

Ironsworn_story_003

Last time out hero, Valgrym, got a terrible beating from a pack of brigands. He lost his horse and suffered a few unfortunate “matches” on complete failures and a Pay the Price result of 91 “It forces you to act against your best intentions”. I decided he was beaten so badly he grovelled and begged for mercy.

Rather than have the brigands kill him and end the story, they take him prisoner and either sell him into slavery (likely) or try to ransom him back to his family.

THE STORY

The poor lad spent a few days stumbling in darkness (a bag over his head and his hands cruelly tied). From the jibes of his captors he learned he was to be sold into slavery.

They dragged and pushed and kicked him into some steep hills and down into a damp valley. Other men took charge of him and iron chains were attached to his ankles. Finally the bag was removed and the full horror of his situation became clear.

His ankles were chained a couple of feet apart so he could shuffle about. A 30ft rope tied the ankle chains to a peg. There were about 20 other slaves in the valley all about 60ft apart. Each had a wooden shovel and a small handcart into which they were cutting wedges of peat.

When he attempted to speak, he was struck roughly, causing his swollen lip to bleed again. “You cut peat, fill the cart, then you ring this bell. One of us will bring you food and drink and bring you a fresh cart to fill”.

Don’t think of escape – you won’t get far hobbled like that. When we catch you, we’ll cut out your eyes and drag you back!” They dragged him across to one of his neighbours - and showed him the ragged empty eye-sockets.

And so, **the next couple of weeks** passed in a blur of exhausted misery and pain. Even when he could spare time to think of Gwenneth, he lacked the energy for hope.

THE GAME MECHANICS

Ask the Oracle D100=47 so he is sold into slavery.

Oracle Region D100=72 “Tempest Hills”
Oracle Location D100=24 “Swamp”

Slavery in a swamp! Nearest thing I can think would be cutting peat in a peat bog. Some nearby hills are the Malvern Hills. I googled “peat bog Malvern” and got an article on a Malvern Theatre site about a band called Peatbog Faeries!

I’m going to assume his options are to risk one of these moves...

Make Camp to try and recover Health, Spirit & Momentum

Gather Information or **Secure an Advantage** to get some idea how to escape.

Face Danger when he is ready to make a break for it.

MOVE:Gather Information

Action Dice 1 +2 Wits = 3

Challenge Dice 3 & 6, so MISS

Unearth a dire threat (the threat of blinding)

Pay the Price – D100 53 – **causes a delay**

Valgrym’s current state is Momentum +2, Spirit +2, Supply +1, Health +1

THE STORY

They were not allowed to speak to each other, but they were brought into a cave most nights and spoke in whispers.

The blinded old man was called Yan. He had been a mercenary before being captured. "They'd not have taken me if I'd been 10 years younger – I was old and drunk. They took one eye the first time I got away. The second time, I was on the run for two days, but they have a dog..."

Most of the others were farm lads from villages to the south. They were all terrified and wouldn't listen when Valgrym spoke of escape.

One of slaves – a miserable wretch – informed the slavers. Valgrym was beaten again.

Having little else to think about other than hack and drag and stack, Valgrym tried to remember what the Drake had taught him - the thoughts and gestures of the Ritual. He had no salt to sprinkle, but he could feel the magic like a tingle in his arms.

Suddenly a small voice made him jump "Ya doin it wrong, ye mortal fool. An' it won't work wi dat IRON on yer legs."

A brown-skinned, skinny creature, vaguely man-shaped but only 18 inches tall with elongated fingers and splayed webbed feet, sat on the stack of peat slices on the almost-filled cart. He was naked and painted with mud in streaks from head to toe.

Having already met a Drake and being in pursuit of a Witch, Valgrym was surprisingly unsurprised to meet a faerie.

"take off the iron an' get some salt an' ya should be able to cast yer little spell". The little man picked his nose as he spoke. "I can see ya got the magic in yer".

THE GAME MECHANICS

Oracle character Role D100=17 "Mercenary"
Oracle Ironlander Names 39 "Nan" (doesn't sound quite right so I'll go with "Yan")

MOVE: Make Camp

Action Dice 1 +1 Supply = 2

Challenge Dice 10 & 5, so MISS

Pay the Price – 36 – the current situation

worsens!

Needing some way to break out of this downward spiral, I decide that the phrase "Peatbog Faeries" that I uncovered earlier will provide a means of escape. Now just need to dream-up a narrative to support it.

I realise I've moved away from "playing to find out" again, but this seems like the only way to get back on track. And the story has definitely been guided by the rolls and this bit of googling randomness.

THE STORY

A moment later and Valgrym was sent sprawling by a kick from one of the overseers. The man knocked him aside and wheeled away the cart. He didn't seem to notice when the naked little man jumped out of the way.

For a long minute Valgrym thought he must be going mad. He stammered "he... he couldn't see you?"

"Course not – that biggun ain't got no magic at all. Oh well, I'll leave you to your practicin..." and the little man turned to walk away.

"Wait, don't go just yet, please...". The boy's obvious plight seemed to become apparent to the creature and it paused and a sly look came over its wrinkled face.

"Would you be in need of a favour?" the creature smiled and rubbed its hands together. "Perhaps willing to make a bargain? A little quest perhaps?"

Valgrym stammered his agreement – perhaps unwisely "Get me out of these irons and I'll do your quest – I swear it."

The faerie's grin almost split his head in two. "It is sworn!". It squatted down and looked carefully at the ankle irons, stroking its chin.

"Can't magic em off or magic you out of em – that's iron that is." Then he snapped his fingers, leapt to his feet and ran off into the hills. "I'll be back boy, worry ye not!".

The Peatbog Faerie was gone for two days. The boy was losing faith – maybe he had lost his mind and imagined it. Then the little man was back. He offered Valgrym a black berry, tinged with green and smelling rotten and sickly sweet. "Eat this and next you know you'll be out of them irons".

He had nothing to lose and plucked the berry from the little hand. Just before he ate it, he thought of Blind Yan. "Have you got another one for my friend? Same deal?"

"Him! He's no use to me. Got less magic than eyes! He can't do no questin".

Valgrym explained – "no I'll do two quests if you get us both out of these irons and help us get away"

"Swear it"

"I swear it"

"It is sworn"

The little man handed over a second berry. "You'd best take it over, he won't take it from me. He couldn't see me even if he had eyes, which he don't."

The blind man didn't believe him when Valgrym said "We're getting out of here", but he grudgingly ate the berry. A few seconds later Vagrym ate his, then he watched in horror as Yan spasmed, his skin grew yellow and his veins throbbed and with a gasp he fell dead.

Turning angrily to the little man beside him, he raised his shovel to smash it down, when a terrible pain in his stomach made him scream, clutch his belly and collapse.

And the darkness closed over him...