

# The Needs of A Tree (To Slavery and Back)

## Cover Sheet

Adventure by Jason Sagers  
1<sup>st</sup> Frost '02 - 18th Seedtime

### Player Characters

T'ana Starflower	Mind	Elf/Dragon	Female	
Vanderhand	Non-mage	Human	Male	
Arwen (first half)	Earth	Human	Female	
Grendel (second half)	Mind	Human	Male	
Rowan	Binder	Elf	Female	
Gok	Shadow Celestial	Elf/Vampire	Male	
Sau Rus	Infiltration	Saurian	Male	
Basalic	Earth	Human	Male	Scribe

**Plane** - Rifts Earth

### Places visited

Africa

- A second Millennium Tree
- An abandoned military base

Atlantis

- Splynn
- Dragcona
- The Preserves

**Employer** - A Millennium Tree

### Major NPCs encountered

- Millennium Druids - They tend the Tree
- Odin, Thor & the rest of the Norse Pantheon
- Wei Soo Ling - shapechanged Oriental dragon
- The Master - an evil Intelligence
- Two Atlanteans (became our masters)

**Mission** - Find two missing parts of the Millennium Tree

## To Slavery and Back

### Part 1. On Safari in Africa

The mission I signed up on was, believe it or not, to be summoned to help a tree. The person who introduced it at the Guild Meeting was an old gentleman with grey hair, wearing dirty brown robes. He spoke in an odd accent which was, at times, hard to understand.

My fellow adventures were:

*T'ana Starflower*. 6'4" stern looking female elf, with long auburn hair, wearing grey plate mail armour. A Mind Mage.

*Vanderhand*. Human male with shoulder length hair, black pants, white shirt. Non-mage.

*Rowan* - 6'1" elven female auburn red hair. Binder

*Gok*. - 6'5" stocky elf. Long black cloak and pallid skin. Long dark hair and a scar running down one side of his face. Shadow celestial.

*Arwen* - 5'11" female human with waist length brown hair. Earth mage.

And I'm *Basalic*. Human male earth mage/warrior.

Anyway we were asked if we were the Life Givers. We were then told that it was a hot, dry, place that we were going to and were given some leaves that we were told to eat upon arrival. According to their aura, they came from the Millennium Tree and their Plane of Origin was Earth.

We were told that the Giver of Life (presumably the Tree) had been under assault and were weakened. The sect, that our employer belonged to, were trying to put it back together. They wanted us to help them retrieve two pieces, each about 5 to 6 foot long. We were also told that it would be advisable to leave things like portable holes behind. So much for my usual weapon loadout. The departure time was to be tomorrow midnight.

After some discussion, I became the scribe (no one else wanted the job), Starflower the military scientist, and Arwen the party leader.

I put Lesser Enchantments on my companions and Arwen put one on me. I also found some mistletoe out of my own garden for Arwen. Astrology readings were done in order to obtain more information such as 'What dangers await' - Dangers are few and far between. Hmmm A vision was also obtained of a tree, located inside a crater, being struck by lightning.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Frost

At midnight we were at the appointed place. The spot glowed then a tear appeared in reality. We stepped through and seemed to be travelling down a glowing tube at great speed. Finally we landed in a sandy area. A blue glow could be seen on the horizon.

I had to extricate my foot from under Starflower. For some reason she had changed into a large dragon. Also, as per instructions, we chewed the leaves we were given.

Starflower on discovering she is a large dragon - "I seem to have a small problem"  
Vanderhand - "Small?"

I could also see that everyone was brighter - except for Vanderhand. Then there was a loud BOOM and a nearby tree exploded. We all dived into a nearby hole. As we watched we could hear footsteps, loud clanging and, occasionally, objects were flying overhead. One landed near Gok and sent him flying. Vanderhand used his crystal ball and could see two large glittering metallic looking figures with smaller ones in a gully nearby.

Suddenly something exploded nearby and we're showered with sand and metallic fragments. We then saw a man beckoning from behind a nearby tree. We were about to go over when another explosion sent me hurtling in that direction.

After following him for about ten minutes he walked into a medium sized tree and we followed onto a stairway going down. After what seemed like 15,000 steps later we reached a corridor and were lead into a room.

We were given the opportunity to freshen up. I discovered that I was seeing magic auras around items. Also, since Starflower wasn't able to use her chain shirt any more, I borrowed it.

The rest of the night passed without incident and the next morning I discovered the joys of showering and singing in it. Have to figure out how to build one when we get back. An empty potion bottle was filled up with liquid soap.

After breakfast, which consisted of a collection of cereal derivatives we were introduced to the people who needed our aid. They were known as the Millennium Druids and they tend the Tree. We were led to another room. On it was a pile of stuff, an item that looked like a rifle with no trigger, an overcoat of very resilient material, two acorns and two leaves each. Both the leaves and the acorns came from the Millennium Tree. The leaves gave us the equivalent of a Force Shield for 30 minutes while a single acorn would heal. Two together would resurrect. The surcoat would absorb damage while the rifle is a technowizardry device that would deal it out.

Once we collected those we were led back to the first rooms and given some sort of history lesson consisting of moving pictures. From what I could understand there was a war that led to a terrible cataclysm and everything changed. We are now in the Phoenix Empire, somewhere in Africa. The giant things of armour were Glitterboys and there was a human inside them and there were also juicers, soldiers that were drugged up out of their minds.

The Tree had been subjugated by the Empire who were taking bits of it for their own use. The Tree called for us as it was believed we could do what the Druids could not.

.2.

Lunch time was the basic fare, cheeses, fruits and bread. Afterwards we were taken to the training grounds, so we could learn to use these 'rifles'. This involved several corridors and stairs, finally through a big iron door, then up a ramp to the surface. Outside we could see some disguised buildings and what looked like archery targets. Vanderhand's 'rifle' was slightly different than ours. His had a 'powerpack' attached since ours were powered by us drawing

mana as we were spellcasters. Since Vanderhand was a non-mage he had to use a different source.

So we spent the whole afternoon blasting at targets and figuring out how to use them properly.

The next couple of days was also spent practising.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Frost

Other preparations also had to be done. A city called Rana was mentioned at some point, otherwise known as the City of Doom. It was ruled by a Phaeroh with a necromantic fetish.

It was also rather hot so I ditched the drow half-plate in favour of the leather. Besides, I may need to at least attempt to cast magic.

That night we were guided out by three druids in front and three behind. After going outside we were led to a spot between two trees and told to wait until it was safe. A few minutes later we were waved through. Soon we were out of the oasis. I could see two large blue walls on either side of us and they seemed to converge up ahead, where we were going. It was a long journey and several times we were told to hug the ground and stay quiet as objects roared overhead. We also had to duck when our guides heard footsteps. It was like we were avoiding contact with anything.

Finally, 4 to 5 hours later, the sand underfoot gave way to grass and I could feel a tingling in the air. After avoiding more potential trouble, we finally saw the Tree, or at least an 800ft tall skeleton of one. There was an intense 'glow' around it and it looked broken and scarred. There were very few leaves left on it. The trunk was 200 feet wide.

When we arrived at the base, the druids started talking to it then introduced us. The tree then communicated back to us in dreams and feelings, all except Gok. He didn't pick up a thing. There were two distinct carved items we had to find, each 4 ½ ft long and were quite nasty items. Basically they were corrupted staves. The Tree had been tortured and abused by the Phoenix Empire into this state.

After two hours we snuck back.

#### 6<sup>th</sup> Frost

Slept most of the day. Starflower was able to find some very old, pre cataclysm, maps and located the first one to the south of us on the same landmass. The second one she had to get a complete world map and discovered it was somewhere in the ocean to the west. However, upon questioning the druids we discovered that the new continent of Atlantis was located there.

.3.

Late that afternoon we took off from the archery range using various flight spells and headed south. Starflower turned into a rather hungry looking dragon. A couple of hours later she unexpectedly shapeshifted back in midflight and fell. Fortunately Gok was able to get a set of wings on her and we continued on.

Starflower - "I'll cast Mind Speech cause sometimes it provokes trouble."

A short while later I spotted a magical burst in the air and we changed course to avoid it. The air felt warm and tingly, then the air around the burst began to be whipped up. So we changed course to the west in order to get out of the area of effect as quickly as possible. Half an hour later we flew out of the periphery. Behind us a whirlwind had formed. The air still felt charged but was not magical. The burst of light got brighter and bulged outwards as we increased our distance from it and I could still see magical energies around it. Fortunately it did us no harm and soon began to fade.

Two hours later, we landed and made camp as dawn arrived.

### 7<sup>th</sup> Frost

It was very hot. A person on a dune was spotted watching us and Arwen thought it was her god Odin. I found that hard to believe. Gods making personal appearances? I think not.

My thoughts on the subject were immediately stopped when both Starflower and Vanderhand reported the sound of shifting sands. When we went to the top of a dune to look we saw no less than three large, 120ft long, sandworms heading in our direction. Naturally we immediately broke camp and took off, Starflower in dragonform. According to their aura, they were 'Blow Worms' and as we flew away one of them spat at Vanderhand and covered him in sticky goo.

Mid afternoon and we reached savannah country and changed course to the south east.. As darkness fell, the temperature fell and the goo around Vanderhand began hardening. At nightfall, we found a forest and landed. We tried to get Vanderhand out of the goo but soon realised we required strong acid.

Starflower found a plant that had acidic juices but as she did, a vine hit her. Meanwhile we were towing a gummed up Vanderhand using the sphere of weightlessness. Someone referred to him as a Vanderzeppelin. Meanwhile Starflower sliced the vine but another had a go at me and I ended up upside down. Starflower cut me down but not before the vine drained a lot of my magic potential.

Finally we started negotiating with the plant. It wanted sunlight in exchange for the juices. As Rowen had a golen carefully dig the plant up, Arwen was sure Odin was watching again, and this time I was also getting the feeling that I was being watched. Arwen then summoned a 50ft tall elemental to move the plant into the clearing. Once it was in place, it grew another ten feet. We then tapped it for acid and got Vanderhand out. There was enough left for one decanter full.

### 8<sup>th</sup> Frost

It was after midnight by now by the time camp was set up. Arwen had the elemental build us a fancy stone fortress complete with fortifications. Later on there was a localised light spotted in the clearing but nothing was picked up on telepathy. However we could see a figure standing there, 7ft tall with the head of a hawk. It was just standing there, watching us before wandering off again.

We decided to rest up the day. That night we saw figures coming out of the clearing.

.4.

Everyone was woken up as four skeletons headed out of the bush. Arwen fired a warning shot but they ignored it. Then all four of them glowed. I could see a point, equidistant from each one

where they were drawing mana from. So I told Arwen where that was and she shot at it. As the arrow contacted, lightning arced forming a small sphere at that point. They fired some sort of energy discharge at us, twice, and Starflower shot a lightning bolt back. Unfortunately that had the effect of charging them right back up again.

Vanderhand was nearly knocked over the wall by the next blast which also splattered against Starflower's forcesshield. Arwen conjured up an Earth Elemental but that was destroyed in quick succession.

Starflower then tried a telepathy and detected overwhelming hatred and evil from something further out in the forest. . Also one of the skeletons had a mind. So Arwen conjured up another elemental but kept it below the surface until it was near them. The skeletons advanced.

I was trying to get Armours of Earth on people when another blast knocked me halfway across the keep. Vanderhand retaliated and succeeded in blowing a skeleton up. The nexus point immediately shifted to a new equidistant point from the remaining three. Starflower tried sending a phantasm to the skeleton with a mind but it was taken out. Just then all three skeletons and the nexus were surrounded by a glowing wall.

Rowan passed out as we were hit by a magical effect. Meanwhile Vanderhand's next shot went right through the wall and impacted on a skeleton as Arwen sent the elemental to drag another down beneath the earth. The nexus was dragged down as well. Another shot blasted Starflower as the elemental mashed the skeleton and the nexus popped back up between the remaining two. I was beginning to wonder what would happen when there was only one left.

Arwen grabbed a skeleton in a Hands of Earth and everyone fired on it while the free one went around the moat to the back of the keep. It then teleported across the moat and entered the keep. Meanwhile the elemental munched the held one, causing the nexus to co-exist with the last skeleton.

The skeleton attacked Gok, who collapsed, and Starflower, Vanderhand and I charged down the stairs to meet it. Starflower walloped it with Severer and a leg fell off. A new leg immediately took it's place. So she tried Monopole. To her surprise the sword vanished out of her hand and landed on the ground nearby. Arwen had figured out how to get a triple burst out of these rifles so she used that to blast the thing to bits. There was a huge flash of magic as the nexus went 'pop' and dissipated. Arwen then got the elemental to fix the holes in the keep. We could sense that the evil was still out there - watching. From what we could figure out, that group of skeletons was called a Triumverite

.5.

#### 9<sup>th</sup> Frost

We flew off the next day. Gok was trying to take advantage of Starflower's draconic shadow but Starflower wouldn't let him. She then flew down and sucked on a grazing animal. We flew around a big lake then followed a chain of little ones before landing in a hollow by the last lake. Starflower killed an impala so Vanderhand and I skinned it. Rowan preserved the meat for later eating. Gok was still complaining of voices in his head and he was looking decidedly vampirish but his Generic True Name was still Elf. I decided to check it every so often - just in case.

Arwen - "If you get yourself eaten by Starflower, I'm NOT paying for your resurrection and I'm NOT going in after you."

Night passed without incident.

#### 10<sup>th</sup> Frost

We flew on both day and night.

#### 11<sup>th</sup> Frost

By now the landscape had become more hilly, with lots of small streams and a wide variety of plentiful animal life. Starflower spotted something interesting among a pride of lions then suddenly changed back to an elf. Again Gok was quick enough with the wings.

A bit later we landed. Starflower's GTN was checked and it was discovered she is now an Ice Dragon. Only six hours per day, of her choosing, could she become an elf. She could cast in dragon form and had an icy breath weapon.

We flew on into the night, now going north west, as per Starflower's directions with the Finding spell and the maps we were making of the areas around with Vanderhand's crystal ball. Finally we had mapped the right area. The missing branch was located in jungle near a junction of four major rivers.

#### 12<sup>th</sup> Frost

We travelled closer to our target. More precise mapping told us that the staff was located north of the junction in very dense forest, with a canopy made up of interlocking trees. We could not find anywhere to land nearby.

#### 13<sup>th</sup> Frost

We stopped at the tree boundary and Starflower could detect something 19 miles away in the forest. The canopy looked rather solid and definitely interwoven.

.6.

When we got closer to the forest it looked like the area had been tended and we were getting the feeling we were being watched. Occasionally we caught glimpses of small creatures in the branches but they were very fast and quick at hiding. We did however manage to determine that they were tree people.

Gok - "Let's kill one and see if they retaliate"

(A statement that proves why he keeps being nominated for Stupidest Adventurer)

After a while it got darker as we got deeper into the forest. It also felt like that there were more entities watching. I was feeling it the most for some reason and was starting to get twitchy and paranoid. Then Odin showed up, following us. Thor appeared a short while later, followed by the rest of the pantheon. This was getting really too strange for comfort.

We carried on, trying to ignore them but I was wondering just what they were doing here and why they were here. It turned out they had prepared a camp for us in a nearby clearing, complete with banquet and feasting hall. We were feasting and I was discussing various topics with Odin, Thor and Arwen (who worships Odin), plus any others of the pantheon that cared to join. These guys proved to be my type. Note to anyone else: Never try to outdrink Thor. I do remember taking part in a 'toss the axe competition'.

### 14<sup>th</sup> Frost

Next morning they're all gone. Even their tents and stuff. Strange.

Midday and we arrived at the river. It was somewhere between three to four hundred feet wide . So it was decided we'd go along until we reached the intersection. A bit later in we noticed something was stalking us. Just then a large lion with a snake like tail, a chimera, jumped on Vanderhand. Starflower dragged it by the tail off him and got fire breathed on, three times.

I went to rescue Vanderhand who appeared to be in real danger but that turned out to be a near fatal move. The rest of the party opened fire with their rifles. After Starflower and I got caught in the next few fire blasts, I decided to back off and open fire as well while Starflower was still dragging it by the tail as well as kicking at it with her claws.

Finally we brought it down but my surcoat was completely damaged. Starflower's was also damaged but had some protection left so I used it instead. Vanderhands surcoat was also completely destroyed.

The chimera was skinned and the skin repaired for later conversion into armour. A collection of bones and other useful parts was also gathered.

Gok to Starflower - "You've already got scale armour".

As it got darker there was more rustling in the trees. There were also insects galore so we all had a rather uncomfortable night.

### 15<sup>th</sup> Frost

We carried on. Pathways could be seen in the trees above and we could see people with blowdarts on the other side of the river.

That night Arwen constructed another pillbox but that didn't stop our stuff from being rifled through during the night. Nothing was taken though.

### 16<sup>th</sup> Frost

The river widened as we kept moving. So we decided to backtrack to where we had first encountered it.

.7.

Starflower decided to stop being the Military Scientist as she had realised she was thinking more like a dragon and less like an adventurer. So I ended up with the job. Starflower had also discovered she could shapechange into other things so she turned into a monkey - a rather heavy one.

Just then Gok fell over. And a magical aura built up around him. Some sort of Intelligence, something called the Master, was trying to summon him. The summoning failed and, when Gok recovered, he told us he had been trying to talk to the voices in his head. We told him to ignore them.

Night arrived. Fortunately there was a lack of insects.

### 17<sup>th</sup> Frost

I managed to backfire one of my spells and caused some damage. It took the healers two days to fix it. While we waited, Arwen sent an elemental prospecting and it came back with black diamonds plus gold and silver ore.

### 19<sup>th</sup> Frost

Crossed the river using an elemental dug tunnel and reached a clearing on the other side. It looked like a savannah area and was covered completely by the tree canopy. According to what we could determine, the branch should be in the clearing but we can't see it. Rowan sent a golem in and it looked like it was dodging invisible trees.

Arwen got the elemental to tunnel under the clearing. It vanished. Arwen went through the tunnel and also vanished. We could hear her and pass notes but she could not return. Also Gok got pain from trying to enter.

We all entered, in standard tunnel formation and reached a blank wall. We were able to go through by touching it but two hundred feet further on, it was as if we had been turned around, at least according to the ranger's direction sense. Three hundred feet and we ended up on a wide grassed area with small clumps. Behind us was another Millennium Tree, 1500ft high and much larger and healthier than the first one. Starflower thought that the missing branch is underneath it.

Just then a small party of short people came out and asked us if we had come for the part. When we said yes, we were told to follow them. We were taken to the tree then led through a network of chambers and tunnels inside it. Finally we reached a meeting room.

A tall lanky female called Wei Soo Ling arrived as well as two other men. Ling was actually a shapechanged oriental dragon and was going to help Starflower deal with her dragonside. Apparently Starflower is only a baby dragon. Gok was also put into protective custody for his and everyone else's safety.

We received the missing branch/staff and discovered that the other two men were Atlantians and they had information that would be useful. Basically it's a slave driven culture run by a group called Splugoths, or undead slayers and we would be treated as interdimensional slaves. Splynn is the capital city where the Splugoths spent most of their time. There are also dragons there who are mostly in Dragcona, the city of dragons. The population is 3.7 million plus 19 million slaves and 1 to 6 thousand dragons. We would also require several barrel loads of money to buy ourselves out of slavery.

.8.

When we left the Tree we found ourselves outside the clearing - and there was no sign of the tunnel that had been dug. So Arwen sent the elemental prospecting for more mineral wealth. A couple of days was spent doing this and by the end of it, we had a hoard of diamonds, gold, and assorted other gems and minerals. The pile was now ten times bigger and valuable than before.

The last elemental that Arwen got turned out to be a rather intelligent one who told us that there was a cache of stuff one-fifty to two hundred miles away. However it had to leave us quickly as his wife wanted him. Now I've seen everything - a two hundred foot tall henpecked earth elemental.

### 22<sup>nd</sup> Frost

So we flew out to investigate, spending the day flying. Finally, as night fell, we reached an area full of gorges and made camp.

### 23<sup>rd</sup> Frost

Arwen summoned another elemental and got a direction to the cache, three miles away. So we went there and found ourselves facing a cliff face. The elemental was used to carve a series of steps up near the disguised entrance way. The plan was to carve our own tunnel and get in the side. Starflower used a bird form to investigate the cliff and discovered part of it moved, revealing a large hole.

So we clambered up the cliff and the elemental carved out a four hundred foot long tunnel that went very close to the chamber. We found that we hit a solid black wall, non magical but with all the properties of Bound Earth. It was calculated the wall was fourteen and a half feet thick and getting through it would take months. Further probing showed that the entire chamber was surrounded by this stuff. Looked like the only way in was going to be through the front - and through any wards that had been set up.

Rowen put her consciousness in a golem and went exploring. When it was 200ft away from the cliff (it had an Install Flight built in) the cliff face opened. Two black metal divisions slid to each side and the golem landed on the door track. It could see 100ft into the 500 by 330 ft cavity but everything else to the back (nearly 2000 ft) was dark. Then the golem stepped in....

... and something snapped Rowan's consciousness back to her body. Starflower flew out to have a look and there was no sign of the golem at all. It must have been completely vapourised. A rock was thrown through and that completely vanished as well.

Starflower, deciding she was the toughest thing around and could regenerate anyway, stuck her tail in. All it did was tingle and when she examined that tail, found it had been cleansed of all dirt, parasites, and other such things. So she went right through and got cleaned. As she did so, lights came on, illuminating the cavern. The rest of us went though using our surcoats for protection. Vanderhand didn't have one but was able to use an item to borrow someone else's protection.

Starflower detected no minds inside. When we were 200ft in, the doors closed behind. At the 400ft mark was a lineup of six 15ft tall metallic humanoid figures, probably some sort of golem. A cable connected each one to the wall. The 600ft mark had doors on the side leading into bunkrooms. Another room contained devices that had flashing lights and strange panels with moving lit words on them. On the other side was a split level with the bottom level containing six metal birds and the top is a storage area containing various bits. There was some sort of weapons storage area as well. The back wall had a sliding door with a square box with numbers on it next to it.

Upstairs, above the bunk rooms was some sort of recreation area with a green covered table which had numbered spheres on it and some sort of devices that dispensed food. We had to find some sort of cards with a black stripe on them to use those which we found in some of the bunkrooms. It was all rather bemusing to me so I just followed everyone else's lead as they explored and experimented.

Arwen had some experience with places like this and knew the language so she spent some time figuring out how this place worked. One of the things she found out was that we needed to be scanned by some device so that we would be 'recognised' and not affected by the defence wards. Also she was teaching us to play games called 'pool' and 'billiards' using the green covered table, the numbered & coloured spheres and a stick.

Sometime, about evening, the lights dimmed and we dossed down in the bunkrooms, apart from Starflower who stayed in the large open area - the only place big enough for her.

During the night a red light started flashing. Arwen recognised it as some sort of intruder alert so we went on alert. I blended myself and took up a firing position near the entrance. A lizard creature was seen climbing the cliff outside.

Vanderhand had been instructed by Arwen how to operate the door controls and what to do with them. So the doors were opened. Arwen called out a greeting and the lizard creature replied in a language that some of the party recognised as being similar to Reichspiel. He said his name was Sau Rus and he was a Cernun mystic. He was also a freelancer and lived around this area. His College of Magic came up as 'Infiltration' and he lived in the jungle around here.

A lot of talking went on while we decided what we were going to do. Finally we accepted him in, with reservations, and showed him where food was and a place to sleep.

#### 24<sup>th</sup> Frost

We were woken up by some very loud trumpet playing, something that Arwen identified as Reveille. Initially I went looking for the wiseguy with the trumpet in order to shove a sock down it but discovered it was some sort of automatic recording and there wasn't much we could do about it.

.10.

Arwen managed to open the armoury - the locked room at the back wall. As she did, something really odd happened. All of Starflower's active spells dropped off and they wouldn't stick when she tried to put them back up again. We couldn't detect any odd spell effects or any auras on the floor indicating a counterspell.

Inside there were two more of those dispensers on one wall and there were other stuff on racks such as armours, swords and even stranger things such as 'gonnes'. One cupboard contained some really heavy weaponry. All of these were behind locked cabinets.

Just then all our spells dropped off and we could feel our magical potential being drained. Three minutes later, the alarm went off again. According to what Arwen could determine, an unknown storm was approaching. I headed for the rec area and stocked up on chocolate bars etc in case we had to make a fast getaway. However it was decided it was safer to stay put. Meanwhile Vanderhand grabbed a suit of chain/plate armour and clambered into that.

The storm struck us five odd minutes later, was 15 to 20 kilometres wide and lasted six hours, during which time no magic would work - if we had retained the ability to cast them. Fortunately, after the storm passed, we got our magic potential back.

While we waited for the storm to go over, Arwen inventoried the armoury and discovered the following:

- 3 sets ATPA Powerspy armour (Rowan, Basalic, VDH)
- 2 sets assassin plate
- 2 body rigs for assassin plates (contained drug dispensers)
- 2 refill canisters each for the drugs in the body rigs
- 2 suits of crusader armour (Vanderhand was wearing one of those, Gok got the other)
- 5 vibro knives (Basalic, Gok, Starflower, VDH, Rowen)
- 5 vibro swords (Basalic, Arwen, Sau Rus)
- 6 L20 pulse rifles
- 1 JA11 assassin rifle
- 2 JA9 assassin rifles
- 2 NG202 rail gun
- 100 high explosive mini missiles
- 150 fragmentation mini missiles
- 100 plasma mini missiles
- 20 medium range multi warhead missiles
- 20 medium range heavy high explosive missiles

There was other stuff that we had no chance of using so we left it alone.

Finally we got Sau Rus to sign the contract.

Those six metal golems turned out to be some sort of power armour called SAMAS which required someone inside to control them. Two were intact, two other ones weren't able to fly and the other two were complete writeoffs. The dispensers in the armoury dispensed special military clothing called fatigues.

Once the storm passed we looked outside and discovered a complete mess. Rockslides, trees scattered about and craters in the ground. We wouldn't have survived out there. Starflower managed to get some loose wood for Rowan to make more golems. It had to be teleported in past the cleaning ward as the first lot was completely destroyed.

Gok was practising his spells and managed to blast himself with whitefire. We had to use two of those acorns to bring him back.

The next eight weeks was spent training including learning to use those SAMAS. Two of the damaged ones was able to be made fully operational.

.11.

### 21<sup>th</sup> Ice

Finally left the base, heading north, back the way we came. Vanderhand, Arwen, Rowan and Sau Russ were on the SAMAS while the rest of us were in Powerspy armour. Gok and Rowan also had the Crusader armour while the rest of us had the assassin plate. By mutual agreement, all the drugs were left behind but we did raid the food machines before we left.

We retraced our route back. By mid afternoon, Starflower spotted a dustcloud ahead which we changed course to avoid. It proved to be a group of humans in jetbikes out scouting.

### 23<sup>rd</sup> Ice

Finally exited from the forest and found the area where we had set up camp last time. Someone had set up a camp there, and it looked suspiciously like the entire Norse pantheon again. Gok wanted to visit and, for once we agreed with him. It would be bad manners to turn down the

hospitality of a god. So we approached.

Anyway there was a lot of feasting, drinking and merrymaking then I was taken aside for a private talk, along with Arwen. We were in a large hall with lots of people in it and I was basically indoctrinated into their belief system. Maybe I've found a bunch of deities I can believe in after all. And it looks like my next weapon of choice is going to be the war hammer. Other things happened as well that I couldn't avoid out of being rude but I presume Flamis will understand. Or maybe I won't go into details. After all, what Flamis doesn't know won't fry me.

For us, it took 2 or three days and at the end of it I was a believer and had been converted to the druidic side of the College. I bet Adam is going to highly amused when he finds out. Still considering all that has happened recently, it was the logical thing to do.

I was also given the option of returning to Alusia and being replaced by another adventurer but, after thinking about it, I declined the offer, even though this plane had been too strange for me to handle at times. Arwen did go and in her place Grendel the Mind/Water mage appeared. Arwen left with her mage rifle and the JA11 rifle, plus what she had been given by the druids. A copy of the scribe notes to date went with her.

However when Grendel and I rejoined the party only an hour had passed. The entire divine contingent, and all the tents bar one, had vanished.

.12.

Tip for Adventurers: Make sure there's an Act of God clause in the contract.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Thaw

We worked our way carefully up the rift valley which took us at least a week to reach. We had to be careful as I had to get familiar with the SAMAS and Grendel had to be made familiar with this world and what we had to deal with. Vanderhand became the party leader, much to his annoyance, and I stayed as military scientist, at least until such time Grendel was ready to take over.

I could see a blue glow from over the hills - probably a ley line.

During the third watch that night some humanoid shapes were spotted on the ridge line moving deliberately to attack. A second group seemed to be flying to the tree line, presumably as part of a pincer movement. A third group was then detected behind the first with four members in each. All three groups then commenced firing at us.

I fired a missile at the first group. Whatever they were using was doing a heck of a lot of damage to our armour. After this I'm definitely learning more military science as I was feeling rather overwhelmed. Several rounds of firing was exchanged as our forces advanced to meet them. Then I spotted a mage drawing mana. This was not good.

Vanderhand's missile obliterated the second group except for the one attacking Starflower who was currently in ice dragon form. Just then a very large cloud floated over our area which caused all our magics to drop. This was definitely not nice especially when Grendel's wings failed and he dropped out of the sky. I had the mage's range so I was trying to shoot him. Meanwhile Starflower had bitten her opponent and spat him out as it tasted vile. Then she

discovered she had been poisoned. I could see her aura fading.

Vanderhand dropped a missile on the mage but he was still standing after that. A ring of intact grass surrounded him and I was sure his index finger was raised in a sign of defiance. He then emitted a blast of mana and I was blinded for the duration.

When my vision cleared I could see a dome around him. The other attackers had been dealt with by now so I had everyone fire on the dome in case we could break it. It cracked and an expanding bright light flared out. Starflower breathed on it with her ice breath and it turned to ice which she was able to break. When it came down, the mage was gone. However he had left us a present, four of those black cube fusion demolition charges set to explode within seconds.

Grendel was able to teleport one to a safe distance but the other three went off in our vicinity doing more damage and leaving a large crater where they were. Starflower did her finding thing and determined that the mage was over ten miles away in the rift itself.

.13.

We took stock. All the SAMAS's were badly battered and one, Vanderhand's, had a broken left wing and couldn't fly. We did what repairs we could but it was evident that we were going to either ditch one or head back to the base to get spare parts. Vanderhand made the call to head back.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Thaw

On the way back we saw movement 200ft off to our left. At the same time Starflower complained she was being drained. Also we could detect distant explosions to the south, where we were going.

The creatures were small marsupials and, assuming they were connected with Starflower's problem, Sau Russ was instructed to open fire. This he did and they scattered. Just then there was a white flash of light to our right and a bush burst into flame. Both mind mages felt a psychic shock.

Just then Vanderhand's SAMAS legs froze up and there were more psychic shocks as more bushes flared up. Sau Rus suddenly dropped from the sky and crashed, breaking the right wing on his SAMAS. Two more creatures appeared on the ground in front of Starflower so she started strafing the area with her ice breath while Vanderhand was strafing random bushes with his rail gun. As a consequence both Starflower and Grendel were getting a lot of death buzzes.

Starflower then saw a large object on the ground which flew up at her. It was about fifteen feet long with tentacles. Grendel, on shadowwings, flew in and attacked it as it smacked into Starflower's face and hung on. It then switched tentacles from Starflower to Grendel. Starflower was able to regain control of her flight and averted a crash. She then clawed for altitude while Grendel continued attacking the tentacled creature.

Vanderhand - "Starflower is playing with her relaxation toy"

The creature faded away, much to Grendel's annoyance. Starflower had to catch him. However she was still being drained. As far as I could tell there was something inside her aura, something

called an Endurance Leech. We finally landed and, after feeding Grendel a gutbuster he managed to get it out of where it had burrowed into Starflower's neck. While we waited for Starflower to wake up, we transferred Sau Rus's good wing to Vanderhand.

During all of this, Grendel discovered that he could cast Force Shield on others. Rowan divinated the branch. It was a long lived sentient and can absorb 700 points of damage, and contained eighty points of mana. It is very effective against vampires, which caused someone to suggest we should hit Gok with it. Also it regenerates damage and magic every 24 hours. Certain powers are granted to the possessor, each four times a day at the twelfth power level, such as exorcism, stone to flesh, chameleon, purify food & drink and super human strength. It gives the powers of a leyline walker and is currently corrupted, not cursed.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Thaw

There were still explosions from the direction of the base and when we got there, we discovered that the doors had been blasted away and there were metal things fighting with what was inside. A pile of rubble lay on the ground. Thank goodness we had left the defence wards on when we left.

.14.

The plan was for Starflower to teleport in, grab whatever spare parts she could then get out. So I gave her a gutbuster and a Strength of Stone and she did so. She came back with two wings, one body plate and several mini-missiles then teleported back for more plates

While she was inside, there was a lot of weapon fire penetrating the base as the invaders fought for entry against the defences. She came out with more plates and parts and also left a fusion charge inside the armoury with a fifteen minute delay. As she blinked out, two figures entered the bay.

As soon as she reappeared we stowed everything, using nets that Grendel had created, then bugged out fast. A short while later there was a brilliant white light behind us and a lot of red lights started blinking in the SAMAS control panel and error messages were flashing up. Something to do with dangerous radiation levels outside. Fortunately Starflower had been learning the local language. We had to reset the SAMAS to keep going. Also Starflower was feeling woozy. We had been trying to use mind speech but discovered that psionics don't affect people in power armour or robots.

The mushroom cloud, marking the location of the base receded behind us as we fled.

Starflower - "I didn't mean to do that"

Finally we found a place to stop. It was raining and the 'radiation counter' was falling. When it was safe, at about lunch time, we made the repairs we could. It took us the rest of the day. After a while Starflower started complaining of itchy shoulders.

That night I could see the glow over the mountains get bright. Starflower sensed something moving under the ground. About midnight Grendel noticed a red light flashing in one of the SAMAS which showed that the 'radiation' count was going back up. We decided to leave with the wind at our back.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Thaw

It was dawn when we stopped again and recharged the shadowwings. On the way, I was high enough to just see glimpses of hive structures in the rift valley itself as well as a huge interdimensional portal. We decided to stay well clear.

At the end of the day we stopped and camped.

.15.

Night fell and the standard watches were set up. I was on first and saw a shadowy figure on the ridge line. Nothing happened by watch change so we passed on the information to the next watch. A short while later everyone was woken up when Starflower called a 'bug-out'. Four groups of four 'bugs' were heading in, intent obviously hostile. Sau Rus was the only one in a SAMAS so he opened fire. I started using my mage rifle but it blew up in my face. So I tossed the useless thing away. Time to go back to the old tried and true methods. Five were wiped out by a missile and weapons fire before they closed to melee range. I was hit by their weapons fire and the surcoat I was wearing was also destroyed. So I chewed a forceshield leaf. Starflower breathed at the ones attacking me, knocking them out.

So I cast a Hands of Earth and managed to catch one. The others were being beaten - then another bunch came over the ridge. We were sure that we were in serious trouble then a couple of jetbikes arrived and strafed the advancing forces.

Now that the pressure was off, Rowan was putting up protective walls while I was putting up rows of Hands. Vanderhand then went down by being bitten by insectoid poison. It took me a couple of attempts to get the spell on.

There were only two left, but they were hanging well back. It turned out they were both mages, proven when they started firing energy discharges at Sau Rus' SAMAS. Then, as the two jetbikes, flew back over, there was a huge flash of light and I was momentarily blinded. Starflower and Grendel fired phantasms at them so they stopped the beams and started advancing. So Sau Rus resumed fire.

As I tended to Vanderhand, two glowing spots of light appeared on either side of us. I could tell they were linked to the insectoid mages so I started dragging Vanderhand backwards towards the tree line. About a minute later, the dots exploded with bright light. We were just out of range of one but the other engulfed us doing damage/ Fortunately the forceshield was able to take it. Grendel let go another phantasm which took out one of them.

I tried casting an Armour of Earth spell on Vanderhand but something went wrong and my shoulders started itching. Maybe what Starflower has got is contagious. Starflower attacked the other one from the air while Sau Rus shot at it. It too died.

The jetbikes came around and landed and we discovered that the pilots were the two Atlanteans we had met. The two mages had a couple of strange items on them. We were about to examine them but were told that there were more bugs on the way. We had thirty minutes to get clear. So we left as quickly as we could. I put on a set of assassin plate then clambered into my SAMAS. As far as I'm concerned now that Grendel has seen the sort of stuff we have to deal with, he can handle military scientist duties from now on. Meanwhile the others had managed to secure six poison gland from the bugs, identified as xiticix.

We kept going north, parallel to the rift. Starflower had also extracted the scent glands from the xiticix and had applied some to our armour, in the hope that it would make them think we were bugs. As we left, I tried to get glimpses into the valley. The contents were completely destroyed.

‘Taking insurance against Acts of Gok’ - Vanderhand

Four hours later we landed by the tree line. Everyone was completely exhausted as we had basically been on the go, with little rest, for the last two days. As we rested there was some crashing in the forest but nothing else. Finally, at dawn, we took off again.

5<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Midmorning we saw some flying creatures. We stopped to recast the wings and have a bite to eat at midday then hopped off again. That night we stopped. Grendel and Starflower did precogs and determined that we were going to be attacked on the second watch. So, when we heard odd forest noises, we bugged out.

6<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Mid morning, we were an hour before we were due to land when we felt that the place felt ‘different’. So we landed and checked the mana but couldn’t detect anything unusual. However the forest felt ‘unfriendly’. I Daed a tree and discovered it was a long lived sentient beech. The sentient trees were no less than eighty feet from the edge of the forest so we stayed there. The only other unusual thing was that there was no loose wood.

We ran north for another three hours before dusk fell. As we camped, Starflower could detect a sentient mind eighty feet into the forest but no surface thoughts. During the middle watch we could hear crashing and breaking sounds within. At day break the tree line was closer. It was like they had moved.

7<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Did another half days flight, landed at noon then legged it. I put Strength of Stones on Grendel and Gok so they could handle the load. At dusk we could see the north end of the rift valley about thirty miles away. There was also enough loose wood for Grendel to create a ‘battle barge’ for us to shelter under.

Limited precogs put an attack as occurring in the middle of the night. It was about then that Gok wandered off into the forest by himself just as we were attacked by a bunch of Wild Vampires. We soon discovered that they regenerated damage rapidly, even from Starflower’s breath weapon. Vanderhand tried using a missile and managed to start a fire. Starflower had to blow it out with her breath.

So we fell back to the old methods, which proved to be more successful. Magic and magical weapons were what we needed. Their major vulnerabilities were magic and silver as well as the traditional wooden stake through the heart then decapitation trick. The trick was to be able to smack them down and get them to stay down.

Combat ensued. Unfortunately we weren’t doing too well as they had incredible defence. We nearly got one but another vampire pulled the stake out before I could decapitate it. Then, after

a while, they all turned to mist and vanished. That wasn't all. Gok was gone.

.17.

Sau Rus had been affected by one of the vampires and told to stand guard on the entrance to the 'battle barge' letting no one in. I was able to DA him and determined that (a) his race is long lived sentient (b) the last magic to successfully affect him was a hypnotism and (c) no answer when I asked for which counterspell to remove it. It wore off in 20 minutes. I could actually see the time ticking down.

### 8<sup>th</sup> Thaw

Morning finally arrived and we made preparations to go after Gok. While a map was prepared for Starflower to use, I scouted for tracks. They were fairly obvious, heading south, and he was alone. Starflower did her Finding magic on the map and discovered Gok was somewhere near the bottom edge, 150 miles away and heading west at thirty odd miles an hour. He was either using his wings or had transportation. As we watched we noticed the course was slightly north of west.

So we headed west and managed to fly for twelve hours. Somehow Starflower was convinced to let Grendel ride her. At the end of those twelve hours we tried again, this time using a world map. This put Gok somewhere over the Atlantic Ocean. Was he heading for Atlantis, or the Vampire Kingdoms in the land beyond that?

We had landed in the plains between the desert and the forest. As night fell the battlebarge was created and the precogs told us that there was a strong possibility that we would be attacked sometime just before midnight. So, those that could, waited in their SAMAS. Sure enough, three large vehicles came in in three equidistant directions. They looked like floating disks with large tentacled creatures on them. Each one was accompanied by four humanoid females and more of the warrior women were advancing. They had encircled us and were now closing the circle.

Starflower was able to get a Quickness on us and I dropped an Armour of Earth on Grendel before the attack started. The opening volley consisted of a blinding flash of light which left many of us unable to see. I was fumbling for the SAMAS controls. Starflower tried breathing on one of the creatures but a Wall of Force sprang up protecting the disk and occupants then went down again.

The battle was very confusing. The warrior women were firing away at us with energy weapons, knocking large holes in the battlebarge. Starflower was being whipped by the tentacles so she teleported back to the top of the barge. Both Rowan and I were blinded so Vanderhand and Starflower had to direct our aim so we could fire the missiles. After that we were blasting away with the weaponry just hoping to hit something.

After a while Sau Rus was rendered unconscious then Starflower was knocked out by a mental attack. Grendel was the next to go then Rowan's SAMAS was damaged so badly it shut down. So did mine as the assault continued. I bailed out but was rendered unconscious by magic. Rowan was also rendered unconscious by the same method.

That left Vanderhand, alone, and valiantly defending our freedom. Several times he was able to resist their magics and, for a while, it looked like he might have been able to prevail. But it was not to be. Soon he too fell against the onslaught of multiple foes as one of the tentacled creatures

zapped him with a lightning bolt. Our fate was now in their hands - or tentacles.

.18.

## Part II - Six Go Mugging in Atlantis

Well they didn't kill us. Instead we woke up on a carrier craft, flying over the ocean. All of us were stuck in one cell. After landing we were put into holding cells and spent the next two weeks being tested, prodded, and put into combat arenas. It was only in the arenas that we could do magic.

### 22 Thaw

Finally we were all in the arena at the same time. All our equipment was on a table. Another team was also kitting up on the other side of the 500metre size arena. So we kitted and spelled up, preparing for combat. Just then, the terrain changed with features being added such as a forest and a lake in the centre. We could hear gunfire to the other side of the lake. Grendel detected two pairs of minds, each pair going around the lake, We headed off to cut one pair off.

I'm not sure what happened next, but I found myself in a laboratory. The rest had been taken to their holding cells, except for Vanderhand. He was also in another laboratory. I was getting tattooed. Crossed sword tattoos on one bicep, a flaming weapon on the other, and a bear on my chest. Activating the crossed swords helped defend me, the flaming weapon created a magical sword of fire while the bear created an animal companion to fight for me.

Fifty six hours we were delivered to the others. Vanderhand had gained an extra pair of arms and chitinous skin. Two Atlanteans had bought us as a job lot of slaves, the same two we had met previously.

We had to wear slave markers at all times. Apparently Gok had attracted the interest of the Intelligence in Africa and we were traded in exchange for a debt. We would have to be careful as we would be monitored. Some areas of the city would require the Atlanteans to be with us

Starflower used her Finding ritual on a map of Atlantis and discovered that the missing stick was located somewhere in the Preserves. It's the game park for the Masters and their guests. The Preserve is in the western area and we're in the eastern, in the capital city of Splynn. Other cities were scattered around the eastern half, including Dragcona, where most of the dragons live. Between us and the Preserve is a mountain range, the Great Stone Mountains, where gargoyles can be found. Above the Preserves is an area called Refuge where only the masters, the Splurgoth, can go. Our days were spent observing and practising for various combats in the arena.

.19.

Splynn is 195 square miles with a large stone pyramid in the centre. There were eight million slave population and six million slavers and visitors. It contains the Market where all sorts of extraplaner beings can buy and sell, the Arena of Champions, the Imperial Pyramid, which is located on a leyline nexus, and the Palace of the Living Stone where magical items can be made, and the Menagerie, an exhibit of strange creatures some of which are sentient.

Other cities on Atlantis are: Azlum to the NW, Dragcona to the west and Ki-Talan to the SW. Also mentioned in passing was Mt Doom in the northern part of the mountain range

### 3rd Seedtime

We were flown to Dragcona - in the cargo area and fed on mush. All except Starflower. Since she was a dragon, and dragons are revered here, she got better treatment. Our owner's status went up considerably when it was discovered they had a dragon slave.

The flight took nearly nine hours. Dragcona is a city of 3.7 million, not counting slaves, of which nearly five thousand are dragons. We had to carry the luggage while Starflower was treated like lesser royalty. We were escorted to our domicile and told that we were required in the arena in seven hours.

I guess I was basically giving up much hope of even returning to Alusia by this stage as all I seemed to care about was doing well in the arena so at least I'd die with some sort of dignity and honour.

According to Starflower's Finding the staff was in the Preserves. Getting to it there would be highly dangerous and, given our current situation, impossible. Frankly our chances of ever getting it, without a lucky break, were basically nil in my opinion.

### 4th Seedtime

We were all put in the arena except for Rowan and Gok. There were eight opponents, and magic was suppressed. In the end we beat them into submission but the audience wanted blood. They had surrendered so we spared them. As we left we heard eight distinct shots. There is definitely no honour in this.

Our next match was in fifty hours and the staff was still in the Preserves but could be heading towards Refuge. By dusk it was still in the Preserve then moved inland and vanished. Starflower repeated the ritual and discovered that it was in a building to the south of this city. Maybe we finally had our lucky break.

The building was circular, 120ft tall. Inside there seemed to be a party going on which meant it could be some sort of tavern. Starflower and Grendel were detecting a lot of deaths inside. The staff was also inside, surrounded by a lot of overpowering minds.

.20.

We were hiding in a 25' wide alley next to the building, which we later found was called the Slaughter House Inn. People were going in and out all the time and Starflower could detect several dragons inside. The main attractions in there was the narcotics, the combat arena and the live food.

Just then we noticed that the streets started getting very busy and the local guards seemed to be looking for something. They were ignoring Starflower as a dragon, and something seemed to be visibly agitating them. Then two burly guards grabbed Gok and dragged him away saying 'He needs to be fixed'. We decided to head back.

When we got there, the place had been trashed. Nothing taken, except Gok's gear, but the front door had fallen in and been broken in half. Our owners were in the building and had been injured. Apparently they wanted the vampire as vampires are forbidden on Atlantis. We retired for the night.

### 5th Seedtime

According to Starflower, Gok was somewhere in the mountain range and the staff was in the Preserves. So much for our lucky break. Grendel used a crystal ball to draw a map of the area and Starflower located the staff on the western edge of that map.

We had her track it at various places through out the day and it was wandering through the Preserves and up into Refuge. We were hoping it, was going to reappear in town but no such luck. Somehow we were going to have to go out and get it.

Also tomorrow's fight had been cancelled. Probably due to our failure to kill the last time.

### 6th Seedtime

Starflower continued tracing the staff and basically it continued wandering around the Preserves.

### 7th Seedtime

We found all our fights had been cancelled until further notice. Wasn't happy about that. Also our owners suddenly went missing. Probably because we wouldn't kill on demand. Also, to make things worse, both Starflower and I had sprouted small, nonfunctional wings. No wonder our shoulders had been itching.

So it was decided we should smuggle ourselves onto a cargo plane heading out to the Preserves. Meanwhile Starflower would fly out. So we went to the airport, found trolley and boxes and managed to get ourselves loaded on board. Before she left, Starflower left our owner icons in the house.

The plane took off midafternoon and, after a nine hour flight, landed. Starflower was on her way and had a slight skirmish with a gargoyle over the mountains. She would arrive several hours later. After landing all the crates were pulled out and stacked.

### 8th Seedtime

I decided to sit and wait - besides, busting out now would be most illogical considering that we had no idea what the situation was. Grendel was able to detect eight other minds, besides ours, in the area.

Sau Rus tried a Transparency spell on the wall of his box. That was then five people dashed towards the stack and started moving them. Turned out he had backfired and made it so they could see in. We were all Mind Speeched so I cast a Walking Unseen on myself and snuck out while Sau Rus was providing an impromptu distraction by running off into the bushes. I then got Grendel out. The rest were easy to get to, except Vanderhand who was buried right at the bottom of a stack. So we started 'tunnelling' our way in. In order we discovered, food stuffs, armour plating, Vanderhand, crossbows, swords, and army rations. Grendel and I scavenged what we could. Grendel then tossed a phantasm at one of the hunting party and we all made our escape. However, I felt that they had let us go so that they could hunt us at their leisure.

### 9th Seedtime

Starflower was hunting us - probably so were the hunting party. Everything around us was tingly as if we were in a high mana area. At midday a tracker came close but missed us.

That night, we heard a flapping sound. Starflower? Thirty seconds later we heard something

walking in. It didn't seem to be Starflower so Grendel threw a phantasm at it. Result - one very surprised animal. Starflower then showed up.

.21.

Grendel had already set up one of his 'instant boats' as a shelter. Suddenly he picked up three minds. He threw a phantasm at one and it vanished. Starflower got two minds but it may not be the same two that Grendel still had. So Grendel scanned with ESP and detected five minds. Just then we heard five 'thunks' hitting the side of the 'battle barge'. They were firing darts at us. So we took cover. Each of the darts had a red flashing light at its back. We believed they were going to explode. Grendel was able to whisk one away but then we had to grab them and throw them away as far as we could. More were flying in.

Just then I caught on in the leg. Just as I pulled it out and flung it away, the light went out. At the same time the minds out there started backing off. We bailed out of the 'battle barge' in case it was going to explode while Grendel and Starflower threw phantasms at them.

Once they were gone, we had a look around. We found the body of a five foot tall lizard creature with a branch speared through it. They also had odd looking crossbows, and more of those darts attached to a harness. One of those darts were examined and there was a fine needle in it.

We then came to the conclusion that, since nothing had exploded, then maybe those darts were used to track their prey. Sure enough there was something embedded in my leg close to the bone. Starflower tried to remove it but it moved away from her incision. So she chased it down to my toe which was then removed. However, I had to be carried until the leg healed up.

Also since our position had been compromised, we moved camp

### 10<sup>th</sup> Seedtime

Starflower discovered that the staff was only nine hundred feet north of us and moving so she shape changed into a parrot and flew off. She saw something vaguely humanoid carrying two staves and a sword. It looked like a ten foot tall brown/green ghoul with multiple arms, three pairs of sunken eyes, a spiked tail, and exterior armour plating with spikes. It then did something and the branch, she was perching on, exploded.

It was moving roughly eastwards at thirty miles an hour so we sped off after it. I was on the blanket with Rowan driving, while Starflower carried Sau Rus. Both Grendel and Vanderhand were in powerspy armour. I cast Armours of Earth and Strengths of Stone all round before we went in to take this creature down. It took my remaining restorative and a healing potion to get all the spells off.

.22.

Starflower triggered a Quickness and flew in with Grendel, launching a Phantasm each. Its sword animated and sliced the phantasms to bits before turning on Starflower. She attempted to grab it and there was an explosion flinging her backwards. We suspected the sword may be sentient in its own right, very ancient and powerful.

After regrouping we went in for another assault. During further combat we discovered that this creature also regenerated. We had to hit it hard, and fast. I kept the sword occupied with my vibro sword while the others basically just piled into the creature, bearing it down and

pummelling it to death..We retrieved the now deanimated sword, two staves, and pouches of odd stuff. One of the staves was the one we were looking for.

.23.

Once we touched the staff we were all zapped back to the base of the Millennium Tree in Africa, where we had first appeared. Gok also appeared, falling on me. Gok then tried to carve something on to the Tree but we physically restrained him. We then received images of of the staves and the surcoats. When we touched them to the Tree, the staves were absorbed and the surcoats were regenerated. Rowan also had a small twig drop at her feet. The Tree then told us it owed us all a favour and that any Millennium Tree would honour it.

Just then another vortex appeared and we found ourselves deposited in the middle of the Guild courtyard Guild Security rushed us away for examinations and debriefings. It wasn't until the 18<sup>th</sup> that we were finally released.