
The Voyages of Team Dragon

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Introduction

This is Jack Burton in the Pork Chop Express, and I'm talkin' to whoever's listenin' out there.

Jack Burton, Big Trouble in Little China

1.1 About this book

You might be thinking, “Oh no he didn’t!” But in fact, yes, I did. It also shouldn’t surprise you because I threatened to do such a thing several times on the mailing list.

I took the content from a bunch of places, formatted it in Restructured Text ¹, compiled it using Sphinx ², which parses everything and turns it into LaTeX ³, which gets converted to PDF ⁴.

Sphinx is usually used to build manuals and documentation, so that’s why there’s some weird formatting in this book.

It took me the better part of 2009 to put this together. It was a lot of fun to go through the wiki notes, Mark’s notes ⁵, email, and all the rest of the things we created over the course of the campaign. I hope this book brings back the memories for you all.

¹ <http://docutils.sourceforge.net/rst.html>

² <http://sphinx.pocoo.org/>

³ <http://www.latex-project.org/>

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portable_Document_Format

⁵ Most of them are unreadable.

1.2 The beginnings of things

Team Dragon started out as a Dungeons and Dragons version 3.0 campaign and later upgraded to a 3.5 campaign. We started towards the end of 2003 and ended it mid-2007. That's a span of about three and a half years ⁶.

In that span, we sent 1,469 messages on the mailing list, passed an uncountably infinite number of notes at the table, had 51 sessions (not including 3 or 4 one-offs that I don't have notes for), drank many Boxes of Joe, and generally had a superb time.

The world was a splendiferous product of Mark's mind. I vaguely remember him saying he'd worked on it for years. The adventure, also a product of his mind. There are several points in the adventure that I think we can all agree indicate Mark is seriously disturbed. For these parts, I suggest we assume Mark plagiarised them, or perhaps got them from Amy.

I don't remember offhand where the name "Team Dragon" came from. There were no dragons in the beginning of the campaign and our crack team of navy men had nothing to do with dragons either. Regardless, it was a great name. We were a team and the mere mention of our name would instill horror and panic in our enemies and cause our friends to pack their fine china away. We were that awesome.

I took copious notes in a wiki that I maintained for every session we played in. The meat of this tome is the product of those notes, some pictures I took one day, and a bunch of other random stuff I threw in.

Like many journals, this doesn't necessarily represent what happened with great precision. Rather it's what I happened to write down, edited, and tweaked later. I also took some liberties with things and added some stuff where there were weird gaps.

As a wise Person ⁷ once said, "This is crap."

⁶ Interestingly, I met Sadie at the end of 2003 and we got married in mid-2007. Thus both this campaign and my relationship have parallels which is a bit weird. I'm not sure how I feel about that.

⁷ A wise Person who spent most of the campaign not a person, so take it with a grain of salt.

1.3 A short summary of things

1.3.1 The Mission

To kill, main, destroy, avenge, help, save, and confuse everyone we meet. Not necessarily in that order.

Er... wait. We're out to save the world from the ravages of Evil!

1.3.2 The Characters

TEAM DRAGON Cast of Main Characters

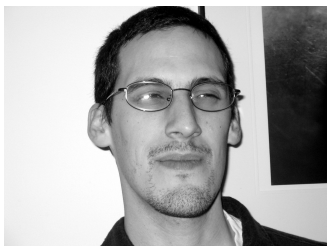


Dungeon Master

Zurfal, our stalwart cleric



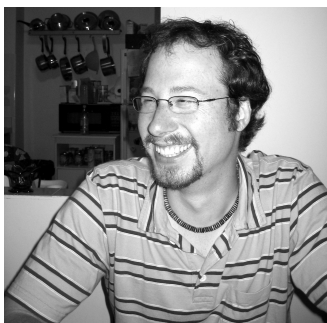
The Voyages of Team Dragon,



Person, our grim fighter



Elmor, our bombastic bard



Oni, our who-knows-what-he-is

Retired main characters that joined us again at the end:

1. **Sir Morgan, the Justice Maker:** our paladin (who probably shouldn't have been). Left to search for his noble mount, married Cherizsche, and then was general for the army outside Tashal. Now sad.

List of side characters that have traveled with us:

1. **Joe:** henchman who unfortunately died, but then came back – but it

wasn't him; he's really dead. Died. Then gave his life to save us and thus died again.

2. **INFERNO:** our trusty steed, who also probably unfortunately died. Died.
3. **Darnel:** a jackass who then became ok then probably unfortunately died but then turned up at the gallows only to be saved by Zurfal for reasons we can't possibly fathom (yet), but then turned out to be the Star King. Who knew?
4. **Lord Keith:** tied up, catatonic, riding on a horse, and not particularly prone to enlightening conversation. Had several very enlightening bursts of conversation, but spent most of the campaign asleep. Cherizsche's dad. Sad at the end.
5. **Genshin:** our honky-tonk kung-fu monk. Died.
6. **Natasha:** seething beauty that turns out to be a ravenous dragon sometimes. Died.
7. **Porsche:** greatly needed kick-ass magic-user who tends to solve problems with fireballs. Died.
8. **Samantha:** a thief who tried to assassinate Oni, was trapped by Person, and is renouncing her naughty ways. Died.

Enemies:

1. **Toshido:** family from the south that invaded the north. Led by Lord and Lady Vanya. Died.
2. **Rogue Group 6:** led by Duval. We killed most or all of them, but they sure were a pain in the ass.
3. **The Mule:** Shadowy tall figure that was mysterious. Then we met him and he was kind of lame. Died.
4. **Mor:** demon that used Person, then used Duval. He had a brother and we killed him, too. Died.
5. **Shanshek:** Person of many faces that we probably met a whole lot of times, but didn't know it. Died.

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6. **Roxane:** I think this was a girlfriend of Brian's that dumped him thus placing her on the enemies list.

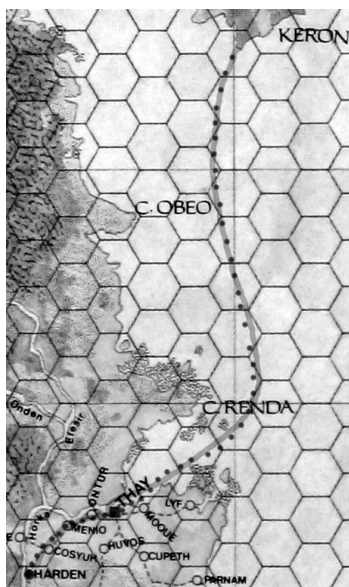
Finding Lord Keith

May the wings of Liberty never lose a feather.

Jack Burton, Big Trouble in Little China

2.1 Synopsis

11/xx/2003 through 05/02/2004. Getting off the island, wandering through the countryside, finding Lord Keith.



2.2 Off the island

Session: 11/xx/2003

Summary

Patrick McGouhan would have been proud of Team Dragon as they escaped off the island of Keron despite the best efforts of The Conspiracy to keep them there. Then CRAZY SHIT HAPPENS!

Details

We've spent the last four years or so fighting a war for tradelanes up the east coast of the main continent. During the course of this war, we've been based on the island of Keron and had no contact with the mainland.

We are an elite squad of the Jihadir, the navy of Tashal. No mission is too tough, no conquest too difficult, no objective too unreachable. We are Team Dragon.

One Wednesday morning, several days after coming back from an elite mission that we were totally awesome at, we are summoned by Admiral Amui-Shar into his office. We arrive, but strangely he's not there. On his desk, we discover a note.

The note is from Amui-Shar. He apologizes for not being here and for setting us on a road the ends of which we won't see for some time. Then he informs us that Zurfal and Person are promoted to Captain and given tickets for passage to Thay as security personel on board a ship protecting two merchant ships. Unfortunately for Team Dragon, Elmor Kalabeth and Sir Morgan the Justice Maker were not given tickets for passage. We're told to leave as soon as possible.

Person and Zurfal do some quick thinking and manage to get their comrades on board by overriding the existing orders.

We also investigate Admiral Amui-Shar's house and discover he's disappeared. There's something seriously fishy going on. It seems getting off the island and back to the mainland is imperative.

We conduct security checks on all three boats and discover nothing exciting. Sir Morgan puts the horses on a different boat than the one that we are on—a

decision we were soon to regret.

We have dinner with the officers on our boat. During the dinner, the cook keeps flashing a dragon tattoo and staring at us. Finally, she says, “Try the soup. It’s to die for.” Zurfal tries his soup and discovers a six-sided die in it! Weird!

Elmor, trying to cover for Zurfal being all awkward, stands and tells a story to bolster the officers and crew... but the story kind of sucks.

After dinner is over, we try to contact the cook, but she’s nowhere to be seen. At this point, someone runs in and tells us that stowaways have been discovered on one of the merchant vessels. We head over to the other boat to work out the problem.

The stowaways are a woman and a child. They, too, are trying to leave the island. Elmor takes pity on them and convinces the other officers to allow him to pay their passage. Then he wanders off to play with the children. They’re playing a board game, but are missing a six-sided die. Elmor pulls out the die Zurfal discovered in his soup and it turns out to be the missing die. Weird!

Elmor then attempts to buy the game from the children who turn out to drive a hard bargain. Whelps.

With all this action and adventure behind us, the ships set sail for the mainland.

During our voyage, Zurfal takes on a disciple named Joe. Joe is one of the ship’s crew and really likes the cut of Zurfal’s jib. Sir Morgan teaches fencing to other crew members. Person naps unexcitedly. Elmor sings to the crew, to the birds, and generally to anyone who will listen.

Evening comes. As soon as darkness begins to fall, the man in the crow’s nest points out a ship approaching us. We determine this to be an attack and Team Dragon prepares for evasive maneuvers!

- We steer off course so that our merchant ships don’t get attacked as well.
- The enemy vessel catches up with us.

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- Zurfal creates an Azer which walks around and sets shit FIRE on the other boat.
- They are really surprised at this magic! So isn't our crew!
- Arrows fly!
- We board their boat!
- From the numbers Person keeps rolling it's wholly unclear as to whether he's rolling d20s or d4s.
- Sir Morgan beats some people up!
- Zurfal is a ONE MAN WRECKING CREW!
- Elmor knows how to party!
- We see flares from our merchant vessels fly into the sky far away indicating that they are also in trouble.
- Fire on the enemy ship goes crazy!
- The enemy ship's mast falls into our ship setting our ship on fire!
- Zurfal puts a fire out!
- More fire happens!
- Zurfal whacks our mast sending our mast crashing down!
- ...

Lots of fighting, then the ships break up and people are in the water and their ship sinks and lots of them die. We take a dingy out and search for survivors and take some prisoners.

Our crew is really unexcited about having the prisoners on board. Several of our crew step up to insist that the prisoners are killed and that there are no alternatives. Zurfal puts his foot down. The crew gets to the brink of mutiny. Zurfal puts his foot down in a very convincing way and the crew backs down for now.

And then...?

Team Dragon is off the island... but on a boat that's got some serious structural damage! Sir Morgan's trusted mount is on one of the merchant vessels

which may or may not be gone to us forever. The crew hates us. We found a six-sided die and a strange game.

What will Team Dragon make of all this weird stuff?

2.3 Don't fake the funk or your nose will become a blob of hideous evil!

Session: Sunday, January 11th, 2004

Summary

We take a prisoner, pull the broken mast out of our deck, finally make it to land, discover we totally missed the party, and then settle down to dish out a nine course meal of Justice!

Details

Our ship was in a serious state of disrepair following the battle. It's really dark now and while we managed to save a handful of folks from the dark waters, it's likely most folks who were in the drink drowned there. Some of our men were dead set against taking prisoners—they wanted to slay them. Zurfal attempted to convince them otherwise, but we ended up just throwing them all in the brig below deck.

Zurfal buffs up Sir Morgan so that we can pull the mast out of the middle of the ship. He does.

We continue our voyage, but the ship is crippled.

Person notices one of the prisoners looks funny. Person pokes Sir Morgan (who is super buffed up right now) and the two of them take the prisoner aside. We discover our prisoner was the captain of the other ship and his wound was caused by Person—a laurel the captain had all to himself! His name is Darnel.

We interrogate Darnel poorly and discover he has no interest in telling us much. Though we do find out that "lots of things are different on the mainland".

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Person notes snarkily that there's a conspiracy against us knowing anything about what's going on. Darnel says, "There's no conspiracy. I'm just not going to tell you any more unless you return me to my friends on the mainland."

We stroke our collective chins and mull this offer over.

Later, we discover that two of the prisoners have escaped from the brig and attempted to hide on our dinky damaged boat. After a very short amount of searching we find them in the captain's dingy! They jump out to take us all on! One is slain instantly and one is so surprised and enraged he jumps off the ship into the drink never to be seen again.

We near the port of Thay and discover the Patriots have won the Superbowl and their fans had destroyed the city! Ships lay bottoms up in the port, smoke sits heavy in the air, not a creature was stirring except horses with no harnesses and peasant looters.

We take the dingy to shore and dock the boat by a house. The house was abandoned—but it takes us 20 minutes to figure that out. We see lots of dead bodies: women, children, men, men dressed up as women, High Sentinel guards, Toshido soldiers, ...

I was just kidding about the Patriots—we decide it was probably the Toshido. Darnel is very surprised. Even he didn't know exactly how different things would be. Neener neener!

We wander the streets towards the docks where we're hoping to discover something about the merchant vessels when we run across a rabble bullying a few women. We flex our Team Dragon muscles, scare off the rabble, and rescue the women in distress. As soon as Elmor opens his mouth to tell them who we are and that we are most happy to have come to their rescue, they look darkly at us and scuttle away.

After wandering some more, we discover the Magnifique, one of the merchant ships we were escorting to the mainland. The hold is empty and the ship is upended—but at least it got here.

We discover the Silent Wind soon thereafter—same situation. However, we get a chance to read the captain's journal. Seems they were boarded, the hold was emptied, the crew was murdered, and the captain was shot where

she sat. Sir Morgan's steed is not here and e cannot feel its presence nearby. We are greatly concerned.

We wander off to the better part of town which is walled off. We get through the gate, take a nice leisurely tour through the various churches being careful not to step on all the dead bodies, discover some things the merchant guild left behind, and then much to our dismay, discover hanging bodies in the Cathedral of Heironeous.

Like stalwart adventurers, we wander inside to take a look and there are dead mutilated bodies everywhere. To say this place is defiled is the understatement of the year. We decide to clean up the place when a pile of dead body bits begins to whirl in a vortex of gooey flesh bits and attacks us!

We fight with the monstrosity! It is ruthless and mindless at the same time.

Person gets sucked into the vortex of blood and carnage and Sir Morgan jumps through it to save him—a feat of courage and all kinds of exciting stuff.

After some trial and error, we discover hitting it doesn't do much, but fire does which seems to be a running theme here. So Zurfal creates an Azer and starts setting shit on fire. Zurfal is sucked into the beast and claws his way out.

The beast whallops Person bringing him to the brink of death. Sir Morgan does the lay-on-hands thing and St. Cuthbert brings Person back. Person is incoherent and crazed. He alternates between stumbling around and throwing up.

Finally, the spinning vortex of body bits slows and then stops. The troubled spirits trouble us no more. Joe kisses the ground Zurfal walks on. Joe, Zurfal, and Sir Morgan help to cleanse the place and vow to avenge their souls! Person continues to be sick.

And then...?

Team Dragon arrive at their destination to discover the city ravaged and plundered. They meet and kick the holy hell out of EVIL and vow to avenge the souls of many thousands of voices all silenced at once. Will Team Dragon ever figure out what's really going on?

2.4 Not all who wander are lost (but we are)

Session: Friday, January 23rd, 2004

Summary

We wander around a lot, we head towards Menio, Elmor gets chased out of town, and we decide it's high time we send a message to the Toshido that **TEAM DRAGON IS NOT TO BE MESSED WITH** by making a sandwich of Justice and feeding the whole town!

Details

After defeating the evil thing, we spend some time collecting our wits. Person and Darnel stumble out of the temple and over to the fountain to cleanse their bodies and minds from the overwhelmingly revolting experience they just went through.

Person pukes. He looks very ill. "That was the most traumatic thing I have ever been through. I just want to die."

Darnel replies, "Yeah, that was pretty screwed up."

Zurfal, Joe and Sir Morgan go through the temple and work to put things right as best they can.

Some time passes and we decide to go back down to the docks. On the way to the docks we discover a couple of dead horses that looked like they had pulled a ramming cart and broke down a wall. Underneath the horses is a horse that is barely alive. Zurfal and Elmor guide us to freeing the near-dead horse and then mending it to the point where it can wander around behind us.

Thus we were joined by our trusty companion... **INFERNO!**

We spend some time trying to solve one of our outstanding puzzles that involves the game, a couple of game pieces, and the "directions" we got a few days ago. Our efforts don't really amount to much; the game board doesn't seem to match the city layout.

We decide there's nothing left for us to do here and it's time to leave the city of Thay. Darnel isn't sure which road we should take, so we kind of pick one

arbitrarily. We get a couple of miles away from Thay and then camp out.

Night passes uneventfully.... Not! We're attacked by lizard things that sound like large pigeons! Person almost beheads one, Elmor charms one into a friend, Genshin stuns one, Zurfal grapples with one and throws it in the **FIRE!** Person seems distracted for a moment, then his eyes become steely with war and he charges another one. INFERNO kicks the bejesus out of one! We kill them all—except the one that Elmor has charmed.

Elmor says, “Hey friend! Come over here—I have a tasty treat for you!” and then beheads it.

We sleep a bit more, then break camp and head on our way.

We ride towards the town of Menio. On the way, we're approached by a super fast riding rider! We jump to the side of the road, watch him ride by, then decide we want to hail him, but it's way too late.

After another hour, we can see town in the distance. It looks strange, though, so we decide to send Elmor in to do some reconnoissance.

Elmor rides into town and discovers it was recently taken by the Toshido. Elmor brandishes his guitar and warms up his singing voice intent on finding out what's going on. Elmor enters a bar and talks to some very unfriendly Toshido dudes.

“Stranger, what are you doing here?”

“Dude—what's up with your EYE?!” Elmor points to the dude's missing eye.

The man growls and Elmor cuts his losses, turns around, orders a drink and talks to the barkeeper.

“Hello barkeeper! A tankard of your finest ale!”

“Stranger, what are you doing in these parts? How did you get here?”

“I like to sing songs about fields and flowers and things! ... I have no clue what's going on.”

“Where'd you come from?”

“Uh... I came from the north somewhere ...”

“How'd you get here?”

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

“I followed a river ... So many questions! Will you look at the time—I have to run!”

Elmor gets chased out of town and rejoins Team Dragon. He tells us what happened, but it doesn’t help very much.

Darnel has a revelation and exclaims, “Dammit! They’re going for the bridge!” We don’t really understand what that means, but Darnel is pretty excited about it and it sounds bad. Real bad.

We talk about our options and decide that we’re not going to let the Toshido ransack the place and that we’re going to take Menio back. Darnel rolls his eyes at first, then as he sees we’re deadly serious, he says, “Wow—that’s ballsy. I’m impressed that your small band is all gung-ho about taking an entire town back from the Toshido. You all are either incredibly stupid or pretty awesome. Regardless, I’m thoroughly entertained.”

Person scowls at Darnel and says, “You’re such an ass.”

Even so, as we discuss our battle plan, Darnel becomes even more impressed with our awesomeness. We have that effect on people.

Menio is a small town with one main road that goes through it. To the south is a river that flows alongside the town. Between the river and the road, there’s a barn and a bunch of other buildings.

We plan to approach Menio in the middle of the night by way of the river bank. Genshin will slip into the stable, let the horses go, and then Sir Morgan will charge down the middle of the road atop INFERNO and kill everyone. Zurfal, Person, Joe and Darnel will come up from the river and finish everyone off. We’re distinctly not going to set anything on fire this time around. No fire—fire is bad.

We all vote that this is the bestest plan we’ve ever had and we’re all very excited to be a part of it. ¹

Oddly, everything goes according to plan! Genshin sneaks into town and runs through the stable letting the horses go. Horses go everywhere! Sir Morgan charges into town shouting bloody hell at the top of his lungs and slays a few people! The Toshido are surprised and awestruck! We totally catch them unprepared and in their jammies!

¹ It’s true that all our plans are the bestest plans.

Then the plan sort of unravels as the garrisoned Toshido soldiers wake up, throw their armor on, and ome out to kick our asses.

And then...?

Team Dragon wanders around feeling lost, discovers a new partner IN-FERNO, camps out, gets attacked by pigeon-sounding lizards, continues on to Menio, and then decide to send the Toshido a message. Does Team Dragon's message ever get through to the Toshido or do they get smacked down like the dogs they are?

2.5 Apply the smackdown

Session: Sunday, February 2nd, 2004

Summary

Team Dragon lets no deed go unpunished in Menio and exorcises the Toshido presence. Then they're set upon by 500 riders who take Team Dragon prisoner, poison them, cure them, and then send Team Dragon off to stall an army of 3,500 who are poised on the gates of Hardin.

Details

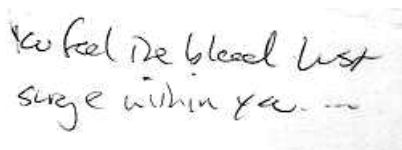
Toshido soldiers were waking up and spilling out into the streets in ever increasing numbers. Sir Morgan charges the town atop INFERNO! He slays a few guards and keeps things chaotic.

Elmor helps by summoning a massive army of barbarians ² who rush the town, but stop just before they get there and grunt and growl at the pitiful Toshido soldiers. Sir Morgan stands in front of them, his threatening glance striking fear where it alights.

Person seems distracted for a moment, then his eyes turn steely and his blood boils and he roars with rage in the streets of Menio in an almost unhuman fashion! RAWR!

² Who isn't scared of an army of barbarians appearing out of the night?

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The Toshido see the army of barbarians standing there all menacing and such and form up into a weak army of their own to charge us!

Sir Morgan charges down the street and mows people down! INFERNO kicks and bites!

Person explodes into violent frothing derision and a path of wanton destruction follows him.³

Zurfal smites the Toshido around him with his mace but spends most of the battle running across the yard to catch up with us!

Townfolk of Menio appear behind the charging Toshido and attack with shovels and other farming equipment which is unfortunate, but awesome!

Joe runs out of the barn wielding a pitch fork and at one point has a crossbow but is for the most part entirely ineffective.

Person, bloodlust in his eyes, squares off with a Toshido soldier who is wearing seriously nice armor and appears to be an officer of some kind. They trade blows and Person, dripping blood and snarling, almost kills the dude when the dude flips things around and ends up holding Person's sword at Person's throat! The dude tells us all to stand down! He will not be taken prisoner—he'll kill Person first!

Person seems to simmer down a little as the bloodlust fades from his eyes.

The dude threatens us again, "I'm not kidding! I will not be taken prisoner! Surrender to me now!"

Person quietly orders his hover sword to hover which causes it to become immoveable. Quickly, he slides out from underneath, grabs the dude, wrestles him to the ground and punches the surprised dude in the face over and over again!

"Dude—you will surrender now!" *POW BAM BIFF*

³ PERSON SMASH!

“No!”

“Surrender!” *KAPOW WHaCK BOFF*

“Gah! I surrender! Stop *KAPOW* punching me in the *BAMF* face!”

The few remaining Toshido put their weapons down and surrender along with their officer. The townsfolk of Menio cheer as Team Dragon throws their hands in the air in victory! We have won the town of Menio back from the Toshido!

Zurfal eyes Person with a questioning look in his face. Person turns his head, unable to meet Zurfal’s questioning look. Zurfal strokes his dwarfly beard in thoughtful repose then goes around healing everyone who’s wounded, but still alive.

We spend some time searching the Toshido’s makeshift barracks but don’t find much. Person takes the dude’s fancy bloodroot armor. It’s great armor, but it has a Toshido emblem on it—something we don’t particularly want to be associated with. In the makeshift headquarters, we find a set of documents that allude to the Toshido plans in the area but they’re not particularly helpful.

We try to question the Toshido officer. We ask him questions and try to play good interrogator/bad interrogator. He scoffs at us and tells us nothing. The only thing we learn is that we’re pretty terrible at interrogation. We are frustrated that no one is willing to tell us what the hell is going on.

We hear the heavy sound of hoofbeats of many horses thunder across the plain towards us. Within minutes, we’re surrounded by a real army! We’re completely outnumbered and their forces are far superior to the Toshido that we just man-handled. They take us prisoner. Zurfal makes a note to post a lookout next time.

The army’s general meets with us and feeds us. They appear to be the Sentinel’s men. We’re relieved because this army is on our side. After nibbling on his food, we discover we’re poisoned!

“Tell me everything and I’ll give you the antidote!”

“We’re on your side you jackass!” retorts Zurfal.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

“So, I’m to believe that you show up in Thay a few days ago with no knowledge of what’s going on. You arbitrarily decide to head north and waltz into Menio taking it back from the Toshido all by yourselves. This story is so far-fetched—do you think I am an imbecile?”

“Look, General. We’ve told you everything. We are Team Dragon, an elite fighting force of the Jihadir and we spent the last five years fighting near the island of Keron. A couple of days ago, something changed and General Amui-Shar sent us back to the mainland, but we don’t know why. We had nothing to do with the total asskicking Thay got from the Toshido—that happened before we got to Thay. I’d say we’re just passing through, but actually we don’t really know where we’re going. We were told to find Lord Keith, but clearly he’s not here. And yes, we expect you to believe all that because that’s what happened. Also, we found these documents in the makeshift Toshido headquarters in Menio.”

“Documents, huh? I’ll look through them later. I still find your story highly suspicious, but some of it is certainly true and I’m unfortunately in a position where I’ll have to take your word for the rest of it. Also, I didn’t really poison you—it was a joke. Ha!”

“So...”, says Zurfal between his clenched teeth, “Will you tell us what the hell is going on?”

“Sure. First off, my name is General Kole. I’m general of this army of the Sentinel’s men.” He pauses for a moment as he looks over the documents. “Gentlemen, in the last year while you have been doing whatever it was you were doing on the island of Keron, the High Sentinel of Tashal died.”

General Kole pauses, looks us over and continues. “You seem perplexed, so I’ll continue. Normally when the High Sentinel dies, someone completes the Quest for the High Sentinel and becomes the new High Sentinel. So it has been for centuries. Unfortunately, this time around, the Quest ended in utter failure and the major families in Tashal, sensing a power vacuum, have taken the opportunity to launch their armies in a grab for power and land. As you have seen, the Toshido family seems to be coming out on top as they destroy everything in their march northwards. With no High Sentinel and effective government, the council has faded to the side.”

General Kole looks us up and down and finally lets us know what he wants us to do for him, “The Toshido are marching on Hardin. I want you to stall

them until my army arrives.”

We’re a bit puzzled. Zurfal asks, “So what does this involve?”

“The Toshido are bringing an army of like 3,500 soldiers, catapults and other siege equipment. You hold them off for a few days until we get there.”

“Seriously? The six of us are to hold off an army of 3,500? For a few days?”

“Yes. We have no choice. More importantly, you have no choice either. If the Toshido take the city of Hardin, then they will continue their march northwards and eventually reach the capital. This cannot happen. We must stall them as much as we can while we pull our forces together.”

“Hrm... We’re game. We’ve had worse assignments.”

Zurfal says resolutely, “The Toshido are going Toshi-down.”

“Good. I will send some Nokama scouts along with you. Talk to Grimfoo who manages our equipment and take what you need. Get to Hardin as quickly as you can so that you can stall the Toshido attack.”

We leave Kole’s tent and head off to talk with Grimfoo the keeper of equipment. He’s pretty weird. But he gives us cool uniforms that go over our armor denoting our allegiance to the Sentinel.

Then we all go up a level!

Sir Morgan spends some time in a trance trying to reach out and connect with his trusty steed. He has a vision of a band of gypsies led by a man with a toothless grin. “Thank you St. Cuthbert for this vision. I will find my trusty steed.”

We sleep at the encampment for a night with plans to head to Hardin in the early morning. That night, Person sleeps very poorly—his dreams full of demons.

And then...?

Team Dragon stomps on the Toshido dealing a greivous blow, is captured by the Sentinel’s Men, is poisoned, is cured, is released, and then Team Dragon takes on the task of stalling 3,500 soldiers who are hell bent on taking Hardin. Can Team Dragon stall all 3,500 soldiers for long enough

or will they get captured by the Toshido and be forced to wash dishes for a week?

2.6 There be only one dragon!

Session: Sunday, February 22nd, 2004

Summary

Team Dragon is stricken with a bout of stupidity and recklessness which sends them into the fire of harms way while the DM shakes his head for like 6 hours muttering, “You fools... you fools.”

Description

Team Dragon rests a bit because we’ve been applying the smack down for 30 hours straight and we’re a bit tired. Elmor sings The Hallowed Halls of Hardin to bolster the troops! ⁴

Then we head out. Five Nokama scouts ride ahead of us. It’s 4:40pm—we have 48 hours to waylay the troops attacking Hardin!

We chat forever about which road to take and decide upon the Forgotten Road which parallels the river. We start on down the road and capture two Nokama scouts from the opposite side that were spying on us. We talk with them a bit and ultimately let them go. The Nokama is a group that’s helping both sides, but really has allegiance to neither.

As we’re traveling down the road, we come across a herd of some cow-like animal. Sir Morgan suggests that we stampede the herd into the army’s encampment thus creating **CHAOS** in the extreme!

Zurfal says, “This road to Hardin kind of sucks.”

Elmor perks up, “Hardin? Are we going to Hardin? Did you know there’s a keep right next to Hardin named Hardin Keep? I know everything there is to know about Hardin Keep!”

Elmor decides now is the time regale us with everything he knows about Hardin and Hardin Keep. Hardin Keep is an old Keep that sits atop a hill

⁴ Someone in the back yells, “FREEBIRD!”

overlooking the city of Hardin. Hardin Keep has a strange tale to tell—that of a monster that lives underground and eats lots of stuff.

As we're traveling down the road, we notice that the weather is becoming unnatural and weird.

We arrive at the battlefield. We can see the enemy encampment from here. We survey things and it looks like there's a food area, a lot of tents with soldiers, a fenced-off area with wagons and animals, and a bunch of siege equipment.

We talk for a bit and decide that the Nokama scouts will sneak in and take out the siege equipment, wagons and food areas without killing anyone. Another group of Nokama scouts will herd the cow-like creatures through the encampment causing **CHAOS!**

One of the scouts drily ask us, "So while we're doing all this stuff, what're you going to do?"

Zurfal says resolutely, "We're going to take that abandoned keep!"

We make camp with the plan of executing our plan in the dead of night—that's the soonest the Nokama can herd the cow-like animals here. During the night, Elmor scouts out the keep and in the process kills one of the Toshido that was guarding the place.

At 1:30am, our plan goes into motion and we attack the keep. The weather is insane—rain, wind, thunder, and lightning! We rush the walls with Toshido shooting arrows down at us! Toshido soldiers pour out from within the keep only to be slaughtered by our awesome might!

Zurfal summons a lion and a mace and they kill and maim and scare the poor dudes away!

Elmor turns one soldier into gas who promptly disappates and floats away. His friend, witness to this, shrieks out, jumps off the wall, and flees.

Person, rain and other peoples' blood pouring down his face, looks up with bloodlust in his eyes and cries out a blood curdling scream. His massive two-handed hover sword sweeps around him bringing death and suffering to all those who step into its deadly range.

Sir Morgan maims and dismembers the enemy with great honor!

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Joe spends some time doing what he does best: sucking.

We utterly destroy everyone, tie up INFERNO to a tree and leave Joe to keep him company, and then we storm the keep!

Once inside, Person almost falls through the floor, is helped out of the hole, sees a soldier who has seen us, follows the soldier up the tower, and kills everyone in a berserk rampage of death.

Darnel does fall through the floor and hits his head. He is now unconscious. Zurfal and Sir Morgan lower Elmor into the hole to help Darnel. They manage to pull Darnel up, but he's in pretty rough shape, so we bring him back to hang with Joe and INFERNO.

Elmor, still in the hole, says he's going to look around and goes off exploring.

Time passes.

More time passes.

Sir Morgan and Genshin go exploring to find Elmor.

Time passes.

Zurfal grumbles and scowls. He tells Joe we're going off to find the rest of the team and to stay put with Darnel and INFERNO outside the keep. Zurfal and Person go down the hole into the tunnel system below to find Sir Morgan, Genshin and Elmor.

We follow footprints and catch up with Sir Morgan and Genshin.

Sir Morgan puts his finger up to his lips to silence us, then whispers, "The tunnel opens up into a huge cave. In that cave is a dragon."

We peer into the cave and see an old, blind, crazy dragon that appears to be subsisting on green mold that grows throughout the cave. Also, the place is bitterly cold.

We decide that Elmor was looking for the creature of Hardin Keep and that the creature is this dragon. We also decide that the dragon has captured Elmor somehow. Even though we all speak dragonese⁵, this dragon is insane and we can't talk to it.

⁵ Dragonese is the new pink-everyone's doing it.

Person wants to skulk around the cave and slides by the blind crazy dragon and into the cave beyond looking for Elmor. After some moments, Person, finds Elmor frozen. Then the dragon steps between Person and Elmor and the rest of the crew trapping Person and Elmor in the cave. Elmor frozenly cowers in fear! Person seems distracted for a minute, then the bloodlust enters his eyes and he charges the decrepid beast!

Person and the dragon circle each other. The dragon thrashes around striking the walls and cave ceiling with great might. Bits of wall and ceiling fall down into the water—turns out the place isn't particularly structurally sound. Sir Morgan, Genshin, and Zurfal hang out in the hallway waiting for something, but it's not clear what. Person, shrieking blood-curdling screams, swings his mighty two-handed sword and takes some serious hunks out of the dragon and then starts a spectacular series of really terrible rolls.

Elmor, now awake, attempts to distract the dragon and casts a spell making a sound come from behind the dragon which says, "WE'RE GOING TO EAT YOUR BABIES!" This enrages the blind crazy dragon!

Person deals an assload of damage and then gets whallopped and almost dies. Zurfal heals him, Person stands, and charges the dragon again which whallops him almost sending Person to his grave a second time.

[Then, in real life, the power goes out dealing a crushing blow to everyone! Amy saves us with 1,001 candles which she pulls from every nook and cranny of the apartment including unmentionable places. After a whole lot of trying to roll golconda to bring the power back, we decide, screw it—we'll just play in candle light. Then the power comes back!]

Person gets smashed by the dragon and Zurfal heals him once more! The dragon shrieks and flies upwards and crashing into the ceiling which collapses into the cave crushing the dragon and trapping us. The dragon lands on Zurfal breaking both his legs and he's unable to walk. Person is unconscious. Elmor is barely alive. Sir Morgan is wholly unamused. Genshin is nursing his wounds. We're all in pitch black darkness, but we think we see stars above us.

And then...?

Team Dragon pretty much delegated the whole "waylay the army" task to the

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Nokama forces. Team Dragon heads off to find out about the “monster that eats stuff” in Hardin Keep. Team Dragon totally slays everyone involved and ... they meet a real dragon! Due to poor planning, Team Dragon is almost vanquished by a slimy insane lizard that eats green mold! Team Dragon kills the dragon, causing a massive cave-in felling Hardin Keep and a thousand years of history vanish! Joe, INFERNO and Darnel—we have no idea what happened to them. Now our heroes are sitting in the cold waters all but buried alive. Will they survive?

2.7 Puzzles

Session: Sunday, March 14th, 2004

Summary

Team Dragon heals up, rests, and then escapes from being buried alive only to find themselves in the depths of the keep filled with twisting corridors and puzzles.

Details

The dust settles from the recent cave in. Zurfal heals people, casts creates light, and discovers a tunnel in the cave wall!

We wander down the tunnel and pass a meat locker. We continue to another room that has caved in. Elmor is pretty sure it's the entrance we came through which means we're not going to leave the same way we came in. We wander around some more and come to an intersection and go right because “it might not be particularly bad”. It wasn't bad, but it was caved in.

We wander around some more and re-discover the room before the dragon—also caved in. Sir Morgan tries to dig, but we didn't bring our entrenching tools and it's no use.

We wander some more and head down the hall with the ruts which we think were made by wagons. We discover RATS! ACK! The hall continues for a really long time until we come to a part where the floor has caved in.

Looking down we see another hall below. Person climbs down, decides the place is really groovy, and beckons for everyone to follow and they do.

We see what remains of a petting zoo. There are cages in a hall with all kinds of exciting marks on the walls from claws and other things. Another hall leads to an arena. A very big arena. An arena so big, that it'd fit an army.

In the center of the arena is a plaque mounted on a stone and a skeleton standing next to the stone. The plaque talks about a puzzle involving moving a couple of things to make some other things.

We poke around, solve the puzzle, pick up a key, and Elmor and Zurfal travel through the gate that opens leaving Genshin, Sir Morgan, and Person to figure out what to do if the gate closes. It does. Turns out there's a handle on the other side of the gate so people can open it from both sides.

Zurfal and Elmor discover another puzzle with rods and triangles and solve it. We all go through the gate and discover another puzzle involving steam whistles. After much deliberating and hemming and hawing, Person gets bored and starts pulling handles. No one dies, which is nice.

We solve the puzzle, go through another gate and end up in a room where the puzzle is "survive". We turn to leave the room to discover the gate closed behind us. There are three ropes that go to the ceiling and three key holes on the other side of the room. There's lots of pits and slimy stuff and two, no three, big closed pipes. We start pulling ropes and robots come out and try to kill us all. After getting two of the keys in, one of the pipes starts pouring water in the room, robots go hog wild trying to kill everyone, and Person uses his climbing and swimming skills extensively.

We get the keys in the holes and the room opens up. We get flushed out with the water from the room and end up at the bottom of an underground lake.

We roll a series of spectacularly terrible rolls. Genshin almost drowns ⁶. Person and Zurfal try to save him—Person by swimming and Zurfal by casting a calming spell. The calming spell is an area effect spell and totally zaps Person's mojo causing him to start drowning as well. Will then rolls some incredibly terrible rolls which just make things worse.

At the end of the ordeal, we all *barely* make it to the surface of the water, and then climb up onto the stone beach.

And then...?

⁶ Which is surprising given that Genshin is like a ninja.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Team Dragon uses their fantastic direction sense and wanders around aimlessly. Then Team Dragon utilizes their awesome cleverness and solve a bunch of puzzles that have been around for eons. Then, because they've been so *fantastic* and *awesome*, they decide to really suck and almost drown. Will our haggard party every see the light of day again? Whatever happened to Joe and Darnel? Did the army encamped outside Hardin ever recover from the awesome blows that the Nokama dealt while Team Dragon went off to discover the legendary monster that eats everything? Will Sir Morgan ever find his steed? Will Team Dragon ever meet up with Lord Keith? Will Person ever rack up enough bonuses so it doesn't actually matter what he rolls? Can you get sunburned laying by the stone beach of an underground lake?

2.8 More puzzles

Session: Sunday, March 28th, 2004

Summary

Team Dragon naps on the beach underground without sunscreen, discovers and solves another few puzzles ⁷, gets some awesome magic shwag, saves a bunch of losers by killing off a monster lobster creature, and then discover ourselves in the largest expanse of tunnels ever created.

Details

The underground lake waters lap against the stone beach. Exhausted from our most recent ordeal, we lie on the shore and nap for a bit. As we catch our breath, Zurfal goes around and does some healing. Person feels seriously ill and drained from being hit with Zurfal's calm emotions area effect spell. That concerns him.

We all wonder what might have become of Joe, Darnel, and INFERNO. We wonder when we'll see them again.

Zurfal and Genshin wander off to find an exit since the air is pretty stale down here. They find a ladder which leads upwards. After removing the stone that covered the exit from the ladder chute thing, Zurfal comes back for us and then we all travel upwards into another test chamber.

⁷ But almost cops out on them.

This puzzle involves drawing four lines with no retracing to connect 9 buttons assembled in a 3 x 3 square.

Zurfal suddenly remembers he has airwalk and, grumbling in Dwarvish, wanders up to the ledge above the arena chamber bringing Sir Morgan and Genshin with him.

While he's walking on air, Person solves the puzzle. Person and Elmor wander through the gate that opens and down the hall to see what's next in the test system.

Person and Elmor wander into a big cave overlooking a waterfall with another test in it. The gate slams shut behind them trapping them—they must solve the test or perish!

The test requires us to use a scale to figure out which of the 12 marbles is heavier (or lighter) in only three weighings. Person remembers his father telling him puzzles like this, but he must think back into his past for the answer. As Person works through the permutations and combinations to find the decision tree, Elmor plays a song of confidence.

Zurfal, Sir Morgan, and Genshin discover their own way through the wall and show up in the cavern. Zurfal airwalks down to mee up with Person and Elmor.

Person works it out and solves the puzzle allowing us to move on to the victory room!

We find a box with a bird puzzle in it, a silver necklace with a ruby, a cloak, and a pot of figurines.

We walk down a hall and then down a grate and meet up with a bunch of people fighting a lobstrocity in a large tunnel!

Zurfal casts daylight while Sir Morgan and Person jump out from behind the group! We rush to the lobstrocity and attack! Person whacks off a claw! Sir Morgan slides under the lobstrocity and stabs it from beneath! Elmor creates a wall of fire which scares and confuses everyone—lobstrocity and lobstrocity fighters! Zurfal casts prayer! Genshin gets grappled! Lots of falling and getting up and general sucking... then the lobstrocity turns tail and runs down the hall to be killed dead!

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

The group of dudes we just saved is all persnickety and act like a bunch of jackasses. We're all like, "We just saved your asses from the lobstrocity! Whatever!"

We wander around the tunnels for a really long time and marvel at who built them and why.

And then...?

Team Dragon solves a bunch of puzzles, wins treasure, fights a lobstrocity thereby saving a group of hapless and totally unappreciative adventurers lost in the bizarre expanse of tunnels which may or may not be a sewer system. Will Team Dragon ever see the light of day? Will they ever meet up with Lord Keith? Will they ever find out if the armies that stood on the brink of crushing Hardin were themselves crushed? What is going on while Team Dragon futzes around taking a tour of underground labyrinths?!

2.9 Don't forget to put your armor on before you fight evil

Session: Sunday, May 2nd, 2004

Summary

Team Dragon putzes around in the tunnels for a really long time, then chats with a skeleton who is guarding three warehouses and all kinds of crazy stuff. Team Dragon then proceeds to set off all the traps, pull all the levers, bury the warehouses in sand, bury the tunnels in torrents of water, and finally, after destroying everything they could have destroyed, make it to the surface and to Lord Keith's house. Then evil strikes at night and the pajama party ends in almost total destruction of Team Dragon.

Details

The tunnel system is huge. Seriously huge. It must have taken a large group many years to build this crazy place. Fortunately, it consists primarily of one big tunnel rather than a series of smaller, confusing tunnels.

We wander around and discover a huge door covered in pipes and valves.

To the right of the door is another series of valves and also some guages. We figure the valves and guages and such all work together in a complex harmony to open the door. Behind the door is probably a whole lot of water which could be used to flood the tunnels. We discuss this for a bit and we're not entirely sure what purpose that would serve.

We leave the great door and after some hilarious follies discover a secret passage into a large domed room. At the center of the domed room is a great stone chair. In the stone chair is this bizarre skeleton dude who, in a prior life, built these tunnels. With great aplumb he tells us dark sinister stories about the thieves and their warehouses, Hardin and its instant moat system, and things of that nature occasionally interrupting himself with, "DON'T GO DOWN THOSE CORRIDORS-BECAUSE YOU WILL GO TO YOUR DOOM!" and then apologizing profusely. His name is, or was, Simon Bell-water.

Team Dragon proceeds as we normally do. We say goodbye to the skeleton and walk down the right-most corridor into a warehouse... and trip a trap which causes tons of sand to start falling from the ceiling. We run through the warehouse through a series of corridors in the back, pull a bunch of levers, and discover a map room with a map of the tunnels which Elmor diligently copies down.

Person whines about how nice a spell like "brick to mud" would be right now. His ignorance of magic is very great.

We finally rush through the now-very-sandy warehouse and back to the skeleton dude. He laughs at us which annoys us a bit, but whatever.

Team Dragon wanders back to the metal door and pulls all the valves some of which break off in our far-too-capable hands. Then we sit down and wonder what to do next when suddenly three massive lobster creatures come rushing down the tunnel locked in great combat!

Elmor has a cunning plan! He charms the largest lobstrocity. We name it Lobstero! The two little ones rush down the tunnel while Elmor orders the biggest one to smash down the wall next to the great door!

"Lobstero, smash the door!"

"ZLZssLRPPP!!!"

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Lobstero smashes at the door with its great claws. The door weakens and then explodes outward sending the waters of the river pouring out and knocking us off our feet! We ride the massive water slide down the tunnel and grab onto a passing wall pulling ourselves to safety (but just barely)! We climb the stairs into a room, open a grate in the ceiling, and then climb into daylight! w00t!

Even though TEAM DRAGON is composed of a group of really smart dressers, we all look like crap right now.

We climb the walls of Hardin and marvel at the new moat we just built with our ingenuity. We promptly get captured by the local militia standing on the wall. They bring us to the head guard who we talk to at great length because he doesn't believe anything we tell him. He finally releases us to wander the town in search of Lord Keith.

Zurfal and Elmor decide to try that dragon game we have. The board looks a lot like the portion of the city we can see. After some puzzling and wandering around matching the board to the city, we discover ourselves at Lord Keith's house! Hooray!

Unfortunately, we discover that Lord Keith is really insane so that's a bit of a twist in our story. Lord Keith has a daughter Cherizsche and a son Azimoth. Cherizsche cooks us some food, Elmor hits on her and fails so miserably that we're all incredibly embarrassed for him. We meet a new dude named Oni who is mysterious and very well dressed.

Zurfal and Person examine Lord Keith to discover he's been reading JANE AUSTIN! HOLY BATSHIT CRAZY NO WONDER HE'S INSANE!

HA!... I was just kidding. Lord Keith has this weird journal thing which is neither magic nor non-magic—and it's really weird.

We have dinner.

After dinner, Elmor goes off to play his music at the Prancing Pony—the inn that Oni is staying at.

Then we go to bed.

[400 notes get passed around and I have no idea what happened....]

Person and Zurfal awaken to a loud crash and all kinds of halibaloo going on upstairs. They leap to their feet and rush upstairs—Person has his sword, Zurfal is ... very naked.

We discover evil is afoot! Azimoth is nearly dead—his throat having been cut. Zurfal tries to heal him, but we're not sure if he's going to make it. Cherizsche isn't in the house. Lord Keith is still crazy. Elmor, Sir Morgan, Oni, and Person discover a secret passage in the basement that leads to a huge underground area with traps and stuff.

We wander into a huge room with a table and chairs around it. In the chairs are the remnants of Cherizsche's cousins—all mauled and maimed beyond recognition. Cherizsche is tied up and blindfolded at the head of the table.

At the end of the table stands a tall dude. We recognize him as the leader of the dudes we saved from the lobstrocity a while back. He mocks us and tells us there's nothing we can do.

We're armed, but not wearing any armor. This fact hangs in the back of our minds like lead in a swimming pool. Which is to say that we're vaguely aware of this, but completely ignorant of the deadly consequences.

Oni, newest member of Team Dragon, takes this opportunity to show us just how well he's going to fit into Team Dragon by charging into battle! Person, Elmor, and Sir Morgan do as well. A bunch of other dudes pop out of the shadows and give us a spanking the likes of which we've never experienced before. I can't even blame this one on bad rolling. It's so gruesome that I must leave the sordid details out of the archive.

They totally incapacitate all of us with poison darts. The leader dude mocks us, smiles, and they all disappear. Team Dragon is left in tatters writhing with poison and sitting in puddles of their own blood.

We dub this the great Pajama Party Massacre. It was a series of follies that almost cost us our lives.

Zurfal wanders around and does some healing and looks at the scars left behind by the darts they threw at us totally sapping us of our constitution. The tip of the dart is in the shape of a 6... We have met with our nemesis: Rogue Group 6.

And then...?

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Team Dragon chats with a crazy skeleton guy, floods the tunnels, makes it to the surface, finds Lord Keith, has dinner, goes to sleep, wakes up in the middle of the night, discovers evil is afoot, never bothers to change out of their pajamas, challenges evil, and gets a hard-core spanking on their behinds by Rogue Group 6.

Will this be the sordid end of that amazing team of crusaders for justice known as Team Dragon? Or will they get to perform feats of wanton destruction through mild ignorance another day?

The Evil Druids

When some wild-eyed, eight-foot-tall maniac grabs your neck, taps the back of your favorite head up against the barroom wall, and he looks you crooked in the eye and he asks you if ya paid your dues, you just stare that big sucker right back in the eye, and you remember what ol' Jack Burton always says at a time like that: "Have ya paid your dues, Jack?" "Yessir, the check is in the mail."

Jack Burton, Big Trouble in Little China

3.1 Synopsis

05/16/2004 through 10/03/2004. Leaving Hardin, discovering evil druids, kicking them around.



3.2 Gaming at MIT

Session: Sunday, May 16, 2004

Summary

We hang at MIT which has a lunch cafe thing where ordering is difficult unless you're brilliant. We play with Brian's toys for a bit. Then Zurfal does some healing, we chat with Cherizsche, Elmor spreads awesome rumors about Team Dragon, Oni shoots the shit with the local gentry, Zurfal finds some armor (and a shield), we chat with Cherizsche some more and decide to do the Quest for the Sentinel. Then we all go up a level! w00t!

Details

We meet at MIT in a room that will soon become the new machine shop for a guy who knows machining like no one's business and smokes cigars—even in closed airless spaces. B plays with all the toys he can find, we listen to some really dissonant trumpet stuff, and we spend most of the session marvelling at how we're gaming at MIT and how it's awesome and how we rox0rz!

Seriously. Erik even has his Atari shirt on.

Back to the story... Zurfal spends a lot of time healing everyone including Cherizsche. Though he can heal our wounds, he cannot heal our souls. Cherizsche is extremely bummed out from losing her brother and a bunch of cousins.

We head back upstairs into the house and to where we left the body of Azimoth. It has been mysteriously replaced with the dead body of someone else. We suspect that it's likely her brother has been dead for some time and that the Azimoth we talked with was an imposter.

Cherizsche is a lady of something and tells us all kinds of crazy stuff most of which makes our head boggle like those bobble-head things. She frees us of our service in the Jihadir. She does have need of us, but she cannot with good conscious order us to continue—it must be our choice. Since some of us are “in the service for life” so to speak and others of us really have nothing better to do, we join back up again. :)

We settle down again for the rest of the night and wake in the morning.

Elmor and Oni head off to the parade. Elmor sings and dances and Oni mingles with the crowd.

Zurfal checks out Lord Keith. Zurfal, Genshin, and Person go to the basement to hunt for dwarf armor that's stored down there.

Elmor plays in the town square. Oni hunts down the Watcher of Hardin to chat for a bit.

Person finds himself sinking into darkness, but wakes himself up, leaves his room, and wanders about in the city for a few hours.

Zurfal goes to hunt for armor in the city after finding none in the basement¹.

Elmor starts rumors about Team Dragon and creating the moat and saving Hardin from the Toshido and all the other awesome things we do! People **LOVE US!**

We meet up with Cherizsche again and go back to the basement. She brings us to a secret library with lots of maps and tells us more stuff. One of her cunning plans is to have us make lots of noise, go north, and entice Rogue Group 6 to follow us. We're not entirely sure this is a great plan, but hell, none of us are really *thinking* through things or have any experience with the sorts of things that a great plan involves. She also tells us some other things which can be summarized as follows:

1. The world has gone to hell.
2. The Toshido are going for the bridge in Burzon.
3. Things are not so good.

Then she gives us some choices about what we want to do, but we're not paying a whole lot of attention.

We decide to do the Quest for the Sentinel because that's the only choice we can remember. She gives us some instructions, the first of which is to find the Sparrow King. We consult the books in the library and learn all about this Sparrow King dude. We're not entirely sure how to go about finding the Sparrow King—he could be anywhere.

¹ This is a bit of a surprise since everything else is in the basement.

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She also tells us that in the meantime, we should head north and get through the Telemar valley before the bloom. We'll be cutting it close—the bloom happens very soon.

And then...?

Can Team Dragon do the quest that everyone has failed so far even though they didn't really pay attention to what the quest entails?

3.3 The world needs heroes—the world needs TEAM DRAGON

Session: Monday, May 31, 2004

Summary

Elmor and Oni go party-hopping while Zurfal gets some armor and Person just hangs out. Then we take our leave of Cherizsche as Hardin is invaded and everything catches on fire. We march north a day and discover another city where Elmor and Oni perfect the art of information gathering. Person discovers some really screwed up stuff about himself, but doesn't tell anyone. He later appoints himself General. Zurfal heals people of the city and gives them food and drink.

Details

[Jeff brings a very large case of popcorn.]

Zurfal, Person, and Sir Porgan hang out with Lord Keith and Cherizsche at their home. Zurfal spends some time reading Lord Keith's Journal which is unusual to say the least. Person spends time acquainting himself with himself which is also unusual.

At some point, Person and Zurfal go downstairs and hang out with the rest of the family.

Meanwhile, Oni and Elmor head off to a party. At the party, Oni finds some food and attempts to use his five-finger discount. He is caught by a server and ends up paying for a paltry pastry.

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Elmor plays for the crowd and earns some money the “hard way”². Elmor tries to illicit some information from people, but fails and ends up going home with a girl and making her night³.

Oni talks with people at the party and finds a woman and deftly does the Nigerian Scam on the woman and pockets some serious change⁴.

Back at the house, Person decides to head off into the city to find an armor smith to remove the Toshido emblem off his new Bloodroot armor. This takes some time as it turns out it’s not easy to do such things.

[We eat some popcorn.]

Oni leaves the party and somewhere between the party and Cherizsche’s house, gets a quest—something about delivering messages to other towns.

After all that, we collect back at Cherizsche’s house and get some sleep. We’re awoken by the sounds of Hardin being invaded. Screams, artillery fire, fire fire, more screams, horses, ... The usual midnight invasion sounds. Zurfal almost sleeps through them.

[We eat some more popcorn.]

Cherizsche gives us an Oath Stone and a few other things including cloaks that will identify us to others in her revolution. Then she tells us we must leave now so that we don’t get caught up in the invasion. Then she asks us to protect her father and look after him on the way north until we can find a safe place for him. We agree to do this, bind him up and throw him on the back of the horse.⁵ Cherizsche stays behind to destroy the house and all its secrets.

Getting out of the city proves to be trivial due to the complete chaos the city is in.

[We eat some popcorn.]

After we leave the city, we reach a resting point. We spend some time investigating the Oath Stone that Cherizsche has given us. If we all touch it at

² A first for Team Dragon.

³ And possibly her year—he is very “proficient”.

⁴ A successful scam is also a first for Team Dragon.

⁵ Lord Keith spends the next week like this.

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the same time, we are able to tune into each other allowing us to communicate through our thoughts. It also gives us a +1 to initiative and some other things.

Elmor, Zurfal, Sir Morgan and Person are gung-ho about this. Magic devices like this are hard to come by and it's immediately clear to us how useful this will be both in and out of battle. Oni, our newest member, is loathe to tune in with us, but it's not clear why. We spend some time trying to convince him, but in the end we fail.

We follow the river northwards until we reach a city which looks like it's been heavily affected by the war. It's almost night time and we're not able to determine whether this city has been taken by the Toshido yet or not.

We decide to make camp in the forest outside the city and send Oni and Elmor in to investigate. Oni and Elmor disguise themselves as refugees and head off to the city.

Around the city is a large clearing allowing the guards on the city walls (or what's left of the walls) to see who is coming. Oni and Elmor do the most convincing refugee act ever for their benefit. They walk with unsteady gait, often stumbling and moaning.

"Dude, you fall down," whispers Elmor to Oni.

"No way—you fall down!" Oni whispers back.

"You do it!"

"No you!"

The two bicker all the way to the city gates, but somehow they manage to make the refugee act convincing and are given entrance to the city of Ramere. Once inside, they hang out with what remains of the city folk. Elmor has a cunning plan and sews rumors of Team Dragon and how awesome they are—the crowd eats it up. They discover that the Toshido have not ransacked the two, but rather that it's being continually rushed by lizard creatures from the forest some of which are ten feet tall.

Back at camp, Person wanders around in the dark and discovers some really weird stuff about himself. Amongst other things, a large portion of his right shoulder and upper arm have crusted over with a thick black shell. Also, there are two bumps on his head—it's clear he's growing horns.

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Then he comes back to camp, but says nothing. Surprisingly, Zurfal has also spent time thinking about life, the universe, and everything and states in no uncertain terms that the world is in chaos and the gods are in danger. The two sit in awkward silence for a bit.

Time passes. Elmor and Oni don't come back to camp that night. After spending a while discussing what might have become of Oni and Elmor in a town all by themselves and unsupervised, Zurfal and Person decide that ill must have befallen them. They pack up camp and head off to the city in search of Oni and Elmor.

[We eat some more popcorn.]

Zurfal and Person ride into town with Lord Keith tied up on the back of a horse. We reach the Ramere gates where they meet the head of the guard Renduil and chat with him a bit. We convince Renduil that we could kick his ass if we wanted, but we really come in peace and he should stop bugging us. He rightly lets us into the city and Zurfal heals some people and creates food and water and we are loved by everyone. We don't tell him that Oni and Elmor have infiltrated the city as refugees—we figure this news can wait.

At one point, after answering the “who are you?” question over and over again, Person tells people that he's a General for no purpose other than he figures we're our own army now and being a General is probably a good thing.

And then...?

Elmor and Oni go party-hopping and do the refugee thing. Person discovers things about himself that are best left unsaid... for now. Zurfal gets all weird and states the world is in chaos and the gods are in danger—words that hang heavy in the air like the thick overbearing smell of cologne in an AutoZone store. Oni performs the Nigerian Scam flawlessly and Elmor plays for the crowd earning Team Dragon some dough. Hardin is taken and Ramere is a shambles. The rumor of Team Dragon starts to spread like wild fire... Our heroes are enroute to becoming real heroes.

3.4 TEAM DRAGON and the art of TOTAL DOMINATION

Session: Sunday, July 11, 2004

Summary

Our harried group of wanderers spends some time in Ramere to help out the townsfolk with their little plight. Then we kick some two-headed monstrosity butt and Person grows horns.

Details

The town/city of Ramere is in shambles. Renduil refuses to let people leave—we discover later that he’s probably a little high from the effects of the blood flowers.

The blood flowers are far to the north, but their pollen drifts southwards through the air. The pollen has hallucinogenic and somewhat psychoactive effects.

Turns out that lizards come out of the forest every day and attack the town. No one knows what’s pushing the lizards out of the forest, but it’s suspected that it’s something unnatural and evil. We decide to hang out a bit in town, but we know we can’t stay long because we have to get through the pass before the blood flowers are fully in bloom.

Zurfal and Person examine the structures and defenses of the town to see if there’s anything we can do to fix or shore them up. We don’t come up with much.

One side of town is against a wide river—the one we’ve been following since Hardin. Zurfal suggests to Renduil that we abandon the city, retreat across the river⁶, and build anew there. Renduil goes beserk and chews Zurfal out, “WE WILL NEVER LEAVE OUR CITY!”

The day progresses. Person sits on the battlements and watches the battlefield. Oni and Elmor notice people acting eccentrically. Elmor sings some songs to cheer them up a bit.

⁶ Turns out Zurfal can part water.

Then the lizards come. A few lizards tentatively come out of the forest and begin chewing on dead bodies out in the field: human and lizard alike. As time passes, the number of lizards grows and the number of dead bodies shrinks. The lizards start acting restless.

We do the oath stone thing—this time Oni joins us. Zurfal casts prayer. We stand at the massive hole in the wall and prepare for the lizards to charge so we can eviscerate them.

Then it comes.

We can feel the ground tremble as it moves towards us.

It breaks through the forest edge and it's huge. It rears its ugly head—no, wait... there are two heads. It rears its two heads and spits tar and rage at the tiny lizards which scatter. The monstrosity catches a few and swallows them. Then it sees us, roars, and charges the town.

Oni shoots it! Elmor casts a spell and gets shot at by one of the dorky town-folk! Sir Morgan mounts INFERNO, does a ride-by and cuts the monstrosity a little. We all notice how little the little is and this concerns us. It approaches us and reaches the wall where we're standing. Zurfal grows in strength to wrestle with it. Person nicks it in the back of its foot. It reaches out and swallows one of the townsfolk. Zurfal casts flamestrike—which fizzles and does nothing. Zurfal creates an AZER which doesn't do much either.

Then Person lodges his hover sword in the beast's leg and tells the sword to hover. Then bloodlust erupts in his eyes and he roars and pulls a bloody oozy bone sword out of his arm.

The monstrosity roars and tries to ply itself off of Person's hover sword. The hover sword rends the beast's flesh resulting in massive damage and hobbling the beast. It also bends the hover sword. Then the beast bats Person thirty feet against another wall, breaking one of Person's ribs.

Sir Morgan rides by and almost gets destroyed! Elmor creates an illusion of a larger monstrosity which causes the monstrosity to turn tail and ignore us for a bit. Zurfal grows to like half a ton and charges! Person rushes back to the battle and criticals the monstrosity and takes off its foot! Oni gets whallopped!

The monstrosity eats some more townfolk and bats Person away again! The

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monstrosity then makes a dire mistake and attempts to eat Zurfal, but can't pick him up off the ground! Zurfal stuns the monstrosity from inside and gives it something to chew on!

Person whacks it again, we set it on fire, people do some more damage, and finally the thing falls to the ground crushing a house and we descend upon it and hack it until it's dead.

Oni surveys the battlefield and the participants. The place is a mess and the lizards out in the field are lurking around getting progressively more courageous. Then Oni notices Person's arm is oozing, he's holding a two-handed bone greatsword, and that he's grown horns! Person pulls a claw off the beast and then the townfolk pull the carcass into the battlefield where a bunch of tiny lizards descend upon it with ravenous glee. Elmor creates a dragon that swoops over the field sending the lizards scattering.

We hang out in town for a bit—the townfolk are really psyched we helped them out, but they're a bit wary of how we did it. Everyone treats Person like he has horns on his head, because ... well, he does.

Person is irritated with how everyone is reacting to him. "This is crap! If it weren't for me, this damn city would have been destroyed! I expect more gratitude!" He stomps off to spend time nursing his demons.

It's clear the town will not stand forever, but Renduil is dead against leaving. We talk about bumping off Renduil and other possibilities. Person examines the boats that are parked on the river and discovers they've been deliberately destroyed.

"Person, perhaps you should wear a hat?" suggests Zurfal.

"Shut it, Zurfal," Person growls.

Oni skulks away intent on discovering more about this town. He finds the town hall and after looking around to see if anyone is nearby, breaks a window on the ground floor and sneaks inside. He pokes around and discovers some information about the town and a man in the forest. On the way out, someone else in the town hall sees Oni and demands an explanation for why Oni is in a place he shouldn't be in. Oni convinces the man that he was sent to fix the window. Then when the man isn't looking, Oni escapes through the window and finds a board to board the window up.

And then...?

We hang out in town and discover that Renduil has some issues and the town-folk are pretty much screwed. We are attacked by a two-headed monstrosity which we crush with our new-found organization skills and elite fighting. Person grows horns—a surprise to everyone. Oni sneaks into the town hall and discovers information about the lizards and the forest itself.

Will Team Dragon spend too much time dealing with the mundane issues of the common citizen that they reach the pass through the blood flowers too late?

3.5 Lots of people, but no Person

Session: Sunday, July 25th, 2004

Summary

Will wasn't there to take notes, so this is a really brief brief synopsis of what he heard happened.

Details

Some stuff happens. There's a council meeting where Team Dragon mocks Renduil and lets the town know that Team Dragon is leaving and if they want to live, they will leave, too.

So the innocent townsfolk of Ramere head off with Team Dragon only to be ambushed and enslaved as Team Dragon gets a beating and gets dragged off to some place in the woods.

And then...?

Is it ever safe to hang out with Team Dragon? Are Team Dragon's days numbered?

3.6 Old men, druids, and forests—oh my!

Session: Friday, August 20th, 2004

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Summary

Team Dragon hangs with an old man, discovers some serious screwed up stuff under his floorboards, CSI comes to investigate and ... kidding about CSI. Zurfal uncovers an orb which we use to “follow” the townsfolk being taken by the evil druids to evil druid land. We walk up to their doorstep, back off 20 feet, and then get the bejesus knocked out of us by a bunch of evil tree-huggers.

Details

We’re hanging at some dude’s house. The dude is old—it’s probably the old widower dude that Oni read about in the scrolls in the Ramere Town Hall. Zurfal “melds” with the old dude and says some incomprehensible and totally bizarre stuff.

The old dude leaves us to do some errands or something like that. Zurfal takes this time to pull up the floorboards of the cabin revealing an orb. Zurfal takes the orb.

Sir Morgan is pissed. “This goes against everything I stand for! I’m in a party with Person who is turning evil and growing horns, Zurfal who steals other peoples’ things, Oni who does the same, and a lecherous bard! This is where I put my foot down. I will go no further!”

Zurfal says, “We can use this orb to find the townsfolk we were protecting and then give it back. This is the right thing to do.”

Oni pipes up, “I don’t steal things! I’m an honorable gentleman!”

Elmor asks Oni, “I really dislike the word lecherous. I prefer to think of myself as desirable and classy.”

“Elmor, I agree. You’re classy. I should know, because I’m an upper class gentleman—classy is my middle name.”

Person shrugs picks his teeth as he watches the others in the room. His teeth are noticeably sharper looking than they used to be.

Sir Morgan retorts, “Zurfal—you pretend not to be aware of the evil and deceit that is going on around you. I pray that you do not lose your way.”

Zurfal growls and replies, “Shut it, paladin. Your holier-than-thou attitude is tiresome. We’re on a quest that is so vital that nothing must stand in our

way.”

Sir Morgan looks Zurfal in the eye and says angrily, “We will continue this conversation later. You can count on it!”

We peek out the door and see the evil druids outside and getting ready to take the townsfolk somewhere possibly to feed them to the lions or something like that. Person looks at the evil druids hungrily.

“Mmm... fresh druid meat.”

“What was that, Person?”

“I said, the druids have bare feet. We could take them now.”

The old man shows up again and says, “These druids are part of a greater evil in the Telemar Valley. They’re doing terrible things to the area and they are evil evil evil. They must be stopped!”

Person says, “That’s all I need to hear. Time to eat... er, I mean kill the evil druids.”

Zurfal halts Person. “There are too many of them—we will surely be slaughtered. We will follow the druids to their lair and attack them there.”

Person scowls and says, “Oh great. Let’s just sit in this wretched house for another few days. This is crap.”

Zurfal and Elmor go back to watching the druids while Sir Morgan stews in the corner. The old man sits quietly.

Person pokes Oni. “I’m so incredibly bored. We sit around for hours and hours and hours thinking about maybe we should do something. The time for action is now! We should crush our enemies and move on instead of sitting about! ...”

Oni successfully bluffs that he’s incredibly interested.

The druids leave the area taking the prisoners from Ramere with them. We finally leave the hut and bid the old man farewell. He squints at us and wishes us good luck. As he shuts the door, he mutters, “You’re going to need it.”

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We track the 35 peasants ⁷. We use the orb to help us keep in touch with the peasants and to see a really exciting scene between two of the bad dudes in charge and about how they're using the slaves to get seeds to make drugs and sell the drugs to merchant dudes to make money and then roll in the money because they're EEEEEEVIL!

And then there's something about a dragon.

Oni goes off into the forest to relieve himself. It's quite possibly the longest relieving ever... or is it?

We continue to track the druids and their prisoners and then suddenly the trail ends. We assume this is the evil druid doorstep. We're hesitant to attack now, so we decide to retreat a bit to think about possibly planning our next move.

We retreat for a few minutes and suddenly we're ambushed by evil tree-hugging druids!

The evil tree-hugging druids rip us a new bunghole reminiscent of the Pajama Party Slaughter. Pretty much all we do is kill one guy and set a few leaves on fire. The evil tree-hugging druids capture Genshin and Oni who both made unbelievably sucky rolls trying to escape ⁸, then they disappear. The rest of Team Dragon retreats expeditiously!

And then...?

Can it be that Team Dragon is on its last feet? How is it that the two least capturable members of the party are the only ones captured? Is Team Dragon a fad of the past like skateboards and mullets?

3.7 Surprises abound!

Session: Friday, September 17th, 2004

Summary

⁷ Poorly because Person is a jackass and has tracking, but doesn't have wilderness lore. Oops.

⁸ Which is weird since Genshin is like a ninja and Oni should be the least capturable member of the party.

We retreat far far away to a deserted village where we lick our wounds and kick the crap out of a member of Rogue Group 6 who has been posing as a member of our party for days! We learn about a bunch of stuff and come up with a plan to send Elmor in as a druid wannabe to sow confusion amongst the enemy so we can find our captured friends, kill everyone involved, save the townsfolk of Ramere, save Ramere, and then finally go back to what we were originally doing when we got involved in all this stuff. It's a plan so cunning and vile that it's sure to work! And, wildly enough, it does!

Details

We sit and rest for a bit from our battle and retreat and spend some time trying to figure out how we're going to recover Genshin and Oni.

Zurfal says grumpily, "These druids suck."

Elmor, who is looking at something shiny, turns his head suddenly and says, "Druids? Did you say druids? I know everything there is to know about druids! If I had known we were fighting druids, I would have said something. I have a million ideas of how we can defeat them!"

Sir Morgan raises his eyebrow.

Zurfal says, "Hush, Elmor. We should retreat further until we're well outside of the druid lands. Then we shall make plans."

Person scowls, "Retreating is crap."

We retreat far away to a deserted village. On the way, Sir Morgan jumps out and tackles Sir Morgan. We're all very confused, but we start beating on Sir Morgan⁹ anyhow.

We defeat the imposter and take him prisoner. The real Sir Morgan tells us that the imposter has been traveling with us for some time and is a member of Rogue Group 6!

The imposter has cool stuff on which we take. Then we force him to drink truth soda and interrogate him in our classic Team Dragon next-to-useless style. Surprisingly, we come up with all kinds of wild information! We discover Duval's plan with this Rogue Group 6 guy. We learn of Rogue Group 6's plot which is complex and involves working for multiple disparate

⁹ One is an imposter and the other is overly lawful and a pain in the ass.

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groups which don't know about each other. This guy tells us all about Rogue Group 6 which is really interesting to everyone except Person.¹⁰

One of the groups Rogue Group 6 is working for is looking for infected blood and syrum with the purposes of making people sick. Lots of people sick. It makes us sick just to think that other people are trying to make other people sick.

We also learn about the investors who have been investing in this drug trade with the druids.

We then kill the Rogue Group 6 dude because we can't let him go and can't bring him with us.

Person says, "I'll make sure this guy is dead and dump him in the woods." Person checks the dead guy's pulse, smiles knowingly a sharp toothy smile, hefts the guy over his shoulder, and heads off into the woods to "dispose" of him.¹¹

Person comes back with blood dribbling down his chin, but claims it's from getting hit in the cheek.

We then spend an hour planning our actions. Person is bored.

Elmor gets the great idea to dress up as a druid wannabe, waltz into the druid camp, pretend to want to be a druid, and then tell them all about how the thieves are hanging with the investors and planning to screw the druids. We have a mild chuckle figuring like most Team Dragon plans, this has no hope of working the way we think it will and what will really happen will involve gobs of bloodshed and a severe re-arranging of the landscape.

Elmor waltzes up to druid camp and talks with the druid folks who believe him (surprise!) and his story about how the thieves are going to screw the druids (surprise!). The druids are really really angry! (surprise!) The plan is working!

Elmor continues to do some amazing and very serious bluffing. Serious serious bluffing. They even feed him truth bread and he continues to bluff! They let Elmor go and he wanders around the druid camp and discovers where Oni is staying.

¹⁰ Person is bored Bored BORED!

¹¹ Person eats him.

Elmor encounters a guard and after failing to bluff for the first time in this misadventure, casts blink and runs right through the dude much to the dude's surprise.

Meanwhile, Oni gets hold of a vicious kitchen implement and is planning his own escape. He sneaks up on the guard guarding him and smacks the guard upside the head with a wooden spoon causing **obscene** amounts of damage. Then Oni escapes!

Oni, on the run, spots Elmor!

Elmor, while blinking, enthralls a bunch of people. Oni wails on a few more guys with his spoon. Elmor runs through a bunch of guys waiting at the door and makes it outside! Oni tries to do the same and gets some serious hurtage... but makes it anyways!

Then Oni and Elmor disappear into the night!

Meanwhile, back at the camp, Zurfal and Person are watching the whole thing through the orb and eating popcorn.

And then...?

Elmor surprisingly remembers everything about druids, Team Dragon surprisingly interrogates a member of Rogue Group 6, Elmor surprisingly bluffs like no one has ever bluffed before thus conning the druids into believing his story, and Oni surprisingly escapes! Team Dragon is on a roll of amazing successes! But will it last for long?

3.8 SUPPLIES!

Session: Sunday, October 3rd, 2004

Summary

Oni and Elmor hunt for Genshin and work on escaping. Meanwhile, Person, Sir Morgan and Zurfal head towards the druid base, encounter a supply wagon, totally slaughter them, meet the investors, and raid the druid base!

Details

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Elmor and Oni meet up in the forest and make some plans. They hunt for Oni's stuff and also for Genshin who we've totally lost track of.

...

Meanwhile, back at camp, Zurfal and Person chat for a bit and then, together with Sir Morgan, head off towards the druid place.

Person is distracted and starts holding his nose. "Zurfal's flesh smells sweet... must resist!" he whispers to himself.

On the way to sneaking into the druid camp, Person, Zurfal and Sir Morgan come across a supply wagon driving along the road towards the druid camp. In hushed voices, we make a quick plan.

Zurfal plays the part of a drunk dwarf who has just lost his way and stumbles across the road in front of the supply wagon causing them to stop. This confuses the wagon's armed escort who surround him and attempt to get him to answer questions like, why is he here? where is he coming from? Zurfal slurs.

Meanwhile, Sir Morgan and Person sneak up behind the wagon and attack the guards.

When the escort realizes what's going on, Zurfal has pulled out his mace and attacks, too.

...

Oni and Elmor discover a room where Oni's stuff has been stored. Oni grabs it all quickly. They leave the room to discover thieves have surrounded the area and are armed with bows. Elmor sprints through the thieves and escapes into the woods, the thieves firing arrows at him as he blinks in and out of existence. Once Elmor hits the forest line, the thieves start setting their arrows on fire to set the woods on fire to smoke Elmor out.

...

Person eviscerates a guard and feasts upon his flesh which makes the rest of the armed escort very uneasy. Several soldiers are firing arrows from the wagon.

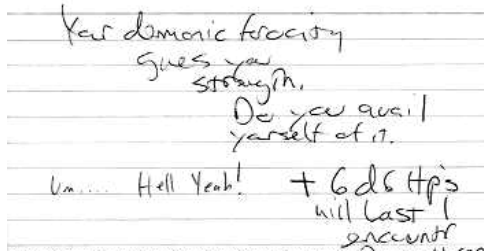
Person throws the dead body down and charges at the soldiers firing arrows from the wagon. One of the soldiers grabs Person as he tries to run by and

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holds him down. Another soldier pulls his sword out and yells into the fray, “Throw your weapons down or we’ll kill him!”

Person turns his head to face the soldier and lunges at him biting his FACE! Another soldier smites Person with the hilt of his sword and Person falls unconscious. The soldier drops his body to the ground.

Not thirty seconds later, Person’s eyes open again and he leaps up behind the soldiers, much to their surprise, and eviscerates them. Person whispers over and over again while hunched over and ripping apart flesh and bone, “Power is mine. I have said yes!”



Handwritten notes on lined paper:

Your demonic focusing
Guess you
stronger.
Do you avail
yourself of it.

Um... Hell Yeah! + 6d6 HP's
will last 1
encounter...

Zurfal coup de graces one of the armed escort.

Two guards attempt to flee and we chase them down only to discover they’re not guards at all, but investors. They’re very very disturbed after watching Person slay and eat several of their escort.

Person slinks off to feed a bit more and then clean up.

Zurfal chats with the investors a bit. “You investors are in mortal danger. The druids, led by Arnell, planned to kill you. They have no need of your services any longer. We have waylaid your wagon in order to make sure you didn’t make it to the druid camp and your doom. I’m ... uh ... really sorry about the mess. We didn’t mean to kill everyone.”

The investors look pale. One of them says, “Well, thank you for saving our lives. While we’re skeptical of your methods, if what you say is true, then you have truly saved our lives and our company. This investment we’ve made with the druids has always been tenuous, but now we have reason to think it was more than tenuous. We shall ride back to town. If you are ever in the neighborhood, look us up. We would be ‘quite thirsty’. Also, take

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this. It is the deed to Arnell's house. Screw him."

Zurfal and Sir Morgan talk amongst themselves for a bit. Person cooks up an appetizer of human fingers and tartar sauce.

...

The thieves continue setting fire to the forest to smoke Elmor out. This has the effect of producing a lot of smoke, but also incenses the druids. They are so angry, they attack the thieves and chaos ensues.

...

Person, Zurfal, and Sir Morgan get one of the wagons up and running and ride into the druid camp. We're stopped by druids. Then all hell breaks out and everyone starts fighting. A bunch of druids charge our wagon, so we get out and battle ensues!

Arnell (king of druids) fights Merelid (king of thieves)!

Oni shoots people!

Sir Morgan grapples with animals!

Zurfal takes out a rhino and crushes its skull!

Person destroys a bear!

Sir Morgan kills Merelid (king of thieves)!

Arnell, king of druids, offers us a deal, but we decide he's lying. Zurfal whacks him hard. Twice. Arnell goes down.

Then a massive dragon appears and lands in the clearing. He is extremely happy with our actions and he goes around and kills everyone who might have a semblance of life left in them. While the dragon is breathing acid on hapless thieves and druids, we grab the wagon, head towards the refugees, find Lord Keith (Remember Lord Keith? This is a story about Lord Keith...), and herd everyone towards the bridge town as fast as we can.

And then...?

Elmor and Oni complete their escape. Zurfal, Person, and Sir Morgan capture a supply wagon, chat with the investors, and ride into the druid camp. Our enemies fight themselves... silly men. We kill a bunch of dudes and a

dragon is happy with us and breathes acid on the rest and kills EVERYONE!
We make it out alive with Lord Keith and a bunch of refugees who would
“be safer with us” and head off towards bridge town.

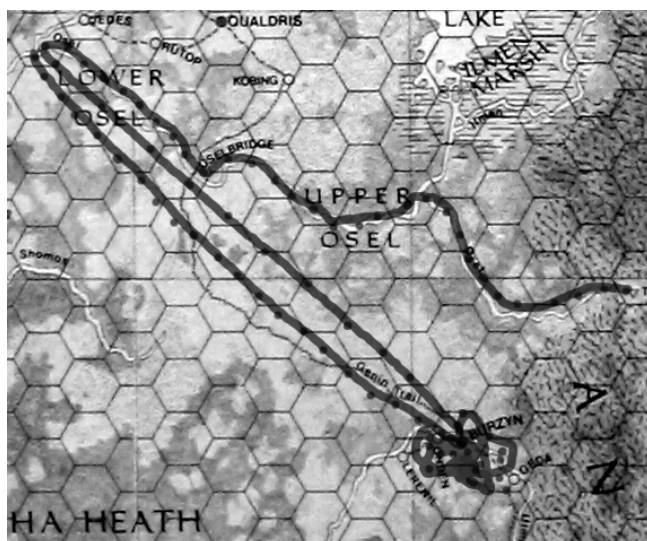
Onward to Tashal

Okay. You people sit tight, hold the fort and keep the home fires burning. And if we're not back by dawn... call the president.

Jack Burton, Big Trouble in Little China

4.1 Synopsis

10/15/2004 through 04/03/2005. Onward to Tashal.



4.2 Moving right along

Session: 10/15/2004

Summary

We continue on the path to Osil, discover some interesting things from the refugees we're "protecting", have an awesome peasant party, bump into a halfling tribe who isn't so happy with us, and finally discover an "abandoned town".

Details

[B brings the biggest bag of Mike and Ike's we have ever seen. At one point, someone wonders aloud, "I wonder how many Mike and Ike's it would take to change my stool."]

We tear on out of the druid camp with Lord Keith and the refugees and try to get as much distance from the camp as we can.

Zurfal looks around and says, "Do we have everyone? We need to get as much distance from the camp as possible in case they come after us."

"What'd we find when we searched the bodies of Arnell and Merelid? I wasn't paying attention because I was busy heroically herding refugees and guiding Lord Keith," Elmor replied.

"Hrm... Did anyone search those bodies?"

Oni shrugs his shoulders. "Hey, don't look at me, man. I was busy trying to get a couple of spots out of my clothes. I think one of the stains is permanent."

Person says, "I was otherwise, uh, occupied."

Zurfal scowls and says, "Damn. I don't think we searched their bodies at all. Elmor—you and I will go back and see what we can find. Oni, Person and Sir Morgan—you forge ahead with the refugees and Lord Keith."

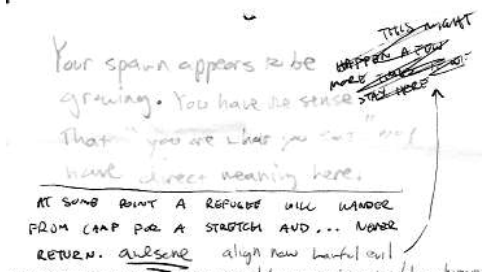
Zurfal and Elmor turn around and sneak back to the druid camp only to discover that the bodies are gone. They catch up with us again and explain the situation. We all feel pretty stupid.

Several hours pass and it begins to grow dark. The refugees are tired and hungry and we decide it's time to stop, set up camp, and see what we can do to feed everyone.

Zurfal spends some time healing those who are heal-able. This causes many to be ill at ease—magic is an unusual and distrusted thing in this world.

Later, we gather together to discuss things. It's a pretty dull meeting, but we all agree that getting the refugees and Lord Keith to Osil, the nearest city, is of utmost priority.

After the meeting, Person sneaks off away from camp to, uh, feed his new habit.



Later that night, around one of the camp fires, Oni and Elmor talk to some of the refugees that we freed. Then Oni recognizes one of the refugees as someone he knew from Tashal. His name is Aldris and Oni talks with him at length.

On the way back from “feeding his habit”, Person trips over the trip wire that Oni set to alert us of intruders. Upon investigation, Oni discovers it was Person who tripped the wire.

“Uh, dude, you tripped the trip wire.”

“It appears so.” Person looks coldly at Oni.

“Um... ok.” Oni looks at Person’s horns and increasingly disturbing features.

“You’re still human... partially? right?”

Person smiles demonically, baring his pointy teeth, and says, “Of course!” Oni finds this confusing and also disturbing, but doesn’t pursue the conversation further.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

In the morning, Zurfal casts Circle of Healing and then makes breakfast.

During breakfast, everyone stares at Person. He's got horns. Serious horns. They sprout from the top of his head and curve slightly like bull horns.

After breakfast, we break camp. We continue following the river to Osil. While we're following the river, Zurfal decides to search the cart that we confiscated from the investors and finds a metric assload of crazy, expensive stuff: linens, gold, weapons, food, wine,

While walking, Elmor spots Aldris, recognizes him, and "captures him" suggesting he was a collaborator and a member of organized crime. Oni disagrees. The rest of us aren't particularly interested, so the matter drops quickly.

Later, one of the peasant refugees approaches Zurfal and says, "Sir, several of us are missing. I remember seeing one of them yesterday, but he seems to have disappeared in the night."

Zurfal says gravely, "Is it possible that he and the others wandered off while we were all sleeping?"

"I suppose so. There's talk amongst us that the one over there is a demon and that he is evil." The refugee points in Person's direction. Person, watching the exchange, smiles a pointy-tooth grin.

Zurfal says, "He is my friend, ally and a great warrior. He fights by my side against the evils that beset this land and helps me to bring villains to justice. He is changing... but I am sure that it is not evil. St. Cuthbert would have told me so. Tell the others who speak ill of Person that I will not tolerate it. Speak ill of him no more."

The peasant looks confused, but nods and wanders off.

Person turns away from Zurfal and wanders from the group a little ways. He closes his eyes, looks deep inside and sees himself sitting atop a throne of bones and skulls surrounded by minions. The dark voice within him says, "You are my greatest student. Eternal glory is close at hand." Person smiles sinisterly, then opens his eyes and comes back to the group.

You dream of sitting on a throne
of blood, surveying your kingdom. Then
stands by your side. He smiles and
says, "Once visited, you shall never
richly be ruled over. My son..."

We keep walking out of the Telemar canyon along the river towards Osil.

Along the way, we see a herd of bison. We start thinking about food and what to do with all these refugees. Oni shoots a bison, which injures it but doesn't kill it. Before he can knock another arrow, Genshin runs up to the bison and whacks it upside the head killing it. Zurfal and Elmor cook up the bison, we pull out the wine and have an awesome dinner that couldn't be beat with spices, wine, and Elmor singing and playing his harp. It's a fantastic peasant party!

During this feast, Team Dragon meets to talk about things. The dinner has definitely lifted peoples' spirits, but there's still a lot of unease and unrest and we're concerned that some peasants are mysteriously disappearing.

At one point, we discuss letting the refugees head off on their own to Osil. Zurfal is adamantly against this. "They are safer with us."

Elmor exclaims, "Yes, but unfortunately, we're a lightning rod for DANGER!"

Zurfal scowls.

The rest of the night passes uneventfully.

In the morning, a halving tribe is seen in the distance riding towards us. We stop our caravan and let them approach. They are not pleased with our presence in their plain. Elmor uses his diplomacy skills, offers them some left-over bison from the night before and makes it clear we're just passing through. They are wary of us, but this seems to placate their issues. They give us a "barter token" and then tell us to "beware of white tide."

We laugh at them... white tide! Ha! But we don't know what that means.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

We continue walking. Genshin and Oni scout on ahead and discover an “abandoned” town with recent looking refuse.

Zurfal and Person watch them with the orb. The town looks pretty safe, so Zurfal stays with the wagon and the refugees while Person runs ahead to meet up with Oni and Elmor to prepare the town for the coming refugees.

And then...?

We move along discovering some interesting things from the refugees we’re “protecting”, have an awesome dinner that couldn’t be beat, bump into a halfling tribe who isn’t so happy with us, keep on moving, and discover an “abandoned town”.

4.3 Wolves, giants, and index cards

Session: 11/5/2004

Summary

A caravan holding a giant baby comes sweeping into the abandoned town being chased by wolves. We “save” the baby and return it to the giants. Then we ride on to Osil, chat with guards, reunite with Darnel, and generally make a mess of things. Then we retire to a nice inn.

Details

Elmor, Oni, Person, and Genshin are all hanging at the abandoned town scoping it out when we see a caravan approaching from the distance. The caravan rides into town very quickly escorted by humanoids on horseback. Their cart is a bit broken, so it’s bumping aruond. Also, there’s a giant baby in the cart. ¹

Wolves, following the cart, catch up with the escorts and attack them. We continue to hang out in the shadows trying to figure out what’s going on and who’s who.

¹ It’s both a baby that is very large as well as a baby that is of the giant race.

While the wolves are attacking the escorts, the cart makes a mad dash to escape. Then we're seen and a bunch of wolves² attack us and battle ensues!

Person is beset by a pack of wolves, but is (happily) wearing the evil tentacle cloak and is able to fight them all single-handedly.

Genshin, in an amazing series of cosmic blunders and bad rolls does something wildly uncharacteristic of him: he falls off a roof and lands on his ass.

Oni is on the roof of a different building which is encircled by wolves. Oni jumps to the roof of the next building and performs the "bloody, fiery cloak attack"! The roof he was just on catches fire preventing the wolves from following him. Unfortunately, Oni sees a new group of wolves coming up the stairs of the building he's on and he now has no where to run.

Elmor yelps and runs in fear.

Person performs amazing feats of strength and gesticulates with boundless rage taking out a bunch of wolves in a very short period of time. Long live the double-critical!

Sir Morgan rides into the fray and then chases down the cart with the giant baby in it. Meanwhile, Sir Morgan's archons take out a bunch of wolves.

Oni pulls out his bow, aims at the cart driver who is now far far away, and easily picks him off. Sir Morgan catches up with the now driver-less cart and leaps off his horse onto the cart. He pulls back on the reins and brings the cart to a stop.

A group of giants, presumably following the wolves following the giant baby in the cart and the giant baby kidnappers, show up. Elmor diplomacies with the giants. They're angry we just wiped out a bunch of their wolves, but eventually they come around because the wolves did attack us and we did save the giant baby. They head off to the cart and pick up the giant baby. Then they come back, tell us to come around here no more, and go home.

Whew.

Zurfal, the refugees and Lord Keith catch up with us at the abandoned town. We brush ourselves off and continue on towards Osil. Some of us decide to ride in the cart and take a nap. That's when we discover a hidden section in

² We assume they attack us because they assume we're with the giant baby kidnappers.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

the cart and something else that must have been owned by the investors: a box of gas masks. We find this unnerving.

Oni and Elmor scout ahead at Osil. Elmor goes in after bluffing the heck out of the guards. Oni pretends to be a cartographer. Once again, Zurfal, Person, and Sir Morgan wait behind with the refugees.

Zurfal sends a “MAC ON CHIX” pictogram... it takes us hours to decipher it.



Elmor fascinates a tavern. Oni finds a nice inn. Elmor macs on chicks.

Oni talks with some guy about Cherizsche and medals and such. We become Cions³. We also take on a new mission to get Lord Rett to send mercenaries down to Burzon to protect the city and the bridge from the advancing Toshido army.

Zurfal, Person, and Sir Morgan wander into town with the refugees. We walk into a square and discover, much to our surprise, that Darnel about to be hanged.

Zurfal demands that they stop the hanging! But the dude in charge is having none of it and tells the hanging people to proceed. Zurfal, acting on conscience, burninates the gallows and thus stops the hanging.

Darnel is very surprised to see us.

³ No clue what the Cions were. If you're Mark, you can edit this page. If you're not Mark, find Mark and ask him to make a note on this page.

The dudes in charge of the hanging are **really** angry at us and one of them appears to be a cleric of Heironeous. He's really pissed at us and also really angry at seeing a demon (Person) in town.

Zurfal cries out, "This man has probably done you wrong, but you cannot hang him! It must not happen!"

"You and your friends have no right to interfere here! How dare you!"

Zurfal states, "That may be! But we have run into this man before and though he is of low moral fiber..."

Darnel scowls, "Awww... that's mean!"

Zurfal continues, "... he is important to the future of this world and St. Cuthbert has plans for him. It is not his fate to be hung here by you!"

The cleric of Heironeous hisses, "You have only delayed the inevitable. This man will not be hung today, but surely he is not long for this world. I put him in your care and make him your responsibility. Should he screw up once more, then it is his head and yours. I will make sure your stay in town will be very brief."

Then he storms off along with the soldiers.

Darnel brushes himself off and wanders over. "Well, good thing you showed up. I was about to be hung, but I was totally innocent..."

Zurfal growls, "Shut it, Darnel."

We find an inn and hang up our spurs for a night.

And then...?

Team Dragon slays a bunch of wolves and helps a giant family find their giant baby. Then we ride into town, do some stuff, become Cions, stick our noses into their justice system, and save Darnel... who probably isn't all that worth saving. Then we hang our spurs for a night and get some damn sleep.

4.4 The demon is in the details

Session: 11/19/2004

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Summary

We wake up, Oni and Elmor go off to talk to Lord Rett to get him to be cool about the whole mercenary thing, Sir Morgan invites Person to go hang out... at an EXORCISM! Zurfal is there, Person is exorcised, the demon pops out and attacks! Person takes him out. Oni and Elmor play poker with a woman and seduce her (after lots and lots of cheating, bluffing and motive sensing).

Details

We walk into the Whetstone Inn and the innkeeper runs over to greet us eagerly.

“Hello, travellers! What can the Whetstone Inn do for you?”

Zurfal replied, “We have need for rooms for ... oh, like a hundred of us.”

The innkeeper furrowed his brow, “A hundred? I don’t have enough rooms for that many. I have rooms for twenty at most.”

Zurfal grumbled, “Figures.”

Thus we discovered that none of the inns have enough space for all of the refugees that we’ve brought along with us, so we end up spreading them out and putting them up in a bunch of different inns.

Sir Morgan pays a young lad to park our cart and keep an eye on it. Person heads out to go “find some finger food”. Sir Morgan suspiciously watches him from the corner of his eye as he walks down the street.

We sleep for the night.

The next day arrives and we find out that Lord Rett, who is mayor of Osil, has a daughter named Seph who is getting married tomorrow to Fenlir, leader of a mercenary band. We are excited because this is just the thing we were looking for! Then we find out Lord Rett is very busy and isn’t accepting meeting requests.

Oni thinks about this for a bit and forges some wedding reception invites. He and Elmor head off to a wedding reception to do some skulking around and see if they can find a moment to talk with Lord Rett about sending mercenaries down to Burzon to protect it from the advancing Toshido armies.

Zurfal spends some time with the local townsfolk and the refugees and anoints new members into the club of St. Cuthbert.

Sir Morgan leaves suggesting he has errands to do, but really he just wants to get away from Person.

Person sidles up to Darnel. "So... what happened to you? Did you rub someone the wrong way?"

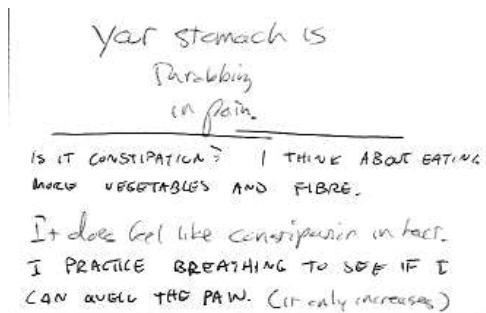
"Ha! No. See what happened is that you all left Joe, INFERNO and I in Hardin when you went to storm the keep. I later parted ways with Joe and INFERNO—no clue what happened to them, but clearly they never re-joined with you. I wandered northwards and was eventually taken prisoner by the Toshido and forced to help them out. I finally escaped, but was apprehended by the townsfolk here. Then they decided to hang me for helping the Toshido. Kind of a damned if you do, damned if you don't situation. But then you all showed up and now I'm free again. Free to do as I please."

Darnel paused and let his facade down for a moment, "Honestly, I just want to go home."

Person says quietly, "Home is where it's at."

The two stand in silence for moment. Then Darnel finally says, "You've seen some changes, too, it seems."

"Yes. Yes, I have. Also, I'm having indigestion."



Your stomach is
Paralyzing
in pain.

IS IT CONSTIPATION? I THINK ABOUT EATING
MORE VEGETABLES AND FIBRE.

It does feel like constipation in fact.
I PRACTICE BREATHING TO SEE IF I
CAN SOOTHEN THE PAIN. (It only increases)

Meanwhile, Zurfal is spending time with his new followers.

"St. Cuthbert is wise and brings swift judgement to evil in the land. We are his eyes and ears and sometimes his cudgel. Evil in the land must be

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

smited!"

"Great Zurfal, I wish to smite evil, but I don't even know where to start."

"Evil is everywhere in the land. It is with cheaters and those that break the law, it is with the Toshido armies that burn and ransack villages in their northerly march, it is with spies and assassins. St. Cuthbert will guide your hand and you will know what to do when it is time."

"Does St. Cuthbert guide the demon Person?"

Zurfal furrows his brow. "The lesson is over for today. Pray that St. Cuthbert smiles upon you."

After spending time with new followers, Zurfal heads off to talk with the clerics of Heironeous. Zurfal enters the temple and is accosted by the high cleric.

"Ah.... Great Zurfal. It is good to see you without your demon friend."

"Knock it off, cleric. I have traveled with Person for many years. He is no demon."

"He isn't? Forget for a moment his outwardly characteristics. Think about the things he's done recently. Heironeous tells us of wicked things he has wrought. It is hard to believe that his heart is guided by a man anymore."

"Like what sorts of things?"

"He eats flesh, Zurfal. He goes out in the night and preys upon the young and innocent to feed his hunger. His first thought in the morning is world conquest and a throne of bones upon which to sit. His last thought at night is the same."

Zurfal grumbles.

"Zurfal, you know it's true."

Zurfal scowls and says, "We will continue this conversation later."

Zurfal returns to the inn to ask Person heavy questions. Zurfal gets right to the point. "Did you eat the refugees that had gone missing?"

"Have you noticed that building over there? It's shiny."

"Person, I'm not horsing around. Did you eat the peasants?"

“Peasants or pheasants?”

“Person, this is not acceptable. This is a moral outrage.”

“They’re just sheep, Zurfal. They feed me so that I may do great things with my boundless strength. Think of all the battles we’ve had recently where that’s come in pretty handy.”

“I ... I can’t believe you’re saying this.”

“It’s not that big a deal, really. I have gained great power. The sacrifice of a few will save so many. My power is what will help you save the world.”

“I demand that you stop it this instant!”

Person smiled. “Well, I can stop any time, but I don’t think now is a particularly good one. Maybe later.”

Zurfal scowls deeply and leaves in a huff.

Some time passes.

Sir Morgan steps in and looks a little uncomfortable. “Person, I’ve come to fetch you for a meeting we’re having.”

Person, who is grooming his nails which are less like nails and more like talons now, looks up and says, “I’m ready to go when you are. Meetings are my favorite thing in the world. What vitally important minutia are we discussing this time?”

Sir Morgan replies, “Uh... Just come to the meeting. It is of grave importance. The clerics of Heironeous have information for us that will help us greatly in our mission.”

Person, entirely unaware that Sir Morgan can lie like the dog he is, happily heads off to the meeting with Sir Morgan only to discover that it’s not really a meeting but really an exorcism.

Person finds himself standing in the center of a torch-lit chamber surrounded by chanting members of Heironeous. Zurfal and Sir Morgan stare at him darkly. “Person, we’re here to help you make the right choice.”

“Ahh... But, Zurfal, these sheeple and their chanting won’t affect me. It almost tickles.”

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Zurfal replied, “We shall see. This is your last chance, demon. Leave Person now.”

Person looks hurt, “Zurfal, you speak as if I’m two different people. It is only I, Person, that is here before you.”

The cleric of Heironeous steps out from the shadows.

Person looks at Zurfal sternly, “I’m very disappointed with you, but I’m game. Let’s get this over with.”

Zurfal raises his eyebrow.

Meanwhile....

Elmor and Oni are hanging at the wedding reception and talking to various people. They’re trying to get to Lord Rett and have a chat with him.

Meanwhile....

Person is in the center of a circle of chanting acolytes who have cast a force field of some kind around him preventing him from leaving when a demon emerges from Person. The demon creates a force field within the force field the acolytes have created... This muffles the sound and makes it difficult to see what’s going on inside.

Person talks quietly with the demon. The demon looks enraged and goes to smash Person! Person holds his hover sword between him and the demon and tells the sword to hover—the demon runs into it! Person unhovers the sword and slashes the demon in the side!

Zurfal runs into the circle after buffing ridiculously and whacks the demon from behind. The demon explodes into pieces sending Person and the acolytes against the walls spinning around like bowling pins.

Meanwhile....

Oni and Elmor try to seduce a particularly cute woman by playing cards. They do an inhuman amount of cheating, bluffing, and motive sensing. Oni wins like 10k gold pieces! Elmor wins 75 years of servitude from the woman.... Oops!

Meanwhile....

Person lays on the ground completely unconscious. Some time passes and he is finally roused.

Zurfal gently shakes Person's shoulder. "Person... Person, I am here. Can you hear me, Person?"

"What happened?"

"You were taken by a demon."

"The thing we just fought in the temple?"

"Uh... the temple? Do you mean the temple in Thay?"

"Yeah... that's where we are, right?"

"No, my friend. We are a long way from there. You should rest. I'll bring you back to the inn."

And then...?

Oni and Elmor go to a wedding reception, play some cards for money and indentured servitude. Meanwhile, Zurfal, Sir Morgan, and Person play an entirely different game for Person's soul. Everyone wins! Or do they?...

4.5 Hello nurse!

Session: 12/3/2004

Summary

We meet Natasha (she's hot). Person gets drunk. Oni becomes a dragon tamer. We meet Seph (she's hot). We discover the real reason Fenlir can't marry Seph (hot) and we decide that's not fair. The troops have to go to Burzon, so we should use the wedding to draw out Rogue Group 6 using the wedding and ... no worries—we'll protect Seph (hot)!

Details

After the exorcism and the extremely high stakes poker game, we all meet up again back at the tavern. We all meet our new companion Natasha (she's hot) who looks hot.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Person heads downstairs for some beer after a really rough evening. He's as despondent and bummed out as he's ever been and not particularly talkative. But he's also not a demon anymore, so that's good.

Person's well into his sixth or seventh tankard of beer when Zurfal comes along.

"How's it going, Person? Do you remember your journeys since Thay?"

"Remember? Ahh... yeth, but no. Demon made a pact, you thee... A pact, a pact, a pact. All ith done, but not done. And all I have done..." Person starts to weep.

Zurfal looks at Person curiously. "So you do remember events since Thay?"

Person weeps, "No... I don'th remember anything."

Zurfal shrugs, "Seems like you don't remember how to hold your alcohol, either. You're going to have quite the headache in the morning."

Tears continue to fall down Person's face.

Elmor comes down and his hair is now parted to the side, wavy, of a copper hue, and has some serious charismatic mojo to it.

Oni switches disguises and becomes Lugar the Team Dragon dragon tamer⁴.

Person puts down his last tankard and attempts to sober up, but doesn't do a particularly good job.

With everyone here, we head off to Lord Rett's and meet behind his house. We walk to the barn to hang out—because that's where business really gets done in this town.

"We are meeting here because there are spies everywhere."

"Wait, seriously? And they don't spy in the barn?"

"No, Elmor, only horses' asses are in the barn."

"Oni, er, Lugar—that's the stupidest thing I've ever heard."

"You've got to know these things when you're a dragon tamer!"

⁴ Even so, Team Dragon still has no dragon.

Zurfal cuts in, “What spies? What’s going on here?”

“There’s a group here named Rogue Group 6 or something like that. They informed me that my daughter Seph cannot marry Fenlir. If she does so, Rogue Group 6 would kill him and her. Not only must I stop the marriage, but I was forced to denounce Fenlir publicly, too.”

We convince Lord Rett to fetch his daughter. Then we tell him of our cunning plan.... We’re going to have Oni impersonate Seph (she’s hot), continue with the wedding between Fenlir and Seph (she’s hot), and use the whole occasion to draw out Rogue Group 6 so we can kick their ass (for the first time).

“Are you sure this is a good idea? Will my daughter truly be safe?”

“Of course! What could possibly go wrong?”

We head over to where Seph (she’s hot) is sleeping and wake her up to tell her our outstanding plan. Oni dresses up as Seph (she’s hot... and Oni/Seph is also hot). No one is the wiser.

We disguise Seph (she’s hot) as a kitchen assistant using our cloak of non-detection and a ring and bring her (and her disguised hotness) along with us.

Person slips away into the night for a bit to get some fresh air. Zurfal is wary, wondering if Person is going back to his evil ways.

Then we go off to chat with Fenlir and he’s cool. His soldiers are in a bit of disarray—drunk, disorderly, and ... well, drunk. We tell Fenlir of our cunning plan and at first he’s very wary, but then he’s really psyched to go along with it!

“I’m really excited to be a part of this plan. But I am concerned for Seph’s safety. Are you sure this is a good idea? Are you sure Seph will be safe?”

“Of course! What could possibly go wrong?”

We get some sleep. Lord Rett is to publicly apologize tomorrow morning to Fenlir for all the nasty things he said.

First thing in the morning, Person visits with Astus, a weapon smith, to get his hover sword fixed. Recall that his hover sword has been bent ever since we fought those lizard things way back when.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

“I don’t have time to fix it now. Would you want to leave it? I can probably get to it later.”

“Uhh... I don’t think today is a good day to be without a sword. I’ll visit tomorrow if I’m still alive.”

“Women problems?”

“Of a sort.”

Person, saddened, returns to the inn and meets up with Elmor, Oni, Zurfal and crew.

We all head off to the public apology. We’re ready for some Rogue Group 6 trouble... but nothing much happens. Lord Rett tells Fenlir that he’s truly sorry for the nasty things he said about Fenlir’s mom. Fenlir’s cool with that. We see a chick in the crowd who sticks out like a sore thumb. We try to follow her, but she gives us the slip which means she’s definitely a bad guy!

We get ready for the wedding....

And then...?

Will Oni/Seph (hot) have a special day worth remembering? Will Fenlir and his troops make it to Burzon to protect against the Toshido’s inevitable advance to the north? Will Natasha (hot) tell us all her dirty secrets? Will Person ever have a dull day again? Will Rogue Group 6 give Team Dragon yet another beating or has Team Dragon finally got something up its sleeve? Will Seph (and her hotness) live to continue her adventures in collecting new items for her wardrobe? All this and more in the next session....

4.6 Nice night for a white wedding

Session: 12/18/2004

Summary

We prep for the wedding and then at last the blessed moment arrives. Oni/Seph (hot) spends countless hours doing up her hair and nails for the occasion. The rest of us clean up our armor (which was previous disgusting), hone our blades, and prepare for a serious brawl. The wedding goes as

Team Dragon plans... minstrels make music, dancers dance dances, and then carnage and mayhem ensue as Team Dragon takes on Rogue Group 6 in a battle of epic proportions that scare the shit out of the local townsfolk.

Details

Now that the public apology is done, we begin preparing for the wedding. Oni/Seph (hotness with a capital h) carefully does her nails and hair and puts on a dress that fools even us. The rest of us clean up our armor (which was disgusting), put on some clean clothes, hone our weapons, buff like it was the new pink, and prepare for the only kind of celebration that Team Dragon would be a part of: battle.

After all the preparation, we head off to the wedding tent. There are people everywhere. We carefully situate ourselves in such a way as to maximize our abilities to destroy everything.

Seph (hot), Genshin and Natasha are out back doing servant sorts of things and trying to spot trouble from that direction. Person, Elmor, Zurfal and ... oh fiddlesticks, we misplaced Darnel again. Person, Elmor and Zurfal are in the main hall watching the proceedings. Oni/Seph (hotty hot hot) is at the altar with her father, Lord Rett. Various soon-to-be-totally-useless town guards spot the place.

Minstrels start playing everyone's favorite wedding procession song: St. Cuthbert's Canon in D. Elmor raises his eyebrow in a "you call that music!?" sort of way and makes his way to the minstrel corner to help them out. Meanwhile, Lord Rett escorts Oni/Seph (hot) up the aisle to the front.

Fenlir comes in with his "best men" who look terrible, but much better than they did earlier. Minstrels continue playing and dancers pop in to dance, spin, and dance some more up and down the aisles.

Suddenly, the merriment stops as a dude strides in and yells, "This is a sham! Seph, daughter of Lord Rett, is to be married to me! I cannot let this proceeding proceed any further!"

We quickly surmise this is the dude who Seph (hot) was supposed to marry. Turns out Lord Rett didn't really tell him the wedding wasn't on anymore.

The dude strides up the aisle making more and more of a commotion. Person comes down the aisle to meet him and escort him outside....

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Elmor is totally surprised by the fact the minstrels he was playing with and standing right next to drop their instruments, pull bows from concealed compartments under the floor boards, knock arrows, and shoot the dude coming up the aisle. Then they start showering everyone with arrows!

The dude turns into a pincushion of arrows and collapses into Person's arms! "Gasp! This wasn't supposed to happen... They never said they'd shoot me... Gasp!" Death.

Person, discombobulated and not quite with it in his new role of non-possessed (or is he?) continues to hold the dead dude.

Everything is quiet for a moment. Then panic ensues! People attack people! The crowd stands up and runs! Useless guards head over towards the minstrels and either die or turn tail and flee.

Elmor is knocked down and has a difficult time getting up. Zurfal... I have no idea what Zurfal does. Oni/Seph (hot hot) grabs Lord Rett and throws him to the floor behind the benches and hides him. Genshin comes running in with Seph (hot) and Natasha (hot) who then turns into a dragon and eats one of the minstrels.

We all but finish off the minstrels when, out of the blue, Rogue Group 6 attacks! It's a trap!

Genshin almost dies protecting Seph (hello nurse!) from arrows with his body!

A mage pops up and fires off a fireball which whacks almost all of us because we're all in the same area of the room except Person who is still holding that dude and trying to figure out what his life is all about. Genshin in an incredibly heroic move, jumps at Seph (hot—but about to become crispy hot which is bad) protecting her from the fireball with his body, and gasps his last breath as he dies. Elmor runs out the back of the tent with a cunning plan to run all the way around the tent and surprise them from behind. Oni/Seph (hot) continues to take cover, oddly from the heat of the fireball. Lord Rett dies from the fireball blast and is now burninated. Fenlir is pretty hurt as well. Seph (hotomatapia) grabs him and pulls him outside.

Person watches the fireball, watches his comrades go down, and then watches Genshin die. Then a barbarian half-orc charges Person, nicks him

barely as Person half-heartedly steps aside, and takes out a pew as he recovers.

An evil mage attacks everyone who just got whallopped by the fireball with some kind of black cloud.

Then the confused look on Person's face melts away. He draws himself up into a towering form of shimmering blue awesomeness and speaks with a voice that is at once calm and angelic, "Half orc, you will now die." Person's sword ignites in a whispering blue flame as he totally eviscerates the half-orc doing awesome amounts of damage. Duval, with fear in his heart cries out, "Attack the fighter! Do it now!"

Person takes a few arrows in the chest and arm, but shrugs them off. Duval does some spell and really whacks Person, who doesn't quite shrug it off.

Across the room, Zurfal spots the evil rogue and yells to Person, "The rogue is right there! Get her!" Person leaps over several pews to close the distance. Elmor continues to run around the tent. Natasha (hot) leaps upon the mage.

Oni hits the evil rogue as well, but then she disappears. The half-orc charges Person and mashes Person in the face, but in doing so breaths his last breath and the two both fall: the half-orc dead and Person unconscious.

Duval withers Zurfal's leg. Zurfal casts seering light at Duval, but it doesn't have much effect.

Person's eyes flutter open and he rises from unconsciousness—he is a steam-roller of goodness, it appears. He spots Duval, ignites in a warm blue glow, and charges Duval!

Natasha (dragon-hotness) gores the mage.

Elmor summons a hound archon. The hound blesses Person and heals him a bit. The rogue chick attacks Zurfal. The mage tries to get out from under Natasha (hot hot hot) and grows 10 feet tall!

Person closes with Duval and then whispers to him, "You will lose." as he skewers Duval upon his sword. Duval's eyes widen with the shock of the searing pain.

Zurfal gazes vengefully at the thief chick.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Somehow, the mage escapes from Natasha. Then Duval smirks and spits a worm into Person's mouth. Person chokes! The orc barbarian gets hit by Elmor, but drops a bomb just before he's totally dead and blows a bunch of stuff up including his head. Person falls in the explosion and the worm gets further into his mouth.

The thief chick is on the ground screaming!

The hound archon grapples Person's face open trying to get the worm out but fails. Oni/Seph (hot hot hot) finally pulls it out and kills it.

In the chaos, Rogue Group 6 disappears—to lick their wounds. The battle ends.

The battle was grim indeed. Lord Rett is dead, Fenlir might be dead-ish, Genshin is dead, bodies of guards and townsfolk litter the hall burninated, arrowed, and all kinds of other dead. The tent is on fire, but the flames are slowly going out.

Seph (hotty hot hot) is totally fine! We are clearly victorious!

Zurfal hobbles around and heals people.

At this point amidst the chaos, city guards and a Nostradi waltz in and are utterly confused at the massive amounts of steaming chaos that has become of the place.

“What the hell is going on here? I could see fireballs from the other side of the city!”

And then...?

Does Rogue Group 6 decide to change their name to reflect their current numbers? Will Team Dragon ever meat them and finish the job they started? Will the townsfolk of Osil ever recover from the traumatic sights they've witnessed today... or will Team Dragon stay in town and show them things that are beyond their imaginations? Is Person's new-found good streak a passing fad, or is it here to stay? Will Genshin become the subject of one of Elmor's ballads, or will Zurfal casually bring him back to life? Does Fenlir and his troops ever make it to Burzon to head off the Toshido invasion? What other secrets does Natasha (hot) have? All this and more in the next session.

4.7 It would take a miracle

Session: 1/7/2005

Summary

We assure the guards that we're friends and we're not going to fight them and that everything is kosher even though there are a lot of people around us that are dead, most of the building is either burned or broken, and Lord Rett is a piece of charcoal. Zurfal resurrects Genshin and then resurrects Lord Rett to maximize the astonishment, amazement, and fear of the entire city of us. Elmor does some detective work. Oni sells some stuff and buys some stuff. Then we all decide we've done enough damage here and plan to head for Burzon on the morrow.

Details

Guards pour into the wedding hall and collect the near-death people. While they're doing that, we discover the dancers' costumes and Zurfal wanders around healing people.

Captain Sire waltzes in with another detachment of guards and a Nostradi.

"I demand an explanation! Clearly the fighting has stopped, but I want a good reason why you all shouldn't be tried and executed."

Zurfal gruffly looks at the man. "Who are you?"

"I'm Captain Sire of the Osil city guards. I am in charge here."

"Well, here's what's going to happen...."

"I said that I'm in charge. You're not in any position to tell me how things are going to work."

Zurfal draws himself up, wanders over to Sire, and then speaks slowly and gruffly to the man's face. "What's going to happen is this: you and your men are going to help us bring these bodies out. We're going to extinguish the flames of the tent. Then you're going to round up anyone who survived and explain that it's all going to be ok. During all of this, you're going to stay out of my way. I have important things to do."

Captain Sire steps back. "Well, ok then. Just tell me what happened."

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Zurfal starts to say something, then pauses, then says, “It’d take too long for a full explanation. Lord Rett was being blackmailed. We laid a trap for the blackmailers. They caught onto our ploy and killed a whole lot of people. We managed to protect Lord Rett’s daughter and Fenlir, but Rogue Group 6 mostly escaped. Except for that one.” Zurfal pointed at the dead half orc. “Now I’ve got things to do.”

Captain Sire, astonishingly enough, is cool with the explanation and Zurfal goes over to heal Fenlir—an act which will cost WETA \$12million to do the special effects for. Captain Sire, who Team Dragon now refers to as Wiggums, talks with Fenlir a bit.

We take the bodies of Lord Rett, Genshin, and the half-orc barbarian and head out. Zurfal brings Lord Rett and Genshin to the Temple of St. Cuthbert. Oni and Person bring the half-orc barbarian to the city limits to be burned.

On the way, Oni and Person are waylayed by stupid guards.

“Hey—what’s that you’ve got there?”

“It’s a dead body. We’re heading to the edge of town to burn it so that we make sure it never comes back.”

“Oh no you’re not. Do you have a permit for that thing?”

“A permit? I don’t think you were listening. We’ve got to burn it now so that it doesn’t come back.”

“Come back? You mean it’s not really dead and you’re going to kill it. Bodies don’t just come back from death, you know.”

“Rrrrr... This is crap. Get out of our way.”

“No can do. You’re clearly doing something illegal and we can’t let you continue.”

Person, irritated that he can’t do the thing that must be done, drops the body at the feet of the guards, washes his hands, turns around and walks away. Oni sighs and follows.

Person heads back to Astus, the weaponsmith, to have his hover sword fixed. As Astus hits the sword with a hammer to test its strength, the hammer explodes injuring Astus’ hand. He’s really angry and wishes to have nothing

to do with this sword or Person. Person apologizes, offers to help, but ends up leaving. The hover sword is still bent.

Person, Elmor and Oni (now disguised as our hot lawyer ⁵ and diplomat) meet at the tavern and chat it up with Darnel (who needs a beating).

Elmor gathers information about magic stuff that might be for sale. Magic isn't common in this world. We decide we're in serious need of magic stuff unless we want to get our asses kicked again.

Person heads over to the Temple of St. Cuthbert to help Zurfal out with the resurrections.

Elmor does some detective work in regards to the minstrels. Who hired them? Where'd they come from? blah blah blah. It's not very exciting and he doesn't find out much

Oni sells all the stuff in the wagon and earns over 68,000 gold. Instead of buying the city, he heads off to an auction—a black market auction for magic goods. Oni bids on some stuff—a ring of protection and a breast plate and shield—and wins the bids. At that point, Person and Zurfal discover the magic items in question are likely “blood-stained”.

Elmor is (probably) making glass with Natasha (hot tszzzz!), but we never really know for sure.

Oni and Person go to the place with the wagon full of gold to fetch the ill-gotten magic items. They take our wagon, but leave us a paltry amount of gold to pay for a new one. Preferably one with chrome wheels and a phat sub-woofer.

It is 4 or 5 in the morning and the streets are pretty bare. Oni and Person head back to the Temple of St. Cuthbert to discover Zurfal on horseback riding back to the temple. The church bells of the city are ringing and making quite a clatter. We discover that Rogue Group 6 made another attempt on the life of Seph (hotty hot hot).

Oni gives the breast plate and shield to Elmor. Elmor doesn't use shields, so he gives it to Zurfal. Zurfal is not pleased.

⁵ Team Dragon definitely needs a lawyer.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Zurfal casually raises Genshin from the grave, but the raising is very noisy. If anyone slept through the church bells, they certainly aren't sleeping anymore.

Genshin says, "I had the most terrible dreams."

"You were dead tired," replies Zurfal with just a touch of grim dwarven humor.

Zurfal goes for the double-play and raises Lord Rett from death as well. However, Lord Rett looks like ass-half of his body bares burn marks.

[We all get some really cool notes from Mark—probably about seeing dead relatives and people like that.]

We leave the Temple of St. Cuthbert to see a throng of people. We head to Lord Rett's house. One of the guards at the house points at Lord Rett, cries witchery and stomps off. We don't really think much of it.

Lord Rett and Seph (hot hot hot) hug a bit. Blah blah blah. Lord Rett tell us that the townsfolk will think this is all witchery, that he is a demon or some such thing and that he'll have to leave town. He's not happy that we resurrected him. His future will be difficult.

We go to our meeting with Captain Sire (aka WIGGUMS) and Fenlir. Lord Rett wants us to go to Burzon with Fenlir and his crack-team of death ninja mercenary soldiers. (HA!)

We decide, hey—what the hell! Person mentions the sunsets in Burzon are quite nice this time of year.

Fenlir says, "It'll take a week to get there."

Zurfal says gruffly, "We can make the trip in 3 or 4 hours—2 if Elmor doesn't make us stop for pee breaks. We'll plan to leave and get there as soon as we can. We'll figure out what's going on and when you get there, Fenlir, we'll have a plan."

Fenlir raises his hand and replies, "I don't even want to know how it is possible you can get there in 3 hours. I'll meet you in Burzon as soon as I am able. Until then, godspeed." Then Fenlir leaves to collect his troops.

Elmor goes off to gather more information about the minstrels and discovers their room at an inn. He searches it.

Zurfal gathers his acolytes from the group of refugees—remember the refugees? Lord Keith is a refugee right now, too. Zurfal gathers his acolytes and brings them to the Temple of St. Cuthbert which is now mobbed with people.

The people of the town have heard of Zurfal's miracles.

"It is the great Zurfal! Father Cuthbert be praised! Heal me, Zurfal! I have a gimp leg!"

"It's St. Cuthbert, not Father Cuthbert." Zurfal grimaces.

Zurfal decides to take advantage of the crowd here. He hauls his dwarven ass up a few stairs and atop a crate.

"St. Cuthbert brings justice against the wicked! A dark evil is taking this land, but St. Cuthbert guides us to stand in its path! Evil will be brought to justice!"

The crowd cheers! Except one guy at the edge who yells, "You are evil! You have performed evil witchery upon our mayor and turned him into a demon just like the demon you brought with you!"

"Who are you, peasant, that says such foolishness to me?"

"I am Ossim!"

"I remember you. You said similar things yesterday. What you say is nonsense. Lord Rett was brought to life by the power and grace of St. Cuthbert. He is no demon and my friend is no demon either. What you say are lies."

"It is you that lie! You and your wicked tongue!"

"I hope the cudgel of insight whacks you upside the head soon. In the meantime, get out of my sight."

The crowd is restless and some hiss at Ossim. He leaves.

Person nudges Zurfal, "This doesn't bode well."

Zurfal shrugs, "It doesn't matter. We've got work to do."

Historians will forever refer to this as The Sermon on the Stairs.

In the meantime, Elmor heads back to the inn and Oni attends a meeting.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

And then...?

Will Team Dragon make it to Burzon to thwart the northward advances of the Toshido? Will they do it single-handedly with meaning, or will it be another series of mildly cosmic blunders? Will Darnel be left behind again? Will he ever get home? Will Lord Keith come out of his catatonic state or is he destined to be spoonfed pureed veggies forever? Whatever became of the secret meeting with the investors—they said when we got into town we should “be thirsty”? Will Zurfal’s actions cause a sudden rebirth in the St. Cuthbert movement? Is St. Cuthbert happy about all this? Will Oni ever return to his manhood, or is this whole cross-dressing really growing on him? All this and more in the next session....

4.8 No time for planning—we’re at war!

Session: 1/21/2005

Summary

Team Dragon ties things up at Osil as only Team Dragon can do then casually wind-walks down to Burzon to help the Burzonians make a Toshido knuckle sandwich.

Details

Osil was getting too small for our hearty band of adventurers. If it wasn’t Captain Sire (aka WIGGUMS) breathing down our necks asking us about silly things like how all those people died at the wedding or why people who were dead and burninated are getting a second chance at life, it was the throngs of ignorant villagers who either want us to mend their ailing or want to burn some crosses on our lawn. All in all, it’s another day in the life of the Team Dragon circus and travelling road show.

Elmor does some checking into the whole minstrel affair hoping to turn up a stone that might lead us, well, somewhere more knowledgable about our unseen yet cunning foes. He doesn’t turn up much. We’re still in the dark about who the enemy is and why they’re doing what they’re doing.

We discover that there's a big crowd gathering at the temple. Zurfal and Person head off to the temple to see what's up.

They arrive to find the temple surrounded by a very large crowd many of whom are wounded or ailing. As soon as they see Zurfal, they come forward and surround him. As Zurfal tries to pass through them, they grab at him asking him to heal them. Zurfal pulls himself atop a crate and addresses this new, bigger crowd.

"Go home! I am gravely sorry for your ailments, but I can not help you. I know you've seen me bring people back from the dead and heal others who were almost dead, but I am on a mission for St. Cuthbert and I need all my energy to fulfill my destiny. You must all go home."

"Home!? You must heal us like you have healed the others! Take pity on us, great Zurfal!" The crowd starts to turn from asking for help to demanding it.

"Seriously! I have great work to do. You must go home and let me do it!"

Several rocks are thrown—the origins aren't clear. One passes inches from Zurfal's head.

Zurfal grumbles, "Rrr... I don't have time for this." Then he casts calm emotions.

The crowd gets a lot quieter.

Zurfal looks at Person, "We should leave before the spell's effects wear off."

Person replies nervously, "Indeed."

Zurfal and Person leave the crowd at the temple and visit Lord Rett and talk about the Nokama, but Lord Rett doesn't have any available, so it's a very short conversation.

We all head back to the tavern. Person notices a halfling with a crossbow and when he wanders over to whisper sweet nothings in her ear, she tosses her soup at him, fires the crossbow at Oni, and runs for the door. Oni knocks the bejesus out of her with a sleight of hand and she all but dies.

Elmor notices the symbol of a mafia family in Tashal on the head of the bolt in Oni's arm. Oni recognizes it as well. Turns out the whole incident had nothing to do with Team Dragon, but rather with Oni specifically.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Captain Sire (aka WIGGUMS) wanders in practically on cue and asks more questions than we really can answer.

We decide it's best that we do the wind walk thing and leave Osil before we get in more trouble. Zurfal casts his spell and we fly away.

After a few hours, we arrive at Burzon without doing any serious damage to anything. Zurfal maintains wind mode and continues past Burzon to scout the oncoming Toshido army. He discovers many things. While he does this, the rest of us hang out.

We come together again and march up to the Burzon gates.

"Greetings Burzon! We come from Osil to help protect you from the oncoming Toshido armies. Let us in so that we can talk with the general and make plans."

Our greeting is met with silence for a few moments. Then we hear a reply, "Who goes there?"

Elmor cheerfully says it all again with added relish, "Greetings Burzon! We come from Osil to help protect you from the oncoming Toshido armies. Let us in so that we can talk with the general and make plans to defend Burzon, protect the women, and stop the Toshido armies in their naughty march northwards!"

"Drop your weapons and surrender to us!"

Person looks at Elmor. Elmor looks at Oni. Oni shrugs. Zurfal looks at all of us and then turns to the guard.

"We don't have time for this. Open the doors and let us in. If you're not going to do that, go get your captain!"

"Drop your weapons and then we'll talk!"

Elmor suddenly has a great idea and says, "SIT!" in a very commanding voice. The guard sits.

"Hey! How'd you do that!?"

Zurfal looks at Elmor and says quietly, "What the hell was that for?"

Elmor says, "I used my powers to command him to sit and so he sits."

Zurfal asks, “Are you going to make all the guards sit? If they’re sitting, will they open the doors for us?”

Elmor looks sullen, “I’m not sure... but I think this is a good first step!”

Zurfal yells up to the guards, “We’ve traveled here from Osil. We’re Team Dragon. We’re here to save Burzon from the oncoming Toshido army. We need to meet with your general RIGHT NOW. You’re wasting our time and time is very precious right now. I scouted the Toshido army a few hours ago and they’re marching on Burzon as we speak. If you don’t open the doors or get your captain right now, by St. Cuthbert, I’m going to knock the doors down myself. Got it?”

We hear some vague commotion atop the gates, but we’re not sure if they’re talking amongst themselves or what. Regardless, the gates open.

Elmor says, “I told you making them sit would help.”⁶

Person points out, “We need to be handling this diplomacy-with-words stuff better.”

Zurfal grunts, “Shut it, Person.” and heads into the gate.

Once in the gates, we’re met with the Captain of the Burzon guards. He doesn’t believe we are who we say we are or that we’re here to help protect Burzon from the oncoming Toshido army. Elmor sings to him to prove that we are who we say we are. The dude is so struck with Elmor’s song of valor that he takes us to the South Gate which is where the party’s at.

We get to the South Gate, notice that the North Gate is very elegantly crafted and has probably stood forever, notice that the 150’ tower near the South Gate is about to topple over and crush everybody, and then we discover that all the generals are dead and this captain has been pretending that they were alive so the men’s morale wouldn’t fall through the floor. We’re quite surprised.

We discuss stuff with Lt. Wolf, Lt. Lion, and Sgt. Bison. They tell us the situation. We take careful note that they like animals. We chat a bit and decide our objectives are as follows:

⁶ We’re not sure whether that helped or hindered our situation, but the guards certainly didn’t expect it and if we don’t get them by brute force and cunning, we’ll definitely get them by surprise.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

1. impersonate a general, have a nice party, and boost the men's morale
2. fortify the tower, gates, and everything, set up a defense, and prevent the Toshido from killing everybody

Oni heads off to put on his disguise. He comes back a changed man. Everyone is stunned—nay, utterly shocked at his transformation.

We have a nice party. Oni/General stands and speaks to the men bolstering their morale (+2!). They are seriously psyched. We're seriously psyched! The Toshido will surely be crushed!

With that done, we decide to turn into clouds to go screw with the oncoming Toshido. Our plans are loose and not particularly well-thought-out. Zurfal goes alone to a point in the road a few hours in front of the Toshido and works on creating a blizzard. The rest of us head to the siege weapons in the Toshido line-up to take them out.

We discover the major flaw in our plan when the knights of Hextor⁷ spot evidence of the blizzard being cast in front of them, ride their horses to the very spot, and then heckle Zurfal who had forgotten that blizzard takes forever and a day to cast. The knights summon a few elemental something-or-others which swoop up and beat on Zurfal thus ruining the spell, causing Zurfal to fall to the ground, and pretty much taking out the one member of the party that can do serious large-scale effects. Also, Zurfal is the only one who can get us back to Burzon quickly. Zurfal is taken prisoner by the knights of Hextor.

And then?...

Will Team Dragon put their collective heads together and come up with a cunning plan—a plan so cunning you could dress it up and bring it to a Spring Fling? Will Zurfal be made to eat dirt by the Knights of Hextor? Will the villagers of Osil ever recover from the outstanding miracles they've witnessed?

4.9 Heckling the Toshido army

Session: 2/12/2005

⁷ Every army should have a few knights of Hextor floating around.

Summary

Team Dragon (minus Zurfal) heckles the Toshido army a bit then discovers Zurfal's plan for a duel.

Details

Zurfal, never one to stop fighting even when in chains, talks with the Knights of Hextor and gets them to agree to a duel. Our best fighter against theirs. To the death. The winner hangs out in Burzon. Yes, seriously.

Meanwhile, the rest of us are seiging seige weapons. Elmor turns Oni invisible and Oni runs in invisibly, disables the monster catapult, sets it on fire, and then runs out again. Natasha lightning breaths one of the other seige engines and in the process takes out a few dudes surrounding it. Elmor creates a celestial hippogrif which flies around and attacks anyone trying to put out the fire on the catapults.

Oni does his sneak attack thing and fires an arrow at what is probably a captain of the seige engines. The arrow passes through several other soldiers on the way to the captain's heart. All die immediately.

This causes quite a commotion. Panic ensues.

Oni, Elmor, and Natasha beat it back into the forest.

Person, Oni and two scouts from Burzon float over to the supply wagons section of the Toshido army. They change out of cloud form in the trees and shoot the Toshido supply wagons and beasts of burden passing below them.

Genshin rushes in, punches some dudes to death, frees some of the horses, and then sneakily hunts for arrows because we're running out.

Person turns into cloud form, flies from the trees at the Toshido and tells them to "TURN BACK OR BE DESTROYED!!!" They feel very intimidated. Not.

We all float back towards the archers and change out of cloud form. The Toshido try to alert the dudes in the main body of their army, but Oni takes out their messenger with ease.

We shoot some more folks. They shoot at us with flaming arrows and hit us a few times which kind of sucked.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Genshin uses the tentacle cloak of EVIL and grabs some dudes and starts tumbling around. The cloak absorbs two of the dudes. Their horrified faces shine in the folds of the cloak forever.

We turn back to cloud form and then attack the animals pulling the catapults. Genshin attacks the animals with the cloak's tentacles and then runs.

Then the Knights of Hextor arrive to break up the party and we flee.

We meet up with Zurfal's acolytes and get some healing. It's perplexing because no one knows where Zurfal is. We recall that he can turn into cloud form whenever he wants, so he's probably ok. We hope for the best and head back to Burzon because it's late and it's raining (but not blizzarding) and screw that.

On the way back to Burzon, we spy a barge that's floating up river. We check it out and it looks like a section of bridge. We think maybe the Toshido are dragging the barge up to the broken bridge and use that to cross the river skipping over Burzon altogether or attacking from both sides.

The barge is 80 feet long and 2 stories high and other measurements as well! It's covered by a very large and very tight leather tarp.

We decide we don't have the required implements of destruction, so we do some rough math and figure out we have just enough cloud walk to get back to Burzon, shag some women, get some stuff, come back, blow up the barge, and then return to Burzon and throw a very large party.

We head back to Burzon and pick up lamp oil. We also pick up some explosive something or others and Person figures, "Hey. I'm beefy. I can carry a cask of lamp oil." Natasha, not to be outdone, carries two casks. We head back to the barge. After some discussion we change the plan from "put a hole in the side" to "put a hole in the top". There was much rejoicing.

We put a few holes in the tarp on the top side of the barge. Unfortunately, Natasha and all her beefiness almost falls through the hole in the tarp that she made and becomes what we like to call "unstable". This causes a lot of racket on an otherwise quiet night and everyone in the huge camp on the bank next to the barge looks up at us. Then they sound the alarm and start coming after us. Those bastards.

Special spiderman guards start scaling the barge. Other guards are on little

boats and circling the river-side of the barge. We start dumping all our oil as fast as we can through the holes in the tarp into the barge itself.

Genshin changes from cloud form above the barge and drops upon the guards that have made it to the top of the barge.

Elmor creates an illusion of XXX-rated nymphs doing really dirty things off in the forest which everyone except a lug named Stan thinks is totally fake. Stan drools a bit and goes back to cleaning dishes. Lascivious sounds of moaning and “Oh, baby...” and slapping each other on the nude backsides juxtapose themselves bizarrely with guards running around, the smell of lamp oil, the rushing river, and Stan washing dishes.

Genshin drops the alchemists fire (that’s the explosive stuff) into the holes in the tarp on the barge. The whole world goes into slow motion as Genshin sprints towards the edge of the barge and leaps off it in a spectacularly filmed sequence with legs and arms waving as he sails through the air and into a boat. He covers his head as the barge EXPLODES in a fireball of fury heard miles and miles around! KA-BOOM!

Elmor is discovered singing dirty songs and he runs into the forest followed by like 15 guards... But some of them are out of shape and 15 drops to 10 which drops to 7. Elmor decides he needs a change of strategy and instead of running away, he turns around and runs towards them yelling, “AAAAH-HHHHH!!!!” He injures a couple of them as he comes in contact with them and shocks a few others. Then Person comes out of cloud form behind the remaining ones. They surrender immediately.

Person looks at the guards and says, “You know, there are only six of us. Six of us creamed the Toshido catapults, wrecked supply wagons, blew up your barge, and killed several dozen of you. And we did all that in the last couple of hours. We’re planning to tear your entire army apart before you even make it to Burzon. Might as well just let you go. There’s no way you’re going to stop us.”

Person and Elmor lets them go. They run back to camp.

Oni, Genshin, Person, Elmor, and Natasha regroup and do another flyover of the army on the road. Instead of groups of soldiers with a lot of distance between them, they’re more evenly distributed now. We also notice a group working on repairing the siege engines. That sucks.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

It's 10:00pm by our reckoning and it's dark and rainy. We have maybe three more hours of cloud walk left. We decide to do another attempt at disabling the seige engines because, hey, we've been super successful so far and we're going for the hat trick.

Oni disguises himself as a seige engineer, comes out of the forest, bumps into a guard on the way to the seige engines, attempts to explain that he was using the plumbing, totally blows his bluff check, and flees into the forest with 30 dudes chasing him.

Genshin drops out of a tree and intercepts the dudes. But then Oni bumps into 15 more dudes who were already out in the forest because these Toshido guys really do try to think out of the box. Person and the scouts come out of cloud form in the trees and shoot arrows at the dudes. They shoot back fire arrows which really puts the hurt on. Person gets burninated.

Oni is captured and beat up a bit. As they're dragging him back to the road, he turns into a cloud. Ha ha!

Genshin grapples with the dudes he fell on top of and fails his tumble check spectacularly several times. Eventually, he makes it away and climbs a tree. Genshin drops the last alchemists fire on the guards, but it doesn't do much damage to the guards. It does, however, set the tree on fire which turns into a bit of a problem. Genshin jumps to the next tree over and deftly deflects some arrows shot at him. Then he turns into a cloud and wafts away.

Genshin, Oni, Person, Natasha, and Elmor meet up. The scouts we had with us are all dead ⁸. We head back to Burzon.

We arrive, chat with the Lt. animal dudes, get cleaned up, sleep a bit, and have a nice breakfast. Then we chat with the Lt. animal dudes again. While we're chatting, a messenger runs in and says there's someone who wants to talk to us at the gate. We head down to the gate.

A Knight of Hextor is at the gate keep waving the white flag of truce. He brings news of the duel that Zurfal set up. We're required to sign the terms of the duel. The Lt. animal dudes are a bit wary and pissed at this. But hey—it's Zurfal! He'd never agree to something we'd probably lose... would he?

We sign the terms of the duel, hand them back to the messenger, and watch as

⁸ Not our fault—red shirts.

the messenger rides off into the distance. Everyone looks at Person. Person sighs and begins to prepare to fight the strongest, meanest Toshido dude in the army.

And then?...

A duel? Seriously?

4.10 The duel

Session: 2/26/2005

Summary

We discover that there are families around Burzon planning to attack Burzon on behalf of the Toshido. Oni talks with the families. Elmor extends Team Dragon's sympathies. We capture a Toshido spy which turns out to be Cherizsche and she's pissed at us. We blood stone and then Person and Lord Ossidious duke it out in a duel to the death.

Details

We discover that some of the major families that live on estates around Burzon were planning to attack Burzon when the Toshido do.

Oni dresses up like a Toshido messenger and visits the families to the north of Burzon to ascertain whether they are friend or foe and also to give them "new orders" as to what they should do. This should help us a lot—the families will be less likely to attack from the north. That way we won't have to worry so much about defending the north and the south. That's the theory, anyhow.

Oni talks with one of the families. It's pretty classic. Oni tells them that all 8 Team Dragon dudes dealt a heavy blow to the Toshido army and now the Toshido have agreed to the duel so that they don't all get destroyed. But then Oni tells the family that Fenlir is coming from the north and they should attack Fenlir if the duel goes sour. Or something like that—all very confusing.

Oni travels to the other families and chats with them as well. We learn that most of the families are helping the Toshido because the Toshido have captured their relatives and are holding them hostage. That's kind of sucky.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Elmor visits the Burzon family to send them Team Dragon's sympathies and tell them that we will avenge them for their loss. They lost a member or two—it's not entirely clear what happened.

Meanwhile, back at Burzon, we discuss the terms of the deal. One of the terms of the duel is that the combatants cannot use magic of any kind. This is a problem since Person's primary weapon, his hover sword, is definitely a magic weapon. Thus Genshin goes off to search for a sword that Person can use instead of the hoversword and he finds a decent one sitting in a room somewhere.

Oni returns and heads off to talk with a cleric of Heironeous who says something about giving the Toshido a disease. We argue about whether or not it's a good idea to give the entire Toshido army a disease and whether it might spread and infect everyone everywhere. It's an intriguing conversation about biological warfare.

We decide that it's probably not what we want to do. The dude gets fussy at us and Elmor tells him to "sleep" (which doesn't work) then to "stop" (which does work, but only for an instant). The dude hucks something at us which Elmor knocks into a wall. The something turns out to be a glass flask of the disease or something equally bad. We set it on fire, leave the room, and close and lock the door behind us.

We talk to each other about various things. We get a message from General Kole who is attacking a Toshido reserve army that's also headed north to Burzon. He hopes to reach us to help in the big battle, but it's hard to say whether he'll miss the party or not.

Lt. Wolf's men capture a Toshido spy. We go to apply our fantastic abilities at interrogation only to discover that it's Cherizsche! Funky! She's heard rumors about the duel and has come to tell us that we're crazy, we're going to lose, and she's really pissed at us because this is a big deal. Then she tells us that we can all pull together and use a blood stone that she has to give Person additional bonuses so that he might be able to defeat Lord Ossidious. It turns out that Lord Ossidious is only like totally the most powerful awesome death-ninja fighter in the entire land ever.

We agree to hulk Person up even though the effects on the donors are permanent and the effects on the donee are not permanent. Person additionally

promises Cherizsche to look after Lord Keith who we've been neglecting a bit ⁹.

Wildly enough, Fenlir chooses that moment to arrive with 500 horse. That's excellent!

We mark off the dueling ring outside of the south gate of Burzon.

We sleep through the night. The weather turns sour—the wind picks up, the temperature drops, and it hails a bit. When daylight hits, the hail turns to heavy rain.

The Toshido army arrives headed by Knights of Hextor. Lord Ossidious, one of the knights, hops off his horse and stomps into the ring. Person, too, steps into the ring. The Knights of Hextor release Zurfal and he agrees to referee the duel—something about Lawful alignments make everyone all trusty.

In meta-gaming land, Will makes sure to pick the suckiest d20 he can find and thus Person misses miserably for several rounds. Lord Ossidious screws with him for a few rounds until Person figures out that while bluffing is all but useless, parrying is a good idea. Then things even out a bit and Person takes some serious chunks out of Lord Ossidious. Lord Ossidious in turns takes some serious chunks out of Person.

The duel continues in this way for round after round.

Towards the end of the duel which is pretty vicious, Lord Ossidious is missing a few fingers, has an arm which is pretty injured, and is missing his shield. Person on the other hand has a broken jaw, the side of his face is pretty grim looking, and he's got some huge welts in his arm and armor.

The two combatants are down to their last 10 hit points. This is the last round of combat. Person goes in for a hit, then a miss. Then he decides this is it—he goes in for a last attempt at a head shot, almost criticals, but does enough damage to pop Lord Ossidious' head clean off his shoulders. Lord Ossidious' body falls limp to the rain-soaked earth. Person, too, collapses, but only unconscious and fatigued.

And then?...

⁹ Actually, we've been neglecting him a lot. We think we left him back at Osil all by himself. Oops.

The Voyages of Team Dragon,

Will the Toshido meet their side of the agreement? Or will they decide to attack anyways? Will Cherizsche ever forgive us? Will our luck ever run out? Will Person ever find a plastic surgeon to fix his face?

4.11 The aftermath

Session: 3/12/2005

Summary

Person collapses and is attacked by Lord Ossidious' witch bitch who gets trampled. The Knights of Hextor split, but the Toshido, bastards that they are, attack us anyways. We unleash floods, a blizzard, a blade barrier, and barrages of arrows which kill them in droves. Then General Kole rides in and slays a bunch (and we send Fenlir out to join the fray). Lady Vania tries to treat with us, but we're all like, "Um. Let us think about that. No." We have a huge feast, Oni hits on Lt. Lion, and at night Elmor disappears to come back with captured captives that he has freed! w00t!

Details

As soon as Lord Ossidious' head falls off and Person collapses from sheer exhaustion (and getting the crap beaten out of him), Lord Ossidious' witch bitch squeals in anguish and rushes into the ring to kill Person!

Zurfal points at her and shouts that she is breaking the rules of the duel. The rain is coming down pretty hard, yet everyone can hear the storm of hoofbeats as the Knights of Hextor spur their charges towards the witch bitch and trample her to death!

Right. So that happened.

The Knights of Hextor, abiding by the rules of the duel, ride off. However, the rest of the Toshido army doesn't follow them. Captains start signaling their troops to organize them into ranks and other groups. We're not really sure what they're about to do—we decide to prepare for the worst.

Elmor and Oni rush in to grab Person's all but lifeless body and drag it back into the keep. The rest of our host heads into the keep as well and we close the door. Oni prepares the archers for battle and brings them to the ramparts.

Elmor sings a song of courage. We send off a few signals to tell the dudes we have positioned by the dam to flood the plain.

Some of the Toshido troops are heading home but the rest of them are passing signal flares like crazy between the various hosts. The Toshido bring up their catapults and start hurling stuff our way.

Zurfal goes into a nice safe place in the keep to start another blizzard.

The Toshido cavalry charge the keep. Our archers shoot down at them and hit a few. They shoot up at us and hit a few of our dudes. Oni tells our archers to be strong!

Zurfal's storm kicks in and it's a full-blown blizzard complete with white out and intense winds. While it makes it difficult for our archers to hit targets and it's also hard for us to see what's going on 20 feet from the keep, it also makes our enemy's lives miserable.

Between the accumulated water and the blizzard snows, it's becoming more and more difficult to slog through the stuff on the ground which is very much to our advantage.

Zurfal has another trick up his sleeve. He raises the water of the river 26 feet and in doing so floods the area around the keep from a second direction!

The Toshido bring up some ladders to attempt to scale the keep walls. Elmor grabs some infantry and they work hard to keep the Toshido from reaching the ramparts.

Someone shouts from the ramparts that they see a large cavalry approaching us rapidly in the distance ¹⁰. This is a bit worrisome because we're thinking maybe it's the Knights of Hextor or some similarly powerful group.

Zurfal casts a blade barrier which covers the area next to the entrance to the keep. It slaughters some hapless Toshido who get caught by surprise.

A bunch of stuff happens in the ensuing chaos. The cavalry comes closer and closer and then we discover it's General Kole's group! They rush through the surprised Toshido like a hot knife through butter. We send Fenlir and his cavalry out to get some action now that we know the day is certainly won.

¹⁰ I'm not sure how they see that far in the blizzard—perhaps the blizzard is a local area effect?

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The Toshido run! We signal to the guys at the dam to stop the flooding of the plain. Zurfal changes the weather from blizzard to 60 degrees and sunny—which is a bit of a welcome surprise to everyone.

We bring the wounded from the ramparts down into rooms for some triage. As Zurfal and Genshin are working on that, Oni hits on Lt. Lion (the archers are her division). Elmor remembers that he can cure people too, so he goes off to help Zurfal.

Person lays on a bed in a world of hurt and unable to talk much—it's clear that some of his jaw is missing and the side of his face is numb with excruciating pain. Zurfal tells him to suck it up and wait until the next day after he's regained his spells.

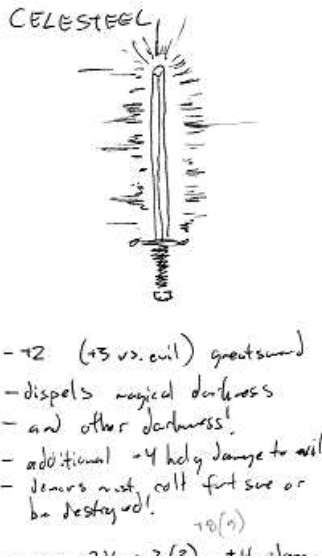
One of the infantry out searching the battle field brings back Lord Ossidious' head and his flail.

Then Lady Vania of the Toshido comes to treat or surrender or something. We leave the keep to chat with her. She alleges she has an army sitting on our doorstep and if we wanted to avoid further bloodshed and do the honorable thing, we'd restore the south lands to their rightful heirs—the Toshido. It's interesting to note the southlands includes the southern keep of Burzon. If we give her the southlands (and the southern keep of Burzon), then she will declare the war over. We tell her we'll consider her offer. We don't trust her, though.

We head back to talk with Lt. Lion, General Kole and Cherizsche. After some discussion which mostly involved Lt. Lion, General Kole, and Cherizsche whining about things but refusing to make a decision for us, we decide to tell Lady Vania tomorrow that we reject the treaty.

Then we have a big feast that couldn't be beat in the sunshine and it's really nice and Elmor sings a song and everything's really groovy. Oni spends most of the time hitting on Lt. Lion.

Person's sword now has a name and it is Celesteel. It and Person chat about things, most notably about the road ahead.



Zurfal has a moment of clarity: if there is an army sitting on the doorstep ready to storm the place, it wouldn't behoove us to have the place all 60 and sunny. He switches it back to a snowstorm.

That night, Elmor disappears, but we're not sure where he disappeared off to.

The next day Zurfal regenerates Person's jaw. Person still looks a little worse for wear, but he's feeling much better.

We meet with Lady Vania and she gives us a scroll. We tell her we're not going to do the treaty. She leaves, but isn't happy about it.

An hour or so later, Elmor appears on a wagon with Natasha and a bunch of captives all of whom appear to be nobles captured by the Toshido to force the various smaller families to do the Toshido's bidding. The Toshido are a bunch of jerks!

We decide to split up. Elmor, Natasha and Oni head off to figure out what kind of threat is actually on our doorstep and take some measures to lessen it. Zurfal and Genshin are going to take the nobles north to Tashal and Person is going to Osil to protect Lord Keith—something he promised Cherizsche he

would do.

And then...?

What happens to Elmor, Natasha and Oni? Is there really an army sitting on our doorstep or are the Toshido bluffing? What happens to the Knights of Hextor now that their fearless legendary leader has been vanquished by a person named Person? Is that like a metaphor for something?

4.12 Surprise!

Session: 4/3/2005

Summary

Elmor, Oni, and Natasha head south to mess with the Toshido army and (hopefully) put them in a position where they're totally hosed even after winter has broke. Person heads up to Osil to find Lord Keith but discovers something far more funky than he could possibly imagine. Zurfal and Gen-shin escort the nobles to Tashal. Zurfal talks to the folks at the temple of St. Cuthbert and learns the secrets of his dreams. Then we all meet back at Osil and confront the ramifications of Zurfal's casual resurrections.

Details

We agree to meet back at Osil in a few days time. Elmor, Oni, and Natasha head south to screw with the Toshido army. Elmor sends a missive summarizing the adventure:

Dear esteemed colleagues,

Here's our accounting for the Elmor and Oni's Excellent Adventure:

Plus Side:

1. Toshido General Nermal - dead via extreme file mess up c/o Oni.
2. Toshido General Lady Vania - removed from command minus 1/2 arm.

3. Toshido General Rha-ad - in charge plus one bottle of sweet wine, several kegs of ale, and one order to retreat.

Minus Side:

1. The index and middle finger of Elmor's left hand.

We did a good job. Looking forward to writing the song for this.

Elmor

While that was happening, Zurfal spends some time mending the wall and tower of the south keep of Burzon using his fantasitc wall of stone spell. Everyone is very impressed.

Then, Zurfal, Person, Genshin and all the nobles that Elmor valiantly rescued from the evil clutches of the Toshido internment camp all turn into clouds and head north. Person stops off just outside of Osil with the purpose of protecting Lord Keith.

Zurfal and Genshin drop off the nobles at Tashal and head off to a bar that Zurfal remembers well from his early sea-faring days in the navy. Things must have changed because now the bar sucks. Zurfal is wholly unimpressed.

Meanwhile, Person walks into Osil and is greeted by hundreds of Zurfal worshippers. They have the symbol of St. Cuthbert with a double-Z sewn over it. It's pretty sketchy, though. None of the people Team Dragon interacted with are there any longer. Captain Sire (Wiggums) is gone—left when the rebellion was getting pretty vicious. Lord Rett, Seph, Lord Keith, and most of the refugees all fled during the rebellion as well. Person is pretty surprised, a little amused, and very concerned about the whole thing.

Everyone is very excited that Person, a loyal servant of Zurfal, is there to hang out with them. They find him a nice place to stay and feed him very well. Person hangs out waiting for Zurfal the magnificent to show up. In the meantime, he tries not to get anyone's hopes up.

Meanwhile, Zurfal and Genshin head to the temple of St. Cuthbert in the temple district of Tashal. There Zurfal feels uneasy and talks with the head honcho who tells Zurfal that many in the order are very displeased with Zurfal's actions, especially those recently. They've heard that Osil has become

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a bed of Zurfal-worshippers and has caused most of the gentry and government to leave Osil for better climes. Things are not good down there.

Zurfal feels ashamed and very humbled by this. He decides to go to Osil and set things straight.

Thus, Zurfal and Genshin fly down to Osil. As they're walking towards the city gates, Elmor, Oni, Natasha and a hot chick all suddenly appear out of no where. And Joe. Zurfal is all like, "What the hell is going on? I totally thought Joe was dead!" We're all very confused. Turns out that Zurfal's visions aren't all that and a bag of chips.

Turns out the hot chick is Oni's sister Porsche who is a very high level magic user who was totally incapable of freeing herself from the Toshido camp that was sans army and required the help of Elmor to escape. She even has the ability to teleport. Very exciting.

As soon as Person learns that Zurfal is finally in town, he bursts out of the house they've put him up in and shouts to the hundreds of villagers sitting outside his door, "The great Zurfal is coming!" This news sends everyone into a frenzy of excitement. Person can only sit back and say, "Ahh, Zurfal. What a mess you've created."

As Zurfal, Oni, Natasha, Porsche, Elmor and gang near the gates of Osil, the gates spring open and Zurfal is greeted with great fanfare from the hundreds of Zurfal-worshippers that have taken over Osil.

The crowd of Zurfal-worshippers separates and a dude being carried by other dudes comes to greet Zurfal. Turns out he's the leader of the Zurfal-worshippers and he's suspiciously wearing the garments of the old priest in the temple of St. Cuthbert.

The leader tells us about how amazing Zurfal is and how they drove out the unbelievers. Zurfal is aghast. He attempts to tame the unruly town by telling them of all the bad things they've done. Then he decides to talk to them one by one to separate the ones that were just following the crowd from the ones that bludgeoned the priest, looted, and did various other bad things.

While Zurfal is talking with everyone, Oni, Porsche, and Person head off to Lord Rett's house to figure out where he might have gone and more importantly where he took Lord Keith. While Person stands guard at the front

door, Oni and Porsche search the house and don't find much except that Lord Rett has two other houses up north.

After Oni and Porsche are done searching the house, Oni, Porsche, and Person head back to the inn where Person found Lord Keith was staying. The inn keeper isn't particularly useful, but we do get some clues that Lord Keith is most certainly with Lord Rett.

We head back to the temple. Just outside, we bump into Genshin and he tells us about what Zurfal is doing and how things are going. An old woman asks us for some alms. Oni refuses, but Genshin gives her a couple of silver and suddenly she stabs Oni in the back!

Oni is poisoned but manages to weakly turn around and nick her for an entire point of damage all by himself. Porsche does the magic user thing and turns Oni invisible.

Person is totally fed up with this evil crap, goes into a righteous rampage and whacks the rogue in the arm with the broadside of Celesteel! Then he backhands her across the face. She falls, then gets back up and is suddenly unable to do anything evil.

Person hisses at her, "You have been bonded to my soul. You will repent or be bound to me forever!"

Genshin brings Oni in to see Zurfal to get some healing. Meanwhile, Person does his first ever Sermon of Righteousness to the rogue. Tamatha, the rogue, doesn't tell us much, though we don't ask her much either. Person renames her Samantha—this is to be her new name for her new life.

And then...?

Will Person finally get a friend (and second character sheet)? Does Zurfal reverse the damage he's done in Osil and get forgiven by the gods and everyone else? Will Zurfal start doing secret resurrection ceremonies out in the woods from now on rather than in clear view of the common folk? Is Porsche here to stay? Will Oni survive until his meeting in Tashal? Will we ever find out what happened to Lord Keith? Will we ever find out what happened to Elmor's hand? All this and more soon.

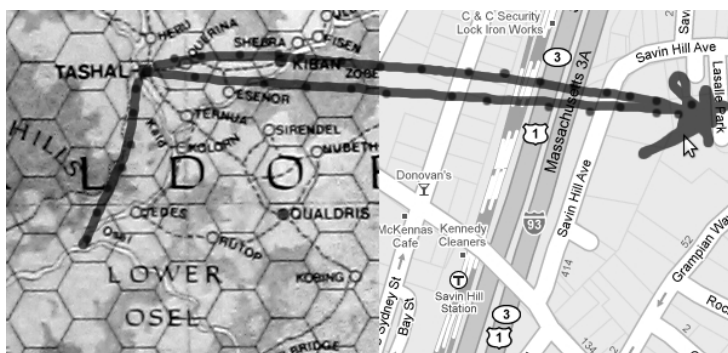
Champions of the Tower

I'm a reasonable guy. But, I've just experienced some very unreasonable things.

Jack Burton, Big Trouble in Little China

5.1 Synopsis

04/24/2005 through 11/06/2005. All about the Quest for the High Sentinel.



5.2 Where's the cohesion?

Session: 4/24/2005

Summary

We continue trying to track down Lord Keith. In the process, we have a “we lack cohesion” moment, we travel casually to Tashal, we tell them we’re not Team Dragon, they get fussy, so then we tell them we are Team Dragon, they get extra fussy, and then everything sorts itself out and we ask to go on the mission.

Details

Zurfal neutralizes the poison in Oni. Elmor and Natasha go off to make glass. Porsche and Person hang out with Samantha outside the temple.

The Zurfal worshippers are finally disbanded and several of them are brought to justice for crimes they committed. After a day or so, people who had fled Osil start moving back to the city.

Zurfal makes sure to memorize restoration in the morning and casts it on Oni the first chance he gets curing Oni of the poison.

Person talks with Samantha about leading a good life and making good choices. She then turns around and gives Person a piece of her mind. Person feels hurt. He thinks about what she said for some time.

Zurfal then goes on to fix the fingers on Elmor’s hand.

Oni decides that maybe his life might be in danger so he turns himself into a Professor.

Zurfal text messages Lord Rett and we find out that Lord Rett is way far north beyond Tashal and that Lord Keith has been taken from Lord Rett.

“I promised Cherizsche that we would take care of Lord Keith. We must find him as soon as we can.”

“I agree with Person. Further, I have suspicions that Lord Keith is intrinsic to our mission. We must find him. We cannot let him be in enemy hands. It is likely others are looking for him, too.”

Oni looks perplexed. “What others? The man can barely sit on a horse. The last meal he ate with us was through a straw.”

Elmor turns to Oni and asks, “When was the last time he ate?”

“I thought it was your week to spoon-feed Lord Keith.”

“No way, man. It was totally your week.”

Zurfal ignores the bickering and uses his crystal ball magic powers and finds Lord Keith. The crystal ball shows Lord Keith in a room with a window. Zurfal looks out the window in Lord Keith’s room, and recognizes the colorful towers of Tashal.

We have a team meeting and at that meeting we decide it’s time we spread the Team Dragon love up to Tashal.

Zurfal and Porsche make plans for transporting us, all our friends, and Zurfal’s many St. Cuthbert worshipping followers to Tashal. While they do that, Person wanders around the city looking for the refugees that we left behind.

Then Person does something he’s never done before: he takes the first step towards a vow of poverty. He’s talking with some people who are very down and out in their lives and ends up leaving them all his money. It’s not particularly elegant or virtuous, but he feels good afterwards.

When Person returns to the committee discussing how to transport our army to Tashal, he discovers Oni waxing philosophical about the cohesion (or lack thereof) in the group. Then Oni mentions some interesting things like that he might be the head of the organized crime families or some such nonsense. This makes Person surprised and angry.

“How is it that you’re the head of the organized crime families?”

“It wasn’t my fault! I didn’t volunteer. They just elected me head because of all the great work that I’ve done....”

“Great work? What great work have you done for organized crime?”

“Uh... I helped them decorate. I’ve got really great taste in color.”

“I can’t believe this! What kind of criminally evil stuff are you into!? I don’t even know how I can continue to travel with you.”

“Oh, but it’s part of my big plan.”

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“What plan?”

“Well, see, the organized crime world is an intrinsic part of society and one of the many fronts that our enemies are fighting us on. My becoming head of the organized crime gives us another angle through which we can achieve our mission. Further, it makes our enemies’ lives that much harder. As head, I’ve got spies everywhere.”

Person looks at Oni and scowls.

We head to Tashal. Tashal is a city of many towers in the crux of two rivers joining together. It is walled in and has a zillion towers all in different colors skirting the wall. Outside of the wall is a sprawl of shanty towns. Outside of that are farm fields. To the northwest is the old city—a massive village of caves.

There are no major boulevards in Tashal—it is a city of many side streets.

We arrive in Tashal through various magical means and Zurfal immediately goes off to shop with his followers. Person meditates with Samantha who isn’t very excited, but they have a calmer discussion than they had the previous day.

Oni, Natasha, Elmor and Porsche head off to Arnell’s estate ¹ and hilarity ensues as Elmor and Oni attempt to bluff their way into the estate, spend the night, and look around.

The next day, we meet back at the Rubber Chicken tavern. We’re hanging out when Darnel, chased by guards, rushes in. He sees us and appeals to us to get him out of yet another tight spot. Zurfal decides that Zurfal is the only one who can mete out justice and tells the guards that they can’t take Darnel.

“You can’t take this man.”

“Yes we can. By order of the City of Tashal, this man is under arrest for stealing horses.”

“I didn’t steal them!”

“No, but you were about to!”

¹ Arnell is the thief we killed in the druid camp way back when.

Zurfal looks at the guards and says, “You can’t arrest a man for not stealing horses. That’s not justice, that’s nonsense.”

Darnel pipes up, “Yeah! What he said!”

“Shut it, Darnel.” Zurfal thinks a moment then says, “Look, we’re Team Dragon and we’ll take custody of this man, again...”

“Team Dragon! You’re Team Dragon!” Everyone in the tavern is now looking at us. The guards are looking at us. People on the street are now crowding into the tavern to see us.

Elmor chimes in, “We’re totally Team Dragon!” And then he starts to sing of our accomplishments and valor and bravery and everyone in the place is going nuts. People start crowding into the tavern and the place is getting pretty packed.

Darnel notices this, too, and attempts to slip out, but Genshin grabs him by the collar.

Then the Sentinels men show up. In a sudden show of good thinking, we tell them we’re not actually Team Dragon at all. Then they tell us they’re going to imprison us for saying we were. So then we tell them we actually are Team Dragon and we’re just trying to fool people because we don’t want all the attention.

This causes a riot. People start throwing stuff because they’re very angry and confusedq. It’s a mess.

The guards take us prisoner and we end up in the brig. Person says, “So that went awesome. Oni, you must feel right at home here.”

“Hey! I’ve never been caught for anything I did. To even casually suggest that I have is insulting.”

Zurfal bangs on the bars and yells, “Get your captain or whoever is in charge here. We need to be released now.”

We meet with an obnoxious constable who tells us to suck it up. We tell him to get the captain, but he refuses. So then Porsche turns into a dragon and totally freaks everyone out. They bring the Captain and he’s much more reasonable.

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As we're being released, Elmor makes a mental note, "Mental note, don't say you are, then aren't, then are Team Dragon again—it doesn't work out so well."

We ask the captain many things. We find out the councillors are meeting tomorrow so we decide to show up and meet with them and the Staff who is the only person left of the old regime.

Zurfal meets with Joe and his followers at the Temple of St. Cuthbert in town. Zurfal talks with the priest a bit.

Elmor talks with one of his contacts to divine where Lord Keith might be.

Person chats with Samantha about how it's good to be good.

The night passes.

Oni turns back into Oni again and Zurfal shows up. We all head over to the councillors meeting. (We totally oath stone.)

The councilors thank us for our services thus far. We tell them about the battles and the lamentations of the women and all that. They thank us and clap hands and stuff. We continue with our story and tell them lots more, but then we realize they're bored. So Elmor whips up a full audio/video presentation in full 3d rendering with per-pixel shading, bump mapping, and utilizing a 16-pipe GPU architecture. He sings and dances and it's very intense and thorough and portrays Team Dragon as a team of awesome. Everyone is very impressed.

Then we tell them we want to take up the Quest for the Sentinel. They're pretty stunned and talk it over amongst themselves for a bit. This takes a while and results in them telling us that we must prove ourselves up to the task first.

They tell us about Thorin. Thorin is a man in town who is a filth of a politician. He has ties to all politicians and families of the city. He's trying to create a movement to topple the current tatters of a government. Our task is to remove him as a threat. We're told that we can't kill him since that would only spur his movement. We must convince him that what he's doing is bad.

Also, they tell us that they want to celebrate our awesomeness and that there will be a great festival in our honor in three days.

Elmor's contact contacts him. His contact is pretty injured. It seems like the information was very difficult to dig up. He tells Elmor that Lord Keith is being held by a sadistic family for political reasons. They're holding him for ransom.

Too bad they don't know that the only ransom Team Dragon gives is a nine course feast of justice.

And then...?

Will Team Dragon make it through the festival? Will they prove themselves to the councillors or will those damn Thay liberals filibuster forever? Will Team Dragon ever save Lord Keith? Will it involve gobs of gory bloodshed worthy of a Clive Barker film?

5.3 Confessions

Session: 6/10/2005

Summary

We have a talk where all the interesting sordid details of what's going on with our characters are spilled (all of them?). Then we scry for Lord Keith, discover him in a storeroom with a box with an insignia of the Alan and Alan trading company on it, head off to find this Alan and Alan place, bump into two assassins on the wrong end of the law, take a tour, ride the waves, blow some stuff up, and meet back at the manor.

Details

We're standing in a square and the sun is at its zenith in the sky. We head off to the Lazy Horseradish Inn to have a group chat and work out issues we're having in our party.

Person starts first. He starts off with his experiences with the demon that took over his soul. It's difficult for him to tell—clearly there's a lot of guilt surrounding the whole experience. He continues to tell about his recent turn to the good side, how he's become a Celestial (of sorts), and his new mission in life. He also mentions that his guilt is almost unbearable and that he is taking a vow of poverty.

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Elmor speaks and tells us that he's an orphan and it turns out he's also half-dragon. Who knew?

Zurfal apologizes for his fanatical past self and tells us of his new lot in life.

Oni, too, confesses. It turns out he's a shapechanger, a rogue, owns a minor fortune, and he's somewhat involved with organized crime. This last bit turns some heads. Oni quickly informs us that in order to eliminate organized crime, it must be tamed first and this is his mission.

We remember that Lord Keith is being held by an organized crime family. Thorin (the man we must placate in order to take up the Quest for the Sentinel) is also involved with organized crime.

We're all feeling pretty good about things now. Our secrets are finally out. We feel the cohesion coming back.

Oni and Elmor go off to take possession of the house we got from the investors. They first talk to a Nostradi who sends them with soldiers to the house itself. The head servant has no memory of the sale but Elmor and Oni, using some expert diplomacy, convince him it happened. Oni pays the existing staff. The manor consists of 24 rooms, a small moat, river front view, stables, an armory with master-work weapons and armor, and a bathroom which used to be a temple.

Meanwhile, Zurfal and Person scry for Lord Keith using the orb. We discover that he is alive but he's going crazy in a strange room. His hands are covered in blood and he's punching the door and throwing things around. He's in a frenzy of some kind and keeps screaming, "I MUST ESCAPE!!!" Also in the room are a series of barrels and storage boxes. The walls are stone and there aren't any windows. The door is a heavy wooden door and appears to be locked, barred or bolted from the outside. We think this is a storage room. There is an insignia on one of the boxes of a fish jumping out of the ocean. It's very strange. Zurfal tries to read Lord Keith's aura... It looks like one aura on top of another. One is a very very intense Lawful Good aura. The other is a barely visible neutral good one. Person is reminded of the raging clarity of Celestial righteousness.

We try the magic orb scry thing again and see the same thing.

Zurfal picks up his followers and they go shopping for handbags, high-heeled shoes and matching outfits.

We all meet up with Elmor and Oni and do the scrying thing again. Oni asks around about the fish insignia and finds out it belongs to a trading company called Alan and Alan, a discovery that brings up many bad memories for Person ².

Oni dresses up like one of Zurfal's followers so as to avoid undue attention.

This being our only lead, we head off to the warehouse section of the city. On the way we pass two guards walking with two other men who are clearly assassins. Oni trips one of Zurfal's followers which causes some commotion allowing Oni to grab a pendant off of one of the assassins. The pendant has a skull on it. Now we're sure they're assassins for one of the organized crime families.

We reach the warehouse for Alan and Alan and a man comes out to talk with us. After some classic Team Dragon conversational hijinx, Person pipes up and states he is the younger Alan and is looking around. Brathen and Sheldon own the Alan and Alan company still. We get a tour of the main warehouse.

During the tour, Oni peels off from the group and does some sneaking around. He slips behind boxes and discovers a set of wagon tracks that lead thorough the warehouse. He follows them up to a solid wall that they appear to pass through. He tries to search for some kind of mechanism to open the wall, but totally borks his checks and ends up covered in dust.

Meanwhile, Person suggests that we might be interested in investing in Alan and Alan but want to know more about the shipments in the area. We get a scroll listing cargo and where its headed. We tell Shmiel, the man we've been talking to all this time, we will return in a few days.

Elmor heads off to talk to his contact again in regards to Lord Keith.

Somehow we find out about the ransom. It's 9000 coins to be delivered to Northern Cemetary Hill at the Cheval gravestone. Delivery of Lord Keith will be at Merchant's crossing on the following day.

Person tracks down Samantha and brings her to the manor. We have some food then Person and Samantha head off to the stables to sleep for the night.

² Alan and Alan are Person's older brothers who took over the family merchant business when Person's father died. They kicked Person out of the house soon after. He joined the navy and that's how he became the fighter he is.

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Person sleeps in the stables because he has moral problems with sleeping in the manor. Person chats with Samantha a bit, then meditates and falls to sleep.

Oni and Elmor head off to chat with the captured assassins. They discover the assassins were doing their jobs. Alan and Alan are possibly a front for the skulls and might be involved in slave trade. Other than that, Elmor and Oni find out very little.

Oni heads off to sell some stuff with Elmor, Natasha, and Porsche. They all head off to a “pawn shop” which is closed. They break in, skulk around, find a trap door to the basement. In the basement in a pile of shit (literally), they find another trap door. Everyone rolls some seriously amazing reflex saves except Natasha as the trap door turns out to be a trap and the ceiling falls in striking Natasha and pinning her to the ground. They eventually get enough strength to move the slab, but Natasha is seriously injured. Elmor casts cure serious wounds.

Then something happens and they hear footsteps or something above them. They’re trapped in the basement now. They argue a bit about how to escape. Porsche casts fireball and then teleports the whole gang out of the pawn shop which goes up like a roman candle killing the guards and anyone else who might have been in the building. It also makes a very loud explosion that’s heard for blocks around.

Rumors go around the city in regards to the pawn shop. It’s a mystery as to what happened, but clearly the pawn shop is no more.

And then?...

Will Oni fence the stolen goods somewhere else? Will we ever find a lead that will lead us to Lord Keith? Will the party’s new-found openness cause strife now that we all know what’s really going on (or do we)?

5.4 The hunt for Lord Keith

Session: 6/26/2005

Summary

Team Dragon wakes up to a beautiful (dark) morning, get attacked by a poisoned package, go on a scavenger hunt first for Lord Keith's journal and then his pants and in the process kill a hobo, discover that the hobo had a rock, come up with some very cunning plans, and besiege a zoo hidden away under a cemetery to free Lord Keith.

Details

It is dawn. Person awakes; his dreams were filled with gruesome images of peasants he killed and ate. This causes him to be somewhat gruff and ill-tempered. At some point during the night, Samantha disappeared from the barn that Person and Samantha sleep in. Person, a little concerned, takes his time searching the house and finds Samantha in the house chatting with the staff.

During breakfast, Oni and Elmor chat about something in hushed tones.

We all meet up and decide that we need to find Lord Keith. Zurfal memorizes a zillion "find object" spells because we think this gives us the best shot at doing so.

First, Zurfal casts find object to find Lord Keith's journal. The flicker of the candle points towards the journal.

Just as we're about to leave the mansion and go off to find Lord Keith, a package arrives for Team Dragon! Oni takes great care not to touch it but then does so anyways. He immediately is afflicted with POISON! 80s hair bands scream in his head as he crumples to the ground. The butler also collapses—he touched the package in order to bring it into the mansion.

Zurfal casts cure poison on Oni. Then we grab the staff member and rush off to the makeshift Temple in the house which used to be a latrine where Zurfal implores St. Cuthbert for divine help (i.e. trades a series of spells for a cure poison). Zurfal cures the poison of our staff member and the crisis ends. Samantha helps take the servant to a room to rest and recover.

Zurfal attempts to object read the package. He sees a tall seven foot man with feral features in casual dress with black gloves³ carrying the scroll carefully by the ribbon. He walks up to the door of our mansion.

³ We later discover the tall seven foot man with feral features is none other than The Mule.

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Zurfal attempts to “rewind” the object read VCR and see further into the past.... He sees a table. They’re making the paint for the scroll. The paint has the poison in it. The person might be elven. Long black hair. Zurfal recognizes Raya from Rogue Group 6 there.

The vision ends and Zurfal tells us all about it.

We decide to go off and find Lord Keith by trying to find the journal. We walk through Tashal by wandering in a direction, casting find object, triangulating, and wandering some more.

While wandering in the streets, we pass The Staff and he asks us how our talks with Thorin are going. We bluff and say, “Oh, they’re going great.”

We discover ourselves at the capital hill. The candle suggests the journal is below the hill somehow.

While we’re busy looking at the hill and verifying that the find object spell is really suggesting that the journal is under the hill, Oni kills a defenseless hobo that was following us. Oh, but weirdness—the hobo has a rock with a rune on it much like the rocks that Rogue Group 6 carry. We don’t recognize the rune.

We have at least two other rocks like this with us but can find only one of them. We compare the two rocks. It’s very exciting and we surmise this hobo was really in the employ of Rogue Group 6 ⁴.

Person refuses to let the group leave the dead hobo body in the alleyway. So Oni heads off to fetch the guards. The guards show up, we tell them that we found the body ⁵, they say, “Ok”, and we leave them with it.

Elmor informs us that the Archive is under the hill. We talk to the building staff to try to gain access, but we’re not allowed into the Archive. No one is.

After some discussion, we decide searching for the journal is probably a dead end and that the journal is probably not with Lord Keith. We’re very puzzled about this, though.

Zurfal uses the orb to hunt for Lord Keith again. He’s still in the same storage room that he was in last time we checked. This time, there’s another body in

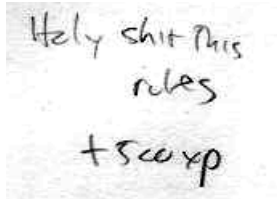
⁴ Turns out Oni killed the hobo and planted the rock on him to throw us off the scent. I don’t recall why, though. I (Will) didn’t find out until months afterwards and had a good laugh.

⁵ Person isn’t happy about lying, but it’s better than leaving a dead body there.

the room with him—though the body is dead and Lord Keith is happily using the body to beat down the door which is a bit grotesque. Lord Keith keeps screaming, “MUST ESCAPE! MUST ESCAPE!” Strangely, we can hear the deep booming of the maniacal voice carrying through the city.

We listen to guess the direction the voice is coming from and we determine it to be from the north.

Then we have a cunning plan. Zurfal casts find object for Lord Keith’s pants. Yes, his pants.



The flame of the candle is **INTENSE** and bright blue and leads directly to the North Cemetery. We head that way with great haste. We’re guessing the blue flame probably means that Lord Keith’s pants **REALLY** want to be found.

We reach the cemetery and Elmor talks to a couple of grave diggers. They say it’s “bad luck to be in the cemetery after dark.” They also say there are “foul people hanging around” and that it’s dangerous. Silly gravediggers—“danger” is Team Dragon’s middle name!

Zurfal casts find object looking for Lord Keith’s pants one more time. The blue flame intensely points to a crypt. We pull the door open, run down the stairs, and down the hall a bit all the while following the intense blue flame. Then we hear sounds coming towards us so we stop.

Oni turns invisible (thanks to Porsche). Porsche, who has an itchy fireball trigger finger, asks to throw a fireball (or four or five) down the hallway. We veto the idea.

Oni sneaks down the corridor, then back up and tells us that there are six guards coming towards us armed with various implements of destruction. Also, one of the guards has a whistle around his neck.

We retreat the way we came a bit to lure the guards around the corner so that

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we can bore them with endless conversations of the minutia of our battle tactics. After a moment of this, Person, who got up on the wrong side of his straw mat this morning, completely loses his patience with screwing around and declares, “We must find Lord Keith NOW!”

Person ignites into blue flame of celestial beauty—which lights up the hallway like a clear morning sending the guards scampering for better defensible positions. Person charges down the corridor yelling fiercely, “I AM COMING FOR YOUR SOULS YOU EVIL BASTARDS!”

Oni, who is invisible, discovers that he’s not as safe as he thought he was in the hallway as he hears several guards sneaking up behind him.

Battle erupts! Oni becomes Person’s eyes and helps him see where the guards have ducked into alcoves of the corridor allowing Person to turn the corner and cleave repeatedly dishing out endless amounts of pain.

Zurfal creates hound archons which go after the lurking guards! Genshin puts on and activates the evil tentacle cloak causing the hound archons to turn around and attack Genshin! Hilarity ensues!

We clean up some more guards and book it down the corridor into a huge room. Elmor slips into the room with greater invisibility and points out the room has balconies where archers lay waiting for us to walk through the entrance.

Porsche uses Elmor’s sight and casts ice storm in one of the balconies. Zurfal creates an Azer in the other one! The archers are consumed by fire and ice. Neener neener!

Elmor conjures up an illusion of a huge dragon which scares the bejesus out of some of the guards who jump from the balcony and try booking it through the room to where the big gate is—but Person screams at them with a scream of righteousness and they burn in blue flames!

But then someone goes and flips some switches and all the doors open letting out all manners of fierce creatures. As we’re fighting, we wonder whether we’re in an underground zoo in a crypt underneath the cemetery? That’s weird. Who builds places like this?

Porsche charms a manticore! Lord Keith is released from one of the closed doors and runs out. Person fights with a two-headed giant. The giant

whallops Person sending him flying into a wall with a bone-crushing thud. Natasha uses her breath weapon. Oni runs after Lord Keith to protect him from the myriad of evil beasts and bring him to safety ⁶. Zurfal creates a stone tunnel and Oni and Lord Keith come running through it.

At this point, Porsche starts firing off concussive fireballs allowing us to escape. We run down the hall with Lord Keith in tow.

Zurfal talks to Lord Keith as we run. Lord Keith, who is in hysterics, yells at the top of his lungs, “THE SHEPHARD MUST PROTECT HIS HERD! THE SHEPHERD MUST SURVIVE!”

Team Dragon runs all the way back to the manor.

And then?...

What on earth is going on? Who built that weird place? Who gave Lord Keith the case of Red Bull? What’s all this shephard talk about?

5.5 Interlude: The Shephard’s Sons

We enter the mansion and are led upstairs to Lord Arnol’s study by a determined yet increasingly calm Lord Keith. He calls us by name: Oni, Elmor, Zurfal, and Person, and then gestures for us to sit on the floor, dismissing our cohorts with a commanding stare. Turning his back to us, he peers through the window into the darkness outside. The door closes and he speaks, his face hidden in shadow:

“We are safe. Sit. Listen. For I speak with the voice of Shepherd, the author of mankind’s story for a thousand years.

“A millennia has passed since the Shepherd walked the earth. In her time, the Country of Thay was nothing but a wild land populated with wild peoples, naked, ignorant, and above all divided, having fled from the Golem Wars which threatened to annihilate all life on the continent. The people found themselves in the most primitive state of nature, after all knowledge of language, society, magic, and technology had been erased from their mind to prevent apocalypse by war machines and living nightmares.

⁶ The safety that Team Dragon provides, of course!

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“However, in a matter of centuries, tribal warfare had once again driven the population of the entire continent to near extinction, through the true ravages of war: Fear, Desperation, Hunger, and Disease. The people lived with only the vestiges of society to protect them, being so fearful of others that the very spoken word of another tribe was considered a disease. In such times, there was little hope for the Gods most reckless creation: Man.

“One woman rose above her birth and teachings with a vision of the future, one where her tribe of fishermen and a neighboring tribe of mountain folk, could learn to coexist in some fashion, and perhaps, even trade for mutual benefit. Spending most of her youth hiding amongst her tribal enemies, she learned she had a gift for language and quickly learned the forbidden tongue of her enemies. In secret, she began to communicate with those from the mountain tribe, posing as a transient and teaching them of the fishermen of the east, who had learned much about the sea and possessed many valuable commodities. The leaders of the mountain men soon caught wind of the bounty of the sea, and quickly raised an army to invade their rich neighbors. Rushing back to her village, the Shepherd warned her people of the impending attack and urged them to meet the mountain men on the green planes which led to the towers of stone.

“On those fields, the armies stood across from one another, poised for another bloody encounter. But for the first time since the fall of the great Western Empires, the people of Thay clashed with words not spears, wooed by the voice of reason: the Call of the Shepherd. The Shepherd spoke to each leader in their native tongue and addressed them in traditional etiquette, translating for the opposing side the meaning and purpose of each gesture and word. Through negotiation, the leaders found a way to tolerate their opponents, and agreed to delay the war until more could be learned about each tribe. The Shepherd, seeing the power of common language, decided to travel the land and unite the peoples of the Country of Thay under the banner of a common tongue.

“Wandering the land henceforth, the Shepherd came across many tribes, and acting as an ambassador of learning and communication, helped many communities find a way to coexist. Over decades, many tribes began to trade with one another and over time they combined to form great alliances and federations. Common languages, traditions, art, music, and the written word became infectious, spreading independently of the Shepherd’s travels, like

seeds blowing in the wind. The spring time of Civilization had come to Eastern Thaysia.

“It is in this way that the Shepherd learned the ways of all people, and the language of every intelligent being who walked the green earth. What’s more, through her long years of study, the Shepherd had discovered underlying commonalities amongst all languages, as if they were all linked to a single root language ingrained within man’s consciousness. In fact, she developed the very language we now call “common”.

“Despite being celebrated across the continent as a shepherd for the people, her fame did nothing to quench her curiosity. Her intellect searched the vast realm of human communication, only to discover an ancient and powerful language known as the Words of Creation. Such words did more than describe reality, they defined it, created it. In their rudimentary form, they allowed the mortals of old to weave and empower magical spells and alter the laws of nature. However, in their purest form, such words could manipulate the very fabric of the universe and grant mortals a rare vision of Truth.

“Upon her discovery, it was as if the Shepherd’s eyes were suddenly flung open to see for the first time. Her lifelong work appeared as nothing more than shadows dancing across a cave’s wall ⁷ and the future, an infinitely complex tapestry of possibilities. Only her love of the people anchored her to reality and allowed her to use her knowledge to guide the people toward a future filled with prosperity, unity, and peace.

“It was then that she began bringing her vision to the people. The moment her words reached the ears of others, a revolution began. Her words pierced the very heart of the people and drove them in hordes to demand a reorganization of the Country of Thay into one nation, under the leadership of a protector, a guide, a Sentinel. Sadly, her message traveled too slow for her aging body, which began to falter just as this movement gained momentum.

“Instead of abandoning her people at the moment of truth, she decided to find a way to shape the words of creation into a written form, thus creating an everlasting account of her dream of a new social order. Unfortunately, the words of creation were so potent, no mundane medium could tame them. Realizing her life was near its end, the Shepherd decided to make the ultimate sacrifice. Over one year, she milled her own flesh into paper and her

⁷ Nod to Plato.

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very blood into ink, infusing every page with a delicate weave of her life essence and the Words of Creation.

“Her death, tapping her last drop of blood and the last shred of living flesh to complete the Shepherd’s Journal, heralded a new age of civilization and prosperity for Thay. Ruled by the desire for harmony and the ascension of the common folk, Thaysian society would protect the many and scorn the few. Those greatest in power lived in forced modesty, those living in abundance enjoyed little influence, and those with neither were heralded as the savior of mankind. Her martyrdom would live forever in the pages of the Journal, which in the centuries would come to serve as the foundation of society in Eastern Thaysia.

“However, not even Truth can withstand the rigors of time. As with all visions, no matter how enlightened, the Shepherd’s sight was limited. She could not see into the everlasting, and the society built upon her body and words eventually began to crumble. The price of her society became too great for many to bear, and too many sacrifices for the good of the many led to deep, festering resentment among those destined for greater things. Over the centuries, many began to stray from the vision, seeking to actualize their own potential despite the social and moral ramifications. The powerful sought power as an end in itself and commoners became commodities, like lambs sold for slaughter. In the end, even the sentinel himself, the ultimate symbol of society and selflessness, succumbed to corruption. Thus the Age of the Shepherd came to an end.

“Now it is time to open a new chapter in the story of man. The Shepherd could not see all ends, and society must soon be guided by a new generation or risk utter destruction.

“You have been brought here by many forces in the service of The Shepherd.”

Upon uttering these words, the wall behind Lord Keith suddenly darkens and becomes lost in inky blackness. From behind this curtain of night, several figures emerge, illuminated by flickering candle light and half shrouded by shadow. We recognize many of these figures, and the Shepherd speaks of them all.

A young woman, dressed in green gold and black: Cherizsche of the Watchtower, The Watchers, once the impartial protectors of law and order, the

moral archive of the human race.

An enormous silver-blue dragon, wings spread: The Great Matron, Prius of the Silver Order, High Queen of Madria. Ever walking the Golden Path, she has transcended the coils of law and order, seeking man's deliverance through the power of words, governance, and influence.

A young man dressed in a fancy black and grey suit, holding a rose: Lord of Whispers, society's shadow. He who commits the unseen or unsightly, in order for society to survive.

A beautiful woman with emerald skin and massive white wings, holding a majestic, shining blade aloft: Celesteel, the Unforgiving Servant of the Holy Fire, Ruthless enforcer of the heavens.

"These creatures are but the palm-bearers at the Shepherd's funeral, and you are her next of kin. Having delivered you to the grave of the Shepherd's last blood relative, Lady Chavail, they have completed their last duties as servants of the Shepherd and will inevitably fall prey to their own selfish designs. That is, until their master returns to the house, to rule them judiciously and use their power wisely.

"Now step forward, Sons of the Shepard, and be called by your True Names.

Person steps forward as if under a spell... "Azufell!"

Zirful steps forth... "Krator!"

Oni takes a step... "Enyx!"

Elmor moves forward... "Cilvius!"

"You are the successors of a once mighty Kingdom, one without borders, a Kingdom of Philosophy, of Vision, of Heart and Mind and Spirit. You have been chosen. The looks on your faces—you clearly wonder why. Not for power. For more powerful beings are there not? Not for knowledge. Would you dare believe you were the wisest of all? Not for clarity in vision. Your eyes see little of what is true. Not for consensus. DUH! None of these things are your greatest gift.

"You were chosen is because you dissent, you transform, you change. You represent the heart and soul of mankind's greatest power: flexibility in the face of adversity. More than any individuals of your time, you are central

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figures in the battle for balance, from the fires of the Abyss to the Celestial Halls of the Seven Heavens, from the depths of human depravity to the heights of man's morality.

"You, Azufell, shall struggle with the Divine powers of good and evil. In the old tongue your name is said to mean, "He who eats peasants." No no no no no wait. "Fallen Grace."

"You Krator, you shall reconcile law and order amongst the Divine powers. In the old tongue, your name means "Divine Mortality."

"You, Enyx, you will be forever torn between human ambition and decency. In the old tongue, your name means "The mind rules, the heart trespasses."

"You, Cilvius, shall wrestle with the inadequacies of human governance, fighting both the ever-present threat of tyranny, and the lawlessness which chaos promises. In the old tongue, your name means, "Sovereign Obedience." The old ways have passed. Perhaps balance can achieve what righteousness could not.

"But be warned: your inheritance is not the control of the human race! A Shepherd does not lead its flock as a butcher drags a tied, blinded bull bound for slaughter. Instead, she follows her herd, pointing to danger, saving the injured, watching the vulnerable, and encouraging the hungry toward lush landscapes. She does not tell, she asks, she does not push, she follows, she does not force, she allows. The Shepherd does not work alone, but uses trusted companions to assist her. The Shepherd becomes part of the landscape itself, the weather, the seasons, not resisting them, but embracing them. The Shepard even learns to love her nemesis, the wolf, who destroys the weak, maintains equilibrium, and compels the survivors to empower themselves.

"All you must do my sons, is set Man on a path—he will be the one who must walk it. From henceforth, all your actions shall shape the future of this world. Your struggles will become the foundation for humanity, the blueprint for society. Everything shall matter. Who you call allies and who you ignore. Who you call enemies and who you dismiss. Your embrace or denouncement of the divine. Your battles over right and wrong, what is necessary and what is good, how one should act and how one must act. These are the battle grounds of this heroic conflict. And in the end, it will be your capacity to engender possibility that will decide Man's fate."

Lord Keith turns to face us, and looking with eyes now replaced by searing green light, speaks again.

“I stand before you as half of what was once whole, a ghost who fled from capture, hiding inside this haggard body, her flesh and blood stolen by her greatest enemies, its mundane disguise no protection from the piercing gaze of her enemies. You have held my body in your hands, even seen its blinding goodness in the discerning stare only a God’s blood can provide. Yet you failed to see me and in this way I fell out of all knowledge since the Sentinel’s departure many years ago. But the Six have discovered my body and you and your shadow now share the fate of the future. Balance is restored.

“Oh yes, the Shepherd has enemies. All things desire balance above all, and mankind is no exception. There are those who believe in the Will to Power, who would remake the world in their own image regardless of the price. There are those who would sacrifice anything for greatness. To these people, Tyranny, War, and even the state of nature (life without society) can be the ultimate form of society, allowing the powerful to rise to unbelievable heights upon the backs of lesser men. The enemies of the Shepard threaten to unravel the existence of society itself.

“You have met the servants of the Wolf before.”

The figures which stood before us begin to fade as other shadows step forth from the void.

Five men and one woman, all shrouded in cloaks but with hands extended into the light, upon their hands an insignia which reads “6”.

Lord Keith points to them and says, “Duval and his Rogue Group 6, the Daughters of the Wolf. They now share your path.”

One man stands before us with no facial features, yet with eyes and a mouth painted on his blank face. Dressed in black and blue silk wrappings, almost like a mummy. Behind him stand shadows of familiar people from our past, like Joe, a former ship captain, a woman dressed as a servant with her head smashed in.

Lord Keith continues, “Shanshek, Voice of Destiny, Speaker for the Dead, High Judge of the Trial by Fire, Daughter of the Great Mother. Shanshek, seeks revenge against the gods for their deceit against the Great Mother of

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Creation and, more, hopes to free Man from the forces of the Divinity, regardless of the cost. He always acts through the hands of others, manipulating the weak, the hopeless, the proud, or the self-righteous.”

An older man dressed in plate mail ornamented with the Toshido insignia holding a spear, a crown, and a staff.

Lord Keith sighs and says, “Lord Vanya, Baron of the Family Toshido, Heir to the land of Kaldor. Above all, Lord Vanya wishes to supplant the Sentinel and claim rulership over all of Thay through political and martial means. He is the Tyrant of this dark age, and forever Walks the path of Steel.”

A hulking brute of a man, nearly seven feet tall, stands with his back towards us. He is dressed in an extremely fine business suit yet holds a modest wooden pendant in his hand shaped in the form of a mule.

“John Adder, The Mule. Vengeful, ruthless, and utterly without scruple, The Mule is the ultimate lord of the underworld. Seemingly invulnerable to physical threats, he has recently been subverted politically and seeks his revenge upon his former colleagues. Nevertheless, do not believe he serves anyone but himself.”

An enormous winged demon, wreathed in flame, breathes heavily in the darkness. Upon his enormous spear, several impaled men scream for a merciful death, kept alive by untold sinister magicks.

“Mor, the Banished One. The former Supreme General of the evil armies of the Abyss. Overthrown by his greatest protégé (ed note: this is likely Person), he now seeks a new apprentice, one who can deliver him a throne of mortal kind. Though evil beyond description, Mor’s cruelty is tempered by fierce ambition and limitless patience, making him truly an enemy to be feared.

“If you are the truth, they are deceit itself. If you are the candlelight, then they are the darkness which surrounds it. If you are the sun, they are the blackened sky. They too have sensed the end of an era and have sent their own servants to guide humanity along their path. You, and those you mobilize against them, are all that stands in their way.

“Sit and listen, my children. Your path—Man’s path—is inexorably tied to the Sentinel’s quest. Only the true Sentinel can reunite the body and spirit of the Shepherd’s Journal, and use its power to herald a new dawn for mankind.

The Daughters of the Wolf are already moving, their potency is growing, and even now, they have the advantage. The time will soon come when the lawful shall become outlaws, when heroes will be prisoners, when Shepherds will be trodden down by the hooves of their sheep. However, you are not powerless, and if you stay the course, you may yet find hope on your side.

“All that remains is to speak plainly of the great quest which lies before you. You have been patient, and now all shall be revealed.”

Clarifications to the above text

Lady Chavell’s crypt in the cemetery is where we found Lord Keith. She was the last blood relative of the shepherd. It’s not clear as to why there were people hanging around in her crypt—that’s a bit weird.

Lord Keith is not really talking—it’s the Shepherd’s spirit talking through him.

Lord Keith’s journal is the other half of the Shepherd. The journal is made of the Shepherd’s blood and flesh.

The journal is under the hill... Oh wait, maybe it’s not.

5.6 A Shepherd’s Journal? But we’ve already got one...

Session: 7/17/2005

Summary

We talk with The Shephard through Lord Keith and then Lord Keith goes back to his regular self. Oni and Porsche chat with Thorin and we agree to help him if he helps us by chilling out. Oni also discovers the council is besieged by EVIL! Person takes a Vow of Poverty. We go to the ceremony and Rogue Group 6 shows up—they’ve done the Quest for the Sentinel and have the Shephard’s Journal! We’re all like, “WTF!!!”

Details

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The spirit of the Shepherd tells us all this crazy stuff about the Quest for the Sentinel, the Shepherd's Journal, and the evil cast of characters that we'll have to deal with.

So we're hanging out with Lord Keith and the Shepherd discussing the quest.

The Shepherd's Journal must be in the hands of the Sentinel. Then to complete the quest:

1. Find former leaders of Island of Benath. The royal family that fled before the plague.
2. Find the Queen of Light and her mate, the Star King. No clue where they are, but the Sentinel heard that they had come here prior to his death. The Island's fury would rage.... The Queen of Light is probably in the desert to the west. The Star King is probably in the Country of Thay.
3. Search the archive for letters between the Country of Thay and the Island of Benath.

Lord Keith falls unconscious at this point. Zurfal heals him and gets his body into a stable state. We bring him to our make-shift hospital room in the manor.

It's late... So Person heads off to sleep, Zurfal studies, and Elmor goes bar-hopping.

While bar-hopping, Elmor bumps into a Team Dragon homage band. He lets them finish their set and then he performs. He blows their minds. First he does a rousing story about Person: the man, the myth, the ass-kicking legend of the Country of Thay. After that, he does a fully-multi-media audio-visual fest of Elmor's conquests in love. The bar eats it up like lead paint—everyone loves it!

Oni and Porsche head off to chat with Thorin. They break the bar on his door using “knock” and then sneak into his house. The servants hear the loud noise and there's some commotion as the guards are called in, the place searched for rogues, and the guards, after finding nothing (Oni and Porsche are invisible) leave. Oni and Porsche continue to stand very quietly until the commotion dies down and everyone goes back to sleep. Oni follows an old man up the stairs.

Oni walks in on Thorin sneaking a midnight snack. They talk for a bit. Thorin tells Oni that the council maintains control using organized crime—everything the council told us about Thorin is an outright lie. Oni and Thorin strike a deal: he'll agree to sign a document which we'll present to the council and we'll agree to help him out and aid him.

The night passes.

In the morning, Zurfal protects the house with a spell (I forget what the spell was). Anyone who tries to enter the house but does not utter the passphrase, "The Shepherd will return." will get some serious ass-kicking. There's some discussion about various ways we ourselves can work around the passphrase-requirement but the discussion doesn't get very far.

Elmor heads off to hunt for evidence to verify Thorin's story and it looks very much like Thorin's story is true.

Samantha, who seems to have turned over a new leaf in her life, asks Person for some additional healing materials for taking care of Lord Keith and the servant who was poisoned. Person borrows some money, heads off to buy some healing things, buys them, leaves the change for the explicit purposes of helping others who are in need but may not be able to pay for services, and brings them back.

Person is still very troubled by the actions of his very-recent past. He decides that he, too, shall turn over a new leaf in his life. He sells his armor and donates all the money to helping the poor and destitute. This Vow of Poverty leaves Person's soul less tarnished and gives him strength.

Elmor, Oni, and Zurfal are reviewing the evidence that Thorin has assembled against the council. The council has done many evil deeds and consists of many men of low moral quality. There are records of smuggling, organized crime pay-offs, and a variety of other bad things. Of note, Alan and Alan (the trading company of Person's brothers) is mentioned many times in Thorin's records. Also, The Staff is involved and he takes strange trips and disappears often.

Thorin wants to nuke the council now. We're not really psyched about that since we think nuking the council now will destabilize the government and make it difficult for us to set off to do the Quest for the Sentinel. So while it's clear that the council is not a good one, we're concerned that the alternatives

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aren't any better. Thorin seems great for revolt, but he doesn't exactly have a plan for post-government-toppling. So we agree to take out one of the more extremely evil council members. Perhaps this will serve as a notice to the others to tone it down and give us time to do the quest, get back, and re-do the government.

Antiuwa is super evil and it's likely he's the head of the skulls. The skulls are one of the major organized crime families. Because of that, we decide to eliminate him.

Person additionally vows to end the Alan and Alan company using whatever means necessary.

We head off for the ceremony in our honor. Person is in his new outfit-peasant clothes. Elmor and Porsche use up their 0-level spells and mend his peasant clothes so they're more presentable.

We head off for the ceremony in our honor. We leave our cohorts and four million followers in the crowd in a place they will be protected. Oni shakes the hand of Baron Duel (Antiuwa) and he's totally very evil. The Staff, curiously, has no alignment reading (or any other reading for that matter) at all. We're not really sure what this means.

We're crowned Champions of the Tower. We're additionally given the nod to undertake the Quest for the Sentinel. There is much rejoicing and The Staff goes around to congratulate us all. When he gets to shaking Person's hand, Person goes for the hug and notices that while The Staff is solid—he's definitely not human.

A bell which signifies that the Sentinel is coming or going starts ringing.

The Staff mutters about how this is highly irregular and rounds up a contingent of troops to head down to the bell tower and investigate. We go with him.

It's Duval and Rogue Group 6! Not only have they replenished their ranks with new dudes to replace the dudes we totally killed, but they've also completed the quest, hold the Shepherd's Journal, secured a truce with the Toshido, and are prepared to take the throne. Team Dragon utters a collective, "WTF!"

The Staff handles all this news very poorly and starts acting like a broken

record.

We follow Rogue Group 6 back to the stage. They charismatically get the crowd going with their accomplishments and their promises for the future! It's clear they are going to take over the government and that we've lost the crowd. They have won this day indeed!

We decide to retire to our manor. On the way there, Elmor turns out to be the world's expert on the Shepherd's Journal and chooses this moment to tell us all about it. The Journal is required to retrieve the artifacts of The Staff, The Spear, and The Crown which are locked away in a vault.

We're really confused, but decide a showdown at this point is probably not a good idea. We arrive at the manor and discover The Mule is waiting at our door.

The Mule tells us that we're walking into a trap and that when we go to meet the heads of the families to instate Oni as the whatever, they will try to kill us all. He offers to help us out, but he asks that we kill the heads of all the families and thus exact his revenge on them all.

Person is absolutely against being the pawn of one evil man even if this man wants us to kill other evil men. Elmor, however, thinks it's a great idea and goes out of his way to sweet-talk Person into thinking this is a great idea and going with it. Person decides that maybe it is a good idea since these evil men need to be brought to righteousness anyhow. But he has an uneasy feeling that he can't shake.

The Mule tells us more about the meeting tonight. We'll all be in a room underground. Our weapons will be confiscated before we can enter the room. Each family will bring with them some security personel—perhaps 3 or 4 guards for each family some of which will be hidden. Additionally, there will be another 6 guards.

The Mule will see to it that the exits are locked and that there is a man on the inside who will give us weapons. The Mule then leaves.

Team Dragon quarrels for a while about whether going along with The Mule's plan is a good idea or not.

Then a package arrives at our door identical to the package that was poisoned a while back. This time, however, it's not poisoned. It requests our presence

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at the council the next day at first light and it's signed by The Sentinel.

Team Dragon discusses the bejesus out of everything.

And then...?

Will Rogue Group 6 succeed in taking over the government? Are things so bad that Team Dragon has to flee town?

5.7 A trap for thieves

Session: 08/19/2005

Summary

We meet with the head of the Jihadir, who turns out to be an old friend. We spring the trap of the meeting with the head of the thieves guilds, and it turns out the trap is not for us. Well, not exactly for us.

Details

The groups plots and discusses possible strategies for exposing Duval as the fraud he is. We do some learning about the Sentinelship:

- The new Sentinel must be vetted by the Council (a foregone conclusion with this Council).
- There is a crowning ceremony for the Sentinel. The new crown, staff and spear are named at this ceremony. The artifacts for this ritual are kept in a vault protected by the Eye of the Sentinel. The eye will only open for one who has truly completed the Sentinel's quest.

Could the group possibly force the Duval to go through this ritual, or will he sidestep it and declare marshal law?

The group decides it needs to seek political allies in the pursuit of unseating Duval. Our most powerful potential ally is the head of the Jihadir, so we decide to meet them.

The head of the Jihadir was formerly Grand Admiral Relas Hammer, but is now our old friend Grand Admiral Amui-Shar!

Amui-Shar gives us many interesting details about the happenings in Tashal in the past years. ... details to follow.

[Intro to thieves guild romper room.]

Oni disguises himself as The Mule's sister, and succeeded in convincing the heads of the thief guilds, Antiuwa of the Swans, Osbourne of the Skulls, and Geld of the Roses. Oni ends up being named the ambassador of the underground to the government; the successor to The Mule.

They learn of The Mule's Bracelet of Nine Stones, which explains his physical invulnerability. They learn that Antiuwa is cozy with Duval. The others are afraid of him and fear what his Sentinelship would do to the underworld. There was discussion of a blood war, though Geld was opposed to it.

An alarm went off, and they hurried to the exit, which was barred. The Mule shows up and closes the trap with a SWAT team of Sentinel guards. Chaos and slaying ensued, but the group, unarmed and with magic suppressed by an anti-magic field, somehow manage to escape and bring the thieves with them.

Figuring the meeting might be a trap set by Rogue Group 6, seeing as we know The Mule has worked for them in the past.

FIXME - missing stuff here

5.8 Demons and politicians—how can we tell the difference?

Session: 10/08/2005

Summary

We have breakfast, meet with Duval, have breakfast again, discover some really disturbing things, meet with The Staff who turns out to be a robot, have a third breakfast, discover some more disturbing things, and then agree to head up a mission for Duval.

Details

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Organized crime recap. The head of the Skulls is Antiwua. He's also a council member.

The head of The Swans family is Osbourne.

The head of The Rose family is Geld.

We suspect Antiwua died in the brawl with The Mule and the crime families, but there is no explicit evidence as such.

We talk about what to do and whether to meet with Duval at his invitation. Person is annoyed at the thought of fighting with legalese and threatens to stop evil tonight! Oni and Zurfal continue to talk about using legal methods to get Duval out of office.

Person then mentions that he's going to go burn down the warehouse of Alan and Alan right now! Zurfal severely chastises Person and tells him to chill out. Person feels defeated and frustrated and heads back to the barn to sulk and meditate.

After Person leaves, Oni and Zurfal both sense something weird. Zurfal somehow manages to pick up a faint scent of perfume and follow the trail of perfume to a wall in the mansion. At that point the trail ends. Someone or something has been through the mansion. It appears that our spell forbiddance isn't as protective and full-proof as we thought.

We awake in the morning. Zurfal and Oni go off to do various things. Person eats a crust of bread from the breakfast table and then brings the remnants of breakfast out to feed starving children. He passes Samantha who is returning back to the mansion from buying more healing components for the servant that is still ill and Lord Keith.

Person has a clearer mind today, but is concerned that his emotions and frustrations got the better of him yesterday in his conversation with Oni and Zurfal. There is some evil in the air... something which is affecting Person.

Later that morning, Person, Samantha, Natasha, and Genshin meet Zurfal and Oni outside of the tower to meet with Duval.

This is where it gets a little confusing. Oni is dressed as Atol, one of the council members. Porsche is polymorphed as Oni because it would be suspicious if Oni wasn't there. Got it?

We talk with someone and get a breakdown of which council members are on our side in regards to Duval and Rogue Group 6 taking over the government. It doesn't look good.

We walk into the council meeting. Duval is there talking with some other guy and various council members are milling about. Duval's meeting ends abruptly—but we get the sense that Duval is having to deal with all the trials and tribulations of a real government and that he seems to be going along with it. It's very puzzling. We're not really sure what's going on.

The council assembles a breakfast buffet in our favor with orange juice. Duval is drinking what is obviously blood and he chooses not to partake in the breakfast. Naturally we're all wary about the food and after hemming and hawing about whether it's poisoned and whether we're safe, we mention that we've already eaten and abstain from a second breakfast.

Person feels an evil presence he hasn't felt in some time and is very shaken.

A council member stands and talks about how Team Dragon is a plague upon the land as The Mule has discovered and that we're connected to organized crime and we must be arrested. Duval grows angry at this and kicks the guy out of the room forcefully. We learn two things here:

1. we were totally set up by The Mule who is now in league with Duval to kill the heads of the organized crime families—we're set up to take the blame
2. Duval is totally in control of this council
3. Duval is centralizing power amongst his underlings and newfound allies
4. The Mule is part of the government and his first order of business is cracking down on crime

Ok, that's four things, but the last one is really funky.

Duval has summoned us because he "holds us in high esteem" and believes we're "the only ones who can help". While Duval has secured a treaty with Lord Vanya of the Toshido, it's likely that Lord Vanya will break the treaty at the end of the winter and continue his march north. It turns out the military isn't really in a position to stop such an advance and it will be some time

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until it is re-organized. Duval wants us for a mission: to go south and stop Lord Vanya's advance in advance of the advance.

Team Dragon does a collective, "huh?" Person decides he needs some orange juice and while getting his orange juice he does a detect evil on the sly. Duval is soooo evil, it would boggle your mind. Person learns some other things as well and his intuition tells him that Duval is in league with an old friend of Person's.

Zurfal states that Duval should go through the ceremony and thus crown a new Crown and Spear. Atol (Oni in disguise) seconds that suggestion and gives a long-winded but very well-worded speech on the virtues of having a government that's inline with the laws and rituals. Another council member retorts that we're in a state of war and such trivialities while nice cannot be afforded. Hashash (one of our allies) stands up and between drunken belches agrees with Atol (Oni in disguise). No one listens to him at all, though, and the few who do don't take him seriously.

Elmor, seeing the social situation in a way that only Elmor can see, stands up and gives a stirring allocution worthy of great applause and laudation. Then, much to our surprise, Duval agrees to do the ceremony.

Team Dragon does another collective, "huh?"

Person is suddenly gravely concerned at the state of things. He asks Duval to meet with him in private. After some exchange, Duval agrees to meet with Person in one hour. The rest of Team Dragon isn't really cool with this, but Person is adamant—he must answer some burning questions.

We don't agree to do the mission—instead we balk for some time and agree that we will come back before the morrow with our answer.

Then another curious thing happens. The Staff (who we all know is a puppet) asks us to yet another breakfast ⁸ in 20 minutes. This is so peculiar that we agree. Zurfal mentions how this is no man, but a robot. This is very peculiar indeed (not to mention how Zurfal might divine such a thing). The Staff gives us an address to meet him.

Atol (Oni in disguise) heads back to his (Atol's) house to do whatever he does there.

⁸ Our third breakfast this morning.

The rest of us head off to our third breakfast with The Staff. We arrive at the suggested meeting location and discover an abandoned house. We're very suspicious and we're expecting a trap.

We knock on the door and wait a bit. Seems like no one is home. Oh, wait, The Staff was in the closet. The Staff comes out of the closet and his human form melts away to reveal a robot with a sword in each leg⁹. He motions for us to stand still and he waits a few moments. Then he pulls a sword from his leg, hurls it across the room, and kills the invisible swordsman!

But seriously, it's an invisible man with a ring of invisibility! The Staff tosses the dead body in the fire (with the ring on). Then The Staff pulls the mirror off the mantle and puts it on the table. A shadowy figure emerges from the mirror. It's The Crown! w00t!

The Crown is a little pissed about Duval and company. We discover that we've been tailed by invisible people all this time.

The Crown then starts answering our questions and gives us an explanation of the big picture. The Crown had the Star King captured and brought to the city to aid us in the Quest for the Sentinel. Unfortunately, Duval grabbed him and his stuff and sent the Star King to the gulag. While Duval hasn't actually completed the quest yet, he has enough of the markings to indicate that he has. That's how he has been able to seize control of the government and it's unlikely that he'll be unseated any time soon.

The quest can only be completed by bringing the Star King and the Queen of Light to the island. The Crown has helped by pulling everything together, so we should be able to finish the quest which was previously almost impossible to do.

The Star King floats with the lost souls of the Gulag of Nye. We must go there to fetch the Star King. There are two ways to enter the Gulag of Nye. The first is to find the Gulag and attempt to enter it from the outside. The second is to get arrested and sent there as prisoners. The Crown mentions that he can arrange this for us and that we should speak to Galimar. He is the representative of the Gulag in the city.

After we rescue the Star King, we need to bring him to Tashal and find The Crown (the Star King knows how to find The Crown). Before we leave we

⁹ Kind of like Robocop, but different.

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must find and secure the Journal... Duval probably hid it in the archive. Duval cannot use it and it would point out to the others that he is not the real Sentinel.

To get into the archive we have to follow the Crown of the Dread Emperor. The government has this crown and it's probably in the hands of an underling. We'll have to figure out where to find the underling, get the crown and use it to guide us through the archive.

However, we can't just waltz around down there. We have to hide ourselves because any goodness will be discovered and dealt with immediately. That would be very unsafe—we would surely be killed. There is a way to make us transmute into evil things allowing us safer passage.

Zurfal asks The Crown why the Sentinel made the quest so damned hard. The Crown thinks a moment and says, "The sentinel was a man deceived by fear. He was weaker than he knew."

The Crown then has to leave. We talk to The Staff a bit and he tells us that Garrick (Duval's mage) makes many visits to the archive in order to discover a way into the vault where the crown and spear are.

The Staff returns to the closet. We take the ring of invisibility off of the dead burning guy's finger and leave.

Person heads back to meet with Duval and discovers many interesting things.

We all meet back to the mansion and discuss things. Person reveals that Duval is allied with The Mule, but more importantly also with Mor—the demon that possessed Person not so long ago. This triumvirate of evil is a grave situation indeed. Person was tempted to attack and kill Duval, but then it occurred to him that we must leave things as they are in order to secure the book from the archive safely.

Zurfal casually mentions he's had some dealings with Shanshek before but refuses to elaborate. Then Zurfal concocts some new scheme to force Duval to do the ceremony. It hinges upon the fact that we can't do the mission and be in charge of the military without a Spear being named!

We head back to the council. Zurfal tells Duval that if we took on the mission, we would be taking on the responsibilities of the Spear and that this is illegal given that there is no Spear. Zurfal goes on to state that Duval should

do the ceremony and elect a Spear. This goes over like a lead balloon and we don't really get anywhere with this line of thinking. Person suggests through the oath stone that the mission itself doesn't matter and that we can use it as a facade to hide behind while we go on to do the real quest. Person tells Duval we'll take the mission. We're to meet someone on the morrow to discuss the details. Duval mentions he wants regular reports, but we're thinking the only report he's going to get is about how we're going to punch him in the face when all of this is done.

We head back to the manor. Person has a long talk with Samantha about life and poisoned servants and all that and they feel pretty good about things.

Person also sends a letter to Alan and Alan asking them to cease and desist all illegal activities now while they have a choice to do so. The consequences being that Person will wipe them out.

And then...?

Team Dragon utters a collective, "huh?"

5.9 The archive can't be that bad

Session: 10/14/2005

Summary

We dismiss our servants, meet about the Toshido mission we have little intention of pursuing, visit the library, discover Garrick's hobby, tie up some loose ends, and then head down into the archive dressed as hideous EVIL!

Description

It was a dark and stormy mid-afternoon at 2:30pm in the high 40s and we're sitting around a table discussing the Toshido mission we've just signed onto. Elmor mentions that maybe the Toshido aren't that bad after all and maybe they'd be a welcome presence. We all glare at Elmor.

Then Person brings up an issue that's been at the back of his mind for some-time: the safety of our servants. It's become clear that our forbiddance spell

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is not as protective as we would have liked. One of our servants is still recovering from being poisoned.

Person suggests that in the interests of the servants' health, we should dismiss them. Oni and Elmor don't like this at all as they enjoy the indulgences that luxury has to offer. Oni suggests that it's Person's vow of poverty speaking which was wholly untrue, though Person isn't psyched about the fact that our mansion is the pinnacle of opulence and lavishness and is wholly unnecessary, either.

Zurfal agrees with Person in regards to the servants. We agree to explain the dangers they're in and allow them to leave if they will. Oni attempts to keep them on by increasing their salary. Only the butler Jeeves stays—everyone else leaves faster than you could say, "Team Dragon will protect you from danger!" We find this to be very curious.

We talk a bit more and discover that Elmor has some power over Garrick, though it's not clear how useful it will be.

It also comes to our attention that Zurfal can cast undetectable alignment.

While we're discussing various things, there is a knock on our mansion door. Jeeves answers it. A very dead Darnel is standing there. He's a corpse with rope marks around his neck. He passes right through the forbiddance spell¹⁰ and walks stiffly into our drawing room. He places four flasks on the table and says, "To speak the wisdom which darkness holds, you must become evil." Zurfal asks him where he came from and we find out he's a servant of "Crator" (who is Zurfal). Darnel then attempts to walk out our door and explodes in a sudden puff of rule-bending.

It's time to go find Garrick so we dress up in full ninja gear and head off to the foot of the hill to discover when Garrick does his thing and what his thing is.

We arrive at the foot of the hill and discuss how to get past the two guards. It's raining very heavily and it's very dark. After some deliberation, Zurfal walks up to the guards, tell them we're here to do research in the library and gains us entrance without a fight. Diplomacy is so weird sometimes.

The guard inside the tower leads us down stairs to the library and gives us a

¹⁰ Seems like everyone can pass through the forbiddance spell.

lantern. His name is Janeth and he's pretty new to this job. He says he sometimes hears strange sounds and Garrick wanders down at around 6:15pm every night but they don't ever talk. Janeth leaves us in the library.

Zurfal senses the area and it's tainted with evil. He feels as if it's been a while since evil has passed through. Elmor hears footsteps and Oni (who is invisible) sneaks off to find out whose footsteps they are. They belong to Garrick. He walks through the library in pitch darkness to a wall in the back, presses some stones, and then goes through a hole that opens up in the floor. Once he's down the hole, the hole closes.

Zurfal looks at the wall and sees some interesting things. Garrick is like a beacon of evil—the intensity is pretty great.

We head back to the mansion. It's like 9:00pm, so we go off to bed.

In the morning, Person chats with Samantha and basically tells her a watered down version of what is going on, what they're about to do and that he doesn't think we're going to come back for a while. She's a bit distraught about this.

Zurfal talks with his followers and says similar things to them.

We head off to the meeting regarding the Toshido mission we've taken on. We talk with the captains or generals or whatever they are (doesn't matter) and we talk about the situation. The Toshido are conscripting any living being that can walk and hold a shovel and are bringing their massive army to bear on Burzon. The information is from the Nokama and it's within the last month or so. It's very likely they have no plans on maintaining the peace treaty. They're also leaving a large portion of the southlands undefended.

Lady Vania is being held at Burzon in exchange for allowing some of the Toshido to spend the winter there in shelter.

So there are 35,000 men marching on Burzon and eventually Tashal. We might be able to pull together 10,000 total to defend the area—but that's counting a lot of lucky stars. There are 1500 men in Burzon currently.

We tell the captains or generals or whatever they are (doesn't matter) that it's best that we head down to Burzon and assess the situation on the ground. We tell them to prepare defenses for Tashal, train more men, acquire resources

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for war, and do whatever they can to make Tashal ready for a possible battle in the spring. We also tell them to update Duval.

Person heads home and everyone else goes off to talk with Thorin and persuade him not to rise against the Sentinel. They show up at Thorin's and meet Jane who is his "assisstant". Elmor says she might be a half-dragon. Thorin wants a fight right this nanosecond! After some talk, Elmor and Zurfal convince him that now is not the time and that we're going on the Quest for the Sentinel and that we'll make him the Sentinel when we're done as long as he chills out. He's a bit egotistic, so this appeals to him and he quiets down.

Meanwhile, back at the manor, Person examines the wall that the trail of perfume leads up to and discovers nothing interesting at all.

Everyone heads back to the manor. Zurfal bullstrengths Person. Porsche casts darkvision on everyone except Zurfal. We take the flasks of evil with us and head off to the library.

Just like last night, we talk to the guards and they let us in. We head off to the library and lie in the darkness awaiting Garrick's arrival.

Garrick shows up with Duval. Garrick hasn't found a solution to the eye thing and Duval is pissed. We think Duval spots Zurfal and Person hiding in the darkness. Like a middle movie of a trilogy, Person thinks to himself that he shouldn't have come because he'll give the mission away. Curiously, Duval makes no obvious indication that he's seen us and he leaves upstairs after upbraiding Garrick.

Garrick presses the stones and heads downstairs.

We all drink the flasks. Elmor turns into a snake thing! Person turns into a demon! Oni turns into a medusa! Zurfal turns into an illithid! WE'RE TOTALLY EVIL! HOW DO YOU LIKE US NOW!!!

We head down the hole and follow hot on Garrick's heels. Down some stairs, through a hall, up some stairs, around a corner, and then into a really big room with a honeycomb wall on one side, a precipice on the other, and a portcullis 200 feet from where we're standing. We kind of screw up the details here and Garrick and Oni (who's invisible) make it through the portcullis before the rest of us even enter the room.

We're beset upon by monstrous spiders! Elmor frightens away the one that bites him which was an awesome idea. Person fights with his and with help from Zurfal convinces it to leave us be. Person grabs Elmor and Zurfal (who are paralyzed) and brings them to the portcullis. He tries to muscle it up, but really can't. So we all try to muscle it up and Person sticks the hover sword (Celesteel) underneath it to keep it up so we could slide through. This has a different effect, though—Celesteel sends the portcullis exploding through the ceiling.

This makes quite a bit of noise...

And then...?

Will we catch up with Oni? Will we ever be able to look at ourselves in the mirror again?

5.10 The things you find in some peoples' basements

Session: 10/23/2005

Summary

Beholders, vault doors, skeleton emperors, and then running across the massively massive cavern under the chaos of the bloodwar.

Details

Person, Elmor, and Zurfal muscle up the portcullis that they were trapped behind. Person placed Celesteel under the portcullis to keep it up... Celesteel explodes the portcullis through the ceiling making a bit of a ruckus.

Meanwhile, Oni continues to follow Garrick. They both hear a loud crash behind them, but there are so many crazy things going on down here, that they don't pay any attention to it. In fact, one of the walls of the room they're in crashes down and two massive lions roll through it in the midst of a behemoth struggle!

Meanwhile, Zurfal heals Elmor and Person. We hear what sounds like a series of fireballs and screams. Fearing the worst, we rush off towards the

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sounds continuing to follow the trail of Garrick. As we're rushing down a passage, we hear a voice that says that it is Oni. Due to some catastrophic rolling, we don't believe him. Shenannigans ensue as the disembodied voice attempts to prove it is Oni. We finally believe him. Whew.

We follow Oni down a hall to a point where the massive hallway opens up into an even more massive room filled with stone statues. The floor of the hallway we're in has caved in, so we scuttle down one of the statues to the main floor of the room. Zurfal's IMMINENT DANGER sense kicks off—we know we're in a bit of trouble.

We walk through the stone statue garden which also has a series of mirrors and dark corners to the other end of this massive room where there is a doorway that appears to have some kind of force shield. From the shadows, we hear a whisper, "Who enters my garden?"

"We're TEAM DRAGON! w00t!"

"Mmmm, pretty."

"Woah, pretty!? You must be the abomination that has created all these stone statues! Let us through or we'll... we'll put you in politics!"

"POLITICS!!! GAH! No, I am quite content down here in this darkened stone statue garden of mine... But, I will make you a deal. I will let two of you through, but two of you must remain and become ... part of the local ambiance."

"Well, hrm... we'll consider your offer. Give us a moment as we form a committee to discuss it and produce a referendum which will be passed down to the entire party along with a suggested course of action which we will then vote on."

"GAH! How can you spend so much time deliberating! I am a monster with no patience for such things! DIE!"

To the battle board!

We're attacked by a beholder! We know this because we can see it in the mirrors. However, due to the fact that there are a metric buttload of mirrors in this room, it's wholly unclear as to the exact location of the beholder. We must use cunning to divine the location of this foul beast!

We get all prepared to take on a beholder when Oni (dressed up as a Medusa) does a gaze attack through the mirrors and turns the beholder to stone. So that's the end of that.

Oh, but wait! We spot two more floating our way!

Zurfal examines the force field of the door and decides to go around it. He casts stoneshape and builds a passage through the rock around the force field to the other side. Sweet.

The two beholders attack! Person is hit with some magical spell! Oni becomes visible and falls asleep! Person grabs Oni and we all rush through the tunnel that Zurfal built to the other side of the force field. The beholders advance upon us!

Zurfal whacks Person with Bigby's crushing fist! Person is very surprised, but out of the goodness of his heart, he suspects foul play! He drops Oni to the ground (THUD!).

This wakes Oni up and he tries another gaze attack at one of the beholders... but almost gazes at Elmor! WHOOPS!

Person decides that we must defeat the beholders before we can move along... RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL PREVAIL! Person rushes back down the tunnel and charges a beholder... trips, and goes sprawling. WHOOPS!

Elmor sings... Zurfal is freed from the beholder's charm! Zurfal directs his massive fist at a beholder! BAMF! BIFF! BOFF!

At this point, we discover that Elmor can probably free all these creatures from stone.

One beholder tries to hit Person... miss, miss, HIT! ZZZZZZZZZZZZT! Person's left arm is shrivelled and destroyed! Holy crap!

Person is enraged! He attacks the beholder with his good arm and beats the crap out of it.

Zurfal does a VENGEFUL GAZE! One of the beholders explodes sending guts everywhere!

Person finishes off the beholder he was working on.

The battle ends. Whew.

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Elmor looks around at the various stone statues and they're all of evil creatures. So he decides perhaps its better to leave them as is. Then Elmor looks at the stone fountain in the middle of the room and detects that the waters are very poisonous.

We take a bunch of eye stalks ¹¹:

- 2 charm monster
- 1 anti-magic cone
- 1 fear
- 1 slow
- 1 finger of death (w00t!)
- 1 sleep

Zurfal does some healing on Person and Person's disfigured left arm comes back to some level of usefulness.

We continue down the hallway. It changes from stone to iron working, which is interesting. We continue to follow the crown of evil. At one point we come to a caved in hallway which is a dead end. We mull over this a bit anf decide to double-back and turn down a corridor that we skipped over. This works nicely and we continue down the hallway to a massive doorway. The door appears to have been ripped through the walls... it's pretty intense. Whatever did this was huge.

We walk through the doorway, down a hall, and into a circular room with lots of trash in it, a series of pods along the walls, and a huge vault door which is closed and locked.

We determine that we cannot open the vault door and that it's like four million feet thick. We're certain that Garrick came this way and went through the door. Elmor cleverly mentions he can dimension door... So he does so and brings a bunch of people through it. However, since he can't bring everyone, he cleverly uses Zurfal's true name to summon him. This gets us all to the correct side of the door.

¹¹ As I recall, we take these, but we never end up using them.

There are alcoves and statues. We're on the right path. We follow down the path up a set of very large marble stairs with marble pillars to either side. There are runes which say, "All bow to the emperor of Harn." Everyone except Person bows here. Person bows to no emperor. Person walks up the stairs and everyone else follows him.

There's a massive doorway at the top of the stairs which opens into a massively massive cave. There's a causeway from the door to the gate of a huge castle in the middle of the massively massive cave. To either side of the causeway, there are hordes of skeletons and camp fires and all kinds of crazy stuff. At the gate of the huge castle, there are skeleton guards. The causeway itself is made of stone which has been carved into a surface of skeletons. There are towers on either sides of the gate.

As we reach the causeway, we notice watch-skeletons on top of the towers.

Elmor wanders across the causeway to the gate to speak with the two guards. The skeleton guards ask him what business he has in the castle.

Elmor says, "I have important business."

"What business?"

"Uh... My name is Elmor and I have business with the emperor."

"Oh. Cool." One of the guards enters the gate and the other continues to stand at the gate. When the guard comes back he says, "The emperor will see you now."

We pass through the gates and walk down another massive causeway beneath which are armies of skeletons and other creatures as far as the eye can see in this massive expanse of a cavern. We pass through another set of gates into a massive throneroom. A naked skeleton is sitting on the throne of bones.

This image is very familiar to Person. It was something he used to dream about.

We all bow to the emperor. He asks us about our business. We tell him we are looking for the archive. Person, on a hunch, pipes up and tells the great king that we are servants of Mor. Oops! Turns out the king doesn't like Mor and Mor was cast out of this place. Whoops!

Then, in an attempt to make amends, we tell him we want to become his

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servants. He's way cool with that, but it will cost us our flesh. Whoops—bad idea number 2!

We finally tell him that we're hunting Garrick. He grows weary with us and tells us we're free to talk to the archive, but two of us must join his army and we have to choose which two. We start to elect a committee to discuss this offer and come up with a course of action when the emperor grows impatient and tells us he's going to choose for us.

But that's not how Team Dragon rolls—to the battle board!

We are immediately surrounded by skeleton nobles, a series of skeleton guards, a handful of more powerful skeleton guards, and this emperor guy.

The skeleton warriors move in. Elmor casts summon monster and creates a celestial hippogrif. Zurfal casts turn undead causing two of the more powerful skeleton guards to run! Person gets attacks of opportunity on two of them—he whacks one of them hard and the second swing accidentally hits Oni. Whoops!

Elmor sings to bring us confidence!

The powerful skeleton guards (who turn out to be death knights) attack us! The celestial hippogrif gets hit. A death knight hits Zurfal! Another hits Person!

A flaming gate erupts open in the corner of the room and a flaming something or other leaps out of it and tackles the celestial hippogrif!

Person ignites into righteousness! A second flaming gate erupts open in another corner of the room. Person destroys one death knight and another! Then he turns towards the emperor and charges him!

Elmor stops singing (he's invisible). Zurfal turns undead again sending a bunch of skeletons to their grave!

The flaming something or other kills the celestial hippogrif, returns to its flaming gate, and the gate closes. A pit fiend comes out of the second gate staring intently at Person. Gah! Scary!

Oni shouts to Person to chill with the celestial stuff because it's causing the flaming gates and scary things to come out! Person grunts, but otherwise ignores him.

Zurfal does a searing light and whacks the emperor something fierce. Person changes his mind, turns to face the pit fiend, and charges it. Person closes very quickly and leaps at the pit fiend to grapple with it. The pit fiend shrieks as Person sucks it into his soul cage!

Elmor (invisible) decides to tumble into the emperor and knock him over but mostly he just tumbles over and bounces off. Then the emperor casts prismatic light which kills Elmor very dead and heavily damages the rest of us.

Zurfal casts flame strike on the emperor and the lich emperor dies!

Person grunts, then rushes over, grabs Elmor's remains and we book it down the corridor behind the emperor's throne.

Team Dragon makes it through the battle and beyond!

We sprint down the hallway and into a weird room with a forge and a satyr who is forging armor and weapons for some thing he refers to as "the blood-war". We have no idea what he's talking about, but we're really friendly and he's really friendly and we're all generally really friendly together and then we move on.

We run down another hall and find a small alcover we think is safe enough to rest in for a while. Person is having some digestion issues regarding his soul cage. Zurfal resurrects Elmor. We rest for a few minutes, but then decide it's probably a bad idea to stay here much longer since we'll possibly lose Garrick's trail.

We continue down the hall to a ladder. We climb up the ladder into another hallway with a barricade at one end. On top of the barricade are two scorpion thingies. We tell them we're there to talk with the archive. All they're thinking about is the bloodwar, so we say we're there for the bloodwar, too. Hey, why the hell not? :)

We climb the barricade, past the scorpion things, and into a small room. There are dozens of gates in the room and it's filled with all manner of nasty things. One of the gates opens up into a massively massive cavern where the bloodwar is currently occurring. There are some clockwork something or others, and all kinds of really crazy stuff going on that blows our minds and is completely unrelated to our quest.

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Then something happens and they rip open the gate to the massively massive cavern and rush into the room. There are demons and devils and clockwork horrors and all kinds of crazy stuff.

We decide that we need to get across the massively massive cavern because that's where Garrick went. We're getting a little worried about how we're going to get back home again but whatever—first things first.

Elmor has a great idea and turns Zurfal and himself invisible. They book it across the massively massive cavern floor, get nicked, and make it to the other side. Elmor calls out the true names of Person and Oni and summons us to his side.

Then Person senses the evil of Garrick and the crown very very close.

And then...?

HOLY CRAP! Will Team Dragon make it to see the archive? Will we find out all kinds of cool stuff or is he “out of the office—back in five”? After we've talked with the archive, how are we going to get back to the surface? Will we all suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome?

5.11 Another one bites the dust

Session: 11/06/2005

Summary

We kill Garrick, save the archive's babies, talk with the archive, and get the journal back. w00t!

Details

We started today's session on the other side of the massively massive cavern after running through the bloodwar between demons and devils. We climbed over the barricade and find ourselves in a small room.

The small room has three exits. After thinking about this for a bit, we agree Person should feel for Garrick's presence.

Person feels for Garrick's presence and it's determined that he is very close and something else that's evil is also nearby. We move silently (PERSON ROLLS A 6!) towards the next room. We know the archive and Garrick are in there—we can feel it. We hear Garrick talking to something.

We think for a moment, then head off. Elmor (invisible) and Oni (also invisible) sneak ahead to see what's going on. They see a massive cavern. The walls of the cavern are stone and there are images of books carved into them—which is funky. There's a lake on the other side of the cavern. Garrick is sitting atop a pedestal talking with whatever is in the water. There's a door a little way past the pedestal leading somewhere else.

After listening a bit, we discover that Garrick and Duval are holding the archive's offspring hostage! Garrick talks with the archive a smidgeon, then stands up, picks up a few books from the pedestal, climbs down, and heads off through the other exit to another room.

Zurfal tries to sneak up towards Elmor and Oni, but trips over something making a bit of a commotion. Then we hear some funky strange noises coming from the room that Garrick went into.

Zurfal suddenly gets a super really bad feeling about everything, gets very pale, straightens up with all his Dwarven glory and states in no uncertain terms that we must stop Garrick right now. Zurfal steps out of the shadows towards the other room. That's when the archive notices us.

“WHO ARE YOU?”

“Hi! We're Team Dragon and we're here to chat with you about some things.”

“YOU MUST DIE!”

“Yeah, ok... so we hate Garrick and we overheard you and Garrick talking and it's clear you hate Garrick, too. How about we promise to free your children from Garrick and in turn you, uh, don't be so mean to us.”

“OH, OK. FREE MY CHILDREN!”

With this piecrust promise set, we wander closer to the room that Garrick stepped into. Zurfal uses his illythid telepathetic skills and feels the room. Inside, he feels Garrick and a series of mental voids.

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Then Oni peeks into the room. The room is a large laboratory of sorts. There are all kinds of evil machinations, a skinless dude hooked up through needles to some kind of liquid purifier, tables, sconces, jacob's ladder stuff, and a series of zombies doing various bits of work. Garrick is on one side of the room scribing on little pieces of paper and he's definitely not writing a children's book!

Zurfal announces that the not-quite-dead skinless guy was the head of the church of St. Cuthbert and that the blue liquid is the blood of St. Cuthbert. We're all like, "Woah! The blood of St. Cuthbert? That's screwed up."

We chat for a bit and come up with a fantabulous plan of action. It's hard for us—Team Dragon isn't so hot with planning.

We form a circle around an empty spot on the floor. Elmor shouts Garrick's true name thus summoning him into the little circle we've created. Zurfal creates a stone wall around us and closing off the entrance to the lab protecting us from anyone else who might come to aid Garrick. Garrick pops into the middle of our little circle! Elmor stabs Garrick causing Garrick to double over. Person goes to hack Garrick in the head, rolls a 1, and stabs Zurfal who yelps in unamusement. Person goes to hack Garrick again and wails on him with righteous might! Elmor tries to stab Garrick again, but misses and also stabs Zurfal who yelps in unamusement a second time. Person does a Conan-style sword maneuver and then plunges the sword deep into Garrick.

Garrick, who is not doing well, pulls a blue potion from his pocket and as he's bringing it towards his mouth to drink, Zurfal sees it and jumps on Garrick's arm, shattering the arm and the blue potion which explodes sending us all forcefully into the wall that Zurfal created.

Garrick is dead, baby. His bones are turned to dust. In the dust, we find:

- a bracelet (totally evil)
- a pouch of gems (totally disgustingly unbearably evil)
- a rod which we affectionately call, "Garrick's rod"

Elmor grabs the rod ¹² and his form changes. Now Elmor is wearing the most expensive furs of the finest animals in the kingdom. We assume he's

¹² Heheh, he said rod.

holding a rod of adornment. Elmor puts the rod in his pocket ¹³ and the furs fade away.

The archive uses its telepathetic powers and talks into our minds. “GAR-RICK IS DEAD—WHERE ARE MY BABIES!” Zurfal tells her to chill out—we’re working on it.

Zurfal uses stone shape to open a hole in the wall he created allowing us entrance into the laboratory where there are a bunch of zombies who have just guzzled some blueish potion.

We also hear chanting.

Two of the zombie things come out through the hole and as soon as we kill one, it explodes doing all kinds of nasty damage and kills the other zombie which also explodes. Zurfal summons some creatures to help, Person decides to go into the room alone and deal out some righteousness, Oni and Elmor hang back and are caught up in a cloudkill area effect spell, Zurfal does some damage and some healing and some undead turning, Person clotheslines the two spell-casting skeletons in the back of the room and then sends them to their graves... or wherever it is that skeletons go.

Then we’re all in the room and everything that was dead is really dead except for three zombies in the corner.

Person thinks to himself, “I bet I could throw this table and squash those dudes in the corner.”

The DM says, “Oh yeah? Try it!” Person (at a penalty of like 12) picks up the table, hurls it towards the corner with the might of a thousand stone giants, squashing and killing the zombies and causing them to explode. After the ensuing peals of explosive noises end, Person flexes a bit. “Yeah, I did that.”

Zurfal takes care of the skinless dude, removing needles, shutting down the machine that the dude was hooked up to, and tries really hard to send the dead guy to a nicer place. Zurfal also points out that a lot of the machinery and stuff going on down here is likely necromancy. Garrick probably helped Duval into his current undead state and was likely researching how to turn himself into a Lich.

¹³ Heheh, he put the rod in his pocket.

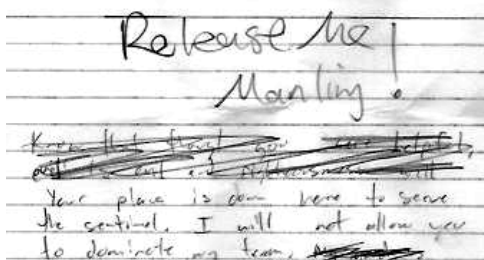
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Oni searches the place and finds a list of unspecified interesting things.

Elmor and Person search the two closed doors off of this room. One is a disgusting meat locker. The other is a hall that leads down to a room where the two aboleth babies are. We open the gates allowing them to return to their mum.

Elmor picks up a jar of aboleth blood and hides it.

We all leave the lab and chat with the archive. The archive attempts to dominate us, but Person's will is so strong that he dominates the archive instead! Person flexes a bit, "Yeah, I did that, too."



Zurfal and the archive have a really exciting conversation about some prophecy that Zurfal has told us about several times which we haven't really paid much attention to.

The archive also gives us back the journal. w00t!

Then the archive opens up a door that leads upstairs—hopefully so that we don't have to go back through all that stuff we went through to get here.

And then...?

Holy crap! Team Dragon might emerge victorious from hanging out in evil land, killing beholders, killing an emperor, running through a blood-war, killing Garrick, saving babies, and talking with the archive! What will Team Dragon accomplish tomorrow?

The Great Escape

Like I told my last wife, I says, "Honey, I never drive faster than I can see. Besides that, it's all in the reflexes."

Jack Burton, Big Trouble in Little China

6.1 Synopsis

09/17/2006 through 06/10/2007. Into and out of the Gulag of Nye.



6.2 Summaries of where we are now

6.2.1 Introduction

Here's a summary of where things are at so far. I sent these via email after a longish gap in playing so as to refresh our memories about what we were working on and who was involved.

Just to make sure the emails weren't terribly boring and I added a farcical item figuring it'd be fun to play the "where's the farcical item?" game.

6.2.2 Summary 1: People

This section is about people.

Team dragon consists of:

- **Zurfal** - cleric
- **Elmor** - bard
- **Oni** - ? ¹
- **Person** - fighter

Secondary characters:

- **Natasha** - Elmor's "special friend"
- **Porsche** - Oni's hot single sister
- **Genshin** - honky-tonk kung-fu monk; disciple of Zurfal
- **Samantha** - thief who tried to kill Oni; now Person's friend
- **Lord Keith** - I think he's still with us
- **The Crown** - who casually dumped the fate of the entire planet on our humble shoulders ²

¹ We still don't know what Oni's class is.

² Probably regrets this.

- **Joe's spirit** - who occasionally comes to Zurfal in times of plot-thickening
- **Jeeves** - our butler at the mansion
- some other servants at the mansion who stayed

Bad guys:

- **Duval and Rogue Group 6** - our nemeses
- **Lord and Lady Vanya** - leaders of the Toshido
- **The Mule** - sly dude who was with and now against organized crime
- **Mor** - demon lord who was cast out; once part of Person
- **Shanshek** - ?
- **William Shatner** - master of the roundhouse

6.2.3 Summary 2: The Staff, The Crown, the Quest

Ok. So The Staff is part of Duval's entourage in the government, but he's really weird. We figure out pretty quick that he's a puppet of some kind in the literal Jim Henson sense ³.

The Staff invites us to breakfast (our third that day) where he turns into a robot and The Crown comes out of a mirror and is all like, "OM-GROFLBBQ!!! You dudez have to finish the quest!" to which we respond, "What the fuck you talkin' about, Willis?"

Seriously. The quest goes like this:

- we have to get the Journal
- Duval probably hid the Journal in the archives because the journal can prove he didn't really do the quest and no one visits the archives voluntarily
- we have to follow the Crown of the Dread Emperor to get into the archives

³ I like to think he looks like Gonzo.

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- oh, right, and we have to be really really evil, too

We've done all that, killed Garrick, almost died, and saved the Aboleth's babies.

- then we have to find the Star King
- the Star King is in the Gulag of Nye (no relevance to Harry Potter)
- we could try to gain entrance to the Gulag of Nye by finding it and getting in, or
- we could get arrested and sent there as prisoners
- The Crown solemnly mentions he can arrange that for us and we should speak to George Clooney who is the representative of Gulag in the city
- if George Clooney isn't around, we should talk to Galimar

Oh—and while finding all this out, we picked up a ring of invisibility from the invisible swordsman who was following us around, but is now dead.

6.2.4 Summary 3: Duval

Yeah, so Duval showed up a few days ago with his Rogue Group 6 and declared he finished the Quest for the Sentinel.

That surprised us a bit.

So now Duval is now the Sentinel. Also, Duval is in league with Mor, the demon that possessed Person a while back when Person was not so interested in vegetables. By “in league” I mean that Duval has been possessed by Mor. It's not clear how much Mor and how much Duval is there; not that it matters. Duval is also vampiric and likes his Bloody Marys.

Duval has also tapped The Mule for Secretary of Homeland Security. The Mule spent some time wiping out organized crime in the area.

Duval also made a peace treaty with Lord Vanya of the Toshido which stopped the Toshido advance. Then Duval stood on a beached rowboat and declared, “Mission Accomplished!”

Duval is really nice, though, and gave us a job. We're supposed to go down to the border with the Toshido, go on a date with Lindsay Lohan, and ask her to help us figure out how to wipe the Toshido out because they're inevitably going to attack after winter.

6.2.5 Summary 4: Politics

This summary is about the political situation which Person emphatically hates. Because of that, I haven't kept track of it as much as I should have. If there are any errors, let me know.

Duval is now the High Sentinel and has brought into his government: Rogue Group 6 (or 3), The Mule, and Mor. He's gotten The Mule to take a big bite out of organized crime.

Organized crime used to run this city, but The Mule did a SWAT team thing and wiped out a large number of important crime family members. The rest of the family members are probably licking their wounds and trying to reorganize or something. Reorganized crime is definitely not as powerful as they used to be.

Clearly the government went from a bunch of lecherous fat cats who were as corrupt as could be into something worse. Thorin hated the original government and really hates this one. He's all for raising a rabble and taking this one out with a rebellion! But we talked him down telling him that if he does that, he's going to screw up our plans. So he grumbled and backed down... for now. Also of interest, Thorin has an assistant named "Jane" who Elmor thinks might be a half-dragon.

The Toshido have made a truce with Tashal not to attack, but Duval and his military folks are pretty convinced that it won't last past the winter and that the Toshido are martialing their forces in the meantime to prepare for a big assault. Brad Pitt and Lady Vania are being held at Burzon in exchange for allowing some of the Toshido to spend the winter there.

The Staff is a robot. The Crown has a vested interest in making sure the quest is fulfilled (for real this time) and is helping us do so.

We have no idea where Duval is going with all of this, but he's making a concerted effort to actually run the city/country.

6.2.6 Summary 5: Stuff we've got

This probably isn't a comprehensive list because Person no longer carries anything except the clothes on his back and a big sword. But, I'll do the best I can from the summaries.

- Bunch of stuff that we've had for a while.
- Evil tentacle cloak - I think we still have this.
- Orb - We have an orb that we use for scrying.
- Mansion - We have a big mansion that we got from the investors. Jeeves is our butler. We have a very small staff, but that's it.
- Rogue Group 6 rocks - We have three (actually two) rocks that we picked up off of Rogue Group 6 members and one old man.
- Eye stalks - 2 charm monster, 1 anti-magic cone, 1 fear, 1 slow, 1 finger of death, and 1 sleep. I don't recall if we've used any of them yet.
- Pit fiend - Person has a pit fiend in his soul cage.
- Garrick's bracelet - Totally evil.
- Garrick's pouch of gems - Totally evil.
- Garrick's rod - Elmor has this—we think it's a Rod of Adornment.
- Chuck Norris' beard - I think Elmor is wearing this at present. It's +15 to ass-kicking and +10 to all checks that result in ladies swooning.
- (Oni found an unspecified list of interesting things in the laboratory.)
- Jar of aboleth blood - Elmor is holding this. Ew.
- The Journal - We got this from the Aboleth just as we left off.
- Ring of invisibility - Got this off the invisible swordsman that was following us around.

6.2.7 Summary 6: What just happened and what's next

This is a bit long if only because it summarizes where things are at right now.

We're walking up the stairs that will lead us to somewhere—probably either the surface or the library where we left or some place like that. The following has just happened:

- we killed Garrick in a very permanent fashion and prevented him from drinking whatever which probably would have turned him into a lich
- we either saved or killed the skinless man who Zurfal said was St. Cuthbert in the laboratory
- we killed everything else in the laboratory
- we saved the archive's babies
- we chatted with the archive and learned some stuff
- we have the Journal

The Shepherd told us to:

- find former leaders of Island of Benath. The royal family that fled before the plague.
- find the Queen of Light and her mate, the Star King. No clue where they are, but the Sentinel heard that they had come here prior to his death. The Island's fury would rage.... The Queen of Light is probably in the desert to the west. The Star King is probably in the Country of Thay.
- search the archive for letters between the Country of Thay and the Island of Benath.

The Crown told us to:

- find the Journal (done)
- get ourselves into the Gulag of Nye to find the Star King
- we bring the Star King back to Tashal—he knows how to find The Crown

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- we'll get more instructions at that point

Duval told us to:

- head up the military operation in Burzon against the Toshido
- check in regularly

Thorin wants to:

- revolt (maybe this is a good idea now?)

Personally, I think now that we've totally killed Garrick in a permanent manner and taken the journal, the jig is up so continuing with Duval's mission is silly. But it also means that it's likely the Mansion is no longer safe for all our dudes.

Lord Keith who is drooling once again is in the Mansion—we should probably move him to a safe place or somehow bring him with us.

Also, The Shepherd told us to get letters from the archive. If the aboleth really is the archive, then do we get the letters from it before we go?

Also also, The Crown showed us that we're being stalked by invisible people and that we're constantly under surveillance.

Also also also, the aboleth totally taught us the Macarena. It was the awesome.

I think that sums it up. There's a lot more going on—reading through the last few summaries might bring more material to light. Also, I definitely don't have context for other character-driven missions since I don't have notes for those and there's nothing in the wiki.

6.3 Entering the matrix

Session: 09/17/2006

Summary

We escape from the vile dungeons unscathed, Oni surprises us, Elmor surprises us, we talk to a dragon, and we decide to go to the Gulag of Nye where

Team Dragon is cut into small bits, stuffed into tuna cans, and frozen. Never fear—Team Henchwomen will save them!

Details

First, we figured out where we were with things after a long hiatus. Then we had frozen jello shots. The adventure was already off on a fantastic start.

Zurfal says, “So... We should figure out this Gulag of Nye business and how to get there.”

Elmor looks at Zurfal and says, “Did you say Gulag of Nye? I know everything there is to know about the Gulag of Nye!”

Turns out that Elmor knows everything there is about the Gulag of Nye except where it’s parked. He theorizes it’s either a floating ship or a floating island or something. It’s run by the white dwarves of the north. They built the Gulag of Nye and they run it. There’s no sentence; you just go and hang out for the rest of your life.

Elmor continues to speculate that they must use some kind of magic to send people to the Gulag of Nye, but he has never ever heard of anyone coming back and never heard of how people get there either.

Enough chattering. We’re standing at the foot of the stairwell. It occurs to us to see if we can find the Crown of the Dread Emperor which Garrick had. We spend some time looking for it, but then our evilness starts wearing off so we run like hell.

Up the stairs and into a massive room which guards the entrance to this vile dungeon. We have a minor problem in that we’re all evil, so we suspect we’ll be vaporized if we attempt to cross the seal. Person wills his goodness to destroy his evilness and he slips through like a greased pig. Noticing his comrades having problems, Person touches them one by one and wills their evilness away, too. This works fantastically leaving little marks of Raziel on Zurfal and Oni (which wear off eventually).

Demons start to come and we run like hell through the seal and back into Tashal!

It’s very early in the morning and we head back to the mansion.

Theresa, one of our servants who was poisoned, has made a lovely recovery.

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We're all enthused. She gives us a note which we sense is not evil and not magical and not cursed or poisoned in any way.

Lord Keith wanders down the stairs, gets his journal, wanders upstairs and goes back to coloring clouds and birds.

Zurfal opens up the note, reads it, looks concerned, crumples it up, says it doesn't matter, then tosses it on the fire.

We oath stone. OATH STONE!

Zurfal tells us the note says that there is a betrayer among us! Holy crap!

We do a round of healing and restoration. Person decides it's time to free Samantha and he does so. Person then meditates to work on converting the pit fiend.

Then Oni tells us that he's been trying to infiltrate Rogue Group 6 and that he has the Crown of the Dread Emperor, he was supposed to kill Samantha and then they were going to let him join their club.

CUE SHOCK AND SURPRISE!

We talk about this for some time. Elmor, Zurfal, and Person are a bit surprised. Person is also vehemently angry and leaves to meditate.

Zurfal takes the Crown of the Dread Emperor from Oni, casts obscure on it and also undetect alignment in the hope that he can hide it from evil.

Elmor tells us his dragon mother wants us to drop by for tea and cake.

CUE SHOCK AND SURPRISE!

We decide to visit the dragon mother. Elmor opens up a portal and we travel through, down a long path and into a massive cave with a huge silver dragon. She says, "Hello. I'm one of your greatest allies!"

Person points out wryly, "If that were true, ma'am, then it's likely you'll be dead tomorrow."

She replies, "Such wit in that one."

Elmor says, "Yes, Person has always been a funny guy. You wouldn't know it by looking at him."

She tells us that she is on the same path as the Shepherd. She wants to help us follow it, too. She knows about the Gulag of Nye and she tells us stuff like everyone who goes there is massively crippled beforehand and the only food in the whole place is vegan. Nice to know—not a nice sounding place. She gives us a couple of options on how to get to the Gulag of Nye: either go the standard route or figure out where it is and get a brass dragon named Fin to fly us there.

The white dragon destroys the pendant that Oni got from Rogue Group 6 to track him. We also give the crown to the white dragon for safe-keeping and she agrees to take care of Lord Keith and his journal, too. And the oath stone—we notice that Zurfal is ultra-pumped up somehow and he's able to maintain the oath stone bond without the oath stone itself.

We decide to go the standard route because it sounds easier and the idea of being crippled sounds lovely. Also, we don't want to try to break into the Gulag of Nye in case we break it and let a bunch of evil stuff out. The white dragon gives us fake regenerative teeth to uncripple ourselves when we get to the Gulag of Nye. w00t!

We head off happily to Gallimar's office. We bring the entire team: Elmor, Oni, Person, Zurfal, Genshin, Samantha, Natasha, and Porsche. We all walk into Gallimar's office and he tells us he's been expecting us (which is weird) and we find out a few interesting things:

1. The Tower (i.e. the previous Sentinel) sent himself to the Gulag of Nye
2. the last person to go to the Gulag of Nye was Darnel and he went a couple of days ago...

That means that Darnel might be the Star King.

CUE SHOCK AND SURPRISE!

Person grumbles, "Figures."

Gallimar tells us he'll only send four. There's a lot of clamoring outside and we think it's from guards come to arrest us so we can't arrest ourselves. In any case, we're definitely running out of time. Team Dragon signs the book and heads downstairs to go to the Gulag of Nye.

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We get to a nice room and funky robots with claws and eyes and hammers and snippers and all kinds of mean nasty things snip and claw and hammer at us and cripple us in ways that shouldn't go on record. Then our bodies are thrown in little containers, filled with liquid, and we're frozen and probably sent to the Gulag of Nye but we don't know because we're frozen. As they say in the old Sierra game, "Died of dysentery". Oops!

Meanwhile, Porsche teleports Team Henchwomen back to the mansion and thus avoid certain doom at the hands of the guards outside.

Team Henchwomen doesn't spend much time there after deciding that the mansion is probably too perilous, so Porsche teleports them all up to her parents' house. Turns out the place is pretty decked out with all kinds of fancy stuff. We "borrow" some of it, get ourselves equipped and teleport north in the middle of a town in the north where it's really really cold and they really really hate magic and magic use.

We look around for Fin, Genshin gets in the ring and kicks some people around, and Natasha loses money in gambling. Porsche polymorphs into a white dwarf.

We discover that Fin is usually gone for the winter. However, we know that he should be coming back soonish. We hole up and wait.

And then...?

Will Team Dragon be slurped up like frozen jello shots? Will Oni's parts get mixed up with Zurfal's parts? Will Team Henchwomen get to the Gulag of Nye, break in, and save everyone? Holy crap—how can anyone stand the suspense!?!

6.4 CIGAM!

Session: 10/22/2006

Summary

Team Henchwomen bumps into Duval2, meets with Finn, fly to Sherwyn, fight a bunch of Orbaalese guards to save a prisoner only to find out that the prisoner has been looking for them and knows all about the Gulag of Nye.

Details

We're in the town of Lorkin in the country of Orbaal far to the north. The locals are a race of white dwarves known as the Orbaalese. They have no sense of humor and they have a deep distrust and hatred for all magic use.

It's early in the evening and we're hanging out in a tavern. While we're putzing around passing the time, we hear a commotion outside. A group of Orbaalese guards storm in. On their uniforms is a crest of an anvil with a ring. The head dude announces to everyone we'll be searched and all foreigners should go up against the wall.

Samantha puts a chair up against the foreigner wall and stands on it in defiance. Porsche (disguised as an Orbaalese) lines up with the locals. Genshin tries to slide out the back through the kitchen door, but then discovers guards are in there, too and he also lines up on the foreigner wall. The guards try to get rough with Natasha (which probably looked really funny) and she finally lines up with us.

An old hag points us out and tells the guards, "That's them!" The guards search us—they're looking for some large amount of coins or something silly. A strange man steps out of the crowd and he's 6'4" (i.e. he's huge). He doesn't show his face at all. He talks with the guards and straightens everything out and the guards leave.

He offers for us to sit down with him, so we do. We conversationally fence with this mysterious stranger for a while with Porsche periodically kicking people under the table. He's careful not to reveal his identity, but we pick up on some unusual things. After a while he finally pulls his hood back and we discover... Woah! It's Duval! But he looks 20 years younger and he doesn't seem to have a clue as to what's happened in the last 10 years. Also, he's a vegetarian.

Duval2 tells us that there are strange things afoot (duh!). He offers to help us. We chat for a bit and this Duval2 is different than the other Duval who, while he gave us a nice breakfast and has generally left us alone recently, is a big meanie.

At this point, a group of knights in shining armor barge into the tavern bringing with them lots of happy celebration. A general-type walks in as well and Porsche (disguised as an Orbaalese) wanders up to him and whispers sweet

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nothings in his ear. Turns out it's Finn, the very guy we're looking for. Finn and Porsche (disguised as an Orbaalese) get snuggly and then go upstairs and get it on.

Next morning at breakfast, Natasha tells Finn we have some common interests. Then Natasha tells Finn that we're looking for the Gulag of Nye. He's not sure about much but he says that the Orbaalese probably don't know where it is either because if they did know, he'd know they knew. Then he tells us we should find the old Cult of Cigam because they might know because they had a big hand in building the thing.

We naturally ask, "Um... So what's Cigam?" Cigam is a force. The Cult of Cigam wanted to bind and control the powers of the north. Then he says some other stuff that was too confusing for us all.

We should head to the capital of Orbaal and we might find some information regarding the Cult of Cigam there. It just so happens the capital moves every couple of months, so it might be difficult to find.

We chat some more and then Finn leaves and says he'll meet us again later. Duval2 heads out and the gang tells Samantha to follow him which she does. Natasha suspecting foul play follows both of them, loses track of Samantha and notices that Duval2 does absolutely nothing out of the ordinary.

We head off to Finn's place. We meet him and woah—he's a massive dragon! We hop on his back and fly off.

Just before dawn, we arrive at a large city called Sherwyn. Finn tells us he'll meet us every night at around this time at around this place if we need him. Then he flies off.

Not two seconds later, we're approached by a wagon traveling the road with no lights. It's wicked dark, so this is puzzling. We notice that the wagon is headed for a rock. We talk about that for a bit, the wagon hits the rock and upends and crashes into the wall alongside the road. The horses scatter. We rush over to the wagon to discover it's less of a wagon and more of an armored car. There are three guys inside—two are very dead and the third appears to have been totally unharmed. He starts to scramble out of the car. Then we notice that there are 14 men on horseback and wearing shiny armor and they show up and tell us to surrender! Then this unharmed dude in the wagon yelps, "Save me!"

Team Henchwomen decides in two seconds to fight the law and protect the prisoner! (This is the first battle of Team Henchwomen!)

- Genshin jumps atop the carriage! Samantha runs for an outcropping. Porsche (hidden behind a wall on the other side of the road) casts Dancing Lights to confuse the dudes. Natasha does Lightning Breath! SIZZLE! Duval2 takes out a guy. Two of the guys shoot something at us.
- Genshin jumps on a dude's horse and rips off the dude's helmet! Samantha sneak attacks one dude. Porsche casts Chain Lightning on one dude and it rebounds and zaps a bunch of other dudes! ZING! Natasha disembowels a guy. Then the dudes beat on us for a bit.
- Genshin Stunning Fists the guy on the horse. Samantha sneak attacks a guy climbing up a cliff towards her. Porsche casts Fireball and toasts a bunch of dudes and leaves a gaping crater in the snow. Natasha be-heads a guy. One dude throws a "grenade" at Porsche and a "grenade" at Genshin—ouch. Another dude hits Samantha.
- Genshin runs over to the outcropping Samantha is on, climbs quickly and punches one of the guys. Samantha abandons her position, jumps off the outcropping, tumbles, and runs off for another outcropping. Porsche charms a guy. Natasha makes a guy dead. Duval2 wastes a guy. We see that one of the dudes has captured the prisoner and is heading off towards town.
- Genshin pulls a guy off of the cliff and then kills him. Samantha sneak attacks the charmed guy killing him. Porsche casts Hideous Laughter at the dude who has the prisoner causing him to fall off his horse laughing so hard. Natasha wastes another guy. Duval2 throws darts at two guys.
- Genshin grapples with the second guy on the outcropping. Porsche casts Dense Fog or something along the road preventing the next wave of guards from reaching us. Natasha runs, jumps at, and tackles the guy that Genshin was grappling with. We hear bells and horse footsteps coming our way....
- Genshin runs and tackles the guy who is laughing. Natasha bites a guy's head off.

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- Genshin attacks a guy, Samantha sits on the wagon and surveys the situation, and Porsche hits a guy.

The battle essentially over, Duval2 grabs the last live guard and we head for a group of horses that are still around, hop on, and make a run for it in a different direction than the direction the next wave is coming from. We ride hard for a while and find a rock outcropping where we take a break.

Duval2 turns out to be the only one of us who has healing skills and binds the prisoner's wounds. We interrogate the guard for a bit and he tells us that the prisoner is a cultist and that the city can't let any of those foreigners in. Then the guard dies.

We give Vainreth (the prisoner) some healing potions and he begins to come round and he's overjoyed that Cigam has brought us together because he was looking for us! Turns out he knows all about the Gulag of Nye....

And then...?

What are the chances?! Will Team Henchwomen's luck hold out for another couple of game days so that they can get to the Gulag of Nye and meet with Team Dragon? Will Team Dragon ever escape from their popsicle cells? Will Brian get xp because he noticed that CIGAM is MAGIC spelled backwards?

6.5 Meeting with the KLAW

Session: 12/03/2006

Summary

We ditch the people following us, hang out in a cabin and lick our wounds. Then we pretend to be Team Dragon, teleport to a big city, perform some classic Team Dragon hijinx, then go to a posh party.

Details

It is late evening—9 pm or so. On the horizon every now and then we think we see a torch flickering or something. It's extremely windy and cold and precipitating (or maybe that's snow blowing around) and we're very exposed

to the elements. We think they're searching for us, so we decide to take a walk to get further from the "bad area".

We see a set of flares go up in various colors. We decide that we're not moving fast enough. We ditch the horses and teleport to the mountains. POOF!

Porsche creates a Leonid's Shelter (cabin) from rock. We all get inside and think about making fire. Duval2 takes Natasha's Sunsword, goes outside, breaks up some rocks, brings them inside and casts heat metal on the rocks which warms the place up. After much discussion, we divvy up the bunk beds. Porsche teleports home to get some coal from her parents' basement (and some other stuff). She comes back and starts a roaring coal fire and warms the place up significantly. Magic is the shit.

Porsche scrys one of the horses we left behind and it is almost dead. Then she scrys a dead guard that we killed when freeing the prisoner. There are a lot of people and torches and lanterns and the people are going over all the wreckage looking for clues or something. They have a mortar kind of thing (probably what they're using to send up flares). One of them spots the scrying thing....

We go to sleep and wake up in the morning. We tell the Cigam cultist to tell us everything.

He tells us the Gulag of Nye is running on its own. One day a long time ago, the ships that supplied the Gulag returned with everyone slaughtered. No one has been to the Gulag since. He also says, "The only escapable prison is the one that gives you what you want." The Gulag prisoners were being used to build an army of some kind but it's not clear what that means. The legend suggests that the frozen north was the home of great abominations. The Gulag was built to contain these things. He also says, "The more magic concentrated in one area, the more cigam was concentrated." It's suggested that the cigam was corrupted or tainted or driven insane by these experiments. The legends say that the cigam will rise again and the most unlikely of men will rise to play the role of cigam.

The way to reach the Gulag is to take the steel ships that once traveled to and from the Gulag. The last time someone traveled to the Gulag was 350 years ago. The ships are sealed in the old temple in the Bay of "Narby". Ships can

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only be activated by the high councilor's seal. The seal is on the councilor's crown, staff or ring. Tomorrow is the anniversary of the coronation.

We talk for a long time. We decide to dress up as Team Dragon, walk in the front door, and demand a seal to drive the ship to the Gulag.

Genshin is Oni. Duval is Person. Porsche is Zurfal. Natasha is Elmor. Samantha is ... Samantha.

We drop Vainreth off at the mansion and tell him to work on his memoirs. Porsche picks up our uniforms.

We put the uniforms on and do some disguise stuff. Then we teleport outside the city. A gate opens and we wander in. This looks great—tapestries, lanterns, fresh paint, ... We say “Hi” and they send a colorguard out to get us. A half-orc shows up to rough us up a bit but we act cocky like Team Dragon so that's not particularly effective.

We ride in. In the center is a large walled building. Everything is made of large blackish-grey stone. We talk to another guy who says the king is very busy. He brings us to a house and leaves us there. We give him the cup we've brought for him and he's not very impressed.

Samantha does a search of the house and there are no traps, but lots of peep holes. Samantha inuendos about it then “goes to take a nap”. This puzzles everyone for some reason. Duval leaves. Porsche leaves.

While Samantha, Porsche (Zurfal), and Duval (Person) are gone, a half-orc shows up to “test” Team Dragon. He goes after Natasha (Elmor) with questions. It results in a battle and the half-orc is hurt (severely). The half-orc says he trusts us now (idiot). He was sent to ensure our identities. Then two guys come and grant us an audience with some schlub in a couple of days.

Everyone comes back. A little while later, a guard comes in and invites us all to the anniversary party as Klaw Kithenwood's guests. Samantha sits in a window and notices a big house on fire across the city. Genshin goes over to investigate using his new found Volunteer Fireman skills.

Hooked Spear is an old guy and appears to be the captain of the guard.

Evening passes. The next morning comes. Duval is already gone, but has left disguises for us all. There's also a hot meal and a gift basket and a note from the high councilor. There's fruit and a bottle of wine. We feast. Yay.

Duval returns later in the day with suits and clothes for the party. We head off to the party. It's very very posh. There's a massive party and lots of people. There are two long banquet tables with pillars and one wall with a huge mural with Orbaalese dwarves standing over dead drow.

And then?...

Will we ever get to meet with the high councilor and get his seal? Will we go to the Gulag or perhaps to warmer climes, like Bermuda? What happened to the real Team Dragon? Are they still plugged into the Matrix?

6.6 The great escape

Session: 02/11/2007

Summary

Zurfal, Person, Oni, and Elmor wake up in the Gulag strapped down, missing bits of their bodies, and bereft of any memories prior to waking up. However, the essence of Team Dragon lingers strongly as they find themselves hopping from one dangerous situation to the next leaving a wanton trail of destruction behind them a mile wide. Also, Person returns to his demonic ways (though at great insistence that he's not really evil—he's just trying to blend in) and we meet up with the Star King and The Sentinel and get some answers!

Details

Zurfal awakes. His night vision kicks on immediately as it's very dark. He slowly becomes aware of his surroundings and the plethora of tubes that are coming out of his body. He also notices that his arm is clamped down. As he moves around attempting to figure out the extent of damage he's suffered, he is overcome with excruciating pain. He has no memory of how he arrived in this grim place, but he does know that he is Zurfal.

Zurfal releases one of the clamps keeping his exposed arm in place (there's a huge chunk of flesh missing from his arm—you can see the bone!) which sends searing pain through his body. He pulls himself together, though, just as a couple of dudes rush into the room armed with strange weapons. He is able to take cover before they notice him. They're being chased by a larger

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dude who's armored in some kind of bone-muscle outfit. The massive ugly guy sees the little dudes, but they beat the crap out of him and the massive ugly guy backs out of the room and takes off down the corridor with the two little dudes in pursuit.

Person awakes. He realizes he can't move and he can't see and can't remember anything prior to this moment. His upper torso feels numb and icky. Everything is extremely stiff—as if he hasn't moved in weeks. There are cables and tubes coming out of his body and his head is clamped down to the bench he's lying down on. He feels afraid and says a timid, "Hello? Is there anybody out there?" to which Zurfal replies, "Person!"

Zurfal releases the rest of his clamps and pulls his tubes out. Then he wanders over to Person and starts pulling Person's stuff off, too. Person isn't particularly happy about that—it really hurts and he can't see what's going on.

Oni wakes up, too. Zurfal heads over to Oni and releases Oni. Turns out Oni has one of those healing teeth we got a while back, bites it, and his body heals back to normal. Zurfal is missing his tooth. Zurfal heads back to Person.

"Person, bite down on your healing tooth."

"What healing tooth?"

"THE TOOTH... THE TOOTH...", Zurfal hisses in Person's ear.

"Zurfal! Don't do that, it's creepy." Person searches his mouth for the healing tooth, bites down on a few that don't seem to do anything, and then finds on that breaks open healing Person fully. "Ohh... that feels a lot better."

Zurfal harrumphs. "So there are three of us. I feel like we're missing someone."

The walls of our prison are made of some kind of iron—much like everything else. The air alternates between the acrid smell of burnt flesh and the musky grimness of rotting death. The tubes we were attached to lead to a pedestal in the center of the room that holds a series of vials. There are two containers next to Person—one holding what appears to be muscle bits and one holding two hands which are clearly Person's hands—though he doesn't appear to be missing his hands. Oh, and we're totally naked.

There's a large explosion in the hallway and a body comes crashing into a sarcophagus in the room which tips over sending Elmor's remains all over the floor. Zurfal forces Elmor to bite and swallow his tooth healing Elmor back to full health. However, Elmor isn't particularly capable of doing anything—he's still in shock.

Two cat-like humanoid creatures peer into the room. One charges in while the other stays at the door. Person charges it with the intention of tackling and grappling with it. It catches him and flings him into the wall. Oni makes to sneak attack the cat-like thing, but misses wildly and crashes into something. Person goes to tackle it again, rolls it over, and starts punching it in the face! Oni jumps into the fray and Oni and Person deal the cat-like creature a world of hurt and it totally dies. The second cat-like creature that was at the door leaves and runs down the hall.

Zurfal starts fishing through the debris in the room and finds his tooth in a vial, bites it, and swallows it fully healing himself. Yay!

Zurfal then looks at the vials on the pedestal and notices they're of different colors. We all feel an affinity for a vial, except for Person who feels an affinity for two of them. Zurfal decides these vials are our life essences. He takes a slurp of his and sends himself into a Cuthbert-blood induced vision. A massive distortion emanating from Zurfal ripples through the room and then through the walls. Oni quaffs his—a massive distortion ripples from him, too. Person and Elmor are a little hesitant about this and decide to drink theirs later.

At this point we notice a clicking sound in the hallway. Also, two dudes rush into the room—one with red robes and one in hacked-together armor—and exclaim, “You’ve just woken up!” The red-robed dude leaves and the hacked-together armor dude tries to shut the door to our room. We’re having none of that, though, and we all rush over to oppose him and keep the door open.

Suddenly, there's a crazy rumbling sound coming from down the corridor. The dude hears this, stops trying to shut the door and instead takes off down the corridor in the opposite direction of the crazy rumbling sound.

Elmor says, “Uh... I have a really bad feeling about staying here.”

We all agree and we take off down the hall following the dude. He's clearly

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running as fast as he can, hurtling over dead bodies and avoiding other obstacles. He reaches a spiral staircase and runs up it taking steps two at a time towards an open hatchway. On the other side of the hatchway, there are several dudes yelling, “RUN!”

We reach the staircase, run up it as fast as we can. The dude gets through the hatchway and the people on the other side go to close it, but we get there first and push our way through.

Then a plume of fire bursts through the hatchway behind us and an 8-foot tall creature with mechanical arms and legs comes through and starts slaying everything in its path. Person picks up a spear and joins the men trying to kill the creature alternating between thrusts and faints. Person in a spectacular feat of superior combat-skills whacks the creature, rams the spear through its chest, and then flips it over. Two little dudes hop out of the creature and are immediately killed.

Then everyone looks around, strips all the good stuff off of the dead bodies, and leaves with nary a thought about us. We shout to them, “Hey! What the hell is going on?” Two dudes finally notice us, wander over, and say, “Newcomers!” Then one dude stabs the other, takes his stuff, and says a bunch of stuff we don’t understand in a strange accent we’ve never heard before.

Person decides this is a good time to quaff his potions. His cunning intellect decides that the black one is the essence of the pit fiend in his soul cage—so he quaffs that one first with the intentions of quaffing the white one next... But those intentions are soon forgotten as the familiar warmth fills his veins, the immense strength causes his biceps to ripple, and the saliva in his mouth starts to churn at the sight of blood and bodies strewn about the room. A distortion ripple rips through everyone nearby which makes everyone notice. Person smiles and flexes and casually moves to crush the white vial which has found its way to the floor with his heel. Oni and Zurfal share a look and Oni dives for the white vial but is tripped by Person sending Person and Oni sprawling and the white vial careening across the room. Zurfal picks it up and grumbles.

Zurfal pulls some clothes off of one of the dead guys and hides his “bone weapon”, much to the relief of everyone ⁴.

⁴ Though there are, like, only 4 left.

The dude invites us to a general assembly in a large arena down the hall.

We send Elmor out to learn some stuff. He comes back with an explanation of what's going on. We're in the Gulag and there are three levels. The bottom level is the worst. The middle level is ok. But the upper level is fantastic. Turns out there's an old man who showed up 5 years ago on the upper level living the high life—we're going to go fight him and take the upper level back. We suspect that the old man is none other than The Sentinel. Every now and then, there's a harvest where these droid things show up and strip the flesh and bone off of a bunch of bodies and then leave. The harvests hit the lower level most often. There are also timers on the walls that are counting down to something.

An old man at the assembly whips the crowd into a frenzy with the promise of attacking the upper level and taking it. We're game—so we follow the dudes heading to the front preparing to rush the doors into the upper level. We follow the dudes down a corridor.

Person suddenly remembers that he has a flesh blade and pulls it out of his arm. This causes a massive distortion ripple which causes a bunch of dudes to rush over and yell at us—they fear we'll alert the upper level dudes as to our presence or some silly thing like that. Person grins sheepishly, his massive bloody bone and flesh great sword dripping all over the floor, and says, "Oops—sorry!"

We continue down the corridor to the stairwell where we wait. Then Darnel is pushed into the stairwell, naked and holding a scroll, and forced up the stairs at crossbow point. Zurfal sees Darnel and says, "We've got to protect him...", pushes forward and offers to take his place. Darnel is surprised we're there, but very happy to relinquish his almost certainly doomed position. Zurfal is stripped of his clothes, given the scroll and urged upwards.

Something happens and a massive distortion ripple goes off around us. The whole place starts shaking and the walls peel back like a banana. Two massive hulking droid things show up with lots of little things behind them and start slaughtering everyone. The crowd surges up the stairs knocking Person down. Person pulls himself up and we all rush upwards into an entrance-way with two massive doors. Pit fiends appear and start smashing down the doors. All hell breaks loose as spellcasters start sending all kinds of crazy magic into the air. Holes are tearing through the ceiling. The doors fall

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and we surge into the room beset by soldiers from the upper level and chaos erupts!

Person sees the chaos and carnage before him and something inside him ignites... He grabs a recently felled body and feasts upon it—the blood spraying everything near him in a gushing fountain. He hunches forward, yells a blood-curdling roar that induces fear in all those around him less for its raw ferocity and more for its deep organ-wrenching bellow of bloodlust. With Elmor and Oni in tow, Person lunges forward slaying everything in his path as he tears forward through the doors into a beautiful garden and up the center ramp.

As Person moves up the ramp killing and feasting upon everyone in his way, Oni curiously sprouts angel wings....

Back in the entrance room, Zurfal turns invisible and grabs Darnel and pulls him to safety. They wait there....

Person slays everyone and breaks through the crowd of soldiers into an empty corridor. Oni and Elmor edge around Person and book it down the hall—they’ve both suffered serious wounds while working their way through the melee.

Person happily turns around and starts slaying again—this time going back in the direction of the entranceway. The slaughter is so brutal, violent, and graphic, that words cannot but provide the meekest inkling of the awe-inspiring incident.

Oni and Elmor run down the hall meeting no resistance. They come upon an old man who is pacing back and forth. Oni shouts to the man, “Sentinel!” The old man looks at him and then is beset by a massive headache, then the memories flood to his mind and he realizes where he is and why he’s here. He starts casting spells and massive distortion ripples sail through the room. Everything stops. “Go get your friends! Hurry!”

Oni and Elmor run back to the battle to retrieve the rest of Team Dragon. Zurfal and Darnel are easy to fetch, but Person is so overcome with bloodlust that he’s having a hard time coming to terms with the fact that everyone is frozen and the gore cannot go on.

Oni hands the white potion to Zurfal and says, “Wow—Person is covered in blood! Zurfal, make him drink the white potion!” to which Zurfal responds,

“I have no pants.”

Elmor raises his eyebrow and mumbles, “That’s pretty fucked up.”

They calm Person down a bit until he’s cogent again, then we all rush back to the Sentinel. The Sentinel drags us into a throne room. “Cigam is coming! I will tell you all I know. Cigam opposes magic. The Orbaalese built the Gulag for the purpose of building an army. The army got out of hand and continued building itself but for some unknown purpose. I believe the Cigam will kill me. However, it cannot appear here with magical means—it must come on a path that you can follow back! You must follow it back and destroy the seal and thus destroy the Gulag! Destroy the Cigam to repair it. If so, then all will be returned....”

At this point, the Sentinel is enveloped in what can only be described as a big rainbow-colored marshmallow thing. As the thing is eating the Sentinel, the room is warping in weird strange ways. It then turns and books it down the hall with Team Dragon following in hot pursuit.

And then...?

Holy crap! Will Team Dragon beat down the Cigam? Will we lose Darnel again like we’ve done so many many times before? Will Elmor drink his vial? Will Oni stop creating mischief? Will Person continue down his dark path or will he once more turn to the light and go back to being vegetarian? All this and more during the next session....

6.7 Follow the rainbow blob

Session: 05/06/2007

Summary

We take a tour of the Gulag of Nye and marvel at its wondrous architectural details, Darnel becomes righteous, we discover Magic Items ‘R Us, and Person attempts to install the Eye of Vecna, but Team Dragon isn’t having any of that.

Details

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Quick summary....

1. Zurfal has no pants.
2. Oni has the white potion.
3. Oni has sipped from most of the potions at this point.
4. We chatted with The Sentinel and then he got eaten by a rainbow blob.
5. The rainbow blob then booked it down the hall leaving a very obvious path to follow.
6. Darnel is wearing some stuff.
7. Person looks like Tim Curry from Legend.

We're in hot pursuit of the blob following its trail of ooze. The blob is warping things around it kind of like silly putty. It also flattens some of the Cigam guards. Oni and Zurfal discuss something under their breath and end up giving Person's white potion to Darnel.

We run and run until we come up to a massive vault door. Around the door are massive statues of dwarves. This seems like a contradiction, but rest assured that it is not. On the other side of the vault door is a massive segmented glass tunnel that heads upward. Outside of the glass tunnel is the arctic sea. This thing is wide enough to fit twenty men side-by-side—this place is huge!

Along with the massive statues of dwarves around the doorway is some Orbaalese writing. No one can read Orbaalese. Oh, wait—Person says he can read it and that it says, “Bones make it crunchy.” He grins wickedly. Oni looks at Zurfal nervously.

Up the tunnel we go. After a ways, the tunnel levels off and we see that we just came from the bowels of a massive aircraft-carrier sized ship. It's just mind-bogglingly large. It's got these huge tusks that are cutting the ice in front of it. We also astutely notice that the tunnel heads downward from here into another ship very similar to the one we just left. Additionally, as we look out across the arctic ocean, we can see some sixty of these ships all connected together with similar glass tubes and massive chains. There could be more, but we can only see so far. Scary—this is some Gulag⁵.

⁵ Up until this point, he was very naked. It was disturbing.

The slimy trail we're following is slimy, so Person decides to sit down on his butt and slide down the other side of the tube into the next ship. WHEE!!! Team Dragon finds themselves on the deck of the next ship. There are these massive discus-launching things on the deck. Out of mild curiosity, Person decides to taste the goo; it is a thousand flavors all mixed up in one. He decides it's probably a bad idea to do that again.

We continue following the slime trail. The walls of the massive halls we're wandering through look like the halls from the middle level of the other ship: they're like banded metal sheets that are bolted on. This ship is really quiet, though—all we hear is a mechanical hum.

We wander into a room that is very clean. There are four armored skeletons bolted to the wall. This is a little weird—the bones are held together with wire and have armor and weapons. It doesn't appear that these freaks can move of their own accord, though.

We continue into an even massiver room with pews for holding zillions of soldiers on some trip to conquer the world or some similarly wild and mind-boggling thing. We continue to follow the slime into the next even more massiver room that's entirely carved from stone with huge massive pillars holding the ceiling up and a gigantic massive globe in the center. Then we hear the footsteps of soldiers behind us and notice a bunch of the Cigam guards march into the room. They're wholly unaware of us....

Then Oni convinces Darnel to drink the white elixir and KA-BOOM! Everyone goes flying as the magical concussion explodes from Darnel. He stands in the resulting crater a mythic figure of glowing white with fiery hair and all the sorts of things that Person sort of used to be way back when.

The soldiers in the next room notice us now. We also hear the eerie slurpy noises of the rainbow blob rushing towards us. Darnel, now fiery with righteousness, takes a look at Person and announces that Person must turn from the black path or be destroyed.

Oni shouts to Darnel, "Soldiers are advancing upon us!"

Darnel, who was once a wimpy dork and is now essentially an Astral Diva, charges the soldiers and cuts them down with righteous might. Zurfal uses his stone-shaping spell and creates some armor and a cudgel from the huge massive pillars. The rainbow blob heads right past us towards Darnel. Person

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stands back figuring if Darnel dies, that's ok by him. Zurfal sees the blob heading towards Darnel and casts Bigby's Crushing Fist at it—but his spell fizzles. The blob undergoes mitosis—the bigger of the two blobs continues towards Darnel and the little blob turns around and rushes Zurfal! Oni, out of nowhere, creates a wall of light that captures the little rainbow blob that was headed towards Zurfal! The walls warp a bit and then explodes and the two blobs slurp out of the room at incredible speeds. Weird!

Darnel creates a blade barrier and is slaying everything in the other room. We just kind of sit around and watch until he's done. He comes back and then looks at Person and orders Person to repent! Person growls and snorts but does not yield!

Zurfal casts Calm Emotions and after a pregnant pause, Darnel gives Person a hug and then wanders to the corner of the room to admire himself in some glass against the wall.

We're in the middle of a gigantically massive room with pillars, a globe, and a throne against the back wall. Oni checks out the throne. There are runes above it which Zurfal has seen before. Zurfal object-reads the globe and sees the events of long ago. Person grumbles a bit. We decide to move on and continue following the slime. Elmor follows us—bleeding as he goes.

Using the experiences of being in the Navy as our guide, we reckon we're somewhere in the middle of the ship. The halls continue to get more and more massive and each room is even more massive and more different than all the rooms before it. We walk through sets of doors so large that they could cast a shadow on Person's behemoth ego, but at this point we're pretty jaded about massive amazing things never before seen by mortal eyes.

As we're walking down the hall, we notice one of the hugely massive doors is open. From it we can hear the mighty stirrings of an army so we send Oni to stealthily peek and see what was up. He does and reports back that it is indeed the mighty stirrings of an army. "Cool", we say. Then we continue on down the hall.

Gah! There are a zillion naked Cigam guys walking towards us. Person says, "Go get 'em, Darnel!" But Darnel isn't very excited. Wimp. Instead we stand by the wall and let them pass us—all 300 of them. Oni tips his hat and Elmor shows the sailors some leg as they wander by. We're sure they would have hooted and hollered if they had mouths.

Onward we go down the hall. It's interesting to notice that the floors and walls are primarily concrete, but there's a lot of bone in there, too. Ick. Down a set of stairs which are in very rough shape and into a small room with a small door. There are four mecha-like things—Oni plays with one for a while until he realizes there is no way he's going to be able to fit through the door with it.

It takes us five or six minutes of hemming and hawing until we decide that the door out of here is locked. Oni says he can unlock it with one of his rogue skills.

“Wait... You're a rogue!?” One of the greatest lingering mysteries of the campaign is at last revealed: Oni's character class. We exchange high-fives.

However, Oni is unable to jimmy the lock. Person, somewhat bored, decides to just punch the door and see what happens. He slams it and it flexes, but doesn't quite splinter into a million pieces. Darnel, seeing Person struggle, decides to show off and eviscerates the door making the noise equivalent of an avalanche, then says, “After you, Person”. Person is a little pissed.

The room on the other side is an ugly little storage room. There are surgical tables much like in the first level of the Gulag on the other ship, but these appear to be heavily unused. On the other side of the room is another door. We pass through that into a circular hallway that goes left and right. To the left we see a vault door. To the right we see another vault door. Person tries to open the vault door, but can't. Zurfal has an idea and suggests to Darnel that he try to open one door while Person tries to open the other door. This turns out to be fortuitous—Person turns the vault door opening thing, but Darnel's door opens.

Inside the door is a room not unlike a museum or library. It's darkly lit and there are desks scattered about. The walls are covered with display cases and an array of strange items glisten beneath the display case glass. It takes us a while before we realize we're standing in Magic Items 'R Us. After the realization sets in, we start poking and prodding magic items outfitting ourselves with the best stuff so we can get trounced 20 minutes from now⁶.

Darnel, unimpressed by the magical wealth around him, pulls out the Sentinel's journal and starts reading aloud. We all turn our heads—holy crap this

⁶ It's very clearly not the Gulag in Harry Potter.

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is useful!

The Sentinel discovers his council is evil. He fakes his death and then “post-mortem” creates an impossible quest so that no one can become the next Sentinel. Then he heads off to the Gulag figuring he’ll come back and be Sentinel again. At the Gulag, he learns many things about Cigam. He dreams of our coming and his eventual demise to the rainbow blob....

Looking at magic items takes a long time and eventually, Person gets bored and looks around the room for an exit. His eyes set upon the dark case in the corner that exudes dark forebodings. He opens the case causing everyone to look at him. He then opens the case within the case and sees an eye staring at him. Person thinks about this for all of two seconds and goes to pull out his eye.

The team, realizing that this is very very bad, jumps into action! Elmor jumps at Person entirely missing him and falls into the big dark case. Zurfal casts Hold-Monster on Person and succeeds! Person is paralyzed with his eye in his right hand and the Eye of Vecna in his left a mere inches from his empty eye socket.

Darnel saunters over to heroically take the Eye of Vecna from Person and his arm immediately turns to black ash and falls to the ground. YEOUCH! Zurfal casts Regenerate on Darnel and then wishes he had a Dispel Stupid Ideas spell, too.

Elmor manages to right himself and gets out of the case. He hacks off Person’s arm and throws the arm, along with the Eye of Vecna, into the case. Team Dragon picks up Person and rushes him out the door into the next room.

In the next room there are dozens of elixers of all shapes and colors much like the vials that held our essence. Zurfal has a brilliant idea just as Hold Monster starts wearing off of Person. The team casts about frantically for white-colored elixers as Person starts mouthing, “I think I’m in the mood for Dwarf....”

Oni grabs an elixer and throws it to Zurfal who pops the top and dumps it down Person’s throat. Person drops to the ground in a massive magic concussion which sends the party flying into the walls. Elmor almost dies,

but Zurfal rushes to his side with a Cure Critical.

The slurpings of the rainbow blob are heard and then two blobs burst into the room. Oni creates a magical wall around one. The other, which was heading for Person changes direction and lunges at Oni who, in a fantastic feat of nimbleness, leaps out of the way and spiderclimbs up to the ceiling. The rainbow blob breaks through the magical wall and the two blobs slurp out of the room.

With the danger gone, the party turns to Person who is undergoing severe physical changes ⁷. First his horns shrivel up and his flesh turns from deep red to a pale white. Then his arm grows back and his legs melt and elongate into a long snake-like tail. Then he rises up like a giant worm! Finally, his breath explodes from his body causing the temperature in the room to drop ten degrees because of its intense frigidness.... HOLY CRAP! PERSON IS A FROST WYRM!

Oh, and Oni looks like a dragon, too.

And then...?

Holy crap—what happened to Person? Will he continue to eat people? Can Team Dragon stop this hideous army hell bent on destroying civilization and imposing upon this world the will of Cigam which is insane?

6.8 The first seal

Session: 06/10/2007

Summary

Lots of rooms, some frustration, then a big fight with a seven foot dude. Then we see the first seal and solve the first seal predicament.

Details

We put the game on pause and read bits of the journal we hadn't read, yet. It was interesting, but many of the things in the journal were things we had

⁷ We're metagaming here. Why would the DM give us access to magic items of incredible power unless he's planning to crush us in the very near future?

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wildly speculated at or things that we had experienced first hand. Still, it was really nice to know that we were probably on the right track in the grand scheme of things.

Elmor grabs a flask and drinks it but it's not clear what happens. Zurfal heals Elmor a bit which makes Elmor much happier. Person, who has had his arm chopped off and was turned into a giant frost wyrm, is a little frustrated and a little angry and tail whacks Elmor who sails through the room and into a thing of flasks breaking many of them. Bits of essence go flying and affects most of the party in various ways: Zurfal gets a big beefy arm, Person discovers a prehensile tongue, Oni... well, nothing happens to him. But we suddenly start hearing the sounds of THE BLOB!!!!

Elmor who is sitting in a puddle of liquid essence ooze starts thrashing around. Zurfal and Oni grab some potions on the wall and book it into the next room while Person whacks another set of flasks sending them flying. Safely in the next room, Zurfal utters Elmor's true name summoning him hither. Person reads the writing on the wall (metaphorically speaking) and slithers into the next room. The door behind them slams shut....

We're in some strange room much like all the other strange rooms, but we don't pay enough attention to note how this strange differs from the other stranges.

We pass through the room into the next one. We enter a new room that's octagonal. There's a jug pouring water into a wand and it's being annihilated. Also there's a metal sphere traveling through a series of dimensional doors. Also also, there's an anvil about the size of a car hovering in the corner of the room. Also also also, there are four Staffs of the Magi. This is clearly a room filled with magic experiments.

Carved into the iron wall is a smidge of Orbaalese writing which stops abruptly: "Complete the army, continue..." On the ground is a heavily rusted dagger which was clearly used to carve the words into the wall.

Elmor pukes up elixir ick in the corner of the room. Person's wyrm-like instincts start kicking in and he perks up.

Oni and Zurfal wander over to the jug and the disintegration wand. Oni whacks the jug with the disintegration wand. FOOP! A wall of water erupts from the spot where the jug sat sending us all flying. Person breathes bitter

cold freezing everything around him.

Elmor stands. We think he's looking better.

Oni grabs a Staff of the Magi as does Zurfal. At this point we notice that there's a timer in this room and while we're not sure what it's counting down to, we get the feeling that the end point is soon.

Person decides this room is too hot and slithers to the next room on his own. The new room is made up of shelves and metal books. Some of the dust burst out of the door when Person opened it—the rest remains thickly dispersed across the room. There are several maps and battle tables with miniature pewter figurines⁸ scattered over them. There are weapons lockers here, too. Scratched into the wall is: "Final orders. Complete the army and deploy the forces. ... the emissary. When the timer runs out execute order one." Person continues through the room to another door which is huge and built like a safe. He utterly fails to open the door.

Zurfal walks in, heads over to a locker, pulls out some full plate and puts it on. Oni and Elmor tromp in. Person, unable to open the big door, opens the smaller one and books it down the hall roaring in frustration. He stops abruptly when he notices that the temperature is getting hotter the further he moves down the hall. He turns back.

Person calms down a bit and regains his composure. Zurfal buffs up and pulls the vault door open. We remember we left Darnel a while back and poof!—he's with us again.

We walk into the new room. Everything is made of obsidian. The room is very long and there are weird shapes in the floor and walls and ceiling. There are also hand holds on the floor. A solid metal/obsidian structure is in one of the far corners of the room. On the far wall is a small door and an orb-shaped indentation in the wall next to it. The obsidian structure opens up and a seven foot man that looks like George Clooney if he was made of mercury strolls into the room and says, with little emotion, "Let the emissary step forth and provide." He then drops into some pose that must be called the "everyone in the room will soon die" stance.

We converse a bit about which one of us is the emissary. We decide it must be Zurfal, because the rest of us aren't psyched about walking through the room.

⁸ And mental ones as well, we hope.

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Zurfal saunters up to the seven foot deadly ninja mercury George Clooney as only a dwarf clad in plate mail can and says, “Dude. What’s your sign?” Zurfal then reads the aura of the seven foot deadly ninja mercury George Clooney and discovers this guy hasn’t changed in years. The dude hands Zurfal his ball. Zurfal puts his hand on the ball, but something is amiss.

All the doors close abruptly. Seven foot deadly ninja mercury George Clooney leaps over Zurfal, lands on the ground, grabs two handles, and pulls. Blocks fly across the room whacking Darnel and Elmor who we’ve forgotten again.

Battle ensues! Oni tries to disintegrate the seven foot deadly ninja mercury George Clooney but hits the wall! Person pulls chains and crazy stuff happens! Zurfal heals! Elmor and Darnel try to stand up! At some point, some of Oni’s blood lands on the dude seriously injuring him! We do crazy things and finally kill him.

We breathe a sigh of relief and look around the room trying to figure out what to do next.

Barely a moment later, another seven foot deadly ninja mercury George Clooney steps out of the obsidian structure and attacks! Gah! This one grabs Person and holds him hostage! But then in a flash of brilliance, the dude throws Person to the side, pulls a chain, and then gets crushed by a wall. Zurfal uses his telekinetic powers to pull the ball from under the wall. He tosses it to Oni who’s up a wall. Oni sticks it in the slot. We wait a few moments, notice no new seven foot deadly ninja mercury George Clooneys appear, and decide we’re safe.

In the meantime, Person has almost given up the ghost. He’s on the ground barely moving and barely breathing. Zurfal cleverly harms him and this makes Person feel better. And a bit surprised.

We walk through the little door into a room that’s puts all the other crazy fucked up stuff we’ve seen today to shame. There’s a seal thing in the middle of the room and in the middle of the seal is a chrysalis with a rainbow blob wibbling over it. The chrysalis is connected to four altar things with crazy stuff that would blow your mind!

Zurfal exhibits some weird deja vu or something and walks towards the seal and activates it. The rainbow blob starts wibbling furiously on the

chrysalis. Zurfal aura reads the whole thing and sees a woman wandering in the darkness—it's horrible.

Person grabs Elmor's sword and starts hacking at a wire connecting an altar to the chrysalis. The rainbow blob leaps for him and hits him sending him floating in the air to land on the ground abruptly paralyzed.

Zurfal touches the seal and whispers something. The seal turns bright red and begins to crush the chrysalis that is passing through the seal's middle. The blob whips around and attacks Zurfal swallowing him whole! CHAOS, LAW... FIGHT!

Darnel attacks the blob! His arm explodes in all kinds of disgusting blob-like fleshy bits. He cuts off the rest of his arm and cauterizes the wound. Person picks himself up and attacks another wire.

The blob attempts to morph Zurfal but he resists! The blob attacks Person and Darnel critically it!

Oni hits the chrysalis with disintegrate. FOOP! We see two human hands holding metal rings that are controlling a sphere of annihilation which is in the middle of the seal. The hands are in a glass cylinder.

Person slithers over and whacks the glass cylinder barely cracking it—he can't seem to get anything useful accomplished today.

Zurfal escapes the rainbow blob which turns around and absorbs Darnel, then attacks Oni. Cloudkill covers the room and knocks Person out. Darnel almost escapes the blob.

Oni shatters the glass cylinder and grabs the two rings to control the sphere of annihilation! The blob is very unhappy with this, wiggles to the other side, and grabs the other two rings! It is a contest of wills!

While Oni and the blob are fighting, Darnel grabs one of the rings from the blob and manages to pull it out! We now have three rings and the blob has one! Person and Zurfal dive at the blob and Person comes out with the fourth ring!

Oni and Person work the sphere of annihilation out of the seal. The blob spatters into a million pieces leaving an old man holding a medal.

We hear voices in the room next door and the sounds of intense fighting,

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not unlike what we went through with the seven foot deadly ninja mercury George Clooney dude.

The seal heals itself into one piece and glows very red. There are two symbols in the center of the seal: “OK” and “Cancel”—one breaks the seal and the other closes it. Zurfal hits the cancel symbol, closing the seal forever. The seal stops glowing and then shatters.

The door to the next room opens and there stands Duval, Team Henchwomen (minus a few), and some guy we don’t recognize.

And then...?

Holy crap! We finally make it to the first seal in what appears to be a series of seals. Will the other seals take as long as this one did?

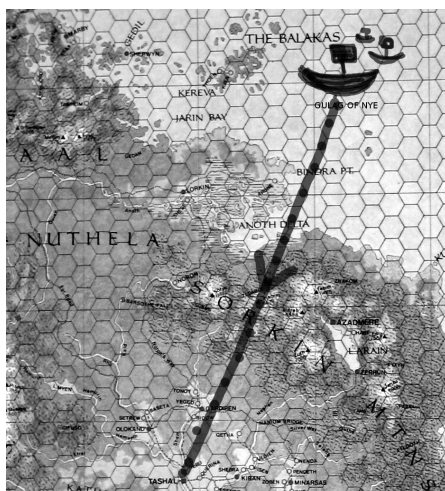
Fixing the World

Just remember what ol' Jack Burton does when the earth quakes, and the poison arrows fall from the sky, and the pillars of Heaven shake. Yeah, Jack Burton just looks that big ol' storm right square in the eye and he says, "Give me your best shot, pal. I can take it."

Jack Burton, Big Trouble in Little China

7.1 Synopsis

06/22/2007 through 04/12/2008. Closing the seals one by one, then the last stand.



7.2 You've got to know when to fold them

Session: 06/22/2007

Summary

We trim our ranks, settle some long-standing arguments, and return to former selves. Oh, and Oni becomes king.

Details

The remnants of the rainbow blob melt away leaving behind a frail old man.

Team Henchwomen walks in with some strange dude and Duval. Duval is about to say something when the old frail man interrupts him with, "Please relieve me, emissary!" The frail old man then holds out some metal thingy.

Person jumps for the metal thingy. Duval does a ninja-like flip over everyone towards the metal thingy. Oni from the other side of the room uses telekinesis to grab the metal thingy and bring it to himself. The metal thingy jumps in the air, Person crashes into the old frail man who dies, and Zurfal, noticing the flying Duval over his head, whacks him sending him sprawling. As the dust clears, Oni stands triumphant, holding the metal thingy then quickly hides it on his person somewhere.

The dude who walked in with Team Henchwomen demands the metal thingy. Turns out he's a general of the Cigam armies. He orders his guards to secure the room.

Duval asks Oni for the metal thingy. Zurfal and Elmor step between Duval and Oni in a protective fashion. Oni books it for the door in the back of the room and Person follows in hot pursuit along with the general and some guards.

Oni makes it to the door, opens it, and slips inside.

The room has a massive stone pedastel filled with water. There's a big table with water on it and little floating ships—clearly a map showing the location of the fleet, possibly in real-time. There are thousands of ships. There are maps on the walls and a huge compass, too. There's a small throne in the middle of the room with a ship navigation wheel in front of it.

Oni crosses the room and sits on the throne. A yellow haze surrounds his hands and then disappears. The general, seeing this, sighs resignedly and bows down to his new lord: Oni.

Duval runs to Porsche and takes her hostage. Porsche fumbles her something check, cuts her own throat, and collapses at Duval's feet—he's a bit surprised. Samantha jumps at Elmor. Zurfal flips around very undwarven-like and deals her a massive blow. She falls down and cries.

Elmor goes to cast dimension door and the floor freaks out and deals him damage. At this point we realize that we just closed the space seal and that all transportation spells are no longer available to us. This potentially includes quick trips to the dragon mother. Oopsie! Elmor then kicks himself.

Person enters the room that Oni is in and sees a two-handed sword on the wall. He picks it up.

Oni leaves the throne room and returns to the room just in time to see his sister collapse. Elmor heals himself and moves threateningly towards Duval.

Zurfal casts hold portal on the door behind Duval just as Duval dives towards the door. He makes it, but loses some bits in the door as it closes upon him. SQUISH!

Zurfal heals Porsche. The door opens and we see Duval captured by the guards. His arm is severely mangled. Oni orders the soldiers to kill Duval. They do. DEATH.

Samantha seeing the dead Duval², grabs a grenade and blows herself up along with some soldiers. DEATH.

The old frail man dies. DEATH.

Person points out that it wasn't really Duval, though... so who knows what it was. He is saddened and perplexed at Samantha's death.

Elmor then tells Darnel to kill Oni. Zurfal, somewhat irritated, points out to Elmor that he is not plot-centric at this point. Darnel asks Oni if he has killed someone. Then he attacks Oni and whacks him really hard. Oni turns invisible but Darnel with his eyes of righteousness can still see him! Oni, fearing for his life, surrenders to Darnel who being a nice chap turns the other cheek and heals Oni.

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“I sensed lies in what you did, Oni,” said Darnel.

“Well, I did fib”, replied Oni.

Elmor says, “That’s what you get for drinking my essence!”

Zurfal says gruffly, “Knock it off!”

We all have a big group hug.

Then we all head back to Oni’s throne room.

Oni talks with the general. We find out that the first order is to take the eastern continent. The other generals walk in. Some stuff happens that Person is wholly uninterested in, so he doesn’t record it. He slithers off.

Alone, a few rooms away, Person sighs. He looks like a frost wyrm still, but as time has passed, the animal-like feelings of the frost wyrm have ebbed away leaving only Person. He remembers one of the rooms with essence that he had passed through, and slithers back looking for a vial that might change him into a man. He finds a clear vial. He draws himself up, closes his eyes, and relaxes. Then he drinks of the clear vial. He focuses his inner spirit to dispell the physicalness of the frost wyrm. Slowly, he transforms back into a person. This time, he is just a man. Everything feels different, and at the same time, he feels a semblance of normalcy gain.

Person returns to the throne room, back to his original Person form and personality. The rest of Team Dragon is suspicious at first. They question him for a while, but soon are distracted by something shiny elsewhere.

Oni drinks one of the clear potions that Person drank. Elmor wanders off and plays a game of solitaire with the deck of many things, almost dies, but then becomes Lawful Good, fights death, lives, loses four levels and then regains them.

Then we sleep.

And then...?

Sleep? Gah—how long has it been since we did that? What lies in the darkness for Team Dragon now? Does it go bump in the night?

7.3 Dreams and discoveries

Session: 07/22/2007

Summary

As the navy heads for Tashal so that we and our newfound armies can conquer and destroy everything we know, we get some sleep—somewhat of a novelty in this game. During our sleep we have crazy dreams. Then we wake up, ask some questions, discover some crazy stuff, and then Zurfal has one of those “oh shit—what have I done” moments.

Details

We’re on our way to Tashal. Zurfal hunts around the ship and finds the bones of Genshin and the dead body of Natasha. We find all the magic items in that room (except the Eye of Vecna) and sort them into piles based on the second letter of the first word. In doing that, we discover an Orb of Dragon Kind. It’s a good thing that Natasha is dead and Elmor is playing solitaire with the Deck of Many Things because if they knew we had an Orb of Dragon Kind they’d be really angry.

Even though we’re in a ship in a massive armada of a massive army set on destroying the known world as we know it because Oni told them to, we all decide it’s a good time to get some sleep. Our slumber was filled with the shifty difficult-to-read words of a higher power. Our dreams are dark and lurid indeed.

We awake the next morning and despite the fact that Oni is master of all he surveys, we can’t seem to get a nice breakfast of english muffins, jam, and hot coffee. We decide this ship sucks.

Zurfal finishes up his altar to St. Cuthbert and casually brings Natasha to life. Natasha sits up, shakes her scaley head, turns back into a human, and wanders off to search for Elmor.

Zurfal prepares to bring Genshin back to life, but Genshin tells Zurfal that his time on this earth is over and that he does not want to return to the living.

We’re trying to figure out what we should do. It’s decided that instead of sailing in with the armada, we should fly because it’s a lot faster and we can

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get to Tashal and do our damage before the armada gets there and sets fire to everything we've ever known. At this point Person wonders aloud whether it might be a good idea to go after the other seals first.

Oni pulls one of his underlings over and we ask the underling many questions about the seals. We discover the following:

1. The seal of space was in the Sorkin mountains, but was recovered and that's the one that was on the ship. It's now broken.
2. The seal of mortality is somewhere in the ancient civilization of the Misyn.
3. The seal of time is somewhere in the south.
4. The seal of natural law was lost and possibly taken by a demon and used for wicked purposes.

It's possible that the seal of natural law was in the hands of Mor who is now in league with Duval. That's probably not a good thing.

After some more discussion we come to consensus that there's no way we could recover all the seals before the armada makes land. So we decide to head for Taschal.

We windwalk for 16 hours and step off on land somewhere in the north in the middle of a huge forest. Zurfal is looking pretty odd. He doesn't look like a dwarf anymore. For one thing, he's taller. For another, he's lost his beard.

GAH! Zurfal has lost his beard!

As a side note, we brought some troops with us when we windwalked. They're pretty cool. We make them gather firewood and such. They have no mouths, so they don't talk back.

Zurfal casts neutralize poison on Oni. Oni's body goes crazy and he starts spurting blood on Zurfal and everywhere else. Zurfal falls backwards severely burned.

Oni stabs himself in the arm and blood comes pouring out but it's not ordinary blood. The blood collects into an amorphous blob. As Oni falls to the ground from total lack of blood, the blob pulls itself together, grows legs and a shell, and starts running. Porsche, the less subtle of the Oni clan, launches

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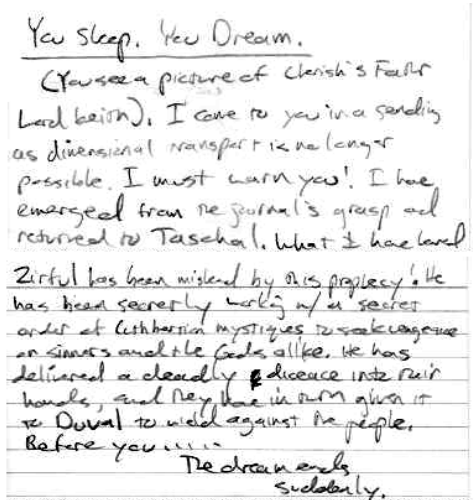
a fireball at the blob and it explodes! The troops throw grenades at it which also explode sending bits of fiery craziness everywhere setting bits of forest on fire.

Zurfal heals Oni who looks older and wrinkled now. It appears as though he's lost the ability to morph himself.

So we talk about that. We talk about how that makes Oni feel.

"Mad!", Oni says. He tries to make a face, but can't even seem to do that anymore.

Then we discover that Oni had some disease that was given to him by the evil druids way way way back when. Not only that, but Zurfal gave his comrades this disease, but his comrades were wiped out—likely by Duval. So it's possible that Duval is in possession of a disease that could wipe out everyone.



You sleep. You Dream.
(You see a picture of Clorish's Father Lord Keith). I came to you in a sending as dimensional transport is no longer possible. I must warn you! I have emerged from the journal's grasp and returned to Tascha! What I have learned
Zurfal has been misled by his prophecy! He has been secretly working w/ a secret order of Cathartian mystiques to seek vengeance on sinners and the fools alike. He has delivered a deadly disease into their hands, and they have in turn given it to Duval to wield against the people.
Before you...
The dragon ends suddenly.

Zurfal has a “oh shit—what have I done” moment.

The forest fire dies out of its own accord.

And then...?

Gah! So what doesn't Duval have? I'll tell you—he doesn't have brass balls.

Will Team Dragon waltz into Taschal and show Duval their collective cahones? Will it make Duval cry? Will anyone make it to level 17 or will all life in the world be wiped out before then?

7.4 There's no "I" in tyrant

Session: 08/17/2007

Summary

We go to sleep, we awake, we fly 16 hours, and then go through ten rounds of "can't we all just get along?"

Details

We awake after sleeping through the night nursing troubled thoughts. While we slept, our shock troops monitored the area around us keeping us safe.

In the morning, Elmor tells us about the Vashar and that Shanshek is their leader. We recall that Shanshek helped us into the archives long ago. She tells Elmor that she wants us to open all the seals, let the Great Mother out, and thus help her and the Vashar kill all the gods.

He also tells us that there are actually five seals—the fifth of which is only available after opening the first four.

It's a cold day and though it is somewhat light out, it seems darker than it should be. We talk a bit about our actual mission outside of the agendas of those who have been manipulating us for so long.

We do the cloud walk thing for 16 hours carrying us far far away from where we were. We land just outside of Olokand which is northwest of Tashal. As we passed over the city, we could see empty supply wagons coming in and full supply wagons leaving southwards. It appears as though a great army is camped out nearby, perhaps at the front of a great war.

We land in the forest south of Olokand off the road. We're surprised that we can't see the light that would have come from Tashal which is not far away from here. We send our troops out to scout the area.

Oni tells us The Mule told him that Tashal is burning. In a dream, The Mule said that the armies of the Toshido were attacking Tashal and that Duval released a plague upon the city. We suspect that he's probably not there any more.

We message Amui-Shar our former general: "It is I Zurfal. Team Dragon returns! Where is Duval?"

He messages back something along the lines of: "Tashal under siege. Darkness. Undead everywhere. Come quickly."

Our shock troops return and tell us things they overheard while near the road. The armies are due south. There is unnatural darkness and there is great battle in Tashal.

E Oni and Zurfal will try to
claim the Army for themselves.
They view you as incompetent and
will ~~not~~ trust you with such
power. They mock you in secret.

Elmor then tells us that he has discovered powerful magic that can help us. He gathers us close, then utters Oni's true name! Then Elmor runs towards Oni and whispers something in his ear. Oni shrieks! The shock troops come running back. Person steps towards Oni. Zurfal casts calm emotions. One of the shock troops arrives and tosses a grenade at Elmor.

KA-BOOM! We're all sent flying!

Zurfal casts sustained force on Elmor sending him twenty feet into the air.

The rest of the shock troops show up and fire their weapons at Elmor who falls unconscious.

Person wanders over to a dazed and confused Oni.

Natasha jumps a shock troop and takes him down.

Porsche discovers that Oni has been enchanted!

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Oni tells the troops that they should follow Elmor now which makes the troops very confused.

Zurfal violently thrusts Elmor at himself, catches Elmor's heel, and heals him back to full health.

Person knocks Natasha over.

Zurfal intimidates Oni into stopping the troops—which he does.

Elmor dismisses his enchantment on Oni, who becomes very enraged and rescinds his previous orders. The troops talk amongst themselves—they're very confused.

Elmor apologizes and thus starts a party conversation that exhibits all the sorts of psychological and drama diarrhea that gets you a guest spot on Springer.

In the process of all this we learn a few things:

1. We apparently still have other agendas.
2. Elmor is a do first—ask for forgiveness later kind of guy.
3. Oni is susceptible to various spells which could allow someone else to control the army—which would be bad.

We also learn that even though Zurfal has lost his beard, he's still pretty good in battle. Person is still learning how to solve problems using devices like diplomacy, intimidation, charisma, and bluff.

And then...?

Will we agree on a set of terms for the blood oath so that we may be bound by it and thus have an external thing guaranteeing that we can trust one another? Will we get to Tashal only to discover that we are our own worst enemies and that all the other bad guys pale in comparison? Will we find Duval there? Will we discover how Tashal could be invaded without much of a fight? Is it because Duval has been watching us with a crystal ball and has been so entertained he plum forgot about the Toshido?

Will we save the world after all or are we just the harbinger of doom ironically disguised as a hearty band of adventurers following the path of good intentions?

7.5 Bumping into old friends

Session: 09/28/2007

Summary

We agree to be friends again (at least until we're not playing our characters any more), we avoid the scouts, we discover some news, and then we do our old USO routine and ROCK THE HOUSE!

Details

So there we are in the middle of the woods possibly surrounded by our fiercest enemies, exchanging barbs and sowing the air with distrust and general discord.

After a few minutes of this, we pause and realize that if we are to have even the remotest possibility of succeeding and saving the world, we must do it as a team. Anything less and we will certainly be vanquished. With this realization, we agree to settle our issues after we're not playing our characters any more or in the afterlife whichever comes first.

The heavy conversation over, we're like old chums again. Then our scouts rush in to tell us other scouts have probably heard the commotion and they're on their way to scout the area.

Zurfal summons a Dire Bear which runs off towards the "enemy" scouts to distract them while we high-tail it out of here. We run through the dark woods for a while until we come across a gully with fresh drinking water and soft moss-covered leafy woody things to sleep on. It also comes with a tree that if you look from the right angle looks like a lusty lass. This gully is possibly the last bestest place we'll have to sleep for some time.

So we sleep letting our scouts keep an eye out for danger.

In the middle of the night, we're awakened by one of our scouts bringing a captured scout in. The scout is a Nokama, but very young and not particularly battle-hardy. We untie and ungag him, and tell him that we're Team Dragon! The kid is shocked.

Elmor interrogates him. "What are you doing here?" Turns out most of the disparate armies have joined together under the banner of Sir Morgan and

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they're all parked just outside of Tashal. We send the kid off with a message for Sir Morgan: "Team Dragon is back!"

Morning comes, but it sucks. First we windwalk to pick up Zurfal's new cohort from Olokand at the Cohorts-R-Us store. Her name is Libra. Zurfal promises not to let this one die, but points out that Genshin didn't want to be resurrected.

Then we windwalk towards Tashal and see the city enveloped in a cylinder of inky blackness that extends to the heavens.

Porsche does that spellcraft thing and says, "I've never seen anything like that before. It's not magical darkness."

It seems as though time inside the city has stopped. We suspect the Seal of Time has something to do with this.

To the east of the city is a huge army encampment. Many banners are flying—several of them from once enemy armies. We see the Toshido, the Jihadir, the High Sentinel's men, ... Even though the standards are flying and the men appear strong, it all looks pretty dismal and depressing.

There are some other encampments nearby, but they appear to be abandoned. Everything reeks of burnination.

We decide that it's important to raise the men's flagging spirits. We strafe the encampment from the air shouting, "TEAM DRAGON IS HERE!!!" At first, the men are confused and then excited and then they start putting their armor on with the expectation that the enemy is nigh.

We land just outside the encampment. Elmor conjures an illusion that has no equal: a beam of light breaks through the dark clouds above us and shines directly on our gleaming awesomeness. Angels pour forth from the heavens to circle us with angelic wonderfulness. We're radiating the warmth of a summer's day. The angels sing, "Team Dragon is here to raise your flagging spirits! T-E-A-M-D-R-A-G-O-N... What's that spell? TEAM DRAGON!"

The men go wild! The entire camp rushes towards us cheering wildly!

Then a group of mounted figures approach us breaking up the crowd. At the head is Lord Vanya. Behind him are generals, family heads, and various

other important figures through the land ¹. Additionally, we see our old friends Sir Morgan and Amui-Shar. Sir Morgan is seriously psyched. He hops off his mount, gives Person a hug (ew) and vigorously shakes the hands of everyone else. Lord Vanya is not pleased.

Lord Vanya asks us to prove that we're Team Dragon, which is a little ridiculous given the circumstances. Then he asks us to prove that we were really in the Gulag of Nye given that no one has escaped the Gulag of Nye. Bah humbug!

Sir Morgan invites us to discuss the situation. We follow to a massive tent. On the way, we agree among ourselves that we're going to be hush hush about the army we've got coming and the whole plague thing.

Outside the tent, We're told that our cohorts must wait outside which is a little silly and we don't take too kindly to this. Inside the tent has been sectioned off. We follow Sir Morgan and others to an empty conference room.

Through accidental happenstance, we discover that Lord Vanya's daughter, Lady Vanya, is dead. Lord Vanya talks about how the Toshido stood up against Duval while Team Dragon was putzing around no where to be seen. Then he tells about how Duval released a plague upon the Toshido and seriously almost wiped them out.

We find out more about Tashal. Inside the city, evil undead reign supreme. Most folks who go in come out with some kind of plague which renders you into a bubbling pool of flesh. Lord Vanya says that his people say the plague is magical in nature. While we know a lot about this plague we don't let on. Lord Vanya insists on making us prove we are who we say we are which is a bit hard given that we've changed a bit. He eventually gives up and leaves in a huff.

Sir Morgan is concerned and makes us promise not to heckle Lord Vanya any further. We promise. Even so, we definitely don't trust Lord Vanya at all and suspect he's up to no good.

Sir Morgan doesn't know what to do. He has observed that time flows differently inside the city than outside. He's concerned that an army is growing

¹ Many of whom we've pissed off one way or another over the course of the last few years.

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inside the city and will come out and stalk the world destroying everything. That sounds kind of sucky, but it doesn't really phase us much.

Then Person mentions we have an army coming. This really surprises Sir Morgan. Oni asks a bunch of questions trying to ascertain what kind of people the plague affects and what kind of people the plague doesn't seem to affect at all.

Sir Morgan decides he needs time to think things over and he leaves.

Zurfal, Libra and Person head off to heal the plagued. Turns out they're in a huge pen and they've been locked in and left to die of plague. Zurfal has a theory that if we make them atone, then they won't be evil and then the plague won't affect them anymore. It sounds like a good theory so we work all day on converting people to good. It's not clear how successful we were.

Elmor gathers information and asks around about Cherizsche. Turns out she married Sir Morgan, Sir Morgan slipped her the Justice Maker, and she went into the city in one of the raids and never came out. Sir Morgan is really bummed about the whole thing.

And then...?

Lock'n'load gentlemen—it's time to grab two slices of bread each and make a JUSTICE sandwich with extra mayo! Today is a bad day to be evil!

7.6 Time to enter the darkness

Session: 10/28/2007

Summary

We deal with distrust, big friends, darkness and blobs and now The Mule wants to be our friend.

Details

Zurfal and Libra sleep off the intense weariness of guiding a hundred people to atone. Person practices with his quarter staff.

Oni hangs out with “the family” and bumps into Osborn who was the leader of the Swans. Osborn tells Oni that The Mule is in the city making the best of things. He had a ring that kept him safe from harm which we stole, but it looks like he’s gotten it back. Osborn thinks the darkness originates from the third tower: the Tower of Light. The top of it was destroyed and is now spewing darkness.

We sleep, then we wake up.

People are pouring in from all over the land excited that Team Dragon is here to kick some ass. Soldiers, families, orphans, mothers, daughters, horny confused teenagers writing cheesy poetry filled with existential angst and feelings that they’re just not understood—they’re all psyched we’re here. We’re that awesome.

Zurfal and Person check the sick people. The ones who didn’t atone fought with the ones who did and got a beat down. The ones who did atone have built altars to St. Cuthbert and Zurfal. They seem to be looking better.

We are visited by a messenger who asks us to meet with Sir Morgan immediately. We head off. We arrive. Lord Vanya is there with questions about the plague and doubting everything we’ve said so far. Turns out someone told him something and he’s now trying to discredit us. Of course, most of what he’s saying is true but we deny it anyhow. We argue about it for a while until Oni agrees to do a blood test. Lord Vanya storms out. Person, who is not one for diplomacy, conversation, and sitting around discussing things, decides he needs some action right now and heads out for a walk.

Suddenly, two men rip through the tent canvas and attempt to kill Zurfal. Zurfal rips the arms off of one of them. Elmor bluffs the other, confusing him, allowing Oni to deftly stab him in the back. The armless man dies. We question the survivor and discover that these two assassins are priests of a god named Weejas. Turns out that Weejas is a bit pissed off that Zurfal and his right hand are going to go around and close the seals and end magic in the land forever. Turns out our big mission has consequences for everyone and some folks are really not happy about it.

Oni gets a message from his army. The message says that the army has at last landed in the south. Oni tells them to march to Tashal and join the party.

Person returns, surprised to see one dead armless guy, blood everywhere, and

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one guy being questioned heavily—all clues that he has completely missed some action while on his walk. Lord Vanya also returns as does a messenger with the results of Oni's blood test. The blood test is negative—the rumors are clearly false. Lord Vanya is really pissed off. He storms out and we discuss the battle plan.

Suddenly gongs and warning bells start going off. We rush out of the planning tent, hop on horses that are oddly saddled up and ready for us, and ride out to the emergency: twenty-one forest giants running towards the encampment. As we near them, we recognize several of them. We reach them. They stop and we stop. We have a nice little chat with them and they tell us they are returning the favor and have come to join our forces to fight evil ².

We introduce the giants to the micronians". Sir Morgan is stunned at this fortuitious event. We're all like, "This stuff happens all the time to us."

We head back to the camp with the giant and everyone cheers us again. We barely notice this time, though. We head back to the tent and start making plans to enter Tashal and win this war!

As we're making plans, we feel the earth shudder and time pauses for a smidge. It is the most disconcerting feeling.

Zurfal raises his eyebrow, pauses, and says, "I don't like that at all. This is not good."

Sir Morgan says, "Oh, this happens all the time. Damned nuisance while I'm shaving."

Elmor asks, "What do you think it is?"

Sir Morgan points in the direction of Tashal. "It's hard to know for sure, but it's almost certainly distortions caused by the rubbing of two timelines traveling at different speeds and rubbing against one another. At least, that's my guess."

We all look at one another, shrug, and continue our plan making.

A messenger runs in and tells us that Lord Vanya has disappeared. "Lord Vanya has disappeared!"

Oni looks at Elmor, "Have you noticed the story telling is getting redundant."

² See 11/5/2004: Wolves, giants, and index cards. Yes, the debt was that long ago.

Elmor looks grave and replies, “I have. It makes my bardic skin crawl.” Elmor looks at Will.

Will says, “Oops—sorry about that. I’ll rein in on my editorial shenanigans.”

The story continues. We use one of our many “let’s see what so-and-so is doing” spells and discover Lord Vanya riding on horseback. We’re trying to figure out where he’s riding off to when he suddenly disappears. We suspect he was a traitor and that all that doubt and questioning stuff was to get information to take back to his evil cohorts. Jerk.

We leave the tent, hop on the horses, and attempt to follow Lord Vanya’s path. We’re not sure if we follow it exactly, but we do reach a veil of darkness that hangs down across our path like a stage curtain.

Oddly, Lord Keith stands there, at the edge of darkness, looking back at us. In his hands he holds the Shepherd’s Journal. He also has our oath stone! He tells us it is time to enter the darkness and prepare for the end. Then, it’s as if a spirit suddenly leaves him and he collapses. The book falls to the ground and the oath stone rolls from his hand.

Before we can dismount, Lord Keith wakes up and slowly gets back on his feet. He’s completely discombobulated and has no clue what’s going on or where he is. Sir Morgan takes this moment to tell Lord Keith, “Hello father-in-law!”³ which only makes the poor man more confused. Then Sir Morgan gingerly puts Lord Keith on his horse, sends the horse away and once again we totally forget about Lord Keith.

We turn invisible. Oni calls some of his warriors who join us and oath stone with us. We discover that they think some really weird stuff. Seriously.

Then we walk through the curtain of darkness. It’s not unlike jumping into a cold lake. It takes us a moment to re-orient ourselves. We can now see on this side of the curtain, but there’s not much to see since there’s a huge wall in front of us. We take a few moments to climb the wall and slide down the other side.

The whole place looks like it’s aged centuries. The streets are littered with evidence of plague. There’s nothing living around us. We move silently

³ Sir Morgan married Cherizsche who is Lord Keith’s daughter.

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along the back roads heading towards the third tower. Then Sir Morgan stops us—he detects evil ahead.

We send some scouts ahead to see what's going on. There are skeletons and vampires fighting a blob. We decide to sneak around unseen. We travel for a while all quiet-like.

Then we round the corner and this huge mother-fucking blob of Oni snot blobulates at us! It wants to join with Oni. Oni gets scared, turns tail and runs around the corner. The blob attacks us!

Porsche whacks it with a fireball! Oni, despite being far away from the blob, also feels the burning flesh pain. Porsche whacks it again with a fireball. Person bull-rushes it, breaks his quarter staff, and tries to hold the blob in place. Zurfal channels the power of Cigam to dispel it. The blob loses its hardness and Person slips half way into it. Elmor breathes acid breath on it and acidifies Person's hindquarters.

The blob spits nasty stuff at everyone! The nasty stuff attempts to get into their mouths and ears!

Person dives into the blob—it's unable to penetrate him. Libra casts flamestrike toasting the top of the blob. Porsche and Elmor struggle with their mini-blobs as do guards and other people. Person feels the carapace that has formed from the flamestrike and notices there's a pulsing something or other. Zurfal creates St. Cuthbert's crushing hand to stop the blob from oozing towards Oni.

Two of our guards explode and die. Tentacles lash out from the blob and inject Elmor and some other guards with progeny! Person swims towards the source of the pulse and finds a heart. He tries to crush it and is attacked by crazy stuff inside the blob. Zurfal casts Mordenkanin's disjunction which dispels everything everywhere and almost blows up the earth⁴. St. Cuthbert's hand disappears. The blob is seriously hurt. Person grabs the heart and tears it out. The blob dies.

Oni falls to the ground—as if his heart had stopped.

Time stops for everyone except Zurfal who uses his anti-magic to keep time going. He notices night walkers and crazy stuff walking towards us. And

⁴ That would have been an interesting end to this story....

The Mule. He anti-magics all of us so we can move, Elmor grabs Oni and we run like hell down one of the streets. Person grabs a great sword that he finds lying about.

The Mule flies in from above and lands in front of us and says, “Friends! I’ve invited you here!” We fireball him and as he dives out of the way we run by him and keep running towards the third tower.

We get there to find a small army of nightcrawlers, vampires, zombies, skeletons, and two undead leader things. Also The Mule. We chat with him and it turns out he wants to be friends with us and attack Duval. Duval has the seal of time. He’s making the darkness because it makes life easier (he’s a vampire). The Mule urges us to leave the darkness machine alone and to go with him to kill Duval.

What shall we do?

And then...?

Friends with The Mule? No way! Will we run into Lord Vanya so we can tell him that when we rule the world, he’s not invited over for tea and cake ever? What would Darnel do...? Where is Darnel? Oh crap—we forgot about him again!

7.7 The death of Natasha

Session: 11/09/2007

Summary

We talk, fight, fight, fight, fight, fight and fight some more. We test out a whole load of cool stuff we can do now. Natasha perishes. We enter the tower.

Details

Quick recap: we’re talking with The Mule. He wants to help us defeat Duval, but there are a bunch of weird stipulations involved and we’re still not wildly sure we can trust him.

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Person almost immediately becomes bored with talk and urges his comrades to do anything they can to either provoke a combat situation or leave. Oni, somewhat uncharacteristically, agrees with Person's sentiments. Zurfal and Elmor attempt various negotiating attempts with The Mule.

But then a red arrow flies out of no where and hits the tower just above The Mule's head. The Mule sees this, turns around, and runs into the tower. As soon as this happen, the zombies, ghouls, ghastrs, skeletons and vampires all start running for us.

Roll for initiative!

Zurfal, Libra and Sir Morgan take turns casting turn undead and turn many of the smaller undead into dust.

Elmor chooses this time to tell us all about Mor and his true name. He then goes up a level.

Person tells everyone to stay in the side-street so that we don't spread out across the battlefield and become overwhelmed. He promptly charges out of the side-street into a throng of zombies and others.

Zurfal buffs Person with bull strength! Elmor buffs Person with inspire heroism! Oni enlarges Person! Person roars and tears off his shirt in testosterone-induced eight-foot masculinity⁵.

Death, dismemberment, destruction, mayhem... Undead are turned to dust, overrun, tripped, stampeded, crushed, discorded, shot at, turned, kicked in the nuts and all kinds of crazy stuff. Zurfal summons 3 celestial elephants that stomp, slam and gore their way through the undead throng.

A deathbringer charges the party and is utterly vanquished in a single round by Zurfal wielding the awesome power of St. Cuthbert!

We notice a group of men running towards the castle dressed as Toshido. One of them is Lord Vanya and the hair (singular) on Zurfal's neck raises as he realizes that another in the group is Shanshek. A red arrow appears out of nowhere and strikes one of the humans down before they reach the tower.

3 nightcrawlers use propaganda tactics, but are eventually eviscerated (much to their surprise) and are only able to get off one round of Finger of Death.

⁵ Now he's only wearing purple shorts.

But what a nasty finger it turned out to be. Person dies. But then he recalculates the numbers and discovers he missed a +2 and suddenly springs to life again. Natasha, who is not so lucky, perishes.

We win! The undead lay around us in piles of undead death.

Person hefts Natasha's body and we run for the tower. We enter and walk up a flight of stairs into a large memorial for previous sentinels. Up another set of stairs and we're in a storage room filled with casks of oil that practically call out to us, "Set us on fire! Set us on fire!" We resist because we're a lot more mature now ⁶ and ascend another set of stairs to discover The Mule frozen while trying to jump out a window!

Oni removes the ring The Mule is wearing. Zurfal pulls the dagger out of The Mule's back. The Mule unfreezes and falls to the ground in a one-man pile of blubbering lameness. Person is disgusted. We attempt to learn things from The Mule, but it's hard. He's afraid of dying, he's lived for many many many many years, and his "friends" are trying to kill him. Elmor attempts to entice him with the legendary "gold piece of immortality". The Mule is enticed, but he's still pretty useless.

He attempts to jump out the window again, but we grab him, tie him up, and leave him here with Natasha's dead body as we ascend another set of stairs.

And then...?

Will any more of us fall in battle (or incompetence) before the journey's end is in sight? Will we set the city free only to accidentally set it on fire and burn it all down?

At the end of our adventures, will anyone remember the deeds of Team Dragon and invite us over for tea and cake when we're through? Will any of us write a book about our legendary tales and make a million gold coins only to be imprisoned the following year for tax evasion?

7.8 Up the tower

Session: 11/30/2007

⁶ The Team Dragon of a few months ago totally would have set fire to the whole place.

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Summary

We go up the tower, we see a dead guy, we go up some more, we fight a dragon, we go up a bit more, we get to the top, we fight some more, bad guys come out of the wood work, we kick their asses, then we go back down the tower.

Details

Last session we tied up The Mule and continued ascending the tower. We reach a room with a dead guy with a red arrow through his heart lying very dead on the stairs. The red arrow has a 6 on it. Uh oh. The dead guy has a brand on his chest which looks like an infinity symbol over a sword. This is the symbol of the Cult of Shanshek. Looks like someone from Rogue Group 6 shot someone in the Cult of Shanshek. Our enemies are fighting amongst themselves.

We notice that up the stairs there's a door and that the door has some magic trap on it. So we decide to set the stairs on fire because that seemed like the obvious thing to do ⁷. Zufal bull-strengths Person.

On the wall, there's a dumb-waiter with a shaft that heads upwards. Oni spider-climbs up the shaft until he reaches an opening. He sees a few more dead guys with red arrows through their hearts. He decides to collect some of the red arrows. The room is a huge room with a staircase that goes around the room up and up and up. There are window slits along the walls going up with the staircase. There's a crane and it looks like someone hauled up something heavy, dragged it across the floor, and upwards.

The rest of Team Dragon takes the stairs which are no longer on fire on account of the fire running out of fuel. We ascend the stairs into a huge room. A man stands up out of the sparkles and it's Duval. We tell him about the other Duval and he's not really interested. He tells us he has a surprise for us and we're not really interested. Generally it's a pretty unsuccessful conversation in terms of finding common ground to chit-chat about.

Then Duval disappears in a puff of fairy dust and we hear the sounds of a dragon outside of the tower. The dragon is in some kind of bondage to Duval. That's a bit scary.

⁷ Mature, shmature.

Elmor sprouts wings and flies out the window to do some diplomacy with the dragon. Aloud, it wonders why it shouldn't just kill him. Elmor tells the dragon tall tails and the dragon listens for a while occasionally breathing fire on the rest of us. The dragon says that it must listen to its orders and that it must see us die. Then it whacks Elmor back into the tower.

Oni, a floor above us, throws some of the bodies he found down the stairs so that we can use them. Porsche makes an illusion of Team Dragon going up the stairs and making fun of the dragon. The dragon whacks us with fire and Elmor creates a greater illusion of us burning to death ⁸.

The dragon sees us "burning to death", smiles and flies off.

Go team!

We wait a bit to make sure the dragon is gone. Zurfal goes up the stairs a bit to a slit and looks out across the city to see the dragon on another tower minding his own business. We discover the last of Sir Morgan's men is dead. We're concerned because we only have one or two red-shirts left.

We climb the stairs and rejoin Oni. Oni searches around and finds a bit of armor. The stones of the stairs are broken in places. The thing that was being moved through here must have been really heavy. We climb the stairs and notice that as we climb higher, everything sounds more muffled and the ambient light grows dimmer... darker....

We arrive at a stone door. We look up and it's the top of the tower. There is a seal here—the seal of Time. The seal is on a platform that's 6 feet in the air from the top of the tower. There's a ring of blood around the platform causing some kind of barrier.

Lord Vanya stands in the ring looking really grim. He holds a mace and a shield—and they look grim, too. He's really pissed about his daughter's death and pretty much everything else.

Lord Vanya challenges our strongest fighter. Everyone looks at Person. Person smiles, cracks his knuckles, gets a shetload of buffs, steps into the ring and after screwing around for a bit, decapitates Lord Vanya. Weirdly, Lord Vanya's body pulls itself back together and keeps attacking. The head hops over and chomps on Person's leg! Eww!

⁸ Oddly, no lurid nymphs this time—just burning to death.

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Oni and the others run around the ring and discover that the ring comes up off the ground and over a stone—so it looks interrupted. Oni enters through this opening and shoots the head in the head⁹ knocking it away.

Porsche casts dispel magic and Lord Vanya's body falls apart. A glowing angel alights on the tower—it's Cherizsche!

She says that the gods have sent her here to help penetrate the magical barriers to seal the seal and continue our mission. She offers to take Zurfal's hand and bring him to the seal under her protection. Zurfal aura-reads the angel but she resists! Screwy—why would an angel prevent an aura read?

Porsche hits the angel with a dispel magic and for a split second, Cherizsche flickers. We don't think it's Cherizsche anymore! She goes to stab and sever Zurfal's hand!

Zurfal stabs Shanshek with the paralysis dagger we pulled off The Mule. Porsche telekenesis the hand and arm. Sir Morgan almost freaks out.

Person rushes the paralyzed body of Shanshek. Cherizsche appears from the portal to the tower. She runs over and slashes at Zurfal's other hand! Sir Morgan freaks out and goes crazy!

The Mule climbs up the side of the tower and Oni hits him with an arrow causing The Mule to slip and fall all the way down.

Person bullrushes the new Cherizsche and takes her down. Sir Morgan yelps and starts attacking us!

Shanshek climbs up the side of the tower and says, "Stop! Heed my words!" Libra casts spiritual weapon and slugs Shanshek upside the head. Shanshek falls unconscious, her words never uttered. The Cherizsche under Person morphs into an unrecognizable dead body. The body of Lord Vanya morphs into a very beat up, bruised and dead body of Lord Vanya—but it looks like it died a while ago.

Zurfal leaps up the platform and closes the Seal of Time. The seal turns to dust, time rushes in, dawn appears on the horizon and the city lights up in a majestic light-filled canvas of epic proportions.

Libra holds Zurfal's hand up to Zurfal who regenerates it back on.

⁹ Headshot!

Sir Morgan bursts into tears, but then pulls himself together.

We see our armies rally themselves outside the city preparing to assail the place.

We pick up Shanshek and head downstairs to where we left The Mule. Only he's not there. His bonds are crumpled up on the ground.

Zurfal looks out a window and sees a dot on the horizon coming towards us from the south. Something really big.

And then...?

Who's left on Team Dragon's bad-guy-hit-list? Is the end near?

7.9 Running out of juice

Session: 1/11/2008

Summary

The gang was all ready to meet and play when Will's car died.

Description

B had brought dinner to Mark's hallowed halls where we were planning to game until the wee hours of the morning or until Duval's dreams of world domination were over (whichever came first). Erik and Brian were on their way, too.

Will was merrily on his way to Mark's house and was listening to the radio when suddenly the radio started turning off and turning on. Will also noticed his windshield wipers were slowing down and the lights in the car were dimming and the speedometer said he was going 20 or so, but ... that was clearly not the case.

Suspecting foul play, Will succeeded in several spot checks and a quick-thinking check and pulled over to the shoulder of route 2 just across the street from that huge church where his car sputtered into silence. One phone call to Better World Club and the tow truck was on its way. Will called in and stated that he wasn't going to be able to make it. Boo hiss!

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And then...?

And then the gang scheduled a new date to play.

7.10 Ch-ch-changes

Session: 04/12/2008

Summary

Team Dragon collects at the bottom of the tower, we run headlong across the city to the Council Building, crazy stuff happens, we kill Duval, we close the Seal of Mortality, Person dies, we banish Mor, the Island of Banath lands next door, Person comes back, we close the Seal of Everything-Else, and then we take a much-needed nap.

Details

Team Dragon is standing in the tower next to where we tied up The Mule. It's clear that he's escaped, but we're not sure where he might have gone. In the distance we can see the Council Building—the last stop for the Team Dragon Wreck-The-World-To-Save-It tour bus. Atop the Council Building is the ancient red dragon that recently almost cooked our bacon. It seems we'll have to tangle with it once more and it probably won't fall for the clever ruse twice.

Down the stairs of the tower to the base we go. As we leave through the main entrance, we discover there's a sea of undead that fills the clearing around the base of the tower and spreads down the streets in every direction we can see. Our mouths agape, we're wondering how we can get from here to the Council Building intact so that we can be slain by the ancient red dragon.

Also in the clearing is a wooden structure upon which is nailed bits and pieces of what we only assume is The Mule. The word "TRAITOR" is scrawled in an almost childish script upon the wooden structure.

The undead see us. This is a bit unnerving and we begin to deliberate about how to kill an uncountable infinity of undead when a fiery red arrow hits a bit of The Mule and sets the wooden structure on fire. Upon the rooftops we

see a red-cloaked figure dressed in red watching us. Zurfal recognizes this figure as Reya, one of the last members of Rogue Group 6 still alive ¹⁰.

A few more arrows fly and we take cover in the tower. We continue to deliberate a bit and then re-oath stone.

Then we begin to hear some commotion outside and see beams of searing light striking undead in the clearing turning them to dust. We poke our heads outside to see figures with white robes rushing down one of the streets into the clearing leaving a wake of dead undead behind them. Leading them is a bearded man of 65-ish holding a diamond encrusted staff.

We step outside of the shelter of the tower again as these white-clad figures approach us. We recognize them by the giant Z they have on their robes: Zurfalites! w00t!

As the bearded man approaches, we recognize him as a much older Joe! He rushes over to Zurfal, hands Zurfal the staff, says something while crying, blesses us in the name of St. Cuthbert, then pours his life energy into the staff and dies. Zurfal, a grim look on his face says, “Come. This staff will protect us from the undead for a limited time. We must go.”

We run down the street with the Zurfalites with the staff incinerating any undead in our path. As we’re running, we hear something like, “TRAITORS FIRST!” and red arrows hit Porsche and Oni. Zurfal can’t heal people while running, so he hops on Person’s back (27 strength) and hits Person with an enlarge (now a 32 strength).

We keep running down the street and past a fountain with peasants trapped by undead. Person wants to go back, but is convinced by the others that it’s probably an illusion. Person sheds a tear as we rush by. Some of the Zurfalite red-shirts are picked off by red arrows and die. Oni creates a wall of fire behind us which burns a lot of stuff, but doesn’t hit Reya as near as we can tell. We’re dogged by red arrows hitting people as we run past the next tower and on to the Council Building.

The staff is running out of juice. Zurfal pours some of his life energy into the staff to recharge it a bit. He looks a bit older now.

Several nightcrawlers appear in front of us and throw wagons and other

¹⁰ Or is she? She’s looking a bit pale in the face.

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things at us. Zurfal summons several celestial elephants to stampede in front of us and take out all the stuff in our way. Oni summons a Nightmare to find Reya and take her out.

It's awesome! We're totally feeling awesome and we're taking out the enemy in droves and we're thinking that we're totally invincible... until the ancient red dragon sees us.

The dragon crashes in front of us and breathes in. Then the dragon exhales fiery dragon breath and we flinch because we're about to be incinerated, but a cold wind passes over our shoulders and cancels out the fiery dragon breath! A massive silver dragon bowls the red dragon over—the dragon mother has come to save us! w00t!

Zurfal grunts, “What a nightmare.”

The dragon mother speaks to us in an airy voice: “Children of the Shepherd, take my blood and enter unharmed. Seriously. Stop standing there like big idiots with mouths agape and get in that building and kick some ass. Why are you still here listening to me? Haven't you heard a word I said? Are you paralyzed? Haven't you ever seen two huge mother-fucking dragons battling each other in such a way that they're crushing a good part of the city before? Gods! Get in that building right now or I'll throw this ancient red dragon at you! ...”

At that point, Team Dragon runs into the Council Building.

We're standing in the audience hall. There are three doors in front of us and probably a lot of other description involved, but we run through the double-door and move on to the next room.

Person, Zurfal, Sir Morgan the anguished, Oni, Elmor, Porsche, Libra, and the last two Zurfalite red-shirts enter a large oval room. In the middle is a fountain which is half-destroyed and filled with blood dripping down from bodies hung from the ceiling. There are ten pillars carved with runes with holes cut out of them by someone who clearly isn't a professional stone carver.

Reya is sitting in a rickety chair at the other end of the room. She mocks us, throws her cloak down, and disappears.

Zurfal casts true vision which doesn't really help much. Porsche says, “This

room has been cursed.”

Person walks forward into the room and we all fan out. Reya peeks out from behind a chair and whacks Person with a couple of arrows. Person drops from the shock, then pulls himself together and stands up.

Team Dragon fans out and attacks. Zurfal casts dispel magic which is absorbed by the room. Oni shoots a red arrow at Reya which is blown off course by the room. After some time, someone investigates the holes in the pillars and we decide the pillars are cursing the room and preventing Reya from being hit.

Person attacks a pillar but doesn’t get anywhere with that. Libra casts dispel magic at one of the holes and it coughs up black goo.

Person puts his hand in a pillar hole. He hears a voice which asks him a question. He chooses Oni who loses 4 intelligence permanently.

Oni puts his hand in a pillar and chooses Person who loses his left arm. Take that!

Zurfal puts his hand in a pillar, gets a dagger, and stabs Libra, killing her, and shocking the bejesus out of the Zurfalites who stop following us.

Elmor puts his hand in a pillar and chooses Person who loses 4 charisma, 4 spot, 4 listen, and is permanently disfigured.

Porsche puts her hand in a pillar and chooses Oni who gets a disease and loses 3 constitution.

Oni puts his hand in a pillar and chooses Elmor who loses all his level 3 spells.

Person puts his hand in a pillar and chooses Zurfal who loses 9 hit points permanently.

Zurfal puts his hand in a pillar and chooses Elmor whose magic items all blow up.

Porsche puts her hand in a pillar and chooses Elmor who loses strength.

Oni puts his hand in a pillar and chooses himself and loses 2 levels.

The pillars are all “fixed” and the curse is lifted. Reya shrieks and then The Staff walks in. It’s the automaton we had “breakfast” with ages ago. He tells

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us we have to talk to the Oracle and that he will deal with Reya.

Zurfal trembles a bit and wipes the tears from his eyes.

Then we move onwards. Down a hallway and up some stairs and into a wide hall with two bahamuts or something like that are hanging out. Elmor decides to go up and offer them a lollipop if they'd step out of our way, but they charge us. Person steps up and calls upon the celestials to deal with the bahamuts. They do.

We run onwards and take the left fork. We end up in a room with a huge eyeball on the wall and statues all over the place. Zurfal takes out the journal and shows it to the eye which blinks. The journal withers and turns into a beautiful silver book. Then the oracle speaks.

It says many great things which would be easier to understand if Mark had typed it out or had written it within the last 6 months. We're all stunned and awed.

Then the oracle gives us the staff, spear, journal and crown. We discuss who should hold which thing for a while and end up with Person taking the spear, Zurfal taking the crown, Elmor taking the journal, and Oni getting the shaft..., er, the staff.

Onwards!

The eye swings open and it's a vault door! We pass through the vault which is filled with great treasure and end up in a bedroom. In the bedroom is a door that leads to a narrow spiral staircase. We climb the stairs and find ourselves in an observatory.

In the center is the Seal of Mortality and strapped to the Seal is Cherizsche who is giving birth, dying, being resurrected, repeat. Also, and of much lesser consequence so much so that after noticing we promptly forget about it, are Person's brothers. There are other people, too. On the other side of the room is Duval trying to heal himself of the plague he unleashed upon the city. Silly boy.

In an attempt to hasten the inevitable, Person, Sir Morgan and Zurfal walk over to the other side of the room through a force barrier and confront Duval. He screams a wail of the banshee thing and Porsche dies ¹¹.

¹¹ It's interesting to note that at this point, all of our cohorts have died and the only people in

We have a hell of a fight with Duval with searing light, holy words, holy shit and all kinds of crazy stuff happening. Finally, “Duval” “dies” and Mor jumps out of his body and shoots across the room to Elmor. Zurfal jumps in the way and Mor inhabits him. Person rushes over and beats the crap out of Zurfal. Mor jumps out of Zurfal and into Elmor. Person heals Zurfal and Zurfal tags the Seal of Mortality and closes it. Thus all healing and resurrection spells are no longer.

This sets Cherizsche and others free and Cherizsche proceeds to give birth. It’s ok, though, because Oni and Sir Morgan are there to help her ¹².

Person then grimly sets his steely gaze on Elmor, throws down his spear, wanders over and punches Elmor in the face. Elmor crumples to the ground.

With Elmor unconscious, we wonder what we should do. Several theories are put forth with Oni urging us to kill Elmor. Person isn’t too keen on this idea. We discuss some other options. Person beats himself up a bit so that he’s at 5 hit points and throws his spear to the other side of the room in case worst comes to worst.

Zurfal casts hold monster on Elmor, then attempts to pull Mor out of him and banish him to another plane. This doesn’t work and Mor jumps into Person.

Person, being controlled by Mor, turns and goes after the spear. As he reaches it, Oni lets off a fireball completely incinerating Person and Mor ¹³.

Zurfal heals Elmor using bandages and things like that and gets him to consciousness.

Darnel flutters in. He sees the baby that Cherizsche has birthed and says, “My queen!” As he says that, Cherizsche’s last breath leaves her. Sir Morgan cradles her lifeless body and rocks back and forth.

The observatory starts trembling and it’s hard to stand.

Then Person walks in the door now a risen martyr marking the eighth transformation of his character. He says, “I have returned to bring the King and

the room are Team Dragon members and x-members. Someone should tell Jeff that Sir Morgan made it to the end.

¹² Turns out Oni took a level in Midwife.

¹³ Elmor’s ballad of the epic quests of Team Dragon suggest that Person smiled just before being hit with the fireball.

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Queen to the throne room—they must sit.”

We discover the thing that’s coming towards Tashal is none other than the Island of Banath inhabited by all kinds of grim and gory things that are so grim and gory that we can’t even pronounce their names. It’s being led by Mor’s brother ¹⁴. He’s pissed. He’s coming for blood.

We rush down to the throne room and the king and queen sit. The light tears from the ground and incinerates all the bad guys, the king, the queen, all the bad stuff on the Island, and most of the bad stuff in the vicinity. The Island crashes next to Taschal forming a mountain-ish thing. Mor’s brother is petrified—like a giant silver-ish statue.

We rush off to the Island where the last seal is located. Zurfal closes it. In doing so, all magic disappears from the world and we all turn human.

With evil gone from the land, Team Dragon sits down to discuss the last thing on the agenda: who shall be the new Sentinel.

And then...?

And then that’s it. There’s no more “and then”.

¹⁴ They have a complicated family.

Epilogue

We made it. Holy shit, we made it!

Jack Burton, Big Trouble in Little China

8.1 And then...?

Person helps choose the next Sentinel. With that last task completed, Person takes in a deep breath and surveys the land around this island mountain.

Then he bids TeamDragon farewell:

“For many moons I have been a harbinger of destruction. I have destroyed lives, buildings, ancient ruins, plainscapes, cities, families, evil plans, and demon’s souls. I’ve done it with my hands, fire, incompetence, strength, fear, fantastic criticals, wildly improbable fumbles, courage and cowardice. I have done it with good and evil intentions. I have even destroyed things and been completely ignorant of the fact.

“It is time that I go through my ninth and last transformation. It is time that I go out into the world to help rebuild all the things that I have had a hand in destroying. It won’t get me a lot of experience points, so leveling will be a lot slower, but ... this is work that I must do.

“See you in the next life, brothers.”

Person wanders off, changing as he goes.

Zurfal grunts. “I have spent my life blind to the world in my zeal to serve St. Cuthbert. I am no longer the dwarven cleric I was not so long ago. It is

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time that I go out and see the world for what it is, not what it could be after a healthy helping of Justice.”

Zurfal stands, picks up a rock, hefts it feeling the crevices and points, and wanders off seeing the world with new human eyes.

Elmor says, “I’ve got to start writing this shit down right now because otherwise I’m going to forget and this is the best story ever. This epic tale has a power, a truth, a love that no other tale ever has had. I don’t see anyone holding a notebook or a pen, so I best find one as soon as I can. Farewell, gents! Hopefully, our lives will be as stunning and awesome in the next world as it was in this one!”

Elmor runs off seeking a notebook and something to write with.

Sir Morgan just sits there looking out at the horizon.

Oni says, “Figures. No one wants to hear what I’m going to do now. Well, I didn’t want to tell them anyhow. It would probably just make them cross.” Oni sets off.

8.2 Great memories

Mark setting the egg timer denoting the time when the world ends because we’re taking forever to make a decision.

Team Wagon.

Wives, girlfriends, houses, apartments, babies and dogs messing up our gaming schedule.

Trying to roll golconda.

Box of Joe.

Deciphering Mark’s almost completely illegible notes.

“I think we can all agree that if Joe had been filled with coffee instead of first level incompetence, we would have been more careful about keeping him from harm.” B in an email on 9/14/2004.

Gaming at MIT (nerd score x 2).

Illusions of nymphs and lurid women doing dirty lascivious things.

Finding the cohesion.

B's theme music selection.

Oni's Nigerian scam.

The Pajama Party massacre.

Rolling really crappy when it really counted.

Blowing lots and lots of stuff up.

Setting lots and lots and lots of stuff on fire.

Oni inflicting MASSIVE damage with a wooden spoon and Elmor buffs.

Person's peasant eating.

Oni the Dragon Tamer.

Losing track of Joe, Darnel, Inferno, Lord Keith, and Darnel.

"All right, sweethearts, what are you waiting for? Breakfast in bed? Another glorious day in TEAM DRAGON! A day in TEAM DRAGON is like a day on the farm. Every refugee's a banquet! Every mission a cartographic nightmare! Every battle is a slaughter of disasterous proportions! I LOVE TEAM DRAGON!" Will in an email on 6/3/2005.

Loula sitting on the couch gurgling happily.

INFERNO!

Oni the Lawyer.

Zurfalites.

Also, we were the direct cause of over 20,000 deaths. Blizzards, raised water, explosions, fires, moats, buffalo, sword, spell, song, wooden spoon, arrows, fireballs, celestial hippogriffs, archons, azers, weddings, poison, Person's appetite, armies, ... I've never been in a campaign with such a high body count.

Analysis

Chapter 1: Getting off the island, wandering through the countryside, finding Lord Keith:

unknown - 1, minor slaying: fight on the boats
Fridays - 1, minor slaying: started to free mindi
Sundays - 6, destruction: destroyed a keep
 destruction: created a moat
 minor slaying: blob of evil
 minor slaying: peasant farmers
 minor slaying: lizards
 minor slaying: senile retired dragon
 minor slaying: lobstero
 major slaying: took the keep
 major slaying: we take mindi back
 interesting: fake poison
 interesting: puzzles
 we get our asses kicked: pajama party

Chapter 2: Leaving Hardin, discovering evil druids, kicking them around:

Mondays - 1, interesting: party hopping
 interesting: "you fall down" "no, you
 fall down!"

Fridays - 2, we get our asses kicked: druids jumping out
 of trees
 interesting: find an orb
 interesting: capture a member of rogue group 6
 interesting: elmor invades the druid camp to
 save oni and genshin

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Sundays - 4, interesting: party hopping
major slaying: two-headed lizard and other
lizards
we get our asses kicked: ambush
interesting: oni and elmor escape
major slaying: we wander into the camp and
kill EVERYONE!
interesting: then we run away

Chapter 3: Onward to Tashal:

Fridays - 6, interesting: peasant party
minor slaying: people chasing giant baby
interesting: we save darnel from hanging
interesting: exorcism
interesting: elmor and oni play poker
interesting: oni becomes a dragon tamer
interesting: resurrection (2x)
we get our asses kicked: knights of hextor
(imprisoning of zurfal)

Saturdays - 4, interesting: wedding!
major slaying: wedding!
destruction: wedding!
minor slaying: seige engines
minor slaying: supply wagons
destruction: barge!
major slaying: barge!
interesting: XXX-rated nymphos in the forest
we get our asses kicked: trying to heckle
the toshido
one too many times
interesting: the duel
major slaying: the fight for burzon!

Sundays - 1, interesting: Zurfal worshippers

Chapter 4: Champions of the Tower:

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Sundays - 1, interesting: cohesion talks
interesting: we are/we aren't team dragon

FIXME - include conclusion from email

Songs of Team Dragon

Team Dragon Theme Song

Hey Elmor, how about a new Team Dragon theme song:

Carnage keeps falling on my head
But that doesn't mean my guys will soon be turnin' dead
Dying's not for me
Cause I'm never gonna stop team 6 by dyin'
...

The Hallowed Halls of Hardin

The Hallowed Halls of Hardin is a song to boost the courage of men in times of war! The song details Hardin Keep and the valor of the men who fought there.

Or something like that.

It's one of the songs that Elmor sang periodically

Sponsors

I'd like to thank our sponsors:

The Toshido Clan

This book sponsored by the Toshido Clan. Join us in our attempt at world conquest! Remember—if you're not with us, you will be ground into the dirt like the bug you are! For the low low price of \$19.95, you can get your own "Up with Toshido!" pin! They come in red, blue and green to match any outfit you have!

Bullstrength Pills

This book sponsored by Bullstrength Pills! Take one and FEEL THE RUSH! Move your house! Build a Stonehenge! Satisfy your woman! Clean out your workshop! Clear a forest! Win an IronMan competition! There is no limit to Bullstrength Pills!

(May cause side effects such as drowsiness, bounds of endless rage, sterility, and accidents due to Bullstrength wearing off at inconvenient times.)

Buy them now while supplies last!

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This book sponsored by Industrial Strength Refugee Costumes, Inc. Step into a genuine Refugee Costume and the world is your oyster! Experience the life of an outcast travelling across the land looking for a place to call home. Pay money for clothing, food and shelter no more! Our costume is guaranteed to help you freeloader as if you were really a refugee!

Buy them now while supplies last!

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The Voyages of Team Dragon,

This book sponsored by Adopt-A-Lizard-Thing! Adopt your very own two-headed colossal lizard thing! They make great guards! They can fetch the paper or your slippers! They can clear out villages so you can buy the property at reasonable prices and start your own vineyard! Buy them now while supplies last!

(Note, Adopt-A-Lizard-Thing is not responsible for destroyed houses; dismemberment; wild rampages of wonton death and destruction; or heart attack.)

Evil

This book sponsored by Evil! Yeah, that's right--Evil is sponsoring emails on the TEAM DRAGON mailing list. Don't think for a minute that you can pit us against ourselves and expect to come out victorious every time. We're smart! We're cunning! We've got evil plans and evil lairs! We'll get you, my pretties... and your catatonic Lord Keith, too!

Oni

This book sponsored by Oni. At the end of the mission after we've saved the world and all that, I plan on buying the entire continent using the immense amount of gold I've won, stolen, and swindled during the course of the campaign. If you want, feel free to come round for some tea and croquet.

Elmor Kalabeth's Greatest Hits of War and Love

This book is sponsored by Elmor Kalabeth's new album *Greatest Hits of War and Love*. Share the pain of losing Thay to the Toshido clan. Feel the agony of Hardin Keep toppling over after hundreds of years of protecting the vicinity. Experience the red hot lust of elf maidens as the music all but unbuttons your blouse and sends chills of passion down your spine.

Order now because this album is rapidly selling out! Order the Extended version which comes with *The Hallowed Halls of Hardin* super-hot dance remix guaranteed to turn any dull and dreary wedding into a pulse-pounding celebration of life and wenching!

Evil (ad 2)

This book is sponsored by Evil. Yeah, so you and your mighty fighter have vanquished one of our legendary warriors. Wait until you see what we have in store for you Team Dragon. Evil will not die without a fight!

Duval of Rogue Group 6

This book is sponsored by Duval of Rogue Group 6. We've solved the Sentinel's quest, found the journal, created peace in the land, unified the people, restored the government, and a myriad of other great things. And the people love us! Now go away and don't bother us anymore. I have millions of mouths to feed.... Including mine.

The Crown

This book is sponsored by The Crown. "I can't talk long... but here's my laundry list of 5 million things I've signed you up to do before the end of next week. ... If you have problems, know that some of the things are probably impossible anyhow. Good luck!"

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This book is sponsored by Fratnor-makers of Goo (tm). Do you need to keep someone trapped for a while? Do you need to make sure they don't escape? Do you need to plug them into the Matrix? Then you need Goo (tm)! It will solve all your diabolical needs! If you buy 1000 liters of Goo (tm) now, we'll throw in a free robot that slices and dices and makes a great salad! Offer only as supplies last!

Sequel to Lord Keith's Journal

This book is sponsored by Quest Publishing – publishers of the original page-turning riveting classic best seller *Lord Keith's Journal* and the new sequel *The Things That I Have Seen With My Eyes Would Make You Go Insane*. Experience the adventure and mayhem of Team Dragon from the perspective of a catatonic old man tied onto a horse and forgotten for days on end; live the excitement of being dragged around to places that old men shouldn't habit; feel the explosive heat of passion that only a catatonic main character could experience. All this and more in the new sequel. Buy it at your local bookstore now!

Darnel

This email is sponsored by Darnel. Stop forgetting me you jerks!