

The First Ring

Our second session was missing two prized members: one due to unforeseen work commitments, the other due to finding Disney World with the family a bit more alluring than gaming in Can-tuck-ee. Desdemona and Theo Ohly were sorely missed as they stayed behind to watch over the party's mounts. Several of those present, myself included, were a bit exhausted; baby showers, demanding spouses, and toiling rugby games had taken a bit out of some of us. I misplaced my initiative board multiple times ☺ But, being the troopers we are, after eating pretzel sandwiches (a benefit of having a daughter's baby shower the day before,) we all headed down to the dungeon to commence roleplaying:

The party found themselves tracking the monkey for hours through the dense forest and just when it started to become impossible to continue any further with their horses pulled behind them, they stumbled across an overgrown path. Dot Nic studied the path and determined that at most, it was used by small groups of two to three, every other week or so. They decided to continue North on the path in hopes of once again finding signs of their quarry's passing.

Approaching a smaller side path they decided to investigate. Pushing aside the overgrowth they discovered an abandoned campsite. Rune Bridger was the only one to notice a slight tug on his ankle, but was still unable to recognize it for what it was; a spider's thin trip line of web, and brushed it off as snapping branch or bug.

In the camp they found three desiccated corpses strewn about an old burnt out campfire. Shredded bedrolls, ripped open backpacks, and their spilled contents littered the campsite. Examining the drained bodies they find each of them covered in hundreds of small punctures along with two prominent punctures on their necks. Rune Bridger partially quells some fear of Vampiric activity by finding the wounds more reminiscent of Spider bites.

They started searching the bodies and the camp and while deducing the corpses were traveling ship hands, far from the coast, they also become urgently aware that two spider swarms were dropping upon them from the trees. Yurgi and Lord Justice were quickly enveloped in clouds of black and red striped arachnids. Unbeknownst to the party the mother, a giant trapdoor ogre spider, was unable to join the fray as the massive Yurgi had, by happenstance, been standing on her trapdoor.

Just as they felt they were gaining the upper hand the mother spider appeared, having backtracked her tunnel, and attacked. Suffering multiple bites and a few minor poisonings the band of friends finally dispatched their eight-legged opponents.

[120gp, gem(50gp), gem(20gp), gem(10gp), 4 daggers, a peg-leg, 1 potion cure moderate wounds, 4 vials of blade poison.]

Carefully continuing up the trail, Rune Bridger having warned them that he had heard commotion from the north during their battle with the spiders, they encountered an incredibly articulate goblin. The poor creature was surrounded by a

hunting band of Mites. After the party chased off his pursuers, Cinderpot Grassyacres explained he was a cursed Halfling and that had been curiously following a monkey when he encountered the Mites. Agreeing to let Cinderpot join them he led the party to a 30' long 5' wide crevasse. It opened to a 40' drop into a water filled cavern below.

As the group painfully experimented with ways to climb down, Dot Nic stealthily explored further down the trail, finding a hidden passage in the woods. Upon her return she found Xerxes had generously collected a few crossbow bolts for her. Unfortunately, they were not only covered in his blood but they were also too small to work for her.

They decided to investigate Dot Nic's findings before possibly attempting to descend again. Carefully traveling down the secret path Yurgi noticed something odd underfoot and upon investigating finds a hidden cache beneath the path. Noting nothing else on the trail they return to the crevasse.

[40gp, compass, ?]

Xerxes yelled down the opening in hopes of parlaying with the Mites below. Although unsuccessful Rune Bridger noted it was pleasant to see the Barbarian offering up a solution less violent than removing foe's limbs to make his cage a bit more accommodating for them. They all lowered themselves, some with more success than others, to the Cavern floor under a volley of bolts shot from Mites on the backs of wall clinging spiders. Greatly aided by Yurgi's deflection of numerous incoming bolts, the group managed to dispatch of the two spiders and one of the Mites. The remaining Mite that struggled helplessly in Yurgi's grasp was subdued and bound as captive. For some inexplicable reason the Mite seemed only slightly intimidated by the menacing barbarian and the giant Yurgi, but collapsed in fear before the lithe Dot Nic. He quickly agreed to her demands and was soon leading the party deeper into the echoing ankle deep watery caverns.

[60sp, Dart of Seeking]

Dot Nic stealthed ahead until noticing two Mites bathing a long, segmented, writhing, mass of legs and mandibles. Letting out a battle cry of, "Incoming!" she charged her foes. Fortunately the rest of her party was not far behind and quickly joined her in battle. Unfortunately it was not just the two Mites and their centipede friend. The party quickly found themselves in the midst of a Mite ambush. After a 'flurry' of attacks, dispatching numerous Mite officers and their spider mounts, Mite soldiers, and Centipedes, the party emerged successful. As the group gathered their treasures and recouped, Xerxes, tired of pushing his captive Mite before him, bound it to his chest as a living shield. Lord Gideon sighed, reminded how many of their childhood skirmishes were often instigated by Xerxes.

[34gp, ornate magical key, bag of marbles, Ring of Swimming]

Continuing deeper into the water filled caverns they came across a shallow pooled chamber with stairs emerging out of the water at the far end. The pool was filled with what appeared to be piles of children's bones but, upon further investigation, Rune Bridger found them to be the remains of scores of gnomes.

Climbing the stairs Dot Nick and Yurgi in the lead turned the last flight to see two brave Mites standing with Spears in the center of a large room. Seeing the giant Yurgi they braced for attack, but when they noticed Dot Nic and heard her

intimidating charge they attempted to flee but were quickly dispatched by her slashing blades.

The party determined that the chambers were of gnomish design given the size of structures and the motifs covering them. Lord Gideon determined it was probably a hidden temple with some religious motive behind its existence.

While most of the group headed toward the stairs to the south, Xerxes went west, the direction the Mites seemed to be heading before Dot Nic dispatched them. To the south the main group found a large chamber covered in more gnome remains and exits on all sides. The largest exit to the east blocked by an enormous cave in.

Meanwhile Xerxes was busy chasing more Mites into a final chamber where he encountered a small army of Mites and their insect and arachnid friends waiting for him. Strategically placing himself in a choke point he called out to the rest of the group. Dot Nic joined him directly as Lord Gideon, Yurgi and Rune Bridger continued through the chambers thereby flanking Xerxes opponents. Xerxes strategic position was able to limit his Mite attackers however the Centipedes easily climbed the walls and dropped behind him. Fortunately Dot Nic was their to help dispatch Xerxes' flankers. Before long there were multiple dead Mites and centipedes at the feet the rogue and the barbarian, the only major damage having been dealt to the now bloodied Mite tied to Xerxes' chest. At the same time the Yurgi, Lord Gideon and Rune Bridger had dispatched the rest of the retinue; Yurgi having pinned and tied up yet another Mite as a captive.

[4 Anti-poison potions, 80gp, gem (40gp)]

After gathering their rewards they examined the final chamber finding a sunken room with a raised well in the center where they finally find their quarry, a soggy monkey swimming playfully in the well water beckoning them all over excitedly. Peering into the well, 30' below they see a bucket containing a small silver box. They decided to lower one of their captive Mites into the well to retrieve the bucket and its contents. Upon lowering the creature into the well they watched eight spikes shoot out spread along the circumference of the well's walls, impaling the Mite then quickly retreating back into the walls leaving the party with no other option than to pull up the corpse. While discussing what to do next Yurgi bravely, but quite unwisely, decided he could survive a few punctures. He quickly tied a rope around his girth and dove to the wells bottom. Unfortunately the piercing metal continued every ten feet down the well. He reached the bottom bleeding from multiple huge punctures covering his body like a hideous pox. Xerxes and Lord Gideon were able to pull him back to the surface before he drowned or bled out. Rune Bridger's healing skills were put to the test healing his still smiling friend. Yurgi lifted his prize, "Yurgi got bucket!"

[Rune covered ring, Wand of Entangle, Gem(140gp)]