

The Star Cairns

Session 18 25-4-00 F-Troop rides again.

Next Session Tuesday 2-5-00 At Brian's place.

It is early evening in the City of Greyhawk and the heroes meet up at the Adventurers' Guild to discuss the results of Alvin's in-depth research. He reveals that they seem to have found a piece of a legendary 3-part weapon known as The Doomheart. The three parts are known as the spear, the hand and the soul. It was produced at height of decadence of the Great Kingdom of Aerdy, probably by Suloise magicians in the employ of the Overking. Alvin provides a potted history of the continent of Oerik's early history detailing the ancient enmity between the Suel and Bakluni peoples and the Eastward migration of both these peoples and the Oeridians. He follows this with an analysis of the Greyhawk wars – He certainly has been studying hard! Library and research expenses come to a total of 50gp for Alvin's month of study. Andrea is convinced that with the spear, heart and soul of the Doomheart, all that is required will be the body – presumably one of the party!

They discuss their options and Astra asks, "Do we really want to get these pieces together?" She also wants to take two weeks to study a spell at the Guild of Wizardry however Andrea keeps going on about the Gnarley forest being in danger. Asked why she has this point of view she explains a series of rather disturbing dreams she has been having. Sensing a fight Heme immediately volunteers to go along, Keswick is also quite happy to accompany the mad Ranger. Eventually they decide to go to the Gnarley forest to sort out Andrea's dream, returning afterward to Greyhawk so Astra can learn her spell. Talking late into the night they discuss the properties of Zeppo's ring of regeneration and decide to travel the very next day. Andrea wants to leave at dawn but Astra, with a few things to sort out, persuades them to wait until noon.

Dawn

Andrea is up early grooming and preparing the horses, lavishing particular care on her own mount, Binky. At a more appropriate hour Astra rises and heads for the high quarter and the Henway mansion. Both Reginald and the nephews are unavailable however Henway's wife Margaret will see "Rowena De Ville." They take tea and a rather pointless discussion ensues where Astra attempts to elicit some sort of aid from the Henways and the rather dizzy Margaret offers more tea and encouragement along the lines of, "Really, dear! That must have been exciting." Astra is however able to find out that their anti-bandit manouvers in the Abor-Alz do really appear to have drastically reduced the number of bandit attacks. All tea-ed out Astra leaves a note for the Henways and departs in the direction of the Guild of Wizardry promising to return in the near future.

Meanwhile Zeppo goes off to buy a horse accompanied by Keswick and Andrea, while Heme shops for some sheaf arrows. Keswick picks out a very nice medium war horse for the cleric who delightedly names her Loretta. (Good job she's a mare). (DM note 1). Zeppo drops in at the Temple of Trithereon and asks the following. "Is there any trouble in the Gnarley forest?" and receives the definite answer, "No." Hmm, come to think of it, considering how close Greyhawk is to the Gnarley, surely news of any trouble would have reached them. Zeppo also enquires about some sort of magical weapon with which better to aid Trithereon in his just revenge against, er... well, er... bad people. He is politely but firmly told "No." On the way back he buys some silk rope and greek fire.

Back at the Guild of Wizardry Astra negotiates her training charges and eventually rejoins the others at the Adventurers' guild where Andrea is deep in conversation with Tallow – something to do with the Gnarley forest Rangers. They leave town, a powerful adventuring party, with Keswick riding behind Andrea and Hemegretham casually loping alongside despite the weight of a full set of armour and adventuring gear. Unsurprisingly the crowds make space for them.

Arriving in the forest in the early evening they plod on as the light starts to fade. Eventually they find a clearing and settle down for the night.

A Gnarley Forest Ranger

As they wake in the morning Andrea has a strange story to relate. On her watch she had seen a bright light shining deep in the forest. Investigating she was surprised by a figure appearing behind her undetected – a feat of enormous stealth and skill. She recognises the Ranger from her previous visit to the forest. Looking back to the camp she sees no movement, even from the campfire. Her comrades are suspended in time itself! As she looks back to the Ranger she sees a venerable figure in white and green robes approaching. Despite his age the man appears to have a powerful inner vitality and his eyes are bright and piercing. He introduces himself as the Guardian of the Gnarley Forest, a Hierophant Druid of enormous power. Some matters are explained to Andrea relating to her paradoxical nature (alleged follower of Rao, takes on service for Trithereon etc) and an indication of a possible higher destiny in the affairs of the Flanaess is revealed to her. She is handed a withered, dried acorn as a symbol. She is now a Gnarley forest Ranger with special dispensation to leave the Gnarley area. As dawn breaks the scene fades and she finds herself in the clearing tightly gripping an object. A dried acorn, from which two green shoots have appeared.

She excitedly informs the others. “Shut up I’m trying to sleep,” moans Zeppo. Astra sarcastically asks, “Do you get a special handshake?” Andrea replies, “No, you get a life!” Heme disappointedly looks around the clearing for the hordes of evil creatures he was hoping to introduce to his sword, eventually returning to Andrea. “So that’s it then, no fighting, no threat.” He is obviously highly disappointed. Andrea goes on to explain about the Hierophant Druid, a level of Druid so high that even Keswick hadn’t heard of him. Come to think of it where is Keswick? Searching the campsite they find no trace of the Druid or any of his kit. It is like he vanished into thin air. Heme quips, “He’s gone to look for his own acorn.” And Astra is already thinking about spell training. In general the party don’t seem to be too worried about the disappearance of their eccentric Druid. It is his home forest after all so they decide to set off for Greyhawk. As they leave the tree line, Andrea notices a subtle Ranger sign, which she pauses to examine. It indicates a small neat carving on a tree trunk with the rune for farewell. Keswick’s sign is below it. With a wry smile, the Gnarley Forest Ranger rides onward – To Greyhawk!

Swotting

Back at the City Astra settles into her two weeks of spell training attempting to learn the Mirror Image spell. Heme and Zeppo hearing about Castle Greyhawk (DM Note 2) head off northward to investigate but their efforts will only reveal a group of 40 or 50 heavily armed Dwarves that don’t speak common, although, “We got here first, piss off!” seems to be the gist of the argument. Heme considers the odds quite fair. Luckily Zeppo is able to talk him out of his noble sacrifice. They return to the City where Heme works for a local blacksmith for gratis and Zeppo does stuff for Trithereon and practices with his sling. By the end of the week he will be proficient with this weapon.

The two weeks drag by and unfortunately for Astra a tiny glitch in the space-time-thamaturgical continuum prevents the spell forming in her mind. Thoroughly pissed off and a lot poorer (1000gp) she returns to the Adventurers’ Guild. To cheer her up Andrea foots the bill for a serious night out and our friends sample some of the delights of Greyhawk until the wee hours.

Hardby

Nursing hangovers, the group depart by boat for Hardby arriving a few days later somewhat sobered up. They check in at the New Inn and spend a pleasant night. Rumours coming out of the Bright Desert are proclaiming the formation of a new country south of the Abor-Alz. “The Empire of the Bright Lands”. The horsemen delivering these proclamations to the border desert villages have been well organised troops of soldiers sporting a black unicorn motif. The discussion over breakfast is broken up by the arrival of an early-rising Astra who introduces 3 Hirelings (DM note 3) that she has taken on:-

Luc "The Lance" (3gp per month) is a bright and cheerful human male who comes with his own horse and gear. He explains that when his last moderately successful Adventuring group broke up he was left at a bit of a loose end and basically welcomes the chance to increase his experience by assisting a powerful party in their endeavours. He is a specialist with the Medium Lance and a competent horseman. He also uses a longsword and the longbow although he doesn't currently own a bow. He seems impressed by Astra.

Thellen (2gp per month) is a male Elf fighter down on his luck. With just his longsword and the clothes on his back he is seeking honest employment for his weapon skills. He was heading toward Greyhawk to seek his fortune when the caravan he was travelling with was ambushed by raiders. He was lucky to escape with his life and his sword. Most of his money and possessions were lost but he can also use the net and the throwing knife in addition to his sword. He needs a job.

Reba (2gp per month) is a human female fighter and a specialist in the short bow. She also can use a short sword. En-route to Greyhawk fleeing the rise of the Orcish Empire of the Pomarj she is low on funds and has no intention of arriving there poor. She needs a job.

Astra has provided standard riding horses for the two without horses and Andrea informs Thellen that she will purchase studded leather armour for him. She also lends him a +1 longsword which he is both astonished and delighted to receive. He bows before her in gratitude.

All three of them seem very eager to please and delighted to be hired by an adventuring group.

Footnote – Details of Andrea's dream

As she travels back to Greyhawk, Andrea begins to experience unsettling dreams. She sees herself in a dark forest moving quickly at night, the sound of her heart beating, pounding inside her head; her breathing a steady rhythmic counterpoint.

The branches brush past her as the moonlight shines down into a clearing, clearly illuminating a simple wooden structure. Cold sweat runs into her eyes as she approaches cautiously, reaching out to touch the wood. As she makes contact there is a dizzying moment when the world seems to drop away and a flurry of scenes rush past her:- A strange small creature with tiny horns dancing madly to the sound of a discordant flute, a beautiful woman that touches a giant oak tree and fades from view, a huge shadowy figure with antlers - menacing in its giant size and silent movement, a bear that speaks of ancient battles and a war band of foul creatures felling and burning a grove of trees for the sheer evil pleasure of it.

Many more images rush past her as she plummets for what seems an eternity, until at last one familiar face appears.

The Ranger of the Gnarley forest...

Waking with a shock she knows. It is time. She must return.

Reason for XP	Andrea	Astra	Alvin	Hemegretham	Zeppo	Columbus	Raven
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Opponents							
Spells							
Proficiencies				20			
Ideas		30			10		
Problem Solving							
Role Play	70	50		50	40		
Treasure							
Finishing							
Fun Factor	20	30		60	70		
Bonuses							
Penalties							

Total (This session)	90	110		130	120		
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Grand Total	TBA	TBA	3170	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA
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DM's Notes:-

1. Raven's and Columbus' Horses. If they didn't have one already they do now. Deduct book cost as appropriate.
2. Castle Greyhawk is an old style dungeon adventure that has been out of print for a few years. I recently managed to acquire a copy hence its sudden "appearance" in our campaign. It is great for those times when there is no longer term plot running and the party need somewhere to go just for an Adventure. Legend has it that the castle, previously the home of the mad wizard Zagyg Yragrne, contains deep dungeons with many hidden and secret levels the majority of which are still unexplored today. Many an adventuring party has ventured the relatively short distance to the ruins of Castle Greyhawk. Few have returned...
3. Hirelings "Men-at-arms"
They are paid low wages, 1-3gp per month but are entirely the hirers responsibility. All costs for accomodation, food, drink, replacement of weapons and gear are bourne by the employer. In return the hirelings will perform reasonable service within their job description. Eg. for a man-at-arms guarding horses, providing covering fire or garrison duty are all appropriate tasks. In general the hireling will carry out these tasks to the best of their ability however they are subject to morale checks rolled by the DM. In other words where your player characters decide themselves how brave they are. A Hireling's bravery is rolled on a table with modifiers for charismatic employer, good treatment, combat odds etc. If hirelings are treated badly they will leave and society will fully accept their reasons for doing so. Characters that treat hirelings badly will find it very difficult to hire any more.

It is possible to hire other types of character however terms and conditions vary depending upon the type of hireling sought and the role they will take.