

The Star Cairns

Session 19 2-5-00 Blow that whistle!

Next Session Tuesday 9-5-00 At Brian's place.

Hardby – Let's get going

Astra pays the hirelings in advance and she and Raven (now there's an unlikely partnership) hole up for a week of study in order to copy some spells. Unfortunately for them there is a major festival in Hardby that week and the others take full advantage of the occasion to enjoy themselves, having a fantastic week of carousing and revelry. By the end of the week the Mages have copied their spells successfully and Astra is able to add Web to her repertoire while Raven adds Alter Self to his. They decide to head into the Abor-Alz with the intention of exploring the southeastern cairn. As they leave town they decide on a marching order and both Luc and Thellen are dismayed to find Astra positioning them in the front until Alvin forcefully objects. "Surely we pay them to ride in the front," moans Columbus loudly.

Arriving at Fishton the party is greeted by an enthusiastic crowd. Astra tosses 10cp to the children and is persuaded to reprise her wonderful juggling act. Food and drink is brought and the horses tended and watered as a carnival atmosphere breaks out. The party take the chance to catch up on the local gossip while chatting with Rellard, the spokesman of the small fishing community. They discuss the newly formed "Empire of the Bright Lands", the Greyhawk mountaineer militia at Storm Keep and their famous Griffon Riders. For some reason Astra feels they should go and introduce themselves to the garrison although the rest of the party want to press on to the cairn. As they leave the village Astra comes up the bright idea of navigating first to the original cairn and then to the second (not too close though). From there it should be relatively easy to find the third. Everyone thinks this is a good idea and Alvin, reminded of the studious Necromancer takes the opportunity to hold forth, describing in detail how Ylleck will eventually get her comeuppance!

Reviewing the First Cairn

Arriving at the first Cairn they find it much as they left it with the covering stone in place. The light drizzle starts to develop into heavy rain as bruised and sullen stormclouds roll heavily across the stark background of the dark and menacing fells.

They organise watches for the night and this time Raven attempts to treat the hirelings as servants stating, "We have hirelings. They can be the watch." Andrea is furious and insists that the hirelings be treated as equals. (She also puts the hirelings on her payroll since Astra is now broke). Eventually a sensible watch is organised where everyone takes a turn. The first watch begins and the others proceed below out of the driving rain. Raven, Alvin, Columbus and Astra decide to do some late night exploring. Alvin takes a long look at the mysterious floating runes. Something is familiar about them but what? If only he could get to a library perhaps a map would jog his memory? They return to the magical voice corridors and Alvin dumps his magical items and examines the runic table but still can't make anything of it. Raven thinks that magical items might interfere with spell casting in the room. Later on Columbus tries the same idea and emerges having understood one of the rune-covered tables. Andrea has several interesting ideas about the rooms but since she was upstairs on guard duty with Thellen she can't have, can she. Back upstairs Astra clears some of the smellier supplies and investigates the storeroom finding several tarpaulin cloaks, three large tarpaulin sheets and enough horse tack and general equipment to completely rearm and re-armour (only leather though) a party of their size.

Columbus returns upstairs to join Zeppo on watch in the pouring rain as the rest settle down for the night. Later Heme takes watch duty with Reba and is rather embarrassed by her quite obvious admiration. "Be serious, this is guard duty!" he growls. "Yes Sir!" she replies happily, proud to be on duty with such a noble and dedicated fellow. They are busy patrolling the perimeter when Astra and Luc turn up for the last watch. Reba falls into a deep sleep and dreams of oiled muscles.

The next day they follow Astra's navigational plan and using Zeppo's ever reliable direction sense manage to avoid the second cairn and its irritable Necromancer, finding the third with relative ease. A good deal of scouting takes place but the cairn seems quiet. Eventually Astra finally closes to the entrance, hidden by her cloak and Rogueish skills. Descending into the dark she makes out a large area that seems to be of the same proportions as the previous cairns. She also sees several heat signatures of approximately Dwarven size and an large heat signature at the bottom of the ramp. She gauges the ramp to be between 20 and 30 degrees of incline and measures the width before returning as silently as possible. Not quite silently enough however but fortunately she freezes and gets away with it. Back with the others she describes what she has seen.

Up Front Action at the Third Cairn

Columbus, having strolled down to the cairn to take a look takes out his whistle and gives a good blow. This catches everyone's attention splendidly as he walks down the ramp a little and blows it again peering intently into the darkness. This time a hail of crossbow bolts fly from the entrance, several of them striking him. As the first bolts slam home Columbus is aware of a certain numbness accompanying the wounds – poison! So these guys are not just misunderstood – just evil! Astonishingly he survives, to turn and run as another volley of bolts fly after him. Although several penetrate his magical armour he still gets away with amazingly low damage. The others watch in horror as yet another volley of bolts fly toward the rapidly approaching Cleric. Finally his luck runs out (The DM stopped rolling 1's for damage!) and he collapses doing his best impression of a pin cushion. Hemegretham immediately leaps into action and with not a care for his own safety races toward his fallen comrade. There is a brief pause as various heads disappear from the cairn entrance and are quickly replaced by new figures also pointing crossbows in a suggestive manner. As the big man reaches Columbus he picks him up and using his own body as a shield turns and begins to pound up the hill as fast as his prodigious running skills will carry him. Raven and Andrea unleash their own return fire with bows, as summoned by Astra, Reba races up to the ridge with her short bow. They score several hits on the enemies however none of them go down. In another few seconds Zeppo's Hold spell completes freezing one of the small figures as another murderous volley flies out from the cairn striking Heme many times and poisoning him in the process. Still he drives up the slope bowed by the weight of the armoured Cleric and the numbing poison. Andrea, Raven and Reba return fire striking several of the Dwarf-like creatures however they still stand! At this point some genius instructs Reba to tend the horses despite the fact that Luc and Thellen are already so engaged. The faithful hireling does as bidden reducing the party's missile attacks by one third. A Magic Missile spell from Astra strikes as Zeppo completes a Prayer spell centered on the party. Still Heme charges on until finally, a few yards from the ridge he is hit by yet another hail of crossbow bolts. Badly injured and unable to throw off the effects of the poison, and with a look of absolute surprise, he collapses slowly to ground.

Immediately Alvin leaps over the ridge closely followed by Zeppo and they both attempt to administer to the now severely wounded Columbus. Zeppo manages to do enough to keep him breathing as another volley of missile fire rain down on them both. "Get them out of here!" Yells Alvin and begins to drag Heme up the slope. Grabbing Columbus Zeppo does likewise.

Andrea seems surprised that since they are standing on the skyline, herself and Raven are not drawing any fire from the cairn but it seems that these guys are intent on killing a few of the party rather than injuring everyone. This could be a clever move in a world where Clerics and cures exist. Alvin and Zeppo tumble over the ridge with Heme and Columbus but Alvin stays down also sorely wounded. Zeppo does what he can. As the last Cleric standing he can't afford to do anything other than tend his critically wounded patients. Thinking quickly he places his gem of regeneration into the warrior's belt pouch before moving quickly on to Alvin. All three are grievously wounded but Columbus' chances of survival are very slim.

Mercifully the creatures at the cairn cease fire and disappear below. It is late afternoon and the weather is its usual unpleasant self.

I can't quite remember how this happened but you also saw a large clanking metallic creature with claws that appeared from the cairn - It seemed to block the whole entrance. Astra would have thought, "That's about the size of that big heat signature I saw."

Reason for XP	Andrea	Astra	Alvin	Hemegretham	Zeppo	Columbus	Raven
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Opponents							
Spells		30	20		20		20
Proficiencies		40	20	20	50		20
Ideas		40			20	40	10
Problem Solving							
Role Play	40	30	60	70	30	30	20
Treasure							
Finishing							
Fun Factor	40	20	30	50	10	30	20
Bonuses							
Penalties							

Total (This session)	80	160	130	140	130	110	90
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Grand Total	170	270	130	270	250	110	90
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DM's Notes:-

1. MU's get 20 xp each for their newly learnt spells.
2. Grand totals are just for this particular adventure. Sorry forgot about that and pestered you for your career totals. Maybe we should do it this way in future.
3. Good luck guys!!!