

Miranda Cornelius' Journal...

DM: Patrick Plouffe aka Jonathan Winters

Players: Steve Flam aka Tarlyn (playing Miranda, and writer of this journal)
Patrice Lazure (playing Niles)
Joël Paquin (of the FoS) (playing Philippe Mathurine)

This is Miranda's personal journal of her adventures. You'll eventually see that Miranda has a few things in her background she isn't proud of, as well as a few scars... So be warned that Miranda's point of view is often tainting her lenses when she writes this journal!

DM comments are in blue!

Ravenloft Campaign Background

Here are some historical facts the PCs know.

- 740: - *Grand Conjunction: A major change in the geography of the Core lands and its Islands.*
- *Start of Tepestani Inquisition.*
- 741: - *Hazlan school of wizardry built.*
- 742: - *Bloody Jack's 13th killing spree.*
- 744: - *Realm of Timor is found underneath Paridon.*
- 747: - *Malocchio Aderre takes control of Invidia.*

Also, There is no "Claimed by Darkon" Memory loss craziness in my game until I figure out something I personally like. So there! ☺

Short background on the PCs

Miranda Cornelius (Monk)

Born in Paridon in 728. I didn't value much my parents' morals and at a young age joined a street gang. Sooner or later it caught up with me and I was caught by the police. To my parents chagrin, I was sent to the Divinity of Mankind Temple in Paridon. After a few years of studying there, the Temple had had enough of me and sent me to Darkon to study languages.

I like to keep mostly to myself. I don't trust anyone, especially those with money. The only thing that I hold any interest for is languages. I seem to have a knack for them. I guess Sister Agatha knows me better than I do.

At the University in Darkon I met these two gentlemen, Niles and Philippe. Together we've traveled back to Paridon for some personal business of mine. Though Philippe is a stinking Noble I sort of trust him.

Niles Nicholson (Wizard)

I was born in a place that no longer exists, in a time that no longer exists either. It was somewhere in Zherisia's countryside, not too far from Paridon. I had a relatively normal childhood, even though the blackness of my hair was something quite unusual in my realm. My parents used to work the land, coming to Paridon twice a week to sell the products of their little farm. Despite their efforts to transmit their work ethic to me, I grew up to be quite a procrastinator quite honestly. I always felt like time was on my side, like I had the whole eternity to accomplish my goals. Time in itself has always been a fascinating concept to me. When I was young, I would accompany my father to Paridon and I would generally spend the day daydreaming, twisting the fabric of time in my mind to escape the boredom generated by the clients' stories. But there were a few stories that managed to grab my attention. I remember particularly well an old man who claimed he had spent time with the feys of Tepest, a humanoid race who could live many hundred years. I used to wonder what it would be like to live that long.

Like most people who share my origins, my life was radically changed ten years ago by the Great Conjunction. I have not seen my parents since then and, although there is still some crazy hope inside me that I will eventually see them again, logic leads me to believe that I won't. But then again, does logic mean anything in the world we are living in? Anyhow, after the disappearance of my parents (and of the farm, and of the whole countryside...), I spent most of my time with the old storyteller, and little by little, his stories became mine. Sometimes, I even tell the stories as if I had lived them myself. It's often only after people tell me that I'm too young to have lived those stories that I tell them about the old man. Perhaps even more importantly, the old man discovered I had a certain talent for magic and showed me the basics. I was strongly encouraged to find a place of study to further my arcane development. My respect for the man, as well as my curiosity about where magic could lead me, made me study hard enough to be accepted at Martira Bay University in Darkon. This is the place where I met Miranda and Phillippe.

Philippe Mathurine (Sorcerer / Fighter)

Noble born in Souragne in May 726, I grew up in the quiet Mortolane Mansion. Contrary to other noble kids I know, my parents gave me strong moral values of justice and equality between all humans, not just the rich. So from as long as I can remember, I always tried to stay away from other noble kids, which I found superficial and cruel. They didn't understand my *loa* worship either (I praise the Maiden of the Swamp).

Anyway, I always liked hunting and fishing, and I regularly went with other Souragniens kids (often the son and daughter of our well treated workers). So I can be seen as an odd person: I'm fully at ease with nobles from my noble education on the plantation, but I usually prefer to stay away from them.

I also love to read, especially old dusty tomes. My sorcerer powers were unleashed when my mother died. I was afraid since I knew how people treated wizards in Souragne! But my father had good relations with benevolent voodans, and my powers grew hidden, without me getting in trouble... When I was a young man, my father sent me to Martira Bay University, on the main land, to study sociology and numbers. The vast library there was a blessing! This is where I met Miranda and Niles.

I used to often go back to Souragne, but now it's been nearly two years since my last visit to my homeland... For the moment, I'd like to keep the reason for myself!

Our D&D House Rules

Character Classes:

For a group with few players (two or three) and lacking in diversity (ex: no rogue or cleric), a character may "multi-class" at every 5th level by adding another class like a template to her character.

So a 4th level sorcerer character could become a 5th level sorcerer / 1st level rogue. Her main class is sorcerer and she uses the sorcerer's BAB and saves, but for this level, she has access to the rogue's skills too as class-skills for that level.

She also gains the rogue's class features for that level (Sneak Attack + 1D6, Trapfinding).

Sorcerers:

For a group without any cleric, a sorcerer can add the domain spells of a god's domains to his known spell list, in addition to the arcane spell levels available to a sorcerer of this level. There are no other changes on number of spell per day cast, DC of spell, etc.

Example: with the "air" domain chosen (PHB p 185), he would add *Obscuring Mists* and *Wind Wall* to his spell list for a Sorcerer fourth level (he can have arcane spell level one and two).

Skills:

- Move Silently & Hide skills are replaced by Sneak (*Arcana Evolved*).
- For a group with few players (two or three), cross-class skills are maxed at half the class skills maximum, but may be bought at the cost of a class skill.

Session one – Shut-In from Dungeon 128

(played September 5th, 2007)

October 750 Martira Bay, Darkon

During class today, Ms Limiter received a telegram. She did read it then continued on with the class. After class was over, she beckoned me to her desk. Speaking to me as she handed me the letter, she said “You can take a leave of absence from your classes until you deem fit to return, Miranda.”

I frowned at her. “Just read the telegram” she said.

From Sgt Detective Lilly to Miranda Cornelius, Martira Bay University.

Late on the evening of the 20th of October, your parents were savagely attacked on their way home from their shop. The perpetrator escaped but luckily for your parents we came upon them in time. They are in the hospital in Riverside. You can get more information on this matter when you come back to Paridon.

Sincerely yours,

John Lilly, Detective

I read it twice, folded and placed it into a pocket. Looking at Ms Limiter I nodded and left. I went looking for the only 2 people I really got along with in this place, Niles and Philippe. Niles is from Paridon like me, but Philippe is from Souragne. Souragne is an island off of the core. He seems to not like Nobles just like me as is apparent by his attitude towards the nobles of Souragne when he speaks of them. However, his clothes and etiquette show extremely good education and well manners, go figure...

Me? I have not set foot back in Paridon in 5 years...

Ten years ago...

June 15th 740 Riverside, Paridon

I looked around. Spying Arthur and Penelope across the street I nodded once, then mingled with the flow of humanity you call the crowd at the market here in Paridon. I spotted an easy mark and let the crowd move me to him. He was an elderly man dressed elegantly with a nice pouch at his hip. Now that's the challenge, get it without getting caught. I had almost caught a few times, but since the police knew my parents they let it be but last time I was warned sternly if I did get caught again, there would be dire consequences. I got pushed up against the man and with seeming ease snatched the purse and started walking away into the deep crowd, thinking myself clever. A hand gripped my shoulder and a voice says” We'll have none of that little lady. Hand that back! I try to drop it and run but another hand grabs my hand and prevents me from doing so. I look back in fear and see it is indeed the gentleman I snatched the purse from and he grabs me

quite easily by the scruff of me neck and lifts me off the ground. “We are headed for the Constabulary and I am pressing charges.”

I look around and not surprisingly Arthur and Penelope are nowhere to be seen, the cowards. *What would mother and Father think of this? They think I only go to the Library to study. They already have enough to worry about with the Tailoring and Seamstress shop in the Merchants quarters. And from what Arthur has told me, they won't pay “Shorty” the money he demands all shops for his services of protection.*

We arrive shortly at the Constabulary and the man presses charges, then leaves. I am placed in a cell and left to wait. Many hours later my parents do arrive to get me, looking rather haggard and tired. Without looking or even speaking to me, we leave the station and head in a different direction than home.

“Where are we going?”

“We are taking you somewhere you may learn to be a proper lady and not this hooligan you have become”, my father spit at me.

“You think we do not know of your other indiscretions? Yet we do, Miranda. I had to pay a healthy sum to free you from the Constabulary on the condition you be taken somewhere and learn the proper way to behave in society. Your Mother and I do not deserve this and it is for the best”.

As he finishes talking we are in front of the Temple for the Divinity of Mankind. It dawns on me then. *I am to be sent to be a Monk, I am. Probably better off in here anyhow. Father is always working so hard so he can pretend to be a stinking noble or be accepted by them. Gold is after all just metal, nothing more. I only stole for the thrill and the challenge, never keeping the gold, which went to Shorty, I had been told by Penelope.*

Father knocks on the door and it opens a few moments later.

“This is her?”

“Yes”

“Be off then. She is in good hands here Mr and Mrs Cornelius”

With that, my parents turned and left, leaving me this rather young looking Sister.

“I am Sister Agatha Clairmont. You, my dear, address me as Sister Clairmont at all times. Come now, I will bring you to the lodges where you will be staying.

Miranda remained silent throughout the walk as Sister Clairmont described this or that or rules.

So this is the hand that I have been dealt. I bet all those rich haughty noble dimwits paid for this establishment.

All throughout her 5 years at the Temple, Miranda was one of the more troublesome students yet Sister Clairmont tolerated her because she found that Miranda had spirit and

although she did not study or supply a concrete effort, it came easily to her, especially the reading and writing parts. At the end of her 5 years, Sister Clairmont decided that Miranda would be better suited to perhaps studying abroad and experiencing another culture. To this end, she arranged to have Miranda study in Karg and Martira Bay at the Universities there. She only regretted not having done more for Miranda but alas the time had come for Miranda to move on. At 17 Miranda was old enough to move on as well...

October 750 Martira Bay, Darkon

A few days later we arrived in Riverside and headed straight for the Hospital. The doctor told me, well Niles, Philippe and myself, that my parents were attacked by this halfling named Peck. He is supposed to be the Swan Street Slicer. Sounds an awful lot like Bloody Jack if you ask me. Anyways after some prompting from Philippe, as my social skills with authority figures or anything Noble are severely lacking, we learn that this Peck has been around for a few months and has been killing Nobles. This killer has been caught by the police but unfortunately has escaped ... He will strike again, we are sure of it.

Well after he is done talking I arrange for my parents to be taken back home and have someone look after them there. That done, we head for the Divinity of Mankind Temple as suggested by the doctor. There we speak with my old "pal" Sister Agatha Clairmont. We learn pretty much the same from her and she suggests we go and help protect Lady Auraluna Dromdal at her home as the police are shorthanded at the moment and the Dromdals still have ties with a lot of institutions in the city. You see, the Dromdals' was the only place he got caught but got away unfortunately. And my parents were his next victims yet they are alive and the rest of his victims are dead.

Thanking the Sister we head for the homes of a few of my parents' neighbours and ask them about the Dromdals. We get the same thing we got from the police that were at the Temple as well as from the doctor at the hospital.

Some information the PCs gathered through Knowledge (local) and Gather Info checks:

- *Most of the victims were part of the upper echelons of society*
 - o *Lady Alexandra Billick, age 85*
 - o *Lord Daniel Thomas, age 48*
 - o *Lord Henry Amber, age 57*

- *Excerpts from the Newsbill: "Swan Street Slicer caught! ... Well, he sure ain't no Bloody Jack! ... Deranged mute halfling named Peck ... from the Bowels..."*

- *About the Dromdals:*
 - o *An old family who made their fortune off the sale of exotic lumbers, furniture and other wooden goods.*
 - o *Auraluna, the matron of the Dromdal family, was once a highly desired beauty, although she receives few visitors these days. Her only child Ceseli recently lost her husband to the Swan Street Slicer.*
 - o *The Dromdals are in decline. Auraluna has become incredibly bitter in her old age and is confined to a wheelchair. Ceseli has returned to the family home on Swan Street since her husband's recent murder.*

So off we go to the Dromdals in the Shadwell district and get greeted at the door by Barnsworth, the old butler, a man who is slower than a turtle and not the sharpest tool in the shed if you get my meaning. So we discuss with Lady Moneybags then look around. She does accept us protecting her. This evening she has guests for dinner and thanks to Philippe's silver tongue, we yet again get to stay but not in the same room.

So the guests arrive, Jebediah Stewardsfield (Banker), Neena Guesenholt (Friend) and her nephew Ned (A real dunce). So the meal goes on and we discover why Auraluna wanted to have good ole Jeb over. As her daughter, Ceseli Tuner-Dromdal's husband was killed by Peck, she is now "on the market" so her mother aspires. Well, Jeb got pretty racy there at the table, and I heard it. I get up and go to the doorway and looking straight at Jeb and state "Hey give the body a chance to cool off there, Tiger. You have absolutely no class at all. I guess money isn't everything now is it?" Of course Auraluna looks at me with daggers in her eyes but Ceseli simply smiles and says nothing. I am guessing Auraluna wants Ceseli to marry this twit so she can have money and of course prestige. Bah.

The dog starts baying for no reason. I decide to investigate upstairs and at the first door there, hear a noise. Of course the door is locked. I come back down and none too gently demand a key from Auraluna. Philippe again interjects and we get the key. Niles stays downstairs as Philippe and I go up. The door gets unlocked but no one is inside. The shutters are moving and this is what I heard. The window is broken behind it with no evidence of any broken glass on the floor. In the meantime we do find a book which Philippe graciously takes. Not a very lawful thing to do as I have learnt to now respect the law but not necessarily good or evil if that makes sense. So I decide that I am going to climb up onto the roof, and Philippe will stay at the window.

I climb up onto the roof with a lantern and look around. I see a few windows and as I am looking inside one, a figure jumps through the glass window, almost making me fall backwards in surprise. He misses for some reason and I now see that it is in fact Peck! I scream out to Philippe. A melee ensues and in the end, we prevail. Philippe is amazed of the number of blows I took, as he said he or Niles would have been killed by Peck's fury.

On Peck we find three potions, a really nice razor (*masterwork*), and an arcane bracelet along with some pocket change.

After explaining the situation to Lady Dromdal about what happened and of course handing back her precious key, we leave with Peck's body for the Constabulary...

Session Two – Shut-In from Dungeon #128

Introduction to Within the Circle from Dungeon #130

(Played September 27th, 2007)

November 2nd, 750, Shadewell, Paridon 10 pm

We leave the Moneybags Manor and head for the Constabulary until we hear a scream coming from the manor. Of course with "Carpet" Peck on my shoulder (we rolled him in a carpet to carry him – more discreet and convenient), it is *so easy* to run but I do make it back inside the house after the two guys.

We come upon a bloodied and dead Barnsworth whose throat has a piece missing and the little mutt Sachi licking his blood. Ceseli is unconscious next to him but less injured. Philippe does the right thing and cures Ceseli but she remains unconscious still. We hear screams coming from elsewhere in the manor and the elevator activates itself. With no sign of Mrs. Moneybags herself, we head for the elevator. At the elevator we get attacked from the back by Moneybags' large dog Baron and that damn little mutt Sachi. We overcome both dogs as Niles throws alchemical fire at the big Baron and then I knock it out. I also put Sachi in the kitchen's pantry. As we were fighting, we heard Moneybags yell out to Baron "Protect me! They want to kill me!" and other similar insanities...

Niles goes upstairs while Philippe and I open the door of the elevator and the stink of wet animal fur assaults our noses. *Man, even stink would say that the wet fur stinks!* And then we hear some screams coming from below... Philippe and I climb down the elevator shaft after I drop a sunrod down for illumination. A very strange thing this house as there are supposedly no more basements in Paridon... Yet right here in Moneybags' manor we find one! Odd!

Opening the elevator doors, we step out into a man made basement. A dishevelled man and woman are present in the back of the room near a table with chairs. And a tea set!? A rather large wet furry beast has its back to us and faces the couple. Philippe and I take this opportunity to introduce ourselves to the beast and attack it sneakily!

A battle ensues where I almost pass out from *Uglies'* attacks but we finally prevail and win! I couldn't help but notice its really fiery eyes. Niles arrives at the end of the battle to lend us a hand. Thank god! As Philippe was hurt and the man and woman stabilised him.

(Niles tells us that when he went upstairs, he forced the elevator's doors opened, unsure whether someone was inside: He met up with Auraluna who blasted him with an arcane missile before he could do anything! She was holding a wand of some kind. He managed to calm her down somewhat, she was apparently scared out of her mind of Ceseli, thinking her poor unconscious daughter and Peck both wanted to kill her. Niles, still giving Moneybags the benefit of the doubt, gave her his cat familiar as protection and headed downstairs after hearing us scream for help.)

Looking around the basement, we see sculpted faces in the wall... What in the name of? The man and woman, Vivi Knots and Karl Manderholm, tell us that Moneybags held them captive in the basement and had tea with them. She used a wand to put the dead people in the stone wall and cover their faces with rock: So the sculpted faces are more victims! Weird. Just before we got here, Moneybags came down and released the weak couple from the wall where they were held in the hopes that the *fiery dog* would kill them probably.

Another important piece of information gained from Vivi and Karl is that the old lady really needs her wheelchair to move around. Well, Niles tells us that Moneybags is a Wizard of sorts and evil. *Well, well imagine that, the old bag is really evil and crazy to boot. Can't say I am surprised.* So we send Vivi and Karl to the constabulary to get the police and explain what has happened.

We finally gang up on ol' Moneybags (who tries to flee to the basement as we go back up to the second floor). Niles quickly jams the elevator so she is stuck on the first floor. We run back downstairs and catch up to her!

(That was some good quick thinking. Had Auraluna made it to the basement, she would have sealed up the evidence. And it would have been their word against hers, which is the word of a

noble. No evidence, no bodies, no victims. I can't see how the investigation could have gone on... Obviously, she would remember them for a long time. She probably will... ☺)

Philippe ends up surprising everyone as a silver-tongued charmer, playing to the old lady's vanity (and craziness if you ask me!). She gives us her wand, holding it like some ugly thing... Philippe convinces her to come to the police and tell her tale. She ends up spewing some story about Peck being after her, and working together with Ceseli against her. After coming around, Ceseli cannot help but cry at her mother's accusations...

In the meantime, we look around the house and find a room with child's clothing which would, strangely enough, fit Peck? *She is one demented old bag, let me tell you.* Fifty pounds of salted meat is found in another room in the house as well (for that strange ugly dog, which Dromdal tells us her husband brought back from Sri Raji ages ago because of her love for dogs...). I guess the old Barnsworth couldn't put two and two together. Well, we think that the old bag was reliving her youth with all her extra curricular activities these past few weeks and even months.

We all end up at the police station and get questioned and so does Moneybags. For over two hours. Peck is unconscious and we overhear some High MuckyMuck Monks mention "the Black Maw and (or "for") Peck" in the same sentence (not sure what they mean by that...). Whatsername gets her own cell and two guards. I bet she feels real special now.

So our business done, we head home and sleep!

November 3rd, 750, Riverside, Paridon

The next day, Niles and Philippe study their spells and we look for a place that sells scrolls or someone who actually has the spell *identify*. Referred by my friend Agatha Clairmont, someone at the temple might be able to help us, he asks us to come back the next day.

We go home again for supper where my parents have prepared a rather nice table for us (considering Paridon's situation and means). I guess they are proud of me after all... After dinner we have a visitor who is some baron's lackey – valet I guess. Baron Joachim Aulbesmil from the barony of Nartok in Darkon requests our presence at the Cock and Bull Inn A.S.A.P. So we make Jonah the lackey wait 30 minutes just because and then he accompanies us to the inn.

Inside we are led to a fancy shmancy room and wait for the baron. So we meet both the baron and a man from Thistle, in the barony of Nartok, Mr Borden. Basically we are to be hired to help Thistle with a Goblyn (yes with a Y) problem. The village has been plagued with sickness and Goblyn infestation apparently. So at the baron's request, Mr Borden wants us to go and help them with the Goblins. We agree and Borden then retires for the night, yet the Baron stays with us somewhat longer...

He then tells us the real reason why he wanted to see us. *What a surprise! He He.* Twenty years ago, baron Aulbesmil was supposed to go to some warehouse a couple of hours away from Thistle and burn it down but failed because unfortunately it rained and he only managed to burn down the entrance. He was supposed to get some books as well. A group called the Maison de L'Anneau (*House of the Circlet*) were his patrons back then. He says he does not know why they wanted this depot destroyed and I guess he chooses to lie or withholds information from us. He does give us an enchanted ring which opens all the doors in the warehouse. This ring was given to him by his patrons of all those years...

He wants us to go back to the scene of his crime and find out clues as to the nature of his patrons: Who are they, what do they want with him? He also wants us to bring back his ring quickly in case someone notices he doesn't have it anymore.

We learned he did replace his brother as baron after his brother died from a virus. Ever since he became baron he has had no contact or very little with the Maison de L'Anneau. Were they responsible for the Baron's rise to the barony? (*Oh btw we removed a magical ring off of Moneybags. I think the ring must have fell from somewhere to the palm of my hand, honest!!!*) Well, needless to say, we find the whole deal rather shady and shall go but that doesn't mean we will help the Pyro Baron... Or at the very least, will be very careful.

Session Three – Tying up some loose threads from Shut-In from Dungeon #128; Within the Circle from Dungeon #130

(Played October 10th, 2007)

November 4th, 750 Riverside, Paridon

Well after breakfast, we headed for the Monastery at the Temple. We met with Brother Harold whom sold us a scroll for an exorbitant fee, in my opinion. But this is Paridon, go figure. (*I really thought the PCs would scream at what I charged them for an Identify scroll: 375gp! Having just received a reward for saving Vivi Knots and Karl Manderholm, I guess they decided to splurge...*)

After exchanging pleasantries, we head back home and who do we see at Mother and Father's, taking tea? Ceseli Dromdal, that's who. Apparently her Father being in Sri Raji searching for a cure for his *sickness* might just be a ploy. Or true. If you go by what her Mother is like, then yeah it's a ploy and she is guilty as sin. She is very thankful of our help and tells us that she will be searching as well as investigating for her Father in Sri Raji. I think she'd have better luck finding a needle in a haystack if you ask me. She may possibly even go to Sri Raji herself and offers us a set of keys to her house. We are welcome there any time. Maybe my comment about letting her dead husband's body grow cold warmed her up to us? Get it?

Ok, so after that we went to see Sister Agatha Clairmont to tell her we would be leaving Paridon for a few weeks. Did I **SEE A SMILE FROM HER????** Nah I must have had something in my eye, yes that is it. And she seemed **HAPPY** to see me? Stranger things have happened I suppose. Giving her our regards, we left for the boat. It was time to go on our trip to Thistle, Darkon.

We arrived in the port a little early. The boat was named Dunkelstern (*Dark Star, from the German... Hum, I mean, Falkovnian ☺*) and her captain is Rashid Al-Badr. Sounds like an exotic vegetable to me. Anyways. Rashid is originally from the Amber Wastes? What the hell is that? Doesn't sound like a place you'd wanna visit. He seemed to expect trouble as he had 2 short swords, one at each hip. Maybe he expected the fishies to attack his ship? (*or pirates maybe?*)

Lo and behold, our pyro "Benefactor" has a nephew named Lysander. And Lysander Aulbesmil looks up to Lord Joaquim Pyro Aulbesmil for some strange reason (*Did I really depict him in such a bad light? Or are we just getting paranoid in our old age?*). Go figure. The sea voyage

will take seven days. During this time I will finish learning a new language, thanks in big part to Philippe. I will be fluent in the Souragnien language when we dock in Martira Bay in seven days. Niles will learn how to ... hum... cast the scroll of... um... identifying... er... magic things? Ok let's skip that mumbo jumbo.

On board we are seven passengers and a crew of thirty. Boating is not my cup of tea. I'd rather gouge my eyes out, but hey that's me. So during our voyage we learn from Rashid that perhaps there are boats that are looking for new **CONTINENTS?????** There are other continents? Ya learn something new every day I suppose.

Hey during our voyage, Philippe talks to Lysander and Pyroman about hunting. Pyro apparently hunts with a falcon, a bird called Vollblut (which Niles tells us again means *Pure-Blood in Falkovnian*)? Ok next time I hunt, I am sending my Quarterstaff ahead of me to hunt. We learn during our sea voyage that the village of Thistle has a population of around 200 people. The sickness seemed to be like a super-gastro. Sounds like fun if ya ask me.

We hear of a legend of the darkonian Titans, the *Hu-Charad*? Apparently they were 10 feet tall and used to battle Dragons? Not what you'd call the conventional hobby, eh? Ok so after most of the Dragons were exterminated from Darkon, the rest fled the Core. The Titans followed after them to another land and they were not heard from again. *(Yes, go fetch a Malhavoc Press / Monte Cook Arcana Evolved book for this one. I just LOVE blending stuff from different sources into my games. I find it opens up possibilities one might not have thought of... And for those pesky RL connoisseurs, they're just not sure what is going on exactly, which is probably fun for them and good for the DM. Is it just window dressing for flavor or is there something else going on? Cue: Sinister laugh...)*

During the evening, at supper, Rashid sings. Ok so he has an odd hobby. He left the Amber Wastes 20 years ago and now is a resident of the sea? Hey I want an address like that: "To Ms Miranda Cornelius, about to sink somewhere in the Nocturnal Sea, off the shores of Darkon." Sounds kind of cool if you ask me.

November 11, 750 Martira Bay, Darkon

Finally on the 7th day we arrive in Martira Bay's port. I almost kissed the ground! Hey did you know November is the month of the dead here? I wanna go to the cemetery and yell out "HAPPY BIRTHDAY!"

In case you didn't know, Martira Bay is a very busy city. We learn of some sadistic bastard or bastards who are committing ritualistic murders in Darkon. I wonder if King Azalin Rex is doing anything about that?

Here Baron Pyro leaves us to go back to Nartok, his servant wench Ghini following and his man-at-arms Jonah. I guess he likes a lapdog. Not my cup of tea. So we head for Thistle from Martira Bay. It'll take a few days to make it. So we accompany Mayor Borden to Thistle and upon arrival we requisition the "Manoir" as our headquarters. While traveling, we spot Griffons on the horizon, it is quite a sight... We also give the village some medical supplies provided us by baron Aulbesmil. We manage to get a couple of Minor Quintessence alchemical potions from what is left (*1D8+1 healing damage*).

November 15th, 750 Thistle, Darkon

According to Jern, Borden's squire, the Goblins wish to parley the next day at the crack of noon. Their leader's name is Belig. I don't know about you but I think Goblins need lessons in naming their people. Perhaps they think the same of us humans?

November 16th, 750 Thistle, Darkon

We decide to ambush the poor schmucks. Niles and Philippe will be there at 10 am and I will accompany Jern to the parley. I will use one of my newfound abilities and enlarge myself (*Since the character was already a redhead, I allowed Miranda to take the Redhead feat. I don't see anything wrong with somehow "developing" abilities through a character's life. As a side note, she gained Cure Light Wounds and Enlarge Person. This way the feat feels a bit more like the 2E version of the ability and the character will hopefully get more usage out of it in the long run. Just my two cents.*)

Niles will then cast some illusion on me to make me appear like some freak of nature to the Goblins. Yeah I forgot to mention that we all have some new abilities and skills. When we landed in Martira Bay the others had a hard time keeping up with me. Without even realizing it, I seem to be walking faster. And my meditation seems to be paying off.

So at noon we arrive and Jern can't keep still. I think I should teach him some meditation. We wait and wait and finally Belig and two of his goons (one was hidden in the trees but was found easily) arrive at the crack of 12:30. I know he did it on purpose, but hey he is a dull witted imbecile, what can you expect? So not much conversation and I grow tired of small talk and attack! In the end the three Goblins get massacred except for one whom we leave alive by a thread Well now. Between the three of us we massacre the poor sods. Poor Belig. P.S – More to follow on Belig, I think he must have lost his head... (*Massacred might not be a strong enough word... And these aren't Goblins for the record, but Goblins... Let the players think they're facing Goblins, be unsure and sweat a little... ☺*).

After defeating them we search and find 43 gold coins, 2 Pearls and a Crystal. By the way I think all the Pearls and the crystal look exactly like a rock (*if you bother looking at the RL DM screen, you'll get an idea how well Miranda appraised the stuff*). Neat, eh?

Ok so since we have captured a dimwitted Goblin we ask him for a get-into-the-Goblin-lair-for-free card. No we learn that the leader of the Goblins is named Craig? (*Actually, it's Krig, but I don't think Miranda really cares one way or another at this point ☺...*) Their lair is one hour North from our current position. From what the surviving Goblin says about the lair, it appears that their **LAIR** is the warehouse we seek. The warehouse is after a small hill, literally (*Wow, getting accurate info from Goblins is so much fun!*).

Now I get to thinking. We need an edge against these Dimbulbs. So at first I try the **PECK SWEET SHAVING RAZOR** but I can't perform my beheading of the goblin champion. I just borrow Jern's sword and lo and behold Belig's head comes loose. I get a branch/stake and impale the head with it and off we go to the Warehouse.

Of course with our luck it all hits the fan. And we fall for a trap easily as Niles and I plunge into uncertainty. We hurt a little bit, but I've had worse. Niles makes it out first and all I hear is fighting. I finally do make it out. What do I see? Well it's Niles' pet cat, who I now dub Suicidal

Maniacal Cat. She is killing all these little lizard people by herself. Niles and Philippe have some scuz in their eyes so I try to help but I have no luck this day. Finally, after the monsters are dead except for two, we rest. I think Philippe was fed up of the 'lil buggers' and went off to hunt them so they didn't come back later. *(There were nine of them, Muckdwellers from Serpent Kingdoms, Forgotten Realms to be precise. It was very funny how these 1/4 CR creatures were cut down by the cat familiar and everybody else was either blinded for a round, fallen into a trap or just couldn't hit the side of a barn... Oh, and they're Tiny, so they had a good AC...)*

We will rest now until Philippe and Niles can get back their spells.

Session Four – Within the Circle from Dungeon #130

(Played October 29th, 2007)

November 17th, 750 : Outskirts of Thistle, Darkon

Yawn..... Stretch.....Oh what I'd give for a real bed. After my morning rations, sadly I realize that I have only one ration left. What I'd give for a home cooked meal and a soft bed...

After breakfast I climb down the Little Lizard People's trap and "collect" Belig's head. We trod on to the warehouse following Gblynn info, but discover an entrance that has not been used in quite a few years *(They figure out from the looks of it that baron Aulbesmil tried to burn down this main entrance years ago, but failed because of the pouring rain. They opt to use this entrance instead of the one given by the Gblyns.)*

Luck is with us for once and we enter with no trouble. We use our wand of stone shaping to make it through a passage that's been filled in with rocks and other debris, saving us much time. We make it inside the warehouse undetected (or so we think). Basically, for the whole day we battle Gblyns and rest and battle more Gblyns. We do find some coins and valuable objects. *(I didn't expect how much this session turned into a dungeon crawl. Even when they met the Gblynn babies [see below]. It was quite a change in pacing.)*

In one of the chambers, we encounter the "Matron Mother" Gblynn and kill her. In a pit are the Gblynn children. Philippe uses his bow to "take care" of the children. I can't watch. Nor am I sure I agree with the dealing of the goblin children, though that's a debate for another time. *(I was pretty surprised by this too I admit. But to Philippe they were only: "Just vermin...")*

After all is said and done, we do find a library! Imagine my luck indeed. I find six language books on Balok, High Mordentish, Falkovnian, Luktar, Vaasi and Lamordian! And I a language buff! This is better than gold, honestly. We also find portraits of some of Darkon's minor lords from the last twenty years: Baron Thalís Redtree from Nevuchar Springs (who is said to be Fey), baron Hans Warbois from Karg (a Dwarf deceased at least ten years ago), baron Oscari Gunderin from Tempe Falls (a Dwarf) and baroness Reldkasen from Martira Bay (a Human).

After a further search we find an interesting book after having battled these weird little insects that bite you and make you itch like crazy! This book has the symbol of the god Set on its cover. Set is a god from the Amber Wastes. We also find a drawing of the wolf god and some art objects of minimal worth.



November 18th, 750: Outskirts of Thistle, Darkon

Luckily for us Niles and Philippe can decode the book. Here is some of what they have decoded so far:

May 1st, year 725

... Joachim ApMorte, Abdelkrim Tahir and myself have met today. I am more than pleased with these first meetings. ... We are all unhappy with the Fraternity's ways... We want to choose another path...

... Joachim wants us to refer to him as John ApNeblu if ever in public as he is supposed to be lost in the Mists to our brethren. It would not do for the other Fathers to find out he still lives...

Abdel for his part has no plans about going back to Mudar in the Amber Wastes so he cares less about privacy and discretion...

... we try and make sense of the last few years in the Core. Some events attract our attention...

- 720, an outlander, a Death Knight known as lord Soth, enters our world, Sithicus is formed ... He naturally grabs hold of the land after a few months, becomes its Dread Lord...
- 722, Drakov invaded Darkon once again (for the fourth time really, but must we still pay attention to this ignorant warmonger? My colleagues seem to think so. Could he really be that hate-filled land's Lord) ... Azalin raised an army of undead to repel the invader. Again.

July 15th

... We gather and compare some of our ideas ... I was born in Darkon, yet I have fully rejected the Eternal Order's creed ...

... Joachim, a Forfarian, also renounced his Gods and their ways, especially Arawn, God of Death...

... Abdel introduces us to his God: Set. ... He still worships the Serpent God even though, part of its interests lies in Death and Necromancy...

October 31st

... I reveal my newly found feral nature to my friends...

They do not seem to mind that much, they were weary at first, but then realized how, on one hand, this can help us cast Azalin off the throne, stop his damned undead Kargat and, on the other hand, foil the Fathers of the Fraternity all over our lands from wasting their power in vain pursuits...

Last part of the book is about the religions of the Wolf God and Set:

Set.

Symbol: A coiled cobra

Domains: Death, Evil, and Trickery.

Wolf God.

Symbol: A snarling wolf's head or a single, bloody paw print.

Portfolio: Predators, the wilderness, hunting, savagery, blood, the moon, wolves, werewolves.

Domains: Animal, Chaos, Slaughter, Strength, and Trickery.

So this is all for this time. Sorry there isn't much but we battled most of the time and the rest was spent resting or reading. Until next time...

Miranda

(Whoever DMs Ravenloft might wonder where I am going with all this info [and believe me there is more to come!], but I do have some loose plan about all this. And it was prompted by discussions on the FoS's boards about how much info we should give players about the setting. I don't think players should always be clueless about any setting, AND I have two players out of three who are RL DMs themselves. So I am trying to "come clean" about a lot of this stuff in-game. I always wonder if it's worth it to hold ALL this info from the PCs, let's face it, players LIKE knowing about the world their PCs evolve in. Maybe it will have a scarier effect on them...)

Session Five – Within the Circle from Dungeon #130 / Interlude in Lamordia / Prelude to a loose adaptation of Raiders of the Black Ice from Dungeon #115

(Played November 22nd 2007)

November 19th, 750: Outskirts of Thistle, Darkon

We decided to stay a bit longer so that the boys could learn more from that tome we found. Each year represents roughly ten pages and there are entries for the years 725-727, 729-730. Oddly enough 728 is absent. Has to be a special year as I was born that year! The pages on religion take up about 75 pages. Still more to discover but I don't think we'll be giving this book to PyroBaron Aulbesmil.¹

We moved all the dead Gblynn bodies to one room and closed the door so we could actually breath normal air and not rancid dead Gblynn air. It took us about 30 minutes to do so. We find ourselves lacking in the food department so Philippe went out hunting. In the interim Whilst Niles

¹ This is one of those moments when you know you're doing something right with an NPC. The players really do not seem to know what to make of this guy.

is reading the tome and Philippe is going out hunting, I take time to acquaint myself with the High Mordentish book.

Philippe comes back just a few minutes later, telling us that a man and a woman are out hunting for someone. Luckily he got back unseen and told us. We decide that perhaps if someone were invisible he or she could follow the two hunters and perhaps learn something. Since Niles is the stealthiest, he casts the spell upon himself and ventures out into the forest in hope of finding out a bit more. He does try to follow them but unfortunately is heard so he hurries back to tell us. He did discover that there was in fact a third party with the man and black woman, but could not understand what was said as they were speaking in a foreign language. (The man is white and has some kind of chain mail and scimitar while the woman has very dark skin and seems to not have any weapons, she is probably a monk like me.) We debate whether to head back to the village or face the three. We decide that caution is our best option, as we have no clue as to how many we are facing. When we exit at the other side of the warehouse we get spotted after walking for a few minutes and 10 arrows fly at us, injuring us but not too badly.

The man and woman see us and yell out “*Stop in the name of Seigneur Mont-Mirebalais!*” In Souragnien. *We have a Souragnien among us. As it turns out it is not a coincidence that these people are after us and more specifically after Philippe.* (More on that in a bit!) The man and woman rush us so we have no choice but to fight (him with his weapons, her in a fighting technique similar to mine but not quite the same). We win rather easily and decide to retreat to the warehouse where we’ll have a better chance against ten people. Philippe, with a spell, entangles half of the search party then we head back into the warehouse where I hide in a room close to the entrance, hoping to surprise the new “*LEADER*” as the man we took care of seemed to be the old one. The new leader resembles the black woman in fighting styles so I figured it best if I fight him.

The plan almost worked but he saw me from my hiding spot. While that was going on the boys got free bolt shots and made them count against the search party. A fight ensues and we win yet again! We seem to be rather lucky in that department. Some of the search party are not killed. We start questioning them...

Now it seems that back in Souragne, Philippe got framed by the Mont-Mirebalais for the bloody murder of some maid. That’s probably the reason why he left there in the first place. Hmm... So Philippe tells the survivors to return to Souragne with a message for Seigneur Mont-Mirebalais, who hired them all, to come himself to try to retrieve Philippe in person. Sounds like a fun time if ya ask me, really! Oh the maid’s name is Edmine and she was a servant of the Dessalines family.

Philippe assured us he was in fact a friend of Edmine and would never have thoughts of killing her. He also said the murder by blade was gruesome and could have been part of a dark ritual or something... What was in the mind of these snobbish and cruel Mont-Mirebalais? ²

We learn that the names of the first two people we killed in the search party were Olivier and Joséphine. It seems they belong to a group called *les Assermentés*, the Oathsworn³, and they have

² This was an unexpected development. Philippe’s story was secret and I did not want to spoil his surprise for him. At first, they wanted to flee which was what I was looking for and expected. I just wanted them to feel like someone was possibly after *them*, except for Philippe who would know the truth (part of the truth?). I really made sure not to name Philippe, instead calling in Mont-Mirebalais’ orders. It was funny seeing Philippe sweating it out. I had to improvise quite a bit, but it did help out the PCs cos I forgot a couple of things these guys had! ☺

pledged to catch Edmine's murderer. On them, we found some gold, a composite crossbow, dagger, scimitar, chain shirt and arrows for the crossbow. We do gather enough rations for a day and a half so we decide to stay one more day. From that strange Maison de l'Anneau journal we found, the boys, still deciphering the coded draconic in which it is written, managed to glimpse mentions of Joachim Aulbesmil (PyroBaron) in 726 & 727. In 729 Gabrielle Aderre of Invidia is mentioned. Finally in 730 Verbrek and Darkon's not-so-secret-police, the Kargat, are mentioned.

Then the boys find some strange references... And parts turning out to be a spellbook!

Excerpts from the Maison de l'Anneau journal...

A list of names with short notes.

- *Baron Thalís Redtree from Nevuchar Springs (a Fey male noble)*
- *Baron Hans Warbois from Karg (a Dwarf male noble)*
- *Baron Oscari Gunderin from Tempe Falls (a Dwarf male noble)*
- *Baroness Reldkasen from Martira Bay (a Human woman noble ready to do just about anything to move forward. She is said to study the arcane...)⁴*
- *In Souragne, the Mathurine family, with its thirst for knowledge, has potential for our society. Maybe we should introduce ourselves... Unless we let the power hungry Mont-Mirebalais take the initiative... (John and Abdel rightly point out that we could always throw them against each other...)*
- *In Zherisia's rural parts, some of our agents have managed to pinpoint the birth of a First through divinations... I went there myself. The child seems normal enough. I have not noticed anything out of the ordinary. I was tempted to sneak into the house at night and slit its throat.*
- *The extinct family Stross ruled in western Darkon for nearly 600 years, marrying well, fighting off major intrusion from the magocracy and holding its own against the advances of Falkovnia. They did it the old-fashioned way, with fistfuls of silver and a ruthless cruelty that scattered their enemies. The Stross, most of them mages themselves, were adepts of the Star and Shadows school of magic and devoted to the Goddess of Night & Magic... We should look deeper into their history...*

A list of new spells

(Source: Book of Roguish Luck from Malhavoc Press)

- *Black Hand (Shadowsworn 4, Sor/Wiz 4) – * This spell may attract the attention of the Watchers in Shadows...*

³ Please see *Arcana Unearthed / Arcana Evolved* for the really neat and flavorful Oathsworn core class.

⁴ These four are the nobles whose portraits were framed in the warehouse.

- Cloak of Darkness (Gutter Mage 2, Shadowsworn 2)
- Enter Shadow (Shw 3, Sor/Wiz 4)*
- Lengthen Shadows (Shw 0, Sor/Wiz 1)
- Moonscript (Drd/Shs 1)
- Peerless Camouflage (Brd 2, Gtrm 2 Shw2, Sor/Wiz 2)
- Shadow Blindness (Shw 0, Sor/Wiz 0)
- Shadow Bridge (Shw 3, Sor/Wiz 3)
- Shadow Knife (Shw 0, Sor/Wiz 0)
- Shadow Purse (Shw 1)
- Silhouette (Shw 0, Sor/Wiz 0)
- Smuggler's Veil (Gtrm 0, Shw 0, Sor/Wiz 0)
- Spit Shine (Brd 3, Gtrm 3)
- Step Under my Shadow (Gtrm 2, Shw 2)
- Switch Item (Gtrm 1, Sor/Wiz 1)
- Terror * (Shw 3, Sor/Wiz 3)
- Tongue of Fiends * (Clr 0, Shw 0, Sor/Wiz 0).

(Source: Year's Best D20 from Malhavoc Press)

- Shadow Stich (1st lvl)

(Source: RL Gaz II)

- Death Sight (Sor/Wiz 3)

November 20th, 750: Outskirts of Thistle, Darkon.

It's now snowing rather heavily but we deem it a fair trade off and head back to Thistle. Unfortunately for us, it becomes a full blown snowstorm, so instead of taking us **five** hours, it is now dark and we are nowhere close to arriving. We make ourselves a makeshift tent and stay there for the night. Oh joy, Oh joy! Sleeping in the great outdoors in a snowstorm, something every young woman dreams of doing when she is young... NOT!!!!

November 21st, 750: Lost in a Darkonian snowstorm?

Still way too much snow.

November 22nd, 750: Somewhere in Darkon?

Too much snow.

November 23rd, 750: Darkon?

So we travel and discover we are no longer in Darkon. Just peachy keen. I really love being lost and not knowing where I am, don't you? We see a village in the distance and enter, heading for an inn. Goal: Hot food, a bath and a soft bed, not in that particular order mind you. After we get rooms, we get a meal and discover we are not in Darkon anymore but in Lamordia, the village of

Furchtenburgit⁵ to be exact. Neufurchtenberg⁶ is northwest from here. Have no idea how that is helpful but hey it's better than breaking kneecaps for information eh?

We decide to spend the night there till the snow stops... There is NOTHING happening here. Middle of nowhere.⁷

After a couple of days, guess what? THE SNOW STOPPED!!! So we decide to finally head out to Thistle. So as we are leaving the village, we come upon the frozen body of a man. He appears dead from fatigue or the cold. We're not experts so that's our opinion. Of course being the curious types that we are, we find inside his jacket a paper with the words...

“Raiders have taken Tonnsburg, our village and have enslaved everyone. They have plundered the village and I fear the worst. They have fed some of the bodies to their wolves. Please send help at once. They have looted everything we have... Direct your questions to the bearer of this note. He has seen these strange raiders many a time.”
Signed: Haarold Ventas & Nixa Foxtail.

Apparently the Mayor paid Haarold Vendis to go to Tonnsburg to help them out? I may have been a little tired near the end of our trek you see. There's also the town or city of Neufurchtenberg mentioned. Bah I'm too tired and want to go sleep in an actual bed, so I'll talk to you later. Hopefully it'll be from Thistle or Nartok. Until then...

Session Six – Interlude in Lamordia / A loose adaptation of *Raiders of the Black Ice* from Dungeon #115

(Played XXX 2007)

November 23th, 750: Outskirts of Thistle, Darkon

⁵ Do **not** look it up in your gazetteer. You won't find it. ☺

⁶ This you **may** look up if you want.

⁷ It was pretty funny how they all expected the innkeeper to turn into a serial killer or the inn's few patrons or villagers to turn into werewolves or something.