

# TO TAX THE HOBBITS

Cover Sheet

Adventure by Phil Judd

01/07/90 - 27/07/90

## Player Characters

Flamis	Fire	Female	Human	
Brightflare	Fire	Male	Human	Leader
Corel	Air	Male	Elf	
Whisper	Shadow	Female	Elf	
Eralion	Non-mage	Male	Human	Scribe
Basalic	Earth	Male	Human	

## Plane

Alusia

## Places visited

Jessel

A gnome village

A hobbit village

## Employer

A magistrate

## Major NPCs encountered

Poll - the gnome leader

Mike - a hobbit

Simon Shortkiller - a rebel hobbit

McHale Def - the old hobbit leader

Alex - hobbit E&E mage

Megan - Alex's daughter

Julia - hobbit healer

John - Simon's accomplice

George - another hobbit

## Mission

Find out why a hobbit village hadn't paid it's taxes to the local lord.

# TO TAX THE HOBBITS

## Adventure Summary

30/06/90

The mission was to help a magistrate find out why a hobbit village hadn't paid its taxes. Left by ship to go north to Jessel

05/06/90

Arrived at Jessel and headed inland.

06/06/90

Heard the news that a hobbit had passed by here muttering about 'doom and gloom'.

07/06/90

Arrived at the magistrate's castle that afternoon. The magistrate told us that the taxes had been collected from the gnomes and the elves but the hobbits had put up fortifications and weren't letting anyone in. The next tax collector to try didn't come back. We decided to see if the gnomes knew anything.

09/06/90

Arrived at the gnomes posing as traveling merchants. A flame sight saw a vision of the hobbit village with the barricades and guards patrolling. The gnomes had helped build the wall and told us that it wasn't safe to go there as the hobbits had been rather withdrawn recently.

10/06/90

Went into the forest where the hobbit village is. Stopped by an armed hobbit who warned us to leave or suffer the consequences. Camped outside.

Caught a hobbit who said that they had paid their taxes and that they're protecting themselves against something in the forest. A while later the camp is attacked by more hobbits who rescue the prisoner but three are killed.

An aerial survey manages to spot the village even though it has been camouflaged.

11/06/90

Go into the forest and find a hobbit campsite. Hear one hobbit reminding another about the cover story i.e. there's something in the forest and the taxes are paid. Manage to catch most of them but one is killed and another escapes. Leave all but one - Mike.

Mike tells us that a new hobbit, Simon, had taken over and convinced the villagers not to pay the taxes as they saw little return and they could protect themselves. Also they were having problems meeting the taxes this time. A hobbit deputation had gone to see the magistrate but did not receive a good reception by his staff. Get a map of the village with the intention of going in and kidnapping Simon.

12/07/90

Get to the village but are zapped by Sleep Wards and captured.

13/07/90

We're interrogated. Only real good thing about this is the food. Finally it was decided that we are to be released into the forest with instructions not to come back. Offer to take a letter to the magistrate. Some of us still suspect we're going to be taken out and killed so we manage to remove our iron anklets and use dessert, a pavlova, to gum up the locks so that they'll come off easily later.

14/07/90

Get escorted out into the forest. Stop at a clearing and attack the escort. Afterwards all but two are dead, one captured and Simon's lieutenant, John, escapes. Reach our campsite with our captive, Bob.

15/07/90

Mike is sent off with a note for Alex, the hobbit E&E. He discovered no guards and there seemed to be no one in the village. He slipped the note under the door and returned. Birds are sent off to have a look. Discover everyone is in the Great Hall, and don't appear to be moving.

Go to the village. Place is very quiet - like a graveyard. Intercepted by a guard who tells us that they were all drugged the night before and have only just recovered. Some are still in a coma, including Alex and Simon, John, and a couple of others are missing as well as most of the funds. Found nearly all of our equipment, except the healing potions and an elvish Healer was sent for.

Alex and co were cured and we discovered that they were some way a long way off to the north. We firelighted after them.

16/07/90

Finally catch up to them and set up an ambush. There are four hobbits and three humans. Suddenly they were vapourised by a Hellfire. Returned to the hobbit village with the treasure.

17/07/90

Returned with McHale, the old hobbit leader, back to the magistrate. Got paid.

27/07/90

Arrived back at Seagate.

# TO TAX THE HOBBITS

- Basalic

30/06/90

The mission was to help a magistrate find out why a group of hobbits had refused to pay their taxes. One tax collector had already died attempting to enforce the law. We also had instructions to be very discrete. The payment was 3000SP up front (lovely pocket money) & 6000SP each for finding the missing tax collector or his murderers.

My fellow adventures were:

Flamis - a human female fire mage. Tall & thin with short blond hair and dressed completely in red.

Brightflare - another fire mage.

Corel - An elven air mage.

Whisper - A short, female, elven celestial shadow mage.

Eralion - a troubadour bard.

The standard guild contract was brought out and signed. Everyone added clauses. I added one about wanting an item to see in the dark. Anyway it was signed and Brightflare was elected party leader. Eralion became scribe.

We left by ship to go north to Jessel. The magistrate was traveling with us.

The ship voyage lasted several days. I spent most of the time below, reading some books on gem and rock identification, especially when the sea got a bit rough. Flamis was also interested in the subject - especially igneous rocks. I had requested a cabin near the center of the ship where the movement would be noticed the least. Hence I could more easily convince myself that we were still on land.

There were good winds virtually all the way. The captain was rather surprised but I suspect Corel had something to do with it. When the sea was calm I kept a lookout on deck, watching the sea mammals frolicking around us. Whisper lay on the deck enjoying the sun..

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A couple of days out the wind came up very early and rather strongly. I was rudely woken by the sudden movement and was nearly tossed out of the bed. A couple of hours later it went down again but by that stage I was feeling rather groggy. Brightflare was a healer and he managed to fix the problem - for a small fee.

The next day the harbour came into view. I was certainly glad to be on dry land again and I was off the ship as soon as the gangplank went down.

The captain offered to show us around the town and we ended up in the market place. I followed

my nose, and Flamis, to a merchant selling spicy hot food. She suggested I try a curry so I did. My goodness that was HOT!!!!. I quickly got a fruit juice to cool my outraged taste buds. Flamis reckoned it wasn't hot enough.

We also encountered a hobbit trader, with one arm and a parrot, but careful questioning revealed he knew nothing.

While the ladies continued their shopping, the rest of us went to the bar. Brightflare requested some Bugman's beer. My throat was still complaining from the curry so I took up his offer of trying some. It wasn't too bad either, rather spicy and refreshing. I ended up having a couple of mugs full.

After a few hours we found our way back to the ship.

06/07/90

The next morning I woke up feeling rather seedy, and decided that purification - and exercises - could be given a miss this time. I also selected a light breakfast. Brightflare wanted to know whether I was feeling okay and I replied I was fine. Later on, as we rode towards the magistrates mansion, I confided my problem to him and he fixed it - again for a fee. I hoped the others didn't notice.

The entire day went without incident and we took residence in an inn where Eralion swapped stories with the locals. Once bit of news we did get was that a hobbit had passed by here towards the seaport at a rather rapid pace and muttering about doom and gloom. We managed to get more Bugmans and I decided to go easy on the stuff. Meanwhile Whisper did an astrology reading with the result of

Fire and Thunder and War's swift arrow  
Greed and Ambition bring these Halflings sorrow  
Leaders will lead and followers will fall  
Greed and Ambition brings pain to them all  
Conquerors promise and conflict doth loom  
Greed and ambition bring them to doom

Strange. Not a food reference in sight. Also the stress on Greed and Ambition seems very significant.

.3.

07/07/90

The next day I was outside doing strength exercises with large rocks when I saw Brightflare and Flamis going past carrying a brass cylinder, open at one end, some glass spheres and assorted other bits and pieces. This sparked my curiosity so I asked them what they were doing. Brightflare said they were testing some new inventions so I put down my rock and accompanied them to a nearby field. Once there I watched as Brightflare placed the cylinder on the ground, open end up and put water in it. Flamis then inserted a metal sphere, just big enough to fit inside. Brightflare then cast Heat Production. Nothing happened for a moment then bursts of steam shot out of the cylinder, which promptly tipped over and rolled around the field, propelled by bursts of steam. Finally the sphere rolled out, accompanied by a cloud of vapour. Brightflare set it up again. This time the top of the cylinder was enveloped in steam and we saw the sphere start to emerge from

the top - then fall back inside.

They gave up on that and Brightflare set down one of the glass spheres. He filled it with water, added nails, then jammed the top in. He warned us to stand well back while he cast Heat Production on it. The results of this test were rather more spectacular. The sphere exploded, showering, hot water, glass, nails, and dirt over a large radius. Fortunately we were under cover. Brightflare fired off a couple more before he was satisfied with the results.

By now it was mid morning and the magistrate was impatient to go. So we saddled up and headed onwards.

It was mid afternoon by the time we arrived at the magistrate's castle. Once there we stored our horses, were shown to our quarters and were given the opportunity to freshen up.

Afterwards the magistrate explained the problem. His tax collector had visited the elven & gnomish communities and had collected the taxes from there. However when he visited the hobbits he came back empty-handed, reporting that the hobbits had put fortifications around their village and wasn't letting anyone in. He had been dismissed from his job and another person went in. He didn't return. Clearly something was up.

We asked the magistrate if we could speak to the first tax collector and suggested that he be invited to dinner here, so as not to arouse suspicion.

Meanwhile we went into the town and had a look around. We noticed many of the buildings were stone. We discovered the main reason for that was that the gnomes paid much of their taxes off in services. They had built the magistrates castle over a period of time. There wasn't much information to be had as each race kept mainly to themselves. Certainly there hadn't been a hobbit in the town for a long time.

That night the tax collector was there for dinner. He basically confirmed what the magistrate had said. I DA'ed him and discovered that the last spell on him was a charm. I asked Whisper to do a DA in order to determine how long ago it was but she replied with a whole pack of nonsense. She blew it! I could feel my headache returning. The magistrate suggested that the tax collector be taken to the local wise woman to see if she could detect anything.

After the tax collector left we decided to examine the last tax take from the hobbits. This turned out to be in the form of gems - a collection of rubies and diamonds. Whisper was rather taken with them. Can't say I blame her either as they were rather beautiful and all of them checked out as non-magical. I wanted to add a few to my mineral collection. However, if the hobbits lived in a forest, I wondered where they got the gems from.

08/07/90

The next day we went to see the wise woman. It turned out she was a 'hedge witch' - using astrology and herbalism as well as deduction to do her work. She had a large collection of different types of potions ranging from healing to love. She had discovered nothing unusual about the tax collector and the only astrological portent she had seen had been a bright shooting star that had hit somewhere to the south (That had been the one mentioned at the Guild meeting which another party was checking out.)

The magistrate had arranged for us to pose as merchants and had obtained a horse loaded down with furs and cloths. We decided to make our way down to the gnomes and see what they could tell us. It was a long trip down and we stopped at an inn for the night

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09/07/90

After leaving the inn we headed towards the gnome village. As we traveled I noticed that the ground had become harder and the land became more barren. Mostly the landscape was covered in tussock. Corel summoned some birds to scout out on the promise of some bread which Flamis had. They came back and reported that there was a colony of short humans living in a hole in the ground ahead of us.

It wasn't until the afternoon when we encountered a large hill. The path went up it. When we reached the top we found that the inside had been hollowed out and the gnomes were living inside. We passed the guard posts and were told to see Poll, the gnomish leader. Brightflare introduced us as traveling merchants with the added bonus of a smith (Flamis), healer (himself) and entertainer (Eralion). Poll provided us with some tables (gnomish size) for our good and while we set up, Eralion entertained the children and Flamis set up a portable smithy and lit a fire.

When the gnomes stopped work we were beset with gnomes. Poll acted as interpreter. Flamis fixed some tools by using heat production to heat the metal (pretending to use the fire) then shaping it. She was even handling the white hot metal with her bare hands. The look on the gnomish tinker's face had to be seen to be believed.

Meanwhile Eralion was playing his pipes and skipping through the town with a line of gnomish children following. We were doing a roaring trade.

Later on, after the rush died down, and Brightflare went to negotiate the price with Poll, Flamis wanted more wood so her and Corel went to get some. I stayed to mind the store. Brightflare wasn't too pleased when he got back and discovered them missing. Fortunately they weren't too far away.

That night we slept in the open. Flamis stared into the fire and got a vision of the hobbit village with the barricade around it. Some guards were patrolling.

10/07/90

After a gnomish breakfast (delicious) we said our goodbyes. Poll told us that a couple of gnomes were at the hobbit village building the wall. He also reckoned that it wasn't a good idea to go there as the hobbits had become rather withdrawn lately.

After many hours travel we reached the forest, within which was the hobbit village. We entered it, keeping a wary eye open. A short distance in, we spotted a hobbit side lean-to.

Just then we were stopped by an armed hobbit. He warned us to leave the forest immediately or suffer the consequences. The forest was very dangerous. We decided to make a strategic retreat and camp outside the forest.

We make our plans. Was there something dangerous in the forest? I decide to ask some trees and summon some woodland creatures and ask them. Meanwhile Corel would summon some birds

and check with them. The big questions are now: Is something threatening the hobbits and they're too proud to ask for help or is something more sinister going on?

.5.

I decide to talk to the trees and see if they know what's going on. Hopefully they're more intelligent than grass. However they have no idea of anything dangerous in the forest, mainly because trees are only aware of their immediate surroundings. Corel also questions a few birds but doesn't discover anything either.

Just then we see a hobbit running rapidly away. Flamis casts Fireflight on Brightflare so he can take off after him. But, when he attempts to take off, he finds himself going backwards rather rapidly. Flamis mutters something about she was thinking the corona looked rather odd. Anyway I run off after Brightflare to see if he's okay while Eralion takes pot shots at the rapidly disappearing hobbit with his bow & arrows. However he misses.

I soon find Brightflare lying on the ground looking a bit battered. Flamis isn't very far behind me and she cancels Brightflare's fireflight and puts another one on. She also casts one on herself, in case they need them.

When we get back to the others, we decide to follow the Hobbit's tracks. A short time later we discover a strange clearing with a stone block in the middle of it. The hobbit tracks head straight towards the stone. Also the grass in the clearing looks like it has been tended and the clearing itself is perfectly circular. This place is not natural. When we circumnavigate the clearing we discover tracks going out again on the other side.

Just then there is a commotion behind us. When we rush back we find that Whisper has managed to trap the hobbit in a ring of light. Brightflare interrogates it and discovers that the clearing is used by the hobbit wise woman to read the stars. The stone is carved with astrological symbols I decide to go and copy them into my notebook for later Guild analysis.

The hobbit is plied with food and he tells them that the hobbits had paid their taxes, he knows nothing of the tax collector and they're protecting themselves against something in the forest.

Flamis & Brightflare decide to take off and do an overview of the forest to find the hobbit village. They look rather conspicuous as two fiery comets and making a whooshing sound. I tell Whisper that I reckon shadow wings is much better, it's quieter and more subtle.

They return a short while later and report that they didn't find it. The hobbit says that it is well hidden from the air but is by the river. The hobbit is rather reluctant to tell us any more so Brightflare grabs him, to shake him about a bit. However he forgot about the fireflight corona which burns the hobbit, who gives out a loud scream.

Just then there's an explosion. We all dive for cover. My cloak is on fire so I roll over in order to smother the flames. There must be some hobbits out there throwing grenades. It seems like there's quite a few of them out there. Brightflare throws one of his grenades while I draw my sword. Eralion is firing arrows at them. I decide to move and get behind the hobbits and surprise them from the rear. However by the time I get there it's all over. Our captured hobbit is gone but three hobbits lie dead, killed by a combination of fire bolts (Brightflare), arrows (Eralion) and lightning

bolts (Corel). We retreat out of the forest and discuss what we're going to do. I suggest a low level flight along the river, with shadow wings at night, to find the village.

.6.

Whisper and Flamis (for her ranger skills & infra-vision) are selected to go. I hope they don't run into trouble as they're the only two members in the party with flight spells i.e. we wouldn't be able to launch a rescue party. After an hour or so they return. Flamis reports that they've found the village by the river. Nets have been strung up over it and the whole thing camouflaged to avoid aerial detection. It was only detected because of its heat emissions. Flamis also detects a secondary heat emission - probably a camp fire.

11/07/90

Next morning it is decided to attempt to confront the hobbits directly at their village, after checking out the secondary source. Flamis uses her ranger skills to lead us to the secondary heat source. When we arrive we discover a clearing with the remains of a camp fire and places where bed rolls would have been. I cast a Detect Tracks spell and manage to find where the hobbits crept off.

Brightflare & Flamis both have Walking Unseens cast on them, by Whisper and myself, as it is hoped that the apparent absence of both our fire mages will decrease the hobbit's chances of attacking. After all it was mostly fire that had caused the damage. They both decide to scout ahead.

A hour or so later they hear voices up ahead. It's a group of seven hobbits. One of them is reminding the others about their cover story i.e. that the taxes have been paid and there is something nasty in the forest. Flamis reports back.

We make a quick plan. Brightflare will grab the leader hobbit while I cast Hands of Earth and get the other six. So I cast a Walking Unseen on myself and sneak up the path. As soon as I see them I prepare to cast as soon as Brightflare grabs the leader. However it doesn't quite go according to plan. As Brightflare attempts to grab the leader he disappears - literally. Is he a mage? I cast the Hands of Earth. Six hands thrust up from the ground and grab four of the hobbits. The other two manage to evade and run down the path. Fortunately they are heading in the direction of the rest of the party. Meanwhile I sit down and attempt to talk to the captured hobbits - with no response, while ignoring the commotion down the path.

A little later on I hear someone calling my name. It's Flamis. I'm slightly annoyed at this and reply that this had better be important as I've got four hobbits on hold. Her reply to me to come quickly seems to be tinged with panic so I tell the hobbits not to go away then sprint off down the path.

When I get there I found Flamis staring, wide eyed, into a patch of darkness. She says that, inside it, Corel and Brightflare are fighting each other. She wants me to cast another Hands of Earth in there. I call out to Whisper to lift the darkness but there's no response. Meanwhile Flamis is grabbing at me and yelling at me to hurry up before they kill each other.

So I cast it quickly and blind. Suddenly all those Hands pop up around us. I get grabbed by one. Flamis manages to evade but muffled sounds indicate that I've caught Eralion as well. Fortunately sounds from within the darkness indicate that I've had the desired effect.

At this stage the darkness lifts, revealing Brightflare & Corel, caught in a Hand each, and still trying to get at each other. There is another hobbit caught in a Hand and, to my horror, the leader hobbit is on the ground - dead. Oh smegging heck! Not another one.

Flamis is yelling at Brightflare and Corel to stop but they're ignoring her. However a little while later they calm down enough to listen to reason. It turns out that Brightflare had been trying to subdue the invisible hobbit but had accidentally killed him. Meanwhile another hobbit was running away and Corel managed to stun him with a lightning bolt. However that bolt passed very close to Brightflare and Flamis, injuring both of them. Brightflare saw red and attacked Corel. Meanwhile the other hobbit had got away, presumably back to the village. This looks bad.

After everyone calms down I dispel the Hands. Flamis has tied up the other hobbit who introduces himself as Mike.

We discover a ring on the dead hobbit and my DA reveals it to contain Mind Mage Indetectibility. So that is how he disappeared. Wonder where he got that from? Flamis puts it in her pouch and we go back to where the other four hobbits are.

I want to let them go as a sign of good faith but Brightflare says to leave them. The Hands will release them in about seven hours anyway. I just hope that they'll be okay in the meantime. Just then Whisper and Eralion bring up the horses.

.7.

Brightflare wants to retreat as some of us are a bit battered. So we do. I offer to put Mike on my horse but from the looks that he's giving Whisper (and vice versa) we put him on her horse. As we leave Flamis and I attempt to cover our tracks.

An hour and a half later we're out of the forest again and make a camp. Whisper DA's the ring and discovers that it has 7 charges left in it. However, without a Namer, we cannot find out how it is triggered. I cast Healing on both Brightflare and Flamis. Flamis wants to cook a hot meal. Hope she holds the chili. Mike offers to do it but Brightflare objects in case he decides to poison us.

After lunch Brightflare interrogates Mike. He also explains that we didn't intend to hurt anyone, but we could if we really wanted to. We are here to find out why the hobbits haven't paid and we wanted to come as friends, not enemies. Brightflare also mentions that we come with a warrant and admits that maybe we should have mentioned that at the beginning. He shows Mike the warrant. Brightflare also offers to help the hobbits with their problem.

Mike tells us that the threat to the village actually comes from the inside. A hobbit, by the name of Simon Shortkiller, had arrived in the village a few months ago, married a local hobbit, and was spreading some strange ideas through the village. The old leader, McHale Def, couldn't counter this and decided to step down when the villagers (Mike described them as sheep) decided that Simon would make a better leader. McHale is now lieutenant. Simon convinced the rest of the village that they didn't need to pay their taxes as they saw little return for them and they could protect themselves. Also they were having trouble meeting the taxes this time round. Simon ordered the barricades and the nets put up.

The murderer of the other tax collector was John. He was the hobbit who had the ring and was killed. Mike said that John had been acting strangely since his wife had been killed by a falling

tree. Flamis wants to go and recover the body but Brightflare says we don't need to. Hobbit testimony should be enough for us to claim the reward.

A hobbit deputation had gone to see the magistrate to discuss a tax reduction but were basically told to 'smeg off', probably by some petty bureaucrat. I reckon they may have a case and suggest to Brightflare that we could negotiate some sort of reduction for the hobbits.

Mike also tells us that Simon has a bow with five funny looking arrows. We reckon they're probably magical. Simon also perceives us as a personal threat.

Mike tells us that there is also another hobbit in the village called Alex, who is able to make people invisible. We suspect he's an ensorcelment/enchanter mage. This prompts me to DA Mike for last spell impacted. However it didn't work. Whisper didn't get it either.

George was the hobbit who had run off to Jessel to speak to the hobbit there and get some help - and more magical items. He was due back a couple of hours ago but, as yet, had not returned. Whisper tells Mike about the astrology reading. I begin to wonder if it refers to Simon.

Brightflare wants to go into the village, kidnap Simon, sneak out, allow Mike to return to explain, and return to meet with McHale & Alex. So he asks Mike to draw a map of the village.

Flamis & Brightflare fireflight to intercept George.

Shortly after we have set up at the new site, Brightflare & Flamis return. There's no sign of George. Flamis lights a fire and sits in it for a while. Meanwhile Brightflare cooks dinner by zapping it with a heat production. We decide that the raid on the village will occur at midnight so I ask Eralion to wake me at 10am so I can attempt to purify. He does and I do.

12/07/90

Midnight comes and we're off. I ask Whisper to cast a witchsight on me. I return the favour with a Walking Unseen.

After tethering the horses near the river bank we set off. We manage to get close to the hobbit village without any incidents and I cast Walking Unseen on everyone else, including Whisper who needs a recharge, tie Mike up in a tree, then cast one on myself. Thanks to the witchsight, I can see everyone else as glowing blue shapes. If I see one go out I intend to give them another one.

The plan is to sneak in, knock out the guard at Simon's house, and grab Simon. I take a few attempts to cast Detect Traps/Snares and finally get it. However nothing shows up. We see a set of parallel lines inside the wall. I attempt to DA them to find out what they are but miss. There is a fire inside the gate and we are casting shadows so we decide to sneak through and hope. Fortunately we manage to do so, undetected.

We move cautiously into the village, down a path. Just then Flamis falls over and her Walking Unseen dispels. I attempt to DA her, to see what is wrong but miss. Whisper determines that Flamis has been hit by a sleep spell. There must be some sleep wards around the place. I try pouring cold water on Flamis, and whispering in her ear but neither has any effect.

Whisper detects another ward nearby and I attempt to DA that to see how it is triggered.

However I miss again. This is not my night for doing this. I think I'll have to study this talent some more when we get back. Whisper manages to determine that it's triggered by non short entry, i.e. anything taller than a hobbit. Corel tries crawling onto one but feels the magic impact. He was able to shake off the effects. So much for that idea.

Someone gets the idea that we should pick up Flamis and use her to trigger off the wards, that's assuming that they'll go off if someone is already asleep. I decide to do it, even though touching her will cause my Walking Unseen to dissipate.

I pick Flamis up very carefully. She's very light. I then manoeuvre so her foot touches the next ward. However I start to feel lightheaded and everything defocuses. Smeg! I've been affected. The last thing I remember is collapsing, in an untidy heap with Flamis, to the ground as everything goes dark.

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13/07/90

I finally wake up in a small room with the others. There are a couple of hobbits in there (Simon is one of them) as well and another couple outside, armed with javelettes. Flamis has also woken up. We have been taken captive. Our obvious weapons have gone.

One of the hobbits is carrying a stack of small sacks and we are asked to put our items in them and submit to a search. If anything else is found then we'll be killed. I have a dagger hidden in my boot and decide, in the interests of peace, to come clean. Don't have any items though. The only things I keep is my pen & paper. Eralion argues for the retainment of his flute and he is allowed to keep it, after a lady hobbit (Alex's daughter - Megan) has checked it out.

Meanwhile Flamis has convinced the others to put their items in her's and Whisper's golden purses. Apparently they are purses that can only be opened by the owner so that everything will be safe. They do so and put the purses in the sack. We also have to hand over John's ring. Seems like he's still alive. Their healer (Julia) must have resurrection.

We are then handed some iron anklets and asked to put them on. Once they're on the mana flow will be disrupted and we won't be able to use any spells or talents. Flamis looks like she's about to protest violently but warning looks from the hobbits - and us - shut her up. I notice she is studying the anklet locking mechanism before she puts it on.

Finally the anklets are on and the hobbits leave. A hobbit chef comes along for our breakfast orders. I ask for a standard breakfast and something hot & spicy for Flamis.

Breakfast arrives and is consumed with gusto. It's delicious, the best I have ever eaten. Whisper was certainly right about her descriptions of hobbit cuisine. Wonder if we could get a few to work in the Guild kitchens. That would certainly improve the standard of the food.

After breakfast Brightflare is taken away and interrogated. He is brought back, half an hour later, looking a bit beaten up. Don't think the hobbits like him very much - wonder why? Probably because Whisper has been referring to him as a 'hobbit killer'. He is tied up & gagged and thrown into the other cell, presumably so he can't communicate with us. Corel is next.

We all get a turn. Basically the hobbits want to know, what we're up to, where we came from, and

what abilities we all have. I decide to co-operate, especially when one of them has a red-hot poker. I also try to convince them that we want to help them and that there's no need for any animosity but that falls on deaf ears.

After we have all been questioned, we are left alone again, apart from the two guards on the other side of the door. The door is unlocked but Alex has done something to it.

Time drags on, broken only by lunch and afternoon tea. These hobbits certainly know how to turn food preparation into an art form.

About late afternoon the hobbit chef comes to see us for our dinner requests. He tells us that the Council have been arguing all afternoon about what to do with us. Simon was finally overruled and we are to be released into the forest the next morning, with instructions not to come back. I offer to take a letter from Simon to the magistrate about the tax situation.

After he's gone we start discussing ways on getting out of here. Flamis reckons, since Mike and Simon are involved in escorting us out, that we're going to be killed and that we should break out tonight - if we could get these anklets off. I'm arguing that we should stay put as these hobbits haven't killed us yet and they have had ample opportunity to do so.

The discussion then turns to, how to get the anklets off. I suggest using a belt buckle and poke around in the lock. Flamis provides the buckle and Eralion gives the idea a try - and it works. Very soon he's got all of them off. We decide to put them back on - after jamming the locking mechanism with paper. However there's a good chance they may fall off. I'm wondering what we can use for a glue. Maybe I'll order raw eggs for breakfast.

I attempt to DA both guards to see what the last spell was they had on them. However I miss both times. Whisper tries and determines that they have had Quickness on them. So much for the theory that the villagers are under a charm. I'm wanting to get Alex or McHale alone and talk to them without Simon or John nearby.

.9.

Flamis is still arguing the point that Simon & John mean us harm. But they daren't try anything in the village as the rest of the hobbits wouldn't agree. They're more likely to try something once we're taken into the forest. The more I think about it, the more I come to realise that she may have a point.

Meanwhile Eralion asks one of the guards to be allowed out to perform certain bodily functions. They agree and two hobbits escort him out. When he gets back he tells us that the outside walls are made of brick. Meanwhile Whisper has DA'ed the bar holding the door shut. It's clean - no aura on it at all.

Simon, Megan, & two of Simon's cronies come in and ask for Eralion. He is manacled and led away.

Each of us are given the chance to go outside. We decide to do so and discover that Eralion is being led around on the end of a 30' rope, and being given directions from Megan about where to go. Looks like they're testing all the wards.

Dinner has arrived by now so we plough into it. Whisper has ordered pavlova for dessert and Flamis realises that the center of a pav is made from egg white and sugar. She suggests using that as a glue. Guess I won't need the raw eggs after all. So we scoop out the middle of the pav and Flamis stores the sticky mess. I volunteer to try the experiment so Brightflare casts fire protection on me then I coat the inside of the locking mechanism with pav. I close the anklet and Brightflare casts heat production on it. This causes the anklet to stay closed a bit more easily, however I can pull it apart without difficulty. The experiment is deemed a success. So all our anklets are treated.

A short while later Eralion is returned. He tells us that he has been wandering around and triggering off all the wards and feeling all the magical impacts. However Megan had cast a spell on him so he wouldn't be affected. She then checked to see if the ward had gone. Simon had seemed very disappointed that the wards weren't still there.

Brightflare sends Charlie (his little furball friend) to the roof (by teleportation) to see what it's made off. Charlie reports it's made from wooden slats. The ceiling appears to be wooden as well. Flamis wants to burn her way out but we point out we're more likely to be overcome by the smoke first. We decide to wait till morning and allow ourselves to be led out, discretely remove the anklets and announce it's a lovely day then wait for Brightflare to pull at his ear before attacking the escort.

Now we're planning how to get back in the village afterwards. Much to Whisper's delight and amusement Flamis suggests using Shadow-wings. Flamis points out that Shadow-wings does not negate infra-vision. Then they could burn a hole in the net and literally drop in on Simon's place. Maybe our items will be there.

14/07/90

Next morning I run through a series of stretches and calisthenics, much to the bewilderment of the rest of the party. I tell them it's good for them. Somehow I don't think they believe me. Breakfast arrives soon after. I'm having cereal and fruit. The hobbit chef doesn't want to talk to us this time. Seems like he got into a bit of trouble for doing so last night.

Nothing much happens until morning tea which is cream buns, doughnuts etc. It's all very delicious.

After lunch, in comes John with six hobbit guards behind him. I recognize four of them as the ones that had been in the Hands of Earth. John wants us to wrap rope around our wrists while we're in the village but we can remove them once we're in the forest. We also get a dagger back each. However our other items will be retained until the taxes are renegotiated. John also hands over a sealed letter from Simon which I accept. Whisper is also handed a letter. She tells us it's the chef's cheese sauce recipe she asked for.

We wrap the rope around our wrists and are led through the village and out the gate. Once out of the village we are allowed to remove the ropes.

As we walk through the forest we manage to remove the anklets and leave them behind by kicking at them until the pavlova glue gives way. Fortunately the grass is rather tall. The hobbits are wondering why each of us is reckoning it's a lovely day today. I notice John is lagging back to talk to the trailing hobbits. This makes me feel uneasy. Are they actually going to try something or is Brightflare's paranoia rubbing off on me?

We stop in a clearing for refreshments. Brightflare scratches his ear and Eralion whistles a tune. That's the signal for us to start something. I prepare, and casts, a Hands of Earth. Nothing happens. Oh smegging heck! I'm going to have to practice that if I get back. Meanwhile Corel has hit John with a lightning bolt and Brightflare has followed up with a bolt of fire. John is singed and smouldering but he's still standing - much to their surprise. Flamis has switched on her fireflight corona while Whisper has surrounded John, and two other hobbits, with a translucent wall of light. Then we see John vanish. The other hobbits are preparing their javelettes. Eralion leaps on one and tackles him to the ground.

I start preparing another Hands of Earth but see a hobbit charging at me. Just then I'm hit by muscle spasms. I decide to try and grab the javelette but missed and get pricked by it instead. Diving under the javelette to get at the hobbit only results in getting hit by the thing. I can see Flamis having the same trouble.

Just then the hobbit and myself are surrounded by a ring of light. There is also the sound of an explosion. Just what is going on? While I'm attempting to evade the javelette, and not succeeding, I hear Whisper yell at me to back through the wall. I do so and am now in it. Meanwhile Eralion has burst through the wall and is attempting to pull the hobbit through it from the outside. I can see the hobbit taking damage from the wall and I yell at Eralion to stop it. Corel has shot the hobbit with the bow and Flamis is lying on the ground - stunned. I'm attempting to subdue the hobbit without hurting him too much. Eralion is still trying to pull the hobbit through the wall and the hobbit is in agony. I don't like this at all. Whisper is yelling that John has got away. Just then the hobbit falls limp and I drag him away from the wall.

We take stock. John has escaped and all the hobbits, except one, are dead. Add 5 to the kill tally. I don't feel very well at all. These muscle spasms aren't helping either.

Flamis uses Pyrogenesis on the javelettes but Brightflare manages to stop her. There are four of them left as well as two bows. We also find some healing potions in the hobbit packs and, after we have fixed ourselves up, there are three left. Also Brightflare fixes my muscle spasms.

Flamis wants us to stay and ambush any hobbits that come to get the bodies but Brightflare wants to leave the area - rapidly. He and Flamis take off - with fireflights, while the rest of us make our way back to our camp with the captured, conscious and subdued hobbit. Whisper dispels all the walls.

When Flamis & Brightflare reach the campsite they do a quick recce. The horses are grazing contentedly below. Then they see Mike below, waving. They land and tell him what happened. We arrive back about 90 minutes later. Mike identifies the captured hobbit as Bob. Bob expresses surprise at seeing Mike and calls him a traitor. Bob gets subdued again. Every so often Flamis takes off to do a non subtle recce (as Whisper and I put it).

Later on Flamis and Brightflare interrogates Bob. Whisper and I move away to watch the forest. They find out that Simon has Brightflare's jacket, and our weapons are in storage. Bob admits John killed the tax collector and he reckons an explanation was sent to the magistrate.

We decide to discuss what we're going to do next. It is suggested that Mike be made Unseen so

he can go into the hobbit village and speak to Alex and ask him for a meeting, after lunch tomorrow, where the river flows out of the forest. Eralion writes a suitable message and Mike writes a confirmation on the outside. While Whisper casts the Unseen on Mike, I cast Unseens on myself & Flamis and we go to the edge of the forest to get some wood suitable for quarterstaves. It's getting dark by the time we get back. My Unseen is still going so, since I'm on first watch I leave it going. I'm very pleased when I discover that it lasts virtually through the watch. Once my watch is over, I wake up Brightflare & Whisper, cast Unseens on both of them, then go to sleep. It's been a rather exhausting day.

15/07/90

Next morning I purify for one hour and exercise for another. I was intending to purify for two hours but something distracted me. Mike arrives back just before breakfast, and reports that there didn't seem to be anyone in the village. There were no guards and no guard fires either. He slipped the note under Alex's door. This sounds very bad. Maybe there has been a mass evacuation. However Mike doesn't think that was in the contingency plans. Corel summons some birds to do a recce of the village while Flamis builds up the fire and sits in it again. However she has no success in locating the hobbit village. She did manage to see what the gnomes were doing however.

Mike manages to perform miracles with our trail rations, and we have an excellent breakfast. Afterwards, while we're waiting for Corel's birds to return, Brightflare & Flamis take off to see if they can find them - or any signs of where they might be. Brightflare leaves us with instructions to move to the rendezvous point to meet Alex.

However I suggest we wait a bit longer for the birds to return. When they do, Corel gives us some disturbing news. All the hobbits are in their Great Hall - slumped over tables etc. None of them appear to be moving. Also there seem to be some bodies stacked in a corner. We pack up and make all haste to the meeting place, hoping that Alex was able to escape what happened.

As we move off, Brightflare and Flamis return and we quickly tell them what had happened. I'm all for heading off to the hobbit village but Brightflare reckons we should wait for Alex first. If he doesn't show on time, we move in.

So we get to the rendezvous point. We've got an hour or so to wait so I decide to go for a swim in the river. Someone reckons it's rather odd for an Earth Mage to be in the water but I point out that swimming is good for all over muscle tone.

It turns out that Mike is rather good as a ranger and while Brightflare & I wait in the open, Mike helps the others set up ambushes.

So we wait - and wait - and wait. However there's no sign of Alex. We wait some more. Still nothing. Finally - after waiting an hour, or so, over the appointed time we decide to move in. Brightflare and Flamis take off with fireflight. The rest of us are going to follow with Shadow-wings. However Flamis points out that their fireflight goes at 68mph while Whisper's shadow-wings only move about half that. That'll do fine as far as I'm concerned. There's no sense in rushing headlong into danger. Also with Shadow-wings, they won't hear us coming.

Eralion doesn't want to fly. So we decide that the horses will be left here and he'll take one in, with the two hobbits.

Whisper casts the spells and we take off. Corel is looking rather apprehensive as he hasn't done this sort of flying before, however I tell him that flying is easy - it's the landing that can be tricky. I promise to show him how it's done.

We know which way to go as I have a fair idea of the direction and we can track two bright points of light ahead. By the time we get there, Flamis and Brightflare have already cleared an area for us to land. I decide to be the perfect gentleman and allow Whisper to go first. However she declines so I make my approach, after telling Corel to observe closely.

It wasn't one of my better landings, probably due to a mixture of overconfidence and obscured vision from the smoke hanging around the place. The two fire mages had burnt a clearing. Must speak to them about fire safety in forests at some stage.

Anyway I bounced into a couple of trees on the way down and landed in an untidy heap on the floor. Feeling rather battered and bruised I pick myself up and give the OK sign to Whisper & Corel, who are circling overhead. I also tell Corel that I hoped he took notes as that was a demonstration on how not to land. Maybe Eralion was right. Maybe staying on the ground is better - especially for Earth Mages. Either that or I'd better take a skill in gymnastics & tumbling.

Whisper makes another of her famous three point landings - feet, stomach and face. Corel's landing is a little more elegant.

We head off towards the forest. On the way I trip over something. It's Corel's battleaxe. Maybe the rest of our weapons are lying around. I resolve to check that out later. Right now we have more important concerns.

The hobbit village is quiet as we approach. Too quiet - like a graveyard. However, as we're about to enter a hobbit guard appears. We ask to speak to someone in authority and soon McHale shows up.

His story is not pleasant. Somehow they had all been drugged the night before and they had only just recovered. However Alex, George, Julia, the hobbit's astrologer and a few others are still in a deep coma. Simon, John and two other hobbits are missing. Both horses are gone and so has all the treasure, except just enough to pay the taxes. However, if we took the taxes, that would leave the hobbits destitute. It was clear that we had to catch Simon & John and bring them to justice. Flamis reckons we're going to have to shoot to kill.

McHale showed us where the other hobbits were lying. Brightflare did what he could but nothing seemed to work. However Whisper's DAs discovered that they had been poisoned and the poison was artificial in nature. We were either dealing with an alchemist or an assassin. Meanwhile I tested the refreshments. The food was okay but the water was not. Flamis took a sample of the water and flew off to get help from the neighbouring elvish community.

While we waited Corel and I went looking for any other items lying around. With the help of a rather sleepy, and annoyed, owl that Corel summoned we were able to find most of our equipment, including Brightflare's coat and the golden purses. However the healing potions were nowhere to be found.

Flamis arrived back with the elvish healer not far behind. However he hadn't flown - he just

appeared. Whisper determined the elf was a shadow mage. Guess he must have shadow walked. It didn't take long for him to revive Alex and the others.

Once Alex had recovered, we settled down to decide what to do. Alex's son had attempted to do a locate on Simon but he wasn't within a 50 mile radius. This implied that they had been moving all night and day. Their horses, as Eralion pointed out, must be just about to drop from sheer exhaustion.

Alex used an item of Greater Enchantment to increase his own locate range to 400 miles. This time he found him, somewhere to the north. The only way we were going to catch them is to fireflight. Alex also mentions that most of the items that Simon & John will have are Water Magic items - such as creating rainstorms etc.

Incidentally I managed to find out, from Alex, that they get their gems and items by trade across the border. However he seemed rather evasive when giving that answer.

.11.

We finally decide what we're going to do. The idea is to try to fly at right angles to their course for ten miles, stop, and take another bearing on Simon. Once we plot both bearings on the map, we should have a better idea how far away they are. We then fly that distance, land ahead of them, and set up an ambush.

Flamis builds up a really big fire and sits in it, preparing to cast the fireflights. Eralion is looking very apprehensive. Can't say I blame him either. I wonder if I can get away with it if I stand behind Flamis and act inconspicuous. I ask Whisper if there's anyway she can coax more speed out of a shadow-wing but she doesn't think so.

Finally she starts casting. She casts on everyone else, including Mike and Alex, then suddenly realises there's someone missing. She looks around quickly then, with an expression of delight, casts her spell on me. Instantly I'm surrounded by a reddish/yellow, flickering, glow. It burns momentarily as well. Fortunately it's not as bad as one of her currys. Eralion is looking very pleased and asks for a mirror. I think he's enjoying the effect.

Flamis explains how the spell works. We need to take off straight up, then we twist our bodies for direction. At least that is the same however a shadow-wings takeoff is a running start. Landing is done by flying close to the ground then turning off the concentration, which will cause the subject to fall. Sounds easier than shadow-wings.

We walk out to the edge of the village to a nearby clearing and take off - straight up. I notice that the corona elongates out in flight and becomes a fiery tail, accompanied by a low pitched roaring sound. I also notice that the ground is dropping away very rapidly, leaving my stomach far behind. Having lunch just recently was not a very good idea. Maybe I'd better level out soon. I see Eralion doing aerobatics.

Fairly soon I've got the hang of it and we are circling around as Alex checks the direction for Simon. I see another pillar of flame ascending below us - It's Whisper. It's also a rather interesting sight.

Soon we're all heading west. The ground is rushing past below us - very fast - very very fast indeed. Shadow wings is much more sedate.

Ten miles later we stop and land. Alex casts again and it is still pointing north. They must have got a long way away. So we take off and head north.

After half an hour of jetting across the sky we land again. Alex reckons that the arrow had started to turn as we flew. Another locate later and Alex told us that Simon is due east of us.

Several stops and locates later, we seem to be flying in a circle. Just what is going on? However when Mike plots our course on the map, it turns out to be a converging spiral. Someone suggests that a Locate be cast on John so Alex does. This locate is at right angles to the ones on Simon. There is definitely something odd here. Maybe Simon has got something that's upsetting the location spell but none of us have ever heard of such a thing. First time for everything I suppose.

By now it's getting dark and the fireflight has run out. However a series of Locates, with varying ranges, on John, indicate that they're not very far ahead. So Alex and Flamis get some shadow wings off Whisper, and Walking Unseens from me, and they fly to investigate. Meanwhile the rest of us get some sleep to recover fatigue. Brightflare also provides a hot dinner. Whisper casts a witchsight on Eralion so he can keep watch.

An hour later they were back. They found a group of four hobbits and three humans. Alex had used a Wizard eye to identify them and reckoned two of the hobbits were John & Simon. However Simon's locate was still pointing ninety degrees away. Was that actually Simon down there?

We decided to flit ahead of them, with shadow-wings, and wait out the night. Whisper cast a witchsight on me then cast shadow-wings on us all.

We finally landed about twenty miles ahead of them. Night landings are not fun. I think I must have tripped over something in the dark as I made a really rotten landing, skidding along the ground, and finally ending up sprawled in a heap with lots of bruising. Ow Ouch Ow - Smeg! I wonder if there's an item around that can produce soft landings. I think I'll need one if I ever fly again.

16/07/90

No chance of purifying this morning as the bruises are still aching. I run through a series of stretches, just to make sure everything is working, then some light exercises, followed by some practice swordplay.

We are in the middle of rather barren plains with the main vegetation being a short tussock growth. We can see for miles in all directions. There is a small hill nearby. Mike reckons they're likely to be going around it so that is where we set up the ambush. Brightflare and Corel will wait ahead while Eralion, Flamis, Whisper and I will go around the side of their projected path, as they round the hill. Meanwhile Alex & Mike will retreat to a very safe distance. Corel has a rank 20 Hellfire ring with one charge in it and he says he will use it if he gets first pick of the treasure, since it was a rather expensive item. We agree to that so the plan is he'll hit them with that then he and Brightflare will follow up with lightning & firebolts. Meanwhile Flamis and I will use Hands of Earth and Dragonflames. Whisper will be using walls to separate the hobbits and the

humans.

We settle down to wait, keeping very low. Alex has also cast some Walking Unseens over us but we still had to be careful about casting shadows.

A while later they came into view, still on the projected course. They were coming just within range when they stopped. I could see a hobbit, probably John, jump off his horse and go over to another hobbit. Great - He's a high ranking ranger as well so he might have spotted something.

Just then - to our utter amazement - all the humans and hobbits just vanished. The horses were looking very confused. So were we. Then I heard a cry of triumph. It was Corel. We went forward to see what had happened.

We cancel the Walking Unseens and we examined the area where the hobbits and humans had been. There was lots of gear lying around the place - and seven piles of ash. I hoped it was a quick and relatively painless end.

The wind was coming up so we salvaged the remains of the ash and wrapped them in seven different piles. We then turned our attention to the items. The hobbit's treasure was there as well as several magical seashells, four potions, Simon's bow & arrows, John's ring and Megan's ring as well as an amulet and a necklace. We decided to take the ashes and magic stuff and Alex offered to bring the horses back with the armour, weapons and treasure while we firelighted back.

Once we got back to the village we returned Megan's ring and told McHale what had happened. We also showed him the letter Simon had wrote to see whether he agreed with it. However the letter turned out to be a blank piece of paper. McHale decided to accompany us back to the magistrate to talk about the tax situation.

After a hobbit style banquet (I swear I couldn't eat or drink anything more) we spent the night there.

17/07/90

We left early for the magistrates palace with McHale and the taxes, arriving there late afternoon. The magistrate accepted the taxes and took the ashes for transportation to the barony for analysis and to use them to get a confession from John's soul. He then paid us and arranged for us to take a ship back to Seagate.

27/07/90

We arrived back at Seagate after a rather uneventful trip. Flamis and I were taking unarmed combat lessons off Brightflare. Once we got back the items were identified and cashed in. After Guild tax, and taking into account the magistrates wages, we each obtained 12615SP.

The items turned out to be:

Two potions of Healing

Two potions of Strength

A necklace of Misdirection (so that's why the locates went wrong). It had a pendant with an arrow on it.

An amulet of Witchsight

Three seashells of Rainstorms  
A seashell of Saturating Earth  
A ring of Indetectability (the one that Mike had)  
A magical bow with several arrows

I got first choice of the amulet of Witchsight because of the clause I had put in the contract and declined any further picks. The amulet cost 1800SP but I reckon it's worth it. Corel went for the bow & arrows to replace his ring. I told him he should keep the ring and frame it. Flamis went for the Misdirection necklace. It looked rather nice on her too and I told her so. Her smile lit up the whole room. Can't remember what the others took.