

Session/Game: Krondor, D&D5e 16 **Date:** July 8, 2018

Episode 16: "Return of the Masters"

Campaign Date: Third-Month, Days 15-28, 1174 of 12th Age

Characters:

Sir Roderick of Heston, human, paladin - 6, lawful good (Dave Nelson)

Berengar the Herald, commoner (henchman)

Aldric the Dogsbody, commoner (henchman)

Langston Ford, human, rogue - 3, neutral (Bob LaForge)

Yul Gibbons, wood elf, druid - 5, neutral (Jason Liebert)

Preacher Lightning, human, ranger - 4, chaotic neutral (Marlon Kirton)

DM: Andrew Smith

Log

Day 15 - Newport

Winter has ended, and the castaways have spent a season indoors enjoying downtime pursuits. Fishy Joe has hired the group to travel North past the abandoned temple to Cumbervale before the roads completely open. There they are to locate Markus Meeks, one of Joe's "associates" to the North. He's concerned that he hasn't heard from Meeks recently, and that Meeks owes Joe an item described only as "The Chalice."

Locals say they saw a star fall in the past three weeks, just when that a mysterious crack of thunder was heard throughout the town. This event was visible from the entire island, and probably landed "a few provinces to the North."

Day 16 - Bayhead

The heroes travel from Newport to Bayhead. The old mining road is mostly clear, but the castaways manage to make it without much work. They spend the night at the Grey Lady, the premiere tavern of Bayhead.

Day 17 - Ponyville

The heroes begin their trip up the Ginsterflow, dodging fallen trees and taking shelter from a spring squall at Ponyville. The heroes take a moment to visit the grave of Squire Fitzalan before turning in for the night.

Day 18 - Cumbervale

The heroes push through the night to arrive at Cumbervale as night falls. However, they soon realize that the village has been sacked. Gnolls wander between the homes and huts of this ginster farming village, and the remaining citizens are all being herded onto a barge to be sailed back up the Ginsterflow to the North by a handful of gnolls.

The Castaways charge into the center of the village led by Sir Roderick of Heston. Several gnoll drudges are slain freeing many of the townsfolk. Yul Gibbons summons two dire wolves which occupy the gnolls' attention for quite some time. Langston Ford makes several sneak attacks as the opportunities presented themselves. Sir Roderick rushes the barge set to take the townsfolk away to the North and is beset by sorcery from the gnoll witch doctor. A cloud of small metallic daggers strike he and Mr. Righteous the horse, wounding them. In retaliation, Sir Heston and his steed leapt from the gangplank of the barge right onto the witchdoctor and cut him down before he could cast any more dark magic. Meanwhile, the gnoll pack lord had tired of the conjured wolves and was not aiming his attacks at the party itself. Rango is felled, in retaliation for a tidal wave spell that had knocked the leader prone. Once the wolves were dispatched back to the Feywild, the gnolls gang up on Yul Gibbons knocking him unconscious as well. Rango is stabbed repeatedly by the plague-ridden gnolls and dies. A poor taunt from Sir Roderick is ignored at first, but with the druid down the battle is joined. The knight breaks the gnollish pack lord in a single smite, then rides down the remaining gnolls now weakened from spell and wolf.

The citizens of Cumbervale are very thankful after losing almost half their number to the gnoll slavers. The Castaways ask the village spokesman Fronk about Markus Meeks, and Fronk tells a story about a scoundrel who was once very helpful and sympathetic to Cumbervale who returned from the North with the slaver gnolls and helped to sack the village. He was accompanied by several cultists of the King in Yellow, as well as a masked champion. The entire group was last seen headed to the East discussing how they might assault the ruined temple just across the river.

Fronk offers his daughter's companionship for the night since they are just coming out of a long winter and have few other resources. Langston Ford enjoys the company of the farmer's daughter for the evening. The Castaways prepare to head toward the ruined temple at morning light.

Day 19 - Cumbervale

The Castaways leave the citizens of Cumbervale to put their shattered lives back in order. They cross the Ginsterflow river and reach the summit of the hills surrounding the ruined temple. It is a stepped pyramid, built by ancient Smirkenburgers, with a single staircase to a thick stone door at the top level. The heroes ascend the temple and discover an array of four gemstones embedded in the door as well as the charred corpses of two badly burned cultists of the King in Yellow. Four semi-precious stones in white, gold, blue, and red are embedded in the door to the temple.

The heroes correctly assume that the door is trapped, and sets about using summoned monkeys to attempt to guess how to open the door to the temple. Four monkeys try to touch the stones in a particular order, and four are slain either by fire, lightning, acid, or frost depending on the final stone touched. Before the final two monkeys try, Sir Roderick decides to try to force the door open himself. He sets himself against the door, whispers a prayer to Hercules, and gave a mighty shove. The entire party is surprised to see the paladin has managed to slide the door back into a groove, fighting against the Smirkenburg magic keeping the door in place. Langston Ford quickly jams his crowbar into the opening. Together the two muscle the door open just far enough that everyone makes it successfully into the temple just as the door slams shut behind them.

The Castaways start descending the interior of the tower. The top room held wall frescoes that depicted how the Smirkenburgers fled from a mysterious people known only as "The Masters" and that they should use this tower and others like it to escape if their former enslavers were to appear on Krondor. The next level had a brace of Smirkenburg statues, along with an abandoned storeroom. The third level down held an abandoned armory, and six skeletons of long dead Smirkenburg warriors. The heroes pause for a moment, debating whether they should attack the motionless undead. Yul Gibbons' remaining two monkeys tie the skeletons together and then the party pulls them together, tripping them all. The heroes attack, easily destroying all the undead. However, Langston hears some voices from the level below. "What was that?" came a voice, "Quiet, all of you!" Langston edged around the corner of the stairs to the final downstairs level and sees a party of cultists, with a half-dozen gnolls, led by a champion of the King in Yellow who goes by the name of Thurl Markossa. He, along with Markus Meeks, a female human fighter named Donce the Wonderful, and a dwarven illusionist who calls himself Hurks Thane lead the congregation of a half-dozen cultists.

A pitched battle ensues. Ford is attacked, and is knocked unconscious, only to be revived. Sir Roderick makes a stand on the stairs down, and fends off the gnolls. Markossa uses his magic to teleport past Sir Roderick to attack Lightning rather than fighting past the paladin. A melee ensues until Yul Gibbons burns the champion of the King in Yellow with a Heat Metal spell on his breastplate. He flees for the lower level, casting Haste on Donce the Wonderful as he goes. The comely fighter then climbs the stairs and engages Sir Roderick on the landing of the stairs. A pitched battle ensues, with cultists, monkeys, and Langston Ford each getting their licks in. Yul Gibbons and Midnight rock Hurks Thane the illusionist when he tries to fill them with fear, and eventually the stairs are won by the heroes. They rush down, now only opposed by a few cultists and the champion. They witness two last cultists in full robes, investigating the controls of a strange large magical portal that is now swirling with mist.

Sir Roderick engages the final two cultists, only to realise that this was no ordinary human. It turns, and he sees that it is instead an abomination with the head of an octopus. Needle sharp teeth and four burning tentacles reach for the paladin, and his head pounds as wave after wave of raw psychic energy burns through his psyche. The others are also caught in the blast.

Midnight is then enslaved by the psychic abomination. "We are the masters," it whispers in their heads "We will conquer all. Slave, kill them all." He drops his bow and attacks Yul Gibbons. A second mind blast brings the party to their knees, just as the mysterious portal opens up. A squadron of Smirkenburg troops in silver armor with silver two-handed swords appears. They are the former slaves of the illithid masters, and they make short work of the abomination. The Smirkenburg troops then make ready to leave. Sir Roderick recovers from the psychic assault and asks as the Smirkenburg troops if he might have the now abandoned temple. "No, and we're destroying it as we leave. Best of luck against the masters." he grunts. The portal activates a final time and appears to churn and shake the temple. The heroes get up and all sprint to the surface where they see the temple collapse in on itself, leaving just a pile of rubble where the abandoned temple once stood.