

Personal Journal of Magnus Cornario

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

Isle of Crete, Hapsburg Army Camp outside of Kydonia

Early Evening

I spent most of the day learning a spell from one of the Scrolls found in the laboratory chamber beneath the temple of Helios. After much effort, I believe I am now capable of casting an enchantment that will make a person believe that he is undergoing an assault from the most terrible grue his inner mind can imagine. In those of weak of will and heart, the terror it invokes should be enough to render life impossible.

Haldar healed Wulfgar and the rest of our band in the morning. While I spent the day in study and ritual, Wulfgar wandered the camp, making some purchases and socializing with many of the army's soldiery. I had requesting that he look for a crystal suitable for scrying as I have recently learned that wizardry. I had little hope for success, as an army camp is hardly a great metropolis, however, he found a merchant refugee from Armeni. The merchant had in his possession a 7" crystal of nearly flawless rose quartz which he was desperate to be rid of. I obtained my crystal for a mere 500 gold ducats.

I thanked Wulfgar for his efforts on my behalf. He merely grunted and noted that he had a tankard of ale to go slay. I think he is still annoyed at himself for not being able to resist the harpy witch's paralyzing incantation.

My studies were interrupted briefly for a ceremony at noon time. I and my companions received official military commendations from Captain Abellius for our work yesterday in rescuing he and his men. We also had the privilege of dining with him for the noon meal. We spoke with him briefly regarding his Turkish interrogator and the list of names that he had been compelled to provide. Apparently, they were of people whom the Hapsburg army had employed in an unusual capacity. The first group of names was for people with unusual talents of stealth and espionage. The second group was for those who seemed to have the ability to use magic spells. The third was for warriors of unusual skill and abilities. The fourth and last column was a for those who had special talents at healing.

I commented to Captain Abellius that Darius was in the second column on this list and he said that he had observed Darius performing some sort of magical ritual over a group of weapons and armor. Captain Abellius said that he had been told that this was some type of divinatory magic, although he did not relate how he came by that information. The Captain did mention that Darius was the very first name he gave to his captors.

I don't believe the Captain cares much for Colonel Darius.

We also received a detailed description of the Turk who tortured the Captain. After lunch, I returned to my studies with a new vigor. It was clear that I had a target (other than Darius) for the enchantment I was learning.

About an hour before the evening meal, I retired to my tent with the crystal Wulfgar had found for me. I began time focusing my thoughts through the crystal, casting about for Darius. After some time, I found success. I observed Darius in a restaurant ordering a meal. He seemed relaxed and at ease – he bore only his backpack and melee weapons. The servants were fairer of skin than most of the people found in the Mediterranean region and I heard Darius conversing with them in a language I did not recognize. I did observe a few words on the menu and wrote them down. I showed them to some of our companions and they recognized the words as being Polish. It appears Darius has managed to travel over a 350 leagues in the course of four days. I can think of no other way he could have managed this feat without using magic.

I attempted to Scry upon Beta as well, but the crystal remained dark. It is possible that Beta's inner mind confounded my enchantment. I might have more success trying for one of his construct bodyguards; my studies show that they are often weak of will, lacking true minds.

Our merry band of misfits has expanded again. Three new members have joined us. The first, Caliph has a somewhat swarthy complexion. He wears no armor and uses a couple of sickle-like weapons. He doesn't speak much, unlike our second new recruit. David, a Jew, has a talent for oratory and feels the need to exercise that talent as much as possible. Scarcely 30 seconds after meeting me, he attempted to engage me in a debate regarding the divinity of words. I confess, I tuned him out. The last of our companions, Sigurd, is from

Wulfgar's homeland of Norway. At least these three are much cleaner than most of our last set of new recruits.

Tomorrow, we head back to the witch's cave to follow the tunnel. Haldar will not be joining us as he says that he has too many wounded to help care for. Jean-Claude has been dragooned into training some new recruits. Louis says that he has come to his senses and wants nothing to do with us. I have no idea where Christshon has wandered off to.

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

Isle of Crete, Hidden Room underneath the City of Kydonia

Before Noon (?)

Foul things lie in the depths of the Earth, hidden from the gaze of mankind. Today, I encountered some of them – ordinary vermin, diseased and filth-ridden rats gathering in swarms, aberrant things that seem nothing more than a rocky mound of tentacles, eyes and mouths, and subhuman bipeds whose mere smell is enough to sicken the healthy.

I am not sure of the time as I write this. My estimate is that we have only been underground for a few hours at most, but considering the battles we have fought and the distance we have come, it seems like forever.

We left the army camp at Kydonia shortly after dawn and arrived at the witch's cave in good time. I cast a spell to detect magical emanations and scoured the lair while the rest of the group examined the walls thoroughly. We were searching for any valuables we might have missed in our previous visit. Unlike then, we were not rushed for time and so did as thorough a job as possible without tearing the walls down into their constituent components. Unfortunately, nothing valuable was found.

After wasting a couple of hours on the witch's cave, we proceeded down the south passageway. It appeared to be a natural formation, probably caused by the movement of water. We walked down the tunnel for some ten or so minutes before coming to the left turn that Tauron had mentioned. During that time Wulfgar and Sigurd (who apparently has some talent at tracking) noticed that the only tracks they could spot appeared to be those of rats – a great many rats.

Note: Build a clock mechanism that will fit in your pocket.

As such, it was no surprise that as we neared the turning that we encountered a vast horde of rodents – it was like a fifty-foot long carpet of squeaking and biting vermin. I estimate that the swarm must have had close to 75 score rats in it. Despite this, our party was in no real danger. Wulfgar pulled a flask of Greek fire from his bandolier and tossed it upon the nearer rats. Right after he did this, Luna conjured a vast webwork of sticky fibers using an incantation that I myself have cast. She engulfed 4/5ths of the horde in her web. Adam then threw a flask of acid upon the unentangled rats, finishing them off. With the rest of the rats helpless in Luna's web, our group quickly dispatched them.

Following the turn, we saw the passageway open into a much larger tunnel, one approximately 30 feet across. It was clear what carved this passage, as a stream filled the far half of the tunnel. At the point of the junction, the stream was approximately 15 feet across and easily a dozen feet deep. It was running rather slowly and the water was not particularly clean. We spotted some rats swimming in the current and well as other rubbish floating its way downstream.

Dangle must have been hungry, because he snatched the body of a dead rat from the edge of the stream and devoured it raw. David lost his lunch upon seeing this. The Dwarf must have a constitution of iron. Despite the fact that the rat corpse was clearly diseased, he has suffered no ill effects.

We did some quick calculations and determined that the direction the stream was flowing was in the general direction of Kydonia. Tauron decided to reconnoiter in the upstream direction. He returned in about 30 minutes, saying that the tunnel narrowed down so that the stream filled it completely from top to bottom. This effectively made the decision for us on which way to go.

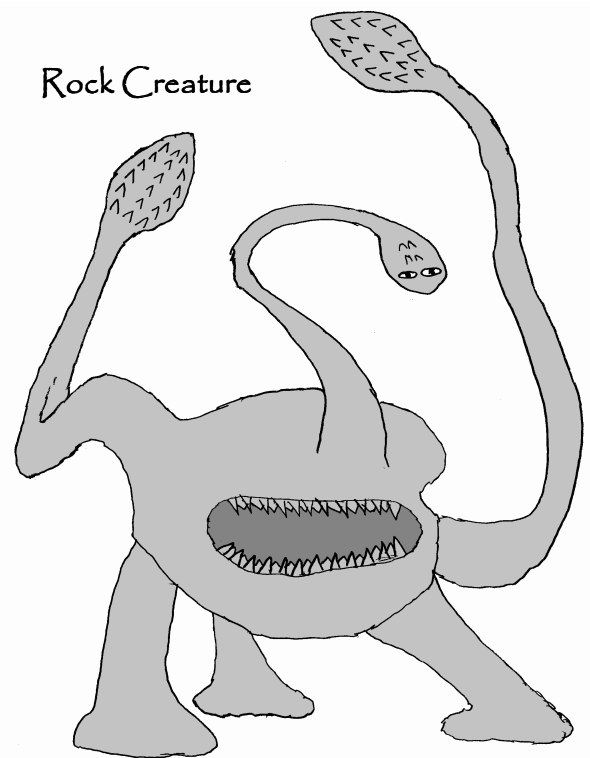
We followed the stream for some distance. There was a brief "waterfall" where the passageway sloped a bit. After that, the stream became very wide, covering the entire passageway. At the same time it became very shallow – less than an inch deep in most places. The ground became very slimy and slippery.

Our group decided to press onward. We eventually came across a moderate-sized cave that opened off of the left side of the passage. Tauron went in to investigate and most of the

party followed when Sigurd warned us that there was something in a pile of rubbish on the right side of the chamber. Right after he said that, tentacles reached out of the pile and engulfed Luna and Tauron.

I have never seen a creature like that which we battled. Even the Hydra and other beasts encountered in the Temple of Helios did not seem like an abomination against the laws governing living things, like this beast did.

The body of the creature was somewhat oval in nature and was approximately twelve feet in diameter and about six feet high in the middle. The skin was dark-grey and lumpy, like it was made out of a slime-covered rock. It stood upon three legs jutting out from the bottom like the legs of a stool. These legs were a foot thick and about 4 feet high. Jutting out from the top of the body were the two tentacles that had wrapped around Luna and Tauron. These tentacles were easily twenty-five feet long. Each tentacle seemed to end in a sort of paddle-shaped protrusion that was covered in barbs. From the middle of the body a vine-like stalk jutted up 4 feet into the air, with a couple of eyes attached to the end of it. In the center of the body was a huge mouth, filled with several rows of serrated teeth.



The ensuing battle was fierce. I myself cast a dozen missiles of force into the body of the creature and the rest of the party threw themselves into the fray with a great deal of vigor. However, the most critical combatant on our side was Wulfgar. The Frenzy of Odin came upon him as he charged the creature. I could see that he channeled the Frenzy through the amulet I made him as he grew to be almost a dozen feet tall during his charge. Shouting his war cry to the Thunderer, he carved vicious wounds into its body with his glaive. Luna herself, who had been released by the creature in order that it might attack Adam, finished it off with a bolt of magical force.

As a side note – David did not engage the creature in battle. Instead, he began a brilliant oration to encourage the fighters. Wulfgar noted that he felt the effects of the oration, even under the influence of the frenzy. Clearly it had some supernatural power backing it, even though it is unlike any spell I have heard of.

We searched through the creatures lair, but found little to show for our troubles – 40 pieces of gold, a cap which Tauron said was worth perhaps 10 gold, and a tarnished longsword and dagger. Wulfgar and Sigurd did note that there were tracks in the creatures lair that could not be attributed to it. These tracks looked to be those of a human-sized reptile but were spaced in such a fashion as to appear as if they belonged to a bipedal creature.

Our group continued along the passage towards Kydonia. The air became dank and fetid (well, more so than before) and the smell became almost overpowering. Wulfgar and I took our blindfolds and wet them down with fresh water from our waterskins. We then used them as masks, which helped marginally.

Dangle, using his keen Dwarvish senses, managed to see a group of bipeds blocking the passage ahead of us beyond the range of our light. Luna had the brilliant idea of casting an illuminating spell on a coin, which she flung into the midst of the creatures.

Thus illuminated, we could see the creatures ahead of us. They were totally unfamiliar to me – a bunch of subterranean troglodytic bipedal lizard creatures. As they looked decidedly unfriendly, I cast a Ball of Abysmal Flame into their midst, slaying a score or so. Luna enveloped almost all of the rest that we could see in a massing of webbing. David once again began his strange oration.

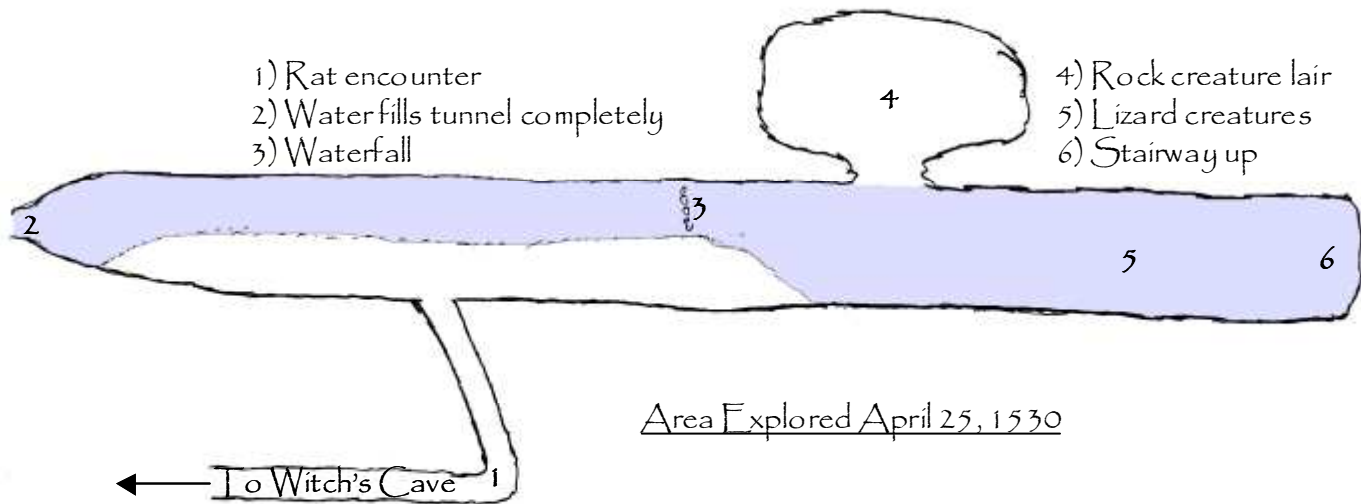
The few that escaped the webbing charged us, where they were quickly dispatched. Wulfgar himself slew several with his glaive as they attempted to charge past him. As they approached, however, a foul stench enveloped our band, sickening Tauron and myself.

Our warriors approached the webbing, intent on finishing off the stragglers, when we noticed some of the lizard bipeds carrying torches and cutting their comrades out from the far side. When informed of this, I used the second of the Ball of Abysmal Flame that I had prepared this morning. Again I must have killed a score or so, although about ten remained. While

some of the members of the band took several wounds, there was no real damage done until one of the lizards inflicted a curse upon Adam with a touch of its scaly hand. The foul enchantment leached some of Adam's natural strength from him. After the curse upon Adam, our group redoubled its efforts and the rest of the lizard creatures were swiftly slain.

There was nothing of value among the lizard creatures – their stone clubs, claws and a few javelins were all the possessions they had. Definitely a lower order of creature. When we counted the bodies, we learned that we had slain three score and six of the beasts.

Shortly beyond where we fought the lizard creatures, the tunnel ended and there was a stone stairway carved into the edge of the tunnel, going up. The stairway ended in a stout wooden door, locked with a most complex lock. Tauron managed to pick it, although it took about twenty times longer than it normally takes him. The door opened into a 20 foot square stone chamber. As we had reached what we thought was a place of relatively safety, we decided to rest for a bit and I penned this entry.



I have checked the items we found in the lair of the rock beast for any traces of ensorcellment, but they radiated no magical aura.

Tauron has just told me that he has noticed something strange with the torch sconces on the south wall.