

For today, I'm motivated to start a solo game, and to use the rules for likelihood as the GM. I've done this before with other games, but let's try it out with Hack'D & Slash'D and see how it goes. It's a chance to play my game in my game world. Here we go...

Session One

April 2, 2023

I make a gnome (always liked them) hybrid caster/warrior (my go-to) who is a seeker of lore. I've always liked the word madrigal for a character, so I'll use that as the first name, and then do an anagram of it as the last name.

Madrigal Gardilam - Hopeful gnome explorer 1

Armor 1; Hits 8; Move 40'; Dagger 2 + Shield 1

Traits: Might 3; Mind 2; Reflex 1

Tags: Mystic (Common, Arcane); Two Weapons; Warrior

Gear: Leather Armor; Shield; Dagger 2

He's the assistant librarian of the Atheneum of Stalwart Keep, a repository of scrolls, tomes, texts, and journals. It is a tall, narrow structure with three 'shelves', where visitors can climb by ladders to ramps around the interior to peruse the shelves. The Atheneum was founded nearly 100 years ago by Teothas Moonharper, and he visits every few months to deliver texts he has found, purchased, or had copied. Those within the keep may purchase a day's visitation rights for 1 cp, although visitors are quite rare - because literacy is quite rare.

For the first while here, I'm going to have Madrigal undertaking simple tasks. I'm thinking that the storage cellar beneath had a wall give way, and reveal a series of old caverns on the other side. The concern is that this may be a passageway into the Vault of the D'Ro, and Madry is sent to explore and make sure that there is nothing nefarious going on.

He's off! I'm thinking that he's going to find something down there that prompts a quest of sorts, but I have no idea yet. As a default rule, an area might have a creature (1-6), is unlikely to have treasure (1-3), and is unlikely to have a trick (1-3) that might be a trap, or a hazard, or a puzzle... I'll figure it out as I go.

He moves beyond the broken section of wall (after clearing away some debris) and finds himself in a square, low-ceilinged chamber. This was once a cistern, but is now filled with 1' deep, stale water. There is a passage on the opposite side that leads somewhere. He has to cross the cistern... which might have something in it. The dice say there are no monsters, and no treasure, and no trick. It's just a wet room. Madri crosses it, with water going up to the middle of his thighs. He examines the water closely with his torch, but there is nothing moving in the water.

He climbs out at the other side to some steps that lead upward. The dice reveal that he realizes this went to another cellar, but odds are good that this has long since been closed off. He checks mind to see if his knowledge of the keep reveals something... and gets a natural 1. He has no idea what this could be. He climbs the stair to find a storage area. He now realizes that the stonework is decidedly gnomish in nature. He now makes the mind check, and realizes that he has found a secret hideout that was used by gnomes that were in hiding from the D'Ro, scheming to resist them. The gnomes had pockets of underground safe havens, connected by narrow tunnels, that ran just under the D'Ro city. Gnomes from nearby were constantly fighting back against their evil kin, and were sending spies into the D'Ro stronghold to keep tabs on their enemies. He has found one of their old hideouts. Looking up, he can see the shaft that they would have used to climb to the surface, but this has long since been sealed off. This is a round chamber with two passages going off from it. This would have been the entry and guard post. There is a monster here... it turns out that two vampire bats are lurking in the sealed shaft, and they are attracted by the light and movement below.

Madri hears them and wins initiative. As they dive at him, he swings his dagger and misses; he also misses with his shield. He fumbles with the torch and drops it so that maybe he can do a little better next round. Wow. They both hit with a natural 12. I would ask what are the odds, but I know that it's 1 in 144. So, on his first fight, and the first combat of the game, there is a 1 in 144 chance that he gets double 12s on attacks by foes. It happens. I don't like the omen. Feels like some major foreshadowing. Each attack then deals 3 hits, unless he soaks some of this. He soaks 1 point from the first, and fails to soak the second. He suffers 5 hits, but they are both attached to him. He's down to 3 hits remaining. In round 2, he kills 1, but suffers 1 hit from the one still attached to him. He's at 2 hits. He manages to use his shield to cut the other one's head off next round before it can harm him again.

Wow. He was almost killed in his first combat by two vampire bats. He picks up his torch to investigate where they came from and see if there might be anything of value. Nope. There's also no trick, which is good... because a trap right now would kill him. He decides to go back to the library and rest (because he will die if he doesn't), and to maybe do some research into the history of the gnomes and their tunnels here. He has earned 2 xp so far.

Back at the library, he rests and peruses the collection. He fails to find anything about the gnomish tunnels or the resistance they mounted to the D'Ro (rolled a natural 1 - so there is NOTHING). He's very curious to learn the history of his kin here, and hopes that such information exists somewhere.

Returning, he moves through the cistern (realizing that the water from the cistern, over time, had worn down the foundation of the wall in the cellar of the library, causing part of the wall to collapse). He also moves back into the guard post, and finds it empty as well (except for the bodies of the two bats, now covered with maggots). He tries the north passageway. There is no trick in the hall. He comes into a hall that also breaks into two. This was a storage area for weapons, and there are still weapons here. Much of this is rotten, but he finds 10 gp worth of weapons and gear. He finds 2 gnomish broadblades 4 and 2 gnome slings 1/30'. He takes them all, planning to keep one of each, and sell the other. The left pathway leads to a barracks for 6 gnomes. There is no monster or

treasure, but one of the gnomes had a fake chest here. Madri fails his sense check to realize it is fake, and tries to pry it open, setting off the trap. It has a poison gas that spurts in his face, but it's been 100 years, so the poison has weakened considerably, and Madri makes his might check to resist (I rolled a 7). There is no treasure.

Heading up the other passage, he encounters a monster. It's a shadeling of a dead gnome that attacks him. The shadeling fails its sneak check, and Madri barely wins initiative, now wielding the gnome broadblade. He misses with both of his attacks. The shadeling misses with both claws.

In round 2, Madri misses twice, and so does the shadeling.

In round 3, Madri misses twice... again... but so does the shadeling.

Wow. a LOT of whiffing.

Round 4. He misses twice. Again. I'm rolling lots of 1s and 3s here. The shadeling hits with a 12 for 3 damage, but Madri soaks 2. He suffers 1 hit and is down to 7.

In round 5, he finally hits with his sword and banishes the shadeling. This is another barracks, similar to the one on the other side. There is no treasure, and no trick. I haven't been checking for secret doors; I'll say each area has a 1 in 12 chance of a secret door. Retro-checking for the three areas explored thus far, I find none. I also roll for the cistern, and get 7. No secret doors so far. Heading back, Madri goes through the armory, through the guard post, and down the opposite hall. He finds a planning chamber, a round room with a table, journals, maps, notes... a veritable treasure trove of material for the gnomes. There is also a monster here. Two cellar spiders drop from the ceiling and scurry towards him. He loses initiative.

The spiders bite, and both miss. He attacks with his blade and hits one, killing it. He then gets a natural 12 with his shield, killing the other. Now we're talking. There is a trick here... it's another gas trap he fails to find. There is a fake drawer in the table that releases poison gas. He fails his might check this time, suffering 5 hits. He's down to 2. There is also a level 1 treasure here... there is both monetary treasure, and something magical. Noice. He finds a gnome gold-encased compass worth 9 gp, and he recovers a shield +1 that is mounted over the table. There is no secret door here. Drat. A hidden cache of gnome treasure would have been awesome to find.

He earns 2 xp for killing the spiders, and +5 xp for recovering this cache of gnome learning. He decides to donate all of the books and journals to the library (knowing that he can peruse these at any time), and he also decides to keep the compass. It's cool. He sells his old dagger, the broadblade, the sling, and his old shield, earning a total of 9 gp. He has also earned a total of 10 xp, so he's 10% of the way to level 2.

Over the next week, he peruses the gnome journals, learning a great deal that was not known about the D'Ro, their activities, their leaders... a lot of it is very specific to the time and place (guard stations and rotations as of 100 years ago), but he learns 3 things that can be hooks for further adventure:

1. The gnomes held a secret stronghold on the far side of the mountain that nobody knows about. They had a garrison of fifty gnomes there, and were using that as a base of operations for forays into the D'Ro stronghold. He knows how to get there and how to get in through a secret door that requires a magical command word.
2. The gnomes were in possession of a powerful spell that they believed would help them against the D'Ro. They were researching how to cast this spell, and it appears that (as of this journal), they were close to creating the spell. The specifics of it are unclear.
3. The gnomes had captured a fiend that was serving the D'Ro, and had imprisoned it in their stronghold. They were using magic to force the fiend to reveal secrets about the D'Ro. Madri's knowledge of lore would suggest there is a possibility that this fiend still survives.

At the end of session one, Madri is like this:

Madrigal Gardilam - Hopeful gnome explorer 1 (10 xp; 9 gp)

Armor 2; Hits 8; Move 40'; Broadblade 4 + Shield 2 or Sling (1/30')

Traits: Might 3; Mind 2; Reflex 1

Tags: Mystic (Common, Arcane); Two Weapons; Warrior

Gear: Leather Armor; Shield +1; Broadblade 4; Sling 1; golden compass (9 gp value)

Also, I'm off of school this week, so the odds of getting in a session a day are very, very good.

Session Two

April 3, 2023

I have a bit of a conundrum. I have a character that can only realistically take on menial-level monsters right now, and there are only a few menial-level monsters at present for the game. Here are my options:

- Generate some more. Give myself a random encounter table to use.
- Generate them on the fly. Menials are easy to make up, so I can ask questions to decide what they're like as I encounter them.
- Plan ahead a little bit with how I'm going to 'stock' the monsters. This goes against my 'let the dice decide' rule that was kind of going to guide everything. I'm still letting the dice choose how to stock the dungeon. For example, I think that I could set up a situation where the old gnome holding is partially held by kobolds, but half of it is under the control of dead gnomes that live on as shadelings. I could always encounter critters in there, too, but those would be the two big forces. I kind of like that the best, but I should let the dice decide. I say (based on the options I have) that this is at least possible... the dice say no. Poop. I was hoping for that option. The dice say to just generate the whole thing on the fly. I'm going to do that. Because the dice said so, and they are irrefutable.
- Okay. Generating on the fly. One more question - I found a cool map that is Creative Commons that I could use for this complex, or I could have to make one up as I go along. The dice say... make it up as I go along.
- The dice don't want me to know ANYTHING ahead of time. Fine, dice. Have it your way.

I'm going to say that it's possible that Teothas Moonharper helps my little dude out in some way. I'm going to go with the lower the better... 1 is a permanent item, 2-6 is a potion or scroll or other limited item, 7+ is 1 gp so that he can buy something worth 10 gp to have some healing or other attack options. I roll a 4. The dice say it's not a potion... or a scroll... but it's a limited use item. It's something with charges. It's a ring of healing with 6 charges. Nice. The dice say it works on a command word (so it's a free action) and that it restores 4 hits each time it is used, but no more than once per round. That's going to make a big difference. Madri could probably take on a few level 1 foes now, and that changes the complexity of this whole thing quite a bit.

Before setting out, he spends 5 gp to get two week's of common rations and a grappling hook, so he's got options.

Madrigal Gardilam - Hopeful gnome explorer 1 (10 xp; 4 gp)

Armor 2; Hits 8; Move 40'; Broadblade 4 + Shield 2 or Sling (1/30')

Traits: Might 3; Mind 2; Reflex 1

Tags: Mystic (Common, Arcane); Two Weapons; Warrior

Gear: Leather Armor; Shield +1; Broadblade 4; Sling 1; golden compass (9 gp value); grapple; two weeks' rations (common); ring of healing (free action; restores 4 hits one per round; 6 charges).

And a'wandering he will go. I decide it is 10 + 1d12 hours to get from here to the hidden entrance to the gnome fortress on the other side of the mountain. It ends up being 17 hours. I figure an encounter is unlikely every 3 hours, so there will be 6 checks (rounding up) on the way to the secret door.

Check 1: no encounter

Check 2: no encounter

Check 3: no encounter

Check 4: Encounter! The dice say that it is a troglodyte that has wandered from its home in search of something... maybe he's in exile? Lost a fight with the clan chief? Lost a bet? No idea. Regardless, he's wandering alone along a rocky stream at the base of the mountain (Madri had to descend, go around the base, and then he's going to climb when he gets closer) and fails his sneak check, so Madri sees him. Madri wants to avoid this encounter if he can, so he attempts to sneak. He fails, and the troglodyte sees him. It decides that he looks tasty, and readies its javelin as it approaches. It is 120' away. Madri is going to let it spend two rounds coming towards him (so it gets 40' away) and then he's going to cast an arcane arrow. He fails, but with a 3 he doesn't lose the mana point. The troglodyte charges, and Madri throws another one before they are in melee range; I'll give Madri the win on initiative because he can time this better (he's at range), and it's at the very edge of the trog's movement rate; this time Madri hits with his arcane arrow, dealing 5 hits; the trog fails its reflex check, suffering the full 5, and is down to 1. The trog pokes at him with its javelin, and hits with an 11 for 4 hits. Madri fails his armor check, and is down to 4 hits remaining. Madri uses his arcane dart in the next round to kill the trog. Easy-peasy. He searches the trog, and I roll a 1 for treasure! The troglodyte wears an ornate clamshell necklace worth 11 gp. Sweetness. Madri has earned 2 xp and 11 gp. Huzzah.

I'm going to save the healing. Since I can use it as a free action, I will burn the charge if needed, but would rather save it.

Check 5. No encounter. Madri recovers 1 hit. He's traveled for three hours, and while this isn't 'rest', it's not combat either. I'm splitting the difference. He's at 5 hits now.

Check 6. Encounter. It's a menial falcon that sees him and thinks it can take him. Since it's a menial, it is basically +0 for everything and deals 1 hit; I'm going to say that on a natural 12 attack, its talons hook and drag the target, forcing -1 edge on the next check that creature attempts. It attempts to sneak up on Madri, and fails. He sees it coming. It's initiative. Madri wins (12 to 10) and uses an arcane arrow. He hits with an 11 for 6 hits, and the falcon fails its check, so he destroys it. +1 XP. He attempts a mind check to see if he can find its nest, and I roll a natural 12. It turns out that there's an old, ruined bridge, and the nest is atop one of the supports, at a height of 40'. So, it's up there. Madri could try and hook his grapple, but I'm not loving climbing that high...

he's going to cast levitate and see what happens. It takes him four rounds to get the spell to work, and he avoids the 1 that would burn his mana point. He's able to 'climb' the crumbling support and gets to the nest. It has four eggs, but these are only worth 1 cp each. He decides to make breakfast with them, and does so. It's now been a full day, so after dinner, he decides to sleep in a shallow crevice (where the secret door is located) where he hopes he can avoid being seen. It is possible that something comes by in the middle of the night while he is asleep. Nope. He awakes in the morning refreshed, and ready to delve into the gnome fortress beyond the secret door.

At the end of this session, here he is. He's earned 3 xp and 11 gp. Here he is now...

Madrigal Gardilam - Hopeful gnome explorer 1 (13 xp; 15 gp)

Armor 2; Hits 8; Move 40'; Broadblade 4 + Shield 2 or Sling (1/30')

Traits: Might 3; Mind 2; Reflex 1

Tags: Mystic (Common, Arcane); Two Weapons; Warrior

Gear: Leather Armor; Shield +1; Broadblade 4; Sling 1; golden compass (9 gp value); grapple; two weeks' rations (common); ring of healing (free action; restores 4 hits one per round; 6 charges).

Session 3: Into the Gnome Stronghold

April 2, 2023

I have no idea what is beyond that secret door... because the dice wouldn't let me pick. So, it's up to the dice.

The door appears as normal stone, but a command word causes it to open into the side of the mountain. There is a small room immediately within, an apparent guard post. It has a circular staircase that ascends to a hidden lookout spot, and several places for a crossbowman to fire through tiny crevices that are virtually impossible to see from the other side. Three exits depart this area, heading southwest, south, and southeast from here. The door in is in the north wall. There is a creature encounter... it is the phantasm of a gnome spirit. Okay then. It is self-aware, and good. It is a ghost. Let's stat up ghosts for this game... I'm thinking that they are pretty powerful in general, and the dice say to put this guy at level 5.

Gnome ghost - Wise medium spirit 5 [Armor 5; Hits 30; Move 40'; 2 Touch Attacks (10); Ethereal; Possession]. A ghost is ethereal at all times, giving it a permanent form of the ethereal form spell. Once per minute, a ghost may attempt to possess a living creature within 30'. The target checks mind to resist. If the ghost is successful, it takes possession of the creature for up to 24 hours. The ghost is ejected from the body if it is incapacitated. The ghost takes on all of the abilities of the creature possessed. The touch of the ghost, in addition to dealing damage, forces the target to check might or be stunned for 3 rounds.

I suppose that Madri must attempt a mind check for a reaction... I just really, really don't want to roll a 1. I roll a 2. It's almost terrible. The ghost wants nothing to do with him, and refuses to acknowledge him. The ghost mutters something about 'not the one I'm waiting for'... I genuinely have no idea what that means. I suppose that Madri can try again, using some of the lore he's learned. I'll give him a second mind check, since he can specifically ask about the captain of this fortress, whose name was Darician (just made that up). This does slightly better, and the ghost seems to pay attention for a moment, but then goes back to wandering about the area and muttering. I'm not going to push my luck. There is no treasure, trick or trap here.

Madri will ascend the iron stair to check the guard post at the top. There is a monster up here... it's a strange sort of stone lamprey. I know. That's what the dice said. It crawled in through a narrow gap, spent time eating the lichen here, and then got too fat to get out again, so it's just been curled up here for a while. It's a level 1 monster because it's so big.

Stone Lamprey - Small hungry parasite 1 (Armor 1; Hits 4; Move 20'; Bite 3; Attaches on a successful bite of 11 or 12, dealing 1 hit per round for up to 1 minute, or until slain).

Yuck. The lamprey fails its sneak, but wins initiative and bites. It gets an 11. Ugh. It deals 4 hits, and Madri fails to soak. He's at 4 hits remaining. It also latches on, dealing 1 more point, leaving Madri at 3. Madri swings at it, missing with both of his attacks. He uses one of his healing charges from his ring, and is now at 7 hits.

In round 2, Madri tries to cut it off of him, and manages to hit with both sword and shield; in effect, he squishes it between them, dealing a total of 6 hits, and the lamprey fails both of its armor checks, so it sort of explodes with Madri's blood spilling out from it. This is very gross. The thing has no treasure. At least it was worth 2 xp.

Madri comes back down, and finds the ghost still pacing back and forth. I'm going to have Madri check mind to see if he knows anything about anything that might help him in here, as he picks between the three sets of stairs descending... he makes the mind check. He actually recalls something about the ghost! Okay then. I'm going to say that the blood gives the ghost a little bit of more awareness. Ooh. That's super Odyssey. I'm adding that to the ghost's description - the presence of a significant amount of fresh blood within 30' is required for the ghost to recall its former life. Madri gets another mind check to try and interact with it. Natural 11. Now we're talking.

The dice tell me that this was the chief advisor to the captain of the gnomes. He was a caster, and his magic allowed him to survive beyond death. Backstory time - the advisor was the only one left behind when the gnomes decided on a full-scale foray into the Vault of the D'Ro. They were going to try and destroy a powerful relic that the D'Ro were using. Hm. According to the dice, it is a powerful amulet, but the dice are refusing to tell me more about it now. Okay. Powerful amulet relic they went to either destroy or recover, and they never returned. That's helpful.

Time to get information about the three sets of halls. According to the dice, each hall has 2-4 passages connected to it. There are some traps. The ghost is VERY happy (natural 1) to tell where the traps are and how to avoid them. Okay, then. I'm not going to roll for traps for the rest of this place, because I would know how to disarm them and where they are, so there's no need. Suffice it to say there are a LOT of traps here, but none of them is going to be a problem now 😊

The first stairs lead to the advisor's personal hall. He had a workshop there, and here is where he once held an imp of some power. It long ago escaped. It's not here anymore (drat). Magic stuff. Maybe some summoned creatures mill about. There are three areas - a laboratory, the mystic's quarters, and a prison for the imp (that it broke out of).

The middle leads to the planning, strategy, and war effort areas. This would have been the hall of the captain. There's probably more information here. Possibly some military supplies. Possibly their treasures. There are three areas - a common room, a records room, and the captain's quarters.

The third leads to the living areas of the gnomes. This is just a living common area and a storage area with privy.

Going into the first set of stairs, Madri comes into the workshop. There are no monsters here, and there's no treasure. There are raw materials for a number of potions, elixirs, and concoctions, but most have long since spoiled. There's nothing of interest here. In the mystic's personal quarters, there are no monsters, and there is (surprisingly) no treasure. I'm going to say that at some point, the mystic gathered up anything of value (maybe

as he knew he was dying), and hid it in the secret storage area off of the captain's quarters. I won't bother rolling for treasure here or there then (but might still find something miscellaneous where the gnomes had their quarters). Going into the summoning room, there is definitely a monster here (but not the imp). I'm going to suspect that it is something magical in nature... but it's not. It's a zombie. I'm going to say that, as a parting gift, the imp animated the body of the mystic as a zombie (but the ghost is not able to even realize this is him - he cannot acknowledge the existence of this monstrosity, because it is so painful for him - and he cannot bring himself to destroy it, because it's him. It's complicated).

Gnome zombie - Medium mindless undead 1 [Armor 2; Hits 9; Move 30'; 2 claws (2); Fortitude].

It snarls and lurches towards Madri. Madri wins initiative, and uses an arcane dart as it closes for melee. He fails the level check, so the spell fizzles. The zombie barely misses twice (rolled two 8's). Madri uses his sword and shield, missing with the sword but hitting with his shield for 2 damage; The zombie fails to soak, and is at 7 hits. The zombie hits with one claw for 3 damage. Madri soaks all of it with a natural 12 armor check! Madri hits with his shield again for 1 damage, but the zombie soaks this. The zombie misses twice, and so does Madri. Again, the zombie does a lot of whiffing, and Madri finally lands a shot with his sword for 4, which the zombie fails to soak; it is at 3 hits. It misses with both claws, and Madri again connects with his sword, this time for 5. No soak means that the zombie has been destroyed. I don't think he'll tell the ghost that he just carved up its undead body. There's no treasure here.

He's going to try the passages leading into the common areas next (save the Captain's hall in the middle for last). In the large common area there is no monster, but there is treasure. There is also magical treasure. Ooh. He finds a total of 120 sp and two potions: invisibility and levitation. Cool beans. In the storage area, there is no monster, and the things that are here are largely picked over, broken, or decaying. The gnomes took all of their good stuff with them.

Now to the captain's hall. First, he finds the master planning hall. This has a monster. It's a tomb spider (level 2). Eek! The dice really want my character to die. It makes its sneak check with a 12, but Madri makes his Mind check with a 12 to see it! Whew. This thing drops onto the middle of the table and goes to try and eat him. It's been subsisting on small rats for a while, and it's excited for a real meal. It wins initiative, and bites, hitting for 5 damage. Madri fails to soak, and already this combat is going poorly. He fails his might check, and suffers another 2 in poison. He's already down to 1 hit, but uses his free action to recover 4 hits from his ring. It now has 4 charges. He's back at 5 hits, but will suffer 2 poison next round automatically. Madri attacks twice, hitting only with his shield (but getting a natural 12). He deals 4 hits with it. The spider fails its soak, and is down to 12 hits.

Round 2. The spider misses with its bite, and Madri rolls really well (12 on the blade, 11 on the shield). He deals 6 and 3 damage respectively. The spider fails its first armor check, but makes the second; it suffers 6 and 2, down

to 4 hits remaining. Its poison deals 2 damage, but Madri uses another charge to recover 4. He's at 7 hits. The poison is done.

Round 3. The spider hits (darn). Madri fails his armor check again, and suffers 5 hits. He's at 2. He also fails his might check, but uses the ring to immediately recover 4, so he's at 2 hits... and will lose 2 next round. Fortunately, he hits again with his blade (11) and shield (9), dealing 5 and 2 damage. The spider only makes its second armor check, but suffers 6 hits, killing it. Madri has to burn another charge from his ring, so that he recovers to 4 just as he was about to hit 0.

He has now used 4 of his 6 charges, so he has 2 remaining. He's going to need some healing potions or something... The good news is that spider was worth a whopping 5 xp, so that's nice. This room is almost entirely empty now, and the spider had no treasure.

He goes into the smaller records room. There is a monster here. Two, actually. These are shadelings of gnomes that were left to stand guard, and who died here. They continue to 'guard' the room, but have no capacity to tell friend from foe. They attack. They win initiative. They both miss with their claws, and Madri uses an arcane dart to destroy one. The second hits for 1 point, but Madri easily soaks that. He uses another arcane dart to destroy it. He finds some records here, including maps and journals, but it's nothing he can spend much time with now. He gathers this all together into his backpack. Madrigal makes note that he'd love to re-establish this gnome stronghold at some point... that sounds like a 'name level' task to accomplish.

Time for the captain's chambers. No monster. There is a secret door here that hides a treasure room, and Madri knows it's here, but he cannot find it for the life of him (rolled a natural 1 on the mind check).

Madri returns to the ghost to try to make his case that recovering the valuables of the captain would allow them to be used to benefit the gnomes. I mean, he's a gnome, so he'd benefit, but he also wants to investigate what happened to the captain and his fellows, and to possibly even see if any survive (which, while possible - they'd all be very old, is very unlikely). He makes the case that he wants to some day return and restore this hall as a fortification and haven for gnomes across the Broken Valley. He makes a fairly compelling case (I'd think). He will check mind with +1 edge. He gets an 11! Huzzah. The ghost debates this, but eventually tells him where the secret treasure chamber is, and how to open it.

I'm going to roll this up as a level 3 treasure (that's what the dice said to do). There is only one instance of mundane treasure, and it is only worth 6 gp... and there is no magic. Well that SUCKS. He finds that there are two storage chests, but these were emptied almost entirely and taken by the gnomes. Furthermore, there were rats in here that were locked in, and they ended up breaking open some potions and chewing up some scrolls, and all are now destroyed (and the rats are long since decomposed). There were also some valuables, but these were things like painting and clothing, and the rats ripped it all to shreds before their demise.

Crap on a cracker. Madri is going to return to the athenium with his new knowledge. I decide that his experience for clearing and 'reclaiming' the keep should basically be half of defeating a level 5 monster - so 18 xp. He's earned a total of:

29 XP

18 gp

1 potion each of invisibility and levitation

His revised character stat block is below. He's halfway to level 2 (almost), and could afford to upgrade his armor. He's going to purchase chainmail for the 25 gp, and sell his leather back for 2.5... that is a significant improvement. He's also used two days worth of rations.

Madrigal Gardilam - Hopeful gnome explorer 1 (42 xp; 10 gp, 5 sp)

Armor 4; Hits 8; Move 40'; Broadblade 4 + Shield 2 or Sling (1/30')

Traits: Might 3; Mind 2; Reflex 1

Tags: Mystic (Common, Arcane); Two Weapons; Warrior

Gear: Chainmail Armor 3; Shield +1; Broadblade 4; Sling 1; adventurer's pack; golden compass (9 gp value); grapple; 12 days' rations (common); ring of healing (free action; restores 4 hits one per round; 2 charges); potion of invisibility; potion of levitation.

Session 4

April 4, 2023

A week off of school and a game I want to expand = lots of time to play.

After the last few sessions, Madrigal has several hooks for further exploration, and the means to do research into these hooks... so he spends a few days going through journals, notes, and maps, organizing and thinking and basically coming up with a plan...

Hooks:

- There is an amulet that the gnomes were looking for. According to the dice, the amulet is not about planar travel, or dark magic supremacy, or an item of good, or stolen from the goddess of death... but it IS (natural 1) related to the Spider Queen of Tendril Wood. It is hers, she wants it back, and the D'Ro were looking for it, too. It was lost somewhere. According to the dice, there was something of a D'Ro civil war about this amulet - one faction of D'Ro were in league with a demon of dark magic, and another fell in league with the Spider Queen. They were jockeying for this amulet. The demon of undead and Spider Queen are siblings, and they do NOT get along. As of 100 years ago, nobody had the amulet, but everyone was looking for it.
- The gnomes were attempting to delve into the Vault of the D'Ro. They wanted to recover the amulet (?), and had some clues about where it was (?). It had been devoured by (the dice said to just give it a mysterious weird name for now and not identify what kind of creature it was)... the "beast of the shadowed pit".
- How many new interesting things can Madri discover? I'll say it's 1-3, and roll... there's just 1.
- Here's what it is not (because the dice told me no): Connected to Old Rill, connected to a mirror, connected to the Shieldbearer's Inn, connected to the small hideout for gnomes I'd already discovered, and is actually somewhere outside of Stalwart Keep. According to the dice, it is a location directly north of Stalwart Keep (I decided to roll 1d12 as a clock with Stalwart Keep in the middle, and rolled 12). Oh, crap. The City of Gauntlet is due north (and it's the only thing on the same line on the grid). How could Gauntlet have anything to do with the D'Ro? According to the dice, the gnomes tried to get the humanoids of Gauntlet to wage war with the D'Ro. Not sure how this could be helpful 100 years later. The dice tell me no to all of my other questions. It seems like this effort failed, but there is a reference to a 'debt that Groth now owes' to the gnomes. The fact that Groth is over 100 years old and is still going suggests that at least some magic is involved in prolonging his life... and I'd think that gnomes might have known such magic at some point. The dice agree. The gnomes used powerful magic to have fate intervene on his behalf, granting him *111 winters on the throne of Gauntlet*. Well THAT is interesting. I mean, since he's already had over 100 winters on the throne, he would be quite interested in keeping that power, and would also know that his time is running short - however, bringing a Narnia-level permanent winter to the land would ensure that, as long as that last winter never ends, he gets to keep on kinging. Now THAT is a villain with some motivation to do some crazy deep magic stuff. Okay. Natural 1. The journals specifically say that this is a concern of the gnomes, and that in about 100 years, they are going to have to seriously consider how to deal with this problem. But Groth was the one who knew how to hide the amulet (the whole belly of the beast thing), and

the gnomes needed this deep magic intel... so a deal was made. Then, the gnomes went on what might have been a suicide mission to take the amulet into the depths of the vault and get the beast to swallow it so that it would be hidden. They didn't go into the Vault to find the amulet - they had it, and went to destroy it. This is some LoTR level stuff right now.

- I'm thinking that there is a mirror that is important that leads into the vaults, but my dice disagree. I'm going to just leave that here for future exploration. Oh. The dice finally tell me that the mirror is an object that Groth is having made to take him into the Vaults to recover the amulet. He wants it now to bargain with the Spider Queen so he can get enough power to bring a winter that never ends.

Well. I'm thinking that Madri's not going to have to go in search of problems. They are about to come to him. He's one of the last survivors of the gnomes of this clan... so Groth might see him as important to figuring this all out.

Because maybe he is. Okay. I'm going to say it is VERY likely that Teothas is involved in all of this. He would have been alive and quite active at the time the gnomes were doing all of this, and I'm thinking he might have been advising them the whole time. The dice barely agree. In fact, the dice say it was his mission, but for some reason the gnomes took it from him. Oh. He had been planning this on his own, and was captured by the demon of undead, who had imprisoned him. Because he couldn't finish his mission, the gnomes on their own took it up and finished it for him.

Well, that also changes things quite a bit. Because it was the mission of the gnomes then (according to fate), it is also up to a gnome (hint hint) to finish it now. Oh, and the compass is really important to the whole thing, too, and is connected to the demon of undead in some important way. It is a compass that leads out of the underworld.

Wow. That is where Teothas was imprisoned, and that's where he escaped from. The compass is how he did it. And, he hid the compass until the gnome who was fated to find it found it. Some next-level s### happening here. My dice are CRAZY yo. Is the weapon that can slay the beast at the bottom of the shadow pit located in the underworld? No. Is the Tablet of eternal winters there? No. Not sure why Madri might need the compass.

Okay. The dice also tell me that Bryn the Shieldbearer (owner of the Shieldbearer's Inn and an ally of Teothas) is not directly related to these gnomes, but he has been tasked with watching over Madrigal. He's going to pull Madri aside and (in a room in the inn that is shielded from all magical scrying), have a conversation.

He tells Madri that it's time for him to go and pay a visit to the Lord of Gryphon Tower.

