

# The Star Cairns

Session 21 16-5-00 Columbus RIP

Next Session Tuesday 23-5-00 At Brian's place.

It is morning and the party are cold, wet and fed up. Andrea goes to examine Columbus only to find the Cleric died in the night! The miserable weather compounds the general mood as Reba wakes with a dreadful flu. Andrea, Luc and Thellen are also rapidly succumbing to effects of days in the hill country with no shelter or sleep. "Has he got a will?" asks Astra as Raven does what he can with Herbalism on Reba. Alvin insists on a decent burial for the fallen Columbus and a crude funeral pyre is made from the remains of the wood and tarpaulin, which Andrea has collected. They remove Columbus' armour and the Gem of Protection from Charm and Suggestion is given to Hemegetham. Zeppo administers Columbus' last rites and as his mortal remains are consumed by flame Alvin scatters Holy water into the blaze. Thus passed Columbus from the mortal world.

Preparing to depart Alvin casts Armour on himself and follows it up with two CLW's. Zeppo CLW's Reba and casts Cure Disease on Andrea, miraculously removing her influenza. As they ride away Andrea salutes the diminishing funeral pyre and commences to try and cover the party's tracks. Zeppo's direction sense serves them well and they arrive at the second Star Cairn. Four silent figures are observed on top of the cairn, presumably Ylleck's undead guards so they carefully skirt the area. Heme's gem of Regeneration kicks into action and the big man begins to recover rapidly, his many wounds fading at an almost discernible rate. Zeppo sorts out the direction again and they head northwest arriving in the late evening at the first cairn. While Andrea and Astra tend to the horses Raven, Alvin and Zeppo all apply their Herbalism abilities to the hirelings. Complete bed rest is prescribed and Zeppo passes around his bottle of amber liquid, which seems to cheer everyone up. They discuss the statue of the small humanoid at cairn 3 and Raven comments that it may be a real creature turned to stone. Remembering rumours of statues in the southern Abor-Alz they consider creatures that might have this capability, "A basilisk for example", says Astra. They also discuss the floating "thing" that seemed to command the enemies and Raven puts his case for negotiation, which isn't too popular with the rest. Astra wanders off and finds a bundle of papers in one of the bedrooms detailing the bandit group's exploration of the cairn. There are definite magical notes in the text. She folds the papers carefully and secrets them in her backpack. She then eyes up the furs that the hirelings are sleeping in but decides to avoid an appraisal attempt at least until they have woken up. Back in the main hall Zeppo casts 2 CLW's on Andrea, one on Reba and one on himself as Alvin also casts a single CLW on himself. Alvin talks to Zeppo about casting continual light spells onto objects as he thinks that their enemies might not be too good in the light. Watches are set and they pass an uneventful night apart from the Manticore howls to the north on Heme's watch. Since the sound is far in the distance he ignores it and it soon dies down.

Dawn breaks on a pleasant breezy day and Zeppo checks out his sneezing patients, using his Herbalism proficiency to assist their recovery. After a good night's sleep in a decent warm bed in their cosy cairn they seem to be on the mend and Alvin and Raven soon arrive and also apply their Herbalism skills. The party discuss their options and decide not to attempt any combat today. Appropriate spells are acquired but as Alvin proceeds through his holy devotions he finds The Spear of the Doomheart missing from his backpack! There is a brief moment of panic before Zeppo puts him out of his misery by handing it back to him. Mightily relieved he returns the artefact to his pack. As requested Zeppo casts Continual Light on a ball of wax supplied by Alvin and a coin courtesy of Andrea. The brightly glowing items are wrapped up and pocketed. After all his exertions Zeppo is feeling the lack of any substantial food in the last two days and suggests that Andrea should try some hunting. The Ranger disappears topside with a handful of snares.

Meanwhile the party intellectuals are keen to decipher the runes in the two "voice" rooms so they head down to the second level. Astra decides to risk walking in bearing magical items and feels a surge of magic about half way down the corridor however nothing seems to happen. Alvin, more cautiously dumps his gear at the threshold and joins her. Astra casts Comprehend Languages and Read Magic in order to decipher the runes. Alvin carefully copies it all down and when they are finished they realise that the purpose of the tables are to increase the chances of enchanting an object. Any object placed on the table and then enchanted gains a 40% increased chance of success. Interesting, but not what we need right now they think. Returning to the main hall they discuss a plan of action as Andrea returns with four rabbits. Thellen is feeling a lot better so he takes charge of preparing them. As a pleasant aroma drifts from the kitchen they all go topside, Alvin with Ash's old deckchair, grateful for a

nice day at last. Bumping into Hemegretham on guard duty they discuss tactics. Zeppo has the idea that Ylleck's staff may be part of the 3 part weapon they are seeking however Alvin having made good use of his study time in Greyhawk is able to point out that the weapon parts are made of the same material, anyway he is pretty sure that Ylleck's staff is the infamous negative material plane artefact, The Staff of the Necrophidius. Heme and Raven work out how to batch a lot of arrows together for transport on horseback as Alvin and Raven make their pitch for a negotiated settlement with the creatures in cairn 3. "What do you want to do, send in an Ambassador?" growls Heme as Zeppo chimes in with his holy call for revenge! Everyone argues well from their point of view and at length some sort of plan is agreed upon. Thellen arrives with an excellent rabbit stew (this guy can cook) unfortunately there is not much of it from just four rabbits shared between all of them so Andrea sets off for another hunting trip. Reba arrives topside for her guard duty somewhat invigorated by Raven's last mug of herbal tea and scanning the horizon sees a large humanoid figure careering along a ridge toward the northeast. The others all take a look and although Astra considers a reconnaissance flight they decide to stay where they are since the figure is heading away from them and indeed within a minute it disappears behind the ridge. They spend another night at cairn 1 before early next morning heading off for cairn 3. Zeppo confirms the directions although by now the party in general will have a good idea of the way. Arriving at Columbus' gravesite they dismount. Andrea plants some thistle seeds at the site while Alvin muses, "How are we going to get them to come out?"

### **Let's Try This Again**

Luc and Thellen guard the horses as the rest of them circle around to the north side of the ridge. Raven and Heme prepare their fire arrows and Astra cloaks and heads for the cairn. "vengeance!" mutters Zeppo under his breath while staring at the cairn in a most unpleasant manner. "They won't come out you know", says Alvin, shaking his head as he lights a candle for the fire arrows. Astra moves past the dead Dwarf-like creature, yes it's still there, and stealthily climbs onto the cairn. Listening she hears nothing so she kicks a rock off the top of the cairn and listens again. Still nothing. Utilising the famous "Columbus Manoeuvre" she blows her signal whistle, listens and then blows it again but nothing stirs. Returning to the party she hears Alvin saying, "I told you they wouldn't come out." Astra volunteers for a more detailed scouting mission and cloaking up heads into the dark entrance of the tomb. Heading stealthily down the ramp she sees the large shape in the corner where it was before, she also notices a floating set of runes similar to the runes observed in the other cairns. Moving carefully around the entrance chamber she finds a large pentagonal room that seems to be the same size as the other cairns. There are several dark exits which she scouts, freezing in one corridor as she suspects that she hears something move. Returning carefully she continues, finding a storeroom with a lot of dwarf sized kit and crossbow bolts. Near the large object she finds a ramp going down. She also explores a corridor from which a faint light emanates. Crouching in the shadows she observes a very large room of a peculiar shape with piles of rubble strewn around. To one side is a strange floating creature with a single large eye and several eye stalks protruding from the top of its head. Various adventuring tales flash through her mind as she remembers the name of this creature – Beholder! One thing however, from the drawings she has seen and the stories she has heard this one looks somewhat stunted, perhaps a young or deformed one? With her heart in her mouth she returns to the surface moving as quietly as possible. Back with the main group she describes what she has seen. Raven is a bit worried that this thing doesn't seem to need guards. Zeppo very cleverly realises that the large room is in fact three of the standard Star Cairn rooms joined together. It is as if the walls have been removed somehow. Alvin takes a look at the "statue" of the humanoid creature and notices that it faces away from the cairn, perhaps running away?

<b>Reason for XP</b>	<b>Andrea</b>	<b>Astra</b>	<b>Alvin</b>	<b>Hemegretham</b>	<b>Zeppo</b>		<b>Raven</b>
----------------------	---------------	--------------	--------------	--------------------	--------------	--	--------------

Opponents							
Spells		20	40		110		30
Proficiencies	20	100	30		70		30
Ideas	10	50	50	20	30		50
Problem Solving							
Role Play	90	100	100	90	100		70
Treasure							
Finishing							
Fun Factor	30	60	70	50	30		40
Bonuses	40						
Penalties							

<b>Total (This session)</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>340</b>		<b>220</b>
---------------------------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	--	------------

<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1145</b>	<b>870</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>790</b>		<b>310</b>
--------------------	-------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	--	------------

### **DM's Notes:-**

1. Andrea's bonus XP is for several riding proficiency rolls from last week that I had forgotten to include.
2. You may wonder how come Zeppo gets more on spells than the other spell casters. This is due to his access to 3<sup>rd</sup> level Clerical spells, which get a base 30XP as opposed to 10XP for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> level Cleric spells.