

The Village – Session the fifth 4 May 98

It is 10 in the morning outside the bath house in the ruined village. The party, now aware of at least some of what they are up against, warily prepare to scout the next building. Raven examines the fountain from 30ft away. He notices a central motif of 3 unicorns.

Astra makes it clear that they agreed to explore the village, in a clockwise direction, quickly and then return to any sites of interest. They prepare to head to next most eastern building when suddenly 5ft of very sturdy, female, half elf steps from behind the bath house. “Oh no, not her!” moans Andrea recognising her beloved sister. Cassandra (for it is she) grins unpleasantly and announces her purpose is to guard her younger sister’s back through this adventure so that she can kill her herself later. The party, obviously somewhat cautious (at last!) in this dangerous territory, question Andrea about this. She refuses to say anything more other than sulkily accepting that the “bitch queen from hell” is in fact her sister.

A quick search of the next building reveals nothing more than what the party assume to be an abandoned hovel. The next two buildings to the east are of very similar design. Raven takes a look in the next (middle) doorway and notices that the gloomy room is full of cobwebs. Squinting into the dark he makes out an intact fireplace with a chimney (wow!) built into the west wall. The others (still in the SWAT spirit) cover each other enthusiastically.

Astra immediately suggests burning “them” out and manages to tear some strips from her cloak which she then soaks in oil from her supplies. Galen rather alarmed at the thought of the party going up in smoke suggests sticking the rags on a bit of stick. To this end he strides confidently off to the nearest tree and calmly rips off a whole branch. Returning he breaks it into three and hands a piece to Astra which she prepares and lights with her flint and steel. Galen nocks an arrow and the party stand by for anything nasty running out of the building. Astra shoves the stick into the building and up it goes in a blaze. A couple of tiny little spiders leg it out of the place, one of which Andrea immediately stamps on. Cassandra stands around cleaning her fingernails with a longsword.

Bored with this our heroes move onto the next (east) building. Zeppo, Raven and Astra enter stealthily and are mightily surprised to see a 7 ft Troll rise from a hole in the floor and advance on them snarling ominously. Bravely they stand their ground as the hideous thing slashes at them with razor sharp claws and teeth. Zeppo is struck for 3hp, Raven for 2hp and Astra rather alarmingly for her takes 3hp damage. Galen and Cassandra run towards the door for a better look as our really incredibly brave adventurers decide it’s their turn to kick some flabby Troll butt! Astra gets her own back for 3hp as Zeppo misses with his flail. Raven’s 2 Magic Missiles careen around the room and smack into the monster in a shower of sparks causing 10hp of damage (See DM’s note 1).

Despite all this the thing is still on its feet and twice as angry. Galen, who got a good look at what they are fighting yells, "Get out of there!" As the beast advances, Astra uses her tumbling proficiency to smack into the door frame and knock herself almost senseless. Fortunately she manages to fall in the right direction and totters away from the door outside the building. Raven attempting to run backwards trips over his own feet and collapses in a heap outside the door thumping his head on the ground for 1hp. The organised tactical retreat is completed by Zeppo who tripping over Raven manages to dive head first into the ground for 2hp of damage. As he drops, Galen lets loose two arrows in the general direction of the Troll. Unfortunately he misses with both. It's looking bad for the party when for whatever reason the Troll halts in the door frame but continues to slaver and claw. Never ones to look a gift Troll in the mouth there is a general sound of missile weapons being unslung as everyone switches to daggers, bows, oil flasks etc. Galen lets go of another two arrows as this is happening but misses again as a murderous volley flies towards the evil monster but amazingly nothing connects. Astra picks up her sword as Alvin lobs his oil flask at the Troll and connects smack between the eyes. The flask shatters and brother Troll is covered in oil some of which splatters onto the door frame. Despite this some of the creatures earlier wounds are beginning to heal. (Don't you just hate regeneration!) Astra and Raven grab the two remaining pieces of branch and run to the burning building to light them. In the meantime Galen fires another two arrows one of which, remarkably, actually strikes the Troll for 6hp. Cassandra misses with her two arrows as she strives to match Galen's batting average. Arriving back first Astra heaves the branch at the Troll but misses, however she does manage to cause the oil on the door frame to catch. Alvin prepares his staff sling and Cassandra's two arrows both hit for 2hp and 3hp. Galen fires another two "safety arrows" as Zeppo (finally) noticing that Astra is bleeding all over the place CLW's her for an amazing 1hp. At least she's half cured now.

Raven's next action is rather unexpected and for those of you that had never seen a Troll laugh before was rather memorable. Heaving his burning branch with all his might Raven drops the whole thing on his foot and sets himself alight. Astra ignoring the cries and yelps behind her lobs her flask of oil at the Troll and in a huge "woof" it is consumed in flame. The damage is enough to finish it off but rather disconcertingly the dying monster simply vanishes! Everyone is rather surprised by this such that it takes a while before anyone notices that Raven is really rather seriously on fire. Zeppo snaps out of it and quickly rolls him in his cloak which puts out the fire. Alvin binds his wounds and advises him to pencil in his eyebrows for the next few weeks.

The word illusion is repeated enough times to encourage Zeppo, Astra and Raven to disbelieve their “illusory” wounds, sadly they all fail to manage it.

Absolutely refusing to slow down Galen examines the middle hovel and determines that the flames have died down. Closely followed by the still smoking Raven, Astra moves into the room. Covered by her comrades she creeps to the chimney with a lantern and begins to look inside. A terrible shriek is heard as a freezing presence flies past the distraught scout and disappears through the door. A shaky Astra leans against the wall but is ok having survived the System Shock caused by the encounter with her good friend, The Shadow. Galen continues the search and as he looks up the chimney he notices a blockage. Poking about gets him covered in soot but he is able to extract a small wooden coffer with a keyhole. Astra does the camouflage make-up routine with the soot as they exit. Raven noting the sun’s position reckons the time is shortly after midday.

The next building is swiftly approached and Raven and Zeppo enter a room where three bushes have grown into a hedge-like formation. Entwined within are two skeletons. Our intrepid pair (who have obviously not encountered undead yet) poke around and discover:-

Raven – A rather splendid helmet, a potion with a holy cross symbol on its base.

Zeppo – A gold belt buckle with an inset red gem, a pouch of money 4pp 20gp.

Galen’s stomach decides that it’s lunchtime and our friends settle down between this building and the fountain to enjoy their little picnic. Taking his opportunity Raven wanders off to examine the fountain and is shortly joined by a suddenly sceptical Astra. He notices a short length of copper pipe protruding from each unicorn’s mouth. Examining the bowl, half full of almost stagnant water and choked with reeds and lilies, Raven notices that it has been (deliberately?) blocked. As he looks he sees a bubble rise up from the gunge. He plunges his arm into the water (fortunately nothing bites it off but this is 1st level after all) and manages to dislodge the blockage revealing a grate set into the bottom of the bowl. Bubbles start to rise as a gurgling sound is heard from beneath the fountain. Astra looks on waiting for something to go wrong as the water level sinks rapidly until the bowl is empty. Breaking off a length of reed Raven slips it into one of the copper pipes (not wanting to be seen snogging a statue perhaps) and tries a tentative blow. He is convinced that he’ll have to suck to start the siphon cycle but what if it’s a trap – too horrible to contemplate. A gurgling sound is heard from below but otherwise nothing happens. As Astra stands by with her fingers in her ears and her eyes shut, Raven takes a good suck at the reed and within a few seconds feels air pressure reverse in the tube. Quickly retreating from the bowl they watch as the fountain gurgles and splutters into life. Initially the water is dirty but after a few minutes the stream clears a little and the flow picks up a little. It looks like the fountain may take a while to clear. Raven is convinced that it will be running at full stream within a couple of hours but expects the clearing process to take some hours more... a day perhaps?

The others wander over for a look and examine the structure for writing and symbols of which they find no evidence. Alvin and Zeppo do however notice the strong Good and Holy symbolism implied by the design. A thoughtful Cassandra is reading the scroll (who let her have that) and notices the "If water was not fouled" part. The party take note.

Galen and Cassandra hurry back to the (ex) Troll building with the rest of the party in tow. They step gingerly over the threshold but fortunately nothing comes out of the hole. Alvin with his magical knowledge is pretty sure that it was a programmed illusion with sound and claims that since it has been triggered it is now safe. A detailed search of the building is carried out but succeeds in nothing other than making our rather grubby adventurers rather more grubby. Whatever such a powerful illusion was there to protect it sure ain't there now.

Speeding onto the next building, the standard now standard reconnaissance is undertaken, this time by Alvin after which Cassandra, as gently as possible, kicks the door in. When the splinters finally settle a room containing four large barrels is revealed. A chorus of "Coopers!" is the predictable result. Cassandra is able to easily lift the large empty barrel and since there is nothing beneath it she smashes it to the ground resulting in a very broken barrel. There is however nothing inside. Lifting the second barrel reveals a large iron key beneath it which Zeppo quickly recovers. The other (empty) barrels are searched for no result. Outside Galen suggests holding the key near to the box that he found up the chimney. Does it look as if it will fit? Indeed it does. Astra checks the coffer for traps and detects nothing. Raven carries the box in his backpack, Zeppo has the key and Andrea has the statuette. Alvin thinks it would be good idea to try the key in the box when they are somewhere safe. The party don't take a lot of persuading.

Almost jogging to the next building the party examine a low structure about 3ft high with a single dark entrance. Cassandra bravely pokes her head in and waves a lantern around. A 20ft deep area is revealed by the light of the lantern. A large pile of old wood lies beneath the entrance, collapsed stairs perhaps. While she is gazing into the murk Cassandra's peripheral infravision detects a flash of movement. A warm "something", about 2 ft long disappears into the rubble before she can shine the lantern in that direction and a scurrying, scrambling sound is heard. She backs out and the party decide to pass on this one for now.

Eager to discover "The Butcher's block" Astra leads on into the next building which is apparently a ruined stable. The collapsed hayloft partially conceals a ladder. But they just don't care about stables at the moment. "It's the Butcher's we want!" they cry! A rapid though cautious approach to the next building reveals a room, featureless apart from the rusted rail and hooks around the wall, a rusty cleaver on the floor and a neatly stacked pile of bones in the corner. It must be the Butcher's Shop! No sign of any block though...

Clarshh's Sepulchre

XP awards for Session 5

| Reason for XP | Galen | Andrea | Astra | Raven | Alvin | Cassandra | Zeppo |
|-------------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Opponents | 280 | | 280 | 280 | | 280 | 280 |
| Spells | | | | 50 | | | 20 |
| Proficiencies | | | | | 20 | | |
| Ideas | 30 | | 60 | 30 | 40 | 20 | 20 |
| Problem Solving | 10 | | 10 | 100 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Role Play | 10 | | 20 | | | | |
| Treasure | 110 | | 110 | 140 | 110 | 110 | 140 |
| Finishing | | | | | | | |
| Fun Factor | | | 10 | 20 | | | 10 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Total (This adventure) | 330 | 0 | 380 | 480 | 180 | 310 | 340 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Grand Total | 1030 | 455 | 755 | 830 | 590 | 310 | 610 |

Rules notes for this session:-

Note 1 - Poor DM'ing during the Troll fight

Astute players will have noticed the combat sequence go a little astray as the excited (and overworked) DM tried to co-ordinate multiple attacks involving 3 players. Raven managed to get his Magic Missile spell off without the Troll having a chance to disturb the casting of the spell. The players (and the DM) are reminded that combat occurs in this order:-

1. I decide what the bad guys will do
2. You decide what you will do
3. Initiative is rolled
4. Actions are resolved for the group with initiative
5. Actions are resolved for the other group.

This gives the monster (or the party if they are fighting spellcasters) a chance to disturb the casting of the spell.

Note 2 - Dave's appeal on treasure XP is approved and results in the following house rule:-

Treasure XP is now to be equally divided between all party members unless there are circumstances where an individual is wholly or mostly responsible for recovering the treasure. In this case the character will receive a larger proportion of the XP than the rest of the party. In the above case Zeppo and Raven have been awarded extra treasure XP since in that particular session I was still awarding individual treasure XP. This will not occur in future.

House Rules :-

Creatures killed or defeated in battle earn XP for the character. In the case of a group action where the group as a whole is responsible for the defeat the XP will be shared. The 80 XP each for Astra and Alvin in this case are due to having been in direct melee with the creatures despite not managing to kill any of them.

Standard CLW's cast in unremarkable circumstances score 10XP. CLW's cast in combat get more according to how sweaty the situation is.