

Temporal Warriors

Arr 28th - 29th

The ruins of Hurlis seem warmer now. The death of Dathor has lifted the gloom and danger and what is left is a pile of arid rubble. Amblay, Axe, Graz Tak and Aravan realise that there is nothing living here, save for the odd rat that avoided Dathor's cruel attention. Amblay, the Marraq sorcerer, stretches his telepathic mind to the edge of the citadel and discovers a mind – weak but alive.

Axe and the rest of the party find yet another Tilean youth out in the wilds on a rite of passage. He, like the previous one they discovered the day before, shows all the signs of Dathor's influence. Two distinct puncture marks on his right wrist. Axe snaps the lad's neck mercifully.

The party decide that any search above ground will be fruitless but the sewers are all but intact. They clamber down one of many holes and move quickly through the city's hidden tunnels. Before long they come upon a crypt. All the wooden coffins are empty and they decide that since the crypt has one entrance / exit it would be an ideal spot to rest at night.

Constant small tremors disrupt their sleep during the night. Axe spots a group of rats scavenging in the shadows and follows them. During the shadowing the Nadir nomad comes across a perfectly round slab of stone deep within the sewers. It is smooth and clean, no rubble or debris pollute the surface. In the centre is a metal handle.

Next morning Axe brings his companions to the trapdoor. He opens it to reveal a well; thirty feet below him is clear water, fresh and tangy it fills his nostrils. Amblay however feels nauseous; his head spins as he feels an intense pressure on him. He moves away from the well. At this point Axe and the others notice something very odd. The water flows *up* the sides of the well and into a series of grids fifteen feet up the walls. Aravan and Graz Tak secure a rope to the trapdoor lid and lower Axe down towards the water.

Axe notices the anomaly immediately. As soon as he descends past the halfway point (the grids) gravity is reversed! He re-orientates himself and moves *up* toward the water. Taking a deep breath he puts his head into the icy liquid...to emerge at the bottom of a narrow indoor well. Above him is a room...obviously within a castle. He feels heat and smells the alluring aroma of freshly baked bread. He ascends into the room to investigate. A shuttered window will not open, he hears a storm outside and beckons his friends through.

Graz Tak and Aravan enter the room as Axe secures the rope on his side of the strange portal. A single door opens to a kitchen; alive with angry chefs and waiters, too busy to notice the three companions.

They are Tileans. It dawns on all three that these Tileans are not nomadic, nor are they forced to scavenge in the wilds for food...they conclude that somehow they have returned to Hurlis as it was – before the Darim levelled it and killed all the

inhabitants. Axe leads them past the kitchens and realises that the storm is actually the constant bombardment of missiles as the Darim army try to break the Tilean defences.

In a small office they come to a worried-looking man. He is Julran, the king's chancellor. Agitated and nervous this man is cautious but soon realises that the unexpected travellers are unusual...perhaps even profound. From the chancellor's words Axe works out that his intuition was correct – King Vir (the Darim king on the throne fifty years ago) is indeed outside the citadel with an army.

"We have travelled back in time," he says simply.

Julran stares at them carefully. His astute mind weighs up their words and he says: "The chancellor of the Darim, a man called Muziel, wishes to offer terms. He is presently in no-mans-land awaited my arrival...would you like to come?"

A temporary ceasefire allows Julran and the three time travellers to reach the tent unharmed. Once there the chancellor of king Vir of Darim is dressed in rich finery, beautifully tailored silks and cottons as befits a man of importance. It soon becomes clear to Axe and his friends that this man – Muziel (he pronounces it *Muzael*) – knows exactly where they have come from. In fact the smartly dressed chancellor ignores Julran for the most part.

Muziel gestures to a folded parchment on a wooden table. "Take it," he says to Axe. Axe passes the note to his companions – it says: "Kill the chancellor."

Axe, Aravan and Graz Tak realise that Muziel plans to change history. But Muziel cannot persuade them to attack the chancellor. Disappointed the chancellor of Darim turns to leave...and the party snap back to the future.

Axe, Aravan and Graz Tax suddenly find themselves amongst ten semi naked men with painted faces and bodies, they carry an array of primitive weapons such as spears and clubs. The three travellers react instantly and combat erupts.

Amblay is still underground but manages to *major control* and grab the mind of one of the tribesmen. He causes chaos amongst them as Axe swings the greataxe and cleaves a skull in two. Aravan hefts her shortsword and two vicious strikes disembowel a couple of the tribesmen. Graz Tak uses his deadly longsword to good effect and soon the tribesmen lose heart and flee for their lives – their primitive weapons no match for the three well trained warriors.

As their enemies flee Axe, Aravan and Graz Tak pounce. Aravan splits the skull of one as Graz Tak decapitates a second. Axe cuts one down before he and Graz Tak resort to longbows to finish off the remainder.

Once the short fight is over the party return to Amblay in the sewers where they discuss the merits of the strange portal they have found. Whilst this discussion continues Axe returns to the well to find out whether it is still active. Once his head penetrates the water he feels the warmth of the fire and the voices of two men – Julran and King Kular Rockspawn (the last ever king of Tilean) – are discussing the meeting with Muziel.

Julran leaves the king to his breakfast and Axe sneaks stealthily up the well and across to king Kular (who has his back to Axe). The nomad lifts the greataxe as the king turns...Axe hesitates, realising that his chance of surprise has gone. The king stands; he is a tall man, powerfully built with the demeanour of a warrior. He sneers at the Nadir before him. "An unusual weapon for an assassin," he says. Axe does not even see the longsword as the king wrenches it from his scabbard (lightning draw) and slashes it across Axe's thigh. But there is no pain...instead the Nadir stands before his companions back in the ruined citadel.

That morning the party develop their ideas on the portal. They see an opportunity to steal from the past and – somehow – hide the loot so that they can find it again in the present. After several hours Axe leads them to the well once more. On this occasion Amblay overcomes his nausea and clammers through the temporal gate.

As each member of the party emerges silently from the water they hear a man being throttled. Julran, the chancellor, has a garrotte round the throat of his king and his knee in the small of Kular's back...

The Battle of Hurlis

Arrogan 30th – Sepos 1st

Amblay, Axe, Aravan, Graz Tak are joined by Daggoran Sunspear, a Darim Agitator, in the time-travelling well. As they climb into the familiar room they see Julran – the Tilean king's chancellor – throttle the life from Kular Rockspawn. Even as he extinguishes the life of the monarch Julran converses with Amblay and his companions. When the deed is done he departs into the empty kitchen.

Above them the Darim bombardment is underway. The ground shakes as missiles and siege devices rain terror down on the Tilean capital. Amblay casts *stoneskin* on the entire party and after Axe puts the body of the king over his shoulder they head down into a more familiar territory...the sewers. Soon they find hidden doorways; one that leads them into a long corridor with cells either side. A Darim soldier turns into the dungeon initially surprised to see elves in the citadel. Daggoran steps forward confidently, his Agitator training makes him a fine orator, and he proclaims; "These are my prisoners." Immediately the soldier is put at ease by the authority of the words. Three other soldiers come to investigate.

When they are close enough Daggoran draws his katana and leaps at his kinsmen. Graz Tak and Aravan are close behind and swords clash in the narrow corridor. Amblay reaches out with his mind and takes control of the rearguard Darim. Under the direction of the Marraq the soldier slices through the ribcage of his companion and fells him. Aravan and Graz Tak cut down the rest but Amblay continues to exert control over the guard; he pushes him to the vanguard of their group as they press on in search of the crypt.

Soon they hear voices. Five Darim soldiers and something else; a tall humanoid, powerfully built with the head of a large lizard. "Have you found him yet?" it says.

The Darim troops split up in search of their quarry and the party watch the lizardman sink into the sewer water and disappear.

Graz Tak locates a closed doorway into the crypt. The entire party moves into the room and spots eight sarcophagi – four empty and four with bodies shrouded in white cloth. Although chilled the air is not magical according to Amblay, the Marraq sorcerer. A quick inspection of the bodies reveals a family resemblance but most significant is the identical duplicate of Kular Rockspawn himself. As the party puzzles the conundrum the exit slams shut...secured from the other side. Soon they discover the only other exit is secured by rubble and debris on the other side...they are trapped.

Graz Tak, however, is a thief, and his expert ferreting discovers a false bottom to one of the empty sarcophagi that leads into a secret escape tunnel; damp and dark. The Tilean under mind control is sent down first and soon they are all moving down a gentle slope towards the outer walls. Every now and then holes in the ceiling reveal the true extent of the Darim assault on Hurlis. Walls and buildings reduced to rubble, stone ablaze with sorcerous fire and bodies littering the streets and alleys.

With the Tilean at the head he surprises a hidden man and duly runs him through with a katana – it is one of the bodies lying on the sarcophagus in the crypt.

After a while they come upon a room with provisions for four people; an escape capsule with everything the royal family would need to escape. Another body is present; the only woman whose body was also on a sarcophagus...her throat had been slit. Axe and Amblay take maps of the citadel and the tunnels beneath it and hurry their companions down the tunnel in the hope of survival.

As the tunnel turns slightly they send the mind-controlled Tilean first to scout ahead. A flurry of arrows greet him and despite a *stoneskin* the soldier is slain by his own troops. "There is no escape!" yells a Darim soldier around the corner. Amblay stretches out his mind and sees four archers, along with a lizardman – the mind is particularly cunning.

Amblay and Axe sneak up behind Aravan, Daggoran and Graz Tak. The sorcerer's plan is simple; hurl a [fireball](#) at the junction and follow it up with blades and knives. The blast of fire hits the mark and the screams of the Darim soldiers fill the tunnel, along with the unmistakable aroma of burnt flesh. Graz Tak is the first around the corner, his blade bites expertly into the throat of the first archer and he decapitates his victim. Daggoran Sunspire is equally deft and his katana smashes the skull of a second. The Darim archers are too busy extinguishing the small fires about them to realise they are being cut down; Aravan draws her deadly longsword across the belly of a third and the soldier dies instantly. From the shadows Axe spits a small needle from a hollow tube with astonishing precision. The razor sharp metal opens the jugular of the last archer and he dies screaming, bleeding and coughing blood.

The lizardman descends quickly into the ankle-deep water only to re-appear directly behind Amblay. The Marraq is vulnerable; his warrior companions yards away and unable to protect him from the outstretched hands of the lizardman. He senses the growing threat of sorcery. From nowhere Axe – the Nadir assassin – grabs the lizard head and in one terrifying motion snaps the neck of the creature before it knows it is

being attacked. It collapses into the pool, its body dissipating into a large puddle with only a rough cloak remaining. Amblay finds a magical hairpin in the folds of the garment and hands it to the thief, Graz Tak.

The exertions of the day take a heavy toll on Amblay, his continuous magic use has brought him to the verge of exhaustion. The party guard him and grab sleep in the bowels of the citadel – all the while the sounds of destruction continue above.

They move on after a full eight hours rest. Soon they spot two more lizardmen talking to a Darim general. Without warning Amblay clutches his head and collapses, the party suspect a mental attack from the lizardmen and waste no time in moving to a safe location. When Amblay eventually regains consciousness he confirms some kind of mental attack but worryingly cannot cast spells or use telepathy.

Eventually the tunnel emerges into bushes, ten yards distant is a copse where four saddled horses await...and Julran. The party are unseen and clearly see him talking to one of the horses. Axe and Graz Tak decide (because they are the most stealthy members of the group) to attack and kill the murderous chancellor. Graz Tak draws a bow as Axe moves in. An errant blowpipe needle causes Graz Tak to fire an arrow...Julran's reaction is as swift as it is deadly. In no time he leaps over to Graz Tak who can only watch as an open hand attack smashes his neck in two...

The entire party are back (seemingly) in their own present. Graz Tak is alive and Amblay is able to cast spells. The rubble of Hurlis is exactly as they left it...apart from a dark tower that protrudes up from the debris, clean and imposing, it radiates magic all around. Amblay draws the party away from the influence of the tower and casts [*stoneskin*](#) on each and every one of them...

An Unexpected Truth

cy 4850 Sepos 2nd - 5th

Amblay, Axe, Aravan, Darrogan and Graz Tak stare at the new skyline of the Hurlis ruins. A tower has sprouted from the rubble and casts doubts as to *when* they are...Axe knows the solution and leads the party back into the sewers. Before he commenced the last time-travelling excursion he deposited the Nadir greataxe in the crypt so that he could be sure what time they were in. Aravan searches each of the sarcophagi carefully. She realises that one of them has been recently inhabited...she, like her companions, fear vampires.

Once in the sewers they hear footsteps. Small groups of men scurrying around under the ruins. Amblay stretches out his telepathy and finds a Darim mind; a soldier's mind. Through his eyes he is able to see other Darim soldiers all wearing blindfold, each man with katana in hand. A small earthquake – one of many in the far south of Grayhawk – causes the Darim soldier to panic. He momentarily removes the blindfold and screams; "I have seen her!"

Axe cautiously leads them back into the crypt, to his relief he finds his greataxe under rubble and knows for certain they have returned to the present. Amblay feels the Darim's mind die instantly, seconds later the minds of his unit die with him. The

Marraq casts [*Improved Invisibility*](#) as Axe sneaks into the shadows to hunt the slayer of the Darims.

The dark tower penetrates the rubble and is grounded in the sewers. As Amblay approaches he senses powerful magic, the natural aura of the thing is overwhelming to his highly tuned senses. Without warning the tower vanishes leaving a twenty foot diameter hole that opens up the sewers to the light of a cloudless sky. Meanwhile Axe makes a grim discovery. He finds five dead Darim soldiers each with katana in hand and none of them seem to have put up much of a fight. He is trained in the arts of death and recognises instantly the work of brutal strength; four of them have broken necks but it is the fifth that concerns him most. A small puncture wound to the neck and the absence of any trace of blood is telling. He returns to his friends.

Amblay leads them all to the time-travelling well in search of answers. Instead he finds twenty severed Darim heads bobbing horrifically in the water. An echoey voice fills the dark tunnels of Hurlis. "I hate Darims!" It is a woman's voice...the voice of the killer. "Seek out the slayer of my husband. I have put him in a cave by the remains of the west wall."

Amblay decides to rest and wait until daylight before searching for the man. The party discuss the possibilities as they wait for dawn. Is the woman the queen? Is the man imprisoned in the cave Julran?

As daylight floods the ruins the party make their way over to the west wall. Amblay searches out the mind and under his guidance Axe and Darrogon locate a frail white haired man...it is Julran. Amblay interrogates his peculiar mind and realises the talented old man has compartmentalised his mind into three parts to protect himself from the queen's torture.

Julran admits to a deception fifty years earlier. He tells them that *he* Julran was the king and that Kular Rockspawn was in fact the chancellor. Furthermore he tells them that he is descended from the first king of the Tileans; such descendents of *True Kings* are rare on Grayhawk – these men are the closest representation of the true identity of their race. He explains:

"The deception was necessary because assassins were everywhere. I had long suspected that King Vir had designs on my kingdom but without help there was little I could do to avert a war. His chancellor (that awful Muziel) drove the king on to attack. My chancellor (the original Julran) began to take his role as king too seriously – I suspect he had been visited by Muziel who obviously implanted the idea that it might be better for all concerned if he killed me. *That* is why I strangled him. The doppelgangers were perfect...even the queen cannot bring herself to believe that I am (or was)

her husband. She became one of Dathor's puppets after the war and all the humanity in her faded. She cannot accept that I would deceive her in such a manner...you are here to confirm or deny what she fears..."

Amblay decides to cast [fly](#) on each of his companions. The spell duration is enough for almost two hours of flight, enough time to escape the clutches of the Daywalker queen. As they pass over the barren lands that once was the land of the Tileans they see the queen, her head in her hands she sobs uncontrollably. Before they can react Julran flies down to be with her.

Amblay draws the Darkbow as Aravan, Graz Tak and Darrogan descend to help Julran. Axe lurks in the shadows and tries to avoid the mesmerising eyes of the beautiful Daywalker.

Aravan and Darrogan lunge at the woman whose agility and strength surprise them all. With one hand she grabs Aravan by the scruff of the neck and Darrogan by the lapels of his tunic and lift them a couple of inches off the ground. Graz Tak knocks an arrow but hesitates for fear of hitting his friends. Amblay takes careful aim but his first shot goes wide. Aravan hefts the magical blade of menace and opens a large gap in her skull. The Daywalker squeals in pain as the wound burns with hidden fire. In anger she casts a [Death Spell](#) into the Elenorian warrior and the blade in her hand flares up brightly. Aravan breathes deeply as she survives the attack unharmed.

Graz Tak hesitates further, unable to chance a shot that may hit his companions. Axe sneaks ever closer to the Daywalker and lifts the longsword called Hellath above his head. She turns and jabs two fingers into his eyes, her face cannot hide her disappointment as the [stoneskin](#) saves Axe's life. Amblay continues to shoot – and miss – with his Darkbow. Darrogan realises the Daywalker can only be hit by magical weapons so tries to grapple the woman instead. After two unsuccessful attempts the Daywalker casts a second [Death Spell](#) into Darrogan and he is slain instantly.

Aravan opens another wound in the Daywalker's stomach and pain courses through her body, her eyes fade as her power seeps away. In desperation she lashes out but the robust [stoneskin](#) offers them immunity from her touch. Graz Tak finally launches an arrow, the head wrapped in cloth, soaked in oil and ablaze; it thunders into her chest and the wooden shaft cuts her vulnerable heart in two. She falls and dissolves into the earth.

Julran and the party head toward the lands of Kulland, where [Jarik Saal](#) (the lord of balance) led the Darklanders and what remained of the Sundered Isles to a new homeland. Though the Kullish realm his gone the thriving kingdom would be a good place for Julran to take stock and work out what he will do. A helpful patrol of Darim soldiers point out the best way to reach Kulland – a lonely mountain pass used by merchants – they head north on foot.

As the party camp for the night Axe goes in search of horses. Before long he comes upon a Darim fort, an outpost in the wilds garrisoned by nearly three hundred soldiers.

Merchants and other travellers use the forts so Axe is not out of place amongst the Darims. A few other Nadir kinsmen are present but it is to the stables – via a gambling house – where he finds some decent horses.

A friendly sergeant sells him six excellent horses.

Next morning the party make better progress. Into the Kull Hills they come upon hundreds of hill men, a cross between Tilean and Darim stock. Wild and largely uncivilised the hill men are curious about the party and try to buy their horses for a few hundred copper pieces but eventually let them through toward the towering mountainous border of Kulland. During the journey they learn that Julran (or Kular as he was known) is actually one hundred and two years old. Despite his advanced years the man is hardy, he possesses an iron constitution that belies his age...

The Kull Hills

cy 4850: Sepos 6th - 8th

The party head northeast toward the Kull Hills and the pass beyond that will take them into Kulland. Along with Kular Rockspawn (aka Julran) they are joined by an Eren thief called Tstane Tschermak. On horseback they make good progress and spend their first uneventful night in the rolling hills of southern Darim.

Early the next morning they reach a dirt track that descends into a valley, a milestone heralds the village of Shaaft; a decrepit hovel that smells worse than many cesspits. A guard sleeps soundly propped on his spear as they canter through Shaaft. Amblay, the Marraq sorcerer, senses magic within the tavern shack, an unexpectedly powerful surge. He leads the rest of the party to the safety of the valley ridge a mile away as Axe enters the tavern to seek information.

The sorcerer is well hidden or brilliantly disguised. In conversation with a miner called Garrian Axe learns that two ruffians with spears guard the most prosperous shaft. Garrian offers the Nadir killer 100gp to kill them although Axe is less than enthusiastic about Garrian's method of payment; a scrap of parchment with an IOU scribbled upon it. He decides to report back to his companions.

Amblay scans the small town with his mind – particularly the tavern – and can *feel* the exquisite mind of a sorcerer. This time Graz Tak and Aravan decide to see whether they can flush out the sorcerer and enter the tavern; Axe and Tstane shadow the party from the safety of the shadows. Many of the miners have not seen a woman in years so one as striking as Aravan draws their attention leaving Graz Tak and the two hidden friends to study the rest. One in particular is not so interested in Aravan open display of charm. Graz Tak slips an expert hand into the man's pocket and removes a small cork-stoppered vial.

Axe turns his attention to the two guards outside the main mine shaft. He waits until one goes to relieve himself behind the hut before sneaking in to break his neck. The guard turns at the last minute and yells. Cursing Axe is suddenly in combat he wanted to avoid; two spear wielders bearing down on him. He slips a dagger into his hand and sidesteps the first thrust of the spear, a quick dance inside the man's defence and he

opens his throat. The second attacker moves to attack but Axe is too quick – his deadly knife punctures the man’s right eye and the fight is over.

Axe wastes no time. He decapitates both bodies and pushes them into the mine shaft. His actions are greeted with shouts from the miner below. He then walks back into the tavern and proudly holds up the two severed heads of the guards, which causes a stampede out of the door as the miners realise the main shaft is now unguarded. Only one man remains.

The sorcerer is called Malnigar. Graz Tak, Axe and Aravan talk to the man and discover he is hiding from someone / something. Malnigar is guarded with his responses, perhaps still unsure whether he can trust the party. It soon becomes clear to them that this man is never going to reveal the truth behind his tale so they say their farewells and head back to Amblay and Kular. Amblay casts *Identify* on Graz’s stolen vial – it is a potion of longevity, Amblay explains that drinking the contents of the vial can restore health, youth and vigour.

They head out north away from the disgusting village of Shaaft. Before long they come upon a lone rider, a Darklander with an arsenal of weapons. A cruel double-handed *nodachi* – the Darkland equivalent of a greatsword – hangs along one of the horse’s flanks.

He does not speak the common tongues of Grayhawk but they discover he is called Jai’nar and that he is hunting someone. With a combination of sign language and crude drawings in the dirt they realise that Jai’nar hunts for a sword. Amblay decides to risk telepathy and enters the Darklanders mind. Mental communication has no barriers and the two men converse briefly. Amblay confirms that he (Jai’nar) seeks a stealer of a sword and in his opinion Malnigar is that man. The Marraq tells his new friend about Malnigar.

With grim determination the Darklander slides down from his horse and draws the *nodachi*. Aravan walks beside him as he descends the steep valley towards Shaaft. Axe stealthily creeps around the back of the tavern and finds a hidden position (within longbow range) that affords him a good view of the shack. He sees Malnigar hastily packing a rucksack.

As the sorcerer exits the tavern he sees the Darklander. All colour drains from his face as Jai’nar moves in for the kill. Malnigar casts *invisibility* and vanishes, but behind him Axe was already aiming. By studying the sorcerer’s movements Axe is able to predict where he will move. His first arrow finds its target. Malnigar’s skull is split as the arrow smashes through bone and brain to exit horrifically from his right eye. The sorcerer collapses face down in the dirt and the party move cautiously up to the body, careful not to disturb the path of the Darklander.

Jai’nar kneels at his fallen enemy and weeps. From the folds of the rucksack he takes an exquisite blade; an ivory-handled katana with a heavily inlaid ivory scabbard, a blade of breathtaking beauty. He performs a small ritual on the blade before taking out a spade in preparation of Malnigar’s burial. Axe takes the spade from him, Jai’nar nods his thanks and the Nadir digs a suitable grave. Whilst the Darklander buries his

enemy Axe and Graz Tak search the rucksack and find a ring, a necklace, a dagger and a few more potions (two of longevity and one of disguise).

Amblay notices that the Darklander has aged ten years in ten minutes. Now grey and frail he seeks the mind and realises that now the hunt is over the reason for the Darklander's existence is no more. Age begins to overcome Jai'nar.

"Tell me about the blade," Amblay says into his mind.

"It is the last created by the greatest swordmaker who ever lived..."

There are no more questions. Jai'nar dies before he can finish his tale. Amblay soon realises that whilst the blade is not magical it possesses a deep spiritual power – that itself can produce magic-like effects or imbue the wielder with extraordinary powers. Axe digs a second grave, though not before he takes the ivory-handled katana and fixes it securely across his back. The party remain silent as the Darklander is buried alongside his long term foe.

The next day takes the party deeper into the Kull Hills. At night they make camp and – as usual – set two on guard at any one time.

Amblay and Aravan sit quietly and talk during their shift. They are suddenly in the midst of a volley of arrows from the darkness, once bounces off Amblay's forehead (*stoneskin*) and a second glances off the Elenorian woman's shoulder. In a well practised routine the party find themselves awake and bearing weapons and stood in a defensive circle. A swarm of swords and spears face them, burly men yelling and screaming as they ambush the party. In the dark of night it is impossible to see their numbers (Amblay guesses around thirty) so they are forced to fight close and dirty.

Amblay's first spell is *improved invisibility* as the bandits press their supposed advantage. Aravan however sets the tone and a couple of deadly strikes with the blade of Menace fell two bandits easily. Graz Tak uses his knife to good effect and he kills a further two. In the middle of the defensive circle is Kular (Julran) – Amblay eventually casts *stoneskin* on Tstane and from that point onwards the entire party are protected.

What Amblay and his companions lack in numbers they more than make up for in ability. The bandits waver against some lethal knife and swordplay, Axe deals death all around him with the bludgeoning power of his massive axe. Amblay casts *fly* and levitates out of combat (still invisible) whereupon he draws the Darkbow and takes aim. Without managing to deliver a single scratch upon the party the bandits begin to lose the heart for the battle. Eventually, inevitably, their nerve collapses and they attempt to scatter in all directions.

Aravan runs through an opponent as Graz Tak disembowels another. Tstane knifes a bandit in the neck and Amblay and Axe pick off the remaining stragglers with arrows.

Weapons are sheathed.

The party stare at the twenty eight dead bodies that litter their temporary camp in a scene reminiscent of a slaughterhouse...

The Agras Pass

Sepos 9th - 13th

The Marraq Amblay leads the group further into the Kull Hills towards the gap in the Kull Ridge known as the Agras Pass. Axe, the Nadir assassin, shadows the party as they move, never closer than one hundred feet from them but close enough to engage if there are problems. He acts as a scout.

At the foot of the Agras Pass they encounter roughly made signs with Darklandish and Darim writing scrawled upon them. Graz Tak studies the words. "They are plague markers," he says eventually. The party believe they were set deliberately to ward of unwanted attention. They ride up into the steep pass. The summer sun beats down fiercely and the road ahead is clear; no snow caps the peaks of the mountains. At night they find a suitable place to camp and Axe – inevitably – scouts the surrounding area but finds nothing. Amblay writes a [Dispel Magic](#) scroll and hands it to the thief Graz Tak, who has shown a talent for the reading of obscure texts.

An hour into the next day and the party stop at a spectacular waterfall; a massive drop of three hundred feet descends into a dark chasm below. Amblay stretches out his telepathic mind but finds nothing, save for a couple of large nesting birds at the top of the fall. There is something unusual, uplifting about the falls. It gives the party a spiritual lift – Axe and Graz Tak immerse themselves in the fresh water and all the party fill waterskins from the cascading water. Axe draws the ivory-handled katana. He realises that the ringing sound of the blade exiting the scabbard is louder than the waterfall behind him...or at least it seems that way. Curiosity drives the assassin to further experimentation; he leans the blade across a finger and is astonished when it draws blood (not even the [Stoneskin](#) protected him).

Amblay's [familiar](#) bat returns later. Smoke further on up the pass draws them to a small roadside shrine to Jarik Saal – the Balance Bringer – two loaves of bread lie on a small altar in offering to the god whilst incense burns around a sacred circle of stones. The party treat the shrine respectfully and move on.

Near the first summit of the Agras Pass they spy a stone outcrop above them, a battlemented wall built as an abutment to the mountainside. A small well trodden path leads up into the construction and the party head up the steep slope to investigate.

The monastery resembles a training school. Nearly one hundred Darkland youths bow as the party reach the main courtyard. They are students learning the martial arts that the Darklands are famous for...each one stares in open wonder at the elves. The party try to make conversation but it soon becomes clear that none of these students speak any language known to the Grayhawkians. Only one man amongst them does; master Yamai.

Axe introduces his companions and the ageing master invites them into his private chambers for lunch. The Nadir shows the katana to the master who is awestruck by it. He informs them that the blade was created by Aran Rinshai, a renowned blade maker from the Darklands whose blades are priceless. "Rinshai didn't make swords," Master Jamai said, "He made legends."

They spend a night in the monastery and enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the remote school. Next morning Amblay *polymorphs* into an eagle to reconnoitre the path ahead. He finds nothing and the party resume on horseback. After two hours on the pass they hear the sound of metal scraping on stone. Ahead they see a Darklander sharpening a katana on a whetstone.

A renegade lord approaches them and demands a toll for travelling on his path. Amblay, Axe and Kular stay distant from the rough-looking man as Aravan and Graz Tak confront him. It is clear from the outset that the man is looking for trouble.

Aravan unleashes her shortsword with astonishing speed, so fast that the renegade lord can only blink as his belly is opened with a vicious cut. The Darklander is fast to respond but when Graz Tak stabs him between the shoulder blades the fight rushes to an inevitable conclusion. Soon the two warriors manage to smash the Darklanders head in two and the road is clear once more.

Further along the dangerous pass Amblay can sense minds; Darkland minds lying wait in ambush. With the help of *major control* he is able to take control of the mind of one of the ambushers and studies the surrounding area. On each ridge are fifteen archers with one leader urging patience. At a designated spot in the road the party will be in a crossfire... Amblay halts the progress and the party rest by the roadside. Axe slips into the shadows and climbs above the Darkland outlaws...he sneaks close to the outlaws without their knowledge and waits.

The powerful mind of Amblay – Marraq telepath and sorcerer – turns one of the Darklanders aim across the ridge. He launches a shaft into a fellow ambusher and the ensuing fight between the outlaws is vicious and quick. Arrows buzz around like angry locusts and the party watch with grim satisfaction as many outlaws fall to their deaths. As the leader tries to gain a grip on his men Axe tries to kill him with a blow-dart from the shadows. Although he is unsuccessful the outlaw chief is struck in the eye by a stray shaft and falls to his death on the path below. A new leader emerges after the death of the old outlaw chief, but he lasts only seconds as Axe fires a small dart into his neck and slays him.

With only five bandits remaining the Darklanders flee from the scene of slaughter. Amblay still has control of the mind of the first Darklander and watches him as he – and his wounded friends – return to a series of caves. They hastily gather their belongings and move off down the path towards the relative safety of Kulland.

Later Amblay comes upon a blind Darklander with a dead mule. Telepathy reveals the old man was once a great warrior; Amblay takes pity on the man and donates a spare horse for the rest of the journey. As a gift the Darklander hands the Marraq a silk scarf (magical – Assassins' Bane).

Amblay moves the party into the labyrinth of caves. After a brief check they settle down for the night; the Marraq sends the bat out into the night. A fierce storm moves in. Even the horses shelter in the large cave as the howling wind and driving rain force the party to abandon a normal guard routine. In the squally darkness a shape looms. Amblay uses his mind to see a large creature, possibly a mountain troll or a giant; the mind of the creature can sense human flesh...and it is hungry.

To his astonishment the creature *polymorphs* into a mountain lion. The mind has not changed and Amblay suspects lycanthropy. It has their scent now but as it enters the cave system it changes once more; this time to a large rat. With a link into the creature's thoughts Amblay is able to track its movement precisely. With his sharp eyes looking down the shaft of an arrow Amblay looses a shaft into the dark cave. The arrow thunders into the rodent and the party hear a loud groan.

A woman with feline features lies dying in a damp corner of the cave, the arrow that skewers her head has pinned her to the earth and if left she would die an agonising death. Graz Tak rams a lockpick into her face to finish her off.

The next day the sun shines once again. The party begin their descent into Kulland and can see the vast mountain-sheltered lands that once were home to the giant Kulls, a land that boasts one of the oldest citadels in Grayhawk; Aldegaarde. The towers and spires of the vast city can be seen by the party even though it is many leagues distant...

A Rinshai Blade

Sepos 13th - 15th

The town of Agras lies at the foot of the Agras Pass. It is a thriving community and as Amblay and his companions descend the steep road they see many buildings under construction, including the outer shell of what will become a temple to Jarik Saal. Darklanders and Malans (from the Sundered Isles) are everywhere; their integration in part due to the exodus from their own lands to Kulland (see Jarik Saal). Amblay decides to spend the night and with Kular and Aravan head for the nearest tavern. Axe shadows them from afar, taking refuge in another tavern (his room overlooks his friends').

The two thieves Graz Tak and Tstane Tschermak cannot contain themselves. The people of Agras go about their business unaware that two men have designs on their wealth. Both men move around the small town stealing from whoever they can, their dextrous fingers unseen as they filch and steal.

In the tavern an old elf called Brinil joins Amblay, Aravan and Kular. The ageing elf admits that he craves elvish company. Amblay cannot sense sorcery but a brief dip into his mind reveals that Brinil is indeed a magician – furthermore Amblay discovers he is seeking a Darklander with one eye and a burnt face. When Brinil finally leaves the tavern he is quickly – and expertly – followed by Axe, the Nadir killer.

In a quiet, dark courtyard Brinil meets a robed and hooded individual. "They don't have it," the Muhaki says. "You fool!" spits the robed man, "they have turned you

over. Your ring has been stolen." Brinil checks his finger and curses. The brief meeting ends as the robed man melts into the shadows and Brinil casts a spell and vanishes. Axe returns to his reconnaissance but manages to relay the events to Amblay when the Marraq enters his mind.

Back in the taproom the two thieves, Graz and Tstane, rejoin their companions as Amblay scans the tavern for any suspicious thoughts. He senses a black spot, a mind that is either telepathically or magically shielded. At night Amblay insists on three guards to protect them whilst they sleep.

Next morning the town of Agras comes alive early. The market square brims to overflowing with traders, farmers and merchants, but Amblay and his friends wish nothing more than to leave town. In the stables they find Brinil in a sour mood. "I want my ring back," he says calmly. The Muhaki begins to open his palm slowly in some strange spellcasting ritual. In a flash Graz Tak has his dagger out and draws it across the caster's chest. The Muhaki elf reels in pain – the spell now spoilt – Aravan and Tstane rush him quickly. The fight is swift and brutal, the Muhaki puts up little resistance and is finally slain when Graz's dagger punctures his brain.

Amblay stores the body in a dark corner (*invisibility*). From the corpse he takes a magical cloak before the party mount up but the horses are unwilling to move. Amblay suspects sorcery and casts *Dispel Magic* that brings them out of their hypnotic state. As the tide of people head for the market the party (with Axe shadowing two hundreds yards away) go against the current and head out towards the northern gate.

In their path is a Darklander with a grey cloak. Across his back is a katana but it is the appearance that draws their gaze...his right eye is an empty socket and half of his face is a mass of scarred tissue. Graz Tak slips away into the crowd and finds a slightly elevated position...he knocks an arrow and waits.

The Darklander introduces himself as Kozai and demands the blade; "I want it," he says. Amblay is calm and reasonable as the tension of the situation increases, "We don't know what you're talking about." Without warning Aravan, the Elenorian warrior, flicks a magical dagger from the hidden folds of her cloak with such speed that it is a blur in the air. As she hurled the knife she hefts the Blade of Menace in her good hand and leaps into combat. Amblay casts *jump* but stumbles back as he mistimes the escape. Kular backs away from the fight as Tstane joins Aravan in hand-to-hand combat with the Darklander. In the shadow, two hundred yards away, Axe draws his longbow and waits for an opportunity to shoot.

Aravan carves a slice of flesh from Kozai's stomach and a crowd gather to watch the action. Nearly two hundred people surround the fight. The Darklander is a skilled swordsman, his blade fast and dangerous, it is not too long before he executes an unstoppable strike against the dangerous Elenorian woman. To his horror – and the crowd's astonishment – the blade rebounds off the *stoneskin* protected throat of Aravan. Kozai staggers back, his morale crushed by the result. A backhanded swipe also hits Tstane but with the same result. Many of the crowd begin to murmur that the party are blessed by Jarik himself. Amblay recovers quickly from his earlier stumble and casts *glitterdust* to aid his companions in the fight.

Aravan unleashes a thrust that takes the Darklander in the face; blood explodes from the vicious wound but Kozai clings to life. Eventually, inevitably, the Darklander is killed.

A priest of Jarik Saal called Lohas (who is building a temple) approaches the party to accuse them of a crime, despite many of the crowd explaining that it was the Darklander that initiated the fight.

"Bugger off priest!" Aravan says irreverently.

Lohas ignores her and takes Aravan, Amblay and Tstane back to the temple garden where a shrine dominates the greenery. Lohas calms the situation with tea and the three travellers hear his words. Axe and Kular are in the shadows whilst Graz Tak lurks close by in case of trouble. The Nadir killer wants to take Kular away from the town but the ageing Tilean refuses to go; "The lady Aravan will need protection." Kular heads back to the temple whilst Axe follows reluctantly.

Enter Jeela, a Drenai Sisterhood Emissary (Elena priestess) who argues the case for the party's release. Despite the increased tension Lohas is reluctant to be more forceful than talk to them – the overwhelming evidence is that they acted in self defence when attacking the Darklander. Lohas reveals that the body of Brinil has been found and the party were seen leaving the area quickly. Again the evidence against them is flimsy and Jeela decides to escort Aravan to safety. Tstane by this time has already slipped away into the shadows and is beyond the garden walls before the priests and guards even know he has gone.

Jeela takes Aravan away to her own shrine. On the way Axe intercepts the two women and unleashes the Aran Rinshai blade. Jeela's eyes widen as the sound of the blade in the air resonates throughout the town. "So *that* is why you were hunted...it all becomes clear." But Axe is already moving, "I'm going to lance a boil," he says mysteriously and is gone once more.

Amblay and Kular decide the best course of action would be to leave the town immediately and heads for Aldegaarde – the largest citadel in Kulland that once housed the mighty race of giants called the Kulls. "I'm coming too," Jeela says.

As the sun rises towards noon the party are on the road again. Amblay seeks out Axe's mind and finds it...the Nadir is on the road ahead of them. As ever...

The Lost Sword

Sepos 16th - 18th

Amblay brings the party along the road to Aldegaarde where they find Axe disguised as a merchant. He has a cart, many horses and livestock such as goats. The Marraq converses telepathically with the Nadir and Axe tells him that he will continue to shadow the party from the rear; the cart offers him a good disguise as many such vehicles travel to the capital of Kulland along the north road.

Amblay pass a group of twenty white-robed Darkland pilgrims who inform them that they are on the way to the Agras pass, to a place called the Cave of Eternity. Via telepathy he informs Axe of the pilgrims approach. Once at the cart one of the Darklanders suddenly starts to howl. He falls to the ground and dribbles like a lunatic, all manner of guttural noises erupt from his mouth. "It is a sign!" the pilgrim's leader says. "It is a very bad sign," quips Axe. But Axe hears a voice that makes him shudder, a low booming sound from the lunatic's mouth.

"Welcome sword bearer..."

When the pilgrims have gone Axe makes camp. He is joined – and befriends – three other carters; Malangorians who have grain, turnips and other wares in their carts. He feels comfortable and at ease with these men who share the common bond of the journeyman.

Meanwhile, several miles away, Amblay senses the subtle touch of a mind. Another telepath. He locates and contacts the mind – a guardian of the hierarchy of Aldegaarde. The conversation is pleasant. Soon six large dragon-like beasts can be seen in the sky. The Silk Guard ride wyverns and are heavily armed with spears, knives and swords. Their leader Uphus greets the party, particularly Amblay, he has an affinity with Marraqs and tells him that the every unit of the Silk Guard must have at least one telepath in its ranks. Uphus was trained by a Marraq at the academy in Aldegaarde. After pleasantries the Silk Guard mount up and leave.

Before they take flight Tstane Tschermak gets close to Uphus. His dextrous fingers are hidden from the wyvern rider as he slips them into the folds of the guard's cloak. Unseen he lifts a purse full of gold crowns and watches as the Silk Guard take to the air and head back to Aldegaarde.

Further along the road the party come across a travelling circus. Darkland jugglers, fire-eaters, clowns and a one-armed swordsman have drawn a crowd of hundreds. Although Amblay advises against it the two thieves – Tstane and Graz Tak – cannot help themselves. They move amongst the crowd quietly until an opportunity presents itself.

But Graz is unsuccessful on his first attempt to steal a purse; a strong hand grips his wrist as a Darklander stares menacingly at him. "Thief!" Graz finds himself in hand-to-hand combat with a katana-wielding swordsman. Worse a clown – also with a katana – is joined by four other circus performers and Graz is surrounded. Blades are everywhere, one hits him in the face but Graz is saved by a [stoneskin](#). Tstane enters the fray to cause a distraction. Once the combatants see another thief they are momentarily distracted – enough for Graz to *flee* and disappear into the crowd. Once they realise Graz has gone it is distraction enough for Tstane to *flee*. The six warriors stare in disbelief...the thieves are gone!

After an hour the two thieves catch up Amblay and the party. In the sky the Silk Guard return led by their leader Uphus. But five of the wyverns hover dangerously above the party, when Uphus dismounts he unhooks the catch of his bastard sword (to prepare for a quick draw). His face is dark and menacing.

"I have been robbed!" he says.

At this point Tstane Tschermak fingers the purse and expertly dumps it in the pocket of his companion, Graz. At that moment Graz opens his robe to the Guard to display his innocence. To his horror the purse is evident to all. Uphus strikes the thief with a *mental strike* and Graz Tak falls unconscious to the floor. Amblay and the rest of the party hesitate...the tension grows as Uphus ties the stricken thief onto one of the other guards and explains that Graz will face the truth of a trial in the temple.

The Silk Guard fly north. Before the party can decide what to do Amblay *polymorphs* into a hawk and flies after the six wyverns. The small inconspicuous bird has no difficulty in matching the wyverns' pace but Amblay is concerned by the direction the Silk Guard head. Not north, more northwesterly. On the top of a hill the Silk Guard descend to a waiting Darkland warrior on a horse.

Amblay uses a *major control* on Graz and effectively takes over his mind. The Darklander asks a few questions but, strangely, after the Silk Guard have gone he cuts the bonds and allows Graz to run. The rider moves off into the west.

Amblay continues to follow the Darkland rider. As he turns north he comes across a further twenty Darkland warriors – possibly outlaws – but all heavily armed. Amblay hears the lone rider say; "Slay them all but I want the Marraq alive..."

Back in camp Amblay relays what he has heard and the party make plans to ambush the ambushers. In camp Amblay and Aravan create manikins stuffed with straw to act as decoys; the party hide within bow or thrown dagger range and wait. Soon, as darkness falls, the Darkland outlaws close in on the false camp. Graz Tak takes a scroll of *fireball* from his cloak (given to him by Amblay) and prepares to read it. Jeela casts *bless* on all but the thieves and they are ready for the fight.

The *fireball* lands in the middle of the outlaws at the point where they realise they have been tricked. Four of their number die instantly in the conflagration whilst three others are dreadfully burnt. Aravan – with the blade of Menace in hand – leaps into the fight followed by Tstane. Graz Tak prepares to fire arrows into the fight. The Darklanders are totally surprised and cannot react quickly enough. Aravan and Tstane cut down the first few and once the Darklanders get to grips with the fight it is all but over. Jeela casts *hold person* to paralyse a Darklander and Amblay hurls a second *fireball* into the fray.

When it is over Amblay and Jeela interrogate the last survivor. From him they gain the Darklander's name – Irridai – Jeela informs them that he is a well known swordsman with possible links to Darim (a spy?).

Axe has seen the fire on the horizon (from the *fireballs*) and leaves the cart and his livestock to investigate. When he approaches he notices an onlooker from a nearby hill, a Darklander watches the battle. Axe decides to sneak up on the warrior. With the darkness as his friend he is able to get very close to the Darklander called Irridai. The warrior, however, has seen him approach and smiles grimly.

"You have brought the blade to me," he says.

Axe draws the Aran Rinshai blade; it makes a sound like thunder as it leaves the ivory-inlaid sheathe. The Nadir is skilled with a longsword but the katana requires a different technique. Still Axe delivers a stunning blow, a strike that would have decapitated lesser men...but Irridai is up to the task and turns the blade aside with consummate skill. But the blow left a deep spiritual scar in the Darklander. For the first time in his life he felt fear – was this the swordsman that would kill him?

Axe moves in slashing and cutting. Irridai patiently turns aside blow after blow and waits for an opportunity to strike. For his part Axe is up to the task, deflecting each potentially lethal strike with equal ease. The steel-on-steel rings out in the night, a sound like two huge bells ringing across the plains of Kulland. Irridai is a master swordsman...Axe has faced none better but still the young Nadir presses on.

When Irridai finally outwits the young bladesmen he manages to strike into the jugular of the Nadir. To his horror the blade bounces away as though it has hit stone (*stoneskin*) – this hits the Darklander's confidence and beads of sweat form on his now-furrowed brow. Axe changes tactics mid-fight. Using his unarmed combat prowess he catches the swordarm of Irridai frequently, forcing the Darklander to use precious attacks freeing himself from the Nadir's grip.

Again and again Irridai strikes under the defences. Blows that would kill another fail to even cut the Nadir killer. For his part Axe strikes wherever and whenever he can but even his best efforts are turned aside by the swift and skilful Darklander. The young man begins to tire and he realises that the *stoneskin* protection will soon run out. A few desperate strikes do not connect and Axe feels his aching limbs complain as they search for respite. As they pain of exhaustion threatens to overwhelm him he notices Irridai suffering the same way.

The last few strikes are weak. One manages to strike Axe's arm and he realises that Amblay's *stoneskin* is no more. *Just a matter of time* he thinks. Irridai struggles against the bone-sapping tiredness.

Suddenly Axe lifts the blade and takes a half step backwards; he salutes the Darklander and bows, presenting his neck to the Darklander.

But Irridai is a man of honour. He sheathes his sword and the two men stare at one another, both take huge gulps of air to relieve the pain in their lungs. "I will not take your life in this way," he says. "Until the next time my young friend."

And the Darklander is on his horse and rides off into the west. Axe sucks air greedily and sheathes the Aran Rinshai blade, his eyes follow the smoke from the nearby battle. When he turns back to the west Irridai is gone...

Into Aldegaarde

Cy 4850 Sepos 19th - 21st

Axe returns to his cart after the exhausting fight with the Darklander Irridai. After a brief mental communication Amblay *polymorphs* into a nondescript Malan rider and heads out to find his friend's camp. Once there the Nadir tells Amblay about the

combat - the Marraq replenishes the [stoneskin](#) and once he is happy Axe is in no danger he departs back to his own encampment.

Next morning the party - led by Amblay - can see the massive towers of Aldegaarde, the Kullish architecture preserved, the grand walls and spires puncture the clouds. Jeela, the Sisterhood priestess, imparts her knowledge of Aldegaarde; "Six years ago the Kullanders elected a king," she says. "Berebian was his name. A wise, clever Malan this man soon realised that Kulland did not need a king. So he formed the High Council of Aldegaarde - of which he was the founder member - and invited three other notable people to sit alongside him and see to the affairs of the land. Garran, Arch Prelate of Jarik, sits on the High Council, as does Illyana, high priestess of Elena. The fourth member is Lord Kenzu, a Darkland general who controls the entire Darkland and Malan soldiers. Together they managed to make Kulland great; prosperity brings with it much-needed trade. Virtually every kingdom has an embassy in Aldegaarde..."

On eight towers around the perimeter wall are the wyvern nests where the Silk Guard sit and overlook the citadel. As Amblay enters the wide streets Aravan and Jeela decide to look for lodgings whereas Amblay leads Kular, Tstane and Graz Tak towards the massive temple of Jarik that dominates the citadel. There are many fine innhouses and taverns and the two women secure a couple of reasonable rooms with a comfortable dining area and baths. Meanwhile Amblay leads his companions into a huge cavern-like common area inside the entrance to Garran's temple...he has seen smaller towns! Along each wall are guild houses (including thieves) and traders. Such is the crush of people that they are channeled into a crush as pilgrims try to get close to the altar. Tstane and Graz Tak take advantage and begin to snatch purses where they can.

Axe arrives a few hours later and goes straight to one of the five markets. At a livestock fair he offloads the goats and horses (keeping two for himself) and makes a handsome profit in the process.

At the temple Amblay is able to speak to a high priest of Jarik called Varran with a view to seeing the Arch Prelate Garran. He informs the priest that Kular is the exiled Tilean king; upon hearing this Varran bids them come back in the morning when Garran will be free.

Axe secures lodgings close to his friends where he continues to shadow them.

Back at the tavern Amblay, Kular and the thieves return to Aravan and Jeela who are fresh from a hot bath. After they dine Kular notices they are being watched by a Darklander. Amblay stretches out his mind subtly, able to caress the mind with such skill that the warrior is unaware of the touch.

It is Irridai.

Tstane and Graz Tak make polite conversation with the Darklander. Tstane manages to steal a short bladed knife before Irridai departs for the evening. Jeela becomes increasingly besotted with the Marraq, that night they slip away and share a bed for the night...

Next morning at breakfast Irridai is more direct. He sits at the table where Amblay and the others dine and demands the blade. "I will buy it," he says, "I will give you thousands of gold pieces for the blade." Amblay refuses and dismisses the Darklander but Irridai becomes angry. Amblay, however, is ready for him. His mind grabs the Darklander with such completeness that the messages from Irridai's brain cannot reach his limbs. Paralyzed the Darklander is in the control of Amblay, who forces him to reveal the power behind him...Qestor is the name Irridai reveals.

Amblay forces the Darklander out onto the street and - grimly - a crowd gathers as Irridai draws a blade. Deliberately, under the total control of the Marraq, Irridai opens his jugular and the crowd scream in horror as he dies before their eyes. Tstane (who has stolen Irridai's katana) snaps the blade in two. Jeela hugs Amblay and sheds a tear for the fallen Darklander...

Amblay, Jeela, Tstane and Graz Tak head for the meeting with Arch Prelate Garran. Kular and Aravan decide to remain outside. Amblay persuades Kular and Aravan inside and the party have tea with the Arch Prelate. Garran is less than pleased by the events that morning...he argues that Irridai was an honourable man and did not deserve to die in the manner in which he did. In fact Garran suggests that Amblay commits suicide to redress the balance. Amblay politely refuses and after a fruitless meeting Jeela suggests they try Illyana and the Sisterhood.

But Illyana is less than satisfied with Amblay and after a brief meeting kicks him and the party out of the temple. Disgruntled Amblay searches for the mind of Amorhaz (the Marraq master of the Silk Guard). The welcome is better, the older Marraq is a warrior but is pleased to contact the younger sorcerer. "We must meet," Amorhaz says, "and share tales of the mind."

On the way back to the tavern that evening Amblay is contacted by a peculiar mind (a wyvern) called Ikiran; the creature explains that he has learnt to use telepathy by watching his master (Uphus). In the tavern Jeela is upset by the treatment of Amblay and renounces her faith to be with him...Amblay stares at her for a long time in silence...the two retire to their room.

Meanwhile, an hour after midnight, Amorhaz - the Marraq master of the Silk Guard - is visited by a tall, slim Elenorian...Aravan is naked. The Marraq smiles broadly and invites the lithe woman into his bed...

Flee!

Cy 4850 Sepos 22nd - 26th

The tavern rises slowly this morning. Amblay is up first, he leaves Jeela asleep in his bed and - as he descends for breakfast - telepathically checks on Axe. Axe confirms he is safe and heads for the Warehouse district to find an old man called Karamatsu who may be able to help him learn kenjutsu. Graz Tak is also up early and with Amblay they head for the academy of sorcery (The Academy of Nine Arts).

It is not long before Graz realises they are being followed; three men using a triangulation approach to keep them in sight. Experts, he muses. Undaunted Amblay

enters the academy, a huge many-towered structure with halls, orchards, schools and a massive library. At this point Graz and Amblay part; Amblay enters the school of telepathy whilst Graz looks for wizards...and scrolls.

The Marraq acquaints himself with Alivar, the head of the school, and they talk at length about the relationship between sorcery and telepathy. Alivar bows to Amblay's greater knowledge on the subject although the Marraq is trying to find a lost ability to cast without words (possibly through the mind). Amblay realises that this is an area of study he will have to further research...he eventually leaves Alivar and heads for the head of the entire school; Imrin is the head mage. He finds Graz in the company of the sorcerer.

Imrin is knowledgeable. Indeed he knows a little *too* much for Amblay's liking. Imrin is aware of the death of Irridai and is also aware of the lengths the authorities are going to seek justice. "They have sent an Inquisitor," he says. "A man with complete authority...he is required to find the truth and execute justice."

Axe and Tstane Tschermak meet in the warehouse district. Axe's attempts to find Karamatsu have so far drawn a blank - the only mention of such a name is *Karamatsu Rinari Daiju* - the head of the Rihaj. He wonders whether the two men are related. In the local taverns around a fish market Axe finds the old man. Karamatsu confirms that the man leading the Rihaj is his son. But the old man - despite his apparently hard life - has no desire to step back into a world of swords. "The only legacy I will leave," he says, "is a host of orphans and widows. I am a better person now than the bladesman I once was." Axe and Tstane leave.

On their way out of the Academy of Nine Arts Amblay and Graz are stopped by an Asharoki who bows respectfully. "I have been following you for a while now," the man says, "my master, Allimar, wished to speak to you. He resides in the Alley of Veils." Amblay interrogates the man further and discovers that Allimar has a tome protected by a demon. He believes that a telepath will be able to read the mind of the demon and discern the way to unpick the lock. Amblay dismisses the Asharoki and moves on, his head full of thoughts and plans.

Axe and Tstane leave the warehouse district and are stopped by five Darkland swordsmen who bar their way. A quick glance behind reveals a further five blocking their escape. Tstane and Axe stand back-to-back and the *Aran Rinshai* blade is revealed. Gasps from the crowd as the katana tastes the evening air. The Darklanders hesitate but a strong leader drives them into combat. Overwhelmed by numbers the two companions rely on [stoneskin](#) to buy them enough time to survive. Steel on steel rings out and the crowd grows to watch the action. Tstane uses the *blade of the planes* but each blow is deflected, Axe uses his unarmed skill to catch the sword arm of the most dangerous swordsman and use it as a human shield to defend himself.

Slowly the [stoneskin](#) protection is whittled away. Axe realises he must cut the numbers (and blood the sword) and as soon as he draws the blade across an opponent's stomach he feels different. The blade feels lighter, quicker and easier to handle. A second dead opponent is cut down by the katana and there is a glimmer of hope.

Tstane realises that his best mode of attack is the backstab. His [stoneskin](#) is almost gone so - dangerously - he ducks out of combat and into the shadows (flee); this leaves Axe momentarily exposed to eight swordsmen. Desperately he defends but the [stoneskin](#) is gone. A blade opens a small wound in his stomach. Not life-threatening but enough for him to react too slowly to a second cut, a deeper, more disabling wound. Tstane thunders back into combat by driving his dagger under the ribcage of a Darklander and up into the heart. His second strike punctures the eye of a second and hope is renewed.

Axe backhands a Darklander in the throat and five have fallen. Tstane *flees* once more to return swiftly to stab another to death. Axe sustains a small cut above his right eye and is covered with blood, the crimson flow obscures his vision and - with his body fighting many injuries - he succumbs to a vicious cut to the throat.

Tstane grabs the Aran Rinshai blade before Axe falls, rolls under the attack and escapes into the growing evening shadows. He ignores the shouts and calls of his attackers and melts into the citadel once more.

Aravan - late up from her night spent with Amorhaz - passes the scene of the fight later on. The Silk Guard are everywhere interviewing eye witnesses and securing the body. She pales when she realises the corpse is Axe, her young Nadir companion. Boldly she moves in and confronts the Silk Guard, noticing the empty ivory-encrusted scabbard of the Aran Rinshai blade. She persuades them that she must accompany the body. Luckily the guards inform her that the body and all its artifacts will be taken to their master - Amorhaz. She hides a wry smile.

The body is taken by wyvern to Star Haven, the citadel in the clouds, and Aravan is flown into the chamber she left just hours ago. Amorhaz dismisses his guards and - when alone - hugs the Elenorian. He hands her the scabbard and the rest of Axe's belongings and says; "If anyone asks you don't me." Aravan nods and leaves the chamber for the second time that morning.

Back in the tavern that evening Graz, Amblay and Aravan meet up to discuss the events of the day and the death of their companion. Meanwhile Tstane Tschermak breaks into an empty house and hides the Aran Rinshai blade under the floorboards before returning to the tavern and his friends. Once there Aravan hands him the scabbard which he hides about himself. Amblay writes scrolls that night (which he hands to Graz Tak); [Dispel Magic](#), [Fly](#), [Fireball](#), [Wraith Form](#) and [Polymorph Self](#). Aravan returns to the bed of the master of the Silk Guard, the Marraq Amorhaz.

Next morning, at breakfast, Amblay is confronted by Illdrych, a Khulan elf priest of Jarik, The Inquisitor. He wishes to cast a *truth spell* upon the Marraq to ascertain the reason behind the apparent murder of Irridai. Amblay refuses but the Inquisitor is calm, yet persistent. "Let me cast a spell on you first," Amblay says and casts [dispel magic](#) which has no effect. The Inquisitor cannot force Amblay to comply but says; "I will take your refusal to co-operate as an admission of guilt then."

Amblay quickly leaves the tavern, casts a [polymorph self](#) into a hawk and flies high above the city. Into his companions' minds he says; "We're leaving!"

Aravan meets Dax, a Jandraki explorer, who offers his cart as a means of escape. She arranges the horses to make them appear shabby and mistreated and with Graz they head out of the city at first light. Dax is not known to the authorities and slips out with Graz and Aravan; he heads initially north and then turns south towards the Agras Pass.

Tstane Tschermak has watched the Rihaj for twenty four hours. He has a mental picture of every shadow, every nook, every cranny and when he is satisfied he moves in under cover of darkness. It is relatively easy for him to move in amongst the students, the mock combat and the rituals to find the master's chambers. Karamatsu Rinari Daiju sits calmly and meditates in front of a small Jarik shrine. Tstane stands before him and reveals the sword and scabbard, an unmistakable weapon. "Teach me to use the blade," he says. But Karamatsu refuses.

Unbelievably, for no apparent reason, Tstane tries to quick-draw the blade and strike the master of the Rihaj. The young thief is nowhere near quick enough; Karamatsu disarms the sword, which falls onto the shrine, but does not follow up with an open hand strike on his attacker. Tstane is gone. The hours he spent staking out the Rihaj pay off. He quickly exits without being seen and moves rapidly away from the school of combat.

When he thinks he is safe - in a dark and lonely alleyway - Tstane pauses for breath...only to feel the brutally cold steel of a blade rest against his throat. He knows instantly it is the Aran Rinshai katana, he knows also that one sudden movement will have his head off. "Hold out the scabbard," Karamatsu Rinari Daiju says ominously. Tstane is forced to comply and extends his arm. The sound of water crashing down to the bottom of a waterfall greets him...but he feels no pain. Instead the blade rests securely in the scabbard, the Rihaj master gone. Tstane runs from the citadel.

Amblay sees Tstane outside the city of Aldegaarde, catches him up and casts [*Improved Invisibility*](#) on the thief before recasting [*polymorph self*](#) and taking to the skies once more. On his flight south he passes over the Inquisitor and twenty temple guards heading south. That night he reaches the cart and casts [*Improved Invisibility*](#) on Graz and Aravan - once again he recasts [*polymorph self*](#) into a hawk and flies away.

Now, with only Dax visible on the cart, four temple guards (from the Inquisitor) stop and speak to the explorer. One of them supplies a mental picture of the four travellers and ask if he has seen them. Dax shakes his head, "I saw them in Aldegaarde," he says, "but not since." The temple guards believe him and move on.

The party bypass the town of Agras and make their way up through the Agras Pass. Before long, at the narrowest point, Dax comes across a roadblock. The Inquisitor stands with ten temple guards. Once they see the cart they open the barricade and the cart trundles through. Aravan leaps onto her horse and spurs it through the opening. Illdrych the Inquisitor, casts [*dispel magic*](#) and the Elenorian becomes visible again. Graz Tak, meanwhile, has climbed up and around the barricade on the sheer face of the pass and is already moving south.

Amblay, flying high above, recognises the temple telepath and *thought strikes* him - to no effect. At this point Illdrych casts a spell and disappears...

The Death of Amblay

cy 4850 - Sepos 27th - 29th

Dax, the Jandraki explorer, and Graz Tak are through the barricade in the Agras Pass as they head south out of Kulland. Aravan has already ridden away and Amblay (in the form of a hawk) soars above them keeping watch. Tstane, the bearer of the last remaining Aran Rinshai blade, detours to a stream bed...the blade has a spiritual voice that guides him. The young thief heads for the spot where the spirit was slain many years ago by a strange dragon-woman.

By the stream he sleeps under the cloudy autumnal skies of Kulland.

Hours later Tstane Tschermak wakes with a pounding heart to find a blade pointed at him and a dark, shadowy figure above him, his face not visible beneath a dark cowl. Without hesitation Tstane rolls away (*flee*) and into cover. Still gripped by fear he watches the sinister figure turn and move towards him. *Stay absolutely still* the blade informs him. Tstane Tschermak is like granite.

From the cowl emanates a strange yellow, noxious vapour. It rapidly expands like the ripple in a pool of still water. Tstane notices vegetation withers in seconds upon contact with the vapour. *Stay absolutely still*. The thief dare not move as the yellow vapour reaches him...but to his amazement - and relief - it melts around his statuesque frame harmlessly. The figure grunts and calls down a wyvern. Tstane realises that it is exactly the same steed as the Silk Guard ride. He only exhales when the figure is high above him.

Amblay telepathically informs Tstane of their progress and the thief heads out to the Agras Pass and a reunion with his companions. Two hours after midnight the party see several torches in the distance ascending the pass and heading straight for them. Amblay (hawk) flies out to see ten Darklanders - all heavily armed - moving as though they want trouble. He takes over the mind of one with *major control* and creates a sound on the ridge of the pass. Immediately the leader orders two of the attackers up the cliff face to investigate. They ascend the sheer face like professional climbers and the Marraq relays this to Aravan, Dax and Graz Tak.

Dax and Graz Tak knock arrows into their longbows as Aravan sneaks out to ambush the attackers. Dax fells the first one and Graz Tak shoots two more through the eyes as Aravan gets ever closer. Amblay lands on the opposite ridge facing the two climbing attackers and looses two shots without success. Meanwhile Dax and Graz fell two more before Aravan - blade of Menace in her hand - falls upon the unsuspecting three who are left on the pass. She splits the skull of the first and before his companions react carves a bloody line in the stomach of the second. Dax and Graz rush forwards with blades to help Aravan finish off the last opponent. Amblay skewers the heart of one of the ridge dwellers and grips the mind of the last one firmly.

A combination of Aravan and Graz Tak slay the last attacker. Amblay sees the shadowy cowed figure in the Darklanders mind but little else. He wonders whether this was just a scouting party before the main assault. Amblay coldly forces the man

to throw himself off the ridge to his death and spreads out his mind in all directions. He senses black spots all around him and surmises that some kind of thought shielding is going on...he informs his companions and sends his familiar bat to investigate. But as the bat flies into one of the dark spots Amblay clutches his chest in pain...his familiar is dead!

He tells the party to be careful and *polymorphs* back into a hawk and takes to the skies once more. Graz Tak stands on one side of the pass and Aravan rests at the opposite side. Dax the explorer stays close to his cart and the horses.

Graz Tak is the first to spot a pinpoint of light from down the pass. It expands rapidly and they realise - to their horror - that it is a *fireball*. It veers off right and Aravan tumbles away desperately as the ball of fire explodes close by. As she rolls she screams in pain; flesh burns, she swears and hurriedly suffocates any flames before they envelop her. Dax crawls from under the cart and aims for the shadowy crack in the pass that the missile came from. Both his and Graz's first shots go wide. A second pinpoint of light grows but this time Dax knows it is aimed at the cart - he nimbly scurries away before his cart, and several horses, are blown to pieces.

Aravan hurries towards the hidden sorcerer. Seconds before she finds his dark hideaway one of Dax's arrows thunders into the darkness and she hears the magician squeal in pain. She - and Menace - make light work of the sorcerer and Aravan squeezes herself into the good hiding place to await further attackers.

Amblay changes into human form and casts *fly* - he ascends rapidly and avoids a speculative arrow from a hidden archer.

Aravan sees two black robed assassins sneak past her. Their garb marks them as expert killers, the fabled ninja that the Darklands is famous for. Without fear and despite her burnt flesh, she cuts down the first assassin from behind, a single deadly stroke decapitating him. Simultaneously Aravan launches the dagger of speed with her off hand, the blade flies true - an astonishing double attack - it punctures leather armour and lodges itself in the ribcage of the second assailant. This man spins to face her. He hits under her defences but the ninja blade bounces harmlessly off her *stoneskin* protection. The killer is faster than any opponent she has ever faced, and possibly more skilled, she finds dust blinds her which makes her swing Menace without success. The ninja rolls away and into the middle of the pass.

Graz Tak knows this is the moment he was waiting for. He unwraps a scroll of *fireball* and reads it quickly. From his raised finger comes a ball of fire that accelerates towards the ninja in the middle of the road. But his aim is not good. For the second time that night Aravan finds herself in the path of the missile. She dives sideways and once again the flames engulf her, though this time not as badly as before. With incredible determination she rushes at the ninja and locks blades with him. Graz Tak and Dax rush out to help her.

Amblay casts *Improved Invisibility* and is ready for battle. He descends into one of the dark spots that his mind cannot see and casts *dispel magic*. Instantly the veil of darkness disappears and he is amongst four startled Silk Guards, the wyverns hovering with the precision of humming birds. But one of their number casts a

counter spell ([dispel magic](#)) with catastrophic effects. All Amblay's protection vanishes instantly; worse still the [fly](#) spell is now gone. More than three hundred feet above ground he flounders. His sharp mind looks for salvation; many things occur to him like grabbing the mind of a Silk Guard and commanding him to fly down and catch him. But there is no time. He plunges desperately and dies instantly as his heavy body shatters upon the rocks below.

In that instant Aravan - and the rest of the party for that matter - realise that with the death of the sorcerer the [stoneskin](#) is gone. But this does not deter Aravan as she fences with the brilliant ninja. Nothing will stop her...despite facing a more gifted swordsman she waits for the tiniest of mistakes. When the killer overstretches himself she cleaves his head from his shoulders.

Above them the three companions see thirty Silk Guards, perched on the two ridges high above them. A lone wyvern rider descends on Amblay's corpse and gently picks up the body. Dax and Graz Tak realise the futility of the fight and walk into the middle of the Silk Guards although Aravan maintains her place in the shadows.

"Justice!" reverberates around the bleak walls. Almai, the leader of the Silk Guard, descends and speaks calmly to Dax and Graz, though Aravan is furious about the death of the Marraq. She refuses Almai's offer of healing. Realising that he will not sway or calm her Almai orders his men to leave. As a parting gesture he lays the Marraq's equipment at Dax's feet before flying away.

Aravan emerges from the shadows and reverently takes the darkbow from the pile of Amblay's equipment. When Tstane arrives the party sit and discuss their next move. The consensus is to head south to the large island of Nyrn, ironically the best route will take them back into Kulland and along the east road to Keisho port where Dax, the explorer, assures them a ship can be hired.

After sleeping for the remainder of the night the party make their way back into Kulland and find the east road. All the while they know they are being watched. A hundred yards from the east road they make camp. Before long a dim light can be seen in a nearby copse. Not a lantern it appears to be the dull glow of a magical weapon. Graz (now in possession of a host of Amblay's scrolls) finds and casts [stoneskin](#) on himself before he and the rest investigate the dull glow.

A beautiful, tall, lithe woman wearing an unusual gown is in the copse. The light emanates from a strange curved broadsword strapped across her back, her penetrating eyes are deepest purple and there is no recognisable racial characteristic. To Tstane she bows; "Greetings sword bearer," she says. "I am Mesmira, I am the one you summoned earlier."

Aravan invites the woman back into camp for food. Mesmira reveals her draconian heritage and says that she is linked to the Aran Rinshai blade in a profound way. She tells them that she has travelled from far away and that she must return before dawn. "Before I leave there are things you must learn, sword bearer...walk with me into the trees and listen well..."

Death and Rebirth

cy 4850 Sepos 30th - Octarius 5th

The party head along the east road towards Keisho, a sea port on the Jandraki coast. They are joined by a young Jandraki sorcerer called Blant Farrand, who *identifies* Dax's longbow (an heirloom given to him by his father). As the party head out Mesmira - the strange dragonian woman - is gone and Tstane Tschermak is back with them. That day the road is busy. Traders, runners, roadwardens and farmers use the paved highway to move their wares and themselves quickly.

That night Tstane Tschermak moves away from his companions. In a remote spot he draws the Aran Rinshai spiritual katana and practises with it. The night is uneventful.

Early next morning a group of twenty Darkland cavalymen led by Aikida – their sergeant – stop and ask the party some routine questions. They seek the sword but after several days searching for a katana amongst thousands of others Aikida admits to Dax that his job is virtually impossible. Dax humours him and the patrol moves on.

Along the east road are situated – at various points – hostleries for the weary traveller. The lights of these innhouses can be seen for miles in the darkness but the party decide to sleep outside instead. Just before dawn, when the first glimpse of sunrise gives a faint illumination, Tstane and his friends hear rustling. Footsteps close in on them.

Blant Farrand casts *mage armour* as Tstane draws the Aran Rinshai blade and moves in on three outlaws. His senses are tuned when he holds the blade and he detects three more hidden, two with spears waiting to launch at Dax and Blant. He relays this and his two friends ride quickly into a place of safety. Dax sees a spear fly harmlessly over his head and draws his father's longbow as he rides to safety...Blant is close behind and throws a *magic missile* at one of the men attacking Tstane.

Tstane Tschermak attacks an unprotected back, the blade punctures the torso of the first victim and sprays blood over his now-frightened friends. Tstane ducks under the attack of a second and watches in the periphery of his vision as a third closes in. Dax has already spotted him; he reins in the horse and looses an arrow through the right eye socket of the man. The second spearman approaches Dax and Blant but the young explorer half turns his horse and looses a second shaft that thunders into the outlaw's gaping mouth and exits ruinously from the back of his skull.

Tstane rolls away from his attacker and comes up behind the knife-wielding outlaw. As the outlaw spins he fails to see the swift slashing blade as it cleaves his head from his shoulders.

The remaining outlaws have seen enough and bolt like hares being chased by foxes. Dax calmly looses a third arrow, which destroys an outlaw's kneecap and fells the man. A quick turn and another arrow takes the last outlaw in the upper thigh and he – like his companion – falls in pain and anguish. Tstane rams the katana through his torso as he passes.

Dax and Blant interrogate the outlaw and quickly reach the conclusion that the band was desperate rather than organised. Poor men forced to live their lives on the edge of

a society that shunned them. Without mercy Tstane Tschermak runs the outlaw through.

Next morning a thick fog descends to slow their progress east. Blant suspects sorcery but cannot discover the caster (if any). Dax moves off the road and soon stumbles upon the body of a Darklander – possibly another outlaw. The manner of death is unusual; acid burns have scarred him and a small puncture wound is visible just above his heart.

At noon the fog lifts and the party attach themselves to a group of Darkland women, Elenian pilgrims heading to Keisho and the temple. Their leader is a woman called Yu. The pilgrim women are good cover as they head along the road; Dax gives Yu the Ring of the Enchanted Wood, a magical Elenian ring. She – and the other pilgrims – are astonished by the gift...at first Yu will not accept but Dax persuades her and she blesses the young explorer.

Further along the road they come across a cart that has thrown a wheel and a frustrated silk merchant who begs their help. He is called Hernandus, a Drenai, and after the pilgrims and the party replace the wheel Dax strikes a conversation with the rich man. It soon becomes clear to the astute young explorer that Hernandus knows very little about carts (Dax is a carter himself) and Dax reveals that he knows a spy when he sees one. Hernandus realises he has been rumbled but treats Dax's apparent indiscretion as playful banter. "I'm surprised you didn't fall for my broken-cart-by-the-side-of-the-road-routine," the Drenai chuckles.

Hernandus travels east with the party however.

Once again the party sleep away from the hostelries, preferring the relative safety of the open grasslands of eastern Kulland. That night Aravan stirs; she somehow senses a telepathic mind in hers. As she wakes the rest of her friends she realises the mind is a wyvern – there is only one telepathic wyvern she knows and that is Ikiran, the steed of Amorhaz, her lover. She relays this to the party.

Akiran deposits a small branch of the Mara tree into her hands. Aravan then sits around the campfire and relays hers and Amblay's vision of a world where Marraq and Elenorian share a common bond and loyalty. She also tells them of the branch; "As it grows," she says, "so the child within me grows. Once the child comes of age the branch will be strong enough for him or her to create his own Darkbow and take his place amongst the Marraqs."

Next morning a fog descends once again, although common in Kulland the party are suspicious and continue to travel vigilantly. Their fears are realised when there is a muted scream amongst them. Hernandus yells at everyone to stay close to the cart as Dax alone goes out to determine what – or who – made the sound. He soon discovers a body. One of the pilgrim women lie dead, the telltale signs of a small puncture wound and a face marred by acidic damage reveal much. Dax reports back to the party who curse the dense fog; visibility is now only ten feet at best.

Tstane Tschermak decides that his skills are required. He sneaks into the fog cautiously and waits like a statue. Before long he sees a shadow pass by. It is a

shadow he has seen before, the cowl and cloak of Saloth – the creature that exhaled a pungent yellow mist – and Tstane remains statue-like. As the creature passes he sneaks up behind it, the memory of the night by the stream still sharp in his mind.

But something is wrong. The closer Tstane gets the clearer he sees his opponent. The edges of Saloth blur as though he is made of smoke. A trap! Tstane now feels the *real* Saloth behind him looming close. His hand darts for the Aran Rinshai blade but his limbs are solid...as though his blood has turned to rock he cannot even move his little finger.

Saloth looms even closer.

Tstane tries to call upon the spirit of the blade but without a hand on the hilt there is no contact. Sweat pours down his cheeks as he sees a hand close by reaching for the blade at his hip. The flesh drips from skeletal fingers and the stench of sulphur assaults Tstane's senses. But he is completely paralysed.

Dax realises something is wrong. As he, Hernandus, Aravan and Blant struggle to see anything Dax *listens* – he follows the smallest sounds and in his brain tries to map out the direction and eventually location of Tstane and whatever tracks him. He draws the longbow and launches an arrow into the murky gloom.

Tstane feels the shaft pass his face only inches from his cheek. There is an explosion of sound behind him and his head and neck are sprayed with the visceral acidic blood of Saloth. A rivulet of yellow acid begins to eat away at the leather armour and then into his flesh...but still Tstane Tschermak cannot move!

Dax and Aravan are already moving, sensing that Saloth is injured they converge on their stricken companion. As Aravan reaches Tstane she sees the leather armour fall away from the effects of the acidic blood. Dax is skilled at following tracks but the globules of yellow gore are not difficult to miss. Saloth has limped off to the south. Aravan is already after him. Dax is more cautious and knocks another arrow into his father's longbow.

There is a cacophonous sound as a wyvern accelerates into the air above their heads. Aravan instinctively launches the Dagger of Speed but it flies harmlessly to the ground. Dax lifts his longbow and – once again – his aim is true. A shaft lodges itself in the upper thigh of the wyvern and the air is filled with its horrific squealing. Both Dax and Tstane notice the yellow viscous blood flowing from Saloth's wound...all over the back of the beast he rides. As Saloth leaves the movement returns to Tstane's limbs and he is free of the paralysis.

The fog lifts and the party head east once more. Before long a dark crumpled shape can be seen on the slope of the foothills of the mountains. Aravan, Tstane, Dax and Blant investigate. They discover the fallen wyvern; Saloth's blood has corroded the tough scales and eaten away at its spine.

The hunt is on once again!

Dax tracks the blood and with his three companions by his side they realise the injured Saloth heads south into the relative safety of the mountains. Hernandus and the pilgrims take the road east as the four friends track Silk Guardian.

Several miles later, in a barren landscape, they spot Saloth's two-handed broadsword rammed into the ground. They circle it at three hundred yard distant until Dax picks up the trail of Saloth...a trail that shows him staggering toward the blade. The young explorer follows it carefully, eventually reaching the broadsword. The tracks disappear at the sword.

He returns to the party and – after a brief discussion with Tstane – the thief moves in on the broadsword. With the Aran Rinshai blade in hand his senses are refined. The closer he gets the more it becomes clear that Saloth is *inside* the blade, somehow he has managed to enter it for protection. Tstane Tschermak grips his own blade tightly and takes a deep breath.

The strike is perfection. Swift, clinical and powerful. The broadsword shatters instantly into a thousand pieces as a pall of yellow noxious vapour envelopes Tstane. Dax and Aravan move in carefully.

Tstane feels the power of Saloth's raw soul. Disembodied the soul must enter a body to survive but Tstane is unprepared for the sheer phenomenal strength of Saloth's being. The young thief experiences pain unlike anything he has ever encountered. His soul – the life-giving power – burns!

Saloth is consuming him!

Tstane cannot panic; there is no time. As the last vestiges of his humanity are burnt away his screams can be heard for a hundred miles. Aravan is already closing, opposite her Dax closes from the other side.

Saloth emerges into his new body with a grim smile. Young, fit and healthy he lifts his prize above his head and bellows in triumph. Aran Rinshai's blade is above his head, as it moves it sings a deadly song. The blue eyes of Tstane are replaced with dark pits; they stare now at the two attackers. Saloth hefts the blade with the confidence of a grandmaster, his gaze flicks between the two attackers and he laughs a guttural, awful laugh...the sound of a killer reborn...

The Lost Child

Octarius 6th - 10th

Saloth prepares for battle. Aravan gallops towards him as both Dax and Graz Tak orbit around the fight with longbows in hand. Blant Farrand casts *invisibility* before moving cautiously forward (to get into spell range). Saloth moves in on the charging steed of the Elenorian woman, his eyes flick left and right as the two archers launch at the periphery of his vision.

Graz Tak's aim is truest. Aravan is spurred on as an arrow hammers into Saloth's skull and spills blood over his left eye. Despite this he advances upon Aravan, his

movement ragged and uncertain. As the two come together Saloth drives the Aran Rinshai blade deep into her stomach, rupturing her womb and slaughtering the child within. She has barely enough time to scream as Saloth flashes the sword across her sword arm...Aravan watches helplessly as the blade of Menace slips from her grasp.

Dax and Graz Tak continue their salvo despite the danger to their companion...but the need to kill Saloth drives them into more action. A stray arrow hits Aravan in the chest and she fights desperately against the strength-sapping damage; she draws upon inner strength and refuses to succumb to unconsciousness. Blant Farrand closes carefully under the shield of [invisibility](#) and casts [mage armour](#) to improve his defence.

Saloth reaches up and drags Aravan into his arms; she fears he will use her as a shield against the archers. As another arrow (from Dax) thunders into his ribcage he coughs blood over her but, amazingly, he draws her close to him. He casts [invisibility](#) in order to escape but Blant hits him in the leg with a [magic missile](#) – the glowing ball of fire marks the target easily for the archers.

Yet another arrow hits Saloth, this time in the stomach. He lurches forward but maintains a surprisingly strong grip on Aravan. Saloth – last surviving priest of the dead god Malkar – is close to the end of his existence. He draws himself up to cast a second spell...but it is the last thing he ever does. Graz Tak hits him once more in the head, the arrow skewers his brain and Saloth falls.

At the body Graz places the Aran Rinshai blade across two rocks and tries to destroy it. He fails and turns his attention to the body, stripping it of equipment before starting to dig a deep grave. Dax and Blant try in vain to stem the flow of blood from Aravan's wounds, they are amazed at the woman's resilience to damage.

"I'm going to get help," Dax says and rides off towards the pilgrim woman Yu.

The blade speaks to the spirit of Graz Tak. It tries to persuade him not to harm it but Graz is determined. The young thief buries it under seven feet of earth then places the body of Saloth on top. He torches the corpse before filling in the pit.

Dax returns with Yu and a priestess of Elena called Aimaris. The pilgrim healer casts three [cure light wounds](#) spells into Aravan's stomach as the party return to the road and the cart driven by Hernandus, the Drenai spy.

Next morning Dax sits next to Hernandus and the two men lead the cart east towards Keisho. Aimaris and Aravan are in the back amongst the silks. The priestess casts three more [cure light wounds](#) but Aravan is still badly injured although she is immensely fit and her recovery rate surprises Yu and Aimaris. The two women fight constantly to keep the Elenorian from getting on her horse. "You need rest," Aimaris says. Aravan resigns herself to a journey in the back of the cart.

During that day on the east road Blant Farrand and Graz Tak travel together. The thief gives the sorcerer every scroll he possesses and the young Jandraki magician spends the day absorbing many of them.

That evening, as the last light of day disappears, Aravan moves away quietly to a quiet copse where she burns the branch of the Mara tree and says some words for the loss of her unborn child. She notices watchers in the darkness. Without hesitation she launches the dagger of speed at the unseen foes but the knife does not find a target. Six men overpower her, they pin her down to the floor whilst one of their number – a Drenai – speaks softly to her.

Aravan realises she is being hypnotised. She resists the Drenai who tries to make her believe it was all a dream.

Next morning Amorhaz reaches Aravan's mind (he says he will contact her every morning to ensure she is well) – she tells him of the Drenai. The Marraq then reaches into the mind of Hernandus; soon he reveals what he has found.

"Hernandus is more than just a spy. He is part of an organisation called The Source – Drenai spy / assassins. Highly trained, highly secretive who take their orders directly from the king himself. From his thoughts I'd say that he is after the Aran Rinshai katana...you need to take care Aravan."

By evening Hernandus makes camp and suggests they spend the night at one of the many roadside hostelries on the eastern highway. Blant Farrand casts [stoneskin](#) on his companions (apart from Graz who already had it cast from a scroll). Dax, Graz, Blant and Aravan accompany the Drenai into a lively taproom. Aravan finds a secluded spot and sits alone, her face dark and her mood darker. Dax talks to Hernandus but unbeknown to him the Drenai slips a drug into his drink. Dax finds himself blabbering openly, his conversation steered to wherever Hernandus wants it to go. Blant and Graz lead the drunk-like Dax out of the taproom.

Hernandus moves over to Aravan. "I don't require company," she says. But Hernandus persists, again trying to hypnotise her like he did to Dax. Aravan reaches for her sword but his strong hand secures it. "Don't make a scene!" he spits. Aravan tries to wrench another blade from her hip but is unable to in the cramped space. Hernandus is very close now.

A figure looms over Hernandus. A tall, powerfully built Malan dressed in casual clothes. "Why don't you leave the lady alone?" he says. Hernandus tells him to get lost but the Malan strikes him once; his hand a blur as he knife-hands the spy in a pressure point. The Drenai collapses, his whole body twitches uncontrollably. "My name is Banyon," he says pleasantly.

But Aravan drags the twitching Drenai out into the courtyard where many of the clientele have fled the short fight. Blant steadies Dax (who still feels the effects of the drug) – he is concerned when ten Drenai surround Aravan and their fallen comrade. The Elenorian reaches down into her left boot and pulls out a tanto; in one fluid, remorseless movement she slips the blade into Hernandus' neck and kills him quickly. The Drenai start to move for her but their leader – Killimar – stops them. Aravan simply barges past them and heads back to camp, her manner dispassionate and cold.

Whilst the Drenai stare in disbelief at Aravan Blant the sorcerer casts *invisibility* and takes the corpse of Hernandus, after a further minute he casts *fly* and heads back to the encampment.

Back in camp Yu and Aimaris become increasingly watchful of Aravan, they are concerned about her state of mind and general health although Aravan's body shows a great capacity to heal itself. The party are concerned about attack from the Drenai so they head off into the night for two hours before making camp once more. Blant Farrand casts *find familiar* and summons a crow...this bird then reveals that twenty Drenai lie in ambush ahead whilst a further sixty bring up the rear on horseback.

As they make plans Yu suggests *she* speaks to the Drenai. "We should all have faith," she declares, "I have the Ring of the Enchanted Wood and the blessing of Elena is with us all."

Dax and his companions are sceptical but allow Yu to take the lead on the cart (next to the explorer). Before long Killimar and twenty Drenai bar their way...they want the blade! But Yu stands before them and lectures them on the protection of the Lady of the Wood. "This is Kulland," she says, "where honour and loyalty and religious piety are held in high regard...maybe in your lands this is not so but here I am under the protection of the goddess."

Strangely the Drenai become nervous at this point. Their eyes are everywhere, fear creeps into their souls and even their leader – Killimar – is uncertain of the next move. Even with superior numbers something about Yu's words make him hesitate. He calls off the Drenai but has some barbed words for the party; "There are dark shadows in Keisho...in one of them you will meet your doom! I will have that sword before the week is out."

When they depart Yu breaks down; Aravan embraces the pilgrim and comforts her. Aimaris – the priestess – feels the deep religious significance of what has occurred and she too collapses with nervous exhaustion. Graz Tak is there; he embraces her and soothes her fears...

Later that night the light of a campfire can be seen in the distance. Dax goes to investigate and finds the tall Malan, Banyon, enjoying sausage for supper. His manner is easy and calm...Dax sits and they talk. Eventually Dax offers him the hospitality of his cart and the protection of his friends.

Banyon smiles generously. "I thought you'd never ask!" he laughs.

The Jandraki Coast

Octarius 11th - 16th cy 4850

The party are joined by the tall Malan called Banyon as they head east along the road that leads to Keisho a sea port on the Jandraki Coast. As they near the city Dax prepares to take his companions into a stream and off towards the coast – his ability to follow trail also gives him an insight into how to hide one. The idea is for Yu and the rest of the pilgrims to secure passage on a ship and pick them up on the coast. Dax

donates five hundred gold pieces to the stunned woman. Graz Tak also puts one hundred gold pieces into the pot.

That night they sleep under the stars once more. Banyon slips away into the darkness but Blant Farrand ensures that his *familiar* crow follows. A mile away – at the east road itself – Banyon waits. Eventually the crow sees a large winged creature descend...a wyvern. Blant stares at the scene through the crow's eyes and when Banyon returns he is quizzed by the party. He admits immediately that he is an off duty member of the Silk Guard sent by Amorhaz to watch over Aravan. He also informs them that the Drenai have been rounded up and arrested – all of them – and taken back to Aldegaarde for questioning. "By the time the diplomacy and legalities of the situation are settled we should be far away from them," he grins.

Next morning Yu, Aimaris (the priestess) and the rest of the pilgrims head along the road to Keisho whilst Dax leads the rest (including Banyon the Silk Guard) towards the coast. By noon they reach a Darkland fishing village. The locals are unfriendly; Banyon suggests food at the local tavern but the welcome there is also unfriendly. "They are very provincial," Banyon explains, "but we are safe if we stay out of trouble."

That night they make camp a mile from the village, a large camp fire and tents on the beach. Just after dark a drunken fisherman approaches gesturing angrily and waving a large quarterstaff. Dax intercepts the drunk and grabs the staff. A brief struggle ensues ending when the Darklander has the staff removed and falls unceremoniously on his backside. Blant *polymorphs* into a mountain lion and the drunkard runs off.

Next morning the party look out for any signs of a ship. Yu's plan is to fly the flag of Elena so that her friends can spot her. As Blant, Aravan and Banyon keep watch Dax and Graz Tak head into the tavern for breakfast.

Graz Tak is half a step of Dax as they enter. Almost immediately the young explorer knows something is wrong. He feels the cold steel of a blade against his ribs and a strong hand wraps itself menacingly around his throat. "Back out slowly and no sudden movements!" a voice hisses. Dax recognises the Drenai accent.

There is no time for hesitation. Dax reacts with astonishing speed and fluidity as he *first strikes* with his elbow. He feels the blade against him loosen in the grip of the Drenai and Dax is already spinning to bring his leg whip-like against the assailant's knee. The leg buckles and the Drenai collapses in pain as Dax is now ready for a frontal attack.

The Drenai is Killimar!

The spy / killer lashes out with a dagger but Dax lets the blade ease past him before ensnaring the arm securely and bending back the wrist in an attempt to immobilise the attacker. Graz Tak spins and moves quickly behind the Drenai.

Outside Blant, Aravan and Banyon hear the commotion and rush towards the tavern. Blant casts *improved invisibility* and heads for the entrance. The fishermen scatter when they realise the fight may turn ugly, within minutes only the combatants and the

tavern keeper remain. Graz Tak uses the pommel of the dagger to beat Killimar with as Dax and he struggle with each other. Eventually the strong Drenai frees himself from Dax's grip but from the floor his knife is ineffectual. Blant moves into the tavern and casts [*ray of enfeeblement*](#) – the tavern keeper is hit and drops a tray of drinks before collapsing behind the bar.

Dax connects with another vicious kick and the Drenai squeals as his broken leg takes further punishment. As Aravan enters Blant casts a second [*ray of enfeeblement*](#) which hits Killimar and saps what little strength he had left. Dax sees the opportunity and dives onto the struggling spy. He rolls Killimar over onto his stomach, wrenches his arms painfully up his back before placing a knee squarely between the Drenai's shoulder blades...Killimar is unable to resist.

Banyon ties up the Drenai and arrests him. He calls down the wyvern and ties Killimar onto the back before saying his farewells to the party. On the horizon a small merchant vessel can be seen flying the flag of Elena. Blant sends the crow out to the ship; by the time the bird reaches it a small rowing boat is already on its way to take them aboard.

The ship is called The Tiger Bane and is captained by a Darkland merchantman called Daimar. It has two masts and a crew of ten. With him are Yu and Aimaris; both women have shed the white robes of the pilgrim and wear more sensible travelling attire.

Once underway Blant Farrand sends the crow out on watch. Dax is fascinated by the captain's charts, compass and the two men spend the best part of the day...Dax – as an explorer – wants to know *everything* about ships and how to sail them. Graz Tak re-acquaints himself with Aimaris – the Elenian priestess – and the two share the day talking religion...though many of Graz's companions are suspicious of his motives. Aravan remains alone when she can although Yu keeps a close eye on the warrior throughout the first day.

Dax inquires about Nyrn and its people. Daimar says that they are largely xenophobic and have only recently opened themselves up to trade with other nations. Although he himself has visited their cities he prefers the warmer hospitality of the northern Grayhawkians.

That evening whales splash playfully around the ship...all is quiet.

The next day is filled with squally showers and rough seas. The party decide to go below decks with the exception of Dax who wants to experience the true thrill of seamanship.

That night the weather is calmer and the alarm is raised. The ship makes its way carefully through what appears to be wreckage of another vessel. The flotsam and jetsam of masts and sails is eerie in the darkness. Before long one of the crew spot a survivor.

Dax turns to the captain and says; "I'll wager this man is a Drenai." Daimar ignores him but the young explorer is correct, the man is indeed a Drenai. "And you'll notice

there are no other bodies in the water," Dax adds. The captain concentrates on hauling the soaked Drenai aboard.

He is called Tostas and tells the party that his ship was wrecked in the storm and his livelihood is at the bottom of the Jandraki Coast. Although the captain and the two women are concerned about the man (they take him below decks) Dax is adamant that there is something fishy about him. His colleagues agree. The Drenai is shifty and – at times – arrogant, occasionally he calls the Jandrakis pirates. Blant senses magic on him and casts *dispel magic* – whatever spell was cast on him disappears (Tostas is unaware of this).

The next day Tostas makes a remarkable recovery. He is more spirited and begins to charm both the women and the captain – who still see him as a genuine castaway. Dax tells Blant to send the crow out to sea to find out whether Tostas has backup. The crow flies all day but sees nothing.

That evening they all sleep in the hole. Dax becomes increasingly bullish, like the rest of the party he knows Tostas is not what he seems but the honourable Darklanders will not tolerate violence aboard the ship...Dax decides to play with the Drenai.

"I can tell you exactly what you want," the explorer says to Tostas, "I can tell you exactly where the blade is hidden."

The Drenai regards Dax coolly. His eyes are penetrating and – at that moment – Dax realises that the man can read the small signs, he is a master of the minutiae...he has haragei. The ancient technique of super-awareness makes the man a dangerous opponent. "I am not interested in the blade," he says.

Later Dax implores the captain to drop the Drenai at the nearest shore (the southern tip of Grayhawk) but Daimar refuses saying the Drenai now wants to travel to Nyrn. "If you don't let him off then we will leave the ship!" Dax growls. Yu intervenes and points out that she has paid handsomely for the voyage and wishes him to honour their agreement.

As a man of honour Daimar cannot refuse when this is pointed out. He tells Tostas that he must leave. After hours of wrangling and arguments Tostas is lowered – alone – into a rowing boat. Daimar has put the ship as close as is safely possible to the shore and the Drenai leaves the ship. His face is cold, unreadable; but Dax senses the bitterness of the man. "Have twenty gold pieces for your journey," Dax taunts him. Tostas takes the money; "And where will I spend it in the wilderness? You have not seen the last of me young man..."

The Tiger Bane approaches a storm at the mouth of the Jandraki Sound. Soon the high winds begin to throw the ship around. Unlike the previous squall this turns into something more...a fierce reminder of the Jandraki Sound's power. Down below a number of small leaks begin to open.

The captain struggles on deck to keep the ship afloat but as Blant and the others wait below they hear a terrifying tearing sound. Water floods into the hole like blood from a bad wound. A three foot gap in the hull below the waterline. Blant calls the captain

who surveys the damage with an experienced eye. "Plug the gap!" he yells, "Anything you can get your hands on."

Blant, Yu, Aravan and Graz Tak pile chests, caskets and any furniture to hand in the gaping wound. Blant casts multiple [web](#) spells to bind the packing in place. Astonishingly the water becomes a trickle and once the crew bring down the bilge pumps they are able to remove more water. ...Aravan displays incredible strength as she works the bilges furiously to keep the Tiger Bane afloat.

There is a sickening crack above them. The howls and screams of the crew indicate only one thing...the main mast has collapsed...

The Nyrn Forest

Octarius 17th - 19th cy 4850

The Jandraki Sound is one of Grayhawk's most feared stretches of water. Sandwiched between the mainland and the vast island of Nyrn the currents currents are treacherous and can endanger even the most experienced seamen. The Tiger Bane is caught in the grip of a ferocious storm. With its mast split and a large hole in the hull the crew and the party fight to keep it afloat.

On deck the captain Daimar and Dax struggle to sever the main mast from the ship fearing it will drag them down to their deaths. Dax is aware that the sea plays tricks with him; in the violent sea there appears watery hands like giant tentacles that grab and pull at the ship. "Don't concentrate on them!" Daimar hisses and the two men return to the mast.

Below decks Aravan and the rest of the crew pump water from the hold. Despite the rough seas they start to win the battle against the storm. As Daimar and Dax free the mast the storm dies, the clouds part and visibility is good once more. Ahead on the horizon is a landscape dominated by pine trees. Dax's calculations confirm the northeast coast of Nyrn.

The Tiger Bane reaches a sheltered cove surrounded by the evergreen forest. Daimar informs them that it will take a week to patch up the ship so Dax and his companions offer to head into the trees on reconnaissance. The forest is dense and Aravan – who was born in the Elenorian Forest to the north – senses the unusual living environment of a major forest. "There are elves here," she states.

Dax leads them to a high crag from which they spy the vast expanse of green as far as the eye can see. Being the second largest forest on Grayhawk it houses a large variety of creatures, a cacophony of sound assaults them but from their vantage point they spy none of the telltale signs of a settlement.

As night falls Blant Farrand casts [stoneskin](#) on Yu and the priestess Aimaris. There is a palpable change in the atmosphere at night; a more sinister feel about the forest. Dax and Blant spot what they initially see as a horse, a white stallion illuminated in the moonlight. On closer inspection they realise the single horn that protrudes from its

forehead can mean only one thing – unicorn. Blant sends his *familiar* crow – Fluck – off to investigate.

Through Fluck's eyes Blant sees three elves approaching. All are disfigured in some way; one has an enlarged right eye socket whilst the two others have a deformed limb each. In all other respects they appear as normal elves although no race that anyone can determine. Their leader is called Xilara (with the enlarged eye) and she tells them that they seek pure-blooded elves with which to breed with. The Nyrn Forest is filled with humanoids and centuries ago the elves were bred with orcs, goblins and hobgoblins (all creatures which abound in the forest). When asked about the unicorn Xilara calls it a god.

Blant casts *cat's grace* on Aravan as she heads off to speak to the unicorn. Dax follows secretly (*improved invisibility*) to a secluded copse. The unicorn is called Maishak and Aravan soon learns it is not a god but an Elenian priestess *polymorphed* into the shape of one. Maishak explains that the elves needed guidance to steer them away from the path that their race was following.

Next day the party move further south into the forest and decide to travel on foot instead of returning to the ship. Blant sends Fluck back to the Tiger Bane with a note tied to it explaining their decision. But through the crow's eyes Blant sees the smouldering ruins of the ship and a dark robed figure stalking the deck. The crew have been butchered and the figure cuts strips from the captain Daimar with a cruel-looking bastard sword.

The party head south once more all day and forgo sleep to move during the night. When exhaustion sets in they sleep during the day and post a guard. Soon they hear the captain's voice; Daimar is obviously in pain and a second voice (a Darim) can be heard. Aimaris recognises the voice. "He was at the academy with me," she says, "but he was seduced by the Malakarians and defected to that religion...his name is Malnar.

Later Dax scouts around trying to find a trail. He spots a robed figure in the trees with a bastard sword across his shoulder...but Dax knows instinctively something is wrong. The figure hobbles as though hurt and he realises this is a trap. Without warning Dax feels the power of a spell hit him but he is unharmed. A figure emerges, a Darim priest of Malakar with a sour disposition. Dax is struck hard and fast by a knife-hand strike (unarmed combat) to the solar plexus. The *stoneskin* protects the young explorer and he stops the next strike with a deft catch.

As the two men struggle Blant, Aravan and Graz Tak move in. Aravan hefts the sorcerous Blade of Menace while Graz holds the Dagger of the Planes. Malnar struggles with Dax to no avail. His only hope is to cast a spell into Dax and flee but Dax is aware of this tactic and – just before the priest can cast – Dax kicks him soundly in the stomach.

Malnar realises that two other opponents are now upon him and rues the decision to leave his bastard sword on the captain. Without enough defences the priest of Malakar succumbs to the inevitable – Graz's dagger punctures his left eye socket and kills him. Aimaris tends to Daimar, the captain; her *cure light wounds* ease the pain of much of

the damage he has sustained. Daimar tells of the sudden attack and the single handed destruction of his ship by the priest.

They leave the bastard sword behind and move south.

Dax scouts ahead and comes upon two orcs sat on a fallen tree arguing. Blant sends Fluck to scout further ahead and is astonished to discover an encampment of nearly five hundred orcs in a natural depression. They decide to move around the depression and leave the orcs alone.

Whilst carefully moving around the depression they are ambushed from above. Five orcs leap from the concealed branches of a tree onto the party. Aravan reacts first; she unleashes her shortsword rapidly and 'skewers one of her opponents fatally through the abdomen. Dax breaks the leg of a second with a vicious kick and Yu manages to crush the throat of a third. By the time the orcs realise they are outclassed it is too late. Not one of their blades finds a target as the party slay them within half a minute.

As silence descends once more the party advance south past a snoring guard, confident that their brief fight has gone unnoticed. Only a Forest Lion and its cubs are seen as the party make good progress south.

Next day they see an elven arrow stuck in a tree. Further on a second arrow can be seen...Dax reckons it to be a marker of some kind. An ambush is quickly ruled out. At a third arrow the party discover a rope ladder leading fifty feet into the leafy foliage of the trees. They climb to be greeted by a Khulandir elf that introduces himself as Vestril. A strikingly handsome elf he is obviously a warrior due to the cache of weaponry he has with him.

Vestril explains he was shipwrecked in the storm that disabled the Tiger Bane. He reason for travelling to Nyrn was horses. "The Nyrn Meadow is a vast expanse of lush greenery," he explains, "where horses roam free and – if you can tame them – make excellent steeds."

The Khulandir leads the party south; his easy manner and endearing charm make him a good travelling companion although his quips about humankind become irritating after a while. "The trouble with humans is that they eat like pigs but like them too..." Vestril laughs heartily at his own humour as he moves through the trees.

Southward Bound

Octarius 20th - 27th

The Nyrn forest stretches from coast to coast on the largest island on Grayhawk and is where the party – a disparate bunch – head south after being shipwrecked days earlier. Daimar, the captain of the Tiger Bane, is being cared for by Aimaris and Yu but it is the newest arrival – the Khulan Vestril – that leads them south. Vestril explains that he is the youngest son of queen Jirena of Khulandir and is on Nyrn to seek a horse. This horse is called Vvardas and is the twin of the steed his mother rides. His ebullient attitude begins to grate on the rest of the party but they follow him despite this.

That night whilst resting a whistling sound can be heard. Vestril, Dax and Graz Tak head into the darkness to investigate and see a human giving signals to a wolf. The wolf hunts something in the forest but disappears when the three travellers come close. The Nyrnian introduces himself as Valyr Navic a hunter seeking a particular type of poisonous snake found in the forest. "The venom is deadly when coated on a blade or on an arrow," he says.

Valyr is a pleasant young man who is invited into their camp. He cooks two recently caught rabbits and proves an easy mannered fellow who likes to talk. The party learn much from him; he tells them that in Nyrn Malakar is seen as a force for good whereas the Elenian religion is viewed as dark and evil. "The goddess is referred to as the Dark Lady," he says eyeing the elves suspiciously.

Next morning Valyr the hunter moves away north. Before long they notice guttural shouting and yelling in the distance. Blant casts *improved invisibility* as they creep nearer to the sounds. A group of eight orcs surround two others who are engaged in a bloody fight, their companions bet on the outcome.

"Let's move around them," Dax says.

"No chance," Vestril grins. "There are but ten, barely entertaining but enough to get our blood boiling. I say we slaughter them."

Dax shakes his head in disgust. The young explorer climbs a tree as Vestril leads Graz Tak, Aravan and Blant against the orcs. Blant casts *haste* on the Elenorian as Vestril draws a pair of twin longswords and relishes the fight with the orcs.

Aravan, Vestril and Graz are already upon the orcs before they realise what is happening. Hastily they draw weapons and try to fend off the attackers. Blant casts *jump* and initially remains behind his companions. Vestril severs the throat of the first orc but Aravan and Graz take time to find an opponents flesh. After a slow start the two companions begin to make their mark; Aravan cuts down a couple as does Graz before Blant steps into the fray. Already under *improved invisibility* and with a *chill touch* cast Blant soundly kicks an orc to death with a well measured attack.

The orcs are all dead within minutes, Vestril laughs heartily at the murder and returns to Dax who is less than impressed with the display of bravado. "You could have brought more orcs upon us," Dax says. Vestril merely shrugs; "Bring them on."

That evening Vestril takes time to walk alone with Aravan. He comments on her mood; "You have lost your joy my lady," he says. But Aravan is unwilling to open up to the prince of Khulan and – reluctantly – Vestril backs off.

Later that night Graz Tak investigates chanting deep in the trees. Almost half a mile away in a clearing he witnesses some form of ritual. Eight men and women stand around a pentacle (which is surrounded by burning bowls of incense). It occurs to Graz that they may be summoning so he returns to the camp to inform his companions of what he saw.

Next morning Daimar is fully recovered from his torture by Malnar (the Malakarian). Blant casts *stoneskin* on him and the party move up to the remnants of the circle Graz discovered. Blant senses sorcery around it although the pentacle is gone – the party decide to move on. Fluck – Blant's *familiar* crow – flies above the treetops and scouts ahead. It sees an imp-like creature with large opaque eyes and small leathery wings jumping from tree to tree obviously on the lookout for something...or someone.

Aravan tells the party to get close to the tree trunks so that whatever it is cannot find them from above. The tactic works and the creature moves away before long. Aimaris preys to Elena and informs them all that she suspects it to be a minion of Malakar – or at best a minion of one of his priests. Dax has other ideas; he suggests to Yu that it could be after the Ring of the Enchanted Wood.

The discussion that follows centres around an escape route. The suggestion is that the Jandrakis in the party go into a seaport and secure a ship then sail down the coast and pick up the elves and the priestess. Vestril, however, is adamant that he wants to find the horse called Vvardas and the discussion becomes heated. During that night Blant writes a scroll (*mount*).

Three hours after midnight a lantern can be seen. Dax and Vestril head off to investigate whilst Graz Tak lurks unseen in the darkness. The horseman is dressed in chainmail and is obviously a warrior. A two handed greatsword lies across his back and a lance is at one side of the horse, they notice the leathery imp creature is wrapped in a blanket (obviously dead). He holds up a lantern and greets them warmly. Dax invites him into camp for supper.

He is called Ymric Talovic and is a pleasant man who thanks the party for their hospitality and understanding. Naturally they question him but this professional soldier tells a tale different to what they have heard since they arrived.

"There is a power struggle in Nyrn at the moment," he begins, "in particular in the capital citadel of Malakor. King Gralnadar has been on the throne for almost two decades but in the last five years we have all noticed a difference. Do not be fooled by reports that Malakar is pure in this land – we know the reality of what he stands for. There are enough Drenai and Bretonian merchants in our lands to tell us the truth about Malakar.

"Trouble is Malakar suffuses every part of our society. Our children are taught in Malakarian schools, all the guilds pay homage to *him* and virtually every Nyrnian worships him. We are a naïve race but we are learning all the time of the ways of the world. If Gralnadar is not careful he may lose his throne to the arch prelate of Malakar and we will live in a theocracy of hate and despair. If I uttered these words in the city I would be dead within the hour, that is why I prefer the meadow and the forest to the battlements and keep.

"I have probably said too much already. Forgive me."

Ymric departs the next morning and – at last – the Nyrn forest gives way to a vast and luscious green meadow. Farmsteads and villages can be seen as for many leagues and cattle, sheep and horses roam free. Dax leads them to one of the larger villagers in

search of horses. The farmer welcomes the young Jandraki explorer though is suspicious of the elves. He is called Hagen and has a large stable attached to his farm. Dax knows horses and is stunned by the excellent quality of the mounts available.

Before conducting business Hagen insists that the party share the hospitality of the Nyrnians and have lunch – a grand affair that takes place in the courtyard. All the farmhands and their families are present and fresh food and wine flow freely. With almost fifty people as audience Vestril cannot help himself. He stands up to introduce his companions in a light hearted and mostly derogatory way.

But his words regarding Elenorians butchery of the Marraqs cause Aravan to stare darkly at the foppish prince. Her eyes narrow and her teeth remain firmly clenched...

The Terror Within

Cy 4850 - Oct 28th – Novan 3rd

After the sumptuous meal at Hagen's farm Dax concludes his business with the farmer and purchases excellent riding horses for his companions. The route south is easier on the Nyrnian horses, a welcome change from the tiring trek through the great Nyrn Meadow. They are joined by Morikand, a Darak sorcerer, a guest at Hagen's table and a fellow traveller.

That night Blant Farrand sends his *familiar* Fluck out but the crow sees nothing.

Next morning they come across a vast herd of horses moving towards the west. Three mounted men are herding them, a mile apart, and the rearguard approaches. He is called Kiolten, a horse master, the Nyrnian eyes the elves suspiciously, particularly the vociferous Vestril. It is the Khulan prince that suggests they scan the horses. The elf is arrogant and impatient in his quest for a special horse called Vvardas. Kiolten explains that the herd is not for sale but Vestril treats the man like a peasant.

"These horses belong to king Gralnadar," Kiolten explains.

"I care not for your king," Vestril replies, "I will find the horse and claim him."

Blant Farrand changes into a pigeon (*polymorph self*) and flies around the horses. With his natural ability to sense sorcery he finds what he believes to be a spellcasting mount. Vestril moves over to the horse and Dax is with him. Although Dax cannot speak elvish his linguistics ability is able to discern an argument between horse and man. Vestril grows increasingly angry. He moves back to Kiolten to argue with the horse master and whilst there the horse – called Runar – explains to Dax that he is not the fabled Vvardas.

It is Aimaris – the Elenian priestess – that takes the situation in hand and quietly convinces Vestril that the horse is not the one he is looking for. Reluctantly Vestril agrees and they head south away from the herd.

The party become increasingly annoyed with Vestril; his arrogant manner and belief that they are his servants cause great tension within them. That evening – when the

party set up camp for the night – Vestril sneaks off into the darkness. Dax follows him as carefully as he is able and soon finds the elf talking to an object in his hand.

"You are giving me nothing to work on!" he says. Later Dax hears him say, "This is insanity!"

Back at camp Graz Tak rifles through Vestril's backpack. He takes a few gold coins and a handful of gems.

The next day Fluck spots a smaller herd (one hundred head) of wild horses roaming free. As Vestril moves off to investigate Blant Farrand decides to put distance between him and the annoying elf. They ride hard for two leagues until they hit a paved road that heads north and south. Dax tells the party of Vestril's night time activities which spurs them all to put greater distance between themselves and the Khulan.

Unbelievably ahead of them sits Vestril on his horse. "He has travelled six miles in five minutes!" Blant tells them.

That night they make camp just off the road. Once again Vestril sneaks away with Dax close behind. Yet again Vestril speaks into some hidden object he holds; "This is impossible!" he is heard to say.

It is only the next morning that Dax notices something significant about Vestril. Quietly he announces that the elf has not eaten anything during his time with them; nor has a drink past his lips. Blant and the others slowly come to the same realisation. At Hagen's farm Vestril ate nothing. When four farmers on the road (with carts full of produce for market) share lunch by the roadside Dax takes the opportunity to offer bread and water to the elf. Vestril declines and the party's suspicions grow even further.

Later that day the travellers hear a bell ringing in front of them. Ten dark-robed Malakarian priests head north; they stop the party and question them, paying particular attention to Aimaris. The priestess ensures that her symbol of Elena (a silver necklace) is visible to the Malakarians. The situation becomes heated but it is Vestril who steps in to fend off the priests.

He opens his cloak to reveal twin swords each with ruby pommels. The Malakarians greet the elf with sudden recognition and fear; they are soon making their apologies and move on. With every yard Blant Farrand cannot contain his suspicion. Vestril is moody and irritable but Blant awaits the right moment.

He casts *dispel magic* on Vestril and launches an attack on the elf. Aravan, Dax, Graz Tak, Aimaris and Daimar all leap at the elf. Vestril is swift to counterattack; what little advantage they had disappears when he too casts a *dispel magic* – this time Blant feels the drain as all his protective spells (including *stoneskin*) vanish.

Vestril is surrounded and outnumbered but it does not appear to worry the elf whose reflexes are sharp and swift. Graz Tak drives the blade of Hellath into his opponent's stomach, a crushing blow, but no blood erupts from the wound. Instead the stench of

rotting flesh and maggots explode from the gaping hole. The elf's sorcerous disguise flickers momentarily to reveal a decomposing skeletal figure, a corpse animated with the dread black eyes of pure evil.

The elf mask returns and Vestril is able to turn aside the first wave of attacks in preparation for a second spell. Dax stabs the creature through the eye socket and a putrid grey splash of brain fills the air in a cloud of sulphurous dust. Aravan moves in to deliver a well timed backhand strike with the blade of Menace, a powerful and unstoppable strike, she decapitates the creature and they watch it's head sail ten feet away to land with a dull thud on the grassy plain.

The sorcery of disguise is now gone. The ruby-hilted blades are no more than rusted, chipped steel. The princely clothes have gone and only now does Blant sense a sorcerer...he casts *jump* to somersault back out of combat. Morikand casts *glitterdust* to aid his companions and Aimaris joins in with a *prayer*.

And still the undead horror fights on.

Graz Tak closes murderously on the headless opponent. With all of his strength, with perfect timing, he crashes his magical longsword through the exposed ribcage of the former Vestril and the blade exits from the other side taking bone, rotten flesh and putrid sinew with it.

They heave a sigh of relief as the corpse lies still. Yu and Aimaris douse the corpse with oil and Daimar prepares a torch.

Graz emits a strangled cry. He clutches his left side and tries in vain to throw off the studded leather armour that protects him. Blood drains from Aimaris' face and the priestess is first at her stricken friend. She realises that the gems he took from Vestril's backpack were not gems; instead they were a type of undead beetle that now burrows under Graz's flesh.

Time is critical. As Daimar helps Graz divest himself Aimaris lays her hand on his stomach to feel the creature's progress. She casts *dismissal* and the pain ceases instantly. Aimaris embraces Graz fiercely, her eyes moist with tears. Grateful that the pain has gone Graz kisses her fondly.

Next day they continue south out of the meadow. The countryside begins to feel more urban, the frequency of villages and farms increase. Without the aid of maps it is difficult to pinpoint their location but Dax – a skilled navigator and cartographer – suggests they are within two days ride of the citadel of Malakaor itself; the Nyrnian seat of power. Aimaris shudders; "I can *feel* the power even from her...it is as though something watches us from a distance."

Dax takes them in the direction of their new goal; the port of Isiris in the south. A farmer offers them food and lodging but Blant settles for information. The farmer tells them that two dark haired men passed by the day before asking about elves...

Later Blant Farrand hands their newest companion – Morikand – the Soul Compass, a strange magical item with the ability to find souls. Blant himself has not been able to

get the item to work but in the hands of the talented Morikand it begins to behave strangely. When he writes Blant's name on parchment and concentrates the compass moves in the direction of the sorcerer. "So be it," Blant says, "it's yours Morikand."

Blood and Honour

Cy 4850 – Novan 4th – 6th

The party continue south towards the port of Isirin. Blant Farrand sends his *familiar*, Fluck, ahead to scout. Before long the bird finds an encampment full of campfires and tents, an outlaw community in the wilds. Women, children and livestock inhabit the encampment with their men.

Dax and Graz decide to head in to take a look. Once they meet the outlaw chief, Berosta, they quickly decide to invite the rest of the party into the camp. Berosta feeds them a warm stew and they feel at ease with the outlaw who tells a tale of Nyrnian discontentment at the influence of Malakar in their society. They appear more like conscientious objectors than real outlaws, forced to live rough instead of in the bosom of a dark god.

Despite the relative closeness of the capital Malakor the outlaws are rarely troubled by King Gralnadar's men, Berosta takes this as a sign that all is not well between Malakar and the king.

As the party depart Dax places one hundred gold crowns in Berosta's hand. The outlaw is astonished but thanks the young explorer. Graz Tak also donates twenty gold crowns to Berosta's wife before the party moves on once more.

After two hours Blant Farrand notices that he cannot see through Fluck's eyes. He reins in the horses to concentrate on his *familiar*. In the distance Dax notices horses approaching quickly; so quickly in fact they seem to glide over the ground, skimming the grass like a stone skimming over water. He notices Fluck flies on the shoulder of the lead rider.

Blant casts *glitterdust* in preparation, Graz unfolds and casts *haste* whilst Morikand casts *invisibility*. The riders approach and the tension mounts. The lead rider is a striking woman, an elf of unearthly beauty. The sorcerers sense a powerful magic surge as the three elves canter up to the party. The woman's horse is powerful and bears the intelligent eyes of a noble steed...it too emits a powerful magical surge.

The flanking riders appear menacing and heavily armed, their own mounts have wings tucked into the flanks. They are Pegasus.

"I am Queen Jirena of the Khulandir," the woman intones. "These two are my personal bodyguards Girawien and Ethaniel. I come for the soul of my son, Vestril."

Blant regards his stunned companions and offers regret for the death of Vestril. The queen smiles at him.

“He was a difficult child, seduced by evil power; power that consumed him in the end. Know that I bear you no ill will for his death, there were times when I would have happily strangled him myself, but this is a matter of blood and I must recover his heart.”

The queen tells them that members of the Khulan royal line have their souls encased and protected in a diamond that is placed within the heart itself. She wishes to reclaim it and be on her way. Blant informs her where the body was burnt adding that they did not see any such gem.

Dax fidgets in the background, the tension is palpable, his mistrust of the elven queen is clear to see. Suddenly, without warning, the tension within him bursts out and he tries to quickly release a blade and attack her. Graz reacts instantly to his companion’s plight, his dagger is out quickly and he slashes at the queen, narrowly missing her face. Blant is also quick to react, he casts *dispel magic* at Jirena but the spell fails against the powerful sorcery of the Khulan monarch.

But it is Aravan who opens the first wound. Her deadly blade of Menace carves a line in the queen’s stomach, crimson blood spills out over the grey stallion. Her bodyguards leap to her defence but with a single gesture she stops them dead in their tracks.

“Enough of this!” she bellows, the harsh power within her voice clearly audible for miles. “I will not have any more blood spilt this day!”

The momentum cannot be easily stopped. As the three elves hesitate Aravan strikes at the queen. Her instant reactions catch the wrist holding the blade but Aravan drags a dagger with her other hand and thrusts. Jirena grabs this wrist also, her slender frame belying the raw strength of the elven queen.

To her bodyguards she says; “Hurt them!”

Girawien and Ethaniel are released from their verbal restraint and spin to attack the gathered party. Jirena negligently tosses aside Aravan and launches a *dispel magic* at Blant Farrand. His magical protections collapse under the forceful power of the queen’s sorcery. Girawien turns to Graz Tak but his three rapid, artful strokes are avoided with equal aplomb. Ethaniel wields twin longswords and goes after Dax, who tries to stab the queen’s steed.

Jirena rips out a katana but Aravan is on her once more. The tenacious warrior cuts under the queen’s defences once more a delivers a staggering blow that opens a twelve inch gash in the queen’s abdomen. Blood gushes once more and Jirena retaliates swiftly. With the katana spewing fire she slashes across Aravan’s throat and the party watch in horror as her head sails back onto the grass.

Simultaneously Ethaniel is too quick for Dax. The young man is too slow to avoid a vicious thrust and is quickly run through; he falls into a pool of his own blood. Almost instantly the realisation hits them that they are outclassed. Daimar is already running from the fight, Blant casts *jump* and somersaults back out of combat.

Aimaris, the Elenian priestess, stands in front of her lover Graz and implores him to stop. As Yu kneels down to pray Ethaniel lashes out and decapitates her. Morikand casts *invisibility* upon himself and flees the combat.

Girawien launches himself at Aimaris but Graz pushes her away just in time, he engages the warrior hand-to-hand. Girawien is fast, skilful and powerful but Graz trades knife work with him with equal skill. The thief ducks under an attack and drives the dagger into Girawien's face. He carves a crooked scar from cheek to temple and the elf recoils angrily, spitting blood from the awful wound.

Angrily Girawien turns his attention on the pleading priestess; with a grim smile he strikes her down efficiently. Graz gasps in horror but from somewhere deep down his instinct for survival kicks in. Knowing that Ethaniel closes on him he *flees* combat, rolling away into the shadows before hurrying away, Aimaris' death hurting him more than any of the elven blades.

Queen Jirena points a finger at Morikand. Despite the *invisibility* the young sorcerer realises that to resist would be futile. He turns to confront the queen who gives him a task as payment for his continued survival. "Bring Blant Farrand to me!" she says.

Blant hides in *wraithform* at a nearby crag and is joined by two more of the survivors, Daimar and Graz. When Morikand finds Blant with the Soul Compass the sorcerer materialises and decides running from the queen would be futile. With Morikand beside him Blant Farrand walks in to meet the queen and her two bodyguards. He casts *stoneskin* on both before they move towards the queen.

Graz Tak however sneaks in nearby, unseen in the shadows, a bitter taste in his mouth and a burning rage in his mind. He knocks an arrow in the longbow and gets into position.

Blant stands before queen Jirena. "You owe me a debt of blood," she says, "for the life of my son I require a service from you. Find and return Vestril's Heart within seven days and your debt will be repaid. Fail and I will hunt you down forever until your soul is crushed and everything you hold dear is in ruins."

"Very well," Blant says. "I will return here within seven days."

At that moment Graz Tak launches an arrow. Before Girawien can react the shaft punctures his left eye; he collapses like a felled oak.

Ethaniel draws his weapons but the queen stops him. "It was a blood debt; Girawien slew his woman...the debt is now repaid." To Blant she says: "Go now Blant Farrand and bring back Vestril's Heart...but if you ever stray within the lands of the Khulan I will kill you."

When the queen departs Blant gathers his remaining companions. He casts *polymorph other* on Daimar, Morikand and Graz, turning them into eagles he leads them back to where they slew prince Vestril.

At the pile of ash that marked the fight with Vestril two travellers have made camp. Zashir, an Eldrow hypnotist, and Hokaru, a Darkland sorcerer, are astonished by the sudden transformation of four large birds into people. Zashir quickly demonstrates his talent by waving his hand in front of Blant's face and hypnotising him. It soon becomes clear that Vestril's Heart is gone...Blant is eager to find it, the threat of queen Jirena hangs uneasily over his head.

Morikand uses the Soul Compass to discover the gem moves west. He [polymorphs](#) into a hawk and between them the party share the two newcomer's horses. Before long Blant's hawk-like vision spots a lone rider searching through a pile of ten dead bodies. He recognises the man as the Nyrnian soldier Ymric Talovic.

Blant introduces the rest of the party to the soldier. Ymric explains that he searches for a necromancer called Ashadrir, a dark Bretonian who slew some of his men and set the corpses against him. He was carrying a large gem. Blant is convinced that the two incidents are connected and Ymric adds his weight to the quest by heading off to find horses for the rest of the group. "I'm coming with you," he says.

Into the night the party travel with Blant (now as a bat) scouring the landscape. A used pentacle of summoning is found, bowls of smouldering incense still aglow. Upon investigation Morikand feels a deathly cold shadow all over him, his strength sapped by the undead creature. Eventually Graz drives the blade of Hellath through it twice and it vanishes from whence it came...

The Necromancer's Ring

cy 4850 - Novan 7th - 10th

The party continue west after Ashadrir, the necromancer who has taken Vestril's Heart. In order to catch the thief Blant Farrand drives his companions overnight, forgoing sleep in his desperate attempt to return it to the queen of Khulandir.

Three hours after midnight they come across the sleepy village of Almar. Blant [polymorphs](#) back into human form and enters the stables of the only tavern. The stables are quiet and they discover a good horse (possibly belonging to Ashadrir). Hokaru casts [detect undead](#) and detects one inside. Blant then casts [protection from evil 10' radius](#), [stoneskin](#) on Hokaru and Zashir, before they all tentatively enter.

In the taproom is a snoring man, his face slumped against the table. Zashir investigates and discovers he has been magically slept; Blant suspects he is an obstacle placed in the room to slow them down - or to make a noise. Graz reaches for a scroll of [glitterdust](#) and casts it before leading Blant and Hokaru upstairs. On the landing they are confronted by an animated skeleton with shield and longsword. No sooner does the creature descend the stairs to attack than Blant casts [web](#) to secure it to the wooden walls. Graz ascends and smashes it into a pile of bones with a couple of deadly strikes with the blade of Hellath.

Up they go and encounter a shadowy wraith on the second landing. It cannot resist the [protection from evil](#) on Blant and is forced out of the window and away. At one of three doors on the top level they can see a bright light flooding under the gap and

through the keyhole. Hokaru is convinced that undead are beyond the door. Graz Tak expertly picks the lock and the three companions prepare to launch an attack.

They are not prepared, however, for the horror beyond the door. The light emanates from a tall figure in front of them; a sulphurous, winged devil with crimson-red eyes and razor-sharp talons. Ashadrir the necromancer sits at the back of the room on the edge of the pentacle he has created. "Kill them Ysurka!" he bellows before casting a [finger of death](#) at Blant Farrand. The Jandraki is hit by the full force of the spell but survives with only minor damage.

Hokaru realises that he must stop Ashadrir but cannot get past the looming devil; he draws a light crossbow and aims at the necromancer. Graz Tak slams the blade of Hellath into the creature's side and a gout of green blood erupts from the wound. Ysurka redoubles its efforts to grab for the intruders but it is unable due to Blant's [protection](#). Ashadrir realises this and hurls a [dispel magic](#) at Blant, who resists it.

Hokaru shoots Ashadrir in the right leg and the sorcerer squeals in pain. Graz hammers a second blow at Ysurka and the devil bleeds anew. Blant Farrand casts [monster summoning II](#) and invokes a mongrelman...a club wielding warrior he sends in at Ashadrir. The mongrelman hits Ashadrir across the arm but is unable to stop him casting a second [dispel magic](#) at Blant - once again the Jandraki stands firm against the magical assault.

When Graz strikes a third time Ysurka reels back. Hokaru hits Ashadrir in the chest with a second bolt as Blant casts [wraithform](#) on himself. The devil turns on the summoner suddenly, whatever binding Ashadrir had now broken. Taloned hands grab the throat of the Bretonian and pin him forcefully against the ceiling...but Ashadrir does not have time to choke. Graz Tak caves in the skull of the necromancer and the fight is over.

The devilish Ysurka disappears instantly and quiet returns once more to the sleepy tavern. All the while Zashir has spent the time waking up the snoring man whilst Morikand looks on from a distance. Once the fight is over they rejoin their companions in the bloodstained room.

Blant Farrant finds Vestril's Heart on the body but a [repulsion](#) spell stops him picking it up. He casts [dispel magic](#) to break the spell and - with a huge sigh of relief - pockets the ruby gemstone. From the dead body they take a couple of daggers, a magical cloak and a curious ring that eventually finds its way onto Morikand's finger. It is called Illeum's Rite, a powerful magical band created by one of the world's leading necromancers and emperor of Bretonia; Illeum Runesabre. As soon as Morikand wears it Blant senses a sharp increase in the power of his companion.

With four hours of darkness left the travellers move out into the wilderness to rest under the stars. During what's left of the night Blant and Hokaru create and swap scrolls ([jump](#) and [detect undead](#)) whilst Morikand recovers strength lost to an undead shadow. At first light Blant Farrand heads back to the rendezvous designated by queen Jirena where he hopes to return the soul of her dead son.

It is during this journey that Morikand becomes aware of a little more of the ring's power. He senses ten Bretonian warriors close by that seem to be shadowing the party; possibly following the ring or under orders to protect the wielder. He reaches out to them (with his mind) and once the connection is made the Bretonian warriors acknowledge him as master.

That night Hokaru cannot sleep. "There are undead out there," he says, his newly found necromantic skills serving him well.

"They belong to the ring," Morikand says cryptically, "possibly guardians...I seem to have complete control over them."

The following day Blant Farrand reaches the location where Vestril (and Dax and Aravan) fell. He makes camp and they can do nothing but wait. He and Hokaru swap more spells in the meantime.

At night Morikand senses a Bretonian voice in his mind; "There is a figure stalking you master...he tries to get near."

"Bring him to me."

Shortly after four burly, heavily armed Bretonians manhandle a tall figure into the camp, a hood over his head and muffled protests can be heard. Zashir rips off the hood to reveal Ethaniel, the bodyguard of queen Jirena. Blant has him untied and Morikand dismisses the Bretonians though half of his mind is on the circle of undead protection out in the darkness. Blant negligently tosses the gem at the elf's feet...Ethaniel wastes no time in picking it up and wrapping it in the folds of his cloak.

"We are now even," Blant tells the elven bodyguard. "Tell your queen I have done as she asked."

Ethaniel sneers and leaves, but over his shoulder he has a few barbed words for Blant; "She has a sting in the tail for you sorcerer."

Fluck follows the elf as he makes his way north. Through the [familiar's](#) eyes Blant Farrand sees Ethaniel tap the gemstone with his sword and appear to speak into (or through) it. It is only then that Morikand receives a mental communication from the Bretonians; "There are three hundred elven archers closing in on us!"

Blant acts quickly. He casts [polymorph other](#) on Graz (owl) and himself and shares out [invisibility](#) and [fly](#) spells on the rest of the party. As they fly over the oncoming Khulandir archers it is clear that Ethaniel's treachery will lead to the death of the undead and the Bretonians. After one hour Blant descends (as the fly spells wear off) and on foot they go in search of a farmstead to buy horses.

"We head for Isirin," he says as the weather draws in and rain begins to fall...

Isirin

Novan 11th – 15th

The chill in the air and the light rain on their backs herald the onset of winter in southern Nyrn. Blant Farrand sends his *familiar* – Fluck – out ahead to scout. The mountains to the south now dominate their view as they make their way toward the city of Isirin, Nyrn's southernmost settlement. On the road Morikand experiments with Illeum's Rite, the ring captured from the dead necromancer Ashadrir. He fails to summon any more undead guardians.

Next morning at breakfast Blant creates a scroll of *protection from normal missiles* and hands it to Graz Tak. They join an intersection in the road, to the left lies Malakor and straight on lies Isirin. A short way on the southern road Fluck spots a Darklander on foot. To their amazement it is Daimar, the sea captain that brought them to Nyrn.

Blant Farrand is immediately suspicious. He senses an almost imperceptible magical presence about Daimar (a surge that was not there before). Morikand also suspects the Darklander but his experiments with the Soul Compass prove inconclusive. Blant decides to talk with Daimar and offers him a *stoneskin*. But he casts a *dispel magic* on the Darklander and the magical disguise crumbles to reveal the true identity of the traveller – a craggy-faced elf who realises instantly that he has been found out.

The elf rips out a longsword and launches himself at the party. Graz Tak intervenes and smashes the blade of Hellath into his face. Blood erupts from the elf's forehead and he staggers back in pain. Zashir the hypnotist waves a dagger in front of his face; "Watch the blade! Watch the blade!" he says. Astonishingly the elf is drawn to the blade and is held firm in the grip of the hypnotist's skill.

Blant casts *web* but only manages to secure a left ankle. Morikand lashes out a dangerous kick into the elf's groin before Graz Tak's second strike splits the skull of his opponent and the elf is dead.

The party's attention is quickly grabbed by a hissing sound from the copse, an odorous stench emanates from the open skull as a yellow vaporous creature rises from the slain elf. It resembles a floating cloak but they all realise it is the manifestation of a naked soul – and it wants a vessel to overcome.

Graz Tak takes out a scroll of *protection from evil 10' radius* and as soon as it is cast the creature is forced away from him. The rest of the party stand close and the evil soul cannot breach the unseen circle of protection. Blant Farrand then casts *control undead* and the creature is forced to do his bidding.

"Talk!" Blant urges the wraith.

"Let me live," the wraith says, "let me find a body or I will die!"

"Who sent you?" Morikand asks.

The creature flinches at the demonologist's words; "So you are one of the masters of the Nine Hells, one of Illeum's generals in the south. My master Ethaniel captured your companion (Daimar) and forced me to consume his soul and seek you out. Once

I found you I was to travel in disguise until the moment was right – until I could slay you all whilst you slept."

Blant shakes his head in disgust as they watch the soul wither and die...it crumbles into dust.

Through the hills they are being watched by a couple of outlaws but ignore them and drive on into the seaport of Isirin – they arrive well into the night and give false names to the guards. The city is busy even at night. The inns and taverns are packed to overflowing but they find a nice enough place run by a man called Bilic. Zashir hypnotises the stable boy to treat their horses well. The taproom is a throng of people and Bilic offers them a dingy cellar room – the last room available – before Graz Tak slips some gold into his hand. Bilic warms to them and provides a better room on the second floor.

That night Blant writes Graz a scroll of *protection from evil 10' radius*.

The city is growing rapidly because of the trade brought by the Bretonians and the Drenai. Such is the wealth these two nations are bringing to Isirin they have their own separate enclaves (which are policed by Drenai and Bretonian troops respectively). At breakfast the party discuss business ventures as they entertain the idea of buying property in Isirin and setting up a service for those who cannot read or write. Bilic informs them that only Nyrnians can own property (unless it is in one of the enclaves) or those who have the backing of the Malakarians.

After breakfast the party negotiate an extended stay at Bilic's place (he is delighted) and Morikand returns to the cellar room that he has hired for the duration. He spends most of the day removing furniture and scrubbing the stone floors – as preparation for this cleaning he launched a *fireball* into the cellar room and after putting out the flaming door the disinfecting began in earnest.

Meanwhile Blant heads out into the market to buy provisions for scroll making whilst Graz Tak takes Zashir (now his apprentice) to find the guild of thieves. In the dingiest, darkest corner of Isirin they come to the Crow Bar, Graz makes a few secret hand signals to the doorman and is given access to the tavern. Inside he quickly finds the guildmaster, a Nyrnian called Retch.

Graz's first action is to push one hundred gold coins across the table to the guildmaster who is shocked and surprised though extremely grateful. Retch tells Graz that he is known – the reputation of Graz Tak has reached the spies of the Drenai enclave. Retch tells them that Gallor Galliath is the spymaster who runs the Drenai enclave, a man reputedly to be the most hated in all of Drenai...even the king does not like the man, which is probably why he is so far away from the homeland.

Next stop for Graz Tak and his apprentice is the temple of Malakar. The thief realises that if they are to own property they need to do so with the backing of the temple or it will not come to pass. Retch gives Graz a scarf that will identify him to an operative inside the temple and help gain access to the high priest.

The temple resembles a great open plan academy. There are stalls, traders, philosophers and politicians – a small citadel within a city. In the centre of the vast structure lies the altar – surrounded by two concentric circles – Graz can sense the sheer power of the stone from over a hundred yards away. Soon they are given audience to a tall Nyrnian called Arik Warslayer, the High Priest of Malakar in Isirin. An imposing, impressive man Arik takes them on a leisurely stroll through a series of manicured gardens.

The High Priest knows of Graz and his companions. Once Graz tells them what they want Arik becomes more generous and offers to help almost immediately. "I will certainly help you, Graz Tak, I will ensure that you and your companions become landowners in this citadel...but I need you to persuade them to talk to me...I have a task for you"

Graz is uncertain but is further reassured by the High Priest. "I do not expect you to drop to your knees and worship Malakar, I am not a stupid man Graz Tak. I require a service from you and will pay handsomely for it. Convince your friends to help me and I will make it worth your while. Step into the circle Graz Tak, breach the first layer and let Malakar see into your heart." Graz Tak and Zashir feel the awesome power as they approach the altar stone; they take tentative steps into the outer circle of Malakar's realm. Both men lose the next five minutes of their lives; when they wake they find themselves by the exit, the High Priest smiles at them as they leave.

Back at their room Graz reveals his exploits to Blant, Morikand and Zashir. Initially Blant is apoplectic at the idea but Morikand shrugs; "I for one will listen to what the priest has to say." Blant resigns himself for a journey to the temple of Malakar.

Next morning Blant Farrand, Zashir, Graz Tak and Morikand are given a private audience with Arik Warslayer. The High Priest will not tell them the nature of the task he has for them and enters negotiations regarding their reward for such an undertaking. "The nature of the task I have requires discretion – I cannot have the temple implicated in any way. I will commune with my god on your demands."

"I require protection of my soul," Blant says, "and the ability of resurrection."

"I require magic resistance," Zashir adds.

"For me its permanent protection from evil," Graz says.

Arik Warhammer turns to Morikand. The demonologist says; "I require nothing other than the good grace of your god." Arik Warslayer's eyes widen and he goes to the altar to pray to Malakar.

A short time later Arik returns. His face is troubled but he soon regains his composure. "My master agrees to **all** of your demands...if you accept this task he will grant your wishes.

"Will you do my bidding?" The question hangs in the air...

Arik's Quest

Novan 16th - 20th

The party are in the private chambers of Arik Warslayer, the High Priest of Malakar in Isirin. Hokaru casts [detect undead](#) and discovers one close by, although he cannot see it. Arik turns to Blant Farrand and Graz Tak and urges them to swear an oath to take on the quest he has – as yet – not revealed. Despite misgivings from Hokaru the two men accept the High Priest's offer.

"King Gralnadar has been on the throne for eighteen years," Arik begins, "and I am sure you are aware of the tension between the monarchists and those of the Faith. During his reign he has had three queens and countless consorts but to date not one of them has borne him a child.

"That is until now. There is one woman – his concubine – who is with child. She is called Jaelana. Apart from myself, Malakar and the king this knowledge is secret, so you can understand my caution at this point. If this child is born it will invigorate the monarchists and lead to a rise of nationalism that will not serve Malakar well. I for one would be happy if the king remained childless and the line ended with him.

"Jaelana's family live here. In fact this very night she will land at the remote southern wharf and gather some essential provisions before returning to Malakor and the safety of Gralnadar's palace. Once there she will be beyond my reach.

"The task is simple. I want Jaelana to disappear and **never** be found. Complete this task successfully and you will have your reward..."

Blant leads the party to reconnoitre the southern wharf. It is early evening and – at a quiet location – he casts [rope trick](#) and they all climb into the extra-dimensional space to talk tactics. Whilst within it he creates two more [polymorph self](#) scrolls; they plan to try to ambush the small boat before it lands at the wharf. By changing into large fish (and other such creatures) their aim is to get her into the water and capture her.

Blant sends Fluck – his [familiar](#) – out to sea as he and his companions take to the water. Before long Fluck spots a small boat, six oarsmen and a light below deck. Convinced this is the vessel Blant Farrand launches a [fireball](#) at it. The sorcerous flame smashes a gaping wound in the side of the small vessel, damage that will sink it within minutes. As the sailors scurry for the shore a large Drenai warrior appears on deck. He hurls a couple of large swords and sighs as he dispenses with a two-headed greataxe.

"We must go master Luckwarden!" a sailor says. The large warrior swims towards the shore with his companions.

Morikand, Graz Tak and Hokaru see that there is no woman on board...they have attacked the wrong boat! They head immediately for the southern wharf. Meanwhile Blant Farrand (now a large shark) decides to try to bite the Drenai warrior and drag him down to his death. But the large man proves a tough opponent, even in the water he is able to deliver three blows with a dagger to the shark's snout (unhurt because of [stoneskin](#)). Blant gives up and heads back to the harbour.

When Morikand and the others arrive at the southern wharf a rowing boat with two sailors, two warriors and a beautiful Nyrnian woman is securing ropes to the secluded wharfside. Morikand lands as a seagull on the boat as Hokaru positions himself a short distance away on dry land as a human. Graz Tak is also in human form in the water unseen, at an opportune moment he reads a scroll of [fireball](#) and the small vessel quickly turns into an inferno.

Both sailors dive back into the water as Jaelana and the two warriors are on deck. Hokaru casts [melf's acid arrow](#) at one of the guards before unleashing the katana and stepping into the fray. Morikand tries to grapple Jaelana but the young woman shrugs him off initially. The first tall Nyrnian guard rushes out to meet Hokaru angrily but the Darklander is ready; he ducks under a wild swing before slashing upwards to spill the brains of the warrior all over the harbour floor.

In the distance Blant sees the flare of Graz's [fireball](#), turns into a hawk and races back to the fight.

Graz Tak slashes with the blade of Hellath at the remaining warrior but his attempt to *flee* is not good; he trips and lies prone at the warrior's feet. The Nyrnian crashes a sword down onto the thief's head but it bounces harmlessly off him ([stoneskin](#)). Graz uses the man's astonishment and fear and is quickly on his feet. He drives the longsword through his eyeball and blood is spilt once more.

Jaelana sprints away with Morikand after her. Blant Farrand's keen hawk eyes spot them and he lands along their projected course. Now Graz Tak, the fastest sprinter in the party and the man with knowledge of the alleyways, is also ahead of the frightened young woman. A simple leg out trips her, she crashes into a wall and when she rises to her feet the four men have her trapped in a dim backyard...there is no escape!

Morikand casts [dispel magic](#) on her and whatever protections she carries are gone. "Who are you?" she says. Blant tries to [polymorph](#) her into a rabbit but fails twice. Instead they gag her, bind her hands and feet and Graz casts a scroll of [invisibility](#) onto her to secure her even further. Finally Morikand reaches for the Soul Compass and asks it: "Show me the heir to the Nyrnian throne." Incredibly the needle spins rapidly round and raises the question that they have been lied to by the High Priest. Blant casts [rope trick](#) and decides that it would be safer (and more discreet) to have the conversation within the safety of the spell.

Within the [rope trick](#) the party hatch a plan for the woman Jaelana. Morikand is insistent that they return to their innhouse where he will perform *the necessary rituals*. Two hours after midnight they find themselves back at Bilic's innhouse where Morikand creates his first ever pentacle. The rest of the party stay away as he prepares (with the woman inside the pentacle) to summon a demon.

Morikand Bitchpiss draws upon the power of demonology and through a portal drags a demon into the pentacle. He immediately casts a [binding](#) to control it. Despite Jaelana's protests he then binds the rat-like creature to the unborn foetus. Instantly the ritual is complete and all four men haul her out to the stables.

Blant casts *polymorph other* and turns her into a grey mare, the kind of horse that would blend in on the plains and grasslands of Nyrn.

Blant and the others rest until noon. When they feel they have enough strength they gather their horses (Blant rides Jaelana) and head out into the wilds. At the northern gatehouse they see the legendary Drenai warrior Drusor Luckwarden arguing with a captain of the Nyrnian guard. He is unaware that the man who tried to drown him hours earlier passes...Blant wears a wide grin as they make for the plains.

Two days later they come across a herd of six hundred wild Nyrnian horses. Blant Farrand frees Jaelana and she gallops quickly to be with the rest of the herd.

"What now?" Morikand asks.

Blant casts an eye south. "Now we claim our reward..."

Demons

Novan 21st - 26th

Blant Farrand leads the party back from the edge of the Nyrn Meadow where they have just set free the concubine Jaelana. The quest from Arik now complete they turn south once more to return to the city of Isirin. A light covering of snow descends as winter creeps across Nyrn.

Two days later Blant Farrand, Morikand, Graz Tak, Hokaru and Zashir enter the temple as hordes of worshippers filter out after morning prayers. Before long Arik Warslayer – the high priest – greets them and takes them into the security of his private chambers. The high priest knows instantly what they have done and is pleased. He congratulates Blant on his ingenuity in dealing with Jaelana.

He moves first to Hokaru; "I know you wanted no reward young man but since you risked your life for Malakar it is only fitting you be paid for your troubles. Malakar shares your hatred of undead and it is said that his most joyous time was when he rid Rosengrad – the holy city – of the undead houses. Whilst there he found this..." Arik hands the necromancer an exquisite shirt (magical). "It was created and worn by the legendary Archibald of Rosen...it is now yours. Take it."

Then to Morikand; "You also played a major part in the Jaelana affair and asked for nothing in return...but my master is a benevolent god and asked me to give you this..." Arik hands the demonologist a small stoppered vial. Morikand senses the demon within. "Remove the stopper and you will release **Vohaas**, a powerful demon from the Plane of Conjunction. This creature is the only one that has ever wounded the master in combat. Have a care though, Vohaas is cunning and will want to escape his prison by whatever means possible."

Then to Zashir; "You asked for magic resistance young man. Step forward to the altar and Malakar will grant your wishes."

Zashir strides confidently into the inner sanctum of Malakar but is unprepared for the sheer power there. His body is battered by a force unseen, he wilts under the power of Malakar and Zashir falls dead. A priest retrieves him from the altar and lays him at the feet of the horrified party.

Then to Blant; "I suppose now would be a good time to give you this..." Arik hands him a delicate parchment. "It is a *scroll of resurrection* written by Malakar himself. You are the only man able to cast it but you must be careful; even the gods cannot use this power without consequence. Unlike other scrolls this one has unlimited uses."

To Graz Tak; "Step into the inner sanctum young thief..."

Graz Tak stands where he stood days earlier, the same force that killed Zashir batters his body but Graz Tak is made of sterner stuff. As he leaves the altar he has been granted a permanent [*protection from evil*](#).

Blant Farrand unwraps the *scroll of resurrection* and casts it. The universe groans under the power in that room, Grayhawk shudders at such magic. Every sorcerer within a thousand miles knows something profound has occurred. Further still each deity – wherever they are – stop to hear the universe cry out in pain...each one focuses their mind on one man...

Zashir blinks and breathes once more!

After breakfast the party split up and head into Isirin. Zashir finds a school in the merchant quarters, a place where the wealthy send their sons and daughters to be educated. He looks for a young woman...

Meanwhile Blant Farrand investigates the Mages Guild within the temple complex but after a while returns to the room in Bilic's tavern. Hokaru, Graz and Morikand join them in the tavern but later Morikand descends to his cellar / pentacle room to make preparations for a summoning.

Zashir returns after finding a suitable young woman and hypnotising her (she is to come to the tavern and find Morikand).

Later that day the young woman reaches the tavern and is shown downstairs to where Morikand waits. He sits her down in the centre of the pentacle and begins to chant. Through glazed eyes she watches him, unaware of the impending danger, unaware that she is merely a bargaining piece for his summoning.

The instant Morikand completes the summoning a dark shape materialises gradually. The demonologist realises that he has summoned something monstrous, a massive soul beyond his skill to handle. The shape before him unfolds like the petals of a dark flower, a creature with ten arms and an insistent gaze.

Meanwhile upstairs in the taproom Blant and Hokaru know instantly that something powerful is in the tavern. Their ale sours instantly, it rots within seconds to be replaced by a tankard full of squirming maggots. The rest of the drink in the room is similarly spoiled and Bilic faces a choir of protest against his ale. But Blant, Zashir

and Hokaru leave quickly. Swarms of flies are now present and the stench reminds them of rotting flesh. Others take a similar path and Bilic's tavern empties quickly. Only Graz Tak remains...he is curious to see what is happening in the cellar.

In the cellar the stone oozes vomit but Morikand has no time to even notice. The demon is upon him with astonishing speed and power, swords rain down on him and it is only due to the [stoneskin](#) that he survives the first assault. He reaches into his pocket and unstoppers the vial Arik Warslayer gave him.

He senses a dark shape behind him. The figure passes and with a dark blade unleashes itself at the ten-armed monster. Vohaas moves with incredible speed. In a blink of an eye he has cut three of the beast's arms from the torso and almost contemptuously reaches up to pluck out the eyes of the demon. The ten-armed one flails wildly in its death throes, an errant sword slices the young woman in two as Vohaas turns his attention to Morikand Bitchpiss.

Vohaas has a commanding presence but nothing prepares the young demonologist for the power of his gaze. Morikand knows that if he looks this creature in the eyes he will be finished. With a monumental effort he manages to replace the stopper. Vohaas vanishes instantly. At that precise moment Graz enters the vomit-stained room but the stench is like a barrier. Graz eventually leaves as Morikand goes upstairs to clean up. The infestation of flies and maggots gets worse. The very wood is rotting at an accelerated rate and even the stone crumbles in places.

Blant, Hokaru and Zashir retire to the safety of a nearby tavern where many Nyrnians stand to watch the spectacle. A hundred Nyrnian soldiers create a cordon around the decaying tavern but when some of them fail to even get through the front door (they are violently sick) they call for a priest.

Minutes later Arik Warslayer is on the scene; the Nyrnian troops are replaced by temple guards (elite soldiers trained at the fighting school within the temple complex). Unlike the soldiers he is able to enter the tavern without vomiting, in fact he appears calm as he talks to Morikand. "There will be a thorough investigation," he tells the demonologist, "the results of which will find you innocent and absolve you of any blame Morikand. The demon you summoned was the arch ruler of the Plane of Pestilence by the way...if this tavern is not properly quarantined the city will die within weeks."

Morikand leaves the tavern.

Over the next three hours Arik Warslayer and his retinue of priests cleanse the tavern by burning it to the ground. The fire is sorcerous, able to burn stone, and for the rest of the afternoon the Nyrnians are treated to an impressive bonfire.

Whilst in the new tavern the party are joined by a Drenai called Touros. As he talks to Hokaru it becomes clear that the man has a message for Blant Farrand. Zashir subtly hypnotises the Drenai to tell the truth and – incredibly – Touros tells them everything. It appears that the head of the Drenai enclave, Gallor Galliath, wants to speak to Blant urgently. The party suspect it is something to do with Blants recent acquisition. They

also discover that Drusor Luckwarden is here in Nyrn and he has brought along most of his mercenaries.

Morikand goes alone into a room upstairs they have rented. He draws another pentacle and summons an imp-like demon. He casts [binding](#) and forces it into a throwing dagger.

Hokaru, Graz Tak, Morikand and Zashir decide to go into the Drenai enclave and see what Gallor Galliath has to say. Blant casts a [rope trick](#) inside the room and clambers into it. Once there they sense they are being watched but this is nothing unusual; Drenais have a reputation for being the sneakiest race on Grayhawk. The first building they encounter is a huge converted warehouse with stalls lining the back walls. A trading room where everything is for sale...including information.

The next building is the manor house, the seat of power in the Drenai enclave. Two guards confront them and will let no-one in without an appointment. They are rude and point them to the Drenai offices a few doors down the street. Graz nimbly lifts one of the guard's long knives as he passes.

In the office they meet a young Drenai woman called Mercila. Graz slams the long knife into the fine oak table and demands; "We want to see Gallor Galliath!" This sours her disposition and once again they face the difficult barrier of a stubborn official.

But suddenly Mercila capitulates – as if she was given some hidden command or gesture – she sends them directly in to see the leader of the Drenai enclave. Gallor Galliath is not alone. Slumped over a long chair is the massive frame of the legendary warrior Drusor Luckwarden, the man appears red eyed and halfway towards being drunk.

Gallor negotiates with Blant's friends but will not disclose the nature of the task he has in mind. In the end the Drenai spymaster says; "Tell Blant I pay better than Malakar." The party decide to leave learning nothing more...however they suspect Gallor's task is urgent.

Graz Tak takes a small detour as his companions return to their tavern lodgings. He walks into Mercila's office and turns on the charm. Graz Tak is a handsome man and few women can resist his easy manner and eloquent speechcraft. Her initial frostiness melts away and she suggests a wharfside restaurant and a candlelit dinner. "I look forward to it," he says kissing her hand as he departs.

Meanwhile Morikand summons yet another demon into the tavern room. A squat one-eyed hunchback appears and the demonologist [binds](#) it into a plain gold ring. Exhausted he sleeps for the rest of the night.

Hokaru and Zashir go to the Nyrnian harbour to hire a boat. The party have decided that their original plan – take a boat and explore the southern ocean – is preferable to the politics of Isirin. They have little luck and are told by one man – Glydith the sea captain – that their chances of hiring a boat indefinitely are slim. Zashir takes issue

with the man; "I'll wager five gold crowns that you will be eating your words by tomorrow."

On their way to breakfast with Arik the party see Touros (the Drenai spy hypnotised by Zashir) wandering around the streets aimlessly like a lost sheep. He talks to everyone and anyone, trying to remember something important but not quite remembering what it was he had to say.

Graz Tak wakes in the arms of Mercila on a secluded beach not far from the harbour. The young Drenai woman dresses quickly and kisses him before she leaves...the thief returns into the city and realises that he is late for breakfast at the temple.

Arik Warslayer greets his friends over an abundant breakfast. The Nyrnian hospitality is not limited to farmers; the high priest lavishes good food and wine upon them. When Zashir raises the matter about the difficulties of getting a boat Arik waves a hand in the air as if the problem is solved.

"I'll get you a ship my friends...and I'll even throw in a good crew."

The Southern Seas

Novna 26th – Decadus 1st

Arik Warslayer organises a ship for Blant Farrand and his companions, a ship that will take them south into the unknown. After breakfast they head to the harbour to be greeted by Glydith, the captain that had refused them passage a day earlier. Zashir and he exchange a wry smile. "I had no idea you were connected to Malakar," Glydith says. "Welcome to my ship – it's called The Eagle."

The sea captain introduces them to some of the more important members of his crew. Vihir, first mate and navigator, Maggot, a portly and grumpy chef, Mantic, the ship's priest, and Maldrar, a Dark Knight and one of Arik's temple guards. The high priest has leant him to the ship for protection. The last introduction is to an impressive golden eagle sat on a perch above the poop deck. It is called Relven and despite Graz Tak's best efforts he cannot make the bird talk.

That afternoon the ship sets sail and heads for Devil's teeth. Glydith explains that the southern route is blocked by a series of dangerous hidden reefs that can tear a ship to pieces in bad weather. It is one of the main reasons why there is so little traffic that heads south...Glydith reassures them that – given favourable weather – he is able to cross the barrier.

Later that day Morikand asks the captain whether he can prepare a room for summoning. Glydith flatly refuses but the intervention of the Dark Knight Maldrar changes his mind. Glydith grumbles under his breath. "Just do it quietly!" he says indignantly. At night they drop anchor and Morikand finds himself a quiet room near the hold...he begins to clean it thoroughly.

Next morning Blant sends Fluck – his *familiar* – on a routine scout around the ship. To the southeast he sees what he thinks is a black cloud that hugs the sea, an unusual

sight in such good weather. As Fluck gets closer Blant realises it is no cloud – it is a fleet of nearly a thousand ships! No banners or livery are evident but Blant fears for the safety of his bird so recalls him and tells the party. Glydith cannot believe the tale and Morikand decides that he needs to get closer.

He casts [demon shield](#) and [invisibility](#) and with a scroll of [polymorph self](#) becomes an albatross. An invisible sea bird is able to get much closer to the ships. Morikand is able to discern ships full of mercenaries...Drenai mercenaries. He returns to discuss his findings with his companions and the captain – it is suggested that Drusor Luckwarden (a mercenary general) is involved somehow, possibly Gallor Galliath also. Glydith makes good progress south until night fall when he drops anchor.

In the calm of the night Morikand draws two pentacles deep in the bowels of the ship (one protection and one binding). He lays a necklace into the binding pentacle; his idea is to bind the demon into the necklace for protection. There is a distinct temperature drop as Morikand brings forth a humanoid demon with deep red eyes and a cruel expression. As it stands over the necklace Morikand tries to force it into the jewellery but his initial attempt fails. A crew member strays down below to investigate the noise; as he puts his head round the door the demon lashes out and rips his soul apart in seconds. Nourished by the injection of a soul the demon tears down the protection pentacle and is upon Morikand with a glint of triumph in his eyes.

Graz Tak and Zashir head down below quickly. The rest of the crew have noticed the drop in temperature; ice forming on ropes. Graz and Zashir burst into the room and realise that their companion is in trouble. Graz slams the blade of Hellath into the creature's back and cuts it badly. The demon howls and as he spins to meet the new attackers Graz thunders a second blow and gashes the demon severely. Zashir stares deep into the cruel red eyes in an attempt to hypnotise but the mind of the demon is too strong; Zashir himself is mesmerised and forced to stand paralysed in the grip of the demonic mind.

The powerful demon slashes a talon across Graz Tak's face but the thief is saved by [stoneskin](#). Annoyed the demon tries another tactic and hurls a [death spell](#) at Graz who withers under the force of the damage. He staggers back in pain as Morikand tries in vain to bind the demon to the necklace.

With Zashir transfixed the demon is in command. A second [death spell](#) slays Graz Tak and – in triumph – the demon turns to Morikand with a vicious smile. At this point Morikand manages to successfully [bind](#) the demon; it vanishes into the necklace and he sighs with relief. Zashir falls out of the paralysis to realise that in the grip of the demon's mind he found its name – Graarn.

Blant and the rest of the crew are nervous about the activity that night. There are many dissenting voices but Maldrar keeps these in check. Blant watches as the crew consign their fallen companion to the deep and with a heavy heart he unfurls the Scroll of Resurrection and raises Graz Tak from the dead. Lightning strikes all around them in the dark night as the universe groans as her laws are violated once more.

The atmosphere on the ship is subdued the next day. It takes Glydith a day and a half to navigate the treacherous Devil's Teeth and when they emerge on the other side they

all realise that this is new territory for them all. A small island is close. Shipwrecks litter the beaches and they decide to ignore it and find a more suitable island to gain provisions and fresh water.

A body floats face down in the water. One of the crew uses a long pole to turn it over and they all realise it is a human race none of them recognise. Worse still the corpse has no eyes, just empty sockets. Glydith leaves it floating and moves ever south.

The next set of islands is larger. Two main landmasses separated by a narrow causeway that can be crossed only when the tide is out. Glydith orders a gathering party and all the party move ashore. Blant creates a *polymorph self* and hands it to the demonologist, in return Morikand creates binding and hands it to Blant...both men absorb these into their repertoire. Morikand and Zashir take the causeway to be alone on the second island. Once there the demonologist begins the creation of three pentacles.

Two pentacles of protection and one of binding. Morikand lays Zashir's leather shirt into the binding pentacle and the chanting begins once more. On the other island the sound of summoning drifts across the water and Blant and the remaining crew cast a suspicious eye over the proceedings.

The demon summoned is a slender individual with a powerful presence. It appears no difference to a normal humanoid but both Morikand and Zashir realise they are in the presence of something commanding. Zashir locks eyes and is instantly mesmerised once more by the powerful demonic mind. Morikand continues the ritual of binding, his mind unwavering in the demon's presence. As the demon breaks through the first pentacle Morikand launches his throwing dagger (with a demon bound into it) which lodges itself into the creature's ribcage and begins to consume its soul. After this wound Morikand successfully binds it into the leather shirt.

Zashir snaps out of the demon's grip and wears a wide grin. "I have its name," he says triumphantly, "It is called Edovi – Slayer Lord of the Plane of Mists." Morikand smiles at his brave companion and Zashir puts on his new leather shirt. Morikand realises that Zashir is now afforded excellent protection from the shirt as he struggles to focus on the hypnotist...it is as if the shirt mesmerises those who stare at it.

Once back at the ship Zashir hypnotises Maggot – the ship's cook – to feed him bacon and eggs every morning. The crew are slightly concerned when – at breakfast the next day – they are forced to eat seaweed porridge and the elven hypnotist tucks in to a hearty feast.

On the move the ship is followed by whales and dolphins that come to investigate the vessel. In the distance they see flames from a fire. Glydith guides the ship towards an island where a bearded man leaps up and down on the beach signalling frantically. The party head out in a small launch to rescue him. He is called Molyan, a Darim sailor shipwrecked six months earlier.

Molyan's tale:

"Our ship drifted way off course in a storm and we went for weeks without knowing where we were. Eventually we spotted a large ship on the horizon and headed for it and – hopefully – information as to our position. That's when the trouble started. The ship was manned by elves but not ones we had ever seen before. On the front of their vessel was a huge cannon that launched a ball of fire into the sails and set the ship ablaze. The next ball of fire went underwater and holed us...we began to sink quickly after that! But that is not the worst of it. Even as we sunk the elves launched arrows at us – but their range was nearly a mile! The crew either drowned or were shot in the water by their long ranged archers...it was monstrous!"

As Molyan tells the tale Morikand and Zashir head of to a remote part of the island and the demonologist creates more pentacles. In the binding pentacle he sets his spiritual throwing dagger (an heirloom from his father). Once more Morikand brings a demonic presence from the Abyss and this one he manages – without much of a struggle – to bind into the dagger.

Back on board Blant creates a [blink](#) scroll and hands it to Graz Tak.

That night one of the crew members called Grudge sneaks into Zashir's room quietly and without hesitation thrusts a dagger deep into his chest. As Zashir wakes however he realises the dagger has been consumed by his demonic shirt. Grudge recoils but Zashir hypnotises him artfully; "You will obey my every command..."

Next day Fluck spots a ship during his scouting mission. It is full of strange elves and sports a cannon on the front. Glydith does not want to get involved with such a vessel so the party come up with a plan to reach the ship. Zashir – who is an Eldrow – will pose as a man shipwrecked floating on a piece of flotsam in the water. His companions will use magic to accompany him in the water.

Morikand [polymorphs](#) into a dolphin as does Graz but Blant prefers the shape of a shark. He leaves Fluck on board next to the captain and will tell the bird to peck starboard or port so that Glydith knows which direction to sail.

The elves spot Zashir immediately and steer their ship towards him. One in particular makes a pulling gesture with his hand and magically draws the floating hypnotist towards him. Once close the elf uses telekinesis to bring him aboard.

Zashir cannot understand the language but the captain speaks what he calls an ancient tongue.

"I am Jaevian, captain of this vessel. Welcome aboard."

Jaevian explains that his race is the Jallaks and they come from an island (also called Jallak) where their seat of power lies. Their god / king is called Valadaar, an ancient elf who is reported to have lived for almost three thousand years. Zashir listens and learns, his initial attempts to hypnotise one of the Jallak's fails so he decides to be more cautious.

Jaevian tells him of a race of humans called the Q'Tharians, these are the enemies of the Jallaks and live under water in a fantastic domed citadel. The confrontation has

been going on for decades and Zashir learns that these Q'Tharians are immensely powerful and rich in lore and music and art.

Under the ship the three companions swim. The two sorcerers feel the powerful sorcery above them and wonder what manner of creatures they follow.

As Zashir is taken below decks he notices something odd about several of the Jallak elves. Jaevian and others wear necklaces around their necks...made from human eyeballs...

The Destruction of the Isle of Jallak

Cy 4850 Dec 2nd – 7th

Zashir stands on the deck of the Jallak war galley next to its captain, Jaevian. The ship heads back to a small island, the seat of power in Jallak, an island that resembles a dwarven fortress rather than an elven abode. Under the water Zashir's friends follow the ship, *polymorphed* into dolphins or – in Blant Farrand's case – a shark. Morikand decides that he needs a closer look. He transforms himself from dolphin to a seagull and flies up onto the deck. When he lands he returns to human form. The crew and the captain stare at him as Zashir explains he is a friend.

The Isle of Jallak looms large now as the ship closes in. After seeing Morikand fly onto the deck Graz Tak does the same and *polymorphs* himself into eklven form; but as he lands the bows of the Jallaks are aimed at him and the captain has him stripped of his equipment. Graz makes it hard for them and steals certain items back from his captors. In exasperation Jaevian has him manacled.

There are three harbours on the island, which is very small and crowded. Morikand spots a group of elves on the battlements being taught to launch arrows at targets in the bay. He realises the elf is a Marraq, the darkbow unmistakable.

"That is Yalgron," Jaevian says, "He is the finest bowman I have ever seen, an outlander elf like you. He teaches us how to shoot."

When the party reach land Blant decides to swim back to The Eagle but Hokaru remains in the water, waiting for an opportunity to sneak ashore.

In the throne room sits Valdazaar, an ancient and powerful sorcerer. He greets the newcomers with good grace, apart from Graz who he taunts. The self proclaimed god king of the Jallaks wears the traditional necklace of human eyes. Zashir surreptitiously attempts to hypnotise Valdazaar but fails.

The assembled nobles and guards are sorcerers. Many of the Jallaks are also magicians and the party realise that they have a higher percentage of spellcasters than anywhere else on Grayhawk. Valdazaar shows an interest in Morikand in particular. Demonology is non-existent on the island.

Morikan grins. "Give me some room and I will demonstrate your majesty."

The throne room is cleared and Morikand Bitchpiss creates three pentacles of protection (one for Valdazaar, one for Zashir and one for himself) and another of binding. He takes from the king a ring and places it inside the binding pentacle. The room falls silent as Morikand intones his chants of ritual summoning. Ice begins to form as a powerful demon of possession is dragged from the Abyss into the throne room.

The demon is a shadowy creature but Morikand knows it is powerful as it moves through Zashir's pentacle of protection with little difficulty. The hypnotist stares into dark eyes as Morikand fails the initial binding. Suddenly, as soon as the demon materialised it vanished, only Morikand – and Zashir – realising that it had possessed the hypnotist. Zashir's eyes glaze over and become pure milky white orbs. Valdazaar and the assembled nobles applaud the display and the king orders a room be set aside (at Morikand's request) for summoning purposes. Valdazaar goes on to proclaim a banquet that evening; "We will celebrate our new and powerful friends," he says, "and for entertainment we will torture and mutilate the human to death!" There are howls of delight from the crowd.

Meanwhile Hokaru slips ashore (in human form) as darkness falls. As he moves carefully he is aware of a figure behind him... Yalgron the Marraq.

"Greetings and welcome," the Marraq says. Hokaru realises that this elf is troubled. "I need to get off this island. The king is mad; a lunatic whose mood and temperament changes with the weather and with the position of the moon in the sky. Help me leave this place."

Meanwhile Morikand and Zashir are in an empty storeroom in the bowels of the palace and immediately Morikand creates some pentacles (two protection and one binding). He casts [summon demon](#) and for the second time that night brings a demon of possession onto Grayhawk. This demon is not shadowy; instead it is a lumbering giant forced to squat down because of the low ceiling. To Morikand's annoyance he realises that he has drawn something major from the Abyss... *this* one is even stronger than the demon that has possessed Zashir.

Thinking quickly Morikand grabs the small bottle he was given by Malakar. The demon tears down the protection pentacles and for the first time Morikand realises that here is a beast he cannot defeat. From the bottle comes Vohaas. Armed with a dread black broadsword the demon strikes at the junction between shoulder blade and neck plunging it deep into the creature's torso before exiting near the hip. The demon of possession howls in agony as his soul spills out like acid on the floor. But Vohaas is already delivering the death blow that decapitates and obliterates his foe.

Morikand has timed it well. As the supernaturally quick Vohaas spins to face him Morikand coolly stoppers the bottle once more and breathes a heavy sigh of relief. "I need a rest," he says.

Yalgron is at the banquet and talks to Valdazaar. The Marraq however is in constant contact with Hokaru who [polymorphs](#) himself into a blood hound and moves up into the palace. The guards ignore such a dog... there are many around the palace and Hokaru is able to enter the throne room and sit quietly under one of the many long

tables. Before Morikand and Zashir come to the banquet the demonologist prepares yet another summoning.

This time he tries to summon a demon of combat. When a tall humanoid with red eyes and a nodachi strapped to its back appears he prepares to bind it into service. Unlike the previous demons this one is more co-operative. "I am Yusk from the Plane of Blades."

Morikand relaxes but binds it successfully to him anyway. "You will serve me as bodyguard until we reach Grayhawk."

"So be it master," Yusk says calmly.

As the banquet gets under way Graz Tak is tied and bound on spit and roasts slowly, agonisingly as his flesh burns. As Morikand makes his entrance – with the demon Yusk half a step behind him – Yalgron sends a message into their minds. "When I count to three we must act."

Yalgron notches an arrow and launches two in quick succession. They snap the bindings on Graz Tak's ankles and neck and he falls away from the fire a free man. He quickly lifts a dagger from a nearby nobleman as the fighting starts. Valdazaar is enraged by the fighting and casts *reverse heal* on the Marraq. Yalgron collapses with blood flowing from every orifice, his screams of pain can be heard across the bay.

Two noblemen lunge at Morikand but Yusk cuts them down with ease, the large two-handed nodachi a blur in his hands. Hokaru emerges from under the table in human form amid the confusion; he launches a crossbow bolt into the head of Jaevian, who staggers back in pain. Then the Darklander releases the katana from its scabbard and moves in to combat.

Many of the nobles scatter in panic, unable to stomach such a vicious fight. Valdazaar however turns his attention to Morikand and casts *ray of enfeeblement* at him. Yusk intervenes and deflects the spell – much to the king's annoyance – and he moves in to face the Jallak king. Valdazaar strikes the demon low and hard with a longsword and opens a ten inch gash in Yusk's midriff...a gash that leaks soul. Yusk responds quickly and efficiently. His first stroke severs the right hand of Valdazaar but the king does not have time to scream as a second stroke plunges the blade deep into Valdazaar's soul. When the blade exits the Jallak king is dead and Yusk's damage is gone.

A hollow explosion can be heard deep beneath them as the foundations of the island crumble. The ancient power of Valdazaar kept the Jallaks alive and kept their island fortress standing. Without that power the universe begins to reclaim a race that should have died out centuries earlier.

Morikand realises that Yusk is an excellent bodyguard and decides to read a scroll (*death spell*) in the midst of the combat. He casts it on the captain of the guard – who fights with Zashir – and the Jallak is badly damaged though able to continue.

Amid the crumbling throne room the battle continues. Graz Tak follows the two elves that tied him to the spit roast and taunted him throughout his ordeal. He comes upon the first unawares; pushes the elf's head against a wall and drives the stolen dagger into one ear and out the other side. The second elf pleads for his life but Graz slashes expertly – and powerfully – across his throat. The elf is dead before he hits the ground...Graz goes in search of his equipment even as the fortress crumbles around him.

A huge slab of ceiling falls close to Morikand but Yusk is there, the nodachi cleaves it in two and two large pieces fall harmlessly to the ground.

Hokaru sneaks up on Jaevian and delivers a swift and bludgeoning strike to the sea captain's throat. The katana cuts deep and cleanly, the head sails off and into the rubble as the fight draws to a close.

When the last Jallak, the guard captain, strikes Zashir's head (with no effect because of the [stoneskin](#)) he drops the blade and the party's attention turns to escape. Hokaru casts [fly](#) on Zashir and Graz Tak and himself. Zashir loots Valdazaar's body and as he does a slab of ceiling crushes Yalgron to death. Seconds before the island crumbles into nothingness and is taken by the sea the party take to the air...Yusk dives into the water and vanishes. As they escape the carnage they notice every ship sinks, every Jallak drowns in the chaos of the destruction.

Once back on The Eagle Yusk appears next to Morikand once more ([teleport](#)). Glydith sets sail south once more as the party take a well earned rest.

Two days later they come across a large mountainous island and decide to make camp to take on supplies. It is covered with jungle and a search party is organised by the captain. Blant persuades Glydith to accept the protection of [stoneskin](#) and also replenishes Graz Tak's.

Morikand casts [tongues](#) then [polymorphs](#) into an eagle to talk to Relven, the ship's eagle. He learns much about the captain – Glydith – the bird tells him that he was [summoned](#) by the captain and that Glydith is some kind of mysterious sorcerer. Morikand cannot sense a magical surge on the captain but does not doubt the truth of the eagle's words.

As the crew and the party settle down for supper Graz Tak wrestles with a dilemma. His dreams have been troubled for days since he tried to convey his fears to the Lady Elena in prayers. He fears reprisals if Malakar's gift to Blant – The Scroll of Resurrection – is allowed to exist. So he lifts it from Blant Farrand's backpack and tosses it into the fire.

The conflagration is like a huge fireball exploding amongst them. Sailors scatter in flames. Once the fire abates the finger of accusation points to Graz, many of the crew saw him put the scroll in the fire. Blant Farrand puts a comforting hand on the thief's shoulder. "It had to be done I suppose..."

In a secluded cove Morikand sets about the creation of further pentacles. Graz Tak has given the demonologist the Cloak of Masking to have a demon bound into it -

Zashir is present and both men stand inside separate pentacles of protection as Morikand intones the well-versed ritual of summoning. Once more Morikand is able to bring forth a powerful energy, a humanoid creature with red eyes and an angry disposition. Zashir fixes the creature's gaze and is instantly mesmerised, though his mind is able to witness the workings of the chaotic brain.

This time the demon is given no chance as Morikand forces it into the cloak. Zashir smiles at his companion; "It is called Fang, from the Plane of Fortresses." Morikand makes a mental note of the demon's name.

Morikand is struck by the quality of the cloak. The demon augments its power greatly; when he puts it on he realises (as does Zashir who can now sense sorcery) that there is no magic emanating from him or any of his items or demons. It is as if he was a non-magic user.

"This is too good for the thief," he says...

Discovery

cy 4850 Dec 8th – 9th

The Eagle is moored on the west side of a large mountainous island taking on board supplies. Hokaru, the Darkland necromancer, finds time to perform the ancient tea ceremony; his companions enjoy the calming ritual on deck. Morikand hands the Darklander Illeum's Rite, the necromantic ring.

Later that day a crew member returns and shows them a symbol he found on a cave. It is the symbol of House Cadavris, one of the minor noble vampiric houses from Rosengrad. When Malakar took control of king Archibald's kingdom he drove out the many undead houses in an attempt to cleanse the city. The party decide to take a look.

Hokaru leads Blant, Morikand, Graz Tak and Zashir down into a domed room full of piles of bones. Some are whole skeletons long dead. Hokaru's innate necromantic senses reveals two undead amongst the bones; before long two skeletons approach hefting glowing longswords. Hokaru casts [hold undead](#) and manages to paralyse one but Blant's [web](#) sticks harmlessly to the ceiling.

Morikand swiftly kicks out at the second skeleton and his bodyguard, Yusk, carves the remaining one to pieces with swift work from his two handed nodachi. Blant Farrand takes the two magical longswords and they move on.

Two doors face them. Both appear flimsy and rotten, a swift shoulder charge should knock them down easily. Graz Tak, however, informs his friends that both doors are trapped...both are magical although only one bears the symbol of House Cadavris above it.

Morikand casts [dispel magic](#) and destroys the sorcery one the first door but despite repeated attempts he, Blant and Hokaru all fail to [dispel](#) the door with the symbol on it. Yusk shatters the first door with his blade revealing a corridor that descends to a further opening a hundred yards away. Blant summons ([monster summoning 2](#)) a

bombardier beetle, an armoured giant, and sends it against the intact door. As soon as the beetle touches the door there is a crack of energy as it is incinerated by the power of the trap.

Zashir is getting impatient. He hypnotises Blant; "Use your magic to go through the wall," he suggests. Blant, however, casts the only spell he knows to achieve such a thing ([wraithform](#)) but this cannot see him through the door. At this point Morikand and Zashir decide to head back to the ship leaving Graz Tak, Hokaru and Blant Farrand to continue down the first passage.

At the end of the corridor they head through an opening into a natural cave that has many bunkbeds along the walls. Hokaru has a strong sense of undead. Blant's lantern reveals women and children huddled together and frightened of the three intruders. Twenty in total they cower at the light, their faces gaunt and pale, the children's' eyes bright with fear.

"Vampires!" Hokaru spits.

Hokaru casts [fireball](#) into the largest concentration of them. In the confined space the impact of such a spell is devastating. As the screams of the dying vampires pierce the silence Graz Tak unfurls a scroll and launches a second [fireball](#), Blant Farrand wastes no time and hurls a third into the room. The massacre is complete. When the flames are starved of fuel they die down and all that is left is ash.

A brief search reveals nothing. The three companions head back up to the second door to ponder the problem once more. Blant casts [enlarge](#) on the door and the flimsy wood cracks and splinters. When he reverses the spell it falls back to reveal another corridor that ends in an opening. Hokaru casts [protection from evil](#) and [circle of protection](#) and, with his companions close, he leaps through the door. Bolts of energy converge on the three men but as they emerge on the other side they are completely unharmed.

They move down and into a large room where the magical surge is overwhelming. Nine globes hover in mid air at various heights and slowly orbit some invisible force. The lowest is at head height whilst the highest is thirty feet above them. Each globe has a powerful gravitational pull. None of the three men decide to get too close...after a brief discussion they move on through the only other exit.

Hokarus immediately sense the presence of an undead mage. Lord Cadavris sits on a throne in the centre of the room flanked by two burning fire pits. Both Blant and Hokaru realise the fire pits are sorcerous, probably portals.

"I am Lord Cadavris," the vampire states, "and I need your help. My people are stranded here. We were on our way to the lost lands of Acremea in the south when a storm took us. We have been here for years now. Help us off this island and I will reward you handsomely."

"I need no reward from the likes of you!" spits Hokaru and he draws his katana and attacks. Blant and Graz take the lead from the young necromancer and leap into the

fray. As soon as a blade comes close to the vampire lord he vanishes in a haze of mist; vapours swirl around their heads briefly and then vanish.

Blant casts *invisibility* and can see lord Cadavris behind him. He reacts too late and the icy touch of the dread vampire drains his life force, sucks out the vitality and leaves Blant weak. Escape is the only thing on Blant's mind now. Because of the vampire's touch he has lost much of his repertoire and resorts to a scroll of *polymorph self* in order to change into a bird and fly away. Whilst preparing the spell a second caress from lord Cadavris further drains him.

Hokaru casts *hold undead* and lord Cadavris is held like a granite statue before them; motionless, vulnerable and beaten. Try as he can the bonds of the spell are too great. Hokaru and Blant grab magical daggers and start to slice the vampire lord but Graz Tak moves them aside. He hefts his trusted blade of Hellath, the longsword that has served him well over the last few months, and strikes.

The blow is perfection. Power, speed, finesse. Lord Cadavris has no time to scream in pain as the blade enters the top of his skull and exits from the groin; his life force extinguished in the flash of a deadly attack.

Meanwhile back on the ship Zashir tries to persuade Glydith to set sail, despite the late hour. "I won't sail blindly in the dark in waters I don't know," he says firmly, dismissing the hypnotist.

With only an hour left until dawn Morikand and Zashir return to the quiet cove to perform another summoning. As Morikand brings forth a demon of possession into a pentacle of binding Zashir stares into it's eyes. This time however the demon flinches from the gaze of the hypnotist...just before Morikand binds it into the coin of greed.

When they return to the ship Morikand gives the coin to Glydith and tells him it is for protection. The captain accepts it gratefully. Blant, Morikand and Graz are now back at the ship and recount the tale of their fight with Cadavris. Mantic, the ship's priest, tends to Blant. He tells the sorcerer that the only way to restore his drained energy is by getting to a temple of Malakar.

Morikand, Zashir and Yusk return to the cavern after a discussion regarding treasure. At the trapped door Morikand leaps through and his demonic protection deflects the energy of the door. Yusk and Zashir, similarly protected, also manage to move through it. At the next opening they see the entrance to the globe room partially blocked by the largest of the globes. These have now fallen to the marble floor and remain where they fell.

Morikand *polymorphs* into a snake and slithers past the obstacle whilst Yusk teleports to the other side to be with his master. Zashir, however, fairs worse. As he tries to crawl in between the door frame and the globe he inadvertently touches the globe. There is a crack of energy and Zashir is gone; sent to the Ninth Plane of Hell!

Morikand moves on to the throne room. On the throne itself he finds a small diamond *identifying* it as the soul residue of lord Cadavris, all that is left after the blistering strike from Graz Tak.

He and Yusk leap through the first fire pit (teleportal). They find themselves high in the jungle canopy on a precarious ledge hundreds of feet above the ground. Live monkeys, small bears and other jungle creatures lie suspended from branches. A vampiric larder. They return and head through the second teleportal.

This time Morikand and Yusk find lord Cadavris' treasure. Three huge chests piled one on top of the other. With a monumental effort (and Yusk's incredible demonic strength) they manage to move and open the first chest. It is crammed full of gold and platinum and silver crowns, much of which bears the head of the old king of Rosen, Archibald. The next chest contains gems and jewels too numerous to count so both take a handful before moving to the third chest. This one has the most prominent magical surge.

When opened it reveals powerful magical items; a katana, a dagger, a staff, a skeletal hand and much more. Morikand gathers all of this equipment and places it on himself before [polymorphing](#) into a bird and flying back to the ship...

Further South

Dec 10th – 16th

The Eagle is moored in a sheltered cove on the Island of Imris, a large mountainous isle in the seas south of Nyrn. As the party sit around on deck they are stunned to see Zashir – who vanished when he touched one of the nine globes in Cadavris' lair – the hypnotist seems unharmed from his ordeal and tells his friends that he had to make a *deal* to escape Hell. "I must get back to Grayhawk and find Illeum Runesabre in six months," he tells them. "I have a letter for him...if I succeed then my task will be complete."

Morikand calls his companions to the main deck and deposits a handful of items he recovered from Cadavris' treasure room. The demonologist offers them clues as to the nature of the equipment (he went away and cast [identify](#) and was surprised at how much information he received).

Graz Tak takes a jewelled pommel, Zashir takes the Amulet of the Unholy, Blant takes a shield and Hokaru is given Devil's Bane, a katana created by the famous necromancer Illeum Runesabre. Another sorcerer joins them; Mangas takes Frostbite, a dagger.

The party decide to leave the island and head south further. Some of them are intrigued by the mention of the isle of Acrimea and want to explore the southern seas further. As the rain beats down the Eagle makes steady progress.

A ship is spotted later that day. Fluck, Blant's [familiar](#), scouts ahead and sees a deserted Drenai war galley, a massive four masted vessel that drifts on the waves. Morikand casts [invisibility](#) and [polymorphs](#) into an albatross and flies to the ship to investigate. He sees ghostly figures that move through the deck. He returns briefly to brief his companions and they all – with the exception of the weakened Blant – decide to board the ship and take a look. Blant Farrand casts [fly](#) on those who need it and Morikand creates a [polymorph self](#) scroll and hands it to Mangas.

As they land on the ship Graz Tak draws Hellath, his trusted longsword, and places the newly-gained pommel against it. The jewel bonds to the magical blade instantly and Graz feels strong vibrations up and down the blade. It glows a dull crimson and feels more balanced...more powerful. Hokaru can already sense undead as they head down into the ship.

The captain's cabin is their first destination. Hokaru (who has [detect undead](#) running) senses the undead fleeing from them, as though they fear the party's magic. Graz picks the lock to the cabin easily and moves inside. An overturned table and a wide-eyed man behind it greet him. There is a thunderous crack as the man fires a Bretonian musket. Graz is stopped in his tracks by hundreds of small lead balls; the gunman is stunned when the thief merely brushes away the shot ([stoneskin](#)) and takes the gun from him.

The Drenai is called Magast. He seems slightly mad and tells them about an elven woman they rescued, a wounded woman that they cared for. "The crew began to go missing," he says, "one by one they would disappear only to return as ghosts or as rotting human cadavers. I thought you were one of them."

They continue their search with Magast following them. At the bottom of the ship they find a coffin surrounded by a pentacle made from the ash of human remains. Hokaru cannot hide his distaste and hurls a [fireball](#) at the coffin. The bottom of the ship is ablaze in seconds, they hear a tapping on the inside of the coffin but ignore it, instead Hokaru casts a second [fireball](#) for good measure as they return to the Eagle (with Magast) and watch the blazing ship burn and ultimately sink.

Next morning the sea is as still as glass. A strange mist surrounds them and there is no wind. The revelation that Mantic, the ship's priest, is missing causes concern and a hasty search of the entire ship. Mangas casts [ESP](#) and skims the minds of selected crew members. Magast's thoughts betray concern for the elven woman whilst the most interesting thoughts are those of Maldrar, the Malakarian temple guard. His thoughts show Mantic boarding a small launch late last night and rowing away from the ship.

Morikand casts [invisibility](#) and [polymorphs](#) into an albatross to investigate the magical mist. He flies up to gauge the extent of the cover; it stretches for a mile all around the ship and is several hundred feet high. He [identifies](#) the mist as *Malakar's Breath* – a spell that Malakar reserves for the most powerful of his nae priests. As he flies around the ship he sees a sweeping glow brush over the mist, as though something was probing the ship. He realises that whatever is searching for them cannot penetrate the shroud that Malakar has thrown around them.

Next morning the mist is gone but Morikand sees the same luminescent glow on his own skin. It travels up one arm, around his body before exiting down the other arm. An [identify](#) reveals the nature of the spell – *The Eyes of Elena* – he tells the party as they sail further south.

They find the body of Mantic floating face down in the sea. Maldrar gets the body on deck and prepares it for a funeral rite. He explains that Mantic was sacrificed in order to cast the *Malakar's Breath*. "I have seen this effect before. The poor priest Mantic

was not able to cope with the sheer power that Malakar cast through him and although he probably saved us he paid ultimately for it...he will be burnt at sea and we should pray for him."

Blant [polymorphs](#) into a white shark and scouts around in the sea whilst Hokaru becomes an albatross and checks out the skies and the surrounding ocean.

Morikand and Zashir slip away to the cargo hold and the demonologist creates some pentacles (protection and binding). Above deck all of the crew can hear the telltale sounds of a ritual summoning; it is a dread sound they have heard before. Glydith, the ship's captain, growls and draws a sabre. "I've had enough of this!" he bellows and heads for the hold. Maldrar opens his hand and seems to grab the captain with some powerful [telekinetic](#) power. He shoves him back against the mast. "Never come between a demonologist and his summoning!" Maldrar warns.

Ice forms on deck as the temperature plummets. Mangas draws his new dagger Frostbite and feels instantly warm...the cold does not affect him whilst holding it.

A dark shape begins to form in the cargo hold; a mind-numbing surge of magical energy fills the confined wooden space. Morikand does not fear the beast. Zashir opens his eyes and mind to it as the first thing the demon sees is Zashir who loses himself in the brutal gaze of an angry demon.

But Morikand's grip on the demon is strong. As it materialises in the centre of a pentacle of binding the creature realises that it must escape if it has any chance of defeating the summoner. Morikand crushes its will and forces the soul into the ship itself. Zashir comes round and laughs; "It is called Thoasa, from the Plane of Tides."

On deck the crew and especially the captain give Morikand and Zashir a frosty reception but the demonologist merely smiles. There is a deep thud as Relven, the ship's eagle, crashes dead onto the deck. The sailors gasp in horror and Glydith's anger flares once more. Morikand turns to the captain. "You will do as you are told!" Glydith's face changes from abject hatred to servile compliance and he starts to bark orders at his crew.

Morikand can move the ship at will and tests its phenomenal speed in open water. The crew are stunned by way it crashes through reefs and rock, obstacles that would normally destroy the hull. But the Eagle is now enveloped in a demonic skin tougher than any steel.

Mangas decides to enjoy the ride and starts work on his spell book.

Next day the watch spot a ship on the horizon. Morikand steers it close and they come alongside a primitive single masted sailing vessel. Twenty men with shortbows line the deck, nervous at the larger ship and unsure of who or what they are. Mangas casts [spectral hand](#) and is able to touch the captain of the other ship and cast [comprehend languages](#). The captain beckons them aboard and the entire party step onto the new ship (with the exception of Morikand who stands at the wheel of his new ship).

Zashir immediately hypnotises the captain who is called Vio. He explains that they are from the Island of Imarand and invites them back to their land. "There are many islands in the Imaris Sound, the largest of these being Acrimea. The Dalt'enn are the most powerful of all the races and regularly take slaves from each island for their evil summonings."

Mangas casts [ESP](#) on the captain and picks out the features of one of the Dalt'enn; they are elven in appearance and Mangas is struck by their similarity to Morikand the demonologist...

The Lost Isles

Dec 16th – 18th

The Eagle – Morikand's demonic ship – follows the Imarand ship towards the first of the Lost Isles. Blant Farrand, Graz Tak and Mangas are on the Imarand vessel and converse with Vio, the ship's captain, they learn much about Imarand culture and life on the Lost Isles. Meanwhile Morikand is below decks on his own ship putting the finishing touches to a pentacle of travel.

There is a large crowd in the harbour of Imarand to greet the new ship. When Morikand comes on deck there is a collective gasp of horror; hundreds of bows are levelled at him. The primitive Imarands believe him to be one of the feared Dalt'Enn. Out of the crowd comes an old woman. She is blind in one eye but pushes her way to the jetty where she confronts the demonologist. "Let me be the first to welcome the Death Dealer!" she says.

Mangas casts [ESP](#) and skims her mind. He realises that her art is an obscure one; Cathrar studies The Paths. Mangas is able to see glimpses of Morikand's past in her mind as well as his future. Though he cannot discern anything specific he is sure the old woman Cathrar can.

Cathrar disappears into the crowd as Morikand comes ashore. Having been told about the chieftain of Imarand (Herrea) he uses the *soul compass* to find him and with his companions behind him heads for the heart of the city. Imarand elders, the wise men that make all the decisions in the city, surround the chieftain. Morikand casts [comprehend languages](#) on his friends and includes Herrea so that they are able to talk freely.

The party learns much about Imarand and the other islands in the area. After an hour with Herrea they decide to continue their journey south – a journey Dax the Explorer set them on months earlier. After taking on fresh water and supplies from the Imarands the Eagle heads out to hug the coast. They intend to sail directly into the heart of Acrimea.

At night they anchor themselves off shore.

Two hours past midnight a sailor hurries down into the sleeping quarters to find Morikand. "Master come quickly! There is a stranger on deck."

As they ascend up on deck Blant casts [foxes cunning](#), Hokaru casts [circle of protection](#) followed by [cats grace](#). On the foredeck a dark elf stares down at the party. Arrogant, evil and confident he leans on a battle axe which Morikand knows is demonic. "This ship belongs to me now!" the Dalt'Enn says, "you are all slaves. Throw down your weapons!"

Morikand casts [banish demon](#) and the axe crumbles into dust before the startled Dalt'Enn. From nowhere four dark elven warriors appear. Each one is laden with demonic protection and weaponry and the party have no time to think. Blant casts [jump](#) and somersaults backwards out of the melee. Mangas casts [glitterdust](#) as swords clash in the darkness.

The Dalt'Enn on the foredeck raises his hand and hurls a [lightning bolt](#) at Blant Farrand. The sorcerer is able to avoid the shocking bolt but as it hits the deck the demonic ship dissipates the damage evenly around the ship. Zashir finds himself in hand-to-hand with an expert swordsman only [stoneskin](#) saves him initially.

Morikand disarms one of the warriors and Hokaru follows suit. Yusk and Hokaru are quick to press the advantage; the demon cuts down the first as Hokaru cuts the throat of the second with Devil's Bane, Illeum Runesabre's dangerous katana. Hokaru Temochi can feel the blade quench its thirst on the blood of the Dalt'Enn and also feels strength and vitality seep into him as the blade imparts this power on him.

Now freed of his attacker Zashir moves in on the Dalt'Enn sorcerer on the foredeck. The sorcerer sees this and casts a [summoning](#) – a dark shadow appears on deck, a growing sense of cold as the demon materialises slowly before them. Graz Tak cuts a Dalt'Enn warrior with a deft backhand stroke with the Blade of Hellath (which now has Illeum's Pommel adorning it), as the warrior doubles over in pain his second strike disembowels the attacker.

Mangas casts [grease](#) on the last warrior on the lower deck. The poor fellow slips and slides and makes his way over to the rail where he clings on desperately. Yusk hits him three times in quick succession and slays him.

The demon is now fully materialised. A twelve foot monster with fiery wings and sinister red eyes. It howls and yells as it rushes towards the party, almost able to taste the naked souls. But Hokaru Temochi is in its path. The Darklander waits until the demon is committed, with Devil's Bane loose in his hand he lets the beast come. In a fluid, awesome motion the blade is like a whip. It connects between the demon's shoulder and neck and carves through bone and sinew until it lodges in the dark heart. Devil's Bane gorges itself on demonic blood. As Hokaru retrieves the katana the demon explodes into dust banished from Grayhawk for a hundred years.

Graz Tak has moved away from the fight. He can see Zashir Mindbender struggling on the foredeck with the last remaining Dalt'Enn. He draws his longbow and after a momentary uncertainty (he is not sure whether he will hit his friend or not) he lets fly. The first arrow hits the Dalt'Enn in the stomach. The dark elf howls in pain and clutches the shaft. Blood runs down it over his slender fingers but there is nothing he can do to stem the torrent. The second arrow punctures his left eye and smashes through the skull as it exits.

Morikand piles the demon-infested weapons on deck before starting the grim task of decapitating the dead Dalt'Enn. He places them strategically on the front of the Eagle so that they can be seen by any other ship.

Mangas puts on a demonic cloak (of steel) that was worn by the Dalt'Enn sorcerer. Graz helps himself to a demonic longsword (of Pain). There is little chance of sleep for the rest of the night particularly when Morikand descends to his summoning room with Zashir to summon protection for the ship.

Zashir is integral to the summoning. His attempts to stare into the minds of the creatures allow him to discern the true names of the demons...information vital to Morikand.

The first is called Grusur, from the Plane of Combat. A horned humanoid demon who wears a hood to hide his face. Morikand binds him to the ship. The second is from the Plane of Blades, a dangerous and powerful demon that wears a mask and wields a katana. His name is Myill and despite his power Morikand binds him immediately into service as protection.

Blant Farrand gives Morikand the Cloak of Contempt and asks his friend to bind a demon of protection into it. Morikand knows exactly which plane to seek such a demon. He summons Uleach from the Plane of Fortresses and once again has little trouble as he binds it to Blant's cloak. As soon as Blant Farrand wraps the robe around him his magical surge disappears, no trace of sorcery or the demon visible from the outside.

Next morning they change their plans and head for the Tragornian city of Villius. Just before noon a small vessel approaches with four heavily armed Tragornian barbarians and one priest. They are helped on board and the priest introduces himself as Angarod, High Priest of Ulmar the Lord of Battle. He is impressed by the severed Dalt'Enn heads on the front of the ship and invites them back to his temple on the mainland.

Villius is a large city more reminiscent of a Grayhawkian seaport than Imarand. The Tragornians are warriors and merchants and soon the party is led through a huge market place and up into the temple of Ulmar. Zashir goes immediately to the altar to pray. He is astonished when the demon of possession is banished from him and the god speaks directly into his mind. Zashir realises that Ulmar goes by a different name on Grayhawk:- Jarik Saal.

Angarod takes them to the Hall of Kings, the seat of power in Tragorn. In a vast room full of barbarians they are presented to King Halgar of Tragorn. The man is a little worse for drink and when Zashir tries to speak Halgar has two burly guards silence him. When the situation threatens to get out of hand a beautiful young woman stands up. Silvana is the daughter of Halgar and clearly the power behind the throne. Her words stop any nonsense and Zashir is free to proclaim the words of Ulmar. The Tragornians are impressed.

Morikand greets the princess and says; "They call me Death Dealer."

The Tragornians are silent. All eyes upon the demonologist as Silvana studies the elf carefully. When Morikand suggests that he is here to destroy the Dalt'Enn there are cheers and shouts of approval. Silvana calls a banquet to honour the newcomers. Hot food is brought out. The party are treated to sword and axeplay exhibitions; the Tragornians are all superb combatants. Zashir manages to hypnotise King Halgar amid the revelry of the banquet.

Princess Silvana is a good host. As the evening draws to a close she spends more and more time with Graz Tak. Drawn as she is by his handsome face and charming manner Graz is the envy of all the men in the Hall of Kings. She has a personal bodyguard of four of the toughest Tragornians who protest bitterly when she dismisses them for the night.

"My room is close," she says directly, "and my bed is warm."

Graz Tak grins as she slips her hand into his and leads him away. Mangas watches them go and smiles. He skims the minds of the entire banquet with [ESP](#) and one mind in particular – a young red haired barbarian – concerns him. The barbarian's thoughts are fuelled by jealousy as he stares at Graz Tak and wonders how he can get close to strangle him...

The Summoner

Dec 19th – 21st

After the banquet thrown in honour of Morikand the party rise late the next day. Hokaru aches all over, the rush of his blood-fuelled blade is gone to be replaced by pain and a dry throat. He joins his companions at breakfast along with king Halgar and the Ulmarian high priest Angarod. Graz Tak and princess Silvana do not attend but the king does not dwell on his daughter's activities.

The topic of conversation turns naturally to the Dalt'Enn. Morikand wants to give a message to their king, Lord Dread, and decides to return to the Eagle to do his rituals. Hokaru casts [cat's grace](#) before descending into the summoning room – Zashir is close behind.

Morikand summons a demon from the Plane of Disjunction but on its arrival he dismisses it instantly. It was not powerful enough for his message. Next he summons a demon from the Plane of Mists, a plane he has dipped into before. A shadowy figure is soon before them and Zashir stares deeply into the demon's eyes.

This demon is not bound by Morikand but offers his name anyway. "I am Enjul," it says calmly. "I have heard of you Death Dealer. How may I serve you?" The demon called Enjul releases Zashir from his powerful gaze and Morikand considers his options.

"I want you to take a message to an enemy," Morikand says. Enjul bows his acceptance of the mission. "But first I must give you something for Lord Dread."

Morikand summons a further demon from the Plane of Dreams and instantly binds it into one of the 8 coins of greed. Armed with the gift Enjul takes leave of the ship and heads for the palace of Acrimea in the citadel of Dalt' Ara.

That evening the Eagle sets sail for Acrimea. King Halgar has post fifty of his strongest warriors on board. Blant Farrand moves amongst them and casts [stoneskin](#) on six of the hardest of them.

As night falls Morikand is drawn to his summoning room once more followed by Hokaru Temochi and Zashir Mindbender. The demonologist calls a demon from the Plane of War called Amyldor but dismisses the four-armed horned woman immediately. "These are not powerful enough," Morikand complains so turns his attention to the Plane of Death.

The next summoning brings forth a nightmare.

As the powerful demon materialises Zashir attempts to stare at it. Edovi – his demonic shirt – shrouds his eyes and gives him a stern warning. "To look at it is death! To touch it is death!" Morikand and Hokaru shut their eyes. The necromancer draws Devil's Bane and jumps into the attack as Morikand tries in vain to bind it.

A deathly, unearthly wail emanates from the demon of death. Hokaru and Morikand are chilled to their bones as their sorcerous protection withstands the death wail. Zashir is not so lucky. His face blanches and his ears bleed as he falls dead at their feet. Even Yusk – Morikand's demon protector – succumbs to the icy touch of the demon and is destroyed.

Blant Farrand is on deck with Mangas. He knows something is wrong. He has been in this position before. He urges four of the Tregornians down below to aid his friends and the warriors rush into battle without hesitation. As they pile into the hold the slightest glimpse of the demon's pale flesh is enough to kill them!

Hokaru and Morikand – eyes still firmly shut – hear the bodies pile up around them. Morikand finally casts a successful [binding](#) and the demon of death is gone, bound into a coin of greed. As they tentatively open their eyes Hokaru and Morikand wipe beads of sweat from their eyes. Morikand takes no chances and casts [unseen servant](#) to pick up the coin of death and place it securely in a leather pouch.

Mangas takes Edovi, the demonic shirt, from Zashir's corpse.

Next morning a rowing boat can be seen in the distance. Beyond it is the shore of the fabled Acrimea – land of the Dalt'Enn. As the boat draws close Morikand senses demonic influences but does not attack the messenger. The lone boatman hurls a small urn into the sea and rows back to Acrimea. Morikand examines the contents of it and discovers a pile of ash...Enjul's ashes.

At midnight the summoning continues. Morikand is joined by Mangas and Hokaru and a Jezharrain traveller called Atavia as he prepares further summonings. His first two attempts result in less powerful creatures that he dismisses but the third is from the Plane of Famine. As soon as it begins to materialise Morikand realises that this

demon is powerful. After a brief struggle he manages to bind it into another coin of greed.

Morikand continues his drive to arm himself and the party with demonic weaponry and protection. He delves into the Plane of Blades once more and the demon that presents itself is a shimmering silver longsword...an awesome magic surge. Atavia reaches down and grabs it. The ferocious power of the arch demon of Blades consumes the Jezharrain's soul and gives a body to the unfettered demon. Morikand tries to bind it once more but it is futile; the demon is too powerful. In the body of the female Jezharrain the demon launches itself at Hokaru and Morikand.

Only Morikand's [*stoneskin*](#) saves him as the demon strikes swiftly and dangerously, keen to take the soul of the summoner. Hokaru trades blows with it but realises that it is only a matter of time before it tears down Morikand's defences and gets to his soul. In desperation Morikand reaches for the stoppered vial given to him as a gift by Malakar.

As Vohaas appears the arch demon of Blades turns to her new foe. Vohaas is speed and power personified; his first strike is a blur as he severs her swordarm from the elbow. His second strike is equally fast taking her other arm at the shoulder. The demon of Blades is astonished, her dark eyes wondering what kind of maniacal demon possesses such skill. She has little time to wonder as Vohaas decapitates her and takes her soul.

Vohaas turns to Morikand who is already replacing the stopper on the small glass vial. The demonologist breathes a heavy sigh of relief as Vohaas disappears. He turns to Hokaru and grins. "I need to rest."

As Morikand heads for his bed chamber Hokaru stares at the shattered remains of the elf and watches the shadow of its spirit drift around the room before seeping out and dissipating into the Astral Plane.

Next morning the air is chilled and the sky is an angry red colour. Acrimea is only a hundred yards away and Morikand is drawn to a woman who stands on the shore. A Dalt'Enn mystic she shouts over to the ship.

"Greetings *He-who-brings-death* – let me be the first to welcome you to your fate. The Dalt'Enn have waited many years for your coming. Lord Dread himself prepares for the day of destiny..."

Destruction

Dec 22nd – 24th

The party decide to head for the Lost Isle to investigate Murtag's tower. The Tragornians on board tell them that Murtag is a blind mystic that even the Dalt'Enn fear. Their curiosity takes them past Fort Blood but soon the lookouts spot a smaller ship approaching. Blant Farrand sends out Fluck to investigate. He turns to Kheltar, the Tragornian leader, and hands him the blade called Slayer.

The vessel is manned by seven Dalt'Enn and seems to be sailing itself. Six of the dark elves prepare flaming arrows whilst a seventh stands in a pentacle and prepares a summoning. The Eagle increases speed as the fifty Tragornian warriors on board prepare to storm the enemy vessel. Graz Tak slips Illeum's Pommel onto the hilt of the demonic Blade of Pain and awaits the fight.

Suddenly without warning two Dalt'Enn swordsmen [teleport](#) on deck and surprise the party. Their blades bounce harmlessly off Vetrick ([stoneskin](#)) an Asharoki ranger who joined them in Villius and the Dalt'Enn realise that their surprise was in vain.

Blant casts [glitterdust](#) as his friends attack. Mangas casts [grease](#) on the first warrior who slips into Hokaru's Devil's Bane and is killed instantly. Graz Tak is upon the second warrior who is outclassed as the thief drives the demonic blade deep into his heart. The Dalt'Enn howls with inhuman pain as the demonic blade consumes his soul.

The Tragornians are almost alongside the Dalt'Enn vessel. The summoner summons a demon onto the deck of the Eagle. The party are experienced with demons and realise that the Dalt'Enn sorcerer has called a powerful four-armed katana-wielding monster from the Plane of Combat. Blant Farrand casts [fireball](#) at the demonologist but the pentacle protects him. Hokaru summons three [ghouls](#) onto the Dalt'Enn ship to help the fight there.

As the demon of combat takes material form Blant casts [fly](#) and leaves the ship. Mangas also [levitates](#) out of harms way leaving just two men; Hokaru and Vetrick, to face the dangerous demon. The Tragornians swarm the Dalt'Enn ship led by Graz Tak whose only thought is to deal with the demonologist. The dark elves are outnumbered and outclassed as the Tragornian barbarians hack the six warriors to pieces.

Meanwhile on the Eagle Hokaru casts [pentacle of protection](#) at his feet but the demon destroys it with little effort. Suddenly the Darklander faces a rapidly moving katanas, he parries two but one crashes against his [stoneskin](#).

Graz Tak uses the demonic Blade of Pain to destroy the sorcerer's pentacle before nonchalantly taking out his soul with a single strike. He leaves the Tragornians to their bloodlust as they rip apart the bodies of their enemies. The thief spies Vetrick and Hokaru in hand to hand with the powerful demon and rushes to their aid. The demon turns aside every attack from the Asharoki and the Darklander and presses its advantage against the two men.

Graz Tak is upon it within seconds. Before the demon realises there is a new attacker Graz drives the Blade of Pain deep into its back and takes its soul.

With the fight over quickly the Tragornians start to cheer. Not one of their number was even damaged during the fight. Blant Farrand descends to examine the sorcerer, he spies a magical cloak but when he reaches for it his soul is attacked by a demon. Luckily Blant recoils from the attack and decides to use a large stick to remove the cloak.

That night they approach the Lost Isle close to the fishing village of Picket. An elf with a lantern on the shore gains their attention. Blant, Graz Tak, Hokaru, Mangas and Vetrick go ashore to greet him. He is called Almas and reveals that he is an Elenorian abandoned here by his father some years ago. Blant casts [ESP](#) and discovers that Almas is truthful although desperate to return to Grayhawk. He agrees to lead them to Murtag's Tower.

Breakfast in Picket. Later Blant writes a [fly](#) spell and Mangas absorbs it into his repertoire. Hokaru and Blant then cast [fly](#) on the entire party – including Almas – and head off to the tower. Fluck goes out on reconnaissance and discovers that the only entrance is two thousand feet up in the clouds where he spots a study, a fire and a man sitting warming his feet.

The party invite themselves in to the study. Murtag is apparently blind and each sorcerer senses a powerful magic surge from the old man. Murtag explains that he is a master of the Paths and gives them tidbits of information regarding the Dalt'Enn, the prophecy of the Death Dealer and the role of Malakar in their quest.

He proves to be mysterious, misleading and each member of the party senses he is hiding something. They press him further regarding the nature of his skill. Murtag explains that he can see where their fates lie but if he revealed them he would be blind to them from that point onwards. Hokaru and the others become increasingly suspicious about the man and his motives. Despite his power Murtag is evasive and difficult, he constantly sidesteps direct questions and his answers are vague to the point of being awkward.

Soon Hokaru has had enough. He executes the fluid and mesmerising *ai-draw*- the Darkland skill of sudden explosive attack. Devil's Blade cuts deep into Murtag's skull and gorges itself on his blood. In that instant Hokaru has an awful realisation; Murtag is actually Malakar!

Graz Tak responds with a similar fluid speed. He lightning draws the Blade of Pain and bites deep into the soul of a god. He too realises that the energy he draws is that of Malakar but the momentum is impossible to stop now.

Malakar staggers back in pain – more pain than he has ever felt in his short life – his blood sucked out by a devilish blade and his soul in tatters. Exquisite, awesome, overwhelming pain he stumbles back unable to co-ordinate himself, he staggers into a chair and falls. Hokaru hits him a second time, a ferocious strike that caves in the side of his face; bone, blood and teeth fly across the room as Malakar tries – in vain – to recover his senses.

It is Vetrick, the Asharoki ranger, who delivers the decisive strike. A blade rammed into the side of Malakar's temple causes the god to disappear in a cloud of vaporious gas; banished from Grayhawk for one hundred years.

Immediately the tower begins to collapse under them. Luckily the [fly](#) spells are still running and each man leaps into the air as the dark tower of Murtag implodes to create a huge crater beneath them as if the earth swallowed every last lump of rock.

The party, still reeling from their surprise attack on the dark god, walk into Picket and sense something is wrong. Moored out to sea is the Eagle is still and silent. Bodies float on the water around it.

They realise as they fly onto deck that the entire crew and all the Tragornians are dead, their bodies littered around. Thousands of snakes are leaving the deck after their killing spree. Each member of the crew bitten hundreds of times. Even those with [stoneskin](#) have succumbed to the multiple snake bites.

Hokaru summons four [ghouls](#) to clear the snakes from the ship.

Before long the crewless demonic ship heads towards the Red Isle with the Asharoki, Vetrick, at the helm. Fluck spots a circle of eight monolithic standing stones in the wastelands of the Red Isle. The smouldering volcano is in the background, a pall of black smoke on the horizon.

The party walk into the standing stones. Mangas [identifies](#) them as the Circle of the Planes. Once inside the circle the sound of the outside is muted. The sorcerer then casts [find familiar](#) and waits. Before long a wolf appears from the north western monolith. It bounds up to Mangas and with the telepathic speech of the wolf introduces itself as Higord. The wolf explains that he comes from Limbo, one of the Outer Planes, and was confronted with a portal which he decided to enter...the call of Mangas was too intriguing to ignore.

Higord ranges out into the wastelands with Mangas peering through its eyes. Before long the wolf shadows a lone figure. A robed and hooded Dalt'Enn stalks the party.

Mangas knows instinctively that the figure is Lord Dread.

The Battle for the Lost Isles

Dec 25th – 28th, cy 4850

The robed figure shadowing the party as they take refuge in the Circle of the Planes can only be Lord Dread, king of the Dalt'Enn. Morikand moves towards him with Vetrick by his side. Graz Tak flanks both men his longbow poised and ready for action.

One hundred yards away from the Dalt'Enn sorcerer and Morikand can sense demons. They stop and talk to the dark elf. Lord Dread wants peace but on his terms. Morikand and Vetrick do not trust him and the conversation is dominated by Lord Dread's need to get Morikand off the Lost Isles and the *secret* he hid from Malakar all these years. "There are two distinct Paths," he tells them, "two possible eventualities that Amarel has seen. In one you sail away from these islands and leave us to our own fate. But there is a second Path where you – the Death Dealer – step onto Acrimea and we face obliteration and death."

Mangas casts a [wall of ice](#) around himself inside the Circle of the Planes whilst Blant Farrand and Hokaru join Morikand and discuss their next move. When Lord Dread informs them that he has their ship – the Eagle – and will not release it until they are

three days away from the Lost Isles Morikand realises there is only one course of action. He advances the Dalt'Enn.

Graz Tak launches an arrow, which disappears instantly as it gets within ten feet of Lord Dread. Blant [summons](#) a troglodyte and sends it against their enemy and Hokaru sends two [ghouls](#) against him as well. Behind these creatures the party advance on Lord Dread. As Hokaru gets close he realises that Lord Dread has made no footprints in the snow; the sorcerers suspect a [projected image](#).

At this moment Lord Dread hurls a devastating [lightning bolt](#) at the attackers that catches Hokaru in the face. Not even Archibald's Shirt can protect him as powerful energy consumes his flesh. Even Devil's Bane, Illeum's powerful katana, is fried by Lord Dread's magic.

The party recoil in horror. Blant and Morikand cast [invisibility](#) as the summoned troglodyte is torn to pieces by an unseen demon protecting the [projected image](#). Blant [summons](#) another creature (a lizard man) to recover Hokaru's corpse and he immediately starts to take items from it, most notably the Necras Ring which he puts on.

As soon as Morikand and Blant get close the [projected image](#) disappears.

They return to the Circle of the Planes where Morikand creates the largest pentacle he has ever attempted. It fills the diameter of the entire circle (one hundred and twenty foot diameter) and he prepares to cast. Mangas sends Higord, his [familiar](#), out before Morikand summons a demon from the Plane of Storms. He is disappointed by the result so he banishes it immediately.

Suddenly a demon appears from nowhere. A huge lion with dangerous claws and a slavering mouth it leaps at the nearest soul. Graz Tak is equal to it. He strikes it once with the Blade of Pain; demon meets demon as Graz's awesome attack cuts a gaping hole from the lion's shoulder to its hip. A fountain of blood erupts into the air but the demon is dust before it hits the ground.

Blant calls for rest to recover his – and the other sorcerers – strength. After an uneventful night they head for the second stone circle depicted on their map.

On the way they are joined by Orbelain, an eldrow warrior, and before long they come upon the huge skeleton of a dragon half buried in the volcanic ash. Mangas, the Muhaki scholar, informs them that the skeleton was once a Storm Dragon – a species that supposedly died out three thousand years earlier. Blant and Morikand discuss the possible implications of this hypothesising that the Lost Isles are somehow suspended in time.

The second circle is slightly smaller and the stones are rougher and appear older than those of the Circle of the Planes. Again Mangas casts [identify](#) – the Temporal Wheel. He informs them that they are standing at the very spot where Prometheus – the Creator of the Universe – created Time itself.

Morikand creates a pentacle inside the Temporal Wheel. A pentacle of travel. His idea is to travel to the Abyss and from there he will attempt to travel in similar fashion to the pentacle he has on his ship, the Eagle. Although there is scepticism the rest of the party do not have a better plan so they agree to face the perils of the Abyss.

The ritual by Morikand creates a pair of double doors that he opens to swirling black mists. "The Plane of Fortresses," the demonologist informs them. He leaps inside and the party follow quickly before the huge doors close behind them.

A dark, damp prison cell greets them. Blant illuminates the room with his lantern and the realisation that there is no magic here hits them hard. The doors are impenetrable and only a small grate separates them from the remainder of the prison; through it they see endless corridors and a myriad of demonic creatures keeping guard.

Before the panic sets in Morikand calmly starts to draw a pentacle of travel. Even with no contact with the Layers of Magic Morikand Bitchpiss – the Death Dealer – knows how to manipulate the Abyss. Once created he warns the party that when – if – they manage to travel back to their ship the Dalt'Enn will wait in ambush. He opens another portal, this time there is a wreath of fire around the threshold but Morikand does not hesitate. The party draw weapons and rush through.

The pentacle at the bottom of the ship is well known to them all. As their impossible journey reaches the Eagle the party find themselves surrounded by enemies and are forced to react quickly. Three Dalt'Enn sorcerers sit at the edge of the pentacle, a dark watch accompanied by three demons they have summoned. Kramnas is a squat humanoid with a deadly three-headed axe, Ulaya is a veiled woman with a katana and Spike is a powerful orc with a demonic spear.

The first Dalt'Enn sorcerer casts [death spell](#) on Graz Tak. The thief buckles under the awful damage but stays on his feet despite the terrible pain. Kramnas swings the dreadful axe at Mangas and shatters the sorcerer's skull into several gore-soaked pieces. Spike thrusts the spear into the midriff of Orbelain and the eldrow howls in agony as the demonic orc feeds on his soul. Orbelain staggers back weakened by the awful wound.

Morikand tries to [banish](#) Ulaya but fails and decides to unstopper the vial that will release Voahas, the deadly demon of combat. The party recover quickly and press their attack. Orbelain, despite the close quarter combat, lets fly a short bow arrow that fells one of the Dalt'Enn and spoils his next spell. Graz Tak, full of rage, drives the Blade of Pain deep into the guts of one of the sorcerers and destroys his soul. Vetrick trades blows with the deadly Ulaya and, incredibly, manages to ram his magical blade into the side of her head and destroy her.

Blant Farrand has seen enough. He [polymorphs](#) into a sparrow and tries to find an escape route. The only one he can see is above him, an opening that takes him into their sleeping quarters...he cannot fail to hear the voices of other Dalt'Enn above.

Orbelain draws sword and shield, much better suited for close quarter combat. The arrival of Voahas and his deadly swordmanship alters the focus of the battle. Kramnas turns to face the new enemy and backs off when he realises what – and whom – he

faces. Vohaas's katana weaves a mesmerising pattern in front of Kramnas and the demon does not even see the blade that ends his life. Vohaas turns to Morikand, his sharp eyes know what to expect, the demonologist re-stoppers the vial and the demon of combat vanishes.

Vetrik and Morikand engage the orc. Their unarmed tactics of catching the sword arm of their opponent frustrates and hinders the demon that struggles to overcome their tactics. Graz Tak finishes off the last sorcerer and he and Orbelain turn their attention to the commotion above.

Blant flies up to the rafters of the sleeping quarters and, unseen, returns to human form. Four Dalt'Enn sorcerers prepare to launch spells into the fight below but Blant is quickest. He casts [web](#) and firmly entangles three of the Dalt'Enn; without their arms they cannot cast and they panic but the more they struggle the more they become entangled. One of them is only partially entangled and is able to cast a spell. Before he can launch it Orbelain hits him in the thigh and opens a massive gash...the sorcerer gives up the notion of casting and concentrates on stopping the torrent of blood.

Vetrick manages to slay Spike and after Morikand hits the bleeding sorcerer with a [ray of enfeeblement](#) Graz Tak decapitates the man.

After Blant ties up the three Dalt'Enn sorcerers silence returns to the Eagle once more. It is soon evident that they are alone. It is also evident that the ship is moored next to the impressive marble walls of Dalt'Ara – the great ruined citadel of their enemies.

Blant Farrand restores [stoneskin](#) to the entire party whilst Morikand goes about the business of restoring the demonic influence to the ship. He summons and subsequently binds a demon from the Plane of Tides to his ship. Then he turns his attention to Orbelain, the problem of his damaged soul is one Morikand thinks he can solve. He creates a pentacle of summoning and places Orbelain's greataxe into it.

From the Plane of Blades he brings forth a demon. "You will aid the wielder!" Morikand says sternly, "and it drawing from an enemy's soul you will grant that healing to the wielder." With those words Morikand forces the demon into the greataxe.

He then leads Orbelain to one of the three Dalt'Enn prisoners. The eldrow strikes the prisoner once and slays him, as he leaves the blade inside the corpse Orbelain feels himself recover, his soul fortified by the bound demon.

Morikand stands on deck to survey the citadel. Five hundred feet above him he sees the robed figure of Amarel the Mystic...

The Palace of Dread

Dec 29th – 30th

The Eagle is moored to the deserted wharf of the ruined citadel of Dalt'Ara, the home of the dark elven race led by Lord Dread. Morikand Bitchpiss can still see the mystic,

Amarel, high above him on the outer city walls. "Before we go in we need to be prepared," he says, "with both protection and weapons."

Down in the hold he gathers his companions and prepares to summon demons into their weapons and armour. First he summons a demon from the Plane of Blades into Vetrik's greatsword, binding it to aid the wielder as well as draw out the soul of an opponent. Next he turns to Gila, a Muhaki martial artist that has joined them, into his studded leather armour he binds a Fortress demon and into his quarterstaff he binds a Combat demon.

Orbelain gets a Fortress demon bound into his chainmail armour but it is only when he tries to summon a demon from the Plane of War that Morikand and the party have problems. A six-armed monstrosity will not be bound into his leather glove and a battle ensues. Blant casts [*glitterdust*](#) from the room above as the party clash violently with the demon.

When things look to be getting out of hand Morikand un stoppers the vial he was given by Malakar and Vohaas begins to emerge in the hold. Before the powerful demon can materialise Vetrik – armed with his heavily augmented greatsword – cuts through his opponents flailing defences and the greatsword consumes its soul quickly. When he wrenches the blade free there is only dust remaining of the demon.

Morikand is, as usual, one step ahead of Vohaas. As the demon of Combat draws his nodachi the demonologist calmly stoppers the vial and he vanishes back into the prison of Malakar's making.

Eventually Morikand manages to bind a demon from the Plane of Combat into his leather glove (right hand) and the party are now ready to face the citadel and Lord Dread himself. Gila informs them all that the date is profoundly important. Although the Grayhawkian calendar is on the verge of becoming common year 4851 (at midnight this night) the *actual* date in terms of this universe is ten thousand years since Prometheus first created time.

All night the sounds of guttural screams emanates from within the citadel. Morikand knows instinctively what is happening; Lord Dread is sacrificing his own people in order to summon demonic help.

Blant casts [*stoneskin*](#) on Gila as Morikand leads his companions onto the wharf. Amarel, the Dalt'Enn mystic who has watched them for nearly twenty four hours, disappears behind the high walls. The streets are deserted. All buildings lie in ruins, dilapidated and fallen, not even the rats have stayed in the emptiness of Dalt'Ara. The only building that shows any evidence of life is the black marble walls of the palace of Lord Dread.

The power of the demonic influence can be felt by all of the party (even those not versed in magic) but Morikand closes in casting [*project image*](#) and [*invisibility*](#) in the process. On the well maintained lawns the party can see six pentacles. Perched on a tower high above them sits a huge purple and brown dragon that stares down at them with piercing red eyes.

The Soul Compass merely spins wildly and Morikand is forced to trust his instincts and his skills as a demonologist. At the threshold of the palace he [summons](#) a demon from the Plane of Combat to go on ahead; he suspects that the pentacles will be triggered when movement is detected nearby. The demon is sent into toward the first pentacle and sure enough his fears are realised. A demon leaps from the nearest circle.

But Morikand recognises the slender Darklander that emerges. It is Vohaas! The demonic swordsman makes light work of the demon Morikand has summoned; three quick strikes and the demon of Combat is gone.

"Greetings, Morikand, I have been waiting for you. My name is Arrakaas."

The realisation that this demon is not Vohaas but his twin brother is a great relief. Morikand takes a gamble and unstopper the vial for the second time that day; when Vohaas emerges the two demons face each other. It is obvious that there is a deep hatred between these two and Morikand quickly urges the party on beyond the ensuing fight.

As they reach the next pentacle a second demon leaps out and confronts them; a darkly beautiful elven woman called Harrakara. She smiles at them and weaves her magical charms upon them all. The whole group lunge at her apart from Vetrik who is completely disarmed by her beauty. Graz Tak, master thief and master swordsman, is not beguiled. He executes the perfect reverse strike on the demon that opens a wound from her groin to her shoulder. Her screams echo around the open palace as she is sent back to the Abyss.

As they head for the next pentacle Vohaas and his brother Arrakaas exchange the initial blows. Steel on steel rings out around the palace. Blant stares back and cannot even see the rapidly moving blades.

The next demon that leaps out at them is almost fifteen feet tall with gangling limbs and a vacant expression. Ykrik is from Havoceum, the Plane of Havoc; Morikand seems to know instinctively what the demons are called and where they come from although he hasn't got time to study why.

Ykrik is instantly attacked, although Orbelain is mesmerised by the chaotic creature and aims a blow – mistakenly – at Gila the Muhaki. This demon proves little problem for the party; Graz Tak brutally slaughters it with a powerful strike through the midriff.

Another demon of Combat is summoned to go forth and, once again, another one of Lord Dread's demons leaps out to face them. Ulhara is a tall humanoid with six tentacles protruding from it instead of arms. It wraps them around the demon of Combat and squeezes the soul from the attacker. As it sets itself to attack the party Morikand is half a step ahead of his companions. He launches a demonic throwing dagger so skillfully that it punctures the eye of the unsuspecting Ulhara and destroys its soul. Yet another is sent back to the Abyss.

Morikand continues his instant [summoning](#) and sends a demon of Combat up to the next pentacle, triggering it like the ones before it. A slender robed figure emerges with

a pair of flickering daggers in his hands. As the Combat demon lunges Lord Dread's demon slits its throat easily and stands before the party to taunt them. "I am Kazzar from Androlyne (the Plane of Killers) and I know you Morikand Death Dealer. I will slay you last!"

Kazzar leaps at the party who are taken aback by his speed and power. Graz aims a few blows that are easily turned aside; in fact Kazzar proves an elusive opponent and a quick one with a knife. His twin daggers flicker in and out of sight as they shift from the Astral Plane to the Ethereal Plane in his hand. Gila is the first victim of the terrible blades, as the icy steel plunges beyond the *stoneskin* the Muhaki's strength is drained. Gila falls unconscious to the ground. Orbelain is next to fall to the icy blades and he too falls unconscious as his strength is sapped.

Graz Tak realises that Kazzar is a killer. But he too knows the art of death and when the demon makes a small mistake Graz puts the Blade of Pain through his ribcage and consumes its soul instantly.

With two of their number down Morikand and Blant Farrand discuss their next move. With only one pentacle left they are concerned about activating that before they continue. Despite this the dragon still looms above them and the two twin demons continue to exchange blows in one corner of the palace. The consensus is to lure the final demon from the last pentacle.

Morikand summons yet another demon of Combat and draws out a shambling mess of rotting flesh and vegetation, the putrid stench is almost unbearable. Grudger is from the Plane of the Fetid and dismisses Morikand's demon with little effort. But Morikand is not without talent and throws his own power at the shambling beast. Grudger vanishes in an instant.

Blant meanwhile has studied the two unconscious friends but is unable to resuscitate them. "They're out cold but still alive."

Morikand turns his attention to the dragon that looms above him. He instinctively knows the creature is called Trillz the Dark, a powerful demonic force from the Plane of Dragons; the force of the demon's soul is overwhelming.

Morikand tries to bind Trillz into a service for him but the price is too much for Morikand. "I want the two unconscious souls," Trillz says, "give me them and I will aid you Death Dealer." But the demonologist will not pay *that* price and decides that Trillz must be dealt with. He prepares to summon another demon to deal with the dragon.

Meanwhile Blant and Graz Tak watch the two demons, Vohaas and Arrakaas, who are in stalemate as they match each other blow for blow. Graz Tak casts a scroll of *magic missile* at Arrakaas in an attempt to give his brother a small advantage. Unfortunately the missiles cannot penetrate their innate magic resistance.

Blant, Graz and Vetrik take the unconscious men into the shelter of the Great Hall where Morikand gathers himself for yet another summoning. This time he stretches his power to the Plane of Slaves and forces a demon through to aid him. Ritual

summoning is safer than the instant summoning spells but there is not time for that so Morikand chances his arm. As soon as the corpulent, bald-headed demon appears Morikand knows he is in for a struggle.

In its massive arms the demon holds manacles and a spiked collar.

"More slaves I see!" booms the Slave Lord as he casts a casual glance over the two unconscious warriors, Blant Farrand, Vetrik and Graz Tak. He stands almost fifteen feet tall and looms over Morikand, his eyes pure red with hatred. He rattles the chains dangerously before the demonologist's eyes...

Victory

Dec 31 - cy 4850

The massive slave lord from the Plane of Slaves towers above the party as they shelter in the lee of the Atrium. Blant Farrand is already over his two unconscious companions – Gila and Orbelain – and it is to Orbelain he turns to first. After a telepathic conversation with Illeum Runesabre Blant knows exactly what he must do. With Illeum's ring (Necras) he places his hand on Orbelain's forehead and pours strength and vitality into the warrior. He moves next to Gila and within seconds both men return to consciousness.

Meanwhile the slave lord tries to ensnare Morikand with a set of demonic manacles. Graz Tak and Vetrik attack the beast as Morikand's initial *binding* fails. The slave lord parries Graz with the chains and the Blade of Pain is temporarily stuck in the links. Instead of struggling to free the blade Graz Tak tries to use the situation to his advantage by thrusting his longsword through and into the demon. When Morikand catches a backhand swipe with a set of manacles he is able to hinder the slave lord's defences.

It is all the opportunity Graz Tak needs; the thief slams the blade through the chains and up into beast's skull – obliterating its soul.

Above them Trillz the Dark, the mighty demonic dragon, applauds. The party are eager to descend into the palace and find Lord Dread. The sound of Vohaas and Arrakaas duelling reverberates around the palace walls, Blant leaves Fluck behind to keep an eye on them.

There is a demonic door at the base of the tallest tower and Gila smashes it down with his quarterstaff. They see a spiral staircase leading up to the dragon and down into the bowels of the palace. They move down.

Before long the heat becomes oppressive. The air is thick and sulphurous. Eventually they reach the lower level of Lord Dread's palace, a balcony perched on the ceiling of a vast underground cavern. From their vantage point almost one hundred feet above the ground they see a grim picture.

The floor is cracked and in places lava bubbles up in small rivulets causing immense heat; the room resembles the inside of a furnace. Two large raised areas contain pentacles and a third directly below them contains a third circle. The bodies of the Dalt'Enn litter the room, their hearts ripped out as sacrifices for their craven leader Lord Dread. The emaciated, gaunt demonologist sits in the furthest pentacle and directs two demons to attack the party.

The demon directly below them is Gaxar, a huge powerfully built humanoid that stands almost twenty feet tall and has eyes that are the deepest crimson. The other pentacle contains a man-sized demon wearing a cloak and cowl that covers any facial features; only the deep red eyes of a powerful demon are visible – Adral from the Plane of Abomination.

Graz Tak is the first to react. He reads a scroll of [dispel magic](#) and aims it at Lord Dread himself but the spell fails to affect him. Morikand hurls a dagger at the lumbering Gaxar, a demonic blade that sinks deep into the beast's breastbone and causes a roar of pain that shakes the balcony and causes it to vibrate dangerously. Gaxar springs upward and his huge hands reach the balcony. He swings like an oversized ape and tries to pull himself up to get to the party. Morikand launches a second demonic dagger that thunders into the beast and destroys its soul. As Gaxar falls one of Morikand's demonic blades falls into the lava.

At that instant Adral, the robed demon, [teleports](#) onto the balcony and is amongst them. His initial attack is to try to embrace Graz with his black cloak but the thief avoids any contact with the chilling demon. He raises the Blade of Pain and with a deft backhand strike destroys the demon efficiently.

Morikand leaps off the balcony and casts [polymorph self](#) in mid air; he becomes an eagle and descends to pick up his demonic dagger, an heirloom from his father. Orbelain abseils down to the ground careful to avoid the fissures and the lava. Only Lord Dread remains and they close in on him.

Lord Dread summons a demon from the Plane of Combat to face Morikand and Orbelain. An ambidextrous swordsman with two black longswords stands between them and Lord Dread but the momentum of the fight is with the party. Orbelain ducks under a vicious strike from the demon and slams Conduct – his massive greataxe – under the demon's defenses. The blade crushes the demon's skull and Orbelain forces it down through its body before the beast is consumed.

Above them Vetrik launches arrows at Lord Dread but a magical protection stops every single shaft. Graz resorts to arrows after casting the last of his [dispel magic](#) scrolls but he too cannot penetrate the protection.

Morikand casts [dispel magic](#) and the protective circle around Lord Dread collapses. Without these the desperate Dalt'Enn is vulnerable. Blant hits him with a [fireball](#) shortly after Graz casts a scroll of [fireball](#) and Lord Dread smoulders under the attack.

Orbelain bears down on Lord Dread. He leaps into the pentacle and is met by a devastating [death spell](#) – a magic so powerful it can obliterate the soul in seconds. Conduct glows and vibrates in the warrior's hands; the power it has consumed up to

that point takes the brunt of the spell. Lord Dread is spent; the last hope gone he faces the dark elf's anger.

Orbelain makes it quick. Conduct smashes Dread's skull to pieces and the battle is over.

The party congregates around the fallen body, realising that Lord Dread had used every inch of power, sacrificed every item of power and value to stop them. His ruined broken body a frail imitation of a once powerful elf. Next to him lies a silver platter with a charred cloth covering something hidden. As soon as Blant removes the cloth he realises it is a mistake.

The severed head of Malkar is underneath!

Even in death there is a dread power in the dead god's visage. Orbelain takes the full power of the gaze and his limbs solidify and turn to stone before his horrified companions.

Gila is heading up the staircase for the top of the tower. Despite the sound of combat from the palace lawns (Vohaas and Arrakaas) he does not realise that the scene outside is an illusion. He feels the cold steel of a nodachi against his throat. Blood pools around his feet, the demon Vohaas hobbles into view, its face cut and ruined, its body carrying vicious-looking scars from its brother's blade.

"I want you to get me the vial," he says.

Gila will not be bullied however and accepts only on his own terms. "I will promise on my soul but I will not let you possess me."

Vohaas nods his agreement and the two descend the spiral staircase. When Gila presents himself at the top of the balcony the party can all see the damaged demon behind him. As Vohaas leaps to the ground and advances Blant Farrand backs away in fear, his companions follow suit. Only Morikand advances calmly.

Vohaas can barely walk and has many bad wounds but there is a terrible determination in his eyes as he bears down on the man who has held him captive for months, the nodachi held loose. Even half dead Vohaas is one of the universe's best swordsmen.

Morikand lets the vial slip from his grasp and crushes the delicate glass under his boot. Vohaas stops moving, his dark eyes narrow and his face betrays a stunned expression. In that one movement the demonologist has set Vohaas – from the Plane of Disjunction – free.

"Your service to me is done," Morikand says calmly.

"I will never forget this Morikand Death Dealer," Vohaas says, "but you are wrong. I will come to your aid whenever you call but I will not be bound; my services to you in future will be as friend. The name of Morikand Death Dealer will be well known in the Abyss."

Blant recovers himself and moves forward with the covered head of Malkar. At the right moment he displays it full in the face of Vohaas hoping to turn it to stone. The demon snatches it contemptuously from Blant's grasp. "His gaze in life could not harm me; nor can his dead eyes...this will adorn my new palace as a trophy and as a reminder of my captivity."

"One more service is required of you," says Graz Tak – master thief – to Vohaas. "Our companion Orbelain, the slayer of Lord Dread, requires help. Is there anything you can do for him?"

Vohaas nods and [teleports](#) the statue away. When Orbelain feels life rush into his bones once more he faces the massive jaws of Trillz, the demonic dragon lips his lips. "You have brought me a tasty soul!" he says. But with a simple gesture Vohaas sends Trillz back to the Abyss before he himself disappears.

Orbelain sighs with relief. He stares around at the quiet city. Fluck hovers around him and something catches his eye moving on the battlemented walls of the palace. Amarel, Dalt'Enn mystic, the last of her race, stares at him. He raises a short bow but the woman does not flinch; as if she has already seen and accepted her Fate. Orbelain's arrow hits her in the face and she is dead long before she crashes to the palace floor below.

As Orbelain meets his companions at the base of the tower they realise that the New Year – cy 4851 – is only seconds away. Blant and Vetrik suggest getting to the circle called the Temporal Wheel. At once Blant gathers them all round and casts [teleport](#).

As the New Year arrives the party stand in the centre of the Temporal Wheel...they are not alone. A woman in a white gown stands before them; her appearance reminds them of the striking face of the god Malkar. Lady Elena bows respectfully to them all.

"You have done the world a favour this day," she says, "and the attention of all of Grayhawk is upon you. I will ascend to care for my brother and try to channel his hatred into something constructive. With the gods elsewhere Grayhawk will be left to people like you; through the various pantheons we will give guidance to its people but essentially you are now Grayhawk's future.

"The tales of this day will be told far and wide. For what its worth you have my blessing and my love."

"Tell me one thing gracious lady," Graz says politely, "where did Lord Dread obtain Malkar's head?"

"It was given to him by Muziel," she says. "Malkar and the Echeron lord were at the Gates of Limbo when Valadain Raikos and his half brother Illeum Runesabre came to do battle. The tale of the Godslayer is well documented but what is not known is that Muziel stole the body of my father and fled south, fearing reprisals from the Godslayer.

"He offered Lord Dread the head of Malkar and claimed refuge on the Lost Isles. As the years past Malakar grew into his new role of godhead but realised there was a

growing threat in the southern islands. He usurped the wizard and took on the mantle of Murgat in the tower so that he could keep an eye on developments on Acrimea.

"Muziel realised this and fled but Malakar was consumed with the idea of retrieving his father's body. That is the point in the tale where you came in..."

As the party ponder the goddesses words she moves out of the Temporal Wheel and vanishes...

Homeward Bound

Cy 4851 Janos 1st – 16th

It is the first day of the new year. Morikand and his companions discuss time in the very location where Prometheus – the Creator – created Time itself. The demonologist [*polymorphs*](#) into a seagull and flies back to his demonic ship – the Eagle – which is moored at the ruined citadel of Dalt'Ara. When he arrives he finds a strange note pinned to the wheel; "Push these two buttons...The Shader."

Curious about the note he follows the instructions and is astonished when the ship lumbers out of the water. He experiments with the wheel and finds he can levitate the ship to any height and, furthermore, *sail* the ship through the air. He heads back to the Red Isle with the ship one hundred feet off the ground.

Before long he reaches his companions and there is a brief discussion regarding The Shader. Vetrik seems to know something about it but is reluctant to reveal what he knows at that time. The party decide to head back to Bretonia where they have been invited – via Blant's Necras ring – to meet Illeum Runesabre. Before they left the war in Bretonia dominated the northern landscape and the two powerful leaders, Illeum and Korven, found themselves in stalemate.

Morikand steers the ship back into the sea and sails north back to towards Grayhawk.

Morikand is in the summoning room with Vetrik, Graz Tak and Orbelain and has promised them demonic augmentations to their weapons. The first demon is from the Plane of Combat, a ritual summoning that allows Morikand to bind it before it fully materialises on the plane. This attempt, like many he has tried, fails and the shadowy demonic warrior is now whole and wields two massive greataxes – one in either hand.

The fight is ugly. After a few failed attacks the demon is finally cut down by Graz and the dangerous Blade of Pain, the demonic longsword that is adorned with Illeum's Pommel.

After waiting a short time to recover their composure Morikand reaches once more into the Plane of Combat, he wants to bind a demon into Vetrik's longbow. As soon as the demon begins to materialise the demonologist knows it is powerful, he can feel the tiny hairs stand to attention at the back of his neck and the chill sensation that races down his spine.

Bestrand the Clown appears as a juggling fool. The four balls he keeps in the air are pure black primal power...The Void. Morikand launches a throwing dagger at the clown but the merest touch of the dark globes obliterates the dagger, it is unmade before their eyes!

Panic sets in. Graz Tak does not even think about the danger and tries to strike the demon with the Blade of Pain. Luckily for him his aim is bad and the blade hits nothing but fresh air. Vetrik casts [trip](#) and to their amazement the clown Bestrand falls to the floor. It is all the distraction they need and Graz Tak drives the Blade of Pain into the clown and takes its soul.

Morikand takes a short break and decides to postpone his attempts in favour of less harrowing demons. His studies have led to the discovery of a plane ruled by an arch demon called Gresil. Gresil has a massive library and hoards books and tomes from all over the universe...this intrigues Morikand so he summons from Gresil's plane (the Library Plane).

A humanoid demon wearing full plate armour and carrying a spear materialises. Agrakar is one of Gresil's guards and this time Morikand does not attempt to bind it.

"I need permission to enter the Plane of Libraries," the demonologist says, "tell your master I seek study."

"Of course Morikand Death Dealer," Agrakar says, "I will convey your request immediately." The demon vanishes and Morikand decides to rest further before any more summoning.

Meanwhile Graz Tak starts to teach Orbelain how to dodge blows, The ship continues north on its way to Grayhawk.

Next morning Morikand gathers Vetrik, Orbelain and Graz Tak as he tries to summon more demons. The first attempt to bring a demon from the Plane of Combat is successful this morning; as soon as it appears Morikand [binds](#) it into Vetrik's longbow. Next he [binds](#) a demon from the Plane of Dreams into Vetrik's helmet before he summons a demon from the Plane of Winds into a throwing dagger to replace the one he lost earlier.

Finally he binds another demon from the Plane of Winds into Graz Tak's quiver, enabling any arrow within it to be imbued with magical properties. The next fourteen days are uneventful and calm in the southern seas. The southernmost tip of Nyrn can just be seen as Orbelain successfully learns the dodge skill from Graz Tak.

A ship heads out to them bearing the flag of Drenai, or at least some form of Drenai ensign. It is packed with soldiers, probably a patrol boat. The captain, Rofir, comes alongside the Eagle and with the agreement of Morikand steps aboard. Morikand shakes the man's hand but the [dominate person](#) spells fails to work. Rofir explains to them that there is an exclusion zone around *New Drenai*. The party listen as the captain of the Drenai ship explains how Gallor Galliath – now the self-proclaimed king of the new land – is driving the Nymnians north. Malakor, the largest citadel, has already fallen to the talented Drusor Luckwarden who controls Galliath's armies.

They discover that king Gralnadar is holed up in his last remaining city – Nyrnik – but the Drenai believe that they will soon have control over the whole of the large island. Morikand and Graz do not believe that Gallor Galliath has the official backing of the Drenai king back in the north.

Back on the Drenai patrol boat they spot a robed figure taking a keen interest in what is said. "That is Zadar," Rofir explains, "a spy...we are required to have one on board at all times."

Morikand invites Zadar on board who accepts the offer but immediately dismisses the captain back to his ship. Morikand casts *dominate person* and this time the spell succeeds and they are able to control the spy and get information from him. Graz Tak learns that Mercila, the spy in the Drenai enclave he consorted with before they left, is bearing his child. Furthermore he learns that she is Gallor Galliath's cousin. He decides to write a letter to her and hands it to Rofir.

Morikand leads the spy Zadar down to the summoning room and conjures up a demon from the Plane of Deception; he decides not to *bind* it as the creature stands side by side with the spy.

"I give you this soul and exactly one year to cause havoc," Morikand says.

The demon bows and steps into the body of Zadar the spy. "As you wish Lord Morikand," it says before boarding Rofir's ship and departing.

They set sail once more and head for the Gorat Sea. Their intention is to navigate the Gorat up as far as they can go and then use the ship to fly into the harbour of Erelain, where they can begin their search for Illeum Runesabre.

A day later Morikand summons Agrakar once more.

"Gresil is keen to make your acquaintance," the demon says. He produces a demonic coin and hands it to Morikand. Ever cautious the demonologist uses *unseen servant* to take the coin and after the demon vanishes he casts *identify* – it is called Gresil's Gate and Morikand believes it to be some portal opening device that will allow him access to the Library Plane.

Two days later, as the ship heads directly north up the Gorat Sea, a Nyrnian ship approaches. Again they let the vessel come close and the Nyrnian captain – Valdic – boards cautiously with a group of ten guards for company.

The man knows the names of Morikand and Graz Tak and the captain is keen to take a message back to the king of the Nyrnians. "I am certain his majesty would be interested in your arrival in our waters. Would you allow me get a message back to the king?"

Morikand nods. "Make it quick."

Captain Valdic hastily scribbles a note and ties it to the legs of a pigeon one of his men produces. He lets the bird fly into the bright morning sunshine and after a couple of minutes the bird heads straight for Nyrnik.

Vetrik watches the pigeon fly off until it vanishes. He knows only too well that the message – like all such messages – are being intercepted by Drusor Luckwarden.

Fatherhood

cy 4851 Janos 17th - 25th

As Valdic leaves Morikand's demonic ship a seagull swoops low and deposits a small parchment into the hands of Graz Tak. It is a very swift response to the letter he sent to Mercila, although when he opens it he realises it is from the newly-appointed, self-proclaimed king of the Isle of Nyrn. (Read it [here](#)).

The party discuss their original plan, which was to head north and find Illeum Runesabre, but the weight of responsibility sits heavily on Graz Tak's shoulders. "I must go to Malakor," he says, "and get to Mercila."

"Then I will go with you," Morikand says, "We all owe you too much to let you do this alone." He uses the soul compass to confirm she resides in the former capital of Nyrn – Malakor.

Vetrick is at the helm. The ranger lord is the only other person capable of sailing The Eagle. Morikand and Blant Farrand go below decks as they both research new spells they are creating. During this research Blant creates a [death spell](#) scroll and hands it to Graz.

Morikand and Blant are at the pentacle room at the bottom of the ship and the demonologist uses a pentacle of travel to reach Gresil's Library plane. The plane is dark and unwelcoming, a maze of twisting corridors full of bookshelves. It is impossible to see any roof as the two men stand, bewildered, amongst millions of ancient tomes. Eventually a small man approaches them, a pair of multi-coloured spectacles hang on the end of an unusually sharp nose. The demon resembles a kind old man but Morikand realises this is Gresil and on his own plane his power is immense.

Gresil is pleased to see Morikand. "Have you brought me a sacrifice?" he inquires eagerly peering at the wizard Blant.

"I'm afraid not," Morikand says, "But I have a gift for your archives instead." The demonologist hands over the journals of the explorer, Dax. Gresil is delighted and leads them to a reading room, a quiet secluded spot full of books. The demon hands them both a steaming brew and urges them to drink. Blant is reluctant but Morikand swigs it down heartily and begins to consume the knowledge all around him. Blant shrugs, realising that without the brew he will never unlock the secrets of the tomes around him...he swigs it down and begins to study.

After six days they are done. Gresil leads them to a vast hall where there is a large tome. "Will you sign my visitor's book?" he says opening it to reveal thousands of scribbled signatures (including the infamous arch demon Loramas). Morikand realises that to sign is a profound act but does so willingly. Blant signs himself *Brian* Farrand and smiles at Gresil triumphantly. Gresil's expression is unreadable but Blant Ferrand suspects the demon may have the last laugh.

When they return they are astonished to discover that only five seconds have elapsed on Grayhawk. On Morikand's instructions Vetrick sails the ship to the eastern edge of Nyrn where they face the shortest journey to the city of Malakor. Meanwhile Blant and Morikand put their efforts for the next six days into spell creation.

After four days Blant resigns himself to failure. Despite his careful research the spell he tried for is beyond him for now.

Two days later Morikand emerges triumphant from his study. *True Name* is born, his first new spell and he joins the select elite of living sorcerers that have created new sorcery.

That night Morikand takes the ship high into the clouds and *sails* it through the air to land in the Little Mala River. As dawn breaks the towers of Malakor can be seen as they navigate the narrow waterway towards the harbour. Fishermen, farmers and other travellers are stunned as they large vessel moves up the river. By the time the ship reaches the harbour the walls are lined with people eager to get a glimpse of the new arrival.

Soon a group of two hundred soldiers – mainly mercenaries wearing Drenai livery – are on the wharf. Styke, the Drenai harbourmaster, comes aboard and when he realises who they are sends out a runner immediately.

Before long a further three hundred guards appear, at their vanguard is a strikingly beautiful Drenai woman in flowing robes of pure black. Graz is first to meet her. She introduces herself as Funosi, the chancellor to the new king, and leads them up towards the palace.

The palace sits atop the biggest hill in the city, Gralnadar's old home, but now it resembles a fortress as Drenai soldiers line the walls. At the main palace building the party stop; the telltale heavy pressure on their minds can mean only one thing – the palace is cocooned in anti-magic. They enter despite this into a large heavily guarded hall with two massive staircases on either side that lead up to a second balcony room.

Stood by a large fire Gallor Galliath watches them as they approach, his keen eyes scrutinising each and every one of them carefully. The king of New Drenai is calm and welcomes them all with good grace, all except Graz Tak. There is an atmosphere between the two men and it is clear that Gallor Galliath is unhappy at his treatment of his niece (Mercila).

Eventually the king agrees to let Graz go alone to see Mercila. Funosi takes him to a private chamber with two elite guards outside. Mercila, full of tears, embraces Graz and clings onto him.

While Graz is away with Mercila Morikand, Vetrick and Blant work on Gallor Galliath. They eventually persuade him that the best place for Mercila would be the ship where the two sorcerers could study her unusual pregnancy carefully. Reluctantly Gallor agrees and soon they take Mercila, with Funosi along as guard, back to the ship.

Between them Vetrick and Morikand come up with a stroke of genius. As Funosi stands on deck talking with Vetrick about the ship the rest of the party descend to the summoning room where Morikand presents his plan to Graz.

"We will go to the Library of Gresil and spend however many months it takes until Mercila has the child. In Gresil's plane time seems to move differently and therefore we will return almost immediately back to our time."

Graz Tak is against the idea initially but eventually agrees and he, Mercila, Blant, Morikand and Orbelain are transported to the main hallway in Gresil's Plane. The bespectacled arch demon is friendly, particularly to Morikand and Blant, and is understanding to Graz's plight.

He takes Mercila to a special room where she is able to float around in a large pool full of warm water and fragrant scents. The Librarian shows the thief a pile of books on various topics from royal births to bloodlines and after drinking a sweet-tasting brew Graz begins to read.

Morikand and Blant know exactly how to use the Library and are soon buried amongst ancient tomes of magic as they continue to study their art.

Gresil leads Orbelain to another room. The warrior is suspicious of the demon but when he finds himself immersed in a room full of tomes and books he becomes interested. After sampling the brew Gresil says; "I see you are an exponent of the axe young man. Two books I recommend are *Salazain's Heavy Weapons* and *The Lore of the Large Blade*." Soon Orbelain is consuming knowledge.

After seven months Mercila has the child, a son with the eyes of his father and the face of the mother. Morikand takes his companions back to the ship. As soon as they are on Grayhawk he casts [forget](#) on Mercila but she is not affected by it. Blant casts [invisibility](#) on the child but the spell dissipates around it and fails. Even Blant's attempts at [ESP](#) do not affect the special child.

In Funosi's terms they have only been gone for seconds. When they emerge with the child the chancellor is visibly shaken, her face betrays her disbelief as she is forced to hurry after them after them. Morikand, Graz and the rest march into the palace.

Funosi takes a stiff drink at the palace. When Gallor Galliath sees them he too is shaken, his hands tremble as his niece proudly shows him the newest member of his family. "Gods teeth!" the king splutters. "What manner of power do you wield?"

The king wants to secure their services and after a brief discussion agrees that if they help take the last remaining city (Nyrnik) from Gralnadar he will give them the citadel

and allow them to set up a free city state. Gallor hands Vetrick a letter to give to Drusor Luckwarden.

Mercila remains with her uncle as Morikand and his companions take the Eagle up into the clouds. After two days they see Drusor's army of mercenaries below them. Morikand lowers the ship and the army scatters in fear. As he lands it in the river only one man is left within a thousand yards of the demonic ship.

Drusor Luckwarden is a large man, despite his greying hair and advancing years the two greatswords strapped to his back signifies a powerful man. He strides aboard the ship to receive the letter from Gallor Galliath.

"So you intend to walk into Nyrnik and take the city without a fight?" he says.
"Sounds like an interesting plan...I will be accompanying you of course, in case things get a little scary. The Nyrnians don't fight too well but there are enough of them to cause you some bother. Lead the way Morikand Bitchpiss..."

Abdication

Janos 26th – 27th

Drusor Luckwarden – the man who, with his mercenary army, has brought the kingdom of Nyrn to its knees – marches through the gate of the last citadel in control of King Gralnadar. Blant Farrand, Morikand, Graz Tak, Vetrick and Gila are with him. As a precaution Blant casts [*stoneskin*](#) on each of his companions.

The seaport of Nyrnik houses the remnants of its army, commerce and many refugees from other areas of the southern kingdom. There is silence in the citadel as the Nyrns stare with contempt at the towering Drenai, his characteristic twin greatswords strapped to his back.

The nobility and the remains of the generals of Nyrn's armies reside in a council hall and the party head into it. They are not hindered as they make their way to where Gralnadar sits.

"Have you come here to surrender then?" quips Gralnadar, his words aimed at Drusor.

The Drenai sneers. "I have come here with these men who have been sent by Gallor Galliath. The terms are these, Gralnadar, leave this city and it becomes a free city state. Stay and my forces will take it apart and kill every last man woman and child...you have twelve hours. After that I will come!"

Drusor Luckwarden storms out and the muttering and mumbling begins from the galleries around the council hall.

Blant, Gila, Graz Tak and Vetrick start to bargain with the king and the nobles. Retch, the guildmaster of thieves, is present and he and Graz begin to talk in earnest about the real situation on the ground. Vetrick and Gila deal with the king; their powerful political arguments lead to the dawning realisation that he – Gralnadar – has no choice but to abdicate.

At a particularly heated point in the debate Arik Warslayer, the former high priest of Malakor in the south, faces Vetrik. The ranger draws his longsword and shouts; "This is the very sword that took down your god!" Vetrik sees Arik visibly weaken at the sight of the blade; in fact others in the council hall also blanch at the naked blade. Blood oozes from the ugly scar on the head of the high priest and Vetrik sheathes it with a cruel smile.

"Give us ten hours," Gralnadar says to them, "and I will give you my decision."

The party agree and return to the large tent where Drusor and his captains reside. The soldiers leave and Drusor offers them all a bottle of wine. Blant and Morikand realise instantly that it is magical. Blant takes it and casts [identify](#) – Nixior. Morikand shakes his head and tells them; "It's common name is Soul Rot...once imbibed it will slowly eat your soul away."

"Gallor Galliath gave me this," says Drusor, "and said for me to celebrate my great victory with it."

Blant is horrified. "He meant to kill you?"

Drusor shrugs. "I suspected it was an attempt on my life. It won't be the last time someone wants me dead."

"Then you should turn your forces on Gallor Galliath," Vetrik says.

But Drusor shakes his head. "Not until I have finished what I have been paid for. After that I might head north and fight Bretonians. You should never trust a Drenai," he laughs ironically.

At this point every member of the party realise that Drusor's real intention was to flush out assassins in his ranks. Collectively they can hear the telltale small signs that are a prelude to an ambush.

Orbelain lunges to the *wall* of the tent, his demonic greataxe plunges into the skull of the first killer and exits with a fountain of blood, bone and brain. Vetrik backhands his longsword across the throat of another and he too falls. Gila slams the end of his demonic quarterstaff into a third and shatters another skull.

The killers are in chaos. Unable to realise that their prospective ambushes are already cutting them down they struggle to find their weapons or any meaningful defence. Drusor decapitates another as Graz Tak disembowels one more. Vetrik uses an artful kick to take the legs from the last opponent, hoping to question him further. But Gila has other ideas and his quarterstaff caves in the victim's skull and quiet descends once again. Drusor smiles at the grim carnage and the expert attack by his friends.

Morikand takes the party away to a quiet tent and creates a pentacle of summoning and one of protection. He summons a demon from the Plane of Deception. When it materialises he realises that it has doppelganger properties as it mimics each and every member of the party in turn; both facially and orally. Morikand [binds](#) it and

uses [true name](#) to reveal it as Kedesa. "You will infiltrate Gallor Galliath's palace and report back any significant events."

Kedesa nods and vanishes.

After nine hours Retch enters the camp and reveals that Gralnadar will abdicate. They waste no time in boarding the ship and sailing it into the centre of the walled city of Nyrnik. Drusor begins to break camp immediately and send his mercenaries away from the Nynians.

The city scatters as Morikand's ship – the Eagle – returns to the watery harbour. Graz Tak addresses the city and proclaims it a free citadel. There is relief, some cheering but also some confusion. With Retch's help they manage to call a banquet for that evening and invite the real power behind the city.

Morikand searches for a quiet room in the council hall to summon from. The others join the demonologist as he summons from the Plane of Disjunction once more.

Morikand – and his companions for that matter – realise instantly that the demon that has materialised has a massive presence. In many ways it has the same waif-like deceptive appearance that Vohaas had but the surge of magic is undeniable. Morikand decides not to [bind](#) it...instead he decides to talk to the unarmed demon.

"I am known in your plane by Vohaas...a good friend of mine."

"I know Vohaas!" the demon spits, "he was the one that took my throne!"

Blant realises that this demon is not going to co-operate and casts the defensive [jump](#) spell. Graz Tak is first to unleash a blade; his experience in this situation tells him that speed is everything. Hesitate with demons and it costs you your soul. But the demon catches Graz's wrist in a powerful grip. When the master thief draws a dagger he catches that also. Graz Tak is helpless in the demon's grip...powerful fingers begin to dig deep into his flesh. He realises that he is just seconds from death.

Gila slams the deadly quarterstaff into the demons unprotected back and it collapses onto its knees and howls as its soul is almost crushed. It stares helplessly at Gila as the quarterstaff ends its short excursion onto the Prime Material Plane.

Graz persuades Morikand to summon another demon to take a letter and a message to Mercila. He wants them to come to live in Nyrnik now that he and his friends have control.

Morikand duly obliges by summoning from the Plane of Goranthis a beautiful silver haired demonic woman. Graz momentarily wonders whether she would be a good messenger but Morikand has already [bound](#) her to the task.

As Graz and Retch continue their preparations for the banquet Morikand turns his attention to the protection of the citadel. A modest outer wall needs augmenting so at the first turret he summons Stram from the Plane of Fortresses. Stram is a dwarf-like

figure with a demonic pickaxe. He knows of Morikand's reputation and offers two other names; Jarka and Jaera, which Morikand also summons.

As Morikand sees to the structure Orbelain finds two veteran soldiers to accompany him. The warrior is taken on a tour of the entire citadel in order to fully understand the area and how best to defend it.

"We will make these walls impenetrable, master Morikand," Jarka says.

The council hall is packed as the banquet commences. Drusor Luckwarden is the first notable visitor. The Nyrnians are wary of the massive warrior but that is nothing compared to the utter dread when the next man enters.

An Erenlander wearing a lavish cloak and donning an exquisite katana enters. All the sorcerers in the room can feel the sheer power of the man, even those not of the art can sense the dark brooding power of the individual.

Retch introduces Illeum Runesabre. Gasps fill the council hall. Drusor nods at the new arrival and it is clear to all that the two men are old friends. Illeum is calm and self-assured and speaks at length with Blant and Morikand regarding the troubles in Bretonia. Graz Tak knows that this man's arrival will add further weight to their legitimacy as a free city state.

Graz stands and brings the council chamber to order; his smooth charismatic presence and charm soon have the crowd under his control. Women stare lasciviously at the handsome man before them and the menfolk nod in agreement with his wisdom and style.

"The king is gone," he says, "and you are all free men. A council will be installed to run the day-to-day affairs and ensure that you are all treated equally and fairly. The walls are already being strengthened to guarantee your safety and prosperity. I can assure you that there will be no rise in taxation or other burdens because of these changes.

"Furthermore I propose to build an Academy of the Thief. But this does not mean that there will be wholesale thievery; it simply means that all such activities will be regulated to maintain order and fairness. There will be two more academies built; a Sorcerers School and a Demonologists Academy, so that the people can further understand the ways of this world and come to appreciate the power inherent in every last man and woman..."

Tumultuous applause erupts spontaneously throughout the council hall.

"And I will bring my new son here and marry his mother so that Nyrnik has an heir to lead you when he is ready..."

The applause gets louder as the assemble nobles cheer rapturously. Only their beautiful daughters look concerned and talk amongst themselves as Graz proclaims his intentions to marry another...

Northward Bound

Jan 28th - Feb 15th

The banquet to herald the creation of a new city state of Nyrnik is in full swing. Blant Farrand casts *magic jar* into his knife Ice Slayer in a quiet corner. He then spends the rest of the time talking to two highly respected members of Nyrnik; Sirgient, the Guilmaster Merchant and Gangrik, the Harbourmaster. These two men show the necessary aptitude to become members of the council of Nyrnik. Retch, the guildmaster thief, is another who displays the talent to lead. Arik Warslayer is touted as the fourth member with Stavan, the highest ranking soldier in the city, making up the fifth.

Stavan is summoned to the council chamber and it soon becomes clear that he is a coward, only rising to the position of general because he was well connected to the old king, Gralnadar.

Drusor Luckwarden and Illeum Runesabre strike a deal, the necromancer secures the services of the Drenai mercenary captain for the fight with the armies of Korven in the north.

A Khulandir ambassador called Galuthiel arrives and addresses the council hall. "I bring a message from her royal highness queen Jirena of the Khulan. Her most gracious majesty extends her greetings to you all and hopes that greater trade links can be arranged between us."

A beautiful young Nyrnian woman called Elassa – the daughter of a wealthy nobleman – tries to seduce Graz Tak. The master thief is not interested and although polite dismisses her immediately. The young woman skulks off, her eyes like hot coals and her mood irritable. Mercila arrives with his son – called Golnorn – and is greeted by the council chamber. Illeum Runesabre is particularly interested in the infant, especially when Mercila reveals that Golnorn seems to be impervious to all spells.

Stavan – the coward general – performs badly at council. Many question his leadership and when Drusor ridicules him and his men Graz and the others realise they have to find a more suitable man to lead and train what few soldiers they possess. Orbelain has made several acquaintances amongst the troops of Nyrnik and when they put forward a suitable candidate for Stavan's job Blant and Graz go down to the harbour to search out Avaris Marn.

The man was a captain but resigned his post years ago. They find him fishing. Although reluctant at first the two companions persuade him to go to the council and talk to the other members. Meanwhile Gila and Vetrick go exploring the city, taking in the delights of several taverns. Before long both men realise they are being followed. Gila spots the man and soon they have him cornered. He reveals himself as Grysic – sent by the head of the guild of assassins. Gila and Vetrick are led back to the Drunken Cavern Innhouse – the headquarters of the Assassins' Guild.

They meet Kandrilar, the guildmaster, and offer him a position on council. He accepts and the three men head back to the council hall. The council hall is packed and the negotiations regarding the setting up and running of the new council are at an advanced stage. Before Vetrick introduces the newest member he walks calmly up to Graz Tak who is talking to Stavan and Avaris Marn. Vetrick draws his demonic sword without warning and in one expert movement strikes the coward Stavan down. There is silence in the council chamber as all eyes are on the fallen general. Two soldiers drag away the body as Vetrick introduces Kandrilar to the council. This brutal action succeeds in focusing the minds of the assembly and bringing order and common sense to the proceedings.

After Stavan's fall business is conducted efficiently and with little fuss as the new council begins to cement relationships and build power in the new city state. Vetrick goes to the harbour and to the Eagle. He prepares it for a journey north.

Orbelain meanwhile slips away with Elassa, the beautiful Nyrnian noblewoman. As they lie together in her private chamber Orbelain begins to feel odd. It is as though his limbs stiffen, all movement ebbs away and he realises – too late – that the young woman has somehow poisoned him. A tall man enters as she leaves, a striking figure he has one red eye and one brilliant blue. "I am Korven," he says, "please extend my regards to Morikand and tell him I wish to meet him."

Meanwhile Blant follows Sirgient (the guildmaster merchant) back to his house under the cover of *improved invisibility*. At the merchant's home he sneaks in and tries to find the wealth he is certain the merchant is hiding from him. In a study nearby Blant senses a powerful sorcerer. Unseen he peers into the room and sees Korven studying a book. Blant decides to leave immediately.

Next morning the Eagle is ready to sail, Orbelain tells them of his meeting with Korven and Morikand soon spots the demonic spy in the warrior's clothes. He *banishes* it immediately. Illeum and Drusor are to hitch a lift north on the ship.

After two weeks Morikand drops off Illeum and Drusor at the northern tip of the Khulandir forest whilst Morikand lifts the Eagle into the clouds. He lands it in the Breton river a few days later and sails up to one of Grayhawk's largest citadels. A crow lands on the main mast and Morikand realises it is demonic, perhaps a spy from the citadel.

Blant puts Illeum's ring on a chain around Fluck's neck; he is unsure how the Bretonians loyal to Korven will take to such an obvious Illeum influence. As they sail into the harbour the Eagle is dwarfed by war galleys and larger troop ships. The whole citadel appears to be a massive training camp. Soldiers and siege weapons are everywhere.

A general called Mirnabia introduces himself as general of the eighth army and invites himself aboard. Morikand senses demons about the man. Mirnabia is astonished when he realises who the men are and immediately invites them to the palace.

The palace of Gran Breton is large enough to fit Nyrnik comfortably inside its vast walls. Morikand and his companions are treated well and brought before the duke of Gran Breton – a powerful sorcerer called Asinar.

"Welcome my friends," Asinar says genuinely pleased to see them, "I am the son of Korven, ruler of Bretonia."

"We need to see Korven," Vetrick says abruptly, "and soon."

"A message has already been sent to him concerning your arrival gentlemen, emperor Korven will be here shortly..."

The Battle of Morinae

cy 4851 Feb 15th - 16th

As Korven arrives at the court of his son, Duke Asinar of Gran Breton, there is silence. The arch demonologist is a charismatic figure and – like many of the party – he emits no magical presence whatsoever. He greets each of the newcomers in turn, paying Morikand and Vetrick the greatest respects. "I have followed your progress closely," he says, "and with great delight."

Korven explains a little about the present situation and the impending strike on the walled town of Morinae. When Vetrick voices his concerns regarding spies in the court Korven reassures them that no spies can penetrate Gran Breton palace. Morikand talks about Illeum, Drusor and Asigoth (a dark assassin hired by Illeum). Korven has heard of the killer and Morikand's soul compass gives his direction as south.

It is clear that Korven wants their help and soon reveals that he wants them to attack and kill both Illeum and Drusor Luckwarden. Vetrick argues strongly that they should be employed on or about the battlefield but Korven and the rest of his generals are sceptical; with no experience in warfare they don't believe that Vetrick and his companions have what it takes to fight a *conventional* battle.

"I have an advantage," Vetrick says. "I can see into the future."

Korven tests this and when Vetrick correctly guesses the nature of a meeting Asinar will have the next day the demonologist is suitably impressed.

"Before we embark on anything," Morikand says, "I need to visit Gresil's library."

Korven nods his approval and hands him a small milky white gem. "Give him this gift and give him my regards."

Morikand realises instantly it is a bound soul but [true name](#) reveals nothing. Deep in the bowels of Gran Breton are many summoning chambers used by Korven and his sorcerers. Morikand takes the party to a suitable chamber and uses the gem to reach Gresil's library. The kindly old man greets Morikand warmly.

"I have a gift for you," Morikand says and hands him the gem. To his surprise the librarian disappears instantly. Slightly alarmed Morikand uses the soul compass to eventually locate Gresil, who sits in a small antechamber (looking slightly older) but happy with some discovery.

"A truly great gift!" he tells Morikand.

Morikand studies Korven, Graz Tak studies the art of stealing, Gila studies martial arts whilst both Vetrick and Orbelain study the art of war and the great generals in history (including Drusor Luckwarden).

Eventually, back in Gran Breton after their study, the party realise that only five seconds have elapsed on Grayhawk. It is only when Orbelain heads for Korven's private chambers that he realises something profound has occurred. His special awareness and all round vision have improved immeasurably. In some hidden three dimensional matrix in his mind he becomes aware of everything around him; the smallest movements, the weaknesses in the guard patterns, the relative strengths of those guards. When he and the party enter Korven's war room he sees the emperor and eight of his best generals.

One man – Sturdik – stands out. Arguably this Bretonian is Korven's best (Orbelain can somehow sense it). The assembled men talk about Morinae and – against Sturdik's wishes – Korven suggests that Orbelain and Vetrick try out their newfound skills at the battle of Morinae, he also suggests that Sturdik oversees the battle.

"How long will it take you to capture Morinae?" Korven asks his general.

"A week to ten days," Sturdik says.

Korven ponders this. "Drusor Luckwarden will take it in two. So there you have the challenge, Orbelain, let us see what you and your friends can do."

Later that day Morikand flies his demonic ship over to the encampment of Korven's forces that surround the town of Morinae. Ten thousand experienced, veteran warriors are given a speech by Sturdik; he tells them that Orbelain will be leading them. "If you do well then I will maintain my position as your leader, but if you fail then all is lost."

Orbelain's first task is to re-organise the troops from a squad level upwards. Sturdik casts a disapproving eye at the axeman but says nothing. Orbelain maximises the force's potential by resolving a few imbalances in the ranks. Once this is achieved he brings fifty or so captains and squad leaders to a large tent to divulge his strategy and get a feel for the quality of the men.

Blant Farrand suggests a closer look at the town and casts *invisibility* and *fly* on the whole party. Before long they are inside Morinae, unseen, and make their way through a disused warehouse to a cellar. Morikand creates a pentacle of travel inside it, a possible gateway to allow troops to infiltrate the town when the battle starts.

On the way out Orbelain can see the defences at first hand, he applies his unique ability to the town and gains valuable knowledge about it. Morinae has two walls that surround it and steep hills behind. The walls are one hundred yards apart and the buildings between have been trapped to make a killing ground. He spots two weaknesses in the walls as well as the crude trap that the opposing general *wants* him to find.

An Eren general is close. Mosanra is the leader of the town's defences and gives orders to his men wherever he finds them. Orbelain studies him closely. A good leader; charismatic, intelligent, shrewd.

Back in the tent he puts the finishing touches to his idea. Vetrick and Gila are to head the vanguard of one thousand men – *The Forlorn Hope* – who will attack the weakest wall and try to breach wall two. Orbelain knows that if this is achieved the battle is won.

At dawn the next day Blant casts [*Cats Grace*](#), [*Protection from evil 10' radius*](#) and [*fly*](#) on Vetrick and Gila. Morikand and Graz Tak fly into the clouds on the ship along with five hundred soldiers. As Vetrick and Gila head to the front of the Forlorn Hope they are greeted with suspicion and concern. Some actively show dissent until one man points out that Vetrick put a sword into Malakar's skull. At that point there is silence.

Blant Farrand lags behind and casts [*project image*](#), [*Tenser's Transformation*](#) and [*spectral hand*](#) initially. Orbelain is [*enlarged*](#) by Blant and stands at the back of his army to survey the scene. Sturdik stands in his shadow.

After an initial bombardment with ballistae the walls are attacked. Orbelain attacks each of the weak points with a concerted effort – even the trap set by Mosanra – the air is filled with arrows and the screams of the dead.

As the Forlorn Hope reach the walls Vetrick and Gila [*fly*](#) onto the battlements alone. Suddenly fifty Eren soldiers are upon them. The Bretonians below cannot believe what the two men have done and scramble urgently to aid them. Gila uses the deadly quarterstaff to crush the souls of the first unfortunate opponents and behind him Vetrick unleashes the greatsword into the horde of Erenlanders on the walls. The two men are relentless. Soon bodies begin to pile up around them; very few of their opponents can match the speed and power of the two killers. Worse still every soul their weapons consume makes them stronger.

Out of the Erenlanders comes a tough warrior hefting a katana. He is upon Gila instantly and launches three vicious attacks. Gila dances away from them effortlessly, the last blow he parries with his staff before returning two deadly blows to the man's ribcage. As the bones snap his soul is crushed and Gila has time to fell another. The Bretonians manage, albeit slowly, to gain a foothold and support the two men at the vanguard. Blant Farrand's [*image*](#) is attacked by a sorcerer close by, a spell passes through the projected form. Blant sees the culprit immediately and hurls a [*fireball*](#) into him. The sorcerer is enveloped in a ball of fire and dies instantly; five more Erenlanders fall to their deaths as a result of the explosion.

Orbelain witnesses the gains on wall one. He realises that the Erenlanders have not yet discovered his plan. Where Vetrick and Gila fight the wall is almost taken. Now Orbelain redirects and concentrates his artillery against the second wall.

Vetrick sees a shambling Erenlander out of the corner of his eye. Undoubtedly an undead it rushes at him with arms outstretched and rotten teeth bared. Vetrick prepares himself but the [protection from evil](#) deflects the creature into the hordes of the Forlorn Hope. He watches with grim satisfaction as his men tear the undead to pieces and burn the remains.

A Bretonian demonologist struggles with two kegs filled with black powder. A stray missile hits one of the houses between wall one and wall two igniting it and the rest of the houses. In the midst of the inferno that Vetrick and his men must negotiate he sees what Orbelain saw hours earlier – a way through! Without hesitation he and Gila are down into the flames and the Bretonians follow in single file. When the sorcerer ignites the demonic bombs a large hole is blasted into wall one and the rest of the Forlorn Hope rush through to wall two.

Orbelain now senses that his opposite number, Mosanra, can now see the flaw in his plan and the genius in Orbelain's. Enter Morikand over the hills behind the town. Rope ladders descend from the side of the Eagle as Graz Tak picks off soldiers on the walls with well-aimed arrows.

Vetrick and Gila [fly](#) onto wall two and the Erenlanders part against their devastating weaponry. Fuelled by their weapons Vetrick and Gila continue the slaughter, quarterstaff and greatsword in murderous harmony. Wall two is soon the scene of a second massacre. When enough Bretonians are on the walls a second demonic bomb is brought to bear, Vetrick and Gila meet the troops from the Eagle and the battle is won.

Orbelain feels the opposition evaporate when the second wall crumbles. His men flood into the city and begin a deadly house-to-house battle. Orbelain and Sturdik march into Morinae together.

Vetrick and Gila are at the vanguard once more; their target is the manor house and the leader of the Eren forces. As Vetrick kicks a door off its hinges an old man is taken out by Gila's expert kick. Three coffins lie in a shadowy alcove and Vetrick orders a captain to deal with them.

"We know what to do sir."

On the highest balcony of the manor house is Mosanra. Vetrick, Gila and Blant [fly](#) up to stand beside him. Mosanra drops his sword and surrenders. The manor house is surrounded by cheering Bretonians, Vetrick and Gila's name on all their lips. Sturdik, their general, is nowhere to be seen.

When Orbelain (now normal size) reaches the balcony he is given a similar reaction. Mosanra bows to the winning general. Vetrick promises him a position in the south in the free city of Nyrnik but Mosanra is reluctant to accept saying that his role is with his people.

"Then go," Vetrick says, "go back to Illeum and tell him what we have achieved here."

A few hours later the party, all except Blant Farrand and Graz Tak who stay in Morinae, but with a sour-faced Sturdik, are in Korven's war room once more. Korven is pleased with Orbelain, and his companions, and as he receives reports from captains on the field his delight increases. Only Sturdik, who skulks in the background, is not pleased with the result.

"Incredible!" Korven says enthusiastically. "Bring on Drusor and his elves and Orbelain here will crush them!"

Asigoth's Gambit

Feb 16th – 21st

Blant Farrand and Graz Tak are in the manor house at Morinae searching for treasure or any other valuables. Two of the Forlorn Hope ensure that the building is surrounded and well guarded and – more importantly – that they are to be left undisturbed. At the top floor they come upon Mosanra's room. The defeated general has a small casket under his bed and Blant senses sorcery within.

Within seconds Graz Tak, master thief, has it unlocked and they find almost two hundred gold coins and an Amulet of Seeing, an item which Blant intends to use to create spells.

When the captain of the Forlorn Hope returns he leads them into another bedroom where a tapestry hangs from a window, a pentacle emblazoned on it. Blant moves forward to inspect it. Suddenly the soldier grabs the sorcerer's head and tries to snap Blant's neck. Luckily Blant manages to avoid certain death and both he and Graz turn on the figure.

Before them is not a soldier. Instead a thin, shadowy man with deep red eyes and a katana in each hand. "I am Asigoth!" he yells just before he launches a ferocious attack.

Blant immediately casts *Tenser's Transformation*, which allows him to fight as well as a warrior, and draws a magical dagger. Graz Tak is upon the demonic assassin with a couple of deadly swipes from his own demonic blade. Asigoth possesses great skill with the blade and easily turns aside the initial onslaught before casting *dispel magic* through one of the katanas and at Blant Farrand. Blant survives the attack and trades blows with the demon.

The next *dispel magic* from Asigoth destroys all Blant's protection (including the *stoneskin*) and he is suddenly vulnerable. Despite this Blant manages to slash Asigoth across the forehead and draw blood, a small wound but one that could easily turn the tide of battle. Graz tries to occupy the demon but Asigoth turns aside all of his blows and concentrates on destroying Blant.

Inevitably, under such ferocious attacks, Asigoth drives a katana under Blant's defences but is thwarted by his demonic armour. Asigoth only manages to consume the soul bound into the armour instead of killing his target. Still the demon drives against him. Blant recasts *Tenser's Transformation* but he begins to realise that the relentless demon will stop at nothing until he is dead. Suddenly he casts *teleport* and vanishes back to Gran Breton.

Graz Tak finds himself alone with the demon, which now turns on him. The thief *flees* out of the window and calls on the Forlorn Hope to go after the demon. Not surprisingly they find the manor house empty, the pentacle drapery has vanished.

Blant quickly recounts his tale to Korven, Morikand and the others. Morikand uses the soul compass to locate Asigoth (north) and Blant recasts *stoneskin* as well as *magic jar* on himself.

Morikand, Gila, Vetrick and Orbelain go to one of Korven's many pentacle rooms. After half an hour Morikand has created a pentacle of travel and explains that he wants to visit the Plane of Disjunction and try to either summon Graz Tak or get to him. Meanwhile Blant retires to a quiet chamber where Korven provides him with a place to continue his spell research.

Morikand and the others find themselves in a massive forest. He casts *non detection* before heading towards a small village in the distance. The villagers have barricaded themselves in and are unfriendly. It resembles a poor Darklandish place and the demonic inhabitants closely resemble the Grayhawkian Orientals.

Vetrick leads them to the Black Lake. A viscous, poisonous, tar-like substance that has a distinct sulphurous stench. On an outcropping stands Vohaas, now the ruler of this plane. He greets Morikand warmly and after a brief conversation *teleports* them all back to his castle.

The party are surrounded by demons. Orbelain's interest in Vohaas and his current campaign is heightened when he is introduced to five prominent generals. The demons project a three dimensional model of the current arena and Orbelain studies their tactics closely. Before long he is giving hints, then suggestions until finally he has re-arranged the entire field of battle.

Vohaas is a remarkable creature. Whilst concentrating on Morikand he is also capable of compartmentalising his mind to concentrate on Orbelain as well as what the rest of his court are up to. They all tuck into a dragon roast and talk about Graz Tak and, more importantly, Asigoth.

Eventually Vohaas propels them back onto the walls of Morinae, along for the ride is Zaelador, one of the demonic generals ordered by Vohaas to study the way Orbelain fights.

Meanwhile Blant is buried in his study. So deep is his concentration that he does not notice a figure sat opposite him. The grim face of Asigoth manages a mocking smile. "Good book is it Blant Farrand?"

Blant reacts quicker and casts *teleport* to arrive on the walls of Morinae.

Orbelain calls for reinforcements to be brought up from Morganth to bolster Morinae. He prepares the army to march within a day, a march that will take them north and towards their next target; Gulhaven. Meanwhile he has sent two hundred of the most dangerous of the Forlorn Hope in advance to spy and to generally destabilise Gulhaven before they arrive.

Vetrick and Gila are already hand picking five hundred of the Forlorn Hope. Their plan is to fly into the hills between Morinae and Gulhaven (in the Eagle) and land behind Drusor Luckwarden's force. Vetrick believes that he can do immeasurable damage to Drusor's army with such talented men. Graz Tak, worried by the influence of Illeum's Pommel, decides to hide the artefact inside a mattress in one of Morinae's brothels.

At dawn the next day Orbelain, with Zaelador next to him and Blant Farrand studying in a cart, leads almost nine thousand men north. Morikand intends to drop off Gila, Vetrick, Graz Tak and the five hundred commandoes at dawn.

Blant Farrand is securely positioned in the middle of an army inside a slow moving tented cart surrounded by books. He cannot believe, therefore, when he looks up from the pages of a large tome Asigoth is there! Without hesitation he *teleports* out of danger. But this time Blant Farrand miscalculates. His intended location is just in front of the army but he *lands* too high. More than three hundred feet up – and without the security of another spell – he plummets to his death.

Orbelain is out of the cart and races up to his fallen comrade. Only then does he realise that the *magic jar* has saved his soul. Blant Farrand's soul overwhelms a nearby soldier and he has to quickly convince Orbelain that he is indeed the sorcerer.

Morikand (who steers the ship with his *projected image*) descends to a quiet valley, a spot that Vetrick the Ranger knows would be a good place to hide and prepare an ambush. Without warning the air is filled with deadly shafts. Like driving rain the arrows thunder into Vetrick and his men, there is no escape, nowhere to hide. The Forlorn Hope fall all around them before they can put up any reasonable defence. Vetrick and Gila are hit many times, only the *stoneskin* keeps them alive but they realise this will not last forever.

Morikand casts *demonic shield* over himself, his companions and fifty of the Forlorn Hope. The storm of arrows bounce harmlessly off the impenetrable barrier giving them time to assess the damage. Many of those inside are severely wounded. Morikand remotely calls the ship down from the clouds to pick them up.

Outside the *demonic shield* the Khulandir archers finish off the last of the Forlorn Hope. From the relative safety of Morikand's protection Vetrick and Gila spot Drusor Luckwarden approaching. He is an unmistakable figure; big bushy beard, broad of shoulder, twin greatswords across his back. He smiles at them as he talks to a sorcerer. Morikand wonders whether he will *dispel* the demonic shield.

"Greetings old friends," he says with mock sincerity, "tell Orbelain that I am ready for him..."

The Fall of Blant Farrand

Feb 22nd - 28th

The Eagle returns with the remnants of the Forlorn Hope to the main force of Orbelain's army. Fifty stalwart survivors, battle hardened veterans agree to become permanent guardians of Morikand's demonic ship.

Vetrick, Graz Tak and Blant Farrand decide to head north to the Elenorian Forest. The ship ascends to almost ten thousand feet above the Great Myr Lake where Blant is determined to complete the creation of a new spell. They intend to spend four days up in the clouds, all are wary of the threat of Asigoth – the demonic assassin – and as a result protection on the ship is tight.

The Forlorn Guard pair up and rotate in shifts to watch Blant Farrand at all times. Graz Tak and Vetrick also share these responsibilities, as each man is aware of the danger. For two days Blant busies himself with his new spell as Vetrick and Graz maintain tight security around him; at the end of the second day Blant casts *stoneskin* on five of the closest of the guards.

When the attack comes it is swift and unseen. Asigoth – disguised perfectly as a Forlorn Guardian – is close enough to get his hands on Blant's throat. Before the wizard can react the assassin snaps his neck with almost negligent ease. Instantly Graz Tak, Vetrick and twenty other Forlorn Guards are upon the killer.

Asigoth throws off his disguise and is in the middle of them a deadly demonic katana in each hand. From the *magic jar* Blant's soul issues forth and Asigoth wastes no time in driving a katana into the acrid vapour. Blant survives the attempt to consume his soul and tries desperately to move away from the deadly assassin.

Asigoth turns aside a concerted attack from Graz and Vetrick but fails to defend one of the Forlorn Guards whose sword bounces harmlessly off Asigoth's *stoneskin*. The demon casts *death spell* through his blade and Graz Tak buckles under the awful damage. He staggers back out of combat and moves to a higher deck where he reaches for his longbow.

Asigoth is upon Blant's vaporous soul again as soon as he can. The wizard's naked life force is vulnerable and his failure to possess one of the Forlorn Guard is his downfall. For a second time Asigoth's blade attacks the soul and Blant is devoured by the demon.

Graz Tak assaults Asigoth with a few well aimed shafts but the demon is able deflect them all; buoyed by the death of the wizard Asigoth turns his attention to Vetrick. The ranger puts up a stoic defence and dodges away from the deadly katanas.

Slowly the Forlorn Hope begin to gain the upper hand on Asigoth, their numerous attacks begin to whittle away at the *stoneskin*. After a couple of failed *death spells*

Asigoth starts to look for a way out. Vetrick senses this. He manoeuvres round the demon as best he can hoping for an opportunity to grab a sword arm and prevent him leaving. But even Vetrick cannot stop the demon as he *teleports* away from combat when the *stoneskin* is gone.

Graz Tak is already searching his companions broken body. A haul of magical weapons and items are piled up beside him including the two most valuable resources; Blant and Amblay's spell books.

These tomes are of interest to Morikand who immediately absorbs *Tenser's Transformation*, *Major Pentacle* and *ESP* into his repertoire. Vetrick tosses Illeum's Ring over the side and it plunges into the deepest lake on Grayhawk.

Morikand descends into his pentacle room with Blant's spellbook and *summons* a demon from the Plane of Fortresses. Quothas (*true name*) is bound into it. Next he recasts *stoneskin* on the rest of the party before Morikand decides to summon a demon to deal with Asigoth.

Akazzar, from the Plane of Death, is known to the demonologist and he brings the awesome killer onto the Eagle. But Akazzar will not be bound into service and immediately attacks the party. Graz Tak and Vetrick react instantly and their blades search for the demon's soul. Tihs Rovem, a black orc thief member of the Forlorn Guard, is also in the fight.

A brutal, ugly combat ensues. As Morikand fails to bind Akazzar the slender katana-wielding killer tries to end the melee quickly but the party is equal to the demon's attacks. Graz Tak catches Akazzar's swordarm and struggles to keep hold of it. It is all the advantage they need as Vetrick's massive greatsword feeds on the soul of the killer and consumes it.

Morikand leads the Eagle north over the vast green sea of trees that is the Elenorian Forest. The largest expanse of woodland anywhere on Grayhawk. His *soul compass* reveals that Asigoth is to the south but the more immediate problem is ahead. The large wingspan of a white dragon is unmistakable, even from a mile away. When it gets close the party can see an elf on its back wearing the livery of Elenoria.

"I am Revaniel, Lord of the Watch," he says, "and you are trespassing."

Morikand explains that they wish to speak to the queen of Elenoria herself but Revaniel is unhelpful. He suggests that they move south and take the demonic ship into the Myrid plain whereupon he will get a message to the queen in person. Vetrick and Morikand shrug and take the ship south.

The ship lumbers slowly over the vast expanse of grassland below. Vetrick inspires Morikand with the idea of binding the Forlorn Guard to them with some kind of blood oath and gets them all (including Graz Tak and himself) to donate a droplet of blood into a small goblet. This goblet, now full, he hands to the demonologist and Morikand takes it to his summoning room.

From the Plane of Poisons he summons a powerful energy called Drenk (*true name*) and binds it to the blood. Vetrick is the first to drink, Graz quickly follows. After ten minutes the entire Forlorn Guard have finished the brew. Morikand cannot sense the demon Drenk anymore and, initially, the crew and his two friends show no ill effects.

Within days the Eagle hovers above the highest tower in the palace of Van Myrid. Graz Tak, Vetrick, Morikand, This Revom, Morikand and five of the Forlorn Guard descend down the spiral staircase. Soon, in a wide antechamber, they are met by twenty furious palace guards and despite weapons being pushed into their faces they do not react violently.

Soon a tall man enters the chamber. Dressed simply in a robe of the finest silk he exudes the calm confidence of a man of great power. A katana is slung almost casually across his shoulders.

"I am Valadain Raikos, High Steward of Van Myrid."

The party introduce themselves. Vetrick and Morikand know only too well the legend of Valadain who – with his half brother Illeum Runesabre – slew Malkar at the gates of Limbo. They are cautious and wary but Valadain dismisses his guards and takes them for breakfast in his private chambers.

It becomes clear that Valadain – like so many others – has followed the progress of Vetrick, Morikand and Graz Tak in recent months. Graz is deeply curious about the errant king, Viator Varkos, who disappeared with the entire treasury many years ago and is the main topic of conversation within the citadel.

"My only concern is the security of the reason," Valadain tells Graz, "without stability in Myrid the potential for a wider conflict increases. A war involving half the world is something we must avoid at all costs. Eventually one of them – Illeum or Korven – will emerge victorious."

Vetrick and Morikand talk freely concerning Drusor Luckwarden and the involvement of the Khulans in the war in Bretonia. Valadain indicates that he does not think it a significant development but Vetrick is not so sure.

"I have one request of you," Valadain says. "Whatever your involvement in this war I want you to leave Elenoria alone. As friend and consort to the queen I am responsible for the security of the elves. It would be better that you leave her alone; I know her too well. She is a great believer in justice and likes nothing better than a good cause."

Vetrick smiles. "We can't promise that Valadain."

For several long seconds the two men regard each other carefully, their faces impassive and their thoughts hidden. Two men who stood against a god and lived.

"Very well," the high steward sighs...

The Death of a General

Feb 29th - Mar 3rd

Orbelain's army travels four days north toward Gulhaven. On the field in front of them is Drusor Luckwarden's mercenary army, a force of similar proportions, bolstered by troops trained by Queen Jirena of Khulandir. Drusor sits on a horse in front of his men, a battle standard by his side but Orbelain will not enter into the niceties of pre-battle ramble with him. Instead Orbelain drives his men forward into battle.

The two armies come together and there is ferocious skirmishing on both sides. Orbelain knows that Drusor is testing for weaknesses, indeed he opens up a few holes in his defences but the Drenai mercenary does not take the bait. After the initial trials Drusor strikes the first blow in earnest and his elves and men take out Orbelain's left flank. This crushing defeat leaves Orbelain with a quandary; shore up the broken flank and lose more men or turn his attention to the stronger right flank.

Orbelain counterattacks with equal ferocity and he turns near defeat to near victory, as Drusor's own flank is crushed. Stood next to Orbelain is Zaelador, Voahas' demonic general, the demon is impressed by the guile of Orbelain and also the sheer prowess of Drusor himself. The Drenai general is in the thick of the fighting.

Soon Drusor smashes through the heart of Orbelain's forces, the two halves are pushed apart and he has to act quickly or the day will be lost. The remnants of the Forlorn Hope drive themselves together and effectively cut off the head of Drusor's force. Drusor himself is surrounded by the veteran guards whilst the rest of his force struggle to reach their leader. Orbelain drives forward and can see the mercenary slaughtering all in his path.

The fighting is close and chaotic. On another day Orbelain would have won but the savagery of Drusor's men proves decisive. Soon the Forlorn Hope are scattered, the Khulan's and mercenaries surround the last pocket of resistance and Orbelain is trapped.

Zaelador draws a katana and moves towards Drusor as the general approaches. With almost negligent ease Drusor Luckwarden disarms Zaelador before cutting him down with a vicious flick of one of his greatswords.

"At last an opponent worthy of me," Drusor grins at Orbelain.

But Orbelain grabs his demonic greataxe and launches himself into combat. Drusor knocks the axe from his grip and – when Orbelain grabs a shortsword – he knocks that away also.

"I don't want to kill you," Drusor says, "on the contrary you and I have much in common."

Orbelain spits at Drusor's feet and grabs his axe once more. To this Drusor sighs. "Very well young man...let's end this then."

Drusor wields two greatswords as though they were rapiers. His massive frame is able to cope with the sheer brute strength and dexterity required to wield blades in such a manner. Orbelain is a good axeman but realises – very quickly – that he is outclassed. Only *stoneskin* prolongs the fight, which is now being witnessed by the remains of Drusor's army.

On several occasions Orbelain comes close. On another day his great demonic axe would have taken Drusor's mighty soul but the Drenai is remorseless and relentless. When the final blow comes it is quick. Orbelain's head is smashed into small pieces and Drusor is left to count the cost of the battle. Fewer than five hundred of his soldiers remain...

Meanwhile Morikand, Vetrick, Graz Tak and This Revom leave Van Myrid in the ship and head south and west toward Khulandir. They are joined by a grey orc priest of Elena called Headlock. Morikand retires to his chamber in an attempt to create another spell.

Graz Tak receives telepathic taunts from Asigoth – the demonic assassin – and when he takes these concerns to Morikand the demonologist brings out the soul compass. The pendulum on the compass locates Asigoth and they move on deck where one of the Forlorn Guard is stood. Vetrick strikes him down immediately realising that he has been tricked. Graz receives further taunts and they all realise that Asigoth is an assassin that can fool even the soul compass.

Morikand creates a pentacle of protection specifically designed to protect against Asigoth. He casts *stoneskin* on Tihs and Headlock before continuing his studies.

Later Morikand summons a demon from the Plane of Life and binds it into Graz's blood, which the master thief quickly drinks. Below them the forest of the Khulans can be seen and Vetrick steers the Eagle into one of the larger rivers.

A few hundred Khulan elves emerge and when Morikand tells them of their desire to speak to Queen Jirena one of them rushes off to take a message. After a couple of hours more and more elves emerge. Thousands of Khulan warriors surround the ship.

Whilst they wait Morikand summons Venar, a grey haired woman from the Plane of Prayers. He converses with the woman in demonic tongue and instead of binding her they come to an agreement. Venar then turns to Vetrick and opens the small lantern she carries. "This light will cleanse your soul ranger," she says.

There is no hesitation from Vetrick. He places his hand inside the small lantern and screams. The pain is unlike anything he – or any other human – has ever experienced. He falls unconscious to the floor and Venar says; "It is done...his soul is pure again."

When Vetrick wakes a beautiful elven woman; Princess Martyra of the Khulans, comes aboard and announces that she is the emissary of the queen herself. The conversation with Morikand and Vetrick is short. The princess will not agree to any meeting between the queen and themselves and the party become more and more frustrated with the situation.

When she turns to leave the princess is struck by something expertly thrown from the shadows. A small throwing star cuts Martyra's jugular vein and blood spurts like a fountain from the falling elf. Morikand is quickest to react. Before the guards and soldiers know what has happened he casts *demonic shield* and takes the ship up into the clouds. Arrows bounce harmlessly off the impenetrable barrier and soon the Eagle is in the clouds and they are safe.

They all suspect Asigoth.

Morikand summons a demon from the Plane of Trees to take the body back down to the queen and with a *message* attached explaining what occurred. Before long an eagle arrives (which Vetrick *befriends* and uses *speak with animals* to talk to it). The eagle delivers a stark warning from Queen Jirena; a warning that her vengeance will be swift. "...you will be dead before the year is out."

That night, when Morikand is asleep, Asigoth makes an attempt on his life. He appears in the doorway of the summoning room (where the entire party are inside the pentacle of protection) and hurls a demonic dagger at the sleeping demonologist. Vetrick is too quick. He deflects the deadly blade and sends it crashing against the walls of the ship. Asigoth parries a couple of attacks before *teleporting* away.

Morikand casts *true name* on the demonic dagger left behind. It is Sordid from the Plane of Death. After a brief conversation he banishes it.

The last leg of their journey takes them north. The vast citadel of Gran Breton looms large below them and Vetrick lands in the largest courtyard of the palace itself. Soon the party march into the court of Korven. Generals, bodyguards and nobility surround him as he greets Morikand warmly.

Morikand dispenses with any pleasantries and demands payment for the sacking of Morinae. It soon becomes clear that the oily, treacherous leader has no intention of honouring their deal. In fact he is surprisingly calm as the atmosphere becomes heated and the party begin to sense that Korven is not their ally after all.

Vetrick has seen enough. He ignores the hundreds of elite guards all around the throne room and draws his mighty greatsword. But as he advances on Korven the king does not flinch, does not even try to defend himself. Vetrick moves in and Korven merely smiles...

Prisoners

Mar 3rd - Mar 6th

The atmosphere in Korven's throne room is tense. Vetrick, Morikand and the grey orc priest Headlock are surrounded. Korven taunts them arrogantly and they realise that the emperor of Bretonia is not going to let them leave. Morikand's persistent questioning regarding Asigoth brings no clear answer but it does provoke Korven into revealing that he will not let them leave. All around them in the galleries are the nobility of Korven's court. Each man and woman holds a dark mask to their eyes, a mask with no slits for eyes.

Morikand goes on the offensive, his initial *dispel magic* fails but his demonic glove connects. To his horror the glove turns black instantly and is shattered into a million pieces that disappear as into nothingness. Korven laughs raucously and forbids his men to intervene. "They are mine!" he spits.

Vetrick pulls the demonic greatsword and lunges at the calm demonologist before him. Korven does not flinch. As the blade hits him Vetrick recoils; the greatsword succumbs to the awesome force of Korven's Void protection leaving Vetrick no choice but to draw Scar, the blade that sent Malakar from Grayhawk.

Korven unleashes a spell at Headlock who vanishes instantly, banished to some remote Abyssal prison. The emperor laughs maniacally and stretches out his right hand. Both Morikand and Vetrick notice the creeping blackness that spreads from his fingernails to encompass the entirety of it. He lunges at Vetrick and tries to touch him with the *Void Hand*. But Vetrick is too quick.

A few more failed *dispel magics* make Morikand realise that the only possible outcome is obliteration. He fingers the coin given to him by Gresil and after several attempts he manages to break the protection of Korven's vast pentacle and he and Vetrick vanish. The kindly old man that is the librarian greets them warmly...

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It is dark. The stench makes Headlock's eyes water. He casts *light* and the full horror of the prison becomes apparent. There are many bodies, skeletons litter the place but there are also survivors, barely able to lift their weak limbs to shield their eyes from the brightness. Headlock counts five that breathe. He casts *cure light wounds* systematically and finds Fallis, a Nadir hunter, the strongest of the survivors. Headlock spends the first few days curing and devising a plan to escape.

When one of the demonic guards peers through a viewing slit in the door Headlock tosses a throwing star into its face. Gripped by rage the gaolers – three in all – enter the cell with cruel whips and start to strike all in their path. But Headlock casts *bleed* enabling all weapons to affect the demonic gaolers. His warhammer connects with one of the towering brutes and snaps the spine in two. The creature collapses and writhes around before dying. Fallis' rusty longsword is more than a match for the second gaoler and between the remaining four they manage to overpower the last one.

Headlock snatches a bunch of heavy keys and leads them into a vast, mesmerising maze of twisting passageways and corridors. Doors line the walls; each one houses an unfortunate victim of the demonic prison. Headlock moves quickly and checks each of the viewing slits in the doors. He frees anyone human, leaving some of the more demonic horrors behind. Soon his numbers swell to around fifty. The last cell he opens contains a surprisingly fit and athletic man who, when released, calls himself Dorik Luckwarden.

"Are you...?" Headlock says.

"I am Drusor Luckwarden's younger brother. Well met priest, I owe you my life. What's the plan?"

Headlock leads them to a guard room. Twenty gaolers, similar in size and shape as the ones he overpowered in his cell. Through that door Headlock hopes to build a barricade.

"They want you to escape," Dorik says, "it is part of their sport. They allow so many to flee so that the demonic nobility can hunt them down."

Headlock casts *bless*. "Then we will give them the kind of sport they won't forget in a hurry." He charges through the door and the battle is short and brutal. Dorik Luckwarden possesses great skill with the rusty longsword. Every attack connects with – and fells – the lumbering gaolers. Fallis is equally skilled and between them they manage to overcome all the resistance and secure the three entrances to the upper levels of the prison.

Dorik hands out the weaponry that lines the racks. Headlock waits...

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Vetrick wastes no time. With Gresil's help he studies the three primal powers; The Void, Rootvile and Creation. When he returns to Gresil's antechamber Morikand is gone. Nourished, refreshed and strangely calm he speaks Gresil.

"There was a priest with us in Gran Breton, an Elenian by the name of Headlock. It is my belief that Korven banished him to some demonic prison and I need to get to him."

Gresil sighs. "I fear what you say is true lord Vetrick. But the prison in question is impenetrable. It is called *Aggragar* and is run by the arch demon Cusar. An army could not breach it."

"Then I need to get to a temple of Elena. The Lady will help me. Know any priests Gresil?"

Gresil the Great Librarian smiles and sends Vetrick back to Grayhawk. Vast trees are all around him. He studies the ground, tastes the fresh water and observes the minutiae around him. He is a ranger lord and knows, instinctively, that he is in the Kalador forest.

Soon he is surrounded by elves. The Kals, by reputation, are fiercely proud and warlike. Vetrick realises that he has strayed deep into the forest, deeper than any human has ever reached. The irony of the situation is not lost on him; *if only they knew I was half demonic!* Despite the Kals bravado and arrogance there is one voice of reason amongst them.

A silver haired elf says; "Can't you see what sword he carries? That is the blade that marked Malakar."

There is silence. It is though even the birds, the insects and the very wind itself stills in awe of the elf's words. New found respect is on every face. "I need to visit a temple," Vetrick says.

The temple of Elena, like so many in the great forests of Grayhawk, is an oasis of greenery, natural groves and beautiful gardens. The high priestess is called Gehlen, a striking woman who takes the ranger into a quiet room. There she leaves him. By a clear pool sits Elena, Vetrick composes himself to face the full force of her beauty, but the goddess is calm and smiles at him.

His gaze falls to the pool where he can see the scene of a dungeon. Headlock marshals a handful of beleaguered prisoners as they barricade the doors and prepare for some kind of assault.

"Can you get me there?" Vetrick says.

"It is a one way ticket Vetrick. Whilst I can place you inside the room the nature of the place will prevent you from leaving."

"I will not leave him to die there," the ranger says.

Elena smiles warmly. "Nor will I. But there is only one creature, the foul lord of this infernal place, that has the power to release those poor souls. Get to him, break his power and I will reach you."

The goddess reaches deep into the pool and in her hand is a great black sword. Vetrick steadies himself as the power of it nearly knocks him off his feet. A two handed blade of awesome power, the dark metal seems to absorb all light and as soon as he grips the black hilt he staggers back.

"It belongs to my brother," she says.

Vetrick staggers back once more.

"It's presence will alert the foul lord of the prison and draw him to you as though Malakar himself had stepped into his domain. It is the only way."

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Headlock does not even notice his companion arrive. Vetrick seems to melt out of the shadows into view. The priest can feel the sheer presence of the blade. Vetrick walks up to the confused Dorik Luckwarden and hands him Scar. "Take this sword, Drenai, because very soon we are going to get a visit."

"By the gods man!" Dorik says.

Vetrick grins. "Indeed."

There is little time to react. The weaker prisoners begin to die. A foul, foetid stench creeps into the guard room, a smell so unpleasant that it chokes the weak to death. The charged atmosphere turns cold as something approaches. The doors, heavily barricaded, begin to melt away. Great heat and raw power as the lord of the plane arrives to face the blade of Malakar.

A hulking shape crashes into the room. Two harsh red eyes lay either side of a tentacle that protrudes from a scaly forehead. Massive, powerful arms hold a double spear; a hook at one end and a blade at the other. Only Headlock, Fallis, Dorik and Vetrick remain able to fight as the beast advances. The remaining prisoners cower in the shadows.

It slashes this way and that with awesome speed. Vetrick dances away dextrously and awaits the inevitable opportunity. The walls shake as the arch demon hurls an unknown spell at the ranger but in the cocoon of Malakar's protection the spell dissipates harmlessly around him. Vetrick feels strangely calm. He closes carefully and launches an attack on the demon's soul.

Vetrick's double handed strike is a blur. No defence – however skilled – would stop the blow. The blade smashes through the demon's skull and buries itself deep into its heart. Blood, gore and the life force of the beast are spilt on the floor. As it screams its soul dies.

The power that binds the prison together is gone. The many-layered protections and wards are no more and the whole place begins to crumble. Walls and floors collapse. The screams of the millions of prisoners can be heard for miles and there is panic in the guard room. Vetrick wrenches the blade from the corpse and the whole scenery changes.

He, along with Headlock, Fallis, Dorik and the remaining prisoners, are suddenly in the warmth of the Kalador forest; the beautiful temple of Gehlen is all around them. The Kals are quick to comfort the sick and heal the wounded. Dorik and Fallis lead the cheers as Gehlen, the high priestess, walks amongst them. She stops and bows to Vetrick, her head inclined in the direction of the altar. Vetrick knows what must be done and knows also the truth of what happened. With no powerful protections around it Elena exerted her influence on the plane and plucked them all to safety.

"I am in your debt," she says, "to put yourself in such danger for a friend is a mark of greatness." She takes her brother's blade and stares deeply into his eyes. Vetrick has the feeling that she stares directly into his soul, as though she opens him like the petals of a flower in blossom to see what is underneath. He does not flinch. Few men could withstand such scrutiny but Vetrick is unlike other men; his soul hardened by his experiences. Eventually, inevitably, Elena turns and is gone.

When he returns to the jubilant crowd he sees Dorik Luckwarden embracing Headlock. "I swear to you my orcish friend that I will keep my promise and follow your goddess."

Even the elves congratulate the orc who looks incongruous in such a beautiful place. Vetrick feels peace suffuse his entire being, a complete sense of well being he has otherwise never experienced. As he returns to the elves a chorus of victory songs are sung in his name...

Vetrick's Quest

Mar 7th - Mar 11th

During the celebrations in the Kalador Forest the party are joined by Xiaian Lau, a Menelothian woman and martial artist. Graz Tak introduces himself to the high priestess, Gehlen, and informs him that he must see the Lady Elena, the goddess of the elves. Gehlen informs him that the Lady will grant audience to all his companions as well.

Elena sits by the clear pool that is her altar in this temple. Graz Tak, Vetrick, Headlock, Dorik Luckwarden, Tihs Revom and Fallis are all present and are humbled by the beautiful goddess. Vetrick wants help to get to the Temporal Wheel but is coy with his companions about the nature of his visit.

"I can get you close," Elena says, "but are you really sure you want to go?"

Vetrick realises that inside her temple the goddess is able to read his mind. "I must."

Elena does not argue, nor does she try to persuade him against it. She agrees to his request. A dark corridor in the grove opens; the path to the Red Isle and the Temporal Wheel. Before they take the path Headlock casts *cure serious wounds* on Graz whilst Vetrick helps out with *cure light wounds*. Once Graz is fully healed from the effects of a *death spell* they enter the corridor.

The Red Isle is well named. The glow from the active volcano in the south of the island leaves an eerie red presence in the sky. Though it is winter the air is humid and the temperature mild. Vetrick and Graz lead the party to the circle of stones known as the Temporal Wheel. Vetrick stands in the middle of it. "I'm taking you to the end of time," he says. "Any who don't wish to come leave now."

No one leaves. "Why?" Headlock says.

"Because something awaits me there, a gift of sorts."

They are propelled forward in time by Vetrick's unseen companion, further forward than any other creatures have ever gone. When their journey ends the scene around them is totally different. The sky is a wash of angry colours. They perch on one of two small islands in a sea of lava. The heat is overwhelming as time, space and everything else is about to implode.

Vetrick searches in vain for anything. Instead they witness an incongruous sight. On the only other small island stands a tall dark haired man with an exquisite silk shirt and an air of towering arrogance. He appears to place something inside the folds of his rich garments.

The stranger sneers at Vetrick. "Come and find me Vetrick and we shall discuss your *gift*." The stranger vanishes. Soon the rest of the party follow suit but they soon realise that one of their number – Fallis – did not return from the maelstrom.

Vetrick seethes as he leaves the Temporal Wheel. Not even the presence of Morikand can ease his anger. "Tricked!" he hisses. They decide to head for the east coast of the Red Isle where the plan is to capture a ship. Morikand aims to summon a demon into

it and use it as a means of quick transportation. The demonologist has come from his successful study of a new spell – *Possession in Death* is born!

It soon becomes clear that they are being followed. Vetrick has ideas to ambush the ambushers despite the barren terrain and flat landscape. But before any plans are laid down twenty screaming barbarians – Tragornians from the eastern isle – rush out of their cover and sprint towards the party.

Morikand casts *slow* and more than half are affected. Headlock and Graz reach for their longbows. Xaian Lau launches a throwing dagger into the face of a barbarian and fells him and the two archers take down a further four in the initial assault. Vetrick is soon amongst them and his blade cuts three of the Tragornians down immediately.

The fight is surprisingly short. The barbarians attack falters and as Graz enters combat with the Blade of Pain all is lost. Within two minutes twenty dead Tragornians lie dead around them. Graz and Tihs rifle the body for any gold and soon they are on their way again.

Morikand decides that the party requires further protection and intends to bind demons into weapons (for Vetrick and Xaian Lau). He creates pentacles of summoning and protection and gets to work.

The first demon is from the Plane of Withering. An old man with a walking stick is before them; the red eyes betray his true power. When Morikand fails to bind him the demon blows dust into Tihs' face and a fight ensues. It is brutally short. Graz Tak rams his demonic blade into its ribs and the demon's soul is taken.

The next demon is from the Plane of Combat (*true name* reveals it to be called Ildrak). This is successfully bound into Xaian Lau's scimitar. The next demon is from the Plane of Vengeance (*true name* Haden) which he successfully binds into Tihs' longsword. The last demon he summons is from the Plane of Doom. This one Morikand is unable to bind and the beast launches itself at the demonologist. A horned, winged monster it manages only a few steps before Graz Tak drives the Blade of Pain through its skull and destroys it.

Morikand is now a mage. His study of demons and his desire to summon them has led to mastery of the art of demonology. He joins a small and dangerous band of demonologist mages; few ever reach such heights.

Next day they reach the east coast and spot various ships in the waters between the isles. Graz casts a scroll of *polymorph self* and Morikand follows suit with the spell of the same name. They fly as seagulls over to an Imarand merchant ship, a small vessel with ten crewmembers. Graz hides away in the shadows (in human form) and Morikand also becomes human. The demonologist stands proud in front of the captain (a man called Gregar) and casts *dominate person* on him. Soon the captain – now under the total control of Morikand – orders the crew to head for shore.

The rest of the party board ship and Graz gets rid of the crew (he pays them 5gp each) and as the rest of the party remove the grain in the cargo hold Morikand has enough

space to work on the pentacle. He summons a massive demon from the Plane of Tides and successfully binds it into the ship. He renames it The Seagull and before long Vetrick steers it out to sea.

Soon Vetrick raises the vessel into the clouds and heads back towards Grayhawk. Headlock gathers insects from around the ship, small flies and the like, and when ready he casts *giant insects* on them. Suddenly six enormous creatures are present.

"These will take human riders," Headlock remarks casually.

His companions stare in open-mouthed awe at the insects that now perch on the rails of their new ship...

Return to Grayhawk

Mar 12th - Mar 19th

Morikand's new ship, The Seagull, soars high above the clouds above the Harrain Ocean. It heads north towards Grayhawk. Vetrick climbs onto one of Headlock's *giant insects* and flies around to scout, Morikand *polymorphs* into an albatross and the two friends spend a few hours searching for unusual creatures. When none are found they return to the ship.

During the week long flight Morikand does research into the possibility of binding two demons into the same weapon. He casts his own spell *possession in death* during his studies. He summons a demon from the Plane of Veils and immediately binds it into Vetrick's greatsword. Both Xiaian Lau and Headlock, exponents of the *spirit sense* are aware of a change in Vetrick when he holds the sword; he becomes indistinct and hard to see.

Later Morikand puts his study to good use by summoning a demon from the Plane of Darkness. Initially he fails to bind it and the ship is plunged into darkness, as the party draw their weapons they can see neither friend nor foe. Morikand casts *binding* and the demon (whose *true name* is Kedelac) is now bound into Gila's quarterstaff...the second demon within it. Gila tests the weapon, which feels good, and the two spirit sense exponents sense an improvement in the weapon.

The free city state of Nyrnik comes into view after a week. Morikand notices the city has grown considerably, due in part to the demonic engineers he set to work on the defences. The walls are higher and the manor house – the seat of power – has become a grand palace. It is to this palace where Morikand steers the vessel, he lands it squarely on the roof and is soon surrounded by one hundred palace guards.

Vetrick examines the guards closely. The significance of their fine robes and expensive silks is not lost on him; his mind turns to the lone figure he saw at the end of time, a man who also wore similar finery. They are met by a powerful Drenai sorcerer called Verawain. Discreetly Headlock casts *know alignment* on him and discovers that he has strong allegiances to Gallor Galliath. Verawain is pleasant and informs them that Mercila is now the queen. "The council was not working," he

explains as they head for the palace, "so it was decided that it is best if Mercila becomes queen. Things are much more stable now."

The new queen greets the familiar faces of Gila, Morikand and Vetrick warmly and is surprised to see Dorik Luckwarden amongst the party. Xaian Lau, the Menelothian martial artist, can sense a dominating spirit within the palace, an influence so strong that he cannot fail to spot it. Initially she keeps this to herself.

"We are just passing through," Vetrick says.

"But you will stay for dinner," Queen Mercila says. Next to her, in a small cot, is the strange child she bore to Graz Tak, a child raised in the Abyss and brought back to Grayhawk.

The dinner is a small affair. Present with the party are Verawain, Styxor, a Nyrnian master thief, Galastor, a Drenai tailor, and Bosian, a maimed one-eyed priest of Malakar. The Malakarian is deeply uncomfortable in the presence of the man who maimed his god and their relationship during the meal is fractious. Vetrick, however, turns his attention to the strange tailor. The man is effusive and confident. He is obviously great friends with Mercila but Vetrick cannot get the man out of his head; there is a gnawing suspicion about him.

Once the pleasantries of the meal are over the party return to ship and take off immediately. Their destination is the Olshay Range, the largest mountain range on Grayhawk. The tallest peaks are located here and it is one of the last true wildernesses on the planet. Many creatures fled here as the domination of human and elvenkind drove them into the mountains. Few humans have ever been deep into the Olshay Range.

As they leave Nyrnik they rise into the clouds. Suddenly the sound of grapple hooks on wood can be heard. Before they know what is happening fourteen pirates are on deck and rush at the party. A grey bearded giant of a man leads the attack but Morikand meets him head on. He casts *death spell* on him and grey beard falls dead in a second. This shakes the confidence of the attackers and when Vetrick leaps into the fray he carves a couple down with his demonic greatsword they begin to falter. Gila uses his deadly quarterstaff to good effect and downs a couple more before the pirates realise they are outclassed.

Tihs, the thief, ducks into the shadows emerging only to ram a longsword through the back of a pirate and out the other side. Dorik Luckwarden lashes left and right with economical blows, his skill too great fro the faltering attackers. Vetrick and Morikand Lau mop up the remainder which leaves Headlock to cast *hold person* on one of the pirates before they are all dead.

Gila ties up the survivor and Headlock releases him. The man blathers in an attempt to save his life; he is called Devar and was hired by grey beard in a harbour-side tavern by the tailor called Galastor. Headlock goes on to cast *speak with dead* on grey beard and is able to ask him three questions. The pirate captain confirms the link with Galastor but also explains that the tailor wanted him to throw a vial of liquid onto Vetrick and this would win them the fight.

The party search grey beard and find the magical ceramic vial. Morikand *identifies* it as Vetrick's Bane and suspects it to be a sorcerous poison. The decision is made quickly and after Tihs has filched some gold off the bodies all the pirates (including the vial) are cast overboard.

It takes a few days before the party find a suitable location in the heart of the Olshay. A vast mountain with an elongated natural plateau is where they land the ship. Remote, inaccessible and easily defensible. Morikand draws a pentacle immediately and summons a demon from the Plane of Towers. A squat dwarf appears which is bound into a service.

"Build me a castle!" Morikand orders it.

"Of course master Morikand...I will build you one fit for a king..."

Drusor's Bane

Mar 20th - 23rd

The party are in their new home in the heart of the Olshay Range, five thousand feet up they look down on the clouds. The demonic engineer continues to create Morikand's sky castle whilst the rest of his friends use the demonic ship as temporary refuge. Vetrick scouts the surrounding area and discovers the tracks and footprints of creatures he knows nothing about. These, he muses, are no ordinary animals.

Headlock, the orc priest of Elena, uses *stoneshape* to fashion a shrine which he buries thirty feet into the rock on the edge of the plateau. When he completes the shrine he notices words appearing suddenly, punched into the ceiling by an unknown sculptor. Headlock's acute spirit sense reveals demonic influence.

I AM BACK

The rest of the party consider the strange message. Vetrick suspects the re-emergence of Asigoth and nobody disagrees with him. That night they sleep uneasily, aware that an enemy is close. Xaian Lau and Gila, the two martial artists, take the first watch. When Xaian spots a couple of rats trying to get into the ship he launches a well-aimed throwing dagger that hits the first rat. The rodent is semi corporeal, a magical trick of *projection*.

The clattering of the thrown dagger inside the sleeping quarters is enough to wake the rest of the party. Morikand casts *detect demon* and realises Asigoth is close. Without warning the demonic assassin is amongst them, he materialised in the middle with a pair of jet-black katanas in his hands. Morikand realises that he cannot cast for at least another minute but his friends are quick to take the offensive.

Headlock casts *bless* before swinging Wrathstar at the killer. Asigoth parries with the blade and the priest's hammer is unmade! It shatters into a million shards of black glass before evaporating into nothingness. Horror stricken the rest of the party realise what power Asigoth now wields; two void blades capable of utter destruction.

Vetrick is committed to his attack and as soon as the demon's blade turns it aside the greatsword vanishes along with the demon bound into it. Asigoth survives the first barrage of blows and counterattacks swiftly. A deft flick of the first sword catches Headlock unaware, the priest is obliterated before their eyes! Gila and Vetrick avoid another couple of attacks and all continue to press their five-to-one advantage. They know that Asigoth will soon run out of defences. Indeed when Xaian Lau flicks a throwing dagger at the demon Asigoth does not defend and is cut by the powerful throw.

Gila's timing is perfect. The deadly quarterstaff smashes into Asigoth's midriff and punctures its soul. Asigoth screams. The demon is on its knees and howls like a wounded puppy, his eyes now a pale pink instead of vibrant crimson. There is no more fight left in him and he *teleports* away before Gila or Graz could deliver the final death blow.

"Is he dead?" Xaian Lau asks.

"Not likely," Gila remarks, "he will lick his wounds and rebuild his soul. We have not seen the last of that one."

Next morning Morikand creates a pentacle on the plateau floor. He summons a demon from the Plane of Blades and is confronted by a corpulent man with a blacksmith's hammer and a sour disposition. After some initial taunts Morikand manages to *bind* it into a service; to build Vetrick a greatsword. Later he casts *true name* – the demon is called Avarak the Furnace Master. Avarak suggests that he needs a forge and an unearthly fire to create the blade.

Morikand summons a second demon from the Plane of Pyres and *binds* it to Avarak's service. It is a small imp-like creature with a mastery of fire.

That night a wandering mountain elf called Aldanor Carlomin joins the group. A paladin on a rite of passage he is welcomed by the party.

It takes Avarak twenty four hours to produce the greatsword. When Vetrick takes possession of it the Furnace Master disappeared, his service complete, however Morikand keeps the imp and sets it to work on the castle. The blade is *identified* by the demonologist as Gar Avarak.

Meanwhile Graz uses his sorcerous quiver to enchant the paladin's arrows. The party now discuss taking the fight to Korven with Gila's suggestion that they use Dorik Luckwarden to get to Drusor and perhaps persuade him to help them. Dorik is enthusiastic about the idea and convinces them all that he can get them to see his brother.

Drusor Luckwarden has made massive gains in the war with Korven. His army surrounds the citadel of Morganth on the border to the Bretonian heartland where Korven rules. As Morikand steers the ship into the clouds he can see the siege mapped out below. Smoke rises from the walls as Korven's forces try to repel the irrepressible army of Drusor.

It is decided to land the ship a mile from Drusor's tent and walk in. His army is made up of a core of Erenlanders and Khulans with a smattering of Drenai throughout the ranks. As the party, led by Dorik, move through the engineers and reserves heads turn. The troops can see the resemblance to their leader.

At a huge tent on the battlefield Drusor and his generals make plans to take another city. When Dorik and the party enter the tent Drusor dismisses his men. Dorik and Drusor embrace but Drusor's disposition towards the others is not good. He accuses them of treachery and dishonour, a charge Vetrick throws back in his face.

Vetrick and Drusor square up to each other, their tempers rising. Not even the conciliatory Dorik or the calming influence of Graz Tak can blunt their anger. The two men are bitter rivals but few could suspect what was about to happen. With his anger at its peak Vetrick snaps; his new blade, Gar Avarak, is unleashed and he lunges at Drusor.

Graz Tak reacts first. He knocks the blade from Vetrick's grasp in an attempt to diffuse the situation. But Gila is under no illusions about where this fight is going; he is upon Drusor Luckwarden as soon as the Drenai's trademark twin greatswords are drawn. Gila uses the technique of distraction – a skill unique to martial artists – to feign an attack. When Drusor is drawn to it Gila strikes. A small mistake but it sees Gila's staff crack Drusor's head in two, the deadly quarterstaff quaffs the soul eagerly and voraciously.

When Drusor's empty body falls to the ground Dorik screams in anguish and turns his blades on the killer of his brother. Gila deflects each blow methodically, calmly, his senses tuned to the bodyguards who are rushing into the huge tent. Escape is impossible. Even if they defeat the bodyguards an entire army will be right behind them. But Gila is calm...calmer than he has ever been.

Gila spins to kick Dorik in the face as Morikand kicks him in the sword arm. The howling guards are almost upon them but Morikand's *slow* buys them vital seconds. His next kick is lethal, the demonologist snaps the neck of Dorik Luckwarden with a skilful attack.

Gila concentrates on the staff, he invokes the demonic influence from within, calling on the demon from the Plane of Darkness to aid him. Instantly an impenetrable shroud of blackness envelops the tent. Squeals of terror fill the area but Gila can see! He drags Luckwarden's body and shepherds his friends into a corner of the tent. The guards lash out wildly, maiming each other in the blind panic.

When Morikand is certain everyone is present he activates the magical coin and they are instantly transported to Gresil's library in the heart of the Abyss. The great librarian greets them warmly as usual but Morikand does not wait for pleasantries; he realises that he needs to go back to his ship immediately. Using a pentacle of travel he is able to drag them all back to Grayhawk and aboard the Seagull before Drusor's army even realise what has happened.

The ship soars high into the clouds and they pick through Drusor's body for equipment. Both greatswords are magical and the paladin Aldanor takes one and

Vetrick takes the other (blessed by Elena). Amongst the rest of the equipment is one of Illeum's rings (the Necras) that is so familiar to Graz Tak and Morikand. Another ring is present, a tough mail shirt and an amulet called Tahaal. Morikand can sense demonic influence on this item.

As they penetrate the clouds the group surround the fallen body of Grayhawk's greatest warrior and decide how to divide the spoils...

The Influence of Muziel

Mar 24th - 28th

The Seagull – Morikand's demonic ship – is moored on the plateau high into the Olshay Range. Next to it demonic engineers work to construct his impressive castle. All is calm until Vetrick convulses on deck, his scream piercing and agonising. As his companions rush to him blood seeps from the ranger's mouth. The pain lasts for several minutes until he recovers.

"It is the death of my familiar," he explains, "Muziel has taken the life of Willow, the Shader."

Soon afterwards they discuss the world and its politics, particularly their place in it. Two options present themselves; go north to canvas the aid of the Elenorians or go south to see Mercila and Golnarn, Graz Tak's special child. They decide to head south.

Vetrick takes the ship up into the clouds and hugs the Jandraki Coast on their journey south. That night they are all on deck. Gila and Xaian Lau spar on deck, putting each other through their paces in hand to hand combat. Something can be heard flying around them, a huge creature with a wingspan large enough to create a disturbance in the air.

Out of nowhere the hulking shape swoops down at them. On its back is a rider carrying a huge silver lance. The initial attack misses but the dragon and rider turn in mid air for another assault. Vetrick launches three quick arrows and as the dragon swoops down the second time there is no rider.

Vetrick steers the ship down to the water, the demonic ship skims the surface and moves rapidly across it. They pass a shattered lance and realise that black shapes encircle them above, like flying sharks in the gloom. Gila concentrates on his demonic quarterstaff, from the demon of darkness he produces a shroud of blackness that only his eyes can penetrate. As Vetrick removes the ship from danger Gila watches as the dragon riders recover their fallen companion, their livery suggests followers of Jarik Saal from Aldegaarde.

The harbour at Nyrnik is crowded. Vetrick steers the ship to a Bretonian enclave and secures it. A few Bretonian soldiers protest but soon recoil as they realise who they are dealing with.

Gila suggests buying garments for their trip to Mercila and all are in agreement as they head for the Merchant Quarters, in particular they seek out tailors. Graz Tak lurks behind them shadowing their every move. He realises that they are already being followed, probably by Mercila's spies, so he stays close and alert.

At the first shop they realise that Galastor – the queen's tailor – has become the sole producer of fine garments by royal appointment and soon the entire party are at his busy establishment. A young apprentice called Kiran shows them to a private room and goes to fetch his master – Galastor.

The tailor is a confident man who wears his fine clothes with arrogance. That arrogance disappears when he enters the room, blood drains from his face as Aldanor closes the door behind him. Gila smiles and invites him to talk.

"He made me do it," Galastor blathers referring to Muziel.

Gila steers the conversation and gains much information from the terrified clothier. Galastor tries to convince them that he is just a pawn in Muziel's game but the party is not buying into his lies. When Galastor makes a chance remark about his feelings for Mercila it is too much for Graz Tak. The master thief lunges for the tailor.

Each man is surprised by the swift kick Galastor aims at Graz. The thief avoids both attacks easily. Galastor tries to escape but he is outnumbered; Xaian bloodies his nose with a kick and Aldanor opens up a massive wound in his stomach. Still the tailor clings on to life but Gila's staff crushes his soul without mercy.

As they leave the shop Vetrick torches the private room. By the time they are well on the way to the palace the alarm is raised and the smoke rises into the morning sky. Militiamen scurry around the Merchant Quarter in a desperate bid to put out the inferno.

As they take the main walkway up to the palace gates something odd happens. With every step the palace seems to get further away. The more forward progress they take the greater the distance. A man in an exquisite shirt appears at the threshold to the palace...Muziel! Graz Tak takes out a scroll of *dispel magic* but the spell fails. Aldanor launches an arrow that falls short of its target. When the man called Muziel steps back into the doorway the distortion snaps back and they find themselves at the palace gatehouse.

The guard captain greets Graz who notices that all the uniforms and livery of the palace soldiers, in fact of all the palace staff, has been altered. The hand of Muziel is everywhere. Xaian Lau senses a deep spiritual influence just from the clothes the soldiers wear.

"Ok captain," Graz says sternly, "disrobe immediately. Tell your men to follow suit."

The guard captain reacts angrily and soon one hundred palace guards surround them. Tensions are high. Even the appearance of the chamberlain, Verawain, cannot calm the situation. When Xaian Lau starts to disrobe the arguments stop. The lithe woman

exposes her obvious charms and all the men gape – open mouthed – at her naked beauty.

"Right lads, get them off!" says the guard captain.

As one hundred soldiers strip to their loincloths the influence of Muziel disappears.

"I want all palace staff to remove and burn their clothes," Graz Tak says.

The captain nods. "At once my lord."

As the party enters the quiet throneroom Mercila eyes Xaian Lau suspiciously, her face darkens as she catches the eye of her husband, Graz Tak.

"Why is everyone disrobing?" she says.

They give the queen a full rundown on the situation. Every one of them can sense the change in the palace. Even Verawain – after some disagreement – is forced to disrobe. When four naked guards enter they inform Graz that the quartermaster has been siezed.

Vorlan Elmard appears to be innocent. After interrogation by Gila the party decide that he is not complicit in Muziel's plan but his stores are filled with garments and weapons brought by Galastor and – ultimately – by Muziel himself. Vetrick alone can see evidence of Muziel's tampering and orders the entire stores to be destroyed.

Back in the throneroom the queen takes stock of the situation and admits the deception had her fooled. When Golnarn, the child, begins to cry she knows something is very wrong. "He never cries," she says.

Graz takes his child but still it weeps. The thief can see deeply into his son's eyes and knows, instinctively, that something – or someone – is trying to hurt Golnarn. Morikand casts *pentacle of protection* but this is exactly what the enemy wants.

Having waited until Morikand cast the spell Asigoth appears out of nowhere. The demonic killer wields two dark void blades but Gila and Morikand are quicker to react. The demonologist tries to disarm Asigoth but fails but Gila – who draws Asigoth into a mistake – crashes the staff into it's skull. Asigoth reels and falls to the floor, its soul all but spent, but there is still fight left in the deadly killer.

In desperation Asigoth swings at the child. Vetrick catches the sword arm but is unable to stop the ambidextrous assassin plunge the second void sword into the child's face. Astonishingly the child Golnarn is unharmed. Asigoth's last attack catches Aldonar and the paladin is unmade instantly, along with the blade of Hellath and one of Drusor's mighty greatswords.

Morikand finally drives a demonic gloved fist into the demon's face and Asigoth is gone forever.

Next Morikand takes his friends down to the summoning room. Vetrick expresses a desire to seek the wisdom of Vohaas, arch demon of Disjunction and friend of Morikand. The demonologist summons a messenger and *binds* him into a service. "I want to seek the counsel of Vohaas."

Half an hour later the demon returns to respond. "Lord Vohaas will gladly welcome you Morikand Demon Friend, but he has two provisions. Firstly you must bring the ship and secondly you must bring the child."

"No way!" Mercila scowls. "My son is not going anywhere near the Abyss. Graz tries to reason with her as Morikand brings the demonic ship to the balcony. Mercila resists all attempts at persuasion until – when his patience snaps – Graz manhandles her aboard.

When everyone is aboard Morikand concentrates on the Plane of Disjunction. His control of the ship is now total, he concentrates on the pentacle of travel and visualises the palace where they had previously visited.

The journey is swift and stomach churning. But Morikand knows something is wrong. Instinctively he realises that the ship has missed its target, in fact the demonologist is hopelessly lost. As they emerge into the midst of a deadly battle there is fire and death all around them. The ship is battered by storms and balls of fire. Unspeakable soldiers riding demonic steeds attack.

Morikand is lost...

Disjunction

Mar 28th - 29th

The Seagull is in the midst of an unearthly battle. Somewhere in one of the six hundred and sixty six planes of the Abyss Morikand's ship is lost. The demonologist watches as the front of his ship is blasted away by demonic power and he quickly casts *demonic shield* to envelop himself and the rest of the party. He descends into the ship and at the pentacle of travel he tries again, in desperation, to find the plane of Disjunction.

This time he lands in the middle of a vast sea or inland lake. Gone is the battle all around him. The plane resembles Grayhawk with blue sky, white clouds and a deep azure sea. The boat begins to list but Morikand raises it from the water realising that the demon bound into it is preparing to mend itself. Morikand rises into the clouds and surveys the horizons.

To the perceived north is a large fiery hole, a mile across, which seems to suck all life into it. Even from several miles away Morikand can sense the raw power of it and he decides to head to the nearby coastline. He uses the Soul Compass to locate Vohaas but he fails; Morikand's instinct is that he has reached Disjunction.

As the coastline draws near they can all see an immense citadel, complete with harbour and thousands of ships. Larger than any citadel they have ever seen they are

drawn to it and notice that there are gigantic sea creatures that swarm below. As a result the ships – like Morikand – sail through the air and land at the harbour. Morikand descends and is guided to a place in the harbour by a winged demon. An imp lands on deck and questions the demonologist but Morikand dismisses the creature without revealing anything.

There are humanoid creatures present but they are in the minority. A vast conglomeration of different species all thrown together in a huge walled environment, Morikand realises quickly that each member of his party carry one or more demons and as such they can blend in with the natives. Gila, Xaian Lau and Morikand go exploring and soon find themselves in what they perceive to be a tavern. Speech and language are unusual; most creatures use telepathy but there are several demonic languages that Morikand can recognise.

A waiter offers them drinks and tells them that they are in Sag'ranad the last free citadel of the plane. Morikand gets three tankards of a red gloopy liquid and soon realises that it is a concentrated soul liquefied. Gila and Xaian stare distastefully at the beverages but Morikand quaffs his without hesitation.

Darkness envelops the demonologist. All sound, taste, touch and sight disappear as his body takes in the powerful drink. Slowly, inexorably, his senses return so too does a new sensation. As he stares around the room he does not see shapes or features; instead he can see the burning power of the souls within represented by fire. The hotter the fire the more intense the soul. Reluctantly both Gila and Xaian follow the demonologist. They too experience similar pain followed by euphoria. All three feel more attuned to the place and more able to cope with the intense surroundings.

Morikand leads them to a shadowy table where a tentacled demon sits. The waiter has already informed them that information can be gained there. When Morikand asks for the creatures name it laughs; "You don't want to be giving your name to anyone around here, Grayhawkian."

They learn that Sag'ranad is about to be attacked by Vohaas and his army. The last resistance to his tyranny has gathered within the citadel and prepares to repel the great hordes. Morikand decides that it would be wise to return to the ship and leave. At the harbour, however, the harbourmaster has other ideas. He requests Morikand sign his name in the log (in blood) something the demonologist is reluctant to do. Instead Morikand casts *control demon* but the harbourmaster is not tricked by the spell and becomes more insistent that Morikand signs. Morikand flips him a small gold coin (with a massive demon from the plane of Greed bound into it) – when the harbourmaster takes the coin his whole demeanour changes.

"Stay as long as you like," he grins and moves away.

Morikand raises the ship into the clouds and heads away from Sag'ranad. Before long he gets the feeling that there are demons close. Considering the ship is thousands of feet in the air this causes him some concern. Suddenly a massive fleet of invisible demonic ships – some not unlike the Seagull – become visible. Thousands of vessels inching towards Sag'ranad and the inevitable battle. Some carry thousands of

Darkland-like warriors who carry katanas whilst others have grotesque winged and barbed demons as tall as houses.

Two emaciated humanoids board the Seagull and calmly suggest they are all now prisoners. Morikand explains who he is but they seem unimpressed. Gila stands in front of them and leans on his quarterstaff. "I am no-one's prisoner," he states firmly. Again the two demons seem calm and point out the army that surround them. Gila shrugs. Eventually one of the demons makes a suggestion. "If you slay our best warrior in one-on-one combat we will accede to your wishes and take you to Vohaas. Fail and your friends are prisoners."

From one of the ships a slim dark-robed warrior lands on deck. One of the calm demons explains that this demon (*true name* Letcham) was trained as a bodyguard to Vohaas himself.

Gila knocks Letcham to the ground with an artful sweep and the two combatants exchange rapid blows. Gila realises that Letcham is an expert and his one small mistake is almost punished. *Stoneskin* comes to the martial artist's rescue and although Gila is outclassed he is not beaten. He projects darkness around him from his demonic staff and forces the demon to fight blind. A sweeping kick knocks Letcham to the ground and a ferocious double strike crushes his soul.

True to their word the two demons lead the Seagull to the back of the fleet where a monstrosity large vessel – with almost two thousand troops on board – awaits. Vohaas sits uncomfortably on a throne but beckons Gila, Xaian and Morikand into a private stateroom. As Gila walks past one of the two emissaries he strikes him viciously with a crushing blow that consumes his soul. Not one of the soldiers even blink.

"I see you have brought both ship and child," the arch demon says, "good. If you left either alone on Grayhawk then Muziel would have taken one or both, or at the very least exerted influence over them."

Vohaas explains that he – like Muziel – is a master of the primal art of Creation. Muziel has been systematically destroying all other primal sorcerers – particularly those that follow his own path – which is why Vetrick and the child Golnarn are in danger. He briefly explains that the four fundamental laws of the universe; Time, Space, Life and Death are the four Primal Constants. "These are the powers that Muziel can draw upon. As you have seen he is particularly skilled in the arts of Time and Space. There will be others who will show talent in other aspects which is why – if Vetrick is to have any chance – that I must mentor him."

Vohaas explains that a rogue general called Skyrd has raised a force against him. In a small bowl of water Vohaas demonstrates his mastery of Space and Time and displays Skyrd marshalling his troops. "When the battle begins I want you to take him out. Once Skyrd is dead then I will be master of this plane...do this for me and I will reward you greatly."

They agree. The battle is unlike anything they have ever seen. Raw power blasts across the water devastating whole regions of the citadel. Winged demons assault

from the air as the ground troops move house to house. Vohaas opens his fist and says; "Prepare yourselves!" Morikand casts a few *foxes cunnings* before Vohaas closes his fist.

Skyrd is alone in a room but reacts instantly to the assault. Jahick (an Estallian Pyromancer), Morikand, Xaian Lau and Gila surround him and hack at the fierce beast. Skyrd is a master bladesman and even outnumbered he is able to cope with the multiple attacks. Just as the battle outside goes against him so the battle within is similarly failing. Morikand manages to *control demon* and forces Skyrd to lie flat on his face and place his hands behind his back. Gila executes the rogue general mercilessly.

They are soon back with Vohaas who rejoices in their actions. Gila takes Avenger (Skyrd's katana) and Vohaas explains that it was created by him years earlier. They each discuss training. Xaian Lau and Gila are interested in learning the katana whilst Jahick wants to learn unarmed technique.

Vohaas tells them that some people have primal potential and never even know it. As a test he bends time and space and asks each one of them to simply find the fire. "I have put it beyond the reach of normal souls but if you have any potential you will find it."

Both Xaian and Jahick cannot find it, neither can Morikand but Gila reaches beyond time and space itself, finds the impossible recess where Vohaas hid the fire and caresses it. Vohaas smiles. "It seems I now have two students."

Vohaas explains a little about the plane of Disjunction saying that there are pockets of it that defy the normal laws of the universe. This was one of the reasons he discovered his talent for Creation and now – with the aid of these spaces of no time – he completes the training of three of the party.

Jahick learns unarmed combat whilst both Gila and Xaian manage to become exponents of the katana...their master one of the universe's greatest swordsmen. Morikand meanwhile experiments with a new spell. He *shape changes* into Muziel and tries to gain knowledge from the physical attributes of the Echeron Lord...

The Enemy

Mar 30th - Arr 3rd

The party reside in Vohaas' mighty palace deep in the plane of Disjunction. The arch demon is now ruler of the entire plane having recently crushed any resistance to his rule.. Gila and Vetrick are now his students in the Art of Creation, the most difficult of the three primal powers to master. Both men practise their new skills under the watchful eye of the demon but it soon becomes clear that Vohaas has taught them as much as he can and - inevitably - the discussion turns to their future and that of the child Golnarn.

Meanwhile Morikand finds one of the many summoning rooms in the palace and takes Xaian Lau and Tihs Revom with him. He summons a demon from the plane of

Torment and immediately binds it into the martial artist's katana. Next he summons another demon, this time from the plane of Crushing and binds this together in the same katana. Xaian Lau notices the difference straight away, the blade is lighter in her hands. Finally Morikand summons a demon from the plane of Fortresses and is able to bind this into Tihs Revom's leather armour.

The party come to a clear decision that it would be best if they returned to Nyrnik where they can - with Gila and Vetrick's help - protect Mercila and the child in safer surroundings. They all board Morikand's demonic ship - the Seagull - but it is Gila that transports them. He uses his primal talents to fold space between Vohaas' palace and the harbour at Nyrnik. Instantly the surroundings change and they are in Nyrnik once more!

Things are different in Nyrnik. Since the incident with Gallastor and his influential garments there is an explosion of tramp-like attire that can be seen on virtually every individual. Guards and soldiers wear tunics that are dirty and stained, their beards have not been trimmed for days. The nobility seem to have taken this to heart also with wealthy individuals wanting to outdo their neighbours by wearing more and more outrageous filth. Mercila smiles at the unkempt harbourmaster and is soon in the bosom of her palace where they are all greeted by the chancellor, Verawain.

The chancellor gives a brief report on world events; the two most notable items being the stalemate in the Bretonian civil war and the fact that Gallor Galliath wants to meet with Mercila immediately.

Tihs Revom, Xaian Lau and Jahick decide to venture into the thriving citadel to see what they can discover. Not everyone has taken to the vogue filth of Nyrnik. Foreign travellers turn their nose up at some of the sights and as the three men enter the packed market square they realise that the free city state is booming. Xaian Lau realises very quickly that there is a big spirit close by, Jahick can sense a hefty sorcerous presence even in the midst of three hundred people. Tihs cannot help himself. He filches a purse from an unsuspecting traveller unaware that it is from the sorcerer that they are tracking.

In a quiet corner of the market an Elenorian elf emerges, a man with a longbow and an impressive magical presence. "Do not open the pouch, thief," he says to Tihs, "for it contains a message from the north. The child is in danger and only my mistress can protect him. My name is Velgar - take the message to Mercila at once!"

The mysterious elf is gone as quickly as he appeared. Sensing magic in the pouch the three companions decide to take it back and seek the advice of Morikand Bitchpiss. Morikand opens the pouch and a small parchment emerges, along with a ring that he *identifies* as The Seal of Illyanth. The parchment can only be read by Morikan - it reads:

The child is in immediate danger, The Enemy is close and I fear there is only one sanctuary left. The ring is the key to my kingdom; bring it and the child and you will be safe. But hurry!

Illyanth of Elenoria.

Meanwhile Graz Tak and Mercila are in the queen's private chambers. It is their first time alone for weeks and they share an intimate embrace. During their lovemaking Graz's highly tuned sense know instinctively that something is wrong. The candle by the bedside does not flicker, as though it has been turned to stone and a fly above it is motionless, suspended in time above the flame. His heart pounds as he realises they are not alone. A glance over his shoulder reveals a tall man with an outstretched hand and a longsword above his head. He notices the man is casually dressed in silks, the quality of the garments is what he notices most and he realises that the man above him is Muziel!

Although naked Graz Tak is never far from his knives. He reaches under the pillow and his slender fingers close around the hilt of a demonic knife.

"Don't stop Graz!" Mercila yells in raptures beneath him.

Graz can see Muziel's hand closing to make a fist. The pain is unbearable. It is as though Muziel was twisting his heart around inside his chest. The thief drives himself through the pain and tries to twist his body to make an attack; but at that instant Graz watches - horrified - as his heart explodes from his naked chest to be caught nonchalantly by the grinning Muziel. Then, as he dies, he sees Muziel drive the longsword through his ribcage and into his lover.

There is a scream that fills the palace. A sound not heard since he was born - Golnarn bawls at the top of his voice. Gila and Vetrick, who were studying their art together in their quarters, rush to the sound. Morikand, Jahick, Xaian Lau and Tihs rush to the queen's nursery.

Vetrick gathers himself and using the Art of Being he contracts the Timeline upon himself, effectively stepping back in time to a few minutes before the scream. Now he moves purposefully into the queen's chambers. The bedroom is a scene of carnage as Graz and Mercila lie where they died. He hurries into the nursery where he sees Muziel over the child; the Echeron lord seems to know what has happened and simply winks at Vetrick. He knows that Vetrick is unable to alter time retrospectively. But there is a third person in the room. The efl Velgar aims an arrow at Muziel. The smartly dressed killer ignores the child and - thinking only of his own safety - disappears.

Vetrick allows the timeline to snap back and he is with the rest of the party in the nursery; they quiz Velgar who reiterates the need to get to the protection of Illyanth. Gila is already gathering his power. He focuses on Death, more specifically on the line that represents it within his own mind. Soon he is in a shadowy landscape where all around him is grey. He sees Mercila walking calmly towards a portal in the distance and heads her off.

"I must go through the door," she says to him.

"Not today my dear," Gila says and leads her back beyond the shadows.

She exhales as she wakes. The party are startled first by her sudden re-appearance and secondly by the lack of emotion in her. She casually pushes aside the body of her dead husband without a tear, as if he was some piece of deadwood.

"There is no soul," Gila says to his companions, "so I fear she is now undead."

Morikand leads them all - including Mercila and the child Golnarn - to the ship. With the *soul compass* he has located Gallor Galliath to the east and takes the ship up into the clouds for safety. Later that day (again with the aid of the compass) he locates a troop of one hundred Drenai cavalymen below and realises that it is Gallor's bodyguard.

Gallor Galliath seems to know everything that has happened. Before they even speak he regards them all arrogantly and suggests that he will - as they have discussed - agree to become steward of Nyrnik in his niece's absence. Gila reacts angrily and uses the same skill on the Drenai as he did on Mercila. He takes the corpulent Drenai spymaster to the same shadowy line and grabs him by the scruff of the neck, dangling him over it. Somehow Gallor knows where he is - his astute intelligence realises that *this* is a line he cannot cross.

Gila growls at the spymaster; "You *will* do exactly as we ask Gallor Galliath; Mercila is handing stewardship of her city to you for safekeeping. You will maintain it well until her return!"

The bodyguard are not even aware that a potential attack has taken place. Gila returns to the present and Gallor falls apart as he hastens away from the party, in particular Gila. Morikand sets the ship down in the Gorat Sea, he hovers a few feet above the waves and heads north towards the sanctuary of queen Illyanth of Elenoria.

Shortly after noon there is a sudden explosion of thunder and Morikand is hit by a black arrow that materialised before him. His *stoneskin* protected him but when a second arrow hits him he casts a *demonic shield* around the party and examines the arrow. It is a Marraq shaft and it is identified as Zakarath's arrow. A third arrow bounces harmlessly off the shield.

Jahick, the pyromancer, spends his time perusing the many scrolls from the fallen Graz Tak's equipment list. He finds *phantasmal killer* and manages to absorb it into his repertoire before casting it and sending it after Zakarath.

Gila examines the arrow and asks Velgar whether he knows the archer. Velgar shakes his head so Gila concentrates hard on the dark shaft, his mind delves deep into his new skill and he is able to pinpoint a scene from hundreds of miles away. The Marraq Zakarath stands on a cliff with an arrow knocked. Slightly behind him is the tall Echeron lord Muziel.

"I cannot see the demonologist's mind, master, it is hidden," Zakarath says.

"It is there," Muziel says calmly, "try looking where there is nothing but shadow."

Muziel manipulates something in the Marraq's mind slightly, hardly a noticeable change but one that allows him to see Morikand. "Ah, I see it now," Zakarath says and lets the first arrow fly.

Gila returns himself to the ship. "This is going to be a rough ride folks..."