

Adventure Log for Planescape Campaign I, June 1996 - September 1997

Attention DM's: I've converted several of my adventures into web pages for you to view and use. Please [e-mail me](#) if you want more information on any of these adventures. -- *Eric*

Adventure Log

"Dreamland" -- the PCs appear in a semi-material realm created by the dreams of a young coma-bound boy. They discover that this realm has been damaged by intersecting the Outer Planes, and that the boy has split into two distinct entities. They are successful in joining the two halves of the boy together, but before they can return to the material plane they are forced to leave through one of the rifts to the Outer Planes. (Lasted 2 days)

"Bridge on a Dead World" -- the group accidentally ends up on the world of Vrai, a planet devastated by the Blood War. Sinter and Thibor are cursed by hexes in a crypt. When the group escapes the crypt, they find themselves surrounded by death and devastation. They are able to cross a bridge where the last seven Tanar'ri and the last two Baatezu continue to fight under the watchful eye of the argenach rilmani Quicksilver. The PCs solve the riddle of the "gatelock" around Vrai, which prevents planar travel, and manage to destroy all of the fiends before leaving. They pass through a gate and end up in the Outlands. Quicksilver promises someone will come to remove the two curses within the next three days. (Lasted about 3 days)

"Falling" -- Exista awakes in a diabolical laboratory of some sort, strapped to a wall. She uses her mental powers to escape her bonds, then jumps in a cart that takes her on a roller-coaster ride ending in unconsciousness. When she comes to, she is falling in a realm that has no ground beneath. She avoids confronting an angry gnoll, then lands on the deck of a spelljamming ship which is also plummeting in this bottomless pit. She explores, and discovers that the ship is haunted by the spirits of the dead slave crew, abandoned by their mind flayer masters and left to die. Exista is able to find a way to power the ship and steer it through a floating portal. She crash-lands in the Outlands, where she meets a silvery being who "binds" with her, healing her broken leg in exchange for a small service.

"Land of the Dead" -- Thibor passes away during his second night in the Outlands. The next day, Sinter and Aletheia bury their companion. They hear a crash, and a while later, a beautiful but very very disheveled young woman (Exista) approaches. They introduce themselves, Exista uses one remove curse spell to fix Sinter's firetouch problem, then go look at the crash site. When they return, they can see smoke in the distance. They travel to the smoke and discover four burly bandits killing an old man near his wagon. Three of the four four-armed thugs are put to sleep by Aletheia, but the fourth one fades out of this plane of existence. The other three are quickly dispatched.

The three search the wagon and the old man and find some much-needed supplies. During the night, they stay in the wagon. On Sinter's watch, the shutters on one window fly open.

The next morning, a respectable gentleman named Jalaci Avorl approaches and says he can help restore Thibor to life if the group will help spring a friend of his, a gnome named Helwa Shaleshorn who's been captured by the Harmonium. The group agrees, promising to meet Jalaci in the nearby town of Sylvania. The attack on the Harmonium camp is a complete fiasco. Aletheia does manage to put the guards to sleep, but a pesky paladin and two fierce blink dogs pretty much screw up the rest of it. Exista does get to talk to Helwa and discovers that he doesn't want to be rescued. The group barely escapes with their lives.

In Sylvania, Jalaci is quite surprised to learn that his friend didn't want to be rescued, but after a meeting with

his "cell leader" he is convinced. He gives the group what they need: the location of a gate to Mount Olympus on Arborea, a map through the caves to the Underworld, and hints about petitioning Hades and Persephone for the life of Thibor.

On the slopes of Mount Olympus, the group helps a stupid goat herder named Petra to defend his flock against a bug-in-sheeps-clothing. Petra offers to guard their wagon while they enter the caves. They descend into the caves, encountering a freakish mutant and stirges that just about wipe out the party, and a mad centaur who is put to sleep and left alone. Finally, they reach the gate to the Underworld, where they give up something precious (a spellbook) to get in.

In the Underworld, the group sees lots of petitioners being punished, including Thibor -- but unlike the others, he seems to be making headway in his punishment. The group successfully convinces the mighty Hades to release Thibor. His only condition is that they not strike at any petitioner as they leave. A swarm of shadowy petitioners attacks the group as they leave, but Exista remembers that some spirits will be distracted if you spill your own blood on the ground, and with knife cuts on them all, they escape the Underworld. Petra's father, Apollo, greets them on Mount Olympus and gives them a stone with a continual light spell cast upon it. The group returns to Sylvania. (Lasted about 10 days)

"Rule of Three" -- PCs reunite at Thibor's grave, and discover that Thibor has grown a new body. His old body isn't particularly cooperative and has to be "slain" more permanently. The group decides to travel toward the spire. As they pass by the wreckage of the spelljamming ships, more reaves attack them. They manage to capture one briefly, before it fades out. Somewhere along the way, the PCs discover a secret compartment in their wagon that is home to some sort of mischievous faerie creatures. Whatever they are, they seem to have been chased off.

As the PCs travel on, they encounter a rogue modron named 1,001, who joins the group. The modron has information about a rumored portal to Sigil. The group passes through the Realm of the Norns and are attacked one night by shadowy wolf-like creatures. 1,001's information turns out to be correct. The portal is in a three-sided building, and watched over by a withered githzerai gentleman calling himself Rule of Three. Rule of Three knows some of the secrets to navigating the three-sided building and using it as a portal. The PCs end up taking a series of portal trips through Pandemonium, the Prime Material (Elminster's Study), and the Plane of Salt, then three more portals to a Bladeling Temple on Acheron, a bare stone cubicle holding a pointing statue on an unknown plane, and a graveyard on a prime material world. The PCs find that they have learned the gate key that will finally take them to Sigil -- any "pointed" weapon. The PCs activate the gate, and through it can see a gloomy, fog-shrouded city at night. (Lasted about 6 days)

"Darkest Sigil" -- The group decides to wait a day or two until going through the gate -- they need the healing. Rule-of-Three heads on to Sigil without them. On Halcyon the 1st, the PCs pass through the gate to Sigil. PCs arrive in a fog-filled city at night. The buildings around them are in ruins. PCs investigate an odd stone cube that holds a spellbook, then survive an attack by hideous flying heads. The group eventually finds its way out of the Slags and into the mean streets of the Hive. The party sees that the fog hides a mishmash of building styles -- round towers guarded by undead monsters, narrow, crooked streets, catwalks -- all cluttered with trash and marred by potholes, in this part of town at least. The party is almost immediately presented with a gang of ruffians led by a half-ogre and backed up by a troglodyte priest and a half-elven wizard. The half-ogre growls, "Rule of Three a message to you us wanted deliver to," then attacks with a big club. The fight goes badly for the heroes -- all but Aletheia (brave Aletheia!) are knocked unconscious by weapons or by a color spray spell. The heroes are robbed, but before they can leave the Diviner of Eregyns is able to read the thoughts of the wizard and learn that her name is Emra and that she is a member of the Fated.

The heroes decide to try to find shelter for the night. After sticking to the wider, more traveled streets, they find Aleesha's Pantry. Aleesha puts most of them to work, then feeds them and gives them some information about Sigil, the Hive, the Slags, and a creature called the Kadyx. The group sleeps.

The next morning (Halcyon 2nd), PCs get their first glimpse of Sigil in the light -- the truly weird layout of the city. PCs discover that in the day, the Hive is more sad and broken- down than scary and mysterious. As they pass to the more affluent parts of town, they are briefly harassed by a Harmonium patrol. Aletheia questions the guards at the Hall of Records (the headquarters of the Fated) about getting in to find Emra the wizard, but is rebuffed. Just about this time, Kylie the Tiefling Tout shows up to hawk her tawdry wares (okay, they weren't exactly tawdry). For five gold, she shows them to a place to live (a semi- subterranean joint called The Cauldron), takes them on a shopping spree (they sell their wagon and horses for a tidy sum), and answers some questions. The heroes have a restful night at the Cauldron.

"Menacing Malady" -- On Halcyon the 3rd, the PCs awake refreshed and ready for the day. Just as they leave the Cauldron, they hear a scream around the corner, on Crescent Street. The Crescent Street Hospital & Herbalist is the scene of a frightening sight -- six women, apparently employees of the Hospital, are being terrorized by a humanoid seemingly made of plant matter. They dispatch it quickly, then enter the Hospital to rescue Dr. Edwin Alistair and twelve patients.

Inside, PCs discover a garden and kill three more plant men before deciding that the plant men might actually be the patients. The group ascends to the upper floor, where they find a glassed-in arboretum. PCs discover the body of an elderly woman in a storage room under some sacks of soil. In fact, she looks just like one of the nurses they encountered outside! They discuss whether the mold-men might be plants turning into people (and replacing real people), or if the patients are turning into mold-men. The group battles some more mold-men, with Thibor doing a spectacular job of wrestling one into submission. The group returns to the first floor and begins searching the patient dormitories. They discover a lumpy golden-brown substance in a closed glass jar, and debate as to whether it might be a cure for the moldy patients. They corner one mold-man, chase another through a window (out into the streets of Sigil, where it is dispatched by a Harmonium patrol), and finally encounter Dr. Alistair and yet another mold man.

Sinter and Aletheia rush to the front of the hospital, looking for the "nurse." Aletheia scans for evil and sees that the "nurse" is in fact diabolically evil. As the heroes rush toward her, she says, "You don't understand. Entropy is ecstasy, ..." her voice changes from that of an old woman to a low rumbling bass, "... and decay is divine." "Her" face and body begin to change, and Sinter soon finds himself battling an exact copy of himself. Fortunately, the doppleganger, apparently a member of the Doomguard faction, is quickly killed.

Dr. Alistair is able to tell the group that the cure for the mold-men is stored in the herbalist shop, and the group uses various syringes to inject this cure into a number of mold men. In all, over half of the patients were saved. As a reward, the group is given a couple of potions and a number of herbal remedies and concoctions. (All took place on Halcyon 3rd)

Interlude -- PCs spend a few days recuperating, exploring, and gathering information. They each hear rumors about Sigil, various factions, and other bits of trivia. They also start paying more attention to the patrons of the Cauldron: regulars include a group of hobgoblins, a band of mind flayer killing githzerai, some grimy laborers, a money-minded Arcane, and a mysterious robed and hooded stranger. A winged man demands Sinter's flaming sword, but in return Sinter gains a potent one-time-only healing favor from Mount Celestia. Aletheia posts a message requesting a trade of wizard spells.

"Mystery Package" -- On Halcyon the 7th, Aletheia gets a message: "To the Berk what Rule-of- Three paid me to bash: I hears you wants to see me. Meet me at the Shattered Temple at Anti- peak tonight, and bring yer bloody friends. Emra of the Fated." The group hires a pony-cab and makes the trip to the other side of Sigil to the Shattered Temple. There they talk briefly to a man who insists that there are no gods. Emra is indeed interested in trading spells -- in fact, she's willing to give the group a copy of each of her spells in return for a favor -- delivering a mystery package to an old woman named Moxelpik in the Gray Waste. The group agrees, after getting instructions from Emra.

The group travels into the Hive and locates the Bottle and Jug tavern, a very seedy bar that is a front for an even

seedier boxing match. They find a soft-spoken, bejeweled, and corpulent orc named Azok, who is surprised to see them and not Emra, but rushes off to gather the package. While they wait, Sinter is offered a chance to box a huge one-eyed giant, but he declines. Azok returns with a small iron chest and an even smaller key.

The group returns to their room, and the next day, they seek out a barmy named Sadu, an inmate at the Gatehouse. He is able, in a roundabout way, to tell the group where to find a portal to the Gray Waste and what to use as a key. Using this information, the heroes enter the Hive again, looking for Mitner's Storage, an abandoned warehouse. They discover that they can only gain entrance through an upper-story window. Sinter nimbly climbs up and drops down a rope, then is attacked by a giant moth with shimmering wings. Exista and Thibor climb up while Aletheia and 1,001 wait outside. The giant moth is able to cause weakness and/or confusion in each of the fighting PCs, and they have a tough go of it since the two who are confused often find themselves just standing there while it gouges them. They eventually destroy the moth, and with the clever use of a spell and some brute force, manage to open the front door to the warehouse so that the heavy 1,001 can join them. The group finds a hidden trap door and descends into darkness.

Under Sigil, the party finds some putrid zombies who belch up clouds of stinging insects, a dead body with the components necessary to call forth a nightmare on the Gray Waste, and a room full of cranium rats which charm Exista and command her to attack Sinter. The rats are destroyed by the clever use of a web spell and a lit torch. The PCs finally find a statue, and use it to open a secret door (and a pit into which Sinter plunges), and discover the portal to the Gray Waste.

Upon passing through the portal, the party finds itself crawling out of the mouth of a listless, ancient dragon. They are stuck in the dragon's cave with no apparent exits. While exploring, from a nearby pool of water comes a baby dragon, carrying a dead humanoid in its mouth. The baby dragon attacks the party ferociously, but the heroes prevail (although Sinter does get hit with a blast of sticky acid breath). The only swimmer in the group, Aletheia, manages to find the underwater passage out of the room, and leads everyone else to the next room, a cavern full of fungus. The party finds a very low exit partially blocked by fungus, and after a nasty confrontation with a spitting fungus, manages to crawl out of the cave and get outside.

The PCs have little time to savor the gray, cold, dead landscape of the Gray Waste, as a band of gray-skinned humanoids assaults them. They spend the night in the cave, resting, using found potions and scrolls to heal (since Exista is again suddenly cut off from the forces of Good).

The next morning, the party starts walking toward the horizon. Before long, they discover the River Styx, and pay a hefty price to be carried on a raft by a skeletal boatman. During the first night on the raft, each party member has a dream containing a vivid emotion, and each discovers the next morning that they have lost the ability to feel that emotion -- as if the Gray Waste was stealing their very souls. During the "day" on the River Styx, a huge iron ship sails by, carrying misshapen fiends to fight in the Blood War. One even lofts a magical spear at the group, but the spear misses. Finally, after another night on the raft, the boatman lets them off at a nearly-identical shore and points to a far-off spire of stone -- Moxelpik's lair.

The PCs travel for a week on the Gray Waste, and see such interesting sights as a full-blown Blood War battle not too far off; a herd of stench kows being herded by some demonic-looking folks; and a tall, evil bird-man carrying a sack of larvae (which Sinter takes). Finally, their food all gone and their will to live sapped, the party arrives at the base of the spire. It is made of a glassy smooth black rock, impossible to climb, and it is a couple hundred feet tall. Some gargoyles descend and ask for bribes to carry the group to the top of the spire, but the group seems to be out of shiny gems. Aletheia and Thibor agree to summon the nightmare. The fiery, skeletal horse appears and carries the party members to a landing platform near the top, one person at a time.

Beyond a giant brass door, two zombies lead the PCs into the central chamber. Aletheia, riding the nightmare, leads the group. In the central chamber is Moxelpik, a huge hag, who seems to have more control over the nightmare than Aletheia (she sends it away and it obeys). She is at first angry at being disturbed, but is pleased to see the larvae, and even more interested in the package from Emra. When she inserts the key, a magic mouth

appears, saying, "Moxelpik, mighty night hag, hear my petition. I am Hogrek, a wizard from the city of Sigil, and a member of the Fated. I seek to ally with you to further both our ends. I can offer services and information, in exchange for your expertise in arcane matters. I send you this gift as a symbol of my true intentions. It will do your bidding and serve you well. Finally, as a show of gratitude for your time and attention, you may kill the bearer of this gift if you so desire." Inside chest is a steam mephit, a little fiend made of steam. Moxelpik command the mephit and the juju zombies to attack the PCs, while she grabs her magic broom and flies through the window.

The battle at first goes poorly for the heroes. The zombies each have crossbows with poisoned bolts that cause paralyzation, and the steam mephit gates in two fire mephits to assist. Soon, though, the tide turns to the party as Aletheia uses his new wand of frost to destroy two of the mephits, and Thibor uses his chill touch to cause the zombies to flee. After destroying the zombies and remaining mephit, the PCs have a minute to discover that there is really nothing of value in the room, and no other exits they can find.

Suddenly, though, they all sense a presence in the room. It is the hooded figure who often sits in a corner of the Cauldron in Sigil. It pulls back its hood, revealing a blank black face and bulging, glowing eyes. This Ultraloth uses telepathy to command the group to follow him. He magically transports them to a huge tower on the Gray Waste, the Tower of Kihn-Oin, built from the spine of a god. The Ultraloth shows the group a scene from inside the tower -- a strange room where a number of ragged women are strapped to a wall. One spot is empty -- Exista recognizes it right away as being the room where she was kept captive. Thibor is horrified to see that one of the women is his own wife. The Ultraloth mentally says, "Why do I show this to you? Because I revel in your despair! HA HA HA HA!" Suddenly, the group is back in Sigil, in the room with the portal.

Before leaving the under-Sigil area, they explore the final room -- a room where someone who looks suspiciously like the Lady of Pain simply looks at them, shakes her head, and disappears. Back on the surface, Aletheia arranges for Emra to meet to uphold her end of the bargain. She meets them at the Cauldron. When Aletheia tells her that she would have been killed by the hag at Hogrek's bidding, she gets a strange look on her face and leaves. A few hours later, she returns, a few bloody streaks on her face, and collects her spellbook. She tells Aletheia that they have done more than their bargain, and that she owes them a favor. (Ends on Halcyon 21st)

"1001: a Barroom Brawl" -- Over the next couple of weeks, Aletheia unexpectedly disappears (read [Aletheia's farewell letter](#)), and Sinter Firetouch dies after being visited by Moxelpik in his dreams.

On Nimbus 11, the remaining members of the group (Dr. Ferenc, Exista and 1,001) are sitting in their favorite corner of the Cauldron, when a group of Quadrones and Mercykiller warriors, led by a single-minded Pentadrone, enters and fires on 1,001, killing the rogue. Thibor turns to examine his dead friend while Exista tries to talk sense to the Pentadrone, when suddenly from the upper level a roguish wind elf fires arrows at the Pentadrone.

All hell breaks loose.

Thibor conceals his spellcasting while he creates a *spectral fist of stone* and pummels the Pentadrone. Exista continues to try to talk to the creature, while the Quadrones race up the steps to fire at the wind elf. Suddenly, from across the room leaps a gigantic praying mantis, who seems bent on helping the wind elf, while a dusky-skinned elven man from across the way fires some magical missiles at the Quadrones.

Okay, okay, let's give these folks names: the mantis warrior is Click, the wind elf is Zephyr, and the dark elf is Kultiras. During the ensuing melee, Dr. Ferenc ends up paralyzed on a ladder, Kultiras uses his *levitate* spell to hoist the leader of the Mercykillers into the air, Click inflicts massive damage before falling to arrows and a hurled two-handed sword, Kultiras uses a couple *hold person* spells to nail the rest of the Mercykillers to the ground, and Exista manages to pacify some nearby folks wounded by stray arrows (thanks, Zephyr!). The feisty wind elf is caught in a mancatcher but turns into a cloud of air and escapes, only to return later to help the

wounded Click. The githzerai raakkma band helps delay the remaining Pentadrone and Quadrones, as the heroes beat a hasty retreat into the street and hide for a few days in seclusion at the Crescent Street Hospital. (This battle took about 10-15 rounds, and an hour-and-a-half of game time.)

Zephyr's Note about this encounter: *"I feel like I have miserably failed in my bargain to watch over the group, as I let the rouge Modron die in the bar fight. I decided to take a more active role with the group by taking 1001's place in order make up for this failure and eventually decided that the group isn't so bad after all."*

"Shattered Temple"-- The PCs introduce themselves, rest up, and obtain a new kip. Almost immediately (Nimbus 14th), they are found by one Caylean of the Athar, who offers them a job - - capturing a new Athar recruit, Derioch Ysarl, recently deceased but somehow not dead. After negotiating half of the jink up front, the group agrees to stake out Derioch's place and capture whoever might be impersonating her.

The PCs leave early the next morning. On the way to Derioch's villa, the group discovers an unusual dabus hunched over a dead man. The dabus manages to escape while the PCs battle some two-headed dogs created out of thin air. The PCs leave the dead guy for the moment, after discovering that he has a strange puncture wound and a tattoo.

At Derioch's, the clever plan is to knock on the front door. A gnome opens it and shoos them away. The PCs decide to break in after dark. To kill some time, they return to the dead man and take the body to their new place. Thibor splits the man's belly open before realizing that this man isn't exactly dead. With some quick prayers of healing, the PCs manage to avoid killing the comatose man. They leave him tied up and return to Derioch's place.

The PCs try the front door but can't get it open, so they jump up to the balcony, where 8 executioner's ravens attack them. They manage to open the balcony door into a guest bedroom. There's no one about, so they move to the stairway, but suddenly Kultiras is stabbed in the back by an *invisible* foe. The foe is tracked down and killed -- it was the gnome. He doesn't have a tattoo or a wound besides the horrific slashes from Click that killed him. The PCs continue to search the house, finding a wolf with glowing eyes in one room, a sitting room, a library, a kitchen, and a dining room. In the dining room, a painting of a lion-like creature comes to life and attacks the PCs when they open a secret door. In a secret room off Derioch's bedroom, another *invisible* foe attacks, and it too is killed (it is a bariaur warrior, again no wound or tattoo). On the upper floor, the PCs battle two animated suits of armor before discovering a very angry Derioch. The PCs manage to wrestle/ego whip her into submission and kill her wolf/imp familiar.

They carry the bound woman back to the Shattered Temple wrapped in a slaad skin. Caylean is quite dismayed to hear Derioch's story -- that she was brought back to life by Aoskar, the dead god of Portals, and has joined Aoskar's church, The Will of the One. He also helps them identify the still-comatose man tied to the bed back at their place. Caylean offers the PCs more money if they agree to try to find some other missing Athar recruits. They agree and stay the night at the Shattered Temple. (This part ends in the early morning hours of Nimbus 16th.)

The next morning, as the heroes leave the Shattered Temple to investigate the missing Athar members, they are accosted by a poster-pusher who hands them a flyer for Sussanoss of Sooths, a fortune teller. They decide to rest up and start fresh in the morning (the 17th). In the Great Bazaar, the group is able to find Sussanoss of Sooths, an illithid. It answers a few questions about one of the missing Athar members, Tosk Hammerspike, the lawful dwarf. The heroes stop at a nearby tattoo shop and get tattoos like those found on Derioch and the other man they found so marked.

The PCs then visit Tosk's place, where they talk to the halfling woman who runs the boarding house. She gives PCs a note from Tosk that outlined where he was going to go on the day he disappeared. The PCs visit the Courts and discover that he made it to an appointment at about Peak, then they visit a jeweler on Bell Court and

discover that he also made it there. However, he did not make it to a shop right down the street from the jeweler (The Friendly Fiend, owned by Akin the Friendly Fiend). So they deduce that he must have disappeared somewhere on this street, and investigate a nearby alleyway.

There, they dig through a pile of garbage and find signs that Tosk was indeed abducted here. A man pokes his head out of his window and yells at the heroes, and Click leaps up while Thibor levitates up to the apartment. The old man is frightened, and tells them that he saw a dabus hunched over the dead body of a dwarf, and that some Dustmen came and collected his body a while later. The PCs head for the Mortuary to question the Dustmen.

At the Mortuary, some grim guards lead PCs to Toranna the Gray, an evil priestess. She and her wight servants battle the heroes, but are ultimately defeated. The PCs discover (mostly through the necromantic skills of Thibor) that Toranna's role was to sort out any body marked with the special tattoo and make sure they were dumped into the Plane of Fire. She was a hired hand, not a real member of the Will of the One. After debating, the group decides to play dead and jump through to the Plane of Fire.

When they fall through, they land on a stone boat piloted by a slaad. It assumes the PCs are deaders, and starts piloting toward a nearby island. A fire elemental rises up and offers to trade knowledge of a power key for a service: destroying whatever magic creates the force field around the island and keeps it cool. The PCs agree -- this of course reveals to the slaad that they are not dead, and Click is forced to spend a round killing it. The PCs pilot the boat themselves, stopping so Exista can use telekinesis to pluck some glowing rubies from a plant (this is a power key that permits the priests in the group partial access to their spells). The heroes decide that they need rest, and spend a "night" on the raft.

The next day (the 18th), they approach the island, where they kill off some pesky human and orc guards. A tunnel into the interior of the island leads to a temple where a pair of wizards are using *light*, *audible glamor*, *levitate* and *phantasmal force* spells to "resurrect" Tosk and send him through a portal to Sigil. They complete the task, and the PCs attack. The githzerai woman wizard turns into a wraith-like form and escapes, while the elven wizard man is paralyzed by Thibor's magic wand while attempting to open the portal to Sigil. In the meantime, four rutterkin emerge from behind some tapestry-covered alcoves and attack the group. After some struggle, the rutterkin are paralyzed and killed (except for one who escapes). The PCs search (and kill) the elf and find two vials of venompurge and a scroll of *passwall* that is presumably used to open the portal to Sigil.

The party opens a door to a long stairway, at the top of which a young fire giant and two humans growl menacingly. One human uses a rod to attempt to blast the party, but they shut the sturdy door in time to avoid being singed.

Our heroes use a *knock* spell to open a magically locked door right off the temple, and find the elf's spellbook and some notes about how much he hated it here. Then they come up with a plan -- they want to lure the giant and his pals inside the temple. They load the courageous Thibor up with fire protection, and he opens the door to the stairway, steps into it, and shuts the door.

The rod-bearing fellow at the top of the stairs points it at Thibor -- and Thibor realizes to his horror that it isn't a rod -- it's some sort of musket or arquebus! The rifleman fires at Thibor and fortunately misses. Thibor uses his *wand of paralyzation* to take him out, and manages to lure the fire giant and remaining human warrior into the room. Exista uses her psionics to make the giant think his foes are invincible, and the party makes short work of the giant and his friend.

After some more exploring at the top of the stairs, the PCs discover a prison area, where a pair of orcs and a pair of humans are about to kill the two remaining Athar prisoners -- one woman who did not fall for the ruse, and one man who is still under the effects of the deathmock. Both are rescued, and confirm what the PCs already know. One of the guards is forced to tell the PCs where the githzerai's quarters are and where the power source for the island's protective shield is located. The PCs raid the giant's room, but cannot enter the githzerai's room

as it is protected by some sort of wizardly symbol (later revealed to be a *lesser sign of sealing*).

After a little more exploration (in which brave Zephyr manages to kill off a few orcs all on her own), the group decides to assault the upper temple where the power source is supposed to be. After all, that's the last thing they have to do since they have rescued the prisoners. As they approach the upper temple, an above-ground structure guarded by a pair of archers on a nearby tower, the party is assaulted by a rain of arrows. Zephyr defies gravity and *jumps* up to the top of the tower and battles two unarmed humans for a number of rounds. As a consequence, she misses much of the fun...

The rest of the party enters the upper temple. At the far end is a plain stone altar, and on the altar is a glowing gem -- the power source! Unfortunately, the githzerai wizardess is hovering above the altar, and two bar-Igura tanar'ri await camouflaged in the wings.

In the first round of combat, brave Thibor is knocked unconscious and spends most of the combat bleeding nearly to death. Exista uses her mental powers to levitate off the ground, but is almost slam-dunked by a spring-loaded bar-Igura -- those suckers can jump! But mighty Click can jump, too, and does so to quickly get to the far end of the temple -- however, the other demon jumps and follows him. Kultiras uses his *wand of wonder* to first summon a *gust of wind* that slams the githzerai into the back wall of the temple, then creates a *stinking cloud* around Click and the githzerai. Sometime in here, one of the rescued prisoners (an ex-priestess) binds Thibor's wounds. Click is near death, and jumps back to Kultiras to get a healing potion, but the bar-Igura leaps and savages the thri-kreen warrior, incapacitating him and leaving him to bleed.

In the meantime, the githzerai wizardess descends and heads for one of a number of statues in alcoves. Exista uses her mental powers to stun her, but she still manages to move the statue aside and descend into a shaft. Exista almost follows her, except that one of the bar-Igura demons causes Kultiras to flee the temple in fear. Exista sees that, except for their weakened rescued prisoners, she is alone in this temple with two fierce demons, and decides to chase down Kultiras, who seems to be heading back to the lower temple -- and the portal to Sigil!

Zephyr, in the meantime, has finally killed off her second unarmed human, and returns to the upper temple to see what all the fuss is about. She and the rescued prisoners pull Click and Thibor from the temple, and bind Click's wounds. The demons do not seem interested in leaving the temple, seemingly content to protect the gem. Zephyr heads toward the lower temple, with the thought to help Exista calm Kultiras. When she gets there, it's only a few minutes before he is ready to fight again.

As they are about to leave the lower temple and return to their unconscious friends and nearly powerless rescued Athar prisoners, the githzerai woman appears, clutching a scroll of *passwall*. She turns and flees, but Zephyr tackles her, and between the three of them, they knock her unconscious. The three and their unconscious prisoner return to the upper temple, and all lock themselves in the nearby tower to rest and heal.

Everyone (including the githzerai prisoner, whose name is Imogen) is revived by some healing magic. Zephyr intimidates Imogen into revealing a few more details -- such as info on a secret tunnel leading to her quarters. She and Click keep watch on the top of the tower; they can see that for a while, a few orcs and humans nervously man a guardpost in the distance, but at some point they leave.

The next "morning" (the 19th), the group prepares their plans to gain the power-source gem, but first Kultiras uses a *protection from evil* spell to enter the temple and go down the shaft into a tunnel that leads to a secret door opening into Imogen's quarters. Kultiras is poisoned by a trap on a chest in her room, but finds not only her spellbook but also a very incriminating note from her immediate superior, an unknown berk called "Origax." Kultiras gets weaker and weaker from the poison as he first tries to open Imogen's door from the inside and fails, then returns through the secret tunnel.

The final plan is quite elegant -- Exista uses her telekinesis powers to grab the gem from the altar and pull it

toward the door. The bar-Igura, seemingly unable to leave the temple, can only watch as the gem is removed from it.

But just as the gem crosses the threshold, the gem shatters! The temperature immediately shoots up to over 120 degrees, and the party races toward the portal! As they run, they see dozens of fire elementals crawling out of the fiery sea. Within moments, their skin starts to blister. When they get to the portal room, they see five remaining guards begging to be released through the portal. Kultiras reads the scroll of *passwall*, and the guards plus brave Thibor immediately jump through to Sigil. The heat is so bad that the rescued Athar prisoners both pass out. Kultiras pulls out a second scroll of *passwall* (which starts to smoke in his hands), casts the spell, and he, Zephyr and Exista move through, leaving the mighty Click to pull the two Athar prisoners through the portal at the last moment. Click's last view of the Plane of Elemental Fire is the very rocks of the fortress melting into slag.

Instantly, the group is assaulted by a female bladeling who uses a *net of entrapment* to catch the whole party in one tight group. She says, "You have no idea how much damage you have done to the Will of the One. My employers will have to work for years to gain enough followers to revive Aoskar." Then she pauses. She releases the PCs, saying, "I gotta get me a new employer. I don't work for losers."

The relieved PCs rest up for a day, and are invited by Caylean to a special ceremony held on their fortress in the Astral Plane. Each PC gets one or two special magical items, and the group is paid double their money. Exista, in particular, gets not just a gift, but information on a powerful mentalist from the Prime Material world of Toril, in the land of Zakhara, in the City of Delights -- a female kobold named Vira the Wise. (Hmmm.... Next adventure, maybe?) With the mystery solved, the prisoners returned, and the plot of the Will of the One ruined, the PCs have had a successful mission all the way around! (Ends on Nimbus 20th)

Interlude: "The Confession" -- Nimbus 21 through Reaping 2nd are spent resting up after the last harrowing adventure. On the 3rd of Reaping, the group (minus Click, who whiles away the hours by devouring live pigs) travels to the shop of Akin the Friendly Fiend. Zephyr desires to trade some magical armor for some *elixirs of health* and a bottle of perfume that will allow her to charm members of the opposite sex. Akin is more than willing to trade.

The Friendly Fiend also has a job opportunity for the PCs -- they need to travel to the "Land of Fate" to find a sword called *The Cyclone of the Four Quarters*. The "Land of Fate" is part of the Prime Material world known as Toril. The Fiend is convinced to pay part of the payment up front, so the group gains one of four magical items offered in return for the Cyclone: a *rod of resurrection*. (They're gonna need it!) Akin also hints that he could be very useful to Kultiras in hooking up with some higher level mages that might lend him supplies, equipment and library use for spell research. Thibor questions him about his Yugoloth heritage and whether Akin might be able to assist Thibor in rescuing his wife from the Gray Waste; Akin's reaction is rather enigmatic at best.

The group retires for the night, hoping to get a fresh start in the morning. During the night, Thibor is visited by a smoky wraith-like being who first tries to convince him to join the Dustmen, then taunts him about his missing wife. Nice!

The next day, the group looks for information about portals: one leading from Sigil to the Outlands, and another leading from the city of Fortitude to this so-called "Land of Fate."

The portal to the Outlands is in the Bleak Cabal hangout called "Zero" and the key is a haiku dedicated to nothingness. Each player wrote a haiku:

Exista:
Nothing to Nothing

One step through the portal path

Click:
O to Nothingness

It sure can be very bleak

All to All Negates

Zephyr:

Night sky but no stars

dark breeze without cold nor brush *Time devours all living things*

empty air around me

Kultiras:

barren, vague, distant

beyond the known, but unknown

something, but nothing

O for it to end

Thibor:

Rotting cadaver

'Til emptiness fills

Dave (Exista)

Matt (Zephyr)

Jay (Click)

Paul (Thibor)

Pete (Kultiras)

The portal to the "land of fate" is supposed to be in the Library of Oghma, in the attic -- but there is no information about the key needed.

The heroes spend some of their hard-earned jink on supplies for a long journey.

As PCs arrive in the Outlands on the morning of the 6th, they are ambushed by two giant goats and five half-elf/half-bird creatures called kruels. The giant goats are magically compelled to attack our heroes; one goat nearly makes an invalid of Exista with a critical bite to the head! The kruels attack by lobbing burning stones at the PCs from bushes on higher ground. Click and Zephyr track down the cowardly kruels in the bushes and slaughter them.

In Fortitude, PCs are hassled about not being lawful, and scout out the town. The main feature is the Confessional, an amphitheatre where the citizens of Fortitude confess their sins and asked to be judged. Near the Confessional is the Library of Oghma. PCs rest the night.

The next day (the 7th of Reaping), the PCs head for the library and start searching for an attic. The library has three separate wings with three separate attics, so they just pick one and start looking around. Exista is turned *invisible* by Kultiras and uses her psionic levitation to search two different attics in two different wings. The PCs act suspiciously, and an older mage runs to get some Harmonium guards to handle the situation. Zephyr uses her magic perfume to convince the mage to help her get rid of the Harmonium guys. Finally, they see that the entrance to the one wing they haven't checked is locked and bears a sign saying, "Absolutely no admittance." Apparently there have been unexplained noises in this wing, and reports of books and tables flying at patrons. The PCs convince the librarians to let them into the haunted wing of the library, though the librarians give a stern warning: don't use magic in this wing!

So what does Kultiras do? Casts *detect magic* once the party arrives on the second floor of the library. One of the stained glass windows forms into the likeness of a warrior and attacks. Kultiras is burned by a *prismatic spray*, and manages to jump out a window before getting utterly decimated. Zephyr flies up to the trapdoor to the attic and gets it open. In the meantime, Thibor also casts a magic spell and himself attracts the attention of the glass golem. During all of this, Click is bravely battles animated tables and flying books.

Eventually, the gang scrambles up into the attic, where a glowing blue ball hovers over a dead body. It tries to attack various characters -- especially the male humanoids -- but finally Thibor is able to communicate with it. It is the haunt of the dead man lying in the attic. It wants to possess a body. Thibor bravely volunteers to be possessed, and the blue ball enters his chest.

Thibor climbs down from the attic and leaves the library with Zephyr and Kultiras in tow. Kultiras reads "Thibor's" mind and discovers that this possessing spirit wants to confess to a crime.

At the Confessional, Zephyr attempts to warn the crowd that what they are about to hear isn't really Thibor confessing, but a possessed man. The crowd doesn't want to hear about it. A merchant named Gytor Almmmer, speaking through Thibor, confesses to illegally selling magical weapons to the Baatezu and causing the deaths of several Harmonium members by that action. The crowd wants him killed, but Kultiras is able to convince the crowd to find someone in town who knew Gytor -- so he can prove that this isn't Gytor at all. A weapon-maker of Fortitude is able to verify this.

The crowd unanimously rules that Gytor be banished from Fortitude. The haunt leaves Thibor and streaks out of the city. Thibor remembers everything, and knows that while the haunt really wanted someone to come to the library attic, another part of him was ashamed and created an animating force to keep folks from the attic.

The group hires the old mage from the library to cast a *warp sense* spell (Thibor also buys a copy of it on a scroll), and they discover the portal in the attic and its key -- a miniature gold scimitar dipped in honey. The next day, with their (rather sticky) portal key in hand, the group steps through the portal and into a dark, musty stone room littered with mummified corpses. (Ends on 7th Reaping)

"Bit & Bridle" -- When the group arrives, they notice that Click did not reappear on the other side of the portal, and that a stranger, one Count D'Riccini (a human swashbuckler played by Paul's brother Jake), appeared in his place. The heroes have little time to investigate Click's mysterious disappearance as they must find their way out of a low-ceilinged tomb into which they have arrived. The walls of the tomb are carved frescoes depicting happy servants engaged in various types of labor. Each mummified body clutches a miniature figurine, which Thibor realizes represents the deceased person's soul.

The heroes first battle some carrion crawlers that scuttle out from under a pile of long-dead corpses; a paralyzed Exista uses her telekinesis powers to activate her *emerald frog* figurine, which eats one of the carrion crawlers. More exploration reveals a trio of undead dwarven crypt servants, and these are defeated. Six more crypt servants appear, and while three are turned by the party's two priests, the other three must be dealt with using force. Unfortunately, the Count is slain; fortunately, the party uses several precious charges of their *rod of resurrection* to revive him. Zephyr makes a very unwise decision to attack the three turned crypt servants, who rally and deal her a nearly fatal blow to the head. The party defeats the last of the crypt servants and uses healing magic to revive Zephyr. Also in this tomb, Thibor discovers a cursed scroll -- the fun will begin later. After dealing with a tentacled crab-like critter hidden inside yet another body, the party manages to escape the first room of the tomb.

Beyond a long stairway is a very high-ceilinged room with four upright stone sarcophagi big enough for giants. Here, again, the walls depict scenes, this time giants engaged in leisure-time pursuits like hunting and swimming. In the ceiling is a huge crack, big enough for the party to crawl through once Zephyr flies up and secures a rope.

Once out of the tomb, the PCs find that they are in a long-deserted city surrounded by a perpetual storm. They rest in an abandoned building for the night. The next day, as they wander, they see a horse gallop by them. They follow the horse and it leads them to its desecrated tomb. The mausoleum door has been ripped open, the sarcophagus opened, the body partially eaten, and the horse's spirit figurine broken. The horse indicates a carved fresco which shows the horse receiving a precious bit and bridle from its beloved master. The bit and bridle are gone now from the body.

The PCs debate about how to proceed. They find a huge plaza in the city with several pyramids. They approach one and see a gigantic undead man emerge from it. Another one is guarded by a small army of skeletal warriors. Finally, the PCs discover Ophidia, a beautiful woman who tells them that she was once a princess in this city and that she is cursed to stay here forever. She gives them information about the city's history and the boiling, swirling storm that surrounds it and keeps all from exiting alive.

Ophidia visits the horse's tomb with the heroes and suggests that ghouls may have been involved. She points

them to the Pyramid of Kagamemni, where ghouls are known to lair. The party rests the night, unmolested by the restless undead while near Ophidia's pyramid. (Ends Reaping 9th)

"Paralysis" is the secret word of the day as the heroes head for the pyramid. They encounter viscious ghosts outside of Kagamemni's Pyramid. Thibor, cursed to cast "wild magic", actually benefits the party by *charming* one ghost, while a paralyzed Exista uses her mental powers to set another one ablaze. Still, the party is nearly wiped out after this first encounter, and slinks back to Ophidia for another day's rest. (Reaping 10th)

Time has almost no meaning for the eternal inhabitants of this Necropolis, but for our mortal heroes, time is of the essence as they are running out of food. The following day, they again trudge through the streets of the City of the Dead and enter the Pyramid of Kagamemni. The interior is simple -- a sloping stone passageway, barred by a very heavy and stuck wooden gate. It is frail Zephyr who manages to lift the gate out of the way for her burly companions. Farther down the tunnel, the group is assaulted by ghouls; Thibor manages to command a pair of these hideous creatures, but when he tries to cast *wraithform*, he merely turns himself *invisible* instead (that cursed scroll!). Exista uses her mental powers again to torch a ghoul, and the others are dispatched the old fashioned way. A few party members end up -- once again -- paralyzed.

Our heroes discover a big, recently-used door. The still invisible Thibor enters and scouts out the central tomb, where a tall, pale, clammy-skinned, stringy-haired, claw-handed man crouches in a pile of sand, studying scrolls and books. Thibor returns to tell the tale, and ever-spontaneous Zephyr throws the door open and announces her presence. The creature (Dashur, the great ghul sand mage) blasts her with a couple of *magic missiles*, and the fun begins.

Dashur uses his spells to create a *pillar of sand*, atop which he casts more spells. Zephyr sacrifices her *arrow of fiend slaying* (she misses, but he's not a fiend anyway). Dashur conjures a *sand lion*, summons some gem-eyed skeletons with magical powers of their own, and then blasts the party with a *lightning bolt*. All seems lost, when Exista uses her highly dangerous powers to disintegrate the poor bastard.

The party discovers a treasure room with some magically locked chests. Thibor discovers Dashur's spellbook and is -- you guessed it -- paralyzed by a *sepia snake sigil* on the first page. The party returns to Ophidia for help and to have Kultiras memorize a *knock* spell or two. Kultiras and Ophidia talk through the night. (Reaping 11th)

Ophidia is able to remove the paralysis from Thibor, and the gang finds the ghost horse's bit and bridle in one of the locked chests. All other treasure is cursed to be too heavy to carry.

The heroes return to the horse's tomb, place the bit and bridle on the horse's corpse, and use a *mending* spell (found in Dashur's spellbook) to fix the mount's ka figurine. With all things in place, the ghost horse can finally rest.

Ophidia instructs the group to gather up their things and to follow her to the biggest pyramid in town. There an undead giant permits the group to leave, promising that as long as they don't look back, the Black Cloud of Vengeance surrounding the city will not harm them. He also removes Ophidia's curse -- she is free to leave after a thousand years of captivity here. The heroes run through the storm and leave the Necropolis.

Kultiras bids farewell to the group, as he and Ophidia are going to study magic together for a while. Ophidia opens a rift back to Count Di'Riccini's home world, and he steps through after bidding a fond farewell to his temporary companions. Then Kultiras and Ophidia disappear as well.

The remaining heroes -- Thibor, Exista and Zephyr -- are now in a rough, mountainous desert region. In the distance, the group can see a dry riverbed, some sort of building, and a shimmer -- like water.

"Sea of Sand, Sea of Fate" -- Our trio of heroes begins trudging down the slopes toward the shimmering water

many days in the distance, but decides almost right away that travelling at night will help them conserve their meager supply of water. At night, they walk with the guidance of a *continual light* spell; during the day they seek shelter within *continual darkness*. Two nights of travel later (Reaping 14th), the group does finally run out of water, and on the third day each of them suffers -- but frail Exista the most. They decide that even one or two days more of this travelling without water could easily kill her, so Thibor uses his supply of deathmuck to put the aasimar into a deep coma -- in which she requires no food or drink. They stuff Exista into their *bag of holding*, and Thibor and Zephyr travel on one more night and into the next day, finally reaching an oasis with a small caravanserai nearby (Reaping 15th).

Thibor and Zephyr note that the water of the oasis seems to smell strange and has an oily sheen on it. They use a *potion of sweet water* to render any poisons inert, revive Exista, and everyone drinks their fill. Still weakened from the journey, they consider whether they are strong enough to travel on (but to where?), and decide to explore the seemingly-deserted caravanserai.

Zephyr flies over the building and can see into a large courtyard, where she spies two large water troughs stained with dried blood. The group bypasses the main doors and climbs into the courtyard to investigate. When Thibor looks into a small window, a man covered with snake scales pops up and blows a blowgun full of *dust of sneezing and choking* into Thibor's face. While he turns blue and collapses, Exista casts *neutralize poison* and revives him.

Choosing to ignore the snaky opponent, the ever-adventurous Zephyr opens a door to a large stable, where a gigantic scorpion resides among the bodies of a bunch of dead camels and horses. Exista's little frog figurine makes short work of the scorpion. Other parts of the caravanserai were once warehouses, but as our heroes discover, they now contain piles of dead animal and human bodies, all apparently slashed open and drained of blood.

Exista uses her extraordinary senses to scan for the presence of evil, and discovers two distinct sources of evil in the caravanserai. Thibor uses his mystical powers to assume a smoky *wraithform*, and investigates. In one warehouse area he finds a gigantic snake, seemingly asleep. Thibor then enters the room where the snake-man was, and frightens him so much that the snake-man leaves his room and enters the courtyard to attack the other two members of the party -- but not before changing four quarterstaves into poisonous snakes as extra allies.

Thibor dispels the magic that created the snakes, grabs the staves and runs out of the caravanserai. Meanwhile, Rakhir the snake-man focuses his powers on the two ladies -- especially Exista. While Rakhir fails to *cause fear* or *polymorph* Zephyr into a donkey, he is very successful in using Mind Thrust to disable some of Exista's power and eventually is able to fool her mentally into believing that he is invincible and that his next blow will kill her. Matters are not helped by Exista's own psionic powers backfiring on her not once but twice. Thibor returns to the scene and uses a *spectral fist of stone* to pummel the snake-man, while Zephyr chops at him with her swords, and just as Exista takes what she believes is a fatal blow from Rakhir, he is slain by Zephyr.

The trio of heroes retreats from the caravanserai, although Thibor returns for a quick look -- and sees that the gigantic snake he'd seen earlier is now in the courtyard crying, "Rakhir! My servant!" Our heroes decide to walk away into the desert and spend the night.

After an uneventful night of sleep, Exista, Zephyr and Thibor trudge back to the caravanserai, hoping to confront the monstrous snake they'd seen the night before. Zephyr notices that the oasis is now poisoned again, and that there are markings in the sand that indicate a huge snake had left and possibly re-entered the structure.

The party explores the area where the snake-man was living and find a lot of gold and gems, as well as a golden goblet stained with dried blood. Exista deduces that the snake-man and the giant snake are probably yuan-ti, and that they (for some unknown reason) have been feeding on the blood of animals and people poisoned by the oasis.

They all clamber up on the roof of the caravanserai, and Thibor again assumes *wraithform* so that he can sneak into the giant snake's room and determine whether it is asleep. It is not, and chases Thibor into the courtyard. From the rooftop, Exista raises a Tower of Iron Will while Zephyr plugs away with arrows with little effect. Thibor launches a few *magic missiles* and pulls forth a zombie servant from his magical bag, but ends up bitten and in the coils of the snake. A few of Zephyr's arrows nail the poor necromancer instead of the snake! In the meantime, Exista begins broiling the snake with her Molecular Agitation power, and simultaneously defends herself against the snake's own formidable mental powers. The snake's coup de grace is when it uses its arcane powers to *polymorph* Exista into a homely vulture. In the end, the party is victorious when the zombie helps Thibor free his arms so that he can use his *wand of paralyzation* against the monstrous snake. Paralyzed, it is only a few moments before its eyes are pecked out (by Exista the vulture) and it is hacked to pieces (by Zephyr).

Thibor immediately collapses due to the poisons in his system, but quick spell-casting by Exista and a potion from Zephyr set him right.

A quick search of the snake's room reveals a magical bow, some potions and some scrolls.

The party rests the day and night, and Thibor is able to return Exista to her original form the next morning. They are visited by an approaching caravan. Kasim, one merchant in the caravan, invites the party to join him on the journey to the nearby city of Jumlat. Kasim and his eight sweating slaves are transporting a statue of a jackal-headed man to Huzuz to sell to a professor.

The caravan and the PCs rest the day and night (again) and the next morning, Exista uses her powers to purify the oasis. Everyone waters up, and four days later, the caravan and our heroes arrive in the port city of Jumlat. (Ends on what would be the 1st day of the month of Zenith back on the Outlands.)

Kasim the merchant is more than willing to help the PCs gain passage on the cargo ship heading toward Huzuz, the City of Delights, along with Kasim's precious statue. Our heroes spend the next four days resting, bathing, buying new clothes and gear, and having a local sorcerer identify magic items. Exista also researches the religions of the region and discovers that she and her companions are considered "unenlightened infidels."

On the day they are to depart Jumlat, Kasim arrives with bad news -- his mother is gravely ill, and he cannot make the journey to Huzuz to deliver the statue he'd been commissioned to acquire. He asks the party to pay him a fee for the statue, deliver it to the professor in the City of Delights, and in exchange they can keep the extra profits for the statue. The party agrees, and sets off to board the merchant ship.

Upon reaching the ship, a small cargo vessel called the *Katar*, the PCs are dismayed to learn that the ship will be helmed by a very inexperienced *rubban*, or captain, one Hasan ibn al-Din. Hasan's lack of experience combined with the fact that he doesn't personally know any crewmembers except for a senile old cook seems like it might be a problem. The *Katar* departs after the PCs have gotten settled in.

About 3 days into the journey across the Golden Gulf, the PCs are surprised one night to hear the sounds of a fight outside their cabin. They discover that their door has been blocked by someone, and they can hear the *rubban* in the next cabin also pounding on his door and demanding to be let out. Zephyr flies out of the port-hole and onto the deck, where she sees some of the crew fighting with other crewmembers, while a smaller group is straining to pull the statue with ropes toward the edge of the ship. Some crewmembers are dead. The ones attacking viciously have all placed white veils over their faces and are swinging scimitars.

Zephyr unblocks the door to the cabin, and Exista, Thibor and Zephyr engage the enemy. Exista uses her mental powers to ignite one of the ropes attached to the statue. Thibor conjures a shadowy *wall of gloom*, forcing most of the corsairs to flee for a short time, and eventually blasts a bunch of them with a *lightning bolt*. The biggest surprise is from the old doddering cook, who staggers upstairs, removes his turban, and reveals that he is in fact the burly leader of these murdering scoundrels. After a bunch of dueling, all of the mutineers are

killed, leaving only the PCs and Hasan, the captain.

Exista binds up the "cook's" wounds and revives him with magical healing. The group questions him extensively, and between this and what information Hasan can fill in, they discover that he and his men were part of a group of holy slayers called the Everlasting, a radical, fanatical sect of a god of courage. Their job was to dispose of the statue and kill all witnesses so that the statue could not ever be found again. Eventually, the leader of the holy slayers refuses to answer questions.

Hasan is extremely concerned because the *Katar* requires a crew of 15, but fortunately the PCs find two magical *flying carpets* that the holy slayers were going to use as getaway vehicles to return to dry land. After much debate, the heroes, Hasan and the holy slayer climb aboard the carpets, and they fly for two straight days to reach Huzuz, leaving the *Katar* to be salvaged later.

In Huzuz, the PCs and Hasan spend four days to hire a ship and crew to find the *Katar*. They also turn the holy slayer over to the proper authorities. Three days of sea-going later, the *Katar* is spotted, but it has been completely stripped of any valuables. The crew hired by our trio brings the ship back to port in Huzuz, where Hasan promptly turns over ownership of the *Katar* to the PCs as he wants nothing further to do with the sea-going life. The PCs sell the *Katar* for a tidy sum, and plan to explore Huzuz in the morning to seek Vira the Wise. (Ends on the 18th of Zenith)

"Vira's Test" -- Our heroes visit the University in Huzuz to seek Vira, and learn that she is ill and resting in her home near the Golden Mosque. On the way to Vira's, the three run into an old friend -- Kultiras! He spent only a short time with Ophidia learning a new spell or two, and has spent the past three weeks or so teaching magic theory at the University. Ophidia transported him there and told him he'd run into his companions again.

At Vira's, our reunited quartet of brave souls finds the aged kobold mentalists to be a gracious -- but very ill -- hostess. She is pleased to learn that they were sent by Caylean, and figures they can help her. She'd been psionically damaged by a cursed psionic item, and needs five burnt out *ioun stones* in order to store enough psychic energy to perform Psychic Surgery on herself. Having tracked down a rumor of a long-since-past cult of mentalists under the City of Delights, she convinces our heroes to descend into the sewers to find the remnants of this cult and to locate the *ioun stones*.

The next morning, the heroes enter the sewers. Some passages are tall enough for folks to stand almost upright, but others are 3-1/2" tall tubes flowing with sewage. You can bet Zephyr isn't happy about crawling through sewage! After a while, the PCs find one of these smaller tubes angling downward. Zephyr and Thibor attempt to shimmy down a rope to lower themselves to the far end of this tube, but end up sliding down and smashing into a violet fungus that contaminates them both with some sort of rotting disease. Between Thibor's dagger, Kultiras' magic, and some nice shooting by the crossbow-toting Exista (she only hit Kultiras once!), they make short work of the fungus. Two *elixirs of health* later, the diseased Zephyr and Thibor are cured and ready to move on, although Zephyr is horrified to discover that, even after magical healing, her beautiful face is permanently scarred.

A few passages later, the group sees firelight coming from one smaller tunnel. Zephyr sneaks up to take a look and sees a larger room where three figures in red robes are crouched around a small fire. She sneaks back and gets Kultiras to make her *invisible*, but makes a noise as she approaches again to do some backstabbing. One of the figures, a half-mad gnome, apparently can see her despite her *invisibility*, and commands his companions (a woman and an orc) to attack. Zephyr fires on them and becomes visible.

All three of the foes turn out to be members of the Brotherhood of the True Flame, and each has nasty spells to cast. The female sorcerer *charms* Zephyr, who gets out of the way while Exista squirms into the room. A holy slayer of the Flamedeath Fellowship, from the shadows, sprays Exista with a flammable liquid, and the gnome sets her on fire with a magic wand. While Exista tries to put the fire out, Thibor and Kultiras crawl to the entrance of the room. Thibor makes Zephyr run away with his magical *wand of fear*, then also makes the

female sorcerer flee. He then uses his *fiery eyes* to make his opponents hesitate at key moments, and a *color spray* knocks the holy slayer out of commission. Kultiras, meanwhile, launches some very timely *magic missiles* and disrupts the gnome's and orc's spellcasting, and uses a *watery fist* to constrict the mad gnome. Just as two more holy slayers show up, Thibor ends the whole battle with a well-placed *fireball*. Unfortunately, the flames destroy any spellbooks and wands the wizards might have had.

Zephyr returns a while later, and the group takes a moment to recuperate while looking at the room's most obvious feature -- a big circle of white stone set into one wall of the room, covered with strange runes and symbols and bearing a red handprint in the middle. (Ends on 20th of Zenith)

The party rests for several hours in order to heal and re-gain spells. While completely unable to read the runes, the party discovers that Exista is the only one able to activate the circle of stone by placing her hand on the red handprint. When she does so, she feels a slight psionic tingle and the stone disappears, revealing a short passageway.

At the end of the passage, Kultiras discovers a secret door that opens into a large hall. They explore a library where a secret door is discovered, behind which is a shaft heading down that is completely choked and blocked with human bones, centuries old. Exista discovers that the shaft is a psionically activated elevator, but doesn't work properly due to the bones.

The party also finds another library type room swarming with giant rats. Zephyr and Kultiras develop a plan to open the door and allow Zephyr to fly in for a short while to scope out the room. When she returns, they form a new plan to fry the rats with magic. Their plan is very successful, with about half of the rats being killed by magical flames, while the other half runs away. In this second library is another of these psionic elevators, and this time Exista gets it to work.

On the second level down, the party discovers sleeping quarters, eating quarters, classrooms, and a jail. They also find a mosaic with some clues: panel one shows a dark-skinned man sacrificing a victim on an altar; panel two shows the victim has disappeared; panel three shows two mind flayer statues glowing; panel four shows the dark-skinned man glowing. The party concludes that the cult here worshipped mind flayers and somehow got their powers from human sacrifices.

The jail holds a nasty occupant -- a larval intellect devourer -- which is quickly dispatched by the party. In fact, it turns out that there are two more in a grate-covered pit under the jail as well -- they take serious damage from arrows and *magic missiles*, but escape for the moment.

Meanwhile, Exista has been experiencing voices in her head and strange visions and sounds. The voice instructs her to "descend to the lowest level" to "release" someone from agony, and the visions show a thick green bubbly fluid. Exista is very confused. Finally, the whole party is treated to a vision -- a wavering, spectre-like image of an old man, who begs the party to release him from his agony.

Examination of various human remains in the main hall, the kitchen area, and the shaft lead Thibor to believe that the people here were trying to kill each other -- that perhaps they all went insane.

The party decides to return to the main level and explore another staircase they saw. While going to explore a door, Kultiras triggers a trap and drops into a chute -- which sends him to the pit under the jail. There, he battles those two previously encountered baby intellect devourers using magic. Thibor helps by sending down two skeletons from his *bag of bones*. Unfortunately, the skeletons get confused and start attacking Kultiras after the other critters are dead, and Kultiras is forced to turn them.

The rest of the party helps Kultiras get out of the pit, and they find a doorway they hadn't seen before leading from the pit. Following the corridor behind it, they come to another shaft with a set of psionic doors spaced around this silo-sized shaft, but no floor. Exista discovers a way to make a walkway phase into existence, and

they go through one of the psionic doors, beyond which they find a temple like the one shown in the mosaic, complete with big mind flayer statues. Kultiras finds a strange gauntlet that causes some of his equipment to rapidly decay into dust. Strangely enough, he keeps the gauntlet anyway.

Beyond the temple are stairs down. After following some twisting tunnels, the party encounters a black-skinned zombie who is amazingly resistant to being turned by the party's priests. Zephyr's arrows rip into the zombie, and a well-placed lightning bolt from Thibor blows it to bits and also destroys the door behind it. After examining the zombie, Thibor discovers that the zombie had had the top part of its head opened up and its brain removed. Hmm...

Beyond the door is a strange room, dominated by a huge glass sphere filled with bubbling green fluid. Inside one can barely see the silhouette of a humanoid. In front of the glass sphere, the old-man spectre appears and again begs the party to release him. Exista wants the old man, named Ziqor, to tell them where the ioun stones are before he is released; the old man believes that knowing where the stones are is his only leverage to getting them to release him. Exista also questions him about the history of this cult. During all of this, Kultiras attempts to *know alignment* (this fails), and then performs an *augury*, asking his goddess to reveal whether letting Ziqor escape would lead them to the stones (the answer is a definite maybe).

Finally, the party agrees to let Ziqor out. Kultiras smashes open the glass sphere, and a flood of green goo gushes out, as does the occupant -- not a human at all, but a naked, enraged mind flayer. (ends in the wee hours of Zenith 21st)

Ziqor immediately attempts to teleport away, but fails. He mentally "shouts" that his mental powers have been damaged due to his years in captivity, and that he must have the ioun stones for himself. Ziqor mentally blasts the party, incapacitating Zephyr and Thibor, but Exista and Kultiras are able to give chase when the mind flayer bolts from the room.

Exista and Kultiras chase Ziqor to the pits under the jail. There, the mind flayer reaches into the stagnant water and pulls out an ioun stone. Exista uses telekinesis to mentally wrestle the stone from Ziqor's hands, but he is able to hold onto it long enough to use its store of mental power to teleport himself away. Exista and Kultiras run back to where Zephyr and Thibor are recovering from their experience.

A mad chase is on for the remainder of the ioun stones! They return to the pits to search some more, but find nothing. They then go back to the classroom area and find wet footprints -- too late! They head downstairs to the big central shaft, where they hear something splashing in the water below -- it's Ziqor, looking for another stone. He manages again to teleport away before he can be caught. Exista tumbles off the hovering platform in the shaft and she and Kultiras pummel some giant toads, but they find no more ioun stones. Just as they are thinking of leaving the shaft, a door opens up on the upper level and someone (gee, I wonder who?) throws down a life-sized copper automaton shaped like a mind flayer. It is inoperative, and the heroes can see why -- a panel in its chest is open, and the hollow area inside is empty. This is apparently where the last of the ioun stones were stored.

Exista levitates up to the door and finds Ziqor there with all five stones. He says, "Mortals, you have lost!" and vanishes. Exista shouts something about him being a coward. Ziqor returns, and says, "Here's a clue -- I'm heading for a gate which will return me to my home world." Then he vanishes again.

Exista uses a *locate object* spell from a scroll and attempts to home in on the stones, hoping Ziqor is still around. She discovers that he is indeed still somewhere in the complex, and the party is able to follow the trail back down to the lowest levels, where they find a secret door. Kultiras can't figure out how to open the door, so he tunnels through the wall with a *passwall* spell.

After riding on one more psionic elevator, the party finds themselves in a long narrow room with a floating cube of stone in the center and a curtain of darkness at the far end. The stone cube has writing on it like that on all of

the psionic doors in the complex, and Kultiras is able to use the cube to activate a portal to the Astral Plane.

On the Astral, the party travels for about two days, heading toward the only landmarks around -- a pair of nearby color pools. At the pools, a pair of githyanki offer information about which pool Ziqor went through (in exchange for a small payment of gems). The heroes step through...

... and find themselves on the top of a snowy mountain under a sickening mauve-green swirling sky. Farther up the mountain are some huge and bizarre ruins. Among the ruins, Ziqor sits and weeps, the ioun stones at his feet. Kultiras immediately understands that during the centuries while Ziqor was away from his home, it had been somehow destroyed. Ziqor telepathically tells them that he was on a mission to help stop hideous invaders called "The Elder Ones." While on the Astral, he encountered the Psychic Winds and was blown into an alternate Prime -- specifically the tunnels under Huzuz in the Land of Fate. The small mentalism cult captured the injured mind flayer and used him to power their psionic devices. When Ziqor returned, it was too late. Ziqor vows revenge on all of the mortals living in the Land of Fate.

Just as the party decides to just grab the ioun stones and return home, the ground underneath them quakes! The spot under Ziqor erupts, and a huge tentacle-covered monstrosity emerges from the hole, immediately tearing Ziqor into two bits.

The ensuing battle is long and involved. Thibor bravely dives for the stones and is almost immediately killed by the strangling hold of the tentacles and the acidic goo covering them. The creature, very evidently one of the invading Elder Ones, uses mental powers Exista has never encountered before. Things are looking bleak, but some clever spellcasting and use of psionic powers by Exista, the good sense of Kultiras (he used a potion to fly away and plug the critter with *magic missiles*), and the brave archery of Zephyr (who was, in the end, stunned by psionics and forced to assume gaseous form) overcome the hideous fiend, and the heroes are triumphant. The priestly Exista uses nearly all of the power of her *rod of resurrection* to revive Thibor from death (yet again!), and the party returns to the Astral, then back to Zakhara.

Once out of the tunnels, Vira is able to coach Exista as to how to fill the ioun stones with mental energy. Then Vira uses the stones as a reserve of psionic power while she performs psychic surgery on herself. Because of the heroic efforts of the party, Vira is restored to her former health and power. (Ends on 4th of The Flocking)

"Unfriendly Rivalry" -- The party members decide, based on hints from Vira, that a good way to discover the resting place of the Cyclone of the Four Quarters would be to have one of the party members take the History of Huzuz and Zakhara class from the university. Perhaps, it is thought, it might be mentioned in a lecture or at least one could then have access to libraries of historical documents. Each of our heroes finds his or her own place to live, and over the next three months, our heroes settle into life in Huzuz.

Thibor takes the History course, and also takes a course on medical topics to help him with his doctoring and necromantic studies. Zephyr gains some additional training in the bow, and begins investigations into the topic of finding a portal back to the Outer Planes, Sigil in particular. She also does some soul-searching after the "violet fungus incident" and makes some changes to her appearance and her outlook on life (let's just say if she weren't already a Taker she'd be a Bleaker for sure!). Kultiras delves into a Magic Theory class at the university, and Exista studies with Vira and learns some neat new mental powers.

Towards the end of the three month semester, Thibor does indeed make a discovery related to the Cyclone of the Four Quarters: a guest speaker mentions it, and on speaking with her after class, Thibor learns that the owner of the Cyclone, one sheik Shaddad al-Ad, was laid to rest not far from Huzuz -- Thibor gets general directions to where a crypt door was recently exposed by a flash flood in a dry river bed.

Around this time, Zephyr also learns that there is a special library -- more of a reading room, really -- at the university that specializes in "dimensional" or "planar" topics. The whole group makes a trip to this library, where they find a book with part of a page torn out -- possibly vital information regarding a portal. The

librarian can only describe a possible culprit -- an "elven woman" who was specifically asking about "portals" to a place called Sigil. Upon further questioning, the librarian describes not an elf, but possibly a githzerai.

As our heroes leave the library, they are assaulted by the only Fire Mage to escape the sewer encounter -- she wants nothing short of four smoking corpses in retribution for the loss of her colleagues. She has help, in the form of an efreeti and four holy slayers on nearby rooftops assaulting the party with arrows. The party manages to slay the Fire Mage and dispose of two holy slayers, but poor Thibor has most of his spells disrupted by one particular archer who does manage to escape. When the Fire Mage dies, the efreeti loses interest in the combat and simply walks away. The PCs are questioned by a small squad of mamluks but are not arrested. Woe to Archer #3 if Thibor ever gets hold of him!

Our group decides to leave ASAP for the rumored location of Shaddad's tomb. After packing adequate supplies, they trek through the desert for a couple of days and find the entrance to the tomb, complete with suitable warning on the door. After descending a trapped stairway (Zephyr detects one of two traps), our heroes find a small tomb containing the bodies of Shaddad's wives. Their spirits rise as wraith-like apparitions and attack the males of the party. Their chilling touch is mostly avoided, and a crucial use of a *negative plane protection* spell by Exista saves the day.

During the battle with the wraiths, Thibor himself assumes *wraithform* and scouts ahead. He discovers a large tomb dominated by a very fancy coffin, a smaller treasure room with treasures intact, and another treasure room marked as the one holding the Cyclone of the Four Quarters. In that room is nothing but a pedestal and a rotting velvet pillow where, presumably, the Cyclone once rested. Drat! Thibor returns to his companions.

The wraiths disposed of, the party continues on and discovers a pile of stones -- apparently fallen from the ceiling as the result of a trap -- under which is the very fresh body of a halfling in leather armor. Among the halfling's equipment is a pair of chopsticks from the House of Wo restaurant in Huzuz, and an advert from Ensin's Discount Elixirs -- in Sigil! The party also discovers a very fresh tunnel dug from the surface right into a passage way of the tomb complex. Clearly, some folks have beaten our heroes to the Cyclone! Our heroes explore the unlooted treasure room and as they disturb the treasures, they hear a frightful moan from the larger tomb. (PCs have lost track of the date in Sigil, but around the first of Fracas)

The heroes seem unfazed by the moaning sound and continue to loot the treasure room. The moaning becomes louder, and sure enough, Shaddad al-Ad's mummy shambles into the room. A fiery spell from Kultiras, the gaze of Thibor's *fiery eyes*, and Exista's molecular adgitation combine to set the undead warrior on fire, but the creature is able to strike both Kultiras (who apparently was unaffected) and Thibor, who suffers a curse -- he is made mute. The owner of the Cyclone of the Four Quarters, though, is ultimately defeated.

Our heroes explore the resting place of the Cyclone just to verify that it is indeed gone. Kultiras is able to remove Thibor's curse of muteness (and the cursed *periapt of foul rotting* he got from in the mummy's treasure room). While this is going on, Zephyr discovers that some goats outside the crypt nearby are illusions. Hmm...

The party agrees that they should look for their rivals at the House of Wo in Huzuz. Two days (and a bath) later, the heroes visit the Oriental restaurant and question a server. She recognizes the description of the "old elf woman" and the "small man" and adds that they were often accompanied by a beautiful outlander human female and a white-haired dwarf. She got the impression that they lived somewhere nearby the restaurant. The last time they were here -- a few days ago -- they mentioned that they had found a "cyclone," lost a "snake" (Snake was the halfling's name), and were headed to a "portal" to a "cage."

The party searches the neighborhood and finds a boarding house where the rivals apparently stayed. As it turns out, they left only a couple of days ago and cleared out their place -- all except for a scrap of paper -- the page from the library book! The page indicates that "In a vulture's mouth is a door to a forge in a cage. The door is opened at midnight by one who has the heart of a lion."

A little research turns up a nearby geographical feature named after a vulture -- a mountain peak called Vulture Point. Our heroes pack up, say good-bye to the City of Delights, and head off on their last adventure in this long quest for the Cyclone of the Four Quarters.

About two days later, the party can spy the distinctive mountain peak. At its base is a small village, where the townsfolk are in distress because the bravest man in the village was kidnapped by hideous outlanders -- the "elven woman," the beautiful human, the white-haired dwarf, and a heretofore unmentioned mysterious "evil black knight" in full armor and helm. Yikes!

The heroes follow a path up the mountain and as they approach the "mouth" -- a beak-shaped protrusion holding a cave entrance, they are spied by a big bat, apparently some kind of sentry, who flies into the cave to warn the rivals of the approaching PCs.

Our heroes enter an enormous cavern. Between them and the far end is an area 50' below their level -- a sheer drop off a cliff to a rocky cave-bottom below. At the other end, the beautiful one -- a tiefling called Orwy -- finishes summoning a fiend. This gigantic evil fire-breathing bat flies across the room and attacks our heroes.

Eventually, more folks appear -- the white-haired dwarf turns out to be a derro called The Savant. The "black knight" is a ju-ju zombie priestess of death called Miranda the Vile. Hidden for most of the battle -- and using a spectral force to distract the heroes -- is none other than Una, a githzerai illusionist and Signer from the very first adventure ("Dreamland").

Highlights of the battle: In the same round, the abyssal bat fries the group (breath weapon) and the Savant freezes the group (*ice storm*) -- killing Kultiras' dog in the process. Zephyr uses her precious *arrow of fiend slaying* to utterly obliterate the abyssal bat. Kultiras is able to magically *calm* a swarm of bats summoned by Orwy to distract him. Thibor blasts Miranda with a *lightning bolt* to no avail, but successfully *paralyzes* Orwy. Exista tries and tries and tries to activate her levitation power -- but when it really counts, she is able to disintegrate Miranda the Vile (after she fumbles the Cyclone of the Four Quarters, dropping it 50' off the cliff and through Orwy's paralyzed body). Una tries to "imagine" a *wall of ice* but ends up nearly imagining herself out of existence.

Finally, the Savant is the only survivor. He takes flight through his arcane powers, and as he escapes the cave he is heard to mutter, "Shemeshka promised us a big bonus if we got rid of you. I guess that won't be happening."

Our heroes find the captured villager in the back of the cave near an obvious portal. His presence -- even at midnight, it seems -- isn't enough to open the portal. The heroic foursome take the villager back home, and after consulting with some folks in town, their men go hunting for a mountain lion. Turns out the gate key was more literal than figurative...

When the portal is activated, the heroes can see that it literally leads inside a huge fiery kiln of some sort. Kultiras uses a protection from fire scroll and enters the forge. He bangs on the oven door for a while, and eventually a very concerned-looking group of blacksmiths opens it. Kultiras motions everyone through, and our heroes once again stand in the City of Doors -- in the Great Foundry. (Ends Fracas the 6th).

"Final Showdown" (the final adventure of the campaign) -- I almost hesitate to make a log entry for this final adventure because it was *so* great that words can hardly do it justice. But to make the record complete, here's a brief rundown:

Our heroes are escorted from the Great Foundry and find themselves in Sigil's Lower Ward at night. They head to The Friendly Fiend after buying a copy of S.I.G.I.S. from a street urchin. Akin is overjoyed to see his hired help return with the Cyclone of the Four Quarters, and offers them their payment plus a performance bonus. The mood is shattered when Shemeshka blows the shop door open, stares at the group, and stalks off.

Akin speaks with Thibor alone, and gives him two tattered "wanted" posters -- one for his missing wife, apparently recently accused of a horrendous murder of a high priest of Tyr, and one for the lovely Exista, dating from about seven years previous.

Our heroes find a place to live for a few days, and each takes care of his or her own business.

When Zephyr stops in at the Hall of Records, she's given a message that someone wants to meet her at Fortune's Wheel. She hires a Fated warrior to accompany her, and heads for the tavern. Shemeshka is there, and offers Zephyr the opportunity to become head of a large criminal organization in Sigil -- complete with wealth, power, and high-up friends -- if she makes "the right choice when the time comes." *Mysterious...*

Kultiras, too, has a meeting with Shemeshka. It seems that Shemeshka could see into his very thoughts, and knew the secret that none of his companions knew -- that he'd been turned to the side of evil by the mummy's curse (from the previous adventure). She offers him what he wants -- magical powers and a laboratory facility/library for magical research. All he has to do is lure his companions to a place called The Hall of the Planes, under the Twelve Factols Inn, using the ruse of knowing where there is a gate to whatever plane they want to go to next. Just before they go, he is to send a message to her groom, the tiefling Colcook, at the Fortune's Wheel. When they get to the Hall of the Planes, Kultiras's job is to make sure Exista dies. Shemeshka tells Kultiras that she'll arrange for some allies to help him defeat the aasimar priestess.

Exista has a strange encounter of her own: the rilmani Quicksilver appears on her doorstep and dies of grievous wounds after warning her that "Anasthasia is on her way back to the Wasting Tower in the Gray Waste" -- and to "trust no one" because fiends and celestials alike want her dead. *Even more mysterious...*

Exista passes on the news about Anasthasia's whereabouts, and the party decides to head for the Gray Waste ASAP. They prepare for a long journey, and of course Kultiras conveniently "knows" of a portal to the Gray Waste. They enter the Twelve Factols Inn, find their way to Twelve Factols hall, and discover a secret door leading to a descending staircase.

Our heroes run a gauntlet of tricks and traps before finding a weird circular room with strange gravity -- turns out its a miniature version of Sigil. They find a staircase and descend farther.

The final room, the Hall of the Planes, is a gigantic circular room that turns out to be a miniature version of the Outlands. The descending spiral staircase is The Spire, there is a pool of water where Tir fo Thiunn would be, and there are sixteen large, empty picture frames spaced evenly around the room. The heroes discover that where they stand on the floor affects magic -- specifically, they find a magic-dead region around the base of "the spire."

As they step off the staircase, lights go up in the room and the sixteen picture-frames activate. Basically, this room is a huge video-conferencing chamber, and a representative of each plane appears in the painting. To almost no one's surprise, Shemeshka is one of the faces.

Shemeshka first reveals that Anasthasia is in the room with the party, dressed in a bizarre Lady-of-Pain outfit. She explains the intricacies of the plan Anasthasia -- and Exista -- had been involved in -- that a horde of women from around the planes had been captured and turned into mindless automatons who could be possessed by any Yugoloth at will from any plane. They could walk undetected into, say, a temple and commit murders or other crimes. Shemeshka also reveals that ultimately this plan would somehow lead to the deposing of the Lady of Pain.

She offers Thibor a deal -- he can have Anasthasia back, if he takes her immediately and leaves -- he is not to interfere in the upcoming conflict. Thibor mulls that one over for a while.

Exista is informed that she must die, since she is the only one of the women to have escaped the Yugoloth.

Zephyr is told that this is the time to decide, and Kultiras is told his allies await his commands (at this, an undead warrior and a canaloth reveal themselves in the Hall of the Planes).

What ensues is the final battle of the campaign -- Kultiras and his allies versus Exista, Thibor, and (eventually) Zephyr. Thibor goes above and beyond -- not only does he choose to stay and defend his friend, but he also gets to protect Anasthasia (at least temporarily) by casting *protection from evil* on her, thus preventing Shemeshka from possessing her and joining in the fracas. Kultiras, though, also uses magic to his full advantage, casting *slow* on Exista (she eventually nullifies it by running into the dead-magic area), and using *unfailing premonition* to avoid being backstabbed by Zephyr. Zephyr's new *gauntlets of ogre power* and *sword of the planes* come in handy as she pummels Kultiras mercilessly. Exista, alas, is hindered by the *slow* spell and the unrelenting attacks from the canaloth. She is unable to initiate her psionic powers successfully. Eventually, Exista and Thibor are both slain, and Zephyr beats a hasty retreat from the room, eventually making it back to Sigil.

Kultiras finds that all of the faces in the picture frames have been replaced by one face -- that of the Lady of Pain. Her look is indescribable. Kultiras runs from the room, screaming and begging for forgiveness, but he discovers -- too late -- that he is trapped in the mazes for eternity.

Thibor's dying vision is that of being reunited with Anasthasia. Her spirit and body were separated a long time ago, and she's effectively dead, too, so the happy couple goes on to the next life together.

Exista has a brief dying vision as well -- a glimpse of her next life. She is a beautiful tree swaying in the gentle breezes of Elysium, and her last conscious thought is that the true meaning of "exista" is ... *being*.

Thanks to Paul, Matt, Dave and Pete for a great end to a great story. But the fun has just begun -- stay tuned for Planescape Campaign II!

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