

The Frontiers of Alusia

A Campaign History

T. Kurt Bond

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Dedication

This campaign history is dedicated the players who made this campaign so much fun.

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Chapter 1. Campaign Background

Early in my years at college¹ I ran a short *DragonQuest* campaign using SPI's *The Enchanted Wood* adventure. Unfortunately, I don't have any notes on that campaign, other than the ones I wrote in the adventure booklet itself, but I do remember that the players were my older brother Paul, his girlfriend (at the time, and now wife) Connie, and my friends Howard, Larry, and I think Matt. It went well and everybody seemed to have a good time. After it was over I eventually decided to run another campaign using *DragonQuest* with a new set of characters. It ran for a much longer time, and I kept somewhat better notes this time, so I've been able to reconstruct much of its history.

1.1. Setting

This campaign was set in a heavily modified version of *The Frontiers of Alusia*, a very minimal setting (with a rather nice map) published by SPI² for their *DragonQuest* roleplaying game.

1.2. Rules Systems

I originally ran this using SPI's *DragonQuest* (DQ) rules, of course. Eventually I switched it to *GURPS* 3rd edition. (See Section 5.27, "Monsters and Merchants Under Seagate" [22].)

1.3. Players

The players have varied slightly over the years.

- Alan Bond³ — Played Gim Torson
- T. Kurt Bond⁴ — Played Derenedeth
- Karen Elliott — Played Tesla Ramana
- Matt Elliott — Played Winther
- H. Howard H. Hill — Played Boswt (deceased), Korbel Noir (deceased), and Shay Uvall
- Steve Scott — Played Cormac Tricerius
- Ray Smith⁵ — Played Barlow Smythe (deceased), Kalo Bibkins (deceased but still around), and Jamie Molson
- Vicky Staubly — Played Bytor⁶
- Larry Wilson — Played Basgoot

1.4. BAMF, Inc.

I ran another short campaign using this setting while I was in college. The players (who included at least Steve Willis) in that campaign called their adventuring group BAMF, Inc., and that campaign had a slight overlap with this campaign. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to find most of my notes for that campaign, so I don't have any more details than that. (I *do* remember that the bit about eating the heart actually happened.)

¹Probably in 1984?

² Simulations Publications, Inc. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simulations_Publications], an influential and prolific game publisher of the 1970s and 1980s.

³ GMed an adventure.

⁴ Yes, I played in my own campaign; with someone else GMing those sessions, of course.

⁵ GMed a couple of sessions.

⁶ And maybe Remy Gill?

Chapter 2. Player Characters

This chapter describes the player characters.

Barlow Smythe.

(Ray Smith's first character, deceased.) Barlow Smythe died at the Crypts of Stonesboro, heroically holding off the enemy while the others escaped.

Basgoot.

(Larry Wilson's character, transformed.) Basgoot started with a troubled past and has accumulated many more problems as time went by, but the greatest of his afflictions is his on-again-off-again transformation from human to demonic changeling by the powerful demon (see Narung's Demon [14] and Narung Reforged [24]) imprisoned inside Narung, the powerful magical sword he accepted from a ghost. The demon has apparently learned how to stay on the material plane even when *Banished* or killed, and so must be imprisoned for all time. Basgoot is also intermittently plagued by drunkenness, first brought on by drinking from the wineskin of an old man the party met in the same crypts they found Narung. This old man has occasionally appeared elsewhere to confuse the party and help Basgoot, including in the South.

Boswt.

(Howard Hill's first character, deceased.) Boswt died at the Stronghold of Sassym by falling down a shaft after slipping from slime-covered hand and footholds.

Bytor.

(Vicky Staubly's character, deceased.) Bytor was known for his anachronistic exclamation 'Hot Tub!' and for his shades. He died at the Crypts of Stonesboro and, sadly, reappeared later as a zombie re-animated by the necromancer of the crypts and fought against his former friends, who killed him.

Cormac Tricerius.

(Steve Scott's character.) Cormac Tricerius died in an ambush on the way to Blackstone Chapel and died again later in its defense, but was resurrected each time by the grateful clerics' deity. In Makad-al-Arakan he drank of the Waters of Arakan's Delight, acquiring thereby a link to and weakness for Arakan which long troubled him and was cured only by Mordraug, the Necromancer of Wolf River.

Derenedeth.

(Kurt Bond's character.) Derenedeth escaped the round-up of the party that ended in their exile, and while the rest of the party vacationed in the south he occupied himself with shadowy endeavors in Carzala's underworld. When they returned he provided them with the information they needed to revenge themselves on the Judge who exiled them, information that enriched them at the same time and eventually resulted in their being rewarded with a barony.

Gim Torson.

(Alan Bond's character.) Gim Torson is an elf who has lived too long among humans. He died in the defense of Blackstone Chapel, but was resurrected by the grateful clerics' deity. Originally one of the consciences of the party, he has latterly become unhesitating and ruthless (just ask the old man on the altar in Makad-al-Arakan). He lost a leg to a demon's hunger and anger and gained the nickname Gimp, but regained his leg by the magic of Mordraug the necromancer. Neither he nor Jamie nor Shay nor Basgoot nor Cormac can remember what they did for a month to repay the necromancer for re-attaching Gim's leg and healing Balour Shaw, but they fear the worst. (After all, he was a *Necromancer!*)

Jamie Molson.

(Ray Smith's third character.) Betrayed to the authorities by a rival, Jamie Molson joined the party when they were exiled to the south. He died while in the south, at the Inn of the Prophet's End during an attack by assassins. Luckily his miserly companions found enough money on his person for a resurrection. If it weren't for his tight grasp, Narung would have ended up with Bolg in the earth below Mordraug's Lair, and he was lucky to get the five fingers thus cut off re-attached immediately. His curiosity is his greatest weakness, and his greatest strength.

Kalo Bibkins.

(Ray Smith's second character.) Kalo Bibkins was a rash but entertaining halfling who caused the party's exile to the south and in the process was messily executed for theft. He still troubles the party's sleeping hours (and occasionally their waking ones), unable to rest peacefully in his grave. (See Kalo Bibkins is Back [18].)

Korbel Noir.

(Howard Hill's second character.) Korbel Noir was killed by a were-tiger at Castle Ashban. He was valiant, foolish, suicidal, and given to desecration of just about anything, usually by strewing entrails.

Shay Uvall.

(Howard Hill's third character.) From south of the Gatar Shey, Shay Uvall is also valiant, foolish, given to desecration of just about anything, usually by strewing entrails; whether he's suicidal or not isn't yet known. He has travelled widely in the South as both a merchant and a mercenary.

Tesla Ramana.

(Karen Elliott's character.) Tesla Ramana left adventuring after being crippled by a crate of contraband dropped on her during the attack on Smugglers Cove, but has applied herself to the equally competitive (if usually less violent) world of trade and looks after many of the party's day to day business operations. Her disfiguring injuries have started her on a program of surgical and magical alterations that seem to be leading beyond mere repair.

Winther.

(Matt Elliott's character.) Winther was often called the 'Band-Aid' by the other members of the party because of his healing skills, and fond of debate and reasoned discussion, he is the party's bastion of morality in an uncertain world. He feels a sense of duty to better the world, and his companions, but suffers occasional dark fits of cynicism. Winther also drank from the wine-sack of that wandering madman when he appeared to them in the South, and thus sometimes seeks refuge in the blood of the vine.

Spear Fodder.

(Played by various drop-ins.) These various visitors typically did not survive long. Such is life, and death.

Chapter 3. Non-Player Characters

This chapter describes some of the important non-player characters that have affected the lives of the player characters.¹

Albad.

Albad is the name of the mysterious man in Marv Dashlam who hired them to abduct Hajj.

Amur Gibbetsmaster.

Amur Gibbetsmaster, the hanging judge of Seagate, exiled the party with a geas to explore the South to further his own nefarious schemes. Upon their return from the South the party was instrumental in his own downfall and eventual hanging.

Balour Shaw.

(Crazed no longer, just missing.) A mysterious mage, sometime mentor of Gim Torson and once insane and in the custody of the party, Balour Shaw was cured by Mordraug the necromancer and has since disappeared, telling the party they're responsible for Carzala's survival now — he has better things to do.

Beggar King.

This evil being lives in the sewers and tunnels below Seagate, and controls all of the beggars who live in and around Seagate. He is an occasional enemy of the party because of their intrusions into his domain.

Brandon.

Brandon is the captain of the Seagate city guards, a vicious bully, and a follower of Tathlam Dargan, the Baron of Seagate. Brandon has a special place in his heart for the party, and it's not somewhere anyone would want to visit.

Camlost.

Captain of one of the party's ships, Camlost is a very severe and ascetic human, tall, dark, and dour. While not well liked by his men, they have tremendous respect for his skill and his courage. Not much is known about his history before he started working the trade routes from Carzala to the North ten years ago.

Cleirach.

(Pronounced "Cleary".) The main engineer hired by the party to build the road, Cleirach is a small man, very quick physically and mentally both. He is full of strong opinions. He learned his trade in the North, in the Broken Lands, and in the Confederacy, where he also worked on civilian projects.

Corvius Dark-blade.

A skilled weapons-master who runs a private weapons training establishment in Seagate, Corvius Dark-blade was Barlow Smythe's first contact in Carzala. His cognomen comes from the strange blade of dark metal that he carries. Corvius has an enviable reputation as someone *not* to anger, and various rumors abound that the fencing academy he runs is *not* his real business.

Daffyd ap Hugh.

Captain of the Count's courier vessel, the *Seaswift* Daffyd ap Hugh is the intelligent young man who escorted the characters back to Smugglers' Cove when they returned to retrieve their ships.

Dohraoul.

Dohraoul is the Knight of Theris who escorted the party off the soil of Carzala via Chapel Crossing at the border of the Brastor Holding and the Sea of Grass. He was a grim man who behaved politely to the party members because, as he explained upon first meeting them, he thought they had been dishonorably treated — they should have been allowed to die with their honor and dignity intact. He was also the first to welcome the party back to civilization and Carzala when they crossed back into the Brastor Holding at Chapel Crossing on their return journey.

Dulinn Wiell.

Dulinn Wiell is the party's merchant factor in Seagate, finding cargoes for the party's ships and selling the incoming cargoes.

Evan.

A strange, gray, enormously strong dwarf-like being who was rescued by the party from a spider web in the Caves at Smugglers' Cove, Evan has a definite affinity for stone and has proven himself a masterly weapon-smith, reforging Narung with the help of Chelm and Bolg. He was last seen wandering south through the Atrusian hills, leaving the party (in disgust?) after their escape from the stronghold of the (unjustly?) murdered Necromancer, Mordraug.

Gerrod.

¹ Remy Gill needs to be moved to the Player Character chapter. Who played Remy Gill?

A marine sergeant whom the party lost in the Spider Hall in the caves behind Smugglers' Cove and then rescued from the Arkanians at Finn's Waste, Gerrod was foolishly grateful for the rescue and asked the Count to retire him into the party's service. He now is the so-called 'butler' of the party, when their house isn't exploded and burned to the ground, and has proved an invaluable servant and ally, as well as an invaluable source of knowledge about the Carzala military.

Gh'yal.

Gh'yal was the leader of the Jetaleem, and is the one the party has to thank for convincing the other Jetaleem that they were indeed intelligent, and would not be a suitable breakfast snack. He also talked the party into killing the evil wizard Moghu in return for an escort to the north side of the Salt Sea.

Girfalath.

The captain of one of the party's ships, Girfalath is an Elf, completely frivolous when off duty, but completely serious when on duty or on his ship.

Hajj.

A true Prophet, Hajj was rescued (or kidnapped, depending on your viewpoint) by the party from the danger of assassination south of the Gatar Shey at the request of the ruler of Marv Dashlam and brought north to safety. His politics and philosophy tend to offend the priests of most religions, emphasizing reason and equality as they do, and it is hard to decide if he is a holy man, a philosopher or a troublemaker.

Harun.

Harun was the tribal champion of the Auhaami that Basgoot defeated in the Auhaami tradition so that the party might enter an oasis in the party's first encounter with the Auhaami of the Gatar Shey.

Ilene.

A beautiful young woman rescued from an enchanted sleep in a underground stronghold in the wilderness at the behest of Balour Shaw, Ilene is rebuilding Balour Shaw's tower, helped by a group of untalkative Dwarves.

Karl Blue-tooth.

Karl Blue-tooth was the guide the party hired to help them find the source of the Wolf River in search of Mordraug. His unpleasant personality and crude personal habits ensured that the party did not grieve when he did not return from the journey, after he had abandoned them near their destination.

The Mage.

The party has offended this powerful mage on several occasions. They really have no idea who he is or what he is about, although he seems to be involved with Suliman Trade.

Melthal Heavy-hand.

Melthal Heavy-hand is a recently retired army officer who ranked high in the Count of Carzala's service, and who still retains numerous friends there. He was Basgoot's first contact in Carzala. He is a gruff and testy person whose trust is not easily won. He lives on a large farm with his family somewhere not far from Seagate.

Moghu.

Moghu was a tyrannical evil wizard and ruler and the creator of the Sand Golems; the party slew him to free the Jetaleem.

Mordraug.

A powerful necromancer and healer who lived in seclusion in a stronghold he gained from the Dwarves in olden times for healing their king, Mordraug was sought out by the party to replace Gim's missing leg and heal Balour Shaw's mental and physical injuries. The party paid for this with a month of their lives, which they do not remember. He later caused Narung to be reforged and helped imprison the demon in the sword, but was foully murdered immediately afterward by Basgoot, fulfilling a bargain made with Bolg, the orcish-named Dwarf who also helped reforge Narung.

The Necromancer.

The party has offended this powerful necromancer on several occasions. They really don't know who he is or what he is about.

Selye Storm-watcher.

Selye Storm-watcher is a prosperous, if eccentric, resident of Gurgnir's Hope who was Cormac Tricerius's first contact in Carzala. Although his adventures have made him plenty of money, he still spends much of his time adventuring or exploring the lands around Carzala, often alone. His name comes from his habit of wandering around in and watching storms, especially violent ones.

Remy Gill.

A very young Elf, Remy Gill is nonetheless a very accomplished military engineer, having worked on both sides in many sieges.

Slehad.

Slehad was the quirky and interesting Fire Giant who entertained the party in his tower overlooking the cliffs of the Mountain Wall and the Gatar Shey. Unfortunately for the party, he turned out to have disturbing habits and dietary tastes and human and elvish corpses in his larder.

Steffan.

A young officer in the Count's court, Steffan is a pleasant young man with a taste for gambling and intrigue, but he is extremely devoted to the Count, who trusts him with difficult assignments. Steffan is probably one of the party's best supporters at court.

Tathlam Dargan.

The Baron of Seagate, Tathlam Dargan is an enemy of the party, in part because of their disruption of his once peaceful community, in part due to their actions towards Amur Gibbetsmaster, and no doubt in part for other reasons.²

Tamhas.

Tamhas was the captain of one of the detachments of marines that accompanied the party back to Smugglers' Cove to retrieve the ships and their cargo.

Tekhadun.

(Deceased.) A dwarf who was forced to join the party when they were geased to travel to the Kingdoms of the Five Sisters, Tekhadun was bad-tempered and prideful, but a master of the axe. He died in the south, killed while fighting a Chimera.³

Tully Glas.

Tully Glas is the party's factotum⁴ in the North, taking care of finding cargoes and running their trading business, as well as whatever else comes up.

Uillean Kawiyr.

Uillean Kawiyr was the captain of one of the detachments of marines that accompanied the party back to Smugglers' Cove to retrieve the ships and their cargo.

Ulfred.

Ulfred is another of the military engineers that the party hired to build the road. He is a very short but very broad man, his hair beginning to grey, with a short steel-grey beard.

Vlad Sharp-knife.

Vlad Sharp-knife is a prosperous merchant based in Crystal Springs who was Gim Torson's first contact in Carzala. He has suggested the party to several persons looking for adventurers to do jobs, has helped them find merchants who might be interested in the South and helping build the road, and has acted as a consultant to help the party get their merchant company started. He is extremely curious, but now that he is getting older he usually leaves the adventuring to others. His name comes from the many daggers he invariable carries, some concealed, that he has been known to use on those who try to cheat him.

Yavidi.

Yavidi is the leader of the Kaval-tu-Ata, the Auhaami tribe the party spent so much time with while in the Gatar Shey.

² Originally the position of Baron of Seagate was traditionally given to one of the Count of Carzala's younger sons, and the Baron worked closely with the Count. However, at one point in the past the position went to one of the Count's daughters, a very unusual woman, and when she died the position was given to her husband, a very popular member of court, and when he died it was given to his son by his first wife. Thus eventually it was inherited (more-or-less) by Tathlam Dargan.

³ Did the party ever bother to tell his kinfolk? Who are his kinfolk, anyway?

⁴ n. A person employed to do all kinds of work.

Chapter 4. The Party's Background and Formation

The characters all came south from their homes to the Frontiers of Alusia looking for adventure. They fell into bad company (that of each other) on the ship that brought them to Seagate, the capitol of the County of Carzala, and decided to band together for mutual advantage. It has been downhill all the way since then. They arrived in Seagate on 1 Kelemore 842.

Note

This campaign started sometime in 1985.

Chapter 5. The Adventures

Following is a recounting of the events of each adventure in the order they happened, arranged by adventure rather than by playing session, but with possible dates of play following each adventure.¹

5.1. The Ogres of Crystal Springs

The party traveled to Crystal Springs, where Gim Torson gave Vlad Sharp-knife, a retired merchant and adventurer, a letter of introduction. Vlad suggested that the Mayor of Crystal Springs might hire them. The mayor, Kesdra, hired them to get rid of two ogres who had moved down out of the Fastness of Girwyllan and were way-laying travelers and outlying farms. (The guards of Regir's Keep were occupied to the south, hunting down several large bands of outlaws in the Sweet Riding.) While the party searched for the ogres, the ogres ambushed them on the road. When the party proved more than the ogres could handle the ogres fled to their nearby subterranean lair. The party followed and killed them. Among the debris was a map the party could not read.

Magic.

During this adventure the party picked up two potions of healing and one map in an ornate bone scroll case. The potions have been used and the map has been followed.

Note

This adventure was gamed sometime in 1985.

5.2. The Merchant's Insane Son

The wealthy merchant Rasson hired the party to rescue his son, Turon. Three months before, Turon had been abducted by an enemy of Rasson's, a mage. The mage drove Turon mad and turned him loose in the Wilderlands of Gilarni, a forest territory claimed by Elves. When Rasson found out he sent his men to bring his son back, but they were ambushed and massacred by the Elves, for Turon in his madness had attacked and killed an Elf, and the Elves in turn were killing any humans in the forest in retaliation. After this Rasson hired the party because one of them was an Elf.

On the way to the Wilderlands of Gilarni the party stayed at the inn at Arn's Ferry, where they were attacked by an assassin who (as they found out afterwards) carried a strange coin: it was a large gold coin, not one that any of the party had ever see, and was obviously carved rather than minted. They survived the attack, but were thrown out of the inn and could only find lodging in a strange tower inhabited by an even stranger old man, Balour Shaw, who habitually spoke in a *most* enigmatic manner. The next morning they found three more assassins frozen to death outside the tower; each carried one of the strange gold coins.

Once in the Wilderlands of Gilarni, the party was accosted by Elves, but Gim Torson convinced the Elves that allowing the party to complete their mission was something to be desired by all involved (except The Mage, of course) and that Turon was not responsible for his actions. The party rescued Turon from the riverside cave where he was living (battering him somewhat in the process), disposed of some of the mage's henchmen who attacked them, and returned Turon to his father Rasson. Gim Torson later revisited Balour Shaw and began learning magic from him.

Note

This adventure was gamed sometime in 1985.

5.3. To Clear the Crypts of Stonesboro

Rasson recommended the party to Tomon, who was looking for a group of adventurers to investigate the rumors that something was living in the burial crypts near Stonesboro. The crypts turned out to be inhabited by various ruffians, sub-humans, and undead, most of which were in the service of a necromancer, though the party only figured this out later, near the end of the adventure.

¹ Didn't Ray Smith run an adventure in the Brastor Holding with the party? Maybe even two? I think that's why I originally created Derenedeth. If anybody can remember, I'd appreciate any details that they can supply. Didn't this involve the Book of Ka-gor, or something like that?

Bytor was killed early on. Barlow Smythe was killed while bravely and selflessly holding off some of the monsters in an early retreat, and was replaced by his friend Kalo Bibkins, a choice that had a dark and significant impact on the party's future.

During the clearing of the caves, the party met the Ghost of Harmon, who asked that one among them take up his sword and clear the crypts of Undead; Basgoot accepted, and was *Geased* to kill all the undead in the crypts and their maker. The sword, a magic bastard sword, was named Narung. Later the party met a madman in the crypts, who offered them a drink from his wineskin. Basgoot again accepted, and was drunk for days.

Finally the party killed the necromancer after an epic battle with all of his remaining undead servants, among whom, alas, Bytor was now numbered. Afterwards they freed a group of Dwarves who had been captured by the necromancer and were being forced to build tunnels for him.

At some time before, during, or after this adventure, the party was summoned to a warehouse where a menacing figure warned them that they had crossed him once, and must never again do so. The crates in the warehouse were marked with the sign of Suliman Trade.²

Magic.

During this adventure the party picked up five books and one box of mysterious powder from the necromancer's library, one wand of Fire and Brimstone, and a small pouch of red balls that expanded and then exploded. The pouch has been emptied and the books sold.

Note

This adventure was gamed sometime in 1985.

5.4. Blackstone Chapel vs. Polam Wesved

The party contracted to defend a religious community of healers in the hills south of the Brastor Holding and the South Lending. The community had angered Polam Wesved, a powerful and unscrupulous merchant, by offering shelter to Rayesta, a beautiful Horse Nomad warrior that Wesved had tried to abduct and enslave. She beat off the kidnappers, but was severely injured; fleeing into the southern hills, she stumbled into Blackstone Chapel, a small religious community, where she was taken in and healed. Wesved told the community to return her to him, and when they refused gave them three weeks to change their minds, threatening violence if they did not.

Since they were basically pacifistic and did not have the skills to defend their community and Rayesta from Wesved's thugs, the Chapel sent one of their most trusted men, Tychel, to complain to the authorities in the South Lending. These, however, told him it was out of their jurisdiction, since the Chapel was beyond the borders of the Brastor Holding (perhaps acting under the influence of Polam Wesved). Desperate, Tychel sought out a group of adventurers, on his own, to bring them back to protect the community. On the way to Blackstone Chapel they were ambushed, but most survived, and even the fatalities were resurrected.³

After a furious debate, the community decided that it was morally permissible for them to hire the adventurers to defend the community. There were several attacks, which were beaten off at the cost of several party members (including at least Gim and Cormac). However, the party members were resurrected by the grateful community's deity, and eventually Polam Wesved gave up this approach to regaining Rayesta.

When they returned to the South Lending, the party was arrested since they had been accused by Polam Wesved of stealing a valuable slave (Rayesta) and killing his henchmen who were (he claimed) in lawful pursuit of her. Unfortunately for Wesved, the judge whose compliance he had bought was replaced at the last minute by the new Laird of the South Lending, and the final decision was against him.

Note

This adventure was gamed sometime in November and/or December 1985.

5.5. The Search for Jomanal

(This scenario was a solo adventure for Gim Torson.) Gim Torson was summoned to Balour Shaw's tower by a talking owl to repay some of the debts Gim had incurred as a student of Shaw's magic. After the

² Is this an emblem, sigil, or icon? Or merely a name inscribed on a box? (I think this was a symbol burnt into a crate, and the party had to research it.)

³ I think that Cormac died here; who else?

usual confusing preliminaries, Balour Shaw sent Gim out searching for Jomanal, an adventurer fairly well known in Seagate, who disappeared while working for Balour Shaw some time before.

Gim followed his trail and found out that Jomanal disappeared in the mountains near Crystal Springs, about a month before the party killed the Ogres in that area, apparently in search of a treasure. It turned out that the map that the party found amongst the ogres' loot belonged to Jomanal, and was the map to the treasure for which Jomanal was looking. Balour Shaw also thought the map would lead to something for which he had long sought.

Note

This adventure was gamed sometime in December 1985, possibly on the 11th.

5.6. The Stronghold of Sassym

The party set out to find the treasure Jomanal thought lay at the end of the map, and Balour Shaw asked them to keep an eye out for a particular book in which he was interested.

They ran into some slight problems on the way out, because Kalo Bibkins had stolen the purse of an extremely important, not to mention malicious and wealthy, nobleman (committing the infamous and almost legendary grand theft pickpocket) slightly before they were scheduled to leave. He was vigorously sought by the town guards, but with the help of the Thieves Guild (for which he paid dearly) he was smuggled out of town in the carcass of a slaughtered animal and joined the rest of the party on their trek into the wilderness, although they made him travel downwind for several days, until the stench subsided. Following the hints on the map, they finally discovered a hidden stronghold at the head of the Tiana River, east of Carzala.

When they tried to enter the stronghold, they were attacked by a Water Elemental in a pool beside the entrance. Kalo's pony was frightened and fell into the pool with Kalo astride it. Gim attacked the elemental with a lightning bolt since that was the party's most effective magical offense, and badly damaged the elemental, but it also damaged Kalo and the pony, both now involuntarily swimming in the pool. The blast electrocuted the pony, but by some miracle Kalo survived, barely. After searching around some more, they found another entrance, an rock-lined shaft down into the ground. Boswt slipped from the slime-covered hand and footholds while climbing down the shaft and died.

The stronghold had been deserted for centuries, during which various foul creatures had moved in. After a few amusing incidents with hallucinogenic mushrooms and fungi, the party found a large room, in the center of which was a large pentacle and inside that a silvery but semi-transparent dome. Under the dome was a beautiful young woman, apparently asleep, and the book which Balour Shaw sought. The dome was impenetrable to all their efforts to open it.

They returned to Balour Shaw, who accompanied them back to the stronghold and opened the dome. The woman remained entranced. On the way back to civilization they were twice attacked, once by six men led by an assassin (who turned out to be carrying a strange carved gold coin) and once by a necromancer who led six other men. With the help of Balour Shaw they survived. During one of the attacks Basgoot's sword, Narung, began to hum; the person he had just struck screamed, then shriveled up and was seemingly absorbed by the sword. Basgoot's eyes turned completely black, the blade of the sword glowed blindingly, and then Basgoot's eyes closed, he said "oh", and he dropped to the ground. He was unconscious till the party returned to civilization.⁴

When they left Balour Shaw he was researching how to wake the woman. When Basgoot finally awoke, his eyes were normal again.

Magic.

During this adventure the party picked up a massive book, which Balour Shaw claimed, six unreadable books, which were sold, a ring, a horn, a rod of lightning, eight vials of healing potion, and two vials of invisibility. All of the vials were used up rather quickly.

Note

This adventure was gamed on the 11th and 25th of January 1986, and the 15th of February 1986.

5.7. The Arrest of the Party

Alas, Kalo brought his past crashing down upon himself *and* the rest of the party. Upon returning to Seagate, Kalo sent a taunting letter to the nobleman whom he had pickpocketed. Unfortunately for Kalo,

⁴ This *is* the point at which this happened, isn't it?

the nobleman had no sense of humor, and hired a bounty hunter to track Kalo down. The bounty hunter did, and delivered Kalo to the local dungeon and an eagerly awaiting torturer.

Under torture, Kalo incriminated the party in his earlier escape from Seagate, and the party was arrested by order of Amur Gibbetsmaster. The party was forced to watch Kalo's beheading, a singularly botched exhibition, since the executioner was blind drunk. It took him six blows to kill Kalo, and even then Kalo's head was not completely severed from his body. The surviving party members were themselves offered a choice: death, or a geas to scout out a caravan trail across the southern desert to the semi-mythical kingdoms of the Five Sisters.⁵ They choose the geas, of course.

Two other prisoners, Jamie Molson and Tekhadun, were also sent south with them. Jamie was betrayed to the Seagate city guards by a rival thief, and Tekhadun had killed a nobleman's son in a tavern brawl. (Incidentally, the ruler of Carzala was out of the country during this whole affair, and the punishment was the idea of Amur Gibbetsmaster, the hanging judge of Seagate.)

Note

This adventure was gamed on the 1st of March, 1986.

5.8. To the Mountain Wall

The party took the plains route to the South, but were forced into the ominous Thornwood Forest by the Horse Nomads. In the forest they stumbled upon a clearing, in which there were several statues and a tiny hut. The wizened old woman who lived in the hut introduced herself as Mother Thistle ("Mother Thistle Knows!"), and invited them inside. Surprisingly enough they all fit.

Once they were inside she spoke obscurely of three mages who had touched the party: The Mage, The Necromancer, and Balour Shaw, saying that they had angered the first two twice each. She then went on to say that the Hand of the Otherworld had touched all of the party, and had possessed one of them. She warned that the dead could help them, but could also destroy, and that the desert's most powerful dangers were also the least obvious.

When they left her hut the next day, they found they were on the southern edge of the forest, though there was no way they could have traveled that far before finding the hut.

South of the Forest was the Vale of Morin, once the site of fierce battles against the Horse Nomads. During their first day in the Vale the party saw the Horse Nomads who had chased them earlier, but the nomads, though they obviously saw the party, did not enter the Vale. Later, the party was accosted by a group of Ghosts, who asked about the state of their city, Korsepolis. Upon learning that Korsepolis had been in ruins for centuries, the Ghosts traded the party a promise of safe passage across the Vale in return for the party's oath to reestablish trade with the Kingdoms of the Five Sisters and resettle Korsepolis. Since the former they were already *Geased* to do and the later was a matter for the future, they agreed, as the best bargain in the situation. The Ghosts also told the party that Korsepolis had the best roads through the mountains to the desert, and so would be the easiest route to the desert.⁶

The party found Korsepolis in the mouth of a valley that led up into the mountains. They snuck through the city after dark, almost blundered into a war between orcs and hobgoblins, and then followed the road out of Korsepolis into the mountains. The road crossed the mountains and ended at a tower overlooking a one thousand foot drop to the desert: this was the Mountain Wall from which these mountains took their name.

Note

This adventure was gamed on the 24th of March, 1986.

5.9. The Giant's Watchtower

They were invited into the tower by a elderly, pleasant seeming if somewhat quirky Fire Giant, Slehad. He told them about the tower, and the track that descended to the desert, and mentioned that he left Carzala three hundred years ago, soon after it was settled by humans. However, during the night he attacked the party, and it was only with the greatest of struggles that they defeated him. They explored the tower and found that his larder was stocked with human and elvish corpses.

⁵ Was Derenedeth absent on his own mysterious business and remained at large and in hiding, or was he captured as well and *not* offered the choice of exile, later to be rescued? I think the later. Ray, do you remember?

⁶ Notice that this conflicts with what the Auhaami found in Angbar. See What the Auhaami say about Angbar [21].

In the tower they also found a curious clay ball, a chest, and a small box. The small box proved to contain a moderate quantity of an unknown drug. Jamie broke the ball, releasing a strange shadow-like creature, and found that the ball also enclosed a key. When Jamie used the key to open the chest the key bit him. Later, Jamie ingested some of the drug from the box and experienced strange hallucinations and euphoria. Cormac summoned the Giant's spirit back to explain the strange contents of the chest, but the Giant's answers were obscure at best, and not of much use.

Magic.

During this adventure the party picked up a scroll with three spells inscribed upon it, broke open one small clay ball which turned out to have a biting key and a shadow creature in it, and ten other clay balls, one of which was later broken when warring against the Queen of the Thri-Kreen and released another shadow creature.

Note

This adventure was probably gamed on the 26th of March, 1986.

5.10. The Nomads & the Ruined City of Sumaldi

The party left the watchtower and climbed down the cliff to the desert. Once out upon the desert they were attacked by strange insect-like humanoids, but managed to defeat them. They came to an oasis, but found it inhabited by the Kaval-tu-Ata, a tribe of Auhaami, the nomads of the Gatar Shey (the Southern name for the desert). According to the customs of the tribe, they were allowed to enter the oasis after the party's champion (Basgoot) defeated the tribe's champion, Harun. They found out that the insect-like humanoids were the Thri-Kreen, a race found in many places on the desert. The party stayed with the tribe for a while. The sheik, Yavidi, hired them to retrieve some religious items, the Cup and the Talisman, from Batik-al-Yazum, a local wizard, who had stolen them from the tribe. In return, the sheik offered to outfit them for their journey over the desert and to supply a guide, and told them Batik-al-Yazum and most of his servants were absent.

The party accepted, and set out for Batik-al-Yazum's tower in Sumaldi, a ruined city and oasis a few days travel away. They were attacked by a party of ghouls in the city, and during the fight Basgoot's sword again began to hum. This time, both Basgoot and the ghoul screamed, at the same pitch, and Basgoot *changed* his armor turned black, his skin became the color of yellowed ivory, he grew half a foot taller, and the ghoul shriveled up and blew away. He and the sword killed five more ghouls, absorbing each one, and then Basgoot attacked Jamie, the nearest member of the party, slicing through the magical Wall of Force with which Cormac had encircled the party. Basgoot tried to resist the influence of the sword and the rest of the party managed to pull him off Jamie, whereupon he collapsed.

The party continued with its mission, and succeeded in reclaiming the Cup and the Talisman, killing several of Batik-al-Yazum's servants in the process. They returned to the nomad camp, where they continued learning how to live in the desert, how to ride the lizards that were the desert's most common form of transportation, and how to speak the language of the South.

Note

This adventure was probably gamed on the 28th of March, 1986.

5.11. The Attack on Tuath's Rest

The Thri-Kreen, the insectoids who had ambushed the party when they first ventured upon the desert, attacked the nomads in force one evening, carrying off fifteen men and thirty women, along with one-hundred thirty-seven herd beasts. The party agreed to accompany the nomads on a raid to Tuath's Rest, where the Thri-Kreen were living in caves in the hills, to recover the captives before they were eaten.

The party helped scout and plan the attack, and Gim Torson called up a storm as a distraction, but he succeeded beyond his wildest dreams, and it became a race to defeat the Thri-Kreen and recover the prisoners before the caves in which they were imprisoned flooded. Winther, who summoned a fire elemental to attack the Thri-Kreen, was also successful, but ended up with an intelligent, self-willed, and very independent, if immature and brash, fire elemental, who assisted in the assault only for the chaotic fun of it.

During the assault on the caves, the Thri-Kreen Queen was on the verge of defeating the party and the nomads with her magic and guards, when Basgoot in desperation surrendered himself to the control of the sword. The sword killed the Queen and then cracked open the mountain, starting an earthquake

that collapsed the Thri-Kreen caves. Luckily, all the party and the surviving nomads escaped the cave-in, carrying Basgoot, who had again collapsed into unconsciousness.

Basgoot had again changed, and now had pointed ears, hardened talon-like nails, an inhuman look to his face, deep crimson skin slightly scaled, black hair, and completely black eyes. He was seven feet tall, and weighed 400 pounds. His skin had also become incredibly tough.

During the attack Jamie broke open one of the strange clay balls from the chest they had found in the Fire Giant's Tower, releasing another of the shadow creatures.

Magic.

During this adventure the party picked up fourteen semi-transparent resinous jewels in nine colors. (These turned out to be ten point powerstones, and each of the following people have one: Gim, Shay, Basgoot, Winter, and Derendeth.) They also got twenty semi-transparent, flexible bladders full of viscous liquid in eight colors, all packed into a small box of smooth, reddish, slightly grainy material.

Note

This adventure was probably gamed on the 5th of April, 1986.

5.12. From Tuath's Rest to Sev-a-Kalam

The nomads moved to Tuath's Rest after the water subsided, partially to prevent another hive of Thri-Kreen from moving in. The party finally left for the south, taking with them a chest of treasure that the nomads had found in the ravine, which they agreed to trade for various things the tribe wanted in return for a share of the profits. Their guide was Dahlil, who had visited the Kingdoms of the Five Sisters before. They took a road he was not very familiar with because the more familiar road led to two kingdoms currently at war where the party would not have been welcome. Along the way they encountered sandstorms and various unfriendly denizens of the desert.

One of the oasis they found was surrounded by nomad tents, but the inhabitants (the Lakal tribe) and all their animals had been beaten to death by blunt instruments, and the well had been fouled with their bodies. Desperately in need of water, the party headed south to the nearest oasis. Along the way they were constantly harassed by creatures made of sand. They finally reached the oasis, which was located in a small range of mountains; while they were at the oasis they were attacked by a Roc, and some of their pack and riding lizards were killed.

Fleeing south, they found that their way out of the mountains and onto the desert was blocked by a huge sandwhip, a creature that lives under the sand and entangles any animals that walk over it in its many tentacles. This one was huge, over three hundred feet in diameter. Unable to return the way they came because of the Roc and other monsters, they first tried to poison the sandwhip.⁷ When that was unsuccessful, Gim Torson summoned the Roc, although he was unable to control it; the sandwhip attacked the Roc, and in the ensuing battle the party slipped by.

Crossing a huge salt flats, the Salt Sea, they came to an inhabited oasis, Sev-a-kalam, where they stopped briefly to rest and recuperate.

Note

This adventure was probably gamed on the 31st of April, 1986.

5.13. Visit to Makad-al-Arakan and Narung's Breaking

In Sev-a-kalam, the party was warned that the southernmost reaches of the desert were plagued by bandits, so they joined a Auhaami caravan leaving for the next oasis, ten days away. Five days out, they were attacked by maniacs, and several people on the caravan, including Tekhadun and one other character,⁸ were captured, and several loaded camels are also stolen. The caravan master, Djavh, identified the attackers by the eight-pointed cross tattooed on one of them as Arakanisi, worshipers of the demon Arakan, King of Chaos, who requires human sacrifices.

Following the Arakanisi, the party and the warriors from the caravan found a series of caves in the Salt Sea, but alas! only guards remained: the captives had already been taken elsewhere. Investigating, they killed the guards and found several corpses. In one room, apparently formed from the ribs of a huge

⁷ Didn't they try to do this with the drugs from the Fire Giant's tower?

⁸ A player character, perhaps one whose player was not there that evening?

skeleton, they found an altar in front of a statue of beautiful artistry but unsettling aspect. Behind the altar was a huge red vertical stone block across the room, in the center of which was a vertical whirlpool of flame. Tracks in the blood and dust of the room showed that this was where the Arakanisi and the remaining captives had gone.

The party and several Auhaami crossed through the flames, and found themselves in a strange place: the sky was green, the grass blue, and a river was red; a miniature sun, moon, and stars circled in the sky, and the clouds were white, blue, red, brown, and black, and in constant rapid motion. This was Makadal-Arakan, the world of Arakan. Cormac drank from the red river and began to praise Arakan. (Cormac experienced these fits intermittently thereafter for a *long* time, until cured by Mordraug.)

Following the tracks the party came to an amphitheater, in the center of which was a throne. Basgoot sat on the throne and was blasted by lightning, but survived. The party then went back along the road and took the other fork, which led them to a steep-walled valley containing a heavily guarded prison-like structure, which turned out to be where those abducted from the caravan were being held.

While attempting to bypass the guards along the road to where the prisoners were held, Basgoot called upon Narung, his cursed magic sword. A huge demonic figure burst forth from the sword, breaking it into pieces, and grew until his head touched the sky. Basgoot fell into a coma and his body became rigid, but he lost some of his more demonic exterior characteristics. He shrank to six foot four and a mere three hundred pounds, his skin returned to the color of yellowed ivory, and he lost most of the scaled areas on his skin and completely lost his talons. The sky cracked open and another huge demonic figure stepped in and the two figures began to fight.

In the confusion and destruction of the ensuing battle the party rescued the prisoners, who included many not from the caravan. They all then fled through the rapidly disintegrating world back towards the entrance, carrying their wounded and unconscious, with Basgoot still clinging to the shards of Narung. Alas, upon reaching the entrance they found it closed. An ancient man, one of the prisoners, said that it could only be opened by sacrifice, and offered himself: Gim Torson, one of the few still conscious and capable of making decisions, instantly, without the slightest hesitation or remorse, accepted the old man's sacrifice and chopped his head off, leaving the corpse spouting blood over the altar. The entrance opened and they all passed through to the caves in the desert.

There was not enough water with the caravan for all the prisoners, so some were left in the caves while the caravan headed for Akhisar, the closest city, to report the actions of the Arakanisi and arrange transportation for the other prisoners. Alas, by the time they had returned to the cave with transport and Akhisar's warriors, those they had left behind had been smashed against the sides and ceilings of the caves. Basgoot remained mind-burnt, and Cormac still had fits frequently.

Note

This adventure was probably gamed on the 7th of June, 1986.

5.14. Akhisar, the Chimera, and Tekhadun's Death

The characters were interviewed by the captain of Akhisar's city guard about the events in the caves and beyond. Impressed, he suggested they seek work with the city guard, or as warriors of the Bey, the local ruler. The party stayed in Akhisar for a while, getting Cormac cured by a sorcerer and resting up. Basgoot, unfortunately, remained mind-burnt.

However, one day they met a ragged old man, seemingly a water or wine seller, who quoted poetry (not to their taste) at them, offered them a drink from his skin, and spoke to them most familiarly and obscurely, saying that he came to help a follower fallen on evil times, and asked them to lead him to their fallen comrade. When they did, he gave Basgoot a drink, and Basgoot became roaring-and-falling-down drunk. Winther asked for a drink, which the old man gladly supplied him, but upon drinking Winther fell into stupor and unconsciousness. Basgoot remained drunk for a day, but when he sobered up he had recovered from his mind-burn.

After a few days in the city a merchant invited them to visit and talk of their journey. Also impressed, he told them they might easily find work for him or for the merchants' council.

They eventually went to work for the city guard. After a few weeks patrolling in the city, the captain of the guard sent them out to kill some monsters that were troubling caravans along the trade route. Along the way they rescued a Jann⁹ from a group of Brigands. The grateful Jann gave Basgoot an amulet.

⁹ One of a semi-mythical, somewhat magical race of the South.

Tracking the monsters down, they found three Chimera. After a fierce battle the party killed the monsters, but Tekhadun died (bravely, of course) in the fight.

Note

This adventure was probably gamed sometime between the 7th of June, 1986 and the 9th or 10th of July, 1986.

5.15. The Desert Gate: Through the Saddyahi-Ashban

Two weeks later the party left Akhisar for the nearest of the Kingdoms of the Five Sisters, and traveled with a caravan through the Saddyahi-Ashban, the mountains between the desert and the Kingdoms of the Five Sisters. The caravan was attacked twice by bandits during the trip, and every second night a member of the caravan was found dead, apparently killed by someone in the caravan. A Jann war party also accosted the caravan; they were raiding in retaliation for bloody, savage attacks by human bandits, but when they found out Basgoot had saved the life of their sheik's son (from who came the amulet), the Jann allowed the caravan to pass, after the party gave their oath to track down the bandits who killed the Jannee. Finally, they reached the Castle of the Desert Gate (sometimes called Castle Ashban by the hasty), at the pass out of the mountains into the plains of the Five Sisters. There the killer was discovered: one of the caravan guards was a were-tiger, who went on a rampage through the castle. In the ensuing fight the were-tiger was killed, but several party members were infected and Korbel Noir died.

Note

This adventure was gamed on the 9th or 10th of July, 1986.

5.16. Marv Dashlam and the Abduction of Hajj

The party left for the nearest city of any size, Marv Dashlam, hoping to be cured. There they visited the Mages' Guild, but the cost of a cure was beyond their means. The next morning they were visited by old, shabbily dressed man who informed them that if they wished freed of their curse they could visit a particular house that evening. During the day they spoke with the merchants of the city to fulfill their geas, but the merchants were not interested in trade along such a risky route as through the Gatar Shey. The merchants seemed very complacent and unaggressive.

That night they visited the house, where a mysterious man (who told them to call him Albad, though this was obviously not his real name) of obvious authority offered to have them cured if they would kidnap a certain holy man named Hajj and take him back with them to their homeland, under no circumstances allowing him to come to harm. Albad said they had until the next evening to consider. The next day they were approached by a priest of the local religion, who spoke of an evil heretic, a fiend in human form, and asked them to rid the city of this menace. They did not accept, and the priest left angrily, hoping the gods would send them their reward.

That night they returned to the house and accepted the mysterious man's offer; he had them cured by a master mage, then *Geased* to kidnap the holy man. They were joined the next day by Jubad, who somehow knew of their errand and offered to help them find Hajj. With his help they did find Hajj, who was hidden in the magic garden of one of his followers, but when they went to abduct Hajj, Jubad attacked them and attempted to kill Hajj. Hajj was injured, but they managed to save him. Jubad escaped, and soon the city was up in arms, looking for the villains who had attacked their holy man, and perhaps killed him in the process.

The priests, of course, still wanted Hajj dead.

Magic.

Albad gave the characters some magic items to assist them with their task and to pay them for doing it. They received a knobbed cane three feet long that was invested with Enchanted Sleep, a chain one-and-a-half feet long invested with Binding, and Winther, Basgoot, Cormac, Jamie, and Gim received scrolls, each with two spells.

Note

This adventure was gamed on the 22nd of July, 1986.

5.17. Escape from Marv Dashlam

After the botched kidnapping of the prophet Hajj, Tesla, Jamie, Winther, and Gim went into hiding with the unconscious and badly wounded prophet, while the others returned to their lodgings. Two days later Hajj regained consciousness, and agreed to leave the city with the party, more concerned with defusing the continuing riots than with his own preferences. The party left before the guard found out where they had hidden, but had to fight their way out of the city. Surprisingly, they did not *seriously* injure anyone in their flight. They fled across the mountains towards Akhisar, where they were well regarded and where they hoped they would be safely out of the jurisdiction of both the priests of Marv Dashlam and the city's ruler.

Note

This adventure was gamed on 19th of August, 1986.

5.18. Back in Akhisar and Attempted Assassinations

After traveling across the mountains, fleeing with the prophet, they entered the gates of Akhisar at dusk and were greeted by Abu Darruh one of their friends in the city guard. He told them of the exciting recent occurrences in Marv Dashlam, and suggested they put up at the Prophet's End, an inn of good quality and reasonable cost with a reputation for discretion. Despite the ominous name, they decided to do so, as the desert was not passable at that time of year, not to mention their ill health and general exhaustion. As it turned out they remained in Akhisar for about six months, speaking with the local merchants about trade, and working for the city guard. They were visited by a Jann, who told them that the bandits who murdered the Jannee had been killed by an Akhisar patrol, so they were freed of that oath.

Half-way through their stay, one morning they found an eight-armed cross of blood on the floor of the common room of their suite at the inn. During the day they learned that other crosses had appeared in many houses throughout the city. Later they were visited by the captain of the guard, who told them that the crosses were threats from the Arakanisi. Later, a message arrived from the Albad, the mysterious man who had hired them in Marv Dashlam, warning that the priests of that city were still looking for them.

Several nights later, Shay Uvall, another resident of the inn and sometime merchant and mercenary, saw a stranger coming down the stairs from the party's rooms. The second time he saw this happening, he warned the party they were being observed. A few days later, an assassination attempt was made on Hajj in the market, and two days later an assassination attempt was made upon all of the characters while they slept, unable to wake because of an enchantment. Shay Uvall heard the intruders and came to the party's rescue. He struggle with the assassins until his efforts to wake the party succeeded, and together they managed to kill the assassins. During the attack Jamie Molson died, but he had enough money with him to be resurrected. It was decided that Shay Uvall will accompany them North.

Note

This adventure was gamed on the 15th of November, 1986.

5.19. Recrossing the Gatar Shey

They left Akhisar one day after the second assassination attempt, accompanied by Shay Uvall and escorting Hajj and three merchant emissaries to the north. The party encountered no serious problems in the southern Gatar Shey, and reached Sev-a-kalam without trouble.

There the locals warned them that the monsters of the Salt Sea were restless. Nonetheless they set out, and one day as they were traveling across a salt flat a huge worm-like beast suddenly broke up through the ground in front of them, arched over them, and broke back into the ground behind them.

The salt surface between the two holes cracked open and dropped the party twenty-five yards into salt water, where the huge worm swam leisurely towards the party, obviously congratulating itself on the fine breakfast it had found. Just then, however, several small boats loomed up out of the dark and one of the creatures in them threw an object into the water in front of the worm. The object exploded with an impressive noise, blinding flames, and a truly foul stench, and the worm left quickly. The party wished it could too.

The creatures in the boats seemed much like goblins, only nicer, and immediately entered into a heated conversation amongst themselves. When the party figured out the debased dialect of Auhaami the crea-

tures were using they discovered that the creatures were trying to decide whether the party members were intelligent, in which case they should be saved, or not, in which case they would provide breakfast and lunch, and maybe supper. After some initial difficulty, the party convinced most of the creatures, or Jetaleem as they called themselves, that they were indeed intelligent. (Several Jetaleem remained unconvinced, not surprisingly.) Gh'yal, the leader of the Jetaleem, told the party that he would resupply them and lead them to the northern edge of the Salt Sea if they would depose Moghu, the evil sorcerous tyrant that was oppressing them. (Imagine a clean goblin. Imagine a clean goblin spouting Marxist rhetoric. Imagine a clean goblin spouting Marxist rhetoric at you as you float in a salt lake infested with huge worms that have shown a distinct interest in having you for breakfast.)

The party, of course, agreed, took the oath, and snuck into the despot's underground stronghold, where they were pestered by an imp and nearly killed by Sand Golems. They succeeded, however, in destroying the despot's magical talisman, driving both the despot and his Sand Golems mad. The Jetaleem leader kept his word and escorted the party safely to the northern edge of the Salt Sea.

The party headed north to the nearest oasis, hoping that the Roc and the Sandwhip that they had found there last time would have killed each other off. However, when they reached the ravine where the Sandwhip lived they found the bones of the Roc, and further up the ravine the tell-tale depression in the sand of a Sandwhip in residence. Luckily, there was a twenty foot wide area between the outermost reach of the Sandwhip and the wall¹⁰ of the ravine that our heroes could squeeze through before the sandwhip could move to grab them.

Heading north again, they found that the well in the next oasis (which had been filled with the corpses of the Lakal tribe the last time they passed through) had been cleared and cleaned. When they reached Tuath's Rest it was obvious that their nomad friends had prospered in their new location. While the party was in the south, several of the nomads had scouted the trails up over the Mountain Wall, and found that only the one from Korsepolis (over which the characters had originally traveled) was passable by animals, and that only barely. Five of the young warriors had decided to seek fame and fortune, and the party agreed to take them north as they go. The sheik of the tribe also mentioned that some of his warriors had seen strange creatures seemingly formed of shadow, and on a few occasions had been attacked by these creatures.

The party climbed the Mountain Wall and traveled through the mountains without incident, but when they entered Korsepolis they stumbled directly into another battle amongst the local humanoids but escaped without serious injury. Crossing the Vale of Morin they were again accosted by the ghosts, who demanded a status report. When they left the Vale they were attacked by Horse Nomads and driven into the Thornwood Forest, where they soon stumbled into the clearing with the tiny hut and Mother Thistle. They spent the night there, and she told them of the many changes in the North since they left, all bad.

When they left in the morning they found themselves on the North edge of the forest. When they reached Arn's Ferry Balour Shaw warned them that there had been an increase in disorder in Carzala and that the party's journey would disrupt the power structure. Gim agreed to become Balour Shaw's apprentice.

Note

This adventure was gamed on the 21st of November, 1986.

5.20. Return to Carzala & Events in Seagate

Upon reaching Seagate they were ushered into the Count's presence, where he congratulated them, and restored to them their property which had been seized illegally by the court when they were exiled. He also explained that there had been many irregular legal aspects to their arrest, trial, and sentencing, and that he had reversed their sentences for that reason.

He rewarded them for their journey by giving each of them dwarven armor, and arranged a meeting of the major merchants to hear about the journey and the prospects for trade. At the meeting they were heckled by Polam Wesved, whose low opinion of them found ready favor with some disgruntled members of the court, though not with the Count. During the meeting a mysterious explosion in Arn's Ferry was mentioned; it had destroyed the ancient Giant's tower where Balour Shaw lived. (Gim was dismayed: of what use was his apprenticeship now?) After the meeting Wesved sent men to kill the party members, but the party dispatched the assassins with ease, and Wesved's head ended on a pole when the Count investigated his actions.

¹⁰Did they attempt to poison the sandwhip with salts from the Salt Sea? Or was that just the imaginings of the Gamesmaster's fevered mind? (Probably the latter.)

The party found that it had returned after four years to a country in disorder: bandits and outlaws were everywhere, travel had become difficult, pirates were ruining trade with the North, smuggling had increased dramatically, drug use had run rampant (and not just in the cities, causing many to worry that the work-force of Carzala would be ruined), people were disappearing from cities and farms, and a group of Barons, including the Baron of Seagate, opposed the Count in everything he did. No one was able to understand why the country had deteriorated so rapidly. How had things come to this? Had the gods looked on Carzala with disfavor? Was the whole land cursed?

Note

This adventure was probably gamed on the 21st of November, 1986.

5.21. Smugglers' Cove and Caves

One evening not long after their return to Seagate, the party was relaxing in their house when one of them heard a knocking on the shutter of his window. Upon opening the window, he found Derenedeth hanging from the roof. He swung in and said that it was best that he was not seen with the party. When the whole group had gathered, he asked them if they were interested in revenge against Amur Gibbetsmaster, the judge who forced them into the journey to the south. They were, and agreed to meet Derenedeth later in an abandoned warehouse. He then left by the same route he entered.

At the meeting, he showed the characters papers that proved that the judge wanted to send a group south for his own purposes, and chose the party because they were convenient. Other papers indicated that Gibbetsmaster was involved with smuggling and perhaps the drug shipments that were so devastating the cities. Unfortunately, the papers were not legal proof of Gibbetsmaster's involvement, but they did mention a possible landing of smuggling ships, and the party decided to investigate that in hopes of finding out more. Amazingly, *Kalo Bibkins* also showed up at this meeting and behaved in a very eccentric manner. He offered no reason for his continued existence, and no one felt brave enough to ask.

Arriving at the cove where the landing was scheduled the party found that the ships had already arrived, and were about to be unloaded. Using stealth, distractions, and the help of the unnerving Kalo Bibkins, they killed the lookouts and wiped out most of the smugglers before the smugglers realized what was happening. During the fight a large crate was dropped on Tesla from a cave fifty feet up a cliff, breaking most of the bones in her body. One of the ships turned out to be a pirate and the other turned out to be owned directly by Amur Gibbetsmaster; both were packed full of drugs to be smuggled into the country and had recently been fitted with slave chains. The ships carried papers incriminating Gibbetsmaster in slave trading, drug running, and smuggling valuable goods out of the country. Three hidden caves on the cliff side turned out to be full of smuggled goods.

Following leads from the few surviving smugglers, the party found the two hundred slaves Gibbetsmaster intended to ship out this trip, guarded by twenty-five ruffians. The party freed the slaves and returned to Seagate to inform the Count of Gibbetsmaster's treachery, having left the uncanny Kalo to guard the ships. On the way they were attacked by a group of ruffians roused by a guard who had escaped the slave coffle, but the party survived the attack and wiped out the ruffians, leaving no one to warn Gibbetsmaster.

Note

This adventure was gamed in two or so sessions sometime in 1987.

5.22. The Capture of Amur Gibbetsmaster

Upon reaching Seagate they immediately warned the Count of Amur Gibbetsmaster's perfidy. The count asked them to discretely abduct Amur Gibbetsmaster from the Baron of Seagate's country castle. He hoped to prevent the civil war that would undoubtedly result if the Count were to ask for Gibbetsmaster's head and the Baron were to refuse.

The characters' succeeded, much to everybody's surprise, and brought Gibbetsmaster to justice in Seagate, where he was interrogated by the Count's chief Mage. It was revealed that he was part of a conspiracy to weaken the count and had been for several years. Unfortunately, he did not reveal the names of any of the other leaders, although he did reveal that the conspiracy was led by a powerful mage, and listed many of the landing places of the smugglers and pirates and his contacts with them. Amur Gibbetsmaster died after making a signed confession.¹¹

¹¹Weren't the characters invited to attend his death?

The characters were greatly rewarded for their services. First they were given the captured ships and cargo. Next Derenedeth and Kalo were pardoned for any crimes they might have committed in the past. Finally the party was given Korsepolis, the Vale of Morin, and the Mountain Wall to hold, clean of danger, and rebuild for trade with the south. This latter proved especially unpopular with some of the court, who were sure they were more deserving and better fitted for this honor and responsibility: after all, who were the adventurers but a bunch of jumped up thugs? Tesla started the long road to recovery, but decided to give up active adventuring, at least for the time being.

Note

This adventure was gamed sometime in 1987.

5.23. Smugglers' Cove, Revisited

After the abduction of Amur Gibbetsmaster and its aftermath, the party returned to the cove to claim the ships, which the Count had awarded them. The Count sent along a crew for each ship and a few marines to help and to make sure that all the deadly drugs were destroyed (and to make sure he got his eight percent of the treasure). When the party started taking goods out of the caves they were attacked by a Phantasm in each cave. Later they were attacked by huge spiders, which captured several of the crew and Cormac and Winther.¹² The spiders retreated into tunnels hidden beyond false walls at the ends of the smugglers' caves and the party followed, leaving the majority of the marines and crew to continue loading the ships.

These tunnels led to a huge maze of crooked tunnels, infested by spiders and other strange creatures. The party rescued some of the captured marines and sailors, along with two halflings and a massive, grey, otherworldly being (Evan), but the others had been taken to a huge circular room of worship. This room was dominated by ever changing views of other places on the walls, an altar where the spiders were sacrificing their captives, and a gigantic demonic spider whose limbs spanned the room. Most of the prisoners were freed in the ensuing battle, but the walls of the room kept fading in and out, and one of the marines stumbled into one of the scenes on the wall and vanished. Ominously, the altar was marked with an eight-pointed star.

Magic.

During this adventure the party picked up 10 vials containing healing potions, three one-inch diameter bronze balls invested with Fireball, Imploding Fireball, and Invisibility, five quart jars of very powerful acid, three books on alchemy, a book on magic experimental techniques procedures (which also contained a parchment with an incomplete spell), a spell book, and three glass balls filled with an opaque mixture.

Note

This adventure was gamed on the 1st of January, 1988.

5.24. The Smugglers' Ships

The party returned to Seagate from Smugglers' Cove with two ships loaded with treasure. Once there they investigated selling the non-drug portion of the cargo in Carzala (the Count had forbidden them to sell the drugs in Carzala). After talking with several merchants, including Vlad Sharp-knife, they decided to keep the ships and to start their own merchant company. They hired crews and officers and so forth and started the company, with Winther and Gim taking the lead in keeping track of all the details, and Vlad Sharp-knife providing occasional consulting. After Tesla recovered she began taking a great deal of interest in the business. They sold the non-lethal drugs in the North, against the wishes and vehement protests of Winther, but to the great enrichment of the party.

Gim made a trip to Arn's Ferry, where he discovered that Ilene, young woman whom the party rescued from the Force Dome in Sassym's Stronghold, was rebuilding Balour Shaw's tower with the help of some Dwarves. She had been away at the time of the explosion and believed Balour Shaw dead when she heard of it. Back in Seagate, Gim visited the Count's archives, and discovered that the tower was standing when Carzala was settled by humans, and inhabited then as well.

The party went to Dhairrhuwyth, a local mage, to get some magic items identified.¹³ The mage turned out to have known Balour Shaw, and had been investigating the explosion of Balour Shaw's tower. He had found out that a single gold coin with a eight-pointed star was found on top the rubble, that Balour

¹² The party all choruses, "Gotta get the Band-Aid Back!" See, Winther, you are valued!

¹³ A horn, a jewel of seeing magic?

Shaw had killed three assassins carrying similar coins several years ago when the assassins were after a party of adventurers, and that one of the major symbols of the Arkanian cult is an eight-pointed star. He asked the party to accompany him to the upcoming Arkanian Festival at Finn's Waste during the solstice, where he hoped to find out more about the Arkanians.

Note

This adventure was gamed on the 2nd of April, 1988.

5.25. Some Events at Finn's Waste

The festival at Finn's Waste turned out to be impressive, bringing thousands of worshipers from all over Carzala, and much of the preaching called on the worshipers to be ready to bring unbelievers to Arkan's Throne to be judged, on the coming Day of the Rule of Arkan. The festival took place around a huge monolith, carved at the top in the shape of a godly head. The party observed that there were caves hidden inside the monolith, and snuck inside under cover of invisibility.

Inside the monolith they found the true center of Arkanian worship and discovered it revolved around human sacrifice and demonic worship. In the main temple were two huge and unsettling paintings, one of which the characters recognized as the view from the Entrance to Makad-al-Arakan, the World of the Arakanisi and the other of which they recognized as the Hall of the Great Spider from the caves behind the Smugglers' Cove. While sneaking about the party overheard a discussion linking the Arkanians to the conspiracy of Amur Gibbetsmaster and the death of Balour Shaw. They went on to disrupt a ritual intended to call up Arakan, during which killed a few devils, and rescued some prisoners intended for sacrifice. One of the prisoners turned out to be Gerrod, the marine who vanished from the Spider Hall. On their way out the party collapsed the access tunnel to the complex under the monolith. Returning to Seagate, they reported to the Count, who sent out troops to capture the Arkanians left at Finn's Waste and slapped stiff restrictions on the other Arkanians in the County.

Knowing the party will have other things to do, Gim and Winther agreed to subcontract the exploration of an alternate route to the Vale of Morin to a group of adventures calling themselves BAMF, Inc. The count retired Gerrod into the party's service at his request, where he quickly becomes an indispensable 'butler'.

Note

This adventure was probably also gamed on the 2nd of April, 1988.

5.26. The Abandoned Cathedral

(This scenario was Gamesmastered by N. Alan Bond.) During the night of the first day of this scenario, the characters were awakened by a loud rapping on their bedroom doors and the snooty voice of Elbain the Small telling our heroes to gather in their common room. There the adventures met Amlach the Golden who represented the Yester. After Amlach offered a job and a reasonable price for the party's services, the adventurers agreed to undertake the offered mission. The next morning, our heroes set out on a ship provided by the Yester which traveled from Seagate to Swithan's Cove. After departing from the boat with the Yester Rabon as their guide, the party traveled across the Plain of Desai to a point in the Southern Palisades.

From here the party traveled into the heart of the mountains. Rabon guided the party along a trail that was badly deteriorated, but had recently seen some use. On the second day of travel in the mountains, the party spotted a sentinel fleeing along the trail. The sentinel escaped from the party's partial attempt at pursuit. With the Arkons so warned, the party was ambushed *twice*. (The second ambush occurred after the party allowed a prisoner to scream during a tortu... ah interrogation session. The party was saved during the ambushes by Gim Torson's brilliant fighting technique, of course.) After dealing with the ambushes the party found the Cathedral.

When darkness fell, Jamie and Derenedeth eliminated the sentinels on the keep's walls which allowed the party to enter the keep and ascend to the stairs to the cathedral, with Gim Torson covering the advance of the party with his powerful magics. Our heroes were thus able to gain entrance to the cathedral and close the portculius with a few encounters with the enemy. After a short rest, Rabon took a small magical "boomb"¹⁴ from his pack and planted it next to the entrance of the tunnel. The party then followed the corkscrew tunnel into the darkness, pausing only to deposit more of Rabon's "boombs".

¹⁴ Pronunciation by the Inspector Clouseau, of course.

At the bottom of the tunnel, the party met the eternal champion and Rabon reclaimed the sword the champion carried. Through here the party traveled through a downshaft to the private chambers of the Elite. Here the party planted more bombs, found treasure, and harassed a disembodied voice with slight telekinetic powers.

During their search through the Elite's chambers, the party discovered a secret exit which they followed to a cave that led to the sea. Rabon activated his bombs and the party then sailed in a small boat back to Swithan's Cove and rejoined the ship of the Yester which took them back to Seagate.

Note

This adventure was gamed in late June or early July, 1988.

5.27. Monsters and Merchants Under Seagate

BAMF, Inc. finally returned to Seagate from their exploration of the route through the mountains, with a report (see Appendix 1, *Report from BAMF, Inc.*) of the route, a rough map, and three Auhaami bearing a message from the sheik at Tuath's Rest. BAMF, Inc. traveled through the mountains, picking up a old spellcasting hermit along the way. While they were crossing the Vale of Morin, they were stopped twice by ghosts asking about the re-establishment of the trade routes. In Korsepolis they had to sneak through the continuing the war between the orcs and the hobgoblins, but found out that the humanoids were building crude forts and towers there. They finally reached the Giant's Watchtower at the edge of the Mountain Wall, where they found a number of Auhaami camped. When the Auhaami learned for whom BAMF, Inc. was working, three of them decided to accompany BAMF, Inc. on the return journey.

On the return trip, they traveled through the plains, where they were attacked by Horse Nomads and forced into the Thornwood Forest, where they were found by an old woman living in a small hut. She and the hermit healed the injured, bickering viciously all the while. When the party reached the Brastor Holding the old hermit left them.

The Auhaami reported that the road from the Mountain Wall to Angbar was better than the Korsepolis road¹⁵ (though the trail down the cliff was worse), that the castle in Angbar was only partially in ruins, and the Gatar She terminus of the Angbar road was farther from Sumaldi, which was important because Batik-al-Yazum was increasing the number of his servants, both alive and undead, and had been raiding the nearby nomad tribes. They also reported that a nomad from the Southern Desert reached them with tales of mass murders in Akhisar, in the fashion of the followers of Arakan.

The characters were invited to meet with a group of merchants on 9 Sawtes 848 to discuss opening trade with the South. At the meeting they discussed the characters' plans for the trade route and what needs to be done. All the merchants seemed very interested, and perhaps even willing to help defray the costs of opening the route. They invited the party back for another meeting on 25 Sawtes 848.

On 15 Sawtes 848 as the characters were walking back from a restaurant, a young man burst out of one of the expensive homes along the street, yelling for help and saying someone has just abducted his father and brother. The characters recognized him as the son of Tyrrell, one of the merchants at the meeting, and approached him, but he fell to the ground and died, a crossbow bolt in his back. Entering the house, they found and killed one of the kidnappers and discovered a hidden passage leading to the sewers.

Following the trail through the sewers, they discovered beggars in the sewers, and then a city beneath even the sewers, inhabited by a race of rat-like humanoids called skaven by the beggars. Some of these humanoids had captured humans and used them as sacrifices in their unholy worship, at which they were joined by some depraved humans. The party rescued the captives and escaped into the sewers, collapsing the tunnel to the Undercity behind them.

One of the captives turned out to be Balour Shaw! Alas, he was incoherent most of the time, and it was clear he had been driven insane and could not remember any of his previous life. The party decided they owed him enough that they would try to get him healed.

At the second meeting with the merchants all went well, with the merchants agreeing to contribute to the building of the road through the Atrusian hills, in return for reduced taxes on the goods that pass through the party's barony.

On 2 Patluf 849 the count summoned the characters to discuss their plans for their barony; the count offered to retire some of his soldiers to the area to provide it with a core population. He also contracted with the party to take a ton of silver to the south and exchange it for gold, which the exchange rate would make very profitable.

¹⁵Note that this contradicts what the Ghosts of the Vale of Morin told the party. See Ghosts in Korsepolis [11].

Note

This adventure was gamed in December of 1988. It was probably the first adventure played using the *GURPS* rules.

5.28. Winter in Seagate

5.28.1. Winter in Seagate: Part 1: Fog, with Self-Doubt

Most of the characters were out walking late one very foggy evening, looking for a their favorite late-night tavern. They entered the Little Bazaar, which was oddly clear of the thick fog elsewhere omnipresent, when suddenly a familiar voice yelled out for them to stop. When they do, they heard their own voices coming out of the fog. The voices harranged them for their past deeds, and warned them that now they must be punished. Cormac was offered a chance to join them, and Basgoot was warned that he was selected out for eternal torment. Then a duplicate of each of the characters stepped out of the fog. After a difficult fight they killed all of the duplicates (at least, they *thought* they killed the duplicates...), but then the fog itself attacked them, and proved impervious to their weapons. (How do you fight *fog*?)

Noticing that the fog thinned the further from the ground one went, they climbed up to the roof tops above the fog, which they found to be concentrated in a circle around the bazaar. The fog went berserk and began destroying buildings and killing anything in its path. They noticed a thick cord of silvery mist that led away from the fog, and followed it back to a warehouse.

Inside the warehouse were several hundred Arkanian worshipers, kneeling and chanting, led by several priests. From their bodies rose a haze that solidified into fog above them and then twined into the silvery fog cord that the party had followed to the building. Outside, Basgoot drew the remains of Narung (which he had carefully, perhaps obsessively, carried with him since it was broken) and cut the silvery cord of fog. Narung sucked magical energy from the cord, and there was a huge explosion and an earthquake; ninety percent of the worshipers were killed and Basgoot was knocked unconscious. (Again.) The party observed that the stump of Narung was noticeably longer than before.

The party returned to the Bazaar where they disposed of the bodies of their assailants in magical fire in a well, and then returned to their house where they found that the characters who had remained there had also been attacked. Later the party learned that several members of the Court were in the warehouse when it collapsed, and that the warehouse was owned by Suliman Trade.

Note

This adventure was probably gamed in late March, 1989.

5.28.2. Winter in Seagate: Part 2: Mad Mages and Demons Disturbed

Balour Shaw's amnesia and madness continued, and he had to be constantly looked after, a task made more difficult by the spells he randomly cast. Late one evening he was more unsettled than usual, but finally was calmed down by staring into the fire, a pastime he greatly enjoyed. (Ah, how the mighty are fallen.) Suddenly he yelled, threw something into the fire, and peered closely into the fire; whatever he saw frightened him and he jumped back screaming, "Come on, come on! We've got to see the Wizard!"

Shaw led the party on a wild goose chase through the streets of Seagate and then through the sewers, half of the time giggling and laughing and half of the time screaming something about "idiots". They followed him through the sewers till long after dark, picking up Kalo Bibkins on the way, until they finally caught up to him. Shaw pointed them to a secret door that disclosed a trapped tunnel leading into what was obviously an abandoned mage's workroom.

Once in the room a spell was tripped, and it was magically sealed, trapping the party. In the center of the room was a shimmering dome, which turned out to contain a demon, and when the party investigated they found that the dome was about to collapse. Luckily the demon was also inside a pentagram that would hold it for a while longer, but when the characters figured out how to banish the demon they found that the tools they needed were inside the pentagram with the demon. They planned carefully, and when the dome collapsed Gim Torson rushed out and pitched the tools to those outside the pentagram. Unfortunately, the demon caught Gim by the leg, and proceeded to chew it off. An attack by the other characters distracted him long enough for Gim to break free, and they were able to perform the banishment.

Afterwards, they eventually figured out how to get out of the room, and traversed a secret door upward to another chamber and then exited to the cellar of a house. They fled the area, dragging the injured with them.

Magic.

The players left the Bell, the Book, and the Candle in the workroom.

Note

This adventure was probably gamed in April, 1989.

5.29. Spring in Seagate

Healing, Wolves, Dwarves, Swords, and Demons

5.29.1. Spring in Seagate: Part 1: Healing, Wolves, and Explosions

After the chase through the sewers to the hidden magical workroom imprisoning the demon, Balour Shaw collapsed, and his condition continued to worsen. Winther stabilized Gim's leg, but could not heal it. When they looked for other healers it became apparent that none were left in the city: some had died, others had been killed, others had just plain disappeared. Eventually a dwarf (one of those the party had rescued from the Crypts of Stonesboro) came and told them of Mordraug, a powerful healer who lived at the head of the Wolf River, in the mountains below the Sweet Riding. Gim, Cormac, Jamie, Basgoot, Shay Uvall, and Balour Shaw went to Mordraug's Lair to get Gim and Balour Shaw healed, meeting Karl Bluetooth (an unsavory wilderness guide) and lots of wolves along the way.

Once there they found that Mordraug was a necromancer as well as healer, and probably undead as well. His price for healing Gim and Balour Shaw and telling each of the characters something of great value was "a month of their lives." Some halfhearted haggling ensued, but they finally agreed with the proviso that they would also receive a five point powerstone. The next morning they woke to find Gim and Balour Shaw were healed, though Balour Shaw was still asleep, and notes written in their own handwriting placed beside them. When they got back to civilization they found out that a month had passed. The evening before they reached Seagate Balour Shaw awoke, told them they had imperiled their souls by dealing with Mordraug, were stupid for bringing him back to Seagate, and that they had to protect Carzala now, he had more important things to do.

They returned to Seagate to found out that that their house had been blown up and burned down in their absence and those they had left behind were nowhere to be found.

Magic.

During this adventure Mordraug gave Gim, Cormac, Jamie, Basgoot, and Shay Uvall five point powerstones.

Note

This adventure was gamed on the 26th of December, 1992.

5.29.2. Spring in Seagate: Part 2: Dwarves, Swords, and Demons

After they find their exploded house, a squad of the count's guards marched up to take them to the count. Just a few minutes behind them came a group of the Baron of Seagate's city guards; there was a tense standoff for a few moments, but eventually the city guard backed down, and off the party went to see the count.

The count was infuriated with them: there had been too many violent events lately around the party, including attempts to burn their ships (which did burn a nearby wharf), etc. Local opinion blamed the party for many of the other recent troubles, so the count gave the party an ultimatum: in four weeks they had to be out of Seagate and Carzala, and they could not return until the count was no longer angry with them and mood of the city had turned in their favor again. After being told this they were ushered from the Castle by the guards.

After the guards left, they heard Derenedeth's voice coming from a nearby sewer entrance. He directed them to stable their horses at a livery stable where he would meet them. From there he led them through the sewers, where they were followed by a small shadow that turned out, eventually, to be Kalo Bibkins.

Along the way they were trapped between beggars driving giant rats for dinner and Skaven coming to fight for their brethren. They turned themselves invisible, hide in a side passage, collapsed part of the tunnel on the skaven and beggars, and in the ensuing confusion they escaped. Eventually they got to the the mage's workroom under the city where the party had fought the imprisoned demon. There the returning characters found the rest of the characters, who were very confused when asked what was going on, for the returning characters had warned the other characters to leave the house *before* the explosion,¹⁶ and they have been hiding in the sewers since then. The party decided to buy the house above the workroom so they would have a bolt-hole in times of trouble. They stayed at a good inn for the rest of the month they were in Seagate.

Basgoot continued acting strange and moody, often vanishing and reappearing at strange times. Cormac, Shay, and Basgoot interviewed mercenaries for guards for the road, with occasional advice from Gerrod. Gim, Winther, and Jamie interviewed laborers and support personnel for the road building. The dwarves working on Ilene's tower agreed to work for the party on part of the road. Tesla continued overseeing the trading company. Winther retired to the lab and produced stinks and smokes. Tesla embarked on a series of magical and surgical repairs which soon moved beyond the realm of repairs.

Basgoot fled Seagate on the morning of 23 Ubard 849 in the company of Evan and an unknown dwarf. This was the morning the party was scheduled to discuss plans with the count. The party only knew that Basgoot and Evan had disappeared until after the meeting when Derenedeth reported with the news. Jamie visited his contacts in the Thieves Guild¹⁷ and returned with the news that the dwarf was Bolg, a *bad* character and had abducted one footpad who attacked him on his way out, and killed another.

Gim, Cormac, Jamie, Shay Uvall, and Winther chased Basgoot, Evan, and Bolg to Mordraug's Lair, where Basgoot, Bolg, and Mordraug reforged Narung with the help of an unknown wizard/swordsmith. As part of the process, Narung's demon was released from the sword and the party had to keep it away from the sorcerers while they cast the spell to reimprisoned it. To do this the characters flew around a lot until Basgoot with everyone's help impaled the Demon in the eye with Narung as sorcerers finished casting the spell.

When Basgoot impaled the Demon and the sorcerers finished the spell the Demon screamed so loud it knocked everyone down and then was sucked into Narung. Basgoot hesitated a moment then chopped Mordraug's head off. Bolg gave off a fiendish, joyous laugh and immediately attacked Basgoot, struggling with him for Narung and nearly killed the Demon-torn warrior. Shay *Entombed* Bolg and Jamie, thinking quickly, got five fingers cut off (three on one hand, two on the other) but prevented Narung from being *Entombed* with Bolg. Luckily, Winther *Restored* them, although Jamie would not be able to use them for a month. Basgoot became more nearly normal in appearance, though he still had Narung. The party fled Mordraug's Lair as it collapsed around them. Evan left the party soon thereafter (in disgust?) and wandered south through the mountains. The party made it back to Seagate and had to leave the very next day, 10 Silemore 849, on the first day of their temporary exile.

Note

This adventure was gamed on the 31st of December, 1992, or on the 2nd of January, 1993.

5.30. Roadtrip!

5.30.1. Roadtrip! Part 1: Beggars, Doubles, Priests, Golems, Little People, and Mages

On the morning the party was to leave Seagate, Derenedeth turned up terribly injured (almost dead) at the inn where the party was staying. The rest of the party healed him and when he recovered he told them he'd been taking care of business when he'd gotten careless and had been captured by the Beggar King's minions. The party went back to sleep. When they got up again to leave, they heard the cook telling the innkeeper how ten dead beggars had been found floating out of the sewers so far that morning. The party decided to skip breakfast and leave right away.

They reached the South Lending in the Brastor Holding on 25 Silemore 849, where they intended to wait for the mercenaries and engineers to arrive (except for Remy Gill, who was already with them). As soon as they rode into town, however, many of the town's merchants accosted Jamie Molson and

¹⁶There was not time to get anything but what each character had on them out of the house.

¹⁷I think on the way Jamie was attacked by his double, and that the being who reported back to the party claimed to be Jamie and claimed that both Jamie and the double survived.

demanded the money he owed them. After much arguing Jamie and the party managed to convince the merchants (helped by Jamie's lack of scaring and his pleasant facial expression) that the Jamie Molson who owed them money was an imposter posing as the real Jamie Molson.¹⁸ After yet more argument the local constable was also convinced, though still suspicious. Unfortunately for Jamie, the innkeeper wasn't convinced until *after* he beat Jamie about with a piece of firewood.

The first night they were in the South Lending they set a watch and *Magelocked* their windows, fearing that Jamie's double was after him again. Alas, they were all cast into an enchanted sleep and Jamie was *Teleported* away from them. The *Teleport* woke them up, however, and they immediately began looking for Jamie using *Seeker*. They found that he was about a half a mile away, on the other side of town, and set out for there immediately.

Jamie,¹⁹ on the other hand, found himself in a dead-end alley facing two figures — one his double and the other a demonic creature spitting fire. He attempted to *Teleport* back to the inn room, but a *Teleport Shield* prevented it. He then cleverly *Teleported* behind the two to attack them from behind, but was never-the-less overpowered and captured.

When the rest of the party arrived they found a number of burned spots and some blood on the ground. Upon again *Seeking* Jamie they got an image of him lashed over the back of a demonic creature and behind him seated his double, who was laughing maniacly and periodically digging at Jamie with his dagger as they traveled through a hellish landscape. The landscape seemed familiar to Basgoot from his dreams...

The party gave up hope for Jamie and moped around the South Lending until the mercenaries and engineers arrived to survey the road. When the survey mission reached Blackstone Chapel they found that several important factions in the order opposed the building of the road, worried about losing the isolation necessary to a religious order and the possibility of conflict with the savage hill tribes. Indeed, some of the Chapel elders went so far as to threaten legal proceedings to block the road, with some apparent legal justification. The elders agreed to let the road be built after the party surveyed an alternate route for the road that did not pass through the middle of the Chapel complex and the party was convinced to build a wayhouse (at a probable cost of 100,000 to 200,000 farthings) for the order at the intersection of the new road and the old.

Some miles past the Chapel they found the ruins of what could have been an inn or manor house set back a bit from the road. This could be repaired, though only partial walls remain now. They did not find anything unusual about the ruins. Some days past the ruins the party noticed they were being watched by a group of tribesmen. The characters approached the tribesmen, who all had a design worked into their clothes with blue-dyed leather. The tribesmen communicated with the party with sign, asking what they were doing there. The party managed to convey something of their purpose, and though the tribesmen were displeased, they seemed resigned. They also seemed to indicate that hostile tribes lay further along the party's path.

Several days later the party was attacked by a couple of hundred tribesmen, who ambushed them in a narrow valley walled with trees and thick underbush. Even though the party was ambushed, Orm and his troops and the characters easily managed to defeat the tribesmen, having only 3 dead and 3 severely injured, while many tribesmen died. All of the tribesmen were found to have an irregular eight-pointed figure worked into their clothing with red-dyed leather.

Further along in the bending south of the road's path, the party followed a disturbance into the brush one night because they saw Tesla (who had stayed behind in Seagate to manage the business) running towards them, but before they could reach her she had been pulled into the bushes. When they reached the area she was gone.

Tracks of unusually small humanoids lead away and the party followed them to the foot of a tall crag, where the trail ended. Gim *Walked on Air* to the top of the crag, but saw only the ruins of a castle. Remy and Shay investigated inside the rock of the crag, but found nothing. After much searching about, Derenedeth cast *Flight* on four of the party and they carried the other party members to the top of the crag, where they saw the castle ruins, but this time there was an intact tower! Gim *Bird Controlled* the giant owls nesting on the top of the tower away, and the party landed and entered the tower.

The tower was filled with many strange things, including invisible servants, golem guardians, macabre decorations, and all the modern conveniences. In a room floored by a huge five-pointed star in a circle the party was attacked by five golems after a fireball dropped out of the ceiling and exploded in the middle of the room. In the throne room they were attacked by 20 demons while another demon carried Tesla down the stairs to the basement. The surviving demons *Blinked* out down the stairs when the party

¹⁸They actually explained about the doubles they fought in Seagate during the explanations.

¹⁹ Played by Howard Hill, in Ray Smith's absence.

had slaughtered most of them, and the corpses revealed that they had actually been short humanoids. The party recognized them as the "Little People" of BAMF's report.

When they tried to follow they ended up on an endless stair trap that finally led them to the roof where they now found an observatory and an orrery, which when pushed caused the stars to whirl violently, making all of the party terribly ill. Going back down to the basement they found it completely filled with what they thought was water but what was actually a Sucking Reek that turned Gim into a *Body of Air*, sucked him in and nearly dissolved him. After returning to the throne room for much discussion, they tried the basement again and this time it was dry-floored and contained a steeply inclined tunnel that lead down through the crag.

At the bottom of the crag they found an arid plane of dust-filled winds and sand and gravel and baked clay, littered with various body parts. Over them a huge blood-red sun visibly rose in the west, and all around were crags and huge piles of boulders. They heard distant screams and Gim remembered legends of such an infernal place. They followed some tracks to a crack in the bottom of another crag, which lead into a series of passageways resembling nothing so much as the digestive system of some huge subterranean beast. Disoriented by the foul air and the nature of the passageways they stumbled through a central chamber with six exits and out another tunnel.

This tunnel eventually turned to stone and led to a set of double doors. When they opened the doors they were looking upon a huge semi-spherical room with a number of statues, a five-pointed star in a circle containing a dismembered body, a blood-covered figure rising from the floor, and *Jamie* tied to one of the statues. They recognized the figure as the mage who threatened them in Suliman Trade's warehouse during the Crypts of Stonesboro adventure, and *he* recognized *them!* The party immediately began a desperate attack to cover Basgoot's attempt to rescue Jamie. After *Hasteing* himself, Basgoot ran out and slashed Jamie free from the statue with *Narung*, slicing him slightly in the process, then ran back to the double doors. While this was going on the others were trying to cast spells (which all fizzled out), keep open the slowly closing double doors, and endure the attacks of fire and ice triggered by the mage. They managed to keep the doors open until Basgoot had dragged Jamie through (Cormac losing the last joint of the little finger on his right hand as the doors closed) and then fled back up the passage under a hail of ice-daggers and fireballs.

Fleeing back through the slimy tunnels, they again stumbled through the central chamber and took another tunnel. This one eventually turned to packed earth, which started collapsing about them as they squirmed through. Several of the party got stuck in the collapsing tunnel, but the others managed to pull them out, into the bottom of a pit, above which was a beautiful blue sky.²⁰

Note

This adventure was gamed on the 26th of November 1994.

5.30.2. Roadtrip! Part 2: Nomads, Orcs, Little People, and Orcs Again

The session began with the characters at the bottom of a pit, staring at a wonderful blue sky above them. Upon investigating, they found that the pit was surrounded by tall poles surmounted by skulls and short, painted wands tasselled with feather or furs. Off in the distance is what appears to be a tribal encampment of Horse nomads. The tunnel they came through is only partially collapsed, so the characters decided to dig back through, after spending some time resting and healing themselves.

They began to dig, but while they are digging they hear something taunting them and cursing them; when they look up, on the edge of pit is a horrible creature: a spider with a 3-yard leg-span and a human torso attached to the front of its thorax! Needless to say, there's a lot of cursing going on as part of the party stands the monster off while the rest finish the digging. They manage to flee back through the tunnel without anyone being killed, though some were bit.

The characters travelled back through the tunnels (or bowels as the case may be), through the central chamber, and out through another tunnel. This one eventually turned into a stone tunnel that narrowed down to an 3 foot tall, 18 inch wide crack, which opened into a rough-hewn corridor that lead off to the right and left. Deep, gravelly voices could be heard coming from both directions, but no-one could hear enough to determine what they were. Foolhardy and brave, the characters decided to sneak down the corridor to the right, which lead them to a chamber full of Orcs. Against the back wall of the chamber was a throne of huge bones and tusks, upon which sat a huge orc holding a large sceptre or mace. All of

²⁰At this point all of the characters have 3 HT left, except for Jamie, who has 1 HT left, and is still unconscious.

the Orcs were busily employed devouring their meal; it's probably best not to inquire what was on the menu. The sounds of bones cracking under the pressure of orcish molars covered whatever sounds the characters may have made during their approach, and they decided that discretion was the better part of valour and retreated back down the crack and into the slimy, odoriferous tunnels.

Again the characters travelled back through the passageways, again through the central chamber, and again out through yet another exit. *This* time they came out into the night in a niche on the side of a hill, a flat place with steep sides and a short cliff on the back, where the tunnel entrance was. The niche overlooked a desolate heath, and in the distance the characters saw a faint glow, and some of them occasionally heard chanting. They were attacked by two of the "Little People", but soon defeated them. Looking around a bit they found some stained leather bindings that looked like foot-wrappings and still had traces of the slime from the tunnels.

Since the presence of the Little People seemed to indicate a likelihood of finding Tesla, and no other interesting features presented themselves, the characters set off north towards the glow and the chanting. Out on the heath the characters came to a barrow mound, and beyond the barrow mound was a ring of standing stones, and in the center of that was a three-legged dolmen. There were three fires in front of the dolmen, around which danced many of the Little People, and beside one of them was a wizened oldster bedecked with feathers and furs and paint, sharpening a cleaver. Atop the dolmen were four warriors, and what looked suspiciously like a bound human.

Attacking the Little People. Rescuing Tesla, with lots of invisibility and flying.²¹ Because of his great strength, Basgoot was probably the one who grabbed Tesla, although there was probably someone who also helped with Tesla. Shay Uvall probably attacked the shaman and took his cleaver, and there may have been others attacking the group of Little People. In general, lots of hacking and slashing went on.

Not surprisingly, the Little People were not pleased by this assault on their religious rites, and pursued the characters with fury, cries of rage, and sharp objects. Luckily, the characters were faster. Not to mention largely invisible. Still, it was a close race back to the tunnel entrance.²²

The characters fled back through the Belly of the Beast, for such it now seemed certain it was, for as they scuttled through the depth of the slime increased, jets of slime shot out of orifices in the walls, the tunnels shook and quaked and quivered, seemingly in agony, and a terrible deep *beat* reverberated throughout the tunnels. Things Were Obviously Not Well. Luckily, this time as they stumbled through the central chamber they chose the exit that lead out to the infernal desert, above which rose the castle on its crag.

Finally they reached the crag and tiredly climbed up the tunnel into the castle dungeon. After some difficulty getting out of the castle due to uncertainty of the stairs leading one to where one expected to go ("Didn't we just do this?") they managed to escape and returned to the camp with their mercenary soldiers, and found out that they had only been gone only *one* day. They continued with the survey of the road. When they got to the cliff, they had to leave their horses behind, but they continued with their survey, heading down out of the mountains towards the Vale of Morin.

Jamie, troubled by the pains of his wounds and the even greater pains of worries about what his double was up too, was wandering about in the night and stumbled upon a badly wounded orc standing over the newly killed body of another orc. The remaining orc attacked Jamie, but because of his wounds was easily dispatched. The Orcs had two *Evil*-looking magic items; a Mace in the form of a metal Skull and an Axe fancifully engraved with the visage of a hideous demon.²³

The next day the outriders reported a large part of Orcs very near coming quickly toward the party. Orm quickly commanded the party up onto flat spot above a extremely rugged and steep hillside to await the Orcs. About a hundred orcs approached, and send out a herald to parley. He demanded the return of the of their two sacred relics. During the parley, another group of about a hundred orcs appeared, to the anger of the first group, and they also sent a herald to demand the return of *their* sacred relics. After some stalling by the party, the two groups of orcs both attacked the party, co-operating against a common enemy, though obviously enemies themselves. The party was outnumbered by more than two-to-one, and these Orcs were clearly better armed and armored than the tribesmen had been. Cleverly, the characters thought to abduct²⁴ and neutralize the Orc mages and leaders, which helped, and their defensive location helped, but even so it was difficult battle. The party was successful, though, with the orcs fleeing the battle at the end, and all the characters surviving.

²¹Who did what here? I know that one invisible character flew onto the dolmen, attacked the guards, and snatched up Tesla, then flew back towards the entrance to this plane. I think another invisible character attacked the shaman, and took his cleaver. I think there were other invisible characters wandering around.

²²Didn't somebody collapse the tunnel entrance?

²³Did Jamie tell the other characters before the Orcs caught up to the party? I think he did.

²⁴Were they able to abduct them? If so, how many? Or did they just kill them? Howard thinks they were just killed.

So we left our heros on the field of battle, tending their wounded and wondering what it was all about.

Note

This adventure was gamed on the 23rd of December 1994.

Chapter 6. Interesting Items

This chapter describes some of the interesting items that the party has found over the campaign.¹

Narung.

Found in the the Crypts of Stonesboro, *Narung* is a mysterious sword responsible for much havoc in the party, especially to its bearer, Basgoot.

Clay Balls.

Glazed, hollow clay spheres, some of these contain enigmatic black shadows with exist with any visible objects to cast them, and move on their own.

Horn.

A curious horn, of unknown properties.

Power Stones.

The party has obtained several power stones, from various sources.

¹ Eventually, it will be a complete list of the more important treasure, especially magical treasure, that they have found and sometimes lost.

However, when the party's house exploded, most of these treasures were lost.

Chapter 7. Interesting Places

This chapter details some of the interesting places that the characters found during their adventures.

Ogres' Cave.

In their very first adventure the characters found this out-of-the way cave in the mountains to the east of Carzala. A long, winding, narrow (by ogre standards) passage leads down to a large room.

Turon's Cave.

While rescuing a rich merchant's mad son from the wilderness, the party found this cave in the bank of the Sweetwater river. When the river level is high, the entrance to this cave is under water, but the main room is high enough so it is rarely submerged.

Blackstone Chapel.

An order of healing monks and nuns lives here, to the south of the Brastor Holding. They are basically pacifistic, and very fond of debate. Their deity does the really difficult healing, such as resurrection.

Fire Giant's Watchtower.

At the end of the mountain road out of Korsepolis on the very edge of the Mountain wall overlooking the cliff and the desert is a tall, strong tower that was once inhabited by an evil Fire Giant.

Smugglers' Caves.

While investigating the doings of Amur Gibbetsmaster the party discovered this very interesting set of caves, which led into a maze of tunnels inhabited by Giant Spiders and full of Arkanian symbols. In front of the caves is a cove convenient for smugglers.

Chapter 8. Reflections on a Campaign

This campaign never really ended, but the geographical dispersal of the players eventually caused it to sink into quiescence. Still, with 30 adventures over several more sessions than that, it lasted pretty well. It looks like there were 5 adventures in 1985, 15 adventures in 1986, 2 adventures in 1987, 5 adventures in 1988, 2 adventures in 1989, 2 adventures in 1992, and 2 adventures in 1994. Several of the players graduated from college in 1986, if I remember correctly, and left the area for jobs. In the later years we played at Thanksgiving and Christmas, when the players returned to the area on holidays. After that things began to get too difficult to schedule.

There were plenty of things left for the players to do: finishing the road, developing their barony, fighting humanoids along the Mountain Wall, trade caravans to the south, fighting The Mage and The Necromancer, and so forth.

I was surprised, looking back, at how many player characters, and how many important non-player characters, died during this campaign, or were severely wounded.

At some point I'd like to revisit this campaign, but frankly at this point in my life I'm not sure I'd be interested in doing it in either *DragonQuest* or *GURPS* (my tastes lately run to simpler rules systems), and I'm not sure converting things to yet another system would be worth it. (At the time, I was maintaining the *GURPS* character sheets using the original MakeChar¹; I've no idea what the modern equivalents are like.)

Of course, looking back at the box of index cards I used to keep NPC and monster stats I see that my typical *GURPS* NPC or monster easily fit on the front of one index card, and are in general remarkably simple. Really, *GURPS*'s complexity comes during character creation, and then only for characters that you are detailing to the level of a PC, something you'd only do for a major villain; for everybody else you just pick the numbers you want.

In 2007 I revisited to this setting briefly with a *Savage Worlds* adventure for my daughter, niece, and nephews, and one of the original players. It was fun to see his eyes get big when he realized where this new adventure was taking place. And the adventure itself was fun, so I reckoned it was successful on both levels.

8.1. The Frontiers of Alusia

The Frontiers of Alusia really was minimal, consisting of only the 22"×24" map, a description of the general area on the inside of the coversheet (a thin 11"×17" sheet of thin cardboard, folded over to be an 8½"×11" folder), the map key on the back of the coversheet, and a 4 page "Travel Guide for the Frontiers of Alusia Adventure Map" (an 11"×17" sheet of paper, folded over to be two 8½"×11" sheets, making 4 pages) with a short paragraph for each of the most important map features.² The area was a frontier, relatively recently settled (or resettled, as it ended up in my campaign's backhistory), surrounded by wilderness and strange creatures, with little bits of the past, ruins and such, appearing here and there. I think the sparseness of the setting was actually helpful: you could easily know everything about the setting and could mold it however you wanted.

In any case, like the other campaigns featuring *The Frontiers of Alusia* I've since found on the net, I added many features of my own to the area, including a new area to the south, off the map, where the player characters ended up spending a significant portion of their time. I also went back and forth on the size of the area a number of times, rescaling it to have a larger area and adjusting the population upwards.

8.2. DragonQuest

I have a description of the *DragonQuest* rules elsewhere³. I'm glad I started this out in *DragonQuest* (*DQ*); I liked the *DQ* rules much more than *AD&D*, as they allowed much more flexible and detailed characters and more interesting tactics, as well as allowing every character to have some magic. It gave a much

¹ <http://www.seurer.net/games/utilities/makechar.html>

² I suspect that SPI had hoped to offer additional products to go with this, but such was not to be. Judges Guild did produce three supplements set in *The Frontiers of Alusia: Magebird Quest, Heroes and Villians, and Starsilver Trek*, but I didn't know of them at the time and never saw them until I bought them from an internet RPG dealer in December 2007. I wish I'd had them, since they would have been useful in fleshing out the setting.

³ <http://tkb.mpl.com/~tkb/dragonquest.html>

different feel to the campaign. I had previously used *DQ* to play a moderate length campaign using the wonderful *DQ* adventure *The Enchanted Wood*, written by Paul Jaquays and published by SPI, and had been very pleased with how *DQ* played, and it was a good fit for the campaign.

Eventually, however, became dissatisfied with *DQ*, probably with the number of independent formulas that I had to calculate when updating major NPCs and the players had to calculate when updating PCs.

8.3. *GURPS*

Eventually, however, I began to want something that was even more flexible than *DQ*, which had few skills outside those explicitly part of the professional skills (Alchemist, Mechanic, Troubadour, etc.) and the combat skills. I also became dissatisfied with the many independent formulas that had to be calculated when updating characters. These formulas were scattered through the rulebook so it was painful to find them and then painful to actually do the calculation.⁴

In some ways then it is ironic that the next system used was *GURPS*⁵ 3rd edition, from Steve Jackson Games⁶. (See Section 5.27, "Monsters and Merchants Under Seagate" [22].) It has lots of skills, which also need to be calculated when characters gain experience. However, at least in *GURPS* all skills (which includes magic) have costs that are figured off one table, and it is the actual skill number that goes up, rather than the skill rank and then some other number figured by a (often) unique formula.

In any case, I converted⁷ all the characters from *DQ* to 3rd edition *GURPS* (they ended up around 350 points, and were probably a little more powerful and considerably more well-rounded) and important NPCs over (the chief villain of the campaign ended up at well over 1000 points), and the players were able to adjust pretty quickly. (They were already used to a detailed tactical hex-grid combat system from *DQ*, so adapting to *GURPS* wasn't that much of a stretch.) All in all, it worked out very well.

⁴Nowadays I'd probably just make a spreadsheet to use for the character sheets.

⁵<http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/>

⁶<http://www.sjgames.com/>

⁷I used Bill Seurer's *GURPS* MAKECHAR character generation program [<http://www.seurer.net/games/utilities/makechar.html>], which worked very nicely.

Appendix 1. Report from BAMF, Inc.

T. Kurt Bond
December 27, 1988

Abstract

This is the report I wrote detailing the adventures of my second group of players for my original group of players, after I arranged for the characters of the second group to be hired by the characters of first group to do some exploring.

1.1. Background

About one week ago the BAMF, Inc. returned to Seagate with a report and a rough map, which they duly presented to the characters. They also were accompanied by three Auhaami carrying a message from the chief at Tuath's Rest. The report and message follow herewith.

1.2. Report from BAMF, Inc.

Until Blackstone Chapel (twenty miles into the South Downs), the road is passable without much trouble, and suitable for carts and wagons, excepting a few trouble spots. However, within five miles the road after the chapel has disappeared completely except for almost unnoticable traces. The rangers were able to follow those traces without too many problems. Eighty miles beyond Blackstone Chapel the traces lead into a medium-sized valley, about 1 mile long and a quarter to half a mile wide. The far end of the valley forks, dividing east and south. Streams run down each of the forks into the center of the valley where there is a large pond. A large stream empties this pool and runs out of the valley through the end the party entered the valley (the northwest end). Beside the pool is a ruin, little more than foundation outlines and a pile of stones.

The party took the east fork and traveled about fifteen miles until they came to a tree surrounded by wolves. In the tree was perched a three foot tall near-human (of an unknown race), which the party rescued. It turned out he was the chief of a tribe, and in gratitude he invited them back to his home cave for a feast. The party agreed, and accompanied them to the cave (were there were two hundred or so little people), where they were served fine food and and absolutely the best ale they had ever tasted. However, after most of the party had nodded off they were attacked by the Little People. The party bravely fought off the attack and managed to escape the cave complex, capturing the chief along the way. The chief was killed during the escape, but one of the party, Bere (pronounced bear), carried the body along and after reaching a safe place he cut out the heart of the chief and ate it. It made him sick for several days.

They travelled about fifteen more miles and came to a deep, swift, and fairly wide mountain stream that they found uncrossable. In the middle of the stream is a large rock which looks as if it may have at one time supported a bridge. This stream is also inhabited by a large monster, which the party glimpsed only briefly. Though they did explore upstream several mines, they did not find any better places to cross, so they returned to the fork in the valley and took the south branch.

Following the south branch, they were surrounded by a tribe of humans with stone and bronze weapons. The party managed to convince the tribesmen that the party was not hostile, and became somewhat friendly with them. These tribesmen mentioned that there were several tribes in the mountains, and that all the others were hostile. They were greatly curious about the iron weapons of the party members, for iron weapons were only legends to them.

About twenty miles from the fork the party came to cliff-face. Only a rough footpath (not sufficient for pack animals, but adequate for careful climbers) is left on the cliff-face itself. While they were climbing the footpath, they came abreast of a cave mouth, in which appeared a mad-looking old man yelling "Who are you?" This hermit promptly fell out of the cave mouth, yelling "Now what *is* that spell..." A little while later he came climbing bck up to them, covered in white feathers. He tagged along with the party after that. He did not know the mountains, answering the party's questions in that direction with "Haven't the foggiest! I've never been here before in my life!" He did help them a couple of times by lighting the evening fire with a Fireball spell, though. After the cliff-face they descended through the mountains for twenty miles until they reached the Vale of Morin.

When the party crossed the Vale of Morin they were accosted by Ghosts twice; both times they were asked if they were working to establish a trade route, the ghosts saying "we were promised this so our souls could rest." The party replied that they were surveying for the trade route.

When the party reached Korsepolis they found that, although the humanoids were not having one of their frequent wars in the ruins, there were many of them in the surrounding mountains, and in the city itself. The ruins of Korsepolis are nestled in the mouth of a valley, through which runs the road into the Mountain Wall. The ruins completely fill the mouth of the valley, and a half a mile wide or more. In the center of the city is an area that has been cleared of ruins and leveled by the humanoids. They piled the stones around the cleared area, making a circular mound around it, and many are living in it (about 150 to 200). Other than the watch around the central area, the humanoids do not seem to keep careful watch on the city, patrolling only once every three or four days or so. In the city there are ruins of what must have once been a small fort which could be rebuilt relatively easily. It seems to be newer than the rest of the ruins, and was built using rubble from the city. There are also two towers of the same sort in different areas of the city that could be rebuilt. The humanoids seem to avoid these areas for some reason, not coming close to them on their patrols through the city. After observing the city for a while BAMF sneaked through undetected and continued to the Watchtower.

When BAMF reached the Watchtower they found twenty-five Auhaami camped around there. The Watchtower itself seemed in good shape, and had not been entered. The Auhaami asked who the party was and what it was doing, and when told it was working for the explorers who came through several months ago three Auhaami decided to accompany them back to Seagate with a message.

On the way back through Korsepolis the party ran into a small group of orcs, which they managed to destroy. They left the city hurriedly before any other orcs found them.

On the return leg of the journey the party was attacked by Horse Nomads and several people were severely injured. While the old hermit held off the nomads with an odd assortment of spells the party retreated into the Thronewood, where they were found by an old woman. The old woman and the old man healed the injured party members, while arguing constantly over everything while they were together.

When the party reached the Brastor Holding the old man left them. The rest of the trip was relatively uneventful, except for several short battles with bandits along the roads in the Atrusian Hills.

The total time for the journey was 83 days, but the rangers estimate that travel time through the South Downs and the East Bounders would be fifteen to sixteen days.

1.3. Message from the Auhaami

The road out of Angbar is better than the Korsepolis road and it is farther from the ruined city in the desert, Sumaldi, which is important because Batik-al-Yazum is increasing the number of his servants, both alive and undead, and they have raided the nearer tribes several times. There is also small castle in Angbar that is only partially in ruins. There are very few humanoids south of Resimaldi. Each road through the mountains has a watchtower at the desert end.

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Colophon

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