flay. Yorgill and Esmella also climb up. One of the militia men tries to climb up, but fails. Flay scores a palpable hit against the creature (a body blow) but sadly doesn't kill it in one blow – that was, perhaps, a little optimistic. Amatlo casts *Doom* on the hydra successfully. Caius casts magic missile on the beastie. Yorgill stabs it mightily. Esmella holds her action predicting a party fatality in the near future. Flay hits it again. Amatlo casts *Bless* on everyone, and now four of the militia men have climbed up onto the ledge.

Then the hydra roars into action and bites, revealing that in addition to its great bulk, strength and multiple toothy maws that it's also a venomous creature. Marvellous.. Another head goes for Caius. Another for Amatlo. Another for Yorgill (misses!) The beast takes a militia man in its jaws. Esmella tries to heal Caius but the cure fails and Esmella loses her spell. "What sort of anti-magic freak are you??" she cries. "After we kill the hydra, we burn the witch!"

The bloke from the militia who was bitten tries to flee, but falls off the ledge and kills himself. The last militia man scurries up the rope. And joins the fray. At this point Flay winds up a mighty swipe and manages to kill the hydra! It was a very lucky blow, but Flay is willing to take the credit for it.

With the hydra dead, a very thin passage on the far side of this chamber is revealed. We hear a muffled scream from inside it. Flay declares himself, but he can't get through the fissure. Caius takes off his armour and heads in. He squeezes into a tiny chamber. There's a woman in here tied up. She's clearly terrified. She scuttles back against the wall. "We're with the Rew city watch! We're Here to rescue you." Caius leads her out.

The captive Lady Beornwyn... one of the Queen's Ladies in Waiting. Flay knows her, and they exchange a few words. The Queen definitely was not on the carriage, but the Lady Beornwyn was travelling on the Queen's business – she won't say what it is. But she does say that important papers were taken from the carriage that must be recovered.

Caius takes Esmella to one side, and explains that he has been cursed and that *cure* spells won't work on him. He asks her to cast an *inflict* spell instead. As far as Esmella can see, that's the sort of double-talk she'd expect from an undead horror trying to pass itself off as human. However, the thought of inflicting wounds on Caius is too enticing an opportunity to pass up, so she complies with his request. The spell works just as it should, and almost kills Caius outright... reducing him to a bloody mess on the cave floor.

Continuing poison damage is taking its toll on the rest of the party. Amatlo quickly succumbs, and Esmella is left running between various fallen comrades. Once the poison has run its course, Esmella restores Amatlo with her last spell.

Lady Beornwyn, the sheriff and the remaining militia head out of the cave. Beornwyn says that the royal chest they are looking for is of medium size, and filled with important papers. It is sealed. "Don't open it. It will explode." Flay, Amatlo, Yorgill and Esmella head off deeper into the cave system after Nerull, Adam and Jools.

Nerull has cast Protection from Evil on herself, and the threesome have entered the one viable corridor. They arrive in a chamber 200 feet long, that looks like some of barracks. There are beds in rows here - four rows of fifty. On the beds appear to be figures. Adam sees two sets of tracks coming and going up the middle of this room. One is a man of medium build and weight. The other is a stocky woman. Nerull creeps up and looks in the beds. There is a human skeleton in full chain armour and shield. The shield has a white eight-pointed star with the numbers 7 in top left, 2 in top right, 1 at the bottom. This is a sleeper army of Aragorn! The spellcaster Nerull met earlier here may not be a necromancer, but just another bad guy without the power or the level to affect all these undead horrors. He did cast enchantment spells on Nerull... which in hindsight isn't really the sort of tactic that necromancers employ.

They press on. They can hear water dripping, as well as the noise from the other chamber. The three follow the passage to a small chamber. There is a lantern burning in here. There is a table and a chest is on the table. Nerull can smell a human in the room. The chest is magical. Flay and the others arrive just in time to warn Jools not to tinker with the chest. The watch claim the chest and have rescued the damsel, but they're still missing the evil hydra-wrangling wizard. Adam continues to track, while Flay delivers the chest to Beornwyn.

Flay questions the lady-in-waiting about her captor. She says that he was human and of average build. Wearing metal armour. Chainmail. He didn't say anything to Beornwyn. Flay leaves the chest with her and the militia and then returns to the complex to find the others.

Many of the tracks Adam has found could be 100s of years old. The party is forced to assume that there was only one person dwelling in these caves recently, and it's the one that Beornwyn describes. We comprehensively search the cave system but cannot find him.

The group comes to the conclusion that the wizard must have escaped in the confusion. With nothing else to do, everyone returns to Moorcot – we arrive in the early evening. The Watch will take Beornwyn back to Nyr'Danr and report what has happened to the Watch there. The capital is on the way to Uridge. Meanwhile, Kerrinwell needs to burn out all the undead. He says that he will, but intends to wait until help from Nyr'Danr arrives.

Flay questions Lady Beornwyn. She thinks this was a random attack. She was going to an important meeting. She met with some people and was returning with papers. No one except her knew of the route that they were taking, so she can't imagine how this would have been planned. Flay hopes that she is right.

27th Deepwinter 1166

We get up early and Amatlo prays for spells. Then we go to Nyr'Danr and arrive there in the evening. Amatlo and Caius sell all the excess horses in Nyr'Danr for 800 silver aruns. The party inform the watch here that we encountered Tursens in the wood. We leave the weapons and armour we gathered in the watch house here. But we keep the Tursen tabards... just in case.

Beornwyn thanks us profusely. Will make sure Torman hears of our heroism. Flay says that he is just happy to have been in service to the Queen.

Empirical experimentation on Caius suggests that *cure* and *inflict* wounds cast by clerics of Lugnae do not work properly on the bard. Esmella is very thorough, putting Caius through as much pain and discomfort as possible. It turns out that spells cast by other clerics (Amatlo is a priest of Kraatese) work normally, so Esmella can only conclude that Caius has been cursed by her god. She says she will pray for guidance, while at the same time sharpening her cross bolts.

28th Deepwinter 1166

The party leaves Nyr'Danr early in the morning. Caius was quite jumpy to be in the city given his early history with the Watch and is happy to be on his way.