

Hunt for the Maiden

Adventure by Bernard Hoggins

Spring 803WK

Duration 74 days (1st Meadow- 14 Blossom)

Party Members

Brigetta McLeod	Bard	Female	Human	Mil Sci
Hamish McLeod	Wiccan	Male	Human	Scribe
Tanis	Air	Female	Elven	
Rowan	Binder	Female	Elven	
Michael	Celestial Solar	Male	Human	
Ben	Non-mage	Male	Human	
Aqualina	Water	Female	Human	Scribe

Plane

Farwey

Employer

Marvin. Jester to his Baron

Places

Barony of Zargora

An orc encampment in the Barbarian Lands

The Crystal Mountain,

The Swamps of Despair

The Dark Forest

Principle NPCs

Baron Bertran

An Orc Namer.

A flock of gryphons on the Crystal Mountain.

Mission

Find the Baron's second daughter that had been taken by orcs

Hunt for A Maiden

Adventure Summary

1st Thaw

Told that a Baron's daughter was abducted by orcs. Travelled to Plane of Farway

8th Thaw

Arrived in Barony. Spoke to the Baron who told us that she was abducted while riding. A group of rangers had followed but were also missing.

10th Thaw

Reached abduction site. Lots of orc tracks. Followed.

15th Thaw

Arrived at the border. Found area cursed by Blight. Blight, which were flying creatures, attacked that night. Dusted them and collected dust for later analysis.

19th Thaw

Encountered orc patrol. Learnt that their chief is suffering from a magical disease and needs the lady for a cure.

20th Thaw

Reached orc city located in caverns inside a hill.

21st Thaw

Discovered that the orcs require the lady as part of a curing ritual to cure the chief. The ritual may not be fatal. We decide to help find the other parts.

26th Thaw

Reached the Crystal Mountain to get 'The Breath of a New Born Griffon'. The mountain is made of solid obsidian and the griffons are hostile.

28th Thaw

Rowan's staff is missing. Try to negotiate with the griffons but they tell us to leave. They have the staff and are damaging it which hurts Rowan.

29th Thaw

Griffons finally give us the breath but not the staff. We leave. That night Rowan flew off back to the mountain and got captured.

30th Thaw

Wait a day in case Rowan returns. Train

1st Seedtime

Still no Rowan. Head back.

2nd Seedtime

Reach mountain., find Griffons. They sent Rowan down a hole to retrieve gem. We follow through puzzle rooms and fight a golem. Retrieve gem for griffons and Rowan's body. Get stick back. Michael flies off with Rowan's body.

3rd Seedtime

On the way back to orcs we had to ditch the Blight dust. It got unstable and exploded.

11th Seedtime

Arrived at orcs. Michael and a revived Rowan there.

14th Seedtime

Three days training while Michael and Rowan fly off to consult with a sage. They discover that the next parts are in the Dark Forest.

18th Seedtime

Reach the forest

20th Seedtime

Attacked by skeletons

22nd Seedtime

Encounter pygmies and fight them. Retrieve golden cauldron and hydra shadow. Get these back to the orcs who do the ritual, cure their leader and release the woman.

14th Blossom

Return to the Guild.

Hunt for the Maiden

Got employed by a guy in a jester outfit, minus the bells. He introduced himself as Marvin and said that a Baron's second daughter had been kidnapped by orcs. Silly girl had been riding alone. Anyway, having nothing better to do, I went to see what was up.

My fellow adventurers were:

Brigetta McLeod - a bardic mage and Caledonian troubadour

Hamish - her cousin and a wiccan.

Tanis - a beginning air mage

Rowan - elven female binder

Michael - a celestial solar mage who's an expert wheeler/dealer.

Ben - A warrior with bow and axe

And me, Aqualina, female water mage from Pasifika.

Brigetta was appointed military scientist while I became the scribe. No party leader yet but I guess we'll sort that out on the way. Somehow I suspect it'll be Brigetta - again. She's got that sort of personality.

Marvin told us that it was the daughter of the Baron of Zagora, a barony to the south of their kingdom, just known as the Empire, on the plane of Farwey. To the south of that were barbarian lands. The abduction took place a week ago and the pay was 2000sp and any loot. It would take us a week to get there. I just hoped we were going to be on time.

After the meeting, I got a Guild Lesser then went straight back to the Sea Goddess Haven and made up twelve permanent WoH and six WoS. I had the feeling we were going to need them. The rest of the party turned up that night for a party.

Next morning, back at the Guild, Marvin took us to one of the basements where an archway full of black was located. We stepped though - and found ourselves in a small room. The walls were covered in ancient runes. Could be mystical - could be graffiti - there was no way of knowing. It must have been one of those 'slow portals' too as we later discovered the trip had taken five hours. Felt like five hours too - even though it had seemed to be instantaneous.

A ladder led up to a dead-end ally in the city above. Marvin led us to the local manor where we were able to obtain a pencil sketch of the daughter. She was about 25 years old and rather plain looking.

8th Thaw '03

It took us a week to get down to Barony Zegora on borrowed horses. A very uneventful trip - an extremely uneventful trip. I think some of us were wishing for barbarian hordes just for some excitement.

Anyway, at the manor house, we met up with Baron Bertran in a small antechamber. He was an elderly man in his fifties. I felt like kicking Brigetta in the shins during the interview as the Baron got rather offended at the line of questioning she brought up. Even a Lord's daughter should show some decorum. Maybe they do things differently in Caledonia. Anyway we were told that a group of ten rangers had gone after her but there had been no word from them either. He knew of no one who would benefit from her abduction.

We spent the night in a local tavern. The stableman from the local manor showed up. They told us that she did have a ‘thing’ going with a local merchant a while ago and she was in the habit of taking long rides. She had four siblings, three brothers and a sister. Also, they commented that it was unusual that the orcs had raided this far north.

9th Thaw ‘03

Next morning dawned overcast, with a warm fresh breeze. Everyone wanted their cloaks waterproofed so I did so. It started raining a bit later, a light refreshing warm rain, so I was riding with light clothing and the sash, just enjoying it. I getting some looks from the farmers we passed but I was more concerned with Rowan’s unblinking sentient eyeball on a stick. Every time I looked at it - it was staring at me - most disconcerting. I was wondering if it was having lewd thoughts.

10th Thaw

Still light drizzly rain. Reached the village near where the abduction took place and spoke to the forester who reported the abduction. The horses had been hacked apart by large bladed weapons and there were many orc tracks.

11th Thaw

Now it was daylight, and still lightly raining, we had a look at the area. Brigetta and Michael did rituals while I hunted for rabbit. Michael attracted a hawk to himself as a companion.

Brigetta sang a song about a sunny spring day and a lady who was riding. She desired to see the birds and flowers but found a bunch of orcs behind trees instead. They roared and rushed her, then bore her off to spill her blood upon the cauldron for the good of the tribe.

We figured we could make the barony border in three days if we moved quickly.

15th Thaw

Finally reached the border. The farmhouses had given way to more defensible steads. Each night, Brigetta had been setting down wards but certain things were setting them off - such as Rowan’s eyeball-on-a-stick.

This spot on the border was near the Swamps of Despair. Here we found the remains of a farmstead. It looked like the buildings were just gone - as in erased. So we checked the area and found that it had been cursed by blight, cursed because the blight came. The blight even had a GTN of, you guessed it, Blight. This implied we were dealing with some sort of entity.

Brigetta did a ritual and sang a song about how blight came, bringing death with it. The Blight took the animals and people in accordance with the wishes of Wuffa, slowly destroying everything in its path. It was a very slow speed, starting about 500-1000 years ago. The Blight isn’t alive but could be undead.

Tanis discovered that the hunter’s trail just vanished. Michael examined the area and discovered human sized patches of blight. It was as if they had been picked up and carried away. He also discovered that Light affects Blight adversely.

Another ritual told us that when twilight came, the Blight descended with death in its path. Those taken are now between. To defeat the Blight one must undo the ancient spell.

.2.

That evening Brigetta used another spell to send a message to Marvin, telling him what we had found out so far. During our watch, Hamish was acting oddly, as if he could see something in the trees. So I triggered my Witchsight and saw two humanoid, winged, figures, flitting among the trees. That was when Brigetta's alarm went off.

There seemed to be a group of them out there. Brigetta tried to soothe them with her harp music while I called out a greeting in pixie. That provoked a reaction, but not the one I had hoped for. Instead they swarmed for the attack. Michael was able to DA one and got the answer, Sentient Animate - GTN Blight.

Michael quick cast weapon enhancement spells on those that needed it as they swarmed towards us. I had two of them scrabbling at my armour but, fortunately it was too tough a nut for them to crack. Unfortunately some of the others were not so lucky. Equally unfortunately I could not use my bolt spell or trident until they got off. Tanis came in to help. When she managed to take one out, it turned to dust. Nearby Michael was also smashing some into dust.

When it was all over, Rowan was asleep from a backfire. Also Ben, Hamish and Rowan were infected from the Blight's touch. Rowan sent a golem to gather up some of the blight dust which was put in an empty potion bottle. I then stoppered it and sealed it with candle wax.

We then moved our camp. Fortunately the rest of the night was uneventful.

16th Thaw

Brigetta was able to find some herbs that worked on Ben and Rowan. Unfortunately Hamish was too susceptible and was suffering from a fever and headache. We would have to hope that future applications would help.

Rowan then used a blanket to get Brigetta up high so she could make a map of the area. To the left were the Swamps of Despair. Though my spyglass, she could see lots more winged shapes flying around there. Further on was more open plains turning into rocky rougher country with large hills in the distance.

So we pressed on, following the orc trail. I stayed in my armour in case of further blight attacks. But that day and the following night passed without incident, apart from sounds of flapping.

.3.

18th Thaw

The following night also passed without incident. Now we were on rough terrain, hillocks surrounded by marsh.

19th Thaw

We encountered a band of humanoids, most in standard armour but led with one in a silvery chain shirt. They wanted to know what we were doing on their lands. We told them. Their leader and two of them approached and Michael determined that the leader was a Namer. They told us to accompany them to see their Chief. Their Chief is suffering from a strange disease and the kidnapped noblewoman is part of the cure. However the Blight is not to blame. They also gave us a warning not to camp near the swamp but hurry past it. They also told us they have a god under the Gray Mountains.

We headed along with them, the Namer curing Hamish of his affliction. That night we camped and shared food. Brigetta tried to share her stories but they didn't appreciate the Shoji humour, going for more the Caledonian and Pasifikan tales of battles and heros.

20th Thaw

After waterproofing their leader's armour, we continued on. We met a couple of hunting parties, this group being more of a border patrol, then finally were led up a very large hillock. On the way up we noted several sophisticated defence sites then entered a large cavern. This led to a large orcish community. We estimated over a thousand inhabitants. Finally we were taken to a spare cavern where we were left under guard. The place seemed reasonably civilised. Even the drunken fights during the night didn't deter us from that belief. As Michael commented - it was just like the Guild.

21st Thaw

Morning, and the Namer appeared. He wanted Michael, Brigetta and Ben to go with him to see the Chief. They discover that he has a magical disease that he obtained while down the depths of the cavern. He was the only survivor of his hunting party, the rest having been killed by whatever they found down there. Their astrologers had told them that they need certain things for a cure, including a noble maiden. It is thought that the process is not fatal. Currently they needed three more things and something to mix them in. The three things were the shadow of a hydra, the bone of a living shade, and the breath of a newborn griffin. It all had to be mixed in a golden cauldron.

Brigetta did a ritual to see how he got the disease. All she got was a lot of hacking, slashing, and tearing. The illness itself is uniquely magical, and the method to cure it was to read the stars. Apparently all the hills are connected by old tunnels and they go really deep.. There is even a legend of an ancient dragon down there.

When they got back and reported, Hamish tried some divinations:

What is the name or type of creature we need - You know it.

Where are they - (gibberish)

Location of first ingredient - journey to Mt of Eeo and find protection in peace.

Location of second ingredient - 17th 84th mountain, sea, fire

Location of third ingredient - With the disruption of the partnership and the flow of the possessions, go forth to the Crystal Mounts.

How long have we got - Til the turning of the third sun do you have.

Location of cauldron - With the reconstruction of offense, must journey to the Swamps of Oo.

26th Thaw

The Crystal Mountain was actually on the map so we headed over there, passing near the Dark Forest. As we went by there, the horses were spooked, sensing scary bad feelings. I just hoped it wasn't as bad as the Dark Circle.

The mountain was made of crystal alright, solid obsidian. We could also see ice on top. It looked climbable though. However, when we arrived, Hamish decided to summon a griffon so I created a boat so we could hide in it. In hindsight, this may have been a very bad idea as two griffons arrived and both were very hostile. We were getting obsidian rocks dropped onto the boat. I created a fog, and put waterbreathing on people, so they couldn't target us so easily. After a few more near misses, they gave up.

After a while there was a cracking sound from the mountain. We decided to leave abruptly. It was just as well we did as a very large chunk of ice dropped on the boat, smashing it in half. I used a Waters of Vision and saw a griffon circling the peak. As it did, storm clouds began to form around the peak. We decided to move much further away and make another boat.

It was a very fierce storm that rained down on the area, very cold and included large hailstones. I put Cold Resistances on everyone as we waited it out. Hamish was wondering if we should try to convert a griffon to another faith, making it a ‘born again’ convert. We thought that wasn’t quite what the astrology reading had in mind.

27th Thaw

It was still stormy the next morning. More cold resistances all round. For some reason Rowan got very wary of her stick and kept tossing it in a corner. Ben tried to subdue the stick and got zapped by it.

By mid afternoon, the weather had turned back to normal. Rowan had a golem take the stick outside and leave it there. Another Waters of Vision showed two griffons flying around the peak. That was when a small bird fluttered in and tweeted at us, over and over again. Basically the message was ‘leave - or suffer the consequences’. It was a very confused bird that flew away once the griffon’s control wore off. Brigitte tried sending a message back.

I saw three griffons around the peak then noticed one land. Zooming in, revealed a golden nest with two hatchlings inside it.

That night, it was raining heavily again. Also we heard heavy wingflaps in the night.

28th Thaw

At dawn, something heavy landed on the boat, crushing part of it. So we left. Also Rowan couldn’t find either her golem or the staff as they weren’t where she had left them.

Just then, ten griffons arrived, one bearing the staff ,another, a mangled golem. Brigitte tried telling the whole story but they weren’t impressed. They wanted us to leave, but leave our horses behind. To accentuate this, the one with the stick, squeezed on it, transmitting its pain to Rowan. As far as I could see, we had no choice but to leave empty handed. However, they were prepared to negotiate..

.4.

While we waited for the griffons to discuss the situation, Hamish read the tarot, asking the question ‘If we use the breath of a hatchling in the potion, will it work’.

The future is grey / Magic melds with religion / Death begets swords /
Fool is he that relies on the royal wand

I was also using a Waters of Vision to see what the griffons were doing. A group of them were flying around the peak, playing ‘catch’ with Rowan’s stick. Every so often, Rowan twitched as the stick was hurt.

The day went by, turned into night, which also progressed without incident.

29th Thaw

The next morning a flock of griffons arrived. Basically they agreed to our request. Only two of

us were to collect the breath and, as a price they wanted two of our horses. I was expecting them to ask for three. So Brigitte and Rowan flew up in Rowan's carpet, armed with an empty potion bottle and a waterskin to get the breath. Of course they were escorted by griffons both ways. However, when they came back, Rowan still didn't have her staff.

The girls doubled up on horses, I had Tanis behind me as we travelled back west. On the way, I had a look at the sample of blight ash. Somehow it looked different. It looked like it had changed colour slightly.

During a stop Hamish again did a reading. This time the question was 'If we go North, do we get to the Mountains of Eo?'

From the seventh shadow of the failing sun, see the hawk dip and follow the claws.
He got the same answer no matter what direction had been asked. We got the impression that we had to head west for seven days then follow a hawk.

Anyway we travelled thirty miles that day. That evening we stopped and I made a boat. Hamish made a prediction that we were going to be attacked that night. Just then we noticed Rowan fly off back east towards the Crystal Mountain. She had told noone what she was doing and had no backup however, we figured she was after her stick. This was potential suicide and we had no effective way of catching her.

I had a couple of charges of Shadow Wings but Brigitte would not let anyone fly off after her especially given the reading we were going to be attacked. So we waited. During the night, an electrical storm passed swiftly overhead, heading for the mountain. A couple of lightning strikes did hit near the camp but there was no damage.

30th Thaw

The next morning dawned. There had been no attack during the night, unless the storm could be counted. We then concluded that the attack may have been the stick coercing a griffon to bring it back to Rowan. If that was the case, Rowan had just left for nothing. I scryed the area and found the imprint of the carpet by the remains of the nearest boat by the mountain. I then checked the top of the mountain and spotted Rowan in a nest surrounded by griffons, one of which had the stick securely grasped in it's claws. As far as we could see, there was nothing we could do about it.

.5.

Hamish wanted to take over scribing to see what it was like for a while, so I thought. Hey. Why not. So, take it away Hamish Now all he has to do is learn to spell my name right (I fixed it later in the transcription. Annotations in blue).

Hamish McLeod - Scribing for Aquilina

The day has dawned fine considering the thunderstorm that passed overnight. Aqualina casts waters of vision and Rowan is in the nest of the griffins. While discussing what to do next over breakfast (guild rations - AGAIN!) the following was overheard....

Michael - "Lets trade an annoying bard for Rowan"

Ben - "A days travel & lets sneak past them" (the griffins that is to rescue Rowan)

A bit later on Aqualina casts waters of vision and sees Rowan speaking - bit of a shame no one can read lips. Music is heard as Aqualina grabs her harp and strums a few times.. all tensed up, Aqualina is having a hard time thinking. [It soothes me and helps me think - deal with it. Besides I was having the desire to do GBH on Rowan for running off and delaying the mission]

Further discussions (Michael, Brigitte & Aqualina) over Rowan leaving last night, overheard is "Its desertion - Pure and simple". [According to the letter of the contract, it is]

Time to read the Tarot I think... What will happen if we rescue Rowan?

Swords will break, Horses will tumble, Staves will be broken, Crowns will be forged, and the devil will be born anew.

Michael "Ahh so THIS is why we killed black mages in the past"

Hummph.. Maybe I should remove the 'devil' card from the Tarot deck as it makes gloomy reading. [Does this mean Rowan's eyeball stick is going to break? Remind me not to be anywhere nearby if it does.]

Mid-Morning

Aqualina casts water of vision many times. [until I was flat out exhausted from the casting] The following is observed. Rowan is walking down the mountain, looks at something, returns walking up the mountain, then sleeps in a griffin nest.

Mental note I - Expensive... Griffins nests.. Spun gold - want one.

Mental note II - 30 griffins = 15 nests of spun gold - I'm sure someone at the guild may want these and they may have use for a mountain made out of obsidian too.. maybe make a sacrificial dagger or few. Will have to check with Silverfoam & my good pal Gravin of Brightrock.. He'll know what to do with a bit of obsidian

Brigetta casts Whispering winds and Rowan has "You've got 'Airmail' ". Party scratches for stuff to do and some training is done by Tanis and Hamish. Tanis is tied to a tree and repeatedly attempts to fall at the ground. It seems to work? Bonkers if you ask me.. I try and cloak my mind.. Seems to work fine.. just have lost all sensation of touch and my joints are really really sore.. I'm sure something must have gone wrong somewhere.. that's not supposed to happen. [I spent the time just soaking and relaxing in a nearby stream. Oh yeah, and caught an eel for dinner too. Watching Tanis trying to throw herself at the ground and missing was amusing]

1st Seedtime

OWW!!!!!! My aching bones. Something is definitely wrong here, Aqualina casts curse removal on me, doesn't appear to do anything at all. Day is fine, bright and sunny without a cloud in the sky & with this we set off to the mountain. [Mental note I - Rank curse removal more. I thought I had got it right too]

Later on... Aqualina casts water of vision - Aqualina says everything is black (must be something wrong - maybe a backfire?). Michael casts witch sight and there is Rowan in a hole sleeping sprawled with a skeletons bones on top of her. Ew Yuk! & more to the point - who is the skeleton? and where is the hole? [I checked several times and she hadn't moved. I had to conclude she was dead. That gave the truth to the two card blind draw that Hamish had done a while ago. He drew the Fool and Death.]

Mid afternoon - Found the boat of the original campsite - ie the outermost boat.

Night time - Ben changes shape, I cast walking unseen & Brigitte casts dance of swords on him, he'll be bouncing around for hours now. Ben charges off to find the hole Rowan is in.

Much Much later - Ben returns.

2nd Seedtime

We now have a tiger called Ben - Sprekenzie common? no? ok just shake your head etc. Starter for 10 - where is the hole? Days walk to the hole? (scratched in ground '1') We mount up. [Mental note II - Really must rank Curse Removal. I had learnt it so I could fix myself if I got stuck in merform. Now Ben had the same problem, but with tigerform. I didn't think I could do anything about it at this stage]

Mental note III Where's our binder Rowan, this horse needs rearranging. Its now got spiked bones where my bottom is needing to go! Dam painful on the hips etc

Griffins land on the **innermost** boat - we're riding horses <We act casual> and talk..... The griffins want a gem stolen from them (by a mage) and put it down a hole, the griffins are too big to fit but the party is the right size (I know, I know, even we know where this is going!), Rowan is already down there.

Mid afternoon

4' X4' hole found - were going in! Rowan has probably cleared some of the way (generous laughter from the whole party). Michael HATES this place. [and I don't blame him] Griffins that cant fit in holes, Mages, Skeletons! Brigitte offers some advice - (our novice Tanis should make note) Traps, Wards, undead, Constructs.. These are the things to look out for. We enter the mountain.

Shortly thereafter we enter a room with 3 clocks in cases and a fourth clock without a case that the hands can be moved. Time on the clocks reads 1:15, 12:30, 11:45 [and 6:30 on the fourth]. We notice that footprints in the dust in the room lead to a wall and then disappear though the wall. [My ocular revealed a doorway shaped magical area] Michael moves the hands on the 4th clock to read 10:00 and a door grinds open - an alcove is found.

Michael & Aqualina get cozy in an alcove made for 1 and pass though together, the rest of us then follow. [I should point out I was tanked up in eog plate mail at the time and armed with a trident, so you can get those thoughts out of your heads. Besides, it's better combat strategy to get as many through as you can at once, just in case]

Evening

We have a puzzle, 2'x2' squares numbered from 1 to 122 [be as accurate as you can, this is important in scribe notes. Someone may have to follow our tracks] arranged in a sort of triangle. #1 is on the door, and 1, 2, 3, are in front of us. [The three doors at the other end are numbered 133, 144 and 155. The problem is to hop over the correct tiles in sequence then select the correct door.] We ponder the solution to the puzzle, and have to ponder some more several times. Michael says that several of the squares have a magic aura and a few seconds later we find out that some have mechanical traps as Ben roars and then whimper as darts fly from all directions and tiger blood sprays across the ground. Bleeding profusely, Ben is healed by a quickly administered waters of healing.

After some more deliberation Aqualina pipes up and volunteers to try a few tiles as we think we have figured out the sequence, [thanks to several DAs and trap finding from Michael and myself](#). [\[Even in plate, I am the most dextrous. I just got unlucky.\]](#) After crossing several squares and a few stumbles she reaches the other side but appears to be rather clumsy and has warts and boils. Ben growls something that sounded like spiders and pink? And is acting a bit strangely, jumping on shadows. The rest of the party appears to jump on though this fine and without further ill effect. [\[The sequence is 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, with the first and last number being the doors\]](#)

Mumbled comment heard from the back of the party “ This mage who made this MUST DIE!”
[\[That was most likely Michael. Mind you, he does have a point. This just seems so insane.\]](#)

.6.

I got the pen back off Hamish and continued on. He counterspelled mine and Ben’s curses with no trouble but backfired the one he did ‘just for the heck of it’. Sigh. If he really wanted to practise I was sure he’d get plenty of opportunities later. We then carried down the corridor. After about a hundred yards, it opened to a room. Inside was an altar with the gem resting on a cup at the other end, two lines of three hexagonal pillars each going down the room and a very large three armed ‘ogre’ in the centre.

As we went into the room, the ogre advanced and screamed. Tanis’s hair immediately went white while Ben froze on the spot. Meanwhile I ducked behind one of the pillars. It was just as well I did as it breathed fire all over the rest of the party. I then prepared a water bolt, as Michael and Brigetta charged in. Brigetta went right in my line of fire so it was fortunate the creature was nine foot tall.

I hit it with a bolt then moved for a clearer shot as it waded into Brigetta and Michael. Hamish then reappeared right in front of me as he attacked it. It was just as well for him that I wasn’t charging. Instead I used a second bolt as the others waded into it. Finally the third bolt brought it down.

What we had was a mixture of creatures, some sort of animated golem. Part of it was troll so we had to ensure it was well burnt to ensure it’s demise.

“I’ve got the toasting fork guys” Aqualina after spearing a piece of troll on her trident.

Both the altar and the gem had a magical aura. Touching them petrified you followed by a burst of hellfire. While the others debated what to do, Ben and I went looking for Rowan. Fortunately he was able to track down her scent and followed it to a three by three block of tiles in front of door 133. Underneath those tiles was a pit trap with Rowan lying at the bottom of it with a skeleton on top of her. Michael carefully went down and retrieved the body.

I tried a Binding Water ritual in order to get something to knock the gem off but managed to backfire with a wasting disease affecting my strength. The next attempt made me momentarily mute. Finally, once many of the others had cleared out, I picked up the troll skull and threw it at the gem, knocking it off. We were instantly bathed in hellfire.

“Did the skull DA as formally Binder?” - Hamish

“I didn’t detect that much residual evil” - Michael

When we got out of the hole, it was dark. Once we handed the gem over, the waiting griffon gave us the stick then. Michael then used Wings to fly himself, Rowan, and the stick back to the Guild while the rest of us headed back to the orcs.

3rd Seedtime

On the trip back, I checked the bottle containing the blight powder. This time we saw it was turning red and the vial was starting to melt around it. So Brigetta insisted I get rid of it. The problem was, how to dispose of it safely. Finally it was decided to dump it in the fire. Just in case, I armoured up.

Once the smoke cleared from the rather large explosion, only Tanis and I picked ourselves up. The others were unconscious and I had to use all the permanent WoH potions I had to heal everyone up. We were also down to one badly scorched horse, the rest being completely cooked. So we had roast horse for dinner. (Mental note III - learn enough healing to administer healing potions correctly)

11th Seedtime

It took eight days to get back to the orcs. Michael and Rowan, now resurrected, were waiting. Ben was de-cursed and I was cured. The orcs had caught some boar so it was delicious roast boar for dinner.

During this time Rowan told her story. Here it is in her own words:

Rowans trip to the Crystal Mountain

Torture

Okay so the griffins had kidnapped my staff, since its aura reads long lived sentient just like mine, I think kidnapped or taken prisoner is more appropriate than stolen. Now I tried to trade for it the first morning they had it but the she griffin wouldn't trade it for my horse. Food in exchange of a staff that throws lighting balls, a staff that she cant use. A good deal I thought.

The griffins spent the day torturing the staff, and by default me because of the nature of the bond. Aqualina cast a waters of vision and could see a number of griffins playing mid-air catch with the staff high over the mountain. I was just getting pain terror and a lot of mental screaming for help from the staff.

Around sunset Ben volunteered to go look for the staff in his tiger form but the others didn't want him to go off alone, instead I possessed my smallest golem and flew up to search. All the staff could tell me of its location was it was in a golden nest, we located 3 but were only able to check 1 properly before it was time to return to the party. I was too tired to make a second search that night.

Throughout the night I was woken at intervals with transferred pain and injury as the staff was damaged.

Next morning the she griffin came back with the staff and this time there where more than 10 of them, more like a flock of 15. Although she still wouldn't trade the staff she did agree to give the party what they wanted.

So before noon suffering from the lack of a good nights sleep along with the torturing of the staff I ferried Brigetta the 15 - 20 minutes up the mountain to meet the boss she griffin and one of the babies. The business that brought the party to the mountain concluded I again tried to negotiate for the staffs return, but she still wouldn't talk of trading for it. Brigetta short sightedly told the griffin the staff was linked to me magically and she would be forced to come find us with it tomorrow, At that point the griffin suggested she would brake the staff, but I was able to talk her out of it. It being a bad thing to break magic items as they tend to go with a big boom take others with them.

We went back to the others and set out away from crystal mountain, the griffins and my staff, I tried to tell them we had to stay and get the staff, that if it was broken or badly damaged I would just fall over dead. I told them that even as it was, the small amounts it and I had been taking were slowly torturing me to death. Brigetta's reply was that the staff would be back in the morning, "yes" I said "with one pissed off flock off griffins." Aqualina made me a few waters of healing over the course of the day to help heal the damage as the torture continued.

I considered the options

1/ Do nothing- suffer another night like the last as we where now too far away to use the golem, let the staff come back to me in the morning. The griffin is not going to trade so what happens then, do we just keep on until Im tortured to death Do we fight for the staff, another night like the last and I wont be much help. Besides thanks to Brigetta she knows she's being magically compelled to come, she may just risk breaking the staff or she may realize killing me will break the bond. She will definitely come ready for a fight and bring her flock. Results of option 1, I get tortured to death. The staff gets damaged or broken, I die. The griffin kills me to break the bond, we fight a flock of air mage griffins out numbered at least 2 to 1 and we all die.

2/ Go back locate the staff and steal it back, maybe have to fight one surprised griffin. We are now a days ride from the mountain, all riding back wont work. We can't all fly. Anyone I take risks being stranded, as Im almost too tired to cast, and this will only get worse. Result of going it alone with option 2, Staff get damaged or broken I die, Griffin wins fight I die, I win I get staff back.

Option 2 is the only one where we don't all die and I could get the staff back. I decide to return. I see no other option the humans haven't seemed inclined to listen all day. I can only see getting into augment with Brigetta as a waste of time that will tire me still further, so I say nothing. Since I now haven't slept properly for nearly 2 days and have been keep going most of the day on potions the party decide I should not sit a watch.

While they where sorting out the new watch order I set off for the mountain.

Stealth

I flew for just over an hour back to the boat closest to the mountain. Just as I came in to land there was a burst of pain from the staff, as a result I crashed. I hid inside the partly crushed hull of the boat, downed a healing potion and posses Tich again. Off we went up the mountain checking out griffin nests for the staff, being closer to the mountain gave me a longer search time. Griffin nest are full of many small golden treasures but all I wanted was my staff finally I found the she griffin sleeping alone in a nest, my staff held tight in her claw. As I moved Tich to get a better look he slipped and fell on the head of the griffin waking her up.

Back in my body on the boat I decided to go up and attack the griffin as quick as I could, before

she could wake the others. Up I flew, a storm seemed to be rolling in from behind me.

I met her in the air and using my fire wand I let her have it full charge. My goal was to strip away her ability to cast magic. To cause her enough harm to force her to drop the staff and make a run for it. We battled the rising storm, and each other. For some reason we we're in a high mana area. It was obvious that she was not using her own wings to fly and that she was slightly faster than I was in the air.

Another blast from the wand, I land, down my last healing potion and animate my rope to aid me in the fight. Mana impacts. I switch to my Cross Bow, aim fire. The bolt gets deflected in the last few feet. Another mana impact. The ropes in position to spring out and bind her up. Reload the crossbow.

Death or death

Its dawn. I'm lying in a golden nest, there are 3 griffins guarding me. The boss she griffin looks much the worse for wear, there are signs that my rope gave her some trouble after I went down. Since I'm not dead already, I guess they want some thing of me, I start negotiations not for the staff, but for my life.

Seems they've lost some little fist size gem down a hole. The deal is I go down the hole and get the gem or they eat me. I'm stalling for time. Seems some mage who didn't fit nicely into any collage stole the gem and hid it down a hole too small for a griffin to fit though. They've sent a few other people down to try for it, most didn't come out again, those that did got eaten as they had failed to get the gem. At least they were no longer torturing the staff, and we seemed to be close enough that it could heal me.

Still stalling we go look at the entrance then of course I can't go in today because I need to recover from last night and the lack of sleep before that. I spend the rest of the day resting and sleeping, and that night too. Still no sign or signal from the rest of the party, Bloody Humans. Still I stall for time sleep late, ritually purify, check my gear, no rope, only 1 healing left. Try to talk the griffin into letting me take my staff in with me, "I've got more chance of getting the gem that way". But she won't give it to me.

Mid morning comes, the griffins won't wait any longer. The party should have been here by now if they were coming. I can't fight 3 griffins at once, I can't out run them flying. Without the staff there is no point to going just inside and waiting until they think I'm dead, because it will bring them back to the entrance each morning.

My options seem to be certain irresurreccable death by being eaten, or most probable death with a slim chance of recovery and resurrection down the hole. I went for the probable death.

So I went in down this little 4 ft by 4 ft tunnel and it opens up into a room there is dust on the floor and foot prints leading off across the room to the far wall. Those foot prints aint right they shouldn't be there I thinks. As well as these foot prints there are 4 grandfather clocks in the room 3 are in cases unable to be touched and still running, the 4th is stopped. So I took off my pack and sat and thought for a bit, then I saw that the times on the running clocks didn't change, so I worked out that the 4th clock should read 10 o clock to keep the sequence, swung the pendulum and a section of the far wall right where the foot prints ended slide up to reveal a 5 by 5 ft room I went though into this room and the door shut behind me then another opened ahead.

Beyond was a wedge shaped room at the other end where, 3 doors the doors were marked 133, 144 and 155. At my end the room was only 6 ft wide it got wider as went away towards the far doors. The floor was paved in numbered tiles each tile was 2 ft square, they started 2 ft out from my door with the numbers 1,2,3, the next row was 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and the third 9,10,11, 12, 13 then 14 to 19 and so on across the room until the far wall where the 3 doors were set in 6 ft alcoves with 2 ft wide doorsteps. Where the tiles would have left large gaps with the wall there were pillars with carved vines on them. Simple step on the right tiles to safely cross the room, but which ones?

The door behind me closed leaving me on a 2 ft ledge and I saw it was marked 1. But that wasn't much help. The first row of tiles looked safe, I stepped on the one that was marked 2, safe. 6 trapped, a spray of darts that my armour stopped, they were sure to be poisoned. 5 is safe. Third row 10,11,12 either trapped or magical. I could try to work out the pattern, and probably end up poisoned before I do, and with no waters of healing left that was be bad. The room is too short to fly across. I decided to trust in my amour, hope I resisted any magic and just go for it, as I took a second spray of darts from an already triggered trap.

I broke out in boils, a dart got though but I felt okay. 55 was safe. I was hit with muscle spasms. I dodged a trap set to spike my feet. Another dart, only 6 ft to go to door 133. I fell into a 20 ft deep pit trap 6 ft square.

I don't think door 133 is the right one for some reason. I have no rope. I feel sore all over, must use my last healing soon. Since it restores all fatigue due to both Injury and Spell Casting I decide to wait until I've magiced my way out of this trap. I have no rope, I do have a skeleton in the trap with me. So I animated it and had it stand on my shoulders then I adhered it to the wall and by climbing up it get out of the trap on to the door step of 133. Lying on this 2 ft ledge I leant over to counter the adhesion and pull up my skeleton when another muscle spasm strikes.

I wake up back at the guild in the healer wing. My Eylor, my Staffs there too. Eylor says they didn't turn up to rescue us until hours after I was dead.

Next adventuring agreement I sign is going to state that the party is under obligation to attempt rescue of my staff same as any other party member. Also I'll be taking 2 ropes, and a bunch more waters of healing with me when I go back out.

Rowan.

We reprovisioned. I was able to make up ten more permanent WoH from their water mage's stock of ingredients. Michael also told us that he considered that the kidnapped noble woman was 'a dog'.

14th Seedtime

We had three days training time while Michael and Rowan flew north to consult with a scholar. They discovered that Mt Eo had been seven days inland from the ocean, somewhere south of the border. He showed them a tapestry of two demigods duking it out. This had caused the destruction of the mountain and the Crystal mountain may have been part that had been tossed out. The Dark Forest could mark the location.

They also found out that Wuffa was a mage that had fled the empire. Some big devastation formed the Swamps of Despair.

Hamish decided to take over again so take it away Hamish

Orc encampment

Energetic discussions of group dynamics... Under discussion is the following: Intelligent sticks & under no circumstances follow the military scientist. [I'm beginning to think we should treat the stick, Eylor, as a party member, except when it comes to the treasure split]

Review of information:

Mountain of Eo - destroyed by 2 demigods.. approx 1000 to 2000 years ago.

Michael - "Chances are there are no reliable witnesses still around"

Brigetta remote views the dark forest from above (suspected location of Mt Eo) & finds that surprisingly its dark (viewed from above). No mount found - no clearing etc. The orcs mention that Chimeras & Hydras sometimes come out of the dark forest - also some orc parties make it out alive too.

Rowan & Michael reminisce on blowing up the parties horses with a vial of dust. We leave the trembling and shell shocked horse with the orcs, they have agreed to stable it. Mental note - i think this horse has a mental problem... try not to get it as party loot. its got baggage if you know what I mean.

We break camp and head for the dark forest & camp about a mile away from the forest. [It took us four days on foot to get there]

18th Seedtime

Aqualina makes a boat for us tonight - a river barge - on a plain. Spells are cast & we are on alert for trouble.

Towards midnight - On watch. Me (Hamish) & Aqualina. Hear a nice voice, very inviting emmm... wants me to go come to her and chat etc. Holding a conversation and don't succeed in getting the owner of the voice to come into the light of the camp fire and am reluctant to go outside. However do the next best thing and tell the voice that Aqualina is ready - willing and able to party. [I should have thwapped him for that. There should be a clause in the contract about not sacrificing other party members] With some ruckus both me and Aqualina are both sent off watch early to get some sleep. Aqualina makes a move for the door to check the camp perimeters. Ping! Ping Ping! (straps being undone from Aqualina's armor - puts a sash on and prepares to cast. [Resist Cold] Rowan gets to the door first and shuts it. Yawn - sleepy.

19th Seedtime

Porridge!

Brigetta - "What the hell else do adventurers eat?"

Brigetta & Michael tell Aqualina that she was controlled last night. We check for tracks nope - nothing there. The day has dawned overcast and cloudy. Aqualina checks the weather - the outlook is it is going to get worse! Poo! she can divine the future too! Humph! Michael & Rowan describe weird & scary places - sounds bad & nasty.....

A hawk flutters from the sky & Michael suddenly straightens and addresses it "Your Grace". The

hawk then flies off into the forest. Shortly afterwards Michael - "What, this doesn't happen on your normal adventures I take it?" directed at the party. [It was one of the demon Sier's. I don't care what anyone says, I still don't trust that guy]

Michael then mentions something about it was seeking a cursed wiccan. Good, we don't have one of those so we now follow the long departed hawk into the forest.

The forest - Ankle deep mud & its dark & dim in there..Unnerving - most of the normal forest sounds are gone. Rowan looks around as we are trudging deeper and spots some movement - the rest of us see different shades of mud - all are smelly.

Michael DA's some trees. A healthy tree - it reads as a golem or undead - an animate! Its been like this for at least 150 years or so. Nope the tree cant get up and move about but this can move ie their branches. Vulnerabilities to anything? Nope! Not even fire... NO! They are not sentient. An unhealthy tree - Natural living plant. A dead tree - Dead as in DEAD DEAD DEAD! We avoid the healthy looking trees.

We trudge deeper into the forest & the mud gets deeper - Icky! not a nice wet! the worst of earth & water, you stop and you stick & sink. Walking further there is sort of a splash as Rowan fall over forwards & unconscious into the mud. Aqualina grabs Rowan and wipes some mud off Rowan - Yuck she now smells. We squelch onwards.

A little further on some movement is spotted, the party of fearless adventurers is scared! A large (gulp) red (gulp) dragon that's 25' long is seen though the trees (eek). [When dealing with Starflower I mean dragons, caution is definitely advised.] I cast walking unseen on myself and run after the party which have decided to make a small tactical withdrawal away from the scene backtracking as fast as humanly possible to where we have come from.

Victory - we choose to fight another day! Suddenly Rowan starts swinging her staff wildly. [It was also firing lightning bolts at something we couldn't see] Mental note - Rowans insane, all this mud is getting to her... There is nothing in front of her as im right next to her ducking out of the way of a few swings. Suddenly her head snaps back as it looks like she takes a hit and stuns for a couple of seconds then is swinging wildly again. Rowan says that there is something bad in here. OWW! sudden pain all over my body, nothing serious but just tender. Rowan lets out a sigh - Ahhhhh. and looks better. Aqualina comes over and hands me a potion for future use of necessary (looks somewhat like one of the potions that Tanis almost drowned me several days back when there was a mishap with a fire). Yep she's insane - Rowan has a one sided conversation with "the stick". Aqualina has adventured with mind mages before and suspects mind mage phantasms.

We continue for the rest of the day - towards dark Aqualina makes a boat for us to stay in.[One of these days, I'll get around to learning to make bigger boats]

First watch is Rowan and Tanis. Shouted awake - Yelling - Get up!!!!!! Everyone not in armor armors up. A scratching noise is heard towards to bow. Bugger the boat is made of dead wood and its probably got borer, a giant case of it maybe? Rowan thinks it could be a dead orc or a tree root.

Second watch After an hour the scratching is still there. Looking outside via a port hole, notice that the tress are moving. Looking again, no, its us that moving. Damn, we forgot to put that

anchor down. Aqualina says we better sit back and enjoy the ride and wake me when we get there (Aqualina is currently on watch) [I was just going OFF watch]

20th Seedtime

In the morning a skeleton is seen tangled in the vines of a tree. Breakfast is cold gruel Damn we need a fire.

Who's the sucker who is going to walk out first? Michael the hero steps out like a 1st adventure party member - some sort of clearing.. Skeletons around the place are hanging in the trees.

We walk out casually and non aggressively. Eerie, no animal sounds and there are no echo's - as if the sound is absorbed some how. Very weird. I think we are in trouble, deep muddy trouble. 3 foot deep muddy trouble to be exact as Brigetta takes a mud depth reading with a stick taken from the boat deck. Everything is completely still - bar us.

Someone shouts out "We come in Peace!" I mentally add "shoot to kill, shoot to kill" Still nothing happens..... [even after we tried all our languages]

We need a smaller boat, this one is too big and is stuck fast & too hard to move. Aqualina says that we can counter spell the boat. Michael "We are standing on it! Don't or well sink in the mud." Aqualina makes a small punt and we punt to shore.

Michael - "Anyone know where we are?!"

Brigetta - "We could loot the bodies, don't think they well need their items anymore"

Michael DA's a skeleton - Non sentient animate. Humm, better not die here, it could be bad. Snap, Snap, Crash, Crash. About 10 or so of the skeletons (some with silvered weapons - Brigetta must be able to smell the stuff) drop into the mud . Its going to be bad! Shall we wait till the skeletons bring their items on deck before we hack them loose or we'll have to hunt in the mud for them later - not a pleasant idea. [So we prepared for combat, armoured up and coruscades all around]

.8.

The skeletons basically had us surrounded and started attacking immediately. Ben was attacked by one with a glaive, Hamish was facing one with twin scimitars, Michael and Rowan were facing three, I was nearly surrounded by four but one chose to attack Brigetta and another went for Tanis.

So we smacked into them as best we could. Tanis grabbed my tulwar so she had a better chance. I was just concentrating on fending them off with the trident. Not the best weapon to use in this situation but it was what I had. And some of their hits were getting through the eog.

Eylor blew up the one in front of Rowan and Michael quickly dropped his. That left them free to help Tanis and Hamish. Unfortunately, by the time they cleared those out, Brigetta took a severe blow and dropped. One of her opponents immediately turned on me as well, making it three, while the other turned on Ben who was moving to help, bringing him down as well. So Rowan and Michael started working their way around the circle while Hamish stepped over Brigetta to aid Ben. Rowan piled in to help Hamish while Michael decided that the best thing he could do was to save Brigetta. However he would like it put on record that he didn't save the bard (even though he did). I then collapsed from a well aimed blow.

When I recovered, Rowan and Michael were mopping up. Brigetta and Ben were back on their feet so I basically burnt up all my fatigue making Waters of Healing. My armour didn't seem too damaged thank goodness because it'll be a real nuisance getting it fixed. Probably have to go back to Greyhawk and see Lawfakir. Tanis had done so well with my tulwar that I was going to let her keep it but she fancied an axe in the loot so she gave the tulwar back.

None of the weapons were magical but there was a silvered morning star. In addition, there was the following: another morning star, two battleaxes, two scimitars, a warclub, a glaive, a short sword, a rapier, a mace and a maingauche. There were also some tower and large round shields. The skeletons were orc so we surmised this had been the fate of one of the orc search parties.

We then heard an inhuman scream as the boat behind us was destroyed. We pressed on. As we went, the mud got thicker and there was mist drifting about. As it got darker, Hamish lit a candle.

That night, during mine and Hamish's watch, Rowan retrieved Eylor from outside. I first chided her for leaving it out again as I didn't want a repetition of it being staff-napped. However she said that it had been making friends with the locals. Apparently we were going in the right direction.

21st Seedtime

Dawn arrived and I'm really tired. Also, apparently we had overwatched as there had been only two watch changes that night. Odd though. I was sure we had only watched the normal length of time. Rowan had also managed to lose all tactile sensation, probably another backfire.

We travelled on that day. At the end, after making a boat, I cast a Resist Cold and a Waterbreathing on me before doing Waterbreathings all round. Odd though. For a while I had felt I hadn't needed it but I was now glad to have it, like wearing a favourite set of clothes. Very odd.

So we settled down for the night.

.9.

(And Hamish scribes again)

22nd Seedtime

Next morning we set out after the usual preparations. During the tiring march, the ground has begun to dry, thigh deep mud is now only calf deep and there is a hazy marshy fog around pierced by the forms of distant trees. Animal sounds that have been missing from the forest can now be heard, and the dark under the trees is slightly less dark, this can't be good. We have spotted some ruins with some strange symbols etched into them.. they look old and the symbols are unfamiliar to me, however there is a murmur of something from Michael as he has seen these type somewhere before.

After about four hours march we approach a structure in the swamp, though a clearer part of the mists we make out a structure - a small ruined tower and approx 15' beyond, a 10' high cliff ring thrusts from the ground, although it appears natural, we can see it forms a wall in the shape of a C enclosing an area about 50ft across (with the ruin being 20' or so to our right from the path to the top entrance of the C), the gap open to us is approx 15' wide, with trees and some very wet looking marshy areas on either side too.

I cast walking unseen. Michael and Aqualina advance though the marshy scrub as quiet at possible, shortly after Brigetta follows. We advance and notice that a small human (pygmy we later find out) is chanting over a pot on an altar in the circle of the cliffs near the far wall. [Reminds me of the tribal shaman at home, but shorter] The party gets into place & readies for any action. Past the alter there is a rock with several jagged protrusions (looks like more than 5) dimly seen through the mists. I prepare to cast Dannum Minatum and keep preparing it just incase its needed to be cast. Rowan prepares to make a ramp so some of the party can reach the top of the cliff.

There is a sudden noise & a puff of smoke and on either side of the alter now stand 2 wolves, large & red eyed.... NO, not wolves, DIRE wolves. The Dire Wolves advance and the pygmy catches up to the direwolf and jumps on its back. Michael is unseen and in the clearing under the mud. Ben rushes forward charging up to the side of the clear path and I run for Rowans ramp, Brigetta runs up the ramp ahead of me and Rowan prepares a spell.

Reaching the top of the cliff with Brigetta, I see Rowan & Tanis (with bow in hand). Who knows where Aqualina is? Last time I saw her was in a particularly marshy area by the ramp. [I was actually submerged in the swamp] The ramp disappears and there is 2 puffs of fire, one heads to the marsh area on the right hand side (exiting the C) setting some of the trees there alight (hope no one got caught in that). The blast heading this way was hot, definite smell of burnt long pork, quick check - its not me.

Arrows fly, none hit as they are just shy of their mark and water shoots from the ground striking the 2 beasts and splashes around a bit, that must have been from Aqualina. Both direwolves and passenger rush by and disappear into the mists of the swampy area followed up by an arrow which clatters into the brush where they had just been.

We are victorious ! They obviously knew that we are way too powerful & have run off with their wolf tails between their legs. [Yeah right! More like fetching reinforcements]

Twang, Twang Wizz, Arrows & javelins shower us on the cliff, Brigetta falls over as she's the only one hit, [Incorrect. Rowan also had a javelin lodge in her and another bounce off] both have impaled & lodged in her primary arm and blood is squirting from both. Where the hell did that come from? (they came from outside the C, from our rear!) I see one, a pygmy in plate mail - an ambush! [Told ya - and they knew what they were doing, going for our Mil Sci first, plus visible images]

Jumping down from the cliff into some cover I land awkwardly and my secondary arm is numb and useless. Wizz of arrows, Looking up they missed Tanis but her glittering coruscade is missing. Michael appears and scales the cliff to pour a healing potion into Brigetta, but blood is no longer squirting, her coruscade is gone and Michael's walking unseen does not drop - this is NOT good, so he leaves the potion behind and heads into combat.

At the entrance to the C, Ben is holding at bay 3 pygmies, I run to his aid as 3 on 1 is NOT good either! There is twang of a bow, the only one it can be is Tanis, shortly afterwards there is a thud and a scream! No idea who or what she hit. A 4th pygmy advances to flank Ben, Michael appears on my left with a glowing rapier and a shorter maingauche in hand and me with a sabre. Both of us being walking unseen have the flanking pygmy between ourselves and Ben. All 3 attacks hit - that HAD to hurt. Both of our walking unseens fail and we are noticed as it is a fairer 4 on 3, still in their favour. Tanis, Rowan and Brigetta are on the cliff and I can no longer hear or see what

they are doing, Aqualina is MIA and Michael, Ben and myself are in the process of trying to make short work of these pygmies.[\[I was already up to the top as well and trying to deal to the spellcasters. See later\]](#) Michaels rapier penetrates the pygmies partial plate, he wiggles it and the pygmy falls without a scream. As the rapier withdraws is dripping blood. A pygmy broad sword slashes me and there is some blood - OW!

A pygmy rapiers Ben and he falls to the ground - dam, our only healer in the party is down again. Michael flanks the pygmy in front of me, coming though its back slashing as he goes. The pygmy still stands - just (payback for hitting me before!) A pygmy rushes at Michael's back, weapon drawn, a snap of a twig or splosh of mud alerts Michael and with unearthly speed spins and runs him though with the rapier - and stuns with the hit. My sabre slashes into the battered pygmy. Michael impales 2 of the enemy - a rapier and maingauche, one instantly falls and the other stuns. I get hit again and hit back, the pygmy wobbles but does not go down.

The only way to describe what happens next is annihilation - Michael takes out 2 pygmies and advances to save Ben. A good slash of the sabre and the pygmy grins - ohh! Michael impales the pygmy with the rapier & manoeuvres a healing potion to Bens lips. My sabre slases deeply into the pygmy as Bens eyes flutter - he's alive. Michael leaves close and then tries to keep the pygmy out of close, the rapier plunges into its leg as he runs up the blade to the shaft -that looked very painful. The pygmy frothes at the mouth and goes wild. My sabre clangs off its armour - damn! He dies horribly on Michaels rapier, I'll spare the details as it was exceedingly messy.

I catch a glimpse of a pygmy running into the ruin. Michael gets to the ruin first and disarms it, the warclub departs its hands and he cowers in the corner and mumbles (only as bards can) Michael closes and bails him up in some sort of a hold - it stops the mumbling. Michael says that he's a long lived sentient bard. The pygmy is insane and just gibbers - Michael roughs him up. Aqualina appears and starts casting to heal us, I'm feeling quite faint and my vision is getting a bit fuzzy and light headed. After a couple of spells there is a flash and she stumbles a bit, shakes her head, looks worried and rants a bit, spells, what spells?

Rowan and Tanis also reappear, turns out they and Aqualina were fighting (with bow and magic) an archer, a namer and the bard that Michael caught. [\[Darn Namer kept catching us in his Counterspells - should learn General Knowledge Namer Counter\]](#) The archer and the namer got away unfortunately. Things could be worse I suppose, there is a chant from the captured bard, Michael has a dagger at his throat and there is a spray of blood as he is now dead. ITS WORSE!, my leather armor is now crimson on the side that faced that bard. I'm sure its going to smell later.

Taking a closer look at the pot, we find that it is the cauldron lined with gold (and the one we are after) and the jagged rock has the imprint of a hydra on it, just as if a hydra had been by the rock when a powerful blast had etched part of the rock away (that was not shadowed by the hydra)Yay, we have 2 more of the items that we require. Rowan petrifies Brigetta's body, and then shrinks it and the hydra rock so we can easily carry them.

We spend the next few days tramping back through the swamp, with a few wet, uncomfortable nights when we don't find one of Aqualina's boats - as she still hasn't remembered how to create them, then about a week walking from the forest to the Orc encampment (Note: must remember not to kill most of the horses again, all this walking is extremely tiring and slow). When we reach the encampment, we find that the group of orc's that was after the bone of a living shade has also returned, and they were successful. Turns out they got into a nasty battle with some undead types, and early on one of the orc's lost an arm. Later in the combat the same orc was turned into

a shade, however the previously detached arm was not affected. The orcs grabbed the arm and ran off. So we now have all the ingredients. The orc shaman conducts the ritual and it is successful - the orc chief is cured. The baron's daughter is returned to us in one piece - completely unharmed. We walk back to the Baron's keep - and he is delighted to have the daughter back, however Michael comes up with something about a geas which means she has to go off plane for a while (not sure where that came from), [he wanted to make sure she got an education] so she is entrusted into his guardianship, and we all head back through the portal to Seagate [It's the 14th of Blossom when we get back]. Michael arranges for the daughter to go off and get some education for a year. We all get paid and we deliver Brigetta's body to the healers where she is unshrunk, unpetrified, then raised from the dead.[We also get chastised by Guild Security for letting Hamish do all the astrology readings, especially since I can see the future in the Waters as well]