

# Insect World

Cover Sheet

Adventure by Carl Reynolds

01/01/94 - 10/03/94

## Player Characters

Gar Og Zegate	Fire	Orc	Male	
T'ana Starflower	Mind	Elf	Female	Mil Sci
Lath	Air	Human	Female	
Vila	E&E	Human	Male	Leader
Valium	E&E	Human	Male	
Romo	Binder	Human	Male	
Phaeton	Solar	Human	Male	Scribe

## Plane

Elusha

## Places visited

Fesenheim in North Aquila  
Underground insect hive  
Underground complex  
A garden somewhere in Elushia

## Employer

Rudigar

## Major NPCs encountered

Hautmut (Martin) - Rudigar's son  
Grandfather Wirrn - insectoid  
Granny Click  
Fritz  
Baron Richtofen  
Revlin - town leader  
Sudonikus - Baron's noble  
Uve - guide  
8' tall iron golem in underground complex  
Heinrich

## Mission

To escort Hautmut safely down to the underground insect hive

# **Insect World**

## Adventure Summary

10/01/94

Found notice of a late adventure. Met the rest of the party and the party employer. When he started his introduction we noticed he spoke Common with a very odd accent. He told us he was from Fesenheim in the northern reaches of Aquila, near the mountains bordering Aquila with Alfheim. His name was Rudigar and he needed a party to accompany his son, Hautmut, on a journey to a colony of insectoids that lived under the mountains. Apparently their village was friends with the 'bugs' and they traded knowledge. Every so often, a boy or girl would come of age and would go down to the colony to stay there to learn a trade. It was now his son's turn to go. Usually the insects send an escort but it hadn't showed up this time. War problems? Brudegar also told us that some of the insects were dangerous.

12/01/94

Portalled to Barovia then flew off towards the mountains. Stopped at Graft for a Wings recast. Spent the night holed up in a barn.

13/01/94

Reached Rudigar's village. Found out that the villagers used insects to help them with their farming. Stayed at Granny Click's.

14/01/94

Saw Grandfather Wirrn that afternoon. Turned out he's a giant insect. He didn't know why the usual escort hadn't turned up but he did tell us that there were conflicts among the different varieties of insects. The wasp-people (or wasp women) were the most aggressive, attacking for no reason. There are lots of species of insects down in the caverns and a few of them are mages. The journey down would take a week but the entrance cavern was only a few hours away. The cavern itself was large and lit by it's own sun which went through a regular day/night cycle (the light waxes and wanes). The villagers work with a species that most closely resembles the termite but wasn't. Ants are their worst enemy. There are beetle people, spiders are dangerous, mantis men are also bad. The flies are also extremely nasty. Starflower asked about myriapods (centipedes etc). They do exist and are large but not intelligent. There are also human/insect hybrids. The growth rate down there is much higher. There are also some ruins down there but no one is sure who or what built them.

Also met Hautmut. He doesn't speak Common. Rudigar told us that we should not use lights or fires on the journey down as that would attract the insects. He has some insect repellent, usually insect byproducts, but what repels some insects can attract others. Food will be provided and there is lots to carry. Water we can find on the way.

15/01/94

Reached the cave mouth and entered a chamber that was swarming with insects. Fritz lived here. Stayed here overnight.

16/01/94

Headed down earthen tunnel. Met giant fleas. Kept going. Tunnels became stone. Found a cave to sleep in.

17/01/94

Reached a place where we had to watch out for the holes in the floor. Went through swarms of midges and repelled some caddis flies.

18/01/94

Arrived at vertical shaft. The plan was to descend down 400ft to get to the next tunnel. Bug people live in the shaft and should be left alone. Shaft keeps going down and up. Tried windwalking but something stopped us flying down. Rudigar was still in the shaft when the spell duration expired and fell to his death. Obstruction may have been giant spider web.

Decided to start back up.

19/01/94

Arrived back at the earthen tunnels.

22/01/94

Reached the top. Orcs and a troll had attacked Fritz's cavern and killed him. Fought them and took orc prisoners. Waited till dawn then reported back to the village. Grandfather Wirrn started arranging for another guide.

28/01/94

No guide yet. Visit by Baron Ritchofen and his entourage.

29/01/94

Got our guide, Uve. Stayed the night at the caves.

30/01/94

Reached sinkhole area and descended down one. Crawled through narrow tunnel until reaching lava tube. Went past an underground river and encountered tunnel full of spiders and webs.

31/01/94

Backtracked to river and waded down it. Lowered ourselves over waterfall and into cave behind it. Cave contains plinth with glyphs and a curious depression in the middle.

01/02/94

Carried on. Attacked by huge cave weta and it's parasitic fleas.

02/02/94

Bypassed cavern full of giant spiders.

03/02/94

Walking on muck which was full of insects. Further we went the more insects there were. Soon passage opened up into immense cavern, lit by what appeared to be a sun. Could see grassy plains and forests plus a structure stretching from floor to ceiling.

Encountered a wasp woman.

04/02/94

Carried on across plain. Lath nearly killed by trapdoor spider. Also attacked by beetles.

Discovered an underground complex below us so decided to enter that. Layer of tunnels over series of rooms. Objects crawl through tunnels cleaning them and removing obstacles. Had to go around one. Large golem in the complex which attacked us. Went back in the tunnels.

05/02/94

Still crawling through tunnels. Reached edge of tunnel grid and had to start digging our way out past an entry hatch.

06/02/94

Finally got out and emerged in a forest. Bypassed river of army ants. Reached the plain and headed towards the tower, following the forest. On the way, attacked by mosquitos and nearly flattened by a giant worm. Saw a flea-man and fought off a spider that attacked him.

Reached the edge of the forest. Could see tower being beseiged by army of giant ants. Termite tower at least a mile high, touching the ceiling.

We decided to retreat. Vila stepped into a hornet's nest and a fireball was used to clear them away. That attracted the attention of some mantis-men. Some of us, the weaker members of the party, were told to fly to the cavern while the others waited it out, invisible.

The resulting fight ended with Lath nearly suffocated and Gar plus Starflower captured. They tried to escape but Gar was killed and burnt. Starflower managed to get away.

The remains of the party assembled in the entrance cavern.

07/02/94

Finally decided to try dropping messages down the airshafts at the top of the tower. Starflower went to do that. She noticed that the sun was a 30' disk with twenty glyphs arranged in a circle. The light varied from time to time depending on how many glyphs were glowing.

When she got back we settled down to wait.

08/02/94

A human with artificial wings rushed into the tunnel being chased by two ant-man. The ant-man were defeated. He introduced himself as Heinrich and he told us that the war between the ants and the 'termite' people had been going on for quite some time but lately it had escalated to the present level. Him and a strike force had broken through the lines to reach us. The rest of the force hadn't made it. In his opinion it would be better that we went through the tunnels if Uve could guide us.

He also warned us that it was not a good idea to stay in the 'sunlight' for too long as long exposures caused people to 'change' taking on insectoid characteristics. The ants and 'termites' are the dominant lifeforms down here.

So we headed off back up the tunnel and along a narrow side branch. Reached the shores of an underground lake.

A boat was created and we sailed out. Heinrich got us to stop on the point of the lake over the termite mound so he could do a ritual to raise the lake floor here so that the termites could tunnel up. This took some time.

09/02/94

The termites burrowed a hole up and we climbed down. Reached large area where a lot of 'humans' (many had varying degrees of mutation) were studying. They were trying to predict the seemingly random changes in light.

Heinrich and a few others were going to go back with us. We were shown a mushroom shaped stone that looked as if it would fit in the central depression of the plinth behind the waterfall.

15/02/94

Finally we were ready to leave. Saw brilliant beam of light erupt from the 'sun'.

18/02/94

Reached the plinth behind the door. The mushroom shaped stone was put in the plinth and a shimmering curtain formed. We stepped through and found ourselves in a garden on an unknown spot of Alushia.

Returned back to the cavern and continued our ascent. Finally made it out. Some villagers were waiting there and we were led up the mountains to avoid a confrontation with the Baron.

Finally we headed back to the Guild, reaching there a month before the next meeting.

# Our Little Trip to Bug City

Phaeton

31/12/93

Attended the Guild Meeting. Unfortunately no suitable adventures came up. Looks like another three months hanging around the Guild.

10/01/94

While checking the noticeboard I saw a notice indicating that possible employment could be had for a party of adventurers. I decided to check it out.

When I got there, I discovered Gar (full name Gar Og Zegate - he changed it) was there. This time he was dressed in frills and ruffs and wearing a floppy hat with a feather in it along with his hand and onehalf sword but I knew he had a big chest with LOTS of assorted weapons in it. He's also a firemage and is 6'6" tall - (he looked 5'6 because of a permanent stoop). He's an obvious orc with black hair, red eyes, green skin and a protruding canine tooth.

Starflower was also there. Even though she's a female she's one of the few who take the Art of magicks seriously. She's an elf 6'4" tall with long auburn hair, green eyes, and wearing black plate armour as well as a shimmering silvery cloak. Her crossbow and two tulwars (one of which has a Bound Air blade) were strapped on. She's a Mind Mage and a rather good one.

The other female in the party introduced herself as Lath and was currently wearing a white ballgown with silver shoes. She's human, blue eyes, long blond hair (figures), 5'9" and currently carrying two hand axes. She told us she's a death aspected airmage and she can also turn into a wolf.

The next to introduce himself was Vila. He was in casual dress. He's 5'6" with brown eyes, brown hair and told us he's an E&E mage and also a 'famous' thief.

Valium was also an E&E mage but specialised in differing areas. He was 6'2 with shoulder length brown hair.

Last was Romo. He told us he was a Binder. No golems with him though.

I introduced myself as Phaeton Tama - solar celestial mage, magic philosopher, and experienced healer. 5'3", and thin, wearing white robes and a rainbow cloak. I had quite a few useful spells such as Shadowform, StarWings, Walking Unseens and, finally, Curse Removal.

We were able to discover that this adventure had been called by a representative from Guild Finance who wanted us to 'go out and make money for the Guild'. Apparently the latest tax rise was hitting the Guild hard. Anyway he told us that this farmer chap, from Aquila, had been hanging around the Guild for the last couple of weeks but he couldn't afford to hire a party. Finally they let him present his case in the hope that the party might discover enough treasure to refill the Guild coffers.

First thing we dealt with was the formalities. Vila became the party leader as he was the most experienced and Starflower was the military scientist. Both Gar and I wanted the position of

scribe. He managed to convince the party that it would be safer if the notes were in his possession so he got the vote.

Once that was complete a weatherworn gentleman, about 5'7" in height was brought in. When he started his introduction we noticed he spoke Common with a very odd accent. That was soon explained when he told us he was from Fesenheim in the northern reaches of Aquila, near the mountains bordering Aquila with Alfheim. His name was Rudigar and he needed a party to accompany his son, Hautmut, on a journey to a colony of insectoids that lived under the mountains. Insectoids? Was this a colony of Selenites? Apparently their village was friends with the 'bugs' and they traded knowledge. Every so often, a boy or girl would come of age and would go down to the colony to stay there to learn a trade. It was now his son's turn to go. Usually the insects send an escort but it hadn't showed up this time. War problems? Brudegar also told us that some of the insects were dangerous. This prompted Lath and Gar to discuss the possibility of getting 'bug' plate armour - like that which Starflower already has. Also we were able to ascertain that Gar still had his insect control rod. We tried to locate Grendel to obtain the other one but he had lent it to another party.

Valium mentioned that if he shouts 'Q', he's casting a Quickness. Vila then mentioned that he says 'Geronimo' we were to close our eyes as he's about to trigger a skeleton. Many of us were rather intrigued by this so Vila decided to demonstrate. Suddenly a skeleton appeared. Once we got that sorted out, Vila rolled a marble across the table. It turned into some sort of winged creature. According to the DA it was a 'Magical entity - winged imp'.

After the meeting broke up, I paid 600sp for a Lesser Enchantment to be put on then went to the Fire College so Gar could put Protections from Magical Fires on us. I then paid 1000sp for two 10pt healing potions. Vila was also offering Greater Enchantments at Rank 6 so I paid 1000sp for one. It was supposed to last for four weeks but he double effected on me so it'll last eight weeks.

11/01/94

Someone had arranged for an astrology reading - along with interpretation. The reading was as follows:

Once upon a time, long, long ago (ancient history or legend)  
There was a dwarf who didn't know (dwarf=ground/cave dweller)  
Of anything except his cheese (cheese=gold)  
"Come here little mouse, come here please" (Warning of lure - danger)  
"I only want to be your friend" (An obviously false statement)  
But really the cheese was only pretend (Gold doesn't exist?)  
The dwarf had a little problem you see (Enigmatic insect problem?)  
"A little creepy crawly was looking at me"  
Here they come like lambs to the slaughter (Danger!)  
And that was the end of the dwarf and his daughter (Lost generation? Destroyed? Or a warning?)

We were also waiting for permission to use the rune portal to Borovia (the closest safest place to our destination) which is Count Kree's territory but no word was expected until tomorrow.

That night, I did a Reading the Night Sky ritual and got the following:

The wars continue  
Above and below the ground  
What are men but insects?

12/01/94

We managed to get permission to portal to Borovia so that was what we did. Upon arrival Starflower cast a telepathy and followed that with a mindspeech. Meanwhile I did StarWings on everyone. Once done, we took off towards the mountains in the general direction of Rudigar's village. Because of the distance we had to make a few stops. The first one was Graft. The ground was thick with snow and Gar managed to plow into a snowdrift. I was feeling the cold so asked Lath for a Resist Cold spell which she obliged with. She then used a lightning bolt to bring down a tree so we could get a fire started. Soon Starflower had completed an invigorating broth. After drinking it we were ready to go. Unfortunately my attempts at casting the StarWings were not entirely successful. The first attempt was a backfire which completely drained my power crystal. I had just enough energy to complete the job (except for Lath and Rudigar. She had used Windwalking on both of them to go ahead and prepare the next stop). However I was too exhausted to fly. So I was bundled up in blankets and Gar drank one of Starflower's Waters of Strength so he could carry me.

.2.

I don't remember much of the rest of the trip. Vila had a Locate of Lath so we could follow them.

The next thing I clearly remembered was being woken up by Starflower and fed some sort of stew. From the smell and sounds around me, it was obvious that we had holed up in someone's barn.

13/01/94

It was rather noisy the next morning, what with the animals etc, but I did manage to get an hours purification in. I managed to get starwings on everyone, (except Lath & Rudigar - they went off ahead on windwalking) and half an hour later we arrived near a village. We followed Vila to a house. Once inside we discovered Lath was being berated by an elderly lady who Rudigar later introduced as Granny Click. Two young children were in the room, a boy called Sasha and a girl called Petira. They both seemed to exhibit insect behaviour but Petira's aura showed her to be fully human with no magical talents and there wasn't any magical effects on her either. While Rudigar went to see Grandfather Werrin, Granny Click served us a selection of cheeses for breakfast.

Afterwards we discussed tactics and decided to split up resources. Vila pulled out two of his ten point Healing potions and gave one to Valium and myself. Gar decided to pass the Wand of Insect Control over to Valium as Valium wasn't likely to be in combat and had a good chance of getting it to work. Gar also suggested pairing fighters with mages so Vila decided to pair with Starflower. Lath selected Valium (thank goodness) which left Gar looking after Romo and myself.

Accommodation also had to be sorted out. Granny Click had three places here, there were two more next door, and one over the road. So Lath, Valium and Romo ended up staying here, Starflower went over the road, which left Vila and myself next door. There wasn't much else we could do until Rudigar came back so we stayed and talked to Granny Click for a while. We found

out that the villagers here use insects to help them with their farming. They even breed them.

When darkness arrived, and after dinner, I did a Reading the Night Shy Ritual and came up with the following:

Who's that climbing up my wall?  
Inky black and very small?  
Now he's up above my head  
Hanging by a little thread.

Boris the Spider!  
Boris the Spider!

14/01/94

That morning I was too busy admiring the sunrise colours, and sketching the effect on the mountains to bother about purification. After breakfast, Starflower went for a walk and did a mental sweep of the area. Mostly she picked up villagers but there was an alien mind in one of the buildings so she informed Vila who did a Wizard's Eye to investigate. His eye revealed a huge bug creature sitting at a table. It looked something like a giant ant and appeared to be writing.

Starflower continued her scan and noticed that the villagers in the field seemed to be intently concentrating on the job in hand but their minds also seemed agitated. Could they be under some sort of mind control?

About lunch time, Rudigar arrived back and informed us that there was no hurry to leave. Also that Grandfather Wirrn wanted to see us that afternoon.

.3.

So, that afternoon, we followed Rudigar to the building where Grandfather Wirrn was. Before we entered, Starflower put up Telepathy and a Mind Speech. Also she recognised this as being the building where the alien mind was. The room he led us into was one that Vila recognised. In one wall was an alcove with a curtain drawn across it. As we entered Rudigar told us that Grandfather was behind the curtain as he wished not to be seen. He also said that Grandfather didn't understand Common nor could he speak it so he'd have to translate.

From behind the curtain came clicking, whirring, and scraping sounds. I immediately went on Selenite Alert. Lath looked rather nervous as well. Rudigar told us that we should not leave the village until we get what we deserve. Gar wanted to know if we had to kill anyone. Grandfather wasn't sure. He also didn't know why the usual escort hadn't turned up but he did tell us that there were conflicts among the different varieties of insects. The wasp-people (or wasp women) were the most aggressive, attacking for no reason. There are lots of species of insects down in the caverns and a few of them are mages. Grandfather listed all the different species.

The journey down would take a week but the entrance cavern was only a few hours away. The cavern itself was large and lit by it's own sun which went through a regular day/night cycle (the light waxes and wanes). The villagers work with a species that most closely resembles the termite but wasn't. Ants are their worst enemy. There are beetle people, spiders are dangerous, mantis men are also bad. The flies are also extremely nasty. Starflower asked about myriapods (centipedes etc). They do exist and are large but not intelligent. There are also human/insect hybrids. The growth rate down there is much higher. There are also some ruins down there but

no one is sure who or what built them.

Rudigar showed us an interesting object. It's a clay sphere which contains a highly ferocious insect inside. Basically you throw it at the opposition, the sphere breaks, and the insect attacks the nearest creature. Basically an insect bomb.

Back at Granny Click's we had lunch, a selection of insect food. Some of it was reasonably ok. It all DAed as coming from Elushia.

That afternoon Hatmut turned up but told us he'd rather be called Martin. He's about 15 years old 5'8" tall with brown hair and brown eyes. He doesn't speak Common either.

Rudigar told us that we should not use lights or fires on the journey down as that would attract the insects. He has some insect repellent, usually insect byproducts, but what repels some insects can attract others. Food will be provided and there is lots to carry. Water we can find on the way.

Starflower spent the rest of the afternoon swapping recipes with Granny Click while Vila wandered off to a tavern and got drunk. That night, I went for another astrology reading.

Evil lurks below the garden  
Do not part the curtains  
Do not plant the mushroom  
Do not speak to the statue

15/01/94

I managed one hours purification in the cold light of dawn. After breakfast we prepared to leave. Lath wasn't feeling well so I did a Soothe Pain on her. She shouldn't have gorged herself the day before. Three and a half hours later we reached a cave mouth. It looked like it had been dug out. After clambering through the dark tunnel, we emerged in a torch-lit chamber. It was actually split into two by a central column and there were smaller side tunnels off it. There was also a pungent smell in here and the place was literally swarming with insects. One of the main chambers contained a large table with beakers boiling on it. The insects were crawling everywhere.

Rudigar told us to wait and he departed. Soon he was back accompanied by a 6' man carrying a large axe who was introduced as Fritz. He pronounced Seagate the way Gar does. The idea was that we would stay the night here then commence our descent in the morning as soon as the bulk of the food arrived.

The way Rudigar said that we were going to see our way there was to have some paste applied to our eyes which would allow us to see in total darkness. The trouble was that the resulting 'light' coming in would be so bright that we would need to wear multi-faceted eyes over our own. Also we won't be able to use any lights, or light fires as we would be permanently blinded.

Fritz was interested in the sorts of magics we did so Lath took him outside (we wouldn't let her cast inside) and demonstrated lightning bolts. Gar later asked Fritz whether or not he had much bother with orcs attacking from the mountains. He said he had been attacked by a strange sort of orc recently, with wings and female heads. The skeletons were lying outside. So we went to have a look. It was harpy alright.

He reckoned the orcs were easy to deal with as he just let loose his trained attack wasp. He showed us the creature. It looked like an ordinary wasp but was at least six inches long. Nasty.

There were insects all over the place (I spent some time sketching some) and there was some debate on whether we'd sleep in the cavern or take our chances with the cold and the orcs outside. We decided on the cavern. Starflower did discover that a Force Shield spell did help keep the insects out. The rest of us just huddled in our sleeping sacks.

Before retiring I did another Reading the Night Sky ritual. This time it was:

Souless shall devour tongueless  
Food shall be eaten and not live again  
Armies rise anew each day  
You could go home.

This one sounds extremely nasty. When I mentioned it, Starflower muttered something about Undead.

16/01/94

I managed two hours purification despite the fact that we had all picked up a dose of fleas and they were itching us. Late morning, a party of villagers arrived with the bulk of the food supplies.

Before we left I put a Witchsight on myself (I'm still unhappy about this paste business) and we headed down a low narrow tunnel. It got darker and darker. After a short while, the tunnel widened and Rudigar decided this would be a good spot to apply the paste. A few of us, me included, decided it would be prudent to only have one eye enhanced and cover it in case we needed to have light. So that was what happened.

After the paste was applied to the eyeball (a NOT nice sensation) the darkness gave way to a dim light. We began to see again. The light got brighter, and brighter, until it was unbearably bright. We had to apply the bug eye to counter that effect. Once it was done we continued on. I discovered it was still possible to detect auras through this thing but gathering mana was like I was in absolute darkness i.e. impossible.

This stage of the tunnel looked like it had been artificially dug. Wooden supports helped hold the tunnel open. According to Rudigar, this stage had been dug by the first set of villagers to visit the insect world after a few of them had broken through to the surface. Just then I noticed something moving by one of the supports. I was about to point it out when it suddenly leapt at Starflower.

It was a bug, a very large black one. We soon identified it as a giant flea. Starflower flicked it off and drew her tulwar but it decided to leap on her back. I was right behind her so I decided to try with my dagger but that just scraped off its chitinous skin. Lath (who was just behind me) threw an axe. It missed the flea and bounced off Starflower before returning to Lath. I felt the wind of its passing on the return.

My next move was to grab the flea and attempt to pull it off. That was successful but the flea was able to bite my finger and start sucking. Ow! So I put it on the ground and Starflower tried stomping on it. The flea decided to be staunch and hang on. Just then Starflower spotted two more coming, so she moved to attack. A third one was behind them.

Meanwhile I had succeeded in dislodging the troublesome flea with my dagger and Lath was attempting to stand on it. Just then we were all enveloped by a blinding fire. It did kill the fleas but we all took damage. Gar had to do Heal Burns on us all. It took several minutes for the spots in front of our eyes to fade.

We wandered on for a while and the slope got steeper. Soon the tunnel walls became rock and appeared more natural. Limestone caverns apparently and there were several side passages. Rudigar said he knew the way and that Martin was memorising it. We had our doubts as we were completely confused. Finally we found a cave to sleep in.

.4.

17/01/94

Rudigar told us it was going to take 5 to 6 days to get down to the insectoid cavern. It was also decided to work our way back up to the entrance tunnel and leave marks indicating our path in case we had to beat a hasty retreat. That took most of the morning. Then we continued downwards. The slope got steeper and in places we had to be very careful. Lath and I ended up. Finally we reached another tunnel. Rudigar warned us to watch out for the holes in the floor. Valium nearly fell down one. Once we were through Vila commented that it must have been the holy place.

Down a bit further was a cavern. According to Rudigar it was full of insects so Starflower did a telepathy. She picked up lots of tiny minds, none of which were sentient. So we followed Rudigar along ledges and through swarms of midges. As we manoeuvred past a pool we discovered that part of the ledge was blocked so Romo used a Shaping Elements spell to create some planks for us to get over. Nothing else unusual occurred for the rest of the days travel.

Rudigar found us a place where we could stop to rest. It was then that Gar discovered that insect larvae was crawling over him. So, while we covered our eyes, he used pyrogenesis to burn them off.

That night we were under attack by some odd insects - some sort of caddis fly so we moved onwards a bit. Rudigar passed around some paste to repel them.

18/01/94

I managed to get one hour of purification in before we left. According to Rudigar the next bit would be harder. Great! (not). After a few hours walking Rudigar told us that we were approaching a vertical shaft. We had to descend 400 feet to reach the next bit. The shaft itself continued down to unplumbed depths and also continued upwards. A volcanic shaft perhaps? Rudigar also said that there were bug people that lived in the shaft and we should leave them alone.

While we discussed the possibility of using bound ladders and rope to make our way down, Lath decided that casting Windwalks would be a good idea so, after Vila enhanced her base chance, she cast on Rudigar, Romo, and myself. We tried to make the descent but discovered something stopping us. I don't know what the others did but I headed back out of the shaft and waited for the spell duration to wear off by oscillating up and down the tunnel. Romo also made it out before the spell duration expired. We heard a rapidly descending scream then - nothing.

I was all for going to the rescue so Romo made some ladders and both of us started descending.

Just then Lath spotted five bug creatures coming up. Romo spotted one of them. I was hoping we could communicate with them but Romo decided to use a slippery surface spell to keep them away. One did slip but didn't fall far as they had wings. Vila tried to pick up Rudy on a Locate but failed. Vila's Locate has a range of sixty miles and I don't think the shaft is that deep. Rudigar must be dead. I DAed one of these creatures and discovered that they were Dark aspected. So much for talking to them. Lath had better luck though as they were avians. They just wanted to be left alone.

So Lath cast a Windwalk on herself and dived into the shaft. Nothing happened for a while then there was a blinding flash of light from below. Lath must be in trouble. Moments later she came up the shaft, wounded and completely exhausted. However she had Rudigar - what was left of him. The bottom of the shaft was two miles below and some insects had got to the body first.

I quickly did an Empathy on Lath and discovered she was poisoned and was still taking damage. Once I had her condition stabilised I was about to do a Remove Poison, but Starflower rushed in and fed her a Waters of Healing. Once Starflower had finished I did a Soothe Pain on Lath to help her sleep then did a Preserve Dead on what was left of Rudigar. Basically he had been pulped and there was no chance of a resurrection. Once we had retrieved all the salves and other useful stuff he had I conducted a brief Raphealian ceremony before consigning his body to the depths.

When Lath woke up, she tried a Windwalk to discover what it was that stopped up. She wasn't sure but it seemed like a giant spider web.

After some discussion it was decided to go back. After all we had lost our guide and we had no way of knowing which way to go. It may be possible to get another one. Martin was rather keen on continuing but Vila 'persuaded' him (with the help of a Charm Person spell) to come with us. So we continued. After a while we reached the 'holey' bit. Gar fell down one and Vila levitated him out.

After a while we stopped and set up watches. During the 'night' Martin tried sneaking off down the passage but Vila threw another Charm on him.

19/01/94

Before we continued Gar renewed the Protections from Magical Fire on us. Nothing happened on the remainder of the journey up. After a while we reached the earthen tunnel. Thank goodness we left those marks. We decided to rest for the 'night' here.

20/01/94

It was decided to stay here for a day and remove those 'bug eyes'. Martin was first so we could gauge the effects. At first the light was blinding but, as we removed the paste, it dimmed to a more tolerable level. After a couple of hours it was gone. Lath volunteered to be next. As she was adjusting, another of those giant fleas arrived but Starflower, Valium, and Gar soon dealt to it. We spent the rest of the time removing the eyes before continuing.

21/01/94

Gar lit the way with a firelight so I used it to put a Witchsight on myself. Vila suggested I do the same with everyone else so, with his help, I did so. Another flea turned up but Starflower turned it into shreds.

22/01/94

Finally we neared the top. Starflower was in front and she reported back that part of the wall to Fritz's cavern had collapsed. She then did a telepathic scan and picked up several non-human minds. She hypothesised they were orcs so Gar wanted to rush in and kill them. Starflower concentrated then determined that there were ten orcs and one of something else - probably a harpy.

.5.

According to Starflower, the mind that was not an orc was eating, and a couple of the orcs were engaged in digging holes. She wasn't sure what the others were up to through. Meanwhile Valium did a Wizard's Eye and discovered that the hole was being dug just beyond the cavern entrance to the open air. Pit trap probably. He also discovered an orc boy happily engaged in squashing bugs. Two other orcs were sleeping and a third was pillaging. He then sent the Eye around a corner and spotted something green and horrible which sent him in a state of panic. I had to catch him and calm him down before he fled deeper into the tunnel.

Lath, Starflower, and Gar had already been rendered invisible by Vila so they crept forward. Starflower spotted the 'whatever it was' (turned out later to be an exceedingly ugly troll) and she panicked, deciding to flee towards the entrance where the two orcs were digging. Valium tried to put the troll to Sleep and managed to backfire, rendering himself amnesiac.

As Lath fired a lightning bolt towards the orc boy, Starflower realised she was heading straight towards two ugly orcs. This time she froze in fear, but not before bouncing off Lath. The troll had been attracted by the commotion and was now lumbering towards Lath, after trampling Gar. Lath managed to retain concentration then let the troll have it with another Lightning Bolt while Gar stuck at it from behind. Lath's lightning bolt went on to hit the orc boy.

About this time, Starflower recovered her composure and started killing the orcs - much to Lath's and Gar's annoyance. They wanted her to attack the troll. Meanwhile Starflower had sliced up an orc while another Lath lightning bolt bounced off the troll and killed the orc boy.

While Starflower was killing her second orc, she spotted two more, much better-armed, heading towards the cave. At the same time Vila made me invisible - just as an orc entered the tunnel where we were. Valium decided to go for it. I just crouched against the wall.

Gar managed to get a Weapon of Flame on his sword and went for the troll while Starflower went against the two approaching orcs. Lath fired a Lightning bolt. This one bounced off the troll, bounced off the wall, hit the troll again, then shot down the corridor.

The troll closed with Gar and tried to attack. Gar was forced to drop his sword. Just then Lath lightning bolted it again and the troll collapsed - right on to the blazing sword. Lucky!

An orc had successfully managed to hit Starflower from behind and it was then noticed that three more were coming. Starflower killed that orc. I wasn't having much luck either trying to hit this one. Valium had been rendered invisible and he was making a better job of it. Fortunately the orc decided to withdraw. I decided to do the same.

Lath stepped outside and created a Windstorm, knocking the advancing orcs and Starflower over.

One was attempting to cast (it was a trainee Mind Mage) but Lath got to it first. It decided to surrender.

It didn't take long before we had five orc prisoners, including their leader. Lath wanted to ensure the mind-mage orc didn't have the energy to cast spells so she decided to hit it - several times - killing it in the process. Starflower used Mental Attack to subdue Valium who was still attacking me. Gar was searching around and discovered some gold coins - about 1,600sp worth. We also found Fritz's body - what was left of it. The troll had been eating it.

Outside, it was night with four hours remaining until dawn. I tried removing Valium's amnesia, but found it difficult to concentrate especially since Lath and Gar were interrogating the orcs.

Once dawn broke, we headed back to the village and reported what had happened to Granny Click and Grandfather Wirrn. No one else could understand Wirrn's language so he was forced to write notes in the native language which someone else translated. We were able to arrange for another guide but this one could not speak Common very well. Grandfather Wirrn also told us that the orcs had been attacking the insects for some time.

Later on, while I tried to remove Valium's amnesia - without success - the rest interrogated the orcs. Vila used a Charm on the leader orc and Gar acted as translator. They found out that the orcs lived in the mountains and there were six more in their hideout. They were hired by another village, to the west, to take the cave out and had been attempting to do that for the last six months. Every month they were paid in gold in a forest location. The leader had managed to arrange for the harpies and troll to help. Gar reckoned he'd be a prime candidate for Guild Security.

Starflower volunteered to execute the orcs quickly and painlessly. Meanwhile I discovered that Valium's amnesia was only going to last three days but I decided to keep trying just for the practice. I was having difficulty concentrating with all these insects. So we decided to wait for a few days.

.6.

28/01/94

By now Valium's memory had returned. Grandfather Wirrim was still attempting to find a guide for us. His first choice was a woman called Marrin, but she was refusing to go as she didn't want to leave her children.

As the morning progressed, I noticed that the villagers seemed to be rushing around and appearing to be a bit more agitated than normal. The others had noticed as well so Lath decided to go for a reconnaissance flight. She saw a group of eighteen horseriders, about an hours ride away, heading in this direction. After reporting, Vila made her invisible and she flew off again. He then went to see if Grandfather Wirrn was expecting anyone and was told that the local Baron was paying them a visit.

Lath approached the riders and began a low level sweep. To her surprise, she was hailed and told to land. Unfortunately she had to wait until the spell ran out before she could do so. The group consisted of one young, handsome looking gentleman wearing black and scarlet and carrying a rapier. That was Baron Richtofen. Five others were in red and gold and one of them had a protruding upper jaw. The rest of the entourage were men-at-arms in chain mail and carrying

swords and crossbows.

Fortunately the Baron spoke Common and wanted to know where Lath had come from and what she was doing. She had the good sense to be vague about both answers. Finally she was placed on the back of one of the men-of-arms horses.

The villagers are getting more and more agitated. The town leader, a plump person called Relven, started playing a more prominent role in getting things organised. As the Baron's entourage pulled up, we watched from inside Granny Click's cottage. Starflower did a telepathy and a mind speech. We noticed that the villagers were now looking nervous and concerned.

Lath was directed to go to the cottage where we were. When she hesitated one of the guards cuffed her. Brute! The man with the dental disorder, Sudonikus, started talking to Relven in the local language. During our wait, some of us had managed to pick up a very basic understanding of it.

The Baron, the five nobles, and a couple of guards rode off in the direction of Fritz's cave leaving the rest stationed about. From what we could gather it appeared he was going to check on the attack. A few hours later, he was back. Lath had taken the opportunity to change into a dress.

We were beckoned outside by Sudinikus and looked over by the Baron. He then gave a speech in the local language. Some women seemed to be upset. We later discovered that he had told them that the village taxes had been doubled but he was releasing some of the menfolk from the war to help in the fields. I checked the auras of both Baron Richtofen and Sudinikus and discovered that the Baron was a Binder and Sudinikus was a Mind Mage. On a hunch I did the other four in scarlet and gold, and read three of them as Namer, Celestial, and Mind respectively. The fourth was unknown.

Upon questioning Vila informed Richtofen that we were from Carzala and that we were hired by the villagers to help them out (Starflower's danger sense went on overtime at that). The pay was still under negotiation. Richtofen then went to have an audience with Wirrn.

When he returned they prepared to leave. Just before they rode off, we were instructed by Sudinikus to report to the Baron before we left the area. Later we found out that the Baron knew about the insects.

29/01/94

Finally a guide was found. His name was Uve and he was aged about 65, and fat, but looked healthy enough. Didn't speak much Common though. He insisted on going through all our packs throwing anything out that he deemed to be 'unnecessary equipment'. (I put the playing cards back later).

The idea was to leave that afternoon and sleep in the cave. But Uve had been drinking in the local tavern and was now drunk. Starflower and myself had to use a Remove Poison on him. Once we reached the caves Gar did a Protection from Magical Fire on Uve and we settled down to sleep. I was considering doing a Reading the Night Sky ritual but it was too overcast.

30/01/94

It was soon obvious that Uve didn't like Lath for some reason and was insisting that she be at the

rear of the party. He was also surly towards Starflower, but not as much because she was an elf.

Once that was sorted out, we started our descent. This time we decided not to use the light intensifying gunk, but depend on my witchsight spell instead. Some fleas appeared but Starflower soon dealt with those. Finally we reached the sinkhole area. Uve told us to wait while he went ahead. Shortly he returned and indicated a sinkhole we were to descend. When asked about the original route we took he became rather agitated insisting that we don't go down there.

Uve was starting to prepare a climbing rope but Romo created a ladder instead. Two ladders later we were at the bottom which was rather damp.

A narrow, windy, tunnel led from the sinkhole and soon we were forced to crawl. Up ahead, Uve got stuck so Romo used a slippery surface spell to get him moving again. Once past that point we slid downwards into a larger passage where we could stand again. For a while we were sharing it with a river before intersecting a ten foot wide lava tunnel. We rested for a bit before continuing on.

A spider landed on my shoulder. Carefully I flicked it away with my dagger and it landed somewhere near Gar who squashed it. This was where we were going to camp for the 'night' so I put witchsights on myself and Vila as we were the first on watch. Meanwhile Starflower hypnotised Lath (who was getting claustrophobic) and Romo (so he could sleep over Uve's reverberating snoring).

31/01/94

The tunnel ahead was filled with webs and lots more of those spiders. Gar used a fireball to blast the passage clear, but the smell of burning web was rather overpowering so Lath conjured up a wind to blow the fumes away. I checked a spider's aura and discovered that its poison was highly toxic to humanoid life-forms. Uve decided it would be safer to go another way as there were still spiders crawling about. Valium decided he wanted a pet and used the Wand of Insect Control on a spider. Soon it was sitting on his shoulder. When Uve saw it he attacked it. Meanwhile Starflower detected hundreds of tiny minds ahead...

We went back to where the underground river was. Uve reckoned the only other way was down the river and over the waterfall. Uh oh! I don't like the sound of this. So we started roping everyone together. At this point the water was kneedeep and flowing rather rapidly. Vila sent a Wizard's Eye down and discovered that the depth went down to 4 feet and that the roof dropped so low that there was only an inch clearance between that and the water. After some discussion, Romo created a column of air to give up breathing room. Vila's Wizard Eye discovered a dry cave behind the waterfall with something odd in it.

We made our way cautiously down the river then used ropes to lower ourselves over the waterfall and into the dry cave behind. Valium was the last so he used a Levitate so he could bring the rope down.

Once in the dry area we used dry cantrips then we examined the plinth. It was 21/2 feet in diameter and one inch high and had a curious dimple in the middle. The surface was subdivided into segments and each segment had a glyph on it, none of which we recognised. Romo believed it to be enchanted but I was unable to pick up any aura. Gar put up a pillar of fire and we used

that to warm ourselves up. I sat down and proceeded to draw a picture of the plinth, carefully noting the glyphs. Maybe someone at the Guild will know what they were.

01/02/94

After another set of witchsights all around, we stepped out into the cavern. Just then I noticed that a nearby rock had feelers and called out 'Arthropoid!' (Lath later commented that most other adventurers shout 'Monster!'). It turned out to be a huge cave weta which leapt on the nearest party member, Starflower, doing quite a bit of damage judging by her scream. She stepped back and drew her weapons. Uve, Lath, and Martin also prepared to attack it. Starflower hit first, once, twice and it was stunned. On the weta's back were two red parasitic fleas. One of them also tried to have a go at Starflower, but failed to penetrate her armour. Soon all three adversaries had been dealt to. Starflower then healed herself.

02/02/94

We kept going. A few caverns later we spotted a giant spider on the ceiling (I wonder if that was Boris?). Lath and Gar took potshots at it with lightning bolts and fireballs while the rest of us kept count. Lath managed to get the most hits. In the cavern ahead we could make out the forms of several more so I triggered a Light in there so the others could see them clearly. I figured they were Dark Aspected so I put up a Wall of Starlight across the entrance, hoping that would hold them in. One slipped though so Gar followed up with a parallel Wall of Fire. It got through that as well but shortly succumbed to the rest of the party. The rest of them were nicely penned in. I then counterspelled the Light so as not to attract any more insects.

.7.

After some discussion, Romo used a Shaping Elements spell to create a tunnel we could pass through so we could bypass the spiders. On Vila's instruction I counterspelled the Wall of Starlight. The descent continued.

03/02/94

We reached a smooth tunnel. There was lots of muck on the floor and we could see things wriggling in it. As we descended the more there were and soon it seemed we were walking on a carpet of crawling things. They were everywhere, the floor, the walls. Lots of flying creatures were also apparent. Lath was not happy about this at all.

After a while we spotted a glimmer of light. Journeys end? Soon the passage opened up into an immense cavern. Insects were everywhere. The whole place was illuminated by what looked like a sun. The air was hot and thick. Nearby, around the edges, the plant life mainly consisted of mosses and lichens, but beyond that were grassy plains and forests. Some sort of structure stretched from floor almost to ceiling, somewhere in the middle.

Uve insisted that we wait in the tunnel, so we did. To ward off the insects, I put down a couple of Walls of Starlight to block the tunnel from either direction then, after he renewed the Protections from Magical Fire on us, blasted the entire area with a Fireball. Once that was done we settled down to wait for what Uve considered the 'right time'. I also noticed that the light in the cavern was starting to fade. Guess it's nearly night down here.

A couple of hours later the Walls of Starlight collapsed. At the same time we heard a droning sound. Just then, something entered the tunnel from below. We soon recognised it as one of those wasp women we had been warned about. She looked sort of human from the waist up but

was definitely a wasp from the waist down. The top half was covered in some sort of green shimmering cloth. She was armed with a spear.

Uve reckoned that it was time to go and beat a hasty retreat up the tunnel. I started preparing a Bolt of Starfire. Valium quickened Starflower, Lath, Gar, Romo, and himself. Lath tried speaking to it. She discovered that the wasp-woman had seen a flash of fire from this tunnel and wanted to know which one of us was responsible so she could have a piece of him. So she brandished her spear at Lath. At that Vila made Starflower invisible, and Gar fired his crossbow. The wasp woman started jittering around the tunnel then went for Lath with the sting. Almost simultaneously Starflower stepped forward and scored two good hits with her tulwars, knocking the waspwoman out of the air. It didn't last long after that.

Gar wanted to know if there was any curse associated with the cloth that the wasp woman was wearing. I couldn't find one so Gar took it. I checked Lath for poison but soon discovered that she was only winded. Also the spear was magical as well. While Vila went after Uve, Romo and I captured some of the poison in an empty potion bottle. An alchemist could use that as a basis for an antidote.

We rested back up the tunnel. Romo discovered that the cloth had protection properties so Lath started wearing it. Even I had to admit it looked good on her. He also found that the spear had the effect of preserving anything it killed. I can only imagine why!

04/02/94

Hours later, the light returned. This time it was only as bright as the full moon. Uve said it was time to go. so I put Witchsights on everyone and a Resistance to Light on myself. Vila and Valium also made everyone invisible. We passed through an area of lichens, and large fungi. The Walking Unseens didn't last long as bugs kept running into us. Soon the fungi turned into moss, which later gave way to grass. Lath was feeling happy so she started skipping and gambolling on the grass. I was staring up at the sky, trying to figure out what was causing the light, but it was too far away to make out.

Just then something leapt out at Lath, grabbed her, and dragged her down the hole it had come from. It looked like a large spider. The lid of the hole closed after it. Romo made the trapdoor transparent at the same time as Vila used an Opening spell on it. I had moved to the edge of the hole ready to go to Lath's assistance. Down below we could see the spider attempting to wrap Lath in silk. She looked to be unconscious. Starflower stopped the spider with an Mental Attack, just as Gar jumped down with the ex-waspwoman's spear. Soon the spider was dead, and Gar lifted Lath to our waiting arms.

As soon as I used my empathy I knew I had to work fast. Lath was paralysed, owing to spider poison, and not breathing. So I immediately started artificial respiration while Starflower started a Remove Poison. Once she started to breath again, I took over the Remove Poison. Just then, another trapdoor spider popped up from a nearby hole. Gar shot at it and it disappeared back down its hole. Vila then Mage Locked the trap.

Meanwhile the others were exploring the first hole. Gar cleared away the web and discovered that the hole was octagon shaped and the lower bit was lined with metal. There was a barely visible circular hatch in the floor. Romo made that area transparent and discovered a ladder leading down a tunnel below.

I was just completing Lath's Healing when two brightly coloured red and black beetles flew over. One landed nearby. Uve tried speaking to it but nothing happened. Once Lath had recovered she tried speaking to it as well. Then she threw a Lightning Bolt at it. It was just as well I know the Air College as well as I do for, when I recognised the first couple of syllables, I backed off. The blast hit the beetle, bounced, and hit Lath and Starflower. Simultaneously Gar charged it. Valium then put it to sleep. The other bug took off but Starflower Mental Attacked it, and it fell from the sky. Valium slept it then backfired with a virulent skin disease. Fortunately that's an easy thing for me to fix.

Lath and Starflower had taken quite a bit of damage from the lightning bolt backlash, so I fed Lath a ten point Healing potion, while Starflower used magical Healing on herself, cursing Lath all the while for nearly killing her. I was feeling too tired to do any more.

.8.

As one of the beetles was drawn down the hole of a trapdoor spider, Uve insisted that we kept moving. Meanwhile Vila began probing below the ground with a Wizard's Eye. The first thing he encountered was a series of tunnels that formed a grid layout. It was one of these tunnels at the bottom of the shaft Lath had been dragged into. Below that he spotted a round room, and on the same level, a square room with a marble floor with an iron humanoid standing in it. Quite possibly a golem. Gar started making comments that if we had to go down there, we shouldn't do it for any less than 10,000sp.

Ahead of us was what appeared to be sporadic tree-like growths with a forest further on. Stuck on the cavern ceiling was a large round object. As we watched, several wasps flew out and began descending towards up. We came to the rapid conclusion that going below could be a safer option than staying topside.

Valium cast Walking Unseens on us all while Romo caused the hatch in the bottom of the hole to unscrew. Just as we dived into the hole, we could hear the droning sound of the approaching wasps. Once we were down Gar and Starflower put the hatch back.

Quite a few small insects had made their way down with us so Gar blasted the area with a fireball. Meanwhile Lath was solommlly swearing that she was not going to cast any more lightning bolts. Maybe she's beginning to come to her senses. Meanwhile, as Romo counterspelled the transparency on the hatch above - before the wasps spotted us - Gar began speculating that we were in the Lost City of Ry'leh - a rather evil place. I hope he's wrong.

The tunnels here were only four foot in diameter so we had to stoop to get through. Starflower used her ranger sense to determine which direction we were supposed to be going. Fortunately the tunnel we were in was going in roughly that direction. The tunnel walls were made of some sort of metal and also had a weak magical aura., too weak for me to read. Can't be iron then.

After a while we reached a hole in the tunnel. A metal grille was blocking it. Vila recognised the room below as being the spherical room he had seen before, so it was decided to have a closer look. Vila removed the grid, then slid down a rope that someone else had lowered. The room was empty but to his alarm, he noticed that one of the archways leading out, had a bulky, 8 foot tall, golem standing in it with it's arms crossed.

Back in the tunnel above we noticed that the what we had thought was a deadend wall ahead of us was actually moving towards us. If we didn't act quickly it would be right on top of us in a matter of minutes. Starflower dived down the hole while the rest of us retreated back down the corridor. As the thing reached the hatch it moved over it then stopped. The hatch closed above Starflower.

Romo managed to slow it down with an Adhesion spell. Since this network was laid out like a grid, it seemed logical that we should be able to go around this obstacle and approach the hatch from the other side. So that was what we did.

Meanwhile Vila and Starflower discovered that they had a golem following them. It had already pulled the rope down and was now picking up their language by repeating what Vila said. By now, they had made their way to a room that had shelving. Most of it was empty but a few scrolls were lying there. Vila grabbed one and it crumbled at his touch. He managed to retrieve another one successfully.

By now we had reached the shaft, opened it, and had made our way down. We figured that Vila would have a Locate on us so would know when we reached the shaft. We decided to wait. Shortly they arrived - with the golem following. We examined the scroll and discovered it had some sort of encryption spell on it. Romo put a Preservation on it before it took further damage.

For some reason the golem addressed Uve in German then went for him so Uve ducked behind Gar. Gar drew the wasp spear, but the golem grabbed it and crushed it. So much for that bit of the party treasure. The golem then moved and hit Romo, knocking him over. Lath fired a lightning bolt which hit the golem, bounced, and hit Lath and Valium. The golem then picked up Romo around the neck and lifted a fist. It looked like Romo was doomed for a moment.

Gar fired an arrow which bounced off the golem. At the same time I managed to get the lights on so we could all see. The golem then threw Romo at Valium then advanced on Starflower. She struck it twice, dealing fine blows, but did not even scratch the thing. Then it knocked her over and demanded her surrender. She surrendered honourably - having no other option. (I later found out she had triggered one of her most powerful magic items and still had not been able to make an impression). While the golem went after Uve, who had fled, the rest of us dragged Lath, Valium, and Romo into the corridor. I did a quick triage and determined that Valium was the worst off, so I massaged my second Healing potion down his throat. I managed to find another potion of someone else and used that on Romo. Unfortunately he still remained unconscious. Meanwhile there was a mad scramble up the rope. I was refusing to leave until Romo recovered.

A little while later I was grabbed by the golem and asked if I wanted to surrender. Stupid question! Starflower came back down a bit later on and together we managed to get Romo up the rope. Once we were up we rested. Romo came around a few minutes later. Just as well as another of those moving walls soon arrived threatening to sweep us away. We bugged out. Uve mentioned he had seen the golem before out in the open, just watching.

A little while later we found ourselves in a deadend with a hatch above us. Vila did a Wizards Eye and discovered that it was buried under 20ft of dirt. The forest was above. Just then we spotted another of these moving walls coming down towards us. Romo used an Adhesion to slow it down while Vila tried frantically to open the hatch. No use. It was stuck. Finally Romo

shaped the tunnel wall to form a bypass around the object so we could slip past.

.9.

After a while, we're still crawling along tunnels. Every so often, Vila would use a Wizard's Eye to check deadends for a way out. Unfortunately, no luck. Finally we rested. Vila was rather tired and Lath was feeling the effects of claustrophobia so Starflower hypnotised her.

05/02/94

Time passed as we continued crawling. We encountered three more upward shafts but they were all blocked. Soon the tunnel we were in began descending, getting steeper and steeper, until it became vertical. Naturally we proceeded no further. Instead we backed off and tried another direction but all we found were dirt filled exits. On one occasion Vila looked down a grill and spotted a golem below. Could it be the same one?

Finally it was decided that, at the next deadend, Romo should try digging our way out. So, at the next dead end, the hatch was opened. Dirt, and quite a few crawling things fell in. Just then someone spotted one of those moving walls coming so we backed off to the intersection so we wouldn't get trapped. Once it came out of the dead-end, we discovered the tunnel was spotless and the hatch had been put back. Maybe it shoved the dirt back up again?

A bit later on, Starflower detected a bug just above us. Investigations with a Wizard Eye showed that the bug, a giant scorpion, was in it's own tunnel, about five feet above. So Vila used the Wand of Insect Control to get it to dig down to us. Unfortunately when Romo tried to create a hole in the metal, it resisted. It flowed and got thinner, but wouldn't break. So it was decided to get the scorpion to head for the nearest trapdoor up and dig a tunnel there.

It took quite a while for us, and it, to get there, but soon it was tunnelling away. I had to transfer fatigue to Vila as he was exhausted. We also needed to ensure that we emerged in the 'moonlit' phase of the light cycle. Currently above, it was very dark. Six hours later was bright sunlight. Another four - and it was brighter again. Finally, after another eight hours, the lighting was as we wanted it. Also the scorpion had given birth.

06/02/94

We waited a bit more while the rapidly growing scorpions fought each other. Finally there were only two left. I cast Witchsights all around then Romo made the hatch transparent. Valium slept one of the scorpions, which was immediately attacked by the other one. Once it died he tried sleeping the other one but was inflicted with an arthritic reaction. Soon had that fixed. Finally Romo extended the tunnel wall, blocking the scorpion off. As he did so, the plug fell off giving him a glancing blow.

Soon we emerged in a forest. Not far beyond was grasslands beyond which was the tower. There was also a large hive structure on the roof. Wandering around nearby was an ant-like creature with wings. As we emerged we were besieged by giant fleas but, again, Starflower made short work of them.

We headed through the woods towards the tower. Shortly we encountered a giant wasp being mobbed by ants and decided to go around. A little later on, an ant approached and spat a web at Starflower. Her and Lath chopped it to pieces. We also noticed that the trees were full of

termites.

Finally we reached the plain and decided to skirt the edge of the forest. Ahead of us was what appeared to be a moving carpet going into the forest. Closer examination revealed it to be a swarm of soldier ants devouring everything in their path. So Romo created a bridge so we could cross the 'river'.

Shortly after that we were being attacked by sparrow sized mosquitos so Gar used a fireball to clear them away. Next encounter was a giant dragonfly attacking a beetle. This we avoided. Suddenly the ground heaved ahead of us and a giant worm emerged. Valium and I were knocked over by the 'earthquake'. Starflower chopped at it but it managed to crawl over her. Gar and Lath were also shooting at it. I decided to stay where I was, as still as possible, concluding that it sensed vibration. Instead I tried casting a Bolt of Starfire to get it off Starflower. The first attempt drained the crystal while the next attempt produced a feeble looking bolt., which had little effect. Meanwhile Lath tried a Lightning Bolt and had managed to backfire herself blind.

Uve threw some blue/grey powder at it, but whatever it was didn't have much chance to do anything as Gar hit it with a fireball. Lath was still attempting to lightning bolt the worm but managed to get herself and Romo in a backblast. Meanwhile I quickly retreated to where the other party members were in order to do what Healing was required.

Finally the worm was vanquished and a rather battered and bruised Starflower crawled out from underneath. If it wasn't for her chitin armour, and the Ram of Forces she had used to hold it back, she would have been crushed under the weight of the worm. While I tended Romo, Martin had located Romo's last Healing potion and had given it to Lath. Just then I noticed a thin gaunt guy in the forest watching us.

.10.

Starflower tried detecting his thoughts but they were all in insectoid so they didn't make much sense. We then spotted a large spider, which promptly attacked the grey man. Gar and Starflower charged in, and it didn't take long before the spider was dispatched. We also noticed that the guy's skin was made up of chitinous plates and that his teeth were pointed. Once the spider was down, he bit into it and we noticed that his flesh was filling out. We hurried on.

Lath tried to see whether turning into a wolf would negate the blindness curse but that didn't work so she changed back. Meanwhile we entered the forest and followed the edge, reaching the shores of the lake after about an hour. We also noticed a large increase in the number of small flying things that were bothering us so Gar erupted a fireball around us and we ran for it. One of Valium's fingers was swelling and throbbing from an insect bite so, at the first opportunity, I treated that. I also checked the duration of Lath's curse - 6 weeks.

Finally we reached the other edge of the forest and could see the tower in front of us. Unfortunately it was being sieged by a large number of black and red creatures - giant ants. There was no way we were going to get past that lot. For once, Uve was at a loss for words.

The 'termite' tower was at least a mile high, reaching to the top of the cavern. As well as the ants, there were quite a few objects scattered among them that looked like wine casks. Starflower determined that there were 'things' inside them. Eggs probably - just waiting to hatch. Just then I noticed that the 'sun's' light was slightly brighter.

Lath cast a Windwalking on Starflower so she could do an aerial reconnaissance. When she circled the top of the tower, she could see small openings scattered about. Air vents I suspect. Much too small for someone to crawl down. Also, according to her, the ant army was a chaotic mess. Some were attacking the tower's foundations while others were food foraging. A giant spider was currently getting swarmed over. Meanwhile Vila used a Wizard's Eye to explore the ground below. He managed to spot another of those underground shafts at his extreme range.

Uve wanted to go back. Martin didn't. We started going back once Starflower returned. On the way Vila stepped into a hornet's nest so Gar used another fireball to clear them away. Unfortunately we noticed that the blast attracted the attention of some mantis-men in the sky. Lath had enough time to cast Windwalking on Uve, Martin, Romo, Valium and myself before the mantis men arrived. Meanwhile Vila made the others invisible. They were going to follow on Invested Shadowwings as soon as it was clear.

Romo was a trainee Ranger so he had a good idea where the cavern entrance was. However Martin took the opportunity to fly to the tower so Romo went after him. The rest of us circled above, watching, as the mantis-men landed and began to search the clearing. Finally Martin and Romo arrived back so we followed Romo to the cavern entrance. I was hoping all the time that the others were going to be ok.

.11.

Once at the cavern, I was so exhausted that I went to sleep, but not before leaving instructions that I was to be woken if anything happened. Romo also took the opportunity for a nap. After about a couple of hours, Vila flew in with Lath in tow. She wasn't breathing, and her lips and finger tips had already turned blue. However my empathy showed she was just barely alive. So, with Valium monitoring her condition, I did what I had to to get her breathing again and stabilise her condition. It was close though. Unfortunately she had been not breathing for long enough for her brain to be damaged. Just how badly damaged I was unable to ascertain but she had lost quite a bit of her Magical Ability, Willpower, and Endurance. A Rank 10 Healer would be required to treat that.

Once Lath was settled down and asleep. Vila told us that they were attacked by the mantis-men. Some had been killed, but in the process, Lath had been covered with a swarm of insects, which had suffocated her and left for dead. Meanwhile Gar and Starflower had been captured and taken away.

A few more hours past and Starflower flew in, virtually in tears. Her and Gar had been put in cages by the mantis-men and they had managed to break out. But the mantis men reacted by using their spears to thwart the attempt. They managed to stun Gar and then kill him. His body was then burnt by the Wall of Fire that had been put up. Starflower tried to rescue him but there were too many mantis-men and when she did manage to grab Gar, discovered he was too heavy for her to lift. She had no choice but to leave him. In the state his corpse was in, there was no chance of a resurrection. Vila led Starflower away in an attempt to console her. I felt rather sad too and prayed that his soul would reach whatever heaven he believed in. At least he went the way he wanted to, during combat, with honour.

Time passed. Vila wanted to wake Lath up to see how she was but I told him it was better for her to sleep normally. The cavern continued to get brighter. After five hours, we had dinner.

Another seven hours and the light dimmed again. In the meantime I tried removing Lath's curse but failed. It was going to be a difficult one for me to shift. Better leave it for the experts. Also Lath of exhibiting symptoms of memory loss, failure to recognize objects and people, and a general lack of concentration and comprehension.

07/02/94

Martin was still keen to try again to reach the termite tower but, as far as I could tell, there was no unnatural compulsion on him. So it was decided to try and leave a message by dropping it down one of the 'air-shafts' on the tower. After a few attempts, and one of my pens, Uve drafted a message from Starflower's dictation. Meanwhile I calculated that stacking WindWalking and StarWings on the same person should guarantee enough flight time for the round trip.

So that was what we did. Several copies of the message had been prepared and wrapped around rocks, then the spells were cast on Starflower who flew off. Her first attempt missed a hole, but the second went straight in. Since Lath had managed to cast a triple duration WindWalk she decided to a full aerial survey of the cavern. Among other interesting things she saw huge fungi near the edges, as well as a lake that was half in the cavern. Judging by the activity, the bugs love the place.

She then flew up to investigate the sun. It turned out to be an insetted big disk, about 30ft in diameter. There were twenty glyphs arranged in a circle of which two were currently glowing. Beneath the disk was a hazy area of air. I suspected that to be some sort of magical diffusion effect. She also spotted two large wasp nests on the roof, one made of paper, the other of wood. Some guards were flying around each.

Finally she returned, and we settled down to wait.

08/02/94

Eleven hours after Starflower returned, our rest was interrupted by a commotion outside and something rushed into the tunnel - a human with wings. Two ant men were right behind him. Starflower charged down the tunnel while Uve charged valiantly to the rear. Shortly Starflower had cleaved one in half and the other one fled.

It turned out the person's name was Heinrich and he spoke Common - much to our relief. His wings were attached at the shoulder and he told us they were enchanted and had been given to him by an elf. Under his tunic he showed us the harness they were attached to.

The war between the ants and the 'termite' people had been going on for quite some time but lately it had escalated to the present level. He had to argue for a strike force to break through the lines to reach us. The rest of the force hadn't made it. In his opinion it would be better that we went through the tunnels if Uve could guide us.

He also warned us that it was not a good idea to stay in the 'sunlight' for too long as long exposures caused people to 'change' taking on insectoid characteristics. The grey man he described as a 'flea' man. The ants and 'termites' are the dominant lifeforms down here. I also asked if it would be possible to find a Healer or someone to remove Lath's curse. The Healer he was quite sure they didn't have but he wasn't sure about the Remove Curse. Finally, after I did Witchsights all around, we headed back up the tunnel.

After a short while we took a narrow side branch which was a bit of a tight squeeze. After more climbing and crawling we reached the shores of an underground lake. Romo bound some water into a boat and (after a few attempts) fashioned a couple of oars. On the way over we were greeted to a very pleasant sight of star like patterns on the roof. Fireflies Heinrich called them.

.12.

The lake was subdivided into two halves so we had to cross over a small amount of land. Romo then created a new boat on the other side and we continued on. Lath used a wind spell to blow us over.

After a bit, Heinrich requested that we stop. Apparently this point of the lake was right over the termite mound and he needed to perform a ritual to raise the lake bed in this area so that the termites in the mound could tunnel up and reach us. Unfortunately it was going to take some time - about an hour for every ten feet of depth. Also the duration of Romo's boat was not going to last for much longer. We took a chance and Heinrich started the ritual.

After a while Romo had to renew the boat. Unfortunately he failed and one corner of it collapsed - the one I was sitting on - so I ended up in the bitterly cold water. Uve had also fallen in but some quick action from other party members stopped him from sinking. Meanwhile Starflower dived into the water after me.

When I came around I discovered I was back in the boat. Romo had reformed it and we were heading into shore. I also had a levitate on me, presumably that was how I was got out of the water. Sleeping while under the influence of a levitate was very restful but I had to ask Vila to put me down before the spell ran out.

After a while Uve went fishing and managed to drag up a large centipede. Valium used the Wand of Insect Control to make it his 'pet'. Meanwhile Romo tried creating another boat, but it sprung a leak, so he did another one. That one proved to be more waterproof so we sailed out in it.

Once we reached the ritual point, Vila tried putting a levitate on Heinrich but to his surprise, it didn't work. He tried again, with still no effect. Valium tried one as well which didn't work either. He then tried one on me which did work. So Heinrich had to start the ritual in the boat. As he did so, I gave Vila some more fatigue.

Three hours later (and some boat renewal spells later) he was still going. Finally, after another half an hour, a piece of land broke the surface, about six feet across. Heinrich then did a spell to send a message. Once that was done we headed back to shore for a LONG rest.

09/02/94.

Finally Heinrich said it was time to return to the point. Romo soon had another boat created and we headed back to where the land had come up to wait. After a while the top burst open and a pair of large mandibles, followed by a rather large black bug broke the surface. It peered at all of us as Heinrich made the introductions. Finally we clambered down the steep, smooth, vertical shaft. On the way we were challenged a lot by sentry bugs.

After a while of following Heinrich we reached a large area where a lot of 'humans' (some looked more part insect because of varying degrees of mutation) were studying. There was a triangle,

covered with symbols, on one wall. Heinrich explained that they were engaged in finding out a way of predicting the seemingly random light changes. Apparently they have had some measure of success which gave them a large advantage over the other insects.

Heinrich muttered something and part of the wall became transparent, showing us a view of the ant army. The view outside was spectacular so I pulled out my sketchpad and got to work. Heinrich told us that the ant people didn't have much of a chance of getting in but there would be no stopping the iron man. There seemed no pattern to his movements. He even picks fights for no apparent reason - since nothing can harm him. Heinrich reckoned he was either bored, balmy or trying to make a point. Also, we were told, that there was a large pit in the centre of the cavern, directly below the 'sun' where huge masses of insects swarmed. Now that Martin was here it was the termites tradition to send someone back. Heinrich went to speak to the Queen. Meanwhile we were served up something mildly alcoholic. I decided to abstain but Uve attempted to get blind drunk.

A bit later on we were given a tour and discovered that they had some sort of 'research den'. Most of their magic was based on a combination of Earth and Binder. Heinrich then told us he was coming back with us. Also coming was a couple of workers and a termite/human female.

Lath was given the option of having her blindness fixed by having an eye transplant. Basically they wanted to replace her eyes with bug eyes. I was of the opinion that it wasn't going to work as the curse affects the brain rather than the eyes. So I was trying to figure out a way of increasing the chance of removing the curse. Unfortunately we didn't have the ingredients for a proper Circle or a Greater Enchantment. Plus I wasn't sure that I could concentrate long enough to make it work. Vila finally offered to Enhance my Light so that it would have the duration to cover the entire six hour ritual. Also Heinrich came up with a substance that would cause my vision to 'tunnel' so I wouldn't be distracted by anything beside me. Plus they had a quiet, side tunnel available. So we decided to try it. If it didn't work Lath was all for the operation. But it wasn't necessary. The ritual worked.

We were also shown a stone slab with runes on it that the insects had no idea what it did. All I could tell is it had something to do with vision. Then there was a hemispherical shaped stone with a shaft. It's aura indicated that it was some sort of key - but to what? Then someone remembered the strange stone slab under the waterfall. There was a good chance the shaft would fit in the central hole. The 'termites' were also keen on studying Starflower's amour.

15/02/94

It was suggested that we wait for six days before going back so we could observe a very odd phenomena. And I'm glad we did. Instead of the usual diffuse sunlight that illuminated the cavern, there was a bright, actinic-blue beam of light from the 'sun' straight down at the pit below it. All the insects were going crazy. It looked like a continual lightning strike and, according to Heinrich, it vaporises everything it touches. I suspect that even a Rank 20 Protection from Sunlight was not going to help. After a few hours the light reverted to normal. Shortly after that we made preparations to leave.

18/02/94

Finally we reached the waterfall and rested. The key and the disk had come with us since the 'termites' had no use for either and maybe the Guild could figure out what they were. Also we wanted to see if the key would fit the plinth. Romo tried analysing the enchantment on the plinth

but, after eight hours, still wasn't having much luck. A bit later he announced it was a teleportation device. Starflower tried a limited precog to see what would happen if the key was plugged in. She saw an area of shimmering light appear above the plinth, her stepping into it, and appearing on a path within a garden - somewhere in the open.

Meanwhile Vila decided to go prospecting for gold under the waterfall but all he found was iron pyrites - fools gold. Romp shaped the waterfall and Lath started digging. First, all she found were leeches but they finally uncovered some specks and a small nugget.

Finally it was decided to plug the key in. I was having misgivings about this but couldn't remember why. The shimmering curtain appeared. I DAed the destination as being on the Plane of Elushia. After we removed the key the curtain stayed up for 30 seconds before disappearing - plenty of time for the last person to get through with the Key. The key was re-inserted and Starflower stepped through. The rest of us followed. Sure enough we were in a garden, surrounded by woods. There were no signs of any buildings. There was a dais in the centre that was also enchanted with transportation magic. Lath cast a Windwalk on herself and flew off. When she returned she reported she could see a village beyond the forest.

Vila and Starflower windwalked to the village while the rest of us waited. They discovered that the village was occupied by humans but they spoke an unknown language. Even the buildings were of a different architecture than what we were used to.

Once they returned, we reactivated the portal, went through, and headed up the tunnel. It took quite a while to make the ascent but we finally made it to the entrance cavern. Two villagers were waiting for us and they told us to follow them up into the mountains. It was night.

By mid-morning we reached a cave where a third villager was waiting. He explained that this was the cave where the orcs and troll had been hiding out but they (the villagers that is) were now using it. Wirrn had instructed them to ensure that we were led away to avoid a confrontation with the Baron. There was a very high possibility that we would have been drafted into the Baron's army.

Finally we headed back to the guild. By the time we reached there, it was nearly a month until the next Guild meeting.

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