

The Star Cairns

Session 22 23-5-00 Let there be Light!

Next Session Tuesday 30-5-00 At Brian's place.

Lurking behind the ridge the party spend most of their time debating a course of action to render the inhabitants of cairn 3 extremely dead, all except Raven who wants to negotiate (who'd have thought it!). Alvin points out that they are supposed to be saving Greyhawk from something or other, aren't they? And Andrea predictably wants to kill something, anything! Fortunately there are enough evil things around to keep her busy. Zeppo keeps trying to attract attention so he can plan his arsenal of spells however the heated argument between surprisingly pacific Raven and the others continues. Heme grunts with disgust and returns to guard duty closely followed by Reba. Raven makes several good points about negotiating with a supposedly Lawful opponent but is generally teased about his "chickenish" ideas. Zeppo stamps around muttering about revenge and vengeance. After some more fun at Raven's expense Astra and Alvin settle down and begin a more constructive discussion. Alvin believes that a show of strength will be necessary in order to impress the nasty floating football into negotiation. Astra muses over her idea of a lone unarmed negotiator while looking meaningfully toward Raven, however Zeppo and Heme aren't too pleased with any of this negotiation talk and are convinced that the party can take on this powerful creature.

As they talk into the evening Astra reckons she knows what the cairn must have been for. Since it has wide ramps instead of spiral stairs it must have been used for large devices such as the lobster thing they saw. Maybe there's more than one down there? They talk until quite late until settling down at the camp and keeping a triple guard they sleep through an uneventful night.

Stretching, spell learning and generally doing all the things that Adventurers do they discuss, The Plan. It is not long before Raven complains, "This plan just doesn't work! There isn't enough time for everything." After an argument criticising too-complex battle plans then leaving the hirelings to guard the horses, they finally approach, creeping around to northern side of the ridge. Towards the west Reba covers the entrance from the ridge while Zeppo casts Silence onto a coin and as Astra cloaks up they begin a cautious, silent advance to the entrance. Zeppo bumps into something on his left however he assumes that it must be Astra and pays no attention. Moving down the ramp they see the large heat source but there are also 2 other Dwarf-sized sources that begin to move toward the ramp aiming crossbows. Zeppo throws his silenced coin and Raven lets fly with Magic Missile as Alvin casts Hold. All chances of any constructive discussion disappear as the missiles slam home. Unfortunately for Alvin both of the creatures resist his Hold spell however they don't have all the luck as one of them trips over. However the other gets off a volley from its repeating crossbow one of which strikes Andrea poisoning her. Astra slips by them and creeps further into the cairn as with a great clanking sound the large creature moves to the bottom of the ramp waving its pincers menacingly. As the two dwarf things try to hide behind it Raven the diplomat nails one of them with bow and arrow as Andrea and Heme do likewise striking the other with a scratch or two. Alvin's second Hold spell is more successful freezing the creature in mid-stride. As the silence spell expires they hear a great deal of shouting and trampling of feet from inside the cairn and as the lobster thing begins to advance toward them brave Sir Raven turns and legs it at full speed. The others back off more slowly as suddenly the Lobster lights up, clearly illuminating the whole area as Zeppo's Continual Light spell hits. (DM note 1) There is renewed shouting, apparently from inside the monster, as it suddenly smashes into the wall and careening madly lurches off to the left spinning in a circle. Creeping around the interior of the cairn Astra is surprised by this event and is blinded for a few moments as the pitch black room fills with daylight. Hastily she backs up to the wall and waits for her vision to clear hoping that nothing saw her. She needn't have worried. A group of the Dwarf creatures had arrived to reinforce their comrades but they are quite clearly in major trouble in the light. Seeing this Heme and Andrea lead the party charge down the ramp as about 80 yards away Raven has a peculiar intuition that he'd better turn around and run back again. Meanwhile Astra has manoeuvred herself into the alcove under the ramp just as one of the creatures staggers around the corner covering its eyes. Never one to miss the opportunity for a fair fight she uses all of her Thiefling experience to backstab it with her magical longsword, Silvertongue. As the unfortunate creature smashes into the floor, killed at least twice, another larger, nastier looking example totters toward the safety of the dark room behind her. Since this one also seems to be blinded she repeats her negotiating technique and another victim is slain, never even knowing what hit him.

As the main group plough into battle Zeppo gets off a prayer spell, greatly enhancing their attacks and defences. They notice as they melee with these fiends that they don't seem to be as good in the light as they were in the dark. However they fight ferociously and without regard for their own safety and seem to be improving a little after the initial blinding burst of light. Raven charges down the ramp joining them in combat as Alvin uses Web to close off one of the corridors. Swords and spears flash in the air as the lobster thing repeatedly crashes into the opposite wall, a positive frenzy of savage cursing issuing forth from it. Alvin lets fly with his staff sling and as Zeppo closes to tap Andrea's shoulder bestowing a Cure they see the next corridor fill with webbing as a loud shouting and trampling from the same direction is suddenly turned into a stream of muffled curses. "Hmm, Astra's still around", thinks Alvin as he fires another sling bullet into a monster's head. Raven and Andrea both kill their opponents as spell factory Zeppo casts yet another support spell, this time Aid on Andrea. Suddenly a longsword appears in mid-air behind them and falls to the ground as Astra fumbles and drops her weapon. Heme fells one of the creatures with a mighty blow while simultaneously receiving the benefit of an Aid spell courtesy of Zeppo. The battle raging, Zeppo casts his last Aid on Raven, as they are dismayed to see the Beholder and another group emerge from the northwest corridor. As the new group enter melee both Alvin and Raven take damage as a bright ray surges from one of the monster's eyestalks striking Andrea. (DM note 2). Amazingly enough (thanks to Zeppo's Prayer I think), she resists the powerful magic and the whole group take the opportunity to disengage and leg it out of there as fast as they can, which fortunately for them is fast enough. Although they are pursued to the top of the ramp the creatures follow them no further and within a short time they retreat below where Astra will overhear them apologising, in broken common, to their "Master" for their poor performance as bodyguards. Slipping around them she manages to light her Web spell with a hand lantern before slipping away. It goes up like a torch and much muffled swearing and screaming is heard until, patting their clothes out a group of the Dwarf-things (DM note 3) emerge limping from the blaze. From above Alvin shouts down the ramp, "Do you want to negotiate?" But they retreat further into the cairn ignoring him. He turns and jogs off toward the ridge, possibly secretly pleased that they didn't want to talk – only Rao really knows.

Down below, the floating creature returns to its lair and at last the lobster thing stops crashing against the wall. A hatch opens in its side and two of the Dwarf creatures collapse out of it, a very sorry sight indeed. As they totter off toward the down ramp Astra takes her chance and climbs inside finding a compartment with two seats and 10 levers arrayed in front of them. She takes note of their positions and examines the one-way portholes that look forward and sideways. She guesses that there would be enough room for four human sized creatures inside. Taking a last careful look around she emerges. There are four guards at the foot of the stairs and in an aggressive mood she decides to dole out some more damage. As she gestures rapidly two Magic Missile spells speed from her hands instantly felling two of the guards however it seems they might have guessed the invisible thief bit as reinforced by another group they form a line and herd the invisible Astra into the storeroom. Nervously she gestures with her magical sword producing a surge of magic that washes over the front line. Seeing them somewhat confused she makes a desperate break for it colliding with a spear in the process and taking damage but managing to force her way to the ramp she scampers out into the open air like a frightened rabbit!

Meanwhile behind the ridge Raven has realised why the Beholder didn't use Dispel Magic on the lobster thing – It would have dispelled the magic that causes it to function. "Check!" Your move bad guys.

Reason for XP	Andrea	Astra	Alvin	Hemegretham	Zeppo		Raven
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Opponents	840	2875	840		840		840
Spells		40	40		110		20
Proficiencies		120					
Ideas	10	20	40		30		70
Problem Solving							
Role Play	20	30	40		40		50
Treasure							
Finishing							
Fun Factor	20	40	30		20		40
Bonuses	100						
Penalties							

Total (This session)	990	3125	990		1040		1020
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Grand Total	2135	3995	1440	430	1830		1330
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DM's Notes:-

1. Spell of the month for me.
2. For the sake of posterity dept – Andrea needed to roll 15 or above to save against the Beholder's Flesh to Stone ray. She rolled 15 and got herself a 100XP bonus. Wow!
3. By now you've seen them up close enough to notice their large milky white eyes. No pupils or cornea. They are chaotic evil Dwarves known as Derro.
4. Astra's solo activity brings her a lot of combat XP since the four enemies she disposed of where in individual combat with her, not in group melee. The XP for other enemy fatalities are shared between the party members that were involved in the melee action. (Which is the rest of you).