

Pasifika in Peril

Scribe notes by Flamis (Jacqui Smith)

The Adventurers

Flamis (Jacqui Smith) - I am a Fire Mage of some repute, most noted for blasting the enemy with DragonFlames. I am the party scribe. Oh, and I'm definitely a blonde.

Sven (William Dymock) - Male Human Water Mage. Comes from Svenway. Likes to bog down opponents, or failing that, hit them lots. He's also bossy and rude! Party Leader.

Silverfoam (Michael Parkinson) - Elven Namer. Really experienced. Party Military Scientist.

Viola (Bridget) - Female Human Illusionist. Likes to flash the bad guys.

Thorn (Helen) - Female Human Fighter. Icky-thump!

Grif (Zane) - Male (I think) Dwarven Air Mage. Into lightning and hammering.

Caine (Scott Raymond) - Male Monk and Martial Artist. Throws his weapons away and hits things with bare hands.

Session One

1 Frost 800

There were any number of interesting adventures going out this time, though not many seemed to have much to do with this Dark Circle business. I decided that I might instead try for some midwinter sunshine, and chose an adventure out to Aqualina's homeland, Pasifika. I did have some misgivings when they told us the meeting room would be in the Water College. There was something fishy about this, and it turned out to be our employers. They were themselves a team of adventurers, merfolk and aquatic elves, from the Pasifikan Guild. I didn't even know they had a Guild. Aqualina never said anything.

They were:

Lethe - Male aquatic elf Mind Mage

Urewa - Merman Namer

Aquana - Mermaid Bard

Kaoh - Female Aquatic Elf E&E

Mizuno - Mermaid water mage/healer

Urewa, their party leader, explained that the islands of Pasifika were in peril - the ancient city was threatening to rise from the depths, causing eruptions, earthquakes and tidal waves, which would surely drown the islands and destroy the mer city. They had found some legends which suggested methods of restricting the damage which had been

used once before. We would need to find the Fire stones, now scattered and lost. They didn't even know how many were needed. Just that one of them was said to be somewhere in the Seventh City, the Hidden City of Phila Delphia in Terranova. Another had been stolen and taken somewhere, possibly offplane.

It had become apparent to the aquatic adventurers that this would involve some travel in places far from the ocean, places they couldn't go. So they came to hire us. In return we would each receive an item from their vaults, something they couldn't use, and we could. Sounded like a pretty good deal to me. Meanwhile they would go hunt down some special oils and rocks, which could be used in a ritual to prevent the earthquake and retrieve other firestones.

We rapidly came to the conclusion that these guys didn't know anywhere near enough about what we had to do, so we set about doing some astrology and such like. I did a flamesight ritual using the firestone they had brought, and performed a ritual of Conversing with Other Selves to find out if one of my alter-egos knew anything. We also got an astrology reading to find out the fastest way to get to Phila Delphia. Here's what we got:

1) *What is the quickest and fastest way to Philedelphia*

Take a mad dash across plains of peril
Will you need a thing of beryl?
Beware the creatures that sap your will
Reach the gate where all is still

Even though you have the key
The first portal, the right one may not be
Follow the thread to where it leads
Until a connection can be made to succeed

2) *Reading on a firestone*

It was there but now it's not
To find it go south a lot
Find the land of the long white cloud
Where the Gate Keeper can be found

Journey back to its current place
Remove it carefully, leave no trace
Destiny says this must be done
So past and future can be one

3) *Reading on another firestone*

My first is in ocean but is not in the sea

My second is the sea that follows the bee
My third is a drink that is made from a leaf
My fourth appears twice in a Pasifikan drink
My fifth is an old measurement useful for length
My whole is the place where the object now lies
octal?

It can't be reached by conventional means
Instead travel through the stuff of dreams
Emerge in a land similar to this
But do not assume or your target you'll miss

Wait for the person who can weave
The way that the tentacled ones can
This person can send you but there is a price
The name must be known to do this plan

4) *Reading on the ritual*

Take two stones from each side of the fault
Find the oil that'll make anything slip
Coat each end and then sit and wait
For the earth to move, shake and flip

Go to the spot where the epicentre be
With arcane words slide one on the other
If all done right there should be sympathy
And the fault will slide, not stick together

5) *How should the firestones be arranged?*

Vision of geometric shape with epicentre in the middle.

6) *What happened when they were used once before?*

Waves bouncing off a wall of fire getting slower and smaller with each bounce. The wall flared as each wave hit.

7) *Where can the firestones be found?*

'Beauty - in the night'

We spent the rest of that day getting ourselves organised. Kaoh did Greater Enchantments on those of us who could afford it, and there were Lesser Enchantments all round. We choose our party leader, military scientist and scribe, and made plans for the following day.

It was pretty obvious that the quickest way to Phila Delphia was to use the Beth Salem portals, but they're on the Plain of Grass, which meant travelling through a fair chunk of the Dark Circle. We'd been given a portal key for Phila Delphia, but told that the Pasifika portals were misbehaving, fading in and out, which meant we had to find another Gate. I thought of the Pellucidar Gate, but that was away to the

north. Too far. I figured that with an Enchanter to boost the duration on Wildfires, and a carefully chosen route, we could get to the Beth Salem portals in one run. And it would be a lot safer than flying. Flying over the Dark Circle is BAD. Walking is worse. Running at 40 miles an hour, we'd only be likely to come under attack at the Portals themselves.

Session 2

2 Frost 800 - Seagate to Beth Salem to Pellucidar

I was right. The undead couldn't touch us as we ran like fire across the treetops. And the portal circle was easy to spot on a low grassy mound above the ruined city. The weird thing was the perfectly circular lake right in the centre of the ruins. We didn't stop to investigate, but ran straight for the portals.

Silverfoam checked the auras of the six trilithon portals. One was flickering intermittently - that had to be the Pasifika gate. Another, marked with a square, had a constantly bright aura, indicating a functionally portal. We tried our diamond key in the trilithon for Phila Delphia. No change in the aura.

The key at the other end had to be out. And that wasn't the only problem. Sven spotted movement in the ruins. And a black cloud headed our way. The Dark Circle had noticed us.

The movement resolved itself into a small army of skeletons heading up the hill. I prepared Dragonflames, ready to blast them if they got close. Sven was ahead of me, and the ground below the undead turned to bog. "That should hold them..." he called. But still more came out of the ruins. He cast again, and the whole hillside started to give way. "Mudslide! Time we're out of here!"

Giff grabbed our portal key, as we ran for the active gate, the one with the square. Through the portal we stepped....

....into sudden damp heat, and the noise of thousands of insects. We were standing in another square, trilithon portals on three sides, a great ruined city on the fourth side. Above us was not the sky but the distant roof of a tremendous cavern. I knew at once where we were. Pellucidar, the City Below. Behind the portals was jungle as far as the eye could see. A huge pyramid rose beyond the city, on its summit, tiny black winged shapes lifted into the air. 'Pterries,' I called aloud and pointed, much to the consternation of the party. I explained where we were, and that the only thing to worry about here was the wildlife, no problem to experienced adventurers like us. There was good eating here too, I recalled from Phaeton's stories. Down by the lake, there

should be mud dwelling critters called "Lunchus Valliumus" after the adventurer who first found them - or trilobites for their three bite snackability.

They made an excellent dinner, and we settled down for a relatively peaceful night, only interrupted by a visit from a snake, which became breakfast, and by the purring of a small cat which found its way into my sleeping bag.

Session 3

3 Frost 800 - Pellucidar to Malacandra

We purified, cast defence spells, had breakfast, packed up and headed for the portals. Our Phila Dephia key still wouldn't work, leaving us with the choice of going back the way we came, or trying the other active gate, one marked with a triangle.

We stepped through the portal....

..... and shivered. It was cold, and the air was dry. We stood in on a vast barren plain, near a walled city. It was near sunrise, the first light of dawn touching the top of the pyramid which dominated the city. A gigantic volcano rose from the plain to the southwest of the city. But we had little time to study the landscape. This city was not uninhabited, and its portals were guarded. We were challenged by two humans in a language none of us understood. Then horns blared from the city walls. It didn't take much to recognise the sound of an alarm. The guards turned to the east and drew their weapons. More guards came running from the city gates. We looked and saw a swarm of four-armed goblinoids approaching rapidly on six-legged riding beasts. "Thark," said a guard, looking at us. We got the drift, and prepared our weapons.

As we moved into fighting order, I prepared and cast Weapon of Flames on my staff and Thorn's sword. By then one group of the foe were in bow and spell range. Viola let loose a flash of light. Caine shot arrow after arrow into the enemy spell-caster, while I sent him a bolt of fire. He still got his spell off and my guts told me what it was. "Necrosis! Get the damned Necromancer!"

Thorn, Sven, Caine, and Grif formed a fighting V in front of me, with Silverfoam and Viola behind. They readied melee weapons while I blasted the oncoming foe with Dragonflames, flash-frying the Necromancer and scorching others of his company. One of the enemy charged, and I was grateful for Grif's defence spell as he just missed me. Then it was all a melee. I think I slew two more Thark with

my flaming staff, as Caine fought bravely at my side. Thorn accounted for another, as did Grif. Then the battle was over. The horns blared in victory.

We found that some of our companions in arms spoke a form of Elvish. The Thark attacked here rarely, and there must be an encampment nearby. They would take the bodies for food, and captives to be eaten later. We spent the day healing our wounds, and planning a raid on the encampment. It was easy enough to see which when the Thark had fled. Then it was a matter of guessing the distance. Our hosts were impressed when I pulled a large Crystal of Vision out of my pack (along with a small cat, and several somewhat damaged ration bars). I was lucky and managed to sight on the Thark encampment first shot. They were roasting the corpses of brave human warriors for their feast! Others were being kept captive behind the camp in a shallow cave in the face of the escarpment rearing up there. We had to rescue them!

Session 4

4 Frost 800 - Malacandra

We formulated a plan (actually it was mostly Silverfoam's plan). It got much easier when I told them about the extra-spicy fire elementals I was able to summon with the aid of my Rod of Fires. Then we waited until the height of the feast, and flew for the escarpment - aided by some of the city's finest warriors, mages and healers. I spent the next hour hidden from view, summoning the fire elemental. It came and bent readily to my control. Then Viola cast an illusory wall to protect the captives, while Silverfoam rendered the elemental undetectable. Then I sent the elemental out to lay waste to the camp. Confusion reigned among the horrified Tharks, then death, as their tents burst into flame. They ran, only to find themselves confronted by Walls of Fire and Smoke. Some fell on their own spears, crying out to Ares, their heathen god. Their Shaman, whom we suspect might have been a Wiccan, tried to cast at the elemental, but collapsed, half a dozen arrows piercing his corpse.

When all was still, I had the elemental extinguish the remaining fires, at then sent it back to its home with thanks. I got the vague impression that it had enjoyed itself. We rounded up the remaining terrified mounts - the natives called them Thoats. Then we released the captives, ensured ourselves that all the Tharks were truly dead, and rested until dawn, while the camp cooled.

In the cruel light of sunrise, the Thark encampment

was a less gruesome sight than many battlefields I have seen. The fire had seen to that. But it was still a depressing job, sifting through the remains for valuables, looking at the destruction I had wrought here. It was the pervasive stink of burned flesh that got me the most. Still, we found a number of amulets, most of Luck, but some others. I claimed an Amulet of Carbuncle for myself.

We returned to the city, the once captives helping us to herd the Thoats. We sold them in the city, and then reported to the Generals, who were well pleased with us. We were gifted with native clothing, light but warm, and invited to bathe and rest before the feast that evening. There we were presented with tokens of honour and gratitude; silver armbands engraved with laurel leaves. Of course, all Sven wanted to know was how many silver pennies it was worth. Talk about mercenary!

5 Frost 800 Malacandra to Perelandra to Phila Delphia

Next morning we woke refreshed and ready to continue our adventures. Taking our leave of the people of Malacandra, we returned to the portals, and Silverfoam tested the aura of each gate. We found that the Phila Delphia key was not working here either, but the gate marked with a cross was active. Silverfoam divinated that portal and concluded that it went to Perelandra - on the wet planet. Ugh!

We prepared ourselves and stepped through the portal...

...onto warm sand under a bright white clouded sky. Waves washed up the beach not far away, almost touching the trilithons. A trench had been dug to one portal so that the water swirled around its base. This proved to be the gate to Pasifika. The city itself was underwater nearby. We experimented with our gate key, and were greatly pleased to find that it worked! The way to Phila Delphia was open at last. Silverfoam prepared to divinate the gate, while I got lunch and fed the cat. There were trilobites in the sand here - and spiral shaped shellfish which Silverfoam named ammonites, and tasted of squid. They made a rather tasty seafood chowder.

After lunch, and after Silverfoam confirmed that the portal with the diamond key did indeed lead to Phila Delphia, we packed our gear, readied our weapons, and walked through the gate...

... onto a wide windswept circular stone plaza. A

chest-high wall ran around its edge, and at its centre was a stone ziggurat, surmounted by a block-shaped temple. Grey clouds swept above us, and below as well, as we saw when we looked over the wall. It seemed that this city floated among the clouds. "Seemed" because the clouds below were purely illusory. The Air mage was ecstatic, saying that the whole place felt like a mountain top. That was until he spotted the two stationary tornados which appeared near the base of the pyramid. Air elementals, and really big ones. "Who are you?" said one. "What do you want?" said the other. We answered with our names, and then Sven said we'd come for the Fire Stone to save Pasifika. That seemed to satisfy them, because they went away.

The only way in appeared to be the doors to the temple at the summit of the pyramid, so we climbed all the way up the steps, our dwarf friend becoming more and more excited. The golden doors were closed, but were not warded or trapped. Sven opened the doors, revealing the hall beyond, dominated by a giant-sized throne. The dwarf could barely be restrained from running forward into the room, so Caine cast slept on him, while we checked for more auras. The throne glowed intensely of air magic, the doorway of something else. Silverfoam and Caine checked the doorway, to see it passing it would kill or have any detrimental effect. Suddenly I realised that that was the wrong question, and read the aura myself, learning that the effect would be "cleansing", and that the nature of the cleansing would be to remove all magics in effect. I most certainly did not want to go that way.

Silverfoam divinated the doorway, guarded by Thorn, Viola and the sleeping Grif, while Sven, Caine and I explored the top of the pyramid. Around the back, we found another set of doors, this time of silver, and not inclined to cleansing people of their magic stuff. Not warded at all it appeared, so we woke Grif and let him through. He had only taken a step or two past the door when he vanished. Then reappeared some moments later. It proved to be a teleportation ward.

We explored the top floor of the temple and found no more hazards. Hidden doors led into the back of the main hall. Finally we let Grif at the big chair. He looked so happy I began to wonder if we'd ever get him down again.

Session 5

6 Frost 800 - Phila Delphia

Grif had gone to sleep in the throne, and I was just about to start getting dinner ready, when there was a

shout from the rear. Sven had spotted a stranger, a person in blue robes, poking his head around the door. Of course he gave chase and we all had to follow. I threw the cooking things back into my pack, much to the consternation of a certain feline, while Caine prodded Grif awake. Then we all headed off after Sven, who'd disappeared through the teleporter ward by then.

We caught up with him some levels down, where he'd stopped for a very obvious reason. Sven was confronting a whole platoon of what were plainly temple guards, all in blue leathers. It didn't help that none of them spoke Common. It was a stand-off until one of them was dispatched, and returned with a young man in deep blue robes. He cast a spell, and then he could talk to us. Must be a Bard, like Aqualina's friend with the funny accent.

Sven again explained our mission and the Head Priest was sent for. After some more discussion it was all sorted out. The people in the floating city were keen to help their compatriots in Pasifika. They would give us the Fire Stone. They'd also help by loaning us a device which would stabilise the portal from Perelandra to Pasifika. It would help them as well, by allowing them to set up trade with the Pasifikans. Turned out that this city was actually floating above one of the mountain ranges in Terra Nova and was hidden to protect it from the Spawn. Some of their adventurers would sometimes go below to explore, and they were able to show us some maps. I made copies for the Guild library.

We were told that these cities had been established soon after the War of Tears as some of the elves had feared that the humans may become extinct. However, after many centuries, they lost contact with each other for various reasons such as Serendip being invaded by giant insects and having to be abandoned. So we told them of what our Guild adventurers had found out.

Finally we got dinner and some sleep.

7 Frost 800

Phila Delphia to Perelandra to Pasifika

Next morning, we said farewell to the nice Philadelphians and left through the portal to Perelandra. One of their number was coming with us, a non-mage Ranger called lolaus, who was going to try to find out more about the current state of the other cities from our Guild library.

At Perelandra, we placed the device around the

portal key to Pasifika. I wasn't so keen on this idea. I know I was about to get very very wet - a state I detest! Sven kindly cast water breathing on us, and water proofing on our gear. Without telling us, so I didn't get a chance to take the soap out first! Sven didn't seem to even know what soap is!

Of course I did get wet. The Pasifikan gates are submerged fifty feet beneath the surface. They were guarded too, by some very well-armed and wary merfolk. We told them who we were, and asked where the Pasifikan Guild was to be found, so they gave us directions.

Fortunately, Aqualina had managed to teach me to dog-paddle, so I made it to the surface easy enough. Sven conjured up a boat thingy out of coral and stuff, which was good, but I had to get wet again to visit the Pasifikan Guild, where we handed over our Fire Stone, and got some maps of the islands to the south of here. You see, we'd figured out that the next stone to look for would best be the one lost to the south of here - in the Land of the Long White Cloud.

8 Frost 800 Pasifika and Parts Southward

In the morning, we set sail for parts due southward. Or more literally, set mage current by day, and mage wind by night. Silverfoam's skill as a navigator helped us keep on course, as did the glow on the northern horizon. What was going on up there, I hated to think, although my children were staying safe with their grandparents in Ranke - with instructions to get them off plane to Lyonesse if the Dark Circle started expanding towards Silverstream.

It was a long journey, some thousands of miles across mostly empty ocean once we got past the southernmost island of Pasifika. I amused myself practicing short bow, casting my Flame Sniper variant of Weapon of Flame and shooting seagulls. They told me to be careful and not fire at an albatross. I suppose that was that really big bird I didn't target. Hey, I might not know what an albatross is, but I know what a seagull isn't. And that wasn't! I also spent time learning basic elvish from Silverfoam.

20 Frost 800

Stratosland (aka Zeyland)

Land at last! Grif spotted it first, so he got naming rights, but Sven insisted it be called Svenburg. Boy, has he got an ego problem! I'm not calling it that and I'm the official scribe and mapmaker. Our astrology reading said it was the Land of the Long White Cloud - so maybe we should call it Stratosland. There was a tall conical mountain

which I think must be a volcano. Nestling at its base was a village with a wooden palisade beside a sandy beach. They can't have any Fire mages here if they think a wooden palisade is any defence.

We guessed that we'd need some help in understanding the local language so Swen summoned a dolphin. From it, we discovered that a merfolk adventurer was in the vicinity who had been studying the locals. So we went and found her. Her name was Neri and she agreed to help translate.

When we approached the village, several groups of natives in linen kilts and feathered cloaks approached us in canoes, waving clubs and wooden spears at us. They obviously thought they were scary, but I've seen much scarier things. Neri knew that they were speaking a form of Pasifikan, and that's how we managed to establish communication. After we convinced them that we weren't hostile, they let us ashore, and took us into the largest of the wooden buildings in the village. I asked them their name for this land. They called it 'Zeyland' so that's what we will call it. Neri had to be carried in a tub of water as she did not have the ability to change her tail to legs. I had to admire the skill in the carvings on the centrepiece and the beams inside, but they sure were ugly. Like gargoyles on churches I suppose.

Inside there was a group of elderly natives, presumably the Village Chief and his advisors. After they greeted us, one of the warriors indicated that we should sit in front of the chief, and they brought food for all of us, mostly steamed roots and fowl. Following the meal we got to explain our mission to the elders, but we didn't get far, because they knew nothing of the Fire Stone we were seeking. That was, before I remembered the astrology reading had mentioned something about a "Gatekeeper". Then they spoke animatedly and pointed in the direction of the mountain. Obviously we would have some climbing to look forward to. However, they also warned us that the mountain was "tapu" which meant something like sacred, because of the monster, the taniwha which lived there.

Session 6

20 Frost 800 - Zeyland

There wasn't so much climbing after all - Silverfoam suggested we explore the mountain by flying, and there didn't seem to any good reason not to. We took the mermaid back to the beach, considering that she wasn't exactly built for mountaineering - by flight or otherwise.

We left the native village the same day, there being some hours remaining before dark, and surveyed the mountain, employing a spiral search pattern for efficiency. As we passed over the forest I thought I might have spotted one of the large flightless birds we had been served for lunch, and with which Viola had become fascinated. She had wanted to take one back to Seagate to train as a riding beast, until the rest of the party pointed out that it would be much more practical to take an egg - or several. I had other ideas, such as the possibility of domesticating them for culinary purposes. I could just see Basalic's reaction to drumsticks the size of his arm - and as for the omelette potential... But we didn't stop.

The other interesting feature that Silverfoam and I both noted was a flat area on the side of the mountain about a third of the way from the summit to the tree line. Something about it seemed unnatural somehow. We noted it for future reference and looked for a camp site. I found a good spot, a crevice near a stream, with a fine view. Silverfoam and I were just checking out the cleft when there was a whoomp of displaced air behind us. I turned, and there was a large grey object which looked remarkably like Sven's battle barge we had travelled south in. Now I know where all those legends of ships found on mountain tops come from - water mages with instant boat spells. But it made adequate enough hostelry, especially when warmed by my increase temperature spell.

21 Frost 800 - Zeyland

The night passed uneventfully. After breakfast Grif started casting flight spells, but back-fired on the first attempt, wiping the spell from his mind. That meant we had little choice but to divide the party, if we wished to accomplish anything useful that morning. Silverfoam remained with Grif to perform a remove curse ritual, while Sven and Caine stood guard.

The rest of us had the task of scouting ahead. I cast Wildfires on Thorn, Viola, Iolaus and myself, and we went for a run. We spiralled up, following the contours of the mountain. After a hour or so of nothing but rock and snow, we came upon a cave and slowed to examine it. Suddenly, a hairy humanoid figure leapt down in front of us. I had no idea what it was, just that it wanted us for lunch, and leapt aside, then broke into a dead run. It was more that a little surprised by the speed with which we fled, and missed completely.

When we reported back to camp Sven was most critical, wanting to know why we didn't kill it. I

pointed out that it was not the job of scouts to engage in combat, and was most gratified when both Silverfoam and Caine backed me up.

After lunch, I cast Wildfires on the rest of the party and Immolate on me (Viola had a triple, and didn't need redoing), we went back. There was no sign of the hairy humanoid - which we later discovered was a yeti, just its tracks. So Sven approached the cave. A winged beast emerged, tail dripping venom. A wyvern! So this was the taniwha. Battle ensued. Sven got in some hefty blows, while Thorn slipped around to its rear and I cast weapon of flames on my staff. It was a swift, but bloody fight, Thorn dealing the final blow, just ahead of me.

Then we checked out the cave, and found what appeared to have once been the equipment of an adventuring party, including a huge sword which took Thorn's fancy, a set of vambraces which looked very much like they might suit me, and some coinage engraved with the name "Lord Gilead".

We explored further, and found the remains of the yeti. Apparently it hadn't exactly missed lunch after all. It had been lunch for the wyvern. A little further on, and we realised that we were approaching the area we had spotted yesterday. We slowed our pace, and advanced cautiously. Suddenly a tall female figure bearing a huge key, surmounted with a spherical red gem, appeared in front of us.

"You must be the Gatekeeper," I said. She asserted that she was, and that we were expected. She went on to tell us that her name was Sesuna, and that she was a chronomancer, and the Guardian of the Timegate that stood behind her. What had appeared to be an ordinary, if unusually shaped, boulder was abruptly revealed to be a circular portal. Through it we could see the streets of a city, similar to Malachandra save that the light was different. The people were dressed in Ellenic style, most in robes, though some wore leather armour. Sesuna explained that the city was some thousands of years in the past, and that the Firestone we sought had disappeared from a museum there at that time. Presumably because we had taken it... would take it... whatever. Time travel makes my head ache. The good news was that the magic of the portal was such that we should be able to speak and read the language used at our destination.

Session 7

21 Frost 800 - Zeyland

Late Spring to Mid-Autumn ??? Ancient Pasifika

21 Frost 800 - Zeyland

We made the usual preparations, including disguise illusions to make us look like natives, and then stepped through the portal...

.... and found ourselves in a sunny meadow. In the near distance we could see a great city surmounted by a pyramid like those we had seen before. The City nestled beside the shore of a great ocean, but if we were on an island it was a very large one. Silverfoam checked the aura of the grass and established that we were still on Alusia. That was all we had time to take in before the local constabulary arrived - on a flying raft. This was novel, especially since none of the guards appeared to be a mage. The captain announced that they were aware that we had arrived from elsewhere by portal and demanded that we come quietly. Since it would have been counterproductive to do otherwise we boarded the raft and they took us to a stone building labeled "Pasifika Customs".

They checked us over thoroughly, made us fill out customs declarations forms, and then had us hand over all our weapons, armour, drugs and magical items. The arm bands we had been awarded in Malachandra caused some raised eyebrows, but noone commented. Most of our gear was returned, but some items, my Rod of Fires, my Amulet of Delahn, the vambraces and the big sword we found, Grif's hammer, Silverfoam's staff and Sven's armour they kept. They told us that some of these items would be impounded for the duration of our stay, being weaponry and armour they did not want loose in their city. Other items, like my Amulet were required for further study, but would also be returned when we left. Assuming we would be staying for more than a few days, which we assured them would be the case.

We found a decent Inn, one not too fancy, but comfortable enough, and settled in. Later we rented a house obtained work permits and set up shop, but for the first few days we played tourist. Viola and I bought toys for the children, Silverfoam purchased fabric, Caine checked out the herb shops, and we all got new sets of native clothing, and maps of the city. Viola began ingratiating herself with the city guard, going to the tavern they frequented, and making friends with various constables and sergeants.

Then we amused ourselves visiting temples, the arena, the city museum and various other sites. The fact they we may have spent longer than most looking at the display of gems in the museum was covered by the long and technical conversation

Caine and I were having on the subject. While this was in progress the room was thoroughly examined. We found the Fire Stone itself displayed on a plinth in the centre of the room, covered by a glass box. The plinth was warded and trapped to set off alarms. There were invisible eyes in the corners of the room, which proved to be linked to crystals in the central museum guard room. A set of circular patches arranged in a square around the plinth matched another set in the ceiling above. We discovered that these could generate a series of beams of light, which, if broken would set off alarms and wards. That could make matters difficult, especially since we didn't have a Celestial mage, but they weren't active during the day. Which led to us planning daylight robbery!

I had already suggested that we substitute a clever fake for the Firestone - a red gem similar to a fire opal, perhaps a garnet or a red spinel, with a firelight cast at the centre to imitate the flickering flame at the centre of the stone. Shaping the gem would be easy, given my Gloves of Shaping and some skill in sculpture, followed by a polish cantrip or two. But first the gem must be obtained. Towards the end of the second week in the city, I began visiting the gem shops and found a specialist in semi-precious and uncut stones, where I purchased a few examples for Basalic. I asked about the availability of red stones which would be of suitable size and quality for manufacturing a crystal of vision for a fire mage such as myself, and the proprietor was happy to order one for me. However, it would take some weeks to arrive.

We spent the intervening time fine-tuning the plan, and using our skills to get us enough silver to ensure that we at least broke even. Viola managed to form a relationship with one of the museum guards and got a look inside the museum security office, by taking him his lunch. We discovered that they'd let us have our weapons and other toys if we were venturing forth from the city to explore the surrounding countryside. So this we did, at regular intervals. Sven created a pleasure barge which we parked off shore around a headland. This would become our remote base of operations, where I would be sitting on overwatch using my crystal ball to watch the guards in the office.

Finally the appointed day came, ten days after the gem was delivered. The shaping had gone well, and the result would need a well-trained eye to identify as a fake. I lent my Necklace of Misdirection to Sven, and cast firelight on the gem until I got a multiple effect. Grif cast flight on Sven who would be official

gem carrier. Then I collected our things from the customs officers, and with lolaus and Grif, who had no role to play in Operation Daylight Robbery, headed for the barge. The plan went off without a hitch. The others went to the museum and wandered around for a while, finally gravitating to the gem room. Caine lurked in the hallway until it was empty, and cast the spells he would need, Quicken, Blur, and most importantly, the Passing spell, which would enable him to pass through solid objects.

Viola headed for the guardroom taking lunch to her boyfriend, and ensuring that the guards would not be watching their crystals. That was my job. I was using our crystal ball to watch the guards. Silverfoam was coordinating the operation using a series of sticks which if broken would signal him via locate spells when to tell the others to move. I broke the first stick to indicate the guards were distracted. Silverfoam gestured to Caine, and Caine moved, so quickly that even I could hardly see it. The gem was quietly passed from Caine to Silverfoam and thence to Sven. And he simply walked out with it.

We all met back at the boat, and activated the key Sesuna had given us to take us back to our own time. Mission accomplished.

Session 8

21 Frost 800 - Zeyland - Modern Pasifika

We asked Sesuna to send us through the Time Gate to Pasifika just one second in the past. This, she warned us, would lead to a short period of nausea resulting from doubling up in the same time. So we were ready for the odd sensations which hit us as we stepped through...

... onto a large deserted raft, after nightfall. I cast a firelight, and soon after the adventurer Kaoh popped up at the edge of the raft. She explained that the Pasifikans were evacuating which explained why noone was here. We delivered the Firestone we had just retrieved to their Guild, had our enchantments renewed, and got some rest. They had some of the items from their vault we'd asked for, including a belt which would allow me to enter the aquatic environment without actually getting wet.

I took the opportunity to speak with my other selves in an attempt to find out more about our destination. I asked these questions:

Where on the plane of Octal is the Firestone we seek?

Answer: This is my island in the sun,

There you will your treasure find.

What should we do when we arrive on Octal to help us find the Firestone?

Answer:

Seek the log beneath the waves,
There you'll find the chart you crave.

How is the Firestone protected?

Answer:

It is, but it isn't; it was, but it mightn't.

A message arrived from Aquana, their Bard, explaining that she had received a message from our Guild saying that we should report back immediately. Aqualina had had a visitor who wished to see us. Now I knew who it was who would be taking us. Aqualina's new boyfriend from off plane... Lord Shaggy? Something like that. She'd told me that he had some dimensional weaving abilities, allowing him to planewalk and such.

So, next morning, we started for the Guild. We would fly most of the way, using Sven's instant boat spell to provide us with a place to rest. It took four days.

26 Frost - Seagate to Octal

Grif found an urgent letter waiting for him from his relatives. They were fighting an invasion of kobolds fleeing the Dark Circle, and needed his help. We said farewell, and went looking for lunch. Caine and I refused to eat the slop the Guild cafeteria provides, so we ran down to the farm. It also gave me the chance to check that everything was under control. The farm workers assured me that none of the wards had been triggered, so the undead weren't roaming this far west. We had an excellent lunch of fresh bread and butter, cheese and pickles, with fresh milk on the side. I filled my pack with more rations, pickles and cheeses, and set off back to the Guild.

We found the rest of the party at the Water College talking to Aqualina and her friend whose name turned out to be Lord Shaygin. She had told him about our problem, and he had agreed to help us get there. He would lead us to the plane of Octal, and he lent us an item in the form of a doorknob, which would enable us to get back.

We made ourselves ready, and held hands with Lord Shaygin. He then activated the magic and we followed him, slowly gathering speed, stepping from plane to plane. We marched past ever-changing vistas, some familiar, some very alien, as if in a dream. After some intermediate time the shifting landscapes started to slow down, and eventually

stabilised. We were standing on rough ground between a scraggy forest and sand dunes. Lord Shaygin left us, wishing us well, and we headed for the dunes, reasoning that the "waves" would be beyond the sands.

All went well until I had the misfortune to lose my footing on the side of a dune. This would not have been much of a problem save that Sven, in some attempt to break my fall, cast a spell on the sand. This only succeeded in turning the side of the dune to quicksand. I found myself sinking and was fortunately able to turn on the belt the Pasifikans had given me before I drowned in wet sand.

This did not improve my temper, so I was very relieved to see the dunes ending at a sandy beach. Some distance off shore we could see signs of a reef, and the mast of a ship protruding from below the crashing waves. Sven created a boat, and we headed out to the sunken ship. As we drew near, I could see that the vessel's back was broken, but she was still in one piece. Sven cast Ship Strength on the wreck, and then attempted a vertical Wave Current to try to raise her, but she stubbornly stayed put. This was annoying, but far more of a problem was the water spout which sprouted from nowhere and headed for us. Looking down at the wreck we could see the caster. A nixie!

Silverfoam quickly cast Water College counterspells on our boat and on the area she was swimming in, while Sven cast Summon Aquatics to cause her to come to the surface. I was waiting, my staff alight, and preparing Dragonflames. The Nixie's head crested the waves just as the waterspout crashed into our boat. I got off one breath of flame before the boat fell apart under my feet, and I found myself treading water, again grateful for the Pasifikan's gift. Next thing I knew, the Nixie was unconscious and our captive. We thought we might interrogate her, but there was little point. Caine swiftly and competently executed her.

The sunken vessel surfaced, now more or less intact, and was beached. Exploring her, we found numerous skeletons, and two small chests full of bottles of rum. On finding the Captain's cabin, we discovered the ship's instruments, charts and log. Tucked inside the spine of the log was a map depicting a river. On its reverse was the verse:

I cleaned and examined the astrolabe, noting the strange star patterns depicted on its reverse. Then I realised something even more odd. The numbers were in the common form, but there was no numeral

8 or 9. Then it clicked. The skeletons had only four digits on each hand. To these people two hands made eight, not ten. Fascinating.

We finished our excavation of the ship, and then planned to follow the course indicated by the map. Sven generated a viking longship, and we made our way up the coast. There was a fishing village by the rivermouth, where the boats were heading out for the evening's trawl. We hailed one, and learned that we should beware of bandits if we planned to head up the river. Since evening was near, we decided to anchor the longship there for the night.

Session 8

27 Frost 800 - Octal

Truly the villagers gave us fair warning. We had gone less than a score of miles upriver when we were set upon without warning by huge river beasts. They were most like huge grey pigs, with leathery skin, tiny eyes and ears and enormous pink mouths with large blunt teeth. We had never seen their kind before, but from their aura we learned that they were called hippopotamus. There were four of them, and they seemed to want to snack on boat. I cast flame sniper, and proceeded to fire fire at them, while the others shot at them with more mundane arrows. Silverfoam put one hippo to sleep before another bit a chunk out of the boat and dumped me in the water. I was furious, but there wasn't much I could do. Soon the others finished off the beasts.

Checking their auras confirmed that the behaviour of the hippopotami was indeed not natural. The obvious explanation was that the bandits were not far away and we prepared for a fight. Soon after we rounded a bend, and there ahead of us the river narrowed and was spanned by a bridge. Something odd about the jungle on either side alerted me. "Ambush," I called and we all ducked for cover. Sure enough, a flight of arrows thunked indeed the sides of the longship, followed by a trio of diamond-tipped javelins from the starboard bank. I repeatedly blasted the trees on that side with Dragonflames, and almost killed the Earth mage along with his cronies. He slipped away behind the bridge, while combat continued on the port side. We soon realised that there was a necromancer over there, when we felt the pain of Rigor Mortis spells locking up our muscles. Sven created a raft between the longship and the river bank, and our fighters ran across to engage the enemy, starting with the necromancer. Once I'd finished clearing my side of the river, I cast flame sniper, and started firing at those of the enemy whom I could target in the melee. Eventually, all the

enemy were down, though Thorn was sorely wounded. The enemy Earth mage tried to sneak away downstream, until Silverfoam took him with a Compel Obedience spell.

From the now very cooperative Earth mage we learned that the bandits had a hideout not far away, where they had treasure hidden. Six guarded the encampment together with a wizard. Which accounted for the wizard eye Caine had spotted earlier.

Session 9

28 Frost 800 - Octal

Two can play at that game. Having ascertained the direction and range of the hidden camp, I pulled out a crystal ball and had a look. To our dismay we saw that they had four hostages tied to stakes in front of one building. Silverfoam and I checked out a couple of the buildings where the Earth Mage said that there might be bandits waiting, but found no persons, invisible or otherwise. We interrogated the Earth Mage as to the activities of the bandits and discovered that their crimes were several, including piracy, slaving, the murder of innocents and rape. For this, we had Caine execute their Captain, the Necromancer, and cremated the bodies.

We agreed early on in our planning that an extra large Fire Elemental would be useful in numerous ways, so I set about performing the ritual. I need no fire for the summoning, and one of the items we had captured was placed in front of me so that it would seem that I was divinating it to anyone watching.

The summoning worked and I cast Immolate on myself and had the elemental place on its shoulder. The continuous fire armour granted by the Rod meant that I could sit there concealed in the flames during the fight. The Earth Mage cast Strength of Stone and Armour of Earth on those who needed it. Silverfoam put a Counter E&E General on me so I would not be slept and so loose control, and Indetectability on Sven, Caine and Thorn. I cast Wildfires on Sven and Thorn who would carry Silverfoam and Viola, and Caine performed a spell of his own which enabled him to run across the canopy.

We timed it so that the elemental, with me on its shoulders arrived first at the clearing. I switched on my witchsight and spotted the bandits hiding in the trees. Immediately I had the elemental drop a wall of smoke over the captives. That stopped the pirates from threatening to shoot them. Next I had the

elemental go hug the nearest bandit-occupied tree. The bandits, all except for the one in the tree on the extreme left of the horseshoe, dropped out of the trees. One took a pot-shot at the captives first which went wild, and another tried to shoot the elemental forgetting that he'd need magical arrows to damage it. The one on the extreme left was soon occupied by a martial artist dropping on him from the trees. He shot up into the air, only to fall seconds later and hit the ground with a sickening thump, as Caine leapt for the cliff.

Meanwhile I had the elemental immolate the nearest bandit, who didn't seem to realise that he might have survived if he'd removed the armour which was doing most of the damage, and simultaneously drop a Fire Wall to deter some of the others. Two of them wisely decided to be thoroughly deterred and ran off into the forest, hopefully sufficiently frightened to mend their ways. The third went for the captives but learn that that wasn't so healthy as he charged straight into the moving Fire Wall. A fourth was the second to get the immolation treatment. Then the bandit who was trying to threaten one of the captives changed his mind, and ran for the broken body of his leader, and grabbed a belt. Then he too, shot into the air, heading for the cliff. Now, it was Sven's turn. The entire cliff-face fell away, stone turned to mud, leaving the bandit with no landing place. Into the air again he leapt and landed further back. Not far enough as Thorn, still under the effect of Wildfires, ran up the cliff and tackled him, knocking him unconscious with a single blow. And that, as they say was that. Caine untied the hostages. I had the elemental cremate the bodies, then had it put me down, thanked it, and dismissed it. Sven cast a second spell to wash away the rubble, and together we retrieved the pirate's treasure from its hiding hole inside the cliff, behind one of the huts.

Session 10

29 Frost 800 - Octal - Norden - Lorgos - Alusia

We spent the night camped behind the cliff-top while Silverfoam took the opportunity to divinate some of the Bandits' treasure. In the morning Sven created another boat, and we headed upriver, following the treasure map we had found.

We came to a fork in the river, and took the channel shown on the map. Soon after we spotted the distinctive finger-shaped rock we were looking for. We began exploring that part of the island, following the instructions, which said we should go 30 paces towards the sunrise from the finger rock, and then

turn left and go 10. Problem was there was no sign of any stump to dig under - until Caine remembered that they counted in eights, not tens in this place.

I let Thorn my gloves because she would be better at digging than me, and she almost dug through the top of the oak chest we found there. Inside was some jewellery, and the Firestone we were looking for! Hurrah! We collected it up, and Thorn activated the doorknob. It took us to an unusual hourglass-shaped plane which Thorn said was called Norden. She was recognised by the locals - apparently a Guild party had done something good here. They took us to the centre of the city, and a permanent portal to another plane called Lorgos, which Thorn said was ruled by Lord Shaygin.

Lorgos smelt of damp seaweed. It had recently been completely inundated, but thanks to another Guild Party, the waters had receded. We found Lord Shaygin in his office. He had told his guards to expect us, and he was pleased to see that we had been successful. He led us back to Alusia across the planes again, and left us on the great raft above Pasifika. It was deserted.

Sven cast waterbreathing on us all, and we went down to Pasifika. There we found the bedraggled members of the other party, just three adventurers, and they were far from hale. They had lost Mizuno in a raid on a Sahuagin outpost, attempting to capture another Firestone. We had not heard of Sahuagin, but were told that they were belligerent sea-dwelling reptilian humanoids, somewhat akin to lizardmen, having large bulbous eyes and bad attitudes. As a captive in their city, Mizuno might be enslaved, or even killed and eaten. Urewa was hiding near the outpost keeping a watch.

They took the Firestone, and showed us where they were kept. In a sack in a cupboard. Not guarded, and not even trapped or warded. Caine and Silverfoam were livid at this lack of security. We decided we'd better take them with us or find a more secure hiding place. Buried inside the rock walls and warded seemed like a good start. Then we started scheming. How were we going to rescue Mizuno, and get back the other Firestone?

Session 10

29 Frost 800 - Alusia

Before it got dark, I got out the crystal ball, and we had a look over the sahuagin outpost. I was lucky had got the targeting right first go. We saw a group of seven cylinders, arranged in a roughly circular

clump. There was a larger central cylinder, five in a circle around it, and one cylinder, off at the end, connecting only to one other cylinder which looked most likely to be a prison. So I had a peek inside that one, and the big centre cylinder. The big one had a dome on top, and several circular exits. Ugly fishy things with spears and crossbows occasionally swam past. I immediately decided that I wanted to capture at least one of those crossbows. The small one at the end had only one of the fish men inside, and he seemed to be watching someone behind my point of view - probably a prisoner. Gotchya!

We discussed several ways of assaulting the place. Most of my spells would not work, but with the life support belt I would be able to cast. It was likely that spells like Flash of Light and Pyrotechnics would be very effective on Sahuagin, with their big bulbous light-sensitive eyes. Then Sven had a great idea. Why don't we wake up the Earth Mage, get him to summon up an Earth Elemental and have that dig us a passage underneath the seabed to the outpost. With a locate on the missing merperson we could be pretty sure of coming up directly below her prison.

This we did. It was extraordinarily effective. The Sea Devils had no idea what hit them. We came up through the prison, rescued the mermaid, while the Earth Elemental punched the guard into the middle of next year, and then learned that the stone had been taken from her. So we went looking, across the big cylinder, to another room on the opposite side, where Misuno had seen the gem with her Waters of Vision. There was a Sahuagin priest there, performing some kind of ritual. The Firestone was sitting there on a shelf, making like some kind of ornament. The priestly ritual came to an abrupt end as the Elemental pounded the priest into a pulp. We snatched up the Firestone, and then after ascertaining that it was safe, commanded the Elemental to trash the place, starting with the demonic altar in front of the now-deceased priest. Which it did. We snagged a little treasure, including three intact underwater crossbows. I intended to examine this, analyse their workings and learn to replicate them, and present the result as my first masterwork in Weaponsmithing. We returned to Pasifika and prepared for the grand finale.

16 Snow 800

There was a huge flash of light on the northern horizon. After that we saw the glow no more.

26 Snow 800

Finally, the appointed date came about. Finally. I was getting bored. And tired of fish. But I was

needed. I was the only one able to cast the Wall of Fire spell needed to trigger the stones.

First we laid out the stones in a roughly regular shape. They hovered above the surface, obviously unkeen to enter their opposite element, and organised themselves into a perfect shape. Then I cast Wall of Fire on the nearest, and quickly, using the Belt of Flying we had found, took off. The Wall of Fire sprang up and out across the water surface, propagating in quite unheard fashion, leaping from one stone to the next, until a circle was completed. Then the wall grew upwards, forming a dome of flame. And then it came. There was a rumbling from the depths, and a great rush of water outwards as the ancient rose. The wave crashed against the wall of Fire, evaporated into steam, and rippled away, almost completely dissipated. The islands were safe, and in their midst was a new island, which Silverfoam insisted be called Gwylion's island. He owed him one, he said.

At Sven's insistence, we spent a few days on the new island. After all, we'd been there before - a few thousand years ago, or just over a month in our past. I'm not sure whose idea it was to carve our likenesses into the face of a rocky outcrop, but between the Earth Elemental, my Gloves of Shaping, and my sculpting skills, we achieved a fairly dignified result.

At last, a quick boat-ride later, we returned to Seagate, to find a town in chaos. Too many refugees, and barely enough to feed them. I had a proper mess to sort out on the farm, half the beasts dead, and the place full of squatters. They got put to work, and things were set to rights soon enough.