

Scribe notes for "Find Liessa's Tutor"

On my honour as a scribe, none of the following is a lie, though not all of it may prove to be true.

Berik Grundenstein

The Players

Phillipe "PJ" de Bourgenac (played by Ben), Human/M, Fighter, greater noble, party leader.

Berik Grundenstein (played by Craig), Human/M, Witch, lesser noble, party scribe.

Liessa Vardeman (played by William), Human/F, Mind Mage, party military scientist.

Karga (played by Jon), Human/M, Earth Mage.

Aaron Rumard (played by David), Human/M, Namer, lesser noble.

The GM

Mandos (played by Mandos), god, world-shaper, story-teller, tamer of kittens, "he's just this guy, you know."

The Summary

The mission took place from January to March 1996 AP (September to November 96 AD).

Marcus Carradine is a mind mage. He is the tutor of Liessa. Our mission was to rescue him, which we did. He is a rude, arrogant bastard, with little gratitude. He is also a powerful mage.

Two planes, Telnar and Shwintar have some horrible fate prophesied. A small girl, Princess Elizabeth, has a part to play in stopping the calamity. Her minder, Michael, has been travelling with her around the planes, helped by Marcus Carradine.

Elizabeth and Michael are from Telnar, and were sent back there by Marcus Carradine on 17th Feb, 1996 AP.

On Shwintar are pygmies, trolls, skeletons and centaurs, however these are unlike Alusian ones! In terms of Alusian roles, the pygmies are humans, the trolls are dwarves, the centaurs are elves, and the skeletons are orcs (but more polite).

Under Shwintar is an underground ruined city. A necromancer called Count Numbers used to war with his brother, a binder called Count Fingers. When we left, Numbers had captured Fingers. Numbers and Fingers are from Telnar.

Diary

31 Dec 1996 AP

We met in room 12C, after finding it (it moves around a lot).

The guild rep there detailed the mission. "A matter of interest to the guild, paying standard rates."

We were to investigate the disappearance of Marcus Carradine, the teacher of Liessa. The last party to encounter Marcus was attacked by Calamar troops. In the battle, Marcus' tower was destroyed but Marcus' fate was unknown.

We planned to boat north to Arabel via Ausdorf.

The Seagate harbour-master recommended Captain Gannis of The Shadowhawk, a tidy, well-run ship.

1 Jan 1997 AP

We left on the afternoon tide.

The Shadowhawk proved to be a good ship, though riddled with cliches (including fake sailor accents).

2 Jan

Arrived at Ausdorf, a well-defended harbour where casting magic is illegal.

Captain Gannis obtained a cargo, and asked us to carry it inland for him when we reached Arabel. We agreed.

We left on the evening tide.

3 Jan - 10 Jan

We were waylaid by a storm, which made those of us who did not have sea legs pretty bloody miserable.

11 Jan

The storm finally cleared. The first thing we saw was a wrecked ship.

The sailors wanted to look for survivors and/or loot, so we went with them.

The ship had settled on some rocks, and was twisted and bent, making movement inside tricky and dangerous.

From the wreckage we rescued an old man and a young girl (around 6 years old), a small chest, some silver coins which the sailors took, a chart, and the ships log which Captain Gannis took. We treated the survivors and took them back to The Shadowhawk.

The girl did not show up on Empathy or ESP. Her aura was of a short-lived sentient, GTN human. It also showed that she was immune to magic, including quasi-magical skills like Healing. Two years ago the dancer took the same two passengers from Arabel to somewhere down on the south-eastern end of the continent.

The man's aura was of a short-lived sentient, GTN human. He was under no enchantments or spells save the ones we had cast (Empathy, Healing, etc).

Both were wearing well-cut travelling clothing that was made to look average.

From the log book, the ship was called The Spritely Dancer. She was a cargo cutter, an arms runner by the look of the log book. She was taking two passenger, a child and her guardian, to Arabel.

The girl woke first. We wished she had stayed unconscious for she was loud, rude, arrogant and spiteful. She said that her name was Elizabeth, that her daddy's name was King Roderick, and that he was going to invade this country and chop everyone's heads off to rescue her. She described his flag, a gryphon rampant, but not in enough detail for any of us to place the heraldry.

18 Jan

Arrived at Arabel.

The man awoke. He introduced himself as Michael Tremello. He said he had to get himself and Elizabeth to the Great Sorcerer Carradine. "On her head rests the fate and destiny of two worlds."

On his plane, called Telnar, there was a prophecy that the world would end horribly sometime on the Year of Our lady 1796. They found another world whose fate was the same, a twin world, philosophers believe.

The prophecy stated that the daughter of kings from both worlds would be the

saviour of both those worlds. The prophecy had a great list of things the princess had to do. People to meet, places to see, etc. This was why Michael and Elizabeth were here. The prophecy also said she had to be raised to be obnoxious. Bummer. The prophecy does not mention us, though.

Now, Michael and Elizabeth need to see Marcus, as he is the only one who can send them home.

Captain Gannis gave us his cargo, and a letter of introduction to several contacts of his inland.

We bought lots of toffee apples after discovering that they shut Elizabeth up.

Stayed the night at the Inn of the Twittering Bird, an average hostel, where everyone genuflected and fawned over Prince PJ.

19 Jan

I opened the chest, and found ~550 sp worth of silver and gold coins.

Travelled to Denton, arrived there very late.

We delivered Captain Gannis' cargo of spices to Bob Thistlewaite, the keeper of an inn near the Dancing Weasel tavern (a sister to the destroyed Flamboyant Ferret inn).

Baron Giles, his daughter Melinda, and his son John, insisted that they take care of our accommodation.

Melinda spent the evening sitting next to PJ blushing, fluttering her eyelashes, and generally flirting. Other people genuflected and fawned over Prince PJ.

I am glad no-one this far north knows I am a noble. Their treatment of nobles would suffocate me.

20 Jan

Baron Giles gave us horses, a carriage, and an escort, despite our protestations. He would not hear of Prince PJ travelling in anything other than high style.

Even the bandits came out of the trees and genuflected to us.

Arrived at the remains of the Flamboyant Ferret late afternoon.

Our guards left us here, saying they didn't go into the forest.

The inn had been hit pretty hard (spells, troops, a giant, calammar?) so there wasn't much left.

We found a small girl in the ruins, she tried to run but PJ caught her, prompting Liessa to ask "are we collecting small children?"

The girl was about 8 years old. She said she used to live in the inn, but her mummy and daddy were killed by men in flying ships that looked like animals (definitely calammar), then the inn sank, so she lived in the woods. She said she was happy and she was a "forest girl". The local peasants ostracised her because she lived in the forest. Her name was Tessa. She was a reasonably skilled healer and herbalist.

Spent the night camped near the ruins.

21 Jan

We left Elizabeth and Michael in the care of Tessa (after Tessa negotiated a, to her, good price out of us for looking after them). Michael was in a very

bad way, needing a high rank healer. We carefully moved Michael to Tessa's cave.

Tessa became fearful at the mention of Marcus. She said that "the Great Evil Nasty Sorcerer turned people into lizards and bugs and then stepped on them."

Around midday we left for Marcus' tower.

The forest was a typical beech forest, with little undergrowth.

Camped in forest.

That night Karga heard some crying over a rise. He investigated and found a skeleton sitting on a log, crying. He said "hello" and the skeleton jumped up and hid behind a tree. Karga continued to be friendly, and the skeleton calmed down. The skeleton said its name was Jeremy and it "wasn't crying" and "wasn't lost" and "I'm a person too".

Karga brought Jeremy back to the rest of us. "Look, I've found a skeleton and he seems to be quite friendly." PJ went berserk and attacked, and it took the rest of us to restrain him.

Jeremy said he worked for Count Numbers, the Good Count, for about 30 seasons. He was working with his war-band, raiding a village, when he disappeared and appeared in a ruined tower. He's been wandering since. We asked more about the "raiding a village" and he said the Good Count took people and kept them safe from Count Fingers, the Evil Count, whom the Good Count fought.

We divined him and found he was a Permanently Animated Skeleton, very old, and also under the effect of a rank 20 Witchcraft Evil Eye which ran out in four hours.

He remembered being a new zombie, and that everyone teased him until all his flesh fell off and he became a full fledged member of the Legion of Count Numbers.

Jeremy asked for food, and ate it. The food sort-of disappeared or melded with him or something.

22 Jan

Jeremy cooked breakfast, something he was very good at.

Travelled through the forest, reached Marcus' tower near dusk, which Jeremy recognised as the one he appeared in.

The tower was pretty sound, structurally, but the top storey was gone. Berik, PJ and Liessa entered it. Inside, everything was trashed. Floors were unstable, furniture was broken, internal walls were holes.

We found a circle, which divined as a portal circle with runes of permanency carved in it. The magic was last activated one week ago.

Jeremy said he fell about a foot after appearing over the circle.

When coming close to the circle, PJ suddenly grew a tail, and his aura changed. Liessa and I questioned him, and he told us the story.

Two and a half years ago, he did a mission for Marcus. When the party returned, Marcus gave them a "reward or a lesson". They could live for a thousand years or receive a gift. PJ had lost several horses, and asked for "a horse he couldn't lose". So, Marcus gave PJ the ability to turn into a horse when he wanted.

Karga and Aaron entered the tower, and detected the aura of everything inside.

Upon viewing the aura of the circle, Aaron fell unconscious. Karga managed with difficulty to stay conscious, and saw an extremely bright aura, primary magical effect portal, duration permanent, time since creation 1 week or 3 months, activation method touch. The aura centred about 5 feet above the centre of the circle.

We spent some more time examining the portal, and determined that its destination changed each lunar cycle (full to waning to new to waxing to full), i.e. it changed around every eight days.

The planes it went to were, in order: Telnar (Michael's plane), Ferenth, Jamnil, Hell, Shinteth, and Shwintar (the twin plane that Michael said also faced a horrible fate).

At the moment it was going to Shinteth.

We counted back lunar phases, and determined that Marcus, given the time he disappeared, could have gone to Telnar or Shwintar. We decided to try Shwintar.

Liessa found a ring, I divined it as an invested Windwalk with 1 charge remaining.

Camped near the tower's garden.

23 Jan

Returned to Tessa's cave, leaving Jeremy at the ruined inn. It was pleasant to see that Tessa had started knocking some manners into Elizabeth. Michael said this was ok, and that it was part of the prophecy.

Michael did not know any of the other plane names.

We waited a few days for the lunar cycle to change.

4 Feb

Travelled to Marcus' tower, again leaving Michael and Elizabeth with Tessa.

The portal was still active, and now went to Shwintar.

5 Feb

Bright and early, we all purified, checked our gear, and went through the portal.

We appeared in the middle of a village, near a large fire. A short man ran over, with a staff with bells on it, saying "welcome strange travellers." He introduced himself as Broken Mouse. He took us to meet the village leader.

In a small hut we met three small men, one in an ornate chair. Broken Mouse introduced the one on the chair as He Who Spits Lightning, and the two standing as Sinks Like Brick and Two Dogs Fighting. He Who Spits Lightning talked very, very fast and had an attention span of around two minutes. The aura of all was short-lived sentient, GTN pygmy. PJ introduced all of us.

Broken Mouse remembered another traveller a few months ago, who looked like us but dressed in black. Bingo, we had found where Marcus went. This stranger in black had not stayed, but rushed off to "the tunnels".

We wanted to leave, but Broken Mouse and He Who Spits Lightning insisted that we stay for a feast. They said that our visit was ordained. Yay.

Jeremy recognised this plane as his home.

The feast started at dusk. It was noisy and hectic and wild. It involved a ceremony where a man with a spear yelled a lot at our leader (PJ), then PJ had

to walk forward, accept the spear, then walk backwards. Afterwards we all lined up and rubbed noses with each other. The cynic in me wants to say "quaint native customs".

We observed that there were about 200 people in this tribe, around 50 of whom were combatants. They had little metal.

The real surprise were the other guests at the feast. There were two good-looking trolls (PB 7), Oaksmasher and his wife, who were from the troll clan in the hills where the pygmies got their metal. There were two skeletons from a tribe to the west, neither of who knew Jeremy. There were four centaurs, King Whitetail and his retinue.

All guests lined up and participated in the nose rubbing ritual. When PJ rubbed noses with one of the centaurs, she decked him.

When we sorted out all the fuss and violence that this caused, the King explained that it is a centaur custom to hit someone you are attracted to. Apparently the centaur, Clarabelle, the King's daughter, didn't count on PJ being so "fragile". PJ, when he came to, said he couldn't stay here with her, so she matter-of-factly asked for just sex. PJ tried to point out that he was human not equine, but she said that he smelt like a centaur so he must be able to change form. PJ acquiesced. He changed into a horse and accompanied Clarabelle off for some privacy. Liessa commented "now there's something you don't see every day."

King Whitetail explained that when female centaurs reach puberty they have a phase where they must mate, and if they don't mate, they are barren for life. In this state they are assured of conception. Looks like PJ is going to have an heir here. After that one child, the female centaurs have normal chances of conceiving. Centaurs are fertile with centaurs, humans and horses (though no self-respecting centaur is going to be seen dead with a horse).

As the feast progressed, we learnt more about this plane.

The pygmies are the plains dwellers, the trolls are the miners and metal workers (sort-of like dwarves on Alusia), the centaurs are the woods creatures (sort-of like Alusian Elves, complete with arrogance and self-important attitudes), the skeletons live in the rough and broken places (just like orcs, though there were some semi-civilised things in the hills that seemed like orcs).

There were no taboos or dislikes against dead people rising as skeletons and zombies, it seemed to be an accepted thing. All the zombies and skeletons were sentient.

The prophecy that predicted our arrival was "five will come after one, then rivers will flow and plains will become prosperous." Nice to see a short prophecy.

They had lots of very good food, and two alcoholic drinks; a passable ale, and a very potent grain alcohol.

6 Feb

One word - hangover.

We had a few teases at PJ's expense. I think the best was my effort "Phillipe leapt a filly". PJ tried to defend himself by saying "She didn't seduce me, she saw me first." Liessa correctly answered "PJ, that's the definition of seduction."

This entire plane is slightly higher mana than normal. Spells still cost a base of 1 FT, but mana-sensitive adepts (e.g. Witches) get a +3 to their Base Chances.

The general terrain near the village is lots and lots of grass, small scrubby trees, and small-bush-filled gullies with streams in the bottom. Far in the distance on all sides are the faint outlines of mountains.

The plane is six months out from Alusia, when it's winter in Alusia it is summer here.

Broken Mouse told us that the tunnels were a hole in the ground about 10 to 15 miles away, that gushes water.

He said that we would gain the blessing of the stone and then we would go.

We went into a hut. Karga instantly felt nervous. Inside was a high mana area, except that Karga found it to be a zero mana area. On a pedestal was an eight-sided crystal. It's aura was magical, air aspect.

Later, I divined Karga, and discovered that he had been under the effect of an Elemental Nullification.

Broken Mouse said the blessing of the rock was the tribe's luck.

We left at lunchtime for the tunnels, accompanied by Broken Mouse, two other braves, and Jeremy.

Travelled all afternoon. Camped in the grass, after stamping out a flat area.

Broken Mouse warned us to watch out for snakes, then he summoned one, which the pygmies killed and prepared for dinner.

7 Feb

Travelled all day. Reached a big hole in the ground, circular, about 50 feet across, descending at an angle. The hole was formed of packed ribbed earth.

Jeremy said that Count Numbers and Count Fingers lived below in the Fallen City.

He said the hole was made by a Great Summoned Beast, which he described as being something like a giant mole. This Best was currently somewhere in The Labyrinth.

Camped near the hole.

8 Feb

Karga was attacked by a spitting snake. We despatched it, we were lucky that it hadn't hid Karga in the eyes, it's venom would have instantly blinded him.

We prepared spells and items, and descended.

As we descended, Jeremy told us more about his life. His war-band had been made up of 1 leader, 1 odd-job (him), 3 missile troops with bows, 4 grunts with clubs. They had fought the "little people" of Count Fingers, which, from his description, sounded goblinoid.

He said that Count Fingers and Count Numbers fought in the Fallen City, which fell into the cavern a long time ago. Each Count had their own section, and the rest of the city was no-mans land.

After a few miles the tunnel opened into a cavern. A big wall blocked our progress, in the wall was a gate, closed.

Telepathy revealed 12 to 15 minds, all thinking "let's get them."

We routed them easily, they were skeletons, armed only with clubs and crossbows.

On the other side of the gate was a section of the city which Jeremy called no-mans land. It had been a religious section, there were numerous temples, statues of gods and goddesses, etc.

There were also lots and lots of traps and wards.

We were attacked by Count Fingers' "little people", which turned out to be rag and string golems.

Liessa got caught in a Bubble of Force ward, whereupon a golem tried to roll her away from us, blocking our chase with moving walls. Nevertheless, we caught up and dealt to the golem.

We were attacked by more skeletons as well, which we defeated.

Battling the skeletons and golems was reasonably easy, what made it extremely difficult was dealing with the many traps and wards at the same time as fighting. The forces we fought knew all the traps, but only the skeletons made much use of this knowledge.

A captured skeleton told us that Count Fingers had Marcus, and that Count Numbers had sent a force to rescue Marcus.

We sent the captured skeleton to Count Numbers asking for parley. The skeleton returned with a note saying "meet me at midnight in the town square, weapons sheathed, etc".

The skeleton guided us there, guiding us around Count Numbers' traps.

At midnight a group of skeletons entered the square, In their midst was a human, 5'10", blond hair, blue eyes, nice ears, around 27 years old, dressed in blue. One skeleton was carrying a flag with two doves on it, a symbol of truce, explained Jeremy.

The human introduced himself as Jacob Numbers. He thanked us for returning Jeremy safe and sound. He said he was concerned that we had attacked his forces. He struck us as a polite, pleasant, well-spoken person.

Liessa bluntly said she wanted Marcus. She offered our help to Numbers in return for Marcus and us leaving. I feel it was the second that Numbers desired most.

He agreed to talk, and invited us to his camp. We agreed, and accompanied him there.

In his throne room (an old warehouse) we talked again. He said that if we levelled with him and said exactly what we were doing here then he would explain the situation here.

PJ told him the truth, that we were members of a guild of adventurers. And that the sole reason for us being here was our mission to find Marcus, the man in black.

Numbers explained that about 20 years ago he and his brother Fingers had found this city and thought it would be fun to fix it up and rule it, with skeletons and golems as their subjects (Numbers was a necromancer and Fingers was a binder). But Fingers changed. He became evil and came up with a plan to rule the universe. He started raiding villages on the surface, stealing and raping women. Numbers remonstrated with him, they came to blows, and they have been fighting since.

Fingers changed sometime when he was exploring the catacombs beneath the city (old mines, whose collapse caused the city to sink, which still doesn't explain why the earth closed in over the city).

Numbers has been capturing people from villages and putting them in petit mort (suspended animation), because he doesn't know how else to protect them from Fingers.

He didn't kill, so his numbers of skeletons kept going down, except through natural death in the villages.

He said that this was a problem, because when his forces killed golems, the golems came back again, even though the hearts had been destroyed. He theorises that Fingers has a way of making lots of identical golems very quickly.

Numbers wanted Fingers stopped. He offered us a job of creating a diversion, so most of Fingers' golems will be occupied, so that Numbers' forces could assault Fingers' main camp. In payment he offered us a magical item he found, that he is using to stop the river that normally supplies the plains. It's an earth magic item, that let him cast an earth mage spell, even though he's a necromancer.

We agreed.

9 Feb

Numbers gave us a tour of his camp. It was run quite well. Apart from the bits where Numbers tried to run things himself (he was a real idiot at day to day organisation, a stereotypical academic). The skeletons know he is useless at organising, and run things accordingly. The skeletons like Count Numbers a lot, and are all very loyal.

The skeleton military scientists told us that the golems fought very predictably, with clubs and dagger hilts against skeletons, and with dagger blades against pygmies, trolls, etc. The golems had no unit tactics but just rushed in. He said that large numbers of golems in close were almost unstoppable. The skeletons had better weapons, better tactics, but the golems were holding even solely through strength of numbers. A skeleton could take down a golem in about twenty seconds, but the buggers kept coming back. Neither side's military tactics had changed in the last twenty years.

The Fallen City had several distinct areas. The market area was held by Numbers, the rich area was held by Fingers, the religious areas (where we had entered) and slum areas were a no-mans land. The city was badly laid out, and wasn't well-built or well-organised when it was thriving.

Numbers doesn't know anything about the original inhabitants of the city, the war with Fingers has taken him away from his studies. The buildings are human-sized, i.e. too big for the pygmies, too small for the trolls. The inhabitants believed in lots of gods.

No-one has found any bodies or bodily remains in the city.

The gods themselves are gone from this plane, which affects readings of the past. At some time in the past a new "spirit" had to come to the plane, and this new spirit has no memory of anything that happened before it arrived.

Numbers and Fingers come from off-plane, from the plane of Telnar (Michael and Elizabeth's plane). Numbers was quite evasive on their age, from what he said, we think he and Fingers might be immortal.

Numbers shows us the bodies in his basement. There are over 3,000 of them!

The plan we worked out was this: Liessa worked with the skeleton military scientists and came up with several new tactics (new to the skeletons, anyway). Liessa told PJ. PJ suggested it diplomatically to Count Numbers. Count Numbers agreed and told the skeletons. The skeletons ignored what Count Numbers said (the Chinese whisper theory held) and did what they had worked

out with Liessa.

The item Numbers talked about was an 8-sided crystal, looking very much like the "rock" in the village. If divined as an item of Earth Power that augmented earth magic and repressed other elemental magic.

That evening, we moved out.

We fought many running battles in the streets, overcoming lots of golems. We reached Fingers' camp at the same time as Numbers' strike force, and helped in the assault.

We won, and captured Fingers.

He was totally unrepentant, and admitted that yes he did plan to rule the universe, and would have except for us.

Downstairs we found lots of humans, all dazed and confused. Fingers says that they are all his children and that he has been teaching them magic. There were many classrooms, casting chambers, and golem materials.

What we determined was that Fingers had been controlling (or brainwashing) his children, then teaching them to control golems, effectively giving him large numbers of golems under his control. He had been petrifying each person, with an unbinding so that when their golem was killed they became un-petrified.

We freed the humans.

In one chamber we found Marcus, completely chalk-white, floating in mid-air. Fingers said that Marcus went into this state of his own accord.

Marcus' aura showed short-lived sentient.

As I divined the spell on him, his skin turned to normal, he rotated upright, and said to Liessa "you're late".

First impression, Marcus Carradine is a rude bastard.

We took Fingers to Numbers, handed him over in return for the Earth magic item. Removing the item from the wall caused the river to flow again. Looks like the prophecy of the pygmies has just been fulfilled.

We left, which made Numbers happy, and climbed the tunnel back to the surface.

Camped near the hole, which had a large amount of water coming out of it now.

10 Feb

Travelled back to pygmies' village, where the villagers welcomed us with much hospitality. Marcus was rude to them, and transported us back to Alusia immediately.

Second impression, Marcus Carradine is a rude, arrogant bastard.

Marcus ranted about the mess, did some cleaning, then calmed down.

11 Feb

Travelled back to Tessa's cave.

Elizabeth was acting almost polite. Michael was still injured, but now could be moved without killing him.

Camped near Tessa's cave.

12 Feb

Travelled back to Marcus's tower.

13 Feb

Marcus offered us a reward for rescuing him. He said we had five seconds to think of something, or he'd choose for us.

Third impression: First and second impressions last. Tessa was right.