

Undiplomatic Incident – Notes

This is an introductory scenario, with the PCs being members of a City Watch squad – Trading Gate Watch House Patrol no.1 – who are assumed to be rated as somewhat promising, and hence likely to be assigned the occasional unusual investigation. Note that major NPCs have character sheets at the end of the document.

Background

The Wyrnberg has declined since the days of *The Colour of Magic*. It's *thinning*; its high ambient magical flux is causing repeated time slips and reality breakdowns, the dragons are dozy and confused things that vanish closer and closer to home if they can even be inveigled out of the caves at all these days, and older residents swear that the base of the mountain is broader and the sides are less obliquely angled than they used to be.

Even its queen, Lady Liessa Wyrmbidder, seems to be adapting to this all too well – but her children, **Treicha Liessing Dragonlord** and **La!resca Hrunsdaughter Dragonlady**, brought up on romantic stories of the old days and with a surfeit of youthful ambition (plus energy inherited from their father, Hrun the Barbarian), are looking for ways to make their grander dreams come true. The trouble is, they have enough Wyrnberg arcane knowledge to take that sort of phrase literally.

They considered going looking for somewhere else to rule, or other sources of residual magic, but realised that the competition for those sorts of resources was severe, many of them were dangerously unstable, and their own knowledge wasn't yet up to building a New Wyrnberg anywhere. But then, some canny research and lucky guessing identified a place where one could *rent* space with residual magic; the Thaumalogical Park in Ankh-Morpork.

The Plan

The plan was, La!resca (younger, more experience of the outside world, takes after her father) would travel to the city incognito, sort out a short-term lease on a building, and get things set up; then Treicha would show up and claim the status of ambassador for himself and diplomatic status for the building, and they could get down to some research, learning how to dream up dragons to order which they could then use elsewhere.

But – this didn't allow for La!resca's personal overconfidence and ambition. Finding out about the clacks system, she decided to fit the embassy into it, setting up a set of relay towers and observation posts on the roof of the building. She hired a couple of gargoyles to handle the mechanical side, but she didn't trust other people to manage the new system – there was a lot of confidential stuff involved. So she took to sleeping in the embassy. Unfortunately, this meant that a trained dragon-shaping mind was dreaming in a zone of residual magic – while exposed to The Ankh-Morpork Smell.

A few nights later, the **White Sewer Monster** was coming into being. Of course, it couldn't leave the immediate environs of the embassy – but it whispered in La!resca's mind. And of course a creature which manifests a non-resident's response to The Smell wouldn't tend to be terribly nice.

Treicha Arrives

And then, after a few weeks, Treicha Liessing Dragonlord hit town. As per the plan, his first stop was the Patrician's Palace, where he presented his credentials and some diplomatic gifts. Then he checked into the Seven Sleepers Hotel, Ankh, and sent a message to his sister saying he'd arrived.

She didn't simply want to bump him off; she could see better uses for someone who could call up their own monsters, and anyway, Mummy would certainly be annoying on the subject, having made it clear that Mysterious Disappearances would be taken badly (like she can talk!). However, she didn't want him playing the Rightful Heir card either.

So she told him that she'd meet him late that night on the Wood Bridge (which is within a zone of low-end residual magic, thanks to run-off from the Unreal Estate), and had him confronted by the Monster. While it kept him preoccupied, she knocked him out with a cosh and used the monster to carry him off to the river bank, from where she dragged him to a rented cellar on Euphrasy Street, a badly run-down, mostly commercial district not far to the hubwards of the Wood Bridge. (Various street people saw bits of this, but are currently trying not to think about it.) She's got him tied up while she tries to get him to sign an Act of Abdication and swear fealty to her. If she gets that formal enough, it should mean that he can't turn any creatures he creates against her, because of the power of magical oaths.

Official Concerns

However, the Palace staff aren't asleep. They weren't sure what to make of those gifts, but they've now been evaluated as authentic and valuable (they include an amazingly tasteless ancient solid silver table decoration, and a ceremonial sword with certificates explaining where all the nicks in the blade came from), and those formal credentials look old-fashioned but have some authentic-looking seals which the College of Heraldry think are valid. So, when Treicha failed to return when he said he would, they decided to get the Watch to check what might have happened to him. They also began rummaging through the files to try and determine who in the city might know anything about the Wyrnberg.

Which is where the PCs come in.

The Opening Scenes

The squad come into work one morning, and get a message passed down from the Palace – delivered by a junior (and genuinely not sinister) clerk named **Mr Floss**. They get the briefing in one of the patrol rec rooms, which is emptied out for the purpose. It appears that a possible foreign ambassador has gone missing, which could be embarrassing if he really does represent an actual nation state, so it would be helpful if the Watch could find him and start smoothing things over before anyone notices. In the worst case, if anything bad has happened to him, a full report, and a full confession from someone, would be better than nothing. The PC squad, which is largely made up of people who did slightly better than most in training, has the job of dealing with minor weirdness, so this assignment has filtered down to them.

Mr Floss has the full background; it seems that a rather arrogant and imposing-looking fellow showed up at the Palace three days ago, calling himself “Treicha Liessing Dragonlord”, a diplomat from a place called the Wyrnberg, which is indeed mentioned in a few references as lying way off to turnwise, beyond the Octarine Grass Country. (Anyone who knows a bit about the wider geography of the Disc might have a Test to recognise the name as being associated with some kind of obscure mini-state, out in the sort of area where all sorts of wacky things happen.) He presented some credentials and gifts, and said that he would return after a day or two to confirm his status. The clerks considered that he might just be a lunatic with a collection of junk jewellery, or a clever if overconfident confidence trickster, but they did have the gifts and documents checked, and they seem to be authentic. Given that the fellow hasn't shown up again, a Watch check-up seems indicated. The Palace will be making its own enquiries the meanwhile, and will be in touch if they turn up anything relevant; the team's job is to poke around the city and find out what they can.

Checking the Hotels

If the players don't think of it themselves, a successful Test of some kind will suggest that many such Missing Persons cases involve somebody getting drunk and incapable, in which case he may be lying down wherever he's staying at the moments groaning gently, or getting mugged while drunk, in which case he may have been missed by people at the place where he's staying. In any case, common sense will suggest that he'd be staying somewhere posh (either because he *is* posh or

because he needs to pass as posh as part of his scam), and a successful Test – or in the worst case, consultation of a battered city guide which is lying round the station house – will provide a list of four more or less plausible locations. With any luck, they'll split up to investigate all of these as quickly as possible:

- (a) **Gofftrots Private Hotel**, Gofftrots Road: It turns out that “Family” is the key word here; the place is wall to wall screaming children at this time. The staff are used to this, or at least say so with grim determination; visiting PCs may find it more stressful, as the manager, **Mr Squire**, will insist on talking to them in the child-infested lobby. They'll probably get their legs barged into a lot.
- (b) **Hope Springs Hydropathic Establishment and Hotel**, Spa Lane: Big, luxurious, and much more of a health farm than a hotel. The manager, **Nurse Cadmonger**, is always happy to help the Watch, and to offer free treatment for Watchmen, such as “irrigation”. Asking what that means will get you a description of colonic irrigation, which will trigger a Test to avoid the effects of body horror.
- (c) **The Park Lane Hotel**, Park Lane Circus: The biggest hotel in Ankh-Morpork (80 rooms), haunted by the best class of ghosts and visited by royalty. The assistant under-manager, **Mr Thorby**, who will be assigned to deal with visiting watchmen, is indomitable and unfazeable, and will be so efficiently helpful that it's annoying. Actually, he just wants these lower-class erks out of his nice smart hotel. Hopefully, the PCs won't decide that he's trying to hide anything.
- (d) **Seven Sleepers Hotel**, Seven Sleepers: A first-class mid-size family hotel with 40 rooms, but luxurious and not a daft choice for this purpose. And it's the place where Treicha did in fact check in. He deposited his luggage, went to the Palace, came back, sent a message to the intended embassy, and then received his invitation to the Wood Bridge. The manager, **Mr Archbishop**, will be very formal, but is actually glad to see the Watch, as the staff have reported no sign of the room being occupied since this guest checked in, which is a little concerning, and may need investigation.

Mr Archbishop can ask around the staff for information about “Mr Liessing”, and introduce the PCs to one of the bellboys, **Herbert**, who carried a message to “Building 19” on the Thaumalogical Park, and was handed a reply by the “strange lady” there. If pressed, Herbert will admit that he wasn't paying much attention then, because the place gave him the creeps. The buildings there are indescribably weird... (They actually have very modern architecture, with the dimension-distorting effects of residual magic making it worse, as the PCs will see later.) But the lady was kind of tall and scary, and wore lots of leather, and seemed sort of *tired* and snappish.

Apart from that – well, Mr Liessing wasn't much of a tipper. Oh, and he did ask where the Wood Bridge was. He didn't say why.

Treicha's Room and Luggage: Treicha's room is as the previous description implies; a nice hotel room, tidy, with a very few personal items lying around, but with the clear sense that it hasn't really been used by the current guest. There's a moderate-sized wood and leather trunk parked by the wall; it's fastened with a chunky iron padlock.

With a bit of plausible argument or other application of social skills, the PCs can extract this trunk from the hotel; Mr Archbishop will want a receipt. It can be carried away quite easily by two human or dwarf watchmen or one troll. Alternatively, the PCs may even insist on doing something to it on the spot; Mr Archbishop will be shocked if and when someone breaks into it, but there's probably not a lot he can do about a bunch of burly watchmen who are being assertive. It is locked, but the padlock can be shattered with good tools or troll strength; some kind of Test would be needed required to do this without making an excessively embarrassing mess of the fastening area. Alternatively, if anyone thinks to ask, there are people back at the station house who know how to pick locks, and this one will be easy.

Inside the trunk... Well, the top layers of the contents should mainly serve to tell anyone that Treicha is likely to qualify as an Overdressed Foreigner; his taste in clothes is pointlessly ornate, quite colourful, and complicated and rather old-fashioned in style. A layer or so down, investigators will discover a couple of studded leather codpieces, a dress dagger with a ruby-embellished pommel (perfectly functional as a dagger but mostly for show), and a gilded steel helmet with fold-out wings above the ears. A deliberate and successful search (with some kind of Test involved) will turn up a secret compartment (designed more for a bit of privacy than serious concealment), containing a hand-written book in archaic Morporkian, seemingly a lot of mystical stuff about dreams; extended close reading, preferably by someone with at least basic knowledge of magic, taking an hour or so, will show that it's actually about controlled use of imagination for some kind of practical arcane purposes, with notes on how to control the *physical* products of this exercise. But remember, it's a hand-written notebook in old-fashioned language, and mostly intended to remind the person who wrote it about stuff; it'll take a while to extract any information from it, and that information will be confused and obscure.

Background Briefing

At some point, the PCs will probably return to the station house, if only to report in what they've found so far; the GM should encourage this. If it looks like they are going to insist on staying out and hence missing the next clue, the desk sergeant may get a message to them by urban clacks, messenger, or something, telling them to report in.

Anyway, when they do get back there after whatever first set of investigations they've conducted, the PCs are informed that they are to receive a briefing regarding the Wyrmborg, which may be relevant to the case. It seems that the Palace *have* turned up something; somebody from the University has some expertise, having apparently been there, and he's been asked to consult.

The someone is sitting in the front office of the station house, looking down-at-heel and worried in a scruffy robe and battered pointy hat. He introduces himself as the "Professor of Cruel and Unusual Geography". This is **Professor Rincewind**, as some of the players will probably guess, though he may not give his name straight away, to string the joke out. He will say that he's happy to talk in the front office; with some kind of successful Test, a PC will realise that he keeps eyeing the door, probably working out ways to run away fast. If that fails, the PCs can have another one to pick the same fact up by the end of the conversation.

Rincewind's game details are in the game book. He will be open enough about what he knows about the Wyrmborg, which of course is what he remembers from the relevant bits of the plot of *The Colour of Magic*. It's an upside-down mountain, ruled by a bunch of people who can create dragons by thinking about them. They didn't seem too bad, actually; they didn't especially set out to kill him – well, they came close, but it didn't seem to be especially *personal*. A friend of his (well, someone else who didn't try to kill him, which is a friend in his book) may have married the woman who ruled the place, actually. But he never went back there to find out the details.

Rincewind can also explain a little bit about Residual Magic, as can any other character with any kind of formal magical training. He will also recognise any stuff he's shown from Treicha's trunk as being very much in the Wyrmborg style; he'll roll his eyes at the garish excess, saying that it's pretty typical.

However, despite his helpfulness, if anyone says *anything* about keeping Rincewind around indefinitely for more advice, or taking him along anywhere, he'll bolt, and run screaming. He's extremely good at running away, of course; roll dice for it if you *insist*, but the odds should be high that he'll succeed. He'll then either hide out in an obscure part of the University, or leave town for a few days. He isn't interested in getting involved in any *adventures*, and this time the PCs are unlikely to be able to make him.

Following Through

By now, the PCs should have a fairly good idea where to head, plus some relevant background data. However, exactly how they approach things will influence the flow of the plot, and is up to them. They may well split up for some of this; feel free to fudge the timings a little so that they meet “by chance” in interesting places and maybe just as dramatic things start happening.

The Wood Bridge Area

This is a lightly-used wooden footbridge linking the Unreal Estate with the Singing Marsh and the Nap Hill district. There’s not much to *see* here, although a successful Test by anyone who takes a look over the bridge itself will note some recent claw-mark-like gashes and superficial damage on the hubward railing. (Any single PC will probably miss this, but if several of them take a look over the bridge, there’s a fair chance that one will succeed.) However, the really useful information to be obtained here can come from a human source.

The key thing is, a couple of vagrants/beggars who doss down on the Nap Hill side of the river here *did* see the crucial incident, and can be persuaded to talk by someone using a bit of charm or (more grudgingly) by intimidation. (Of course, the PCs have to think of asking such people for information.) Play them as brain-fried street drunks who don’t want to think about this subject, but can’t stop themselves from doing so. They can’t describe anything in detail, but...

*There were two people talking on the bridge, and there was the big white monster thing that came out of the river... Huge it was, wi’ teeth and all ... And then one of the people coshed the other, and then **got on top o’ the monster**, carrying the coshed fellow... An’ then they went off upstream, huggin’ the far bank – they may have got out o’ the river a couple of streets down; something like that.*

Following a trail of eye-witness accounts from confused, semi-coherent vagrants *may* eventually bring the PCs to Euphrasy Street, and maybe even to number 23, an apparently unoccupied commercial premises; a dusty, boarded-up warehouse/shop. A little inspection shows that the boards on the door can be removed easily – the place is less unused than it looks. In the cellar of this building, the PCs can find Treicha, chained to the wall and gagged. (As he’s not wearing much, this may look kind of kinky at first glance.) If he gets rescued, he’ll immediately try to claim diplomatic immunity, and insist on going to have a word with his sister; he knows where to find her. A successful Test of the sort of legal knowledge that any Watchman should have will tell the PCs that he can’t really claim to be a diplomat until the Palace formally accepts his credentials, but that won’t stop him trying. If they’re sensible, the PCs won’t let those claims stand, though; it would lead to a lot of trouble later, especially if they seem to accept that the building in the Thaumalogical Park is an embassy. See below for more on this.

If the PCs get here early in the plot, this could lead to a face-to-face confrontation between Treicha and La!resca, and perhaps even one between her monster and one that he hastily invokes – which could get messy. However, it’s quite possible that the PCs won’t find him until after the climax of the adventure, at which point he’ll mostly just be grudgingly grateful to be rescued.

Building 19, The Thaumalogical Park

Building 19 is tucked away towards the back of the Thaumalogical Park, giving visitors plenty of time to admire the multi-coloured grass and eerily moving trees on the way there. A successful Test of perceptiveness on the approach will catch the fact that there’s a modest semaphore tower on the roof, manned by a gargoyle. The front door has no name plate. There’s also a loading bay with a large wooden door round the back; this is mostly unused, but smashing through it would be another quick way into the building.

Knocking on the front door (or the back door, for that matter) gets no *immediate* response, but after a few minutes, La!resca Hrunsdaughter Dragonlady will answer – though she’ll only introduce

herself as “La!resca”. She’s tall, well-built, and probably good-looking at times, but right now she has bags under her eyes and a distracted air, and she’s wearing distinctly workmanlike clothes. (The chainmail bikini underneath will only appear if she gets into combat.) She’s just about polite, but doesn’t want to say much or let anyone into the building.

Her improvised story is that she’s a businesswoman looking to set up in Ankh-Morpork; her line of business is “confidential, if you don’t mind”. Yes, she comes from near the Wyrmsberg, but “you don’t want to believe everything you hear about that place”. Yes, she had a message from an old acquaintance, named Treicha Liessing, who’d just arrived in town three days ago; apparently, he just wanted to say hello – perhaps he needed some advice on the city. She replied that he could drop by some time, but he hasn’t done so yet. Now, she’s busy...

If anyone presses a point about questioning her, she’ll get increasingly angry, eventually losing the plot entirely and deciding to call up her monster. This takes a few seconds of concentration from her, after which the building starts to shake; then, after a few more seconds, the giant albino alligator comes up through the floor, in such a way that she ends up riding on its back. La!resca’s idea will be to use it to get past any attempts to restrain her, go and grab her brother, largely to use him as a hostage, and get into the sewers, where she can start calling up more monsters while she works out what comes next – probably some kind of underground empire, working out a way to expand the zone of residual magic, or something. Unfortunately for her, for now, the monster will fade out not far beyond the Wood Bridge, so she’ll need to shake off pursuit before going for Treicha. It will of course also fade out if *she* loses consciousness – so if a big fight starts, clever PCs will try to knock her out.

(You may have to improvise a lot at this point in the adventure, as the PCs may do all sorts of weird things. One time when I ran it, they managed to irritate her a bit, left her alone while they investigated the Wood Bridge, then worked out more of what was going on and sent an urgent message about monsters and threats to the city to Watch HQ. As a result, they got back to Building 19 to discover the monster in one-on-one combat with Captain Carrot, who had of course rushed over when the message arrived, and *of course* got into a big hand-to-hand fight with the monster that was threatening the city. They helped him win by shooting it a lot. Knocking out La!resca would still have been smarter, though.)

Finale

If she gets taken down too easily, and there’s still time in hand, finding Treicha may still be an issue, especially as she might be very unwilling to help, out of sheer bloody-mindedness – and any time she’s conscious around the Unreal Estate, she can call up a monster again, given a few seconds to concentrate (so perhaps she’ll lead the PCs there deliberately, then say she needs a moment “to think”). On the other hand, if you’re running out of time, she can say where he is voluntarily, on the grounds that him starving to death would annoy Mummy. He of course may have to be restrained from trying to strangle her.

For added complications, if Treicha is still a prisoner, he might be able to summon thin and unreliable monsters from the river in the vicinity of the sewer outlet near the Wood Bridge, in effect by remote control, using a lot of concentration. This could stir up some plot in that area. (They’d be destroyed by one good hit each, but they’d still be ugly with big teeth.) La!resca would be scared by them, and might give away Treicha’s location if necessary – if she isn’t permitted to just call up her own monster to fight them, which would be her first suggestion.

The other thing to note is that not only will Treicha probably try to claim Diplomatic Immunity at some point, but La!resca may try the same thing. Both would also love to have Building 19 recognised as an embassy. As previously mentioned, successful Tests of legal knowledge will tell PCs that they should be careful at that point. Having to treat these two as diplomats would be merely inconvenient, but if they can get the building immune to Watch attention, they’ll be able to carry on summoning monsters at whim. The Patrician could get *very* sarcastic about that.

Funnily enough, Treicha is not likely to harm La'resca, because she *is* his sister – but hauling her back home for a chat with Mummy will definitely be part of his plan. At least he'll know that keeping her away from the Thaumatalogical Park is a good idea.

Major NPCs

La'resca Hrunsdaughter Dragonlady

Species: Human. **Niche:** Back-Stabbing Schemer.

Features: Sword-and-sorcery princess, out of her natural time.

Serious student of the art of dragon summoning.

Really serious temper on her.

Mannerism: Scowls, then forces a polite smile.

Treicha Liessing Dragonlord

Species: Human. **Niche:** Very annoyed kidnapping victim.

Features: Caught between barbarian hero genes and a modern royal upbringing.

Occasional student of the art of dragon summoning.

Usually quite chill, but has his limits.

Mannerism: Explains things slowly and precisely. But only once.

Gigantic Albino Alligator

Species: Supernatural Monster. **Niche:** Thing to be stopped from trashing the city.

Features: Which part of “Gigantic Albino Alligator” did you not get?

The Smell incarnate.

Totally dependent on a strong ambient magical field.

Mannerism: Roar. Bite. Thrash.

Note: Crocodilians have powerful muscles that close their jaws, but much weaker muscles to *open* them. If you can get a grip around this one's jaws, even moderate human strength will keep them shut. So then you just have to worry about three-quarters of a ton of reptile rolling on top of you, flailing with its tail and claws, and diving under the nearest water.