

The Star Cairns

Session 13 27-9-99 The bigger they are, the harder they fall!

Next Session Tuesday 5-10-99 At Brian's

It is a dismal sight. A pentagonal room ankle deep in freezing water and a host of fallen, sorely wounded comrades. One of the two walking wounded, Astra, removes the lead bars that Columbus had placed on the water supply, cutting it off. She removes the shield from the hole and the water begins to drain away. Meanwhile Alvin drags the others into the main staircase room. He attends his patients carefully, and the two of them spend a long night watch caring for the fallen until morning comes and they slowly regain consciousness.

Zeppo struggles through his devotions and is granted the customary spells. He kicks off the healing by casting 3 CLW's on Andrea. Columbus does the same two times on Hemegretham. Columbus moans about his lost armour and as Astra and Alvin get some well-earned shuteye the claustrophobic couple Andrea and Zeppo take a look topside, observing the horizontal rain and high winds. They return below, Zeppo shelving his plan of collecting some berries for another drier day.

It's mid-afternoon when Alvin and Astra awake and Alvin is able to cast 2 CLW's on Heme and 1 on Andrea. Zeppo also takes the opportunity to cast another CLW on Andrea. The party are now looking somewhat more like the tough Adventurers that they are. Columbus proudly shows the silver ring he found while poking around the tombs upstairs and Astra is pleased to appraise it at 5gp – A nice enough trinket but nothing special. The party discuss their plan to do away with Zappy and a puzzled Andrea tries to understand how this Will O' Wisp thing is able to hurt them but it appears that fundamental concepts such as electricity will never be her strong point.

Astra, wearing Andrea's bracers, and Alvin advance to the corridor where they can see the Will O' Wisp floating above the staircase. Zeppo casts Aid on both of them. They both cast their Magic Missile spells, resulting in a shower of sparks from Zappy. Columbus casts a Create Water spell above the monster but this just falls straight through it, apparently not affecting it. An obviously wounded Will O' Wisp sinks down the stairs out of the firing line.

Watches are organised and everyone gets enough rest to recover spells, which are then used to assist the slow process of healing. Alvin casts CLW twice on Hemegretham and once on Andrea, Columbus casts CLW on Andrea and Zeppo taking the "Physician Heal thyself" motto literally, casts a CLW on himself. They observe that the Will O' Wisp room is now dark – it appears that the creature was the only light source for the room. Astra chucks her continual light hook into the room, which lights it up nicely. They prepare Andrea for a quick reconnaissance of the room. She is roped up with Heme at the other end and Zeppo casts Protection from Evil, Aid and begins his best protection Chant. Magically armoured to the hilt Andrea strides fearlessly into the Will O' Wisp room. As she treads on the first stair a bolt of electricity narrowly misses her from below. In the tradition of heroes the world over she turns and runs away as fast as she can but is struck by another bolt of electricity. However she has succeeded in luring the beast from the safety of the lower room and Astra and Alvin unleash their Magic Missile spells. They slam into Zappy in a shower of sparks and the creature disappears – it must be dead! Hooray! Zeppo is so pleased he casts another CLW on himself.

There follows a long discussion about tactics for disposing of a Fire Elemental. Columbus wants to fill the adjoining room up with water but Astra notes that the secret doors open inwards – If they filled the room with water they would never get the door open so it's back to the old drawing board again. Zeppo wants to head directly down the stairs and find out what Zappy has been guarding so diligently but Astra warns against that course of action, advising that a fully spelled up party would be in much better shape to take on any other nasties that might be lurking below. However Andrea and Heme want to hit something and recklessness prevails. Columbus refuses to have anything to do with this at all. After all the party stole and vandalised his armour, so why should he risk his life going into battle? There is a brief intense confrontation over this but eventually they descend the stairs leaving Columbus alone. As they reach the lower room Astra is startled to hear an urgent telepathic whisper from Bladestar, "Invisible, behind you!" Using skills learnt as a child in the travelling circus she instantly tumbles forwards shouting a warning as the Will O' Wisp bursts from its invisible state. Hemegretham is hit by a burst of electricity as Zeppo loses his grip on his flail, hurling it across the room. Andrea swings her sword at the thing but it easily dodges, however nothing can dodge a Magic Missile spell and Alvin and Astra's spells hit the thing for serious damage. They see the light shrink to a tiny sphere before it disappears and they realise that this time it really is dead. As Astra and Andrea both detect a secret door in the Southwest wall, Hemegretham wants to find Columbus so he can

finish his argument, preferably physically. They return to where they left Columbus only to find he has disappeared. Searching the upper level where she hid the breastplate Astra finds it is no longer there. She characteristically checks all her possessions and is relieved to find everything is still in its place. Andrea notices that his rucksack is also missing and they conclude that he must be heading for civilisation in order to get his armour fixed. For some reason or other Hemegretham seems to want to "Beat some sense into the idiot," and after a short while they decide to attempt to follow Columbus. Alvin and Zeppo remain behind as the others head up into the foul night. Demonstrating a remarkable Tracking ability, Andrea is able to follow Columbus' trail, much impressing the others that can only see soaking wet mud. Into the appalling weather they trudge but after an hour with no sign of Columbus Hemegretham decides to utilise his superior Running ability to close the gap. Unfortunately for Heme he doesn't have any superior Tracking ability so his only course of action is to follow the coastline. A number of lucky breaks and amazing feats of Dexterity later he finally trips and falls, taking some minor injury. He realises just how reckless he has been running at night in a storm next to a cliff and decides to wait for the others to catch up. Way behind, Andrea notices a split in the trail and they follow the one with the biggest feet until they finally meet up with Hemegretham. Astra decides to try a little airborne reconnaissance and after warning the others she uses an Alter Self spell to transform herself into a Gargoyle, a hideous winged creature that she has previously fought hence her ability to visualise its form. The others complement her on her improved appearance as she launches herself into the air. Buffeted by the gale and enclosed in cloud, she sees even less than at ground level. She returns to the surface, quite fortunate not to have been blown out of the sky. Soaked, cold and hungry they return to the Cairn, finding it again at about midmorning. Zeppo CLW's Heme and asks them if they found any berries. They are not impressed but their tempers improve as the ever-considerate Cleric passes around a bottle of Whiskey.

Astra wants to deal with the Fire Elemental while the charm still lasts. Heme points out that he would be more enthusiastic with more Hit Points and Zeppo takes the hint and casts CLW on him. Downstairs they eye up the secret door noting the lack of any magical light here other than Astra's hook. There is a lot of waffle about Abjuration magic, Unseen Servant and Faerie Fire until Alvin suggests that maybe a Fire Elemental could open a door requiring magical fire as its key. "Gosh!" They exclaim. "What a good job you came along Alvin."

Putting Alvin's plan into effect all except Astra retreat to the first level behind the skeletons. She casts Unseen Servant and uses it to open the door to the Elemental room. The terrifying creature is there pacing the room like a caged Tiger. It sees Astra and approaches her but does not attack. With her heart in her mouth Astra descends the stairs as the creature from the planes follows her. Reaching the door, through a series of gestures Astra is able to cause the Elemental to touch the portal, which swings silently open. Jamming her non-magical longsword under the door she surveys the room which has no lighting. The floor is covered with fine white sand or possibly salt. There are no visible exits but she does notice that she can't see into the corners of the room. Suspecting magical darkness she turns to ascend the stair and suddenly realises the fatal flaw in her plan. She is stuck with a charmed Fire Elemental that will shortly overcome her charm. In combat with this creature Astra estimates her chances of survival to be non-existent however if she approaches her comrades the Elemental will attack them ruthlessly. It takes her all of a few seconds to jog up to the foot of the stairs and inform the others of her dilemma. Unfortunately the Elemental hears the voices of the hated Primes (DM note 1) from above and ascends the stairs where the Skeletons engage it in a brutal combat. The first Skeleton is shattered by the Elemental and another is somewhat dismantled as Hemegretham moves into position to attack. Zeppo casts Resist Fire on Heme and Andrea and follows up with a Protection from Evil. There is another round of combat and Heme lands a mighty blow as with a roar the thing is banished to its own home plane. The Skeletons shuffle into a 4 way formation as Astra writes an apology note for the noise, leaving it in the ribcage of the fallen undead. They remember Ylleck's dire warning against noise or damage but nothing untoward appears to happen so they decide to head back downstairs, just as Columbus enters, fully clad in his plate armour. "This time don't touch my armour," he warns CLW'ing Hemegretham just to show there's no real grudge.

Later they survey the newly opened door and Andrea decides to go in. Columbus casts Protection from Evil on her. As she enters the room and she is immediately engaged by a foul humanoid creature with long fangs and claws that leaps from a dark corner. Zeppo quickly casts Aid on her but the thing manages to claw Andrea and with that touch comes a chilling cold that reaches deep into the startled Ranger drawing knowledge and experience from her. (DM note 2). Astra's Magic Missile spell slams into the thing as Andrea counter-attacks with her sword striking a powerful blow. Zeppo recognising an undead creature attempts to turn it but fails as Andrea ducks another of the creature's clawing attacks. Using her years of combat training she quickly shifts her balance and turns her sword driving it with all her strength into the monster's head. It collapses to the floor – destroyed!

Reason for XP	Andrea	Astra	Alvin	Hemegretham	Zeppo	Columbus
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Opponents	2630	1130	400	1210	1130	500
Spells		140			320	
Proficiencies	30	60		30	20	20
Ideas	20	100		10	20	20
Problem Solving						
Role Play	40	40		60	50	100
Treasure						
Finishing						
Fun Factor	40	40		60	80	100
Penalties						

Total (This session)	2760	1510	400	1370	1620	790
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Grand Total	4640	2290	1730	3310	3530	2140
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DM's Notes:-

1. "Primes" - Shorthand for creatures from "The Prime Material Plane." What you would call the real world.
2. Level drain attack. Andrea was a 4th level Ranger. She is now 3rd level with a total of 6750 experience points. The halfway point between levels 3 and 4. Please note the corresponding loss of Hit Points, Proficiencies and combat stats.
3. Notes on Opponents XP – Due to the somewhat more complex situations involving combat over the last two weeks, combat XP has been allocated more specifically:-
 - Fire Elemental 2000 XP – Each get 380 XP except Heme who gets 460 XP including bonus for finishing it off. Columbus and Alvin get 200 XP each even though they only engaged it in combat the previous week, they did contribute to its demise.
 - Will O' Wisp 3000 XP – Columbus and Alvin get 200 XP each for the above reasons. The rest get 650 XP each.
 - Wraith 2000 XP – Andrea took by far the greatest risk here being the only character ever in melee combat with it. She gets 1600 XP. The rest get 100 XP each. Dave wasn't here so no XP for Alvin.