

The Emperor Is Gonna Die

Adventure by Scott Raymond

1st Meadow '03 - 24th Meadow

Adventurers

Phaeton D'Tama	Solar Celestial	Human	Male	Scribe
Brigetta McLeod	Bardic	Human	Female	Leader
Silverfoam	Namer	Elf	Male	Mil Sci
Veor	Ice	Human	Male	
Hamish McLeod	Wiccan	Human	Male	
Mira Stuart	Earth	Human	Male	
Stilicho	Non-mage	Human	Male	

Plane

Haarn

Employer

Huan Yong Lee - a delegate

Places Visited.

The Shoji Empire

Imperial Capital City

Imperial Palace - in top of the Cube

Pavarrum - local school of magic

Important People

The Emperor

Cho Sung Long - the Emperor's Seventh Eunich (assassinated)

Han Thiron - local alchemist and linguist

Little Lotus Blossom - the Seventh Eunich's 'friend'.

Losee - Acupuncturist

The Emperor's Gonna Die

(Not if we can help it)

Phaeton

Part 1 - Spring '02 - A preliminary look

Brigetta and I were contacted by the Guild Council and asked to report. An delegate, Huan Yong Lee, from the Shoji Empire on the Plane of Haarn, had arrived seeking aid to help their ailing Emperor. All their local physicians were baffled so he had come here, on an unauthorised mission, seeking more unorthodox help.

I was the only available adventuring healer about and Brigetta was assigned as my bodyguard, and translator (being a bard). We portalled back with our guide and arrived a few days travel away from the capital.

Notes about this land

It's mostly human and is ruled by an Emperor. Under the Emperor are several generals which take care of particular areas. They also have several people under them and so on and so on. Basically it's a very stratified society, with everyone at their particular level in the hierarchy.

Demi-humans are treated as 'oni'. This roughly translates as 'devil' and are kept apart from normal humans, having their own quarters, eating areas etc. It is suggested that any party coming through be all human. Elves and dwarves may get away with it, as they can look human, but giants would definitely have problems interacting in this society. We saw some strong 'oni' decked out as warriors at one point so I presume they must have their place.

Their script and language, called Shoji, is very strange. Thank goodness for translators. At least Common is spoken by our guide and several of the high-ups. I guess that they have trading contacts with people that speak a similar language.

Their coinage consists of a series of disks threaded on strings - called 'cash'. I guess the longer the length the more value it was. 1 disk was basically 1 cash. Ten of those made a 'stick' while ten sticks was a 'bar'. and Not sure exactly on conversions, all our expenses were being provided for. We spent most of ours on documents.

Speaking of which, they used scrolls a lot which needed to be unwound. No bound books here. Also instead of reading left to right then down the page it was downwards then left to right. Their script consisted of complex pictograms which each brushstroke having a meaning.

Much of their medical techniques were different too. They talked about things called yin/yang and chi flows i.e. energy pathways through the body that had to be kept in balance. If it went out of balance various techniques were used such as inserting needles in various places - something called 'acupuncture'. A similar technique, involving massage and pressure points was also used, called 'acupressure'.

Our spells effects were also changed. We did some testing with their Magicians Guild and noted some rather interesting effects. The spells acted reasonably normal with some slight variations i.e. my Light spell emanating from the end of a staff. I did attempt to discuss this with their wizards but the language barrier didn't help - something I must sort out before I try again. They don't have Colleges as such but more like Spheres, it being easier to learn magics of one chosen

Sphere then it is to learn others - especially those of opposing Spheres. Spells could be turned on, or off, during the duration.

The Journey Continues

We travelled for the most part in people borne carriages, i.e. four strong guys, running along carrying the carriage on poles. Locally they're called palequins. Spent most of the trip figuring out the language in the scroll I was reading. These were single person carriages by the way. Both Brigetta and I had brought scrolls. Mine was on medical matters while she was reading poetry.

We stayed the night at what could be classed as 'inns'. Their food mainly consisted of rice and some meats with added spices.

During one night, someone tried to kill us. A hole had been opened in the ceiling and a thin thread lowered, down which someone attempted to dribble down poison. Fortunately I spotted the light bouncing off the thread and alerted the local guard. There were a couple of these black-clad assassins, called ninja, but we were unable to get much out of them as they killed themselves with poison capsules, immediately upon capture. We did manage to find out later that they were a group who had been responsible for assassinating some very high up officials a while back. Evidently someone didn't want us helping the Emperor.

Brigetta did a Ritual of Recitation on the bodies. She discovered that the name of one of them was 'Little Dragon Tongue' who worked for 'My Honour'. He had killed many, including Chang So Lu and Hung We.

It was a three day trip until we reached the capital. It was a very large city. In the centre was the Imperial Palace, built on top of a large featureless cube - designed to stop people climbing up it and into the Palace itself where the Royal Family lived.

We were taken in the city - through the outer wall - then, after a while, through another wall, into the Imperial Gardens, then into the cube itself. By now it was getting late on the third day. We were taken to quarters and left in the very tender care of assigned courtesans. Mine were known as the 'Ladies of the Midnight Lotus'.

During the night a couple more of those black clad assassins tried to take us out, killing all the guards along the way in. The whole combat was a bit of a blur as far as I was concerned. Somehow one of them got mashed against the wall by a spell.

Again the Ritual was performed to find out more. This one was 'Stinging Venom' who was working for the Cho Li Assassin's Guild, otherwise known as the Guild of Beneficent Sleep'. One of their victims had been Cho Sun Long - the Emperor's seventh eunuch.

Next morning we were led up the cube, on to the gardens on top, and into the palace. There were a lot of protocols to follow upon greeting the Emperor, involving a lot of bowing and scraping. The Emperor was on the throne, weighed down by all this heavy armour and ornaments. He didn't look very well at all and all that lot must have been extremely uncomfortable. To make matters worse we couldn't even look at him, touch him or even speak to him directly. We had to address the Ears of the Emperor and listen to the Mouth of the Emperor. We also ended up arguing with the Protocol Officer. Basically we were getting nowhere.

Finally we broke protocol much to the consternation of the entire court. That also led me to an argument with the physicians that had been trying to cure the Emperor. Basically, as far as I could tell, they were all charlatans, apart from one, the acupuncturist. He was actually on the right track as it turned out.

We managed, somehow, to get private access to the Emperor. Most of it was due to Brigetta's negotiating skills - something I'm not good at. There seemed to be nothing physically wrong but, with the help of the acupuncturist, I was able to determine that there was some sort of dark magical energy present in the Emperor that was sapping his strength and was taking over his body like some malignant growth. Where it had come from I had no idea but I suspected dark sorcery at work.

The cure turned out to be simple in theory but rather strenuous in practise. Basically I laid down a Wall of Holy Light and passed the Emperor through it, feet first. At least that was the plan. It took several burly guards to overcome the resistance in order to push the Emperor through it and, even so, we had to go slowly and carefully as the Emperor was suffering. I was doing all I could to ease the pain of the reaction.

Several hours and Walls later we finally did it. The Emperor was cured and very quickly regained his strength and health. And, boy, did he have words with the Royal Court who had taken advantage of his condition. The Protocol Officer lost his job and I got the impression there were going to be a few major changes, like throwing the book out the window. There were certainly going to be major changes coming.

Anyway we were rewarded and sent home. Our next task was to bring back a party to find out who had been behind this dark plot. Basically we had been away for a week.

Treasure Obtained

Two sets of bamboo/cloth armour in black (3pt, +5 to stealth)

17 Sharkeen (throwing disks) (PS9 MD16 BC60 DamD Bclass, Range12 as dart)

6 daggers

2 Ninjato shortswords

Nekode - climbing claws

(5000 ep each & three quarters of a pound of silver worth 250sp after tax)

Part 2 - The Adventure Proper

So starting on the Summer of '803, that was what we did. The adventurers we obtained were:

Robert McLeod - another of Brigetta's clan. He was wearing the McLeod tartan, and looked like an unassuming adventurer apart from a very well made set of leather. He had a slight limp but the leg looked well healed. He wields a battleaxe and is a Mind Mage.

Mira Stuart - another from Caledonia and there is a slight passing resemblance to the McLeods. A young human female, carrying a claymore. Druidic earth mage.

Silverfoam - Six foot tall elf dressed up in red sparkly shoes with four inch heels and wearing red armour. He's a Military Scientist and Namer with extras.

Veor - A human wearing purple and black silk. An Ice mage

Stilicho - 6'4" human. Carrying a number of weapons and his armour carried the family crest, green/red device with a gold lion.

Our guide and interpreter, Huan Yong Lee. Was also there. He was a small oriental gentleman in silk robes. Brigetta was chosen as Party Leader, Silverfoam as Military Scientist and I was the scribe. Brigetta then organised everyone else to get Lessers of Basalic, a local Earth Mage. I had already paid out for mine from the Guild. I was also holding on to Silverfoam's scroll of Gaseous Form. Plus, I sold the armour I had previously acquired to Robert for 50sp.

We spent a week with Huan Yong Lee, acclimatising to the culture and the language.

8th Meadow

We were taken to the circle and portalled through to Haarn. Silverfoam divinated our guide upon arrival and discovered that he had died twice in the last fifteen weeks. It turned out that our 'transport' momentarily killed us as we were completely disassembled then reassembled at the other end. For some reason, I was slightly delayed in appearing. Plus we could have been in transit for a couple of days.

It didn't take long to confirm that this was Haarn, but this wasn't the same spot that we had appeared in last time. The climate was warm and we were on rolling plains. A road could be seen in the distance, nearly an hours walk away. An Imperial waystation was on it.

The others didn't waste anytime in testing their spells to see what they would do.

Extinguish Fire - Fire turned blue and went out

Freeze - Veor ended up with a freeze dried stick. Seemed to work normally on a rock.

ESP - Robert detected 216 non-sentient entities in a 90 degree arc in front of him. When he scanned past us, we came up different colours.

Mental attack - the bird flopped over completely stiff

Speak with Animals - worked normally. Mira must have picked a polite bunny.

Mana Sight - Silverfoam was almost blinded by the mana residual

Counterspell Bardic General - the grass grabbed Brigetta

Ice Creation - a cold fog appeared and slowly coalesced into ice.

Igloo - A small ice pagoda appeared

Mind Cloak - ability to perceive magic goes away, like hiding behind a curtain.
Light - Appeared on the end of the stick I had picked up.
Spell Barrier - A shimmery sparkly wall appeared. The sparks attacked any spell that contacted the wall.
Bolt of Starfire - Ball of light coalescents then shoots off
Friendly Light - appears to work normally.
Blending - Mira vanished. Spell appeared to work like Indetectability
Witchsight - My eyes turned golden and Silverfoam glowed green. Mira glowed blue
Locate - Silverfoam got the exact location of his target, in this case Robert.
Undetectable - Robert dropped off Silverfoam's Locate
Walking Unseen - Basically a Somebody Else's Problem field for anyone who wasn't watching
Coruscade - a patch of light that got brighter the more I moved.
Sleep - Seemed to be normal
Dance of Swords - Brigetta starts doing gymnastics & acrobatics
Resist Cold - Mira flickers blue and feels warm
Ethereal Orchestra - Local style music accompanied by drums.
Ice Traversal - Hobnailed feet.
Refrigerate - Veor obtained a box containing ice, which started to melt normally.
Hypnotism - Seemed to work normally.

It was late in the afternoon so we decided to camp. Silverfoam produced an eight foot tent with a four poster bed inside.

.2.

That night, we were shot at with projectiles that were flattened balls. I was hit by one. The rest of the party were woken up. At the same time small round holes appeared in Silverfoam's tent and Brigetta's tarpaulin. Brigetta spotted five attackers so the party charged., both Brigetta and Mira yelling Caladonian war cries.

I wanted to drop a lighted area on top of the attackers so we could see them more easily. But I made it red so it wouldn't affect our night vision. Instead of it forming where they were, it emanated from my staff and washed over the entire campsite. At least we could now see what we were doing.

Stilicho charged in as Brigetta went into melee with another. Silverfoam was flying around directing the battle in true military fashion. Brigetta then killed one. Meanwhile Robert must have backfired an Indetectability as he became highly obvious. Finally I fired a black bolt at one of them, in the hope I could break their morale. The bolt hit but they were too staunch. Stilicho then hit that attacker and it went down.

Mira was currently invisible and was inadvertently protecting Brigetta's back from the person trying to hit her. My next bolt was a red/orange one, at the one Mira was being hit by. Again I was attempting to break their morale by making them think it was fire but again they held their ground.

For some reason an argument erupted about the use of warcries between the Caladonians and the others. A suggestion of 'Tally Ho' was made. Stilicho also objected to Brigetta's dancing.

Finally we defeated them all but, not before I had backfired Witchsight and shrunk to half my height. To make things even more embarrassing, my clothes did not shrink with me. Only one

of them was left alive at the end.

Their loot was five odd double pole weapons, 5 beaten up suits of ringmail, 200 cash and some other odd weapons, including the crossbow like ball launcher.

.3.

Morning. The Caledonian's served up porridge for breakfast, much to the bemusement of the rest of the party and the puzzlement of our guide. He was actually having problems with the entire concept of porridge.

Afterwards we attempted to interrogate our captive. Brigetta and I dressed up in our native outfits and tried to prise information. He wasn't talking. Robert then tried some more 'novel' approaches. He still wasn't talking. We finally gave up.

So we headed off to the waystation, arriving there by dusk. Two inscrutable guards were guarding the entrance and we dropped off our 'package'. That night, Brigetta entertained while I did what healing was requested of me.

9th Meadow

When we woke up the next morning we noticed that our packs had been rifled through and a few minor items were missing. Nothing important so it didn't matter much. Breakfast was pickled vegetables and cold rice, something called Kimchee.

"I think they misunderstood our request for a hot meal" - Silverfoam.

We collected some palequins - two triples and a double for the girls. Veor suggested palequin races and the carriers were quite capable of doing it, but we decided against it. Instead Brigetta spent the time telling local jokes to help familiarise us with the language. Even the slaves were laughing. Veor and I were also discussing the mechanisms of the Ice College.

"Ice mage - humour - Hello?" - unknown person.

Also Silverfoam wanted to introduce a palequin service to the Baronies to help relieve the unemployment problem.

13th Meadow

It took us four days to get to the Imperial City and the Palace. Upon arrival, we entered the stone block and were conducted to quarters. Each of us were given private rooms and body servants. Brigetta and I got the same group as last time. Basically everyone had a good night.

.4.

14th Meadow

We were pampered then measured up for traditional clothing suitable to meeting the Emperor. It was basically a several layered, complex garment of silk. Robert, Mira, Stilicho were all in red, denoting them as warriors. I was in healer sky blue, Brigetta was light green with red trim (courtesan with some warrior), Veor was in red with black trim (he had subterfuge training), while Silverfoam's outfit was dark blue with red and white trim. He also had a standard bearing pole on his back. His banner would be placed there later once he had produced it. It wasn't until evening that all the outfits had been fitted.

15th Meadow.

We were dressed in our ceremonial robes and instructed in the proper protocols to follow when in the presence of the Emperor. Only those with red could carry weapons in the Emperor's presence and they had to be peacebonded. Our shadows were not allowed to fall on the Emperor, we had to listen to what he had to say without interrupting, laugh at his jokes and not laugh when inappropriate. We also had to address the Ears of the Emperor but at least we didn't have to deal with the Mouth this time. Evidently several changes had been made since we were last here.

An elevator ride took us to the top of the Block then we were taken inside the Palace itself and conducted into the Emperor's presence. After all the formal introductions and long speeches we finally got down to our business. The Emperor took us to one of his private chambers.

There we discussed the problem. There had been no relapses but he suspected that other magical attempts had been made. Our plan was to have Silverfoam divinate the Emperor then I was going to speak to the Pavarrum - their school of magic to see what they could tell us. I received letters from the Emperor allowing me to access their libraries - even those containing very secret lore.

Brigetta wanted to investigate the death of the previous seventh eunuch that the assassin had admitted to killing in case there were some clues there. So she asked to see what office he had used. It would take a while before the staff could find out which one that was.

.5.

Silverfoam divinated the Emperor and got two results. The first one that he scribbled down in a hurry was:

Darkness Ancient / Rises Lowly / Giving Loss / Pain Flows On
Touch On Night / Gives Light Brought Low / Returning Light / Banishes Haste

After a more careful scan he obtained the following:

Emperor Lives / Symbol Just / Hope Springs / Desires Dust
Emperor Death / Gives Hope Fatal / Darkness Shudders / Falls All Ruins

Veor correctly interpreted the first one as what happened when the Emperor was passed through the Wall of Light.

Meanwhile Brigetta was doing bardic divinations as well. What she got was the following:

- 1) Who plotted to kill the Emperor by poisoning his life force?
Shadow / Behind Light / Before Thee Stands / Polish and Stain
- 2) How was the poison administered?
If Fire Burns / Water Quenches Flame / Lest Thou Burn / Giving Aid Provides Harm
- 3) Who administered the poison?
Than Says Go / Game Plays / Time Flows / Under Darkness
- 4) What was the name of this poison
Giving Death / Flowing Time / Lotus Blooms / Sand Pours

5) How may we best find the poisoner?

Death Gives Peace / Time Gives Heed / Sand Silent / Evening Falls

Several interpretations were tossed about. One of which was the poison was a derivative of the lotus blossom although none of the texts we perused. The Black Lotus is used for peaceful death, the White Lotus is used for a sleeping potion. The Imperial Lotus didn't have any medicinal uses listed while the rarest flower, the Violet Lotus, is intrinsically magical.

The Emperor's astrological Aspect is Winter/Fire.

There were six people named Than. Two guards, one cook (not the Emperor's), a librarian, the Imperial Goose Poker and his twin brother.

The poison consisted of two parts. I had removed one part but the other may still be lurking. However, I was unable to detect anything like that.

I also asked for a list of remedies that had been used on the Emperor in case one of them was actually the cause.

While Veor and I headed for the Pavarrum's library, the others went to search the offices of the former seventh eunuch. For some reason, the entire group were staring at the miniature tree (a bonsai) that was located in the outer office. The Caladonians then found the hidden compartments containing odd implements of torture. None of them were magical apart from one that animated.

In the next chamber, the secretarial bedchamber, they found a book - 'The Book of 1001 Pleasures'. That led them to conclude that some of those devices may not have been torture implements after all.

Inside the inner sanctum, they found a journal in a foreign language. It was hidden behind a brick which was behind a porcelain pot-belly stove.

The file room was full of files. For some very odd reason Stilicho thought it was empty.

Finally they reached the private bed chambers that the seventh eunuch had used. Currently the room was being used for storage as the current eunuch was a member of a religious order that had shaved heads and wore orange robes. They were an Order of pacifistic monks. Here they found assorted odd pharmaceuticals, more odd implements of 'torture', and a little black book. One entry was what we thought was a girl's name, Little Lotus Blossom, located at the House of the Rising Obelisk. He also had a rather large collection of inkwells. Brigetta decided to collect some of the puzzle boxes that were found.

Meanwhile Veor and I discovered that the alchemists were busy blowing themselves up again. Apparently their quest for an immortality potion was leading them in the area of unstable explosives. When I described what we wanted to the Head of the Pavarrim, we were told to talk to one of the alchemists, who also specialised in mystical linguistics. He was a weasily looking man, who had a crippled arm, a crippled leg and was as deaf as a post, presumably from exposure to multiple explosions. His name was Han Thiron.

I finally got to talk to him, after I healed him up. He finally agreed to look into the haikus. After we got back Veor did a ritual to block one of the two airshafts to our set of rooms with ice. Sleep wards were put in the other airshaft.

That night, Veor and I were on watch. Suddenly I was hit by something small and sharp - and it wasn't a mosquito. I got dragged behind the couch by Veor, just as two humanoid entities came over the top. Veor was also hit. The room was only lit by lamp light so I cast a Light spell, before getting hit again by our assailants. By now, the others were awake and Silverfoam rendered me Indetectable.

Just then a glowing hypnoball appeared. Fortunately no one was adversely affected. However we could now see there were three fighters and one sorcerer. One of the fighters was at the back with a crossbow. The sorcerer was from the Confusion College - at least that's what I thought the aura said. Silverfoam later discovered the GTN was Shonku.

Brigetta savagely attacked one of the warriors and he powerstruck the floor, shattering his weapon and going unconscious.

“Fine. Ruin our loot won't you” - Brigetta.

Silverfoam dropped a necro special counter under the sorcerer. I shot a purple starfire at him but it had no effect. However Mira sliced into one and discovered that the warrior's blood reacted as it came into contact with her silver sword. Brigetta hit another from behind which turned and whacked her so Veor struck it from behind.

Just then the one that had been rendered unconscious stood up again. On a hunch, I fired a Holy bolt at the caster. All his clothes burnt off and he glared with glowing red eyes. Silverfoam was struck by a sword. The tip broke off and lodged in his elbow.

My Sunray took out two of the warriors completely while the sorcerer was left smoking and seriously annoyed. Robert got a haircut and close shave from the remaining warrior before the next sunray vapourised it. The sorcerer was still corporeal, and he decided to flee. The others took the attack of opportunity and the sorcerer exploded.

His death cursed us with poison and we were rushed off by the guards. I was seeing pretty multicoloured lights then passed out. We must have been healed as we woke up and proceeded to throw up black goop. This was collected for later analysis.

.7.

16th Meadow

Next morning we had mostly recovered although the lack of sleep was leaving us rather tired. I dealt to the weapon sliver in Silverfoam's elbow, extracting it carefully. It's aura was formally living but it had no GTN. Silverfoam then divinated all of us but detected nothing unusual apart from the poisoning. Brigetta tried a ritual to see who summoned the undead warriors but, upon completion, she was thrown five feet backwards into the wall.

The only thing magical in the pile of salvage was an oddly shaped stone. It's major effect was enchantment. The divination revealed that it was a necromantic enchantment that enhances non-sentient fleshy undead. Basically, the user throws it at an undead and, after it burrows in, the undead becomes loyal to the user and has a limited degree of sentience. It's called the Stone of

Chon Chi Sou. Obviously it had been in one of the warriors, probably the one that reanimated. It had been made by an entity called Ilvier who had passed it on to the sorcerer who attacked us. It was made in the third year of the Goat in the Reign of the 763rd Jade Emperor, 516 years ago. Currently we're in the reign of the 923rd Emperor.

Han Thiron arrived later on in the day. He told us that Ilvier was still alive and he's a god. Also that some of the haikus were mentioned in the Prophecy of Quai Kon Wei which talked about outsiders. The text was as follows:

The Guiding Light of the House of Jade
He Shall Fall into Darkness
Lightbringers from the Outside of the First World
Returning Light to the Jade
Darkness shall find a Feast of Temptation
Inside the Rampant Proliferation
Darkness shall discover that Light brings Darkness

He then mentioned a class of Oni called Demon Henkyoki. They are native to this plane. Ordinary Henkyoki spontaneously transform into them. A Henkyoki is a magic using barbarian that has some limited shapechanging ability.

After he left, we examined the seventh eunuch's journal. The ink was magical, which bonded to the paper and was non-fading. I managed to get hold of some. Also the journal appeared to be in code.

17th Meadow

We went to the seventh eunuch's house. Accompanying us was an Imperial squad of Oni, including a mana sniffer. We discovered that the doorway was warded which we could counter with an E&E special. If that had gone off, the effect would have been like being hit very hard with a blunt object.

Once we dealt with that, I put up a witchsight and coruscade while Silverfoam floated above the ground. We were in a short corridor with doors off the sides and one at the end. Something then flew out at Silverfoam. Turned out Veor, who was right behind him, had stood on a needle trigger. Five more were in the corridor so we sent an object down there to trigger them all. An assortment of darts, spikes and sliding blocks flew out which we collected.

Brigetta - "That thing tried to kill us. It's ours."

There was a ward on the door at the end which had the effect of generating heat so Silverfoam put a fire special counter on himself and set it off. The door caught on fire which Veor quickly put out.

On the other side was a study. Another ward was on the desk which required both a counter illusion and necro special simultaneously to deal with. So Silverfoam and I cast together to deal with it.

.8.

We systematically searched the place and found his diaries on a trapped alcove. It had a bear trap inside designed to take out the wrist of anyone disturbing them. Mira found a collection of thirty playing pieces while Brigetta found the board. The pieces were made out of various rocks. I then

found a very ugly dagger - nature of magic: life, college: spirit, effect: hurt. The dagger handle was made out of a hardwood oak while the blade was metal.

The game board had a formally living aura, nature: observation, college: E&Eish. Mira unwrapped a piece which looked like a vague humanoid. Required to activate magic: focus, what is the focus: mind, nature: observation, purpose: observation. Brigetta divinated the tablet and discovered that it was a military scientist toy. The dagger, once bathed in the user's blood, can enhance the user for an hour when they stab themselves with it

Upon arrival back at our rooms in the Cube, we flipped through the diaries. They told us that the eunuch had been puzzled by reports coming from certain areas. There was no idea on the code used in the notebook save that it was keyed to another book. He was suspicious of the other eunuchs. So we asked for all the scrolls to be brought up for analysis.

18th Meadow

The entire day was spent analysing those records. It was soon obvious that the areas that the eunuchs were responsible for were getting smaller. This implied there were more eunuchs in the bureaucracy.

Silverfoam - "Don't tell me the eunuchs have been breeding again?"

According to the records there were 3000 eunuchs at the moment, 2900 last year. The seventh eunuch had been losing territory to the third but the third was losing area as well. A money trail revealed that money was being siphoned into the eunuch's pockets. Also the later records were getting more consistent between different defence forts. As a side issue, I obtained a local ephemera for later study.

Nine random people, and Little Lotus Blossom were interviewed. Little Lotus Blossom turned out to be a feminine man. College: Life, most effective counterspell: sex, effective Alusian counterspell: E&E, bonded to magical entity: goddess Niloo. Him and the eunuch were in an intimate relationship and may have been about to be formalised. Not much was mentioned to him but the latest journal may be in the summer house.

Just then we noticed someone peering through an airvent. Robert looped a rope around the person in order to pull him down just as someone started rapidly winching him back up. As a consequence the head was ripped off rather messingly. Silverfoam was able to get a locate on the sword that was being carried as the rest of the body disappeared up the airshaft.

.9.

After witchsights and a Friendly Light, we headed out to follow the body. We had to ride up in a basket elevator until we reached the right level, seven floors above us, then Silverfoam announced that the Locate had dropped off. We then encountered a dead guard and a broken sword. Silverfoam dropped a necro special on the body then I started the resurrection ritual. When it was complete, we told him that he had been seriously injured but we were able to save him in time. All he could tell us that he heard nothing then experienced pain. Looking at the wound, we concluded that his assailant was short. I also wrote a note for him to give to his superior officer, recommending that this guard have a week off, effective immediately.

Nearby, from this corridor should be the room that was immediately above ours. The first room

we checked was empty and dusty. It opened into an airshaft but it was soon obvious that it was the wrong one. The only other possible room had no obvious opening and it was also empty and dusty. So it was finally decided that Silverfoam should go back down then float up the shaft, carrying a very strong light. We may be able to see the opening. Some of us waited in each room and also in the corridor. I had a Darkness on my staff as well. After a short while, Brigetta exclaimed in surprise. There was a secret room, opening into the corridor, right above the airshaft. Inside was a spring powered winch and a dead headless body as well as a massive amount of blood splattered all over the place. There could have been four people in here.

The corpse wasn't human. It was formally human but had been affected by bio-mutation magic. It had extra toe and finger joints to make for easier climbing. There was also a non magical white powder in a bag which we soon discovered was chalk dust.

Once the corpse was brought back down, Brigetta did a Ritual of Recitation.

Who was the most important person you've killed - Hai Wong, the tiger killer.

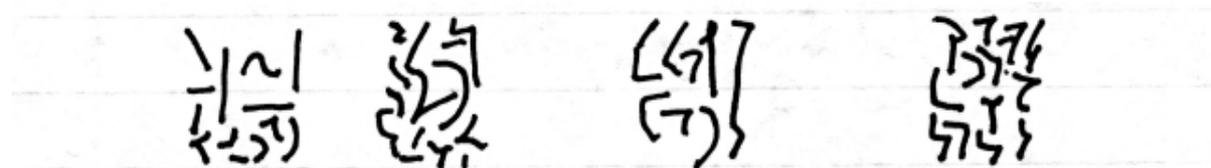
What allies do you have in the city - Lords of the Circular Restitution

Where would you have retreated to - The Chapterhouse of the Lords of the C.R.

Who are you working for - (smell of rotten meat) Chow the Porpoise.

Who are you pacted to - No answer. All she got was a serious migraine.

At the end of the ritual Veor was singing badly and Robert was dancing while wearing a top hat and formal attire. Silverfoam put Brigetta to sleep then Daed Veor to discover he was suffering from a Demon Infestation. It would wear off in a few hours. I also saw a series of symbols which I quickly drew. Han Thiron was summoned. When he arrived he told us that it was ancient Rhoshini text and he would take it away for translation. I gave him a copy.



Silverfoam divinated the body and discovered a series of magical enhancements and a few physical ones. The magic was from the College of the Adept and there was no known counterspell.

The captain of the guard told us that Hai Wong was his ancestor and a very famous army general.

19th Meadow

Brigetta woke up, minus migraines.

Brigetta - "I'm human."

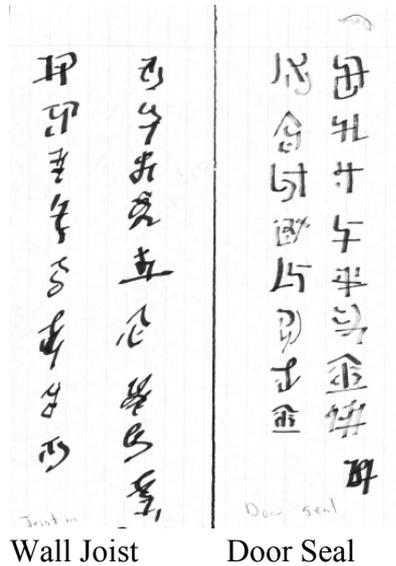
Veor - "No you're not. You're a bard."

When Han Thiron returned, he told us about the Day of Circular Restitution. That day, the Emperor had got so bored so he announced that anyone could seek restitution against anyone else. Lots of people died that day.

The symbols were translated as "Night of ending dawn's light". It was the entity that Brigetta could not pronounce the name of and what the opposition was pacted to. It was last heard of

about 22 thousand years ago, before the Shoji Empire had been created from the ruins of the Roshinni, as associated with a band of Greater Summoners. It was quite likely that it was Roshinnic magic that had affected the Emperor.

.10.



The seventh eunuch’s summer house was located on a small island in the middle of the rider that flowed through the city. So we went there. There was a good luck seal on the door, which was carefully removed, but no wards were detected. Inside, the house was square and open planned and we carefully searched it. Robert was undetectable and was checking the outside.

An inscription carved in the wall joist was found which said “If I die, please give my notes to the Emperor. Avenge my death. - Cho Sun Long. The Emperor’s Seventh Eunuch.” Meanwhile Robert thought the outside door lintel was too large. After he dropped a note to us, we investigated and discovered it was hollow. A total of 50ft of scrolls fell off. Basically it was the last diary volume.

He had noticed patterns in the reports, things were getting too regular, too average. One of the forts had changed it’s commanding officer and he hadn’t found out for a month afterwards. So he sent a clandestine agent to investigate. The report came back, ‘Forts? What forts?’ The forts over the mountains right up to the border had been converted to bustling merchant bases. Also the stealth operative observed the sale of nine treasonous items and one lethal drug. The last pigeon carried a report that he had seen a barbarian from the mainland purchasing huge amounts of substances who spoke fluent Shoji and calling the substances by their old name. One of the substances being sold was a special tea, reserved for the Emperor, that was only known to be grown in the Imperial gardens. However the amount implied another secret source. The last diary entry had the eunuch planning to do a personal inspection.

So we headed back to the docks. Halfway to the boat, we were shot at with more of those oblate spheroids by attackers hiding in the bushes. I went to cover with Veor protecting me and managed to put Coruscade on both of us. Silverfoam levitated above us to get a better view while Brigetta charged at where we suspected one to be. Silverfoam made her Indetectable as well, just as she found one. Somehow Robert’s location was tagged by a blue canary, probably a backfire, while Mira also went hunting for a target.

Robert and Veor were hit by another barrage of missiles while Silverfoam got tangled up in a tree. Robert charged to help Brigetta who was attacking her one hard. Silverfoam was then struck badly in the same elbow I had earlier healed, forcing him to land for healing and a coruscade. I had managed to hit one in cover with a Bolt of Starfire earlier so Stilicho was shooting at him. Robert then helped Brigetta bring her one down.

Mira was fighting a third while Brigetta and Robert moved to a fourth. A fifth one tried to hit Robert, missed, and hit the one he was fighting. Meanwhile the one fighting Mira broke his

weapon against a tree. Unfortunately for Mira she did the same thing on her return swing. She was not happy, drawing her daggers and basically slicing her opponent completely up.

Brigetta - "I'm Brigetta - I'm not stupid."

Finally only one of them was left and he fled, very rapidly. Silverfoam had a Locate on him and we followed. Silverfoam flew ahead and saw the last assailant, running under the river water. However, the Locate meant that we could wait and catch up with him later.

.11.

I cast Starwings on myself and flew off after Silverfoam. He was hovering above the river and was indicating the position of the assailant. So I shot a red bolt in order to flush him out. That resulted in a steam explosion in the water. Fortunately the locate still remained on and my target was still down there, probably unconscious. So Silverfoam went fishing as the others approached on a boat. Brigetta borrowed my pearl of waterbreathing, divested herself of her armour and dived in. Silverfoam followed her down. Mira also jumped in to help. I was intending to give them a Friendly Light to help but managed to make myself mute instead.

Finally, they found him unconscious and fastened a rope to him. However, Silverfoam detected something icky inside and counting down. So they vacated the area. As they climbed aboard the boat, they saw the rope go rigid as the locate dropped off. Just then the water turned brownish-red and started to bubble. We had to jettison the rope as it, too, was turning brown. Veor tried turning the water to ice but the ice rapidly melted. At least that brought us enough time to get out of the blast radius.

Silverfoam and I flew off to check on the other bodies, in case they could also blow up. Entity pacted to: No answer. GTN: Human, with modifications, Additive: Abdomin contained a separate aura. Last magical effect (excluding ours): Melding. Secondary aura effect: Lethal. Triggered by movement. The other bodies were also rigged. Counterspell required to disable: No answer. College: None. Aura strength: Formally living. Area of effect: 15 feet. Method of disabling: No answer. Would laying of hands trigger it: Yes.

Silverfoam divinated a body. Regeneration had been done last week. Effective skill used was a rank 9 something and a life spell was currently running. Brigetta also started a divination. While she was doing it, I repaired the damage done to Silverfoam's elbow. Her answers were: Address to flee to, House of the Elegant Dawn, Shawong To. Name of person who employed you to attack foreigners, No answer. What organisation do you work for: The Unarmed Ones. What is the name of the most important person you know in that organisation: Lemon the Shadow. What is the name of the entity who implanted the device in your body, Quau.

Other DAs and divinations yielded the following: The booby trap is an implanted spherical object, containing a quasimystical aerosol liquid, which is triggered by either the slightest movement or by the will of the entity. It is armed on death and there is a .5 to 1 second lag before activation. Lethal blast radius: 15ft, dangerous to 30ft. The liquid settles after five minutes and is some sort of bioacid. It dissolves most things, only dragonhide is resistant - to a point. They weren't paid but were hired by the original group of assassins. None of them were pacted. Their contact was The Hooded One.

Finally we exploded the bodies after Veor enclosed them in bound ice. No sense in exposing

anyone else to the risk. The empty house was made available for our use and we spent an uneventful night.

20th Meadow

I had my voice back by morning. Upon arriving at our rooms, we made a request to have an audience with the Emperor. I was expecting to be going to him but, he came to us, accompanied by his head guard. Basically we presented him with all the evidence and the third eunuch was summoned.

Mira and Robert were rendered undetectable, I had a witchsight up while a coruscade was on Veor before the eunuch arrived. His guards had to remain outside while he was confronted with the evidence. While that was going on I discovered that he was pacted to the third bookkeeper of the Imperial Horde and that he was completely human - with the emphasis on complete. Discretely, I informed Silverfoam.

Mira tried to knock out the third eunuch. He stumbled, then went unconscious. The eunuch's healer was summoned and it became very clear that the person was completely incompetent. He was also pacted to a deity which may be Shoji but may not be - we weren't sure. It was 'The Lord of the Barren Cycle' or Il Vier. So we summoned the Emperor's personal physician as I wanted an independent witness. Three people, including the acupuncturist, Losee, arrived. I had met him on the previous trip. With their assistance, I was able to prove that the eunuch's 'bits' had been reattached. They were supposed to be in a glass container which was supposed to be on a string around his neck. Certainly he had the container but it was made of metal. Something was really odd. Basically a eunuch that was no longer a eunuch was in serious trouble, according to the local laws - such as being executed.

We thoroughly searched the still unconscious eunuch. He had a false tooth, a magical ring with illusion magic and a tattoo - the sign of the Serpent of the Barren Waste. Part of the tattoo's aura strength was long lived sentient, the rest was magical. The purpose of the magic was control with the controller being a third circle demon and the fake healer being the one who put it on. The fake healer also had a tattoo and his was more ornate.

When Losee saw it he mumbled something then punched his fist right through the 'healer's' head. But, instead of blood, bone, and grey matter coming out, there was a black goop. Then the body burst open and out of it came a long lived demonic creature that looked like a mutated starfish. It's Plane of Origin was the First World. Veor blasted a hole into the next apartment and used that to get the Emperor through to safety. Outside, a fight had started between the Emperor's guards and the eunuchs own force. The creature was trying to escape back to it's own plane, as well as throwing slime at us, so I combined a Dimensional Weaving Counter with Silverfoam's necro counter to disrupt it's portal. Brigetta threw her javelin at it at the same time, just as space 'twisted' around it and sucked it in. She was left holding the last six inches of her Javelin of Shocking and was not very happy about it. As it vanished, the sounds of battle outside stopped. Stilicho also lost his normal battleaxe.

The slime was formally living protoplasm and was collected for analysis.

Basically the next couple of days was spent checking the rest of the eunuchs to ensure that they are actually eunuchs and that no more of the bureaucracy were controlled. There were some tattoos but they were now inert and easily got rid of.

23rd Meadow

Finally we were summoned to an audience with the Emperor. Basically the dinner and thank you speeches went on all night. We were also all rewarded.

24th Meadow

Returned to Alusia.