

AROUND A HAT IN 80 HOURS

Party : Bozo Crambely - Party Employer, Leader and Scribe
Amaranth - Enhancer and Insultress
Amelia "Ironside" Pendragon
Clementine - Mindless looter (and a big bear too !)
Ithilmore - Supportive follower
Mary M - She who plays with dolls
Turf - Staunch to the degree of stupidity

Mission : Employed by Bozo to explore his extra dimensional hat.

Date : 1 July 1996 AP

Arrival : We step through the hat (with Amaranth landing on her head) and arrive on a plane called Wonderland. Clementine hands Bozo a bug, turning it into a bug-clock in the process. We have followed another party through, and arrive at the same point that they did. We follow their tracks. Gradually (ie one at a time) they fade out. We head for a nearby wood.

Signpost : We encounter a signpost listing a variety of destinations down a single path into the woods. We head down the path. Amaranth observes that at some points the distance to another member of the party increases to 1000s of feet and then returns to 10s of feet, with no apparent change. We believe we are heading through an area of planar instability, and hence decide to stick together.

The Wabe : We come across a clearing with a sun dial in the middle. The area DA's as The Wabe. Three tall birds are standing on the far side. They are Borogroves. Some small pig like creatures called Wraths are milling about. A badger like animal with a corkscrew nose comes out from the sundial. It is a Tove. We chat with it while keeping our distance. It warns us about Bojums. We discover that DAs give interesting answers to interesting questions. The time is "teatime".

Jabberwocky : A loud snuffling and crashing through the bush comes a large sinewy creature with big teeth. Mary M reports that it is hungry. The various creatures scatter. We fade back into the shrubbery. The Jabberwocky (for that's what it is) attacks. It tramples over Turf in order to pursue Bozo. Bozo dodges under it and jumps on its back to confuse it (it was after the hat Mary M reported later from a great distance). The party start smiting it, with Turf doing large amounts of damage. Ithilmore narrowly escapes being crushed by a tree that it knocks down. It eventually makes a break for it. Clementine pursues it and launches an attack off the sundial as it takes to the air. Bozo gives chase on Wings and does further damage to it, before it dumps him off into some foliage. The party regroups.

Gnomon : We note that the gnomon on the sundial is highly magical. It is part of "The Source". Clementine procures it. We have a cup of tea to recuperate (it is teatime after all). We head for Rosewood.

Red Knight : Come to a clearing that DAs as Kings Bishop 3. A red pavilion is in the clearing, and a red knight mounted on a red bedecked destrier accosts us. "Be ye for Rosewood or be ye for Whitfield ?" We are not prepared to commit at this point so we back off, and head back the way we came.

Paths : We end up at a new place called “Tweedledees”. We subsequently find that the paths are magical and tend to take you where you intend to go. This makes traveling much easier.

Red King : Two stout individuals fighting with wooden swords in a house, called Tweedledum and Tweedledee. They speak strangely and often contradict each other (“contrariwise”). They are quite loopy. We find a Red King asleep behind the house. Tweedledee thinks that we will cease to exist if he is woken. We head off for Whitfield.

White Knight : We come across a clearing that is King’s Bishop 5. A white pavilion is in the clearing, and a white knight mounted on a white bedecked destrier accosts us. “None may pass”. We discuss this and ascertain that none may pass for this is the road to Whitfield and Whitfield is no more. We pass.

Humpty Dumpty : We continue on and find a dark and gloomy part of the forest. We decide to try a thought experiment. We sit down in a circle and concentrate on creating some picnic food. “It won’t work you know”, comes a voice from behind us (even though we are in a circle). Humpty Dumpty (a large egg-shaped fellow) is sitting atop a 10’ high wall that stretches off into the distance in both directions. We experiment with the wall and find that anything passing over the wall goes through a twist and doesn’t actually pass over but comes back. Turf does an empathy on the wall, and is shocked and stunned - he talks about death, and screaming on and off for quite some time. We discuss getting some sleep and Humpty states that it is safer sleeping here than if we were deeper. We notice a small narrow path opposite which appears to go deeper. We show him the Gnomon, which he states is part of the Source. “It’s broken, you know”. We sleep.

Dreams : We each dream of a nice spired city, except for Turf who dreams of blood. Amelia wakes up to find that one arm and shoulder has turned to steel. This has happened to her once before, in the dreamlands.

Zoog : We head for Zoog. We encounter them - monkey like creatures with blowguns that shoot hallucinogenic thorns. Several of us resist the effects and contain Clementine who thinks she is a fish, Mary M who thinks the whole world is made of sweets and tries to eat it, and Turf who thinks we are all bizarre creatures, especially Ithilmore who is a whale. She sits on him.

Walrus & Carpenter : We met a rather plump Charles Lions Esquire, and a rather thin Mr Cartwright. The offer to guide us, but I find them suspicious. They keenly offer to guide us to Blackwood, via the seaside. We do not want to go near the sea. They start to guide us. It gets sandy underfoot. We leave hastily. They follow. We come across a clearing around a mushroom. They contemplate jumping us so we attack. They change shape and turn out to be wraith-like entities with life draining and regeneration abilities. The carpenter’s hammer does good grievous injuries, as Clementine and Bozo become painfully aware. The Walrus is downed, and the Carpenter captured. We talk. He seems polite, and mildly put out with our insistence that he and his friend attacked us. The Walrus’ body disappears. We eventually allow him to go. He fades out (in preference to passing through a triple damage wall of dark). We have a cup of tea. The mushroom is a planar gate - we decide to not explore it yet.

Gingerbread House : Koth, a shape-changing tiger of Amelia’s acquaintance passes by. We guess that the paths are magical and take one to where one wishes to go. We decide to head for the next broken piece of the source. We find a gingerbread house in Blackwood. The witch is crispy fried in her own oven. A sentient puppet called Punch claims that the evil children, Hansel and Gretel “Done her in”. Punch is rather insane. We find the weather vane to be part of the source. Amaranth TKs it down to her possession. Meanwhile, inside, we find a magical comb and mirror.

R&R : The bug clock says we have been going for almost 23 hours now. We head back to the White Knights which is “shallow”, and pass an Elven Harlequin fighter on the way. We rest and attempt to heal our grievous injuries prior to trying to head deeper. Turf traps Amaranth in the pavilion’s back room. The White Knight becomes aware of the extent of our injuries and offers us an unguent from the “Mystic East” - a market in the direction of Rosewood. It is a cementy-glue-like substance and is used to fix up Bozo and Clementine. The mana is “very high and gusty” as we depart, 37½ hours since the bug died.

Leen : We head for the next piece of the broken source. We end up in a market place. We mill for a while, and then spot an Elf being brought up for trial. The court clerk has a highly magical balance, which DAs as part of the source. The Elf is found guilty of being a drainer and sentenced to death. During the excitement, I relieve the clerk of his balance, and the bag of gold that he wasn’t too attached to. We leave.

Cheshire Cat : We encounter the dread Cheshire Cat who attempt to have a quiet word with one of us. We stay together. We head for the next piece and find another planar gate magic mushroom. We explore.

Arcadia : We fall for ages, and needlessly worry over the landing which ends up being no more than a 10’ drop. There is ash all about, and Turf can hear the scream from his dream. We are on the plane of Arcadia. We head downhill (east). We find a razed ancient Elven city. We find the centre where a gold tablet lies in a crater. It is inscribed with ancient Elven script, and is a part of the source. Amelia grabs it, as we hang on to her. The world closes in on us, and we are spat from the mushroom where we fought the Walrus and the Carpenter.

Tweedledees : We head off towards Tweedledees, and Bozo thinks the party should head for some unguarded treasure. We find a Roc’s nest. Clementine fossicks in the nest (and is keen to take an egg). Bozo directs her to find a magical sword- Snickersnee. We continue on, and find some trees that DA very interestingly. In fact they can answer any question, including what other party member’s favourite colours are. Mary M starts asking DA questions about the Source. It notices “Why are you trying to destroy me !!?”. We discuss what we have discovered and find the puppet, Punch, eavesdropping. We talk a while, and trade poems with him. We continue on to Tweedledees. Amaranth starts a riot.

Nonames : We eventually manage to convince Mary M to accompany the party to Nonames. Interesting place. Has a certain “jinny say kwa” about it. We lose Amelia for a while. Head back to the White Knight’s for a cup of tea, before heading off to the Source.

Rosewood : We head down the narrow, uninviting path opposite Humpty Dumpty and come to a tee junction. We find that the most dangerous thing on the path is Turf. He hands the sword we found recently to Ithilmore and Bozo becomes the most dangerous. We head right. We come to the mounted Red Knight guarding a chasm. “Stand ye for Rosewood, or stand ye for Whitfield ?” . We stand for both. “What be ye purpose ?” The source renewed. “Restored or Redeemed ?”. After much discussion, redeemed. “Then ye be for Whitfield. Be on your guard while in Rosewood”. He stands aside. We continue down the path which opens onto some fields. Ill-kempt (and despairing) peasants tend the haphazard fields. We deduce that they are dead souls. We approach the nearby city. People are agonisingly building and, further around, dismantling the red hot stone walls with their bare hands. Pain, torture and chaos abound. We leave.

Whitfield : We pass back along the path but the tee junction is no more. We find were it should be by DAing trees that are closer to Whitfield or Rosewood. We continue and have a philosophical

discussion with the White Knight. Turf is unthinkingly noble. Ithilmore is rationally noble. Mary M is irrationally emotive. Amelia is straightforward. Amaranth is clever. Bozo is stubborn, but sincere. Clementine is unheedingly frivolous. We come out of the woods to ordered fields. Rows of synchronised workers tend perfectly rectangular fields (brick ratios of 2 to 1). We head for the city. Everybody has their tasks, and they do them over and over. Ithilmore acquires a dinner set, and Bozo buys a chess set. In the centre of the city a tower churns out Elven soldiers wearing porcelain plate. Ithilmore follows Turf in, and is compelled to enlist. Turf drags her back. Amaranth experiments by tossing in a peasant girl. She comes out in the next batch, and staunchly heads off to war. After contemplating plate armour, we follow a batch as they leave the city. In the distance is a bridge across a chasm. The orderly ranks of white knights, clash against the rag-tag crimson hoards coming from the Rosewood city in the distance. Dead bodies rain into the gorge. We travel to the edge of the gorge some distance away and observe. Clementine disobeys the party leader. Ithilmore shows she is a reliable party member. The puppet appears out of nowhere (or was it Mary M's pack?). We talk. He is named, Laughter. He shows us a puppet show involving a good king, who gets usurped by power, and evolves into an evil tyrant., preparing a ritual to become immortal. We head back past the city and get noticed due to our incompatibility. We trample into the middle of a field, where the guards won't come (they stick to the paths). They cut out the whole field, and throw it away (with us still inside!).

Fighting Again : We get back to the Mushroom clearing. The Walrus and Carpenter are plotting how to best ambush us. We attack and vanquish them again. We head through the mushroom planar gate.

Things get repetitive : We arrive on a muddy plain, with explosions in the distance. We slog towards a nearby road and then hide as a large host travels by. A wrench occurs, and we are back where we started, colder and tired than before. We decide action is called for so Star Wings all round and we head for the city in the distance. Large explosions are occurring there. We are peppered by bolts as we cross the city walls, and head for the spire rising from the city centre. Turf and Ithilmore abandon the party. The second to top floor has some open arches and a central courtyard. Amaranth attempts to land through an arch that still contains a window. She is bugged, but recovers. We remove the wards and discover the mechanism in the centre of the tower that operates as a lifting mechanism. We crystal ball above us and find a ritual in progress. Turf and Ithilmore rejoin us. We travel up the lift. Bozo bursts into the room and takes out the Greater Summoner. A demonic Emperor, Abaddon, Lord of the Abyss, in the form of a dragon, is trapped in the pentacle. Turf throws a Greater Summoning counterspell at the pentacle to release him. We flee under protective counterspells, taking the Summoner with us. Luckily, the door was pretty small, but the demon was not happy. We flee, flew and fled.

The Centre : A huge explosion occurs. We come to in the "Centre". Some time has passed - greater than a day, less than 3 months. ("Blown into the middle of next week" quipped Amaranth). We are on a large plain with an immense tree in the distance. One branch looks rotten. We have the premonition of a two headed angel riding a chariot of fire coming to get us. Another round of Star Wings and we fly towards the tree for an hour, noting the complete absence of flaming chariots. It changes into a huge crystalline structure, with some broken bits. We continue towards it for another hour, perceiving a total of zero burning chariots. It changes into a huge mechanism. One part of it is not working. We get to it and explore. We find a bolt missing. We take our four bits of the source and bring them together.

The Source : Wrenched again, we find ourselves at the bottom of a hill surrounded by a muddy plain. On top of the hill is a stone blockhouse. We approach. A healer with a bloody apron answers the

door. We pretend to be important, and bluster in. Glimpses into side rooms off the long corridor, show torture being performed. We head upstairs. The “Healers” start to get stropo, we head downstairs. By the time we reach the end of the downstairs corridor, there is quite a number of them following us, armed with flensing knives, scalpels and other butchery implements. Luckily there are steps going down. We proceed down, in an orderly manner, with the exception of Mary M, who foolishly runs ahead, and Clementine, who, being a Big Bear, has some difficulty with the stairs, crashing onto each landing on her way down. Mary M screams from up ahead. Turf sprints to the rescue, and Bozo leaps into the void. Mary M has come upon two more of the butchers, who obviously intend carving her up. Bozo’s timely arrival distracts them allowing her to rush past. Turf charges in. Mary M attacks from behind (she seems particularly good at this). Bozo whips past the melee, picks the lock on the far door, and finds a straight-jacketed madman chained to the wall. He whips out his Tulwar, and cuts the madman free. The room starts to spin, the room, then the building, the hill, and the entire plain spiral down into him. Mary M foolishly attempts to hang onto Laughter, to no avail. He is sucked in too. It all spirals into a large vortex and then crashes down in the form of a crystal, broken into shards.

Seventh Plane : We find ourselves on a grassy plain, on the seventh plane. A small boy is sitting, crying and rocking. Present is Apolleon (aka Abaddon, Lord of the Abyss, a demonic emperor). We get the impression that clamouring demonic hoards in the distance are closing in. We start assembling the crystal Apolleon tells us that we have a chance to end all the misery by killing the boy now. Mary M cuddles the demon king Belial. Abaddon tells us that the crystal is Belial’s soul, if you put it back together, all that has happened will happen. If we do not, the universe will be saved from much misery. Four glowing symbols appear in the following order : a crozier, a balance, a trumpet, and a sword. They resolve into the four archangels, Raphael, Uriel, Gabriel and Michael. They put forward their points of view (while the party continues to assemble the broken crystal) :

- Raphael - Beli-El needs protection. If he is willing to return to the fold he should be accepted. He was one of us, one of the greatest of the angels, Samiel. He followed the dark path to better know the enemy, but he was corrupted by it, and taken by the forces of evil.
- Uriel - Justice must be done. He should pay for his crimes. (Ithilmore points out that Justice should be tempered with Mercy, which shuts him up). He later states that perhaps Beli-El should be given a chance to redeem himself.
- Michael - He is evil and should be destroyed !
- Gabriel - Sulks quietly, but seems to back up Michael.

Resolution - Michael steps forward with his sword to smite the boy. Turf and Bozo step into his path, weapons drawn. Michael sneers “You dare to try to stop me”. Once Turf assured him that we were serious he incredulously backs off. Amaranth announces that the crystal is almost complete, only a single piece to go. Apolleon moves so as to make a grab for the last piece. Clementine blocks his path. He frustratedly implies that we will all be sorry and walks off in a huff. Amaranth asks for Bozo’s permission to complete the crystal. Permission is given. The boy grows into an Angel, give a symbolic candle on his robes. He is the Angel of Magic. Michael storms off, with Gabriel trailing after. Raphael and Uriel release vast numbers of pin pricks of light which coruscate into the new angel, giving him strength and beauty. Beliel stays the slathering hoards, and then thanks us and offers to grant us each a boon for the aid that we have given him. He requests some time and quiet to contemplate his past and hence his future.