

Campaign/Game: Saturday Showups - D&D 5e

Date: February 4th, 2023

Session 2: Wherein the Showups explore a cursed dwarven delving of Goltwarren in search of forgotten gold and lift the curse of the elves.

Characters

Alys, dwarven sorcerer/warlock (Sheila)

Bilbo Barrelhouse, dwarf barbarian (Noah)

K'last DeLake, human champion fighter (Travis)

Sora Silverlash, human paladin (Pauline)

DM: Andrew

Log:

In an arcane age, adventurers have arrived in the “new world” from wherever they originally came from in search of adventure, riches, destiny - something that drives them. Collectively, they are known as the “Showups.” This is their story.

These adventurers explore this rediscovered continent of **Apreea**. They are based in **Ineas**, a modest city based on a large island just off the coast. Ineas was once a major naval base for the crumbling elven empire that used to rule the waves.

Goltwarren, a dwarven hold from an earlier age, is buried in the hills of the continent of **Apreea** just a half-day’s walk from the furthest vestiges of civilization, the village of **Droughtsburg**. Some say that the long-dead dwarves still haunt the vault, cursing any who come for their hard-mined gold.

The adventurers are gathered by **Shamus O’Birdums**, a dwarven scout who knows the location of the long-forgotten dwarven delving of Goltwarren to explore the underground city and loot it of any valuables.

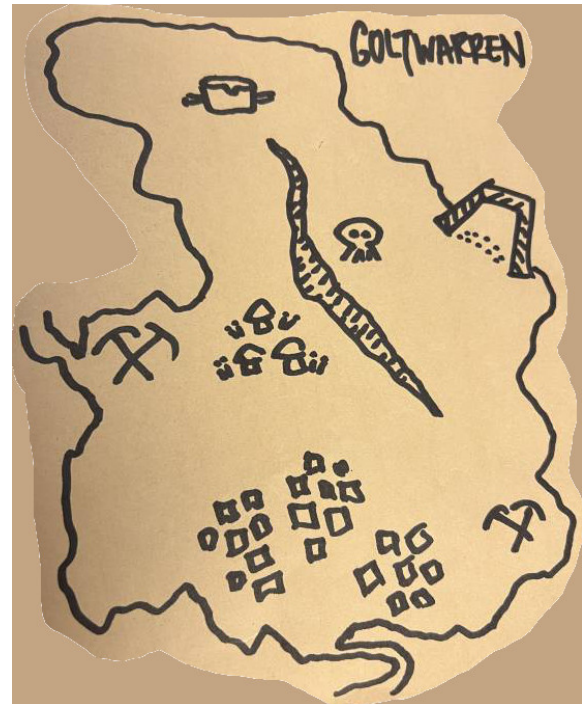
As the heroes approach the forgotten delving, Shamus asks each of his companions who they might remember in their will if they were to perish on this trip - not that this is going to happen. K’last favors his shipmates back in Ineas. Bilbo asks that the waitress at his favorite tavern get his money. Sora offers her loot to Alys if she were to fall, but Alys is coy and doesn’t share who she would name in her will. She only says that someone would appear and claim what is theirs as payment. The answer is cryptic, but Alys is spooky and the party enters through the bent bars of the gate down into the dwarven settlement.



In the first room, the Showups encounter a half-dozen dwarven guards slain nearly three-hundred years ago. Their bodies are dry and preserved, and it looks as though they were left where they were slain in an attack. It is not clear who attacked, but the wounds suggest that it was the elves.

The Showups read some of the runes on the walls. It tells the story of a dwarven demigod who took a mortal mate and fathered fraternal twins. The daughter was loyal to the dwarves and ruled the delving. Her name was Astrid Auricaller. The carvings about her brother are nearly carved out of the runes.

As the group delves further, they pass a door that leads downstairs toward a titanic chamber. They are surprised by a magical, nightmarish fog that envelops them. They are attacked by a half-dozen of these dwarven corpses, animated and moving as though they had never died. Ghostly illusions of their living forms barely cover the empty eye sockets and desiccated skin of these cursed beings. As they are destroyed, the party can clearly hear their souls whisper words of thanks as the ghostly forms are freed from their damned corpses. These Hollow Dwarves don't know that they are dead. They are cursed in some way that has them continue on in a mockery of how they were when they were alive.



The showups find themselves in a titanic underground chamber. This is the heart of Goltwarren Delving. The ruins of a dwarven village stretches before them. A half-mile deeper into the fungus-lit cave a titanic crucible melts ore over a superheated magma vent. Along the walls of this cyclopean chamber, the Hollow Dwarves - corpses still animated as if alive - continue their mining activities and soldiers walk patrols. Along the wall to the right is a special carved stair entryway into a retreat.

The Showups start by looking through the village. They investigate the four different altars of the dwarves. They learn that the dwarves were in a war with the elves from the shores of Apreea. The dead in the entrance chambers were the result of an attack. The Showups face down a patrol of Hollow Dwarves on their way to the library.

At the dwarven library they learn that the other twin scratched from Goltwarren heraldry was named **Garrok**. At one time the Dwarven hold of Goltwarren was ruled by these two siblings, brother Garrok and Astrid Auricaller. Garrok betrayed the hold, and was used by the elves in their conquest. His hatred helped fuel the curse on his old home by the archmage **Klissin Darkmantle**. Klissin was in league with the warlord known to the dwarves only as **The**

Anathema, a hexblade with a strange birthmark or deformity on his face. A large statue to “The Great One,” a dwarven demigod seen as the hold’s ancestor is a central feature of this crumbling building.

It dawns on the Showups that the elves left behind a vile curse on the denizens of Goltwarren. Alys knows that many of the greatest curses require a **Curse Keeper**, a being who exists only to maintain the curse throughout the ages. In nearly all cases, these keepers are cursed themselves, perhaps even worse than the victims they suffer to be cursed. By removing the Curse Keeper, these curses can be lifted. Keepers are fueled only by vengeance, pain, and regret, but their anger makes them hard to destroy.

They realize that the specially carved starway leads to the retreat that once belonged to Garrok. The Showups realize quickly that whatever is left of Garrok is a Curse Keeper, a vile undead being whose existence is only meant to continue the torture of the dwarven souls of Goltwarren. The four carefully sneak into the grandiose gallery. Inside, they see an unmoving half-ton monstrous undead monster clad in armor. K’last immediately identifies it to the others as a Soulless Juggernaut. Two other Hollow Dwarves toil sweeping the stone floor and sorting through artifacts of the long-dead delving. The heroes spring their attack! Bilbo hacks one of the dwarves to bits, but catches a glimpse of a masked, undead dwarf that looks very unlike the Hollow Dwarves. This monster gives off an aura of menace and anger. Garrok the Curse Keeper introduces himself to the Showups. He threatens them, and tells them that they will soon join the cursed dwarves of Goldwarren.

The Souless Juggernaut springs to life, charging the heroes. Shamus O’Birdums is knocked unconscious pretty quickly. Alys takes on her patron’s Form of Dread, limbs cracking and lengthening and her skin turning sallow. The Juggernaut, an undead construction specifically built to destroy the living, is unable to detect the dwarven witch. She curses and engages the Curse Keeper along with K’last and Bilbo. Sora holds her own against the Juggernaut, striking out with radiant smites but K’last nearly falls when attacked by the black tendrils of necromantic magic cast by Garrok. Alys’ magic bolsters the human fighter, and drives him forward to engage the cursed dwarf. A pile of ball-bearings knock the Juggernaut prone on its final charge, allowing the paladin to finish it off just as Garrok the Curse Keeper is defeated.

The Showups grab the little treasure left, and sprint back to the surface before the entire cavern collapses. The curse is lifted, and the heroes are blessed with the knowledge that they have managed to free innocents from an eternal curse.



Epilog

In exchange for an XP bonus, Alys added a log to the the session description.

Alys writes:

"My most recent mission took me to an old dwarven stronghold called Goltwarren. I joined a ragtag party of adventurers and went on a search for gold deep within its hold. Having been away from people for so long, the smell of their blood was mouthwatering. It took much self restraint, but I did not give in to the temptation. It is a battle I fight every day, made much worse by the proximity to living beings. I glanced upon some ornate carvings telling the history of the hold, with a clear message that someone was exiled from their position of power. Upon further entrance to the stronghold, a number of dwarven corpse's reanimated and attacked our grouping. We made quick work of them, and navigated buildings searching for clues to continue unraveling the mystery set before us. Upon entering our final search point, we were greeted by a monstrosity that could not detect the undead, thereby sparing me as a target. Through some well thought out plans, the group managed to fell Garrock Auricaller, the curse keeper who once ruled this place and chose to side with the elves. The treasure was not as vast as we had hoped, but enough to please the living ones. I gathered a few components, but did not make any stellar finds. Perhaps next time, if my thirst allows."