

# 'The Mystery of the Missing Suitors'

By the Venerable Father, Broc von Hecklyn

## Overview of the Chapters within this tome

Page(s)	Chap #	Précis
2	<a href="#">Prologue</a> :	<i>A short view of Father Broc's life</i>
3-4	<a href="#">Chapter 1</a> :	<i>Meet, greet and discuss a mission. Then fly to Bowcourt through the cold winters night</i>
5-9	<a href="#">Chapter 2</a> :	<i>Finally arrive at destination and get a brief overview of events from the Chancellor</i>
10-15	<a href="#">Chapter 3</a> :	<i>We explore a bit and then proceed to dinner</i>
16-18	<a href="#">Chapter 4</a> :	<i>We have dinner; we give our time to the feats and activities and Penni to the baron!</i>
19-25	<a href="#">Chapter 5</a> :	<i>The revelry ends with Dawns revealing light and the party discover age-old secrets.</i>
26-31	<a href="#">Chapter 6</a> :	<i>We discover more and the baron's life is threatened after Penni puts her hand where it shouldn't be!</i>
32	<a href="#">Chapter 7</a> :	<i>We check out 'Tower Blanc'</i>
33-35	<a href="#">Chapter 8</a> :	<i>Discussions with the family and bouts occur while we search the rooms of Guy/Fulk</i>
36-39	<a href="#">Chapter 9</a> :	<i>Our roof collapses, Penni has a private bout with Guy, he answers some questions and the castle is invaded by various golems and constructs</i>
40	<a href="#">Chapter 10</a> :	<i>Battle is joined</i>
41	<a href="#">Chapter 11</a> :	<i>The fighting continues</i>
42-43	<a href="#">Chapter 12</a> :	<i>Battles and we head for the chapel encountering nastier Golems interrupting the sacrifice of Justine with astounding consequences</i>
44	<a href="#">Chapter 13</a> :	<i>We aren't on Alusia anymore but in an Asylum elsewhere (without our minds) which we quickly escape from</i>

- 45        [Chapter 14](#): We wander the new town called 'Newport'
- 46        [Chapter 15](#): On the beach crating a schism by bringing Justine back to life
- 47        [Chapter 16](#): We check out the Asylum and talk with Dr Dipple
- 48-49     [Chapter 17](#): We meet Dr Dominani and strike a deal
- 50-51     [Chapter 18](#): The plane is in an uproar and chaos due to recent events
- 52        [Chapter 19](#): We trek across the lands and discover disturbing facts
- 53-54     [Chapter 20](#): We get to the island, enter the tower and invade victors home.
- 55-57     [Chapter 21](#): We undertake 'work' on the heart of victors plane destroying it
- 58-61     [Chapter 22](#): The ramifications of our actions come home to us
- 

*These are the certified true and correct scribe notes for the adventure, as written by:*

*The Venerable Father, Broc von Hecklyn*

*For the period 14<sup>th</sup> Snow 804 to 25<sup>th</sup> Snow 804*

## **Broc von Hecklyn**

---

### **Prologue**

**Noon 14th Snow 804**

**My**

**residence in Seagate:**

**T**he bitter cold weather has continued and I'm wrapped up warmly in front of my fire watching the flames dance around the hearth, content and comfortable with a thick tome of church history to review, ah what bliss!

I had just nodded off when the door opened and in traipsed my faithful acolyte Garion Du'ornal<sup>1</sup> entered and I could tell be the frown on his face he wasn't happy which meant bad news for me. <sigh>

---

<sup>1</sup> Ga'Ernoul de Tuscana – Born in Tuscana, my acolyte for the past few years.

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

"OK what is it Ga'Ernoul?" I was about to prompt him to reply when I noticed in the doorway behind him my old friend Thaeuss standing patiently with just the hint of a smirk on his face. "Come on in Thaeuss, make yourself at home and tell me why you're out in this dreadfully cold weather". Thaeuss promptly sat down in front of the fire, thawing whilst gathering his thoughts and I waited patiently as I have learnt that Thaeuss will speak in his own good time.

"Broc, a message was sent to the guild requesting some assistance with a 'delicate' matter up in Bowcourt and I thought you might like to come with me and a few others to see what's afoot there." He knew me well, knowing that with just a little information offered and the possibility of adventure I would jump at the opportunity, and I did! "Certainly Thaeuss when and where are we meeting and what's the story?"

He rose from his warm repose with a smile on his face, "I knew you'd come but explanations will have to wait as I have others to gather for the task. Come to the guild at 2pm to find out more". He then took his leave and went again into the cold searching for more 'friends'<sup>1</sup> no doubt, which left me with a chill at the thought of who he may come across here in sleepy mid winter Seagate.

I waited some time and gathered some fortitude with the help of a good bottle of wine and some fine cheese but I couldn't help wondering what I had volunteered for and who would be accompanying us on our travels this time.

I noticed the clock showing half way between 1 and 2 so I rose, dressed and I asked Garion to excuse me to any who come asking for me while I am away then I grabbed my warm heavy cloak and headed up to the Guild with haste. I saw few others in the cold streets, as most are too intelligent to be heading anywhere outdoors in this bone chilling weather. I was relieved that my warm heavy cloaks managed to keep out most of the cold on my route to the large imposing edifice by

---

<sup>1</sup> Friends or victims – this is yet to be seen!

*the river, which is known as the Seagate Adventurers Guild (SAG).*

## **Chapter 1:**

**2pm 14<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Guild - Seagate:**

**Seagate Adventurers**

*I passed through the guarded gates of the guild and asked the door warden where Thaeuss was meeting to organise a 'party'. He said the only room being used at the moment was the grand meeting room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, so I hurried off in search of this room, as I'd never heard of a 'Grand meeting room'! I entered the well lit (but still retaining shadowy corners), warm and opulent room wherein I spied several other adventurers including a few familiar faces. I took a seat, nodded to the assembled few and waited for a man to inform us as to what is afoot.*

*Looking around I noticed and noted that already gathered in this warm and cosy room were:*

- ⇒ Gerald, a Human male, renowned for his illusions*
- ⇒ Penni, a lovely Elven female Namer, a woman of deep convictions and full of promise*
- ⇒ Dramus, an Elven male Necromancer, a stout adventurer of good standing*
- ⇒ Thaeuss, an Elven male Binder, a fellow adventurer I know well*
- ⇒ Yvette, an Human female Mind mage, a young lady of repute if not renown*

*Thaeuss related the story as known thus far is: Six weeks after the Winter Guild Meeting, an urgent message has arrived at the guild by way of the semaphore system from the Baron of Newcourt's Chamberlain.*

*The message requests a party to (discreetly) investigate a disappearance at the court where several suitors for the Baron's daughter's hand are in residence and one important guest has gone missing.*

*An individual will need to pose as a suitor with the rest as entourage (allowing the group free, unobtrusive access to the castle). Remuneration will be by*

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

negotiation. Own transport to Newcourt<sup>I</sup> is required. Our employment to start as soon as possible

Thaeuss further notes that in an unusual twist, standard guild astrology readings indicate that a binder would be useful on this mission (and no the astrologer was not drunk, blind, charmed, compelled, nor bribed), but they did recheck twice.

**This explains why Thaeuss was gathering us together as he was 'lucky' enough to be in Seagate at the time!!**

The ubiquitous 'Smith' from guild security appeared from his shadowed corner and asked for the guild contract to be signed and positions decided upon. We quickly responded to this voting myself as scribe (with no other volunteers), after some discussion Yvette became military scientist with her highest rank and we decided that Dramus would be our leader unless a decision involved demonic's and the like, in which case Thaeuss would take charge.

Preparations began immediately with the meeting adjourning until 6pm, which we had decided as our time of departure. Some hurried back to lodgings or stores to procure more winter furs for the highlands that we would most likely be visiting, others quickly visited the library for a bit of research<sup>II</sup> into the area of Bowcourt and yet others simply disappeared off for a few hours.

**6pm 14<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Guild - Seagate:**

**Seagate Adventurers**

We all met in the Guild courtyard where we discovered Thaeuss had created our transport device which rather looked like a large tarpaulin turned up at the front & sides, with transparent 'windows' in the front/floor as well as seating space for around 4 individuals. He explained that some of us can be weightless and go along with the 'flying tarpaulin', some will be carried by the tarp due to their weight and I would be transformed to stone and shrunk to

---

<sup>I</sup> We note that it is Yule in Newcourt, which is some 450 miles NNE of Seagate in the foothills of the Alfheim Mountains.

<sup>II</sup> See the Section in this document 'Seagate Guild Library Research results'

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

reduce my weight. This was agreed and we all alighted this 'flying tarpaulin' in various fashions and we took off into the night.

The trip was relatively uneventful (especially for me in my 'stoned' form) but it was very, very cold, especially when the cold protections wore off and most were forced to 'huddle together under a blanket/fur mound in the front once Penni suggested had it!<sup>1</sup>

### **4am 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804 Somewhere in Bowcourt?**

The flight terminated some time around 2am just outside a walled town in the Bowcourt area, more is yet to be determined!

A number of plans and thoughts are discussed as we need a 'cover story' for our group of individuals and also we need to be seen as a cohesive group centred around Gerald (the suitor), but not so cohesive as to have no internal dissention so that we are approachable to various court machinations etc. See **Appendix 3 - Plans, roles and tasks.**

Actions undertaken, decided or being cogitated over:

1. We have undertaken a brief period of research at the guild library looking for information on Bowcourt, Foxcourt, Newcourt and associated areas. The Information is listed below under 'Seagate Guild Library Research Results'
2. We have packed for the cold weather
3. We have travelled to the approximate location of our destination.
4. We are still considering what our story will be and how we will present it to the court and other individuals.

---

<sup>1</sup> I understand no objections were made to the idea by the 'males' (Dramus and Glass). Who would when they were being offered warm, close proximity to the shapely forms of Penni and Yvette!!!

## Chapter 2:

**4am 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**

**Somewhere in Bowcourt?**

*They alight from the flying tarpaulin and wonder where they are, Yvette being the practical and down to earth woman that she is volunteers to go to the gates of the town and ask after Penni gets shouted down for that very suggestion<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, she departs for the gate some 200yards away and Gerald appears to follow her.*

*Yvette comes to the gate and knocks loudly at the little gate inset in the bottom right corner, no response is forthcoming so she repeats with even louder knocking, finally hearing sounds of movement from behind the thick gates. A guard appears behind a small latch in the door, behind a loaded crossbow pointing at Yvette's lovely countenance.*

*Yvette: "Hello there can you let us in",*

*Guard: "No the gates are closed for the night"*

*Yvette: "We know but it's very cold here and we have lost our horses"*

*Guard: "Sorry but the barons orders stand and the gates are closed overnight"*

*Yvette: "Where are we?"*

*At this the guard takes a moment (probably due to puzzlement), "excuse me"*

*Yvette decides that may have been a less than useful question and changes her tactics.*

*In her most convincing voice she asks, "Please let us in, we are most cold"*

*Guard: "the gates of Faircourt are to remain shut madam, come back at dawn!"*

*With that, the latch is shoved shut and sounds of the guard moving back to wherever are heard.*

*Armed with at least that information her and Gerald return to the other freezing travellers and relay the news. "This is fine but "how far away from our destination are we"? is then asked of them. They*

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: When in dangerous unknown situations like the snowed in NE highlands in the dead of night, don't send the Rank 8 healer in first!

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*cogitate a minute before remembering that I know the maps and directions to where we are headed, Thaeuss quickly grabs my 'stoned' form and changes me back to life.*

*Damn it is freezing cold was my initial thought, especially after the warmth in Seagate when I had last been 'alive'. I 'come to' in the dark frozen wastes and the first thing they do is ask, "how far is Faircourt from Newcourt?" I think fast in between freezing and chattering my teeth and inform them "it's some 50miles SW of Newcourt". Thaeuss suggests I put the cloak back on again and he pronounces the change word then I become stone again.*

**4.15am 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
of Faircourt**

**Outside the town**

*Armed with this new information they again 'board' the flying tarpaulin for another brief flight across the cold, snowy landscapes below.*

**5.30am 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
of Newcourt<sup>I</sup>**

**Inside the town**

*Around this time a larger city is seen ahead with a number of lights visible from a distance, assuming this is the destination the party finds a suitable wall to fly over and looks quickly for an open place to land without attracting attention. This is done expeditiously with us alighting in a deserted small square near the walls. They change me back again so now I too can freeze with them and they roll up the tarpaulin in case of need another time.*

*We wonder the streets looking for a tavern with little luck but we manage to avoid some patrols around the empty streets<sup>II</sup>. We wander for almost an hour seeing a fair bit of the city including a blackened church in the main square which looks little used. We luckily find an open tavern and upon entering, it*

---

<sup>I</sup> Approximate size is some 7-8,000 people in this city. Large walls around some 40ft high and well constructed.

<sup>II</sup> Note: When arranging guards etc don't outfit the patrols with chainmail or similar clanking armour, which can be heard at a distance by and half hearing being.



## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

seems to be a labourer's tavern for their early morning meal before their working day.

We enter and take seats in the moderately warmer main room and gesture for food. We notice that the other working people in this tavern seem to be giving us a 'wide berth' since we are dressed strangely for such a place and at such time. Our thoughts are interrupted by the arrival of 'food', well it looks like something edible anyway except it consists of green and purple, darkly spiced cabbage with bread and a dark liquid of indeterminate scent.

Being the hearty types that we are, we start to pick at the food but when the server passes close by I ask for some cheese, which is followed by a small wheel of the appropriate type. We pass some time here and Dramus fails to hurt the economy with his passing around of TSG's<sup>I</sup> as Gerald's hand is fast enough to catch the thrown coin and replace it with a silver piece instead.

We ask directions to the Barons Castle and are informed that it is some 2 miles NE. It is decided that Thaeuss and Gerald (in disguise) will visit there to inform the chamberlain of our imminent arrival and find any information we must know before arriving.

**8am 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
town of Newcourt<sup>II</sup>**

**Inside the**

We split up with Yvette, Penni, Dramus and I going to procure a carriage for our last leg of transport to the castle. Thaeuss and Gerald walk off; go invisible and fly towards the castle.

A Carriage is procured after some haggling at a local stable and the idea of 'renting' carriages is introduced after we express a desire for a carriage and the only carriages in town are owned by the noble / rich families living here. However one is wintering in the south and arrangements are made to 'rent' the carriage from the La' Vache family<sup>III</sup> for the sum of two

---

<sup>I</sup> True Silver Guineas. 1 TSG = 21 GS (Gold Schillings). 1 GS = 12 SP (Silver Pennies)

<sup>II</sup> Approximate size is some 7-8,000 people in this city. Large walls around some 40ft high and well constructed.

<sup>III</sup> More likely from the La' Vache family carriage driver and steward

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

TSG's. We then await the carriage and return of Thaeuss and Gerald.

Meanwhile Thaeuss and Gerald have flown to the castle invisible and then dropped to the ground half way up the hill and become seen again. They then walk the last few yards to the gate and ask to be shown to the chamberlain. This is done with little trouble and they meet with the Chamberlain<sup>I</sup>, introducing themselves in their disguised forms. They explain who we are and ask if there are anything we should know, to wit he replies he will tell us all when we arrive but until then, he looks forward to meeting us.

They take their leave from the Castle and promptly fly back to us in town, locating and rendezvousing with our carriage. We all enter the carriage and our driver 'Pierre' drives us up to the castle proper.

### **9.30am 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804                      Near the town of Newcourt<sup>II</sup> and the Baronial Castle**

We arrive at the castle and alight the carriage after formal introductions to the chamberlain. We are announced as Sir Gerald, a knight of Brastor and Gryphon Pass<sup>III</sup> and his companions. We receive raised eyebrows when the servants rush to get our luggage, bags and cases to find merely backpacks instead!

The chamberlain explains that he will visit with us later when he has time and he directs servants to take us to our rooms and made comfortable. . He has a servant for our use and we are introduced to Nanosh, a young lad of around 14 years of age. Nanosh shows us to our rooms and most express the desire for some sleep and retire to their rooms, Gerald in one, Thaeuss in one, the 'ladies' in another and I will be sharing a room with Dramus. Since I am the least tired, I am left to 'watch' from our hall while the others rest.

I spend the next few hours in front of the fire trying to learn more Le'Lange<sup>IV</sup> from Nanosh with a little success. I know very little Le'Lange as does

---

<sup>I</sup> Javert the Chamberlain

<sup>II</sup> Approximate size is some 7-8,000 people in this city. Large walls around some 40ft high and well constructed.

<sup>III</sup> This locale was chosen as it is within the dark circle.

<sup>IV</sup> Le'Lange is the local language, closely related to Elven

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

Nanosh but we try to enhance both our vocabularies 'mon petit'<sup>I</sup>. I do however discover that the boy is one of the Domari, who are the original inhabitants of the area. His native tongue is Domari<sup>II</sup> (the same name as the people -- although the collective term for the people also appear to be "Dom" -- very confusing).

### Noon 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804 Baronial Castle

In Newcourt's

The doors open and in come servants laden with food, others with tables and accoutrements for our lunch with the chamberlain. I go around rousing the others with polite knocks and then return for polite conversation while the servants do their roles. Once is all is ready Jubert shoos the servant including Nanosh out so that we may talk of the issues here and what is afoot in this grand unique castle.

There are three suitors in residence at present with us making four sets of suitors and entourage. There were others sent for but they have not arrived yet due to the weather. There was a fourth suitor (Fulk) before our arrival but he has gone missing, it is he we are tasked to find and in order to avoid repercussions. The baron has directed that the decision on who will win the Lady Justine<sup>III</sup> de'Amberville's heart will be made by the start of spring. She is confirmed as the heir to Newcourt barony and the title of baroness would pass to her upon her father's death or when he passes it on.

The details on thee four suitors are:

- Fulk de Foxcourt, a young mid 20's male, nephew to Count Richard of Foxcourt, a man of little style and taste who was used to exercising his prerogatives with the serving wenches or the local 'ladies' in the town at the foot of the castle hill.

He was ill thought of almost from the outset by all and sundry. He is however favoured by his uncle

---

<sup>I</sup> Translation 'A little'

<sup>II</sup> Domari appears to be closely related to Old Kravonian.

<sup>III</sup> She is a lovely girl, 18 years of age

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

the count who would 'strongly' like Fulk to win the hand of the fair lady Justine. This would firm his power over the area and ensure that the Newcourt barony stays within his power and loyal to him.

His companion, Guy and several guards accompanied him. Only Guy and two guards remain as the other guards have been despatched to Foxcourt with the news of his disappearance.

- Florestan Firebrass, a young 16-year-old chinless male cousin of Justine's is another suitor. He is here with his Great Aunt 'Oudine Fortbrass' who is described as being 'formidable. He also has a page, a captain of his guards and six guards with him.

He is her cousin but if he were approved as the suitor then he would get dispensation to marry so close a relative.

- Gerard de Mauvoisin, a local Baronet (Newcourt) of around 30 years of age is here also, he is a widower and seen as a 'fine catch' apparently by the local ladies. A squire, page and two guards accompany him.
- Chevalier Henri de Malvallet of Faircourt is the last suitor in residence; he is the son and heir of the baron of Faircourt. He is 20 years of age and acts with style, dignity and grace appropriate to a young man of his station. The chamberlain lets slip that he may be the favoured suitor at this time. A squire, page, sergeant and four guards accompany him.

We enquire about the search for the missing suitor and are informed that it was thorough. We ask poignantly about the tall, oddly shaped and sizable tower within the castle walls. "Ah, Tower Blanc".

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*It is the oldest building in the castle and was the resident of the baron's previous mage<sup>I</sup> 'Simon Dufay<sup>II</sup>', before his unfortunate death some 7 years ago. It turns out that he confessed to have burnt the bishop of Newcourt to death in his church after some days of 'frank and forthright discussion' with the baron's guards. He was burnt to death for this crime.*

*Anyway, the thorough search went all the way to the roof door on the top of the tower that is the only known way inside. No one went inside, as the seals were intact. The tower has been uninhabited for the last seven (7) years and the post of the mage is currently vacant!*

*Fulk was last seen at dinner on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Snow, he was noticed as being missing on the 9<sup>th</sup>. He frequently was away for a day at a time previously when he went visiting to exercise his 'prerogatives' nearby. Some of his guards have left to report the disappearance and they are expected to reach Foxcourt by tomorrow (16<sup>th</sup> Snow). A speedy response will no doubt eventuate. We take it that haste is requested of our search for the missing Fulk and would be most appreciated.*

*Thaeuss broaches the point of payment and Jubert produces a small glowing, war to the touch, amber looking stone which he says is worth some 1,500sp. He will pay us in these and perhaps more. We are offered this 'mana bauble' for our investigation and we will get back to him later with our results.*

*We press him on the issue of who knows about our presence and us and we get the feeling that he is doing it of his own initiative to provide plausible deniability for future repercussions and perhaps to alleviate the stresses on an already pressured situation.*

*We discover the castle dates from the time of the old western kingdom (some 900 years ago) with additions made by successive generations, which is why there are*

---

<sup>I</sup> It may not have been his actual residence rather his 'working area'

<sup>II</sup> Simon Dufey was apparently a mind mage and was killed on mid winters day seven years ago.

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

so many different architectural styles and structures within the walls. It is much larger than would be expected of a baronial castle and is sited on a large hill rising from the plain, the hill having one sheer side on the north and on the western side the road up is a switchback road leading to the gates.

Another point of note is that this barony (and apparently Faircourt barony) is much larger than we expected, and that in some parts of the Baronies/Kingdom a noble with Newcourt's land and vassals would be at least a Viscount, perhaps a Count. This of course makes baron Newcourt's daughter is a very fine catch.

Dramus (via mind-speech) relates that he has discovered the castle area to be a Necro place of power, much to our astonishment. He has also detected a handful of lessor undead underground beneath the tower.

## Chapter 3:

**1pm 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Baronial Castle:**

**In Newcourt's**

We suggest that Fulk's rooms become vacant for a short time and perhaps 'rats' could be the reason for the brief move to other rooms, this will then give us some time to look for anything which may provide a clue as to his whereabouts or any foul play that may have befallen him.

After our information filled lunch with Jubert, he excuses himself as he has much to do and takes his leave from our company. His last words are that dinner will be an hour after dark (which is 5pm) and we are expected at dinner. He departs the rooms via the main doors and Nanosh surreptitiously comes in and 'lurks' over by the fire.

I depart for the room I share with Dramus so that I can undertake my divination ritual in peace while the others check the rooms for hidden / secret apertures or for any other means of entry to our suite or means of spying on our activities.

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*During my divination ritual, I discover that the room is a Rune place of power as well as being a Necro place of power, what a find!*

**2pm 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle:**

**In Newcourt's**

*My divination finishes successfully and I rejoin the others to relay my findings about the little stone that the Chancellor has provided us, and which he costs at around 1,500 to 2,000sp.*

- *The stones is naturally magical and appears to be a type of crystallised mana*
- *It can be used to power magic (used by mages to draw mana)*
- *It may be possible to store magic in the crystal*
- *Approximately 24FT may be stored in the crystal*

*I also related the fact that the room was also a rune place of power to the astonishment of the group, suppositions were quickly made and Penni / Thaeuss sent to investigate the room with the results of:*

- *The room is mostly in a mana rich region where Entity based magic is strengthened possibly to the extent of becoming a 'place of power'*
- *DA question was "Nature of Magic", and the answer was "entities".*
- *The Volume in the room was 'Magical' and a 'glowing purple haze' was how Penni described the aura*
- *The side of the room closest the tower was the mana rich / place of power part and the other half of the room was of variable strength.*

*Penni while she was in a DA'ing mood had a 'look' at Nanosh's aura and asked "what magical affinity he has" and the response was "precognitive"*

**2.15pm 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle:**

**In Newcourt's**

*We decided that a look around our current lodgings for other clues, ideas etc would be of use and so we*

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*ruminated about how to do so, either as a group or in mixed size groups (ones, twos or threes etc) depending on how we planned to present ourselves to other parties present here in the castle at this time.*

*Yvette: "we should split up as we can do more damage that way!"*

*We decided to all go for the initial stroll and perhaps divide ourselves later once a good understanding of our surroundings has been gained and we know more of where we are, where we stand and more importantly the best escape routes.*

*So, we ask Nanosh to show us around the area and he agrees leading us outside and along the corridor heading SOUTH? We all head up the corridor in staggered formation with the 'heavies' (bodyguard types) in front, 'estranged ex girlfriends coming next then 'the suitor' and his 'grand vizier'. The rear was comprised of both the Spiritual and Magical Advisors in deep conversation. It must also be noted that this 'marching order' (for want of a better term) was in height order, with the shortest in front, then rising until the rear of the party.*

*Walking the corridors, we get an impression we are in an unusual 'manor house' extension or add-on to the castle. We walk down the end of the corridor we have our rooms in and come to a large set of double doors. We open the door and we find ourselves in a large semicircular room which is obviously a chapel of some sort, having a large stained glass window with an unusual form / shape in it, also an alter, lectern, pews, choir loft and other clerical areas.*

*We look around this area for a short time admiring the unusual macabre motifs of skeletons, bones, swords, and red colourings. It looks to have possibly been part of a chapter house and possibly of Michaeline influence but this bears more investigation.*

*We decide to continue our 'look around' further and I go to open the other set of large double doors which would lead us down the corridor opposite ours (not the courtyard doors which were the other exit from this*



## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

chapel). I was part way through doing so when a light pull was felt from the other side and when the door opened an old male human, wearing an old green cloak and carrying a walking stick was there. Seeing me there startled him and I quickly apologised for startling him and introduced us to him.

He is Father Jacques, he is a Raphaelite charged with maintaining the chapel here, and seeing all is in order. I give him the special church signs to identify myself to him and he returns some which indicate that he is a mere curate and at the lowest level of the church (powers of Light). Penni DA's him asking the following questions: "What power is he aligned to" and getting "No answer", "what is his strongest or most intrinsic magical ability" with the answer of "Seeing / doing things with or to souls". Altogether unusual answers for the clergy especially the fact that he has no corresponding 'link' to a power.

He relates that this portion of the 'castle' is in fact an old monastery or chapter house from several hundred years ago and was a Michaeline based community that fell into disfavour with the church and was disbanded. The practises of this particular chapter were considered too extreme and repugnant to the church at the time.

He explains that the stained glass window was damaged some time ago and has an interesting design, which we cant make out at this time. Gerald has thoughts on this and something 'lurks' in the depths of his memories but remains elusive for now.

We do note however that no part of this room is in the area, which may be the magical field emanating from the tower!

Yvette seeing our interest and his desire to be helpful as any good clergy would be asks him if there is an Ossuary<sup>1</sup> here, he says yes and proceeds to lead us down into the depths of the building. Down the corridor, he leads us until we find a set of narrow

---

<sup>1</sup> Late Latin *ossuarium*, from Latin, neuter of *ossuarius* of bones, from Old Latin *ossua*, plural of *oss-*, *os*  
: A depository for the bones of the dead

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

winding stairs going both up and down. Up he explains is to the servants quarters and we historically the monks dormitories and the current ground floor rooms would have been for upper ranked monks, the abbot etc. Also on this ground floor level are the kitchens, storerooms and other rooms, which may have been armouries for the warrior Michaeline types. He says downstairs we must go and I offer to steady him as we descend into the dark.

Half way down (some 20 feet) the light has almost gone from the lanterns upstairs and he reaches into an alcove pulling out a lantern, he then spends a few minutes fossicking around finding a flint and stone with which to light the lantern. He does so after a minute or two while we wait patiently as we are obviously unable to light the lantern ourselves or do anything (like see! - LOL) in the dark without it.

At the bottom of the stairs, we enter large catacombs with a huge assortment of bones, some arranged in shapes while others in large piles. A necromancers dream! Many bones have been arranged in various formations and a particular candelabrum<sup>I</sup> catches our attention, oh how the long winter nights would have just flown by for the monks in this chapter house! A large skull mosaic made out of skulls in macabre fashion is also of note with alternating bones and black skulls. We ask Father Jacques if anyone important is buried down here and he answers in the negative. A DA of the area asking "time since last used in a magical ritual" reveals "no answer" so we will have to come back later for more information<sup>II</sup>.

We ask further, or rather Yvette using her 'special' charms does so and elicits the following information:

The bishop was killed by the nasty mind mage (Simon Dufey) after the Mind Mage controlled a mob to go and slay the bishop by burning him in his church. He fails to offer any logical or rational explanation why although he surmises that Simon Dufey killed the bishop simply 'because he could'!

---

<sup>I</sup> A large decorative candlestick having several arms or branches

<sup>II</sup> Great another night awake in the company of dead people, surrounded by skulls, the smell of death, freezing conditions and various 'things' in the dark.

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

The bishop was a Raphaelite and since his demise, the church representative has been Father Bartholomew who has seen to the upkeep of what is left of the church and conducts limited services there. The church has sent replacements for the barons approval but since the baron has failed to approve any they have all returned whence they came.

At this point, Dramus and I get a little uncomfortable in that our roles are similar to those of the bishop and Simon Dufey, Dramus equating to Simon as the barons magical advisor and I equate to the bishop as the barons spiritual advisor. Together we conclude that someone may have been behind both plots causing the baron to require counsel from other sources, who and how we have yet to define. Fooling a mind mage and killing the bishop are not activities undertaken lightly at the best of times, but would only be done by a supreme strategist with a great deal of power at their disposal.

We are disturbed in our dark thoughts by the departure of us all back upstairs away from the cold and we dutifully traipse back up the stairs leaving the bones and the darkness until later when we have some more time to delve into the mysteries.

We escort Father Jacques back to his room and at the door, I pause waiting for the expected blessing that would normally emanate from fellow religious types but none eventuate. Most strange! Perhaps I will talk with him some more!

Nanosh again take sup his role of guide and takes us down the corridor across the courtyard from ours until we are at the entrance where we came in earlier this morning. He stands on the stairs and reveals to us that his mother calls this place "the evil mountain" in her native Domari tongue, she had a bad impression of it and its nefarious purposes!

We voice the need to continue with a bit of a walk around the grounds but give Nanosh leave to return to our rooms to stay warm while we traipse around in the snow and 'bracing' highland air. Dramus also voices a

wish to return to our rooms and does so in company of Nanosh.

**3pm 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Baronial Castle:**

**In Newcourt's**

The rest of us start walking left around the outside of our present accommodation, we pass stables at the end of the building inside of which we see the end of our carriage and nearby we see another castle<sup>1</sup>. We pass between the 'chapter house' and the recently spotted castle and we look to our right and see a large depression in the ground, a 50 ft drop from our present height and down on the floor in the depression we can see ruins of an older castle which has parts reaching just up to our present height. Seeing this Yvette is caused to comment, "this must be the place where old castles come to die". We can't disagree given the surfeit of castles seen thus far on our brief visit and perhaps we'll find more on our travels around this unique castle / fortress and environs.

We also pass around the outside of the chapel and gain a better viewpoint of the mosaic on the outside and note that it would be different than what is appears if put back together properly. We surmise that it was broken for a reason and that reason would bear investigation at some point!

We get closer to the tower and Penni can definitely see the variable aura clearly which she says is most spectacular. We stop at the base of the tower and undertake a quick investigation of it with the following results:

- There are multiple auras /magic's in the vicinity
- DA Question "name of magic in the area"
  - Hardening / strengthening / durability / permanency
- The tower is made of bones, I.e. Bone construction (necromancy magic)
- The tower is octagonal, 100ft diameter and seamless but appears to have 'veins' running through it.

---

<sup>1</sup> More of a Donjon –A round central tower with a cog wheel set of smaller towers below it, the main tower appears to be around 45 ft higher than the surrounding ones which appear to be around 40 foot in height. They all have peaked roofs in this mountain style and are probably around 400 years old by the style of architecture.

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

- *It is protected from magic and magically bound*
- *It is enchanted to prevent access vs. Astral / Ethereal / Spectral magic or passage*
- *Its effective 'rank' for definition purposes is the very top or better*
- *It is a 'negative rune portal'*
- *The mana flows stop within 10ft of the tower but expand out after that, thus producing a 'dead zone' around the tower.*
- *It looks like each 10ft tall portion of the tower was created separately and imbued with the special magic. In addition, the magic and construction remain similar leading us to speculate that one entity or group of entities with specific instructions created it over a long period with much care and patience.*
- *We 'date' the tower as being some 3000 years old which would make it some 500-1000 years pre Penjari.*

*The cold starts to penetrate at this time and we head back to the chapter house and glean more information as we pass various buildings. The donjon walls are magical and probably pre interregnum (400 years old).*

*Gerald is still pondering what he thinks he should know but can only remember the reference to 8 something's, not sides but something else referential.*

*Dramus meantime has once seeing Nanosh quietly ensconced in front of the fire, undertaken to speak with any local spirits of the dead in his inimical necromancer fashion. He makes contact with a long dead monk who appears to be in red, wearing black armour with draconic designs on it chest. The results of this 'one sided discussion are:*

**4pm 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

*We get back to our warm rooms, dry off and heat up while readying for dinner in the next hour. Have a brief discussion with Dramus as to the events during our absence and return to the preparation for dinner.*

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

We put up Mindspeech again and mind cloaks for all but Dramus.

**4.55pm 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

A knock at the doors sees a page there, waiting to lead us to the dinner. We are all ready in our various dress styles and we follow him. He leads us around and through connecting chambers to the 'main castle' and where we judge the main courtyard to have been we find a roofed in great hall type area which is laid out for this dinner. It has many fires warming the area but in the main, it is 'damn cold'.

There is the head table for the baronial family et al, two tables are fully occupied by various personages and we are shown to space on the third table. As we walk to our table, we draw glances and speculation from those around us. Most of us are accustomed to this and in accordance with etiquette ignore it but Dramus being Dramus sees some looks from the baronial table and some young girls there, then smiles and waves at them.

The main table has two 'throne' like chairs; one of which is empty (the barons we assume) and the other has a young woman occupying it that we assume to be the baroness<sup>I</sup>. Along the table is a group of young girls surrounding a young girl about 18 years of age who we judge to be the lady Justine<sup>II</sup>, daughter of the baron and the object of so many suitors. To her right appears to be another younger sister<sup>III</sup> and to her left is a young lad<sup>IV</sup>.

Nearby is an old grey matronly woman as well as another young lass who spend most of her time standing behind Justine's chair and gossiping between her and her sister, often with a hand covering her mouth to foil lip readers. A personal guard/ bodyguard stands behind the baroness while servants stand behind most of the tables waiting for requests from the assorted

---

<sup>I</sup> Baroness: She looks to be early 30's, very good looking, long golden curling hair, regal and elegant.

<sup>II</sup> Justine: Apparent age around 18, long blonde straight hair, slender and stunning

<sup>III</sup> Sister: Possibly around 16 years of age, dark hair as compared to her sisters. She has ebony looks. Attractive.

<sup>IV</sup> Aged 12-13, young looking but with promise in later life given his heritage, undistinguished features atm

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

guests. On the main table is a man of the cloth<sup>I</sup> and an elderly gentleman who looks very 'bookish'<sup>II</sup>. Overall it looks like 'the family' is on one side of the main table and 'high level' functionaries on the other side with the Baron / Baroness in the centre.

The next table around (table 2) has a group of people we assume to be Florestan's party.

The next table (table 3) has two sets of individuals we judge to be Henri and Gerard.

We are seated at the far table (table 4), which has a few military types, and we are shown our seats, which we take in height order.

## Chapter 4:

**5pm to Late 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

We spend dinner assessing those around us, DA'ing all and sundry, talking with the various people and generally gorging ourselves on the hearty winter fare.

Gerald approaches the baron to pay respects along with his 'bodyguard' Penni in her nicest guard outfit, he does so and Penni eyes the baron via empathy with the result that we think he's a poisoning victim, which Penni vows to look into later. Gerald also intimates that since we 'lost' our present for him in our 'lost luggage' he should feel free to enjoy something else instead! At this point he's mesmerised by Penni's heaving chest which she is concentrating on hard<sup>III</sup> and her 'delicious' appearance only seems to encourage him! She is of course not discouraging him, as is her path in life<sup>IV</sup>.

---

<sup>I</sup> Father Bartholemew we assume

<sup>II</sup> Perhaps the sage / historian

<sup>III</sup> As no doubt are other parts of the barony!

<sup>IV</sup> Forever the object of desire of so many, many men (and elves), (and dwarves), (and orcs), and.....!!!

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

Arrangements are made for a post dinner meeting between Thaeuss (with a guard - Penni) and the Baron. The work of Gerald and Penni done they return to the table and continue socialising with all and sundry. Gerald does little to destroy his reputation as a 'southern fop', which is reinforced by his poem to Justine that was translated faithfully by Yvette in full view of all. Many a snigger was stifled and Courtier skills tested during the poem!<sup>I</sup>

Gerald also spends time talking with the Troubadour and the chef, during which time he was talking about his 'skilful' musical ability and Yvette was heard to mutter, "his father forbade him the use of heavy instruments" when Gerald commented on his piccolo skills.

Some dancing is started and the suitors are all vying for Justine's attention after her initial dance with Henri. Gerald dances some with her and during the process is passed off to multiple partners and finds himself dancing with the Baroness who is 'appraising' him for his suitability. She questions him of his intentions towards Justine et al.

Seeing the departure of Thaeuss and Penni, I take up 'position' close to Gerald so as to provide a level of 'protection' should it be needed. I stand nearby watching the dancing and generally keeping an eye on Gerald and his immediate surrounds, ever watchful for deceit and devious trickery!

During dancing the baron departs for his chambers followed by Thaeuss and Penni hurrying back to the rooms to change into something 'more comfortable'! Penni finally decides upon a skimpy leather outfit, which by all accounts has more gaping holes in it than a fine Gracht cheese<sup>II</sup> or the Seagate Air Mage outdoor rotunda! She covers this with a heavy cloak and grabbing her herb bag she and Thaeuss hurry off to the barons rooms.

---

<sup>I</sup> For a full transcript see appendix 5 - TBA

<sup>II</sup> These having 'breathing holes' in them so large that mice are known to nest in the tunnels and grow entire families, who merely eat their way out of the food rather than in. Apparently over time the mice create a 'rather special' cheese in Silverfoam's own words.



## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

They arrive there to meet the valet outside the doors to the baron's chamber, though the open doors they can see an attractive maid fluffing around the room and the baron lying in bed. When Thaeuss shows up with Penni the valet is momentarily confused but when Thaeuss explains that for show and propriety he had to come while Penni presents 'a special something or two' to the baron. He suggests that he and the valet remain out here 'chatting' while Penni can 'present' to the Baron.

This is readily accepted and the valet then calls the maid out saying she is not needed tonight. At this, the maid 'Honnoree'<sup>I</sup> gives Penni the look of a thousand deaths, as would a spurned lover or conspirator! She then leaves after seeing Penni drop her cloak revealing what she loosely calls an outfit underneath and the Barons increased cheek colour and signs of better blood activity!

Once the Door has closed upon Penni being alone with the Baron, she starts work after some introductions and explanation of skills (Healer, Courtesan etc). She fixes the poison in his system but finds long-term damage to his tissues and signs of lengthy sleep depravation that she communicates (via mindspeech) to Thaeuss. She will be staying the night with the baron and tells Thaeuss to return to us and she will be along in the morning. She then exercises all her considerable skills upon the body of the baron!<sup>II</sup> His liver shows signs of long term damage most likely from a 'stimulant'<sup>III</sup>, which increases his virility while poisoning him.

Thaeuss mentions to the valet that she might be here all night so the valet summons a servant and soon blankets and a large table are bought for them to use while maintaining their vigil outside the barons rooms. He uses mind-speech to relay that he will need to rest later!

---

<sup>I</sup> A woman of pleasing appearance to a male but nothing spectacular.

<sup>II</sup> I'm sure that had he died at that time the undertakers would have been hard pressed to wipe the grin from his face with anything less than full cosmetic surgery – or a mask!!! The hard, hard life of the upper classes eh! Who said that Penni would never get a rise out of a noble ;)

<sup>III</sup> Of unknown type and origin

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

Some of the information we garnered during the feast and subsequent activities:

- The skull is actually that of the old Bishop who was burnt to death
- The venerable is Thibout<sup>I</sup>, the Barons physician since a boy
- The present castle chaplain is 'Father Jacques'
- The current rector 'Father Bartholomew (or Bartholomew) is a drunkard
- Neither the rector nor his curate attended this feast as they were busy with their limited solstice services but would most likely be about the castle on the morrow.
- The Baron<sup>II</sup> is a Short lived sentient, strongest magical effect/ ability is Protection and when asked to which power is he aligned to: No Answer.
- Gerald has remember ed someone by the name of 'De Molay' aka 'The weasel' as being germane to our activities, how is yet to be determined.
- Gerald further remembers a chap named Karrick who was involved in intergrating entity colleges.
- Gerald also wonders about M'lady du Amberville (perhaps a relation) who was a nasty type of lass

Some of the information we garnered during the feast and subsequent activities: **(continued)**

- Gilbert, one of the merchant guests at the feast seems very familiar with the baroness, possibly a relationship of some sort there. He is a mid 30's, well-dressed, suave and charming merchant specialising in the Amber trade. We judge the extra charisma that he seems to possess to be magical in some way.
- Renier, another merchant guest appears to be late 40's and specialises in wool trade.
- The troubadour 'Jean Rossignol<sup>III</sup>' is greatly skilled and it appears he fancies Justine as well in a romantic way or some other fashion yet to be determined.
- We confirm Henri as a mind mage
- The younger sister is Alys
- The younger brother is Francoise, who offers to show us around the castle on the morrow after

---

<sup>I</sup> Human, Male, apparently 80 years of age or thereabouts, quite ld and doddery, slightly deaf

<sup>II</sup> Healthy?, late 50's male human. Requires support from his valet. Bland features.

<sup>III</sup> And he appears to be of the Bardic college of Magic. The evil nasty one!

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*some talk with him and his tutor. Once the feast had ended and the dancing started he retired with his aunt.*

- *The sage is Bernard who has tutored all the children.*
- *The young woman behind Justine is her lady-in-waiting Collette<sup>1</sup> who appears to be a well-trained young lady of the court, already skilled in economic matters.*
- *The baroness and her aunt do not appear to have any auras at all.*
- *The cook is Gobert le Gros*

*Yvette has been working on Guy for most of the evening and he shows signs of obvious interest but she is managing to keep his interest up and his attentions at a distance (for now). During her lengthy discussions with Guy, she gets the feeling that he knows something about Fulk's disappearance and he is close to disclosing the information as she seems so nice and trustworthy, but he does not do so.*

*Gerald makes a point of dancing with Alys who seems surprised that he noticed her and he considers that she shows promise for the future. He gets from her a sense that she likes the troubadour Jean Rossignol and she says that his heart is steady and dependable.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Collette is a gentle born companion rather than a servant

## Chapter 5:

10pm 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle

In Newcourt's

*Penni realises that the night's stay will be long and she might fall asleep and miss something so she summons Thaeuss from outside the door. He rises and with the valet enters the room. They briefly confer, during which time one of Thaeuss's golems<sup>1</sup> are activated and told to stay with Penni, rousing her if anyone comes into the room. The valet at this time looks around the room keeping an eye on things. Once the transfer has been made, both Thaeuss and the valet retire back outside the doors leaving Penni to her tender ministrations.*

*Penni returns to her work on the barons sleeping body and while doing so almost sees something but not quite, as it is gone before she can marshal her senses. It was as if something crawled back underneath the bed, body or something.*

*At this time, Penni notices that the Barons heart rate is increasing, his breathing more laboured and a sweat breaks out upon him. He continues like this and cries out in his sleep during this time. Penni, concerned at this turn of events lifts the soporific effect she has laid upon the baron and he suddenly sits bolt upright and stares off into the room, seemingly into the distance.*

*Penni summons Thaeuss for help and he along with the valet charge into the room to see what is happening. The baron stares and raises a finger, pointing to a spot in the middle of the room saying "Robert, you are dead" and then slumps down lopsided across the bed with exhaustion. Thaeuss and Penni both notice that the valet does not look surprised at this occurrence.*

*Under the auspices of helping the Baron back to sleep Penni DA's the area of his interest with some*

---

<sup>1</sup> A small rag and string one, the size of a small doll

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*surprising results. In terms of last magic effected upon him the answers were: A magic ritual, of the college of dark binding, the ritual is called 'hag riding' and the caster of the ritual has an MA of 25. All surprising results<sup>I</sup>!*

*Seeing the Valet's care and attention to the Baron and sensing his 'good intent', Penni makes one of those intuitive leaps she is known for<sup>II</sup> and decides to come clean with the valet.*

*Firstly, she introduces herself and Thaeuss. The valet then introduces himself as 'Godfrey' and he has been the barons valet and companion for some 40 years now, a long time since first being his squire in their younger days. Penni explains who and what we are in short sentences at which Godfrey nods and says " ah yes, Jubert said he was getting some assistance in to help with the problem of Fulk's disappearance". He has 'connected the dots" so to speak and is now one of the conspirators.*

*Penni updates Godfrey as to the Baron's state of health and what has been going on over the last few hours while she has been with him. She explains her skills as a physician and what she has been doing to assist the barons' recovery. He looks at the baron, sees already a little improvement in his complexion and general health, and agrees it is doing the baron some good at least.*

*Godfrey relates that 'Robert' was the barons' brother who died when the baron was around 20 years of age, during a hunting accident. Robert was married and was survived by his wife in distant Aquilia where she retired to after the accident.*

*Penni relates her suspicions that Honnoree is poisoning the Baron perhaps inadvertently! She says the 'stimulants' that enable the baron to perform better are also killing him slowly which speaks to the cause of his condition. Asking about Honnoree elicits the following information: She is Honnoree Lace*

---

<sup>I</sup> Who knew there was an official college for those evil binders (present company exempted of course ;0) ? We all just thought they hid under the title of 'Binders'

<sup>II</sup> Among other things she is well known for!

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

Court<sup>I</sup>, a woman of the chamber who has been employed in the barons' service since Beltane. She has been keeping the barons chamber for some 7 months and an overnight guest for the last 2 months or so.

Yvette at this point notes the loss of both Penni and Thaeuss on Mindspeech as its duration has expired. Whilst still fending off Guys advances she excuses herself for a few minutes and runs off to find them, gets appraised of the situation, recasts Mindspeech and she returns to the feasting hall.

**11pm 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

The feast is over and some dancing is still being undertaken in the main hall. A few hardy souls are still there while both Florestan and the younger royals have left, with the baroness, Justine, Colette, the suitors (sans Florestan), the party and assorted others remaining to revel the night away.

**11.59pm 15<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

The night rolls over into the Solstice and several of us feel its effects in a number of ways, some small but some large. The parties are tired from the past hours of dancing; Dramus still isn't drunk<sup>II</sup> although he's matching 'the hardened drinkers' drink for drink. During the evening and between dances, Henri and Gerard have warmed to our Gerald and they invite him to join them on a hunt in the afternoon, once the excesses of this evening have been slept off. Gerald accepts and they bid him and all a good night.

Upon reflection its thought that Gerard and Henri are the more refined of the suitors who are both wishing to win Justine's hand but if one should lose they'd prefer to lose to the other and not an 'outsider' like Fulk, Florestan or even Gerald. They appear keenly aware of the political implications of

---

<sup>I</sup> Lace court translates to Ice Heart after some thought

<sup>II</sup> Apparently he cant get drunk – sad Necro! Whats life like withut the joy and release of inebriation! Some of my best times have happened when I was enjoying a few medicinal drinks with others!

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

the match and will no doubt stay friends afterwards as their interests coincide.

The penultimate dance is played, during which Guy intimates an invitation for Yvette to join him afterwards which she politely deflects, thereby putting him off to another day, perhaps tomorrow? When she turns him down she catches a glimpse of the man behind the façade and the look wasn't pleasant, he obviously isn't used to being told 'No!'

The rest of the party (Gerald, Yvette and I) retire to our rooms without Dramus who is continuing with his drinking buddies. We are apprised of the situation with the Baron and other information and we arrange to keep watches here and outside the baron's room.

**6am, 16<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

Dawn sees us all the worse for wear with our lack of sleep. Dramus had returned around 2am and has taken the watch in our suite of rooms while I am standing watch outside of the baron's chamber with the sleeping form of Godfrey.

The baron wakes and seeing Penni there is pleasantly surprised. They briefly chat and he comments on feeling better then excuses himself to the Garderobe. Hearing the noises from the suite, Godfrey wakes and enters the bedroom seeing the state of affairs. At this point, Penni exits the baron's bedroom and I escort her back to our rooms.

Now that we are all in the same place, at once we rouse the few sleepers and share the news of the night past. Dramus does illuminate us as to some of his mystical questions, one of which returned the answer that Fulk is neither dead nor alive. We take this to mean that either he is in 'stasis' somewhere or perhaps 'undead'. We all then go off to sleep with Dramus continuing to watch while we are getting some much needed rest

**8am, 16<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

Some of us awake while other continue to rest up before the rigours of the day. I arise and complete a warding around our rooms to prevent unwanted magic from reaching us and providing a measure of security fro our activities.

Dramus undertakes to detect undead to better ascertain if the undead previously detected could in fact be Fulk. His detection is better than before but still only picks up the 'handful' of undead around the region suspected to be the underground of the tower. He determines though that they are at the low end of the animated, possibly skilled type skeletons.

Yvette goes in search of Honnoree with Nanosh and they go along to the lunch hall hoping to do so. Failing to find her there, she wanders around locating the chamberlain. She asks where the maid Honnoree would be and he indicates "working in the guest chambers with the others".

Yvette goes off in search of these workers finally finding the correct rooms. She there stages a conversation with Nanosh along the lines of "How dare that strumpet Penni be stealing the Baron, has she not stolen enough men's hearts when she stole dear Gerald from Yvette?" "She'll come to a sticky end one day when her comeuppance finally catches up with her!" "She'll be first upon the wall when the revolution comes". She and the very confused Nanosh then return to the hall for some 'brunch' after her hard work for the morning.

Once back in the main hall she makes her way to Jean the Bard and strikes up a conversation. Her skill at gaining trust and natural ability soon sees them discussing all and sundry topics. She manages to elicit some information from him on the topic of Fulk once Francoise comes along and joins the two of them in conversation.

Francoise volunteers the following once he too is firmly entranced by Yvette's good looks, charm and



## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*skilful use of assets "Jean he saved Justine from Fulk". Looking to Jean to explain Yvette waited. "Yes it is true I'm afraid, one night I saw Fulk and Justine in the garden where he was being very forward<sup>1</sup> with her. I saw this and that they were alone and I feared for her. I did all that I could do and started strumming a little tune then wandered into the garden! Fulk saw me there and stopped his disgusting behaviour then left poor Justine there."*

*Francoise agrees with the story and adds "Yes I saw it all as I was hiding in the garden away from my aunt at the time". " He was a nasty man being rude and too forward with Justine"*

*Thanking them for their trust and assuring them of her discretion she excuses herself and starts back to our rooms with Francoise saying after her "I shall be along shortly to show you and your friends a tour of the castle as Father Broc said you'd like that". She waves in return and hurries to warn us of the impending visit and events.*

*Returning to our suite, she speaks with Nanosh and mentions he is not a very good thief, at which he appears aghast and about to protest when Yvette produces some of the food he has been secreting upon his person. He looks astonished and calls her a 'Chauvexani', which we would loosely translate to a very skilled woman, perhaps a strong woman or a witch.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Very forward could mean anything from a stolen kiss to attempted....! This further confirms what low opinion we hold of this 'Fulk' whom, we have yet to meet!

**9am, 16<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

*Francoise arrives to show us all on a tour of the castle. He takes us all around the grounds explaining where he can of the vast fortress here in Newcourt.*

*The information we garner is:*

- *The castle has been being built over the years almost continuously<sup>I</sup>*
- *The Tower we have noted previously is the 'Dowager tower'*
- *The burnt castle in the depression was the 'Dowager House'; this house was burnt down several barons ago (he does not know if the dowager baroness was in the 'House' at the time.*
- *In the base of one of the towers we find 'The Black Stair'<sup>II</sup> which protrudes from the floor of the tower almost to the ceiling some 30ft high. The stair does not actually go through the ceiling but stops a few feet below the ceiling. The stairs do not go down below the floor as there are stone slabs preventing such access.*

*He takes us up to the White tower via the adjoining slender walkway. We have an up close look at the tower but we do not go up to the roof of the tower as the walkway only extends to some 30 ft below the roof level. There is a slender ladder attached to the side of the tower, which we could have used to gain access, perhaps later!*

*We continue on more and after some 2 hours, we thank him heartily and promise to speak with him again during our stay here.*

**11am, 16<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

*We return to our rooms and those of us going on the hunt (Gerald, Penni and Thaeuss) prepare for the hunt after lunch with weapons, armour and other assorted specialty items! We then all move to the great hall*

---

<sup>I</sup> Almost as if it was / is a living organism – growing constantly!

<sup>II</sup> Made of black stone - Obsidian

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*for some well-earned lunch after our hard work last night and explorations this morning.*

*We notice there is two priests present that were absent at last night's feats and I go over to introduce myself. They are 'Father Bartholomew' the rector who is an old man, slender and frail accompanied by 'Brother Andre'<sup>I</sup>, a shy, obsequious young curate assistant to the Father. They are both dressed as Raphaelites in their well worn green robes. I pass the signs for fellow clergy, getting what I expected from the Father but I get an interesting response back from the brother who signs that he is in fact a Gabrielite.*

*Once introductions are made we moot the possibility of a walk in the brisk air which is taken up with the Father staying here beside the warm fire. I inform the group via mindspeech and then am 'released' from the mindspeech link after the revelation of mind college magic on Brother Andre.*

*Brother Andre and I walk away from the Castle and exchange more signals as well as small talk for the benefit of any watchers. It turns out that he is a knight of the holy inquisition who is here in the barony investigating why it is so difficult for the church to have a new bishop appointed after the demise of the last one many years ago. He relates that he has it on very good authority that the baroness is a witch of some considerable skill. He has the power to call on a nearby chapter of the Michaeline<sup>II</sup> branch should it prove necessary.*

*I relate to him our reason for being here and he does not seem too taken aback by the reasons but can offer no help on the matter as most of his time is spent outside the castle. We then return to the main hall where he reverts to shy curate role.*

*While I was walking with Brother Andre Jubert manages a few minutes with the rest of the party and relates that they have received word from Count Richard*

---

<sup>I</sup> Thaeuss DE's the brother getting information regarding magic on him which is that of Mind Cloak, low rank, mind college.

<sup>II</sup> It is half a days ride away from here and is 'The abbey of the clerics regular of the sword of St Michael'

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

of Foxcourt regarding his missing nephew and he has sent word he will be there by the 18<sup>th</sup> for an explanation - probably with some allies! This has given us a tight timeframe for our investigation and we acknowledge the pressing need then continue with our tasks.

**1pm 16<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

The hunting group of Gerald, Penni and Thaeuss go off and start their hunt while Dramus, Yvette and I remain in the grounds. Yvette would like to follow up on the possibility of the Honnoree poisoning the Baron and I would like to further examine the Black Stair so we split up while the others are away on the hunt. Yvette approaches Jubert and arranges to have the chambermaids clean our rooms while Dramus and I go and take a better look at the Black Stair.

The result of my Divination on the Black Stairs is: They are very old stairs from eons ago (around 30,000 years old) and they are enchanted crystalline. The top stairs show signs of melting and to make this structure melt even partly we judge required an enormous amount of [power or innate strength (dragon etc)]. Dramus who is kindly watching over me while I undertake the ritual finds the stairs give me a 'pleasant buzz' for his sort of elf! Probably orientated towards the Drow I would assume.

Meantime Yvette has created a situation in which she can interact with the chambermaids freely. When they come and start on the rooms she is seen to be tearing some of Penni's clothes to little strips and using colourful language describing her moral code (or lack thereof). Using this age-old female bonding technique, she starts talking with the maids, and luckily she finds Honnoree there and they strike up a conversation for a few minutes while Honnoree works.

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

After a short time, Yvette unobtrusively casts Hypnotism on Honnoree that is undetected and works on her. Using this and her powers of persuasion as well as her innate trustworthiness Yvette elicits the following information:

- Her real name is Honnoree De Challot, and she hails from a knights fee locally in Newcourt
- She got a job here because it was easy and they needed staff
- She has wheedled her way into the barons affections
- She is giving him this stimulant which is also poisoning the baron
- She knows it is harmful and will possibly lead to the barons demise
- Her story is that the baron was previously involved with her sister who used to work here in the castle. The sister after servicing the barons' needs for a few months became pregnant with his child at which point the baron had her sacked. Because of her sacking, she became ill with the result that both her and the child subsequently died.
- She is here for revenge; she is trying to eek a blood debt from the baron by effectively shagging him to death as penance for his lusts and the death of her sister.

Yvette judges this to be a sad matter but not of our immediate concern as a short time with Penni can cure almost anything. Yvette plants a suggestion in Honnoree's mind that its time for her to leave and return home after exacting some revenge on the baron.

At the end of Yvette's conversation with Honnoree she suddenly turns, begging Yvette's leave as she has something urgent to attend! (She goes and packs her few clothes then leaves the castle we later hear)!

Meanwhile out on the hunt: Thaeuss and Gerald do not get into any trouble but neither do they appear to rise above the general skill of the majority of the hunters. Penni however revels in her natural

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*skills and abilities on horse and shines well above others. She is noticed and chatted up by Florestan's Capt (Matthew de Montford), as well as Henri and Gerard's squires named Raul and Etyin. No doubt, her dance card may be a bit fuller when next we socialise.*

*They end the hunt with no mishaps and rendezvous back in our suite with the rest of us at Dusk.*

*Francoise as well as his Dog and Justine who have come to escape the monotony and post celebration discussions join us. Dinner is in our rooms and we undertake many things.*

## Chapter 6:

**6pm 16<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

*With the pleasant company of Francoise and Justine, we all play various games of cards while chatting about many, many things such as Politics, inheritance and relationships. We garner nothing much it seems but our knowledge is enhanced on a number of topics. Justine does let slip that after his boorish behaviour towards her she did wish that he would go away!*

**8pm 16<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

*We undertake our planned tasks for the evening once Justine and Françoise have retired for the evening after a good few hours with us here.*

*Penni heads off to the Barons chambers with Gerald along as her 'protection' for the evening where she reacquaints herself with his body! Gerald is kept company by the Valet outside in a now familiar cosy*

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

area with a warm brazier, blankets and a long table nearby.

Penni regales the Baron with the tale of a 'hypothetical' baron and events which transpired in this 'hypothetical' household involving the baron, a maid whom he got pregnant, subsequent death of pregnant maid, the vengeful sister and he plan to sentence the baron to 'death by sex' and slow poisoning. It seemed an entertaining story but needs some polish to make it into a real story!

Penni further explains that the Baron may be under some sort of a hex / curse / evil influence and offers to help him to be rid of it. The Baron is perplexed by this but says that he will send to Father Boniface<sup>1</sup> in the morning for guidance on this matter.

Once Penni has gone I start preparations for my Ritual of Sending with Dramus as my guard to watch over me while I sleep.

Outside the Barons chamber Gerald and Godfrey are talking when they notice a drop in temperature, they look outside and see a storm front approaching with its promise of attendant snowfall. Godfrey remarks that one wasn't predicted then returns to a closer position around the warm brazier.

Questions:

Is the coming storm natural or was it summoned? If summoned then who summoned it and for what purpose?

Subterfuge? Delay of Richard? Cover for more attacks?

**9pm 16<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

My ritual has worked and I move towards what I assume to be the baron, guided by the bright light that is Penni in this dream state of ethereal colours and

---

<sup>1</sup> Father Boniface is the Abbot of the nearby Michaeline chapter house 'The abbey of the clerics regular of the sword of St Michael'. Dramus cringes at the thought of these Michaelines descending on the castle.

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

presence. In this state I notice people not by their looks but by the sense of their being, represented by light in various shades. I do notice a huge dark void like 'presence' where I would assume the tower to be!

Coming at last to where the baron is I wait and watch the dreams as they come:

The first impressions I get are those of a Tournament where I can see what I assume to be the Baron (Hugh) looking very young with an older sibling (assumed to be Robert) who are laughing together and then joined by another sibling, their sister (Justine)<sup>1</sup> who is a stunning woman of surpassing beauty.

I get other visions of interactions with Robert, Hugh and his wife, coming to the birth of his child while Robert has no heirs. Hugh's first wife (Isabelle) dies in childbirth but bears him an heir. His first wife had schemed for Hugh to inherit the barony ahead of Robert. She schemes and plots his demise. One scene is that of a hunt where Robert and Hugh are alone and competitively racing along a slope. It appears that Hugh pushes Robert slightly unbalancing him and he falls to his death down the slope upon his horse. The last scene is that of Roberts Shade returning for his vengeance but Hugh using hidden reserves of 'power' to force him back and away.

When Hugh has forced the shade away the baron stops dreaming and slumps back in his bed. This ends my ritual and I awaken back in our rooms with Dramus watching over me.

**10pm 16<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

Meanwhile back in the barons chamber the party has seen the baron rise as previously and do the same actions he did the previous night, Gerald and Godfrey enter the room to assist Penni.

Just as they are about to lay the Baron back down into bed Penni notices a little something beside the Barons hand, in a flash she reaches down to grab

---

<sup>1</sup> We did learn that the Lady Justine has an aunt named Justine who is the sister to the Baron and his brother Robert. She has not been seen much around the castle for sometime but such absences are not uncommon.



## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

whatever it is with her lightning fast reflexes. She does so and is rewarded with a squirming something tightly held in her clenched fist. She asks for something to put whatever it is in and Gerald rushes to get a bottle or something similar. Just as he gets a bottle and they try to force the contents of her hand into the bottle she feels a slight stabbing sensation on her hand.

They try to force the contents but with her hurt hand she can't do so and the thing spills from her hand onto the floor. It seems she has caught a small silver spider<sup>1</sup> that quickly tries to scuttle off into the darkness. Gerald summons a nightmare, which deals with the spider fast by crushing it in a single blow, leaving a shattered carapace and silvery ichors splattered across a floor tile.

With the demise of the spider attention is now drawn to Penni who is now clutching her hand in agony and great pain - even for a healer such as her. Gerald and Godfrey watch as they see thin silvery lines shoot up from Penni's hand where the bite has become swollen and inflamed. The grave concern for her actions and her fear of poisoning Penni tells Gerald to get Thaeuss and the rest of us to help her.

Gerald responds with haste and literally sprints through the halls of the castle on route to our rooms. As he passes various points his passage is noted with concern and people apparently think an assassination attempt has been made on the baron and they start 'turning out' from their beds to prepare for trouble. The guards are roused and guardhouse emptied of guards who rush to the baronial chamber and stand guard over his sleeping figure while Giles, the Baron's Captain of the guard, paces with a feral look in his eye.

Godfrey assures the guards that no such attempt has been made but they stay guarding the baron. Seeing the futility of arguing with such martial types Godfrey returns to looking after Penni and moves her into a smaller antechamber of the barons where she is made more comfortable. Together they watch the little silvery veins grow up her arm towards her elbow joint.

---

<sup>1</sup> By the looks of it and what we know we surmise that this may be a golem of some sort.

Meanwhile after a few minutes fast run Gerald arrives breathless at our doors and pushes them open to our astonishment and surprise. He quickly explains and states the urgent nature of the summons. We all act fast with Yvette and Thaeuss heading off first at a fast pace through the corridors. I follow up last with Gerald as Dramus says he will wait here to see what happens as well as keeping Nanosh<sup>I</sup> company!

**11.30pm 16<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

The return run rouses yet more people from their beds and by now the entire castle would have been awakened, but the time for subtlety is passed when mortal danger rears its ugly head in the face of one of our own precious party members.

Upon our arrival at the baronial chambers we quickly assess the situation and join Penni and Godfrey in the antechamber. Yvette helps to stabilise the spread and it slows but they can't make any headway in healing such a virulent poison, as this appears to be. A DE of the ichors reveals it to be 'star-silver'<sup>II</sup> which we all wonder at. Thaeuss locates the 'splat' of star-silver around the dormant body of the spider and finds when he unobtrusively casts animation on it that it animates. Weird!

Penni is in a bad way so it's decided to 'stone' her using Thaeuss's cloak and then work on her stoned form to rid the body of the poison. She puts on the cloak and is stoned. Thaeuss then breaks her arm off below the shoulder and starts to 'mould elements' on the limb to remove the poison.

He is successful with the poison coming out in powder form and falling to the floor from the arteries and blood vessels that he 'massages' free of the insidious silver. Thaeuss collects the dust for later investigation.

---

<sup>I</sup> Who is asleep In front of the fire

<sup>II</sup> An expensive, rare and potent 'power' source used in various arcane ways, including powering golems of a special nature and type

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

After doing his work on the limb Thaeuss reconnects the limb using his spells and once reattached he returns Penni back to living form. She is in agony once more, but not from the poison but the extensive tissue damage caused by the extraction of the poison. Her hand and arm are barely usable and we decide she needs rest now.

A brief discussion of the events ensues during which time we assess that the spider did in fact emanate from the baronial signet ring, which will be looked into once we have time. Further discussion is interrupted by the arrival of Nanosh who summons us back to our chamber when he whispers that a Chauvexani (A Witch) is there. We take our leave of Godfrey and hurry back to our chambers keeping Penni comfortable still but unable to do anything to heal her as yet.

Our passage back is uneventful apart from the looks we get coming from where we did! People are wondering what has gone on but are reluctant to help.

While we were gone Dramus had used some Crystal of Vision to spy on people he thought might have been involved with the attempt on the Baron. He spied on the Baroness and only saw the merchant Gilbert getting out of her bed and hurriedly departing her chambers during the furore. He spied on Henri and saw him worrying along with the rest of the people. He last spied on Aunt Oudine and was rewarded with a view from above 'Tower Blanc', which surprised him no end. With the uses of the use of these crystals he was unable to determine just who had done what but had found a few titbits of information anyway.

His next thought was for self-preservation, as he knew when things go badly the fine, good, lawful and upstanding citizenry always looked to the evil, despicable, vile, nasty and disreputable Necromancer to blame. So in true Necromancer style he climbed up into the rafter above the main room and lay in wait for what may. His large frame

*squeezed in between the solid rafters amongst the dusty wood and old rattraps etc<sup>1</sup>*

*As luck would have it he did not have to wait long before he saw the doors open a little allowing a small, child like figure entrance to the room which had a lot of our quickly left items lying about, the remains of a meal and the sleeping figure of Nanosh by the fire. The small figure quickly rummaged around our bags, and then noticed the figure of Nanosh asleep in the warmth. The figure grabbed a sharp knife from the table and holding it as if to strike moved towards defenceless Nanosh.*

*Seeing this Dramus was galvanised into action, he cast a spell and the figure is imprisoned in a 'bone dome', which Dramus judges should hold him a while. Nanosh awakes with a start to see a small figure surrounded by a 'bone done' but using a knife in an attempt to saw its way through the material.*

*Dramus tells Nanosh to go and bring us back here post haste. Nanosh needs no encouragement and bounds out of the suite running to find us.*

**10.30pm 16<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

With our return to the suite we quickly take stock of the situation and undertake to be proactive in the coming hours rather than reactive.

Thaeuss looks at the trapped figure and discovers it to be a Golem (A Marionette in fact), which DA's as a puppet (½ wood, ½ Rag and String), Magical construct. He needs to get down to its level to communicate to it so he transfers himself to the body of one of his golems and starts to talk with it.

---

<sup>1</sup> Where else would any self-respecting and fearful necromancer hide out in time of danger?

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

Seeing Thaeuss do this Nanosh starts getting hysterical and looks about to scream or something else embarrassing when all of a sudden he quiets and falls to the floor. We notice also at this point Dramus directly behind him looking satisfied (as evil necromancers do!) and he says, "he's not dead, he's just quieter"!

With this small distraction out of the way Thaeuss continues and talks with the Golem garnering the following information:

- The golem has been activated with the express purpose of killing one of the 'sleepers' in our rooms.
- He must kill to be released from his present 'prison'
- The golem was activated only within the last hour
- The spirit inhabiting the golem is 'Edward', a knight of old whose last liege lord was Javert (possibly some 900 years ago)
- His master is a bright and powerful spirit
- He was last in the chapel (just along this corridor) when he was activated for his purpose
- The chapel is dedicated to 'The Dragon of St Michael'

Deciding the need to divinate this golem Thaeuss and I settle down to do so with the following results:

- The golem itself was created or enchanted some 5-6 months ago
- The spirit inhabiting it has only been there some 1 ½ hours
- Spirit Binding was involved in creating the Golem.
- The golem is a pseudo entity magic branch creation with blends from Necromancy, Rune, Wicca, Shamanistic magic and other such magic.

*1. We decide that we need to get some answers or at least rule out some possibilities so we will*

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

- prepare to visit the White Tower and enter if we can to find its secrets.*
- 2. We will also ask the chancellor for him to take stock of all statues in the castle and note if any are new or missing, also any other stone representations in the grounds. He needs to check the ruined castle etc for such things.*
  - 3. Who was born to Hugh and Isabelle? Who was born to Hugh and Margaret?*
  - 4. If the first child no longer in the picture then why? Revenge motive?*

## Chapter 7:

**11pm 16<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

We head off once the furore of the night has settled down and proceed first in the direction of the 'Black Stair' on route to 'Tower Blanc'. We avoid various patrols and assorted wandering individuals through good hearing and a less than hurried pace and arrive in the room with the Black Stair. Those of us who had not undertaken any investigation on the stairs do so but we find little else that way. We also lift up the flagstones at the bottom of the stairs to find an area well filled with rubble, rock and sand. We assume that whatever areas are below the ground floor are all filled in and we therefore decide that Fulk cannot be down there.

**1230am 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

We continue our travels and arrive at the bridge connecting to the Tower. Here we brave the high and bracing winds to climb to the roof where we find 8 stone Gargoyles which we determine to be Golems again created / controlled by Dark Binding magic's. We also find two capped shafts / entrances into the tower both of which are covered by seals that we determine belong to the Elven Court. Further, breaking these seals would constitute a condition for the animation of the gargoyles and their subsequent offensive actions upon the breaker of the seal.

Thaeuss (impersonating an evil nasty, vicious Dark Binder), converses with one of the gargoyles and we discover that recently the gargoyle animated, attacked someone and then flung the corpse down for the tower to the rocks below. Since we have determined that we are not going to break the seals on the tower we send some to check the base of the tower for a body but with little success!

[See the section titled 'Tower Blanc rooftop\)](#)

**4am 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

*We, after the night's activities return to our rooms, send Nanosh out for some hot chocolates and drinks to warm us while we prepare for bed (appropriate watches being set). This seems to mean that Dramus and I watch as I had most sleep in a row and Dramus is on a 'natural high' due to his proximity to the tower.*

## **Chapter 8:**

**8.30am 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

*A knock at the door gets our attention and when we attend to it we find a number of servants being directed by the chamberlain setting us our breakfast. After some minutes the servants leave us with a large amount of food and drink to bring us into this fine heavily snowing day. The chamberlain stays behind and talks with us (Dramus and I) once the servants have disappeared.*

*"So what else have you found out about Fulk's disappearance or the attempt on the baron?" he asks. We reply with our standard "We are still investigating all the options we have ascertained as being pertinent but have no definite conclusion as yet, we will let you know as soon as we have anything that you need to know!"*

*We do ask to be able to search guys room today and that he arrange matters so that we can, an indoor martial tournament is suggested to keep Guy occupied. He takes this information and knowing we can do no more takes his leave as well, disappearing back to his*



## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*various and complex duties around the castle. Dramus and I continue watches and nibbling occasionally.*

**9.30am 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

***In Newcourt's***

*The slumbering party starts to awake and join us at breakfast. During this time, also Godfrey comes to thank Penni for her efforts on the baron's behalf and all the trouble last night. He says that the venerable Thibout has offered his services to aid in her recovery; this offer is politely turned down, as Penni seems to be quite capable and recovering well.*

**10am 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

***In Newcourt's***

Francoise and Alys come to visit with us, they defend mama's honour (the baroness) They say that Aunt Justine was last here around 8years ago. She had given each of them naming gifts with Justine getting the looks, Alys the brains and Francoise Endurance or fatigue. She has also given them a lot of little gifts over the years.

**11am 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

***In Newcourt's***

We are taken for a walk by Alys to the portrait gallery. We see the family wedding portrait (of the present baroness and baron, not the first baroness). Robert was baron before the present baron. Aunt Justine looks like Alys! Aunt Justine looks young for her age. The first baroness (Isabelle) died in childbirth. Alys has a doll named Madeline (she was present from Aunt Justine). As we walk back Alys asks what Gerald's intentions are toward her sister, which Gerald states are entirely honourable!

**11.30am 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

***In Newcourt's***

Once back in the rooms we have a rest except Thaeuss goes flying in this inclement weather. He spots an unusual lump on a rooftop near the great hall. He

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

alerts us and we wander in that direction prepared for trouble in case of need. T lands and assesses the mound and finds a frozen body. It has gashes on it (poss. from the gargoyle). Dramus goes to the site and assesses that it is not a place of death. Thaeuss clears away the snow and ice using his magic, itemises the body and set off back to our rooms with us following expeditiously.

### **Midday 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804 Baronial Castle**

### **In Newcourt's**

Once back in our rooms, Penni DA's the corpse revealing formerly living, GTN human (perhaps a bit lower than that). On the body we find a luck amulet and a magical dagger. The blood is looked at which gives time since death of 10 days (about the right time). A divination of the body reveals nothing but there's some magic on the body influencing the aura strength.

We send Nanosh to ask Jubert to attend us for a moment, arriving some 10 minutes later and once there we get him to ID the body. We hide the body under an illusion and then under the bed in Gerald's room. We explain we aren't happy with the state of affairs and will discuss options with him later.

We (inc Jubert) discuss some of the rumours being mentioned or picked up on by ourselves.

- 'It is said that the baroness is a witch'
- A male child was born to the baron and Isabelle before she died.

For his own protection (and sanity), Yvette hypnotises Jubert to forget our conversation and he goes away somewhat confused.

### **2pm 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804 Baronial Castle**

### **In Newcourt's**

Godfrey relates that the other one in the vaults is not the correct one; it is subtly different and has possibly been tampered with. Access to the vaults is only Godfrey, Jubert, baron, baroness and the keeper of the seals. These are kept in a strong room.

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

Thaeuss then divinites/interrogates the previously animated spider golem (ex seal of the baron)

**3pm 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Baronial Castle**

***In Newcourt's***

We discuss things with Godfrey and find out that the barons' eldest son (by Isabelle) is Victor who left here when Justine was christened (her family insisted). He left 18yrs ago (come candlemas). We discuss seeing the baron to divinate him this evening.

**4pm 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Baronial Castle**

***In Newcourt's***

The bouts are starting in the main hall and Gerald, Penni and Dramus go to be seen while Thaeuss, Yvette and I proceed to search Fulk's rooms and we find numerous 'tell-tales' on the door (used to identify if the rooms have been entered). After disabling these Yvette and I search the rooms and we find little until we search the large travelling chest Fulk had bought with him. Within we find a secret compartment with 3 recesses, One is empty while in the other is a dagger with Faircourt's seal upon it and we also find a phial of liquid (poison).

We voice our concerns and Yvette is heard to say "but the bard may be completely innocent" which is unanimously disbelieved.

## **Chapter 9:**

**5pm 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

***In Newcourt's***

We need to take some action so we cogitate over what action to take while in the main hall Penni, Dramus and Gerald are partaking in the bout we had planned as the ruse to enable us access to guys room.

There were a few bouts and Penni in her injured state is encouraged to take part. She has one bout with Florestans Captain of the guard, which she wins with alacrity. This win helps Dramus's fortunes no end as he has had a small wager on the bout and he looks well pleased with himself.

Meanwhile back in the rooms a crack is heard by those of us still in our rooms, which are Thaeuss, Yvette and I? We look up expecting attack, withdraw into a smaller more defensible room, and prepare for the imminent incursion.

Suddenly we look up and the roof appears to collapse, we stand poised to act until after a few

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

minutes we see merely a mound of snow upon a section of roof. It would appear that our incursion is natural and caused by weak support beams and the unusual weight of the snow at present. We go over and survey the damage, which looks to be extensive.

We look through the wreckage and seeing a largely intact section of the roof, we decide to shore it up somewhat for now. Using Spectral hands, Dramus pushes the section close to the ceiling and then Thaeuss summons a pillar of dust and sand to hold it there. This seems to provide some establishment of a roof but we still have holes etc.

We send Nanosh to inform the Chamberlain that we have a small break in the roof and would like some assistance, perhaps even a new set of rooms. When Nanosh comes out from Gerald's room where he had been sleeping in front of the fire he looks at the pillar, the hole in the roof, the leaks and pooling water and then at us standing there like this happened every day! We could see his mind thinking "'sacre bleu' these are mad chauvexani, they think this is a mere trifle, what have I got myself in for". He does as we have asked with speed and sprints off out of our rooms en route to finding the chamberlain.

He finds the chamberlain in the hall watching the bout and organising things thereabouts. His approach to the chamberlain is noted by Gerald who sidles over to hear Nanosh's excited report of roof falling in and lots of snow and water in the rooms and if the chamberlain could attend when possible. The chamberlain thinks fast and sends a minion to ready another suite of rooms with expediency.

Gerald, Penni and Yvette decide to return to the rooms and take their leave from the bouts. It seems Penni's next bout was to have been Guy and he looks upset at having missed his opportunity to demonstrate his martial skill.

We finally all meet up again in the suite of rooms with the chamberlain not far behind but we have managed to hide the pillar holding the roof up with an illusion

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

for now and Dramus has been busy warping wood back into place to provide a more solid ceiling for us.

While he is doing this at close range to the wood itself he notices some wood that is already twisted and not by himself. We think on this and conclude that another being of Dramus's ilk has done this damage thereby causing the collapse. Our paranoia levels increase as we realise that in order to do this they would have had to be inside our rooms and close to the beams, rafters and ceiling, perhaps even inside the room with us.

The chamberlain looks at the roof aghast and apologises saying he will organise other rooms for us but he must get back to the bout. We discuss what has happened as well as our lack of progress thus far.

A servant comes some time later and says some rooms have been prepared for us. We won't be taking the rooms but we need some more time to affect repairs on the roof so Thaeuss and Penni go off to inspect while we continue working on the roof and supports etc.

Once T & P have returned from looking at the newly ready suite of rooms and said that we are happy to stay in our present ones. We plan what to do next, aware of both the impending arrival of Richard in the next days (inclement weather or not), the wishes of the Baron (via Juvert) for a speedy resolution to this problem of Fulk's disappearance, misgiving about information and people we have encountered and the mystery of the tower

We resolve to speak forcefully with Guy and so send a message to him with news that Penni would like the opportunity for a 'private' bout with him in one of the spare sets of chambers in half an hour. We send Gerald as the messenger and plan what we will do. We all decide mindspeech is a wonderful thing!

We rendezvous with Guy and two guards in a nearby empty chamber and then we commence the bout. The two participants stand near the centre while the guards and we stand around in a loose semi circle. Closest to the two guards are Gerald and I who are nominated to take them out as soon as possible.

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

All weapons are taken from the participants and they are given normal gloves by their 'seconds', a guard gives his to Guy and Thaeuss gives his to Penni. (Not un-magical hehe). The first blows are exchanged with Penni getting one in first which is a super hit taking much out of Guy and landing him on the floor with blood dripping from the nice jab Penni had delivered. The guards look momentarily stunned as does Guy but he gets up off the ground shaking his head to clear it...

He stands to the ready and the bout starts again with a similar result as the previous one, Penni is very lithe and stunningly fast as her fist connects again with the result that Guy is flattened again and he starts to fall backwards.

As he starts to fall, the guard I am next to moves to halt his fall as does Thaeuss and Penni, shouting 'now' across our mindspeech I sap the guard next to me with the desired result of unconsciousness. Gerald's one is luckier and manages to not be knocked out but also not see what has just happened to his companion. Knowing the next few seconds to be vital to our scheme Penni who has just KO'd Guy does a spinning turn and KO's the guard as well.

Therefore, we end with the two guards out for now and a near unconscious and concussed Guy. We acting quickly, questioning Guy using a rune of truth getting the following information: (I used his blood and we seem to have our desired effect).

- He doesn't know what has happened to Fulk.
- He last saw Fulk who was on his way to 'see' Justine and ensure if he cant have her than no-one else would have her afterwards (we think he meant to be very ungentlemanly to her)
- He suspects the Mother to be a witch
- He and Fulk we of the opinion that this vying for Justine's hand was a 'foregone' conclusion' since Richard greatly desired it!

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

- He was to plant the evidence upon the party most threatening to Fulk's ambition when the time was right.
- Missing from the chest is a charm of hiding or disappearance which Fulk took with him when off to see Justine.
- Justine has rebuffed Fulk's advances several times including the incident in the garden
- He referred to her as the ice bitch
- He assumed he was to win this contest of suitors

In order to cover up our assault on the guards we bruise Penni somewhat to look as if we have restrained her from ore damage in her berserk blood rage.

We wake the guards to take Guy away while Dramus and Gerald restrain Penni's bloodthirsty rage. We say the Penni had been driven berserk by Guy and the sight of blood and lashes out at the guard (second one) in her rage. The one I sap'd knew nothing else and had no issue with the story but the other guard had a suspicion but alone he had nothing to base it on so he kept his mouth shut, hand near his weapon while the guards took the unconscious blood splattered Guy from the room.

We return to the rooms, clean up and go have some dinner. After dinner, we have Alys and the boy come to join us for games and discussion where we find out the Henri is the preferred husband of Justine as he is a pure Chevalier.

We decide to divinate the baron and with Godfrey's help we are shown into the baron's chambers, well Penni and I are with Thaeuss waiting in the anteroom with Godfrey.

The Divination shows he has been under the effect of something akin to creeping doom but more insidious along with the hag riding episodes etc, this effect combined enables access to the targets dreams and will literally cause the target to fade away from the inside as their will and soul are sucked away and destroyed.

At the end of the ritual, we are discussing things frankly with the baron including our origins and purpose here when we hear the alarm bells being sounded



## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

through the nearby guardhouse. Moments later the doors to the baron's chamber are thrown open and several guards rush in to surround the baron and Godfrey sets about dressing the baron.

We decide to investigate and descend a nearby stair with me in the van of our small group. To the courtyard where we see a number of guards fighting what look to be, Michaeline's knights which on closer inspection are actually just the arms and armour of the knights coming up from the cellars and fighting.

Meanwhile back in the room Gerald, Yvette and Dramus are resting and keeping watch when Yvette sees something in the rafters out of the corner of her eye. She acts normal and checks on the sleeping Dramus while at the same time casting mindspeech. Once this spell is active, Dramus is told to wake slowly and come out into the main room where she suspects something small and dark is lurking in the rafters.

Dramus gets up and surreptitiously looks about the room seeing something small and dark in the rafters. His fear of spiders is huge and he 'sends to' Yvette and Gerald that they should head for the door slowly. They do so and when close by Dramus lets loose with some spells at the small target in the rafters. ^ Streams of corruption are sent its way with most missing but one gets it killing it instantly with the pieces falling to the floor.

The smell and stench of putrescence and corruption fill the air making them almost wretch, Nanosh who was quietly sleeping in front of the fire but is now wide eyed and staring at what just happened is wrenching nearby. Yvette tells Dramus to clear this mess away and he says just wait and in two minutes the mess disappears apart from the small parts of the whatever on the floor and Nanosh's food offering in the corner by the fire,

They all go and look at the pieces when their attention is drawn to the doors. They see in a flash a figure come to the door and slip under, by

way of under the door in=immediately followed by another and.

Question:

Was the roof collapse merely to distract us or to get us moved?

If the room itself of prime position or use to another?

Evidence against Fulk:

If we can compel Guy to speak the truth then we can assess that Fulk was intent to harm (possibly rape) of Justine on the night he disappeared and he came upon something that stopped him.

## **Chapter 10:**

**Am 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

*The battle is joined with the melee in our rooms resulting in Gerald Dying at the hands of these nasty creatures but through his heroic actions both Dramus and Yvette live and once they have defeated the 'things' they head off to find the other three.*

*Meanwhile Thauess has been creating several golems, I have rune walled several entrances to the inner sanctum and Penni has been directing forces to help beleaguered soldiers in the courtyard etc. We also encourage the movement of the royalty back to the central keep.*

*We notice some of these creatures enter the castle via secret passage and move to intercept them. I engage them but they spend most of the combat holding them from advancing past me (I am stunned for most of the combat) while Thauess and the 'Fists of Death' (aka Penni) take them out.*

*We have bought time for the baron to be moved to the central keep and we move to follow him once we meet up with Yvette and Dramus. We quietly mourn for Gerald but get on with necessities.*

## **Chapter 11:**

**Am 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

*We continue our destruction of the Golems with some success and an awful lot of golems! - Remind me never to cross Thaeuss as he has many of those mindless followers.*

*We go and meet with the Baron in his now secure quarters in the Dojon and have a brief chat, discovering that the children aren't there as they are probably with the Baroness in another part of the castle nearby.*

*Call us suspicious we depart the baron, move towards the Baroness's area, and gain access again. We discuss things 'pointedly' with the Baroness in terms of rumour etc.*

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*We discover the children are not here either and somewhere else in the castle.*

*We go looking for them and instead locate the dog first, whom we find nearby being menaced by candelabra's, hat stands et al. We demolish the household furniture and find the dog that has been wounded. We heal him and ask him to lead us to his master. Instead, he leads us to a blank corridor where we find a secret door and we follow him through the passages. We are also on the trail of whoever hurt him it seems.*

*We exit the passages nearby our old rooms.*

*Up the corridor toward the old chapel, we see a number of the golems knights and several on horseback hiding in the dark.*

## **Chapter 12:**

**Am 17<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

*Week 13 - 9<sup>th</sup> September 2004*

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

Looking ahead to the mass of undead knights and the mounted knights we decided a bit of subterfuge was called for. So with Dramus, Gerald and I all casting wall spells in a small area we planned for Gerald to have an illusion of us waiting down here milling around; Dramus to have a wall of Bones 5 foot behind this and I would have a runewall 3 foot in front of the Wall of Bones.

While the walls and illusions were up we planned to nip across the outer courtyard and move to the other corridor to avoid these nasty looking mobs. The spells all went off well except Gerald's illusion; as such there was now half way up the eastern corridor a rune wall just in front of a wall of bones.

We proceeded with our plan anyway and we charged out to the left, entering the inner courtyard. Flinging open the doors we saw a lot of snowdrifts and some frozen over fountains, outdoor seating etc. We also noticed for the first time a large 40ft metal golem<sup>1</sup>. It animates with our presence and starts moving slowly but surely towards us.

Panic sets in and we decide to continue on to the inner west corridor, which we hope is free of enemy forces. We enter the corridor and start up it while sending the earth elemental to tunnel away the earth beneath the large golem so as to keep it from pulverising us.

Our charge up the western corridor is halted half way when the armoured knights charge in the topmost doors and bear down on our golems and us. The golems hold off the first charge but we have grave doubts about other charges past this point. We prepare for a hard battle.

We notice the bard come down the stairs beside us, we quickly realise there is an upper floor away from the mounted knights and the foot knights down here and we charge upstairs. We run along the upper floor towards the chapel end and we find a big stonewall.

---

<sup>1</sup> Armed with two large weapons in the form of a mace and hammer of some of some sort. Very nasty looking indeed.

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

We set to removing this obstacle while we leave the golems to guard the stairs up to our floor. The stone is removed in short order revealing a bright sparkly 'shield' obscuring the chapel and what is going on in the. We suspect this may be some sort of runewall like force shield to keep us and other magic out.

Considering that Time is off the essence a rope is thrown into the room and Gerald and I volunteer to leap into the unknown magical field. We do so expediently.

Gerald floats on in while I leap down on the rope to the floor 30 foot below, I see two mounted knights charging me as well as Justine lying on the later (seemingly unconscious) inside a summoning pentacle.

There is a hobbit in metal armour that looks like a bodyguard type as well as 'Father Jacque' dressed in priestly raiment's presiding over the ceremony and the Sage Bernard is standing off to one side in a seeming daze. Gerald seeing the situation takes aim and cuts down Father Jacque with his special archery. I set my spear to receive the charge from the mounted knights and their warhorses.

Next Thaeuss floats into the room joining Gerald in the air and Penni leaps down the rope to land beside me. A melee ensues during which I impale stopping one knight and destroying his mount with the help of a golem; Bernard is taken out by Yvette's dagger, as is the hobbit fighter who turns out to be a clockwork creation.

Unfortunately during the melee Bernard animates and moves to the alter saying in a voice not wholly his, "enough of the ceremony, time for the sacrifice"; with this he stabs Justine in the heart killing her instantly. Once this happens we feel a dark presence beginning to coalesce and the room dims.

Too late! The world dims and fades to nothing, yet there is a faint smell of salty sea air and then the pure darkness of oblivion.

## Chapter 13:

**Unknown date and time      near the town of 'Newport' on an Unknown plane.**

*We come to our senses at various times and things aren't what they were. We find ourselves no longer in Newcourt but in a previously unvisited location, namely 'The Newport Institute for the mentally distressed'. The men find themselves in a room with only themselves but the women come too in a room with another woman<sup>1</sup> covered in bandages and madness in her eyes.*

*We had little recollection of who and what we were just loose ideas of who we were. Penni's 'memory' was that of a wanton strumpet, eager for a good, hard time of it. Thaeuss's 'memory' was that of his homicidal and violent finger puppet doing a variety of 'bad' things and that his name was in fact Thomas. Yvette had a wound to her head and was going about saying she could hear voices in her head (perhaps she was mad!)*

*The rest of us had various memories of which mine was that a of a priest being restrained for dealing*

---

<sup>1</sup> Tied down to the bed. She does look familiar but the 'ladies' have little time to investigate

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*with all the dirty, nasty filth that is in the world today and wanted to cleanse those so filthy and immoral.*

*Naturally Penni (aka 'Buttons') caught most of my attention for her lewd and wanton behaviour. She was talking of having 'a threesome' and getting quite excited about it even if it involved (in her mind) the tall gaunt one (Drew, a local undertaker), the mad puppeteer (Thomas) his long nosed puppet and herself. At one stage she was quite openly leering at me making suggestions of a 'foursome', which would include me!*

*I lost my composure then and knew that she needed 'cleansing' of her wanton and wicked immoral thoughts and I would have to give her a good, hard seeing to so she would see the error of her ways. Once I told her that her cheeks flushed, they became glowy and rosy coloured and she said in a barely audible husky voice "oh, yes please". I went and smashed a chair to get a stick to beat her with when orderlies jumped me, meanwhile the rest of the 'normals' helped me and we made a break for freedom.*

*Even in their addled minds, which don't operate as they have in the past we realised escape, was the best policy, especially compared to acid baths, frontal lobotomies and other assorted 'treatments' that Dr Physco (aka Dr Dipple) was considering for us.*

*So after a bit of trouble involving Penni being a strumpet, Thaeuss seeming slightly psychotic with a homicidal sock puppet attached and other small incidents we escaped with our possessions out of the institution and made our way into the nearby town of Newport.*

*We found some interesting facts from our brief stay there including the detail that 'Count Victor' was the liege lord and he had a poor sister who killed herself.*

## Chapter 14:

**Unknown date and time  
Unknown plane.**

**near 'Newport' on an**



## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

We head for the local library and find there a scribe named Bernard. We look around the place for periodicals and reading texts where we can.

During this time, Drew/Dramus made a run for it away from what he saw as those mad loonies from the asylum. He knew he had to return to his funeral home parlour to dispose of some rather colourful liquid and various body parts. He made off but was spotted by Thomas/Thaeuss, 'Buttons'/Penni and Yvette who followed him and left Gerald and I perusing the books.

Upon arriving home Drew/Dramus has a very brief nap which results in a revelation that finds himself back in control of his normal personality, aka Dramus with the 'Drew' persona being secondary. This period of euphoria is very transitory however, as the three party members who followed him burst in on him and he quickly gathers his senses, picks up his hat and suggests they return and collect the missing members (Gerald and I).

They all return to the library to find that both Gerald and I seem to have returned to some semblance of normality and some of our senses and thought patterns have remerged.

I feel the need to visit the local church and we all head down there to find it is a Michaeline church. This looks very familiar to most of us and we feel there has been some sort of battle here recently perhaps involving us, but we are not certain! I talk some with the resident priest who it turns out becomes suspicious of us and has his acolyte get the guards and set them upon us.

A chase through the streets ensues during which it is found that several of us can actually fly above the ground and various other little abilities. We all split up and rendezvous back at the library safely. We decide to further put distance between the town and us and we take flight to a nearby beach by the seaside.

Penni remembers some things about herself at this time and we get into a general discussion about magic and how useful it is. This discussion helps to jar

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*more things but some memories are currently unobtainable.*

*Thaeuss breaks the 'Justine' stick and we find a body with us on the beach. We match this with the pearl in the hilt of the dagger and suspect a connection between the two items. We also note the dark runes and sense of 'evil' emanating from the dagger.*

## Chapter 15:

**Unknown date and time on an Unknown plane. on a beach near 'Newport'**

*We are still on the beach contemplating what to do about the dagger, Justine and our general predicament! We decide to release the spirit we think is trapped in the dagger. We hold the hilt of the dagger and the pearl drops out, we then place this in the body's mouth and with Penni standing ready to 'stuff the 'soul back in the body' we close the corpse's mouth around the pearl so as to contain whatever comes from it as the teeth crush the pearl itself.*

*The pearl is crushed and Penni hurriedly 'stuffs the soul back into the body' with astonishing affect. After a while colour returns to the body while Penni is stuffing away and then a gasp emanates from what was a corpse and now is a live Justine. When the gasp emanates we all also feel a shudder as a 'disturbance' resounds from her body heading out in all directions on this plane.*

*We all find our memory return along with our abilities and drives to see our mission completed. We all discuss and decide what to do next Penni DA's a plant to reveal the POO to be 'Newport' We know a castle is nearby so we plan to head there in the hope of finding answers there as well as Françoise whom I have fixed upon with my Bowl of Location item.*

*We arrive near the castle and see a small town there as well; we look around the streets of the town and finally find Francoise/Dog in the same body that of the dog. We take him along with us and head up to the castle where we tell the guards we are travelling troubadours here to entertain Count Victor. We are admitted to the castle where a number of familiar faces are present but with different or mixed personalities.*

## Chapter 16:

**Unknown date and time.**

**Near the town of**

**'Newport' on an Unknown plane.**

*We check out the highest room in the tallest tower and find Elyse who is not in a good way so she is soon petit morted and minimised for ease of transportation. We check out the chapel but while it has the sword and dragon motif, we find its not consecrated ground and not of any, use to us in our endeavours to find out what has happened to us.*

*We decide to deal with this so we start taking out guards/servants in small groups and then bigger groups until the room we are using to store these unconscious plebs looks like a house of ill repute and a likely place for illicit sexual activities.*

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*Finally, I sap everyone after then have been agonied by Dramus. We approach the Count and demand resolution and explanations but it turns to violence and we knock him down, into pieces and see in fact a small imp playing the part of 'Count Victor'. A DA of the Imp reveals that his demon is Darkness. We question the Imp as to his master's identity and we get no name but there is a 'dark mirror' we need to find which is important to our task.*

*We find that this plane/world/domain was created Dr Dominani who was the midwife for its creation. Apothysis is the Domain lord. Finally, we all take turns to sleep after such a long time of wakefulness.*

**Noon the following day. In the castle near the town of 'Newport' on an Unknown plane.**

*We have decided to deal with the Dr in the asylum who we first met over threats of acid baths etc. We all fly to the asylum and land on the roof to plan our incursion inside. We use a bone slide top drop to ground level and then enter the Dr's office followed by his bedroom and then laboratory which has all sorts of medical contraptions and equipment as well as a few books which aren't only 3-5 days old when DA'd which I take for later research. We also find a small curvy trumpet sort of object which we DA as magical communication device*

*We wait and soon the Dr comes in after finishing his rounds and we surprise him with a sap to the back of the head. We take the unconscious Dr into his laboratory, strap him down securely into his 'Operating table', and then bring him back around. We ask him some questions finding out that Dr Dominani is the Domain Lord who created this plane and he is Dr Dipple's employer.*

## Chapter 17:

**Late afternoon In the Asylum near the town of 'Newport' on an Unknown plane.**

*With the Dr still tightly and securely tied down to his table, we continue our questioning as to what has been happening of late. Penni DA's the Dr and finds out that his strongest magical/quasi magical ability is 'Mind affecting'. Yvette tries to look into his mind and finds a trained mind well used to mental 'tricks' and very well 'ordered'. Yvette then looks deeper to see if he is lying to us and then finds herself dominated.*

*At the same time, the door in the wall between the office and us disappears under the veneer of a solid wall and a door appears in the opposite wall. Immediately we hear shuffling behind the new door and Gerald says (in Dr Dipple's voice) "just a minute"! Quickly I move to beside the door but then asked to sap Dr Dipple while Penni takes position by the door.*

*I get to the doctor and try to knock him out but a number of things happen just before I can; namely, that the Doctor seems to flow away from his bindings, hits Thaeuss, pushes me back and pivots upright on the table. This takes us all by surprise so I drop my sap, ready my spear and plunge it solidly into the Dr's chest. Simultaneously Gerald goes to shoot his bow at him with Yvette deliberately standing in his way (compelled by the Dr) and the door opens with a large trumpet like object being thrust inside the room.*

*The Dr seems to shrug off the spear blow; the trumpet like object goes off (I'm sure someone was cleaning it at the time) with a loud boom and lots of small metallic pellets that hit all and sundry including the Dr and us. Again, this doesn't faze him and the melee continues. Penni grabs the protruding barrel of the 'Blunderbuss' and pulls it and the firer inside the room. We are about to have another go at the Dr when he decides discretion is the better part of cowardice and flees very, very rapidly out of the room and up the hallway.*

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

We quickly take stock of the situation and speedily question the hunchback, reaching the following conclusions

- We're in a very bad place
- It is full of very bad people named Dr.
- Dr Dominani is going to be very unhappy with us
- We shouldn't be here
- We have lost Dramus and the children
- We don't know how to get back from wherever we are

As a result, we decide banishment back to Alusia is called for (as this seems the safest place presently!) so all are banished by me starting with Thaeuss and finally me. The Banishments work fine except for one thing: We all find ourselves standing beside a large wrought iron gate in the grounds of well manicured lawns surrounding a large, old gothic looking mansion. We all look askance at this turn of events and are about to try to scale the walls etc when the small object we took for Dr Dipple's study starts 'ringing'.

Thaeuss retrieves the object, puts it to his ear and then has a conversation with the being on the other end which went as follows

"Hello" - Thaeuss (In a snobbish Elven accent)

"I am Dr Dominani and I'm unhappy at the damage you've been dealing to my servants" - Dr Dominani

(In a hoity accent)

"Well they started it first"

"That's as maybe but we must sort this out, perhaps over lunch or a cup of tea?"

"OK but we will defend ourselves if threatened!"

"Of course, of course. I'll send my man down to get you soon"

"Goodbye"

We then notice a door underneath a stylish piece of artwork at the ground floor open and a man in red/black livery comes out and motions for us to join him. We

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

do so and he introduces himself as 'Shern', the Dr's butler. He is to escort us to lunch with the Dr. We follow him to a large, well appointed dining room. Along the way, we see more servants and Penni gets a quick DA off (asking Plane of Origin, getting the result of Lemordia).

We meet the mysterious Dr Dominani who turns out to be (according to DA's etc) a Vampyr / Sentient Undead-Avatar. We partake of a little lunch with him and discuss our less than happy situation with him to get the benefit of his knowledge and experience. We explain our part in this affair and what our aims are. He has interacted with other guild parties in the past and knows of the SAG and it's abilities.

*Victor 'contracted' Dr Dominani to create the plane of 'Newport' but something went wrong and the plane didn't come about as it should (probably due to the altercation at its construction) and subsequently Dr Dipple was sent to help in the settling in of the 'citizens' to their new plane via tried and true 'medical methods'!*

*He agrees to help the party if they hand me over to him, this suggestion is quickly poo poed (as per standard guild practise) and we instead negotiate to turn Victor over to Dr Dominani and he will let us go on our way to complete our mission. He provides us with a 'draught' of some sort to enable our senses to 'alter to suit the surrounding in Victor's redoubt' which we take gingerly and pack securely for later use.*

*We are soon sent back to 'Newport' with Dr Dipple to locate our missing companions (Dramus, Justine and Francoise/Leroy) who we last left in the asylum when we were taken to 'Domainia'. Dr Dipple doesn't know where they are but tracks lead out the window to a strangely twisted toadstool ring where we think Dramus has taken himself and the children.*

## Chapter 18:

**Unknown date, 3pm  
of 'Nightheart'**

**on the plane**

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*After some consideration we decide to enter, the fairie circle ourselves to find Dramus and the children. We enter and find them all there inside the fairie circle on the opposite side.*

*Dramus explains recent events as thus:*

*"I noticed the door disappear and no noise from other side so I waited a few minutes and then got myself and the children away to a copse of trees where I could see through the Dr's window to keep the office under observation. After a few more minutes the Dr emerged from his laboratory, looking quite upset but relatively unscathed so I assessed you'd not succeeded and perhaps I needed to summon help if possible. I needed my tower and it wouldn't come to this place so I created a fairie ring and we stepped through to here"*

*"Well my tower almost got here but not quite so my options were limited and I didn't know where I was anyway so we decided to traipse through these woods to find out where we are. It was going fine for the first hundred yards or so until my sword started lightly glowing, I resisted the urge to flee and for the children's sake kept going until after another hundred yards, it started brightly glowing. I summoned my courage and kept my resolve to take the children to safety and we kept going onwards until after a further hundred yards through densely packed woods the sword glowed so brightly I thought the sun was trapped inside it. At this point my resolve fled in advance of my courage and we ran with haste back to here and to wait for?"*

*Dramus finishes the story as seems to be on the edge of a breakdown so Thaeuss draws his attention to what might be a spider in a nearby tree to his left and I promptly sap him to give him some rest from his phobias. Our plane of Origin is now determined to be 'Nighthart'*

*Thaeuss flies up above the forest canopy to determine our location and sees fertile land some distance away from our location. He returns and creates a 'skiff' for our transport needs and we take flight towards 'civilised lands'*



## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*We decide to press on to the castle and see what we find there - if anything! On our journey, we pass over a number of disturbing sights below us. A cavalry patrol in red livery fighting undead, a skirmish between more undead and troops, a walled town under siege and finally a hamlet with people staked to crosses in the centre of the hamlet but not dead even after they seem to have been there for some time.*

**Unknown date, 5pm  
of 'Nightheart'**

**on the plane**

*We finally come to the castle we have been looking for but see it is no longer in good repair and in fact looks deserted and mostly destroyed. We land outside and approach the half hanging gates. We hear growls inside and we prepare weapons at the same time as speaking greetings to those within. The growls subside and after a minute, a man comes out to talk with us introducing himself as 'Luke'. We DA him and find he is a short-lived sentient / Greater Werewolf.*

*We discuss things with him and after we mention we are looking for Victor, he states that 'lots of people are looking for Victor'. We tells us that Harkon Lucas is the lord of this area, that the red liveried troops are Falcovnian troops loyal to Drakov of Falcovnia, the people staked out in the villages are ordered by Drakov and that the Undead are lead by an unknown party. We thank him for his help and he mentions that with it getting dark we should find shelter as 'bad creatures' roam at night, "well they mostly come at night", and he then bids us goodbye and moves back behind the castle gates.*

**Unknown date, 6pm  
of 'Nightheart'**

**on the plane**

*We move away from the ruined castle and I do a 'locate' to find 'Victor' using what he should look like as represented by the Imp/golem in the castle we*

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*have previously encountered. The locate reveals a 'tower on an island' so we fly down to the nearest sea and there create an unusual outrigger canoe with the help? of Thaeuss's magical contrivances.*

**Unknown date, 7pm  
of 'Nighthart'**

**on the plane**

*We take our canoe and head out to sea, into the foggy distance. We hear during our journey the beat of drums and then a galley passes us by without seeing us. We soon there after hear the sounds of combat on the seas but we steer away from it heading to where we thing the tower to be. We find ourselves an hour later upon the craggy shores of a small island upon which sits a big black tower that stretches up in the clouds. We estimate the height as being 400 ft or greater*

## Chapter 19:

**Unknown date, 7pm  
of 'Nighthart'**

**on the plane**

*We trek across the barren rocks of the island until we are at the base of the tower, there we assess the tower once more and judge it to be made of black featureless obsidian stone and some 250 ft across and over 1000 ft or more high. We circumnavigate the base and we find a door when we were just about to rely on Dramus's magical fairie stone.*

*Dramus advances up and tries the knocker on the door, which causes all of us to find ourselves on a path, standing by a gate outside a run down estate.*

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*Tall trees surround long grasses covering the once grand lawns.*

**Unknown date, 7pm  
of 'Amberville'**

**on the plane**

*We open the gate and enter the estate to start on our way after the elusive Victor. Gerald has taken some of the draught provided by Dr Dominani to see things in a different way from the rest of us, perhaps seeing things we fail to see. Walking along the path, I get a feeling of great evil, which grows with each steps along the path, and after 10 minutes walking the light is starting to go and night creeps up. We see in a tree a small doll similar to the Punchinello that Thaeuss had on his hand when he was 'Thomas'. The doll warns us not to be about at night as that's when the 'bad things' come out and terrorise the land. We continue with haste in order to be inside before night fully falls!*

*We turn a corner and see a run down manor house ahead of us, but Gerald sees a fine house with sounds of a ball/party emanating from within. We enter the house and search it with little avail until Dramus states, "Victor, we don't think much of your manners in greeting guests and your hospitality is sorely lacking". At this, the doors of the main ballroom are opened by unseen means leading us to look around inside but still no Victor!*

*We move to look around upstairs and I start seeing blood dripping from the walls, the floors rippling, movement in the walls and the sense of evil increasing markedly. We return again to the ballroom and there Dramus again baits Victor to show himself which he does in a form. Dramus attempts to capture him by chain casting Bind Greater Undead and succeeds in trapping the being that is spinning around him in the floor.*

*We see Dramus getting sucked down into the floor until he loses a hold on the Greater Undead 'Victor' which then vanishes away leaving Dramus waist-deep in the stone floor. Thaeuss is pressed into service getting him out and in doing so reveals a dark earthen*

*necromantic type area below, which we think we'll use to get to the bottom of Victor's machinations.*

## Chapter 20:

**Unknown date, 9pm  
of 'Amberville'**

**on the plane**

*We get down to the bottom of the 'pit' via ropes or personal ability and we find ourselves in a large room with doors and stairs leading downwards some 60 ft away. We decide that dastardly Victor is most likely in the lowest part of the house as his sort is wont to be so we head towards the stairs. After a short period of time we don't seem to have reached the stairs and if anything they seem further away! We look back towards the hole in the roof that we came in by (it still has the rope there) and we see it is now some 400 ft away and the stairs appear to be a similar distance.*

*We stand and discuss this phenomenon and then notice the distances seem to have increased to close to a 1000 ft while we have been talking about the issue. We decide not to flee but to try and get to our destination. Yvette starts to hear a faint sound every minute and a half from some distance away but behind us none the less. We stop and look around us and notice we have made it to the edge of the flagstone we have been travelling across. We can see a nice 5 ft wide 'trench' between the flagstones and we decide to stop and take stock of our situation.*

*Thaeuss puts up 'Walls of Dust and Sand' around us and we eat some rations while discussing options. After a few minutes a large black 'leg' appears over the top of the wall and then another followed by a large insectoid face with very large mandibles. I strike at the legs delivering a good blow as does Penni and we drive off the creature from the pit which leaves a pile of ichor that Dramus assiduously avoids looking at!*

**Unknown date, 11pm  
of 'Amberville'**

**on the plane**

*We judge that we have shrunk through some means and we assess our heights at around 20 ml each (with Dramus topping out at around 24 ml in height) which means a lot more previously innocuous household beings are now a lot more dangerous to us. We decide to head for the noise and we do so along the channels between flagstones getting to the wall from which we have determined the noise to emanate from.*

*We see at the bottom of the wall a small hole big enough (being over 50 ml tall or thereabouts) for us to pass through. We proceed into the tunnel with myself on point to the left and Gerald on the right. We see small objects, which come up to our knees 'moving' in the tunnel and take defensive positions.*

*One of the 'objects' leaps at me and lands on my shield where I see that it is in fact a large (at least to us) flea with rather large mandibles. The flea leaps away and Dramus sends one of his Spectral warriors after it taking it down in spectacular fashion. Seeing a new type of monster that we need to practise manoeuvres against we do so on the black fleas that seem to infest the tunnel now that we look for them. I take off one of the flea heads for later research and perhaps mounting over the fireplace.*

*We carry on along the tunnel and see it open out a bit when we see a large black rat coming towards us. We all back into the tunnel and flatten to the sides of the tunnel so as to minimise our body exposure. The rat charges down the tunnel straight into us, getting damaged by my set spear and assorted others blows from the party. Once the rat is dead I cut off the rat's tail (which is about 5m long) and wind it up and carry over my shoulder.*

*We continue along the tunnels dealing with several other fleas as well move towards the source of the noise. The tunnels end in a set of stairs, which seem to have an aura that Penni determines to lead to 'the Heart'. Now that we are here at the base of the stairs I can hear the ticking as well and it seems to*

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*be around 1.5 minutes apart We proceed with extreme caution up these stairs.*

*Once I reach the top I see a large gilded room full of mechanical machines with a rather large one in the centre of the room making lots of noise. The room has a big crystal glass dome over it that has a dragon pattern in it. The noise coming from the room is very loud and has been hammering at Yvette's mind for some time and now that she is in this room she is unable to really move with the pain so she sits and concentrates on keeping her mind.*

*Dramus does Bind Greater Undead on victor and tells him to manifest himself. At this taunt some of the walls come away and start forming into metallic golems<sup>1</sup>. Dramus concentrates and manages to hold 2 of them through strength of will while the other two form up and start moving towards us.*

## Chapter 21:

**Unknown date, midnight  
the plane of 'Amberville'**

**In 'the heart' on**

---

<sup>1</sup> Thirteen foot tall metal golems

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*We took up our positions and prepare<sup>1</sup> to defend to the last against the giant metal juggernauts coming our way. Yvette with her mind in pain finally gives in and*

<b>I am / a spirit / Summoned / from past time / bound / to hide / the heir</b>
<b>We are / a shade / Conjured / from the void / charged / shelter / the innocent</b>
<b>essence of air, water &amp; life / protect / Justine</b>

*opens her mind to the voices and gets the following information:*

*Yvette could sense the white spirit circling the room when we first arrived, it came across to her as she huddled on the floor hiding from the voice and the voices clambering to get in were pushed away so her mind was at peace. Then there was a gentle knocking on her mind, which she chose to let in and it turned out to be Justine's guardian spirit. It also revealed that when Justine was sacrificed it took the hit to protect her and that caused the ritual to go awry. The portion in the heart room and talking to Yvette is only a portion of the spirit, it was unclear if it was diminished through fighting Victor or if it was dispersed throughout the plane.*

*The next few pulses go fast with me holding off one golem, another facing off with Gerald while Dramus tries to maintain his hold on the other two. Thaeuss undertakes to see how he can best sabotage the mechanical workings, Penni looks around the room taking out one of the 'held' golems and Yvette looks at the lock surrounding the heart!*

*After six pulses, the scissors holds my arm while I am avoiding the other nasty weapon on my golem with some success thereby keeping it occupied. Gerald's golem is occupied by him and his successful weapon hits. Penni has been taking out a golem from behind and then it starts hitting back when Dramus's controls on the golems falter. Thaeuss has been playing with some very dangerous energy conduits of pure mana and electrickery. Yvette successfully opens the lock and an iris opens revealing a dark smoky area within.*

---

<sup>1</sup> We take a few potions and ready our primary weapons.

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*Thaeuss passes the dagger of soul stealing to Yvette and she plunges it into the heart causing the heart / soul to be 'trapped' within the new black gem of the dagger. Once this happens the golems 'power down' and stops moving/attacking! The room starts to fall apart with exploding force and we all decide to make haste and depart the room while we can still do so.*

*All head down the stairs and seek safety away from the exploding room except for Thaeuss and myself. Thaeuss became trapped behind a miss-fired 'Wall of Dust and Sand' and is taking his time exiting the room so I wait for him.*

*While I wait for Thaeuss to come and head down the stairs, he sees a 'body' forming in the crystal ceiling. He waits a few seconds and sees the body take form and drop through the ceiling as a real 'body'. We both take cover behind the wall (expecting it to explode or something else bad) and wait. We then come back out seeing the body still there in the middle of the room and I grab it while we head for the stairs before the room finally disintegrated.*

*We all head down the stairs but halt halfway down between the exploding room above and the base of the stairs below. So now on the stairs we have (in order from highest elevation to lowest) Thaeuss, myself (plus anonymous corpse<sup>1</sup>), Yvette, Justine, Leroy/Françoise, Dramus, Gerald, Penni.*

*A few minutes pass and we check our surroundings seeing the top is now covered over with solid material that seems to be made of some magical substance while the bottom now opens out into a blazing light. We decide that going towards the light is a good idea and head down. We all do so and we exit through the 'horse statue' in the Newport town square.*

**Late afternoon  
of 'Newport'.**

**In the town**

---

<sup>1</sup> The corpse I notice has a passing resemblance to the baron and appears to be a human male aged around 30 – possibly this is the 'body' of 'Victor'.



## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

After we all exit the 'statue gate', the 'gate' disappears and we notice that the people standing around the square all have dazed and very confused looks. We ask a few some questions and discover that a lot of them have memories of just before death as if the current inhabitants of the bodies are the spirits 'dredged' up by the **Evil Dark Binder** (aka Victor). We tell em all not to worry and Dramus encourages them to 'head on down to the pub and drink your problems away' and passes out a few coins.

**Late afternoon / just prior to dusk**  
**In the town of 'Newport'.**

The weather has started to pack in and a distinct 'chill' is in the air, the onset of winter is felt. We make speed and head to the asylum to pass across our burden to Dr Dipple as per our agreement with Dr Dominani. We arrive at the asylum and avoid the mass of bodies<sup>1</sup> milling around confused by entering Dr Dipple's office via his window. Inside the office we notice the door is barred from inside to protect him from the 'madness' outside in the asylum. Once we have, all entered the office, the good Dr appears from his bedroom and we transact the deal handing over both the body and the gem containing Victor.

We discuss the deal and organise ourselves for the coming dissolution of this plane. We decide not to head back to see Dr Dominani and go 'home' from there, instead staying here as when the plane collapses since we came the same way. We break Alys out in preparation for this occurrence and once she has stopped screaming we tell her to sit down and relax while she chats in hushed tones to her sister Justine.

We see an enormous wall of 'force' along the horizon coming towards us and realise the futility of resisting so we engross the children in conversation until it arrives. The world goes black and the salty smell of the sea passes!

---

<sup>1</sup> Both inmates and the 'guards'

**24<sup>th</sup> Snow 804**  
**Baronial Castle**

**In Newcourt's**

*We come to 'at the scene of the crime', the chapel in the castle. There are a number of bodies littering the floor, which we leave there for later examination. Looking around we notice that the only one of the children with us is Lady Justine while Alys and Leroy/Francoise are absent.*

*We see the glass in the chapel explode outwards as a sense of huge pressure released into the world localised around ourselves. Picking ourselves up we decide to go somewhere warmer than the now freezing, exposed chapel floor. We head down to Father Jacques room to get some warmer clothes for the women. As we pass by, we see the huge golem in the courtyard still pounding away but seemingly without purpose and controlling influence.*

## Chapter 22:

**Around dawn, 24<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Newcourt's Baronial Castle**

**On Alusia, In**

*The day dawns a cold grey day and we head towards the centre of the castle back to the 'secure' places where we last left the royals (baron and baroness) in relative safety. We take with us the wounded Bernard<sup>I</sup> and a dazed Jean after finding the body of Father Jacques gone from where we last saw it.*

*Along the way, Thaeuss notices the remains of several 'wasp like constructions' with silvery ichor on the surrounding flagstones, which he carefully scoops these up for later examination. We next encounter some of the castle servants standing around in the corridors looking dazed and making little or no sense. We direct them to start banking the fires and preparing food, which they understand, and they head off to their various duties.*

*Soon thereafter, we encounter some of Henri's and Gerard's men at arms along with Gerard who all look the worse for wear after recent battles. We talk quickly and discover that Henri is wounded but stable after the battles but no one seems to know what has happened.*

*We ask that they move around the castle directing staff to be about their duties, prepare food and warm the castle as well as setting the servants to start clearing up the mess of bones and bodies. We suggest that the bodies be taken to the chapel for now until burial services can be arranged.*

*Moving on we get to the location we last left the baroness where we find her there in a state of ill health along with Oudine<sup>II</sup>. Alys, Francoise and Leroy are all present as well which pleases us all. The Venerable Thibout is attending to the baroness and the others with his tender ministrations and he appears exhausted after his efforts on their behalf. Alys is in*

---

<sup>I</sup> Penni has healed some of his wounds which look to her trained eye to be some 5-6 days old.

<sup>II</sup> She appears injured with some scars on her face which appear to have been bandaged up to heal except we can see no evidence of bandages.

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

an extraordinarily calm state (perhaps sedated in some way) but she fails to respond to our greetings except by tracking our movements with her eyes.

Yvette goes over and talks to Alys reassuring her that all is well when she receives a reply back in her mind, which slightly astonishes her, but she takes it into her stride. Penni is about to explain what has happened to the Baroness when the Baron and his men arrive so she delays until the baron is ready and then illuminates them on the recent events. Penni's story is told in broad strokes rather than details and can be succinctly told as;

**"Victor (the Barons eldest child to his first wife and disposed in his second marriage) felt aggrieved and had conspired to take what he saw as rightfully his through dark, evil magic. He contrived to steal the barony 'lock, stock and barrel' using this dark, evil magic. We managed to interrupt his plans in time and after a number of battles against him and his evil minions managed to overcome him and restore the barony back to its [present state.]**

**Around 7am, 24<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Newcourt's Baronial Castle**

**On Alusia, In**

At this news, the Baron is distressed and takes some time with his wife to absorb the news and discuss their ramifications. During this time the rest of us are involved in undertaking healing for the wounded and doing what we can to make others comfortable. I get the opportunity to undertake a healing ritual on the baroness, which means she is restored to full health and able to undertake her duties again.

Thaeuss during this time gets our special friend from storage in our room and when he is unobserved, he breaks him out of his compact state then drops him into a deep drift near the castle gates. Later on, he discusses cleaning up the bodies around the castle with Jubert and advises him to search around the castle walls for any that may have been missed over the last few days.

Thaeuss also surveys the large golem still 'powered up' but lacking in direction that is stuck in the

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

courtyard near our rooms. He observes and then acts to cut off the supply of steam that seems to 'power' the golem. Once the golem stops, he recovers the 'power source' for later examination.

Dramus assists Thibout in his work and then encourages the very old and exhausted physician to rest after all his hard work. While the suggestion is shrugged off initially, Dramus's winning smile and personality comes through and Thibout is soon spotted snoring in a comfortable armchair by the fire.

Yvette converses more with Alys in their special way and then the family get together to share news and comfort each other over the traumatic events of the past few days. We also discover that Guy was hurt in the fighting during which one of his companions died.

**Around noon, 24<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Newcourt's Baronial Castle**

**On Alusia, In**

Lunch is served and the baroness moves around reviewing the state of the castle while her husband languishes in maudlin state. The herald runs in and announces that he has had message from Count Richard to expect, his arrival imminently which acts to inspire everyone to move around with haste getting on with duties cleaning up the castle.

**2pm, 24<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Newcourt's Baronial Castle**

**On Alusia, In**

The sound of approaching hoof beats brings the work in the castle to a halt while we wait expectantly for the new arrivals. The riders arrive in the courtyard and we see that it is not Count Richard and his men but rather 20 Michaeline knights along with Father Andre<sup>1</sup>. Dramus suddenly feels woosy and makes haste, off to our rooms along with Penni.

The knights enter and speak briefly with the baron stating they are here to deal with the evil events of late to which the Baron indicates his permission for the investigation of the castle and people herein.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Gabrielite Inquisitor from the Church in town below.

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

Father Andre and a Michaeline come over to me, he then states "Father Broc, I require your assistance with my investigations under the power of the Inquisition, do you agree?" I agree to help Father Andre and he introduces me to the Michaeline as Abbot Boniface of the 'Abbey of the Clerics regular of the Sword of St Michael'. He then instructs me to tell him what has been going on recently and what evil has caused this.

I suggest we move to a more private room to discuss this, which is easily accomplished, and I tell my story to them both. I too relate the broad strokes of the tale, omitting various parts of little relevance but stressing the dark/evil magic used by Victor and that the combined actions of our group through self sacrifice and decisive action helped vanquish the evil and restore the barony this morning. It is at this time I ask what date it is, finding out that it has been some 6 days since we were last here.

I am asked directly on my honour "Is the baroness and evil witch?" to which I reply, "I assure you she is not an evil witch". This seems to placate them both and settle any question they have on the matter and we move on with our discussion of events.

**3pm, 24<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Newcourt's Baronial Castle**

**On Alusia, In**

During the time of my discussion with the Abbot and Father Andre, the Michaeline Knights search the castle and encounter the other members of the party. One reports to the abbot just as I am finishing my story and relates that Dramus (an evil necromancer pacted to the dark forces) is one of my companions. This causes a good deal of colour to race to the Abbots face and he turns to me and asks, "Why do you have one aligned with the Dark in your party?"

I explain Dramus's key role in our recent victory over the dark and relate that I am trying to win him over to side of light, which will take some time. The Abbot sees the light here but advises me that should

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*the Michaeline's return and find Dramus here they will be less than friendly towards him.*

**3.30pm, 24<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Newcourt's Baronial Castle**

**On Alusia, In**

*The Michaelines all gather in the courtyard and ready to leave when a large group of black winged figures is sighted flying towards the castle. We all wait and soon see 8 guards along with 2 mages and finally Count Richard land in the courtyard and walk towards the Michaelines. The Abbot dismounts and greets Count Richard who says "Ah Abbot Boniface I see you are just leaving, good!" With this the Abbot remounts and along with his knights take their leave and depart the castle with haste.*

*Count Richard ascends the stairs and after looking us over goes and spends time with the Baron to discuss recent events. During this time some servants come in with a body slung between them that appears to be Fulk's! The news is related to Count Richard.*

**4.30pm, 24<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Newcourt's Baronial Castle**

**On Alusia, In**

*We are summoned to attend Count Richard and give him our account of the recent events. We do so and again relate the terrible tragedy that has unfolded through the evil machinations of Victor. Count Richard is very suspicious of us but has no proof of any wrong doings so he dismisses us while he continues his discussions with the Baron.*

*The rest of the afternoon passes uneventfully but we have news that Count Richard and his party will be here over night continuing their investigations.*

**7pm, 24<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Newcourt's Baronial Castle**

**On Alusia, In**

*A very subdued dinner is held, with little conversation apart from forced pleasantries and most people retire for an early night. We stand triple watches for the night.*

**8am, 25<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Newcourt's Baronial Castle**

**On Alusia, In**

*After an uneventful night, breakfast is held and Count Richard departs the castle still mumbling about "getting to the bottom of this".*

*Other movements/events we learn of are:*

- *Alys will be accompanying her aunt Oudine and cousin Florestan when they return to Bowcourt. Alys will there be able to spend time with friends of her mothers / aunts who can help her with her new abilities<sup>1</sup>.*
- *The announcement of Justine's husband to be has been delayed given the present circumstances. -- We still expect that Henri will be successful in his bid for her hand in the future.*
- *Jean is also leaving Newcourt, perhaps headed to Bowcourt as well.*

**10am, 25<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Newcourt's Baronial Castle**

**On Alusia, In**

*We have a discussion with the baron about a number of things including the church presence in Newcourt, the lack of magical advisor etc. We leave after saying our farewells and Jubert takes us away and passes across our payment for services. We then take our leave and depart via Dramus's tower which he summons atop "Tower Blanc".*

**Noon, 25<sup>th</sup> Snow 804  
Seagate Adventurers Guild**

**On Alusia,**

*We arrive back at the guild and take in a few pints at the local pub.*

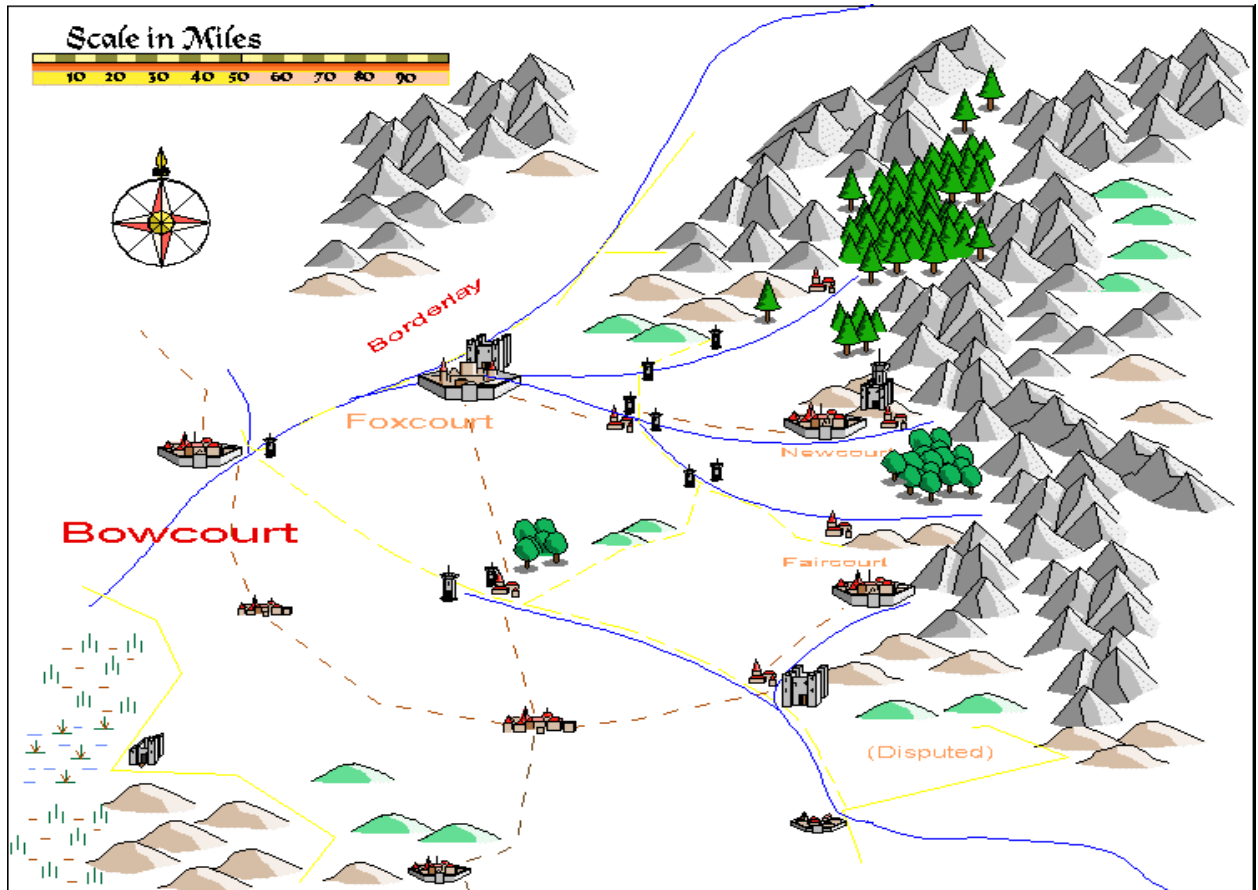
---

<sup>1</sup> As a new Mind Mage



# ***A Travellers Guide to Bowcourt, Newcourt & Foxcourt***

## **Map of Bowcourt, Faircourt, Foxcourt and Newcourt**



### **Places of Note or Interest nearby:**

#### **'The Abbey of the Clerics regular of the Sword of St Michael'**

*This quaint chapter house is home for a few Clerics dedicated whole-heartedly to the service of St Michael. They are renowned for their fierce devotion to duty and 'fine needle work'<sup>1</sup>. Visitors are welcome during normal hours although pacted individuals are welcome anytime!*

<sup>1</sup> They apparently can use swords for this tasks and to a high degree of accuracy.

**'Châteaux du Amberville' aka Castle Newcourt or  
'Newcastle'**

*This is more a fortress complex than a 'Chateau' and is the site of multiple 'castles' and towers all protected by large walls and battlements.*

**'The White Tower' or "Tower Blanc'**

*This tower is within the walls of Chateau and visible from some distance. The tower takes its name from its outside appearance, which is that of polished white stone. It is not until one is close up that they find the material is actually bound bone*














**'The Black Stair'**

*These stairs are in the new tower in the centre of Chateaux Newcourt's grounds. It is an ancient stair dating back several thousand years to the time of...*

**'The Dragon of St Michael'**

*A rabid sect of the Michaeline's based in a chapter house in Newcourt.*

# The Alusian Calendar for the

Winter													The Alusian Calendar for the Winter 804 season.																			
			Moonday			Duesday			W'ansday			Th'rsday			Frysdays			Reapsday			Sunday											
			Samhain – This is the night before the guild meeting, traditionally a drunken affair rages throughout Seagate and nearby environs before the various adventurers pass out in whatever repose they find themselves in.																													
Frost (7)													1	Guild Meeting			2		3		4		5		6							
	7		8		9		10		11		12		13																			
	14		15		16		17		18		19		20																			
	21		22		23		24		25		26		27																			
	28		29		30																											
Snow (8)													1		2		3		4													
	5		6		7		8		9		10		11																			
	12	Msg sent from Newcourt	13		14	Starting - --Date	15	Solstice	16		17		18	Yuletide																		
	19	Days of Chaos	20	DoC 2	21	DoC 3	22	DoC 4	23	DoC 5	24	DoC 6	25	DoC 7																		
	26	DoC 8	27	DoC 9	28	DoC 10	29	DoC 11	30	Twelfth Night																						
Ice (9)													1		2																	
	3		4		5		6	First Plough	7		8		9																			
	10		11		12		13		14		15		16																			
	17		18		19		20		21		22		23																			
	24		25		26		27		28		29		30																			

## **Winter 804 season.**

# **Seagate Guild Library Research Results:**

### **ALFHEIM**

Queendom: on N. side of the Alfheim Mountains, largely wooded, some open cultivated areas. There are paths through the forest, but most transportation uses canals and barges/canal-boats with magical hulls drifting under their own power. All the cities are odd: single huge trees, or over multiple trees, or made of crystal and silver. cf [Eidolon](#). Pop: lots of elves. Lang.: Elvish, money. External vassals: [ELFANBURG](#), The [ELVAN ISLES](#).

### **Newcourt**

Barony: vassal of [FOXCOURT](#), in its N.E., and into the foothills of the Alfheim Mtns. The name is a common corruption of the Lalangue *Nuit Coeur* (loosely tr. as *Heart of Darkness*). The area has a very poor reputation; many strange beasts are said to inhabit the mountainous areas.

### **FOXCOURT**

[BOWCOURT](#)'s N-most county. Resources: warpstone, treachery. Current ruler is *still* Ct Richard "Tricky Dicky" Foxcourt, despite being reduced to ashes during the Baronies War. Foxcourt is unusual within the BOWCOURT area for usually having patrilineal inheritance. Lang.: Lalangue. VIP: Ct Richard. POI: Warpstone mine where the demon emperor Ahruman is making dwarves; also the vassal Baronies [Faircourt](#) and [Newcourt](#).

### **BOWCOURT**

Ancient Marquisate: established over 1100 years ago, originally an Elven protectorate. The rulers have almost always been female and inheritance is usually matrilineal. Now part of the New [W. KINGDOM](#). Major resources: wine, history, forest, and mines. Lang.: Lalangue. VIP: Her Radiance, Marquessa Dulciena. POI: Arch'pric of [MORDEAUX](#); County of [FOXCOURT](#); Viscounties of [CHAGNY](#), [VOLE](#).

### **CHAGNY**

Viscounty: vassal of [BOWCOURT](#). Current Viscount known to be a mind-mage and to employ other mages.

### **MORDEAUX**

Archbishopric: vassal of [BOWCOURT](#). An unusual area within BOWCOURT where the temporal authorities are drawn directly from the Western Church. The area is still essentially feudal in its government with chapter houses holding land from abbots, who in turn hold it from Archbishop Mordeaux.

## Mulberry

Barony: vassal of [BOWCOURT](#). The current B., Henri de Mulberry is known to be a Shaper. His twin brother, Sir William (Guillame), one of the greatest modern philosophers & an expert on theoretical magic, is a well-known advisor to the royal court ([W. KINGDOM](#)). Both brothers are somewhat *eccentric* [fancy term for unbalanced].

## Faircourt

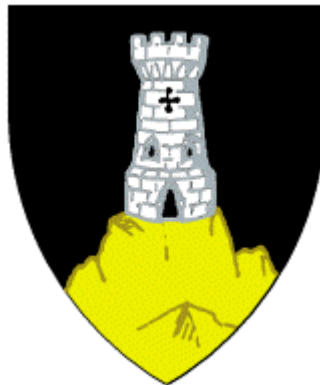
Barony: vassal of [FOX COURT](#), created in 221. "Faircourt" was a form of cant on "Foxcourt" in Common -- particularly a reversal of the *false heart* origin of that name, and also a corruption of *fer Coeur*, or more correctly *Coeur de fer*, meaning *Iron heart* in La Langue. VIP: B. Faircourt (Sebastien de Malvallet).

## VOLE

Viscounty in [BOWCOURT](#), near a Druidic forest.

---

## Newcourt



Newcourt Barony: vassal of [Foxcourt](#), in its N.E., and into the foothills of the [Alfheim](#) Mtns. The name is a common corruption of the [Lalange](#) *Nuit Coeur* (loosely tr. as Heart of Darkness). The area has a very poor reputation; many strange beasts are said to inhabit the mountainous areas.

The population is more backwoods than other areas of the baronies and tend to be suspicious with strangers. While many people from Newcourt are cosmopolitan and accepting of Magic and other oddities, the further into the hill country you get the less accepting people become, until in the high valleys the people will be naturally distrustful of strangers and have a good solid dislike of magic. The furthest of these villages is that of [D'arbres](#), hidden in a high valley even the local Baron of Newcourt was unaware it existed. It has since been deeded to Sir Christopher Reynard.

---

## Foxcourt



County Foxcourt is the largest vassal area of [Bowcourt](#). Current ruler is *still* Ct Richard "Tricky Dicky" Foxcourt, despite being reduced to ashes during the Baronies War.

Foxcourt is unusual within the BOWCOURT area for usually having patrilineal inheritance.

Lang.: Lalangue. Resources: Sheep, Farming, Warpstone, and Treachery. VIP: Ct Richard. POI: Warpstone mine where the demon emperor [Ahriman](#) is making dwarves; also the vassal Baronies [Faircourt](#) and [Newcourt](#).

---

## Faircourt



Barony in the east of [Foxcourt](#), southern neighbour of [Newcourt](#), established in 221 WK.

The first Baron Faircourt was Javert "The Fox", a younger son of the then Count of Foxcourt. Javert was a knight of no small repute and was prominent in King [Otto the Gentle](#)'s (163 - 209 WK) campaign against the southern barbarians into the Sea of Grass -- from 194 to 198. His sobriquet stemmed from both his family name and from his cunning military tactics.

From 204 he was Marshall of the Kingdom's Southern Army, and served in that position through the remainder of Otto II's reign and through the entirety of King [Eberhard](#)'s (209 - 214). When he retired from active military service he was created Baron Faircourt by King [Albert Eberhard](#) in 221.

The name "Faircourt" is a cant on "Foxcourt" in Common -- particularly a reversal of the "false heart" origin of that

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

name, and also a corruption of "fer coeur", or more correctly "coeur de fer" meaning "Iron heart" in [Lalange](#). The children of Baron Javert bore his sobriquet as a family name from this point on, being Renard in Lalange, or Reynard in Common. Guillame Renard, 3rd Baron Faircourt also held high position in the King's army and was the bearer of the Crown Princess's standard at the battle of Newbridge in 227. During the fierce fighting on the left flank Princess [Isabel de Bowcourt](#) was dragged from her horse and would have been captured or even killed had not her banner bearer Guillame lead her bodyguards in such a ferocious charge that the enemy were forced to give ground and the young Princess was able to be helped back to safety. For this and other heroic actions Baron Faircourt was deeded the fiefdom of Bois de Cerf, "Hart wood" in Common, where the current Chateau de Renard stands to this day. Guillame Renard was slain at the Battle of Everbury in 235. The 14th Baron Faircourt was one of the many Western Kingdom nobles who, in 494 WK, rode with the last Western King, Sigismund the Pious, on his ill-fated crusade south into the [Sea of Grass](#), never to be seen again. The present Baron Faircourt is Sebastien de Malvallet; the Barony having passed from the Renard family in 657. The main economic pursuits in Faircourt revolve around sheep; meat & wool being the primary exports. A well respected white ewe cheese is also made in the northern part of the Barony.

---

### Marquisate of Bowcourt



The founding of the Marquisate of Bowcourt pre-dates the Western Kingdom, and the Marquisate was brought inside the kingdom when Magnus Ulrich, grandson of Ulric the Wolf married Marquessa Beatrice de Bowcourt in 1265 (After Penjare).

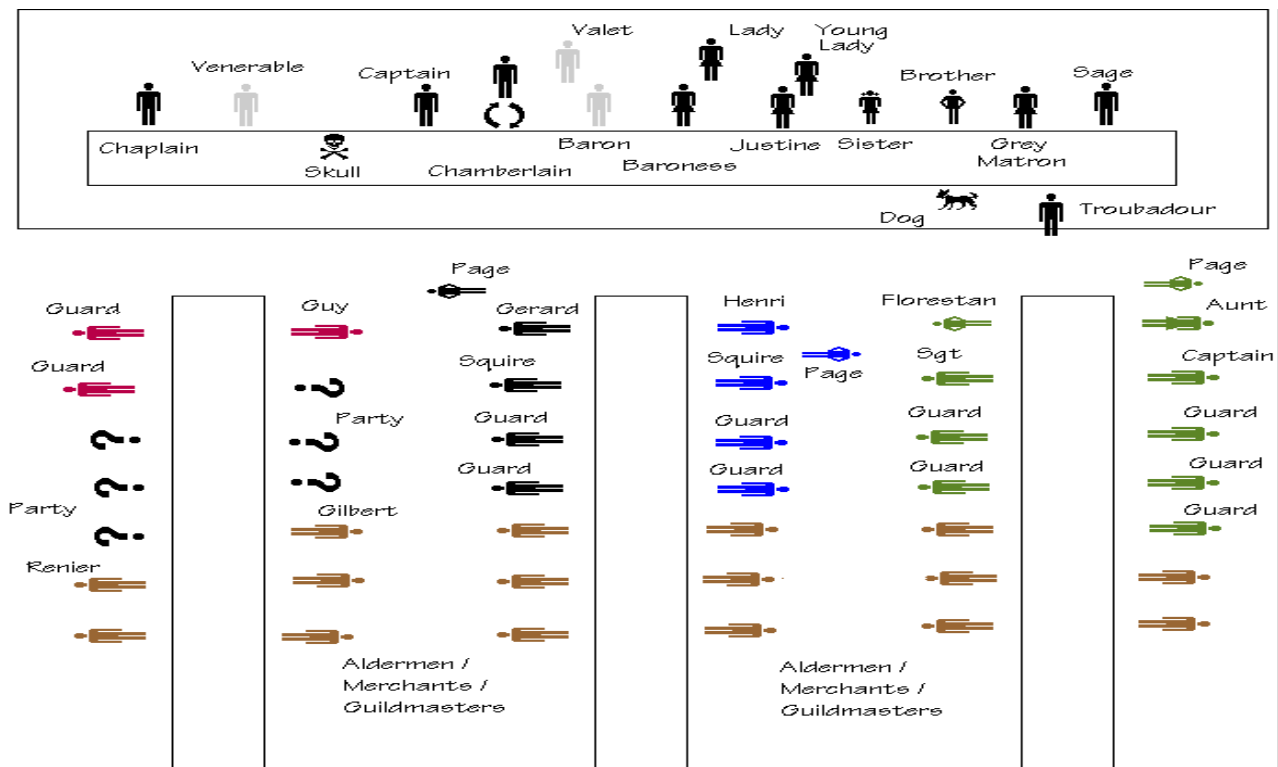
The traditions and people of Bowcourt have always been heavily influenced by Elven culture and the Marquisate has traditionally had female rulers.

The Marquessas have a reputation for great beauty and intelligence, a certain ruthless approach to politics, and it is said, faerie blood. It became somewhat of a tradition for the old Western Kings to marry the Marquessas of Bowcourt every few generations and then pass the Marquisate on to their eldest daughter.

The current Marquessa is Dulciena, mother of the Western King Ulfric II, and wife to Duke Frederick of Aquila.

# Dinner plans for the Solstice

## Map of Setting at Dinner



## Dinner Details

The question marks represent (left to right) Yvette (top right), Thaeuss (top left), Gerald (middle right), Dramus (middle left), Penni (bottom right) and Father Broc (bottom left)

Black Figures are Newcourt people (including the vassal Gerard Mauvoisin's party).

(The three grayed out figures -- Baron, Valet and Venerable -- are missing when the Party arrives but will be turning up shortly, so I've included them for simplicity).

- Blue figures are from Faircourt.
- Green from Bowcourt.
- Red from Foxcourt.
- Brown figures are Merchants, Guildmasters, etc. Only the two seated adjacent to PCs are named.

Unshown are other aldermen, flunkies, servants, Newcourt guards, etc.



## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*You may assume that people relevant to the situation in hand are either present at the banquet or labelled, or not present. They will not be both present and unlabelled.*

*The arrows next to the Chamberlain are him fussing and circulating.*

*The dog is (mostly) under the table -- it's a big, lanky, shaggy deer-hound kind of thing.*

*The Troubadour is maybe 20, dressed in fancy livery, and tuning up a lute.*

*The skull is a skull... Yoric, perhaps*

## **Appendices of Information**

### **Appendix 1 - Watches - Proposed watch Structure**

(As set out by Thaeuss the Master Watch Scheduler)

Standard: 4 Hours on Watch; 8 Hours Sleep; 12 Hours Elapsed Time.

7pm - 11pm Broc                      11pm - 3am Penni                      3am - 7am

Dramus

7pm - 9pm Yvette                      9pm - 1am Thaeuss                      1am - 5am

Glass

5am - 7am Yvette

Short: 3 Hours on Watch; 6 Hours Sleep; 9 Hours Elapsed Time.

9pm - 12pm Broc                      12pm - 3am Penni                      3am - 6am

Dramus

9pm - 10:30pm Yvette    10:30pm - 1:30am Thaeuss    1:30am - 4:30am Glass

4:30am - 6am Yvette

We will have 1 to 3 golems (depending on the situation) on watch through the night.

If someone needs to be off watch duty for some reason then Yvette will take their place and we will have one person on watch at the beginning and end.

---

### **Appendix 2 - Usual Applications of Magic's**

Rune - TBA    Mind - TBA    Necro - TBA    Illusion - TBA

Binder - TBA    Namer - TBA

---

**Appendix 3 - Plans, roles and tasks**

Gerald: Bait or rather - Suitor

Father Broc: Spiritual Advisor

Dramus: Magical Advisor

Yvette: Physicer & Cultural Advisor

Thaeuss: Chancellor & Monetary Advisor

Penni: Cook & Bodyguard

The assumptions that might be made (or perhaps that should be encouraged to be made):

1. Obvious antipathies:

- o Father Broc and Dramus      Thaeuss and Penni

2. Possible assumptions:

- o Yvette is/was Gerald's Mistress
- o Penni and Father Broc have something happening
- o Penni and Yvette will talk freely with each other

Which leads to: Penni, Father Broc and Yvette vs. Dramus and Thaeuss

Also:

Yvette as a rejected and jealous mistress who doesn't really want the suitor to succeed would be a reasonable target for subversion, provided that her man isn't permanently damaged. Yvette would be best especially as she is the only other human.

**Appendix 4 - Suppositions, guesses and Thoughts of meanings, events, issues etc.**

To do:            *Check Fulk's room for clues*  
*Speak with Guy re Fulk etc*  
*Discuss events with the other suitors and get a better understanding of them as groups, individuals and adversaries.*  
*Investigate the white tower*  
*Fulk's dalliances with the ladies in town*

*What previous dealings have been known with Fulk*

*Fulk's relationships with:*  
*His Uncle - Richard of Foxcourt*  
*The Baron of Faircourt*  
*The other suitors*

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

*Where do the mana crystals come from?  
Locally?  
Buried under the castle?*

---

---

### **Appendix 5 - Love Poetry by Gerald - for use on baronial daughters et al.**

*Your eyes are like limpid ponds of starlight  
That glisten with promise and mirth*

---

---

### **Order of Birth for the De'Amberville family**

- *Justine*
- *Alys*
- *Francoise*

### **Pre Marriage to Isabelle the order was**

- *Victor as the eldest son and rightful heir*

### **Appendix 6 - The major cast of this tale:**

(SAG) this denotes a member of the Seagate Adventurers Guild

(Unknown) this denotes characters of interest to us but of unknown role in this tale

(History) this denotes characters mentioned herein of note but not actually met

- *(History) Ex Bishop of Newcourt, A Raphaelite*
- *(History) Peter Dufey, ex mage of Newcourt*
- *(History) Robert, Brother of the Baron*
- *(SAG) Dramus, the 'conflicted' Necromancer*
- *(SAG) Father Broc (the author of this tale)*
- *(SAG) Gerald, the erstwhile suitor*
- *(SAG) Penni, the 'bodyguard'*
- *(SAG) Thaeuss, the Good Binder*
- *(SAG) Yvette, the trustworthy*
- *(Unknown) 'De Molay', aka 'The weasel'*

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

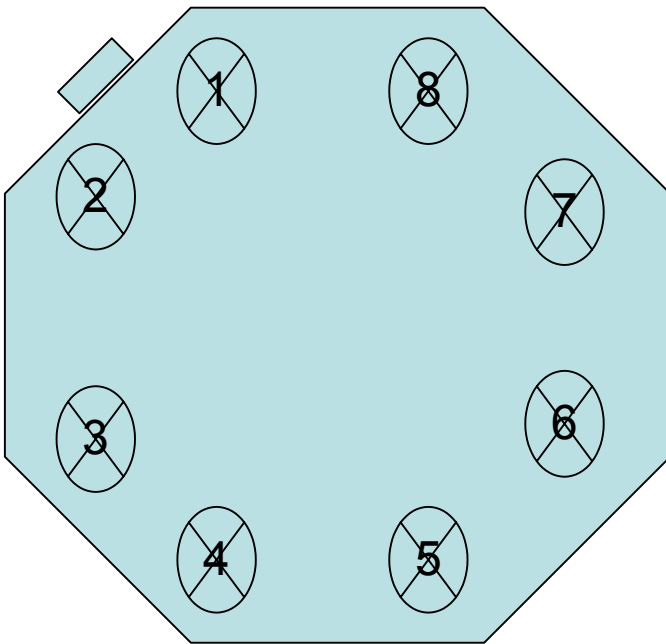
- (Unknown) Karrick, an old memory of Gerald's
- (Unknown) M'lady de Amberville, a bad memory of Gerald's
- 'Brother Andre', an apparent Raphaelite but actually a Gabrielite Inquisitor. He is a man of 'hard' character and staunch loyalty, not to be trifled with.
- **Baron Hugh De'Amberville**. The current Baron of Newcourt, a man from the old school of ruling and he has a number of skeletons in his closet. Fond of his children and a good father.
- Baroness Margaret De'Amberville, the Baroness and her family are related to the Marquessa of Bowcourt who is the Liege Lord of the Barons Liege (who is Count Richard of Foxcourt). She is reputed to be a witch of some skill, a skilled manipulator of people (all ranks) and good mother to her children. She is actually a mind mage!
- Baroness Isabelle De'Amberville (deceased). First wife of Baron Hugh who died in childbirth.
- Baron Robert De'Amberville (deceased). The deceased older brother of the Current Baron Hugh who died in a hunting accident.
- Bernard, Sage of Newcourt. A scholar and the tutor to the children.
- Chevalier Henri de Malvallet
- Father Bartholemew, an old Raphaelite
- Father Jacques, an old Raphaelite of advancing age who is the resident castle priest.
- Florestan Firebrass, Justine's cousin
- Fulk de Foxcourt The missing suitor, nephew of Court Foxcourt (Richard). A self-important, boorish man of few manners.
- Gerard de Mauvoisin,
- Gilbert, a merchant of Newcourt
- Gobert le Gros, the cook at the castle
- Godfrey, the Barons valet and squire
- Guy, a man of Foxcourt. A mean, vicious man and companion of Fulk. He has bad manners and is destined for a sticky end (I'm sure it will be arranged soon).
- Honnoree Lace Court, aka Honouree. A chambermaid previously in the employ of the Barons where she was trying to kill him for the casting aside of her sister.
- Jean Rossignol, Troubadour and Bardic Mage. An erudite man with a secret as well as a well skilled musical artist.
- Jubert, Chancellor of Newcourt. A bureaucrat of skill manipulating the baron's court and supporting the baron in his decisions. A plethora of knowledge and intrigue.
- Lady Alys, Justine's younger sister. A woman of great intellect destined to be a woman feared and worshipped by many. A new Mind Mage!
- **Lady Justine De'Amberville**, the women at the centre of the suitor's attention. Named for the Barons Sister.

## The Mystery of the Missing Suitors

- *Justine De'Amberville (snr), Sister of Baron Hugh De'Amberville the Baron of Newcourt. Rumoured to be a witch. Actually a mage of the Greater Summoning College*
- *Lord Francoise, Alys's younger brother. A young boy with seemingly boundless energy.*
- *Nanosh, A Domari lad assigned to us. Inquisitive and suspicious of us as strangers and 'Chauvexani'.*
- *Oudine Fortbrass, Florestan's Great Aunt. Appears some 40 years of Age but probably closer to 60 as she hides her age well. She is a Mind Mage.*
- *Renier, a merchant of Newcourt. The Baroness's lover and a subtle power in the court.*
- *The Venerable Thibaut, Barons personal physician of advancing age.*
- *Leroy, Master Françoise's loyal canine companion*
- *Giles, the captain of the baron's guards.*

## 'Tower Blanc' - Rooftop

---



### **Interpretation if the Gargoyle Golems**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8