

The Poison Cloud

Lath goes mad on Rifts

The Suspects:

Rowan Elvish Binder
Lath Angelic Air Mil Sci
Anooke Short Ice
Dunlan Human Witch
Villa Human Enchants
Pierre Human Water Cooks
SauRus Human Necro Cartographer

The Job:

Joseph Stonebark Of Tolkeen speaking for Councillor Cedric Stonebark (his father). Baron Von Cromwell of Markeen has been losing peasants, 200 and counting. Wants us to find out why and stop it. Pay is 10000sp each plus expenses.

Stonebark claims he comes from a civilised land where they speak common (is that possible?). The center of a magic confederation. They have problems with the anti-magic "Coalition". It is a little Chilly at the north end of the Mississippi river. We are of course on the plane of Rifts.

There are many silly questions. Confusion about types of magic. He buys us black myrrh. There are many threats, mentions of charges, Michealines, Pacts, fear arrows. Lath screams a lot. We decide to buy in two restoratives each.

We go to the hospital courtyard. A button on a box is pushed. Mana builds up, Rift (guild security will have a fit, never mind). Then a city. No giant bugs. JS tells us now that "these things are not that predictable". I am not a lizard go figure.

The city has 150 000 people, mostly human. Preparing for war. High mana zone plus. Much magic being used. Advanced mechanitions. No sign of merchant activity. We are now led to see Cedric. An older guy in robes. Lath keen on seeing the Town. We go to the hotel. Lath is reminding me of Faith.

We see winged beings in the sky. No laws against flying. Rowan's wooden donkey not allowed in hotel. No animates allowed. Generally poor service. We go into a small room after Lath is pacified. Room takes us to the 15th floor. Lath goes to one of the big rooms out the window and onto the roof.

We are given a card with 20 000 credits magically on it. After some food we go to the college to practice magic. Mana pool twice fatigue but separate from it. My armour handles lightning bolts well must remember to stand at least 10' from Lath when she is casting. Lath also summons a stropo air elemental, a very stropo air elemental.

Mana pools can be healed. Gut buster goes to mana pool rolls to fatigue. Mana pool recovers 1 per hour while active as per ft while resting. Zero ft will prevent casting. Casting consumes mana pool then ft.
Elementals MA+D+5

Thaumaturges MA*2
Entities MA+FT

Lath goes shopping to figure out prices 1sp =1 credit. I put a crystal ball over Markeen 100miles north. A joke is told about having one six-inch ball (not sure if it is meant to be funny, mammalian humour??). There are a lack of maps around. How they plan a war without maps I don't know.

Scrolls:

3 Restoration Powerful healing spell missing organs arms within 48 hrs regenerates
10 Ithan's Armour creates Mystical ablative armour weightless reduces magical fire lightning attacks.

10 Heal wounds restores damage D+10

2 Fly 35mph 1000ft alt 60 minutes

2 magic pigeons 30 word homing pigeons

2 Fly as eagles 50mph 100minutes +10def in flight

Lath is illiterate and will get her dog to read scrolls for her.

There are a lot of guards. Why??

Pierre is unmouse tattooed "Property of Seagate Adventurers Guild Please Return" on back and a star on his forehead.

3rd of Frost

A couple of horses and a sled are offered. No snow on the ground but we take it.

After an hour we go over the river the up the side of the river. Some farms some wilds. Encounter flying walking somethings.

At night mana glows in the south and west. A 240' Air elemental is summoned by Lath. Another obstructive elemental.

Weather turns cold in the night it is "made" better against nook's wishes

Watch order 1 Lath, Villa

2 Anooke Rowan

3 others...

4th of Frost

In the morning the temperature drops again.

Talk of tying prompts giggles from Rowan. Her Rope won't last long enough.

Anooke wants more cold can't understand our desire for warmth. We discuss with Bob, the cart driver, about the weather. Mostly normal a little warmer today than usual however.

Mid morning there is movement on the horizon. At a mile and a half we see 3 large dogs with wings and a funny tail. At a half-mile we get ready for fight or flight. The horses know better and run. Anooke is zapped and two of the creatures disappear. There are reports of flying. They move fast and one Teleports on top of me. Lightning comes from the sky. Two of the creatures die the other flees throwing many fireballs

as it does so. Lath cuts ones heart out Rowan preserves and miniaturises the other. Went I figure out what it is it will be useful.

Later we approach the city of Markeen. Walls 15' high 5' thick. Single metal portcullis. A castle like building, cottage housing, dirt road, 140 000 people.

There is a discussion of the rope market as we pass the Arms Hotel. There are markets for Lumber, Fur, Iron ore, Food. Bob is asked if he wants to be our guide. He says only knows the route we have just travelled. Must be danger ahead.

Malcolm comes and says the baron will see us. We freshen up Lath goes mad (Not like Faith, Faith is an evil little hobbit Lath is insane and a little forgetful no one is perfect). Half and hour later...

Their clothes are mid level style high quality cloth. (I don't know what that means either).

Present loss 2000 peasants over last fortnight. No common connection. Usually one or two at a time. No disturbances no bodies. Processions left (no one we know then). Mostly non-human.

5th of Frost

Zeus Wolf/Human is our guide/scout. We annoy him. He says he is a mutant and not averse to flying. We feed Lath and discover there are no excess food purchases. Big Sands is the closest place from which people have disappeared. 60 to 70miles away.

On the way we find a convoy of evacuees being guarded. Leader of guards is Lieutenant Donald Millar who is moving the women and children to safety. Xicitix are attacking the settlements. Large insects. Not a little big eight feet tall then some. Insect invasion not usual.

No walls around the town. Picket fences, flower gardens, and shade trees. Dwarf smithy lots of churches. None of the missing has been taken from town 43 from the farms around in last 10 days. Most recent half hour walk out of town. We find no recent deaths. No tracks. No undead. One taken everyone else packed up and left.

Large ice marble follows us back to town. There we find abduction stories. Son went to fix a fence, didn't come back. Fence not mended no tracks. Another woke up they were gone.

That night at 3am there is a buzz in the air. Attack Attack. "I wonder if they will be friendly," says Anooke as the large insect creatures come in.

6th of Frost

We have breakfast before confronting the nasty insects. How many hobbits do we have in the party again? There are eight groups of eight. We take on one group of them. Bugs that is. They are each carrying two scimitars and as the unfortunate Pierre found out they attack many times per pulse with a heavy accurate and poisoned blows. They were vulnerable to magics that were cast so fast I nearly didn't get a shot in.

We capture one and it informs us of nothing. The dead on the other hand tell us that it doing this for revenge. That humans have attacked the hive, that more attacks are coming. At least twice as many will attack tomorrow night. It has natural poison Rank10. We tried to let it go but the ungrateful sod attacks so we kill it.

Remarkably the guards are unconcerned with 30% casualties. They have more coming. We decide melee combat with bugs is not our thing and prepare to fortify a building. We get in supplies. Wood and mud for golems and dead bugs for our defence. Lath gets a big air elemental and tries to work out how best to use it. We rest during the day and the night but nothing comes.

7th Frost

Lath goes mad. We shrink seven insects to take with us. We finally see a basic map and decide to go to Nadir Farm an independent cattle ranch. We find the farm in ruins, smoking ruins. There are super iron golems with grenado launchers. You can get inside them and drive them. I know how. The range of the grenado launchers worries me so gaze at a ball first to see if it will be safe to approach closer.

There are lots of fury dead mutants/wolfin. The armed people are in camouflage armour, not coalition and they say they didn't do it. They are lead by an officer called Nate Green. Says his dog boy tells him people in coalition armour from the west attacked them. Zeus can't find Nadir or his Family. Advice go south to the bug expert.

We decide to go to Doug while Lath gets a big hole fetish.

We find that Doug is worried about Nadir and meat stocks. (Is he concerned with cattle or is he a vampire?). Rambles on about bugs. DB trouble around here. Four have gone missing.

20-60,000 Bugs in Saskatchewan Manitoba. We are dealing with the Duluth Hive. If you get close most actions will cause them to attack. Identification is by smell. They have big towers with their entrances near the top. Generally a bug like queen underneath.

We go off to a DB tribe. Monkey like creatures (not humans) gibber at him. Dark coloured insect men took 4 prisoners. Invisible arrows. (Bugs or Coalition?). They panic when we show them one of our itemised bugs.

Doug tells us to go talk to Zak Krug, he knows more about the bugs. Lives in cabin to the north.

Pierre wants to rub Lath with Blue cheese and have a large bonfire to flush out the bugs. He also says "I feel so much safer flying beside air elemental." Must be until Lath falls unconscious or goes mad.

At about this point Doug mentions Zak is in a hut three to four miles away. Typical absent-minded philosopher he didn't mention this until we were about to fly out of here. Rather than walking we use flying carpets.

We find a small hut as darkness approaches. The green house has vegetables that need harvesting. Pierre makes sure nothing goes to waste. We also find a note "Doug I've gone north for a couple of weeks doing some research for my latest project."

Also in the house is a layer of dust a week or two old, the remains of alchemy equipment and a dozen missing alchemy books. This should be good a missing mad alchemist (is there any other kind) giant bugs and antimage nutters running about killing people. We decide to stay the night and after finding the personal journal we discover the location of the homestead that Zak is probably at.

The 8th of Frost and Anooke is happy. It is cold very cold. Why don't we have more missions in tropical jungles? Apparently Zak didn't like to talk about the old place much. His family died in a bug attack. The crystals don't show much, forest nowhere to land. See a clearing, old homestead dried riverbed no smoke. About this point Zeus decides to go home. Maybe he has a good idea.

We on the other hand fly to the homestead. We land just outside bug territory. Lath goes mad again and forgets Anooke. Pierre as always makes a nice cup of tea and we decide to run really fast...

At the homestead we find tracks. Human sized combat boots, 8-10 people, 3 to four days old. The place has been repaired. The ground between the house and the barn has had something heavy on it. No tracks for moving it. Almost like a cart landing on it then taking off. No binder or witch I know of can move a cart that heavy.

Most of the plants in the glasshouse have been destroyed. We find two or three young plants and discover that they are dangerous poison producers. Lath investigates the 'glass' and we loot it. 34 sheets of 1yard by 1 yard

In the house are the muddy boot prints of a dozen people. Olive drab tarps iron rations and cans of some unknown substance. There is writing by Krug that looks like some experiments on the flowers. The poison plants start to cause fatigue damage to people so we destroy them quickly, except for one we put in a jar.

There is an alchemy lab in the small building that is made of metal that doesn't look like metal.

In the barn there are 200 bodies and a smell that was in the greenhouse. On top of the pile of bodies is a very powerful grenado. Dunlan determines the timer has failed. He then throws it and it explodes. A big bang a big hole and the barn burns briefly. The grenado had the same heraldry as the tarps and the knife we found.

Between Dunlan and myself we have several thousand questions for the dead. Turns out that Krug has been in league with people in uniform. He has been gassing them. The later deaths have been quicker and it was the Coalition. There is a fifty/fifty split between human and non-human bodies.

Some notes and pictures are found that show bugs being experimented on. No wonder they are annoyed. It becomes clear that this Krug has been developing a weapon of massive destruction.

I try to get the bodies to burry themselves but something happens and become very stiff for a while. Counter spells don't work. Skin change doesn't work. No blood. I forget some stuff.

A message is sent to the employers:

Found corpses
Coalition Poison
Airborne quick
Plant based

We go back to Markeen. Now the baron wants us to find Krug

Where is our contract lawyer when we need one?

We go to Tolkeen to find alchemists and herbalists everyone is busy. Nothing urgent, just the probable end of their civilisation. We sleep on it. It has been a busy day.

9th Frost

Finally we get an appointment with Cedric Stonebark. This time it is not in the council rooms. There is a lady to his left. He is as bad as an elemental. Lath tells a story. It is mostly the truth even.

The woman has a name as it turns out. She is called Captain Prince. She will liaise with us about lots of stuff. Dunlan courageously endeavours to discover if she likes men with tattoos. We never did find out the answer.

Apparently they have sent out recon craft towards the hive. There were 100 to 120 bodies on the beach. Coalition planned a raid but didn't have enough.

We also discover that, the King of Saint Cloud wants Nate Green's men. They are classed as bandits. We will have to take on their uber golems when someone offers us enough to do so.

Lath manages to find out that brothels are not illegal. I don't need any dancing lessons right now so I don't think that I will bother with a brothel. On the other hand breakfast is an exceptionally good meal (rank 8 or 9).

The Attack on the hive is probably a test. The plant is apparently an off world species. It has highly toxic spores that vapour breathing will not stop. Dunlan wisely asks for gas masks.

The TIB has captured a voice and some moving pictures. Shows a scene of armour dropping a grenardo down into a pit. There is a green cloud and quick deaths. Dozens of different species including monkeys and bugs. Some think that I should especially horrified by this scene but I am not an elemental and I have been in the guild kitchens.

There is some bloke called Remington who is offering a weapon for sale. There are apparently 600 Remington Rangers. Must have been more before they took on the bugs (they must breed like orcs the rate they lose men around here). They are loosely allied to the coalition.

Our employers now want Mr Krug back in their control. Apparently we are to stop the whole nasty plan. We are to meet double agent Diana in the Raging Golem Diner.

Before that we go shopping. To make Lath look civilised we try to find Angel of Death robes. For the rest of us we look for gas/spore masks. We strangely want to live. We try and fail to find looking glasses and grenardos.

The Raging Golem Diner is up market. We find a large table and order one of everything. Pierre is unimpressed thinks that everything is cooked with dirt. Dunlan is disappointed there is no girl in the cake. Personally I would regard that as a savoury rather than a dessert.

Diana Langton meeting not particularly helpful. We are to go to free Quebec to meet an arms dealer called Ronald Mercer. The meeting is in two days time over a thousand miles away. The meeting is to occur in an establishment called Le Chat Noir in a town called Old Bones. At least that sounds hopeful. We need to stop ourselves being double-crossed

We talk to Capt. Prince and arrange for transport an hour later. The magic does not work in the hotel. We are also given a dozen grenardos. Instructions, Push button on top, count to three, throw. Dunlan volunteers to carry these. Rather him than me.

Power magic builds up. Magic is sucked up. The sky is ripped open. Villa wonders how we going to get back. We probably should have thought of that earlier. We are sucked in for a slow bumpy rift to Quebec. An hour later we are in snowy grasslands. There is a town 2 miles to the east.

It is Old Bones. It is walled must be 2,500 to 3000 people living within those walls. There are guards on the gate, which is closed. People are checked before going in. Surely a guild party will not attract any suspicion from the guards. We forgo the full frontal assault and instead ask for the best inn in town. The guard is unusually helpful and gives us the name of just such an establishment.

Lath looks for the homeless on the hard dirt roads. She finds the place is quite clean and tidy. We can put an end to that. The walls are hard. Not stone or wood. It is of course cold. Has no one around heard of heating. We make our way to the black cauldron inn and try to evaluate the locals but there are only a couple of people in the place.

We inquire after clean whores, ice fishing, moose steak, beef stew, Mostly we just insult the locals. After that we go looking for le chat noir. We steak the place out. Lath doesn't want to go into a gunfight with a hand axe.

We head to the brothel to leave Villa and Anooke with all our money to find everything there is to know. The Brothel doesn't have a name just a sign of a long slinky cat. The place is cleanish. Apparently Ronald Mercer owns the town. After working out how much beer and other services cost and how long the cred stick will last our noble party engages in planning for grand larceny.

Le Chat Noir is a dark and shabby inn. Surprisingly the town guard is following us about. Inside it is largely open plan. There are 50-60 people and games being played. 12 credits for food and beer for those of us not wandering the streets or investigating the brothel. Reasonable beer but Pierre is not impressed by the fish stew. We start insulting the serving staff. I begin to see our plan. No one would believe this bunch of loud, brash and offensive people could possibly be on a secret mission.

Dunlan excels in this roll. He deliberately has difficulty with the serving staff. He gets slapped when he asks if the serving girl works in the brothel. Maybe she can't dance and is sensitive about it. He then yells to the entire room "Does any of the serving girls work in the brothel". We then insult the bouncers-plate-head-covered. They are all inbred all called James. We are asked to leave and are still followed.

We go back to the Black Cauldron and Pierre cook chocolate moose. We attempt non-rudeness for a change. We get three rooms. One for Lath, one for Rowan and her stick, and one for the rest of us except Anooke, who likes the cold ally.

At 2am Lath screams in the ear of the waitress we offended. Armour goes inside a building and a bloke comes out. He goes into a house with no visible locking mechanism. Strange. He may live alone.

10th Frost

Good breakfast. Must remember to take a highly ranked cook on all adventures. Lath performs a ritual. The weather gets warmer. There is fog and steam, melting snow and muddy streets. "**RUMBLE**". There was a stream running through the town, it is now a flooding river. We destroy a town and it's only the second week.

There are large trees knocking on the walls of the town and water is running over the top of them. Lath cools it down again. 4 feet of ice is through the town. No mention is to made of Air mages ice mages or any other mage that can control the weather.

The barman in our inn thinks that the weather is strange. There are collapsed buildings in the town. Guards walk past on the ice and many people are trying to dig themselves out. A thought occurs that we need applesauce.

We go to our meeting with Mr Mercer. Lath goes mad (again). Today there are 34-40 people in here to watch us. A gentleman is seated at a central table near the fire. During the discussion we figure out that he is scared of the Remington Rangers. And won't deal.

Our astrology reading fails but the crystal succeeds. We use a whispering wind to contact him and arrange a private meeting.

11th Frost

Remington has 50 missiles with a range of 5-6 miles. Mercer is opposed to the use of these with poison spores on civilians. He seems to be opposed to the use of weapons on civilians, which is strange for an arms merchant.

There is a base at Black Bay on the 5th and largest lake (Superior). We are to expect 100-150 in the enclave. There are formidable golems and an old military vessel. They

also have air vehicles. They are allied to the coalition and are anti DB's and Mages. They should be thrilled to see Eylor and the rest of us. They are also 1800-2000 miles away.

We decide to take a cloud rather than waiting for transport. A large creature flies past us. It was a green horned dragon. In an amazing piece of sensible thinking a guild party decides not to poke it.

15th Frost

The camp is on a peninsular in the lake. There are 20 semi-permanent buildings in the camp surrounded by an iron mesh fence. There are guards patrolling. There is an old military vessel near the base in the ice filled water. It has 16 weapons on it's deck that we later learn are called cannon.

We make it cold, very cold hurricane force winds and lots of snow. Lath warns the binder for being mad and talking to herself. Pot kettle.

It gets very very very very cold (-100). We lose track of time. It is deadly on the surface even with high ranks of protection from cold on. The mana doesn't feel right. The predictions are for the weather to worsen and for the party to go mad. Too late for that one then.

The Remington Rangers camp seems to have some sort of scry shielding a mile and a half diameter across. The ship is buried and crushed but there is no one inside it. There is 300 feet of snow and it is still snowing. Lath has out done herself again but she doesn't want us to go out side and die just yet.

Anooke makes a tunnel down and prepares a room. He finds a 100' wide tunnel through the snow. The tunnel was going across the path to the base. There are scrape marks. Monster or a machine? It is hard work down the tunnel and it is dark down here.

Vibrations at 1am. 1:04 side of snow cave disappears. It is a Mana Ice Snake. A long lived non-sentient. It was moving fast TMR 25. 1875 feet long a third of a mile long. Heading east. After a short discussion we decide to move on and not attack the massive monster. I learn again that *I hate the cold.*

We tunnel after the tunnel and Lath learns not to insult the cook. Grass for the angel. Lath takes Anooke to the work face while the rest of us hide in a igloo/snow cave. The tunnel is again crossed by the Mana Ice Snake.

A couple of days later we get to a room at the end of the tunnel. It is still 2miles from the base. In a peculiar turn of events the Hobbit is orders to eat more food.

Inside the base at last.

Building 12: 4 siege weapons plus ammo. It is itemised.

Building 10: Alchemy lab. Dead plants.

Building 4: Concrete pad Under this there is a small warehouse. A body under a tarp.

Building 2: Boats ketches, 2 masts 35-40 feet long 15-man crew. 2 frozen bodies.

Building 3: Thick walls. Storage boxes, Grenardos ZK12. 4 nine-foot golems weapon built in.

Building 8: Thick walls stone small slot pillbox. 3-siege ballista 3 golems.

Building 5: Tower 3 stories of stairs. 2 bodies inside full of ice.

Building 6: Big barn odd machines possibly for flying.

Building 7: Bunkroom. Single bed. Map on wall. No frost.

Buildings 9: Two bunkrooms single golem in each room. Evidence of a hurried escape. Some bodies, killed not frozen. 40 bunks per room.

The mad scientist is alive and to the southeast. We decide to attack a Golem in one of the building 9's. It has a sword and a crossbow. After a massive 21 points of endurance in the first blow Pierre has had enough so we pull him out. We use one-way windows to attack it. Lath's arms give her trouble. We kill the golem and it explodes. The building is gone and so has 200 feet of snow.

We try building 3. The walls are difficult to see through. Bound?? The door is 500lbs of cold iron. It is trapped. Inside there are heads of war. They are too fragile to move so we blow them up when the golem starts to activate.

The commanders hut is warm in side so we do not over heat we leave the door open. We take the maps off the wall and we take the lock box. We take the paper work and the secret agent list. There are blankets and silk sheets, which we take. We also find credit sticks and other forms of currency. Thousands of silver pennies worth.

There in a secret entrance, we take that too and set fire to the hut. It is half a mile to the south entrance and a tunnel to the winter HQ. We take the tunnel to the storage area under the concrete pad. In there we find coffee, chocolate and blankets. Then we wind walk down the 4-mile long tunnel.

We are told not to try anything. Lath does another ritual. How bad could it be? We have a plan. I wonder what it is.

We tunnel to the 'back' door. Small tunnel in rock, well hidden. It has a rusty iron door. There is thick dust on the other side and a 600' tunnel. There are many rooms and it appears that the fortress is not as well occupied as it could be. Oh yeh only a medium sized heavy armed force to defeat. Lots of dust this level is unused. There are elevators, garages stairwells that are blocked off. Guards secure stairwell doors and there roving patrols.

We decide that the lower levels are warmer than the outside air. We go under the quietest quarter. There are rock layers between each level. There is a lab but no heads of war or missiles. Rowan digs through to the next floor. Lath is concerned, Lath goes mad, there are osh worries. We use ice to support the elvish mole.

There is a layer of iron in the rock near the floor. We mouse Krug. There is an anti magic field on him. We run like hell then call in transport it is fluffy so south we go.

After about 200 miles we reach the edge of the storm. At about 240 it warms up. We see a large lake to the east. And the Baron is out of range. We decide to go to Tolkeen. There is large army outside. Their army as it happens. It is now the 27th of Frost.

Anooke refuses to go on a diet to save everyone. Lath wants to loot. Then they figure out the army is for us. We find that Councillor Stonebark is in a meeting *again*. We talk to Krug. He thinks that he is not a baddy. He made the poison to kill the bugs and when he got help to make more it got out of control. No one else can make more. We blew up all the labs and all the plants are dead.

Rowan get stupid touches ring gets cursed. They don't seem to have any namers to fix her. Lath then tries to intimidate a man with his own army. She does however get a parade for the heroes.

We all get lots of money and a wish and a ring. Lath has her list on her ready at all times for wishes. There are also lots of cream buns for the little guy no one quite remembers. We eat a lot learn, a spell, and course we watch **LATH GO MAD**.