

Illusion, Delusion, and Dainty Danger

Or, The Strange Case of the Odd Guild Mission

By

Axy Geldrax

Scribe to the Seven Dainty Dudes

Mission Date: 1 July to 10 July 1994
Client: The Adventurer's Guild
Contact: John McGreedy, Guild Tax Collector
Objective: To test out the Guild's Training Methods
Area: North East of Seagate, on the Northern Road

The Party:

Axy Geldrax	Male Ranger Merchant	Scribe
Catherine Varden	Female Mind Mage	
Darien	Male Celestial Mage	
Karyn	Female Mage	
Kismet	Male E&E Mage	
Merryck	Male Fighter Merchant	Military Scientist
Torensen	Male Rune Mage	Party Leader

NOTES: To test the Guild's outside training.
Action took place to the North East of Seagate.
Lady Charlotte portrayed Princess Dainty
White Waters Manor, an old Manor that had been re-built by Duke Trentor – fictional late Duke of White Waters Manor.
Teresa (the leader), Phillipe, and Suzanne – evil Guild adversaries who interfered with the mission.
Brent – a Doppelganger who aided Teresa.
The MacDonald's, a family farm 10 miles from White Waters Manor.
Sarauma (pronounced Swaremi?) – lizaerd men in the swampy area around White Waters Manor – aided Teresa.

Introducing the Party:

Axy Geldrax I'm a fairly tall male Ranger. I don't belong to a magician's collage. This is my fourth adventure. Like a fool I said I was Scribe on the last adventure, and so was voted scribe on this!. I am an accomplished Military Scientist.

Catherine Varden Apparently an experienced Mind Mage. She appears to be too weighed down by morals, i.e. no sense of humour, but she did earn my respect during the adventure.

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Darien	A male Celestial Mage, and a Ranger like myself. Darien and I fought together against Snakeman Slavers in April, it was good to work together again.
Karyn	I know sh is a Mage, but I'm not sure which collage. Karyn is a very airy fairy sort of person, into fogs and vapours!.
Kismet	I male E&E. Does well despite interference from the love of his life, Karyn.
Merryck	A Fighter Merchant, a bit like myself, beholdng to no collage. Merryck became Military Scientist as I was expected to be in the thick of it.
Torensen	A male Rune Mage. He is very experienced and has just come back from a sojourn in his home land in the cold wastes up North.

Session 1: 17/3/95

30 June 1994

We introduce ourselves, I have already worked with Darien, on our last adventure, I look forward to this one. It seems that even after a long absence from adventuring, Torensen is still the most experienced and is therefore voted party leader. After saying that I had been scribe on the last adventure, they make me scribe on this. Merryck is made Military Scientist. Although he lacks the studies I've made, I'm expected to be too busy fighting in the front line.

First off we meet John McGreedy, the Guild Tax Collector, and our mission is to audit the Guild's training. Renumeration as per the attached contract. He is particularly interested in the following magic and skills training: Acting, Pole Weapons, Entangling Weapons, Necromancing, Silent Language, Spy, Thief, Water Mage, and Wicca. The Guild has set us a problem and then will keep an eye on us.

We are introduced to the brother? (Duke Avarice) of the Duke of Carzala, he wears very fine clothes as befits a Duke, and is obviously fond of food and drink. He requests that our party look for his fiancee (Princess Dainty), who is missing on route from Bowcourt to their marriage in Seagate. She left Whereinthehell five weeks ago with her lad in waiting (Lady Sarah), carriage, carts, and 12 men-at-arms. There is the small matter of the dowry, 150,000 SP, part of which is magical. The money for the dowry comes from Dainty's father (Prince Caspian), and the magic item from her mother (a de Beauvoir). Dainty's elderly father is the benefactor of her cousin (Gerald Fotheringhay).

Princess Dainty and her entourage were to visit various nobles on the way down. The guild has contacted Elfinberg on the edge of the mountains and the party was reported to have passed. We request letters of introduction for the friends and the Princess herself. We will meet Duke Avarice's Secretary who will fix things up for us.

There is no portrait of the Princess, she is described as blond, blue eyes, and average height (5ft 2) for a woman. Duke Avarice gives us a picture of her engagement ring

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so we can use magic to locate it. Princess Dainty enjoys embroidery, she is not musical, and is of a delicate nature.

The Duke leaves, and Catherine reports that Duke Avarice is actually a lead actor from the local theatre. So what is going on?, the party deliberate. Are we really to look for Dainty, or is the real mission to uncover the fake Duke Avarice, either way we go in for a bit of Astrology. If real, did Dainty have enemies?, who would want to steal the dowry? (well really – some stupid question), did she run away?

After half hour, the Dukes secretary (Matthew) turns up, he is short and plump, no-one seems to recognise him as an actor.

The coat of arms of Dainty's family is a flying silver swan on a blue circle (facing left). We request a list of her stopovers, and letters of introduction. Dainty's route was planned to avoid Bowcourt itself because of the war. Matthew has not met Dainty, the Duke met her five to six years ago. Marriage negotiations lasted a long time, and she is now in her 20's. Dainty spent her early life in the Power of Light Monastery and then had the rough edges knocked off in the Court of Bowcourt. We are given a broach so she will recognise us.

After Matthew leaves we buy maps of her intended route, and visit the Guild library. We check out the symbols of and around Bowcourt, and find that de Beauvoir has a swan swimming to the left in a circle. Avarice's seal is of five coins (of the heads of Carzala, Bowcourt, and Destiny).

Nobles mentioned as stopovers are Sir Richard Devonport east frontier of Bowcourt), Sir Trentor of White Waters Manor, and Sir de Grantly in Carzala. Dainty's entourage were also scheduled to stop in villages, and also to do some camping. The White Waters Manor is associated with various rumours, of Dragons through to Black Death. This is the stuff of Guild adventures, but the rumours are somewhat dated.

Karen disguises herself and follows Matthew to the old part of Seagate. Karyn seemed to change very quickly, is she another shapechanger?, if so, it is not the same as I've come across before. Merryck and I go to the merchant's guild to see if we can get some information about merchant caravans seeing Dainty on route from the North, we talk to a merchant called Albert, but don't get anywhere. Darien, Kismet and Catherine go to the Guild library. Elfinberg, Dainty's last known location, is two days away from the next stopover on the list. Due to the odd nature of this case I would not be surprised if they searched the Librarians desk itself. Torensen waits, in the guild bar.

Back at the Guild, a little urchin comes up to me and gives me a note from Albert, the merchant Merryck and I saw before. The note said that there is an ore caravan at Slippery Rock and they are about to return to the north-east soon.

We retire and arrange to meet the next day at 9 o'clock. During the night Torensen and Karyn do astrology readings. Torensen will concentrate on where the princess is located, whilst Karyn will dwell on reality of the whole situation.

Session 2: 24/3/95

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1 July 1994

Torensen's astrology gave him an image of a window in a castle, Karyn recites a poem of unrequited love. We reason that once we find Dainty, the astrology readings will fall in place.

Kismet does a locate on Dainty's engagement ring and cannot find it within range of his spell, say 60 miles. Kismet and I go through a portal to Elfinberg, to see if it is near there. Before I can get near the portal, Kismet comes straight back saying that he could not detect it there either.

Darien, Catherine, Torensen and I go to a pub in old Seagate, waiting for the others to visit Matthew. Catherine has a precognition, seeing Matthew visit John McGreedy straight after talking to the others.

Merryck, Kismet and Karyn meet Matthew, apparently they have quite a chin wag. Duke Avarice and Dainty are actually married but have yet to have the ceremony. It is to be held in Seagate because it is safe from the war. Avarice will benefit from the will if anything happens to Dainty. They all (Matthew as well) go to another pub, the Sour Grape (in the Merchant's quarters) to glean more information. The wedding ceremony was supposed to have been last year but the negotiations broke down, apparently due to the Duke. When Avarice travels, he travels in style by sea or carriage. He does not know any of Dainty's family or friends, and has not offended any. Matthew was employed by the Duke when he came to Seagate. Avarice communicates by courier, occasionally by magic, uses the Duke of Carazala's, because he does not have a mage in his employ.

Merryck goes for the jugular, and asks if he has noticed some irregularities in his workings for John McGreedy. One is that Daint's wedding is set for Micklemas of this year (29 September), yet Avarice wants her here within the week. Secondly, that Gerald Fotheringhay (Dainty's cousin) changed sides in the war, he is now on the side of Aquila, the same side as Bowcourt (and his benefactor, Prince Caspian – Dainty's father).

We decide that Kismet, and Darien go to Elfinberg and fly South, whilst the rest go to Slippery Rock and travel north, meeting once Dainty's ring is located. In the afternoon Darien does shadow-wings on us all and off we go to Slippery Rock. Surprise surprise, we find a pub, the Goblin's Head (which looks like a Kobold). We find the wagoners and have a chat with them. They saw a bunch of nobles near Jake's Field about three weeks ago (7-10 June), describing two veiled ladies and a dozen armed guards, just the people we are after. Jake's Field is approximately half way between Bowcourt and Slippery Rock.

Darien and Kismet start to fly down after a short sharp meeting with the portal guard in Elfinberg. They land before their wings give out. Kismet informs us that Darien had landed, set up a large pillar of light and then went to sleep, with the light still on!

We land before our wings give out and set up camp. Karyn wants to fog the place so that enemies cannot see us – we point out that we also cannot see! Since acquiring a set of plate (a souvenir) I have been practicing getting into and out of it as fast as I can. Boy did I get some dirty looks when the rest of the party saw me doing it. I

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would have thought that black armour with a serpent's head motif would be quite eye catching. Karyn and Catherine didn't seem to think so, Karyn casts at me to quieten the noise I was making.

Session 3: 29/3/95

2 July 1994

Kismet wakes up first and notices someone about 10 foot away from Darien, just looking at him. Kismet throws his voice to wake Darien up. The man goes by the name of Alcom, and considers the valley to be his. The valley leads down to the road and there is a town there, called Paulsgate. Alcom was attracted by the lights Darien and Kismet made the night before, he thought it might be the work of a God. Darien and Kismet head south and nearly fly into the Sea of Grass. Kismet's locate finds Dainty's ring. They trace it to a Keep on a small river heading north-south, then make their way to us.

Meanwhile, Torensen goes rabbit hunting, I practice putting my armour on, Merryck prepares breakfast, the mages purify. Karyn prepares fog to alert Darien and Kismet to our position. I show everyone how to skin a rabbit – well it was that or watch the mages try and pluck it. I ask Torensen to make me a rune shield that he was talking about. I can report that it is quite effective, I tested it by shield charging trees, and hacking at it with my hand-alf sword. We are alerted, we may be under attack, we ready our crossbows and bows, but it is only Darien and Kismet.

We plan to go to the Keep, but we need a substantive cover story. Darien is not keen on doing more wings until he has eaten and rested. Kismet decides to scree the Keep. Things are looking up, the first time I saw someone scree, it was Aqualina who got blasted with flames.

I warn the party of the dangers of screeing and like the last lot, they too scoffed. Kismet gets ready to scree, and the rest look over his shoulder. I take a more distant position with a good view of the party when they get engulfed in flames – my healing skills will shortly be in demand. After 10 seconds he is still screeing!! Kismet must be good, Aqualina could only manage 10 seconds. After a few minutes and no flames, I go and see what's happening.

There is a square Keep inside a triangular Manor, with a shallow ditch on the outside. Nearby is an old building and a very large lake. There is grass in the courtyard and people going about their daily business. The Keep is guarded, there is one on the roof and one or two at the gate. Inside, Kismet sees six armoured men-at-arms having lunch. In the courtyard three are three women, one short, plump and blonde, the second a tall brunette, and the third tall, slim, well curved and wearing black. The smithy is being used on some battered armour. The flag on the keep is at half mast.

In the late afternoon, Karyn does one of her changes and makes herself look like Baron Blitzkrieg, whom I've seen at the Guild once or twice. Darien gives us all wings and we go to the village 10 miles away from the Manor, Darien and Kismet saw it on their way down. We are to find out all we can about the Manor and its owners.

Session 4: 7/4/95

We all land safely and wait for the wings to disappear so they don't scare the locals. I don my armour and we move to the nearby buildings, made from stone blocks with a wooden upper story and a slate roof. We greet the locals, Adam and June McDonald

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and family. We ask about the Manor, it is White Waters Manor, surrounded by swamps, and owned by the Trentors who were married recently. The old Baron's bride is evil, and they don't like youngsters. It is said that the girl Carter vanished a couple of months ago. Kismet negotiates lodgings, we get a house (at one end of a barn), and are invited to dinner. Blitzkrieg was impressive, but the snakes on my armour and sword drew the kids. During the dinner we meet Bernard de Ventitor AKA Bern the Bard. We ask about people passing through, Chris the Tinker, three youngsters, layabouts heading for the was (supposedly), two minstrels, and someone ill heading north to see the healer Jessie or Janet or something. There was also a party of a dozen men with ladies (one named Suzie). Apparently two of the kids sneak out at night to spy on travelers, you know what kids are like.

I cannot help but notice that there are 10 adults and 10-15 kids, but no men aged between 10-30. Bern has been there a few days, to let his lame horse get better. Despite being in lodgings, we organise a watch, Kismet, Catherine, me, Darien, Karyn, Torensen, then Merryck.

3 July 1994

During his watch, Kismet talks to Bern's horse. Catherine and Kismet go to the top of the barn and meet a kid who's late for work, apparently one of the kids that sneak out at night to spy on passing people. She went with Colin when she saw the soldiers, she remembers seeing shields with ducks in a circle. There was a lady with them. This was in spring after shearing, and before the men took the sheep up country, about a moon ago. To get to White Waters Manor (Devil's Manor as she calls it), we have to go down the road and over a ford.

We talk to Bern, who is from the baronies, we are the largest "troop" movement he has seen. Darien detected Bern's collage as Bardic, which is said to date from pre-perjury times when dragons argued. Kismet sees an invisible wizard's ear, with wightsight I see a wizard's eye.

As we leave, the weather is windy with some clouds. We notice we are being stalked by one of the brats. Karyn gets the kid to go home, scaring the living daylights out of him is a more apt description.

So, we plan to scout White Waters. Karyn walks with Bern talking Troubadour, but she can't play the lute and walk at the same time. Bern knows Dainty's uncle Count de Beauvoir. Bern describes Dainty as blonde and well endowed, she has been widowed by a de Beauvoir.

The weather is getting bad, clouds moving quickly above. Bern's horse (Figaro) talks with a Drackenberg accent. Karyn gets the urge to plait the horse's mane – but settles for a sleeping Torensen, who I remember was quite surprised when he eventually found out.

We are following a winding road and enter a swamp, we backtrack a little to find a suitable campsite for the night.

Session 5: 13/4/95

Kismet does his crystals of vision late at night. He looks at the Manor and the mill which is about a mile away. He sees five houses, but no carriage. The oval shaped

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lake is two miles long. There are some “real” trees off to one side of the river indicating some high land above the general low lying swamp. Whilst looking at the Manor Kismet notices a cross of rubys, indicative of the powers of light. Merryck reckons it is worth 4-5,000. There is a bracelet with animal charms – lots of furry woodland creatures. The mill is stone with a thatched roof.

4 July 1994

I go hunting but don't find anything. For our breakfast Darien summons some rabbits, we get ready to pounce once they realise Darien has ulterior motives. I ready my bow, I suspect someone is bound to let one get loose, then I can practice on a moving target. Catherine mind controls the rabbits so we can just scoop them up. Karyn starts a philosophical argument over the relative merits of using magic versus weapons and cold steel, guile and cunning.

We travel all day through the swamp and see a few lizard men (Sarauma). I want to get the bastards, they must be related to the snakemen darien and I saw off on our last adventure. We protect ourselves and despite my urges to follow and kill I behave responsibly, well I am a Military Scientist now. We eventually ford the river with walls of darkness between us and the Saraumas. After painful brushes with walls of starlight I try out the wall of darkness and find they don't bother me.

Rain and lots of wind. We stay on a hillock for the night.

5 July 1994

At four o'clock in the morning we get wings and fly to the mill. Kismet and Karyn look around the place and find it is empty, although there are the remains of a fire in the fireplace, and some straw in a corner of the mill storage area. I go back outside and start to cover our tracks, as much as is possible after a team of adventurers has flown in. Because of the signs of life Kismet and Karyn go to the Manor as peasants while we hide in the tower and keep quiet.

They meet a guard who wonders why they were not attacked by the denizens of the swamp whilst on their way there. They are sent to the cookhouse where they ask to buy some provisions. They get some good information on the Manor's layout in the guise of gawking at the impressive buildings. They work for the food and get to chat with all and sundry. There is talk of swamp monsters. They are told that a nice lady has been staying there for several weeks. When the Baron passed away two months ago she stayed on to help the widow. The lady (Dainty) comes down and talks to Kismet and Karyn. Dainty eats from a wooden box whilst she works. There seems to be something between Dainty and the head of guards (who we later find out is Brent). The pale wimpy character (found to be Phillipe) likes the lady in black.

Session 6: 21/4/95

Kismet and Karyn come back mid afternoon. Karyn disappears, we suspect she is disguised as a rock, probably an illusion (could she be an illusionist?). Darien and I stay on watch, within an hour, I hear something, after making sure that the coast is clear I go down to investigate. I suspect Karyn, so call out for her (whispering) but there is no answer. There's no one else from the party around so I decide to test out the “rock” and my hand goes through it. So I go in and move my foot about. I feel the satisfaction of kicking something soft – I find Karyn, the sharp tap on my shin tells me that she has just found me. I try to explain that being down here is

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dangerous. I offer to heal her sore ribs but she gets very defensive, I get disappointed. Later on we notice that there is a lot more straw downstairs than there was before, I wonder why but we suspect Karyn, she admits it is magic and we try to explain that changing the appearance of the Mill may call attention to ourselves. I knew I should have kicked her harder!

On Torensen's watch, he sees something move near the manor, I check it out and see that a party is leaving the Manor on horseback. Kismet does locate on Dainty's ring, she is in the group and it is heading for the ford. Kismet does crystals of vision, two women and four men out falconing, the four men include the sergeant and Phillipe.

The party argues/discusses what to do now. Torensen and I want to go straight up to the Manor, the others feel that Dainty is being coerced and therefore want to get her out in the open. Torensen decides to go with the majority. Karyn disguises my armour to be pretty though I feel it does not do me justice. Karyn, Catherine and Merryck hide in bushes whilst the rest intercept the falconing party. They are a bit surprised to find us there. With introductions over, Dainty says that it is her and that she has already sent messages to Carzala with no reply, and that the marriage is not due until Mickelmas anyway. We get invited back to the Manor, escorted by Tony. Boy! Is he surprised when Karyn and Catherine call after us. Loosing his cool he gallops after the others who are cheesed off with us. We are now escorted by three and the rest gallop back to the Manor.

Brent Smith is the sergeant at arms and looks after us. When we enter the Manor, a middle aged woman comes out (Suzanne Chatelaine) and talks to Brent about where to put us. We end up in the laundry. We also get fed in the main hall. On the main table left to right is Dainty, short, plump, fair hair and wearing elaborate clothes. Next to her is a voluptuous, tall, dark haired woman. Next to her, Phillipe, the weedy guy who loves Teresa. Next to him is another woman. There are two empty places.

Suzanne comes over and asks us to appoint someone to speak to Dainty, Catherine is volunteered. Janie is Dainty's hand maiden. Janie gets writing equipment for Dainty to write a letter for us to take back to Duke Avarice. Kismet uses wizard's eye to keep an eye on Catherine.

I decide to repeat what I did on my last adventure and fabricate a second set of scribe notes detailing our journey from Carzala. Catherine leaves Dainty whilst she writes, and is taken to see Lady Teresa, where she is asked to play the harp.

6 July 1994

Catherine thinks she may have been charmed. We find Catherine has been hypnotised by someone from the mind collage. She goes into a trance to see if she could remember what happened. The party discuss the mission, which is to find Dainty and take her back within one week. I tell Darien that the real mission was to test guild training, but he wasn't too keen on hearing that, even when shown the contract.

Weather report – wispy clouds. At breakfast no-one is at the high table, but wenches do take food upstairs. Brent and Suzanne eat in passing the high table. Darien does a detect aura on Brent and finds that he is not a short lived sentient being – he has a magical aura.

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We all go for a walk outside the Manor to discuss this. After, Catherine strikes up a conversation with Brent. He says Dainty only had a couple of guards, and they had to be escorted through the swamp, Brent begins to get engrossed with Catherine. Karyn tries a dispel illusion. Torensen rescues Catherine from Brent. I go and clean my weapons and armour. The ladies come down, Teresa has a book and eventually works a loom. Dainty embroiders whilst eating out of her chockolate box, we begin to suspect the chockolates have some sort of hold over Dainty. Catherine plays for them. Morning passes.

Session 7: 28/4/95

Lunch is arranged outside and some of the party give a hand shifting benches. We are offered some of Dainty's chocolates and notice that the box is Oak with relief carvings and is padded inside. After lunch we split up. I chat with the guards, as I am keen to get some fighting practice in, funny though, I cannot find Brent for his permission. Meryck goes off with one of the serving wenches!!. As I am talking to the guards a shout goes out – there is a riderless horse a few miles away. Kismet and two guards tell me Kismet actually said “there was a Bard with it”. Kismet does a locate on Bern whilst I go and get my fighting stuff ready. I get back and everyone is milling about, Bern is apparently still alive and moving North. Dainty recognises Figaro and apparently knows Bern. The rest of the party get their gear. Torensen has sprained his ankle and is unable to come, however he does give me, Catherine and Karyn rune shields, Catherine and I get sensible shields, Karyn asks for a wall shield. From looking at Figaro and the blood on him, it appears that they were ambushed after crossing the ford.

At the ford Bern is located due north, up stream. Catherine does not locate any other minds. We set off on the high ground to the west of the river. This was bad guesswork on my part as the trail started to lead due east, ie across the river. We backtrack to the ford. The party start mucking about again. I start looking for tracks to follow but there is a lot of mess and a lot of blood. I set off (actions speak louder than words) and the rest follow. Despite being in a swampy area we gallop across a firm grass paddock until we start getting into swamp land. Here we dismount and leave the horses behind under strict orders (by Kismet) not to move until it gets dark.

We get closer and closer to Bern's location. Karyn rears her ugly head and lets them know we are near. She creates a big boulder in the air which lands in the water with a great splash. Catherine detects several minds in the area, and Karyn shows she does have her uses she sends out an image of herself out front as a decoy, one Sarauma leaps out at it. If you could read expressions on a Sarauma's face I think surprise would head the list on this one. We engage with a fire fight, i.e. we pick them off with bows and crossbows, lucky Darien gets into close with one. Then a big magic spell is let off. The mages called it tekayrage which is an odd way of saying a bloody big wind. It not only knocks most of us flying but the Sarauma as well. Unfortunately Bern's body that had been propped on the shore was blown into the river where he drowned as we battled with the Sarauma. Having killed one with an arrow I finally got close with one and was immediately joined by half the rest of the party. Karyn holds the Sarauma mage inside a wall of bones, this was apparently too much for it as when the wall ended, the Sarauma mage is asleep. We have two Sarauma prisoners. I want to kill them but Karyn wants to keep them prisoner. Without anything to tie them up I want them dead, the last time I was in a party that

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held an unrestrained prisoner he ran off. I notice that the Sarauma are wearing weapon belts and suggest we can use them to bind them, although I still prefer killing any reptilian.

Session 8: 5/4/95

The party talk, did the tekayrage come from an invested item or was it a mind mage? If invested then it would be useful to find the Sarauma mage that can do them, or if it was a mind mage that we captured then it would be very valuable to the Guild. I agree the magic using Sarauma should be kept, but feel that the injured one should be killed. This time Catherine sides with Karyn to keep them alive, in fact Catherine kept one alive with magic first aid! I tie the injured lizard up and open a few wounds at the same time, instead of bleeding to death, Catherine heals it again. Merryck and I go to the wall of bones as it is supposed to disappear sometime and we don't want the captured Sarauma to escape. The others bicker amongst themselves over what to do. Most want to take the tekayrage Sarauma back with us, Karyn questions the plan's morality, ie it is a sentient being and should be allowed its freedom. She does not seem to take into account that it and its friends took, were responsible for Bern's death, and then attacked us. So far I have not met a single sentient reptile that hasn't tried to kill me!. Everyone comes over as the wall of bones goes down, the Sarauma is asleep. Catherine mind controls it and I tie it up just in case. I argue with the fate of the wounded Sarauma, I don't want to leave it alive and Karyn wants to set the slimy creep free. I pick it up and throw it into the water, Karyn is pleased as we leave it alive. I'm pleased because I handled it roughly and expect to have opened some of its wounds again, it should die soon after we leave. I have the dubious pleasure of carrying Bern's body back to the horses, which by some miracle obeyed Kismet and were not far from where we left them.

The party discusses on the way back. Kismet comes up with a good excuse to lure Dainty back to Carzala. We have to get Bern back to Carzala quickly to revive him, and having her friendly face there would make that much more easier. Karyn suggests that we all go out for a ride with Dainty, knock out the guards and take Dainty back to Carzala – I point out that she is a bit inconsistent in her terms of kidnapping, as she did not want to “kidnap” a Sarauma but is quite happy to do the same to a Princess.

We get Bern to the Manor and before we can put Kismet's plan into action, Bern gets taken to Phillippe's room where he is brought back to life. Karyn, Kismet and Merryck hang around Bern's room. Dainty is there and talks fondly of Bern when he was at Bowcourt. The others feel that Dainty has forgiven Bern for something. She is talking of quite a while ago, ie beyond 4-5 years ago. Bern is alive requiring two days recuperation, Dainty is much happier.

Meanwhile I check that the Sarauma is properly manacled. We used Torensen's manacles of cold iron specially designed to curb Mages (I approve – perhaps we can use them on Karyn!). I stay behind to check the prisoner. Whilst down there I'm sure I felt magic impact but nothing happened. Later I tell Darien, but he wasn't too concerned – you'll read why later.

Dainty stays with Bern, and the party fetch his stuff from Figaro. Kismet manages to get a message to Bern that we will see him later. It is some time before tea, I go and check the Sarauma, no change. Catherine and Merryck lie down for a rest (not

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together). Karyn gets up to her stupid tricks again. She raids Pierre's herb garden and attempts to heal Torensen's swollen ankle. Torensen says his ankle is getting better but he really itches, but I cannot see anything. At dinner Karyn seems very fidgety, especially her hands. Kismet whispers to Darien "what's the duration of the wall?", I'm requested to note this amazing statement down by the party. I think that if we ever find out why Kismet said that I think the world might be a better place. At dinner a festival in Bern's honour is announced for tomorrow, there will be no work and we will all celebrate.

After dinner I go and play with the guards as it is their training time. After training I look at Torensen's itch as it is getting worse, my healer skills tell me that Torensen has a stinging nettle rash that I still cannot see. I go outside to look for some Dock leaves but it is too dark and I don't find any.

Kismet, Karyn and Merryck go see Bern, he is told Figaro is fine. The three of them find out that Duke Avarice was a count.

7 July 1994

During the night Catherine is on watch when she heard a splash. I go outside for a look around and see that Brent is back. How? We didn't hear the gates open, could it have been shadowwalk?, or an underground passage (in the swamp?).

Torensen leaves some lavender and dock leaves by Karyn's pillow, who makes something for her hair with them. She thanks Kismet for the flowers who is gracious in accepting the praise. Later Torensen asks if Karyn appreciated the flowers, this leads to Kismet and Karyn having a bit of a tiff.

After breakfast, I go and check on the Sarauma in the cellar – it has gone and the manacles are mangled. I go straight up to the party, and then to Brent. He goes off to talk to the night watch. Torensen and I go outside to look for Sarauma tracks, we don't find any.

Session 9: 12/5/95

I suggest a wizzards eye down the well to check out the splash Catherine heard last night. Kismet finds that the water level is 20-25 feet below ground and is 15 feet deep. The well is 15 ft from the kitchen, and 25 ft from the cellar. Kismet sees nothing, and then goes on a flying visit around the keep, and the herbalist's (Phillipes's) room, seeing lots of bottles with odd runic inscriptions.

Catherine, Karyn, Merryck and Torensen discuss laying on a play for tonight's celebrations, Darien hangs around the fringe having a little sideline in magic, I don't know what for – you'll read why later.

I go back down the cellar and have a look around for secret passages etc. At the time I notice that it is dry down here, very dry, in fact so dry that you wouldn't expect it to be so dry, especially when the area around is a swamp. Why dry?, neutralise water?, binder?, illusionary terrain? Does this suggest that the Sarauma are not involved because they would prefer it wet!!

Through his locate Kismet says Brent is back, through the wizzards eye Kismet finds Brent flirting with the wenches. If he came back through a portal, it has to be in the

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keep, with respect to the time it takes to find him with the wizzards eye. It could be that someone else is disguised as Brent and Kismet only oicks it up when the disguise is magically applied. Kismet talks to Torensen about runic inscriptions.

Dainty, Bern, Suzanne and two others go out for a gentle ride.

Darien, Catherine, Karyn and Merryck go outside to practice the play, they then come back and check out the hall.

Torensen and I go back down to the cellar, he lights up the walls from behind to look for secret doorways. Although we don't find any, I notice that the manacles have been well smashed by an object, not as if the Sarauma had ripped them off.

In the afternoon, everyone comes out and practices their dance steps, servants, guards, everyone. Phillipe does not seem to know the basic steps and I refuse point blank, we still have to get to the bottom of this mystery. Catherine "persuades" me to practice some dance steps, I give it a go and find I really like it.

The Banquet

Everyone is seated at a horseshoe shaped bench arrangement, with lots of food and wine. After the first course, Bern announces a dance, a galliard, this is fun and I get up straight away and find someone to dance with. Karyn and Kismet dance as well. A toast to the Duke precedes the second course. I get up straight away for the next dance, a paran. This is a great banquet!, so much dancing!.

A different set of servers bring out the third course. This is followed by Dainty, Jill, Suzanne and one other singing 3 songs, Dainty has a good voice, but Jill is hopeless.

After the fourth course the Troubadours in the party perform an opera loosely based on what we believe is really happening. Catherine (Princess Valerie) sings of her true love (Prince Gowron) gone off on a quest. Darien is the messenger with bad news, Prince Gowron has been killed. Torensen a tall noble man sings of how he loves her and wants to court her, with asides to the audience, ie "love her forever" equals "I'll kill her on the honeymoon". This draws lots of boos and hisses. Valerie and (the male) Karyn do a romantic duet. For the wdding scene, Darien plays the priest. Merryck plays the fiddler who reveals himself (as Prince Gowron) professing love for the princess. Karyn cannot stand between the princess and true love. Torensen swaps goblets. When the goblets are drunk, Torensen dies and screams I've been betrayed uurggghhhhh – the audience is raucous – Torensen dies. Karyn reveals his evil self and goes for Gowron. The swordplay is not bad for the stage, although I could teach them a thing or two. Gowron stage kills Karyn, proposes to Princess Valerie, and the play closes with the couple at the alter to audience applause.

After the fifth course, Bern comes over to give advise on the performance. I suggest more dancing could have been included, I would have joined in.

Session 10: 19/5/95

After some more excellent dancing Lady teresa proposes a toast to the late Lord Gilbert. Dessert is served and people started getting drowsy. This Catherine found odd since she, Karyn, and Kismet were not drinking as copiously as everybody else,

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in fact she had cautioned the rest of the party not to drink either. The party managed to get back to the laundry and were packing up when magic started impacting. At this point we find out that Darien was a doppelganger, he most certainly wasn't before – I'll vouch for that!. At this stage the rousing chorus of "Adventurers, we are leaving!", and some hypnotisms got everyone moving in the vague direction of the courtyard, outside, and safety. The real Darien is located to the North West.

This exciting tactical move probably explains why Catherine is not Military Scientist as waiting for us was a spell casting Phillipe and a glaive wielding maniac masquerading as Suzanne (or was it the other way round?). With a cry of "get them" Catherine launched the fighters at the evil duo. Their being slowed came as a bit of a shock and the enemy mind mage was out of sight, spending spell energy like water. This was getting on Catherine's nerves. Catherine to the rescue, she drops the two in the courtyard, but got cursed herself and dropped by the gates. Despite desperate confusion we stuck with the plan, leaving under cover of fog with the horses Torensen boldly acquired.

Escapes are fun (especially when successful), exciting things which stimulate the body. We stopped for the night by some rocks. The mages all fell over and we were watched over by Merryck the hypnotised also Torensen and I who I think Catherine are suggestible without magic.

8 July 1994

Dawn came with threats and curses by dozing magi, Catherine released Merryck from the hypnotism, apologised and then put him somewhere comfortable. During breakfast we came up with a plan to negotiate back Dainty, Darien, and possibly Bern on a buy two get one free sort of deal. We ride back into range of Torensen's visitation spell and checked the place out with crystal balls and spells. Everyone is still unconscious and only the bad guys are up and about. Catherine feels that a moment of screaming, inane, terror provides a nice relief from the daily routine of being an adventurer.

Session 11: 26/5/95

What do we do?, we feel Teresa is a mind mage, but not sure which of Phillipe and Suzanne are the Wicca or Illusionist. Torensen is to use his visitation to go in the righteous indignation and barter for Dainty, the real Darien, and of course Bern. At the ford we are in range of Torensen's magic. Kismet's locate shows Brent is spinning, and Bern, Teresa and Jill are in the keep. Catherine does some precognition and sees a ghostly figure walking through fog, phantasms? I could have sworn I heard Karen say "we should fog the place as they are afraid of the frog".

Torensen appears into a fog in the main hall, people are still asleep. No-one answers Torensen's shouts for a talk. He hears a groan nearby, he tries to shout them awake, the fog thickens. Due to the nature of the Visitation spell, the rest of the party don't know what's going on. The fog gets thicker – it is actually from a fire. Someone wakes up but the ghostly Torensen scares them and they scream. After a while Torensen returns to the party and lets us know what is going on, he points out that the keep is on fire.

FIRE!!!!!!!!!!!!

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We're off, we mount up and ride to the Manor. The gate is locked from the inside. Catherine moves the bar with her mind as Karyn, Torensen and I push open the gates. Kismet's horse bucks which for some reason really frightens Kismet. We locate Dainty and her maid collapsed near a window seat in the solar. Merryck tries to climb to the solar but falls, stout fellow that he is, he has a second go. Catherine and I go for the rope and the rest of our things. Torensen hacks the way through a thorn bush covering the door and outside steps. Darien and Merryck rescue Dainty and the maid. As Dainty gets near the bottom the rope unravels and she falls to the ground. Kismet should "get the chocolate box" and when it cannot be seen, we hear "the bitch has stolen it", are doppelganger's female?

Karyn starts rescuing people in the hall and is soon joined by Catherine. Torensen and I hack our way nearer the door. The smoke gets thicker, the air gets hotter. In the urgency of the rescue people are being thrown out of the windows. There are two fires, one at the stairs and one upstairs, the ceiling is also alight. I eventually kick the door open. I pull them out two at a time, and Torensen gets one each go. Merryck gets confused in the smoke, eventually we call him over to the door and we all get out before the roof collapses. A quick medical check finds 8 dead, one with a broken neck. Teresa and Suzanne are not dead, we find out that Teresa is actually an illusion. We wake Bern and Kiamet dishes out chocolates.

Still early morning, sparks from the blaze are setting fire to the stables. Kismet and Karyn fool around and we lose the battle against the sparks. Karyn does a mist to dampen down the sparks. There is a frightened cow and calf in the barn which we actually rescue. Kismet and I go out to collect the wandering horses. We quiz Darien, he was held in a wet damp place reached under water and through the well. The others sleep, especially Darien and Merryck. Torensen sets up a rune ward to stop magic coming in.

Session 12: 2/6/95

I put a lid on the well, Karyn makes it invisible and I arrange pots and pans around the top to warn if anything comes up the well. Kismet and I are on guard. Karyn does soup for lunch whilst Torensen and I check out the well, no change.

After lunch we move 200 yards away from the smoke. We are careful with Dainty (sprained ankle) and someone with broken ribs. Those awake discuss what to do. We feel that Dainty should be flown to Carzala, but we also have a responsibility to stay and look after the others, not to mention get the dead to the Guild. Karyn wants to tie up loose ends, ie talk to the doppelgangers. I also want to tie up loose ends, ie "talk" to the doppelgangers who I see as being in cahoots with the Sarauma, who I also want to talk to.

By mid-afternoon Bern stops snoring but doesn't wake up. Karyn blows in his ear and he wakes up. She asks about the doppelgangers and what else was odd there. Bern says the chocolate box is Dainty's family heirloom. He has not met any of the others before. Dainty was introduced by someone she trusted ie a guardian, and has only known Teresa a short while. Bern and Karyn play word games – has Karyn met her match? Duke Avarice was standing in for Dainty's family. Ever alert I check on the still sleeping people, I recon two are wakable but I let them sleep on. Bern last met Dainty over 4 years ago.

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Bern, Darien (carrying Dainty) and Torensen go to Seagate. Torensen gives me a rune shield before he goes, I expect a little action later.

Bern didn't quite make it, he sprained his ankle taking off. He moans about it being broken, Karyn and I go along with his acting, bind the sprain and splint it for looks. Merryck sleeps all day.

I wake up the two people I felt were OK. They are frightened, thinking that we have gone out of control and are responsible for burning the Manor down. Peter Cooperson had helped rebuild the Manor and Keep earlier this year. He has a Carzalan accent, and is a general handyman from Governors Hope. He is apprenticed to his uncle in the Cooperage. Peter tells us that the Manor's renovations were paid for by the Guild, and it was not supposed to get burned down. Phillipe is a mage, Teresa is the boss, a mind mage, and is immune to fire. Brent is a hired fighter, a bit strange though. The group was told that there were hordes and hordes of Sarauma in the swamp, but the Manor was not bothered with them, in fact they only ever saw one, the one we captured. Peter's uncle arranged to do the work for the guild in the hope of encouraging preferred business from the Guild later. Bern turned up dead and was not expected. In the scenario, Dainty was to be sacrificed and the party was to rescue her. Peter and the others were briefed by McGreedy.

Miss Deborah says that the sacrifice was to have been the day we arrived. Teresa knew we had arrived when we were at the mill. The Manor had been operating since spring. She has no knowledge of any doppelgangers in the Manor. Suzanne came in with Dainty's group.

We are still unsure about what happened, perhaps doppelgangers took over, unaware of the plot. Still we set off for the MacDonalds.

9 July 1994

Darien and Torensen come back, but Kismet remains at the guild. Darien was guided to us by our campfire.

Session 13: 9/6/95

10 July 1994

Before getting to the MacDonalds, Karyn changes into Blitzkrieg so as not to alarm the MacDonalds, and we arrive in the evening.

Back at the Guild we debrief. Princess Dainty is actually Lady Charlotte de Beauvoir. The Guild was surprised that Bern turned up, he is from the Troubadour's Guild at Bowcourt, interested in ties with our own Guild.

Teresa is evil and was under a Geas not to hurt the guild, obviously the Geas has been broken. She is known to have a Wiccan friend, and Phillipe and Suzanne are old associates. It is not known if any are doppelgangers. It is possible that there was only one doppelganger, and it came into the scenario through Brent.

Bern insists on talking to Lady Charlotte before allowing the Guild to debrief him. On being debriefed, he releases a post hypnotic suggestion to say "Happy Birthday Harkum" (the Guild Chairman).

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I submit to a divination and find I was not hypnotised and therefore I did not release the captured Sarauma.

The Guild do some astrology readings. If the Guild does not bother Teresa, she will not bother the Guild.

The End

Despite Karyn's antics, I enjoyed this adventure. We succeeded in testing out the Guild's training despite the interference of Teresa and her cronies. Despite losing the Manor to fire, we did save nine lives and got eight other Guild employees to the Guild in time to be resurrected, thus preserving the Guild's reputation in Cazala.