

Gardens of Phadre

An Adventure By Gordon Lewis, Spring 801 WK

Party:

Drovar	Mer/Human, M	Earth (Pacifistic), Healer, Ranger
Darien	Human, M	Celestial (Shadow), religious, Thief, Ranger - Scribe
GoK	Elf, M	Celestial (Shadow), Spy, Ranger
Katerina	Human, F	Warrior, Spy, secretive
Clementine	Hobbit/Bear, F	Hero, Air (recently), Bear - Party Leader
Aryan	Human, M	Warrior, Mil Sci, Ranger - Military Leader

Employer: M. Bantrim Nilhodden, Count de Champ Sanglats (Bowcourt). Accompanied by Nainsae (Grace), an escort from the Elven Court.

Mission: 1. Kill the dragon Bharion, a teacher to elves. He is very sick, and the elves wish to end his/their suffering. Completion grants permission for the Hunt of the Stag of Phadre to take place

Payment: 2. Provide Bantrim's team in the Hunt, which will decide a wager between 4 nobles. Travel and preparation expenses, dragon leftovers (including hoard), 600sp/p/week.

Places: Tuscana, Pvensey, Alfheim, Silver Mountain, Garden of Phadre.

Entities met: Bharion, colourless dragon
The scholars of Silver Mountain
Roberto Sincero, Baron Serie Selvatiche (Tuscana)
Julio Di LaStella, Baron Terra di Stelle (Tuscana). Also his cousin Lucia
Hugo Cochonvis, Baron Chutes Bouillantes (Bowcourt), also his brother Guillaume (both now deceased.)
The Stag of the Garden of Phadre
The Fairy of the Garden of Phadre

Summary: The party travelled with the nobles to Pvensey, collecting the other teams at their nobles' estates. The entire group portaled to Alfheim, not far from the Gardens of Phadre. The party (plus Bantrim and Grace) flew north to Silver Mountain. En route, they overcame an attack by chimeras – a trap set by some elves who didn't agree with the party's mission. The Dragon at Silver Mountain was resigned to his fate, and planned to cooperate with the party. Unfortunately, his illness causes painful episodes, which make him lose control. During one of these attacks, Bantrim dies after being hit by the Dragon's magic. We resolve the situation by giving the Dragon an item that turns pain into pleasure. While waiting for another episode to occur (to test the item), we have the chimera skins made into armour. After the test is successful, we get an item each from the dragon's hoard, and join the rest of the group at Phadre.

Three days after Bantrim is resurrected, the hunt starts. We try to avoid offending the Forest, and gain an escort of wolf/elves. When two of their kind are killed by Cochonvis, the party helps dispense justice. Both Cochonvis brothers are killed, and a large amount of damage is done to the clearing where the fight took place. The party's suspicions that Bantrim is a nasty piece of work are confirmed during this incident. The other teams arrive, and set up camp.

The party leave the others, and manage to find The Stag. After an eventful chase he is captured. We return to the camp at the end of the following day, and Bantrim is declared winner by Grace. There is some argument over the settlement of the wager. Next morning there is no sign of Bantrim. Everyone returns to the camp outside the forest, and the party is paid and dismissed by Bantrim's aide. We later hear that Bantrim disappeared for some weeks, eventually showing up in Sanctuary.

NARRATIVE:

2 Thaw. We meet with Bantrim's Aide: Hugo Sangtache, who outlines the mission, and invites us to stay at the inn that Bantrim has bought, after the party at same. We spend the day reading up on dragons (Standard Handout to Adventurers #3), and acquiring means to bring back the blood (24 x pint dragon blood holders, on loan). Also good would be eyes, heart, skin, teeth, claws and bones.

At the party are all 4 lords, and various companions and servants. Not all of the intended team members are there. We chat with Bantrim and Hugo Sangtache. Hugo Cochonvis insults Grace, and is made to apologise. We then booze like adventurers at a noble's free piss-up.

3 Thaw At Breakfast (well, the first meal after getting out of bed) we talk with Grace. We notice that the dwarven retainers that the other 3 lords have stick together, and we also occupy Bantrim's researchers with philosophical questions.

Last chance to get gear before we ride and portal north tomorrow (very good horses to be optionally provided by Bantrim's family stud).

4-22 Thaw Travel to Pvensey via Di LaStella, Sincero, Cochonvis estates.

23 Thaw Portal to Alfheim (6hr ride inside portal), pass border controls, fly up to fight with chimeara (see "Flighty Flight" attached), stay in cave overnight.

24 Thaw Fly to Silver Mountain Academy, talk to professors, dragon, misguided ones. Tour dragon's cave, including 'Hall of Heroes'. Drovar in process of being healed of earlier backfire. Bharion involuntarily changes into Dragon form, warning us to flee, and claiming that Bantrim is up to no good. Bharion hurts us all with Globes of Light and Dark, then sits in his cavern whimpering. We leave via the portal we arrived through (Drovar brought codes given to him), but unfortunately Bantrim dies. Cally (see list of Silver Mountain elves below) has worked out a time portal, and experiments with making a barrel of mead in the Great Hall (One day in 5' column of Dark = one year).

Clementine offers the elves her necklace that turns pain into pleasure, which the elves are very keen on.

25 Thaw - 6 Seedtime Bharion recovers after a day, and we all discuss the situation. We decide that Bantrim is probably up to no good, but don't have any grounds to refuse to continue with the mission. We wait for Bharion to have another attack, so we can see the impact on the elves while Bharion is wearing the necklace. After hunting down the chimeara that escaped, Flan makes some very good armour for Kat, GoK, Clem and Aryan. Highlight of the wait was the tasting of the mead. The pillar of Dark containing the growth-covered barrel dissipated on the 4th. The excellent contents were christened 'Clementine Mead'.

7 Seedtime While Bharion is in his cave, we feel the rumbles that indicate another of Bharion's bouts. The bound go off for a lie-down.

8 Seedtime After a day, Bharion recovers, and declares 'that worked!' The bound agree that it was an interesting rather than painful experience. Love seems especially pleased. Bharion lets us each take a magical gizmo, and we have various spells and rituals performed on us.

9 Seedtime Grace leads us to the clearing near the gardens of Phadre where the four camps are set up. Hugo discretely arranges for Lucia DLS and Pedro De Campo Rico to fix up Bantrim. Lucia has a chat, and Drovar lends a hand. We scout the Sincero and Cochonvis camps.

10 Seedtime Bantrim 'thought it was a dream' - he doesn't seem too upset at not having any dragon bits or soul. We decide further scouting isn't worth the effort.

11 Seedtime Prepare for the Hunt.

12 Seedtime We manage to dope Sincero's horses at breakfast. Grace leads us to the Garden, and gives a speech about the forest's pleasures and dangers before declaring the Hunt started. The teams advance, and Grace tells us about various flora that we pass. GoK quickly bores a water sprite. After lunch, we Summon a deer, then somehow need to chase it. The Forest makes us lose the trail, and Drovar is slept off his horse. The horse then disappears. Some time (and 15 miles) later, we find it inside a 'Flower Ring' within a clearing - we are discouraged from trying to break the horse out, and decide not to use cold iron against it. GoK is rude to the flock of nearby pixies, and takes a while to apologise. Drovar backfires a couple of times. We move on, and GoK Summons a young wolf, who starts to lead us to where the Stag is. After 30 minutes, The Fairy causes the wolf to be unbound. We make camp next to a stream. Darien summons a grey wolf, apologies when it complains in elven, and releases from binding. It stays for a chat anyway, and tells us about The Fairy. We heard other parties at various times during the day

13 Seedtime Head for high ground, filling in a pit trap on the way (Sincero's, as we glimpse a couple of his party?). Clem has a chatter with a fairy that plays at being a unicorn. It tells us that The Fairy doesn't want us chasing the Stag. We make camp, noticing magical Daffodils.

14 Seedtime The camp is raided overnight, and there is much minor breakage of missile weaponry (and anything else left not in contact with party members). A pack of wolves join us (on instruction from The Wolf), some of whom split off to keep an eye on Cochonvis when we come across his camp (they are building traps). We jog around the contour we are on, hoping Sincero will scare The Stag towards us. We

find a BIG snake in an area of long grass (large due to a special plant), Clem and Drovar talk to it. Clem drinks some water saturated with essence of Phadre, starts acting playful. We search for the source of the magic in the water, or the snake plant, Clem riding a wolf. In a dark and dank part of the forest, we kill a black scaly thing that got hold of Clem's arm. After we make camp, Lucia DLS shows up for a chat. After she falls asleep, Aryan and Clem go off exploring, using her boots of speed. Find interesting deer-shaped hole in rock. Clem 'sees' an aura. Finally, Clem took 4 left boots from Sincero's camp. The night passed uneventfully.

15 Seedtime Head for interesting hole in rock, but detour when the wolves smell dead wolf. We find ourselves at the Cochonvis camp, where one elf and one wolf are up on gibbets, having been dead for many hours. Grace rides forward to discuss the issue with them. The Wolf appears, and duels with Cochonvis, while Grace prevents his men interfering in the even fight. Bantrim orders us in, and we have the retainers dead or within Hands of Earth in short order (the dwarf is cheering the wolf on). The environment helped us fight (e.g. the Hands did not attempt to capture us.) We soon discover that something is making magical attacks on Cochonvis difficult, and his armour is much tougher than normal leather. As we struggle to do damage (The Wolf does not like the taste of his blood), various party members are Controlled, then disarmed by other party members in turn. Finally, Clem has an item that (this time) creates a huge fire/windstorm that consumes Cochonvis and those in Hands. Bantrim had already made arrangements with most of the newly deceased (plus the dwarf), but much loot is lost in the conflagration. The trees around the vortex are getting damaged until Drovar buries it in Tunnelling.

The other parties arrive, and the principals decide to camp for the day, have a memorial meal, and continue hunting on the morrow. While Drovar and Darien rest, Clem calls the Wind, and we have a talk.

Eventually, all Guild members, The Stag, The Fairy and Grace have a discussion some distance from the combined camp. It is agreed that we will chase The Stag, capture it, show the principals that we have won the bet, Grace will declare Bantrim winner and the wager over. Therefore Bantrim will not be able to hunt The Stag any more, and it will be time for us all to leave.

The Chase is on! The party cast spells and quaff potions as The Stag trots off. Drovar follows utilising some special earth-running type spell, while Clem gets onto his antlers with help from air spirits. Everyone else takes to the air on Wings. After collecting Drovar with his hind hooves, and being partially successful in throwing Clem off, The Stag changes into a hobbit with horns. He starts to carry Clem off into the bushes – maybe he mis-understood Clem's cheeky lick. Clem decides she would rather be a bear, and asks the air spirits for more help. The somewhat put out Stag is a bear for a bit, but is back to deer by the time Kat ambushes him. Her magical arrow ends up in his rack, but Aryan manages to grab his neck. By changing back to hobbit he escapes Aryan and Darien, but is tangled by Aryan's masterful whip-play when back as a deer. The party take the opportunity to hog-tie him, and The Stag concedes!

As we make sure The Stag doesn't change his mind, we realise that Clem seems to be stuck as some form of air (although we can still communicate with her). Her attempts to change back to a 'normal' form just make her half her hobbit size. We start the two day walk back to the site of the main camp, The Stag under token restraint. We discuss exactly how we (or more precisely, Grace) will announce the wager won.

16 Seedtime After an uneventful night and morning, The Fairy meets us and conducts a fine luncheon, Grace joining us as well. Drovar agrees to return to help repair the damage to the Garden. Come late afternoon, we take a short walk, and are back at the camp still occupied by the other teams (and Bantrim). There is a great cheers as we approach, with The Stag in a quick release hobble. As planned, Grace declares Bantrim the winner, and The Stag is freed. Bantrim gets very (but also quietly) upset, Aryan taking the main thrust of his anger. We subtly contain him until The Stag is away.

A grand meal is prepared while the principals retire to discuss settlement. There is much argument over Bantrim's win, the others arguing that we hunted while they had agreed with Bantrim to suspend the chase. After the meal there is much merriment, and more fairy folk.

17 Seedtime on We Sleep Bantrim, and stash him in Kat's magical farmhouse. Come dawn, ride out to main camp, and get paid by Hugo (who dismisses us). Fly back to Guild, and have Thauess turn Bantrim to stone. After the required time has passed, Darien and Aryan take him to Sanctuary, and around for him to be found in a brothel, discretely disposing of various of his belongings along the way.

REFERENCE

The wager:

Bantrim: "In the Garden of Phadre is a stag of extreme grace. This Spring we have the honour to ride him down". He has a brown, or some would say golden, hide. No known magical abilities, merely a supreme example of his kind. Very vibrant, tough hide.

In all things, it is important not to be caught going against the spirit of the hunt and chase. But accidents do happen.....

Teams (limited to 6 hunters each) will accompany each of the 4 lords. Any number of servants are allowed to make camp. The teams will start evenly spaced out over one mile at the edge of the Garden, commencement to be at Bantrim's announcement.

No magic to be cast against the stag once it is uncovered.

Previous wagers between the four were not to this scale.

From Lucia DLS

Wager was made 6 months ago. Stakes are bits of land, a favour, magical bauble. Surprised that the competition was in the form of a Hunt - not B's thing. DLS would keep the Stag on his property.

Garden of Phadre

Bantrim: "A beautiful place with much game". Enchanted forest "in the protectorate of Alfheim." Probably neutral in the wager – as regards the relative standings of the hunters, that is. Random destruction of the landscape is probably unwise. It would also upset the elves. Approx 10 x 70 miles. Crammed with Fey Folk, talking animals, giant insects.

Bharion:

Bantrim: "Oh, yes, lesser dragons have colour. He is past that."

He has had his horrible disease for 2 centuries, and will take some time to die. It cannot be cured on Alusia and he cannot go back to the plane he contracted it on. We have discussed banishing him, which would possibly kill him, but no dragon remnants in this case.

Our right to the Dragon's hoard is unclear - Bantrim has assumed 'we kill it, it is ours.'

Bantrim's 'warrant' has the Elven Queen's seal on it, and seems genuine

Grace: "His pain is hurting my people"

Has some 20 students, a third of which who are bound to him, and suffering especially. Teaches philosophy, Celestial, Illusion. The situation would have been discussed with the students before the Queen made arrangements with Bantrim. Varying reactions could be expected from different students.

He can't suicide.

Grace has not heard of him flying.

From the Wind Spirit

The wind helps the dragon occasionally. Some elves are air mages.

The dragon is faster than an eagle. It didn't fly often, and hasn't since the chimaera have been here (winter).

There are lots of caves in the area.

The dragon's main cave has a main entrance, a big bit, and narrow bits.

From Nainsae (Grace)

Elf-sized and larger entrances to the cave are warded.

The dragon has used the cave for 700 years. The inside of the cave has a 'glass' covering, which gives lighting.

The village surrounds the main entrance. The bound students have been taught for 300 years. Some of the elves are known as professors due to have being around for so long. Profs are not necessarily bound.

In elf form (looks very stocky), the dragon is albino-like, with very white skin, colourless eyes, blond hair.

He has symptoms of a cough. He stays at the school for up to a week at a time, and still teaches.

Bound students look weak, and are tired from the pain.

Elves say that his attacks (during which he loses control) are normally weeks apart, but have been as close as two days.

From Bharion

Appears around 60' long (illusion made by B, consistent with gouge marks, size of cavern etc.)

Is 'OK' with us doing the task, will 'pop off to the other world.'

Plans to 'sink into the mountain' on death.

Bantrim:

Count de Champ Sanglats. [Bloody Fields]. Blazon is an armoured arm holding a sword, with bar sinister. Bantrim is charming - too charming. Charming to rhyme with scheming.

Aide : Hugo Sangtache : Human : Spy / Assassin / Courtier

An acknowledged bastard, he is not allowed family retainers by his father, hence use of mercenaries. Bantrim has a set of geeks who showed up at the party later. They research for B, have been concentrating on histories, dragons, Dwarven ancient Kingdoms. Elves say he wants parts of the stag for rituals. He has 'a streak of subservient evil', and some kind of father figure. Lucia DLS: Summed up by 'means to an end'.

Weapons:

Bantrim says he was sent an arrow by persons unknown (we had assumed it came with the warrant, but the arrow arrived afterwards). It would store a dragon's soul (temporarily), but Bharion demanded that it be destroyed. Bharion agreed that if we tracked down whoever sent it, we could have as much of his hoard as we could carry each. We suggested that not destroying it immediately would help our investigation, so it has been put to one side. The elves say it is a prison and torture chamber, and has evil intent for the soul. Currently 'hungry'

From 'Hall of Heroes'

Dagger: Feels very hot when first touched. Those of strong will can use it after some kind of test of faith. It feels like it moulds itself to its bearer (except when in its sheath). Wielder can spend WP to cause EN damage. Ignores armour, does spec grevs.

Spear: Odd jagged head, bulbous butt. Bharion says that it hurt, but wasn't plunged in hard enough. Aryan plans to use it as a lance. Ignores natural and formally living armour, does EN damage, will stay stuck in.

Hand-and-a-half Sword: Covered in Orcish runes, has chaotic magic. Others keen on it despite this. Called 'False Hope', gives wielder great confidence, and no other assistance whatsoever.

Grace (Nainsae):

Knows Draconic, has meet Bharion twice.

Impressed by Drover being some kind of honorary forester (scythe, not arrow)

Her mother was a student (Illusion), favoured the very large illusionary dragon figures that were present on our arrival.

Chimera:

From the plane of Milloo, they have head and foreparts of a huge lion, body and (extra) head of a goat, tail of a poisonous snake. They had 'portal tokens' (recognised by Bharion, who has been there '3 or 4 times'.)

Silver Mountain Academy:

At Bharion's cave mouth on Silver Mountain there is a village supporting a school (of sorts). There are 21 scholars living and studying in 'the school' under the guidance of Bharion himself. Most of them have been there – albeit on and off – for 300 years.

In amongst the villagers there are students. The Scholars teach them some of the arts given by the dragon.

Seven of the scholars are 'bound' to the dragon. They feel his pain and suffer with him. They also share some of his insights.

There are many wooden buildings, including three towers and a Great Hall. There is also a large round stone building.

At least one of the towers (standard appears-bigger-on-the-inside-than-the-outside) is a portal to Bharion's cave under a staircase. When we entered it, we were in limbo until Bharion also entered.

Bharion's Cave:

We portaled in to a side chamber, the main chamber is rather large, with a small lake, and enough room for a short flight. Many streams feed into the lake, and lots of plants. There is an odd lighting effect that seems to give maximum bonuses to all branches of Celestials. B shows us 'Hall of Heroes', preserved (to varying degrees) those that have attacked him. He gives(?) us various weapons to help get it over with quickly. It would probably take a day or two to find our way out from the chamber next to the Hall of Heroes. A rk20

Darkness appeared as we ran from Bharion (cast or warded?). Dark area contained ha-ha, and trap in floor (which we left piled with stones.)

Silver Mountain Elves:

Three senior ones greet us, discuss situation. It is against the rules for them to act against each other, so won't restrain disaffected ones. Will help us with spells etc to a limited degree. The link to B is 'about time, not distance', so moving away does not help.

Disaffected students:

Say Bharion has things to do, including raise other dragons (shown illusion of 5 eggs, due to hatch in centuries). "Only a dragon can rear a dragon". There is a known place on a given plane where elves can be turned into dragons. They reluctantly agree to not interfere with us before we kill Bharion, but make no promises about afterwards. Others say that at least one of them can summon across planes (source of tokens).

The Fairy of Phadre

From grey wolf/elf: Is 'Consort of Phadre'. To call, create a fairy ring (ritual)

From 'unicorn' fairy: doesn't want us to chase the Stag.

Conducts a luncheon (tables grow out of the ground, fresh food appears etc), can summon fey on a whim, makes short tracks that go a long way. Overall, the kind of stuff you would expect from the personification of the master of the Fey on his home turf.

Other Interesting Things in the Garden

Purple Trumpet plant – absorbs magic, creates High Mana Zone within 2ft. Sucks mana if overused (we have been warned)

Bank of White Flowers – preserves things like food. When we try to remove a couple of samples we are told by fey 'Look, learn, don't touch'.

Grey wolf/elf – Speaks better elven than half the party. Is shapechanger, no college. Fairly chatty for several minutes. Expects that the Stag is on high ground by now, can't be bribed to help us find it.

Daffodils – very yellow, has enthrallment enchantment.

Black scaly thing – Lives just under surface of mud, has tube-shaped mouth, could swallow Clem's bear arm. Took several blows to kill. The teeth stayed lodged in the flesh, and the wounds continued to bleed until we removed them. Has parasitic/symbiotic flower on top (DA 'energy sap').

It lived in reeds that were light green, with purple tips – these apparently cause nausea.

Lucia DLS's boots require a song (bribed out of a fairy) to activate. They let the wearer move very quickly, but require some willpower to stop moving, and make the wearer hungry (she had magical leaves to counter this).

Flighty Flight

Half of the party (Aryan, Darien, GoK and our Alfhieim escort, Nainsae) were tricked into landing (we all had Shadow Wings) on a small rock landing outside a cave on a cliff face. As Nainsae landed, she collapsed unconscious, and the illusionary figures that had spoken to us disappeared. Two great goutts of flame left Darien and GoK momentarily stunned as a chimaera, also with Shadow Wings, bounded out of the cave and leapt skywards. Naturally he headed straight for the party employer. Fortunately M. Bantrim's hunting experience is apparently not entirely land-based. As Katerina swooped down to assist, Bantrim flew directly at the cliff face and dodged away from with rather more agility than the chimaera could muster. His heavy landing gave Katerina the chance to get in a couple of good blows before he flew off again.

Meanwhile, back at the cave, Aryan (after unsuccessfully trying to throw Nainsae off the cliff - Feather falling is so useful) was trading blows with the next chimaera to emerge. Darien and GoK had managed to sort themselves out, jumping off the rock pad and joining the aerial chase. This left room for Clem (now a bear) to land and tackle the snake end of the beastie. After whacking it around a bit, Clem decided it was time to run into the cave and deal with the third chimaera which was keeping things warm for Aryan. By now, Drovar had decided to join in, so took Clem's place dodging fangs.

Up above, our airborne friend had decided to go after GoK (or was that away from Katerina?). GoK turned back towards the others, and the chimaera had a go at him. GoK took the blow, and then held on (fortunately from above), causing them both to plummet towards the forest canopy below. With excellent timing, GoK pushed off high enough for his own Wings to kick in, but low enough that the monster only had Wings on for an instant before crashing though to the forest floor. Katerina landed (rather more elegantly, I'm sure) and chased him off.

While this was going on, Clem's bear hug wasn't doing too much to the stay-at-home. Drovar's Tunnelling under Aryan's opponent cleared the way for Darien to fly into the cave mouth just as Clem broke free. Joined by the Aryan and Drovar, he was soon dispatched. The final monster was finished off as he popped out of the Tunnelling.

Examination of the bodies revealed that the monsters had been brought (but not summoned) from the plane of Milloo. This particular variety have the head and foreparts of a huge lion (a very powerful bite, much stronger than normal lions), an extra goat's head and neck (just the right size to hook an elf's arm around), and a snake for a tail (with a powerful, but short duration, poison.) The tough hide gave as much protection as improved plate.