

## Excerpts From The Personal Journal of Speaks With Wind

Thunder Moon ~ 5th day

Quintilis 15 - The Ides Of Quintilis

We are on the road at last!

After I finished yesterday's entry, I was summoned to a meeting. Consul Galerius and Senator Belarius presented us with silver medallions as thanks for our dealing with Tony Montana and to wish us a good journey.

In addition, Constable Munch was being given a promotion. He was being placed in charge of his unit, which had been given special weapons and gear. They are supposed to deal with out-of-the-ordinary threats that come up using special tactics and weaponry. They were having a hard time coming up with a name for their unit, so I suggested the Special Tactics and Weaponry unit. When I congratulated the Constable. They were calling it STAW when I left.

Grognar was a little leary about wearing his medallion ~ he complained that silver caused a burning sensation. Professor Weishaupt suggested that he might have developed an allergy to the metal. Grognar also said that his shape-shifting magic only allows him to shift into rat forms.

After some consideration, I said it might be a form of battle fatigue. His battle with the wererats infected him with Filth Fever, clearly traumatizing him. This might be a way of his inner mind compensating; by limiting him to his foes' shapes and causing him to act like them, it could be a way of trying to make himself feel less vulnerable.

Anyway, Professor Weishaupt is coming with us on our journey, at least for a little while.

The Professor also asked us to test some new products of his. He has created an alchemical substance that bursts into flame when exposed to the air at a high rate of speed. He used this substance to coat arrows and similar items. He then wraps them to prevent exposure to the air. His idea is to create flaming arrows without having to cover the heads in pitch and then light them; just unwrap a bundle and shoot.

He gave us two sets of arrows, each set containing a score of arrows with cold-forged iron tips that had been treated with his new substance. He also gave us a set of similarly treated

crossbow bolts and a set of balls for thunder-sticks (like Winston uses). The Professor wants us to test them and report back on how well they work.

The Professor has also created an alchemical silver dip. When weapons are dipped into it, it hardens, making the weapons useful for fighting lycanthropes and the like. He wants us to see how long it lasts under battle conditions.

Dawn Flower and I each took a vial of the silver dip, and I took one of the bundles of alchemical arrows.

Despite the large size of the caravan, we made good time today. Our first stop is the Principality of Herod, some seven days journey to the north-east.

### Thunder Moon – 6<sup>th</sup> Day

#### Quintilis 16

Caylx hired an entertainer to sing his praises on the journey. Words fail me. The man is a competent enough musician, but his subject matter needs improvement.

Fortunately, it turns out that one of the drovers is a skald. The music is different than what I grew up with, but quite enjoyable. The skald said his name is Royus and he is a member of the Rogerian clan. One of the reasons he took this job is he said that he wanted to expand his repertoire; most of his songs are about traveling and herding.

The downside is now I can't get his song, "Happy Trails" out of my head.

### Thunder Moon – 7<sup>th</sup> Day

#### Quintilis 17

Royus had a new tune he played at night. He called it "Tumbling Tumbleweeds." I had to ask him what a tumbleweed was. He said they were a plant found in the desert regions to the east and south.

That explains why I never saw one – while the summers can be quite warm, the Five Nations are still rather wet.

I can't focus on working the way I could back in my rooms in Palnu, but Dawn Flower and I managed to scribe a scroll of Endure Elements for her use.

## Thunder Moon – 8<sup>th</sup> Day

### Quintilis 18

I discussed my initial plans for the trade caravan with Professor Weishaupt and how I planned to use the proceeds. My basic plan is dual purpose – to create a school for spellcraft (of all kinds) and to provide an organized response for the Five Nations to the threat of the meteors.

Dawn Flower and I made another scroll for her – one that summons a mist to obscure one from sight.

## Thunder Moon – 9<sup>th</sup> Day

### Quintilis 19

Decent progress today. We camped by a small pond. I think the noise of such a large group scared the fish, though – I didn't catch anything.

## Thunder Moon – 10<sup>th</sup> Day

### Quintilis 20

We arrive at the "Principality" of Herod tomorrow. Professor Weishaupt said that it used to be an independent principate, but that was a long time ago. The title of Prince is now just an honorary one. While Herod is very wealthy and has vast influence, he does not have law-making power.

## Thunder Moon – 11<sup>th</sup> Day

### Quintilis 21

We arrived in the Principality of Herod today. When we arrived, we were met by several guards. We asked to be brought to the Prince Herod in order to talk about a trade treaty. The guards informed us that both the Prince and his son were ill, but agreed to take eight of us to him. The number eight appeared to be important to them, for some reason.

We were brought to the son of Herod, Heroditus. The son looked deathly ill and informed us that his father was no longer sick, having died. Heroditus also told us that he was not truly ill in the traditional sense, but rather was being plagued by a Night Hag. I remembered<sup>1</sup> some information about them from what Hssht had told me.

Night Hags are creatures of one of the Hell Worlds. They are humanoid creatures who haunt the dreams of mortals, torturing them slowly until they die. Then they capture their victims' souls, which they sell to the more evil denizens of the depths of the Hell Worlds.

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<sup>1</sup> Knowledge (Planes) check of 27.

Night Hags may become invisible to mortal sight at will and can cause even hardy souls to fall into a deep slumber. They are resistant to ordinary weaponry, being vulnerable only to ensorcelled weapons of cold-forged iron. In addition, they are resistant to spells<sup>2</sup> and many energy forms and magics. Fortunately, they are not particularly resistant to lightnings.

Heroditus confirmed all of this. He had spoken to a witch nearby, asking her for help. She was the one who told him that he was being afflicted by a Night Hag. In return for half of his fortune, she offered him aid. She provided him with enchanted weapons of cold iron and told him that he should seek the aid of eight strangers who were warriors. He had set his guards to looking for people who matched what she had told him. Apparently, he thinks we are them.

We struck a bargain. In return for a favorable trade treaty and the items given to him by the witch, we would attempt to deal with the Night Hag. However, we told him that we had no way of reaching the hag as she attacks him from the Ghost World<sup>3</sup>, which lies between this world and the various worlds of elemental forms and energies.

Heroditus informed him that the witch had provided potions which should bring us to the Ghost World, as well as a device that she said would lock the Hag in the Ghost World, preventing her from fleeing to this world or other worlds. I asked to see the potions and items the witch provided him and that we would need to fight the Night Hag. He showed us the following items:

- A cold-forged iron dagger with a basic combat enchantment of the first magnitude
- A cold-forged iron greataxe, enchanted with a combat enchantment of the first magnitude
- A cold-forged iron greatsword, again with a combat enchantment of the first magnitude
- A wand of made of teak wood, that had been filled with ten and two-score bolts of lightning
- Eight potions, which, as the prince's son said, would temporarily transport the drinker to the Ghost World.
- A masterwork longsword of cold-forged iron, but not one that had been enchanted.
- A masterwork battleaxe of cold-forged iron; again, not ensorcelled.
- A strange device that looked like a sphere. Its top could be rotated and locked down. This was the device that is supposed to bar the Way Between Worlds. I worry – I can detect no enchantments from it.

My estimate that the items are worth nearly 25,000 gold aurei!

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2 SR 24

3 Ethereal Plane

Dawn Flower examined the prince's son and said that he would be unlikely to die this night. However, it would be doubtful that he would see three more sunrises. We told the Heroditus that we would prepare for battle tomorrow and engage the Hag that night.

We discussed battle plans. Some of us wished to consult the witch, but Heroditus said that she was temperamental and very expensive. He also doubted that there was much more she could do or say.

Caylx suggested that we consult Weishaupt<sup>4</sup>, to which we all agreed.

Professor Weishaupt was dubious about the undertaking but said that he could provide magical support before we entered the battle. He would cast a spell that would allow him to see the unseen, then when the Hag appeared to torment Heroditus, he would cast various enchantments to fortify us. Then and only then would we enter the Ghost World to battle the Hag.

Professor Weishaupt allowed me to learn two spells from him that I might use to prevent the Night Hag from becoming unseen and fleeing, if we should gain the upper hand. The first, See Invisible, would merely allow me to see the unseen. The second, Glitterdust, conjures golden motes of earth to cover the targets, preventing invisibility and potentially blinding the targets. Like many such spells of conjuration, it does affect those who are otherwise very resistant to sorcery.

I had trouble learning Glitterdust. It is a spell of the Land, diametrically opposed to the magics of Wind and Storm which I learned from Hssht. It just seems wrong to me, unnatural in essence and against my inner nature. In order for me to prepare it, I will need to expend much more of the magical energy I would use than for other spells<sup>5</sup>. Still, I believe it will be worth it.

## Thunder Moon – 12<sup>th</sup> Day

### Quintilis 22

Our ancestors smiled upon this day – we were victorious. Indeed, the battle with the Night Hag lasted not more than a dozen heartbeats. We then slew her steed and two other denizens of the Hell Worlds.

We prepared our spells and enchantments in the morning and then worked on the battle plan in

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4 For which he received 500 bonus experience points.

5 Two spell slots, instead of one.

the afternoon, rehearsing our actions. Heroditus would sleep in the Great Hall, giving us room to maneuver when attacking the Hag. Our entire group laid enchantment after enchantment on ourselves. Professor Weishaupt proved himself quite formidable, casting spells none of us knew.

I myself was under the influence of more spells than ever before in my life at a single time. I could practically feel the power of the sorcery as it was layered upon me. I received the following spells, either singly, or as part of a group enchantment:

- Greater Invisibility: This was cast by Weishaupt, and renders the recipient unseen to normal vision. Unlike lesser versions of the spell, engaging in violence does not break the dweomer.
- See Invisibility: Learned from Weishaupt, I cast this myself, allowing me to see into the Ghost World and to see creatures and items hidden by magic.
- Enlarge Person: One of my usual spells, this allowed me to grow to the size of an ogre.
- Mage Armor: Another of my standard spells, I think I cast this more often than any other.
- Shield: What would Mage Armor be without its mate and companion? Better than ordinary mortal shields, this lets me wield my greatsword.
- Bull's Strength: I finally used this spell for battle.
- Bear's Endurance: Dawn Flower cast this spell upon me, to enhance my vitality should I be wounded.
- Shield Other: This was another spell cast by Dawn Flower. Of them all, use of this spell worries me. Wounds done to me are shared between us, lessening them for me but thereby endangering her. She said that this would enhance her healing abilities as she could heal the wounds of both us at the same time. I follow her reasoning but disliked this then and still do as I pen this.
- Weapon of Awe: Dawn Flower called upon our Ancestors to fill my blade with the power of the Mountain.
- Protection From Evil: As I would be in the thick of battle, Dawn Flower asked our Ancestors to protect me from harm... which they did.
- Bless: When all of the basic enchantments were done, Dawn Flower called upon the Ancestors to guide our blows in battle, to strike the vitals of our foes, and to fill our hearts with courage.
- Haste: The last spell cast before battle was done by Professor Weishaupt. This spell made us move with unnatural celerity, allowing us to move faster and to strike blows quicker.

I had heard that the bite of the Night Hag would infect a person with disease, so Dawn Flower

and I each drank a vial of Antiplague. We also quaffed down a glass of Soothe Syrup, which prevents sickening and nausea. I also had Dawn Flower drink the Potion of Invisibility that we obtained from Tony Montana.

The battle was anticlimactic. Weishaupt and I saw the Night Hag enter the room, riding a Nightmare. She dismounted her steed, which left, and then she began to torment Heroditus. Weishaupt cast his spell of Haste and we drank the potions that brought us into the Ghost World. We took the Night Hag totally by surprise. All of us that engaged her struck her vicious blows before she could react. Even Grognar, using the ensorcelled cold-iron dagger, injured her greatly<sup>6</sup>. Caylx then used the sphere, turning it and locking it. It began to hum, locking the Ways.

Then and only then, did the Hag react. She attempted a greater enchantment of sleep<sup>7</sup> upon Grognar and Winston, trying to cast them into a deep slumber. They easily resisted the spell. The Nightmare returned, attempting to defend his mistress. Varos ignored it, and made the finest bow shot I have ever seen. He put an arrow through the Night Hag's right eye, felling her instantly<sup>8</sup>. We made short work of the Nightmare.

We were somewhat worried when we failed to return to the real world after the potions wore off. We presumed that it was the sphere keeping us locked in the Ghost World. We were debating what to do with it, when two more Hell World creatures came through the south wall. These were humanoids, draped in chains<sup>9</sup>. They were proceeded by a two groups of animated chains.

This was more difficult than the battle with the Night Hag, as most of our spells had worn off. I used the Glitterdust spell that I had prepared to good effect, blinding both chain devils. One threw off the blindness after a few moments<sup>10</sup>, but the other did not, at least before we slew it. While the Glitterdust spell was incredibly useful, it still felt unnatural to cast.

I also called up a Sphere of Ball Lightning, which I set upon the devil that recovered its sight. It quickly fled, running through the Ghost World. I used one of my scrolls of Expeditious Retreat to hasten myself so I could outrun it, as only Tesh, Caylx, Mordin and I could keep up with it. We ended up chasing it out of the castle entirely before we put it down.

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6 11 points with a +1 cold-iron dagger.

7 Spell of Deep Slumber.

8 Critical hit with a magic cold-iron arrow, for 52 points of damage.

9 Kytons

10 After one round

After the battle, we investigated the sphere closely. The hum seemed to be becoming fainter so we decided to wait to see if it wore off.

In the meantime, we investigated the Hag's body and that of the chain devils. The only possession the Hag had was a gem, worth about 2,000 aurei. We surmised this was her heartstone, the device she used to travel the Ghost World. The only items the chain devils had were two magical chains. One was merely a spiked chain of cold-forged iron with a basic battle enchantment. The other was far more interesting – it was a necklace that wraps the wearer in a shell of fresh air. That is a device I want.

Groggar also cast a strange spell upon the corpse of the Night Hag. It turned a piece of her body into a treasure map, showing us what the Hag thought was most valuable in the local region. It mapped out a cave nearby the castle.

The effect locking us in the Ghost World wore off after a couple of hours, returning us to the real world, with our spoils and the bodies of our foes.

We spoke with Professor Weishaupt regarding our excursion. He hypothesized that the chain devils were the customers of the Night Hag, and were there to collect Heroditus' soul.

I suggested privately to each of my companions that they should probably not mention Professor Weishaupt's participation or spellcasting in their reports, as he is not licensed for sorcery and we don't know how far the reports actually go. My report simply states that he provided us with some alchemical gear for the battle.

Heroditus was thrilled to no longer be hag-ridden, and promised favorable terms on the trade treaty. In addition, he knew of the cave on Groggar's new map. He said it was full of statues. Occasionally people would go there and some would not return. Other visitors would go and then say that statues of the people who went missing were now there<sup>11</sup>.

It may take a couple of days to work out the details of the trade agreement – perhaps we will have time to investigate the cave. If so, I have a couple of items I wish to make first.

Speaking of Groggar, the heartstone has been said to have the power to cure any disease. Perhaps it can cure him of the mental handicaps his battle in the sewers afflicted on him.

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<sup>11</sup> Cockatrice or Medusa lair is the logical guess.



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This and my other game recaps may be found at [www.launchpadzero.net](http://www.launchpadzero.net).