



# Tyrants of the Moonsea

An Adventurer's Journal  
with Maps (and Spoilers)

By

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For Loris and Clio  
&  
Anyone else who may find it of use

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## **1. General**

To my knowledge, there are not any complete walkthroughs for this game available on line. At least, I have not been able to find any, Lilura (an excellent RPG resource in more ways than I can describe here) did a walkthrough that is based on the first version of the game, which apparently ended after the Zhent attack on Elventree. The Neverwinter Nights Extended Edition, on which this journal is based, greatly expands and lengthens the game, taking it far beyond Elventree. I believe that as the NWN(EE) has been debugged and patched, many of the problems mentioned in other sources on line have been fixed in recent years. I have not noticed anything insuperable in this, my third (I think) time through.

As with the other walkthroughs I have done, this journal is to give Loris & Clio a leg up, if and when either may decide they want to play. It is based on my own experience with this module. I have changed it significantly from the first version, making it less cutesy and more descriptive.

There are three Annexes. The first is of the game's geography. (See "Maps" below.) A second lists the different quests in the order I did them, using for the most part the names given to them when they appear in your journal. The third lists the solutions to various puzzles or difficult to navigate situations that a player may encounter. Use it as a last resort: It is always more fun to figure these things out for one self.

### **Henchmen**

Three henchmen may be recruited early in the game. Two are in the Sword's Rest in Voonlar: Astar Graysteel, a Human Fighter and Eremuth Silverwand, a Half-Elven Wizard. Another, in the Boring Pig Tavern in the same town, is Lyressa, an (apparently Good) Undead Rogue.

Henchmen in this game do not die. They get taken down to one hit point (HP), lie down and stay there until a battle is won or lost. If the battle is won, they come back to life at their full current HP level. If the battle is lost, your character is dead and so probably doesn't care what happened to them.

There are some places that your henchmen will not or cannot venture with you, like the Locktower in Voonlar or past the gates when you finally enter Hillsfar in the first part of the game, or the Red Wizard Enclave in Mulmaster. So, in those places your character will be on his/her own.

Both Astar and Eremuth become unavailable to you (for different reasons) in Elventree, but if you want or need other henchmen, there is hope. There is a hint in Hillsfar's Temple District that Blizzard may become available at some point in the adventure. And Sharalyn can take the place of one the others in Elventree.

In Thentia, you can pick up Beirmoura, a talking sword. It will accompany you as a henchman and you can also wield it as a weapon in its own right. It is quite a powerful multi-enhanced weapon, but once you wield it, you lose it as a henchman.

## **Quests & Loot**

There are lots of quests and secondary quests. And experience points (XP). And gold pieces (GP). And Loot.

In the text, as footnotes or at Annex 2 (which is from the 2022 edition of this document), I have noted the things I considered most important or most useful. In any case, very often the exact loot or GP you can pick up at any location is a random pick from the game engine. So many of the items I recorded may be different for you.

It may not be possible to do all of the secondary quests that are built into this game. Some, for example, are available only to certain character classes (e.g., only to Wizards or Druids). One of these seems to be the dying shark on the ship moored near the Oxtip Tavern in Mulmaster. Also some areas in the game seem to be unreachable, e.g., the Northeast quadrant of Thentia, or the door behind the bar in Mulmaster and .

Bear in mind your ability to carry loot until you can unload it at the next available merchant. Going over your maximum limit slows you down and reduces your ability to fight. To make this more manageable, buy all the bags of holding you can afford every time you can. Put as much of your accumulated heavy armour and arms in them as you can, and then fill out the corners with smaller items. There are other *Magic Pouches* available that reduce weight by 20%, 40%, 60% or 80%, but I like the 100% *Bags of Holding*.

## **Levelling Up**

This game appears to want to start with a character at least at Level 13. If you start with a brand new character, you will find that as soon as you begin, you will be given 13 opportunities to level up. A nice start to the game, which gives you a lot of early control over your character's early development.

It also makes later levelling up quite a challenge after you have gone into the game. You have to kill a lot of monsters and complete a lot of quests to amass the 20,000+XP you need per new level. So make your character class, ability and feat choices carefully.

## **Maps**

At Section 3, I have done an overview map of the Moonsea so you can get a strategic overview. I have noted the principal map navigation areas with numbers and a legend and have taken the liberty of marking road and pathways in as near as I can make them out. (These are in yellow because it seemed to me to stand out better on the map.)

At Annex 1, I have catalogued the maps I made from screen shots of all the places that I found important in the game. These are, generally, in the order in which I played them (or which, in retrospect, I decided was the best sequence in which to play them).

Several one room or otherwise simple places have not been included for the reason that they are simple: You are not likely to get lost or be unable to figure out what to do in them.

I have annotated all the important places on each map with which an adventurer can have some interaction. Most are substantive, others only incidental. The numbers assigned to each reflect the order in which I found they were best played to get the maximum number of XP and the most useful or resalable loot and/or GP.

## **Playing the Game**

### **Exploration**

The game is pretty well linear in progression through to Elmwood. From there, however, you have a range of different destinations that can be taken in different order. The first time I played I went to Mulmaster, Thentia, Melvaunt, Zhentil Keep and Thar in that order. Doing that, I found it difficult to complete some of the quests and when I got down to the last battle of the main quest, I found the result unsatisfying.

My second time through, I did it in a slightly different order (Mulmaster, Melvaunt, Zhentil Keep and Thentia) and didn't try to do everything in each location, completing quests over a number of return visits to each. That permitted me to get farther in several of the quests (e.g., *Muragh's Magnificent Machine* and the *Big Game Hunt*) than I had the first time around.

### **Zhentil Keep Peculiarities**

There are a couple of peculiarities in the Ruins in Zhentil Keep's New City/Docklands area. First, movement from one section of the ruins to another appears to be completely random and can be very disorienting. You never get an overall picture of ruins on your map area, only the part you actually traverse after entering each section. I tried to map the whole area (Annex 1), but the sections do not mesh exactly. At least, I could not figure out how to do so before deciding not to waste any more time trying.

Second, no matter how many monsters you destroy (all ages of White and Red Dragon, Ogres and Giants, Invertebrates, Zhentil war parties out on training manoeuvres, etc.) you may eliminate during an exploration of one section, if you return to that section again, some or all may have regenerated. So, trying to clean out the Ruins area after getting the *Render's Head*, is a fool's errand. There, you will have lots of opportunities to amass loot and niggling XP (except for Ancient Dragons @ 120XP), but doing so will only delay your pursuing the rest of the adventure.

### **Character-restricted Quests**

I started the game the first two times as a good/lawful Half-Elven Rogue, moved to a Cleric and then to a Paladin. The third time, I imported the Rogue/Paladin I developed in *Darkness Over Daggerford*. I suspect that these choices of alignments and character category made some quests unavailable. For instance, I seem to remember that I should have been able to do something with Cassius, the familiar of the Druid merchant in Hillsfar, but that didn't happen on my third time through. There is a *Red Berry* in Cormanthor East for which I never found a use. In Zhentil keep, there are the *Jagged Rocks* which seem to be linked in some way to a shark carcass on a ship in Mulmaster. My character never was able to go past the general exchange

with the Stormmistress. It might have been different had I had been a Druid or some other class or alignment. Similarly, there is a sleepy cat in the Breakwater Inn in Melvaunt which I suspect might also reveal itself as something else, were I a different character.

### **Game Finale**

After the second time through successfully, I found the game ultimately unsatisfying. This is not because I failed to accomplish (I think) everything I could as a rogue/priest/paladin, but rather because the tales of Maganus and Eremuth do not reach a final conclusion. The end annal leaves those open to a further game or games. That is probably the way it has to go to provide some series continuity, but I like everything nicely tied up.



## **2. Walk-Through**

### **1. The Road to Voonlar**

The adventure began with my character standing beside a wagon watching a worker (Anders) trying to fix a broken wheel. The owner was a merchant called Madoc the Uncouth and my character hired to guard his caravan to the town of Voonlar. Not much happened other than Madoc telling me to get myself more properly outfitted for a fight, just in case. I went into the wagon and opened my chest to find a few healing potions and an *Healers Kit*+6.

Back outside, when I told Madoc I was ready, we were transported to just outside the gates of Voonlar.

### **2. Voonlar**

Arrived in Voonlar, Anders scarpered just as the wagon broke down again inside the town gates. Madoc was beside himself when a sleazy town guard wanted a bribe to help get his goods to the Shield Trading Company. Then the guy recognized him and promised to deliver the shipment intact. Madoc paid me off and suggested a drink in the Sword's Rest Inn so he could make another proposal of service.

I went to check out the Shield and met Halander Dane behind the counter. I engaged him in a bit of conversation and my trouble antennae activated when he let slip that there was something special about Madoc's shipment. Dane claimed to be a (non-Zhent) refugee from Zhentil Keep and to run the only place in town without Zhentil involvement. He gave me some info on the Town and its current ruler, one Bron. I gathered neither the town nor its boss was particularly salubrious, but he said it was at least better than Zhentil Keep.

I looked at his stock but nothing there struck me as any better than my kit, so I went over to the Inn to find Madoc and get that drink he promised. Inside, I spoke to the innkeeper and tried to get some information and rent a room, but had no luck. The place was full up, he claimed. Then I spotted Madoc in a corner and went to collect my drink.

### **Madoc's Mess**

No sooner had we begun talking but that Bron guy came over, aggressive as all get out. He accused Madoc of cheating on the Zhentarim and threatened to throw both of us in the clink. He was a chauvinist pig, though, and thought he saw an easy mark and challenged me to fight instead. Outside, he lasted about a minute before I got him down on his knees. Before I could land the final blow on him, he ran off with his tail between his legs.

Madoc thought he was off the hook, but a Zhent Mage who had been watching killed him with a Fireball. After that bit of drama, the Town Guards were about to try to arrest me when the village was invaded by Fiends, Vrocks, Slaads and other assorted monsters.

That took their minds off me for a little while. I fought enough of the monsters to quiet things down and to make them shy of me. But then the Zhents still alive also came after me. "So

much for gratitude”, I thought. After dealing with them, I followed a trail of footsteps in the snow that led me to the Temple of Bane.

Inside the temple were two guys dressed in black up at the altar, accompanied a couple of Green Slaads. One of guys, who wore an eye patch, seemed to be in charge. Before I could do or say anything, the head priest of the temple, a Zhent thug named Gormstadd, pushed me aside imperiously and tried to take on the invaders. He was unsuccessful, however. “Served the thug right”, I thought.

Before I knew it, however, the Guy with the eyepatch turned on me. He went into a barely comprehensible rant about the Order of the Crippled Fang and his hatred of the Zhentarim, then ordered his minions to deal with me summarily and took off.

That left me facing his right-hand man, Zacharus, and the Slaads. They tried to do as ordered, but I prevailed. When Zacharus went down, the Slaads disappeared and the whole attack on Voonlar seemed to die with him. That left me free to pick up loot from the dead bodies of priests, guards and Zhentarim that were strewn in the temple and outside everywhere.

I picked up a *Striker* Quarterstaff from Zacharus’s corpse and, from the numerous bodies of the dead priests inside and outside the temple, a bunch of *Morningstars*+1 and *Cure Critical Wounds* potions. The Town Guards carried *Masterwork Longswords* and *Shortbows*, as well as healing potions and a few GP. On Madoc’s body, there was a *Dagger*+3. On the Zhentarim were *Short Swords*+1 and a *Crossbow*+1. The Zhent mage who killed Madoc had a *Wand of Fire*.<sup>1</sup>

As I took a breather, a Half-elven woman came running up to me, introduced herself as Sharalyn Lockhart and let me know she was a Harper. She said she had some important things to discuss and asked me to meet her in her room at the Swords’ Meet Inn. I thought, “Uh Oh, not another Ariel. I had enough of her in Daggerford” But she seemed like a genuine good guy, so I agreed and she gave me a key to the upper floor, where the rooms were. If nothing else, that key potentially gave me a place to rest up and store stuff if necessary.<sup>2</sup>

Before going back to the Inn, I went to the Shield and sold off all of the stuff I had picked up. He still didn’t have anything I particularly needed, so I left and went back outside. On the way to the Inn, I noticed a door slightly ajar on a farm outbuilding and checked it out. Big mistake! Inside, at the far end of the building was a Beblith. It gave me a harder fight than anything I had faced in the town yet. But I survived, and then went on to the Inn.<sup>3</sup>

Before I got three steps inside the door, a tall grim looking sort approached. I was ready to go for my sword when he greeted me handsomely. It was he, apparently, who had killed the Vrock that had broken into the Inn. He was generous enough to give pat of the credit to a wizard

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<sup>1</sup> This begins the quest *The Order of the Crippled Fang*. The various monsters outside are worth 22XP each. Killing Zacharus earns 90XP.

<sup>2</sup> This begins the quest *The Dead of Winter*.

<sup>3</sup> Killing the Beblith earns 43XP and the cow hide if you check out the dead cow.

present there too, for his success. He introduced himself as Astar Graysteel, and was clearly a good fighter. He said he would be in the Inn for a while longer if I had need of a travelling companion. I thanked him and said I had a few things to do but might just take him up on that.

Then I made my way over to the stairs up to the rooms, where the wizard he had mentioned, one Eremuth Silverwind, was standing. As I went to go up, he approached me and thanked me, in a not quite sincere tone of voice, for leading the fight against the Fiends. He apologized and we spoke a bit. He intimated that he was adventuring in part because he was not on good terms with his father, a noble back in Waterdeep. He also offered to come along if I needed a travelling companion, but I declined, for the moment. I thought I should speak to Sharalyn before making any decisions on travelling companions.

## Helping the Hapless

Up on the second floor, looking around for Sharalyn, I saw an unprepossessing guy lurking around, talking to himself. He looked suspicious, but also harmless, so I went up to him and asked him what he was doing. He floundered a bit, but eventually, I got a story from him about his father being thrown in the lockup by Bron (and not very nice things happening to him). This fellow, Lashar Waters, was trying to work the courage up to try to make Bron's Deputy Grimswold, who was in one of the rooms, to help him get his father released. Or at least to steal the keys to the lockup and make a rescue try.

I could see the kid was not up to the job: He was about as intimidating as a Titmouse. So, I said I would try to get his father out.<sup>4</sup> After my first experience with him, I was pretty sure I could take care of Bron and whatever other thugs he had about. He showed me the Deputy's room and when I went in, Grimswold was dead drunk on the floor and, I was sure, would be dead to the world for the next day at least. So I opened his trunk and helped myself to his *Deputy Armour*, *Deputy Helm* and *Longsword*+2.

I also found a note to him from Bron, telling him he had taken away the deputy's key to the Lockup and the only way he would get back in would be to wear all his kit. So Lashar's idea of stealing the key was out. But I now had Grimswold's kit and I thought I could use it to get into the place. This seemed to me to be a tad more urgent than whatever Sharalyn might have had to say, so I decided to try the rescue before seeing her again. "What could possibly go wrong?" I thought to myself.

Off I went to find the Lockup and when I did, the door was barred to all. I put on Grimswold's helm and armour (keeping my own sword, just in case) and went up again. The deputy inside (Noric) let me in and, thinking I was Grimswold, told me that Deputy Dalzel was waiting for me in the armoury, up on the second floor and to get a move on.

Seeing as how I was able to move freely, I found where the dungeon was located, but it was locked tighter than a drum and I seemed to need a special key to pen it. None was in ready evidence, so I decided to go on upstairs to see what I could see. On the way, I passed a quiescent Battle Horror and in the hallway beyond it found a storeroom and got, out of a few barrels and

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<sup>4</sup> This begins the quest *Locktower Rescue*. Getting entry to the Lockup, either by stealth or by bribery, earns 500XP.

crates, some assorted small loot (potions, healing and trap kits and a few GP). In what was Bron's Office, I found his journal (which made it clear he was in deep with the Zhents) and a few other assorted bits and pieces.

Up on the second floor, there was another quiescent Battle Horror and Deputy Jeyner, who tried to chivvy me along to Dalzel. In the armoury, I rifled all of the weapon racks and a barrel. In them I picked up a *Halberd*+2, *Morningstar*+2 and a *Shortbow*+2, some *Arrows*+2, *Bolts*+2 and *Bullets*+2, as well as over 350GP and assorted other small loot.<sup>5</sup> When I finally turned to Dalzel, it was clear he was a brute of a gaoler and he invited me to go down to the dungeon with him and have some fun with old man Waters.

When I agreed, we were transported down to Waters' cell and Dalzel began taunting him. I soon had enough of the 'fun' and stopped Dalzel, dead. But not until he had yelled loud enough to alert the others in the place to an interloper. Luckily, they were all sluggards and I had time to pick up what Dalzel had on him (a *Scimitar*+2, *Large Shield*+2 and a prison key), change into my own helm and armour, pick up the old man (despite his gorge-raising stink!). Then, on my way out of the dungeon, I picked up a Priestess of Selune Robe and a Vial of Dust from the body of another prisoner and some more assorted small loot from a store room.

Back up on the ground floor, Deputy Harfit came at me as soon as I emerged, then the Battle Horror, and finally, Deputy Noric. With them all sorted, I took Waters outside (I could not stand the reek any more) and told him his son was waiting for him at the Meet. He just said that he was going straight home, leaving it to me to tell Lashar to meet him there. I decided to go back into the Lockup and sort the other Deputies, as well as Bron, if I could find him.

On the second floor, the second Battle Horror attacked me while Deputy Jeyna took shots with his crossbow. I sorted them quickly enough. On the third floor, the door to Bron's inner sanctum was unopenable. So I cleared the rest of the place methodically. The only slight problem I had was another Deputy, Chadee, who I wakened in her room. Among the loot gathered were several scrolls, potions, GP and other small stuff, a *Swordsman's Belt*, a *Studded Leather Armour*+3 and a *Scroll of Resurrection*. On Chadee's body, there was a *Katana*+2; On Jeyna's, a *Crossbow of Accuracy* and *Bolts of Piercing*; On the Battle Horrors, a suit of *Full Plate*; On Harfit, a *Greataxe*+2; and, On Noric, a *Bastard Sword*+2, and the front *Gate Key*.

When I got back to the Swords' Meet, Lashar wasn't there. Nor was Griswold. I went back out to find them, and did. At the town whipping post. Griswold was about to take out a drunken revenge on Lashar. Until I interrupted. At which point, he ran off, never to be seen again. When I told Lashar his father was at their home, he asked me to go there so they could thank me properly. I did, they did, and I went back to the Inn to find Sharalyn and get back to business.

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<sup>5</sup> Apart from the weapons and ammo in the armoury and on each of the Deputies, the exact items and the amount of GP found in the Lockup seems to be determined at random and will be different every time you go through the scenario.

Killing Dalzel, Harfit, Jeyna and Chadee earns 43XP each; Noric, 22XP; and the Battle Horrors, 58XP each. Going to see the Waters in their house earns 2000XP and a *Pink & Green Ioun Stone* (Charisma). And ends the quest.

## The Plot Thickens

Back at the Inn, I thought I might as well clear all of the rooms before going to see Sharalyn. And a good thing it was that I did. When I unlocked the door to a room not far from hers, I found three mean looking thugs, One was named Thorin (a Dwarf), another Zain (a Druid) and the last Raest, a assassin if I ever saw one and the leader of the bunch.. After some of what they obviously thought was clever verbal foreplay, they tried to cut me down.

“Tried” was the operative word. On Zain’s body, I found a *Masterwork Crossbow, Bolts of Piercing* and a *Ring of Invisibility*. On Thorne, there was a *Dorgan’s Defender* battleaxe. On Raest, I found a pair of Boots of Striding+2, a couple of healing potions and a *Nightthief’s Nimbleknife*. In addition he was carrying a contract, signed by one Maalthir, for the assassination of Sharalyn. I knew that wouldn’t be happening in the immediate future, at least. But I decided I had better get that information to her PDQ.

In her room, I showed her the contract. That prompted her to tell me about her history with the Maalthir character past. When she told me about the Hillsfar/Zhent conflict and everything that had been happening. in the Moonsea, I agreed to help deal with the Order of the Crooked Fang. She suggested that Hillsfar was the place to begin, Although Voonlar had been locked down, she had a friend, Lady Shrae at the Temple of Chauntea, who could get me out. She went on to explain the problems involved in getting into Hillsfar. She gave me a *Scroll of Transformation* to deal with the ban on non-humans and the name of a contact in the Guard who had the authority to grant entry to the city.<sup>6</sup>

When she had finished, I took a deep breath and considered next steps. First, obviously was to get to Hillsfar. Not far behind that was to make sure my back was covered. So, when I was leaving for the Temple, I stopped to speak to both Astar and Eremuth and take them up on their offers to accompany me. On our way to the temple, I thought a little bit of group bonding would be a good idea and we stopped into a place called the Boring Pig Tavern. It was a pretty disreputable looking place and had a large Green Slaad laying dead in the middle of the place.

When I went to buy our drinks, the bartender explained that the dark adventurer sitting over at a table by herself had killed it as soon as it burst into the place during the excitement earlier. I thought that anyone so slight who was able to sort a Slaad like she had was worth a word or two. So after we got our drinks, we took one over to her too. She was not very communicative, hid her face and had a distinct odour of dead meat about her. But eventually she opened up and told us her story. Or at least that for the last few years after she had wakened in the laboratory of a necromancer named Suzail and left. She couldn’t remember anything before that. I suggested that joining up with us might give her an opportunity to find herself, so to speak, and she agreed.

Then we went off to the temple together. There, Lady Shrae was expecting us and gave me the key to the Eastern gate. After we had talked a bit, she told me about how the priests of

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<sup>6</sup> This finishes *The Dead of Winter* quest. It is quite lucrative. You earn 250XP for showing the contract to Sharalyn. You earn another 250XP for hearing out her whole story, 150XP if you have insight into the Harpers, +2 Good orientation if you sympathize with her over what happened to her father. There is a further 2000XP when she finishes and another +1 Good if you agree to help deal with the order of the Crooked Fang..

Bane had been using the catacombs under Voonlar to animate the dead to fight for them against the Order of the Crippled Fang. She thought that something had gone wrong and that things were happening in the catacombs that did not bode well for those still alive in the town. With three companions now, at my back, I was willing to take a look and see what we might do for her to reduce or eliminate the danger. She told me the access to the catacombs was in an abandoned house a little to the West of the temple. After buying a few potions and redistributing some of the better loot items still in my bags of holding to my three companions to improve their kit, we headed out.<sup>7</sup>

On the way, I noticed a house with a door that opened easily when I picked the lock. Inside the place was threadbare, with an old guy and his wife huddling in front of a small fireplace. I apologized for breaking in, gave him 10 GP just because he looked like they needed it and left.<sup>8</sup>

## Underground

We got to the abandoned house finally and in a desk, I found *Gormstadd's Journal*, a *Torch*, a *Brooch of Warding*, a *Potion of Antidote* and a thing that looked like the *Upper Right Quadrant* of some kind of ornament. When I read the journal, it recorded how the priests of bane had found the four pieces of a *Symbol of Bane* and had used it to find and release a Banelich who was helping them create Undead for their fight with the Order of the Crippled Fang. It went on to record how the Banelich, one Shrazgul, had in fact been using the priests and the Undead for his own purposes.

Gormstadd had written that he had takes a piece of the *Symbol* (the ornament I had found in the desk) in order to force Shrazgul back into captivity. That explained why Lady Shea had said she noticed a decrease in activity underground recently. But Gormstadd also had written that the Undead serving Shrazgul were searching for the piece in order to let him out.

Gormstadd, I knew, had been killed back in the Temple of Bane during the attack on the town. That left it up to me, I supposed, to deal with the mess those stupid priests had created. So I looked around and discovered a trap door that led to the catacombs. With a gulp, but without further adieu, we descended.

Before going any further, I took the precaution of buffing up, which was a good thing because, around the first corner were a Banedead and a Baneguard. After sorting them, all three companions charged off to the North to fight some more Baneguards and a Direguard. With them sorted, checked out the remains and found several *Masterwork Longswords*. Among the bones was the body of Charon, whom Gormstadd's Journal had mentioned. On it, I found a *Mace of Darkness* and potions of *Clarity* and *Heal*. With my three acolytes back under control, I took us back down the hallway to the Southeast corner of the area in an attempt to check out the

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<sup>7</sup> This starts the quest *Evil Beneath Voonlar*. In your dialogue with Shrae, you can get an alignment shift +1 Lawful, if you manage it properly.

<sup>8</sup>This is a not very exciting unnamed quest. Apologizing and giving Mard 10GP earns 100XP and an alignment shift of +5 Good. Just apologizing and leaving is a wash. You can get alignment shifts of +2 Evil and +5 Evil and 2GP if you tell Mard you are the boss and demand all he has. If you really want to play an evil character.

place somewhat systematically.

We came to a chamber door guarded by a couple more Banedeads and inside, found ourselves confronted by another Baneguard, a Zhentarim Spirit and the Minion of Tyranny. For the four of us, they were surprisingly easy to overcome. Once they were down, I was able to get from the Minion's remains the Upper Right Quadrant of the Symbol of Bane, an *Ebon Lash Whip* and a *Scroll of Confusion*. Beyond where we fought, there were three sarcophagi. In the first was a *Ring of Protection*+3. The second was booby-trapped and locked. Once inside, I found there a suit of *Armour of Command*. I considered putting it on, but was still quite satisfied with my *Zeal's Walk* and stashed it, just in case, in the Bag of Holding I kept for special kit. I gave the ring to Astar because he didn't have one and had taken the greatest damage of any of us to that point.

After a brief rest to restore ourselves, I buffed up again and we moved on, following the hallway past the sarcophagi to the North and East. We came to a chamber and were assaulted by two Zhent Spirits, Direguard and a couple of Banedead. There was only a *Masterwork Greatsword* among the remains, but in a sarcophagus in a corner were scrolls of Slay Living and *Restoration* and an *Amulet of Will*+3. I gave the latter to Eremuth because he had been pretty good about staying out of melees and I thought the extra saving throws more important for him than the extra armour protection.

In another, smaller chamber to the North, there was another Direguard (and *Masterwork Greatsword*) guarding another sarcophagus. In the tomb, were a set of Bracers of *Dexterity*+3. I took those for myself and gave my set of +2 to Lyressa. We went on along to the Southwest corner of the Catacombs, attacked by another Zhent Spirit and Direguard on the way. There, I saw the Minion of Darkness and went right after it, leaving the Banedeads protecting it to my cohort. For our troubles, I was able to pick up the *Lower Right Quadrant* of the *Symbol* (and another *Masterwork Greatsword*). That made three of the quadrants in my bag. I remember thinking, "If Shrazgul wants them, he is going have to come through me."

From there, we made our way North. A chest was sitting in one chamber, just begging to be looted, which I did. That netted a set of *Bracers of Armour*+3, a *Greater Battle Robe*, a Phenalope, a *Healer's Kit*+1, and an Ale, which I gave to the guys to share. I gave both the Bracers and the Robe to Eremuth to improve his kit: I certainly didn't need them and he was proving ever more adept. Carrying on to the north still, we ran into some more Banedead and Direguards protecting a couple of sarcophagi. In them were a *Bar of Mithral* and an Emerald. I was sure glad I had several *Bags of Holding*, or else carrying that much metal would have been a royal pain in the butt.

Continuing Northward, we ran into another Baneguard and Banedead which we brushed aside easily. Up in the Northwest corner of the Catacombs, we encounter the Minion of Hatred and a couple of Banedead guards. The fight was harder than we expected, but we prevailed with only a little damage. On the Minion, I got the *Lower Left Quadrant* of the *Symbol*, as well as a Scimitar+2 and another Scimitar+3, as well as 24 *Giant's Bane* bullets.

With all four quadrants of the Symbol in my pack, I was pretty sure we were going to have to face the Banelich fairly soon. So we started off again toward the East. Where a passage

opened to the South we took it, running into a couple of Banedead about dead centre of the Catacombs guarding another Sarcophagus. There was nothing in it but a *Skeleton's Knuckle*. After that we followed the winding passage until we came again to Charon's remains. Beyond that, instead of going back where we had started, we followed the passageway until it came to corpse, a dead end and drop down to somewhere unseeable. There, we had to fight off another Zhentarim Spirit and Baneguard before we could see what was what. With them sorted, I looked and discovered it was the body of the other priest Gormstadd had mentioned, Merkul. On the remains, I found a set of *Banite Full Plate*, another *Masterwork Longsword* and a few healing potions.

After resting a bit, mostly to give Astar a chance to recuperate, we retraced our steps back up to where we had turned South at the North end of the Catacombs. On the way, we ran into a few more Baneguards and Direguards, as well as a Zhent Spirit guarding sarcophagi. In one, I found 350GP and in another 259GP and a nice Sapphire. Having cleared virtually all of the Catacombs, there was only one place left to find Shrazgul. That was in the Northmost centre of the place. Up there, we came to a rune pillar emanating an eerie light, behind which was a locked and booby-trapped door.

Examining the pillar closely, I found a spot with four depressions, each shaped like one of the four quadrants of the *Symbol*. I knew then that we had come to it: Time to face the Banelich. So I fitted each of the pieces into place. With that, the door opened up and out came clouds of mists. When they had dissipated, we buffed up and went through the doorway.

Inside, the stench was palpable and as I thought, up on the raised dais was the creature Shrazgul, with a Direguard to either side. He began a long rambling diatribe against Bane and the priests of Bane and boasted of how he would himself become a god. When I had heard enough, I thought "Fat chance", and went straight for him. Luckily Astar and the others were able to keep the Direguards busy while I occupied myself with the Banelich. After an extended battle, in which he summoned Succubi and healed himself, I was able to take him out. On his carcass, there was a *Black Lord's Caress* flail and an *Talisman of Pure Evil*.

We made it back to the ladder down which we had first entered and sat for a quick rest. Astar had been proving to be the most easily injured of the bunch of us. The thought arose that he had probably been through even more than he had chosen to tell me when we spoke. I made a note to try to find some way of improving his kit sooner rather than later.

As we emerged up into the abandoned house, what should appear but a *Manifestation of Bane*. It proceeded to boast about its superiority to all and proceeded, "in recognition" it said of our having killed his pretender Shrazgul, to "allow" us to walk away. It claimed that our dealing with the Order of the Crooked Fang suited its purposes. With that it withdrew. "Blowhard", I thought. We went back to the Temple of Chauntea and told Lady Shrae about the Banelich and about the apparition of Bane and what it had said to us. She was grateful for that but mightily concerned about the prospect of a religious war breaking out in the Moonsea.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Killing Shrazgul earns 240XP. Each of the Baneguards earns 15XP, the Direguards 21XP or 25XP, the Zhent Spirits 45XP, 51XP or 53XP. The Minions of Tyranny and of Darkness are 63XP each and the Minion of Hate 72XP. Telling Lady Shrae and relating the dialogue with the Manifestation of Bane ends the quest and earns 2500XP.



She said she was going to have to think on the question, but clearly had nothing further for us at the moment. I sold almost all of the loot we had accumulated, thinking I had better do it while I could and bought a few potions of healing and other items I thought we might use as we headed toward Hillsfar. Then I thanked her and we set out through the East Gate.

### **3. The Shind Road East**

We had not gone far when Astar spotted Zhents up ahead, on which Eremuth uncharacteristically complimented him. Lyressa observed that one of them was quite dead, which prompted Eremuth to comment that she was unique in his knowledge: An Undead still in possession of its soul. I took that as an indication of respect and was gratified that the group was, I fact bonding. As we approached, it was clear it was a patrol that had been devastated by something formidable.

#### **Marauders on the Road (1)**

The leader, a Captain Malakar stopped us and warned against going any further. She told us her troop had been decimated by a Black Dragon and the survivors harried by assorted Herzous, Vrocks Succubi and Qualits that roamed at will. I sympathized with her losses but was determined to carry on. We proceeded to clear the woods and hills on both sides of the road, killing Herzous, Vrocks, Succubi, Qualits and one Beblith as we went. In the hills to the North, we came upon the corpse of a Green Slade on which, after taking its tongue, I found a *Wand of Fear*. Also, up there, after disposing of two nasty Qualits, I noticed an unnatural looking pile of snow. Clearing it away, I found a half-frozen Zhent soldier. I revived him with a Healing potion and he went to rejoin his troop, leaving behind a *Ring of Antivenom*.

With the North Hills cleared, we did the same for the road. Across a stream, we did find a trail of heavy footsteps leading to a cave. We could not explore it, however, because the entrance was blocked by a row of massive boulders. To the West, we found more dead Zhents and a broken down wagon. On the remains were a few GP and a *Zhent Tower Shield*. In the Wagon, I found 387GP, a *Potion of Heal*, a *Healers Kit+6* and a *Strong Fire Trap Kit*. (That made two I was carrying until I could find a merchant who would buy them.)

Up on the hills to the South, we came across a Vrock, a Herzou and a Succubus beside a big Fiend who introduced himself instead of attacking us. Kaz Tummet, he was called and he had an offer for me that I couldn't refuse. Impressed by how we had cleared the area, he wanted me to kill a Slaad enemy of his (Lord Grazkhan), farther down the road. He promised riches beyond my wildest dreams if I did that. I head him out, but I suspected that I could trust him as far as I could throw him (and he was big). I figured all he would do was turn on me if I completed my end of the deal. But then, there was just a chance he might honour his part of the deal. So I agreed, but not without swearing to myself that I would be on the lookout for the slightest sign of bad faith on his part.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Sympathizing with Malakar's losses results in an alignment shift of +! Good. Succubi and Qualits earn 2XP each; Vrocks 8XP each; Herzous 13XP each; and the Beblith 15XP. If you agree to Kaz's proposition, that begins the quest *Internal Warfare*. If you decide just to get the inevitable over with right away, KazTurnet is worth 102XP dead. You can also just not engage with Kaz, in which case Grazkhan will make the same proposition to you - in reverse - when you meet him later.

We rested up and then went on along to the East.

## The Narrow Valley & Yulash

We entered a narrow valley and found a broken wagon with barrels and crates strewn about, as well as several dead Zhentarim. In one crate, I found potions of *Heal* and of *Lesser Restoration*, a silver ring, a Sapphire and a *Spear*+3. In one barrel there was a *Potion of Clarity* and another of *Lesser Restoration*. On one Zhent corpse, I found a *Cloak of Fortification*+3, which I gave to Astar. He could never complain that I had not done my best by him after that.

We had not got much farther along the road when a big Black Dragon stopped us in our tracks. Gloomfang, for that was its name was taken aback when I didn't quake with fear and decided to indulge his ego by entering into a dialogue with us. When I asked why he had attacked the Zhentarim, he said they were just in the wrong place at the wrong time and, besides, didn't like them at the best of times. When I asked whether he served the Order of the Crooked Fang, he scoffed in contempt for it. He boasted that he served no one and had sent a wizard named Maganus off packing when he had tried recruiting him to the Order's cause. When I asked about the monsters on the road behind, he scoffed at both sides, as well. By then he seemed to have had enough conversation, because he decided to attack us.

That proved to be a poor strategic decision on Gloomfang's part. The fight lasted quite a while. Longer because Astar got paralysed with fear at some point, but we managed to put the worm down, just before he was able to land a final blow on me.<sup>11</sup> I used a couple of potions to heal up a bit and checked out the corpse in front of us. There was not much other than a vial of *Dragon Blood* and a *Pale Blue Ioun Stone* (Strength).

Farther up the road, we neared Yulash, where a group of Red Plume mercenaries were taunting a badly wounded Zhent and preparing to do him in. I could see the prisoner was in no condition to do anything and interceded on his behalf. It took a little gentle persuasion, and a little more show of muscle, to persuade their Captain Haliator that his best interests would be served by abiding by the Geneva convention and treating the prisoner better than he had planned. The bunch gave the Zhent a stay of execution and took him into Yulash where he would receive at least some of the medical attention he needed.<sup>12</sup> I was not going to let them take him, but the Zhent (Merrik) said that would be best at that point, so I let them take him.

That done, we took a look around and saw a merchant named Ogson sitting somewhat disconsolately beside his wagon. Apparently, the Yulash guard had requisitioned all of his oxen and he was stranded there. I sympathized with his plight. He went on to say it had not been all bad because the oxen had been found to have Mad Cow anyway. When I asked if he should we should warn the garrison, he cheerfully observed that it was too late, so I let the matter drop.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Gloomfang is worth 102XP dead. Not that you have much choice.

<sup>12</sup> This quest has no name, but playing it as I did earned a +2 Good alignment shift and 250XP. Evil characters can probably get + Evil shifts by encouraging the execution of Merrik, but didn't bother to check that out.

<sup>13</sup> Thinking you should warn the garrison about mad Cow results in an alignment shift of +2 Lawful. I suspect it is possible to move to Chaotic by saying it served them right, but I didn't bother to check that out.

I cheered him up further by selling my accumulated loot and buying some improved kit for Astar and the others and several potions I thought might come handy. Also, I finally was able to flog those Strong Fire Trap Kits I had been lugging around since forever.

## Nearing Hillsfar

After resting beside Ogson's fire for a bit, we moved on. The guard at the Yulash gate was surly and could not be persuaded to let us in. So we left him there stomping in the cold and made our way East. We reached the farther outskirts of Hillsfar when we saw a small, but eminently capable, fighter take on several Slaads and best them with what appeared to be minimal effort. When we approached to congratulate him, he recognized Astar. It was evident there was no love lost.

As I listened to their wordplay, it became clear that the stranger was an assassin named Artemis Enteri. Further, it transpired that he had been hired by the High Blade (ruler) of Mulmaster, one Selfaril, to kill Astar. As I listened, Astar's history unfolded some more. It seemed that, back in Mulmaster, this Selfaril had ordered Astar to kill a young woman and when he had refused, was banished. Not only banished, it appeared but proscribed and with a price on his head. Artemis then attacked Astar precipitously. None of us was going to let one of our group be attacked, so we all joined him against the assassin. The fight went on it seemed like forever, with Artemis healing himself several times. We finally got the best of him, however. But before we could land a final blow, he vanished, shouting "Enough of this. We shall meet again!"<sup>14</sup>

## Marauders on the Road (2)

With Artemis seen off, we took a bit of a breather and then carried on down the road toward Hillsfar. We had not gone far when I noticed off to the North several Slaads standing around a fire. "This must be that Grazkhan that Kaz wanted me to go after", I thought. And, of course, it was. They didn't attack us straight off, so we had a chance to talk a little. Apparently, the Slaads had been pulled into this plane by Maganus and had no way back. Grazkhan offered me the same deal that Kaz had because he thought Kaz's bastard sword might give them a way to get back from whence they came. I was tempted to take him up on the deal, but then I thought, "A deal is a deal," and told him no deal. At which point we had it out. Grazkhan lost.

We picked over the remains but didn't find too much of value. Then we went inside Grazkhan's HQ tent and were met by three Grey Slaads. They were a different kettle of fish than the bunch outside and it took a while to put them all down. The fight was worth it, though. Afterward, I found a *Copper Ring* on a human corpse. In a chest, there was a *Wand of Lightning* and spell scrolls of *Dominate Monster*, *Greater Dispelling* and *Globe of Invulnerability*. And, in a nearby loot bag, there were 2701GP, and a potion of *Cure Critical Wounds*. All in all, that proved to be a pretty good haul.

We rushed back to where Kaz and his minions were waiting and told him Kaz was dead. And I knew immediately that I was right not to have trusted the monster because they all set

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<sup>14</sup> Beating off Artemis in this encounter earns 500XP.

upon us at once. Well, Kaz was not much more of a fighter than Grazkhan had been and we soon had them all sorted. On Kaz's remains, there was the *Abyss* bastard sword that Graz had wanted. The others had only a few GP. "Hardly worth the bother", I thought, but we had rid the Moonsea of several scurrilous nogoodniks.<sup>15</sup>

### Hillsfar, But Not Quite

We headed back toward Hillsfar, stopping on the way to off load our loot to Ogson. Outside the city walls, I noticed a man and a woman standing beside a couple of oxen, both engaged in what seemed to be a bout of recrimination. When I interrupted, they told me they were a couple of traders but had been locked out of the city with no where to go. Worse, they said, their trade goods, except for the oxen, confiscated by the city guard. I put two and two together and told them about Ogson back at Yulash and how they could probably do a deal. They jumped at the idea and disappeared back toward the West with their animals.

While I was standing outside the gates, an old man came shambling up to me, stuck his nose right int my face and accused me of stealing his spoon. I stepped back and demurred. He persisted so I swore on my honour that I had not done so. He kept on railing, however, so I gently pushed him back and walked away.<sup>16</sup> At that point, to get away from the madman, I dashed back to Yulash to make a quick check on how Ogson and the trading couple had made out.

Back in Yulash, the trader, Cheswick, came running up and told a tale of woe about how his wife had been abducted by Frost Giants. There was something about his babbling that didn't make sense, but I decided the woman needed saving before anything else. That took us, on the run, to the cave that had been blocked with boulders farther back up the road toward Voonlar. When we got there, all the boulders had been moved, so we entered without difficulty.

The difficult part came inside. First we encountered several Frost Giant Nomad guards and a Shaman. The Shaman's remains had an *Amulet of Protection*+3 and a *Morningstar*+3. The guards mostly had carried only a potions of *Cure Critical Wounds*. Around a corner to the Northwest, there was another Nomad, throwing boulders at us from an island across an expanse of water. Before I could deal with that, a White Dragon guard came charging at us. Although we kept taking hits from boulders thrown by the Giant on the island, we eventually brought down the Dragon. Then I equipped my bow and despatched the bugger on the island without further adieu. The White Dragon's remains, there was a Sapphire, an *Amulet of Fire Resistance* and a vial of *Dragon's Blood*. The dead giant on the island was Glor "The Trebucher" Bloodaxe, but I could not find a way to where he was to check his remains.

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<sup>15</sup> This ends the quest *Internal Warfare*. Keeping the deal with Kaz causes an alignment shift of +2 Lawful. Killing Grazkhan earns 54 XP and the three Slaads around him 2XP each. The Grey Slaads inside the tent are worth 7XP each. Telling Kaz that Grazkhan is dead results in another alignment shift of +5 Lawful. Kaz dead is worth 117XP, the Herzou 13XP, the Vrock 8XP and the Succubus 2XP. Plus 1500XP for completing the quest.

<sup>16</sup> This begins the quest *Madmen and Villains*. Dealing with the old guy earns alignment shifts if you want/ need them. Pushing back softly when he first accosts you earns +2 Good. Swearing on your honour earns +2 Lawful. Gently taking his arm earns another +2 Good. Of course, you can treat him less politely and earn shifts to Evil and Chaotic, as well. I didn't check them out.

With all of the guards dropped, I was able to take a look around the cave. Along the Western edge, there was a locked door that required a special key to open. At the Eastern edge, there was a double door and we went through it. There we met up with Jarl Bashnag, the undisputed leader of this bunch. He proved the adage “The bigger they are, the harder they fall”. On his corpse, there was a *Bloodstone Double Axe* and a key. Of course I knew which door that key would open.

So we went back to it. And opened it. Inside was Agatha the Cook and Amberlyn, who looked much the worse for wear. The Giants had not treated her well and she showed it. After sorting Agatha, I found on her body a *Spear of Stirring* and several potions (*Speed*, *Aid* and *Cure Critical Wounds*.) In a nearby barrel, there was an *Adamantine Helm*, a *Chain Shirt*, a *Leather Armour* and a *Gold Ring*. Underneath some stones, there was *Quartz Crystal* and a *Zhent Tower Shield*. All in all, not a shabby haul. After hearing Amberlyn’s side of the encounter that had brought her there and comforting her a little (she was much changed from the shrew she had been when we first met), we headed back to Ogson’s camp.

Back in Yulash, Ogson reported that Cheswick had tried to steal his goods, but had run off when caught red-handed. Amberlyn told the tale of how her husband had changed after marriage, said she never wanted to see him again and promised me a reward when she got back home to Selgaunt. Ogson clearly had a thing for her and she seemed to reciprocate, so I suspected both would be fine thenceforward. After selling all of our accumulated loot to Ogson, we headed back to Hillsfar.<sup>17</sup>

#### **4. Hillsfar**

##### **Barbarian at the Gate**

Back at the Hillsfar front gates, I went straight up to the gate, which got me a foul-mouthed rebuff from the guard. Then I remembered what Sharalyn had told me about the edict against non-humans and retreated without arguing. Out of his line of sight, I used the *Scroll of Illusion* she had given me to take on full human shape. When I returned to the gate, the guard was no more welcoming. So I retreated once again and put on my *Armour of Command*. When I returned wearing that, I was able to persuade the SOB that it was important I speak to Kalor Onehand PDQ or his head would be on the block.<sup>18</sup>

That got some action and before I knew it Onehand came out the gates. My welcome from him was not much better than from the guard. Nonetheless, he ordered me peremptorily to follow him inside. There he maintained his gruff manner outwardly, but whispered he was acting out of an excess of caution because there were telltales everywhere. He told me to meet him in the nearby Diamond in the Dung Inn where we could speak in a quiet corner.

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<sup>17</sup> This quest *A Tale of Two Traders* begins with when Cheswick and Amberlyn go off to see Ogson and ends when you bring the rescued Amberlyn back to Ogson. The completed quest is worth 2500XP. The Giant Nomad Guards (including The Trebucher and Agatha) were worth 31XP each; The Shaman, 47XP; The White Dragon Guard, 75XP; and, Jarl Bashnag 39XP. Comforting Amberlyn back at Ogson’s camp earns an alignment shift of +1 Good.

<sup>18</sup>Persuading the guard successfully earns 150XP. If you don’t have good skills of persuasion, you will have to bribe him to get in. At a cost of 1000GP.

I decided to take a look around a bit before meeting him and spoke to both the druid merchant, Branon Oakheart, and then the Thay merchant, Zeltoon Saan. Both had lots for sale, but nothing I thought I needed, except perhaps for a potion or two. I asked them about themselves and only the Druid was very forthcoming. He apparently had lost his familiar, a dire wolf named Cassius, when attacked by demons in the Cormanthor woods and had taken refuge in Hillsfar. The Red Wizard was so full of himself, I could barely stand my few minutes talking to him. I also went into Tity's Emporium. Tity was an ex-adventurer who sold some good kit on the sly. I bought a pair of *Bracer of Dexterity*+4 to improve my own gear. He also had some good intelligence on the city and spoke well of Onehand.

With all other doors locked and no one else worthwhile approaching, I went into the Inn to find Onehand. Inside, Oswal Funf, the innkeeper (or maybe just the bartender) pointed me to the Captain in front of a bookshelf at one end of the room. Onehand was very forthcoming about Maalthir and the situation in Hillsfar, as well as himself and the part he had played in saving Sharalyn and her mother.

Preliminaries over, he told me that the reports he had received indicated that neither Maalthir nor anyone else in Hillsfar was involved with the order of the Crippled Fang. He did think that the Order involved the Archmage Maganus, ex-Priests of Cyric and ex-Red Plume fighters, all in all a formidable lot. He had also had reports of the Order being holed up in Cormanthor Forest and marauding into Elventree from there. I was ready to head there when he said there was still one task I had to perform in Hillsfar.

When I told him to bring it on, that old man I had run into outside the city walls and a troop of the Red Guard surrounded us. It turned out the old guy was none other than that Wak Rather whom I had heard some locals mention with some trepidation. He had come to arrest me, having seen through the shape shift that Sharalyn's scroll had effected. I was about to resist when Onehand came up from behind and struck me a blow on the head. My last sensations were bright lights and searing pain before everything went black.

## **The Arena**

When I regained consciousness, I was in a low chamber and a Priest, an Orc and an elven Wizard were looking down at me. From their conversation, I gathered that the Priest had done quite an amazing healing job on the head wound I had received. The others moved off, leaving the Priest to whom I then spoke. He introduced himself as Father Garth, a Priest of Ilmater, the God of endurance, perseverance and self-sacrifice. He told me that we were in a holding cell underneath the fighting pit of Maalthir's arena and that I had been brought in by that Wak Rathar character, whose job seemed to be getting gladiators to fight in the arena.

He also reported that Onehand had delivered me there and told the arena master (called *The Innovator of Pain*) that I was a Harper ally and to keep me under close supervision. Garth described the Innovator as a major sadist and feared that didn't bode well for me. I asked how to escape, but Garth said that was unlikely as in his time there (8 years of pain and mistreatment) only one gladiator, the Red Minotaur, had secured his freedom. He suggested that I speak to the others Elf (a apparent Orc) and Blizzard (a human mage).

The Orc could not remember his name but seemed convinced he was an Elf. He talked like one, acted like one, and certainly seemed to think like one. Hence what the others called him. He told me his story and in the course of it about finding a wolf he managed to nurse back to health before being captured by Red Plumes only a few months previously. When I asked about the others in the cell, he considered Father Garth a great man and described him as a committed pacifist. Blizzard, he held in high regard, but knew little about her. He would only snarl at the mention of the arena master.

I went over to Blizzard who told me she had been in the arena four years, a result of her resistance group being betrayed to Maalthir. She hated Maalthir and Wak rather and was determined to survive to sort both of them. When I asked about Father Garth, she said that, although he refused to fight, the Innovator of Pain intended to keep him alive until he had ben broken.<sup>19</sup> She was sure that Elf was a real Orc, although an exceptionally good and intelligent one and a good fighter, to boot. Her views on the arena master were close to Elf's. About Onehand, she said he had been a good soldier but that his spirit seemed to have darkened.

With nothing else gainfully to be done in the cell, I made my way out the unlocked door to an area where gladiators appeared to walk quite freely. Before I knew it, I found myself facing the arena master who proceeded to describe the many pleasures he had planned for me. When I threatened to deal with him then and there, he pointed out that (a) his two Golem thugs would prevent that and (b) in any case, a *geas* had been put on me, preventing me from doing him any harm. He told me to go see his pharmacist and get some potions to fortify myself and then report back for my first test in the arena.

I went to see the pharmacist, a Drow named Drizzle, who had been hideously deformed by massive injections of Manticore venom when he first was brought to the arena. Then he had been relegated to prolonging the pain of others. I picked out a couple of potions (*Bull's Strength*) and went back to the orchestrator of the madness.

He then had me put in the fighting pit where a cut scene showed me being brought face to face with a Tanarukk. My kit was good enough that I was able to deal with the Orc with relative ease. To the displeasure of the crowd and the arena master, so I was thrown back in the cell with the other three unfortunates I had as mates. Except there were only two of them. When I asked about Father Garth, they said he had been taken out for his next beating before the crowd. All I could do was rest up for whatever came next.<sup>20</sup>

Rested, I went out to see what I could learn about Father Garth. The arena master brushed that aside and told me that I was to meet with the Red Plume officer who had brought me (Onehand). I caught him in the gladiators' "lounge" and he apologized for betraying me. His reason he said was that he had realized on seeing me that I was the only one who could carry out a plan to depose - kill - Maalthir.<sup>21</sup> When I did not demur, he went off to do some more planning and I went back to finish what I had to do in the arena.

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<sup>19</sup> Commenting unfavourably on the Innovator of Pain's treatment of Garth results in an alignment shift of +1 Good.

<sup>20</sup> Killing the Tanarukk earns 23XP and feeling for Father Garth earns an alignment shift of +1 Good.

<sup>21</sup>This begins the quest *City of Trade*.

The arena master was ready for me to go in, so I went off, got a couple more potions and came back and told him to do his worst. He had set me up against three Driders: a Sorcerer and two Rogues. They were a bit more challenging than the Tanarukk, but with the help of a couple of healing potions, I sorted them.<sup>22</sup> Then I was taken back to the holding cell where Garth and Elf awaited. Garth was in a sorry state and refused to be healed. I was astounded at his forbearance but he was adamant about not fighting. He told me of his past and his reasons for his stance.<sup>23</sup>

When I asked about Blizzard, he said that she had been taken out to the fighting pit and was afraid that something really bad was in store for her because the crowd hated her so. Although not at all religious, I said a short prayer for her, which Garth approved. I went to have a word with Elf and commented on whether we could help Garth in any way. Before he could answer, the arena master came in and called me to fight. Garth called upon his god to heal me as I was heading out the door.

There the Innovator of Pain stood gloating. He told me I was to fight the two ogres that had failed to inflict enough on Father Garth after which I was to witness the execution of Blizzard. I went off to get a couple more potions from Drizzle when he let slip that they had brought in something special to fight her. I was able to persuade him to tell me what it was (a magic-immune Golem) and how to fight it (Don't use a magically enhanced weapon). With that secret intelligence, I went to the armoury and picked out an ordinary Longsword to take with me.

After I had equipped it, I told the Innovator of Pain that I was ready to face whatever he brought on. Inside the fighting pit, Blizzard had been brought down by the Magic Golem. I put myself between it and her and, after a continuing slugfest, I finally prevailed. At that point the arena announcer blared that I would kill Blizzard. Well, of course, I refused to do any such thing.<sup>24</sup> At which point we were booed off the field.

Back in the holding cell, Father Garth and Elf were nowhere to be seen. Only the Innovator of Pain was there and he was seething. He spat out that, for my trouble, I was to go out again immediately to face the only gladiator ever to have got his freedom the Red Minotaur. Then he stomped off. Outside he sent me in to Drizzle in order to give Maalthir better sport in the arena, he said. It was a good thing he did. I was able to draw Drizzle out not only on the Red Minotaur, but also on how to get the *geas* on me removed. To do that, he said, I would have to get at and sort Wak rather in the Dreadspire. Not an easy task, virtually impossible, he said. I stuck that in the back of my mind and went back out to the fight.

In the pit, Father Garth was standing, badly wounded beside a downed Elf. I asked him to let me heal him and he refused, saying he was near his end and had only power enough to give me to kill the Minotaur. I told him to heal Elf himself so we could fight the thing together. He did that, but doing so cost Father Garth his own life. With Elf up and able to fight and me

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<sup>22</sup> The Drider Rogues earn 46XP each and the Sorcerer 205XP.

<sup>23</sup> Commenting favourably on his philosophical stance results in an alignment shift of +1 Good. When he tells his story, using your insight to say that the one who saved him was a priest of Ilmater earns 150XP.

<sup>24</sup> This earns an alignment shift of +2 Good. But it doesn't endear you to any of the onlookers.



sufficiently buffed, we brought down the red Minotaur, to the dismay of Maalthir and everyone else present. Maalthir came out and put the Innovator of Pain on indefinite leave pending a decision on his future for having bungled how he had handled me. Impressed by my performance, he invited me to dine with him later. Then left.

I was marched back to the holding cell where Elf and a prostrate, but healed, Blizzard were waiting. I went to Elf to see how he was and we commiserated over Father Garth and I offered that he was at least at peace. Then Elf said he suspected that this was the last time we would see each other and wished me the protection of his gods. Then I checked Blizzard. She was burned and shaky but much recovered. She thanked me for not doing the execution demanded and I said I could never do such a thing.<sup>25</sup> She admitted that she was not sure she would have done the same. Then she told me that if I had the chance, I should kill Maalthir.

I rested up and then went out and spotted the Red Plume who was waiting to accompany me to Maalthir. He tried to order me to put a blindfold on me. Only when I refused with a warning did he ask politely, almost pleadingly, saying only a very few knew way and Maalthir wanted it kept that way. After which I acquiesced, but not without a dire warning about any tricks. He then guided me down a couple of halls and left me outside the door to maalthir's quarters.

### **Maalthir's Menace**

Once through the door, Maalthir treated me to a demonstration of his power, beheading a few of his guards who had tried to poison him. Then he told me he knew Kalor Onehand had put me up to kill him. I demurred, but he went on about Kalor. When I would not be drawn, he asked about my purpose in Hillsfar and I confirmed it was to find out about Hillsfar's connection to the Order of the Crooked Fang. He said he had no connection and went so far as to ask me to deal with it for him because it was interfering with trade and near to causing a war with Zhentil Keep. When I agreed, he gave me the freedom of the city's Market and Temple Districts. (But did not, I noted, remove the *geas* from me.)<sup>26</sup>

Then I was summarily dismissed and he ordered that I taken back to the arena for one last task. Before I knew it was back in the pit, this time facing Kalor Onehand. He, badly beaten, began accusing me of murdering his sister and of cutting off his hand. I realized he had been beaten to the point of insanity as he attacked in a frenzy. At that point, I had no choice. It was fight back or die. We battled for what seemed an eternity and I had to use much of my store of healing potions to survive. But then, suddenly, Kalor began to collapse, regained his senses and apologized for trying to use me to get at Maalthir. I reassured him that forgave him and that Sharalyn loved him. Then he gave up the ghost in peace. Beside his corpse, I glimpsed a vision

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<sup>25</sup> Asking Father Garth to let you heal him earns an alignment shift of +1 Good. Killing the Minotaur earns 132XP. Back in the holding ell, telling Elf that Garth is at peace earns another alignment shift of +1 Good. When Elf blesses you to "walk in the light of Selene", you earn 1500XP. This ends the quest *Hillsfar Arena: Elf the Orc*. Telling Blizzard that you could not do such a thing as execute her results in another alignment shift of +2 Good.

<sup>26</sup> At this point, the *City of Trade* quest is completed and you earn 3000XP. If you just ESCape out of the cut scene and dialogue with Maalthir, you forgo the XP.

of Father Garth doing his benediction.<sup>27</sup>

Then I was transported to Hillsfar's Market District, where the first thing I saw was Blizzard. She came up to me to thank me again and I learned from her that she was Maalthir's natural daughter. She said she doubted he had any parental interest in her other curiosity as to whether she would survive. She thought she had been freed only because she was unpopular with the crowd, had been unbeatable and there were no more opponents that could deal with her. Better to see her off. I asked if she would like to join me but she said she wanted to go off by herself. She left open the possibility she would do so if we ever met again.<sup>28</sup>

### **Hillsfar - Whither Wak**

When she departed, I found myself transported into the Temple District. Immediately, I was approached by Wak rather and a couple of Red Plumes who, encouraged by Wak, were blaming me for Kalor Onehand's fate. It was on the point of coming to blows when another Red Plume came up and declared that Maalthir had decreed I was not to be harmed. Wak went off in a huff, telling me he had an "old friend" in his Dreadspire who wanted to meet me again.

I gave him the bird and called that I would catch up with him soon enough. I decided to check out the rest of the city first. In the centre of the District, I spotted a young priest of Ilmater named Tarn who was sitting, despondent, on a bench. When I spoke to him, it was evident he was having a crisis of faith. When he confessed he was about to give up, I told him about Father Garth in the arena. That seemed to restore his faith somehow. That was another first for me: An agnostic restoring the faith of a believer.<sup>29</sup>

With Tarn behind me, I thought I should clear out my accumulated loot and replenish my healing potions. The nearest place to do that was the Vault of Swords, the temple of the militaristic god Tempus. The head priest Dounalis Gulf told me about his beliefs, showed me his store and also pointed out their altar where weapons could be enhanced. I took advantage of both the store and the altar to improve my kit.

I checked out all the other doors in the district. I found one that seemed magically locked, so I made a note to check it later to see if anything might have changed. Then I found the door to Wak's Dreadspire located in a very dark area of the district.

### **The Dreadspire: Whacking Wak**

As soon as I went in, Wak appeared - or so it appeared at the time - and, cackling, laughed "You will NEVER survive!" I chased him into a chamber where a Greater Water Elemental moved to defend him. I got to Wak and put him down first and then sorted the Elemental. Despoiling Wak's remains, I found a *Sequencer Robe*, a *Red Key* and a few GP. On those of the Elemental, there was a *Huge Sapphire* and a few more GP.

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<sup>27</sup> This ends the *Hillsfar Arena* quest. It earns 3000XP.

<sup>28</sup>This ends the quest *Hillsfar Arena: Blizzard* quest and earns 1500XP.

<sup>29</sup> Successfully restoring Tarn's faith ends the *Hillsfar Arena: Father Garth* quest and earns 1500XP.

I took a few moments to rest up, then looked around the chamber and saw four pedestals, each with a different coloured glowing light above it. I wasn't quite sure what that was all about, although the thought stuck me that the Huge Sapphire might have something to do with whatever was going on. With nothing else to do in the chamber, I left it and went the only way I could go, down a hallway to the East and North. At the end of it there was a locked rough-hewn door, for which I used the *Red Key* I had found on Wak to open. It opened on to a chamber filled with fire, in which the resident Greater Fire Elemental attacked me forthwith. After dealing with it, the fires died out and I was able to rest up again. On the Elemental's remains, there was a Huge Ruby. In the chamber, there was also a crate that contained a *Skin of the Manticore Cloak*, a *Gold Necklace* and a *Potion of Cure Critical Wounds*.

The other door I that chamber led to a long hallway which I followed until I came to another small chamber on the right at the West corner. When I poked my head in there, a Greater Earth Elemental came to life and I had another fight on my hands. With it down, I had to rest again. After which I found a *Huge Topaz* on its remains. In an alcove off that cubbyhole, there was a chest. The chest held a *Deadly Spike Trap Kit*, a *Potion of Cure Critical Wounds* and a *Rusty Key*. I then followed the hallway South to another locked door, which the *Rusty Key* opened. Behind that door was an Air Elemental that, frankly, put up the best fight of the bunch of them. On its remains was a Huge Emerald.<sup>30</sup>

Another look around made it clear there was nothing else to be found or done on this level of the tower and it was evident there had to be a way to get up to the higher levels. Back at the room where I had disposed of Wak, another look at the pedestals and I noticed the colours emanating from them corresponded to those of the huge jewels I had found on the elemental remains. I put each jewel on its corresponding coloured pedestal and a portal immediately opened in the chamber. That was the way up, so I took it.

As soon as I emerged from the portal I was facing a large Pit Fiend who said "The Master" would not be happy to see me go any further. I said Wak was dead and the Fiend said "Not bloody likely! He just came through here." That struck me as exceedingly strange. It didn't seem inclined to come to blows, so we talked and the Fiend revealed it didn't like Wak any more than anyone else. When I checked the door behind it, I had no trouble picking the lock, but the trap on it was something else altogether. It could only be disabled by the Fiend. So I proposed a deal: I would deal with Wak once and for all if the Fiend disabled the trap. That struck it as a good deal either way. Either I or Wak would be done with and it would be either free or no worse off. So, it said the magic phase that disabled the trap and I went on into the hallway behind it.

Once I had unlocked the door, gone through and confirmed that it did not lock again if I went back out, I returned to the Fiend and sorted it smartly. I had not promised that I would not come back to deal with it. I didn't want to meet any monsters on my way out. (Assuming I would be making my way out.)<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Killing the Water Elemental earns 46XP; The Fire and Earth Elementals 67XP each; and the Air Elemental 218XP. On your way out of the Dreadspire, you can reclaim the huge jewels from the pedestals if you wish and sell them to a merchant.

<sup>31</sup> Doing a deal is just one way to proceed. You can also just ignore the fiend, go over to the door and try to unlock and disable it if your skills are good enough. Or just use brute force if your strength and fortitude levels are high enough.

Going forward carefully from the portal chamber, I opened a door on my left. Inside it was a strange mirror with eerie sensations emanating from it. I put my hand to it and felt myself being drawn in. When I resisted, a doppelganger of myself came out and attacked me. I had to use a couple of healing potions but disposed of the spectre in the end.<sup>32</sup> Afterward, I found among the broken glass of the mirror *Shard*, an enhanced dagger. On a bookshelf were a couple of nicely bound but nondescript books.

I left the room and went on down the hallway. Behind the first door on the right was a store room with nothing of value. Behind the next door, on the left, was a chest of drawers in which I found 64GP, a Sapphire, two Rubies, a *Necklace of Fireballs*, a *Scroll of Power Word: Kill* and a *Potion of Speed*. Opening the next door along, I surprised a Red Plume Mercenary and three Erinyes. That was another fight in which I had to use several healing potions to prevail, but found next to nothing to show for the effort afterward. I tried to rest up, but several Hell Hounds came at me. Luckily, I was strong enough to deal with all of them. Then I was finally able to rest properly.<sup>33</sup>

I buffed up again before going through the next door. For some reason, I sensed something bad was there and when I opened it, who should appear but the Innovator of Pain. He came right at me, but I knew there was no point in fighting him until I had ridded myself of that geas. And Wak was the only one left who could have put it on me. That meant I had to find and deal with him faster, before the Innovator could get many blows at me. So I ignored him and dashed past, through the door at the other side of the Library and through the first door I saw.

The Innovator came after me, but yelling at me to fight him. Later, I realized that going through that door was a good decision. Had I just run past it, I would have hit several traps laid out in the hallway.

Anyhow, I went through the door and followed the hall and up a couple of stairs until I came into a chamber where Wak was in the centre of several funny looking glass enclosure that I realized were cloning chambers. I went right at Wak and, although it took several well placed blows (and a healing potion), I dealt with him summarily. And just in time, too: The Innovator had followed me up and tried, but had failed to stop me killing Wak. When the geas was lifted, I turned on him. Like all bullies, he was a coward and unable to put up any kind of a fight without his cheat.<sup>34</sup>

I decided that if Wak had been able to clone himself, the first thing I should do was destroy those cloning chambers. After doing that, I rested and then picked over their corpses. On Wak there was 67GP, a *Cloak of Fortification*+4 (which I equipped right away, and packed my *Cloak of Resistance*+4 to give to one of my companions), a *Black Robe of the Archmage* and a *Scroll of Time Stop*. On the Innovator's remains, there was a *Robe of Vecna* and a *Shocking Whip*.

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<sup>32</sup> The Doppelganger is a hard fight, but worth only 4XP. It leaves nothing behind it.

<sup>33</sup> Killing the mercenary earns only 8XP. Each Erinye is worth 4XP. The summoned skeletons earn nothing.

<sup>34</sup> Lifting the geas earns 3000XP and ends the quest *Madmen and Villains* For Wak, you earn 67XP and for the Innovator, 142XP. Destroying the Cloning Chambers earns 100XP each..

Then I made my way out of the tower, picking up a few bits and pieces in the Library where the Innovator had been lurking. I decided to get rid of all the excess loot I had picked up and then have my *Starfire* short sword enhanced +5 at the Temple of Tempus. I went to Tity's Emporium because he, of all the merchants in Hillsfar, paid the best for good stuff (as much as 15000GP apiece) and had the biggest cash reserve. That done, I had *Starfire* enhanced and, on my way out of town, got a couple more healing potions from the Druid merchant.

When I got outside the gates, my companions had all disappeared. I suspected they had gone on to Elventree, so I set off as quickly as I could to catch up with them there.

## **5. Elventree**

I arrived in the Cormanthor Wood outside of Elventree and met with three Rangers on guard. They were quite abrupt until the leader, Craster Rees recognized me, he said, from Sharalyn's description. He seemed quite taken with her and told me that she and my other companions had come through earlier. Pointing the way, he said they would most likely be found in the Swaying Bough Inn.<sup>1/4</sup>

### **Elventree - The Plot Thickens**

I made my way there after scoping out the town and was met by Eremuth, Astar and Lyressa. Eremuth was sour as a salted lemon, but bot Astar and Lyressa seemed pleased to see me and told me that Sharalyn was waiting for me upstairs. There was something about Eremuth that I did like this time around, so I took the precaution of taking back all of the kit I had given him. Then I really need a rest, so took a kip.

When I had rested enough, we all headed up the stairs to find Sharalyn. When I saw her, she was all teary and weeping. One or another of Kalor Onehand's co-conspirators had got a note out to her telling her what had happened in Hillsfar and she was heartbroken over it. I told her it was not either her or Kalor's fault, but that other forces had been at work.<sup>35</sup> Somewhat comforted, she composed herself enough to say that we would have to speak to the local savant, one Hilrad, who was likely the only tome to be able to help us find the encampment of the Order of the Crooked Fang.

We traipessed up the stairs and found Hilrad, who was a font of information about the area and what had been happening. He said that the Sentinel, a local factotum in the shrine to Mystra, thought that the order of the Crooked Fang was made up of hardened warriors and powerful wizards, one of whom might well be that Maganus I had met back in Voonlar. The Order, he said, had been raiding out for the Cormanthor Forest to the South of Elventree. Hilrad also was of the view that Elventree was not anywhere near strong enough to be able to deal with the Order and doing so would be up to me.

I had little choice but to agree. I decided, though, to check out Elventree before heading into the forest. In a chest in the Elventree, I found some *Potions of Heroism*, a *Scroll of Animate Dead* and some *Arrows of Slaying (Human)*. In another chest, I found an ornately bound

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<sup>35</sup> Comforting Sharalyn at this point gets you an alignment shift of +2 Good.

*Elventree History* and a *Potion of Lesser Restoration*. After that I sold and bought one or two things at the Gold Cave, and then went to the Hall of the Unicorn (the Temple to Mielikke) where I Chandlar Hummerspoon and got a few *Potions of Heal*. I noticed that he had a *Cloak of Fortification*+4 which was priced way above what I had in ready cash, so I made a note to check back there later.

On my way to see the Sentinel in the Grove Shrine to Mystra, I noticed a pile of leaves that had something hard in it. Scrabbling about the leaves, I found a small wooden carving of a which I was able to Identify as a *Figurine of Wondrous Power*, which would summon a Dire Wolf once a day. I thought that would be exceedingly useful when faced with numerous monsters as we were likely to be, so I equipped it without delay.<sup>36</sup> I spoke to the Sentinel, but he had nothing further to add to what Hilrad had told me. He did confirm that the arch wizard Maganus was a prime mover in the Order of the Crippled Fang. Also he had among his stores a *Belt of Priestly Might* which I bought and gave to Astar to increase his strength. That let me give his *Swordsman's Belt* to Lyressa. She was pretty good with a blade, but the belt would make her better.

Then, with nothing else that I could see was useful to do in the area, we headed South into the Cormanthor Forest.

## Cormanthor

As we carefully explored our way through the trees and rocks, we were beset numerous times by Herzous and their summoned Succubi, Green and Gray Slaads, Order Warriors, Priests and Wizards. These things came on in force each time we encountered them and dealing with them was not easy. It often took the use of several healing potions during combat to enable us to deal with them all, but we managed to clear the forest of all of them. Afterwards, picking through the remains, we found numerous *Longswords*+2, *Large Shields*+2, *Short Swords*+1, *Masterwork Staves*, *Longswords*, *Crossbows*, *Bolts*+1, *Potions of Cure Critical Wounds*, a few miscellaneous spell scrolls, some GP and other lesser loot. There was more than I could put in my Bags of Holding, so I enlisted the help of my companions to carry the stuff.

In one spot in the Southwest, we ran across the body of a dead Adult Green Dragon. That gave us some gauge of the calibre of the foes we were going to be facing. In the North, we came upon a Gray Render who seemed to be guarding a nearby black crate. After we dealt with it, I found in the crate a set of *Drow Studded Leather Armour*+4, 99 Poison Bolts and a Viper Fang dagger (which I gave to Lyressa, reasoning that if she was good with one enhanced blade she would be even better with two.) Not far from there, I spotted a chest in which I found some *Bracers of Armour*+4, some *Arrows of Slaying (Human)*, an *Acid Flask* and a *Scroll of Bewilderment*.

In one spot in the Southeast, I spotted a hidden Shrine to Silvanus. In it there was what appeared to be an offering of Ironwood. I was tempted to take it, but I already had lots of other

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<sup>36</sup> Noticing the pile of leaves and thinking to investigate them earns 150XP as well as the *Figurine*. On the map of Elventree in Annex 2, the presence of Cassius is marked. Cassius was the wolf mentioned by the Druid merchant Branon Oakheart in Hillsfar. Cassius was not in evidence in play this time around, so somehow I was not able to initiate the quest related to him or Oakheart, although I did speak with the Druid about his familiar when I was in Hillsfar.

loot and I didn't really need to carry a piece of wood along as well. As we moved about the North, we ran across a Hunter's Trap with a bird tweeting away in it. I let the bird go and then destroyed the trap. I thought, "Better a bird in the bush than in some poacher's hand."<sup>37</sup>

Once we had cleared the area completely, I thought we were too heavily laden to go up against the Order's encampment effectively. So we dashed back to Elventree and unloaded all of the loot on the merchants there. With the proceeds, I bought the Cloak from Hummerspoon and fitted it to Astar and gave Astar's *Cloak of Resistance*+4 to Lyressa. Then we rushed back to Cormanthor and made our way to the Order's Encampment.

## Disordering the Order

The encampment, in fact the whole area seemed to be deserted. Behind the gates, in the tented area, I opened a chest and found 8379GP and a suit of *Studded Leather Armour*+3. In a second chest were 52GP, a *Scroll of Summoning VIII* and potions of *Clarity* and *Heal*. As we went back out the gate, we were quickly disabused of the notion that the place had been deserted. An Order Wizard, Priest and Warrior, as well as the Crippled Fang herself. I had only a few seconds to try to buff up and then we were at it.

I took care of the Warrior who came right at me, then let the others go at the Priest and Wizard while I handled the Dragon myself. The fight was surprisingly brief. The Crippled Fang was not a great fighter and went down exhausted after a few dozen blows were exchanged. On the Dragon, I found a *Ring of Clear Thought*+5, two *Rubies*, a finely bound volume of *The Cult of the Dragon* and a *Rod of Reversal*.<sup>38</sup> There was nothing unusual about the loot on the remains of the others, but I took it anyway. (Hummerspoon still had a lot of the GP I had paid for the belt, so I figured he would be able to buy the lot easily.) Heading out, I had a premonition, so we rested up and then buffed up before starting back to Elventree.

And a good thing we did. When we came to where Craster Rees and his Rangers had camped, we found the three of them dead. Over them was standing the seven foot tall, half human, half dragon monster of a warrior, Karandas, the Commander of the Order of the Crippled Fang. He bore what appeared to be a very powerful greatsword. He was not pleased at the Dragon's demise, as might be expected of a mother's son. He said he was through with alliances with soft skins, Maganus being the only one he thought worthy of any respect. He said that Maganus's objective was to see the Zhentarim dead, while his own was to see all humanity wiped out. (I thought, "He must be one of the few who consider Zhentarim part of humanity.")

And before we knew it, talk was over and he came at me with his mother of a sword. It was a good thing I had buffed up because, Karandas was amazingly powerful. As it was, both Lyressa and Astar were down and out of the fight before I managed to land the death blow on

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<sup>37</sup> Each Order Wizard sorted earns 38XP; Priest, 28XP; Warrior, 16XP. The Beblith is worth 14XP, Gray render 5XP, Gray Slaad 4XP, Green Slaad 2XP. Finding the Shrine to Silvanus is worth 150XP, as is releasing the bird from the Hunter's Trap. If you take the ironwood from the shrine, that moves your alignment +1 Chaotic and strips you of your "Crusader" title.

<sup>38</sup>Killing the Crippled Fang earns 152XP, the Warrior 12XP, the Priest 24XP and the Wizard 29XP.

him. But I did.<sup>39</sup> On his carcass, I found the Greatsword *Dominion*, a pair of *Boots of Speed* and a book, *Netheril: The Pride of the Archwizards*. I took the *Cloak of Movement* and the *Greataxe+3* from the body of Craster Rees and the *Masterwork Longswords and Longbows* and the *Arrows+1* from his companions and laid their bodies out with more dignity than Karandas had left them. I planned to see that the Elves gave them a proper burial. Then we went back to Elventree to report our success to Sharalyn and Hilrad.

### Elventree - Zhentarim Attack

Back in the Swaying Bough, we told Hilrad and Sharalyn all that had happened and showed them the sword *Dominion*. Hilrad brought the Sentinel in because his knowledge of the Netheril swords forged by Archmages in the past. They agreed it was best that the sword be entrusted to someone who could keep it safe. But before they could say or do anything else, when the ground shook.

We all dashed outside to see what had happened and saw fires burning throughout Elventree and Zhentarim invaders moving about. When challenged, the Zhent leader, Zalazar “the Hellspell” Oram, responded that they were there to avenge attacks on them by the alliance between the Elves and the order of the Crooked Fang cultists and that the order from King Fzoul himself was to burn Elventree to the ground.

Before we knew it, the Zhents accompanied by Beholders were marauding everywhere. As we ran to block them, Hilrad counselled that we deal with the Beholders first and then the Mages, while the Elves would handle the rest. We put up a good fight and had handled the first wave of Zhents and Beholders and were cleaning up when Zalazar appeared again accompanied by more Beholders. He was about to do us all in when the Archmage Maganus came to our rescue and put a stop to the impending battle royal. With a few spells he did them all in and ended the invasion.<sup>40</sup>

Afterward, he proceeded to clue us in on the background to his vendetta against the Zhentarim and his plans, including allying himself with the Dracolich Karandas and the Order of the Crooked Fang.

When I told him we had dealt with Karandas and his mother, and told him that *Dominion* was in good hands, he laughed and said I should choose my companions more carefully. With that he took off, laughing that he would not deal with me so kindly the next time we met. I noticed that Lyressa, Astar and Eremuth were nowhere to be seen and turned to try to find them.

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<sup>39</sup> Karandas is worth 250XP. Between now and the time you report back to Hilrad is the last opportunity you will have to take back any improved kit you have given to Eremuth and Astar or anything you may have them carrying for you. When you report to Hilrad and the Zhent invasion begins, both these companions act out of your control and you cannot get access to their respective inventories. Eremuth reveals himself as a Malaugrym, kills Astar and disappears outside of your view. Although you will be able to see Astar’s body in the Inn, events from there to his funeral are out of your control. Do not feel guilty for having taken items of his kit, or that of Eremuth: It doesn’t make any difference to later developments whether you do or don’t.

<sup>40</sup> In the fighting, the Zhent Mages are worth 12XP, the Beholders 8XP and the Fighters 4XP. When Maganus kills Zalazar, 3500XP is awarded for the ending of the *Order of the Crooked Fang* quest. If you want to despoil any of the Zhent or dead elven bodies, you will have to do it before you go back to the Inn after Eremuth and Astar. The remains will all be gone after Astar’s funeral.



Before I could move, Lyressa came running up reporting that Zhentarim had attacked the Swaying Bough and Astar and Eremuth had gone to defend it.

We ran to the inn and found there Astar dead and the Sentinel wounded. He related what had happened. He said that, protecting *Dominion*, he had fought off the Zhentarim when Eremuth and Astar had arrived to help. Then, before he knew it Eremuth had cast spells that debilitated him, taken the sword and with a swipe of a tentacle had taken out Astar's throat. The Sentinel then revealed that Eremuth was no half-elf but rather a shape-shifted Malaugrym whose prize all along had been the sword. He also said it had flown off to the East afterward. We were ready to chase off after it.

Hilrad, however, observed that Maganus also was after *Dominion* and that, if the Malaugrym ran true to form, Ex-Eremuth would be somewhere near preparing a stand to protect its prize. He said that gave us time to give Astar a proper funeral, which the Elves then did in a cut scene.<sup>41</sup> Afterward, I re-engaged Lyressa as a companion and asked Sharalyn if she wanted to join us. She did and gave me a *Harper Pin* in case I might need it to establish my bona fides with other Harpers in the future. Then I improved both her and Lyressa's kit with some of the items I had taken from Eremuth and Astar. After a rest, we set out to Elmwood, although I did make a stop to sell off accumulated loot to Hummerspoon. But, when he ran out of cash, I dashed back to Hillsfar to unload the rest on Titys and the other merchants. I told Branon about the little carving I had found and he said to keep it.

## **6. Elmwood**

Then Finally we betook ourselves to Elmwood. There, most of the locals seemed upset over an unusual murder. Not only that, the village head had closed down the ort pending completion of her investigation into the murder. I spotted a merchant in the Grange and sold a few things to him, as well as bought a rope (always need a rope!) And a few other small things. Unfortunately, he was not interested in any of the weapons, armour or ammunition I had.

Then we headed to the Inn to get a room in case we needed to rest up later. The Barkeep, Enrod Daleborn, was in particularly bad shape because his serving girl, Elawen was the victim of the murder. He was not keen to talk about it over it, but told us to go see the village head, Thorayana, for anything we wanted to know. After going up to our rooms. I noticed a couple of strange Rangers in one of them. Rested, we went back down and on our way out asked Enrod about them. He said they were strangers and didn't know anything about them other than that they had been in the Inn at the time of the murder, so were not the perpetrators.

## **Murder Most Foul**

We found Thorayana down by the docks. She told us a little about the murder but, after I agreed to help her investigation, she told us to go back and talk to Enrod again and also the head of the Temple of Selene, Alamarayne Moonray. Back at the Inn, Enrod was a little more forthcoming and, with a bit of successful persuasion, told us that Elawen had been quite tight

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<sup>41</sup> Completion of Astar's funeral ends the quest *The Town in the Trees* and earns 3500XP. The dialogue with Hilrad begins the quest *The Hunt for the Traitor*.

with the local Druid, Ezrin Treeward, recently and had visited with him frequently, but didn't have much more to add.<sup>42</sup>

We left him and went to the Temple. On the way, I noticed a shallow grave. I was going to do a bit of digging but thought better of it<sup>43</sup> and went on to see the head priestess. Alamarayne was also quite broken up over the murder. Apparently Elawen was going to become one of her acolytes. It was she who had first discovered the girl's body. She described the girl's death wound, a particularly vicious looking hole in her neck that looked like it had been done by a tentacle. That immediately rang a bell and we were certain we were now closer to finding the Malaugrym. Alamarayne was also a merchant, so, before leaving, I was able to sell off all the accumulated loot and get a few healing potions and one or two other bits to improve Sharalyn's kit.

The we went off to find the Druid Enrod had mentioned. On our way, we ran into a kid named Valen who mentioned that Ezrin had been acting strange of late. We spotted Ezrin him in the Druid Grove across the River Lys. As we approached the grove, I noticed a dog growling toward the grove, which seemed passing strange as druids were normally in close harmony with their nearby flora and fauna. When we got to Ezrin, he said that his face had been strung by a mass of bees. I tried to use my healing skills on him but they not up to the task. I thought to myself, "Why would bees do such a number on a Druid?" We carried on talking for a while and my uneasy feeling about him increased exponentially.

When I said I was going to take a walk in the woods and took my leave of him, he became quite snotty and disingenuously wished us well.

## **Cormanthor East**

We entered the forest and began exploring without incident. To the West, we came to the entrance to a misty cave and checked it out. Inside, there were several Water Mephits and a Water Elemental, none of which gave us any trouble. Outside again, we proceeded cautiously because the absence of opposition seemed almost too good to be true.

We followed the hills South where, once past a stream, we spotted Ezrin and his wolf and bear familiars. As soon as we came up to them, It quickly became evident that Ezrin was none other than Eremuth (or rather, the Malaugrym) and the two familiars doppelgangers. After a pitched battle we overcame them. But then the Malaugrym disappeared saying "No, I will not die here. The Blade of Netheril must be protected." Cleaning up afterward, on the corpses of the doppelgangers, I found a couple of *Potions of Heal*, a *Shadovar Amulet*, a *Belt of Fire Giant Strength* and a note which made it clear they were those two rangers we had seen at the Inn in Elmwood. The note proved that the Malaugrym had killed Ezrin and Elawen and referred to a hiding place it had made in an old well back in Elmwood.

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<sup>42</sup> Successfully persuading enrod to tell you about Elawen and Ezrin earns 150XP.

<sup>43</sup> Noticing the grave earns 150XP. Digging it up gets an alignment shift of =2 Chaotic and being stripped of the Crusader title. Actually taking the *Half Plate Armour*+3 from the grave nets another +2 Chaotic shift.

Nearby also was the pelt of the bear that had been Ezrin's familiar. I put it in my pack, just in case it might be sellable or useful later on.

I thought we should head back to find that well and deal with Eremuth - or whatever it was named - as soon as possible. As we made our way up the West shoreline of the River Lis, we came across a damaged ferry. There was nothing to be done with it, so we passed on. A little farther North, we found a Rangers' cache with a little bit of cheese and wine in it as well as a *Cheese Parer* dagger. Going Northward again, there was a rowboat on the shore. I thought of using it to go over to the other side of the river, but thought we should move on without delay. Northward again, there was an old chest with some rags and an empty wine bottle in it.

As we approached the trail back to Elmwood, there was a bush with some *Goodberries* on it. As I picked the berries, we came under fire from Goblins on the Eastern shore of the river. I was not prepared to leave that kind of creature behind us, especially so close to the town. So we went back to the rowboat and made our way across the river. There the Goblins attacked again and we made short work of them and found they had been armed with *Poison Arrows*. So we had at least saved the town that sort of trouble.

While there, I thought we should make sure there was nothing else lurking about. The Northern part was blocked off by a range of impassable hills. As we moved to the East, an Elder Earth Elemental came at us and we sorted it. Moving to the South, we came upon a Drow camp that appeared deserted. At least nothing came at us. In a chest there were some *Bolts of Piercing* and an *Odd Note* referring to a meeting at midnight. I couldn't make anything of the note. We had spent enough time on that side of the river and there was nothing else in evidence there. So we got back in the rowboat, returned to the other side and made our way back to where we had first entered the forest.<sup>44</sup>

## Elmwood - The Old Well

I thought of going straight to Thoyana with what we had discovered, but then decided we had better follow up on Eremuth without further delay. Near the edge of the woods to the East of the river, we found the old well. We tore off the loose boards that covered it up and descended using that rope I had had the foresight to buy at the Grange earlier.

No sooner had we hit bottom when a couple of Invisible Stalkers and a Gelatinous Cube attacked. They were not as hard as they might have been and afterward, I picked up two *Silver Sickles of Soranth* on the remains. We found ourselves in a cross shaped chamber with a door at each end of the cross. I flipped a GP and we opened the door to the West. Through it we were greeted by Pixies Will o Th' wisps and a Tri-Floral Frond of Death. Beyond that chamber was another door and through it we were welcomed by an Elder Air Elemental and more Invisible Stalkers. With them sorted we had a chance to look at the chamber we were in at leisure. It had been ransacked and there was nothing much there but a few spell scrolls and books. The room angle to the North and back East where we came to another door.

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<sup>44</sup>Goblins, Wolves, Grizzly Bears, the Water Mephits and Elemental in the cave are worth 2XP each. The Elder Earth Elemental nets 70XP and 52GP. The Doppelgangers earn 16XP each. (Nothing for the Malaugrym at this point.) Noticing the berry bush on the way out earns 150XP.

That got us into the chamber we would have entered had we taken the North door from where we landed. Inside a cut scene showed Maganus taking *Dominion* from a chest and gloating that we were too late. Then a giant rat appeared and transformed into the Malaugrym before our eyes. They had a bit of a set to, but it came to nothing except both of them shooting off: Maganus to wreak vengeance on Zhentarim and the Malaugrym to rally his allies to get the sword back from Maganus. That left us alone with not much to show for our efforts other than the knowledge that we had solved the murder of Elawen. But not achieved justice for the girl or for Ezrin Treewarden.

After both had disappeared, I found the Malaugrym's Journal in a chest and another book it had kept, Volo's Bestiaries: The Malaugrym. The first recorded all of its nefarious activities and its evil bent. It also definitively cleared up who the two Rangers were in the Inn. It also mentioned meeting one of its cohorts in that closed Curio shop back in Hillsfar. The second told me more that I ever wanted to know about the nastiness of the monster(s) we were eventually going to have to go up against. Then we made our way through to the rest of the well areas. (We would not have gotten far had we tried to take the North door first as it was blocked by a broken bookcase. After we bashed it away, the route back South was open.) I figured we might as well clear the whole well complex of any remaining monsters so that the town would not be troubled by them in future.

Through the East door, we were welcomed by a couple of Stone Golems and an Iron Golem. And through the South door, a bunch of ochre jellies, dire spiders and a Queen Spider. There were a few GP and some small loot as reward for our efforts. The real reward was leaving no monsters behind.<sup>45</sup>

## Elmwood - Next Steps

We reported back to Thorayana and she took us back to the Inn to thank us "properly", she said.<sup>46</sup> There, over cakes and ale, we took stock of where we were and what had to be done. Sharalyn was of the view that chasing after Maganus was our first priority. The only problem with that was knowing where, exactly, to chase him down. She mentioned her contacts in each of Zhentil Keep, Melvaunt and Mulmaster as possibilities for more information.

At that point, Lyressa revealed that she had found a letter among Astar's possession addressed to his widow in Mulmaster. She gave it to me for safekeeping and that pretty well decided me on where our first stop should be. Astar was a good and honourable companion.

Sharalyn thought that speaking to one of the Archmages in Thentia could also provide a lead for us on Maganus, given that Archmages tended to keep track of one another wherever

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<sup>45</sup>The Gelatinous Cube, Pixies, Invisible Stalkers, Ochre Jellies and Dire Spiders were worth 2XP each. The Flower Frond of Death and the Stone Golems were 11XP each. The Queen Spider was 23XP and the Iron Golem 47XP. The Elder Air Elemental earned 176XP. The quest *Hunt for the Traitor* finishes when Maganus has his tête-à-tête with the Malaugrym and earns 4000XP.

<sup>46</sup>Much of the dialogue in the Inn is non-discretionary, but once you regain control, you will find yourself awarded 4000XP for finishing the quest *Murder in Elmwood*. It also opens the quests *Astar's Widow*, *Mulmaster: Cheslyn Onaubra*, *Melvaunt: Ulbryn Blackabuck*, *Zhentil Keep: Kornah the Crazy* and *Thentia: Archmages*.

they were. Thorayana, after buying another round, said she would love to go with us, but was just too old for adventuring any more. She did, however give us her old kit in case it might improve what we already had. It was some good kit: a *Dwarven Thrower* warhammer, a set of *Chainmail+4*, a *Helm of Brilliance* and a pair of *Gauntlets of Ogre Power*. Thorayana also had opened up the docks again and suggested that we speak to the Captain of one of the ships about transport across the Moonsea.

## Hillsfar - Loose Ends

I decided, however, that we should follow up on that Curio shot back in Mulmaster. So we dashed there. And it was a good thing we did. Waiting there was Eremuth's sister, Nightshade, in the form of a beautiful sorceress. When I confronted her, however, she turned into a beblith and attacked. It was touch and go for a few moments, but the three of us prevailed. On the carcass was a note from what I presumed to be the mother to which Eremuth's journal had referred. It explained the riddle of Cheswick's change of personality: he had been taken over by a doppelganger. It also suggested there was some greater Malaugrym plot afoot, masterminded by one Hlaven, who I understood to be the mother of both Eremuth and Nightshade. That, I put a note in my mind, bore further investigation as we proceeded.<sup>47</sup>

While in Hillsfar, I took the opportunity to enhance the weapons of both Sharalyn and Lyressa at the temple of Tempus. Then we dashed to tell Amberlyn and Ogson what we had discovered about Cheswick. Amberlyn seemed quite comfortable in Ogson's wagon and we could not gain access to her. I tried to get Ogson to pass on the news about Cheswick's fate, but he was only interested in trading. That at least made it possible to get rid of my remaining extra loot. Then we dashed back to Elmwood to speak to a man about a ship.

Except the man turned out to be the very not-man Kettia Freeborn who Captained *The Grim Voyager*. We spoke to her and came to terms on transporting us to Mulmaster.

## 7. Mulmaster

### Docklands

When we disembarked in Mulmaster, the first thing we ran into was a bunch of self-important Thayvians standing guard as we moved from the jetty. Their Captain, a pompous ass named Zamakus, deigned to tell us their purpose: To protect gifts from Thay to celebrate the anniversary of the High Blade of Mulmaster, Selfarin, and his wife the Tharchion Dmitra Flass of Thay. Not to mention the alliance of the two fiefdoms against the Zhents. When I said I would be interested in attending the ceremony, he sneered that it was by invitation only and laughed at the idea that I might get invited. I disliked the goof immensely.

That was such an unpleasant experience that I decided we all needed a drink to wash the taste of it out of our mouths. So we made our way to the Oxpit Tavern. On our way I noticed a ship moored at the nearby quay that had a dying mako shark and a seagull on its deck. There was no one around and I couldn't get anything intelligible out of the seagull. I didn't, for some

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<sup>47</sup> Killing Nightshade earns 266XP. Getting and reading the note from Hlaven begins the quest *The Unseen*.

reason, like the idea of seeing it squirming in death throes, so I tried to use a Healer's Kit on it. That removed it from the door of death, but all it did was lay there and continue to bleed. I wasn't going to get any closer to it to try to push it over the side, so we left it to determine its own fate. I had done my own bit to preserve life and burnish my PETA credentials (in case I ever ran into any of those maniacs).

### **Trouble in the Tavern**

Inside the Oxpit, we made our way to Cyril the Barkeep. It was hard to get service because he kept looking nervously at a bald, one-eyed sailor and his motley crew. I was beginning to pick up vibes that the Pit was not necessarily a place for rest and relaxation. That was confirmed when he told us about the reputation of the guy he had been eying. He didn't have much more to say except pass on rumours of some kind of trouble in the Western half of the Moonsea and rumblings of trouble with Thar in the North. He also mentioned the town being abuzz with the Thayan Embassy and the upcoming anniversary ceremony.

Everybody seeming to be walking on eggshells because of the guy and his crewmen, almost like a pot about to boil over. So, of course I went over to him, Veris was his name, and find out what was going on. He became aggressive very quickly, asking if I had come for him and his crew. I had no idea what he was on about and told him so. All he did was ask me what I wanted then. When I said I just wanted to ask a few questions he just brushed me off. The language of his crew members was a little less polite. So, we walked away, had our drink and went back out to explore the town.

### **A Nest of Vampires**

After few twists and turns, we came to a door that looked as though it might be easy to unlock. Which we did and went in, to find a Vampire Mage, Rogue and Warrior plotting. They attacked us forthwith, but we sorted them and they all disappeared. Upstairs we found three sarcophagi, only two of which I was able to bash. The third, I could not bash as something prevented me from landing a blow. I could only make a note to try again later. Looking around, I found a chest in which there was a note written in blood, to the effect that the time of the vampires was coming. It didn't make much sense, so I just stashed it in the hope that someone else might be able to understand what it was about.<sup>48</sup>

We went back out and kept exploring, but there was nothing much else to be seen or done. We did come across a Smithy, but he had only a few weapons and nothing we needed. So we headed North to the Imperial District.

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<sup>48</sup> Picking the lock to the house moves your alignment +1 Chaotic and removes the title "Crusader" I was getting tired of that anyway. Inside, there are no XP for killing the vampires in battle. There is a 1-XP reward for each sarcophagus destroyed upstairs. For some reason, the game machine would not let my character bash the third. Even though I was right in front of it I kept getting a message "Unable to reach target!", even though I tried from every conceivable angle.

## **The Imperial District**

### **Dark Doors**

We entered the district and hadn't gone far when I noticed a couple going into a doorway. We entered after them and found they were two Mulmastrian nobles standing in the middle of the room making conversation. They more or less ignored us, so I took a look around. There was nothing of interest that I could see in any of the open rooms. I did, however, notice one door which was locked. Curious to see what was there, I picked the lock. Inside were two virtually naked Mulmastrian commoners. They ran up to me, gushing with thanks at having been freed. They said they had been invited "to come and experience the high life", but instead had been stripped and kept for the pleasure of any nobles who came by.

After they had run off, I found piles of their clothing, a pair of *Boots of the Winterlands* and a *Nymph Cloak*+5. The high life clearly was not what they had expected. On our way out, the two nobles told us we were fine looking specimens and should come to their next party. I just shook my head and left without a word.<sup>49</sup>

With a bad taste in our mouths from even speaking to those two, we left and went out to try to find Sharalyn's contact, Chesslyn Onaubra.

### **The Gates of Gold**

We found her, a guard at the Casino - otherwise known as the Gates of Gold. She was quite cagey until I showed her the *Harper Pin* that Sharalyn had given me. Even then, she was only marginally helpful. I asked about Astar's widow and she pointed me to Rikard Graysteel, who was at one of the Roulette tables. When I asked about getting an invitation to the anniversary ceremony that Thayvian Captain had told me about, she was able to get one, but only at a cost of 10,000GP. When I balked at that, she told me there was a Red Wizard back in Hillsfar from whom I might get one. I knew exactly who she was talking about.

I took a quick look in the gaming room and Rikard did not look like he was going anywhere for quite a while, so I decided to dash back to see a wizard about an invite. Kettia Freeborn was still at the docks and happy to make another quick trip.

We were halfway to Elmwood when the ship was attacked by a bunch of Marels, sea monsters who clearly (shown in a cut scene) thought we would be easy prey. They came on in three or four waves, but eventually we put them all down, including their Leader. That caused a bit of a delay, but it did give us some exceptional loot on the remains scattered about the ship. Each of them had carried a *Marel Spear*, except for their leader who had a *Trident of Thunder*. The leader also had a *Belt of Cloud Giant Strength*, a *Cloak of Fortification*+4 and *Bracers of Armour*+4. There were more *Bracers of Armour*+4, *Periaps of Wisdom*+4, *Potions of Heal* and of *Cure Critical Wounds* and miscellaneous other stuff on the corpses. Some amazingly

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<sup>49</sup> There are no XP for releasing the commoners from Party Central

valuable stuff!<sup>50</sup>

After that we made good time to Elmwood, then force marched all the way to Hillsfar. There, I found Zeltoon Sang again and he was quite happy to part with his invitation to the ceremony. His price was 5000XP. I decided I was not going to get it any cheaper, or any other way, so I did the deal. I thought to sell off the Marel loot, but none of the merchants had enough capital to buy more than a fraction of it. I remembered that Ogson seemed to be particularly well capitalized, so I detoured to Lukash and unloaded it all on him. All, that is, except for the Belt of *Cloud Giant Strength* which I equipped myself and the *Cloak of Fortification*+4, which I gave to Sharalyn.

Then we zoomed back to Elmwood, found Kettia and sailed back to Mulmaster with not even a full day lost. Rested from the sail back, we went back to the Casino and, eschewing the various gaming tables found Rikard Graysteel. When I tried to speak to him about finding Astar's widow, he was drunk as a skunk, barely comprehensible and just wanted to get on with his betting and drinking. All we got out of him was to go to the Zhent quarter and find our own way. So, we left him there in his sulking stupor.

Leaving him, I noticed the heavily barred door to the Casino's Treasure room. No one noticed when I tried picking the locks on the door. Not even the second time around when I had to use a set of *Thieves' Tools* to get it open all the way. Inside there were numerous traps but Lyressa and I made short work of them all. The place was a veritable treasure trove and I was quite happy to accept the alignment shift it cost me to be able to get at it. In a locked and booby-trapped cabinet in the middle of the main chamber there were 20,000GP, *Bolts of Frostbite* and a *Ring of Elemental Protection*. In a chest of drawers against one wall were a couple of *Potions of Heal*, spell scrolls of *Mass Heal* and *Undead the Final Foe* and 61GP. In a desk in one of the alcoves was a *Luckstone* and 3001GP. Finally, in a desk in another alcove, there were 4222GP and a pile of Ice Bullets.

We got out of there again without anyone noticing us, carefully closed and locked the door and made our way out of the place. Clearly we had hit the jackpot by avoiding the games of chance!<sup>51</sup>

Outside, we saw the Temple of Cyric up a long forbidding staircase. We checked it out, finding it dark, dank and stank of blood. The priests were nasty sorts and the only thing semi-worthwhile in the place was their dreary shop and the GP they had to buy loot. Even their selection of wares for sale was limited and suspect, but I did find a couple of *Potions of Heal* to buy. Then we left the unsavoury place.

Our next stop was at the Traveller's Cloak Inn. I was getting pretty tired and it was increasingly hard to move, so I got a room from the owners Dela and Vesver Arden. It was pricey at 12 GP, but the place was sumptuous and I was flush, so I figured why not splurge. We

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<sup>50</sup> Fighting them off successfully earns 500Xp. The Leader is worth 47XP, the Priests 17XP, the Sorcerers 11XP and the Soldiers 2XP each.

<sup>51</sup> The moral cost of breaking into the Treasure room is a +5 Chaotic alignment shift. It is important to be careful when entering to disable all of the traps. Otherwise some or most of the cabinets may become unavailable to you.



laid off the booze but, nonetheless, Vesver - an inveterate gossip - proved to be a font of information. He said something about the Shades of the Anauroch Desert searching for something near Thentia. Then he went on about the Temple of Malar (wherever that was) preparing for its annual hunt. Then he told us about the one-eyed mage in the West, which was not news. But what was new was his information that Maganus had fled to Thar. That was worthwhile.

### **The Zhent Quarter (Astar's Widow)**

After a rest, we made our way to the Zhent Quarter. It was one dark, depressing slum.

Almost as soon as we came through the gates, a sleazy-looking character who called himself Sylar the Trustworthy came running up and offered to be our guide to the delights of the quarter. Well, I had been around long enough to know for certain that anyone who calls himself trustworthy is most likely to be anything but. I didn't have any idea which way to go, however, and he swore he knew exactly where Lana Graysteel's home was. We followed, but I signalled to both Sharalyn and Lyressa to keep a ready hand on their respective weapons.

And a good thing I did. After following the jerk through countless alleys, he brought us to a dead end. And, surprise, surprise, his gang was waiting there for us and attacked. In the midst of the melee, Sylar ran off. That was probably why he didn't see us wipe the road up with his thugs. We were relieving the remains of their kit (each had a *Short Sword*+3, a *Small Shield*+3, plus a healing potion or two), when an old fellow came running up to apologize for the thuggery. Old Jeffers was his name and he said that most of those in the quarter, though poor, were honest and was glad to see the end of Sylar's Gang.

When he learned we were looking for Astar's widow, he showed exactly where her door was and marked it on my map. He was also, like many there a refugee from Zhent Keep, and when encouraged gently told us about Maganus's ordeal there, which went a long way to explaining the mage's hatred of the Zhentarim. I thanked him and he went off, refusing any kind of gratuity. As we made our way to Lana Graysteel's door, who should we run into on the street but Sylar. I could hear him boasting about his arrangements for us and interrupted. He tried to make several excuses for what he had done, but I was having none of it. He was not only a waste of air, he was dangerous to any innocent and I wasn't going to let him get away with it any more.<sup>52</sup> I took the *Boots of Reflexes*+6, the *Dagger*+4 and a couple of potions from his body and left whatever might have been left for whoever would take it.

I knocked on Lara Graysteel's door and looked in, only to see her cowering, expecting to be robbed of what little she might have had or worse. She was still a handsome looking woman. I calmed her down and reassured her, then had to tell her that Astar was dead and gave her his letter. She was glad of his explanation of why he had left and thought all the more of him for his sacrifice and honour. In gratitude, she gave me their wedding ring.

She explained that she had married Rikard, thinking Astar dead and gone forever and

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<sup>52</sup> Old Jeffers's dialogue ends the quest *Cheslyn Onaubra* and earns 1000XP. Killing Sylar earns 250XP and his gang members are worth 2XP each.

couldn't wear it in good conscience. Rikard, she said, was basically a good man and had started off well, but then the responsibility had weighed on him. For her, that explained why he had become a drunk and wastrel. I told her I would try to talk to him and see if there was any hope for him returning to care for her properly. With that, we took our leave and headed back out of the Zhent Quarter.

Back in the Imperial Quarter, I made a bee line for Rikard in the Gates of gold. He was still besotted and throwing away what money he had left. I managed to pull him away from the roulette wheel and, with some effort, persuaded him that he owed it not only to Lana, but to himself as well, to straighten up, get out of the pit where he was wallowing and take care of the both of them properly. Wonder of all wonders, that little exchange brought him around and he decided to go straight back to Lana.<sup>53</sup> I reflected afterward that that was one of the most gratifying set of events I had had since coming to the Moonsea.

### The Anniversary Ceremony

Leaving the casino, I spotted another house with lights on and went to knock on the door. Before I knew it, Sharalyn had bashed it down. I had a quick word with her and told her to lay off the bombastics and let me handle doors and chests thenceforward. When I went inside to apologize for her hasty action, a Beholder, an Iron and a Flesh Golem, two Zhent Warriors and a Mage had at us without a word. After sorting them, I found several healing potions (which I gave to Sharalyn), a couple of *Light Crossbows*+1 and *Bolts*+1, a *Masterwork Dagger*, a *Zhent Tower Shield*, some *Thieves' Tools*+10 and a *Wand of Fire*. Looking around afterward, in a locked room we found a dead Red Wizard (with a *Dagger*+1 on his corpse).<sup>54</sup>

By then, having the invitation in my pocket, I decided it was time to check out the ceremony that Thayvian down at the dock had mentioned. Outside the front door of the Red Wizard Enclave, Zamakus himself was presiding. When he saw my invitation, he clearly did not want to honour it, but had no other choice. He got his back by saying me I could go in but my friends had to stick around. Outside.

Inside, the ceremony began with a long platitudinous peroration by the Thayvian Ambassador. (A cut scene over which I had no control.) When he led in the special gift from Thay to the happy couple, serried quartets of Ruby, Emerald and Diamond Golems, things got out of hand and the Golems began an attack the guests of honour. The High Blades's guards defended him and his wife. I lent a helping hand, taking down several of the the Golems and eventually the dozen of them had been successfully brought down.

With the fighting over, the High Blade, Selfaril Uomudolphin, order the Thayvian Ambassador take away to be interrogated about the assassination attempt. It didn't sound like it would be a pleasant diplomatic affair. Then he asked me to meet with him alone, which we

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<sup>53</sup> Persuading him successfully earns 150XP. When he decides to go back to Lana, that is worth another 4500XP and ends the *Astar's Widow* quest.

<sup>54</sup> . The Iron Golem is worth 47XP; The Mage 11XP; The Beholder, the Flesh Golem and the Warriors, 2XP each. In a previous game, I was able to find an invitation to the Anniversary ceremony on the body of that Red Wizard. For some reason, that was not an option this time around.

accomplished in a private chamber.

I asked him about Maganus and he could offer nothing except that any enemy of the Zhentarim was a friend of his. When I took him to task over Astar, he got on his high horse and proceeded to lecture me on the practical aspects of political and overwhelming military power. I decided there was nothing to be gained by pressing the point, and just pointedly asked him about a reward for helping save his prickly hide. He told me that I could take any parts of the dead golems and anything else I wanted from where the fight took place. Then he, not very subtly, invited me to leave his fief forthwith.<sup>55</sup>

Before I left, I cleaned up the Reception Hall, gleaning 4 Diamonds, 4 Emeralds and 4 Rubies from the Golem remains. From the remains of the guards, I picked up *Longswords*+1, a *Dagger*+1, a *Wand of Fire* and a *Wand of Summoning* and an Alexandrite. Not great, but not bad pickings overall. There was nothing else to see or do in there, so I left and found Sharalyn and Lyressa waiting outside.

I greeted each and welcomed them back as companions and then we made our way back to the docks. On the way I met a flower seller, Daisy Hawthorne, who tried to sell me some potted house plants. I would have liked to help her out, but was not able to complete a transaction with her.

On the way to the dock and the Grim Voyager, we stopped at each of the merchants we had met so I could unload the loot I had accumulated. I had to hit all three in order to get rid of all the stuff as the two temples quickly ran out of stock capital.

## **8. Thentia**

We headed back to the docks to find Kettia and get ourselves passage to Thentia. That seemed the most logical place to go if we were to get word of Maganus from the sorcerers resident there. We boarded and got under way.

### **Peregrinatio Interruptio (1)**

All went well for several hours and we were enjoying the cruise under full sail, Scotch in had, facing the sun. But then our ship was stopped for a documents check by the Melvauntian navy. We were boarded by none other than their Admiral of the fleet, one Meldondar Nurian.

Try as he might, he couldn't find anything incriminating, but questioned all of us closely nonetheless. All the time, I could see Kettia silently fuming in rage. When he learned I was an adventurer, he offered me bounty for hunting down three wanted pirates on the Moonsea. They were Veris of the *Purple Star*, Burak the Mongrel of the *Flotsam* and Ilandra Warmistress of the *Mingleblood*. He had no idea where they were and was of no help in offering any information about them. I didn't mind that much: I already knew where one of them was to be found. With

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<sup>55</sup> You only get XP for the Golems on which you are able to land the killing blow. The Diamond Golems are worth 35XP each and the Emerald and Ruby Golems 17XP each. When the Thayvian Ambassador is trundled off to the dungeons for treachery, you are awarded 4500XP and the quest *Thayan Ambassadors* is completed.

that, the Admiral departed in haughty grandeur, leaving us in peace.<sup>56</sup>

When he had gone, Kettia let fly about me agreeing to Nurian's proposal and how she hated Melvaunt and Thay, the two main powers on the Moonsea that were founded on, and trafficked in, slaves. I agreed, but observed that pirates didn't seem a much preferable alternative and that they, also, trafficked in slaves. I put it to her that I had a reasonable chance of managing pirates but taking on whole realms was out of my means at the moment. She saw the logic of that, even if she did not agree wholeheartedly. So I got no grief from her when I asked her to make a quick detour back to Mulmaster.

Landed in that dreary port, we made our way quickly to the Oxpit and reflected, once again on what a pit it was. I went straight over to Veris, who was as nasty as ever, and told him I had come for him this time. Without further adieu the melee broke out. I took Veris down first and then helped out Lyressa and Sharalyn with his numerous crew members and assorted thugs.<sup>57</sup> Afterward, picking through the remains, I found a *Scimitar of Speed*+4, a *Scimitar*+3, a set of *Half Plate*+4 and a *Potion of Heal* on Veris's body. I also carefully wrapped up his head so that it would not sully my pack. On the corpses of there others, there were a few GP, *Capes of Protection Vs. Lawful*, several *Short Swords*, *Scimitars*+1, *Longbows*+2 and various kinds of arrows.

Bowing to the applause of the remaining patrons and the somewhat muted thanks of the barkeep (he had, after all, just lost a lot of paying customers), we took our leave of the place. Kettia was waiting at the *Grim Voyager*, relieved at still having paying passengers and we sailed to Thentia without further adventures on the water.

Arrived in Thentia, we thanked Kettia and looked around. The first thing I saw from the dock was a Temple of Selene, off to the East. There, I found the High Priestess Sureen Aumratha. After aa few polite words, I found she was willing to take all our remaining loot from Mulmaster off our hands. Flush again, I improved my kit by trading in my *Cloak of Fortification*+4 and buying a +5, and also got several Potions of Heal. With business out of the way, we got to chatting and she told us of a couple of her more accomplished acolytes, the Mages Janatha and Berrimel, appeared to have gone missing while on a mission North to Thar to explore reported activity at the stronghold of Kur-Tharsu. She had heard nothing of Maganus but suggested that I speak to one of the resident high wizards, Flamuldinath "Firefingers" Thuldoum.

## Town Gossips

It was, however quite dark when we emerged and I thought we should find someplace to get a bite and a bed before exploring the area further. Speaking to passers by, one of them told us that we were in East Thentia and there wasn't much to see on the West side. Another told us of Shadowvars moving about nearby ruins, while yet another said that a local hothead noble, Bale Khodolis, was trying to organize a vigilante "resistance" army to deal with the Shadowvar.

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<sup>56</sup> This begins the quest *Pirates of the Moonsea*.

<sup>57</sup> Killing Veris earns 37XP and each of his crew another 2XP each.

Another said there was trouble in Thar, but then added “When isn’t there?”

Somehow, we ended up at an Inn called “The Inlet” in the North Central part of the city. There was no sign of any wizard’s tower in the area, so we called it a night there.<sup>58</sup> It was run by a Minotaur called Thud who was really quite personable and welcoming. So we talked to him and he mentioned the fact that Shadovars were moving about the old ruins and that some fools were setting up a Thentia Resistance Army. He also mentioned something about a Dragon Cult in the city, but had nothing else of interest, so I just rented a room and we left him.

We chatted a bit to some of the guests, one of whom described another a guest as a “bear of a man”, Then we went upstairs and found an absolutely gorgeous suite, which I claimed for us. Wandering about the upstairs, we met a big hairy man who introduced himself as Karin Ninetrees and described himself as a ranger and guide. There wasn’t much to be done with him, so we let him be, although he did invite us to have a drink with him later.

### **House of the Dragon Cult**

After cleaning up and resting a bit, we headed back out to check out the rest of the city. They were pleased to call it a city but it looked more like a burg, or a dorp. For some reason, we were not able to get into the whole northeast quadrant of the area. The Inn exit doors to it were locked and the pathways to it on either side of the Inn were also blocked off and impassable. Across the road to the West of the inn was Angrym’s Livery, a stable and saddlery. I didn’t think we needed any animal transport at that moment, so we just passed it by.

We headed back South toward the harbour and to the West to check out the rest of the city and, hopefully, find the wizard Thuldoun. As we came to where the road turned West, there stood a tower which I had failed to notice the night before. There were no doors on the tower, but the house abutting it had two. I knocked but there was no answer and they were both locked. I thought that strange and that perhaps the wizard had not heard my rapping. So I picked the lock of the first door, entered what was obviously the kitchen wing, and shouted “Haloo! Anyone home?”

Well, there was someone home but it was not the wizard we had hoped to find. Instead, a half dozen thugs clad in purple cloaks charged at us, determined, so it seemed, to remove us from the face of the planet. They almost succeeded, I have to admit. Only a few of the healing potions I had stored in my pack prevented a less happy ending to the fighting. Indeed, both Sharalyn and Lyressa were reduced to near catatonic states by the time the fighting had ended. I revived both with a few more healing potions and we looked around.

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<sup>58</sup> The priestess tells you that Old Firefingers’s tower is in the North of Thentia. That is an error or a typo in the Game machine: His tower is located in the South. See map at Annex 1.

Each of the otherwise nondescript purple cloaks had a name in it so it was easy to discover who had caused us so much grief. An Ogre named Orinskar, the first of the bunch to see us, had carried only a *Greatsword*+4. Another, Crenshyl Khodoil, had a *Two-bladed Sword*+3, *Boots of Hardiness*+3, a *Ring of Major Acid Resistance* and a healing potion. On Kaela Ulsant, there was a *Tower Shield*+3, a *Mace of Darkness*, a *Periapt of Wisdom*+4 and a spell *Scroll of Gate*. She also carried a note from someone signed “Poe” that suggested there was another wing of the Dragon Cult in operation, in addition to that of the Crooked Fang which we had already sorted.

Kaela,

Things are moving ahead as planned. Continue to work on Iyrauroth - the mighty Wyrms of the Peaks must be convinced of the merits of the gift we offer. Shashurra proved to be a grave disappointment; we shall need other Sacred Ones if the First-Speaker's vision is to be brought to glorious fruition!

- POE

On the corpse of Delphaern Leyraghon, I found a *Wand of Negative Energy*, a *Dagger*+2, a *Scroll of Horrid Wilting* and a healing potion. Another, Dalgar, Blood of Iyrauroth, had a *Seigebreaker* heavy crossbow, 98 *Bolts*+4 and *Potions of Heal* and of *Invisibility*. The last of our attackers, named Theldon Hammerfist, was very aptly named. He was the last to go down and the most powerful of the bunch. On his body, there was a *Discord Bastard Sword*, a *Belt of Storm Giant Strength* (+10!), a *Bulwark of the Great Dragon Tower Shield*, and a *Cloak of Protection Vs Good*. He clearly had been the most powerful, if not the leader, of these cultists.

Having collected all of the loot, we rested a bit and then took a look around. There was not much to be found. On a bookshelf in the salon, there was a book that had a pretty complete run down of the whole Cult of the Dragon. It was clear then that the Crooked Fang had only been one emanation of this bunch of conspirators and that there were still serious efforts afoot to create more Dracoliches. There was no doubt in my mind that Maganus was orchestrating some of this activity. We had, at least, scotched this wing before it could accomplish anything.<sup>59</sup> I made a mental note to keep an eye out for that “Poe”, whoever or whatever he/she/it might be, so that we could deal with the ultimate leader of these fanatics.

## The Beacon & Beimoura

By the time we had cleared the hideout and got back out on the road, it was dark again. We headed West along the road, hoping we would soon find the other inn we had been told about, The Beacon. Lyressa and I were fine, but Sharalyn was hurting a lot. And after a short hike, we did.

Inside, the first thing I noticed was an effete young man who looked utterly bewildered and angry, sitting at a table. I was going to ask him about it, but Sharalyn was hurting and I thought we should get a room first, so she could rest up. So I went straight to the bar and did that. I could tell the barkeep wanted some conversation, so I made excuses, saying we would be back down after a bit and we went up.

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<sup>59</sup> This does not appear to be a quest as such. Nothing appears in the game journal for it, at least. Killing Hammerfist is worth 37XP; Orinskar, Kaela and Dalgar 12XP each; Delphaern 8XP and Crenshyl 5XP.

On the second floor, none of the rooms looked like they had been taken so we went into the one with what looked like a nice library. We rested a bit and then I picked up a couple of the books. One related the history of something called the Cult of the Bright Sword. It told of how a wizard had once forged wizard-slaying swords to deal with the rising power of the netheril. According to the book, one such sword was in Thentia. The other book was the journal of that Bale Khodrian we had been told about and told a story that seemed a lot like a weak mind being taken over by another more powerful entity. After I shared these with my companions, we went down to the inn for a drink and to speak to that barman as I had promised.

He was named Moavar, a very garrulous sort, a ship's captain who had retired early, bought the inn and named it the Beacon after his old vessel. He told us about the Marels, whom we had already met, about Avagard, a Thentian noble who had taken to piracy and had made a success of it until apparently done in by Beholder. Moavar suggested that he was not killed and still was about somewhere, plotting revenge. He also told the story of A'Tuin, a dragon turtle and a terror of the Moonsea - one to watch out for and avoid.

Finally, he told me about the Thentia Resistance Army. They, it seemed, were made up of the lot of foppish young nobles I had seen talking in one of the corners of the place. Their leader, Bale Khodolis, I had heard of from those townsfolk I had spoken to earlier. It was his journal I had found upstairs and he seemed inordinately proud of a sword he was brandishing boldly. I began to put two and two together and was getting close to four. And to get the measure of this "army".

After a drink or two, I thought it might be interesting, if not fun, to go over and see that bunch. On the way, the guy I had noticed on entering was still in the same state of mind, so we stopped to talk to him. This Gideon Bimeir claimed to be the best swordsman around and yet was confounded at having been beaten by Bale Khodolis, whom he described as a 'Milquetoast'. At that point, my two and two was beginning to add up to more than four. I asked him about the "army", the activity of the Shadowvars and Bale, but by then he was telling me nothing I didn't already know. He was essentially an entitled, spoiled brat, a lost cause in more ways than one.

Then I went over to the group. As I walked up, Bale was just finishing what seemed to be a rousing speech. They were, it appeared, going to charge off to try to fight the Shadowvars, immediately after they had all visited the head. Khodolis deigned to talk to me, though, exuding confidence, except for a moment when he seemed to beg me to go upstairs and check out his journal. Of course, I had already done that. So I stepped back, disengaged and then told him I had read his journal and it seemed that he was being taken over by something beyond his power to control. He just pooh poohed me and called on his motley crew to follow him to fight the Shadowvars.

I could tell from the start that such a bunch of martial incompetents would have no chance against the Shadowvars. When I told Bale just that, I was given a choice: Try to stop them: Tell them to do what they had to do; and Lastly, laugh sardonically at the bunch. I could tell there was no stopping them without a fight, so I just told them to do what they had to do. Then I followed behind to pick up the pieces. Sure enough, when I got to the Candelmas Ruins, the lot of them were dead. Floating amidst their corpses was a shining sword. It was, in fact, Beimoura, the sword of that book I had found at the inn. After a round of recrimination, when I

told the Beimoura that I was on the hunt for *Dominion*, it offered to join me, at least until we found it. I agreed but was not going to equip it, just take it on as a henchman.<sup>60</sup> I knew I could deal with its mind-bending effects, but thought “Why bother when it gives me another sword at my side.”

## Off to See the Wizard

After cleaning up the remnants of the army at the entrance to the ruins I had to decide whether to check out the Shadowvars or try to find the wizards in Thentia. Back in Elventree (or was it Mulmaster?), Sharalyn had believed it important, so I thought that should be our next move. If, as Bale and his sorry lot had thought, the Shadowvar were a danger to Thentia, I knew would have try to deal with them in due course.

So we left the ruins and followed the road to the hill at the Southwest edge of the town. That led to the tower home of Flamuldinath "Firefingers" Thuldoum resided. “Clearly,” I thought, “That priestess must be directionally dyslexic.” When I met the wizard, he was quite happy to talk to me about Maganus, Thentia and a range of of things. The stuff he had to say about Maganus put his past more into perspective for me and also gave an inkling into how formidable the would be to face when the time came.<sup>61</sup> He also was a merchant of sorts and although there was not much of interest to us, I was able to divest a lot of the loot we had picked up.

One thing he did express some concern about was the fact that the Shadowvar had been coming so close to Thentia and moving about so freely. That determined me to have a look at them sooner rather than later.

After we took our leave of Firefingers, I looked around his tower while he was otherwise occupied. Although there were books and some fair loot to be got, there were several puzzling things about the place. On the second level, there was what looked like some kind of portal in the central part and, behind a locked door, what seemed to be another part of the portal construction. There were no indications, however, of what it was for or how it worked.

I another room (all the doors on the level were locked), there was a cryptic note in a chest in one of the rooms that read only “To see, free a...”. I couldn’t make head nor tail of that either. The third door on the level had a locked chest with a *Potion of Heal*, a *Scarlet and Blue Ioun*

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<sup>60</sup> The quest Thentia Resistance Army starts when Bale asks you to find his journal and ends after you have made your choice of how to respond when Bale orders his cohorts off to fight the Shadowvars.

Playing it like I did, earns 4500XP, avoids any alignment shift, lets you take Beimoura as a henchman (or weapon) and allows you to pick up the minor loot from the bodies of the “army” after you find them in the Candelmas ruins. Just letting them charge off and commenting “This should be amusing.” earns the same result, but entails an alignment shift of +2 Evil. Saying that you cannot allow them to go causes Khodrian to fight you in the inn. You beat him quite easily and that earns you 2XP and the ability to take on Beimoura, but no other XP and only the loot on Bale himself.

If you make a mistake and attack Beimoura or if you get caught trying to pickpocket any of the live TRA, you will find yourself in a fight that does not end until you exit the game and do a replay from your last save. They may be near death, but you can never finish them off.

<sup>61</sup> This finishes the quest *Thentia: Retired Archmages*, even though you have only spoken to Thuldoum. For completing the dialogue with him, I earned 1000XP. The other Archmage in Thentia is a different kettle of fish and is part of another quest.



*Stone* (Intelligence) and a few GP, but not a lot else of note. All of which I found passing strange. But I never to the bottom of any of it. Perhaps if I had been a mage or some other class of character, I might have been more able to discover what was going on there.

So we left and made our way toward the Candelmas Ruins.

### Sorting Shadowvars

We came out of Firefingers tower, made our way North and then West. We passed by a place called Mad Melnyk's but I decided to leave speaking to that merchant until later.

In the Candelmas Ruins, we passed where the band of fops had fallen. As we made our way farther in, we were attacked by three Fire Giants. They didn't give us much trouble and we quickly reached a door that led up to a second level. While the stairs went up, it was quite evident from the dripping ceilings and dank atmosphere that we were underground. Moving forward, we came upon a group of what looked like shadows.

Their leader challenged us, taking me to task for killing her Fire Giant guards. I was having none of that because they attacked us first. Within seconds, I took a strong dislike to the leader, who put on unsufferable airs of superiority and finally introduced herself as Thalia Tanthul, of the blood of Netheril. She gave us short shrift until I mentioned we were searching for the sword *Dominion*, at which point she allowed that our interests might coincide and consented to tell us more of herself and the ruins. But when she learned we did not know the exact location of the sword, she cut the pleasantries and told us to come back when we had something of value for her.

That really rubbed me the wrong way, but I let it pass because we appeared to be able to proceed exploring the ruins without further attacks from her Fire Giant guards or the assassins she had also set out as guards. We made our way deeper into the ruins, passing through another two sets of stairs until we came into a chamber where a Dragonflesh Golem appeared out of nowhere. We were able to deal with it, assisted by the Fire Giant that had, it seems, been assigned to keep guard in the chamber.

In the next chamber after that, there were three loot bags. In one were 444GP, in another 50 *Shuriken*+4 and in the third, a *Bar of Mithril* and a set of *Thieves' Keys*+10. From that chamber, we passed through another door and followed a long hallway, past a chamber whose entry was blocked by boulders and came into a room where a Fire Giant appeared to be keeping guard.

Beyond the guards, at the end of a short hallway was another door outside of which a Shadowvar Assassin kept guard. The Shadowvars obviously knew something about this place that I didn't. I went ahead and opened the door, only to find a Demilich hovering in the middle. Before I knew it, the Shadowvar had rushed in to take it on. Then Beimoura, followed by Lyressa and Sharalyn. So I followed suit. It was a good thing we had the four of us together. The Assassin, the first in, went down quickly. We hacked at the Demilich and repeatedly got it down to near death when it managed to revive itself. Eventually, it ran out of healing spells (I

needed one or two myself) and we prevailed.<sup>62</sup>

On the Demilich's remains, there were two Emeralds. In the locked and booby-trapped chest at one side of the chamber was a *Ring of Power* and the *Staff of Tempus Blackthorne*. I put the staff into one of my packs and gave the ring to Sharalyn. While it did not increase her protective kit, it did - among other things - give her the ability to regenerate. As the only other live human in our party, I figured she needed it most. On the Shadowvar Assassin's remains there was a Short Sword+3, a Dagger+3, a healing potion and 52GP.

With the Demilich sorted, we had no where to go but back the way we came. As we passed the Fire Giants, I recalled the Archmage's concerns about Shadowvars moving about Thentia and the general level of threat the city seemed to feel from them. I decided that, even though they might profess to want to fight the Malaugrym and their allies, their interests were solely their own. Besides, as I recalled, the Lords of Netheril had not been the most generous and kind toward their subjects. "Besides," I thought, "I have lots of room to pick up whatever loot they might afford us." So we took out the Fire Giants and Assassins along our way, none of them giving us any serious trouble, until we came to Thalia and her coterie.

Accompanied by her Rogues, Dancers and Assassins, she was not an easy mark. So I went right up to her and told her I had had it with her pretensions, at which she attacked. We had quite a fight of it, but none of them were really a match for me. Even Thalia, for all her bombast, went down quickly enough. And we all survived without appreciable damage.<sup>63</sup> On Thalia's corpse was a *Katana*+4, a *Cloak of Displacement*, a *Ring of Spell Battle*, a *Potion of Heal* and a *Potion of Death Armour*. On the Dancer was a *Rapier*+4 and a healing potion and on the others, several *Short Swords*+3, *Daggers*+3, a *Masterwork Light Crossbow* and *Bolts*+2.

I thought I might have had to second guess myself on sorting the Shadowvars, but concluded that, in the end, both Thentia and the Moonsea in general were probably better off without them.

## Another Archmage

We left the ruins and notice the premises of the merchant Mad Melnyk and thought we might be able to sell of our accumulated loot. He was another who would not buy any weaponry or ammunition, but we sold some stuff and I managed to find another Bag of Holding and a Potion among his offerings, both of which I bought. After speaking to him a bit - he didn't have any new information to offer - we departed. We made a quick stop at the temple of Selene, where the high priestess had lots of cash and was happy to buy all of our accumulated weaponry at good prices.

Then we headed out and North up the town's central road. As we neared the crest of the hill, Lyressa tugged my arm and said she felt a strange compulsion drawing her to a big old heap

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<sup>62</sup> The demilich is not part of any quest that I could see, but killing it did earn 228XP and some quite valuable kit.

<sup>63</sup> Fighting Thalia ends the quest *Shadowvar Search Party*. It earns 4500XP for the quest, 171XP for Thalia, 42XP for each of her Assassins and Dancers and either 7XP or 2XP for each of the Fire Giants.

of a keep off to the side of the road. We went over to investigate, only to find the door locked. Then Lyressa said she recognized the glowing imprint of a hand on the door as the sigil of her old master Dragoth. She reached out her hand and touched it and the front door opened out for us.

We entered and were immediately stopped by a skeleton asking how we had got in. It asserted that only the dead could enter. Then Lyressa recognized the voice as that of her old master, Dragoth. The skeleton spoke to her almost endearingly but she was having none of it and told him she wanted to know what he had done to her. Dragoth agreed to tell her, but said he would do so farther inside, in his study, and disappeared.

Lyressa told me she had a bad feeling about this development and was scared, but wanted to learn what had happened to her. All I could advise her was that I thought it better to know the truth than to live a lie. (And, of course, that she could count on me for support if necessary.)<sup>64</sup> So we made our way to Dragoth's Library, although doing so was quite eerie, what with Golems and Skeletons watching us warily every step of the way.

In the Library, Dragoth told her (us) the whole sorry story about how Lyressa had been an accomplice to his necromancy and how he had schemed to keep her with him and had ended up turning her into an Undead. And how she had left one day and he had lived in remorse ever since. He offered to do a ritual that would restore all of her powers and skills, except she would remain Undead. Lyressa said she didn't think she would much like the person she had been and asked me what I thought. I did not want to be responsible for that kind of life (or was it death?) Decision of one whom I had come to think of as a friend as well as companion. So I just told her to do what she thought best.

The Lyressa decided that she didn't want to go back, but rather go forward and be a better person, er, being. Dragoth then asked if she would kill him for what he had done to her. She said no, that she was no longer the person she had been and would let his memory of love follow him to the grave. He then asked us to leave and let him alone forever.

As we turned to leave, in a pile of books I noticed Dragoth's journal, which just recorded in excruciating detail the long, sorry, self-serving sob story he had told us. I found it impossible to dredge up any sympathy for the creep. I thought to myself, "Well, Lyressa may be willing to let him stew in his own juices for all time, but I think the world will be a better place without him." So I turned, told him I had decided to do away with him and let the passel of bones have it with all my might. He put up a bit of a fight and his Skeleton Warriors tried to help, but they were nothing but brittle bones and the fight lasted next to no time. Dragoth may have been a formidable necromancer, but a fighting mage he was not.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> This starts the quest *Dragoth the Bone Mage*. Dragoth is, of course, the other of the two mages that Sharalyn had mentioned as being in Thentia. This appears to be a bit of inconsistency in the game story. Perhaps between the broad planning and the actual programming of the game, Dragoth's role became peripheral to the plot.

<sup>65</sup> Lyressa's decision ends the quest. Doing it the way I did earns 4500XP and avoids any alignment shift. Telling Lyressa that you like her the way she is earns the same 4500XP plus an alignment shift of +5 Good. Telling her to undergo the ritual also earns the 4500XP. Also, Lyressa decides to kill Dragoth, which causes you an alignment shift of +20 Evil. Lyressa choosing either of the first two gives you the choice of just leaving with her or deciding to kill Dragoth. There is no alignment shift if you decide to kill Dragoth after Lyressa at that point. But, killing Dragoth also causes all of his minions to attack you, so

Cleaning up his remains in the library, I found a *Greater Amulet of Health*, *Bracers of Armour*+6, a *Black Robe of the Archmagi*, a *Masterwork Quarterstaff*, and a *Blackstaff* spell scroll. In a chest beside his desk, I found Lyressa's old kit: a *R'azzak Kahan* short sword, a *Devil's Eye* small shield and a Sapphire.<sup>66</sup> I offered Lyressa her old kit back, but she didn't want anything to do with it. As we made our way out of his library and through the rest of the keep, his various minions attacked us. All met the same end as Dragoth.

There was not much loot to find in the rest of the keep: A Bone Ring and a Bone Wand, a few GP and other minimal value whatnots. Among the bookshelves in the chamber next to Dragoth's Library, there was a massive tome that a quick look inside identified as the Grimoire of the Undying. After that first peek, I decided that it was not the kind of tome I would be interested in reading any further. (I was not a necromancer and had no intention of becoming one.)<sup>67</sup>

All in all, it was a dreary, dismal place and we left it to collapse in its own time.

## What Next?

We left the keep and went up to the Northern border and tried making our way into Thar. It immediately became evident, however, that that was an impossibility. We made our way into the scarred Lands, killing every monster that got in our way, but there was no way farther North.<sup>68</sup> It was clear we would have to get directions somewhere else. "Firefingers" had mentioned gaining entry from the West, which meant either Melvaunt or Zhentil Keep was where we had to go. So we turned back South.

I thought we might check back at the Inlet to see if anything was happening there. So we headed back that way and stopped to see what was up in Angrym's Livery stables. When I tried to buy horses from him, he told me to come back later. So, no joy there. I suspected that, at some point, we might need horses, so I did take the precaution of asking him to keep the best aside for us and slipped him a deposit to seal the deal. I told him if we had not returned within the month, he was free to sell them, but that I would hold him accountable if he broke the deal before then. We went on to the Inlet and nothing had changed there. Nor could we get into the Northeast quadrant of the town.

Not being able to advance our cause any further, I decided we had better head back to the

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you will want to be sure you are strong enough to take on all of them as they come at you. Dragoth dead is worth 64XP. His skeleton warriors and Zombies 2XP each.

<sup>66</sup> The spell scroll on Dragoth's corpse is chosen at random by the game algorithm. In the chest, the sword and the shield are always there for the taking. The third item is a smaller bit of loot also chosen at random by the game algorithm.

<sup>67</sup> Choosing to read the Grimoire beyond the first look moves your alignment +5 Evil.

<sup>68</sup> The Moonsea map appears at both exits/entries to the Scarred Lands. You can keep entering the Scarred lands as many times as you like, but all you will find are recurring monsters: Manticores, Ogres, etc. @2XP each and no swag. Hardly a good use of playing time. Similarly, you can go back to the Inlet and kill Thud for 10XP or go back upstairs and kill Karin for 42XP and an alignment shift of +5 Evil. At this point, you will have not yet started the quest *Big Game Hunt*. Killing Karin will start the quest for you and give you a head start on it, but doing so will also close off your options for dealing with Karin later. I chose not to kill him. At this point, at least.

docks and find Kettia and her ship and go somewhere else. I stopped at the Temple of Selune and sold off most of the loot we still had and then we went and boarded the ship. We cast off and I told Kettia to head Westward slowly while I tried to make up my mind about where to go next.

## **9. Zhentil Keep**

When I checked my long term planning notes, I remembered that Sharalyn had argued strongly that it was important that we see that Kornah the Crazy in Zhentil Keep. So that is the course on which I had Kettia put the *Grim Voyager*.<sup>69</sup>

No sooner had I sat down to check the maps and have a rest but I felt the ship lose way and realized it was again being boarded. This time, however, it was nothing so benign as the Melvauntian navy.

## **Peregrinatio Interruptio (2)**

Rather, it turned out to be the pirate Burak the Mongrel. This big thug and his equally thuggish crew must have thought they were going to have an easy time of it, what with a female Ship's Captain and an all female passenger list. (Well, all female except for an sword that looked inanimate and innocent enough at rest.)

Tired as we all were, we made short work of that bunch and I stuffed Burak's Head into the same bag I had stashed Veris's.<sup>70</sup> There was some good pickings in their remains. On Burak, besides his *Head*, there was a set of *Shadow Legion Armour*, *The Wolf's Axe*, and *Potions of Heal* and *Cure Critical Wounds*. On his mate, there was a *Halberd+3*, *Boots of Striding+5*, a *Light Flail+1* and a *Potion of Cure Critical Wounds*. The crew members' remains on which we found kit added a *Scimitar+1*, a *Quarterstaff*, a *Shortbow+2*, 194 *Fire Arrows*, *Thieves' Tools+10*, a *Ring of Holiness* and a *Potion of Cure Critical Wounds* to the list of loot.

With the Moonsea cleared of at least one more pirate thug, I congratulated Kettia and suggested that, while we got under way again, she could enjoy a fairly peaceful passage. Then we retired to clean up and rest before approaching the Zhentarim Capital.

## **A Tour of the Town**

We tied up in the Docklands and disembarked. Kettia was happy to stick around and wait for us. She said this was a slow time of year for her and had nothing else to do. Besides, she smiled and added that we were useful to have around when her ship was stopped by undesirables.

We moved into what seemed to be a pretty slummy looking centre of town. Over by a

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<sup>69</sup> This is just another way of saying that Zhentil Keep came next because Kornah the Crazy was the quest that the game gave the highest priority of all those yet to be done.

<sup>70</sup> Burak's head is, of course, the second head needed for the quest *Pirates of the Moonsea*. No XP for quest progress yet. Killing Burak earns 64XP and each of his crew 2XP.

tower near a bridge that led to a much more salubrious appearing area, we found an ugly old crone who seemed quite nasty, as well as being witless. That, it turned out, was a pretty good act, for we had found none other than Kornah the Crazy, a Harper working under deep cover.

Keeping to her cover, she took us on a loud tour of the city. She started in the centre of the quarter in which we had emerged from the passage to our ship. It had been called the “Foreign Quarter”, but was all that had been left of Zhentil Keep after it had been attacked by monsters from the North. She took us to the canal in the Eastern part and pointed out the former Grand Temple of the Black Lord, from which that Fzoul (whom we first heard of back in Elventree) ruled and ran the Black Network.

We couldn’t go any further because a carriage had blocked the bridge across the canal. So she took us back to where we had first met her and over the bridge across the estuary into what she called “The New City”. There, she related that, five years previously a horde of monsters had invaded from the North devastating all before them and pointed out the walls behind which were the ruins of the old city. She said many adventurers had gone in looking for the rich pickings that were available but warned that monsters still ranged there. She also implied that few had made it back out. With that, she gave us a book, *A Guide to Zhentil Slang*, and very publicly concluded the tour.

Then, just before walking away, she whispered for us to meet her in a quiet, less public, spot by the wall of the ruins. There, she dropped the crazy guise and asked what we wanted. I told her about Maganus, but she knew nothing of him. She promised to investigate and would contact us if she had anything. There again, the message was clear: We were not to try to contact her. Before she left us, I got her to tell us about Fzoul and the other spots of immediate interest in the city. Where to stay and where the merchants were. Then she left us on our own.<sup>71</sup>

I unloaded most of what we had picked up at Dragoth’s place on the merchant Lita, traded in Lyressa’s *Bracers of Dexterity*+4 for a set of +5s and bought a *Potion of Heal* for myself. Another merchant, Rak Alumeater, a gnome, had a lot of potions and assorted odds and ends, but nothing that I thought we needed. Over in another spot was an armourer named Luanna. She didn’t have anything I thought we might need either. But when I looked at her wares, I saw she had three *Mithral Bars*. I was flush and had it in the back of my mind sometime to have a proper suit of armour made, so I bought them and stashed them in one of my *Bags of Holding*.

After that, I thought to try our luck in the ruins and went over to the entrance. But then I thought better of it. I wanted to check out the rest of the city for ourselves before heading into the unknown of the ruins. And, besides, I thought, we might rest up and eat well before heading into them. So with nothing else for us in the New City, we went back over the bridge to explore on our own.

## The Jagged Rocks

Once across, one of the first things I noticed was a cave-like opening in a massive pile of

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<sup>71</sup> Telling Kornah about Maganus ends the quest *Zhentil Keep - Kornah the Crazy* and earns 1000XP.

Jagged Rocks to the West of our path. We went inside and found it to be a kind of temple. But a soggy, sodden excuse for a temple I thought it. In the midst of pools of salt water there was a large statue in the form of a shark that resembled the one I had tried to revive back in Mulmaster. I tried, but could, as with the shark, I not find any way to interact with it. Then I saw the head priestess of the place, who called herself The Stormmistress.

She was an imperious, unfriendly type who consented to tell me about her god, Umberlee. It was, apparently, controller of the weather on the seas and she purported to control how it dealt with those who travelled over the Moonsea. It was of passing interest, but I was more inclined to trust to the seamanship of Kettia, rather than some smelly shark-shaped thing. The priestess did, however, have some merchandise for sale, although not much of interest to us. I found and bought a *Ring of Regeneration* (+4) and a *Potion of Heal* among her stores and sold off a few of the kit items I had been carrying in my bags, but never had used.

All in all, it was a very underwhelming experience.<sup>72</sup> Then we went back out into the town.

### **Honours of the Hunt**

Our next stop was several hundred metres to the West, at the Lodge of the Hunt. At first, it looked like a good bet for a place to rest and get ready for a trip to the ruins. It was not long, however, before the looks we got from those inside became more sinister. The head honcho there was called the Huntmaster and his name was Baeredeth Malagar. When I went up to him, I felt hungry eyes on me.

I was only a little relieved when he told me of their ritual of the Hunt and their targets for the year. The first was a Dragon named Vaporandir who was in the Cormanthor Forest. The second was a Werebear who wore the disguise of a human ranger and was in Thentia. The third was a Render, who was in the Zhentil Keep ruins. He offered a significant reward if I were to accept the challenge and complete it successfully. I didn't care much for dragons, nor for Renders, based on my acquaintance with the one involved in the Zhent attack on Elventree. I was pretty sure, however, that Werebears were not typically evil creatures and told him so.<sup>73</sup>

He reassured me that the Werebear he had chosen had a long record of assassinations and, based on that, I agreed to undertake the task he had set. Malagar then gave me a *Vial of Elf Blood* to attract the Render and a *Dragon's Egg* to arouse the Dragon and then wished me well, reiterating that great rewards awaited when I brought back proof of the demise of each of the creatures. I wasn't sure I trusted the guy, but I was pretty sure I knew where each of his quarry were located and didn't think it would take much time to deal with them. Before I left, I bought a *Potion of Heal* from him and then checked out the lodge. There was not much there other than a single history of Zhentil Keep on a bookshelf and a locked chest on the back wall that required a specific key to open it.

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<sup>72</sup>As far as I was able to see, there was no way for my character to perhaps Druid might have been able to do so.

<sup>73</sup> This conversation begins, if you accept the challenge, the quest *Big Game Hunt*, actually three because the game breaks it down to one quest for each of the targets. Telling Baerdeth that Werebears are not evil earns 150XP for your insight.

Out into the quarter again, I decided we should get this whole thing out of the way. I didn't expect it to take more than a few days at most. We went to the docks and had Kettia take us back to Thentia, which she did without any delays.

In Thentia, we dashed back to the Inlet and found Karin still upstairs. I confronted him with what the Huntmaster had told us about him and he denied it vehemently. Of the two, Karin struck me as the most trustworthy, so instead of doing him in we worked out a way to fulfill the Hunter's quest and keep Karin safe. I still had the pelt of the bear that had been Ezrin's familiar, which I had picked up back in Cormanthor East. He cut his hand and put some of his blood on it and we were both pretty sure that it would pass as his own for the Huntsmen back in Zhentil Keep. Then we parted as friends, with best wishes on both sides.

After that we found Kettia again and had her spirit us back to Elmwood. From there, we made our way back to Cormanthor East and found that misty cave we had explored when we had gone in after the Malaugrym. This time, with the *Dragon's Egg* in my pack, we had not gone too far in when we were accosted by a really big lizard who turned out to be Vaporandir. If Vaporandir was a Dragon, it (he?) surely didn't seem like one. His first words were that he wanted no trouble with either Dragon kind or the little people and only wanted to be left alone in his cave.

Here again, everything I heard gainsaid directly what the Huntmaster had told me. And, again, I was prepared to give the presumed victim the benefit of the doubt. So we worked out a way to save Vaporandir, as well. He knew of a dead adult Green Dragon in another part of Cormanthor and suggested it's head could be used to represent his. I knew exactly the dragon he was referring to and exactly where to get it. So we rushed back to the main part of Cormanthor and got the *Dragon's Head*, then went back to the cave to confirm it with Vaporandir. He was so grateful he gave me an *Anti-Magic Shield* as thanks. We parted, also as friends, and got ourselves back to Kettia to get us back to Zhentil Keep. I gave Sharalyn the shield because it significantly improved her kit.

We were able to rest on the trip back to Zhentil Keep, so as soon as we disembarked, we made our way to the New City and into the ruins to try to find the Render. We got in with no problem but could not find the Render right away. As we tracked it down, we ran into bandit adventurers, ogres, Hill and Fire Giants and assorted other monsters. These all impeded our progress even though there was some fairly valuable loot on their respective remains.

Finally, after exploring three or four different sectors, we came upon the Render. It was an entirely different opponent from all the others we had met. When we first found it, it managed to surprise us and cast a paralysis spell that held us for an inordinately long time. We were just fortunate that it was separated from us by a water passage that it couldn't cross. Once we were able to move again, we found a way over to where it was standing and attacked with all of our might. We were able quickly to get it down to near death state, but it resisted and kept hitting out for the longest time. After what seemed like ages of hacking, we finally got the better of it and I was able to take its head.

After catching our breath, we made it back to the exit from the ruins. I suppose we could have stayed on cleaning up other monsters and gathering the loot from their remains. But that



seemed like an extravagance and a fool's errand. The monsters there just seemed to come on and on. Besides, I felt we had already spent enough time on this hunting expedition.

So we made our way back to the Lodge where Baerdeth was surprised and pleased we had returned with proof of having met all of the tasks set for us. He did reward us generously, as he had promised. But then he offered one last task against one last creature. He cautioned I would need all of the hunters's help against it. He told us to meet him back in the Cormanthor South of Elventree.

This all sounded a little hinky to me, so I cautioned my companions to be on their guard when we went back in to Cormanthor to meet them. Kettia got us back to Elmwood quickly and we made our way to Elventree and the forest from there. No sooner had we arrived and met up with the hunters than my suspicions were proved right. Bardeth boasted that we were now the prey of the huntsmen. That set off a grand melee. I went right after the Huntsmaster and took him out of the fight right away. That took some of the air out of the sails of the others and, although he did put up some resistance, we took them all out, one after the other. Then We cleaned up the remains.<sup>74</sup>

On Baerdeth, there was a key I presumed was to that locked chest back at their lodge, as well as an *Amulet of Vitality*+4, a *Pigsticker* Spear, and a *Hide Armour*+4. On the others were a *Scimitar*+2, *Studded Leather Armour*+3, a *Large Shield*+2, a *Greataxe*+2, a *Breastplate*+2 and assorted other stuff. I was right to be on my guard with that bunch.

Then we got back the kettia in Elmwood and she took us back to Zhentil Keep, where we continued our exploration of the place.

### Settling with Slavers

The first thing I did, though, was to go back to the Lodge and check out that chest. And a good thing I did. Inside was 10036GP and a *Helm of Balduran*. I equipped the helm myself in order to improve my kit and gave my *Adamantine Helm* to Sharalyn. The *Helm of Brilliance* that Sharalyn had on, I gave to Lyressa. I was pretty sure they would each be able to use the new helms to best account as we went on.

Back out on what passed for the main street, we headed East. I was thinking of checking out the so-called 'Pride' of Zhentil Keep. I paused, however, when I heard one of the street urchins telling another that he had been offered a place to sleep inside it but preferred the streets instead. That, coupled with the decidedly tepid review from Kornah, caused me to look about for somewhere else to lay our heads.

Almost kitty-corner from the Lodge was a house with an interesting sign out front. I thought it might be worth a look, at least. As it turned out, it




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<sup>74</sup> Killing the Render earns 228XP. For each of the proofs of having killed the Werebear, Dragon and Render, you earn 500XP and 2000GP. (Yes, a total of 1500XP and 6000GP.) Killing Baerdeth in Cormanthor earns 25XP and another 4500XP for completing the quest. Each of the individual hunters, as well as the monsters in the ruins is worth 2XP.

was more than just interesting, it was a slavers' hideout or headquarters. Before we knew it, they all came at us, A passel of Rogues and one Mage. We were strong and experienced enough that we dealt with them with relative ease. There was a lot of good loot on their remains, as well. Besides GP, a sapphire and several potions of *Invisibility* and or *Cure Critical Wounds*, there was a *Light Crossbow*+3, a *Large Shield*+3, *Leather Armour*+3, a *Dagger*+3, a *Chain Shirt*+3, a *Longsword*+3 and, not least, a *Staff of Power*. In a crate, there was another Sapphire, a Diamond, 5000GP, a set of *Thieves' Tools*+12 and a *Bag of Holding*. Finally, in an armoire, there was a pair of *Dragon Slippers*, which I fitted to Sharalyn. (I took the *Boots of Reflexes*+6 which I had previously given her and stashed them in one of my private bags.)

Turning from the Armoire, I noticed a bunch of slaves locked in a pit. I tried but was unable to pick the lock. Then one of the slaves told us that the Slavemaster had to key. So we went looking for the Slavemaster. We found him soon enough, on the upper ramparts of the house, surrounded by several of his Rogues. On his corpse, I found a *Portion of Invisibility*, a set of *Leather Armour*+5, a *Repeating Crossbow*, a *Whip*+2 and a *Deck of Hazards*<sup>75</sup>. As well as the key that the slave below had mentioned.

After picking over the other remains (several more potions), we went back down to the pit. The place was clear of slavers, so I tried the key and it easily unlocked the gate to the pit. We spoke to each of the slaves and they all expressed their gratitude and made their respective ways off to wherever they had to go.<sup>76</sup> Then we took a breather and headed back out to the main street.

## Pride and Prejudice

Across the street was the so-called Pride of Zhentil Keep. We discussed it and decided that we should at least check it out. We did and it was the worst dump any of us had ever seen. The stench of the place was rank, there were rats running everywhere and the bartender, an orc who called himself Berk was 'cleaning' dirty dishes by spitting on them and giving them a swipe. I was ready to leave immediately, but thought there might be something we could learn in the place.

There wasn't. The only rumour the barkeep had to share was of the Render that had taken up residence in the Old City ruins. I paid the two GP he asked for a room, just to see what the upstairs was like. It was every bit as bad as the common room. After killing the numerous rats scurrying about we went back down, our skins crawling. Somehow, Sharalyn got into a fight with one or the other of the patrons and we had to deal with the bunch of them. Only the barkeep and one of his serving wenches had the good sense to stand back and watch. We cleaned up all of the scum and the remaining rats, picking up a few GP and a Courtesan Blade

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<sup>75</sup> This is like a tarot deck. You can pick one, two or three cards, all drawn at random by the game engine and either benefit or suffer the consequences. I experimented and found eight different cards before getting bored with the repetitive process. The best card was the Fountain, which filled to the 10 level all of my potions, spells scrolls, Healer's Kits, Thieves' Keys, Arrows, Bolts and Gems. The second best was the Bequest, which put into my inventory a quite valuable enhanced item, e.g., *Gargoyle Boots* or a *Gold Dragon Armour*. See Annex 3 for a complete list of the cards I found and the result of each.

<sup>76</sup> This is not a recorded quest, but is still worth doing, if only for the loot. Each of the dead slavers is worth 2XP. The Slaver Leader was 28XP. For each of the slaves freed, the reward was 50XP.

from the remains. Then we backed out of the place. No one came after us.

The ‘Pride’, we concluded, was anything but. “Ugh” was the only way to describe it. My Tripadvisor rating gave it a -99 and I quoted the street kid who said it was better to sleep outside. Outside, we shook out all our clothes and other belongings to air them out and to get rid of any roaches or other vermin that might have latched on in that place.

Across the street was an unremarkable house, but not much in it other than another history of Zhentil Keep. The next house up the street also seemed to have nothing much in it, either on the main floor or upstairs. The cellar, however, was a different matter. On entering we received a very hot reception from a Fire Elemental and a Summoned Succubus as well as a priest or some such thing called Burnbones. We handled them reasonable easily and Burnbones remains had some good stuff on them: A *Scroll of Summon Creature IX* and one of *Storm Vengeance*, a Ruby, a *Ring of Protection*+4, a *Necklace of Fireballs*, *Bracers of Armour*+7. Plus a couple of nicely bound, but not very valuable books.

Another unremarkable house across the main street had some nice warm rooms, but nothing of value. I figured that, seeing as how we had cleared all three houses of dangerous types, any of them would make for a comfortable place to rest if we were ever in need of such. Certainly better than that disgrace of a public house. It should have been named something like “The Prejudice”, not “The Pride”.<sup>77</sup>

### Trouble Among Thieves

With nothing else evident for us to do in that dreary place, we began to make our way back to the docks. We hadn’t got far, however, before I felt my pocket being picked. I quickly caught the urchin, a kid named “Sparrow”. She was not a very good thief and seemed quite innocent and regretful when I collared her. She also seemed very hungry. So I told her to keep the two GP she had managed to get out of my purse. She then proceeded to tell me her story and asked for my help in what she thought was a problem in the Thieves’ Guild.<sup>78</sup>

I followed her back to an abandoned orphanage. Inside was a chest with quite a few assorted potions and other useful items. Then Sparrow showed us the trap door down to the Guild’s headquarters. There, she introduced us to the Guild leader, Tyana Softfoot. This Tyana flew into a rage at our intrusion and ejected Sparrow from the Guild for having revealed the secret of its location. When another thief named Jackdaw tried to defend the kid, he also caught the vent of her anger and was ordered to get us all out or be ejected himself.

Back outside, Sparrow was despondent. Jackdaw tried to comfort her and then explained to us that the leader had undergone a complete personality change after going into the city’s sewers a while back. He thought there might be something down in the Sewers that had caused the change and asked if we might look into it. I felt sorry enough for Sparrow that I agree.

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<sup>77</sup> Neither the ratty “Pride” nor the houses are quests. The rats and scurvy types in the inn and the Succubus in the house are worth only 2XP each. The Fire Elemental is worth 28XP. Burnbones is worth 100XP.

<sup>78</sup> This starts the quest *Gorlax, the Many-Eyed*. Giving Sparrow a GP results in an Alignment shift of +2 Good. Jackdaw’s telling you of the sewers makes it possible to enter the sewers at any of the grates in the city.

“After all,” I thought, “There is nothing else for us to do in this god-forsaken place, so I might as well help out the kid.”

We went to find the nearest sewer entrance and went down. Putrid place. Like the Pride, only worse. everything stank and there were rats, Dire Rats, Stink Beetles, Gray and Ochre Jellies and Umber Hulks, even Beholder mages, in the shadows everywhere, waiting to jump out and attack us. We handled them pretty easily every time they accosted us, though. There were also many traps set out. They didn’t bother us much because we all had high fortitude quotients and lots of universal enhancements. Others less well endowed or equipped would have to tread carefully or risk being damaged seriously.

As I moved along what appeared to be the outer perimeter of the Sewers, I came across track twice. On examining them closely, it appeared as if they were mostly from one individual, but well trodden.<sup>79</sup> In the Southern area, there were two passages, each of which was blocked off by a wall that I was unable to open by normal means. Along the Northern perimeter, there was an opening that led to a passage south. On my left there was another closed wall or gate or some such thing. Following the passage to the left, however, I found a lever after dealing with the Umber Hulk that guarded it. On pulling that lever, I heard movement in another part of the sewer maze. Looking around, I found a bag of gold in which there were 105GP.<sup>80</sup>

It took a while, but I found the passage that lever had opened down in the Southeast corner of the Sewers. There was nothing much in the passage it opened except for another Umber Hulk and some Gray Oozes. Coming back from its dead end, however, I noticed another lever. On pulling it, there was another noise farther inside the maze of passages. We followed straight out of the passage we were in, through to the other that had been locked before us previously. This time around, it was open for us.

We followed its winding path until it came to a T junction. Following the route to the right, we eventually came to a dead end. Making our way back, I noticed a sludge covered grate and thought I saw something underneath the slime. Clearing it away, I found a ring with the name “Lita” engraved on the inside. I put it in one of my packs. I was pretty sure one of those traders over in the new town was named Lita and I made a note to ask her about it. Following the other route from the T junction, I found a third lever against the wall and pulled it.

By the time, I was on to the door opening thing, so we made our way to the last wall or gate or whatever it was that had been closed to us. Sure enough, this time it was open and we followed the passage it opened. On one wall a ways in, there were some scratchings that read “Codepoetz was here”. Further along, we came to a fourth lever located in an alcove just ahead of another locked wall. Pulling it opened that wall. We were near the centre of the sewers at that point, so I stopped us before entering and buffed us all up. If there was something bad in there, I wanted to be ready for it.

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<sup>79</sup> Killing Beetles, Oozes and Hulks is worth 2XP each. A Beholder Mage will earn 17XP. There are two sets of tracks that you can investigate for XP. Examining them carefully will earn 150XP for doing so each time, if you are successful.

<sup>80</sup> There are a few of these that appear at random. The number of GP in each also seems to be randomly generated.

I was right to take that precaution because, on entering we were immediately confronted by one mother of a Beholder, called Gorlax the Many Eyed, accompanied by several hulk-like Thralls. I had a few seconds to engage it in conversation and in doing so learned that he had taken control of Tyana's mind and was directing her actions on the surface. At that point, I had several choices of how to proceed, but I knew this was one bad dude and resolved to take it out if I could. I didn't have to wait a moment before it chose to attack. At first I couldn't do much damage, but kept at it. And, as we cut down its cohorts, it was soon easier to deal with Gorlax. And then he did not hold out long. On its carcass, I found a *Ring of Protection*+6 and stashed it away for possible future use. On a nearby pile of bones, there was an *Assassin's Garb* and a *Dagger*+1, as well as a potion of Antidote that clearly had failed to do its owner any good.

Looking around the chamber, I noticed a knotted rope hanging near one of the walls. We had covered every accessible part of the sewers, so I decided we should see where the rope went. I was not surprised when we came up into one of the ground floor store rooms of the "Pride". It was entirely appropriate: Sewer to Sewer. It was, however, a one-way secret passage and there was no way back down to the sewers from the room. So we exited the inn posthaste and got ourselves back to the Thieves' Guild.

There Tyana seemed to have recovered from her possession by Gorlax and had made up with Sparrow and Jackdaw. They all thanked me profusely and gave me free and privileged access to the Guild's quarters for life.<sup>81</sup> I took the opportunity to sell off some of the lot I had gathered but Tyana did not have much capital so could only afford to get a few things.

## Tidying Up

I still had a lot of loot filling my bags, so we decided to go back over to the merchant quarter in the New City and sell off whatever they could afford. We went to Lit first and I remembered I had found that engraved ring in the Sewers. I showed it to her and she thanked me for finding it and for being honest enough to return it.<sup>82</sup> She was able to take some of the stuff off our hands and so were the other two. I still had a couple of full bags, so I decided we had to go find another merchant somewhere.

There were no others in Zhentil Keep, and there didn't seem to be anything else worth doing or learning here, so we headed back to Kettia at the docks. We passed Kornah on the way, but she just stayed in her spot, muttering away, so I figured she had nothing for us either. Another reason to leave the ugly and dispiriting place.

## 10. Melvaunt

Although Kettia was not particularly happy about it, I asked her to take us to Melvaunt. The heads of two of those pirates for which the Melvauntian Admiral had set a bounty were stinking up one of my bags, so I decided I had had enough and it was time to cash them in. We arrived in Melvaunt at night, so we made our way to the nearest inn, a place called "The Floating

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<sup>81</sup> This ends the quest *Gorlax the Many Eyed*. It earns 4500XP.

<sup>82</sup> Returning the ring to Lita earns an Alignment shift of +2 Lawful.

fighter”. It just happened to be the place where that Admiral Nurian had told us to take the heads. So that was a little bit of serendipity.

### **The Floating Fighter**

Inside, I saw a group of adventurers boasting among themselves and thought of approaching them, but then thought to go to the barkeep, Wenda, first. She told me about the guys talking and about the town. She also mentioned something apparently changing form near one of the warehouses in the city. That brought something to mind, but at the moment I was unable to remember what exactly. Then, we had a drink and I went over and found the Admiral’s paymaster Dryden Bruil sitting in a corner drinking away. He was not a very happy sort and clearly very unhappy to be working for the Admiral. He was, however, knowledgeable about the city and about the current state of the town’s politics.

When I gave him the pirates’ heads, he was fast enough to pay out the rewards for each.<sup>83</sup> It was a relief to be rid of the rotting things. But, I recalled there was still one more and made a note to keep my eye out for that one. I was going to go talk to the adventurers then, but Sharalyn caught me and reminded me that our first priority was to get back after Maganus. And that to do that we had to speak to her contact Ublyn Blackabuck. So, after getting a bit of a rest, we went out to find this Blackabuck. On the way out, I noticed an Halfling lurking along the wall. I tried engaging him in conversation, but all I got was a “Grr” and a dirty look.

### **Gathering Intel**

Blackabuck’s shop was farther North, in the Central Market quarter of the city. We made it up there without difficulty and soon found her. After introducing ourselves, I told her about Maganus and asked if she had news of him. She had none but knew there had been much happening in Thar and suggested that we speak to several adventurers who had recently returned from a foray there.<sup>84</sup> I was also able to get her to tell us about Melvaunt and to sell her virtually all of the loot I had accumulated carried from Zhentil Keep.

It was, I thought, time to speak to that group of swashbucklers back at the Floating Fighter. We made our way back and they introduced themselves as The “Dukes of Daggerford” and claimed central roles in that episode. They didn’t look to me like anything more than middling charlatans who traded on the ignorance of strangers. I observed that I had not seen any of them on the field when I had dealt with Gorgomoz. Then they noticed the *Daggerford Medal of Honour* around my neck, and their boisterous claims of glory on the field became quite qualified.

If nothing else, it brought them down from their imperious facade and made them quite willing to share intelligence about their failed expedition to Thar. They did not know anything about Maganus, but had heard of one there whom the Ogres called the “Raven Mage” who was

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<sup>83</sup> Turning over the heads earns 1000XP and 3000GP each.

<sup>84</sup> This concludes the quest Melvaunt: Ublyn Blackabuck and earns 1000XP. It also starts the quest *A Date with the Dukes*.

organizing an invasion of the Moonsea by the different monsters and sub-humanoids of Thar.

They advised that Horses were needed to move fast enough to be able to get through the Scarred Lands unscathed. They hadn't had any horses and had been forced back by recurrent waves of hostiles in the area. They also cautioned that some really powerful magic or a great siege weapon would be necessary to get through the gates at Kur-Tharsu. Lastly, they also advised securing as many allies as possible because the forces at Kur-Tharsu would otherwise be overwhelming.<sup>85</sup> When I asked if they would be interested in returning with us, they quickly demurred, offering quite transparent excuses and apologies.

I was, in fact, relieved: It was evident they were only marginally competent fighters and would likely have been more of a hindrance than any help in our party. What they had told us, however, did give me cause to make certain that we were more and better prepared for going into Thar. I was sure I knew where to get horses: The route to Thar was through Thentia and, by the time we got there, Angrym would most likely have got those horses he had mentioned. (What a stroke of genius it was to have paid him a deposit on them!)

I was sure, however, that the only place we were going to find potential allies or a siege weapon was right there in Melvaunt. Besides, what Wenda had told me about something changing shape in front of her had finally broken through my subconscious. I remembered the Malaugryms and that note on Nightshade back in Hillsfar which mentioned a meeting in Melvaunt. That decided me to do a proper exploration of the city.

### **The Shipyards: Warehouses R'Us**

Coming out of the Fighter, we turned left and, walking South along the quayside, came to what appeared to be an abandoned warehouse. We looked inside and there was nothing much other than a couple of crates in which I found some *Piercing Arrows*, a History of Melvaunt History and a *Deadly Sonic Trap Kit*. In a corner was a door fitted with an extremely good lock, one of the best I have seen in many an adventure. I had to use my finest set of Thieves' Keys plus a Potion of Cat's Grace to get my picking skills up to opening it. But I managed it. Inside was an armoire containing a *Belt of Inertial Barrier*, a *Cloak of Protection+4* and a quiver full of *Lightning Arrows*. But there was nothing else of interest so back out we went.

Following along the quay, on our left there was an entirely unremarkable house occupied by a couple of Commoners complaining about their lot in life. Farther to the West, there was another warehouse. There was nothing in it except a note on which was scribbled "That's It! We're done here. This place is haunted." and signed "Baz". While I was taking the time to read it, we were attacked by several Spectres and a Zhentarim Spirit. They were annoying but we sorted them right quickly enough.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>This concludes the quest *A Date with the Dukes* and earns another 1000XP. It also initializes the quests *Assault on Kur-Tharsu*, *Expedition to That: Mounts* and *Expedition to Thar: Allies*.

<sup>86</sup> Opening the lock on the door of the store room in the Abandoned Warehouse requires a skill level of 50. My 37 wasn't high enough, so I upped my level +1 with a Cat's Grace potion and used a set of Thieves' Tools+12. That was just enough. In the Western warehouse, the Spectres are worth 2XP each and the Zhentarim Spirit 11XP.

Around the corner from the entrance to that warehouse was another residence, one with a view out to the open Moonsea. On checking it out, I could see it was the residence of the city's chief tax collector. He was wandering around muttering about citizens who chose to pay tithes to the local Temple for flagellation and pondering a change of profession for something more profitable. He didn't notice when we slipped upstairs. Up there, I defused the booby-trap on a chest and found 2550GP plus a *Wand of Fire* and a *Wand of Fear*. He was still muttering away when we let ourselves out. I wasn't into S&M. But thought we might check out that temple if the opportunity presented itself.

We were looking - unsuccessfully- for a way into the Southern part of the shipyards when a big black crow dropped a handwritten note at my feet. I picked it up and saw that it was from Kornah back in Zhentil Keep. It told me to seek out a man named "Jeffers" in Mulmaster, who knew more of Maganus. I doubted that he had anything more than he had already told me when we were there. What Kornah didn't - and couldn't - know was that I had already met and spoken to Jeffers.

### More Malaugrym

Frustrated by the inaccessibility of the Southern Shipyards area, we made our way over toward the Northern part of the Shipyards. Following along the quay, I spotted a house with a light behind the door window. Going over to investigate, we found a Greater Doppelganger on the upper floor. After sorting it, I picked up a pair of *Gloves of the Long Death*+4, 4 *Shuriken*+4, and potions of *Bull's Strength* and of *Cure Critical Wounds*. There was nothing of not other than a bottle of Ale in the chest the Doppelganger was guarding. I was pretty sure there was more to that than met the eye, but nothing else in the place was unusual. Still, I thought there was something not right going on for a Doppelganger to be hiding out in that location.

Back out on the quay, I spotted a bottle floating in the water and we managed to fish it out. I could make out inside it a glow that tuned out to be a tiny figure waving at me. I opened up the stopper and out came a Genie. He was so pleased to be let out that he offered to grant me a wish. I had a lot of options, but I ended up just asking to go on a grand adventure. He said it seemed to him that I was already on one but nonetheless added a little to my store of experience. I am always happy to learn from experience so I was quite satisfied.<sup>87</sup>

We carried on around the corner and saw a ship unguarded. On its deck there was a barrel with some *Bolts*+4 and *Bullets*+4 stowed in it, but nothing else worth noting. Coming down the gangplank, we faced the door to the Northern Warehouse. It was big strong and locked: I was not going to be able to pick the lock or bash it in. So I knocked instead. I was a little surprised when someone shouted out "Password?", but that reinforced my feeling that something serious was going down in there.

I mulled my options over for a few seconds and then decided that the password had to be "The Druth shall always win." And it worked. Before entering, I buffed up my companions because I was certain then that it would involve a serious fight. Which it did. Entering, we interrupted a verbal altercation involving a Malaugrym, a couple of Illithid Mind Flayers and a

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<sup>87</sup> Asking for a grand adventure earned me 1000XP. For the results of the other wishes, see Annex 3.



half dozen or so Doppelgangers. It wasn't a moment or three before they noticed us and forgot whatever differences they were discussing.

The Malaugrym, a Shadowmaster named Amarune, ordered the others to attack us and disappeared. Sabarak, the Greater Doppelganger leader and Ootamal, the Mindflayer, and a couple of other Doppelgangers came directly for me. Each companion fought off one of the others. Our buffing stood us in good stead as we managed them without taking major hits ourselves. Less well-prepared or skilled adventurers would have had their hands full.

Afterward, I cleaned up the remains, collecting a *Staff of the Magi*, a pair of *Bracers of Armour*+6 and a *Potion of Heal* from Subarak. From Ootamal, I gleaned another *Potion of Heal*, a *Ring of Clear Thought*+5 and a nondescript *Silver Necklace*. From the Greater Doppelgangers, I picked up several *Potions of Cure Critical Wounds*, and of *Bull's Strength*, a Topaz, and a few more *Shuriken*+4. There was no sign of the Malaugrym in either of the two rooms that opened off the main chamber. On one, the door had a good lock which I opened with the help of my *Luckstone* and a *Thieves' Tools*+3. Inside it, there were two chests, one locked and booby-trapped. After disarming the trap and picking the lock, I found 4800GP, another pair of *Gloves of the Long Death*+4, a *Spell Scroll of Lesser Dispel* and a Garnet.<sup>88</sup> In the other chest was 1456GP, a *Gem of Seeing*, a *Potion of Clarity* and two sets of *Thieves' Tools*: +10 & +12.

## A Sicko Sect

We tried to find our way to the far North side of the shipyards but only got dirty looks and suspicious glances for our efforts. Then we passed by what looked like a temple and bore the sign "Resting Place of the Whip". Inside, there were continuous screams of pain mixed with what sounded like ecstasy. I knew some mystics took to self flagellation, but the place seemed to take the practice to a whole new level. The clientele/worshippers all seemed to be noble class: Perhaps that was an indication of how jaded some people can get when they don't have enough honest work to keep them occupied. I even noticed a big container of Kool-Aid in a corner....

Disciples of the White Rod strutted about and directed us to the one they called the High Whipmistress, Suzildara Sharannen. She welcomed us, if you can call it that, to partake of the festivities, but after a quick look around, we declined. I did, however, look at here merchandise and was able to sell off most of what we had picked up after the showdown at the Northern warehouse. I was flush with cash, but she had next to nothing that was of real interest to us. I did upgrade my *Ring of Fortitude* to a +5 and gave my +4 to Sharalyn and sold off her *Ring of Protection*.

After that we took an closer look around. Priests with whips and flails were wandering about offering their services. In one cell, we found a noble, Lord Peter Derison, getting himself a good whipping. He was too busy, presumably enjoying himself, to speak to us. There were a couple of locked gates that blocked access to what appeared to be stairways. But we were not able to get past them. In another couple of 'pleasure' cells, there were some paddles and whips, which I was not able to take into inventory. I had to assume they were there for some specific

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<sup>88</sup>On killing Subarak, the quest *The Unseen* ends and you are awarded 4500XP. Subarak nets 28XP and Ootamal 100XP. Each of the Doppelgangers is worth only 2XP.

individuals or other purposes.

Then we decided we had to get out of the place. It was just too weird for words. I am not particularly judgmental where kinkiness in others is concerned unless, of course, they try to impose their predelictions on me. We left the building and went a little ways along the street to where we found another nondescript house with a door we could open. Inside, although nicely furnished, there was no one on the ground floor and nothing of interest other than a bookshelf with another history of Melvaunt on its bare shelves. Upstairs, we found a lady (Lady Miséra Derison), the wife of that noble we had met in the temple of weird tastes. She was not very happy, but appeared quietly resigned to humouring her husband's and I was unable to find out any more from her.<sup>89</sup>

Anyhow, I figured that whatever the jaded tastes of the Melvauntian upper classes, they certainly weren't for us. And, with nothing else we could accomplish in the Shipyards quarter, we went up to the Central Market area. I hoped that I might find Hermuk, that disreputable merchant Blackabuck had mentioned, and get rid of the stuff that no reputable merchant seemed willing to buy.

### **The Breakwater**

We made our way up the roadway to the Central market. On our left as we approached the main plaza, there was another nondescript house up a set of stairs. We checked it out but, apart from the resident commoners advising us to stay at the Breakwater Inn, there was nothing of interest. After that, I spotted the sign to Hermuk's All Goods, and over and in we went. He was not a very nice type, so we checked out what he had to sell. (I bought another couple of bars of Mithril. That is something you buy whenever you see it and have a *Bag of Holding* in which to carry it.) And sold him the rest of our excess loot. Then we explored the rest of his place and, finding nothing, repaired to the Breakwater. It was getting late and I figured we needed a drink.

We entered the Breakwater Inn and went right up to the bar. The Barkeep was quite personable and the place seemed comfy, warm and welcoming. We had our drink and a chat with the Tavis, the barkeep. He brought us up to date with the political developments in the town (boring!) And then pointed out a couple of half elven women across the room. He said one was Ilandra Wavemistress whom I remembered was one of the pirates the Melvauntian Admiral wanted dead. The other I knew by sight: It was none other than Blizzard with whom I had shared the trials of the arena in Hillsfar.

I was pleased to see her again, so we went right over and greeted her, even though she was with a presumed criminal whom I was supposed to be hunting. Blizzard introduced us, addressing the pirate as "Captain". Blizzard obviously was in her employ and wanted to keep it that way. We had quite a civil conversation. The story Blizzard told of how she came to join the Mingleblood's crew emphasized how different her captain was from other pirates. Unlike the other two pirates I had done for, this Ilandra seemed to me quite a different sort of character.

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<sup>89</sup> I think that, if I were a different class of character, the scenario in the temple of S&M might play out differently. But I was unable to do anything more in the place.

I decided at that point that I could not take out a person who seemed worthy of respect, especially given the unsavoury reputation of the Melvauntian military and ruling classes in everything else. I also remembered Kettia's view of them and their trade in slaves. So, we worked out that I should offer Ilandra's signet ring as proof of her death to the Admiral's purser. That way she would be able to maintain the fiction of being captain of a trading vessel for as long as she wanted. (And, I could get the reward!) She was so pleased with the arrangement that she offered to come to our assistance should we ever find ourselves in need of it. I was glad to have made a friend instead of just a profit. With that all settled, I wanted to have a word with Blizzard, but she was tied up with her captain, so I let it rest. I suspected there would be another opportunity to speak later.

We went over to where a bard was singing in another part of the Inn. He was not taking requests, however, so we left him continuing his singing. I noticed a couple of games in the parlour: Dice and a rolling mat, and a dartboard with rule book. Neither offered much in the way of action, so I left after trying each out. Beside the fireplace was a watchful cat. I thought it might be friendly, but it just sat there. Maybe it sensed that I don't very much like cats.<sup>90</sup>

So we dashed back to the Floating Fighter and I went to collect the bounty on Ilandra Wavemistress. Dryden at first insisted on having her head, but I just told him she was a woman and I was not a butcher and he relented, paying out the full bounty.<sup>91</sup> Then we headed back to the Breakwater to tell Ilandra and Blizzard.

When I told Ilandra the ruse had worked, she was grateful, gave me an Arrow of Slaying (Outsiders) and promised that if I were ever in need of assistance, she would come. Then I spoke to Blizzard and told her of our mission to find Maganus and the prospect of battle in Kur-Tharsu. When I asked if she would join us, she was reluctant until Ilandra told her that she should help and gave her leave to do so. Then Blizzard was relieved and promised to show up at the gates of Kur-Tharsu.

## Melvaunt Slave Auction

There was still more of the Central Market area to check out, so we left the Inn and looked around outside. At the Eastern edge of the area, we wandered into the Melvaunt Slave Market. The place was quite repulsive, every bit as bad as how Kettia had described it. I took the Slavemaster, a blowhard named Creel, to task. He spewed some self-serving drivel about how the slaves were lucky to have been taken from whatever hell-holes they had lived in and were happy to be so lucky to work for Melvauntians. I wasn't buying the blather, but the three of us were not going to be able to change anything in Melvaunt on our own, so I let it drop.

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<sup>90</sup> You can roll the dice and get different results, but apart from that, there did not seem to be much I could accomplish by playing with the, The same went for the darts. I could read the rule book, but if there was supposed to be a game, I couldn't play it. The cat showed up as something with which to interact when I pressed the TAB key, but when I tried I had no success.

<sup>91</sup> This ends the quest *Pirates of the Moonsea*. If you do the deal with Ilandra, you earn an alignment shift of +2 Good. Telling Dryden you are not a butcher and getting him to accept the signet ring earns 150XP. For Ilandra, you get the same 3000GP and 1000XP you earned from each of the other two. Also, you earn a 4500XP bonus for completing all three parts of the quest.

Just for interest's sake I asked what he charged and said 500GP each for starters, except for one that was 10,000GP. When he pointed that one out, I immediately recognized Elf, from back in Hillsfar. (It was beginning to feel like old home week in Melvaunt.) I went over and talked to Elf. He told me how he had come to be enslaved there and begged me to get him out. I went back over to Creel and we did a deal on Elf.

Unfortunately, when we went back to Elf, he refused to be freed unless all the other slaves were also freed with him. That threw a real monkey wrench into the negotiation, but he would not be moved. Creel pulled me away, apologizing and promising to torture the resistance out of Elf. At that point, I decided that, seeing as how I was as flush with GP (just under 600,000 at that point), I could afford to do the deal. Creel quoted a flat price of 100,000GP and almost fell over backwards when I agreed without haggling further.

That done, he cleared out and I went back over to Elf. When I asked him what he was going to do, he was still under the illusion he was an elf. I got him to recognize his appearance was fundamentally inconsistent with Elvendom. All that did was make him totally despondent. He said he had to go off into the wilds of Thar and think hard on what he would do for the rest of his life. Then I told him about Maganus and how we were going to have to find and fight him probably at Kur-Tharsu. Elf stood tall at that, said he would meet us to help at the walls of Kur-Tharsu and went off on his own.<sup>92</sup>

### **The Purple Portals: Digression from the Mean**

I congratulated myself on getting both Blizzard and Elf as allies for the fight at Kur-Tharsu and thought it a pretty good day's work. I was going to head out to Thar but, on the way out of the Slave Pens, noticed a temple of sorts. It had purple light columns rising from the outside, so I thought it might be something important. Or, if not important, at least interesting.

Inside we met High Artificer Hlessen Muragh, the officiator-in-charge and chief priest of the Melvauntians' favourite god, Gond the Wonderbringer, patron of inventors and other assorted creators of technical and mechanical marvels. Muragh just happened to be one of those creators. His brow was furrowed in worry about how to get what he needed in order to complete his latest creation, Rex, a human-sized Golem with full-scale golem powers. He claimed that Rex would revolutionize warfare in the realms of the Moonsea.

That sounded as if it could come in handy at Kur-Tharsu, so I asked him what he needed. He described what those materials were: Ten bars of Mithril, two Diamonds and a *Flawless Sapphire*. I knew I had lugged all that mithril all this way for a reason, so I agreed to help.<sup>93</sup> He was astounded at that much mithril all at once, but was grateful. I didn't have any Diamonds, but I was sure I could get some quickly enough. The only problem, however, appeared to be

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<sup>92</sup> This episode begins and ends the quest *Elf in Chains*. Telling Creel that slavery is terrible earns an alignment shift of +1Good. Telling him you want to buy Elf's Freedom earns another +5Good. Buying the freedom of all the slaves completes the quest and earns 4500XP. You need a minimum of 100,000GP to be able to open the dialogues with the Slavemaster that will allow you to buy their freedom.

Getting Elf to join as an ally at Kur-Tharsu updates the quest *Expedition to Thar: Allies*.

<sup>93</sup> This begins the quest *Muragh's Magnificent Machine*.

getting that *Flawless Sapphire*, which was obtainable only from an Elemental somewhere in the seas around Melvaunt. And obtainable only by sorting the creature and getting the sapphire from its remains.

“Simple,” I thought, “All we have to do is get Kettia to sail around until these things, whatever they are, attack us, then sort them!” So, back down to the Shipyards we dashed. When I told Kettia that we wanted to charter the Grim Voyager for a cruise until we were attacked (again) by sea creatures and she refused, calling us tetches and deranged. Then I what we were about and reminded her of how we had handled the Marels and Burak the Butcher. She allowed that we had demonstrated we could deal with such things and as how it might just make sense. She had also heard about what I had done for the slaves and was quite well disposed because of that. So off on our cruise we went.

It took several hours before we found our quarry. Or rather, it found us. We had reached Zhentil Keep and started back to Melvaunt when we were attacked. Kettia yelled at us that Water Elementals had broken through the hull of the ship and that we would founder soon if they were not stopped. Down through the deck hatch we jumped, into the midst of half a dozen Greater Water Elementals led by an Elder. After lots of buckling and swashing we finally put them all down. I ran to the ship’s pump and we took turns pumping until most of the water was gone. Then I picked up the *Flawless Sapphire* from the remains of the Elder, as well as a few GP and potions from the other remains that had not washed away. Up on deck, Kettia was much relieved and set her crew to repairing the damage and getting us back to Melvaunt.

On the way back to the Purple Portals, I stopped at Blackabuck’s to buy back two of the Diamonds I had sold her earlier. Then we went in and I gave Muragh the Diamonds and the Sapphire. He was ecstatic and told us it would take a bit of time to complete work on the machine and that we should come back later.

I decided to look around this temple, just in case there might be anything else of interest. There wasn’t much for a non-believer, but toward the rear of the place, we ran into a gnome named Isaac Ginkle. He had for us a proposition: To go down into the bowels of the temple and retrieve from a locked workshop protected by dangerous golems the construction notes of Ikathilo, a previous High Artificer of the temple.<sup>94</sup> We were just waiting on Muragh to finish his machine, so I agreed.

We made our way down the temple’s central stairwell and on the third level below, came to a portal. Stepping into it, we were transported to Mechanus in the Outer Planes, into what looked like one big energy generation works. I tried the one door we saw off the arrival area, but it required a special key (which we did not have) to open. On the other side of the portal landing area, there was a big locked and booby-trapped gate, which we got through without issues.

Through it, there were a couple of dead ends off to the East. Then we followed the gangway into the Northwest and met two Dysfunctional Golems. After despatching them, we tired the door they had been guarding, only to find that it, too, required a special key to open. So we followed the gangway from there to the South and came to a smaller chamber in the middle

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<sup>94</sup>This begins the quest *Ikathilo’s Extraplanar Workshop*.

of the whole set of passageways. In it was a locked and booby-trapped Chest of Drawers. Before I could try that we had to deal with another two Dysfunctional Golems that came at us from the West. After dealing with them, I found Ikathilo's Key in the chest of drawers. Taking it, we went back up to the Northwest chamber and found it opened the locked door. Inside (after failing to notice - and setting off - a trap which fortunately did no damage), I found a chest and inside it the papers that Glinkel had said he wanted: A treatise entitled *The Art of Golem Crafting*.<sup>95</sup>

"Well," I thought to myself, "We have those papers the Gnome wanted, but there's been nothing for our trouble other than a few GP on those golems's remains." So, rather than just heading back up, I decided we should look around some more. The only area we had not yet been in was across and narrow walkway into the Western part of the works. There we found a lot more than we had expected.

The two Dysfunctional Golems were relatively easy to handle. But the Adamantine Golem was a mother of a fighter. Even buffed to the maximum it took numerous healing potions not only to keep myself alive but also to keep my companions in the fight. Eventually, though, we wore it down and sorted it. In the chest the Adamantine Golem had been protecting, there was 25000GP, a *Titanfell Sling*, 20 *Arrows of Slaying (Constructs)* and 7 *Arrows of the Vampire*. That went a little ways toward making the digression to the Outer Planes a little more worth while.<sup>96</sup>

We returned to the Purple Portals, found Glinkel and gave him Ikathilo's treatise. He was overjoyed and gave me a *Tome of Understanding*. That was generous enough, but it was good for only one use, so I was never able afterward to judge when the best time was to use it. Then we went back to Muragh. He had to have finished by then, I believed, and I was correct. When I explained him what I was about in Thar and Kur-Tharsu, he generously made his new invention available to us for use at the stronghold.<sup>97</sup>

Satisfied that we had arranged for all the worthwhile allies and help we were likely to find in Melvaunt, I decided it was time for us finally to head to Thar after Maganus. When I conferred with Sharalyn and Lyressa, they both agreed, so we made our way back to kettia in the Shipyards and asked her to take us back to Thentia so we could get some horses (hopefully) and get on our way.

## **11. The Expedition to Thar**

Back in Thentia, we returned to Angrym's Livery and bought the three horses he had, contrary to all expectation, indeed saved for us. After mounting up, we made our way North to

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<sup>95</sup> The key will open either of the two locked doors that require a key. If you use Ikathilo's Key to open the door near the portal arrival area, you will find the door to the chamber with the chest and Ikathilo's papers also open. But not vice versa. Opening the locked door to the chest room leaves the other door still locked. And you can get trapped in the passageway to it by the Adamantine Golem.

<sup>96</sup> The Dysfunctional golems are worth either 57XP or 85XP apiece. The Adamantine Golem is worth 228XP.

<sup>97</sup> Taking the treatise to Glinkel earns 2250XP and ends the quest. Going back to Muragh and confirming he has finished his golem earns 4500XP and finished the quest.

the entrance to the Scarred Lands. On our way there, another crow flitted by, dropping another note from Kornah in Zhentil Keep. It suggested we head to Mulmaster and seek out Old Jeffers for more information on Maganus. Against my better judgement, we held up our movement North and made a quick return to Mulmaster. There, as I had suspected Old Jeffers had nothing new for us and Kornah was just passing on old information. We hurried back to Thentia and into the Scarred Lands, less than pleased at the unnecessary diversion.

## **The Scarred Lands**

Immediately we entered, who should appear but my old friend Elf, still an Orc and still operating in full belief he was an Elf. True to his word, he joined up with us and fought aside us the whole time we were mapping out the Scarred Lands. After a brief skirmish with a band of marauding orcs, we ran to a group of mounted Horsemen. These were led by one Valda Skullsplitter, who proclaimed himself leader of the Forsaken Tribe of the Eraka. He was no friend of someone or something named Tarkul and threatened our lives if we were in league with that Tharkul or his ally the “Raven Mage”.

I didn’t know that Tharkul from a hole in the ground, but at his disparaging mention of “Raven Mage”, I suspected we had found another ally. (“Enemy of my enemy”, and all that.) So we parleyed. He told me of some great oaf named Kragdul, who had taken the mantle of ruler of Kur-Tharsu and assumed the title Tharkul, of the Mage (clearly Maganus) who was the power and strategic mind behind Kragdul. Then he told us of his group’s mission was to protect their lands from humanoid invasion from Thar. When I said we were headed there to confront the threat head on, he said we would have to deal first with the black dragon Iyauroth. When I asked if they would accompany us to Kur-Tharsu, he said he would be happy to help us clear out the Scarred Lands to get us on our way, but that they were going to stay and protect any encroachment on their own lands.

So, I asked then to clear out the Southern part of the Scarred Lands while we went of to deal with everything else. We separated and, as we were clearing virtually all of the North, East and West quarters, we came across a cougar in one spot toward the far North and a kind of grave marker in the East. The cougar just stood his ground and I was unable to communicate with it, so we left it in peace. The grave marker was also much of a conundrum. The inscription on it referred to some unspeakable evil within, but I could find no way of learning anything else. Once we had cleared all we came across, we met the Horsemen again. They confirmed they had cleared the South and then left for other places they said they were needed. So we headed back North to find the dragon Iyauroth and the way to Kur-Tharsu.<sup>98</sup>

After they left we made our way toward the Northeast and, on closer inspection of one of the ravines we had passed, we came across a bunch of orcs we had missed previously. Before we knew it, one of them who appeared to be the leader and was named Tusk came up to Elf and started talking to him. In doing that, he revealed that Elf was, in fact, an orc named Grunt Steelstorm, one of the fiercest of Tusk’s band, and that he had been hit on the head on a raid on the Elves at Cormanthor and left for dead. Not only that, Elf/Grunt was Tusk’s brother. Further,

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<sup>98</sup>The Orcs, Ogres and other assorted monsters we ran across in this whole area were not worth much (2XP each) but they did take time to clear out and there were only a few GP and other very minor loot items to be found on their remains.

Tusk apparently had been advised by Maganus that Elf/Grunt was on the side of the good guys. Then after despatching an orc named Slink off to warn Kur-Tharsu of invaders, turned and attacked Elf/Grunt and the rest of us.

Once we had disposed of the bunch of them<sup>99</sup>, Elf's amnesia dropped and he remembered everything that had transpired before his knock on the head. At that he was remorseful to the extreme, calling himself an abomination. Quite a transformation for an Orc, I thought. Hearing that, I told him that he was my friend and that all that counted was who he was now.<sup>100</sup> His new character held firm and he said he would deal with his emotional baggage later but for now we had to finish our business with Maganus and Kur-Tharsu.

We cleaned up the remains before resting and heading out to follow the route Slink had taken. On Tusk, I found a *Kumakawa* armour, the longsword *Angurvadal (Flame Tongue)*, and a *Potion of Cure Serious Wounds*. On the other bodies, we found an assortment of *Tower Shields+2*, *Masterwork Greataxes*, *Light Flails+1*, *Masterwork Longbows*, assorted enhanced Arrows,

## Iyauroth

Following the trail of Slink, we entered the Domain of Iyauroth, a swampy, unwholesome-feeling place. After a bit, we came to a Zhent encampment and were treated with great suspicion. We were, however, able to do a bit of trading with the Quartermaster and sell off most of the loot accumulated in the Scarred lands. I was also able to speak at greater length with the Captain and learn that the Zhents had been sent by their Lord Fzoul to keep a watch on Kur-Tharsu and that maganus was indeed there, protected by many Ogre Mages and other monsters.

It was evident that the Zhents were not very happy with their assignment and had kept far away from the dragon that held sway between their encampment and Kur-Tharsu. As we took our leave and began to move North, Merrik (the Zhent soldier I had kept from being hurt more than he already was back on the Shind Road near Yulash) appeared. This Merrik was reporting to the Captain (who was none other than his wife) that all was quiet and the dragon apparently asleep, when he recognized us. (It transpired that he and his wife had been given their current assignment as punishment for having been captured previously.) His recounting of my abilities got us freedom of movement in the area, and the tacit agreement of the Captain that Merrik might accompany us in searching out the dragon. It was evident they both hoped to realize a share of the dragon's spoils and escape to start a new life far from any Zhent sphere of influence.

Merrik then left and said he would meet us just inside the dragon's lair. As we tried to follow him, we came across two groupings of Great Wyverns. These could have been trouble for lesser adventurers, but we handled them with little damage to ourselves and collected eight vials of *Wyvern Blood* for our trouble. I was not sure what it was good for, but we took it

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<sup>99</sup> The orcs in tusk's bunch are worth only 2XP each, but when tusk sends of Slink to warn Kur-Tharsu, you earn another 250XP.

<sup>100</sup> This earns an alignment shift of +5 Good.



anyway.

Finally, we came to the entrance to Iyauroth's Lair, in the Northeast corner of the area. Inside, we found Merrik and several Zhentarim he had persuaded to follow him. An acrid, unwelcoming stench preceded a booming, equally unwelcoming voice which threatened all kinds of dire consequences. It was, of course, none other than the dread dragon Iyauroth. From its bombast, it clearly thought it would have all those Great Wyverns we had already killed to help it fight us. That was a foolhardy premise on its part. Notwithstanding, it was still a very large, very formidable opponent.

But we did, eventually overcome it with only some injuries. Merrik was ecstatic and, leaving his men to collect their share of the dragon's bounty, ran off to report our success to the Captain. On Iyauroth's corpse, I found the usual *Dragon Blood*, an *Amulet of Natural Armour*+6 and an enchanted *Horned Ring*. Its hoard was located in the Northeast corner of the Lair. There, in a chest, I found a set of *Gold Dragon Armour* and 67GP. In another Chest I found a *Wrath of Talon* shortbow and a *Potion of Invisibility*. In a third chest, there was an enhanced shield *The Wall*, a ruby and a grovelling *Note* from that Kaela we had dealt with back in Thentia earlier. It seemed to me that, between Iyauroth and that bunch back in Thentia, we had pretty much put paid to the Cult of the Dragon.

A nearby loot bag had a nondescript *Gold Ring*, a *Potion of Cure Critical Wounds* and a *Greataxe*+3. Piles of treasure lay all about. One had 7767GP, a *Potion of Cure Critical Wounds* and a *Scroll of Greater Shadow Conjunction*. Another had 4001GP, a *Potion of Endurance* and a *Scroll of Greater Restoration*. In another there were 6500GP and another nondescript *Gold Ring*. In yet another, 3211GP and a *Potion of Cure Critical Wounds*. In another, 8200GP another *Potion of Endurance* and a book titled *The Imps' Prison*. Another had 4036XP and a *Healer's Kit*+10. Another had 3777GP, four Diamonds, 26 Piercing Arrows and another *Potion of Invisibility*. Finally, on a bookshelf nearby, there was a book titled *Iyauroth Wyrms of the Peaks*, which related the long history of the dragon we had just killed and another titled *Uthgart Barbarians*. Also on the shelves were scrolls of *Acid Fog*, *Acid Splash*, *Horrid Wilting*, *Cloudkill*, *Ice Storm* and *Evard's Black Tentacles*, plus one of *Freedom*. I almost regretted not being a Mage so that I might try them out.

All in all, sorting Iyauroth resulted in a very lucrative haul, even shared with the Zhentarim. Back at the encampment, we met up with the Captain and saw both her and Merrik head off to their new life beyond the reach of the Black Network.<sup>101</sup> All that done, we made our way to the passage to Kur-Tharsu.

### **Kur-Tharsu - The Fortress**

As we approached Kur-Tharsu, it was evident that the monsters there had all kinds of nasty defences set up, not the least of which was boiling oil. But then I noticed that Blizzard

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<sup>101</sup> Killing Iyauroth earns 171XP. Returning to the Zhentarim camp with Merrik and reporting it to the Captain earns another 250XP. It also opens the exit toward Kur-Tharsu, up in the Northwest corner of the dead dragon's domain.

showed up as she had promised.<sup>102</sup> She suggested that we could get closer without being seen if she were to set an Invisibility Sphere. “Good idea!” I said, and she did just that.

We made it most of the way to the main gate taking only minor damage. At the gate, however, we appeared to be totally stymied. We came under attack from countless archers and a huge Iron Golem.<sup>103</sup> We managed to fight them off but there was nothing I could do to open the gate. But then the *Wrecker* showed up, as promised by Hlessen Muragh back at the Purple Portal in Melvaunt. I was able to say a few words to it and then it went at the main gate, pounding and smashing. Eventually, its efforts brought forth fruit in their utter destruction and we were free to enter. I was extremely pleased to have taken the trouble to secure as many allies as possible for the assault on the Fortress.

We stopped, however, so that I could use some of my *Healer's Kits* on Elf, who had sustained some pretty bad injuries in the assault. The rest of us were in good shape. We didn't bother despoiling the remains of the Kur-Tharsu Archers because they only carried low value bows and arrows. Then, into the Courtyard we went.

### **Kur-Tharsu - The Courtyard**

In the Courtyard, we were confronted by the Kragdar who claimed to be ruler and leader of the invasion of the other realms of the Moonsea. Unfortunately for him, his IQ revealed itself to be inversely proportional to his size. After a mind numbing (for me, at least) chit-chat, he decided to attack us. During the exchange, however, he did reveal that Maganus was inside the Keep, working with the Oni (Ogre mages) to try to summon a Demon Lord.

Kragdar put up a good fight, along with a bunch of his ogres, but we sorted the lot of them. Afterward, I had to use some more *Healer's Kits* on both Blizzard and Elf, both of whom had taken some pretty serious damage. Then we picked over the remains. (I figured we would get to Maganus and his cronies soon enough. On Kragdar, I found the key to the Stronghold, a *Warlord's Breastplate*, the *Hammer of Vorbyx* warhammer, Boots of Speed, a *Potion of Heal*, a *Belt of Guiding Light* and two *Lightning Arrows*. Apart from a few GP and Arrows, there was nothing else in the Courtyard.

So, into the Stronghold we went.<sup>104</sup>

### **Kur-Tharsu - The Stronghold - I**

There we were assailed by a troop of Ku-Tharsu Archers, a Shaman and other assorted troops, none of whom proved any serious challenge. There was not a lot of worthwhile loot on

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<sup>102</sup> When you meet Blizzard, you earn 1000XP and complete *Expedition to Kur-Tharsu: Allies* quest and begins the quest *Assault on Kur-Tharsu*.

<sup>103</sup> The archers are worth only 2XP each. The Iron Golem earns 114XP.

<sup>104</sup> Kragdar is worth 57XP. The Ogre High Mage is worth 45XP. Most of the other Ogres, Kur-Tharsu Archers, etc. In the Courtyard and in the Stronghold are only worth 2XP each. Entering the Stronghold completes the quest *Assault on Kur-Tharsu* and earns 5000XP.

the remains, mostly Masterwork items and arrows. But on one body, that of a jailer, there was a key. Which I pocketed, thinking it had to be for some door we were going to have to enter.

Looking around, to the East there were two doors. We went into the one on my right and discovered a complex of cells. And in one of the cells were a couple of youngish women who looked as if they had been very roughly handled and were much the worse for wear. When I spoke to them, it became clear they were the two young wizards that the Priestess back in Thentia had mentioned: Jannatha Goldenshield and Baerimel Dunnath. They explained that they had been captured by a Black Wizard when trying to investigate the activity at Kur-Tharsu. They were mightily pleased when I showed them the key I had found.

I opened the cell door and they were confident they could make their way back to Thentia. So was I, given the trail of sorted monsters we had left behind. They left quickly, saying that, were I to return to Thentia, their mistress would reward us handsomely. I was going to ask them to help us out with fighting Maganus, but they were in no shape to do much more than get themselves back to Thentia.<sup>105</sup>

After they left, I closed the door to the Jail Cell area and we rested up and dressed our wounds. Then we went out and proceeded to clear the rest of the level of Archers, Elite troops, Storm Troops out of the Barracks and Armoury/Training areas, and then a lot of Orc Shamans from a kind of dark chapel. There were a lot of them, but we took them all down, eventually.

At this point in our progress, both Elf and Blizzard took their leave. Elf said he was losing his elf-consciousness and wanted to leave before his orc nature risked him attacking me. It was quite touching. He begged me, were we ever to meet again and come to blows, to remember him as he had been but show him no mercy nonetheless. Blizzard had expended all of her energy and wizard powers and said she would not be able to contribute to whatever lay ahead. And with that returned to her Captain on the *Mingleblood*.

That left nothing to do but clean up and collect the most valuable of the usual assortment of weapons on the remains (a few GP and assorted minor healing potions). On the Orc High Chaplain, there was a *Periapt of Wisdom*+4 and a *Maiden's Fury* whip. We worked our way through to the Infirmary and then behind it the Officer's Mess and what must have been the Tharkul's chest.<sup>106</sup> Inside it, I found 24,058GP, and an *Amulet of Divine Radiance*, as well as a Diamond, Emerald, Ruby and Sapphire.

Off the Tharkul's office, there was a door that opened on to a stairwell that led up.

## **Kur-Tharsu - The Stronghold - II**

The stairs took us up to the second level of the Stronghold.

As we came out of the stairwell, we were welcomed by two Iron Golems and an Ogre

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<sup>105</sup> After opening the cell door, speaking to them in turn earns an alignment shift of +5 Good for each dialogue.

<sup>106</sup> The Orc High Chaplain was worth 25XP, but all the others netted only 2XP each.

High Mage. After sorting them, we tried to go through the doorway to the North. It was locked, however and my first efforts to pick the lock were of no avail. Then I noticed the doors on the West and East walls, neither locked.

Behind the door to the West was a library. When we stuck our heads in, an assortment of Archers, Shock Troops, Ogre mages and an Ogre High Mage came at us. After we had put them all down, I found in a pile of papers scrolls of *Premonition*, *Feeblemind* and *Power Word, Stun*. In a nearby chest, there were 17 *Seven Stars of Halangarog* shuriken, a *Potion of Cure Critical Wounds* and a few GP.

Behind the door to the East, there was another library, in which two Battle Horrors came at us. There was nothing of note in there other than the sets of *Full Plate* armour on the Horrors' remains. A door on the North wall of this library opened on to a hallway that led to the chamber behind the door that I had not been able to unlock.<sup>107</sup> The only thing of note there was a door in the Southwest that opened on to another hallway that leading North. At the end of the hall was another door that opened on to another stairwell up to the next level. An urn in the stairwell contained a couple of *Potions of Cure Critical Wounds* and one of *Lore*.

### **Kur-Tharsu - Maganus At Last**

Up on the next level at the end of a short hall, there was some kind of orb or crystal of power. I couldn't do anything with it, so just left it and went through the door on our left.<sup>108</sup> Two Kur-Tharsu Elites and a Cervisnea awaited us. From the body of the Cervisnea, I took 44GP, a *Potion of Heal* and one of *Speed*, a scroll of *Time Stop*, *Bracers of Armour*+8 and a *Legacy of the Oni* katana. The Elites had their usual *DoubleAxes*+2, a few healing potions and GP. My Bags of Holding were nigh on bursting. There was a library and a store room off this chamber, but neither room had anything of interest.

We then went through the next set of closed doors (To the East. Waiting for us there were a couple of Shield Guardians. Which we duly despatched. As we did the two more Guardians that were waiting behind the door the first two were guarding. That was a lot of fighting just to gain access to two empty rooms and a hallway leading East. Ahead we heard a sort of demonic chanting.

We proceeded carefully, clearing a room with a Qualit as we passed it. (And collecting several items from the shelves in the room.) A portal in another room did not seem to be functioning, so we left it and came to a set of doors behind which the chanting got much louder. I suspected that was where we would find Maganus and his Oni cronies, so we buffed up before trying the door.

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<sup>107</sup> The assorted monsters in the libraries netted only 2XP each, except for the Ogre High Mage, who was worth 45XP.

I have to confess: I did not see the doors leading to the libraries at first. Instead, I used a *Potion of Cat's Grace*, the *Luckstone* and a set of *Thieves' Keys*+12 to raise my skills to the 40 level needed to unlock the big door to the next chamber. I came to the Libraries and back to the entry chamber in reverse order, by following the hallway off the Northeast corner of the chamber behind the previously locked door.

<sup>108</sup> If you are following yourself on the map function of the game, it will show you your position upside down to what it is on the screen. I have revised the map of the area in the Annex so that it is oriented as you will see the screen in front of you.

In we went and, no surprise, a cut scene showed several Ogre Oni chanting in a circle in a room blocked off to us by magical barriers. And, there was Maganus standing before us. Gloating, he laughed that we had come too late because the ritual was almost complete. When he saw a passing look of puzzlement on my face, he launched into a long song and dance detailing his plans and affirming he intended to put an end to Zhentil Keep (and to me!) with the help of the Demon Lord the ogres were summoning. I interrupted to ask about the sword *Dominion* and he said it was in his chambers, but of no great importance any more. He was happy to see his revenge against the Zhents accomplished, even at the cost of lives of innocents.<sup>109</sup>

Failing in my attempt at persuading him to cease and desist, I said it was time to put an end to his travesty. At that, we were at it hammer and tongs. Err, blade and spell.... A Balor Lord appeared at his side. Lyressa fell, badly wounded, but dealt with the fiend. Sharalyn fell back for a moment. Then, when I had Maganus literally on the point of death, a massive ugly horned creature appeared, proclaiming itself Orcus, Lord of Darkness. I watched as Maganus sealed his deal with the Demon Lord: His soul for the total and utter destruction of Zhentil Keep. With that, and before I could do anything else, both of them disappeared.<sup>110</sup>

I didn't see any immediate way of pursuing them. So I couldn't have, even had I wanted to do so. (The thought passed my mind that the Moonsea would not be a lot the worse for the destruction of the Zhent power. They always had been a bad lot.) I took a look around and picked up some GP from the treasure box on Maganus's desk, as well as *Bigby's Forceful Hand* and *Bigby's Crushing Hand* scrolls from a nearby chest of drawers. The summoning room was still magically sealed, but beside it, I found a chest that contained the sword *Dominion* and Maganus's Journal. It helped to explain what the wizard was about and the extent to which he was prepared to go to exact his revenge. Even though he clearly knew the evil course he had chosen.



Facing Maganus and Orcus

We were making our way back when I thought to check that portal we had passed earlier. It had become energized and function, so I chanced us stepping in to see where it might get us. That was a good move because we emerged at the Southern end of the Scarred Lands, just about where we had first entered on our way to Kur-Tharsu.

<sup>109</sup> Raising the issue of collateral damage to innocents cuts no ice with Maganus, but does earn an alignment shift of +1Good.

<sup>110</sup> This updates the quest *The Raven Mage* and begins the quest *So High a Price*. The only XP earned on this level are the 15XP for the Balor Lord and the 2XP each for Qualit and other monsters previously sorted.

## Hot (err.... ?Warm?) On the Trail

Back in Thentia, I went to the Temple of Selune to see if those two young wizards we had rescued from the cells in Kur-Tharsu had made it back. They had and the High Priestess was grateful and gave me a Fiendfoe warhammer. I tucked it away in one of my bags, just in case I ever decided to give up my Paladinship to become a Champion of Torm.<sup>111</sup> I was able to sell off a lot of the loot we had picked up. Until the temple ran out of investment capital. Mad Melnyk also bought some, but he too, ran out of stock capital and in any case was not prepared to buy any weaponry or ordnance.

I did not want to be overly encumbered when I finally caught up to Maganus and Orcus, so decided on a short stop in Melvaunt on the way to Zhentil Keep. Kettia freeborn got us there quickly on the *Grim Voyager* and we hastened to the shop of Ublyn Blackabuck. She was very obliging, not to mention very well capitalized, and bought all of the loot that I had packed away. Except of course, those items I thought might be of use in future adventures. Much lighter, we returned to the Grim Voyager and asked Captain Freeborn to get us to Zhentil Keep with all reasonable haste.

## 12. The Showdown at Zhentil Keep

### Blockade

En route, we were able to rest up. And a good thing we did. As we approached Zhentil Keep, we were stopped by a massive assemblage of pirate ships busy slaughtering fishermen and others off the shores of Zhentil keep. Kettia stopped short of engaging and, although the city was clearly afire and in dire straits, said we would need a navy to break the blockade.

We considered the situation for a bit, until she suggested that probably the only friend the Zhents might have was the High Blade of Mulmaster and that I might just be able to persuade him to intervene. So back to Mulmaster we went as fast as the winds would take us.<sup>112</sup> I was glad that I had not done too much to alienate its ruler on my last visit.

Kettia got us to Mulmaster in record time. There I spoke to the High Blade, without much success at first. He was not much interested in any threat posed by Maganus, but his attitude changed when I told him about the smoke and flames rising from Zhentil Keep. Although it came as a surprise to me, he apparently took his treaty obligation to the Zhents very seriously and agreed to meet me with his navy at the pirate blockade post haste. Back at the Grim Voyager, we told Kettia to get us back to Zhentil Keep ASAP.

Back there, a series of cut scenes unfolded, showing the Mulmastrians wiping the decks with pirates's blood. (Figuratively, not literally.) After a while a message came from the Pirate King Avagard, indicating that he wanted to parley with me. That somewhat miffed the Mulmastrian Admiral Kramer, so to soothe his ruffled feathers, I said we would go together.

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<sup>111</sup> Their safe return also earns 500XP. (This is not a quest as such, only an opportunity for bonus XP.)

<sup>112</sup> This updates the quest *So High a Price* and begins *The Pirate King's Blockade*.

On the pirate ship, we met that Avagard. Beside him was Ilandra Wavemistress as his second. She appeared to be under some distress but said nothing. When I looked at Avagard, I immediately thought something was amiss: The look in the eye reminded me of a baleful look I had seen before. And when he started cackling about having deceived Maganus with a counterfeit *Dominion*, I knew the supposed pirate king was, in fact, none other than the slippery Eremuth.

Immediately, he caught on and a battle royale ensued. Ilandra tried but was unable to resist the control of the real sword, which Eremuth evidently wielded. After a few blows were exchanged, Eremuth disappeared, leaving all the others (including Ilandra) to fall to our swords. When the fighting ended, the blockade was effectively broken. While the Admiral wrote up his action report, I took the opportunity to despoil the remains. On Ilandra's body was a *Cloak of Elvenkind*, an *Armour of Fleetness* and the much enhanced rapier *Dragathil*, as well as a *Potion of Heal*. On another dead pirate captain there was a *Chain Shirt*+4, a *Rapier*+3, a *Short Sword*+3 and a *Potion of Bless*. The other corpses yielded only a few lesser potions. I stashed *Dragathil* for possible future use.

Back on the *Grim Voyager*,<sup>113</sup> I asked Kettia to get us to Zhentil Keep at last.

## The Keep

Arrived on the Docks, Kettia announced she could be of no help against a demon lord such as Orcus. When I asked what she knew of Orcus, she related he was known as Prince of the Undead and wielded a wand that could cause instant death to his adversaries. She had no answer to that, only that probably only the greatest magic would be of any use against him.

We moved into the Keep. Everywhere, there we bodies, townsfolk being attacked by Vrock, Balors and other assorted monsters. I thought, "The place used to be one big slum. Now it is a smouldering ruin." We dealt with all of the monsters we ran into and eventually made our way to the doors of the walled grounds of the Grand Temple of the Black Lord.

Inside the temple walls, the grounds were strewn with the bodies of Zhentarim Fighters and Priests of Bane. Before us were two huge Balors. Having sorted them, we went up to the doors of the Grand Temple. I was pretty sure what was inside, so I gathered our party together and we took enough of a rest to restore us. Luckily, we had managed to restore enough peace to enable us to do so without being disturbed.

## Showdown

We entered the temple and saw Fzoul trying to dress down Maganus and Orcus for desecrating The temple of Bane. Maganus was unrepentant and Orcus scathingly scornful of the little popinjay. Then they noticed that we had entered and turned to face us.

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<sup>113</sup> On returning to the Grim Voyager, the quest *The Pirate King's Blockade* ends with an award of 2500XP.

You will not be able to have any kind of dialogue with Kettia at this point, so what you have to do is go to the cabin and pick out Zhentil Keep on the map.

I tried another appeal to Maganus which fell on deaf ears. Fzoul, picking up my meaning called out that we had to work together against the threat. He said he would handle Maganus if I would take care of Orcus. There was no time to choose, however, as Fzoul and Maganus went at it immediately. At the same time, Orcus came against me and somehow a whole host of mundane monsters (Herzous, Balors) as well as more esoteric characters appear and attacked us. Luckily, some Zhentarim Fighters appears to take on some of them.

Orcus was a Monster's Monster. His God status gave him virtual impunity and he was able to take more damage than anything else I had ever faced. I found myself hacking and slashing at him well past the time that all of our buffing spells and potions had worn out. Even then, I had to down several *Potions of Heal* to restore my HP so that I could keep up the fight. Sharalyn was the first to go to her knees, and then Beirmoura. Only Lyressa remained standing by me when I finally managed to land a fatal blow on Orcus.<sup>114</sup>

When that happened, all went black for a few seconds and then as the light returned, the big bag of wind stood there, dumbfounded at having had his earthly form killed by a mere half-elven female. He went on for far too long, whining and threatening me with all sorts of retribution when he returned for vengeance. I had heard it all before, many times. I was pretty sure this one would end up like all the others, muttering to themselves in a corner, madmen assuaging egos by futilely plotting fantastical schemes of revenge.



The whole place was still for the longest time. Then I noticed Fzoul and Maganus still at it. While they were distracted, I brought Sharalyn and Beirmoura back up to full strength and then set about picking up loot from the various remains scattered about.

On the remains of one of Orcus's allies named Quah-Nomag the Skull King, I found a set of *Full Plate*+3, a *Large Shield*+5, *The Skull King's Flail*, *Gauntlets of Ogre Power* and a couple of spell scrolls (*Create Greater Undead* and *Cure Critical Wounds*). On another named Kauvra, there was a *Breastplate*+3, an *Unholy Greataxe*+2 and a *Ring of Protection*+4. On another named Harthoon, there was a *Nymph Cloak*+6, a *Quarterstaff*+5, a *Ring of Protection*+5, scrolls of *Flesh to Stone* and *Prismatic Spray* and a *Wand of Stoneskin*.

Then I noticed all was quiet up at the altar. Maganus had been bested by Fzoul and his lieutenant, Scyllua Darkhope. Fzoul pronounced a sentence of death on Maganus and beckoned me to "share" power with him. I told him that neither was going to happen. Fzoul took it badly

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<sup>114</sup> There are only 2XP rewards for killing the various monsters accompanying Orcus. But killing him, which ends the *So High a Price* quest earns 10,000XP.



and threatened that I would join Maganus on the gallows. I was having none of that and we came to blows. When Scyllua fell, Fzoul ran to the temple sanctum and a cut scene played of him calling on his god Bane to bring it down on all of us. We dashed to the door and made it out to the temple grounds just as the place began collapsing into rubble.<sup>115</sup>

There, Sharalyn expressed her gratitude for my having weakened the Zhentarim and banishing Orcus back to the Abyss. Beirmoura, in her typically annoying whine, said she was off to chase the real *Dominion* and told me I was welcome to join her. With regret, Lyressa also took her leave, saying she had always wanted to see Silverymoon, the Gem of the North. Maganus repented and promised to end his crusade against the Zhents. I warned him that I would find him if he ever again went on his spree of revenge. Then he said he had just enough magical powers left to teleport all of us to a place of safety from which we could all depart.<sup>116</sup> He also said he still had a Malaugrym to sort. I laughed at that and said so did I.

Then the epilogue rolled, suggesting that Maganus might still seek to continue his crusade against the Zhents and set the stage for a sequel adventure against Eremuth.



Eremuth's End Scene Appearance

Finally, screen credits rolled and I was returned to the NWN main menu.

All in all, not a bad ending to the game..

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<sup>115</sup> There is no XP reward for besting Scyllua and no time to despoil her remains.

<sup>116</sup> At this point, if you want to save your character with all his/her accumulated loot and GP, you should do so because there will be no other opportunity to do so.

## End Note

I mused to myself that this kind of life, while interesting, fun even, was making me feel really old and that I might even be slowing down. I decided that it was time to begin recording what I have managed to accomplish. And perhaps to interest other successful adventurers in doing so as well. “A private club”, I thought, “A place where we could record history. Where we might give young, promising adventurers the benefit of our experience and, perhaps, a few bits of useful kit; Where we could eat well, drink well and make plans for the future.”

The *Congress of Accomplished Adventurers* has a nice ring to it.

Something to think about.

## CAA Charter Member Altheia iGenisis

Character Record, Altheia iGenisis



Half-Elf, Lawful Good  
Rogue (8)  
Paladin (15)

Strength	25	7
Dexterity	20	4
Constitution	15	2
Intelligence	16	3
Wisdom	13	1
Charisma	10	0

AC 32  
HP 203/203

Experience: 266492  
Next Level: 276000

Main Weapon: Moradin's Longsword  
Attack bonus: +32/+27/+22/+17  
+36/+31/+26/+21 vs. Outsiders  
Damage: 1-8 + 7 (Critical: 17-20 / x2)  
+1d6 Positive Energy Damage vs. Evil  
+5 **Slashing Damage**  
+4 **Slashing Damage** vs. Outsiders

Offhand Weapon: Not Applicable  
Fortitude: 31  
Reflex: 28  
Will: 18  
Base Attack: 20  
Spell Resistance: 0  
Arcane Spell Failure: 25%  
Armor Check Penalty: -3  
Alignment: Lawful (90), Good (100)  
Effects:

- Constitution Increased
- AC Increased
- Immunity: Critical hit
- Saving Throw Increased
- Regenerating
- Fortitude Saving Throw Increased
- Hasted
- Dexterity Increased
- Damage Increased
- Attack Increased
- Damage Reduction
- Charisma Increased
- Skill Increased
- Strength Increased

Character Record, Altheia iGenisis

Appraise	4
Bluff	1
Concentration	21
Craft Armor	3
Craft Trap	7
Craft Weapon	3
Disable Trap	14
Discipline	27
Heal	3
Hide	6
Intimidate	0
Listen	5
Lore	27
Move Silently	6
Open Lock	16
Parry	31
Persuade	13
Pick Pocket	6
Ride	9
Search	14
Set Trap	8
Spot	7
Taunt	0
Tumble	13
Use Magic Device	7

Character Record, Altheia iGenisis

Divine Grace
Divine Health
Epic Character
Evasion
Great Fortitude
Hardiness vs. Enchantments
Immunity To Sleep
Improved Parry
Lay on Hands
Lightning Reflexes
Low-light Vision
Mount Actions
Partial Skill Affinity (Listen)
Partial Skill Affinity (Search)
Partial Skill Affinity (Spot)
Remove Disease
Shield Proficiency
Smite Evil
Sneak Attack (+4d6)
Summon Mount
Superior Initiative
Turn Undead
Two-Weapon Fighting
Uncanny Dodge II
Weapon Proficiency (martial)
Weapon Proficiency (rogue)
Weapon Proficiency (simple)



### 3. The Moonsea - Overview



1. Voonlar
2. The Shind Road (East of Voonlar)
3. The Shind Road (The Narrow Valley)
4. The Shind Road (Yulash)
5. The Shind Road (West of Hillsfar)
6. Hillsfar
7. Elventree
8. Cormanthor Central
9. Order of the Crippled Fang Encampment
10. Elmwood
11. Cormanthor East
12. Mulmaster
13. Thentia
14. Melvaunt
15. Zhentil Keep
16. The Scarred Lands
17. Iyauroth's Domain
18. Kur-Tharsu

## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **1. The Road to Voonlar**

1. Wagon, Madoc, Anders



### **2. Voonlar**

#### **1. Voonlar - Plan**

1. To/From South
2. The Sword's Meet Inn
3. Temple of Bane
4. The Shield Trading Company
5. The Locktower
6. Waters House
7. The Boring Pig Tavern
8. The Temple of Chauntea
9. Mard's House
10. Abandoned House
11. To/From East
12. To/From North



## Annex 1 - Maps

### 2. Voonlar - The Sword's Rest

1. Main Entrance
2. Stairs Up
3. Stairs Down
4. Lashar Waters
5. Dwarf Thugs
6. Sharalyn Lockleaf
- A. Kitchen
- B. Store room



### 3. Voonlar - The Locktower

1. Main Entrance
2. Stairs Up/Down
3. Board Room
- B. Bron's Hide
- b. Battle Horror
- c. Deputy Chadee
- d. Deputy Dayzal
- h. Deputy Harfit
- j. Deputy Jeyner
- l. Library
- n. Deputy Novic
- w. Waters





## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **4. Voonlar - The Catacombs**

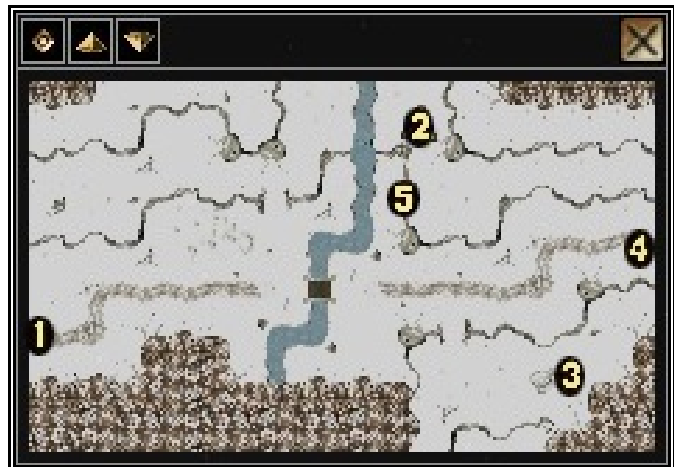
1. Main Entrance
2. Trap Door
3. Ladder up
4. Minion of Death
5. Minion of Death
6. Minion of Hatred
7. Evil-emanating plinth
8. Stairs Down
9. Stairs Up
10. Shrazgul's Lair



### **3. The Shind Road**

#### **1. The Shind Road (Outside Voonlar)**

1. To/From Voonlar
2. Freezing Zhent
3. Kazz'Temmet
4. To/From East
5. Cave



#### **2. The Shind Road (The Narrow Valley & Yulash)**

1. To/From West
2. To/From East
3. To/From West
4. Ogson the Trader
5. To/From East
6. Yulash Gates



## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **3. The Shind Road (Yulash to Hillsfar)**

1. To/From West
  2. To/From Hillsfar
  3. To/From Yulash
  4. To/From Hillsfar
- a. Artemis Enteri
  - g. Grazkhan
  - r. Rock Wall (Impassable)



### **4. The Shind Road (Frost Giant Cave)**

1. To/From Shind Road
- a. Amberlyn
  - c. Agatha the Cook
  - g. Glor "The Trebucher" Bloodaxe
  - j. Jarl Bashnag
  - w. White Dragon Guard



## **4. Hillsfar**

### **1. Hillsfar (Gates & Merchant District)**

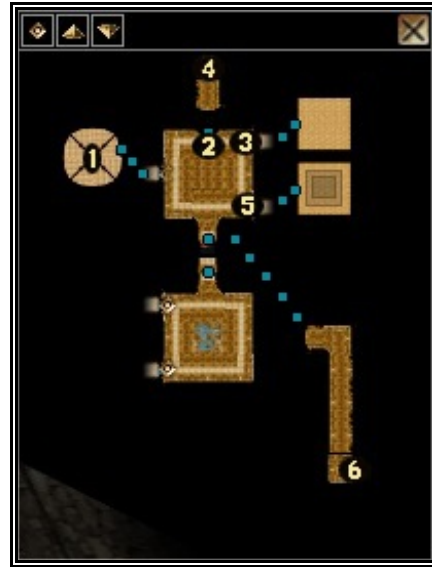
1. To/From West
  2. Kran Onehand
  3. The Diamond in the Dung
  4. Tity's Emporium
  5. To/From Temple District
- a. Amberlyn
  - b. Branon Oakheart
  - c. Cheswick
  - z. Zeltoon Saan



## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **2. Hillsfar (The Arena Complex)**

1. The Ready & Recovery Room
2. The Innovator of Pain
3. Drizzle the Potion Master
4. The Arena
5. The Armoury
6. To Maalthir's Palace



### **3. Hillsfar (The Temple District)**

1. To/From The Merchant District
2. The Vault of Swords
3. The Dreadspire
4. Tarn





## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **4. Hillsfar (The Dreadspire)**

1. To/From The Temple District
2. Water Elemental (Portal)
3. Fire Elemental
4. Earth Elemental
5. Air Elemental
6. Portal to Level 1
7. Mirror Chamber
8. Library
9. To/From Wak's Refuge
10. To/From Level 2



- c. Chest. Crate or Chest of Drawers
- f. Pit fiend
- i. The Innovator of Pain
- p. Pedestal
- r. Red Plume Mercenary & Erinyes
- t. Cloning Chamber
- w. Wak



### **5. Hillsfar - Laris's Curios**

1. To/From Temple District
2. Portal



## **5. Elventree**

### **1. Elventree (Transition)**

1. From Moonsea Map
2. To Elventree

(This map shows up on the first movement to Elventree from the Moonsea Map and again on return from the Order's Encampment.)



## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **2. Elventree - Plan**

1. To/From Hillsfar
2. The Swaying Bough Inn
3. Elventree
4. The Golden Cave
5. The Shrine to Mystra
6. The Temple of Mielikki
7. To/From Cormanthor
8. To/From Elmwood

- c. Cassius  
p. Pile of Leaves



### **3. Cormanthor (Central)**

1. To/From Elventree
2. To/From Order Encampment

- d. Adult Green Dragon (Dead)  
r. Gray Render  
s. Hidden Shrine to Silvanus  
t. Hunter's Trap



### **4. Order Encampment**

1. To/From Cormanthor Central
2. Encampment Gate



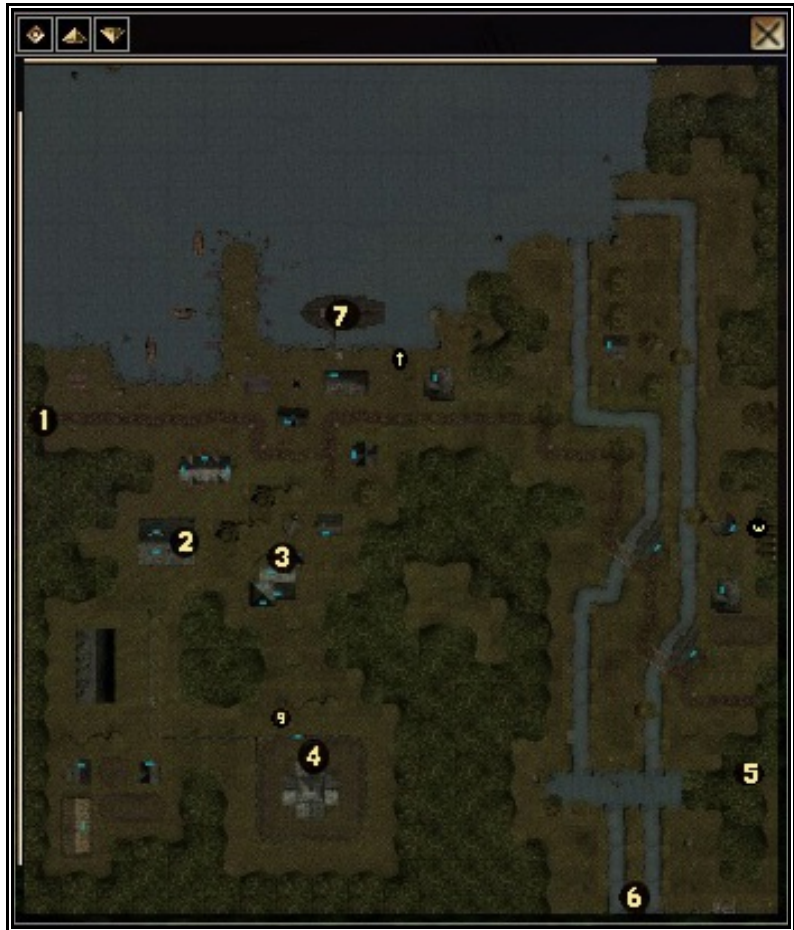
## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **6. Elmwood**

#### **1. Elmwood - Plan**

1. To/From East
2. The Grange
3. The Still Waters Inn
4. Temple of the Half Moon
5. Druid's Grove
6. To/From Cormanthor Forest
7. *The Grim Voyager*

- g. Disturbed Grave  
t. Thoyana  
w. Well



#### **2. Cormanthor (East)**

1. To/From Elmwood
2. To/From Misty Caves
3. Ezrin/Eremuth & Familiars/Doppelgangers
4. Goblins
5. Drow

- b. Berry Bush  
c. Ranger Cache  
d. Drow Camp  
f. Damaged Ferry  
g. Goblins  
l. Landing  
o. Old Chest  
r. Rowboat



## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **3. Cormanthor (East) - The Misty Caves**

1. To/From Cormanthor (East)



### **4. Elmwood - The Old Well**

1. To/From Surface
2. Maganus and Eremuth



### **5. Elmwood - The Still Waters Inn**

1. To/From Elmwood
2. To/From Second Level
3. To/From First Level
4. Duvalle & Sorin





## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **7. Mulmaster**

#### **1. Mulmaster - Docks District Plan**

- 1. *The Grim Voyager*
- 2. Oxpit Tavern
- 3. Smithy
- 4. To/From Imperial District
- s. Dying Shark
- t. Thayvian Guards
- v. Vampire House



#### **2. Mulmaster - Docks District: Oxpit Tavern**

- 1. To/From Docks District
- v. Veris
- x. Unbreachable



#### **3. Mulmaster - Docks District: Smithy**

- 1. To/From Docks District
- s. Smith



#### **4. Mulmaster - Docks District: Vampire House**

- 1. To/From Docks District
- c. Chest
- s. Sarcophagus
- v. Vampire
- x. Unreachable Sarcophagus



## **Annex 1 - Maps**

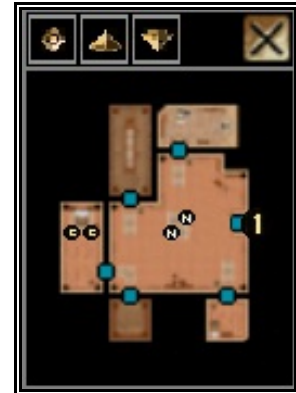
### **5. Mulmaster - Imperial District Plan**

1. To/From Docks District
2. Noble House (Party Central)
3. Residence 2
4. Traveller's Cloak Inn
5. Temple of Cyric
6. Gates of Good Fortune
7. To/From Zhent Quarter
8. Red Wizard Enclave



### **6. Mulmaster - Imperial District - Party Central**

1. To/From Imperial District
- c. Mulmastrian Commoner  
n. Mulmastrian Noble



### **7. Mulmaster - Imperial District: Gates of Gold**

1. To/From Imperial Quarter
  2. Gaming Room
  3. Treasure Room
  4. Worship Room
- c. Cheslyn Onaubra  
r. Rikard Graysteel



## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **8. Mulmaster - Imperial District - Traveller's Cloak Inn**

1. To/From Imperial Quarter
2. Stairs Up & Down
3. Unbreachable



### **9. Mulmaster - The Zhent Quarter**

1. To/From Imperial Quarter
2. Graysteel Residence

- g. Gang Member
- j. Old Jeffers
- s. Sylar (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> appearance)



### **10. Mulmaster - Imperial District - Zhent Hideout**

1. To/From Imperial District
- b. Beholder
  - g. Golem
  - r. Dead Red Wizard
  - x. Zhent Warriors, Mage



## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **11. Mulmaster - Imperial District: Red Wizard Enclave**

1. To/From Imperial Quarter
2. High Blade Selfaril Uoumdophin, after Golem fight



### **8. Thentia**

#### **1. Thentia - Plan**

1. *The Grim Voyager*
2. The Beacon Inn
3. 'Firefingers's' Tower
4. Mad Melnyk
5. Dragoth's keep
6. Candelmas Ruins
7. House of the Moon
8. Inlet Inn
9. Angrym's Livery
10. House of Iyauroth Acolytes
11. To/From The Scarred Lands





## Annex 1 - Maps

### 2. Thentia - The Inlet

1. To/From Thentia

k. Karin Ninetrees

s. Stairs Up/Down

t. Thud



### 2. Thentia - House of the Dragon Cult

1. To/From Thentia

2. Stairs Up/Down

3. Bookcase



### 3. Thentia - The Beacon

1. To/From Thentia

b. Bookcase

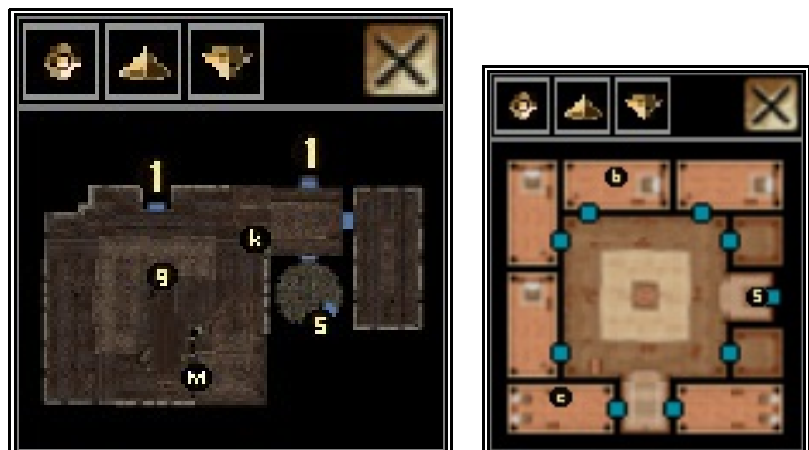
c. Chest

g. Gideon Beira

k. Bale Khodolis

m. Moavar

s. Stairs Up/Down





## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **6. Thentia - Dragoth's Keep**

1. To/From Thentia
  2. Dragoth's Library
- a. Altar
  - d. Dragoth
  - g. Grimoire of the Undying
  - j. Dragoth's Journal
  - l. Locked Gate
  - r. Rituals of Aumvor



### **7. Thentia - Angrym's Livery**

1. To/From Thentia
- a. Angrym
  - e. Exterior Stairs Up/Down
  - g. Gate
  - s. Stables



## **9. Zhentil Keep**

### **1. Zhentil Keep - Docks**

1. To/From Foreign Quarter.
  2. Gate To/From New City
  3. New City  
(End of Kornah's Tour)
  4. To/From Ruins of Old City
- g. The Grim Voyager
  - m. Merchants



## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **2. Zhentil Keep - Foreign Quarter**

1. To/From Docks
  2. To/From New City
  3. Lodge of the Great Hunt
  4. Slaver House
  5. The Pride of Zhentil Keep
  6. Abandoned Orphanage
  7. To/From Sewers (1)
- 
- a. To/From Sewers 2a
  - b. To/From Sewers 2b
  - c. Unremarkable House
  - d. House with Fire Elementals
  - e. Unremarkable House
  - k. Kornah the Crazy
  - u. The Jagged Rocks  
(Temple of Umberlee)
  - w. Wagon blocking bridge



### **3. The Jagged Rocks**

1. To/From Zhentil Keep
- 
- a. Shark Altar
  - s. Stormmistress



### **4. Lodge of the Hunt**

1. To/From Zhentil Keep
- 
- b. Bookshelf
  - c. Locked Chest
  - h. Baerdeth Malagar  
(The Huntmaster)



## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **5. Zhentil Keep - Slaver House**

1. To/From Keep
2. Slave Pen
3. Stairs Up/Down



### **6. Zhentil Keep - The 'Pride'**

1. To/From Keep
  2. Stairs Up/Down
- x. Sewer Exit



### **7. Zhentil Keep - Unremarkable Houses**

1. To/From Keep
- b. Burnbones  
c. Unremarkable House #1  
d. Unremarkable House #2  
e. Unremarkable House #3
- s. Stairs Up/Down



### **8. Zhentil Keep - Abandoned Orphanage**

1. To/From Keep
  2. Thieves Guild HQ
- l. Ladder (Up)  
t. Trap door (Down)  
s. Sparrow





## Annex 1 - Maps

### 9. Zhentil Keep - Sewers

1. To/From Keep (7)
- 2a. Ladder Up/Down
- 2b. Ladder Up/Down
3. Gorlax

- g. Slimy Grating
- i. Lever
- ii. Locked Gate
- j. Lever
- jj. Locked Gate
- k. Lever
- kk. Locked Gate
- l. Lever
- ll. Locked Gate
- r. Knotted Rope
- s. Scratchings
- t. Tracks



### 10. Zhentil Keep - Ruins

1. Movement Portal
  - Options:
    - (1) Return to City
    - (2) Stay in this Area
    - (3) Explore the Ruins
2. The Render

Note: The map never appears as at right.

Individual sections are revealed only after entry and only as they are actually traversed.

Sections may relocate and new sections spawn regularly.



## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **10. Melvaunt**

#### **1. Melvaunt - Shipyards**

1. *The Grim Voyager*
2. The Floating Fighter

R. Resting Place of the Whip  
S. To/From Central Market

- b. Bottle in the Water  
d. Derslon flat  
h. Doppelganger Hide Out  
l. Abandoned Warehouse  
n. Northern Warehouse  
t. Tax Collector's House  
u. Unremarkable House  
w. Western Warehouse  
x. Barrel



#### **2. Melvaunt - Central Market**

3. Blackabuck's Swap Shop
4. The Breakwater Inn
5. The Slave Auction
6. The Purple Portals

S. To/From Shipyards  
e. Elf in Chains  
h. Hermuk's Allgoods  
u. Unremarkable House



## **Annex 1 - Maps**

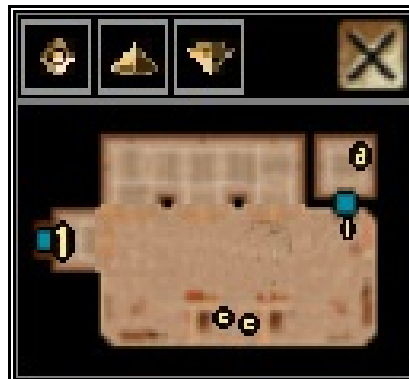
### **3. Melvaunt - The Floating Fighter**

- 1. To/From Docks
- b. Dryden Bruil
- d. Dukes of Daggerford
- h. Hughie
- p. Pile of Books
- s. Stairs Up/Down
- w. Wenda

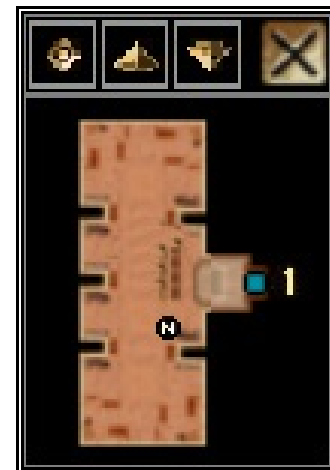


### **4. Melvaunt - Warehouses (Shipyards)**

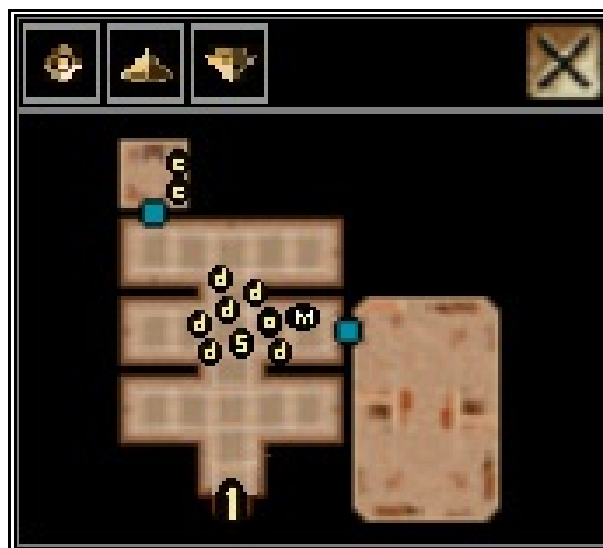
- 1. Entry/Exit
- a. Armoire
- c. Crate or Chest
- Doppelganger
- l. Locked Store Room
- m. Malaugrym (
- n. Scribbled Note
- o. Ootamal
- s. Subarak



Abandoned Warehouse



Western Warehouse



North (Suspicious) Warehouse



## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **5. Melvaunt - Unremarkable Houses (Shipyards)**

- 1. Entry/Exit
- b. Bookshelf
- c. Chest or Cabinet
- l. Lady Miséra Derison
- g. Greater Doppelganger
- s. Stairs Up/Down
- t. Tax Collector



Doppelganger – Tax Collector - Commoners



Derison Flat

### **6. Melvaunt - Resting Place of the Whip**

- 1. To/From Shipyards
- d. Lord Peter Derlson
- l. Locked Gate
- s. Stairs Up
- w. The Whipmistress



### **7. Melvaunt - Breakwater Inn**

- 1. To/From Central Market
- 2. To/From Upstairs
- 3. To/From Basement
- b. Blizzard
- c. Watchful Cat
- d. Dice or Darts
- e. Bard Entertainer
- i. Ilandra Wavemistress
- t. Tavis

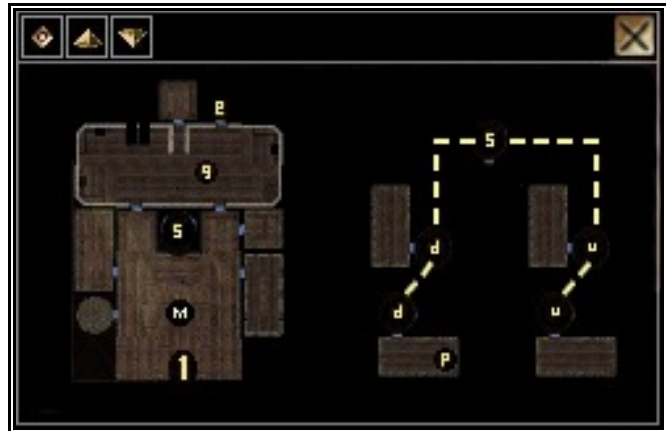


Breakwater (Upstairs)

## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **8. Melvaunt - The Purple Portals**

- 1. To/From Central Market
- d. Stairwell (Lower Levels)
- e. Electrically Barred Passage
- g. Isaac Glinkel
- m. Hlessen Muragh
- p. Portal
- s. Stairwell to Upper/Lower Levels
- u. Stairwell (Upper Levels)



### **9. Melvaunt - Ikathilo's Workshop (Mechano Plane)**

- a. Adamantine Golem
- c. Chest
- d. Chest of Drawers
- g. Dysfunctional Golem
- k. Door (Requires Ikathilo's Key)
- l. Locked & Trapped Door



### **10. Melvaunt - Unremarkable Houses (Central Market)**

- 1. Entry/Exit
- b. Shipwright
- c. Commoner
- d. Dockworker



## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **11. The Expedition to Thar**

#### **1. Thar - The Scarred Lands**

- 1. To/From Thentia
- 2. To/From Iyauroth's Domain
- c. Cougar
- h. Horsemen (Approximate)
- p. Plinth



#### **2. Thar - Iyauroth's Domain**

- 1. To/From Scarred Lands
- 2. To/From Iyauroth's Lair
- 3. To/From Kur-Tharsu
- m. Merrik
- w. Great Wyvern Group
- z. Zhent Encampment



#### **3. Thar - Iyauroth's Lair**

- 1. To/From Iyauroth's Domain



## **Annex 1 - Maps**

### **4. Thar - Kur-Tharsu Fortress**

1. To/From Iyauroth's Domain
2. To/From Courtyard

- b. Blizzard
- g. Gates
- w. The Wrecker
- x. Ballista



### **5. Thar - Kur-Tharsu Courtyard**

1. To/From Fortress
2. To/From Stronghold

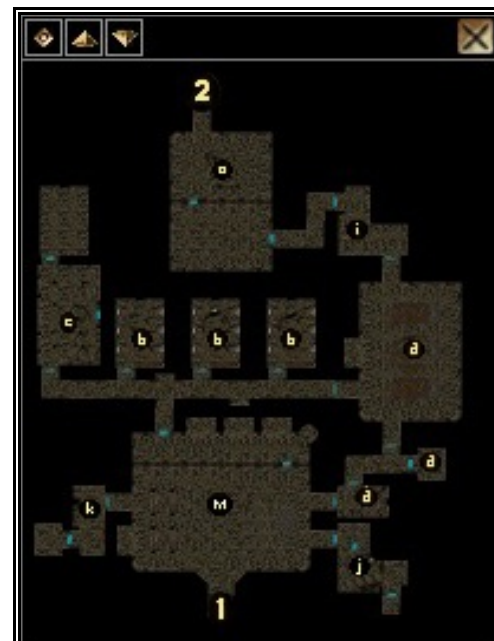
- h. Horses
- k. Kragdor
- o. Oxen



### **6. Thar - Kur-Tharsu Stronghold - I**

1. To/From Courtyard
2. To/From Level 2

- a. Armoury/Training Rooms
- b. Barracks
- c. Chapel
- i. Infirmary
- j. Jail Cells
- k. Kitchen & Pantry
- m. Mess/Muster Area
- o. The Tharkul's HQ





## Annex 1 - Maps

### 7. Thar - Kur-Tharsu Stronghold - II & III

1. To/From Level 1
2. To/From Level 3
3. To/From Level 2

- b. Bookcase
- c. Chest of Drawers
- d. Chest with *Dominion*
- l. Library
- m. Maganus
- o. Orcus
- p. Portal
- s. Summoning Chamber
- x. Locked Door



Reconstructed Image (Not as on Screen)

## 12. Finale

### 1. Naval Blockade

1. The *Grim Voyager*
2. Mulmastrian Flagship
3. Pirate Command Ship



Naval Blockade (Reconstructed Image - Not as on Screen)

## Annex 1 - Maps

### 2. Zhentil Keep

1. To/From The Docks
2. To/From The Temple



### 3. The Temple Grounds

1. To/From The Keep
2. To/From The Temple



### 4. The Grand Temple of the Black Lord

1. To/From The Temple Grounds
- f. Fzoul
- m. Maganus
- o. Orcus



Temple as it appears on entry.

## **Annex 2 - Summary of Quests**

### *The Dead of Winter*

For the safe arrival of Madoc's caravan to Voonlar, you realize 10,000GP. As he says, a ridiculous sum, but one that lets you buy a bit of good armour and equipment when you get the chance.

### *The Order of the Crippled Fang*

The Harper, Sharalyn Lockleaf, wants you to find out about the Order of the Crippled Fang and its machinations in the Moonsea. You get 2500XP for agreeing to do so.

She sends you off to see Kalar Onehand in Hillsfar as a first step. For polymorphing to human form and persuading (or bribing) the Hillsfar Gate guard to get him, you receive 120XP. For talking to Onehand inside the gate, you receive 2400XP.

Clearing out the order in Cormanthor nets lots of middling loot (Shields+2, Longswords+2, Tower Shields+2, Maces+3, GP). For green Slaads, you get 1XP, Gray Slaads, 5XP, Herzous 10XP, Order Warriors 12XP, Priests 24XP, Wizards 37XP or 43XP, the Crippled Fang 184XP. From Karandas, if you talk to it, using insight, you get 120XP for leaning of the Cult of the Dragon. When you kill it, you get 273XP, the sword *Dominion*, Boots of Speed, lots of GP.

After you have fought off the Zhentarim in Elventree, Maganus arrived unexpectedly and saves you from another mage who also showed up unexpectedly. Maganus leaves quickly and says he will see you again. And not be merciful the next time. Then you earn 3500xp.

### *Locktower Rescue*

Lashar Waters needs you to rescue his father from Bron's Locktower. You get 500XP when you get yourself inside and then another 100XP and +5 Good alignment when you get him out, find Lashar again and tell him to meet the old man at home. You also get 36XP for each Deputy dispatched and 57XP for each of the Helmed Horrors, plus all the loot that you can carry. When you follow Lashar home and talk to Bennart, you get 2000XP. If you tell Bennart that seeing the two of them safe is reward enough, then that merits another +2 Good alignment. If you tell him that Lashar showed great courage, then that is worth another +2 shift to Good.

### *Poor Mard*

When you happen upon Mard and his wife at home, you get +3 Good alignment for giving him 10GP. Expect the opposite if you rob him blind.

### *Evil Beneath Voonlar*

Lady Shrae at the Temple of Chauntea needs you to sort the evil underneath the town, now that the Priests of Bane have all been killed off by the Order of the Crippled Fang. You will have to figure out how to get access to the Lair of Shrazgul. Lots of GP and loot en route, some useful most for resale, and XP: Banedeads @23XP, Direguards @39XP, Zhentarim Spirits @67XP and Minions of Tyranny, Darkness and Hatred @103XP. Shrazgul itself is worth 240XP, an evil-only Amulet and The Black Lord's Caress, a +4, Massive Critical Flail. When you report back to Lady Shrae, you receive 2500XP.

*Infernal Warfare*

On the Shind road to Hillsfar, the fiend Kazz Temmet will try to engage you to dispatch the White Slaad Grazkahn. For killing Grazkahn himself, you get 90XP, 90XP for each of his Gray salads and 2XP per Red Slaad, in addition to all the loot in his camp. When you go back to tell Temmet, you receive +5 Lawful alignment. When it then attacks you, if you kill it you receive 1500CP, 15XP for the Vrock, 2XP for the Succubus and 23XP for the Herzou. You also get its enchanted bastard sword and some miscellaneous loot.

*The Frozen Zhent*

Exploring the Shind Road area East of Voonlar, you may spot something covered in snow. If you clear the snow, you receive 150XP. If you heal the almost dead Zhent who had been abandoned by his cohorts, your alignment shifts +5 Good.

*Gloomfang*

You are going to have to fight the dragon Gloomfang on the road to Hillsfar. If you engage it in conversation first, and learn that Maganus wants every Zhent killed on sight, you earn 175XP.

*The Wounded Zhent*

On the road to Hillsfar, you come across Captain Haleton tormenting and about to kill a Zhent prisoner, Merrik. If you prevent Merrik's summary execution and see him taken prisoner to Hillsfar in the hope he will receive medical attention, you 250XP and a shift of +2 Good alignment.

*Ogson the Trader*

You meet Ogson on the Shind Road outside Yulash. If you commiserate with him over the loss of his oxen, your alignment will shift +1 Good.

*Artemis Enteri*

You may be forgiven for wondering why a man bears the name of the Greek Goddess of the Hunt, but it soon becomes clear that he is a hired assassin hunting down none other than your henchman Astar Graysteel. Assuming you come to Aster's assistance and succeed in beating off the attempt on his life, you earn 500XP.

*A Tale of Two Merchants*

You meet Cheswick and his wife Amberlyn marooned outside the Hillsfar Gate and suggest they go to Ogson for shelter. Going back to check they arrived, C tell you his wife was taken by Frost Giants to a cave to the West and asks that you rescue her. At the cave, you kill Frost Giant Nomads @67XP, Dire Bears (@12XP), a Frost Giant Shaman (for 103XP, a Morningstar +3, and an Amulet of Natural Armour +3), a White Dragon Guard @144XP, Glor the Trebuchet @67XP, a Frost Giant @12XP, a Winter Wolf @2XP and Frost Giant King Jarl Gashnag (for 175XP, a Bloodstone Double Axe and the Key to where A is held). For killing Agatha the cook, you get 67XP, her Staff of Stirring, some GP and a potion of Speed. When you speak to Amberlyn, you learn Cheswick sacrificed her and laid a trap for you. She is in rotten shape and begs you to take her away from the cave quickly.

Doing that, you are teleported back to Ogson's camp, confirm Cheswick is a scoundrel



and hear the rest of Amberlyn's story. If you tell her she is not a bitter old hag, your alignment shifts +1 Good. For hearing her out, you earn 2500XP and Cheswick's Dagger.

Later on, you may learn the reason for Cheswick's personality change after he married Amberlyn.

### *Madmen and Villains*

As you enter the Hillsfar merchant District from the Shind road, you are approached by an old man who accuses you of stealing his spoon. It quickly becomes evident that he is not in his right mind. If you treat with him politely, your receive alignment shifts as follows:

Asking "Give back what, Sir?" = +2 Good

Saying "I don't have your spoon" = +2 Good

Swearing upon your honour that you do not have it = +2 Lawful

Gently taking hold of his arm and pushing him backwards = +2 Good

Later, you discover that the old man is Wak Rathar, Maalthir's 'friend' and his way of finding victims for the arena. If you get out of the arena, you can find Wak and the Innovator of Pain (IoP) in the Dreadspire. There you have to kill different kinds of Elementals (Greater Water @72XP, Greater Fire and Greater Earth @100XP, Greater Air @261XP) in order to get the gemstones you need to open the portal to Level 2. If you try to rest, you are awakened by Invisible Stalkers @3XP the first few times, each time in increased numbers.

On Level 2, you have to deal with Agrishal the Pit Fiend to get past the entry door (@100XP if you decide to kill it). You will also have to deal with yourself if you decide to examine the mirror. You don't get any XP for dispatching your doppelganger, but you do get a shard of the Mirror, which is a quite powerful dagger.

You can only kill the IoP after you have killed Wak on Level 3. For Wak, you get 100XP, the Black robe of the Archmagi and a Cloak of Fortification+4. For killing the IoP, you get another 100XP, a Shocking Whip and a Cloak of Vecna. Plus 2400XP for finishing the quest. It is not quite finished, though, until you destroy all five of the cloning chambers (@80XP) to make sure no more Waks appear.

### *City of Trade*

Kalor Onehand tells you to meet him in the Diamond in the Dung Inn and there, if you ask the right questions, tells you all about Hillsfar, Maalthir and what he knows about most other things in the city, as well as himself. He then tells you that there is one other thing you have to do. When you say you are ready, you enter a cut scene that ends up with you in the Arena holding/ready/recovery area. Later in the arena, although he betrayed you, Kalor explains that you are part of his plan to kill Maalthir. When you meet with Maalthir, if you accept, or acquiesce in, his proposal to end the threat of war, you net 2400XP.

*Hillsfar Arena*

After your cut scene with Wak Rathar lands you in the Arena cell and you speak with each of Father Garth, Elf and Blizzard, you get called out of the cell. There, the Innovator of Pain (IoP) tells you to visit Drizzle the potion master (who gives you 3 Cure Critical wounds and your choice of two others) and the armoury to get yourself ready for your first challenge. You get 24XP for killing the Tanarukk Orc (24 XP) and returned to your cell where you can speak to the only occupants, Elf and Blizzard. Speaking kindly of Garth to one of them gets you an alignment shift +1 Good. After you rest, you are called out again.

This time IoP tells you to see Kalor Onehand down in the Gladiator Pool. After you've finished with Kalor, IoP tells you to get ready to face your next opponent in the Fighting Pit. This lets you get more healing and other potions. You get 37XP and 46Xp respectively for the two Drider Rogues, and another 211XP for the Drider Sorcerer. Then back to your cell where Elf and Father Garth are the only occupants. With Elf, you can get a +1 Good shift by expressing concern about Father Garth. With Father Garth, you can get another alignment shift to the Good if you express concern or show understanding about him, and also learn his history by talking to him. You can score 120XP by saying that the slave who saved him was a priest of Ilmater. If you ask where Blizzard is, you can get another +1 Shift to Good. Then you are called out for your next fight.

This time you have been summoned to watch Blizzard's death in the pit and then your own at the hands of the Magic Golem. When you are getting more potions from Drizzle, you can get him to tell you about how to deal with the Magic Golem. Once you have killed it (24XP), you are ordered to give Blizzard a coup de grace. If you refuse, you get a +2 shift to good and both of you are sent back to your cell. In the cell, IoP is the only one with whom you can speak: Father G and Elf are gone and Blizzard can only manage an "ugh". IoP tells you that you are up against the Red Minotaur, the only previous Gladiator to win freedom, and before Maalthir himself, no less.

When you are called out again, IoP tells you to speak to Drizzle again, presumably for more potions. Besides potions, you can get from him information on how to kill the IoP and remove the geas put upon you by Wak. In the Pit, you see that Father Garth and an almost dead Elf are the last two surviving against the Minotaur. Garth gives you a choice he can give you the strength to beat the Minotaur or heal Elf. You can get a shift to good by having him heal Elf. Killing the Minotaur seems to result in nothing but the temporary retirement of IoP, an invitation to Maalthir's quarters and yourself teleported back to your cell. There, you can speak to Elf. Saying Garth is at peace at last gets another shift to Good. Elf's telling you about your summons to Maalthir's quarters nets 1200XP. Blizzard has recovered enough to talk and your telling her you could never have killed her is worth yet another shift to the Good. She tells you to kill Maalthir if you get the chance.

Summoned to Maalthir, he tells you he has nothing to do with the Order of the Crooked Fang, indeed offers you your freedom for hunting it down and dealing with the threat of war. Subject to one last task in the Pit: You have to fight Kalor. You have no choice and no opportunity to avoid this because Kalor has been crazed with torture. When he is finally subdued, showing understanding moves you 5 to Good. When he expires, in peace, you receive

2400XP and are transported to the gates of the Temple District.

### *Father Garth*

This priest is a healer and is being kept alive, just, in the arena. He dies, but seems to appear at beatific moments. You can get alignment shifts in your dialogues with him or about him. Once free of the arena and in the Temple District, you can find a young priest (Tarn) who is questioning his faith. Telling him about Garth's sacrifice nets you 1200XP plus another alignment shift of +2 Good.

### *Elf*

Elf is, to every appearance, an Orc. He believes himself to be an Elf, however, and seems to think, speak and act like one. In your cell in the Arena, if you have had his help in polishing off the Minotaur and after the fight with Onehand, when he tells you about your summons to Maalthir, you earn 1200XP.

### *Blizzard*

Blizzard is the other prisoner/gladiator in your cell. She has been successful for a long time, but finally meets her match in the Magic Golem. You can get an alignment shift when ordered to administer the coup de grace. You also earn 1200XP when you finally find out her history with Maalthir. Later, you may be able to get her as an ally in your final big battle. [There always is one, isn't there?]

### *The Town in the Trees*

On your way to Elventree, you learn that the town has been subject to attacks. You undertake to Sharalyn to save it. After fighting off the Zhentarim, you return to the Swaying Bough only to find your Eremuth revealed as an evil mage who killed Astar and fled. But the town is saved from the Zhentarim. You earn 3500XP.

### *Hunt for the Traitor*

Eremuth is revealed as a Malaugrym who stole *Dominion* and fled East to Elmwood after killing Astar. Following Eremuth into Cormanthor East, when you beat him, you get 16XP for each Doppelganger and from him a *Belt of Fire Giant Strength*, a *Shadoweir Amulet* and a note incriminating Sorin. Also *Drow Leather Armour* +4, *Drow Scale Mail* +4, *Drow Pifawi Cloaks* and *Maces* +4, GP and a few spell scrolls when you kill his Drow Allies. Also in the Cormanthor Wood, you discover the bodies of Ezril the Druid and his bear and wolf companions. On them, you find a Ring of Animal Empathy +12, a large bear pelt and leather hide.

When you track him to the well and see *Dominion* taken from him by Maganus, you get 3200XP. In the well complex, you meet Invisible Stalkers and Will o'th' Wisps @1XP, Tri-Flower Fronds and Stone Golems @14XP, an Iron Golem @70XP and an Elder Air Elemental @184XP.

### *Murder in Elmwood*

Elenawyn, an Inn worker and Acolyte of Selune, has been killed in Elmwood. Thorayana commissions you to investigate. When you show Thoryana Eremuth's Journal and finish

speaking with her at the Inn, you receive 3200XP, Chain Mail+4, Gauntlets of Ogre Power, a Helm of Brilliance and the Dwarven Thrower warhammer.

After having solved Elenawyn's murder and seen Eremuth skulk away in Elmwood, several new quests open up as you speak to Thorayana, Sharalyn and Lyressa in the Still Waters Inn: *Astar's Widow*; *Mulmaster - Chesslyn Onaubra*; *Melvaunt - Ulblyn Blackabuck*; *Zhentil Keep - Kornah the Crazy*; and *Thentia: Retired Archmages*.

#### *Astar's Widow*

Lyressa shows you a letter she found on Astar's body addressed to his wife. If you decide to give it to her, then Mulmaster is your next stop. In the Gates of Gold, Rikard Graysteel, her current husband, tells you to find her in the Zhent Quarter. If you give her Astar's letter and tell her about him, she gives you Astar's Ring in thanks. She also says she thinks that deep down, Rikard is a good man. If you speak to him and get him to go back to her, you earn 3600XP.

#### *Mulmaster - Chesslyn Onaubra*

Sharalyn mentions this Harper Agent may have information on Maganus. You find her at the Gates of Gold in Mulmaster. She is not much help on Maganus, or on finding Lana Star's wife, but directs you to Rikard Graysteel, her husband now, in the Gaming Room. In the Zhent quarter after you encounter Sylar's Gang (@4XP, Small Shields+3, Short Swords+4, etc.), Old Jeffers does give you a lot of Maganus's history. That earns 800XP

#### *Melvaunt - Ulblyn Blackabuck*

Sharalyn mentions that this Harper may have information on Maganus. You need to speak to him to open up the *Date with the Dukes* and several other quests.

#### *Zhentil Keep - Kornah the Crazy*

Kornah is a Harper playing a crazy, but has good information on Maganus and suggests he is in Thar. After you hire her and take her tour of the city, you receive 800XP.

#### *The Unseen*

From Nightshade in Laris's Curios, you learn that she was Eremuth's sister. And on her body, you find a letter about meeting with Cheswick (remember him?) in Melvaunt. In Melvaunt in the Northern Warehouse in the Shipyards, you discover Eremuth's mother Amaraunel and another Malaugrym discussing him. In the ensuing fight, they both flee successfully. When you have killed off all the Greater Doppelgangers (5@11XP & 3@6XP), Sabarak (@64XP, Bracers of Armour+6, Staff of the Magi) and Ootamal (@120XP, Gloves of the Long Death+4, Gem of Seeing, Thieves tools +10+12), you receive an additional 4500XP for completing the quest.

#### *Thayan Ambassadors*

A Thayan delegation arrives in Mulmaster with lots of golems as gifts to celebrate the wedding anniversary of High Blade Selfaril and his (Thayan) wife Tharchion Dmitra Flass. If you are able to get yourself an invitation to the party and are there to help fight them off, you get to talk with Selfaril afterward. You also receive 20XP or 39XP for each Golem you kill and your reward from Selfaril is all of as the Diamonds, Emeralds and Rubies (4 of each) left after the fight. At the end of your conversation with Selfaril, you also net 3600XP.

### *Pirates of the Moonsea*

Admiral Meldondar Nurian of the Melvauntian navy proposes that you rid the Moonsea of the pirates Veris of *The Purple Star*, Burak of the *Flotsam* and Ilandra Wavemistress of the *Mingleblood*. Finding Veris in the Oxpit in Mulmaster, you can deal with him peacefully (120XP and his signet ring) or not (a few XP, Veris's head, Plate Armour +4, Scimitar+4+Haste, GP and other loot from his mens' corpses). When you take his head to Dryden Brull in Melvaunt, you earn 800CP and 3000GP. Burak and his bunch find you on the Moonsea. You get another 800XP and 3000GP for bringing his head to Brull. You also get to keep and sell all the loot from the corpses of Burak and his crew.

Ilandra you find in the Breakwater Inn in Melvaunt. You can attack her for her head or deal with her peacefully. She is accompanied by Blizzard, and you have to know that attacking Ilandra also means fighting Blizzard. It's up to you, but after saving Blizzard in the arena back in Hillsfar, my personal inclination would be not to fight her. After all if you consider Blizzard a friend, you might be able to make Ilandra a friend also. You never can tell when you might need a friend. Whatever you do, you get another 800XP and 3000GP when you bring the evidence back to Brull. You may have to use your skills of persuasion to accept her signet ring instead of her head.

When you have finished with the third pirate and got your rewards for all three, you receive an additional 1200XP for completing the quest.

If you have managed to complete the quest while protecting Ilandra, she will give you an Arrow of Slaying (Outsiders), which may come in handy if fighting big ogres. She will also commit to helping out if you are ever in need of assistance in a naval battle.

### *Thentia's Resistance Army*

Bale Khodos, the leader of this vigilante group found and became controlled by the magic sword *Beirmoura*, the talking Bright Sword of Thentia, and attacks you when you try to stop him from leading his pretentious rabble to its death. Beirmoura joins you as a henchman when you have to kill Bale (1XP) and explains it is enemy of wizards and the five Netheril swords, including *Dominion*.

### *Thentia: Retired Archmages*

Sharalyn mentioned that one of the mages in Thentia might have some poop on Maganus. Flamulinath "Firefingers" Muldoun can tell you quite a bit of Maganus's history, but probably not offer much help on his current whereabouts. Still, talking to him extensively nets 800XP.

[For some reason, both Mad Melnyk and the Priestess in the Temple of Selune tell you that he lives in the North of Thentia. Also, the use of the plural in the title of this quest suggests that there is more than one mage to consult about Maganus. There is certainly another retired mage living in this area but he doesn't have anything to help you in your search for Maganus.]

### *Dragoth the Bone Mage*

Dragoth is the other mage living in Thentia and what he can do for you is clear up a lot of the mystery about and for Lyressa. He can't bring her back to life, but he can restore her memories of the person she was - if she undergoes a necromancer ritual. When she asks you

what to do, if you tell her to do what she thinks best, you receive 3600XP. If you tell her you like the person she is, you get the 3600XP and a shift of +5Good. If you tell her to go ahead with the ritual, you get the same 3600XP, but also a shift +20Evil.

If you leave him at this point, you get nothing else. If, however, you decide to rid the world of his presence altogether, you will kill him quite easily (99XP) but then have to fight all of his skeletons and zombies (@1XP and a Bone Golem (@7XP. If you survive, you are then able to loot all of the remains for a Blackstaff, a Greater Amulet of Health, a Black Robe of the Archmage, Bracers of Armour+6 and a quarterstaff. Killing him does not cause any alignment shift, only the uneasy feeling that you might have done him a good turn by doing so. [I am all for doing good turns. Besides, the world doesn't need another necromancer wandering about, retired or not.]

### *Shadowvar Search Party*

Thalia Tanthul, leader of the Shadowvar in the Candelmas Ruins, is searching for *Dominion* too. You can agree to work together to get it, but she won't do anything until you bring her more information on its whereabouts. When you bring back the fake *Dominion* to her, you get 3600XP and after you kill her and her ilk, all the loot you can carry.

### *A Date with the Dukes*

Blackabuck tells you of a group of adventurers who call themselves the Dukes of Daggerford who have returned from the North and are hanging out in the Floating Fighter. When you speak to them you learn the ogres in their stronghold of Kur-Tharsu have a mysterious ally who sounds a lot like Maganus. They also tell you that you need horses to be able to cross the Scarred Lands and still be in shape to fight at Kur-Tharsu. In addition to this intelligence, you receive 800XP. By the way, these guys won't join you.

### *Expedition to Thar - Mounts*

The Dukes of Daggerford tell you that you need mounts to be able to get to Kur-Tharsu in any shape to fight the ogres there.

### *Assault on Kur-Tharsu*

The Dukes of Daggerford tell you that you will need powerful magic or a big siege weapon to get through the gates of Kur-Tharsu.

### *Expedition to Thar - Allies*

The Dukes also tell you that you are going to need all the allies you can get to be able to attack Kur-Tharsu successfully. If you have played your cards right, Blizzard may agree to join you at the gates when you are ready to attack. Ditto with Elf.

### *Muragh's Magnificent Machine*

Muragh, in the Purple Portal in Melvaunt needs help in building Rex, a magnificent fighting Golem. To do this he needs 10 bars of Mithril, 2 diamonds and a flawless sapphire obtainable only from an elemental in the waters around Melvaunt. If you have not been selling off all those diamonds and Mithril bars you picked up earlier, you are a better man than I, Gunga Din. To get the *Flawless Sapphire*, you have (2) to have been attacked by and fought off the water creatures; (2) to have completed the Big Game Hunt, then be headed back to Zhentil

Keep and defend the ship from attack by Water elementals; (3) pump out the ship's bilges and take the gem off the body of the Elder Water Elemental.

When you deliver it to Muragh along with the mithril bars and Diamonds, he will thank you profusely then tell you to come back later when he has finished his golem. When you come back you get 4500XP and can ask that the Golem help you out at Kur Tharsu. (It will make getting through the gate to the keep an awful lot easier.)

### *Elf in Chains*

You find Elf in the slave market in Melvaunt. If you tell the Slave master that you want to buy his freedom (+5 Good), he will take you over to Elf for a chat. Elf will not agree to be freed unless all the other slaves are also freed. That will cost you 100,000GP for the lot. (Don't bother trying to buy only some.) Doing so earns you 4500XP. You can also gain Elf as an ally at Kur-Tharsu, if you speak to him in the right way.

### *Big Game Hunt*

Huntmaster Baerdeth Malagar in Zhentil Keep engages you to hunt three monsters. These are: (1) The Render in the Zhentil Ruins; (2) Vaporandir, a dragon located near the River Lis back in Elmwood; and (3) a Werebear, a rogue found in Thentia.

In the Ruins, you receive saleable loot and a few XP for killing miscellaneous monsters, rogues, 32XP for Old White Dragons and 120XP for Ancient White Dragons. Strangely, although it is the hardest to kill, you get nothing for the Render until you take its head back to the Huntmaster, at which time you receive 400XP and 2000GP. [In light of what happened with Vaporandir and Karim Ninetrees later, I thought perhaps that I should have taken the time to see if there was an option to speak with the Render. But by the time I understood about the Hunting Lodge, it was too late to go back and try it again. In any case, on the second time around, I found there was little opportunity to do anything but fight with the Render.]

You find Vaporandir in the Misty cave back in the River Lis. There you can kill it to get its tongue for proof of death. (Tongue) Or, if you take the time to talk to it and decide you don't necessarily want to kill it, you can get another 'proof'. (The tongue of that dead dragon back South of Elventree!) bringing the tongue back to Vaporandir nets you a gift of an Anti-magic Shield from its hoard. Then taking that tongue to the Huntmaster nets you 400XP and 2000GP. Should you decide to kill Vaporandir, notwithstanding the deal you made with it, that nets you 48XP and alignment shifts of +5Evil and +5Chaotic, plus the tongue.

Karim Ninetrees, you may already have met in Thentia. If you go back and find him again, you get the same story about the Hunting Guild and have the same choices as with Vaporandir, only you have to find a bear pelt somewhere for him to bloody for your proof of death. Taking that back to the Huntmaster nets you yet another 400XP and 2000GP.

Not only that, but also an invitation to the "Ultimate Hunt" in Cormanthor forest. If you agree, the Huntmaster tells you to meet him and his Malars there. Well, you guessed it. Having proved yourself the best hunter, they all want to hunt you. For killing the bunch of them, you get 37XP for the Huntmaster, 5XP for each of his acolytes and 4500XP for completing the quest. Plus, of course, all the loot on their bodies.

Among that loot is the key to the chest in the Hunting lodge back in Zhentil Keep. If you go back to open it, you get 10000GP, the Helm of Balduran (=1 Armour, +1 Constitution, +1 Universal Saving plus Immunity to critical hits) and a healing potion.

### *Gorlax the Many Eyed*

You catch Sparrow picking a GP from your pocket and, if you treat her right, she takes you back to the Thieves Guild, where the leader, Tyna, is evidently under some kind of spell. Jackdaw tells you that whatever cast it on her is in the city Sewers. In the Sewers, after fighting through rats, different kinds of Ooze, Umber Hulks and Gorlax Thralls (@1XP), you get to speak to and fight with Gorlax (@58XP and a Ring of Protection+6). Back at the orphanage, Tyna, no longer spellbound, offers you thanks, the Guild as a safe storage and resting place and opens her store to you. You also receive 4500XP.

### *Expedition to Thar: Mounts*

The Dukes of Daggerford in Melvaunt will tell you the lesson they learned when trying to cross the Scarred lands. No XP or GP awarded, but the conversation is a must in order to be able to buy horses from the stable in Thentia

### *Expedition to Thar: Allies*

You will have the opportunity to meet up with both Elf and Blizzard in Melvaunt. If you act appropriately, you can gain them as allies for the assault on Kur-Tharsu. You can also get Rex from Muragh if you fulfil the *Muragh's Magnificent Machine* quest.

### *Assault on Kur-Tharsu*

Getting to the Keep's courtyard gate is no easy task. You have to have allies, move fast and take out the Archers and Arquebuses on the walls in order to get at the troops holding the gate.

### *So High a Price*

Orcus & Maganus are attacking the Zhentil Keep and wreaking havoc. You have to get there if you are going to stop them. When you kill Orcus, you get 8000XP plus lots of loot from dead guys.

### *The Raven Mage*

Even though you have beat Maganus, he has summoned Orcus to help him attack the Zhentarim and teleported off to the Keep. If you are victorious in battle with Orcus, you have choices: If you don't let Fzoul kill him, you gain 2500XP. If you abandon him to his fate you realize no XP. If you join with Fzoul, you get the 2500XP but also a shift of 50 toward Evil. Any of these ends the adventure. If you say you need more time to consider, you are locked in the temple with no exit possible.

### *The Pirate Kings Blockade*

When you try to sail to the Zhentarim Keep to follow Maganus, you encounter a pirate blockade. You have to secure Naval help somewhere. The High Blade of Mulmaster has treaty obligations in this regard. Ilandra has also offered to help, although she is unable to come through in the end through no fault of her own. When you do finally beat the pirates, you get sundry weapons (including a pretty good enhanced rapier) and loot and 2000XP.



*Ikathilo's Extraplanar Workshop*

Isaac Glinkle, in the rear of the temple, tasks you with recovering Ikathilo's book on Golem construction from his workshop in the cellars. You first have to find the portal to the cellars, get the key to his chest, then get past lots of Dysfunctional Golems (106XP or 156XP plus a bar of Mithril or iron) and an Adamantine Golem (if you come across it) to get access to the room with his chest to get the book. The Adamantine Golem also guards a chest with 25000GP and some other stuff, so it is worth trying to get that. Beware, however, it is a bugger, so if you can figure out how to get a head start on it and get away fast enough, you have a better chance running than fighting it. Returning the book to Isaac nets you his gratitude and 2250XP. He also gives you a book that will increase your wisdom +1, for one time only.

## **Annex 3 - Answers to Riddles Puzzles, Problems, Quests and Such**

These solutions are presented in the order in which I found them in my first time through the game.

### **The Dead of Winter:**

You have to pick up on Madoc's suggestion that you go to your wagon and fit yourself out for a fight, then go back and speak to him again in order to move to the next game segment.

### **Evil Beneath Voonlar:**

To get access to the Lair of Shrazgul, you have to collect the four Quadrants of the Sign of Bane and put them up on the pillar outside the stairs down from the Catacombs. One Quadrant is in the desk in the abandoned house, and another in each of the Southeast, Southwest and Northwest corners of the Catacombs. These are protected, of course, by Minions and Zhentarim Spirits, Direguards and Deathbanes all of which you have to kill, just to get at the greater evil, Shrazgul itself.

You will find yourself scared by the Banelich, notwithstanding any clarity potions you may have. So the way to kill it is to let your henchmen fight it while you recover your wits enough to rejoin the fight. Repeat until it is dead, or you are.

### **Hillsfar - Getting through the Gate:**

If your character is not human, you have to use the polymorph scroll that you got from Sharalyn in Voonlar. (You did, didn't you?) Then you have to persuade, or alternatively, bribe, the guard to go fetch Captain Onehand.

### **Hillsfar - The Arena:**

The Magic Golem can only be damaged by non-enchanted weapons. So, get a plain-Jane sword (or whatever your preferred weapon is) from the armoury and equip that before you go into the arena. If that does not work and you have the ability to conjure a creature, do that before you go in and just keep it up to maximum strength with potions or spells. It will eventually bring down the Magic Golem.

You do not have any choice about fighting and killing Kalor Onehand if you want to progress in the adventure. You do, however, have a choice about whether or not you heal Elf and/or Blizzard. If you do, they can help you fight the Minotaur.

### **Hillsfar - The Dreadspire:**

If you don't know what the keys and the huge gemstones are for, and how to use them, you might want to try a less challenging game. You need the key from the Elemental in one section to be able to proceed to the next section. The Huge gemstones have to go on the similarly coloured pedestal to permit you access to Level 2.

When you meet IoP on Level 2, don't waste any more time on him than you can get away with: run to the door to Level 3 and kill Wak first. That way the geas on you, preventing you from damaging IoP is broken and the bugger is fair game. And quickly gets shown

up as the sadistic bully he is. Also unless you bash all of the cloning tubes, you risk Wak reappearing.

### **Hunt for the Traitor and Murder in Elmwood:**

You have to go to Elmwood, find out about the Murder, then meet with the Druid, then beat 'Ezril' in Cormanthor Wood East, then go back to the Well, descend, get Eremuth's journal and then bring it back to Thorayana. In that order.

Two rangers (Sorin & Duvalle) can be found arguing in their room on the upper level of the Still Waters Inn. They are gone after Eremuth skulks off in the Well. They are lower level Malaugryms, who clearly had something to do with the murder, but do not appear to be central to any action involving my character.

### **Thentia's Resistance Army - *Beirmoura*:**

In the Beacon Inn in Thentia, you have to (1) Speak to Gideon; (2) Speak to Bale Khodos; (3) Read Bale's Journal; (4) Try to stop Bale from leading his useless rabble out to kill Shadovars; (5) Kill him when he attacks you; (6) Speak to *Beirmoura*. The sword then joins you as a henchman, which you can also wield as a weapon.

### **Thentia - Retired Archmages:**

The locked door in the top of Thuldoum's tower can be opened by putting the lock's settings to 2-C-3-A

### **Melvaunt - Noble Djinni:**

The Djinn gives the following in answer to your wishes:

Incredible Wealth = 5000GP

Extreme Power = Lesser Ring of Power

Grand Adventure = 1000XP

Meet Someone Famous = "It's not Elminster"

Unlimited wishes = Nothing

Don't want a wish = Nothing

### **Melvaunt - Abandoned Warehouse:**

To open the lock on the store room door, you need to have (or get to) an ability score of 50. Even a Rogue may need to use Lock Picks+10, 12 or more and other enhancements such as potion or spell of Cat's Grace as well as the *Luckstone* to be successful. There are GP and a fairly valuable Cloak and Belt inside the armoire in the room.

### **Melvaunt - The Tax Collector's House:**

The booby-trapped chest upstairs has 2000+GP in it.

### **Melvaunt - The North Warehouse:**

The password is "The Druth shall always win."

### **Melvaunt - The Dukes of Daggerford:**

You have to speak to Ulblyn Blackabuck in the Central Market before these guys will give you any intelligence about the North of Thar.

**Zhentil Keep - Access to the New City:**

You have to hire Kornah the Crazy (20GP) to give you a tour of the city in order to gain access to the new City area.

**Zhentil Keep - Access to the Abandoned Orphanage:**

You have to get Sparrow to take you back and use the secret code to gain.

**Zhentil Keep - Opening the Closed Sewer Passageways:**

There are two levers in different places in the maze that you have to use/pull in order to open these passageways. They are located in corners and not easily found. But you know you are probably near one of them when you have to fight an Umber Hulk around a corner.

**Zhentil Ruins:**

You can never see the whole layout of the Ruins. After you first enter, every time you get to an exit, you are given a choice of staying where you are, going back to the New City or going to another part of the ruins. The only way to get to the Render is to keep exploring.

**Getting Across The Scarred Lands**

The only way to get across the Scarred lands unscathed is to go by horseback. To get horses, you have to buy them from Angrym in Thentia, but you cannot do that until you have been to Melvaunt and have spoken to the Dukes of Daggerford and to the Zhentil Keep and have embarked upon the *Expedition to Thar* quests.

**Entering the Fortress of Thar**

If you have completed the quest *Muragh's Magnificent Machine* and persuaded Muragh to have the Wrecker meet you in Kur-Tharsu, the golem will await you at the entrance to the Courtyard of the Fortress of Thar and when you ask it to do so, will bash down the gates for you.

Otherwise the Gates will not open for you until after you have dealt with all of the external defences and defenders. At some point, after becomes quiet outside, you can just walk through. This is a failsafe feature of the game machine to permit you to play it to the end.