

Personal Journal of Magnus Cornario

The Twenty-Third Day of April, in the Year of our Lord 1530

Isle of Crete, Hapsburg Army Camp outside of Kydonia

Late Evening

It has been a most eventful day. As I woke this morning, I recalled that some of the legends of the pagan priests of old included tales where they questioned fallen warriors. I spoke to Haldar before he began his morning prayers to the sun and he agreed to petition Helios for a couple of spells that would allow us to interrogate some of the dead soldiers of Darius' command.

When Haldar was ready, we selected two soldiers: one from the entrance to the stone chamber and another from the armory. From the first we learned the following:

- Darius sent his men to the in front just before they opened the chamber of the stone. When behind them he said "good luck" and disappeared. They didn't see him again. I am uncertain if this means that he became invisible.
- The statues that were beta's companions animated and killed them. They breathed both fire and lightning.
- The warrior never saw the stone.

The second corpse had no more information than the first. His answers to the questions put to him:

- He did not notice the stone itself.
- He did not see Darius take the stone, but said Darius was looking for something specific down here and thought that Darius its theft.
- He did not see Darius cast spells.

I had not noticed in the first vision the pedestal the stone was on was shaped like a pyramid. Where the stone was would have been the apex. Considering my vision of the day before yesterday showed the stone gleaming with the Eye of Horus, this may be significant. Many occult symbols also show a pyramid with an eye at the apex.



We searched the pyramid carefully and noticed the print of a hand in the dust (it was very thick) near the top. I have made a sketch of it, in the off chance that it can be matched to the thief. I had Wulfgar chip a piece of the pyramid off for me, from the top where the stone lay. There is a slight chance that I might be able to use the principles of sympathy and contagion to use the chip to find the stone.

We also attempted to follow the tracks of Darius. He did not appear to go through the gateway to Armeni or back up to the Orrery chamber. Darius wore leather armor and was not known to use magic, but he appears to have disappeared via magic.

Another piece of the puzzle. The ensorcelled objects we found on the bodies of Darius' men appear to be of recent manufacture.

Having determined that we had gathered all the information that we could from the hidden chambers, we set out to return to Kydonia. Jean-Claude, accompanied by Haldar and Christshon, went on ahead at a quicker pace, as he wished to make a report to General Frederich.

When we arrived at Kydonia, I was surprised to learn that the army was camped outside the city. They had not taken it and was not engaged with the enemy. As we approached the army camp, we encountered Kendrick. He warned us that the General was in a foul humour towards us, blaming us for the damage done by Beta and his cohorts. Kendrick informed us that even as we approached camp, the general was venting his spleen upon Jean-Claude.

I inquired of Kendrick why the army was engaged in a siege, as opposed to engaging the enemy. He said that the army had assaulted the city early, when, during the battle music from the north and east entranced nearly 5 score soldiers and led them off in the direction of the beach. The General called off the assault and retreated to the camp. Kendrick said that the army was demoralized and that rumors of a witch on the beach were rampant.

Our group discussed this turn of events. There was some talk of Sirens, but they are said to call to sailors. Recalling my perusals of the Wondrous Creatures of Greece, I deduced that a harpy or coven of harpies were responsible. We determined that our party should investigate, having more experience with this type of event than the army as a whole.

As it appeared Jean-Claude and company would not be available and time was of the essence, Kendrick suggested that we add a new person to our party. He said that she was a native of the island and was the daughter of a smith in Kydonia. Considering that appearance and grooming habits of the last three people the army suggested we have join our group, I feared the worst.

Fortunately, my fears were groundless. Luna Chikadapolous turned out to be quite presentable. She looks as she has some Romany blood in her background, but I was not so uncouth as to bring it up with her. Kendrick told me in an aside that she was rumored to have magic powers and that due to her somewhat otherworldly expression she had acquired the unpleasant nickname of "Lunachik."

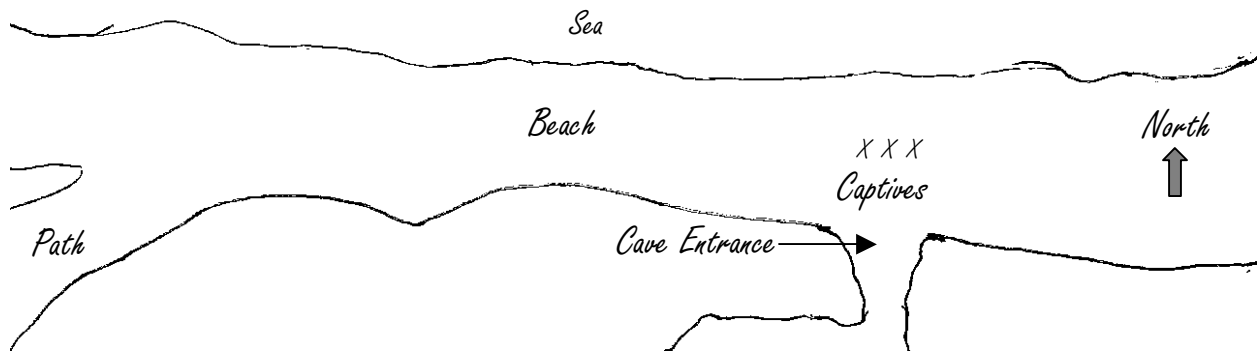
Kendrick also informed me that Louis was bored and wished to rejoin our group. I was somewhat reluctant but considering the fact that Dangle and Igos make Louis look like a model of hygiene and decorum, I assented. When Louis joined us, he made a comment that Kendrick had told him that we were desperate for him to rejoin us. And I had thought Kendrick a model of veracity. Still, the presence of Louis le Petite will make men do desperate things.

After a brief discussion on how to best deal with the harpies, Tauron came up with the brilliant idea that we should use some of our recently acquired Thunderstones to deafen ourselves and make ourselves immune to their music.

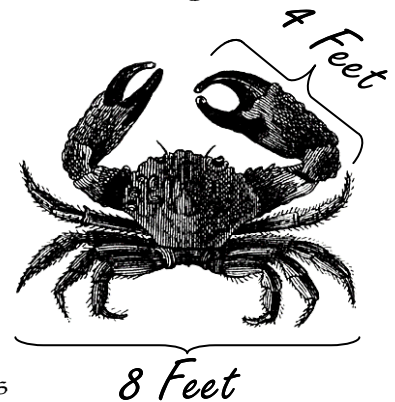
We followed the trail left by the ensorcelled soldiers. It led down to the beach as expected. About 6 to 7 yards south of the beach, the ground began to rise up in a steep stone cliff. Louis and Tauron deafened themselves with the application of a thunderstone and scouted ahead.

Following the path next to the cliff face, Louis and Tauron came upon a man in a cloak. He was standing to the north of three captives who had been fastened to the ground where they stood. The man in the cloak handling the captive in the middle a bone and then splashed some blood on them from a bucket. He then poured a trail of blood from the men leading down into the sea.

After making an insulting gesture at the captives, the cloaked man vanished into the cliff face.



Louis gestured to Tauron to fetch the rest of the group. He did so and we arrived just in the nick of time. As we turned from the entrance of the path onto the beach, a large, monstrous crab made its way out of the water and towards the captives. This crab was easily eight feet wide and its monstrous pincers were longer than a bastard sword¹.



Tauron had climbed the cliff over the cave entrance and proceeded to lower himself down on a rope. Louis snuck toward the entrance of the cave. Wulfgar, Dangle and Adam proceeded to charge to the rescue. Igos showed that he has some truly unusual talents as he changed into a wolf and followed the warriors. I saw him make this transformation at least a dozen times today. Most remarkable.

The crab assaulted the first prisoner just as our group arrived. Wulfgar placed himself between the crab and the prisoner, while Igos healed the captive. The vicious crustacean sorely wounded Wulfgar. He called upon the Frenzy of Odin and returned the favor. Igos healed Wulfgar using a spell. The man in the middle attacked the crab with the bone he had been given. Louis crept up and freed the captives while the crab was preoccupied with our party.

I observed Luna casting a bolt of Arcane Force at the crab and I following it with a volley of my own. Two more crabs appeared out of the sea. Before they could reach the rest of our party, I cast a Ball of Abysmal Flame upon them. We eventually destroyed the crabs,

although Adam was rendered inert by damage they inflicted upon him and two of the captives were slain by the crabs.

The surviving captive was the courageous warrior who had attacked the crab with the bone. He said his name was Boris and that he was one of the men who had been entranced by the music. Boris said that the music came from a witch who could appear as a beautiful woman or an ugly hag with wings. The last fit the description of a harpy as mentioned in my book.

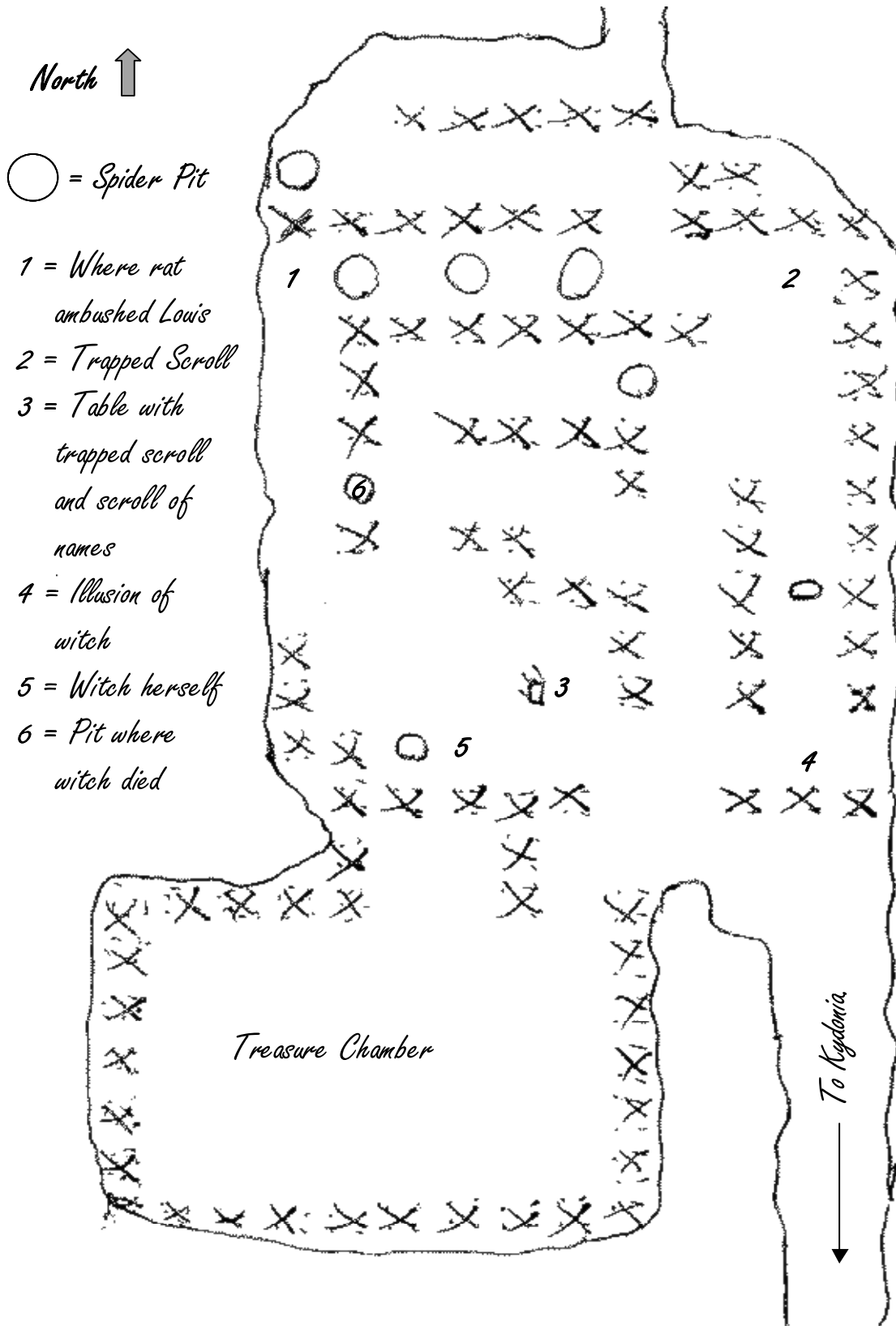
Boris told us the man in the cloak had the face of rat and looked like a hybrid of rat and man. He said that he was the witch's ally and that he had staked the three of them out on the beach as sacrifices when they threw off the witch's charm. He said that the witch and the rat man still had many prisoners in their cave and that it was full of spiders and rats.

The party returned to the army camp to make a report to Kendrick and get some additional supplies before attempting a rescue. We obtained 20 flasks of Greek Fire from a quartermaster, as they are useful against vermin. When Boris replied to a question that he would like to accompany on us, we outfitted him with Full Plate, a Heavy Shield and a Masterwork Longsword, all loot taken from Darius' men. All of the warriors took glaives as well as Boris said many places were so narrow only one man could walk abreast.

We returned to the cave, but used thunderstones to deafen ourselves before arriving at the beach. The cave itself was a charnel pit. The walls were made of branches, bones, weapons and things too disgusting too mention. They were not unlike wicker, but much cruder and much thicker. The prisoners were held inside the walls. Some were manacled, others merely tied.

The villain's lair had been fortified with over a half-a-dozen pit traps. The traps were filled with verminous spiders that swarmed out when they were stepped upon. The rat man in the cloak turned out to be a were-rat. He surprised Louis and threw an envenomed dagger into the halfling. The harpy was indeed a witch. She managed to paralyze Wulfgar in with an enchantment leaving him vulnerable. Adam was damaged by some of the vermin in the pit and Tauron and Luna both took sufficient damage that they should have been rendered unconscious. Both of them managed to remain upright and in the battle through sheer force of will.

A sketch of the villain's lair is below:



We did manage to kill the witch and her pet rat. The beautiful version of her turned out to be no shapechange but a mere illusion. The harpy actually fell afoul of one of her own pit traps, which was her undoing. Ordinary weapons just seemed to slide off of the wererat, so we pelted it with Greek Fire until it succumbed.

The poison used by the vermin took its toll on our group. While his truly uncanny Fortitude saved Wulfgar when in the frenzy, lingered effects afterwards made him seriously ill. In addition, the wererat bit several of my companions. Igos determined that it was likely that he, Louis, Wulfgar and Dangle were likely to afflicted by the dread curse of lycanthropy come the first full moon.

Initially, Wulfgar was somewhat intrigued at being able to transform into a rat. The witch's pet had impressed him with its quickness and resilience to blows. However, once I convinced him of the mental changes that would ensue as result, his enthusiasm faded.

Igos, who it turns out has a fair knowledge of healing, obtained some of the herb Deadly Nightshade, which is a sovereign cure for lycanthropy. The full afflicted individuals ingested the doses carefully prepared by Igos. His medical skill allowed Dangle, Wulfgar and himself to avoid any serious problems from the herb, but his inexperience with treating halflings showed itself. Louis fell into a coma shortly after ingesting the herb. While he is expected to recover, I doubt he will be converting to druidism any time in the future.

We managed to free seventy of the captives. Unfortunately, another ten or so were killed by the various vermin released by the witch's traps. Captain Abellious, whom rumor had was killed in the fall of Kydonia, turned out to be one of the witch's captives. He was in poor health, but alive when we released him. The witch had apparently spent some time torturing him.

After we rescued the prisoners, we took a good deal of time to search the lair. There was a passageway to the south that Wulfgar determined had not been used in weeks. Despite the urging of the rest of us, Tauron followed it for a good ten minutes. While he did not follow the tunnel to its end, he believes that it leads into Kydonia proper.

We found a fair number of gems as well as a good amount of gold in a southern chamber. In addition, we found an ensorcelled buckler. We found a total of three scrolls in the complex. Two of them were trapped with explosive spells, but the third contained a list of names. To my surprise, my name is on the list. It seems that several of our party have come to someone's attention. I have copied the list below:

Louis	Herexes	Peragrin	Richard
Demitrious	Magnus	Horrace	Darwin
Rastor	Jozan	Jeane Claude	Haldor
Phineas	Kesler	Wolfgar	Galina
Sorren	Darius	Terrance	Chanteau
	Malis	Miguel	Garis
	Pyronis	Augustus	Torwyn
	Wentworth	Crishtshon	Lorik

Wulfgar was annoyed that whoever it was spelled his name wrong. I pointed out to him, that until I taught him to read, he didn't know how to spell his own name.

After we returned to the camp, I informed Kendrick of all that we had done. He was thrilled at the return of the men, although he appeared rather distressed when I told him what happened to those that had died. I brought Louis and Captain Abellious to Haldar, as I know his skill as a healer is of a certainly better than the churgeons with the army. I also told Captain Abellious of Boris' bravery during the day.

I spent the rest of the day working to repair Adam while considering the events of the day. I believe that we need to speak to General Frederich tomorrow.