

Do You Take This Frog

Cover Sheet

Adventure by Craig Harper

01/04/90 - 07/05/90

Player Characters

Starflower	Mind	Female	Elf	
Vila	E&E	Male	Human	
Dross	Wicca	Male	Human	Leader
Whisper	Shadow	Female	Elf	
Kane	Non-mage	Male	Human	Mil Sci
Eric	Namer	Male	Orc	
Sabrina	Namer	Female	Elf	
Basalic	Earth	Male	Human	Scribe

Plane

Elushia

Places visited

Tobintown (near Brasta)
Brasta
Westgate
Stony Ford in Griffon Valley
Insel Garsi
Novadom

Employer

Aaron Kijie

Major NPCs encountered

Dwain Kijie - Celestial
Colonel Joseph Kijie (his father)
Mary - Joseph's wife
James Travisher - Namer
Shaun Kijie (the groom)
Amielie Mission (the bride)
Brother Ensel (marriage celebrant)
Colonel Fothringhey
Audrey II - sentient plant

Mission

To determine who sabotaged a wedding and cursed the bride and groom

DO YOU TAKE THIS FROG ...

Adventure Summary

31/03/90

Met our employer, Aaron Kijie from Brasta, who told us of a wedding where the bride and groom were cursed to be frogs, she a frog by day and he a frog by night. They suspected it was done by Dwan Kijie, a dishonoured family member who had disappeared ten years ago. Our job was to find him, find out why he did it, and set matters right.

It was decided to travel to Tobintown and seek out Aaron's brother - the father of the perpetrator and see what further information can be gained.

01/04/90

Left Seagate

03/04/90

Met up with a wagon train going to Brasta. Allowed it to pass and tag along behind it.

04/04/90

Reach Tobintown. Definitely a military outpost. The road splits then rejoins up ahead. In between is the Windy Nook Inn where we decide to stay. Later on Aaron arrived and joined us. He'll take us to the Kijie estate tomorrow.

05/04/90

Reach the Kijie mansion. Meet Colonel Joseph Kijie and his wife, Mary. Get the background story. The bride's name is Amiele Mission, the groom is Joseph's other son, Shaun. The curse was identified as transformation magic - a greater curse. Dwan had been in the army and was court-martialled for disobeying orders, the sentence being two years hard labour. He was disowned from the family at that time as well. He went incommunicado at that time although there was an unverified rumour he was in Seagate.

The wording of the curse was as follows:

Lt Kijie will become a frog from sundown to sunrise and
Amiele Mission will become a frog from sunup til sundown
until swords are crossed at Toad Hall.

It was cast by a member of the Celestial College who had an MA of 28 and was rank 12. Could Dwan have had an accomplice or had it been precast on an item, waiting for a trigger. But, when asked, Amiele had not received any new jewellery. None of her other jewellery was magical either.

06/04/90

Starflower has a nightmare of a dark, slimy building. We suspect it was Toad Hall. No sign of anything in the Colonel's library that could be Toad Hall. Decide to visit the military archives in Brasta.

07/04/90

Head off to Brasta. On the way is Brother Ensel's church (he was the marriage celebrant) so

Starflower and I stop off there to talk to him. He confirmed what we had been told. Wedding not recorded in the registry. Ensel had not heard of Toad Hall, or any other abandoned mansions. Look through the church library but no further clues. Ensel suggests Duke Istis's library in Brasta. We head off. Meet up with the others and head back to the Kijie mansion.

08/04/90

Dross had consulted military archives yesterday and discovered that Dwan's sentence had been unusually light. Usually it's the death penalty on the spot and the court martial is performed posthumously.

Two astrology readings are also revealed. They went as follows:

Why Dwan's sentence was so light?

But Calvin is an old god and demands sacrifices from his subjects. As the strands of fate twisted beneath his unyielding gaze.

Where do we find Dwan?

Let us then take our compass

We are something but not everything

The nature of our existence hides from us

The knowledge of first beginnings which are born of the Nothing

And the littleness of our being conceals from us the sight of the Infinite

No clues there as yet. Whisper had also obtained an appointment with the Duke's librarian so we set off. On the way we stopped to see Ensel again who told us that Calvin was a god of a pagan religion.

We use the library. I find out that Calvinites were pre-College Earth mages, getting their spells more by luck than planning. The whole thing was hidden in a series of rituals and sacrifices. There were blood sacrifices in the Filigasso Forest. Looking up the Filigasso Forest showed it to be a mana-rich area. Lots of strange things had been observed in there.

The others were looking up references to abandoned buildings and defunct trading houses. No luck there though.

Some of us talk to a philosopher to discuss the astrology readings while the others go to Colonel Fotheringway's house (Dwan's commanding officer) to get more information on the court-martial. Unfortunately something goes wrong, involving a backfired spell and a swarm of butterflies.

That night we sneak in and hypnotise the Colonel. We find out that Colonel Kijie had convinced him to influence the court-martial board to reduce Dwan's sentence.

As we left we notice that Vila is missing. He sneaks back into the camp later on that night.

09/04/90

Arrive back at the Kijie mansion. Colonel Fotheringway arrives, rather annoyed. He had a break-in last night and several items are missing, including the family sword. This was found on the road on the way here. Hence we were accused of theft. Dross confessed to last night's entry and also mentioned Vila disappearing mysteriously. We go looking for Vila.

A short while later there is a huge commotion. Front room trashed by forces unknown, servants in panic. Discover Dross's half-devil and Vila's imp locked in combat. As the rest of the party (except Sabrina, Starflower and Vila) turn up, the imp disengages and flies off. A black-winged figure also takes off. Eric takes off in pursuit. Meanwhile Starflower and Sabrina arrive. They had been out hunting. Meanwhile Eric returns with the news that Vila got away. Colonel Kijie wants us to leave but we convince him to allow us to continue the mission.

The suggestion is made to investigate the Ponderosa - an old ruin in the Filigasso Forest.

10/04/90

Two astrology readings were cast in order to determine the location of Toad Hall. Both come up with the same answer SIREN GAILS. Starflower suspects it may be a place name with the letters mixed up so we check the maps. We deduce it's an area called Insel Garsi which is a swampy area to the south-east, surrounded by a river, so we head off. First stop Brasta where we split up on various errands.

11/04/90

Once the party are together again (Kane and Whisper managed to find Vila) we set off. Camped at Westgate at an inn called the Prancing Pony.

12/04/90

A mountain range called the Westbounders lies between us and the swamp. About midday we're traversing a narrow pass through. Camp halfway.

13/04/90

Eric had his throat cut during the night, probably by a dwarf. Kane and Whisper take off with the body back to Seagate. Rest of us head back to Westgate. Arrive there with no further incidents. Inn renamed to the Pink Pony.

14/04/90

Westgate is a very small village so there's not much happening while we wait for the others to return. Find out there are dwarven bandits in the mountains. Their leader is called Dirty Dan. Whisper and Kane arrive back that afternoon with the news that Eric is alive and well. When Eric gets back he wants to have a go at the bandits as there is stuff missing from the wagon.

So we head back into the mountains again. That night the bandits are encountered and dispatched.

15/04/90

Attack the dwarven camp - a cave. The rest of the band, including Dirty Dan, are wiped out. Continue on.

16/04/90

Head out of the mountains and emerge in rough terrain.

17/04/90

Reach Stony Ford in Griffon Valley. The place only consists of the ferry terminal. Wait for the ferry.

19/04/90

Ferry arrives and we head down river. That afternoon we reach the northern tip of Insel Garsi. At evening fly off from the boat and head into the island. Shortly spot a fortified two-story house and land. Attacked by large green tentacles (Audries Duplex) and giant frogs (griplies). Manage to defeat the plant and most of the frogs. Just after the plant is killed, bolts of light erupt from the house and finish off the frogs. Discover they came from Dwan Kijie.

Dwan tells his story. The whole thing had been a lure to get help to vanquish Audrey. Now that was done the curse was lifted. Convinced Dwan to return with us to visit his family before flying out to Stony Ford.

20/04/90

Head back over the mountains very early and, after a hard trip, reach Westgate.

21/04/90

Leave Westgate to Brasta.

22/04/90

Detour around Brasta and arrive at the Kijie mansion. Shaun attacks Dwan and kills him. Go to Tobintown to spend the night.

Find out that Dwan has two treasure caches, one in Novadom and another in an old mine, west of Seagate.

28/04/90

Go down to Novadom via Westgate, Stony Ford and down the river via ferry.

29/04/90

Find the house where the cache is and retrieve it.

31/04/90

After the ferry trip back up river, arrive back at Stony Ford.

07/05/90

Arrive back at Seagate via Tobintown. Some of the party retrieve the other stash.

"DO YOU TAKE THIS FROG ..."

31/03/90

- Basalic

It was a quiet day in the Guild Headquarters at Seagate, broken only by the sounds of explosions, screams, and running feet as the magi practised their spells. We assembled in the Great Hall to hear the next quarter's assignments. The one that sounded the most interesting was a problem presented by a well dressed merchant who wanted a team to sort out a problem with a wedding. Seemed rather suitable for a novice like me so I duly signed up for it. Shortly myself and six others assembled in meeting room 5 (just off the bar) in order to hear what this gentleman had to say. One of the lady elves (Starflower) was glaring at an empty corner. Maybe somebody was late. It turned out that the guy (Vila) was invisible. He appeared as the merchant walked in.

The merchant introduced himself as Aaron Kijie from Brasta. We later found out that this was a well respected and prosperous family with a strong military background and very proud of it. However they had a black sheep - Aaron's nephew, name of Dwan, who had disappeared ten years ago. No one knew where he had gone, who his associates were, or what had happened to him. The matter had rested till the day of a big wedding six weeks ago when the guests were surprised by the sudden appearance of a person dressed in dark robes. No one had noticed him come in. He first demanded to know why he hadn't been invited to the family wedding when he was family then, when no answer was forthcoming, proceeded to curse the proceedings before disappearing in a puff of smoke and a loud explosion. When the smoke cleared it was discovered that all the food had been spoiled. However to really put the kibosh on the event it was also discovered that the bride had been turned into a giant frog until sundown when the groom turned into a similar frog i.e. she was a frog by day and he was a frog by night. Also it was discovered that they retained their sentience and were aware of what is happening. Naturally this sort of put a damper on the whole proceedings. A close friend of the family had attempted to lift the curse but to no avail. Our mission (should we decide to accept it) was to find Dwan, find out why he did it, and persuade him to set matters right. He was offering 5000SP. I got the distinct impression that the family wanted to keep this affair hushed up in order to prevent a scandal, which was why they had waited so long to seek help from outside.

After we replied that we wished to discuss the matter among ourselves Aaron left for the bar. First off we introduced each other as some of us had not met before.

Starflower - a rather tall attractive elf who was a mind mage. She said she was a healer but not very good at it.

Dross - a black mage. Rather dark complexion

Vila - an enchanter. A rather weedy wimpy looking guy. Could do with a good workout.

Whisper - a short (for an elf), rather cute person who turned out to be a shadow mage (some people were calling her an orc which I reckoned wasn't very nice)

Kane - a warrior. Very muscular fighter type in black leather.

Eric - a namer. He's definitely an orc with the green skin to match. Looks more like a fighter.

Sabrina - another tall (as Starflower) extremely attractive elf female who was also a namer

I introduced myself as Basalic, a person with an affinity to the soil ("Oh - A Dirt Mage" someone exclaimed). I'm a tall rather fit human who has some skills as a ranger. I'm not very good yet but, as I said, I'm a good keen man. Someone give me a sword and I'll have a go.

After the introductions Dross introduced his pet dog, a little white terrier called MacArthur. Suddenly MacArthur changed into some sort of ugly demon creature. It shames me to admit it gave me a terrible fright so I was out the door. One problem though - it was shut and Kane was in the way. Finally we got it open and managed to jam ourselves in the doorway momentarily until we burst through into the bar and out the main door. I sought refuge behind a rubbish can until the fit passed.

Meanwhile Whisper was cowering in a corner while Vila went berserk, attacking Dross and MacArthur. Fortunately Starflower managed to calm Vila, by hypnosis, before any real damage was done.

Once everything had calmed down and everyone was back in meeting room #5, Vila pulled out a small stone marble and bowled it across the floor in Starflower's direction. Halfway there, it sprouted wings and feet then took off. Starflower got such a fright she headed out the door. A short while later she poked her head in again and the 'thing' flew at her. Starflower left for parts unknown. I could have sworn that 'thing' was laughing. Certainly some of the other members were. When she came back in, a few minutes later, Vila had retrieved the object.

We settled down to discussing Aaron's problem. It was speculated that Dwan could either be a black mage or a necromancer as both colleges have the ability to cast such a curse. However it was going to be rather difficult to find him. It was decided to travel to Tobintown (near Brasta) and seek out Aaron's brother -the father of the perpetrator and see what further information could be gained. While this discussion went on I studied the guild contract. Seemed like a rather straightforward document to me. Anyway we eventually signed it. Dross became party leader, Kane became the military strategist and I became the party scribe (which is why I'm keeping this diary). Also people stated the additional clauses they wanted included. Kane wants anything to increase his abilities, Vila wants to see in the dark, and Starflower wants to increase her magical resistance. As for me all I want is fun and adventure.

We decide to go and join Aaron in the bar in order to tell him what we were thinking of doing and to seek further information. I was rather surprised that we had taken over an hour in deliberations but Kane said that wasn't unusual. Starflower decided to cast a telepathy spell to read Aaron's mind and did very well at it, so well that she was picking up everyone's thought in Guild HQ, including our own.

When we arrived in the bar Aaron was naturally curious about what had happened in that room. After all he had heard shouts, bangs, and three people had rushed out in blind panic. Dross told him that the contract had been discussed, voted on and signed. Aaron still looked rather puzzled but decided not to ask further.

Starflower then asked him why his nephew had left the family. He replied that he had no idea and that we should ask the father. However Starflower picked up a thought which, she later told us, was that Dwan had been dishonourably discharged from the military. Evidently another piece of

information which was hushed up to prevent a scandal. Vila asked for a 2000SP advance in order to cover transport costs, healing potions etc. Aaron offered to provide transport by ferry. I wasn't too keen on the idea as I had this rather funny thing about large bodies of water and swaying decks. Would it be possible to take a horse? Kane suggested a caravan and Whisper reckoned a convoy would be better. Finally we decide to hire horses and go. Aaron agrees to an advance of 50SP/head for travelling expenses and an advance of 1500SP for miscellaneous. The miscellaneous ended up being used to buy three healing potions. He tells us that he'll take the merchant ferry and meet us at the Windy Nook Inn in a few days.

Meanwhile we get our horses. Whisper already has one and Starflower pays out 360SP for the same horse she used last time to cover the three months rent. Meanwhile I decide to borrow 100SP from the Guild and, with the other 50SP, put a deposit of 120SP for a months rent on something quiet, leaving 30SP for other expenses. Starflower and Dross also ordered some made to measure leather armour for the next adventure.

A few of us decide to buy weapons, including me. Starflower goes shopping for barbed crossbow bolts and orders a decent sword. I splash out on a broadsword, a dagger and a leather jerkin. I considered getting a quarterstaff as well but decided it should be just as easy to make one on the way. Whisper paid out 600SP to get zapped by a lesser enchantment. MacArthur, who turns out to have Earth Mage abilities, puts a lesser enchantment on Vila and Dross.

We finally decide to read the stars (playing join-the-dots) in order to determine where Dwan could be found. What we got, in reply to the question "Where can we find Dwan?" was:

Mary had a little lamb
It's fleece was black as soot
And into Mary's bread and jam
Sooty put it's foot.

The lamb refers to Dwan but the reference to bread and jam eluded us. Before we retired, Kane instructed us to be up bright and early for departure.

. 2 .

01/04/90.

Well this was it. Everyone purified themselves for the day's journey except for Vila. He seemed to be suffering from a hangover. Dross disappeared in order to get an ashwood staff. Starflower explains that they're used to detect poison, turning black when in the presence of such.

Finally we trundle out at 11:30. This is bright and early??? Eric is well equipped as he's riding in a wagon. We take up a formation around it. Starflower and Sabrina spend a lot of time in conversation. As it turned out this is a very common occurrence. I amused myself by looking at the scenery. By the time we made camp for the night I had my quarterstaff.

That night Starflower decides to go hunting for rabbits and invites me to come along. Seems to be a reasonable idea so I accepted. We decided to ensure that we didn't wander out of yelling range of the rest of the group. We cross over the brow of a hill and didn't see anything. I decide to have a chat to the grass in order to determine if there are any rabbits about. The grass sort of curled up (as it were) at the mention of rabbits, not surprising really, but perked up when I said

that I was going to remove the rabbit menace. I was just about to ask about locations when Starflower poked me in the ribs. She said she thought she saw something rather tall that had dog-like features. I asked the grass whether it knew where it was but all I got was the news that it had big feet. Starflower attempted to track it using ESP. The main impression she got from it was hunger. We stayed still as it passed us.

When we got back to the camp and reported we found that someone else had already cooked dinner. Eric identified the creature as a gnoll. At that Vila disappeared - literally. Anyway dinner was reasonable for standard camp fare. I notice Dross is playing with MacArthur. It seems to be hanging off the end of his finger.

Watches are set up. Whisper and Kane take the first watch, Eric & Vila on second, Dross & Sabrina on third, leaving Starflower and myself for the last. Nothing happens during the night.

02/04/90

Virtually first thing in the morning Starflower claims she sees something. There's a mad scramble for weapons and armour and Vila disappears again. I went for a look and saw nothing. Starflower had a look and spotted a trampled grassy area. If that was gnolls, there must have been a few. Kane found some tracks that wandered all around the camp. One set even went through it. A lot of talk sprang up at that point about invisible creatures and Black Mages, until Kane pointed out that some of the tracks were over 12 hours old.

Dross suggested that we break camp now, go down the road for half an hour and purify. So we did that. I attempted to purify but the thought of being jumped on by invisible gnolls must have unsettled me a bit and I couldn't concentrate. Starflower offered to make some herbal tea so I ask for a cup.

We carried on. Dross sat on the top of Eric's wagon and kept a watch behind us. Late afternoon he spies a large dust cloud far behind us. Kane has a look and verifies it. Meanwhile Starflower is keeping an eye open for rabbits as well as talking to Sabrina.

That evening we camp and Starflower goes hunting. About an hour later she returns extremely peeved - not a rabbit in sight. Eric manages to produce dinner out of our rations. While he was doing that MacArthur changed into demon form (we've got used to that by now) and managed to attract five rabbits. While Dross is talking to them, Eric and Starflower let fly with crossbows. Eric gets one but Starflower's crossbow string snaps. Meanwhile the other rabbits flee (on Dross' urging) and escape. So it was stewed rabbit for dinner. Eric presents Whisper with another rabbit's foot. Meanwhile I retrieve the rabbit's gut in order to attempt to fashion a replacement string for Starflower (it's a long shot but as long as it holds until we get to our destination I'd be satisfied). I estimate it'll take two days to dry.

We set watches for the night - the same as before. MacArthur does a bit of scouting and reports a group camped a long way behind us. Nothing happens during the night.

03/04/90

Purification was successful for some that morning (including me) as long as they only purified for two hours, as on the third hour a wagon train rumbled past the campsite. The guy riding point

waved at us. Whisper smiled and waved back. Meanwhile Vila rode out to intercept him. They come back to chat.

He finds out that they're going to Brasta and no, they hadn't seen any gnolls on the way. In fact they haven't seen anyone apart from us. Whisper starts talking about the Prancing Horse Pub in Brasta. From the expression on the guy's face it's obvious that he doesn't know what she's talking about. Whisper soon realises that he knows she's talking a load of rubbish as he said that he knows Brasta well and there's no such place.

Anyway the wagon train rumbles past. We have breakfast and break camp. I attempt to fit the rabbit gut to Starflower's crossbow but the gut isn't dried properly so it still stretches a bit. A few hours later we catch up to the wagon train and tag along behind. A conversation is struck up with one of the trailing riders. What we learn is that Duke Istis runs Brasta, the rider works for Cobb & Co and wagon trains run every week. Meanwhile Starflower is riding just off the trail scouting for 'erbs (as she put it).

We camp by ourselves at a discrete (about 100 metres) away from the merchant caravan. Vila attempts to do a tea leaf reading from Starflower's cup of herbal tea. Don't know what he found out. The sky is still overcast but Whisper decides to give another astrology reading a go. She asks the same question she did before and got the result of;

The reasons are many
The excuses are few
But where you are
Is up

We suspect that the rest of the line is 'to you'. This seems even more incomprehensible than the first one. Obviously the clouds are causing the sky to be a bit fuzzy.

We set watches but nothing happens during the night.

04/04/90

I think the excitement of the thought of arriving in our destination must have put me off my morning purification. After giving up on that I try the rabbit gut in the crossbow. Well it seems like it should work now. However I decide not to ask Starflower to test it in case it has a very limited life. We'll fire it only when we need it.

We reach Tobintown by lunch time. This is definitely a military outpost as I see soldiers saluting anything that moves. The road splits further up then rejoins. Between the two halves is the Windy Nook Inn. It's a three story inn and looks like a reasonable place to stay so we decide to check it out. Starflower strides in and thumps the reception desk, giving the guy there a bit of a fright. She is berated for her lack of manners.

Anyway we find that the merchant who hired us hasn't arrived yet so we decide to book in. Kane immediately books him and Whisper in as 'Mr & Mrs K Smith' in a double room. I take a single room (costing 10SP/night). Many of the others do the same. Dross asks for a room in exchange for his troubadour skills. This offer is accepted so he's booked to play between 6 and 9. I make a mental note to see the performance.

Before we split up, Dross pointed out to everyone that discretion is very important. Starflower heads off to purchase some new crossbow strings (doesn't look like my repair is ever going to be tested - maybe just as well), while I head to the bar, buy a fruit juice, and find a quiet corner where I can write up this journal and listen to the conversations. Virtually all I could hear were military and traders general chit chat.

A little later on Dross, Eric & Vila entered the bar and asks the barkeeper for something green. The barkeeper remarked that they were in luck and hands them four pints of something dark green and looks vicious. Starflower had returned by now and asks for a sample. She tests it with her ashwood staff and concludes that it's semi-poisonous. She then tries it out on some beer and shows that it's a weak poison. Looks like ashwood staffs can be used for testing alcohol content as well.

Dross suddenly gets up and goes back to the reception desk to leave a message for the merchant, returning a short while later. Eric has been drinking the green stuff. The barkeeper asks him what he thinks of it. Eric says that he reckons it's great. Dross says "Yeah! Look what it's done to his skin". Gave the innkeeper a bit of a double take.

Starflower goes back to her room saying she wishes not to be disturbed for the next three hours. I guess she's going to meditate. Vila decides to go for a walk around the town.

After a while, it's dinner time. As we're tucking in to our food Aaron comes in. Vila has returned and Starflower has come back down by now and we decide to join the guy. Dross tells the barkeeper that Aaron is shouting us dinner.

Dross realises it's time for him to perform so he gets set up. Meanwhile Aaron tells us that he'll take us to the Kijie estate tomorrow morning. He also expressed his concerns about the relationships between party members, probably because of what had happened at Guild H.Q. Starflower explains that what he had observed was the effects of seeing certain items for the first time. We wanted to get the initial shocks over and done with. However he had nothing to worry about. Aaron then steers the conversation over to more mundane matters.

I found Dross's stories and songs rather entertaining and interesting and take notes of things to look up and to ask him about later. After the performance Aaron excuses himself and leaves - as well as paying for dinner. Dross receives the accolades of the crowd. then cruises off unseen into the night to enjoy the darkness. Meanwhile Vila goes off in search of entertainment/trouble. I was still remembering some of Dross's stories when Starflower nudges me in the ribs and suggests that it was time to go to bed. She then explained that she meant it was time for me to go to my bed. Honestly - she's sounding more and more like my mother did. Anyway I remember her saying she's already got a boyfriend, a fire mage called Brightflare. Sabrina looked like she found the situation highly amusing. I thought of protesting but decided I'd better behave myself and do what I was told. Anyway she had a point. Tomorrow could be another interesting day.

. 3 .

05/04/90

So much for purification. I woke up the next morning feeling woozy. Surely there wasn't

anything in the fruit juices I had last night. I decide to stumble down to breakfast. Better not let on to the others - especially Starflower.

There were seven at breakfast. Vila is missing. Dross wonders if he's been dragged off by a succubus (a fate worse than death I think). Starflower reckons he'll probably drag himself in later with a hangover. Several people get bacon and eggs. My stomach does flip-flops at the sight of the greasy food and I decide to get cereal. Starflower asks whether I'm feeling okay. I tell her I'm feeling fine and anyway cereal is much better for the body as it's healthy. I somehow get the impression that she senses something. A few minutes later Aaron joins us.

After breakfast Eric heads off to the bar to wait for Vila (and to get some more of that green stuff) but finds that the bar doesn't open until lunchtime. So he goes hunting for Vila - and an open bar. Whisper points out that Vila will be able to locate us if he needs to. Dross decides we will wait until 9am then we're going. We wait for a while then Starflower casts telepathy and goes for a walk. Dross and MacArthur decide to go too. Aaron is looking a bit annoyed about having to wait this long as we're expected at the Kijie mansion for lunch and if we don't get a move on we're going to be late.

The rest of us wait in case Vila turns up. Whisper decides to write Vila a note. So I pass over a sheet of paper and my pen. Her and Kane bend over the piece of paper conferring. She scribbles something, thinks about it, then screws it up and throws it on the floor. I hand over another piece. She scribbles something, crosses it out, writes something else, crosses that out, writes something else, pauses, writes some more, then screws up that bit.

She asks me for the date. I give it to her and she remarks that it's only seven days to her birthday. I make a mental note to see if I can find some sort of present. Maybe Starflower might have some ideas. I write her a note.

A short while later there are several pieces of screwed up paper but Whisper finally has her note. She takes it to the reception area while I collect the screwed up pieces and dispose of them.

Half an hour later Dross bursts into the room. He tells us there's been a bit of a commotion. Kane goes to check it out. I decide to follow (woozy head notwithstanding). Meanwhile Sabrina, Dross and Whisper decide to get the horses ready for a quick getaway - just in case.

We find Starflower who tells us that the city watch are after Vila. Oh great - just what has he been up to. Eric has been wounded rather badly but he's still able to function. Also Starflower shows us a purse that was thrown at her from a window. Kane takes it, examines the contents and hands it back. Starflower asks us not to tell Vila that we've got it.

As we go back to the inn I slip my note to Starflower. Once we return we find that everything is ready to go. We quickly depart. Aaron is looking a bit mystified over our sudden abrupt haste. Meanwhile I find a note under my saddle. It's from Starflower. She suggests something edible - like chocolates. Could be a little difficult to get but I'll think about it.

On the way Dross is tending to Eric in the wagon while Vila is driving it. It seems like he's driving it rather fast over every bump. Bet that's not doing Eric's shoulder any good.

A little while later Dross tells Aaron what happened and an argument starts whether or not we

should go back and report the assault on Vila to the appropriate authorities. Vila insists that he doesn't wish to press charges.

Aaron suggests that James Travisher may be able to help heal Eric. I ask if that was the guy who attempted to lift the curse. Aaron replies that it was. I make a note to speak to this guy as he should have some useful information about the nature of the curse.

After a couple of hours we reach the Kijie household. It's 12:30 and we're definitely late for lunch. A servant takes the horses and wagon and a distinguished gentleman greets us. He introduces himself as Colonel Joseph Kijie. He offers bathroom facilities and a change of clothes for those who wants them. I take up the offer. A good hot bath and clean clothes later and I'm feeling refreshed and fit. My head feels a lot better too.

Everyone has dressed for lunch. The ladies look gorgeous. We are introduced to everyone. As well as Joseph and Aaron there's his wife Mary (another piece of the first augury falls into place), James Travisher, and Joseph's younger son Shaun. He's the unfortunate groom.

Lunch is delicious. The conversation is mostly of mundane items like how was your trip etc. After lunch we are asked to assemble in the study in an hours time. I decide to go back to my room (we were all allocated guest rooms) to meditate and purify.

We assemble in the study. Joseph was describing the background to their problem. Hope I didn't miss anything important. We discover that the bride's name is Amiele Mission. Also Dwan's commanding officer at the military camp was Captain Machenbury. The curse is identified as a transformation type - a greater curse. Dwan had not been dabbling in magic, to the best of their knowledge, before hand. Twelve years ago Dwan had been in a combat situation and asked to get reinforcements. He refused. As it turned out the reinforcements weren't necessary but for disobeying orders Dwan was court martialled. He would have been put to the sword but someone spoke up for him (Wonder who that was - may also be significant) and the sentence was changed to two years hard labour. Dwan was also disowned from the family at this time. Once he was released he went incommunicado. There was an unverified rumour that he was in Seagate five years ago. I wonder if he contacted the Guild? We may need to go back and consult the records.

Joseph describes the scene at the wedding. It was held in a large marquee tent in the mansion grounds. The celebrant, Brother Ensel, was up to the part 'Does anyone have any objections to this union' when this chap in black robes turned up and says 'I wasn't invited but take my gift if you want it' There's a bright flash of light, lots of smoke and he's gone. Joseph is sure that it was Dwan. I wonder about the words especially the bit 'if you want it'. Could that be a clue to lifting the curse?

I ask for the exact wording but they're not sure. Whisper goes to talk to Mary while Dross attempts to hypnotise Shaun. What he gets is "Here take ... my gift" followed by echoing, maniacal laughter. Starflower follows his thoughts and sees an image of Dwan looking very sinister with black robes, red lips, white eyes and sharp, white, teeth. The sun is shining behind him, framing him. She also gets the impression that Shaun loathes and detests his brother.

Eric and Dross cast divinations on the wording of the curse. They both get the following:

Lt Kijie will become a frog from sundown to sunrise

and Amiele Mission will become a frog from sunup til
sundown until swords are crossed at Toad Hall.

They also detect that the curse was cast by a member of one of the Celestial colleges who has a rating of 28 on the Guild MA scale. The curse was cast as 12 on the rank scale.

Sabrina does a Detect Aura on James and discovers that he is a Namer with a MA rating is 18. No wonder he couldn't lift the thing. Starflower explains it to him.

We debate on what college in the Celestial section could have cast such a spell. We settle on Shadow so the suggestion is made to ask Whisper for her opinion.

Also we wonder if Dwan had an accomplice, maybe someone invisible who cast the actual curse. Failing that had the curse been precast on an item, waiting for a trigger word.

Meanwhile I go for a walk in the garden as I find I'm having difficulty understanding some of the concepts that the others are tossing about. I concentrate on ponds, streams, pools etc keeping an eye open for anything that may resemble swords. This is working on the theory that Toad Hall is a name for a place where toads would normally habitat. However no luck. I think this is extremely frustrating. Lots of information and clues but none of them seem to fit together. This was not going to be as easy as I had thought.

. 4 .

Later on the sound of a small bell ringing announces dinner. Conversation is kept at the sociable level. Mary is rather curious about the elves in our party while Eric is getting dirty looks from James. It sounds like they're talking about orcish raids. Surely a rather touchy subject for Eric to raise.

After we talk to Amiele in the study. No she hadn't received any new jewellery. No she hadn't heard of Dwan before this either. Starflower asks her what happened at the wedding. Amiele replies that she was standing there while Brother Ensel was conducting the service. To her surprise Ensel faltered in his lines. A voice spoke up behind her. She attempted to turn around and found that she was unable to. Ensel's jaw dropped in shock.

We ask her if she can remember what was said. She replies "Why haven't I been invited. I'm here now so have this ... no?" She's obviously not sure however when Starflower offers to hypnotise her, like what was done with Shaun she flatly refuses. She probably had enough magic to last her a lifetime. Can't say I blame her either. She must have changed right at the beginning. Poor girl. The psychic shock must have been terrible.

Sabrina examines Amiele's jewellery. Very nice stuff but there doesn't appear to be any auras on any of it. We wonder if Dwan had precast the spell before appearing at the wedding. Maybe someone outside the marquee tent saw anyone. It is decided to question the servants.

Meanwhile I ask Joseph about the court martial records. I find out that they are very detailed and are located in the military archives in Brasta. This means that they should show who it was that spoke up for Dwan. So after a nightcap of hot chocolate, I retire to my room for meditation and sleep. Meanwhile Whisper consults the stars.

06/04/90

I purify and go down to breakfast. When I get down there I notice that Starflower is looking rather haggard. When asked, she says that she didn't sleep well as she had a rather bad nightmare. She then mumbles something about the last time she had a nightmare this bad it was an omen.

Meanwhile Whisper tells us that her stargazing was a load of rubbish. She had asked the usual question 'Where can we find Dwan?' and got the reply 'How do you make a sausage roll? Push it!'. She reckons that somehow Toad Hall got transmuted to Toad in the Hole, which become Sausage Roll.

Dross hypnotises Starflower in order to retrieve the nightmare. She remembers being in a hall way. It's dark and her witchsight is not working. The walls are slimy and what tapestries are on the wall are rotten. There's a smell of putrefication in the air. The door at the far end of the hall way is open. Gnarled trees can be seen beyond the door. The whole atmosphere is full of fear. Then a disembodied face appears and hollow laughter fills the room.

As Starflower describes the nightmare her voice fills with mounting hysteria. Then she screams and rushes towards the door. Eric attempts to tackle her but Starflower manages to get away. I run after her in an attempt to head her off but she managed to evade me and get out the door. I attempt to follow but managed to get jammed in the door with Kane. Eric is close behind and frees the obstruction by shoulder charging us. I get knocked to the ground while Kane, Eric and Sabrina give chase. I ache, curse something unprintable, then follow at a more sedate pace feeling rather worried about Starflower. A sudden thought strikes me. Could that disembodied head be Dwan. Maybe Starflower had dreamt of Toad Hall.

Shortly I catch up with the others. They've got Starflower who is now unconscious. I cast a healing spell over her. Eric asks for some too so after a few attempts I managed to do it. Guess I'll have to practise that spell. Strange though, I feel pretty good too.

Sabrina does a Detect Aura on Starflower and discovers she is the victim of a backfire. Further research by Eric shows it to be a backfired astrology reading. Everyone looks accusingly at Whisper who denies all knowledge.

That afternoon I attempt to talk to the grass, where the marquee was, in order to determine if Dwan walked in. However I have little success as grass isn't as intelligent as I thought. I sit on a rock (as not to disturb the grass) and mutter more curses until the spell wears off.

I decide to see Dross about permission to go and visit Brasta the next day to consult the military archives. He agrees so I see Joseph who provides me with some names of people to see and a letter of introduction.

Later on I find Vila and Sabrina. Vila requests some healing but I have no success even though I was sure it worked properly. Looks like his only cure is going to be rest.

Spend the rest of the day in the study reading and looking for clues to Toad Hall with a break for afternoon tea and doughnuts. Starflower arrives and asks me to accompany her to talk to Brother Ensel.

However we decide there wouldn't be enough time between now and supper so it will be left to tomorrow. Starflower burrows herself in a book while I continue to search for clues and anything that matches Starflower's description. However nothing shows up.

Eric's not at dinner. Dross said he's gone back to Seagate. Guess we won't be seeing him for a few days.

Night passes with relative dignity.

07/04/90

Refreshed I wake up early and purify. Breakfast passes without incident - no bad dreams - no astrology results either as Whisper reckons it was too cloudy.

Anyway, as a party, we head off to Brasta. Brother Ensel's church is on the way so Starflower and I stop off there. I leave a note and 10SP with Sabrina and ask her to run an errand for me. I also hand over the letter of introductions to the military archives to Dross.

After the others are gone we knock on the door, even though it's open. We see no one in the main area but we find Brother Ensel in the vestry. Starflower asks him about what happened. Ensel says that Amiele and Shaun were facing him, he was reading from scripture and noticed something out of the corner of his eye. He looked up and recognized Shaun's older brother who hadn't been around for a while. Ensel described Dwan as a tall and commanding figure. Dwan said that he was uninvited but they could have his gift anyway. Then there was a puff of smoke and when it had cleared Dwan had gone. Ensel reckons it was definitely black magic. Ensel reckons he had got to the part 'you may now kiss the bride' when the incident occurred. Strange that - this implies that the couple are married when everyone else had said that the ceremony hadn't got that far. However when we consult the parish registry we find that the wedding is not recorded.

I was just about to ask about Toad Hall but Starflower beat me to it. Darn it - it's hard to get a word in edgewise around her. Anyway Ensel had never heard of a place called Toad Hall or of any abandoned mansions. Starflower asks if we can use the library.

We look for local history but find that most of the books are religious material. Ensel says that if we want history we need to go into Brasta. Apparently Duke Istis has a very large library. There are also some historians in Brasta.

Starflower immediately decides to leave and head towards Brasta.

When we get there we head towards the town centre and find the hall and the others.

Before we leave Brasta we attempt to contact the Mission family. The area we are led into seems to be rather run down and the house looks rather shabby. This can't be the right place. There is no answer to Dross' knock so we head back towards the Kijie mansion.

On the way back Sabrina hands me a package and 8SP change. Mission accomplished.

After supper I decide to retire early to meditate and figure out how best to write today up. I hear the sound of faint, pleasant, lute playing which relaxes me. Another night passes with reasonable

dignity.

08/04/90

I notice that Eric's back. That was awfully quick. He must have been going very fast non-stop.

Dross calls a morning meeting to get everyone up to date. Kane says that he spoke with the military archivist. The archivist reckoned it was rather unusual for anyone to get off with a relatively light sentence for disobeying orders. Usually they're put to the sword on the spot. The court martial is usually posthumously. The guy who spoke up for Dwan was Simon Kuve. He left the army as a sergeant and now lives in Seagate. Simon is probably why Dwan was seen in Seagate. His career was rather checkered as well. He was suspected of blackmail but nothing could be proven but he was also the ringleader and instigator of several minor misdemeanours. Dwan was also involved in a few of them. Both of them served as privates in the same squad.

We also check up on the Mission's address. We had gone to the wrong place.

Two astrology readings are also revealed. They went as follows:

Why Dwan's sentence was so light?

But Calvin is an old god and demands sacrifices from his subjects. As the strands of fate twisted beneath his unyielding gaze.

Where do we find Dwan?

Let us then take our compass

We are something but not everything

The nature of our existence hides from us

The knowledge of first beginnings which are born of the Nothing

And the littleness of our being conceals from us the sight of the Infinite

As far as I can see these results leave us no better off than before.

Whisper had been able to get us an appointment to visit Duke Istis's library after lunch today so we set off. However the reference to an old god prompts us to visit Ensel on the way. We find out that Calvin was a god of a pagan religion, rather active in the area until the sect was cleaned out by Michael of the Sword (Ensel is a Michaelite). The Calvin worshippers were druidical types. They sounded like my sort of people until it was pointed out that this lot engaged in ritual sacrifices. I rapidly change my mind.

Half an hour later we arrive in Brasta. It turns out we're a bit early to use the library so we decide to have lunch in a pub. However as we're having the drinks beforehand, the bartender comes up and asks us to leave. We also notice a group of people looking at us and muttering. The bartender says it has something to do with our appearance. Didn't know this place had a dress code. We decide not to argue and go to the market place where we buy pies - pork pies. Sabrina and I were looking for bubbly, hot, fruit pies but don't find any.

Later on we go back to the Duke's castle and get conducted to the library. I start looking up Calvinites. It turns out they're pre-college Earth mages, getting their spells more by luck than planning. They hid the whole thing in a series of rituals and sacrifices. There were blood

sacrifices in the Filigasso Forest. I also find out there are two types of Earth mages. There are the druidical type, still involved in sacrifices and are the more aggressive types. The other type are the Pacifists. Kane wants to know what type I am. I tell him I believe in the sanctity of all life forms, conservation of natural resources, and prefer not to kill unless I have to. I guess that makes me a pacifist. Anyway both types have virtually the same spells and rituals.

Not sure what the others are looking up. There is talk about old buildings. They find references to defunct Trading Houses in the Novadom area which were owned by the McKurnon family. Their heraldic symbol being a twisted scroll - not crossed swords as someone was hoping.

Another line of enquiry was based on the building material. Since the hall Starflower had visualised was made of stone, it seemed logical that the hall was in the mountains, not in the forest as first thought. It was found out that two tribes of dwarves lived in the mountains. No reference to any abandoned dwellings.

Looking up the Filigasso forest showed it to be a mana rich area. Lots of strange things had been reported happening in there.

Finally we leave the library. Dross, Vila, Sabrina and I head off to the Philosopher's Guide to see if they can shed any light on this confusing mess while the others go to see the Colonel who presided over the court martial, Colonel Fotheringway.

We discuss the astrology readings. The philosopher/historian tells us that astrology readings usually deal in abstracts and cannot be taken literally. For instance the reference to Calvin could be taken to mean any patriarchal figure who had ultimate authority and used his authority to make events go the way he wanted them to. Could this be a reference to Dwan's court martial and could this mean that someone in authority had manipulated the result.

Then we turn to the curse itself. Toad Hall could refer to an actual place or a place where toads live or be a symbolic reference. 'Crossing the swords' may refer to an actual battle, or the joining together of two halves. So it could mean that the curse would be lifted if Dwan was accepted back into the family.

The dream sparks quite a bit of discussion. The disembodied head seems to imply that the person concerned is dead, or undead.

Some of the astrology readings seem to indicate a south easterly direction. In that direction there lies a plain virtually entirely surrounded by mountains. About eighteen months ago there was a series of earthquakes causing the mountains to sink and the sea to sweep over the plain. Six weeks later they rose again. During that period a lot of people had suffered from nightmares which indicated some great evil was afoot. The area is now a salt plain. Also he mentions an evil character, whose name he dares not mention, save that it starts with an S, had something to do with it and he hangs out in that area. Not many people go that way.

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Meanwhile, outside Colonel Fotheringway's house, Starflower attempts to cast an telepathy spell to assist in the interview. Maybe she was a bit nervous or something because this large cloud of butterflies suddenly appeared all around her, forming a column 3 metres wide and 6 metres high, circling her like moths to a candle. Starflower could only just be seen in this dense mass. Kane

estimated about ten thousand butterflies. Starflower attempts to cast another spell but as soon as she opens her mouth a couple of butterflies nearly flew in.

In order to protect Starflower from the curious gaze of the populace, Whisper casts a blending spell on her. This renders Starflower invisible but still leaves the column of butterflies. Then her and Kane move away affecting a look of 'I have no idea what is going on'. The unnatural, brightly coloured, swarm, attracts the attention anyone passing by.

One person asks Whisper if she's got any idea what is going on. Whisper exclaims. "It's a witch. She went that way". At that the mood of the rapidly forming crowd changes from fascination to fear. Many people retreat, making signs against the evil eye. However some others decide to go and get weapons and other equipment to destroy the foul being.

A little later on they come back with weapons. Starflower is getting very worried by now. One person slashes his sword into the cloud, bringing down a few butterflies and narrowly missing Starflower. Clearly she is in big trouble. But if she moves, she'll turn visible again. What was she going to do? Where's a fire mage when you need one?

The decision is taken out of her hands when someone else throws a flask of oil into the column, closely followed by a lighted torch. As the flames lick around her feet Starflower comes to the conclusion that it's getting too hot for comfort and runs.

This act renders her visible and there are cries of "There she is" and "Kill the witch". One person draws his sword and runs after her. Kane does the same yelling "Get her", while attempting to obstruct as many people as possible, looking like he's wanting to hog all the action.

Meanwhile a bowman takes aim and fires, hitting Starflower twice, who is now running as fast as possible, pursued by a mob hell-bent on blood. Kane is leading the charge - and jostling as many people as possible.

Starflower, still surrounded by a mass of butterflies impairing her vision, and trailing a tail of them, manages to duck around a corner and down an alley, but not before arrow number three finds it's mark. This bowman is good.

The bowman, with Whisper close by, loads another arrow and heads off down another street in an attempt to cut the witch off. Whisper draws her quarterstaff - just in case - and follows.

An exhausted Starflower sees an open gate in a high fence, beyond which is a large garden. She ducks through the gate and finally collapses in a flower bed. Now she's not moving she's invisible again. However the butterflies continue to do complex aerobatics around her and through the flowers.

Meanwhile Kane and his companion have also rounded the corner - well ahead of the main mob (of about half a dozen). He sees the butterfly cloud and heads towards it. Kane quickly looks around to see if anyone is watching. When he sees they are alone he attempts to hit the other guy on the head - and misses. Just as well no one saw that. Fortunately the other guy didn't even notice - more intent on slaying the evil enchantress threatening the town. As he goes through the gate Kane tries again with considerably more success. The guy collapses in a heap on the ground. Kane goes back in the street as the rest of the mob arrive and attempt to decoy them.

Another person rushes in the gate, with sword drawn, yelling "It's over here". Then he stops, stock still, as he sees his fallen comrade. Another person, with a bow, comes in and stops at the gate. Meanwhile Kane is leading the others off on a wild goose chase. He finally notices a couple of stragglers have dropped off and drops back himself. The mob turn and follow. As Kane reaches the gate he hears the shout "She got John!" and the other two come out of the gate. Kane decides to take charge of the situation and orders two men to stay with him and keep guard in case the witch attempts to make a break for it while the others go and get some bows. Kane is going to sneak in and flush her out.

When Starflower hears someone coming she breaks cover and runs. Kane orders one guy to check the fallen chap and the other one to follow. Starflower stops in a herb garden and, without moving, as so to remain invisible, frantically looks around for something that will repel butterflies. Nothing! Meanwhile some of the butterflies have flown in a nearby, open, window and someone inside is flicking a towel at them. Starflower gets hit with the towel but takes it bravely. The window slams shut. Sounds of unladylike language can be heard inside.

Leaving the other two on watch Kane sneaks through a nearby door and into the kitchen, surprising a rather large lady, in the act of knocking down butterflies with a towel. She yells when she sees him and grabs a frying pan. Kane dives out the back door as footsteps approach.

Meanwhile Whisper follows the bowman down a side street. He sees nothing so he relaxes his bow and wanders off. Whisper decides to go and find the rest of us.

Kane runs around the house yelling "She's after me" and nearly intercepts an arrow in mid flight. There are two guys with bows, waiting. Kane runs past them then stops. The bowman wait, bows ready.

Starflower has managed to use Kane's distraction in order to scale the wall and drop into the neighbour's garden. She sees a small building and goes inside, her entourage of butterflies flying in as well. Once inside she attempts to kill off as many as possible.

Kane and the others lie in wait. At this point a stern looking gentleman comes out of the house and demands to know what they are doing, trespassing on his property, and ruining the garden. Kane decides it's time they left so, after giving the gentleman a hasty explanation, they quickly depart. Kane offers to report the incident to the local militia and the mob disperse.

Whisper finally locates us at the town square and informs us what has happened. Kane is able to add further details a short while later. The reactions range from astonishment to outright amusement.

The plan is for Eric & Whisper to sneak in and find Starflower. Whisper is to cast Shadow-wings on her and Starflower is to fly back to the Kijie manor and stay put until we get back. Dross and I are successful in casting Walking Unseen on Eric & Whisper accordingly.

Eric & Whisper follow Starflower's tracks and find the point where she went over the wall. Once over they spot the toolshed - haloed by butterflies. They creep up, creak open the door, and see Starflower - still surrounded in butterflies. She is very glad to see them.

Whisper casts her Shadow Wings spell and Starflower is up, up, and away - and smacks into a

tree. Whisper offers to give her a healing potion but Starflower refuses as she's got one of her own. She grabs it and sculls it all down.

She attempts another takeoff. This time it's more successful, only managing to clip the house guttering with her foot, however she manages to wobble to a reasonable altitude. The last sight we see of her is Starflower heading at full speed in the direction of the Kijie mansion with a comet trail of butterflies.

Meanwhile we slip away, hopefully unnoticed. Dross reckons, with all the commotion today, we'd better conclude our business quickly as it may be unsafe to return. So Sabrina, Kane and I go to see Colonel Fotheringway while the others wait in the square.

Upon arrival we are led into a non-descript room and are greeted by the Colonel. We give him Colonel Kijie's letter and as he reads it I attempt to study his reaction. So far so good. He's not turning hostile anyway. Kane introduces himself as Lord Kane, which momentarily surprises the Colonel, and us as Lady Sabrina and the humble scribe Basalic.

Kane decides he is going to be completely frank and asks him why Dwan received such a light sentence given the nature of the crime. The Colonel replies that there was sufficient doubt about the circumstances and the original order should not have been given. Now this sounds very suspicious. Kane asks him if we're talking about the same trial. Meanwhile Sabrina does not detect any magical coercion on the Colonel. Fotheringway does assure us we are talking about the same trial but he hadn't known Dwan very well, otherwise he wouldn't have been able to serve on the judgement board. However he had heard of Simon Kuve, who's reputation had preceded him. Fotheringway also reckons that there was no cause for Dwan to be vindictive towards the rest of the family as Colonel Kijie had done more for Dwan than he should. The court martial verdict was not well received - especially by Dwan's CO who was rather upset. There was talk of an appeal but the rumours were quashed and the whole thing settled down after a couple of months. Fotheringway states that if Dwan has upset Colonel Kijie then he has incurred his wrath as well. I ask him for a description of Simon Kuve but he can't remember.

Meanwhile Starflower lands on the Kijie lawn, sans butterflies. They had all dispersed on the way.

Back in Brasta we reappraise the situation. We all reckon that there's something odd going on so Dross suggests that we hypnotise the Colonel after nightfall. We all agree as it seems to be the only way to get to the truth of the matter. Dross does a precognition and has a good feeling about this.

Nightfall finds us outside the Colonel's house. Walking Unseens are cast on Dross, Kane and Sabrina. They go in while we all wait outside. Eric suggests that I talk to the horses and ask them to keep quiet, just in case. After a few attempts the spell works and I end up with a bunch of complaining horses. I lead them away and manage to quiet them down by promising them all a double ration of oats at the Kijie stables if only they'll stay quiet until the others get back. Fortunately they love the Kijie oats.

The others sneak through the house and find the Colonel in bed with a lady, presumably his wife. Kane knocks the lady unconscious while Dross hypnotises the Colonel. Sabrina tells him to answer all questions truthfully and quietly. He is asked to recite the letter from Colonel Kijie. It

turns out to be a standard letter of introduction with no threat in it at all. However he does admit to something missing from the military records. He had allowed Colonel Kijie to influence him to sway the court martial board to reduce Dwan's sentence. When asked for a description and whereabouts of Simon Kijie he said he doesn't know and can't remember. The only thing Dwan was studying in prison was rocks and how to reduce them to rubble. There is nothing else missing from the records but there is a separate transcript of what had occurred between the judges as they deliberated the case. Captain Machenbury had not been promoted since as he wasn't outstanding enough. No overt forces were involved. No he doesn't know anything about the wedding. Dross finally causes him to think he has had an unusual dream and they depart out the way they came.

We are preparing to leave when someone notices that Vila is missing. Dross decides that we will wait for 15 minutes then leave, if he's not back. The time ticks by, still no Vila. So we head off. Just as we are departing we see lights appear in the Colonel's house. Whisper offers to stay back with Vila's horse for an extra five minutes while the rest of us depart. She waits the allotted time but there's still no sign of Vila so she takes both horses and catches us up.

It's getting very late by now so we decide to camp out on the road and time our arrival at the Kijie mansion for just before breakfast. Sometime during the night Vila sneaks back in.

09/04/90

We finally return, just before breakfast, as planned. Starflower is very pleased to see us. She had spent all night worrying where we were and whether or not we had met up with some ghastly fate.

After breakfast I ensure that the horses get their double ration of oats. Sabrina comes out to tend to her horse while I check on the others.

The rest of the morning passes without incident. Starflower asks Colonel Kijie, at lunch, if the family has a crest but he replies that they don't as they're not a noble family.

After lunch I go for a walk in the grounds in order to think about what we should do next. It looks more like we should go back to Seagate and see what clues we can find there that point to Dwan and Simon. Or maybe someone should hypnotise Colonel Kijie as it seems like he's hiding something. Certainly seems like the philosopher was right about the Calvin reference, which actually meant Colonel Kijie.

I am interrupted in my ruminations by the arrival of some visitors. It's Colonel Fotheringway. What's he doing here? I go find Dross and tell him. We go down to see what is going on. Colonel Kijie is pleased to see us but Colonel Fotheringway looks disturbed and requests that we leave as he wants to speak to Kijie in private. They go in the study and shut the door. Dross instructs MacArthur to eavesdrop, in dog form, while we go and find the others. Together we are able to round up Kane, Whisper and Eric. No sign of anyone else. I wonder if Colonel Fotheringway has come to tell Colonel Kijie about what has happened last night.

We later find out that Fotheringway tells Kijie that his house was broken in last night and his wife was rendered unconscious. Thieves had stolen several items including the Fotheringway sword. This was later found in a tree on the road between Brasta and the Kijie mansion. Now

what? Could Vila be responsible? Or were we being framed. Either way we are in big trouble.

.. 7 ..

I was right. We are the ones accused of theft, owing to tracks leading from the Fotheringway place, back to the Kijie mansion. Of course there'd be tracks to here. We just came back from there. Circumstantial evidence of course, but the finding of the Fotheringway sword on the side of the road would be rather convincing. I get the feeling that these notes may be required for the inevitable Court of Inquiry.

The two colonels came out of the study, and Colonel Kijie wants to know if the accusations are true. Dross confessed to everything that had happened the night before, i.e. hitting his wife and hypnotising him. He also admits to a member of our party, i.e. Vila, disappearing mysteriously at the time, and who is known to be a thief. He agrees to hand Vila over for questioning once we have found him.

Now, this means that Vila, if guilty, would be bound by the rules of the land, according to the Guild ruling. What that is, I'm not sure, but I suspect it ranges from the removal of the thief's hand to death. The others reckon that the local justice could be a bit unfair on Vila. It is finally agreed, rather reluctantly in the case of some, that they hold off questioning us until later tonight, probably when James Travisher turns up.

Our main priority now is to find Vila and establish his guilt, or innocence. We set off in several directions. I start in the gardens, talking to the trees, or any small rodents, to determine whether or not Vila had been seen.

Half an hour later there is a faint cry of alert from Dross. As I rush to the scene there is a series of screams and battlecries from within the house.

When I finally get there, I discover that the front room has been trashed, by forces unknown, with screaming servants all over the place. I soon discover that an imp and a half devil are locked in mortal combat in the main hallway. The half devil is definitely MacArthur but where the hell did the imp come from? Then I remember the thing that Vila had right at the start. Certainly looks like Dross had located Vila. Also this is definitely not going to go down well with the Kijie family.

It doesn't take long to find a very annoyed Dross as well as the rest of the party (except for Sabrina, Starflower, and of course, Vila). Just then the imp breaks off the engagement and flies away. At that stage we see another winged figure take to the skies - Vila. How did he learn to do that? Whisper casts a shadow wings on Eric and he takes off in hot pursuit, leaving us to sort out the mess and to attempt to explain all of this to the Kijie household. After all it's not every day that your house gets done over by a couple of nether world denizens.

About this stage Sabrina and Starflower are seen coming up the main path, looking extremely pleased and carrying a load of venison. We bring them quickly up to date. They both get very annoyed, especially Starflower, who calls Vila all sorts of names, including some I felt sure she wouldn't have known. I decide to go and see if the rest of the household need any help in cleaning up the mess.

So much for that offer. I am informed, rather pointedly, that they're quite capable of sorting it out and hadn't we done enough. Apparently someone died of fright because of this incident and another one is suffering. Kane is taking care of that lady. Starflower & Sabrina deliver the venison to the kitchens but the staff there don't want to know. They end up leaving it on a table. The rest of us attempt to stay well out of the way. The staff, and family, are regarding us rather suspiciously. Can't say I blame them either. How are we going to get out of this mess?

Eric arrives back and reports he lost track of Vila however he suspects that he went back to the Guild. We agree that we are forced to inform Colonel Kijie that Vila has probably gone back to the Guild and that he would need to take the matter up with the Guild. I think to myself that the Colonel is definitely not going to like that at all.

When we inform Colonel Kijie he is very keen that we go back to the Guild (i.e. you're fired) but we manage to convince him to allow us to continue. Bet we don't get paid as much now.

Dinner proceeds in stony silence. At least the venison didn't go to waste - thank goodness. Sabrina disappears somewhere.

The suggestion is made to set off for the Ponderosa (an old ruin in the Filigasso Forest) the next morning, and a couple of astrology readings are cast that night.

10/04/90

The two readings are:

Where, from here, is the Hall that Starflower dreamed of?

SIREN GAILS

Where, from here, is the 'Toad Hall' of the curse?

SIREN GAILS

Even though neither answer makes immediate sense, the very fact they are the same leads us to conclude that Starflower dreamt of Toad Hall. We were right!

Starflower suspects that the words may be a place name but the letters may have been mixed up. The one thing that we really need is a good map. Fortunately Colonel Kijie has got one and we deduce it's actually a place called Insel Garsi. It's a swampy area to the south east, surrounded by a river.

. 8 .

Kane and Whisper immediately leave for Tobintown in an attempt to find Vila as Eric suspects he may have gone there instead. Meanwhile Starflower makes a copy of the map. Once done we head off to Brasta in order to find Sabrina. In case she returns we leave a message for her.

The trip to Brasta is uneventful. Starflower reckons that it may be a bit dangerous for her to go in, after what happened last time, so she decides to wait at the nearby ferry crossing. The rest of us (Dross, Eric & myself) go and see the philosophers guild and ask if Sabrina had been there. We are told that she was there the previous night so we leave another message and look around

the town in case she's still about. However we don't find her by late afternoon so we go back and rejoin Starflower.

We camp near the river that night. Starflower takes the first watch, Dross & I do second & Eric on third. Dross also casts a lesser enchantment on Starflower.

11/04/90

We certainly picked a beautiful spot to camp. In fact I was too wrapped up in admiring the view in order to concentrate enough to purify. We decide to stay put for most of the day to wait for the others (this was the prearranged meeting spot). The river looks rather cool and inviting so I decide I'm going for a bathe. Starflower decides she's going to go too. Dross warns us to be careful. I'm already in the water by the time Starflower appears - and she promptly removes her outer garments and steps in. I'm not a very good swimmer so Starflower gives me a few lessons and after a while we're playfully splashing each other. It's good to forget the cares of this adventure, at least for a short time.

After that Starflower suggests I need some sword practise. Fair enough I think so we make up two practice wooden swords and go for it. After a while I'm feeling sore and bruised. I wish she'd stop hitting me. However I soon get into the swing of it. Eric looks rather amused, as he calls out lots of advice.

Just after lunch Whisper & Sabrina turn up on Sabrina's warhorse (Chrietienne) bearing a message. They had found Vila and the others should be arriving at six. However they arrive at three. Vila is looking rather the worse for wear. Looks like someone has beaten him up. Whisper says that it was done by a bunch of ladies. Doesn't surprise me - after all the female of any species is more dangerous. Dross takes him away for healing - and, I suspect, for interrogation.

Sabrina tells us that she had asked the philosophers to do an astrology reading asking "Where can we find assistance in finding where to go" and receiving the answer "Flotsam and jetsam drift into the shore where scurvy does live among friends". Seagate we suspect.

Now that we're all together again we take a vote and decide to check out the swamp. We set off and continue until we reach a place called Westgate where we make camp. Night passes without any problems.

12/04/90

Whisper has done a reading asking "Is Dwan at Toad Hall?" getting the answer "The intestines are twisted but go with the flow". Something to do with the river?

Meanwhile I had managed to put the box of chocolates by Whisper's pillow while she was asleep along with a note saying 'Happy Birthday'. I left the note unsigned. Starflower reckoned Whisper's squeals of delight, upon discovering box, and contents, put her off her purification. Also Sabrina presents Whisper with a nice dress.

A mountain range, called the Westbounders, lies between us and the swamp. About midday we're trekking on a path, sheer cliff on one side, long drop on the other, until one of the wagon wheels goes off the side. Looks like the ledge is a bit narrow here. Eric manages to get the wagon back on the road. While he's doing that Whisper comes up and thanks me for the chocolates and gives

me one. She had first thought Kane had given them to her until she checked with Sabrina.

We get halfway through the mountains when night falls. Dross changes the watch order to be: Kane & Whisper, Sabrina & Starflower, Vila (when capable but not tonight, as he's still too badly injured) & Eric, and finally, Dross, MacArthur and myself. If anything happens I'm to wake up Eric & Kane first, then the others.

13/04/90

Just after midnight we're woken up by screaming. Sabrina had gone to wake up Eric and found him dead in the wagon. While the others scout about (they can see in the dark) I verify this and discover his throat had been cut. Other marks indicate that his killer had also tried to scalp him but failed. Starflower is nearly breathing down my neck at this point as we ascertain the cause of the wound as a rather sharp dagger. Also the blood had already congealed, indicating that this had happened some hours previously. Starflower detects no traces of poison.

Meanwhile Kane found a set of tracks heading into the wagon, then back again. Looks like one person with small feet. Could it have been a dwarf? After all we're in that sort of habitat. But why just Eric, when it could have been just as easy to do the rest of us when we slept.

Starflower argues that we're going to have to go back to Seagate, as quickly as possible, to resurrect Eric as she cannot preserve the body. Dross decides that we stay put for the rest of the night and set off in the morning.

While I keep watch, just outside the wagon, Dross does a 'Speak with Dead' and determines that Eric doesn't have any item that will resurrect him and that he doesn't know who, or what, did it. He would rather not pay for a resurrection at Brasta, preferring to be resurrected at the Guild - after all why else do we pay their fees. Also if we have to abandon the wagon, try to carry as much as possible. Whisper wants to know if it hurts and Eric says that it doesn't.

Whisper and Kane take off with the body, using Shadow Wings and Strength of Stone (to carry it), in order to get to Seagate. Meanwhile the rest of us will wait four days in Westgate and if they don't show up, we'll head for Brasta and on to Seagate. After they leave Dross casts 'Hands of Earth' for protection until dawn. I cast 'Blending' on myself before settling down by the wagon.

That morning dawns with the most brilliant sunrise I had ever seen. There's lots of pinks & golds. Stuff purification. I'm too busy admiring it.

After breaking camp Dross instructs us to transfer as many valuables out of the wagon, onto horses. Meanwhile Starflower has found some more tracks outside the camp area. Once everything is ready, we set off. I'm driving the wagon as I have a farming background and have a little bit of experience. I'm also talking to the horses, keeping them calm and reassured as we carefully make our way back the way we came.

We have the same trouble at the narrow ledge. This time the wagon is in more danger of slipping off, so I decide to cut the two horses loose, reasoning that if the wagon goes, at least they'll be safe. Meanwhile MacArthur and Dross are attempting to hold the wagon in place while Sabrina gets her rope out. Once the horses are free I give Dross a hand and, together, we manage to stop the wagon from slipping further. For some strange reason the wagon suddenly got heavier and

it was all we could do to hold it until Starflower wedged some rocks in place and Sabrina had tied her rope to the wheel and looped it around a nearby rock, the same one that Eric had used. Dross puts the wagon brakes on to help.

Dross tries to make one of the horses larger so it'll be stronger but we end up with a half size, pink pony, with a white star on it's forehead. I think his spell backfired. However that's the cutest looking thing I have ever seen. I wonder if it'll breed true. I could make a fortune selling them as children's pets.

Vila suggests we attach the remaining horses to the wagon and haul it out. So we get two strong horses attached and, slowly & carefully, manage to get the wagon through the narrow ledge.

I attempt to cast my 'Speak with Animals' again but it doesn't seem to work. Starflower says something which I don't understand. I tell her to stop speaking in Elvish. She looks rather perturbed then scribbles a note which tells me I have been the victim of a backfire which has stuffed up my language comprehension. My reply is short - and to the point. Fortunately it wears off after a few hours.

We finally reach Westgate without any further incidents and book rooms at the inn. We ask about the denizens in the mountain and the innkeeper reckons it could be bandits, or goblins perhaps. Mindful of the effects of the warm fruit juice at Tobintown I ask for a chilled one. The innkeeper grumbles a lot but I get one. I drink it. It tastes very pleasant but as it hits the back of my throat everything seizes up. Once I recover from my choking fit (and Starflower thumping me on the back) I decide I'm going to my room to lie down. As I leave I hear Dross trying to pacify an outraged innkeeper.

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14/04/90

Well here we are sitting around doing sweet stuff all. Westgate is basically a very small village so there's not much happening. I start the morning catching up on my strength exercises (lifting rocks) - much to Starflower's bemusement, then do some weapon practise with Starflower. She's not hitting me so much - maybe a good sign. Also Dross is giving the local children rides on that pink pony. He reckons the enchantment will wear off in a week or two.

We do find out, from the local sheriff, that there are dwarven bandits in the pass. Their leader is a character by the name of Dirty Dan. He's got a 500SP reward on him.

After lunch Sabrina and Starflower are continuing weapons practise - with real weapons. Then Starflower gets distracted by someone riding out of the courtyard. Sabrina takes advantage of Starflower's inattentiveness to deliver a couple of good hits until Starflower manages to draw Sabrina's attention to the now disappearing rider. It's Vila. I had seen him leave as well and inform Dross, believing it to be something he should know about.

Dross is rather annoyed at the news and immediately sets off in pursuit. Meanwhile I go back and see what Sabrina and Starflower are up to. This time it's target practise with crossbows. Also the innkeeper is busy changing the sign on the inn from 'The Prancing Pony' to the 'The Pink Pony'.

Whisper and Kane turn up a little later on with the news that Eric is alive and well again and that

he was coming back with Vila. Eric wants to catch the bandits as several items are missing from the wagon, some of which are rather valuable.

A short time later we leave town and head up into the mountains, without the wagon this time as Eric is leaving it here for repair. A hard ride gets us to the place we camped at. Starflower prepares a rather delicious meal and afterwards we set up double watches. Dross, Kane, Starflower and Whisper take the first watch, the rest of us will take the second and the familiars will do the purification watch. I collect some small pebbles for sling ammunition, selecting the ones with sharp edges.

During the first watch there is the clatter of rocks below us. Dross wakes the rest of us up. I cast Blending on myself, just in case. I notice it's dark out there. The sky is heavily overcast with no moon. The only light is a dim glow from the fire's dying embers. I realise I can't see anyone else and hope that if battle does eventuate that I don't accidentally hit anyone. Also the feeling of solitude and nervous anticipation is not nice.

I hear more rocks move below, then the sounds of combat. Eric I think. I can see why Vila wanted to see in the dark. It would be a very useful thing. The sounds stop. Hopefully Eric has won. Shortly afterwards more sounds indicate another combat downslope.

Shortly afterwards a shadowy figure steps into the light. I start to attack but a voice in my ear tells me it's Eric. I recognise the voice as being Whisper, but I can't see her. Guess witchsight would be useful as well. I make a note to ask about useful invested items. I also start to feel a bit better knowing she's somewhere close. Do other aspiring heros have these qualms and fears as well?

Eric drops off a dead dwarf and some of his missing stuff. The rest of the party appear as mysteriously as they vanished. Am I relieved to see them again. Starflower announces that Sabrina has seen something downslope and has gone to investigate. Eric and MacArthur go to investigate and Starflower follows behind. Shortly more sounds indicate that Sabrina is engaged in combat and it isn't long until they come back with an unconscious and bound dwarf.

Meanwhile Dross is speaking to the dead dwarf with a series of yes/no questions. What he finds out is that their camp is a cave which lies to the SE, about 5 kms away. It's on a NW facing slope about halfway up. There are pit traps with poison spikes. The entrance isn't guarded and there is a good chance that the rest of the band is there. There is no mage among them.

Dross asks about a couple of invested items that were found i.e. a ring and a necklace. Both items are invested with Earth College magic and the ring produces diamond tipped javelins. A divination reveals that the necklace is invested with two charges of Armour of Earth at Rank 11 while the ring has two charges of Diamond Tipped Javelins at rank 7 with a 51% base chance of hitting.

15/04/90

I spend much of the rest of the night awake and on constant watch for any more intruders and also feeling rather jumpy at the slightest noise. I have no desire to be attacked by someone when I can't see. So I'm very glad to see the sun that morning.

We head off towards the dwarven camp with a compelled prisoner as a guide. Dross suggests that

I wear the ring and use it as a last resort as I'm not that good in combat - yet. I'm rather dubious of the power in that ring as the spell contained inside is not one that a pacifist Earth mage would study. The necklace would be used by anyone likely to go into combat.

We get close to the cave mouth and I cast a Detect Snares/Pits. My Walking Unseen fails to go off but Dross puts one on me, for me, instead. The dwarf continues down the trail, whistling. I notice that everyone else has disappeared again. I square my shoulders, attempting to feel like a hero and follow the dwarf towards the cave. Meanwhile Eric & Whisper fly towards the cave mouth.

Just then another dwarf comes out, fires a crossbow at the two aerialists and misses. I return fire with my sling and miss. However the dwarf suddenly has a crossbow bolt sticking in him. Meanwhile Eric has landed and engages the dwarf in combat. I move quickly to the cave mouth, fully intending to make up for last night, then enter the cave a bit more cautiously. I see some dwarven tracks but it looks like something has recently obliterated some. Looks like another party member is in ahead of me. It gets darker the deeper I go so I retreat to the cave mouth to wait for any dwarfs attempting to escape.

. 10 .

As I look around, I have no idea where the others have got to. The sounds of combat emanate from within. Hope they're having fun in there. Hope they save one for me. It would be too dangerous to go in and help if I can't see. I decide to lay a rope across the cave entrance to act as a trip wire.

A short while later it goes quiet. Then I hear Starflower calling for Vila. She sounds close but I still can't see her. I decide to continue to wait at the cave entrance in case dwarven reinforcements arrive.

Later on, as I'm preparing a torch so I can see to go in, in case a rescue is required, Kane and Starflower come out to get the horses. Looks like it's all over so I retrieve the rope. I later find out that the entire dwarven band have been killed - including Dirty Dan. Also some treasure was found however we suspect some more is hidden behind a wall but no one can find the secret door.

Dross requests MacArthur to conjure an Earth Elemental in order to bash down the wall inside. We decide it is rather prudent to go for cover. The elemental appears and looks rather enraged. Dross looks rather worried as the elemental goes for MacArthur. MacArthur attempts to fly away but gets knocked to the ground. Eric charges in but is unable to prevent the elemental pounding MacArthur into the ground. It certainly looks like MacArthur is a goner. There's even no sign of the body. The elemental continues to attack that area of the ground as Eric starts to chip away at it.

Just then the elemental looks at Sabrina. Sabrina smiles and waves at it. The elemental waves back. I suspect she's cast a spell on it. Sabrina then walks into the cave. The elemental sinks into the ground then a ripple of earth follows her in. A short time later we feel a slight earthquake then Sabrina comes out again followed by the ripple. She speaks to the elemental which disappears. She's looking rather pleased with herself.

While the others go back inside to check on the treasure, I keep watch on the horses and on the outside. Just then I notice a dwarf running out of the cave entrance. It's the one we charmed earlier. If he manages to reach other dwarves we may be in big trouble. I go in pursuit after shouting out to the others.

It doesn't take long for me to catch the runaway up. It's a bit late to get my sword so I decide to subdue. Anyway Dross may want the dwarf back alive. There may be a reward. I attempt to tackle the dwarf to bring him down. That proves to be a mistake - this guy is solid. He manages to slip free but I pounce on him again.

After a fierce struggle I finally manage to subdue him. As I get my sword out I notice a feathery crossbow bolt sticking out of him. Then I see Eric, in the distance, holding a crossbow. Thanks mate. I take the body back, and attempt to ignore all my bumps and bruises.

Kane and Whisper head on back to town to claim the reward on Dirty Dan's gang and arrange for the storage of Eric's wagon while the rest of us make camp in the cave. We also examine the invested items we found. One was completely discharged. The others contain:

- Tunnelling - 3 charges (Kane)
- Diamond Weapon - 2 charges (Eric)
- Armour of Earth - 2 charges (Whisper)
- Walking Unseen - 4 charges (Sabrina)
- Hands of Earth - 3 charges (Dross)

We also discover an Amulet of Diamonds (Eric) and a Cold Iron Broadsword (+5,+1). Dross decides to allocate the items among us. Starflower gets the other Armour of Earth.

16/04/90

Nothing at all happens during the night. Purification is not a problem as I'm feeling rather confident after yesterday. Once Kane and Whisper return we continue on south, towards the swamp. We finally get out of the mountains in the late afternoon and emerge into some rather rough terrain.

17/04/90

Another half day finds us at Stony Ford in Griffon Valley. This place only consists of the ferry terminal and two people, the terminal master and his assistant. We are told that the ferry won't be arriving till another two days. Passage is 5SP each. We ask about stabling the horses and are told that stabling is 5SP/horse/day. Then the terminal master looks at Eric rather closely and charges him 10SP because he's an orc. Eric doesn't bat an eyelid. The ladies smile sweetly and manage to get their price knocked down to 3SP. We settle down to wait.

18/04/90

Nothing very much happens today. I manage to get in a bit of weapon practise but we spend most of the day resting and swapping tales of previous adventures - some of which I remember reading about in the Guild library.

19/04/90

The boat arrives this morning. So does a wagon which is loaded on board. We get on and take up the entire forward deck area. I feel a bit of trepidation about this but decide to try and not to let it show. After all, it's a river and the bank isn't far away. At least it's not the ocean.

It's a very smooth trip down. At times it was easy to forget that we were on water. About mid afternoon we reach the northern tip of Insel Garsi.

That evening we set up an awning across the deck, separating us from the rest of the passengers. This sets their curiosity aflame. Whisper then proceeds to cast Shadow wings on the lot of us. Whisper explains that we must concentrate on flying. I'd rather swim.

We take off. I cross the fingers on both hands and remembering what happened to Starflower, go straight up. The boat master is looking a bit concerned however the 100SP that Eric left on the deck should help. Meanwhile Vila has got a direction for Dwan so we take up a close formation, like migrating birds do, and follow him. Sabrina starts showing off. I just concentrate on trying to forget that there is such a thing as gravity.

Shortly we discover a fortified, two story house. A small courtyard, with trees in it, is in the middle. Bodies of water lie around the place. We scout around for a landing site.

A short distance away we find one. Someone reckons that it looks like that this area was deliberately cleared. We make our landings, or in some cases, crashes. Eric skims over the top then settles down. Vila just nosedives in. Whisper managed to plant her face into the water and ripped her cloak while Starflower tripped over a stump and fell into the water. I managed to execute, what Whisper called a textbook landing, then went to embrace the nearest tree. Never again - well maybe one more as it wasn't as bad as I thought.

Dross casts Walking Unseen on Sabrina and Kane and we head towards the house. It's starting to get dark. Fortunately there's no moon hence less shadows. Then I find that I'm able to see a lot better than usual in these conditions. Thanks Whisper.

As we get near the house we notice that it's rather decrepit and there is a light on in one of the upstairs windows. I can feel the excitement as we approach our objective. Dross reminds us that we want Dwan alive.

Just then Starflower announces that there is a rather powerful mind out there. It's curious. Suddenly I hear a voice, inside my head, asking us who we are. The reactions on some of the others suggest they also heard it. Dross didn't so I pass on the information on a note. No sense in letting the mind know that he didn't get us all.

Suddenly Starflower raises her hand, indicating us to stop. Kane, Eric and Sabrina edge towards the door while the rest of us wait. Starflower drops to the rear. I whisper to Dross that someone keeps an eye on Starflower when she confronts her nightmare. Dross reckons that's a good idea. Meanwhile Kane warns us to watch the water - we're wading in it.

I draw my sword, just in case. Following that I warn Dross that I'm about to cast Walking Unseen on myself then do so. Don't want to be hit by accident.

Just then something shoots straight out of the water and attacks Eric, Kane and Sabrina - and

misses, smashing into the building. It looks like green tentacles, probably part of a plant. I cast Speak with Plant and attempt to reassure it that no one wants to hurt it if it'll just leave us alone. However the effect is probably ruined by the others, quite literally, wading in and attacking. A tentacle whizzes past my head. Dumb idea Basalic.

Just then Vila yells out "Giant Frogs!" I see him clinging to the wall, halfway up the building. How on earth did he get up there? While I'm looking for the frogs something hits me from behind. It takes me a little while to realise that I've just been snared by one of the tentacles and lifted off the ground. From that height I can see that the tentacles come from a large green plant located off to one side. It has a large cavernous mouth from which slime is dripping. It looks hungry. I think I've just been invited for lunch. I can also see the giant frogs coming around both sides of the building.

Starflower is trying to hit the thing with crossbow bolts while I'm trying to cut away at the tentacle with my sword. However the outer skin proves to be rather tough. Meanwhile Dross has managed to hold the tentacle in Hands of Earth.

About this stage the rest of the party are now engaged in fighting off the attacks of the giant frogs. I'm left to my own devices. I also resolve to go down fighting. Then I remember about the ring containing the diamond tipped javelins. Dross had left instructions only to use it in a life or death situation. Well this certainly looked like one to me so I attempted to trigger it. The first charge turned out to be a dud but the second one caused six javelins to leap from the ground and hurl themselves at the overgrown botanical monster. Two of them embedded itself in it's body. The thing squirmed in agony but retained it's grip on me. It looks like it was down to my trusty sword now.

This tentacle is still caught in the Hands of Earth but then I notice another reaching out for me. This gives me an idea. At the moment I'm covered in plant slime. Once the plant loosens it's grip I may be able to slip free. Also, since the shadow wings are still active, I'll fly away. Bravely I wait for the right moment as the other tentacle comes closer. However the plant decides it's going to get me with the second tentacle before releasing the first, leaving me still tightly caught. Oh bugger! So much for that idea.

As the tentacle drags me ever closer to the lipless maw, which starts to slaver in anticipation, I continue to hack at the tentacle. However the situation looks hopeless as the tentacle has the consistency of very tough leather. However I refuse to give up. It's either you or me pal.

The mouth draws closer. I can see the inside of it, consisting of soft, pulsating, pink, fleshy tissue, the surface of which is glistening with some sort of liquid. Digestive juices I suspect.

I decide to allow myself to be drawn into the mouth. It should be a lot easier to persuade it that I'm not a good thing to eat. Once it lets go I'll be able to fly away. I also vow to myself that if this works, I'll never say anything nasty about flying again.

So, with sword held out in front of me, I am drawn ever closer in. Time seems to slow down as I wait for the right moment, concentrating all my power into the sword tip. Finally, as I reach the mouth entrance I stab down with my sword and use all my strength to plunge it deep into the pink mass, twisting the sword as I do so.

The reaction is dramatic. The entire body writhes and twists in soundless pain. The tentacles flail around and I am released to hover close to the mouth. I manage to keep hold of my sword and plunge it again, and again, into the heart of the foul creature. Finally it's all over. The plant collapses on itself. I'm hot, sweaty, fatigued, covered in gunge, and feeling very triumphant.

I gain altitude and fly over the top of the fortress. I can see the others below, still fighting off the giant frogs. For a while I consider joining them but decide that it may be unwise to do so. Just then I see a bolt of light leap from an upstairs window and hit one of the giant frogs. Has Dwan decided to help us? More bolts follow shortly after, each targeting a frog.

A short while later all the frogs have been killed, or driven off. The others enter the courtyard. I decide to land and descend in a slow, lazy spiral into the courtyard, managing to skilfully avoid all the trees and making another textbook landing. That was fun.

I see the others conversing with a tall dark robed man who confirms that he is Dwan Kijie. He also announces that the terms of the curse have been met and it is lifted. We wait with interest as he prepares to tell his story.

. 11 .

Dwan takes us to the other side of the building, then upstairs into a common room. There are several chairs and a table but the furniture looks rather decrepit, damp, and fragile. Dwan then stands in a corner and creates a light to illuminate him from above. He strikes a dramatic pose. It's obvious that he's done this sort of thing before.

"It all really started when I got chucked out of the army. It sort of changed my life and I went into a sort of a down period. I went to Seagate and did some odd jobs and bummed around the docks, none of which was very satisfying. After a couple of years, I decided I had to do something with my life and I discovered, through my contacts at the docks, where I can learn magic. I thought, well that sounds like me. I joined the Celestial College and they taught me all I needed to know about magic. I thought I was powerful before but the College showed me that was nothing.

After leaving the college, I worked as a guard, escorting caravans etc, for a couple of years. In my travels I realised that there was more money to be made as a freelance adventurer. It was about this stage that I met Audrey and our relationship blossomed. She was a sweet little plant at the beginning. Sure she liked to eat insects and the odd rabbit but so what. I found this place years ago and thought it was a good place to settle down. However as Audrey grew up she became more powerful and geased me to protect her and keep her fed. Her appetite, at this stage, was growing rather insatiable and there was nothing I could do about it. There was a tribe of griplies, those frog creatures, to the south, and Audrey found it was easy to control them. Between the two of us, we turned them into an effective fighting force. They also provided a source of food, as well as the odd trapper and hunter that came by. As time went on Audrey got more ambitious and was getting ideas above her station, and expand into the world. I realised that Audrey needed to be stopped but, because to the geas, could not take any direct action.

I had kept an eye on the family and kept contact with my Seagate friends and I heard about the upcoming wedding. I took a chance in laying the curse. Took me two years to prepare it. So I laid a small curse on the family, knowing that they would send a force to find me. I was expecting a bunch of soldiers actually. No offense though. I couldn't leave any blatant clues as I couldn't

go against Audrey directly. I had to hope that whoever Father sent could deal with her - which you did. I thank you. Now what I'll think I'll do is go wandering again and visit my friends. I don't think I'll go and visit the family though."

Kane asks about what happened at the canyon. Dwan replies that he was part of a party sent to dispatch an orc raiding party. However they met up with another orc raiding party and were forced to retreat into a box canyon with only one exit. Captain Machenbury decided that they needed reinforcements and ordered Dwan to go and get them. Dwan reckoned that one person, crossing the orcish lines would be suicide and that they were better off staying put. The orcs couldn't get to them, they had plenty of food and weapons for a week and if the orcs charged they would be easily cut down. Machenbury took Dwan's insubordination personally and vowed to destroy him. Events went the way Dwan said. The orcs charged a few days later, and were easily dispatched. Dwan hadn't realised at the time that Colonel Kijie had interfered with the sentence until it was announced.

The conversation turned to the events at the wedding. He had hung around unseen for a while then wandered in the back door and used an invested item to spoil the food. He had dressed up and also added a bit of makeup to enhance the effect. Once he cast the curse, he used a smoke bomb to conceal his exit.

He had worked for ages to perfect this plan. After all, he said, did we really think he wanted to protect that monstrosity?

We finally convince Dwan that it won't hurt to visit his father. We reckon that his father has had enough exposure to magic to get used to it. Also we tell him that his father wants to see him. Finally Dwan agrees to come. He'll fly out and meet us at the mansion in two days time. Meanwhile we'd make our way back to Stony Ford and collect the horses.

Eric goes downstairs to examine the remains of Audrey. There are some rather large flowers and partially digested coins and other metal bits. After a short while Starflower goes down as well and takes all the seeds for investigation.

We fly out and reach Stony Ford half an hour later with no incidents. After the wings dissipate we go and find the terminal master. He is very surprised to see us and is very anxious about the fate of the ferry. We tell him it was perfectly okay when we left it halfway down. His expression changes from anxiety to outright astonishment. No one leaves the ferry in transit. Kane tells him we left and swam back as we're the Seagate long distance swimming team. Can't he tell by the water stains and mud on our boots?

The rest of the night is spent without incident.

20/04/90

We force ride the horses through the mountains and arrive at Westgate that evening. The horses are looking very much the worse for wear and so are we, especially me. We book in the inn and I'm so exhausted, that I rub the horses down then fall asleep in the stable.

Meanwhile Kane is getting free drinks for killing Dirty Dan.

21/04/90

I start the day off with healthy exercise i.e. bench pressing rocks, and going for a run around Westgate. Doesn't take very long as Westgate isn't very big. When I get back the others are getting ready to leave. Kane has collected the 500SP reward and is showing around a piece of paper. I find out it's a wanted poster on Vila. He's charged with murder, kidnapping and necrophilia. No mention of any thievery which we find very strange. We speculate on the situation and reckon that it's a frame up as the whole thing isn't Vila's style. I wonder what he has been up to, to be framed for something like this. Hope the Guild can sort it out. Also the 3000SP reward is much too low.

We head towards Brasta at walking pace as the horses are still feeling the effects of yesterday. As we proceed we see six riders approaching rapidly. They stop us and show us another copy of the wanted poster and ask us have we seen this man. By this stage Vila is in the wagon, invisible. Kane tells them that someone looking like that went north, at speed. He is also told that Tobintown is really stirred up and lots of people are out looking for this desperado. Kane tells the riders that he's thinking of going after the bounty himself.

We continue north and camp for the night. Looks like we're going to be a bit late for the meeting with Dwan.

22/04/90

We detour around Brasta and head towards the mansion. On the way we are met by Dwan who wants to know what kept us. We tell him it was due to the big manhunt going on. Dwan certainly looks prepared for a grand entrance. He's dressed in blacks and muted greys and carrying a silver sword. He hops onto the wagon and we continue towards the mansion.

When we get there, it looks like everyone has come out of the manor to meet us. I see Colonel Kijie and his wife, and standing next to them is Shaun and Amiele, neither of whom are frogs. All the men are wearing swords. We pull up by the steps and Dwan stands up on the wagon. By careful planning, he is now backlit by the sun. Maybe this guy should have been on the stage. He raised his arms and announces he has returned.

Colonel Kijie acknowledges our successful completion of the mission and says the money will be forwarded to Seagate. He also tells Dwan that they have some serious talking to do.

As Dwan gets off the wagon, Shaun steps forward and asks him why he has returned as he was exiled ages ago and he's not welcome at all. He then draws his sword. I don't like the feel of this at all. Neither does Starflower as she moves closer to Dwan.

Just then Shaun takes a swing at Dwan and hits him. Dwan draws his own sword. Dross reckons we'd better not interfere as this is a matter of family honour. Shaun swings again. I notice Dwan seems to be concentrating on blocking Shaun's attack as he's not making any aggressive moves of his own.

Shaun hits again and Dwan drops his sword. I think now that honour must be satisfied and the fight is over, but to my surprise and horror, Shaun hits Dwan again and again. Dwan cannot protect himself and he falls over - dead. That's not family honour - that's cold blooded murder. I turn away, feeling rather sick.

Mary Kijie is rather distraught by this turn of events but the Colonel just stands there. Kane goes

to check the body and confirm it is dead. Kijie tells him to back off. He also refuses our offer of a resurrection. We get the feeling that our presence is no longer desirable so we leave. As we do so, the servants bear the body away.

We go to Tobintown and stay the night. Eric goes to see the sheriff to find out some more details on the Vila problem. We finally decide to leave the matter in the hands of the Guild Council. Meanwhile Dross, Sabrina and Kane sneak back to the Kijie mansion to interrogate Dwan's spirit.

They get back, late that night, with the news that Dwan had two hidden treasure caches. Some of the items may have been stolen so Dross wants those items to be held by the Guild and returned to the rightful owners. We finally add that clause to the contract. One stash is located beneath a house in Novadon, the other is in an old mine, west of Seagate. We decide to set out for Novadon.

23/04/90

The trip to Novadon, consists of returning to Westgate, over the mountains to Stony Ford. The terminal master wants to know if we intend staying with the ferry all the way this time. Kane tells him we're going down for a swim meet at Novadon. We leave the horses there and take the ferry. We finally arrive in Novadon on the evening of the 28th and book into an inn near the suspected address.

29/04/90

We go for a walk down the street. The house we are after looks lived in however Starflower reckons there's nobody home. There are other passerbys as well. A Wizard Eye spell, cast by Vila, confirms that there is no one in the house.

Starflower and I watch the street, acting like casual pedestrians, while the others turn invisible and sneak in the back. Unfortunately this means that there is the odd moment that the house is unobserved and during that time some one arrives. It's a lady and she's currently thinking about preparing lunch. Just then Eric makes a sound and she goes to investigate, only to be knocked out by Kane. Dross keeps an eye on her while the others investigate.

Eric finally locates a chest, hidden under the cellar floorboards and carefully removes it. At this stage the woman awakes and casts a spell, while still pretending to be knocked out. The whole room is full with fire and Dross makes a hasty exit. The woman then goes out the back and hides in the shrubbery and waits. Meanwhile Eric grabs the chest. Dross casts a projected image out the back door to act as a decoy while they exit, rapidly, out the front. A whole lot of hands grab the image and it dissipates. She heads towards the front but, by then, the others are gone. We're still outside and she stops us and asks whether or not we saw anyone. Starflower tells her that we didn't see anyone.

Meanwhile Kane and Eric head towards the docks and work on the chest under the wharf. They discover a poison tipped knife slasher trap and allow it to discharge against a wooden pile. The contents consist of loot and other bits and pieces. They remove the contents, fill the chest up with stones, and sink it.

Back at the inn I notice a couple of militia heading off in the direction of the house. A little later on they appear at the inn and start questioning Eric. He tells them that he is a merchant (which he is), checking out potential trade routes. He's taken away for questioning but is later released.

That night the treasure is made invisible and Dross & Kane fly off with it. They'll meet us at Stony Ford. The night is undisturbed.

30/04/90

We board the ferry, after passing militia guards, who are involved in searches and questioning. However we pass through and are soon heading back up on the ferry.

31/04/90

We arrive at Stony Ford and meet up with the others and proceed to make our way back to Seagate via Tobintown. The trip is uneventful, taking seven days total.

07/05/90

We finally arrive at the Guild. The place is fairly quiet at the moment as most of the other adventurers are still out. I've basically got the library all to myself and settle down for some serious reading. There's another 52 days until the next meeting - maybe enough time to train. Our money is waiting for us. No matter what sort of person Colonel Kijie is, at least he honours his agreements. I pay back my Guild loan - and also some money I borrowed off Sabrina and find out training costs etc.

Meanwhile Kane, Whisper, Starflower, Dross and Eric fly west to find the other stash. They finally find the mine and start to explore. The mine is an old one and doesn't look safe. Every so often the mine supports would groan and a shower of dust and small pebbles fall from the ceiling. They discover a shaft going down with several passages going off at various depths.

A lot of exploration, falling rocks, and digging later, they find a boulder. It looks like it has been put there. Eric rolls it away and discovers an alcove with a little chest in it. He takes the chest and makes his way out. Just then the roof caves in. Eric manages to reach the foot of the shaft but has to abandon the chest. Whisper provides Kane with a light and Kane goes down to help Eric. They use Kane's tunnelling item to get the chest out.

They quickly make their way up the shaft. Rocks keep tumbling down, bouncing off Eric's armour. However they make it out safely and check the chest for traps. They don't find any so they open it. Inside is a large collection of silver pennies. They decide to camp for the night so they can rest and Whisper can recast the Shadow Wings.

08/05/90

We see them arrive about midmorning, bearing the chest in triumph. Now that we are all back, it's up to the serious task of dividing the treasure. The Guild have converted all the invested items into silver pennies, so if we want them back, we can buy them back off the Guild with our share. Seems a very fair way of doing things. I decide to keep the money, wanting to get in as much training and to learn as many new spells as possible. I also prepare a copy of this journal for the Guild Librarian.

--- END ADVENTURE LOG ---