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D12 – Toad in the Hole

Grettir, Salrod, Paradoxides, Jason and Shorembo carried out a raid on the lizard men of Yarr.

Loot:

Magic sword – Grey Dirge, mithril, gold wire hilt (1000 years old, dwarf made)	8500gp
Silver	150gp
Gold	5798gp
Gold decorated helm	200gp
Gold ring	80gp
Silver rings (20,60)	80gp
Gold wrist or ankle band	50gp
Gold earrings	80gp
Silver chain	30gp
Gold bracelet	200gp
Silver torque, (woman's, dwarf made)	400gp
Gorget (magic, gold plate on a chain)	
Potion (healing potion)	500gp
Gems (50, 200, 50, 10, 50, 100)	460gp
Emerald (2 mana points)	500gp
Ruby	1000gp
Book of spells	
Longswords (4)	
Battle axes (2)	
War axes (4)	
Daggers (12)	
Hand axes (4)	
Spears (10)	
Chain hauberk	
Chain shirts (2)	
Scale hauberks (3)	

Loot for Seahorse Island

At Sea

Gold neckchain	200gp
Gold finger ring	50gp
Black silver arm ring	100gp
Gold torc	250gp
Fragments of sea serpent tooth	

On Island

Curved dagger, metal scabbard (magic)	
Gem on pendant (magic)	
Large ring, red stone	1000gp
Strangely carved gold ring (magic)	
Wheels and cogs, fragments of parchment	
Bottles from desk, tapestry (symbol tables)	
Chest, scrolls (many spells)	
Gold, silver and copper ingots	500gp
Flask	
Silver box of emeralds	3500gp
Silver jar of 30 pearls	5000gp
Blackened coins, scrap	500gp
Carved gold disc, supreme prize for magician	
White magic potion and flask	1000gp
Thick amber glass jar with specimen	
1314 imperial gold coins	2000gp
Sack of silver	220gp
Incense burner	100gp
Malachite chess set	300gp
Long scroll (codex on golem)	
Small glass jar of powder (residual magic)	

Pirates

Splinted mail	500gp
Ivory rune magic (magic)	
Pendant gem amulet (magic)	500gp
Emerald signet ring	500gp
Gold earring with pearl	150gp
Sword	25gp
Copper amulet of bizarre shape (magic)	
Unusual dagger (residual magic)	
Silver headed mace	100gp
Book of spells	
Alchemical components	
Miscellaneous gold and jewellery	500gp

D15 – Walk on the Wild Side

Grettir, Salrod and Girindor were teleported by Paradoxides to the Kistin, which was aground off the island of Tyros. Girindor calmed the weather and everyone was able to get off the ship in safety. Unfortunately Harman and two other crewmen had been washed overboard. Two bodies were washed ashore, along with Harman. Harman gave Grettir his ring and told him to go to the witch Medici at Lyre, with whom he had left notes on unfinished business from many years ago, along with enough money to buy a new ship. This money he said was his to collect if all the others involved were dead. He then died.

Paradoxides took the crew back to Sequalr before they died of exposure, and fetched an expert salvage crew; unfortunately he was unable to teleport back. If this were to happen, it had previously been arranged to meet him in Lyre.

Grettir, Salrod, Girindor, Elen, Atelius, and Ndono headed north into cultivated land and arrived at the hamlet of Khasan on the banks of a river. They posed as bodyguards of a magician seeking exotic plants, who had lost his guide and bearers. They hired a guard to take them to Iandra, where they hired another guide and bearers to take them to Lyre. En route, they were attacked by varts; bat-like demons, which were very hard to hit and kill, but which were kept away by fire. They were also attacked by a minotaur, which they slew, but not before it had killed one of the bearers.

They tracked the minotaur back to a large cavern, part natural, part artificial, and probably full of varts. It was three days from Iandra. When they continued on to Lyre they were attacked by a double-headed serpent, called an amphisbaena, which poisoned Grettir and a bearer before Salrod slew it. Finally they slew a giant spider, which attacked them just before they reached Lyre, three weeks after the Kistin hit the reef.

They met the witch Medici and she told them Harman's story. Harman and some friends had taken an imperial galley by force and had found a casket. They had all swallowed a longevity potion and had made an oath that the last one alive should have the contents of the casket. Harman had left Tyros in a hurry and had asked Medici to keep his part of the oath. Most of the others had already died when Harman had left, but by now he was the last remaining. When she had seen Harman she had said that the next time he landed on Tyros he would die. Medici said that ten years after the capture of the galley at a celebration banquet Harman's ex-lover had poisoned many of those involved for revenge. Harman had killed her and left, but some people had blamed him so he had gone to Medici to get him off the island and this had been when she made her prediction. The casket contained enough money to repair.

D16 – Return of Agent Orange

In mid May 688 after a supper with Medici, Grettir and his friends arranged the salvage of the Kistin and returned to Lyre. Grettir, Salrod, Paradoxides, Banthil, Tilisseril, Girindor, Ndono and four beaters then set off at dawn for the Vart Caves.

They camped overnight before reaching the caves and were attacked by varts. These were demonic bat like creatures, which were very difficult to hit and penetrate. They were frightened of fire and light.

D17 – Sea Weed

Salrod bought a magic mithril hauberk from Yspaddadden. He teleported back to Tyros with a berserk dwarf called Hrekk.

The Kistin set sail from Tyros with a crew of Grettir, Salrod, Hrekk, Elen, Atelius, Rune Ignalf, Girindor, Leif Bjornsson and Zoran. Grettir paid for a doctor called Zephanos and also employed a master called Wurra. Wurra was a high level fighter, but she fought in a different style for the northerners, making use of her high dexterity. The ship left harbour at Lyre and headed for Tentium, they were followed by a galley. In Tentium Salrod bought four talents worth of perfume.

They left Tentium and headed for Cos. A very large sea serpent attacked the ship, but was slain. The Kistin came across an upturned hulk floating in the sea. Grettir and Salrod investigated it and a giant octopus attacked them. The Kistin towed the hulk some way and then the two warriors investigated further. They found pearls, a glazed jar, narcotics and some money.

The ship sailed on to a secluded cove, where they flensed the sea serpent. Flying above they saw a hippogriff, a protected species in these parts used by the town guard of Cos. The Kistin sailed into Telnus the port of Cos. Telnus was a huge natural harbour with a walled town, lighthouse and many stone buildings. Some trading took place and then the Kistin sailed on towards Tabour. One night a Ship of the Dead attacked the Kistin. This sank below the surface once most of its crew had been killed for a second time. As it sank it nearly took some of the Kistin's crew with it. The Kistin then sailed into Tabour.

Loot:

Gold finger ring	100gp
Silver arm ring, heavy, twisted pattern	300gp
Gold wire twisted necklace	200gp
Sword with emerald pommel	500gp
Wooden box	
Wooden bowl with blend of narcotics	75 stars
Leather packet	
Glazed jar (magic)	
Silver	10gp
Gold	212 stars
Pearls (6, 1 very large, 1 large)	1200gp

D18b – Top Cat (26 Sep 92)

The adventure started in the port of Tabour, with the Kistin requiring repair, in late August 688. The party received a visit from Denarius a merchant and magician and the master of a merchant cog. He was a shaven headed man in his late forties, about five feet six inches tall, and must have weighed over 300 pounds. He arrived on a palanquin with twelve armed soldiers and one well armed mercenary. He said he had a problem requiring the help of resourceful foreign mercenaries.

He said that his pleasure slave, Mishka, was missing, having been turned into a tiger by donning a magical cloak. He said that a half eaten corpse had been found near the town of Subi. The council were offering three pounds of gold and citizenship of Tabour, or five pounds of gold for the head of the tiger. Denarius offered half Mishka's weight in gold for Mishka's safe return. Eventually Grettir negotiated this up to Mishka's weight in gold.

Girindor flew Grettir, Salrod, Lorendil, Elen and Atelius to Subi, a town with a population of about 500. They were met by the headman and four guards and the headman provided them with accommodation and two criminals to act as bearers. The body had been found 400 yards from the town four days previously. Any tracks had been ruined by the trampling of hordes of people with no expertise but a vain hope of gaining the reward.

The party headed into the jungle and along the central uplands. They saw and followed the legendary Mevarru bird. Eventually they found other victims of the tiger and managed to find and follow the tracks of the tiger. Twice the tiger ambushed them as they closed in. The second time they managed to hit it, and Elen threw purple lotus dust in its face. Grettir nearly crushed the tiger's skull in attempting to stun it, but Girindor managed to save it. Lorendil cast dispel magic and the tiger changed back into Mishka in a cat suit, which the party managed to remove before Mishka changed back into a tiger again.

Denarius tried to pay the party with Mishka's weight in debased coin, rather than gold dust, but the error of his ways was pointed out and he paid 108 pounds of gold. A celebration was held by the town council, to which the whole party was invited. Much alcohol was consumed and Lorendil danced on the tables, Elen disappeared, Atelius sang loudly and badly and Salrod made improper suggestions to a councillor. At the banquet Grettir saw a necklace of huge pearls and was told that the pearls came from a haunted lake near Kocos on the island.

D18a – Lady of the Lake

The following evening the Kistin set sail for Kocos. Immediately they arrived a beach party was held, a somewhat less riotous occasion than that in Subi. Grettir did some trading and then Grettir, Salrod, Girindor, Wilf, Girindor, Elen and Atelius set off up river towards the lake. The lake was taboo for the turtle hunters of Kocos, but they took the party up river to the edge of the jungle. In the evening they found the lake.

Girindor communed with the lake and went in and talked to a female spirit. During the night those on watch found it very difficult to stay awake, and Atelius was nearly drawn into the lake. Girindor found out from the spirit that anyone spending the night with her would be given a huge pearl. Girindor returned with a large pearl but had nearly succumbed to her charms and remained there. Within the lake were many who had been unable to leave. No one else wanted to follow him in.

The party circumnavigated the lake and noticed a number of very large oysters. Elen, Salrod, Grettir and Lorendil swam out and Elen dived for pearls covered by Grettir and Salrod. Elen gathered five oysters whilst Grettir and Salrod fought and killed three giant lobsters and a conger eel. They all returned to dry land and opened the oysters, which all contained pearls of varying size. They returned to try to take more oysters, and this time a giant eel attacked Grettir and Salrod. Elen managed to gather six more oysters, which again all contained pearls. They then returned to Kocos.

D19a – Bugger the Tree (4 Jan 93)

Grettir and his friends decide that they wanted to kill one of the mountain trolls at the Hall of the Mountain Kings. After discussions with Nickar they conceived the following plan. Paradoxides as a hooded magician with Aranath as his sacrifice would turn up at the entrance to the pass, and knock at the door. He would set up a teleport portal to try to trap the mountain troll. Girindor would be hidden, watching nearby. Kojar would be waiting with Grettir, Salrod, Jason and Wilf, ready to teleport in as an emergency option.

The plan was put into action, but went badly. The mountain troll sensed magic and immediately attacked Paradoxides with a magical skull he was carrying. Paradoxides tried to fly off, but was hit by an axe and seriously wounded. Girindor and Aranath distracted the mountain troll, and Paradoxides managed to drink a potion and fly. The mountain troll nearly went through the teleport portal as it followed Aranath, but sensed it and just avoided it. The rescue party arrived and the mountain troll ran off.

D19b – The Mound of Doom

Gambalien, Girindor and Aranath reconnoitred a tower in the Wood of Etain. The tower had previously been attacked by a party including Jason, and was a centre of activity on Nickar's map. During their scouting they discovered a mound similar to Oglog's Mound, previously attacked during 'Picking the Pocket'.

There seemed to be a force of one or two war bands based there. A moat and a drawbridge surrounded the mound. There was a palisade, with gates at either end, and the site was on a fairly busy orcish thoroughfare. About two hours march along the track in both directions was a barricade manned by a file of orcs. Grettir and his companions decided to take one of these barricades and capture and question the leader.

The weather was very wet and windy and marching was almost impossible. Girindor made the weather even worse to help in the surprise attack.

The attack went perfectly. No orcs escaped, and the leader was taken alive and put to the question. The party then set off for the mound disguised by orcish cloaks and hoping the weather would aid their subterfuge. At the drawbridge Grettir gave the password, but unfortunately the orc on duty suspected something was wrong and refused to lower the drawbridge. This gave the orcs time to prepare.

Paradoxides used a force sword to cut the corners of the drawbridge, causing it to come down. The party rushed over the drawbridge and slaughtered eleven orcs in the guardroom, the last one escaped up a side passage. The party pressed on towards the main chamber where there were 20 to 30 orcs including two sorcerers. Paradoxides and Girindor cast fire magic at the orcs, but this was sucked into the pit, leaving the orcs unharmed.

A cloud of fog or smoke was cast by the orcish sorcerers and headed towards the party. Paradoxides put up a magical protection and when the cloud turned to fire all but Wilf, who had strayed too far forward, were safe. Grettir and Salrod advanced into the main chamber where the orcs were ready for them. Salrod grabbed Grettir and dragged him back as a heavy portcullis fell, sealing off the main chamber. At this point the party decided to call off the assault and Paradoxides teleported everyone back to Sequalr Castle.

D20 – The Black Sword (Walk on the Wild Side III) (8 Jan 93)

Another attack on the Mound had been decided on. Gambalien and Aranath were sent ahead to reconnoitre. Grettir, Salrod, Jason, Paradoxides, Girindor, Wilf, Tilisseril, Banthil, Kollgrim and Adils flew after them, and met up near the mound. The attack was aborted when Aranath reported that a gargoyle had reinforced the mound. The party instead decided to go for their original target the tower.

They landed near the tower and as they approached the goblins there ran off leaving three of their number, sick and asleep, behind. The tower was like a dovecote for goblins. The party investigated the tower and found a loose paving slab in the middle of the floor. Underneath they found rubble, which they removed. Below that was another paving slab, with a protection spell, obviously put in place by an orcish magician.

The slab was removed and the party followed the steps down into the manacle room, which had a grill for a bottle dungeon in the centre. As the party entered two headless undead, wielding two-handed swords attacked them. These were driven off and the wizard's maze was explored. There were a number of traps, which Banthil discovered by falling into them. Four more undead attacked Grettir, but he slew one and the others were driven off. There was a statue in one of the alcoves, very similar in equipment to the undead. A secret door was discovered and the party went through this into a triangular room, where two more undead attacked. One was killed and the other driven away.

On the far side of the triangular room was the wizard's room, within a protective bubble. In this was a demon with a sword pact. Tilisseril spoke to the demon, who said that the wizard was out. It was obvious that the wizard must have died many years before. She tried to gain control of the demon but failed. The demon did explain about the sword pact. This meant that if anyone in the room drew a sword, then all the other demons in the pact would come to the aid of the first demon.

The party went back to the surface level of the tower, where Kollgrim, Gambalien and Adils were on watch. They reported that they were under surveillance by crows and goblin riders, but there were no signs of an imminent attack. The party borrowed Adils' mace and went back to the room with the demon.

Salrod went in first using the mace, he also borrowed Paradoxides' helmet with a light spell. As he went into the bubble the demon attacked him – she became part woman and part snake, with six arms all holding swords. His light was dimmed to a candle, and he was immediately hit, by a savage blow on the nasal of his helmet. This saved him a disfiguring and possibly fatal injury. He returned the blow with the mace. Grettir followed Salrod through armed with Tilisseril's magic spear, as he came through Salrod's light went out. Grettir found his spear to be ineffective and so switched to two daggers. Salrod's helmet had been dislodged so the demon concentrated blows on his head.

Wilf and Paradoxides followed Grettir into the room, and Jason threw a daylight flare in after them. The demon extinguished all the lights and shattered Paradoxides' light gem. Paradoxides blasted the demon with magic and Grettir closed in with his dagger. Whilst this was happening two undead attacked Jason, Girindor and Tilisseril in the triangular room. Grettir was being crushed by the demon, but was inflicting a great deal of damage with his daggers. Paradoxides blasted the demon with more magic, and as Wilf and Salrod closed on it the demon died. Salrod returned to the triangular room and helped kill the last two undead.

In the sorcerer's room there were a number of books, a casket, as well as many alchemical flasks etc. There was also the black sword the demon had changed back into. In the room they also found the heads of the four undead who had continuously been attacking them. The four bodies were then discovered in alcoves within the maze. These were to be taken to a priest of Osiris. Everything was collected together in the triangular room and most people returned to the surface level of the tower.

Girindor and Paradoxides were exhausted and needed to rest for the night. Outside the goblins and orcs were closing in, and so the tower was turned into a defensible position. During the night a gargoyle landed on the roof of the tower, but it was driven off. Morning arrived after a restless night.

In the morning everyone went down to the triangular room, apart from Paradoxides and Tilisseril, who magically walled up and sealed the tower. They then returned to the triangular room after setting fire to the tower. Paradoxides then transported everyone and the loot to Sequarl.

D21 – Score Draw

In the second week of September 688, Grettir, Salrod, Paradoxides, Girindor, Wilf, Jason, Lorendil and Elena returned to the complex beneath the tower to finish checking for secret doors etc. Another secret door was discovered next to the wizard's chambers. In this room was a bound demon, which had been there for centuries. He was a gigolo demon, who was bound by red ties, with the use of a simulacrum.

In agreement for freeing the demon and allowing it to return to its home plane, the demon gave the party a great deal of information. He told them that the magician was called Tersites, and that Tersites had summoned him to force him to help Tersites gain revenge on a woman. Whilst Tersites had been persuading the demon, he had received a call from a fellow magician, and they had talked by means of the fire. Tersites had been making something for the other magician and Tersites left in a hurry to meet him. The other magician was at Skagnar, a trading island in the very far north. Tersites used a demon horse, which became invisible along with its rider.

The demon told the party that Tersites had taken the heart of the black sword demon with him and that if Tersites still had the heart the black sword would be able to find him. He also revealed that Tersites had with him a fire demon, which was commanded into the form of armour, and the group were told where to find its heart, which they then dug up. Finally the demon revealed that the black sword demon's name was Slayer. The demon was then released to return to its home plane.

In the third week of September 688, it was discovered that there had been a landing on the roof of Grettir's apartment tower, two days previously. Grettir's demonic defence had evidently dealt with it, but it had not been reported. A party was sent out to look for signs of the attack. The landing had been by an orc and a gargoyle, and the body of the gargoyle, which had almost been cut in two by one blow, was found near Sequarl Castle. The orc had tried to escape and was tracked and followed to the wood of Etain. A message was also sent to Meriad to patrol along the river. The orc had crossed the river and the patrol spent a night in Meriad before returning to Sequarl.

A few nights later a warning of an assault taking place on Meriad was received via a rune stick. Paradoxides teleported with Salrod to one of the two towers via the rune stick, and while Paradoxides tried to memorise teleport co-ordinates Salrod went to investigate. He went to the top of the tower where he received confused reports of fighting in the hall; he then went down to the hall.

On arriving in the hall he saw a mountain troll slaughtering the occupants. Salrod fought the mountain troll and covered the survivors in their retreat to the other tower. This tower was under attack by orcs, and everyone was forced to retreat back to the first tower, whilst Salrod still covered them from the mountain troll. Salrod lost his shield, but inflicted some damage on the mountain troll, whom he recognised as being from the hall of the mountain king.

Paradoxides had now arrived and stonewalled the entrance. He then went back to Sequarl and returned with Grettir, Girindor, Wilf, Tuccan and Lorendil. They were flown across to the other tower and killed the remaining orcs guarding it, but were stopped from going any further because the hall was ablaze. Varn, the lord of Meriad, was married to Grettir's sister-in-law, but unfortunately she was missing, having been captured when the tower was taken.

The mountain troll and the orcs with their prisoners had retreated to the river. Grettir and his followers pursued them, but were unable to reach them before they dispersed in the forest. They dug themselves in, in small workings. Salrod and Girindor's wasps snuffed one of these out and four or five orcs were killed, but no trace of the prisoners was found.

D23 – Truce Time (2 Oct 93)

In the first week of October 688 one of Varn's servants was found on the doorstep of her parents' house in Sequarl town. There was a message tattooed on her back, demanding a ransom of 5000gp on the first day of the New Year in the tunnel of the Hall of the Mountain Kings, in exchange for Sigtryn – Grettir's sister. Any hostile act, the message said, would result in her being cut to pieces.

The Kistin returned from the South Seas with Wurra and Dr Zephanos on board. Nickar's people captured a low level orcish shaman and Nickar researched him. Nickar also managed to carry out a successful exchange for Sigtryn, with the assistance of the rangers.

An uneasy truce seemed to hold between the orcs and the forces of Grettir and his allies. Nickar wanted to capture a kur to facilitate his shape changing spells. He wanted to use these in an attack on Oglog's mound.

In the first week of February 689, Grettir, Salrod, Gambelien and Kojar rode the night wind, courtesy of Girindor, close to Giants Pass. Salrod had previously encountered kur in this area. They landed at dawn, near wooded hills and mountains. The pass was covered in six inches of snow, and it was winter state one during the day.

Gambelien carried out some reconnaissance and returned mid morning. He had found an old lean-to near the edge of the wooded hills. There was a stream and a tiny ravine in the side of a bank. Pine trees had been chopped down to make the lean-to. It looked like the work of kur, but hadn't been used for a season.

Gambelien went hunting and killed a large deer. However when everyone returned to collect it, it had obviously been taken by a dragon. The marks of a griffin were also seen. The tracks of a giant were spotted and followed, but these were lost as they left the snow.

They travelled west into some hills, northwest of the pass and found a cave. The cave was about fifteen to twenty feet high, 50 to 60 feet deep. There was an empty slab with dark stains at the entrance, and an engraved stone with pictograms representing power, mastery and sacrifice (in black speech). They staked out the cave from a nearby cleft.

Kojar teleported and fetched Nickar to scry the cave. He stonewalled the small cleft and teleported everyone back to Sequarl.

D24 – Kur Captive and the Inland Sea (23 Oct 93)

On the last day of November 688 Grettir and Salrod swam out to a skerry near Fowels Heuch to meet the witch Sybil for the night. She was on a ledge part the way up a cliff, in a small tent in front of a fire. The area was surrounded with small pegs hammered into the ground; they looked to Salrod a little like shrunken heads. Sybil had an ageless voice and during the course of the night the two warriors occasionally caught glimpses of her through the fog and smoke. She seemed to change each time they saw her, and appeared anywhere between seventeen and 100, but very attractive.

Grettir had some strands of hair from the Elouen. Sybil said that they could be made into a whip, but there were not enough to make a net. Grettir and Sybil negotiated a price for Sybil to make the whip and the night seemed to pass very quickly. Perhaps there had been some exotic herbs in the fire?

The first price Sybil suggested was diplomatic immunity throughout Sequarl for Sybil, but Grettir refused this. Sybil's next suggestion was twelve condemned men over the next three years, but Grettir already had to pay three souls a year for the demons guarding Sequarl, and felt this would weigh too much on his conscience. Sybil's next proposal was that Grettir should assassinate one of three people she would name, and Grettir agreed to this.

The three names she gave were as follows. Pallius, a magician in the badlands east of Chittagong, Sybil wanted his books, and would give reward if he were taken alive. Hellius, a priest of Sett in Amelia, whose temple had to be burnt down. Azurana, a priestess of a cult in Orun, and Sybil wanted whatever was found on her body, and under her cult stone.

Pallius was also known as Stelgano, and Salrod and Grettir knew that a party including Paradoxides and Jason had previously tried to assassinate him. This may well have been at the behest of Sybil they thought. They also knew that Pallius was a necromancer and so Grettir picked Pallius as his target to be slain before the next Yule in 689.

Grettir and Salrod had a chat to Paradoxides and found out that Stelgano had a means of teleporting, which was how he had managed to elude the previous assassination attempt. Paradoxides also said that there were many secret doors in Stelgano's tower.

At the beginning of March 689 Nickar had been scrying the cave at Giants Pass. He had seen eight lightly armed kur. They had split into two groups, one of six and one of two, and then departed. Nickar had followed the pair briefly northwest, and had then teleported Grettir, Salrod, Girindor, Tilisseril, Banthil and Erk after them.

Girindor transformed himself into an eagle and flew up and found the kur. They were in a lean-to a few miles away. The party tried to creep up them, but when they reached the lean-to it was empty.

An ambush was set up to surprise the kur when they returned from hunting. Salrod, Banthil and Erk stayed in the lean-to, whilst Grettir, Tilisseril and Girindor hid amongst the trees in the snow.

The ambush was discovered, but Grettir used his whip to entangle one kur and stunned it with the flat of his sword. The other kur grabbed Tilisseril and she used her demon sword to turn the area around her dark, which unfortunately prevented Salrod from finding the kur, who ran off, pursued by Salrod.

Girindor flew after them and attempted to trip the kur. The kur stopped in a stream and threatened to kill Tilisseril if the pursuit did not cease. He agreed to leave Tilisseril safely if the party did not pursue him any further. He also offered to exchange for his friend.

Tilisseril eventually exchanged her protection against black magic amulet for her life, and everyone arrived safely back at the lean-to. Nickar reappeared there and took the captured kur back with him for research. He also agreed to collect the party later.

Girindor transported the party to the Inland Sea. They saw two smallish islands near the coast, each about one mile long, and a few hundred yards across. They crossed to the far side and then came round the coast eastwards. The Inland Sea was about 100 miles across and was freshwater. They landed again on the far side of the Inland Sea, where there was a large area of scrubland with wolves and deer.

As they travelled along the coast they saw five volcanoes, and investigated three of them, which had giant's castles. Salrod and Grettir had previously encountered one of them. Another larger island was also seen, over ten miles long, and they landed on it. There was scrubland on the island and plenty of seals. The island was y-shaped, and five or six miles across, with a dense rough tangled conifer forest in the centre.

The party travelled on the trail past the giant's castles, which disappeared as the narrow path along the Inland Sea opened up. Eventually the party called up Nickar who appeared and returned them to Sequarl Castle.

E1a – Wedding and Three Funerals (4 Jan 94)

The Stigandi set sail in the third week of March in 689. It sailed incognito as the Black Pig. It had a crew of Grettir, Salrod, Magnar Siggison, Wurra, Paradoxides, Girindor, Wilf, Ingvar, Saevil, Aranath, Koll, Giziar, Banthil, Skaja, Jason, Gamric, Safnar, Ndono, Rune Ignalf, Donsti, Kolgrimm, Tilisirel, eight seamen and the alchemist and his assistant. There was a rainbow as the Stigandi left port; they also saw strange fish and a glowing phosphorescence in the sea.

On the twelfth day they were attacked by a sea serpent at dawn. It was only a small one, and was hit by Grettir and Wurra; it was harpooned and hauled aboard. The next day the Stigandi was struck by a maverick wave. On the fifteenth day a giant demonic squid attacked them. It was fought off, but Wilf was swept overboard. Salrod dived in after him, and with help from the flying Kolgrimm he was rescued.

At dusk on day seventeen an inverted hulk was found and during the night some singing may have been heard. Aranath saw something and lit it up with faery fire; Grettir hit it. Paradoxides summoned the thing and it was found to be Selkie, It was seven feet tall, but built as sturdily as a dwarf. It spoke northern, so Salrod translated. Its name was Shinnanah. It warned the crew about the Yotan, the spirit of the far north, and asked for wergild for his wound. He also warned Salrod and Grettir to beware women and magic. Grettir gave him the magic dagger Red Tooth for wergild and the Selkie righted the hulk for the crew to salvage.

At dawn on the twentieth day they met two pairs of fishing smacks. They bought fish and Grettir invited the leader on board for a drink and a chat. He told Grettir that Orlandvik and Jamarsvik were places to be avoided, north of Thorvaldsfjord. Grettir sold him a small tooth from the sea serpent. On day 22 the Stigandi was struck by another maverick wave.

On day 24 the Stigandi sailed between the island of Falmar and the mainland, ignoring the advice of Koll the pilot, who said that it was a haunt of pirates. Two very well sailed Viking longships attacked the ship. They were allowed to come up to the Stigandi, but when Girindor tried to command the wind to give a break between the attacks he was cancelled out by the pirates' wind mage and both attacks occurred simultaneously.

Salrod led Kolgrimm, Donsti, Magnar Sigisson and Ingvar to take the first longship, with Kolgrimm using a fly spell to be first on board. The second ship had a witch on board; Aranath used a fly spell to land on this ship first and flew around distracting the witch. This ship boarded the Stigandi, but was fought off. On board was a fighter with pins in his head, when struck on the head by Grettir he electrocuted Grettir. He was slain by being struck elsewhere. Jason was bewitched but Grettir disarmed him. The witch was slain and released a plague of spiders. Skaja was the only casualty on the Stigandi; he had been held by magic and then cut down. Nine men were captured on the witches ship, but the priest Halfdan leapt overboard and swam towards the shore.

Fourteen men led by Ayrtaun surrendered to Salrod on the first ship. The ships were from Heflavik on the island of Falmar, and the witch was called Drusella. It was agreed that Ayrtaun and the ships would serve with Grettir up to Skagnar, when he would sell them one of the ships back. In return they would show Grettir the witch's tower. Grettir promised not to harm their kin. They also said that Halfdan was a priest of Ran and would have survived and gone into the interior of the island. Ayrtaun agreed to take Grettir and his men to the witch's tower and to help with trading in the north.

On day 25 the Stigandi sailed into the settlement. Most of the effective population of the island had been on board the two pirate ships. Snorri, Ayrtaun's fighter magician had been slain, but Ulric, the fighter magician from the second ship, had survived.

On day 32 a part from the Stigandi, guided by Ayrtaun, approached the witch's cave. It was on the far side of a linn, and was about eight feet high and seven to eight feet wide. Salrod and Grettir burst in and captured two men, four women and eight children. They then explored the complex behind the cave.

They had to cut down two spider's webs using magic weapons. Paradoxides flew ahead but was attacked and captured by a demonic spider. Girindor and Salrod flew down, but had no effective missile weapons to damage the demonic spider; Aranath brought down Grettir and then Wilf. Grettir hit the spider with a magic dart. The spider was a phase spider and disappeared anytime someone else came down. When it reappeared Wilf hit it with two hand axes containing black magic spells and the spider died. It was fortunate for Paradoxides that the axes finished off the spider, as the spider was about to take him with it to another dimension. Paradoxides was freed from the spider's cocoon. The altar was found and destroyed, and a book from the spider cult was removed. All valuables were removed from the complex.

Some trading took place back in the settlement. Grettir bought a cargo of wool. On day 36 the Stigandi left the island of Falmar heading north for Skagnar. At dawn on day 38 a sea dragon attacked the Stigandi. It was killed and dragged on board. Inside the dragon was a hand and a half magic sword. It had the ability to summon sea dragons. On day 41 they met up with a trading longship bound for Tigress, and on day 50 the Stigandi landed at Skagnar. This was the beginning of the second week in May, and had been the fastest known trip to Skagnar. The Stigandi was the first ship of the year to reach Skagnar, which would give Grettir and his crew favourable trading opportunities. Many thanks were due to the now exhausted Girindor, who had provided optimum sailing conditions all the way from Chittagong.

Skagnar was a very large island with a long point. There was some cultivated land, a narrow fjord, a port and a natural set of cliffs. On the top of the cliffs was a very impressive castle, similar to Dunottar Castle in Scotland. The island was very icy.

The day after the Stigandi arrived was a Sunday, and there was a church parade. Grettir and his senior officers met Hilda Thogardsdottir, a very tall (over six foot), blue eyed, bejewelled husky voiced woman with her blonde hair in plaits. She was in charge of Skagnar during the absence of her father Thorgard, as he was overseas on business. They also met the rest of the family: Urgo, Alexius, Goromond, Slaves, Hasjal and Cranarch the sons and Naemir, Hisven, Tres, Winish and Jarnarka the daughters. They showed many signs of severe interbreeding and many of them seemed quite mad.

Hilda told Grettir and his officers that they would be treated as honoured guests, and that she would help arrange trading for them. The first thing she arranged was a visit to the Bathhouse of Petanius.

Grettir was the first into the bath, as they entered in order of status. Salrod followed and chatted to Hilda. He told her of their journey north, and then asked Hilda some questions. She told him that Skagnar had been founded by her illustrious ancestor the immortal Petanius, who had left Chittagong at the height of the empire. His descendants were trying to keep the culture and magic of the south alive. She said that from Skagnar it was possible to go to the eternal ice, mentioned the great white bear, snow trolls, ice tigers, and Yotun the force behind the ice. She also mentioned the golden ice hounds, which were demonic beasts like great white bears, but with golden pelts, of which there was one on the wall. Hilda also referred to Hymorath, which she described as fate, a violent death, rotten ice that a mean stands on, but was also later found to refer to a giant ice worm.

A celebratory feast was held at which Wilf swore to stand on the eternal ice, and Salrod swore to follow him.

Hilda was obviously concerned about her future in Skagnar. Life for her was full of intrigue, double crossing and interbreeding. She wanted a way out of Skagnar, and was looking for a powerful man, and probably one that was open to manipulation. She decided Salrod was the man for her despite his evident homosexuality. With her charm and some magic, as well as the use of a ring she managed to persuade Salrod that she was the woman for him, and that his homosexuality was behind him. Negotiations were carried out with Grettir and Paradoxides; Salrod was freed from his oath to Grettir and Salrod and Hilda were married. Everyone was led to believe that Salrod was staying to take control of Skagnar, but this was not Hilda's intention. If her relatives new that she was leaving then struggles and intrigue would immediately break out, and she would probably be prevented from leaving. Grettir, Paradoxides and Salrod spoke to Thorgard through a bowl of water and confirmed that he was happy with the marriage, although this was later discovered to have been an illusion of Hilda's.

Hilda found out that Tersites had arrived in Skagnar and negotiated with Petanius, for equipment etc for travelling on the eternal ice, as he was searching for the golden ice hounds.

Salrod bought an ice schooner called the White Witch for the journey north. Paradoxides gave Hilda a set of parchments, inks and pens etc as a wedding gift, as she would have to leave Skagnar with just the clothes on her back. Salrod also hired two experienced ice seamen and bought sleds, huskies, tents etc for the trip on the ice. Fortunately they were still all in harbour when a bad storm hit Skagnar.

Finally on day 64 the Stigandi and the White Witch left Skagnar. Just as they left Hilda announced that she would not be returning and as the ships sailed away her relatives could be seen starting their struggles. On day 66 they saw many whales and lots of fish. Girindor was finding it hard to keep the weather under control, and had to cast many spells. On day 69 the White Witch took a glancing blow from some floating ice. The following day saw more whales and a monstrous shark. The next day saw no dawn and Girindor was now unable to recover any mana. On day 72 the two ships landed by the eternal ice and the White Witch took some more damage.

Next dawn Paradoxides used the sword demon to track its heart, which was assumed to be with Tersites. It was found to be north-northwest and near. They were blocked in by ice mountains and so sailed on and landed again. This time the sword demon gave a reading between north-northwest and north-northeast and near. Just as Grettir, Salrod, Girindor, Wilf, Paradoxides, Aranath, Jason, Kolgrimm and Giziar were about to set off they were attacked by an ice troll, which they killed. The party now set off but the lead sledge was written off in an accident. Girindor and Aranath now had to ski ahead.

Ahead of them the party found open water; a surface lake hundreds of metres across. They were attacked by an ice hound, which was driven off. Later the party came across a mile long chasm. Girindor dangled Aranath over the edge, and was nearly taken by a small ice worm, which moved very quickly.

The next morning Paradoxides tried to track the demon heart with the sword. He only just managed to control it, so it was decided that the heart must have been in the chasm. The sword was hidden in the camp and the party went up to the chasm. It was 45 feet to the bottom of the chasm, which had some water in, but was mainly ice. In the mush were a number of holes, in the side as well as in the bottom.

It was speculated that Tersites might have caused this chasm. Girindor carried out a commune. He found that the gash was festering, that there were many worms, which thrived on that, and caused the wound to deteriorate. He found three sources of power; the Nehrein steed, which was the least evil of the three, the armour and the heart of the sword demon. There was a particularly large worm near the source of the power.

Aranath flew down one of the small holes, near where the sources of power were thought to be. It was too small for any of the fighters to get down. He flew out again when he sensed the approach of the worm. Paradoxides cleared the hole using an elemental, but it was still too small. As plans were being discussed a blizzard and storm blew up and the party had to return to camp. Girindor realised that the Yotun was at the heart of the storm, and that the storm was directed at the party. He used his power to combat this and then dispersed the storm, and eventually the weather cleared.

Eventually Paradoxides decided to go down one of the holes himself, and to use fist of force to hold the worm back and vorpall blade to slice it up. He also took Jason's molotovs to use on it. When he disappeared down the hole, Grettir, Salrod, Wilf and Jason stood ready to throw flares at the worm should it emerge. Paradoxides then slew the great worm.

Paradoxides returned to the camp and collected the sword demon and the heart of the armour demon. Girindor used his ability to walk through the ground to walk through the ice and collect the armour, the steed, and an amulet, which was the sword's heart. A signal was given to Paradoxides, who teleported back to Sequarl. The remainder of the party set off back to the ships, but had to stop when another blizzard sprang up.

While the blizzard raged the camp was attacked by three ice hounds, which were all killed. Girindor said that the Yotun had again sent the blizzard. Again he managed to dispel it. The party met up with Paradoxides and then reached the ships on day 87, just ahead of a storm.

Eventually the ships were able to leave for the south on the first day of the last week in June. (Day 91 midsummer). The ships had to fight their way through another storm sent by the Yotun – Girindor tempered this with the last of his power. On day 95 the ships emerged from the storm after nineteen hours and Girindor celebrated the first dawn for some time with relief.

Addendum

After returning to Sequarl, Grettir had a talk with Hilda, and arranged to discuss with Salrod in a dream whether he was happy to be with Hilda.

Salrod remembered dark tunnels, twisty with cobwebs. He was dressed in dark silk robes, and was running because of spiders. He ran into Grettir. They both ran into a bigger chamber where Hilda was. Salrod remembered being in Skagnar. Salrod understood the situation and given a choice of returning to how things were or continuing as they were now. He knew Hilda was intertwined with him body and soul, and severing the connection would affect her. Salrod decided he wanted to continue with the relationship.

In the future seeing a white disc with a blue eye token would remind him of this.

Hilda told Salrod a little more about Petanius. She said he was a dead sorcerer, but he could still be talked to. She said 'that is not dead that can eternal lie, and with strange eons even death may die'.

Loot:

Sea serpent requisites

Pirates:

Longship	8000gp
Gold arm ring	200gp
Carved ivory	500gp
Uncut Yargoon, bluish white	200gp
Bag of rune sticks (Burning Hands, Affect Normal Fires, Levitate II, Cloud of Stinking Smoke II, Shatter Object II, Cause Minor Wounds, Summon Sea Serpent IV)	

Den of Spiderwoman:

Silver hand basin	
Silver jug	
Furs and sheepskins (half a cargo point)	
Miscellaneous silks and fine quality furs	
Silver mirror	
Perfumes	
Bottles wrapped in silk (power)	
Torturer's set	
Tattoo set	
Set of golden body chains (magic)	1500gp
Gold	1600gp
Silver	20gp
Scruples of lotust dust	
Scarlet (2)	
Black (1)	
Purple (1)	
Vial of perfume (magic)	
Ichor from demon spider	

E2 – Two Men Enter One Man Leaves (9 Jan 94)

On 1st March 690 Grettir, Paradoxides, Salrod, Hilda, Girindor, Jason, Aranath, Wilf, Ndono, Zephanos, Kolgrimm, Kathalos, Mongo and Ingvar teleported to Kos to meet the Kistin. The Kistin then left Kos at the end of the first week in March, with crew and shares arranged as follows:

Grettir	19	Paradoxides	10	Wurra	10
Salrod	14	Girindor	10	Jason	7
Hilda	5	Aranath	4½	Ndono	2
Zephanos	2	Wilf	5½	Kolgrimm	4½
Kathalos	2	Mongo	0	Ingvar	5
Hrolf	3	Atelius	4	Elen	3

On the third night a ghost ram ship passed the Kistin. At dawn on the fifth day a giant squid attacked the Kistin. After four tentacles had been chopped off the squid left. At dusk on the sixth day the Kistin was hit by a maverick wave and Hrolf and Wilf were swept overboard. Paradoxides flew after them and rescued them. On the seventh day Paradoxides saw a mermaid, but he alerted no one, and no one else spotted her. During day eight a very large cog crossed the Kistin's path but was left to carry on her way. At the end of the day a patch of seaweed was spotted, containing some planks. This was investigated and three ovules containing black crystals like desert roses were found. The ovules were alive, but not the crystals.

On the ninth day a whale was seen and on day ten a giant turtle passed by. On the twelfth morning another larger patch of brown seaweed was investigated. This was found to be nearly dead. Elen found a nearly bleached skeleton. On the fourteenth day a sea serpent was seen chasing a marlin. Kolgrimm flew after it and annoyed it. The sea serpent chased after him and attacked the Kistin. The sea serpent was killed and flensed.

On the fifteenth day the Kistin came across the submerged hulk of an imperial light ram ship. It was an inshore ship about 200 miles from the empire. Hilda summoned the undead at dusk. Salrod and Grettir were also on deck and could hear a storm and cries from the ram ship. Four officers from the ram ship appeared and scrambled onto the Kistin. Prim Cadens reported to Grettir that they had fought the storm for three days and nights bound from Caracalle, the secret documents and magician were got away. The dead and wounded were brought up onto deck along with the log and charts, and then the ship disappeared into the sea and went to rest.

On the sixteenth day the Kistin was followed by sharks. One was killed and thrown to the rest. On the twentieth day the Kistin reached the Doldrums. The ship came across Marka, a merchant from Kos, in the becalmed cog Morning Breeze, from Selmar on Kos. He was a fat jolly guy trading stone silk, metal goods and alchemical products bound for Bazi. He had been becalmed for two weeks and offered three stone of silver for assistance through the doldrums. It was agreed that Salrod and Hilda would go across to the Morning Breeze, and Demris the first sword of the Morning Breeze would go to the Kistin. Morning Breeze would be able to use Girindor's mage wind in exchange for two scruple of gold lotus dust.

On the twenty-second night both ships were attacked by the shaguin. On the Kistin Demris gave the alarm, but was netted. Atelius was dragged over the side and Paradoxides was badly wounded. Elen was also nearly dragged overboard, but was rescued by Grettir. Eventually order was restored. On the Morning Breeze Salrod was on watch with Hilda, and led the attack on the shaguin, killing their leader. Hilda threw a lot of fireballs and the attack was easily beaten off.

The next morning Hilda took some scarlet lotus dust and just before dawn using a wyrd sword and a skull she summoned and talked to the shaguin. They said that Atelius was alive and asked for 200 talents for him. Hilda cursed them and the day dawned sunny and with a gentle breeze. Was this the effect of the curse? Are the Doldrums due to the shaguin?

At midday some dolphins arrived and were recognised as shape changers. They made a pact with Grettir and his companions to attack the shaguin. Their god, Triton, would help by Grettir and five others to breathe water, and by removing the sharks, rays and squids. They said that there were other humans as well as sea elves in what they called the House of Pain. The sea elves were all male with pale bluish skin, green hair and silver black eyes. Grettir, Salrod, Paradoxides, Jason and Aranath set off at dusk and were kissed on the cheek by the sea elves, and were then able to breathe underwater.

The group headed down below the sea, swimming on the backs of dolphins, except for Paradoxides, who had to fly, as the dolphins disliked his demonic armour. They headed down towards the phosphorescent bottom, and saw some domes ahead of them. The party went into the domes, which were connected and made their way towards the largest central dome, which was where all the shaguin were waiting. The dolphins remained outside. The party killed all but three of the shaguin, who were slain by the sea elves as they tried to escape. Paradoxides killed the shaguin magician and his two apprentices. Two mermaids, two mermen and Atelius were rescued; three more mermen and one mermaid had recently been killed. All had been tortured.

The party then explored the complex. The floor of the largest dome was made of thin beaten silver. Under an altar in a double dome, a secret cavern was discovered containing the loot. There were evil carvings in the room containing the altar and a jade statue. Grettir drove his sword into the statue and lost all his hit points, but the statue bled and the evil was dispersed. Jason went down the tunnel into the treasure grotto. The treasure was raised up to the Kistin. Girindor barely made it back to the Kistin before the water breathing spell ran out.

The Kistin and the Morning Breeze sailed on. Another area of seaweed was discovered complete with a weed man nine feet tall. The two ships sailed on into Bazi, unfortunately arriving too late for the start of the partying. Very large fireworks could be seen in the distance as the ships arrived. There were some fortified islands, but the two ships had to wait until dawn to be piloted into harbour. Bazi had a very complicated entrance channel. The Kistin sailed into harbour, where bumboats selling all sorts of goods and food surrounded her.

The local currency was lunars and solars, both debased coins. One solar was worth approximately 120gp. It cost three solars for a week in the harbour. Bazi was about half the size of Porttown or Emelia. There were many old stone buildings and some fortifications, with a fortified island in the middle of the approach to the lagoon of Bazi harbour. Most buildings were in the main part of the town; many of these were nearly new. Most of the crew of the Kistin took place in the large party, which continued over the next few days, but Girindor flew off for a few days and Paradoxides and Jason stayed on board the Kistin.

On the thirty-sixth day the Kistin left Bazi and headed north. At night there was a large electrical storm. On the thirty-seventh day there was another electrical storm and the estuary was seen. At dusk the polestar was just below the horizon. The Kistin travelled on for half a day to check that this was the correct estuary. Just north of here was the Camorta bank, an area with no wind, a jumble of reef and sand. Jungle drums were heard and the Kistin came under hidden observation. On the thirty-ninth day the Kistin headed up the estuary. In twelve hours the Kistin made 60 miles, and continued at night making a further 50 miles. Late in the night a horrible screaming was heard.

The next night an island was reached, with a tower thirty feet in diameter. It was 50 feet high and octagonal in cross section, with a tapering tower, rotated by 30degrees. The island had 100-foot cliffs.

Paradoxides flew Grettir, Salrod, Hilda, Jason, Girindor, Wilf and Aranath to the tower. The top of the island was an area about 250 feet across. There were steps up to the tower. Paradoxides noticed a portal in the base of the tower facing north. He explained to Hilda how he thought the door could be opened.

The night was spent on board the Kistin; there was a very violent electrical storm. Next morning the party returned to the tower. Another even more violent electrical storm was on its way. Paradoxides entered the tower on his own and then returned.

The following night Paradoxides and Grettir went back to the tower. While they were there a Vorvalakah, a sort of demonic black panther, attacked the Kistin, with three options a round, claw, claw, and bite. It moved dramatically quickly. It could not be killed, only imprisoned. It was driven off once, but regenerated and returned. This time it was knocked unconscious when Jason grappled it and set off his incendiaries. It was captured with a sword in its heart, but was still regenerating. Grettir returned, flown in by Paradoxides, who then disappeared. Grettir's sword trollbiter, placed in the beast's heart seemed to keep it still.

At dawn the beast changed into a woman with dark hair, which reminded Grettir of Snaebjorn an immeasurably old man he had met near the Lands of Dust. It was later discovered that Paradoxides had made love to the magician Valakah, who was imprisoned in the tower, in exchange for one of these beasts for use in the war against Oglog. These beasts were the offspring of Valakah. Vor meaning scion.

Hilda took some hair from the Vorvalakah and made it into an amulet of protection. After dawn the creature was pushed off the boat and into the sea. The Kistin returned to Bazi after three days. Jason and Wilf were each awarded an extra half share for their bravery against the Vorvalakah. Hilda was voted an extra share for saving Atelius. When the Kistin reached Bazi the party had finished.

Trading was carried out. Behind the scenes Bazi seemed to be run by the Black Company, which may have represented the southern empire. They were very wary of magicians. Grettir and his officers met Striker the leader of the Black Company to trade weapons. The next day Grettir, Salrod and Jason returned to see Striker and to tell him of the Vorvalakah, after an intruder, suspected to be one of his men, had been seen sniffing around the deck of the Kistin at night. Striker suspected that Grettir was hiding something and that he was in the area seeking Vorvalakah, some of which he claimed to have in his dungeons. The Kistin was forced to leave Bazi.

The Kistin left escorted by a light ram ship, much more directly than it had arrived. On board were nine victims of an Iage overdose. Iage was like grey lotust dust, which sent people mad. Each of them paid 500gp to be taken to Ianda.

On day 52 a 50-foot crocodile was seen, then one of the drug victims came out of his coma and went berserk, attacking Girindor, Aranath and Zephanos. Hilda kissed him and he died of heart failure. On the 56th day the Kistin was attacked by the watch bane, which was driven off. On day 60 another seaweed-covered wreck was seen, and it was thought likely to have been sunk by a giant squid. On day 64 a sea serpent was seen. Aranath flew in front of it, but was bitten in the leg. Jason hit it with the ballista, and it attacked the Kistin, but was harpooned and killed.

On day 67 land was spotted – the small island of Esanter, 100 miles north of Ianda. Three small ships were seen, one of which managed to use the Kistin's mage wind to get to Ianda, which was reached the following day. Ianda had two jet-black towers on either side of the harbour, with a chain of dark metal stretched between them. Zephanos spent two weeks with his family, who lived on Ianda. The Kistin stayed in the canton, where the crew could do as they liked.

The canton was a walled off area of the harbour with a gate. A licence was needed to practise magic or medicine. No swords were allowed into the main area without a permit. Ianda was a democracy; a thousand votes were needed to be elected for three years. One third of the council were elected each year. There were a lot of stone buildings, and evidence of a town plan. There was elegant architecture; it was a very pleasant island. Grettir, Salrod, Wilf and Hilda had dinner with Zephanos's family. The ship was repaired and left after trading, after a fortnight. The Kistin headed for Anango.

Ingvar fell overboard and was rescued by Aranath. The Kistin overshot Anango to the north and then headed back. A large cog like the Stigandi was seen. The Kistin headed away and was chased by the cog. Two flying magicians headed for the Kistin and dropped a boulder. Aranath and Kolgrimm flew up to challenge them, but were fought off. Aranath, Kolgrimm and Grettir flew towards the cog, and were met by three of their crew. . Grettir shot the magician out of the air, slayed the sacrificial victims on the prow of the cog and dropped an incendiary. The cog headed away.

Anango was run by a senate and governor. The Kistin had a sole agent appointed to carry out their trade through. There was tension between some of the counts on the island. A special arrangement was needed to leave the sea quarter. There were high quality weapons and armour, gold, silver, black wine, copper bullion, coral, tobacco and a mixed bag of secondary trade goods. A pair of green painted raider traders were in port when the Kistin landed. The same colour as the cog that had attacked her earlier and also likely to be Tyrosian pirates. The large cog had probably been captained by Siran the impaler. One of the two cogs in harbour was captained by Samuran.

In Anango there were a number gladiatorial contests. The heavyweight contest was to the death, with weapons drawn by lot. Salrod fought the Dark Avenger a seventh level fighter. After looking in a lot of trouble Salrod won through, and gained a four-talent prize and lot of gambling winnings for the crew of the Kistin.

Loot:

Gold coin necklace (7)	
Spear gun (2)	
Coral necklace (11)	
Whip and net (magic)	
Golden torque	
Skulls	
Gold arm rings (4)	
Pearl necklaces (4)	
Jewelled casket gilded silver	
Gold jewelry (14)	
Golden goblets (7, 200-300gp)	
Box of hammered copper	
Short sword (imperial pattern, magic)	6000gp
Ingots of greenish copper (40)	
Golden torque (magic)	
Gold	4000gp
Pearls (36)	7000gp
Gems (23)	7500gp
Small sapphire in shape of tiger	3000gp
Cosian red wine	
Perfume bottles	
Bracelet	100gp
Chain	600gp
Medallion	100gp
Headband	100gp
Rings (4)	700gp
Cloak clasps (4)	200gp
Belt buckles (2)	200gp
Each share	7850gp

E3 – Collateral Damage (2 Sep 95)

At a party on the island of Anango, part of the celebrations for Salrod's victory in 'Two Men Enter One Man Leaves', a gentleman name Juvenal introduced himself to Salrod and expressed his admiration for Salrod's feats. He was from the island of Croy to the east of Anango. He had a proposal which he thought might be of interest to the crew of the Kistin, and he arranged a meeting for dinner at a nearby inn on the following day.

A fine buffet was laid out at the inn and Juvenal asked Grettir, Salrod, Hilda, Jason, Wilf and Girindor to relate some of their adventures, which they did with all the normal northern braggadocio. He then explained that he was working for a nameless Mr Big, and had an opportunity that might interest them, but that their task relied on discretion. It was obvious to Hilda that Juvenal was a wizard. He explained that he needed to collect something from a wild and dangerous place quite a long way from Anango, and needed to return within the lunar month. The journey would take about one to two weeks each way if the wind was in the correct direction, but unfortunately the trade wind was in the wrong direction for the outward leg. He had heard of the Kistin's feats in travelling against the trade winds. Negotiations were entered into; a fee of 600gp was agreed for each person accompanying Juvenal on the last leg of the journey. In addition a copy of a rutter and 2 000gp in trade goods, local alchemicals, for the use of the ship to get to the island where what he sought could be found was also agreed.

The island the Kistin was headed for was called Zongar. Juvenal described it as consisting of a ring shaped crater filled with volcanic dust with a lake in the centre. It was a deserted island sacred to the chaos gods in imperial times. He wanted to reach a spring in the centre of the island, which he wanted to use to fill some flasks, and he said that this would have healing properties. He also revealed that there were demons on the island.

The next morning Juvenal arrived at the Kistin, which immediately set sail. Girindor bent the wind 180 degrees to serve their purpose, and they headed for the island of Holneth in the hundred isles to the east. During the first watch on the third night a ship of the dead was seen. Grettir called on Osiris to send it on its way, and they were able to avoid it.

The weather was very pleasant, clear and sunny. Late afternoon on the fourth day the wind suddenly turned a full circle, but the experienced crew of the Kistin were able to cope manfully. On the fifth day three sea serpents were seen from the Kistin, but were not pursued as they chased a shoal of flying fish. On the sixth day there was another sudden 180 degrees shift in the wind, but again the crew were equal to the emergency, although there was some damage to the sail and mast. That night the sea was phosphorescent and highly coloured. During watch three Girindor heard the voices of sirens, he was unaffected by them, and got the rest of the watch to put rags in their ears before they were overcome. The rest of the crew came up on deck similarly equipped. Later that night it began to rain.

On the eighth day there were thundery showers and a lot of cloud-to-cloud lightning. That night the Kistin was struck by a maverick wave. Day nine dawned with more persistent rain, but Girindor could still make out the westernmost edge of the hundred isles. Late in the afternoon a small ship was spotted – possibly a catamaran. It had an odd shaped sail similar to those of the turtle hunters, and was probably an indigenous trader. It diverged course and was allowed to get away.

On the tenth day the Kistin was able to determine her position within the hundred isles. That night a giant squid attacked the ship. Some damage was done to the ship, and when Salrod arrived on deck the squid had a tentacle around the mast. Salrod severed the tentacle with one mighty blow, many other tentacles were severed and the rest of the squid escaped back into the watery depths.

On day eleven the Kistin passed the island of Holneth. Around dusk some patches of weed were seen. At dawn on the thirteenth day the Kistin found herself near another catamaran. The two ships approached and traded. The catamaran had an upside down parallelogram for a sail, and was owned by Zelbar, sailing from Horesh to Holneth. Zelbar warned Grettir to avoid Zongar and to go to Holneth instead for water. He was carrying charcoal, pottery, slates and slave girls. Grettir traded for five tattooed slave girls. During the day there were two more 360-degree shifts in the wind, which caused some damage to the Kistin. Just before dusk the Kistin reached the island of Zongar. Girindor changed into an eagle and reconnoitred the island. He returned and drew a map of the island, and said that he had seen carved faces in the crater. As dusk fell the Kistin drifted south for the night away from the island.

That night Grettir dreamt of Osiris and was told by him to keep his feet on the ground. Salrod also dreamt. He dreamt of fights in the past and in the future. The dreams were very colourful and vivid, with many purples, crimsons and lurid details. Salrod could see himself fighting, sometimes on his own, sometimes with others, although he couldn't work out who they were. He could also see himself footslogging through rugged terrain and adversity. Above him it was dark, but he could make out dark wings. He was fighting amorphous things that shouldn't fit together. All through the dreams he could see the image of a huge jade human face watching him, his eyes continuously on Salrod, calculating and judging Salrod. The jade face was similar in style to the ones Girindor had seen in the crater.

The next morning the Kistin was beached on the south east of the island. Grettir, Salrod, Hilda, Girindor, Jason, Wilf and Juvenal prepared for the trip into the crater. They needed a large amount of water, which Juvenal was able to carry with him aboard a magic carpet. Everyone else decided against flying after Grettir's dream. The group set off early morning on day fifteen with not a cloud in the sky and headed into the lush tropical vegetation. It was a very hard climb up to the rim of the crater, and it was almost dusk by the time they got down into the crater. They all had the feeling they were being watched, but they camped for the night.

During the first watch some sort of chaos demon attacked the camp. It was hit by magical wildfire by Juvenal and sword blows from Grettir and Salrod and killed. They were also attacked by rats, which were beaten off. The next day they headed off across the crater. The terrain was harsh with volcanic sands and rocks. Hilda was entangled by demon plants but got free. The group headed towards the lake avoiding the plants as best they could. As they headed on Wilf was lured by the scent of a tree, fortunately Jason spotted him and with the help of Juvenal tried to rescue him. Juvenal was also lured by the scent of the tree and both he and Wilf headed right up to the tree. Jason managed to drag Juvenal away and wrapped him in his carpet. Eventually Grettir and Jason managed to get Wilf away as well, but all his non-magical equipment was damaged, and both he and Juvenal were strangely sunburnt.

At this point Juvenal drew out his ivory wand and cast a spell. The tree and the surrounding area were covered in snow. The group rooted around the tree and Girindor removed a bough. Four vials of liquid were filled from sacs of pods from the bough, and Wilf's missing gear was also found. Nearby was also found a horned skull and a carved jade face, resembling the god in Salrod's dream.

They headed on towards the lake and a cone. At mid afternoon they noticed mist forming on the lake. It was on the side of the lake nearest the party. In the distance a large tree could be seen with overhanging vines. The group avoided these by heading towards the cone. They avoided a hot spring and some spiny plants. As they approached the cone they became aware of some magical influence in the crater. Ahead Girindor could see a suspicious depression in the sand, which they avoided. Ahead they could see some shards of rock, which they thought might be the area they were looking for, as they continued they avoided another sand trap.

They came across a big fissure in the ground, which headed to the left; here they had to avoid another sand trap. The main fissure headed past a cave, whilst a smaller fissure led into it. It was a very large cave with an eight or nine foot high humanoid statue on the far side of the fissure. The group set up camp for the night outside the cave, as it was dusk. That night Hilda dreamt of being sacrificed.

In the morning the party headed into the cave. As Grettir passed the statue, it began to fight him. Salrod attempted to assist him, but his sword failed to bite. He stayed to assist Grettir, whilst the rest of the party went to fetch the water from the spring. Grettir's shield took some heavy blows from the fists of the statue, before it disintegrated. Salrod was able to pass Grettir another shield.

Meanwhile Juvenal had filled his flask from the pool, which had water dripping from overhead. There was a crimson mist above the water, which became demonic female fighters called Elowine. They were very acrobatic and had entangling hair. Juvenal turned that part of the floor of the cavern into mud and then back to stone, trapping all the demons. Fortunately Juvenal, Wilf, Jason and Girindor were able to get back to the main chamber and rejoin Grettir, Salrod and Hilda. Grettir was still fighting the statue and at this point the straps on his second shield broke. Jason's sword 'Grey Dirge' did bite on the statue, and when Grettir hit it again it toppled into the chasm.

Fire came from the fissure and it sounded as though an earthquake was imminent. The party headed away towards the wall of the crater. Grettir headed off with Juvenal on the carpet, while Girindor prepared to windwalk everyone else back to the ship. Girindor felt another force trying to gain control of the winds, but eventually Girindor recovered, and the group headed out over the caldera wall.

Girindor dropped Salrod, Hilda, Jason and Wilf into the sea near the Kistin, and they were soon picked up. Grettir and Juvenal also made it back safely. Immediately the ship set sail. Meanwhile Girindor headed off towards Holneth, trying to escape the attentions of the chaos god beneath the crater.

That night something dark and long winged could be seen headed in the direction of Holneth. There was some kind of supernatural disturbance from that direction followed by a scream.

After seven days, which included avoiding a possible pirate, the Kistin was about four hours out from Anango when Juvenal flew off to deliver his goods. When the Kistin arrived in Anango it was met by Girindor, who explained what had happened in Holneth.

The first night after the flight from Zongar Girindor had spent in a tree near Holneth. The next morning he headed into the town and found it had been completely smashed, with the loss of 3 000 people. He had then flown on to Anango.

Salrod continued to dream of the green face. It was a very masculine god, a chaos god with particular connections to fighting and fertility. Salrod and Hilda went to the street of the gods in Chittagong. At the end of the street, almost in the sea, they found a temple to Baal and Yarma, two aspects of the same god. The priest there thought the god was trying to contact Salrod. Salrod and Hilda made a visit to the rites, where a bull and a virgin were sacrificed, and Salrod and Hilda joined the dancers. They had the feeling of being somewhere else in front of the dark face of a statue, which had weird frightening expressions. The statue had four arms, was armed, and had piled up Afro style hair.

When Salrod didn't wear the charm the dreams fell off. If he wore the jade charm he dreamt of the god in a temple on Zongar where there was a black sword, which would be his.

E4 – Dragon Hunting (7 Jan 96)

The abandoned city of Morthrondel was situated high in the Shehalion Mountains, not far from the Black Road. It had been abandoned for 600 years, when an army of orcs with at least one dragon, and perhaps some wyrms had invaded it. Since then there had been a number of authorised and unauthorised trips to the ruins. Four had perished completely and two had never reached Morthrondel. The trip 500 years ago had found orcs in Morthrondel and returned. Eighty years later the city was found to be abandoned. A trip sixty years later was dispersed by a dragon. One hundred and thirty years ago a trip used a secret entrance to explore the upper levels. On the main level the Great Chasm was blocked. Most of the city was despoiled apart from a few secret places. The party was split and one part was killed by a dragon. 120 years ago there was some flooding on the lower levels. A party reached the primary sub-level, which was the control level for the mine, and retrieved some adamantine.

A magician called Pharazon Lore Hunger led these last few expeditions. Two other human expeditions also disappeared without trace. An expedition found that blockages were being removed, apparently by the dragon to get at them. Later reconnaissance also discovered that the secret door had been destroyed and the teleport coordinates spoiled.

The dwarven element of the current expedition was to be led by Gror Dainson the Nine Fingered; two tunnel dwarves and two other dwarf fighters would accompany him. Gror was 4'7" and 17 stone, Barazin 4'9" and over 17 stone, Nan 5'0" and 18 stone heavily tattooed with the crazy eyes of a berserk, were the fighters. Bifur 3'11" and 10 stone and Bofur 4'1" and 10 stone and brothers, were the tunnel dwarves.

Gror gave a description of the city. There was a great gate with a cliff above it a few hundred metres high. A few hundred metres along there was the Great Chasm, where there was a choice of left or right past it. Left passed a tunnel with the barracks. Right came to a strongpoint, but right again led to the Trade Hall area. The strongpoint was known as the Tower of Nane.

Before reaching the chasm there was an aperture on the left with a gate, which led to residential areas – Nirvan on the left and Kavra on the right. In Nirvan were stairways to the upper levels. Instead of going right to the Trade Hall, the Long Way continued on, with four bridges across the Great Chasm. Eventually the end of the chasm would be reached and the Long Way continued into the Street of the Smiths. Eventually this doubled back to the right into refining areas. The Great Chasm was half to a mile long and very deep; 200 metres down to where it was flooded, and 50 to 100 metres across.

Paradoxides did some research on Pharazon Lore Hunger. He had been a master of the Magicians Guild in Chittagong. He had written four volumes on dragons. He specialised in conjuration, evocation, abjuration and divination. He had disappeared without trace.

On 1st September 690 Grettir, Salrod, Hilda, Paradoxides, Jason, Wilf, Aranath, Girindor, Gror, Barazin, Nan, Bifur and Bofur teleported early in the morning to the ogres' den in the Shehalion. It was a sunny September day. Led by the dwarves, with the elf and the ranger scouting ahead they headed up into the mountains. On the third day the kill and the tracks of a wyrm were spotted. It was tracked until nightfall. The next morning as a cat, Girindor headed up to where the wyrm was suspected to be. He returned to say he thought it had gone. There was a sort of shelter in the rocks and the party headed there and explored the surrounding area. They were about 30 miles from Morthrondel. The dwarves discovered a dwarven door and a secret door; it was probably the back entrance to a small dwarven hamlet.

The whole party went in and waited while Bifur, Bofur, Grettir, Paradoxides and Wilf explored ahead. They went down a spiral staircase, and the rest of the party caught up. They then went through a secret door where they were attacked by three stone giants, who were summarily despatched, and some loot taken. In the loot were a ring, which kept the wearer warm, a potion and a wreath of silver leaves. The wreath enabled the wearer to control animals, and the potion was dwarven mead. The rest of the complex was explored uneventfully. The group then continued on to Morthrondel.

On the sixth day Grettir, Paradoxides, Jason, Aranath, Wilf and Girindor flew off to save a bear from some orcs. On the next day some snow leopard tracks were seen. The weather seemed set to deteriorate so the party spilt into two to try to find a bolthole. Gror found a very large ventilation shaft. The whole party flew down to the bottom and the dwarves explored for a couple of days, while blizzards raged outside.

Late afternoon of the ninth day the dwarves returned. This was a silver mine they said with two levels of galleries and many tunnels. They had also found a way out, which might lead to Morthrondel. It was a canal for shipping out ore. Grettir and Salrod explored along the canal. They worked their way along a submerged towpath for a mile where it opened up into a cavern. This cavern had an island with some huts on it. The canal continued into another cavern with a corridor coming down to the canal with grooves – possibly for loading ore onto boats on the canal. The canal continued on into a third cavern, where there were very large mushrooms on both sides. Girindor went along as an otter. He was able to identify some of the mushrooms. They found a small room with a cauldron and the bodies of many dwarves, including children, who looked like they might have committed suicide. The group could hear what sounded like a waterfall.

The next day Girindor and Paradoxides came back with Gror and found the waterfall, which was a sluice gate. Gror managed to operate the mechanism to lower the water. Paradoxides returned to report to Dain. By day twelve the waters had lowered and everyone met up again at the sluice gates.

The next day was spent exploring by the dwarves. They found that the Nirvan staircase was blocked.

On day fourteen the whole party explored the main level. Many corridors were negotiated, along one corridor a series of chimneys going up and down were seen. The magicians flew the party down one and emerged into a huge forge. The party then headed down to the Exchange, where they were surprised by a wyrm or a small dragon, which they killed. They then left very hurriedly accompanied by the feeling that a much larger dragon was closely pursuing them. They then teleported back to Sequarl. The tunnel dwarves did manage to grab a small amount of loot in the Exchange before leaving.

Loot:

Crystal bottle	
Ring of warmth	5000gp
Wreath of silver leaves allows control of horses	12000gp
Bullion silver	
Rough lumps of gems (64 mainly lapis lazuli)	750gp
Gold coins (2000 some imperial some dwarven)	
Jewellery (10 items)	
Gems (13)	750gp
Stamped bars of gold (4 with eagle stamp)	4000gp
Sword of dwarf silver	
Chain shirt (magical for 6'2")	4000gp
Pint of dwarven mead	10000gp
Adamantine bar	2500gp
Gold bar	
Platinum pieces	150gp
Gems (1000, 500, 200)	1700gp
Mana point gem (2 mana points)	3000gp
Mana point gem (5 mana points)	10000gp
Silver crown studded with emeralds	

Came to 4230gp per share

The wreath was exchanged for six trained warhorses from Kriggs, one of which was bought by Salrod (worth 12000gp). Hilda drank the dwarven mead (worth 10000gp).

E5 – Grettir's Wavy Navy (12 Jan 96)

In October 690 the party teleported to Anango, where Wurra had arranged to sail in tandem with Zamaran of Kasra and Ocanur, his magician. He had the ship 'Green Serpent'. Grettir had received a commission to deliver a package to Asperiche for six talents.

After fourteen days the two ships reached Asperiche, which had a superb natural harbour, with an almost circular island in the middle. There was a reasonable sized town surrounding the harbour and a mountain above it. The Sorcerer's Isle was part of the Asperiche group. No combat weapons or armour were allowed on land. Paradoxides and Girindor remained on board the Kistin.

The party headed to the Sorcerer's Isle, crossing Asperiche on foot, and then got a boat across to the island to deliver the parcel. The island had a shell keep with a tower at the back. They entered a room with a fire and saw Paradoxides and a shadowy figure. He was Nolgamus, and knew who the members of the party were. Paradoxides told them that he would be staying with Nolgamus for the next year and a half. He would learn about the Vorvalakah, the maze and Tyros. He would then drop the Vorvalakah off with the Black Company; he would then do something for Nolgamus for a year. Nolgamus had helped cure Pradoxides after his clash with the Oгри. The rest of the party returned to Asperiche and the Kistin.

On the eighteenth day the Kistin set sail again without Paradoxides and Ndonon and rendezvoused with the Green Serpent. On the twenty-sixth night Grettir dealt with an undead. At the end of the following day Kos was sighted, and two cogs. Ocanur gave Hilda a token and the Kistin would meet up with the Green Serpent again after seven days. As the Kistin approached Kos it was buzzed by a Hippogriff. They then entered the huge natural harbour of Telnus.

After trading in Kos the Kistin left port and met up with the Green Serpent. Just before evening the Kistin came across some seaweed with a small lake in the middle. Aranath flew across it and was attacked by a sort of water troll. They fought and Aranath was nearly taken down, but Kolgrimm managed to finish the troll off.

Girindor as an albatross was able to search a very wide area of ocean. He spotted three green ships and one of the slavers was taken, although the other two escaped. Salrod killed the priest on the captured slaver. A prize crew was put on the captured slaver, and the other two ships were pursued. Girindor called up a storm, which sank the two slavers.

An undead attacked one night. It was laid to rest and a sword of Anango make was taken. From the slaver they took an armring with some power, with a coiled serpent on it. They set free the slaves and also took some jewels, dark plate mail and the ship. Hilda bought the armring.

Loot:

Sword of Anango make	
Arm ring in shape of coiled sea serpent, some power	3000gp
Gold arm rings (4)	800gp
Plate mail armour (very dark with chaotic beasts 6')	1500gp
Ceremonial sword	
Sacrificial dagger	
Brazier (large made of twisted metal)	
Bag of rune carved bones	
Trinkets of jewellery	3200gp
Chain shirts (2 given to Zamoran)	
Jewellery (from pirates)	700gp
Ship	2500gp

E6 – More Snow

The party returned to Sequal and then headed off on the trade road and joined the Black Road heading west. They were travelling on horseback and were able to travel about 40 miles a day. At the end of the second day they reached Nickar's tower.

A couple of days later, just before dusk, they saw some hippogriffs. Hilda sent off a fireball and at dusk they seemed to fly off.

The following day the tracks of a hill giant were seen and Aranath, Grettir, Salrod and Giziar, with Girindor as an eagle, followed the tracks. The hill giant had been attacked by a tiger, which it had killed. Aranath took two tiger cubs, which he found nearby. The group were unable to return to the rest of the party before nightfall.

That night the rest of the party were attacked by a mountain troll. Jason was badly injured, but Hilda hit it with black magic and Wilf with missiles. The mountain troll tried to grab Hilda, but she got away, and the mountain troll left.

The party was reunited and Girindor took the tiger cubs to Kiness's, and then they carried on up the road. There were two Kur on a lookout post overlooking the road, but they were ignored.

Girindor flew up to look at the wall near the orc gate. The wall was incomplete with figures scuttling about on it. They looked like men rather than orcs; they were definitely not Kur. Girindor called up a blizzard and played a tornado up and down the wall. Then the party windwalked up to the wall and looked at the gate.

The gate was actually a gap in the wall. The wall was made of a similar material as the pyramids; dark rock fused together, but not the same material as the black rock of the road.

The party started digging in the snow. Suddenly Ranulph disappeared. The party dug after him and came across a grey, rubbery blob, from which the dwarf's head appeared.

He said that he was being held by imperials. In exchange for the safe return of Ranulph the party agreed to leave the area for a week. Ranulph reappeared from the grey bubble, handcuffed and leg-ironed. Jason set him free and the party set off.

The grey bubble was a tent about ten to fifteen feet in diameter made of a sorcerous, eldritch substance. It contained five imperials and their equipment.

E7 – Les Liaisons Dangereux (3 Aug 96)

In April 690 a centaur armoured with plate and chain barding, called Fingolwin arrived at Dyn-gra-dur. Yspaddadden agreed to make six suits of barding for the centaurs in exchange for his help in heading north to Giant's Castle for Silden's old axe Gore Raver. Fingolwin had a sword called Battle Storm.

At the end of November 690 Salrod, Hilda and Wilf arrived at Digry Dur, closely followed by Fingolwin, six other male centaurs and six female centaurs. The female centaurs were escorted back to their homeland and the male centaurs returned as preparations were made for the trip north. Yspaddadden was able to magically track the axe and confirmed that it hadn't moved for a long time. Hilda memorised teleport coordinates for the inner cave at Digry Dur and the expedition finally set out in December 690.

Salrod rode on Fingolwin, Yspaddadden on Finwar, Fingolwin's son, Hilda on Jeska, Ranulph on Erwe and Wilf on Voldan. The other centaurs were Virlan and Lekker. Kessira the White Arrow, a female elf who seemed to live with the pict, also accompanied them.

The centaurs seemed much more stable than a horse and travelled very rapidly. They seemed almost tireless and over fifty miles was made on the first day. About halfway through the second day they arrived in slightly rougher territory and followed this up river covering over thirty miles.

Mid afternoon of the third day they came across the bodies of four pict. They had been dismembered, possibly by trolls, but more probably by werewolves. The bodies were levitated and left in the trees by Kessira. The party headed along the trail, which headed more to the west; they could see snow covered mountains ahead.

On the fourth day it started to snow as they headed northwest from the river. The next day it became winter state one; the party headed westwards and then more northerly. On the second watch a mountain troll was killed; some ichor was gathered and in the morning the trail was followed. It started off northeast and then east and up into the mountains. Kessira felt that something was following they set up an ambush.

It was a small dragon. It sniffed as it came along and noticed the centaurs and headed away. At this point the trail was going quite high and so the centaurs headed back to the camp while the others continued tracking on foot. Nothing was found before the party had to return to the camp. As they returned Kessira saw a griffin or a hippogriff flying very high.

As the party continued they past the mountain where Yspaddadden had previously had an encounter with a wise, very old and beautiful female spirit. They all headed up through the pass, where the centaurs jumped across a smaller river and continued along a line of cliffs. Kessira did not like this place. The centaurs then ran very impressively across another leg of the river. The axe was now on a bearing of northwest, approximately fifty miles away. They crossed the main part of the river, again by seeming to run across it just before dusk.

At the beginning of day eleven the axe was twenty miles or less away and west-northwest. At midmorning the party caught sight of the giant's castle and the smoky mountain behind it. They went back below the skyline and at nightfall Kessira headed off to reconnoitre. Shortly she returned to say the castle was empty. Yspaddadden checked the axe was there and then the whole party went to investigate.

The castle walls were still intact but the interior buildings had all been broken down to build a cairn at the back of the inner courtyard, and the doors were chained open. There were runes on one end of the rock, which Hilda managed to read. 'Ukko Turso sleeps in his second age until the due day under the protection of the all highest Checkala'. It was in a corrupted demonology script. The runes had general power but were not a stored spell; religious power, ritual, or the echo of ritual seemed the likely causes. The axe was definitely under the cairn, which seemed likely to be the burial mound of the giant Salrod, Yspaddadden, Wilf, Jason and others had badly wounded on a trip north a few years earlier.

The dwarves started to remove rocks from the cairn, which seemed likely to entail many days work. When the first rock was moved the volcano behind them started to rumble. When the next rock was moved sparks flew from the volcano and some smoke came from the cairn. Something flew from the volcano; a sort of fiery serpent. The party left quickly.

Camp was shifted and preparations for a further attempt were made. Yspaddadden carved a number of protection from fire amulets.

The centaurs, apart from Fingolwin waited nearby; everyone else gathered in the courtyard, apart from Wilf who was just outside the gates. The same shifting of rocks was attempted, as the first rocks were now back on the cairn, and the same affects were noticed as previously. However this time the party awaited the fiery serpent. Three minutes after the second rock had been shifted the serpent rushed towards the party. Shots were fired, but even magic arrows seemed to bounce off. The fiery serpent seemed to cast a spell and a ring of fiery blades appeared around the inside of the castle walls. Hilda cast an ice storm, which did seem to damage the serpent, but it retaliated with fire magic. Fortunately the protective amulets worked and only minor damage was sustained.

Wilf swallowed a fly potion and flew up to attack the fiery serpent. Hilda continued to cast wounding spells, but Wilf's longsword did not seem to bite on the serpent, and when he changed to use a whip he became entangled. Fortunately Hilda's spells caused the serpent to retreat and Wilf managed to recover control as he fell towards the ground.

The serpent flew back and tried to talk to the party. After trying several archaic and arcane languages it tried a cosmic magic southern archaic language, which Hilda understood. It told the party to leave, which they did.

The next couple of days were spent recovering and preparing more amulets, and then the caldera of the volcano was investigated. This seemed to contain a portal into another plane. Salrod had previously travelled to another plane with Nickar and so had Yspaddadden. Hilda didn't know how to travel between them, and didn't know whether the portal would be two way, and if it wasn't how to return.

Hilda decided that she should be able to buy or trade for a scroll to summon an earth elemental to remove the stones rapidly from the burial cairn. When this was done the axe and any other loot would be grabbed and then the party would try to escape before the fiery serpent arrived. The dwarves would build a shelter in the centre of the courtyards in case the serpent arrived.

Whilst the rest of the party built the shelter Hilda and Salrod went to Chittagong. Hilda traded two copies of a spell for summoning any elemental in exchange for mass teleport and two scruples of scarlet lotus dust with Tharakur the cruel. This would give one scroll to use now and one to learn the spell.

During the preparations one of the gnomes who used to serve the giants was spotted. He said that the giant had died as a result of the wounds the previous party had inflicted, as he had lost the will to live. The other giant had pulled the buildings down and built the cairn and then left.

After the shelter was completed Hilda cast the spell to summon the earth elemental and instructed him to clear the rocks around the cairn away. The elemental threw rocks everywhere; luckily the party were under the shelter. Hilda sent the elemental away and Yspaddadden, Ranulph and Wilf grabbed what they could and the party escaped on board the centaurs to the north before the serpent arrived.

They crossed the river and continued to the edge of the inland sea, eastwards. The party had managed to collect Gore Raver, a dwarf silver longsword and a giant's knuckle-duster.

The party continued to head east, away from the inland sea, along a flat plain at a rate of sixty or seventy miles a day. The centaurs were all wearing a mixture of chain and plate armour as made by Yspaddadden. Fingolwin was armed with his magic sword Battle Storm, an old runed weapon. Erwe had a poleaxe, Jeske a wooden club and shield, Finar a club and two axes he could wield together, Voldan and Lekker a baseball bat and shield, and Virlan had a spear and shield. They all had longbows, of which Fingolwin's and Erwe's were composite.

After a few days they came across an eight-foot tall human, with long flowing grey hair, accompanied by 25 large white wolves. He was called Kvedulf. He admired Salrod's sword and offered to wrestle him for it, offering his spear in exchange. Salrod agreed to fight him instead. Salrod wounded Kvedulf three or four times and impressed Kvedulf, but Kvedulf managed to close and as Salrod tried to stab him, managed to knock Salrod out with a blow to the jaw. He said that Salrod could keep his sword as it was an enjoyable fight, and he was impressed with Salrod's speed. He seemed to have enough options for a twelfth level fighter and was amazingly strong, quick and resistant. The centaurs knew him and thought him mad, he was King of the Wolves and sometimes just killed people. The party continued on their way towards the homeland of the centaurs.

Two days after the fight with Kvedulf the party saw some picts, and on the twenty-eighth day they reached the centaurs homeland. Hilda and Salrod teleported off to conclude business with Tharakur.

When Hilda and Salrod returned they agreed to go Griffin hunting with the centaurs. They were about 20 miles south or southwest up in the mountains. Hilda flew in Salrod and then returned for Ranulph; Yspaddadden flew in Wilf. Two griffins were efficiently despatched and their nest looted. The next morning another griffin was seen flying in the distance. In the nest were found: the skulls of men and orcs, rams horns, cattle skulls, some armrings, a dwarf silver longsword, a gold necklace, two pouches of coins and a scale metal hauberk. Many griffins' feathers, blood and two heads were also taken. The corselet was handed over to the centaurs along with a third of the rest of the loot, leaving each member of the party with a share worth 470gp. Hilda memorised the name of the gnarled oak tree in the land of the centaurs.

Loot:

Arm rings (3 gold 4 silver)	600gp
Dwarf silver sword, gold hilt, sapphire pommel	900gp
Gold necklace	100gp
Griffin feathers for quills and other requisites	
Gold rings (50, 60, 70, 100)	280gp
Mithril ring (engraved with small leaves, elven)	500gp
Marks of gold (2)	200gp
Scale mail corselet (5'11")	
Miscellaneous coins	

Each share 470gp

E8 – The Wrong Stuff (5 Jan 97)

An attack took place on a small orc den near Digry Dur, at midday. Randir, Gambelian, Aranath and Elena attempted to block up any escape routes, while Salrod, Hilda, Yspaddadden, Ranulph, Wilf, Jason and Girindor attacked frontally. The orcs attempted to escape and were picked off by Randir and his team. A few hobgoblins escaped. The orcish magician was captured and put to the question.

He said that the orcs were watching for a leader called Roca, they were watching the trail and the dwarf hole. Roca had a group of 40 to 50 orcs and was a half orc. He had previously been driven off when he had attacked Digry Dur. The magician described the orc hole. The orcs were below and the humans etc above. The magician described its location and Girindor went off to reconnoitre.

The party then attacked the location Girindor had reconnoitred. This proved to be an entrance to a dwarf hole, which could not be entered. After further reconnaissance the correct location was attacked by Salrod, Hilda, Yspaddadden, Ranulph, Jason, Wilf, Girindor, Randir, Gambelien, Aranath and Elena.

The attack went very smoothly. Roca the half orc, and Yorla a half troll female berserk were killed and resistance in the top half of the complex was immediately overcome, and some slaves were freed. Hilda then cast an illusion on the part and with the appearance of Roca and Yorla they investigated the lower half. Some orcs were slept by Hilda, but eventually the disguise was penetrated, however all resistance was successfully crushed, and any fleeing orcs were pursued and slaughtered. Some orcs including four females were captured. In exchange for three of the female orcs Nickar transported the booty to Digry Dur. The spoils included quite a large amount of weapons. Yspaddadden kept some prisoners for his research.

Loot:

Gold ruby ring	200gp
Weapons	
Gold	148gp
Silver ring	
Amber pendant	
Chain mail	
Gold arm ring	

E9a – The Harpies' Nest

News arrived of an attack on the Kistin. Wurra had been crucified and badly injured, but was now back in Sequarl. The crew had disappeared, but might be in Zongar according to a note found on the Kistin, which was in a warehouse on Tyros. There were traces of a green slime associated with the Tyrosian god Piray. There seemed to be a link between the island of Zongar, the god there and Piray. There also seemed to be a connection to Del Shannor, of whom Wurra had previously fallen foul.

Some expeditioning took place during which Salrod killed a draugr.

Loot:

Gold necklace	150gp
Bear claw necklace	60gp
Silver dagger	100gp
Gold torque	300gp
Amber pendant	70gp
Silver finger ring	10gp
Boar tusk	50gp
Silver arm rings (2)	100gp
Gold wire arm ring	50gp
Bear claw necklace	100gp
Ruby ring	200gp
Gold brooch	200gp
Gold	350gp

E9b – The Harpies' Nest

A trip was organised using Wilf and Jason's riverboat, up to Lake Salrod. They disturbed some very poor adventurers, but decided to let them go.

Early one morning the party were attacked by a group of Harpies, who tried to seduce them with siren songs. Those affected tried to leave the boat and follow them, but they were restrained. Some of the harpies were killed and the rest pursued. One was captured and Girindor, Jason and Wilf pursued the last one to its lair, which was captured. A crown and a swan amulet were found, both very powerful magical devices. Hilda investigated them and bought the crown for 12000gp. She also worked out how to use the swan amulet, including the use of a trigger word. It was an astral movement device triggered by night, which would work best at midnight of the new moon.

The crown was a crown of power for a count or more likely a countess; it contained probably 5 or 6 spells, a lightning spell a light spell, wildfire and globe of protection. It was imperial, evocation, abjuration and some conjuration, probably third or fourth dynasty, possibly traceable and lost 1500 years before. She showed it to Llangollen the Blue, who agreed to charge it with 20 mana points for 500gp in three months. He said it was worth most of a noble house. The swan amulet was older, probably first or second dynasty, from before the black road was built.

Loot:

Swan amulet (astral movement)	
Crown of Power	12000gp
Harpy	3500gp
Glass bottle with alteration potion	
Gold coins	2781gp
Silver coins	50gp
Gems	480gp

Total for two expeditions 3371gp per share

E10 – Vulcanheim Magical Mystery Tour

The party decided to test the amulet on the night of the new moon at midnight in the courtyard of Grettir's townhouse in Chittagong. A swan appeared when Hilda triggered the amulet. It was very large, casting a huge shadow, and landed opening its wings. Hilda, Salrod, Grettir, Jason, Wilf, Girindor and Aranath climbed on and the swan said, 'seven times for seven stars, 23 times am I bound to serve you, Quo Vadis?' It wouldn't travel on their plane, so Hilda told it to go to Muspelheim.

The voyage was extremely cold, and people took some damage as it was winter state ten. They arrived safely in Muspelheim and directed the swan to land near a river, after crossing the coastline, mountains and some moorland.

The party rescued a woman named Grackna. She was from a nearby settlement called Volansmark.

The group then flew to another island and on the way saw a raft with six fire giants. An island to the north was called Egilsmark. Jotun was the local word for giant. The party investigated the island, which had three main buildings. They met the giants named Zagan and Ragar who were smiths. They stayed with them overnight. Zagan and Ragar told the party that the local baron was called Hrothgar.

When the party left they called up the swan and returned with Grackna, leaving Jason with the giants for a year and a day to work as a smith.

E11 – Stelgano's Tower II (24 Aug 97)

Everyone was introduced to Melangier from the Triton League. He had arrived from the Southern Oceans. He was a priest and lived in the sea, connected to the mermen.

Hilda spent two weeks learning a spell written by Kojar, which allowed her to command doors to open.

A few days later Girindor windwalked Grettir, Salrod, Hilda, Wilf, Bifur and Melangier near to the tower of Stelgano. Unfortunately they crash landed and there were a few sprained ankles. After a couple of days rest and recuperation and some reconnaissance from Girindor they were able to land on the roof of the tower just after dawn.

As they landed they set off some traps. Hilda would have had her leg badly broken or even severed, if she were not protected from iron. They freed themselves and worked their way down the tower. Wilf slipped on a greased step, but they managed to work their way past this. They were then attacked by some undead, but these were dealt with, despite the noxious clouds they emitted.

They burst through into a room and saw Stelgano or Pallius disappear through a dimension door. Hilda did not have enough power to follow him.

They spent some days in investigation, but all they found was a chest containing 200gp, which Bifur exploded by setting off a trap. Stelgano had been very careful to remove all traces of himself. One night they heard someone singing a lament and trying to lure them away. They later found out this person was connected to Stelgano.

Eventually Hilda went through into the fourth dimension and found a way to where Stelgano was hiding. He was warned by his homunculus and escaped by riding the night wind. However this time they had found some of his hairs.

In his cubbyhole they found a chest with many traps, which they managed to open. Inside they found six skulls, which they took to Rendip Rim, the Ossyran priest. They also found some packets of miscellaneous alchemicals.

Rendip Rim exorcised the skulls, but they revealed the story of Pallius alias Stelgano, Sybil and the female singer. Using the hairs and the true name Kojar managed to create a tracking device, and the group went to Amelia where he was thought to have fled.

They managed to track him down in the catacombs, outside the city walls. He was slain after breaking Melangier's leg, and nearly breaking Wilf's neck. The homunculus, Gagirth, was sent back to his own plane after the extraction of promises.

Three books were found – Book of Mordur, a grimoire and a kakadaemon and these were handed over to Sybil by Grettir. On the body was found a gold necklace with a stone set in it, of patterned gold. Hilda investigated this and found it to be a scrying device, particularly useful to a divinationist. It was thought to be worth a few thousand gps.

On the evening of a new moon, just before midnight Grettir and Salrod swam across to the skerry. It was overcast and the rain fell heavily; it was very dark and the crossing was a very difficult swim. Grettir told Sybil that Pallius was dead and that Eorwen was now free. Eorwen was Sybil's sister, and had been the voice they had heard singing outside Stelgano's tower. Grettir had agreed to help Sybil if she wished to retire. Sybil was the last pupil of Zareh, and was sought by the priests of Horus.

Sybil told Grettir 'beware magic and the sea'. She also said 'our paths will not cross again, I do not know why, but they will not'. She gave Grettir a warning to bar his door, and told him that before the year was out his tower would know war. He had stirred up his Nemesis, and she was warning him for her sister's sake.

E12 – Hall of Hrothgar (6 Jan 98)

Hilda collected the equipment from Stelgano's tower and stored it in Chittagong.

By using the porno cube and talking to Grackna Hilda managed to find teleport coordinates for the place in Volunsmark, where Grackna had been rescued, and near her villa, both on the plane of Volkunsheim. Hilda had now learnt Grackna's language.

At midnight of the new moon, Hilda, Salrod, Nickar, Grettir and Ranulph climbed onto the swan and travelled to Hrothgar's Island. Nickar talked to the swan and said 'in the name of Quall I command you to speak to me'. The swan replied and the following conversation took place.

The swan said '49 times must I obey the command of the bearer of Quall's token. I may be summoned at midnight on any new moon. I will bear faithfully any six beings.' Nickar asked, 'how large?' 'As large as they are and ever shall be, but the seventh and eighth and all others must look out for themselves.' 'Are there any restrictions where it may go?' asked Nickar. 'Anywhere that can be named and any place which is correctly and truly named or then delivered at its option, but now is a moment that last for ever, and it will not go anywhen.' It couldn't time travel, but did understand the concept.

Nickar said that Quall was the name of an important wizard and his family in imperial times, who was involved in demonology; he had suspected that this was the person who had made the swan amulet.

After landing on Hrothgar's island the party marched to the farm of the fire giants where Jason was staying, and arrived that evening. The fire giants spoke the same language as Grackna as well as a form of black speech. As each person crossed the threshold the giants said 'Peace on all in this house.'

The next morning Nickar set off and returned at dusk with Aranath, who had been scouting on Volunsmark, observing the Overmen. The Overmen bred lines of human for artistic qualities and beauty. They were able to change shape at will. The females were druidic. After six weeks of watching two male overmen, a female arrived on a ship with 100 people and had immediately sensed the presence of Aranath.

Jason had been learning useful smithing skills with the two Giant smiths Zagan and Ragan.

The next morning Zagan took the party to the Hall of Baron Hrothgar, where they arrived after 12 hours of forced marching. At the distance of a quarter mile the baying of hellhounds began. The buildings consisted of a square tower, a long hall, an oval palisade with a wooden watchtower by the gate, and a mound and ditch. On the tower was a fire giant in armour, who talked with Zagan and then called his father. He was a very large fire giant with a muspel sword. He was manic looking, with a spiky beard and silvery, wavy hair.

Hilda translated for the party. Zagan explained that they were strangers from far away, and that one was the little smith who was staying with him. The group were taken into the hall. There was a lot of smoke and there were six other giants, plus some gnome servants. Three giantesses came in. The other giants were Hrothgar's wives and sons. Genghist and Henghist had chain shirts, and Henghist, the eldest, had a war axe and shield. Hagar and Raban had scale mail, and Gaston and Hrolf, who were about sixteen, had studded leather. Hrothgar's wives were called Kallan, Kareer and Ornoa.

There was a feast and Grettir gave gifts and there was a large amount of drinking. Hrothgar boasted of his deeds, including raids to the land of gold, which was the giants' name for middle earth. He also mentioned a mine of blue stone – lapis lazuli. It transpired that he was a priest of Tchakala, the fire god, who was also the god of the fire giant, whose tomb had been raided by Yspaddadden, Ranulph, Salrod, Hilda and Wilf. Grettir also bragged of the things he had done.

More feasting ensued and Grettir explained his problem, and Hrothgar agreed to come to support him with his sons.

On the fifth day the oaths were to be sworn. Hrothgar summoned a fire serpent, and Grettir and he swore oaths, followed by Salrod and Hilda. The fire serpent didn't like Salrod and Hilda, but the oaths were sworn, and runes appeared on Grettir's, Salrod's and Hilda's wrists.

When Ranulph tried to swear the fire serpent attacked him. Hrothgar grabbed Ranulph, shouting 'oathbreaker and traitor'. Hrothgar wanted to burn him in oil, but Grettir said that he was a guest and as such should be safe. Hrothgar booted him 25 metres outside and counted to 100. The giants then gave chase.

After some confusion and chasing it was noticed that Aranath was also missing. The immediate pursuit was unsuccessful. Hrothgar wanted Grettir to swear to kill Ranulph, but Grettir argued that he would try, but wouldn't swear as it might conflict with other oaths. Grettir gave Hrothgar a gold necklace worth five talents.

After a day or two Grettir, Salrod, Hilda and Jason returned to Zagan's house and left Jason there. Hilda then teleported Grettir and Salrod to Volunsmark near where they had rescued Grackna. They arrived there pre dawn on the morning of the ninth day in Volkunshheim.

They followed the river upstream. That night at midnight they heard howling. The following day they continued up river and killed two beavers and skinned them. The beavers were very large, with excellent pelts and a lot of meat.

On the evening of the twelfth day Hilda was attacked and poisoned by a viper, which she killed. The viper was skinned; Hilda was treated and recovered quickly.

Towards the end of the fourteenth day Hilda flew Grettir and Salrod to the south of the river, and they headed west just inside the forest. They were attacked by two basilisks. Hilda was frozen, and Salrod slowed down. Grettir and Salrod fought the basilisks, using their shields to avoid looking at them. Grettir killed one and Salrod drove the other away. Hilda, when she recovered located this one, and fireballed it.

The basilisks were prime plain demons; they had six legs and a head a little like a crocodile. They were stripped for requisites. The three adventurers found the basilisks' cave. There was a nest of fine sand with five eggs. They cleared the cave, which contained a lot of bones, mainly sheep, deer, goats and boar, but also two gnomes and on very weathered human. They found a brooch, in the form of a linked beast, a wolf worth 800gp and made of lapis lazuli. Also an anklet made of links of ivory with finely etched scrimshaw worth 800gp and a metal belt buckle, very well made from electrum.

They rested up in the cave until it was time to return to middle earth, doing a little hunting. During the hunting Salrod and Grettir killed a very large black buck, and Salrod killed a spider. They returned home safely on the thirtieth night and four of the five eggs were still alive.

They went to see Tharakur the cruel about the basilisk eggs. He offered to make Grettir a basilisk standard in exchange for the eggs and heads and two scruples of scarlet lotus dust and Grettir agreed. Grettir gave Hilda the sword of summoning the shaguin, and the shaguin skull.

Ranulph and Aranath also returned, courtesy of Nickar, after they had been caught by Hrofgar, killed him and escaped, only to be captured by the overmen.

Loot:

Beaver pelts (500, 600)	1100gp
Belt buckle (electrum)	400gp
Brooch (linked beast, wolf)	800gp
Bracelet or anklet (scrimshaw)	800gp
Basilisk eggs	

E13 – Pict Land and the Fire of Bones

There were reports that the giant who had had the axe Gore Raver was walking in the North despite his death. In the second week in August 691, Salrod, Hilda, Yspaddadden, Ranulph, Wilf, Aranath, Fingolin, and five other centaurs headed off to the north in search of the undead giant.

First of all they visited the shaman of the salmon tribe of the Picts, with whom Yspaddadden had had some dealings. They were told that the giant was far away to the east where the shaman had sent it.

The party headed east and that night were visited by a Pegasus, which flew off just before dawn the next morning. The next night they camped near another Pictish settlement and were visited by the shaman of the crow people. He said that the giant was now to the south east, about three or four clans away.

On the sixth day they passed another Pictish hunting band and some Pictish barrows. They then arrived at the settlement of the weasel tribe. The party were then told that the giant was to the southeast and had caused damage about a moon ago, before being sent on by the shaman.

During the day they saw the crumbling stonework of a ruined tower, and the fragments of a paved road. Hilda visualised teleport co-ordinates and they carried on. The tower was pre-imperial and over sixty feet tall at its highest point. It reminded some of the party of the tower of Anoch.

On the night of the ninth day Aranath dreamt of the graves of the wolf tribe. On the tenth day they left the forest and circumvented the graves of the wolf tribe. At the end of the day they encountered some Picts from the Eagle tribe, who told the party to go east by the forest at the end of the Picts lands; the giant would be going no further because of the river.

After some discussions the party decided a visit to Kattlegrod would be required to make arrangements for the disposal of the giant's remains.

The next day they continued east to a cyclopean column 100 to 150 feet high. They rode up the steps to it. The column seemed to be made of a metal, but one not even the dwarves recognised. It was similar to iron, but only very slightly rusted; perhaps an older metal not of that plane.

There were figures or marks on the rock around the column, which were very eroded and may have been many thousands of years old. The column seemed to be a solid pole, and looked to have been driven down into the rock, ensuring a perfect fit. The glyphs or pictographs were very old, probably pre imperial and Hilda could recognise some of them. The words she could read were: 'All hail the great one, formless power, sacrifice, mastery, gifts, welcome, sacrifice, worship, summon'.

They were probably connected to pre imperial religions. Demonology had some derivations of these symbols. She had seen some comparative texts in one of her father's books, about brass rubbings in the South Seas.

The party left for Kattlegrod, and agreed to meet back at the column the night after next. A ridge of clouds overtopped the top of the column. When Hilda cast her teleport spell there was a big bang, she arrived nine feet above the ground, and she lost less mana than she expected. Arrangements were made with a priest in Kattlegrod.

Two days later they arrived back at the column. Some investigations were carried out. Hilda took some rubbings and notes. Power was detected, but no mana or life. Aranath tried to fly to the top, but became confused and failed.

On the fifteenth day it rained and the party met some Picts from the Horse Clan. The Picts said the giant was to the north, towards the Beaver Clan. The party headed in that direction and reached a river where they camped.

Next morning they crossed the river, which was about a mile wide, and met the Picts from the Beaver Clan. The Beaver Clan had suffered some deaths from the giant, but had sent it further north. The party picked up the giants trail and followed it to a circle of trees and a tump. They backed off and waited for the giant to wake up and attack.

That night, as expected, it attacked and went down under a welter of blows, after dealing out a lot of damage with a large burning wooden club. All the bones were collected together. Aranath cast detect evil to ensure nothing was missed. Wilf and Aranath were pricked by shards of bone, but Yspaddadden cured them of wound fever. The bones were put in an iron cask ready to be taken to Kattlegrod.

Kvedulf and his wolves arrived. He wanted a fight, but Salrod and Yspaddadden were already wounded from the fight with the giant, so he fought Wilf. It developed into a fistfight and Wilf managed to knock Kvedulf down. He departed laughing.

Hilda teleported Yspaddadden and the casket of bones to Kattlegrod, where they were taken to a priest. Yspaddadden then cast night wind walk out to sea and dropped the casket into the ocean depths. Hilda then returned to the tump and teleported everyone else.

Salrod purchased six orc bane arrows from Yspaddadden for Grettir and ordered some more.

E14 – Nemesis / OK Corral (12 Apr 98)

Girindor's proposition that an alliance between Chaos Gods, the Yotan and Hilda's father Thorgard had been made was discussed.

Thorgard was a very powerful magician and a force in the North. He had probably come to some arrangement with the Yotan many years before, although he was not a worshipper. Hilda spent a week in June researching the Chaos Gods.

Grettir held his Harvest feast at the beginning of September. Salrod won the swimming and came second in the archery; all the other prizes were won by a newcomer to the area – Ironbar Sterbjornsson. His father Sterbjorn had said that he was too much trouble and should guest with Grettir, as he knew trouble was on its way to Grettir.

The priest and Girindor knew that a very large storm was on its way, and suspected that it would hit on All Hallows Eve.

Hilda spent some time researching spells, but also spent time along with Paradoxides, and a scholar of Girindor's further researching the Chaos Gods in the Guild Library in Chittagong. Hilda found an old dusty tome on miscellaneous cults, which had an extensive section on Piray. It appeared that this tome had been lost and misclassified, and should really have been restricted reading. It contained everything needed to contact Piray. It explained what Piray was after – mainly human sacrifices, and what he offered in return – power etc. The book also mentioned Baal, Yazud and Seth.

Further investigation revealed more information on Piray. Squids, sharks, rays, sea serpents, the shagun and the 'Spawn of Piray', were all creatures of Piray. Initial contact would be with the Shagun, they would contact the 'Spawn of Piray', who would then contact Piray himself, although their might be another layer before Piray. When contact was made with the inner cabal, the monstrous, shuddering slow footsteps that walk far below the earth (the Spawn of Piray) would be heard. The enemies of Piray would go mad when they heard this.

Salrod sacrificed at the temple of Yarma in Chittagong and had an augury with the priest. He foresaw a big struggle and opportunities. He saw dynasties rising and falling. He saw Salrod at a crossroads, with the road to fortune or oblivion for him personally. Salrod would see a black sword, shadows, the sun rising and a secret revealed. He could see the dark sword and the wise and more than mortal stare of the statue.

On All Hallows Eve the storm approached and Grettir and Hilda could hear slow monstrous footsteps beneath the earth. Girindor, Gudan and four other rangers tried to hold the storm back from the top of the Black Rock tower (Eagle Tower) at Sequarl Castle. The storm abated somewhat and at about eleven o'clock the rangers flew off. The storm hit Sequarl Castle at about midnight, but by then it was only hurricane force, the lightning had dissipated and gusts only reached 80 or 90 miles per hour.

A figure arrived carrying a white flag, claiming the immunity of a herald, and purporting to be the nemesis of Grettir. He challenged Grettir and said that Grettir was standing on consecrated ground and he wouldn't fight there. His name was Vandermar and he came from hell saying that Grettir's crimes against the Chaos Gods had been noted and that he offered battle or war. He said that he only existed to destroy Grettir. Grettir told him to come and get him. The Hell Knight left and dawn arrived.

The struggle was viewed as a chess game by Rendip Rim, the priest of Osiris, with Grettir and his supporters being the red pieces. The opposition were a white queen and a black bishop.

The next day Melangier arrived and said that a ship of the dead with a spawn of Piray on board had gone up the Nid to the forest. More information was found about the spawn of Piray from Melangier. To see its eyes was death, it ate peoples brains. It was one of the Ilithid, a powerful priest of the Shaguin and Piray, and a servant of the Hell Knight.

Further research was conducted and the book of the Rualaka was found. This named the Hell Knights including Vandermar. They were thought to have once been men of power on earth. There was no record of them being summoned since imperial times. Vandermar was last seen as the Lord of the Undead. There were at least nine or ten Hell Knights. They were said to be immune to magic. No information could be found on the Ilithid.

Grettir issued a challenge to Vandermar, Nickar send a pawn into the wood of Etain naming Grettir, Paradoxides, Salrod, Hilda, Wilf, Girindor and Ironbar to fight on the full moon in Sequarl Burial Grounds. Eventually the challenge was agreed for sunset on the night of the full moon at Ythil's Finger.

At four o'clock Hilda and Paradoxides teleported Grettir, Salrod, Wilf, Girindor and Ironbar to Ythil's Finger. At five o'clock 50 to 60 orcs were seen chained to a palanquin, which was being dragged to Ythil's Finger. On it was a large black tent. From it emerged the Hell Knight, mounted on a phase spider, three mountain trolls, a pit demon or Balrog, and the Ilithid. The Hell Knight put up a Wall of Ice.

Ironbar charged towards the enemy in a berserk rage, followed by Grettir and badly damaged the Balrog, before it flew up, and then attacked the mountain trolls. Meanwhile the Hell Knight and phase spider tangled with Salrod, Wilf and Hilda. Salrod drank a potion and became invisible, but the Hell Knight could still see him. The Hell Knight dismounted the phase spider and produced a demon sword, which fought on its own. The phase spider chased Girindor and he disappeared into the earth. The spider then headed towards Hilda, but Salrod hit it and Hilda leapt out of its way. Meanwhile Wilf was occupying the attentions of Vandermar.

Grettir and Ironbar had killed one mountain troll and wounded another, but Ironbar had become entangled with some black tentacles that had appeared. Grettir went on to fight the Ilithid. Paradoxides flew up to engage the Balrog, but crashed. He helped free Ironbar and then flew up again, but was stunned by the Balrog.

The Hell Knight and the phase spider had headed away from the fight and Wilf, Salrod and Hilda were heading towards the centre of the fight. Salrod was able to catch Paradoxides as he fell.

Grettir had killed the mountain trolls with the assistance of Ironbar and some heavy magic from Paradoxides, but unfortunately Ironbar had also been slain. Hilda blew the Balrog out of the sky with a lightning bolt.

The Ilithid went to another plain and returned immediately, presumably having cured itself. Girindor also reappeared and threw some fire acorns, which missed. Grettir and Girindor fought the Ilithid, which was stunning people and scrambling their brains. It fought for control of Grettir's mind, but Grettir killed it.

The Hell Knight and the phase spider had been standing off, but now Vandermar cast power word death. Grettir and Salrod made their saving throws and the Ilithid had stunned Hilda, but Girindor and Wilf went down. Vandermar and the spider moved in and Salrod killed the spider. Vandermar sank into the ground. Hilda recovered and restarted Wilf's and Girindor's hearts and checked Paradoxides. Vandermar reappeared and cast power word paralyse, which paralysed Hilda.

Grettir fought Vandermar and Salrod covered his back keeping off the dancing sword demon. The Hell Knight then broke off and tried to separate Grettir and Salrod by raising magical ice walls. He then magically crucified Salrod, but Grettir closed with Vandermar and killed him.

Grettir called up medical support and apart from Ironbar everyone else was still alive and could be healed. Grettir spoke to the orcs: 'I am the Stone King, look what I have done to your Dark Lord and your Mountain Kings. Return to the wood of Etain and never darken Sequarl's door again'. They left terrified, dragging the palanquin. One of the mountain trolls was found to be still alive.

Loot:

Two mountain troll heads
Requisites from phase spider
Husks of balrog and spider

Mountain Troll #1

Dwarf made war axe of some antiquity – war lust (+4)	15000gp+
Bracelet, mithril armband, elven work of art	3000gp
Silver finger ring	200gp
Silver chain	200gp
Healing potion	500gp
Four combat potions (200gp each)	800gp
Gem amulet, star sapphire, containing healing magic	

Old Empire: Malcolm's Diary

(healing rate booster)

?gp

Mountain Troll #2

Muspel sword	5000 – 10000gp
Gold decorated dwarf made axe	500gp
Silver armband, beast eating tail	1000gp
Gold neck chain	600gp
Silver arming	300gp
Brooch in shape of salmon	500gp
Gold and ruby belt	4000gp

Mountain Troll #3

Mithril longsword, blue white diamond in pommel, elven made, Grey Dreamer (+3, +2)	15000gp+
Gold wristband	600gp
Gold ring	600gp
Gold and jet arming	800gp
Emerald necklace	3000gp

Ilithid

Body was a construction, probably made by the head.

Long cloak of leather.

Belt of shrunken heads, including important members of the crew of the Kistin.

Belt made of spiked chain with hook and spiked ball at either end.

One potion of essence of power.

Vandermar

Demon sword – Twister.

Ring of Ice Demon, looked like a piece of green ice, suspected to have been made by Thorgard.

Damaged whip. An artefact from another plane, flickered with cold scarlet and black flames.

Balrog

Mace and war scythe, off plane manufacture,

F1 – (23 May 98)

A day or two after the fight with the Hell Knight preparations were complete for a follow up. Nickar and Grettir went of to the Hall of the Mountain Kings on the Nehrein steed. Nickar then returned to Sequarland collected Gudan, Wilf and Hilda. Gudan and Wilf were turned into kur by Nickar, and Hilda was disguised as a captive. Grettir and Nickar were disguised as a Portector and his bodyguard. The dwarf Crago and Kiness also went along. Crago was disguised as an orc, and Kiness was made invisible by his magic ring. The Protector was called Scara and his bodyguard Boris.

Nickar and Grettir left at nine o'clock, everyone else at midnight. They set off along what looked like old dwarven workings.

The party were attacked by four strange vaguely troll like beasts about eight feet tall, with hands ending in claws, and avian beaks. They were probably prime plain demons known as hook horrors. Hitting them was like hitting stone, but they were killed and their heads were taken as they continued to clack even after death. Their ichor was also collected. Nickar thought he might have seen such creatures before in a troll den.

The party continued and came across a group of ten troglodytes. These were taken in by the disguises and let the party by. Parts of the workings had been widened either by dwarves or orcs, probably for metal, probably not iron. The party came across an excavated cavern where orcs had extracted rare earth, some decades ago at least. They then came across the central shaft of the mine probably dug by dwarves.

Some goblins were met and interrogated, and they provided some directions. The party came across a door and Nickar knocked loudly. Nickar read the mind of the guard to get the password, which was 'jewel'. There was a grill above the blank end of the passage. The party were let in past a series of three doors and two portcullises, and then continued on. They came across Gudrum, a half troll, who Nickar said he would let have half an hour with Hilda.

The party then went on to a room with four kur, where the password was 'toecutter'. Two kur headed off and a fight broke out. The remaining two kur and the half troll were killed and then the party were attacked by some undead. The leader was a breather, Grettir hit it and the remaining undead slipped back into the walls. The party then returned to Sequarl.

Preparations were made for a return in strength, Nickar changed Salrod into a kur and a party was teleported by Hilda into a triangular shaped room in the complex, and Nickar set up a teleport door. Altogether thirty people were teleported in.

The room where the previous expedition had met the undead was found, there were four undead and their leader. On the walls were figures of kraken, and some sort of dedication to Piray. The undead leader was a devotee of Piray. All the undead were despatched, and the whole complex was explored. Everything had gone. The main passage had a demon door at either end. There was a dwarven hall on the main passage. The main passage had been dug out by some sort of demon. There was a demon pool near the dwarven hall. The only open entrance was to the northwest through the collection of portcullises and doors. This was closed off now, although it seemed to be the way everything had fled.

Hilda and Salrod visited the island of Tyros and went to see the witch Medici. She explained the political situation on the island of Tyros. She lived in the walled city of Lyra, built in Imperial times. The walls were not well maintained. Salrod and Hilda went to Medici's Italianate palazzo.

Medici explained that to become a citizen of Tyros they would need to go to Kasra and Salrod would have to become one of the council of captains. To do this Salrod would have to kill one of the existing captains or become one of the Obaki's men. The current Oobar was Chenbar. The alternative would be to become the first sword of an existing captain, or to sail into harbour in a ship, which would entail fighting an existing captain anyway.

Tentium was governed by a council of seven magi, and Hilda could try to replace one of these. They could just try trading, but they would definitely be subject to attack. Alternatively Hilda could agree to work for one of the magi, but she might still be subject to attack, or just have to give up her crown.

Medici said that they could stay for seven days under her protection, but that news of their arrival would be percolating outwards, and that she would remain neutral.

Salrod and Hilda returned at midnight for the seer to view what their future might hold. Salrod had already explained something of his dreams to her. They bathed in incense and then things went blurry.....

Medici told them that they were Ying and Yang and their fates were intertwined. She saw them at a crossroads, all directions involved blood and iron. Ahead was a mystery with a heart of darkness, a profound road of mystery and revelation, a way of fame and both triumph and tragedy. Other ways were journeys in a wheel of life. Some ways she Salrod dead, Hilda in chains, other ways one or other mourning the other. She couldn't see into the heart of darkness. She heard the voice of Yarma sat in darkness on the island of Zongar (the heart of darkness). There seemed to be many enemies out in the mist with no safe directions. Their fate lay on Zongar.

F2 – Demolition Man

Account of The Fight at Budely (28 Oct 98)

He got word to us that the Protectors were gathering together in one of the Protectorates, Budely, on a certain night to hear an announcement from “the Master”. Budely consisted of a single bailey in which sat a great hall with twin towers at either end. It was furthest but one away from Sequarl. We put together an elaborate plan involving simultaneous assault by a number of different groups.

Naturally the plan was a complete failure. Girindor, Wilf, myself and four huscarls arrived on our own, riding the wind. We were nearly taken out of the sky by three gargoyles, but crash-landed on target in the bailey, more or less in one piece. We despatched the gargoyles as soon as we had our feet on the ground. After some minor application of brute force on the doors, Girindor suddenly remembered his lightning bolt ring. He blew a man-sized hole in the door by discharging all its power in a single blast. Unfortunately he blinded himself and two of the huscarls in the process. Notwithstanding, I jumped through the breach. Wilf, Giziar and Gamric followed.

We were confronted by about two dozen armed men. There were six protectors each of whom had a “first” or “second” with him. Budely had both. These were mostly 5th to 7th level fighters with a sprinkling of rogues and one fighter/magician. There were about a dozen 2nd to 4th level soldiers and a black clad and cowled “Master” clearly working up something unpleasant. They were preparing to retreat into the twin towers of the protectorate, but when they saw there were only four of us they decided to take us. Big mistake. As they were making up their minds I cut down three who were hanging back in my vicinity. The rest formed up into two converging lines. We went back to back in a sort of diamond shape to face them.

It was nasty. I decided to break out of our formation and to use my superior speed and hitting power to disrupt their attack. This worked pretty well. It's a pleasure to fight fairly straightforward opponents for a change and I made a lot of use of shield, barges, measured blows and aimed head hits. I did great slaughter and was trying to break through to the Master. At this point the odds were changed slightly as Trevillion revealed himself by putting an arrow into the throat of the Master just as he was reaching his punchline. He seemed to take no lasting damage from it or the subsequent two arrows through his chest but it certainly put him off his stroke.

The others concentrated on holding firm but it was tough going. Gamric went down first – he had already been injured during our landing. This lost us control of the breach and meant that when the others recovered and Paradoxides arrived they could not make much contribution. Giziar stood like a rock, shielding preferentially when he had a one option round and, but took terrible damage. The fighter/magician fireballed Giziar (and his own comrades surrounding him) yet still he stood firm. Wilf faced two of the tougher protectors alone. He didn't have a lot of luck, but stood his ground.

Meanwhile I had cut down or put to flight most of their right wing. The Master had fled along with one of the Protectors (a man called Gobian – Trevillion's boss as it happens) and someone else's second sword. I disabled Budely with a lucky

penetration of his platemail. I should have finished him but I was concerned about the others – Gamric was down, Giziar tottering and Wilf beset. I set about turning their flank. This did not take long. They were beginning to flee on the left as well. Trevillion shot a retreating Protector in the back and cut the throat of the fighter/magician before he realised his intent. I completed a circuit and cleared the door to allow the others in. We could hear the arrival of the windwalking rangers and more huscarls on the tops of the towers, cutting their way down to us.

We had won. In our moment of victory Giziar, who had been shielding on less than zero hit points, turned to take a potion. As he did so, Budeley recovered and suddenly rushed him. He arrived just before I did and struck Giziar critically. I lopped his head off seconds later but Giziar was dead.

This last incident soured an otherwise perfect victory. Gamric would recover, but nothing could be done for Giziar.

Gobian's Keep

There was no time to mourn or even rest. Guessing that Gobian had fled to a pre-prepared place in the sun, and having inside knowledge from Trevillion, we decided to hit Gobian's Keep, the third furthest, next. I had a force of sixty cavalry on the way and we arranged to rendezvous there. They swiftly took the cantonment and village. Trevillion knew of a secret entrance and bolthole into the keep. He and force of Rangers crept in to try and open the doors from the inside while we laid down covering fires and diversions. They succeeded in their objective, but once again timings let us down. Gobian's first, Offley, turned out to be far more dangerous than was expected. He also turned out to be a werewolf. He trashed Trevillion's party and fled down the route they had arrived by, taking out two huscarls I had sent as backup on the way. I got to the door before it could be shut and set off in pursuit but couldn't catch him. There were no deaths but some lycanthropy cures were required. Paradoxides followed up but he too saw no sign. He did however, spot an orcish warband marching to reinforce the next Protectorate to the north. Wilf and Girindor finished off resistance in the keep.

Tidying Up

Two Protectorates down. Four to go. The next day I promoted two of Gobian's men into Squarl heralds and sent them, each with a Protector's head, to the corresponding Protectorate to the south of Gobian's Keep. They had a message to be ready to talk the following day. I rode down to each of them and told them if they cleared out now there would be no pursuit. They both accepted my kind offer. One lot marched to Chittagong, some of the others may have gone to join one of the two remaining Protectorates.

The remaining two are the most hardcore Cultist according to Trevillion. They are within two miles of one another and the Wood. There is a Temple associated with the most northerly Protectorate and the Master hangs out there. There is a witch in the other one. Their first swords are still alive and possibly Scarr's first will be there too.

One of the dead Protectors, Kilchattan, had four witch-wives who have fled swearing vengeance and they may also be there. I have about 200 men arriving in the morning and I can get more. However, it's Yule and I can only operate while Girindor keeps the weather cold and the ground frozen. Tactical surprise has gone and tactical time is on their side.

I favour a quick raid on the Mound if we can organise it. Without it the Protectors are no real threat and I can pick them off at leisure. While it is there I must always fear a surprise attack from the woods while I am engaged in the assault. We know there has been civil war and fighting there. It may be ripe for the taking and could be surprised.

F5 – Siege of Garstang

Grettir's description of the freeing of Valakar (01 Mar 99)

Shortly after Grettir's big 40th Birthday Party our hero leaves suddenly at twilight with bristly giant and usual sorcerous companion. They return two days later shaken but not stirred, grim-faced, refusing to speak of what had occurred.

Well OK twist my arm. The mission to free Valakar was a complete success, unfortunately. You recall my fears that she might get shirty with Basi for locking up her darling children? You also recall that I felt I might be able to avert her wrath? Well I claim this week's big prize for prescience. The art of prediction is, however, seldom a precise one. In this case my estimate of exactly how pissed she would be toward Basi were under by some margin, while I had found I had overestimated my powers of persuasion by a similar amount.

Valakar has been imprisoned for 1900 years. She was once Queen of an Empire based around Basi. She intends to be so again. She would not be dissuaded and the best I could negotiate for the hapless inhabitants of Basi was a 26 day stay of grace and the offer of mercy to those who welcomed her on her return. She offered first myself and then Paradoxides the post of Satrap of Basi, or anything else we fancied. We both turned down all reward in return for an extremely risky visit to Basi to break the happy tidings to the Black Company. They took it really very well under the circumstances.

There was a stilted conversation along the lines of:

Grettir: Hi, I've got a rather important message for you.

Black Company: Aren't you the Grettir we expelled for dicking with forvalaka and forbad to return?

Grettir: Well, yes.

Black Company: Well what do you want?

Grettir: I've, freed Valakar.

Black Company: Why did you do that?

Grettir: It just seemed like a good idea at the time.

Black Company: Did you know she's the evil witch queen of ancient legend?

Grettir: Is she?

Black Company: Did you know it took the Empire a long and bloody war to put her there?

Grettir: Er. Well not exactly.

Black Company: So what's the message?

Grettir: Expect her back on the night of the full moon. Resistance is futile.

Black Company: We have 150,000 people on the island, boats for 5,000 and 24 days to evacuate.

Grettir: You could welcome her back.

Black Company: Do you know what the forvalaka do?

Grettir: Well I expect I can guess. But it might not be as bad as all that.

Black Company: Can you think of any good reason why we don't put you into the pit with them?

Grettir: How would that help? Listen, I think I have an idea. I just need to speak to my friends over there, just outside the city gate.

My swift exit was rather marred by the fact that when Paradoxides airlifted us out he managed to leave me behind. He came back, but by this time they had come to the realisation that the only way to make themselves feel better about their impending doom was to share it with me.

They nailed Paradoxides with some yellow lotus dust and started to close in on me. I slung him over my shoulder and ran. Luckily there was a chap with a mule sitting around eating his lunch. Abandoning all dignity I grabbed the mule, slung the wizard over it, leapt up behind and kicked it to an amble. Thus I could just about stay ahead of the pursuing company of light infantry. The flying magician was another matter.

However that was one serious fuck off mule. By the time that it had absorbed one magic missile too many we were clear of the infantry. I contrived to kick Paradoxides into some semblance of life and he managed to fly us to cover where he recovered sufficiently to get us home. Not the most stylish getaway but better than the available alternatives.

So Grettir's name and reputation in the south have sunk to a new low. If I had tiptoed away and left Basi to its fate no-one would have been any the wiser, but that is not the Strongarm way and word should be well and truly out with the fleeing refugees. As a parting shot Valakar said that the Empire should beware her vengeance. I don't suppose anyone in the south is looking forward to meeting their new neighbour.

On the bright side at least I am welcome in Basi now and a bunch of bloodsucking, live eating, entrail gobbling vampires consider me to be their best mate. Doing right ain't got no end. Now I think on it it wasn't the Outlaw Josie Wales that said that, it was one of the baddies.

F5 – Siege of Garstang

Wilf's Report to Temple of Mitra (01 Feb 99)

Report to: Otsos High Priest Chittagong
From: Wilf Stefson Adherent Haroldspear

As your Grace has previously been informed Grettir, Lord of Sequarl, has been conducting certain offensive actions in the south Sequarl area. These actions have aimed to degrade the local dominance of self-styled "Protectorates", which had come to rule the south Sequarl area in previously weakened times of this Noble House.

Some half dozen Protectorates were established in/around the principal road south of the Sequarl core area (see previous map). In the main Protectorates seem to consist of a tower, fortified house or similar with a lightly fortified/palisaded village in close proximity. Local operations have been confirmed as human-led but are believed to have been inspired by Dark Powers previously focussed on non-human adherents.

A decapitation exercise led by Grettir with the support of this adherent had successfully eliminated the majority of local Protectorate leadership (see earlier report 2-3). Your Grace will, however, recall that a notable failure of this assault was the escape of a key military/religious Black Art Practitioner suspected of local Cult leadership. Nevertheless, the strategy can be considered successful overall as, subsequently, a number of other Protectorates were abandoned by their military and, in some cases, civilian occupants.

Two Protectorates remained in active opposition. Protectorate No 1: Garstang – located North towards the Sequarl border within easy Orc-strike of forest cover and Protectorate No 2: Sleat – again North of other former Protectorates within four miles of Garstang, but further from any forest-based military support.

Reconnaissance of each Protectorate was carried out by Grettir's Ranger allies. This concluded that Sleat was the more lightly held, albeit that construction of an earth dam by Dark Forces had created a formidable water barrier inhibiting direct ground assault. It was decided to attack with all available forces. Your Grace will see from the attached tactical detail that Sleat is formed by a palisaded village within a loch. On opposite sides of the village two key defensible sights were a tower keep and heinously a Temple – believed to be of S--T.

A three-pronged strike commenced. Some dozen shock troops made of Grettir's forces combined with key allies and supporters approached the keep aerially. The top level of the keep proved to be defended by razor wire and a small number of guards, however initial obstacles were overcome with no immediate casualties of note. Once the top level was taken level-to-level fighting commenced with the remaining keep defenders shortly slain. Local Cult forces under the name of the Congregation of Death proved to be defending the keep using a rite of combining – this had the effect of boosting the capacity of initial defenders encountered to sustain damage albeit at the cost of later ones.

Other Mitrans should be aware of this combining rite – while it gives initial advantage its overall effect should not be overestimated. From the keep fire/vitriol missiles were launched on the roof/door of the “tent-like” Dark Temple opposite without significant impact. While missiles were to target the evil inherent in the building – variously reported as leaves or serpents' feet – was sufficient to damp down the beneficial effects of Mitran fire.

Mitran forces should not be surprised by this ability to stifle outside fire and hence may choose to discount this offence faced with a similar tactical situation.

After these assaults the next stage of attacks took place immediately after dawn. From one direction the main force of Grettir's army began to rollout a wooden path over deep ice, which had formed to the palisade. This was to be complemented by a lightning sledge assault on the opposite palisade wall while from the keep a sally was launched directly against the Dark Temple. In the event the Temple assault set off ahead of time – with the aim of interdicting any Dark Force attempt to shatter surrounding ice. From the keep roof the immediate Temple margin was readily achieved by direct flight. However, no shield wall was established and this left assaulting forces vulnerable to missile fire from the defended palisade.

Too great a focus on prime hostilities needlessly created opportunities for damage on allied forces. This elementary error should be avoided in future.

The Dark Temple was confirmed as rectangular in plan with a single door central to a shorter side – facing the village palisade. No other entranceway was apparent on external inspection, although Paradoxides (a mage in our company) believed that he had located a weakness centrally in the opposite shorter side.

No immediate method of entry proved successful. The door, while readily apparent, could neither be opened by main force, nor by wizardry. In response to continued missile attack allied forces moved to a longer Temple side. This proved to be a tactical error as it exposed less resilient participants to S--T's evil incarnate: Damned heads on Temple eaves unmanned certain of the assault force.

Stymied, Grettir, an adherent of Mitra's allied deity Osirus, led those dozen present in prayer. Based on this he resolved to force the door through the use of Osiran virtue. After initial resistance this was successful and entry to the Dark interior was gained.

The Dark Temple interior showed two lines of trees – numbering some 5 to each row – supporting the Temple roof and stretching towards an enthroned priest or priestess of S--T surrounded by foul, hooded acolytes. Among the trees were the tortured and murdered remnants of wicked rites. Forging ahead towards a central pool Yog the Beast with Grettir to the left and Paradoxides to the right this adherent and Trevilian – spy and reformed torturer. Girindor (of elvish bent) struck out with elven fire arrows.

Rapidly two tactical aspects became clear: non magical missiles could not land on the Dark Group and the very trees themselves were hindering individuals forward progress by entwining members of the allied group. Missile weapons must be sufficiently holy to overcome Dark Powers in order to be effective. Faced with

entwining trees and branches attackers should pair-up to more rapidly overcome their effect.

S—T's foul adherents assaulted our number with rains of stinging insects and serpents to which we replied with fire and lightning while from the pool a hideous arachnid was seen to emerge and withdraw with eerie swiftness. Then, when our group's leading members had achieved the mid-point of this loathsome cell, was called forth a spewing Cimmerian fog. In this hellish darkness lighted flares availed little although Grettir could use and be seen wielding a glowing holy spear in full ire.

Faced with our righteous wrath the minions of the Dark departed apparently through the use of an astral gate. In departing a swarm of serpents, scorpions and similar was unleashed by a black, signing hand. This hand was itself assaulted by Paradoxides deploying a lightning-laden wand to crash upon it with searing effect. . With a scream the portal closed. ...

As the noisome fog was dissipated but two acolytes were found – dead from lightning and blade. At the rear of the Temple was located a “window” of foul design which this adherent smashed as a work of Darkness. With one exception the allied party suffered mainly minor injuries. Berserker Yog had been taken by the arachnid but in a mighty feat had managed to slay it in single combat while underwater. Exhausted, poisoned and near to death he struggled to the Temple margin: priestly intercession led to his recover.

Cheated of further Black Blood, Grettir, in a fell rage, ordered the Temple destroyed. Damned artefacts, including S—T's baleful thrown, were thrown into the Central Pool. Rapidly then the supporting roof pillars were hewn down bleeding gallons of sacrificed blood and opening the Temple to holy, cleansing sunlight.

In emerging the twin assaults had proven successful. Tens of the attackers were casualties, but the benighted defenders – in their ignorance of Mitra's blessings – fell to the last adult. Some 200 were estimated killed in all, while 30 young Cult members have been assumed into Ego the Osiran's care.

Over the day which followed the walls and base of the Dark Temple were hewn timber from timber and then burnt in the centre of the village. Its evil, insane roof gargoyles were thrust to fuller death and the supporting roots of evil withered back Hell-bound in pure sunlight. The Dark Throne has been recovered and carried to Sequal where it now awaits ritual purification through burning.

Protectorate No 1: Garstang is now being isolated by Grettir's forces with an assault being planned over a period designed to weaken the defenders. Fuller details will be the subject of my next detailed report. I remain your obedient servant in Mitra. W
Stefson Mitra Temple – Chittagong Region Hostile Action Report No:2-4

F6 - The Dork Lord (22 Aug 99)

Jason returned from the land of the Fire Giants with a much darker complexion, a deeper voice and was now seven feet four inches tall. Nickar, Grettir, Salrod, Hilda, Paradoxides, Wilf, Jason, Banthil and Ego met up in Sequarl to chase Offley, the werewolf, and the priestess of Sleet, who had escaped when the last of the Protectorates had been taken. The priestess had taken control of Yog's soul. Girindor returned to report that the quarry had been traced to the mound in the wood of Itaen. Nickar teleported the party along with Yeomanric, Banthil, and Fillir into the mound, while Girindor organised elves and rangers to surround the area.

Nickar took in an advanced guard of Grettir, Salrod and Jason, and they cleared a room of orcs. The rest of the group arrived and moved into a cavern where there was a party of orcs, including a shaman, who summoned a stone troll. One orc escaped, but the rest of the orcs and the stone troll were quickly despatched. Nickar summoned an orc, and offered him only his blood, sweat and tears along with a pointy stick. The orc left without accepting the offer.

As the party headed into one of the adjoining chambers they noticed the smell of roasting deer, and signs that people had been sleeping there. On the suspicion that this was their quarry they set off in pursuit. They were attacked by a demonic blob, which was dispelled by Ego the priest of Osiris. The party were then attacked by undead just as they caught up with Offley. Offley managed to escape as Ego was turning a very powerful undead.

In searching for Offley the party found a manacled woman in an iron lined chamber. After Banthil befriended and talked to the woman he discovered that she was called Keera and was going to be married to the Lord of Darkness – the undead turned by Ego. He also discovered that the priestess of Sleet was the wife of Offley, and that the witch Melisant may have been her sister.

Further exploration found six rooms, five with assorted symbols and runes for summoning various things and one with a mouth to hell. The tablets with summoning spells were later removed and stored in Sequarl castle for the use of Nickar, Paradoxides and Hilda. Each door was a magic door with a password on the back. These were removed at a later date and two each taken by Hilda, Nickar and Wilf. One of the rooms had three undead, which were killed by Wilf and Salrod. Ego left a glyph of warding on the room with the hell mouth.

The Lord of Darkness had only been turned not destroyed so the party began to look for his tomb. By removing the rubble infill they managed to find a ship of the dead, with his body. Ego exorcised this and a chest was removed along with some armour, a dagger and an amulet.

Nickar summoned the orcs and they found their way to the surface, after Nickar dismissed the tunnel worms around the shaft. Contact was made with the elves and they tried to track Offley.

Eventually he was traced to the village of Offley in the debatable lands, but before he and his wife could be attacked they made it to sanctuary in the temple of Sett. Negotiations ensued and they were left to go free in exchange for the soul of Yog. Grettir also agreed to allow some freedom of religion in Sequarl.

Loot:

6' long gold chain	1000gp
5 gems (2000, 1000, 100, 100, 100)	3300gp
16 pieces of amber	470gp
4 gems (diamond 100, opal 1000, spinnel 1000, amethyst 500)	2600gp
1lb adamantine	800gp
silver comb	300gp
gold bangle	500gp
platinum armband (imperial, linked beast motif)	5000gp
golden belt with rubies (imperial, iron links)	2000gp
mithril armband (dwarven, twisted wire torque for woman)	1000gp
silver bracelet	300gp
pair silver anklets	400gp
gold crown (no jewels, heavy, some chaos symbolism, imperial for duke of outlying province)	4000gp
gold coins	3164gp
silver coins (7169)	358gp
magic platemail armour (6'2" imperial plate, significant defence bonus, magic resistance)	19000gp
magic dagger (+2, +2)	4500gp
amulet (religious artefact, spirit home)	5000gp
six magic doors	15000gp
total	64692gp
1 share = 5881gp.	

F7 – Stone Trolls (23 Aug 99)

Grettir, Paradoxides, Salrod, Hilda, Jason, Egor, Fillir, Banthil and Atha went through the teleport rings from Chittagong to Nickars place in the Hall of the Mountain Kings. They headed down into the complex to try to find the mountain kings' treasure and were immediately jumped by four stone trolls. There ensued a fearful fight; Salrod, Hilda, Wilf and Jason all took heavy wounds but the four trolls were despatched.

They healed their wounds as best they could and then continued to explore. They found a series of pools, which were investigated by casting light spells in each one in turn, until they saw the glint of gold down one. Grettir and Paradoxides swallowed water-breathing potions and went down to investigate further.

It seemed to be a well, with an earth mother figure and the tribute the stone trolls had put down there. Grettir and Paradoxides emptied as much as they could into bags, which were hauled to the surface, until their potions were about to expire, when they returned swiftly to the surface. Paradoxides tried to use a water elemental to garner the remains of the loot, but control of the elemental was wrested from him and the party had to flee rapidly back to Nickars area.

Loot:

healing potion	500gp
medal (imperial, engraved old gold, legates medal for campaign)	1000gp
jade pendant (mermaid, suitable for symbolic magic)	700gp
lapis lazuli cloak clasp	400gp
diadem of gold and silver (slightly damaged)	500gp
necklace of pearls	1100gp
silver goblet	300gp
francesca (well forged steel, unusual proportions, can be thrown long distances)	500gp
imperial short sword	500gp
magic sword (mourners crooning, ruby in pommel, +1, spell hypnotic spiral)	14000gp
gold coins	443gp
silver coins (451)	22gp
total	20265gp

1 share = 2026gp.

F8 – Xorn Rider (28 Aug 99)

Halfway through June 692, the party were ready to return to the Hall of the Mountain Kings. Grettir, Paradoxides, Salrod, Hilda, Wilf, Jason and Fillir set off from Nickar's HQ and made their way to the cavern where they had fought the stone trolls. It was by now difficult to make out the stone trolls from the stone of the cavern floor. They headed off along the southwestern passageway heading uphill. Fillir captured a hobgoblin, and after interrogating him they decided to head along the passage with the pools. They heard a scuttling spider ahead, crossed a bridge and then found a cavern of mushrooms where they could feel a draught blowing. They came into a cavern with a huge fissure, which they tried to follow down, but it became too steep.

Paradoxides and Hilda flew down to investigate. They were attacked by a demon in the wall ahead, which seemed to be made of different stone, but not before they realised there was a large area of water down there. The demon may have been what was referred to as a Grell, by the mountain trolls. It was resistant to fire magic, and possibly others. It stunned Hilda and Paradoxides, and also cast darkness around itself. It was very difficult to spot, as it seemed to be part of the wall.

The party retreated pursued by the demon. Jason had dropped some flare, but these were extinguished by the demon, as it passed over them. When Grettir fought it, it damaged his sword and shield. Hilda put up an ice wall to cover the party's retreat. On their way back they were attacked by two minotaurs, which were despatched efficiently. They returned to Nickar's to lick their wounds for a couple of days, and then entered the complex again.

This time they intended to do something about the stone crows, which were assumed to be gargoyles. As they were marching along a corridor, they were attacked by an Umber Hulk. Jason leapt upon its back and with some assistance put an end to the monster. The party then found where the Umber Hulk or Xorn or Xornling had been making a tunnel. They managed to collect a sample of rock that it had softened for investigation, before it turned back to stone.

Having reached a dead end the group decided to investigate an earlier cavern, which had some galleries above. Paradoxides and Hilda flew the party up and they were investigating the galleries and caves when they were attacked by eleven gargoyles. These were slaughtered, no thanks to Hilda, who managed to ice herself into a cocoon, and took some time to escape. They collected the fresh gargoyle hearts and saved them in Paradoxides magic picnic hamper. On further investigation they managed to find a small cave higher up with some loot, and a route to the outside world. The party returned 1st July 692.

Loot:

Two-handed sword and battle axe (from minotaurs, adamantine alloy for scrap)	600gp
gold brooch	600gp

Old Empire: Malcolm's Diary

pearl pendant	250gp
helmet	250gp
gold armring and bracelet	100gp
three silver rings	60gp
five gems (100,50,50,100,1500 – 1 mana point)	1800gp
eleven minor gems	260gp
golden torque (red gold from minotaurs)	1000gp
golden collar (red gold from minotaurs)	1500gp
silver anklet	100gp
gold goblet	400gp
diamond earrings	800gp
dwarf silver sword (sapphire in pommel)	900gp
gold neckchain	100gp
large amber brooch (finely carved, golden lattice, leaping salmon suitable for symbolic magic)	1200gp
11 silver, 13 gold rings	1080gp
chain shirt (dwarf 4'11")	
chain hauberk (dwarf 4'9")	
three wrecked scalemail (5'8", 5'9", 5'11")	
ten chain shirts (7 medium, 3 large)	
ringmail corselet (nearly 8')	
earring of levitation (continuous by concentration)	4000gp
dwarven magic hand axe (blood tooth - +2)	3000gp
11 gargoyle hearts	5500gp
Umber hulk excretia, horns, mandible glands	?
horns, heart and ichor from minotaur (hides would be useful)	1200gp
platinum coins (10)	500gp?
gold coins	3727gp
silver coins (2178)	109gp
total	?

1 share = 4998gp.

Also book of spells, mixture of white and black magic, kept at Sequarl and available to Hilda and Paradoxides.

F9 – Heart of Darkness (7 Jan 00)

Hilda made enquiries about trading spells on Tabor, as she wanted to be able to put protections on the house. She found that there were three or four other magicians working for the council, probably of level four or five, perhaps one might have been level six. There were also three or four other magicians who were citizens of the first rank, one of whom might be of a similar level to Hilda. He was called Hendarak; he had mercantile interests and owned some land.

Hilda and Salrod paid a visit on him. His house was larger than Salrod and Hilda's and definitely resonated of magic. He was of late middle age, balding, clean-shaven, civilised, urbane and prosperous looking. They had afternoon tea on the veranda. The house had a walled garden, a few servants and bodyguards. Hendarak was personable and charismatic. He told them he was third generation on the island, and eventually agreed to trade level six guards and wards and level three shadow form for cure serious, ice storm, ball lightning and summon night wind. This was a closed trade, although Hilda could tell other people whom she had learned the spells from.

Hilda learnt detect chee, protection from demons and mnemonic enhancer (which she chose to recharge at midnight). She traded 50 amphorae of Cosian wine, two cargo points of silk and tobacco for a fast sailing Tyrosian smuggler called 'Long Heels'. It was small and fast, two-masted, lateen-rigged and required a minimum crew of four, although it could take up to eighteen or twenty. She also traded the other 50 amphorae of wine for ivory and pelts from the black coast. One ten-inch piece of ivory was suitable for making ivory cards. Hilda and Salrod bought a pair of servants for the town house. Hilda stocked up their cog with five cargo points of aromatic wood (500gp), five cargo points of dark hardwood (250gp), four cargo points of molasses (160gp), four cargo points of maize (80gp), one cargo point of turtle shells (400gp) and one cargo point of whale oil (400gp). Salrod sailed to Tyros with Denarian. Hilda would teleport to meet them.

They were shadowed by a Tyrosian pirate but arrived safely in Telnus where they met Hilda. They paid a landing fee of 12.5% of the cargo on landing in Cosian Royals (one royal was 7gp), and traded the aromatic wood (700gp), hardwood (350gp), molasses (220gp), maize (100gp), shells (600gp) and whale oil (550gp). Hilda had the ivory for mnemonic enhancer carved and got forty sheets of ivory plus another ten sheets, which were suitable for rune mark amulets. They traded the remaining ivory and hides for 2 500gp. Hilda and Salrod received 5 400gp from their enterprise with Denarian. Hilda bought a mixed bag of alchemical goods and exotica including purple apricots, Vivane Absinthe, used to dispel fear, small pouch of hawkweed, used for night vision, bag of green dried artemesia, used to enhance trances, a box of silver almonds, an ingredient in potions and drinks, used to impair judgment, and a large box of Black Coast alchemicals. Hilda bought fifty scruples of white lotus dust (4 000gp), for use in healing potions and also bought all the equipment and ingredients needed for her Laboratorium (not yet paid for).

Hilda and Salrod went to Chittagong and tried to recruit retainers. They found three possibilities: Arvandar, Erik and Kint.

Arvandır was from Kriggs, a landless son of a minor landowner. He was 36, a veteran soldier (fourth level), slightly arrogant, hedonistic and fond of wine women and song. He was plainly dressed but presentable and energetic. He was a veteran horseman who had worked as soldier, caravan guard and freebooter; he now wanted to settle down. He was illiterate, owned a cat, collected silver charms and had no religion. He was 5'10", lean and good-looking. He would be suitable as guard on the town house in Tabor.

Erik Gierson was 25, 6'2", very heavily built, solid, looked like a typical Viking or northern barbarian, a little in need of a bath. His vices were wine, women and gambling, particularly on horses. He was a little ragged but had some social skills. He was literate, played a reasonable game of chess, enjoyed sagas and ballads and was a staunch follower of Odin and Thor. He spoke northern barbarian and common. He was the landless son of a peanut farmer and had fought on longships, been a mercenary and general wanderer, he now fancied a trip south. He had studded leather armour, a combat shield and a sea chest. He would be very suitable as first sword on 'Long Heels'.

Kint was different from the other two, he was coffee coloured, younger than Erik, and had been at sea since boyhood. He was pretty ragged with a ponytail, 5'4" with a silver earring. He spoke common with a strong southern accent, and was obviously Tyrosian. He was friendly, cheerful, far from stupid, but not very energetic. He was the only one of the three not to gawp at Hilda's figure. He had tattoos of chaos cults and was interested in world history and sailor's stories. He was a rogue, could fight, but would be very suitable as topman.

All three swore fealty to Salrod, and they were paid 20gp a month and all found. Salrod bought Avandır's hunter for 250gp, and stabled it at Sequarl. He gave Arvandır a gold inlaid sword, Erik a chain shirt and Kint a gold armring.

Hilda and Salrod went to the temple of Yarma in Chittagong and told him of their dreams and their plans to go to Zongar. He was impressed: he had only been to Zongar in his dreams. The priest would have liked to go with them but couldn't leave the temple. He told them that no follower of Yarma need fear the dark. There was a midnight ceremony with narcotics and incense, and dancing in the dark. Both Salrod and Hilda had memories of a very large impassive, dark green, almost black, face watching over the ceremony, beating the rhythm in the background. They both gained a great sense of personal satisfaction from the ceremony. Hilda felt the priest was no charlatan: he did have power.

Hilda transported their gear to Tabor and Salrod checked out the boat with help from Erik and Kint. They replaced one of the masts and the shipwright reckoned that the hull was thirty or forty years old, about half way through it's life.

Salrod visited the turtle hunters on the south of Tabor. After discussions with the headman, five 15/16 year olds from different families were chosen to prove their manhood by accompanying Salrod on his trip to Zongar and back. They were tattooed, fine physical specimens, very agile, but unused to this type of ship. Salrod gave longswords to each of the families and daggers to each of the men. They were already armed with bone tipped spears, axes and maces.

Salrod and Hilda also had two experienced sailors from Skagnar. These had accompanied Hilda from Skagnar and seemed to almost worship her. Training commenced with the motley crew. One problem was language, the islanders spoke pidgin southern argot, Erik spoke common, but gradually things came together.

Salrod decided that he needed a repairman. He managed to find a very dark, dark haired man from Anango, who claimed to be able to build ships. He was very confident, even arrogant, independent, and hard to read. He was intelligent and wise. On a trip to Cos he had been taken by Tyrosian pirates, and had been pressed into service. He wanted to leave, which was why he was interested in the trip. He spotted that the name 'Long Heels' included a rune, which would enable someone to trace her. He recarved the name. He agreed to serve for a year and a day in return for a trip or ticket to Anango. His name was Zammos. He bought an extensive set of tools, fitted a ballista, bought by Salrod and equipped with 100 bolts. He arranged 200lbs of iron as the ballast, and copper-bottomed the boat with 500lbs of copper. It was then waxed and oiled. The ship was equipped with ten boarding axes and 100 javelins, and a canoe was bought from the islanders.

Hilda learnt guards and wards, and used it to protect the town house. She set wizard locks on the doors and windows, and extra spells on the laboratory. With help from Zammos she set up one magic door replacing the front door, and set up the other one and a stone wall with wooden bracing separating the laboratory from the rest of the basement.

They provisioned the boat, and leaving Arvendir with 500gp for expenses they set off for Aspirish in mid august 692.

On the first day they were followed by dolphins for a while, the islanders said they were mermen. The next day the islanders saw large swordfish. On the third day they saw a large shark. That night they saw a beach, which they avoided. At dawn on the fourth day they saw the coast of Cos and realised they had drifted too far west. The wind had dropped so Hilda released wind from her bag and they headed on. They saw some dolphins and porpoises. On the fifth day the trade winds returned. On the sixth day the islanders trailed lures and caught a lot of tuna.

On the seventh day they spotted a large whale, and to the chagrin of the islanders, ignored it. Hilda protected the ship from fire and missiles after learning protection from missiles. They saw a cog, but ignored it. That evening the weather became rougher, the wind strengthening against the trade wind, and Hilda needed to release the wind from both of her bags.

On the tenth day they passed a seaweed island but carried on. There were heavy seas and the wind was from the north, they pressed on with just a storm sail. On the eleventh day the turtle hunters were excited by seeing several hump backed whales. The ship sailed on at some speed. The next day they saw a black and white whale, which the turtle hunters declared a good omen; they didn't hunt these. The next day the trade winds became a bit ragged and there were some showers, which at least enabled the water to be replenished. On the fourteenth day the trade winds recovered and they saw flying fish being chased by something. Later they saw a ship heading at a similar speed in the same direction, it tried to pursue but 'Long Heels' outdistanced it. At dusk Hilda flew up for an hour and did a ten mile circuit. She saw a boat to the north heading east, probably the ship they avoided earlier.

The next morning there was a light trade wind. Hilda flew up again, and saw to the south a ship heading north. It tried to avoid 'Long Heels', but they managed to close to hailing distance. It was a large cog from Anango headed for Aspirish. In exchange for three boxes of tobacco they made use of Hilda's trade wind, and the two ships made for Aspirish. At night the cog put up white, red and green lanterns so that the smuggler could keep in contact.

The next morning Hilda flew over to the cog and released the wind. She met the captain who was tall, dark and grizzled, with crew cut hair and beard. He was a fighting man with a well armed cog on its way to Cos. Late in the day (day sixteen) another ship was seen and suspected to be a pirate. The captain asked if Salrod was going to escape with his ship, but Salrod pledged his support. 'Long Heels' gained the weather gauge on the pirate and Hilda flew up. The pirate decided not to attack, and the ships travelled together for a while, and then the pirate headed off. The pirate evidently also had a wind mage.

The two ships arrived in Aspirish ahead of a storm on day seventeen. The captain gave four boxes of tobacco altogether in thanks for the support and invited Hilda and Salrod for a meal on board his cog. The captain agreed to give Salrod a rutter to the hundred isles in exchange for Hilda teaching his mage to summon the wind. The hundred isles were at least several weeks to the southeast, below the level at which the North Star was visible; perhaps a months sail away.

Hilda spent two weeks training the mage, but he couldn't manage to weave the bag. Hilda made a bag for herself during the time and the captain agreed that after the two weeks the ship could go, and he would visit Hilda and Salrod on Tabor, for another attempt to gain the spell. The captain spent a good deal of time on the Rutter, making sure that Salrod, Hilda and their officers could follow it to the triple peaks of Dorrin, at which point the hundred isles would lie to their east. There would be deep water and no reefs at Dorrin, and it would be visible from some distance. To get there they would need to be travelling east-southeast and would need to cross the equatorial current.

Long Heels set off east-northeast in good weather. On the second day they saw a sail, but avoided it. The following day they saw the hulk of a fishing smack, probably destroyed by the pirates they had avoided the day before. By the fourth day the weather had become very hot, that day the islanders caught some fish. On the fifth day the wind dropped and it was even hotter. The following day was beautiful but with little wind, they sailed slowly past a seaweed island, which sank straight down after they had passed. The seventh day there was a little wind, and they noticed they were drifting a little to the east. The next morning the wind was still light, but in a better direction, from the southwest. About midday they saw two reddish brown sails, but passed them by. At dusk on the ninth day they saw a reddish brown sail to the southeast, but it had gone by morning.

Late in the morning of the tenth day, a long shadow was seen on the port side: a sea serpent! Hilda flew up as it approached the ship; Salrod arrayed his crew, whilst Erik took over the helm. Salrod missed his shot with the arbalest, but did some damage with a spear, while the javelins from his crew missed or bounced off the thick skin of the sea serpent. Hilda hit it with ball lightning and it dived and attacked on the other side. Hilda held another ball of lightning waiting for a chance to throw it. The sea serpent attacked and mortally wounded one of the islanders, but Salrod managed a mighty blow as it attacked again, Hilda struck it with the lightning and it was finished by a flurry of blows. The sea serpent was cut up for alchemical requisites and the teeth taken. Hilda tried to save the wounded islander who had proved himself a brave man. There was a phosphorescent wake towards the end of the night and the islander regained consciousness and was brought on deck. The next day after seeing a bright dawn he died.

There was a light wind and Hilda needed to let the wind out of one of her bags. On day twelve there was wind from more or less the right direction and some rain, during the day some fish were caught. That night they were able to check the southern constellations. The morning of the thirteenth day dawned fair, they saw a dark shape as big as the ship, perhaps it was a shark, but it passed by without disturbing them. Salrod ordered everyone on half rations for water, which was getting short. That night there was a phosphorescent wake. Day fourteen was rather squally, and they shipped a couple of large waves. Towards dusk Hilda flew east for forty miles as they had reached the correct latitude, she could see an island sixty miles further on.

At dusk on the fifteenth day in the twilight the crew spotted a sea serpent chasing flying fish, but this one did not attack. The next day was fine with the wind freshening from the north-northwest, by the end of the day it was raining, but they could still make out the three peaks of Dorrin in the distance where they arrived early on day seventeen, with three or four days water left.

Dorrin was a small town, with a harbour and a couple of stone buildings. There looked to be the remains of a much bigger harbour, which had dwindled as it was repaired. There was also a small fort, mainly of stone. There were a few fishing smacks in the harbour, a couple of bigger fishing vessels with reddish brown sails and a square rigged schooner, which belonged to the local count, who controlled the local economy. A box of tobacco was required to gain access to the count, and for a further box he supplied them with a pilot for Holneth.

After replenishing the water they set off and had a quiet trip to Holneth. The third day was a little squally. That night Salrod slept clutching his small jade green statuette of Yarma. He dreamt of something weighty and momentous, dark and claustrophobic. Early on the fourth day they reached Holneth, which looked like a place fallen on hard times. There was a sizeable harbour where they could trade, there were a few of the larger fishing vessels with reddish brown sails, a variety of small cogs, a large raft, and a small smuggler similar to 'Long Heels'. The island was run by a town council.

Salrod and Hilda spent two days in Holneth, doing some trading, listening to any rumours and seeing if they could hear any mention of Zongar. They didn't mention their quest, knowing that when they had last been on Zongar, Girindor had caused something powerful and dangerous to be unleashed on Holneth. They traded two boxes of tobacco for coral jewellery and a number of scrimshaw pieces. They also traded the 200lbs of pig iron for alchemical ingredients from the South Seas: one large bale, three reasonable sized bags and twenty little bags. The person they traded with gave up and gave all that they had for the iron, as they were frightened by Hilda. They named the ingredients and what they could be used for. One was a very herb called Lobelia, a seaweed, which caused aggression and could be used in combat potions. They reballasted the boat and set sail.

They sailed east for a day and saw sharks and hove to at night. Salrod and Hilda used a grain of scarlet lotus dust and some Artemesia to induce a trance that night. Hilda meditated and they both had very vivid dreams. Salrod felt as though he was back in the ceremony in Chittagong. Hilda sleepwalked and was seen near dawn leaning out from the gunwale looking out over the dark sea to the north-northeast. She had a much clearer feeling of being called and had heard drums. They awoke to a beautiful dawn but no wind. Hilda flew up but could see no sign of the land they were seeking, she let the wind out of her bag and they sailed north-northeast. At the end of the day when Hilda flew up again she could make out land far off to the northeast. The morning of the third day there was a good wind and they headed northeast; towards the end of the day Zongar came into sight. The ship anchored to the southwest of the island and the turtle hunters dropped Salrod and Hilda off on the beach.

They worked their way around the base of the caldera a little way, through rough vegetation, using Hilda's earring of levitation to avoid the trickiest parts. After a couple of hours they had gone two miles. They camped but had a restless night. They were disturbed by biting ants, Salrod stamped on a colourful centipede and Hilda heard a large flying creature pass nearby. They both had disturbed dreams when they did sleep.

At dawn there was a light wind from the northeast. Hilda flew Salrod up to the rim of the caldera, and as they looked inside all they could see was mist. They flew anticlockwise around the caldera staying just above the mist. After a little way Salrod noticed very steep paths heading down the slope. Salrod felt tingles from his jade amulet, similar to the hair on the back of his neck standing on end. They noticed smooth rocky outcrops, and also a few plants and grasses, which seemed to be the wrong colour or have the wrong type of leaf.

It seemed much cooler inside the caldera than it should have been. The path down became impossibly steep. As they looked where they had been coming down, it occurred to Salrod and Hilda that they were working their way down the giant impassive face of Yarma; the paths were his hair and they were now level with his eyes. It was hundreds of feet across. They worked their way down to where they could make out his mouth, still in shadow. There was a doorway and after drawing deep breaths, they went in.

The cave was unnaturally cold, and very dark. Salrod lit the light amulet on his magic helmet, which gave a golden light, Hilda lit a torch and they headed on. They were faced by a handful of exits, Salrod chose the lower one to the right, which had the suspicion of drumbeats coming from it, and also seemed to be where the very slight cold breeze was headed. As they came out in a larger cave they could here a rattle behind them, perhaps the sound of a rattlesnake, and perhaps also a suspicion of leather clad footsteps. They were about a third of the way up the wall of this cave, with a number of overhanging tiers above and below them, on the walls were a large number of carvings and runes. There were many sets of stairs. Facing them was a choice left or right, both with the option to descend stairs. They went right and down to the bottom of the cave. They could still hear the rattle and steps behind them. There were seven exits ahead of them; the tingling of his token directed Salrod to one of them.

A carved passage headed on into the darkness; every so often they descended another set of stairs. After the fifth staircase they emerged into a chamber thirty foot in diameter. In the middle were five braziers, burning a mixture of incense and narcotics. Beyond them was a large statue with a hole in the floor in front of it. They had emerged from a niche in the wall of the chamber, and there were more around the wall. The statue was of a large impassive man, with a more than wise face and six or eight arms. It was sixty foot high; made of dark green, almost black stone.

Cowled forms beating drums emerged from the niches. Singing and chanting began; they could hear things slithering behind them. A tattooed man appeared wearing a dark hood. A larger scale version of the ceremony they had attended in Chittagong began. There were forty or fifty people or forms, chanting, whirling and dancing. Ceremonial vessels were brought in, including a two handed, horned cup from which Hilda and Salrod both drank. They drank some more and were seriously drunk and drugged, and danced naked around the pit.

Salrod remembered dancing with a great shadow – Yarma. He told Salrod he was pleased Salrod had come to feature in his dreams and to wake him for a party and sustenance. He had been sleeping for a long time. He told Salrod that no one who followed Yarma need ever fear the dark. Yarma gave the power to slay those who would eat his soul; Yarma's kindred walked the glory road, never stepped back, and should always seek out the chief of their foes. They were unencumbered by pity, remorse or pain. Nothing shall stop them until victory. He gave Salrod a token to keep him strong against those who would take his soul. He removed one of his fingers and made it into a hand and a half sword – the Heart of Darkness. He reminded Salrod that strive forward and slay all those who oppose and never step back, that he need fear nothing by night and that he would forget pain, pity and remorse.

When Salrod awoke he was clutching his sword, which felt icy, and was lying naked in the middle of the now empty chamber. He had a terrible hangover and was three quarters of his endurance down. He realised he could see in the dark. Draped over the statue was a white body – Hilda.

Hilda's eyes were very dark, and they realised they both had black caste marks in the middle of their foreheads. She was exhausted and could hardly stand. She had also received a token from Yarma – she had a black pearl stud in her tongue. She remembered dancing with Yarma, who told her that she and Salrod were joined together like yin and yang. He had explained the mysteries of the religion and had left her head buzzing. Hilda realised she was now a fourth level priestess as well as a magician, she could feel Yarma's heart beating.

Salrod and Hilda managed to get their gear and clothes together; they had been scattered all over the now deserted caves. They headed out not knowing how much time had passed. It was dark and raining; early morning. Hilda tried to fly Salrod back to the ship, but she was exhausted; they got out of the caldera, but only made it as far as the beach. They were picked up here by the turtle hunters in the canoe, who realised that something significant had happened. They took Salrod and Hilda back to the ship.

Hilda did detect chee and realised that her and Salrod no longer smelt unpleasant, just barbecued. She realised that the new moon was now the best time for her and Salrod, especially underground. That day was the 1st October 692, there was strong wind from the north, so they headed northwest and made good progress.

The next day there were stronger seas, Salrod had recovered, but Hilda was still very weak and tired, and was confined to the cabin. A tropical storm hit them from the southwest; Salrod and Erik took it in turns to helm while everyone else went below. The steering oar started to crack, but was still holding out when the mainmast was struck by lightning and destroyed. The crew were called up on deck to clear the wreckage, which was crashing about dangerously on deck. One of the northern seamen received a broken hip or pelvis, Kint was swept overboard but hauled back, along with one of the turtle hunters and another of the turtle hunters broke his thigh. A storm sail was rigged on the rear mast and the ship ploughed on through the storm.

Salrod saw surf ahead – a coral reef or an island, he tried to steer around, and put out a sea anchor to slow the ship down. Salrod realised they were not going to be able to clear the island, especially when the storm sail blew out. But he could make out a gap in the surf, probably a beach, and he headed for it. They ran hard aground on the beach, causing some damage to the ship, but everyone got ashore safely.

After another six hours the storm had abated slightly. In the morning they could see that the ship had come ashore on some coral on the beach, it had been mid tide, and it was now high and dry, as it was low tide. They managed to move it off the coral and move it higher, but not as high as they wanted. Hilda was still not fully recovered, but was able to heal the wounded.

On the fifth day they moved it further up and got canvas under the ship, Zammos discovered quite a lot of internal damage. The next day there were more storms, which the ship survived without further damage. The following day was brighter, Zammos and Erik worked on repairing the ship, the three fit islanders and Salrod went off in the canoe to investigate the island and Hilda the northern sailor and Kint stayed with the wounded.

Salrod and the islanders saw a lagoon and met up with a canoe fishing nearby. Salrod bought some crabs from the fishermen, who took him to their settlement in the lagoon. They pulled up at a house and trading post. Salrod chatted to the headman, who agreed to help.

The next day the whole village turned out to help and the ship was moved to the lagoon. It did take some water on board, but with the pump and plenty of people to bale, they were able to get it ashore safely and well up the beach before midnight.

The next day another storm hit, but the ship was OK. Salrod gave a large batch of javelins and some coins to the headman to distribute amongst the village in thanks for their help. Salrod and Hilda spent three days checking out the island, and with help from Zammos found some suitable trees for a green mast. Salrod and Hilda agreed a price of 300gp with the headman for the help of the village. Hilda and Salrod teleported to Tabor to get some fresh supplies and one or two luxuries and to contact Grettir and Paradoxides.

F10 – Return to Morthrondel (22 Jan 00)

Hilda and Paradoxides spent some time preparing for the next expedition. Paradoxides learnt the spell 'Carpet of Julius', some healing spells and also did some research. Hilda learnt 'Carpet of Julius'. Grettir, Paradoxides, Salrod, Hilda, Wilf and Jason were planning to return to the dwarf city of Morthrondel. They had last been there two or three years before when they had killed one of the dragons occupying it, but knew there were a number of other dragons still there including the main one. They started by going to Kattlegrod, the home of Dain and discussed the terms of an agreement for trips to the city. Dain would supply dwarven back up for the trip, and if the dragons were slain his dwarves would take over the city again. The dwarves going on this trip would be Gror, Naan, Bifur and Bofur, who had all gone on the previous trip. The humans on the trip would get half of the first 100 000gp taken, 50 000gp for killing the main dragon, 12 500gp for a sizeable dragon, 5 000 for a small dragon, any dwarven heirlooms would go to Dain, but would be included in the value of the horde. Each surviving human member of the party would also get one pick from the horde, any disputes to be decided by dice. The remains from any previous trip would belong to the humans, and they would also get free use of any dragon carcasses.

While preparations for the trip were being made news arrived of the fall of Bazi. It was now known as 'The Bright Kingdom'. There had been civil war and the main harbour was then sacked by Tyrosian pirates. The civil war had continued and Bazi was now shut to foreign trade for the rest of the year. The slave markets of Chittagong were flooded with Bazian slaves.

Paradoxides made a flying necklace for Gror, so that along with the two carpets the whole party could be transported around Morthrondel without needing to walk. Hilda made two feather fall amulets for Salrod and Wilf. Yule was celebrated at Sequalr castle.

Hilda used a scroll provided by Paradoxides to teleport herself, Salrod, Gror, Naan and Bifur to a small alcove in a dwarven hold near Morthrondel. Paradoxides teleported Grettir, Jason, Wilf and Bofur to the same place. All was quiet. Gror and Hilda flew off to find the shaft into Morthrondel. As they were leaving the complex they noticed a sleeping grizzly bear, but were able to creep by without waking it.

They managed to locate the shaft on their second flight and the party prepared to fly off on their carpets. As Hilda and the second carpet were about to leave the bear awoke, despite Hilda's sleep spell. Hilda used her ring to ice-wall the bear in. Everyone arrived safely at the foot of the shaft in Morthrondel.

They retraced their steps from the previous expedition and flew along to the alcove by the weir. They rested here for a while and the magic users meditated. Bifur and Bofur did some exploring. When Hilda and Paradoxides had recovered, the party flew off in search of the citadel and the dragon.

They found a pile of rubble and broken up timber, which may have been a barricade. On top were orc bodies and dwarf corpses, almost like a funeral pyre. Perhaps it had been the burial of an orcish chieftain. They continued on and found the remains of a huge elk. Perhaps this had been eaten by a dragon! They carried on down the street, which ended in a vertical shaft downwards.

Paradoxides used a magic wand he had made to track the dragon. He found there were four or five dragons, one of which was below and behind them. They went down the shaft and came out on a street going left and right. They hid the two carpets in an alleyway. Paradoxides laid his out to use as a possible teleport. Paradoxides used his wand again, and said there were five dragons, two together, and three scattered. Of these three, two were on the primary level, but one was on their level.

Hilda cast detect trail, and picked up the way the dragon had gone on his way out. They followed this trail back until they came to a massive stairway, down which the dragon had come. They followed the stairway up for a while, but then headed down as there was a dragon on this lower level. They headed on and came into a more open area with a few exits. Salrod had a spooky feeling as they headed into the chamber.

Paradoxides realised there was a dragon nearby, and as they headed on into the room, Salrod caught its eye, but managed not to be entranced by its gaze. The dragon cast a snowstorm over Salrod, Grettir, Jason and Wilf. Hilda hit it with a fireball, and Paradoxides hit it with his wand. It tried to escape pursued by Grettir and Salrod. Paradoxides flew Jason after it and as it tried to run up the ceiling Jason hit it hard. As it fell, Paradoxides and Jason managed to avoid it and crashed, but were saved by Jason's feather fall amulet. Salrod finished off the dragon with his sword Heart of Darkness, which caused it to writhe as it had its soul eaten for Yarma.

Paradoxides kept track of where the other dragons were, while the rest of the party tried to find as much as possible of its hoard. Hilda cast detect magic to help the dwarfs find the most interesting of the loot. After about fifty-five minutes Paradoxides told them that the largest dragon had left two smaller dragons together and had met up with the remaining two. These had split up and were heading here by different routes. Paradoxides and Hilda teleported everyone to Sequarl.

The next day they all arrived in Kattlegrod for a celebration provided by Dain, to discuss all the information they had gleaned and to share out the loot. In the discussions with Dain they discovered that Pharazon had had a similar size party but with more magic users. He had had eight or nine people including three elven magic users. He had been much more secretive. When they shared out the loot they found the following:

Loot:

Dwarf mail hauberk (magic) for 5'1"	12 500gp
Two handed dwarf made magic iron two handed sword	9 000gp
Gold ring	200gp
Ivory seal	200gp
Mithril bracelet dwarf made with three star rubies	10 000gp (heirloom)
Silver box, with carved jade insets of interlinked beasts	4 000gp
Solid gold double torque carved into interlinked beasts dwarf made with inset jewels	8 000gp (heirloom)
Ironstone, inward glow and protection versus evil	5 000gp
Six large blocks of adamantine total of 30 lbs	6 000gp
Carved black coral in the shape of a leaping fish	300gp
Large diamond	1 000gp
Large emerald	1 500gp
Lustrous pearl	500gp
Yellow topaz	600gp
Purple jargon, gleam from within, 3 mana points	3 500gp
Statuette carved from one piece of amber of a Naga	1 000gp
Elven corsage, ruby carved like a rose set in silver leaves, Protection versus poison	8 000gp
Wand for detecting gold	3 500gp
83 platinum pieces	415gp
Gold	6 211gp
From the dwarves for the head of the ice wurm (pure gold)	5 000gp
Bounty on dragon	12 500gp

Grettir took the armour, Wilf the two handed sword, Salrod the mana point gem, Hilda the detect gold wand, Jason the elven protection and Paradoxides the ironstone. Each share worked out as 8 285gp.

After some recuperation and preparations the same party teleported back to the bolthole and Paradoxides used his magic item to detect the dragons. From here, which was about three miles from Morthrondel, Paradoxides could only make out the mother dragon vaguely and couldn't distinguish the others. Everyone then teleported to the weir from where Paradoxides could distinguish all five of the dragons; they were all together.

Hilda told Salrod that she had some demon eggs inside her, provided by Yarma, these would need to be laid by a month's time. They would hatch into servants for Hilda and Salrod's use. Therefore Hilda only had a limited time before she had to return to Tabor. No one else was told of the reason, but they were told that Hilda had business in the south.

Hilda flew off to the bottom of some stairs with Gror intending to roam the complex in the spirit world in the effort to find another teleport point. When they arrived at the stairs they could hear loud rumblings as the dragon knocked down walls and rearranged the complex. Hilda cast her spell and headed off. She could see and hear in both the real and the spirit worlds. She could hear the sounds of the fall of the city, the sounds of battle. She found an area where some light fell into the corridor; it must have come from the outside world! Not far from there she could see the start of the chasm. She then found a large round tower where the door was barricaded or blocked. As a shadow she managed to creep through a crack in the door and up into the tower. She saw a portcullis and some powdered bones. She realised this was the tower of Nain; she could hear echoes of the battle for Morthrondel. A lot of people had died here: dwarves and orcs. Hilda could also hear the sounds of dragons attacking the tower.

Hilda found some stairs up into a larger room. There were some small cross-windows overlooking the street below. Hilda re-entered the real world and marked out a pentagram for teleport co-ordinates. She then teleported back to the weir. The party decided that they had useful information to report back to Dain, so they all teleported back to Kattlegrad.

They talked to Dain passing on what they had learnt and spoke to a survivor from Pharazon's trips. The bounty for the dragons was renegotiated: they would now be paid 10 000gp for a small dragon, 21 000 for a medium dragon and 105 000gp for the large dragon plus two magic items for each survivor.

The next plan was to return to the tower of Nain, and from there use the tunnel dwarves to find a way into the citadel, while Hilda tried to find a reserve teleport spot. Everyone was teleported into the room in the tower and blackouts were put up at the cross-windows. Paradoxides checked out the dragons. There were only four; the largest dragon was out, perhaps hunting. The tunnel dwarves, Bifur and Bofur searched the tower.

The tower was D-shaped in cross section. There were seven levels disappearing into rock above and below. Each floor had three main chambers. The lowest level was solid with just an entrance tunnel, broken gates and shattered rocks. Above that was a fighting level, machinery and the portcullis. The portcullis was up; it had probably been made by orcs, although the machinery was dwarven. Further up were another fighting level, a hospital level, the command level where they had teleported into, and two crossbow levels. Above these built into the rock were dormitories, a kitchen and a room with something unusual, which Bifur and Bofur wanted the magic users to investigate.

In this room were five boxes and something laid out flat in one corner. This was an arrangement of four fans and a central disc, these had traces of residual magic, around was a circle saying keep out in elven. It was obviously a means of teleporting very conveniently arranged for quick setting up. The boxes were set up to be changed quickly into chairs, three held iron rations, one held cooking equipment and fuel, and the last held a medical kit. This seemed to have been set up by Pharazon so he could have trips here unknown to the dwarves, or perhaps by the elven magicians who had been on his trips.

The dwarves were set to find a way towards the citadel. They found three or four dwarf doors into the common stairway behind the tower. By evening they had found two ways out onto the street through dwarf doors, one onto the main street and one onto the chasm.

That night Hilda and Salrod heard someone summoning not the children of the night, but something similar, they could have responded but chose to ignore it. The next night they heard the same thing. Paradoxides checked on the positions of the dragons; the large dragon was not present. Hilda moved into the spirit world and followed the call.

She followed the street along the chasm, and then stood on one of the bridges across the chasm. Something powerful was calling from deep in the chasm. They were recruiting, offering work for a reward, services for treasures, for souls, for gratitude. "By signs, by words of power, by allegiance we are allied to make a deal". The calling and conversation ended, Hilda could make out movement down in the chasm, but even with her ability to see in the dark, she could see nothing but shadows in the lightless void below. She knew something powerful had done the conjuring gathering recruits from the water below; they had now left to do something. Hilda did some exploring in the spirit world looking for another teleport site. She found a way to the outside near the tower, and a few blocked up streets, but nothing useful.

The next day the dwarves continued to explore the military communications tunnels, trying to find a way to the citadel. That night Hilda went off exploring again, she heard the call going out again, but ignored it. She didn't find a suitable site, but as she was retracing her steps she saw a six-foot tall humanoid with a balancing tail and huge eyes, sniffing around. He passed by without noticing her as she hid in an alleyway. He looked like some sort of troglodyte, but not one Hilda had seen before. She continued back, but as she was approaching the tower she saw a very large winged shape fly by at great speed, from the outside down into the chasm. When Hilda got back Paradoxides tried to detect the dragons, but couldn't trace the largest one.

Paradoxides checked again at about midday and all the dragons were now present. The dwarves continued to explore, they were getting close to the citadel now, close enough to hear the dragons at times. In their explorations they found lots of elven runes. The elves had obviously spent quite a lot of time exploring these tunnels.

That night Hilda went out again. She couldn't find any suitable sites for teleporting and managed to get lost. She had to move back from the spirit world, and then return by a teleport.

Having decided that they had enough information for the present trip, and not wanting to come across the dragons while they were in a high state of alertness they teleported back to Kattlegrad.

F11 – Viking Luck (23 Jan 00)

Hilda headed off to Tabor. Paradoxides teleported Grettir, Salrod, Wilf, Jason and the gnome Filir to the bridge at Yarr. They wanted to return to the swamp city of Yarr, where they had had an unsuccessful trip five years before. Winter in the coldest year of the cycle seemed a suitable time to return. They noticed a large amount of wildlife, much more than five years before, which had been a much warmer year in the cycle.

They found the mound that they had entered on the previous trip, and Paradoxides flew the party there one by one. Salrod was the first, and while he was on his own a Harpy sang to try to lure him away, but Salrod covered his ears with rags.

When everyone had arrived they managed to find the crack they had entered before, but it was filled with rubble. They spent the night on the mound, in some comfort away from the cold, up a rope courtesy of a spell of Paradoxides. The next morning Filir tried to find another entrance.

While they were exploring they spotted a Viking long ship landing. The party set up ready for an attack. Grettir hailed the leader of the Vikings, Gunnar Halfdanson. He called on them not to come closer, and told them he was Prince Grettir, but they refused to believe him, calling back, “and I'm the Queen of Sheba”. Arrows were fired causing some casualties on the long ship, despite their shield wall. The Viking magician sent a wind elemental to attack the party, but Paradoxides wrested control and sent it back to the magician. The Vikings were completely outmatched and suffered many deaths. Salrod killed Gunnar, and the Vikings surrendered. Of the thirty-two who attacked fifteen survived. The dead were buried at sea from the long ship. The remaining two fifth level warriors, Ari and Gron, swore fealty to Grettir.

The Vikings were from Telemark and had come to Yarr in search of treasure and adventure, and to escape from the boredom of winter. With the help of the Viking prisoners the party dug away at the crack. Paradoxides did some divining, and discovered that there was no one left in the mound. The Vikings said that on their previous trips they had not managed to find anything either.

The party decided to sail the long ship, Sea Raven, back to Sequarl. Paradoxides teleported back to Sequarl to fetch Arah, a weather wise Huscarle of Grettir's. While Paradoxides was away, Salrod killed a water deer and Wilf gathered enough vegetables for a large stew.

On the return of Paradoxides, Sea Raven set off for Sequarl with Salrod at the helm. The first night they hove to in an estuary, and were forced to remain there for four days hunting, waiting for the weather to clear. They then had a safe trip back to Sequarl returning on 16th February 693.

The loot they managed to take from the Vikings was as follows:

Loot:

Sea Raven, 28 bench long ship	8 000gp
3 sets of chainmail	300gp
bronze ringmail armour	300gp
gold decorated longsword	300gp
dwarf silver spear	300gp
gold torque	500gp
7 gold armrings	1 100gp
9 gold and silver rings	150gp
decorated helm	200gp
hunting horn	300gp
fine clothing and fur cloaks	400gp
1 214 silver pieces	60gp
210 gold pieces	210gp
4 amber pieces	400gp
4 small pearls	250gp
cut ruby	500gp
ceramic pot of healing ointment	1 200gp
7 doses of heal plus	175gp
4 doses painkill 2	160gp
10 miscellaneous bags of herbs	200gp
6 large cigars for enhancing trances	300gp
serpent dagger	500gp
Total	15 705gp

Giving a share of 2 880gp each. Salrod took the dwarf silver spear, the cut ruby and the alchemical cigars as part of his share.

They also found a weird stone tablet with archaic northern barbarian runes, covered with mermaids and mermen, possibly from Skagnar?

The magic user had the following rune sticks:

Level 1

burning hands	wolf friend	magic circle	affect normal fires
detect magic	protect v illusion	find familiar	detect life
protect v enchant	hold portal	detect hidden obsvtn	protect v b magic
feather fall	circle of protection	black magic curses	

Level 2

protect v frostbite	protect v illusion	protect v enchant	protect v b magic
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Old Empire: Malcolm's Diary

levitate
weather gauge
gust of wind

shatter object
black magic curses

breathe of frost
minor healing

create mist
set bone

Level 3

protect v missiles

health charm

cause light wounds

cure light wounds

Level 4

summon sea wind

Level 5

summon storm heart

He also had a large windsock on a pole and a rune marking and tattooing set.

F22 – Galendor (19 Oct 02)

Ubaron learnt the spell awoken. He then teleported to Dingry Dur, where he learned of the orc attack and also that Ranulf had now become a sixth level fighter. While he was there the Invisible Man announced his presence at the main entrance. He said he had been engaged as an emissary by the “Great King” Gamesh. Gamesh seemed to be the leader of the orcs to the west of Dingry Dur. He wished to say that the destruction of a renegade had been well received and that as he was grateful to the great wizard living in the cave, he would seek no tribute for the place and offered some tokens in friendship to “Death Hand”, the wizard who had killed Zargon. He seemed to think that the wizard was Yspaddadden's boss! The invisible man had also come to update the map, which he had been working on for Yspaddadden. He knew that Zargon had lived in the pit to the west of Dingry Dur, and led a big faction, presumably now much smaller after the death of Zargon and the defeat of the attack on Dingry Dur. The invisible man did not know how the factions and Gamesh connected, but he did think there were three factions in the pit. He thought that the message and fear had generated the gifts and the word was a very powerful sorcerer called “Death Hand” had now moved into Dingry Dur. He showed Yspaddadden the map and told him that the name of the forest was Gelendor (elvish for The Green Land). In exchange Yspaddadden traded him a spell.

Yspaddadden investigated the gifts. They were in a wooden chest; there were three hits with a detect life spell and there were residual traces of power and magic. In the chest were three smallish bags with five arrowheads below them. They were of elven manufacture and in the centre were runes, which had been damaged. They seemed to be the same and each contained five spells; to counter protection from missiles, antipathy to shape changers, antipathy to evil, trueflight and one other. They were made from elemental silver, which had been hardened in some way. The three bags contained an owl, a lump of ice with a toad in it and large, fat mouse. Ubaron observed that these were all commonly used by magicians as familiars.

Yspaddadden, Ranulf and Ubaron decided that they wished to investigate the Badlands marked on the invisible man's map. They had heard that there was something connecting this to the nearby forest known by the angry trees. They had also heard that whatever caused the trees to be angry was active in the Badlands in summer, but not in winter. It was March 694, and although the weather had improved slightly it was still deep in winter. Ubaron taught Yspaddadden the spell protection from frostbite, and in exchange Yspaddadden gave him a copy of the spell protection from disease. They decided to take the dwarf scout Gunry with them.

Ubaron checked the weather would be clear for the next twenty-four hours and Yspaddadden carrying Ranulf and Ubaron carrying Gunry they set off at dusk using the night wind to head for the angry trees. When Ubaron tried to take over control of the wind and head towards the Badlands the wind dropped and he had to cast feather fall and then fly to follow Yspaddadden and Ranulf. Eventually they all landed successful on a grassy knoll. The weather was cold with some sunny spells and a light wind from the southwest. The forest, about two miles to the south, was very dense with particularly large trees.

The magicians meditated until dawn, and then Yspaddadden used true seeker to try to find a cave. They flew off in the same pairs as before keeping to a height of fifteen feet and at a speed of about ten miles per hour. After a couple of hours they saw a very large elk, but they allowed it to continue its grazing unmolested. There were a few game trails, but they spotted one which seemed too well defined, perhaps an orc track. There were also a very large number of dead trees. They spotted another very well defined game trail or track through a defile with a stream in the bottom. The party followed this downstream to the southwest, where they spotted a frozen waterfall with an undercut space behind it; possibly a cave. Ubaron cast detect life and realised there was something large in the cave; the party decided it was almost certainly a bear. Ubaron decided to use the spell summon monster to persuade the bear to come out and then send it on its way.

Ubaron cast his spell and a sleepy looking frost giant appeared wondering who had disturbed his sleep. He asked for Ubaron's Jotun symbol, and when Ubaron failed to produce one made an attempt to grab him, thus breaking the pact Ubaron was held to as part of the summoning. Ubaron drew his sword and fought the frost giant, while Yspaddadden and Gunry fired missiles. Ranulf tried to cross the river to join Ubaron, but lost his footing in the ice. Ubaron struck a couple of heavy blows, but then the giant grappled Ubaron, just as Ranulf arrived. The giant offered not to crush Ubaron, if his life was spared, but Ubaron ignored him and struck the giant again. The giant died after failing in his attempt to crush Ubaron.

The party searched the body of the giant and his cave. They found a couple of haunches of venison, killed within the last week or two, a sack containing an amphora full of gold (1207gp) and silver (865sp) coins, a pouch with some gems, 18 small gems (300gp) 7 large gems (50gp, 100gp, 100gp, 500gp, 100gp, 500gp, 100gp), a roll of fur containing a gold goblet (2000gp), a large lump of amber (600gp), a broken gold armband (200gp) and a dwarf silver sword (600gp). The gold goblet was inlaid with rubies, and looked as though it might have some religious connections, possibly with Ra. Most of the money originated in Chittagong, and it was obvious the giant had just been raiding in thereabouts. Ubaron took a phial of ichor from the giant, and the head of the giant was also taken.

The cave was lined with ice, and there was even a shape for a bed and pillow. Ranulf chipped away the ice, and Ubaron meditated by the fire. Ranulf carved a design on the walls of the cave and Ubaron took teleport co-ordinates. The party also had a good look around the area to help them find the cave in the future. Ranulf did some prospecting but found nothing worthwhile. The night passed uneventful apart from the occasional distant howling of wolves.

The next morning Yspaddadden used true seeker again and discovered that the largest nearby cave lay to the north-northeast. The party flew off in this direction and discovered a large ice field and had a search around, but they were unable to find a cave. They lost all sense of direction in the snow as snow started to fall. Ubaron cast his compass spell and the party were able to return to their cave. Gunry was more affected by the harsh conditions than the rest of the party, so Ubaron took him back to Dingry Dur on the night wind and returned via teleport with Wilf and some picks and other tools. Meanwhile Yspaddadden flew Ranulf back to the ice field and used true seeker again to try to find a sizeable cave, but without success. Yspaddadden slew a deer. Yspaddadden and Ranulf noticed that all the large deciduous trees were dead, there were a few saplings still alive, but the only surviving trees of any size at all were coniferous.

The party went out again the following day and this time found a depression. Ubaron again used his detect life spell and the party were convinced that this time it was just a bear, especially as Yspaddadden could detect no metal. It was flushed out by Yspaddadden, and the party took it down with very little damage to its pelt. They also captured a young cub and decided that Ubaron should teleport it to Dingry Dur.

When he arrived Ulfuir, Yspaddadden's wife was furious as she had no milk to feed the bear cub. Ubaron teleported to Chittagong and returned with a nanny goat to supply the milk. Meanwhile Yspaddadden had managed to find a giant termite mound. Ubaron teleported back to the cave and the whole party was reunited. They decided to wait until the next morning to investigate the termite mound. Ubaron meditated.

Dark clouds started to build up to the north and the weather looked very threatening. Suddenly Ubaron awoke with a start from his meditation and noticed his sword, Wyrd Serpent glowing brightly. Wilf spotted a dragon flying past high up, ahead of a heavy snowstorm. By midnight the party were walled into the cave by snow. Ubaron teleported Wilf and Ranulf back to Dingry Dur. After resting he returned to collect Yspaddadden. Whilst they waited in Dingry Dur for the storm to abate Ubaron wrote some teleport scrolls between the cave and Dingry Dur.

Ubaron teleported the party back to the cave once the storm had cleared and they then flew out to the termite mound, where Yspaddadden had found a depression, which he thought might be a way in. Ranulf dug in and the party proceeded to explore the tunnels. Ranulf found an insect leg and surmised that this might be the source of the pupae that the orcs ate. The party explored various passages and then decided to head down as deep as possible. They came across a large chamber; here they saw twenty to thirty large golden globes on the ceiling. These were the size of medicine balls and appeared to be the thoraxes of insects. There were no other exits from the chamber. On the floor was the leathery dried up remains of one of the thoraxes, which Yspaddadden collected. They then found another similar chamber with two or three dozen similar golden globes. In this chamber Yspaddadden powered up his wand, which had detect spells for metal, magic, power and life. There were no positive hits for any of these spells.

The party now tried to head as high up as possible and found a small passage, which led to the surface. They then tried to find a horizontal level just above the level of the outside world. After a little more exploration, when the fly spells were about to run out, the party returned to the surface, and then back to the cave. Whilst the magicians were meditating, Ranulf decided to dig around the roots of one of the trees. He noticed that it had a very small root system; when Yspaddadden saw this he thought they looked almost like feet.

The party decided to leave the investigation of the termite mound until they had Girindor with them. Instead they decided to march north along the river. Yspaddadden and Ubaron flew Ranulf and Wilf to the river and had a look around before landing. They then marched northwards along the river. They noticed a number of trails, made by the shod feet of orcs. They then flew on to find a camp. They saw a suitable site and noticed a very large campfire from the autumn or early winter and the remains of boar and goblins.

During Ranulf's watch the party were attacked by a group of about fifteen orcs. All the orcs were taken down in quick time, apart from one who tried to run away. Ubaron caught up to him and stunned him with a blow to the head. Two of the orcs were found to be only mortally wounded, but the rest were dead. There had been two fifth level orcs, one of which had a gold torque (500gp) and the other with a gold armband (300gp). The other orcs had 130gp between them. Ubaron teleported Ranulf and the three orcs back to Dingry Dur, while Yspaddadden took Wilf back on the night wind.

Loot

Frost Giant

Gold coins	1207gp
Silver coins	43gp
Large lump of amber	600gp
Small gems	300gp
Large gems (50, 100, 1000, 500, 100, 500, 100)	1900gp
Armband (broken)	200gp
Dwarf silver longsword	600gp
Gold goblet (encrusted with rubies)	2000gp
Head	?gp
Total	6850gp
(share 1750gp)	

Orcs and Bear

Gold coins	130gp
Gold armband	500gp
Gold torque	300gp
Bear hide	50gp
Bear cub	?gp
Total	980gp
(share 250gp)	

F24 – Dr O Raid (25 Nov 02)

The party decided that more thought and investigations were needed before venturing into Atlanea. Ubaron also wanted to buy his new armour before arriving back with his clan. He decided to visit Yspaddadden to see whether his armour was ready.

Yspaddadden had contracted out the making of Ubaron's armour to a dwarven weapon smith in Kattlegrod, and had recently visited him. The smith had told Yspaddadden that the armour was not ready as he had encountered a problem, but that it would certainly still be ready before the year was completed.

Yspaddadden, Ranulf, Wilf, and Ubaron decided to investigate the magic door they had found when they were trying to retrieve Silden's beard from the temple of Ran. They contacted Ranji, whose arm, had mended well after Ubaron and Yspaddadden's healing, and headed down into the sewers at night.

They reached a large sewer, which Yspaddadden flew the party across. As they headed on the party were attacked by a pack of large rats. Many of the rats were slain, and the rest managed to flee. Ranji was injured but Ubaron healed him. The party then reached the area where they had found the secret door: after some searching Ranulf managed to find it.

Ranji managed to open the secret door, which opened very quietly inwards. Ranulf went into the next room first, where he was surprised and hit by a giant spider. He hit it hard in return, and the spider went up to the ceiling. It was a phase spider and therefore proved very difficult to hit, as it spent most of the time in another dimension where it could not be harmed.

The spider spat globules of a sticky substance at various members of the party and managed to stick Ranji. Ranulf helped free Ranji, while Wilf and Yspaddadden tried to hit the spider with crossbow bolts, and Ubaron cast burning hands. Occasionally these attacks did some damage as they hit the spider when it was back in their dimension.

The room was filling with globules of the sticky substance. Yspaddadden and Ubaron went back down the steps and started to read scrolls. Ubaron flew Yspaddadden across to the door on the far side, and Yspaddadden used a knock spell to open it. Wilf, Ubaron and Ranji went through the door and the spider came down, and was hit and finished off by an axe blow from Yspaddadden.

The globules of the sticky substance gradually faded and the party could make out a pentacle on the floor, as well as a picture of a spider on the ceiling. Ubaron flew up and started removing any crossbow bolts from the ceiling, but mortar from the ceiling started to fall down, so he gave up.

The party went on into a corridor with six doors off, three on either side. They checked the first two, which opened onto rooms, one was empty and the other contained a couple of chests and a wardrobe. These contained sewer boots, changes of clothes and a number of black cloaks. The next room on the left contained an expensive wardrobe with mirrors, and four sets of scarlet and black robes, one set were better made, probably for a leader and three acolytes. Wilf detected a certain reek of wrongness, and suspected that these might belong to cultists. The next room on the right had no latch, but a complicated knot in a piece of cord or rope. This was left undisturbed and the party moved on to the next pair of doors.

The door on the right was opened first and revealed a room full of undead, which did not seem to be moving. The door was quickly closed and wired up by Ranji. The door on the left contained manacles, chains, whips and instruments of torture. There were also two wheels on the right hand wall, which looked like the mechanism for a portcullis or something similar. They closed that door and went to the door at the end of the passage.

There was a grill ahead, which they opened using the mechanism in the last room, and Ubaron flew down into what looked like a bottle dungeon. There was a small lift down into the dungeon, and stone benches for about seven people. The lift went down to where an eighth bench would have been. There was a bronze grill in the centre.

The party went back to the room with a knotted rope instead of a latch and Yspaddadden tried to detect magic on the knots. He detected a spell on the knots, which seemed to be a conjuration. It was a very old-fashioned spell, almost like a puzzle. Yspaddadden cast a rune of unbiding and the knot started to unravel but then tied itself again in an untidier knot. He tried again and this time the knot was even worse. Finally the knot was cut and the party went into a room with a spiral staircase, the inner portion of which was warm to the touch.

The party went up the spiral staircase and through a locked door to a corridor with more doors. There was a storeroom with lots of shelves, jars, barrels, packets and the smell of aromatic spices. From another room a bubbling noise could be heard, they went in to see a crackling fire, and funny glassware – an alchemical lab. The next room had a low bed, brazier, racks, tools, needles – it looked like a tattooing parlour. Ranji unlocked the remaining door on the corridor to find a wine cellar.

The party went on to the door at the end of the corridor, and again Ranji unlocked it. It was a wide room with lots of fine mesh cages; one contained a large hairy spider the size of a Labrador. The party closed the door and went up the steps at the opposite end of the corridor. The stone here was lighter in colour and the building looked more modern.

The stairs ended in a locked wooden door. Ranji unpicked the lock to find a curtain. The party crept through the curtain into a largish room, smelling of beer, with hams hanging up, and flour on the floor. There was a door in the far wall, which led to a small anteroom. There was a door ahead and one on the left. They went left first where they saw a stone table and one or two large butts – possibly a brewing room.

The party then headed through the remaining door, which led up some wooden steps to another door. This gave onto a corridor left and right with a single door on the right and double doors to the right. Snoring could be heard from beyond the double doors. The single door looked as though it was a back door to the outside. Ranji crept through the double doors with some yellow lotus dust, and managed to put the occupants (ten men and one dwarf) into a very deep sleep. This room was obviously a private bar and steps could be seen going up at the back. There were large sea chests presumably belonging to the occupants of the bar. There were locked and barred doors to the outside and a fire that had just about died down.

The steps led up into a room where there was a guard asleep. There was a gaming table and comfortable seats. By the guard was a large door. The guard was in one of the comfortable seats beside a night-light. Ranji crept up with some more yellow lotus dust, but just as he was about to throw it in the face of the guard, the guard reached out, grabbed him and threw him down. Wilf and Yspaddadden attacked the guard who was a northern barbarian berserker. They cut him down, but not before he had shouted loudly.

The party burst through the door into what looked like a bordello, with about eight rooms full of screaming whores. They went up the stairs to a corridor with two doors either side and another at the end of the corridor. The first of the doors was held against Wilf and dwarves were firing crossbows through the other.

The party decided it was time to leave. They headed back to the bar and opened the doors onto the street, but did not leave that way and headed back the way they had come to the room, which had contained the phase spider. Yspaddadden flew up to collect his remaining bolts from the ceiling and the undead or zombies left the room they had been locked in. There were eight zombies, and they came out of the room and went up the stairs not towards the room where the adventurers were.

The party headed back out and Yspaddadden flew the party back across the large sewer. Ranji made out figures on the side they had just left. Wilf fired off a flare and the party realised that the figures were ghouls. They headed safely out and Ranji left to do some intelligence gathering about the building they had explored.

He returned soon after to reveal that it used to be an inn – “The First Inn Last Out”. It had been bought out and closed down about year before. It was associated with the Blue Heaven gang, who were known to be led by Dr Ozymandias, a known guild member. The party split into three groups and visited temples along the street of the gods, to ensure they were not followed.

F25 – Destination Ushkadur (15 Mar 03)

It was the second week in May 694 and Ubaron and Grettir teleported to the water trough outside one of the gates into Atlanis to do some initial investigation for a trip to Ushkadur. Ubaron thought Atlanis was about 500 miles from Ushkadur. They set off at 5 am from Sequarl, which Ubaron thought would be about midnight in Ushkadur. When they arrived it was cold and dark, and they could smell horses. Guessing that there were people camped near the trough they quickly and quietly moved away. Grettir prayed to Osiris and then gave the icon of the Nehrin steed to Ubaron. It turned into a very large black horse and Ubaron commanded it to take them to the temple of Ptah in Ushkadur.

The horse set off at high speed. Grettir and Ubaron could only hear a faint echo of its hoof beats, and saw themselves as shadows. The world rushed by, but they were not buffeted by the wind as they might have expected. They moved at a similar speed to the spell night wind walk. They travelled along the Black Road, and to start with there was a quarter moon, but after a while it clouded over. They passed some campsites, possibly even some villages.

Dawn arrived and still the horse galloped on untiringly. They left the road and continued across country in a river valley to the west of a large river. Ubaron and Grettir saw ostriches, deer and wild horses. It was now May and there was no frost on the ground. They crossed a few tributaries up to 70 yards wide, and continued to follow the course of the widening main river, which Ubaron suspected flowed to Ushkadur. They did see a knar being rowed down the river.

Mid morning Ubaron spotted ruins ahead. There seemed to be a huge bowl of water a harbour and a wooded island, with the river flowing into the bowl. Ushkadur was on a rocky outcrop over the river. There was nothing in the harbour. By now the river was a mile across, there were the remains of a large bridge, but the Nehrin steed just galloped straight across the river, seeming to skim the surface.

By now it was raining very heavily, with lots of lightning. The black horse pulled up outside the gate to Ushkadur, and returned to an icon. Ubaron thought this was the silver gate, he told Grettir that there was also a golden gate, a sea gate and the great gate, which the Black Road led to. He two men went in through the gate and followed a cobbled street, looking for a less ruined building which might be suitable for Ubaron to use as teleport co-ordinates. Unfortunately none of the buildings they passed seemed intact enough to be suitable, so they returned to the gatehouse.

They entered a three-foot high doorway into a room with a low ceiling, and climbed spiral stone steps to another room, which was normal height and it became evident that the lower floor was full of debris. There were no signs of occupation within the last few weeks or months, but it was obvious that the rooms had been cleared within the last year or two. The first two full height levels were fairly intact if a little damp, but the next floor was very damp and full of fungi, and as they climbed the steps to the floor after that they realised from the smell that it was full of bats and they decided to climb no further. From the previous level they had a reasonable view across the ruined city.

They could see no better options so Ubaron took visualise teleport co-ordinates of the gatehouse, which was dramatically lit by lightning, and then carved runes in the second full sized room up to use for memorising teleport co-ordinates. Grettir prayed to Ptah and then Ubaron teleported them both back to Sequarl.

Grettir and Ubaron were joined in Sequarl by Wilf, Girindor and an acolyte of Ptah called Amonsil. He was an earnest young man armed with a sickle sword and a staff. Ubaron went to Redhill and bought a protection from fire gem amulet for himself and also a protection from black magic gem amulet for Grettir, which he leant to Amonsil. Ubaron wrote some teleport scrolls to and from the room in the gatehouse in Ushkadur in preparation for the trip.

At about 4:30 am local time Ubaron teleported to Ushkadur taking Grettir, Aurelius and Amonsil with him. They cleared the target area immediately and were quickly followed by Kollgrim taking Girindor and Wilf using one of Ubaron's scrolls. They arrived in the gatehouse about half an hour before midnight, allowing Amonsil time to prepare before carrying out his divination.

The priest reported an undead hunger throughout the city, as well as echoes of Ptah from the southeast. He also said that there was an awful feeling of dread coming from the harbour area. Watches were set and the rest of the party tried to get some sleep.

During the third watch the party were attacked by a large number of ghouls. They managed to kill nine of these, and then Wilf sprinkled holy water, which kept the remainder at bay. Grettir then dispersed these via the power of Osiris.

The next morning Girindor turned into a crow and flew off to reconnoitre the city. Near the sea gate he saw a ledge, which contained some sort of rolled up netting. Flying over the city he could make out to groups of Atlaneans. He flew up to the citadel, but was driven off by ravens.

The party decided to head off in the direction Amonsil had felt traces of Ptah, which was the direction of the citadel. They decided to stay close to the ruined city walls. Girindor tried to lead the party around any traps and to avoid the shrieking plants Ubaron had encountered on his visit here with the Atlaneans some years before. Amonsil was caught by a snare and hauled high up a tree. Ubaron flew up and cut him down, removing any traces of the snare. Girindor cure Amonsil's injured leg. Ubaron cast trail blinding and the party moved on.

Kollgrim fell into a pit and broke his arm on a spike. Ubaron and Girindor healed him and again Ubaron cast trail blind and the party moved on, this time with Girindor casting detect traps and snares. Girindor spotted one of the shrieker plants Ubaron had described and the party avoided it.

Girindor saw an owl and tried to talk to it, at which point it flew off. Some of the group suspected that this was a spy of the Atlanean shaman. Shortly afterwards the party reached the sea gate. Ubaron and Girindor flew up to a ledge above the remains of the gatehouse to look at the netting Girindor had spotted earlier.

The ledge was about 12 feet square, and the netting was rolled up on one side. Ubaron found some traces of magic on the netting. He flew down and collected Grettir and between them they rolled it out. It had many pieces of different coloured material and different shapes sewn to it and seemed more suitable for use as camouflage than as a teleport destination. It was made of finely woven and stitched silk and was definitely imperial in manufacture. Kollgrim was also flown up to have a look and then Grettir rolled it back up and put it in his bag of holding.

The party continued on towards the citadel with Girindor detecting pits or snares every 60 yards or so. Amonsil then brushed against a shrieker plant, which cast out lots of sharp seeds, which fortunately missed him, but also shrieked loudly for some time. The party continued with Girindor now casting detect plant as well as detect pits and snares.

Girindor now came to an area with a line of pits and snares, which he guided everyone through. He heard crows approaching and he tried to conceal the party. They find a hole in one of the ruined buildings, which led down into a cellar where they hid. Down here they could see small crawl ways, which might provide egress for the ghouls, and they could see marks of feet. There were lots of ash and signs of a fire. The whole floor was six to eight inches deep in ash. It all reminded Grettir of the Lands of Dust, and Girindor of where he had tampered with the volcano on Sulphur Island.

The party came back out of the cellar and saw the owl again. It flew off so the party left, with Ubaron again casting trail blind. They ran along a cobbled street, which was not at all overgrown, and after 150 yards headed away from the street. Girindor noticed a very powerful tree in a copse. The party now returned to hunting speed and circled the copse.

Ahead Girindor spotted a more open space with the remains of toppled columns. The party searched the area and again found a hole with steps leading down into another cellar. This one was again covered by a few inches of ash, and there were more signs of ghouls. This cellar was however much bigger: about twenty feet wide, with pillars, a stone flagged floor and frescos on the walls. Wilf could detect the odour of evil all around. There was a main chamber with three smaller chambers off it. There were six crawl holes off the chambers. The party carried rocks down and started blocking them. The frescos were mythological paintings, of various chaos gods, possibly Baal and Mallock. It didn't seem to be a temple, more of a public building. Kollgrim and Ubaron both took teleport co-ordinates of the side chamber with no crawl holes.

Girindor heard horses hooves sounding on the cobbles nearby and Ubaron and Kollgrim teleported everyone back to Sequarl. Two days later they tried to teleport back, but the spells failed as someone had changed the teleport room. Instead the two magicians teleported everyone to the room in the gatehouse they had used previously, arriving just before dawn.

Girindor flew off to do some reconnaissance as a crow. Again he was chased away from the citadel by the ravens. This time he was followed for a while before he managed to lose them. He saw smoke from the Great Gate and thought it was occupied by Atlaneans. He spoke to some crows that he guessed were used by Atlanean shaman, they were called away to a job and headed to the forum area. He saw the owl again, which watched him, he then changed into a sea eagle and flew after it. It headed for the two promontories where Girindor could see a tower on each one.

Girindor managed to kill the owl, but as he flew over the sea near one of the promontories he noticed a magician in imperial equipment, including jet-black chainmail, on a flying carpet pursuing him. He flew around the second tower and headed fro the forest, still pursued by the magician, who managed to hit him with a lightning bolt. He turned into a cat when he reached the forest, but was again hit by a lightning bolt. He changed back into an elf, and managed to evade his pursuer and return safely to the gatehouse.

It was now dark and Ubaron, Girindor, Kollgrim, Grettir and Wilf flew to the plaza or forum area previously discovered. While Girindor and Kollgrim were returning to collect the other two men, ghouls emerged from the cellar. Wilf and Ubaron killed them and then went down to kill those below. Grettir followed and dispelled them so successfully that they were turned to dust. They looked into each of the rooms, and they all had piles of bricks, with poles in the centre and ribbons and beads. Four of the exits were still blocked, but one of the other two had been cleared, the last one had not been blocked initially. The party blocked up the remaining holes and Girindor spent some time looking at the pictures. He recognised the blood red octopus of Piray in one and the Alloween in another. The ghouls on the surface started to block the entrance with rubble and trees.

The priest started his divination in one of the chambers. After forty minutes he burst out in the grip of supernatural fear. This time the traces of Ptah were in a different direction, but they still pointed towards the citadel. The cause of the supernatural fear was again from the harbour area.

Shortly after they were again attacked by ghouls. This time they were led by a cowed figure. Girindor cast dispel evil and Wilf threw some holy water and this seemed to check them and they left. Just before dawn Girindor used his rock to mud spell and Kollgrim a move earth spell to block up the holes more carefully, and to create a new exit to the surface, which they concealed with a bush. They also cleared the teleport pad.

The party headed up the Black Road to the citadel. The road ended in a broken bridge over a ditch to a ruined gatehouse. The dry ditch was about 50 to 60 feet deep. As the party surveyed this they heard hooves on the Black Road. A party of about sixty heavy Atlanean cavalry rode up as the magicians flew the party across the ditch and into the citadel.

Ubaron recognised most of the cavalry as Sky Dancers, but there were a mixture of other tribes including Far Walkers and his own Hard House clan. He did not see anyone he recognised. The party flew into the black rock keep.

The keep was square, with a tower at each corner. Ubaron flew to the northeast tower to try to find suitable teleport co-ordinates. He flew in through the second aperture up the keep, and came to a spiral stone staircase, which he flew up to the next floor. This room did not seem suitable, so he flew up past another aperture. This was finely carved and if there had been a floor at this point might have been suitable. He went into the entrance of the next level, where he heard the rattle of a snake, so as time was short he just went up to the next level. This had an ornately carved window seat, which might be suitable, but was only wide enough to transport two people along with the caster.

At this point the Atlaneans attacked the gatehouse, casting a wall of flame over the entrance area. The party assembled and the two magicians tried to teleport everyone back to Sequalr. Unfortunately they only managed to take six people and Girindor was left behind. He turned into a sea eagle and flew off.

Ubaron teleported with Grettir back to the gatehouse at the silver gate shortly before dusk, where the elf, and Ubaron soon joined them then teleported everyone safely back to Grettir's castle.

The party decided to wait about ten days before returning. Ubaron used this time to learn the spell fly like and eagle, and he and Kollgrim wrote more scrolls for teleporting to and from Atlanis. This time they decided to return without Aurelius to enable the whole party to be transported by flying magicians.

At about 23:00 they teleported from Sequalr to the gatehouse, arriving just before dusk. The city was covered in mist. The three magicians flew the rest of the party along the city walls to the citadel. They headed to the northeast tower and Wilf and Grettir headed down the spiral steps to check whether there was a room suitable for Amonsil to do his divination. There were eleven rooms and four apertures into the centre of the keep. The lowest room seemed the most suitable.

The party decided to check out the southeast tower. They were attacked by ravens and Kollgrim was wounded before Girindor ordered them to leave. As the party headed down they realised that there was something evil down there and they could hear the jangle of armour and scratching. Ubaron's sword indicated that there was danger and Grettir's sword indicated a higher level of evil than generally throughout the city.

They headed back to the previous tower and Ubaron and Kollgrim took teleport co-ordinates in the basement. Then everyone else moved up to the next level whilst Amonsil carried out his divination. He found that there were undead all around the city. He was less troubled by the threat in the harbour as Grettir had leant him an amulet of protection from unnatural fear. He found that the place the party were seeking with faint traces of Ptah was directly beneath where he had carried out his divination.

The party cleared the debris from the floor and Ubaron and Kollgrim had to redo their teleport co-ordinates. The stone floor was made up of a chequer board pattern. The dark squares were a very old southern type probably of Osiris or Ra and indicated consecrated ground. Looking at the other squares Girindor noticed a mistake and then realised there was a secret door. Ubaron checked it for traps and then Girindor opened the door. Grettir led the party down and they came to two sphinx like figures, similar in size to a stone golem. These enarmed their weapons, let Grettir and Amonsil pass, then crossed their weapons in front of the rest of the party.

Grettir and Amonsil discovered that this was just the shrine for the citadel, but was the last remaining trace of the gods, still manned by the last priest. There were shrine to about six of the old gods, but not Osiris or Ra, who were seen as latecomers. The two men prayed at the shrine to Ptah. They discovered that the pthet had gone to the necropolis, taken by the entity responsible for the destruction of the city. The priest told them that this entity was sleeping, and that if it were awoken would visit destruction on the world. They also discovered that the necropolis was on the island in the harbour area and that the sea gate was used for final journeys to the necropolis.

Ubaron teleported back to Sequarl with Grettir and Amonsil, but Kollgrim klutzed. He meditated, but then failed to take Girindor with him. Girindor made his way to the gatehouse, but when he approached he heard hoof beats. He sank into the earth and heard distant sobbing, probably from a female voice. He did not see any Atlaneans, but he still decided to destroy the sigils and flew off. He returned to the citadel. Ubaron tried to teleport to the gatehouse but when this failed he went to the citadel, where he gathered Girindor, and then returned to Sequarl.

Grettir went to see Rendip Rim, who suspected that the entity was a Demon Lord or a High Lord, as his followers would call him. He thought that the shaman and the imperials might be trying to contact him, or not contact him, or might be trying to suck power from him. Grettir was told not to awaken him without the permission of Osiris.

F26 – Rescued from Pirates (17 Mar 03)

Grettir, Wilf, Girindor, Ubaron, Kollgrim and Tulkan, another of Grettir's huscarles, were teleported to Bazi by Paradoxides. Girindor then used windwalk to take them to the island of Magdalen. They climbed a hill overlooking the harbour of Aurora and watched proceedings.

There were a cog and a schooner in the bay, and smoke rising from the settlement. There were a few figures stirring on the ships. Mid-morning a rowing boat containing six or eight people went out to the cog; the people climbed aboard the cog and then after about half an hour lowered some gear into the rowing boat and returned with it to the shore. Shortly afterwards the clouds gathered and a thunderstorm began, as usually happened at that time on Magdalen. Girindor built a shelter and then went off to do some more reconnaissance.

During the afternoon a woman was hung up outside the long house in the village, presumably for some sort of misdemeanour. Sentries were posted in the evening and singing was heard from the long house. At dusk Girindor returned.

The party discussed rescuing the woman and Ubaron, Kollgrim and Girindor flew down to the stockade near the corner of the long house where the woman was strung up, away from the gates where there were sentries. Kollgrim cast sleep on the woman, Ubaron cut her down and Kollgrim flew her off, while Girindor kept watch. They all flew back to the rest of the party without being spotted.

The woman had a torn chiton and a black eye. When she awoke she said her name was Melinda and that she had been captured by the pirates. She was from Timos on the island of Cos and had been travelling with her sick father on the cog to Ianda. They had been attacked by two pirate ships, but had managed to sink one of them. The other prisoners were still on the cog, apart from five girls taken onto land to be traded to people in Aurora. She said there were 20 or 30 people in the long house. She was about 17 or 18 years old, good looking and about 5'7" tall. Girindor took Melinda to Juspur for safety, whilst the rest of the party planned an assault on the pirates.

The cog was anchored in the bay, whilst the schooner was beached, and the prisoners were on the cog, so they decided on a surprise attack on the cog. Ubaron and Grettir attacked the main cabin at the rear, Girindor and Wilf attacked the foredeck and Kollgrim and Tulkan were to land on the main deck. As they landed the pirates on the sterncastle sounded the alarm, and closed off the gate to prevent Grettir from reaching them. Kollgrim and Tulkan changed course and landed straight on the sterncastle and Grettir climbed over the gate. All three pirates on the sterncastle were slain. Meanwhile Ubaron forced opened the door into the main cabin and slew the remaining pirate there.

Girindor and Wilf landed at the front of the ship and Wilf slew the pirate there knocking him over the side of the ship. They went into the fore cabin and found the original crew of the cog locked in there. Organised resistance was over.

The tide was halfway out and flowing out so there was no chance of the schooner being floated, even though the alarm had sounded on the shore. The prisoners were found on the main deck. Salesh the father of Melinda was found and was relieved to hear that his daughter was alive and well. There was also a woman with a daughter and six men in chains – the remainder of the crew, who had refused to join the pirates. The captain and owner of the ship along with his soldiers had been killed during the pirates' attack.

Grettir sent Girindor off to set fire to the stockade and then hover nearby. Grettir then shouted to the pirates and told them that if they didn't hand over the remaining prisoners unharmed then their schooner would be destroyed. The pirates rowed out the four remaining girls, who climbed safely on board, and Girindor collected Melinda from Juspur. Shortly before dawn the cog, the Seven Stars set sail for Bazi.

The cog contained a mixed cargo of cosian wine, seasoned timber and some silk. The crew who had continued to defy the pirates wanted those who had joined them to be punished, but didn't want them killed, so they agreed on the lash. Girindor and Ubaron started to heal Salesh, so that he no longer needed to travel to Ianda.

From the three bodies of the lesser pirates the party found a pearl (100gp) and 412gp. On the leader they found a gilded hauberk (600gp), gold hilted sword (200gp), gold decorated helm (300gp), gold torc (500gp), two gold armbands (1000gp), eight packets of gold dust (800gp), and 60gp.

The next night Wilf noticed the ship was leaving a phosphorescent wake. Just before dawn a sea serpent approached the cog. Ubaron cast his summon sea serpent spell and ordered it to leave. Girindor and Ubaron continued to cure Salesh. They found out that he had land on Cos, where he produced Cosian wine. Ubaron spent some time talking to Melinda. Another sea serpent approached the cog, but Ubaron was able to deal with it in the same way as before.

The Seven Stars arrived safely in Bazi. Grettir used the power of Osiris to cure Salesh, and Girindor completed the cure. They sold the wine for 3,600gp and the timber for 1,500gp. The silk realised 3,000gp. The ship was also sold gaining 8,000gp for the hull, 500gp for the stores and 1,000gp for the catapult. This gave a total loot for the trip of 21,572gp, which meant 3,500gp per share and 572 to be shared between the crew and the grateful passengers.

Grettir, Girindor, Wilf and Ubaron paid their respects to Valakah, and told her what they had found in Ushkadur. She suggested that they shouldn't tackle it without first knowing its name. Paradoxides teleported Melinda and Salesh to Telnus, and Ubaron accompanied them so that he could learn the co-ordinates.

Ubaron returned and he and Kollgrim teleported Grettir, Wilf, Girindor and Tullkan back to Magdalen. It was now the first week in June 694. As they landed there was a big lightning storm and so they took cover in the shelter Girindor had recently created. The storm raged most of the day, but when it calmed down late in the afternoon the party headed to Juspur's tower after checking that there was nothing in the bay.

They told Juspur that they were looking for plants and he suggested a few things they should be able to find at this time of year. He mentioned nutmeg, areca nuts, strynos vine seeds (which had medicinal uses but shouldn't be eaten), phanthos seeds (a climbing plant), caliber beans (medicinal uses with big flowers on a climbing plant), clove trees in the south of the island, areca leaves (medicinal uses again), pepper vines, enthem blooms (very beautiful and rare, with large spiky variegated flowers) and purple apricots. He showed the party his sample book and pointed these things out. Grettir showed him the porno cube, which he called a memory crystal. Juspur said it wasn't advisable to use this often as some men stare into them forever, looking at lovers who have passed on. It seemed obvious he was thinking of someone himself.

The party set off Girindor found a pepper vine, caliber beans and strynos vine, before they made camp. At dawn a bush baby pursued by a large flightless bird called an axebeak raced past the camp just before dawn. They were both cut down and after greeting the dawn a hearty breakfast was enjoyed by all. Most of the day was spent butchering the animals and salting the meat, but there was still time for Girindor to find a nutmeg tree.

The next day they finished stripping the nutmeg tree, taking four pouches of nutmegs. Ubaron also found a pepper vine. It rained most of the night. They were now in the centre of the island and decided to head west. Tullkan killed a viper. Girindor found pepper and strynos vines and Grettir found a grove of edible, tasty mushrooms, which made a tasty meal when added to the salted meat.

The party returned to Sequarl and sold the fruits of their harvesting. The three bags of pepper vines were sold for 480gp, the caliber beans for 150gp, the two bags of strynos vine seeds for 300gp and the four pouches of nutmegs for 600gp, giving each man 250gp.

F28 – Up River Up North (15 Jun 03)

At the beginning of June 694 Ubaron became an eighth level fighter and a sixth level magician, and Yspaddadden became an eighth level fighter and a seventh level magician. Ubaron met up with Yspaddadden who had collected his magic mithril hauberk for him. The hauberk was very light (10 encumbrance, agility –1, protection +1). Ubaron handed over 9,000gp after selling his magic headband to Wilf. They also met up with Girindor, Wilf, Jason, and Ranulf along with the seven crew of Wilf and Jason's boat in Chittagong. The boat was a small version of a Viking longship. The captain of the crew was a woman called Galiena. The plan was to sail from the Chittagong basin up the west branch of the Ytange, hoping to reach the inland sea. They took seven days provisions, hoping to be able to supplement this with hunting and fishing. Yspaddadden flew ahead of the ship, as he was afraid of the water. The ship was sailed for about twelve hours each day, and was able to take advantage of a mage wind supplied by Girindor.

On the third day Yspaddadden and Ubaron killed a wild cow. At dawn on the fourth day the party were attacked by a party of goblins, who were slaughtered, only two escaping with their lives. The dog of one of the sailors was also killed.

That evening when they landed two of the sailors were attacked by a forest troll, one of them was badly wounded, but Jason, Girindor and Ubaron managed to wound him and he left. Later it returned and attacked Ranulf. It jumped back into the river, but Yspaddadden cast detect hidden observation and knew that the troll was still watching. It returned and tried to grapple Ranulf, but it was hit again by Ubaron and went down. Its head was removed along with a gold armband. Ubaron also collected a phial of the troll's blood.

The next morning the party tried to pick up the trail of the troll. They managed to find some traces and then Yspaddadden used the spell detect trail to track him back towards his lair. They managed to follow it back to a rivulet, where the tracks disappeared. Ubaron guessed that there might be an entrance to a troll den hidden in the riverbank. Yspaddadden and Ubaron cast spells enabling them to breathe underwater, and Girindor cast a similar spell on Ranulf. Yspaddadden and Ranulf then went into a small tunnel, whilst Ubaron waited at the entrance in the very cold water.

After a while three goblins emerged from the tunnel, which were despatched by Ubaron, who then went into the tunnel himself, where he met up with the two dwarves. They had killed a number of goblins and their leader, and had discovered that there was another troll within the complex. They handed over a chest of loot to the three warriors.

The troll was on the far side of a crawl way and Yspaddadden followed by Ranulf crawled along this, while Ubaron watched. As Yspaddadden emerged from the crawl way into a larger space a very large rock fell on him. If he hadn't been wearing a protection from stone amulet he would have been crushed to death. The troll leapt up and down on the rock, whilst Yspaddadden made convincing noises of crushing, and tried to force the rock off. Eventually he succeeded and the troll immediately leapt upon the dwarf. Ranulf followed him into the larger chamber and between them they managed to despatch the troll. There were piles of loot in the chamber.

The chest from the goblins contained 60gp and 320sp, a dwarf made chain shirt, a silver longsword, a silver bracelet, a small gold chain, some semi precious stones, three or four furs and some boar tusks. In the chamber they found three sets of scalemail, two ring mail corselets, a chain shirt, a set of field plate without the legs, 2322gp, 1319sp, 4 platinum pieces, semi precious stones, golden cloak clasp dwarf made with a female face probably a nymph, a spiral silver anklet or wristlet, a silver pendant with pearl, a gold decorated helmet, three silver rings, a gold armring, some adamantine enriched iron. The party collected together the loot and headed back to the ship.

On the sixth day they came to a confluence with a smaller river coming in from the north. They continued up the main river. Yspaddadden met and chatted with a couple of harpies, who confirmed that the inland sea could be reached in this direction. During the night they sang to seduce members of the party. Ubaron flew after them with his ears blocked up and they flew away.

On the ninth day they reached the first lake. It was about eight miles across, but much longer, by the end of the day they had sailed about 30 or 40 miles up the lake. They sailed on through the night – about another 60 miles. The next morning they were attacked by a very large river serpent. It tried to grab hold of the stern castle to sink the ship, but Wilf managed to cut off the serpent's tail with a savage blow. After a short time the serpent floated to the surface having bled to death. The party were able to remove the head, horns, teeth and skin, and Ubaron took a phial of blood.

They sailed across the rest of the lake, which must have been about 200 miles long and about 10 miles across at its widest. The water was very cold, and the lake was very deep. That evening the sun set earlier than expected and the party realised that this was because the sun had gone down behind some high mountains to the west, white peaks could be seen in the distance.

The next morning they left the lake and entered the river system. The water speed was about four knots, so it would have been impossible to row the boat up river. They continued to head north and came to another confluence; one river came in from the northwest and the main river from the north. The ship continued up to the north. Yspaddadden saw six large figures camped to the north, about a mile ahead. Girindor, with his elven eyesight made out about eight figures – probably large ogres.

Ubaron, Yspaddadden and Girindor flew Jason, Ranulf and Wilf in to attack the ogres. There were actually seven ogres, two hill giants and six dire wolves, all of which were slain. The party also found and freed a prisoner; a female centaur called Isanna. She and her companion, a male centaur, had been ambushed by the giants and ogres. They had then eaten the male centaur. Isanna knew Fingolwin, who traded with Yspaddadden, as she knew all the centaurs in the north. She and her companion had been exploring the area when they were ambushed. Isanna went off to clean herself in the river.

The party gathered the loot from the ogres and giants. They found 2632gp, 4115sp, a strange irregular disk with a reddish sheen, a mixture of gems and semi-precious gems, two gold torcs, a silver armring, hack gold, amber, hack silver, five golden disks with 50 credits in elvish stamped on them, an ingot of dwarf silver with a stamp of three crowns for an unknown dwarven city, a gold medallion, two silver armrings, a golden scarab set with jet and lapis lazuli, an elven composite bow and some arrows and six dire wolves.

The bow and arrows, the five golden disks and one of the silver armrings were returned to Isanna when she came back from the river. The party made a funeral pyre for her companion. She told the party that there were mountains between here and the inland sea, and that the river did not flow into it. The river passed to the west of the inland sea. The river passed close to the mountains, and there was a pass to the inland sea. Further to the west were the broken lands, the eternal ice and the great drop. There were further lakes and a small sea to the west. The only route by river to the inland sea was from the east. She also informed them that the river would freeze in September and that the frost giants used it as a road to travel south. Her intention was to travel back to the south to report the death of her companion to his kin.

She showed a great amount of respect to Girindor and planned to greet the dawn with him, as she was also a druid. Galendor was mentioned and she said that she had not heard the name in many years. She also told them that there had been a battle there where many elves had died.

In the night the sentries heard the noise of a great cat; Isanna was nowhere to be seen. She returned shortly to let the party know that there was a snow tiger nearby, but that talked to it and it would not attack them. He had told her that there were big eagles flying in the mountains and that it was snowing there.

The ship headed on and at dusk reached another confluence, it continued on the main river to the north. The ship stopped briefly and Girindor communed with a large pine, but he found nothing of interest, and the party continued on. By midday it was starting to get pretty difficult to keep going against the current. The high ground on either side started to close in to a pass about five or six miles ahead. The ship stopped and turned around, while Ubaron, Girindor and Yspaddadden flew on carrying Jason, Wilf and Ranulf. They looked at the land on either side of the river and decided that it would probably be possible to continue with a portage to get past the white water.

As they got up to the pass they reached a small plateau and a wide area of water with a memorable promontory. Ubaron had been looking for a suitable site for teleporting and also somewhere to ambush the frost giants as they headed south. This looked like it might be a suitable spot. They wandered around it and noticed a few marks, which seemed to have been made deliberately. Wilf made a note and a scale drawing of the marks and Ubaron made some sketches. The area seemed to be about 50 to 100 yards across and was about 100 feet above the water. Just before dusk Ubaron memorised co-ordinates as the sun sank over the mountains to the west. The view was very striking and provided weather conditions were not too averse he was confident they should work.

Looking at the marks again the party thought they looked like a circle within a circle within a circle or possibly spirals. The six adventurers returned to the boat and then started heading back to the south, travelling at 10 knots 24 hours a day, making use of the current. Galiena helmed at night and Ubaron took over during the day. At dusk they entered Lake Salrod. An hour before dawn they hit a submerged log and the boat sprang a minor leak, but the crew managed to cope with this via a few hours baling.

Ubaron took over at dawn and enjoyed crashing through the white water at the end of the lake. It was the most exhilarating helming Ubaron had ever enjoyed. That night they continued but just drifted. At daybreak Ubaron took over again and at the end of the day they started to reach civilisation. At dawn on 2nd July they reached the harbour in the basin at Chittagong.

Ubaron and Girindor went to see Rendip Rim at Sequarl to talk about the scarab. This was magical and was a favour of Isis. It protected against black magic and some other spells. Rendip Rim thought it was probably worth about 10,000gp. The reddish disc was thought to be the scale of some sort of creature, possibly a dragon. Yspaddadden used true seeker his magic axe to try to ascertain the whereabouts of the rest of the creature, but was unsuccessful. Ubaron agreed to put in 500gp for the disc and intended to pass it on to Paradoxides. Yspaddadden put in 1500gp for the field plate and intended to complete it when he had the time.

The total loot excluding the scarab was 22444gp, which gave a share per man (including one share for the crew) of 3206gp. Including the money for the scarab each share was 4634gp.

Loot

60gp	60
320sp	16
gold armring	300
two troll heads	200
dwarf made chain shirt	100
silver longsword	250
silver bracelet	80
small gold chain	40
semi precious stones	150
furs	200
boar tusks	100
scalemail	150
chain shirt	100
field plate without the legs	1500
2322gp	2322
1319sp	66
4 platinum pieces	20
semi precious stones	310
golden cloak clasp dwarf made with a female face probably a nymph	500
spiral silver anklet or wristlet	100
silver pendant with pearl	250
gold decorated helmet	250
3 silver rings	60
gold armring	100
adamantine enriched iron	380
sea serpent requisites	2500
2632gp	2605
4115sp	205
irregular disk with a reddish sheen	500
four gems	300
gems (200, 500, 100, 2000, 200)	3000
eight semi precious gems	450
eighteen poor gems	800
black opal	1000
gold torc	500
gold torc	500
silver armring	400
hack gold	400
amber	400
hack silver	80
hack gold	200
ingot of dwarf silver	140
gold medallion	200
silver armring with emeralds	600
golden scarab set with jet and lapis lazuli	10000
six dire wolf pelts	50

F29 – A Tale of Two Griffins (26 Jun 03)

Wilf won the drawing of lots and bought the scarab protection amulet. Ubaron bought Wilf's protection from black magic amulet. Wilf took the sketches he had made of the markings on the promontory and also used the porno cube to show Otsos, the priest of Mitras. Otsos thought they were very old, possibly prehistoric, and were probably used in rituals.

At the beginning of the second week in July 694 Grettir, Ubaron, Wilf and Kolgrim accompanied by two elves, Gambelien and Eliena set off to revisit the promontory. Ubaron wrote a scroll for Kolgrim to read, and then teleported himself and Wilf – who had been left behind by the mass teleport.

They arrived safely at the promontory just after dawn on a cold, clear morning with a bitter wind. The magicians flew up to have a look at the markings from overhead. They seemed to form a spiral, but were quite worn and couldn't be seen if the viewers flew too high. Grettir got no strong feelings from the site – it seemed likely it hadn't been used in any rituals in a very long time. The water was a few hundred metres across at the promontory. There were large cataracts, which Gambelien thought showed that they wouldn't ever freeze over completely.

The party headed north-northwest in the direction of the river but a little way to the east through heathland. At dusk they found a thicket in which to make camp. Early next morning the two elves managed to kill a deer, which was butchered and salted to supplement their iron rations. The elves flew ahead to carry out some reconnaissance, as the rest of the party continued to head north-northwest alongside the river.

In the afternoon the elves returned to say that they had found a large confluence about 30 to 40 miles ahead. They also said that there were very high mountains about 50 miles from the confluence, but that the river continued for at least another 20 miles. At dusk the magicians flew the party up to the confluence where the elves had found a suitable campsite. It was winter state 2 in the open, but fortunately they had a more sheltered campsite. The tributary joined from the east and was about 100 metres across. It came down a wooded valley.

During the third watch Wilf and Gambelien heard the howling of wolves. They woke the other four adventurers and the wolves could be heard prowling around the campsite. Wilf walked outside the immediate surroundings of the campsite and the wolves faded away around him as Mitras had a certain affinity with wolves. However the wolves continued to prowl around the rest of the site. Ubaron cast a spell to summon the wolves and told them he was in charge and ordered them away. One or two still remained nearby but they no longer prowled around the campsite.

The next morning the elves headed off for further reconnaissance. They returned mid morning to inform the rest of the party that there was another tributary about 30 to 35 miles ahead, joining from the west. The mountains closed in from the east at this point. They had just landed to check a possible campsite, when they were surprised by an Ettin – a two-headed giant. The giant had thrown a rock, but the elves had managed to get away. They thought that they would be able to track the Ettin if they all flew back to where it had surprised the elves.

Gambelien read a fly scroll and took Eliena, Ubaron took Wilf and Kolgrim took Grettir and the six adventurers flew to the tributary. They landed on the east bank and the elves were quickly able to pick up the trail. The tracks followed an old game trail and led up into the mountains. The elves killed two of a small group of goblins and the other three escaped. The sun went down behind the mountains and as it became dark the party made camp for the night.

The night passed uneventfully and the group continued after the tracks in the morning. They led up into the scree, which was difficult to climb, so the elves flew up, while the rest of the party waited at the bottom. They discovered some caves about 1,000 feet up. There was one large cave, with a stream emerging from it and a few smaller ones. The whole party flew up and into the largest opening, which was about twelve feet high in the centre. Wilf and Ubaron went in on one side of the stream, with Grettir and Kolgrim on the other, Ubaron still had his fly spell running. The two elves followed slightly behind.

They followed the stream to a pool towards the back of the cave, and edged their way along both sides of the pool. Suddenly Grettir was pounced upon by a large cave lion, and the Ettin threw a rock at Ubaron. Grettir was knocked to the ground by the lion, but managed to kill it, meanwhile Wilf and Ubaron despatched the Ettin.

The party used ropes to drag the two very large corpses out into the main part of the cave and the two elves removed the pelt of the cave lion and its teeth. There was a pouch and a gold ring on the ettin, and in the back of the cave they also found a gold brooch with flakes of garnet, a silver ring, a gold chain necklace with three small emeralds, four gems, three cut and one uncut, some piles of semi-precious stones, a leather sack containing coins and hack silver and gold. There was nothing magical. There were three small exits at the back of the cave, but they were all far too small for the ettin to use, from one of which the stream emerged. Ubaron cleared the back of the cave and painted runes so that he and Kolgrim could take teleport co-ordinates. Ubaron then cast a summon spell and spoke to the goblins who occupied the smaller caves.

Ubaron told the goblins that he was in charge. There were about two dozen goblins and they were obviously frightened of Ubaron, but were even more terrified of the elves. The party spent the night in the cave and Ubaron allowed the goblins to take some of the ettin and the lion as food. The elves flew off to reconnoitre and returned about mid afternoon, looking somewhat battered. They had fought off a griffin, which had been flying from the north.

After nightfall the elves cast night windwalk and headed north, because they felt that griffins would not be flying during the night. Meanwhile Ubaron ordered the goblins to keep a watch outside the cave, while everyone else rested. The elves returned at about midnight. They had travelled about an hour north and an hour northeast to arrive at the high mountains. At this point, about 150 miles from the cave, there were rivers in all directions and everything was white, there was just ice, snow and mountains. They flew about another 20 miles north where there was a high pass, and the terrain was much more constrained. Soon after there was a wall of cliffs to the east, about six miles from the river, thousands of feet high. The wall of cliffs seemed to go on for some miles, although the ground was much easier to the west. The mountain range seemed to be about 20 miles wide, and above the cliffs it was white with snow.

The party all flew up towards this point in the morning and were attacked by two griffins. One of them started calling and they were joined by two more. Ubaron cast lightning bolts, and Kolgrim cast black magic, whilst the others used missile weapons. Two were killed and a third was wounded and had its wing broken by a spell of Kolgrim's. The wounded griffin tried to get away on its lion's hindquarters and eagle legs, but the party managed to track it. The other griffin tried to distract the pursuit, but the wounded griffin was found in broken ground at the foot of the cliffs. Grettir killed the wounded griffin and Ubaron despatched the last one as it tried to come to the aid of its mate.

The elves took the feathers from these two griffins and then everyone returned to where the bodies of the first two griffins were. More griffins' feathers were garnered and then the magicians meditated whilst Grettir and Wilf stood guard. Wilf was surprised by a forest troll, but managed to quickly despatch it. It had a golden torc.

When the magicians were recovered the elves flew up looking for the griffins' nests, while the others kept watch for more griffins. Eliena noticed a spire of rock, 50 to 100m out from the rock. On top was a nest about 40 feet in diameter. Inside was an egg with something still alive inside. Grettir wrapped it in his ice hound cloak. Ubaron cast detect magic to see if there was anything magical within the debris in the nest. There was one hit, and he dug down to it picking up a few things on the way. He found a pouch, a silver arm ring and then the cause of the hit – a gold ring on a withered arm. The ring was worked gold in the shape of a river serpent or fish or watery beast. The elves and Kolgrim flew on to look for other nests, while the others continued to search the first one. They then found a brooch, a locket, an inlaid box, more pouches, including one heavy one containing yellow alluvial gold dust.

The elves and Kolgrim returned at midnight. They had found another nest with griffins in it. They were late as they had hidden from the griffins before returning. The nest was further to the north along the cliff face.

The next morning Ubaron and Kolgrim took teleport co-ordinates for the griffins' nest, which had spectacular views of the surrounding area, making it very easily memorable. Kolgrim teleported back to Sequalr to hand the egg over to Kojar for safekeeping. The party continued to search the nest, whilst they waited for Kolgrim to return. They found a silvered dagger, two more finger rings, a pouch of poor gems and an amber pendant. Several of the items were dwarf made and Grettir speculated that perhaps the orcs were in an old dwarf hold. Ubaron guessed that the nest had been occupied for perhaps hundreds of years. By six in the evening Kolgrim had still not returned.

The night passed uneventfully and Kolgrim had not appeared so Ubaron teleported back to Sequalr. Kolgrim's teleport co-ordinates had failed to work, but Ubaron was able to return successfully with him.

The party now flew south and the elves spotted another nest. This one was also empty and was about sixty feet in diameter. Ubaron again cast detect magic, but failed to find anything. This one only seemed to have been occupied for 30% of the time of the first nest. They found more gems, pouches and a small silver torc with imperial hallmark.

They decided to distract the griffins from the remaining nest they had found, so that it too could be ransacked. The elves watched over the nest while Ubaron and Kolgrim flew the other two warriors down and they all marched north. They were attacked by a griffin. Grettir grabbed it by the tail, while Ubaron struck it with the flat of his sword. It made a lot of noise but a cloak was thrown over its head and Kolgrim caused it to go blind and it was subdued and trussed up. After about 10 to 15 minutes it regained consciousness and began cawing again. Soon another griffin appeared, which was also blinded, subdued and trussed up.

Kolgrim and Ubaron flew Grettir and Wilf back to the previous eyrie, where they met up with the two elves and two fledglings. Kolgrim removed the blindness from the two griffins and they were left to fight there way free. The party returned to Sequalr and then went to Kos to see if people there knew much about the care of griffins. They had hippogriffs on Kos, but these were antipathetic to griffins. It was suggested that they could try selling them on Pangolin, where there were lots of conjurers, particularly masters of the wind.

Grettir, Wilf and Ubaron went to see Tharakur the Cruel in Chittagong. He offered 1500gp for the eggs and 2500gp each for the fledglings. He thought he could train them, but it would take a lot of time and effort; it could take three, four or even five years for them to reach maturity. After negotiations it was agreed that he would be given the egg and he would train the two fledglings, and would then sell them back to the party at a price of 15,000gp per trained griffin. Further more if the party returned with more fledglings to trade for these he would guarantee a price of 5,000gp per fledgling, and 2,000gp per egg.

Tharakur also had a look at the ring. He said that it was northern imperial, from the days of the road. It was a ring of walking on water, and the power would work until broken, i.e. it could be dispelled, but would work again after a period. He put a price of 5,000gp on it. He said that he and Ubaron might have spells of interest to and other matters they could discuss. The party agreed to hand over the griffins and that people would have the right to buy them in two years time.

Ubaron managed to pick the lock on the inlaid box and inside they found an engagement ring. It was white gold with a blue-white diamond, which had been dwarf cut. The total loot excluding the scarab was 21927gp, which gave a share per man of 3654gp. Including the money for the scarab each share was 4634gp. Ubaron won the drawing of lots for the magic ring and sold it to Grettir for 6,000gp.

Loot

cave lion pelt and teeth	700
silver ring	200
gold brooch, flashes of garnet	900
gold chain necklace, 3 small emeralds	1100
3 cut gems (500, 100, 100)	700
uncut gem	1000
22 semi-precious gems	400
3321sp	166
1011gp	1011
10pp	50
gold ring	100
gold torc	1000
4 sets of griffin feathers	1200
brooch, simple gold beast	100
locket, dwarf worked silver	300
inlaid box, late imperial, copper, platinum wire	400
engagement ring, white gold, blue-white diamond, dwarf cut	2500
pouches	1313
pouch of gold dust	480
silvered dagger	50
finger rings (100, 200)	300
amber pendant	50
silver armband, emeralds, dwarf made	800
pouches of 13 small gems	250
951gp	951
3120sp	156
small imperial silver torc	200
magic ring of walking on water	5000
gems	350
trolls head	200

F30 – Words of Iron (11 Oct 03)

Three days of sorting out followed the previous trip, and included a trip to the temple of Isis for Ubaron. He and Kollgrim then teleported Aliena, Gambelian, Grettir, Wilf, Jason and Ranulf to the ettin cave at dawn on 19th July 694. They took with them cold weather gear, ropes, crampons and pitons. They arrived safely at dawn and Ubaron summoned the hobgoblins, who had nothing to report. The elves set off to reconnoitre the area and returned at noon. They had explored a woody glen about 25 miles to the north up the river, where the arc of cliffs began. They had found a suitable campsite, and after a rest for meditation the four magicians flew everyone to the campsite. As they approached the campsite everyone could see large mountains off to the west, probably over 15,000 feet high.

The next morning the two elves set off for further reconnaissance. When they returned they reported having seen two groups of hill giants having an argument about twenty miles to the northwest. One party of giants had headed off to the west and the other group carrying the injured loser of the argument travelled more slowly to the northeast. The second group had headed along a pass in the mountains. After the elves had meditated for a while the party flew after the stronger party of four giants heading west. After picking up the trail the elves continued to follow the tracks quickly, but the rest of the party were forced to follow at a heavy infantry forced march pace. The trail started to follow a stream south-southwest. They realised that they were not catching the giants, so decided to investigate the pass to the northeast. They flew back to the pass and again the elves set off on a reconnaissance. They returned about midnight after watching a hill giant village, of about 10 to 20 giants, including wolves or hounds.

During the last watch of the night Ranulph spotted three giants cross the river, and then head up towards the pass. Using their fly spells the four magicians flew the rest of the party around in a loop to ambush the giants on their way up to the top of the pass. The ambush was set up, and two fire giants and a large barbarian, probably a half-giant, riding a bear were surprised. The bear and one of the giants were killed. The half giant fled and hid, and Ubaron flew after the other giant and cornered him in a thicket. By this time the party had realised that the half giant was almost certainly a druid and the elves in particular did not want to do anything further to harm him, unless he attacked the party.

The party returned to the thicket where Ubaron had cornered the second giant and Grettir and Ranulph tried to enter it. The thicket immediately burst into druidic fire and the pair retreated somewhat singed. A parley ensued and the gear of the deaf giant was returned and the druid and the giant were allowed to go free. Grettir also agreed to meet the druid at dawn by the river alone. The party returned to the camp to rest and allow the magicians to recover their mana.

Just before dawn the next morning Grettir went down to the river alone and met the druid, who emerged from the river. He admitted that he was a druid and Grettir mentioned Girindor as another druid he knew. The druid said he was called Ten Bears. Grettir told Ten Bears his name, but Ten Bears knew him as the Stone King. He told Grettir that if he followed the river north he would find as many frost giants as he would like. Grettir negotiated with Ten Bears for the help of the fire giants against the frost giants. The rest of the party came down to the river and the two elves chatted to Ten Bears, and arranged for him to meet Girindor.

The party marched further north up the river and the elves found another campsite. By now the river had a lot of white water, with hills and mountains to the west, and mountains to the north and east. The elves had seen mountain cat, gazelle and old orc tracks whilst searching for a suitable campsite.

The next morning the elves set off to reconnoitre again and returned at midday. They reported that 25 miles to the north the river turned northeast and became unnavigable. The party flew up to campsite among some small caves and broken rocks high up above the river near the snowline. Just before dawn a large figure below began to bang loudly on a drum. It was a kur. He seemed to know that the party was there and said that he wanted to talk in black speech. The kur climbed up towards the party. He was very large and wore horn scale mail armour covered in runes. He carried a spear or staff with a white rag tied to it and was evidently a sorcerer as he used a spell to enable him to speak common.

“Take the iron road to highlands or turn back to your towers of stone”, he said. He knew that Grettir was the Stone King as he said he could “see in the worlds beyond”. He said he was called Horsmonden and was the chief of his people. Grettir swore by fire and ice not to kill kur. The kur lands were to the west of the river. When Horsmonden went back down 20 kur stood up, who had previously been almost completely invisible, probably due to magic. All the kur then marched off.

The elves reconnoitred about 30 miles to the north where the water came in about a third from the north, and about two thirds from the west. The land climbed most steeply to the north. The elves found a small cave overlooking the confluence of the river, above the snowline. The party flew to the cave and looked down on the confluence, which was almost completely white water.

The weather deteriorated and a blizzard started. It was now winter state seven outside. The cave was a small cleft in the cliffs, with a ledge outside. When Kollgrim and Grettir were on watch Grettir saw a claw almost take Kollgrim off the ledge, with Kollgrim hardly even being aware of it. After this the watch stayed within the cleft, whilst the rest of the party huddled around a small fire.

Ranulf found a small cylindrical opening within the cleft, which he explored. It went nowhere but he did find a few onyx crystals. Night fell and the party began to run out of wood. There was a sudden icy blast, from a dragon's breath. Grettir fired Jason's crossbow with an alchemical charge and a molotov, and the dragon flew off down the river. Dawn arrived and the blizzard passed. Ranulph made marks in the cleft and Ubaron and Kollgrim took teleport co-ordinates and then teleported the party back to Sequarl.

F31a – Snow White and the Seven Dwarves (12 Oct 03)

At the beginning of the first week in August 694 Grettir, Ubaron, Ranulf, Wilf, Kollgrim, Adebarg and Jason set off from Chittagong on Wilf and Jason's boat. Ubaron cast a spell to determine the weather and told the party that there would be strong winds from the northeast along with some sleet or snow. Galiena helmed the ship successfully across the lagoon and through the confluence and they headed up the West Ytange. They sailed on through the night with Galena, Grettir and Ubaron shared the helming.

They continued on another day and night, and then the following day Grettir spotted a very large stag. Grettir used his ring to walk across the water towards it, but it galloped off before Grettir had a good shot. By the end of the day they had emerged from scrub and the river was now flowing through the plains. The river was now heading west and part the way through the day another river had joined from the north. This was the river they had explored in expedition F28. Later they saw a small river joining from the northwest; this led up to the lake of the hippogriffs. They continued on to the west. They were now sailing through scrub, with rough country to the north; they could see the Black Road to the south.

The next morning they saw wild boar on the bank, the weather was now somewhat drier. They came to another confluence with a river joining from the northwest, and the main Ytange coming from slightly south of west. They hit a log in the confluence and were turned broadside on. The ship took on lots of water but the crew were able to row to shore and beach, before they started to sink.

They began to bale, but were attacked by goblins. The party killed seven or eight goblins; one was captured but another one escaped. The captive promised to show Grettir where the Goblin King was in exchange for a hand-axe.

The party headed off with the captured goblin on a leash, while Galiena and her crew continued to bale the ship. After about 400 yards they were ambushed. Grettir fell into a pit, and the party were mobbed by a large force of goblins. About 50 goblins were slain and a few ran off, including a magician who had cast black magic at Ranulf, and then created a smoke cloud.

Ubaron and Grettir did some healing and Kollgrim and Jason went back to fetch Galiena and two or three crew to continue stripping the bodies, whilst the rest of the crew remained on the ship and everyone else followed the tracks of the goblin magician, using the spell detect trail.

As they followed the trail they could see a long thin lake to the north-northwest. The party came up to a criss-crossing of branches, which formed a fence or plashing across the track. There was a wooden gate and Wilf and Ubaron forced their way through. They were attacked by wolves, which they drove away, and were also subject to a shower of missiles from goblins concealed on platforms up in the trees. These were dealt with and the party continued into a cave blocked by walls and gates.

F31b – (10 Jan 04)

The original trip to this area involving Grettir, Salrod and others had taken place in Sept 679 (B38 – 1981/2).

The large door was smashed down by Jason and Wilf, while Grettir and Ranulf headed down a side tunnel. They killed a few goblins and called on the rest to surrender, but there was no reply and they returned to the main passage. Behind the smashed door was a fairly large rough-hewn passage with a few supporting beams.

A fire was started and Kollgrim cast a cloudkill spell twice to use the smoke from the fire and directed it down the passage on the right. The party then headed down the larger passage behind the broken down door. Ranulf was hit by broken oil from a slit above the passage and Grettir fired an arrow up the slit and now more oil descended.

They now reached an iron yet, which Ranulf and Jason managed to force open. This led into a large square hall with an exit in each of the other three walls. The hall was good goblin work and contained some well made goblin oak tables and chairs. There was the smell of burning from the exit on the left. Behind each of the exits was a narrow spiral staircase leading up.

There was an updraft up each staircase, so Jason put incendiary smoke up the one on the right, Ubaron cast noxious cloud up the one on the right and the party went up the staircase ahead. They emerged onto a corridor curving back to the left and right with a door straight ahead. The door was barricaded and Ranulf and Grettir tried to force it open. Meanwhile Ubaron and Jason explored the corridor, which went round in a circle meeting each of the other spiral stairs. There were three other exits heading anticlockwise. The first was a crawl way, the second was an alcove or small room with the slits for the burning oil and the third was a larger passageway with a burning smell, some smoke and possibly the crackle of a fire.

Ranulf and Grettir had now managed to remove the doors but there was a barricade of bricks and stone all the way to the ceiling. Ubaron and Wilf helped Ranulf to clear this, while Grettir, Jason and Kollgrim went to investigate the other exits. The larger passageway ended in a collapse caused by burning the supports. The crawl way ended in a chamber, which was also about to collapse, due to the supports having been set on fire. They returned to the barricade, where Ranulf could see signs of a fire. It was obvious that this exit was about to be collapsed as well.

The party returned to the entrance and checked that all the other passages led to collapses, which they did. Ubaron flew up to check for any smoke columns, which might indicate other entrances, while the rest returned to the ship.

Ubaron saw some small smoke plumes, but also saw one large column on a rocky outcrop. He flew up to investigate and realised that this was a beacon fire. He spotted a further beacon about 10 miles on to the north. He checked out the smaller plumes, which seemed to be small concealed entrances or ventilation shafts and then flew north to take a closer look at the other beacon.

The ship was moored on the northeast shore of the lake just past the confluence of the rivers, so the beacon was on the same side of the lake. The ground rose steadily as Ubaron flew towards the beacon, and it then became mountainous and rose up into the clouds.

The beacon was on a low mound, probably natural, in the hills. From there the land went down briefly and up into the mountains. There may have been a pass off to the northeast, although it was difficult to tell in the clouds, otherwise the mountains ran from the west-northwest to the east. Ubaron thought he could see a structure with a turf roof close to the beacon, possibly a shed. He could see no further beacons, but the mountains to the north were covered in cloud. Ubaron flew back to the ship.

The lake at this point headed northwest and then west-northwest. It was about five miles wide, with hills coming in from the south and only a thin strip of forest before the tree line. During the day Ubaron and Kollgrim flew reconnaissance, but they could see little due to the cloud cover. That night they were attacked by a river serpent; Wilf struck it and then Ubaron cast a spell and persuaded it to leave.

The next day they sailed on up the lake. The north shore was very thickly forested rising up to the tree line; the south was even steeper with some cliffs. The weather was still cloudy so no reconnaissance took place until the following morning when Ubaron and Kollgrim flew up. They could see a ten-mile long cliff off to the south, hundreds of feet high, about three or four miles from the shore, which would make a good lookout point. They flew on and saw ruins at the waters edge on the north shore.

They flew back to the ship, which headed in towards the ruins under oars. As they rowed in they saw goblins or hobgoblins, which opened fire, as they veered away Ubaron and Grettir killed some of the goblins, but one of the rowers took an arrow through the thigh and Kollgrim took one through the hand. Grettir and Ubaron removed the arrow and healed the rower, while Wilf healed Kollgrim who was still unable to use his hand for fighting or casting magic.

The ship headed on up the lake and a few miles further on they saw a bay and a pass up into the mountains on the north shore. They ignored this and headed on for a further day to another bay with a river. Here they moored and set to work to make some pavisses. They could hear the calling of urochs from up the river.

The next morning they headed back down the lake. Two large eagles were seen high in the sky. One flew off and then six more returned. The smaller five had wingspans of about fifteen feet; the two larger were about thirty feet. They flew in a circle above the ship and Ubaron tried to summon them. The largest flew down in a steep dive at Ubaron and the boat. Ubaron stood there and the eagle pulled out at the last instant and flew back up. Ubaron was still casting his spell. The next time the two largest flew down and Ubaron dropped to the deck, as the second seemed lower. He dropped his spell. Six of the eagles flew off but one of the largest stayed and watched the ship for quite a while as it headed back down the lake.

During the early part of the next night the ship was attacked by a much larger river serpent. It knocked down the mast and the ship was rowed for the shore. The serpent attacked the underneath of the ship. A jury mast was rigged and Ubaron let some wind out of his bag. The serpent continued to attack the ship. The next attack Jason dropped a flare as it came in for its attack and lit it up. The following attack came in from the bows and Grettir managed to land a very heavy blow, while Kollgrim fired off black magic into it. Again it attacked the hull, this time inflicting serious damage below the waterline. Jason lit it up with a flare again and this time managed to hit it with a spear, as it was visible. The serpent did not return for further attacks and the crew managed to fother the hull and reach the shore. Ubaron flew ahead to try to find a good landing, but the shore here was very rocky so they headed along it.

The next night they managed to find a sandy shore where they beached the ship. The next morning they dragged the ship out of the water and started to repair the damage. While the boat was being repaired Wilf and Grettir climbed up to a lookout point and Ubaron and Kollgrim flew off to reconnoitre. The two magicians spotted a river they had passed on the way north, about five miles away and knew that the ruins of the boathouse or quay were another 40-50 miles further on. They could see forest on both banks of the lake. As they headed back to the boat they saw a couple of very large eagles off to the southwest.

At dusk they refloated the ship and headed down the lake. Ubaron filled another bag of wind to be used to guide the ship in its attack and then flew up to try to locate their target. He found a cleft in the rocks that we knew was opposite the ruined boathouse and they waited to attack at dawn.

The attack was very successful: a few goblins were killed and the rest fled. However they managed to further damage the hull of the boat as they landed. The damage to the boat was almost as great as that inflicted by the river serpent. They investigated the stone structure, which was old, and properly carved from stone. It looked more like a boathouse than a quay, but there was not much of it left. In the quay was a very light canoe.

Adebarg was left with the crew as they tried to repair the ship, while Grettir and his companions went off to investigate a game trail. They found nothing so they returned to have another look at the quay, where they found the remains of a bollard. Kollgrim flew a reconnaissance, which revealed the ruins of a large structure nearby.

The ships repairs were completed and the ship headed into the next bay to anchor, while Grettir, Kollgrim, Ubaron, Wilf, Jason and Ranulf walked off to check out the ruins. They were quite extensive and the party camped in the remains in order to investigate them properly in the morning.

During first watch Wilf and Ubaron saw a ghostly white shape heading towards them. Wilf fired his crossbow, but the bolt went straight through. Ubaron shouted to the remainder of the party to awaken, but no-one did. He then cast his awaken spell, but only Jason awoke and after his sword went straight through the spirit without inflicting any damage he immediately fled with unnatural fear.

Ubaron became possessed by the undead. It felt like his life force was constrained in some vessel, and he had been possessed by a spirit. He attacked Wilf. Wilf managed to wake Grettir, who was able to help Ubaron escape from the possession. The undead left and the rest of the party were awakened. Ubaron and Grettir flew after Jason, but were unable to find before the camp was attacked again. This time the remaining members of the party managed to face off the undead, which left. Jason let off a flare so Ubaron was able to fly off and collect him.

Everyone stayed awake and the spectre returned at midnight. Grettir asked what it wanted and it pointed towards the lake. The spectre seemed to be female and slightly eldritch in form. It seemed to Grettir to be a restless and unquiet undead rather than being evil. Grettir tried to send her away and she sank into the earth. The rest of the night passed uneventfully.

In the morning the party began to investigate the site. First of all they circumnavigated what seemed to be some sort of curtain wall, with small towers at each of the four corners. They then went to look at a large mound inside the walls with some larger ruins. Here Kollgrim noticed some unusual flowers, which suddenly spat acid at him. Immediately the party were all attacked by the fronds of some sort of carnivorous plant. It was a large creeper or vine with many semi-independent fronds. Ranulf was engulfed by a number of fronds and Jason threw a molotov at him figuring that the fire would do more damage to the plants than to Ranulf. Grettir managed to hack into the main body of the vine and Wilf and Ubaron fought off the fronds in their area. Ranulf was being crushed but with the help of the molotov managed to free an arm and take a potion. Kollgrim splashed a potion over his acid and drank the rest and then cast some fireballs on the main body of the vine. Grettir was spat at by a couple of plants, but avoided any acid or narcotics and chopped some more bits of the vine off, and the remainder sank back into the earth.

The remaining fronds were finished off and the party collected samples of the main vine and the fronds along with any flowers, blooms and seedpods they could find. Grettir harvested these while Ubaron and Kollgrim tried to take suitable teleport coordinates. Wilf and Ranulf searched the ruins, while Jason kept watch.

There were lots of hobgoblin corpses along with a few dwarves. Grettir joined in the search while Ranulf helped the two magicians by carving the stone in one of the corner towers to their instructions. There were a few asps or vipers in the ruins, which occasionally attacked the searchers, but these were quickly dealt with. Ranulf and the magicians finished their work and joined the searchers. Ubaron divided up the area and cast detect magic in each section. He had difficulty getting good results because there was a heavy resonance of magic from under the area they were searching. However he did identify three definite hits and they found a dwarf made war axe with runes on, a dwarf mail shirt, and a dwarf made helmet. Kollgrim cast move earth and this was used to clear the whole area. They found seven suits of armour probably made by the same dwarven workshop, all with the same distinct silver hue.

Loot:

Old Empire: Malcolm's Diary

Magic Dwarven Chain Shirt	4500	
Dwarven Chain Shirt	500	
Dwarven Chain Shirt	500	
Dwarven Chain Shirt	500	
Dwarven Hauberk	1000	
Dwarven Hauberk	1000	
Dwarven Plate	3500	
Magic war axe	4000	+2
Magic helmet	1500	
Dwarf Silver Axes (2)	1000	(for the rest)
Dark iron war axes (4)		
War hammer		
Helmets (5)		
Potions (4)	800	Dwarven spirit - Kuriko
SP	90	1796
GP	476	
6 Stones	450	
Jewel	500	
Gold Necklace	700	
Gold decorated Waraxe	100	
Gold armband	1100	
Gold/emerald finger ring	700	
Platinum belt buckle	600	
Gold finger ring (2)	200	
Small box	500	Alchemical healing unguent
Pouches of gold dust (6)	4160	26
Magic Plant Requisites		Musk fronds
	750	Orange
	400	Yellow
	150	Red
	300	Trunk
	29976	

Share = 3331gp

G1a – Dark Willow (13 Mar 04)

Ubaron teleported to Redhill and met Frathic. Ubaron played the gnome at chess and they drew one game all with one game drawn. Ubaron ordered two protection amulets: gem protection v frost and gem protection v unnatural fear for 3,500gp each. The first would be available in a month (the last week of September 694), and the second a month later. He then teleported to Chittagong and went to the Temple of Isis.

He handed over 1,500gp for a personal ceremony where his fortune would be told. Handmaidens of Isis washed and robed him and there were prayers and the smell of incense. A priest saw him and told Ubaron the following.

Change for him was a theme; it was a turbulent reading of the future. The future went in all directions with many options and chaotic paths. There was danger ahead: from evil, evil spirits and minions of Set. His soul had recently been in jeopardy, although he was a relatively untainted person, which was good for Isis. He would have a lot of inhuman dealings in the future, not the normal interactions with humanity. There were no obvious family connections; he was not a normal family man he was a man alone in the recent past and future, a wanderer far from home. Isis noted that he was alone and would be facing the undead and the inhuman. She noted that he was untainted and a person of promise and he was given a gift of a temple cat, the effigy of Bast the cat goddess was pointed out to him, along with Tefnut goddess of storms and Bes god of luck.

The cat was small, female, light brown with black tipped ears and paws and looked like a Burmese. Bast was an obscure figure looking spookily like the stories of Valaka; an athletic woman with the head of a black leopard. She was a shape changer and an ally or hero of the Ossyran cult. She was enigmatic, connected to women and a staunch enemy of Set. Ubaron had been given the cat as a sign of favour from the goddess. Ubaron learnt the spell find familiar, but waited for an auspicious time to cast the spell.

Ubaron and Kollgrim teleported Grettir, Wilf, Girindor and Ranulf to the Villa near the lake. The mound was no longer covered by the vine; there was now a very large tree even though it was only just over a week after the fight with the vine. Girindor cast hold plant on the tree and summoned lightning. He released a blast of the lightning, but it didn't strike the tree. A second strike also missed and then ricocheted off a boulder narrowly missing Girindor and Grettir. Girindor cast detect evil: there was evil in the mound and among any roots there, but not in the tree. He also cast detect life: the tree was very powerfully alive, like the collective life of a forest.

Girindor communed with the tree. He said the tree was called Blackroot and it was locked in mortal combat with the vine that had attacked the party the previous week. He agreed to enter the tree at dawn to assist in the combat. In the meantime he helped to find a campsite in the nearby woods.

That night the party were attacked by a small band of hobgoblins. Nine were killed, two captured and two escaped under the cover of a cloud of smoke. They found 45sp and 10gp. Ubaron summoned and controlled the two hobgoblins. Girindor headed into the tree. They said they were from the great marsh.

At about midday Girindor emerged. Black root with Girindor's assistance had managed to kill the vine. The vine was drinking from a source of earth power; an underground pool. Blackroot explained that the pool had been discovered by axe wielders many years ago. After the axe wielders left the vine had been drawn to the water. About ten years ago Blackroot heard shouting in the mountains and things had felt better since then. Grettir thought this tied up with the demise of the Ogri.

The party explored the ruins. One of the outbuildings seemed fairly substantial – it may have been a bathhouse suggested Wilf. They found mosaics, tiles and a pipeline which all backed Wilf's hypothesis. The pipeline led to another building, which might have been a pump house.

Ubaron ordered the hobgoblins to continue excavating the bathhouse while the party headed northeast towards the great marsh. They crossed a river heading from northwest to southeast into a lake about ten miles to the east. Ubaron, Girindor and Kollgrim flew the three warriors around the edge of the lake and they looked for a campsite. A cave was found and as they entered they found two hill giants, which were quickly slain. They found 3984sp, 805gp, 14 semi precious stones, 3 better quality semi precious stones – yargoons (1500gp), and a red gold ring with a five-carat dwarf cut diamond (2500gp). Grettir was attacked by a troll, but it quickly fled.

Girindor and Grettir reconnoitred and were attacked by two trolls. Grettir killed one and the other fled. From the dead troll they took a red gold armring (500gp). Kollgrim used his move earth spell to cover the bodies of the two hill giants; the party then flew back to the villa.

The party continued to explore the ruins, while Girindor sank into the earth. The elf met the spectre under the tower and talked to her. She was a priestess or acolyte of Alder. The pure water had been part of a shrine to Alder. The acolyte had been killed by the orcs who had desecrated the shrine. She told Girindor that she could be laid to rest by restoring the shrine. The shrine had contained a kneeling statue of Alder, who was also known as Edin, Kenyon, Seswate and other hidden names. She was a goddess or heroic figure, connected to healing, purity and dispelling evil. She was part of the general imperial chaos pantheon.

The next morning the party including the two hobgoblins headed along the track from the villa. They reached a fork and took the lower more northerly of the two tracks. They reached a river and headed west along the river until they reached a confluence. Ranulf got into the river to carry out some panning and found a small nugget of gold just where the two rivers joined. The nugget was not very smooth, indicating that it hadn't travelled to far; it was reddish gold.

Girindor suddenly stood very still, almost quivering. He had received a message from Shorembo. There had been a convention of the elves to discuss the disappearance of Nickar, but he had not passed on any information about this to Grettir and the others. The message indicated that Shorembo had taken one of the sarntur and headed after Nickar. Urthil was the sarntur taken by Shorembo it was the one most closely connected to Nickar and had at one time tried to take control of the magician. At the convention Girindor and other elves had counselled against precipitate action although Shorembo had wanted to take direct action.

Ubaron ordered the two hobgoblins to return to the villa and guard it. He left them with some food. The party then teleported back to Sequarl. Ubaron then travelled on with Grettir to speak to Paradoxides in Bazi.

Paradoxides told Ubaron about the sarntur and the part they had played in the destruction of the Ogri. He and Ego had used the sarntur, along with Nickar, and they had retrieved them with Grettir from the Lands of Dust. Paradoxides was left to continue with his research and was given a runestick, which would break if Grettir wished him to hurry to Sequarl. Ubaron then took Grettir back to Sequarl to talk to Ego.

Loot:

14 semi precious stones	275gp
red gold ring with five-carat dwarf cut diamond	2500gp
3 yargoons (650, 350, 500)	1500gp
trolls head	200gp
red gold armring	400gp
Total	4875gp
Share	980gp

G1b – The Mines of Azov (14 Mar 04)

Two days later Ubaron and Kollgrim teleported Grettir, Girindor, Ranulf and Adebarg back to the villa. It was a misty day. There was only one hobgoblin waiting for Ubaron as the other had deserted back to the other hobgoblins. Ubaron gave the remaining one a hand-axe and some food and ordered him to keep an eye on the villa and the surrounding area and report back to him when he returned. Ubaron, Kollgrim and Girindor flew the other three up to the confluence of the two rivers where they had reached on the last trip and Ranulf did some more panning.

They camped for the night and then next morning they flew up the northern branch to a small loch, with a cliff. The track had disappeared so they flew back to where a small tributary flowed in from the west and there was a small island, and they started to walk up the tributary. The game trail or track could be seen here. Ranulf did some more panning and found a small red gold nugget in the tributary and red gold dust in the main river from the north. They set up camp for the night.

The next morning the mist had finally cleared and the party marched up the tributary trying to follow the trail. Ranulf found a few more traces of red gold. The land started to close in around the river. The magicians flew the fighters around and then investigated the cliffs off to the south. They camped for the night below the cliffs.

The next morning was clearer and colder. Girindor with his elven eyesight spotted a possible cave in the cliffs. Although it was possible to walk up to this, for flexibility and safety the three magicians flew the three fighters up to the opening. It was 50m across and there were four pairs of large dwarven doors all smashed in. Each door was 2m wide and 3m high. The entrance led into a natural cave that had been widened and improved.

As they explored through the complex they came into a wider cavern and were attacked by three stone trolls. These were killed and on the bodies they found a bracelet, a dwarven goblet carved from gold, a silver armband with carved serpentine, three gems, a gold torc, a ring of carved amber, necklace of pearls set in dwarf silver chain, large silver dish covered in pictures of men with plumed helmets on horseback hunting beasts, a ring of carved ivory, red gold cloak clasp, a red gold ring inset with a ruby, two semi precious stones, 298sp, 1054gp a heavily corroded dwarf axe and fragments of a helmet.

They continued to explore and Ranulf was attacked by two giant lizards. These were killed by the dwarf with the assistance of Grettir. They found a hatchling and six eggs and killed the hatchling. They also found a mail coif, 1652sp, fragments of orcish bones, 5lbs of red milled gold dust, a rather crushed gold ring with a blue white dwarf cut diamond, 26gp and two crocodile skins.

The party continued on and reached a great chasm with a bridge over it. Ranulf was attacked by a giant scorpion, but again this was quickly dealt with and the party were able to cross the bridge. It was a very long way down into the chasm and a long way up too. They then found their way into a cavern with many large edible mushrooms, along with some with special properties which Grettir and Girindor identified and harvested.

Next they came into a room with large polished slabs like tables. Here they were attacked by half a dozen troglodytes. Four were killed and two badly wounded. The wounded were questioned but didn't speak common or black speech and were slain. From the bodies they took 17gp, 48sp, five small gold nuggets on a leather loop, a dwarf silver longsword, an iron shortsword, a dagger and a heavy mace.

Ubaron and Kollgrim took teleport coordinates by getting Girindor to cast rock to mud in a corner of an antechamber, Ranulf carved some sidules and then Girindor cast mud to rock. By a similar method Ranulf carved a message in dwarven runes on one of the tables in the main room. They returned to the lizards nest to collect the eggs and then went to the entrance where Ubaron and Kollgrim took visualize teleport coordinates. They party were then teleported back to Sequarl.

Loot:

Bracelet, malachite and gold	500gp
Goblet, dwarf carved gold (tower of beasts)	800gp
Silver armband, carved serpentine	800gp
2 semi precious gems (50, 20)	70gp
Jewel	500gp
Gold torc or armband	200gp
Ring of carved amber	200gp
Pearls set in dwarf silver	1100gp
Large silver imperial dish	2000gp
Ring carved ivory	200gp
Gold cloak clasp	300gp
Ruby ring, red gold	600gp
2 semi precious gems (200, 150)	350gp
2 lizard skins	500gp
7oz red gold	700gp
Gold ring, blue white diamond (3 mana points)	5000gp
Mushrooms	170gp
Gold nuggets	250gp
Dwarf silver longsword	350gp
6 eggs (1 dead)	1000gp
Total	15590gp

2804gp per share

Ubaron took the mana point gem and Ranulf the goblet.

G3 – Cold Drake Killers (19 Sep 04)

It was the end of September 694. Ubaron went to Redhill to collect a protection from frost amulet. It was a topaz pendant. He also went to Chittagong and bought some flares and then prepared some spell scrolls.

On 1st October Ubaron, Grettir, Paradoxides, Girindor, Wilf and Kollgrim teleported to the cleft in the north up the valley of the West Otanga; it overlooked the confluence of two rivers. There were mountains all around and it was winter state four in the cleft and six in the open air.

After teleporting Ubaron and Kollgrim meditated, while Paradoxides fired up his detect dragon amulet; there were no contacts. They spent the night in the cleft with a watch outside. During third watch Ubaron and Girindor were attacked by a snow troll, but quickly slew it. Ubaron took samples of blood, claws and teeth and the hide was stripped.

The next day the wind had risen and there was some sleet with clearer spells between. Paradoxides again set off his amulet and the party flew off in three pairs with Paradoxides concentrating on his amulet. After about half an hour a blizzard began and the party was forced to land. They saw a river with large chunks of ice in the centre, and frozen over at the edge. The lumps of ice were very large and seemed to have melted over the summer but now had refrozen. It was warmer in the valley than it had been up in the cleft. The weather lifted slightly so the party continued flying slowly at about tree height.

The weather cleared briefly and they could see a glacier and a huge mountain. The flyers became very tired due to the altitude and they landed in an ice field and waited for Girindor to try to find a suitable campsite.

Girindor found a landside, which they could make into a roofless shelter, then a large ruined igloo from the previous winter. They opted for the roofless shelter. Overnight the wind rose further and in the morning a blizzard began. Paradoxides cast his ropetrick spell and the party were able to shelter from the weather.

By dawn the next day the blizzard had blown itself out and the party descended back to the world. They flew up to the glacier, which opened up into a plain at least ten miles across; probably three or four hundred square miles. They flew over the glacier in a figure of eight with Paradoxides concentrating on his amulet again. As they flew Paradoxides got a contact off to the west. They party headed down and saw a small chasm; Paradoxides thought a dragon might be at the bottom of it.

The three pairs flew carefully down into the chasm. Girindor clipped some of the rocks on the way down and lost his fly spell. Fortunately Paradoxides was able to recover with his own fly spell, but he lost the spell on his amulet.

Girindor recast his fly spell and the six adventurers safely reached the bottom of the cavern 200 feet down. There was a very jagged floor and some light from the above world. They started to explore the chasm.

Suddenly they were surprised by the dragon. Girindor was stunned; Paradoxides let off his wand into the dragon. Ubaron threw a fire grenade. Grettir struck the dragon a couple of meaty blows. Girindor came around and set off his ring into the dragon, but was then stunned again. Ubaron and Grettir hit it again and then Grettir despatched it with another heavy blow.

It was actually a cold drake not a dragon. There was another smaller blip on Paradoxides amulet. The party followed this direction and found the drakes hoard and an egg – the source of the blip. There were lots of bones and also a niche in the wall made by a dragon's claw, with a human skull up in it. Paradoxides cast detect magic and received four hits – a potion, a combat shield, a mail hauberk and a heavy, all iron spear with runes marked on it. There were piles of coins and also some gems, which may have been arranged in a zen garden. There were many broken fragments of weapons and armour including a broken old dwarf-axe.

Ubaron and Paradoxides took some ichor and the hide and head were taken from the drake. The coins and gems were piled up and counted. The armour, shield and spear were all from the same culture – probably early imperial. The armour was for 6'6". There was a covering of scales over the breast, each with the same rune. The spear had a similar rune, whenever anyone picked it up they could feel the wind in their hair. It was called Stormrider and was very heavy, although it was only three or four feet long.

The potion was in a dwarf silver flask with gems in the screw in stopper. Grettir touched the skull and got a feeling of Viking strength. It seemed to have belonged to a lone warrior to whom the armour, shield and spear belonged. The dragon had respected the only person to have challenged him alone and had accorded his skull a place of respect in the niche.

Girindor identified the cold drake as male. The magicians meditated and then Girindor cast rock to mud so they could make runs for teleport co-ordinates. The booty was piled up and the party and their loot were taken safely back to Sequarl.

The potion was dwarven mead. The spear had three spells, each powered by a trigger word: feather fall could be used once per day (midnight to midnight), levitation once per week and summon night wind once per lunar month. It also had a +1 to hit and +1 damage bonus. The spear gave the wielder the feeling of the wind in their hair and would be useful when conjuring the wind. It was very heavy with a three or four-foot long shaft all made of iron. (Encumbrance 8, range 6 hexes).

The armour had a special enchantment against cold magic - +2 for the armour and +4 v cold magic. The combat shield was +2. Kollgrim took the shield, Girindor the armour, Ubaron the spear and Wilf the mead. The egg was discussed and it was decided to take it to the Queen of Bazi and see what she offered.

Grettir dreamt of a lone hero fighting the cold drake and the dragon being impressed that he had the courage to face the cold drake alone. Grettir persuaded Rendip Rim to put a tomb with the skull, some equipment and some of the dragon in the temple, with the story outside.

A few days later the same party teleported back to the chasm. They explored it thoroughly but found nothing further. Most of the bones seemed to be deer or elk. There didn't seem to be as many bones as would have been expected. While they were down in the chasm a blizzard hit, but they were able to wait in the sheltered chasm until the next morning, by which time the storm had blown out.

They flew north in three pairs and reached the foothills of the great mountain. Girindor found a cave with a frozen stream emerging. The party explored and found a small passage off to the left, which came to a dead end. Ahead was a wall of ice with a very small crawlway off to the side.

Paradoxides cast detect magic and detect thought. There was no magic, but he sensed multiple minds with fear, hunger, psychosis and fight evident. Detect life gave sixteen hits directly ahead: strong life with some power. Paradoxides could detect communication – mainly empathic, some in black speech, some prayers to the Yotun, and a silent intensity waiting to pounce.

Paradoxides cast vorpal blade and attacked the ice wall, then Wilf fired a daylight flare through the gap and the party could see a large cavern beyond. They went through and everything had gone. Grettir felt traces of Sett. Suddenly runes were heard and there was a white out and the party were attacked by werewolves.

They killed thirteen werewolves and captured one; two managed to escape. The captive turned back into a human female, in her thirties, with paler skin and dark hair. She was athletic, quite comely, with a northern barbarian appearance. The complex was explored and they found deer and fish drying, but nothing of value.

The captive regained consciousness and spoke northern barbarian. While she was interrogated Girindor looked for the tracks of the two escapees. The captive's name was Kettler. They had been waiting for someone. They were nomadic, wandering from place to place. She seemed to be half crazed. She was built like a gymnast or long distance runner and had no arm scars to indicate the habit of fighting with weapons. They tied her up, gave her extra heal and then walled her in with a magic stone wall. They then joined Girindor in following the escapees.

The tracks started as wolves, but shortly changed to human. They managed to follow them for a while, but it quickly became apparent that they were losing ground, so they returned to the complex.

Overnight the magicians regained their mana and the next morning they began to fly around the great mountain; Paradoxides employed his detect dragon device. As they flew over the shoulder of the mountain there was a huge drop on the far side – the great rift. On the far side it seemed like a frozen desert. This seemed to be a continuation of the rift, which separated the lands of dust from the rest of the world. The rift ran from southwest to northeast. The three pairs then began to head back. Kollgrim became very tired and was forced to land, exhausted.

Girindor saw a snow eagle and flew up to meet and talk to him. He described the rift as the edge of the world and said that it bounced off the sacred mountain. He described the mountain as the centre of the world: the meeting place of the broken world, the living world and the ice world.

Paradoxides used a few wands to check out the complex and found two chests joined by a strap – like a set of panniers. They contained two potions, gold and a scroll. One potion had the mark of the sun god Ra and the other the mark of Sett. The scroll was in a bone scroll tube. Paradoxides left some clairvoyance crystals, and then sigils were marked and Paradoxides and Ubaron took different sets of teleport co-ordinates. The party tried to remove all traces of their presence and then piled the bodies in the outside passage and teleported back to Squarl.

They went to Bazi to see the Queen and told her the provenance of the egg. She said that she had never heard of an egg being found with a female. She believed that the offspring were not predictable. In exchange for the egg she offered the summoning of transport or the carving of a figurehead with eyes for a ship; the party opted for the figurehead. She was interested in the sacred mountain, and described it as the bones of the world poking through. She said that about a fifth of the world was broken, none of that being south of the equator and described it as a bite taken out of the world.

Loot

380 platinum pieces	1900gp
5570gp	5570gp
1162 sp	58gp
27 pieces of amber	1350gp
51 semi precious stones	5100gp
12 jewels	6000gp
6 emeralds, each worth 1000	6000gp
Dwarf cut ruby	2000gp
Dwarf cut diamond	3000gp
Combat shield +2	5000gp
Stormrider magic spear	11000gp
Magic hauberk (+2, +4 against frost)	13500gp
Dwarven mead and flask	5500gp
Snow troll hide	700gp
Snow troll head, claws and teeth	200gp
Hide, teeth and claws of drake	
1998gp	1998gp
Potion of Ra – helps eyes	
Black potion	
Spell - protection v undead level 5	

Share 11479gp

G4 – (19 Sep 04)

It was the 1st November 694. Ubaron went to Redhill to collect a protection from unnatural fear. He also learnt the spell cure critical. Ubaron, Grettir, Paradoxides, Girindor, Jason and Kollgrimm then met at Sequarl in preparation for teleporting to the werewolf cave in the far north.

Paradoxides cast clairvoyance and observed from his crystals. He spotted what seemed to be a giant insect feeding in the food store. Paradoxides and Ubaron then teleported everyone safely to the caves.

They moved on to the food cave, where Grettir was attacked by a giant cave worm. It forced him back, but Jason shot it with an incendiary bolt, and it quickly expired. Ubaron took some ichor; Girindor searched the insides, but found nothing of interest inside it. They also took its mandibles, which were like black ivory.

Girindor looked outside; there was a blizzard out there. He thought that it would blow out the following morning. Paradoxides checked his detect dragon amulet and didn't detect anything. The day and night passed uneventfully.

Next morning they set off with Kollgrimm flying Paradoxides, Ubaron flying Grettir and Girindor flying Jason, with Paradoxides using his amulet. They flew clockwise and ascending around the holy mountain, which was called Denali. Kollgrimm struggled with the altitude and they went down to the ridge on the north flank of the mountain, so that he could rest. Girindor noticed something odd in the snow, but couldn't work out what it was.

They rested and Kollgrimm recovered, being given an herbal preparation by Paradoxides. They then flew up again; Ubaron saw a shape bigger than a man looming in the spindrift high up the mountain, a couple of miles away. Kollgrimm used Grettir's iounstone, which enabled him to survive without oxygen. They flew on and Kollgrimm spotted a possible crevasse very high up. The party returned to the cave. Just before dawn Girindor and Ubaron were on watch; Girindor spotted something moving about the speed of a galloping horse. It was humanoid in shape and similar in size to a horse. It was about a mile and a half away.

Girindor turned into a bird and followed the humanoid. It was perhaps a half giant and had chased and caught an elk. It was about half way in size between a human and a giant. Girindor windwalked the party down to where the humanoid was. He said that no-one these days had any respect. They told him that they were hunters and he wanted to know where were their sacrifices? He could smell much about everyone in the party – he knew of Paradoxides liaison with the panther queen, and Jason's involvement with fire giants. He had a huge presence – he was about 8'4" and heavily muscled. He made a circuit of the party. Grettir gave him a 1000gp torc from around his neck. He was armed with a large war axe and had a knuckle-duster and an armoured foot and was wearing chainmail. He was rimed with frost. He had an aura of power with, metaphysically speaking, and a huge grey hat. He referred to Grettir as a death eater and said in these last days there was very little respect left. "Maybe these are the last days and the chain will break", he said.

He asked if their swords were for hire – Grettir said their swords were available for what interested them. He said he had an enemy at the top of the mountain. He could get them to the top of the mountain. He had a larger brother their and they had fallen out and he would like to cast him down. He was one like him but bigger. The party discussed the offer and Grettir prayed – he got no definite response and the half giant laughed and said he wouldn't be answered. He said Girindor had no garden, no fixed roots. He said Ubaron was a minion but perhaps wouldn't be one day.

The party swore blood brothers with the half giant to fight his enemy and cast him down. He said Kollgrimm knows the old ways and should know what was happening! He said he would deal with the storm giants when they got up high. They would come to some stairs and a door – through there they would come to a bridge where they would fight his brother. His brother might call for aid, but if the party were quick they would get him first.

Girindor, Ubaron, Kollgrimm and Paradoxides flew the party after the half giant. He went up the mountain at an uncanny speed. Paradoxides and Girindor were forced to land as the altitude overcame them and Girindor tried to summon the wind to carry them and a blizzard arrived. Ubaron and Jason had to land as the altitude also overcame Ubaron and the half giant picked them up and carried them.

They encountered the storm giants and the half giant, who was called Uller, told them he was in charge and to get out of there; they left. They reached some steps leading up to a portico about 100 metres below the summit. They went through the portico; there were three or four options and they turned north to reach a bridge over a void. The bridge seemed to go far longer than was physically possible inside the mountain. There was light ahead and the bridge seemed to become light as they could see green lands ahead. They saw Heimdal ahead on the Bifrost Bridge. Jason fired his crossbow with a full incendiary. Heimdal seemed to be clad in light. It became apparent that Heimdal and Uller were Aesir Gods. The Gods exchanged blows. Paradoxides flew to the other side of the bridge, even though magic seemed very hard to do on the bridge. Magic was easier once Paradoxides was safely on the other side of the bridge as this was on a different plane. Heimdal's armour lit up; everyone apart from Paradoxides saved successfully, but he was temporarily blinded.

Grettir got into combat and had his shield cut in half. The fight continued, Ubaron and Kollgrimm joined Grettir; Heimdal was finding the going tough. He took out and blew on the gadjallah horn. Girindor commanded a tree, which enveloped Heimdal. Uller turned and ran. Jason fired crossbow at Uller and said, "to the death you swore".

Everyone started to leave. They exited safely from the bridge, whilst Heimdal and Uller exchanged insults. The party were congratulated by Uller, who handed over a gold wheel to Grettir to share with the party and suggested the party left the area. He wanted a word with Jason – he offered him a post, which he declined. The party then teleported back to Sequarl. The wheel of gold was one of drapnir's children. Drapnir was Odin's ring.

After discussions the party went to the temple of Thor and confessed. After handing over the wheel their tale was believed. Five of them had to hand over 5 talents, but Grettir had to pay out 10 talents in wergild.

On the 8th November the party returned to the werewolves cave. They flew up and investigated the crevasse spotted by Kollgrimm, but found nothing. Next day they flew along the river but found nothing. During the third watch Girindor and Ubaron were attacked by a large undead. Ubaron was not surprised due to his sword, which leapt into his hand as danger approached. It was a very large undead, perhaps it had once been a giant, but moved quite ponderously. Grettir threw his spear. The undead collapsed in a heap and the party noticed runes in black speech on its bones. They said something about cursed and wandering. It seemed that someone had killed it, reanimated it and set it wandering. It was about ten feet tall and was probably once a hill giant. It appeared to be life seeking, but not destination seeking. It was fed into the fire. It had nothing of value. It might have been a tupilak – the creation of a shaman.

They spent another day exploring, but found nothing; Kollgrimm and Paradoxides got separated from the rest of the party, but everyone met up back at the cave. The next day they set off again, but found nothing. Girindor went off as a bird to try to find a suitable campsite near where they were now searching, but only just made it back for nightfall without having any success.

At night a forest troll got into the cave, Grettir struck it with his spear as it tried to escape, having realised his mistake in approaching such a tough party, and it was then finished it off. It had a silver earring with a dangling pearl and a gold bracelet. The rest of the night was uneventful. The next morning was clear, but very windy. They explored again, but when Kollgrimm tried to recast his fly spell he klutzed. They managed to find a reasonable campsite and Girindor directed the building of an igloo.

The next morning Kollgrimm was still recovering. Girindor and Paradoxides explored, while the rest recuperated in the igloo. Girindor spotted some wolves and then a large white bear. Otherwise the exploration was unsuccessful. Paradoxides had so far had no hits from his detect dragon amulet.

The next day was sunny and clear. Girindor gave a good forecast for the next two days. They explored again and in the afternoon Jason spotted a large quadruped in some trees – possibly a leopard or tiger. The night passed uneventfully and they set out again the next morning.

Off to the southeast they could see the inland sea. Off to the southwest one of the mountains was smoking. They found nothing and returned to the igloo. During the third watch Ubaron felt his sword leap into his hand, he shouted a warning, but a white dragon breathed frost on Ubaron, and then landed on the igloo before anyone could react. The dragon stamped on the igloo, while Ubaron and Girindor attacked it. It had an incredibly tough hide – it was like hitting iron. The dragon flew up and breathed on Ubaron again, then flew off eastwards. Fortunately no-one was badly injured. The magicians carried out healing from scrolls and the druid did as much healing as he could before dawn. The party then flew off after the dragon; it was about an hour after the attack. They spotted a great white bear, but no sign of a dragon. They continued on into the afternoon, when Girindor spotted a cave. There was a very large area under an overhang on a bend in the river. They flew on but then returned and took teleport co-ordinates, before returning to Sequarl by teleport.

The next morning the party teleported back to the underhang. They flew off to explore the nearby glacier. They reached the eternal ice and flew around. Grettir and Ubaron spotted something humanoid on the ice, which headed under the ice. They flew down to investigate – there was a shambles of crawlways into the ice. They gave up and flew to the undercut under the glacier. During the first watch they were attacked by ice goblins. Jason hit one or two with his incendiary, then everyone awoke and a tough fight broke out. The ice goblins were hard to hit and damage, but not particularly strong. Kollgrimm was wounded and incapacitated, as was Girindor. Paradoxides cast a lightning bolt. Grettir and Ubaron killed one each and Grettir captured one, while the other three escaped. The two bodies seemed to just turn to melt water.

The prisoner spoke black speech. It said its name was winter and they had attacked, as they were hungry. They lived in the glacier and owed allegiance to the ice. It didn't understand the question when asked about the dragon.

They teleported back to Sequarl and took the ice goblin to Tharakur, who gave them 1000gp for it. The bracelet from the troll was worth 300gp, the earring 350gp, and the troll impedimenta 350gp. The mandibles from the ice worm were worth 500gp. Each share was 400gp.

G5 – To Hell and Back (30 Apr 05)

In the middle of November 694 Ubaron, Grettir, Paradoxides, Girindor, Adils and Kollgrim teleported to the crossroads high up on the mountain near to the Bifrost bridge. Ubaron was unsuccessful on his first attempt; Paradoxides took Adils, Kollgrim took Grettir and then Ubaron managed to take Girindor but Girindor sprained his ankle. Ubaron cured Girindor. The party arrived early in the morning at the big archway at the top of the steps; there was a very blue sky with snow below. The peaks were sticking through the snow. It was extremely cold with a high wind chill. Ubaron's sword was glowing light blue to indicate a general level of danger.

They went into a large central arched chamber. On the last trip they had gone right towards the Bifrost Bridge and Asgard so this time they headed left. They reached a gate with fittings and frames of gold and a gate of crystal or gem. At the side was a niche with a golden bell. Grettir rang the bell. It sounded much heavier, louder and longer than expected; the floor resonated. A very large undead emerged. "These are the gates to hell, you can pass by word, deed or sign" it said. Girindor was told he could pass, but Grettir and the rest of the party couldn't. Grettir was told that the undead was the gatekeeper; if Grettir and his comrades wished to pass by deed they could fight the undead, either individually or as a group. They could also give three drops of blood each, or speak the gatekeeper's name. The gatekeeper seemed like a stretched man; cadaverous, with a bluish cloak, and a reddish glow from his eyes. He did not emit supernatural fear. Paradoxides remembered that his name was Modgud. Paradoxides, Ubaron, Grettir, Adils and Kollgrim passed by speaking the name and Girindor was allowed through anyway. The gates closed behind them and Modgud was seen no more.

Grettir lit his spear, but it didn't burn as strongly as in the normal world. Grettir realised he was in enemy territory – he wouldn't recover Ka here; it wasn't an entirely hostile environment, but it certainly wasn't sympathetic. The passage went left and then down some steps. Ahead they saw a bridge of fire across a chasm; the Gialla Bridge. Beyond they knew would be the Iron Wood. Girindor cast protection from fire and went across with Grettir and then ferried the rest of the party across with the help of Grettir's master of file helmet.

Ahead they could see a cavern opening into a twilight world, with a dark forest (the Wood of Iron) and a path in front of them. This seemed to be a sunset, from which the sun would never rise again. Girindor had been burnt after his many crossings of the bridge of fire; Ubaron cast cure burn on him and then cure critical off a scroll. Paradoxides knew nothing grew there; the trees there were of iron, to survive they would have to pass Garm the hell hound and then pass the Hell Gate. They would then need to cross the many streams of test and trial to the hall Elvinda where Hel lived.

The party entered the wood – it was very dark. As they marched through Kollgrim was struck by something, but no-one saw what by. Then Adils was struck by an iron leaf. Members of the party continued to be struck by iron leaves. They formed a shield wall, with Paradoxides casting shield and they forced march. Ubaron was struck on the arm by leaf, which he pocketed. Adils was knocked unconscious by a blow to his head, and was dragged on by Grettir and Ubaron; he then recovered. Party members continued to be struck and Kollgrim had to take a potion as the group marched on.

The adventurers emerged from the wood. What they saw reminded Grettir and Paradoxides of the Lands of Dust. Girindor was given an iounstone to prevent him breathing in the dust. Ahead were some gates, which the party approached. The hellhound Garm emerged. Girindor sang to the beast. Garm attacked Ubaron, who sidestepped and struck the hellhound, and then so did Grettir. Paradoxides investigated the doors. Girindor set off his lightning ring into Garm. Paradoxides caused one door to go down and clouds of dust sprang up. Garm forced his way past Ubaron and Grettir and trampled Kollgrim. Garm went through the door after Girindor and was followed by Grettir, Ubaron and Grettir's huscarles. It definitely seemed to be like the Lands of Dust on the far side of the gate. Kollgrim and Adils took potions and Ubaron returned through the gate to fetch his shield. Garm went back through door and savaged Ubaron, Grettir attacked the hellhound and Ubaron took a potion. Ubaron went through the gate again as Grettir fought Garm. Girindor threw a fire acorn at the hellhound, and the party were able to continue on their way unmolested.

They saw streams and undulating terrain ahead, and a house with a light some distance off. Healing took place. They then continued and came to a gully with a slow flowing stream the colour of blood. Paradoxides produced a ladder and using his walk on water ring Grettir took the ladder across, and the party were able to cross and then crossed it again as the stream meandered. They climbed up and down a number of gullies and carried on towards the lighted house. They lost sight of the house. Girindor climbed his ladder supported by Grettir and Ubaron, but still couldn't see it. Paradoxides cast detect power and headed in the direction indicated by the spell and came to a sluggish river of quicksilver some 60ft across. They could see shapes of metal in the river; Ubaron collected some in a flask. Paradoxides cast a fly spell and flew the party across, ending with Girindor who he flew up and was able to spot the small house with a light and a great drop beyond. It seemed like a very ordinary headman's hall from the northern world. The party approached the front door. A small amount of smoke could be seen through the weather holes at the top.

They knocked on the building and asked permission to enter. They called three times without reply and Grettir pushed aside the weather flap. Ubaron followed him in. Ubaron saw a woman in her 20s/30s with green eyes and dark hair. Smoke filled the room and she offered Ubaron some mulled wine. It was a very earthy, fruity, warm red wine. They sat on a couch and chatted. She offered Ubaron a horse from Nifelheim, which had been left to her by Odin. Ubaron noticed a crow up in the rafters, the woman told him that he was called Mimi and that he was harmless. Ubaron said he was more interested in items and knowledge. She said she knew secrets of life and death, and could teach him to spend hit points for some affect. Ubaron agreed to make love to her in exchange for the level eight spell force heal. He ended up with a small tattoo.

All the party eventually emerge and were reunited. Girindor spoke to her and heard she was holding back the dust. Grettir asked about the pirates that had attacked him and his men, but received no satisfactory answers. Paradoxides chatted and Adils and Kollgrim did not go in. The woman was the Queen of the Night.

Paradoxides astrally walked the party to the island of Magdalen. They were roped around the waist with Grettir's elven rope. They had a bad landing and Paradoxides was knocked unconscious. They were somewhere on a different plane and were attacked by a giant green demonic lizard. They were in a stygian gloom until Grettir lit his spear. All the magical lights went out and Adils fled; Ubaron was saved by his amulet. The demonic lizard was incredibly hard to hit. Grettir hit it very hard and it went down. Grettir held up his spear – it was a little brighter now. Girindor also held up a burning sword. They realised Adils had run off the edge into the abyss, as the place they had landed on was only a small area. Paradoxides recovered consciousness. Grettir called for a miracle to recover Adils, calling for the soul and body of Adils to be drawn back to Grettir. Ubaron and Paradoxides collected ichor before it bubbled away. They heard the voice of Adils; he seemed to be below them, and then they saw him climb up at funny angle back to the party.

Grettir healed Paradoxides. Meanwhile Ubaron noticed the ruins of a tower in one corner of the area they were on. One of Grettir's huscarles noticed a silver, liquid diamond shape two or three feet wide in the rubble. It was resting on a disc of silvery metal. It felt alien rather than evil. Kollgrim cast detect magic and got a large hit from what they decided was a mirror. Ubaron cast detect life and realised it never had been alive. Paradoxides cast detect power – there was large amount of power from the mirror, but also a smaller amount in the rubble – it was a two handed sword. There were alien bones, bipedal, reptilian, fragile, bigger than humanoid, possibly avian. Girindor spotted a bag with 5 diamonds; the bag was made of copper mesh. The sword was very light, and stylistically bizarre. It had a curved blade and quillons. Paradoxides cast detect magic on mirror. It was a demon iconised in the shape of a mirror. He then cast detect thought – he found “who are you”. Paradoxides cast protection from demons and picked it up – he found it weighed about the same as a man. The party rigged a carrying structure and Paradoxides took the party to Bazi.

They arrived at 50,000 feet and plummeted towards the ground, but Girindor cast windwalk and they landed close to the city gate. Paradoxides went to his tower and investigated the mirror and sword. The sword was of the gethyanki – astral assassins. The sword was designed to cut the thread connecting astral walkers to the real world. The diamonds were worth 1000gp each – 5000gp in turn. The sword could be very useful against scryers, it might be worth 10,000gp. The mirror was a demon of considerable power - it could read minds and showed the results on the mirror, it might also be used as a transport through space and time. The Queen of Bazi was willing to pay 50,000gp for it. Paradoxides put in for the sword. The mirror was sold to the Queen for 50,000gp. This was then traded for goods and a share in a dwarven gold mine. The gold mine was currently not being exploited; it was to the northeast of the Dirth Wood towards Kattlegrod. They also received 1500gp for the quicksilver, and 1000gp for the demonic ichor. When they returned to Chittagong they found the dwarven mine to be a hoax, but they still had 50,000gp from the trade goods. They visited Rendip Rim who said that the iron leaves were star iron, which was very pure. Each share was 11,250gp.

G6 – Lair of the Lizard King (16 Oct 05)

In the fourth week of November 694 Ubaron, Grettir, Kollgrimm, Girindor, Ranulf, Wilf and Gunnri (a tunnel scout from Dingry Dur) teleported to the mines of Azov. Ubaron didn't take his familiar – Hannibast. Ubaron teleported Ranulf, Gunnri, Girindor and Kollgrimm teleported Grettir and Wilf. After arrival the magicians meditated and Gunnri and Girindor went scouting. They were surprised by troglodytes and killed all seven. They seemed to be able to smell as see in the dark and spotted Gunnri before he was aware of them. From the bodies they took six blueish steel dwarf made daggers or shortsworads, a heavy dwarf made mace and a red gold nugget on a leather choker. The weapons were old but had been well made and were still serviceable. The dwarf and the elf returned to the rest of the party.

Wilf was surprised on watch by a very big spider, but still finished it off in quick time. He noticed that it had a saddle; the buckles were of graphite and looked as though they had been made by a metalsmith. The saddle would have fitted Gunnri, although it wouldn't have been comfortable. The straps looked like they had been cut in battle, but not by Wilf. The leather of the saddle was very well oiled, and must have been maintained up until a few months ago at most. There was one large and three small buckles. Girindor collected a poison sac from the spider and Gunnri took one of the teeth as a souvenir.

The party then went to explore the cave where Gunnri and Girindor had met the troglodytes. The only exit was high up. Gunnri explored this briefly – he could feel some air, but still felt the mountain was solid for hundreds of paces above him. It was suspected to be a ventilation shaft. They returned to a previous cave where there was an unexplored exit.

This continued on to a cave with giant mushrooms and some water. One of the mushrooms was recognised as hallucinatory, and another identified as poisonous, a third was a beefsteak mushroom. The two non-poisonous ones were harvested. They came to a t-junction – the right leg ended shortly in a sheer drop, to the left it skirted the edge of the shear drop. Ubaron could make out a slight smell of sulphur. The dwarves concluded that this was probably a 100-200m shaft down – probably a worked out mine. It must have taken hundreds of years to dig. The party headed down the sloping passageway to the left, at about thirty degrees. They came to wall of rubble and a labyrinthine gate defended by troglodytes. Ubaron and Girindor flew Wilf and Kollgrimm over and landed them amongst the troglodytes. Meanwhile Grettir, Gunnri and Ranulf tried to climb wall. Ranulf failed to climb and Ubaron flew back to collect him. Between them they killed eight troglodytes. On the bodies they found four shortsworads, two longsworads, a war axe, a dwarf axe, a war hammer, and a javelin, apart from javelin all were dwarf made, of the typical blueish steel, and were old and well used. They also found a dwarf made combat shield, which didn't look as old as the other weapons, and had been repaired more crudely. The shield couldn't have been more than a couple of decades old. There was also an ivory tooth necklace, of quite small teeth, and a gold nugget necklace with eight nuggets of river gold (about 500gp of gold).

They continued on down the ramp and come to a smallish tunnel off to the left. It led to an unoccupied tunnel with no exits – probably a watch room. The tunnel was evidently not of dwarvish construction. They continued down and after a further 100 metres they came to another tunnel, which they ignored. After a further 200 metres they came to another crudely constructed option – but they continued to descend the ramp. After another 100 metres they found another labyrinthine gate – this was undefended. After a further 150 metres further on there was an option on the left. The dwarves now thought they were about 200m down and had completed two circles. The dwarves explored this tunnel – it was another watch room.

The party continue on, past another tunnel off to the left and then another unoccupied labyrinthine gate. After a further 200 metres they passed another crude tunnel, after another 150 metres there was another, after 150 metres another, after 50 metres another, after 150 metres another, after 100 metres another, after 75 metres another and then after a further 100 metres the ramp opened out to a small beach on the shore of a warm underground lake, with a slight smell of sulphur.

The beach was a rocky shelf covered in mud and ground down rock. Ubaron found a twist of cloth torn off on the beach: it was intensely black silk, very finely woven. At first it was suspected to be from the south, however Grettir realised it was fulgan – this was known to be from another plane and was traded with spiders. The water was warm and slightly sulphurous. They realised that they were really on a quay rather than a beach. Ubaron flew around the circumference and saw two other rocky ledges but no exits. The party tied together 110 feet of rope and Grettir swam down using his iounstone, which meant he had no need of air. Grettir could see depths in all directions so it had to widen out under the ledges. It must have been flooded since it was dug. Grettir could see some tens of metres; the water was very clear.

The adventurers suddenly noticed waves in the lake. They doused the lights and Grettir with his magic helmet had the impression of something rising in the middle of lake. Ubaron's sword lit up, and then the party were attacked by a kraken. Ranulf was grasped by a tentacle. Grettir sliced off a tentacle attacking him. Kollgrimm was grasped by another tentacle. Ubaron was grasped by another tentacle but sliced it off and levitated using his spear. Kollgrimm was raised up, by the kraken, but was cut free by Girindor. Ranulf was also raised up, but he was cut free by Grettir and the party headed back up the ramp. Ubaron prepared a lightning bolt, but had no chance to cast it before the kraken receded below the water leaving behind a black cloud of squid ink.

They went back up the ramp and headed into the first tunnel they came to. This was another similar guardroom, and they stayed here, whilst Girindor and Grettir carried out some healing. They then continued up the ramp checking each of the options on the right as they ascended. They passed the first unoccupied labyrinthine gate and went into the tunnel following this, where Gunnri was ambushed. Along the tunnel, as it widened, were walls with troglodytes behind them.

Ubaron and Girindor flew Grettir and Ranulf over and then returned for Wilf, Kollgrimm and Gunnri. Ubaron landed Wilf on top of the wall. The party killed a number of troglodytes and then a lizard knight on a mutant steed with more troglodytes arrived. Ubaron cast ice storm on the group of troglodytes following the lizard knight, damaging them all and slowing them down. The lizard knight came into contact with Grettir. The lizard knight was bigger stronger and faster than the troglodytes.

Grettir knocked him off his steed, but he landed safely and fought Grettir. Ubaron landed and joined in attacking the lizard steed. Ubaron and Grettir finish off the steed. Grettir hit the lizard knight very hard and knocked him down. Wilf by now had slain his opponents and used his crossbow to shoot the lizard knight. The leader fled but was intercepted by Wilf and slain. The rest of the lizard men fled.

There were five exits from cave. Four contained rubbish, eggs and hatchlings – the fifth was the throne room. In here were pile of hides, some stones and a fire and lots of rune signs. There was a tall bronze pole with a ram's head and a dark female human figure, chained over it. She was very dark and looked as though she might have been partly barbecued. The bronze pole and runes felt quite evil to Grettir and Wilf, although not as evil for example as the temple of Sett. The female figure was still alive. She had dark eyes and exotic features, her hair was dyed grey and she had high cheekbones. She looked at Ubaron and he felt an empathic connection – suffering and pleading. She was black, but had painted red stripes – to Ubaron she looked like she might be from the Iron Bound coast, although Negroes with ash blonde hair were very unusual, and she looked particularly exotic with her high cheekbones. Ubaron sent empathic message – you are safe now and she repeated that aloud in common. Grettir could feel that she was neutral rather than evil – similar to Kollgrimm, and he helped her down. Grettir gave her a healing potion. Grettir told her his name and she said she was Demeetha. She swallowed the potion and nothing happened for a while, but gradually it worked. She was chained by magical locks. They were dwarf made with runes – curse rhymes – of constant pain and compulsion.

The party gathered the loot and teleported Demeetha back to Sequalr still in chains. The loot was hidden in the hides covering four bars of lead (probably with an Azov stamp). There were 10 large uncut blue white diamonds, a necklace of 8 large gold nuggets, a strange amulet of twisted metal (magical), a spear which appeared to be a sword blade turned into spear (a demon sword but no worse than Grettir's shield – it sucked blood points), obsidian flakes set in hardwood sword – it looked very sharp, 20 eggs of troglodytes, the massive bronze pole, with a head in the shape of a ram, might be a battering ram, dwarf shortswords, war hammer, war axe, dwarf axe.

Loot:

10 blue steel shortswords
2 blue steel longswords
1 dwarf made mace
1 dwarf made war axe

Old Empire: Malcolm's Diary

1 dwarf axe
1 dwarf made war hammer
1 red gold nugget on a leather choker (60gp)
1 large buckle, 3 small buckles
poison sac from spiders (150gp)
hallucinatory mushroom
dwarf made combat shield
ivory tooth necklace, of quite small teeth, reptilian, lion sized (300gp)
gold nugget necklace with eight nuggets of river gold (500gp).
Piece of fulgan silk
four bars of lead (probably with an Azov stamp – 300gp)
10 large uncut blue white diamonds (1 - 4 mana point gem, (+3500gp), offered fighting magic kit for 6'4" – 16000gp for 9, 5000gp for uncut mana point)
necklace of 8 large gold nuggets (400gp)
strange amulet of twisted metal (magical – key to fetters)
spear which appeared to be a sword blade turned into spear (a demon sword but no worse than Grettir's shield – it sucked blood points – potent imp – staff of ebony and some potions and trinkets – a rechargeable object, or arrows of slay living, bell – if tolled the undead don't like it, given chest of circa 100 uncut yargoons, plus 3 mana point ruby set in gold bangle with gem in beast's mouth, crudely/simplely cut, bangle southern and very worn – engraving polished by wear)
obsidian flakes set in hardwood sword – it looked very sharp
20 eggs of troglodytes (200gp)
dwarf shortswords
war hammer
war axe
dwarf axe
480gp for swords etc.
Yargoons – 8000gp
3 mana pt ruby 4000gp

Ubaron started to investigate the loot. He realised that the magic amulet was a key to the magic fetters. He started teleporting the loot back to Sequarl. He also checked out the runes in the cave. They were crazed cultist stuff: pictograms representing dark arts and black magic. The bronze pole was not magic, but there was a mild evil from the area. Ubaron copied the runes and then teleported everything back to Sequarl.

Grettir was busy and the rest of the party had left so Ubaron started to investigate the loot himself. He had hoped that Renndip Rim might be able to help, but he was unavailable; Kollgrimm and Kojar did assist him. The captive, Demeetha, was held in the restricted zone within the castle in a darkened room. Ubaron did a detect life spell: her life force comparable to Ubaron's. Kojar cast a detect power spell: there was no power from her but there was from the chains. Ubaron made sure she was fed and watered. She had very watchful dark eyes. She swallowed water by stretching her neck and then swallowing.

Kollgrimm left, but Kojar stayed on guard, while Ubaron investigated. He gave Demeetha a cloak, which she folded and sat on. She didn't seem to feel the cold. Ubaron tried to communicate by empathic exchange. There was an emotional contact. He felt vulnerability, yearning and pain, loneliness, anxiety and pain. The pain seemed to appear rhythmically, then there was weariness, earnestness and pain. She held out the chains to Ubaron – he cast detect magic – there were three spells, as well as the item being made of magic. There were two black magic spells, the third was an enchantment; all three were running continuously. The chains had runes in them – dwarven, but Ubaron couldn't read them. The enchantment was a medium level compulsion. Ubaron tried to send empathic messages to Demeetha – he tried to send safety, help, inquisitive and then said her name and his name. Demeetha reached out her hands very slowly and they touched – she was cool and dry to touch. After a few seconds Ubaron could sense a strong feeling of pain – every six seconds he could feel that she was in pain.

Kojar investigated while Ubaron watched – he was much more vulnerable than Ubaron. He fondled the chains and she watched this but mainly she kept her eyes on Ubaron. Kojar found that the two black magic spells were cause pain every combat round, and drain fatigue every so often. There was also a compulsion enchantment – binding or captivity. The fetters had been made with malice aforethought – there was a patina of age on them. Demeetha was keeping an abnormal amount of eye contact with Ubaron – and was rarely blinking. Kojar thought that the chains had had many captives. Ubaron tried to explain the concept of time – by drawing the sun and moon, but Demeetha didn't seem to understand this.

Kollgrimm returned and Ubaron unlocked the fetters using the amulet. Ubaron could feel vulnerability, yearning, gratitude, and appeal from Demeetha. She very slowly moved her head closer and closer to Ubaron's and then muttered a few words in her own language and then she could talk to Ubaron in his own language. She was a translator – and they could now speak telepathically. She explained that she would be able to speak for a while – then she would need to rest. She was from the Underworld, and had never met anyone from the surface world, the constant light. She didn't know how long she had been captured for. The lizard king was a harsh master. She needed to rest – she meditated or slept in the lotus position. She gradually changed to a lighter colour and her stripes faded. Kojar had heard tales of the underworld – lands and seas etc under the world, which might be hollow.

After a few hours Kojar and Kollgrimm had left and Ubaron had a nap. Demeetha awoke and walked smoothly and cast her spell and could speak. She said that she felt much better. She described Ubaron's world as the world of endless light. Her world had a clan system. Ubaron explained about the Atlanean clan system and that he was a free agent but was not the master in Sequarl. She was a slave. She was looking for a miracle to save her life. She was alone in a strange land, unarmed, without the language. She had followed her master to the place the party had found her – she was serving someone from the clan Luthera, she who must be obeyed. Demeetha was bound to serve her – she had high status; first rank in clan. The woman was a Ronin, a free warrior. She had sold Demeetha, who had awoken to find herself in chains. She had gone with the ronin to see the Lizard King and Demeetha had talked and translated. They had talked of trade, trading crystals – diamonds, in exchange for lives of the slaves of clan Luthera. They had walked from the underworld to meet the Lizard King.

Demeetha had been born to serve, but was doomed as a slave of the lizard king – there were half a dozen other slaves, but they had been for food. The Lizard King had wanted Demeetha for breeding. She had been indentured to follow the ronin, but had been betrayed by her: Ubaron said he would protect her.

There were many peoples in her world. She was of the TchGa people – there were few of them and she had been indentured to serve the clan Luthera. Their city was a great space with spires and lights and many people – the Luthera were everywhere. She had lived in her mistress' cylinder with her followers. The ronin had had about forty followers and the cylinder they lived in sounded like a tower to Ubaron. Ubaron described Chittagong and Demeetha seemed to be impressed by its size.

Demeetha had grown up with just her family in a chamber; they had rarely been outside of it. When she did go out she saw passages, other chambers, water, rivers, pathways – the underworld. By now Demeetha had become a much lighter colour, a light chocolate colour, still with blonde grey hair, but she no longer had any stripes.

Ubaron explained his background – she was fascinated by the openness of the plains. She explained that it had been an honour to be indentured as she had been found to be worthy. The oaths between her and the ronin had been broken. Her mistress was bound to protect her and she was bound to serve. She had had eight ages so far, and had been bound to serve for an age. She would sleep at the end of each age and then awake stronger than before and refreshed. Ubaron thought that an age might be about four years, but it was very difficult to come to a mutual understanding of time. Demeetha said that she had proved herself worthy to serve as she had shown courage, magical ability and faithfulness – even in adversity. Her family spoke for her and she had proved herself worthy. She suspected that she had been betrayed as the Lizard King wanted her and her mistress had been willing to let her honour be bought. The ronin was a hard person.

Demeetha could do telepathic speaking with anyone who could speak. She had done questionable things for the Luthera clan – but these were secret and she could not betray them. She would keep Ubaron's secrets in the same way if he took her as a servant. Hannibast, Ubaron's familiar was very scared of her. Ubaron explained what the familiar was and Demeetha said that she didn't mean to frighten her. Hannibast was frightened because Demeetha was very different to Ubaron. Demeetha had never seen animals before.

Ubaron gave her water, and grubs, and arranged for her to be kept safely. He explained that he would be back soon. Once the fetters had been removed from Demeetha his sword no longer indicated any particular level of danger.

Ubaron teleported to Bazi to sell the demon sword. He also chatted to Paradoxides about Demeetha. Valakah gave him a chest of uncut yargoons worth 8000gp and a three mana point ruby on a golden bangle worth 4000gp in exchange for the sword. Ubaron also sold the blue steel weapons on Bazi.

60
150
300
500
300
16000
5000
400
200
480
8000
4000
35390

7 shares 5000gp each
not including captive and chains

Ubaron then went to Kattlegrod to get prices for the gems and ordered a protection from enchantment amulet in the three mana point gem he already had. It would be in a brooch and would cost 2500gp; the dwarf expected it to be ready for the spring equinox.

Ubaron then went back to Sequarl and teleported Demeetha to his home in Chittagong. He took her outside in the night when it was snowing and there was very little light. He also gave her snow goggles to protect her from any light and gave her a hooded cloak. She said that the place was full of life and thought. She thought it teemed with life but there were so many thralls and so few ronin. By thralls she seemed to mean people with unguarded minds – magicians like Ubaron had guarded minds. Her environment must have been full of wizards. It was a particularly dark night, and snow was falling. Demeetha had heard of snow but never seen it; she played with the snow. After half an hour it became too cold for her. She was getting weary, and struggled to walk and started to faint. Ubaron wrapped her in his cloak and teleported her to Sequarl.

Ubaron asked some more questions. Demeetha remembered that the ronin and her followers had travelled by spiders. The fulgan was silk from the underworld. The ronin did possess a sword, but it may not have been the demon sword. Demeetha didn't know whether the diamonds the party had found were the diamonds the ronin had traded her and the slaves for.

Wilf took the three mana point gem and Ubaron the (one to four mana point) uncut diamond

G7 – Down Deep (11 Jun 06)

It was late November 694. Ubaron took Wilf to visit Frathik at Redhill. He ordered an amulet of protection from missiles. Ubaron asked Frathik to cut his mana point diamond, and Frathik said he would do it next winter.

Ubaron told Demeetha that he would be away for a few days and introduced her to Girindor. Ubaron and Kollgrimm wrote two teleport scrolls each, one for the journey to the Mines of Azov and one for the return trip: they teleported Grettir, Wilf, Jason, Ranulf and Gunnri to the chamber off the weigh station.

The party started exploring and came to a large cavern. There was water in the middle, and a difficult path around the edge – the water looked pretty deep. They gave up for now and tried another direction, which led to a dead end. They explored further and came to a damaged door, which wasn't wide enough for the fighters. The two dwarves went through and found a dormitory. This had probably been attacked by orcs. There were two defensible levels with a water supply. It looked like the orcs had been fought off before they reached the top level. The dwarves must have later left. There was a demonic plant but it was burnt by Ranulf and Gunnri, who returned safely to the rest of their companions.

The adventurers explored further and found a tunnel going up; this was a ventilation shaft. It opened onto a tall and wide shaft – it was probably the chasm they had crossed on an earlier expedition. They continued and after a while they went across the chasm on a bridge. As he crossed Ubaron felt a twitch from his sword, and cast detect life. There was nothing from his spell and he concluded the twitch was due to the creature in the bottom of the chasm.

They continued to explore, with Gunnri scouting ahead. Gunnri returned to say there was an occupied cavern ahead. The party headed straight in and fought eight troglodytes. These were quickly despatched and the party found two properly made obsidian tipped javelins, a blue steel sword, and a blue steel war axe. There were also the remains of a lizard, including the tail on the fire. The lizard must have been about 20 feet long, and similar to the lizard king's steed they fought on the previous expedition. Ubaron found the saddlebags, which contained the remains of four broken amphorae, which may once have held wine. Using amphorae rather than casks was typical of the southern world rather than the northern. There were also dried fragments of mushrooms, which may have been used for packing. Ubaron noticed an oval with a dot in the middle on one of the amphora fragments; this was sign of the lidless eye, representing watchfulness. He could find no traces of magic. Ubaron took the symbol, finished off the one lingering troglodyte and the adventurers moved on.

Gunnri went ahead as they continued exploring and then came running back to say he was being followed by a shambling mound. Ranulf and then Grettir fought it and Jason fired an incendiary into it and they all pursued it as it left on fire. Ubaron tried to collect material, but it was very acidic and his phials were unable to contain it. The rest of the acidic remains were neutralised by the rock floor.

The party headed on and came to a spiral path down which went around an open space and down into a darkened chamber once used to smelt iron. There were no exits so they returned up the spiral path and continued to explore.

They had been exploring for about sixteen hours so they camped for a few hours. The next morning they went back to the water filled cavern and Ubaron flew Wilf around it, but they could see no exits. The only option they had left now was a ventilation shaft they had found on the previous trip. Wilf climbed up and found the mechanism. What had seemed to be the end of the cavern opened up and they realised it was a large passageway.

The party marched through and looked for mechanism on the far side. Jason hoisted Gunnri up to the ceiling; he climbed up a chimney, found the mechanism and closed the secret door behind the party.

They marched on along a straight passage heading south. In this area there was sufficient phosphorescence for the dwarves to see. After they had marched eight miles, as the passage turned slightly they saw a mushroom forest in a cavern off to their left. There was trail through the huge mushrooms, which looked as though it must have been used relatively recently. Grettir thought one of the mushrooms had been harvested in the last few weeks.

The adventurers returned to the passage and continued southwards. Suddenly Gunnri was engulfed in darkness. He rushed back to the rest of the party who were attacked by a demonic toad, which was the source of the darkness. Wilf dealt with the demon in a frenzied attack. They headed on. By now the dwarves they were about half a mile below their entry level and they had probably travelled over twenty miles since the secret door. They camped for the night, which passed uneventfully.

In the morning they continued on to the south and passed another mushroom forest. There were thorn bushes in amongst the mushrooms. Headed on and reached a larger cavern filled with mushrooms. Kollgrimm flew Grettir up to explore the cavern. It was vast stretching off for at least half a mile in either direction and even further ahead. They saw two large black shapes hovering and then a third glided to join the other two – they seemed to be observing the two men, and looked like large manta rays. Kollgrimm flew on, and the black shapes followed. He completed a circuit and thought that the cavern was about five miles long and three miles wide. The magician returned to the party: the black shapes were still observing.

The party began exploring along the right hand edge of the cavern and were followed by the black shapes. Wilf and Jason spotted something in amongst the mushrooms and Gunnri and Grettir went to investigate. They were attacked by a group of goblins, hobgoblins, orcs and troglodytes, and the rest of the party joined them. Most of their attackers were quickly slain, but two or three escaped and two goblins and an orc were captured. From the bodies they took a light adamantite mace (500gp), but they had nothing else of value.

The three captives and the slain all had bronze collars. The black shapes had now left. The captives were questioned. The goblins said that they had run away some time ago from the overlords of the under dark. These overlords were dark, powerful and magical, with white hair. They said that the overlords lived everywhere. When they ran away they had run down the tunnels. They had lived deeper than they were now and had come from a direction vaguely away from where the party had entered the cavern. The goblins said they had seen deep ones like Ranulf – one was in party that were carrying things on the road. These deep ones had white eyes.

Kollgrimm hypnotised the orc. The orc said that he had escaped from mushroom fields where he tilled the earth. His master was part of the Red T tribe. He was now a nothing. He had run away many days ago. His master was now in his castle. He didn't know how to get there. There were many masters in the Red T tribe, all with white or silver hair, and living deeper underground. He was hiding here away from the spiders, which the masters rode. He didn't know what the black things were, they watched but don't attack, he didn't know whom they watched for, but they didn't hurt him or his companions. They waited, watched, lurked and were always there. He was asked if he had seen any dwarves, but he hadn't. The orc was puny compared to orcs above ground that the party had encountered on many occasions.

The goblins and the orc agreed to show the party where the other exit from the cavern was in exchange for being set free. The party followed the wall of the cavern round for two or three miles and then came to a smaller passage, where they released the orc and the two goblins. After discussions they decided that to head on further possibly to the underworld they might need the assistance of Demeetha.

They picked a large mushroom some twelve or thirteen feet high and about eight feet across, shaded from above by other mushrooms, with the idea of using it as a teleport pad. Ubaron carved sigils to use as teleport co-ordinates, and Kollgrimm learnt the co-ordinates. Gunnri climbed an adjacent mushroom and set ropes down the stalk.

Ubaron teleported back the Sequalr and found Demeetha. He talked about her serving him and about what she knew about travelling back to the underworld. Demeetha said that she did not know the way; she was not a tracker. She said that Red T was one of the rival clans to Luther. Demeetha had walked all the way from the underworld. She said that she would swear to serve Ubaron for this age and Ubaron swore to protect her. At the end of the period he would give her a leaving gift near her home. She told Ubaron that she could use a staff, throw metal stars or use a whip. He equipped her with these from the Sequalr stores. She also took water and some iron rations and a belt for her stars. She was 5'6" and very dexterous. She had to use magic to talk, but this only lasted a period, and it took her time to recover her mana. She also told Ubaron that she could do scouting and could shape change into a snake. Ubaron asked Kojar to carve a protection from black magic for her, which he did, and also collected some more alchemicals for Jason.

After a night's rest to recover his mana, Ubaron successfully teleported himself and Demeetha back to the mushroom. Demeetha said that she had camped at a brush camp in one of the mushroom forest hidden within the thorns. Demeetha said that she knew the deep ones; they were more like Gunnri than Ranulf but had white eyes. They made things and traded she told them. The High Cast in the underworld valued spider silk, magic, slaves, food, knowledge, alchemical preparations, and things from beyond – from other worlds or beyond the gates. They lived below the metal layer, many days below where they were now. The masters don't like iron, which she called bane metal. Grettir asked if they would welcome him and his companions. Demeetha suggested that they would try to use them as him and his companions were powerful like the High Lords. Grettir then asked if they would they trade, to which she replied that they would need to be strong enough to hold on to what they had. Ranulf questioned if it was a lawless society, she informed them that the law was important but different. Grettir told her that they would need her help not to give unintentional offence.

The party headed on along the passage and after some hours reached another large mushroom cavern. Wilf was rearguard as they headed into the cavern and was surprised and shot at. Grettir glimpsed a spider rider; Demeetha said that it could be a guard or an outrider, possibly an outcast or someone bravely adventuring on his or her own. They pressed on into the mushrooms and were surprised again. This time Kollgrimm was shot through the calf. Ubaron tried to summon the spider, but the rider regained control and fled. Grettir shot the spider. Ubaron flew and carried Grettir in pursuit.

After searching for some time and flying down to investigate some false alarms, they spotted the spider, but as they flew down the quarry dispelled Ubaron's fly spell. As they were about sixty feet up it was fortunate that Ubaron was able to use his magic spear to trigger feather fall. As they drifted down from thirty feet the two men were lit up by phosphorescence. Ubaron then triggered levitate on his spear and cancelled the feather fall to land Grettir quickly. The quarry then threw something, which burst and then fronds of darkness headed towards Grettir and Ubaron. Grettir powered up his spear and countered the fronds of darkness, but it went dark around their quarry.

The two men headed in to the darkness, which dispersed. They then saw the spider, and Grettir threw a dart and hit the rider. The rider and spider hid again and Ubaron cast another fly spell and started to search again. Grettir spotted something and Ubaron landed him. Grettir avoided a web and was attacked by the rider. He finished off the spider and then attacked the rider. She was a woman wearing dark armour. Grettir hit her with a thrown spear in the thigh, and Ubaron threw a flare and she was half blinded. She tried a last cleave, which Grettir parried with a dagger, he hit her leg with the flat of his muspel sword and they captured her.

There were three all steel javelins, a quiver and shortbow case. She was wearing obsidian mail, a fulgian cloak; a golden amulet in shape of spider pinned her cloak. There were three crystal globes in her belt, along with a blue steel sword. She had white hair and very dark skin. She had a glove on her sword hand with a bone ring over one of her fingers. They tied up their captive and Ubaron levitated to see in which direction Wilf and his muspel sword were, while Grettir removed the poison sacs from spider.

The two men returned with their captive to the party. Kollgrimm had been paralysed by venom on the arrow he had been hit with. Jason had given him an amulet to stop the spread of the poison, and Grettir healed him when he and Ubaron returned. The party then headed back to the mushroom forest. Kollgrimm recovered from paralysis and he and Ubaron teleported the party back to Sequarl, but unfortunately they didn't manage to take Ranulf. Ubaron returned for him shortly and everyone was safely reunited in Sequarl Castle.

The captive was a bandit ronin called Uchi. She was master less and Grettir gave her back her equipment and hired her as a huscarl. She was a priestess and worshipped a spider god, part of the pantheon of Sett. She was allowed to worship as long as there were no sacrifices.

G8 – Santos Tomb (20 Jan 07)

Ubaron became a seventh level magician. He spent 500gp on a ceremony at the Temple of Isis in Chittagong. Ubaron and Kollgrimm teleported the two Dark Elves to Bazi along with Grettir, Wilf, Jason, Ranulf and Girindor to talk to Valakah. Kollgrimm wasn't present at the interview with Valakah. She spoke to the Dark Elves in their own tongue. Valakah had met Dark Elves once or twice long ago. They had been below as long as she knew. She said that Girindor's people called them the lost ones. Demeetha was absolutely petrified of Valakah, Uchi was toughing it out. Wilf thought there was a secret between the two Dark Elves. It possibly concerned the consequences of having them hanging around. Demeetha was picking up common very quickly.

Valakah said that they had no particular significance in the world; they were from the sub world and would be blinded or burnt in the outside world very quickly. Uchi looked very hot but was doing mental exercises; Demeetha seemed cooler but mentally was in turmoil. Grettir wanted to discuss with Paradoxides a means of allowing the Dark Elves to see in the light – he would also like to find a spider for Uchi.

Paradoxides thought he could write an effective spell at fifth level to protect against being blinded by the light or burnt. He could create the spell but it would take time and he was busy. Paradoxides had an item that created a cloud of impenetrable darkness.

Valakah said there were caves in the Kula Hills with giant spiders on the island of Santo. There were three settlements called Santo, Kula and Kashan. She thought they would need either the female or the eggs for Uchi to be able to train a mount. Valakah said that would like some eggs or some silk.

Girindor insisted that these were not unknown but had nothing to do with Elves. Any efforts to integrate them into normal society had not generally been successful, he said and he warned them to watch their backs. Grettir asked Valakah if there was something he should know – Valakah said she was amused as these were the complete antithesis of Girindor, and she was surprised to see them with Grettir. Paradoxides said he would rune mark a set of amulets for the use of Uchi and Demeetha.

Santo was about 40 miles from Bazi. Demeetha and Uchi remained at Bazi, whilst Paradoxides worked on the amulets and the spell. Meanwhile Grettir, Wilf, Girindor, Ubaron, Jason, Ranulf and Kollgrimm went to Santo. Girindor took them to arrive just after midnight by windwalk. Ubaron had taken his familiar with him.

Girindor landed them on a deserted beach. They hacked their way through the jungle. And Grettir spotted some fungi. It looked like something large had taken most of it already. They saw some very large centipedes. By afternoon they managed to get through three or four miles of very thick jungle and had gained quite a lot of elevation. The elf had seen quite a lot of very large insects, but less birds than he would have expected. Darkness fell very rapidly.

During first watch they heard the screams of a pig; everyone was awake and they investigated. Ubaron cast detect life and the party approached where his spell indicated. A large spider attacked Girindor and he killed it. It seemed to be about half the size of Uchi's steed. Girindor took its poison sacs. The rest of the night passed uneventfully and surprisingly was dry! The sun rose on a beautiful morning.

Girindor and Ubaron flew out to the cliffs and spotted some likely caves, where there were also waterfalls. They flew back and Girindor windwalked the party to the site; they landed by a waterfall. They could see something that looked like it might be a cave entrance and went to investigate. There were stairs going down ahead and a patina of beaten earth on stone underfoot. Something didn't feel right as far as Grettir and Wilf were concerned. They went down thirty feet into a rectangular chamber, which had a cobbled stone facing. This was of poor quality according to Ranulf – human made. Ubaron's sword indicated a very low level of danger. They saw a pit 15 feet across and 25 feet deep. From the other side arrows were fired at Grettir. Kollgrimm cast fly and Grettir could see humanoid movement in the darkness. Grettir was attacked by painted savages. There was a phosphorescent moss on the walls, which gave some light.

Kollgrimm tried to fly over the pit, but hit a wall and ended up on the edge of the pit. Grettir killed a savage and another was finished off by Jason tossing Ranulf at him. Ubaron flew the rest of the party across. They carried on and reached a t-junction with an aged bronze door on either side. There was a sheet of bronze on wood for each door. Wilf took an axe to one door and Ranulf used a hammer on the other and they made some progress but eventually Girindor cast rock to mud and went through the door on the left to the passage beyond. There was a painting in an alcove on the left with figures from hell. There was the same thing on the other side – there were also runes with death, hate and suffering.

The party came to a room with three doors: the left one was black; the middle one rusty, the one on the right was red. The black metal door was tarnished silver, and had a rune incised on it, which was a generic sign of evil. The middle door was heavily rusted iron with a rune for ying and yang; that on the right was a dark tropical hardwood, perhaps with stain on it – here was a symbol of a scorpion – and with the rune for betrayal. Wilf thought these were the names of Amon an evil sect believed to be extinct. All the doors had some sign of use.

They tried the black door first. Wilf pushed through the door – there was a spiritual meaning to this; he had metaphorically spoken the first syllable of the name of Amon. The passageway went across and there were three corridors. They took the first and it led to a large room. Inside were sliding doors, which made cubicles. There were six cells. There were two sets of doors; one had hammered silver in it. Girindor opened the other doors by a rock to mud spell and they opened into a room that looked like a kitchen with a range in it – the chimney was still smoking. There were bronze vessels – there was a still and a smokery with biltong and smoked meats. The equipment here was more modern than the doors. Some of the meat looked human.

The other set of double doors had all three sets of sigils for Amon in silver. Grettir thought there was an active fane behind the doors. Girindor drove a hole around the doors and into a room with burning torches. Off to the left there was a pale gold coloured shrine with a figurine on it. There were rotting tapestries and carpets; it was dirty underfoot. Wilf approached the altar; there was a figurine, which looked like a cowed monk about a foot high. It was one of the Chaos Gods. It had been very nicely made. Wilf put the figurine in some holy water, which fizzed a little. The altar was made of electrum – an alloy of gold and silver. They looked under the altar but found nothing – the altar weighed about 180 pounds or so. The figurine and the tapestry were contemporary but the altar was older – about the same time as the stonework. The tapestries were post imperial – from the second empire. The party pulled them down, but there was nothing behind them. They rendered the altar into scrap metal.

Girindor noticed something about a part of the wall and then Ranulf found a secret door. Jason managed to open it. A passage led off and there were two other secret doors. They went through the first into a large room. There were more rotten tapestries, along with tables, one of which had candles illuminating a statue in the corner. There was a female life sized marble statue. It was nicely carved and there was an oblique hardness about the expression. It was probably Amon's girlfriend, or perhaps the female aspect of Amon (there was a balance here between ying and yang). There were home made fat candles. The party pulled down and smashed the figure and Grettir put the head in his bag of holding. They put the candles out. The party went back out into the passage and back to the remaining secret door, which opened into a passage. They continued and reached a door on the left, which opened into a large room with two lines of wooden cells. All the cells were empty apart from some bric-a-brac, and some contemporary furniture. In one there was a large jug and a jar with some liquid. Another had four jars with liquid in them and a stack of rusty weapons. The liquid was moonshine – some sort of tuber spirit. The party found 13gp and 37sp in a bag. They continued on and saw the pit over which they had entered the complex – there was a wooden bridge across the pit; evidently any remaining natives had escaped.

They retraced their steps back to the corridor and continued along. This time they started to explore beyond the other brass door. There was a room ahead with a pool and three statues. The pool seemed to contain blood, which was welling up. There were three statues: a large powerful male figure with a snake crown in the middle, on the right was a cloaked female figure, on the left a large dog headed warrior. The two male figures seemed to be Anubis and Anhor, which were in the pantheon of Osiris. Anubis – was the God of the dead and Anhor the God of war. The third statue seemed to be the female aspect of Amon; the hooded one. Two were marble statues, but the centre was granite. Grettir prayed and felt Anubis had acknowledged him. Grettir thought the cowed figure wasn't a goddess but a priestess who was trying to be promoted. He thought she had removed another statue to set herself up. This didn't seem to be the centre of it all. Girindor communed with the stone.

Girindor felt there were three layers to the complex – the top layer was the usurper (Amon) who had overthrown the Osirans. There were deeply unpleasant things connected to this – there was blood from sacrifices in the well and souls were still trapped there in the stones. The second layer was Osiran: they were not keen on being usurped – they seemed to be set here for some deep purpose. He was unable to learn much of the third layer – perhaps there was a sense of this being a prison?

Grettir helped by Ubaron pulled down the statue of Amon. There was a plinth similar to the statue of Anhor, made from basalt; that of Anubis was made from wood, but there were three similar plinths. Amon Ra, Horus or Sett might have been the previous statue, before it had been usurped by Amon. Grettir didn't think it would have been Sett.

Kollgrimm detected a large number of undead behind the single door they had passed. There were three doors into the room with the undead; they all had runes, but only one had a readable sigil – that for ying yang. There was also a set of double doors, but there were no sigils on these. Wilf and Grettir pushed the double doors open and beyond was a small room with an altar and a small gold statue of Anhor. Wilf was not sure whether it was evil but didn't feel happy about it. Grettir knew it was a very well made statue of Anhor. There were runes and signs on the floor in the corner. There were three damaged circles, and another that was still intact. They had been ritually put down with paint, marks and some small icons and sigils. The people walking in had damaged them. The remaining intact sigil spelt Osiris in a protective incantation; another was blurred but was probably Ra or Horus in a protective incantation; the third couldn't be made out; the last was probably Ptah. Grettir thought that the second one was Ra not Horus. He agreed with the others. He thought Ptah might be the way to the void.

Ubaron teleported to Sequarl to talk to Rendip Rim after having taken co-ordinates in the room with the three sets of doors. He returned to the complex with Rendip Rim and took him to see the sigils. Rendip Rim said they were circles of power – Osiris was still active guarding the soul, there was also a summoning of Ptah, a protection from spirits via Ra, and the fourth was calling on Anhor to fight the forces of evil. Rendip Rim also thought that they might have Anhor's avatar of the sphinx here. It didn't look like Amon had messed with these spells. Rendip Rim said that these incantations would be activated if someone messed with the statue of Anhor.

Rendip Rim carried out some ceremony to dispel the undead. Grettir opened the door: inside the room they could hear moans and mutterings. There was a cold wind, and the detritus and rubbish in the room blew around. Grettir held the door open against the wind. After half an hour it had finished and the wind died away. Inside the room were seven anthropomorphic statues in contorted poses and a mixture of detritus – the pool had gone. The restless dead had been released. Rendip Rim didn't want to take statue of Anhor. He said that Ra or Osiris should have been the third statue. He thought the seven figures were aspects of emotion – scream, despair, pain. People had been put to death in a gruesome way here and their blood had been poured into the well or pool. The effigies were to do with binding them here for a purpose. There could easily have been 1000 or more souls here. Kollgrimm took Rendip Rim back to Sequarl.

Girindor woke at midnight: he had dreamt he was on a throne asleep and paralysed and was desperate to wake up but couldn't. Wilf also woke after dreaming and got up and walked from there to the room where the three Gods were; he realised that the figure of Anhor was protecting the world from what was behind the altar, but this was wearing out. As a Mithran he felt the needed to go through and destroy it.

The party went into the room with the altar. Ranulf noticed that the walls were plastered and started to remove the plaster. It looked like there was a door arch behind. Each brick of the arch had a sigil carved into it. Each was the mark of the God Anhor. It read 'The House of Pain Is Eternally Forbidden'. Ranulf removed the bricks one by one.

Grettir picked up the statue of Anhor and the party headed down the passage. There was a breeze from behind going ahead of them. Wilf was attacked by a giant spider, but quickly took it down. They continued on and then turned left following the draft. Wilf came to a decaying iron door across the passage. They were on the inside of this: Wilf pulled the bar and opened the door, which creaked. The wind strengthened. The party came into a larger area – a more natural cave. Wilf was attacked by a wyrm. Ranulf, Grettir and Ubaron joined in and knocked it down, but Wilf was struck. Ubaron gave poison weal to Wilf. They searched the cave – Ubaron found three scroll tubes, some coins, and a silver cross. They retraced their steps and shut the door. They continued along the passage and reached another iron door. As they went through they came across skulls on the floor ahead: human skulls. The party passed these, went through some doors and then came to a door with a pit alongside the passage. Ubaron was attacked by a gargoyle, but quickly despatched it. The party then came to a larger room with large statues of stone warriors along the wall like pillars; they were armed like hoplites and were twelve to fifteen feet tall – they looked like early imperial soldiers. The room ended in green, bronze plated double doors. They went through and fought half a dozen mummies, which were they defeated. There were eight sarcophagi. Seven were empty (except for a burnt mummy) and another had wax and chain and wards around it. There were more double doors ahead. The sigils on the sarcophagus were a curse of binding and imprisonment in an archaic and demonological script. They left it and continued to the double doors. Whatever was in the sarcophagus asked Girindor to let him go; Grettir felt that whatever was there was BAD. Wilf and Ranulf forced open the bronze covered double doors. Beyond was a large cavernous room with piles of ash and bones and six large crude, almost unfinished, statues emerging from them. They had semi precious stones for eyes and were about fifteen feet high. They were in some way reminiscent of the statues of emotion. To the left was a throne with a mummy on it. Its eyes glinted. Skeletons began to emerge from an altar. They seemed to be on fire with a blue flame. One of the statues started to move. Grettir, Wilf and Girindor got the feeling of death ahead of them.

Grettir and Wilf moved towards throne and were attacked by a death spell. Ubaron moved to stop skeletons attacking Wilf and Grettir. Jason and Ranulf attacked one of the statues. Grettir took off the head of the skeleton on the throne. All the skeletons went down and the fires went out, the statues stopped moving.

The throne seemed to be carved out of stone with silver runes. These signified darkness, a throne of power, the end of the world, the keeper of secrets and the end. Ubaron and Kollgrimm took rubbings of the runes. Ranulf found a secret door to the right of the altar. There were onyx eyes on the statues; the altar was carved from stone with marks as though from sacrificial knives. Ubaron detected magic from the throne, and residual magic from the statues, chains and runes on sarcophagi but nothing else. Ranulf opened magic door. There was a small passage to a room with an altar and items on it. There was a font carved from jade, along with a very evil bronze tabernacle - similar to the thing on the throne. Grettir opened it with the point of his spear - inside was a dark stone. It seemed very light - there were runes, but they couldn't be made out. Ubaron detected magic from the stone and round about the altar. They found some things under the altar.

There were two white shiny battle axes, a small silver knife, five scrolls, and some bags of old leather which had cracked. Inside the bags were silver and gold nuggets and gold dust. The jade altar looked quite valuable, but not as valuable as the electrum one they had found earlier. There were nine ancient iron broadswords from the skeletons, and twelve onyx eyes from the statues. There was nothing valuable from the sarcophagi - there were still cries of 'release me' from the remaining sarcophagi.

The party went back to where they had slain the Wyrms - the passage continued on and led outside. They checked around for more loot and took various requisites from the cold drake. They found a few more coins and some miscellaneous weapons.

Next they checked out the room with souls: there was a lot of debris but absolutely nothing of value. There were residual traces of magic in the statues. Kollgrimm returned at dawn.

Kollgrimm and Grettir fetched Rendip Rim. Rendip Rim thought the contents of the tabernacle were evil and were not from their plane. He thought that this was what was powering the throne. Rendip Rim broke open the open sarcophagus and dealt with it. He then gave Ubaron the teleport co-ordinates of the temple in Chittagong and Ubaron took him there and the contents of the tabernacle were disposed of.

Loot

Scrolls

Fly as an eagle V

Sense Magic V

Magic Net V

Call Lightning V

Swim as Dolphin V

Swim as Fish III

Fireball III

Exorcism VIII

Tongues III

Silver knife was rune metal/star iron - off plane

Old Empire: Malcolm's Diary

Battle Axes feel good things – smite the ungodly

350 lbs silver nuggets – 2800gp

30 lbs in gold dust – 4800gp

200 lbs of electrum – 9000gp

Jade altar – 3000gp

Gold statue of Amon – 240gp

Marble head of Amon under altar in Sequarl temple to Osiris

Onyx gems – 12x150gp – 1800 gp

Gave battle axes to temples of Osiris and Mithras

Drake reqs – 2500gp

Coins from drake – 300gp

Silver cross from Mangan? (High temple of Ra pilgrimage) – 500 gp

Total almost 25,000gp.

Share 3,500gp – sacrificial dagger to Rendip Rim.

Grettir, Uchi, Ranulf, Demeetha and Ubaron explored the complex. Ubaron goes out and summons spider and Uchi takes over control using amulet. Sent away as too small. Could make friends with similar ones but would take long while to train it, or get it to grow. Ideally could trade for one.

Kollgrimm took back dark elves and Grettir, Ubaron and Ranulf explored Santos.

Grettir found tree mushrooms. Ubaron found narcotic flowers - seeds. Ranulf gets some fruit. Ranulf looks at mining potential – mainly worthless volcanic. Ranulf spots powerfully scented vine. Hollow tree, but don't find anything. Found a cave and sheltered from storm.

Ubaron flew up to investigate a chimney and saw sparkling scuttling and had sticky threads fired at him. Hacked them off and detected life – was similar to earlier spider but bigger. Summoned it – was a little like a lobster with a strange proboscis but eight legged and moved like a spider. Body about 6-7 ft long and 4-5ft of legs. Non aggression pact and night passed uneventfully apart from very large thunderstorm, lightning. Headed on and Ubaron found dreamweed.

Came to a large settlement scores of huts and some hundreds of peasants. A Japanese style wooden castle. Stockade and watchtower. Some signs of military preparedness. Six halberd armed southern warriors and another in metal armour came out to meet them. Looked like might come from Anango.

His master was called Rygon who would offer hospitality if they came to trade. Left Jason with all the weapons in an antechamber and shown to a room with cushions. Rygon entered dressed in silks. He and the surroundings were decorated with simple but good quality stuff.

Rygon was aware of Ubaron's familiar and offered her a saucer of milk. Grettir introduced himself as Ythmak the Red and Ubaron as Dasheil. The dwarf remained silent.

Rygon said that he had very powerful potions that he made himself and was willing to trade: protection against undead, bringing people back to health from the brink of death, healing against diseases, extending someone's life. He would trade lesser ones for gold and gems and the higher ones for magic items. He was also willing to trade wisdom for wisdom. He said his enemies were the rulers of Kushan and Santos. There was balance on the island; the other two rulers could be rivals or allies depending on the situation, for example would be allies against tyrosian pirates. The three rulers had slightly different arts, but all used the flora and fauna of Santos.

Grettir offered a jewel protection from unnatural fear amulet for trade and was given a potion to bring someone from the brink of death back to full health (heal all), and a box of eagle sight cigars. For Grettir's iounstone which meant he needed no sustenance Rygon offered a potion to give an extra ten to twenty years of vigorous life.

Ubaron traded the spells guardian spirit and cure critical for sorcerer's gaze. He also traded 4800gp for four potions of healing, eight minor potions and a pot of tasteless narcotic sleep, which would put 20 people into deep sleep if it were put in a pot of stew. He received a silken banner of strange sigils for the spell.

Grettir also traded for crossbow quarrels – two of bone breaking and two of blood seeking. He also offered to make some arrows.

The party were offered rooms and a bath, which they accepted and had an evening meal. Rygon had two armoured men with him, and they tried things before the party ate them. Grettir offered Sequarl cigars and then Rygon offered round the hubble bubble pipe with strong narcotics. Rygon said he would be interested in unusual artefacts and anything that would fit with his surroundings and climate.

Rygon was a precise, formal man, very poker faced and difficult to read – Grettir wouldn't like to rely on his innate goodwill. He seemed a bit like a judge and followed very ritualistic politeness. Ubaron didn't think he was as powerful a battle magician as Paradoxides, but was very powerful on his own ground. Ubaron had seen lots of threads of spells and things in out of the way places, in corners and shadows.

They then headed back to Bazi and then Sequarl.

G9 – Back to Bagurn (31 Jun 07)

A week passed and then Grettir received reports of werewolf attacks on villages and farms near Meriad. Paradoxides, Grettir, Ubaron, Wilf, Kollgrimm and Jason rode the night wind to Meriad to receive more accurate reports.

Some outlying farms had been attacked, set on fire and any valuables taken. Many of the inhabitants had been slain and the werewolves had also taken some prisoners. There were tracks coming from the southwest and leaving to the west. Grettir's party set off to the farms on two sleds, accompanied by two local guides on skis.

The farmhouse was built in stone with a shingle roof, and any entrances were on the first floor, so it was fairly strong defensively. Paradoxides used his tracking wand and the party set off in pursuit.

They reached some woods where they could see the tracks of many dozens of wolves. The two sleds circled around the woods to the left, but the tracks failed to emerge. They were near the red monastery, which was to the south of the woods. Grettir drove the first sled with Paradoxides and Kollgrimm on board; Wilf drove the second with Ubaron and Jason, which was attacked by a forest troll. Ubaron hit it very hard and it left. Jason tried to follow but fell in the snow. Ubaron and Paradoxides cast fly spells and set off in pursuit carrying Grettir and Jason. Paradoxides tracked it to a thicket where he and Ubaron dropped off the two fighters. The troll emerged from the thicket and attacked Jason. The magicians attacked with spells and Jason struck the troll but was left reeling before the troll went down.

They found some freshly gnawed bones in the troll's hide and a golden pendant lashed around the troll's neck. It had originally been a cloak clasp in the shape of two gripping beasts and was well made but not magical – worth 700gp.

The whole party reassembled and Grettir healed Jason. They then continued the circuit until they got back to the tracks they had spotted earlier. The three magicians cast fly spells and flew after the tracks carrying the three fighters. They saw a corpse in the snow and flew down to investigate. There was a slight covering of ice and snow, but underneath was the body of a middle-aged woman. She was half eaten, with big bites taken out of her and scratches at her wrists and ankles. Kollgrimm took the hunters and sleds out of the woods and then caught up with the party whilst the hunters took the sleds back to the village.

They flew after the tracks until dusk, when they landed in search of a campsite. They found the remains of a stone building. The stone was good quality and the building seemed to have been some hundreds of years old.

During second watch an undead arrived with some followers but was turned and driven off by Grettir. A white stag went through the camp during third watch.

Ubaron tried to summon the stag in the morning, but just ended up sleepwalking to the north. He was woken and the party continued after the tracks, again with the magicians using fly spells and carrying the three fighters.

After some hours Ubaron spotted something ahead. Grettir and Paradoxides recognised it as the ruins of the House of Bagurn, where they had attacked and destroyed an orc den a few years before. Ego had occupied it for a while, but had since been abandoned.

The magicians flew up to the gatehouse with the fighters and landed. Paradoxides used a vorpal blade to break through the door and the fighters burst through, to be confronted with huge numbers of wolves, wargs, warg riders and werewolves. The wave of attackers tried to overwhelm the men, but Grettir, Wilf and Jason did their best to stand their ground supported by Ubaron. Meanwhile three centaurs rode up from behind in support of the wolves. Two of the charging centaurs were hit by Paradoxides' zard. One broke his neck as he crashed past Ubaron, who shielded him off. A second was just about finished off by Ubaron, but the third knocked down Kollgrimm and moved to attack Paradoxides. He tried to cast burning hands but klutzed. However Ubaron stepped in and hit the centaur hard and it backed off – Ubaron finished it off by throwing his spear.

Meanwhile Wilf and Jason in particular had come under heavy pressure from the wave of wolves, but had managed to hold up without giving up too much ground. Paradoxides cast a fireball and the tide began to turn as Ubaron and Kollgrimm also managed to join the fight. A woman behind the front rows of wolves cast a smoke or mist spell and Grettir and Ubaron tried to reach her as the wolves shrank back. Paradoxides cast dispel magic but the woman had gone.

Some of the wolves escaped past the warriors as Grettir followed the woman down a crawlway. It was too tight for him so he returned and Ubaron sent his cat down but found nothing. Wilf found another door with four captives behind it. There were three women and an 11 year old boy. Wilf and Ubaron checked a few rooms beyond there but found nothing other than a storeroom with goblin equipment, a couple of rooms with bedding and a nicer apartment.

In the main hall and the entranceway were the bodies of three centaurs, a werewolf, 16 wolves, 8 wargs and 12 riders. Ubaron looted the centaur bodies and Paradoxides teleported the freed captives back to Sequarl.

The first centaur had scale mail armour and barding, helmet, heavy spear, iron sword, 2 gold armrings (300gp, 300gp), a leather bag containing 524gp and 1084sp, a magic ring, a healing potion (500gp) and a tattoo on his arm in dwarven runes. The second had studded leather armour and barding, a very nice dwarf made war axe or francisca, spear, 4 silver armrings (100gp, 100gp, 100gp, 100gp), 238gp and 469sp and a similar tattoo. The third had a very nice elven bow, quiver of arrows (22 arrows – 4 elven, 18 dwarven), 4 daggers, nicely carved ivory centaur pendant (400gp), 344gp, 684sp and 4 platinum pieces; he had elvish runes on his tattoo. The bow was worth 750gp, the 4 elven arrows 40gp.

Paradoxides returned with Girindor. He identified the elvish runes as Storm Shadow and the dwarven runes as Red River and Dancing Axe. The party piled the bodies up and closed the doors and set up watch on the gatehouse.

During first watch an ettyn arrived and asked for Cresta or Kreshka. He was let in through the gate and Paradoxides cast hypnotic spiral, but the ettin leapt back into the gateway where he was attacked by Grettir, Wilf and Ubaron. They aimed for his legs and knocked him down. Girindor cast wall of fire from the tower to try to prevent him from escaping but it was too far out and might have been seen from around the area. More blows were aimed at the ettin's legs and there was a cracking noise from his shin and he dropped his weapons and surrendered.

The ettin had been armed with a very large club and a very large crudely made axe. He had a leather bag containing 951gp, 3120sp, 11 semi precious opaque stones (175gp), 3 jewels (350gp), and a child's silver torque of imperial make with an eagle head at each end, which he wore as a ring (200gp). Legionary type, probably the child's father was an officer in the Imperial Army.

The party interrogated the ettin; he told them that a giant called Brun had suggested that recruitment was occurring here and that he should report to Kresta. It sounded like a general call had gone out. Paradoxides cast spirit wrack to arrange a pact with the ettin.

While Girindor was on watch a witch flew up to the gatehouse on a broomstick. Girindor cast a lightning acorn at her, and she cast something simultaneously and then flew off. There was some speculation that she might have come from Sequalr but Girindor had not recognised her.

In the morning Paradoxides tattooed the head of the ettin as part of the agreement. The ettin was a prime plane demon and healed remarkably quickly. Girindor mended the ettin's limbs. Ubaron and Paradoxides investigated the ring and decided that it was a +1 ring of protection.

The party then went to explore the complex and Paradoxides found a secret door. He felt a sense of restlessness from below. Paradoxides found 8 hairs in Kresta's apartment and Kollgrimm sealed them in a phial.

They went to the secret door and Paradoxides opened it. They found weapons, medical kits, food and water. It looked like a stockpile for the rangers. The magicians took teleport coordinates. Girindor communed with the rock and said that this part had been made by a dwarf. Grettir told Ubaron that this was where Ivar had found his magic hacking spear – Khukhunantar.

Girindor communed again and opened a dwarf door into another room about 15' by 10'; it was very dusty and nothing had been there for a long time. Paradoxides explored with his wand but found no traps, secret doors or magic. There were fragments of wood – it must have just been a cubby hole, a place to hide.

They had 20 wolf pelts. 60 wolves escaped. A notional value of 2500gp for the ring gave a total of 9100gp and a share of 1300gp. Ubaron took the elven bow (750gp, +3 damage – quicker to load, can be fired from horseback). Paradoxides took the ring. (877gp without magic items).

G10a – The Big Freeze (13 Oct 07)

Ubaron and Paradoxides did some spell learning. Ubaron learnt knock and conjure elemental. Ubaron mass teleported Grettir, Jason and Girindor back to the House of Bagurn, Paradoxides and Kollgrim followed them. They explored the passages and found the room off the guardroom which they thought was Kresta's room. Paradoxides used his wand and detected magic; he thought there was something below the centre of the room. The truckle bed was pushed aside and there were cracks around a flagstone. Ubaron levered up the flagstone and found a hole below with a crawl way. Paradoxides went down the hole. He found a tunnel with small alcoves with various contents. He returned with two sets of scalemail, one set of bronze ringmail, one chainshirt, a gold hilted, decorated longsword, a heavy wooden chest, and a heavy jar of copper pieces. The chest had gold, bags containing jewels and a couple of pieces of jewellery and a magic dagger. The copper coins were modern. There was 3798gp, a gold armband (500gp), a finely made human gold necklace (600gp), 7 gems (100gp, 50gp, 50gp, 200gp, 50gp, 400gp, 1200gp), and the dagger (1000gp).

They returned to Sequarl to hear the latest reports. Ogres had attacked near Stirk and Garstang had fought off a raid by orcs and wolf riders. There was an unconfirmed sighting of a Frost Giant near Garstang. Grettir decided not to follow up on this and the party rested for a few days at Sequarl. They then received reports from Red Njal of a blizzard at Border 20 or 30 miles north of Sequarl. Something large and powerful had killed and eaten the choicest parts of dozen horses and cattle. It sounded like it might have been a dragon. At dawn when the villagers had investigated there had been just tracks left.

Girindor took party up there by windwalk at dusk. It was now the 6th day of the last week before New Year; the party for Yule would begin the following day. Girindor, Grettir, Paradoxides, Ubaron, Jason, Kollgrim and Adebarg arrived at dusk – it was winter state 7. The byre and stables were stone built with wooden timbers and a thatched roof. Something had gone through the roof about ten feet up. Girindor and Adebarg investigated. They found nothing in the byre. There were the crushed skulls and broken backs, splintered bones of the horse and cattle – something extremely powerful must have carried out the attack. In the barn the two hunters could see scratch marks in the roof support.

There were no signs of burning or acid, so it might have been a frost dragon. The village hunters had followed tracks to a river, but couldn't follow it further. It seemed likely that the beast had headed to the Ytange and then northwards. It had gone into the river and smashed up some ice, as though it was heavy and slightly clumsy with all the food it had consumed.

Girindor and Adebarg were not sure whether the beats had been flying or not. There had been a lot of disturbed snow. If it hadn't flown in it must have retraced its steps as there was only set of tracks. The damaged palisade was knocked inside, which meant that it must have come in on the ground. After further searching they realised there were signs on the outside of the barn and byre. The palisade was 8 feet high. It seemed likely the attack had been by an ice wyrm.

A small feast was held at night by the village and then next morning fly the party flew off in pursuit with Paradoxides using his dragon amulet. They headed along the Ytange. Ubaron spotted something in a reed island and flew down to investigate. He cast detect life: there was something there but it wasn't large enough so they ignored it and flew on. Paradoxides got a hit well off to the north, about 20 or 30 miles away. At that point he was becoming too tired to continue. The direction was into the wilderness and there was a snow flurry coming from that direction.

Grettir decided they should windwalk back to Sequarl for the Yule party and then return in the morning. There was a fierce hailstorm on the way back but they returned safely. Grettir drank a lot and wasn't up as early as he might have been the next morning. Girindor windwalked them back, and as they flew Ubaron spotted a flying humanoid heading west across the path wearing a cloak very high up. They ignored the figure and flew on.

The magicians cast their fly spells and Paradoxides powered up his amulet. Paradoxides led the way and the others followed. Paradoxides was getting a hit on his amulet – it seemed to emanate from a snow covered mound. It was about twice the height of a house; he circled the mound and the hit was definitely coming from there. There was no obvious entrance – the ping came from the dead centre about ground level. The mound looked like it could be a tumulus. The location was probably 50 miles from Sequarl and a similar distance from Kriggs capital – about the closest point of wilderness to Chittagong. The party were forced to land and put on snow shoes.

Girindor sunk into the ground and the wyrm burst out and surprised Jason. It was hit by Grettir and went back down into the mound. Girindor emerged from the ground. He found an entrance – looking like it was between two menhirs. Grettir led the way down closely followed by Ubaron, Paradoxides and the others. The wyrm pulled down a menhir as Grettir went into a chamber and he was cut off to face the wyrm alone.

Grettir realised he had met the wyrm before over almost twenty years before and had played a riddling game. This time he had no wish to talk. The wyrm tried to pull barrow down on Grettir, but he managed to finish it off with dagger, spear and pots of alchemicals. The wyrm tried power word terror but Grettir was protected. He emerged to rejoin his comrades.

The earth smelt freshly dug. It was an occupied tomb and the wyrm had made a pile of what was in the tomb. There was a fresh gnawed bone – a femur from a horse, but there were also some very old bones, which had almost turned to dust.

They found a number of coins many of which were imperial make, and about a third had dwarf marks on. There were: 1740sp, 1360gp, a sparkly silver coif dwarf made, a very fine dwarf made gold wrist band, with interlocking beast 1600gp, a dwarf made magic sword called mist witch, iron, with a dwarf cut ruby in pommel. The coif and the sword were magic. The bier and funerary urns had been smashed up along with very old horse bones etc. They took the head and skin of the wyrm for a trophy.

Ubaron investigated the sword. The spell in the pommel was an illusion – area of effect, mist, triggered by a power word, which Ubaron learnt, and could be cast once per day. The coif was mithril, and protected against head criticals. They returned at the end of the day to Sequarl and had another feast to celebrate. Grettir also invited Red Njal and his men to a feast later in the week to celebrate the killing of the wyrm.

The sword was valued at 11,000gp and the coif at 3000gp. Ubaron bought the sword and Paradoxides the coif. They went to Kattlegrod and trading took place. Ubaron bought a flame knife – it came from off plane, and could only be used once and would be consumed, it would continue to do damage once stuck in someone; it cost 4000gp. He also ordered a mithril dagger to be collected in the summer. They all returned to Sequarl.

Ubaron tried the spell in his sword. It went very foggy around him, but he could see clearly. The high level fighters and magicians made their saving throws and could also see through the illusion. However if it had been a foggy night they would probably had no opportunity of a saving throw. The area affected was a reasonable size and it persisted for about five minutes. For concealment on a foggy evening it would be ideal.

That week there were reports from around Sequarl of a great white bear. The Yule hunting party saw a white stag with giant horns. There were reports from the south of a wounded Pegasus. At the party that evening Ubaron and Grettir had a drinking competition: Ubaron got horribly drunk, and Grettir was also seriously drunk. In the morning a huscarle reported a problem with the night watch. The sergeant had the whole of the gate watch on a charge for being asleep; all the men claimed they were unable to wake up. They told of an extra soldier bothering them for something to eat, they all described someone different who was known to be dead. The dead were at the gate asking for food – a bad omen.

Rendip Rim came up to the castle – he could find no sign of the men being ensorcelled. He agreed it was a bad omen. All the described dead had died at Orc Ford – and had been dead for years. That day had the best weather for weeks. Grettir suggested Girindor should carry out a reconnaissance up the Black Road and the river. Paradoxides did detect scrying.

Girindor saw a group of Neanderthals and then a frost giant heading south. He also thought he had seen a huge silver boar. The next day he headed south. He chatted to the gnomes at Redhill and all was quiet. When he returned he cast predict weather and thought it was going to get worse but he couldn't be sure – something seemed to be interfering with the weather for him not to be able to predict the weather with certainty. Rendip Rim decided to commune with Osiris.

Paradoxides teleported Girindor, Grettir, Ubaron, Jason and Kollgrim to the northwest tower, as Grettir suggested this might be a good place for Girindor to try his predict weather spell again. One of the sergeants at the tower had been dreaming about dead comrades but not the others. He couldn't see their faces but knew who they were. He said everyone got those sorts of dreams after years of fighting and losing comrades; they didn't come on summer evenings but on cold winter nights.....

Girindor tried to predict the weather but failed again. Ubaron tried to cast his know weather spell, which said that it was going to be warm and rain!! Paradoxides got similarly bizarre results of the void. Girindor then tried to influence weather. He could tell the weather was going to deteriorate with strong winds from the north, but he couldn't affect it to start with. There was a lot of momentum in the deterioration of weather. He realised someone else was calling the Boreas and was urging it on. Someone from further south was calling the Boreas.

The party returned to Sequalr to the Black Tower. They arrived to see Grettir's son talking to a Sphinx, which kept saying there were strangers on the plane. Girindor cast his influence weather spell and for a little while he made the wind locally swing round from the southeast. This time he could hear that it was a very deep voice calling the Boreas. It was someone from reasonably close by. It was more off to the west than the east, but it was difficult to say whether it was four or forty miles away. Grettir led a house to house search in Sequalr but it revealed nothing serious. He found Rendip Rim doing a commune and Grettir did likewise.

Rendip Rim said that the Fimbul Winter was arriving; they would need to burn all the fire they could. He said that someone had called for the Yotun. The temperature started to drop and by morning it was winter state ten and there was a massive blizzard. Paradoxides checked the crystals he had left at the House of Bagurn but saw nothing suspicious. Girindor improved things to winter state eight by mid morning but was out of mana. He could hear a voice wailing out to the west and didn't think it was human. It seemed like the heart of the storm, a non human avatar of the Yotun. This storm seemed to Girindor like it was there for more than a few days. Grettir speculated where the summoning might be from. Bagurn was to the West, Hall of the Mountain King was south west. Ythil's finger, Black Orc rock, and the Red Monastery were out to the west then House of Bagurn. Ythil's finger was supposed to be the finger of a giant – it was the sight of last man standing.

Girindor headed to the west to do a commune accompanied by Grettir, Paradoxides, Ubaron, Kollgrim, Adebarg and Jason. Paradoxides cast rope trick while Girindor cast his commune.

Girindor found there was a point of cold west and south of there. The heart of this was only a mile or two west and south of there. He was not sure where this was coming from. Ubaron cast know compass a few times and they headed about a mile to the southwest and Girindor tried again.

It seemed likely that the summoning was taking place at Black Orc Rock. According to legend this was where an orc had been turned to stone. They then teleported back to Sequalr.

Next morning it was winter state 10.

The loot was divided up – the first part yielded 1324gp (1158 ep) and the second part 2435gp (507ep).

G10b – Hard Days Night

[Pete and I went over to Gordon and Elaine's this weekend. We spent Saturday on what was originally intended to be a reconnaissance on the Niherain Steed to see what was going down at Black Orc Rock. Well, basically, it all got out of hand we and we did the show right there. We lived, they died.]

The roll call of the bad guys was a Frost Giant shaman, his attendant two headed Fenris Wolf and Golden Ice Hound, and six Northern berserkers whom he called up when things got tricky. There was also a circle of five ice menhirs which represented Jotunheim in Sequalr.

The trouble started when the Fenris Wolf spotted the Niherain Steed and jumped it from behind. Thereafter the beast was skittish and frankly useless. When we got to this Menhir Circle in the lee to the Rock it spooked. I jumped. Paradoxides clung on. This left me carrying out a lone assault on the ice circle with the aid of my Muspell Sword and the Master of Fire, along with a substantial firebomb which I chanced to have about my person. I stuck the sword into an Ice Menhir while the wolf and the Ice Hound chased the Niherain Steed and the Shaman chucked various magics at me which I either had protections for, saved against or just took on the chin. More or less as I reduced the first menhir to slag the shaman conjured forth the first of a succession of six elite Far Northern berserkers. Fortunately, at this point Paradoxides returned and zapped the first berserker. I took out the wounded Fenris Wolf with a javelin, Paradoxides caused the Ice Hound to flee and I slew or otherwise disposed of the remaining berserkers who made the mistake of engaging serially. Paradoxides bravely engaged the shaman, but not quite quickly enough to prevent him conjuring a thunder-heart, which tied me up for a few rounds while I found my holy spear and then spent most most of my Ka pinning it down so I could slay it. Meanwhile, Paradoxides ravaged the Shaman with a Vorpall Blade. By the time the Shaman managed to engage with Paradoxides, I was free of the thunder heart and together we disposed of the shaman and the ice-hound which reappeared in a last ditch effort to save its master.

We trashed the remaining menhirs and effectively desecrated and destroyed the temple they represented. Then we took the loot, although the best stuff was kit that was too big for a human (Jason might be interested in the sword), and a couple of prisoners from Northerners I had incapacitated, and teleported home. Unfortunately, the Niherain Steed bolted and at present it is still at large. The weather is still bad but hopefully Gerindar will now be able to calm it. Looks like the beginning of the next trip.

G11 – Eagle in the Snow (19 Jan 08)

Grettir and Paradoxides battle against the Frost Giant and his allies had taken place on the morning 9th January. Girindor had then carried out his reconnaissance and returned with a final report early in the morning of the 12th.

Girindor returned after his reconnaissance to report that the half orcs were still there. The party set up ready with Grettir, Girindor, Paradoxides, Ubaron, Adils, Wilf, Trevelyan and Kollgrim ready to be windwalked by the elf after the he had greeted the dawn.

Girindor said that he was expecting a cold clear morning. Just after dawn Girindor windwalked the party to a starting point near the copse. Girindor cast move without trace on everyone and then headed into the copse followed by the party.

Girindor cast summon and control wolves, and at least two dozen of them arrived from the enemy camp and he then sent them away and told them not to come back. One or two still hung around but the rest left and the party continued. Girindor came under fire. Kollgrim tripped over his snow shoes. Wilf fired incendiaries into the plashing surrounding the enemy camp. Girindor cast wither plant to try to remove the plashing. Girindor, Grettir, Ubaron and Adils headed into the camp to see wolves, hobgoblins and half orcs as well as the leader. Girindor discharged his ring into the leader. Ubaron decapitated a hobgoblin rider. Riders were killed, wolves and orcs tried to mob the men and the elf, but Adils didn't seem to be with them anymore. The enemy leader had cast a force wall behind Grettir, Girindor and Ubaron: he continued to cast magic through it.

Paradoxides flew in with Trevelyan and the illusion failed and the party realised they were dealing with Imperial Legionaries. They had three options a round, but had bonuses for cohesiveness. Paradoxides flew on and landed; Trevelyan danced around and managed to evade the legionaries. Girindor dealt with the last orc. Kollgrim flew in with Adils and Wilf finally found a way in through the plashing, as a heavy fight continued between Grettir, Ubaron, Adils and Kollgrim and the five legionaries. Paradoxides was briefly engaged with the imperial fighter magician, but flew on, while Trevelyan evaded out of the fight, as he was overcome by a paralysing dart. Kollgrim was overmatched and was knocked down and wounded in a single round. Girindor backed out to use his bow and Wilf joined in the fight. Grettir, Ubaron and Adils managed to put pressure on one of the legionaries and it seemed he must be badly damaged, but the hand seemed to be sharing out the damage amongst them. The imperial magician cast bats, which Paradoxides ignored by turning into a forvalaka and leaping in to attack the hand at lightning speed. The fighter magician was an eighth level fighter. Kollgrim drank a potion. Wilf was hit in the arm and dropped his war axe – he swapped his shield to the other side and picked up his axe. The Imperials changed formation when one of them was hit in the head by Grettir. The magician was forced out of the formation by the forvalaka and Kollgrim hit one of the Imperials in the back. Ubaron was faced by another of the legionaries, who he struck in the chest. Wilf drank a potion. One legionary fell on the forvalaka but was struck in the back by Wilf. The forvalaka struck the magician in the throat. Grettir and Adils knocked a legionary to the ground. It seemed like the damage sharing had reached its limit as the

legionnaire near Kollgrim slumped after he missed him – he had already been struck by Grettir, Ubaron and Adils, and his share of the damage must have been more than he was capable of taking.

Ubaron's opponent closed, but Ubaron stunned him. The magician cast some sort of blast magic, snapping his wand, which threw off the forvalaka, the closest legionary and also Wilf. Wilf took 30 hp, Trevelyan took 30 hp, Ubaron 16 hp, others more and the magician disappeared – he had been vaporised. Kollgrim and Trevelyan were unconscious. All the enemy were dead, apart from one orc, whose knee had been smashed by Ubaron, this last survivor had its liver eaten by the forvalaka, which then turned back into Paradoxides.

After a couple of minutes, the baggage blew up. There was a fire elemental that Ubaron dispelled. Trevelyan was cured by Grettir. There were no remains of the baton that had been broken by the imperial magician to cause the explosion, but they did find some shards of another wand.

Loot:

Five magic short swords – any hit is a location

Four very finely made lorica segmentata, 6'1, 6'4, 5'7, 5'10" – weight 10 agility -2

Five very finely made imperial shields – charms and high grade material, very light – like a great iron shield, for encumbrance cost of a combat shield, charm to do with binding and knotting on each shield

Five bronze helmets with some sort of spell – trigger word – 1, 2, 3 go, can only hear wind and nothing else, white noise generator

One set of chain mail of black glass – looks like stuff worn by high elves for 5'10", like a hauberk for half the weight

Figures on swords – 20th legion and emperors' dates

Three clips on each shield for darts – darts have charms (15 darts, 3 used), quicksilver pushes stuff through hollow point expelling the poison – spider venom

Five belt flares

Stripped all the corpses – all had a large gem set in breastbone – over heart, seemed to be the link, no life, but magic by association

Three greaves, also three sets of armour on arms, also very well made

Magic crystal cube –

Very heavy stoppered bottle – trace of magic - quicksilver

Blackened slightly dented basin made of silver – traces of magic, used often for a very long time, mythological relief

Fragments of burnt paper

Melted gold (1400gp)

Heavy sledge and then lighter orc sledges

Yellow gold dust (600gp) – same colour as melted gold

Two pairs skis

Bodies had army tattoos – one had a series of dots

Paradoxides mass teleported most of the loot back to Sequarl, Ubaron took the rest and Girindor windwalked the rest of the party back. The wizards looked at the cube. It was a complex alteration, with a trigger word, and seemed to be something interfering with the volume of space, there was also a spell in it for something to do with heat –

they learnt the trigger word. They realised that the item had been around a long time. Paradoxides tried the word and the cube became a tent, about 10' by 10' by 10'. The trigger word opened it and then when repeated turned it back into cube – the magicians thought there were other powers at work there.

Grettir spoke to Abramcik, one of his men, who had lived in the Empire. He revealed that the XXth legion was based in the Sandlands, and had a varied and exotic past. The first cohort were special forces. When the XXth had been chosen to take over the Sandlands it had reflected a change of policy for the Empire; moving them much closer to Chittagong.

G12 – Midnight Plus One (31 May 08)

The fight with the Hand took place on the 12th January. That evening Paradoxides set up an early warning system and reported a ping at midnight. Grettir went and saw the King and some of the loot was dealt with. There was a discussion of the Hand's capabilities – the magician was able to suck in mana from magical attacks, they were very co-ordinated, they were all equipped with magic swords, perhaps they had no protection from fire? The following night there was a vigil at the Temple of Osiris – Grettir, Paradoxides, Ubaron, Jason Adils, Kollgrim, Aurelius and Rendip Rim along with a huscarle to protect Paradoxides. Twelve men were outside the temple with pavises and bows – including 4 huscarles; Ingvar, Gamric, Ardbeg, Arin. Adebarg was in charge of the men outside with orders not to engage but to give warning unless directly ordered to attack. At dusk Rendip Rim put a ward on the temple door and bolted it, and carried out a ritual on all the lights. Paradoxides meditated until 10, and then awoke. He prepared a protection against all magic – an anti magic shell.

At midnight they heard whistles from outside. It became very cold and all the lights dimmed. Rendip Rim cast something on door saying you cannot pass. A golden light appeared through the door and then an Ankh appeared with the head of Anubis. A non corporeal figure came through the door holding a golden Ankh. 'This is the house of the dead why should I not enter?' he said. Rendip Rim made a gesture and said 'who are you and what are you doing here'. The figure was evidently the source of the cold – he was dead, but was able to talk. 'I claim the immunity of a herald' he said. 'What have you to say herald?' replied Grettir. 'I am the legate of the 20th and I have come for my dead' he stated. 'We had it in mind to burn them honourably at dawn, but if you wish to take them you may' replied Grettir. Another figure started to appear through the door. 'No blood is to be shed on consecrated ground' said the legate. The second figure was a trumpeter, who summoned a burial party. The Legate had a golden ankh symbol in his hand with Anubis head at the end. Grettir felt in presence of powerful religious force and it didn't feel wrong. Four non corporeal legionaries marched in following the trumpeter. All walked through the door. 'Legate of the 20th would you speak of these deaths?' asked Grettir. 'When the ceremony is done', responded the Legate. Two more legionaries came in, the last one facing back as a rearguard. The trumpet sounded again and the first five legionaries disarmed their shields, seemed to become more corporeal and picked up the bodies. Their faces did not look familiar. They marched back out carrying the bodies, but the final legionary stood next to Ubaron - he looked about 30, clean shaven and fit, but had a luminous and drifting form.

'If your men had identified themselves we would not have fought. They were on our lands incognito in time of war, we do not seek war with the empire' explained Grettir. 'We should be allies; your forefathers were allies' stated the Legate. He pointed to Ubaron, Paradoxides and Jason and said that Atlaneans, Vorvalakahs and Auslanders were enemies of the Empire. He told Grettir that he should choose his allies carefully. He said that if the Hand's equipment were returned he would call the matter closed. Grettir told him that the equipment had been taken in fair fight. The Legate told Grettir that he might choose peace or war. Grettir told him he would consider his response. Rendip Rim told them that this was consecrated ground and there should be no war. The Legate told him that this was not war, just a declaration of intent. He told

them that he had destroyed the road wardens and the Black Road was his and he could go his own way or this way – they could decide.

The Legate and Rendip Rim went into the room at the back for a ceremony. The legionaries had all been wearing the same sort of equipment as the Hand they had fought; the Legate had the unusual armour worn by the magician, whilst the trumpeter had some sort of chain mail. All the equipment looked in good condition. After five minutes Rendip Rim and the Legate returned. Grettir told the Legate that the equipment was not there, and the Legate told him to give his answer at the temple at Midnight on the following day. He and the two remaining figures left and immediately the temple warmed up.

When the Legate and his men had appeared most of Grettir's force outside had fled, but Adebarg and two others had remained. Adebarg whistled and reinforcements arrived, although many of these had also fled. Despite Grettir's orders some of his men had attacked and there had been an exchange of blows and some casualties. Adebarg got his men into a defensive posture and had let out the legionaries and the Legate when they had left. He had one dead and two seriously wounded.

The Legate had been a priest of Anubis and had worshipped and was a similar level to Rendip Rim. Rangers were the wardens of Black Road. There had been no religion in the Empire. The Legate and his men had seemed to march out of the ground.

At midnight on the following day Grettir, Ubaron, Paradoxides, Jason, Kollgrim and Rendip Rim were at the temple with the kit of the five members of the hand laid out (but not the tent cube or the battered bowl and quicksilver). The temperature dropped and the Legate and his trumpeter appeared. Rendip Rim extended the blessing of Osiris – and the Legate responded with 'peace in this Holy Place'. Again the Legate's shield was on his back and he carried his Ankh and sword. Grettir told him that he wanted no war with the 20th and as a gesture of goodwill here was the equipment of his men. He asked what was it they sought to find out at Ithil's Finger and the Black Rock. The Legate said that the force of chaos disordered the place and that the men were there for reconnaissance. Grettir told him that a Shaman Frost Giant had been there with two summoned creatures. He had created an ice temple and opened a gate, but that this had all been dealt with. He also said that the Yotun had been busy there in the winter years. The trumpeter sounded assembly. A squad of legionaries marched in and took the gear. Again they became more corporeal to deal with the gear.

The Legate told Grettir that he should divest himself of his allies who were the enemies of the Legion. Grettir tasked him with using Orcs and the Legate told him that Orcs were just slaves. 'To what venture would I be an ally', asked Grettir. 'I serve the true Empire not the usurper, I would restore the true Empire', responded the Legate. 'The Dead tell me that you have been to the lands of dust; you know the wars, I deal with those', he continued. 'This has been dealt with – we are not enemies or friends but this will not last forever you will have to choose', he finished. The figures all left and the cold eased.

Grettir went and saw the King in Chittagong and passed on what he had learnt. The King ordered him not to be away in May.

It was now 15th January 695. Paradoxides tried to teleport to the Elven Homelands, but this would not work. Astral walk was similarly unsuccessful.

The next morning Paradoxides teleported Grettir, Ubaron, Kollgrim, Jason and Adebarg to the Schehalion Mountains near the Tower of Anoch. There was a tight pass in the mountains with a large lake to the north, scrubland and marshes. The Black Road didn't run straight here; it ran to a bridge where there was a tower and the road forked north and southwest. The road north was a smaller road and to the west was a huge mountain range. East of here were the Edgware Mountains. The Black Road north went through forest then swung to the north through a pass and then northwest, with jagged cliffs to south – this was where Morthrondil lay. It then reached the edge of the world and the Forgotten Stair at Emir.

The party were about 12,000 feet up; it was possibly another 10,000 feet higher to the west. Looking down below they thought they could make out the bridge and tower, slightly south of east. Ubaron and Kollgrim tried to learn teleport co-ordinates, but the weather and visibility were poor. Grettir set up the tent and they waited for better weather. Ubaron and Adebarg were on first watch, Grettir and Kollgrim on second and Paradoxides and Jason on third.

The next day the magicians learnt teleport co-ordinates. They looked down into a river valley. There was a very large lake to north – it overflowed down to a chasm with a bridge over it. There was a faint plume of smoke from the tower about 10 miles away. The three magicians cast fly spells and carrying a fighter each they flew down to about 1000ft away from the tower. There were men on the roof in armour. The lake to the north was about 15 miles wide; it disappeared into the distance. To the south was another lake two or three miles wide getting wider as it headed south. The tower was about 30 to 40 ft wide and four stories high. It was made of black rock; the bridge was also of black rock. The tower could probably hold dozens of men not hundreds. There could have been ruins of other buildings around but they would have been covered by snow. They saw six armed men on the top of the tower with bronze helmets, cloaks and square shields. There was a chimney, with smoke emerging from it. There was some movement and one of the men disappeared and then two more came up.

The party flew off and headed up high and along the lake to the north. The lake was frozen – it was an impressively huge piece of ice. The lake widened to about 20 miles across. The west bank had a road running close by. They flew on following the Black Road north. There was thick forest rising to the west. Grettir thought this was where they had met the satyr Kenyas, but it might have been further north. The road moved slightly inland into the forest. It was now heading slightly east of true north. Off in the woody bit between road and lake they saw a trail of smoke, of damp wood, wisping up into the sky. Perhaps it was from a bonfire they thought. They saw a sort of rough shelter with a substantial shingle roof and a chimney. There was a great pile of damp wood next to the building. It was very large lumber and there was a very large door.

Grettir hailed the house. They were let in and saw a hill giant, and a very attractive nearly naked woman. She said that she did healing and got to meet quite a lot of people, and dealt with lots of wounds. The wounds were from arrows, spears, claws

axes and other things – lots of trauma. Grettir mentioned Kenyas and she thought the name was familiar. The hill giant was called Barton – she asked him to heat some water to make some tea.

She said that the tower was under new management. It had been shut up for years. The new people had arrived about a year ago. She thought they were a bit rough, serious and not very neighbourly. Barton built up the fire at her request. Grettir asked where she came from – she said her Mum was from around here, but she was not sure where her father came from – perhaps the other side of the mountain – he was a travelling man. Ubaron was very taken with the woman. He tried her tea and gained +6 endurance, +4 HP and +1 intelligence. Ubaron let her know that he would be back after dark. She said her name was Esmeralda.

The place was very old place – she told them that there were old runes in the fireplace. She felt the cold really badly. Barton was her cousin. Ever since they had lit a fire it had been very cosy there – the runes were to do with fire and endurance. They had stayed up in the hills with the rest of her people before. The soldiers stayed up on the ridge but got a lot of post from the south. They all had sausages, wine and pies. There was a pine or resin smell from the fire. Grettir looked in the fire and saw an imp looking out. Esmeralda traced the runes out on Paradoxides hand – they were for fire, power, binding, binding, darkness and binding. They were imperial demonology. Ubaron asked for the runes to be traced on his hand – he got the same runes – but he also got spirit after fire. She used black speech runes for sunset, here; Ubaron replied yes, send Barton out, and she replied OK. Everyone drank some mulled wine – it was smoky and dark red, almost brown – Esmeralda said that they made it themselves. Ubaron received +2 constitution.

Esmeralda said that she never saw her father, except once when he came back, but she had been too small to remember. She had heard that he had long black hair down to his waist, and was between Jason and Ubaron in height. He had had tattoos. Ubaron showed his and Esmeralda was impressed. Esmeralda told them not to go too far up the road; there was a cliff with a dragon behind it, a few days along on the left. She hadn't actually seen the dragon. She gave them some herbs for the tea to take with them- a bag of dried herbs with an exotic knot, Grettir gave her three scruples of white lotus dust.

They left and flew round to the hills overlooking the road to the south of the bridge and tower, to the west of the southern lake. As they flew they saw a giant silvery coloured boar, with smaller pigs following but they ignored it. They were within a few miles of the cave when Kollgrim's spell ran out. Ubaron and Paradoxides ferried everyone to the cave. Ubaron took opportunity to teleport back to Esmeralda's. Esmeralda talked to Barton and he fell asleep. Ubaron sent the watch with her and then returned to the cave.

In morning Ubaron could see a very large white eagle flying in the mountains. Paradoxides indicated that there were no signs of hidden observation. Ubaron and the other magicians meditated in the morning. They then flew off. Ubaron spotted something a bit like that bird very high up. It must have been pretty big as it was very high up and seemed to be following them, so they landed and made camp. Grettir lit up an eagle sight cigar and passed it round. Ubaron thought it was a griffin or

hippogriff, but Jason was sure it was a flying centaur; Adebarg thought it was female. It flew seven circuits anticlockwise and then left to the north-northeast. The party then flew on south following road. They saw nothing on the Black Road. The road bent round some hills and then headed directly southwest. They stopped for the night when the spells ran out. The Black Road headed into a really tightly defined gap high in the mountains. It seemed to head up into a very steep ravine.

They camped for the night on the western side of the road. Ubaron was attacked by a snow troll during the first watch but dealt with it quickly and removed its head. Adebarg removed the pelt. In the morning he again saw a very large white eagle. It was a very big eagle high up, perhaps the same one as the earlier day.

The road went up into a very straight pass; it looked a natural feature although there was a little evidence that there had been some work to help the road through. There were streams culverted along the side of the road.

The party flew up through the pass, where it started to hail and snow lightly. As they flew through they saw very large and humanoid shapes in the mist and hail on the mountainside – perhaps they were frost giants? As they flew on there was cloud to cloud lightning – perhaps they were cloud giants. It was forty miles to get through the pass and then it opened out on the far side and the road started to head west. It was still very straight.

In the distance on the road they saw a big white bear attacking half a dozen humanoids. As they flew closer they could make out that there were four men carrying rectangular shields. The legionaries seemed to be getting the worst of the fight. The six men landed and attacked the bear. The bear tried to parry Grettir's attack, which was behaviour no-one had seen in a bear before. It was very difficult to penetrate the bear's hide. The bear immediately bounded off.

The four legionaries thanked Grettir and his men for their assistance. They said there were a lot of bear problems there. Grettir said that he and his men were from up north - Chittagong. The legionary NCO told him that they were from the south heading up through the pass. Paradoxides offered healing and the NCO thanked him, but said they were OK. He said that they had been ambushed by the bear. He referred to them as spooky bears - thinking walking talking bears. Ubaron noticed that the NCO eyed everyone in turn and when he looked at Ubaron he seemed to have a moment of recognition. He turned to Grettir and said 'it's a long way from Sequalr'. He looked slightly less nervous after the exchange. The party got their stuff together and headed off.

They flew on and camped for night. As dusk approached they could make out another pass ahead. During second watch there was a lot of howling. It seemed to be getting closer. Grettir woke everyone. Paradoxides and Ubaron both cast summon monster 1. Lot of wolves arrived and milled round the camp. Paradoxides and Ubaron gave them sausages and Paradoxides dispersed them. There had been about thirty wolves of which ten were dire wolves. The rest of the night passed uneventful.

The magicians meditated in the morning and then they all flew along the road. They went through the pass they had seen ahead, but the mountains were not as high as the

previous pass. They were now on a fairly high plateau. They flew on for the whole day and then continued the following day, passing some wolves on the way. Later in the day they saw some humanoid tracks heading from south to north off the road and went down to investigate. The tracks were made by fairly crude cross country skis. There seemed to be about twenty in the group; they were probably orcs and headed north. They were probably about twelve hours ahead. The land was much lower scrubland. On the horizon they could see hills to the north and south and had widened out. It was excellent cavalry country thought Ubaron.

After two more days of flying they reached a y-junction and took the left fork, which they thought might go to Telemark or the Sandlands. The snow now had a saggy look to it, as if it melted during the day and refroze at night. The road headed slightly east of south. As they flew on they saw smoke from a village with funny shaped roofs. The village was surrounded by a palisade. The houses were wooden houses - Grettir thought that these were not typical of the Sandlands. Ubaron thought they were very vaguely like some Atlanean houses. They landed and sat and observed the village. Someone went out and cut pollards and returned with the wood, but no-one else went out at all. They party then flew on passing many more similar villages. Another Black Road joined from the northwest at a y-junction and they now headed southeast. There were cultivated lands all around, many villages and the occasional hovel. They went into one and chatted at dusk. Paradoxides charmed the peasant, who told them that they were on the road to Pangolin. It was six days away by slow wagon. Pangolin, he told them, was ruled by senate of wizards. They camped for the night and left at dawn. They headed back to the y-junction and now turned left, and reached another y-junction. Paradoxides and Ubaron thought the junctions made a triangle, so they turned right to verify this. Grettir found some ruins by the side of the road; it was probably an old shrine, and was made from Imperial stone. At dusk Paradoxides found an ancient weathered column with Imperial script. The magicians used this to try to learn teleport co-ordinates.

By now they were low on rations so Adebarg and Grettir went hunting while the magicians memorised teleport co-ordinates. The next day they continued north up the road to confirm that the junctions formed a triangle. They then headed back southeast. They continued the next day and found tracks crossing the road, probably of giants. The tracks headed into the woods but the party ignored them and continued along the road.

Towards evening they saw six tents – they looked like they might possibly be Atlanean. There were men and horses, they looked like hunters. They might be hunting or wintering there. The six men landed and walked towards them. The hunters went into a defensive posture and then parleyed. The hunters looked genetically like the peasant, but slightly richer. They said they were from the Pangolin area. They had seen road wardens but not this winter. They had not seen any square shields; they came from way down the road. Grettir traded some money for food and some furs. There were about two dozen hunters. They said that there was a trade road from Pangolin to Karak. One had been over a big bridge across the great river five or six days south. Once across the bridge he said there was forest to the north and trouble came from there. He said that if they followed the Black Road for weeks they would reach great ruins: Bysantos. It was not a name familiar to Ubaron or anyone else. When the hunter mentioned the name the hunters made the sign of the evil eye. One

said his grandfather had met someone who had been there. They thought the road ended there. The party stayed in the hunters' tents and there was a celebration.

The six men flew on the next morning. Just before dusk they could see a big river ahead. There was a huge bridge, nearly as long as the one in Chittagong. It had piers of worn black rock. There was forest to the north and west. They camped by the bridge and went and investigated the following morning. The bridge had thirty-six spans and was about a kilometre across. There were a number of alcoves along the bridge. The piers went hundreds of feet down into the river, but the wear on the piers went pretty much to the top – there had to be a huge amount of water flowing through here when the snows melted. There were steps going down in each alcove. They checked out the whole bridge. There two alcoves in the centre but the others were on alternating sides. The last alcove on the southern end of the bridge had carved stonework around and the magicians tried to take teleport co-ordinates. The carvings proclaimed by which emperor the bridge had been built and when. The steps led down into rooms, one of which was a shrine of some sort. There was graffiti on the wall in black speech. They crossed the bridge on foot and could see the river flowing south far below.

They flew on for the rest of the day, but the next morning the weather had deteriorated and there was a blizzard. After a couple of days the weather cleared and they were able to fly on for one fly spell. The next day they continued southwest across the plain with forest to the northwest, and flat plains to the other sides. Just before dusk they saw some ruins and went to investigate. There were some humanoid tracks and Ubaron detected life and then found a hole. There were crudely hacked pit props of poor workmanship. They found a couple more holes; there were probably dozens of orcs. They flew on and camped for the night. During the second watch arrows were fired into the camp and they were attacked by some small orcs, which were rapidly dealt with.

They flew on the next day and saw lots of signs of orcs. Just before dusk ahead in sleet off on the horizon Ubaron saw some ruins of blackened stone. They flew on to the ruins. The Black Road headed through a blackened crumbling gate, which must have been 80 feet high. There were huge walls and the ruins were massive in extent. There was movement on the wall as they crossed it. Paradoxides did a rope trick on a ruined tower on the cyclopean wall. The ruined city seemed much bigger than Ushkadur and may even have been bigger than Chittagong. Not long after dusk orcs were snuffling around but were unable to find them up Paradoxides rope trick. Dawn arrived and the magicians looked for teleport co-ordinates. They tried scratching marks on towers, but orcs started moving up. Ubaron got his co-ordinates, Paradoxides may have done. Paradoxides secreted clairvoyance crystals and then tried to mass teleport back to Sequarl. Paradoxides didn't manage to take Ubaron who teleported himself back successfully.

G13 –

Grettir, Paradoxides, Kollgrim and others went to Byzanthos. Fought against orcs and explored the city. Suspected there might be 20 legions of orcs in and around the city. Found Gunnar on top of a pillar with a broken back. Abandoned by his comrades. Worshipper of Loki, from Anango. One of the henchman of a Tyrosian sorcerer. Warned of something from towers that interdicted flying around the city. The sorcerer had seven golem. He was taken back to Sequalr where he was force healed successfully by Ubaron. Party then returned to Byzanthos where they went to the cemetery and fought ghouls.

G14 – Never Break the Chain (29 Nov 08)

Ubaron went to see Cassandra, the priestess of Isis in Chittagong. He handed over 2 talents for a ceremony and sacrifice to Isis, after which he had a personal interview with Cassandra. She told him that he was ready for the eternal vows. She explained that Isis was the mother and wife of Osiris, and the eye of magic in the night. Isis had only priestesses, no priests and was usually worshipped by women. Usually for men Isis was only a secondary worship, few men had a calling for her. Isis was fundamentally governed by women. Ubaron would become a Brother of Horus, as did all her male adherents. Horus was the child of Isis and Osiris. Ubaron would be expected to love, worship and obey the goddess. Cassandra told him that his commitment would be well received by Isis.

Ubaron meditated overnight and then agreed to take the eternal vows. The vows would be given at dusk after the ritual purification. He was waxed, oiled, bathed, shaved and given new silk robes. There was an ever burning flame without any obvious fuels, which burned with a bright, clear, white light – there were tinges of blue with yellow occasionally appearing, but there was little heat. There were many courses of food and drink and much singing and dancing. There was an all night ceremony, with the repetition of one set of phrases – ‘down comes the night, damn the dark, damn the lies’. Ubaron was asked to keep faith – there was a metaphor of the chain of Isis – he swore never to break it. Love of the goddess was through the priestess at this level. ‘If you don’t love me now, you will never love me, you will never break the chain’. After that everything was hazy, and Ubaron woke up in a luxurious bed. He had a new set of tattoos – a chain around his left wrist, which was very finely done. He was now one of the ‘Brothers of Horus’ – for this he had a very small tattoo over his right breast – a falcon’s head.

Cassandra was very pleased with him. She told him that the Gods had spoken and given him a test – the last part of his incorporation. It would be dangerous and would prove that his heart was true. This would allow her to explain certain Isis sect secrets. He was told never to confirm or deny them. Cassandra told him that far away in the southern ocean lay the island of Dorin. Dorin was in the 100 isles, a few weeks sailing from Anango. A few months ago their temple had fallen and the High Priestess was no longer in contact. Ceremonies were no longer being carried out – Cassandra believed that the temple had been taken over by a savant, wizard or priest king, with magical powers but she didn’t know where he was from.

The Goddess had set Ubaron the test to reclaim this. Cassandra’s heart was heavy as the test would be tough but she was also glad as it might free or avenge a sister. Ubaron’s mission was to rescue Severan the priestess and ideally slay the savant. One of the secrets of Isis was travelling from eternal flame to eternal flame. These flames were just about inextinguishable; but if the savant had been an adept of Set, he would have been able to extinguish it, but she knew it was still burning. She also thought that Severan was still alive. The falcons on Dorin were still faithful and at times Cassandra had seen through their eyes. She knew the layout of the temple and where the eternal flame was.

The transport ritual was involved and took a lot of energy, but she thought he had sufficient power. The only problem with the transport was that it was for living flesh only: anything not living flesh would be subject to demons.

The savant looked quite like Ubaron, Cassandra said. He was a big man with similar colour skin but completely shaven. Ubaron could appear as him. Cassandra could teach him the spell 'mask appearance' and also the spell 'protection from wounds' – she could also tattoo the latter spell into him, but he would permanently be 5 mana down.

The sign of Isis was a slumped cross. Binding and knots were important and the bright light that burned. Ubaron learnt some spells – two version of mask appearance, protection from wounds, night vision and neutralize poison as well as transport by flame.

Transport by flame would take Ubaron to the inner Fane, which would be furthest point from tower where he suspected Severan might be. Cassandra thought Severan was alive as there was no sign of her spirit walking and she didn't think Savant would be able to prevent this if she was dead or he would also have been able to put out the flame.

Cassandra thought that dawn on Dorin was a similar time to Chittagong. Ubaron was given a description of Severan – she was 5'8/7 slender, pale skinned for the south, with an olive complexion, black hair, worn very short and dark brown eyes. She had a chain tattoo on her left wrist, and two tattoos – sign of Isis and bull horns of Hathor on her breasts.

Ubaron prepared scrolls for spells he would be casting – transport, night vision, protection from wounds and mask appearance II/III. He cast the other spells first and then the transport. The fire seemed to burn brighter and more chaotic and roaring – with red and green flickers. There was an opening, Ubaron said the destination and stepped through.

He arrived in the Fane and was partially webbed. Ubaron cast burning hands and then tried to force the spider back into the eternal flame. He was bitten in the left shoulder; he was bleeding but managed to force the spider into the flames. There was very little damage to Ubaron from the flames, but the spider expired. Ubaron searched the room – there was a selection of bric a brac and temple impedimenta. There were vestments, which he used for binding wounds, and a ceremonial knife, like a kukri. Ubaron cast rune of unbinding on a strange snake like rope that secured the door – it unwound and he went through. Inside was a semi conscious woman, bound on a wheel, and a serpent. It felt damp, sticky and claustrophobic. Ubaron attacked the serpent and killed it. The woman fitted Severan's description. He cut off her gag. There were cosmic magic runes on the wheel; Ubaron thought they might be curses. They were to do with binding and power over the victim. The gag was cleverly made, and was magic in its own right. Ubaron checked the previous room for anything to use as lock picks. There was a spearhead and a broken shaft, and a set of temple bowls. Ubaron was unable to break the locks – Severan told him that the key was on the savant's belt.

Ubaron crept up some stairs but was heard by a man who Ubaron fought and killed. He was then attacked by two more men. He knocked one out and another down – then two more archers arrived followed by a woman. He stunned one and chased the other off after killing the man he had knocked down earlier. He killed the man he was chasing and returned and finished off the man he had stunned. He left two women and another stunned man in a room. Ubaron healed himself and climbed up on to the roof garden, and round to a door in the tower.

Ubaron cast knock on the door and went through. He was attacked by a spider. He pushed past the spider up to the next level of the tower to fight the savant. There was wizardly detritus on benches and tables around the tower and some hanging from the ceiling. There were scrolls and paper, and shuttered windows. Ubaron fought the savant. He was an expert at martial arts. Ubaron killed the spider and then the savant and took his head. The savant had a broad weapon belt with gems. There were a number of things dangling from it.

Ubaron headed back to where Severan was. She said the key was red and Ubaron found it: he unlocked and freed Severan from the wheel, but she was still spiked. He took her to the tower and used levitate to get her there. He spent a little time investigating the paraphernalia. There were some potions. Ubaron meditated for three hours, while Severan kept watch despite the pain from the spikes.

Ubaron gathered together some loot and then teleported back to Chittagong with Severan and the loot. He wrapped her up and took her by sedan chair to the temple. Cassandra and the priestesses were delighted. Ubaron was fully healed, and Severan was taken to a temple bed to be healed.

Cassandra thought the Savant might be from a chaos sect but she wasn't sure, she thought he was probably from the southern world. Ubaron thought he was an adept – an exponent of the martial arts, but also a magician – using magic to augment his physical powers. He moved very quickly even reflexively to ward blows.

The next afternoon Ubaron went back through the flame and arrived in the fane. He heard the barking of a very large mastiff, and several male voices. He killed one of the men with his own dagger and then pole axed another – a third managed to get on the roof and sounded a horn. He then jumped off and ran into the jungle. It was evening and the sun was setting. It was very humid. There were many figures in the courtyard – Ubaron told them to leave, but couldn't make out what language they spoke. There seemed to be quite a polyglot mixture. There was a billy tin and a fire in the courtyard. Ubaron went along to the tower, which was now in a mess. He found charcoal and marked co-ordinates in the Fane room. He heard the mob outside and teleported home.

Cassandra and Severan thought they were waste water reivers from the ocean.

Severan and Cassandra could make sense of some of the runes – it was a script called demotic, this was anomalous demotic. Cassandra had some reference texts or scrolls that enabled them to do this. Demotic was a barbarous South Seas chaos worshipping derivative of cosmic magic. They were a fringe culture, with tattoos on their body more like Piray than anything else. The waste water rabble probably worshiped a

pantheon of gods including Piray. There were stories of cannibals and sadists. They were all better dead as far as Isis was concerned.

Ubaron didn't like people mistreating women. He was now set up in the temple of Isis in Chittagong. This would be a source of occult lore. He would be able to learn about the interaction between gods of the pantheon, who might have particular lore, who to invoke for particular missions. Followers of Isis were scattered around the world, most worshippers worshipped her as part of a pantheon at a temple. The Goddess Madfet was worshipped as a leopard or panther – a mistress of punishment and helper of the deceased. Symbol symbolic power in certain situations, claws like spear of Horus, particularly fights snakes. Anti Set and therefore an ally.

Loot:

Southern hand and half sword nicely balanced fine steel, trace magic

Belt, semi precious stones, magic in it, healing power

Miscellaneous bag of bits and pieces with trace magic

Significant haul of miscellaneous medicines, number of fetishes, wind dried body parts, vials with sign of hippopotamus or some other beasts, several bottles of ritual oil – includes myrrh

Votive candles some for Isis, couple made by the savant

Belt once per day trigger word, at least 3hp and 3 bp. Southern – Anango, Bazi?
5,000gp+?

Sword made by master with +2 parry and +2 damage but not magic. Fine scrimshaw ivory pommel and sharkskin grip. Rudimentary crossguard. Marks on it – looks like a signature weapon, probably Anango. Might be able to find maker. (1500 – 2000gp, but rare) .

(i) The girl you rescued is very successfully forcehealed. Isis smiled upon the ceremony which you and Cassandra put together.

Cassandra has put her in a dreamless sleep for healing, and will repeat this for some period of time. It is clear that she is very grateful and you have a new friend. Cassandra will take charge of her rehabilitation and you will have a role in this if you stay in Chittagong.

(ii) There is a considerable selection of magical impedimenta in the sack of loot you ransacked. Much of it is not retrievable in terms of direct utility, and some of it belongs to the dark arts and is destroyed. What is salvaged in an understandable or potentially useful form is given to you :

- a mass of ingredients and potions equivalent to an adventurer's high-quality first-aid bag

- aphrodisiac oil (male) 12 doses of unguent. Suspected to be highly potent.

Value uncertain.

- a jar of salve = heal burns, one dose. Suspected to be potent.

- a jar of salve = minor healing, 4 doses. Useful to avoid wound-fever after stitching up cuts.

Old Empire: Malcolm's Diary

- one acupuncture kit and a scroll of signs and sigils around an illustration of a human body. To be studied.
- Six hawkweed cigars - for nightvision

To which should be added :

- the savant's sword : a southern-seas longsword, forged by a master. +2 damage, +2 to parry (= + 5 for this weapon).

It may have other benefits if you study its use long enough.

- a magical Belt of Healing : gem-studded broad leather belt, bronze buckles. Cure serious Wounds once per day (dawn-to- dawn)

I also suggest you transfer your default domestic residence in Chittagong from a nameless Inn to the Temple of Isis. You can defend the temple, and they can defend you.

G15a – House of the Holy (28 Feb 09)

Ubaron and Paradoxides spent time trying to make a mage mat to help with divination spells particularly through walls or underground. There was a discussion of using demon vine requisites. Paradoxides had gold thread, mage weave thread, and some obsidian which could be made into glass thread along with cotton thread, and some vegetable dyes. They borrowed a ring with a bound demon from Bramchek. Paradoxides paid 400gp for the gold thread. Ubaron controlled the bound elemental to spin the obsidian into glass thread. He made two spools. Paradoxides and Ubaron bought some more dyes from Bazi after having visited Juspur Harath and receiving some advice. Two colours were made from plants similar to his suggestion along with two that he had described. This cost 300gp. The cotton thread cost 100gp. The plant dye was in the form of powder. Red dye was mixed with ectoplasm, the blue dye with demon root ichor. The other two were mixed with holy water from the temple of Isis. Paradoxides plan was to make a geometric pattern to help with meditation. They worked from midnight to midnight and made a square carpet for one person with a spiral pattern. There was a brown and green chequered background with a blue, red and black spiral. There were two power points of the ectoplasm left over; there had been twenty-eight in total. Paradoxides and Ubaron carried out some experimentation. It took some time to get it to work at all, but eventually they realised it had to be used in total darkness. It took about 10 minutes to go into a trance. There could be multiple spells running; the carpet had a cone of effect of about 45 degrees. It worked slowly but was very effective for ground penetration. It took about 10 minutes per ten feet of penetration and cost one endurance point for every 10 minutes. Paradoxides also weaved a tent to block out interference, made from dark silk (400gp) – it had encumbrance 3. Altogether it had cost 1200gp to make, but was worth a lot more. It was a carpet of meditation.

Girindor reappeared about four weeks after the last trip to Bysantos, about three weeks after Ubaron's rescue of Severan. Ubaron learnt mnemonic enhancer with the assistance of Paradoxides. He bought ivory from Bazi (to be sorted) (cost in Chittagong would be 250gp per plaque).

Paradoxides and Ubaron met up with Girindor, Wilf and Grettir at Sequal and had discussions with Gunnar as to where to go in Bysantos. Gunnar told them that the sorcerer he had been working for was called Lecutus and that he had been there for a long while. Lecutus used to spend a lot of time thinking and then briefed his team on a tactical mission. He would draw a detailed map and send them out. He lived in the white tower. Gunnar thought that every now and then the Empire came and purged the place – but Lecutus was left alone as he had a permit. People do come up during the summer and sometimes Gunnar and Lecutus's teams would try to deal with them unless they came to a deal with Lecutus. Lecutus had about 30 men including 4 or 5 magicians plus 7 imperial golems. Lecutus had told Gunnar that there were large fights at times between the undead and orcs.

Gunnar had been in Bysantos for 8 years and had virtually never left the tower. His men believed that he was looking for his dead girlfriend, but no-one mentioned it to his face – he didn't say. He sent his golems out through his front door and his other men used missiles and Lecutus used spells whenever he was threatened. The golems

were nine or ten feet tall and about six feet across the shoulders – they did carry weapons. Gunnar said that if he were trying to take the tower he would use a slow acting poison. Gunnar had never been to the top or bottom level of the tower as these were Lecutus's special levels.

A party of Grettir, Wilf, Paradoxides, Ubaron, Girindor, Kollgrim, Gunnar prepared for a trip to Bysantos. Grettir tried to find Amonsil the priest of Ptah who had gone on the earlier trip to Ushkadir, but he was away on a pilgrimage and no-one else was available that week from the temple of Ptah. Instead they decided to take Filir, a gnome who had been on trips before. It was now the first week in April.

Paradoxides teleported the party to the room above the aqueduct. They left an hour before dawn to arrive in Bysantos at dawn. Ubaron tried but failed to learn the teleport co-ordinates. They heard a howl of a wolf and there was disagreement over where it had come from.

They set off along the aqueduct and found the dismembered corpses of four orcs. They saw signs of a wolf twice as big as a normal one and found some old silver coins. They headed down from the aqueduct and towards a large building – perhaps 5 or 6 storeys high. Gunnar led them across a wide boulevard and into an arena or circus. It was very similar to the arena in Bazi used for the chariot racing. Here they were ambushed by eighteen orcs, Girindor was surprised and Kollgrim knocked over and then surprised from behind. The orcs were finished off and Ubaron healed the unconscious Kollgrim.

The orcs had a selection of metal armour and weapons, and also an imperial helmet, a bright steel longsword, a battleaxe, a gold armband (500gp), some imperial scale armour and 287gp. Ubaron cast detect magic and found a bag with a dead crow in it, with a gold pin stuck in its head and a silver band on its foot. The gold pin was magic and the silver band had trace magic. The crow had been killed by some sort of blunt trauma.

They set off again and emerged from the arena onto a street. There were collapsed tenements and some public buildings along the road. They reached the bank of the river; to the left was a ruined bridge, to the right was an island with ruined buildings and a bridge to both banks of the river. They went along the river to the left and out onto the broken stone bridge where Grettir communed with no effect. They then went back along the river towards the island. Further along they came to a plaza, with ruins around it, then to a larger boulevard running northwest with just off from it to the left large buildings which looked like they might be temples. Gunnar told them that to the right was the oldest part of the city. They headed to where the temple buildings were and started with the one on the left.

Grettir communed watched by Kollgrim, whilst, Girindor and Filir, Ubaron and Gunnar and Wilf and Paradoxides explored in pairs. Wilf saw a figure that Paradoxides recognised as Seker a hero of Ra. The gnome found a stone tablet. It was a clay tablet, crudely fired, with freehand scribble in a modern southern script saying: 'Arminius claim 42'. Filir said he found it at the entrance to a tunnel with props. Grettir heard from his commune that there was a temple to Osiris north of there.

The party split the area on either side of a central way into areas and started to investigate each in turn in pairs as before, but including Grettir and Kollgrim as well. Filir found another piece of pottery. Wilf found part of a stelar about 20 feet high. Ubaron found a statue of a beast – a sphinx – it was badly damaged, missing most of the head. Girindor found some sigils saying 'sacred of Geb' – who was the God of Earth. Paradoxides looked at the stelar; it had been erected by a high priest celebrating the ordination/ opening/ cleansing of the temple of Anhur – the God of War. Paradoxides and Wilf found a statue of a seated man with a mace and with his head broken off. It was about double life size and was made in granite.

Girindor found a female statue, again much of it was missing – Rennehet, the goddess of battle fortune. Grettir and Kollgrim found fragments of mosaic and some columns. Gunnar and Ubaron found a statue that was almost completely buried and started to dig it out. Girindor and Filir found a poem in praise of the god of the north wind.

At the next site round Paradoxides found a beast face sticking out of the rubble. The beast was from the Blacklands – a giant river pig or hippopotamus. Filir and Girindor found a poem to Kebbsennuf – the God of the west winds.

They then tried across the other side of the processional way. Pottery shards were found by Ubaron and Gunnar with sheaves of corn marked on them. Paradoxides and Wilf found some gnawed bones – probably deer and probably gnawed in the last year. Girindor and Filir found some drawings. Grettir and Kollgrim found some stairs going down, but it was decided to leave this for later investigation.

In the next area Ubaron and Gunnar found a column or wall with carved pictures. There was a very large woman with the head of Lioness. It looked like the song to Tefnut – a lioness headed heroine of Ra.

They moved on again and Ubaron and Gunnar thought it looked as though there had been a very big temple here once, they could see lots of columns. Wilf and Paradoxides found a tile with a very nice scarab on it. They also found the wedding bands of Osiris and Isis on a piece of stone, and Ubaron and Grettir held a small ceremony.

Ubaron and Gunnar looked at the columns but come to no firm conclusions. Wilf and Paradoxides found a small piece of metal sticking out. There was something interesting about it to Paradoxides, so he investigated further, while Filir found another shaft going down. Girindor used magic to get the piece of metal out. It was a shuriken made of a dark metal – possibly including adamantite.

Knut the sky goddess was linked to Ptah. So they tried another area the other side of the processional way, next to where they had found something to Geb. Ubaron and Gunnar saw a fragment of painted carving in stone of a bearded man holding a spear with four feathered plumes in his head. It might have been Anhur the hunter or warrior thought Ubaron. Girindor and Filir found a seated statue in polished red granite with a defaced head, which they found some pieces of – it looked like an Ibis head, which would be Thoth. Girindor noticed a huge congregation of crows and a raven. There were golden pins in the heads of the crows but not the ravens. A raven

said 'never more' back to Girindor. All the crows and the raven flew round and then off.

The party headed to the river. The water was dark water with a little ice in it. Girindor cast windwalk and they headed off to the north, looking for some scrub to camp in. They flew along the river and saw a suitable island, but it had lots of briars, so they flew on to a better camp on another island with very old trees.

The night passed uneventfully and returned to the bridge on the river in the morning and marched to the processional way. Girindor and Filir spotted a trail of dark blood and found the corpse of a tall orc – probably a half orc. It looked like he had been attacked by ghouls. Girindor attempted to heal him but his spell went wrong and the half orc died. He had 54gp, 78sp on his body. The silver was all local, but the gold was about a third old and two thirds new and from a mixture of places: Chittagong, Anango, Tyros. He also had a dagger, chain shirt, human boots, rawhide trousers, fur lined, sleeveless jerkin. His throat had been ripped out by something. The party carried on to the processional way. This time they went to the area at the end of the processional way.

Ubaron and Gunnar found a picture of a sunrise with field and sun. Filir and Girindor saw something to Ra – light to life, a banner of hieroglyphs.

Ubaron and Gunnar found a broken carved animal – a jet black cat that fitted into the hand. Grettir and Kollgrim found lotuses on columns – this was a symbol much used by Isis. Wilf and Paradoxides found a carved symbol – a dedication to Maat – the goddess of truth and order and the girlfriend of Ra. Grettir and Kollgrim found some beads.

Grettir and Kollgrim then found a sigil but couldn't make it out. It was a bird in a square. Ubaron remembered that it was a falcon in the house, the symbol for Hathor the sky goddess, healing, mother of the sky and of Ra.

Knut was the sister of Geb. Ubaron and Gunnar found a three dimensional scarab on top of a small pillar with a dedication on occasion of a marriage. Filir and Girindor found a clear sign on a fallen pillar. Mafdet – a panther or leopard and helper of the deceased. It seemed like they were heading in the right direction. Cow headed sigils of Hathor were found by Ubaron and Gunnar.

They went and looked at the back of the area they were investigating and saw an arc enclosing another space behind it. The party went to investigate it.

In the middle was a jackal headed man – Anubis or Sett. There were also winged serpents – the temple guardians of Sett.

They moved on to the left where they saw scorpions; this was probably for Abshai god of insects and the plague. There was a plaque with a story hailing Sett for dealing with serpents that would have eaten Ra and allowing mankind to see another day. There was also a snake headed man – another temple guardian for Sett.

They moved on again to the left. Wilf saw the statue of some sort of beast – Apeche, a dragon, serpent, or lizard. Ubaron found part of a statue of a ram headed man – another sign of Sett.

Next they saw a baboon headed statue – Thoth. They had reached the end, so they went back to the centre and headed to the right this time. Ubaron and Gunnar spotted a collapsed arch with a naked woman and lots of signs and sigils of Knut – the sky goddess. Grettir and Kollgrim spotted a reasonably well preserved obelisk. One face had signs describing chaos, darkness and water – the god and goddess Nun and Nunet. Another face showed emptiness - Heh and Hehet, then Kek and Keket for darkness, finally Amun and Amunnet – for secret and hidden things. Grettir remembered something about the creation myth and chaotic times before the earth was formed. They all felt they were getting close.

They move along again to the right. Grettir and Kollgrim found a statue of mummy with sun and feathers above the head. Paradoxides spotted Sokar, who lived in the netherworld and was a good friend of Ptah. He was thought to live in Imhep. There was a lighthouse to the dead, and he lived in a secret cavern and was closely associated to Ptah.

Wilf found a cowled, mummified figure with a staff. The sigils were missing, but the staff signified Ptah. A statue of Psothis, a woman with a star on her head, was found by Girindor. Grettir prayed and heard the message: 'what was once could be again'.

At the last area Ubaron spotted a statue of a jackal headed man – Anubis. Someone else also spotted a phoenix and found a granite scarab – Atum (primeval chaos). Atum was thought to be the father of Shu and Tefnut. Finally they found an inscription with a picture of a boat – the celestial burial boat carrying the dead.

It was now midday. Paradoxides wanted to use his carpet to see if they could find the pthet of Ptah. He carried out a number of fakes so that anyone observing would not be able to tell where they were really trying. The one at the temple to Ptah was carried out next to last.

He found traces about 100 to 150ft down. The thing that he felt was not cosmic magic, but was powerful, with positive chee, life force, redolent of power, and was a light or guide. This seemed to fit very well with what they knew of the pthet.

They left for the river but headed hurriedly a different way. Kollgrim thought he saw something the way they would have gone. Gunnar trod on something that broke and gave way, he fell over, but apart from bruising he was OK. Girindor and Filir dropped behind to see if they spotted anything, while the rest of the party continued. Girindor saw a couple of orcs. Filir saw at least six or seven of them. They caught up with the rest and headed on to the river. Ubaron narrowly avoided a large rock which dropped down vertically from nearby tenements. Grettir saw an arrow from above. They moved over to one of the walls and jogged on. A rock, brick or stone just missed Girindor, but they reached the river safely. They could hear orcish noises behind them. Girindor summoned wind and tried to find the same copse. They collected themselves together and Paradoxides and Ubaron teleported everyone back to Sequarl.

Loot:

Serviceable Orc Junk for 17 Orcs

Imperial

Scalemail 5'10

Shirt

Brightsteel

Longsword

Imperial

Helmet

(Bronze, semi-

precious

stones)

Brightsteel

Battle axe

Gold

500

Armband

Gold

341

Tile with Sigil

Cat Statue

(broken)

Dead crow - magic gold pin and

silver

G15b – House of the Holy Part 2 (09 May 09)

After the last trip to Bysantos the party were joined in Sequarl by Jason and it was decided that he would join them in another trip. There was a discussion of how to get there, and Paradoxides suggested he might be able to use the spell astral walk to take them all straight to the temple of Ra in Bysantos.

Grettir and Ubaron went to the temple of Ptah in Chittagong. They disturbed the priest there, who was preparing for an important ceremony. They told him what they had found on the previous trip. He agreed to pray for them and gave them a token – a ring of yellow gold and lapis lazuli. He was about to be consecrated as High Priest of Ptah or Hierophant otherwise he might have been able to accompany them or send someone with them. However he did feel that it was an auspicious time for them to come to him. He told them that the temple of Ptah in Bysantos would probably have four levels. The upper level would be a public area, the next level would be where some more intimate ceremonies took place. The lower level would be for the most important ceremonies; there might be a fourth level where things might be pent up, and work might be done here by monks and other priests, who might live there.

He warned them that it was possible that dangerous things would be there as on the lower level there might have been pent creatures trying to cross the void and caught.

These may have been freed when the temple fell. He also explained that the pthet was a sign of a great boon from Ptah.

Ubaron had a feeling of turbulence and change when he was praying in the temple. He felt the priest was less powerful, and had less spiritual depth than either Rendip Rim or Cassandra.

Ubaron learnt the spell rope trick. Paradoxides learnt protection from undead level V. Ubaron collected four half pint bottles of holy water from the temple of Isis and Grettir collected some from the temple of Osiris. One bottle was used by Paradoxides to make amulets of protection from undead for the party.

Paradoxides astral walked the party to the temple of Ra in Bysantos. As they travelled Ubaron felt there was a chill about halfway and Girindor felt cut off from the living world. They arrived safely at the northwest end of the processional way about an hour or so after dawn on a mild overcast morning.

The party went down set of steps with alcoves at the side, which may once have held lanterns. The stairs started off in the direction they thought the pthet was, but the stairway wasn't going down steeply enough. Paradoxides and Filir reckoned about 200 steps would take them to the right place if they were going down more steeply. The party went down about 90 feet to a room with a collapsed roof. They could see support pillars sticking out from the rubble. There was a possible crawlway in the rubble for someone of Filir's size. The roof hadn't fallen down recently, but probably some 100s of years before.

Paradoxides did his meditation using the mat. He reckoned the pthet was a little further forward, but much further down. Girindor started to make a small hole in the flagstone. Jason cleared some earth but found no stone below. Girindor sank into the earth and went 50 foot down in the earth and then into bedrock.

Girindor then tried forwards and found the remains of a zig zag staircase, comprehensively collapsed with small air pockets in. It looked as though it may have been done deliberately. He went down to the bedrock where it opened up into a bigger staircase. There was about 50 to 60 feet of collapsed stairway.

Paradoxides cast a couple of fissure spells – the first made a hole 40 or more feet deep, the second caused a collapse and the rest of the party headed out up the stairs. Gunnar barely made it out in time; Jason was caught somewhat by the collapse. He had his own space around him, and was OK, but had to be dug him out. Paradoxides came out via a teleport and Girindor went in with his spell to investigate. He found that much of the underground area had collapsed. Paradoxides was then dragged down by Girindor to try to take teleport co-ordinates.

After an hour and a half they emerged. There had been a build up of crows. Paradoxides had taken some co-ordinates. The party then put up the imperial tent. The rain had become very heavy. Girindor cast mist and then the party teleported back to Sequarl.

Girindor had found a safe corner and improved it, so that Paradoxides would be able to teleport to it. Grettir suggested using some dwarves, who he had working at Sequarl, might be used to construct a tunnel. Paradoxides and Ubaron transported material and the dwarves using the teleport fan and Girindor also went along to help stand guard. The dwarves complete the jobs and Paradoxides took them back to Sequarl for some well deserved sausages and beer. They now had a tunnel from the teleport co-ordinates to the fissure and this was cleared and pitons driven into the edge.

Girindor and Ubaron went back to look at the fissure. Ubaron climbed down first and set ropes in place. Girindor went down the rope as well. They then went back to Sequarl and waited for Paradoxides to recover mana. Ubaron and Paradoxides wrote scrolls and the whole party was then teleported back to the tunnel.

Girindor cast rock to mud and Paradoxides moved it out. They found a hole through to a space beyond. There were the remains of a staircase into a room. Filir led them down into a large room with paintings on the walls with scenes of people in headdresses. They seemed to be celebrating the marriage of someone called Cassius. It indicated an Imperial dynasty from the early Imperium. One painting was for a fertility blessing on the marriage – asking for many children in the name of Rennet.

Paradoxides set up the tent and mat of meditation, but he was unable to locate the pthet. He collected his equipment together again and everyone started to search round the room – it seems to be a square, surrounding and inner room. They passed some passages off to the outside. Ubaron cast know compass, but couldn't tell which direction was north. There was a doorway into the central area – an ornate stone door, there were also two other doors to the outside.

Round the ornate door there was a warning mentioning Ptah and saying not to go beyond, unless a follower of Ptah. Grettir put his hand in a hole in the door with the ring from temple of Ptah on. Grettir received an imminent sense of portent and he then tried pulling and pushing the handle and eventually opened the door. The walls were painted black. Ahead he could see a hole in the floor with stairs going down. The party headed down, closing the bar on the door behind them. As they came down a space opened out ahead and they could hear and see water running ahead. They emerged into a room where Grettir was approached by an undead. Grettir held up his ring and asked the undead to let them by in the name of Ptah. The undead drifted round him, crossing running water towards Paradoxides, who was following Grettir. Grettir asked the undead to let them all by. As the party tried to get past the undead 's their amulets were triggered, and they were able to get by.

There were carvings of a female face and body in the ceiling. Wilf turned the undead and the rest of the party were able to get by. There was a skeletal form knelt with arms around the pillar, with fragments of vestments around. Grettir put his hand on his head and said the words to put him to rest. The skeleton crumpled and trickled into dust.

The pillar was Geb's phallus; Knut was the sky goddess on the ceiling. There was frost drifting down and becoming more widespread. Grettir found amulet he had dreamt of. Paradoxides cast detect power, and felt the pillar was a huge source of power.

Grettir meditated and said that priest had been holding back the dark and was no longer doing so. Grettir had got it in check, but something was trying to get in. It was trying to push the pillar down. Ubaron teleported back to the temple of Isis and ran down to the temple of Ptah to fetch the priest. He went into a commune and Ubaron was forced to wait.

After an hour a minion returned, and told Ubaron that the priest would not come out of the commune for some time. He said that he who has no name can be found behind the yellow gates at the bottom of the hill. He said that the priest had a fever, which might last for hours or days as he had taken sacred medicines.

Ubaron went to the bottom of the hill - it was shack city. Right at the bottom he found some freshly painted yellow gates. He knocked on the doors and was answered by an acolyte who took him to see Amonsil. This was his temple – the dreaming temple. All he has there is an acolyte and a temple cat. He now worshipped Ptah in a different way to Eshen, the head priest at the temple of Ptah and had broken with him. He thought they were misguided Eshen and were following a constricted atrophied path. He brought a staff with him and Ubaron took him back to the room with the carving of the goddess on the ceiling. Ubaron returned about 90 minutes after he had left.

When Ubaron arrived Girindor was communing, but the rest of the party was there and told him what had happened.

Paradoxides had astrally walked to the astral realm. Here he could still see the phallus or pillar, along with a large number of small blue demons poking around, four larger demons, two huge demons and a blue woman with an axe. Some of the demons had wings. Paradoxides returned and then recast his astral walk taking Grettir, Wilf, Jason and Kollgrim with him. They had a tough fight: the small demons blinked and cast cold fire magic. Paradoxides used a couple of zards then turned into a leopard. The blue female was a berserker, and put up a tough fight before being taken down by Wilf. Wilf lost all his hit points but drank a potion. The others formed up in line against the small wingless demons and the largest demon. The other large female was working up and casting spells. Grettir took down two medium ones, while Jason fought a larger one. Paradoxides duelled with the winged daughters. The large female cast ice an trapping spell against Grettir, but protections helped him to restrict it and Jason got him out. The large male stamped every round, which knocked people over and also burst into cold flames. The two daughters then fought Kollgrim and Wilf. They then started to retreat and aviated to leave. Wilf fired at them, they retreated further. The party started checking the bodies, but one of the sons wasn't dead as they seemed to regenerate and he leapt up, but was taken down by missiles and Kollgrim's fireball. The remaining demons were killed and the bodies looted. Grettir led them in paying respect to the sky goddess and left. Grettir and Paradoxides were OK, although Paradoxides had little mana left, the others were all wounded. There were pale shades of the undead, who had been guarding the temple.

Amonsil was pleased to see an original temple as he has only heard them described. He said they were looking at symbolic scenes – for example there was Knut giving birth to primordial life. The pillar was the act of creation – earth meeting the cosmos.

Grettir said he had put the priest to rest and showed Amonsil the artefact. Amonsil thought the act had now been completed with the setting to rest and that the pthet no longer had any power. The battle was over but the war continued.

The shadow of Geb in the room seemed to become more solid, to have more substance. Grettir asked Amonsil to divine meaning of this and he went into a trance. He then pointed out that the sleeper was awakening – and pointed at Girindor who had slumped forward. His vital signs had become very faint, but he was still alive. All the strength had left his body, and he hardly had any strength left to breathe. Grettir attempted to heal him, his colour improved and he breathed more easily. He was then healed by Ubaron and regained consciousness.

He had been into a commune – below was Geb, above was Knut, and behind the void. The pillar was holding the void back, but Geb had fallen asleep. He had attempted to wake Geb, but had failed. He had then attempted again off own life force and had another failure, but Geb was now stirring.

Girindor held hands with Paradoxides and went into another commune. A second attempt was made using Paradoxides power. Contact was made and Geb looked at Girindor, Geb was now wakening.

The shadows below of Geb darkened and he became a statue. Amonsil shouted that Geb was awakening. The arms of Geb reached up to Knut and the place started to shake. The party grabbed Paradoxides and Girindor and headed up the stairs. Paradoxides cast mass teleport, leaving Kollgrim, Ubaron and Amonsil. Kollgrim teleported himself and Ubaron took Amonsil and they all returned to Sequarl as the place collapsed.

Grettir, Ubaron talked with their respective priests and Amonsil prayed. They then met back up at Sequarl. Rendip Rim told Grettir that Osiris felt that Grettir had acted correctly and Ubaron had a similar message. Ubaron was told that he had seen the symbolic battle between good and evil and had contributed on right side, with little collateral damage. Amonsil had dreamed that the procreation of the world did take place and that some symbology had been destroyed and was in the past – that scene of contention was over – Geb in his vigour had obliterated the works of man. He felt it was a victory of a sort; that the temple was now finished, but had not fallen to evil. The sacrifice of the priest was not in vain. He personally had no blame in it, but the fall of the temple was a matter of regret.

Grettir and Ubaron talked to Eshen some days later. He didn't look well. He had seen ill omens and had had nightmarish dreams – a tower fell and shadows covered the world. They had foiled the demon attacks, but the temple had fallen. He felt like Gods had turned from the world. Grettir returned the ring and showed him the pthet. Eshen recognised it as a mark of favour. Its power was past although it was still a holy relic in its own right. He felt they should wait for a more auspicious date and he might then be able to open the way and he would be able to use the pthet in the ceremony. The two men told the story and a scribe noted it as a tract for the temple. He seemed a troubled priest.

Loot:

Malicious axe – makes someone go berserk (demonic)

Blackthorn whip (exotic – off plane)

Heavy spear (forged in demon world, extra damage) (useful as a lance)

Sword (permanently cold, demonic)

War-axe (+1, forged in demon world, very heavy)

All dark bronze.

Made to measure armour, but no special bonus, very exotic

One demon head of woman, but others melted and disappeared.

Pthet

Kollgrim took the whip. Wilf interested in the axe also possibly the sword.

G16 – Party 1 Apep 0 (31 Oct 09)

The party thought that their next move ought to be to pursue what they had heard of a temple of Ptah in Lydius.

Ubaron remembered a carved narwhal horn he had seen that someone had told him had come from Lydius. It had been used as a rune wand. Wilf thought that there was only a three or four month light and weather window to come and go into Lydius. He thought it was a very long way north.

Wurra had encountered a ship once that someone thought was from Lydius. It had been either out of Lydius or traded with Lydius. It had been too strong to attack – it hadn't responded to their hails.

It was the second week in April 695. Ubaron learnt the spell tongues. Paradoxides went to talk to the Queen of Bazi and also tried to learn the trigger word for the swan. She told him that two years ago a trader from Helmundsport on the north Atlanean coast had items from Lydius; platinum nuggets, pumice, bitumen, alchemical ink, pearls and coloured glassware. They had been buying slaves and manufactured goods – and were heading back north via Helmundsport. The records were from a legal dispute. The Queen hadn't heard of Lydius, so it must have been post the early Empire. The ship was called the Andromeda. Paradoxides managed to learn the trigger word.

After this trip on the swan there would be 18 trips left. The trigger word was now known by Ubaron and Kollgrim. When Paradoxides gave the word a boat appeared with a swan's head. The swan said that Lydius was a hostile environment – and asked Paradoxides to reconfirm or cancel. Paradoxides reconfirmed. They had a sense of whirling, then darkness, then whirling again. They were like a ship on a dark sea with no stars or moon. The manoeuvring of the swan was more like a horse than a ship. Wilf saw a big shark's fin, which they avoided. Ahead they could see some flashes of light in the dark sea – a lighthouse perhaps? In the darkness they could make out the outline of a dark island – the sea seemed strangely viscous. As well as the lighthouse they could also see flames – perhaps lights in the town. The swan was moving very rapidly leaving a phosphorescent wake behind. Suddenly the swan rammed something and things slithered out of the ooze that they had crashed into.

Paradoxides was thrown over the side by the sudden impact, but was grabbed by Grettir. Kollgrim also went over the side; Jason tried to grab him but he disappeared below the surface. The party were attacked by a number of giant demonic insects - preying mantises, cockroaches, spiders, millipedes. A millipede attacked Paradoxides and Grettir and caused darkness but Grettir lit up his spear. Paradoxides hid in the bottom of the boat and cast a shield spell. Millipede managed to strike Paradoxides. Demonic wasp flew in to join the attack but was swatted by Grettir. More demonic creatures came in to attack. Paradoxides had thrown up his iounstone to give some light.

They realised they had hit a chain that was made out of screaming interlinked humans. Wilf was attacked by a demonic crocodile. Demonic creatures made weird

piping noises. Grettir and Paradoxides with a vorpal blade hack through the chin and the swan headed on towards the harbour but there was no sign of Kollgrim. The piping built to a crescendo and something loomed out of the night.

Kollgrim flew in and crash landed in the boat, Jason shot at him, but fortunately it was just a glancing blow. The boat accelerated on with a large flying demon in pursuit. Kollgrim was out of hit points and took a potion. Wilf held off the demon of at the back of the swan; the demon moved to the front and Paradoxides hit it with the vorpal blade and hurt it. Ubaron crushed a card and cast a lightning bolt at the demon, but the demon used the energy to heal itself. Missile weapons were fired at it.

They could now see the lighthouse with an archway to the left. By the archway was a figure riding a lizard. The fight continued against the demon, which was very hard to hit – it had very thick armour. The swan managed to get through the gate, while the figure mounted on the lizard held back the demon. The swan landed heavily but everyone stayed on board. They were in very cold water. The swan became an amulet again and the party climbed up some icy steps with water around and stars above. The gate they had passed through was a gate to the astral world.

There was a woman waiting for them on the steps – “welcome to Lydius” she greeted them. “You seem to be under siege”, replied Grettir. “Welcome to the temple of the shattered sun – we have been for 600 years”, she continued. It was very cold indeed; there was no moon, but bright stars and some lights. They could see a ruined lighthouse and some illumination from the town. The place existed on their world but also in the astral projection and there the lighthouse worked.

The woman was just wearing a robe, but didn't seem cold; she was dark skinned. The harbour was full of junk and ruins, and covered in ice and snow. They could see people moving nearby, guards and others – she gave a signal and they were not disturbed. There were ships drawn up in the harbour on wharves and inclined slopes – although much of the slopes were ruined. There were watch fires. They headed to a dominant building – perhaps a castle or a cathedral. The guards were in cold weather gear – they looked like Varangians.

The woman asked who they were and where they came from. They gave her the information and she took them to the outer part of the temple where there was a big fire of burning wood that had been recently banked up. It was a large hall – anyone in there was cleared out and they were given exclusive use. She told them her name was Esther and that she was a knight superior of the temple of the shattered sun. She had a gold amulet with jet where it seemed to be broken – it looked like a broken disc of Ra. More women and men came in with towels and robes. Esther spoke the cosmic magic language; she also had some understanding of southern trading argot. Paradoxides thought it was a dialect of southern. A little later a big bowl of fish soup with fresh bread was brought in.

After a time carpets were rolled out and more food was offered – fish, seaweed and bread – and Esther spoke with the party again. She told them that a special council meeting was being convened to which they were invited.

It was held in a very large meeting chamber up some steps. A woman in red robes, Rebecca, was the head of the council. Grettir and his followers went in with armour and limited weapons, but no shields helmets and with their coifs down. There were thirteen in the council including Esther – nine women and four men. They wanted to know why the party had come. Rebecca told them they had fought the avatar of the heart eater on the way through. She could tell they were on the side of light. Grettir explained briefly about the rangers' disappearance and the temporal disturbance and that he had been guided by Osiris to seek a pthet of Ptah to help rescue them. There were not many temples of Ptah he added and they were here in the hope of finding those wise in the way of Ptah to counsel them. He further explained that they had found a pthet, but that it was no longer live. Lydius was mentioned in lore as somewhere which had a temple of Ptah before the fall of the Empire and they knew Lydius hadn't fallen. Grettir finally added that they knew very little of Lydius – but they could see that they fought for the light too.

Rebecca said that when the world changed, when the sun shattered – the gate was left open here – so they had to keep it closed. Ptah had helped them and so they had kept the demons out of the world. The last time the demons came through there was apocalypse – they had managed to keep it closed since. She explained that there was discord between Ptah and Seknet, and Hapshet had taken the opportunity to take gate and break through. So the most important thing for them was to close the gate. If Grettir and his followers closed it they would help them in any way they could to gain Ptah's good offices. It was not clear to her how they would work round the dispute between Seknet and Ptah. Their capacity to aid would be much greater if they could close the gate.

Grettir asked how long the discord had been. Rebecca replied at least ten cycles – 90 years. Grettir asked was there anything they could do to bring Seknet and Ptah together. Rebecca said that first they should deal with Hapshei's hordes. He had been helping to keep Ptah asleep. If they awoke Ptah, they could propitiate a settlement. At the moment they were busy keeping the gate protected. Rebecca said there were two or three opportunities for action. They could go beyond gate and take action against the horde of Hapshei, they could attempt to complete the ritual of sunrise, which they hadn't managed in 600 years – they could then close the gate properly. To do this they would need to defeat Apesh – the world serpent, then they could perform the ceremony for the book of the dead. Every night there was a fight between Apesh and Ra – the annual rite to banish Apesh – to dispel all evil from the land. The third choice would be to go out into the worlds and find Ptah and wake him directly.

The fires of the sub world ran close to the surface here. There was also ice all around. There was a lot of sea, but the island was substantial, and there were other islands around too. The harbour never froze here. Men used to come here in the years of the empire, but now it was only accessible in the warmest years of the cycle. They needed to be self sufficient and orderly.

Esther was allocated as a guide to show the party some of Lydius. It was a bright, very cold morning – to the west they could see large mountains on the island, covered in ice and snow. There was a small town about the size of Sequarl town. The bay was full of ruins. There had been an earthquake, rivers of blood and flood, most of the city

was under water, but the temple didn't fall in the sea. The yogin (water) took three quarters of the town.

They were not expecting trade boats for another two years. The nearest port that would trade was Helmund's port. Paradoxides thought that Lydius was on the same latitude as the skerry stone and northern barbarian lands. There were many places in the hinterland where fire was very close to the surface – Lydius was a good source of bitumen and pumice.

The party were explained the rules on trading – temporary residents were welcome provided they complied with the terms of their permit. Lydius designated land by zones; temple and associated lands – holy land, Freeport, homeland and then the wilderness park – for the dead. Movements within the wilderness park were supervised by priests. The trade all took place in Freeport. There was a caste like society – the idea of being elsewhere wasn't feasible to them.

Lydius was a source of salt fish, hardwood, stone, seasonally furs from the interior or the coast, glassware, carved ivory, pearls, amber, some bitumen, sulphur, metal, occasionally jewels, a significant source of high quality ink and paint pigments.

The party were offered the help of four knights superior. In the temple were shrines to Osiris and Isis amongst others. The magicians talked to the temple about teleport coordinates. They were told that they would need a token to get through temple defences – the temple was prepared to give them a token but warned them that demons would attack them as they left and entered. The demons might then be able to get through so the only co-ordinates were to a box in a similar set-up to Sequarl. The magicians decided against trying this.

The party decided to go on the Ship of the Dead – to complete the overnight ritual. At midnight Apep would try to interrupt. One knight would pilot the ship, one knight would run ceremony, and one would act as lookout and rescue anyone who went overboard. Paradoxides would shadow the knight acting as a lookout. Esther was the other knight and she would fight alongside the party mounted on her lizard steed. Apart from Paradoxides the rest of the party would try to defend the ship. Grettir was given the role of Sett – to deal with Apep. Everyone else would be able to assist Grettir if they were not needed to defend the ship. Depending on how things went they would be able to decide whether they could complete the ceremony and bind Apep. This decision would be made by the knight running the ceremony. In the past they when they had tried this they had managed to get the boat back, but they had not always returned with a full complement. Dealing with Apep had been possible in the past – however the problem now was that Ptah was asleep – this had impacted on the mana of the knights. The main figures in the temple were Ptah and his wife Ahmet; Osiris was also prominent.

Ubaron gave Paradoxides three cards and used his last one at dawn to create a card with blade fire. Paradoxides made protection from demons amulets for everyone in the party.

Miriam, Samuel and Ellia along with Esther were the knights superior. All the party were given golden medallion of the shattered sun. They were also supplied with some

javelins for use against demons – Ubaron took two of them. They were made of a light metal alloy with runes around it. They were holy javelins for use against demons.

Ellia would be running the ceremony, Miriam would helm the ship. Grettir, Wilf and Ubaron prayed and also made sure they knew how the ceremony would run.

The ceremonial boat was brought out in a room. There was a large congregation. The ceremony started at dusk with the last rays of the setting sun. The real world seemed to disappear and Ubaron had the same sensation as at the start of the swan journey. The ship seemed to be sailing on a calm sea on a dark night. Esther changed into the form of a rider on some sort of troll and Samuel was on a winged thing – the change occurred at the same time as the astral sensation started.

The first attack, from a crocodile demon, was easily dealt with. A demonic wasp was fought by Samuel, and driven off. The sea narrowed into an estuary, and the banks closed in. The banks were now rocky. In the water were islands or piles of rubble that they had to negotiate.

A giant serpent appeared and the boat crashed into it. It was easily identified as Apep the serpent of evil by Ellia. Grettir fought the serpent assisted by Wilf and the boat was attacked by more demons. Ubaron cast blade fire. Paradoxides' amulets were very useful. Wilf was wounded by Apep – his helmet was knocked off and he was stunned. Apep almost encircled Grettir with his tail, but Grettir escaped.

Ubaron cut down a preying mantis. At the back of the boat Esther forced a demon back, while Ubaron cut down a demonic spider. Esther drove off the demon at the back. Her spell caused a golden glow. Samuel cast a spell at Apep - a holy word. Javelins bounced off Apep with little or no effect. Apep spat at Samuel who flew up and away. Apep then came back to the ship.

Wilf drank a 1000gp potion. Grettir continued to fight against Apep. Apep tried to wrap itself around Jason, but Grettir knocked it over the side. The ship of the dead continued on its way.

The ship was followed by a flying insect. Samuel was still flying but the other three knights were all singing and the boat surged forward. The rosy light of dawn arrived and the ship arrived in the temple to much rejoicing – it was the first time this had been achieved in 90 years. They had managed to banish evil for a year. This gave the temple a considerable boost. The party were told they could keep their amulets of the shattered sun. They were now considered allies of the church – they could trade, and were given residents permits. Their attempts to communicate with Ptah were now much more likely to succeed. The council would now be considering whether they could break the siege.

Grettir suggested that angons rather than javelins might be more useful as weapons against the demons and in particular Apep who had seemed very well armoured. Perhaps they might be able to make something that could be cast by Jason's bolt thrower.

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There was a very large religious ceremony of thanksgiving.

G17 – Breaking the Demon Siege (31 Jan 10)

The party were faced with three options – they could try to break the astral siege, invoke another trial against Apech with more at stake, or try to break the entrapment via teleport. Wilf was laid low, possibly due to contact with the demons. They decided to try to break the entrapment via a teleport and Paradoxides cast teleport to take Ubaron, Jason Grettir, Samuel and Kollgrim to Sequarl.

The teleport was interrupted and the party found themselves scattered in the dark over an area covered by broken rubble partly under water and under attack by demons. Kollgrim's screams could be heard a little way off. Most of the party had protection from demon amulets, which were triggered. Ubaron drove off the demon that was attacking him. Grettir moved towards the sounds of Kollgrim. Samuel changed form and went to help Paradoxides. Grettir managed to get to Kollgrim and killed the demon, but Kollgrim was seriously wounded. Ubaron finished off his demon. Samuel and Paradoxides finished off another and so did Jason and the party were able to regroup.

One demon had escaped. They seemed to be in an underground level: the water was salty. Paradoxides believed they were still on the prime plane – the teleport had been aborted by the demons and they were probably not far from where they had started. It was now low tide and the tide mark was very high. Samuel thought they were under a lighthouse or an island in the bay at Lydius. Ubaron and Samuel healed Kollgrim.

Samuel also healed Jason and Paradoxides. Then Paradoxides cast another mass teleport to take them on to Sequarl. This time he failed to take Ubaron and Kollgrim, so Ubaron cast teleport immediately for the two of them and they tried to follow.

Paradoxides' teleport was again interrupted and his group ended in the sea. Jason was nearly eaten by a demonic squid, but he was rescued by Grettir using his ring of walking on water. Grettir finished off the squid and then found it in iconic form. They made their way across the water and back to the temple.

Ubaron's teleport was also interrupted and he was hit by a demon shark while very high in the sky. He and Kollgrim cast fly and the demon changed into a flying demon. Ubaron had used a card so he was quicker than Kollgrim and was ready when the demon attacked. Kollgrim tumbled some way to the earth before his fly spell was cast. Ubaron wounded the female demon and she started to fall, but recovered and attacked again. The demon closed and hit Ubaron hard. Ubaron drew a dagger and stabbed her a couple of times and she broke off and fled.

Ubaron drew his bow as the demon was able to fly faster than e. He had one shot but managed to finish her off. The demon tumbled into the snow below. Ubaron flew down and was joined by Kollgrim. They managed to take a fistful of blue hair, but the rest of the demon just melted away. Kollgrim sealed the hair in a vial. Ubaron recovered his arrowhead, but the rest of the arrow also melted.

It was very cold and they were in deep snow, surrounded by mountains. Ubaron built a snow cave and he and Kollgrim shared Ubaron's protection from frost amulet. They saw out the day and then Ubaron cast night windwalk to take them back to the temple. The party spent a day and half resting and Paradoxides took the time to force the demon into a breastplate. He had its name and it was enslaved. It would be able to cause fear, cast darkness and also grapple something. It was able to attack people teleporting and had been set to interdict teleports into and out of Lydius. The breastplate was worn by Grettir and the party thought it might prove useful in trying to hold Apesh to complete the ritual. First they decided to see if they could now teleport. Paradoxides took Grettir, Ubaron, Jason and Samuel, but not Kollgrim and they left just before dawn. They did not get far.

In a similar place to last time. Jason was attacked by two shark demons, which immediately changed into a more demonic humanoid form. Ubaron was closed by a cockroach demon. Ubaron and Grettir took down their demons. One of the demons facing Jason changed to attack Ubaron. It had a whip and spear. Grettir joined Ubaron. Paradoxides held off a demon, which was then forced back by Samuel. Samuel said a holy word and the two demons attacking Ubaron and Jason along with the demon opposed to Samuel and Paradoxides were dispelled. Paradoxides took some requisites from the demons including poison from the demonic cockroach. Samuel did some healing and then Paradoxides successfully teleported them all to Sequarl. Grettir picked up his field plate and Ubaron wore the demonic breastplate. Paradoxides teleported everyone back to the temple. Something tried to attack as they went through but they did get through to the temple at Lydius.

They rested up again while Paradoxides changed the form of demon so that if something tried to take them as they teleported then the demon squid would be able to attack them. This time only Paradoxides the squid and Grettir went.

The squid and Paradoxides got through to Sequarl with a demon that had attacked them. The squid dealt with the demon and Paradoxides and the squid then teleported back to the temple. Grettir did not make it through and ended up below the lighthouse again. He dealt with the demon spider that had attacked him and managed to get back to the temple using his ring of walking through water.

The party thought that the attacks on teleporters seemed to be coming from the lighthouse and decided to investigate this. The temple supplied some boats and rowers. Grettir had noticed that the water wasn't as cold as he would have expected and there was some mist above the water. There was no ice in the bay, although he would have expected there to have been.

Grettir, Paradoxides, Ubaron, Jason, Samuel and Kollgrim were rowed out to the lighthouse, which was twenty or thirty yards square, and had collapsed inwards. Paradoxides flew to have a look around – he couldn't see way a way down.

Ubaron cast fly and cast airy water on everyone and then they followed Grettir down to where he had emerged from earlier. Samuel cast a spell and looked around as Horus and noticed something: Paradoxides sent squid the after demons there. Grettir spotted where there were two demons in a pool. The squid was fighting something. Grettir

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assisted and the other demon was dealt with. There didn't seem to be any more demons for it to deal with.

Paradoxides cast detect power, life and magic spells but found nothing. He then teleported everyone back to the temple with no interference.

Kollgrim took Grettir back to Sequalr and then back to the temple via teleport with no interference and they concluded that the problem was for the time being at least eliminated.

G18 – Banishing Apep (24 Apr 10)

Wilf went to the temple of Mithra and explained the situation. They gave him something to stabilise the boat. The Mithran view was definitely that they should try to kill the serpent not capture it. Grettir saw Rendip Rim and he also said that they shouldn't hesitate to kill it. He warned Grettir not to fall in. He was also supplied a gallon of holy water for grenades.

Paradoxides said that he could make a skein of hair of the devout and imbue it with an air elemental and the knights superior could then concentrate their efforts on it. An air elemental would be tasked with touching Apep.

Ubaron went to the temple of Isis and spoke to Cassandra. He also did a sacrifice. Cassandra was interested in making a connection with a long isolated temple. She gave Ubaron a scroll to deliver proposing a meeting and exchange. Cassandra was interested in the big ceremony planned. She was also interested in whether the siege was connected to the torpor of unavailability to contact of Ptah. It might be that Lydius was particularly favourable to Ptah; perhaps this was connected to the unusual circumstances in Lydius where it was surrounded by ice half the year and by water the other half and there was also a huge amount of volcanic activity. Chittagong and now Lydius were the only known places with continuous connection to the pantheon of Gods.

Cassandra also warned that losing contact with the boat would mean being lost in the astral void. She did suggest tethers to the boat or someone to throw psychic lifebelts. The other suggestion was for something to link them all or some sort of life hook. She blessed the enterprise and agreed that killing Apep was good. Ubaron had a supply of holy water.

Paradoxides took Ubaron with him into the interior and went to the Ice Mountains in the north. He tried to summon and control a wind elemental. He got a very powerful one. He tried to control it, while Ubaron worked up to support him. Paradoxides lost control and was taken by the elemental, but he managed to recover. He controlled the elemental and put it in a bag and they flew back to Lydius. The air elemental was so powerful it had a name Ysta Jotunsdottir.

Wilf had been given a candelabrum, which would work as a spiritual anchor. Paradoxides made a ball of twine, which consisted of the hair of the knights superior, Wilf and Paradoxides. It would be attached to the candelabrum once the air elemental had attached it to Apep.

Jason helped make some harpoons. Ubaron tested the demonic breastplate – he managed to control it but it caused darkness and unnatural fear and this made it difficult to deploy.

Esther was the captain, Samuel would look ahead, Miriam would steer the boat, Paradoxides would entangle Apep with the twine, Grettir would champion the forecastle, Wilf amidships and Jason the stern. Elia was cover and would take over if necessary sailing the boat. The others had a more general support task.

They set sail in the ceremony with the pink horizon behind them. The ceremony seemed to go very well: there was high moral and a good sense of purpose. Samuel saw something flying high up but it flew off. Samuel scouted and said demons were on their way. Five demons came in to attack the ship. Jason accidentally set off an incendiary near Wilf, which exploded. Grettir and Ubaron fought demons at the bows, while Wilf came under attack amidships. Paradoxides cast blinding ray against another demon as it came in and someone finished it off. Paradoxides then reduced the fire. Jason was attacked at the stern.

Grettir threw a holy hand grenade and hit a demon causing it to leave. Jason took one down and Ubaron, Kollgrim and Samuel finished off a third. The other two fled. Three had been killed. Some healing was carried out and they sailed on.

Trevillion heard a voice in the distance. Samuel flew Trevillion towards it to investigate it. They saw a tower on a rock. There was an entrance on the roof. Trevillion managed to look inside. What he saw was a torture chamber with a fiery elemental torturing a woman from Kos or possibly Anango. There was a fiery demon in a pentacle on a plinth. The woman was on a rack outside the pentacle. They then returned and reported.

There was a close vote on whether to divert. Trevillion, Kollgrim and Ubaron voted to divert. Kollgrim's vote was ignored by Esther. Esther voted to continue. Samuel voted to divert. Grettir said that Kollgrim's vote should count. This gave a majority in favour of diverting as the two other knights abstained.

Kollgrim took Grettir, Ubaron took Trevillion, and Paradoxides flew alone. They flew to the tower and Paradoxides cast vorpal blade to chop through the door in the conical top of the tower. They broke in and saw a long barrel sticking out. The magicians managed to fly the party in and land. They saw steps down. The passage was filled by webs. The party headed down the steps led by Grettir who burned the webs with his muspel sword as he went. Grettir was nearly drawn off the tower by an illusion of the steps. Paradoxides said that multiple illusions seemed to be working here and he cast anti magic shell, which enabled him to see through the illusions and he spotted a hidden door.

Paradoxides magically opened the door and went into the room. He was attacked by two spiders. He killed one with burning hands and then Ubaron stabbed the other and then Paradoxides blasted it, but also damaged Ubaron. Paradoxides started to slow as he had been bitten by a spider. The fire elemental threw small balls of fire at Trevillion as he tried to free the woman. Paradoxides tried to read a scroll to neutralise poison. Ubaron dispelled the elemental. Paradoxides recovered after casting his spell and Trevillion picked the locks and freed the woman. The party left immediately with the woman without any looting. They picked up a token that Samuel had left to help find the tower. They then returned safely to the ship.

Her name was Zilzana and said she was a priestess of Kebzenof. No-one knew the God. Zilzana said Kebzenof was a Half God of Jad, a town on Kos. She had been kidnapped by Tyrosian pirates. She was in the hands of one of the seven. She thought she had been in the tower for some weeks but she wasn't sure. She was very

attractive. She thought she was being kept as a sacrifice as part of the war between Kos and Tyros. She was part of the defences of the city of Jad. After discussions Samuel thought that she had probably been in the tower for four months. The party explained their mission.

The ship sailed on. The sea had been calm, but now there was certain choppiness. Wilf lit his candelabrum. The boat seemed to be swept on towards midnight. Some rocks about and sides narrowed in with rocky ground on either side. This hadn't happened until late – near dawn – last time. Now it was just before midnight. Jason realised as the ship rushed on that they were being followed by something. Was this the serpent of Apep? Miriam couldn't turn the boat as the channel was too narrow. Whatever was following sounded and then when it came back up it attacked the back of the ship. Jason hit Apep a glancing blow with a harpoon and Miriam yawed the ship. Wilf managed to hit it with another harpoon – this time it stuck in.

The serpent attacked Esther and Wilf hit it hard with another harpoon. Paradoxides deployed the elemental with the twined hair. Grettir hit Apep with another harpoon. Ubaron hit it with a holy water grenade. One of the priests connected the twine to the candelabra and the twine held. There was a golden light playing around serpent. The elemental left after completing its task successfully. The serpent took down Esther's steed and she leapt off – Wilf helped her back on board. The priests attacked the serpent down the link and Paradoxides tried to stop incoming black magic attacks. The attacks got through. Two priests went down. Two of the harpoons held – Kollgrim and Ubaron hauled on one of the ropes and got the head of an angon back. Another harpoon came out. Esther sent a spell down the line and shortly afterwards a body floated to the surface and the party tried to haul it in. They dragged the body alongside to carry out a ceremony. Grettir used his ring to walk out and they put cables round the serpent and hauled it aboard.

Elia was exhausted, but Samuel wasn't too bad and Miriam was OK. Esther did some healing.

Grettir used his spear, Ubaron borrowed Grettir's muspel sword; the priests got together and performed the ceremony. Wilf stood on the serpent's head, Jason pulled on a rope, Esther stabbed it with a dagger, Grettir with his spear it and Ubaron with the muspel sword. The serpent drifted into smoke.

The priests did some healing and they ship sailed on to dawn and arrived back in the temple at Lydius to much rejoicing. The siege had been significantly lifted. The temple could now operate freely instead of being under constraints.

A celebratory festival was played. There was some reconnaissance from the knights superior. Ubaron meanwhile took Zilzana to Telnus on Kos.

Ubaron teleported to Grettir's agents. There was uproar in Jad as Zilzana was extremely important and so was her family. She was a vestal virgin. Grettir's contacts were very polite and sent a message to the temple. A palanquin turned up with a group of hoplites and took them to the temple. She ran the oracle, which had not been working since she had been kidnapped. She was cleaned up and looked like an A-list celebrity. It was a big political coup for Grettir and his men. Zilzana was returned to

her family, who were hugely grateful and gave Ubaron her weight in gold – 140lb (22,400gp).

Miriam and Samuel went out scouting – Esther no longer had a mount as her previous one had been slain by Apep; she would have to get another. There was a direction to travel in that had been difficult for the priests before the successful ceremony so this was the direction that Samuel investigated. He found that a step pyramid had been built there and something was being portaged out. Grettir and his men planned to investigate further.

Esther would run the ceremonies, Miriam would run the boat, Samuel along with Grettir, Kollgrim, Ubaron, Paradoxides, Jason and Trevillion were free to investigate whatever was found whilst Esther and Miriam were left with the boat.

This time when they set sail there was a moon, which hadn't been there before. The ceremony began smoothly and the planned group left the boat and headed off on foot. They would return and rendezvous with the boat at this point, which was a cove. If the ship was no longer here Samuel should be able to find it or he could help them make their own way back to Lydius.

The party found themselves on a dark and shadowed island. It seemed very dry and dusty. Samuel took the party to some ruins where they watched for the next portage. They saw a group of six guards, eight bearers and a leader. Ubaron thought the guards were demons and that the bearers were carrying a large, very heavy amphora or urn with a flat bottom. The guards were whipping the bearers, who had to stop every now again. Ubaron carried Trevillion, Kollgrim carried Grettir and Paradoxides carried Jason. They let the group past and then flew down to attack, leaving Samuel to observe.

They were spotted as they flew in. The three magicians landed and Jason clattered into Paradoxides. Grettir knocked over one of the guards. Ubaron hit the leader. Jason was pushed past by the leader and Ubaron hit it in the back. Paradoxides jumped out of the way and fell over. Grettir killed a demon. The demon leader turned on Ubaron, but Ubaron struck it hard in the back as it was turning. It was staggered and Ubaron hit it again. Grettir took down another demon and joined Ubaron in fighting the leader. The leader was staggered to his knees by a blow from Grettir. Kollgrim knocked his opponent to his knees. Paradoxides tried to jump again but fell as he was still pursued by a demon. Ubaron fought a fresh demon, while Grettir chopped the head off the leader. Trevillion had been shooting from the edge of the combat. Paradoxides had a shield up, but the demon hit him in the shoulder. Ubaron took down another demon.

The urn seemed to be of rough, grey stone. It had been put down by the slaves who milled about panicking. Ubaron and Jason tried to subdue the last demon. Ubaron disarmed the demon and disabled one of his arms. Jason knocked him down. Unfortunately it bled to death, so there were no prisoners.

Samuel came over and joined the party. He said that the urn looked like it was made from pumice stone. He said that the slaves were lost souls and the best thing would be to strike their fetters off and let them go.

Samuel said that whatever was in the urn was very powerful but was not evil. The top was sealed and Paradoxides looked at it. It looked to him as though it was an alchemical seal or a stasis spell. Samuel seemed excited and distracted and said that they needed to take it back to the temple. He had no idea what it was, but it was very precious and wanted to take it back immediately.

Grettir struck the fetters off the last souls and sent them away saying 'be at peace' as he did so. The lost souls just turned to dust and blew away. Ubaron and Kollgrim investigated the demon guards' bodies and found a demon whip, an oversize axe, some demon ichor and the horns of the big demon.

Paradoxides started casting some detect spells on the urn. Whatever it was it seemed to be powerful – there were perhaps 20 power points contained it. He surmised that it might contain ectoplasm.

It wasn't too heavy to lift, but seemed to have a lot of inertia when it was moved. They left the oversized axe behind and headed directly to Lydius, which they reached without incident.

The urn was taken to the temple and investigated. A tightly fitted cylinder was removed from the stone. Inside it was a glowing metal flask; it was glowing blue. The cardinal took it and put it on the altar. The ectoplasm was essence of Ptah. It probably contained 1 in 10,000 of all of Ptah's ectoplasm. Presumably Ptah must be trapped in the pyramid. Where were they taking it?

G19 – Essence of Ptah (24 Jul 10)

The party had returned to Lydius after the previous expedition. Paradoxides became a 12th level magician. The loot from the last expedition was split up and each member of the party received 2800gp. The party met with some of the knights superior and discussed what they had discovered. The knights superior thought there were three possibilities: someone had taken Ptah and was rendering him down, the party had found an old temple where Ptah had already been rendered down and this was now being stolen or Ptah was in purdah in ancient mystery they didn't understand. There seemed to be two strategies: break into the temple or track the trail back.

After some discussion they decided to attack the pyramid. Grettir, Paradoxides, Girindor, Jason, Ubaron, Wilf, Kollgrimm and Trevillion formed the main party. This gave them four flyers and four non flyers. The temple agreed to supply Samuel and Elia, while Esther and Miriam would look after the boat. They were also accompanied by Jacob – a large knight who came to guard the boat.

They all went down to a room in the temple and a ceremony took place in the ceremonial ship and they set sail. The trip was uneventful and landed at the same cove they had previously. From there the party set off towards the pyramid.

Underfoot the ground was quite powdery. Girindor thought of it as a sea of asbestos powder. They headed towards the pyramid and Trevillion was attacked by a demonic spider. It went back into its tunnel and the party ignored it.

Girindor was attacked by a hydra like plant. It grappled him. Trevillion closed with it and Grettir and Ubaron joined in. Grettir's blow finished it off. It was a bloodthorn.

Four long tendrils and two half tendrils were taken from the bloodthorn. Trevillion poked around the roots. He found some bronze finger rings, a bracelet of pink coral and some bronze scales. The bronze rings felt like they might be magic – just trace magic – they were for very large fingers.

Trevillion realised that they were heading through badlands to get to the pyramid. They wouldn't be observed but they could be ambushed, so they decided to fly to the temple.

Paradoxides, Jason, Ubaron, Grettir, Kollgrim, Elia, Girindor, Wilf, Samuel and Trevillion flew in pairs. The passengers were landed at the pyramid where they thought they could see an entrance. Ubaron and Paradoxides kept their fly spells running. Samuel and Kollgrim remained outside on watch, while the rest of the party prepared to enter the pyramid.

Trevillion tried to open the lock on the door into the pyramid. He was bitten by a snake, which was on a stone above the rock. Elia looked at it and said the door was a demon. Paradoxides borrowed Grettir's helmet and talked to the door. Ubaron cast neutralise poison on Trevillion – it was a very powerful poison and he had to cast the spell twice.

Paradoxides managed to send the demon away. It lumbered off after knocking over Wilf as it left. There was fire in the pyramid with a face looking out of the fire. Paradoxides took the helmet back and dealt with the fire demon. Grettir got out of the way but Jason was threatened by it, but was not damaged. The next door was also a demon, possibly a shadow door. Paradoxides was now short of mana.

Elia supported by Wilf with his candelabra and Grettir with his spear dealt with the shadow. Girindor cast rock to mud to remove the fitting so that the door couldn't return. There was a skeletal hand at each corner, which Girindor avoided. Each skeleton faded away to smoke. There were demon bindings that they collected – the shadows disappeared.

There was a passage going down ahead with carved sigils in the walls on either side. This was consistent with temples of the pantheon. Grettir didn't feel that the place was evil, but thought that it might be a perversion of good. Wilf thought there were souls here who had been lost and taken by Seth.

Seth had been a force for good, who might have fought Apep, but had fallen from grace and was now an enemy fallen into shadow. Ptah and Seth were both from the very beginning. Seth was a ram headed man – it was unlucky to make an image of him. The party thought they were probably going underground. The sigils continued on the passage walls. The finishing was rough but sigils were quite decorative.

The passage widened out into a room with a number of braziers. Trevillion was shot from the shadows. Trevillion, Grettir and Wilf went into the room and were attacked; as Ubaron reached a niche in front of the room more figures came from both sides to attack. The figures were demon foot soldiers. Something was thrown that landed near Jason. He was hit by some black magic from it. Something cast a black magic power word, Jason and Ubaron were paralysed. Paradoxides was deafened, Girindor and Trevillion were stunned and Wilf was slowed but Grettir was unaffected.

Wilf drew the demon battleaxe but failed to go berserk. Grettir continued to wield destruction. He killed a number of the demon foot soldiers and threw his spear at the demon that had spoken the power word. Paradoxides used his wand and it did some damage but more importantly prevented the demon from casting something else. It drew a two handed sword and fought with Grettir. Wilf cut down another soldier. Wilf eventually did go berserk and killed two more. There was a fearsome battle between Grettir and the demon. Jason and then Ubaron recovered. Grettir was knocked to his knees by a demon soldier. Wilf arrived and was struck by the demon. Paradoxides used burning hands to finish off two wounded demon soldiers. Jason finished off his opponent. Ubaron joined in. The demon leader went down and Wilf continued to hack at it in a berserk frenzy. They managed to take one of the demon soldiers prisoner.

Grettir, Paradoxides, Ubaron and Jason went on through a door at the back where the passage continued. There were silver runes on a door, which said "Ptah's purdah entry forbidden". They returned to the room where the fight had taken place and the wounded were healed. Elia touched the runes on the door and said it was a really holy place. The party checked that there were no other entrances.

Grettir questioned the demon soldier. The demon told them that their leader had been one of Gerion's lieutenants; Gerion was lord of a place he mentioned. He was an arch demon of the fifth plane of hell. Their orders were to hang around and carry the stone. The stone would be left by the door with the silver runes. They would then take it to the pyramid of Sekmet – which he described as a long way – 75,000 paces. This contract he had carried 304 stones. He had been summoned here by the demon leader. All the demon foot soldiers had been under contract

It sounded like there was a group out carrying a stone, but it was probably the group the party had already killed. The demon soldier said that there had been casualties before, when out dragging the urns. Word was 16 unaccounted for. He had taken 46. He said that the pyramid of Sekmet was like this one. There was a white zone where they couldn't go. Grettir's spear was also a white zone. Wilf thought that Sekmet was a very old goddess, who may have been connected to Seth. Paradoxides powered up a wand and spotted an illusion and a secret door. Eventually the door was opened by Paradoxides with a knock spell. There was a small space with loot inside. It sounded like the jars were taken in beyond the door and then reappeared full. It seemed like the jar was now late reappearing.

The magicians meditated and Elia prayed for four hours. She thought that Ptah was really there – behind the door. Grettir told Elia what the demon had said – she thought that they had better talk to the cardinal. She said that Sekmet was Ptah's wife and thought that it sounded as though Sekmet had made the pyramid.

Grettir gave the demon foot soldier his chit and sent it on its way. One more demon foot soldier had survived and was also given a chit and sent on its way. The others just seemed to corrode. The party collected the loot and headed back to Lydius. Paradoxides cast a stone wall to block up the pyramid. The party then flew back to the boat and returned safely to Lydius.

Back in Lydia they arranged a meeting with the cardinal, Rebecca. She told them that Sekmet was an angry goddess of fiery vengeance. She was more propitiated than worshipped and was involved in a Jihad against those in humanity plotting against Ra and was very difficult to contact. Rebecca thought that either there was something very odd in the interactions between the gods or something bad was happening to Ptah or both. She wouldn't have anticipated that something from the fifth circle of hell would have contact with Sekmet.

Sekmet was a lion headed goddess; there was a fane to her in the temple.

Loot:

Bronze finger rings,

Bracelet pink coral

Bronze scales

Manacles.

Small jar

Iron flask possibly magical, fluid could be a potion

Large curved brass bound horn (for blowing into)

Jar contained chits like half a coin

8 flasks with liquid – blood

Braziers lots of armour

Urns

28 shrunken heads

Dried flesh

Large demon head with earrings, thick gold rings with rubies or semi precious stones
not magic

Large sword, looked like a demon sword, but didn't feel evil, life, lots of power, metal

Lots of marrow crackers etc

Rebecca thought sword was a bound shendu – like a sphinx or even a dragon? A good
thing.

Horn was summoning horde of demons – would need to be strong well constituted
and a wizard.

G20 – Waking Ptah (15 Jan 11)

The area behind the door with the writing in the pyramid of Ptah had been referred to by the demon soldier as the white zone. The demon said that periodically a stone jar appeared from behind the sealed door and they would take it away.

The sword was a shendu – something like an Archangel. It was too big for anyone in the party to use properly. It was very valuable but Grettir proposed freeing it as it might help them.

A ceremony was set up by the temple. Paradoxides would cast a spell to release the shendu, while the rest of the party were involved in the ceremony. Paradoxides pulled out a golden pin from the pommel of the sword and the sword started to glow brighter and brighter with a dazzling blue light. The sword was replaced by a beast like thing. The brilliant light dwindled and all that remained was a white hot boulder. The shendu had transformed into that form to avoid damaging the party.

The party decided to go to the astral realms to converse with the shendu. They got toiled up and took the boat in another ceremony. Grettir, Paradoxides, Ubaron, Girindor, Wilf, Jason and Kollgrimm along with three knights superior set off. The Shendu became a winged horse with horns and accompanied them – Paradoxides could communicate telepathically with it.

The shendu told them that it had been captured and bound by Geirion. It advised them that they would be destroyed if they went up against him at his home. It didn't remember much about its ordeal but would accompany them on their mission.

The Shendu and Paradoxides flew off to find Samuel. They were successful, but Samuel was unconscious and they returned to the ship with his inert body. He had been attacked and poisoned by a demonic scorpion. He was cured by Ubaron. Until he was attacked he had seen no activity.

The party headed off to the pyramid of Sekmet, attempting to follow the demon tracks. Ubaron was attacked by a demonic phase spider, which he managed to kill before it phased away. The party collected requisites from the corpse including the fangs.

Kollgrimm found a helmet; it was probably from the demon soldiers they had killed in the earlier ambush.

Girindor saw movement ahead and tried to find ambush positions. It was another party of demon soldiers. The ambush was only partly successful. Grettir took down a soldier that had been shot by Girindor; Ubaron killed a demon soldier, while Jason took out another.

Two more demons arrived. Grettir killed out another demon, while in the air a battle ensued between the Shendu, Samuel and two more flying demons. Grettir slew another demon, then Ubaron and Grettir finished off the wolf headed leader. The two flying demons were slain and the last remaining demon was also despatched.

The party heard gibbering nearby – it was some lost souls carrying an empty pumice jar. The party looted the bodies of the fallen and found a golden token of Sekmet, which looked fresh out of the pyramid. Grettir put the lost souls to rest.

Girindor tried to track the demons back to the pyramid of Sekmet and then the party stopped for a rest. During second watch a female shapeshifter was seen and the Shendu brought back a naked woman. She claimed to be of the Zot tribe. Ethnically she looked like she was from Anango. She said she was called Sheba and could change into a springbok. Ubaron had lived in Anango and she didn't sound to be from the area at all and did not speak southern.

Grettir told Sheba that she was welcome to accompany them but when she heard that they were heading for the dark pyramid she did not want to stay with them. She told them that it was a place of power, and that one of the dark powers – Sekemt – lived there. She pointed out the direction, which agreed with Girindor, and told them that it was about a day's trot. She said that she would see them on their return journey, but that she wouldn't go in that direction.

Girindor had lost the trail. Her and Samuel searched but couldn't find the tracks or where the pyramid lay, even when using the amulet of Sekmet. The Shendu however could spot the pyramid even though it was concealed.

Paradoxides tried to lead the party to the pyramid with directions from the Shendu. Samuel could see dark weather ahead in the direction of the pyramid. They arrived at the steps going up to the temple and were met by two ten foot tall dog headed guards. Grettir told them that they were there to worship and free Sekmet. The guard told them to follow him to the place of waiting. Paradoxides told the Shendu to follow them, but it was not allowed through as an independent power.

Paradoxides and Ubaron felt this was a very heavy place, where it would be difficult to cast magic. Ubaron felt this was very much Sekmet's place. He and Paradoxides both had a feeling of vengeance in the air and that vengeance was a dish best cold. Ubaron definitely felt this was Sekmet who wanted this. Ubaron felt this was not the place to be.

Elia said that this was a domestic argument amongst the Gods and they needed to get out of there as soon as possible. The party headed out and the Shendu warned that the power activity was increasing. Paradoxides cast astral walk and the shendu rode shotgun. Whilst Paradoxides was preparing the spell vertical beams started lighting up the skies around the pyramid. Paradoxides took them back to the temple of the shattered sun. Something tried to grasp Paradoxides just before landing but missed him. There were sparks from the Shendu as it dealt with their attacker. They had something of a crash landing and Kollgrimm broke his ankle, but was healed.

Elia thought Sekmet was very angry with Ptah. The normal connection between them had gone wrong. She also felt that Sekmet wanted to be alone. She was not sure whether Sekemt was involved in the process or not.

The cardinal, Rebecca said that if they assumed that a power or demon were intercepting the holy seed near the pyramid of Sekmet, and then diverting or poisoning it then they would also be able to assume that if someone were to turn up and investigate, it would be a level above the lieutenant the party had already dealt with. If Sekmet had been using the demons then what would turn up to investigate? She did not think the party would be able to deal with it. She thought that this had been going on slowly over a few decades as Ptah had been unavailable for forty to fifty years.

Grettir asked what it would take to wake Ptah. Rebecca told him that it would take a lot of power, but perhaps less than outside of pyramid. She did think that it might be part of the construction of the temple, which was keeping him in purdah.

Paradoxides meditated while Ubaron took the Shendu to fetch the ceremonial boat. As a magician, Ubaron was also able to communicate telepathically with the Shendu. As they appeared near the ship in the astral lands they were attacked by a flying demon, but the problem was dealt with efficiently by the Shendu. It clasped the demon in its claws, and clubbed it or zapped it with its horns. The boat headed back to the temple and returned safely to the temple – the Shendu left.

The party set off in the ceremonial boat again. This time they were accompanied by the Cardinal and three further Knights Superior. The Shendu was summoned by Paradoxides, who flew with it to leave space on the boat for all the Knights Superior. This time they left the boat hidden and all headed to the pyramid of Ptah. The Shendu chased away a few potential demonic attackers and they reached the pyramid safely. Paradoxides' stone wall was still in place and after one unsuccessful attempt Paradoxides was able to dispel it.

The party headed in the way they had been before and reached the door to the white zone where an amphora awaited. Jason and Grettir pushed the door open. On the other side was a sphinx. The sphinx roared and Samuel and another knight superior fled in terror. There was a very bright light behind it. Grettir said let us past in the name of Osiris and Ptah, but the sphinx ignored him. Jason struck to subdue and Grettir waved his spear. Sphinx flew up and was attacked by the Shendu. Wilf and Girindor tried to stop the fleeing knights superior aided by the other knights, while the rest of the party went through the door.

There was a very large reclining figure. Another sphinx flew down and Ubaron and Paradoxides could see two more leaning out of niches high up in the walls, casting spells. One of the sphinxes cast a wind elemental; Jason and Grettir went past it and fought the first sphinx. The sphinx was hit and flew up still with the wind elemental whirling with blades in it. Another sphinx started chanting and was stopped by Ubaron firing his ice wand at it twice. It cast a black magic spell which severely weakened Ubaron's right arm, but he was still able to fire his wand, which he did twice more, preventing the sphinx from casting any more magic. Ubaron shot the sphinx again as it took flight and it crashed to the ground. The rest of the party were firing missiles at the sphinxes. The shendu knocked down the sphinx it was fighting but it was healed by a sphinx and the battle continued. The Shendu knocked the sphinx down but also crashed itself. Ubaron fired off another two shots from his wand at the sphinx that had been fighting Grettir and Jason and it crashed down. Grettir was

flown up by Paradoxides to attack the last sphinx which had retreated back to its niche and finished it off.

The healers checked the Shendu but its spirit had departed. Four amulets of sekmet were found on the sphinxes; these were also gold, but much larger than the one they had already found. Grettir found a scroll, some canopic jars and a handful of stone pots in the niches. Ubaron cast cure critical on his arm from a scroll and recovered fully.

Preparations were made for the ceremony to awaken Ptah. Everyone contributed what they could in mana or power. Ubaron had 19 mana to contribute. They also agreed to contribute blood points if required.

There was a long ceremony with a lot of chanting. All the priests' mana was spent then the ceremony was restarted with Ptah's essence – everyone involved had a taste. Then Grettir's ka, the magicians mana, the druid's earth power and eventually blood points were spent. 10 blood points each and Ptah stirred. There was a lot of bright light, an a feeling of euphoria. Lots of the temple seemed to boil off as the ashes of the dead.

Ptah had woken and all was not as it should have been but he was pleased to be awake. He had something he needed to sort out but he was pleased with the party's efforts. There were lots of cheers and then everyone was deposited back in the temple. Everyone had recovered their blood and hit points and any wounds had been healed. The priests were dazed but very happy and the Cardinal ordered a celebration. Rebekah was confident that in the near future she would be able to make contact with Ptah.

Ptah was no longer in communicado and the temple of the shattered sun and the party were in good cahoots with Ptah. Sekmet was now in seclusion or purdah. However her daughter Astarte has come into being as a goddess of vengeance. The domestic was an accusation of Ptah's infidelity with Mutt while Sekmet was pregnant. Ptah had been in purdah with his essence being siphoned off. There was a small idol of Astarte that had just been made in the temple. The idol was a small silvery young girl or woman. It looked a little like the shapeshifter.

Loot:

Phase spider requisites

Very large helmet

Demon trooper equipment

Broadsword, bronze, off plane, serpent pommel.

Gold token amulet – lion headed (Sekmet) – Elia said it was an item of power and veneration

Two leather flasks similar to ones with blood.

Two empty flasks.

Four large golden amulets for sekmet

Large scroll

Canopic jars

Stone pots

G21 – Searching the Seas of Fate (12 Mar 11)

It was now fourth week 695; the rangers had originally disappeared in the last week of December 693. After the previous trap here Ptah was awoken. There were celebrations at Lydius and as part of this Grettir, Paradoxides, Jason, Ubaron and Trevillion went on board a reed ship for a ceremony. It was a hot night and they came ashore in an empty harbour with great stone buildings beyond. The party went into the temple of Ptah, with sigils saying opener of the way etc in runes above the temple.

Each of the party apart from Trevillion spoke to Ptah. Ptah recognised Ubaron as a follower of Isis – the mistress of entropy. He offered to show Ubaron his fate, but Ubaron declined. He explained a little about Temporal anomalies and said that he would need the help of Thoth (Lord of Knowledge) – he said he would give Ubaron a sign and transport to speak to Thoth. He was given a golden amulet with “favoured of Ptah” on it.

The party followed a jackal headed eight foot plus male figure. He was tattooed, heavily muscled and wore a linen kilt. He was armed with a bronze curved sword, and a strangely shaped bronze axe. He led them to a similar reed boat and took his place as the steersman.. There was a sliver of moon overhead as he hoisted a dark sail and they headed down river. They saw an island head and another complex where they landed and headed to the temple of Thoth. As they left the boat they were handed a papyrus scroll by the steersman. They were met by beast headed guards and taken to the temple where they handed the scroll to the gatekeeper.

Thoth spoke to Paradoxides and Ubaron and explained that he was willing to accept offerings for knowledge. He said that the event they described sounded like it had been created by a chaotic energy event caused either by a God scale power or more probably as an unexpected consequence of something. Time compression effects in mundane world are slowing time, the effects were less apparent and predictable in the astral realm. He also said that relative time was monotonic for ephemerals on their plane. Small scale entropic cheating was possible at a high mana cost. Relative time had less meaning for immortals or denizens of alien worlds. Absolute time travel was impractical for ephemerals. A chaotic event might well involve annihilation of matter or other anomalous physics – perhaps the tinkering with laws of nature.

Paradoxides and Ubaron handed over their amulets to Thoth and he gave them more information. He explained that there could be no recovery for ephemerals of relative time lag. Absolute time movement would be possible for the toll of a god like energy consumption.

Relative time was time experience passing, absolute time is in relation to past and future.

It would be prohibitively risky for the coherence of reality to go back in time for ephemerals on the prime plane. In the astral realm absolute time was a much harder concept. Some places were in both realms. Some events also were momentous and the echoes last for all time and could be found in the astral realm but seldom more than once.

He said that it might be possible to make an entry into the time compression realm from the astral realm if the place was also in the astral realm or the event echoed in the astral realm. Risk was about the paradoxes, but these have no real value for gods who exist across time and across possibilities.

If they went in to the location of the time compression via the astral realm then the only time loss they would experience would be the time loss in the time compression not any travel to it.

If the event was as described then the anomalies should manifest in the astral realm. If the events that created it had been profound enough it would echo throughout time. If they could detect energy it would be apparent. Thoth suspected that its projection would be a stream of energy – rather like the northern lights but more powerful. Grettir would be able to find his temple in the astral realm and this should be relatively nearby.

Temporal anomalies – energy leaking – the rate of leakage would determine how long it would last. At the heart would be a perturbation of the laws of the universe. Thoth said it would burn itself out and heal itself – he didn't see this as the end of all time.

Thoth gave them all a boat ride back to the temple of Ptah and then returned with the knights superior to Lydius. Grettir was allowed the use of a boat and two pilots, Miriam and Samuel, to travel the astral realm.

Grettir, Paradoxides, Ubaron, Jason, Trevillion and Kollgrimm set off in the boat and Grettir tried to find his home in the astral realm. He saw a number of lighthouses ahead – it seemed to be Chittagong. He then saw a rocky outcrop that he didn't recognise, but he thought it might be Yarr. Finally he spotted Sequarl; it seemed as it must have been a few hundred years ago.

Samuel and Trevillion flew off and found the beacon of energy. It was like a big blue pulsing beam of light. They spotted a demon rider; Trevillion shot her and she flew off. The ship sailed on and almost crashed when it went through a very small gap between a clutch of reefs. The blue light seemed to be coming from the smashed top of a mountain, amidst rough seas. The blue light illuminated the upper darkness – they could see the northern lights above.

Jason communed with Thoth. He was told that distortion was never linear and that this one was 10^4 or 10^5 at the maximum depth. He was also told that it would burn out in a lifetime or half a lifetime.

Kollgrimm and Ubaron flew the party to the top of the mountain. They could see water down in the bottom and some turmoil. They landed in the bottom – Ubaron kept his spell running. It was very difficult to stand there as it was very steep and rocky. There was a smell of wet earth. Jason had a feeling from Thoth that what they wanted was through the water to the prime plane. Grettir had been warned not to go into bottomless bodies of water. Paradoxides set up his mat and meditated.

Paradoxides thought that the living world was about 100 feet down. It was difficult to sense what was down there.

Jason dropped a daylight flare. He could see clear water and jagged rocks and then it became foggy – like on a rope trick. It seemed to go foggy about 60 feet down. Ubaron flew Trevillion to reconnoitre around the mountain. Ubaron toked on a hawkweed cigar to see better in the darkness. Near the top they found a rock that looked like a wrecked tree. Trevillion landed to investigate. It looked like a form of yew tree that had been struck by lightning; there was the sound of tinkling from the leaves - as they tinkled there were sparks. Trevillion took a leaf; it seemed almost like metal and seemed to have liquid inside. The tree seemed warmer than a tree should be. Trevillion couldn't work out how its roots had got into the hard rock. It was extremely difficult to tear the leaf, which was copperish in hue. The tree was roughly in the centre of the amorphous beam. The leaf tasted of sap, but with a metallic tang.

Ubaron next took up Paradoxides. He meditated and then when awoken by Ubaron said that there were 200-300 power points in the tree. He also said that the tree had thoughts. The roots seemed to bound round things. They could still hear the tinkle of leaves occasionally and saw sparks. Paradoxides found that the chee was earth and air. Paradoxides tried to contact it with shocking grasp and the tree became more active and there were more sparks and tinklings. Paradoxides could sense the tree thinking “become aware, become aware now”. The tree now seemed softer to the touch. The tree held Paradoxides. By using shocking grasp Paradoxides managed to pass messages back and forth – the sparking was almost continuous now. The tree said who are you in elvish. It said it will take me a while to wake up. The two magicians could now see a face in the bark. The face was slightly androgynous and they realised that the tree was a female elf. She said she came from far away. She was observing the phenomenon and absorbing energy.

Ubaron flew up Grettir to talk to the elf as well. She was called Delorean. She knew that some elves had not crossed the rainbow bridge and were still in prime plane. She was from Elvenheim, which is where those who had crossed the rainbow bridge had gone. She thought the phenomenon was beautiful. She had no knowledge of the way in. She had seen a grell go into the water and then a grell come back some time later – she assumed that they were the same grell. Paradoxides and Grettir knew that a grell had augmented Oglog. Perhaps, she thought, the phenomenon was a side effect of a special anomaly, possibly temporal as well.

She told the men that the grells were an old, lesser independent race, commercially driven, not nice, with a machine-like intelligence, hard minded. They bartered lives and energy. They were amorphous, with tentacles like a jellyfish. Grells existed in families or clans. Paradoxides and Grettir along with Hilda had clashed with one of these in the hall of the mountain kings.

The elf thought they could send someone in with beacon or something; they would suffer time compression. At some point in the future they would be in the past but we would know where they were. They would then need someone or something that was not bound in time. She said that many of those unbound by time were untrustworthy.

The party decided they should give up for now and go back to Sequalr in the boat. They rested for a couple of days and then headed off again in the boat to try to find the tower that they had rescued the priestess from, which they thought, led to Tyros.

They found an island in the area where tower was. Miriam was very tired. The six men left the boat and went to investigate, leaving the knights superior. They investigate the ruins of what looked like it might have been a temple.

Grettir, Jason and Trevillion went down some steps and were attacked by some very large figures lit by balefire. The other three were attacked by about eight more undead. Ubaron fired a shot from his wand but it had no effect. Paradoxides flew up and Kollgrimm and Ubaron went back to back. Paradoxides blasted two undead with lightning.

Down the steps there was also a nagga, who cast hell roots, tripping Jason. Grettir knocked down one of the undead and joined Jason who shield bashed the nagga as she got up. Trevillion kept dodging the remaining large figure. Grettir pursued the nagga, who tried to slither away. Jason went to help Trevillion.

Ubaron cut down an undead. Paradoxides was surprised by a blue demon as he worked up a spell on the temple wall. Kollgrimm and Ubaron were surrounded by undead – Ubaron despatched two of them. Kollgrimm was stunned. Ubaron hit another hard as the blue demon closed with him. He drew his dagger and stabbed her. Paradoxides landed and fried some of the undead.

Trevillion arrived and took an undead in the back. Grettir banished the remaining two undead who fled. The demon spat at Ubaron but missed as she slumped.

They found a set of southern armour, nicely made 5'8" not magic (reddish lacquered iron) (500 to 1000gp in Anango), light steel axe, well balanced, not magical (200), gold necklace (1000gp), gold cloakpin (50gp), golden clasp (50gp), amber pendant on silver chain(100gp), coral pendant of leaping fish perhaps a marlin (300gp), pair of silver bracelets inlaid with turquoise, locking links, nicely made (800gp), a headband of wrought gold, a religious artefact connected with Sett but with no particular powers (700gp), they also took the nagga hide and witches head. Split 6 ways = 4200, 700 each.

There was an altar and a pillar with a carving of a serpent – an idol to Sett. The altar looked like a sacrificial altar. They found a book with spells in black speech in the temple: Black Magic Curses 1 to 3, Darkness 2, Summon Shaguin, Summon Harpy, Speak with the Dead, Cause Pain 1 and 2, and Summon Dead. The ship returned safely to Lydius.

G22 – The Tempest (25 Jun 11)

Ubaron asked the temple at Lydius if they would recharge his wand – the Temple suggested that they could do it on Midsummer Night's Eve, but that Halloween and Midwinter would work better. A tentative arrangement was made for Midsummer Night's Eve.

Ubaron learnt the spell Superior Wizard Eye (level 4) to go with the sorcerous eye he had bought. He had the item and a specified material component. He had traded for it at the end of G19. The spell had a duration of 5 to 10 minutes and a range of a few hundred yards. The eye could move at a very slow walk or creep speed (about 1m/s or 2m/s over a short burst). Ubaron had an ectoplasmic eye, which was very hard to see and a wand. The vision through the eye was slightly distorted – a bit like a fish eye – but it could see quite well in darkness. Ubaron could adapt the spell to a different eye. He also learnt the spell detect trail.

Ubaron dreamt of the endless grass steppes at the end of a summer as he had seen them as a youngster. The grass was full as it would have been if the herds hadn't been there – and it was almost as tall as Ubaron. He saw ruins and stones; it was twilight and he was looking for something out of reach, as though he were playing hide and seek. It was twilight and he would have to go home. He was also thinking in his dreams of how you would you get someone to sleep for ever; how would you get Ptah to sleep for that length of time? How would you write a spell to achieve that? In his dreams he had been thinking about those ideas – time running through his dreams, time washing round you like water around a stone. When he awoke he was thinking about time and his conversations with Thoth.

Ubaron discussed his dreams with Paradoxides, who admitted that he had had very similar dreams but he had been in a maze and was also thinking about time. Paradoxides had taken scrolls and pens to bed with him and had tried to visualise successfully working his way through the maze. When he had awoken he had some cryptic notes. Ubaron decided to try something similar so they could compare notes.

Grettir's communication rune stick broke with a military alert telling him to return immediately. When he and his companions returned to Sequarl there was a message from Girindor; that morning he had reached the turn around point of his reconnaissance near the Red River, and had seen some Imperial ships. There were four or five large galleys, four or five cogs and some smaller galleys he thought. He then turned inland and spotted a large force of heavy infantry near the Red River. He thought there were about 3,000 infantry and some cavalry patrols – about half the legion.

Trevillion had had multiple reports of patrols in Thentis. There was a lot of activity; several reports of groups of 500 soldiers on the march with cavalry patrols. Some land caravans had had trouble with bandits between Thentis and Sequarl so presumably the bandits had been forced to take up activity nearer to Sequarl by the patrols.

Grettir went to Chittagong with some of his men to discuss matters with the King. Kollgrimm had been left in Lydius and agreed to collect Ubaron's wand when it had been charged. Samuel had accompanied Grettir and his men.

Skirmir had fallen victim to a stroke after a day of hard drinking and then a night of shagging. It was not known whether he had been set up for this. Thorkel the Tall had taken over in Telemark. He had a reputation as a good Viking; a lucky raider, and a courageous warrior.

There was a judgment against Thorkel (who was also known as Oar Breaker) in the Cosian court before he had taken over in Telemark. It was from seven years earlier for piracy and the contract with the mercenary guild had been taken up by Valerius – was this the legate of the 20th Legion? It was felt that the Legion needed a legalistic pretext for invading. This was what had happened in Thentis, though no-one could quite remember what the pretext had been. Perhaps fighting with some notorious bandits had been the root? Ythmak remembered that there had been massacres of caravans and their claim was for suppressing the banditry of Grunar the destroyer. The Legion had taken over and there had been a civil war. Then the Sandlands had become a new province of the Empire as Thentis. Thentis however doesn't really seem to be recognised by Empire and there was an opinion that the 20th might be a renegade legion. The 20th Legion Valerian Victrix – raised by Valerius.

The taking over of Thentis had seemed a strange decision – it had reflected a definite change of policy for the Empire. The Sandlands had been benign farmland; a very pleasant area with a good climate, though a little warm in the hottest year of the cycle. There had been no major fortifications; it had had a reputation of being plagued by bandits from outside the settled areas. The populous were mainly free farmers.

Grettir thought that the Legate might be a relict from another age, but his men didn't seem to be. However the men should be getting old now – they had been there for 10 years. The legate was a powerful follower of Anubis.

Skirmir's stroke had happened at the Harvest Festival, in October 694. The succession had been sorted by Yule, which had surprisingly avoided a civil war. The contract on Thorkel had been activated two months ago; letters of mark had been written by the mercenary guild a month ago, but this would remain secret until Midsummer's night – two weeks away. The King had been told of this development. The contract gave clearance from the courts of Chittagong to take Thorkel dead or alive. The action had been raised by Seneca, a trading house in Cos, who had permission to trade with the Empire.

King had sent a letter to Empire questioning the bona fides of 20th; he had received no intelligible reply, which convinced the king they were renegades. He said that the Valerius Victrix or 20th had been raised by Emperor Valerian; no-one knew the Legate's name. They knew little about imperial organisation; there was a theory that all the Legates were dead. The legionaries they had met in Sequarl were dead, but the Hand had were alive. There were live legionaries though. Ubaron had not heard such rumours – he thought that the legion did have their own religion.

Two of Grettir's huscarles were from Telemark. Both knew Thorkel and were on reasonable terms with him, and were very distant relatives. All three were born in Telemark. Thorkel was a man of his word who was not to be crossed; he was known to deal excessive retribution on those who had crossed him. He had a bloodthirsty reputation; a very lucky and charismatic commander, a successful raider. He had not been very bright as a kid, but seemed to have learnt. He was an outstanding oarsmen, hence his original name. He liked gambling. He had dropped his original name and was now Thorkel the Tall. He was known to have a fierce temper and was very direct. He was definitely a Raider, not a Raider Trader.

It was difficult to understand how there hadn't been a big fight? Skirmir's sons just didn't have much reputation and weren't ready to succeed; they had insufficient status. Grettir's two men were surprised Thorkel had the diplomacy to achieve this. He had been well advised – his 10 year old daughters had been married to Skirmir's sons.

There were discussions of plans; assassinate Thorkel, heal Skirmir. Instead they decided to head down there. Ubaron arranged to buy a windsock off Grettir like a dragon (F11), for storing wind elemental, he had spells to summon storm heart, and summon sea wind both level four and summon gust of wind level two. They set off in the Sea Raven – a 28 bench longship. It was crewed by Grettir, Ubaron, Jason, Paradoxides, Girindor, Samuel, Trevillion and a number of huscarles: Donsti, Adebarg, Adils, Ingvar, Tulcan, Gron Sigurdsson, Ari Ulfsson, Aurelius, Rune Ignalf, Gorkum, Erik the bowmen plus a dozen veterans with seafaring experience and a veteran sailor. They had the boat ready to sail in 24 hours. They took an arbalest.

The Sea Raven set sail promptly next morning helmed by Ubaron and headed on through the night using Girindor backed up by bags of wind from the magicians. The next morning they could just about make out the land. The crew saw a dolphin swimming alongside, which they considered a good omen. They sailed on uneventfully and arrived safely around mid afternoon at Telemark. There were several fishing vessels in the area and a couple of larger vessels one heading due east – up to northlands? They let it get away and talked to one of the fishing vessels and bought some cod and asked for the news. There was nothing new according to the fishermen. Grettir asked if there were any names in port. No-one special was the reply, most were out for the summer. Thorkel was at home they said – in his hall. He had no plans to head abroad this year. They said that if the Sea Raven hoisted the white shield people would be happy to trade.

They sailed on into a well sheltered cove, where there was a stone keep, which had originally been an Imperial ruin. The town wall was mainly stone. There was a shipyard near the estuary – there were halls and a pier there on the north shore. There were alarms and commotion as the ship entered the harbour, despite the white shield. A man in scalemail armour came up and demanded to know who they were. Grettir explained who he was and asked to be taken to Thorkel. The man explained that it had been a funny day today; there were rumours of armed invaders from the south. Grettir and his cadre were taken straight to hall; the town was in uproar and some ships were heading off to sea.

Ingvar, Arin and Adebarg stayed with boat, one of the two locals were sent to find out what was going on. Gron was steadier of two, so Ari was sent out and the rest went to the hall with Grettir. They waited to be announced. A senior huscarle came out – you are welcome Lord; we are busy but we will receive you shortly he said and told them they had had news of an invasion. Grettir explained that they come to warn and inform Thorkel.

Grettir talked to Thorkel and then went up on the battlements with his men. Girindor was sent on reconnaissance. Aurelius was sent to see him up and down from the ship. Thorkel had heard word of the invasion and now had more coherent information from Grettir. He had ranted and raved for a while, and it was clear that the brain of the operations was Ella, Thorkel's wife; her counsel was sending out the burning arrow for the fyrd and planning a raid on the ships. Thorkel talked to Skirmir's sword a lot. Grettir spoke privately to Ella and explained that unless the legions had dossiers on all the contenders then they had had a hand in his succession. Grettir suspected Ella was a sorceress, but her hat was quite a light grey.

That evening the hall was full with armed men. Light ale was served in small goblets. There were women there serving the men including a tall woman with long blonde hair. She appeared to be from the Chittagong area or the northern world, Ubaron and Trevillion noticed her casting detect magic surreptitiously and scanning them – Ubaron didn't think it had been detect power; it had been cast quickly. She hadn't suspected Ubaron was also a sorcerer but she didn't get nearer than within three metres of Paradoxides.

Ubaron was very impressed with Thorkel's speech, and the hall had really been roused by it – 500 men were inspired to fight. Ubaron thought it had probably been due to the magic sword rather than a spell by Ella; it had been an hour long ritual.

Just before midnight, Girindor arrived back from his reconnaissance. He told Grettir that about 100 miles away the road went through a pass where there was a big camp with large numbers. He had then checked out to sea, and saw six heavy ram, four light ram ships and four southern cogs. It looked like each light ram ship was paired with a southern cog. The large ram ships seemed to have 200 or 300 on the oars and half as many fighting. Most Imperial ships have slaves as oarsmen, Ubaron said. Girindor reckoned the legion would arrive in Telemark in three days.

The next morning 18 longships were being readied, with another one half as big again as Thorkel's flagship giving Thorkel a force of about 700 men.

The fleet set sail and Girindor freshened the wind. One longship became detached overnight. The fleet waited for it to join up and continued. The next day was cooler and the wind freshened up to strong. While the fleet was waiting Girindor flew off and saw the Imperial ships sheltering in a cove 30 to 40 miles ahead. The Sea Raven went ahead and a couple of longships followed them. As Girindor sighted the enemy fleet, the Sea Raven lowered sails and rowed on. Girindor lowered the wind for the rowing. The rest of the Viking fleet were catching up. A strong gale developed from the south.

It looked like the Imperial ships were anchored five miles ahead. Girindor raised the wind to a storm but was running low on power. When the Sea Raven approached to about half a mile the whole Imperial fleet could be seen anchored ahead right in the end of the bay. Girindor cast his waterspout spell and sent it in to attack the heavy ram ships of the Imperial fleet.

One was left sinking and was being beached, one was badly damaged, the rest more lightly damaged. All had been dismasted, and there were people and weapons all over the place. The damage was localised, so other than the heavy ram ships the rest of the fleet was undamaged. Girindor recast his spell and struck again. One of his waterspouts was hit by magical countermeasures. Two of the heavy ram ships were now badly damaged, and only one was still effective, one was still sinking.

As the Sea Raven continued in, something very fast and phosphorescent headed from the remaining effective ram ship straight towards the Sea Raven. There were three trails in the water, moving very fast. The Sea Raven headed straight towards them, so as not to be struck broadside on. Missiles were fired, but they were ineffective. Paradoxides released his demonic squid and it dispersed one of the incoming, one struck the Sea Raven and one glanced off. The damage was 12 hull structural damage points out of total of 40. There was some flooding but it was not catastrophic. Paradoxides saw a flying carpet, but it was too far away to do anything about. It had probably gone to warn the Legion. Paradoxides reiconised the squid.

The storm now abated to a gale. One Viking longship had sunk; the crew were being rescued, some of the Viking fleet were baling but the rest were OK. The Sea Raven continued on with a storm sail flying. Adils took over the helm from Ubaron. Ubaron and Paradoxides suspected that the remaining ram ship was being powered by an elemental. Of the heavy ram ships one had been beached, one had sunk, two were drifting into the light ram ships, one was still manoeuvring and the last one was sinking by the shore. There were a lot of armed men on the remaining ram ship; they were clearing the damage, and trying to clear a ballista.

Paradoxides sent his squid to attack the ram ship. Drumming could be heard on board and oars started to come out: the ram ship surged forward. The ram ship poured Greek fire into the bows of the Sea Raven. Some of the crew were badly on fire, but Grettir, Ubaron and Paradoxides were protected from fire, so even though they were engulfed in flames they did not take much damage; Ubaron even held on to the spell he was preparing and cast ice storm. The Sea Raven avoided the ram, but took five more structural points from a glancing collision. There was a missile exchange. One of crew of the Sea Raven was killed by the Greek fire and two others went over the side. The flames died down and Ubaron applied burn ointment to the two badly burnt crew.

The Sea Raven sailed round the four light rams and attacked the first of the four cogs. The Empire fleet tried to get armed men off the wrecked ram ships and out of the water to get on the light ram ships to face the Vikings.

Paradoxides cast vorpal blade and attacked the cog; Ubaron cast a couple of ice storms. A magician on the cog cast grasping hand of force to try to counteract the vorpal blade. Jason dropped a shot of alchemical incendiary on board the cog. The vorpal blade duelled with the hand and was much more mobile.

Grettir used his ring to walk along the sea bed and hack at the cables with a battleaxe and the cogs started to drift ashore, he also hacked at the water line of the first cog and despite attention of some marines managed to do enough damage for the ship to settle down. He started to move on to the next cog but was hit by a hand of force.

The Sea Raven rammed the first cog and Ubaron grabbed a sergeant and flew up on to the forecastle of the cog. Tulcan followed him carried by Paradoxides. Tulcan was stunned by the hand of force as he Ubaron and the sergeant engaged the marines. Jason made a heroic attempt to follow but ended up almost falling between the boats. He managed to climb back on board the Sea Raven.

Paradoxides used his ring to fly back aboard the Sea Raven. Ubaron held the marines off as Tulcan and the sergeant jumped back following Paradoxides; he then followed with a jump spell. The Sea Raven drifted away and then gathered way and tried to pass in front of the cogs and pour more fire in.

Meanwhile Grettir had made a hole in the second cog and put in a couple of incendiaries and also put a large hole in the bottom of the last two cogs. He then rejoined the Sea Raven and told Paradoxides that there was a water elemental pushing the Imperial boats into the shallows – Paradoxides tried to take it over to push the boats out to sea. Three cogs were settled down but being pushed by water elemental and wind into mudflats, one was sinking slightly, but there had been smoke from below the stern of this one.

Paradoxides tried to take over the elemental but the Imperial magician dispelled it. Paradoxides then summoned another but it had only got the ships slightly underway when the ships dropped anchor. They left the remains to be dealt with by Girindor with a storm in the morning when he recovered his mana and went to join in the battle.

When they arrived the Vikings had a two to one advantage with about 500 Vikings against 250 marines. Each of the cogs had about 30 marines and there were about 50 left on the light ram ships, but there may have been many more before the waterspout. The odds might be considerably worse if the rowers were free men.

G23 – Day of the Underdog (01 Oct 11)

As the Sea Raven tried to join the battle Girindor climbed the mast to view the situation. He could see the heavy ram ship in pursuit of Thorkel's flagship. The rest of the enemy had amalgamated and were being attacked by the remaining Vikings. There had been an exchange of fire as the longships swarmed in, and there was some fire and smoke. It had taken about ten minutes to get everyone off the longships and into battle. The elf thought that the Vikings had made inroads in the south – Grettir and his men were moving in from the north. The smoke was being dispersed by the remains of the gale to the south. The legionaries were fighting back. The battle was raging and they could hear the auxiliaries singing. The hymn was perhaps a battle song to Anubis, or a funeral dirge. Some of the Vikings were leaving the battle rapidly.

About 30 minutes after the start of the battle the Sea Raven arrived. His men disembarked in good order and engaged an auxilia. They formed up in a wedge led by Grettir, Jason and Ubaron, with Grettir's Huscarles in support. Aurelius and Trevillion were attempting to disrupt the organisation of the auxilia, while archers and magicians were in reserve with another huscarle.

The wedge crashed into the auxiliaries. Ubaron saw a large figure at the back. It was shadowy and twilight. It seemed to have a massive and inhuman face. The attack began well and they stove in a lot of axilia. Ubaron was attacked by an auxiliary with some sort of polearm, which turned out to be a mantrap on a pole, which closed around him. The auxiliaries tried to drag him away from the wedge, but he managed to cleave through the pole. He then went after the three auxiliaries who had been trying to drag him out and despatched them; he then burst through to the stragglers. Almost the entire auxilia were slaughtered, only a few fled, including the standard bearer with the standard. They fought ferociously with no fear of death.

To their right, two new bands of Vikings arrived. Some more Imperials were turning round and coming back after smashing Vikings to their left; the battle was in the balance. The auxiliaries were still singing and there was something out there in the shadows. Ubaron directed Grettir to attack the new imperial unit, thus avoiding being struck in the rear by them.

The wedge formed up again and as they attacked a pilum hit Grettir in the head and he lost his helmet. There were streamers on the javelins. Ubaron saw the 8ft tall figure again with the inhuman face and then saved against superhuman fear. He realised that the hymn was a funeral song to Anubis; a farewell to fallen comrades.

During the ensuing fight the units reformed, and the formation resembled more of a wall than a wedge. Jason got to fight against the inhuman figure. He was weakened by the aura of the figure. It hit Jason hard in the guts with a mace and he was incapacitated. Ubaron arrived to help him, Jason dropped back leaving Ubaron to fight on and hit the horned figure hard. It cleaved, but Ubaron parried successfully and the horned thing changed into the dying figure of an ordinary auxiliary. Ubaron fought a centurion, and was forced to drop his sword. He bashed the centurion over with his spear and was able to pick up his sword.

Grettir, Ubaron and Jason pushed on together. Grettir knocked took down the standard bearer, whilst Ubaron resumed his battle with the centurion and was again forced to drop his sword. He was knocked down tried grapple the centurion, but was fought off. He got back to his feet and drew out his spear. Ubaron hit the centurion in the guts and he muttered red 50 something. The standard bearer fled with his standard but Grettir brought him down with a thrown hand axe and chased after the standard. Jason was assailed by three auxiliaries. He was wounded by all of them, and dropped his sword and pulled out a bolt gun. He then dropped his bolt gun and pulled out and set off an incendiary. He then fell back and staunched his wounds. Ubaron finished off the centurion and Grettir came back with the standard. Grettir said that the battle was lost and his group was the only one left, while the imperials were rallying. Grettir ordered his men back to the Sea Raven. One of his men looted the centurion's body.

Trevillion said that the enemy had undead oarsmen. All of Grettir's men made it back to the Sea Raven. Adils was quite badly wounded along with two sergeants and a sailor who had to be helped on board. A party of Vikings arrived and also boarded the Sea Raven. The party set fire to the last ship before the Sea Raven and then set sail off using a bag of wind from Ubaron. Ubaron did a triage of the wounded.

Paradoxides said that there had been two gods involved in the singing – it had been aimed at the Gods and had combined with the standards and standard bearers produced the effects.

The Imperials sang and Grettir waved his standard as they left. Jason also put a lot of fire incendiaries and flares into the general area. The Imperials' song was in praise of Anghor. As they left they could see the ram ship on the other side of the raft of ships. Thorkel's flagship had been chased by the ram ship and a smaller longship had gone up in flames. Trevillion captured a bag of papers and codes from one of the imperial ships during the battle. It was a ship inventory, a schedule document, a situation briefing, book of recognition codes and another paper that seemed to be blurred and couldn't be read. He also had an Imperial astrolabe with a number of ports marked. This was an ancient Imperial artefact. Samuel said that he had been unable to access his aspect of Anghor during the battle because of the auxiliaries singing. They had been singing their own death laments.

Two of the Vikings were brothers – Skallagrim and Steargrim – they had owned one of the boats, and were in charge of a band of Vikings. They were not much wounded – they had fled and spoke of horned men and a lot of bad luck.

The magicians started to investigate their booty. The standard was positive for magic. Samuel said it was an old religious artefact of Anghor. Paradoxides investigated the standard. He thought the Imperials would be able to track it. He thought he could take the pole off and put the sphinx emblem in a bag of holding making it more difficult to track. Trevillion looked at it and thought he would probably be able to remove it. Ubaron knew of emblems of other shapes nailed to tents in his homeland. Jason dismantled it and Grettir put it in a lead lined box in the bag of holding.

Paradoxides had seen Thorkel fleeing the ram ship. It was a small ship that had gone up in smoke – it seemed like Thorkel had escaped. From the centurion they found – a

ring, a necklace or pendant with writing (probably a dogtag – it had XXVAL on it and a serial number), a bronze wristband with runes (staunch bleeding) and two things inside his ear, that looked like little copper beetles, and a belt with leather pockets. They were all magic except the belt – which had a whetstone and oily rag, two packs of dried meat with waxy paper around, and one pack with a fine linen bandage (2 to 3 ft long) with something spongy inside and a jar of ointment.

Twelve longship crews had attacked the auxiliaries – about 500 against 250. About 200 had got away. Thorkel's ship didn't get engaged as he had played tag with the ram ship. They had killed between a third and a quarter of the auxiliaries and the Imperial fleet had been wrecked – it was probably a strategic victory but a tactical defeat for Vikings.

The ear beetle was considered to be a communication device – Ubaron tried it, but there was no signal – he thought the red fifty something was the centurion signing off.

At dawn Girindor flew off as an eagle to view the Imperial fleet. He returned and reported that the fighting platform had been taken up the estuary, the rest had been sunk in the shallows. They only had one operational boat – the heavy ram. They were carrying out small miscellaneous rescue operations.

Paradoxides looked at the inventory of the light ram ship. There was a rosta and paybook. The oarsmen were mentioned but did not seem to be paid or fed. There was a schedule for a trip from Thentis to the estuary, unloading for two days and then return to Thentis with rutter notes for the trip. The situation briefing had notes about Telemark, thumbnail sketches of Thorkel and other political players, a run-down of effectives, and a wanted list including Grettir, Paradoxides, Girindor and miscellaneous tall supporters. There were lots of notes about elves and they implied that the Imperials thought there were a number of elves or half elves in Girindor's employ. Girindor they wanted to capture rather than kill, rest were for kill or capture. There was a scroll with recognition codes. Two white lights and a flashing white light is response is the one below two codes that were crossed out.

Girindor tried to worsen the weather and then planned to observe the legion on his way back to Telemark.

The Sea Raven headed back to Telemark and the magicians examined the plunder that had been taken by Trevillion from a ship and also from the Centurion's body. Paradoxides cracked the blurred runes but the book went up in flames; he managed to extinguish them. The document remained charred but readable – it was in code. There were about 40 lines of information – about 80% of it remained.

Ubaron investigated the Centurion's equipment. The ring was connected to white magic, but it didn't seem to show up as doing anything particular. It was strongly keyed to the wearer, creating a relationship between the wearer and white magic. Ubaron thought it allowed a lock on or target of white magic to the wearer. Effectively it was a white magic reception code. It had been put together by a better magician than Ubaron and was perhaps a generation or two old.

The next item was the necklace – it had two primary functions both alterations. One was a puzzle, and the other didn't seem to have a useful function. Both seemed to be an active ping on hit.

The beetles were also ping on hits, and seemed to be a simple audio relay. They seemed to be part of a Communication channel, like a message service. They were coded for a matched spell not a general spell. There was a volume cut off. Ubaron thought it was probably a message system to a range enabling message to be passed with a fail-safe. The ping on hit was a reflector and amplifier and was coded. A magician could use this to interrogate Friend or Foe and could also put a spell to target everyone not wearing this device.

The ship arrived back safely in Telemark – Thorkel had not yet arrived. One other longship had already arrived and within 24 hours of the Sea Raven Thorkel returned with four or five longships – two were well crewed, the others were short-handed.

Grettir wanted to put a positive spin on the battle - Rune Ignalf composed a song of the battle at sea; it portrayed the battle as a bloody nose for the legion and made much of the success of Grettir and his men against the legion.

Girindor returned at dusk. He had blown up a gale force hurricane before investigating the Legion. The Imperials did not seem to be worrying about sunken ships. They looked to be digging in and making camp on the shoreline. The main army was now dug in at a large camp and fortification. He had seen a mounted reconnaissance as well as a flying carpet; the Legion did not seem to be rushing on at this point. The wrecked ships were right in on the beach – Girindor didn't think they would be going to sea again.

Paradoxides cracked code and decided these were the real recognition codes, but he wasn't sure of the order.

Grettir and his lieutenant's met Thorkel – he agreed that any talk of a setback should be turned to praise of the glorious dead, and how they had bought time to shore up the defences and allow time for support from their allies in the North.

Thorkel said that it had gone against the grain for him to keep ramship out of the way and not join the battle immediately with his troops. He had been unable to evade the ramship and get back to battle until it was over. He reckoned that between a third and a half of both sides had died. Grettir showed the standard he had captured. Grettir and his men had had their reputation enhanced – particularly the elf.

Thorkel agreed that lining up his men in the plain against the legion would not work – he said that defending Telemark from the fortifications or fleeing were the only two options. He would not expect the return of most of his Vikings until the autumn.

Ubaron took Grettir to see the King in Chittagong. The King was very happy – Grettir and his men had smashed the Imperial navy and the only casualties had been Viking pirates. Grettir said that Telemark would need bolstering if it was going to remain a threat. The King was only concerned with using Telemark to bleed the legion – he did not want the Vikings to sail away. He did not understand what the legion was doing

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– he could not see the value of Telemark, and he did not see that a single legion could make much impact on Chittagong as it was too large. The King agreed to send ships with war equipment to Telemark and take women and children away to safety.

G24 – Black Crow Down (21 Jan 12)

Girindor flew as an eagle over the Imperial camp. It was a standard marching camp for half a legion. There was a palisade and the legionaries were working on a ditch. Grettir showed Bramcek a sketch and he reckoned that there would be 2,500 to 3,000 legionaries. He was able to identify the headquarters and the hospital. Bramcek anticipated that the Imperial army would bring stores by sea and live off the land. Back as a crow but chased off by large crows.

Ubaron picked up a bronze armguard and a 1000gp healing potion. He then took Jason to pick some armour in Kattlegrad and while he was there picked up his new, mithril magic dagger (+2), and ordered a magic mithril armguard.

Girindor headed off to reconnoitre the camp and was gone for a couple of days. An elf called Quintell, arrived after dark to report to Grettir that Girindor had missed one of his rendezvous. He said that auxiliaries were making camp by the sunken boats and that there were lots of patrols from both camps to dodge, and there were at least two carpets flying at night between the camps. He said there was a back up rendezvous at dusk and Girindor had missed that too.

A group of elves accompanied by Trevillion reconnoitred the camp that night – they reported that it was very well protected. There were magical lights (an artificial blue light), and dogs on patrol commanded by whistles – and they couldn't get closer than 400yards. The camp was on full alert. Bramcek thought that that this might just be normal as they knew that Grettir and his men were about. There were also lights at the auxiliary camp. The party discussed whether Girindor had been captured or had set off the defences, but nothing seemed certain.

Half an hour after dawn Girindor returned looking like he had lost most of his hit points and almost all his hair in a fire. He was healed by Ubaron, who also gave him some burn ointment.

Girindor explained that he had tried exploring the camp as a crow but had been driven off by ravens. He had retired to a tree north of the camp and observed. He had seen a forging party of 50 legionaries with 10 cavalry returning late in day with a flock of sheep. He had also seen at least two troops of 10 to 12 cavalry going in and out. He said there were corner towers on the camp. At dusk he had turned into wildcat and prowled around. He had approached the camp, which had a ditch around a palisade. There were no gaps in the palisade. There was a doggy smell between the ditch and the palisade and there were lights on the corner towers and along the walls – both the walls and the towers were patrolled. The cat went over the wall and into the camp without being detected. He saw stables and kennels and a parade ground but then started to get a feeling of disquiet and headed back to the walls. A ghostly legionary appeared in front of him - one of the forefathers of the legion he thought – and stabbed the cat with a shortsword. Girindor turned back into an elf and was stabbed and knocked unconscious. He awoke to find himself in the basement of the HQ, bound hand and foot, gagged, blindfolded and tied to a post.

He heard voices in the room; guards addressing a tribune who told them that he would report to the legate directly, and ordered them to keep the prisoner alive, whatever they did. After a while Girindor feigned death; the guards tried artificial respiration, and then called the magicians, who determined that he was faking. The guards rebound him more securely and gave him a narcotic, which knocked him out for a while.

He awoke and realised that it was now after dawn and he could shape change again, but a bird or a cat did not seem to be suitable because of the enclosed space. He turned into a tree for the first time – he couldn't straighten up in the enclosed space, but did burst his bonds. He was attacked with alchemical fire, but turned back into an elf, still on fire, and was able to sink into the earth. He didn't like the feeling of unquiet spirits in the area, but managed to leave, pass through the forest and return to meet up with his comrades.

Opinion in Telemark seemed to be divided roughly equally between those die-hards who wanted to fight to the end and those who wanted to flee. With the help of the King in Chittagong, women and children were being evacuated.

Girindor flew Grettir, Paradoxides, Ubaron, Jason and Trevillion and landed them on the hills between the two camps, which were around 25 miles apart. They were about 6 miles from the Auxiliary camp and almost 20 miles from the Legionary camp. It was about an hour before dawn. Girindor flew off as an eagle and Trevillion did some local reconnaissance. Paradoxides powered up a wand, which detected hidden observation and goblins. Ubaron summoned five goblins and a hobgoblin and tasked them to watch any comings and goings along the road and look for any diggings and to report back in two days time. The hobgoblin seemed quite intelligent for a goblin and he mentioned black birds that looked at him funny.

There were two routes to the legionary camp. Trevillion investigated and found cavalry tracks. He could see that the route was following a much older road. Girindor returned and the party moved along to where there was a culvert and bridge, which could be removed to make route much more difficult. There was also an area where there was a sort of overhang.

They heard cavalry approaching and Girindor tried to cast windwalk to take the party down out of sight, but managed to take them up very high.

Once the cavalry had passed the party returned to the culvert and Paradoxides collapsed it with a fissure spell. Then Girindor went and communed to try to bring down the overhang, but without success initially. The party camped for the night.

Next morning the hobgoblin, who was called Oengus returned. Ubaron gave him 12 pictish arrows, from Trevillion, and some sausage and offered him a bounty of 1sp for each raven he could kill and told him to meet at the same place in two or four days time.

Girindor received a report from Randir, who was watching around the Auxiliary camp. He said that there was activity between the camp and the water's edge during

day. At night the camp was lit up and there was some flying to and fro of magic carpets.

Paradoxides summoned an earth elemental and pushed earth over road and created a ditch with a stream in it and the party considered how to ambush a sapping party.

They set up an ambush between landslip and the bridge. Ubaron was surprised to see his goblins, who shot at some ravens and then the cavalry arrived, two were tripped and some were shot off their horses but were picked up by other riders. Paradoxides took out two horses and two riders with his magic wand. Ubaron brought down a horse, Grettir stunned a rider, whose horse had been entangled, Girindor brought down another rider and Ubaron and Trevillion brought down another. Five men were eventually killed and another captured – the man Grettir stunned. The escapees headed on to the culvert. Ubaron ordered the goblins to guard captive and await his return and Ubaron, Paradoxides and Girindor flew after the six remaining cavalry carrying Jason, Grettir and Trevillion.

One had headed back towards the legionary camp, while the other five had continued on towards the auxiliary camp. The elf and Trevillion went after the lone cavalryman, while the others pursued the other five. Grettir knocked down one horse, Jason took down another horse. Grettir shot his rider and Ubaron flew up and finished him off with burning hands. Paradoxides went after a horse with two riders. One rider surrendered, Grettir shot the other and the first then went for Grettir, who hit him in the guts. Grettir put them over the horse, while Jason shot at the remaining one, Ubaron fried him and the party headed back to the ambush.

The goblins were still guarding captive. Ubaron rewarded them with horsemeat and weapons from the cavalrymen. Girindor and Trevillion then returned with horses, but not the last cavalryman. Ubaron sent the goblins after him and then ordered them to continue as before watching the road and trying to kill ravens.

Ubaron, Paradoxides and Grettir stabilised one of the captives. They slaughtered the horses and moved up into the hills to watch. Grettir healed another soldier. They were all flown up to the top of a nearby hill by Girindor and then he finished healing the last soldier.

They questioned the conscious captive. He was called Flavian, of the 20th legion, serial number 123456. Grettir asked why no-one had surrendered and they had tried to fight to the death – both here and in the sea battle. He told them that legionaries didn't surrender. He said that Grettir was the Ace of Spades, Paradoxides was the Ace of Hearts, Girindor the Ace of Diamonds Girindor, but he wasn't sure who was the Ace of Clubs – perhaps it's you pretty boy he said to Ubaron. He told them that he had been born south of the Wall. Grettir informed him that his legate had been dead a very long time. Your legion is not doing what it's told by the Empire he further informed the captive. I just follow the eagle – you have to live by the code, he replied. The cavalryman looked about 20, but it seemed unlikely he really was that young. Don't forget you were well treated – fair enough. Let them walk to Auxillary camp. They headed off towards the twinkling blue lights of the camp. Oengus looked like half goblin, half human.

G26 – Thorkel's End (12 May 12)

Trevillion was based in a pub in Telemark Town listening to rumours. There seemed to be strong support for Thorkel, but there was also a lot of mutterings. There were rumours that the southerners had just come to get Thorkel – perhaps if he was handed over after a putsch, they would just leave. Opinion seemed to be about three or four to one in favour of Thorkel. Ubaron spent some time gathering spells to learn from the library in Sequarl and then shut himself up in a room in the tavern in Telemark town to learn them.

A woman approached Trevillion for a room with 8 children and told him that she wanted to get to Chittagong. Her husband was fighting and she wanted to escape to safety. She said that someone had marked the door with a warning about the dark arts and asked if the wizard would transport her to Chittagong. Ubaron went with Trevillion to talk to woman up in the garret. Her name was Llynos; she was 6'3" and in her mid to late 30s with long straggly black hair streaked with grey. The children all had white blonde hair, and were about 6 to 8 years old; she said that some were her sister's, who was now dead. She thought that Thorkel's spies had put the marks on the door. She explained that she didn't want to travel by sea.

Her great grandfather came from the north, high country. All the children were boys. Hung up in the corner Ubaron could see lots of neatly made coats. Llynos said that her sister was called Ceryd and that they had both married Deygulf. She said that he husband hunted and that they made clothes, and healing potions. Ubaron and her talked about healing and he thought she was probably about 4th or 5th level. She seemed strong minded and strong physically. The children were very well behaved. Llynos said that they were no friends of Thorkel, but the legion had burnt their land. Her husband was fighting independently.

Ubaron and Trevillion discussed the situation and decided they needed to know who knew she had come there. Trevillion did some investigation and then Ubaron agreed to take the woman and children to Chittagong.

Ubaron went back up to the attic room and told Llynos to prepare. She spoke to her children in a dialect of northern barbarian. Ubaron teleported them all in one trip – two of the children grunted when teleported, but no-one else reacted. Ubaron arranged for them to stay overnight at the temple of Isis, Llynos handed over 500gp and Ubaron returned to Telemark and gave 200gp to Trevillion.

Over the next few days Trevillion noticed posters appearing in the town calling on Thorkel to give up. A curfew was imposed at night and a crackdown on any opposition. There were stories of werewolves at nights. Trevillion heard of feasting in celebration of someone fighting off a werebear. One of Thorkel's spies arrived at the tavern asking after the witch Llynos and offered 50gp reward for helping find her.

Ubaron checked up on the goblins – Oengus told him that they had killed the last cavalryman, but had not managed to kill any crows. There had been lots of men in and out of the water and they had taken machines out of water. He further related that

cavalry had been up and down the road between the camps twice in a week and a half. They had also seen crows but not every day and always in a small crowd.

Trevillion heard a report from someone who definitely claimed to have a relative who had fought a werebear. Ubaron successfully learnt the spells dispel magic and sleep 3.

There were more queries for Llynos but there was some counter intelligence from Trevillion.. Another of Throkkel's spies turned up and paid a gp for information and a further gp to come back with a bloodhound. He let this sniff around the attic room, but found nothing.

Grettir and Paradoxides returned to Telemark town after a trip to capture a steed for Grettir, who now had a sphinx..

War supplies had arrived from Chittagong and refugees had been taken on the return journey. Grettir received a military report from one of his huscarles and from the elves. There were three groups of imperials – north, centre and south operating from the forward base. There were 400 or 500 men in each of the three groups with a similar group left in the base. Each force had embedded light cavalry. The auxiliaries were busy retrieving equipment from the sea – and their camp had been more strongly fortified. Siege machinery retrieved from the sea had been embedded in the fortified camp.

Carpets had only been seen from the forward base going North (which was rough country leading to Yarr and then the Black Road to Sequarl and Chittagong) and back to the West.

Grettir went to see Thorkel and was admitted to the palace where he heard that Thorkel had marched out with 2000 men to take on the centre force. It was now late morning in the first week of July.

Grettir, Paradoxides, Ubaron, Trevillion and Samuel headed out on foot through a crowd of refugees. After a couple of hours they made it through the city gates and once out of sight of the city Grettir blew his whistle and his sphinx arrived. The magicians cast their fly spells and they headed off after Thorkel. After a few hours they could make out a large body of men ahead and a battle in progress.

There was a large shield wall in a block fighting two or three lines of disciplined infantry. There were woods to the right and hills ten or fifteen miles to the left of the battle. Grettir and his allies circled and Samuel saw the twinkle of spears.

There were 2000 Vikings engaging about 1200 legionaries – tow of the three legionary forces. The area in front of the glint of spears Samuel had spotted looked like a desert mirage, but Paradoxides and then the others were able to see through the illusion and spot the remaining legionary force headed to attack the flank of the Vikings.

Paradoxides put down fissures to delay the flanking force. The battle was still in a state of flux, with both forces gaining the ascendancy at times. Grettir had grabbed a box of incendiaries to bring with him and dropped these on the legionary forces

below, while Paradoxides cast delayed blast fireballs. Meanwhile Trevillion and Ubaron fired their bows with Ubaron assisted by flaming arrows.

They switched focus back to the flanking force and Paradoxides hit them with an elemental. Half the force did little but about in front of the fissure, but the other half worked their way around. Ubaron, Grettir and Paradoxides went back to harrying legion right flank, while Trevillion harried the reinforcements. The legion put in their reserves, while the shield wall showed signs of wavering in parts. One of the units in legion right flank was disrupted, but a Viking unit broke. That legionary unit had lost its commander. Grettir tried to rally the Viking unit.

Paradoxides cast Vorpall Blade and Ubaron fired and kept the legionary unit disrupted. Grettir rallied his group, but another Viking unit broke. Paradoxides attacked their opponents with his blade, while Ubaron tried to rally them. Trevillion fired more arrows. Grettir's unit rallied. Ubaron was unable to rally his unit, but was not pursued due to Paradoxides. Grettir brought his unit back in.

Grettir's unit was winning and Thorkel was holding on against multiple units. Ubaron rallied his unit with help from Trevillion. Paradoxides webbed the unit opposing Grettir, helping Grettir's unit to continue to win. Thorkel's unit became fragmented but were still fighting. The legion returned to attack Ubaron's unit. Ubaron's unit which held on despite being attacked by two units. One legionary unit pursued Thorkel's unit and another joined against Grettir. The two remaining Viking units were hanging on, but Grettir's unit was hit from behind, but another unit had been delayed by Paradoxides sending in his demonic squid.

The Vikings battled on against the odds. Ubaron's unit hit from behind and began to lose cohesion. Dusk began to fall, the Vikings still held out and the legions withdrew. They headed back along the trade road westwards. Meanwhile Grettir and Ubaron organised the Viking force and retreated.

Sphinx searched the battlefield before the Vikings retreated and found a gold brooch. He took Grettir and showed him the corpse, but there was nothing else of significance. Paradoxides found a magic gladius. Looking at the battlefield as they left Grettir estimated that they had slain 150 legionaries.

As the Vikings headed back to Telemark some very large bear tracks were spotted. The army carried on but Grettir and his friends went to investigate and found a burnt out farmhouse.

They saw a large figure who said 'in the name of Staerbjorn I greet you. I am Gee I have been looking for you. Our father sent me with a message. The golden eagle flies north of Morthrondel once more. An iron man has broken the gates – there were too many to oppose. 500 or more marched in and have taken the endless stair to the broken land. In the name of Ironbar I tell you this. Dragons have not flown since the gates have broken' Staerbjorn thought they were shut in. The endless stair led down from the Tower of Ymir to the Lands of Dust. The tower was a few days to the west of Morthrondel by one of faults in the mountain.

Grettir told him that the last and greatest wizard of the Imperium, Coreleff, had travelled in search of the elves weapons, but that they were not there now. He had died when he had tried to pick up one of the sarntur.

It took two days to get back to Telemark. There had been no sign of Thorkel. Grettir informed Thorkel's wife of what he had seen. Samuel cast a divination and reckoned that Thorkel had died a hero in battle.

Grettir could see dynastic difficulties ahead for Telemark. Gefkjyn and Fuller, the sons of Skirmir, were eating and drinking Vikings, and were not potential leaders. Leif and Korvin were the two wounded unit commanders, who Grettir and Ubaron had taken over from. Harvald the Fair was the only huscarle surviving Thorkel. Deygulf had fought ferociously with a battle-axe but had disappeared after the battle. His estate was at Moreannen near battlefield. He had enhanced his reputation during the fighting.

Harvald thought he had seen Thorkel go down off to his right. He saw the standard go down and had been knocked down; when he got up the rest of the unit had broken.

Ella wanted a period of mourning – however there was no body. She knew that the Vikings needed a battle commander and Telemark had never been led by a woman. She had had no children with Thorkel. Grettir's counsel was to avoid rash decisions but some decisions need to be made now. Leif, Korvin and Harald along with Ella should be on the council advised by Grettir he suggested. Ella agreed. Leif and Korvel were willing. Harvald was surprised anyone wanted him: he evidently had very mixed feeling about being the only survivor. The council agreed seven days of mourning.

Grettir received some reconnaissance information from Adebarg. Girindor reported that heavy infantry had moved back to the forward base – two or three units. Paradoxides meditated, while Grettir, Samuel, Trevillion and Ubaron went to look for Deygulf in order to invite him to join the council.

They turned off south of the trade road in hills and found some overgrown ruins. There was no-one about and they decided they had not found the right place. They spiralled out and realised they had come too far west. They found a wood, valley and summer pasture and saw a farmhouse in a fold in the hills that seemed to match the description they had been given. The thatched roofs of the farm buildings had been burned in the last few weeks. Trevillion found a hiding place with steps down into a large cellar. There were sheepskin rugs, furs and a bed that could have been used the previous night, and lots of stores and equipment. Deygulf had evidently been back for his stuff from the hiding place. He had probably gone to Chittagong to join his wife.

They left the hiding place concealed and went to check the battlefield. There was a small group of people making piles of the dead. They scattered as the men arrived. There was a pile of legionary dead, but also separate graves for one or two Vikings. The magicians found trace magic in the piles of equipment, but no gold and gems. Ubaron teleported a large pile of armour back to Sequarl.

They all returned to Telemark town where there was a further report from Adebarg. There were no active patrols – he reckoned that they had now got on land what they wanted from ships.

Grettir thought they should investigate and the magicians flew the party to about half a mile away from camp, after dusk. They could see bright blue lights. They flew over the camp and were lit up by flares. They flew off slightly and looked at the coastal camp. This also had glowing blue lights but not the fireworks or flares. Two of the corner towers of the camp were siege engines. They returned safely to Telemark.

Paradoxides set up detect scrying and it went off he realised the imperial magicians were listening in on their plans, but said nothing and pretended with Grettir that they were receiving reinforcements and ready to go on the offensive.

Ubaron collected his wand from Lydius, a week passed and Girindor turned up to let Grettir know that the heavy infantry had emerged from the forward base and headed back to the West.

They all flew to the camp with Girindor, which was empty. The buildings were there, but there were no signs of life. They flew on to check the marine camp, which was also deserted – the towers were still there but there were no ships. Girindor took them to talk to his elves. They related that last night there were still boats – but that this morning they had gone. At first light the marines had gone to the legionary camp = there were too many for the boats.

They followed the army to the West and saw a large marching camp – there seemed to be both legionaries and auxiliaries and there was no doubt - they were retreating.

G27 – An Old Crown, a New Wife and a Second-Hand Kingdom (02 Jun 12)

Hail Grettir, King of Telemark.

A few days after the end of the last trip, Elven reconnaissance exploring the abandoned Legionary base-camp discovers the body of King Thorkel hanging from a beam with a notice pinned to him carrying words to the effect that he had paid for his crimes with his life. He appears to have died from his wounds. The body is brought back for a decent funeral (the note is suppressed). Shortly afterwards his widow, Ella Finehair announces to the Council that she has accepted a proposal of marriage from Grettir Strongarm. The date of the wedding is set for three weeks' time. A Thing is also called, scheduled for three days after the wedding.

There ensues a period of intense activity – politicking from Grettir and Ella. Grettir obtains a new huscarl, Harvald the Fair, last surviving huscarl of Thorkel, and Council member. There is much industrial-level teleporting required from magicians (I suppose you could refuse the honour if you wished to spurn the favour of the King of Cittagong and Queen of Basi). Two ship loads of fine food and drink make their way down from Sequarl.

The nuptials are a splendid affair. A wedding ceremony in the castle, officiated by a priestess of Freyja, is followed by a mounted progression through the town. 20,000 commemorative silver pieces, of double weight and purity, struck in the Cittagong Royal Mint are tossed from the back of wagons to the crowd. There is the most spectacular display of fireworks ever seen in the northern world, set off according to careful instructions from the Queen of Basi by a worried looking Paradoxides, who needs a stiff drink afterwards. The only slight blot on the horizon are a number of mass brawls, fuelled no doubt by the cheap bootleg booze being sold by my alleged Head of Security to supplement all the free ale and wine shipped in from Sequarl. There is of course a formal gift-giving ceremony where the happy couple receive presents from well-wishers. You are all invited. Doubtless I will be forced to positively quiver in embarrassment at the lavishness of your gifts. I'm sure none of you will wish to cut a bruta figura.

Three days later at the Thing, Grettir is proposed as King by the two surviving unit leaders from the battle and Council members, Kolvin of Dollarside and Leif Egilson. There is much debate which centres not so much on the suitability of Grettir as the appropriateness of calling a vote in the middle of summer while so many are away. There may be other candidates amongst them – though as one of my supporters points out, they can hardly be the chosen of the gods if they aren't here now.

Finally I judge it right to make my speech. I remind them that although a foreigner by birth I have stood shoulder to shoulder with them on the battle-field and now have married into their people. None can doubt my credentials as a warrior, and unlike any here or on the ships at sea, I have experience as a ruler. I have proved that I can defend a land against myriad enemies and bring peace and prosperity to my folk.

Some may be reluctant to make a decision today but the Legion have not gone far and were they to return tomorrow, who would lead Telemark against them? I call upon them to acclaim me their King.

As I do so a large man steps out of the crowd waving an axe (in defiance of custom – everyone is supposed to be unarmed) and shouts Grettir for King. It is the elusive Deygulf. His cry is taken up first by those around him, then my supporters and then

swells around the assembly. There are certainly those who do not join in but there are no dissenters and with perhaps two thirds of those assembled enthusiastically shouting my name, I am raised upon a shield and declared King. I turn to thank Deygulf for his support but he is gone.

There is a more formal coronation a few days later, where I am crowned with the Iron Crown of Telemark – an ancient and rather sinister looking thing, inscribed gnominically in Imperial script “Heavy hangs the fate of the nation”. Apparently, it hasn't been much in vogue amongst Telemark Kings to wear it of late, but in the absence of the sword it is pretty much all the regalia that's left. I can discern that there are no active spells running on it but there is power. Magicians and men of learning are welcome to offer an view.

At the feast afterwards – a more business-like and sombre affair than the wedding, I see my younger son Cirgan, who alone of my children insisted on being present for both the wedding and the coronation, in earnest discourse with a shadowy figure. It is Deygulf. They are talking about the Black Years – the aftermath of the fall of the Empire and the establishment of the Northern Kingdoms. Cirgan is remarkably well informed for an eleven year old but I surmise that Deygulf was there. He could name my crown as the Iron Crown of the Turni the Merciless. My guess is that he is of the line of Kveldulf (who I think some of you have met), the wolfish brother of Styrbjorn and Valakar. He has been friend to the Rangers and takes a very dim view of the Legion and in particular their occupation of the Sandlands. We parted on good terms (he just melted into the shadow) and he seems to have formed a bond with my son – who sees him more clearly than others. He looks a useful and interesting ally.

It is my intention to be around Telemark at least until next spring. This may give an opportunity for time to pass in the game, or for expeditioning around the Yspaddaden – Ranulf axis. Alternatively, one reasonably local possibility for expeditioning with Grettir is the swamp of Yarr and the nearby citadel of Taras – which might make good winter hunting grounds.

G28 – Raid on Thangoria (02 Mar 13)

Yspaddaddon proposed a trip to try to take out Gamesh. He was joined by Ranulf, Ubaron, Wilf, Trevillion, Girindor and Smerlas, a very large eighth level warrior who was the top housecarl of William the Marshall.

The invisible man had given them a map and proposed to be talking to Gamesh when the party attacked.

Ubaron traded the spell Cloudkill for Safe Teleport with Yspaddaddon and Guardian Spirit for Stonewall with Grettir. He learnt these along with some other spells which included the spells for his windsock. He also bought some orc killing arrows.

Wilf bought a magic two-handed sword, death glance from Yspaddaddon.

Yspaddaddon outlined the plan. There was a secret way in through dwarven and elven doors that had been found by Yspaddaddon and Girindor. The entry was a variation on speak friend and enter. The runes could only be seen in moonlight. Once through the doors they could be closed from the other side. They opened on to a passage and then via a secret door onto a thoroughfare. Turning right along this led towards the citadel down a steep set of stairs. Ubaron's cat would go ahead with Girindor and Trevillion as rearguard. Yspaddaddon, Girindor and Ubaron were to fly over the chasm and secure the first chamber and then Trevillion and Girindor would tiptoe past the next three levels and set up an ambush for escapees from the remaining chambers as they were attacked in turn by the rest of the party. Yspaddaddon and Ubaron would use night vision scrolls to give night sight to the humans and the elf.

Ubaron reckoned his teleport minimum would be two dwarves, an average teleport might be everybody but with the last couple doubtful, absolute max might be whole party with committing extra mana and endurance. Absolute max would cost about 17 mana plus an extra couple of mana and endurance to take the last person.

The full moon of February everybody met up at Dingry Dur and The Invisible Man arrived to speak to Yspaddaddon. He was a mystery – Yspaddaddon thought that he was not a man, dwarf or elf. The plan was to attack just after midnight when The Invisible Man was talking to Gamesh, and he would try to ensure that the Tower of Gates was not opened. Ubaron noticed that The Invisible Man left no footprints in the snow. The Invisible Man left and everything was set for the next day.

The next evening Girindor cast his windwalk spell to try to take the party to near where the doors were. There was a snow storm and Girindor had trouble trying to see where to land in the snow and couldn't identify the mountain with any certainty. He had to take the party up above the blizzard a couple of times. He tried to land but crashed and the party was scattered – the magicians cast feather fall and no-one else was seriously injured. Everyone gathered together.

Everyone roped themselves together while Girindor and Yspaddaddon work out the way; it was very cold. Some of the party were taking damage from the winter state conditions. Yspaddaddon used his magic axe to confirm the direction of the doors and

the party hunkered down, waiting for moonlight to breakthrough and illuminate the runes on the door. After an hour or so Girindor saw the runes and opened door. The party went through and closed the doors behind them and waited for midnight. Ubaron and Girindor healed the injured and then night vision spells were cast by Ubaron and Yspaddaddon on all the non-dwarves.

The party set out at midnight, heading out through the secret door and onto the passage to the right. Ubaron's cat went on ahead. They came to a set of steep stairs down. There were landings every so often and the cat waited for them to catch up. After the fourth landing the stairs continued and there were two 45 degree turns to the left. After a third turn the dwarves were sure they had done a full 180 degree turn. There was a 45 degree turn to the right and alcove on the left. They continued on and then the cat stopped at a point where the ground seemed to rise up ahead – there was a sensation of open air around.

Girindor, Yspaddaddon and Ubaron read fly scrolls and flew across the bridge. There was a narrow gap and Yspaddaddon lost his spell squeezing through and was attacked. Ubaron flew through carefully and retained his spell. Yspaddaddon closed and killed the orc with his dagger. There was another orc – Ubaron cast a sleep spell and the orc slumped and fell into a gong making some noise.

Yspaddaddon slit the orc's throat, while Ubaron watched the passage ahead and Girindor fetched the others. The chamber had a carved stone ceiling that looked like leaves and trees; some of the carving had been vandalised by orcs. Wilf barred the door behind them.

Girindor, and Trevillion with the cat crept ahead. After waiting briefly Yspaddaddon led the rest down to the first level. He listened at the door and tried to push in the door and then headed on. Ubaron tried to read a stonewall scroll, but the door burst open and he dropped his spell and cast an instant sleep spell, but the orc that burst out was far too large and hit Ubaron with a halberd. The orc was the biggest orc Ubaron had ever seen, even bigger than Smerlas, well over seven feet tall.

Ubaron follow the orc back into the chamber – there was a female half orc in there, who tried to shoot Ubaron, but he was protected from missiles. Ranulf followed Ubaron into the chamber and the half orc cast a curse but Ranulf saved. Ubaron did not seem to be damaging the orc, although he had hit him hard. He disarmed the orc and Wilf shot the orc with an orc killing bolt. He was hurt and struggled to pick up his halberd. Ranulf threw a hand axe and hit female half orc in the head. Wilf shot the orc twice more and Ubaron hit it. Wilf's next bolt was right between the orc's eyes and Ubaron finished off the half orc. Ubaron took the halberd and a belt off the giant orc and headed on after Wilf and Ranulf.

Yspaddaddon had already headed down to the chamber at the next level and killed the first opposing orc with an orc killing arrow and was faced by four more. He knocked two back with axe blows and Smerlas came in and steam rolled another. Between them they finished off the orcs and headed down to the third level.

Ahead Girindor and Trevillion were fighting orcs on the third level. Trevillion was fighting an orc with Girindor firing past his ear. Trevillion dodged past a couple of

orcs, into a larger chamber on the left, while more orcs were trying to join in from the guard chamber on the right. Girindor shot one of the orcs in the back with a fire arrow. Wilf joined in, but unfortunately shot Girindor with an orc killing bolt, but it didn't go off.

Girindor hit an orc with a lightning bolt from his ring and it went down. Girindor was trapped in the doorway by an orc but he cast another lightning bolt and Wilf finished the orc off with a normal bolt. Girindor cast another lightning bolt from his ring and Wilf came in with his two-handed sword against some more orcs.

Trevillion yelled that "they're preparing". Girindor had dropped his sword and bow and was just armed with a dagger fighting an orc in the left hand chamber. Wilf's two-handed sword was very effective and he beheaded his opponent. The rest of the party started to arrive. It seemed that the chamber on the left was the room of burning flesh.

Wilf finished off last orc in the guard chamber. Girindor was trying to fend off an orc with his dagger and Trevillion was dodging another in the chamber of burning flesh. Trevillion's opponent was killed by Yspaddaddon with an orc killing arrow. Girindor killed his opponent and half a dozen wargs charged in.

Trevillion jumped up on a table and the rest of the fighters arrived. Ubaron used the halberd against the wargs and killed one, while Smerlas knocked another back and Ranulf killed a third. Yspaddaddon hit one and parried it off and it was finished off by Wilf. Smerlas finished off his warg, while Ranulf and Yspaddaddon finished off another.

As Smerlas and Girindor despatched the last warg, the rest moved on towards the throne room and were confronted with an enormous orc. Trevillion was attacked by black magic and lost his dexterity. Ubaron went to fight the orc, while Wilf went into the great cave, and was attacked by spirit weapons. He then joined Ubaron. Yspaddaddon fired an orc killing arrow at the orc and Ubaron hit him with the halberd. The orc's leg gave way and crumpled to its knee. Ubaron hit him again and his halberd went straight through the orc's chest.

The throne room was empty and there were a large number of orcs in the great cave chanting. Yspaddaddon was hit by an arrow from the darkness, but killed an orc with an orc killing arrow.

Wilf and Ubaron charged out into the great cave and attack the orcs and Yspaddaddon fired a screaming arrow to disrupt the charging. Girindor found his sword, moved a table and looked out through a window into the great cave. He was unable to cast a spell and moved back to the exit. Wilf and Ubaron killed some of the orcs Girindor found his sword, moved a table and looked out through a window into the great cave. He was unable to cast a spell and moved back to the exit. Smerlas and Ranulf fought a couple of orcs in the doorway into the great cave. Smerlas knocked his over. Ubaron took two more down. Wilf took another two down, Yspaddaddon shot another; Ranulf and Smerlas finished the remaining orc in the doorway and the rest fled to the gatehouse.

Wilf went off to destroy a fane and Trevillion stayed in the throne room. Girindor, Ubaron and Yspaddaddon cast fly spells and flew up to the parapet by the gatehouse and took Smerlas and Ranulf with them.

Girindor worked up rock to mud and started to work at the hinges around the door. Once Girindor had made some headway Smerlas and Ranulf were able to hack at the bars, Girindor then used his spell against a nearby area under a window. Ranulf hacked through the first bar and then Smerlas hacked through the next two with his siege axe.

Girindor cast wall of fire through a hole and then protected Smerlas against fire,; he then burst through the door, which leant backwards against a wall behind it. There was a big table behind the door. Something cast a black magic blinding spell on Girindor.

Smerlas pushed on and was attacked by an enormous orc wielding a very heavy mace. He was hit very hard. The enormous orc was nearly nine feet tall, very cross, almost berserk and knocked Smerlas back. The orc missed with one blow and hit the table, giving just enough room for Ranulf to get in and Smerlas to retreat down the passage into another, empty chamber.

The orc, who must have been Gamesh, knocked Ranulf down to one knee. Yspaddaddon managed to fire two orc killing arrows into the orc, but they seemed to have no effect. Ranulf rolled under the orc's feet and Ubaron advanced to face Gamesh. Ubaron hit him, but again seemed to have no effect. It hit Ubaron extremely hard. Ubaron pulled out his shield and was hit very hard twice more. He pulled out his ice wand and discharged the full effect of the ice wand at once. Gamesh was blasted back for over 70 hit points, Ranulf took 20 hit points on the periphery. There was a white out, lots of steam and the wand exploded. Yspaddaddon hit Gamesh with an arrow between the eyes and he went down.

Yspaddaddon and Smerlas lowered the two portcullises. The party gathered together and discussed options. They reckoned Gamesh and the other large orcs had used wound linking so that other orcs or slave had been taking their damage. The Invisible Man fixed Girindor's eyes and told them that there was a host coming but the portcullis was down. Wilf, Trevillion and a small naked dwarf turned up. Wilf had destroyed the fane, killed another extremely large orc and found the dwarf Nari. Nari saw the body of Gamesh and spat at it. Trevillion had found a secret door behind the throne that led down into the chasm.

Ubaron tried to summon monster and disperse the orcs but there was no response. Ubaron put up two stone walls on the other gate. Invisible Man said they would come by other ways but that it would take time.

The level above the mechanism for the gates were five extremely tall chained women. One spoke southern, one common and the others were too shocked to speak. They had been badly treated. One was pregnant. There were ropes to the outside and it seemed that the last remaining orcs had fled that way.

There were four great chambers, four lesser chambers, five small chambers, two sets of spiral stairs and four more chambers at the bottom of the gatehouse. Girindor

repaired the damage he had done to the wall and Ubaron made some marks and sigils in a chamber on the top floor to enable him to teleport back.

Nari was from Kattlegrid and had been there 30 years. He was very thin and hard used but remarkably undamaged, although he had many burns and brandings.

There was a disorderly rabble of orcs outside. Wilf shot at any that looked like they might be a leader. Yspaddadon powered up a wand and explored the chambers with Trevillion. They found some silver cups and minor loot in a dwarven hiding place.

Off the big orc there was a huge mace, that looked evil, and was very heavy, a dwarven shortsword that was magical and a magic ring. Ubaron had a magic halberd and a belt off the first orc and there was a mace from the orc that Wilf had killed near the fane. .

Ubaron had some functional teleport co-ordinates. He stonewalled the entrance to the gatehouse and then took 5 women, the dwarf Nari, Smerlas and all the loot they had so far to Digry Dur. (14 mana). He then meditated before he could return.

T= 0, death of Gamesh

T= + 5 minutes - immediate post combat securing of middle level of tower, put the wall of fire out, bandage wounds, de-ice the dwarf, get breath back. Three portcullis mechanisms used to bar the main entrance to the citadel. Anyone taking potions does so. Loot corpse of Gamesh. Loot corpses of two female half-orcs, cause of death unknown, includes burns. [4 gold ankle-rings, a throwing iron, ivory bracelet, ivory earrings, two ivory arm-rings]. The Elf's vision comes back after visit from TIM.

T= + 15 mins - combat patrol search of tower completed, general layout revealed, 5 female captives found chained up and released. Knotted ropes hanging out of front arrow slits in top level. Any orcs and half-breeds have made off. Wilfred turns up with Trevillion and an emaciated dwarf he has rescued. All the women are unusually tall, between 6' and 6'6" tall. Only one is capable of sensible speech, she speaks common and is from Emilia. Once her name was Zicita (Se-key-ta), now it is 547. The others look like well-fed concentration camps victims - severe shock and disorientation. One is heavily pregnant. Ubaron commences teleport co-ordinate preparation - top level, Lesser Chamber unless you specify otherwise.

T=+20 mins - Final communication from TIM - final warning 'they are coming soon' and next rendezvous agreed as Dingrodur. Yspedadden uses scroll to cast Remove Curse. Trevillion feels the numbness leave his muscles, and agility returns to normal. Yspedadden now fires up wand and commences detailed search of tower accompanied by Trevillion. Wilf and Ranulf guard the door, barricaded by a very large wooden table. Girindar will watch from the top level, mainly out of the arrow slits, but sometimes back out the windows into the great cave.

T=+ 40 : Wilfred uses cure critical on Ranulf, gains +18 hit points and + 5 blood points if he has lost any. First signs of orc activity by front gate. Elf shoots a few to keep them back. Signs of large numbers packing the entrance halls, some glimmers far off in the gloom. Shadows in the phosphorescence seen creeping in the great cleft

below the front of the citadel. Yspedadden completes search of about half of tower of gates.

T=+60 : Ubaron completes teleport co-ordinate preparations, Casts Stone-Wall on front entrance and executes Mass teleport, leaving with Smerlas, 5 females captives, rescued dwarf and the large halberd used by one of the jumbo orcs. Also Any other treasure, minor equipment or impedimenta you specify (e.g. the Head of Gamesh). Yspedadden has completed most of search of citadel, only bottom level west side to go.

T=+80 : Search of Tower of Gates completed with magic wand and Trevillions skills, rapid looting completed.

Break-out from citadel can kick off from any time hereafter.

Search results shown below, including some deduction & interpretation made, my dice & your wisdom.

Top Level : This appears to be the private domestic chambers of Gamesh.

Great Chamber - large wooden table, extra-large chair plus 5 normal chairs. All made from oak, roughly hewn then carved with gargoyles and weird beasts, polished and oiled. Large iron fire basket in fireplace, Three great bronze lanterns hang from the ceiling (modern, Chittagong?). Cupboard contains silver service (modern, Chittagong). Small room south of chamber filled with firewood and several amphora of oil, two alcoves leading to arrow-slits have bows and hundreds of arrows ready.

Lesser chamber - 5 women found chained up here. Looks like a macabre bordello - pole-dancing table, worn smooth by generations of slaves, with extra-large padded chair and footstool. 4 very large bronze candle stands, approx 25 kg each, suspect looted from temple, possibly Set. Casting form is female in coils of giant python, top-quality castings, each one slightly different. five piles of sheepskins and fetters fixed to floor. Hundreds of polished human skulls on shelves, lining four walls at high level.

South-east bedchamber - a crime scene - looks like hardcore S&M and half-orc breeding programme. Trevillion has to explain function of most impedimenta to Yspedadden. [Trevillion now viewed with suspicion by Yspedadden, he has too much unhealthy knowledge]. Contents regarded as soiled trash of no value to any decent dwarf. En suite guarderobe, complex shape.

South-west bedchamber - pit of sloth for Gamesh, a great pile of sheepskins and furs. Various skulls and trophies mounted high up - exotic beasts, trolls, orcs and humans. Weapon and armour stands, chest of outsize clothes, chest of alchemical miscellanea - 8 bags of various drugweeds, 6 quart flasks of fine spirits (Chittagong?), 4 small bags with 100 gold pieces in each. Secret hiding place identified behind removable stone at floor level in one wall. Contains small wooden chest. Wand indicates two magic items within. Pocketed for investigation later, along with weed-bags. En-suite guarderobe with some sort of wooden weir-bath arrangement added by orcs, complex shape.

Middle level - appears to be the residential level for the half-orc cultists who guard Gamesh's private apartments. Evidence suggests all guards were female. Layout of rooms is identical to floor above.

Great chamber - headless corpse of Gamesh, broken door, huge dining table, burnt and hacked by weapons. 8 normal chairs in various stages of destruction or damage. Same style as floor above, orcish work of unexpected artistic quality. Three winding-engines for portcullises - dwarf-made with some repairs by orcs. Fully operable. Three great bronze lanterns hang from the ceiling (modern, Chittagong?). Cupboard contains silver service (modern, Chittagong). Small room south of chamber filled with firewood and several amphora of oil, two alcoves leading to arrow-slits have bows and hundreds of arrows ready.

Lesser chamber - fireplace with iron fire basket. Large wooden cabinet with 49 lockable drawers in square array. Mask racks, two large desks with 6 side-drawers each. A number of hooded fur-lined cloaks hanging on pegs. Multiple hits for metal, trace magic, trace power. Too complex for rapid search. Suspect common study and workroom for cultist guards. Secret hiding place found containing minor wizard loot, ju-ju sticks, voodoo dolls and potions - stuffed in a swag bag for study later.

SE and SW bedchambers: two piles of sheepskins, two small chests, two stools, two oil lanterns. Multiple hits for metal, trace magic, trace power. Too complex for rapid search. One chest lock knocked/picked at random. A rummage reveals : leather apron, belt, blouse, buskins, leather gauntlets, deerskin leggings and boots, hooded fleece-lined smock, silken sari, bone whistle, comb of carved bone, incense and burner, large water-bladder, bone whistle, capture thongs, fletching kit, sharpening stone, various oddments of ivory, bone, claws, teeth, coloured stones, shearing scissors, a weedbags, sets of small knives and tools, a bundle of blank rune-sticks, tinderbox, dozens of small sheepskin rags, balls of wool, a bundle of charcoal sticks, coloured chalks. a fletching kit, tattoo needles, inks, rune-stencils, piercing needles, small wire rings of gold.

En suite guarderobe, complex shape. Washing utensils include soap, towels, straight steel razors (modern, Chittagong), perfumed oil, pigments for body paint, pisspots and a very large amphora of water. Surprisingly clean and tidy.

Bottom Level: four fighting chambers protecting the base of the tower and the portcullis passage. Used as storerooms and bedrooms.

NE chamber - stores of arms - dozens of spears, javelins, axes, blades, hundreds of arrows, stones and a few short-bows. Sacks of grain, berries, dried fibres and biltong hang from the ceiling, plus 12 very large amphora (oil?) and 4 large chests of sea-salt.

SE chamber - bedroom. Two piles of sheepskins, two small chests, two stools, two oil lanterns. As per level above.

NW chamber - stores : 8 large bales of cured hides. 6 very large amphora (oil?), 4 hogsheads (spirits?) 2 bags of coal, 6 bushels of charcoal, 6 barrels (tar?).

SW chamber - bedroom not in use. 2 stools, 2 empty chests, folded furs. 1 large blackboard and coloured chalks, showing detailed lunar calendar and rune schedules for the year ahead. Key dates for sacrifices and many unknown marks. Names? Tribute? Trade? Raids? Wooden shelf above table, 5 large books. These appear to be - a rune primer (common), some kind of mundane stores tally, counts etc, a rune primer- blackspeech, General Alchemy with recipes and Illustrations [Aldous of Portown], The Red Book of Blasphemy - appears to be a Temple of Set publication. Detailed study needed.

By the time Ubaron had left, the scientific looting of the Tower of Gates by wand was almost complete. As you can see from the takings, it was well worthwhile - mostly for the contents of the small wooden chest in Gamesh's chamber. Early calculations, based on defence against a horde of orcs and a few magic users, indicated we could probably hold out long enough for Ubaron to return, if we supplemented the stone wall by braising the door back in place. However, darker thoughts began to assail us. For Ubaron's information I append the observations I communicated earlier to the others:

I've been mulling over the Thunderheart conundrum. Prior to all this Gamesh approached me through the Invisible Man, to make him a magic morning star and sent me some vile witches brew to quench it in. Angered by this, and unwilling in any case to deal with Orcs, I refused him, but on a whim, I made a morning star anyway, in the traditional dwarven way without the orcish poison. It turned out to be a very good piece of work and I called it Thunderheart. When we resolved to kill Gamesh, in order to appease him and reduce the possibility of a pre-emptive strike while we made our preparations, I sold Thunderheart to him (while laying cunning plans to render it useless to him when we encountered him). Best laid plans and all that - he wasn't wielding it when we met him. Why not? Thunderheart was a very powerful weapon - as good in its way as Death Glance, that Wilf now brandishes. I have had no opportunity to study the two-handed mace he was using, but I doubt it was a better weapon. If it was, then why go to so much trouble to acquire Thunderheart (for which he paid handsomely) if he already had an exceptional weapon? None of his henchmen were carrying it (and indeed it would have been far too good and too expensive to buy for a mere huscarle). You don't commission such a specific magic weapon and then put it by in a hoard. I can only conclude that he bought it as a present, or as tribute, perhaps, for someone or something else - an entity more powerful than he - or why bother? I suspect that there is a lord - another orc? a troll? a demon? - in the lower levels, to whom Gamesh was either an ally or more likely a minion. He may be on his way and I think we don't want to meet him. If a Balrog (there I said it) shows up on our doorstep then Ubaron's stone wall will not break its stride.

While there was plenty of activity outside the Tower of Gates, there were three military portcullises between us and them. There was no sign of activity inside the citadel, indicating that the Stonewalls guarding the side entrance were still holding and that the way back to the Friendship Gate might still be unguarded. We resolved to try a break out, back the way we came in.

Yspadadden flew down with Wilf from the second storey window across the Great Cave to secure the door to the Chamber of Burning Flesh. The remainder of the party

came down by ropes. To speed things Yspadadden flew back to transport the heavily burdened Ranulf across the divide. As Trev and Gerindor sprinted after them, they were struck by curses which lit them up with a ghastly glow, making them more vulnerable to magic or arrow, but no further attack that we could identify occurred. Wilf in the lead and Yspadadden at the rear, we made our way up the corner tower and across the High Bridge without incident, Yspadadden stopping briefly to Wizard Lock the gate.

Wilf bounded up the Steep Stair, while the rest of us clambered up behind Ranulf as fast as he could go. Yspadadden's fly spell had by now been broken. Wilfred was subjected to sporadic arrow fire from above, indicating the presence of Snaga skirmishers on the stair. However, no serious resistance was encountered, and Wilf gained the top of the stair and held while the rest of us joined him. We then hurried along the passage, subjected to ineffective archery from ahead, until we rounded a corner and found ourselves confronted by a crude wooden barrier, heavily defended. Wilf made a desultory effort to break it down, but it quickly became clear that this was no makeshift barricade. Realising that in our haste, we must have gone past the dwarf door to the secret passage and were now bumping up against the Orc guard point at the top of the Long Stair indicated on the Invisible Man's map. Yspadadden tracked back along the passage, seeking the secret door that he had missed and its opening mechanism. Meanwhile the Elf stood forth with his bow and peppered the barricade with fiery exploding arrows, to the consternation of its defenders, who had no effective reply. With the assistance of Gore Raver, his truculent speaking axe, Yspadadden swiftly located the secret door and opened it, ushering Ranulf, Trev and Wilfred inside. He then ran back to fetch the Elf, still engrossed in raining fiery mayhem onto the barrier. As he approached they both heard the unmistakeable sound of something large - a Stone Troll at an educated guess - roaring as it broke down the barrier from the inside, no doubt motivated by a ravenous hunger for tender elf-flesh. Yspadadden threw a crystal into the blaze and thick, opaque, choking smoke billowed forth. Elf and Dwarf turned and ran back down the passage towards the door. Two more smoke crystals were thrown down by the Dwarf as he ran, ensuring that no pursuer could see ahead along the passage. The Elf dives through the small doorway, followed by the Dwarf who swiftly turns and closes the door behind them.

The party slump in the narrow passage beyond the door silent but for their panting breath, and listen to the commotion beyond, awaiting in trepidation the sound of stone-crunching Troll-fists on the door. Nothing comes and the sounds in the main passage recede. They take stock and realise that the baleful light surrounding Gerindar and Trevillion is receding as the spells wear off. As soon as the glow has subsided to a point where we judge it unlikely to be visible from afar, Ranulf opens the door to the outside world and the chill air of the mountain floods the passageway. Outside, the night is now still and clear. The Moon has set and the runes on the door are no longer visible. Starlight illumines the path down which the Elf leads us to a flat area where we arrange ourselves for the Wind Walk home. Gerindor summons the Wind and we are borne aloft, arriving safe and well, if cold, at Dingradur an hour or so later.

Loot

Halberd +2/+2. Ancient dwarf-wrought weapon. Requires re-hafting to achieve its true potential. Yspadadden would probably consider it about a talent's worth of time and effort to do this. Could be hafted for a dwarf - for tunnel fighting - or a human as a normal halberd. 7000

Mace +1/+1 Ancient dwarven-wrought. 3000

Shortsword +2 Ancient dwarve-wrought, curved and designed primarily for chopping with the edge on the concave side of the curve. 3000

Eye Glass In box. Dwarf made Eyeglass (effectively an aid to examination and implementation of fine craftsmanship) 10000 *

Necklace In box. A piece of elven/dwarven craftsmanship with four 1000gp gems. A fifth gem may be triggered to project a Sigil on the floor in front of the wearer to ward and destroy evil 12500

Ring of Protection Gamesh. Probably +2 and might have another capability. Value estimated. 7500 **

Healing Potion Gamesh 1000

Healing Potion From Halbardier 500

Armring Halbardier 500

Gold Four purses 400

Gold anklets (4) Half orc guard killed by wound-linking 400

Ivory bracelet Half orc guard killed by wound-linking 50

Ivory arm-ring (2) Half orc guard killed by wound-linking 200

Ivory ear-rings Half orc guard killed by wound-linking 50

Throwing Iron Half orc guard killed by wound-linking. Curio. 50 *

Weed Addictive narcotics. This is what the women have been smoking and to which they are totally addicted. It is currently being deployed by my wife in their treatment.

Fulgin pygamas Basically a ninja suit but for 5'8" and unsuitable for anyone in the party. I'm guessing that there ought to be enough material on it to be reworked for Yspadadden, but no-one else. 500 *

Carved bone whistle Increases range of a Summon Wolf/Warg, or could be incorporated to into a spell to Summon a specific Wolf/Warg. 100 *

Giant Mace Magical Evil Weapon (cursed Smerlas with ill-luck). Orcish manufacture and made specifically for Gamesh. Unsuitable for human use. Curio. Wilfred has expressed an interest. Don't know whether his interest has a value. I would suggest a couple of talents. 500 ***

Old Empire: Malcolm's Diary

Gamesh's head A potential trophy. However, Yspadadden has an idea that it might be utilised in making more and better anti-Orc weapons. NB Smerlas has lopped off a hand as a keepsake and I daresay anyone else can obtain any other bits they fancy 500 *

Pile of Juju Items Dolls, masks impedimenta. Potentially interesting if studied, but of no great value except to a magician with an interest in such things (probably an evil one or a mad professor). Yspadadden would keep hold of it in case he got bored one day but wouldn't pay for the privilege.

Total 48250

Some of these items are hard to give what Yspadadden would consider a true, objective valuation.

* What Yspadadden would be prepared to pay for these items.

** What Yspadadden considers it would be reasonable for Wilf to pay for the Giant Mace

*** What Yspadadden considers it would be reasonable for TIM to pay for the Ring of Protection

Assuming that people are happy with the valuations I've given (please let me know asap) if anyone is not. The division of loot in cash terms is as follows:

Yspadadden 5127
Wilf 5127
Gerindor 5127
Ubaron 5127
Ranulf 5127
Trev 5127
Smerlas 5127
Invisible Man 11963

It would be useful if people would indicate whether they want to put in for any particular piece of kit, or just take the cash. As previously indicated TIM would like the Ring of Protection as part of his share. I have not completely finished checking out the necklace, but I'm fairly sure that it will turn out that it can only be effectively deployed by a magician - which in the context means the Elf or Ubaron (I don't think

it is Yspadadden's style, really). If Wilf wants to check it out I can tell him the trigger word and see whether he can deploy it effectively. As indicated I am very keen on the spy-glass. The other minor, non-magical bits and pieces I've indicated are nice-to-haves. I'm happy to give way on most of them to anyone who wants to match my bid. The exception is the wolf-whistle, for which I am rather over-bidding as it is - it goes rather nicely with my recent acquisition of four warg-cubs. If there are any clashes of desire then we can do a bit of negotiation - bottom line is we roll for it.

There are also a few books - the interesting one as far as I am concerned being the Alchemy Tome. I propose that they are lodged here at Dingradur and made available for study by anyone in the party. This approach has already been agreed with TIM. To be honest I am not especially interested in the Red Book of Blasphemy (and from what I know of him, I doubt that TIM is either), so if Ubaron and Wilf think it ought to be stuck under an altar somewhere I have no problem with that. There is also a small pile of runesticks. Most of these are black magic curses of low to medium level, which I have access to already from the Black Book we took from the last lot of Orcs who troubled us. If Ubaron is interested he can get a list from the GM. The two significant spells new to me are Wound-linking and Envenom Blade. I have them in the library here, available for study.

Prisoners

The women are as the GM described in the email below. They are currently in the care of my wife who is using the weed we took to try to wean them off it. They obviously can't stay indefinitely in Dingradur. I have some ideas for their long-term future which I need to discuss with Ubaron.

Nari is in remarkably good physical shape given that he has been in captivity for 30 years. He is currently eating sausages, drinking beer and smoking tobacco at a rate calculated to catch up on lost time. I note that he is heavily branded and tattooed. Unless Ubaron can offer any other wisdom, my plan for him involves a bit of painful obscurement of the runes in his flesh and some healing spells to patch up the damage.

G29 – Lair of the White Spider (29 Jun 13)

Ubaron learnt that his setting up of the hospital in Telemark had been well received in the Temple of Isis. He received a clear statement from Isis through dreams and meditation, that his next challenge was imminent. He should look for the sign of evil crossing his path, and would know the time. He would need to strike down the temple of evil to pass his test. He was on the boundary to his next level.

Yspaddadden had become an 8th level magician, and Trevillion a 7th level rogue. Trevillion married Dylla the Weaver, the daughter of the late Stein Herdierson of Cansey, widow of Mord Grimson, a huscarle of Thorell Oarbreaker. She had a hall on the harbour front in Telemark, with a longship having its winter overhaul. She was about 20, tall and presentable. There was a simple handfasting ceremony in the hall. Grettir's wife, Ella spent some time at the celebrations, but Grettir was unable to be present. The celebrations passed uneventfully, although there were some exotic attendees with the presence of Girindor, Yspaddadden and Ranulf. Ubaron gave a gold armring. Trevillion now had a small stepdaughter called Mardoll.

Girindor told Yspaddadden that Dingradur was an unquiet place. He had been having strange dreams that he couldn't quite remember. He had had dreams of Elves live in tree houses and dreams of waking up in one; he had had a similar feeling when going through the elf door into the passage in Gamesh's lair during the last expedition. Galendor was the green land to the west of Dirth Wood; Dingradur was part of Galendor.

Early in March 696, Yspaddadden, Ranulf, Ubaron, Trevillion and Girindor headed out from Dingradur to try to find out what was behind the story of the angry trees. Ranulf was riding a female bear called Eira, who had been captured by the party when they last ventured into Galendor and had been trained by Yspaddadden. The weather was very fair, with the first warmth of spring; the snow had disappeared.

Girindor spotted the tracks of parties of orcs, and they followed these along a path for the rest of the day. Overnight Girindor dreamt of riding out there on a fine steed in similar weather, although it was something he had never done.

The next morning Trevillion realised they were being followed by bear; Ubaron summoned it and gave it a snack and sent it away. Eira was rapt in attention, as she had also been caught by the mages spell. As they camped for the night they heard a solitary wolf howling. They were now in the woods proper on a path heading to the West. Girindor dreamt of a campfire, and rubbing beeswax into his boots; it felt as though this had actually happened in his past.

They set out the next morning and the elf saw a fork a mile ahead. There was a mound a couple of hundred yards off along the side fork to the north, which looked like it was probably an orc den. They noted the location, but continued by evading to the south. The rest of the day passed uneventfully. They were having tea and preparing for the night, when Ubaron's cat spat into the darkness and hissed. Trevillion saw a big bat in the dark and they were attacked by stirges. Ranulf killed one, one evaded and the remaining dozen were dispersed by Ubaron with the spell summon monster.

The next morning Girindor noticed a set of very large spiders' webs ahead. The party avoided these and headed on and the day passed uneventfully. As they set up camp, Ranulf was surprised and attacked by a nasty looking spider, but he managed to kill it. It was unusually large and venomous for the type of spider.

In the morning Girindor spotted some goblins, but let them go. The afternoon of the sixth day the party startled some game. They camped for the night, which passed uneventfully.

The next morning they headed on. It was another bright day and the snowdrops were starting to come out. The forest thinned out and Girindor spotted the remains of a recent campfire of a group of hobgoblins. The forest opened out into an area of rough terrain. At the end of the day Girindor changed into a bird, flew up and spied out the area. The weather had deteriorated and that evening those on first watch heard a pack of wolves howling.

Girindor had a disturbed and unhappy sleep but didn't remember his dreams when he awoke. He communed and chatted to a lone oak, but discovered nothing very useful. There was a mention of a swarm to the south, which Girindor suspected to be orcs but was unable to confirm. As the party headed on they found the remains of a 5 or 6 feet termite. There were arrows in the head and it looked like it had been killed by orcs.

That night a large bear appeared – it was attracted by Eira. Ubaron summoned and controlled the bear and fed it and sent it away. The next day they continued searching and also did some hunting to replenish rations. Ranulf spotted some poisonous toadstools in a clump in a cleft by a tree; he didn't think that they should be there – normally they would be in a cave. Trevillion dug down and found some stone. There seemed to be two sets of runes on it: elven underneath but then something above defacing it. The elven signs were for the Golden wood, and said it was north half a day; the overmark was of Lolth the spider queen, showing the nine rays of Lolth and was much newer than the elven signs. The overmark had been carried out by someone with black magic.

Yspaddadden erased the runes and Girindor communed. He could tell that the site had been a way station with a fountain, seat and pool for weary travellers to wash in. The party replenished their water bottles. It was now the tenth day since they had set out and the elf tried to determine the path north. He decided on the best direction and the party followed. Girindor saw ogre tracks; probably a party of three or four. The party decided to concentrate on their task and ignored the tracks and camped for the night.

Girindor had the sense of a dream that he couldn't quite remember. It had been about something around there or ahead of them. The next day they continued north and started to enter a more thickly wooded area, with mature deciduous trees. There was a surprising lack of variety in the ages of the trees.

Girindor communed, while the rest of the party hunted. The elf talked to a thrush, which described the trees and forest as sentinels; they were normally passive, but were angry when the captain stirred them up to it – when the forest was threatened.

The captain lived in the heart of the forest; Girindor thought the captain was probably an ent. He thought that the termites had tried to push over some of the trees.

The thrush could take Girindor to where the ent was; it was about half a day away. Girindor accompanied the thrush followed by the rest of the party. As they headed into the centre of the forest; Girindor noticed that some of the trees were awake and were talking to each other about someone coming, Yspaddadden felt the path was closing behind them, Ubaron heard the beautiful, lilting voice of a woman singing seductively to lure him away, but was able to fight it off.

They came to a huge clearing and the thrush told Girindor that the captain lived on the island in the lake. There was a waterfall into a mere with a rocky island in the centre. On the island were a group of large trees, many were hornbeams. It was 50 to 100 yards to the island across the mere. They left the bear to guard their camp and the magicians flew the rest to the island. There were bluebells around the feet of the trees. Girindor flew up and surveyed the island. There were about 100 trees covering the whole island. One part of the rocky area looked easier to land on. There was a lilac tree, a smaller apple tree, some ivy, some mistletoe, but the majority were hornbeams – Girindor thought this an odd mixture. They landed on the pebbly beach and Yspaddadden kept his spell running. Ubaron's cat went into hiding – he evidently considered it was in a dangerous place. Girindor went to talk to the captain.

When Girindor returned from speaking to the captain he felt that it had gone well. The captain had explained that the trees were assailed from the north by orcs, who had learnt the sign of the nine rays of Lolth and from the south by the swarm – corrupted insects. Girindor felt that the party should seek to alleviate the leaguer. He did not think that the swarm and the orcs were in league together.

A small tree came out of the grove and walked into the water. Girindor followed the tree towards the waterfall. The rest of party waited on the pebble beach. There was a stone area, beautifully carved, behind the waterfall. Steps led up to a hall, with alcoves on either side and light was allowed in. It was an elven refuge. The rest of the party followed and the tree, a lilac, returned to the island. There was a blocked chimney at one end, which they cleared and they set up a fire there with some dead wood and spent the night.

The captain was called Ashperton and was a very old ash, and an ent explained Girindor. Throughout his time in Galendor, Girindor had been getting memories of someone else and Ashperton had thought that Girindor was someone of high authority that he had knew before. Ashperton had anticipated that this person would deal with one of the threats. Girindor didn't think the Orcs from the north were Gamesh's group.

The party looked around the hall and Yspaddadden and Ubaron learnt teleport co-ordinates. There were four alcoves that held tented structures, probably beds, but there were just the remains. There were four windows, a chimney, a hall leading away from the waterfall to the left with windows in the roof, which then widened to the chimney and fireplace. There was a carved archway with a seat – the magicians used that for their teleport. The night passed uneventfully.

That night Girindor had dreamt again: he had been in the elven hall before, when it was more completely furnished. This time he hadn't been alone in his dream; there was an elven woman, whose name he couldn't quite remember.

The next morning Girindor was sent to find the orc den; he returned three days later with a wounded satyr called Tec. He had been seduced by a dryad called Desdemona. He had escaped and then followed some orcs to their lair in a hillside with a series of caves. He had spoken to a tree; it had been unhappy but had nothing useful to say. Girindor had carried out some aerial reconnaissance and saw orcs going in and out of several caves.

The satyr was cured by Ubaron and then told party that there was an orc war – presumably due to a power vacuum after fall of Gamesh. He thought that the orcs following the spider cult might be able to put out war bands up to 100 or even 150 orcs.

Girindor dreamt of a blonde elf with violet eyes but he couldn't remember her name. Violet eyes were unusual amongst elves and might mean that she was high born.

The next day they set off into the normal forest and headed north. Dusk arrived, they set up camp and the fawn returned with a couple of hares for supper. The night passed uneventfully. The following morning, as they set out, the fawn warned them to avoid an evil tree, which they did. They continued on for the rest of the day and camped for the night, which again passed uneventfully.

The next morning they continued on to the north. Ubaron thought that the fawn was the best reconnaissance expert he had ever seen – even better than goblins. During the day Trevillion and Girindor were attacked by two trolls. Yspaddadden with his bow, Trevillion and Ubaron took down the first; the bear fought the second, but it got away: the bear was slightly wounded. They took a pouch with 5 pieces of amber from the neck of the dead troll (3 polished, 2 raw chunks, 100, 200, 100, 50, 50). They marched on until it was time to camp again.

Girindor dreamt of the forest and caught another glimpse of the female elf. The night passed uneventfully and they set out again. During the day Girindor flew as an eagle and spotted a valley with rocky cliffs that looked like where the caves were. He returned to the group and shortly afterwards the fawn reappeared having spied out a route to the valley where the orcs were. It seemed to be in the direction they were travelling and was perhaps six miles away. Between Girindor and Tec they found a path and a suitable spot to ambush a party of orcs.

During the night a party of orcs arrived and an orc stumbled into Girindor as he was hiding. Yspaddadden killed one with an orc killing arrow, Ubaron hit another but it saved, although it was wounded; he hit a second with an ordinary arrow and stunned it. Trevillion wounded another. Ubaron shot another that sprayed blood from his inner thigh. Girindor despatched his opponent. Ubaron finished one of the wounded off. Trevillion and Girindor shot another. Ubaron knocked down another.

Ubaron knocked over the leader. Yspaddadden killed another after weapon tricking. The bear with Ranulf on her back knocked over an orc. Girindor killed another.

Ubaron hit another through the knee and another in the bum. The bear finished an orc. Ubaron finished an orcish archer. Trevillion despatched the leader with an orc killing arrow. Yspaddadden threw a hand axe at another. The bear finished another but was wounded slightly. All the orcs were down. The orcs had spidery insignia, the nine rays on some of their shields.

The corpses were looted and they had one prisoner – Ubaron had to cure his broken skull, or he would have died. Yspaddadden prepared a pit using his move earth spell and shoved the bodies in. From the bodies were retrieved: a battle axe (dwarf made), a silver armband, a healing salve (some magic in the making – it would stop wound fever, some cash and a spear for the fawn. Ubaron cast summon monster on the orc.

The orc told them that Uzrig was in charge, and had one band, and that the temple was in charge of Uzrig. The white witch was in charge of the temple. He was not sure if she was human. Ubaron asked how many bands were there, but the orc did not know. Eventually he decided there might be six. He confirmed that the temple was in the valley, but he had never been there. Uzrig went to the temple, which was in a cave not far from there. The cave with the temple was close to Uzrig's cave. Girindor drew a map and asked him is this Uzrig's cave, but he didn't seem to understand the map. The orc told Ubaron that his party had been sent out hunting and foraging. Ubaron ordered the orc to take them to the valley, and point out the cave with the temple and told him that then Ubaron would cut him free and send him back to the ambush site where he would return to give the orc food and more orders. Girindor wasn't sure that the orc was under the spell. The party led by the orc headed to the valley in the dark.

After about a mile, just as they entered the valley Trevillion was shot at by an arrow; fortunately he had a protection amulet, which worked. Four arrows had been fired, but no-one was hit. They moved into cover and then retreated back the way they had come. It took about 15 minutes to return to the ambush site and Tec appeared to let them know that they were being trailed. Ubaron ordered the orc to report that the party were Gamesh's men and to say that they wanted tribute - half of everything. Yspaddadden cast ropetrick leaving the bear and the fawn and telling them to hide. After a few minutes they saw an orc below sniffing the ground like a dog, but he passed on.

They descended just after dawn and it was raining hard. Yspaddadden summoned the bear, which arrived shortly, but there was no immediate sign of Tec. Girindor summoned Tec and he arrived. He informed them that multiple orc bands had been combing the woods.

Ubaron teleported the bear, Trevillion and Ranulf and then Girindor windwalked the rest of the party back to the elven bolthole and they waited for the weather to improve. They caught fish and recuperated. Yspaddadden teleported back to Dingradur and returned with a stock of rations.

A few days later Girindor windwalked the party to the valley. They saw very impressive mountains off to the west and northwest and landed on the flatter ground above the caves. Ubaron sent his cat off to see if he could sniff out evil and he returned after an hour and a half. Ubaron knew that the cat had disliked one cave much more than the others. Girindor turned into a cat and followed Ubaron's cat and

identified the cave – he had to turn into an elf to get a proper view. He noticed a couple of landmarks and spotted some carved steps at the entrance. He changed back to a cat and returned to the flatter ground and the rest of the party.

Without further ado, the two magicians and Girindor flew in carrying Ranulf and Trevillion and came to a stout ironbound door. There was no keyhole but Girindor turned rock to mud to free the door so it could be opened. He reached in for the bar but was stabbed at by an orc with a spear. He cast warp wood on the bar and Ranulf and Trevillion were able to push on the door and heave it open. Yspaddadden and Ranulf dealt with two orcs and then continued down the passage past two alcoves, Ubaron kept his fly spell running.

There was light at the end of an open area ahead. They came to a wooden platform and then down into a wide area with fires. There was a wooden rail around the platform and steps down to the side. They came under missile attack and Yspaddadden threw down a daylight flare. Ubaron was taken out of the air by black magic and crashed to the ground but managed to stay on his feet.

Ubaron lopped the leg off an orc and Yspaddadden took down another. Ubaron was hit by more black magic. Ranulf and Ubaron killed another orc each, while Yspaddadden killed two more. Girindor put up a wall of fire which seemed to set fire to something lurking round the corner. Trevillion was shooting from the platform and killed an orc spearman. Ubaron and Yspaddadden despatched another orc each, while Girindor and Trevillion finished another two. Ranulf finished off his remaining opponent, while Ubaron killed another and triggered his healing belt. Yspaddadden finished his remaining two opponents; the last orc was slain by Girindor's bow. There were about 16 orcish bodies.

The fighters burst through the wall of fire as Girindor started to bring it down. There were tented shelters on the left and an aperture on the right with natural light – a circular area with light above and a stream going along with mushrooms growing, almost like a well. Yspaddadden thought that the magician that had been casting black magic must have gone along the water unless he had flown out or there was a secret door. Yspaddadden asked his arrow of location which way he had gone, and this confirmed his hunch.

They came to an iron grating with a passage to the side. The grating was too small for anyone to pass, so they went down the passage and came to a magically confusing area. There was natural light from the top but the area was full of roiling smokiness, with lots of shadows. Ubaron was grabbed by a tendril that wrapped round him and tried to tie him to the wall. Ranulf was confused and wandered the wrong way round the edge. Yspaddadden cut Ubaron free and then cast magic circle. Ubaron used burning hands to reduce a swarm of spiders that had appeared, he then cast detect life to try to identify any targets in the area. They seemed to be similar to the unnaturally venomous spider that Ranulf had killed earlier in the trip. Yspaddadden maintained the circle and Ubaron burnt more of the swarm. Girindor shook off two magical attacks, but was prevented from working up dispel evil. Yspaddadden's ward started to go down and he flew up carrying Ubaron. Ubaron cast lightning bolt at a target – but he couldn't tell whether it was the right one, as he only had his detect life spell to guide him. His lightning bolt bashed the target back.

The remaining spiders surged past Girindor who was protected from evil and waited on the edge of water unable to attack Trevillion. Yspaddadden kept his fly spell going and followed Ubaron in pursuit of the magician –still using his detect life spell. They pursue the magician to where the passage widened and natural light came in. The rest of the party killed three or four orcs and the rest disappeared into the walls.

Where the passage widened Ubaron noticed a pentagram, which he dispelled and they carried on but Yspaddadden lost his fly spell. The pentagram had been a compulsion not to cross. They turned to the right into a much bigger space with a very large pentagram. It was not a ward but had been carved into the ground – the sign of the nine rays of Lolth, the pair walked round the edge and continued along the passage to a natural cave with a forest of webs.

Ubaron and Yspaddadden couldn't make out what was in this area – it looked like it might be the fane where spiders were kept as part of the worship of Lolth. There was a passage on the left and the right, but it might be a large column ahead and the passages could rejoin further on. Their sense of disorientation drifted away. They regrouped and were joined by the rest of the party.

Yspaddadden again consulted his arrow of location and knew which way to go. Girindor cast wall of flame to clear a way through the webs and the party stayed within and headed on and the passages did indeed rejoin. They explored on and were attacked by a giant spider. Girindor was knocked down and lost his flame wall. The spider was hit hard by Yspaddadden and Ubaron, but blinked out. The party were attacked by a group of spiders and Girindor was obviously poisoned by venom from the large spider. Ubaron tried to work up neutralize poison but was attacked again; he managed to shrug off the poison, but Girindor was rapidly stiffening. The smaller spiders nibbled Trevillion, and he also felt envenomed.

Ubaron and Yspaddadden spotted the suspected magician and threw their spear and hand axe respectively at her. She was hit in the arm and dropped something. Ubaron used his jumped spell to leap in and attack the magician and the spider reappeared where he had been. Ranulf attacked the large spider and ignored the two smaller ones closing on him. The magician cast a web spell at Yspaddadden, but he managed to avoid most of it. Ubaron cut down the magician with a heavy blow. Ranulf hit the large spider and it blinked out again. Girindor transformed into a cat in an attempt to shrug off the effects of the poison.

Ubaron was attacked by the spider, while the two remaining opposition attacked Yspaddadden. Ubaron hit the spider twice and cut it down. Yspaddadden cut down one orc and the other was whipped by Trevillion and yanked it off its feet, enabling Yspaddadden to finish it off. Ranulf killed the remaining smaller spider. Ubaron had twice successfully guessed which figure was the magician and it was now obvious that she was the white witch and what she had dropped was a staff.

All of the cloaked occultists, including the white witch, had been female half orcs. Some must have got away, as there were now none left in the complex. The party barricaded themselves in, the elf and Trevillion were cured of poisons by the magicians; Trevillion was in shock and Ubaron cast the spell cure critical on him.

Once Trevillion had been cured he collect venom from the dead spiders. The party looted the bodies and the complex and then teleported away with the loot after desecrating the temple.

Loot:

The total haul of known and unknown value items was:

- a large bronze cauldron, relief art, dedicated to Lolth (the white spider) --> temple value --> assume scrapped by Temple of Isis
- beeswax graven image Lolth, ready for lost-wax casting --> curio/temple value --> assume scrapped by temple of Isis
- Electrum alloy mix for casting : 6 lbs gold, 18 lbs silver ---> 1100 gp
- 5 bronze daggers, individual faces on each pommel, possible temple value --> 500 gp
- Amulet of Warding, white jade, suspect CON save boost vrs all diseases --> 1000 gp, possibly more in niche market
- Black Sapphire, crude cut & polish, lustrous gem with highlights, 3000 gp
- Black silk bobbins, suspected spider source, high quality, enough for 10 square yards --> 250 gp, possibly more to MU
- a large pile of camp equipment, including an hour glass and fine merchants scales --> 700 gp
- misc coin, scrap silver etc --> 400 gp
- harvest of cave herbs mushroom gardens by Druid --> 1000 gp plus free live samples for any gardeners (mainly narcotic species)
- a new batch of narcotic brews, 12 bottles, assume 2400 gp, possibly more in niche market
- 2 potions equivalent to 'Steam' --> 1000 gp
- 1 Healing potion --> 500 gp
- 6 pots of arrow poison (2 damage, 4 paralysis) --> 600 gp
- 2 pots of healing salve (local healing plus no wound-fever) --> 600 gp

plus....

- [A] Ring of Lolth --> may be used by any wizard (level 0+), INT-based, allows control of spiders. Cult object, value uncertain. Possible temple offering to Isis?
- [B] Staff of Command - orcish artefact, bound demon. Three powers, usable by any wizard (level 0 +): command orc, cause pain by touch, cause damage by impact. Value uncertain, but significant to niche market as one use per minute. A 'lead-your-own-gang-of-orcs' starter kit.
- [C] Magic net, still on the weaving loom. 90% complete. Needs item-capable MU to finish. Value Unknown but significant if completed.
- [D] Tome of BloodSigns. A large tome showing many sigils and the order of engraving to make complex permanent runespells bound into flesh&blood. A rare example of high value to an MU wishing to diversify into S&M. Large powerful tattoos: (1) Be Lucky (2) Immunity to Spiders (3) Strength (4) Heal Injured Location (5) LionHeart (6) Protection from the Evil Eye. The cave also contains

Old Empire: Malcolm's Diary

tattoo needles and various inks, giving you all you need to start a new career...will require dedication and practice to master.

- [E] A small gold statue of Lolth, suspect southern import, a high art & temple object. Value is 2000 gp but only 200 gp as melted scrap. Your call.

From the first orc-band:

- silver armband --> 200 gp
- dwarf-made battleaxe ---> 100 gp
- misc coin & hack silver --> 100 gp
- pot of healing salve, same type as above --> 300 gp

From the Forest Trolls:

- amber pieces ---> 500 gp

I make that a little over 15,000 gp plus the 5 items of uncertain value - A, B, C, D, and E - assuming top two items scrapped by Temple of Isis.

So just over 3,000 gp for each of 5 shares, plus a lucky dip of one dubious value item each.

Or any other way of dividing it all up that you prefer, as many of these are for MUs only.

G30 – That Which Lies Beneath (26 Oct 13)

Just after the full moon in April 969, Ubaron and Trevillion returned to Dingradur and met up with Girindor and the two dwarves to finalise the split of the loot from the last trip. Ubaron arranged for Grettir to buy the net for 6,000gp. The bobbins and 600gp went to Paradoxides for completing the net. The tome of blood runes was to be held available at Dingradur for any of the magicians to study. The staff and ring were offered to the Invisible Man and he arrived on the full moon in April and bought the staff for 4,000gp in gems, a magic dagger (1,000gp) and four blocks of adamantine (400gp).

Yspaddadden remarked that the adamantine was from Thangoria and the Invisible Man admitted that he had been back to Gamesh's place to investigate the civil war going on amongst the orcs to fill the power vacuum – he had noticed the wiping out of the rival group from the Lair of the White Spider. It sounded like he was encouraging the civil war. He said that might have a job for Yspaddadden and his allies. He wanted to get Kaban, the leader of one of the factions. He was a half orc; probably one of the sons of Gamesh. He would let Yspaddadden know if he found Kaban's lair. He felt that Kaban had talent and would be less easily manipulated than the other potential leaders. The other factions were led by a mixture of orcs and half orcs. One of the factions had a cave troll, but it was not Kaban's faction.

Axilius offered a bound fire elemental in a wand with a brass end that could be removed for the ring of Lolth. The elemental would reliably follow instruction once. A powerful conjurer might be able to rebind it; it might be worth 2,000gp and Yspaddadden put in the cash for it. Ubaron and Yspaddadden thought that they could combine to make a similar item. The total haul from the Lair of the White Spider came to 5550gp per person.

Yspaddadden paid in the cash for the black sapphire. Ubaron had the statue melted down. Trevillion bought the amulet of warding, the narcotic brews, mushrooms and the poison arrows. Trevillion was given a hunter's cloak made by his wife. It was not a permanent item, but she had used the dyes given to her as a wedding present and it could be made permanent by a wizard. Ranulf bought the combat potions.

Ubaron took the cauldron, ceremonial daggers and other cult items to be disposed at the temple of Isis in Chittagong. He was given a medal, there was a celebration and Ubaron became a 10th level fighter.

Girindor carried out some reconnaissance of the termite mound and the area around. The party decided to try to stake out a termite to use in spells and also to plant an item to be taken to the queen. Girindor windwalked the party and landed right on the mound, where they were immediately attacked by ants. There were about eight worker ants and two soldier ants. Girindor was attacked by a soldier and multiple workers, he cast lightning from his ring and the soldier ant stumbled but still closed in. The dwarves each killed an ant and Ubaron slew two. The two dwarves then took on a soldier ant and Yspaddadden threw a hand-axe into its head. Ranulf stove it in with his hammer. The first soldier ant tried to sting the elf but missed. An ant closed with Ubaron but he killed it with a dagger. The elf parried the soldier ant on to

Trevillion who was helped by Yspaddadden, and the dwarf and Ubaron finished off the soldier ant. Ubaron killed two more ants attacking the elf and Trevillion finished off his last opponent.

Girindor took some antennae from the soldier and worker ants, four big mandibles and sacs of formic acid from the soldier ants that were delivered by a sting of the tail. They all had chitinous armour. The acid would cause extra damage but not paralysis. Ubaron looked at the menhirs around the termite mound; they looked to be human or possibly dwarven in origin, but there were no markings. The party were attacked by three more ants as they completed their investigation of the ant corpses; two were shot by Trevillion and the last killed by Ubaron. Yspaddadden left a magic dagger behind. Yspaddadden had two large and four small antennae; the small ones would hold one spell and the others more.

Yspaddadden loaded two small antennae with detect life and two with detect thought and one large one with both spells. The other had those two spells but also had detect magic and detect hiding place.

Girindor took Ubaron back to the mound and a short distance away and then sank into the earth with him. It felt like being in a cave full of water to the top, and just being able to suck air from the edge of the cave. After a while Ubaron could smell the pungent warm scent of air. Girindor enlarged the space and put some small holes for air into the nearby passage. The walls were like a smooth earthy concrete. Ubaron cast a light cantrip and then made chalk pentagram and signs. He could hear a drumming, monotonal beat like the heartbeat of a huge creature. Other beats joined in. Girindor communed and could hear messages by sound, but also by scent.

Ubaron teleported back to Dingradur with the elf and then wrote two teleport scrolls from Dingradur to the termite mound. One was for mass teleport, but the other was just a single version. Just after dawn the next morning Ubaron teleported the party to the hole next to the tunnel. The dwarves felt it was between 50m and 100m underground.

Yspaddadden used his axe to locate his magic dagger and felt that it was probably still where he had left it. Girindor heard something go by while the dwarf was concentrating. Yspaddadden used first larger antennae and powered up two spells. He detected lots of life forces; like a galaxy of stars with the centre straight ahead. As he concentrated he could really tune into the beat and could just about hear the words. The centre was where this was emanating from and he guessed it was some tens of yards away. The words seemed to be "look for food; search over there".

Girindor cast rock to mud and created a tunnel as directed by Yspaddadden and the party headed out from their hiding place following the tunnel Girindor was creating. They crossed a tunnel and were attacked by a couple of ants, which were quickly dealt with, but more were appearing. Ubaron cast a light spell, which enabled him to see the passage was lined with eggs and termites into the distance. Ubaron cast a glyph from his necklace of power to prevent the ants from following the adventurers.

They came to another passage cutting obliquely across. Girindor crossed this and continued to carve a passage. Ranulf was attacked by a soldier ant. The sound was

like rolling drumbeats, and was now much faster. Ranulf dealt with a couple of soldier ants but more ants joined in the attack. He started to move through and the elf cast a spell to hold the ants back and then Ubaron cast stonewall behind the party.

Yspaddadden cast a daylight flare and they could see a large number of worker ants, soldier ants and the queen ahead. Ranulf strode into the attack. Girindor cast a wall of fire spell ahead of the party – it went long and dealt with some of the worker ants. The two dwarves were fighting ants while Trevillion threw darts with paralysis venom, over the top of them, trying to hit the queen and managed to hit her twice. Ubaron came up to help out the dwarves and caved in the head of a soldier ant. Ubaron and Yspaddadden badly damaged another soldier ant and it tottered. Girindor cast another fire wall, which finished off some worker ants and three soldier ants. Ubaron and Yspaddadden killed some more of a swarm of worker ants while Trevillion continued to throw envenomed darts into the queen, and was joined by Girindor with his bow.

Fire burst from the Queen's abdomen and the party were attacked by a large number of ants, which threatened to overrun Ranulf. They swarmed over him and he had his helmet knocked off. Ubaron and Yspaddadden flew up; Ubaron cast burning hands at the ants and Yspaddadden threw a hand axe at the queen.

Yspaddadden summoned his battle-axe and hit the queen. He was knocked off by the queen's head and lost his fly spell. Ubaron killed more ants with his burning hands spell and Ranulf was able to break clear of the ants. More darts and an arrow finished off the queen. The drumming stopped and the remaining ants started moving at random and went down their holes. There was no sign of any treasure.

The ants were like red ants, but very much larger. Yspaddadden realised that something had tried to grapple his mind but he managed to shrug it off. He suspected it was a powerful demon wanting to know what was going on. Something kept putting out Girindor's lantern. Trevillion pointed out a tattoo on the ant of a figure of eight in a circle – the symbol of infinity thought Ubaron. Numberless, could be a brand? All the ants had the symbol. Trevillion cut open an egg and inside was a tiny worker ant with the same symbol. Ubaron cast light, but it was much feebler than normal. The party discussed whether to press on and the majority were in favour, so they clambered down a spiral passageway and saw several options. Everywhere was weirdly shaped in a sort of spiral. It seemed to have been made by termites but the spiral pattern seemed strange.

Trevillion had a bad feeling; of cold, not undead but other wordly. The party were worried that they were heading off plane. The two dwarves both felt that they were still at the same depth and north was still the same direction. They headed on with Ranulf leading the way and Ubaron as rearguard marking any junctions. Something tried to takeover Ranulf's mind. He almost lost his sense of North but he shrugged it off. Trevillion was affected by a glyph carved on the wall and became despondent. Yspaddadden shrugged it off with difficulty, but Ubaron had no problem. Ranulf was fighting what looked like some sort of demon. Girindor tried to help Trevillion continue but failed and so pressed on himself. Ranulf had been smashed down by the demon, but got up. He was knocked down again. The creature was holding a head in one hand and a two-handed sword in another and its caterpillar like body was in a pool. There were lots of little ants hanging from the ceiling with distended bellies.

Ubaron and Yspaddadden arrived to help the other dwarf and struck the demon very hard and it seemed to fall apart into little spirals. Both Ubaron and Yspaddadden ignored the illusion and cleaved into it. It broke up into little worms and disappeared but the head bounced away, shuddered and changed into a human head with Mobius brand marks or tattoos on it. Yspaddadden fished out the two-handed sword from the pool as the elf joined them. The things on the ceiling were ant repletes – used for storage, with a grossly distended abdomen.

The ground here was native rock, but the party sensed something cold up above them. Trevillion investigated and then ran away from something cold and frightening. Yspaddadden and Ubaron headed up and came to a brass cylinder with sigils in the ice surrounding it. It seemed to be a seal with complex runes; important, demonic, cosmic runes. The origin was off plane. It was the seal of Asmadeus; something along the lines of “whoever opens this seal shall suffer the torments of hell”. Asmadeus was the supreme ruler of nine hells. Ubaron wondered if the cylinder was evil; something reached out and touched his mind but he shrugged it off. He touched it by accident and his finger became icy and wouldn't recover after being rubbed. He revived it with holy water. He thought the cylinder was evil.

It looked as though it had smashed into the rock, perhaps due to falling from the sky. The party thought that the thing in the cylinder was sending things out for the crystal as it wanted to use that to open the cylinder. They also thought that whatever it was had taken over a human and turned it into a demon. The Mobius brand looked more like a mole in that shape.

Girindor cast rock to mud to drain the pool into another area, but they found nothing. They checked the repletes: two were magic; the ten that were glowing were not. The glowing ones did have power. There was earth power in some of the repletes that could be harvested by Girindor. Each contained a gallon; there were fourteen, ten glowing with raw power, two detecting as magic, two were dark but were not positive for magic or power.

Girindor cast rock to mud and Ubaron said a few words and covered the head and the remains of what had once been a man. Ubaron cast stonewall to cover where the cylinder was and they took the repletes up to the main chamber without damaging any of them. They searched the main chamber, but found nothing useful or valuable. They did find a chamber with eggs. Ubaron teleported Ranulf, Girindor and all the repletes and Yspaddadden teleported Trevillion back to Dingradur.

There were ten repositories of earth power with about ten points each. Two repositories were honey the equivalent of ten 500gp healing potions each. One had an incredibly pungent smell, luxuriously spicy, very exotic. One had dark inky blot of something reflecting no light, the void or darkness. It would be very good for magical poison. There were ten pints in each replete. The spicy one would boost a wizard's mind but might be addictive. Everyone had 20 points of earthpower each, four healing potions, two pints of narcotic and two pints of dark essence each.

Yspaddadden had a two handed sword +2 +1 and sword breaker (magically effective at catching and breaking swords). 18 talents, which he was willing to sell to Ubaron.

G31 – Mission From God (01 Mar 14)

Ubaron spoke to Cassandra, the High Priestess of Isis, about the cylinder the party had found under the termite mound. He explained how they had found it, how something had tried to take over his mind and how he had become cold after touching it. He also explained about the inscription claiming that it had been created by Asamadeus. She thought it bore all the hallmarks of demonic possession. She had never heard of anything like it. She thought it was a demonic prison; a demon lord, presumably Asamadeus must have locked something inside. She agreed to find out more and thought that the Assurans might know more. The two temples she would consult were Mitra and Assura. She did say that Asamadeus was known to be a very powerful demon lord. It would require significant temple activity to deal with the cylinder. It was the weirdest thing she had heard of in a long time.

Cassandra contacted the Temple of Mitra and they brought in Wilf. He met up with Ubaron who took him to Dingry Dur. He told everyone that he had been issued with: an astral transport device to take him and just him to the fifth plane of Hell, a Great Scroll which would allow a magician to open a Gate and summon him to the place of Ritual, creating a gate between the two locations, suitable chains for him (and maybe others) to drag the cylinder, a spell - Protection from Possession – which could be used to protect participants from that which was in the capsule.

The plan (in summary) was for Wilf to go to Hell, once he was in Hell for Ubaron, standing by the cylinder, to read the scroll and open the gate. Once the Gate was opened, Wilf would come back through and then, aided by companions, would drag the capsule back to Hell. Ubaron would hold open the gate until Wilf returned. Wilf was to ensure that he brought the chains back (presumably for future use). The fifth plain of Hell was known to be desert.

Wilf also had a copy of the Gate opening spell and a bug out device (from Hell if he got stuck), though, it didn't seem to say anything about passengers.

Ubaron traded his potions from the last trip to Yspaddadden for a magic shortsword, magic war-axe and a promissory note for 4000gp. He asked Yspaddadden to make him a mace. Ranulf and Trevillion also traded their repletes to Yspaddadden for promissory notes.

The transport device Wilf had would take longer than casting the Gate, so Ubaron would have to wait 3-5 minutes before casting the Gate spell. The Gate would need to be maintained by the magician. The scroll had Wilf's name inserted and was optimised for the fifth circle of hell.

Wilf had also been given a helmet that allowed him to look like a demon, a protection from demon amulet and a Mitran token that got hot in the presence of a demon. The helmet was black with four horns; it was off world tech. When Wilf tried it on, he reeked of sulphur, and became black and shadowy blob. He looked the same when he tried it again, so the party would be able to recognise him.

The Temple had also given an amulet of health that was optimised for childbirth and pregnancy, and a ring that allowed the wearer to swim and look like an underwater demon.

Ubaron looked at the scroll for the Gate spell. It looked like a hard spell to learn. It was a very well made, illuminated scroll. It was optimised for the Pit of Ygreig in the fifth plane of Hell. The protection from possession scroll was also a complicated spell. Ubaron set to learning the Gate spell and Yspaddadden the protection spell.

Yspaddadden learnt the protection spell in the first week. It needed a drop of blood from the person being protected and ensured that the soul remained anchored to the body. The second week the magicians had no success. The third week Ubaron learnt the Gate spell and Yspaddadden understood the spell, although he was not sure he could cast it; if he tried there were no guarantees it would work with no side effects.

The archers had some arrows blessed by the Temple and Ubaron replenished his stock of Holy Water. Yspaddadden made rune amulets for protection from possession carved in ivory – three per person. During the three weeks that this took Yspaddadden also made Ubaron a magic mace. Wilf took the party to a ceremony at the Temple of Mitras. Ubaron made a back-up Gate scroll and learnt the spell Instanta Summons.

Ubaron teleported Yspaddadden to the queen's lair and they had to exterminate some worker termites, but they were no threat as they were no longer organised. They worked on improving the co-ordinates, but then just made their way back to the surface with Yspaddadden marking the way. They returned to Dingry Dur and then just before dawn Gerindor windwalked Wilf Yspaddadden, Ubaron, Ranulf and Trevillion back to the mound and after he had greeted the dawn, the party followed Yspaddadden's marks down to the queen's chamber.

They made their way down to the pool where they had previously fought the possessed human. The pool had been cleared but now it had returned to a fetid pool with the odd bubble appearing. As Wilf made his way past the pool a watery tentacle seemed to reach out from the pool. Wilf sidestepped it and struck back. Another tentacle attacked Ubaron, who sidestepped and hit it, and it seemed to change into droplets. Yspaddadden was attacked by three tentacles and more attacked Trevillion and Girindor. But they got past. Yspaddadden threw in some holy water and they left the chamber and continued into the chamber with the cylinder.

A number of the possession amulets were triggered successfully. Wilf lay down his muspel sword and tried to put chains on the cylinder; the sword animated and attacked him. Wilf didn't see the attack and was incapacitated and broke a couple of ribs. Trevillion and Ysapaddadden dragged Wilf out of the combat and the sword fought the elf and Ranulf. Ubaron knocked the sword down and Ranulf tried to stand on it but failed. Ubaron knocked it down again and Ranulf stood on it. As Wilf was wounded they decided to retreat for now and return when Wilf had recovered.

The party headed back to the pool. Yspaddadden cast magic circle and Ubaron did his own and the party shuffled past the dwarf, and the water bubbled but did not attack. Gerindor cast purify water and spent 26 power to deal with the pool. He spent some more power and purified it completely.

The party returned to Dingry Dur and spent three days recovering mana and Yspaddadden replenished the amulets.

This time they took a couple of big wreckers' bars and two light wands and retruned to the mound. Gerindor used a very energetic wind sprite and they arrived very rapidly, but landed safely and made their way down to the queen's chamber. They passed the pool, which was still pure. They continued down to the cylinder chamber and Wilf tried to attach the chains, whilst the dwarfs lifted the cylinder with the wreckers' bars. The cylinder seemed to weigh half a ton to a ton. With help of the dwarves, Wilf managed to get the chains in place. Wilf accidentally touched the cylinder but although it was very cold, he didn't take any damage. Wilf tried pulling cylinder and it moved surprisingly easily.

Wilf changed put on the demonic helmet and vanished. Ubaron waited in the corridor outside the chamber and the after 5 minutes returned and read the scroll. An arch appeared with what looked like a sparkling curtain of stars. Through the gate and straight at Ubaron came a large demon with a sword and shield. Gerindor shot it in the arm with a blessed arrow and it dropped its sword. Yspaddadden hit it in the chest with his war-axe and knocked it to one knee. Ubaron was knocked back, but managed to maintain his spell. Trevillion also shot it with a blessed arrow. Yspaddadden hit the demon again and kept it on its knees. Gerindor stabbed it. It started to get up again; Yspaddadden knocked it down. Gerindor stabbed it again in the back. Demon landed on the elf, but Yspaddadden despatched it. Trevillion grabbed the demon's sword. The demon issued smoke and this drifted back through the gate. Another demon came through and attacked Yspaddadden, who hit it and then threw a hand-axe at it as it flew up.

A third demon came through and headed for Ubaron, but was intercepted by Ranulf. Yspaddadden despatched his opponent and it also started to dissipate and drift back through the gate. Gerindor emerged from beneath the remains of the first demon.

Ranulf hit the third demon. A fourth demon emerged from the gate and Yspaddadden was about to hit it when he and Trevillion realised it was Wilf. Wilf grabbed the chains. Ranulf hit the third demon again and caved in its chest. Yspaddadden went through the gate ahead of Wilf armed with a summoned shield. A demon passed through at the same time and was faced by Trevillion. It spat at Trevillion. Wilf pulled the cylinder and started to go through the tunnel. Gerindor disarmed the demon and Ranulf hit it on the head and it was slightly dazed. Trevillion also hit it. Wilf and the cylinder disappeared through the gate.

The demon grabbed Ranulf's hammer and they struggled to get control of it. Ranulf gave up the hammer and closed with a dagger and stabbed it critically in the chest and threw it to the ground still closed and finished it off.

Yspaddadden and Wilf were now through the gate. Soon after another demon came through the gate. Ubaron was aware of drumming and a pulse from somewhere on the other side of the gate. Trevillion and Gerindor finished off the demon, while Ubaron continued to maintain the spell, covered by Ranulf. Another two demons burst through the gate, but it was Wilf and Yspaddadden. A really fast demon came through

before Ubaron could close the gate. Trevillion parried a blow aimed at the magician who closed the gate.

Demon weapon tricked with two swords. He was hit a glancing blow by Yspaddadden, and bashed into the wall by Wilf with his two-handed sword. It was the hit by a Mitran throwing star by Wilf. The demon ran up the wall and headed for the exit, but was hit again by Wilf. Ubaron put up a glyph to block the exit and was faced by the demon. Wilf hit it again in the leg as Ubaron parried her sword blow and then finished her off.

Wilf grabbed both her swords, but they evaporated. Yspaddadden did get some ichor before the demon dissipated. They did get a big sword and axe and two brass swords from the other demons.

Wilf and Yspaddadden had appeared in a big cylindrical pit 3 or 400 meters high when the Gate opened. There was three level ziggurat in the pit. Wilf saw the first things go through before he could reach the gate. When they had gone back through the gate to Hell with the cylinder Yspaddadden had fought a couple of demons and Wilf another before they could get the chains off the cylinder and then returned through the gate. They were zapped by lightning as they left and the last demon came through with them. They left the cylinder on top of the ziggurat. Ubaron and Yspaddadden teleported everyone back to Dingridur.

Yspaddadden evaluated the loot. The axe could be used either as a halberd or as a light battle-axe, but would need re-hafting. It was of an unknown alloy, with minor power. The two brass swords were from the city of Diss in Hell, they had a +1 damage bonus but were not magic. The large sword was made of bane metal with poisonous effects. The weapons were taken to the temple but were returned after investigation. The axe had a sharpen blade spell built in, so it could be made extremely sharp for a short period. The spell could be triggered by a wizard or a weaponsmith.

Loot:

Axe – 1500gp

Two-handed sword (10lbs bane metal) – 3000gp

Brass swords (traded by Ubaron for pearls in Anango) – 1500gp

Demonic Helmet of Deidra(magic helm, demonic appearance clothes in shadows and gives low light vision, iconised demon) – 10,000gp

Protection from demons amulet level 5 (once per day, battlefield duration) – 5000gp

Ring of the Argonian swimming and physical attributes – 5000gp

Isis Health pendant (for childbearing and female health, level 3) – 5000gp

Total 31,000

Protection from possession spell (available to learn)

Gate spell (available to learn)

Wilf took the helmet, Gerindor the health charm, Yspaddadden the ring of argonian, Ubaron the protection from demons amulet. Yspaddadden took the two-handed sword as scrap metal.

G32 – Congratulations it's a Tree (10 May 14)

Girindor confessed to Ashperton that he was not who the ent thought he was; but he made sure that he had told the ent that he had rid him of the blight before his confession. Ashperton didn't believe the elf and thought that the elf was under a glamour that had affected his memory. Ents were known to be difficult to mislead, so this surprised Girindor.

Ashperton then started reciting a poem – Stairway to Heaven. The ruins and paths to the north of Ashperton's grove were known to be haunted by the spirits of elves and one in particular Ewen-tanu (which meant undead elf). She had been the wife or soul mate of the man in Girindor's vision, who Ashperton thought he was. To be tanu an elf needed an extremely strong will.

Girindor's dreams were associated with his powerful magic sword, Moon Under Water, which meant world turned upside down. It was a truly ancient artefact; the weaponsmith (Dianor) who had made it was a powerful magician, swordsmith and artist; possibly the greatest of all time. As well as being a weapon and art, it was also a statement of the state of world. He was known to have created another weapon called Love Over Gold.

It was the first week of May 696. Ubaron teleported Girindor, Trevillion, Ranulf and Yspaddadden to the Elven bolthole and Girindor spoke to Ashperton. Yspaddadden asked Girindor what his attitude to going West was, as he believed that this might become pertinent.

The first two verses from verse of the poem came from Elwen, the female in Girindor's dreams, and the last from Ashperton:

There's a feeling I get
When I look to the West
And my spirit is crying for leaving
In my thoughts I have seen
Rings of smoke through the trees
And the voices of those who stand looking.

But it's whispered that soon
If we all call the tune
That the Master will call us to freedom.
And a new day will dawn
For those who stand long
And the forests will echo with laughter.

Your lady was sure all that glitters is lost
She's been crying a stairway to heaven
But when you get there she'll know
That the stars are all closed,
And with your word she can get what she yearns for.

Galendor had been ruined in the spawning (over 700 years ago) then the blight came (100 years ago). Chittagong had stood against a multi-year siege and had been re-founded 696 years ago.

Girindor, Ubaron, Yspaddadden, Ranulf and Trevillion headed off to the North and avoided a very large snake. Ranulf was riding his bear, Eira. The snake was probably a horned viper – about 5 times size it should have been. As they marched Girindor, Trevillion and Ubaron noticed a number of unusual species.

The party camped for the night. There was a rock and they cleared the moss from it and found some marks. It was in an elven script – a line from a poem about nature and pure water, meaning thanks for the water from the nearby spring.

They set five watches – Ranulf, Trevillion, Ubaron, Yspaddadden and Girindor. Yspaddadden saw some phosphorescence in a couple of places and another piece moving silently. He woke Girindor to see if he recognised it. The static one was harmless a night bloom (a parasite cultivated for static light in elven homeland, low-down he would investigate, the moving one he wasn't sure of. Low-down was patch of phosphorescent mushrooms, normally grown underground for light. The elf couldn't find the moving one and nothing showed up on detect life. Yspaddadden set up detect hidden observation and the rest of the night passed uneventfully. Girindor had no new dreams just flashbacks to his other, earlier dreams.

As they headed on, the adventurers had the feeling they were being tracked. Trevillion was attacked by what he thought was a were honey badger. It had been very fierce but was also a lot bigger than a honey badger should have been. Trevillion hit it with a paralysis dart and it left. The party got together and followed the trail. There were hairs on the dart but not blood. Trevillion thought it needed magic weapons to hit the creature.

They tracked the badger to water and followed the stream for a while and then picked up trail again – it was moving faster than the trackers. Ranulf's bear was able to track the badger and the party followed. Using a combination of the bear, the elf and detect trail they followed for the rest of the day.

Trevillion noticed some elven script on a rock. It was a line from a poem about nature and respect for nature and thanks for the bounty of the place. There were some very old fruit trees and a walnut tree, maybe an ancient elven orchard. The party pressed on and found a clearing to camp for the night. It was a good site, but there was no running water.

Ubaron and Yspaddadden cast the spell polymorph self to wolven, and followed the trail as wolves. They came to a tree with a ladder up it and cancelled their spells. Ubaron flew Yspaddadden up, but couldn't find the way. He flew back out and then above the tree and saw a structure. He flew down, still carrying the dwarf, but lost his fly spell – he recovered with the levitate spell on his spear. He set his companion down on a bough, while still holding his spell and Yspaddadden pulled him along after him as he worked his way along the branch.

The structure looked like a garden shed covered in leaves like ivy. On closer sight it was a mixture of ivy, moss, poison ivy, mistletoe and some kind of berry. There was a very faint smell of smoke – maybe of a fire that had gone out. Yspaddadden detected one life in the hut. There was no movement, so Yspaddadden cast a sleep spell and detect thought, while Ubaron used his levitate spell to try to find the entrance underneath.

Ubaron stashed his spear and the spell and climbed around. He found a rope and climbed up. The rope suddenly came loose and Ubaron cast feather fall and the rope hadn't fallen far. He started to re-climb the rope, but this caused a noise so he crushed a card and used the fly spell to go up.

Ubaron cast detect life and flew in through the entrance. He hit the detected life with a spear in an attempt to assassinate. Ubaron lost his fly spell but mortally wounded the target. The human target expired; he had wild white hair and a black and white beard like a badger. He had been tattooed like an Atlanean. A bird squeaked a lot in the corner and then died too; presumably it had been a familiar.

The structure was like a hermit's hut. There was a shield, war-axe, battle-axe, 24 rosaries of different coloured stones knotted together – prayer beads like shaman use (could be used as a research project or a base level of jewellery for 200gp; Ubaron said that they were the base of a ritual). There were impedimenta of shaman beakers, bowls, mortar and pestle, herbs, bits of creatures. There was a dead eagle owl and a cage of live mice. There was a gold arm ring (dwarven made with a drake biting its tail 1000gp), gold finger ring (200gp), number of boxes and chest – golden goblet with gems (elven, pearls, dented, 2000gp needs repair), silver goblet with jade inset (elven 500-1000gp), 3 potions (indigenous manufacture, 2 of one sort, 1 of another both white magic), 380gp, 406 platinum coins, a little bag with 6 gems, 2 cut 4 uncut (0, 1000, 1000, 1000, 0, 0). The tattoos were southern and at least Atlanean influenced.

Ubaron exposed the body to the sky after chopping off the head and placing it between the thighs.

After looting the place, the two warriors returned to the campsite at dawn just in time for breakfast. The companions then all headed off to the northeast. The afternoon passed without incident and they then camped for the night. During the last watch Girindor spotted something about man-size walking on all fours up to a waterfall. It looked very hairy and bulky; perhaps a small bear. It drank from a stream and Eira watched it, but didn't do anything. They walked up to look but realised it was an enormous porcupine and so left it to continue its promenade unmolested.

Girindor saw a female elf and went off with her but came back after finding out that she was a dryad. The party continued on and Ubaron saved against succumbing to the dryad.

They started to make camp for the following night when they saw a large web. As they investigated they were attacked by spiders spinning down from the trees. Ubaron killed three of them dealing great damage with his new mace. Girindor shot and

duelled with another. Ranulf and the bear fought another and killed it. Girindor was attacked by two spiders.

Ubaron pursued another spider and hit it and it was shot and finished off by Trevillion. Eventually the remaining two spiders were despatched.

Yspaddadden burnt off the webs and rescued a satyr: it was much bigger than Tecwyn, about 5' tall. Rhys was very grateful to be rescued. Ubaron cured him with neutralise poison. The companions then searched the area and found some loot. The majority of the corpses they found were orcs with rusted weapons, but a couple of corpses were considerably more valuable. They found 2286gp, 2336sp, 5 gems (3 (1000) and 2 in dwarven daggers 2 x 500). One corpse was in an elven mithril mesh chain shirt 5'3" (non magic perhaps 2000 to 2500gp), 308 platinum pieces, a diamond solitaire ring with dwarf cut diamond (1200gp), a topaz broach, elven set in gold (700gp), a magic sword (white lightning, mithril +2 hit +1 damage, 7000gp).

Ashperton had given Girindor a flagon and he now told the party. It contained a draught of something each: ent draught. He had also been given some fire nuts.

Rhys knew the first two verses of the poem and said that it referred to the white lady. He pointed out the direction of the elven mounds and the elven road. He knew where the white lady walked. He suggested that some present might be in some peril there, but he could show the way. He looked paler then when they had first pulled him out of the web. He went very pale when he heard the third stanza of the poem. "These things are too great for me", he told them, "I have heard of them for a long time".

He said that if Girindor was the master, then he was supposed to free Galendor. He had heard talk of the orc king's death and the destruction of the spiders and he thought he was sufficiently far south of any spiders to be safe, but he had blundered into these. He told Girindor that what he sought lay off to the east. Girindor told Rhys that they would be grateful if he would put them in the right direction.

Rhys explained that north lay the valley of the white spider, which they had already dealt with.

The following morning the group, including the satyr, headed off to the east led by Rhys. A day and night passed uneventfully, with virtually no dreaming by the elf. They camped in a sheltered place the satyr knew.

After a few hours the next day the party emerged into a small clearing. They quickly realised that it was a road. Trevillion kicked away the moss and could see paving stones underneath. It was overgrown, but a road could be seen running east to west. They headed east for a large part of the day. The road then arced to the south east with higher ground to the north and east. Rhys told them that if they travelled at this speed, they would reach their destination on the morrow.

The night passed uneventfully, although Girindor had similar dreams to before; he could hear a female voice singing. Girindor spotted a horned horse, which were very rare. They headed on along the road. Yspaddadden flew up and could see the large

river that led past Dingry Dur. He said that Giants Pass must be about 50-60 miles to the north.

The group started heading into the escarpment. "After dark those who have made the vow will hunt and devour intruders", Rhys informed the party. He thought that they would know the Master, but he himself would be unwilling to be there after dark, unless commanded by Girindor. He would only go further while the sun shone.

"Is there a palace she was defending?" one of them asked. There are the broken places, where they lived before Galendor was broken, Rhys replied.

He led the party along the road back up the escarpment to rest for the night. Girindor took Moon Under Water and meditated for a while. A little way off the road was a rocky outcrop where there was a good view and they set up camp there.

The elf was lying seemingly asleep, flat out with a naked sword drawn. Yspaddadden cast detect thought and could hear battle in the distance in the elf's thoughts. During first watch Ranulf thought he could faintly hear a horn in the distance. Trevillion's watch was uneventful. Ubaron noticed that the bear never slept; his cat prowled around. By the end of his watch, it was very dark and damp. Ubaron could hear a horn, also musical instrument and singing in the distance. Yspaddadden offered to stand two watches while Girindor slept.

Girindor dreamt or meditated. He observed lots of fighting, horns, elven cavalry archers fighting orcs. Girindor remembered that Ashperton had said to walk north until he reached the valley and then turn west and in the morning mist he would find her.

Girindor took his watch. The satyr woke the rest of the party – Girindor had told him that he was walking the iron road and he had set off. The rest of the party decided to follow him and left Rhys there in the hope they would return with glad tidings.

The four adventurers marched down the hill in the pre-dawn with Girindor in sight ahead. Just before dawn, they arrived at some ruins and a mound. The pre-dawn was a bright blue. Girindor was flourishing a sword as though he was following it as if it was a banner. They saw shattered, overgrown but fine stone buildings around them; maybe there was a pavilion, a bowl of stone seats, a small hall with pillars and no roof. Girindor headed on down towards a river full of mist. Dawn was arriving in a yellow glow.

Girindor's four companions could hear unearthly, very sad singing; a lament. Ranulf and Ubaron saved themselves from falling under the spell of the singing, even though it was unbearably sad. It was mainly plainsong, but perhaps a stringed instrument accompanied the voices from time to time; the sound was louder from the mist ahead. They moved on, but Trevillion could go no further overcome by the sadness of the lament.

The remaining three adventurers approached Girindor who was facing a ghostly elven figure. Ubaron was unable to close in, but Yspaddadden and Ranulf moved beside Girindor, at which point Yspaddadden also succumbed to the lament.

The war is over and the scourge is banished, shouted Girindor in elvish over a wind: the song stopped. The year has passed and the scourge is banished, Annaniel you have returned to me, we can be together forever, the female figure besides Girindor told him. She was crying. You have brought the sword back and we can be together. I have been waiting all these years – we can now go west together. Yspaddadden and Ranulf held Girindor back

Girindor told her that she could sleep but there were things still there to do.

She sang a gentler lament – don't you want to be together after I have waited forever, she didn't understand after coming back why he wouldn't go with her.

Girindor felt awful about not going with her, he was heart breakingly sad. Yspaddadden mentioned his promises to Tecwyn, Rhys and Ashperton. Ubaron reminded him of the last verse of the poem. Elwen realised that Girindor was not Annaniel. He told her who he was. She wondered who were his stalwart companions who had lifted siege on Galendor, and they introduced themselves. Girindor told her that Annanile was the sword – he was merely the custodian of the sword. Elwen told him that Girindor had brought him back and that now they could be together. "Give me my husband let me go with him", she said. Girindor gave her the sword. "I can look to the West and go together, I will show only you something before I go" she told him.

The sun came up and the mist dispersed and they could see there was a mere. Girindor had walked off into the water. Trevillion looked for tracks and then went up to where the conversation had happened, but no further.

Girindor returned, and told his companions that there was the prospect for great good coming from this. He continued that he was in straightened circumstances as he had difficult choices and challenges ahead. He asked for their word that this matter would go no further and they all so swore.

Elwen had gone to west with those who fought with her, he explained and the spirit of Annaniel was in the sword.

He told his friends that at the centre of the Elven homeland was a tree of life. There was one here too. Underneath was a shard of the tsarntur. During the spawning this had been cut down and the shard had gone. For 700 years Elwen had kept a sapling alive using earth power. She had bequeathed the task to Girindor. It would be a continuous effort to keep this sapling alive. To stabilise the sapling he had to find the shard. Elwen had told him that she could hear it calling, somewhere over to the West. If Girindor concentrated he would hear it too she had told him.

The sapling was still attached to the dead tree. Girindor could detach it and graft it to the one in the homelands. Girindor could go to the homelands and get help to keep it alive while he looked for the shard. It would be a full time job to keep it alive. Each dawn Girindor would need to do a ceremony to keep sapling alive and this would require a substantial amount of earthpower.

Girindor took them across the mere and then a mile or two further there was a rise in the ground with a henge. The tree was by the henge. It was a fallen tree, that had been hacked down by axes with a green shoot five or six feet long coming from the stump.

Trevillion found a gold harp and a bronze cauldron like a well. It was full of stars even though it was light outside. This was a well of souls. The harp was for summoning and controlling those who were guarding this place; the Dead that Live or Firn-i-guinar.

Ubaron and Yspaddadden learnt visualised teleport co-ordinates. Yspaddadden went to Dingry Dur and returned with a harpist and four shots of earth power from the previous expedition. The harpist played the harp, but when he misplayed it cost him 12 hp. The harp had started to play itself and that had caused him to misplay.

An ent picked up Trevillion and took him up to the henge. Girindor spoke to the rather young ent, who explained that Elwen had gone to the West and that Girindor was now the custodian. The ent bowed slowly and let Trevillion go.

There were more ents. Girindor went and gave a briefing. They seemed to accept him.

Girindor sank into the earth to commune and the rest waited until dusk. They sent Rhys with the bear back outside the valley and told him that if they don't come back in three days, he was to take the bear to Ashperton in the golden wood, where he would find Tecwyn.

Dusk arrived, and the adventurers could hear a horn from the bowels of the earth. Ubaron was working up a teleport spell when horses arrive out of nothingness. Ubaron teleported his friends to Dingry Dur as they left ghostly forms milled about around them, but hadn't noticed the party at that point.

At dawn Ubaron teleported them all back. Girindor tended the sapling; it took 60 power points.

Girindor had a commune; it was nice down there and he could see the sapling. In the night he could ask the sapling for the direction of the shard so that Girindor had a bearing. It was almost exactly northwest. Due north were very high mountains; northwest was a very high ridge. Maybe there was an orc den there?