

*“Last night I heard my mistress chanting a song
Ooh wee, Chub a chub a cheep cheep
Woke up this mornin’ and my mistress was gone
Ooh wee, Chub a chub a cheep cheep
Chub a chub a cheep cheep, chub.
Where’s your mistress gone ...
Little baby one, where’s your mistress gone ...
Where’s your mistress gone ...
Far far away...”*

Summer 800:

Pre Adventure.

Kidnapped Mistress

Miriam the apprentice has come to The Guild to seek aid in recovering her Mistress, The Enchantress Isabeau. The student is assuming that her teacher has been kidnapped – yet again.

We hear her call of distress (and the promise of rich reward) and set off to find the missing mistress.

Our Party

Leader : Amber, Wiccan
Military Scientist: Barth Wader, Church Squire and Enchanter(?)
Scribe: Yours Truly – Douglas Walin, Cartographer /Mind Mage

Menelion (That’s elf for Heaven’s Child) Necromancer
Kayseri Illusionist
Brigetta the Loud Bard
Hagan Tough Guy and Cook

Background

Isabeau lives in her tower, just out of Waterford in the Pevensey region, with her two apprentices Miriam and Donald.

Some moths ago Isabeau was abducted from her home by a group of ‘thugs’. A guild party successfully rescued the enchantress before she was taken to the mastermind of the abduction. (Read: we don’t know who wanted her)

Less than two days ago Isabeau went missing again.

Miriam tells us that her mistress went to her chambers as per normal but when they came to rouse her – she had gone.

Donald travelled in to town to find her and Miriam, remembering our (S.G.A.) previous efforts, came to us.

Info

Isabeau's Tower is 4 stories high with slit windows one door and a lot of *Sleep* wards in place.

The Enchantress is an ex-adventurer (not Guild) in her mid forties. She makes her living by casting the odd enchantment for those who want it. Her only companions are Donald and Miriam, whom she is teaching the enchanting arts.

Preparations

Per Chance

During our routine preparations, Miriam met up with Starflower in the pub. Starflower told the apprentice that her teacher was somewhere in the local of Elfenberg (Northeast of Waterford). We assumed that this was an exceptionally lucky break for us and started to plan on getting to Elfenburg instead of Waterford. It is also lucky that Elfenburg is on the way to Mittelmarkhauptstadt (see celebration notices) via portals.

Special Purchases and Prep.

1. Ox and a Sheep (Pack Ox and Lunch) to be transformed into mice until we need them
2. Starwings from Phaeton (Good job old boy). Adventurers should not leave home without them.

Miriam helped us by undergoing *Hypnosis* and describing Isabeau's ring for Kayseri to picture by illusion. Our Enchanters can now cast *Locate* for this piece of jewellery.

And We're off...

Duesday 1st Meadow.

Amber and her travelling menagerie are on the case.

We did indeed take the portal to Elfenburg and from there flew out to the area that we suspected Isabeau to be in. As a group we flew in a straight line towards the centre of the locus, stopping every so often for Barth to *Locate* the ring. When we got to the centre – some of us started to spiral out in search of our quarry. (After a small confusion on my behalf, about whom was landing and who should continue flying).

Towards the end of our allotted time for the search Barth hit pay dirt with an exceptional success in his casting. We decided to get clever about it all and tried to get a fix on the ring's location by veering off course by 30 degrees either way and seeing where the *Locate* arrow pointed in relation to North. With Amber's *rangering*

abilities and my cartography – we got 'some idea'. (Hey: I think we were doing very well to have 'some idea' of where we were meant to be in the first day)

That was enough adventuring for one day...

First night out.

2am and we are disturbed by a 25-foot long python. The first I knew of it – Menelion wakes me up with "Douglas, wake up – we need you to control this huge snake" this is not a recommended way to gain consciousness. Anyway – on with the show.

Hagan wants to talk to it (reasonable). Amber wants to burn it (understandable but at odds with Hagan). Me – I am looking into the murky darkness for a snake to control. As it happens – I do see it and *Control* it before it makes retaliation in answer to Amber's *Hellfire*.

Hagan chats to the snake. Brigetta wakes up and lets us all chat with it via magic. We all get confused as to why it is so far away from home. Someone gets bored and hacks its' head off (standard issue adventurer response). We all reason that having a 25-foot long python skin and a witch who can handle such things can only be good.

Wodensday 2nd Meadow

I found out just how hard it is to cook snake – i.e. I bollixed it up – never mind I'll try again at lunch time.

More flying around on Amber's carpet. She takes us closer to our estimation of Isabeau's whereabouts. Some of us are turned into mice for convenience sake (Barth objects on religious grounds).

Kayseri and I have found a good training exercise, while we wait for our lift – she will try to um... out fox me at cards and I will try to catch her out, we both try not to fleece Miriam.

Brigetta has reminded us that finding the ring does not necessarily equal finding Isabeau. True enough but we will get to that when we need to.

Lunch Time

Visions etc

1. Brigetta saw Isabeau through her Crystal of Vision. The captive is manacled up somewhere in a 'prison cell'
2. Amber consulted the tarot to find out how many adverseries we have in this matter. The reading repeats the word 'few' alot - so here's hoping.

Action

We have set down approximately 1 mile from the *located* ring, taken the mouse skins off Hagan, Brigetta and Miriam and started to scout.

I am beginning to have reservations about having Brigetta back to normal form. She berates me for naming her Brigetta the loud. Some may find it amusing that her surname is actually McLeod.

The scouting party (Amber and Barth) manage to fly part way to the top of the ridge that we're interested in before they spot Gryphons coming to investigate (read kill) us.

Thence occurred much pecking, pinging, clawing, bashing and casting.

<< Note : Don't get on the wrong side of a *hellfire* wielding wiccan, that is just about the most insidious spell that I have heard of. >>

We have learned that we have a fairly cohesive fighting unit if not very powerful (physically, other than the likes of Hagan and Brigetta). Judicious use of varied spell abilities are going to be the way for us.

From this fight we gained ...

1. 1 x Captive gryphon – the subject of *Control Person*, *Comprehend Languages*, *Telepathy* and *Skin Change*. (Okay Brigetta effected herself with C.Languages so we could say that the gryphon was subjected to her)
2. 1 x gryphon pelt – potentially good for stylish leather armour. The skin is still on the carcass, hoisted into a tree for us to collect later.
3. A bloody mess where an unfortunate gryphon fell out of the sky due to Amber's attentions.

I think that Menelion snaffled the gryphons paw that Barth chopped off in the fracas.

We learned a few important things ...

1. Gryphons don't like other people flying around their territory.
2. They don't have any fantastic way of detecting these other flying people – Just good eyesight.
3. Gryphons can't see invisible stuff.
4. The set, that attacked us, were a 'patrol' – some three hours gryphon-flight away from their lair. There are no other patrols in the immediate area.
5. There are 'Human' mages living in this locale and the Gryphon community have a non aggression agreement going on with them. (I don't think that it is a formal thing – just a matter of prudence on both sides behalf)

Amber took Barth and me for another scouting mission on her flying silk sheet. We crossed another valley to the one where Barth's locate arrow tilted down to give us an indication that we should investigate here.

The valley has some good natural(?) defences in as much as it is surrounded by high on sheer ridges with no landing spaces, never mind concealed ones.

We have decided to move into this valley with some caution.

It is now 3pm and Amber has ferried us all to a 'safe' spot in the middle valley, where we can plan our next move.

Afternoon Tea

Miriam cast a *locate* on Isabeau and got a result, pointing away from Barth's *location* of Isabeau's ring. Amber took the apprentice and me up on her flying silk so that we could triangulate Isabeau's position. After much disagreement and three attempts we thought that our target was some 20 to 25 miles in the direction that Miriam had indicated (strange, because Miriam's range is only 10 miles). Various members came to the conclusion that the young enchantress had got it wrong and that she should try again.

The second result pointed almost directly opposite her first casting – so off we went again. This time our estimates were closer to the mark. We decided to look over the ridge to see where our one and a half mile distance would take us.

We saw another valley (surprise, surprise) only this one is almost perfectly round with a lake, some half a mile wide and in the centre of that lake is an island, one third of a mile across.

After reporting this. I postulated that there was a connection between the site where the ring was and the island.

Brigetta took a look through her crystal of vision and lo and behold there is a cave entrance in the undergrowth.

We planned an attack and got some sleep – waiting for darkness to make our move.

During the sleep time we (Amber and me) got savaged by two wild boars. The party made short work of them, thank you people, and so there became – pork added to our menu and one 500 pound pet zombie for Menelion.

We moved camp and made it look like the old camp consisted of one dead person.

The Plan

Our plan was to have Amber ferry us across the ridge, as weight allowance permits, to a spot 80 feet from the cave mouth (on top of the cave). I would scope out the area for guards, using *telepathy*. With a combination of Brigetta's ventriloquism and Kayseri's *flash of light* , while the rest of us stealthed up to the over hang of the cave mouth, we would entice them into an ambush.

Stealth, in this group – especially at night, is a sticky point. We opted to cover our bush crashing with the noise of pigs – illusionary and zombie.

Why do plans always go horribly wrong?

Rule of survival : When out adventuring, especially when attacking an enemy position – thou shalt use your DA like a lantern to show the way – even if said DA only works half the time.

20 20 hind sight is a wonderful thing.

So – we proceeded to the drop off point and I found five minds on guard. One of them was particularly awake.

Amber flew all of us bar Hagan and the zombie pig into position – 60 foot ahead of the cave.

Kyseri set her pig off to rummage in the woods and then sent in a blinding challenge to the cave-guards. They got surprised and ran (okay stumbled) away. Obviously, they had not understood that bit of the plan - so we improvised.

Hagan swung down into the cave and lead our charge.

Unfortunately – Amber, Brigetta and Kyseri were hit by an alarmingly painful spell and I lost them from my *telepathy*. It was all I could do to bring our fearful leader and songster back from the brink of death but we lost Kyseri for good. Hopefully the guild can do something about that.

The battle continued ...

When you can't see wards – find them the old fashioned way – by walking into them.

Poor, life aspected Hagan, suffering from the loss of Kyseri, charged on regardless. He got to see the insidious fires of hell sweep over him and still he chased our bewildered foe down the dog-legged passageway.

Menelion sent his pet in to help find the magical traps.

Once more, Hagan became victim of hellfire and once more Hagan pushed on to finally catch up with his intended prey. This unfortunate had been shut out on the wrong side of the door in the passageway and so Hagan took him prisoner.

It is well gone midnight. We have healed our wounds. It is time to do a tactical withdrawal and for Amber to *preserve* Kyseri for resurrection.

Th'rsday 3rd Meadow

We have learned many interesting things from our *hypnotised* 'friend' Bartholomew.

The True Game

1. This site is home to approximately 180 practitioners of the college of 'The True Game'
2. The True Game is an alternative path to magic. The aspects are split up into differing groups e.g. fire, power storage, shapeshifting, beguiling, flying, future seeing etc.
3. Adepts of the game tend to have one talent each but can master more than one on occasion.
4. The Head of this community is a Ruler/Armiger i.e. he Beguiles and Flies.
5. The other side of this happy band is the study of fantastical creatures. They capture, breed and create animals to learn from. These specimens are kept in 'The Zoo' which is a section of the complex.
6. The complex does run under the lake, in a maze of lava and worked tunnels.

Operational Stuff

Isabeau

1. Isabeau is being held in the ritual chambers of this complex. She is to be turned into a 'Blue' (a figurine that contains the essence and most importantly the magical skills of the victim). Barth does not know if the transformation can be reversed.
2. We learned that this conclave has got blues of many of our colleges and that they also keep blues of some of their own more spectacular adepts. I would love the chance to collect these blues and study them.
3. We know that it takes a spell to 'merge' with a blue. Finding a copy of that spell would be a bonus.

The Ritual

1. The Ritual will take place on White Lotus Day (5th Meadow)
2. The power for the ritual is sourced from the Adepts that will be performing it.
3. The Ritual Chambers have been undergoing some preparations for this event.

Access

1. The access tunnel is warded with Wiccan *Hellfire* and Necromantic *Necrosis*.
2. There are two adepts that almost always have 'blues' from those two colleges to hand.
3. To cross the wards – you need to be an adept or have an amulet – just like the one Bartholomew has donated to our cause.
4. There is a secret entrance to the complex. It is on the north side of the lake. It is the private doorway for the Leader.

Sneaking in.

< *We have solved our dilemma about carting Kayseri around with us by making her a 'possession' of Mirriam's and then turning Mirriam into a mouse. Hopefully this will also take the apprentice out of harms way.* >

Amber ferried us to the site where Bartholomew thought the secret entrance might be. It took the rangers three-quarters of an hour to find the very well hidden tunnel entrance.

This time we made our way by the numbers. I am coming to think of this as 'by the number of *restoratives* I am forced to take' – oh well everyone does there bit. Poor Menelion backfired a number of times, trying to *counter* the wards of Necrosis. He has developed a rather nasty skin condition. Amber tells us that she can fix it – when she has the time. There were an impressive amount of wards that we either diffused or triggered.

As Bartholomew surmised – the entrance runs into The Zoo. We have seen some bizarre critters penned up in here. Mostly fantastical hybrids – Lion's head on a Horse's body - that kind of thing.

Briggetta helped us sneak past the cages and pits by singing the spell of *calming the beasts*. Although we are all moving *unseen*, it would not do for a beast to scent us and start complaining.

We have discussed possible disguises to wear while moving around here. The two most likely are the garb of servants or the gauzy mask of the Seer Adepts.

It is 2 in the morning and we are about to enter the main complex.

The Main Complex

We breached the door, from the zoo, by warping a hole in it so that I could *control* one of the two guards while Briggetta stunned the other one with her vocal talents.

This is a quick sketch of the complex ...



Our short term plan was to acquire amulets of identification, enough for our party plus Isabeau. (We must remember to give Miriam an amulet when she is next in human form).

We worked our way down to the purser's office.

In the Atrium , there were three adepts who kindly donated their amulets after some guild style persuasion.

Once we found and disarmed the various traps in the purser's office, we decided to take all the amulets so that the adepts would have trouble following us through their own wards. To follow that theme – we emptied the key cabinets onto strings. As Hagan put it – we now have two rosaries of keys to the complex. Of course it would be better if we knew which keys - fit which locks but there again the life of an adventurer was never meant to be easy.

After depositing our unsuspecting donors into a handy broom closet, to sleep off our ministrations. We brought Miriam out of mouse form so she could *locate* her mistress. As funny as it sounds – we then returned Miriam to rodentness and gave her into the gentle care of Bartholomew. (He was the only one who was not *unseen* at this point). Miriam could direct us via my telepathic link to her.

Following the locate arrow into the college complex we took some turns to avoid traipsing through the ritual chamber.

Funnily enough the cells were guarded, by four adepts.

Short changing the guard.

Bartholomew identified the types of adepts for us :-

- a. An Elator (Teleporter)

- b. An Armerger (Flyer)
- c. A Shape Shifter
- d. And a Demon (Telepath)

Our Plan

"*The Plan NEVER survives contact with the Enemy*",
- Von Molke, Murphy and lately Menelion the Necromancer.

We thought that I would control the Elator, as he walked past us, stopping him from teleporting away to get reinforcements. Brigetta would stun the Armerger for similar reasons and Hagan would knock out the remaining guards with the help of Barth and co.

The event

Brigetta sang her much practised 'Worm of Silence' being enough *Shells of Silence* to cover the corridor and our approach. We got ourselves into position and I cast my *Control Person* that would kick off the proceedings. The Elator had the temerity to resist my efforts and Brigetta did not manage to get her stun spell off. I felt the Elator notice some sort of 'wierdness' and so he turned up the corridor, towards us, to check it out. This lead us to a 'Plan B'.

Remember we were all unseen by now – that is until Hagan brought his special stunning skills to bear and knock out the Elator.

As one we moved into action. Brigetta jumped the fallen sap into the guard-way and let loose with her Javalin of Electricity, stunning the Armerger. Hagan took off to see to the Shifter and the Demon and Barth peeled round to finish off the armerger.

The poor sods never stood a chance. This is the way all plans should go (in our favour).

It is approximately 3am and we are about to enter Isabeau's cell.

Mission Successful.

Extracting Isabeau was relatively simple, after our lock pickers tried and failed and Hagan went through with his first love – door bashing.

We were mildly surprised to find Isabeau dead! I tried to keep a straight face when I asked if it was possible that she was under the influence of a *petit mort*. Thence ensued a philosophical discussion on the nature of the spell and how it could be detected. As it happens we unpacked Miriam, put an amulet on her, handed her mistress to her with some fumbled explanation as to her state and re-moused her before we had to deal with her trauma.

Sit, Stay ... Good Church-Mouse.

With the enchantress safe in her apprentice's keeping we made a tactical retreat. On our way through the zoo, we tossed the keys to the cages to a sentient creature (this one has the torso of a man on the body of a lion). I would have loved to see the fracas that caused.

Come the time to fly out – Amber sat down to do the maths and it turned out that she needed to transform Barth, amongst others into a mouse. He still objected on religious grounds. Such grounds that he religiously distrusts anything that a Wiccan does. Yet with the help of Hagan he did indeed discover that rodent feeling.

Frysdag 4th Meadow

Back at the Guild.

We handed a moused Bartholomew over to security with a full report and a pet morted Isabeau over to the (who undoes stuff like that?).

Kayseri is up and walking under her own volition again.

Our payment for Isabeau's rescue is to be an enchanted item each.

We interrogated Bartholomew under a *compel person*.

Blues

- The head of the Tragamores (telekenetics) ordered the blue of Isabeau.
- The last blue to be made was that of a mind mage some six or seven years ago
- There are only a few days in a year when blues can be made. The next day (other than tomorrow) is 3rd Heat – Day of the Dead.
- There are approximately 40 blues – 20 gamers and 20 outsiders.
- It is theoretically possible to reverse the blueing process.
- The college owns some of the blues and the others belong to individual gamers.

Community

- The leader is Dean Hobbs.
- Leaders are elected by council to their position.
- Not many leaders survive the end of their term of office.
- Dean Hobbs was elevated four years ago.
- Power in the college does not necessarily equate to power in the game.
- The talents are a genetic trait.
- Multi-talented players are common. They will not be as strong in any of their gifts as a player with a single talent.
- Those people without talents become servants of the players.
- Players generally belong to factions. A strong faction will have ten to fifteen players in it.
- There have been dissidents, run out of the community for their views.

The Game

- The point of the game is political kudos.
- One faction will announce a game on another faction.
- Factions may have alliances.
- There are rules of engagement. The rules are flexible.
- The nature of the game can vary from sporting to grudge/death match.
- Sometimes there is material ante staked on a game.
- It is very rare for someone to stake a blue on a game.
- Blues are used within the game.
- It is unheard of for an outsider to call game on a player.

Research will commence.

Isabeau is off to the guild library.

Brigetta is performing the *ritual of recitation* on the masks that we collected from the prison guards.

Amber is divining the future consequences of going back to collect the Gryphon bits that we have left in the valley.

Menelion is having a chat to some dead folk ...

4th to 12th Meadow.

Back at the guild. Training, sleeping finding time to do nothing. Life can be good. There again the 'good life' can get boring so when Isabeau told us about a book that she wanted to retrieve, from a far flung Island that no one had heard of, (that is – no one save the author of the research paper, Isabeau had just read) we went forth to fetch it.

This book could help 'us' deal with the college of the true game.

The results of the various divinations etc generally told us that it was not going to be profitable to go back to the college or the site of the dead gryphons.

So ... a sailing we went.

Sunday 13th Meadow

The first day of our voyage. Isabeau bought cabins for us on the 'Silver Dolphin'. We then found out who has sea legs. Hagan has none, Amber tells us that she has sailed before and that the party, she was with did all sorts of damage to some pirates.

This journey, as short as it was, became boring, quickly. (Praises to the various gods who must have decided that we did not need testing in any way, while at sea.) Only Kayseri had the knack of putting her feet up and enjoying the cruise. The rest of us made busy – 'training' ourselves and getting up to harmless mischief. Although it

did take us a very terse but thankfully brief conversation with Amber to persuade her not to practice *hellfire* on board a sea-going vessel.

I found an entertaining and possibly profitable way to practise *hypnotism* and er.. um, the ritual of *binding wills*. Hey, I didn't do anything more insidious than try to set up a business network ... maybe I will report to some religious institution for flogging – later.

Brigetta helped me with my *hypnotism* gig. Under the spell, the sailors would remember the dream that I planted. Our bard sang/told the dreams that the sailors described. It is amazing how many of them wanted lurid tales featuring one very alluring wiccan elf.

Hagan finished off some weaponry that he was working on and then went to help the cook.

We didn't see much of Menelion. He did wander past us now and again mumbling about the curing time of cats and 'just how un-animated some rats could be'.

By and by we came to the island where the book should be. It was fairy tale picturesque – complete with an old tower and the lonely cry of sea gulls.

The captain obliged us with a ferry to shore and a promise to wait for us for one day.

Reapsday 19th Meadow

We waved faretheewell to the sailors in the fast retreating smallcraft and set off towards the tower. Menelion decided to show us the fruit of his efforts as he set 20 zombie-rats onto the sand. For some reason, Barth and Brigetta found this distasteful and started to chop the poor animates up. To be sure – this caused some altercation.

Some folk have trouble seeing past their religious bigotry into professional adventuring. If the party necromancer wants dead animals walking with him – so be it. Just as long as the said animals don't find my sleeping roll comfortable. That's my opinion anyway.

As it stands – we travelled with half of the rats in front of us and half behind us, outside of Amber's anti-undead amulet range. Barth still looked twitchy but that does seem rather usual.

The tower

... a classic style, round tower. Furnished with arrow slits dotted around the top three floors. Built ... some time ago with defence in mind. I wander – in defence of what? But without a good aerial view of the area, I doubt we will get to know that. We

looked for signs of inhabitants – vegetable gardens, animal enclosures etc – none were found. Yet the tower was inhabited, so to speak, by ghouls and a vampire.

As luck would have it – the vampire was still asleep. We figured that we had a few hours left to deal with obtaining the book before the master undead became a problem. Someone did mention that we should as a matter of course, stake the vampire. Kayseri and I repeated our objection simultaneously saying “We don't do undead!”

And so there was much ... professional debate, and time slipped away.

Once we had separated the two very distinct plans and discarded the one that involved face to face experiences with a vampire and the one that would have had us put the tower to the torch (we were after all here for a book), we retrieved the book thus...

Isabeau cast many spells – *wizards eye, telekinesis, invisibility, opening*, - okay a few spells but she cast them several times. She managed to float a couple of books out of the third floor before she identified that the one she wanted would not fit through the arrow slit. (Incidentally, the two books are on the Mind Collage and Cooking)

Adventurers can use some very large war-hammers to open some rather small fruit. Some of us were in favour of setting up a team to fly up to the arrow slit with a crow bar and a shell of silence (or other suitable spell) to make it wide enough for Isabeau to bring the book to us. Over the top – yes, dangerous – yes, amusing thought – definitely.

Actually we used a rope, an illusion of the front door, much telekinesis and Hagan's innate sneakiness to have the book 'delivered' into his hands. It is well worth noting that no one had to step into the tower and no ghouls were bothered during this process.

We all got back to the ship in one piece if a little frazzled and the captain is , hopefully, making good time to the trading ports of the southern continent.

Sunday 20th Meadow

It took us less than 30 hours to make port which was largely due to another astounding effort in *wind whistle* from Amber.

Not even the most paranoid of us could dream that a vampire-bat could have kept up with us, even if he did know of our deeds and whereabouts.

We have informed the harbour master about the vampire and its' location. He kindly told us of a ship that will set sail for the north in four days time.

Isabeau has decided to take that time to study her book and so we are left to our own devices.

*We are staying at “The Sign of the Oak Tree”. It is a very pleasant inn that serves decent food and good grog. The style of this building is common of this area with its'

court yard in the front and airy dimensions. Our host is charming enough, for an innkeeper although he did take offence at Menelion's sack (of dead things). Apparently he couldn't bring it into a place of hospitality (go figure) – so, as far as our host is concerned, he didn't.

The shopping, for exotics is quite good here. We found some very reasonably priced spices etc. Hagan entertained a local Hobbit in Hobbit style – ie fed him while we chatted. The Halfling was very obliging with information about the local customs and ley of the land.

- The population of this town is largely human with representatives of the other civilised races here and there.
- The local religion is all about another One True God in sand dwelling people fashion.
- This is a trading town/port with no real specialities.
- It is a free town. Inasmuch as if a slave lives here for one year they become a free person. This is nice to know and also disturbing. We surmised that slavery is practised in these parts.
- The women of these parts wear an all-encompassing costume and it is not done to just wander up to them and spark up a conversation. Hagan obtained enough sets of clothes for our female associates to wear if they wanted to be ignored. Only Kayseri saw the sense in this (funny that).

Our first evening here and Brigetta can't resist her bardic nature. She did have to perform for a new audience. I did manage to persuade her to take a set after the local troubadour played so that she could temper her performance to his and not to out shine him too much. The redhead must not have heard me well enough, for I will not accuse her of showing off – because she could. The show finished at eleven o'clock and we prepared our watch schedule while Brigetta set up one of the alarm wards – just in case the vampire decided to visit with us.

At Midnight.

Kayseri heard a small wailing going on outside the girls' room. She and Amber identified it as a ghost and so woke up Menelion to verify this. It turns out to be the ghost of Mary Devantia, who was a daughter of this household when the inn was a house. I know this because Menelion woke me up to take notes. A scribe's work is never done ... by anyone else it seems. Anyway, Mary appeared to us in a white shift with blood stains all down the front (somewhere, it is written, that all ghosts shall be dressed in white shifts). She died with her child at its' birth. Sad really, but the kicker was that her lover (Sebastian Secopo) had run off, to the east, "to make his fortune", never to return. Mary wanted some payback. This all happened some seventy years ago.

We said that we would do what we could and Amber invited the ghost to meet with us at the same time tomorrow.

Moonday 21st Meadow

We started to play detective on Mary's behalf. There was nothing better to do and it kept us out of Isabeau's way. The first stop was the temple, housing the crypt of the

Devantia family. Amber pretended to be a distant cousin to the Devantias (very distant, looking at her pointed ears) She was in town doing a little genealogy and could she please look at the family crypt. This was all smoothed over with a healthy donation to the church.

We learned that Mary and child were indeed here along with her father and 150 years worth of kin. Sebastian's people were not here – they were congregates of the other temple (there must always be two temples of the same faith in a town like this).

From the other temple – we learned that the Secopo family still lived in the area and that they were a merchant house.

The House of Secopo is a 'middle class' merchant family dealing in exotic material, specialising in sandal-wood. We were welcomed in as guests and given refreshments while we waited for the master of the house. Anyone would have thought that we were there to buy something.

Alexander Secopo told us that his 'uncle' Sebastian was a bit of an embarrassment to their good name and he wished that the story would not be told. (As it happens. Menelion fixed a price of 650 silver pennies for us not to tell this tale).

The story that we will never tell in the public of this town is thus. Sebastian got Mary pregnant. He then ran off with some trollop. They got as far as the caves to the east of here, before a band of thugs, hired by Mary's father, butchered them and brought the boys head back as proof.

We also learned that the head was buried in the courtyard of the Sign of the Oak Tree.

Menelion had Hagan dig the skull up for professional purposes.

On a roll, Menelion had a chat to the innkeeper. He offered our silence for a consideration and also we might do something about his inn being haunted. The innkeeper was predictably distraught. His counter offer was 1000 silver pennies if we lay the ghost of Mary to rest. So now we are gainfully employed while we wait for Isabeau to finish with the book.

Amber has questioned the shade of Mary's father to verify the tales and get a location on the caves in question.

Duesday 22nd Meadow

We have set out to find the remains of Sebastian. Hopefully by laying his soul to rest Mary will be quietened also.

At the site – Menelion has found the shade of Sebastian the oathbreaker. This makes him a Night Gaunt and we prepare to send him on his way with extreme prejudice.

"Oh – It's quite simple

... we just stand thirty feet away from it and I'll blast it with hellfire, while it can't go past my amulet of protection." - **Amber, the extremely optimistic**

To be fair – we all thought that it was a good plan. We only figured on the flaw just before the crucial point.

Night Gaunts, being undead, exist in a shroud of fear. This is to say – they're bloody scary. Amber and Hagan found this out just as soon as they copped an eye full. It is amazing how fast a panic stricken, *quicken*ed adventurer can run. They hung around outside the cave, leaving us to come up with a 'Plan B'.

The hitters (including the military scientist) wanted to wade in and hit it. Menelion discouraged this with this very handy information about Night Gaunts. They drain. It does not matter who hits who or with what – they drain life from the living.

Throwing things at it then. It still had the problem of crossing the boundary of my jade amulet. This was all well and good but we only had one magical throwing weapon. Oh yes – you need magic or silver to harm these beasties. Life gets more interesting by the turn. Brigetta threw her javelin and scored a good hit. She managed to retrieve her stick, in her quickened state, without getting hurt too much.

Kayseri was hurling bolts of illusory silvered weapons. They kept veering off or worse, coming back at her. The little picture flinger is quick on her toes when it comes to ducking her own magic.

Now, I am not sure when the hero bug bit but somehow it became vogue for Brigetta and Barth to go toe to toe with the heavily armoured, well armed, life draining revenant. I guess there is a rule "Got a battle axe, use da battle axe". Anyway – It was a very short time until we had a pile of Brigetta on the ground. Amazing! Barth dragged her out of the Night Gaunt's reach. I handed my amulet over to Menelion, for him to hold the barrier in place while I went to attend the fallen.

I have learned some very important things.

1. Night Gaunts have feelings too.
2. Even southern shades understand Alusian gestures of ill will.
3. It is possible for the undead to cross our protective barriers, If you make them mad enough.

In essence – don't do the fingers to an already vexed Night Gaunt. All of a sudden I found myself in combat with it. As we are well aware, practitioners of the mind college don't do undead and we certainly don't do close combat – so, after I knew that Brigetta had the wherewithal to come out of her stupor, I displayed my deft abilities in back-peddling.

Menelion accommodated us by moving back with the jade to a position that once again denied the Night Gaunt further progress.

Barth managed to fetch some silvered arrows from Hagan, who was busy discussing the merits of distance and safety with our glorious leader.

Finally we (ie Brigetta) had something to throw. She took a few well-aimed shots, including one to the nether regions (does that really bother the walking dead?) and we witnessed the revenant of Sebastian the oathbreaker fade into the ethereal.

Having earned our thousand silver pennies – we went back to collect it and Isabeau. We spent one more night in the Sign of the Oak Tree before departing for Seagate.

We took eleven days by sea and have arrived home. Isabeau has hit the books again. I wonder how long it will be before we have 'dealings' with the college of the true game again.