

A Terranovan Picnic

Party

Jade – human female warrior
Braegon – human male earth mage, party leader
Cyan – human male mind mage
Rocsinger – elven male enchanter
Katerina – human female enchanter
MaryM – cherub female namer
Kryan – human male illusionist

Places visited

Seagate, Borovia, Kin Lu, Jade Dragon's castle, Alfheim / Eidolon, Donna Silken, Elvish Isles, New Destiny, Donna Ana, Terranova (Dylath, Cobalt River, Uric, Raam, Draj, *** Mountains).

Mission Brief

To scout the activities of the northern Spawn army on Terranova and report back with reliable information such as their strength, destination, and intent

Mission Result

Complete success.
Learnt disposition, next destination, strength, tactics of northern Spawn army
Learnt Ahriman's plans to slow and divert Spawn
Learnt what resource Ahriman was guarding
Learnt about Erehleine participation against Apollyon
Briefed all relevant parties with above information and received payment

Knowledge gained

- The beginning of the world
- The end of the world
- Elvish culture in Elfinberg, Borovia, Kin Lu, the Dragon Isles, Alfhiem, the Elvish Isles, Eastern North Terranova, Central North Terranova.
- Survival amongst the Flora & Fauna of Northern Terranova
- Magical Mists

Key words

Xanadu, Baal, Apollyon, Ahriman, Leviathan, Irin, Xanadu's children, Yo Long, Terranova, Arcadia, Apocalypse, Armageddon, Ragnarok, Tokpa.

What we did

The Briefing

[Session 1]

Our employer is Don Pedro de Alvarado, a swashbuckling Destinian, 5'10" with goatee beard, the captain of the Donna Silken, and 2nd in command for Don Francisco Pizarro de Cordoba, the Governor of Terra Nova.

The mission is to scout the activities of the northern Spawn army on Terranova and report back with reliable information such as their strength, destination, and intent. Information on a possible Erehleine / Drow alliance would also be appreciated. Hindering or stopping the army is outside the brief.

We are to report our information to General Don Juan Velazquez de Leon, in Puerto Damieno, Don Alonzo Hernandez Puertocarrero at Puerto Bozo, Prince Gyronwy of the Elvish Isles, or Don Aldarado himself, but not to the Destinian Council of Ten. Our payment is 800 gold shillings each, half paid in advance, with a reduced tax rate of 15% on any salvaged items not already held by New Destiny, and passports of travel through the portal from the Elvish Isles to Puerto Bozo.

The Guild of Seagate has also employed us (with the Destinians' approval) to have a copy of the information gathered, paying us 200 sp per week each.

We do some research into Terranovan sentients and Demonic Emperors (see Research before we start), and an Astrology reading on whether to visit Ahriman (see Astrology).

Borovia

[Session 2]

On the second, we take a slow portal through the middle marches to Bergelfin (a.k.a. Elfinberg). We walk for around 3 hours through inter-dimensional mist (see Appendix on Fog).

On our arrival at Bergelfin, we catch a coach to Borovia. The coach cost 60sp for a 10 hour one-way journey for 7. They use fast horses, and change them every few miles. The coach uses bound air suspension to reduce friction and discomfort.

Arriving at Borovia at dusk, we wend our way through picturesque countryside until we approach the capital. We note & discuss a street running off to the northeast of the main road, which has unusual and distinctive architecture ending in a tolmen or cromlech wide enough for several people to pass through abreast.

We elect to stay at the Blood on the Vine, the best of the local inns. We run into Mayor Ismak, who is not the usual stuffed shirt.

On the third, we have an early start, leaving around 4am after breakfast. We walk down the street noted the night before, commenting on how the architecture moves from pseudo-Tudor through several disconcerting hybrids to a semi-oriental style, complete with upwards-curved eaves & paper lanterns.

Bright light streams through the tolmen as we approach, and a mass of humanity presses about their mid-morning business as we walk through to the capital of Kin Lu.

Kin Lu

Most of the people on the street are humans, though many of the guards are Erehleine. We make our way to the nearest set of guards dressed in the ruling Tajin colours, and ask to see Lord Kokhan. After a certain amount of disbelief, we are escorted up the hill to his dwelling. As we climb the hill, the population ratio changes until most passers-by are armoured Erehleine. We are particularly obvious as westerners, complete with pale elves and a cherub. From here we see most of the extents of this city. It is huge – many hundreds of thousands of people, far bigger than anything in the baronies. This city is ruled by the house of Tajin, to whom Lord Kokhan belongs.

After the usual delays, we are greeted by Lord Kokhan and invited to tea. Polite conversation ensues, with many of the party nervous by being surrounded by guards (the Atoning Scarlet Chrysanthemums) and maids (Succubi serving the Knightly Duke & the Valiant Marquis). Lord Kokhan is uncomfortable with our requests for information about events in Terranova, and is unsurprised about the Erehleine working with the Drow there. He is annoyingly non-specific and slightly tense.

After a period, Lord Yo enters, in his Jade teabowl. He appears very friendly, informal, direct and honest on delicate issues, all with a charming old-man vagueness that must disarm many people. We all have lunch, and witness Lord Yo giving Lord Kokhan a teabowl that is probably an original Ori. Porcelain collection appears to be Lord Kokhan's vice.

Lord Yo presents us with a gold carp, perhaps 1½" long, that can remember a message, and then swim *very* fast back to him, in case of an urgent message. We learn a little about the different houses in Kin Lu. They include Tajin, the ruling house, which controls Iron and Rice and has blue & silver colours; Yokosama (mercenaries, black & gold), Amdijin (mages, black & orange). Amdijin often work with Yokosama. Three of the greatest houses left Kin Lu because of Penjarre, and live in the Dragon Isles to the north, at war with Kin Lu. They have ridiculously huge ships. Lord Kokhan is uncomfortable at the mention of Yokosama activity and Amdijin portaling ability. We are offered a lift by Lord Yo.

On the way out, we meet Captain Mishi, leader of the Atoning Scarlet Chrysanthemums, and learn how he can effortlessly defeat all but the deaf with his flute.

The Jade Dragon's Castle

We head north in the Jade teabowl, increased in size to fit us all. It accelerates effortlessly to windwalk or fireflight speeds, and we admire the scenery for an hour until we close on the Jade Castle, which juts out from the ocean on a rock pinnacle. The Jade Castle has tens of stories, and appears hundreds of feet high until one draws closer and realises that it is built on a draconic scale. We land in a chamber and are suitably cowed and aware of our mere humanity.

[Session 3]

We have a look around Lord Yo's castle. Most of the rooms are empty, with a few rooms crammed to the (very high) ceiling with "junk". It looks like things have been swept away into these store rooms, higgledy-piggledy, just to leave the other rooms empty. Lord Ho went down into a sealed basement where he found us some "terribly useful" amulets of translation - Eldaranx3, Teleri (sea elf)x2, Titan, High Ogre, Naga, Centaur – not quite fulfilling our request to speak Drow, but his intention seems good. We have a good meal with Lord Yo and then are taken to a portal room, which connects with the Elven Portal Network. Some of the portals go to other planets, but most go to odd places on Alusia. Most of the portal links are broken, so to get from one portal to another often requires a circumlocutious route. We travel to the main portal outside the Alfheim capital. Lord Yo joins us, since he hasn't been there before. Our stop-over is in a cavern, on a pinnacle of rock with its own standing stones, and a staircase encircling it, which descends a long long way. The roof of the cavern is also a long long way up. It's very dark.

Alfheim

After being greeted by the somewhat surprised elven royal guards, we make our way by imperial barge (available to any travellers) to Eidolon, the floating city. I am a little disappointed to discover that two-thirds of the city is at water level in a large lake, connected by canals, but the flying portion is very impressive. After changing our money (8sp = 1 elven silver, 10 silver to the gold, 1,000 gold to the diamond note), we catch ferries across the canals and thence to the upper levels. The flying boats are very elegant. We procure an appointment with an Ambassador for the morrow, and then pass the time until nightfall staring through shop windows at exquisite goods with ridiculous prices. After a hard search, we find an extremely expensive restaurant, where Lord Yo shouts us dinner. As he gets more tipsy and loquacious, the rest of the party turn more philosophical, and then plain greedy, but Lord Yo is a dragon who can handle his drinks, and fends off the more impolite questions. See “Creation Myths”.

[Session 4]

Lord Yo wishes to send a party to ask Xanadu’s Children to return. This not only fulfils the prophecies leading to the end of the world, but means that Baal’s power can be matched by his siblings, who have collectively defeated him before. Lord Yo could open a portal between worlds, and Xanadu’s Children, when found, could open a return portal. This portal would be a serious affair, probably consuming all mana in a vast area, and could only be done occasionally. The current party all volunteer for this mission, but Braegon notes that if the Children of Xanadu and an army of winged elves have walked this path and not returned, a higher level party may be required, and Xanadu’s Herald (Axis) must be invited. The paucity of planar-travel magics in our party makes me concur.

The next morning, Jade organises advance payment for her services from Lord Yo while the rest of us visit the Ambassador and try not to fall asleep. He can offer no help, but we give him lots of information anyway, to ease his disappointment. The afternoon is spent being rejected by various parts of their bureaucracy as we request to use their top-secret military portals.

That evening (the 4th) we catch an imperial barge heading to Borovia, leaving Lord Yo to conduct his own business within Alfheim.. The next five days are peaceful, and we spend most of the 9th travelling through a tunnel/canal in the Alfheim mountains (?created by Kree?). That night we stay in the Blood on the Vine Inn again, then catch the morning coach to Bergelfin, and walk through the slow portal back to Seagate.

The Elven Isles

At dawn on the 11th, we set out from Seagate in the Donna Silken with Don Alverado. A quick check indicates that we are actually heading in the correct compass direction, and I feel we have a chance of finding Terranova. However, I am aware that there are other major groupings of elves in Alusia that we have not yet visited, and fear we may end up in Azuria.

As the sun rises on the 14th, I realise that my fears are groundless – with the usual accuracy of Destinian navigation, we have arrived at the Elven Isles. We have lunch with Lord ####, a son of Prince Gyronwy, and possibly brother of Teleri Silverfoam. The afternoon passes as we leisurely cruise the Archipelago before disembarking upon a small conical island. Don Alverado and the party make their way to the top, where we are greeted by two fine Bowcourtian gentlemen, William & Henri (Gwillum & Onry, for you phoneticists). They are tuning the a stone circle, and (after checking we do not have portals into the minds of demons - which broke it last time), assure us that the portal is quite safe. At sunset, it automatically transports everying inside the portal to Terranova. At sunset in Terranova (not the same time), that portal sends its contents back to this portal. We are advised not to touch the stones, to stay in the middle, and learn that the effects only extend perhaps ten feet up. We portal through without problem (see Appendix on Fog).

The Isle of New Destiny

[Session 5]

The other side of the portal is apparently stinking hot, and half our party immediately starts to perspire. We descend through “tame” jungle – leaving the path is still probably fatal – to the fortified town of Puerto Bozo. This town appears to have been started with high expectations, but by the time some of the foundations were laid, the heat and apathy got to the workers, and the whole place has a feeling of a shanty town. The governor, Don Alonzo Hernandez Puertocarrero, is a lazy slob sent out here 10 years ago for his misdeeds. He probably means well, but lacks backbone or wit. Most of the workers are blue saurians, but most of the people are Destinian peasant. There are few nobility – just visiting ship’s officers & the Governor.

We arrange for the Donna Ana (due tomorrow) to be diverted to Casa Nova as the next step towards Dylath, then spend the afternoon examining the town. A pleasant sea fog arrives, cooling the town. We see Don Alverado off, back to the Elven Isles. He decides to leave alone, so we follow him secretly, and discover that the portal works both ways at Terranovan dusk. A large shipment of arms is portalled through and carried down to the docks. We do not know if the portal works at other times as well, or if the portal only goes to the Elven Isles.

The next morning (the 15th), the rangers are entertained by being shown a large number of hostile plants and animals in the jungle by a twitchy guard. Apparently the mainland is far more dangerous.

The Donna Ana

Ominously, the fog is still there the next morning, and the Donna Ana must pull in at the Ship-wrights rather than the main dock, to avoid foundering. The Donna Ana is a huge ship, approximately 190’ long, with two repeating Ballistae (roughly one shot per second) on each of the fore- & aft-castles. The Captain is Captain Christobel, from Bowcourt (very unusual – must be good!). The officers include Pilot Bartholomew Ruis, 2nd officer Pedro de Gasca, and the Marine Captain Don Francisco Rodrigo de “FireHouse”, the only Don on board.

Casa Nova is apparently a small town & ship-building yard founded by the Destinians during the time that Don Pizarro lost command due to falling foul of King Carlos (may he live forever), as Puerto Bozo was (politically) revolting. When all the differences were patched up again, Casa Nova was made into a satellite town. It is probably on an island at the northern-most end of the chain, and is only 1200 - 1500 miles south of Dylath. However, the Destinians will not take foreigners there, and are uncomfortable discussing its existence. It is possibly hidden by disorienting magic.

On the 19th we land on an island which is a trading point for Destiny & Dylath. Two Drow vessels are present. As we are rowed ashore in a long-boat, a wyvern shoots out of the jungle towards us. The party blazes away with spells, the repeating Ballistae fire at it, hitting it a few times, but it keeps coming until it turns into a fish, hits the water, and a couple of Squarks rend it apart within seconds.

Passage is arranged for us as part of the trade deal between the Destinians (selling iron weapons, particularly scimitars), and the Drow (selling spices, animal components).

Dylath

The Drow ships are 80' coastal cutters, modified with TDP's assistance to be ocean-going, and evolving towards Caravels. The Drow themselves look like slightly swarthy elves, not the black-as-their-souls kind on the other side of the ocean.

The Drow Captain ?Kerising? and his crew prove to be fine sailing companions, if one can't read minds. They give us plenty of freedom on the ship, and even exchange swords as a token of respect and lust for iron. To avoid any confusion, MaryM is disguised as a dwarf and the party pretend to be burly mercenaries escorting RocSinger on a Roc hunt.

After three peaceful days sailing, we put into Dylath in the early afternoon of the 22nd. Dylath is set around a deep bay, with a large island in the centre, which is densely covered with mansions. The edge of the bay itself is home to the less-well off, and eventually ends up as slums in the lower hills. The bay is also the mouth of the Cobalt River, named after its brilliant (though poisonous) blue waters.

[Session 6]

We stay in town for five days. We observe a number of interesting events and deduce some facts – see Summary of Drow Cities.

We meet up with some Fey traders, and when they learn we are strangers ourselves, they are helpful and offer to travel with us. We learn about their culture and oral traditions as well as some desert creatures.

Cobalt River

On the morning of the 27th, we set off up the Cobalt river with 12 Crodlu – 6 carry extra water, as the Cobalt river is poisonous. The Fey run alongside effortlessly all day. They point out some desert ranger tips to our rangers.

That night we start to build a large fortification to protect ourselves from bandits and wild creatures, and a free-willed and very old and large Earth Elemental turns up. After some tense negotiations with our Earth and E&E mages, we agree try a number of magics that may send it back to its home plane, as otherwise it will kill us or take some of our items. Eventually we draw it into the Ethereal Plane, which it does not like the look of, and it tries to change its mind half-way through the portal – a tense thirty seconds ensues before it is finally drawn all the way through.

The next few days pass peacefully, with the fey showing a little more respect for us, and we learn more about them. Jade makes some friends amongst them. The temperature averages 45°.

On the 3rd of Heat we approach the source of the Cobalt River, a waterfall pouring out of a rockface beneath the pass into the main Terranovan desert. The water is brilliantly blue and the air is laden with the metallic poison colouring the water. This metal is like copper, in the same way star-silver is like silver, or warpstone is like lead (not like true-silver or true-lead which are more powerful, but damaged, dangerous). We christen it star-copper. It has an essence of poison, like warpstone has an essence of change.

We pass over the mountain pass and descend to the obsidian town of Marcla, complete with its open-cast mine and yellow lake of steaming sulphur. A number of the fey, and two of us enter the town – we are mistaken for Fey. We observe it in case we are captured in Uric, as all prisoners end up working the obsidian mines until they die – generally a short period.

Uric

In the evening on the 4th of Heat we arrive outside Uric.

[Session 7]

The next morning we enter Uric, dressed as Fey. We spend a few hours observing local culture, (see Summary of Drow Cities) and are particularly fascinated by the Ziggurat being completed in the middle of the town. That afternoon, MaryM takes a closer look at the Ziggurat and comes up with some interesting theories. We decide to leave town before the local constabulary object to her thoughts.

The 6th is spent in peaceful contemplation of Uric from a near-by rise while the Fey complete their mercantile transactions. They get particularly poor bargains, so decide to press inland to Raam the next day, and we agree to accompany them.

[Session 8]

On the 8th, we are ambushed by 60 slavers, 5 drow mages, 3 Praying Mantis warriors (####) and 4 Tizards. The Tizards are more of a concern than the rest put together, but are dealt with by Jade & Katerina and the sudden appearance of Casmar who describes himself as the Eternal Champion's sidekick. He is unsurprised by an Armageddon man-against-the-gods scenario, and is expecting his boss Dante Godslayer to turn up shortly. Casmar tries to leave, but is trapped on this plane until the situation is resolved. He decides to join us.

[Session 9]

The rest of the slavers are then mopped up with a little magic and psychology. MaryM and Casmar share the kills fairly equally. On the 9th through 11th, two of the drow and their Mool servants escort us to their home city of Raam, and pay a ransom of half their weight in silver. Raam is undergoing a plague, so we decide to skirt around it to the south, while the fey head north east and the drow head north. The party and Casmar camp for the night of the 11th two miles south of Raam.

[Session 10]

Heading west towards Draj, we notice that the desert gets even hotter to the north – well over 50°C.

Yokosama Stronghold

On the evening of the 13th we find the site of a battle by following vultures, and find 40 drow and human bodies and one Erehleine – Yamaguchi Tomori. MaryM soothes Tomori's fevered brow until he comes around, and upon finding us charming companions, he agrees to lead us to his base. The battle seems to have been one of equal numbers, so we are impressed that only one Erehleine was injured badly.

Tomori belongs to the mercenary house of Yokosama, who with some Amdijin mages, have been in Terranova for 12-24 months, although significant forces have only been present for 3-4 months.

Tomori takes us to the nearest Yokosama stronghold, which is a fortified bunker of shaped earth a few miles to the north of Draj. We meet Yamaguchi of Yamaguchi, Tomori's leader, and are offered hospitality after a round of mutual runes of truth.

Six clans of fifty-odd warriors each are here, along with Earth, Fire, Water, Air, Rune & Portal mages. They are there to fight the allies of the Spawn (frog demons, as they call them). Interestingly enough, they do not claim to fight drow, or that they are enemies of the Spawn, merely fighting their allies. They have not received any orders to halt the Spawn yet. They have been raiding against Draj, but could not take the city through siege or open warfare. The city of Draj is on an island in the silt swamp, connected by a causeway to the mainland.

The God-King of Draj has not been seen for a while – he is believed dead or in hiding. The Draj nobles are primarily pro-Spawn. It is implied that the Erehleine may be responsible for some of the infighting in Raam and cities to the north-east. They claim that the Spawn uses plague and allow us to infer that the Spawn started the Raam plague.

Yamaguchi shows us a prize they have captured – a “pistol” identical to those used by Ahriman's dwarves. We analyse it and confirm its origins, although we are unsure whether Ahriman or another Demonic Emperor was involved. One of Ahriman's Balrogs is known to have switched sides, and may have taken the technology with him.

Most of the party visit the stables to see real horses after so long, then, it being after midnight, we retire.

Scouting the Enemy

The 15th finds us wearily back in the saddle, although some are mounted on horses for a rest. Poor planning indeed, to be 1000 miles into a desert on the Summer Solstice. We head south with a clan of Erelhein, picking up supplies from hidden caches. We scry to the south, and gain our first glimpses of the enemy.

South of the desert is a range of hills, a continuation of the Red Hills we met to the east. Here too, the sky rains iron and acid. The hills rise into a 3,000 miles long east-west mountain range, splitting the desert from the central jungles. South of that is more hills, then rough, broken terrain, which eventually is covered by jungle. A river runs north-south and near-straight through the jungle and culminates in a swamp at the edge of the roughlands (an unlikely place for swamp). In this swamp is a series of temples forming a religious (as opposed to functional) city, once occupied by Saurians, but now a Shrine to Apollyon, controlled by Spawn priests. An army of 60 - 90,000 spawn and their saurian slaves occupy the swamp. We study their movements and patterns of activity closely.

The camp is mostly open plan -- little in the way of huts/tents that a human army would need. The Spawn and Lizards seem happy to camp in the open. Some light weight looking cloths have been rigged up to provide shade. The only building of any real note is a small (30 foot on a side) pyramid that appears to be on a wheeled base. The pyramid glows faintly after dark. Its layout suggests a very highly ranked Mil Sci doing the planning, and is consistent with having mostly well disciplined troops (plus some irregulars -- saurians). here are some identifiable "regiments" quartered together -- spawn dressed in similar "uniforms". These make up about a quarter of the troops. The remainder appear to have no specific uniform. No reptilian "bird"-life over-flies the camp. The occasional foggy-patch appears momentarily in the air above the camp when they try -- we believe this is from air elemental; patrols. Some suspicious looking clouds hover high above the camp at all times.

Spawn troops are observed entering a tunnel in the rough lands, and being carried out on stretchers, suffering from ?acid?, weapon and ?cave-in? injuries. One instance is seen of a large group of particularly hard looking Spawn accompanied by a variety of nasty giant-toad-like beasts and a brace of "Tizards" appearing in what appears to be a Solar Flare effect. Some of them are injured.

There are three Naga, each with titanesque (30' high) bodies on the tails of mighty serpents, and two Balrog of even greater dimension. One of the Balrog has a gold hand. MaryM has meet this Balrog before and destroyed his previous crystal prosthetic. These five appear to be the absolute leaders of the army. They stay close together in the centre of the camp. Spawn "colonels" receive their instructions from the five, and disseminate the instructions to the troops. There is no sign of Apollyon or Leviathan. While Apollyon may have been missed, we feel confident that Leviathan is unforgettable.

Some Drow are observed in the camp. They appear to be nobles/ambassadors/advisors/something.

Reading the Enemy

[Session 11]

As we travel south through the burning desert and rising foot hills, we spend our spare energy on astrology readings (se Astrology). There is much discussion, which I draw a veil over, as not to offend our gentle reader.

Drugar

On the 20th we are in the red hills, having said sayonara to our escort. We decide that a raid on the Spawn camp would be fool-hardy in the extreme. After some more discussion, we decide not to attempt it anyway. We also conclude that seizing the god-king of Draj would be unproductive. Instead, we decide to contact the xenophobic Drugar. We change shape & appearance to Alusian dwarves with the assistance of Merlin, a friend of Rocsinger. Most of the party struggle to become accustomed to wearing bronze plate mail, particularly MaryM who misses her wings.

We find some giant scorpion tracks and trace them back to a cave mouth. After some discussion we head down the passage. An earth elemental attacks us, but we befriend it. It leads us to a village of Drugar. They are surprised to see us, but only because they expect us to be with the main fighting force. After the gift of a Camelot™ iron mace to replace his rock-on-a-stick, the leader provides us with scorpion mounts and escorts us to the main army through labyrinthine passageways. This trip takes several hours. Eventually we arrive, tired and disorientated, at the main camp. We see a number of mutated Alusian dwarves in heavy plate, with extra tentacles, etc that we recognise as Ahriman's followers.

Ahriman

[Session 12]

Once the initial confusion and tension surrounding our appearance is defused, Captain Crozak is convinced of our helpfulness by learning of the location of the one-handed Balrog that used to be their master while Ahriman slept. After further discussion, we are taken to Takavashka, First General of the Sons of Ahriman via a Dark Portal.

This very capable, approachable and pleasant gentleman (if one can call a shapeshifter Dwarf/Naga with two tails a gentleman) shows us around their War Room, and we exchange tactical information. The War room is full of warped dwarves – the higher commanders seem to be more warped. Most of them either have mind cloaks or are very resistant to magic – perhaps a quarter of them showed on telepathy. A number of free-willed earth elementals continually popped in and out of the cavern, updating the near-real-time tactical display of tunnel fighting on the large central table. We learn more about the fighting tactics of Spawn in tunnels – particularly the sub-race known as termites, and their use of air, water and earth elementals. We also hear of eagle Spawn, who plummet off clouds only their victims, and the Jaguar or Hugwa, who are stealth commando Spawn, which one can stand on before noticing – fortunately elementals have no such trouble detecting them. Takavishka believes that his troops can only hold back the Spawn army until the end of summer, and that they will probably break through somewhere to the south of Raam, as that is where the defence is weakest.

We take a Dark Portal to 4,000 feet below the surface, where we talk about strategic goals and Takavishka tells us of how Ahriman plans to repay his debt to Xanadu. The details of this conversation are sensitive.

We Dark Portal back to the main chamber, and decide that we have seen enough of Terranova. Casmar decides to stay on, awaiting the imminent arrival of Dante. We accept the very kind offer from Takavishka, and Dark Portal to a dwarven way station, then on to Ahriman's "front door", a huge carving of a demonic face in the side of the Worldspines.

Foxcourt, Borderlay, the Elven Isles and Home

By now it is dawn on the 21st back on Alusia. We head south through the mountains on foot towards Foxcourt, sleeping at a lonely Inn with a double-bitted axe over the door. We pick up our horses and ride to the Noir Coeur, or New Court barony (called by some the Heart of Darkness) on the 22nd. The next three days, we ride towards Elfenberg, but change our minds part-way and pop in to visit our new friends William & Henri. We have a fine lunch there, then travel via mirror to the Elven Isles, where there is time for a wonderful breakfast with Prince Gyronwy. The rest of the 25th is spent giving a detailed report to him, then William returns us via Borderlay to a Seagate establishment, from whence we walk home.

On the 26th, Axis & Braegon talk to Xanadu, and note that the 12 dragon statues surrounding his image have all turned to gold. The evening of the 27th is taken up with dinner with Yo Long, who flies off with Jade. The last we hear of either of them is Yo Long offering to teach Jade to be a Night Dragon.

Research before we start

Recent Terranovan History:

The Destinians claim all of Terra Nova on behalf of the Elvish Isles, but only hold two places: “New Destiny”, third island from the North, in a string off from the mainland, whose town is Puerto Bozo; and Puerto Damieno, which is on the mainland, close to several Saurian cities. Some of these cities have joined forces with the Destinians, in the face of the 70,000 strong eastern Spawn army, who swept down the river from their homeland (a huge inland lake - which used to hold trapped the demon Apollyon, Emperor of Light, under a pyramid). The eastern Spawn army have since built a floating city, sailed it out to sea to perform a months-long solar ritual, which awakened the sleeping Leviathan approx. 18 weeks ago (hence tidal waves in Seagate etc). New Destiny has an understanding with the Drow city of Dylath (located at a major river mouth, on the eastern-most peninsula of northern Terranova). The Dylathians gave New Destiny info about the northern Spawn army’s attack into Drow territory. It is believed that the army is aiming for the old Dragon/Elven capital where Baal was captured. Where the capital used to stand is now a sand desert, surrounded by big arid plains. The Drow city of Draj is reported to be under attack, but they are defending with the help of strangers in black & gold who are apparently Erehleine.

Nominations for Best Actor in a Leading Role:

Leviathan, Demonic Emperor of Water. See attached document for creation myths. He is a sea monster, at least 5 miles long, with an eye twice as big as a ship. He currently has the eastern Spawn army’s city resting on his back. He is believed to focus on water magic.

Apollyon, Demonic Emperor of Light. It is probable that he is leading the northern Spawn army. He has a dual nature, being made up of twin brothers Apollyon and Abaddon. He is believed to focus on solar magic.

Ahriman, Demonic Emperor of Darkness. Believed to be under a mountain range in Aquila. Reports state that he has changed his moral stance while imprisoned, and now fights his brothers & father. He is the enemy of our enemy, rather than an ally.

Baal is the father of the demonic Emperors and the first mortal created by Xanadu. It is believed that his sons are going to release him from his binding shortly.

Yo Long, Lord Yo, the Green Mage, the Jade Dragon, greatest of the Irin, the watchers from the beginning of time. Baal’s nephew, he spends most of his time balancing the yin and the yang and finding old pottery. Recently recovered from self-inflicted senility used to avoid problems during the War of Tears. The nominal hero of this story, and in a sense our true, spiritual, employer..

What we Found in Terranova

Brief Geography:

Southern Mountain chain filled with halflings, part of the "Empire of the Sun", previously pillaged by Destinians for its gold. Central highlands covered with jungle filled with flora and fauna, all of which is highly dangerous. This covers the coastal area going up into the hills. Northern Terra Nova has arid mountains, deserts, and plains, where the drow cities are. The deserts are very dry. Everywhere is incredibly lethal – plants and animals mana-warped into optimal predators on each other, environment extremely hostile & unpleasant. Everyone travelling through here should be a skilled ranger.

Race List:

The Spawn are 6' high humanoid frogs who speak a corruption of Elvish ("Frogelf"). They have a number of sub races, warped by prolonged worship of Apollyon when he was trapped under his pyramid. The sub races include chameleon scouts, poisonous snake troops, gliding eagle troops, burrowing/siege specialist ant troops, jungle survivalist jaguar troops, and ogre-sized dragon troops. They use a range of magics, primarily elemental. Solar is their preferred college. They do not know of Namer, Illusion, Bard, Summoning, Ice.

The Spawn are led by titan-sized Naga who see into the future and read minds. There are also a number of Balrog. Shock troops include waves of zombies. There is also a bigger power (presumably Apollyon) who solar flared an entire lizard city when it prepared for siege on the eastern Spawn army's approach. The Drow are similar in culture to Alusian Drow, except that they have a lot of mind mages, and that they can drain others for their spell FT. They rule over enslaved humans in a hierarchical and brutal society. They are olive-complexioned rather than black-skinned.

The Quechan halflings from the Empire of the Sun are outside the mission purview, being too civilised and too far south.

The Mool are a "race" of sterile crossbred dwarves and humans. They are 6' tall and built like dwarves. They seem docile slaves or obedient bully-boys.

The Fey are gaunt desert Elves. They are usually ~ 7', and entire families can run 60 miles per day through desert. They don't drink water. They don't fight, preferring to outrun trouble. They are extraordinary desert rangers, and seem caring family folk with an empathy for others. They use limited magic – one shaman per extended family, or so.

The feral Halflings are jungle primitives who file their teeth to points and back-comb their hair. They prefer to eat humans and other sentients due to the dangerous nature of the vegetation in jungles. Some trading parties venture into Drow cities.

The Drugar are dwarves. They live in the mountain range separating the Arcadian desert from the central jungles. Their technology is generally stone-age. "rocks on sticks" are their favourite weapons. They ride 10' scorpions – which are actually quite comfortable, being low to the ground, wide (2'-3' across), and don't sway too much due to the number of legs. They avoid the surface as much as possible. They are allied with Ahriman & his Alusian dwarves.

We didn't learn much about them, but they appear to be beastmasters and dangerous.

The ###, 8' long praying mantis's. They move quite fast, but are vulnerable to magic. They are supposed to be deadly warriors.

Bestiary

Some of the highlights include:

Cloud Rays, which are 300' across and eat rocs;

####, which are 10 ton behemoths used for pulling heavily armoured carts (they go at 2mph for 20 hrs/day);

Kanks, which are cockroach insects 6-8' long, which can be ridden (40miles/day), their chitin is light and hard armour, and they excrete food which we can eat but choose not to.

Crodlu, ostrich-like lizards who do 60 miles/day in the deep desert, and are good scout riders but can't carry excessive weight (over 200lb).

Tempo, a rhino-sized desert carnivore with hands and many teeth and claws, used in arena combat as well as occurring naturally.

Squarks, $\frac{3}{4}$ squid, $\frac{1}{4}$ shark, which swim at 30+knots for short distances). They are only ~ 4' long, but can rend a Wyvern into pieces in 3 seconds.

Earth "spirits" – greater elementals who can be summoned but not bound, and hold a grudge against humanoids. However, they can be negotiated with and tricked.

Tizard, tiger-like lizards who are powered by magic. Fireball made them quickened, Slowness gave them armour & defence. Control person "splashed" off them and affected one of us. I suspect that "what does not kill them makes them stronger". Even without the magic, they were very fast, incredibly agile, and with masses of endurance and armour. Fortunately their attacks lacked penetration, being no worse than a large sword. They out-run horses without enhancement. They may be sentient allies, domesticated beasts or slaves of the drow slaver/mages.

Many other dangerous beasts are heard of and forgotten except in nightmares.

Summary of Drow Cities

- Dylath's ruler is strange, in that he considers himself a Tyrant, rather than a God-King as is usual for Drow.
- Dylath is very open and friendly compared to the other Drow cities, due to its geographic isolation and the tolerance of its Tyrant.
- In Dylath (only), a few humans are not slaves, but instead "middle-class" traders – still of a lesser social rank than the Drow. Some other humans are free but not prosperous. Most are slaves.
- Dylath is normal mana, even though it is huge.
- Mools, Half-giants (20' tall), feral Halflings, Fey, Drugar and a few other races inhabit the cities with the Drow, usually in a subservient role.
- Only Drow are mages (plus the occasional traveller).
- Many Drow are mages. They favour Mind over Necromancy & Celestial, and also have a number of Earth, Fire, E&E, Namer, Binder, Planar and modified Air mages. Water mages are rare. No Ice, Witch, Illusion, Bard or Greater Summoners are found.
- Dylath is wealthy, second behind Uric, due to its trade and recent supplies of iron weapons. Uric is wealthiest due to its obsidian monopoly.
- Town #3 to the north has recently had a revolution, and is being ruled by the mob, led by the gladiators. All the towns have gladiators, and Town #3 had a particularly large and skilled force.
- Raam to the west of Uric has a weak leader and is full of infighting.
- Draaj to the west of Raam is on the edge of the great Silt Sea. The ruler is considered particularly cruel and arbitrary by other drow.

Uric

- Population is 20% drow, 80% human, 2% mixed – Mool, Fey, ½Giant, etc.
- All non-drow are slaves or servants. Fey are treated as gypsies.
- The “Warrens”, an exclusive part of Uric, is 98% human. Similar to Sanctuary, etc.
- The 2nd circle of the city is for high nobility only.
- The guards are mainly drow, but include Mools, ½Giants, and humans. The guard officers are Mind Mages. They are corrupt and brutal.
- King Hanamu is over 2,000 years old, compared with a normal drow lifespan of 200-300 years. He is harsh but fair. He has > 10,000 troops available. Since he started building the ziggurat 7-8 years ago, he has withdrawn from civic life, become more unpredictable, and almost bankrupted Uric.
- Uric is low+ mana (FT+2), and the surrounding countryside is low mana (FT+1). As one heads west from Uric, some parts of the countryside become low+ mana.
- Lizard-on-a-stick is a remarkably palatable snack food.

Uric Ziggurat

The Ziggurat in the middle of Uric is 450x350 feet, and 150feet high. It has seven massive steps, each painted a different rainbow colour.

The Ziggurat is made of millions of bricks, made from clay + straw + minerals. As each brick is added, it becomes part of the Ziggurat, and is bound, becoming impervious to scrying, earth elementals, etc.

The Ziggurat has huge writing on the side, written in ancient Drakonic. The message is quite long, but boils down to “I am Hamanu, King of all Arcady by grace of the Roaring Winds and Almighty Sun. They have made me into a man that can not be killed, and a general that can not be defeated”. We think (a) he’s boasting or mad; (b) the Roaring Winds & Almighty Sun may be the Ruby Scourge and Apollyon, and (c) the Ziggurat is likely to outlast Hamanu.

Divination of the Ziggurat reveals that it is a life-energy lens which focuses life force into 7 ? 7 ? receptacles within the Ziggurat. This lens effect is ancient magic, a shadowed or distorted version of the original pure magic that Xanadu’s children had before they broke magic into the colleges.

Hanamu, who was financially prudent, is now happy to bankrupt his city to complete this in a hurry (before the end of summer?). This magic is similar to that used by Koth (Sith’s brother) when he became a dragon a couple of years ago in the Filgasso swamp on the Baronies. Becoming a dragon requires a large amount of lifeforce to be channelled & shaped at one time. The Ruby Scourge was a drow who became a dragon. The best answer to the Ziggurat’s use is that it will be used to make Hamanu into a dragon, but it doesn’t fit with some parts. Why 7 receptacles? And what is the other layer of magic that we could feel but not study, under the lens effect? Why the hurry? And is it linked to the Ziggurats used to power the eastern Spawn army as they headed down the river, or the Ziggurat built over Apollyon to power him during his internment?

Astrology

Reading on whether it would be advantageous to visit Ahriman.

It is not every question that deserves an answer,
And many receive advice, but few profit by it.
Even a single hair casts its shadow,
But let a fool hold his tongue and he will pass for a sage.

You should go to a pear-tree for pears, not to an elm,
And treat your friend as if he might become an enemy,
For there are some remedies worse than the disease,
And what is left when honour is lost?

When two do the same thing, it is not the same thing after all,
But no one should be judge in his own cause,
For it is east for men to talk one thing and think another,
And powerful indeed is the empire of habit.

Astrology Reading on the Uric Ziggurat:

Seven Orbs
Obsidian Black
Hold the Souls
Torn Afresh
Consumed in turn
They release
Ancient Power
Of Blood

Merlin's Prophecy:

When Anu's sundered children walk again Arcadian shores,
The *disjecta membra* of greatness reunited,
Wounds of the past may be healed with the blood of the present
And the people of earth, sea, and sky redeemed.

Death's doorway brings forth life anew,
Ancient might turned to weal or woe,
The seas will rise and consume the earth,
And the dark graal reveals the horn of plenty.

“If we go to Draj, who there at that time would know the true objective of the spawn army?”

Mighty power spawns mighty pride,
God-kings their own counsel keep,
Ambition will not be denied,
Lesser folk their dreams held cheap.

“What are the defenses against ethereality, illusion and deceit that the Spawn army uses to protect their troops and generals?”

Called forth by ancient masters,
Dwellers in the corners of time,
Run and hunt celestial paths.

True light sweeps aside deceptive shades,
Unmasking and revealing,
Laying falsehoods bare.

Foreknown and foretold,
Four-armed is forewarned,
Primeval oracles.

[The last three symbols seem to be forced out]

Eye
Sea
Yew

Reading on the Drugar:

Dark Brethren
Roughly Cast,
United Underearth
Goals revealed,
Against the Light
Rightful Rule Forever

Creation Myths

This information was gained from Lord Yo in Alfheim.

Xanadu is one of the Elder Gods, created with the worlds from the merging of Light & Darkness (see creation myth in TDP's scribe notes from the War of Tears). Xanadu created dragonkind, or at least the sixteen first-generation dragons. Lord Yo is a second-generation dragon, "child" of ### and ###. Baal and Anu were his "Aunt" and "Uncle".

The exact order of events are somewhat confused. After Anu's death, Baal was distraught, stormed and raged at Xanadu for a while. At this time Baal learnt his ritual of "becoming a god", wherein he destroys all else on this plane, from one of the Elder Gods, probably while walking between planes.

When Baal started his ritual (which involved flooding, fires in the skies and general apocalypse for the inhabitants of Alusia), the other Dragon-kin tried to reason with him, and then to stop him, but without success. Eventually, they banished Baal to between the planes, hoping that he would see the error of his ways. After some time, he returned, unrepentant, and begun the ritual anew. When the Dragons tried to stop them, Baal & his sons turned violent, and many were slain, for the dragons did not expect violence, nor were they familiar with it. After some time and great losses Baal was imprisoned by the remaining 1st and 2nd-generation Dragons using a great ritual incorporating some of the original pure Darkness or Light from the beginning of time. He was first bound, and then banished into the Outer Darkness. He was not slain, for his siblings were hopeful of reconciliation, and could not bear to destroy Baal, who was still the greatest of their kin. While this all appears a simple matter of chronology to us, our only source of information sees this time as a tragedy where he was orphaned and most of the great ones of his race destroyed. Seeking clarification for intellectual satisfaction seems a little gauche.

After Baal's second defeat, the remaining Children of Xanadu went between the planes, to escape the memories of the past, but promised to return when needed. Lord Yo and some other dragons stayed behind as the Irin (watchers), to await their return.

Baal's children may have been defeated and punished with their father, but were certainly not sent into the Outer Darkness, for they were later bound with the same ritual by those elves destined to become Demon Lords, presumably just before the War of Tears. The circumstances surrounding these bindings were not inquired into, although it is of interest to note that the Demon Kings bound the Demon Emperors before descending to their thrones. What Baal's sons had been doing for the intervening 170,000 years is unclear. Additionally, it seems that this binding did not use a piece of the original creation, which, along with the lesser power of the casters, explains why Baal's sons have been set free relatively easily by passing hobbits. The fact that so many of his sons were freed at (nearly) the same time after so long speaks of some other power at work.

The Vanyarmi (winged elves) who disappeared before the War of Tears at MaryM's request, also went between the planes, possibly taking the same route as the Children of Xanadu.

Appendix on Fog

Fog is a transitional element, formed at the interface between the major elements of air, water & fire.

Meteorological Fog

Advection fog occurs when warm, moist air moves over a cold surface and the air cools to below its dew point. This typically occurs on land near the coast with a coastal evening breeze. It stops when the breeze dies, the temperature gradient flattens or the warm air loses sufficient water vapour.

Evaporation fog is produced when sufficient water vapour is added to the air by evaporation. The two common types are steam fog and frontal fog.

Frontal fog forms as warm raindrops evaporate in a cool air mass, often a cold front. The frontal fog dissipates when precipitation stops.

Steam fog forms when cold air moves over warm water. The fog is warmer than the surrounding air and may be quickly lifted, forming rotating swirls of fog or steam devils. This is the opposite to Advection fog.

Radiation fog is produced over land when radiation cools the air temperature. It is also known as Ground fog and Valley fog. It is the most common form of fog, and is dissipated by a slight breeze, or by air warming.

Orographic fog is formed as moist, stable air flows upward over a topographic barrier. Reversing or calming the wind or removing the topographic feature will end the fog – otherwise, they can last for many days. It is also known as Upslope fog.

Inversion fog is (usually) Radiation fog that lifts above the ground surface but does not completely dissipate because of a strong temperature inversion that exists above the fog layer. It is also known as Fog Stratus and can be mistaken by the ignorant for a type of cloud. Any wind dissipates Inversion fog.

Ice fog is any fog composed of tiny suspended ice particles. This occurs when dew point is below freezing, typically by rapid super-saturation of the air with water vapour from an external source.

Diffraction The bending of light around objects, such as cloud and fog droplets, producing fringes of light and dark or coloured bands.

Heiligenschein A faint white ring surrounding the shadow of an observer's head on a dew-covered lawn or thick fog. This fog nimbus is used in a variety of magical effects.

Fog vs Mist In natural weather, any fog with more than 1 mile of visibility is mist. In magical parlance, any fog constructed primarily from the effects of air (or other vapour) is mist. This includes Air Mist, Noxious Vapours, the overflow from Maze and (nominally) Illusory Mist.

Perceptual Fog

Transitions between states of existence or enlightenment are also characterised by fog. Near death experiences often involve a guiding light *at the end of a tunnel of mist*. Fogs are associated with the chaos and loss of perceptual clarity during states of change (e.g. fogs of sleep, war and memory). Fogs are often encountered during inter-dimensional travel, particularly near the Ethereal, which is a transitional plane.

