

# Fighting the Good Fight, No Matter The Cost

Cover Sheet

Adventure by Paul Schmidt

1st Meadow '01 - 5<sup>th</sup> Breeze

## Player Characters

Isil Eth	Mind	Elf	Female	Leader
Glynn	Air	Elf	Male	Mil Sci
Methos	Shadow Celestial??	Human	Male	
Thorn	Non-mage	Human	Female	
Killramadram (Drum)	Non-mage	Giant	Male	
Flamis	Fire	Human	Female	
Basalic	Earth	Human	Male	Scribe

**Plane** - Greyhawk/Magrathea

## Places visited

Greyhawk City

Magrathea City

Abandoned Abbey

Ruined city of Heliopolis

Tanelorn

**Employer** - 'Baron' Arrackstreich

## Major NPCs encountered

Lorefakir - Mage in Greyhawk City

Jalif Arkan - Leader of the Arcane Order of Exposition (Magrathea Mages Guild)

Calidicie - Regent in charge of library

Ebert Gins - Head Priest of Magrathea's Church of Heironeous

**Mission** - Cleanse an old abbey of Heironeous

## **Adventure Summary**

### 1<sup>st</sup> Meadow

Our employer had come into possession of some land containing an old abbey of Heironeous. He wanted us to investigate the place with the view of taxing the inhabitants.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Meadow

Attempted to go back through the portal but it failed after Drum went through. So visited Lorefakir on Greyhawk. Methos discovered how to fix the portal from information in the library.

### 5<sup>th</sup> Meadow

Portal finally fixed so we went through. Found Drum and travelled on towards the city.

### 7<sup>th</sup> Meadow

Reached the city and visited the Arcane Order of Exposition. Discovered that the claim was valid and our employer had won the map of a group of adventurers in a game of chance. Travelled north towards the abbey.

### 12<sup>th</sup> Meadow

Finally reached the vicinity of the abbey. Attacked that night by three vampires who succeeded in killing Drum and making off with his head.

### 13<sup>th</sup> Meadow

Scouted the area around the abbey and Methos was shapechanged into an anaconda to look inside. He managed to return with Drum's head and an ex-slave. Abbey occupied by necromancers, several dozen snakes, some vampires, warriors of Hextor and several slaves. Led by two powerful renegade necromancers.

### 17<sup>th</sup> Meadow

Returned to the city and made our report. A crusade was formed to cleanse the temple.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Heat

Back at the abbey again. Our job was to sneak in and take out the leaders. Discovered that the place was being used as a Black Academy of Necromancy. Found a secret passage, defeated three vampires, and discovered that the leaders had fled through a portal to the Plane of Forever. Came back out as the Crusade was busy cleaning up.

### 10<sup>th</sup> Heat

The portal had been destroyed so we decided to investigate the ruined city of Heliopolis instead. Most of the city lay in ruins but a small area was inhabited.

### 11<sup>th</sup> Heat

Tried to contact the inhabitants but discovered they were very suspicious of strangers especially since they had been attacked by outsiders for some time. We had to defeat a lumin-hydra in the ruined temple of Pelor and some harpies residing in a tower before they finally trusted us.

### 12<sup>th</sup> Heat

Searched the remains of the harpies tower but didn't find anything.

### 13<sup>th</sup> Heat

Searched the ruins for the location of various temples as some party members needed to find them. Also discovered a highly magical area dedicated to 'the Guardian of the City'. Managed to be forsaken by the Gods.

#### 25<sup>th</sup> Heat

Finally arrived back at Magrathea City.

#### 27<sup>th</sup> Heat

Returned to Seagate. Flamis and I attempted to portal to Greyhawk City. Got separated ending up in the city of Tanelorn which is full of the 'forsaken of the Gods', a place where the Gods cannot act.

#### 28<sup>th</sup> Heat

Found by Flamis and Lorefakir. Returned to Greyhawk. Flamis tried to find solution to my problem but both of us were accosted and incarcerated by Children of Yelram

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Breeze

Finally managed to leave and returned to Seagate - never to return.

## **Additional Notes**

### Plane of Magrathea

A long time ago, this plane had been devastated by a Shadow Dragon who had been summoned to deal with an undisclosed threat. The plane had, until recently, a Forbiddance on it that made it extremely difficult to reach by planar travel. A beneficial side effect of this was to make it more difficult to summon extra-planar entities. There is also a curse on any non-natural fliers that causes them to be attacked by anything in the air. Only airmages with aerial affinity are immune.

All citizens share in maintaining their current lifestyle in order to minimise any setbacks caused by another disaster. This includes compulsory military service. All mages need to be registered with the Arcane Order of Exposition. One benefit of registration is that they can tap into a 'mana bank' in times of need. There is a limit, per mage, on how much power can be borrowed at one time and it must be paid back. Renegade mages have a price on their head and are hunted down. Necromancy is frowned upon.

There was an extensive civilisation on the plane before the disaster. Now many areas have fallen into disuse but, owing to forward planning, not much knowledge was lost. Land can be claimed but such claims need to be registered. Also, if nothing is done to the land within five years, then the claim is invalidated.

Silver is in short supply and in high demand as it is used in various rituals to do with the controlling of shape-shifters. One silver piece was worth two gold pieces. Truesilver and mithral are also highly desired.

Using summoning magic in a forest is not desirable at best. Anything unnatural happening in a forest makes the forest angry and the target is attacked by the forest using what means it has at its disposal such as the wildlife and the trees. The forest is also home to tiny fey creatures that are attracted to cold iron which is instant death to them. Anyone eating their corpses, which are addictive, is turned into a vampire and can see the Dark Moon and are attracted to the Dark heart of the forest.

### Travel

There is still quite a bit of unclaimed wilderness which teems with savage lifeforms, including bandits. All travellers do so in groups and are openly armed. The roads, dating back to before the Cataclysm, have a magical aura of protection and banishment on them, based on iron magic. This includes the old milestones spaced evenly along them. The old roads are mostly overgrown so new roads are being built on top. Where the milestones have been destroyed, the magical protection vanishes in that area.

### City of Magrathea.

This is a large city, surrounded by 30' walls with solid iron gates. The city is very clean with an excellent sewer and drainage system and the population is very healthy. It is ruled by a collection of Regents that are made up of many of the Guild leaders.

### Old abbey of Heironeous

This is located 70 miles north and east of the city. It is a complex of buildings located in a swampy area. Before the Cataclysm, it was used by the Order of Heironeous, but had since fallen into disuse. However, five or so years ago, a group of renegade necromancers, along with

fighters dedicated to Hextor, have taken it over and are using it for spreading the dark knowledge. The group is led by a renegade necromancer called Drake, and an unknown female who is even more powerful. They have made some repairs to the building and are also expanding the fortifications.

When discovered, the abbey was also occupied by a few naga, several hundred snakes, a few vampires, and scores of undead. The road nearby had lost its magical aura as the milestones to each side have been destroyed. They have been raiding villages, a few hundred miles to the east for slaves.

A Crusade of Paladins of Heironeous have since cleansed the place but the leaders escaped through a portal (since destroyed) to the Plane of Forever.

### College of Devouring

This seems to be an offshoot of the Necromantic College but, where Necromancy deals with generating 'life' where there is none, the Devouring College deals with obtaining attributes such as life force, abilities, magic etc from the victim. It may even include devouring the victim's corporal body and/or soul. Undead draining attacks and shriving magics fall under this College. There are no known Counterspells obtainable for this College as yet but Necromantic ones may offer some protection.

### Plane of Forever

Not much was discovered about this place. A chilling wind blew out of the portal which had an evil tinge in it. Entropic magics work best there and its symbol is rams horns.

### Lumin Hydra

A specimen of this creature was fought and defeated in the ruins of the Temple of Pelor (the Sun God) at Heliopolis. It looks like a normal hydra but its skin consisted of a crystalline substance that emitted a dazzling light. Feeding it light makes it stronger but darkness spells are effective against it. As with normal hydra, cutting off a head causes two to grow in its place but petrifying a head is effective. Feeding a head to the central orifice, since each head can be treated as a separate entity for the purposes of control, also was effective. Any creature fed to the central orifice is irrevocably dead. The hydra can also sacrifice a head and transfer its life force to the body.

## **Fighting The Good Fight, No Matter The Cost - Adventure Text**

I wasn't expecting to go out again so soon after the last adventure but, when I was told that an outgoing party really required an earth mage, I volunteered. Flamis, my wife and a fire mage, also was going on this mission.

We met our employer, a tall thin aesthetic gentleman who had obviously not been out in the sun very much however we had been assured that he wasn't a vampire. He was Baron Arrackstrek, from a plane called Magrathea.. He had bought a map and title to a piece of land on which was a church, probably an abbey, and told us that it was infested and he wanted to tax the inhabitants, including back taxes. We ascertained, from his description, that the inhabitants were church knights from the Order of Heironeous, especially once he described their symbol, a silver lightning bolt.

The party that I was a part of were:

Glynn - elven air mage

Isil Eth - tall female elven mind mage who had a noble background

Methos - a beginning shadow celestial mage

Killaramdram (Drum) - Nonmage warrior giant.

Flamis - human female fire mage

Thorn - human female nonmage warrior.

Basalic (myself) - Earth mage and warrior.

After some discussion, Isil Eth became the party leader, Glynn the military scientist, and I volunteered to be the party scribe as no one else wanted the job.

'And if something goes wrong we blame it on the nob' - Thorn

We weren't sure that interfering with a bunch of Heironeous paladins was something that would serve the cause of Good, especially since both Drum and I had encountered them before and admired their philosophy and code of honour. So, after the meeting concluded, I arranged for an astrology ready and obtained a rather reassuring answer. I guess we'll see how it goes. I was also rather suspicious of our employer as I was very sure there were things that he was not telling us.

I also did some shopping for supplies, including a Guild Lesser, a Guild Greater, a collection of Healing potions, Restoratives and even some Holy Water. I later discovered that I had been overcharged for the latter as the person who sold it to me was not the reputable seller he had claimed to be. I'll know better next time.

2<sup>nd</sup> Meadow 801WK

Next morning, 10am, we assembled outside the Guild Hall. Isil Eth told us she had discovered a dead creature by her bed that morning. It had been identified as a Cerebral Parasite. They lived in the Ethereal Plane and fed on mental activity, preferring Mind Mages as a delicacy. Somehow they had come over from Greyhawk.

We headed for Dead End Alley. Our employer had told us that he had received instructions from a local mage, Alkon, of what to do to get here and back. When we got there, jade bracelets appeared on our arms and we discovered that a large baton, a larger version of the ones retrieved from the drow, was standing there, courtesy of Sabrina. The instructions were to walk widdershins around it seven times but, when we tried to do that, the bracelets began to

increasingly irritate our skin. Plus we found it difficult to get near the pillar. It flashed when we tried and there was an answering flash of light from the end of Dead End Alley where the Greyhawk portal was. From what we could tell, there was some sort of Forbiddance emanating from it. Flamis used her DA question in an attempt to determine what College it was a strange word leapt into her mind that she could not tell us.

So we went to see the Guild Namers. They should have divinated it and have a better idea what was going on. From them, it was discovered that there was a drow curse on it to stop the elves from using it. Plus the Namer who knew what College it was had forgotten a short time ago. Apparently only one person could know the Word at the time. So we arranged for illusionary auras to be put on the elves in order to hide their elvish nature.

Upon arrival it was decided to try the portal one at a time, leaving the elves to last. Drum was first. He went round it widdershins seven times and vanished in a flash of light. There was another simultaneous flash from the Greyhawk gate that I was watching. However, when the next person tried it, nothing happened. So it was back to the Namers and one came out to analyse the portal. The result was that it was completely drained and it would take a couple of centuries to recharge. It's destination plane also seemed forbidden.

Since the gate came from Greyhawk, the answers would probably be there and the one person that could tell us was Lorefakir. The other possibilities were the priests of Celestron or Fharlanghn. So we went through the Greyhawk portal and arrived at Lorefakir's residence. He wanted us to keep an eye open for Scratch. So what had that 'person' been up to this time?

If there were going to be any answers the most likely place was going to be in Lorefakir's library. Several other party members decided to enter but, after what happened to me last time and also that I saw no logic in me going in there, I stayed with Lorefakir and partook of his hospitality, including tea and crumpets with strawberry jam.

Glynn and Methos managed to discover that they could get to the plane we wanted through Dead End Alley - as long as the traveller wasn't tainted by shadowdragon essence. Apparently Drum had been - somehow. The plane had been devastated by the Dragon of Shadows a very long time ago when it was summoned to deal with something much worse. Nothing in particular was required to get through. Methos then followed a very intelligent line of enquiry and discovered how to fix the portal itself so we could use it. Well done that person. He then found his way to an area dedicated to Thoth, the god of knowledge and found a cloak draped on an altar. A voice welcomed him as 'the Son of Nutt' so he tried the cloak on and discovered he now had an unnaturally long shadow.

While this was going on Isil Eth discovered an ugly truth and returned with a maple leaf on her cloak while Flamis found an alchemical lab with various substances bubbling away in beakers. Notwithstanding everything I had told her about what can happen in the library, she decided to play with it, using a spoon made of frozen fire. The stirring caused the spoon to sublimate and a whole lot of poisonous smoke filled the room. Flamis used a cleansing flame in an attempt to burn off the poison and turned herself into an ice statue.

Glynn was looking for the knowledge of binding air and found her, bringing her back to where we were. He then went back in to fetch the healing maat. This was used to restore Flamis to her normal self. Of course I dragged her off for a good talking to. She then discovered that her spells no longer looked like fire, more like ice even though her College was still fire.

All the priests of Celestron could tell us that the plane had been devastated by the Dragon of Shadows but they weren't sure on what exactly had happened. There was also a reference to something called Aleph. From the Priests of Heironeous we received one of their blessings, which would shake off the effects of the first Spec Grev. Flamis also obtained three of their vials of Holy Water, which were also effective against followers of Hextor.

We then returned to Seagate. Methos estimated that it would take him two days to fix the portal. Flamis got herself divinated to see what her spells would now do.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Meadow

Finally the portal was ready. We circled it widdershins and found ourselves in a grove of yew trees. I checked that we had indeed reached the correct plane then went in search of Drum. It didn't take us long to find him as he was camped near the grove. Nearby was a new road that had been built on the top of an old one. Drum told us that he had seen two caravans go by while he was here, both under heavily armed escort. Everyone travelled in groups and all of them were openly armed. There was an unusual amount of wildlife in the area. Glynn decided to talk to the local birdlife and discovered that the nearest city was 10 to 12 miles away. However we discovered that their idea of a mile was more like a league.

We headed off in that direction and soon reached a small village of about 200 people. Every house was butted against another. Much of the land near the village was cultivated but there were a lot of overgrown areas where the land had gone back to the wild.

When we approached the village, we were met by a few of the locals. We then stopped at the inn for breakfast before visiting the local wisewoman. She told us that the main city was about two days travel away while it was five days to the old capital.

Four hours later we reached another village which held 500 people and had an earth moat around it. The gate was located in the wall and had two stone pillars each side of it. The guard there wanted to know where we were. We tried to explain but he then pointed us to the guardhouse. Inside was a fine detailed accurate map of the area. Isil Eth told him that we were from Seagate, located somewhere off the map along the coast. From what he was saying, this seemed to be a rather progressive society, trying to rapidly recover from the devastation and attempting to ensure it didn't happen again. Everyone takes part, including compulsory military service.

At the next village we spent the night, during which a couple of carrier pigeons were spotted heading towards the city.

#### 6<sup>th</sup> Meadow

Upon reaching the next village we discovered that the gates were closed and two people were waiting for us. One was a blue robed E&E while the other was in dwarven made armour. The E&E gave us an invitation to visit the magicians guild, known as the Arcane Order of Exposition, in the city before vanishing - literally. We then continued on with the armoured person as an escort.

Another village was reached before nightfall and we could see the city, surrounded by 30' walls, in the distance. During the trip we discovered that the road had a magical aura that was based on iron magic..

## 7<sup>th</sup> Meadow

Finally reached the city and entered through the solid iron gates. The place was clean and there was little smell. All the citizens looked very healthy. Finally we reached the guild buildings and entered. There was a large statue of Immotin, goddess of magic and healing, in the hallway. Our guide told us that we were in the Hall of Revelation. Any question asked here had to be answered with the truth. Several of us wanted to ask our employer some very pointed questions.

We were introduced to the head of the Guild, Jaliff Arkan, who was also one of the city regents. He was a 6'2" human with grey/blonde hair. He suggested we talk to Calidicier, who was another regent as well as being in charge of the cartography and library.

So we started our research. The abandoned church was located some seventy miles north and east of the city. It was also revealed that our employer was actually a local gambler and drunkard, who had won the map and accompanying land claim off a group of adventurers. The claim was found to be legal and included a large abandoned abbey. The adventurer's hadn't physically checked it out but their E&E was convinced it was infested. The area around the abbey consisted of swamp. We suspected an undead infestation. Ebert Gins, the local head of the Church of Heironeous was contacted and they would check their records for more information.. Basically the adventurers had found the place a few years ago and registered a claim but had done nothing about it. For the claim to be maintained, the land would need to be occupied.

We also discovered that the Forbiddance on this plane also had another desirable side effect i.e. that there were less demons around the place. All mages needed to be registered with the Guild and, after some discussion, we did so. There were a few renegades though. One was Drake, who was a tall gaunt gray-haired renegade who had been a secret necromancer. He had disappeared nearly six years ago and there was a 10.000gp price on his head.

That brought up the subject of money. Silver was rather scarce here. One piece was worth 2gp and there was a large demand for silver, truesilver, and mithral. They needed as much as they could for rituals for controlling shapechangers. We were asked for what we had so I sold my mithral breastplate to Isil Eth for 25,000sp. I planned to donate some of the profit to the Church of Heironeous.

There was also a curse on flying on the place. Any unnatural flying, such as spells, would get attacked by everything in the air. Airmages with aerial affinity was the only exception.

Finally we headed out the North Gate in order to find the abbey. We met up with a guard patrol who told us that there were bears, boars, goblins and hobgoblins in the wilderness. There were no sign of undead. After a few hours the road petered out and was covered with grass. Occasionally we could detect it's aura in the gaps so we marked where it went for future explorers.

## 8<sup>th</sup> Meadow

A day later we reached an old menhir. Nearby, to the east, was an old city called Noonei. Methos had been here before and told us that the city was full of magical darkness and was full of undead. We managed to scry it with Flamis' crystal of vision. It was a large city that had been abandoned. There were heaps of debris in the streets and several buildings had been shattered. We even saw a short greenish scaly humanoid wielding a spear. A lizard man?

We continued following the road and estimated that it would take about two days to reach the abbey. It was exhausting work making our way through the undergrowth so Flamis tried summoning an elemental. What she got was a black flaming elemental which I determined came from the Para-Elemental Plane of Ash. When it touched a tree the tree shattered, sending shrapnel flying everywhere. However, when it touched the road, it vanished. We discovered that the road had the property of banishing summoned creatures.

Finally we stopped and camped in the forest. I was going to hunt rabbit for dinner but Isil Eth insisted that I summon them instead. So, against my better judgement and also against my belief that it is 'unsporting' I did so. That proved to be a mistake. What I got was not rabbit but a swarm of tiny lights. These tiny lights proved to be glowing tiny winged humanoid fey and they were attracted to metal like moth to a flame, especially my armour. There seemed no way to stop them committing suicide on my armour and I was fearful that I had done something to harm innocent beings, something that an honourable warrior should not do. In case it was me that they were being attracted to I hurriedly ditched my armour. Glynn had cast a flying spell on Thorn and was about to cast on the others when an angry boar dashed out of the forest. It missed me but spun around for another charge. Meanwhile a large raven flew in and attacked Thorn, injuring her badly. Flamis was casting her 'ice-skating' spell on people in case we decided to leave in a hurry.

A skirmish followed with more and more of those fey immolating themselves on any exposed metal. Also the forest itself was reacting badly, as if it was angry. Methos was snagged by a tree root but Drum was able to get him out. Finally Isil Eth was able to pacify the forest using empathy. The forest was basically angry at both Thorn and myself for using unnatural means.

The boar had been killed and the raven driven off. The area around the ground was littered with the barbecued corpses of those tiny fey which now looked like fried locusts. From their behaviour, Flamis concluded that they were not intelligent individuals but maybe part of a hive mind - like bees or ants.

For some strange reason, Isil Eth decided to eat some. They must have been addictive as she was soon eating them one straight after the other while the rest of us gathered them up for burial. She then said she could see a dark moon in the sky, a moon that none of us could see. She also said something about detecting the heart of the forest somewhere to the east. It seemed to be calling her and it felt evil. Obviously eating fried fey is not good for anyone.

#### 9<sup>th</sup> Meadow

We set off again. Isil Eth was hiding her eyes from the sun and complaining that the light was abrasive. She was also very hungry. So we checked her over with what divinatory abilities we had. The cause was 'eating the blood of innocents'. Her GTN was still elf (so much for my vampire theory) and the last magic to impact was 'Call of the Blood Tie'. Using healer skills didn't help so Isil Eth called upon the power of Hyperion. As she did, green faerie blood oozed out of her skin. Where it fell, plants sprouted.

We continued on, once Isil Eth had completed purifying herself. On a few occasions we had to ford streams as the old bridges were broken.

#### 10<sup>th</sup> Meadow

The road briefly left the forest and we found ourselves in an overgrown ex-cultivated area. There were orchids around so some of us went scrumping to supplement our supplies. Meanwhile

Glynn went for a recon flight. He reported that the forest ahead was greener and fog was persistent in some of the valleys.

#### 11<sup>th</sup> Meadow

By midmorning we were into a swampy area and by late afternoon we were passing freestanding water. The river was not far away. Flamis cast ice walking on all of us so we could get out of the swamp and onto the next ridge before nightfall.

#### 12<sup>th</sup> Meadow

Glynn and Isil Eth, as an eagle, were still flying point ahead. We reached the next ridge and Glynn reported that he believed he had seen the abbey. We decided to 'ice skate' to the area. Isil Eth was still getting a 'pull' to the Dark Heart of the forest and we were beginning to suspect that the abbey was either the Heart or contained it.

About five miles away we found a smashed milestone, completely non-magical. The road here was also no longer magical and had been for three miles further back. So we backed off to just where the magic ended and used Thorn's magical fortress to camp for the night.

At midnight, Isil Eth's crystal ball was used to scry the abbey. For some reason, the view was foggy, as if our scrying was being blocked. There was also a sense of malevolence. Glynn discovered that even the birds were afraid of the abbey. They felt there was something really unnatural there. They're probably right.

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I leant Thorn my eye cusps so she could see in the dark. A watch had been set up during the night. Drum had also set up some alarms but, for some reason, even though he could fit in the fortress, he decided to stay outside while the rest of us watched from inside. This may not have been wise as he was ambushed by three translucent creatures that came out of the dense fog and set about draining his life force. He had just enough time to call out 'Vampire' before being savagely set upon. Flamis woke everyone one else up and we tried vanquishing them with lightning bolts and ice-flame arrows. Drum collapsed just before I cast a Trollskin on him and the vampires retreated. When we went to investigate, we discovered they had taken Drum's head and most of his magical items. So we dragged the body inside and a preservation was placed on it.

#### 13<sup>th</sup> Meadow

It was two hours after dawn when the fog lifted. Glynn spoke to the wind and discovered there were 'dark winds' inside the abbey. There were also humanoid creatures that move in daylight. No other groups of buildings were nearby. Glynn and Isil Eth then flew to the broken milestone. There they discovered three fresh sets of footprints, presumably the vampires. So Glynn spoke to another breeze. It described the winds inside the abbey as 'black winds, cold winds, mostly cold winds'. There were also long thin things, i.e. snakes as well as things that can turn into winds. It also reported that there were three vampires that patrolled the road at night.

The next marker further on was also broken and the protection on the road resumed a bit after that. They could see Heliopolis, or what was left of it. The city was in ruins and partially overgrown. There were a few standing columns and trees were growing in what was left of the buildings. Wild sheep roamed the area. They also discovered a spur road going to a dirt mound, a quarter of a mile from the abbey. Further east of Heliopolis, the ground was firmer.

The rest of us ice skated to the mound to join them. The mound was partially surrounded by several skulls stuck onto poles and more lined the trail from the abbey, so, in case they marked wards, Isil Eth led us around them. When we got there we quickly deduced that this mound was not a burial mound, as first thought, but was foundation for future fortifications. There was no sign of any magic on the mound or on the skulls and the area around them. Flamis shot a skull and discovered nothing inside.

From here, we had a better view of the abbey, There was a plundered graveyard nearby as well as a cultivated area. There were some holes in the walls but repair work had been done. None of the repairs looked like they were done more than about five years ago. Also the area was surrounded with tainted mana, similar to the Dark Circle, but weaker.

We really needed to find out more of what was inside before we tried dealing to it. A frontal assault could be suicidal. So Methos volunteered to be transformed into a giant anaconda and he would go through the swamp and into the abbey through one of the holes. As he did so, we snuck off, under cover, to the area of the road nearest the main entrance. When we got there we noticed more of those fey nailed to the door, still alive. As far as we can tell there were quite a few creatures in there. The party wanted to blast spells at them to attract their attention but then Isil Eth's lucky leaf, that she had obtained in Lorefakir's library, burst into flame. Clearly a sign that we were about to bite off much more than we could swallow.

Methos swam through the swamp water and into a hole in the abbey wall. There he found a room containing a candle and a book. He tried reading it and discovered it was highly necromantic. Fortunately he resisted the temptation to swallow it.

There were no doors into this room, only snake sized holes. Just then, a large iridescent purple snake with a human head, subsequently identified as a naga, slithered in and told Methos to leave in no uncertain terms. Methos did so and slipped into the courtyard. There were several shacks built up against the wall. Some black robed humans, about 15 to 20, were wandering about, discussing the art of necromancy. A few other people were armed and armoured. They were engaged in keeping the 50 to 60 human slaves in line. The slaves were poorly dressed, dirty, and chained up. Some were lined up on the battlements, chained 30ft apart.. A large pit was nearby where bodies were being dumped and off to the side was a tarpaulined area. Methos had a look under it and discovered 150 odd zombie undead.

There was an abnormal number of snakes slithering around and Methos felt there was some force nudging them to stay. He slipped around to the other side of the courtyard and discovered an open area where corpses were opened up and put on display. The entrance to the main building was guarded and there was a cold wind blowing out of the door. For some reason the air was unnaturally thick and grainy. He also saw some very thin looking elves, with long teeth, staying in the shadows. None of them were wearing iron and, for some reason, they reminded him of Isil Eth. The front of the abbey had three symbols carved on it. One was two arrows crossed and held by a hand, the symbol of Hextor. The other two couldn't be identified at this stage. He also saw Drum's head on a pole nearby.

Around the corner was an area for parking carts and a pile of cut stone was nearby. The abbey building itself was solidly built so Methos slipped down a nearby privy, went through the sewers and came up in another privy. During his travels he discovered a 10' by 10' pit just inside the main gate and a closed postern door around the back.

Time was slipping by so Methos slithered over to the head and, with some effort, managed to swallow it. Something discharged but didn't affect him. He then slid up to the battlements and attempted to break the chain holding one of the 'guards' to the wall. Naturally the slave was terrified thinking he was about to become lunch for this giant anaconda. He was even more terrified when the chain broke and Methos started swallowing him feet first. Down below, the black clad necromancers thought it was the funniest thing that they had seen. Bets started being laid on the outcome.

Methos swallowed the slave up to his chest then rolled over the battlements. The slave grabbed a nearby stick and attacked back, taking out an eye. So Methos went into the swamp and rendered the ex-slave unconscious before regurgitating him and the head then waiting for the shapechange to wear off. Fortunately Drum's soulgem was still embedded in the head.

Once Methos rejoined us we retreated back to the fortress. The ex-slave was very suspicious of us, especially of Isil Eth, even after I plied him with much of my alcohol supply. Eventually he told us that he came from a village about 100 miles east of here which had began losing people 2 to 3 years ago. The necromancers are lead by a man, Drake, and an unidentified woman who is even tougher. The place is being used as a Black Academy. The wind started six months ago after some sacrifices were made. He had counted at least three naga and all the snakes wandering about were non-poisonous. The poisonous ones were kept in a special area and milked for venoms. The head guard is really sadistic and the half dozen plate armoured guards are highly skilled and can grow extra arms. Ceremonies are held in the main abbey building and the stone is retrieved from Heliopolis. Anyone wandering in the area is knocked off by the vampires and there had been recent talk of a fourth rogue vampire in the area.

#### 17<sup>th</sup> Meadow

After four days of uneventful travel we arrived back at the city and made our report to the Guild and the head priest of Heironeous. Drum was resurrected but there wasn't much they could do for Methos's eye. The church was very keen to raise a crusade and wanted us to go ahead and take out the leaders while they cleaned the place out. So we stocked up on Necromantic Counter potions. The second symbol on the abbey was the name of a mage, Ackorath, who was supposed to be dead while the third seemed to be something to do with a devourer.

The best way we could figure to sneak in was to do what Methos did, shapeshift and get in via the sewer. So we stocked up on shapeshift potions as well. Methos was hypnotised to forget about the book as it was identified as a book of Vile Darkness, an extremely evil work. Meanwhile I trained with the Heironeous paladins. All in all, we spent a couple of weeks getting ready.

.4.

Flamis had been doing some research and discovered that the third symbol, a set of fangs about to bite, was the holy symbol of Beltar, the lesser goddess of malice, caves, and pits. One of her forms is a marilith demon, probably why this goddess is associated with snake cults. Flamis also discovered that this deity hates most everything, leaving her to conclude that Beltar was also the goddess of PMT.

Glynn was taught the Whispering Wind spell so we had a means of communication and we had a set of black robes made so we could disguise ourselves as necromantic students. I took some time out from weapons practise and learnt the necromantic counterspell, just in case Isil Eth also

learnt the counterspell. During this time the paladins departed the city either singly or in small groups, heading out in various directions as not to arouse suspicion.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Heat

Finally arrived back outside the abbey, at the dirt mound, in the early morning. There, Isil Eth transformed us into snakes and we slithered into the sewer line and followed Methos up and into the privy he had earlier been to. Isil Eth then turned him back into a human so he could have a quick look about.

Here was a row of privies and, past the curtains, as a room. Two black robed students, carrying what appeared to be anatomy folios, were seated at a bench. One of them had a bone wand in a leather wand holster strapped to his belt.

There were two archways leading into the same hall, where an older person was giving a lecture to a group of students on anatomy. Several dissected specimens, some of which were still alive, were on the benches in front of the students. Other exits led from the hallway. Methos attempted to make his way through but he caught the attention and the ire of the teacher and given a very stern warning that if he continued to disrupt the class he would be the next test subject. So Methos retreated back to the privy where Isil Eth turned him back into a snake.

Drum slithered off to inspect the rest of the sewer line we were in and hopefully find a way into the main abbey building. One direction looked very promising so he went down there. Fairly soon we had concluded he had gone right under that building and into the hill it was set into.

The line Drum was in had two side branches but he went up to the end where it stopped and opened up into a small chamber. Four openings were above which he labelled A, B, C and D.

He checked out B first. This privy had a rosewood lid and the room it was attached to was very well appointed. Throw rugs were all over the floor. A door was locked with a double-pin mechanism which could be easily opened from this side but required a key on the other. 'A' was less well appointed but had a martial theme with weapons along the wall. There was also a bed in here which was empty. 'D' was another well appointed room and there was a whitethorn hedge in a side room. Flamis remembered that whitethorn is used to block vampires. A candle in the room gave off a bluish sheen and a cockatrice head with glass eyes was mounted above the main, and locked, door. Drum didn't slither up 'C' as there was an unpleasant metallic odour coming from that room. He went back a short time later and discovered the room was a necromantic laboratory. There was a copious quantity of dried blood splattered all over the place, a flesh golem was standing in one corner and a semi-dissected orc was on one of the tables. Something else was being assembled on another. A stack of old tomes were lined up along a bench. The privy was more like a carnal hole for disposing of unwanted material.

He also checked out the two side branches and found a similar set of four privies at the end of each branch. The rooms were all similar and contained necromantic equipment. We concluded that the college heads occupied the rooms at the end while the department heads were the quarters on each side.

We decided to slide over and enter the weapon master's room (A). There were two teeth located near the door and their aura told me that they would change into skeletal warriors and attack anyone who came through the door unauthorised. I also saw the symbol of Hextor I was expecting to find here in a facing plate mounted on the wall.

The armour also confirmed that as there was accommodation for extra pairs of arms. One set of plate mail was made from what looked like iron, but was formally living, while the other was made from shaped bone. The bone armour had a magical property that it gave the wearer an exoskeleton. They were built for a rather large person and they were also self mobile so they could be summoned on command and possibly fight for the wearer independently.

The weapons looked extremely nasty with extra serrations, layers of rust, and a blood burning curse imbued within. A necrosis ward was in the facing plate and there was also a large, locked, wooden locker on the floor. Probably contained more weapons.

.5.

The padlocked chest was consecrated to Hextor so we decided to leave it alone for now. Same with the armour although some of us wanted to attempt to render them useless. Instead it was decided to carefully exit the room.

On the other side was a panelled hall. 20 feet further down was another door then the hall turned a corner. At the other end the hallway terminated in a blank wall. The door to the room we had just emerged from had a reddish tinge with silvery runes engraved on it. The other one also had silvery runes. Both sets of runes had some sort of non-specific exclusion magic on it. To keep out uninvited students?

We cautiously peeked around the corner and saw a multi armed bone construction, heavily armed and looking extremely lethal. Taking it on directly could be suicidal so we checked the dead end section in case there was a secret door. There was one but there was a ward using magic from the Devouring College.

Glynn tried to bypass the ward by going gaseous and slipping through a tiny gap. He was back within seconds but when he coalesced he was only half his original dimensions. He had been hit by devouring magic.

So we used a Tunnelling spell to punch a hole in the wall. On the other side was a more natural looking tunnel. Built inside the wall was a whitethorn hedge. When we stepped through, we could feel a cold wind, with an evil tinge, blowing up the tunnel. So we carefully progressed onwards with the wind in our faces, deeper into the hill against which the abbey had been built.

A bit further on, a whitethorn hedge had been growing across the corridor. Now there was a large hole in it, bits of whitethorn were scattered about and much of the hedge was frozen solid. I was wanting to make stakes out of the remains of the plant but the vines were too pliant and flexible.

Ahead were three arches built into the side of the tunnel. Behind each arch was a stone bier which was covered in baroque carvings. Footprints went in and out of each arch. Isil Eth detected a place of power in that direction as well. Preservation magic was on each arch as well as residues on each bier. I tried putting a Ring of Stone around a bier but nothing happened.

It was obvious that this was where the three vampires spent the day. We needed to confine their movements while we took them out, one at a time, so I put up Walls to block the corridor in both directions and two of the arches.

We entered the remaining arch and prepared to assault the occupant within. However, as Isil Eth

stepped through she vanished. She found herself in a bright sunny meadow with the bier and she could see the occupant inside, an elvish looking man. She then cast her sunlight and reappeared with the rest of us. The sunlight, followed by Isil Eth's strike, finished it off but there were sounds from the other chambers of heavy bier lids being thrown off and shattering on the ground, followed by the walls between the chambers breaking down. Soon we were being showered by flying masonry.

We clustered in Isil Eth's light as we were peppered by flying rocks and a thick fog rose up around us. Fortunately Drum's giant tower shield protected us from most of the debris. Just then, there was a scream from Thorn as her arm was ripped off. Methos was able to use an increase gravity spell to hold down most of the rocks while Glynn fired a lightning bolt back. Unfortunately my Trollskin attempt on Thorn failed.

A metal dart flew straight at Isil Eth but Drum was able to deflect it. As it hit the shield, it started to burn through it. Drum knocked it away. Another dart flew in and Drum caught it. The second trollskin effort also failed.

The vampire went gaseous but that didn't protect it from Glynn as he airblasted it, scattering it's substance. Both vampires went solid. So Drum charged in and hit one and it aged an enormous amount. Methos was blasted by rubble and hurled against the wall while Thorn collapsed after being hit. Now we had two party members near death. Isil Eth managed to get a trollskin on to Thorn but I still wasn't having any luck casting on Methos. Flamis meanwhile was shooting the vampires with shockbolts after discovering her modified dragonflames had the opposite effect than the one she desired.

Drum managed to take out the second vampire. We were again peppered by flying rocks and I had to take a twenty point healing potion. Drum smacked the last vampire and nearly got hit by another heart seeking dart.

Finally Glynn bravely charged the final vampire and killed it. Meanwhile I attempted another trollskin on Methos but something went horribly wrong. Methos died and his soul took a lurch towards vampirism, due to this being a place of power to such, and started to move towards the vampires source of power, probably a portal, where he would become a vampire. Fortunately Isil Eth was able to tempt Methos to come to her, rather than the vampires (she claimed to use a device but we know her reputation), and use a Restore Life potion - which was just as well as otherwise we could have lost Methos for good. Oh well, if I hadn't failed several times in a row she couldn't have look so smug, nor practised her look of utter contempt on me (it worked by the way Isil Eth). I shall have to find a way to restore my honour later.

.6.

After everyone healed up, we heard noises outside, mostly consisting of large bangs and screams. Was the crusade attacking? There was something banging on the Wall behind us so I reinforced it with another Wall before dropping the one ahead of us.

We progressed a bit further on then the wind suddenly died just as we heard a loud bang. Soon we encountered a large iron door blocking the way ahead. It didn't take us long to ascertain that the chamber ahead was surrounded by Bound Earth so we couldn't Tunnel though, at least by magic. Isil Eth tried to get through the door by transmogrifying it but encountered a devouring ward which ate the spell. So Drum decided to tunnel through manually. It didn't take long to

expose and remove the Bound Earth blocks. Behind those was packed earth permeated with a red material. An attempt to put a Tunnelling through it resulted in the mana being drained away. Finally I recognised the stuff as a ferrite ore.

So we knocked a hole right through it. Cold air blew out of the hole. The chamber was bare except for a stone trilithon in the middle from which the cold wind was emanating from.. Two doors led into the room, both with a silver frame on the inside. The silver frame on the door on this side was glowing, indicating active magic. Three sets of footprints led from the other door to the trilithon. Obviously the college heads had done a runner.

The tunnel behind us was blocked with more Walls before we entered the chamber and examined the trilithon. The destination plane was called Forever and it was a two way portal. There were no special requirements to use it. Isil Eth used a Limited Precog and discovered that the other side of the portal was a large room, lined with tapestries. An exit led from this room.

There was a devouring ward on the other door but it wasn't active so I took a chance and opened the door while Flamis put a ring of dark fire around the portal. The corridor on the other side curved around and paralleled the first one, back towards the abbey. A short while later, we encountered a pit across the floor. I put a Wall across but there seemed something odd about it so I tested it as I didn't want to risk anyone else. That would not be honourable. Unfortunately it proved to be non-substantial Wall and I fell right through it and into the pit below.

I was brought up and healed up to the best of the party's ability. That still left me with a shattered pelvis so I was strapped to Drum's back and the party continued on.

A short while later, they had reached the room where the cockatrice was. As they entered, it started to unfold itself and attacked. Glynn stepped forward to face it. Drum threw spears at it while the others did what they could. It didn't take long before everyone was petrified except Isil Eth and Glynn. Glynn did a massive chest wound to it while Isil Eth released a dragonflames. The result was a crispy, sliced cockatrice. Isil Eth was able to retrieve the tail feathers and used them to bring back Methos and myself. She was then able to get the comb and use it to bring everyone else back.

The room had been trashed and looted as if there had been a hurried departure. All the other rooms had also been looted. Where the bone construct had been was a small pile of dust.

We headed down the corridor and encountered an area where the air was cold and stiff. Probably bound air. So we used a couple of Tunnel spells to bypass it and discovered a glowing symbol in that area on the other side. We saw an acolyte being grabbed by something invisible, probably an air elemental.

It was possible to contact the Crusade using Glynn's Whispering Wind to tell them what had happened. We were told to lay low as something was about to happen in five minutes consisting of light and air. So we backed off behind the Bound Air and into a dark room. Five minutes later there was a very bright light on the other side of the door then it went dark. When we ventured out, we discovered that the air barrier was gone and all the undead had been destroyed.

When we got outside we could see one of the naga being destroyed by a golden thread. Another thread fell on the far wall. We raced for the temple. A light was shining on the altar block. Flamis poured Heironeous holy water on the altar block and it split. There was nothing inside.

Meanwhile Isil Eth started a consecration ritual.

While that was going on, the building started shaking and a large feathered serpent stuck its head through the roof. It was forty feet long with wings. The rest of us searched the area and discovered a priesthole. No priests though.

Finally Isil Eth completed the ritual, consecrating the area to the Orthodox Church of Purple. We met up with the Crusade and arranged for a team of diviners to analyse the portal. They discovered it has more than one destination and only takes people of a certain level or a group containing at least one person of high level. The red stuff was identified as Fuller's Earth and, as well as conducting mana, apparently some giants and dwarfs sniff it. The devouring magic consumes as well as taking all abilities. The other interesting note was that investments take a tiny amount of life force to produce.

It took a week for Thorn and I to be fixed up properly. During that time an astrology reading was cast to find out more about the Plane of Forever but it came back garbled.

.7.

It didn't take long for the Crusade to essentially cleanse the rest of the area, however there was still some important looting to be done, especially in the vampire area. The priests began to thoroughly cleanse the place by dismantling and exposing everything to the sunlight, while Thorn, Methos and I were being healed.

Documents found suggested that 5-6 years ago the necromancers had found the place. The cold wind had already been present and they were investigating it. The vampires had arrived on their own accord. Also the Bound Earth around the portal chamber was discovered to be in a skull shape. Divination on the portal showed that it was made by a person called Asperidos a long time ago, long before the temple was built.

The vampire dust was also divinated. The GTN was Sidhe and they became vampires by being buried here close to the Gate a very long time ago. However the gate is even more ancient. The vampires were bound to this land, but were not its guardians. The priests also told us that the temple had a demon bound into it, just a small one, but they released it.

During this time Isil Eth became more elf-like with pointed features, and a sensitivity to iron.

Flamis did a ritual and discovered the following. The plane of "Forever" does not appear to have other names, that rivalry exists between it and Beltar and that entropic magics work best there. Divinating the portal shows the sigil of Forever to be rams horns.

Glynn returned to Seagate to see a sage he knew to find out more about "Forever" and found that a village was being established around the gate to Alusia. The sage can't find anything about the plane but suggested that Glynn went to a place called Sigil, otherwise known as 'The City of Doors'.

### 8<sup>th</sup> Heat

Instead we went to talk to the forest guardian where Isil Eth told it how the vampires were put to rest. She received a vision of the ancient past, of the forest before the swamp. In it she saw an elf-like human, who was a powerful mage, building, then killing himself as part of a ritual, which

created the Bound Earth walls around the focus of evil.

Some of us wanted to immediately go through the portal but it was decided instead to investigate the ruined city called Heliopolis. Isil Eth and Glynn flew ahead while the rest of us skated. Heliopolis is located on the far side of a range of dry hills, on a river. So, after a while it became too dry to skate. Meanwhile Isil Eth and Glynn flew on.

As they got closer, Isil Eth and Glynn were having more trouble flying than usual. From what they could see, Heliopolis was full of monumental architecture which suggested that it had been an important place. There wasn't as much dust or growth as would have been expected. Since we couldn't all get there in the day, we decided to turn back.

When we returned, we discovered that the priests had come to the conclusion that we weren't going to use the portal. So they had deactivated it by removing the lintel.

### 9<sup>th</sup> Heat

So we set out to investigate Heliopolis more closely. Flamis tried to map the ruins using her crystal ball but when she moved the point of view too close to the ground, the entire view went pitch black. Meanwhile Glynn spoke to the local winds. According to them everything was normal.

Flamis performed a ritual of Flame Sight, using the ashes from our campfire, and sensed the presence of warm ashes in two locations near this side of the city. All she could see were two sunlight bright lights in the city. About midnight, Isil Eth and Drum saw two very bright lights waving around outside the walls but only lasting about five minutes. They were unable to scry them.

### 10<sup>th</sup> Heat

Next day we walked to the city. The road has the standard protection magic which was last invoked a thousand years ago. Just outside we found signs of a recent battle. There were ogre-like prints and the remains of well made cross-bow quarrels made of cedarwood with steel heads. The heads consisted of bodkins, not barbs. From the way they were embedded in the ground, they would have been fired from the city walls. Could the city have been attacked by gnolls?

So we looked for a defensible position inside the city. Isil Eth cast an ESP and discovered the ambient background thoughts were quiet, although they're still all there. It was easier for her to concentrate. Glynn, Drum and I recognised this effect as akin to the effects of the Light of Truth.

We entered the city, initially passing through a residential area consisting of two or three story buildings. Eventually we found a small plaza. Here Thorn set up her fortress and we spent an uneventful night inside it.

.8.

### 11<sup>th</sup> Heat

In the morning it was decided to make first contact with the inhabitants. Isil Eth cast a telepathy and discovered that her range had increased. It took five hours of clambering over rubble before we reached the centre of the city. Fallen doric columns littered the area and there were several footpaths leading around the various piles. One of the buildings here was a temple and we detected a magical aura inside, one of solar guardianship, protecting against decay. So we stopped here for lunch and Isil Eth unfurled her banner. On it was the picture of a glowing tree.

Flamis could hear the sound of running water so she and I went to have a quick look. One path led to an old fountain, located in a smaller plaza, which was still working. So we filled up the water bottles and headed back. Only one path lead into the fountain plaza.

So, after lunch, the entire party followed another well worn path from the main plaza. Shortly we reached another cleared area. Inside was a settlement enclosed by a thirty foot high wall, made from the surrounding ruins. Each side of the wall was 240 feet long and, as we watched, we saw movement on top of it.

Methos called out a greeting and, after a short wait, the gate opened and two orcs, a dwarf, and a human arrived. Isil Eth stepped forward to meet them. They were rather distrustful of our motives and initially wanted us to go away but, with the help of a wineskin full of tasty wine, Isil Eth finally convinced them to let us in. One condition of that was that we had to accept some stones that were covered in engraved runes and we had to have at least one each. I recognised the rock as being haematite and I couldn't detect any magic on them. We were told that they would help us find our way around their city. Once we accepted them we were let in.

It was decided that we should see the Council of Elders. Somewhere about then we discovered that the stones were actually loadstones. They had the effect of slowing our movements, nullifying most of our magic and generally causing the effect as if we were carrying a very heavy cold iron load. Also we couldn't get rid of them.

The council consisted of an orc, two humans, and an elf. The dwarf representative (who was of the College of Forge Magic) turned up a bit later. They told us that they were descendants of the original inhabitants, from the time before the gods went to war and destroyed the place but something about that story didn't ring true. We later ascertained they had moved into the area in the recent past. Many of their settlements were to the east of here. Isil Eth tried to tell them that changes were coming but they didn't seem to care. They had been attacked from forces outside and, a few years ago, some black robed people had been among the attackers.

They still didn't trust us as all their previous contacts with the outside had been hostile. To earn their trust they wanted us to go to an old temple (the one near the large plaza) and touch the sun disk there. If it didn't affect us we were probably friendly. When they told us that the temple was sanctified to Pelor, we figured that it would be a piece of cake. Also, once that was done (so they said) the effects of the loadstone would drop off.

So, in the company of the orc representative, we went to the temple. Once inside, the effects of the loadstone disappeared. The sun disk had fallen off the mount that was affixed to the back wall and, in front of that was three altars, all marked with symbols of Pelor.

We headed towards the back of the building. Suddenly it got incredibly bright and we could make out something moving in the glare. It was a Lumen Hydra which had the power of dazzlement and charm. Most of us were affected by it's magic but those that weren't affected were able to defend themselves. Also once we were attacked, that broke the charm.

Basically a Lumen Hydra looked like a normal hydra but it's entire body was covered in highly reflective crystal shards which emitted a dazzling multicoloured light. Each head had a mouth but there was also a central orifice in the centre of the body. It was a light based creature and exposure to light sources only served to strengthen it. This included the Light of Truth and Reason. When I realised that, I quickly changed weapons.

This species fed on energy, especially through the central orifice. Once that got the hydra's victim, they were drained of all energy and the husk consumed. Basically an irresurrectable death. As with normal hydras, chopping a head off caused two more to grow in its place. The hydra would use the heads to defend the body against attacks which meant slashing weapons were also not much use. Anything that caused a head to drop off, such as freezing cold (as Flamis discovered with her 'blackfire' variant) would do this. However, Glynn used cockatrice feathers against the heads and the hydra was forced to break them off to stop the petrification from spreading. This did not cause heads to grow back, as the hydra is a creature of the earth. The hydra could also sacrifice heads by moving damage inflicted on the body to the head and causing the head to die. This also did not result in two new heads.

Another tactic that proved effective was Isil Eth using Control Animal spells to control a head and forcing it down the monster's main orifice which resulted in the destruction of the head. Here I learnt a valuable lesson. Such spells were available to my College but I had not previously learnt or ranked them as I considered them to be 'animal cruelty'. However, as Thorn pointed out later, that if ethics, or ideals, get in the way of serving the greater good then they are a liability. Better to do what is distasteful in order to do what is right than to do nothing and not prevent harm. So it looks like I'll learn the binding/controlling spells when I get back.

Methos was able to use a Cloak of Darkness to do harm to it while Drum jumped on the creature's back and proceeded to hack holes in it. Flamis used her 'umbratechnics' to great effect then discovered that she had regained her original pyrotechnics spell as well. So she ended up with both variations. Meanwhile I started using Tunnelling spells to tunnel out trenches underneath it causing it to drop into the ground.

Finally Methos snuffed out the last head with his cloak causing the body to die. The dazzling light immediately vanished. Before the first 'trench' dissipated, the tail was chopped up and the entire body thrown into the trench where it finally became one with the ground. Bits of gem like glass, and a few heads, were scattered around much of which was gathered up in treasure.

The orc, who had been taking notes throughout all of this, told us we had passed the test. We weren't very pleased with him as it was obvious they had lied to us and used us to solve their own problems. All they had to do was to be honest with us. They had one priest of Pelor, who had seen the necromancers before, but they hadn't been able to use the temple because of the hydra.

He then told us that the second test was to take out two harpies that were nesting in a nearby 40ft high tower. Finally, after some discussion, we agreed to do it.

.9.

Isil Eth - "Lets come up with a plan, instead of winging it" (while discussing what to do about the harpies)

The orc then tried to run off but Drum was able to catch him and bring him back. With an extremely worried orc in tow we then headed to the city and called for the Council. The elf, clad in half plate, emerged and tried to take the orc away but we stopped that. After some negotiation, as we wanted the loadstones removed, we returned to the temple, with a hesitant elf as they wanted to verify our story. However, after we got there, the elf had a quick look then just as quickly did a runner.

We determined that the loadstones were affecting us with a Greater Curse with an effective MA of 32. Isil Eth was contemplating her chances of removing it when a mob of villagers showed up, led by the Council. Initially we thought they were hostile but the dwarf told us that they had rethought the situation and had decided to accept us as friends. As a show of good faith, he removed the loadstones.

They showed us the tower where the harpies were and told us that they believed that there were three of them. We suspected more. They also told us that the city walls cause entities with hostile intent to be lit up so they could be more easily targeted.

That evening we set a watch on the harpy's tower. Drum noticed four distinct harpies which seemed to operate in pairs. So, later that night, after all the harpies had returned to their nest, Glynn, Isil Eth, and I headed towards the tower. One side of it was more broken than the other and I figured that one good earthquake would bring it down. However I didn't have that spell so, with Isil Eth's permission, I used a Tunnelling spell to take out part of the base. The tower immediately collapsed. Isil Eth detected lots of minds inside suddenly switch off. One harpy managed to take off but Drum shot it down.

### 12<sup>th</sup> Heat

We spent the day searching the tower but the only piece of treasure we found was a piece of jewellery that Flamis spotted. By late afternoon we were back at the temple and it wasn't long before a stout, stern looking woman arrived, wearing an electrum symbol of Pelor. She reminded me of my mother. She introduced herself as Flora and invited us for a banquet in the village.

So we did, and were intermingled with the council members at the high table. As the night progressed the party got very interesting. The council members were very interested on what was outside as they had no contact, besides what had been attacking them. Flamis and the dwarven smith decided to have a drunken weapons competition.

### 13<sup>th</sup> Heat

Next morning, I traded a healing potion for one of the smith's highly crafted battleaxes before we accompanied Flora back to the temple of Pelor. She showed us a healing area under the building which contained a book made out of burnished gold. She became more friendly after Isil Eth turned some of the pages. On it's cover was the symbol of a blue flame, the guardian of the city.

Basically to solve both Isil Eth's and Glynn's current problems, they would need to find the temple of Corellon Larethian, the God of Elves. Flamis needed to find the temple of Joramy and she suggested that I go to the temple of Beery. Flora told us that the other villages she goes around are located in two valleys, east and north of here.

So we went temple hunting. Flora knew where the temple of Beery was but the other's problems were of a higher priority so we left that until later. Glynn flew up to do an aerial survey, looking for clues.

A bit later on Glynn and Isil Eth, who were checking out wooded areas in the city, discovered stones with the marks of elvish deities on it, including an arch with the symbol of Varda. They concluded they had found what they were looking for.

Meanwhile the rest of us were working our way through the piles of rubble looking for clues when we were ambushed by a bunch of ogres, humans, and orcs. A vicious fight eschewed and it wasn't long before we had severely dealt to them, although I received a rather bad wound. Glynn and Isil Eth heard the fracas and flew off to help. One human took a lightning bolt and a smoking pair of boots arced into the air and landed near where we were. Another fleeing human ran into a dust free area and, what appeared to be a blue shimmering wall zapped him into oblivion. An ogre and orc were captured but we let them go.

Afterwards we had a closer look at the area. It had some sort of spiritual aura tainted with white mana. The aura was soaked into the rock and, as far as we could tell, there was some sort of desire effect. Also it seemed older than the city.

So we went back to see Flora. She knew about it and was rather concerned as they weren't sure what it was. It certainly wasn't a temple.

We returned to Thorn's tower where we had been making camp these last few days. Flamis did her ritual and confirmed that was the location of Corellon's grove. She also obtained the location of Joramy's temple. As for that strange area, apparently someone old and very wise had lived there and their spirit still protected the city however it wasn't known whether anyone good aligned could safely enter that area.

#### 14<sup>th</sup> Heat

We went back to the dust free area, located near the centre of the city. It looked like it had been the base of a tower and the floor was made of slate. Isil Eth was the first person to go in. She reported she could feel the dark moon overhead. Apparently there are three moons, the red moon representing birth, the black representing death, and the white representing ascension. There also seemed to be some sort of waiting presence. Glynn used the Light of Truth to read a name on a block, a name he can't reveal. The rest of us made notes and drew copies of the symbols in case the scholars at Magrathea knew about them.

Once we had finished, Flamis led us to the area where the temple of Joramy was. It had completely collapsed and there was no sign of any consecration. She was adamant that she was going to get inside but I concluded it wasn't safe and, it may not be a viable temple anyway. Finally we convinced her to wait until we got back to Magrathea.

That night, Isil Eth and Glynn went to the grove. When they came back they both looked more elvish than before.. They didn't return until early the next morning.

#### 15<sup>th</sup> Heat.

Flamis went back to the site of the temple and tried a Flamesight ritual. Nothing happened. Afterwards we went to the Beory temple. It felt peaceful but that was about it. By now I wasn't sure that this was the right deity for me and I've never been a religious type person anyway, preferring to believe that a person makes their own destiny by their actions. I was getting the impressions that the Gods had decided to give up on me and their blessing, holy water, and consecrations weren't going to be any benefit to me what so ever. So be it. I couldn't even enter consecrated ground without ill effects. Basically I had no faith, at least not in higher powers.

#### 16<sup>th</sup> Heat

We started back to Magrathea the next morning with the dwarf from the council. Isil Eth and Glynn flew ahead while the rest of us made our way as fast as we could. Even with that it still

took us a while to get back.

### 25<sup>th</sup> Heat

Finally arrived back. During our travels, a portal had been set up between Magrathea and Heliopolis and a book had been excavated from under that ancient area. Flamis discovered that there was a small temple to Joramy in Magrathea but, after she explained her problem, they recommended that she go to the temple of Bleredd, the god of fire, earth, and smithing. There they told her that if she wanted her old College spells back, she should break her Rod of Fires. She refused as there was a chance she could get all her other old spells the same way Pyrogenesis had returned.

Meanwhile I had a chat to the Heironeous priest. He was giving me some very odd looks but was happy when I told him that Heironeous was one of the few deities I had a lot of respect for.

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We basically split up after that. Drum headed south to study combat skills at a monastery. The rest of us headed back up to Heliopolis. Once there, Isil Eth and Glynn went to explore their newfound elvishness while Flamis was determined to do something about that temple of Joramy. She fiddled with the ruins for a while but a priest showed up and asked her to leave it alone. He seemed rather distressed when he couldn't see me, just my shadow, so I had to beat a hasty retreat.

We then headed back to the portal along with Thorn. After leaving her in Seagate, Flamis wanted to visit Lorefakir again and ask him about her problem as she was not happy with being an 'ash' mage. Seemed too close to necromancy for her liking. Unfortunately, when we went through the portal, we got separated. I ended up in what appeared to be a deserted city, but it suddenly sprang into life when I stepped away from where I had appeared. DA-ing several passers by gave me several different planes of origin but, after talking to a few, I discovered this was Tanelorn... and it was a place that was devoid of the gods. They couldn't even act here. Free will and a form of anarchy ruled here. I was also told that this was a place that people like me sought for and I was extremely lucky to get here.

Well I may not have faith in the deities but I did have faith in Flamis looking for me. So I kept a watch on the area where I first turned up. Sure enough, sometime after nightfall, her and Lorefakir arrived and we managed to get back to Greyhawk. Maybe one day, I may come back here - but not yet.

There, Flamis was told that she needed to consult the 22 books of Fate in the library so we both went in there. Basically reading any one of the books caused an effect on the reader. Flamis drew well, managing to obtain three wishes. I also drew and gained some endurance but adversely affected my chances of resisting and casting Earth magics. Flamis used one of her wishes to partially negate that and the other two to shift the effects of her College from Ash through normal Fire and into Radiance.

She then wanted to consult with the local temple of Bleredd about my problem so I waited well outside while she went in. Unfortunately something must have gone very wrong as there was a flurry of activity inside and she was detained in there for some time. I went to seek aid from Lorefakir as I did not want to make things worse but discovered that he couldn't perceive me either now.

So I finally decided to attempt a quick raid, grab her, and get the both of us off this plane, never to return, but, on the way back, I was accosted by those Children of Yelram who perceived me as a threat to the city and themselves. Resistance was definitely futile and I didn't want to kill any of them as that would have made things much worse. I was feeling rather frustrated as all I wanted to do was to get Flamis and go away but they weren't listening.

So I was taken to their house, locked in a room completely surrounded in Cold Iron and questioned intently. They must have got Flamis as well at some point as I could hear her voice as she was also intently questioned. Basically they saw my 'talent' as a threat and wanted to keep both of us here forever for our own safety.

I was getting to the stage of allowing them to kill me, hoping that would alleviate my threat enough for them to allow Flamis to leave with my body back to Alusia, when Flamis managed to reach a concession. I was rendered unconscious and thrown through the portal. Flamis came through a bit later on.

So that was that. We hadn't been paid by our employer and I had been forsaken by the Powers of Light. That meant I had to be careful which other Guild members I associated with, as many of them are pacted to the Powers of Light, and also what adventures I go on. The only benefit I can see is that any priest who isn't affected is probably an evil priest that deserves smiting. I may be going on a quest of faith in the near future.

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