

The Seagate Times



Issue 38 - Spring 802

Invasion of Alusia Averted

Plane-Eating City Finds Tastier Fare

A recent party was sent by the Guild to spy upon the plane-eating city of Tokal in preparation for its threatened invasion. As a cover mission they were employed to eradicate a small army of fanatical rebels who were attempting to destroy the city. They were paid in full despite taking double the eight hours overconfidently quoted by the party leader to remove all five hundred dissidents.

The city itself is ruled by six powerful mages and inhabited by a vast number of undead skeletons. A living population of humans provides replacements for the skeletons. After death their flesh is chewed away by giant caterpillars, leaving the skeleton ready for animation. These humans are almost all quite docile and sheep like in their behaviour, and live their pointless little lives in huge hive-like buildings upon the city surface blissfully unaware of the hard working skeletons living in and maintaining the undercity. Their religions are obviously aware of this, and ironically speak of an afterlife devoid of pain and hunger (and flesh).

The city itself is a ten mile across mychorrhizoid entity which has the ability to translate itself from plane to plane. It converts the entire planar surface - rock, plants, animals, sentients and all - to its basic essence, a sludge rich in mana. This it sucks up and feeds upon as it moves about whatever plane it is on. It has just finished eating the plane of Landaqin down to bedrock. For anyone who is looking for cheap land or fond in privacy this is the plane to visit. When we returned from our mission, we were informed that they had decided not to move the city to Alusia and would consume another plane instead. Parties venturing off plane are advised to keep an eye open for giant fungal plane-eating cities on planes they visit in future. The city evidently appears as an unusually stable storm from the outside.

The party in question claims that it is unfortunate that the possible invasion of Alusia has fallen through, on the basis that it could have provided steady work for the guild. Actually, we here at the Times are relieved that the city is heading elsewhere. Alusia has enough troubles of its own. Guild Security have since informed the Times that they are concerned that the party choose to aid the city, since the city in question is a considerable threat to this plane, and many others where we find employment. Perhaps aiding the rebels might have been more conducive to protecting future incomes. Guild Council members have commented that the party's actions probably influenced the city's decision to eat someone else's plane and not ours. With friends like that, who needs enemies? Arguments are still continuing.

Elsewhere in This Issue

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and more...



The Plane of Landaqin - after the visit of the Plane-eating City of Tokal.

News in Brief

Seven run riot in Phantasia

Yet again members of the Seagate Guild of Adventurers attempt to turn a (relatively) innocent plane of existence on its' head. "All turned out well in the end - we got paid" says Prince Graaven of Brightrock.

The tally - Guild Party 3: Opposition 2.

"We ..." quoth the talkative northern prince in a thick dwarven accent "Managed to start the revolution, re-establish The Kingdom of Mercy and kill a megalomaniac Queen. They took brave Garrick's life (for a short while) and banished Dirk from their lands - Ah well it was better than the summary execution due to him." - The Prince could not be drawn to give any more details about his comrade's foibles but it is rumoured that adventuring with can be extremely exciting at Dirk's side.

"Where we are from, dragons are no' important, we give no more thought to hunting them than we would any beast o' the forest." - Graaven, explaining to Beryl the dragon why the party had so rudely attacked her.



Snow White and the Seven Adventurers

Apparently, Phantasia is an interesting land to navigate (The roads are coloured) and magic flows through the monarchies. When the group of seven dwarves (referred in that land as Princes) arrived there were 11 known kingdoms. Now there are potentially 16. "Let's see how the war goes before we know for sure," said WordSmith, the leader of this expedition. "We learned a lot about the nature of Phantasia and its residents. We also learned a lot about adventuring and working as a team."

Pressed for any negative results, WordSmith continued "Well, when we arrived all dwarves were Princes, and peasants and fey knew their place. Unfortunately the lifting of the Queen of Enchantment's curse meant that we were the only dwarves left on the plane! Terrible loss, but at least various Princesses were freed from their fey forms at the same time."

"Don't believe everything a leaf tells you"

- Dirk, explaining practical adventuring to Angelica.

He made no comment about an apparent holiday five of the party members took at the Haven of the Sea Goddess before the mission was complete. Party members also refused to confirm reports that the visit was paid for by plunder from the Kingdom of Gold, and encouraged by the Kingdom of Lust. "You're just jealous, and I've got an amulet to protect me from that, so sod off" was one retort. "It's no use giving me an icy stare, Princess Snow White safe guards me from those." was another.

Beastmistress Olga was keen to describe details of the wedding that the party arranged. "The thirteen Princesses had put on a great show, and everyone looked splendid! The hats were especially fine. Then it was all messed up by that nasty Queen - who couldn't show her invitation, I might add - firing the disintegration bolt at the bride. The groom did the right thing, took the hit. Anyway, after we had sorted out the old hag, we swept him up, and continued with the groom in his stead. Lovely tradition that."

The rest of the party were apparently "off to have some serious words with the smallest prince's mother", and not available for interviews.

Dark Circle Q&A

We asked Guild Security for answers to some commonly asked questions regarding the Dark Circle. We present these as a service to the misinformed and all those who have recently joined the Guild.

1. What IS the Dark Circle?

It is a roughly circular region within which those Undead entities which are normally harmed by sunlight can walk aboard during the day without harm, contrary to natural law. Within this area the stars look brighter at night.

2. What areas does it cover?

It covers much of the former Brastor Holdings, the upper Sweetwater, part of the Wilderlands of Gilarni, the Vale of Morin, the Angarwold, the Thornewood, and a large part of the Sea of Grass, including the ruins of Bethsalem. It has been pushed back somewhat since its initial expansion and now is now approximately 450 miles in diameter.

3. Where is the approximate centre of the Dark Circle?

The Dark Circle is centred some 300 miles east of Seagate.

Answers to Last Issue's Puzzles:

Novice Lessons:

- Moonday, Miss Prickle, Horse-riding, Room 14
- Duesday, Baron Coco, Hobbitish, Room 8
- W'ansday, Prince Idlewild, Elvish, Room 3
- Th'rsday, Mr Hogan, Flying, Room 12
- Frysdays, Miss Hydrophilia, Swimming, Room 21

Riddles:

First: Chess

Second: Flag

Third: Galley (Ship)

4. *What structures and entities are known or believed to be at its centre?*

The Dark Circle is known to be centred on a structure known as the Fortress of Masada. It is thought to be controlled by an exiled Drow Priestess named Rashak, or the Necromancer of Massada. However there are speculations that she might in turn be controlled by a powerful entity known as the Gaunt Man.

5. *How did the Dark Circle come into existence?*

Unknown. It is possible that Rashak owns an item which generates the effect, that it is somehow generated by her Fortress, or that it is the result of some dread ritual.

6. *When did it originate? What caused it to suddenly expand?*

The effect was first encountered nearly two decades ago in the Sea of Grass, but it expanded rapidly in the summer of 800, almost surrounding Seagate. However, it has since been fought back, and the edge is now nearly a hundred miles from Seagate.

7. *What effect does the Dark Circle have on people who enter?*

There are no known direct effects on people, unless you either destroy Undead, or get killed. If you destroy Undead in the circle, you suffer nightmares. If you die, you come back after a night passes as an Undead. There are a number of nasty wasting diseases which are endemic in the area, possibly spread by the Undead.

8. *What effect does the Dark Circle appear to have on Undead within it?*

It makes them much tougher. For example, they can inspire fear far more effectively than usual.

9. *What additional powers does the Dark Circle appear to confer on undead within it?*

They can drain your willpower with a touch. Hit them and you may start losing strength as well. When you destroy them, they are known to explode.

10. *How may individuals be protected against these powers?*

There are some rare talismans called Amulets of Jasper which do provide some protection against draining, and do appear to work. Also the Amulet of Amethyst helps against the nightmares, and the Amulet of Aquileaus against fear. The most useful protection against the diseases and draining effects is Holy Water and it's a good idea to take plenty.

11. *What does the Dark Circle do to normally protective items such as amulets?*

The normal range of amulets - Jade and Chalcedony - which repel Undead are ineffective.

12. *What precautions should Guild members take before entering the Dark Circle?*

Be extraordinarily careful - remember even the lesser undead can drain you - so don't get hit. Take lots of Holy Water, and

Amulets of Jasper (if you can get them) and Amulets of Amethyst and Aquileaus.

The Adventurer's Guide

Tips for success

If you're having trouble with a needle trap try poking it with a nice hard sausage - preferably somebody else's sausage.

If you suspect a gas trap stand well clear and use telekinesis... Or a very long pole.

If it's a pit trap, span the pit - use a plank, a spare table or door, or rope. Binders and Earth mages are often good at instant bridges.

Tables and bunks are also useful against falling ceiling traps - as are Earth mages.

Use your dungeon against itself - they're often full of stray items and materials you can use to make dungeoneering activities easier. Being creative - more creative than the dungeon's architect - is the key. Speaking of which, always take a thief, a good set of lock-picks, and a battering ram.

Spikes are really handy too - and never go dungeoneering without a good length of knotted rope.

Remember that, lacking magical vision, Forbidding can only be seen by those whose Name is in it. Useful for things like ambushing riders, as horses won't normally approach a shimmering wall.

Want To Make 30,000 Pennies ?

I wish to purchase a unicorn horn to give total protection from poison, however rather than carrying about an inconveniently long, four feet adult horn strapped across my back I would like a baby unicorn's horn which will be far more portable and discrete. I would prefer the horn be taken from a snow white foal with glistening eyes just before it takes its first step and be cleaned and presented upon a silver tray.

Given that it is spring it seems the right time to ask for the hunters out there to sharpen your knives and the witches to cast your summon enchanted creature spells. It is my understanding that the person who actually kills the unicorn may be cursed and that unicorn mothers may be given a rather stout fight and so will be willing to provide appropriate recompense of thirty thousand pieces of silver.

Happy hunting

"Look, I'm not *THE* Faery King. I'm just *A* Faery King." - Dramus

"Or a King who's just a fairy?" - Arnaud



Starflower's Bestiary

(Lady Starflower had not returned from adventure at the time of publication, although we are assured that she was alive and well - albeit somewhat enlarged - when last sighted, off plane. Therefore we present this article, one she set aside for such an emergency).

Gruesome Gargoyles

It has been a fair while since I have seen a gargoyle in the flesh as it were. Historians will tell you that at one time there was a fashion for turning gargoyles to stone and using their corpses to adorn architecture. Perhaps the objective was scaring peasants. Whatever the case, the species is now somewhat diminished in numbers, although reports have been received of gargoyles sighted over ruins in the Fastness of Girwyllan, and on the Isle of Palestrina.

Gargoyles are roughly humanoid in form, albeit with leathery wings, sharp claws, a horn, a tail, and spiked elbows and knees. Thus a gargoyle might be mistaken for a minor devil or daemon, if it were not for their skin, which is always stony in appearance. Upon contact it feels very rough, and generally quite cool to the touch, especially when compared to the burning heat of many devils. Typically gargoyles have deep-set red eyes; and sharp, small teeth.

This stony hide gives the gargoyle its major advantages in combat - the ability to conceal itself very successfully against any background of rock or worked stone; and an unusually high level of protection. Many a sword blow will be deflected by a gargoyle's rocky integument, as if the warrior was hitting a rock with a stick. A gargoyle can hold itself so still it appears to be a statue. An observer must look very closely to ascertain that the gargoyle is really alive.

This does bring the question of whether or not gargoyles are living creatures at all. The librarians classify the gargoyle among the fantastical avians - a term which means little more than "magical beasts that fly". It is apparent that gargoyles have strong connections with elemental earth. They do not bleed when struck, and have no need to breathe. They appear to be devils made of stone. Such a lithous thing surely could not fly except by means of powerful innate magics. Perhaps they were spawned in some long-forgotten alchemical experiment - perhaps someone made the mistake of feeding elemental earth to an imp? The fact remains that gargoyles are tough, intelligent opponents, who will attack without compunction, and without warning.

In combat, gargoyles usually attack in packs, using their natural weapons - their claws, horn, and teeth. They occasionally use melee weapons such as the vicious hooked sword shown, but it is rare indeed for a gargoyle to be seen using missile weapons or magic. This suggests the simplest method to bring them a pack of gargoyles is for warriors to engage them, and to fight defensively while the mages shoot them with missiles and spells. This becomes somewhat more problematic when you consider first that they may well attack from concealment, suddenly and without warning, and secondly that they can fly. Adding the aerial element

can confuse any combat. If you're deliberately hunting gargoyles, or in an area known to be infested with them, make sure you have fighters at both the front and the rear of your party, camp where you have cover from aerial attacks, and make sure you have heavy weapons like glaives and double-handed swords which deal enough damage at a blow to cut through that stony skin.

There is one final thing to remember. Gargoyles are often the minions of denizens even more evil and far more powerful. When they attack look to see what stands behind them, who they are guarding and acting as sword fodder for. You might just want to concentrate your fire not on the gargoyles, but on their vile master. And how to deal with that would have to be a whole other article.

The Stone Fiend - The Gargoyle



GOLD!



That's right DWARVES, get in touch with your inner feelings! I can, for an appropriate fee, teach the Generic True Name of GOLD! Not the wishy-washy Alusian type of GOLD, but REAL GOLD! GOLD from the KINGDOM OF GOLD! Personally, I've found this knowledge to help in understanding of my true self. Now, this understanding can be yours too!

Contact WordSmith at the Merchant's Guild.



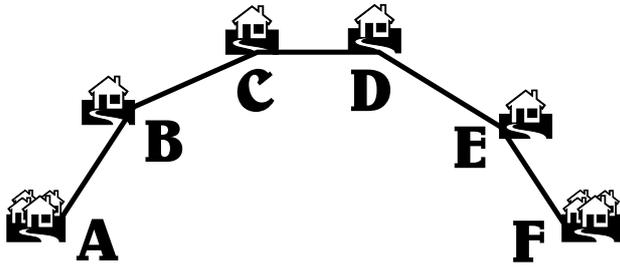
"Look, we can't trust him!" - Dramus

"But he's so nicely spoken..." - Morgan the Orc

"For a HELLHOUND!" - Dramus

The Puzzle Column

An Inn Thing



A party of adventurers travelled from the towns lettered A to the town labelled F on the map, a journey of five days. On each night, including the first and last, they stayed at an Inn, in one of the towns lettered A to F. From the clues given below, can you name the town and the hostelry at each stage of the journey, and identify the landlord in each case?

Clues

1 On one of the intermediate days (B to C, C to D or D to E) they travelled from the Blue Dragon in Rimsdale to Jade's hostelry, the Lazy Unicorn.

2 They stayed at the White Hart on the second night after staying at Pippin's inn.

3 Town B is Trembleigh.

4 Starbright's establishment is in Butterwell, which is the stage before the Hooded Man.

5 Arathorn is mine host at the inn marked E on the plan.

6 The Gryphon's Head is a later stage on the journey than Jeniah's house, while Frankington is two stages later than Collingwood.

7 The Golden Crystal is not run by Christophe, and is not located in Overhill.

Riddles

Gold in a leather bag, swinging on a tree,
 Money after honey in its time.
 Ills of a scurvy crew cured by the sea,
 Reason in its season but no rhyme.

A hundred brothers lie next to each other;
 Each white and fine — they've only one spine.
 I am the tongue that lies between two.
 Remove me to gather their wisdom to you.

Get the Power of Fire and Light!

Fire College Invested Items:
 Dragonflames Rk 10
 Weapon of Flames Rk 10
 Also Rank 8 Weaponry.



Now with added Radiance for
 Positive effect on dark creatures.

Prices negotiable.
 Please contact Flamis at the Guild.

Dur: "We got to find a Princess. What do we need?"

Dirk: "Lust! Coercion! Gold!"

Dur: "Ahhhh.... romance isn't dead..."



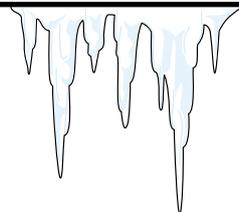
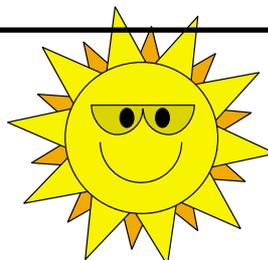
**"DON'T LET IT BOTHER YOU.
 LOTS OF FIGHTERS HAVE SWORDS THAT ARE
 SMARTER THAN THEY ARE."**

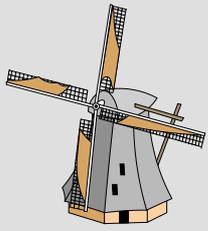
What's Hot

- Solid Viscera
- Flying with a Dragon
- Dwarven only pubs with drinking troughs
- Planes where all dwarves are Princes
- The Kingdom of Gold
- Making up a new ritual, and succeeding with it!
- Hypnotising Queen's Messengers
- Bedwarmers
- Unicorn Horns
- Having your very own breath weapon

What's Not

- Liquefied Viscera
- Flying into trees while fighting dragons
- Carrying monster summoning helmets
- Carrying blood lust axes into fights with dragons who call truces
- 8 year olds with Major Curse
- The Congo - except it's too damned hot (Amber)
- Killing Unicorns
- Being on the receiving end of said breath weapon - especially when she's an ice dragon!





The Rumour Mill

From the Weird Files...

We're reliably informed that Arwen returned from off plane over a week ago, and Guild Security still haven't let her go. Between spitting up silvery slime she's telling strange tales about flying metal golems, deities holding parties, man-eating jungles, giant sandworms, and Starflower turning into a full-sized ice dragon. We don't know what to believe, but we're going with the hallucination theory.

And about the same time Grendel vanished abruptly from his home on the Sea Goddess Haven. We're wondering where that torc of his finally teleported HIM!

Father Rowan has recently become the subject of an amusing prophecy - apparently he's to marry a Prince of Araby. Funny, we thought the good father was already happily married with children.

Speaking of faeries, Dramus is definitely getting a bit above his station. Our least favourite necromancer (we don't have any favourite necromancers at the Times) has been seen trying on coronets for size. Hope they find one large enough to accommodate him.

And speaking of accommodation, just how many lady loves does our friend Kryan intend to have? One for every face? For an illusionist of his calibre, that can be a very large number.

On the subject of numbers, just how many does Baron Silverfoam have in his collection?

Lastly, we're a bit concerned about Henri Stanleigh, our intrepid Terranovan correspondent. He was last seen screaming as he was being put on board ship, "I don't want to go back..."

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sirs

Just remember everyone - we aint the editors any more, but we still have the charcoal etchings and sculptures, so don't nobody get any bright ideas.

Sabastian and Ishamael

PS: Page three hobbits! Guarantee a circulation increase.

Ed: No return address was included.

Wiccan Amulets for Sale

- Amulets of Luck
- increase defence and magic resistance.
- Amulets of Jade
- hold undead at bay.
- Amulets of Carbuncle
- reduce damage from poison



Restorative potions also available.

Please contact Thom at the Guild.

Water College Potions for Sale

Waters of Healing Rk 11 - 500 sp

Waters of Strength Rk 10 - 1000 sp

Please contact Aqualina at the Guild.



The Last Word

The editors would like to express their grateful thanks to all contributors to this season's issue of the Seagate Times.

We remind you that we reserve the right to edit all contributions and to determine what shall and shall not appear in print. Please note that opinions appearing in this document are not necessarily those of the editors or staff of the Seagate Times.

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