

# Theft of the Faerie Flag

Adventure by Jacqui Smith

Spring 801WK

Duration 64 days (1<sup>st</sup> Thaw - 4<sup>th</sup> Blossom)

## Party Members

Vanderhand Le Vircourt	Non-mage	Male	Human	Leader/Mil Sci
Cher	Binder	Female	Saurine	
Sharinalauralana (Shar)	Shadow	Female	Elf	
Nikola Rosenstein	Earth	Female	Human	
Hamish MacLeod	Wiccan	Male	Human	
Aurora	Air	Female	Elf	Scribe

## Plane

Elushia

## Employer

Brigetta MacLeod

## Places

Port Artz

Caledonia

Castle Dunvegan - the home of the MacLeods

Goblin outpost

Montevideo - Destinian outpost in mountain range between Destiny & Caledonia

## Principle NPCs

Malcolm MacLeod - the current Laird

Ian MacLure - Seneschal

Angus MacLeod - Master at Arms

Katerina MacLeod - Druid.

Vaclav Kaldesh - gypsy

Lenka Kaldesh (wife to Vaclav)

Petra Kaldesh (son of Vaclav and Lenka)

Ludmila Torenescu - gypsy woman

Leafsitter - male pixie

Angus McClary - fisherman

Don Antonio Fernandos - Destinian Royalist & Summoner

## Mission

To find the Faerie Flag that had been stolen from the Clan McLeod

## Theft of the Faerie Flag Adventure Summary

### 1<sup>st</sup> Thaw

Employed by Guild member, Brigetta MacLeod, to retrieve magical faerie flag stolen from Clan MacLeod

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Thaw

Sailed towards Caledonia

### 6<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Attacked by pirates

### 9<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Arrived at Port Artz

### 10<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Sailed up river to Westport

### 15<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Continued north by wagon train

### 18<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Wagon train attacked by goblins, hobgoblins and a couple of ogres. That evening arrived at Berimar.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Took river barge up Halph river.

### 22<sup>nd</sup> Thaw

Reached town of Eltris at bottom of Lake Eltrs.

### 23<sup>rd</sup> Thaw

Crossed lake, continued up river to Loch Dunvegan. Finally reached Castle Dunvegan. Met the Laird and discovered that the flag had been stolen from a locked room.

### 24<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Examined room. No sign of tampering on lock. No disturbances in room. Found small baby sized finger print on display case and two tiny hairs that belonged to a spider monkey. Told that some entertainers had visited recently and they had a monkey. Also guard had been mental attacked.

### 25<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Went after entertainers. Headed south along the shore of Loch Dunvegan.

### 26<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Continued south past Loch Dunvegan then down past Loch Bracadale before going into the hills. Found clearing with burnt wagons as well as a spider monkey hiding up a tree. Discovered exchange had already occurred and that the gypsies had been captured by goblins.

### 27<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Found old mine entrance and started exploring.

### 28<sup>th</sup> Thaw

More searching. Big fights with crafty goblins. Found prisoners and beat a hasty retreat.

### 29<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Discovered that the flag had been given to Don Antonio, a Destinian Royalist, who wanted to restore the throne of Don Carlos. Headed down to their contact point, a small cottage on the shore of Darnoch Firth.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Seedtime

Hill giants attempted to ambush us

### 7<sup>th</sup> Seedtime.

Reached cottage and discovered portal to Montevideo. It was divinated to see how it worked and fisherman bribed for information. Went through and met up with Destinian guard. Managed to get rid of them. Found the manor, searched it, and discovered Don Antonio using the Flag, and other artifacts, in a ritual designed to summon Don Carlos. We interrupted the ritual and fought him but he got away.

### 4<sup>th</sup> Blossom

Returned to the Guild after returning the Flag and other artifacts to their owners.

## Theft of the Faerie Flag

*Aurora*

Our party employer this time was another Guild member, Brigetta MacLeod (also known as McLoud). She had received a message from her father, the Laird of the Clan, informing her that an artifact of the Clan, the Fairy Flag, had been stolen. Basically it had been nicked and we had to get it back.

The Flag is made of silk, is strongly magical and had been in the Clan for generations. An ancestor had fallen in love with a fairy princess and, after seeing the depth of their love, the Fairy King had allowed them to wed for a year and a day. During that time they bore a son but, when she had to leave, the princess asked that her son not be left alone and not to be allowed to cry as she could not bear the thought of him crying. After she had left the, then laird, had been rather sad so his friends decided to have a celebration and banquet to cheer him up. That worked, but during the celebrations, the maid in charge of the baby left him alone for a while and he began to cry. The princess heard that all the way in the land of the Fey, and immediately appeared at his side, comforting him. She left when the maid returned but left her shawl wrapped around the baby.

The shawl became the Fairy Flag and it is said that it can be waved three times. When waved, the Fairy Host will arrive in order to help the Clan out in their time of need. The first time the Clan had been besieged by their mortal enemies, the McDonalds and all hope had been lost. The fairy forces drove the McDonalds off. It is also said that any non-clan member that touches the flag is instantly annihilated.

“Nobody likes the McDonalds” - Brigetta

“I’ve heard rumours about their food” -

Aurora.

However Brigetta didn’t think it was the McDonalds this time, although they were the prime suspects, as the Laird was calling for adventurers. They could have used a third party though.

Anyway my fellow adventurers were:

*Vanderhand Le Vircourt* - tall male human, thief taker, fighter and military scientist. He was carrying lots of pointy things.

*Cher* - a 5'0" female saurine, with yellowish sandy looking skin, wearing a body harness and cloak. She is a Binder and also speaks the language of Dragons. *Shar* (short for Sharinalauralana Feyradbaneadour also known as ‘the short elf’). 5'5" female elf with long red hair and green eyes carrying an axe. She’s a Shadowmage and herbalist.

*Nikola Rosenstein*, Human female beginner earth mage. She’s from the Western Marches.

And I’m *Aurora*, a female elf, beginning airmage and archer.

Vanderhand became the military scientist and got coerced into the job of party leader while I became the scribe.

Brigetta had arranged transport for us on a Destinian merchant ship, the *Donna Bonadventure*, which leaves tomorrow. We were bound for Port Artz then would go mostly overland to Caledonia. That night we had an evening out for dinner where we got to hear Brigetta sing. We then headed for the ship, taking our breakfast with us.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Thaw

Departure time was early that morning and, as far as I was concerned, the trip was not very pleasant. I spent the previous night in my bunk, in the cabin I was sharing with Shar, trying to sleep over the noises of the ship then, once we got underway, the motion was making me very seasick. I was not a well elf.

.2.

Finally I emerged up on deck, late that afternoon. We weren’t the only passengers as there were some merchants aboard as well. Cher and Shar were doing unarmed combat practise on the deck. Later on Shar was teaching Cher elvish. On occasions I was correcting Shar’s pronunciation.

“I’m a writer. I write for the *Seagate Times*”

- Aurora

“Ah! Fiction” - Cher

Later on, once I was feeling better, I buttonholed Brigetta about conditions in Caledonia. I was also wondering if the theft of the Flag was part of a larger picture. However, Brigetta hadn’t been home in two years and couldn’t tell me much. What she did tell me was that Caledonia consists of several independent clans. The Stuarts think they’re in charge and had once tried to claim kingship. Everyone liked the McIntyres as they owned the most fertile valleys and provided much of the countries food. Then there were the McClareys. They were a small clan but bred the best sheepdogs in the area. Also they had the bushiest growth of facial hair in Caledonia. Consequently they were known as the ‘Hairy McClareys’.

The feud between the McDonalds and the McClouds had been going on for generations. It’s origins were probably lost in the mists of antiquity. At one point the McDonalds had crashed a wedding and slaughtered most of the guests.

“Sanctuary - A place full of Scorpions” - Nikola

Nightfall saw us off the coast of Ranke.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Thaw

We crossed over the bay to Aladar. By now the unarmed combat practises had ceased on the orders of Captain Ramirez. The sight was distracting the sailors. Instead some of us passed the time getting singing lessons of Brigetta. She said I was a mezzo-soprano while Shar was a contralto.

That afternoon it started raining which set in for the night.

### 4<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Still raining heavily as we continued on. Finally sailed into the port of Freeport.

### 5<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Stayed at Freeport, changing cargo. It was much too dangerous for us to leave the ship as this was a lawless town.

### 6<sup>th</sup> Thaw

The rain stopped as we travelled along the coast of Brandenburg. That night we settled in a bay. During the night we were woken up by a commotion. Pirates were attacking our ship. So we rushed on deck with our weapons.

The sailors were attempting to repel boarders, who were on small skiffs, when we got there. Suddenly seven foot waves sprang up around the ship and the deck started rocking. We had been warned of this so we attempted to secure ourselves to the railings. Unfortunately I missed and ended up sliding around the deck until I was able to grab something secure. Once I was secure I was able to use my short bow to help fight off the invaders.

The battle was fast and furious, and mainly one sided. Several of our sailors did fall but Brigetta was hewing her way through the invaders with her battleaxe. Cher was doing likewise and the rest of us were giving a good showing of ourselves. Both Vanderhand and I were peppering them with arrows even given the heaving and pitching of the deck. Some of the crew were frantically lifting the anchor so we could get underway while the officers, who were also spellcasters, water, air, and fire respectively, were casting what spells they could. Finally Captain Ramirez got a Mage Current going and we sped away from the pirates.

.3.

### 7<sup>th</sup> Thaw

This morning we were all summoned to the Captain's cabin. Basically he thanked us for our help then told

us that our fare would be refunded.

### 9<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Finally reached Port Artz. The port officials there told us that we required licences to practise magic, trade goods, and to entertain. All our weapons were to be peacebonded. Not that I really cared at the moment as, when I stepped off the ship, and onto the motionless ground, I started to feel rather queasy again. So I sat down on the nearest bollard. Nikola was similarly affected. We had to be helped along the dock as we made our way to the portmaster's office. We needed to book passage on a cutter going to Westport, specifically the Serpent's Spike, commanded by Captain Benjamin.

While Vanderhand went to organise passage, the rest of us waited in one of the local inns. When he got back, he told us that an early start was required. So we booked two rooms, one for the ladies and another small one for Vanderhand. I also arranged an early morning wake up call with one of the serving girls. Said girl was rather interested in the fact we were adventurers and wanted to know if we were from Seagate. Instead of confirming this I was able to get her to tell me the stories she had heard of a previous party's exploits.

### 10<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Dawn was just emerging as we boarded the Serpent's Spike and sailed out of the harbour. Reached Westport at midday. Halfway there we encountered the sister ship, the Serpent's Scale, going the other way.

Westport is a small fishing town with a castle located off to one side on the nearby point. It didn't take us long to find out that the next caravan wasn't going north until the 14<sup>th</sup>. So we took accommodation in one of the inns and found ways of passing the time. Cher was a big hit with the innkeeper's children. I guess they hadn't had a 'pet monster' to play with before.

I started off doing archery practice, but Brigetta had evidently decided I needed training in a melee weapon, since I didn't have one, so introduced me to the battleaxe. Claymore was also another possibility but she didn't have a spare. However, there was a good chance I could get one at our destination.

However, there was one interesting distraction while we waited. The 12<sup>th</sup> was market day and there were quite a few interesting stalls to check out.

### 15<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Finally left on the wagon train. There were five wagons in all and we were spread out among it. I was sitting next to the driver on the lead wagon with my bow on standby. While we travelled I was also

getting driving lessons. Some of the others were also doing this on the other wagons as well.

We were doing around twenty miles a day. On the first evening we camped in a cleared area with the horses in the centre. We slept under the wagons. Vanderhand set up two hour watches for us so we could help the caravan guards. The order was Char, Nikola, Shar, Aurora, Brigetta and Vanderhand.

#### 16<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Basically more of the same. That evening we stopped at a gnome village, Elderath. Some elves and humans also lived here. This time we stayed at the inn called the 'Shattered Crystal'. There was an interesting story about the name. It had to do with a gnome that claimed he could cut a gem in a rather unusual way. It basically exploded and a few bits of it were still embedded in the ceiling.

.4.

#### 17<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Since the merchants were in, all the shops opened up, even though it was late. So we had an interesting time browsing and, in some cases, buying. Cher purchased a chainlinked gold bracelet for 200sp while I traded a Waters of Healing for 20 +1 weaponsmithed silvered arrows. I also got talking to a group of gnomes and learnt the art of panning for gold. We were practising in the town trough when Vanderhand caught us.

After a while, we called it a night and retired to the inn. There we discovered that the amenities didn't cater well to tall folk. Cher was complaining about the length of the beds while I decided to stretch out on the floor.

#### 18<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Another day of bouncing along on the wagon trail heading north. Stopped that evening to camp. Dinner was rabbit, courtesy of Vanderhand and myself. Vanderhand showed us how easy it was to skin them. Maybe I should learn the basics of rangering.

Watch order tonight was: Cher, Nikola, Shar, Vanderhand, myself then Brigetta. During my watch something began alarming the horses but, even with elven night vision, I couldn't see what it was. The first I realised what was going on when something thudded into the side of one of the wagons. Looked like a fiery grenade. Another one flew in then I was hit by two sling bullets. We were definitely under attack.

The noise and the smell of smoke soon woke up everyone else except for Shar. She took a little longer. A squad of goblins accompanied by 4 hobgoblins were charging down the slope towards us, followed by a couple of larger creatures, which were

later identified as ogres. I had my longbow out and was firing arrows at them as fast as I could. The caravan guards, Brigetta, and Vandehan were also firing. Meanwhile Cher, Shar, and Nikola, in wolf form, were moving to attack.

The volley of arrows stopped a couple but the rest swarmed the wagons. One nearly got to me but I managed to take it out with an arrow at point blank range. However, it was getting very obvious to me that Brigetta was right. If I was going to be able to survive a fight, I really needed to get proficient in a melee weapon.

Another took a swing at me so, not having a prepared weapon, and a bow on its own does little or no damage, I slid off the other side off the wagon while the others nearby, attacked the creature with their weapons. Nikola was in the process of ripping out the ogre's throat. I bet that tasted nasty. Meanwhile Shar was wading in with twin battleaxes.

The tide of battle soon turned in our favour with many of the attackers being vanquished. The remaining goblins and hobgoblins fell quickly. Cher had trapped an ogre in a wall to keep it out of the battle. She then dissipated the wall and the ogre, seeing the situation, decided to flee. All the archers shot at it and it fell.

The bodies were searched, then buried. On them we found two slings that were fireproofed. Unfortunately they had used all their fiery missiles. Once that was done, we searched the area and found their camp. There, we discovered that they had raided a small, southbound, caravan with 5000sp worth of goods, mostly cloth. Cher wanted to keep it as spoils but both Vanderhand and I insisted that they be returned to their rightful owners. We would gain goodwill with the merchants and, besides, there is usually a ten percent reward.

Late that evening, we reached a town called Berinar, located on a river.

#### 19<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Stayed in town all day. While there, I paid 55sp for a plaid tartan outfit.

#### 20<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Took the river barge up the Halph river.

#### 22<sup>nd</sup> Thaw

Finally reached the waterfall at the bottom of Lake Eltris so we disembarked. It was a short trip up to the town of Eltris which marked the bottom end of Caledonia and was in the Macintosh clan territory. They were famous for toffee and rainwear so I purchased some, rainwear that is. I also spoke to the innkeeper here but all he knew was that the

MacLeods were stirred up about something.

### 23<sup>rd</sup> Thaw

It took an hour to cross the lake in a barge, thanks to their water mage's mage current then we continued up the river, took the left fork and, by mid afternoon, were at the town of Halph. We were now at the edge of MacLeod territory. From there, we took a boat over the lake separating us from Castle Dunvegan, the ancestral seat of the MacLeods.

Upon arrival at the castle, we were taken directly to the main office containing a large conference table. Seated in a large chair at one end was a man in his mid forties who had a family resemblance to Brigetta. This was the Laird, Malcolm MacLeod, who was also Brigetta's father. We were also introduced to Hamish MacLeod, a wiccan who had been using the tarot in an attempt to determine what had happened without success. He was to join us in our investigations as a font of local knowledge. Also introduced was the seneschal, Ian MacLure, the Master at Arms, Angus MacLeod, and the Clan Druid, Katrina MacLeod.

All the laird could tell us at this point that the Flag had been kept in a locked room that had a guard outside. The only people who had keys were the laird himself and the seneschal. The Flag had been in the room at the morning inspection and the room locked. The guard had seen nothing but, when the room was unlocked and checked that evening, the Flag was gone. There are no interior windows and all the walls, floor, and ceiling consist of Bound Earth so they cannot be Tunnelled through. Apparently one of the line gave his life willingly to enable the Binding. The case containing the Flag is warded so that only a MacLeod can open it safely. I wanted to question the guard but that would have to wait until later. It was dinner time.

We all gathered at the main hall and were seated at a table that was located near the High Table. Brigetta and her immediate family, including her mother, Lady Anwen MacLeod. The arrival of the main course was accompanied by a rather raucous sound which some members of the party described as a sackful of cats fighting each other. I thought it was rather interesting actually and, upon studying the piper, concluded that the bagpipes were a difficult instrument to play. Hamish told us that they were originally used to scare the opposition during warfare. We could certainly understand why.

“Signed party contract, disallows inhumane torture” - Cher, after Aurora expressed a desire to try playing bagpipes.

Entertainment after dinner consisted of dancing, drinking, and listening to people sing, including Brigetta. She even danced around swords which was

a rather scary sight. We were invited to dance a few sets.

“I think I'm doing the Scottish Reel” - a rather tipsy Aurora.

We decided to leave investigations until the next morning.

### 24<sup>th</sup> Thaw

I was woken up at dawn by the sound of the piper welcoming the new day. Out of curiosity, I went looking for the source of the sound but it stopped after a while. It didn't help that the castle was a rather large place. Fortunately I was able to find my way back down to the hall where the others were having breakfast.

Ian MacLure, showed us the room where the Flag had been kept First we carefully examined the door. There were no marks indicating that the lock had been picked and no magic had been cast on it. Cher cast a transparency on the door allowing Vanderhand to examine the lock mechanism. He could find no signs of tampering. Cher was able to slide a piece of parchment under the door. The door itself was stout and wooden and had no magical aura.

The room had been left undisturbed since the theft. Usually only the seneschal and a couple of cleaning ladies enter the room, for the morning dusting, and none of them were MacLeods. Ian told us that there had been no visitors to the castle on the day in question but a couple of days before, some entertainers had arrived for the evening and had left the subsequent morning.

Once we had completed the initial examination, Ian unlocked the door. The door opened inwards and there were no wards on the door or on the floor. There was a horizontal case on the central table where the Flag was supposed to be. Other items in here were a drinking horn, a large cup and a small box containing a lock of hair. None of these other items had been disturbed and nothing could be detected with witchsight. Also there were no odd smells.

Vanderhand and I didn't want anyone to step inside the room until the crime scene had been carefully examined by eye. There were no disturbances in the dust and no signs of unusual air currents. The cup was magical and so was the horn, the nature of which was strength. The lock of hair was human.

We examined the case without touching it. The top was transparent so we could see where the flag had been. Hamish then spotted a small fingerprint on the case, about baby sized, which was located near the clasp. The major curse ward on the case was still

active. Also spotted were two tiny hairs. I made a quick sketch of where they were before they were bagged and tagged. The GTN of the hairs was Spider Monkey. That was when Hamish remembered that the entertainers had a monkey with them.

.5.

Cher wanted to stay and DE the ward on the case so some guards were called in to see that she wasn't disturbed. Meanwhile Nikola was taken to the ladies solarium to see what she could learn from the ladies gossip. The rest of us headed down to speak to the master at arms so we could interview the guards that were on duty.

While steering the conversations, Nikola discovered that there were six entertainers in two wagons. They were travelling folk with an unusual accent, probably Destinian and had names like Lenka and Alberto. The monkey was the only one wearing plaid and one of the men was its owner.

Meanwhile Angus was telling us that the gypsies had been the only unusual visitors to the castle in that period of time. He thought that the monkey was extremely well trained.

During the day there are two guards on duty outside the room, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. In addition there were other guards at each end of the corridor. They couldn't see the actual room guard, but each guard called the hour to the next guard in sequence so, presumably, there was at least two guards in hearing range of every other guard. So Vanderhand decided to interview all six guards that were in the area. None of them had noticed anything unusual except that Blair, the afternoon room guard, had complained of a headache just after the 4pm timecheck. I had Shar DA each guard for last magic to impact. All the others had an expected answer except for Blair. He had been the victim of a Mental Attack.

By now, Cher had completed her ritual and discovered that the ward contained a Damnum Magnatum and was triggered by any sentient entity that was not a MacLeod. The last time it had gone off was hundreds of years ago. However, a monkey does not count as a sentient entity.

While Vanderhand went to check on something else, us females went out pixie hunting although Cher insisted she was only going as our minder. We didn't find any I could question but I did summon an eagle. He remembered the brightly coloured wagon and told me it had left the castle heading south.

Vanderhand had gone to check the lock again and determined that the keyhole was on the outside only. He then went to see the Laird and examined his key

to see if anyone had made a copy of it. There was no evidence of it. He was also planning on doing a search of the Great Hall looking for monkey hairs to see if they matched the ones we had found but the laird told him he had Daed the monkey out of curiosity. It was a simian arachnid or spider monkey. We had a match and since it was extremely unlikely that there were two of them, we had our prime suspects.

It was confirmed when we checked the gate guards. According to the log the wagon was not searched on the way out and the guards had been hypnotised to believe that everything is normal. So we decided we were going to go after them early the next morning.

#### 25<sup>th</sup> Thaw

So that was what we did. Before we left, I spoke to the eagle's mate, who was nesting on the top of the highest tower of the castle, to let her know where we were going and to offer a large fat rabbit to any eagle who could provide any information that led to the capture of the criminals.

By 9am we had reached Dunvegan village and asked the locals if they remembered the wagon.

Kid to Nikola - Mummy says I'm not to talk to strange people.

Vanderhand - And you don't get stranger than that.

We were told that the caravan went straight through the village without stopping which they thought was rather odd. So we kept on travelling and continued going south, passing the turnoff to the dwarven territories.

On the way I was still wondering how they got in. Then I suddenly realised that we had not checked the seneschal or his key. It was highly likely that they had used his key and had also accessed his mind as he was more familiar with the room's layout. Since nothing else had been stolen, Vanderhand had concluded that this was a theft to order and, since we were heading south towards MacDonald country, as far as we were concerned, they were prime suspects.

.6.

We camped for the night between the shore of Loch Dunvegan and the nearby hills. It was a bitterly cold night but I couldn't get my Resist Cold spell to work, even after repeated attempts.

#### 26<sup>th</sup> Thaw

There was a heavy frost in the morning as we headed off. By lunchtime the trail was turning as it passed between Loch Dunvegan and Loch Bracadale. However, the wagon tracks kept on going down a

disused track that ran down the west side of Loch Bracadale. Hamish told us that this area was basically unclaimed although the MacDonalds occasionally run sheep here. He then decided to go invisible and went off, by himself, to scout ahead, much to Vanderhand's annoyance. He soon returned, having lost the trail. So we carefully worked our way down and discovered that a short time later, they had turned away from the shore and headed for the hills. After a short while, it entered a narrow valley between two hills. The whole setup shouted 'Ambush!'.

So I decided to cast a flying spell on myself then asked for someone to put a Walking Unseen on me so I could fly over-watch and scout ahead. I saw nothing on the ridge lines but discovered that the valley terminated in a large clearing. Inside that clearing were two black spots. I decided to report back instead of investigating on my own.

A while later, we entered the clearing. Just then, something small whistled past Nikola and another hit me in the cheek. Couldn't see what it was though. A third projectile bounced off Vanderhand and he was able to ascertain that it was a nut from a nearby tree. So Hamish used an ignite flammables to scare off whatever was in there. As it leapt to the next tree I was successful in hitting it with a blunt arrow. The creature faltered in its leap and fell out of the tree, stunned. Fortunately the fire in the first tree soon went out, doing minimal damage.

The entity turned out to be the spider monkey we were looking for. Nikola healed it and Hamish succeeded in making it his familiar. Meanwhile Vanderhand found my arrow. I think I'll engrave this one.

"Does anyone speak male - errr monkey?" -  
Cher

Fortunately, Nikola could. She discovered that his owner had been killed by several 'uglies' a while ago. He remembered getting 'the gold thing' which had been given to another human before the attack occurred. The survivors of the attack were taken captive by the 'uglies'.

The dark patches proved to be the remains of the caravans. I had feared that the Flag had been destroyed in the attack but that may not be the case. A male skeleton was found that had been there for 21 days. Cher also found the remains of a chest. Inside was some fused coinage and a crystalline sphere which proved to be a Rank 11 Crystal of Vision. A female skeleton was also found and we decided to bury them properly. Bodies of the attackers were also found which showed them to be goblins.

Vanderhand found the tracks of the goblins and also

a lone set of tracks heading away in a different direction. After a short while, they just terminated as if the person had flown off. Looks like the only way we're going to find out who that was is to rescue then question the survivors.

It was another cold night so I attempted my Resist Cold spell again. All I managed to do was to backfire myself deaf. Nikola was feeling rather ill as well but Vanderhand was able to deal with that.

### 27<sup>th</sup> Thaw

We followed the tracks of the goblins into the hills. Hamish told us that there had been a joint dwarven/MacDonald mining operation up here but the mine had failed. The goblins were probably occupying the mines.

Finally found the mine entrance. The goblins had put an old door up and covered it with bracken. The dwarven runes on the doorway told us that this was Tallow's Deep while the goblin scrawl translated as 'Keep out - or else'.

Cher did a one way transparency on the door. Standard mine shaft with wooden beams holding up the roof. No sign of any goblins so we cautiously entered in single file: Vanderhand first, Aurora, Shar, Hamish, Cher and Nikola bringing up the rear.

Thirty foot down the corridor was an open area with two other exits, an upturned ore cart in the middle, and some loose rocks on the ground. I picked up a few to use as ammunition while the others carefully checked the area. One of the paths deadended only after a short distance so we went down the other one. That continued on into another open area and here we could smell goblins. Couldn't see them but we were sure they were close by somewhere.

.7.

A concealed door was spotted so Cher did a one way transparency on it. On the other side was a pitch black corridor that was only four foot high. This did not look good. So we sort of made our way down, complicated by the fact many of us had to bend over a bit. Cher was scouting ahead. To our relief it opened out some more. Just then we saw a goblin face on the wall but it proved to be a carved effigy.

We reached a room with a 7' ceiling. Vanderhand detected a pit trap in the floor so he used a long pole to trigger it. The top caved in and we were assaulted by a loud high pitched scream that lasted for nearly a minute. Turned out there was screaming fungus in the pit. So everyone was made Unseen and we waited for anything to happen. But, after several minutes, nothing had.



There was another door in this room so Cher did a one way transparency on this one as well. Again she saw another dark corridor. I was beginning to hate this place as I was feeling mildly claustrophobic. Plus I have a slight fear of dark places.

At the end of the corridor was a raised portcullis. Beyond that was a 4' high room containing a table with what looked like a model siege engine on it. The mechanism for the portcullis was on one wall. An open door on the opposing wall led into a corridor and, occasionally, a nervous goblin would look in presumably checking for intruders. I wanted to shoot the goblin but Cher used adhesion to stick the goblin to the floor long enough to Hamish to creep out and sap the goblin which turned him visible. Cher animated a knife so that the goblin's jugular vein could be carefully cut. He was then rendered Unseen again. A small spike was placed in the mechanism to jam it. Meanwhile the body was carefully dragged into the corridor.

We carried on down the corridor. A short while later everyone spotted an obvious secret door. Vanderhand spiked it closed before we continued on. We then encountered a set of double doors at which point it was decided to go back and through the secret door. After making our way through more confusing corridors we found scratches on the wall which was theorised to be goblin writing.

Later on we found a smaller corridor which we had to crawl down. I was really beginning to hate this place and wanted to leave as quickly as possible. Fortunately the room at the other end was normal height with a crenellated ceiling. A large statue of a female human, wearing mage robes, dominated the centre which was surrounded by dirty green water. An alcove on one wall contained sand while a corridor led off from the opposite wall. A goblin corpse lay on the floor.

However all this was determined a bit later as we were attacked by creatures that were a cross between a large bat and a mosquito with the appetite and ferocity of the latter. These were stirges and they swooped down on us from the ceiling and tried to attach themselves to us so they could suck our blood. I soon found that using my bow was ineffectual and I had to resort to trying to swat them with my dagger, which was equally ineffective. For some reason they seemed to be picking on me as a prime target.

The others were faring better. Vanderhand was dealing rapidly with the ones menacing him so he was also able to deal with the ones that were feeding off me.

“Take this you sucker” - Cher

Finally we were able to deal with them and started our investigation of the room. Presumably there was a ventilation opening to the outside to allow the stirges to come in and out.

“Veni vidi vesquitte - We came, we saw, we squitted.” - Vanderhand.

The goblin corpse only had five copper pennies on it but, investigation of the offshoot corridor showed there was a rockfall blocking it. Another body was buried under the pile and the curious thing about it was that it only had three fingers. A magical ring was on one finger which was basically pearl surrounded by fish overlays. The spell within was waterbreathing and it automatically went off when the wearer was immersed.

The statue also only had three fingers and one of those hands was holding an enchanted scroll case which was carefully removed. The statue was not magical. Meanwhile Vanderhand and I were investigating the sand using a pole. All we found was a poisonous snake which was quickly dispatched. Under the sand was a weak magical aura which indicated that it used to be a portal to a plane called Octal.

.8.

Hamish decided to carefully remove the poison from the snake, presumably for later use. The scroll case contained a scroll containing magics that had three spells. The first duplicated the effects of a healing potion, the second preserves one dead body while the third repaired a broken bone.

We then rested.

#### 28<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Basically it was a case of walking unseens and witchsights all round before we set off again. We were close to where the goblin had been killed so Vanderhand and Hamish went to check to see if the body was still there. To no one's surprise, it had gone. The portcullis was still up but the spike that had been planted was removed. So Vanderhand used another spike to jam the portcullis itself.

A short while later, we reached a short flight of stairs going down to a cross corridor. Beyond that was another flight going back up. The cross corridor had a very smooth, slick, surface and the moss on the walls stopped just below the top of the stairs in a rather distinct boundary line. I could feel a breeze coming from one side.

We crossed very carefully but some of us still slipped on the surface. Just as the last person crossed, we heard a rumbling sound and a wall of water rushed down the cross corridor. Within seconds it had turned

into a swiftly flowing river which lapped against the top steps. Our way of retreat had been cut off so we had no choice but to go on. At the same time we heard the booming of drums.

We hurried on. One room we entered had a pool in the centre. Suddenly we were shot at through small holes in the back wall so we dashed down to the corridor on the other side. This proved to be a dead end so Cher put up a wall to shield us from the arrows before we went back through.

Nikola spotted a secret entrance so we went through that, hoping to get behind the goblins. However, it just proved to be another passageway.

Further on, the passage we had taken suddenly sloped downwards towards a set of doors and there was something sticky on the slope. It smelt like honey and we suspected it was a trap so we backed off and went somewhere else.

The next room had rocks littering the floor and a low ceiling which looked slightly odd. So I decided to shoot an arrow at it. To our surprise, the arrow went straight through, leaving a small hole, and there was a goblin yelp of surprise. The roof was made of canvas. Hamish used ignite flammables to set it on fire and the goblins hiding in ambush on the ledges above ran off.

After that we encountered a more natural looking room with stalactites and stalagmites. Pools of water littered the ground and there was a four foot hole in the ceiling in one corner. A goblin poked his head through the hole briefly then ran off. There wasn't an easy way to get up there so we left as well.

Finally reached a room with holes in the ceiling. Wolf spiders were dropped on us so Cher did something which caused the roof to drop out. Four goblins fell with it while two more watched from the ledge above.

.9.

So we basically beat them up. Shar and I were firing arrows at the two up top while the others were wading into the four down here. For a while it wasn't looking too good as Hamish was knocked unconscious and Vanderhand was in a bad way but we were able to prevail. The last goblin up top ran off.

We climbed our way up to the ledge and into more of those cramped goblin tunnels. By now I was wishing I could shrink myself to the size of a pixie and fly down these corridors. All this bending was getting really painful and I was starting to be sure that the walls were closing in. I definitely wanted out of here.

Finally we reached a cavern which was water filled up nearly up to the ledge we were on. A cage ran on a line that stretched across the cavern. Also, I was sure I could see several large objects in the water.

So we further explored these small goblin corridors. Soon we found a really bad smell which turned out to be rotting food in a larder. This included kegs of goblin beer. We left it alone.

A bit later on we heard agitated goblinspeak. Upon investigation we reached a prison area and a fight ensued between us and the six goblins stationed there. Because of the cramped conditions there was really only room for two of us to get in there. Cher used a frictionless floor spell to cause some of them to fall over while the rest of us charged in. We won the fight but at the cost of Vanderhand's primary hand. We had to use a healing potion and the bone healing magic from the scroll to fix it.

We found the surviving gypsies in the cells. There were two males and two females. All of whom looked starved and dehydrated. They were able to show us the winch room which controlled the mechanism that controlled the flow of water down that cross passage. Once that was sealed off, and the mechanism jammed in place, we made our way out of the complex as fast as possible.

#### 29<sup>th</sup> Thaw

We finally reached the campsite and the remains of the gypsy wagons. Here we took stock, said words to the dead and spoke to the ones we rescued. Vanderhand and Hamish wanted to play bad cop, worse cop but it proved not to be necessary. There was Vaclav Kaldesh, his wife Lenka, their son Petra and Ludmila Torenescu. Her husband, Ramon had been the one that set up the deal with the Destinian Don Antonio Fernandos, as part of a get-rich-quick scheme. He was also the Mind Mage. Vaclav claimed he got dragged into the plot as he owed Ramon a favour.

We suspected that Don Antonio was a royalist and this was part of a grander scheme to restore the throne of Don Carlos. Before the goblins attacked, they had met with the Destinian and handed the flag over. They also knew where they met Don Antonio, a small cottage on the shores of Darnoch Firth, near the sea coast. As well as the flag, they had stolen a sword from Clan Stuart and a cup from somewhere in Destiny. We planned to recapture and return both items. Hopefully there would be a reward. Vanderhand wanted to turn the gypsies over to the Laird but Hamish and I convinced him to keep them with us for a bit longer. If they kept co-operating we could put in a plea for leniency.

.10.

We headed south towards the cottage. When evening came we stopped and camped.

### 30<sup>th</sup> Thaw

At three in the morning the heavens opened and the rain came down. Hamish said that it was perfectly normal but it still meant that we were travelling in a torrential downpour. Thank goodness the McLeods had provided us with wet weather gear, made by the MacIntoshes. Finally we found a cave to shelter in. Vanderhand braved the weather to get firewood and he returned, not only with the wood, but with a rather bedraggled male pixie called Leafsitter. He had been blown offcourse by the wind and said that if he didn't get back soon he'd probably be known as Leafsitter the Lost. He didn't know Common but I knew pixie so I was able to translate for him. Hamish tried to light the wood with pyrotechnics but the sparks flew from his ears instead of his fingers. I think he backfired.

So we waited it out as the storm raged all day and well into the night.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Seedtime

This morning dawned bright and clear. Leafsitter travelled on my shoulder for a while until he saw a landmark he recognized and flew off. That evening we reached the bottom of the loch and made camp.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Seedtime

Clear but lots of mist on the loch this morning. Looked rather pretty. A small, non-navigable river flowed out of the loch, heading towards the top of the firth. The path went along the side of it and we soon entered the base of a ravine. Finally we reached the campsite that the gypsies used every time they came down here. We reached it by evening, an alcove cut in the cliff.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Seedtime

Cloudy and windy this time as we worked our way down the trail. Midmorning the trail disappeared beneath a large amount of dirt and rock that had slipped down the cliff, probably caused by the recent rains. Getting the cart around this was going to be difficult at best.

I was suspicious of the situation, probably because I've been hanging around Vanderhand for too long, so, after several attempts, I put a fly spell on myself and had Hamish put a Walking Unseen on me. I then flew over the slip to scout around. What I saw were four hill giants, waiting behind a stone wall, with several boulders. A cave opening in the cliff was behind them. I immediately returned and made my report.

We made plans. I'd fly to the top of the cliff above the cave and shoot from there while Cher would take

up a position near their wall. That would be after she put a wall across the cave entrance. The rest would be firing from the mound of earth. Lenka would also be casting sleep spells through a crystal ball Cher had provided.

What actually happened did sort of go according to plan. Cher's spell didn't work on the first time but worked on the second. We were all Walking Unseen and Witchsighted as well and I had to wait until she was clear before dropping the first grenado. That one landed dead on the head of one of the giants who had already been peppered by arrows. He didn't last long after that. The second grenado missed so, after that, I switched to arrows. One rock smashed into the cart but the rest missed.

Finally they were defeated. Cher and I flew in to finish them off. Unfortunately, I landed really badly while Cher finished off the last one standing but managed to break her favourite sword in the process. It could be mended but it would not be as good as it was.

Behind the wall, the cave consisted of four caverns joined to a central cavern which also had the tunnel to the outside. So we gave it a complete going over. A large pottery urn was found which was full of skulls. Three iron keys was found in a depression in the wall while the chests that the keys opened was behind a large boulder. Cher managed to use magic to bisect it after I drew a dotted line on it with the inscription 'Cut here'. A large amount of money was inside.

### 7<sup>th</sup> Seedtime

After several days travel we finally reached the fisherman's cottage on the Firth. It was an isolated cottage with a small garden. An old fisherman was sitting outside mending a net. Hamish told us we were in Kincaid territory. They're mostly fisherfolk.

.11.

Cher went Unseen and crept behind the 'L' shaped house while the rest of us carried on with the gypsies. As we got closer we could see smoke coming out of the chimney while the fisherman was definitely a Caledonian, wearing the McClary tartan. I could smell the aroma of cooking fish inside, mixed with some rather interesting herbs.

Meanwhile Cher was casting transparencies on the back wall and discovered part of the wall was resisting. She finally came back and reported that there was a large cupboard in the bedroom and the back of it appeared to be a portal.

One hundred silver in bribes later and Angus McClary told us what we wanted to know. There was

a portal in the back of the cupboard that Antonio uses. However he didn't know about what Antonio had been up to. More bribery gave us a password 'Apothiosis'.

While Cher was divinating the portal, I was swapping recipes with Angus, specifically my apple stew for his fish. Finally Cher was able to report that the inside part of the doorframe was enchanted with rune magic, the portal only went 1000 miles on this plane and the triggering words was 'Manifest Destiny'.

Once we were ready, we went through the portal and found ourselves standing on an octagonal elevated structure with a roof supported by columns at each column - basically a garden gazebo. The air here was crisp, warm and clear with an odour of flowers mixed in with citrus. It felt to me that we were somewhere up a mountain.

Two guards were standing at the steps. Both were wearing Destinian half plate and carrying short swords. I tried giving them the password but was told that was last months one. So one of them rang a bell and, ten minutes later another gentleman, accompanied by four more guards shoed up. He was bearded and wore a white tunic with a purple sash who introduced himself as Juan Costa and told us Don Antonio was not available at the moment and would we please accompany him to the mansion. The way he said that made it sound as an order.

So we accompanied him and his guards. There were other people working in the orchid so we waited until we reached a secluded spot. That was where we made our move. Cher started it by tripping a guard with her tail and the rest of us moved in. Hamish, Nicola and I piled on to one guard and basically brought him down while the others attacked with their weapons. It didn't take us long to subdue them.

.12

During questioning, Juan Costa told us he knew about the flag but didn't know where it was. After healing them, and ourselves, up we left them tied to trees. It should take them a few hours to escape. We also removed their armour and weapons except for Costa's sword which was a family heirloom. Instead we took his ready cash as a ransom.

We carried on down the path while Unseen, wondering where the manor actually was. We did see formal gardens, a farm house, and a large lake but no sign of the manor. I was intending to fly up and have a look but managed to give myself a bad nosebleed from a mana backlash. So Cher took off instead.

She finally found the manor, built into the cliff on the north side. She also confirmed that we were in a bowl

shaped valley high in a mountain range.

We hid near the manor, still unseen. I finally got my flying spell to work so I flew up and perched on the ledge running under the second story windows. I then checked each one from one end to the other.

The windows were really only big enough to let light and air through. The one on the end had strange sounds coming from within which indicated that there were two people inside involved in intimate pleasures. The rest of the rooms were unoccupied and I saw a large dining room, a study and more bedrooms.

Vanderhand threw up a grappling hook with a rope attached and I hooked it on to the ledge. The others quickly clambered up. It was just as well I didn't put the hook through the window as Cher discovered they were all warded with Greater Summoner Insect Swarm which would trigger if anyone tried to go through it. So Cher bypassed the whole thing by using Moulding Elements to get a hole in the wall into the study.

I was hoping that this was Don Antonio's study but soon reasoned that this belonged to the seneschal as the desk was full of household accounts. However there were maps on the wall so I quickly copied down the position of this place, relative to other places, so we could find it again. This place was labelled as 'Montevideo'. As we suspected, it was located in the mountain range between Caledonia and Destiny.

We quickly headed down the corridor and towards the room where the sounds were. Maybe we could catch Don Antonio with his trousers down or at least surprise someone who would know where he was. We had a look through Cher's transparency and could see a large four poster bed. Curtains hid the occupants from view.

Suddenly I felt a spell fail to impact. When I told Shar she replied that it was Mental Attack. Then Nikola fell over. Since we obviously had us all on ESP or telepathy I decided to try and distract him by thinking some very erotic thoughts as we charged into the room.

However a male voice from the bed invited me to join him. He also invited Vanderhand as well. When the curtains were swept back we discovered that it was an incubus and a rather exhausted female. Naturally a fight ensued and the incubus was defeated. He immediately vanished.

We checked for treasure and discovered that the woman, Cecilia Hernandez, was wearing a magical negligee which granted protection. She didn't know where Don Antonio was but knew there was a secret

door in the wall behind the bed. Hamish knocked her out and I swapped her outfit for another nonmagical one.

It took a bit of fiddling but Cher soon had it open. Behind the walls was a set of stairs leading up. Another door was at the top. Through the transparency we could see a carved room with a skylight in the ceiling. Three ugly imps were guarding the place.

Shar was able to determine that one of them was a Celestial so she put Special Counters on us before we charged in, splitting alternately left and right as we went through the door. One imp shot the left side with a fireball while Nikola, on the right was hit with a Ray of Cold. I succeeded in shooting the fire imp out of the air while Nikola hit and stunned the ice imp. Hamish then walloped the fire imp and killed it. Meanwhile Cher flew up and grappled the celestial imp.

Nikola was stung and poisoned by the ice imp but between her, Hamish, and Vanderhand, it didn't last long. Cher slammed the celestial imp in the ground, killing it while I treated Nikola's poison with a Waters of Healing.

This room had an effigy in the middle with a painting on the wall of the same figure. This was basically a shrine to 'the hero Don Carlos'. Was our summoner trying to summon Don Carlos as a hero?

Hamish and I spotted the edge of a secret door in the opposing wall. Vanderhand experimented with the candlesticks nearby and soon had it open. Beyond was a long corridor with a door on the other side. Beyond that was a room containing a bath. This had to be his cleansing room.

Halfway down the corridor, someone had spotted another secret door so we backtracked to investigate. On the other side was a storeroom and study. Also there was a lectern with a big heavy book on it. Once we determined it was safe, Vanderhand picked it up claiming he was going to throw the book at Don Antonio.

There was no sign of the Flag here so we kept looking. We found another door in the bathroom which led into a short corridor. Two doors were at the end and Cher did one way transparencies on both. The east door led into a workshop with alchemical stuff while the north door was a small robing chamber. Fancy Destinian clothing was hanging from a hook. Naturally we checked the pockets for loose change.

The door on the other side led into the summoning chamber and it was there we found Don Antonio in

the middle of a ritual. He was inside a pentacle which was inside a protection circle. There was also an inscribed triangle which had three items inside it, the Cup, the Sword and the Flag.

We wanted to surprise him but the door creaked open and he turned. I tried to shoot him but missed. As the others rushed forwards, he summoned three hellcats and ordered them to attack us. I shot one just as Cher created a trench which broke the circle of protection. Two of the cats started to turn on him while the other went for the person who shot it.

Nikola transformed into a wolf and intercepted the cat while Vanderhand rushed into the circle. Don Antonio quickly spun around, with his staff out, and created a circle of energy which the cats bounced off. Vanderhand hit him while Hamish and Nikola dealt to the cat.

Cher had a bright idea and cast frictionless floor on the area where Don Antonio was, hoping he'd slip over and out of his circle. It didn't quite work when Vanderhand hit him again and I shot him. Instead he just staggered and went for a healing potion. Hamish charged in and shieldbashed, knocking him partially out of the circle. As the hellcats leapt in he called for his Master and literally vanished. The hellcats disappeared as well.

That left us free to collect the missing items and make our way back with them and the loot. We didn't know where the cup went but we returned the sword to the Clan Stuart who gave us a magical kilt and sporran for a reward. The Flag was then returned to Clan McLeod. That was when the party started. I even got to play the bagpipes much to everyone's amusement. It's harder than it looks.

Finally we set off for the Guild. Brigetta returned with us and Hamish decided to tag along so he could get more experience. So after an uneventful journey, we arrived back at the Guild on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Blossom.

