

THE PROGRESS OF DISEASE II 1987 AP

Immediately following the Guild Meeting of 30/10/87 our party assembled for the first time. We were: Persephone and dog, human earth mage; Miss Amelia Theakston, hobbit fighter and volcano seller; Que, human fighter; Caskette, human mind mage; Villa, human E & E and thief; and myself, Mary M, hobbit namer. Persephone and I were the most experienced members of the party. For both of us this was our fifth adventure. It was Villa's first. Persephone was voted party leader. Que was our military Leader and I was the scribe.

The Guild had received a letter from Clavados, Lord High Bailiff of Eylea, of the Theocracy of the Ffenargh (letter attached), requesting the same adventurers who had helped out previously. The new task was to prove the guilt or innocence of Miles D'Arcy, being held for the murder of his father Geoffrey D'Arcy, the late Lord of Myrkfast.

The Guild had discovered that the adventure referred to in the letter was "The Progress of Disease" and had occurred 23 years ago in 1964 AP!!! We were given access to the Guild file containing all the records relevant to this adventure that the Guild had been able to locate. It was very sketchy indeed!

1. The Ffenargh is a swamp 100 miles north of Sanctuary.
2. It was deeded to the Church of Saint Theoderic in 1543 by Duke Sigmund of Ranke and has since been ruled by the Lords Spiritual from their temple at Eylea. The Lords Spiritual rule through three barons.
3. The people of the Ffenargh are mostly of low intelligence and in some areas are degenerate. Most suffer from "the vapours".
4. The original party answered a plea for help from Clavados (the same one) to stop the vapours epidemic. The scribe notes ceased at the point that the party entered the swamp.
5. There was a poor map of the Ffenargh but it was not the corrected one made by Faedrin, the Ranger, referred to in the scribe notes, and a list of items brought back from the adventure.

That evening some of our party went and spoke to Elmer Green in Seagate and the following day we visited Aloysius Took in Seacroft. Here is the story we pieced together.

While the party were in the Ffenargh two things happened for which they were not responsible. Firstly, the vapours epidemic stopped and secondly the Lord of Lorge, one of the three barons who rule for the Lords Spiritual, died. From several servants the party received a jumbled story that the aged Lord of Lorge had sacrificed his young wife before he died. The items brought back from the adventure had come from Lorge Hall. There was also a rumour that some of the inhabitants of the Ffenargh bred with ghoulish beings that lived in the outlying areas.

An examination of the items brought back from the previous expedition to the Ffenargh accompanied by later divinations revealed them to be the result of some sort of general entities type magic, not a specific college as they exist now. The style of the items, and in particular the runes on them, appeared to be Penjarin but the objects themselves were much more recent. It was as if they were copies. If only we had followed that thought through at the time and not taken them with us to examine in detail!

The items were:

1. A box of assorted potions of which we were unable to determine their precise effect.
2. A bloodstone which drew blood from whoever touched it under arterial pressure. The stone would appear to be used for sacrificial purposes.
3. A set of candlesticks of the sort for placing at the points of a pentacle.
4. A pair of bracers which Caskette put on. They raised his temperature a little, gave him increased vitality, are protective in some way, have some sort of mental link with demonic powers, and act as a controlling device in the presence of a specific (or perhaps any) demon and have a curse associated with their removal.
5. A carved box, magically cursed to trigger some sort of hellfire, etc., when opened.

We set out for the Ffenargh on horseback on 2/10/87 AP. The first night out we killed and burnt a troll who was disturbing villagers in the area. (OK, we found this out the next day. The villagers thanked us and promised a reward of half a cow and three round cheeses; we would pick these up on the way home.) After that the journey went reasonably uneventfully and every night I would divinate one of the items. We became increasingly uneasy about them. They appeared to have been made by an amateur magic user following instructions, perhaps laid out in a book. The carved box was the right dimensions to hold such a book.

On the 7th we had lunch with "Prince" Felarn Strongbow II, the younger brother of the Duke of Ranke, who was out with his mage, Greyhaven, and guards marking the boundaries of the "Principality of Southern Ranke".

Continuing on our way we reached Ranke City at dusk on the 9th, just making it inside before the gates closed, we spent a luxurious night at the Sign of the Bluebird. During the night Villa uncovered the information that someone answering to the description of Koth (the blacklisted black mage who had been on the previous adventure) was looking for a party that matched our description, and had gone north ahead of us. We decided that the only reason that he could be interested in us was if, since he had been blacklisted, he had discovered what the items were, and in particular what the book in the box was. We packed hurriedly and continued north.

About midday we met a local, Henry the Miller, and stopped for lunch. We explained that the reason we were headed north, beyond Old Samuel's place, the limit of his world, was that we were rangers and enjoyed the wilderness. When asked he said that yes, he had seen someone going north. We continued on our way.

Approaching what we believed to be Old Samuel's place, we found the farmhouse door swinging in the breeze. Inside we found a skinned corpse, whose basic age and build matched Henry's. We remembered that one of Koth's favourite spells was skinchange. Scouting out the area with my telepathy I discovered a mind that might have been a familiar in the barn. It was slaughtering the terrified farm animals. I called to Villa, who was investigating the barn, and he ran past us towards the house as we ran towards the barn. The mind moved towards the shuttered windows and then leapt straight through. We found ourselves face to face with a devil in Demon Cat form, in fact it was one of Belial's sons. When he demanded "The Book" we all realised the one hope possible. We gave him the book still enclosed in its protective box. Overjoyed at his easy success the devil opened the box and promptly disappeared in a massive pillar of flame. On the ground was an open box with a book inside.

The book was protected against fire. It was made of vellum, Elf to be precise. A semi-sentience had been placed in it to aid and teach the possessor and with use the book corrupted. The brass fittings preserved the book and exterminated pests and it was 5000 years old.

We hightailed it back to Ranke as fast as we could go. Persephone began flicking through the book. When she touched the cover the runes became legible. It read "The Tome of Carroc, Brother of Sith, Summoner and Great Mage of the Dark Powers". She opened the book and it sighed. The book contained instructions for creating the items the first party had brought back. After 10 minutes Persephone closed the book, although she was not keen to do so. She was temporarily exhilarated. I took the book for safekeeping while Persephone retained the box.

A storm began to the north west and we took shelter in a copse of trees. When the storm abated we returned to Ranke, just making it back ahead of the rest of the storm. "Henry the Miller" had booked our old room for us at the Bluebird and was waiting there for us. He appeared to be in his mid 30s, dark and handsome. The fire in the hearth was not really there and when we lit a real one both images disappeared.

Caskette took a look at the book. The next section of the index mentions rituals of life draining, dopplegangers, hellfire and weather control. We were unable to open the third section to see what was there.

The room was suddenly plunged into darkness and Amelia was abducted. At 9 pm a dark figure in a cowl appeared at the door with instructions to take the book to Tarrant the Alchemist in the Jewellers quarter and swap it for Amelia at 9 am the following morning. Ten minutes later Amelia appeared at the window of our room.

I decided to try one of the potions, which we believed would allow me to teleport back to the Guild for help. Instead, I found myself "blinking" from place to place randomly. After a short while this stopped and I found myself in the street outside.

The party left the inn, via the window, in search in another inn to spend the night. We settled on the inn of the "Notched Axe". The innkeeper was a stone giant.

Amelia's Story

Amelia said she had been abducted by Koth and was taken to a warehouse where he called Master (Belial?). Koth told the demon that the plan was not going well and that his "son" was dead. Belial promised help in 12 hours. Koth made reference to his infiltration of Asmadeus' faction. Belial left. He then summoned Asmadeus. A similar conversation took place. Koth's son Klaude, 20 years old, then entered with a large black cat. He was sent to talk to us and deliver the ransom message, then Koth left. Amelia escaped.

It would seem then that Koth has two demonic masters, Asmodeus and Belial, both of whom believe that he is infiltrating the other faction.

A note was slid under the door, also giving the ransom instructions along with a message from Villa on how to get to Tarrants!

Amelia and Caskette decided to go for beer and we all tried to get some sleep.

The next day we were awakened by Ehem (Persephone's dog) at 5 am. We collected our horses and left Ranke heading south, back towards Seagate. We spotted three figures waiting for us on the road ahead. One was old, one was young and one was ugly. Persephone buried the book using Tunnelling. All of the party, with the exception of Amelia, were amnesiated. Koth hypnotised Persephone and she traded the book for invested shadow wings.

It seems that Koth wanted the book so that he no longer needed a demonic master. Koth said that Caskette should have the bracelets removed because they were dangerous and gave demons control over him. The book contained magics that Carroc had rediscovered dating from before entities magic branched into separate colleges, or represented an attempt to recombine the entities colleges.

The three left, another familiar joining them from hiding.

Que suggested we visit friends of his, Brother Farric, at a Michaeline monastery on the coast. After a hard ride to the coast, Caskette had his bracers removed and we spent a pleasant evening in the local village. The food was great!

On the morning of the 12th, after a great breakfast, we hired a boat, leaving our horses at the village and sailed north. We stopped on shore for the night. The next morning we sailed up the coast, sighting the river mouth and Stoyne Isle around 10 am. The mists began to clear and we sighted the town of Elyea. After docking at the jetty we encountered our first local. He was an old man, only 90% human, with a bad cough. After healing his cough I discovered he was in fact only 35. Around here people usually only live to 40. Clavados, our employer is nearly 80 years old and Siranish, the high priestess

is past 90! The temple folk appear free of the cough and vapours. We headed for the castle which, like the jetty, was in very good repair.

DAs on all the guards showed no recent magics and that some of them were part swamp ghoul! Their armour was old but well kept. We were introduced to the High Priestess and Clavados. Clavados was an old man, wiry and lean, spry and tough with greying hair. He wore a gold surcoat and sword and carried an ear trumpet. He was accompanied by an aged dog. He was relieved that we had arrived, was surprised that Persephone was in charge and said it was nice to see hobbits again.

The Case

On 15/10 word was sent from the bailiff of Popping that two reed gatherers had found the body of a richly garbed man in the Spagbog. Clavados and Prefect Calarnis identified the body as Geoffrey D'Arcy. Calarnis summoned Geoffrey's spirit and Clavados made a transcript but it can't be used in trial. The spirit accused his son Miles of the deed. Clavados went to Myrkfast to arrest Miles, who surrendered on the road but refused to say anything.

When the forefathers of the Church left Ranke for the Ffenargh they brought with them the eight holy relics of Saint Theoderic. Two prefects went into the treasury to ascertain if one of the relics had indeed been stolen but they didn't come out. The treasury has been sealed. On the 17th a squad of men at arms was sent to Myrkfast. They did not return. The trial starts in two days as they can only hold Miles for 30 days.

St Theoderic

St Theoderic was a wise and holy man in Ranke, some 600 years ago. Standard miracles were reported. About 400 years ago his followers had gained some prominence in Rank and Duke Sigmund granted them land -- the Ffenargh. The eight holy relics they brought with them are remnants of St Theoderic's material life. No one has opened them for a long time. They are:

1. Gilded skull.
2. Pewter chalice.
3. Wooden begging bowl.
4. Robe.
5. Alabaster urn with ashes.
6. Left mummified hand.
7. Ivory prayer wheel.
8. Miradon -- a stuffed owl.

Laws and Trials

Magical evidence is not permissible in court. Otherwise the standard laws of Ranke of 400 years ago apply. Hearsay may be presented but won't carry much weight. The three

Lords Spiritual act as judges, Siranish, Waldergrave and Tiarvit. Clavados is the prosecutor. Miles may have a Prefect as a lawyer if he wishes.

The D'Arcys

Geoffrey leaves his Estate, Title (Lord of Myrkfast) and a small amount of money. A distant cousin may inherit instead of Miles. No close family. Miles' Mother died in childbirth, no brothers or sisters. Miles approaching 23rd year.

Political Situation

There were three Lords Secular:

- Lord of Myrkfast (Steward will be created if Miles found guilty).
- Lord Bailiff (Clavados).
- Lord of Lorge (murdered his wife, executed by party).

Under-prefect Zacharia guides us to the prisoner, Miles.

Miles

From early age gentle and scholarly. Miles looks 30-ish. Wearing long boots, leather trousers, blue surcoat with Hippogriff. Thoughts obscured with something. Thinking of many unimportant things at once. Some kind of Entities magic similar to our items is in effect on him. No College (but could be Entities type).

Party plan to enter treasury. Find scorched Prefect. Burnt running away from something with paws. Hellhound? Attacked by magical guardian spirit. Summoned and bound. Magic of 400 years ago (i.e. when came to Ffenargh) released when relics disturbed?

Relic Room

Octagonal column with niches. Ivory caskets in niches. One casket on floor. Spring-loaded base of niche. Cracked gemstone, faint magic of containment. Missing relic is Robe of Ulm. Thieves entered and exited through roof. Either climbed wall outside treasury or reached roof through church.

Interview with Tiarvit

Bald, chubby, 65-ish. Least of the Lords Spiritual. No magic in effect. Tells us that Robe has Holy Powers, curing disease (even death?), used as shroud of St. Theodoric. Ulm may have been name of man who gave robe to St. Theodoric when he was a beggar? Corruption of alm? Lore handed down since move to Ffenargh that opening the boxes might damage the relics. Tells us about life/miracles of St Theodoric:

- Spoke to birds
- Controlled weather
- Stilled and walked upon waters.

- Healed the sick.
- Handled venomous serpents.

Theodoric born around 1000 AP. About 30 years during ministry. Killed by magic users (Council?) Followers scattered. Theodoric lay in state in robe for two days. Cremated and ashes put in urn. Around 1040 AP -- Sebastian founded first Church of St. Theodoric. Around 1048 AP Sebastian killed by same conclave of evil mages. At the same time a split in the Church occurred between the True Church and the Heretics. The True Church passed to Timon's leadership and he was the first to record St. Theodoric's teachings.

Heresy of Minon (doesn't officially exist), dates to 40 years ago -- Minon still alive on Vipen Isle -- centre of the Heretical Church. Minon says that St. Theodoric was a mage.

Note: Ffenargh is also known as "Carroc's Mire".

Information on the Relics:

1. Gilded skull. -- drink from gilded skull conveys gift of prophecy (apocryphal?).
2. Pewter chalice -- regenerate from mortal wounds. St. Theo drank from it at last supper.
3. Wooden begging bowl -- bowl makes money while poverty stricken.
4. Robe -- Missing.
5. Alabaster urn with ashes -- brought with St. Theo from the east. Had something in it? Holy liquid? Now contains ashes (presumably St. Theo).
6. Left mummified hand -- protects wearer against magic of Powers of Darkness.
7. Ivory prayer wheel -- Lord of Light answer prayers.
8. Miradon -- a stuffed owl -- possessor able to speak to Avians and probably Dolphins also.

Un-answered Questions

- Miles has something as well as human in his ancestry. Who was his Mother?
- Who was Lorge's wife?
- Is Miles wearing anything magical?
- Miles is expecting the trial to take place in two days, would putting it off by one day without telling him be legal? Would it shake him? Can the court stall once the trial has begun?

Note: Geoffrey's body dead for 4 days before found.

Second Interview with Miles

Healthy to point of extreme vitality (similar to Caskette). Metabolism racing (as if speeded). No emotions showing -- shuttle-thought. DA revealed edging towards long lived sentient, Human with a touch of something else. Doesn't practice magic. The gold thread of his surcoat is protective.

At first Miles appeared possessed by “Legion, for we are many”. Claims to have been in this body for 20-odd years, before that in Lorge -- created by Carroc. However, we discovered that the entire possession was an act! Also, he was actively resisting. He responded appropriately to spells, but hesitated when asked about the Heresy.

14/11/87

Going to see Sirarnush. Head of both branches of Churches.

15/11/87 - The Trial

Miles demands a jury of his peers -- that is to say, us! Ffenargh law permits a noble to be tried by a Grand Jury of Inquisition, made up of other nobility. As there are no other surviving Secular Lords (other than Clavados, who in his role as Bailiff and Prosecutor cannot be part of the Jury), and as the party have been granted (albeit honorary) noble status, the party must become the Jury, investigate the crime, and return a verdict.

Party travel towards Lorge Isle by punt, reaching the village of Glub by nightfall. The population of Glub are all more than half Ghoul, and some of what they are eating is human!

16/11/87

Continue travelling through swamp on punts. Sight a large sea-snake type something, moving through the water. Arrive at village of Skagken.

17/11/87

We meet Lorge's Revenant on skeletal horse! DA: Formerly living, his purpose to once again slay his wife/widow. Walk along causeway for an hour. See an anaconda.

Reach a clearing, once a garden, with a ruined house. Part original ruins and part added. Door wrenched open, roof fallen in about two weeks ago. Track of footprints back and forth in mud on floor. Path of destruction from kitchen to front door. Stairs leading down from the kitchen with mud on the stairs. Footprints leading up and down. Recently repaired door leads into wine cellar with a hole in wall/tunnel partially natural. Another mended door.

Tunnel is an old spiral staircase leading down. At bottom of old stairs is preserved floor (6000+ years old). Two rooms with bookshelves and chairs. Display case in centre, several hundred mouldering books, 7000 years old. Bookshelves preserve contents, books haven't aged. Reference works on Alchemy, Magic, Item Construction, Principle of Magic. Found a book on the fundamental principles of Entities magic, written in Olde Common.

Special display case to hold four books -- three books inside -- lids protective (warded or cursed, etc.).

Book 1: Dwarf skin cover and pages, spirit binding, powerful generic Entities magic, more powerful than the book we lost to Koth.

Book 2: Hobbit skin cover ad pages.. Less powerful than the one before. Title reads: The Second Tome of Carroc, Brother of Sith, Summoner and Great Mage of the Dark Powers.

Book 3: Shapechanger (Tiger?) skin cover, other shapechanger skins inside. E.g. snake, bear, boar, wolf, eagle, trout and camel. Most powerful aura of the three. Around 5000 years old.

Upstairs, there are two graves inside the house. One has been dug up (the Lady of Lorge) and the other's occupant has burst out (the Lord of Lorge). The Lady's grave contains an old robe, 1000 years old. No magic, used to contain magic, since discharged. Used to hold curative/restorative/resurrection magic. There is also a body in the Lady's grave -- but it's not her! Human Male, several weeks old, strong wiry type, garrotted. Our thief -- matching dagger. Last spell to impact: Invisibility. E&E mage. Sanctuary Sea-farers (Pirate) tattoo.

We detect a "cracked" mind in another room of the mansion. Party get trapped in force cage. There is a beautiful Lady, a green glop monster (Slime Golem) and the cracked mind turns out to be the real Miles, suffering from a continuing life draining effect. The Lady is half-living and half-formerly living. Alive, but the life force isn't all hers. Human, College is generic Entities (Black, Necro, Summoner, Shaper). She ages when she casts.

She makes copies/doppelgangers of us (like the Miles we met) and leaves. Party all begin ageing rapidly and feeling drained/tired, except Mary-M who feels ravenously hungry. Golem menaces party and dissuades escape attempts. Caskette destroys Golem with Disruption spells. Party still stuck in cage. Eventually, Amelia (smallest member of party) strips and is smeared/covered in slippery ex-Slime Golem remains, and manages to squeeze between the bars. She retrieves key and releases party.

Upon leaving house Party are set upon by a horde of Zombies. After killing them, Party use invested Shadow Wings and fly back to Eylea and prepare for the arrival of the Lady and our duplicates.

18/11/87

Prepare ambush in Harge. An Heretical priest arrives, waveriding, and reveals that the Lady is at Myrkfast with Ghouls, Zombies, our duplicates and a Hydra. She's coming up the river. Evacuate village for castle. Lady's army arrives with eight boats, a dozen ghouls, two dozen zombies, and a 60 foot Hydra! Zombies attack through breach in wall. Battle ensues. Church forces being overwhelmed. Heretical priests (water mages) waveride to rescue. Party deal extensive damage to Hydra which eventually flees into swamp, duplicates are slain, restoring Party health. Finally, as the Party face the Lady,

the Revenant of Lorge appears from the swamp, grabs her and drags her back into the mire. (She has not be heard from again).

Epilogue

[Schism in Church being healed]

Party are paid 310 sp each for services rendered. Take one week to salvage books which are sold to Guild for 50,000 sp -- though not the three special books, which are locked in the Guild Vaults for safe-keeping... (especially to keep them from Koth... and Persephone). Spend a night at Que's monastery. Pass through larger territory of Count Felarn Strongbow. Discover that Villa stole our reward of half a cow and three round cheeses! Return to Guild 15 days after the Battle of Eylea.

Appendix 1: Letter from Clavados

To the Adventurers Guild of Seagate --

Once again we find ourselves in need of the services of your brave operatives. The party that you sent last time were more than satisfactory and we would have them again if at all possible.

The situation briefly is this -- Geoffrey D'Arcy, Lord of Myrkfast has been slain and we are holding his son for this murder most foul. We have not yet however been able to procure enough evidence to prove either his guilt or innocence. We appeal to you to supply us with investigators to solve the mystery.

Payment to be as arranged last time.

Clavados. Lord High Bailiff of the Ffenargh.

Appendix 2: Excerpts from the Book of Timon.

These things I write for I have known. I was the first pupil of Sebastian, who was the first pupil and disciple of our blessed Lord Theodoric, and given by our lord of the secret wisdom.

When after our Lord had come from the east, and was at the coast, he saw a man with a terrible skin disease, who cried out: 'Help me, will not somebody help me?' and Theodoric was filled with compassion, and reaching out his hand, blessed the man who was immediately cured, and the man was filled with joy and said: 'Surely you are a son of our Lords in heaven.' and Theodoric said to him: 'Call me not that', and sent him away with a warning not to tell anyone of what had happened.

But instead he went away and began to talk freely, spreading the news and saying that the Son of Light had arrived. When the people heard of this they flocked to where Theodoric was to see the Light and ask for healing, the first person to arrive was a young soldier named Sebastian, a good and holy man. He said to Theodoric: 'I was told you are the Son of Light, and can heal any ill, will you help my mother, for she is very sick, and I fear that she may die.' But Theodoric said to Sebastian 'What care you if someone dies, is that not your profession?' and Sebastian replied: 'If you heal my mother, I shall lay down my tools of war and till the land instead.' Theodoric was pleased and went with Sebastian to his house in the Town. When Theodoric entered Sebastian's house, and saw that Sebastian's mother was very ill, he took a bowl of water, and blessing it, gave her a little to drink and she was healed.

Sebastian and all the other people seeing this were amazed. That evening the people brought to Theodoric all the sick and injured. The whole town gathered at Sebastian's door and Theodoric healed many who had various diseases or injuries. In the very early morning, while it was still dark, Theodoric arose, and leaving Sebastian's house went off to pray in a solitary place. Sebastian went to look for him, and when he found him, exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you.' To which Theodoric replied, 'I can do no more healing today, I am too tired.' Sebastian asked 'May I stay with you Lord and learn from you?' and Theodoric accepted him as his first disciple.

After some hours the people of the town found Theodoric and Sebastian and said to Theodoric: 'Will you not heal those who could not come to you last night?', and Theodoric healed many people, but no matter how many he healed more arrived as people from the surrounding villages joined the crowd, and finally Theodoric said to Sebastian: 'There are too many people, I need to rest.' So Sebastian helped Theodoric down to the beach, where he asked his friend John, who was a fisherman to ferry them across the bay to the island of Roth, where Theodoric could rest. When they were half way across the bay, a dolphin came and played beside the boat, and Theodoric spoke with it. At this Sebastian and John were amazed, and said to Theodoric: 'What did the beast say?', and Theodoric replied: 'She says there is a big storm coming.' At this John wanted to steer back to land but Theodoric told him to keep the boat headed towards the island, and a strong breeze came up which sped them in that direction. Before they could reach the island, the squall broke, and the tiny boat was nearly swamped. John was afraid but Sebastian said to him: 'Do not be frightened, we are in no danger, for my Lord is blessed by the Light Powers, my Lord, why do you not tell him who you are?' But Theodoric did not reply, but stood, and commanded the wind to cease and the waves to calm, and the squall subsided, and John said: 'Most surely he is blessed by the Powers that be.' and John asked 'May I stay with you Lord and learn from you?' and Theodoric accepted him as his second disciple.