

"Elf Noir"

Scribe Notes for Summer 804 WK

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Mission : body guard to Draukoenig (DK) while he visits Freetown, and Ellenic states (to obtain an musical item from a godling/church - possibly panpipes), stop off at Azuria, then to his home in Raniterre. Said to pack for hot summer in Hellenic states, and winter wear later on.

Positions offered: Preferably humans &/or hobbits with impeccable morals. Much sneaking, and probably some violence. A water mage &/or Navigator desirable; but no soul despoilers [Mind, Necro]. An astrologer familiar with the signs of the death of (or hopefully just danger to) Princes would be a decided benefit.

Guild adds: Must know how to behave around royalty. Employer (Drow royalty) refused to be questioned & cannot be truth-sensed, but appears to be on the level. The mission is to Escort the DK to Freetown, thence to undisclosed location in Ellenic States to liberate an item from a Pagan Temple. No details known other than that the temple is NOT dedicated to any of the State Gods. Protect the DK & escort him home. Probable detour on the way home -- details will not be revealed until party is incommunicado.

Promised Pay:

1. The ship DK came in & its crew.
2. anything from the pagan cult except the specific musical instrument that the DK wishes.
3. anything gained from incidental violence.
4. 1 royal favour or reasonably powerful unique magic item each [Guild recommends the item, no guarantee as to the effectiveness or shelf-life of the favour].
5. Golden garments from the DK's mother.
6. Also, depending on the circumstances of who sent the assassins, one of his daughters [DK: "would make an excellent nanny -- they're very ... good with children"].

Party: Sir Frances the Michaeline knight warrior (leader and scribe); Sir Christopher "Best Swordsman in Alusia" warrior (ship captain); Motley the giant etc warrior; Eric the dwarven namer warrior (mil sci); Caprice the gypsy; Shemin-ah the icy plains horsewoman.

People and Places Encountered

(In approximate order of appearance)

The Boss : Drow royalty: Draukoening (referred to as DK) *translate: Dread King* [aka "The Living Goddess" a direct descendant and embodiment of Annan the Sky Goddess, also "The Wheel of Things"]

description: [Actually female, though always assumed male guise with the party] darkish skin, prominent cheek bones, dark (not quite beady) eyes, long black hair worn in top knot poked through the helmet and cascading down his back. Very Strong, doesn't sleep at Seagate, does at sea during day, has a trance like reflective state (?to refresh instead of sleep?). Very lunar aspected, but not shape changer. Believes himself to be pure blood of the king of kings line and his allegiances is with himself, and that line. At night, disappears into the shadows - cross between shadow form and blending?

wearing : dull black silk of layers to with some purple stripes through it, confuse and obfuscate the armour and stuff below, provides good protection vs. garrotte at neck. Much of his apparel is magical items, including the black cloak to prevent Aura Reading. Mail glove (right hand) conjure/summon riding beast. Fingerless leather glove (left hand) +/- 4 luck "more powerful than the evil eye". Gold Crown (fits atop the helmet) enhances some specific skills for leadership. Belt affects movement. Brown leather boots walk on snow, run on water; with silver spurs for riding (and kick attacks). pair of intertwined rings ?mimic magic?

skills etc : Bard - Slumber song 15, dance of swords defence, silence, witchsight greatest rank talent, healer 7, aerial combat expertise, weaponskill mace and unarmed, languages especially archaic, 'self only' spells of other can be used on him ?item?, creates winds and stormy aspect on ship. Locate needs to be rk 11 or greater (but not Disguised), most easily cast when he is in sight.

history: been travelling around on his tour "before taking over his throne?", includes travelling to Terra Nova. Just completing his tour of the baronies, which was cut short, and even quicker return home after the sanctuary assassin attempt. Has travelled to Freetown before, and Destiny - meeting someone high in the Carlos regime.

warnings: don't ask him questions rather make statements e.g. : It would be nice if you could do, though supposedly he can accept orders. No sense of humour, though can detect mockery. Cranky in daytime - better working at night.

Previous Court Companions: 6 All Drow, Oz says : from the same homeland, mages : earth, water, namer++, E&E, Air, bard tutor (who knew lots extra stuff too like the transportation). An inside traitor to DK?

Assassin attack #1: outside of sanctuary, DK meeting an elf?, quiet, full moonlit night, jasmine flowering smell. 8 human(?) arrived very quietly (synchronised windwalks?) fight over in half a minute. DK can't be surprise attacked, so missed the dagger through back, dispatched assassin, then transported to Oz on ship, got out crystal ball to see companions all dead. Shortly afterward another group of humans landed to help clear up the group. Then a celestial was casting shadow wings, another disappeared - windwalk?, so DK gave order for ship to set sail, to Seagate. DK said to guild that the assassins were internal home politics, but then admitted on ship that he knew nothing about them. Actually was organised by **Duke of Never** (Raniterre), led by the Huntsman, who took the bodies (& great wealth & items), and interrogated them, then awaited us at Fawn Island in Pegonia. Aiming to eradicate the DK & court for own political safety, aggravated by DeeAnna's marriage to Duke of Armide a couple of years back.

Ship : "Pastiche" (newly painted) 2-3 Destinian ships cut and stuck together with rk 20 ship strength, via Prow. Oz won in gambling, also 20ish crew for year & a day, from sanctuary. Disguised Pink in Freetown. Renamed "Triage" in Hellenic area. Once we took off the magical figuredhead that was keeping it all together, we gave the sailors ownership of it (with a rank 10 ship strength spell) and told them to sail to Saint Charles Island, near Raniterre.

OZ / Cuthbert : hobbit master herbalist/cook/spy/gambler, in control of the ship when we took over it. Has leather collar allows him to have first rank of all skills he hasn't mastered. Ex-slave? originally baronies born, but been travelling all his life. Been with DK for 12 years. Been taught languages might be useful : Drow, Raniterran, sand-dweller, Arabic.

Daygen DeeAnna's 2nd best watermage loaned to us : rk 10 generals, some specials. A brewer/distiller by profession, learning navigator (rk6). Young (for Drow) been with DeeAnna for 50 years. Speaks Common with Broad Raniterran accent. Gets along with humans okay.

Freetown : lots shipping activity, presumably looking for treasure come from underwater earthquake/explosion north of Freetown Island (but within the 12mile Thaumaturgy exclusion zone). Chandlers (suspiciously well-stocked?) doing brisk trade.

Court: us plus group of dwarves (beer provided especially, Fylox talkative, here giving excavation expertise) two main groups, few local humans. To avoid Sir Ernst black, DK wore purple worsted silk robes and gold shoulder plates, we had grey robes & cloaks. DK's present very well received: gilded silver plate armour (saughin influenced human styling) with elven head still enclosed, put on display at entrance to court. DK gives oration (in Drow) of how he slew this "Fenic/Ferenc the Fearless" a necromancer pirate: DK major cursed him, then he died of own necrogeny. (Beranice (Fenic's "wife") a Greater Enchantress, escaped). DK post-dinner private discussion with Drake not satisfactory, (Drake told him "latest entourage has sufficient knowledge"

implied traitor in previous entourage) DK returns grumpy, and in need of entertainment. Hence:

Assassin attack #2: "new restaurant" with "Opening Specials" banner in Drow, staffed by 'innocent' waiter assassins and demonic Maitre D'. Their code word "Duck Soup". Magics they used: FoL, invisibility (rk11-20), Quickness, armour of Earth?, demonic's mind spell, pepper dust. Skills: blade infested tea towels, blind fighting (not quite Kinlu style), rk 10 alchemical poison, death aspected. Mistaken identity: aiming for DeeAnna. Confirmed as being organised by Duke of Never again.

Party for Medea: to celebrate her safe return (about a year ago). Conflux of omens imply something of import due, so gather everyone together to face it. Guild members instrumental in her return invited. 30th - 13th

DeeAnna Duchess of Amede (Drow Queen?) Aunt to DK (via mother?), though prefers to be known as cousin. Illusionist. Several thousands years old. Very similar in looks to DK, except for her wasp thin waist. Unlike DK, has a sense of humour. Wears long black cloak with fur edging, high heels (puts her slightly taller than DK), metallic armour (truesilver gilding over silver?), two moonstone rings (protection from demons, windwalk investeds). Amplified racial talents. Married to Duke of Armede (was pacted to Belial(?) but it "went wrong") ("they're very sweet, DK you must try one sometime"), 2 years ago, mother one child, has dozen of her Drow retainers in Armede (highland/hinterland Raniterre). We rescued her from Duke of Never's abduction attempt as she was journeying to the Drow Home. He didn't want to kill her immediately since she was close relative to all the (death aspected) Drow.

Cowland : "the land between two rivers" has low rainfall, but few droughts due to many rivers from the eastern swamps. Mountains to north (continue to the lunar empire) infested with Harpies, and orcs(?). The (now ruined) Orcacina(?) town at Battle Lake was trashed by an orc army 25 years ago, who have since retreated into the mountains. Winds from the East are humid/thunderous and apparently surly to talk to.

Pegonia, aka Green Inland Sea, "The place where wild things are" in local jargon.

A swamp with several islands of land within it. The swamp is layers of plant material building itself up to 'land' with creek like waterways between. Normal appearing scrubby (about 4' tall) mangrove-like plants. Brackish, but not as salty as tidal swamps. The appearance of sea is by the constantly changing light from the swirling clouds/mists affecting the undulations of the land/plants. The clouds swirl out from a centre like a fountain. Lightning like flashes beyond the clouds continually. Subsonic rumblings put us on edge, brink-of-thunderstorm feeling, possibly communication amongst the swamp. Storm approaching.

Air Place of power reputed at its centre (the source of the clouds?). "Giants of the Air" Rk 20 Air elementals rend any flying thing within its realm - marked at the edge by the appearance of sand amongst the surrounding rough terrain giving a different hue to the ground. More than one?? No birds in the swamp. Few flying insects.

Grass on the surrounding dunes, slightly bright green (tastes spicy to horse), magical affect of 'gestalt' - one aura for all the grass in the swamp. It communicates amongst itself - what one know, all knows - like fear of being eaten by horse. We tried to avoid walking on it once the horses left the swamp - patches of it would occur, but tended to clump together amongst the scrub.

Alligators hunt in packs of about a dozen, with a couple of 'scouts' and co-operative attacks making a kill in a quarter of a minute. 10-12' long, lithe appearance with web clawed feet, good for attacking and swimming. Prefers to keep to the water ways (hopefully).

Fawn Island roughly triangular shape. Steep unclimbable cliffs on two sides, sentries patrol third. (pair of centaurs and a goblin with horn), watchers set atop cliffs with ballista. Deep forest in middle. Housing built into cliffs. Several hundred goblins/goblinoids and many centaurs inhabit the island, partying. Handful of Fawn, leading blood ritual (Rabbit-guinea pig creature) under big tree near cave mouth, watched by inhabitants in an amphitheatre/grove nearby. Centaurs were amazing shots with their bows, apparently one hit a target half a mile away twice in a row.

Tree: 400' dripline, 30' diameter trunk, "pseudo titanic blood rite dryad" cast earth magics (slowly - every fourth pulse) earth to mud, 18ft hands of earth. Possibly becoming human/titan shaped as we left (2 minutes fighting). "Well-spoken" or "Euphemism" is her name, she was revered as the ancestress of the centaurs & fauns of that island -- but not of the goblins, (who are called "newcomers" by the fauns & centaurs).

Count of Never: "the duke's huntsman" Comte du Chasser-Never (Sashay to his friends). arrived on the island (most of "major force" got killed by elementals on the way in), then rune portalled in more troops a few weeks ago. They were teaching goblins armour skills and military tactics, in expectation of the huge Drow force coming to attack them. Include greater on hydra and basilics in the swamp. However the force (us) was late, so most had gone The remaining troops were

somewhere else in the Ellenic countryside, along with the airmage(s?) & a few other persons of comparative importance. The count had earlier discovered that it was unhealthy for normal humans to stay in the place for more than a couple of days. Huntsman had set up Web of Entanglement wards. Was wearing rich wolf skin cloak, light silvery armour & whip-sword from Drow court. Accompanied by **Rune mage Baron de la Porte Noire** (kinsman of the Duke, PN is "Traitors gate" in Never City) and **Illusionist** 'councillors'. They left cave via rune portal, we take guard John with us via ethereal. Their impressions of us: E&E, Illusion (fog, goblins) no ice, Giant/skin change (possibly not pixie) Stasis (resisted), didn't see our real selves - may assume we're drow.

Deep Ethereal misty, no sense of place or directions. "Well of Lost Dimensions" warned against going to : people disappear down, 'path' seems to lead there. Time passes, spells wear off. Thinking of casting enough for the spell to work. Imagining shapeshifting/changes works similarly. Caprice summons ethereal elemental: **Leader of the Horde Shining Battle** (speak enchanted creatures to communicate); high up in the elementals' strict cast system. He puts us to sleep, to be awoken by a kiss from a princess of the realm. Caprice imagines waking in a particular place, and we all were.

Witch Spawn : male, mostly human (Hellenic influence) 1 yr old baby, one of a twin (sister died of fever (twins often said to be light and vicious)). Been blessed, not yet pacted/dedicated to a god, but awaiting someone/thing. DK agreed to bring up, as part of deal with Sykara, Witch of Cucumber, possibly to remove his stormy curse. Picked it up while we were in Pegonia.

Azuria : getting there : only Broadsound safe sailing entry due to floating reefs somewhere along northern coastline. There is a strong caste system : non noble - not allowed to own wealth (e.g. money, horse, any weapon/tool other than for their own trade use) barter economy, hence no travelling between the counties and no border guards. Nobles as expected.

Six officers/satrapy areas: Admiral, based at Broadsound (international port), at east.

Air Marshall - Sokomonera in West maintains a "no flying zone"

Azuria capital inland south, we didn't visit, empress used to live

General Abigail (bastard daughter of emperor), currently controls 2 areas, aiming for her third, based at Anzoa, with army close by. Likes taking 'flights of fancy' i.e. flying scouts. (avoid saying the words bastard/illegitimate etc in her presence)

Fenenema - her adversary, the step daughter of the emperor

Ex Empress - lived her life in different times. Killed by guild party several time, including when she was most powerful, hence still presumed dead. Friend of Medea.

Fallen Tower - elf inhabited town built on the ruins of the fort where Empress was last killed (4 years ago). Protected by 7' stone wall, with 1½' killzone around it. (We flew over it - noticing incoming (45 min) Airmarshal/Abigail.) Harried by 100s pixies (bowfire leading to sleep) which don't like light - a lit torch keeps them away. Planted with white Wraith Rose plants - 1pt/pulse, move 1TMR. The elves seem stupider than normal elves - possibly since they have no concept of lying/falsehood. Elves had some sort of blood oath/binding to the Empress, and that has evolved since her death into religious fervour : they now have innate worship. Speak common, with important rites translated (inaccurately) into Elvish and sung by rote.

"The relic" from the woman Yew, described as resonating - one was careful of what one said in its presence as it came true or possibly what one said was resonating the events of the future and one of course, spoke of it. A tetrahedron 1-inch on each side, made from a gold & diamond mixture. All edges cuts anything and it "resonates to an order" it is only really used for shaving arrows by the elves. This Fragment is understood to be a fragment or flake from the "GreatPunch", which was a larger tool in/with a gold handle used by the Empress's supreme craftsman. We borrowed it, but returned it to Yew before returning to Seagate.

Tuning Fork : DK "It's something I didn't know I was looking for, a minor footnote in an ancient legend, so my previous court (& Never) shouldn't expect me to be looking for it. It is used to create order, to make it perfect - it should be confined to a small area (city), attempts at making the whole world perfect are always doomed". It may be an analogy, may not look like a tuning fork. Should have been with 10-50 yards of the harp it is tied to. Found out about it via guild scribe notes?? It was called several other things too.

Underground tunnel complex - now flooded with fresh water. Had been looted by groups of humans in months following Empress demise, then during one raid it flooded - sending up a waterspout. Lake is now lower level. Main sink hole 500' deep, rough at edges at top, then smooth lined with marble/opalescent, chips off to reveal earth magical (??) the old tunnelling through it were permanent. Doors all broken & removed, much painted carvings from walls looted. Portal through to harp room deliberately broken. The detail of craftsmanship of this complex implies that the Empress was wielding the "tuning fork"

Sphinx called Sybil, lives on "Isle of Dead, in the Dead Lake". Portal arrival from flooded underground tunnel complex. Had to play riddle game : Get one up on her to be able to leave, two up to get her help. See appendix. We won: either she wanted us to, or she is out of practise having only

used the local elves as practise. Sybil insists on giving us a gift, Lula. Insists she can't give us the info we wanted about the tuning fork, since that would be XXXX from which we infer that Abigail has it. But doesn't know how to use it. DK is happy for us to abandon picking it up, and use the information gathered for a future attack.

Lula a Sylph, rendered flightless (presumably by Ex-empress), has air magics – doesn't cast, it just happens. Sentience of a child –was used as governess of the Azurian court – remembers Abigail & Fenenema.

Abigail doesn't like flying or fast moving, so we raft back up river then ride horse back to our ship.

Guido City, under the control of the Michaeline sect, led by "Rosey" the living saint (sainthood was conferred due to him being trapped but was released when La Raniterran died). The populace have "badges" which they buy, giving their support/allegiance to the Church and its objectives. The sort of invisible trading bridge portal to another plane is much less covert than it once was, and is being opening used. We come up with our cunning plan of getting DK back home, see appendix.

Northwest border of Never.

The **Never River** beyond the Ducal city quickly runs out of farmland. For the next 30 or so leagues the river winds through hilly land with a few small settlements on the Right Bank — mostly related to tree-gum plantations. In several places the river's edge is indistinct, making freshwater swamps of some of the spaces in between the hills. At **Point du Fort** the river stops running North and empties West into a triangular "dead lake" (**HaHa Bay**) that runs almost 2 leagues E-W and 1 league N-S on the Western side. The North & South sides of the bay are steep hills.

The Western side is much more gentle; in its middle is the town of **Port Alfred** (Pop 1500-2000) along whose Northern edge runs the shallow **Rivière à Mors**, the only obvious waterway flowing out of HaHa Bay, which eventually feeds the swamps in the NW. It is obvious to the navigators that the Ràm is too meagre to be the only outflow (presumably there are subterranean exits). Across the Ràm, accessed by two bridges, is **Bagotville**. This village still holds many hobbits, but it has been expanded to include the quasi-official Drow outpost.

In the Southwest corner of HaHa Bay is the military camp **Grand Baie**, the Northernmost of Never's line of forts that guards against the Desert tribesmen. Anomalously, Grand Baie is not walled.

Drowlands:

Getting there: Meet up with DK to arrive home with the boat in his grand processional manner and dozen drow guides/guards. We travel through the night on nocturnal horses (which can see in the dark) through the swamp. Riding 14 hours along a road through the swamp, then slow down to go along no obvious paths, and avoiding making tracks. Being on horseback means we miss out on the leeches - which might kill a person by sucking their blood out within a minute. These are obviously protection enough against the Neverese. Spend the day in the hobbit township resting, then travel in closed palaquins that fly through the air, and finally down underground, 2000' down within ½ hour, arriving at Ishwarrah.

Ishwarrah: is dark continually – situated at the bottom of a towering ravine, with seven stories of buildings up the walls. No sky is visible. This is the Ehrelaine establishment on the outskirts of Home, where any guests (non-drow) are housed. (the baby enters the city proper though). It is run by a ehrelaine called Ishwarrah, imported especially, and no the first to call himself that name here. It is also the hot night life place for the drow, where they go for a fun time. Much depraved behaviour happens here. Dress code is very strict though – we were each given a Kimono robe to wear, (indicating rank of elder son of a merchant clan) men wear a sword (but never use it – some wore just wooden swords for decoration) If we were to actually hit someone, they would treat us like a rabid animal that was attacking a child. The women could choose to dress as the males or in a female swordless guise (it would be a vast insult to her male companions to infer that they were too weak to protect her). It is inconceivable for a woman to lie. They speak fluent Raniterran, common is okay, don't encourage us to verbally mangle their drow.

DK sees our employment at an end. She is revealed (to us) as female – "The Living Goddess" is another of her titles – a direct descendant and embodiment of Annan the Sky Goddess. "The Wheel of Things" is another title – which was referred to in the astrology reading – which also implied another attack was forthcoming. We await in Ishwarrah for the formal presentaion of our gifts and golden robes made by her mother. They will send us back via their variable portal - to anywhere lower than Drow Home, within 5% accuracy. (the further you are sent, the less accurate ones arrival at the desired destination).

DeeAnna is attacked by Never and his army. He stands atop a hillock over an inert DeeAnna, presumably still alive. (he should know that to kill her would give death bonus to all drow since she is kin to them all) He is surrounded by 6 mages casting/triggering every pulse, random spells from most colleges. In the ground at Never's feet are three magical staves, presumably one creating the wind blowing out spiralling clockwise – making missile fire, flying etc impossible. Moving/walking requires strength or agility to keep on track. Another stops magic working in the 5' area Never is in almost instantaneously. 150' away 3 'preists' seem to be enacting a ritual – heavily surrounded by ring of guards cheek by jowl. Appears they are pacted mind magics, with belt full of potions. One seemed to use a claw/hand to kill on of its guards, before fleeing. A platoon of Neveresse infantry are about 5 min away as we arrive, but appear confused without their leader. Some other Drow reinforcements shortly portal in inaccurately by the drow general.

Never's death did cause a Demon to turn up (indeed it was on plane only a couple of minutes away). However, thanks to the Solar Wand, the battle actually finished at 12:00:05. So we and the Duchess of Armide & her Drow had safely flown by the time the demon got there. The Priests were from the order known as "The Lords of Balance" & are minions of Naberius, the *official* Cult of the Civil Service of Never. There were also suspicions that the Duke was behind the murder of Cardinal-Prince Messepain (the Vampire), which had been widely blamed on an anonymous Gabrielite hit-squad -- but there is no proof of this.

Three nights later we had the gift giving ceremony. In a rare break with tradition, the ceremony & partying was inside the city proper: in the large square [unimaginately titled "the Square of four pillars"] in front of the "forbidden city" itself (the palace compound within the Drow city). We met DK's "mother" --- actually DK's parent's chief concubine & the most powerful commoner [in effect the acting prime minister of the colony until DK's court can be fully established]. Most of the princesses are DK's parthenogenetic "sisters & her cousins, whom she reckons by the dozens, & her aunts." Plus a few daughters.

D of A stays for our gift-giving & the general celebrations, then departs for Lutice, the capital of Raniterre (having given independent Raniterran necromancers a chance to establish the facts, should they wish). She will be petitioning the king for a judgement against Never's estate & his official condemnation ... oh, and to consult her husband's wishes in the matter, naturally. It looks as if Never is not coming back anytime soon.

FINIS

The party could return to Seagate anytime the wish from the Midnight of W'ndnesday 5 Breeze onwards. You'll be sent back from the Basement of Ishiwara's with flying spells on. You will definitely land on firm ground within 2 hours flight of Seagate, or any other target you wish to nominate in the Baronies. Though many chose to stay for longer to train and study the drow society more.

Timeline

Day	Date	Time	Event	Downtime	Action	Travel	Total
Duesday	1 Meadow	Midday	Guild Meeting			1	1
	1 Meadow	Dusk	Leave Seagate				1
Moonday	14 Meadow	Dawn	Arrive Freetاون	12 days ship		12	13
	14 Meadow	Dusk	Drow Waiters attack		1		14
Duesday	15 Meadow	Dawn	Leave Freetاون				14
Reapsday	19 Meadow	Dawn	Arrive Slip	4 days ship		4	18
Moonday	21 Meadow	Dawn	Leave Tower Hill	2 days waiting		2	20
Duesday	22 Meadow	Dawn	Leave Cowland		1		21
	22 Meadow	Noon	Attack Pan				21
Thursday	24 Meadow	Noon	Appear at Argos	2 Days Ethereal		2	23
	24 Meadow	Dusk	Arrive at Tower Hill		1		24
Frysdays	25 Meadow	preDawn	Leave Slip				24
Duesday	29 Meadow	Dawn	Arrive Freetاون	4 days ship		4	28
Thursday	1 Heat	Dawn	Leave Freetاون	2 days waiting		2	30
Moonday	5 Heat	Dusk	Arrive Azuria	4 days ship		5	35
	5 Heat	Midnight	Meeting Sphinx				35
Duesday	6 Heat	postDawn	Leave Sphinx		1		36
	6 Heat	Dusk	Leave Azuria				36
Duesday	20 Heat	Aftnoon	Arrive Guido City	14 days ship		14	50
Frysdays	23 Heat	Dawn	Leave Guido City		3		53
Sunday	25 Heat	Noon	Cross into Neverre	2 days hiding		2	55
W'nsday	28 Heat	preDusk	Bagotville	3 days ship		3	58
	28 Heat	All Night	Walk through swamp		1		59
Th'rsday	29 Heat	All Day	Sleep in village				59
	29 Heat	postDusk	Arrive Inanna		1		60
Frysdays	30 Heat		2 more nts, Ishiwara's		2		62
Sunday	2 Breeze	Noon	Battle w/ Never		2		64
W'nsday	5 Breeze		Gift giving ceremony	Leave for guild	3		67
					Action	Travel	Total
					17	50	67

Notes:

- Day starts preDawn
- Day ends midnight
- 43 days ship
- 4 days waiting

The Cunning Plans.

Approaching Faun Island

When arrived at **Skid**, we talked with Bodyguard and requested an air mage from Many Cattle. Aeolis the airmage arrived the next day to transport us by cloud to Cowland. However storms from DK (backfired ritual?) meant he decided to stay on ship in the bay, arrange crystal ball message in Tower Hill room to sail in to get us when we return with the Cyrix.

In Cowland we did the pretty with Prince Ed, then the following morning Aeolis casts rank 9 "Flying" on us and we set off north to Battle Lake, to fit in our cover story of "looking for an item in the area". Thence we disappear from their sight and fly due East to **Pegonia**. Fly until it seems we are approaching the swamp - hide out in the instant fort the Pavise magical item provided, while the air elemental harranged us from outside.

We got across the swamp in record time by the obvious plan of everyone balancing on a small unicycle and riding across the water at 24mph. This way we avoided the gestalt grass and the lightning that was falling onto random hummocks at around 1 stroke every ten seconds. We avoided the 15'-20' gators by sheer speed, and using the driver's ability to see through water to spot them in advance. We saw a few air elementals up close - they put out the fires from the lightning strokes. We got to within 3 miles of the island after an hour and a half, rather than two full days slog. We stopped for lunch and planned.

While we did work out a magical but non-flying way to get up and down the 800' sheer rock cliffs, we felt this was best used as a contingency plan when leaving, as we couldn't avoid being spotted while climbing. Instead, we decided to sneak between the centaur and goblin camps by coming into the island invisibly over the water, and wander between them as goblins, through the high-traffic zone, then hide just short of the cave for the final approach. This all went reasonably smoothly, apart from the ring of Rk 12 E&E web of entanglement wards we had to bypass. We stopped in an illusory terrain 800' from the cave to scry it out once more. The big tree is maybe 400' high, and has a drip-line radius of 120'+. It is 50' from the cave. We have just scryed into the cave. There are two humans, two fauns, and a giant (human-sized) faun in the cave, talking. One of the humans is wearing fancy clothes over silver armour - we believe this is the "wizard who opes his book of evil". The big tree is a "pseudo-titanic blood-rite dryad", and people are a little nervous of it.

Looking like goblins, we charged into the cave as quickly as possible while the fog arose around us to obscure the centaur bowfire (and catapults). The tree was slowly casting big earth spells at us to slow us down. We enter the cave, fight ensues, we gather the Cyrix from the faun, but the humans escaped via a rune portal in the back cave - leaving a pleb to guard their back. We take him with us and chat to him before leaving him permanently disguised/disfigured in Slip - before he met DK.

Feeling/hearing/sensing either the approach of a horde of centaur galloping to us, or the titan tree uprooting itself, we decided a quick exit was best. We all leave via the Deep Ethereal by way of Sir Christopher's casting.

Getting past the Never border.

The border guards come on board the ship while we are in the lock that transfers us from the river up from Guido City, to the river that goes through Never. The guards seem to be mostly namers, some obviously so. They divinate each person and their possessions - the hour rituals occupy the lock traversing time. Any written material is taken away and a copy made for the Duke's library.

The cover story. Deygon (the drow water mage) is escorting the baby back to the drow court. In attendance is Lula, the governess, Oz the servant, and three guards: two pactees of Foras, and plains horsewoman. The remaining three party members were hidden as rats: two skin changed into mice, but then disguised as rats, then the illusionist also shape changed into a rat. Many interesting items were shape changed with the party members to avoid divinations.

DK used his magical rainbow sandals to teleport to a hunting lodge near the river, safely inbetween planes, taking most of her travelling souveneers safely with her.

We hire a normal trading ship to carry us up river, and our own ship sails out to Port Charles. Obviously Sir Frances, Christopher and Caprice appeared to be onboard as it leaves. The sailors were told to make what they want of it - though we did warn them that Deeagon's ship strength (which was the only thing holding it together since we took off the magical prow) wouldn't last too long - so not to go off pirating in it.) Once on board, several party members revert to normal form, until the border, but remain in our hired cabin (Oz was keeping us well provisioned), talking with ventoloquism, to sound the same as Eric - until he started arguing with himself - but Motley managed to convince the sailors that he was only slightly mad.

The magics showing on their divinations showed rank 5 mindcloaks, many rank 20 illusions (but cleverly disguising their MA to be 5, but forgetting their WP was 36 - obviously Foras) The rank 30 earth magics was explained off as the parent of the baby. The rats were hidden amongst the food stores that Oz had commandeered/brought on.

Astrology Readings:

When will the Draukoenig be attacked?

(Asked at the guild. A note on the outside says "Think I got the spelling right. Sorry -- rush job. Obviously this pseudo-sonnet is a pastiche, since

1. inconsistencies in metre & rhyming patter[n]s
2. some of the poem fragments are worse drivel than the others
3. esp. density of fake archaisms
4. Odd place for crisis
5. Fluctuation of time/hour across the fragments intentional?)

Our interpretations in italics

The night doth cut with shadowy knife in half the kingdom of the sun;
The red dawn meets with her in strife;— vassal of mine I hold each one.
The sailors chant beside the mast, the tempests lash the riven foam,
But I, the King, am striding fast before the prow, to guide it home.

This would apply to DK returning home with us. If Never thought himself the kingdom of the sun (himself was solar aspected), he would have been worried by the Drow on either side of his duchy..

Now when small grasses whisper and are bold, and winds are straying
Down in the beech-grove where the faeries hold their midnight maying,
Now when the wizard opens his evil books and goblin screech
Come forth, O sprites, from your forgotten nooks and take your meed.

This describes the Faun Island in Pegonia.

Wraith-roses white shall bloom by night in avenues of gloom
And small Fire-flies with spectral eyes shall light the dead earth tomb

This describes our time in Fallen Tower, Azuria - and the underground complex of the late Empress.

The worshippers their gods appease, the tortured sinner moans for ease
The speed of things doth not decrease, the Wheel of Things doth Never cease.

This applies to our travel through the Never Duchy to DrowHome, we managed to avoid with our innocuous cunning plan.

I fear not where that soul may go, it matters not what gods there be,
They did enough their might to show had they done naught but fashion me.

This could now apply to Never, since the fight went in our favour: "the Wheel of Things doth Never cease" was appropriate, but with confusion over who was subject and the object.

At Thebes:

Awake, for mourning in the breakfast dishes
flung the curse delaying moonbeam's wishes
Lo, the sneaky hunter of the South has snaffled
Witchy spawn; the news is light and vicious

Notes this was the answer given, in response to a different question. Not quite sure what the question is for this answer. The word Sneaky does not fit with the timing of the rhyme, hence is in the wrong place? Hunter of the south could refer to Never's huntsman we encountered at Faun Island, or Sneaky, referring to Medea in Freetaun.

Moonbeam refer to DK (or DeeAnna), and his stormy curse.

*Witchy Spawn referred to the baby Dk got from the Witch of Cucumber
light & vicious - the good and bad twins the baby is half of.*

Riddles.

Sybil's first riddle:

A dancer with only one wing, one toe; well-versed is the ranger who can follow my spoor. What am I?

Answer: A quill. We guessed correctly.

Our first riddle: (by Shemin-ah)

A babe at dawn, an adult at noon, a crone at sunset. What am I?

Answer: A mayfly. Sybil incorrectly answered "moon".

Sybil's second riddle:

A strange beast am I — subtler than a harpy, with more
disparate limbs than a chimera. My skin is smooth & deceptive
I flee unhurt from those that stab at me; yet command my name and
I am caught. What am I?

Answer: A riddle. We incorrectly guessed.

Our second riddle: (by Sir Christopher)

I am often counted on,
Though not your fingers or toes.
I am your support at night,
When the heart and mind's doubt grows.
People often call me blind,
For I have no eyes to see.
Sev'ral times I have been lost,
But I can't be given away.
What am I?

Answer: Faith

Sybil's third riddle:

Peek-a-boo, who sees who? The wise consult me and learn more about themselves; but why do so many fools vainly expect compliments when they know that, though merely speculative, I only tell the truth? What I do I do thoughtlessly: yet it is considered thoughtful in others. What am I?

Answer: A Mirror. We guessed correctly.

Our third riddle: (by Motley)

A pouch am I holding the most precious things
Yet what I hold few look to see again
Keep me o'full or empty too long, some can not see the difference
Small and weak, yet I have moved legions they say

Answer: Stomach (Sybil guessed Faith incorrectly.)

Quotes

"Did he fall or did he Pouf?" On motley dying, flying towards his opponent and being spiked through the Aorta.

What does it mean when Eric the dwarf announces his intention of "Getting the goat."

Christopher, on casting Flash of Light to start a fight in a restaurant: "I wanted to do something subtle, but could only think of the blindingly obvious to do, so I did it."

Eric "I know Caprice is contractually obliged to kiss me."

Seagate Times Articles:

The Wheel of Things doth Never cease

His Dread Grace the Duke of Neverre has been killed during a botched kidnapping attempt on his political rival, the Duchess of Armede, in a complex Antipodean plot. To make sense of the events of this summer, a little background is needed.

Until recently, the vast southern nation of Raniterre was divided into five duchies, Neverre, Armede, Avenal, Rodelle, and Lutice, nominally ruled over by a King. The approximately 30 million citizens were active demon worshippers, and almost all nobles were pacted. The real powers behind the throne were: The Cardinal, the vampiric head of the Raniterran church; La Raniterre, the mistress of the King and interdimensional time-travelling bio-alchemist; and His Dread Grace of Neverre, the most ruthless and powerful noble in the kingdom.

In the last four years, La Raniterre has been killed by the guild; The Cardinal probably killed by His Dread Grace; and most recently the Destinian Royalists have bought Avenal and turned it into the Michaeline stronghold of Britannia. The local Drow royalty has married into the House of Armede, and Armede has been pressuring His Dread Duke and his hunters to stop killing Drow. Britannia is now baying at the borders of Neverre, waiting for a single slip to unleash thousands of Church knights to rampage and purify.

In this heated atmosphere, the Duke of Neverre ambushed the Drow King while he was visiting Ranke, and killed his entire court. A guild party was hired to protect the King and return him to his city. Both sides got an astrology reading including the phrase "The Wheel of Things [the Drow King] doth Never cease", and everyone thought it was fated that the Drow King would be killed by Neverre, having failed to clarify the subject/object distinction. After various travails, the Drow King made a triumphant return to his homeland, slipping past Neverre's blockade. The Duke, in his rage, kidnapped the King's cousin - the new Duchess of Armede.

A brief battle broke out between the guild party and the hundred elite guard and ten pacted mages. The four survivors surrendered, and the relief column of Neverre nobility led by the Duke's brother and heir decided not to press the issue with the hot and dusty adventurers. The new Duke of Neverre is now hastily arranging alliances with anyone he can find to defend him from Britannia or his brother's demon overlord Beleth "the Mad King".

Guild members are no longer welcome in Neverre.

Puzzle Corner

Question: How do you sneak up on an island in a swamp? Assume salt-water crocodiles will attack you in the water, air elementals if you fly, and the grass will inform the enemy if you walk on it. You have to cross forty miles in two hours.

Answer: Turn the party into three goblins, two weasels, and a pixie. Balance the party pyramid-fashion on a unicycle. Ride the unicycle on the water at twenty mph, and hold on tight when you dodge the crocs. Wave to any observers. No scout or picket is going to report this occurrence to their sergeant, nor any astrologer to their boss.

What's Hot

Unicycles

Talking to Animals

Being a "Princess of the Realm" kissing people awake.

What's Not

Drow waiters

Talking to Gods

Gossip:

Picture this: a handsome young man lies fallen on the battlefield with no apparent wounds, his face in gentle repose. Nearby is his slain opponent. A beautiful gypsy woman comes to stand over him and wonders if he is perchance just

sleeping. Steaming hot water obscure the duo from observers, but they both shortly emerge. No lipstick traces remain to hint of what may have passed, but what is it with the bite marks on his ear???

News in Brief

Freetaun, the infamous pirate haven in the Isles of Adventure, has 'found' a sunken city just to its north. Combat archaeologists from many countries are flocking to the islands to stake out their ground and gather antiquities.

The equatorial empire of Azuria is in the throes of revolution. Two bastard daughters of the previous Emperor, whom the guild claims they didn't kill, are having a major domestic. The insular satrapies are picking sides based on whose flying army turns up first, and woe-betide anyone who picks wrong. This region is dangerous for adventurers, and cash poor. However, the princesses have plenty of magic loot.

Kin Lu's unusual weather continues. The unseasonal flooding and typhoons have cost the southern provinces most of their summer crops, and the ruling house of Taijin may need to call upon their deep pockets and international favours or lose their rice monopoly.

Weirdness of the Week

The humble tea towel, with sharp disks sewn into the edges, can prove a deadly weapon when used by a professional. A bevy of wait-staff demonstrated their use to a bemused and impressed guild party. The tea towel can be used as a whip, or to slice like a dagger, or as a garrote in close. However, experiments prove that they are not so good at parrying large swords.

Duke of Never Dies

The Duke of Never (in Raniterre) was killed in defense of Deeanna the Duchess of Armide (also a Drow princess), whom Never was in the process of kidnapping and/or killing. The Duke struck at his best at high noon (co-incidentally the lunar aspected Deeanna's worst), and it stayed at noon for the ten minute duration of the fight. Never stood atop a hillock, fortified with six mages continually casting random special magic spells, in turn surrounded by guards. Backup support was provided by a trio of mind mage priests, also heavily surrounded by guards, and a platoon of incoming infantry. But the most complicating factor of the fight was the magical strong wind spiralling out from the staff Never had planted at his feet. It prevented any missile fire, flying attacks, and even trying to walk or move one had to have the strength or agility to keep upright, or be blown backwards 60'. The wind and random spells seemed to be as, if not more, detrimental to the Neverese as it was to the Seagate party. The mages who died cursed their killer with sleep, but Never himself surprisingly didn't have a death curse - perhaps he didn't ever plan to die. Apparently Naberius his demon master appeared a short time afterward, but it was still noon when we left, so unfortunately we didn't get to meet him. The rumours that Never was behind the assassination of the late Cardinal-Prince Messepain (the Vampire) of Raniterre were unable to be confirmed as we go to press. Previously blame had been laid at the door of an anonymous Gabrielite hit squad. Never is succeeded by his brother.

Update on Southern Climes

A guild party of experienced adventurers have been travelling in southern parts and have been kind enough to give us updates on areas that many fellow adventures are also familiar with.

Freetaun, the home of Sir Ernest Drake the dragon.

There was lots shipping activity around the island, presumably looking for treasure. There had been an underwater earthquake/explosion north of Freetaun Island (but within the 12mile Thaumaturgy exclusion zone) and rumours abounded of finding loot. One had to apply for a liscence to prospect from the palace, and the ship chandlers were suspiciously well-stocked, and doing brisk trade. Also a dwarven contingent were visiting, giving Sir Ernest some advice about mining, the details of which they were unwilling to discuss.

We heard of the death of "Fenric/Ferenc the Fearless" an elvish necromancer pirate (our employer had put a major curse on him, then he died of own necrogeny). However the pirate's beautiful wife, Beranice a Greater Enchantress, aparently escaped. One to keep a look out for.

Sir Ernsest was hosting a celebratory party for the safe return of his daughter Medea, one year ago exactly. Several guild members instrumental with her return were invited and attended the week long festivities at the start of Heat.

Azuria, last residing place of The Empress, aka La Raniterran, aka Nurse Weiss.

Azuria seemed to be about, in the the midst, of a civil war. The Emperor is now dead, and the rule is being fought over by his illegitamate daughter, General Abigail, and Fenenema his step daughter. General Abigail seemed to winning at the time, controlling two of the Azurian Satraphies (like counties), and was aiming to get control of her third. She was based at Anzoa, with her army close by. Likes taking 'flights of fancy' i.e. flying scouts and had some ability to see/sense

any fast moving traffic - like flying. We were advised to avoid saying the words bastard, illegitimate etc in her presence, but then we didn't meet her.

On approaching the last residing place of The Empress of Azuria, we came across a reasonably recent settlement built on the ruins of her palace, calling itself Fallen Tower. It is inhabited by pseudo-elves - the vat bred servants of the Empress that have been breeding over the last 4 years. The town is protected by 7' high stone wall, with 1½' killzone around it, which we just flew over. It being night-time, we were harried by hundreds of pixies (bowfire leading to sleep) however they don't like light - the locals always carry torches at night. Also planted amongst the town are white Wraith Rose plants which drain 1pt/pulse, yet move quite slowly. Elves had some sort of blood oath/binding to the Empress, and that has evolved since her death into religious fervour : they now have innate worship. They speak common, with important rites translated (inaccurately) into Elvish and sung by rote.

The underground tunnel complex where the Empress had resided is now flooded with fresh water - not conducive to sea creatures. Apparently it had been looted by groups of Azurian humans in the months following the Empress's demise, and then during one raid it flooded - sending up a waterspout. The adjacent Dead Lake is now at a lower level. The main sink hole near Fallen Tower is 500' deep, rough at edges at top, then smooth lined with marble. This lining chips off to reveal earth still affected by magical tunnelling through it made permanent. The exquisite carvings and decorations previous parties may remember had been largely defaced and looted. The doors were all broken & removed. The portal that went to the chamber where the harp had been had been intentionally destroyed and made inoperative. Instead we found another portal to an island on the Dead Lake.

The detail of craftsmanship of this complex implied that the Empress was wielding the "tuning fork" - the item were sent to find. It creates/imposes order perfectly - best used on a small area, rather trying to create a perfect empire. "Tuning Fork" may well be an analogy, and it may not look like a tuning fork - it has had several other names - and was expected to be found near the Harp. The Drow royalty are looking for it - we believe it to be in the keeping of General Abigail at the moment, though she doesn't appear to be using it.

On "Isle of Dead, in the Dead Lake" there is a Sphinx called Sybil. Rather than just attacking her, we decided to play her riddle game. She kindly explained the rules to us : get one up on her to be able to safely leave, two up to get her help. She gave us plenty of time, and somewhat to the surprise of some in the party, we won. Either she wanted us to, or she is out of practise, having only used the local elves as practise. She seemed somewhat lonely without having the Empress visit, or invite her to dinner anymore. However she was being staunchly loyal to the General Abigail's or rather avoiding any possibility of being called a traitor.

Guido City, Bretland, near Raniterre.

Guido City is now under the control of a new Michaeline sect, led by "Rosey" the living saint (sainthood was conferred due to him being trapped but was released when La Raniterran died). The populace have "badges" which they buy, giving their support/allegiance to the Church and its objectives. The sort of invisible trading bridge portal to another plane is much less covert than it once was, and is being opening used.

Further travelling was made East of Cowland in the Hellenic States, and to the Drowlands north of Never. Interested guild members should go to the library for more details in the submitted scribe notes "Black Noir".