

THE UNWILLING RETURN OF THE CHOSEN

Cover Sheet

Adventure by Mike Harre

01/04/93 - 16/04/93

Player Characters

Jhiselle deBarnard	Fire	Human	Female	Bane of Trolls
Antonio	Air	Human	Male	Rampant Asparagus
Tor	Non-mage	Hobbit	Male	Chief Thumper
TDP Roberts	E&E	Human	Male	Leader
T'ana Starflower	Mind	Elf	Female	Military Scientist
Phaeton D'Tama	Solar	Human	Male	Scribe

Plane

Serenoc

Places visited

Dwarven kingdom of Savonla
Stalgrake
Restholm
River Talon
Covenhold
Old complex in mountains

Employer

Brian the Dwarf

Major NPCs encountered

Baldo Felgriz - a hobbit
Vashem Gar - human thief
M'Rull - firemage troll
Liam Surin - pyromaniac tempester (winged elf)

Goven Redbeard - dwarf guide
Grodan Blackstone - Brian's representative
Princess Serissa - Ellyon
Loritha - Serissa's attendant
Himajere - a mage
Aram-sen - Bael (vampiric race)
Boris - Bouncer at 'Bar & Grill' in Restholm

Mission

To retrieve four individuals

THE UNWILLING RETURN OF THE CHOSEN

Adventure Summary

31/03/93

Met our party employer, Brian the Dwarf. He wanted us to go offplane to Savonla, and return some 'wanted' people alive. They had been asked to do a mission but had fled, leaving a trail of destruction behind. They were Baldo Felgriz - a hobbit with mind powers, Yashem Gar - a human thief, M'Rull - firemage troll, and Suraim - a pyromaniac tempester (winged elf). Descriptions were provided to an illusionist so that they can be Located. Travel arrangements had been made to their last known position, the Barron Mountains.

01/03/93

Brian created a portal and we found ourselves in a dwarven city. Joined a wagon train. Met up with Princess Serissa (an Ellyon - faerie like creature - on no account refer to them as pixies) and escort. Reached a dwarven way station by evening.

02/04/93

Reached another waystation. Helped some injured soldiers that had suffered an orc attack.

03/04/93

While on a trail, some unseen entity went through the wagon train contaminating the food supplies. Reached a set of wooden buildings surrounded by a palasade. This was where the wagon train was going.

04/04/93

Moved our gear on the Stelhraken. This was a metallic, dragin looking object that ran on stell rails which extended in both dragons. It pulled a string of wagons. We boarded a carriage and rode off. Reached a forested area and attacked by orcs riding crocodile like reptiles. After a fierce fight the orcs retreated.

Arrived at a small village that night. During dinner, approached by a elf-like figure named Aram-sae. (We later found out he was a Bael - a vampiric entity).

05/04/93

Left the village on the train.

06/04/93

Finally arrived at Restholm, our destination, where we left the train, and visited the local wizard, Himajere. In town we stayed at the Inn of the Five Goats. Also visited Boris' Bar and Grill where our targets had been last seen. Last they had heard the tempester had been seen in the Barron Mountains.

07/04/93

Left town and unbottled TDP's boat so we could sail upriver to the vicinity of the mountains. Attacked by some undead (Aram-sae's spies?) before sailing off.

08/04/93

Continued sailing up the river Talon, crossed a lake, and reached a bridge spanning the river that halted further progress. Rebottled the boat and continued, on horseback, along the riverside road. Camped in a glade.

09/04/93

Passed a second river spanning bridge. This one had rails on it for the Stalhraken. The river was un-navigatable further on up so it was decided to have our best riders fast ride the horses while the rest of us flew to the next town, Covenhold. Reached there just before nightfall. Discovered that a large winged creature had been terrorising the town every night for the last two weeks

The creature, a large winged stone golem (Servant of Chaos), did attack that night. We managed to stop it by destroying the pendant it was wearing - a pendant we suspected was animating it.

10/04/93

Left Covenhold and headed towards the mountains. Reached the foothills by evening. Spotted the tempester and managed to capture him. Found out that their hideout was another ten kilometers up the pass we were in.

11/04/93

Attacked by a fire elemental that morning. After defeating it, headed up the pass. Attacked the hideout and captured the others. Explored the hideout. Looked like it used to belong to a wizard.

12/04/93

Continued exploring the complex.

13/04/93

Early that morning, attacked by Aram-sae, four undead, a troll, a human, and an entity in a black cloud. A wyvern turned up a bit later on. After a fierce fight, Aram-sae and the entity in the cloud retreated. The others were vanquished.

Headed back to Covenhold then on to the river. Unbottled the boat then sailed down to the rail bridge.

15/04/93

Arrived back at Restholm harbour. Had to get in port quick as a maurauding water dragon was out there. Went to see Himajere who portalled us back to the dwarven city where we turned over our captives and collected our reward.

16/04/93

Portalled back to the Guild.

THE UNWILLING RETURN OF THE CHOSEN

Phaeton

31/03/93

I had just returned from one adventure and was contemplating going on another one, even though I had only about ten days training time - just enough for spells. Plus I still needed the money to learn Curse Removal.

The adventure I found myself on was presented by someone calling himself Brian the Dwarf - even though this guy was about 7' tall, and 4'6" wide. He had black hair, a long black beard, and was wearing very ornate black plate, including a helm, and was toting a large double-edged battleaxe. He told us that we were to go to an off-plane kingdom called Savonla, find some 'wanted' people, and bring them back alive. The pay was 10,000sp per live body. Apparently resurrection was not an option there as it is very difficult. We could always bring them here ... Any 'loot' that we found is ours.

We assembled in Meeting Room 16. I didn't even know we had a meeting room 16 but Guild Security pointed me in the right direction (the chap materialized out of the shadows and pointed in the right direction - even before I asked. Those guys can be rather un-nerving at times).

Once I got there, I found my fellow adventurer's were:

Jhiselle Barnard - a young human female firemage (PB 12), 5'3" with fiery burgundy hair on top of which was an outlandish hat with a red feather stuck in it. She was wearing black armour.

Antonio (nicknamed Herby). He's an air mage, currently covered in leaves (courtesy of Gaia - I was on that adventure) because of a talent of being able to grow plants on his skin. 5'11" human carrying projectile weapons. He said his top spell was ice projectiles. Also he mentioned that some of those berries were explosive and some others were alcohol berries.

Tor - One of the rare breed of hobbit, one that looked after his body. He is 3'6" and bulging with muscle. Must be into body building in a big way. He's a fighter, bristling with weaponry and wearing red dragonscale armour.

TDP Roberts - He's a very experienced E&E mage with many high ranked specials. 5'11", slightly pudgy, wearing brown and light blue armour, carrying a scimitar, and covered in amulets and other jewellery, most of which was invested. He mentioned a rather interesting magical item - a ship in a bottle, which can be expanded to a full sized ship complete with golem crew.

T'ana Starflower - 6'4" female elf with long auburn hair, black chitinous plate armour and a shimmering silver cloak. She said she was a Mind Mage.

I introduced myself as Phaeton Tama - solar celestial mage, magic philosopher, and healer. 5'3", and thin, wearing white robes and a rainbow cloak.

Brian told us that the people we were looking for had been employed to do a mission to their Western Continent but had fled, leaving a trail of devastation behind them and committing several

crimes along the way. They were: Baldo Felgriz - a hobbit with powers similar to the mind college and could also change into a tiger like form, Yashem Gar - a human thief (and a worthy opponent according to Brian), M'Rull - a firemage troll, and Liam Suraim a tempester (a winged elf-like being) who was also a pyromaniac.

Their charges to date were as follows:

4 charges of arson, including most of the town of Yaristrim, a dwarven wayhouse, and the Imperial Dwarven Dungeons, 2 charges of riotous behaviour, 1 charge of murder - the Emperor's fourth son, 6 charges of destruction of Imperial property, seven charges of assault (including three on Brian - involving fire), 2 charges of destruction of Imperial transport system, 1 charge of destruction of Imperial trade (they blew up the train), 3 charges of escaping from Imperial Justice, 1 charge of lese majestic (they touched the Emperor), 5 charges of conspiracy, 1 charge of unlawful congregation, one charge of consorting with prostitutes (after which they burnt down the brothel), 2 charges of disturbing the peace and violating noise control laws, 1 charge of keeping an incontinent donkey, one charge of causing the death of a rare and valuable species (the cockatrice that had eaten the body of the Emperor's fourth son died from food poisoning), and one charge of theft (of a spoon).

Brian would have wanted to accompany us to get these guys personally as it was a matter of honour but he had something else to do so had hired us instead. He told us they could be hiding in the Barron mountains which are full of caves and mines as there had been some mysterious outbreaks of fire there. He also warned us that there was a possible warfooting with the orcs. To get there, he had arranged for us to accompany a wagon train to meet up with the Steldhraken.

Tor was told to wear a grey cloak. On his plane all hobbits have a spell-like talent each. All the talents seemed related to Mind College spells and the colour of the cloak indicated which talent they had. Those with grey cloaks were marked as the 'Unfortunate' i.e. those without a talent. Brian wasn't sure which talent that the hobbit we were looking for had but he told us that his cloak was a dark blue.

TDP wanted to know what these people looked like so he could use them as targets for Locate spells. Brian had some wanted posters but that wasn't enough. So it was suggested that Brian describe them to an illusionist.

While Brian left to do that, we took care of introductions and administrative details. TDP became party leader, Starflower was military scientist and I became the scribe. Someone reckoned we should all have titles so the following were dreamed up:

Tor the fantastically wonderful chief thumper
Phaeton the accurate and honourable scribe
T.D.P the intrepid party leader
Starflower the ever cunning and tactically fabulous military scientist
Jhiselle the destroyer of forest and the bane of trolls
Herby the rampant asparagus.

Soon Brian returned with Gerald and four images were provided which we all studied. Brian told us to meet him in the courtyard the next morning.

I went to the Earth College to have a Lesser Enchantment put on. After that I had to hurry over

to the Fire College as Jhiselle was putting Rank 13 Protections from Magical Fire on us all (a sensible precaution). They would last for 15 days. Then I went down to the stables and hired a Guild horse. That cost 250sp including a 100sp deposit.

That night I did an Astrology reading which didn't make much sense
From a dragon's belly sharp arrows fly
At lizard masters racing by
Strike not the dragon but let him run
And thou shall see the battle run.

01/04/93

An hour after dawn, we assembled in the courtyard - all packed and ready to go. Brian pulled out a long thin crystal and drew the shape of a door in the air. Nothing happened until he remembered to add the doorknob. Once he did a door appeared and swung open. We went through.

We found ourselves in a large, sparsely furnished room. There were some pictures, a rug, and a fireplace. We led the horses to the stables.

Brian suggested that it would not be a good idea to reveal our off-plane origins but instead state that we are from Salhome. It's a very large city filled with all manner of inhabitants.

According to my DA talent, the name of the plane we were on was Unktehi. I also noticed that the stars here were brighter and closer together than the night sky on Aleusia. Astrology skills would be no use but the Celestial Reading the Night Sky should still work.

When we got back, Brian told us a bit about the history. Apparently there were two gods involved in creating the land and they created a continent each. The Western continent was populated by humans whereas the Eastern one was filled with demi-humans. It was believed that the gods had done this for their own amusement. They continued playing this 'game' until 11,000 years ago when they abruptly left, causing devastation. It affected the humans more as many of their powers came from the gods directly. So one group attempted to summon the gods back. What they got instead was a demonic force - some sort of personification of evil. Nothing remained of the summoners. A permanent gate was left through which the evil force rapidly spread all over the continent causing devastation in its wake. Many humans were touched by the evil and transformed into orcs. The survivors fled north & east and retreated over the icebridge to the other continent which was then shattered. A magical barrier now exists between the two continents. There is some leakage though. Orcs have managed to come though and small parties have gone though to see what is happening. Fortunately we shouldn't need to worry. The evil is in the west and we're going east.

It was suggested that we needed supplies. Brian managed to change our money on a one to one sp standard.

.2.

After a short nap, we set off to visit a dwarven weaponsmith that Brian had recommended as being discrete, a chap by the name of Govan Redbeard. Brian also warned us not to wear any visible weapons or armour while in town. That was a privilege reserved for the dwarven militia.

At least I'm safe.

After Starflower's prompting, I spent 220sp on a silvered, +2 weaponsmithed dagger, all I felt I could afford at this time. The others were busy buying all sorts of weapons and armaments. Starflower floored Govan by asking for a tulwar, which isn't a dwarven weapon by any means. Finally Govan sent his apprentice off to see what could be found. The lad came back with a long thin box. Inside was an beautiful ornate tulwar. Govan said he had acquired it from an estate a while ago and it was reputed to have some sort of magical property. He wasn't sure what it was. Starflower paid 2500sp for it.

On the way back we were intercepted by a grey bearded dwarf, wearing white robes and a gold medallion. He introduced himself as Grodan Blackstone and told us he represented Brian, before handing over our travel documents. Starflower asked about soporific herbs, and she was given three doses of the stuff, a description of the plant it came from (Portulaca) and was also told it wouldn't work on trolls. Neither do poisons.

When we got back, a small bag, currently emanating an iron clanking, was being placed on Starflower's horse. It could only be described as a no mana zone. We led our horses out of the stables, into the courtyard, through a set of gates, and found a group of carts surrounded by dwarves involved in frantic activity. Most of the carts were covered while others contained black rock.

Grodan led us to a stocky middled aged white haired dwarf who was looked rather harassed while attempting to co-ordinate the sea of activity around him. Also with him was his sidekick, a short, bald, green-skinned, humanoid with large pointy ears. According to his aura he was a goblin. I was also able to ascertain that the last spell to affect him was a Healing spell from the College of Healing. Most curious.

Grodan spoke to the dwarven overseer and explained that we were to travel with his caravan. The overseer seemed rather annoyed by this until he saw the travel documents, then he grudgingly acquiesced. We were told to ride alongside wagon 15 and that we could put our excess baggage on it. It would take us two and one half days to reach the train's leaving point at Stalgrake. The overseer wanted to know if we could fight. At that Tor flexed his muscles. I just hoped we didn't have to.

Finally, after half an hour, the convoy of wagons was ready. We mounted up and rode alongside. Also, two wagons ahead of us, a veiled human female figure joined the convoy. I decided to keep an eye on the other side. Meanwhile Tor rode up to talk to her. She said her name was Loritha, and was veiled because she wasn't married. Accompanying Loritha was a pageboy carrying an ornate box with small holes in it. Occasionally rustling sounds could be heard inside.

After some talking Loritha admitted she was the attendant to a princess. Of course Tor wanted to be introduced. After some hesitation she motioned to the pageboy to open the box. It was about this time that Starflower and TDP were moving forward to ascertain exactly what Tor was up to - and to check he wasn't making a nuisance of himself.

When the box was opened, it was noted that the inside was lined with velvet and there were small cushions scattered inside. The most striking thing thing however, was a tiny, delicate, elfin figure. Her multicoloured iridescent wings were shaded to deep royal blue at the edges. Her long,

diaphanous dress was finer than the finest silk. The party members present, attempted to perform the correct protocol.

Then Antonio and Jhiselle joined the group. Tor offered our services as the princess's personal guard when it was realised she was travelling without one (they had been killed in the line of duty). Starflower introduced the party members present, then suddenly realised there was one missing.

I was deep in the contemplation of magical theory when Starflower rode up and insisted that I be presented to the princess. What I discovered was a six inch tall, stunningly beautiful humanoid female with shimmering translucent wings, somewhat like those of a dragonfly. Starflower introduced me. I mumbled a greeting then managed to fade into the background.

The rest of the day passed without incident. Near the end of the day we pulled in to a dwarven way station. The place was built into the side of a hill. Some dwarves and humans were drinking at tables outside. We were conducted inside into a large hall with some doors leading off on the other side. On one side of the hall was a large bar. After some discussion and the presentation of our travel documents, we were shown to the third door from the left.

Dinner was excellent. We were invited to the best table in the place, with the princess. Most of the party ordered something strong to drink but Antonio went for water while I went for plum juice. Shortly the princess joined us, sitting on a velvet cushion on the table. After dinner (which was delicious roast pork - my favourite), I made my excuses and went to bed. As I was leaving I noticed two hobbits in the corner, one with a green & white cloak, the other with a pale blue one. So I DAed both of them for principle talent. The green & white signified mindspeak while the pale blue was apportation.

02/04/93

Jhiselle and Tor must have overindulged the previous night as they were suffering that morning. Starflower was also a Healer so I set her to work on Jhiselle while I did a Soothe Pain and a Neutralise Poison on Tor. Starflower explained how Tor had gone up to speak with the hobbits last night, and seemed to asking some of the wrong questions. Shortly afterwards she had felt somebody trying to penetrate her mind-cloak, and Jhiselle reported a sudden headache which passed quickly as it came. One of the hobbits trying to probe their minds perhaps?

Once that was complete we set off. The hobbits could be seen in the distance, riding off very rapidly. The day was rather uneventful. At one rest stop Starflower spotted a green orchid so I was asked to identify it. Its aura said Tesla. Starflower collected a specimen in one of her sample bags.

At two pm the overseer told us that we were entering a high risk area for orcish attack. The dwarven guards were already preparing their weapons. So we prepared. TDP did an Enhance on Starflower who linked us all with Mindspeech and followed up with Telepathy. Meanwhile I put a Witchsight on myself. But we rode through the area without incident. Though Starflower said she noticed something, fleetingly, at the extreme edge of her range.

A bit later on the rest of the party were discussing the subject of magic with the princess as Starflower had discovered that the princess knew a little bit of it. I drifted closer to listen as I was

getting fascinated. Apparently Serissa (that was the princess's name) only had minor magics and her principle spell was one that allowed her to speak to frogs. Her brother was a more powerful specialist in Air Magics. They had some sort of pre-requisite system for spell acquisition i.e. learning a spell depended on what had been previously learnt. Soon I was demonstrating some simple cantrips to her - after ensuring none of the dwarves were watching. I also found out her race was called the Ellylon.

Nothing else happened until we reached the waystation. There we discovered a group of wounded human soldiers. They had been busy fighting orcs. So Starflower and I got busy healing them. I just had enough energy for dinner, then went straight to bed.

.3.

03/04/93

The dwarves downstairs were still carousing when I woke up to purify. The result was, I was only able to get an hours worth. I then put up a Light, followed by a Witchsight, then Counterspelled the Light before going down to breakfast. The militia leader thanked Starflower and myself again for Healing his men, and informed us that, in return, one of his scouts would be going with us. Seems that there could be more orc trouble ahead from a different type. This lot are mounted on some sort of lizard creature. Also some of the tribes seem to be banding together. When I queried about whether or not the orcs were practising the 'arcane arts' I was told it was more of the shamanistic/wicca type - what we refer to as the 'primitive' magics. I suspect necro would be a favourite.

Finally we rode off. One of the dwarves gave me a boost up on my horse - and I nearly went over the other side. I suspect horseriding is something else I should master. The morning was peaceful. At lunch time we rested. I attempted to renew my Witchsight but failed to do so - even after three attempts.

An hour and a half past lunch we overheard the scout (who seemed to have a mixture of elven and human features) telling the trailboss about something on the trail ahead. They went ahead to have a look while the rest of the wagon train stopped and waited. I attempted to cast another Witchsight on myself and succeeded. Meanwhile Antonio spotted a figure on a ridge, mounted on something odd. Probably one of those orcs we were told about keeping an eye on the wagon train.

After a long wait (well it seemed like one) they returned. Apparently they had found tracks. The wagon moved off warily. Everyone was keeping a lookout. We saw the figure on the ridge twice more.

As we progressed on, Jhiselle and Antonio felt something odd - like a faint draft and a chill. Starflower activated her ESP and detected a faint mind proceeding through the wagons towards the rear. TDP, Tor and I could hear a faint chittering sound. Also my Witchsight was picking up a faint blue glow. Starflower had mind-speeched the lot of us so I used that to relay a visual to her. With the help of that she was soon able to see it herself and started aiming her crossbow, even though it was rapidly receding. Meanwhile TDP enhanced my spellcasting so I could get Witchsights on everyone else. Just as Starflower was about to fire, the entity disappeared. The dwarf on the wagon with us suddenly discovered that the food he had bought that morning had gone off. I managed to DA some of it and discovered that it had been affected by putrescence.

It seemed wise to check the rest of the food by using a cover story of possible contaminated stock causing a health risk. No more was found. Privately we surmised that the strange entity had done it as a distraction.

The rest of the trip passed uneventfully. Journey's end was a set of wooden buildings surrounded by a palisade. I managed to find some reading material - their local equivalent of the 'Seagate Times'. One item was of interest. an outbreak of unexplained fires at Sintwig - south of where we were. Maybe that's where our targets were. The conversations in the inn dealt mainly with the war with the orcs and trouble with malicious spirits. Hmmmmm....

04/04/93

The night was uneventful. The sunrise was so nice that I only bothered with one hour of purification. After breakfast the trail boss informed us that it was time to load our gear on the Steldhraken to continue our journey. When we got outside we discovered that the Steldhraken was a dragon like object resting on two parallel metal rails that ran into the distance in both directions. There were wagons attached to the back of the Steldhraken. Some were enclosed but some were flat with something hidden under canvas on each one.

We then noticed that Serissa and Loritha were met by two humans in black armour and another Ellylon, to escort them back to their home lands to the north - The White Lands. Serissa thanked us for being her replacement escorts and said that we would be welcome to visit.

Soon we were shown to a carriage - after a guard examined our travel documents. Our horses were put inside another wagon which was equipped as a stable. The carriage we were in was equipped with seats, some facing forwards and others facing backwards. I went to a seat forward facing a window. As well as us, this carriage was occupied by a few humans, a couple of dwarves and three hobbits wearing cloaks of red, red/orange, and white. I was unable to DA the red and white but was able to ascertain that the red/orange meant a talent of fire.

Just then, with a lurch, the carriage started moving. Very soon it was moving very fast while swaying slightly from side to side. I was quite enjoying the trip but some others weren't. Jhiselle was looking slightly queasy but Tor was worse. He made a dash to the window and soon lost his breakfast. I started a Soothe Pain in an effort to relieve the symptoms but wasn't having much luck. Just then the hobbit with the white cloak came over and offered her assistance. Soon she had put Tor into a restful sleep, some sort of healing sleep according to my empathy. I suppose that implies white means a Healing talent. Tor woke a bit later feeling a lot better and ravenous.

I decided to explore the length of the train. I didn't see any other hobbits but I did find that the front most carriage was a kind of a kitchen. So I spent 10 sp on pies and took them back to share with the rest of the party. Tor was talking to a uniformed dwarf (the conductor) who was telling him that they sacrificed hobbits to make the train go. Tor wanted to watch. The conductor also told us that it would take three days to get to Restholm at our current speed - that of a galloping horse. Tor went to talk to the hobbits while Starflower wandered to the rear carriage. I had noticed a couple of pure elves back there, a male and female, and had decided to leave them alone. The hobbits were very curious about where Tor had come from as they hadn't heard of a colony of 'Unfortunates'. They were rather tightlipped about their abilities, only preferring to talk about their own clan (each colour also represented a clan).

A few hours later we were approaching a forested area. Suddenly, from ahead, charged a group of orcs (they looked like Alusian orcs) riding 4' high crocodile like reptiles. I managed to determine, via DA, that the orcs were Dark Aspected. Now at least I knew which spells to use. They were approaching us from both sides. TDP quickened the rest of the party and Antonio started firing ice projectiles. Starflower went Indetectable - after mind-linking us all, while Tor and Jhiselle did what they could. Soon fireballs were hitting the orcs (although I suspected they weren't Jhiselle's) while some other fell asleep - courtesy of TDP.

Finally Jhiselle managed to put up a Wall of Fire on one side, catching several orcs while I put up a Wall of Starlight on the other side - also affecting several orcs. Meanwhile Tor was having fun hitting anything that came close while Antonio continued with the Ice Projectiles. There were also explosions coming from other parts of the train. It turned out those covered objects on the flat cars were cannon.

After a fierce struggle the orcs decided to retreat. Starflower then announced she could detect an orc in a forward carriage. When she got there she discovered the red cloaked hobbit fighting the orc with a glowing sword and shield. Just then the orc hit the hobbit, knocking him over. The sword and shield vanished. (Hmmm. Red = Magical weapons?) Starflower dealt to the orc.

As the orcs retreated, Jhiselle got in a parting shot and vapourised one. I did a quick check of the immediate vicinity and discovered no serious injuries. TDP went to check the rest of the train and discovered, from a dwarven guard, that the guards van, at the rear of the train, was missing. The cannon immediately in front of it had misfired and blown up the platform, leaving the van adrift. It was feared that the orcs had got the four dwarves, and a metal strongbox containing valuables that were aboard.

TDP wanted to mount a rescue but the dwarf reckoned it would be suicidal. The orc encampment was very large and well hidden and it was not possible to stop the train and back up as we would then be more vulnerable. The best course of action was to keep going. So TDP decided to launch our own rescue attempt - just in case. He instructed me to put StarWings on as many as the party as possible and launch from a platform car. I had only enough to get everyone except Antonio and myself. They flew off.

Soon they returned with two dwarven bodies. Starflower nearly had a very bad landing but Antonio and I managed to catch her in the parachute. They had found the guards van but there was no sign of the other two dwarves - or the strongbox. Obviously the orcs had them - and there wasn't anything we could do about it.

.4.

We examined the bodies that we had. Many of them bore the ravages of some sort of disfiguring disease and I warned the others not to touch them in case they were infectious. What we did discover was a magical amulet (nature of magic - change), two rings coloured red and green (tarnished gold & silver - non magical) and a bone bead necklace (original source - human). The dwarves wanted to burn the body. In the end it was pushed overboard.

That evening we reached a small town. As we proceeded towards the indicated inn (the train was stopping here overnight) we attracted a crowd of children. One of them was dragging a rag doll and made the comment that we looked like mages - and daddy reckons that all mages should be

burnt at the stake. To which Jhiselle responded with a resounding "Too right!" I also got the impression that 'daddy' is the local religious zealot.

The innkeeper provided three rooms so we continued with the usual sleeping arrangements. First was dinner. Starflower decided to dress for the occasion and enhance her beauty. The waiters were nearly tripping over themselves to see who would be serving us. Starflower explained that was the objective of the exercise. Jhiselle knew what she wanted - a fresh juicy steak. Tor got one too. The rest of us went for the chicken special. We had a pitcher of milk for refreshments which Antonio added a berry or two. Fortunately I was drinking uncontaminated milk. After a while Tor slid under the table. Jhiselle and Antonio were also showing ill effects.

Just as we were finishing dinner a black clad stranger came into the room. He removed his hood revealing pure elven features. As soon as he caught sight of Starflower, he came over and immediately began pouring out the charm. I decided to excuse myself at the first opportunity. The stranger told us he was a hunter. Probably a ranger but we had the impression there was something more - something sinister. (Later on the possibility was raised that he might be a bounty hunter - or even a Dark Mage). He told us that his name was Aram-sae, and he lived in a mansion by a lake near Mount Ruin and that we should visit him. Starflower then took up his offer for a walk in the moonlight.

I was upstairs studying when TDP came in. Apparently they were trying to get Tor up the stairs and were having difficulties. He was completely incapable of walking. So I decided to neutralise enough of the alcohol so he could stagger upstairs with assistance. Just as I finished doing that, Starflower arrived back wearing an amulet that the elf had given her. Neither TDP's abilities, Jhiselle's infra-vision, or my DA could detect anything magical about it. On a hunch, I DAed Starflower for last magic to impact. I got the answer 'hypnotism'. Starflower said that he had attempted something but she had resisted.

Antonio had a Crystal of Vision so we attempted to use it to try and find out just what this guy was up to. All he got was a shadowy figure in a dark place. So I attempted to enhance his vision with a Witchsight. As I did everything went dark. Oh dear! I knew immediately what had happened - backfired and blinded myself. Unless we could find someone who could Remove Curse, I could be stuck like that for weeks.

The only immediate solution I could come up with was to have Starflower link with me using Mind Speech, and send the images what she was seeing. In effect I would be using her eyes. I couldn't DA with them though. Not an ideal solution but would do in the meantime. Meanwhile TDP and Starflower went to consult with the local Healer in case there. They found out she didn't know Curse Removal but she was at least as good a Healer as I was, and an experienced Herbalist. Starflower and her compared notes. She was a bit reserved but Starflower discovered the location of a glade containing some local herbs (flannel leaf, red root plus Ayre) - the ingredients for a healing potion. They did find out that a wizard lived ten miles north of Restholm who might be able to help.

05/04/93

Starflower and Antonio left early to raid the herbalist's glade. Meanwhile the rest of us had breakfast (I had mine brought to my room) and prepared to leave. As soon as Starflower and Antonio arrived back we headed off to the waiting Steldhraken. On the way we were accosted

by a man garbed in robes. That had to be 'daddy'. We had already discovered from the innkeeper that he was the local priest of Zakim. He waved his staff at us and yelled 'Begone foul creatures'. All he had to do was wait for a little while and we would have left on the train. Tor got rather fed up with this and grabbed the staff and broke it. Some of the gathering townsfolk started to advance threateningly towards Tor. Also the kid started hitting Tor with her doll. TDP decided to sleep the priest which distracted the townsfolk enough for us to get on to the train.

The trip to the next town was uneventful. When we arrived TDP attempted to Locate the hobbit but failed. He then tried the tempester and got him with a 110 mile locate. After a short while, he went out of range. The innkeeper told us that the wizard's name was Himajere the Wizard and he lived in a small castle 10-20 miles north of Restholm. Looks like I'll have to wait until we get there. Again the night was uneventful.

06/04/93

I think I was getting the hang of seeing myself through Starflower's eyes as I boarded the train. The hobbits were still on board and Starflower was able to use her telepathy to gain more information as she questioned them about their clans. She found out that dark blue is telekinesis and green/white is telepathy.

At 2pm we arrived at Restholm and unloaded our gear and horses. This was as far as our travel documents took us. Also we were given 250sp as bounty for the five orcs we had killed on the train. Again TDP tried to Locate the tempester but he wasn't within range. We then rode through the town gates going north. We were told by the guards that the town gates closed at sunset and wouldn't open again until sunrise. We should be well back by then.

The road took us past a well tended forest with a small tower in the middle of it. Soon we found a path leading into it. Signs warned us to stay on the path and not to interfere with the plants. The path finally led us to the small tower.

TDP knocked at the door and an elderly gent answered. He first thought Antonio was the victim until TDP explained the problem. Finally he said he could help - for a cost. Oh well. I was expecting this. The cost turned out to be 750sp. I was rather surprised when he said that it would take two hours rather than six. Different magical rules no doubt.

I was led inside then laid on a table. Soon I could hear the wizard chanting. Then I heard another voice answering. Soon the wizard and the other entity were having a discussion. Intrigued, I reached out with my empathy and touched the other entity. All I could pick out was that it was benevolent. After a short while everything went quiet and I lay there in darkness. After a while my sight began to come back. It was fuzzy at first but after half an hour it was fully back.

The wizard was still there but there was no sign of the other entity. When I asked him what it was he just smiled and reckoned it was an empathic echo. We rejoined the rest of the party while engrossed in a deep philosophical discussion on magic. All that the others were interested in were magical items.

.5.

So he pulled out a box containing several magical items and explained what they were. I wasn't

intending on buying anything but some of the others did. The most interesting items were something called 'power' stones. These were crystals that could hold spell fatigue, the more elaborate the crystal, the more points can be stored. However the more that was in there, the greater the chance that a point could be 'flawed' i.e. something happened when it was used or it needed a special condition to regenerate. Each 'point' had to be used in order.

TDP bought a silver ring which creates a zone of silence (4 charges, 1 fatigue/charge, 1600sp, lasts 5 minutes) while Antonio went for an amulet that creates a non-sentient animal (up to 100lbs weight) for as long as the user concentrates (2+1/min F, 15000sp). The mage did a roaring trade in power stones. Once he got the orders he went upstairs for a couple of hours. I spent the time making copies of my magical theory notes.

When he came back, I DAed each stone for flaws. Starflower got a 6pt stone which had a minor flaw on the 4th point - drops her physical beauty a little bit for a second when she uses it. Antonio got a 3 point flawless stone while Jhiselle bought a 4pt. Unfortunately Jhiselle's stone had a major flaw on the third point i.e. could only be regenerated in full moonlight.

TDP also asked the wizard about the elfin entity that had taken an interest in Starflower. He was told that Aram-sae was a Bael. They looked like elves, but were in fact a vampiric necromantic race. We'd be better off destroying the amulet that Starflower had. He also recoiled in horror when he discovered we had that orc pendant. It had a chaos stone in it which would mutate the wearer. The heart of an active volcano was the best place for those.

It was time for us to go so we made our farewells and departed. As a parting gift I left notes on our magical theory. We just made it back to Restholm before the gates closed. We were charged 1sp each to enter.

Finally we reached the Inn of Five Goats. It was located in an up-market area and the proprietor was an elf who was rouged and dressed in ruffles and smelt of perfume. Starflower reckoned he must have been a rather good courtier.

After dropping my stuff in our room I felt the urge for a bath. The bathroom turned out to be communal but did have areas that could be screened off. I opted for a private bath so one was duly prepared by an attendant.

After I bathed and got dressed, I headed straight down to the restaurant. There was no sign of the others but since the restaurant was going to close shortly I decided to start dinner without the others. I was working my way through the main course when the others finally turned up with just five minutes to spare. Apparently they had been in the bar.

The others had managed to find out that the people we were looking for had been last seen at Boris's Bar and Grill. So, after dinner, we got some directions and set off, towards a more disreputable part of town. On the way I discovered that dark blue cloaked hobbits had TK, purple registered as Knowledge, and yellow possessed astral projection. The black one I couldn't figure out for some reason.

Boris's Bar and Grill turned out to be accessed from a short flight of stairs going down from street level. At the bottom was a rather large troll who demanded our weapons. When he got them he put them in a box and carefully copied down the symbol on the side of the box to a piece of paper

which he handed to TDP.

Inside was a smoky, dimly lit area. There was a stage on one side which was currently dark. All the goblin staff were wearing red/white uniforms. The walls were covered in various types of weapons - including the remains of a four poster bed.

TDP was soon able to ascertain that the goblin behind the counter was the manager was had the name of Lovane. Boris was the name of the troll. Apparently he had been left the establishment by the previous owner - a human - just before he was murdered by the group we were after. Boris had used the four poster to avenge himself on the fifth member of that party.

TDP then talked to Old John, a human customer who had been around at the time, and learnt that they had also set fire to the police station that night. The last he had heard, the tempester had been last seen in the Barron Mountains. He also warned TDP about bandits in the Stranglehold Pass.

Just as TDP rejoined us the stage lights came on and we were treated to a goblin song and dance act. It was okay but I wasn't impressed.

There was a fortune teller in a booth in the far corner so TDP went to have a word or two. He was told that what we are looking for is 'under ground, under trees, under water'. So he asked for an astrology reading. She produced a pack of Tarot cards, asked TDP to cut them, and laid them out. Looking at the cards, she divined the following:

Black wings rise on a moon's pale face
Cold eyes born on night's dark race
A necklace cold that chains the heart
Strike true to open hands of fire
Strike true to end the stone's cold time
And rid the world of evil's trace.

A reference to the Bael? Or the original source of evil?

Tor asked the fortune teller whether he had any undeveloped hobbit talents and ended up with four void cards and the nine of swords. Once a fighter, always a fighter... Starflower obtained a reading that indicated that she was going to meet Aram-sae again and that her champion would fight his champion.

After retrieving our weapons from Boris we headed back to the inn. I was able to get on the roof and do a night sky reading ritual and got:

"Seek thee warmth and shelter beneath trees lofty brow"

It either didn't work or it's a reference to the elven country.

07/04/93

After breakfast we left town and headed for the shore. The plan was to extract TDP's boat and attempt to sail up river to the area where the tempester was detected. Unfortunately TDP was only able to get navigational charts for the area of the river delta.

We had just got the boat out and the golem crew were busy getting everything ready to sail when we spotted movement on the cliff facing us. Jhiselle went into sparrow form and took off to see what it was. From her report they seemed like some sort of walking dead (sightless eyes and very little body heat). One of them took a potshot at her.

.6.

It seemed quite likely that these were spies, sent by Aram-sae, so it was decided to take them out. So I quickly cast StarWings on Tor, Starflower, Antonio and Jhiselle (now back as a human). A crossbow bolt thudded into the side of the ship. Another landed near Jhiselle and myself as I finished casting. I immediately went UnSeen while TDP ordered the gunners to launch a volley of ballistae bolts. Jhiselle put a Weapon on Flames on Tor's sword. As Tor took off I made the comment he looked just like a painting of the ArchAngel Michael. The others soon followed. TDP then requested a set of StarWings so I attempted to oblige, but managed to reverse them on myself. The second attempt worked and soon TDP was following the others. I decided to make use of the pair I had and do an aerial reconnaissance to make sure that there weren't any more coming.

It didn't take long before the others were engaged. Tor had spotted four entities on a ledge, with another below, so that was where he landed and bravely waded into the three remaining figures (the fourth one had already been felled by a ballistae bolt). The others weren't far behind. Meanwhile I overflew the cliff but couldn't see any more of them. So I began to circle back.

Tor quickly dispatched two of them. Jhiselle had to quickly duck as one went for her so Starflower charged it from the rear. That gave Jhiselle enough time to get a self-immolation running, just as Starflower double-struck it with both tulwars, dispatching it. The one below was steadily climbing the cliff so I attempted to swing by and dislodge some rocks on top of it. Unfortunately I miscalculated and hit the cliff. It was just as well I was able to recover and take off again before it reached me.

It didn't take long before they were all properly dead - including the one that was coming up the cliff (Starflower had spotted it from my mind, so TDP slowed it while she went for it. It didn't stand a chance). After a quick search Antonio spotted a small hole in the cliff face. According to TDP's Wizard Eye, there was something in it. It turned out to be a mallard. Jhiselle spoke to it and discovered it was resting while on the way south.

A search of the bodies revealed deep gashes on the side of their necks that were not caused in the recent combat. They also discovered that two of them were wearing earrings that were faintly magical. I was fetched back from the ship to do a more detailed examination. What I discovered was that one earring had communication as the nature of magic, the undead were originally human and at least one had them had been dead for ten hours. The last spell to impact was Walking Dead. Also their weapons were coated with poison. They ended up in the ocean.

Starflower, Jhiselle, and Tor headed off to see the wizard. All they found was one mind inside that was busy. That was the servant, the wizard must have been out. So they left a note.

Once everyone was back on board we headed off. While Tor and Starflower engaged in weapons practice, I went below to study - after putting a 'Do Not Disturb' note on the door.

That evening, Starflower was cooking fish for dinner that Antonio had caught. Afterwards I put a Witchsight on the golem Captain (a intelligent/sentient rag and string golem - the rest are standard wooden golems) and the golem lookout.

08/04/93

I was woken up, just after midnight, to put a Witchsight on Antonio, then again just after dawn to stand my watch (another witchsight on me). Nothing unusual was reported during the night.

That morning was a partially overcast day. We sailed up through the delta then up the river Talon. Soon we reached a lake with a fishing settlement on it, which took us nearly three hours to cross, then continued on up. TDP tried a Locate fix on both the hobbit and Aram-sae but was unable to locate either of them. Meanwhile Tor and Starflower continued sparring on deck. I decided to read in the sun.

After a short while we reached a 20ft high bridge spanning the river. No way were we going to get the boat up any further. Two young boys were fishing off the edge of the bridge over which ran the tracks of the Steldhraken. After we got our gear and horses off the boat, TDP started the ritual to put it back in the bottle while Starflower decided to go 'fishing for information' and ended up paying 6sp for two scrawny looking fish. The boys told her about the 'batman' and the blue dragon that was reputed to live further up river.

Just then the boat started shrinking. The two boys got rather alarmed at this and hid in a nearby clump of trees. Once that was done we continued riding along the track that ran alongside the river.

Soon we stopped for a break. When Starflower mentioned the incident with the boys and the fish Tor made the comment about 'urchent bankers'. I threw a clod of earth at him for that one. Meanwhile Antonio used his amulet to conjure up a cormorant and instructed it to catch some fish.

About mid-afternoon we reached a fork in the trail. One branch continued to follow the river, while the other veered off to the northwest. On TDP's request, I gave him a set of StarWings and made him UnSeen and he flew off to scout ahead. After a while he came back and told us that we were forty miles away from another bridge.

We continued on. By nightfall we were about 2 hours short of the bridge and had reached a glade with copses and some willows. It was here that we decided to camp. TDP picked up the 'vampire' within 110 miles NNW and the tempester within 330 miles (he tripled) to the NE. The town of Talon lay 20 miles away in that direction and it was possible that he was there. Antonio tried his crystal in an attempt to see if we could ascertain his location but all we could see was a stone wall. Could he be in a stone coffin?

Watches were set for the night. Nothing unusual happened except that Aram-sae's locate changed to SE. Could he be looking for the boat?

.7.

09/04/93

Neither arrow had changed direction by the time we set off. After two hours we stopped near a

group of pretty blue flowers. Antonio planted a few on himself. According to their aura, their Generic True Name was Myosotis Arvenis but Starflower said they were forget-me-nots. While hunting around, she also found some Ayre and planted that on Antonio as well.

Once we reached the bridge, I put a Star Wings on TDP so he could fly off and survey the river while we rode on. On his return he told us that the river became unnavigable at a point thirty miles further up because of rapids. The next town, Covenhold, was a fair way off but we could get there before nightfall if most of us flew while Tor and Starflower as the best riders among us cantered the horses, changing mounts every hour or so.

About half way there, Starflower stopped Tor, and signalled the rest of us to land. She explained that she hadn't seen or heard any bird-life for some time. Neither could she detect any birds, nor even any flying insects with her telepathy. Very strange. Antonio suggested casting a "Summon Avian" spell, and did so. Suddenly he sprang into the air flying North-East. Starflower said that he was suffering from some kind of compulsion. A backfire effect? I took off after him, soon followed by TDP. Jhiselle remained flying over the horses to keep watch.

The wings were scheduled to give out five miles before Covenhold but that was because we would have been doubling back to keep with the horses. Now Antonio was heading at full speed. Fortunately he was going in the right direction. Trouble is, we'd be way beyond Covenhold and getting close to the mountains beyond by the time the Wings ran out. In order to keep Antonio in sight, I gained altitude so it was easier to see the light blue wings against the ground.

Finally Antonio touched down in an old vineyard and began running. I landed about two hundred metres behind and headed off after him. Unfortunately he's faster than I am. Just then a set of black wings flew over me and landed ahead of Antonio. By the time I got there, TDP had slept him. Antonio was still twitching and I was unable to tell how long this was going to last.

It was decided that TDP would levitate Antonio, make him UnSeen and tow him using his Invested Rank 1 Shadowwings. That would still mean that they'd get back to Covenhold after dusk. Meanwhile I'd fly on ahead and intercept the others. I estimated, with my StarWings, I could get there, just as they reached the town.

Once I had ascertained that Antonio and TDP were underway I headed off. I skirted the city and managed to spot the others approaching town, just as the sun was beginning to set. After landing and Counterspelling the Wings, I reported what had happened.

A sign with a black cat and broomstick was all that indicated where the village inn was to be found. There was no sign of people, the town seemed to be deserted, doors barred, and shutters closed. According to Starflower, they were afraid. Of the dark? We hitched our horses to the rail outside the inn, and went inside. The inn was very quiet. A few locals huddled in the corners, while the innkeeper polished glasses behind the bar. Everyone was staring suspiciously at us but between Tor and Starflower, they finally managed to arrange for rooms (two) and some drinks. The fact of Tor showing he had money probably helped.

The next thing he asked for was something to eat. What he got was stale looking bread and corned beef covered in some white stuff. The innkeeper said it was mayonnaise but I could tell it was cold cream - especially since that was what it said on the jar's label. It was soon obvious that the innkeeper was illiterate - no matter what he said.

After gaining the innkeeper's confidence we managed to find out what had been happening. A large winged creature had been invading the village nearly every night for the past couple of weeks. Only one person had seen it and lived to tell about it - it was rather dark at the time - the rest had disappeared, including the inn's cook. At that, Starflower demanded access to the kitchen to cook a decent meal. I got pressganged into helping chop vegetables.

After an hour or so, TDP came in. We quickly briefed him on the situation then he mentioned we'd better get Antonio down before the levitate wore off, preferably on something soft. Currently he was suspended above the hitching post. As we stepped outside there was an almighty THUMP! Too late. We could tell where he was by the depression in the ground. We found him (thus dispelling the Walking UnSeen) and Tor and TDP carried him upstairs to one of the rooms. The inn's customers seemed rather alarmed that they were carrying what appeared to be a large shrub but TDP reassured him that the person inside was an expert of camouflage. Once we got Antonio on the bed, it was evident he was still twitching and wriggling in an effort to point in the direction he had the desire to go. It was finally decided to tie him to the bed. Meanwhile, I managed to get a triple duration Witchsight on myself, just in case.

Since there was a good chance that this thing was going to be back, it was decided that we were going to have a go at it, and teach it a lesson. So we set double watches. At 11pm there was a commotion down the street. Crashes and screaming. Starflower put a Mind Speech on us all and we got Quickened. I went to the window, put a light in the room, and looked out. I could just make out a twelve-foot humanoid with batwings, tusks, and carrying two human forms, one under each arm. One of them, female judging the screams, was still alive.

Tor rushed down with Starflower, TDP and Jhiselle close behind. I was estimating whether or not I could hit it with a Bolt of Starfire but soon figured it was out of range. Starflower then noticed it was wearing an amulet with a stone in it and wanted to know what the fortune teller had said. I quickly sent back the reading and added a recommendation that they strike at the amulet. I then headed down myself. Since this creature appeared to like darkness, let's find out what happens when I turn the lights on.

Tor had closed and swung a mighty blow. The sword impacted on something really solid, just like hitting a brick wall. The creature was made of stone! It dropped the woman, who began crawling away, and attempted to strike back.

Starflower began concentrating and used her telekinesis in an attempt to lift the amulet off. She nearly did it, but the creature realised what was happening and grabbed the chain. The stone was still visible. At last that kept one hand occupied. The other one had struck at Tor using the other body as a weapon. Messy!

Jhiselle attempted to use a Web of Fire but cast it on herself instead. Thank goodness for those Protections. Tor was finding that the creature had a whip-like tail and it was attempting to use that as well. Another web erupted over its upper body, but it soon busted free of it.

Its next attack was a wing buffet, knocking both Tor and Starflower over. By this I was in range and I lit up the entire area. The creature turned out to be extremely ugly, definitely granite looking, with stone wings and a barbed tail. As it moved towards TDP I fired a bolt of Starfire at the amulet. The amulet absorbed the energy and glowed briefly. Now if I could overload it ...

Finally, after a few attempts, TDP got a Slowness on it. Just after that, Tor managed to break one leg off while Starflower went for the arm holding the amulet and managed to chop it off. She then waded into the gem. There was a loud CRACK and a small explosion. The entity froze into solidity. Tor proceeded to get a LARGE hammer and began breaking the creature down to smaller particles.

From what I could tell the gem contained Animating magic, and the only other thing magical was a stone javelin with Forming as the nature of its magic. The villagers started a spontaneous street party, showering the party with food and drink. I quickly checked on the woman but she was too hysterical to let me help. Instead I was nearly attacked by a kitchen knife. Women! As I left, I ensured I didn't turn my back. I then managed to avoid the party and went back to check on Antonio. He had stopped twitching. I guess that stone thing (or Servant of Chaos we later found out) was the avian he had locked on to.

10/04/93

By nine in the morning we were ready to go. TDP arranged for the stone javelin to be stored for our return. Also the villagers had a ceremony for us (they were really pleased). We were presented with a pouch containing the results of a whip around. Starflower started to protest saying that they were a poor village but ended up being kicked in the shins by both TDP and Tor. After we left we discovered the pouch contained 750sp worth of gold coins.

We continued on at a leisurely pace. Jhiselle was practising bird calls as we travelled through rolling country. There were some ruined vineyards and occasionally a wrecked house.

After a while, we passed near a clump of trees. Starflower thought we were watched so she used her Telepathy and picked up something in the trees - something elf-like. At the same time something 'splatted' on her shoulder. Another one hit the side of her face. Whatever it was it was wet and smelly. So she Mental Attacked the creature.

The creature we found was a two-foot high monkey-like beast with an elven face and covered in fur. Starflower tied it up. Its aura told me it was a Treeling. When it recovered from the attack it attempted to take a bite at Starflower (the rest of the party though that was rather funny). Tor then grabbed it, admonished it (even though it didn't seem to understand us), then Jhiselle released it.

Finally we neared the mountain pass and decided to find a place to stop and camp.

.8.

Starflower borrowed TDP's telescope and surveyed the terrain. She reported that there might be a cave a good five miles up the pass, but she couldn't be sure. A more likely choice for a camp-site would be one of the blind gullies leading up into the foot-hills to the south. The first proved to have little water or cover, but the second, half a mile further on, had a spring leading to a pool and stream. The water was clean and clear, but icy cold. At the back was an overhang wide enough to conceal the horses. A pillar of rock dominated the centre of the gully. The only vegetation was some gnarled and twisted trees. Bristlecone pines, Starflower called them, saying that they were probably very old. At least they were easier to draw than people. TDP and Starflower pronounced the campsite good. I was just glad to get off that horse.

Watches were set, and I went to sleep gratefully. Some hours later I was woken by Jhiselle. She had spotted something flying at about eight miles an hour, a mere forty feet above the gully. TDP added that his locate was tracking it. It had to be the tempester. After a hurried discussion, it was decided that TDP and Starflower would go after it, and try to knock down with their spells. TDP triggered shadow-wings upon himself and Starflower, as she cast Mind-speech, and off they flew in the darkness. They circled ahead of the winged elf, just on the edge of telepathy range, and landed. Starflower landed badly, but re-covered quickly, and together they started casting. As the first spells impacted, the winged elf took off, increasing his speed five-fold in an attempt to escape. They loosed their spells again, and this time the tempester started to fall. Twenty feet from the ground he stopped. TDP's levitate had worked.

Meanwhile we were preparing our horses and breaking camp in case we had to bug out in a hurry. Soon the two fliers came back, towing a tempester shaped balloon behind them. We piled up a heap of blankets then stretched out a tarp above them. Once we were all ready, TDP dispelled the levitate. The tempester thudded into the stretched out tarp - still asleep but safe. He was quickly searched. A ring, his broadsword and armour proved to have a magical aura but a gold necklace with a ruby was not. It was decided to wait until daylight before I examined the aura. Once that was done, the tempester was trussed up, blindfolded, and fastened to a horse. Even his wings were tied around him.

It was decided to wake him up and interrogate him with Starflower monitoring his thoughts. We were also linked by a Mindspeech. Once the tempester was woken up, he was extremely angry and started raving on about dishonourable people who had captured him in a cowardly way. He said he had no friends (which seemed to be true). Starflower did get a mental picture of the other three. He also claimed that he fought the bandits off (the pass was empty when they got there). Their hideout was another ten or so miles up the pass. Starflower got a vision of a room with pillars in it with an entrance in the roof. There's a magical trap on the door. He didn't know what it was but it wasn't fire. They don't use a password or a pattern of knocks. There also seemed to be a 'back door' to the room, but they had not succeeded in exploring through it.

While TDP put the tempester back to sleep, I transferred some fatigue to Starflower. TDP then laid down a series of wards to keep out native sentients, excluding dragons (just in case).

11/04/93

I managed to purify for two hours then put a Witchsight on myself. Tor went to the edge of the gully to keep watch while Antonio kept an eye on the sky. At TDP's request, I checked the tempester's aura to determine the remaining duration of the currently running sleep spell. That way we could keep an eye on the spell and ensure he didn't wake up. I also checked the ring (nature of magic - lightning bolt), the armour (protection) and the sword (fire).

Later on, Starflower was preparing breakfast when the fire suddenly flared up and she was caught in the flames. TDP used an invested to extinguish the fire, but there was a hobbit-shaped fire creature left. According to my aura it was a semi-sentient fire elemental. The elemental headed towards TDP and grabbed him. Fortunately the Protection from Magical Fire saved him from damage but it was getting uncomfortably hot. So TDP moved towards the pool of water. I fired a Bolt of Starfire into it but that didn't seem to do anything. Jhiselle had just finished healing Starflower's burns by then and both of them rushed over. I prepared another bolt but decided not to fire in case I hit TDP.

TDP threatened to jump into the water so the elemental shot into the air and hovered ten feet up. My Bolt failed to go off, but Starflower hit it with her Bound Air sword. It immediately dissipated.

Meanwhile Tor had spotted a suspicious looking rock and had carried it back to the camp. Antonio tossed it into the pool. 'It's drowned now' 'How do you know that?' 'It's stopped moving'.

We moved out, up the pass. After a while Tor spotted a flare on the hilltop. Also according to TDP's Locate, the hobbit and troll were very close together. As a safety precaution Jhiselle protected us all from normal fire. We were also linked up with MindSpeech while I reinforced my Witchsight.

Soon we could see the entrance, 110 feet up the cliff. There was a fire burning up there as well. Since TDP could only Quicken five people I volunteered to be left out. Instead I went Unseen.

Starflower probed with her telepathy, TDP used his Wizards Eye, and together they found the room where our three targets were. It was a shadowed place with a high roof and pillars. Starflower had the Troll's mind, and described him as looking through a fire and out through the pillar of flame at us. Hastily we concealed ourselves behind some rocks. TDP also noticed that the shady human had a rather distinctive rapier so he locked on to that. Now we could Locate him as well.

The two of them began casting Sleeps and Mental Attacks. The hobbit was the first to fall, but the other two proved to be more resistant. The troll stuffed the hobbit into a chain-mail sack. Both grasped at amulets around their necks. Eventually they too finally succumbed. As the troll fell, the pillar of fire went out.

Tor was already halfway up the cliff as I cast a StarWings on myself and took off for an aerial survey. When I landed on top, I checked the area around the door. It was warded with an agony effect. Was one of them a necro? Down below the others searched the bottom of the cliff for the back door so we could get the horses, and the tempester, under cover.

Soon TDP scrambled up, closely followed by Starflower. TDP used an Opening spell to open the door then Antonio (still below) summoned a mountain lion and got it to slide down one of the pillars. Somehow it missed the pillar but nothing happened to it except landing with a sickening thump on the stone floor below. Antonio dispelled it.

Tor tried climbing down. Instantly he was racked in agony before becoming unconscious. I checked the warded area again. This time the effect was "alarm". We couldn't haul Tor out so Starflower restored him to consciousness by 'yelling' in his mind. As he came around a pulsing light began flashing in the middle of the room. Another detect aura showed that the ward had gone.

We could see that there was a door at the back of the room. TDP's wizard's eye also detected a secret door on the wall next to it. The corridor beyond the obvious door was dark so he requested a Witchsight. After several attempts I got one off, but I was very tired afterwards. Tor and Starflower busied themselves removing possibly useful items and weapons from the sleeping trio, and tying them, including securing with manacles.

We went into the room and I put up a Rank 11 light then checked the other three with the same question I had used on the tempester. Starflower waited while TDP and I went through the obvious door. Beyond it was a dark corridor with another door at the far end. It had locking magic on it and was covered in panels of different kinds of wood. TDP used another Opening spell on it and we wedged it. The room beyond had elvish runes running around it, and another similar door on the far side. We attempted to appraise Starflower of this via the Mind Speech and discovered communication had been lost. So we decided to head back. When we got back we found a frantic elf, screaming at us that we had dropped off her telepathy as well.

So, with Starflower in tow, we went to examine the runes. According to her, they read, in archaic Elvish:

In the world lies a land
In the land lies a mountain
Under the mountain lies a city
In the city lies a courtyard
In the courtyard lies a tree
Under the tree lies a hole
In the hole lies a chest
In the chest lies a box
In the box lies a bag
In the bag lies a diamond
On the diamond lies a light
Under the light lies a door
And the road goes on.

At Starflower's suggestion, I checked the wood panelling and discovered that several of them were from different planes.

.9.

We came to the conclusion that given the chance that this door might lead to places unknown, even to another plane, we'd better leave it alone for now at least. Starflower pointed out that the "back door" didn't look big enough for the horses anyhow; and she, Jhiselle and Tor went off to find a cave or a gully to conceal them in. Meanwhile TDP and I inspected the items taken from our prisoners. The troll was wearing a bone amulet which had some shamanistic abilities. A wand had a summoning type spell embedded in it. The daggers had poison on them as well as a harm entity effect which we figured actually created more poison. Nasty! And there are those at the Guild who would pay lots for those. The rapier was non-magical, so was the main-gauche, while the chain mail had protection magic on it. The hobbit had no magical items but the troll had a powerstone in a pouch. Great! That's my treasure! TDP allowed me to hang on to it but I wasn't going to use it until it was checked over properly. There was also the glass globe with the flame on it. At first thought we considered it to be a firemage place of power but Jhiselle only got a slight buzz from it. The only other conclusion I came up with was that it was the firemage equivalent of the Crystal of Vision - used in the flamesight ritual.

Many of us were feeling tired so we rested for at least six hours.

12/04/93

TDP and Starflower decided to explore past the secret door so we tagged along. There was a ward in the doorway but it seemed depowered so Starflower walked into it. According to her aura, it had no effect. The corridor beyond was cold, dusty, dark, and the air was stale. Jhiselle used her pendant of illumination to light the way.

There were two doors on each side and one at the end of the corridor. We went into the first one on the right, which swung open as Starflower touched it. It was dark on the other side until I put a Light spell in the room. It turned out to be a bedroom, with the mummified remains of a human female on the bed. Her head had been severed and dried blood splattered the pillow. We found some mediocre non-magical jewellery (4-500sp worth) and some rolled up papers in a desk's secret compartment. The papers turned out to be three pages of archaic legalese. Probably the deeds to this place. Another door out the back led to the ensuite.

The door on the other side led to a kitchen. Nothing really interesting was found. A jar contained dried up crystals which I suspected was sugar.

The door further on, on the same side, led to a bare room with a hole in the floor. A pole had been built over the hole and there was the remains of rope tied to it. This had to be a well. We were all warned not to throw anything down it (maybe someone thought something would crawl up). There still seemed to be some water down there was well.

The opposing door opened onto a set of stairs leading up a short distance to a room. I threw another Light spell in it. There were depowered ward spells on the 3rd and 5th step and as Tor stepped on the 4th step there was a faint 'click'. Nothing else appeared to happen so Tor carefully stepped off. Still nothing. The rest of us decided to bypass that step.

In the room, there was a fireplace, a broken table, broken shelves, but the predominant feature was a circular area with runes inscribed around the edges, in the centre of the room. The nature of the magic was - magic. Weird. The runes looked dwarvish. Three books lying on the floor had a magical aura (nature : knowledge) so I asked Jhiselle to preserve them with her talent, and I carefully wrapped them up as they were about to fall apart. Jhiselle also spotted a loose stone in a corner. Once we had prised it out, we found a small pouch containing 15 gold pieces and 4-5 small gems.

The last door had been badly damaged but we managed to force our way through and the room at the end also got flooded with light. A pentagram had been inscribed on the floor but had been broken and a mound of dust was lying nearby. Uh oh! I think I know what that dust was. The table at the end of the room (on a raised dais) was also broken with the remains of a book on it. Other tables had vials and other alchemical stuff on it, including preserved 'things'. I began collecting the more interesting looking items. The book had summoning/controlling magic in it and I could read the title 'Necronom Obsurandum Maleficorum' I'm not sure what it means but it sounds NASTY!

A circular picture had been inscribed on the floor in front of the door and we discovered there was a slight 'give' in it. We managed to flip that circular section over (it was hinged) and it had an identical picture on the bottom. A smooth tunnel ran twenty feet down, and opened out. The floor was another 10ft further down. Also a secret door was found to the left. Starflower broke a torch sconce trying to get it open so TDP used an opening spell on it. The corridor was rough cut and curved to the left before abruptly terminating at a wooden panel. TDP shoved a Wizard's Eye

through and discovers the multipanelled room on the other side.

Since we had the Wizards Eye, TDP ran it down the pit. He discovered all sorts of bits, including armour and swords. So I threw a Light down. Tor was lowered down and found the floor was also littered with bones, similar to those found in the orcish runner beasts. He brought up a tooth and two claws. Before we left, TDP used TK to put that nasty looking book in a bag. I felt rather dubious. There are some things that mages should not be fiddling around with.

According to TDP's Locate Aram-sae was in Covenhold so we set up a series of watches before settling down for the night.

13/04/93

It was two am when we were woken by Jhiselle and Tor. Jhiselle had spotted some heat sources heading up the cliff, one of which was rather large. Tor was already advancing to engage so TDP cast Quickness on the rest of us while I did a Witchsight on Antonio, TDP, and myself. Starflower activated Telepathy and Mind Speech and was able to determine that one of them was Aram-sae. They were levitating up the cliff.

Soon it was determined that there were eight of them. One Bael, four undead, a troll, an albino human, and an entity in a black cloud. Starflower mental attacked the albino and it became unconscious. Tor was charging Aram-sae and burst into flames, an immolation courtesy of Jhiselle. He hit Aram-sae, stunning it.

Jhiselle fried a zombie, while TDP slowed one. I was just getting to the top when a Ram of Force hit Jhiselle knocking her back down to the room. She was stunned, took a lot of bruising, but would survive so I concentrated on repelling the attack. Antonio fired off Ice Projectiles and two more zombies 'bit the dust'. Starflower went for the remaining zombie and missed.

Finally I got a Light spell off and it was easier to see what we were doing. Plus I could now act more effectively. Just then something red, large, and reptilian appeared. A wyvern! The troll was asleep by now so while Antonio knocked out the last zombie with Ice Projectiles, the rest piled into the wyvern. Meanwhile I fired a Bolt of Starfire into the cloud but it seemed to have no effect.

By now Jhiselle had sculled a Healing potion and was feeling a lot better. The wyvern lunged at Antonio so I shot another Bolt at it. Aram-sae backed into the cloud. Tor followed but missed. Suddenly the cloud, and Aram-sae, disappeared. All that was left was the wyvern and a combined assault soon finished it off.

.10.

The next morning (we slept the rest of the night), Starflower discovered she had come down with a nasty disease but she soon cured it. It wasn't a spell effect. Meanwhile Tor was trying to lift the maul that the large troll was wielding. To our surprise, he did it - he's a LOT stronger than he looks. There's a magical talent involved as well. He decided to take the other troll's bone amulet as well. There wasn't much in the way of magical items on our attackers but we did discover a earring with protection magic on the human we had captured. It was silver with a skull on it.

I put StarWings on everyone, except Tor and Starflower, then we prepared the horses - and our captives - for a quick getaway. We also decided to take the sleeping troll and the dead wyvern so TDP levitated the lot.

Tor and Starflower rode the horses at a fast canter while the rest of us kept pace overhead, towing the captives (except for the big sleeping troll). Once clear of the mountains, we took off ahead. Some farmers scattered for cover as we passed overhead. One of them fired a crossbow which bounced off the wyvern. Finally we neared Covenhold and positioned our levitated captives over convenient haystacks near the road and waited for the other two to arrive.

Finally they did so, minus one troll. It had woken up a few hours ago and they had to abandon it. It was going to be still levitating till dusk. We headed into town. By now, only the wyvern and the tempester were levitating. On the way the discussion turned to steam powered catapults firing dead wyverns. They're all MAD! The innkeeper wanted to charge us 2 silver pieces each for the mattresses to land the wyvern and tempester on but the rest of the folk disagreed. Soon an impromptu party started. Tor insisted I drink a beer.

We didn't want to stay very long as TDP wanted to retrieve the stone javelin. That had been placed in a boathouse by the river. A small boy had been assigned to guide us. So, with the floating wyvern and tempester in tow (the others were strapped to horses) we set off. We were going to fly and ride but I just couldn't get the StarWings off - even with a Light assisting. Must have been the beer. Probably why serious mages don't drink - knew there had to be a reason. Only TDP ended up flying. The boathouse turned out to be a few hours away and was small and dilapidated. Somehow we managed to strap the javelin to the wyvern and we set off downstream. It took us another two hours until we got to a spot where TDP could unfold the boat.

Once the wyvern had been winched aboard (the levitates had worn off) TDP reslept the prisoners then set off down to the rail bridge, 40 miles down.

During the night I was woken up by a loud splash outside so I went up on deck to investigate. It turned out Tor had thrown the troll overboard. From what I could figure out he was under some sort of compulsion cast by a Thail Strongclaw. I went to get TDP so he could order the golem captain to turn the boat around.

It didn't take long before TDP had used a wizard eye to locate the troll then threw a waterbreathing at him. Just in time too. I felt sure that troll would have drowned. Meanwhile Jhiselle was trying to find out why Tor had done it. Tor refused to answer and jumped over the side. At the same time he was hit with a WaterWalking. This meant he bounced off the surface of the water when he hit. Jhiselle dived overboard and retrieved the troll. I went down to help. Meanwhile Tor was slept and restrained.

14/04/93

Tor appeared to still be under the effects of the compulsion the next morning so he was put back to sleep. Starflower attempted to use a telepathy to find out what happened but Tor successfully resisted. Also we had reached a bit in the river where we had to get off and walk so that was what we did. Entities could not be left on board so we had to take the sleeping bodies off before TDP re-bottled the boat.

At about lunch time I checked up on Tor and discovered that the compulsion had stopped. So TDP woke him up. All Tor could tell us was something about a 'little voice' in his mind. Also he was so hungry we went through much of the stew and even a dwarven snackbar - much to Jhiselle's surprise. Nothing else happened on the trip down to the rail bridge.

Once there the boat was unbottled and we embarked. I could still detect no sign of the compulsion on Tor but decided to continue checking on a semi-regular basis in case it was something on the boat that was causing the problem.

At about that time, I detected that the compulsion had returned to Tor so I alerted TDP. Just then Tor charged at Starflower with murderous intent. Starflower was unarmed and defenseless so she quickly moved out of range - over the side of the boat Tor then turned on TDP. I managed to get a Ring of Starlight around him while TDP hit him with a Sleep. Once Starflower clambered back on board she successfully cast Telepathy on Tor. However she discovered an area of his mind that she couldn't access. We decided to visit the wizard and see what he could do. On the way we picked up the other stuff that had been stashed.

15/04/93

We arrived at the Restholm Harbour and discovered that the mouth was barricaded. Also they were flying red/green flags. When we drew closer to find out what was going on we were told to get in the harbour quick. Apparently there's a dragon on the way.

.11.

Jhiselle stayed to guard the boat and our captives while the rest of us flew off to see the wizard. Tor was slept but was twitching in a similar manner to how Antonio had been, as well as whimpering. Antonio and Starflower had him in a sling between them.

When we got there, we knocked on the door. There was no answer at first but soon Himajere answered it. He told us that the 'dragon' was some sort of sea reptile that swims and eats ships. It had been controlled but it had broken control (the controller was inept) and consumed the controller and the controlling globe. Talking to it wouldn't help as it was old and senile. Also magic didn't seem to work on it.

Tor was placed on a table and Himajere started an incantation. A faint glow emanated from Tor which was traced to the bone amulet in his possession. Himajere produced a pair of tongs and gently removed it from Tor. According to him it was a troll shaman stick and contained the spirit of a great troll. TDP took it and offered to fly away with it to determine if it had a range. Meanwhile we found out that the controlling object was a green globe with some sort of mirror attached. There was one survivor who had seen it, but he was a monastic tempester who was suffering from the mental delusion that he was an angel. Currently he was living in the mountains a thousand miles away.

The railway had also been attacked by an organised band of orcs and was out of commission - no getting home that way. However Himajere said he could put up a portal but it would cost us something in the region of 3000 sp. He also examined the powerstone I had and said it was an unpowered non-flawed 4 pointer. I think I'll leave attuning it until the Guild have had a chance to examine it.

At this stage Tor's compulsion wore off. According to my calculation, TDP should have been ten miles away by then. It didn't take long for TDP to reach the place where his ship was berthed and to start the ritual to re-bottle it. Some of the neighbouring ships captains wanted to know whether he could bottle their ships as well.

Once TDP returned, he removed the sleep on Tor, who awoke extremely hungry. As well as going through several helpings of hot stew he also went through some more of those dwarven snackbars.

Our primary objective was to reach the dwarven city where Brian was to deliver our 'captives'. While Tor and TDP went to the dwarven merchants guild to arrange some sort of transport the rest of us waited, with the captives, outside the north gate. Starflower went shopping for honey in order to provide an easily ingested and digested food. Meanwhile TDP and Tor weren't having much luck. All they managed to obtain was a four course meal.

So we went back to the wizard to take up his offer of a portal. When we got there we discovered that he had been singed by an experiment so Jhiselle offered to give him a Protection from Magical Fire as well as a Heatproofing to offset the cost. We managed to knock it down to 2000sp. While we waited for him to do the preparations (it would take an hour) a tray of drinks magically appeared. The milk was delicious.

After a while Himajere returned, carrying a similar crystal to the one Brian had. He traced out a large area and glowing lines appeared around the edge of it. He then traced a small circle and placed the crystal in it. The entire area turned misty and we went through, leading the horses, emerging from the side of a rocky cliff. We could hear war drums which sounded like they came from underground. TDP couldn't detect Brian within 55 miles but he did manage to get a fix on the room where we had first arrived. So we followed the arrow.

We only got ten miles when we were accosted by a black figure in black plate armour. Other dwarves surrounded us. We showed the pass and their manner turned from hostile to respectful - especially when they discovered what we were carrying. Some of the dwarves recognised them and wanted to take hostile action but their commander stopped them. We told them that the prisoners were destined for Brian so they offered to escort us.

Once we arrived at the city and went through the back entrance and reached Brian's place. The dwarven sergeant banged on the door and it was opened by Brian's retainer who told us the Brian was at the front but hadn't been heard from for a week. However he was empowered to pay us - as soon as the identity of our prisoners had been confirmed. He then left. Twenty minutes later he returned with an old female dwarf. She examined our sleeping captives and pronounced them to be authentic. The retainer handed over the money and told us that we would be portalled back in due course. The rest of the party decided to go on a weapon buying frenzy. I decided to stay put.

16/04/93

Finally the portal was ready and we went through it, ending up in the Guild courtyard. All our acquisitions were turned over to the Guild for evaluation. After tax we ended up with 18,392sp each. Acquiring the powerstone cost me 9000sp but there was quite a bit left over to finally get Curse Removal. I also acquired the books we had discovered - except the evil looking one. I

presume that ended up in the Guild vaults. The other thing we discovered that the troll amulet hadn't made the trip back. TDP got the wand of fire sprites. Jhiselle decided to have armour made from the wyvern as well as getting the earring of protection. The fire globe went to Antonio while Tor obtained the ring of lightning bolts.

Soon it was all over and we went our separate ways. I immediately made the booking for learning Curse Removal. That should keep me occupied for a while.