

Overdue Books

(Progress of Disease III)

Adventure Summary

01 Frost '98

Found out about the mission, the retrieval of three black books of power that had been stolen from the Guild Vaults. The books had been authored by Caroc, an extremely powerful pre-Penjarre mage and brother to Sif. Amelia and Mary M had brought them back from a previous adventure to the Ffenargh Swamp. The first book in the set had also been found but it was taken by Koth, an ex-adventurer and evil mage. It was suspected he was after the others.

Went to Sanctuary to consult with Aloysius Took, an ex-adventurer who had adventured with Koth. Stayed the night and learnt more about both the adventures that had been in the Ffenargh (Progress of Disease I and II).

02 Frost '98

Returned to Seagate and did various preparations. Left that evening on a ship to Sanctuary - last known sighting of Koth.

03 Frost '98

Arrived in Sanctuary that evening. Stayed at the 'Five Pipes'.

04 Frost '98

Acquired our urchin guide, Bill, who led us to a fortune teller. After that went to the 'Notched Axe' where Arthur met his contact who told us about Felix Dravin, who had fenced the books and other stuff. They weren't there not. We could also try a person called Melliot.

Went to see Felix Dravin. He worked as a jeweller and ran a shop. After some questioning many of the missing items were recovered but not the books, which he never had, or a stone cutting sword which had been sold to someone called Simon. The box of stuff had come from Tobias Morgan who ran a warehouse in the docks.

Next stop, Melliot. He had some books but they turned out to be copies of the original first book. He also told him that Tobias had tried to sell him other books in the set but they couldn't be opened. (This was because of the enchantments that meant that the books had to be opened and read in order but we weren't going to tell him that.) He believed they were fakes. He did tell us that the owner of the first book was the leader of a firecult.

Late afternoon, went to Tobias's warehouse. Amelia tried to buy the unopenable books but they weren't there. They had been bought by Madame Letitia from the 'Three Quills'. Went there but discovered the books had been stolen. Someone had cut a hole on the stone wall.

Returned to the inn. Early that night there was a ruckus outside and a dead man, wrapped in a red cloak was lying outside. He had been stabbed by a poisoned dagger. A resurrection was done on him and we discovered that this was Brother Joseph, a Michaeline Knight from the Abby of Michael Defiant, located outside Ranke City. He was here looking for a demonic fire cult. Apparently they had found him. We decided to join forces. He told us that the fire cult was

located under a deserted temple in a set of crypts.

05 Frost '98

So we decided to raid the place and retrieve the first book. We found the deserted temple then made our way through the secret door, down the stairway and into a large room where we were set upon by phlegm golems that spat sticky, quick setting, mucus at us. We managed to get past them, past the horde of undead, then some of the party went after the mage. They killed him, grabbed the book and other stuff, but then the demon Belial turned out and to say he wasn't pleased was an understatement. We fled the temple as Belial had a temper tantrum, completely wrecking the temple with fire.

Once we returned to the inn, we discovered that, again, this wasn't the original book although it was a well crafted forgery - even down to illusionary duplicates of the original enchantments. At that moment Koth turned up and told us that the original book was safe. He had created this copy in order to get out of a 'difficult situation' and requested our help to get the other three books. Amelia refused.

Joseph left to report to his abbot, taking the illusionary copy with him. Meanwhile we had discovered who had stolen the other books, a Daniel Potter, so we went looking for him. During the search we were attacked by a bunch of drugged-up fire cultists.

Daniel was found in a cellar above a sign shop, dead from a rapier or estoc wound. After resurrection he told us that 'the nob' had the books. 'The nob' was described as a small weasely man with a goatee and had hired Daniel to get the books from the 'Three Quills' with the help of Simon. Daniel told us that the man's name was De Molei and he was staying at the Three Crowns Inn. He was accompanied by a lady who he had addressed as M'Lady or Melody.

Headed for the Three Crowns but De Molei had left. We departed Sanctuary in pursuit. Suspected that Koth was following us so we stopped and laid an ambush. Got horribly stormed on instead.

06 Frost '98

Continued the pursuit.

08 Frost '98

Discovered that De Molei's party planned to take a ship from Caron, the next town up the coast, so Arthur and Gerald went ahead while we carried on with the horses. On the way, Mary M was chased by a gargoyle - Koth's familiar.

Meanwhile Arthur and Gerald arrived in Caron and discovered that De Molei was planning to leave that evening. Gerald arranged travel on another ship for us. A bit later on, a body is discovered in the inn's stables and it is taken to the bailiffs. Gerald and Arthur sneaked in to retrieve it as they discovered it is one of De Molei's escort, which implies either Koth, or his son Claude, was now disguised as the guard.

By the time we arrived, De Molei's ship had left. We sailed off towards the Ffenargh. On the way, the guard was resurrected and questioned. He had no idea who hit him but did confirm that De Molei had the books. He also warned us about the two large guards whom he referred to as Fear and Loathing and also mentioned it was rumoured that M'Lady dabbled in the occult.

11 Frost '98

Arrived at Eylea, in the Ffenargh Swamp that evening. Stayed at the monastery. Told that more adventurers had been through and had gone into the swamp.

12 Frost '98

Punted into the swamp. Reached Lorge Island and discovered a black tower rising from the ground where Lorge Hall used to be. Managed to find a way in from the top. Made our way down past the old library where the books had been first found, through the remains of an alchemical lab then down to a larger room with an ornate pentacle plus other runes etched into the floor including a large triangle. A crack was discovered running around the triangle.

Distracted by an illusionary weasel. Arthur went to investigate but disappeared. Mary M nearly netted by the familiar. Amelia went after the familiar and it's companion - another half devil but they got away.

The triangle had transportation magic on it and we discovered how to use it to descend to the next level. There we found a large dark room from which four staircases descended. The stairs descended around the inside of a large cylinder, the top of which was fog shrouded and the bottom covered in small bubbles which had condensed and dropped from the stalactites in the ceiling. Protruding from the floor was a large ziggurat.

When we neared the bottom of the stairwell we encountered De Molei and some guards including the two big ones at the top of the ziggurat. After some bantering the guards attacked. The two big ones had wings and DAed as some sort of devil. After a fight they were dispatched.

As we crossed over to the ziggurat, De Molei was joined by M'Lady and a tall wizened figure dressed in robes. M'Lady conjured up three female winged creatures while the wizened one used a spell to render our invisibilities useless. He then caused flaming walls and black tendrils that acted like Hands of Earth to erupt all around the ziggurat.

De Molei had been doing something with a spherical object until one of Gerald's arrows stunned him. A small shape next to the wizened one took the opportunity to take the sphere so it, and De Molei started wrestling for it. During the fight, the sphere broke. M'Lady tried to attack the wizened one but that was ineffectual. Meanwhile he did something that caused all the bubbles to rise and swirl rapidly around the cylinder before soundlessly exploding in a burst of light.

When our eyes cleared we noticed that the fog had gone and the wizened one was no longer wizened. Instead he looked fully regenerated. We suspected this was a rejuvenated Caroc. Also, in the centre of the ceiling was a large black stalactite that had pieces dropping off it. Caroc leapt to the apex and opened his mouth side to catch the first falling drop. Gerald tried to deflect the drops but they managed to swing back on course.

One of the remaining guards flew up to meet up with another figure who had been watching from another stair and they both left. M'Lady also sprouted wings and flew up. We decided to leave because, as Caroc swallowed a drop, he became larger and more draconic looking.

By various means we made our way out of the tower. On the way, M'Lady was caught up with and dispatched. Mary M and Silverfoam flew off to warn the monastery.

13 Frost '98

Made our way back to the monastery and found the others, including Arthur who had spent some time in Koth's pocket. Koth had released him with a message to warn us before fleeing himself.

Made our way back to the Guild.

Overdue Books

(Progress of Disease III)

- Basalic

It was late afternoon when we assembled in the Guild meeting room allocated to our adventure. The one I decided to go on was the retrieval of three books that had gone missing from the Guild Vaults. Mary M, and Amelia had deposited the books in the Vaults over ten years ago and were rather worried that they could fall into the wrong hands.

The meeting room still smelt of smoke from the early morning fire as we evaluated each other. In here were:

Silverfoam: Wearing his usual fancy Admiral's outfit with all the gold trimming. Male elf and Namer.

Gerald: He was in an outfit with lots of glittering rhinestones on it, complimented by a dagger. He is a 5'6" tall male human with medium length hair and declared himself to be an illusionist.

Amelia: 3'6" hobbit female, muscled, with red/brown braided hair and wearing soft leathers. Favourite weapon is an axe.

Liessa: Currently in plate mail she is a 5'10" human female with long red hair, blue eyes and a pale complexion. Usually carries a stern expression. I knew her to be a Mind Mage.

Mary M: 3'6 and a half inch tall hobbit with large, feathery, wings. She was in gilded leather armour and a plumed helmet. She was accompanied by a small child, Dart. She's also one of the Grail hobbits which means she has an extra large appetite and virtual immortality.

Arthur Pendragon: Amelia's husband. He's a small, skinny hobbit at 2'11" wearing leathers and carrying a strange weapon. Looked like a polearm but had a large blade at each end. Declared himself as a thief and also told us he had a habit of going invisible. Does cast Mind Mage spells.

Basalic: I'm a pacifistic Earth Mage in leather armour and carrying an assortment of weapons i.e broadsword, boomerang, and dagger (I decided to leave the glaive at home). However I suspect I'll be casting a lot of Stone Strengths and Earth Armours - as per usual.

The payment for this adventure are the three missing books and whatever else we could find that was missing from the Vaults and unclaimed. Amelia was appointed as the party leader and I was the scribe. No one else wanted to.

Mary M explained what had happened. About 33 years ago there was an adventurer called Koth Darkclaw who had tried to sell the souls of the other party members. Some of them were now on the Roll of Honour. Because of this he was blacklisted by the Guild. This party had been investigating an epidemic in the area of the Ffenargh Swamp. The epidemic had been stopped but they discovered that the local Baron, Baron Lorge of Lorge Island, had apparently sacrificed his wife. They had brought back several odd items that were placed in the Vaults which became Lot 23B. This consisted of a set of candlesticks, a stone that drew blood, a pair of bracers and other

miscellaneous stuff as well as a big carved box which had been divinated as having a very powerful fire trap.

Ten years ago another party went to help some monks of St Theoderick in the Ffenargh Swamp that had their treasury broken into. The thing that had aroused their suspicions was a dead body that had fallen through the skylight. Stolen was a book that taught magic. Before they left the party were given the contents of Lot 23B. The box was discovered to be Penjarre runes and looked like they had been copied from something else. En route, the party was ambushed by a demon that wanted the missing book. Since the box was of a size that could contain a book, they said it was in there. So the demon opened the box and was immediately consumed in flame. Inside was the missing book. The party took the book and fled.

Later on Amelia was kidnapped by Koth who demanded the book as ransom. He requested more forces from the demon Belial then Called Master and summoned Asmodeus to request more forces. (We suspect he was pitting both demons against each other). Meanwhile Amelia escaped, rejoined the party, and the party fled. During this Vila scarpred and stole part of the party's payment: half a cow and three round cheeses.

Again the party encountered Koth. This time he was accompanied by his son and his familiar. After Koth blasted a tree with a high-ranked fire spell, the party decided that handing over the book was prudent. One of the party, Persephone, had already looked at the book and discovered it was the 'Tome of Caroc' and was written on elf-skin. By legend Caroc is the elder brother of Sif, summoner, and great mage of dark powers.

After doing the mission, during which they discovered that the Baron's wife had been revived and had used the Book to create the other items, they discovered three other books, similar to the first, each one a sequel to the one before. Book One was required to open Book Two, etc. All the books were stuck in the Vault. There was a rumour that soon after this, Koth had approached Persephone to trade Book 2 for Book 1. The books allowed the reader to learn pre-Penjarrie magics and were extremely powerful and dark. Meanwhile Koth had denounced both demons and was in hiding. The last possible sighting was in Sanctuary.

The Vaults had been periodically checked to see if the books were still there for a while but, after time went on, this duty was neglected. It was possible that the books had vanished from the Vaults in the last four months.

Mary M requested a list of items that had been in the Vaults around then which resulted in the items that had not been sold in auction two years ago (their storage time had expired). These were:

- Lot 1 - A black rock (Note: Do not divinate)
- Lot 5 - Helmet of Destruction
- Lot 17 - Bracers of Delusion
- Lot 21 - Stonecutter (a bejewelled broadsword which had a high reserve)
- Lot 27 - Sword of Blindness
- Lot 33 - Mushrooms of Madness
- Lot 43 - Hillseeds
- Lot 61 - An infernal mill, an invisible robe

The first thing we did was to find Starflower to see whether her Finding spell would be of any

help. First she tried for the books by swinging a ring over a map. However, each time, the hair broke, the ring fell to the map and vanished. Trying for the sword was more successful as it could be described more uniquely. The ring hovered over Sanctuary.

It was a crisp winter's afternoon as we rode out of the Guild for a two hour ride to Seacroft where Mary M's parents lived. They were ex-adventurers and had been around at that time. It was early evening when we arrived.

Seacroft wasn't fog shrouded this time, probably because Kryan was away. The Tower of Fog could be seen on the headland. Seacroft itself could be either classed as a large village or a small town. In the centre was a block of buildings consisting of a tavern - 'Adventurer's Rest, a smithy, haberdashery, and other stores. As we got closer I noticed there seemed to be a lot of hobbits about. Mary M explained that the 'Adventurer's Rest' is hobbit owned and operated. The owner is Aloysius Took, Mary M's father. Also of note that Kryan isn't held in high regard in Seacroft.

After ordering drinks and dinner we spoke to Aloysius. He had worked with Koth down south before helping to found the Guild in '59. He described Koth as being smart, resourceful, and a loner. However he had already had a bad reputation then.

The story of the Guild in it's early days was interesting. Seagate was not very well off then and an arrangement was made with the previous Duke, then a Baron. The Guild elevated Leto I to a Duke later on. Maya was the head of Guild Security as, apparently, Herkum didn't trust Wegan. Also it was rumoured that Herkum and Maya had a thing going.

Koth had been thrown out for fence-sitting. The party had been poking around down south and they had run into a certain demon (Belial). Koth had been put into a vulnerable position and had refused to fight either way before scarpering. Much of the party were killed in the resulting fight and one of the survivors swore a vendetta against Koth and went after him. The body was found later but it wasn't believed that Koth killed him.

The whole thing appeared to be tied in with their previous trip with the swamp, books, and the witch (the Baron's wife). As Aloysius put it 'She killed him, we killed her'. The body ended up in the family crypt.

Caroc could have had a tower on Lorge Isle, which was in the swamp. Maybe the party had found the upper levels.

During this conversation, one of Starflower's missing rings turned up in Liessa's pocket. Liessa had no idea how that got there. Personally I suspect Arthur. The last magic on the ring was Finding. I ended up with it for safekeeping.

Aloysius also described the 'black rock'. It was a solid smooth half-sphere crystal. I suspected it was made out of obsidian. 'Half a darksphere' someone said. He also theorised that Caroc had been engaged in recombining the thaumaturgy Colleges which would result in something much more powerful than the sum of the colleges. Synergy, Gerald called it.

We spent the night in the inn.

02 Frost '98

Over breakfast, Arthur hypnotised Mary M and discovered some more of the story. During the adventure, the party had been captured by the revived Baron's wife and imprisoned in a cage in the basement of Lorge Hall. The witch created doppelgangers of the party which caused them to age (except for Mary M who got ravenous) as their life-force was linked to the doppelgangers. She then sent them across the swamp, on a punt, to lull the monks into a false sense of security.

After she left, the party managed to escape from the cage by one member squeezing between the bars. They then used some invested Shadow-wings to fly to the monastery. After convincing the monks they were who they claimed to be, a defence was organised.

Once the doppelgangers arrived, they were killed which restored the party to their original ages. Then the lady turned up riding a large hydra. Things looked grim until a bunch of heretic monks of the same order turned up riding waves. Turned out St Theoderick was a water mage and these 'heretics' were all water mages while the original lot just venerated him as a saint treating the mage legends as heresy. They managed to help defeat the hydra, just as an undead man on an undead horse turned up, grabbed the lady and rode off with her. That turned out to be Lord Lorge, now a revenant, who was out for revenge.

The party returned to Lorge Hall and, behind a large mirror, discovered a secret door that led down to a well preserved library. There they found the other three books and they were quite sure that the lady hadn't found them. All she had done had been from the first three-quarters of the first book.

We returned to the Guild arriving mid morning and I went to have a Greater Enchantment put on. That cost me 6000sp. Fortunately I had already borrowed 3000sp off Flamis. Meanwhile Mary M and Amelia went to see Bozo so they could go through his hat to have a word with Samiel - the archangel that, until recently, had been joined to Belial. He remembered Koth and remembered that his 'other half' knew about the books, and wanted them for himself. He had been stalling Koth with the promise of the books.

Liessa had been stocking up on weapons and I turned up there later on to arrange for a spare boomerang before heading home to spend some quality time with the family.

Meanwhile Amelia had discovered that Lord Grendl had known about the books owing to the fact that they had been mentioned on the last Guild inventory to the Duke. So it seemed very likely that there had been a security leak, probably from the Duke's side. However, when the stock take finally turned up it only described them as "Caroc's Books". Grendl, being a student of necromancy, had recognised the name and had been curious. Only a few philosophers would have known. That made us all relieved that there weren't going to be a queue of people wanting the books.

By the time I got back, Arthur had booked passage for us, and six horses, on the Destinian ship 'Don Giovanni' which was leaving for Sanctuary that evening. The trip would take a full day. We had to be on board by sunset so it was just before then when we arrived at the docks. Silverfoam, still in an Admiral's uniform insisted on being piped aboard so Gerald did the honours.

Our accommodation turned out to be a marine's bolthole, a room 3' high and about 8' square. Silverfoam commented that next time he'll do the bookings.

I wasn't happy about this but staked out a claim in the corner closest to the centerline so to minimise the movements and made myself comfortable the best I can. The rest of them went up on deck. Soon the ship was clear of the harbour and picked up speed as the Mage Current took hold.

Gerald wanted to do a ritual, something to do with illusionary auras, and asked one of the officers if he could do it on deck. The officer went to ask the Captain then returned with the message "As long as it has nothing to do with fog, you may proceed". Gerald replied frostily "I'm not a fog mage" before settling down.

Meanwhile Mary M was bouncing around asking the lookouts what they were looking for. Their reply was the usual, rocks, other ships, pirates. That prompted Liessa to ask whether or not a pirate attack would mean an extra charge on our expenses. The sailors started to get a bit alarmed when Mary M started going on about giant krakens and mana storms. She then startled the guy up in the crows nest by flying up and landing nearby to enjoy the view.

All the other non-hobbits ended up sleeping on the deck that night.

03 Frost '98

The next morning, at dawn, Mary M managed to frighten the wits out of the sailor in the crows nest (a different one) by flying up and wishing him 'Good morning'. Fortunately he didn't fall out. Her only intention was to see the sun rise.

Nothing eventful happened on the rest of the trip. Fortunately the sea was reasonably calm.

Finally, just as the sun was going down, we arrived in Sanctuary Harbour. It was a wide harbour with an island, called Godrock, in the middle of it. Godrock itself looked to be about two miles across, surrounded by high cliffs, with luxurious growth on top.

The area to the right of the harbour looked large and prosperous with several lanterns lit and much activity on the docs. On the left it was darker and looked more rundown. Further north it was quite rundown and semi barren especially where the town backed into the fens. There was one particularly noticeable dark patch by the swamp.

While we waited on the ship Arthur went ashore to arrange for our accommodation. Finally he returned and we disembarked then checked over the horses after they were unloaded. Arthur led us to the 'Five Pipes', run by Goodie Atwater, in the Artisan's Quarter where there were four rooms available. We took all four.

.3.

04 Frost '98

The night was uneventful and breakfast was unexceptional. Gerald received an offer to entertain that night. Just after breakfast, an urchin came to see Arthur. It was probably because of this that the party, with the exception of Liessa, went out. We had been warned to stay together as Sanctuary was dangerous to anyone who wasn't familiar with it.

The urchin, name of Bill, led us through a maze of busy streets. Virtually all the population was human. After passing the governor's palace we arrived at a large tent bazaar. It was mid morning by now and most of the food sellers had already sold most of their produce but there was still

quite a bit of activity.

We were led into a large tent that had been partitioned into two. In this half was seated an elderly woman seated in a chair. She was swarthy and well covered and reminded me of a gypsy. Behind the translucent curtain was a large guy pottering around a dormant forge.

She introduced herself as Illora. I couldn't detect any definite College but there was a hint of one. What she was, was a fortune telling and, after crossing her palm with silver, we obtained the following readings.

1) 'What is the worst between me and what I seek' - Forces oppose you. Fire, fire and death, water and time. Of these the closest is fire. I see fire and a man in red but he is not of fire. There is a book, no there are many books.

2) 'What is the best way to kill the books?' - Only the whole can be destroyed.

3) 'Where are they now?' - That is unclear. Some are close and some are far. Some are very close. There is something confusing here.

She looked drained after that and it was then that the smith started up so we left. We found some 'elevenes' (the hobbits were hungry - especially Mary M) then headed back to the inn.

When we got back there was a message waiting for Arthur which asked him to meet Jarred at the 'Notched Axe'. So, after lunch, that's where we went.

This took us down towards the docks. On the way we passed the entrance to the Maze, that part of town which looked dark and consisted of small, narrow, streets. Finally we reached the 'Notched Axe'. It was a large and rundown establishment and looked empty when we arrived. All the patrons that were there looked disreputable. It had an open floor plan and the centre of the place consisted of a sunken gaming pit. Several well used weapons adorned the walls. Some looked rather unusual. We found a large booth and ordered beer all around.

Jarred contacted Arthur at our booth. He told us that a good possibility of someone who would know something about the missing books was a small time fence by the name of Felix Dravin, who specialises in small enchantments. Apparently he had picked up the books and other stuff as a job lot. The books weren't there now and he didn't know where. We could also try a chap called Melliot.

So our next stop was the jeweller's quarter where Dravin's shop was. It turned out to be a combination jeweller/locksmith and his main item appeared to be jewel encrusted ostrich eggs that had been split in two and fitted with locks and hinges. When we entered the shop we were met by a small boy, Timothy. When we asked to see Dravin, he refused our request so Arthur got threatening. The kid got scared and ran off upstairs, followed by Arthur. Amelia checked out the room behind the counter and discovered it was a small workroom and the opposite door was locked on this side. So she went upstairs too.

It wasn't long everyone had disappeared apart from Silverfoam who was watching the back entrance. My instructions were to watch the front so I closed the door, flipped the sign over to 'Closed' then, on Silverfoam's suggestion, cast a Strength of Stone on myself then leaned against

the door, after being made Indetectable.

Fairly soon, the others came back down dragging a chest. Inside it were most of the missing items that had been passed over for auction. Dravin had paid 30,000sp for the entire set as a job lot but the only thing he had been able to sell was the sword, for just over 30,000sp to a guy named Simon who works for a guy who works for a guy who works for Jubel (the local crimelord I think). He had obtained the box from Tobias Morgan who had other stuff such as a flamberge, some books, and other stuff two weeks ago. Tobias's warehouse is in the dock area.

Just before we left Liessa ordered an egg. Bill had been trying to steal small items but Mary M had him on telepathy and was insisting he put them all back. He did so, rather reluctantly, then tried projecting images of bodies and garbage in an effort to unsettle Mary M. Mary M pointed out that wasn't going to work on someone who had dealt with demons etc.

Since I had on a Strength of Stone, I was able to carry the chest back unaided. Meanwhile Bill was still trying to get back at Mary M by thinking various unsettling thoughts. So Gerald leant down and whispered "She does blush easily you know". Mary M replied "I've got you on telepathy too you bastard!" To which Gerald replied with a smile "I know."

By the time we arrived back at the 'Five Pipes' and ensured the chest and contents were secure there was someone downstairs to see Arthur. He wanted to know what sort of book we were after. When he was told we were informed that Melliot had them and was attempting to sell them.

So we headed down Governor's Way towards the scribe's office. Once there we managed to gain admittance to see the scribe in the book viewing room. Melliot turned out to be a rather large, round guy.

The first book he had brought out wasn't anything like the one we were looking for. For instance the title was 'The Wisdom of Caroc' and the cover was made of cow leather. When Amelia looked through it she discovered it was a derivative of the original with much of the arcane spells removed and the philosophies distilled into a more acceptable version. So she asked for the original to be brought out.

This one looked more like it. The title was correct and the leather was composed of human skin on the outside. However it was only eight years old and when Amelia looked inside she discovered there were bits literally missing with several blank sections. Also whoever had made this copy had been slipping into insanity as the writing became more incoherent as we progressed through the book. This wasn't what we were after either.

.4.

Melliot called for coffee. While we waited for it to arrive, he told us that the original was not in his possession and we'd have to negotiate with the owner. Also there seemed to be a lot of fakes out there. Someone even had the nerve to sell him copies that couldn't be opened and claimed they were sequels. The original was owned by the leader of a fire cult.

As the coffee and marshmallows were brought around, Amelia made sure that Mary M and Arthur didn't scoff the lot. Melliot said that we might be able to contact the cult through the local Temple of Fire, even though they weren't part of the temple. Just as we left he warned us about the guy

who tried to sell him the fakes - Tobias Morgan.

It was late afternoon by the time we arrived back at the inn, and while Bill chatted to one of the local barmaids, we planned over dinner in our rooms. Amelia wanted to go out and contact the guy and this was what we eventually did. All preparatory spells were cast i.e. Mind Cloaks, Mind Speech, Armours of Earth and Strengths of Stone.

Bill led us through a maze of alleys and streets. On the way we spotted a group of people wearing blue masks who we avoided. Soon Bill pointed out Tobias's warehouse. Arthur snuck off to look around. It was a two story building. Liessa picked up the minds of several guards and one accountant. Another person was keeping track of slaves.

Amelia, Arthur, Silverfoam, and I advanced on the building as Amelia planned to pose as a potential buyer. After banging on the door we were met by a large guy in heavy armour and wearing a broadsword. Inside was a large dark warehouse. We were taken to a set of stairs and conducted to the mezzanine floor. Once there, Arthur and I were firmly instructed by the local guards to wait there while Amelia and Silverfoam went into the boss's office.

Inside, they met Tobias who told them that he didn't have the unopenable books but could get them back. Over the mind-speech Liessa relayed the thought that he had sold them for a pittance and was now kicking himself. Finally they settled on a price of 20 guineas for all three books payable now. He should have them back by moonset, in a couple of hours.

So we left and waited at a pub called the 'Bloody Sails', a real dive of a place. Gerald sent off an illusionary dog to tail Tobias's messenger and see where he went. After a short while Gerald and I went out to find the dog. Shortly we trailed it to a darkened shop with three feathered quills painted on the display board. We made a note of the address then headed back to the pub.

Just on moonset, we headed back to the warehouse. This time Arthur climbed up on the roof while the other three who had been in entered the warehouse. This time the telepathies picked up a very worried clerk. Apparently there had been a hiccup in getting the books back. When we all got in the office we discovered a calm Tobias and a very worried clerk. Tobias explained that his messenger had been unable to get the books but he was confident that he would have them by tomorrow night. Amelia wondered if we could pick them up from somewhere else. Liessa relayed the clerk's thought 'Good luck!'. Finally Amelia was refunded ten guineas and Tobias told us that they had been brought by Madam Letitia from the 'Three Quills'. He offered to lend us a boy to lead us there but Amelia asked for the clerk. The clerk looked very worried at that but looked relieved when Tobias insisted on the boy.

So that was what happened. We three followed the lad while Arthur followed the clerk to a nearby pub. Meanwhile the others followed us at a safe distance. On the way we bypassed a street brawl.

Arthur, still Undetectable, followed the clerk into a nearby inn where he proceeded to start drinking heavily. Arthur slid into the seat opposite the clerk and waited for the Undetectability to wear off. When it did, the clerk got the shock of his life. To him, it appeared that a 'pixie' suddenly appeared in front of him. Believing it to be an effect of the drink he told Arthur all he wanted to know. Apparently the books had been stolen by the time he had got there and the intruders had gained entry by cutting a hole in the sandstone back wall. Only those three books

had been taken. Once Arthur found that out he went Undetectable and slipped out. The clerk resumed getting soused.

The rest of us had rendezvoused at the 'Three Quills' by this time. It was a three story building and Liessa detected minds sleeping in the second floor and a few on the third. Gerald had a look around the outside and up the walls and discovered a room that had the smell of wet paint.

By now Arthur had returned and, once we had his report, we concluded that the stonecutting sword had been used to get into the building. I examined the sandstone bits that had fallen but couldn't detect any magical aura. So whoever had the sword, had the books.

It was quite late by now, 10pm, so we returned to the inn. Upon arrival we were told that someone had been here looking for us. Didn't know who it was but, according to Goodie, he had a lovely red cloak.

After a while, we were up in our rooms when we heard the sound of someone thumping on the inn door. Then there were bangs, screams, and someone yelled, "He's dead!" We rushed downstairs. In the now open doorway was a man, lying dead, wrapped in a red cloak, and with an odd looking dagger stuck in him. A hand and a half sword was lying nearby. Both the sword and the body were dragged inside. While Mary M prepared for the resurrection attempt, we examined the weapons. The dagger wasn't magical but the blade was coated with some red muck - an alchemical poison. It's blade was two tiny crysblades shaped like two leaping flames. There was hardly any guard. The sword was magical with smiting magic embedded. A weapon spell I suspected.

.5.

Silverfoam was in the process of neutralising the poison but, since Amelia wanted everything divinated, Liessa took over. The poison itself was also magical, some sort of necromantic or wiccan enhance damage magic, probably either create plague or necrosis. Amelia stated that Michaelines don't use magic but I detected detection magic in the Michaeline amulet. Amelia took it for later examination. I also found two daggers on him, one in a boot, and the other in a back holster.

A short while Jared, Arthur's contact, arrived. He had a lead on Simon and the sword and wanted Arthur's help to track it down. He believed they'd be back by dawn but, if they weren't, to ask at the Vulgar Unicorn, located somewhere in the Maze.

It was nearly an hour later by the time Mary M successfully completed the resurrection ritual. When he woke up, his first impression was that Mary M was some sort of angel, a ceriph. Must have been the wings. He introduced himself as Brother Joseph and was rather concerned his medallion was missing. He referred to it as the Blessed Sword, Ira - Michael's Wrath. Amelia handed it back saying it had been found in the street.

The rest of the night most of us spent asleep. The night passed uneventfully.

05 Frost '98

Arthur had returned by the time we went for breakfast. All they found out was that Simon was acting as a freelancer. He then went off to follow another lead.

Joseph had found out that we were looking for the books but he wasn't sure that we were allied with the 'demonworshippers' who had them. He was from the Abby of Michael Defiant, outside Ranke City. He was sent here to look at the uprising of a demonic cult who, according to what he had been told, possessed dark magic. He was here to investigate discretely. Last night he had found a cult member - or one had found him.

After Amelia explained the situation to him, Joseph told us that he believed he knew where the first book is. It's somewhere in a set of crypts under a deserted temple. The cult is making use of the crypts. Joseph wasn't sure whom they served but they were the result of the merger of the 'Sons of Fire', who served Belial, and the 'Red Redemption' who served Aim. They now called themselves 'The Twin Flame' and was led by one who was a follower of Aim. There was a mage there who was a worshipper of Belial.

It was decided that we were going to go in there and get that book. So we weaponed and armoured up. Mary M tried a telepathy and promptly fell over in a deep sleep. I Daed her for 'Duration of curse in effect' and got 30 minutes. I told Joseph she was just tuckered out. Since Michaelines believe that magic is 'evil' we wanted to be subtle about our magic. So I waited while Joseph, Gerald and Amelia went to get Joseph's armour before putting a Strength on Liessa.

When they got back Joseph was clad in red enamelled full plate armour. By the time Mary M woke up, Silverfoam had surrounded himself with empty plates and Amelia told Mary M she had been asleep for three days. Mary M seemed so disappointed that she had missed all the fun so Amelia confessed.

Amelia had also told Joseph that we were mages so I put Armours on him, Mary M, and Silverfoam as well as a Strength of Stone on Gerald. Amelia requested that I save the rest of my magics for the Trollskins that may be required later.

It was an overcast, nippy, morning as we ventured out into the streets, fully armoured and ready for battle. The citizens kept a wide berth - not surprising really. However, we were intercepted by a group of militia at one of the intersections. Their leader was 6'5" and very broad. First Liessa tried to tell him that we were in the process of leaving until it was pointed out that the stables were in the opposite direction. Fortunately Amelia convinced them that we had to visit a temple first.

Finally we reached Temple Way. One of the temples here was one with a twisted looking top. The red paint on the building was peeling, revealing the sandstone below. An alleyway ran between it and the next building so we went down there. An unfinished wall was behind it.

Mary M detected a waiting mind below. Meanwhile, by the back door, Gerald spotted some brushed out tracks. There was a ward just inside the door but Silverfoam dissipated it. Joseph was explaining that the catacombs were artificial and were constructed at the beginning of Sanctuary's history. According to him, it was possible to get to nearly all points of the city.

Once inside, Liessa detected five minds below, one contemplating, the other four waiting. We wondered if those four were golems. At the end of the short corridor there were stairs leading up. There was another ward at the bottom which was a Rank 15 Hellfire. It was triggered by the first sentient without a certain magical taint or talisman. Once the ward was cleared, Gerald checked the steps and discovered the third one was booby trapped. This was bypassed.

At the top was a ceremonial area which consisted of an oval dais with a funnel pit next to it. Three staircases led down to the worship area in front of the temple's front doors. The whole place smelt musty and there were holes in the ceiling. The pit's surface was blackened. There were no auras down there but there was some sort of metal contraption at the bottom. Parts of it had been removed. The main doors were barred on this side.

Gerald spotted more tracks going to one of the staircases. At the bottom they ended at the dais wall. The wall looked blank but Gerald found a secret door. He managed to open it and discovered a counterclockwise spiral staircase going down. It looked rather dark down there.

.6.

Just as we were about to descend, Silverfoam became aware that Arthur was nearby. I saw him a moment later, looking over the edge of the dais. Soon we had sorted ourselves into a marching order and carefully descended.

Partway down, Gerald stepped on something and there was a 'Click'. Over the mind links, Mary M reported that one of the minds registered surprise as it was not expecting anyone. We paused for a while then, as the mind went back to what it was doing, continued cautiously on. Silverfoam detected another ward which was dissipated.

At the bottom the stairwell became a short corridor which expanded into a large room. Two dark openings were halfway up each side wall and were connected by a bridge. The room was lit by several torch sconces. Another exit was on the far side. Silverfoam detected a magical aura occupying the space under the bridge. 'What is the effect of the magic on a humanoid figure' resulted in the answer 'It'll go away'. We weren't sure whether that referred to the magic, or the figure.

As we started to enter the room, Gerald spotted something bulky moving in one of the openings. As it moved, it made a slimy, slippery noise. Gerald had been using Projected Image to explore which meant he was invisible but the creature spat out a fist sized ball of something sticky which hit the real Gerald pinning his arm to his side. Another one appeared from the other opening which resulted in one at each end of the bridge. I was one of the last around the corner into the room and tried to determine just what these things were from their aura. The best I could come with was 'Gloop Golem'. They were magical animates.

They fired again. One hit the wall behind Liessa and the other slimed Joseph's shield. The stuff smelt like it had come from a swamp.

Mary M reported that the minds had changed from 'Wait' to 'Destroy'. Also the other one had become rather alarmed with the thought "Shit! They've found me." Meanwhile I DAed the magical area with Silverfoam's standard question and got 'No Answer'. Mary M then backfired herself into blindness. At the same time Arthur ran into the warded area and a column of boneshards, worms, etc leapt up from where he was, just missed him, and splattered on the underside of the bridge. That didn't remove the entire ward, just the area where he was.

The next barrage of gloop glued Mary M to the wall and nearly covered Joseph's helm. This stuff solidified rapidly so Joseph was occupied in removing the helm before it became jammed. Mary M wasn't having much luck getting loose and another shot made sure she wasn't going anywhere.

Then Gerald heard a slurping sound coming from the opposite entrance.

Gerald charged into the warded area and managed to avoid another column of muck. Meanwhile Amelia leapt up and managed to pull a flaming scone down. Silverfoam soon discovered that gloop golems can't be banished or stopped with counterspells. Also they weren't actively under control. Meanwhile I had repeated my aura check on Mary M and discovered she would only be blind for a short while longer.

Liessa managed to help Mary M get free while Joseph succeeded in ripping his helmet off. Silverfoam headed into the warded area and was hit by a column of mud. Meanwhile I was hit by another mass of gloop.

It was about now that I did something that, in hindsight, was stupid enough to get me nominated for Stupidest Adventurer. I triggered a Self-Immolate on the theory that would stop any gloop from hardening. However, two things occurred. The first was I found that the gloop was extremely flammable. There must have been a high proportion of tar or pitch in it. The second was that I became the only target for the gloop golems as they were attempting to smother my fire. At least it kept the stuff off everyone else but, for a while, I thought I was going to be toast, literally. I managed to finally duck under the bridge but not before having to get myself out of my leather jacket and breastplate. The other problem was once ignited, I couldn't turn the flames off after realising my mistake.

By now Joseph had engaged the advancing gloop golem and caused it to collapse. Plus Liessa had used Spectral Warrior to take out one on the bridge. Amelia charged in and helped Joseph deal to the fourth gloop golem while wielding a lit torch.

Behind the fourth golem was a mob of skeletons. Mary M then warned us that the mage was preparing to leave after collecting up whatever he wanted. So Arthur, Gerald and Mary M managed to get around the skeletons and charge off after the mage. Meanwhile Joseph, Liessa and I went after the skeletons while Amelia went up the steps, that were behind the bridge, in order to take on the remaining golem.

I took one more gloop shot in the back before the golem turned to meet Amelia. That resulted in a burnt patch in the cloth under-armor before the fire went out. I am definitely going to have to find an armorer after this.

Beyond the far exit was a larger room. On the floor was engraved a large pentacle and a protection triangle. Standing by one wall was a human-sized barbecue grill. Arthur raced through that room, through the door and around the corner to a smaller room where the mage was in the process of disappearing through a concealed door. He had a sack over one shoulder and a book under an arm. Arthur leapt forward and jumped on the mage closely followed by Mary M. The mage didn't stand a chance.

Meanwhile Joseph, Liessa and I soon made short work of the skeletons. Amelia was in the process of being smothered by the gloop monster so Liessa went to help. Between the two of them, that gloop golem was no more. I was feeling rather injured so I drank a 10pt Healing potion.

As the mage died his body turned into a mass of twisted serpents which attacked. They dealt to

that but decided to grab the sack and book and get out quick. It was just as well they did as rising out of the pentacle was a fiery demon who looked very angry. It was identified with Belial. Once they were clear I blocked the gap with a Wall of Stone but not before Joseph was blasted with Dragonflames. Hopefully the wall would hold him while we made our escape. On the way out I retrieved what was left of my armour, and a fortunately intact breastplate.

.7.

There was a large explosion behind us as we ran out the back entrance and ducked into the back of the Wotan temple next door. They must have taken it over from another religion as the outside design consisted of several minarets. Inside were several wall hangings dedicated to Wotan and other Norden gods as well as a rather puzzled priest, probably wondering why we were so messy and looking like we had been in a fight. Outside, a crowd was gathering to watch the flames now erupting from the holes in the fire temple. Suddenly the roof caved in. While Gerald cast disguises on us all, Liessa had picked up Belial's mind and reported he was extremely annoyed. Probably throwing a tantrum.

After Amelia left a donation we made our way out, disguised as workmen carrying a stone winged statue (Mary M), and reached the inn without incident.

We cleaned up as best we could. The gloop was the most difficult thing to remove, especially out of Mary M's wing feathers. Amelia consulted with Goodie Atwater and discovered that her homemade liquor was quite adequate to the task. However it would take some time.

Before that there was the question of what we had retrieved from the fire cult. As well as the book, there had been the contents of the sack. Preliminary analysis of their auras revealed the following:

- Candlesticks (5) - magically enhances dark magic

- Key - magical opening

- Red rock - draining magics, probably blood.

While Arthur went to check the crowd in order to see if any other fire cultists were about, the rest of us rested for most of the afternoon. Silverfoam divinated the items while Mary M worked on the book. It was virtually identical to what she remembered but there was something nagging at her. Then she remembered. When they first encountered it, it was irresistible to the mages in the party, but now it wasn't. Also Amelia, a non-mage, was also able to open it. They figured it may be because it had already been studied.

When Arthur returned he told us he had identified four fire cultists. One of them was having thoughts of revenge against the perpetrators of the fire.

After we had rested, Arthur sensed a sentient mind in the book which was cycling through the same thought. Also it was now possible to open the pages at the back of the book. It was there they discovered that the writing was complete gibberish, as if the author had gone insane. Gerald came to the conclusion that this was a very well crafted illusionary fake.

A voice said 'I prefer the term forgery' and a person literally stepped out of the wall. He was a gentleman dressed mostly in black and looked in his mid thirties. Mary M believed him to be Claude, son of Koth, but subsequent DAs indicated that his actual age was 65. GTN =

Shapechanger(Tiger). Highest ranked spell except Hellfire and Damnum Magnatum was Skinchange. This must be Koth himself. He told us that the original book was safe, away from thieves, demons, and firemages. He had made the copy in order to get out of a rather difficult situation where he had to give something to someone. What he wanted us to do was to help him recover the other three books. Amelia refused to negotiate as she didn't trust him. So he faded back into the wall, along with some sort of gargoyle creature that was peering out.

Once he had gone Amelia tried to touch the wall and her hand went right through. Turned out there was an illusionary copy of the wall about a foot in front of the real one. The real window was open. Gerald had to use a special knowledge counterspell to remove it. He was also very curious on how it was done. I was more worried about how long had he been standing there listening.

Joseph said that he should report back to his monastery. So he did, taking the illusionary copy back for his abbot to deal with.

After checking that there were no other hidden listeners about we discussed what to do. If those fire cultists managed to trace us here then the inn could be in danger. So the suggestion was, should we move to another inn, or move to safe rooms in a brothel. I was not in favour of the brothel inside. Amelia told Goodie Atwell of what we planned. So we made our way to the Back Dog and Jug where Gerald organised rooms for a few days.

Earlier on, Arthur had discovered who had stolen the other books, a Mr Daniel Potter. That person had supposed to meet up with two people but had disappeared before meeting the second one. So, with Bill's help, we found our way to Mrs Potter's house in a very poor area of town called Downwind, mainly because nearby were the tanneries, abattoirs etc.

Gerald and I went to see her while the others waited. Even with the infusion of a few silver pennies she wasn't able to tell us much. The first person that Daniel was to meet was a bloke by the name of Hamino, one of those 'religious persons'. Locally he's known as Father Jim. She couldn't tell us where to find him, he just turns up.

Bill got very worried when we reported back and told him who we were looking for next.

.8.

Halfway back across the bridge that separated Downwind from the rest of Sanctuary we were accosted by four black cloaked, dark robed figures. Four more came at us from behind. There were no signs of the bridge guards. All were armed with more of those wavy daggers. Wonder how they traced us here?

Each of those daggers was coated with poison, as I found out when I was stabbed by one. The others were also dealing to opponents in their own way. Amelia threw three darts at one. They all hit and two of them were well placed. I tried punching my one out but discovered they were wearing hard leather armour under their robes. Meanwhile Liessa, who was next to me, managed to stun her opponent then push my one over the side of the bridge. Gerald was peppering the cult members with arrows while floating over the river.

I pulled out and drunk a Waters of Healing to deal with the poison then went for my broadsword. Given the choice between a stunned opponent and the one Liessa was fighting with, I went for

Liessa's one and dispatched it. She helped me so it seemed chivalrous to do the same. Then I disarmed the one that was stunned.

Meanwhile Arthur had spotted another person in black robes watching from a nearby alley. He gave chase but the suspect got away by going straight up a building.

Finally the fight was over. Those that were poisoned were healed and the one survivor, the one that I disarmed, was secured. The bodies were dragged over the bridge to the Downwind side. Already some of the inhabitants had come out to scavenge what they could. We had already removed the poisoned daggers. Speaking of scavenging, I managed to find some leathers that would fit me but they weren't as good as my old ones. Mary M discovered that the cultmembers were doped up on some sort of narcotic with hallucinogenic properties. Finally I lent Silverfoam a Waters of Healing as he had run out.

We rested a bit and hid the sleeping cultist under an illusion before entering the Maze. Here we were looking for a storyteller, by the name of Harkeem, who may know something. The buildings in the Maze looked empty and planks crossed overhead over the narrow street. Finally we reached a building bearing the sign of a unicorn rampant. Arthur said that this was the Vulgar Unicorn but, after studying the sign, figured Obscene Unicorn would be more accurate.

Inside was the storyteller going on about a great white kraken and a ghostly sea captain. Once he was finished Arthur invited him over to our table and, as he was plied with drinks, Arthur told our search as a form of unfinished story looking for an ending. He didn't mention any names but suggested that Father Hamino could help fill in the gaps - casting him as a minor villain. Harkeem suggested that Hamino was a bit of a rascal. Maybe we should talk to a man in Coffin Court who sells signs and also has a loft in the building.

So we left and backtracked in the Maze until we found a building with a sign of a sign on it. Arthur and Gerald went up on the roof and found a trapdoor that was bolted from the inside. No minds were detected inside. Meanwhile I was curious of the fact that there was more stone on this building than the other ones around here.

Arthur then came down and tried the front door and managed to gain entry. Inside was a workshop and a dead man slumped over a stack of signs. He had been dead for four hours. A ladder lead to an open trapdoor. Up there was another dead man splayed out, face-up, on the floor. It looked like he had been stabbed with a rapier or estoc. This was Daniel Potter.

Mary M resurrected him and, after recovering from the shock, told us that he hadn't got the books but 'the nob' took them. The nob was described as small, weasely with a goatee. Very aristocratic looking. With him were two big guys who had roughed Potter up then held him still as he was ran through.

Potter had been hired, through the local guild, by De Molei (the nob) to get the books however, after the job, Father Jimmy had offered more i.e. 500 shillings which was more than double. De Molei was at the Three Crowns Inn, and was with a lady whom he had addressed as something like Melody. We suspected it was actually M'Lady. The guy with the sword would have got half Potter's takings and Potter had gone in for the books. He described them as being cold to the touch. Fortunately he didn't try to open them.

We convinced him that it would be in his better interests to go straight and take the family (wife and 5 kids) well away from here. I gave him some money to tide him over for a short while - for the kids.

After leaving the Maze we headed for the 'Three Crowns', in the better part of town. First thing we did was to check the stables. The stablemaster told us that Lord Reynard De Molei had left some hours ago with his party. They had left by the North Gate. Presumably they were returning to Bowcourt.

Bill was sent upstairs with a message that Silverfoam had written while we watched the building. By now it was nine in the evening. After a short while a window was flung open and a dark shape went out the window and jumped the gap to the next building before bounding off over the rooftops. It looked like a large tiger. Silverfoam then admitted the contents of the message. It read "You're nicked."

Arthur went through the window to check on the room. All he found of interest was a discarded stocking. I started thinking about tracker dogs.

So we retrieved our gear and horses before leaving Sanctuary, hot on the trail of the missing sequels. Before we left, Arthur had given Bill what he wanted, sponsorship to the local Guild. Also Bill could do what he liked to that captured cult member.

.9.

The North Gate was actually in the East Wall but the road soon turned north. Shortly we reached a fork and Amelia checked for tracks. Indications were that they had taken the coast road so that's where we went. Looked like there was about a dozen large horses and six small and they were setting a brisk pace. Later we forded the Faull River (more like a glorified creek). At this point we were downwind of Downwind so Amelia started needling Arthur about 'the last traces of civilisation'. Gerald and Silverfoam went ahead to scout.

No sign that we had caught up to them by midnight so we find a creek and go upstream a bit until we find a clearing where we can camp.

Amelia suspects the Koth is following us so she wants to ambush him. So I cast Strength of Stone on Liessa for Endurance then go and collect more shrubbery to build up along both sides of the road while Silverfoam sets up a Sleep Ward just beyond the creek. Just after I tripled another Strength of Stone (Endurance) on Mary M, Silverfoam completed his ritual and looked very pleased with himself.

A short while later the clouds started rolling in, rather more quickly than usual, and the temperature falls. Soon an icy rain begins to fall. At this point Mary M picks up a close worried mind and it isn't one of us. It started to hail just after Liessa made me Undetectable. We huddled in the greenery and waited.

It got colder. The hail turned into sleet and the wind rapidly increased. All of us were feeling the effects of the cold with extremities turning blue and our faces going numb. By half-two we give up and head back to camp. I tried to put up a Wall of Stone to act as a windbreak but something went wrong and the Wall appeared on its end. It then blew over, crashing to the ground. Fortunately no one was flattened. We decided to set watches and rest the rest of the night.

An hour later the wind died down as rapidly as it came. By four, the storm was over. We all suspected Koth had caused it.

06 Frost '98

Around six we were all woken. The horses sensed a predator and less than a minute a smallish shape padded towards us. It was a rather damp wolf and was wearing something silver around its neck. It was also affected by a Mind Control from the Entity College. Had to be Koth again. Now what was he up to?

Silverfoam and I cautiously approached the wolf and we could see it was wearing a silver hipflask. The flask didn't have an aura so we carefully removed it. The wolf ran off into the forest. Silverfoam examined the contents of the flask and pronounced to be a 50 year old Borderleau cognac - a very good year. It was passed around and helped warm us up - as well as the fire I managed to get going. Amelia started calling Koth all sorts of names including smarmy, egotistical and pretentious. When we checked on the ward it was still there.

Headed off and reached the seacoast. Around 11am we reached a small fishing village with a large inn. Check in and clean up. The innkeeper mentioned that a large group had checked in just before the storm hit. There were a couple of nobles (a man and woman) as well as eight guards, and servants. The woman was described as a 'stunning blond' and the chap as 'a weasel'. They had left at eight this morning.

Decided to rest and stay the night.

07 Frost '98

Left really early. I asked the innkeeper for packed food for the trip. It was a grey, cool, morning as we left. Passed another inn at 3pm but decided to keep going in the hope that we might catch up with the other party.

Later on, Mary M's horse had a mishap and slipped over a bluff breaking both front legs. Mary M was able to fly off. We had no choice but to put that horse down. I cast Speak with Animals in order to calm the rest down.

We pushed on. It was nineish by the time we reached the next village and stopped at a large rural inn. We figured that, by now, Lord De Molei's party was one inn ahead. There we arranged for rooms and hot dinners. Silverfoam also arranged for a mule.

08 Frost '98

Early that morning we were awoken by a flash of light and a loud BOOM!. A thunderstorm was rolling in. Very soon it was pitching down with rain. I stayed up for a while to watch the light show. From what we could ascertain this was a natural storm.

It was still raining at dawn as we left. The storm was rolling inland. It wasn't until 6pm that we reached another village. There we discovered that the Lord's party had been here this morning. They had been asking about alternative means of transport and were told that it may be possible to get sea transport at the next town up - Caron. So we stopped for a meal and pushed on.

It was decided that Arthur and Gerald would fly on ahead and see what was going on. Before they left I put a Strength of Stone(Endurance) on Gerald. Silverfoam theorised that they would be

leaving this evening as it was high tide.

Once they left, we carried on. Mary M was flying above, stretching her wings. Just then she spotted that gargoyle creature that had been with Koth, back in Sanctuary. It flew off and she went after it. Silverfoam put a Locate on it.

The gargoyle tried to distract her by emitting a flash of light but Mary M was relentless. Soon she had caught up and grabbed it. However it was stronger than it looked and managed to break free. It then tried to net Mary M but she skilfully evaded. It then flew into a valley, created a patch of fog, and vanished. Silverfoam had to give Mary M directions over the MindSpeech. Again Mary M caught up to it but again, it broke loose and took off. Liessa sent a Phantasm after it but it went 'poof'. Also the locate lock vanished.

When Mary M returned she had been blinded and deaf. Silverfoam talked her down then cast a Wiccan General Counter on her which removed the effects.

By now, Arthur and Gerald had arrived in Caron and discovered that the Lord's party was still here. However they soon found out that they had booked passage out on the next boat.

.10.

Arthur was following the guards while Gerald headed for the docks. There, he saw that there was one large boat, a caravel, two smaller coasters and a flotilla of fishing boats. He managed to speak to an officer from the caravel, called the Lady Elvira, and discovered that they were preparing to leave shortly. They couldn't wait for us but recommended one of the coasters, the 'Spirit of Air' commanded by Captain Johansson. So Gerald went to see him and arranged passage north. To the south side of the Ffenargh would cost 250sp while up the central channel to Eylea would cost 300sp. There hadn't used to have been a channel but it had been cleared 7 years ago.

Gerald went back down to the docks. Shortly afterwards, some guards arrived. The two lead guards were large and looked like twins. They were leading the horses and led them along the dock, down the ramp and onto the water where they trotted along as though they were on dry land. It looked like the Lord and Lady were already on board the boat. Arthur had also arrived, along with a crowd of curious onlookers, and detected that the other guards believed that there was something odd about the two large guards. None of them know where they're going.

Soon, the officer arrives with the remaining sailors. They row out then the sails and anchor are taken up. The ship starts to depart then a Mage Wind picks the sails up and they take off out of the harbour.

Shortly after, there is a commotion at the inn. A body has been discovered in the stables. He had been stripped and garrotted. It was generally believed it was one of the sailors. Could it be that Koth was now on the boat?

The body was taken to the bailiff's place and stored in the cellar. Once everything settled down Gerald and Arthur sneaked in and removed it. Gerald made it look as if they were carrying a roll of carpet.

By dusk, the rest of us arrived in town. Amelia spoke to the Spirit's captain and soon we were

getting on board. I counterspelled and recast my Speak with Animals (getting a triple). Thus armed, I reassured the horses about what would happen.

Once we were on board and away, Mary M resurrected the body. We discovered he was Jean-Paul, a guard from Newcourt in Bowcourt and one of the Lord's guards. He had been checking on the horses and had no idea who hit him. Liessa hypnotised him to believe he was still in the stables and that the motion he was feeling was due to his weakened condition.

We needed to find out everything he knew and ensure that he was truthful about it. So a strange surreal landscape was set up involving mists, strange eldritch sights and sounds, and certain disguise cantrips to make us more unearthly. Then we abruptly woke Jean-Paul up.

To him, it must have looked like something out of his worst nightmare. Liessa was doing the questioning (with suggestions from the rest of us through the mind-link). I'd hate to have been the poor sod that was subjected to Liessa's interrogation. As well as asking pertinent questions she was unsettling him with questions like "Where is the Key to the Apocalypse" and "Name the 8 steps in the Ritual of Ag-Nazim. Hurry. Your life depends on it". He was really getting unsettled and fearful and for a while I thought he was going to have a heart attack.

He tells us that he's working for De Molei who he referred to as 'Le Weasel'. M'Lady was identified as De Berville. Jean-Paul said he was from Newcourt which lies within the county of Foxcourt. He had been working for Le Weasel for the last three months and during their travels they had gone down to Seagate by horse then to Monkierre in South Bowcourt, where they spent a week, then down to Sanctuary where Le Weasel acquired the books. The books are kept in an ornate box. M'Lady came with Le Weasel and it is rumoured that she speaks with the Dark Ones and has hands of men who have been murdered, some candlesticks, and a stone that draws blood. As far as the two big guards are concerned, he doesn't know who they are as they also came with Le Weasel and he referred to them as Mr Fear and Mr Loathing. He has seen them summon rain.

After all of this he was put to sleep again with the 'suggestion' that this was a nightmare brought about by delirium and fever.

09 Frost '98

Early morning, the wind stiffened and the ship surged forward. It stayed as a strong southerly all day. I spent most of it fishing off the stern with some of the sailors. The others spoke to a well recovered Jean-Paul. He didn't say much about his employers but said he was from a fishing village in Newcourt. Amelia told him we had found him and would attempt to rejoin him with his comrades.

11 Frost '98

At midday we reached an estuary with a large rock at the end. The captain said we just might make it to Eylea just on dark or we could wait here for the next morning. We decided to press on.

Sure enough, night was falling as we reached Eylea, after passing through the channel in the swamp. The most prominent feature was the stone monastery to St Theoderick to the right. Amelia and Mary M leapt off the ship and went up there while the rest of us helped unload. They were met by an old guy, Clarados, who knew them from ten years ago. Apparently he had hired there party and also the original one from 25 years ago. He told them that more of their friends

had arrived that morning who had been concerned about some terrible business in the swamp and were going to check it out. They had taken a couple of punts and had left at 10 that morning, heading for a large hall. Lorge Hall, Amelia surmised. They had left their horses behind.

By the time we arrived, Amelia had arranged for a punt and guide for the morning. Dinner was served and accommodations were provided. I decided to stay in the stable with the horses and tried talking to the two big black ones that the Lord and Lady had ridden but didn't learn much. However I believed that they would make good breeding stock.

.11.

12 Frost '98

Next morning we were ready to go. Nearly everyone wanted Strength of Stones and Armours of Earth so those were provided. Also Arthur requested a blessing from the monks, something to protect us from the water. After a bit of conferring Clarados went off, then returned with a clear, teardrop shaped crystal he said was the Tear of Theodelus. It would turn black if it was touched by an 'impure' person. Naturally that led to a discussion on the meaning of purity. Arthur suspected that his touch would turn it black and he wasn't sure that he could be shriven. Mary M didn't think we'd have enough time for that.

From what we could tell from DAs, the tear detected compassion, conscience, and morality. Most of us touched it and it stayed clear however, when Mary M did so, it went sparkly blue, much to the astonishment of Clarados. He (sort of) rushed out and returned with a whole collection of monks including a very old one with a protective magical staff. He was introduced as Father Zebulon. While the assembled watched, Mary M touched the tear again and the same thing happened. There was a collected gasp from the crowd. I wonder if this means that Mary M is going to be venerated.

Father Zebulon gave us all blessings, consisting of Waterbreathings and Waterproofings. I then arranged for the scribenotes, written to this point to be left at the monastery. A written note told where we were going and contained instructions to forward them to the Guild if we didn't return in a week.

We boarded the punt, currently rigged for sail. Silverfoam still wanted to be piped aboard. Finally Gerald took the hint. Our guide took us up-river past the Eylea Island then went up a tributary passing the village of Lagfar then Corpsemire. It was well named as there were lots of corpses there, some of which would float up from time to time. A big battle had been raged there sometime in the past.

At 1pm the sail was brought down and we punted further into the marshy swamp. By four we were in stick, boggy, march, about two miles off from Lorge Hall. This was as far as we could get by punt, we had to walk the rest of the way. So we squelched on. Fortunately the ground got firmer after 200 yards and was reasonably dry. Soon we reached a ridge and Liessa reported a bunch of minds thinking "Yum yum eat eat eat yum". Turned out to be a herd of swamp cattle.

The other thing we saw over the ridge was a huge black edifice consisting of one large tower and eight smaller ones around it, located about a mile away, on the spot where the manor should be. We made ourselves invisible by various means and cautiously approached.

When we got there we discovered a 130ft diameter black disc with eight 20ft high outward

projecting spikes with octagonal cross sections. On top of the disc was the tower, 100ft high and 40ft across. On top of the tower were ruins of grey stone, what was the manor's basement. Other bits of grey stone masonry, the remains of Lorge Hall, were scattered about. The tower was covered in wet, glistening, swamp muck which was slowly dripping down.

We walked around the tower. All we found were animal tracks, no sign of a campsite until we got around to the front. There, near the front track was two desiccated bodies. We figured that they had been doppelgangedered to death as they looked very old and mummified. The last magic to impact was life draining. It was entity magic and had occurred yesterday.

We then tried to learn as much as we could using DAs. Everything was magical. Each spike contained incredibly strong entity magic which was used for channelling. However each one channelled a different elemental aspect. In order clockwise from the western most one was Dark, Earth, Life, Water, Light, Air, Death, Fire. We figured that they were draining the appropriate element from the environment, a hypothesis that was proven when an animal brushed against the life spike and was aged. They could only be negated by the opposite element. All we could detect on the disk and the tower were protective and preservative magics. Then Gerald noticed that the disk was still rising at a rate of just under an inch in five minutes.

Gerald went up to have a look at the top of the tower. Up there was lots of rubble and no guards. So the rest of us ascended to the top. Up there we found an open trapdoor with black stairs spiralling downwards. Muddy footprints led downwards.

We descended single file. First Gerald followed by Silverfoam, Amelia, Mary M, Liessa, me then Arthur. Shortly we were in a circular room which had been trashed. Some bookshelves were still partially intact along the wall. Four stands with empty glass cases were also standing. The first one had been broken but the remaining three had only the backplates removed. Amelia warned us to be careful as there were still active destructive wards on the cases. These had been where the books had been kept.

Tracks led to the opposite wall and a secret panel in the floor was discovered. Below that was another spiral staircase. Not far down was a dark shadow on the step and the wall. Its aura was Formally Living and had been hit with a Black Wind spell of the Entities College around 20 to 22 hours ago. So Silverfoam cast Counterspells on us from the various entity colleges.

The stairs ended at another room which contained material that had collapsed and decayed, such as tables and glassware. We suspected that this had been an alchemical lab. Footprints in the dust led to the remains of a door opposite. The panel at the top of the stairs had closed but Arthur soon had the triggering mechanism figured out.

More stairs. By the time we reached the bottom of those we figured that we were at the level of the disk. We were now on an internal balcony with a large room beneath. There was a large inlaid pentacle immediately below the balcony. A protective triangle was nearby and the rest of the floor was covered in glyphs. Liessa picked up two worried minds, another 150ft below, probably the remaining two guards.

The room itself was 100ft across. Around the edges were eight large curved arches. The top of each arch corresponded to one of the spikes. The floor was awash in two inches of water. There seemed to be a flow in from one of the eastern arches, probably the Water one. The Air arch had

the intrinsic magical nature of portal, destination of Alusia. From what we could figure out it was a doorway from an elemental aspect and there seemed to be no effect if an entity walked through.

.12.

As far as I could tell, the floor was made out of a black basalt rock. Mary M was checking the doorway auras and noticed that the death one seemed to be weaker than the others. Why that was, we were unable to determine. The life one was correspondingly more powerful.

Just then, Arthur heard something upstairs just as Silverfoam found a crack running around the edge of the inlaid triangle. We then noticed a twinkly light bouncing down the stairs so we ducked behind an illusionary wall. The light turned out to be a glass globe with a magical light inside which plopped into the water and floated there. Gerald Tked kit away towards the light portal where it rested, still glowing.

Meanwhile Arthur detected two minds upstairs thinking waiting, curious and watching thoughts so he crept up the stairs to investigate. Silverfoam quickly determined that the light ball doesn't have any offensive capabilities. On the way up, Arthur spotted a weasel, that didn't appear to have a mind, coming down. We suspected it was an illusionary animal which was later confirmed. The spell had been cast at the tenth level of ability and the weasel couldn't see invisibles - which was what most of us were, in one form or another. Silverfoam then counterspelled the weasel.

Arthur, by now, had worked his way up to the remains of the lab. Suddenly he vanished off the mind-link. Silverfoam tried locating him but to no avail. So most of the others charged up. Mary M was the first into the darkened lab and suddenly found herself netted. Amelia wasn't too far behind and banged into a solid door in the doorway - that hadn't been there a few minutes ago.

The gargoyle on the other side, tried to sap Mary M but missed. As Mary M struggled to get out of the net, the gargoyle began dragging her up the stairs. Then the gargoyle fell over as Mary M's invested petit mort spell took effect. While she worked on extricating herself she noticed another gargoyle/half devil drag the first one away.

Liessa was hacking at the door while Amelia triggered a WindWalk and slipped though the gap. She then went after the retreating half-devil which was attempting to fly off with the first one. Mary M managed to extricate herself and also took off in pursuit. As she crossed the library, she felt magic impact.

It took a short while for Liessa to knock a hole in the door and we poured though into the lab. Gerald spotted an illusionary wall, forming a small alcove. There was still no sign of Arthur.

The two half-devils and Amelia had managed to exit the tower. Amelia could catch them but Mary M was too far behind. Unfortunately she couldn't do anything while in an insubstantial state so she tried to position herself so she could grab them as the Windwalk wore off. It didn't work and Amelia's own flight ability was much too slow for another attempt. So her and Mary M returned to the rest of the party.

The triangle had transportation magic on it and the triggering condition was a word in common speech. So we stood in the triangle and Gerald uttered something in an ancient language ('down' he later said it was) and the floor dropped out from under us. It then closed above us. We were

now descending in a triangular column.

After a while, the walls disappeared and we descended to the floor in a very large, pitch black room. Undetectables are dropped on Amelia, Mary M, and myself. ESP detects nothing. The triangle is flush with the floor and no sign of a groove is detected. We explored carefully and discovered stairwells at each of the four cardinal points - Life, Death, Light and Dark. From the lantern light I was carrying, we could see glyphs on the ceiling and a triangular hole in the centre.

We headed for the Life stairwell and discovered it was 30' across. There was a magical aura - life channelling in the area and we could see a dim glow coming from below. Also we could see that the staircase descended into fog.

We descended to the fog layer. On one side the stairwell became unsupported and we could see part of the ceiling. No sign of any floor below though. Stalactite objects could be seen protruding from the ceiling. They were magical with the nature being channelling and condensing. Drops could be seen forming at their tips. The fog itself was also magical and, from what we could ascertain, had a slightly beneficial effect. So we went into it. It didn't feel damp but definitely felt refreshing and clean - like mountain air.

Once out of the fog layer, we could see we were descending along the sides of a cylinder - 700ft across. Three other identical staircases also spiralled down. The floor seemed to be around 2100ft below us but we couldn't see it as it was covered in small, spherical bubbles. Occasionally another one would fall from the stalactites above. In the middle of the 'bubble bath' was a ziggurat, also made out of black granite.. Gerald Tked a falling bubble towards us and we examined it. Effect on humans - restoration. Effect on elvish namers - beneficial. Liessa surmised that was because they were 'gobstoppers'.

We were about halfway down when a guard-type figure stepped out of an entrance near the apex of the pyramid. He took one look and ducked back inside. A few minutes later he was back with five companions, another two guards, two larger guards, and an aristocratic looking gentleman. The aristocrat called out in a Bowcourt accent "Don't come any closer". "Is there a problem?" called back Silverfoam, taking on a similar accent. "Only if you come any closer".

They kept bantering at each other as we continued our descent. It was obvious that they were De Molei, the two that Jean-Paul had referred to as Fear and Loathing and three of the other guards. After taking into account the shadow on the stairs, that left M'Lady and two other guards (one of which was either Koth or Claude) unaccounted for. Finally De Molei ordered his guards to 'harm' us. Fear and Loathing looked like twins, blond, blue-eyed and beefy.

One of the bug guys cast and Silverfoam was hit with Dragonflames (being the only obvious target) while the three guards raced down the pyramid and crossed on top of the bubbles. Amelia and I went to meet them while Gerald fired arrows at them. The arrows struck home but we saw them eat something before continuing.

Fear and Loathing unfurled batwings and took off. Silverfoam Daed one of them and concluded that he was some sort of devil. Unfortunately he wasn't banishable by counterspell. Amelia shot at them with special arrows and succeeded in causing one to fall on to the stairs. The other one pulled out an arrow, which obviously hurt it, and proceeded to kick his fallen companion before continuing on to attack us. Liessa hacked into it and caused it to explode in black, oily smoke but

not before it hit her back.

Amelia was busy attacking the three guards, who had reached the stairs. She seemed to have gone into some sort of berserk rage so it seemed more prudent to stay out of her way. Gerald was in the process of charging in. It didn't take long before all three guards were either dead or unconscious.

Just then, on the pyramid, two other figures appeared next to De Molei. One was a woman with long blond hair wearing a courtly gown (M'Lady) and the third was a tall figure dressed in black robes and looked like he had been mummified.

.13.

Gerald was the only person I could actually see so I followed him across the bubbles. It was like walking on a scree slope so we had to be careful about our footing. Another guard stuck his head out of the pyramid and ducked back inside. M'Lady clapped her hands three times and three oily puffs of smoke appeared which coalesced into humanoid females. More devils I presumed. The mummified one raised his hands and something dark flickered between them before hundreds of little black stars flew out from them in all directions. At the same time a small black haloed shape appeared next to him while the guard returned carrying a very large crossbow which he started winding up.

We made an attempt to avoid the black dots but to no avail. Everyone got several of them stuck to themselves which made them effectively visible. Mary M flew to the base of the pyramid and hovered. Just then the guard that Amelia killed stood up again. Fire flickered in his eyes and mouth as he shambled towards Silverfoam, who was still on the stairs.

The wizened one gestured again and black flame erupted then vanished into the pyramid. Then 20ft high walls of black flame appeared on the edge of every level all around the pyramid. Mary M had a wall appear in front of her and another 5' wall appear behind her - presumably from the level below the layer of bubbles. It was about then I noticed another black haloed figure halfway down one of the spiral staircases on the opposite wall. It looked like he was just watching.

Amelia got to the first wall (the 5' one) and floated over the top of it. Silverfoam raised a staff and the Undead stopped ten feet away from him. Le Molei was doing something with an orb in his hands while M'Lady cast a spell at Mary M which had no effect.

Silverfoam started running and the zombie decided I made a more tempting target so I increased my speed towards the rest of the party and the pyramid. Just then the wizened one completed his latest incantation and black tentacles appeared on all the pyramid steps, spaced twenty feet apart. They looked like some strange version of Hands of Earth and were behaving the same way. One of them tried to grab Amelia but she elegantly sidestepped.

Gerald boosted himself upwards, pulled out his bow and shot several arrows. One of the female devils took the one meant for M'Lady. The one aimed at the mummified one dissipated before it got to him but De Molei took two good hits which left him rather dazed. The crossbowman also fired hitting Gerald then began reloading. Gerald shot up and into the mists. As he did so, the figure on the stairs stood up and saluted him.

Amelia decided to charge through the next wall and took damage from cold and life-draining

effects. M'Lady cast again at Mary M who resisted again. Meanwhile the wizened one looked at M'Lady then De Molei, noticed that they weren't looking at him, so decided to send black fires up and down. A few seconds later all the bubbles started rising and drifting sideways. It was getting more difficult for us to keep our footing. Liessa leapt through a wall on to the pyramid while Silverfoam and I ended up on the next layer down as all the bubbles began spiralling faster and faster into the air.

Amelia, Liessa, and I were grabbed by tentacles. Now I was on the pyramid, I could feel the magic again so I decided to try a long shot and send a Tunnelling up the side of the pyramid. The mana felt dead and cold.

However, something had happened on top. The small creature next to the wizened one had leapt up and plucked the sphere out of De Molei's hands. It, and De Molei began wrestling for the sphere. M'Lady threw a beam of light with splashed against the wizened one while the three female devils tried to attack him but met resistance in the form of an invisible shield.

The bubbles were swirling rapidly all around. Suddenly there was a soundless detonation as they all exploded with a bright burst of blinding light. It smelt and tasted of bright sunshine and restored us to full health and invigoration as well as wiping out the zombie.

Once we could see again the battle on the pyramid top was still going on. M'Lady and the devils were recovering from the light. The guard had dropped the crossbow and was attempting to flee. The figure on the stairwell was still watching. De Molei and the small creature were still fighting for possession of the sphere. However the wizened person was no longer wizened and mummified looking. Instead he stood tall and debonair. Also the mists above had gone. In the centre of the ceiling was a large black stalactite with something descending. Gerald flew up again and saw that the stalactite was dropping off in layers, each subsequent piece being larger.

The ex-wizened one jumped to the apex of the pyramid. M'Lady ran off after the guard while unfurling bat wings. The devils tried to attack him again, but again bounced off the shield. All he did was to open his mouth wide to catch the first descending drop.

Gerald conjured up a plank in an effort to deflect the drops away. That worked but the drops, after leaving the plank, curved back on course. The stranger swallowed the first drop and became bigger. At that moment another figure came out of the pyramid, quickly assessed the situation, and flew off. M'Lady also took off.

Amelia ordered us to get out as fast as we could. Those that could, started flying towards the entrance. The rest of us that were held, destroyed those tentacles, and Amelia triggered WindWalks on those who couldn't fly. I was first and immediately headed for the entrance.

Just then, from the midst of the wrestling match, pieces of brass orb dropped out. De Molei looked very worried at that point. Also the other guy that had flown off met up with the one on the staircase and they departed together.

Black power was pouring out of the pyramid while the person, whom we were sure was a revived Caroc, was growing larger with each drop and also appeared to be changing into a dragon. We weren't planning on hanging around to confirm this.

By various means, we made our way out of the tower. On the way, Arthur's sword was located but there was still no sign of Arthur. When we reached the library level we noticed that the entrance above had caved in and M'Lady was trapped there, pleading with someone called Azmade (turned out to be the other demon who had got a forgery) to save her. So while the others piled into her. I cast a Tunnelling through the blockage. M'Lady was quickly dispatched and her body turned to powder. All that was left was a winged skeleton. As dark smoke began coalescing in the room, we exited through the tunnel and left the tower. Power was crackling around the spikes and the tower was visibly rising.

While Mary M and Silverfoam flew off to warn the monastery, the rest of us managed to find the punts that the other group had arrived in and left. It was late at night by now so, when we figured we were at a safe enough distance, Gerald cloaked us in an illusionary terrain.

13th Frost

Early that morning, it was noticed that everything had gone silent. We were found by monks and escorted back. Mary M and Silverfoam were waiting as was Arthur. He told us that he had been in Koth's pocket the entire time and, after Koth had left the tower, he had released Arthur and told him to warn us to get clear. Koth was also keen to vacate the area. So Claude had given Arthur some shadow-wings and Arthur had managed to reach the monastery.

Arthur also told us that, while he had been in Koth's pocket, he had summoned the demon Lorange, who was a rather nasty demon, into pain and torture. The demon was still trapped in there and Koth had no idea. If that demon ever got out, we suspected that it would become very unpleasant for Koth. Also Lorange knew about the books.

So that was that. We made our way back to the Guild. The monks allowed us to take the four horses that the other party had left so I claimed the black stallion as part of treasure. Should make a good stud horse.

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