

Log: Bad Light

8/23/04

The morning after slaying Baylor the Bloody the Rogue, Sorcerer and Cleric went with Osgood to see Simon Gore. Simon was surprised to hear of the secret vault in the castle and even more so of the cavity in the wall and the teleporter room. "It makes sense, though," he mused. "Many times in my father's later years he would apparently stay in his rooms for days without seeing anyone. I'll bet he was actually using that room to keep in touch with the others."

The pirate's hideout was another mystery to Simon. A quick examination by Dimdar revealed that Baylor's tunnels were much newer than the stairway and secret door, suggesting that Baylor had stumbled on the secret cove and created his own living quarters within it.

Simon turned the conversation to another, more pressing issue. "Several of the merchant guilds in Westport are growing concerned about missing ships. It seems that several ships have left Westport on route to the northern lands and never arrived. One of our local fishing boat captains reported seeing a number of wrecks in the vicinity of the Pearl Tower but he dared not get too close because there is a treacherous reef there. Since you three seem to be inclined to explore, would you mind going down to the Tower and checking with the keepers there? Maybe they've seen something or know something about it."

It seemed like a reasonable thing, so the three saddled up and headed for the Pearl Tower.

The Pearl Tower gets its name from the mother-of-pearl shingles that used to decorate its sides. Those scales are long since gone, taken by traders and pirates for their value, but the name remains. The Tower is actually carved out of a protruding piece of the rock cliff that faces the ocean. Its twin bonfires at top act as a beacon to mark the location of the reef, which is all but invisible from above the water. A small team of keepers receive a stipend from the merchant guilds to keep the light burning. Since there is nothing of value in or around the tower, there has never been any need for armed protection.

As the team approached the Pearl Tower they saw immediately that the bonfires were out. They drew closer, using woodlands for cover, and discovered a dozen goblins standing watch at the top of the tower. They attacked the goblins and slew two immediately. Two more rushed them while the rest pounded on the tower's trap door, crying out "Help us!" in loud, squeaky voices. (In this world goblins sound a lot like Cartman from South Park.) The cleric summoned a hippogryff to attack the goblins from the air while the rogue and sorcerer loosed missile weapons at them from the cover of the

woods' edge. Those who charged the woodland border found themselves facing the cleric's morningstar.

The battle was short and decisive -- within a few rounds only one goblin remained. However, a more potent threat emerged from the trap door: Skorg, a barghest, and the leader of the goblin band. He used his spell-like abilities to strike at the players from behind, blinking in and out to change position each round and causing despair in the sorcerer and halfling. In the end, the beast was undone by similar stealth tactics: the halfling used his dexterity to tumble underneath the beast and slash upward into his belly. The barghest suffered three grievous wounds in this manner before it finally fell.

In the distance the group could see a bonfire burning about three miles south along the cliff. They also saw the wreckage of at least a dozen ships in the waters at the tower's base. It looked like a deliberate scheme to wreck ships and take the cargo.

They entered the tower and searched the barghest's lair, finding a magical sack that held gold and gems. They descended to the next level, which appeared to be empty, only to be attacked by a green hag using invisibility to attack from advantage. Both the sorcerer and the rogue were struck and suffered strength loss. The sorcerer loosed a number of magic missiles and the cleric attacked with her morningstar. They damaged the creature enough that she fled, leaving her treasures behind. The group found a chest containing more coin and minor gems. They also found another chest, one of high quality and bearing the same symbol as the chest found at Bainard's Keep. It radiates powerful magic of the Conjunction school but appears to be empty.

On the ground level the group discovered that the hag had kept a pet. A grick attacked them when they opened the door to its lair. They disposed of the beast quickly, again using the rogue's sneak attack ability to advantage.

Outside, they waded into the water far enough to get a good look at the wreckage. A dozen ships had sailed into the reef and been caught there, from the looks of things. One in particular seemed like a new addition. They found no sign of survivors and, given the bones and limbs in the hag's lair, expected none. As they searched, another reason for the lack of survivors emerged in the form of four ghouls. The cleric turned the undead creatures, causing them to take shelter inside a wreck. Knowing that they had used the best spells on the hag and barghest, the group decided to leave the ghouls be for the moment and investigate the second bonfire.

As they suspected, the bonfire was tended by another dozen goblins. They began slinging bullets and arrows from cover, picking the creatures off. One or two ran toward the Tower, only to be cut down from behind by the halfling's sling. The rest huddled together for protection, which made them an easy target for one of the sorcerer's last spells, a flaming sphere. The cleric dispatched one or two with her morningstar to finish off the group. They then settled down by the bonfire to rest and regain spells.

In the morning, the refreshed team put out the misleading bonfire and relit the Pearl

Tower's fire. They then descended to the beach to face the ghouls. Knowing the power of these creatures, the cleric used her Searing Light spell to destroy them from a distance. The sorcerer stepped into melee and took two hits from one of the creatures, luckily avoiding the paralysis effect, before stepping back and using his own Scorching Ray. The spells were highly effective, destroying the creatures completely.

Okay, I'm a spineless wimp when it comes to my own kids. If some of you others want to do a subset adventure like this, pick a date and we'll do it.

So, you now have two of these really cool chests that make whatever you put into them disappear. (Teleport? Disintegrate? Turn invisible? Who's to say?) You also have some serious goodwill gained in Westport, where the merchant guilds collectively owe you a Big One. Oh, and because of the experience they've gained, you now have a 5th level rogue, 5th level cleric, and 6th level sorcerer in the group. Fireball, anyone?

So ... where to go from here? This is not an idle question, because it would really help me to know what you guys want to do when we get together Labor Day weekend. (I know Ellen and Kevin can't be there; we'll deal with that by having them take their sailing lessons that day.)

Here are what I see as the obvious options:

- Back to Bainard's Keep. A couple of you mentioned wanting to be there a week after you left it to see who shows up. Bear in mind that there's probably a very pissed-off Druidess in the neighborhood.
- Crossroads. Rook mentioned Crossroads as being where the Dark One was going, if you remember. You could go looking for him there if you feel so inclined. Crossroads is exactly the place to go, also, if you just want to gather information on unsavory characters or their likely targets.
- The teleporters. Yes, it looks very much as though you have an instantaneous route to the Keep, Crossroads, Tiburon, or Tavor. But what's on the other side? And how would you get back? You'll never know until you try. The barbarian probably doesn't want to know, which could be a complicating factor.