

## *Into a Strange Land*

I (being Arwen Valenta a druidic earth mage and troubadour) attended the Guild meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Fruit 800. A mission of interesting scope was made known. The state of Flugelheim had not been trading or communicating with anyone East of them for the last two years. Absolutely no information was coming in the direction of Seagate. Also as the Duchy needed more supplies of grain and Flugelheim was a major grain producer the Duke indicated that this situation needed to be investigated. The conditions of the contract are such that payment is in the form of cash on delivery of information and would be paid out on a “per piece of information” basis. Needless to say, as this is the type of mission I’d enjoy I signed on.

After the general meeting I proceeded to the briefing room for this assignment. The other guild members participating in the mission were as follows, Starflower (a female Elf and Mind mage), Hagan (a male Human and Dilettante), Rowan (a female Elven and Binder) and Adam (male Giant and Druidic earth mage). Of these, I have only ever been out on assignment with Starflower before. After some discussion it was agreed that Starflower would act as military scientist for the party and myself as scribe. Though, as it will be explained, my job will not be carried out quite how it usually is due to the circumstances of the mission.

The information available to us initially is very sketchy. In fact, the only information we have available is that a guild party helped place what we believe to be the current royal family in power. They may not still be in power. We have no information. Indeed, the last information the guild received from there was that the state had agreed to sell it’s fleet to Destiny in return for Destiny carrying it’s grain produce to it’s customers. This was done under the old Destinian regime. And we may have to deal with holdouts in Flugelheim in the area. Not a pleasant thought.

Adam has the ability to ask questions of the earth. As to how this works. I don’t know. But the following questions were asked with the following answers.

Questions asked of the Earth:

<i>Question</i>	<i>Answer</i>
1. Is there a magical reason for no information coming out of Flugelheim?	Yes
2. Are the King and Queen still in power?	No answer
3. Are there any restrictions on magic within the city of Flugelheim?	No answer
4. Has the harvest been good in Flugelheim?	No answer
5. Has there been an increased number of troop movements, other then those due to the harvest?	No answer
6. Are Artzdorf and Flugelheim still united?	No answer
7. Are there any Calimar in Flugelheim?	No answer
8. Was less then 80% of the harvest brought in last year?	No answer
9. Are normal scrying magics possible in the Kingdom of Flugelheim?	Yes
10. Has there been a major step up in the mining activities of Flugelheim?	No answer

Note: No answer actually takes the form of. ‘You are not allowed to know the answer’ rather then the usual, no answer received.

These answers quickly suggested that there was some sort of magical blockade stopping information about Flugelheim crossing its borders. For questions can be asked of the edge of the boundary.... Such as question 1. But not of the interior of Flugelheim, such as most of the rest of the questions.

A sailor from a ship that had recently passed through Flugelheim was bribed to come up to the Guild and a divination of his state of being was carried out. This sailor had passed through the area of Flugelheim three times in the last 3 months. This resulted in three separate magical effects on him from the magical boundary. It was however quickly ascertained that this was not an overt magical effect however. From questioning him, it was ascertained that that he could not remember anything out of the ordinary. In fact, the more specific the question asked of a victim of this effect, the more vague the recollection of the event asked of. All memories of experiences in Flugelheim are of an extremely mundane nature. As there are memories, but no significant ones it does raise the question of how does it distinguish between trivial and significant memories. The only other thing found out from the divination was that the effect has something to do with the College of Dimensional Weaving or something very close to it.

Starflower checked to see if the sailor had suffered any significant injuries beyond what would be expected of a sailor during the sailor’s period inside Flugelheim. But there were not any evident. Starflower then proceeded to use her ‘finding’ spell, a form of dowsing, and using a coin from Flugelheim found in the Guild treasury and minted just before all information out of Flugelheim stopped coming our way. The result was that she felt magic impact. Luckily she was under the effects of a Dimensional Weaving Counter spell at the time, and so she resisted the attack. But the dowsing still didn’t work. She was just not affected by the attack herself.

A variety of people then DAed Starflower and the coin used. The resulting information obtained from the coin through these DAs is as follows.

Question:

1. Was magic in effect on the coin, Yes
2. Name of the last magic to impact, excluding finding, No Answer
3. College of magic in effect on coin, other then Mind College, officially 'No answer'
4. Duration of magic in effect Permanent.
5. Name of the oldest piece of magic to affect this coin that I'm allowed to know the answer to. "Golden needle of Fire" (translation into common) this was in an extremely obscure part of the coins aura. The original language was draconic or something like that.

Nothing useful was obtained from DAing Starflower.

Starflower was then divinated by a Guild namer. And the following information was obtained. There was a feedback resonance. The magical field around the boundary tries to de-activate the diviner / item used to scry on part of the area. And the further away from the magical field the less the retaliation effect of the anti-scrying mechanism.

Lastly the coin was divinated. The following information was obtained. Nothing besides what had just happened to it had affected it in the last 24 weeks. There was a trace of magic from the Draconic age.

There was speculation that perhaps the situation in Flugelheim was due to the Calimar. Or possibly due to the government finding some old treasure horde dating back to the Draconic age. And perhaps some item from this horde has caused this situation in Flugelheim.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of Fruit we set sail for Flugelheim. Note the following, The Guild astrologer had a dream the night before we left. And we were told that we would need the coin from Flugelheim that Starflower tried to use 'finding' with. Also, Adam is going by 'package tour' (literally) namely a cargo container outfitted as a bed for the voyage. He will thus hopefully remain out of sight of the crew. As we are claiming to be carrying a cargo of wild monsters for a travelling 'carnival' show as it were. The 2<sup>nd</sup> officer also informed us that our travel arrangements left it open to us as to whether we are to be dropped off at Port Arts or Flugelheim (city). So this is something the party must come to a decision about over the next few days.

The ship that is to carry us is a Destinian coastal trader, of reasonable size. Not that Adam or I are looking forward to this trip, irrespective of the size). The three ladies of our party have been quartered together in one cabin. While Hagan has been given quarters with one of the ship's officers. Adam's quarters have already been 'arranged', as stated earlier. We are claiming to be merchants of a more adventurous nature than most, (to explain the amount of weaponry we carry). As the officers of the ship viewed it likely that we would like conduct weapons training and the like, we were informed that only the fore deck would be available for such use.

The ship's officers were comprised of a Captain (a non-mage) by the name of Gerald dela Rosa who was related to the family that owned the vessel, and 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> officers. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> officers were Water mages and the 2<sup>nd</sup> officer was an Air mage. This is not unusual for a Destinian ship. What is unusual for a Destinian was the fact that the ship's captain was a non-mage. Usually only mages or those in training to be mages (as in the case of the 4<sup>th</sup> officer) can hold rank above petty officer level.

There were two other groups of passengers travelling on the ship, both of a mercantile nature. Each group comprised of a merchant, an advisor and two apprentices, plus Four to Five porters, guards, and general dogs bodies. One group was relatively unremarkable, but the other was found to contain mages. This mercantile party's advisor was a Mind mage and one of the apprentices was a Rune mage. A quiet discussion between the merchant of this group and Starflower resulted in some information of a general nature. The main bit of information from our point of view was that the merchant had not had much to do with Flugelheim recently. As both parties involved were 'very diplomatic', no one was giving much away. Starflower did however put her foot in it a bit. Oh well. The merchant, while a long time resident of Destiny was not native to that land. And Starflower deduced that he was in the mid to high levels of competency in the merchant profession.

The rest of that day was spent by me receiving training from Starflower in the use of the Tulwar (this is all too familiar) and me instructing those others interested in the basics of the merchant trade. As we are posing as merchants. (Like that's going to work).

Night of the 7<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

Adam and Starflower both had a disturbed sleep. Starflower also experienced some sort of nightmare.

8<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

We continue the training. Not much else happens.

Night of the 8<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

Adam (again), Hagan and myself all suffer a disturbed nights sleep. In the early hours of the 9<sup>th</sup> the Mind mage from the merchant party visited Adam in his container. The mind mage asked him if he was a prisoner, and did he wish for help. Adam replied, "They think I am". Satisfied with this answer the mage let him be.

9<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

Adam mentions what happened the night before regarding the Destinian mind mage so Starflower goes to have a discussion with him. She does learn that he has some means of making Mind Cloak potions cheaply and efficiently. And that the Mind mages boss is under the effects of these potions at all times. This is very interesting news. But Starflower gave our mission away to him in the process (surprise, surprise).

Adam also sent word that there was a very interesting chest in the hold. An overly elaborately protected chest, especially of a magical nature. Rowan made the chest see through so we could examine the contents without breaking in. There were found to be four different types of silk within the chest. A barrage of DA questions was sent at these silks. With the following results.

Silks:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Colour: Blue, made from some type of insect husk, nature of magic – heat protection
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Colour: Green, sort of creature involved in the making of this silk? – Worm  
Nature of the magic – Breathing, Generic True Name of the creature it comes from?  
Parachute worm.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Colour: Blood Red, What is the source of the colour of this fabric? – The fabric is this colour  
Nature of the magic? – Dryness
- 4<sup>th</sup> Colour: 'yellow' Gold, Living plant, Generic True Name? Sunfibre. Age since harvesting?  
No answer.

Training continues in Tulwar and Merchant.  
Starflower casts another Telepathy.

Night of the 9<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

As I am solar aspected I am able to determine that whatever is effecting us at night happens exactly at midnight. And only effects us if we are asleep at the stroke of midnight (ok, within 5 seconds either side of midnight).

10<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

Training continues in Tulwar and Merchant. And Adam runs out of wool for the socks he was knitting for himself (to keep him sane). So he decides to unpick what he has knitted and start again from scratch to keep himself amused.

Due to the fact we now know the origin of our disturbed sleep is not natural. Some DA's of party members were carried out by Hagan. On Starflower the question was: Name of the last magic to impact, other then self-only spells. The current answer was intra-dimensional retribution. On Adam the question from Hagan was. 'Name of last magic to impact other then Earth or Mind magics'. With the current answer of 'Hypnotism'. This being a namer magic, as everyone knows? News to me. I thought it was a Mind College magic. We live and learn.

Starflower had further discussions with the Mind mage from the merchant party. She was able to determine that the merchant parties were not experiencing disturbed sleep. The only semi useful bit of information she was able to obtain besides this was that he would not give out his, or his employer's name. At about the same time Hagan pulled out a box containing cream buns with which to bribe the sailors. He asks them about their sleeping patterns, and determined that, like the merchants, they are sleeping fine. At this point a ship's officer grabs Hagan, and 'invited' him and his cream buns to the senior officer's mess for lunch.

At the officer's lunch Hagan gets to meet the ship's captain, senior officers. He inquires into their sleeping patterns, and is informed that they too are having restful sleeps. This leads into him mentioning that magic appears to be affecting the ability of information to come out of Flugelheim. This appears to make the Captain very unhappy and the rest of the officers uncomfortable. Also during this discussion Hagan is able to meet and DA the ship's blacksmith (and cook) and

the ship's Master at Arms. Both of whom had not been seen previously. The Blacksmith was found to be a mage of some sort, but not fully colleged, and the Master of Arms was found to be a Namer.

During the lunch the ship's officers discuss what each has been up to but they avoid asking what the Master of Arms has been doing however. A spy for the Destinian regime, perhaps? Hagan inquires politely, as to the possibility of having the Master at Arms divinate him. The Master at Arms agrees and they proceed to his cabin for the divination after the lunch had concluded. Starflower kept Hagan amused with stories over mind speech while he waited for the divination to be completed.

The results of the divination are as follows: The effect is not overtly magical in nature. But it is in effect. It is more in the nature of a quasi – magical effect, and is a symptom of us knowing something we are not supposed to know. The result is that we are in violation of a prophecy? Or the twist in a paradox that is trying to resolve itself. Also, there are those who have known all along what is happening in Flugelheim. Hagan thanks the Master of Arms and rejoins the rest of the party.

After informing the rest of the party, Starflower decided to approach the Master of Arms herself. As in all likelihood he is a master spy for the New Destinian Regime, and she has a ring that may be able to get more information or other forms of aid from him. After overcoming some initial difficulties she is able to get in contact with the Master of Arms. Showing him her ring caused him to be more approachable, and the following information was obtained:

1<sup>st</sup> Information is going west. But not as much as the new Destinian regime (i.e. Astoria dela Vaga and the powers that be in MMH (Her brother Don Diego) would like.

2<sup>nd</sup> The old Destinian regime appears to be very much in power in Flugelheim. Not necessarily officially, but a major power.

3<sup>rd</sup> He suggested that the ring be left outside the borders of Flugelheim as there were those in Flugelheim who would love to get their hands on the one who wore it. As this is not feasible Starflower intends to hide it. As do I when it comes to a certain Baron's boots.

4<sup>th</sup> He does not think there are Calimar within the borders of Flugelheim, but admits it is not impossible. (I do hope there aren't any)

5<sup>th</sup> A magic boundary device was discovered and taken there. And it is this, which has caused what has happened.

6<sup>th</sup> The Captain is not the most politically expedient person to be trusted. (Starflower's difficulties in getting in touch with the Master of Arms involved the 2<sup>nd</sup> officer thankfully).

7<sup>th</sup> He suffers from the same problem of no information leaving Flugelheim to a lesser extent than most people, because he was in Flugelheim when the boundary was put in place.

Discussion between Starflower and the Master of Arms would suggest that, if you know something already people could talk about it with you. And hence he could effectively learn new information (because he knew it but was denied access to it). He could not however either confirm, or deny this. The "golden needle of fire" is in some way linked to the item causing the barrier around Flugelheim. The Master of Arms literally laughed to learn that the 'Beast' in the container we brought onboard is in fact a giant and guild party member.

Night of the 10<sup>th</sup>

We avoid sleeping over the period of midnight. The night passes peacefully.

11<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

There is a storm today. Caused by the ship's mages to speed up the ship's progress. As a result, no Tulwar training occurs today. The lessons I have been giving in the profession of the Merchant have continued however.

Starflower obtains one of the ship's ballast stones. Rowan uses her binder skills to re-shape this stone to include Starflower's ring, as a means of hiding it. It is re-shaped into the form of a pestle, as this is a reasonable object for Starflower to be carrying about with her. It was just after this was completed that one of the cabin boys came in with a message from the Master of Arms. The message stated "We would be crossing an invisible barrier sometime before dinner." An aside, Hagan has noted that one of the able seamen is nearly a water mage.

Starflower hypnotised me to forget why we were on this mission. As it was hoped this might protect one of us from the effects of the Barrier. It didn't appear to work, but was a logical idea to try. This 'barrier' is invisible and so clearly seen by witchsight. Hagan DA'd the wall as it approached him across the deck of the ship. The question he asked was "How can a sentient minimise the effect of this wall on them." The answer he got was "Destroy the source." Adam, likewise DA'd the approaching wall with the following question. "Direction to the source". He was given an arrow pointing in the direction of the source. Note – Both Hagan and Adam tried to impart this information to the rest of the party who were still on the other side of the barrier, via Mindspeech. They could understand each other. But their messages to the

rest of the party came across as gibberish. Rowan in turn used her DE and obtained the following information. 1<sup>st</sup>, the source is mobile, and 2<sup>nd</sup>, the field is created by an item. Starflower wrote a note that was readable after going into the field. Note into only, we did not get the chance to try it in the opposite direction. Finally, I crossed the barrier, and felt magic impact, as though I had nearly but not quite resisted the effect of some magic.

Night of the 11<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

We all had a good nights sleep. There was no Midnight effect anymore.

12<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

Today we sailed around and through the narrow headland and across the bar into Flugelsump bay against which Flugelheim city is built. On the northern headland there stood a lighthouse and on the southern headland a small fortification of some sort. Signals could be seen flashing from this fortification to some other point, unknown.

In Flugelsump bay, there were five merchant vessels, two coastguard/raider type vessels and a ship of the line at anchor. What was very unusual was that not a single vessel was flying a flag of any sort. And I do mean any sort.

It was only after we crossed the bar that the pilot vessel came out to the ship. Customs officials came aboard at this point and questioned the ship's crew and passengers. After some haggling it was agreed that we owed 1 gold piece a head for landing fees and residence for the next quarter and a further 5 gold pieces for the cargo. For a total of 9 gold pieces. A further ten-percent transaction fee was to be owed on the cargo if it was sold for more than forty gold pieces. As Adam is the cargo we had no intention of selling it. So this shouldn't be a problem. We also learnt that all mages would have to report to the Mages Collegium for a licence to cast spells. This licence costs one gold piece a quarter for all mages except Necromancers, Mind mages, Bards and Illusionists. The costs of licences for these colleges are higher. What exactly we don't know as yet. Also learnt from the customs officials was the fact that each market town holds a fair at harvest time. This will hopefully help us in our cover.

Note – The Flugelheim colours are a crown over a sheaf of wheat, both in gold against a grass green background.

After landing we went to the business establishment of a person called Roland who was suggested to us by one of the customs officials (he is the husband of the customs officer's wife's sister.... I think). After some discussion it was agreed that a price of thirty silver pennies for the week would cover the storing of the cargo and a handler (Hagan). This included food for Hagan, but not for the cargo. That would be our responsibility. We really could do with someone with animal handling abilities. If we are going to be carting Adam around inside this box.

We next found accommodation for the rest of the party at an inn nearby. After negotiations this came out to 2 gold pieces for the week for a single room for the three of us, including cold breakfasts. The night past uneventfully.

13<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

The party made contact with the Flugelheim association of Guilds today. A mercantile licence was obtained for myself and entertainer's licences were obtained for all of us. Last, but not least, we all (except Hagan) obtained mage licences for a total cost of 4 gold pieces. The guilds having been having problems in the way of trade. They are not happy with the situation in Flugelheim, as the device 'protecting' it is bad for business. So a possible means of us gaining additional employment is in the offering.

We learn about the Flugelheim Guild of Porters.

Night of the 13<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

Hagan awoke during the night to find a female hobbit breaking into Adam's and his section of the warehouse. During the resulting scuffle, Adam and he captured the hobbit. She turned out to be an E&E and pregnant. At this point they came under attack from someone casting spells at them. They both soon fell asleep. (Damn those E&E's).

When they awake on the next morning they found themselves underdressed and in their beds. Also, their gear had been neatly folded and stacked at the foot of their beds. Hagan found a message with his items "Fair's fair, I only took your money. Thanks for not killing her."

There was a second message for Adam, "Nice ring, but I figured you would have more use for it than me." Both Adam and Hagan had been relieved of a few small, minor items and a fair bit of their 'excess' cash. Each message was signed with a sigil, the sigil being comprised of 2 parts. One being the Guild involved and the other the personal signature of the thief.

14<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

First off today we obtained a cart for our expedition into the interior of Flugelheim. This was obtained at a cost of 75sp and a 425sp bond, which we would get back on safe return of the cart. We also decided to make a map of the City of Flugelheim. So after Hagan leaves a note on the roof of the warehouse saying "The 'price of' an introduction was suitable. And could a meeting be arranged." We spend the rest of the day in teams wandering the city and taking notes for this map. (as everyone in this party has the Ranger skills).

15<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

We continued to wander the City of Flugelheim for the purposes of making this map.

16<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

We continued to wander the City of Flugelheim for the purposes of making this map.

Hagan has a note left for him, which said the following. "Information sharing would be useful. How about I drop in, announced this time. Say, just before the closing time for the inns."

The map of Flugelheim is completed. It clearly shows the extent of Flugelheim, including the major thoroughfares. The high and low classes areas are displayed, as well as the position of the horse markets. Also on the map are the positions and relative sizes of the two river islands. One is the royal private residence, as opposed to the 'official' residence in Flugelheim proper. The other is a naval base with construction facilities. There was a ship in the dockyard under construction, flying a Destinian flag dating from about one hundred to one hundred and fifty years ago. The flag was red and gold (halved) with the symbol of a ship on it.

Starflower tries to locate the female hobbit we had captured briefly, using the map of the City of Flugelheim. But it didn't work.

That night we were visited by the author of the notes to Hagan and Adam. The following information was obtained:

#1, The thieves' guild is being leased by the old regime Destinians. This arrangement was reached after they had tried to assassinate the Master of the Thieves Guild several times but to no avail. The Master of the thieves' guild is not happy about the situation, but is going with it for the time being.

#2, The old regime Destinian's have their fingers in most of the 'pies' of Flugelheim.

#3, The person we meet does not believe the 'device' we seek is in Flugelheim city itself. But he doubts it would be far from it though.

#4, The Destinians have not been very active outside the City of Flugelheim itself. And what activity they have been carrying out has mainly been through agents, rather than in person.

#5, The money from the grain shipments which are still being sent is not reaching the new regime of Destiny.

#6, The Merchant guild and middle levels of the administration have been highly infiltrated.

#7, A couple of Calimar agents had passed through Flugelheim two years ago.

#8, The Royal Landing Archives would contain a lot of useful information, but it has been highly infiltrated by the old regime Destinians.

Hagan speculates on the timing of the Calimar agents being in Flugelheim and the device appearing inside Flugelheim. These two occurrences occurred about the same time. Six months before Carlos's death.

While this discussion was taking place, Starflower noticed two people on telepathy. A man and a woman. The woman killed the man using poison. Before moving away. Starflower obtained enough of a fix on her so we could find her again if we needed to.

The night passed uneventfully.

17<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

Today we obtained two draft horses from the horse markets, for our wagon. A mare and her gelded brother of the same age. We were able to obtain them at reduced cost (700sp) because of the trouble they had been causing the horse trader, due to their belief that they were to be separated. Once we had reassured them we would not be separating them they were not a problem.

Notes on the horses of Flugelheim and Artzdorf. Only one stud farm is in Flugelheim. The rest of them are on the Artzdorf plateau. The one in Flugelheim is considered the 'black sheep' of the trade and specialises in farm horses. It also breeds hobbit-sized horses. The horses of Flugelheim and Artzdorf are of the highest quality, and studs are highly protected. Indeed, horse stealing is one of the most highly punished offences in Flugelheim or Artzdorf.

Supplies for the trip into the interior were purchased and we were politely informed that if we continued to hang around the city proper we would be 'invited' to a royal audience, as it were.

We are intending to use the harvest fairs of the rural market towns as our cover. These start in Teranheim on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Fruit, the fair lasts in Teranheim for three weeks. The next is in Mennerville, which starts on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Fruit and runs to the 28<sup>th</sup> of Fruit. The third is in Mariksville and starts on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Fruit and runs through to the 5<sup>th</sup> of Harvest. Then is Rigelheim, which starts on the 29<sup>th</sup> of Fruit and runs to the 19<sup>th</sup> of Harvest. The fair circuit then moves on to several lesser market towns following the same pattern before returning to finish in Terinheim again for about three weeks.

The decision is made to head for Mariksville to arrive there just in time for the beginning for the Mariksville fair. The marquee we had ordered to be attached to our wagon during performances was delivered at a cost of 150sp. It is big enough to hold twenty-five paying customers at a time.

We set out on the roads for Mariksville. The roads are well maintained and travelled. We arrived at a natural campsite. We do however miss- judge the timing needed for the setting up of camp that night though. And have to finish in the dark. A manor house can be seen in the not too far distance.

18<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

We set off again. But breaking camp takes longer than expected. At around lunchtime we reach an inn called the "The Last Turnip". We stop for lunch there. Besides the innkeeper, his wife and their daughter (and a stable boy) there are five customers beside us.

The five customers are dressed in the same style, but differently. I thought they appeared to be wearing new autumn clothes with a Destinian flavour to them. And while they appear to be farmers, the clothing is of very good quality. The lunch passed (the food left something to be desired). There was a farmer's cart with horses parked outside. And two horses besides our own in the stables. As we are leaving we noticed that the cart was of a level of quality that is unusual to be seen in use by a farmer (even for Flugelheim). And the horses were of extremely high quality. This is very unusual. As we drive away, I noted that the customers had been speaking very good, accented common. There was only a very slight trace of an accent.

Ten minutes carting down the road we passed large manor house gates on our left. There was a double sigil over the gates and walls to either side. Ten minutes after this we passed gates on our right, just as big, but of obsidian and iron. The lands beyond these walls look like groomed farmland with no crofts in sight. As the day progresses we pass three more gates of similar but less imposing visage. All having two character sigils over their gates. Late in the day we are passed by two horsemen, which we recognise from the inn we had lunch at.

We cross a stone bridge after following the river to spans for some time.

We reach another campsite. They appear to be deliberately made for wagon caravans. We still miss-judged the set up time. But not so badly this time.

19<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

Heading off, we note that the appearance of the land has changed. With tenant farmers appearing in place of estates. We do still pass two gates today, but these are much less ornate, and appear to be likely to be working estates rather and estates for the leisure of the wealthy.

About mid-morning we came across a farmer driving a cart and carrying a load of some sort of root crop. We nodded a greeting as we passed. At lunchtime we arrived at the now 'familiar' inn and stop for lunch. The staff of the inn is

comprised of the innkeeper, his wife and their son. And the customers appear to be three locals. There are three horses tied up outside the inn as we arrived.

The customers appear to be lesser nobility, manor lords, those more likely to work the land. Their conversation changes as we enter the establishment. They appear to start to talk between themselves about us. Starflower goes over and starts up a conversation with them, while we order lunch. In her conversation with them she was able to learn the following:

#1, The harvest was going well.

#2, There were a good two plantings of grain.

#3, The shipping of grain to markets wanting it had not been a problem as far as the farmers were concerned.

(Note – expenses for the last two inns have been 12sp total.)

We continued on, and noted that we are going to be entering Mariksville from the south side. Further down the road, we reached a fork. The road (which is well sign posted) indicated that Rigelheim was towards the east at a distance of thirty miles along the road. And that Mariksville was ten miles to the north. We naturally headed northwards. A few more miles down the road northward we reached another of these campsites. And as it was late we set up camp for the night.

Night of the 19<sup>th</sup> of Fruit.

Early in the morning just as Starflower was going to wake Hagan at the end of her watch, a horseman galloped by. He was galloping full out and quickly galloped out of sight. The horse had leather barding and no sigil was to be seen on horse or rider. The rider wore chainmail, but no apparent uniform and was armed with a hand and a half, and a kite shield. Hagan was able to DA the rider, gaining the information that the rider was non-colleged. Starflower had both rider and horse on telepathy and was able to find out that the man was on a mission. He was probably a courier of some sort. In the morning Hagan noted from the horse's footprints. That the horse was wearing barred horseshoes, for better traction. Also Starflower used her finding ability to determine that the courier was in Mariksville or nearby.

20<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

We broke camp relatively nearby and drove towards Mariksville, reaching it about mid-morning. Mariksville is a large market town with a population of around three thousand people. It is not walled and it has grown beyond the borders defined by the town's gates (though since it can't officially grow beyond those borders, it hasn't done so near the official entrances of the town).

A bored looking guard at the town's gates stopped us. We stated that our reason for being here was the harvest festival and after paying a fee of 5sp for the fair site and land taxes we were admitted. We were also told to ask for Aaron at the fair grounds. Both the guard at the gate and the two with crossbows above were very lax in attitude. One block on however. We can across the town armoury, which had a squad of soldiers fully armed and armoured, ready for trouble.

We continued on into town and reached the fair grounds. We appeared to be the first to arrive. It wasn't necessary to ask for Aaron, as he was the first person to approach us. Aaron appears to be a likeable hard working man, who is struggling due to his assistant being unavailable and some of his work gangs not getting on with their jobs. We ask if we can have lunch first before we choose a site for our show. (I wanted this, so we would have a chance to talk to some of the locals and get a good idea of where it would be best to site our camp). He agreed and suggested that we stop by the "Red Dog Tavern" for lunch. He also asked if I would be willing to 'help' him out with a 'ladies' man who has been causing him some trouble, later that night. I agreed.

After not too much walking we reached the tavern suggested. The tavern is towards the lower end of the market, but not bad. The staff was the tavernkeeper, a barman, and a serving wench. There were twelve other customers in the establishment at the time. The tavernkeeper was surprised to see our group, as I think we looked a bit upmarket to him. And as such he put on a 'display', but once we said who had suggested his establishment to us, he dropped the accent he had put on. Before I forget, there is an organisation in the town called "The Mariksville League for Common Decency". This is a group we had to watch out for. Every year they pick something about the fair to disapprove of. Last year it was whisky, this not surprisingly did not go down well. But we were told that Renard (who was stopped from delivering his whisky last year) had paid a 'donation' to the League this year and was bringing his twenty-year reserve down for the fair. The town was looking forward to this with eager anticipation.

The tavernkeeper was a friendly and helpful host. And we were able to obtain what I think to be good advice on the layout of the fair, and as such we were able to come to a reasonable decision on where to place our site. The lunch was pleasant, at a cost of 7sp.

As we headed back to the fairgrounds we were approached by a man in silver chainmail and wearing a tabard, the same as that of the guards in the ready reaction squad seen at the town armoury earlier. A quick DA by Hagan indicated that this gentleman was an E&E by college. He introduced himself as Garth. He politely informed us that weapons that were larger than a shortsword were not to be carried in town. The guards at the gate had been remiss in not informing us of this. We would have to leave our axes and the like at our show site, and the larger swords (such as Tulwars) could be peace bonded with lead if we choose to continue carrying them. This meant they could still be drawn, but we'd better be prepared to explain why we had. We also learn that he is not the town's guard captain, and that, that position is a political appointment. We thanked him for his time and made our way back to the fair grounds.

Reaching the fair grounds we talked possible sites over with Aaron and a position on the fourth corner was chosen, on the 'inside' of the circuit. This still enables us to get out of the fair grounds, unobserved but at the same time gives us more control over access to our marquee. Aaron also gave us more information about the 'ladies' man he was having trouble with. This gentleman, Bart, enjoys hanging out at the 'Salty Wench' and 'local's' local as it were. It is situated behind the town hall. We also learnt that he is normally ok, when his sister is around to keep him in line. Also, as it turns out, Bart's sister is Aaron's assistant, and is down with a case of the flu. We quickly realised that we could kill three birds with one stone. Namely, get Aaron's assistant back, get Bart behaving properly and getting us in Aaron's good book. Without having to beat the living daylight out of Bart. Starflower headed over to the sister's place and cured her of the flu. The town healer is currently out of town, otherwise the situation would never have arisen.

We set up our site. Including the marquee, which when set up is about fifteen feet by twenty feet. We also discuss the possibility of Hagan setting up a fresh pasty/ bread store next door to our main show. The thought of purchasing horses also arises, but we put it on hold after Aaron quietly informs us that we would be better to wait for the horse markets in Rigelheim, where we are headed next. He also informs us of the opening parade and ceremony to be held at midday, exactly. And so our day draws to an end.

Night of the 20<sup>th</sup>

At about four in the morning. While Starflower is on watch, a hue and cry goes up. (Everything always happens on her watch... grumble). There is a major fire burning in town, out of control. We are quickly awakened, either by the noise or by Starflower. Adam, Hagan and myself quickly take off for town, to investigate, and hopefully help fight the fire. Starflower and Rowan stay behind to insure that nothing of ours is stolen in the commotion.

As we race to the fire, Adam grabs up a water barrel, and Hagan and I a second between us. Very large water barrels... thanks to our strengths of stone. Upon arriving at the fire these are quickly used to good effect. The fire is a significant one, and is burning up one corner of a block of connected building. The town militia is already there, trying to put the flames out, to good effect. They are obviously well trained in fire fighting drill. At this point, the hand drawn fire brigade wagon arrives and Adam takes the off of it, and begins to use it to refill his 'bucket'. I also cast strengths of stone on a number of the militia so that they can more easily pump water, or lug buckets.

While this is going on, Starflower spots the cause of this blaze. A mind intent on starting more fires. This mind was at the very edge of her telepathy range and she immediately set off to intercept the pyromaniac, but not before warning us of the second fire he had started via mindspeech.

To cover our use of a mindmage. Adam 'spots' the firestarter, due to his great height and ability to see over the building and 'tells' Hagan in which direction to head. (We won't mention that said firestarter was invisible at the time, and Adam could see invisible creatures... at the time, anyway). Hagan immediately organises a small group of militia and they race off to put the fire out before it takes too great a hold.

In the meantime, Starflower steps outside of our tent and uses her teleport ability to get within chase range of the miscreant. The creature is flying and so Starflower, after several unsuccessful attempts at using spells against it, changes into her beast form and gives chase. In the meantime, Rowan enchants her broomstick and also joins in. During the resulting air duel, the creature loses its invisibility, to reveal itself to be a half-devil. The half-devil used mistform to escape being killed, in combination with windwalking. What was very odd, was that the half-devil seemed to be able to turn to mist as a talent, rather than having to cast a spell.

With the threat over we headed back to bed for some much-needed rest.

21<sup>st</sup> of Fruit

In the morning the guard captain came around to talk about the incident, as Starflower had told him that there was something about last night's situation, he needed to know about. As we had him in our sights, as it were, the usual barrage of DA questions were sent. Hagan asked if he was packed, the answer being none. Important, given last night's happening. Adam asked what his rank in the Destinian language was, for which the reply was rank 9. (It normally only

goes up to rank 8!). Finally, I asked what college he had, with an answer of Ice and what was his highest ranked skill, with the reply, Military Scientist. Basically, the only useful things we learned besides from the above from this talk was the name of the Manor house to the south of the town, Laya Johns ... he was going to say something else, but caught himself in time. That's what I think anyway.

He thanked us for the information, that being a half devil being the firestarter. And he went on his way. At about this point Adam remembered having a dream. Something in it has suggested to him, that he should repeat the ritual he did back at the guild and ask the same questions again. The following was the result.

Questions asked of the Earth:

<i>Question</i>	<i>Answer</i>
1. Is there a magical reason for no information coming out of Flugelheim?	Yes
2. Are the King and Queen still in power?	Yes
3. Are there any restrictions on magic within the city of Flugelheim?	No
4. Has the harvest been good in Flugelheim?	Yes
5. Has there been an increased number of troop movements, other then those due to the harvest?	Yes
6. Are Artzdorf and Flugelheim still united?	Yes
7. Are there any Calimar in Flugelheim?	No
8. Was less then 80% of the harvest brought in last year?	No
9. Are normal scrying magics possible in the Kingdom of Flugelheim?	Yes
10. Has there been a major step up in the mining activities of Flugelheim?	No

As can be seen, some useful information has been obtained. Especially number 5.

Starflower and Rowan fly off on Rowan's flying blanket to get a general map of the surrounding terrain, for use with 'finding' if this proves of use. One thing they do notice, is that there is one manor house for each of the cardinal points (well, approximately).

It was quickly time for the parade. So we got ready. Rowan used my special, ever fashionable dress for it. It turned into an eye-popping bathing suit. And Adam used my special egg so he could be our blimp, with our advertising sign, written on it "You ain't seen nothing yet". He also started to go for the dress, but changed his mind. Damn his eating habits. Hagan played at Destinian fop and Starflower, well, was Starflower. I pulled Adam along.

Not surprisingly, we were the talk of the town. And were made to be last in the parade, so as to not ruin it totally for the other members of the parade. The parade finished back at the fairground, for the opening ceremony. A fairly boring affair, but unusual in that it was timed to midday, perfectly. An aside, the mayor is an E &E with Mass Charm as his highest ranked spell, and he speaks Destinian with a rank of 8.

After the ceremony, I approach the mummers to co-ordinate timing of our shows with theirs. It only being fair, as clearly, their and our shows were the main attractions. The mummers were made up of two families and several hangons. For a total of fifteen troupe members. The troupe was comprised of four musicians, six actors and the remaining being support staff. The actors' abilities ranged from Troubadours of rank for to eight+. With appropriate courier skills as well.

After running 'teasers' all afternoon. That night we held our first performance. To an audience of ten. Note, Adam acted as our doorman, Starflower was obviously our beast, and Hagan played Destinian fop to Rowan's damsel in distress. While I co-ordinated. The reaction of the audience was immediate and of great effect. As soon as the beast was fully revealed.... Half the audience fled, several of them voiding themselves. It was an excellent start. At 2 copper a head the charging rate isn't bad. Not bad at all.

Afterwards Adam headed into town to buy a gallon of ale 'for the beast' and was mobbed by the townspeople. Rumour of our show had spread fast, as I'd hoped. It looked like the next day would be a great success.

Shortly after Adam's return, Garth came around. He instructed us on the fact that, due to concerns of the public. We would have to have several signs erected. One said, "Number of customers eaten : None". And the other, "Cage approved by the town's blacksmith". As I could only think this would help sales. We didn't object. The fair closed around 9pm.

22<sup>nd</sup> of Fruit

In the morning Starflower went 'finding' of the courier she saw the night before we came into town. He was still in the area. In the immediate area of the southern manor house. Why was I not surprised? Next Starflower went 'finding' of the source of the magic field. She backfired in some manner we could not discern. But she did obtain a location, but as

to how well we trust it, I really don't know. The 'finding' points to the south a bit passed the southern manor house. Roughly at a fork in the river we crossed to come here.

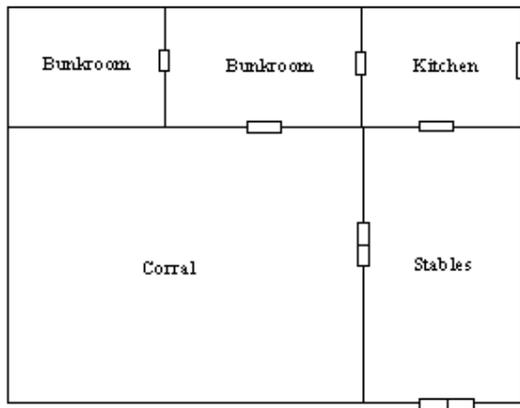
At ten in the morning we put on our first show, and in fact, all in all, we got through seven packed performances. It is a very tiring day, but profitable for the nature of the show. We make a profit of one hundred and fifty silver pennies, after expenses for the day. Not bad, not bad at all, for a market town. That was admittance fee, and tips.

23<sup>rd</sup> of Fruit

During the late hours of the night we headed out of the fair, so we can check out this lead we have to our intended target. Our reason for leaving for the next two days is that we are low on supplies, and need to get more by hunting in the lands to the south. And we are well clear of the town before sun up.

As we headed south we had to skirt the edges of the manor house itself, and later on came across a bunkhouse with stables and a corral. At this point we made a map of the immediate surroundings so that Starflower could do a 'finding' to see if the object?? that we sort was to be found within the immediate area. Say the bunkhouse, for example. Starflower fails repeatedly before backfiring with the result of the stone pointing towards us. Unreliable mind mages.

A sketch of the bunkhouse's layout.



Starflower then tried locating the half-devil that we had engaged earlier. Her finding found him to be within the confines of the local map we had drawn. Suggesting that we must be close to something we need to investigate.

Adam cast unseen on all of us and we approached the building in front of us carefully, moving around to come at it from the front, along the path leading up to the building. As we approach, first one horse and then another are lead into the stables by a man. Starflower can tell from one of those horse's minds that they are being made ready for work. As the horses taken into the stables look to be draft horses rather than riding horses, a wagon or cart is probably being made ready.

At midday exactly, as we are getting very close to the stables, casting, coming from inside the stables is detected. We speed our approach up in response. The stableman who lead the horses into the stable earlier then opened the doors and a man riding a horse and leading another with saddlebags on it raced out. And I do mean raced, the horses were clearly under the effects of a quickening, and because of this the wagon and driver were quickly out of range before we could bring anything to bare. Why did I have the horrible feeling that what we most hoped to find was quickly racing out of sight? Giving it up for the lost cause it was we moved to engage those remaining inside.

Adam DA'd the stable hand, he was an Earth mage those plane of origin is Alusia. At the eighty feet mark, we were engaged briefly by an Earth Elemental, which Adam quickly banished back to the Elemental plane of Earth. (Note – we approached from the double stable doors side) As we came in Rowan swung out to the left and Hagan to the right while Starflower and I came up the middle. Adam acted as our mobile reserve.

Hagan obtained entrance to the Stables via a window on the right hand side of the stables and engaged the stable hand. Starflower then teleported into the stables to attack the stable hand from his flank, but he retreated to the stable doors to the outside, so that he had his back to a wall. At the same time Rowan attempted to cross the corral fence and became entangled in it as she came under crossbow fire from the bunkhouse. I arrived at the doors to the stables and stepped aside to let the battering ram that is Adam take the doors down.

Starflower then opened the doors to the stables, just as Adam arrived, while Hagan kept the stable hand busy. Because of the Adam instead moved to support Rowan in her situation, while I ensured that the stable hand Hagan had just taken down stayed that way, for a next ten minutes at least.

Adam then tunneled out the wall hiding the celestial mage that was bringing Rowan under fire and then threw his mace at the mage, just missing him. Having missed he decided to play through, charging through the corral fence and over the top of the poor celestial, coming to a stop within convenient reach of his dropped mace. In the meantime Hagan and I moved to engage the remaining opponent in the kitchen. There was a very large strong fighter armed with a hand&half and kite shield.

Adam then turned to face the mage, waited for him to stand and then while suggesting he surrender he gave him one last 'tap'. This proved too much for the mage and he passed onto the next world. Both Starflower and Hagan immediately noticed this as they were both affected by the results of the situation. Adam remarked afterwards... "Sorry about that, it was only a light tap."

In the meantime, Hagan and I continued to engage the fighter before us, it was brutal as he was obviously equipped with some very powerful magics and indeed, every time we hit him, we suffered severe injury in return immediately for our trouble from the magic that appeared to be contained within his shield. His sword also appeared to be highly magical, but came to grief upon the hilt of my trusty off hand main gauche. This blade has served me well since my obtaining of it on an adventure earlier in my career. When this happened Hagan called for his surrender, but he instead disappeared, leaving a trace of the Dimension Weaving college spell, D Jump. Damn those Calimar.

At the end of the conflict we had one dead body (the Celestial), one prisoner (the Earth mage) and one escaped opponent (the unknown one).

We initially followed the fleeing horses from the corral to try and mislead any pursuit, before heading off southwest in the direction that the horseman had fled. The body and the prisoner were both searched and each was found to have a magical ring upon their person. These were removed and examined by the DA's in the party with the following results.

Hagan asked of the first ring, "If the wearer was using this ring to the best of its ability, what would he be doing". The answer obtained was that he would be ported more than one thousand miles. He then asked the same thing of the other ring, obtaining the same answer.

Adam then asked of the first ring, "Direction of portaling", with a No answer result. He then asked of the second ring, "Direction of person after portaling, relative to position before portaling. Again he did not get an answer.

Finally, I asked of the first ring, "Is this item shaped?", with an answer of no. And of the second, "rank of magic contained within this item." With an answer of ten.

We stopped within the shelter of a corpse of trees to interrogate the prisoner. This was managed by Starflower using hypnotism on him as he was brought back to consciousness again. (Hagan DA'd the prisoner for last magic to successfully impact, obtaining a result of hypnotism).

The following was obtained:

#1, The 'Last Turnip', the first inn we passed coming out of Flugelhiem, not surprisingly is a contact point of old regime Destinian spies. The contact message is apparently to ask for the 'special venison' and when told that it is unavailable, to say, "I'll have the corn chicken then thank you". The next two countersigns being "Flippity flap, it's a bat" and "muddy is ok." (Why do I not trust this answer? Hmmm)

#2, When asked the name of his leader, he replied Zebadiar.

#3, What is your name, he replied Zackry.

#4, Do you know where a special item is being kept? He answered, yes.

#5, Where is the item now? Answer, "On the base".

#6, Where is the base? Answer, "Lord Kevin's estates, on the river's edge".

#7, Is the estate near Flugelheim? Answer, yes.

#8, What is the symbol of the estate's gate? Answer, "a stylised KM".

#9, Where is the item kept on the estates? Answer, "in the hunting lodge".

#10, Where in the hunting lodge? Answer, "Try the chapel".

#11, Where is the hunting lodge in relation to the manor house? Answer, "North and somewhat to the east, about five miles".

#12, Number of people inside the lodge? Answer, "About thirty-five".

#13, How many mages are inside the hunting lodge? Answer, "4 to 5".

#14, What are their colleges? Answer, "Celestial, Air, E&E, Earth and Necromancer"

(We have already taken out the Celestial, who is dead, and the Earth mages, the prisoner we were questioning)

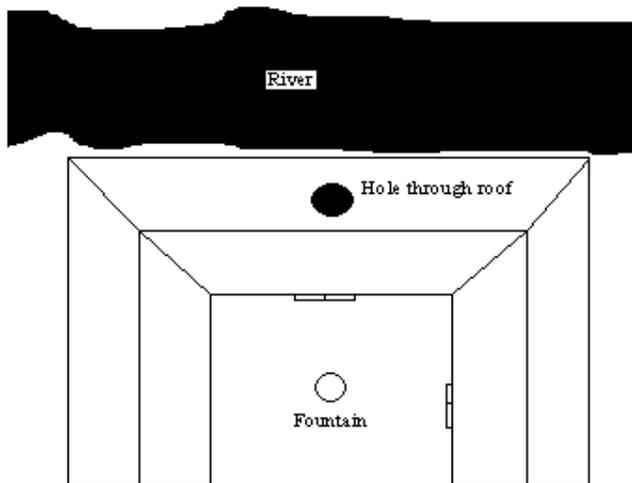
#15, What was the E&E doing? Answer, "Riding away to warn the others".

Starflower then put the prisoner to sleep again and skin changed him into a mouse for easier transportation.

The party quickly agreed that time was of the essence and so we made plans to fly directly to the hunting lodge, hopefully getting there before the E&E. Rowan made ready her flying carpet, taking Hagan and Adam with her. This was possible, as Adam was made weightless through use of my weird. In the meantime Starflower made herself and me undetectable and then transformed into her flying form. She then carried me. This set-up effectively boosted our flying speed to just over twenty miles an hour. About three quarters of an hours flying time later we reached the Terin river, a bit north of the fork. We then turned to fly to the fork, and from there could see the manor house complex of Lord Kevin's estates. Also sighted was the edge of the forest that was probably where the hunting lodge was to be found, and it was in this direction that we headed.

As we came insight of the hunting lodge the E&E was seen to draw-up outside and enter through the front doors.

View of the hunting lodge, as seen from above.



The top floor of the hunting lodge was an archer's gallery. This went around the entire circumference of the hunting lodge. The roof was made of clay shingles and was quite steep.

Entrance to the lodge was obtained through the simple method of Adam passing me my weird back and letting gravity take its course. Luckily he didn't keep going through the floor of the level below as well. He then used his ring to shrink himself and moved out of the way. Hagan and I then followed him through. Rowan and Starflower then followed, once the hole was made a bit bigger. In the meantime the enemy below began to react.

Hagan, Starflower and Adam worked on breaking through the floor below while Rowan and I stood ready to engage any opponents coming up the stairs. Having broken through we moved down to the next level as a squad of troops stormed up to the top. I blocked the base of the stairs with hands of Earth as Adam tunneled out the top of the stairs, trapping the squad. At this point the squad retreated down the stairs through the hands, which trapped six of them. Three of the remaining troopers fled the building while the nominal leader of the squad stayed on the stairs to wait for the conflict to be resolved.

A general melee then was engaged with other soldiers coming at us from various directions. This proved to be relatively one sided, and my use of Starflower's 'serverer' didn't help, with limbs flying everywhere. An agony was then cast. (Damn those necromancers). Luckily all of us but Hagan resisted, and Starflower wasn't even slowed. All the soldiers failed to resist the agony, so Starflower and I were free to move to engage the necromancer and the fighter Hagan and I had engaged earlier at the bunkhouse. (Surprise, surprise, he had D-Jumped, using the ring he had worn to here). In the meantime, Adam killed one of the soldiers with his bare hands, so that an item that makes him immune to agony would take effect. (The soldier in question was dying of blood loss anyway). He then moved to support us.

With Adam throwing spears at the necromancer as though they were javelins, Starflower and I moved to engage the fighter. We were getting the best of him, when the necromancer touched him and they both disappeared, (Damn it, I

wanted that shield). In the meantime, Rowan had wandered off and found the chapel by herself. She was damn lucky not to be jumped while wandering around on her own like that.

At this point the soldiers surrendered, on the condition that nothing magical be removed from the hunting lodges current boundaries. The reason being that they were geased and would die anyway if magic item were removed. To this we agreed. The E&E and half-Demon did not turn up and a grate in the cellar leading to the river was later found. This is probably how they escaped.

It was quickly determined that the object we sort was the chapel's altar and it's disposition discussed. The decision was made to destroy the altar, in-situ, as this would not break the agreement with the surrendered soldiers. Also after some discussion, it was agreed that I take the necessary risk of breaking the altar. And this I proceeded to do. Breaking the altar resulted in a rift of some kind being created in the fabric of reality?? The altar being sucked into this void there after. I was thankfully not taken away with it. I did however end up knowing literally everything about the country of Flugelheim, to the point of not being able to think of anything else. (Who said one could never have enough knowledge.... I could tell them otherwise. Phaeton!!) (Bloody philosophers.... I'd give THEM an education all right!)

Riding back to Marrickville we settled down for the night.

24<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

Packing the show up we made our excuses. We had made 'several' very successful performances with some of the nobility and were heading back to Flugelheim to perform for a higher class of cliental.

25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> of Fruit

We travelled quickly back to Flugelheim.

27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> of Fruit.

We spend some time in Flugelheim waiting for a ship to be made available. Contact with the guilds of Flugelheim is made, and a guild representative is coming with us to Seagate. The party hopes to make a tidy income out of this.

29<sup>th</sup> of Fruit to 3<sup>rd</sup> of Harvest

We spend time on board ship travelling back to Seagate.

4<sup>th</sup> of Harvest.

We sail into the port of Seagate.

Aftermath:

My death curse from breaking the altar was thankfully removed. So I no longer know everything there is to know about Flugelheim, just a fair bit. It was noted that we had all been irradiated by void energies and permanently marked by this. (Oh well, the Calimar don't like me anyway, what's new?). And our prisoner is now a gibbering idiot, as he is under the effects of a MA forty greater curse, and suffers from amnesia as a result.

From a political and financial viewpoint. Well, Flugelheim is now back on the map as it were, and grain shipments are heading our way. The Duke should be pleased.