

[Excerpts form the Journal of Magnus Cornario]

The Thirteenth of October, in the Year of our Lord 1530

My house, Barony of Cornario

I set up my dedicated wright to enchant my mithral dastana with a basic protective enchantment.

While it worked upon that, I researched the creatures that Prince Rupert said killed him and his cavalry troupe. My sources of information are slim, but what I what I have uncovered makes me think that they are creatures summoned from the Abyss. The oldest reference I found referred to them as "Type One Demons".

My reference said that they are immune to electricity and poison and are highly resistant to acid, cold and fire. In addition, they are highly resistant to physical weapons that are not imbued with the divine powers of positive energy.

While the demons have some minor spells at their disposal, what worries me most is their "Dance of Ruin". It is said that three of the creatures, dancing together for a very short period of time can call forth energies devastating all life within five-score paces. This is what killed Prince Rupert, and I can find no defense against it.

The Fourteenth of October, in the Year of our Lord 1530

I have a new assistant. Alexandros of Athens is a priest of Athena in her aspect as patron of heroes. Alexandros has also expressed a desire to come with Wulfgar and I when we engage in our various tasks for the Princes. He comes recommended by both Ariadne and Andrea Palladio, so I have no worries there.

I used my manikin to enchant Wulfgar's dastana with a defensive enchantment.

The Fifteenth of October, in the Year of our Lord 1530

David's Keep, Afternoon

Princes Rupert and Roger have asked us to explore an old keep at Kineta. This is a fortress on the Turkish side of the canal, about 10 miles east of the eastern end, overlooking the ocean. They believe that the Turks have abandoned it, but would like us to confirm this.

Sigurd will not be coming with us. He wishes to focus on securing his menagerie. Our previous adventure has unnerved him. Alexandros will be joining us, in addition to Gerard. Gerard is David's new bodyguard, although he looks more like a spy than a warrior.

Sea South of Kineta Keep, Late Evening

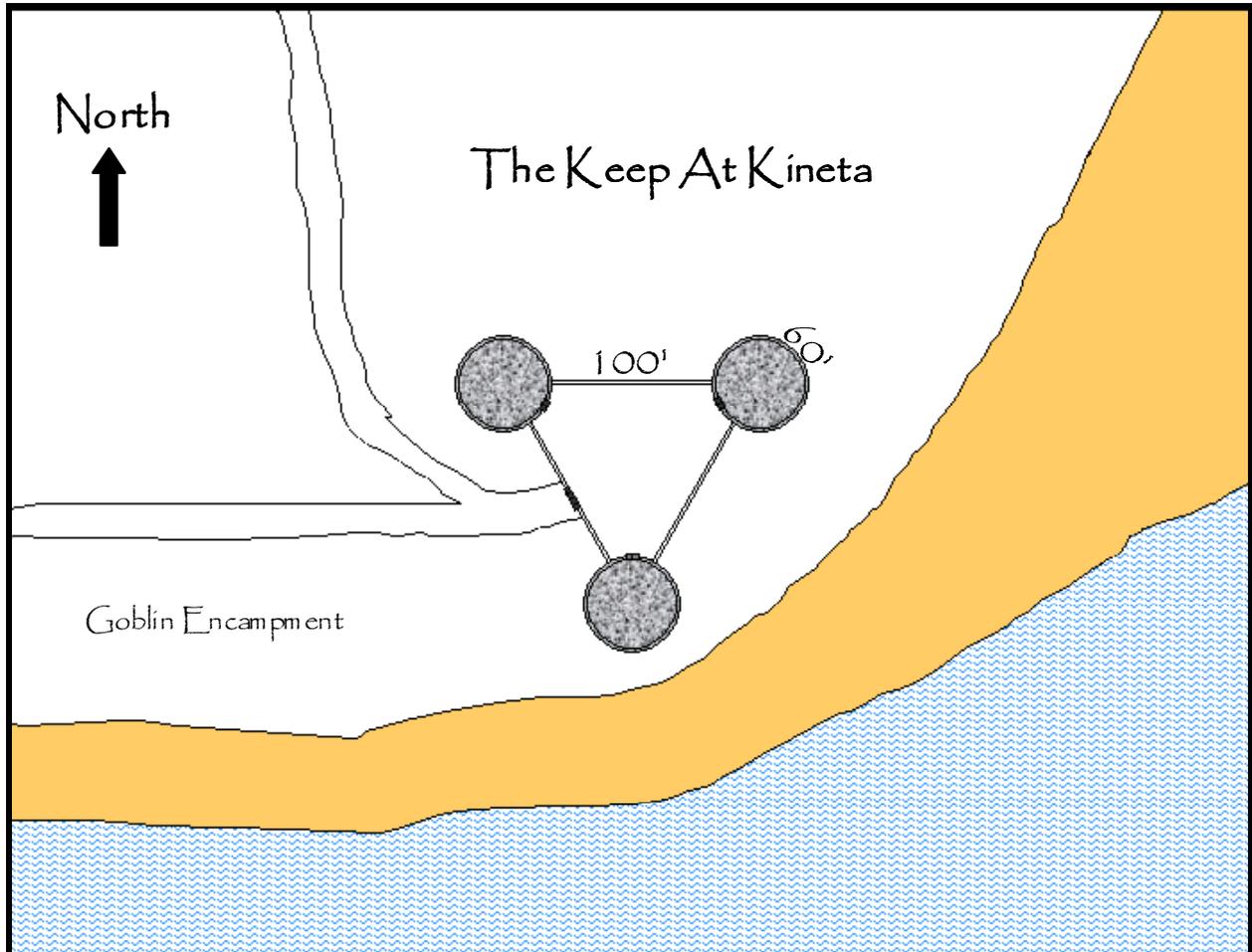
We are about 10 miles south of the keep, in our new collapsible boat. I have doubts about Gerard's skills as a warrior, but he is an excellent scout. Combined with aerial information obtained from Celeris, we have fairly detailed information about the keep.

The keep is a basically an isosceles triangle. The sides of the triangle are basically 20 foot high stone walls that are 100 feet long. The apexes of the keep are 60 foot circular stone towers.

The keep has apparently been overrun with goblins and their allies. Gerard snuck into the goblin camp and said that he counted about 300 goblins. He also saw a giant-sized humanoid (about 12 feet tall) carrying a large club. There are some goblins, presumably leaders, who wear something similar to spiked gauntlets on their left hands. They carry glaives and wear dark cloaks. Many ride wolves. Most of the leaders are camped inside the courtyard of the keep, while more ordinary goblins are in the ruins of a burnt-out village on the west side of the keep.

Gerard said that he spoke to a couple of the goblins. Gerard must be a master of disguise or the world's greatest thespian to pull that off. The goblin Gerard spoke to said that new recruits of both goblins and their allies are arriving every day. They referred to some sort of master or leader, but said he was not in the keep itself.

After Gerard returned, we decided to assault the fortress in the early morning hours, before they are reinforced further.



The Sixteenth of October, in the Year of our Lord 1530

Cornario Manor, Late Afternoon

The assault upon the Keep at Kineta went flawlessly.

We prepared for the assault by having Caliban make white clothing for all of us. He then cast an transmuting enchantment that allowed us to assume a cloudy form and ride the winds. An hour before dawn, we rode the winds to the bottom of the cliff underneath the keep. Seeing ourselves undetected, I called forth two fiendish hound from the depths of Hades.

These hounds, while not fantastically fearsome fighters, have a bark which terrifies listeners that are weak of. The hounds may be heard clearly within 300 or so feet. In addition, the fiendish hounds can fly twice as fast as a man can run. My calculations were that the entire encampment could be affected by the hounds' barks.

We sent the hounds in ahead of us, while we rode the winds to the roof of the southernmost tower.

The vast majority of the goblins were scared off by the Hounds of Hades. A small fraction of them stayed in order to be slaughtered by our party. Some of them had clear sorcerous abilities while others were handlers for their special monster guardians. A couple of members of our party were pinned in the bottom of the tower by a web spell and Wulfgar took several wounds but no one was severely hurt. David showed a new ability - the ability to call forth fire from the air using the power of song. Most unusual.

We did defeat our foes. Of greatest importance is the fact that we captured their leader, a sorcerer goblin called Bonecrusher. He rode upon a lion-headed dragon and attempted to flee when the battle turned against them. I managed to disintegrate the dragon as it fled and Wulfgar captured Bonecrusher.

The goblins themselves were not of much interest. However, their animal companions were quite diverse. I am sure that Sigurd is cursing himself for not joining us. They controlled the creatures via the spiked gauntlets that were worn by certain of the goblin leaders.

The goblins had the following creatures controlled:

- Wolf Mounts
- Fire Wolves
- Cold Wolves
- Rock Giant
- Manticore
- Lion Dragon

We found the following in the keep:

- 24,000 pieces of gold
- Goblin-sized glaive enchanted with a basic battle enchantment of the first magnitude.
- Goblin-sized leather armor enchanted with a basic protective enchantment of the first magnitude.
- Goblin-sized longsword enchanted with a basic battle enchantment of the first magnitude.
- Papers showing how the goblins controlled their pets.

David plans to interrogate Bonecrusher later today. I have some notes upon the goblin creatures below.

Wolf Mounts

There were about a score of "normal" wolves that the goblins used as mounts. These were larger than regular wolves, being about 5 feet long and 3 feet high at the shoulders. Most had either gray or black fur. There was no evidence that these had supernatural powers.

Fire Wolves

These wolves were also used as mounts by the goblins. They were much larger than the regular wolves, being about 8 feet long and standing about 4½ feet at the shoulder. They had reddish fur and could breathe fire. Their bite seemed to burn as well.

We found the bodies of four of the fire wolves when the battle was done, but I would not be surprised if some escaped.

Cold Wolves

These seemed to be variants of the fire wolves. Their fur was a winter white, instead of the fire-red. These wolves breathed out a spray of ice and cold instead of fire. Their bites freeze the flesh of their victims.

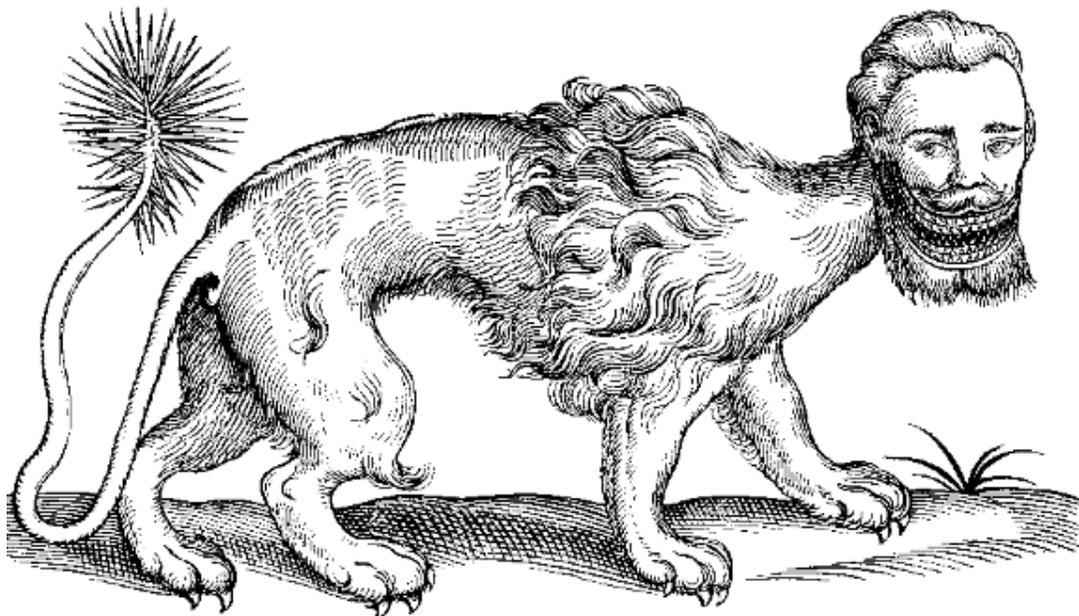
We apparently killed four of the cold wolves as well.

Manticore

I actually have a reference upon one of the creatures used by the goblin. The manticore is listed in The History of Four-footed Beasts, a bestiary by an Englishman named Edward Topsell. According to Topsell:

"This beast or rather Monster... is bred among the Indians, having a treble row of teeth beneath and above, whose greatness, roughness, and feet are like a Lyons, his face and ears unto like a mans; his eyes gray, his colour red, his tail like the tail of a Scorpion, of the earth, armed with a sting, casting forth sharp pointed quilts"

I have copied his illustration below.



The manticore we encountered was about 10 feet long. It had the body of a lion, the wings of an eagle, and its head was vaguely man-like head. It had iron spikes upon its tail as opposed to a scorpion's tails. It shot the tail spikes out in volleys, faster than any archer.

I shot the one with an acid arrow from my wand. They are not acid-resistant.

Rock Giant

The giant was larger than an ogre or cyclops. It stood about 12 feet tall and had rocky-gray skin (hence my name for it). It was totally hairless and carried a bag of boulders, in addition to a huge club. The boulders were about the size of cannon-shot and my guess is that the giant threw them at his foes, although he did not have the opportunity to do so to us.

Lion Dragon

The lion dragon had the head of lion and the body of a wyrm with leathery wings and glittery brass scales. It had huge claws and fangs and was about 12 feet long. I detected an enervating effect in its roar, but none of our party are particularly weak of will and its roar did not affect any of us.

As a fascinating aside, I could not help but notice that the disintegrated remains of a dragon are indistinguishable from those of a human, or a halfling, or a dwarf.