

DELTA BLUES

Cover Sheet

Adventure by Rosemary Mansfield

01/01/95 - 26/01/95

Player Characters

Aqualina	Water	Female	Human	Scribe
Kryen	Illusionist	Male	Human	
Kismet	E&E	Male	Human	
Kynn	E&E	Female	Erelain	Leader
Slasher	Non-mage	Male	Human	Mil Sci
Hargan	Non-mage	Male	Human	Leader
Drover	Earth	Male	Human	

Plane

Kazuni

Places Visited

Polgase on the Perrin Islands
Villany - city at the foot of the delta
Various points in the Delta

Employer

Dario DelaVelani

Major NPCs encountered

Count Kinley and Lady Persia Kinley of Polgase
Captain Francois of the 'Blue Dolphin'
Tonio - Deltan guide
Antonio Del'Zaccaria - our host in Villany
Luka - a young boy and city guide
Tiadata - a friend of Dario
Gatea - from the Namers Guild in Villany
Andreas Pairola - Tonio's cousin

Mission

To investigate strange happenings in the Delta with the aim of establishing a permanent safe passage.

DELTA BLUES

Adventure Summary

We met our employer, Dario DelaVelani who told us about the City of Villainy, which was the one at the foot of the delta. It, as well as the rest of the plane, were recovering from having civilisation demolished during the Demon Wars which ended about 500 years ago. Now it's one of the major trading powers on the continent. Ever since the war there had been some sort of effect on the delta. It had been stable but now the delta itself was changing and the channels through it were no longer permanent. Over the last three/four years the guides were unable to predict the changes. So since there was no guarantee of passage the city was now virtually cut off. If this continued it was feared that they would have to evacuate by the next spring. Villainy consisted of 6-7000 households.

The delta itself is 50-70 miles long and about the same wide and mainly resembles a bayou with several small islands and mangrove swamps. The major dangers are alligators and poisonous snakes.

The Demon Wars started with demonic political infighting which escalated turning the entire plane into a battleground. It started 1000 years ago and lasted another 400 although it continued on and off for another 300 after that. Magic is distrusted because it is too closely associated with the demons which made mages not generally respected apart from the Namers. However, recently, they were 'personae non gratis'.

Big party on ice that night in the Seagate Harbour

01/01/95

Went though a portal to the Plane of Kazuni arriving at the Perin Islands. Made our way down a mountain side and reached the town of Polgase. Stayed at the Kinley residence. Count Kinley told us of ships that had their crews and cargos transformed. Even some of the ships had been altered.

02/01/95

Headed for the port town and reached it that evening.

03/01/95

Departed on board ship bound for Brights Hope

10/01/95

Finally arrived at Brights Hope. Proceeded overland towards the delta.

11/01/95

Reached the delta and arrived at a village where we picked up a guide, Tonio. Rescued another delta dweller, Tonio's distant cousin, from some bandits. Took him, and our prisoners to Villainy arriving there by twilight. Dropped the prisoners at the headquarters of the Carbinerri, the local guards, and were questioned by them. After a while we were released and reached the residence of our host, Antonio DelZeccaria.

12/01/95

Found a guide, a young lad called Luka, and went for a tour of the town. The place is criss-crossed with canals and boats are the principal means of transport. Some of the mana affected areas were examined. The buildings looked melted and attempts to read auras were inconclusive.

Sampled the Villainy nightlife and heard a rumour of a very large alligator in the swamp.

13/01/95

Some of the party met a representative of the Namers, Gatea. Basically they learnt that the Namers hadn't found out where the base of operations of whatever was doing it but whatever it was wasn't hiding among the Deltans, who were doing most of the investigation at the moment. Also whatever was causing the effects was not an area of effect or a thing. However they were getting conflicting messages from the auras of affected entities but they seemed to be raw mana effects. They could be mana backlashes i.e. side effects from some other effect. It was even hypothesised that the mana was leaking from other planes. It was mentioned that the problem had started in backwater areas near the city but had spread downriver into the delta. Some effects were also occurring upstream from the city.

14/01/95

Another meeting with Gatea. She told us that their current working theory was that the disruptions were caused by demons - possibly a completely new type. They hadn't found any patterns to the strange effects either. Also the areas were irregular in shape and extended upwards into the air and downwards into the water.

Slasher and Drover experimented with introducing canaries into the mana zone. One forgot how to sing, another dropped dead and two others frightened.

15/01/95

Went into the delta to investigate another cursed area where it looked like tree branches were waving in the wind - but there was no wind. The area was magically trapped, warded, or cursed with an MA rating of 42. Effect of last magic to impact - change appearance. Only one entity caused the effect. A demon?

16/01/95

Another meeting with Gatea. The Namers had also done divinations and had discovered that there were differing effects in differing areas. Some caused immediate effects, others did minor curses and still others did major curses. The worse Gatea had heard of needed an MA of 57 to remove. Most of them were in the twenties. The ones that caused the immediate effects were usually the worse ones. They're still trying to locate the entity that was causing the problem.

The earliest mana block she knew of had started nine years ago. Most of them were three or so years. Some areas overlapped and the effects in the intersecting areas were uncontrolled. The Namers strategy in stabilising the areas was to try and limit the effects.

She did mention that the rumours of the giant alligator had surfaced about last winter and the Deltans had wanted the Namers to hunt for it.

Finally we were informed that the Namers had found no other planes that was the source of the mana. There was even an area that caused sentience.

17/01/95

Headed off into the delta with Andreus as a guide. Reached an area containing dead leaves that were moving. Their aura read as animates.

Just then Dario DelaVelani arrived in the clearing and told us that there had been a revolution in the city and the Callistratas had taken over. He had instructions to get to Polgase and was being pursued by assassins.

Just then the assassins arrived and there was a big fight. We won but unfortunately our boat was lost with our supplies and we had construct a raft to leave.

20/01/95

Managed to leave the delta and headed out to sea. Hitched a lift on a ship going to Polgase.

26/01/95

Reached Polgase and removed any delta inflicted curses. Some of the party decided to stay to help resolve the Villainy problem.

DELTA BLUES

Aqualina

The adventure that Kryan and I decided to go on was one introduced by one Dario DelaVillainy, a young nobleman from a place called Cassani. They had a river port at the head of a delta and something was affecting the delta causing the channels to shift unpredictably. Some ships weren't getting through. He offered 7000sp each + 500each per week as well as salvage. Basically they wanted a permanent safe passage.

So we filed into a meeting room. Our employer was a very elegant young man, tall and slim with dark curly hair and wearing well cut clothing that was dark in colour.

He told us about the City of Villainy, which was the one at the foot of the delta. Both city and plane were recovering from the devastation of the Demon Wars. Now the city is one of the major trading powers on the continent. Ever since the war there had been unusual events in the delta. Now the delta itself was changing and the channels through it were no longer permanent. During the last four years the guides had become unable to predict the changes. So since there was no guarantee of passage the city was now virtually cut off. If this continued it was feared that they would have to evacuate by the next spring. Villainy consisted of 6-7000 households.

The delta itself is 50-70 miles long and about the same distance across. It resembles a bayou with several small islands and mangrove swamps. The major dangers are alligators and poisonous snakes. Located 100 miles up the river from Villainy is a place called Yagasaki where foreign elves are not welcome.

The Demon Wars started with demonic political infighting which escalated turning the entire plane into a battleground. It started 1000 years ago and lasted another 400 although it continued on and off for another 300 after that. Magic is distrusted because it is too closely associated with the demons. Only Namers had continued to be respected. Recently they became 'personae non gratis'. Our employer refused to say why.

Then it was decided to ask DelaVillainy to leave us alone to decide who was doing what and to introduce each other. So my fellow adventurers were:

Kryan - male human illusionist.
Kismet - male human E&E.
Kynn - female erelain E&E.
Slasher - male orc warrior.
Hargan - male human warrior.
Drover - male human geomancer.

Slasher became the Military Scientist, I was the Scribe and both Kynn and Hargan were joint leaders.

Once our party leader returned, he restated our pay then admitted that his father, who is the head of the City Council, doesn't actually know that he is here. Residents of both the city and the delta are on the council. There used to be a representative of the Namers Guild as well, but no longer. It turned out that DelaVelani's sister, Celeste, was a trainee Namer and had been on an affected

ship. She had survived, but had been badly affected. So her father was blaming the Namers for not protecting her. The Head of the Namer's Guild, Lady Selinia, had also been on that ship. Her body was still alive but the mind inside had gone.

DelaVelani also suggested that Slasher should be disguised otherwise people would think he was demoncursed. Kynn would also need to have her skin lightened to match the colour of the local elves. Fortunately my skin tone matched a society in one of their island groups.

That evening there was a party on the Seagate Harbour. Someone had arranged for it to be iced over. Ice skating turned out to be not as difficult as I first thought.

01/01/95

Went for a early morning swim and explored under the ice in the harbour. Neat fun. Meanwhile Kryan had disguised Slasher as a fat human merchant. We gave him the name 'Price'.

DelaVelani arrived at that point and told us that we were going by portal to Kazuni (the name of the plane) reaching the Perin Islands then there would be a week or so sailing to Villainy. We would bypass the delta and cover the last part overland.

We portalled to an upstairs room in an inn up a mountain then made our way by horse drawn sleigh down the mountain to Polgase arriving just after sunset.

.2.

Soon we had arrived at the residence of Count Kinley and Lady Persia Kinley. After being shown our rooms we were fed dinner.

After dinner we adjourned to the study to discuss the situation with Count Kinley. There had been stories of ships arriving at Villainy with half the crew dead and the other half insane. Other ships never arrived and on some that did some of the people on board had suffered physical mutations such as extra limbs and different coloured hair. It wasn't just the people either. A cargo of hemp had been transformed into tobacco. One ship had even been transformed into a type that hadn't been seen before. This led to speculation on the possibility of alternate, parallel realities and whether or not there was shifting between them. Another possibility was something like warpstone which transmutes everything it touches.

Count Kinley mentioned that the City of Frigwhite was frantically rebuilding its docks in order to attract the trade away from Villainy. This prompted the idea that Villainy should finance the construction of a large canal to bypass the delta.

2/01/95

We had a hot bath and breakfast before being called to the study. Count Kinley had prepared a map for us and we studied it eagerly.

We had been told that there was a ship in the local harbour that was heading in the general direction of Villainy in the next few days, but we needed to find out what Prince Dario's plans were. So while Kryan and Kynn studied the contents of the library, the rest of us decided to go for a walk. Drover ended up buying boots.

Once back at the house we quickly packed. Dario had decided it was time to leave. Shortly we were in a coach heading down the alpine road.

By 4pm we had reached the port town. There was a stiff wind and it was looking rough out to sea. While the others arranged for rooms at the Sea Breeze Inn, DelaVelani, Kryan, and I went to arrange for our passage.

DelaVelani checked with the harbourmaster and discovered that the 'Blue Dolphin' under the command of Captain Francois, was heading either to Villainy or to nearby Bright's Hope. So we went to discuss the matter with the Captain and found him on board his ship, supervising sailing preparations. He told us that he refused to go through the delta to Villainy but would drop us off at Bright's Hope. He wanted to leave on the tide so we would need to be on board by 5am. Accommodations consisted of 4 cabins surrounding a saloon.

The others were just finishing dinner, fish stew, by the time we got back. Afterwards Hargan was fiddling with his harp so I got mine and, together with Kryan, we made a trio. By the time we realised what the time was it was very late. But it was rather enjoyable.

03/01/95

Early morning we made our way to the boat. Once on board we sorted out who was sharing with who. Each cabin held two bunks each. Kryan and I remained together. Kynn and Slasher would be in a cabin next door so Slasher could knock on the adjoining wall when the disguise needed refreshing. Hargan bunked with Drover which left Kismet sharing with DelaVelani.

We stayed out of the way while preparations were made to leave, but as we cast off I went on deck to watch. Soon we were out to sea, and it was rough!

.3.

09/01/95

This has definitely been the WORST boat trip I have ever been on. It has been stormy the whole trip and the seas have been very turbulent.

10/01/95

Morning and we could see the land. At mid morning we were informed that the ship would be standing off the shore near Brights Hope and we would be rowed ashore. So we packed our gear and made ready to depart. Two trips in the longboat got us and all our gear ashore.

Once ashore, DelaVelani led the way inland. Soon we were travelling over dry grasslands. As we walked DelaVelani told us about some of the animals in the delta, like the pike, alligators, and catfish. I found the catfish intriguing. Apparently they leap out of the water and catch birds on the wing. I wanted to know if they purred when they were stroked, but he didn't say.

We had been following a creek and at dusk, we stopped to camp. The creek wasn't deep enough for a decent swim but I thought it might have something in it that we could use for dinner. Slasher had a similar idea and managed to sneak up on four ducks and neatly decapitated four of them with the Air Sword. Drover sat down and began a ritual to summon a rabbit. I went eel fishing and ended up wrestling with it on the bank before dispatching it with my dagger.

By now Drover's rabbit had arrived so Hargan drew his crossbow and shot it. The impact sent the rabbit hurtling backwards. What was left of it ended up in the stew with the ducks. The eel was smoked for later.

Kryan had also been involved in a ritual. When he had finished the camp was covered in a camouflage. From outside it looked like the campsite was not there. The night passed without incident.

11/01/95

Next morning, I sat in the creek and purified. We then proceeded onwards inland until we reached a larger creek then followed it south. Around midmorning we reached a rise and saw smoke in the delta ahead of us. Soon we reached a small village; ten households on the banks of the river. A few canoes were pulled up on the bank. When we arrived Dario was given a very warm welcome. A guide was also assigned to us, a gentleman called Tonio. While we waited for him to organise a large boat, I watched three kids building a raft.

Soon Tonio arrived with a punt. I was asked to go up the front and keep an eye open for alligators, once Tonio had shown me what they looked like (a couple of small ones were sunning themselves on the bank.) Half an hour downstream we entered a hardwood forest then continued on through scrub, working our way through a maze of channels. Suddenly Kismet heard screaming ahead.

.4.

In order to increase our speed, Tonio suggested using the paddles under the seat so Kryan, Drover and I grabbed one each and soon we were speeding down one branch. Just then Kismet called for us to stop as we were going the wrong way. So Tonio slammed the punt pole into the water and we rapidly spun around. I didn't think that was possible for this sort of boat. Just then the screaming stopped.

Kismet was looking ahead down the channel through a Wizard's Eye. It opened up into a large open area of water with a small island in the middle. A boat was hidden in a patch of reeds on the near end and a group of rough-looking men were gathered around one who was curled up on the ground. Kismet, Drover, & Hargan went invisible. Cautiously we sailed down the indicated channel and soon we could see what Kismet had described.

We came right up to the shore by the reeds and beached the boat. Slasher stepped off the boat, and one of the men took a swipe at him. Kynn fired her bow and the man in front of Slasher suddenly sprouted an arrow - and a crossbow bolt. Must have been Hargan. Drover leapt off the boat and moved up the bank. At the same time Slasher grabbed the man's hand axe, stomped on his foot then threw the axe away. It just missed Drover.

Back in the boat, I was clutching my quarterstaff rather nervously in case one of the opposition tried to board. DelaVelani, behind me in the boat, stood up and started waving his sword about. As Kynn went over the side DelaVelani attempted to leap over me to join the fight. Unfortunately he tripped on the staff and plummeted headfirst over the side and into the water. I dropped the staff into the boat and jumped in to pull him out. Then I had to go under again to get his sword.

By now Kynn had managed to find their boat in the reeds. Another guy was in it standing by for

a speedy getaway. Hargan had reloaded and fired again while Slasher was wrestling with another one. He must have been overenthusiastic as he ripped off an arm. That was the first casualty. Someone tried leaping into our boat into what was apparently was an empty spot, but was occupied by an invisible Hargan who knocked the intruder over the side.

Back on the island the battle was definitely going our way - at least most of the time. Slasher hadn't succeeded in closing with his opponent, but it was just as well as Hargan shot the man with Slasher's double crossbow. Drover came up behind the man and knocked him out. Of course that rendered Drover visible as well. He then went to tend the person that had been originally been beaten up.

The rest of the ruffians had decided it was best to leave as quickly as possible so they headed for their boat. Kynn dived into the water in order to prevent them from leaving.

Underwater, Kynn managed to grasp the pole and jerk the punter off the boat and into the water. The boat capsized. I created a current to bring the boat and the people who were in it back towards us.

Soon we had gathered up all the bandits. Two of them had been killed, while Kynn and I restrained the rest with whatever was available. Tonio recognised the person they had been ill-treating as a distant cousin.

.5.

It was decided to take the bandits with us to Villainy to face summary justice. So the six prisoners were herded onto the boats. Kynn made a litter for Tonio's cousin whom Drover had diagnosed as having slight concussion and broken ribs. The two dead ones were also put on board. Kryan and I took control of the second boat and were soon following Tonio. As we left, Slasher threw the detached arm into the water. Within seconds, something large rose from the water and took the arm in one gulp before disappearing below the deceptively tranquil surface.

As the day was fading into twilight we passed our first building. Soon we were in a canal with buildings on either side. This was Villainy. Tonio led us through a maze of canals, many of which were barely wide enough for two boats side by side. The buildings, most of which were two or three stories high, lined the canals and, in many cases, composed the canal walls. In the grey twilight, the whole place looked dark, gloomy, and oppressive. Every so often we passed under an arch bridge. There weren't many walking paths along the sides of the canal and it was soon evident that the primary mode of transport was by boat. A couple of wider main canals ran through the city. They were also packed with boats going hither and thither. I just kept our boat close to Tonio hoping I didn't violate any local 'traffic' laws. It was soon evident that the town of Villainy was built on several small islands completely covered in buildings and criss-crossed with canals.

Our destination was the headquarters of the Carbinerri, the local equivalent of the town guard. DelaVelani had already left us, once we had reached town as he wanted to speak to his father before news of our arrival reached him. Soon we were traversing down a narrow canal. At the end was a building with a stone archway containing a pair of open wooden double doors. We entered and pulled up alongside a crude stone wharf. Steps led up from the water level. Waiting on the wharf was a officious gentleman in a uniform. Tonio told him we had some captives and what had happened in the delta.

We were escorted inside and conducted into a small room where an officer type was waiting behind a small desk. The bandits were taken somewhere else. As Tonio told the story the officer wrote it down, using some sort of shorthand. When he had finished, the officer took the scroll and told us to wait. The door was closed and locked behind him.

Tonio's cousin had regained consciousness and told us that he had been hired by those men to hunt blowfish. But when they had reached the island he was set upon by them. They wanted to know where the 'Chasana' was - a missing boat - and they weren't taking no for an answer.

All we could do was wait, so I followed Kynn's lead and took a nap. After quite a few hours the uniformed chap arrived back with a middle-aged weedy man who was the representative from the person we were supposed to be staying with. So we were escorted to the boats and paddled off, Tonio in the lead. After twenty-five minutes of negotiating the narrow canals in the dark we arrived at another, more ornate, building with an archway and doors. This one was lit. As we disembarked we were greeted by a flurry of servants who rushed around gathering up our belongings. DelaVelani and a solidly built gentleman in his mid forties arrived. He was introduced as our host, Antonio DelZaccaria. Even though the hour was late, dinner had been prepared, a collection of red meats, fish dishes and rice. After dinner we retired to our rooms. Four of them, opening to a lounge room, had been prepared for our use.

12/01/95

After hot baths and breakfast, we decided to explore the city to get a feel for the place. So we got some of our money changed at a rate of 100 of their coins to 89 of ours and DelZaccaria assigned a young lad, named Luka, to be our guide. In the daylight, the town seemed more brighter and cheerful. People were bustling all over the place and the canals were packed with boats. Luka took us to Freiry Plaza which was a big food plaza. There were some interesting smells floating around the place so I sampled a few of the local wares. Luka was going on about his cousin who wrestled alligators. I thought that was rather interesting and wanted to watch. Luka also knew about the Chasana but all he reckoned it was carrying was nuts. It had belonged to the Filichi.

Our next stop was fabric and hat shops. Kynn ordered a new outfit while I asked about the local fashions. Nothing took my fancy. Meanwhile the men were looking at hats. When we met up again, Kismet presented Kryan with a wide-brimmed lilac hat.

We then cruised around the city. Luka pointed out the 'unstable' area and told us that going in there would not be a good idea as strange things can happen. Even the fish that swim in the canal were doubtful. Certainly he wouldn't want to risk eating one. There had been more unstable areas but the Namers had managed to take care of them. I asked Luka about a good place to swim and he said that there was some good, alligator-free spots just outside the city.

We were back by lunchtime and were introduced to DeZaccaria's wife. We were told that a punt boat had been allocated for our use, so I went down to check it out and spent the rest of the afternoon getting lessons from Luka.

Kynn was getting all sorts of information from DeZaccaria mostly background stuff such as the prefix 'Del' being the head of the household and 'Della' being the heir.

After an hour or so of punting around the canals, I suggested to Luka that we go and have a look at that swimming hole he had mentioned. Soon we reached the spot. No alligators in sight, so I jumped into the water. The water was refreshing even if it was a bit cold and rather murky.

Slasher spent the afternoon exercising while Kryan and Kynn were gathering information. Kismet and Drover went for a walk and found one of the affected areas. The buildings appeared to have been melted by intense heat and it looked like it was enveloped in a heat haze even though no heat could be felt. Drover tried reading the auras of objects within it, but everything was scrambled. Kismet sent a Wizard's Eye into the area. He reported that everything looked fuzzy, and complained that it was giving him a headache. So they retired to a local pub and consumed a few ales before making their way back.

Dinner was quiet. Afterwards we went upstairs to discuss what we were going to do next. Someone suggested that we should analyse one of the distortion areas and attempt to duplicate it in order to flush out whatever group was might be maintaining those areas for their own advantage. After a while Kynn announced that we were about to have company. She was right. A few minutes later a servant arrived to inform us that DelaVelani was waiting downstairs. So we all trooped down.

DelaVelani told us that he had spoken to his father and he had agreed in principle to us investigating the odd phenomena and was keen to see it resolved. He wasn't prepared to officially sanction our activities, but he was prepared to financially back us. So at least we'll be paid. We're told to remain here as Count Kinley's employees. DelaVelani asked us to be discrete. Kryan said that wouldn't be a problem and not to be alarmed at any rumours about us as they would be concealing our real activities. DelaVelani added that he had been asked to remain in the city. His father had already lost one child to the delta and he didn't want to lose his heir as well.

Slasher asked for a list of the incidents and I wanted it coded by date and location within the delta. Unfortunately they didn't have any accurate means of determining positions in the delta. It was agreed that we needed to speak to the Namers in order to discover what they knew, and what theories they had come up with. We could send discrete messages to DelaVelani via DelZaccaria or through DelaVelani's friend Tiadata (also known around the place as 'Tadpole'). DelaVelani could not stay long as he was supposed to be at a reception and wanted to get back before he was missed.

After he left we decided to split up and sample the city at night and see what the inhabitants thought of the situation. Slasher wanted to visit the seedier parts of town and I offered to go with him. To my surprise Kryan didn't object too much. He decided to accompany Kismet and Kynn. Drover and Hargan headed off in another direction.

So Slasher and I set off in the boat and soon found the areas we were looking for. There wasn't as much custom here as usual because there hadn't been much trade, at least according to the locals we spoke to. It was rather quiet. I was interested in places that had some sort of show so we went searching. Slasher wanted to see alligator wrestling but we didn't find any of that. We did come across a knife fighting display. In other places found dancing. Sometimes we could join in, in others it was more exotic (involving things like dancing on tables).

As the night passed we collected some 'hangers on'. I amused myself flirting with the men. One said that if there was a witch causing the troubles then burning was too good for them. Instead

they should be fed to 'The Gator'. I gathered that this was a very large and very ferocious alligator that was believed to exist deep in the delta. Fairly soon our expedition had turned into a pub crawl.

The others had an interesting time as well. Kryan and Kynn attempted to introduce Kismet to culture and music while Drover had his hands full trying to keep Hargan from making provocative political statements.

.7.

13/01/95

In the morning, while Slasher and I were still asleep, Kryan, Kynn, Hargan and Drover headed off to the Namers' Guild. They were greeted by a small boy. He dashed off and soon returned with a young lady who conducted the party to a courtyard before leaving them there with refreshments. Later she returned and introduced herself as Gatea. When asked what was the best way to approach the delta, she answered "Don't go". They learnt that the Namers hadn't found out where the base of operations of whatever was doing it, but whatever it was wasn't hiding among the Deltans, who were doing most of the investigation at the moment. Whatever was causing the effects was not an area of effect or a thing. They were getting conflicting messages from the auras of affected entities, and could only conclude that the effects were caused by raw mana effects, possibly mana backlashes i.e. side effects from some other effect. It was even hypothesised that the mana was leaking from other planes. It was mentioned that the problem had started in backwater areas near the city, but had spread downriver into the delta. Some effects were also occurring upstream from the city.

While they were away, I finally woke up and found Kryan's note which it said where they had gone and asked me to pass it on to Kismet and Slasher. So I got dressed, passed the message on to Kismet, then waited for Slasher to wake up.

The others returned as Slasher woke. Once Kryan renewed Slasher's illusion and we received a brief resume of their exploits it was suggested that Kismet, Slasher, and I go off and see the Healers and establish the credit line. So we punted off. Once there we were told that we really needed to have a letter of credit drafted instead of paying a deposit in advance. So we left to deal with that, with a slight diversion to a pub. After a few drinks we headed back to the Zekani residence.

By this stage it was dinnertime. We had the dining room all to ourselves this time. As Kryan was heading off to bed (he wanted an early night) the dining room door opened and a rather ornately dressed gentleman with a jewelled rapier literally bounced into the room. He introduced himself as Tiadata and he struck me as a very excitable person. His excuse for coming here was to bring a present for Antonio's wife (Antonio being DelZekaria), but it soon became obvious that we were the object of his interest. He told us he had been in the delta with his boatman, hunting when, without warning, he was literally covered with fur. At the same time his boatman was suffering from headaches. The Namers were able to counter both effects.

Tiadata wanted to show us around the town. Originally I wasn't planning on going but changed my mind. So I went up to change into something more appropriate and to let Kryan know what was happening. Finally Hargan, Slasher and myself went with Tiadata. We ended up in more relatively classy places than we were in last night. I ended up dancing with Tiadata a lot, and discovered he was a bit of a flirt. After a rather entertaining evening we got back just before midnight.

14/01/95

Today it was sunny for the first time since we had been here even though there was still a cold breeze. After breakfast Drover, Hargan, Kismet and I went to meet with Gatea in the Blue Feather. Before we left, Kryan put an illusion on Hargan to make him look like Price. The rest were planning on doing more research. Slasher was even considering loading the boat for an expedition into the delta.

After a short trip we arrived at the inn a bit early for our appointment. Soon Gatea arrived. She told us that their current working theory was that the disruptions were caused by demons, possibly a completely new type. They hadn't found any patterns to the strange effects either. The affected areas were irregular in shape and extended upwards into the air and downwards into the water. Gatea also warned us that many of the Namers here would be suspicious of us so, if we needed to contact her, it would be best to pass a message through her cousin, Carlos Menio.

When we arrived back we discovered that Slasher had managed to acquire a large flat bottomed barge, two punt boats, and one of those tiny coracle like boats. It was just big enough for me to sit in and also had sails. Slasher had managed to pile up the barge with lots of supplies such as canvas, food, lanterns, lamp oil, nets, a large cauldron, and other assorted equipment. He even had a cage with five canaries on board. I was rather worried about the weight distribution until one of the servants whispered that they had rearranged the loading as Slasher was just piling it in. While the others went in to the house, I stayed to help load before trying out the little boat.

Kismet reported that he had sent a message for Tonio to be our guide into the delta.

Slasher wanted to find out what would happen if his canaries were exposed to one of the cursed zones in the city. Drover had to come along to check the canaries' auras before and after and Hargan decided to come too. I just came along to take the boat. Also I was hoping for a swim while they worked. For some reason it was decided to take two boats. I punted one while Hargan took the other.

Soon we reached the backwater canal by one of the cursed areas and came to a stop. No one was observing us. Drover checked two of the canaries for Plane of Origin and the other three for Last Magical Effect. Then Slasher extracted a canary from the cage and fastened it to the end of a three foot pole and stuck that end in the mana zone for a couple of minutes before swinging it over to Drover. Drover detected no change in the aura. We then discovered it had forgotten how to sing.

Further experimentation resulted in one canary dropping dead and two others scared. Some sort of fear effect. I went fishing (the water was too fouled and stagnant to swim in) and caught a small fish. I threw it back.

I took Drover straight back, but Hargan and Slasher stopped off at a weaponsmith to fix Slasher's crossbow and to purchase some quarrels. They were also after more provisions such as grain.

Dinner time and Slasher wanted to try out his repaired crossbow. So he fired a couple of bolts out the dining room window, hitting the target he was aiming for (the crossbeam in the window of the house opposite). DelZekaria laughed, but I was worried we were going to be raided by the Carbinerri for discharging a weapon in a dangerous manner within city limits.

After dinner, and after our hosts had left for the evening, Kynn summarised her researches. She had concluded that some Houses could actually gain from the current situation. Could a revolution be in the works? The obvious scapegoats for these problems would be the Deltans followed by the Velani's. Kynn also thought that the Namers could be being blackmailed or otherwise influenced to delay finding a solution. She mentioned that there had been a drop in reported crime in the last few years which prompted a discussion on whether or not someone was trying to organise crime or whether the criminals were doing something else, like planning a revolt in an army.

I was keen on going into the delta for first hand observations, as I was feeling quite literally out of my element with this talk of political games. After some discussion, it was decided to stay in the city for another day to do further research.

That night, I discussed with Kryan the possibility of going for a swim and asking some of the aquatic life in the nearby reaches of the delta for information. He thought it was a good idea but insisted I needed protection, probably Hargan or Slasher.

15/01/95

Next morning, Slasher and Hargan had decided to investigate the falling crime rate so Kryan disguised them as thugs. After they left, Drover, Kismet, Kryan and I went to visit Andreus Pairola, Tonia's cousin and the one who had been assaulted in the delta, who was now convalescing with friends in another part of the city.

So we punted off with Luka at the pole. Soon we reached an area of town (Kismet had already obtained the address) that consisted of a row of small islands, covered in buildings, with bridges joining them up like pearls on a necklace. While Luka visited the market, with a silver coin I had given him, we found the address and were taken upstairs to where Andreus was lying in bed. There was only one chair in the room and Kryan gallantly indicated I should sit. The rest made do with the floor or the edge of the bed.

Andreus told us that the ruffians had been firmly convinced that he knew where the missing ship had gone even though he had only been on it briefly the day before as it travelled down the delta. Saved him paddling home. The people who owned the ship had arranged for word to be sent back to the city when the ship passed the sea entrance checkpoint. Word had not come at the expected time so a search of the delta was mounted. But there was no trace of the ship, not even any floating debris. It had just simply vanished without a trace.

Andreus also mentioned the 50-100 ft long alligator that was rumoured to be lurking somewhere deep in the delta. He also mentioned that the standard alligators were rather dangerous in themselves and it wasn't the teeth we had to be the most wary of, but the tail. It packs quite a nasty wallop. The other danger were the sea snakes. Apparently they're translucent, hence very difficult to see before they strike and they're very poisonous.

He was also rather scathing about the Namers claiming it was their fault that the delta was all stuffed up, probably caused by them practising their magic, and getting it wrong. They had been poking their noses around in the delta asking questions and making a nuisance of themselves.

Slasher and Hargan had gone looking for reasons why the crime rate had dropped. According to the locals, most of the criminals had been caught. The ones that were left were probably lying low,

after the crackdown. When they got back Slasher had come to the conclusion that a crime boss had arrived and was busy organising the crime scene.

.10.

I decided to wait a couple of hours after lunch to let it settle before going upstairs and changing into something more suitable. Soon everyone, except Hargan and Kynn, were on board a punt and heading out to the swimming hole that Luka had showed me earlier.

As we rounded the last corner, we noticed that the pool was full of children. Uh oh. So we continued on a bit further. Soon we were out of their sight. Just then we spotted an overturned coracle on the far bank. Marks indicated it had slipped. Kryan went in the water to investigate, and found a half submerged child. We first thought that the kid had drowned, but Kryan got him breathing again.

The child was brought on board, still unconscious, and Drover diagnosed that he had been poisoned. Probably by a snake. Kryan produced a Waters of Healing. Soon the kid had recovered and told us he had been hunting pigeons for his mother, when the boat had slipped, tipping him into the water. We decided to take him home, and put his boat in tow. His mother was very grateful to us and wanted to fuss over us, but we told her we were in a hurry.

Soon we were back at the pool. This time it was deserted. I think it was Kryan telling the kids there was a watersnake lurking around, as we left, that did it. I had timed my merform transformation to complete by the time we arrived. Once we did, I put on the Sash of Defence and rolled into the water which I found was only 5' deep. Then I used the nixie medallion to summon some pike.

The pike that turned up wasn't very co-operative, even after a feast of summoned sticklebacks. It just wanted me out of its territory. It did know of a cursed area nearby, but refused to show us. So I dismissed it, and proposed summoning an alligator instead, much to the alarm of the rest of the party. Slasher began sharpening the ends of long poles - just in case.

Soon a seven foot long 'gator turned up. I had just enough time to counterspell the first Speak spell, cast another one, and get back in the boat. It turned out to be relatively friendly, especially after the summoned trout arrived, so I hopped back in the water again.

It wanted to know if we were prey. I replied that we were not. Next it wanted to know what sort of 'gator I was. The tail looked odd and where were my claws. I replied that I didn't need any and if it tried anything my companions would mince it. I think it believed me. It knew of the same cursed area as the pike did and it would direct us. I asked it about the 100ft long alligator, but it hadn't heard of one that big.

So we followed the slow moving alligator. I swam nearby while the others followed in the punt. Soon we reached an area where trees were whipping about - even though there was no wind. This was it. The alligator took up a waiting pose just below the water line. It was waiting for prey. I waited too.

The others started their investigations. They noticed some birds in the trees that weren't quite right. Their legs seemed thicker than usual and they were jumping in the air rather than flapping their wings. Just then Slasher reported that his sense of North had moved. But it didn't look like

the sun had changed orientation. Strange.

According to their aura the birds had suffered a physical change that had occurred three seasons ago. I swam up to join the others and examined the area with my ocular. Positive on the Magically Trapped Warded or Cursed test. Drover continued with sampling auras. The nature of the effect was movement and the magical aptitude rating to remove the curse was a staggering 42. Since Drover was running out of auras to examine, Slasher started ripping out trees and throwing them into the cursed area. Effect of last mana to impact on the tree was "change appearance". A bird's nest in the tree turned blue.

Slasher fired at a bird, and it exploded in mid-air. The only bits that Kismet was able to find to telekinesis out were a wing and a leg. To our surprise the curse effect was still on it.

Kismet then managed to pull out the blue nest. Its aura told us that the effect was caused by one entity. A demon? Or someone who had their MA boosted by some means?

We headed back to the pool. The alligator had left by now so I decided to go for a swim while the others continued testing. I even managed to find an area deep enough to practise mer-dancing.

The others had determined that the effect wasn't the result of a backfire. Slasher tied a metal grapnel to the end of a rope and threw it in the area. When he pulled it back, he discovered that the metal had turned floppy, but Drover couldn't detect an aura. Kryan tried drawing mana while holding it and found it was possible. So it was no longer Cold Iron. Then Slasher threw in a bag of nails. None of them went floppy, but one turned a brilliant lilac colour.

It was dusk by the time we got back to the city. After a quick bath, and dinner, it was straight to bed.

16/01/95

This morning dawned bitterly cold and wet. The plan was to visit the Namers again after breakfast. Slasher had stuck the lilac nail in his earlobe. When we got there, we were told that Gatea was unavailable. So were the other two members of her circle. We left a message for her to join us at her lunchbreak. Kismet surmised that the Namers were only at one-third strength.

We window-shopped and arrived back just before lunch. Gatea met us and we adjourned to a nearby cafe. Gatea told us she had spent the entire morning teaching kids and was getting sick of it. She would rather be researching. Can't say I blame her.

We compared notes. The Namers had also done divinations and had discovered that there were differing effects in differing areas. Some caused immediate effects, others caused minor curses and still others did major curses. The worse Gatea had heard of needed an MA of 57 to remove. Most of them were in the twenties. The ones that caused the immediate effects were usually the worse ones. They're still trying to locate the entity that was causing the problem.

The earliest mana block she knew of had started nine years ago. Most of them were three or so years old. Some areas overlapped and the effects in the intersecting areas were uncontrolled. The Namers strategy in stabilising the areas was to try and limit the effects.

Kynn had requested access to the Namer's library so Slasher posed the question to Gatea, but she

couldn't get us authorisation. We would need to contact the Head of the Guild and it was unlikely that permission would be granted. She added that the rumours of the giant alligator had surfaced about last winter and the Deltans had wanted the Namers to hunt for it.

Finally we were informed that the Namers had found no other planes that was the source of the mana. There was even an area that conferred sentience.

.11.

Once we arrived back at the house we discussed means of measuring the delta. Time was no problem as that can be measured accurately using auras and durations, but distances were not so absolute. Finally Slasher came up with a brilliant idea which was to set our own standard based on the length of the city itself. Kynn described that as an 'elegant' solution.

Kismet, Hargan, Drover, and I went off to see Andreus. We found him sitting up in bed making a fine woven net he said was for catching birds. He was feeling a lot better. We discussed him guiding for us in the delta and finally agreed for him to meet us at the Zekari household at sunrise the next morning. Slasher was also out - finding two pubs at opposing ends of town to act as reference points for Kynn's Locates.

17/01/95

Again it was a wet morning. Andreus had already arrived and was checking the loading of the big barge.

It was decided to put the small coracle on the barge, tow one of the punt boats and that some of us would follow in the other. Finally we headed off. Andreus was controlling the barge while I followed after with the punt. Kismet and Kryan were with me. While Kynn was shown the location of the two pubs, we waited at the entrance to the Grand Canal for them.

After a few hours we stopped to rest. I decided to stretch out a bit and go for a swim, after being warned not to go too far. Slasher came back later with the back end of an alligator. Turned out he had wrestled it to death.

Another couple of hours later and we were travelling down a narrow channel that was completely covered over with tree branches from both banks. Vines and other things were hanging down over the water. I was hoping that nothing nasty would decide to drop into the punt.

Shortly Andreus pulled the barge into the bank and I came in alongside. Kismet chose that moment to wake up so I gave him the piece of lunch I had been saving. Andreus told us that there was a strange, but relatively harmless, area on this island. He would stay with the boat while we investigated.

After a short walk, avoiding several small clouds of midges, we found the area that Andreus was talking about. The ground was covered with dead leaves, but in this area, they were moving. According to Drover they were sentient animates. The effect of last mana to impact was animation which had occurred seven months ago. The area was not magically warded, trapped or cursed. I picked up a heap of leaf litter and tossed it in. Nothing happened save the animated leaves crawled all over it and soon it was lost to view. Kismet used telekinesis to pull one out. The effect faded after a few minutes and the aura reverted to formally living.

I wondered if the effect extended to anything that was formally living so I plucked out a long strand of hair. Slasher volunteered to drop it in so I handed it to him. He stepped into the area, and then turned and fled. Kismet used a Wizard's Eye to track him then Slept him. Most of the party went to retrieve him.

.12.

Just as they arrived with the still unconscious Slasher, Dario DelaVelani burst into the clearing. Goodness knows how he managed to find us however he had disturbing news. The Callistratas had perverted half the dojo (the ruling council) and that they had taken over the city. His father was imprisoned and his mother had been killed. Fighting was still occurring in the city. He had instructions to get clear to Polgase and wanted our protection. A group of assassins were already hot on his tail. He hoped he had managed to lose them in the swamp.

Drover and I examined Slasher. According to my ocular he was magically cursed. Suddenly Kismet and Dario disappeared and Kryan made himself look like Dario. Another Dario also appeared. To cap it off he put an illusion over the cursed mana zone to make it look normal. I triggered a Trollskin on myself - just in case and prepared my dagger and maingauche.

Hargan and Kynn must have seen something as Hargan fired a crossbow bolt then both of them advanced towards the edge of the clearing (I later found out that Kismet had been Slept at the edge and was being dragged off). Once they were out of my way, I headed for cover behind a nearby tree. There I spotted another 'assassin' in chain mail, helm and carrying a medium sized sword. It didn't look like he had seen me as I ducked back behind the tree. I then saw another one advancing towards our position. I decided to attempt to cut that one off, but was intercepted by a third man brandishing an estoc. The first one I had seen joined him. Kynn kept slicing and dicing until someone hit her with a Sleep spell.

I closed and went on the attack in an attempt to subdue. I did manage to scrape one with the dagger, but was shield bashed for my troubles. We were at a standoff situation when we were all hit by an Agony spell. Not again! Crawling into the middle of a nearby clump of bushes seemed like a really good idea.

While this was going on, Slasher was trying to rally members of the opposition to crawl into the mana zone while in their agonised state. One did so and his chain mail armour turned into daisy chain armour. A second one had his clothing change colour to several shades of greens and lilacs.

Kryan was invisible at the time so he picked up the sleeping Kynn and carried her towards the person dragging Kismet. "Drop him or I kill you". The man seeing someone floating towards him and uttering dire threats, did exactly that. Kryan then shield-bashed him - using Kynn as the shield. After helping Drover deal to another we finally regrouped. Several of the 'assassins' had been caught in Rings of Bone so Slasher went to deal with them.

It was soon discovered that the boats were gone, whether or not Andreus had taken them to safety or he had been set upon and captured I don't know. And it wasn't just the Water Staff, the original set of scribe notes were also in the pack. Guild Security was NOT going to be pleased - especially this was the second time something like this had happened to me.

Some of us, me included, were all for finding the boat and checking on Andreus's welfare but Dario insisted that we help him get to Polgase. It would be too risky to do anything else now.

Finally we agreed.

The only way off this island was either to swim or by boat. So we started constructing a rough boat and I bound the whole thing with a Ship Strength. I then peeled off my kraken skin armour and shifted into merform. Kryan also decided to go to merform as well. Kynn was able to swim as quickly as we did so we took turns pushing the raft with the others on it.

It took us three days to get down the delta to the coast. On the way I started feeling really sick and had to rest on the raft. First I thought it was bad water, but then realised that we must have blundered into a cursed zone. Slasher came down with a headache. At one point we spotted a bright yellow otter.

20/01/95

Finally we were out of the delta. The water no longer tasted like cold tea, instead it had the more pleasant salty tang I was used to. Most of us weren't keen on trying to use this raft all the way to Polgase so it was decided to gain passage on a ship. But we didn't want to do so openly in case someone tried taking pot-shots at us. So we played the parts of drifting castaways off the coast. This resulted in us being picked up by an outbound merchant ship on its way to Polgase. While the others were confined to the hold I was helping out with the sailing (I resembled their local islanders who were also skilled sailors). To avoid any awkwardness I asked Kryan for illusionary clothes for the duration as all I had left was what I had been wearing. Everything else had been on the punt.

26/01/95

Eventually we arrived at the island and got transport up the mountain to Polgase. Once there we reached Count Kinley's house. There we were divinated and each of us were suffering some effects of encountering mana zones. My aura had completely vanished. After consultation with their local Namer I decided to have that curse lifted.

Kynn, Slasher, and Kryan volunteered to stay behind and help deal to the problem at Villainy and also to attempt to retrieve the Water Staff. I felt I'd better get back and tell the Guild what had happened. So after a few days of preparations, divinations and curse removals, those that were going were ready to go. I had a rather tearful farewell to Kryan and promised to check up on what was going on.

As I predicted I was soundly berated by Guild Security, especially since another party had also managed to mislay their notes and managed to get themselves framed for assassinating someone high up in Destiny resulting in a trade embargo.