

# Return to Norden

## Cover Sheet

Adventure by Greg Taylor

Duration: 12 days (01 Thaw '798 - 12 Thaw '798)

### Player Characters

|             |             |       |        |         |
|-------------|-------------|-------|--------|---------|
| TharKuun    | E&E         | Dwarf | Male   |         |
| Mehb        | Air         | Human | Female |         |
| Tsavo       | Necromancer | Human | Male   | Leader  |
| Aryan (Sir) | Non-mage    | Human | Male   | Mil Sci |
| Eidolon     | Solar       | Human | Male   |         |
| Carie       | Wiccan      | Human | Female |         |
| Aqualina    | Water       | Human | Female |         |

### Plane

Norden/Lorgos/Chos/Sudar

### Places Visited

Cities on the top level of the above planes

### Employer

Arondel - Namer/Healer - ex-Lord of Norden

### Major NPCs encountered

Sarn - Lord of Norden

Shaygin - Lord of Lorgos

### Mission

Find out why people disappear while using the Norden portals

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## Adventure Summary

### 1st Thaw

Met Arondel, the party employer, who told us that rebuilding civilisation on his plane had started although there weren't many people left after the devastation when the Eye was stolen. It was returned by a previous band of Seagate adventurers. However, people had gone missing while using the local portals. He also told us that Norden consisted of three levels rather like tiers on a wedding cake. The third layer was a chaotic sea of mud, the second was grassy plains, and the top was a city surrounded by a lake.

Arondel also showed us his doorknob which he uses to access an interplaner room, by drawing a door on any wall and pressing the doorknob to the wall. Inside the room was all sorts of stuff. Apparently there are several doorknobs and they share the same room but the occupants never meet.

Arondel 'planewalked' us to Norden and we arrived on the second level. Walked to the base of a huge cliff where a staircase went up to the top level. Stayed the night at the base.

### 2nd Thaw

Ascended the staircase and reached the city. Discovered there was a tower in the centre and the sky curved down and entered it. This was the centre of the plane and was where North pointed. Set up camp inside an abandoned building near the city portal building. Most of the inhabitants of the plane were in the city doing reconstruction work, assisted by large stone golems.

Investigated the portal building - rectangular, three stone walls, stone ceiling with the fourth wall being a row of pillars. Portal on a raised circular dais. As we examined it, a young man appeared on it who had been aiming for a portal on the second level. Found out that there are three portals on the second level, each surrounded by stone circles and nine on the lower level on the top of tall towers.

Went for dinner at the open courtyard surrounding the wall around the tower, known as the marketplace. Half the plane is light and the other is dark. The terminator rotates around the plane using the central tower as an axis. All the food was magically created by the Lord, presumably using the power of the Eye. Met Arondel there. After dinner, he introduced us to Lord Sarn who lived in a building behind the tower wall. The tower itself was bricked up.

Discussed the situation and wondered if missing people could have ended up on another plane. Arondel mentioned that Norden is a member of a group of seven identical planes. The others are Sudar, Eradon, Virym, Lorgos, Chos and Korax.

### 3rd Thaw

Went portal hopping. The portal worked by visualising the destination portal then saying the magic word 'Allushin'. Did four hops around Norden then found ourselves in an identical city portal building but not on Norden. It was extremely cold and everywhere was covered in snow. This turned out to be Chos.

Used Arondel's room for a refuge while Cold Protections were put on. A spirit was spoken to

which told us that the local Lord had accidentally caused the plane to go cold and couldn't reverse it.

Went up to the tower. Found the body of the Lord, dead for 250 years. His spirit confirmed what had happened. Explored the tower. As with all the other towers, this consisted of five levels. The earth pillar was surrounded by the bottom two levels while the top two surrounded the sky pillar. The third level was where the Eye was, suspended in a mana field between the gap where the earth and sky met. Access between levels was by a five person side staircase that went around a quarter turn and stopped on the next level. The next stairway started diametrically opposite. The Eye looked like a crystal ball but composed of raw mana. It seemed to be working normally but was under a curse which implied the whole plane was cursed. The MA of the curse was 30+.

Tried to return to Norden but blinked around Chos a bit before appearing fifty feet underwater in a stone circle. This was Lorgos. Two squid-like creatures saw us and swam off. One was a mind-mage. Blinked up to the city portal, also underwater. The only dry spot on the plane was the area around the tower. Reached the tower and met Lord Shaygin. He also had a magical doorknob.

He told us that about 400 years ago, the Great Rains came which lasted three odd decades. Most of the people perished and there were only thirty left. The second level was submerged to thousands of feet but the land around each portal had been raised to the fifty foot mark to give anyone who appeared a chance of survival. An unexpected visitor from Norden had arrived recently.

He also warned us about the squid creatures which were 'exceedingly dangerous'. They had appeared after the rains, all had mental magics and had originally attacked the survivors without provocation. They were also all mind cloaked to escape detection. So far there had been an uneasy peace for the last 250 years. We wondered if they were related to the Calimar.

He finally admitted that the rain was caused by something he had investigated but couldn't talk about it on-plane. So we opened up Arondel's room. Once inside, Shaygin told us that he had got curious about the geas that prevented asking, and even thinking, about how the plane was created and what did it and, after several years, had managed to word an astrology reading in such a way to bypass the geas. But, as he did so, it started raining. He also got an answer but it terrified him so much that he destroyed it.

#### 4th Thaw

Arondel and Shaygin experimented with their doorknobs and managed to create a room with doors at each end. After breakfast, attacked by four Sudarians. Beat them off but this was only a diversion as someone else stole the Eye of Lorgos. Evacuated the inhabitants to Norden. Discovered from the dead invaders that the Lord of Sudar had been grabbing inhabitants from other planes as slaves and the Eye was required to power a huge machine.

#### 5th Thaw

Practised weapons in case Sudar attacked Norden

#### 8th Thaw

Two visitors popped in from Korax. Later on, Arondel took us down to the caverns under the city (a place of power) to have necro counters put on. Arondel and Aryan then planewalked to Sudar

and discovered a large ziggurat. They were spotted and forced to retreat to Norden.

#### 9th Thaw

Gained access to Norden's tower in order to question the shade of the dead previous Lord of Sudar. Stolen Eye was required to power a machine that would allow evacuation off-plane as Sudar was also cursed. Lots of undead inhabit Sudar. A special mask is also required for interplaner travel.

#### 10th Thaw

Went to Sudar. Fought off wandering skeletons. Discovered pyramid leaving through interplaner portal in the lake. Most of population (slaves) left behind. Evacuated them all to Norden. Went to Sudar Tower. Chased an entity that we thought was a Calimar through a portal to the caverns below after it had taken Sudar's Eye. Fought more lesser and greater undead. Found body of entity which was human but wearing a Calimar mask. Retrieved the Eye and the Mask. Left Sudar for Norden as magical Darkness closed in over the plane.

#### 11th Thaw

Tested the Norden portals. Couldn't find anything wrong.

Sudar's Eye didn't seem to be cursed in itself so took it to Lorgos and plugged it in. Worked ok but decided to take it out until Lord Shaygin was ready to re-occupy his plane.

#### 12th Thaw

Had to leave Norden in a hurry as something was coming and Arondel didn't want any Alusians around. We suspected Calimar. All party members sent home with rewards.

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## Aqualina

The party employer was a person by the name of Arondel. He looked old, battered wearing tattered back clothing and a black, tattered, floppy hat. He told us that rebuilding civilisation on his plane had started even though there wasn't many people left after the devastations (see earlier scribe notes 'The Eye of Norden'). However some people had gone missing when using the local portals. Since there weren't many there to begin with, losing even a few was tragic. The third level was now a sea of mud. As the whirling storms there had stopped, everything fell down in a chaotic mess. No one lived down there now. Any survivors were relocated to the other two levels. Also the storm that had swept the second level every noon was now a mild rain.

The members of the party introduced themselves

TharKuun - E&E and staunch dwarf. Carrying a crossbow, battleaxe, and dressed in ratty old leathers. He told us he was a ranger.

Mehb - "If it's bad, I'll hit it". Airmage. Human female 5'4". Stocky but pretty. She can make arrows go faster. Carried a mattock, hand & 1/2 sword, and a composite bow.

Tsavo - 5'2" and heavily built. Mid 50s with greying hair and a world weary face.. He wore rustling white robes and told us he was a scholar and a linguist. Dabbled in magic, necromancy, and doesn't fight.

Sir Aryan - 6'2" and solidly built with short blond hair. Carried a great axe, sabre, daggers, and a club. A Military Scientist and 'kicks butt'. Has a knighthood. A ranger, thief, navigator, and sailor. He had been listed as a pirate captain by Destiny.

Aqualina - That's me. 5'1" human female (there seems to be a trend of short people in this party) with very long dark hair and light chocolate coloured skin. I was currently barefoot, wearing a gold minidress and was wrapped in my feather cloak. I told the others I was a Water Mage with high ranked Water Breathing, Ship Strength, Waters of Healing and Strength. For weapons I had the dagger/maingauche combination and the net/trident although I was learning tulwar.

Carie - A plain 5'6", noble looking woman wearing a tidy gown. She described herself as a 'storm witch' and had minor curse highly ranked.

Eidolon (Sir) - 5'4&3/4". Tall, blond and Nordic, blue-eyed and a crewcut hairstyle. A solar celestial and said 'I can make the sun shine where ever I like'. We weren't sure if there's enough room for him and his ego.

After some discussion, Tsavo became the party leader with Eidolon as second. Sir Aryan was the Military Scientist and I was the scribe.

Arondel told us he could only take three at a time to Norden by using a technique he described as 'planewalking'. Each round trip would take an hour. He then showed us his 'room' which was accessed by pressing a magical doorknob into the nearest wall. Inside were baskets of bullkelp, brooms, wardrobes, bookshelves with books, and an armchair. Inside the wardrobe was assorted

ladies dresses and some boots that Eidolon recognised as being his that he had lost the last time he had been in the room. The walls of the room glowed blue. There is more than one magical doorknob in existence and several groups use the same room but, somehow, they never meet. However goods stored there can be exchanged for other goods. It wasn't recommended to leave anything valuable in there. Also, the door couldn't be closed with anyone inside otherwise they'd be killed. That stopped the idea of the room being used for mass transportation. Meanwhile Tsavo was going through the books.

Carie went out and spent 500sp on food to take with us but, what with all the weapons and stuff that the other guys were trying to pack into that room, there wasn't room for all of it. So Carie gave the excess away to the poor.

Aryan, and Tsavo were the first ones to leave. I watched as Arondel seemed to form a 'crack' in mid-air then they held hands and stepped through. The 'crack' closed behind them.

Eidolon, myself, and Carie were next. It looked like we were walking through a shifting grey landscape. As we walked, scenes briefly appeared and disappeared. Finally the scene of a grassy landscape appeared and Arondel opened another crack. We stepped through.

The first arrivals had already set up camp and Aryan was trying to make coffee. There was a large cliff 3/4 of a mile away. Some herd animals were roaming around. Near the cliff was a cultivated area and we could just make out more trees on the top of the cliff. Windows were cut into the cliff in a zig-zag pattern up it. Behind those were the stairs.

By the time the rest arrived, it was late afternoon, although the sun was high in the sky. Arondel suggested that we head towards the cultivated area and camp there for the night. So we did. When we got there we discovered there were some stone buildings and the start of the ascending staircase. Near the staircase was an 8' high marble statue.

Also there was a rather morose figure with a hoe. He told us his name was Nev and he had been assigned to cultivate this area. He wasn't a farmer, and didn't want to be, but he had been a miner from the third level but what with the current state of that level, all the mines were flooded. I also thought it was rather mean for him to be assigned here all by himself. His food was thrown over from the cliff above.

Camp was made and Carie prepared dinner which we invited Nev to share. I then entertained with harp music.

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Mehb went out to purify and nearly got walloped by a descending lunch bag. After breakfast, we said farewell to Nev and started ascending the stairs. The stairs were made out of white marble and, at every landing, there was a window. After a while I wasn't keen of looking out but Mehb was enjoying the view. Also, as we neared the top, it was getting colder.

Finally we reached the top. Mehb had the usual expression of an airmage on top of a mountain. We had emerged in a room with a large balcony over the cliff and two large doors on the opposite side. As I stepped towards the doors it wasn't cold any more.

On the other side of the doors was a flagstone road heading into the centre of this level. So we

followed it. On each side was a forest of trees. The trees extended for a mile before the road turned into a causeway crossing a lake to a city built in the centre. In the centre, on the top of a small rise was the central tower - and I mean central. This was the centre of the plane and the sky curved down to meet it. Here, was housed the Eye - the power source of the plane.

As we stepped on to the causeway, I was the one with the rapt expression. The lake had extremely clear water and I could see 3-4 feet long carp swimming in it. One of them arced out of the water, like a dolphin. The idea of a swim was getting more delightful by the minute.

On the way over we encountered a woman carrying a large bundle. Aryan thought they were spears but it turned out to be a large basket. She was going into the forest to pick apples.

Finally we reached the city, entered through the guardhouse, and onto the street. At each intersection was a pedestal but the statues were missing. We later discovered they had been animated in order to assist with city repair purposes. A bit later on we saw one assisting some workmen. Arondel told us that they had been animated by the will of the current Lord of Norden.

Finally we found a repaired but unused building near the 'temple' where the local portal was and set up camp inside it. There Arondel told us that he wasn't sure which circle people were disappearing from and when there were more than one, all of the group went.

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Arondel left us, after asking us to meet him for dinner at the tower square, and we examined the building we were in. It was basically a two story tenement with no interior walls. Upstairs was a balcony and Mehb went there to 'commune with the spirits'. Aryan and Eidolon kept going on about 'making the place defensible, even though there wasn't any doors in both the front and back doorways. A small fountain down the road was our only source of water. The top of the hill with the central tower was about ten minutes walk away.

A short while later a middle aged woman arrived at the doorway. She introduced herself as Nilda and was our closest neighbour. She couldn't stay long as she was involved with the rebuilding project but did answer some questions about the portal. It worked by being stepped on, thinking about the destination and saying the activation word 'Allushin'. The transfer was instantaneous.

Finally she offered to bring us some 'furniture' basically stone pallets and blocks. We accepted. After a while a couple of 8' tall stone golems arrived with the required blocks. Apparently stone was easy to get, anything else was a bit more difficult. Unfortunately the noise disturbed Mehb's concentration.

Once they had left, Tsavo suggested we do some preliminary investigations of the temple so we went over and took a look. The building definitely reminded me of the sunken Pasifikan library building with the steps and the row of pillars in front which made up the front wall. Inside, the rectangular building was bare, except for the raised circular dais on which was inscribed the circle. The dais was 15ft across while the building was 50ft square.

I was going to examine the area with my ocular but Eidolon strode confidently in - and immediately felt magic impact. Then I detected another one in the corner. "Don't go near it - it's mine" Eidolon instructed. So I guided him to the edge and he checked it out. The name of the

spell stored within it was Stun. Aryan decided to trigger it - nothing happened.

Just then a young man, carrying a basket load of bread, appeared in the middle of the circle. He was supposed to have been travelling from one plains tribe to another on the second level but ended up here. We finally managed to convince him that using the portals were unsafe and that he should stay until Lord Sarn and Arondel could speak to him about the incident. He was also concerned about the freshness of the bread but we soon solved that problem by eating it. We even provided the jam to put on it. Of course he got some.

Carie took him away to divinate him to see if there were any clues while the rest of us pondered the problem (apart from Eidolon and Aryan who went outside to spar). There was a little square wave design around the edge of the dais but it wasn't magical.

From what we could determine each portal linked to all the other ones, one on this level, 3 on level 2 and 9 on the lowest level. Was there a 14<sup>th</sup> portal in the link or had one of the portals become one way only trapping people at the other side. Also, since the Eye was powering the whole thing, had the Eye itself gone slightly flaky while it had been captured. Tsavo summoned a shade but didn't find out anything useful.

When Carie returned she reported that he had Dimensional Magics on him and that the magics had terms that could be interpreted as 'generally' and 'usually'. Does this imply that the originally built setup was starting to decay?

Arondel had already told us that we would be meeting Lord Sarn that evening so some of us decided to dress for dinner. We then headed up the hill to the 'marketplace'. As we walked, the line between light and dark swept over us. However, since we were so close to the central tower we could walk faster than the line and we could see the half of the city that was light.

Basically half the plane is dark and the other half is light. The terminator rotates around the plane using the central tower as an axle. Also there's a band of rain that keeps pace with it so exactly halfway between 'dawn' and 'dusk' there is a rain shower.

At the top of the hill was a large open area surrounded by buildings and the occasional street leading off it. At the centre of this area was the central tower, surrounded by a wall. There was a rather impressive view of the town which stretched in all directions down to the lake.

Three long tables and one smaller one had been set up and people were loading them with food. We soon ascertained that it all had been magically created, presumably by the Eye. Other people were also filing in. All appeared to be ex-miners and there were fewer women than men. Many of them were still dressed in work clothes and several were covered in stone dust. They appeared to be congregating in family groups.

We soon spotted Arondel and went to join him at the shorter table. Once there we told him what had happened at the temple. His reaction about the wards was a simple 'Oops'. He had originally set them all up when the Sudarians invaded to protect the portal and had thought he had removed them all.

As for the person who had arrived, Arondel confirmed we had done the right thing and suggested that we allow him to go back the next morning with Lord Sarn tracking him to see if anything else



happened.

He also mentioned that there are some catacombs under the city which was a place of power and was usually used to make major changes to the plane. There wasn't a portal there and if anyone had shown up there, Lord Sarn would have surely known about it.

Dinner was a collection of meats, vegetables, and fruit. During it, I asked Arondel about the carp. He said they could be fished for. However no one does at the moment.

After dinner, Arondel led us across the square to a set of large gates in the wall. On the way, I asked him about the local calendar. There is a set hot day, corresponding to mid-summer, and a set wet day, corresponding to mid winter. The day and year length is the same as ours. It's easier for the weather to be kept constant than to go changing it all the time.

The gates led into a foyer area between the wall and the tower. As we entered we could hear a slight scraping sound. I surmised that was the sound of the sky moving. The doors and arrow slits in the tower were bricked up, in order to protect from intruders - and for safety reasons.

Also in the courtyard was a wooden, two-roomed house. This was where Lorn Sarn lived. A young looking man answered Arondel's knock. He welcomed us and asked us to keep quiet as his wife was in a 'delicate' condition.

When people had disappeared, which had been going on for two weeks now, he had been asked to use his powers to locate them on the plane. He couldn't find them. None of the portal towers are broken.

If they weren't on this plane could they be on another? This could lead us into subjects that seemed to be unable to be thought of on this plane - such as who made it. So we squeezed into Arondel's room to discuss this further since, technically, it isn't part of the plane. Arondel told us that there was a group of seven planes that Norden was a member of, sort of an archipelago of planes. The planes were: Norden, Sudar, Eradon, Virym, Lorgos, Chos, and Korax. Arondel had only been to Sudar but it seemed reasonable that many of the other users of the room came from the other planes. So spot DAs were done. It turned out that the bull kelp came from Lorgos.

So could the missing people had ended up on one of the other planes? To try to find out it was decided to do divinations when we returned.

.3.

That night, Tsavo did an astrology reading. His question was 'Have the people who have disappeared from the Plane of Norden, while using the portals, gone to one of the other six planes?'

The answer was:

If a man had a plan to get out of the rain  
Then a hill with a ball might just do the trick  
But his plan is a sin in the eyes of the sane  
What he does to himself will affect another six.

3rd Thaw

The next morning we prepared for some portal hopping after Arondel showed up. It was Waterbreathings all around with Witchsights on those who needed them. I then did a precognitive Waters of Vision to see where we might end up. I saw a vision of us standing in another circle which was surrounded by snow. Once dressed, I put on a Resist Cold.

When we were all ready we followed Arondel into the temple, stepped into the portal and formed a defensive circle around him. Arondel then said the magic word and we found ourselves standing on a platform in another 25ft circle. The platform was on top of a tower and there was a long drop to the sea of mud below. The smell was incredible and indescribable.

Hop two took us to another tower near an enormous cliff while hop three took us to an identical tower in the 'night'. Eidolon tried Daing the portal for 'chance of failure' but got no answer. Hop four was into the middle of a ring of standing stones. A circle was also inscribed in the ground. The stone circle was located on grassy plains.

So far all had gone well. We had earlier wondered if the problem was because people had been incorrectly visualising their destinations so Aryan decided to put that to the test and took over from Arondel. He visualised the city but added snow. \*Flash\* And there we were, back in what appeared to be the city temple but the entire landscape was thickly covered in snow. It was so cold, I could even feel it through my cold protection. Arondel quickly summoned his room and we piled inside, grateful for the added protection. We noticed no footprints leading from the circle.

While I put Resist Colds on everyone else, Carie decided to try a ritual in order to raise the temperature in the local area. We feared that the local eye would block that but, after a while, the temperature began to rise. By now Eidolon had determined we had blinked over to the Plane of Chos.

I drank a three point Restorative as I was feeling very tired, while Tsavo spoke to a spirit. From what he could determine, the local Lord, who was new to the job, had managed to cause the entire plane to suddenly go cold. He was unable to stop it, once started. The Eye wasn't involved in the onset nor was the Lord compelled or influenced to do it. Also, as far as the spirit knew, the Eye was still there.

It took at least an hour for the temperature to rise to a point where we could venture out even though it was still below freezing. Aryan kept trying to warm his hands on me so I kept well away from him. Same with Eidolon. Tsavo tried to detect undead but didn't sense any.

We tried a nearby tenement, the equivalent to the one we were staying in. This one had a wooden door which was stuck. Aryan smashed it down and we looked into what had been a living area. Everything was still laid out. Upstairs was a single bed in which two frozen bodies were huddled together. Time since death was around 250 years.

We then ploughed our way through a foot thick layer of snow, up to the market place, and the tower. The view from the marketplace wasn't very good, it was all grey and hazy. There was still no sign of undead but someone spotted a lump in the snow near the outer courtyard gate. It turned out to be a body, frozen solid and dead for nearly 250 years. Tsavo summoned its spirit and discovered it was the local Lord.

Tsavo determined that it was something the Lord had done which had caused the cold, but he didn't know exactly what caused it and he didn't want it to be cold. He had been a Celestial Mage and the Eye was still on plane - and no, he didn't have another doorknob.

When Aryan discovered that this was the Lord, he immediately thought 'Loot'. Tsavo determined that there were two items somewhere on the body. So Tsavo, Eidolon, and Aryan set about the task of getting them. This turned out to be rather messy as the body had frozen solid and had stuck to the ground. Arondel, Carie, Mehb and I decided to leave them to it and examine the area of the courtyard towards the tower door (which was slightly ajar) for any wards. We didn't find any. However we were forbidden to examine the tower itself until they had finished. They finally retrieved a ring containing flying magic and a brass or bronze breastplate containing protection magic.

While we waited, I asked Arondel to describe the tower of Norden. It was built in five levels and surrounded the earth pillar on the first two, and the sky pillar on the last two. The middle level was where the two met and this was where the Eye was. When we finally got inside we discovered that the tower of Chos was identical. Access between levels was provided by a five person wide sweeping staircase which went around a quarter turn then stopped on the next level. The next staircase started diametrically opposite where the last one ended. Each pillar narrowed before they met in the middle. The earth pillar looked like it was made out of rock while the sky pillar was some sort of blue translucent crystal.

At the apex, in the tower's third level, the pillars stopped and were three feet across. Between them floated a crystal ball which was surrounded by a multicoloured coruscation. We could clearly hear the grinding noise and it was still very cold in here.

The tower itself was completely empty and no wards were detected. The only other thing we found was a pile of rubble on the fifth level. We determined it was the remains of a table, books, and some tools. Only the metal bits remained to be identified. None of it was magical.

Carie tried to divinate the Eye but failed. Arondel then summoned his room and we waited inside while he tried a divination. As far as he could tell, this was the Eye of Chos and it was working normally but it seemed to be under some sort of curse which implied the whole plane was cursed. The MA of the curse was 30+. Also the Eye consists of raw mana and is not sentient.

We headed back to the temple. On the way Aryan tried to use his shield as a toboggan but didn't get far. I had a go as well but had equally little success. Once back at the temple we entered the circle and attempted to teleport back to the city on Norden.

.4.

Nothing happened. So we blinked back to the stone circle where we first appeared on Chos then tried to return to Norden from there, in case there was only one link. Still no luck. We ended up back in the city on Chos. We then blinked back to a snow filled stone circle.

Aryan tried taking over again. When he said the magic word, we suddenly found ourselves fifty feet underwater in a stone circle. Thank goodness I had put Waterbreathings on everyone this morning. The stones were covered in marine creatures. Glittering seaweed grew nearby. Small fish swam about nearby. While the others discussed what to do next, I floated over to one of the

stones and began a shift into merform - just in case.

Just then we noticed two squid-like creatures watching us. They looked like large, normal squid but had two arms with hands. I was about to wave to them but they swam off, rapidly. One of them was DAed before they got out of range, and it was discovered that it was a Mind Mage. Also some of the nearby life-forms were DAed and we discovered we were on Logos.

A short time later, a large metal object, trailing a rope, was dropped. Some sort of anchor we suspected. Once it snagged on one of the stones, a wicker basket was lowered. By now my change was complete and it was recommended that someone go up and have a look. Aryan volunteered to come with me so I cast Buoyancy on him, so he could swim in plate mail and we swam to the surface. By the time we got there, the anchor had been raised and all we could see was a small sailboat, with a triangular sail, heading north to what appeared to be a waterspout in the distance. All that was left was a large glass ball floating on the water that had the rope down to the basket attached to it. To the south I could just see another glass float. To the east was some sort of disturbance, a school of small fish feeding as far as I could make out.

After arriving back at the bottom, Arondel sent us to the local city portal. The building was full of water except for a small gap near the roof. When we got outside we discovered that the entire city was flooded. Only the rooftops protruded. So we headed to the marketplace and the central tower. As we ascended up the slope the water got shallower until it was only a foot deep at the top. Since I was still a mermaid, Eidolon picked me up and carried me. Also we noticed that this tower was fatter than the others as if bits had been added to it later on. The usual courtyard wall was gone but in its place was a smaller, 5' high wall, designed to keep the water out.

As we approached the tower someone called out "Oy!. Who goes there!". Aryan's response was "How long have you guys been flooded?". There was silence for a while then a platform was lowered (which smelt of fish) and we were carried over the wall to the dry section. Waiting for us were three men in tatty clothing wielding very functional tridents. They also appeared to have gills. Eidolon passed me to Aryan because, as he put it, he might want to use his hands for 'talking'.

We were led upstairs where a man wearing blue and green robes. He introduced himself as Shaygin, the Lord of this plane. From what he said it soon became apparent he was a Water Mage as well. He told us that dinner would be served in half an hour and we could get our wet stuff dried. A pile of blankets were in the corner we could use. I used some to hide my lower half as I changed back from merform. While we prepared, an old lady arrived with some hot fish broth.

Arondel summoned his room and while the others got some dry clothes I dried myself off with a towel then looked out the window. Everywhere I looked was water, broken only by the roofs of nearby buildings and a couple of single hulled sailing boats.

Shortly dinner was served, consisting of white fish paste and chopped green seaweed. Delicious. Shaygin was obviously as curious about us as we were about him as they didn't get many visitors.

He told us that about 400 years ago, the Great Rains came, which lasted 3 odd decades. Most of the people perished and, at the moment, there were only thirty left. The entire plane was completely underwater. The second level was submerged to a depth of thousands of feet but Shaygin had managed to raise the ground below the portals to the fifty foot mark to give anyone

who did appear a chance of survival. There had been one visitor from Norden recently.

Shaygin warned us about the squid creatures which he claimed to be extremely dangerous. There weren't any before the rains although there had been smaller squid-like creatures in the lake. Must remember to ask Arondel if there are any in the Norden lake. They all had mental magics and had originally attacked survivors without provocation although there had been an uneasy peace for the last 120 odd years. Even with the Eye he couldn't detect them. We figured they were mind-cloaked. We also wondered if they were related to the Calimar.

We also discovered that Shaygin also had a doorknob. It was him that was putting all the seaweed in the room. Apparently it was edible.

Finally I asked him if he had any ingredients for making permanent Waters of Healing he could sell that I could take back to the Guild. He offered to give me some.

After a while he admitted that he knew why it had started raining which could have been to do with something he investigated. However he didn't want to talk about it here. It was suggested that Arondel open up his room but we thought it might not be prudent if another doorknob was brought in there in case there were 'unpredictable results'.

Once we were inside Arondel's room, Shaygin commented it was very similar to his own, even down to the couch and the half eaten cheese sandwich. Soon him and Arondel were comparing their opinions on the books in the bookcase. The only main difference was that Arondel had green walls while Shaygin's room had blue.

We managed to convince Shaygin to tell his story. He had got curious about the geas and, after several years, he had finally managed to word a question in such a way to bypass the geas and find out about whatever power had created the plane. However, as soon as he did it, it started raining. He did get an answer but it horrified him so much that he destroyed it. Tsavo still wanted to know what it was though.

Finally we settled down to sleep the rest of the night.

#### 4th Thaw

I was woken by the sound of Shaygin saying 'You gotta see this'. Turned out him and Arondel had been playing around with their doorknobs and had created a room with blue and green walls and a door in two opposing walls. They had opened a door in two different rooms at the same time and now had a room connecting those walls. We just hoped they didn't try using the other doorknob inside the room.

We were offered some brown bitter tasting concoction, the local equivalent of coffee. I then renewed my Waterbreathing and Resist Cold. Meanwhile Carie did a Mindcloak on herself while Shaygin concentrated on her using the Eye. As the Mindcloak took effect, he couldn't locate her anymore.

Just then there was a call to arms. Far out to sea were four black dots, surrounded by lightning, approaching the tower rapidly. Were the squids attacking again?

It wasn't the squids. Instead, as they approached, we could make out four black humanoids. Eidolon thought they were from Sudar but I wasn't going to take that as gospel until we had proof. As it turned out, he was correct. They were flying on some derivation of shadow-wings and were all surrounded by a coruscade, formed from the lighting that kept striking them from the 'sky'. It didn't seem to be harming them though.

As they approached over the exposed roofs of the city, they slowed down. There were no visible weapons. I was hoping this was going to be a peaceful encounter but, instead, they started waving their hands, as in spellcasting. TharKuun and Mehb fired a crossbow and arrow respectively which hit their targets. At the same time, an agony field went down, affecting TharKuun, Mehb and a couple of local defenders while two other defenders were affected by Hands of Death. Necros!

Another defender was manning an oversized crossbow and his bolt neatly skewered one of the attacking necros, knocking him out of the sky. Meanwhile Tsavo dropped a Quickness on himself, Eidolon, Carie and Aryan. At that time I managed to get a Rainstorm above the next necro in line while Carie cursed another with PMS (that's periodic muscle spasms). Unfortunately one of the defenders being affected by Hand of Death collapsed.

Eidolon's Solar Flare went off, cutting through the remaining three necros. One of them vanished. Turned out Arondel had banished him. Bad move. That means he's escaped and can report back to whoever sent him. I started heading to the stairs. Halfway there, the other two dropped out of the sky.

By the time I got there, the bodies of the fallen necros had been retrieved from the water. They were naked, apart from a loincloth, jet black in colour, and hairless. There was a large rune on their chest tattooed in red paint. Each of them had three rings: a gold one, a silver one, and a bronze one, all magical. The loincloths weren't magical. They also had some sort of deathcurse. Eidolon remembered it did something to them and their killer so we checked the person who fired the crossbow. Yep. He was cursed too. Meanwhile Arondel took the bodies of the two defenders, who had died, for resurrection.

A short while later, there was a shout from upstairs. "The Eye's gone!". And sure enough, on the midday rain line, a storm was starting to brew. No one else from Lorgos was missing and the Eye isn't on plane. So it wasn't an inside job and the outside attack was only a diversion. But how did they get in there in the first place?

While we were trying to sort out what was going on, Arondel returned and reported that he was able to resurrect one person but the other was too far gone.

Tsavo questioned their spirits and discovered that the lightning protection was the gold rings. (According to the previous notes they were Wraithcloaks. The silver were Wings and the brass were Hand of Death) The attack was a diversion to get the Eye and they have other eyes beside Sudar's but he didn't know where from. They're being used to power a rather large machine, that the leader believes will save Sudar, which is located outside, in the city, on the top level.

The nature of the curse is to serve the Lord of Sudar even after death by turning them and their killers into wraiths. Already the shade had a bluish aura around it which Eidolon described as a wannabe wraith. They turn into wraiths at midnight. Curse Removal can prevent this as well as removing the tattoo.

The Lord of Sudar knows what damage he's done to the other planes but he doesn't care. The machine is heavily guarded by mages, a mixture of mind, celestials, and necros. They have been grabbing populations from other planes as slaves.

This plane needed to be evacuated so Arondel and Shaygin decided to try opening their rooms, one on Norden and the other on Lorgos. So Arondel started his planewalk ritual then slipped through. Meanwhile Shaygin got everyone to gather up all the valuables and stack them ready for transportation. Carie went upstairs to do a ritual while I kept an eye on the storm. Tsavo started using spells to warp the skin containing the tattoo off the bodies. The whole procedure looked rather gross.

Shaygin opened his door. Eidolon wanted to make more room by moving stuff out but Shaygin refused as much of it wasn't his and he didn't want to annoy any other users. We were able to create a path to the opposite wall. Just as we finished, the opposite wall opened up and we could see a sunny marketplace on Norden. So a mass evacuation started and soon a human chain was passing stuff though from Lorgos to Norden. Then Eidolon saw heads coming out of the water near the submerged buildings. We suspected it was the squid.

Finally it was just us and Shaygin left on Norden. The original scheme was that Shaygin would lent Eidolon a ring of Banishment, Eidolon would close the door after everyone was through then banish himself to Alusia where Arondel would planewalk to fetch him. The ring could only be used twice. The first time it sends you to your plane of origin, the second was to your specific birthplace and a subsequent use meant oblivion. So we tried it but discovered that Eidolon couldn't use Shaygin's doorknob. Obviously they were keyed to the owner. This meant Shaygin had to use the door but he couldn't go anywhere else and it would take over an hour before Arondel could repeat his ritual and come back to fetch him. Aryan offered to stay and help fight off the squids but it was agreed that it would be a futile gesture.

Finally we gave Shaygin a lightning protection ring and Eidolon cast Wings on him while I put on a Waterbreathing. The flying should keep Shaygin out of reach of the squids until Arondel could meet him at the portal we came through. So I gave Shaygin a hug for good luck, which he appreciated, then we went into the room. Shaygin closed the door behind us.

We emerged on Norden where the Lorgos refugees were being made welcome. I put Waterbreathings on Aryan and Arondel and Arondel started his ritual. I was getting fretful worrying about Shaygin and hoping he was going to be okay so I was spending the time pacing while the others discussed means of going to Sudar and getting the Eye back.

Finally Arondel stepped into a 'gap' and soon returned with Shaygin. His skin was blackened, he was hairless, but at least he was alive. He still had his doorknob tightly clutched in his hand and it was warm to the touch. The skin underneath it was red and burnt.

.6.

Arondel whisked Eidolon away for divination. Meanwhile I went to see how Shaygin was doing. He was rather depressed about losing his plane and was considering an idea for training his people to be Water Mages so they could survive in the water and deal to the squids.

An hour or so later, Arondel reported that Eidolon had two death curses on him, the first at Rank

5, the second on 10. The first said 'Once you die you will rise as a wraith at the following midnight and serve Lord Sarn' while the second stated 'You are doomed to die at the hands of darkness'.

While Arondel rested, fortifications were being erected under Aryan and Eidolon's supervision in case the Sudarians attacked Norden. The Lorgosian who had fired the big catapult was very keen on repeating the feat so he was busy building another. Incidentally he also had the 'rise as a wraith' curse on. Meanwhile Carie was discussing with the local alchemist about the possibility of making Mind Cloak potions. While he checked ingredients Carie, Mehb, and TharKuun went to rank spells.

I decided to stay out of the way so I went for a swim in the lake. I was told there was a rumour of a giant kraken in there but no one had seen it in living memory. I decided to let sleeping krakens lie. Instead I just relaxed in the water for a while. Getting close to the giant carp proved to be rather difficult as they were very wary.

That evening Arondel came for Eidolon to attempt to remove the wraith curse while Carie and the alchemist started to make the potion.

#### 5th Thaw

After doing some contortion exercises in the morning, I dressed in my kraken skin armour and went looking for Aryan to see if he was free for unarmed combat practise. However he was heavily involved in sorting out the chaos that was the defence setup so I spent most of the day doing trident practise with the Lorgosians - and whomever else they roped in. Meanwhile Mehb and TharKuun had got roped into helping test the new giant crossbow.

Eidolon turned up after lunch and immediately started trying to sort out the mess that Aryan had made. Unfortunately the curse removal had failed so Arondel was going to try again after resting.

That night Carie suggested that Sarn create a thin beam of sunlight, just after the midnight line, that could catch any just risen wraiths. That seemed like a good idea so he went to see if it could be implemented.

#### 6th Thaw

Basically the same as yesterday. The Mind Cloak potion (Rank 1) was successfully made and it was handed to Arondel in case he had to sneak in first. The alchemist had enough ingredients to make a second one so they started on that.

#### 8th Thaw

More of the same really. Arondel finally got the wraith curse off Eidolon but the second Mind Cloak potion fizzled.

However, two strangers had appeared at the portal, a man, Caran, and his twelve year old son, Timothy. They were cloth traders from the plane of Korax and had been aiming for the city there from the second level. Both of them had rather dark skins and were dressed in off-white robes and turbaned head gear. They told us that a few hundred people had disappeared off their plane, mostly mages. Mind you, since the mages were the ones most likely to use the portals that seemed reasonable. Their lord, Lord Nebran, wasn't a mage but they had E&Es, Air, a writing mage and healing mages. On Korax, the bottom level is swamp and the second level is desert.



I asked whether or not anyone had mysteriously appeared. Caran said no but I managed to find out from Timothy that a frozen body had appeared in a desert portal. Had to be someone who got on Chos and hadn't managed to get out in time. Mehb and I took them away and helped them settle in until Lord Sarn could sort something out. I still reckon that the Sudarians have something to do with the planar breakdown in order to kidnap slaves. We also had a look at their cloth samples, some of which were rather nice.

A bit later on, Arondel took us down to the underground cavern so we could have some necro special counterspells (rank 12) put on. They would last three months. It was then decided that Arondel would planewalk to Sudar, with a volunteer or two, to have a quick look around. Aryan and Eidolon diced for it and Aryan won. So we powered them up with everything (at least the subtle stuff) we could think of: Waterbreathings, Waters of Strength, Resist Colds, Vapour Breathing, etc, etc. Then Arondel did his ritual and the two of them stepped through.

They didn't emerge on Sudar but, instead, peered through. Their first look revealed darkness so they tried again somewhere else. This time they were looking down on a city street in what seemed like moonlight. Arondel seemed drawn to something close by so they took a look. What they found was the edge of a set of what appeared to be black steps. Standing nearby was a black skinned person dressed in only a leather loincloth. The most striking feature about him was his face, it was paleskinned and badly deformed. He then turned and looked right at Arondel as if he could see him through the planar boundary. Arondel suddenly felt very fatigued so he and Aryan left the vicinity of Sudar and managed to reach Norden, emerging somewhere on the second level, several days walk to the wall. They couldn't open the room as there was nowhere to draw the door (there was chalk in the doorknob).

So Eidolon got this idea of flying out there with a slab of stone. To do this he stripped down to a loincloth, used one of the lightning protection rings, then cast StarWings on himself. He then just managed to lift this slab of marble and flew off with it. Unfortunately he crashed into one of the nets that had been erected to stop incoming fliers. That resulted in waves of laughter from nearly everyone. Finally he was away, being blasted by lightning as he rose above the level of the buildings.

When Eidolon finally found Arondel his skin had turned black with charring and his hair had burnt off. Additionally his cloth loincloth had also burnt off leaving only his leather codpiece. We concluded from this that leather was required for protection. The slab was propped up, the door drawn, and Aryan and Arondel's equipment was passed through (Shaygin had already opened his side). Arondel was going to fly back with Eidolon. All he was now in was a leather skirt and the doorknob was placed in a small leather bag.

Once prepared, the door was closed and the pair flew back. It was suggested, before they left, that Arondel splashlands in the lake so we headed down there, even though they would land long before we got there. As it turned out, Arondel made a really good landing and was soon ashore.

That evening we discussed what we could do.

.7.

A while later, Arondel arrived. Tsavo was still interested in what Shaygin had discovered so a short while later, Arondel, Shaygin, Tsavo, and myself were planewalking. I initially thought we were checking out Sudar but we ended up in a place that reminded me of a small island. Both the

sky and sea were a metallic grey and there was no horizon. The sand was also grey but the grass was blue/grey. Nearby, a wooden jetty jutted into what I thought was water until I used my dowsing talent. No water at all.

Arondel said that we were just beyond the edge of the bubble worlds and described the seven planes as being in a line - like pearls in a necklace - and this place was at one end. He also warned me not to touch the 'water' as it was something he called 'proto-matter' or 'chaos-stuff' i.e. stuff that planes are made from. This place seemed to be a baby plane and it had no name of its own.

Shaygin then told us that he was an astrologer and had managed to do a reading asking the question on how he could contact the creators. It was that act that started the floods. He told us the answer that both Tsavo and I memorised. He didn't want us to write it down - just in case.

It was:

I give you a coin that I made from a stone  
I give you a song I stole from the dirt  
I give you a knife from under the hill  
And a stick I stuck through a dead mans eye

I give you a claw that I ripped from a rat  
I give you a name and the name is lost  
I give you the blood from out of my vein  
And a feather I pulled from an angels wing

I summon with poison and I summon with pain  
I summon you with the names of the old lords  
Chos, Sudar, Kerax, Eradin, Lorgos, Virym, Norden

From the Dark they call you  
Into the Dark they call you  
Coin and Song, Knife and Stick  
Claw and Name, Blood and Feather  
Here in the Darkness, I summon you together.

The answer appeared to be some sort of summoning ritual. The references to pain and blood also implied it wasn't very nice. Both Arondel and Shaygin had concluded that the gods just didn't want to be known - so why had they created and populated the planes in the first place. Plus it also implied that there was a different creator for each plane who had named the plane after it. It was believed that the Sudarians were also cursed. Maybe they were trying to complete the summoning ritual?

Arondel then told us that when the Eye of Norden had been stolen, he had, in an act of desperation, summoned enough energy in order to fling himself out of Norden in order to get help. He found himself on this proto-plane and then realised he was stranded. Fortunately he encountered some entities who taught him how to planar travel on the condition he didn't reveal who they were. I wondered if they were the mysterious creators but Arondel didn't think so.

Another thing that was interesting was the angel that Eidolon had evoked on the earlier mission. The invocation was found beneath the base of a sundial. The thing was, why would there be a

sundial on a plane where the sun doesn't actually move. I wondered if there were sundials on the other planes and whether they also had inscriptions. The inscription had been:

Call upon the Eye for light  
When weeping in the falling night.  
It might control the starry poles  
And summon angels, burnished bright.

It was six hours later by the time we got back. I went straight to bed and was soon lulled to sleep by the sound of the Great Sea.

## 9 Thaw

The rest were up early this morning. They had come up with the idea of questioning the shade of the ex-lord of Sudar. Unfortunately the place of death was inside the Norden tower so Lord Sarn arranged for part of the tower to be unbricked so we could get in. Eidolon wanted to spend the waiting time sunbathing. That sounded like an excellent idea so I climbed up onto the roof. It wasn't long before I was joined by Eidolon and Aryan.

Just around lunchtime the message arrived that everything was ready. So we trooped to the tower. When we got there, a small hole had been made in the bricked up door. Once inside, we had to ride the golems up the stairs as they were all warded. The place of death was at the top of the second flight, at the Eye room. Six golems were spaced around the pillar all facing outwards. Tsavo's attempt failed so Carie pulled out a tarot deck.

Yes, this was Lord Garn. The magic that allowed Sudarians to cross planes turned out to be some sort of mask which they have to wear but it doesn't travel with them. However it's a two way trip as they can return by an act of will. The plane is indeed cursed but not by darkness. He had sought forbidden knowledge. The stolen Eye was required to power some sort of machine that would allow the entire population off the plane and out of the planar group. There was no particular destination in mind. He only required one foreign Eye. The only other major item required for the machine was the mask. The curse was the reason they were leaving.

From what we could determine, now he had an Eye, the machine could be ready to go at any time. We then wanted to know what defences they had. On the plane there was more than 20 but less than 100 Greater Undead and more than 20 followers have those tattoos. Between 200 and 2000 people live within five miles of the tower.

The mask is kept near the centre of the ziggurat and the Eye is located nearby. Sudar doesn't have a sun but has a moon instead.

We decided we were going to go to Sudar and see if we could negotiate some sort of settlement for the return of Lorgos's Eye. Maybe they could use Chos's one instead. I was also wondering if Chos's Eye could be transplanted to Lorgos instead.

Arondel had divinated some of the rings so we could use them. Two were:

4 charges of Rank 5 Agony - 60% BC

5 charges of Rank 10 Hands of Death - 65% BC

Three of the others had ShadowWings.

It was decided to rest up and go early the next day.

.8.

10 Thaw

We powered up. Vapour Breathings, Water Breathings, Dark Visions, Witchsights, Featherfalls (on those who were intending to fly), Waters of Strength & Coruscades. Carie showed me how to use her Trollskin item then I cast a Rainstorm on myself. As well as helping my spellcasting chances, it'll keep my armour soft and wet.

Aron del and Aryan planewalked to Sudar to find a good spot to open the door from that side while Shaygin set up the door here. Finally both ends were open and we stepped through.

The other side was in a dark stone room, somewhere in the city. The only light was from our Coruscades. As Aron del closed the door behind us, Tsavo announced he could detect some lesser undead nearby. I went to the door and had a look outside. I could see flicking lights coming from over the roofs somewhere in the direction of the lake as well as the eldritch sounds of great wailings and lamentations. The entire atmosphere left a sense of dread.

Three skeletons appeared from around a street corner. Aryan smashed into one with a mighty blow and instantly cleaved it in twain. Eidolon beheaded a second but the third one managed to hit him. Aryan leapt into the fray and finished it off. Examinations showed no auras on them but the rusty old scimitars they were wielding had lifedrainning properties. Fortunately the one that Aryan picked up had no apparent effects. If it killed someone they would rise again as undead.

As Tsavo reanimated the skeletons, he discovered that the area was high mana for a necromancer. Carie took this moment to come out of the building and rushed the skeletons with the intention of tearing them to pieces. Eidolon had to forcibly restrain her until she recovered.

We headed towards the flickering light as quickly as we could, managing to avoid all the undead on the way. On the way we passed two intersections containing large humanoid, non-magical, statues on plinths. Finally we could see what was happening.

Hovering above the lake was an enormous black stepped pyramid that had bright blue/white lighting playing all over it's surface. It's reflection in the water looked just as impressive.

A short while later we could see the source of the eerie wailing. On the causeway, across the lake, was an enormous group of people, hundreds, maybe thousands of people, some of which were carrying torches. Their rage, anguish and desperation, appeared to be directed at the pyramid which was currently drifting out over the water.

By the time we got as close as we dared, the pyramid was sinking into the lake. Some people had either fallen off, or dived off the causeway and were trying to reach it. We could also see some undead in the crowd that were hacking away at the people around them.

I'm not sure what was going through Eidolon's mind at this point, something like an aerial assault on the pyramid, which I was of the opinion was the most insane idea I had ever heard, but he suddenly picked up Aron del and myself and took off into the air (he had Shadowwings, along with Aryan and Mehb). At one point we got very dangerously close to the city wall as Eidolon made a right angle turn.

Finally we got out over the lake through a gap in the wall. I wanted Eidolon to drop me as I felt I had a better chance in the lake than I did with this maniac. By now only the tip of the pyramid was visible. Then I saw why Eidolon wasn't letting me go. The depths of the lake was blacker than I would have expected and the pyramid was disappearing into it. It looked like some sort of portal. There was also some sort of acrid smell. Just then, I lost consciousness.

When I woke up, we had returned and landed back with the others. Carie was singing and Tsavo was addressing the crowd saying something like 'We are your saviours, come to take you to a better place. Rise up against your oppressors'. Carie was singing a song of light and hope so I joined in while Eidolon created a path of light. I guess we would have looked like some sort of angels, what with our coruscades etc. The whole thing must have looked like a Raphaelite revivalist rally. All we were missing were the horns and tambourines.

All the crowd knelt in reverence. Tsavo commanded them to rise then asked to speak to their leaders. Finally, somewhere in the midst of the crowd, an old man rose to his feet and began making his way towards us. Some of the others went down to meet him. Others in the crowd were dealing to the skeletons. All of the people were dressed in rags and some had chains dangling from their arms and legs.

Finally the old man reached us and prostrated himself in front of us. Again Tsavo asked him to rise, then asked him what had befallen them. 'They promised but they betrayed us' the old man said. 'Thousands died building their evil pyramid and they promised to take us to avoid the doom of the Darkness'. By the way he said the last word, it was obvious they didn't mean the natural darkness around us.

Tsavo asked him to wait while we went into a huddle. Finally we decided that we should send the ex-slaves to Norden. Arondel opened his door in a nearby building and went to report to Lords Sarn and Shaygin. Meanwhile Eidolon and Aryan went to help finish off the skeletons. Finally Arondel returned and told us that it was agreed to send them through to the base of the city. There was plenty of room there to house them and food can be provided magically. Shaygin was going to draw the largest door he could. Arondel would do the same at this end. However we were asked to wait for an hour or so as preparations were required to be made at the other end. That was fine as we weren't going to draw the door down here.

The best place we decided for the door at this end was the back wall of the 'temple'. So a path of light was laid up the street towards the centre of the city and we started shuffling refugees up and clearing out the undead in the vicinity. Mahb was taking great delight in smashing them with her mattock. As we moved towards the central tower I noticed that there was some unnatural darkness around the tower, something very scary.

Finally the path of light reached the building containing the city portal and Arondel opened up his door. Shaygin had opened his end in the building at the top of the stairs as the view opened out onto a sunlit scene with the causeway stretching over the lake to the city beyond. Fifty people, all wearing sky-blue tunics, were waiting to welcome the refugees.

So we funnelled the people through. As they did, Eidolon DAed several of them for plane of origin. Most were Sudarian but a few were from the other planes, Chos, Lorgos, and Norden. Undead were converging on the rear of the column where the weaker people were, the sick and the lame. Our fighters went to deal with them.

It took an hour before the bulk of the people were through and another hour to deal with the stragglers. It was then we noticed that a Darkness was beginning to creep over the causeway. Undead were still wandering around and bodies were lying in the streets and on the causeway. The party members with wings did a quick scout around for survivors but there were none to be found.

Once the last person was through, Arondel closed the door. We would create a smaller one when we were ready to go. I had been feeling odd since Eidolon's flight so I had Arondel DA me. He discovered that I had a magical backfire effect, some sort of mana block. For the next day I would no longer be a mage.

It was decided to investigate the spooky tower before we left this plane. It was of the same design as the others but looked very black and very imposing. It was also quiet - maybe too quiet. Tsavo detected no undead as we approached. The large wooden door to the courtyard was ajar.

Just then we saw a figure in the doorway watching us. It disappeared into the tower once it realised it had been seen. It looked humanoid and was wearing flowing dark robes. It had a purple head and tentacles for a face. It was then I realised with horror I had seen one of these before. It was a Calimar. But what was it doing here? More importantly why was it still here? Then another thought struck me. Those entities that had taught Arondel his planewalking abilities - had those been the Calimar as well? Certainly Arondel wouldn't admit it.

.9.

"Charge!" orders Aryan so we headed through the door and over the courtyard. Eidolon and I were the fastest so we ended up in front. Just then Tsavo called out "Watch out for wards". As we neared the doorway Eidolon paused to check the entrance for wards since it would be the most logical place to put one. I did the same thing with my ocular. Both of us picked one up. Eidolon identified it as a Rank 10 Wiccan Hellfire. So Arondel countered it before we charged through the door.

There was no sign of any Calimar on the bottom level but it looked like people had recently moved out so we charged up the stairs. By now the party were getting rather spread out on a long line. Aryan wanted us up there as fast as possible so we charged up to the second level. As we did we could hear maniacal laughter from above.

I decided to take a short cut so I leapt up from the stairs to the lip of the second level. Besides, that would get around any wards at the top of the stairs. As it turned out, there weren't any. Then I ran across the room and sprung up to the next set of stairs. As a consequence I was getting way ahead of Eidolon. Halfway across, there was a 'crump' and the floor shook momentarily.

I raced up the stairs to the third level and stopped momentarily as soon as my head was level with the floor in order to see what was there. There was no sign of the Eye but there was some illumination from the gap between the earth and sky pillars. Also I could see a figure leaping through a glowing blue hole in the floor beyond. There were no shouts of alarm from the party members below so the hole must have been some sort of portal. So I took a running leap and ended up on the third floor. By then Eidolon had arrived and cast a Solar Strike spell on the area of floor where the portal was. Some of the spell effect was 'warped' by the gap which helped concentrate the effects onto the portal. Hopefully it'll do some damage to whatever went through it. Meanwhile I scooted around the other side of the pillar and saw a square of glowing blue light

which was closing. I wasn't game in jumping through it. Goodness knows what was on the other side and I didn't want to be cut off from the party. Instead I tried poking my trident in the hole as Aryan wanted it kept open somehow.

By the time the others got there, the portal had closed neatly slicing the fork off the trident. Arondel managed to locate the trident head somewhere below, probably in the catacombs.

After some discussion we headed out of the tower and down to the city portal. The wall of Darkness was now over the causeway and was encroaching on the city. The Wall of Lights that Eidolon had left down there were fading into it. Near the light walls near the portal building there were piles of bones. That implied that they were natural skeletons as summoned ones usually fall to dust. The portal itself seemed ok so we stepped on it, forming a defensive circle, with Arondel in the centre, and he said the magic word.

We appeared in the centre on a hemispherical cavern on an identical dais. Arondel suddenly gave a yelp of pain. He was standing on a hot trident head. The walls of the cavern were covered with runes and there were four exits spaced evenly around it.

Just then the runes of ThaKuun's head started glowing meaning there was undead nearby. Just then five skeletons came out of one of the entrances. Aryan and ThaKuun went to meet them. Then some other figures came out of the opposite doorway.

Tsavo also detected numerous undead in the labyrinth outside. In here were four greater, and four lesser. One of the greater was with the first group and the others consisted the second. Tsavo identified the greater undead as wights.

Battle was joined. Carie was concentrating on holding the skeletons back with her amulets. ThaKuun disarmed one while a wight charged at Eidolon. Mahb intercepted it while I went around Carie and managed to hit it with my new tulwar. Eidolon cast a Wall of Starlight, surrounding the other two still standing near the entrance.

Just then black fire leapt out from one of the enclosed undead and hit Mahb, Carie, Eidolon and myself. As a consequence I found myself panicked. Since there were no bodies of water about, I stepped back onto the dais and tried to make myself a very small target. While I was doing that Eidolon took the restorative I had previously prepared for him.

As a consequence I was not aware of most of the battle. Tsavo was using a Spectral Hand to keep the two wights busy by shoving them. One retreated back through the entrance while the other tried to make a break through another entrance but was destroyed by another set of Walls. ThaKuun beheaded another skeleton while Mahb bravely finished off the attacking wight. Finally Tsavo raised the destroyed skeletons and used them to finish off the remaining opposition.

.10.

Mahb was looking rather poorly by now so I handed over one of my 20pt healing potions. Meanwhile Eidolon restored all the Coruscades and we headed down a corridor with four of Tsavo's skeletons in front and the other two behind.

After an hour of wandering through the maze (fortunately Arondel had some idea where we were

going) we reached some steps going up. Faintly ahead we could hear heavy breathing and the slap of feet so we charged upwards. As we got there, we heard a scream.

We had emerged in an open space, neatly bisected by a wide, apparently bottomless, chasm. The only way across was a narrow stone bridge. Three greater undead stepped out from the tunnel opposite and two of them began to cross. Aryan stepped forward to meet their advance. When one started prodding at him with its scimitar, he opted for a defensive withdrawal (“backing off without swinging” was how Eidolon described it). The one at the back blasted us with blackfire so I backed off to the rear of the group and drank another 20pt Healing potion. Eidolon put up a Wall of Starlight between us and them while Arondel dropped a Counterspell around the rear one.

The foremost undead stepped into the wall. It didn't look too happy about that so it took its aggravation out on ThaKuun so ThaKuun hit it back. The other two started preparing spells. Aryan went in to try to help ThaKuun but, critically fumbled the attack, and lost his weapon which flew spinning into the chasm. ThaKuun finished it off so Aryan charged in to shieldbash the next one. The skeletons also went in, and three of them tumbled over the edge. Aryan teetered but didn't fall. He backed off and let the fourth skeleton in. It also fell over the edge but managed to take the greater undead with it.

The last one was now approaching. Eidolon went forward in an attempt to knock it over but it maintained its footing. They commenced to fight on the bridge and Eidolon backed into the Wall of Light, hoping that the undead would follow. Then it staggered as it was swatted by Tsavo's Spectral Hand. Enraged, it moved into the Wall of Light - and promptly recoiled before going over the side into the dark depths of the chasm.

ThaKuun tried to go through the Wall of Light even though dwarves usually have adverse reactions to them. This was no exception and he went for Eidolon, who had already reached the other side, after pushing past Mahb and Tsavo. All three of them leapt on ThaKuun and managed to subdue him until the madness passed. The rest of us followed.

Mahb then spotted a prone figure further on down. We weren't sure what it was but turned out to be a humanoid figure wrapped in a black cloak. We could detect a faint smell of rotting flesh. The cloak wasn't magical but was formally living. When the figure was revealed we first thought it was the Calimar, as it had a purple head. Turned out to be a human Sudarian wearing some sort of Calimar mask. The mask itself was what was giving out the rotting smell and it DAed as formally living, GTN-Calimar. There was some preservation magics on it.

The body itself was wizened and naked. Also he had the Eye of Sudar clutched tightly. Eidolon managed to remove it from him and take possession. Tsavo summoned the shade of the body which told us that he was a Sudarian human who had been ordered by his Lord to wear the mask and not to remove it. He had been wearing it for more than a year and it had granted extra abilities to do with the ziggurat and powers beyond that, such as seeing into other planes and teleportation. It was the only mask on Sudar and still had some powers. It also had side effects, such as mental disturbances, and he told us that the power gained hadn't been worth the costs. He also hadn't seen a live Calimar and he had no goal in this labyrinth.

Once the mask was removed, we noticed that the head was hairless and the face had the look of the mentally deficient. While ThaKuun stowed the mask we tried to explain to Arondel just how



bad the Calimar were and that their presence here meant that the other planes could be in serious trouble. However, for some reason, Arondel seemed to take up the defensive, claiming that they can't be that bad. Methinks he doth protest too much - and I wouldn't be surprised if it was the Calimar that taught him his planewalking ritual.

While Arondel opened his door, the party tried to see how deep the chasm was. The first torch dropped over 700ft before we couldn't see it any more. Also it looked like that some of that darkness we had seen advancing on the city was creeping up the chasm. Finally we heard something hit bottom, at least a mile down, then there was a hissing sound. Tsavo theorised there were lots of greater undead down there. Plus, at spots on the chasm wall, it looked like there were bloodstains, as if blood had oozed out of the wall.

After a quick meal we went through to Norden where we were treated as heros by the Sudarians. Lord Sarn told us that there was to be a ceremony in three days that the Sudarians requested. The Norden and Lorgos people were still wearing identical sky-blue tunics. I later found out that they had a bolt of blue fabric and had used it to make a uniform in order to 'give them some sort of authority'.

Later on, Aryan and co saw Lords Sarn and Shaygin in private and warned them about the Calimar and Arondel's possible association with them.

.11.

Eidolon later went to check on Arondel and found him in his room, asleep in an armchair. All the contents of the room were spread out in the rest of the building. The only other thing in the room was a half eaten cheese sandwich. Eidolon noticed that Arondel looked much older. Also that the closest magic that he had to Dimensional Weaving (which was the College the Calimar used) was the Dimensional Gateway ritual.

11 Thaw

I was one of the first awake and decided to see if I could cast a Water Breathing spell on myself, after clambering up on the roof. After the second attempt, it worked. Yippee! I'm a mage again.

Lord Sarn wanted us to see if the portal system was working properly, now that it wasn't being interfered with from Sudar, as they wanted to start using it. So, after breakfast, we prepared to do just that. Lord Shaygin was found and he put WaterBreathings on the rest of the party.

I suggested that Aryan control our destination. After all, he had been in control the both times we went off-plane. Besides, if it worked ok when he used it then it had to be fool-proof.

First off we blinked down to the three stone circle portals on the middle level. At each hop Eidolon checked the aura of the grass to ensure that we were still on Norden. Then we went down to the nine portals on the bottom level. Tsavo marked each one with a pointer of darkness, each pointing in an opposite direction. Then he sent us on a rapid tour. Fortunately he warned us first so I kept my eyes shut during the rapid transitions.

I wasn't so lucky when someone decided to rapidly hop from portal to portal at speed. When that was complete I had to sit on the portal disk as I was feeling rather queasy. Finally we tried deliberately going to Lorgos then Sudar. Didn't work. We ended up on the equivalent place on Norden. Finally we returned to the city and informed Lord Sarn that the portal system was ready

for use.

The next thing we did was to ask Arondel to divinate the Sudar Eye to see if it was safe to go into Lorgos. When we got there, we found he was trying to sort all the stuff out. He insisted that he had to do it himself and that he had little time left. He agreed to divinate the Eye while we went and had lunch.

After a while we went back. He had just finished as we arrived and we were surprised to notice that he looked a bit younger and stronger. Could the proximity of the Eye be having a rejuvenating effect on Arondel? According to the analysis, there were no specific curses on the Eye.

Arondel did his ritual and he, accompanied by Tsavo, planewalked to Lorgos. Meanwhile Shaygin opened the door at this end. About five minutes later, Arondel opened his door. We went through and ended up in the ground floor of the tower. Outside, the storm was brewing out on the midday rain line, accompanied by lightning. Up at the Eye level, TharKuun TKed the Sudar Eye into the gap. Once in place, the light from the gap flared up. Shaygin announced that he had his full powers back.

Initially the Eye was going to remain in place but it was later decided to remove it again until Shaygin was ready to reoccupy his plane. Keeping the Eye in Arondel's possession may keep him alive until he is able to pass on his knowledge of planar travel. Also the storm could help limit the edge of the mind-mage squids. Another possibility we discussed was asking for immigrants from another intelligent aquatic race, such as merfolk, that could help the Lorgosians deal with the squids. Plus it would take time to Shaygin to train up more Water Mages. So TharKuun used another TK to pop the Eye out again.

While Arondel did his ritual to return home, I, accompanied by Mahb and TharKuun went down to the courtyard in the hope that there might be some squid bodies floating nearby so that we could prove if they were related to the Calimar or not. We didn't find any but did notice that the water level had dropped as the water was sucked into the clouds.

By the time we got back to Norden, it was late afternoon. We rested for the rest of the day.

12 Thaw

It was two in the morning when there was a banging at the door. When I went to see who it was, I discovered a rather agitated Arondel. He said we had to get all our stuff and leave immediately as there was some entities coming and he didn't want them to know that any Alusians had been here. Apparently he had 'bent the rules' rather badly by hiring us in the first place. So we got ready to leave. Arondel also had a bag containing our payment and salvage in it. He got even more agitated when Tsavo said he couldn't be banished. So Arondel prepared to planewalk him back.

We ended up in a cabbage patch, much to the dismay of the farmer who was tending them. When I asked him where we were he said that we were not far from Slippery Rock. I paid the farmer for the damaged cabbages then Eidolon put Wings on us all. Mahb also put Feather Falls on those who wanted them. I was one of them.

We got back to the Guild and were debriefed by Security. About an hour later, as we were about to arrange to find out where Tsavo was, he showed up. He told us that just before Arondel's ritual

was complete, he could hear strange 'music' then a large blue glowing 'rift' had appeared in the sky, near the tower and something like a ship was starting to come through. It didn't appear to be a Calimar Voidcruiser but that didn't mean that it wasn't Calimarian. Arondel hustled Tsavo into the rift and they were off. On the way, Tsavo had the impression that something had touched his mind but was satisfied with what it found. Finally Arondel pushed Tsavo through onto Alusia, appearing near the Guild, while Arondel hurried back to Norden.

The bag contained all the salvage we had found as well as our payment of 5500sp from Arondel. There was also a note from Shaygin apologising that this was all he could find in a hurry. He had left a pale blue/green emerald worth 500sp for each of us.

The Calimar helm allowed people to learn the Dimensional Weaving Counterspells as well as the Calimar language. The Guild claimed this item but offered to allow us to learn the Counterspells for free as they now had an alternate source. I might just take them up on that.

The salvage was turned into Guild script which gave us 7,567 in Guild script each (they insisted on the tax on the gem and money being paid in silver pennies). I decided not to take any of the salvage but I regretted not being able to get any Waters of Healing ingredients out of Lord Shaygin. I also hoped he would be able to reclaim Lorgos and, if I ever had the opportunity, I wanted to help him. Just then another thought struck me. Damn! We didn't get to go to the party.

However this wasn't the end of the story. I was still rather concerned about what was happening on Norden so I used some of the scrip to obtain an astrology reading from the Guild Astrologer, Frederick Toadswart. The reading was "Are the squid creatures on Lorgos related to the Calimar?"

Some say that the Apes are related to Man  
But do the Apes care? They just don't give a damn.  
So when they are used in an intricate plot  
They do what they want and they don't care a lot.

This implied to me that they may be related in some way i.e. a similar species.

A week later I received another scroll from Mr Toadswart with another astrology reading, and a note saying "This one came to me as a vision, and I'm pretty certain it's for you. I guess since you didn't actually ask for it I won't be able to charge you for it. Hmph!". It said

The Man in Blue, his people have dwindled  
He fought so hard to save them all  
But the cursed rains fell steadily  
And the rising waters proved deadly  
So now he must bide time with his ball.

The Man in Black, his people he swindled  
He left them to die in a terrible place  
Without the special summoning script  
He must find an old gods' crypt  
And he hides from an Elder race.

The Elder race, their interest is kindled  
In an experiment they forgot about long ago  
The Blue and Black Minions have a destiny  
But their conflict will disrupt the worlds harmony  
Even Ancient races are limited in what they can know.

When I discussed this with Eidolon his conclusions were as follows:

The squid creatures are sentient (MA - can cast magic), but not self-aware. They are not knowingly helping the Calimar.

The summoning script &/or the old Gods crypt are being sought by the Sudarians. Logos and Sudar are destined to meet again and fight - even the Calimar can't see/prevent what will happen next.

It looked like both the Sudarians and Calimar are looking for the old Gods that created the plane 'necklace'. We could go looking for it ourselves and meet them there and 'kick butt'. However, we might need more people who aren't afraid of charging 100's of Greater Undead as it could get a little rough, probably too rough for me. Besides I wanted to help remove the squid creatures from Lorgos.

So I decided to file these readings with the scribe notes to aid any other future parties.