Twenty-seventh day of Eighthmoon, [x] days after the Arc of the Ley-lines in the region around Crystal Town

Our first inkeeper was very quick. This one had several purple sorcery rays, and was of unclear species. There are scales, and sharp teeth. I have just looked back to the board to see the list of innkeepers, and it says she is female and her name is Chalc'ic Xitli. She is a sorcerer and an enchanter. She had us discuss what to do first, of several options, and although I would have preferred seeing to the shards as our first task, we were sent on a mission to secure a perimeter around the ley-line tap near Teakiri, which is the closest town to the outpost's current location. I did not go on this mission.

Our second innkeeper was very quiet. This one is called Silluvium Zarai, is female, and has many layered robes covering her entire form. She is a greymage and bard, and with her magic, silenced anyone who spoke out of turn. She had us vote, and the party voted to escort some villagers to the outpost, where healers could cure their advanced mana-rash. I went on this mission. There were three villagers from Teakiri who needed this escort. I do not recall their names, but several of the members of this adventuring group were known to them, or at least knew others who knew those members of our adventuring group sufficiently well to exchange gossip about shared acquaintances, including our innkeepers. One of the villagers had white mana rash, but kept insisting that it was yellow.

We encountered desert gremlins, which heal when the ambient magic in the area surges. This happens frequently, and makes them very hard to deal with. After a great deal of delay, we were able to move on.

There is a cactus in the party. It is very young, barely knows how to speak, and does not know what names are. I and others, among them one called Yuri and one called Ayrin, attempted to explain the concept of names to it. This explanation did not yield useful results. The one called Yuri was asking many questions of me, and of our other party members. I have learned that there is a crystal diver called Otli, two siblings named Beau and Leilani whose parents hunted monsters, a mangrove tree called Echo, an Illion elf raised by Wood elves, a Wood elf practare from the south called Zet, and more. Beau is confusing, and apparently needs to consume mana regularly to survive. He does not particularly want to be an adventurer, but his parents sent him to accompany his sister Leilani.

We encountered slimes, after that. I almost managed to pass by them, carrying one of the mana-rash afflicted townsfolk, but was struck down with a boosted fireball. I learned later that a significant percentage of our party members had been killed and eaten, or perhaps eaten and killed, though all townsfolk were escorted safely away. We debated going back, but eventually decided there was no point, as all our party members had already been killed. We then met the outpost mages, coming back to meet us. Several of them attended the two with simple mana rash, and the head healer took charge of the one with the white mana rash, which is much harder to cure.

The head healer is Eliim Valen, a male human who is our third innkeeper. He is very busy. A healer, a wild mage, and a witch, according to the list of innkeepers. He left us after a brief overview, and after the first round of voting tied the two mission choices between investigating a shard, and going and fighting desert gremlins. After another round of tied voting, the group decided to go fight the desert gremlins. I did not go on that mission, although I heard there were many gremlins defeated and large burrows collapsed. Apparently, the burrows' entrances all faced towards a strong magical presence, perhaps the ley-line.

Next we decided to, at last, investigate and attempt to clear out the shards. We received instruction on this, but the instruction had many steps and was not necessarily clear in actual practice. Later, through trial and error, we determined the correct method. First we went to a rainforest, one that had far too much blue mana in it. Many of my party members were confused by this, asking 'is it not a *rain* forest', and 'isn't there supposed to be blue mana there', and other questions such as those. They are not familiar with rainforests such as those, and do not yet fully comprehend the balance of the ecosystem, the biome, and what overabundance means.

On the way to the blue rainforest, we encountered gatherers at a tree. The fruits they harvested were strange, warped by the magic. Many ate them anyways. They said that the flavor was different, and did not notice any other effects. I told one of the gatherers that the tree was out of the pattern; it was covered in blue mana rash, and had a sense of something out of balance. I told the gatherer. The gatherer did not understand me, and asked a question which I did not understand, that upon reflection I believe to have been a sexual reference. I attempted to simplify the matter, and suggested to the gatherer that if the village's foresters wanted to cut down trees, that this blue-touched tree would be a good one, as its fruit and roots were corrupted. The gatherer expressed regret, as trees of that kind take many years to grow large, mature, and begin bearing fruit. This is true. It is the way of such things, that death may come as a tragedy, yet in some ways also as a blessing.

One of the townsfolk earlier, stricken with mana-rash, asked if carpentry was strange to me. This villager was a carpenter, I later discovered. I asked in return, as I, a creature made of wood, once worked as a carpenter, is it not strange that you creatures made of meat can be butchers? This surprised the villager, who had not thought of it that way before. My time as a carpenter was brief, and not enjoyable; it was not strange to work with wood, as the villager seemed to believe it would be, but the tools did not sit comfortably in my hands, and my arms struggled to saw straight cuts. I did not tell this to the villager. I instead explained how I am awake, just as how the villager and my party members are awake; and how most trees and plants are not awake, in the same way most animals are not awake. There are always exceptions, as I am an exception to most plants being not awake; and there are strange in-between states which I have heard about, in stories and lore or in rumors of mysteries deep in the jungle. I did not tell this to the villager. But it crosses my mind again, now, thinking of the blue-touched tree.

There was one more encounter, which I do not recall. And then there were beasts - some kind of strange armored beasts? Ah, no. I remember. The encounter which I did not recall was mudcrabs, with strange crystalline in their shells, and with purple carapaces. Some of the party members, including the dwarf-rat, Señor Gouda, insisted on hunting one to see if it could be cooked; I warned them that I had seen such experiments tried before, and had not yet met a creature that enjoyed the taste of mudcrabs. They did not heed my warnings.

Many of our party, including myself, sustained hacks. Some were left with only one limb. Even for those of us who retained our legs, the next encounter proved a challenge. The beasts, armored or combat or some sort, were difficult to deal with, given that more than half our party was unable to use first aid to heal others, or carry our downed allies away - tasks requiring two functioning hands. One of the beasts was distracted with a mudcrab corpse. We took the eggs or boulders the beasts were throwing, and carried them with us to the blue rainforest.

In the blue rainforest, it was immediately apparent that all was not functioning as usual. The water was far too plentiful; the trees seemed soaked in it, and pools of it had accumulated about the forest floor. The air was cooler, wetter. A blue elemental wandered about the area, vivacious and energetic. I examined the pools extensively; the first step to untangling the excess mana was, and is, to attune to it. This involves examining and touching objects, perhaps creatures, containing and overflowing with the relevant type of mana. There were sixteen pools, all different in the way their mana rested, and I examined all of them.

During this time, almost the entire party was downed by giant spiders. Many weapons were damaged by the acidic blood, leading them to deal only vitals damage. At this point, the wild energy of the forest had given me the energy I needed to restore my injured arm, so I helped to heal some of the wounded party members. As I and others were attempting to determine next steps, another group took to speaking with the elemental, trying to convince it that the rainforest was not a place it wanted to make its home, offering to bring it to the river we intended to journey to next, where the blue mana flowed naturally.

We arranged ourselves in a circle, in an attempt to do the next stage of the untangling. This was incorrect, but we did not learn that until later. The elemental kept investigating and poking at us; it was curious about our clothes. I offered it a friendship bracelet, one that I had made inexpertly in an attempt to practice different techniques. It accepted the bracelet, and seemed content with that.

It became apparent that only four of us had attuned to enough blue mana: myself, Echo, [Theo], and Zet. [Theo] remembered that the next step was to key to something in the area. Other people had ushered the elemental to the center of the circle, in an attempt to help us focus the blue mana. We all attempted to key to it, humming as had been described, to try and reach the proper resonance. This worked, but was not correct, and led to a result which I feel regret over.

The unweaving which followed was difficult, but was eventually accomplished, even though the area was briefly overrun by creatures. I do not know what type of creatures; I was focused on

the knot we were trying to detangle, but I do know that we were at great risk, and only survived through luck and through the aid of our party who had not entered the untangling. When we finished, we discovered that we had indeed straightened out the knotted-up mana in the area. We had also unwoven the elemental. I retrieved the friendship bracelet I had given it, now tingling with blue energy; others retrieved the rocks and ice it had been holding.

Next we went to the river overflowing with green mana. This entire mission irritated me. I had to explain the ritual process several times, we reached little success, and the green monkeys we encountered on the way made me want to hit them until they stopped moving, but did not take hits and were not able to be knocked out. The only thing that felt like it was accomplished successfully was tying the elemental's friendship bracelet around a rock in the flowing river, to hopefully draw some blue mana to it - and to give whatever remained of the elemental a chance to thrive in its natural habitat.

There is a part of me that thinks I should have not gone adventuring at all, and just stayed with my birds. But thinking about it now, my party members are loud and hasty and annoying, and those are also words I have used affectionately to describe my birds. I will continue adventuring.