

Spying on the plane eating city

(An adventure by Ben Tabenar)

5th Ice, Winter 802, Ice Moon

Seagate the city of beggars, Despotism of Cazarla, nine weeks and three days after the guild meeting.

The guild has hired us to spy on the city of Tokal on the plane of Kancare, as they are concerned of an extra planar invasion in the making. The local representative of Tokal is Artimus Cyst and his henchman, a Lars, are interested in hiring a party of adventurers on behalf of Lord Fetta to capture or kill three rebel mages leading a rebellion in part of their city, this will be an ideal cover so we hire on. He agreed to allow us to return anywhere in Elusia and to capture the rebels alive, returning with them possibly to Freetown or the lunar empire. I perform a divination on the Lars as he sleeps that night then join in carousing with the party at Dramus's house and about Seagate. The party veto's arresting Artimus for spying, interrogating him rigorously for information before handing him over to the authorities to be drawn and quartered.

6th Ice

We travel through to Tokal using Artimus Cyst's boat arriving in the utterly calm but rancid harbour that was a change from the fresh storm tossed water the previous party had observed. As we travel towards the docks we notice gulls flying below the horizon with washed out mountains in the distance. Artimus informs us that the harbour is being emptied as sirens start to wail and we notice wide sections of the harbour dropping prettily away behind us. As Morgan and Reck show their nautical skills to get us to the wharf quickly I manage to steal the portal device unnoticed during the confusion. Dramus saves the party as we approach the docks by placing a bone construction to extend them towards us so we can flee the water just before it drops away below us, a fishing boat to our rear was not so blessed, fortunately no one of any significance died.

We then travel by suspension carriage to the palace of lord Fetta where we are greeted warmly and told of our mission to strike down the rebel mages. He claims that no books or suchlike have been captured and they are not amenable to negotiations. His plan is for us to sneak into their area under cover of an attack by the warders in a few days although we will have to be somewhat careful of mage hounds.

Reconnoitring the front lines we examine the hellfired bodies of two rebels and meet some sedated mage hounds before returning to lord fetta's palace where we politely endure an evening listening to a play about the cities 'official sanitised' history. Reck being somewhat of a socialite mixed with the local mages, including the buggy-eyed mage while I made acquaintance of a delightful young lady called Persephone.

7th Ice

Lord Dramus summons his tower today while everyone else investigates the city, catches up on sleep and cleans up from some rather messy rituals.



Belfor

Viola wishes to leave us, return to Elusia and rescue her children, which appear to be champions of Renove. Dramus agrees to help her by providing high quality transportation for a wonderfully extrosionistic fee and we get her to sign the standard release form. I agree to look after the hellhounds and Belfor agrees to follow orders.

Arnaud to Belfor...I can take you to hell but I'm not a ranger so you'll have to make your own way to Renoves lands.

9th Ice

We travel to the ruined region of the city where we attack the rebels under cover of the warder's assault.

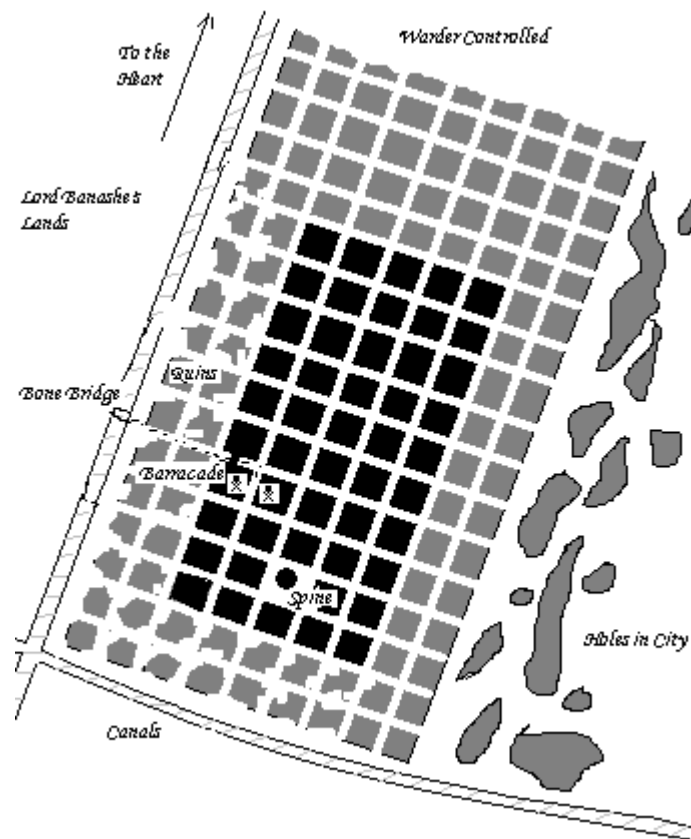
Morgan...He's very nicely spoken
Dramus...He's a hellhound!!!

Since all the bridges across the canal were destroyed we used a bone construction to cross the thirty foot deep sludge into the totally ruined buildings near the border. Travelling further inwards while throwing stones ahead to detect illusionary terrain the buildings became more upright and we had to negotiate our way over a crude barricade, all without finding a single rebel.

Despairing of ever finding a rebel Dramus managed to entice some fool to throw a stick at us after much shouting and as we approached they showed what a bunch of hicks they truly were, deciding not to throw down their weapons immediately when faced by a fully powered up guild party. A short beating was required to teach them their mistake, leaving three of them dead and ten captured while four escaped like frightened rats. Belfor must have been starving as he ate one of the disgusting things, serve him right if he gets sick.

The rebels seem to come from two distinct civilisations, one a bunch of thin bodied, primitive stick throwers and the other a bunch of squat bodied inbreds similar to the inhabitants of Mordeaux. With such warriors it is no wonder that their pathetic bloody civilisations have been invaded and wiped out, I have no sympathy at all.

Although the prisoners are hardly worth the food to keep them alive as slaves they did have some armour, which while heavy was rather valuable according to Michael.



Some of the city under Rebel control



Prisoners in coffle

Chatting to the chained captives while we enjoyed a nice lunch we found out much about the city, how it eats planes down to bedrock and so forth. Dramus at this stage freed them and made them an offer they couldn't refuse. In return for more information from their leaders he offered to take all the survivors of the warders assault back to Elusia.

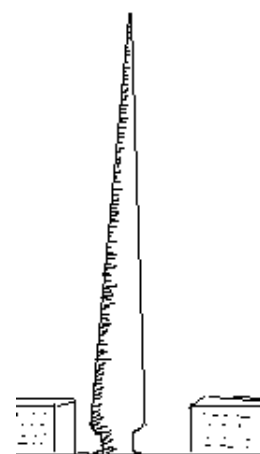
Meeting first Captain Calfarnia before moving up the chain of command to General Maltras we are filled in on the current military strategy of the rebels, on the way being entertained as a magehound appears and messily kills the illusionist we were originally hired to kill. It seems Tokal has nearly completed consuming their plane and to be able to plane travel needs to grow six symmetrical spines. One of the six the rebels are attempting to fell by beating it with large mauls and spikes, this they believe should trap the city here where it and its millions of inhabitants will starve to death. Further questioning uncovers that they have been receiving dreams from something imprisoned within the city giving them advice, no magical spell or ritual seems involved in this communication.

The main rebel encampment surrounds the spine and several mages maintain a portal through which reinforcements continually arrive, many of which either liquefy or are warped as they step through.

While Dramus summons his tower the undead of the city attack the rebels achieving surprise by collapsing a hole near the base of the spire and climbing out, diligent and yet futile negotiations from Reck and Morgan fail to stop the bloodshed and a comic battle ensues, culling the weaker rebels as their leaders entertain themselves watching and catching up on sleep. Suggestions to the mages to stand near the spire and cast spells to attract a magehound to attack them so the resulting explosion would bring it down were coolly received although they were more than happy to have some youngster attempt this with invested items.

Returning with the prisoners chained together in a slave coffle we encountered an ancient evil intestine monster known as the twiner at the barricade. A bit of a ditherer it failed to make way for us when politely asked to "get out of the way" so we drew weapons and chastised it.

During the fight it embraced Dramus in one of its appendages and stroked his wraithcloak while whispering sweet nothings about being a follower of the path, this must have endeared it to our great leader, Dramus asking it to move into his tower as his house guest. Hopefully he will let it eat some of the beggars infesting Seagate.



The Spine

Morgan to Skeleton "I'm sorry we've ruined your surprise attack but we've seen you now"

Hours later Dramus finishes summoning his tower, stops the battle and negotiates a truce between general Maltras and the undead leader, Feron. Some skilled oration privately with the rebels explaining how we had made a moral decision to break the guild contract and destroy the city ourselves so it doesn't continue its reign of terror into Elusia convinced them to leave quietly and quite frankly confused many of the party. Further lying was required to get them to settle in the Seir worshipping city of Rocar in the southern continent of Elusia, mainly involving fictitious stories of the beautiful rich widows living there. Of course we omitted to tell them about the lizard men, the nearby temple of Bune or the biting insects and heat.

Feron, the skull, let slip that the city had compelled him to come here with the undead hordes as if the spire were to fall the city would die. That night I return to the inn for some deserved sleep while the rest of the party quietly strip the city of rebels and the twiner and return to Elusia.

Party humour on Feron "He HEADs back to a safe location...his HEADquarters"

10th Ice

Manifesting in all his glory in Seagate, Seir transports Dramus to Rocar where the rebels are unloaded into the gentle hands of the willing princes priests. In the meantime in Tokal in the early morning I visit Lord Fetta with Alan, Dean and John, enjoy a nice breakfast and collect our pay. Belfor ran off in the night to attempt to find Renove's champions outside the city and since Dramus was not keen on having the insane Maxim in his tower and to cover for the theft of the portal device I requested Artenius transport him back to Seagate next time he visits. Meeting the party back at Tokal at lunchtime we return to Seagate to plot what to do next. Deciding to check out artenus's house we find he had sold it along with some barges on the docks. Searching the house we find a magical binder boxy thingie containing a self-satisfied message "Thank you for so much entertainment, I have decided to take my leave of your fine city, my countrymen shall not be visiting your plane in the near future. The heart of the city contains the guilds final end and if the virtues ever war the city will go mad". Reck and Morgan check out the barges at the docks where Morgan amuses herself playing dunk the mage with Reck.

Morgan "How long can humans hold their breath underwater"

Appendix A - Adventurers

His Majesty, King Dramus of Oz, A tall rakish elven wizard with floor length hair who is extremely skilled in travelling the multiverse on five guineas a day. He lives in a tower with his young child, nanny Clarissa, and numerous rock trolls he feeds truesilver. He has an excellent bar, is generous without fault but is a tad overconfident at times. The human cities on a plane rife with undead owe their continued survival to his selfless guardianship due to his hobby of saving planes of existence. Voted Party leader due to his vast experience and wisdom.



Dramus

Prince Michael, Mighty warrior and prince amongst men, accompanied by his three capable guards Dean, Alan and John. He is a hero and extremely competent merchant specialising in armaments and the spice trade.

Arnaud de Montfort Esq., your friendly scribe.



Morgan

Morgan, Appearing as a female orc in plate with a big sword, she acts more like a confused elf with an illusionary disguise. From a family of goblin farmers, which would explain a lot, she sports silver capped teeth and plays with black mana. Wishing to grow horns she is reputedly into lacy clothes, which is far too horrifying a vision to even contemplate. A fat and jolly orc she is fond of rancid meat and remembers with some fondness the 'good eating' when a whale died on Seagate bridge.

Lady Reck, An attractive blond lady armed with a main-gauche and rapier, she keeps doing strange hand gestures to people she meets and is a drinking buddy of Morgan's. Very fond of all things maritime she hangs about the docks and nearby pubs.

Viola, Beautiful sorceress with exquisite taste in clothes, graceful, elegant and lethal. She is the loving mother of several young screaming babies and decided to bring two along on the adventure disguised as puppies along with a henchman and a nanny. A recruiter of pretty girl and toy boy temple dancers she has a green aura. Her babies were abducted so she left us to rescue them prior to the assault on the rebels.

Appendix B - The plane eating City of Tokal

Tokal (gtn "Skarj button shell" included)

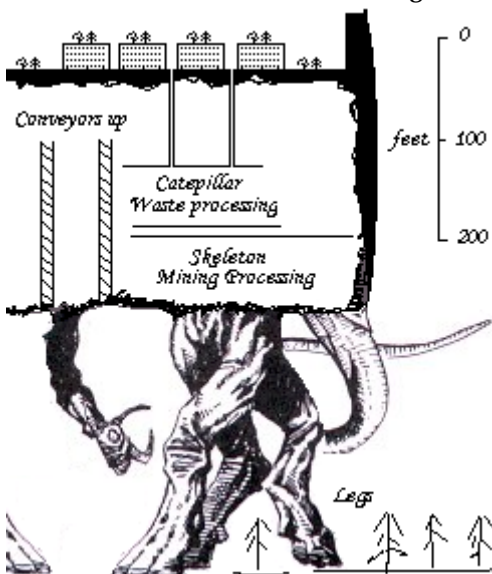
Due to a gods war causing damage to the plane of Skarj the city was constructed a dozen centuries ago as a place for the survivors to live using transformation magic on a Skarj button shell. The city itself is a long lived slightly sentient and has a major magical ability of containment and minor abilities of planar travel, mana conversion and unbinding, it is a dimensional weaver and has an individual true name.

Appearing as a gigantic plant like city with tendrils growing upwards and roots leading into a large water filled jagged edged rent from an ancient cataclysm called the harbour. It is surrounded by the plane of Kancare of which the outer edge is known as the Vardis and appears as a storm from the outside. Having legs it moves about whatever plane it is on and everything which touches the Vardis, air, water or earth is converted instantly into mana goo which flows into the iron clad heart of the city.

This consequently results in poor relations with its neighbours and rampant xenophobia from the citizens due to the continual attacks. The city has spent the last two hundred years eating the plane of Landaquin and is either feeding upon another plane or is in the process of moving planes currently. Six spires or horns grew out of the city and are required for it to move to planes, the rebels were attempting to destroy one to trap the city to starve to death upon Landaquin, sparing the next plane on the menu.

The upper city contains multi-storeyed buildings with gardens on the roofs and in between and is inhabited by humans and a few facsimiles. All the dead in the city are dropped into the underbelly where they are made into skeletons. Vast numbers of these skeletons live in and maintain the undercity along with caterpillars which eat the cities waste products. Spiral screw-line conveyors move materials about and the walls may be tapped for water by feeling for a cold place on a wall and driving a hollow spike in. Hot parts of the wall can also be tapped and a cement like liquid oozes out.

Streets are laid out in grids and signposted with pictures rather than being named and bridged canals abound. The harbour water is held in sheets somewhat like the rings of a tree and seems to act as some kind of reservoir and about a generation it is flushed with continuous sirens being sounded from the dockside towers, this appears to be controlled by the city itself.



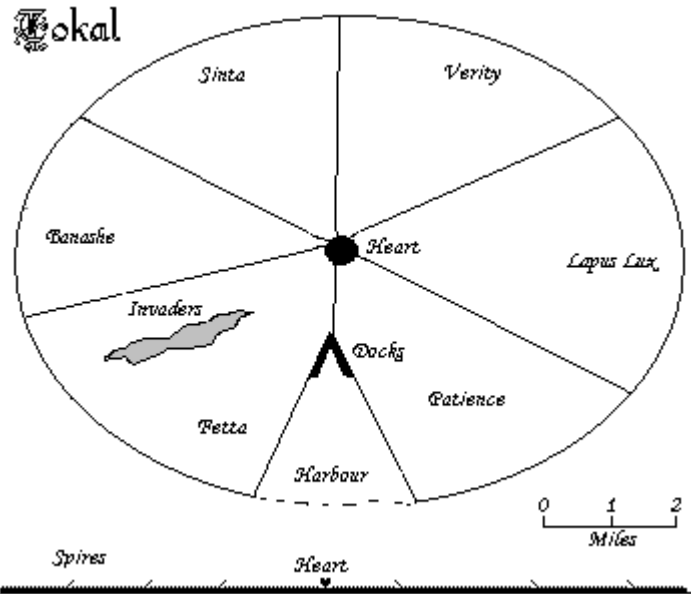
Most of the city mages are non-combat sage types rather than combat mages although the warders seem to have access to hellfire. There is a vast amount of magic in the city with magical lighting, currency and colouring, which becomes more visible as visitors become more attuned to the mana of the city.

The city is ruled by a council of currently six powerful entities called virtues which share a symbiotic relationship to the city due to some form of melding and rule one of the six sectors each.

The virtues maintain the Vardis around the city, through which creatures occasionally manage to get through via cracks especially at dawn when it is at its weakest. The Vardis is difficult to summon entities through, often warping those that do succeed, and temporarily breaks the links between powers and followers.

The population of the city is vast and are very fond of mythology and often name themselves after powers, slavery is mostly illegal apart from Lars and non-humans. Their mythological afterlife is a life devoid of pain etc that fits being turned into skeletons although few inhabitants seem aware of the cities form.

The mana in the city is best described as having a 'bad taste' appearing to eventually mutate those using it with mages appearing twisted and warped, summoned entites such as hellhounds find it painful. Unknown to most Elusian powers until recently the inhabitants worship several gods including the great hydra, Sothoth Keth the uncover of secrets and Largar Mor the god of messengers. The gods take a very active role in the plane and have been known to arrive in person when a follower is slain. Visitors will have magic resistances equivalent of rank fifty purification until they have done a lot of casting which attunes them to the mana and as a side effect makes the lighting and many colours visible.



The Virtues (gtn included)

These long-lived sentient entities must remain neutral to the gods and each rule an inhabited sector of the city. They are weakest at sunset and this is when things such as gugs can get past the Vardis. They have a symbiotic link to the city through some form of melding process and were originally human mages, they have their own souls and each virtue is unique and apart from Banashe's case not inheriting the previous virtues powers. It takes dedication and hard work to become a virtue. The current virtues are:

- Lady Patience**, virtue of patience, mind mage, wears red ribbons and float in the air using mindspeech for communication. She has aides Bruce and Matthew and Artimus Cyst works for her. She has a magical wooden box called the Admiralty, which contains money, books inns and suchlike as necessary. She gives out pieces of ribbon which improve concentration checks and are living parts of her, she may be able to cast range touch spells through them. The only original virtue left alive she has Attorneys, which are fighter types and wear pieces of ribbon.
- Lord Verity**, virtue of truth, he is undead and possibly a vampire and lives in a castle. Wearing plate armour and armed with a large sword he has a large collection of weapons stuck through him.
- Lord Sinta**, virtue of tolerance and unpredictability, his followers wear folded pieces of paper and many are healers, he was interested in getting a previous guild party to steal lady patience's portal device.
- Lord Lopus Lux**, virtue of caution, he lives in a gloomy cathedral like house and has precognisant investigators called warders who wear pieces of mirror, black armour and ride black horses and pass for glorified town guards. He also has mage hounds which are dogs specially trained to hunt down and kill mages and those using magical items.
- Lord Banashe**, virtue of discipline, he is humanoid with skeletal wings
- Lord Fetta**, first virtue of adaptability his sector is noted for buildings shaped like hands and mouths. He has abilities similar to flesh shaping and is a follower of lady patience. Although occasionally changing his appearance his eyes and mouth seem to remain constant and he can see straight through illusions. His followers wear small golden eyes and his palace is artistically constructed with two men and two woman figures holding it aloft in their hands. Having studied Cazalan morality he has styled himself a man of the people to encourage support from the unwashed masses to increase his power base. He had the rebels upon his sector.

Guilds and Associations

- Lars**, Lord Lars was the virtue of discipline and a necromancer. He was deposed in the year 791 due to his illegal study of necromancy and broken into fragments called facsimile's (gtn included) which are individual entities, some of whom are highly ranked military scientists. There were about ten thousand Lar's originally but all but a thousand have been hunted for sport or worked to death as slaves.
- Hammers**, guild of builders mainly human with a few Lars.
- Rebels**, about five hundred invaders from the plane of Landaquin who were organised and fortified in a ruined section of lord Fetta's lands, they entered the city through a very 'broken' dimensional gate giving many of them warped bodies. Their magic seems to be mainly illusion and celestial and they carry disks on chains which may be a form of money. According to them one of the last dragons on their plane showed them how to portal into the city, dying in the process some years ago. From midwinter 802Ap they had been hearing a voice in their dreams, reputedly from an entity imprisoned within the city telling them that destroying one of the cities spines will kill it, which they were attempting to do. They were convinced to leave the city and now dwell in the city of Rocar in the southern continent of Elusia.

Other Entities Encountered

Artimus Cyst, is a spy for Tokal, he is pacted to Sothoth Keth the uncover of secrets and has a cover as a merchant importing bulk foods from Seagate.

Porcilio Scabre, is Artimus's servant Lars in Seagate.

Buggy eyed mage, an E&E with fish pale skin who works for lord Fetta.

Stocky mage, an Earth mage with coppery skin.

The twiner, an ancient evil 'intestine monster', with bad skin made up of numerous humans strung out and controlled from a central entity by their intestines. Poorly spoken and dressed due to its chosen diet of peasants it is none the less an asset to have in any insane necromancers dungeon.

Pra-Tulm, Rebel celestial mage

Feron, Leader of the undead in the undercity, appears as a skull which is sometimes attached to a bolted together body.

The portal device(s)

A small brass ship and a two weighted bolas which allows the creation of temporary dimensional rifts to Kancare using Virtue magic which ships may be sailed through, it evidently can only do Elusia to Kancare transport as the other planes are more distant but can open portals to anywhere in Elusia. The bolas when thrown ahead of the boat becomes suspended in the air and sets the destination for the portal, it is Virtue (patience) magic. The ship catches the bolas out of the air on a hook on the mast as it sails through the portal formed. It is unknown which of the boat or Tokal itself opens the portal. The bolas was stolen and is currently held by the guild to hopefully deny free access to Elusia for the cities spies.

Planes of Existence

Skarj. Plane of origin of Tokal

Kancare. Plane surrounding Tokal which exists within other planes and consumes them. Its surface is known as the Vardis and appears as a storm from outside and walls of light from within.

Escabar. This is the plane of origin of the mage hounds used by the warders.

Landaquin. This is the plane of origin of the rebels and has been eaten down to bedrock by Tokal which has also consumed all the oceans and rivers and most of the air. The gods of the plane deserted it some time ago and a few decades ago even the dragons left.

Other Races

Gug. Twenty foot tall four armed monsters, their skin makes good boots.

Caterpillars, human sized caterpillars who can vomit over people as an attack they live in the under city.

Skeletons, human skeletons maintain the under city and can be compelled to come to its defense when required.

Mage hounds, (gtn included) skeletal dogs used by warders in hunting down mages or those using magical items, they have mechanical jaws mounted in front of their muzzles, somewhat like bear traps which are cranked open. They hover about three feet off the ground with their legs moving as if they were drifting in a breeze when active, are from the plane of Escabar and are non-banishable. When attacking they move faster than a phantasm, bite their victim and then proceed to life drain them, leaving a blackened corpse, they then explode causing devastation to the surrounding region.

Previous Missions

The first guild party to visit the plane in 797 and hired by lady patience to get lord Banashe deposed, as he was being ineffective in putting down a rebellion in a neighbouring sector of the city. The party convinced the virtues instead to make lord Fetta a virtue and give him control of the sector in rebellion so he could put it down himself and 'sacrifice' the eight outer sectors of the city, giving the remainder the necessary population density to survive. Lady patience didn't care if the mission was successful or not and inserted a female warder named Finch into the party as a spy, she and the party leader were charmed in some way to fall in love and became married, Finch later charged him with rape. Many of the party were horribly mutated in non-useful ways by lord Fetta trying out his newly acquired abilities.

The second guild party went 'underground' in the city discovering it had guts and below these legs, it was located on bedrock which made them suspect the city was eating the plane down to the bedrock and from inference that the attacks from outside the city were being launched by those who's lands were being eaten. They found skeletons and caterpillars in the under city.

The third mission, as I write was hired by the guild to evaluate the threat poised by the city and additionally by Lord Fetta to remove the rebels from the city, which was done. Artenus Cyst left a message to the guild stating that the city would not be moving to Elusia, instead another as yet unknown plane being chosen.