

A faceful Gift

An adventure for The One Ring by O. Nygard

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Winter was slowly losing hold over the world. Here and there the snow lifted its white cap, revealing the brown grass of yesteryear – long and unkempt like the hair of a mischievous child. On the eighth day of thaw when the amber sun set over Gladden fields, Radagast the Brown lit lanterns round his house proclaiming that Turnday had come and with it, a new year.

Turnday

The player-heroes are in Rhosgobel for the celebration of Turnday. For the festivities, the folk of the longhouses gather to sing and make merry. They light candles and bonfires, carry gifts to each other and open their homes to kinfolk and strangers alike.

During the festivities, **Barald**, son of **Berangar**, receives a special gift from his elder brother **Baldac** – a golden trout more beautiful than any fish ever seen. The trout will be kept in a large pail for the duration of the festivities, and then eaten by the family to bring fortune and prosperity to Barald.

The golden trout

The fish is none other than **Firial**, one of the three river maidens who live in Black Tarn, caught by use of a cunning spell and thus trapped in her guise. Should the pcs take interest in the fish, they can use Hunting to see that it is no normal fish, Insight to feel that it is hurting, and Riddle to see that it is in a guise. However, due to the spell Firial is under, she cannot speak with them.

Radagast

The same day, the hobbit Bolgo Beltstrapper arrives from the Shire leaving Radagast the Brown a letter from Gandalf. As a GM you must decide how much Radagast will be involved in the adventure: since he is the master of all plants and beasts, he will undoubtedly recognize the fish should he see it. Depending on the circumstances, Radagast may himself ask the player-heroes to set the fish free and return it to Black Tarn, or be absent due to the urgent matters of the message.

The negotiation with Berangar

If the pcs want to set the fish free they'll either have to steal it (causing shadow) or negotiate its release. This is treated as a normal Encounter, with several obstacles to overcome. Below, the most key obstacles are listed. However, depending on the situation more or fewer obstacles may arise.

Meet with Berangar. Days like these, there is much to be done and Berangar, being the head of his house has much to see to.

Get Berangars approval to return the fish. The fish is a precious gift, handed by Berangars eldest son to his youngest to grant prosperity and luck to the family. A gift is not lightly taken back.

Give compensation of no of lesser value. The likes of this fish hasn't been seen for ages. There are few things that could compensate for the loss of such a treasure.

Find out where the fish comes from. The fish was caught at a place where Berangars kin have gone to fish for generations. Being a proud hunter, Berangar is unwilling to part with the secret of his favoured spot.

Make it so that Barald or Baldac doesn't resent them. The sons of Berangar are proud and refuse to be lectured by others. Even if Berangar gives his approval, the sons will secretly resent the player-heroes.

The death of Firial

Should the player-heroes fail to retrieve the fish in three days, Firial will die. When she does, she will turn back into human form causing grief and dismay among the folk. Now they can no longer live in peace with the beings of the forest, and the families will start blaming each other. The Shadow has grasped Rhosgobel, and misfortunes await.

Should the player-heroes try to resolve the situation by returning the corpse to the Black Tarn, all TNs for the interaction there will increase to 20, making the negotiation much more difficult.

Entering the woods

Black Tarn is approximately three days' travel to the east. One of the player-heroes must carry the large pail, containing Firial, which increases his/her encumbrance by five.

If the player-heroes are not careful, they might run into a band of goblins who are hunting in the area. There are seven goblins, armed with crooked knives and clubs and led by a smaller one with slender build and twisted proportions. Their leader, Urthuk, carries a sword and a strange beaked helmet. The goblins have made several traps in the forest, and are now waiting for travellers to spring them.

Should the player-heroes fight the goblins, they must make sure that no harm comes to the fish as the goblins scorn its beauty and would be happy to kill and eat it.

The Black Tarn

The negotiation with the River maidens

Should the player-heroes return Firial to her sisters, Mirawel and Myr, at Black Tarn, they will come to meet them at the brink of the water. They are much distressed, but full of woe and sadness rather than hate. They claim that the people of Rhosgobel can no longer enter the forest to search for food, and that the sisters of the lake will no longer protect them from the terrible dangers who lurks in the heart of the forest.

Should the player-heroes try to make amends for the misdeed of Baldac, they must negotiate the terms of the new alliance with the folk of the tarn. The negotiation is a hard (TN 16) Encounter, with several obstacles to overcome. Should Firial be dead at return, the TN increases to 20. Below, the most key obstacles are listed.

Persuade Mirawel to listen. Mirawel is beside herself, lamenting the fate of her sister and the foolish wickedness of mankind. At first, she will not listen, as no words can change what has passed.

Persuade Myr that the people of Rhosgobel had no evil intent. Firial could never have been snared by normal nets. Only trickery and treacherous spells could have stolen her from the lake to live as a slave to man.

Have Mirawel and Myr forgive Rhosgobel. For this treachery, the woodmen will find their traps empty, their fishing nets come up in shreds. Their cattle will dry out and their farmlands turn barren till they can no longer make these lands their home.

Avoid paying a high price. For any to come of this, the player-heroes must seek out a rare plant known as Mallos, or Winter-myrrh in the common language. Only its golden bloom may cure the spell that Firial is under. However, this plant does not grow here and the player-characters must traverse the Narrows to the eastern borders of the forest, should they try to find it.

The Wrath of the Tarnfolk

Should the pcs fail to convince Mirawel and Myr to forgive Rhosgobel, the whole forest will turn on the people of the longhouses, making their lives arduous and misfortunate.

The journey east

Traversing the narrow of the forest, the PCs may choose between two routes. The first one, being straight east from the Tarn, is the shortest as a bird would fly but unfortunately full of toil and hardships for those who are not of bird-kin. The other route is to follow the old paths laid out by the people of ancient. This route is a slight detour, but might well be worth it.

Among the several misfortunes that may arise, two poses the most dire treat. First, the paths are old and hard to find, and it is easy to mistake the well-trodden trails made by beasts or dark creatures for the paths of men. Second, the depths of the forest are home to Eil, a wicked

being from obscurer times. Eil is one of the greater spiders, a terrifying and corrupted creature who hangs lures from the trees to mesmerize and ensnare those who travel through her realm.

The Winter-myrrh of the Eastern Bight

Once on the far side of the forest, the pcs must succeed with a hard (TN 16) test against Explore, to find the herb. Each character may test once each day. This search is considered part of the journey, and repeated failures to find the straw may provoke additional fatigue-tests.

There is also the odd chance that Radagast the Brown may have it growing in his winter-garden.

The Bronze hook

Should the pcs find Winter-myrrh, or negotiate with the River Maidens to be relieved from this task (see Avoid paying a high price, above), the River maidens will present the player-heroes with a parting gift: a Bronze hook, engraved with fine writing in a language unintelligible to them.

This is the cursed hook, which trapped their sister. Find its maker, and you will find the architect of this wickedness. Find it, and perhaps Rhosgobel can still be saved.