

# The Last Star Cairn

## Session 3 09-09-02 Oops, Tracking!

Next Session Monday 16-09-02 At Brian's place.

As the dust settles on the brass golem and Zeppo casts a quick CLW on himself Andrea describes the rooms she has seen. Zeppo wonders if the thing is really dead. "What if we come back up and it's gone?" is his rather chilling thought but the others pay no attention, obviously convinced of the Golem's inanimateness. Meanwhile Andrea urges another search party as Astra points out that she has a spare Invisibility spell. "So, not just me me me me!" snaps the Ranger somewhat irritated at finding out Astra was prepared to do something for the party.

They descend into the cairn and looking around notice a large pile of decomposing bodies. Andrea wisely remembers the threat of Rot Grubs that inhabit dead bodies and do gruesome things to those reckless enough to attempt a search, which causes Zeppo to take good step back from where he had been standing. Zeppo casts Detect Magic and directs the effect around, not finding anything as Andrea senses a secret door in the southern wall. Alvin scans around with a Find Traps spell as Andrea tries a number of classic Star Cairn solutions to opening secret doors. Heme even has a go at dragging the strange floating runes to the door, which amuses him no end as his hand passes straight through them. Alvin has the novel idea of searching for some sort of mechanism, which he doesn't find however Astra is inspired by the idea and searching, quickly discovers it without any problem.

### Xaxe

The door swings open revealing a darkened room. Alvin sticks his continually lit wax ball to the top of his staff and they peer inside finding a man, dressed in white robes, lying, apparently asleep, on a stone bed. Suddenly Joe hears a clanking sound from outside and Alvin quickly shuts the secret door, relieved to find an opening mechanism on the inside. They return their attention to the figure. The man has a dark skin tone and dark hair and is wearing a pair of silver bracers. Astra gets Alvin to hold her silver mirror close to the man's mouth where it fogs very slightly however they don't see any evidence of breathing. Alvin scans the man and the room with his spell but gets no reaction as impatient with all of this Andrea touches the figure. Immediately he awakes and stretches as if from a very deep sleep. He is confused at first but after hearing the party's conversation switches from an unfamiliar language to heavily accented broken common. The party question the man carefully discovering that he is a spice merchant from Ket named Xaxe. He says he was kidnapped in "Hard Bay" by evil Suloise wizards and brought to this cairn for reasons he could not ascertain. He was held with many other people, some of whom were taken away never to return. He doesn't remember anything about his sleep or the bracers (which seem to have no way of being removed) and when questioned about the date gives a common calendar date of 400 years in the past! He is somewhat surprised when they inform him of the actual date. At one point Astra tries to comfort the fellow with a reassuring squeeze but the fact that it is administered by an invisible person rather disturbs him. They agree that they are responsible for this temporally challenged character and decide to take him with them. Opening the secret door they listen carefully and regain the surface with no problem. The party head back to the cave and the horses.

### Back at the cave...

Andrea makes a big fuss of the horses as the others speculate upon the nature of Xaxes' silver bracers reaching a general conclusion that they must be some sort of restraining item. There is some funny business as Astra tells Andrea that she has cast invisibility on her without actually casting the spell. Heme and Zeppo milk this for all it's worth until it dawns on the Ranger that she is indeed highly visible! Astra actually casts the spell and this time Andrea sees it is for real as even she can't see her hand in front of her face any more. They discuss methods of dealing with golem guardians and conclude that the original plan worked so well why not try it again, perhaps with a boulder this time. They settle down for the night re-arranging watches so that Hemegretham doesn't have to stand watch with an invisible person, the idea of which rather upsets him. Before turning in Zeppo conducts a superficial examination of Xaxe and muses on the man's excellent condition after 400 years of sleep. "Something is wrong here", he thinks as casting a CLW on himself he turns in for the night.

## Tracking

The next morning on a cloudy day with a light rain finds our friends eager to explore the fourth cairn. But before they set out both Alvin and Zeppo surreptitiously cast spells on Xaxe. Alvin's Know Alignment reveals that Xaxe is Lawful Neutral and Zeppo's Detect Charm reveals that Xaxe has not been charmed. Alvin offers to medically examine Xaxe however the Kettite says he feels fine so they set off for the cairn leaving the man behind to guard the horses.

About half way to the cairn they start to doubt the wisdom of their actions and decide to send the two invisibles back to see what Xaxe is doing. A few things bother them. Why is he so active so quickly after 400 years lying on a stone bed? Why did he not want to submit to a medical examination? And why, despite talking knowledgeably about horses to Andrea did he not once come anywhere near them? Astra and Andrea make their way back to the cave while the rest wait. Arriving at the cave they discover that Xaxe has gone! Andrea tries to pick up his trail but but again fails to find anything at all. An exasperated Astra casts Change Self into the form of the Astral Deva and tries to scout around from the air however her view is impeded by the rather heavy cloud and she returns having seen no sign of Xaxe. Andrea suggests that she uses the remainder of the spell to return to the others and bring them, which she does. As the rest of the party return Alvin notices that he has taken nothing, not even food or water. Concerned for the man's safety Andrea finally manages to pick up his trail as it heads due west. They quickly realise that if Andrea is actively tracking they won't be able to catch up a man on foot so they decide to take a risk and proceed fast on horseback and try to pick up the trail further on. Zeppo's horsemanship allows an invisible Andrea to ride pillion and they set off at a brisk canter with Andrea's and Zeppo's Direction Sense keeping them on course.

After about half an hour Andrea searches for tracks and finds they have lost the trail. They backtrack for ten minutes and pick it up again where it turns abruptly northwest. Zeppo wonders whether he is heading for Freyl keep as Astra remembers that the iron men walked in very straight lines. Alvin mentions that Xaxe looked human but Astra points out that she can easily change her appearance with magic. Galloping onward for half an hour Andrea tries to track but again completely fails to find anything. Northwest for another half an hour and Andrea "just knows" that if there were a trail there she would have found it. There just isn't a trail there. They decide to forget about Xaxe for now, after all at least they tried to rescue him. As they ride back to the cairn they discuss the man. Astra is concerned that may have unleashed a "humaniform" golem onto the world and Alvin agrees that some of his actions were "automaton-like".

## The Cairn

Back at the cairn they set up the golem trap again as Alvin casts Stoneshape and Levitate. This time Heme is sent down as bait accompanied by an invisible Astra, he tries to attract attention by scraping his magical bastard sword on the stone walls. After a few minutes a metal man appears and pursues him up the stairs with no regard for Astra, lurking invisibly in the shadows. Heme bursts out of the cairn leaping the pit as the metal monstrosity clanks its way to the top of the cairn and then crashes through the thin crust. Zeppo quickly casts Bless as a quick and brutal combat breaks out with Heme in particular dealing very heavy damage to the golem. Within a minute it is all over with another mighty construct humbled by their ingenious manoeuvre. Creeping back down into the cairn they examine the Xaxe room, Alvin cleverly remembering to pick up his staff this time.

It is Astra who detects a secret door, this time in the southeast wall of the main hall and pointing out the mechanism she opens it revealing a 30ft corridor. As they explore they discover one of the privy rooms and at the end of the corridor a pentagonal room with the apex to the south. Inside there are chairs and pedestals with a variety of interesting statuary. There are three visible exits. Zeppo inquisitively enters the room and is alarmed to find that the statues animate and attack him. Wisely he beats it out of the room with all haste, taking some serious damage in the process. He shoves past Andrea, Heme and Joe who hearing the joyful sound of battle have positioned themselves at the corridor/room entrance blocking it. Zeppo, safely behind the front line fighters heals himself as the clash of steel kicks up a merry din. Alvin casts CLW on Zeppo as swords are swung and statues are battered. A much-recovered Zeppo casts Aid on Andrea as Alvin casts Prayer. Immediately the fighters surge with energy and the first of the statues falls to Heme's mighty blow. Both Andrea and Heme take damage from the automatons when suddenly Alvin's Magic Missile spell strikes home. Seeing that it actually did damage Astra also gets in on the act and a metal horse is quickly downed by multiple Magic Missiles from both Alvin and Astra. Andrea smashes into the figures as Zeppo casts an Aid on Hemegretham helping him to slay another of the statues. With their enhanced combat abilities it is not long before the ground is littered by broken, motionless statues.

Zeppo casts CLW on Andrea as Astra searches around finding a secret door in the southeast wall. Pointing out the mechanism she opens it causing an odourless smoke to pour into the room. They quickly retreat to the main hall closing the secret door there.

Reason for XP	Andrea	Astra	Alvin	Hemegretham	Zeppo	Joe
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Opponents	1400	1000	1300	1600	1300	
Spells		50	100		80	
Proficiencies	30	50			30	
Ideas/Plot/Clues	100	90	200	60	90	
Problem Solving						
Role Play	100	60	50	100	60	
Treasure						
Finishing						
Fun Factor	100	70	40	90	80	
Bonuses						
Penalties						

<b>Total (This session)</b>	<b>1730</b>	<b>1320</b>	<b>1690</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1650</b>	<b>0</b>
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<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39681</b>	<b>12772/12772</b>	<b>10425/10425</b>	<b>35651</b>	<b>40926</b>	<b>17430</b>
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**DM Notes:-**

- Good plan – A good plan is still a good plan if we are talking about mindless automatons. It actually worked even better with the boulder. Alvin, in particular benefits from his bright ideas.
- Combat – Heme was a real brute so he gets most of the combat XP with Andrea 2<sup>nd</sup>. Zeppo and Alvin get additional combat awards due to their use of combat support spells – Bless, Prayer, Aid.
- Zeppo's career XP total is now up to date. 37756 + 1529 (SCII 2) + 1650 (SCII 3) = 40926 making him F-Troop's front-runner by 1245 over Andrea.