

The Incandescent Grottoes

Session 10 28-8-23 I wondered what the smell was

Next Session 07-9-23

In world time 12:40

Relaxing in Marjoram's chambers, Vlad is keen to see if the Prismist can help them explore any remaining parts of the complex, particularly regarding the magically sealed door in the cult temple area but again she politely but firmly refuses to join any exploration. As Marjoram returns to her books, they spend a while musing on the layout of the caves now that they have a better overview of the grottoes and note that the shaft in the ceiling of the metal grid, noxious fumes room is almost certainly the other end of the pit shaft in the cult temple altar room.

Angus concludes that the remaining places of interest are most likely to be on the first level, perhaps at the end of that big wide corridor over the chasm so they get their gear together and head off to review the first level. Crossing the river, they notice that their improvised rope guideway is a bit slimy and has a distinctly rancid fish aroma. Arriving on the beach they also notice multiple web-footed tracks so continuing with caution they pass through the crypt area and mount the stairs, noting again the whiff of rotting fish, to the south perhaps?

Heading south and returning to the room of tiny statues they re-examine them a bit more carefully, noting all of the figures without drawing any specific conclusions, as a bemused Shadwell watches a tiny figure of himself grow out of the floor to take its place in the adventuring diorama... the things one you see working for adventurers, eh?

The Troglodytes

They do notice however that the rancid fish smell is definitely becoming stronger as they head further south, so they are not surprised when entering the mushroom grotto to see a group of strange pinkish humanoids emerge chameleon-like from their semi-concealment against the crystalline walls, proceeding to block the exit as a larger specimen, dressed in makeshift armour gestures in their direction and demands in broken common that they lay down their arms and surrender their treasure. As the adventurers respond by raising shields and weapons, the cry, "kill them all!" echoes around the chamber as the Troglodytes rush to attack.

Behind her wall of warriors, Fenella starts to cast a Faerie Fire spell as the Troglodytes land the first blows, injuring Vlad and Angus with vicious claw swipes. The enemy boss stands back watching as the party attack, with Angus landing a vicious slash into his nearest opponent, the oozing ichor of the wound not improving the smell one bit! Fenella's spell completes and the Boss Trog lights up like some sort of pagan decorated tree, causing it to growl in anger and glare back at the Druid peeking over the burly shoulders of Angus and Vlad.

As the enraged Boss Trog steps forward to join the melee, it urges the others into greater action and they attack the adventurers with renewed purpose, wounding both Angus and Reme who provide the flanks of the protective cordon around Fenella. Vlad feels an urgent desire to attack the largest enemy, a notion with which he is in full agreement swinging at the glowing Boss Trog, dealing it a serious wound as Angus neatly skewers the Trog standing alongside.

With one enemy down the heroes are spurred to greater efforts and out-fence their opponents to strike first with Vlad burying The Sword of Sir Chyde deep into the rubbery pink flesh of the enemy leader striking it down dead! As it collapses, glowing brightly and with an expression of utter surprise on its ugly face, Vlad can't help but notice that it seems to be transforming in shape and form into some other sort of creature which somewhat unsettles him, perhaps drawing the mighty Fighter's concentration long enough for two of the Trogs to slash and wound him. Behind him, while defending Fenella on the right side, Reme is also hit as the Druid stabs her spear in vain at his assailant.

Pressing the attack now the leader is down, Reme strikes a telling wound which is followed up by Fenella's determined spear thrust, killing the flanking creature instantly in an appropriate teamwork revenge. Since the enemies are now all the same size, Vlad chooses the convenience option and slashes at the nearest enemy, wounding it as he keeps one nervous eye on the motionless form of the dead Boss Trog. With the leader and two of the Trogs down the party press their attack on the seemingly battle-crazed Trogs but in a flurry of swordplay, claw slashes and spear thrusts, neither the monsters nor the party land a strike.

The creatures re-double their attack proving they're not finished yet, fiercely clawing and badly wounding Reme as Vlad and Angus seemingly unable to hit anything between them, perhaps distracted as the Boss Trog creature completes its transformation into some sort of dark smooth-skinned (dead) humanoid. Reme steps back and recovers to stab his assailant giving back at least as good as he received.

With a mighty cry of frustration and rage Angus finally finishes his enemy as the others close warily to strike back at the last crazed creature which still seems hell bent on continuing the attack. Tag team Reme and Fenella strike decisively with sword and spear both plunging deep into the creature's flesh, finishing the last of the Trogs. Recovering their breath and looking around warily they hear the sound of flappy webbed feet running quickly away in the direction of the entrance pool, followed by two splashes, then quiet, punctuated by occasional monkey shrieks in the distance.

They examine the corpse of the transformed Boss Trog. The creature is naked, a grey smooth-skinned featureless humanoid which apparently was even duplicating Boss Trog's makeshift armour as part of its disguise. Still rather nervous of the strangely transformed creature, Vlad has Fenella pronounce it "proper dead". With a bit of thought and discussion Vlad and Fenella are able to scour their memories to recall a creature known as a Doppelgänger which can transform itself into an imposter double of any humanoid creature. The creatures possess a sophisticated ability to behave in the manner of the replaced subject perhaps via some sort of ESP power. Unsettlingly they now recall something that they gave no thought to at the time... there were two identical Marjoram figures in the small statue room! It seems the Doppelgänger desired Marjoram as its next target! They wonder whether to consider unusual or out-of-place phenomena a little more in their future explorations.

More concerned with the remaining living Trogs than any weird dead thing, Angus recalls the exit to the north of the entrance pool and the two splashes they heard. He is keen to urgently pursue the escapees but the party have several serious wounds and as the battle fervour dies down a little they decide instead to make the trip back to the forestry camp for rest and recuperation. Returning again to the camp without let or hinderance leads Vlad to wonder if travelling the forest with two Rangers and a Druid is not such a bad idea as they arrive at their welcoming destination. They receive cures courtesy of the cleric, Brother Marly and agree to store their valuables with him for a short time. Marly explains he will be moving on in a week or two but he will keep their items (tiara and bracelets) safe for now. Marly asks nothing of them and indeed seems very happy to help but they feel that his kindness routinely offering cures and honest help should be repaid and take note to find some way of rewarding the travelling cleric. Bright and early the next day the adventurers return again without incident to the Incandescent Grottoes.

The Troglodyte Lair

Back on the beach by the entrance pool, Angus strips off and swims over to the dark exit with a rope. They rig up a rudimentary ropeway over the water and join him on the other side, sorting out their gear again in the dark, cramped and very smelly corridor. Following the corridor it emerges into an open grotto but this one is filthy, strewn with refuse and rubbish. There is a central slab with smaller stones set around it and two passageways exiting to the east and one to the north and another northeast exit. Taking the southerly east exit they find a kitchen of sorts, with rancid, rotting fish and meat hanging hanging from hooks amidst freely strewn refuse and detritus. A barrel stands to one side and suffering the appalling reek they prise it open revealing the decomposing body of a large Troglodyte, rammed into the small space, limbs hacked and broken to fit... apparently the last resting place of the real Boss Trog.

Leaving the stomach churning stench of the small enclosed space they return to the main room and try the next corridor featuring a crudely fitted door which Vlad opens easily. A natural cavern is revealed with a corridor exit at the northern end. The main area is again strewn with rubbish, a rickety cabinet stands against the wall with skulls and mummified parts of assorted different creatures. Following the corridor around to the north, searching through filth and grime as they go they come to what they assume must have been the boss's lair. A filthy pile of bedding amidst piles of discarded bones and a strange metal cube on a small pile of stones in the centre of the room. Angus in particular has been diligent regarding searching these vile rooms and his patience is rewarded as he uncovers a begrimed and dirt encrusted shortsword. Carefully clearing off the worst of the filth reveals a fine gladius style weapon made of dark steel with a jagged edge feature in the lower blade. Hefting it he finds the balance perfect for him and a with a few practice swings and thrusts concludes it is easily a fine match for his magical shield once he can clean it up a bit.

In the meantime the others have been examining the curious metal cube. 2 ft on each side it is clear from the deep scratch marks on the floor that it has been dragged here. The cube features a leering jester motif on each face and around the top, inscribed on each side, the following short phrases:

"Mountain's might"
"Army's Blight"
"King's Conceit"
"Nobles Meet"

Leaving this conundrum they exit back into the main area and are about to pass through the northern corridor when they hear something behind them. Turning, they notice four Trogs, burdened down with possessions are creeping fearfully past them towards the southern exit. Both parties regard each other and the Trogs take a cautious step or two towards the southern exit. Since the party doesn't intervene they pick up the pace and make a quick exit, followed by splashes from the pool so they conclude they have defeated the Trog gang. Further exploration reveals more of the same in the now deserted Trog caverns including as Angus suspected a link up with the other side of the corridor across the chasm.

Dreaming of hot baths and fresh air they consider their plans.

In world time 10:00, the next day