

# The Star Cairns

## Session 9 31-8-99 Dampened Spirits

Next Session 7-9-99 At Alex's

As Astra cruises bars in the Dock area, Zeppo is chewing the cud with the Acolytes at the Temple of "Some-sort-of-divine-being-or-another". He manages to get separate confirmation of some of the rumours:- Bandits, Statues, Metal Man, Rampage, Rape, Pillage (what?) etc etc but no new information. As Andrea and Alvin try to report to the Town Hall late in the evening, Astra is getting bored with being told to shove off by various Adventuring groups and ship's crews. The ugly drunk with the troll breath that tries to proposition her is the last straw and she heads back to the New Inn, cloaked in case of pursuit.

Back at the Inn the party meet up again except for Hemegretham who due to his 2<sup>nd</sup> cask of Ale is now inhabiting a different universe entirely. Astra has a chat with one of the barmen at the Inn and establishes that to take a coastal vessel laden with Adventuring equipment to Fishton should be possible for 200-300gp. Ignoring this obviously gross overpricing she rejoins the others. Disappointed that the Town Hall doesn't work shifts Alvin and Andrea plan to return in the morning to explain the disappearance of the Bandit rumour. Astra doesn't want the group to mention anything about the first part of the, ssshhhhh, SECRET WEAPON. Alvin teases Astra about not mentioning the second part until she shuts up. Andrea, realising that she is out of cash mentions this to Alvin who happily parts with 30gp, it was weighing him down you see. "Let me know if you need any more," he says, attracting a crowd of well-wishers and admirers. Missing this golden opportunity Astra heads for bed, carefully examining her room before turning in. The others soon follow.

### **Morning has broken**

It's breakfast time at the Inn and it is indeed a comprehensive display. Among the Breads, Cheeses, Eggs, Bacon, Ham and Salami, is some fresh fruit (This Sea-port business is not so bad eh?). Alvin pockets a handful of blackberries and sneaks off upstairs to cast Goodberry on them. He returns with five rather more interesting berries.

Pleasantly replete Astra, Zeppo and Columbus head off to the market quarter for some serious shopping. Some general supplies are purchased including wood and stone biter arrows and some mountain equipment. Astra gets a second horse and decides to name them "One" and "Fred". Columbus mentioned a discount but forgot to press for it when they paid.

Meanwhile at the Town Hall Alvin and Andrea encounter the local bureaucracy in the shape of an efficient if somewhat pedantic clerk. Eventually he leads them to the local Militia and they report the lack of a bandit problem due to their good selves. The Captain thanks them for their civic duty and makes a note to check the frequency of caravan raids before being too grateful.

### **The Call of the Wild**

Suitably equipped they depart Hardby, taking the main road in the direction of Fishtown. Taking care to ensure they aren't followed they soon arrive in the village and are greeted by the villagers and a band of small children. Astra generously throws some coppers into the crowd which are gratefully received. Talking to the villagers they ask specifically about a group of armed men finding that just some hours before the party's original visit to Fishtown a group of about 20 well armed men (a lot larger than the average adventuring party) passed quickly through, pausing only to re-fill wineskins and not be polite.

Zeppo fills his wineskin with Fishtown wine, not quite so good as Hardby, but it's quaffable and the others discuss the Rary situation. Alvin and Andrea are convinced that Rary, known as a considerate and kind man, must be acting in the best interests of Greyhawk by brutally murdering two of his colleagues on the Circle of Eight. The others aren't so sure and Astra says she will let Alvin negotiate with any Arch-Mage that they happen to meet on the trail.

Andrea heads off and tries to pick up the trail and misses it on her first attempt, however a bit further along the coastline she picks up an old track consistent with the passing of a large group of horses. A screech from high above them causes everyone to look up revealing the wonderful boulder-dropping monster flying between the darkening clouds. Fortunately it doesn't attack. Zeppo comments that it seems to be guarding a particular site. As it starts to rain, Andrea discovers evidence of the horsemen stopping for a while in a generally circular formation. The remains of a large fire are discovered at the centre. Attempting to pick up the trail again Andrea is surprised to find that it doesn't emerge from the site! Deciding to press onto the Star Cairn anyway, the Party pick their way along the coast, hoping for a sight of the famous Ghost Tower of Inverness. They don't spot it, however Zeppo's Direction Sense is pretty sure they're on the right track. They cross a deep gorge with a small but fast-flowing river and a few minutes later Andrea crests a ridge and quickly drops to the ground motioning to the others to do likewise.

### **Deja Vu**

About 100 yards ahead is a large cairn and dimly visible through the sheets of rain are five motionless figures standing on top of it. On the lee side of the slope, Columbus looks after the horses and notes that the wind is picking up from the Northwest. Astra dons her Cloak of Elvenkind and slips into the valley. She approaches stealthily and circles the cairn at a distance of about 30ft. She notes that the cairn appears to be very similar to the first one they encountered and closes to 20ft for a closer look, at which point a stern female voice rings out, "This area is being used for research, please leave now." Astra jumps back but the figures on the cairn appear not to have reacted. She notes that message was delivered in the modern style of the common language. Up on the hill the party hear the voice but cannot make out what it said. Various hot-heads are restrained by Alvin who is wondering whether the voice is a Magic Mouth spell. A few minutes later Astra re-appears and brings them up to date. She had also suspected a spell as the origin of the voice. The party again restrain the enthusiastic Zeppo and Heme from their "full-frontal" style of diplomacy and Andrea sets off on a stealthy circuit of the valley. She returns about two hours later. By now the party are thoroughly soaked and cold and Heme has had enough hanging around. "There are only five of them," he complains. Andrea wants to return to the gorge for some shelter but both Alvin and Astra seem to prefer the inside of a nice dry cairn. Alvin is already suspecting the nature of the figures as Hemegretham takes a walk in plain sight up to the cairn. The alarm message starts and continues to repeat its warning and the figures turn to face Heme. They are hideous skeletal creatures that peer from empty eye sockets. Apparently unfazed by this the big warrior slouches his way back to the party, noting that the skeletons returned to their original positions as he drew away. An agitated Alvin immediately counsels attack as he wishes to destroy this mockery of life in the name of his God. This seems to be what everyone has been waiting for (better than standing around in the rain anyway) and Columbus quickly hobble-ties the horses and joins them. Astra suspects rather nastier magical defences than just being shouted at but Alvin wants to confront the undead creatures. They decide to approach on foot, Alvin and Zeppo from the North (stair) side and the rest from the South.

### **The Good, the Neutral and the Ugly**

Striding confidently forward the two good clerics ignore the warning message and brandish their holy symbols at the skeletons that turn to face them. Calling down the mighty powers of their divine patrons they condemn the undead to destruction. Something is wrong with Alvin's connection to the Celestial plane, however the full force of Zeppo's Holy power is unleashed on the skeletons causing one of them to step backwards and fall from the cairn in front of the other group on the South side – not quite the spectacular destruction he would normally expect from such low level undead. Maybe these are not quite "your average skeleton". Alvin shouts "Help!" and legs it up the stairs and as the skeletons advance on him he is relieved to note the turf covering the cairn top. Columbus attempts to turn the remaining Skeletons but fails as Alvin's Entangle spell completes and catches every skeleton on the cairn in a writhing mass of mutant grass!

Meanwhile back on the ground the rest of the party lay into the skeleton that fell from the cairn quickly despatching it. A game of "shoot the monsters before the Entangle wears off," breaks out involving innovative use of Hemegretham's Mancatcher to extract one struggling skeleton which is set upon by the party and smashed to bits. Columbus slings a bottle of Greek fire into the Entanglement and manages to subject one of the beasties to some steady damage while the fire lasts. Alvin and Andrea fire missile weapons into the fray, as the others thump the Entangled monsters to the best of their ability. Finally the last skeleton collapses in a disgusting rattle of bones, just a few minutes before the Entangle shuts down.

Looking around the area Zeppo catches sight of a cowled figure, apparently observing them from the ridge. As they approach, the figure retreats down the slope. However when they crest the ridge there is no sign of anyone!

<b>Reason for XP</b>	<b>Andrea</b>	<b>Astra</b>	<b>Alvin</b>	<b>Hemegretham</b>	<b>Zeppo</b>	<b>Columbus</b>
Opponents	100	100	100	100	100	100
Spells			60		100	
Proficiencies	20	20			20	
Ideas	20	50	40	30	20	20
Problem Solving						
Role Play	40	40	40	90	30	30
Treasure						
Finishing						
Fun Factor	20	40	20	40	20	20
Penalties						
<b>Total (This session)</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>170</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>200</b>

**DM's Notes:-**

1. The combat XP has been shared equally since the party were all involved in the melee.
2. Alvin's very appropriate use of Entangle earned him a 50xp bonus allocated to spells.
3. Heme's innovative, if slightly mad use of the Mancatcher scored a bonus of 30xp to Role Playing. (It seemed somehow inappropriate to assign it to Ideas).
4. Zeppo gets 100xp for a successful use of Turn Undead.