

The Star Cairns

Session 30 25-7-00 The fifth Cairn.

Next Session Tuesday ?????? At Brian's place.

It is noon when our friends emerge from the strange disc and stride back toward their camp in the foothills. Interrupting Raven's nap they busy themselves with various chores and duties. Zeppo, rather concerned about the water situation, notices a large bowl-shaped depression in the secluded Cwm that they have made their base. It looks somewhat like a small dried-up lake, commonly known as a Tarn. Zeppo casts Create Water at the depression and after a loud splash and a cloud of spray, the Tarn is revealed flowing with fresh clear water. They all fill up their canteens and wine skins. Meanwhile Astra is trying out the latest flying form that she has observed. Casting Alter Self she impersonates the Astral Deva and although quite obviously not exuding the majesty of that celestial being she most certainly looks like one. Rising from the ground she is pleased to find that her arial performance is now rather superior to that of her previous Gargoyle form. She practices a few turns and manoeuvres as she scouts the area. As the afternoon heat rises, they shelter in the shade and discuss their next move in which a number of actions are proposed. Among them, poisoning the Toads, ignoring the Toads and fighting the Toads. Joe thinks the Toads should be Slept, whatever that means. Andrea attempts to hunt down some more lizards but returns empty handed. Fortunately there is enough meat left over from the previous night to provide a decent meal. The party settle down for a peaceful night under the stars.

Dawn the next day finds Andrea using her Animal Handling skills to calm the horses since they will be left alone for the day. The party depart quickly and within an hour stand regarding the stone circle. Striding boldly onto the surface they vanish from the world of Oerth. Quickly proceeding to the cairn they descend to the first level making enough noise to alert the very denizens of Hades itself to their impending arrival. Looking around they notice the semi-consumed bodies of some of the larger Toads, finding that they seem to have been attacked by both larger and smaller bites. They descend with some caution to the next level.

Astra persuades them to be quiet and using her Detect Noise proficiency hears a crackling sound to the Southeast. Alvin casts Detect Evil and begins to scan around himself. To the Southeast he senses an overwhelming emanation of expectant Chaotic Evil. To the Northeast, there is an echo of some half-remembered evil. Alvin is considering this when there is a brief chill and a flicker in the air. And suddenly a huge spider stands before them, hideous fangs dripping with venom. With the benefit of surprise the creature lashes out at Heme but his magical armour turns the blow. Both Astra and Raven attempt to disbelieve the thing that Alvin, Heme and Andrea are busy hitting. Striking back the Spider scores a slight gash on Zeppo, enough to inject some of its poisonous drool but fortunately the sturdy Cleric resists the effects. The party return fire with full force as a hail of blows rain down on the thing, including a Magic Missile from Astra. Zeppo is slightly wounded but again resists the effects of the poison as the vile beast falls dead to the floor. Zeppo Heals himself successfully patching up the worst of the damage.

Entering the room to the Southeast they note the tapestries that cover the walls depicting dreadful fiendish landscapes. A loud crackling sound can be heard from an exit to the Southeast. Examining the next room from the doorway they notice that much of the floor is taken up by a great circle inscribed onto the floor however it seems to have been mostly obliterated by a series of savage scratch marks. A small table and chair take up a tiny corner of the room; on the table is a book. There is an unnerving presence in this room and a loud crackling noise like a very hot fire. More than one of the party are seen to concentrate, as if in conversation with some unseen entity. Andrea creeps around the perimeter of the room towards the book as Alvin hurls a vial of Holy Water into the circle. Nothing appears to happen for a few seconds when suddenly the origin of the terrible evil appears. A 12ft tall obscene parody of a living creature with a snarling dog-like head, piercing violet eyes, a set of sharp claws and two vile insectoid pincers. A flurry of activity breaks out as Zeppo casts Aid on Heme, Astra lets fly with Magic Missile, Joe fires his bow, Alvin casts Protection from Evil on Heme and Andrea charges the thing from behind. Several good blows are placed, including one from Heme that would have polished off an entire tribe of Goblins but amazingly the thing writhes away while simultaneously grasping at the party with its vicious claws and pincers. With the only hit on the creature being Astra's Magic Missile, both Raven and Alvin get the message and prepare their own Magic Missiles. It counter attacks with Dispel Magic and Astra and Alvin feel their Armour spells dissolve as the Protection from Evil disappears.

The two Magic Missiles fizzle out before they can strike the beast, which winks smugly at them. Heme, determined to hit this thing ploughs in again, supported by Zeppo but they both miss as Andrea, clutching the book tries to dodge past the monster. Unfortunately she doesn't make it and is stranded in the room as Joe and Alvin call the retreat. As they back off, Raven gets off another Magic Missile as Hemegretham finally manages to hit the thing. Both strikes cause visible damage on their assailant however it doesn't seem much dissuaded from the fight, turning and successfully grabbing Andrea in one of its pincers as Zeppo's hurled holy water splashes over its hard, dark flesh. Struggling desperately Andrea manages to break free as Zeppo advances brandishing a Cause Disease spell. Heme flails around grimly hoping for another hit and Joe gets off arrow after arrow sadly, none of which hit their mark. The creature resorts again to magic, causing 5 Magic Missiles to strike Alvin. Ever lucky, the Priest manages to resist most of the damage however he is badly injured by this broadside. Suddenly the creature vanishes! Silence descends on the room and the crackling noise is no longer heard. Alvin uses the last of his Detect Evil spell to gauge the rapidly falling level of malignancy in the room as Zeppo casts CLW on Andrea. Alvin just has time to cast a CLW on himself before a cry from Joe in the next room summons them. He claims to have seen an awful apparition pass through the room, appearing from one solid wall and disappearing through another. A short man of Suel colouring appeared however his limbs and head had apparently been cruelly torn from his body. This terror floated noiselessly across the room, his tortured visage apparently concentrating on keeping his errant limbs together by force of concentration. The party agree that it sounds like a good time to leave. Alvin quickly casts CLW on Andrea and himself and they depart for the stairs, unfortunately running into two more of the horrible spiders!

As the party prepare for battle Alvin decides to play the arachnids at their own game. Fortunately his Web spell completes before the spiders can attack. The webbing completely enmeshes them, when suddenly, and rather disappointingly, they disappear! Resuming Plan A, they rush up the stairs emerging into the Astral phase. Andrea cries out for the assistance of Aaron (long gone – he was a helpful random encounter) as the heroes assume a defensive stance. Joe and Zeppo, curious as to whether the toads are still in the cairn, with remarkable coolness, return to the cairn descending to the first level where they hear slimy animal noises. Returning to the surface they are in time to see the transition to Border Ethereal. They all step over the border into the Bright Desert morning, returning quickly to camp. As Zeppo casts CLW on Andrea, Astra uses Comprehend Languages to read the book. It appears to be a magical notebook, particularly concerned with the summoning of what it terms a "Type III Demon". There is also a spell of too high a level for any of the party to understand.

Reason for XP	Andrea	Astra	Alvin	Hemegretham	Zeppo	Joe	Raven
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Opponents	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Spells		50	50		60		20
Proficiencies	10	10			10		
Ideas							
Problem Solving							
Role Play	30	30	30	20	10	10	20
Treasure							
Finishing							
Fun Factor	30	20	20	20	20	20	20
Bonuses							
Penalties							

Total (This session)	270	310	300	240	300	230	260
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Grand Total	6615	7945	5640	4310	5270	2480	5010
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