

The Star Cairns

Session 23 30-5-00 Huzzah!!!

Next Session Tuesday 6-6-00 At Brian's place.

Back behind the ridge our heroes get their breath back. "Let's hit them now!" urges Andrea and after a few minutes of discussion with even Alvin counselling attack they head carefully back to the cairn. Astra takes a look inside but it is now dark! Descending silently she sees a diffuse area of heat that appears to be cooling. Returning to the others she explains what she has seen. Alvin thinks the Beholder must have disintegrated the apparatus however Astra has a much more complex and convoluted explanation, which we won't go into here since it was entirely wrong. Raven doesn't like the plan now that the room is dark and Andrea quickly agrees. They discuss whether to remain in the vicinity but Heme points out that their friend can "float silently." This seems to persuade everyone and they set off for cairn 1. Arriving at dusk Andrea goes off hunting and returns with 5 rabbits which Thellen skins and cooks. Alvin would prefer deep fried Beholder steak but makes do with rabbit stew. He casts a CLW and settles down to read the exploration notes of cairn 1.

It's dawn the next day and Zeppo asks whether they have a plan. "Of course not" quips Alvin as they set off in a merry mood toward the 3rd cairn. One thing is certain though. The Beholder will have a plan.

On their way they fall to discussing their travels and notice that they haven't been attacked much in this wild mountain range. Luck, a rampaging Golem or maybe they are just so fearsome that nothing wants to fight them are just some of the interesting theories put forward. Arriving at the cairn they make camp and leaving Luc, Reba and Thellen on guard they head for the cairn. Astra cloaks and creeps silently into the cairn observing two Derro bodies. Ignoring them she continues on her scouting mission entering the southeast corridor. As she follows the wall of the large room a scream from behind surprises her and she is charged and stabbed by one of the creatures. Taking a nasty wound and feeling cold poison spread into her veins she turns and runs as the vengeful creature slashes again wounding painfully. However she manages to break away and runs for the stairs. This time the whole party see the frightened rabbit as she bursts from the entrance with the crazed creature, eyes tightly shut, in hot pursuit. Andrea throws her Continual Light coin into the cairn as Raven engages the creature despatching it in one neatly aimed blow! As they examine it they notice that it was already badly injured. A suicide guard perhaps? Zeppo and Alvin both cast CLW on Astra, which cheers her up somewhat.

Descending into the now lighted room Alvin moves to one of the bodies and begins to examine it. Suddenly a foul maggoty thing strikes his left arm burrowing into his flesh! He instantly casts CLW but it burrows deeper, disappearing within. In agony he feels it tearing through muscle and sinew as it burrows toward his heart!!! Paralysed with revulsion the party gape impotently until Andrea makes an executive decision. Guessing the location of the thing to be Alvin's shoulder she unsheathes her sword and strikes with all her strength almost severing the hapless Cleric's arm in the process. Fortunately a neatly sliced grub lies in the mess that is Alvin's shoulder. Zeppo rushes in Healing and Curing and apart from a feeling of revulsion Alvin is soon largely restored. Zeppo sprinkles Holy Water on the body and it gets wet. As they look around they see a large pile of dust where the crab-thing was – It looks like the Beholder has indeed disintegrated it.

They resume searching the first level, which; they suspect has been vacated by our nasty friends, and indeed they find the storeroom empty. One of the large rooms has a depression at one end which some of the party are convinced conceals something. They explore further until they come to a curtained entrance halfway down the northeast corridor. Unfortunately the Derro ambusher within clearly heard them approaching and as Raven reaches for the curtain a volley of crossbow bolts punch through the material hitting both Astra and Raven. A scuffle breaks out as Raven tries to get the crossbow off the snarling biting creature and. Andrea shouts "Surrender" but it merely draws a dagger and slashes at them. Jostling for position Alvin finally able to get a clear line of sight to the Derro and promptly casts Hold, instantly immobilising it. Zeppo quickly heals Raven and Alvin CLW's Astra. "Tie him up and get out!" shouts Andrea as they quickly truss up their prisoner and make good their escape.

Back at camp Zeppo casts CLW on Raven as the prisoner, recovering from the Hold, begins to snarl, spit and struggle. Astra attempts 3 Charms, courtesy of Bladestar but the prisoner just doesn't seem to respond. As Zeppo sees whether he can treat some of the Derro's wounds, an exasperated Raven casts Know Alignment and announces that the prisoner is Chaotic Evil and therefore not worthy of any mercy. As they discuss this they notice that the Derro has stopped struggling and even breathing! Zeppo examines him finding that it had swallowed its own tongue. Fishing it out, he thumps the creature hard enough to start it breathing again. It tries this trick once more until the party realise that it is trying to kill itself. Using his herbalism skills Alvin cooks up a sedative, which renders the Derro unconscious. As they discuss their next move Astra is worried that the Beholder may have departed taking the weapon component, and indeed any other treasure with it. Andrea examines the area looking for tracks. Guffawing mightily, Hemegretham helpfully points out that a floating thing leaves no tracks as a scowling Andrea explains she is looking for its guard's tracks – hurrumph!

Meanwhile there is a problem with the prisoner. It seems to throw off the effects of the sedative in about 3 hours. Since they only have enough of the particular herbs for seven doses of the draught their prisoner could manage to kill itself before Astra has a chance to try to charm it again. Zeppo comes up with the bright idea of constructing a special gag, which he gets Heme to whittle from a piece of wood. Zeppo is confident that the Derro will be prevented from swallowing its tongue by the uncomfortable gag. They set 3 man watches and the night passes uneventfully apart from some screams, growls and lights in the sky far to the north. They soon disappear so they party ignore them.

Dawn breaks and Zeppo starts the day by attempting to Dispel Magic on the prisoner. Unfortunately if there is any magical influence on this creature it was not dispelled by his spell. Alvin casts CLW on Astra; Zeppo casts 2 CLW's on her and one on Raven. Andrea asks to borrow Astra's cloak but Astra refuses pointing out that she can't move silently. (DM Note 1). Re-entering the cairn they check the upper level this time finding no suicide ambushers. They are interested in the subsidence in the southwest room and take some time exploring it. In order to avoid embarrassing the party I won't go into too much detail. Suffice to say an awful lot of noise was made investigating the top part of a cave-in and Raven got to cast Levitate.

At the top of the down ramp they pause as Astra cloaks and descends silently. As she reaches the bottom there is a click and a volley of crossbow bolts fly through the air striking her four times. "How come they can see me!" she wails as luckily for her she resists most of the poison effects. Repeating the frightened rabbit act she arrives at the top of the ramp to be CLW'd by Alvin. Calming down she realises she must have walked into a trap as suddenly there is a sound like the crack of a whip and a long drawn out cry of pain. More unpleasant torture sounds emerge from below and the heroes decide to take a chance. With Astra taking the lead they descend to the lower level. They find themselves in a pentagonal room with a wide corridor before them. The cries are coming from that direction. Astra heads that way as the others remain halfway down the corridor. Looking in she sees a very large room with a wooden frame in the middle where a human figure is bound. One of the Derro is taking great delight in lashing him with a wicked barbed whip that tears the flesh from his body. The man is sorely wounded and obviously in great pain. Astra moves forward to backstab the torturing swine but is suddenly attacked by another that had hidden behind the entranceway. At the same time there is a shout from behind the main party and the remaining Derro emerge from their hiding place behind the ramp and advance at a run. As the trap closes the party note that scraps of thin cloth shield their eyes.

Astra has a lucky moment as her attacker fumbles and drops his spear allowing her to fire a Magic Missile attack. The 3 bolts swoop and strike as Alvin fires his Magic Missile from the doorway where he had been covering Astra. One of the Derro crumbles from the damage as the main group engage the party in a furious melee. As Astra defends herself, Alvin casts hold on the vile torturer and the fiend is frozen to the floor. Alvin returns quickly to the main group as casting aside mercy Astra slits the Derro's throat – it collapses to the floor, dead.

Back in the main battle the fighters are giving better than they are getting although the big worry is whether the Beholder will arrive. Zeppo quickly gets off a Hold freezing two of the monsters as another falls victim to Alvin's Hold. Andrea runs one through as Raven and Heme hold the line taking some damage from the vicious wretches. Suddenly the Beholder appears at the end of the corridor as a ray from one of its eyes lances out, striking Zeppo. Yet again Trithereon smiles upon his servant as the Charm power is resisted by the stalwart Cleric. Gritting his teeth as the eyestalks turn toward him Alvin gets off a Web spell but is dismayed to see his spell just die. Zeppo casts Continual Light at the monster's main eye but also experiences the effect of the anti-magic ray as his powerful spell dies in mid-air! As the melee rages Heme, Raven and Andrea cut down their opponents and turn their attention to the floating creature. Being rushed by this lot seems to have caused the thing to reassess the situation and as eerily as it appeared it floats away to the left of them. Quickly Heme and Andrea slaughter the helpless Held Derro, as Astra, as gently as possible, cuts down the prisoner, Alvin shouts, "We only want to explore the lower levels!" but there is no response as Raven slits the throat of the last Derro. To hell with negotiation thinks Alvin, "Get out!" he yells. Heme hefts the prisoner onto his shoulder and they leg it up the ramp as a volley of crossbow bolts fly at them from the side corridor. Zeppo and Andrea are hit but manage to resist the poison. Astra tries to fire a Web into the room, just having time to register all of the wooden benches piled up as a barricade as her spell fizzles out. Two rays slice through the air toward them but too late – they make it up the ramp and tear out of the cairn. Zeppo quickly examines the semi-conscious prisoner and decides to risk cures. Two CLW's later a badly beaten, muscular man stands before them and introduces himself as Joe, an Adventuring Fighter.

Reason for XP	Andrea	Astra	Alvin	Hemegretham	Zeppo	Joe	Raven
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Opponents	1200	1100	1100	1200	1100		1200
Spells		20	100		130		20
Proficiencies	10	40	20	10	50		
Ideas	20	10	30	10	30		
Problem Solving							
Role Play	20	20	30	20	20		20
Treasure							
Finishing							
Fun Factor	20	40	50	20	20		20
Bonuses	100						
Penalties							

Total (This session)	1370	1230	1330	1260	1350		1260
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Grand Total	3505	5225	2770	1690	3180		2590
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DM's Notes:-

1. This is not actually true. Although I can't ever remember her trying, as a 4th level Ranger Andrea has a 33% chance to Move Silently and a 25% chance to Hide in Shadows.
2. Andrea's 100 bonus is for saving Alvin's life. One more round and he would have been very dead.
3. Front line fighters got a bit more on Opponents.