

The Gnome with the Golden Hand

Cover Sheet

Adventure by Carl Reynolds

01/07/95 - 22/07/95

Player Characters

Katherine	Mind	Human	Female	Military Scientist
Grond/Fenton	Binder	Human	Male	
Tixellanif (TC)	E&E	Human	Male	Leader
Pent	Ice	Hobbit	Male	
Sabbath	Fire	Orc	Male	
Flamis	Fire	Human	Female	
Basalic	Earth	Human	Male	Scribe

Plane

Elushia

Places visited

Summer City, located under an ice lake - very far north of Carzala

Dwart complex in split peak mountain.

The tomb of Hurog the Hammer at the bottom of the complex.

Employer

The Wizard Immanuel Alias

Major NPCs encountered

Victor - the gnome

Mission

To find the gnome and recover the wizard's staff.

The Gnome with the Golden Hand

Adventure Summary

31/06/95

A bag of opals, accompanied by a note, was mysteriously dropped off at the Guild. According to the note, the Wizard Aliias wanted a party to determine who killed the King of his city. We assembled to check it out.

01/07/95

Received some enhanced ShadowWings, portalled to Destiny, then flew a long way north. It was late evening by the time we arrived. All that was at the indicated map reference for the city was an ice covered lake. Intercepted by black, shadowy figures who believed we were intruders and attacked. We retreated to a nearby forested area. There were signs of a dragon nearby.

02/07/95

Tried approaching the lake again. This time the spectral minions let us through and we reached the point where the river flowed out. The ice proved to be Bound Ice and there was a walkway that went under the ice sheet by the river. A city could be seen through the ice.

We went down the walkway and suddenly flipped the other way up. A little way further on, we reached a very large warm area. Here we found a huge area of fields with the city in the middle. It was called the Summer City. Entered the city and went to the wizard's tower where we met the wizard. He told us of Victor, his gnome assistant, who had stolen something, killed the King then went Outside. The wizard wouldn't say much about the item except it was rather potent. Also discovered that the spectral minions were created by Aliias and were his servants and 'information gatherers'.

03/07/95

Went to the palace for more information. Aliias had said that Victor had got upset about the King's xenophobic proclamation but subsequent information contradicted this. The spectral minions were everywhere and people were nervous of them.

Went back to the tower and used his crystal to explore the nearby split peak mountain (indicated in an earlier 'reading'). Discovered that the bottom of the peak was inhabited by obese, light grey, humanoids inhabiting the lava pits. They use fire magics and destroyed the minions Aliias sent in. Lots of passages led off into the mountain.

04/07/95

Left the city environs, emerged from under the 'ice' and headed north towards the mountain range. Camped at the foothills.

05/07/95

Travelled east along the foothills. Saw griffons in the mountains then were attacked by some. Defeated them with difficulty. Made camp under a rocky ledge.

06/07/95

Found the pass to cross the range to arrive at the vicinity of the split peak mountain. Crossed the pass then Flamis spotted a little figure walking along. It wasn't the gnome, instead it was a Lesser

Dwart. It came from the split peak mountain and told us a gnome had visited them and wanted us to visit. We declined - with force.

07/07/95

Explored the base of the mountain and discovered a path going up to a cave. Two dwarf guards were at the entrance.

08/07/95

Looked for other entrances but didn't find any.

09/07/95

Headed in through the entrance and fought the dwarf guards. They told us that the gnome had come through here, blasting lightning bolts, and had been chased into the depths of the cave complex. As far as they knew he was still down there.

We made our way down the tunnels, fighting off the dwarfs and their torc wearing magic-users as we did so. From time to time we had to make our own tunnels in order to get around them. Later on some of those obese creatures, Greater Dwarfs, were encountered. Those too had to be fought or avoided.

After quite a while we found a definitely artificial shaft, complete with handholds. As we descended the air got noticeably colder. At the bottom it was very cold and we found what appeared to be a tomb and a body encased in ice. According to the plaque this was Hurog the Hammer.

Another level below us was discovered that could be accessed through a snow filled room. There were four of them and we started clearing the snow from one of them. As we did so we were attacked by ice elementals. We got away but with one casualty.

A shaft down was discovered and we descended, reaching a cavern with glittering ice covered stalactites and stalagmites. A gremlin arrived who offered to lead us to Victor. Soon we reached a vertical shaft. As we prepared to make a descent a glowing light appeared in the shaft. Soon Victor levitated up to our level. He was carrying a glowing blue crystal staff. Occasionally lightning would flicker up and down it.

Victor did not want to go back or allow Aliias to have the staff back, even though the everpresent spectral minions were hissing at him. We decided that it would be better to take him to the Guild and let them arbitrate. Finally Victor agreed. He used the staff to blast a tunnel to the surface and we took off on Fireflight.

We flew west, hoping to outfly the minions but they popped in all around us and we were forced to land. Aliias then communicated with us, through a device he had given TC, and insisted we hand over Victor and the staff. Finally a compromise was reached. Victor, TC, and the staff went back to Seagate while the rest of us were held as hostages.

20/07/95

Finally a Guild representative turned up with Aliias's staff. Victor had admitted killing the King but it was an accident. The staff was defending him when the King discovered Victor in the Royal Wing. Victor had fled to the mountains in fear. Meanwhile Aliias had been under suspicion and

had dropped it all on Victor.

We made our way back to Seagate, arriving on the 22nd.

The Gnome with the Golden Hand

Basalic

The mission that Flamis picked appeared to be some sort of mystery. Apparently someone dropped off a bag of opals and a note before disappearing. Surprisingly Guild Security didn't have a chance to determine who it was. The note requested assistance to determine who had murdered the King in their city. The note did give a map reference to the city but when checked, the coordinates were somewhere in the northern mountain range and all that appeared to be there was a large lake. Either the city is in the lake or there is a cave network nearby.

We entered meeting room #3 and discovered who our fellow adventurers were:

Katherine: a woman dressed in peasant clothing. She said she was a Neuromancer

Fenton: a six foot elf was decked out as a Gabrealite Father. He was a Binder and carried a golem called Bob on his shoulder.

Tixellanif (TC) - A tall bloke with a red hat, yellow shirt and orange trousers. He carried a rapier and was an E&E.

Pent - a 3'2" hobbit carrying a variety of weapons. He's an Ice Mage.

Sabbath - an orc wearing dark leather armour and a black cloak with a large red eye on it. He carried a tulwar and was a beginning firemage.

It was rapidly apparent that Sabbath was having an adverse reaction to Fenton. Turned out that he had brutally tortured by elves on his last adventure and had developed a neurosis against them. I wanted Katherine to put him under hypnosis to minimise the effects but she wasn't keen. Meanwhile Fenton was discussing something with Guild Security. After a few minutes he left.

Sabbath said that he didn't like being DAed during an adventure as he considered it an invasion of privacy. So I suggested that if I read his aura for a standard question I'd be able to test for it when necessary. He agreed to that so I went for 'Last magical effect to impact'.

After a short wait someone else stepped into the room. This was an eight foot tall behemoth, with long hair and a beard, dressed in platemail and carrying a rather impressive looking warhammer. Reminded me of a legend of some guy called Thor. He introduced himself as Grond and said he was a replacement for Fenton. Granted he had broad shoulders and rippling muscles but there was no reason I could see for both females to go all ga-ga.

Once introductions were complete we voted on who was doing what. Katherine became the Military Scientist while TC became the party leader while I was the scribe.

The Guild rep didn't really have much to add but along with the note and the opals a pass key to the city had been left. It was a red opal disk with a grey stripe and didn't have an aura. The wizard had signed the note Aliias and as far as the Guild knew was an Enchanter/Binder cross. All we had to do was find the perpetrator of the King's murder.

Once the Guild meeting broke up, we arranged for some Greater Enchantments. Once we had

them Flamis tried for a precognition Flamesight and got an image of a mountain with a split peak. The scene then changed to an impression of darkness, smoke and heat with something moving in it. There was even the sound of rhythmic tapping.

She then managed to convince Guild Security to allow her to try her Contact Other Selves ritual. Considering what happened last time I wasn't surprised about the precautions they took to prevent any backfire attempts but this time they were unnecessary. She asked three questions:

"Who killed the King" - "The Man with the Golden Hand"

"How may we find the King's murderer" - "There is no escape. Justice cannot be forever avoided"

"What perils await us on our quest to find the King's murderer" - "Be thankful the Guild is safe".

01/07/95

It was decided that we were going to fly up there. So, early morning, we were all assembled at the Lord of the Bat's tower to receive our Wings. An Enhance Enchant had been laid down to ensure that we had the range (it was a LONG way north). Even with that it was decided to portal to Destiny and fly from there.

The trip itself was uneventful and it was late at night by the time we reached the mountain range indicated. We could see the lake ahead and below looking rather iced over.

Just then we were intercepted by a group of shadowy figures who ordered us, in whispered tones, to stop and land. We did so. Five of them followed us down. Four of them were rather insubstantial, like shadows but one of them was more solid. It was to that one that TC showed the amulet to but it refused to believe that we had obtained it legitimately. Instead it was convinced we had stolen it so ordered it's companions to attack.

Katherine reckoned they were wraiths and as such, we needed magically enhanced weapons to hurt them. So I triggered a Weapons of Flame on my sword and went for the attack. Sabbath and Pent did something similar to their weapons (Flame and Cold respectively) and were already going for it. So was Grond.

It proved rather difficult to dispatch these things as they were regenerating every time they hit us. But with the help of Flamis's Dragonflames we were able to vanquish our foes. I had to use a Healing Potion at one point otherwise I would not have been able to continue. Having a gashed and bleeding arm can really ruin your day. Fortunately Katherine was able to fix it.

As we rested we noticed that more of them were flitting around. We would be in deadly trouble if they attacked en-masse as most of the party were feeling rather weak.

.2.

However we were able to rest a bit before taking off again and retreating to a forest area. At the edge of the forest we set up camp. I detected an odd smell which reminded me of a geothermal area but this didn't seem like the area for it. But Grond and Sabbath spotted another possible explanation during their watch - a dragonish object flying past the moon.

02/07/95

Morning wasn't long in coming. We could see little black specks around the lake. Before breaking

camp to confront the wraiths again I cast Armour of Earth on Pent, Grond, Sabbath, and myself as well as a Strength of Stone on Flamis as she was still feeling tired.

So we flew towards the lake (the shadowwings were still running) and waited for the wraiths to react, which they did 25 miles out. We backed off a bit and landed. Four of them followed us down. We hoped that these ones were going to be more reasonable.

It looked they were. As we advanced on foot, TC held out the amulet and the wraiths backed off. I DAed one of them and discovered they were actually 'Spectral Minions'. The last magical effect on another was 'Creation'. Age ranged from 0 to 20 years.

Finally we reached the lake at the point where the river was flowing from underneath the ice. Alongside the river was a walkway leading under the ice. However it wasn't natural ice. Instead it was magical. Pent tried walking on it to see if it affected his magical abilities but it didn't. From what we could figure out it was some sort of Bound Ice. Through the ice we could see a distorted picture of a city. In the middle was a tower with a bright light on top.

Minions flitted past us in both directions as we descended under the 'ice'. Grond was in front. Suddenly he 'fell' upwards to the roof. He stood up on the ceiling as if it was a floor. I couldn't detect any aura on the floor, ceiling or the area between them. So, one at a time, we stepped forward and flipped over. After Sabbath went through I checked his aura but the last spell to impact was one of ours.

A short while later we exited the cave into a very large warm area. Actually it was a huge area of fields with a walled city in the middle. A flashing diamond was on the top of the tower. Above us the sky was a deep blue with bright stars. I checked a blade of grass for Plane of Origin and got Alushia.

Soon we met a farmer working in the fields. When asked he said the place was called the Summer City. He had never left the area.

We then headed for the city gates - or at least where the gates would have been if they were there. Instead there was just a gap. We couldn't see any guards either at least not until we got inside. Once we explained why we were here one of the guards offered to guide us to the wizard's tower.

The city was certainly active. Quite a few trades were in evidence. We could also see what looked like a large cathedral. The central tower was attached to what appeared to be a palace.

Soon we reached the wizard's tower and shown inside. The rooms were luxuriously decorated. Shortly we were conducted to a door where two big guys with large curved swords were standing. They let us through as the wizard was expecting us. Inside was a small bare circular room. Once we were all inside, the door shut. Just then the floor began to rise rapidly. Fortunately the ceiling was a long way up. After a while it lurched to a halt. When the door opened we found ourselves in an open topped room surrounded by a balcony. The place was full of silks and satins. Among them was a immaculately dressed small guy with a moustache and beard. He introduced himself as the Wizard Immanuel Aliias.

He told us that he had done an astrology reading that had indicated help from our Guild. He also knew who had done the deed, a gnome called Victor, who had been in his employe but had

stolen something before killing the King and fleeing into the wilderness. Aliias had used his minions to search the entire area but had failed to find him. It seemed therefore that Victor had gone Outside. For some reason the king had made a xenophobic proclamation that had angered Victor and caused him to commit murder.

Aliias then offered to tell us the two readings. He summoned a minion who came in with a head and shoulders bust of a beautiful woman which played two strange songs. They were as follows:

I want to tell you a story
About a little man
If I can
A gnome named Grimble Grumble
And little gnomes
Stay in their homes
Eating, sleeping, drinking their wine.

He wore a scarlet tunic
A blue/green hood
It looked quite good
He had a big adventure
Amidst the grass
Fresh air at last
Wining, dining, biding his time

And then one day
Hooray
Another way for gnomes to say
Ooooooorayyyyyyy.....

Look at the sky, look at the river
Isn't it good
Look at the sky, look at the river
Isn't it good
Winding, finding, places to go.

And then one day
Hooray
Another way for gnomes to say
Ooooooorayyyyyyy.....
Ooooooorayyyyyyy.....

A movement is accomplished in six stages
Then the seventh brings return
The seven is the number of the young light
It forms when darkness is increased by one

Change returns success

Going and coming without error
Action brings good fortune
Sunset...

The time is with the month of winter solstice
When the change is due to come
Thunder in the outer course of heaven
Things cannot be destroyed once and for all

Change returns success
Going and coming without error
Action brings good fortune
Sunrise...Sunset

A movement is accomplished in six stages
Then the seventh brings return
The seven is the number of the of the young light
It forms when darkness is increased by one

Change returns success
Going and coming without error
Action brings good fortune
Sunset...Sunrise...Sunrise...

Aliias reckoned the reading was right about the hood but not about the tunic. Also the gnome's name was Victor, not Grimble Grumble. He had also searched the sky and the river but had found no trace of Victor. But the stars and the idol suggested that we could succeed where he had failed.

This magical dome had been set up several hundred years ago and the city encapsulated within. The dome was also a focusing lens for making the stars clearer and brighter.

Aliias wouldn't say much about the item that Victor had stolen only reckoning that it could be dangerous and that he wanted it back. It does protect Victor from locations and other scrying methods and could have been used to kill the king as the cause of death had been magical. It was also likely that it was the 'Golden Hand' that Flamis's divination had referred to.

It had been five months now since the King had died. The Prince will take over once he comes of age.

Aliias still didn't want to talk about the missing item. Eventually he took TC aside in order to explain it to him in secret. When TC returned I checked him for 'Last Magical Effect' which turned out to be one of ours.

Grond wanted to examine Victor's room even though Aliias had subjected the contents to as many divinatory tests that he could think of. Flamis and Pent searched for any hidden apertures but didn't find any. Also Sabbath decided to consume the oily contents of a potion bottle that was lying around. All it did was make him sleepy.

There were several other entrances/exits to this dome and the nearest city was 60 odd miles away to the west. Aliias had his minions to check the mineshafts but it was possible that they had missed something. Either that he could have headed for the mountains since that was where he came from originally.

Aliias had a large crystal ball which was more flexible than the usual crystal of vision. So while the others speculated, he used it to search for the split peak mountain while Flamis and I watched. Shortly we found it. It was off to the east and it looked like it had been split to the core. There was even a good possibility it was a recent volcano. Could Victor had gone there?

.3.

We were conducted to sleeping rooms. Rather small rooms too. We had to pull down the beds from cupboards. Aliias also issued us with a pass each.

03/07/95

Next morning I got up early and purified. Then Flamis and I transcribed the astrology readings. Breakfast turned up. Of course Pent ordered lots.

It had been decided that we wanted to find out just what the proclamation was that the King had made that had got Victor so riled up. So we headed off to the Palace. The first impression was that it was a building with six wings and a courtyard between each wing. However our guide informed us that there were twenty four wings i.e. each wing was actually four and they alternated. When we looked closely we could see shadowy projections over the courtyards. There were two wings that noone used - especially the East Wing. Apparently there were demons in it. Grond wanted to know where religious fathers would go. The guide suggested the East Wing. He also mentioned that Victor had stayed in the servants quarters while at the Palace. Something to check out while we were here.

We had to wait until the right wing came along. So we wandered into the courtyard. Soon a ghostly palace wing swept the courtyard and we found ourselves in an enclosed courtyard. We were met by the Head Stewart. He told us that Victor had been friends with the kitchen staff. Apparently he loved cream buns which led Pent to suggest that we use cream buns for bait. So we headed down to the kitchens.

We did find the crevice where Victor had been curling up. The kitchen staff were unaware if any supplies had been stolen the night of the King's murder. One of the kitchen staff was a young boy named Jack and he had been friends with Victor. Victor had shown Jack several powdered rocks and other substances of an alchemical nature. Victor had also brought in a bird that looked like a chicken which Jack hadn't seen around before, as well as other things such as flutterbys and green flowers.

The steward wasn't sure what had happened the night of the King's murder. In fact it had been the wizard that had alerted the populace to what had happened. He had heard of the proclamation but it hadn't been one as such. Instead it had been more of a discussion point. The King had been more keen on opening things up to outsiders. Seems to be a contradiction somewhere. Also he kept nervously looking about. Looks like most of the populace are rather nervous of the wraiths. Hmmm. He did say that nothing definite was recorded. So much for that line of enquiry.

We found our way back to the central meeting room with 24 entrances. We were also told there was a Hall of Gates in the High Tower. Wards were on the entrance to the East Wing as well as on the Royal Wing. They glowed yellow/green in Flamis's mirror.

Our intention was to hang around in the hope of catching the High Chancellor but after a while we gave up and left a message. On the way back I DAed some more spectral minions and discovered that they were sentient entities with an average MA of 8 and a WP of 18. Hmm...

Back at the wizard's tower Flamis and I watched while the wizard explored the split peak mountain with his crystal ball. He sent the view down into the split and we discovered that the bottom was occupied by light grey, obese, humanoid creatures with smooth skins inhabiting the lava pools. Some of them were eating the rocks. Some spectral minions went in for a closer look and got hit with blasts of fire. Only one made it back so I DAed it and discovered it had been hit by a Malignant Flames spell. Flamis protected another from magical fire and it took off for a reconnaissance. I then healed the damage that touching the minion had done to her.

The minion saw the creatures tearing holes in the rocks and eating them. A couple were bathing in the lava pools. It also saw lots of caverns and passages leading off from this fissure. Just then it got blasted by fire and was vapourised. We suspected Hellfire.

Later on the entire party trooped off to the mines, with a bunch of minions tagging along for the ride. When we got there we noticed that the dome of the sky met with the ground here. The slag of the mine was piled up against it. Water dripped onto the slag heap from the 'sky'. We spoke to the mine supervisor who gave us a tour. They were primarily mining opals but were hauling out other minerals as well. During the tour we passed through another of those reverse gravity zones as we went deeper in. The upshot of the tour was that Victor hadn't been here and there was no sign of him.

.4.

There was no message from the Chancellor when we got back. It was getting rather late by our reckoning but Pent, TC and I decided to track Aliias down and report. Also we wanted to discuss remuneration for tracking Victor down. Finally we settled on 100,00sp total for completion to be given in magical items. He requested a list of what we wanted. He did give us a small crystal which projected a Wizard's Eye. I also experimented to see if it was possible to make a Spectral Minion Unseen. But, even though they were entities, it didn't work. Pent also accepted a 12pt Greater.

04/07/95

The next day we made our preparations. Aliias presented us with four ioun stones that would act as spell fatigue stores but only when they were spinning around the users head. There was also the potions of Quickness (lasts ten minutes, ages the user one month a minute) - one for each of us, six Enhance Enchant potions (adds up to Rank 10), and some 'gutbusters' (exchanges 1F for 1E per drop - 100 drops worth). A gold bird in a cage which might locate the missing item and some Enhance Weapon salve.

Finally we organised provisions, fed the hobbit, and off we went. I cast Strength of Stone and Armour of Earth on various people (a ritual that was to be repeated every morning).

We then headed north and followed the river out of the city. When we emerged from under the 'ice' it was raining slightly and was rather cold. The river was very strongly reflective, in fact the reflection of the split peak was clearer than the original. Further up, the reflection became more normal. Late afternoon we reached the foothills of the mountain range and camped.

05/07/95

To assist doing the morning spells it was suggested that I have all four ioun stones whirling around my head in order to use their stored fatigue instead of more of mine. However I had to restrain myself from swatting them as I was perceiving them to be mosquitos buzzing about. Darned things! A bird must have been fooled as well as it dived bombed and tried to grab one. It missed and crashed into a tree.

A couple of hours travelling along the foothills later, TC spotted the spoor of an unknown creature. Turned out to be a griffin. Soon we reached a gorge and crossed over the river flowing through it. A little while later Katherine picked up a mind thinking 'Rip Tear Rend'. We decided to go around. A bit further along she picked up another half dozen - baby griffins. We noted their position and took a wide berth.

Two hours later a griffon was spotted in the sky ahead of us. It swooped down and landed nearby. I was hit by the initial attack. Another one swooped down and Flamis dragonflamed it. Simultaneously Pent icebolted the one on the ground as I hit it with my sword.

The one that was going to land peeled off skimming the trees. But a third one showed up and came in to a landing. It was greeted by Sabbath and my weapons as well as a barrage of Pent's icebolts. It kept going, straight at Pent. Meanwhile the one still in the air sped off at top speed. Guess it didn't want to be singed again.

By now the first one had been finished off so we were able to turn our attention to the one trying to take off with Pent. But for some reason Sabbath was acting strangely, staring around in everything in horror.

As the griffon tried to take off with Pent, Grond leapt on it grabbing a leg. It was forced to let go of Pent with that one but squeezed with the other. Pent screamed. At the same time I got pecked. Grond was shaken off and again the griffin tried to take off but after a combined assault it crashed and burned.

We rested and Katherine healed us up. I then checked Sabbath's aura and discovered he had a curse effect. Then, for no apparent reason he charged at Flamis. She swung her quarterstaff and knocked him out. We then made sure he was secured. I then got busy using Earth healing on Pent and Katherine.

.5.

As we rested Grond started performing a ritual to turn one of the dead griffins to a stone statue. The other one was already having bits, especially feathers, removed. We could see two more griffins circling overhead. Half an hour later they were joined by three more. One then descended and landed on a ridge over 200 metres away. TC tried talking to it but got no response.

Once Grond had his statue he installed it with flight then we set off again. As we progressed we

noticed we were being followed by three griffons. That night we made camp under a rocky ledge.

06/07/95

We continued travelling. By that afternoon we realised we had overshoot the shortest point to the split peak mountain so Flamis used her Crystal of Vision to see if there was a pass through the range. There was one but it wasn't going to be easy. Looks like we're going to have to do a bit of climbing.

.6.

We backtracked to where the pass was and Grond started a ferry service, using the stone griffin, up to a ledge halfway up, starting with Flamis and Sabbath. At the top, Flamis spotted a couple of griffins peering over the top of the next ridge. TC and I were the next pair. Once we were up Grond then transported Flamis and Pent to the top while trailing a rope. The rest of the party clambered up the slope.

Sabbath was the second to last and I was the last as I was bracing the rope at the bottom. Partway up, Sabbath slipped and tumbled down towards a steep cliff. Since the top of the rope was still attached to the griffin, I attempted to swing out in an attempt to catch him. I missed and I ended up clinging to the cliff face. To make matters worse, Grond decided to take off with the griffin in an attempt to save Sabbath. This meant that I didn't have a stable anchor any more so I started falling.

Flamis must have cast a firelight on Katherine as she swooped down to the bottom of the cliff. Meanwhile, in an attempt to catch Sabbath, Grond lost control of the griffin and it crashed into the side of the cliff. Grond had to abandon it. So he ended up tumbling down the cliff as well. Finally I slammed into a rock taking a chest wound.

Once we all regrouped at the bottom of the cliff, Katherine did what healing she could but my chest still hurt. After we rested Grond used a large fallen tree to ferry us over the pass to the valley beyond. Six griffins continued to watch us.

As we landed we noticed the split peak rising from the plain to our right. From this angle it looked like the mountain had been cut by a dagger from the top. Then Flamis announced she could see a little figure wandering along.

We drew closer to it. It didn't look like a dwarf or a hobbit but it wasn't a gnome either. The clothing was filthy, it had a backpack, and had tatty dark hair. Upon questioning it told us that it came from a village in the split peak mountain. I DAed it for Generic True name and got the answer Lesser Dawrt. He looked like a rather shifty type.

He told us that a gnome had come to visit them and wanted us to visit. In fact he was rather keen on it. I started wondering if they wanted to invite us to dinner - with us as the main course. In the end we knocked him out and secured him. I examined the backpack but the only thing inside was a tangled mass of string.. Grond then turned the dwarf to stone and we buried it under a cairn of stones before camping for the night.

07/07/95

Grond sent Bob (his rag & string golem) scouting in the mountain while Katherine kept a

Telepathy link on him. Somehow Bob managed to get inside the split peak and got lost in the maze of tunnels, just as the telepathy ran out.

So we headed towards the base of the mountain and searched around it. Eventually we found a path leading upwards. Flamis used her Crystal of Vision to explore the path and discovered a cave at the end of it. There were two dwarf guards inside armed with slings.

.7.

We waited out the afternoon. In the early evening Katherine and Flamis were on watch and they noticed the cairn containing the stone dwarf move. Rocks rolled off the top and a stone arm poked out. Sabbath hit it then dropped a Web of Fire on while Pent and Flamis took swings at it. I dropped Trollskins on both Sabbath and Flamis. As it crawled out, Katherine mental attacked it and it fell over. As Sabbath tried pouring poison down it's throat we noticed that the dwarf had two rows of teeth. The outer ones were blunt but the inner ones were sharp and curved - just like the shark's teeth that was in the necklace that Aqualina had brought back from her last mission. Grond was trying to chisel the dwarf's head off. He wasn't getting very far getting through the stone neck until I cast a Diamond Weapon on the chisel. During all of this the dwarf's aura was still living. It wasn't until Grond reversed the stoning ritual and the body died. But the head remained alive.

08/07/95

We scouted around the edge looking for other exits and using the Wizard's Eye to see if any tunnels got close enough to the surface that I could drop a Tunnel to it. The first one we found was a circular smoothed wall tunnel. I reckoned it was a lava tube. It came to about two feet of the surface than stopped. The only other one was more of a pocket than a tunnel containing stalactites and stalagmites. I was keen to investigate it but Katherine reckoned they were teeth.

We decided to camp somewhere else that night.

09/07/95

We headed off for the lava tube. I cast a Tunnelling and we dropped down into the tube. Well I was wrong about it being a lava tube. Now I was able to examine it closely it looked like it had been artificially created. After progressing along for a while we found that there had been a cave in and it was quite thick. This was definitely not a way in. So we headed back to the surface. It took me three attempts but we finally had an exit Tunnel.

A frontal assault was now our only option. Grond wanted Pent to create an ice sheet so he could ferry some of the party up. Pent came up with a stylised ice swan. Grond took TC and Sabbath up while the rest of us walked/climbed. Flamis then put a Heat Protection on the ice to stop it from melting.

We made our way up the track. Katherine picked up minds ahead so TC put invisibilities on Grond and Sabbath. Pity about the anti-invisibility ward they walked into - and the dwarfs that swarmed out to meet them. Pent rushed in to help.

We were about to enter the cavern but a stone block dropped against the entrance, sealing it and trapping Grond, Pent & Sabbath in with a horde of dwarfs. My first attempt at Tunnelling through the wall failed but the next one succeeded. I am really going to have to rank that spell. Once the wall opened we charged in.

There weren't that many left by then but Pent was in a bad way. Grond was laying into them right, left, and centre. Some of them had been knocked unconscious as well. I was able to dispatch one before it was all over.

.8.

Katherine cast Dark Visions on those of us who needed it while Flamis searched around for the mechanism to open the cave mouth. and soon found a lever. While the others questioned our prisoners, I checked the walls to see if they had been digging anything interesting out of the walls. Didn't find anything but I'm not a miner - yet. I did spot a hole in the ceiling so I lifted Pent up so he could have a look. It was only an alcove and all he saw inside was a net. We hauled it down in case it came in useful.

By now the others had found out that the gnome had arrived and blasted the dwarfs with lightning bolts. They chased him down into the depths of the cave complex and as far as this one knew he was still down there. He reckoned that there was a good chance that the gnome had been eaten by his 'superiors' and that we'd have a hard time getting there.

So we secured the dwarf in order to take him with us as a guide. Basically the plan was to get him to lead us to the boss dwarfs so we could negotiate with them. We were prepared to kill them in self defense if we had to.

We headed off, marking the tunnels as we went. After a while Katherine picked up three minds down a branch tunnel. Two of them were being obeisant. The dwarf was straining at the leash to get there so Sabbath knocked it out. TC sent a Wizards Eye ahead and discovered that the tunnel opened into a chamber full of dwarfs. Three of them were wearing golden torcs, the sign of their leaders/mages.

Suddenly the tunnel filled with billowing clouds of smoke and we backed out of it just before a fireball erupted out of the smoke. Fortunately it dissipated before it reached us. TC was still watching with the Wizards Eye and reckoned there must be an Ice Mage in there as well as he saw Armour and Weapons of Cold being formed. Flamis dropped a Wall of Fire across the tunnel entrance and we progressed onwards. I DAed the area ahead of us as we progressed and, a short while later, picked up a Malignant Flame ward. Twenty feet after that the tunnel curved and dead-ended.

When we got back to the branch we discovered plugs of ice blocking both the branch tunnel and the one we had originally come down so I cast a tunnel to get around that plug. Katherine picked up a mind at the other side of the plug as the tunnel formed but it turned out to be a surprised spectral minion.

Once through we headed back up the tunnel then turned down a side passage we had previously ignored. After a while we encountered another plug of ice. According to the Wizards Eye the tunnel then curved rapidly downwards in a spiral. There were at least five torc wielding dwarfs and several others beyond the plug.

The plan was to punch our own tunnel in order to intercept the bottom part of the spiral then attack the waiting dwarfs. It would take two casts to get through. As it turned out, it took three and I was feeling rather tired at the end of it. By then Katherine had already caused one mage to be attacked by a phantasm and was Mental Attacking another.

Once the second Tunnel formed Pent and Grond charged through and started causing devastation among the dwarf ranks. Smoke then billowed in the tunnel obscuring our view. As the rest of us started to go through another Tunnelling opened up below us and we fell.

As we picked ourselves up a dwarf tried to leap on Sabbath but managed to injure itself badly. I saw Pent make a really fantastic javelin throw at a dwarf that was peering over the pit at us. Flamis DFlamed it at the same time but instead of the dwarf collapsing into a pile of ash, she carbonized the outside so that the result was a black dwarf shaped column with bits dropping off and bodily fluid oozing from unburnt portions inside it. Flamis looked like she was going to be sick.

Finally we were able to beat up most of them. Sabbath had been severely mauled by them and I was feeling rather exhausted. There was a plug of ice in the tunnel nearby on the downside and Grond punched a hole through it. On the other side was the last remaining torc wearing dwarf that was being attacked by one of Katherine's phantasms. As it collapsed, it managed to trigger something and it stood up again. This time it's skin had turned a slate grey, just like the undead one we had encountered earlier.

.9.

Grond went into the attack, changing weapons to his broadsword. As he did so the sword burst into flames. The undead dwarf wasn't too keen on this and melded into the wall.

And that was basically the end of that battle. Three of the dwarf bodies were wearing torcs so I DAed them. They had curses that were associated with the wearer and contained necromantic magics. We stored the torcs very carefully.

Continuing downwards we spotted tracks that could be the gnomes. An encouraging sign - hopefully. Further down was a series of 10x10 alcoves with stone benches so we rested for a while. Katherine was picking up minds above and below. By their behaviour, the ones above could be a search party so we continued our descent. Soon it became apparent that we were approaching a population centre. The passage levelled out. TC used the eye and discovered there was a cavern ahead with two of those grey obese creatures guarding the entrance. Beyond were more dwarfs.

While Katherine transferred fatigue to me I was listening intently. Soon I heard the echos of footsteps from back the way we had come. One large heavy entity and a few smaller ones. Grond and Pent went back up the slope to have a look. It turned out to be another of those large round creatures followed by quite a few dwarfs. So Grond cast a frictionless floor on the slope while Pent created an iceplug at the bottom with ice spikes. The result was that the spherical creature slipped and slammed into the plug followed by a couple of dwarfs. It then started tearing at the ice so Pent hurriedly put up another block as it started breaking through. Flamis tried dragonflaming it at the same time but it didn't even look burnt. Soon icebolts, shockbolts and crossbow bolts were raining down on it but it still kept coming. Finally Pent used an investment to drop a tunnel in the floor in front of it as it busted through the ice plug. To make matters worse, Katherine detected another coming from the other direction to investigate.

Not wanting to become the meat in a dwarf sandwich we decided to tunnel our way out. Meanwhile the spheroid was in the process of clawing it's way out of the pit but another

frictionless floor took care of that for the moment. Just then my first Tunnel went up. A black shape loomed in the tunnel but retreated into the wall as I glared at it.

Four Tunnels later we emerged into another corridor and headed away from the concentration of minds that Katherine detected. As we rounded a corner we found ourselves peppered by snowballs. In our flight we passed a spaced out dwarf. Just then Katherine detected a couple of dwarf 'priests' ahead.

Flamis triggered a Quickness on us while I blocked off the corridor behind us with a row of Earth Hands. Meanwhile, Sabbath discovered a large entity blocking the corridor intersection ahead. It tried to hit him. Grond fired a crossbow which buried itself in the creature. Just then something behind us got caught in a Hand. Must learn Wall of Stone sometime.

It was decided to punch through a Tunnel to reach the cross-corridor. As it opened revealing a bunch of dwarfs, Flamis sent a Fireball screaming down it. Close behind it was a berserk orc waving a flaming sword.

.10.

Grond, Sabbath, and Pent laid into the lesser dwarfs while TC started scanning for another way out. There were two of those obese creatures in the intersection with a bunch of torc wearing dwarfs behind them. The one in front got dropped down a Tunnel so the other began tearing it's way round that pit and down the corridor back to where we were. As it moved away the mages behind it began firing ice bolts at Pent.

I waited until the second creature had cleared the area of the pit before dropping it in another tunnel. I then headed down my tunnel to give the others a hand. Flamis used a Wall of Fire to block the passage between us and the mages. As it went up she was hit by one of their ice bolts.

The first creature was working it's way out of the pit in the direction where Pent and the others were still battling the dwarfs. Just then it started snowing in the tunnel. As the entity was pulling itself out I tried to drop it down another pit. The first attempt failed but the second succeeded. I then DAed it. Generic True Name - Greater Dwarf. Just then I spotted something dark and menacing in the side tunnel. Just another spectral minion lurking about.

Finally we dispatched the lesser dwarfs and Pent blocked off the tunnel behind us. TC used the Eye to determine that the tunnel ahead was also iceplugged beyond which was a room with a pool of a thick black substance that had a Greater Dwarf floating in it - unmoving. The stuff was flowing out of the pool and down another tunnel. Some dwarf priests were in here as well. Many of the other exits from here were iced so TC followed the trail of black stuff down the corridor. That led to another cavern where the black stuff disappeared down a hole.

I took six restorative drops, followed by a Healing potion in order to get enough energy to punch some tunnels down to the lower cavern. Meanwhile Flamis and Sabbath put Protections from Normal Fire on us all just in case the black stuff was flammable. Once we reached the cavern below, I examined the black stuff. Yep. Some sort of oily tar. Burns but not very well, at least not until an alchemist plays with it.

Grond and I went down to check the tunnel to see if it was safe for the others to follow. It was rather steep for the first bit but soon levelled off but seemed ok (even for Sabbath) so we guided

the others down.

After a while we found a definitely artificial shaft leading straight down with handholds carved in the side. As we made our way down the air began to get noticeably colder.

At the bottom it was very cold. A short while later we found what appeared to be a tomb and a guy encased in ice. According to the plaque on the iced over door, his name was Hurog the Hammer and he had been some sort of champion. This led Katherine to comment whether or not this had been one of Flamis's 'boyfriends'.

.11.

Just then words began appearing on the walls. Grond and Katherine set about deciphering. According to my DA and Flamis's mirror, the writing was Long Lived Sentient and was the colour of Mind magics. TC probed around with the Eye while I examined the alcoves in the walls. They all looked like areas where a softer rock had been carved out.

From what could be ascertained from the writing and the Eye, there was another layer below us that could be accessed through a snow filled room and it was possible that Bob had gone down there. We soon found it (one of four). The snow was jammed inside and was non magical. Pent didn't think it was possible for me to Tunnel through it which I agreed with. Finally Grond figured out what the message was. It read 'Grond. I'll meet you in the Crystal Cave. Bob.'

Katherine probed around with her mind and detected a ring of undead around the area. A group of four were in each of the snow filled rooms. The rest seemed blocked from us by rock. We first surveyed the alcoves to see if they could provide another way through but no luck. During all that, some of us reckoned they could hear tapping. TC was feeling rather fatigued so I gave him a Healing potion.

Finally Flamis started raising the temperature in the room in order to melt the snow. Within minutes we were ankledeep in cold water when the snow above the area of effect fell in and melted. The floor was inlaid marble. It was unanimously decided that we didn't want to get flooded so Pent used his snow shovelling spell to dig his way through. As he started I put a Trollskin on him while Flamis put a Weapon of Flame on his javelin just in case he ran into the undead. He ran into something alright. A grey elderly looking dwarf hammering on the ground. Sabbath dealt him a mighty blow and he went down. The weapon of flames on his sword probably helped too. Just then two ice elementals came out of the wall and hit Sabbath and Grond before disappearing again. Two more had a crack at Katherine. She collapsed. I threw a Trollskin at her. Meanwhile the elementals had managed to get Grond and Sabbath before retreating. Grond turned back into Fenton just as TC reported a death buzz.

It now seemed safe so TC cautiously went in the room to retrieve Sabbath & Grond as well as finding TC. Nothing happened and soon he had retrieved all three. Fenton was dead but the others were unconscious. They were soon revived. Sabbath carried Fenton's body as we cautiously entered the room. Still no sign of the elementals. All that we found was the body of the undead dwarf and a hammer which was magical but not cursed. Flamis started probing around the marble slab where the body was lying. Underneath was a shaft leading downwards which was packed with snow. With the use of Pent's snow shovelling spell we headed down.

Finally we reached a tunnel. Melted snow was lying all around and the air was noticeably warmer.

TC used the eye again and saw a small creature up ahead. Beyond that was a cavern with glittering ice covered stalactites and stalagmites. As we reached the creature it ran away. Finally we reached the cavern. On impulse Flamis put a light up which caused myriads of glittering reflections. It looked beautiful but she was told to douse the light in case it attracted attention. I also DAed the area inside the cavern and detected no magical effect.

Just then Bob rushed out wanting to know whether or not we had got his messages. He was also carrying three small rocks. Turned out to be uncut gems: crysoberyl, carbuncle and ruby.

A short while later the earlier creature (which DAed as a gremlin) returned. It wanted traps and weapons in order to give it an advantage against the dwarfs. In return it would lead us to Victor. Flamis managed to come up with something so the gremlin led us down a passage.

After a while we reached a vertical shaft. An outcropping was 60' below the lip. Another 20' further down the shaft opened up to a cavern with a lava pool directly below. One slip going down would be fatal. The gremlin climbed down and disappeared into the outcropping.

While I was setting up climbing ropes in order to make a descent, the gremlin reappeared at the outcropping. Behind him the tunnel was glowing an eerie blue light. We soon discovered what was causing that. Out on to the outcropping stepped Victor, and he was carrying a glowing blue crystal staff. Occasionally lightning would flicker along it's length.

He levitated himself up to our level while the gremlin climbed up. The everpresent spectral minions crowded forward eagerly and hissed. Victor explained that it wasn't him that had killed the King but instead it was Aliias - and no way was he going back or even allowing the staff to go back. This really seemed to need the Guild as an arbitrator. If we could get Victor there they should be able to ascertain the truth of the matter.

We knew we could outfly the minions on fireflight but Victor still didn't trust us enough to cast on him. Besides the staff might not allow it. But he reckoned the staff could keep up. He also provided us with a quick way to the base of the crater by using the staff to blast a way. Once there, Flamis cast Fireflight on us all and we took off.

.12.

We flew west along the mountain range bypassing the area where the dragon and griffons were. While we were enveloped in the standard fireflight corona, Victor was surrounded in a bright white sparkling teardrop.

Just then spectral minions started popping in around us. Also a high pitched trilling sound began to emit from TC's backpack. We all thought that something inside was going to explode so TC quickly landed and jettisoned his backpack. After a few minutes, while the rest of us circled the area, nothing had happened so TC gingerly opened the backpack to discover what was causing it. It turned out to be the bird in a cage that Aliias had given him. It then spoke with Aliias's voice demanding that we hand Victor and the staff over. TC refused and said that Victor was under our protection and that we were going back to let our Guild sort it out. After that he would get the staff back. To say Aliias was not keen on that was an understatement.

We were about to fly on when lots more spectral minions popped in and started to form an enclosing dome. Somehow I knew they were going to do that. We were all forced down. Flamis

managed to really stuff up her landing and crashed into a tree. Fortunately her Britannian crash helmet took the brunt of the impact. Unfortunately it cracked. I touched down and put a Trollskin on her.

Aliias, through the bird, and Victor attempted to negotiate a compromise. However it was rather difficult. Aliias wanted the staff and Victor refused to give it up. Katherine offered herself as a hostage. Finally Aliias agreed but only if we were all, except for one, hostages. So TC and Victor flew off with the staff. Meanwhile we were conducted by the wraiths to Aliias' tower. Flamis had to be carried.

We spent the next ten days as Aliias' 'houseguest's. Fenton was resurrected, and Flamis healed. As the days passed Aliias was getting more and more agitated. Eventually we ended up confined to the cells and fed bread and water. At the end of that Guild representatives turned up to negotiate our release.

They told us that Victor had admitted killing the king but it had been an accident. Victor had discovered the command word to the staff so he had stolen it and used it to enter the royal chamber. The King, on discovering Victor, had grabbed a sword and tried to skewer him so the staff reacted to defend it's 'owner' and struck the King dead. Victor took off for the mountains. Naturally Aliias had been under suspicion so he dropped it all on Victor.

They had brought the staff back, but we discovered later that the Guild had examined it and something had been done to it to make it less dangerous to everyone.

Finally we headed back to the Guild, still not trusting Aliias. Even though he had not been guilty of regicide he had still not been exactly forthcoming. Plus all those wraiths gave him a really good spy network and why else would he want one of those unless he wanted power. Maybe his negligence in leaving the staff where Victor could get at it had not been entirely accidental. Personally I wanted nothing more to do with him.