

Mystery in Mystra

Adventure by Simon White

Autumn 801WK

Duration 30 days (1st Fruit - 30th Fruit)

Party Members

Boulder	Non-mage	Male	Giant	
Brigetta McLeod	Bardic	Female	Human	Leader
Shizane	Fire	Male	Human	Mil Sci
Tonalin Venridour	Mind	Female	Elven	
Thorn	Non-mage	Female	Human	
Hamish MacLeod	Wiccan	Male	Human	
Aurora	Air	Female	Elf	Scribe

Plane

Mystra

Employer

Grendel

Places

Karameikos

 Kelven

 Specularum

Principle NPCs

Baron Desmond Kelven the Second

Teldon - a powerful mage

Anya Theros - a guide

Luigi Giovanni - merchant leader

Arestos - wine merchant

Serephon - minstrel

Lord Simion

Baron Volore

Baron Torenescu

Duke Stefan Karameikos

Duchess Olivia Karameikos

Mission

Find out what is on the other side of a portal

Mystery in Mystra

Adventure Summary

3rd Fruit

Went from Seagate to the 'Sea Goddess Haven.' Entered the portal located 60ft underwater. Found ourselves in an underground dungeon area under Baron Kelven's castle. Brought before the Baron and questioned. We're in the city of Kelven located in the country of Karameikos on the Plane of Mystra. Practising arcane magic is forbidden inside the city as also in the city of Threshold. Giants are hostile here and fire mages are reviled. Specularum is the capital city. There, all weapons are to be peacebonded at all times.

There are two types of inhabitants in Karameikos. The original inhabitants are the Traladrans. They're a fair skinned, dark haired people. However, around thirty odd years ago, the Thyatians 'claimed' Traladra. Once of them was Duke Stefan Karameikos who obtained title to the land and did some aggressive civic improvements, including roads, fortifications, and urban expansion. The Thyatians are a shorter dark skinned folk and, currently the mix is 10% Thyatian, 70% Traladran and the rest mixed.

Karameikos is considered to be underpopulated. What population there is, is mostly human but there are two separate groups of elves, the Callarii and the Vyalia. There is also a gnome stronghold which is shared with a dwarven clan. Much of the country is overrun by orcs and goblins but pacification is in progress. There are even dragons. They referred to them as young, but they compared to mature ones on Alusia.

The currency consists of three coins: the Royal, a gold piece, the Crona, which is silver, and the Kopec, which is copper. It's ten kopec to the chrona and ten cronas to the royal.

Discovered that the portal only opened once a month and anyone pacted to a Death God is automatically killed when going through.

4th Fruit

Looked around Kelven. Got maps and arranged to join a caravan going to Specularum

6th Fruit

Left with the caravan

13th Fruit

Had to drop back from the caravan because of the pace they were setting. Attacked by a vampire during the night.

15th Fruit

Arrived Specularum, peacebonded our weapons. Have arrived in the middle of a festival. The city is huge, surrounded by a wall and has a port.

16th Fruit

Woman claimed to hear 'demons' in her cellar so we went to check it out. Found network of tunnels. Attacked by members of the Veiled Society. One died. Got into lots of trouble with the local law because we struck first and some weapons were not peacebonded. Arrested but allowed to help the guards search the tunnels. Found a tunnel up to a noble house within which was a murdered woman with evidence incriminating another noble house. However other evidence had been left. Veiled Society trying to sow dissension between the noble houses.

19th Fruit

Put on trial and found guilty. Let off lightly because of mitigating circumstances. Assassination attempt on us as we headed for the docks. Talked to a wine merchant and a minstrel. That night, helped escort a local Lord and staved off another assassination attempt on him.

20th Fruit

Rewarded by the noble houses. Afternoon tea at the Volare mansion.

21st Fruit

Lunch at the Torrenescu estate.

22nd Fruit

Meeting with Duke Karameikos about trade between Karameikos and Seagate.

24th Fruit

Headed back home

Mystery in Mystra

This mission was announced by one of our own Guild members, Grendel Beetleknox, who wanted a party to investigate a portal that had appeared near the 'Sea Goddess Haven'. He had briefly checked it and discovered it led to a plane called Mystra and it had emerged in a cave. I was running short on ready cash so I decided to go. Besides the SGT wanted an article.

A group of us followed Grendel into one of the meeting rooms. The party was as follows:

Boulder - a fine featured 8'8" bald giant (or a very tall human) 550#, carrying a large axe, and wearing hard leather. He told us he likes a good fight which obviously will make him a front row fighter. He's also a low level ranger, merchant and is also a military scientist.

Brigetta MacLeod - Human female, medium height with red hair wearing a white shirt, plaid and kilt. She also has greenish alligator skin armour and uses twin battleaxes. She's a high ranked troubadour and a bardic mage.

Shizane - 5'8" human male wearing red/orange robes. The tip of a unicorn horn could be seen protruding under the hood. He's a fire mage, expert with rapier and maingauche, a good ranger, military scientist, and also cooks well. But that wasn't all. He was also a sailor, brewer, merchant, philosopher specialising in magic, herbalist and astrologer. He even told us he had five hairnets that bestowed waterbreathing.

Tonalin Venridour - 5'11 elven female dressed in a nice multicoloured outfit. She's a beginning mind mage, a beginning healer and is adept at the bow.

Thorn - After announcing she was not pacted she then told us we were not to poison any wells in her presence otherwise she would have to hurt the perpetrator lots. She's not a mage but is carrying a 'big thumpy sword'. She's a reasonably proficient healer, ranger, military scientist, a bit of merchant, a bit of troubadour, and a lot of warrior.

Hamish MacLeod - Brigetta's cousin, a 5'9" human male, 150#, wearing earth hues. He knows sabre, sap, and is a wiccan mage. He also has a spider monkey sidekick.

And me, Aurora, a female elven airmage who specialises in bow and flying magics. I'm 5'8" in height, waist length blond hair, currently wearing a skyblue dress. As well as a Guild adventurer, I'm also a junior reporter for the Seagate Times.

"... and I doubt very much I can blame it on the nobs this time" - Thorn.

It didn't take long for myself to be assigned as scribe and Shizane as Military Scientist but there was a bit of an argument, followed by a vote, before Brigetta was finally appointed as party leader. The contract was passed around and signed with the following added:

- Anything made for a person, goes to that person
- Brigetta is looking for a way to improve axe rank.
- No giants with crossbows are to stand behind Thorn
- Aurora wants a set of wings

There wasn't much more Grendel could add to what he had already mentioned at this stage. So

he took his leave of us while we made preparations. I spent the rest of the day and much of the evening checking both the Guild library and the SGT archives looking for references to Mystra but found nothing. Shizane did an astrology reading and got an image of himself in courtly clothes.

2nd Fruit

I was running late to meet the rest of the party at the Guild as I had slept in. Once we were all together we went over to the virtually deserted Water College. The only person we saw was the janitor. We went into the closet where the portal was and emerged in a lighthouse.

Outside we could see the 'Sea Goddess Haven' in the distance off the coast. We had to take a ferry boat out to it. When we got closer we could see some of the ship was resting on rock and there were a lot of ballistae and other defensive weapons on the roof of the large keep. Other buildings were scattered around. A large door was in one side of the keep.

Upon arrival we were met by a well dressed elven man. When we told him we were Grendel's party he led us to a room in the keep that was covered in trophies, including an 80' long kraken tentacle. After a short wait, Grendel joined us.

He told us that the portal was located 60ft below the surface of the water, 100ft away from the ship. It had always been there but had recently reopened. The last time it had opened was 30,000 years ago. The cave on the other side looked like it had been worked.

Shizane started an astrology reading, asking about the forces and the reasons for the portal;opening. He saw a heraldic device consisting of a castle in the top left, a cross in the top right, scales in the bottom left, and a gryphon in the bottom right.. Following that he got the vision of hammers.

Brigetta went off and did a Ritual of Recitation on the portal. She saw a series of woodcuts. The first one showed three figures, consisting of a warrior in platemail with a crown on his helmet, a beautiful woman on one side with some sort of symbol in her hand, and a tall thin man with a staff on the other. The next was a man holding a lightning bolt while the third was a skeletal man with a cloak and a scythe.

3rd Fruit

We prepared to go though the portal. Grendel had already given us two Waters of Healing. Aqualina provided five more, waterproofed our gear, and also did a Waters of Strength on Hamish and Brigetta. Grendel had to hypnotise me as I was not keen to go into the water. Waterbreathings were put on those who needed it and we swam towards the portal. Boulder was the first through the portal followed by Shizane.

.2.

We crowded into the space at the other end. Boulder was rendered invisible and a light was put on his helmet before we progressed into the corridor. The corridor walls were rough but marks did indicate that they were worked.

A short while later, we reached a passage that was more artificial. Cells were carved into the walls. Just then we ran into a group of guards who turned and ran in alarm. Considering all they

saw was a bobbing ball of light, I'm not surprised they were alarmed. Boulder ran after them. The rest of us followed more cautiously.

It didn't take long before we are confronted with more guards, accompanied by an imposing figure in chain mail with a gryphon device on his tabard. He waved a hand and all the magic on Boulder dropped off. A command from the figure and Boulder was led away. The rest of us were told to follow.

We were dropped off in a comfortable suite of rooms while waiting for the Baron to decide what to do with us.. I found some sort of religious book in a drawer and began reading it while the others discussed our predicament. It was written by the Church of Karameikos.

It was also discovered that there was something odd about the ranger 'north' sense. There was some disagreement over which way north was as there seemed to be two of them, pointing in opposite directions. We finally agreed to go with the sun.

A bit later on, we were summoned to see the Baron, Desmond Kelven the Second . With him was the head of the Mage's guild in the capital city, a gentleman by the name of Teldon. He was rather surprised to learn we had divisions in our magical knowledge. In this land, all spells were available for all mages. Boulder was in the cells because he was a giant. Here, there was a continuing conflict between the humans, and their allies, against the local giant-kind. Shizane also got into real trouble when he said he was a fire mage. Here, fire mages are reviled because of the evil destructive things that they do.

We were in the city of Kelven one of two in the land of Karameikos that were ruled by the Church of Karameikos. Here, practising arcane magic within the city limits was forbidden. The other is Threshold. This led to the hypothesis that the Baron here is a Paladin, basically a Church Knight. The capital city of Karameikos is Specularum. There, all weapons have to be peace bonded otherwise it's instant execution on the spot. There is some friction between the two races.

There are two types of inhabitants in Karameikos. The original inhabitants are the Traladrans. They're a fair skinned, dark haired people. However, around thirty odd years ago, the Thyatians 'claimed' Traladra. One of them was Duke Stefan Karameikos who obtained title to the land and did some aggressive civic improvements, including roads, fortifications, and urban expansion. The Thyatians are a shorter dark skinned folk and, currently the mix is 10% Thyatian, 70% Traladrans and the rest mixed.

Teldon told us that the portal only opened once a month and remained open for only a minute. Grendel was lucky to get back immediately. The last time it had been used successfully was 2000 years ago. This led us to the conclusion that the portal opened to other planes other than Alusia. 200 years ago, someone tried to use it but was killed in the attempt. From what Teldon was saying, there was a death curse on the portal. Anyone pacted to a Death God was automatically killed. The last person was pacted to Hades. So much for using this portal as a trade route.

That evening, once everything had been explained, we had dinner in the Grand Hall with the Baron and his court. Just as well we had all brought good clothing with us. It would be a month until we could go back so it was suggested that we travel to Specularum and see the Duke. Teldon would go with us. I got the feeling he was rather interested in our magics as he and Shizane spent quite a bit of time discussing obscure magical stuff that was way over my head.

Most of the people at dinner were Thyatians and I was trying to find out more information on the culture.

.3.

Karameikos is considered to be underpopulated. What population there is, is mostly human but there are two separate groups of elves, the Callarii and the Vyalia. There is also a gnome stronghold which is shared with a dwarven clan. Much of the country is overrun by orcs and goblins but pacification is in progress. There are even dragons. They referred to them as young, but they compared to mature ones on Alusia.

The currency consists of three coins: the Royal, a gold piece, the Crona, which is silver, and the Kopec, which is copper. It's ten kopec to the chrona and ten cronas to the royal. A much more logical system in my view than ours.

Getting to Specularum is easy. We can use the Duke's Road, which would take 7 to 10 days, while taking the river barge would take half of that. I was assured there was no danger on the trip.

Any income that we made would be taxed here at 25%. There was also a 5% sales tax and a 1% import tax. It was strongly suggested that Hamish got a cage for his monkey.

Finally we retired to separate rooms. Shizane had his horn magically removed by the Baron. It had to come off otherwise he'd be treated as an 'abomination' - not a nice thing. Telden would also arrange to do something about our giant. Unfortunately he couldn't come with us as planned as he needed to return to the Mages Guild in Specularum as quickly as possible.

4th Fruit

Woke at dawn. Boulder was transmogrified into a cute 6'2" human and let out of his cell. Even all his gear was changed. We saw the seneschal and was told a letter of introduction to the Duke had already been arranged. We were expected to leave within the next three days at our convenience. And yes, it was possible to buy maps. Also, since healing abilities belong to the clergy, Thorn was advised to be discrete.

We obtained a guide, a Thyatian called Anya Theros, and had a look around. The keep, located in the centre of Kelven had eight towers with catapults and ballistae on top. The town itself is also walled and a separate walled area on one side is the caravan park. We even saw a small grove of trees in town, something that seems to be lacking in Seagate.

Our first stop was Ruminov, a Traladran money changer. He examined our coinage and concluded that our silver penny was worth 7 kopec, a gold shilling was 84 kopec and a truesilver guinea was 1764 kopec. So we changed 1000sp, 1 gold & 1 truesilver and received 2548 kopec worth of coins. This was shared out and each of us, except Shizane who provided the raw currency, received 1 royal, 20 cronas and 20 kopecs each, a total of 320 kopecs. Shizane kept the rest. Hamish spent his 20 cronas on a cage weighing two pounds.

Brigetta managed to get some maps but we decided to leave most of our shopping until we reached the capital. So it was decided to go to the caravan park to see if we could go with a caravan.

There was one there that consisted of ten wagons, pulled by 6-8 horses each. There were several

well dressed merchants, and 15 guards, 5 in chain the rest in leathers. We met their leader, a moustached human, named Luigi Giovanni, who addressed me in very cultured elvish, wanting to know whether I came from Alfheim. Too late, I realised there was an Alfheim here as well and it didn't take him long to surmise the existence of the portal and where it was - not from me I might add because I immediately clammed up. He then gave me a rather intense stare, just like the ones I had seen when someone is detecting an aura.

.4.

We were told that the caravan was leaving the day after tomorrow so we retreated to prepare.

5th Fruit

Shizane spent 190 cronas for a mule and another 80 for a pack saddle. Shizane and I then spent 55C each for a two person tent each. I bought 20 normal arrows for 20C and the shopkeeper threw in a spare string for my longbow. On the wall he had a special folded composite bow that was made in Ethengar and was given to him. Only they have the technology to make them. They also have special arrows as well and I would really like to get some.

6th Fruit

Up really early to join the caravan. We discovered that the leather clad guards were from the Republic of Darokin. As the caravan left, we took up position at the rear.

They set up a fast pace although we were told they were ambling. Still we were able to keep up relatively easily. The road we were on was very well made. As we travelled we tested the mana and discovered it felt odd. Also the mana intake was affected by how much metal we were carrying, included silvered. About half a pound of common metal was enough to block magic and ten pounds of silver. More experimentation by Shizane showed the mix was in proportion, i.e. a quarter of a pound of common mixed with five pounds of silvered is enough to block it.

It was tiring to keep up, and in a day, we covered sixty miles, at a rate of six miles an hour. All we met were two wagons going the other way. All the way, the road followed the river.

13th Fruit

Seven days later we had discovered that purification seems to last longer here. Plus the metal limits were no longer applying to me plus my racial witchsight had vanished plus my nightsight had changed so that warm bodies were glowing red in the dark. Shizane theorised that I was becoming more like the elves here.

We were two days out from Specularum when we were told that the caravan had to pick up the pace. They wanted to be there today. So we let them go. They left at a pace we could not hope to match i.e at least three times faster. At this point we were in wilderness country and hadn't seen a settlement for some time. So we carried on at our own pace. The land around here looked like it had be deforested for farmland but neglected.

At dusk we set camp. Some ruins could be seen several miles away off the road. Watches were set up, three of four hours each. Boulder and I first, Thorn and Hamish next, with Shizane and Brigetta last.

As night fell, lights came on in the ruins. Boulder wanted to investigate but I wouldn't let him.

Then I suddenly felt very tired and dropped off to sleep.

14th Fruit

It wasn't until lunchtime that we all woke up. It turned out we were attacked in the night by a dog sized bat. Shizane had managed to toss a couple of firebolts at it before he succumbed. Brigetta's ward she had set last night had been dissipated and strange itchy marks on our necks indicated we had been nibbled on by a vampire. We decided to leave the area.

15th Fruit

Finally reached Specularum. It was a huge walled city which had a port. A small castle guarded the port entrance and large seagates controlled entry. A small fishing village was close by. A large queue had formed at the gates waiting to get in.

We joined the queue and discovered there was a festival on. Because of that, entry fees had increased. No wonder that caravan wanted to get here early. The walls were nearly 30ft high with towers spaced every 400ft along. There was a moat around the city and the drawbridge was down. The main gate was guarded by soldiers carrying spears and wearing red/blue tabards with a ship device. We ensured all our weapons were peacebonded. I even bundled the arrows and removed the bow strings.

It cost us a total of 48C to get through and we discovered that it was the Festival of Locar, celebrated by the Traladrans. More city walls could be seen ahead which surrounded the port. A local told us that the Mages Guild was over to the right and warned us to stay clear of the Old Quarter, especially the Nest. Apparently that area is comparable to Sanctuary.

The Mages Guild was located in the Merchants Quarter and, as we travelled, we noticed that this city was dirtier than Kelvin. The Guild was located in a fortified two story mansion labelled 'Karamaikos Great School of Magic' and was located near the large defence tower.

We spoke to the receptionist and gained an appointment with Teldon for 10am tomorrow. With the festival on, the best chance for accommodation was in the Old Quarter. On the way there we encountered a religious procession consisting of a sedan chair containing a beautiful woman borne by four Traladrans. Following that was a group of statues, one more ornate than the rest.

Suddenly the procession stopped and we could hear an argument going on between one of the bearers and a small group of Thayatans. The insults were flying back and forth and it would have come to blows but the participants were forced apart by a group in green livery. I found out that these were Baron Volore's men and the person I was speaking to was going on about them interfering again. Volore is a master merchant.

.5.

We finally found accommodation on the edge of the Old Quarter. However it consisted of two inns, located near each other, with a room each. So the boys took one while us girls were in the other. That evening we met up with Theosius who wanted to hire us for odd jobs within the next week. He doesn't know the exact nature of them but was reasonably sure it wasn't illegal. Upon departure he left us a bag containing 9 royals, which was split among the three of us.

Meanwhile, at the other inn, the boys had a bag containing 20 royals thrown at them by a man

with black hair and a full faced beard, who was pretending to be drunk. Two others, wearing purple full-faced hoods, were with him. Presumably they were being hired as well.

We went over to the other inn, located around the corner from us, Shizane purchased six meads (as well as one for the barkeep) and we compared notes. By talking to people we were able to discover that the Torensescu Clan is the second largest noble family of the original inhabitants and they now champion native causes. The Radu are also native and they became well off since the Thayatians arrived. However, when Shizane mentioned people in purple hood, everyone clammed up.

16th Fruit

Next morning we met for breakfast. As we were finishing up an elderly woman, Thanato, rushed in claiming to have heard demons in her cellar. So, being the adventurers that we were, we offered to check it out.

The cellar was rather large and we carefully checked it out. All we could hear were rats but we suspected that wasn't it. It was a dry dirt cellar and as we explored we saw one large rat and noticed a barrel had been tipped over, spilling apples on to the floor. I lit a candle and discovered two areas where the flame flickered, one in the NW and the other in the SE corner. Further investigation showed obscured tracks connecting the two holes. The NW hole pointed in the direction of the merchants quarter while the other one pointed towards the Nest, however, we didn't think they actually went that far.

Being adventurers we went exploring down the SE tunnel. At first it was a crawl but then entered a 10x20ft room that had been carved out. We could see human sized tracks in the floor. More exploration revealed branch tunnels, one of which ran into a dead end. For a while we were convinced there was something hidden here as it seemed really odd to dig a tunnel to nowhere but we finally gave up.

Finally we entered an old cellar. Suddenly we saw a glowing humanoid form that had clanking sounds coming from it. That wasn't so bad but it was when the hands started coming out of the ground that we nearly freaked. I dived for cover out of the way while Shizane, Thorn and Brigetta, rapidly unpeaced their weapons and attacked the rising zombies. I leapt on the one Brigetta was attacking in an effort to help bring it down. Thorn immolated a dagger and hacked away at hers.

“That gives us an excuse to search the rubble” - Brigetta

“We're adventurers. We don't need an excuse” - Aurora

Boulder kicked one in the head which flew off but that didn't stop it. I was trying to punch that one at the same time and managed to plunge my arm deep into it's body and get it stuck inside.

Finally they were all defeated and Thorn had to cut one open to free my arm. I then had to suffer one of Shizane's cleansing flames in order to remove the rotting flesh off me. It was not pleasant. Thorn and Shizane spotted a burnt metal chest embedded in the ground, and bumped heads getting it out. The lock was completely fused.

There were no other exists so we worked our way back to a T junction with a branch we hadn't checked and explored that. We encountered another 'T' with fresh tracks going in both

directions. Looking right was an open space, probably another cellar. We could hear the sound of wood on wood coming from that direction accompanied by quiet footsteps. Then a light appeared in the cellar accompanied by a creak, presumably the trapdoor being opened.

We looked in and saw a guy, wearing a brown full face hood and cloak, over other clothing, approaching with a wheelbarrow full of digging implements. When he saw us he tipped the barrow so that the scattered tools would impede our progress and hightailed it for the ladder. Thorn managed to grab him and a fight ensued. Finally he surrendered. Thorn immediately tended to his wounds before he died on us.

.6.

Once he was revived he threatened us in the name of the Veiled Society. We weren't able to get much out of him so we decided to bind him, and take him with us, using the wheelbarrow. A search revealed a garotte and 20 royals, which we didn't remove.

Finally arrived back at the old lady's cellar. We were busy hauling stuff up the ladder when two more brown hooded men arrived. Of course they had to show up when we were hauling the extremely awkward barrel up. They charged us with weapons already out and a fight ensued. Brigetta and Boulder were already off reporting to the innkeeper.

Thorn dropped the barrel and Shizane did a Weapon of Flame on his sword. While I'm trying to restring my short bow the others laid in. One was hit by Thorn and decided to run away. The other one was stunned so Thorn hit him again and he collapsed, bleeding. Shizane filled the tunnel they came up with a firewall.

Their wounds were tended to as best as we could then someone decided we should take them with us to the Mage Guild. However, the only way that we could see to do this was to transport them in a barrel each and bowling them there. In hindsight, we should have fetched the City Guard to deal with it.

Anyway, once the others returned, that was what we did. The barrels were parked in the reception area and we went upstairs to see Teldon. We had to wait a short time and, just after we arrived, a beautiful lady in cloak and plate mail, with a gryphon symbol on it, emerged. Her name was Aleena.

We were in the process of informing Teldon what had occurred when there was a scream from reception. Someone had opened a barrel. To make matters worse, one of our prisoners had died in transit, the second one. Blood had seeped out of the barrel and on to the carpet. We were in a lot of trouble.

We were in more trouble when it was discovered that some members of our party had not repeacebonded their weapons after the fight with the zombies. Also our first captive had not actually attacked us. As far as I could see, Specularum law was very absolute on this point that we were the aggressors. There had to be some extremely mitigating circumstances for us to get off and, frankly, I couldn't think of any. So when the guards showed up, we were arrested and taken to the main tower, split up, and questioned individually. I don't know what the others said but I decided to come clean. Besides I suspected that they had ways to discerning the truth anyway.

It was only because of the suspicious circumstances going on in the tunnels, and the fact we were keen to cooperate, that we were allowed to accompany the guards in their search. There was a parallel tunnel, with crosslinks to the one we had found. One room had disturbed earth on the floor and a body of a woman was found underneath. She had only been dead for a few hours and cause of death was either stabbing or garotting. The guards were able to tell us that the Veiled Society were an organised criminal group. However they didn't recognise the name of the man who had attempted to hire us but we later discovered he was a respected sculpture and craftsman in the city. He does lots of work for the noble families.

Searching the house upstairs revealed signs of violence, a brownish sticky sweet liquid, bloodstains and a dagger. The dagger had red hairs stuck on it. And someone had evidently tried to write something in the blood. It looked like 'BAD'. Near the cellar entrance was a signet ring bearing the symbol of the Torensescu family. The ladder had black stuff stuck to it which may be pitch. A used bit of rope was discarded nearby which may have been used as the garrote.

The victim was identified as Lucia Valori and the house belonged to Fortunato Valori, her father. There were also some red hairs under the victims fingernails. We recognised her as being the one in the carriage.

The cellar where we had found our first captive came up in a one room house at the back of a butcher's shop. We found muddy footprints on the floor and an empty bottle with traces of the sweet brown wine. Part of the bottle's seal was still legible, reading —scan-est and there was half a picture of a villa. On the floor was a mound of bandages and a brown hooded cloak was found hidden in the desk. More red hairs were found inside the hood. The only thing found in the bed were fleas so several of us were using cantrips to keep them off.

The butcher told us he had rented the back room to a man called Skevlos whom he described as a portly black haired man.

Once the preliminary investigations were complete we were taken back to the tower and put in a 'nice' holding cell. Two hours later we could hear shouting outside and a bit later on there were screams and the clashing metal. We later discovered that a full scale riot had erupted.

19th Fruit

Today was our trial. Teldon had appointed an advocate for us and, after the proceedings, we were found guilty (not unexpected) told to spend time in gaol, (the amount we had already done) and fined 10 royals each. I believed we got off very lightly.

Afterwards we finally got around to getting that box opened. Inside were three pieces of melted gold jewellery about 600 royals worth in gold.

We also found out that the dagger belonged to the victim. The person we had killed was the murderer and the other guy wasn't involved in the murder, just with transporting the digging implements. The tunnels led to three of the main noble houses. As well as the Volari, one went to the Torensescu and the other to the Radu. We suspected that they were attempting to stir up dissension between the noble houses.

It was decided that we should seek accommodation with the guards, because there was a good possibility our lives were in danger from insane assassins. I can just see the headlines in the *Times* when that comes out ranging from 'Guild Party Seeks Sanctuary' to 'Guild Party Hides Behind Town Guards'. But we did it anyway - because it was the logical thing to do.

The festival was over early, because of the riots - which was a bit of a shame as I had been looking forward to sampling the culture. The riots were caused by rumours and accusations flying around because of the murder.

As we were progressing down the street, later that day, a crossbow bolt slammed into Shizane from somewhere on the rooftops. I tried to cast a Fly spell on Shizane so he could get up there and deal with the sniper but failed - several times. Besides, that's not the best spell if you require an immediate lift-off. Shizane drank a Waters of Healing - just as another bolt thudded in. Clearly the tips were poisoned. He managed to return fire, with a firebolt, then the assassin fled into the building and disappeared into the street. My third fly spell attempt backfired onto me as Shizane went after him - and ran into an ambush. The others followed but I decided to get help from the guards. A while later, I came back with the captain and a twenty man squad.

"Fire mage in hot pursuit" - Brigetta

The opposition had fled and we turned over the bolts and arrows as evidence. By now the spell was whipping my clothes and hair about so I counterspelled it.

"No doubt the guards will know where to find us" - Shizane

The guard captain identified the poison as being Mandoria. It comes from somewhere in Thyatia from a small rodent. It's only toxic to humans.

The assassins could have been hired from a rival group but this attempted hit had Veiled Society written all over it. After hearing our story, the guard captain offered the use of a holding cell for us to sleep in which we accepted. Yep. I can just see the Rumour Mill column now. Probably lucky for us that the Myrror had ceased publication. We were told that the Veiled Society had members all over Karameikos but most of the members were here. If we left town, we would probably be safe.

After that we headed down to the docks looking for clues. We first visited a Kaladrian wine merchant in Vinter's Lane, Arestos. He managed to identify the label as being from the Trusken Estate and the drink is imported from Thyatia. One person who drinks the stuff is Seraphin, a minstrel who plays in a tavern at the end of the docks. Unfortunately we weren't able to find out more as Boulder started asking about rather expensive wines and managed to offend the merchant. We left hurriedly.

The tavern in question was the 'Broken Rutter' and as we approached, we could hear music inside. A red headed bard was playing background music on a rather unusual looking instrument - a twelve string guitar. We sat down at a table, six meads were purchased and Hamish tried to chat up the barmaid - very unsuccessfully.

Hamish then ordered two more ales, one for him and one for the bard. After a short while I went up to the bard and, when he had finished the tune he was playing, asked him about his instrument. He said he was playing tunes from a time way back when people had come here from another plane called Earth. The guitar also came from there. So I asked him to play something elvish then invited him back to our table to converse with our master troubadour.

Eventually the conversation turned to wine. He told us that he only had a couple bottles but, if we were interested in that type, the Vanir estate produces a similar vintage made in the next valley over. Shizane brought another round.

We went for a wander along the docks then checked the market place. Lots of tempting stuff to buy but I decided not to. Someone did find an alchemists shop that sold restoratives so two 9 pointers were bought at 750C each. Brigetta then discovered a note with the Torensescu seal in her pocket. It read 'Two bells to midnight. Jade Sea, Pier 7'.

Two bells before midnight was 10pm and, before we left, Brigetta cast Dance of Swords on everyone except Shizane. We found the ship with the Torrensescu flag on it and saw Theosius coming down the gangplank. Just then ten men, looking like beggars, arrived on the wharf. They were carrying unbound shortswords but peacebonded them when they stopped.

However, Lord Simian, a tall thin man with raven black hair was not worried by them. Turned out the King of the Beggars had sent them to act as bodyguards. So now he had two lots. We were to escort Lord Simian to Baron Volore's residence and ensure he got there safely. The reward was 1000C each upon arrival.

So we formed two defensive circles around our principle with the 'beggars' on the outside. Three quarters of the way there, 'all hell broke loose' as we were attacked on three sides at an intersection.

.9.

As the enemy closed in, the beggars formed a protective shield between them and us. Boulder and Thorn also stepped forward while Brigetta and I prepared bows. Shizane moved closer to our principle to help protect him while Hamish started preparing spells.

It seemed like the fight took a long time but, in reality, it was all over in about a minute or so. Bowmen opened up on us from the tops of buildings from both sides and the lead beggars were quickly cut down by the advancing forces. There was also an assassin in armour up there who was throwing poisoned daggers at our principle, some of which were hitting. He also did some sort of hold person spell which froze the principle in his tracks. Shizane used a fire running spell to get both of them out of the way as the bodyguard succumbed. They were clear for just enough time for Shizane to use a Waters of Healing to fix the poison but then the assassin flew over the gap and started to close to melee range. The situation was not looking good.

Fortunately Thorn, Boulder, and Brigetta (who had switched to axe) were making short work of the opposition. I wasn't having much luck but did manage to get a couple of hits in. Maybe I'd better learn some of the more lethal spells of my College. Hamish headed up to the back of the buildings to deal with the ones on the roof.

Shizane, with the aid of fire bolts, was able to drive off the assassin before he could do more harm, although it was a close thing. When he left, several of the opposing forces also retreated. When it was all over all we were able to salvage for 'evidence' was 13 crossbows and 63 daggers,

50 of them balanced for throwing. However we were able to get our principle to safety — rather battered but alive. In appreciation he doubled our payment, now 2000 chrona's apiece.

.10.

Once we got back to the guard tower, several of the party started running several magical divinations. Shizane did a fire reading and discovered that the red haired person is a carpenter and he'll be working at the docks in two days. So the guards arranged to arrest every red haired carpenter on the docks then.

Brigetta was a Ritual of Recitation on the hood we had recovered and discovered the following:

Where does the V.S. meet - vision of hall containing more than twenty people wearing hoods.

Identity of the red haired assassin - no answer

When and how could the cleric be contacted by immediate superiors - no answer

What secret id signs or passwords that the V.S. used - multiple answers that change over time.

Hamish was doing tarot readings and was able to ascertain that the person did not know the assassin, the Society met in a hall that could be located in the Nest, the same hall each meeting and that the entrance is through a tavern with a white & blue interior. So Boulder and I went looking for inn names that Hamish could use to determine which one it was.

It turned out to be the 'Blue Mead Hall'. Entrance to the meeting hall itself was gained though the inn cellar, which was guarded and the route went through four sets of branching passages. The correct route was, right, left, slight right, slight right. The entrance to the hall is also guarded and there is a passcode which changes each meeting. The primary objective of the Society, as far as we could determine, was pure and simple greed.

We were also told that our meeting with the Duke was in 3 days from now.

20th Fruit

We received a message from Baron Volore that we were to attend afternoon tea this day. An hour later, a message arrived from Baron Torenescu for lunch on the morrow. The emessary from the Radu family delivered a bag of money, a total of 5000 chrona.

Afternoon tea consisted of four hours of delicious food over several courses including ice-cream and chocolate as dessert. I really wanted to take the secret of ice-cream back to Alusia but it was considered improper to ask. I would have to wait until a suitable trade could be found.

Afterwards we were conducted to a small room. While we waited I tried to make friends with the family cat but it didn't want to know. Baron Volore told us that he was very grateful for our assistance and an account had been opened in Brigetta's name at the Karamekian Treasure Bank for a sum of up to 10,000 chrona. We were also offered the use of their third guest house which we accepted - after all it would have been improper to refuse.

So we were taken to the guest house where we were able to relax with baths and comfortable beds.

.11.

21st Fruit

Next day a carriage arrived to take us to the Torrenescu estate, located out in the country. One

carriage for the girls, one for the guys. The convoy was escorted by a squad of knights in plate mail who were so skilled in wearing it that they were able to mount and dismount their horses without assistance.

We headed west out of the city and past the Duke's forest.

“I'm just admiring the scenery” - Aurora.

“I'm just admiring the scenery too. It's just wearing plate mail” - Brigetta

Off to the right was a small castle. We were told by the attendant, who was accompanying us, that it belonged to the landed knight Valkyre. We then passed through vineyards and reached a large, three-tiered castle. Each tier was a curtain wall and the entrances were rotated 180 degrees around relative to the previous one. A small town, called Marlian Village, was located on one side. Seemed awfully large to me especially since I originally came from a hamlet. Their definition of village, town sizes etc is nearly twice as large as ours.

After a two & one half hour trip we finally arrived at the keep and watched as our knight escort got off their horses, apparently unencumbered. From the look on Boulder's face, I think he wants some of that armour. A strip of red carpet was rolled out so we didn't have to walk on the stone floor. This keep was well maintained but looked old. I suspected it had stood for hundreds of years, if not thousands.

Lunch was served in the Grand Hall and we were placed at seats about halfway to the back from the main table. The food was very hearty and it was very nice - so was the honey mead. I think Brigetta was ensuring I didn't drink too much. Her and Shizane were also making sure Boulder was well fed and didn't make any social faux pas. I stuck mainly to the non-meat dishes as I'm mostly a vegetarian. For a while I thought I was the only elf in the room but then I saw a male elf seated close to the head table. From what we could hear, it was only recently that the local inhabitants had stopped feuding among themselves and got organised.

After dinner we were taken to the room behind the Hall. Red carpet led from the door to four thrones on three tiers. Three of the thrones were occupied, the top one by the family head.

He thanked us for our efforts in defusing the situation and told us that a stipend had been set aside for our use. It was 'suggested' that we use it to obtain some more suitable clothing, especially for our upcoming audience with the Duke. A peasantry dress was suggested.

Baron Torenescu was especially interested in the differences between our world and his, especially when we mentioned that our Duke didn't have barons. Here, a duke has to have barons under him or he isn't a duke. Also the inheritance of the barony was controlled by the Duke. Karamekos was described as a small country. Because Grendel was part owner of his own dominion he could be classed as a Baron.

On the way out we were given a gilded chest with a studded gem inlay. The box itself seemed to be worth 5000 chronas and when we got a chance to count the contents, about the same amount was in there.

Back at the guest house, we slept off lunch.

22nd Fruit

Went to see the Duke and joined the queue of petitioners. The Duke had an interesting system for screening those who wanted to bother him with trivia. Their appointment would be delayed and if they still persisted, he would politely listen before casting them in jail.

So we listened to the petitions. One lady, Yolander, was complaining about slavers at their town of Lulen, and wanted to enoble their defender. It was apparent that this petition had been brought up before so she was put in jail but was to be released that evening as this lady is very popular with the court.

Another interesting petition came from a halfling, Genkin Flintfoot, who wanted permission to cross the border to pursue raiders from Karameikos that were invading the Five Shires. The Duke gave permission. It was also apparent that this raider problem was related to Yolander's petition as Lulen was located near the Five Shires.

We were told that the Duke is to be addressed as 'Your Highness'. Only local nobles and ambassadors use 'Your Grace', and currently, we didn't qualify as either. So Brigetta told him of our request to open trade relationships and handed over the letters of introduction from Kelvin and Grendel. Afterwards we were invited to use accommodations in the Lower Palace which we gratefully accepted. He also gave a proclamation that made us all Court Lords. We spent the rest of the day observing court.

23rd Fruit

We were seen by the Duke's wife, Duchess Olivia Karameikos, and the Minsters of State, Trade & Internal Affairs in a private meeting. We were told that a group had been sent through the portal, after we had come through. Protocols were put in place for possible trade to ensure the protection of both sides.

25th Fruit

Got word that Grendel and Aqualina had arrived to finalize the trade details. So, once they were here, we made our way home.