

The Incandescent Grottoes

Session 1 22-6-23 The Secret Forest Spa?

Next Session 29-6-23

After organising themselves and storing their loot we find our friends, newly at level 2, continuing to explore the forest.

Following a clear stream they find themselves in an airy glade where the stream runs over some rocks, disappearing into the ground through a large natural sinkhole about 20 ft across. It is shielded by many overhanging tree branches and shrubs effectively screening it to the casual explorer and as they approach they notice a carved set of stone steps leading down. Standing at the top of the steps they can see a half underground cave with the stream forming a splashing waterfall over the rocks flowing down to a tranquil pool with a sandy beach. They observe some small creatures moving around the edge of the beach and in the water so they take a few steps down to take a closer look. Beneath the canopy there is a pleasantly shaded light with a few sunbeams piercing the arboreal cover so they are able to clearly see the small animals which they identify as a troop of small monkeys. Somewhat unusually most of the monkeys are in the water. As they descend to the beach the monkeys notice them and put a bit of distance between themselves and the adventurers but they don't seem unduly bothered by their presence. Looking around they see a dark passage to the north, directly above the water and to the east a passage that glows with a soft purple / orange light.

Watching the monkeys, Fenella notices that they are eating a lime green moss that grows abundantly on the eastern wall of the cave. They then seem to dive beneath the water where they can see most of the group near the bottom of the pool feasting on the water weeds in the depths of the pool. She grabs a handful of the lime green moss which consists of tiny little spheres on stalks and eats it, noting a yeasty, effervescent flavour and texture. Deciding against a swim at this particular moment she sticks her head beneath the surface and is pleased to discover that she can "breathe" the water as if it were air! Angus wonders about a secret passage in the pool where the monkeys are congregated but they all agree that the eastern passageway seems the more accessible option for now so taking a few handfuls of the water moss, they head off into the glowing passageway.

The passage has the same sandy floor as the beach but the walls and ceiling are covered with pulsating purple / orange crystals which provide a good amount of light. Fenella and Vlad both take time to look closely at the crystals and begin to worry Angus as they just stand staring at the walls for several minutes. Angus sticks his hand in front of Fenella's face causing the Druid to ask him just what he thinks he is doing, she was looking at the crystals for a few moments thank you very much! As Vlad turns round to see what the commotion is about Angus explains that to Reme and himself they seemed to be mesmerised by the crystals for several minutes while both Fenella and Vlad claim they had just looked at them for a few seconds. Sure, looking at the crystals seemed to provide a weird perspective of looking down into an expansive depth within each crystal but actually it was quite pleasant and now both Vlad and Fenella are feeling rather refreshed and invigorated. A few amused observations that this might be some sort of wildlife health spa are exchanged before they continue down the corridor following it as it turns to the north, emerging into a large grotto with exits to the north, east and south. The 12ft high ceiling is covered with milky glowing crystals, some of them slowly dripping onto the damp white sand below. The walls have an abundant coating of bright red mushrooms growing all over them. Angus examines the mushrooms, successfully identifying them as Scarlet Pimperelles, a usually edible type one of which Fenella puts into her pack. They notice a few footprints of a web-toed humanoid in the sand but the tracks disappear quite quickly so they put it down to a patch of wet sand that held the imprint for longer. They decide to explore the northern exit but pause before reaching it as they notice some sounds of movement from the exit to the south.

Cautiously approaching they find another large crystal grotto, this time with metallic grey crystals hanging from the ceiling making a soft keening sound, the walls are covered with a glowing purple moss which is being harvested by a group of small canine humanoids with reptilian skins. After a few moments the creatures, which you recognise as kobolds notice you and bunch up together chattering busily in some unknown language, a few of them brandishing daggers in your direction. They seem to be on the defensive rather than outright hostile so the adventurers approach a little and Vlad and Fenella try to communicate with the little scavengers who in a few words of halting common explain they are just harvesting the moss. As the party move a bit further into the grotto the kobolds edge around them and once they spot a clear way to the northern exit the group of seven quickly scarper. Angus notes that the kobolds do not have webbed feet.

With the kobolds gone they notice a curved archway to the east with a heavy stone door collapsed on the floor before it. The stone of the door and the archway is dark grey and pockmarked, the arch set with gruesome carvings of people writhing in agony, some naked with dissolving flesh, others skeletal. Looking through the archway they see a long corridor also of the dark grey stone with 3 heavy stone doors on the north wall and 2 on the south. Entering they examine the first closed northern door finding a tarnished brass plaque which reads, "Master of Ooze". Checking the next door on the south wall they notice holes where a (missing) plaque could be attached. The next door is in the north wall and is slightly ajar, its plaque reads, "Master of Dissolution". Opening it they see a small cell-like room 8 * 8 ft also of the same dark stone. A pile of twisted metal stands in one corner beyond the corpse of a giant rat (4ft long) that is writhing and rustling before them. Angus and Vlad both want to put the dead creature "out of its misery" so they step forward to attack, quickly beheading the corpse.

Suddenly 3 large pale green maggots burst from the meal they had been enjoying and fall upon the party, lashing out with slender tentacles. Vlad takes a hit and instantly collapses in paralysis as Angus and Reme also suffer the same unlucky fate, paralysed and conscious, to be devoured by these awful creatures. But Fenella is still in action and will surely save them as she lets fly with her sling, the bullet whistling through the air missing the creatures entirely. The ghastly maggots set about their meal, beginning to burrow into each of the fallen as with a shout Vlad throws off the paralysis, hacking at his assailant with his sword, killing it instantly. As Reme and Angus provide lunch for the remaining 2, Fenella takes a stab with her spear but misses. Summoning up their strength both Angus and Reme throw off the effect of the paralysis as they both slash at the remaining maggots finishing them both.

Rather the worse for wear and somewhat consumed, potions and wafers are taken by the injured putting everyone back to normal health except for Angus who seems to enjoy unnecessary suffering.