

Life after death—Ballard's experience after breaking the Zhi Bow

Players: If you see anything that doesn't gel, please highlight it in this document and let me know.



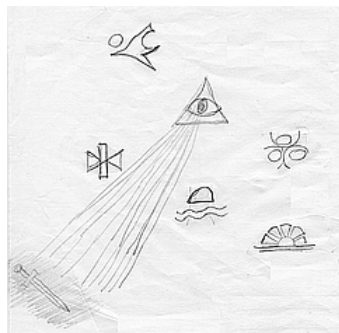
1. When Ballard breaks the Zhi Bow he feels the enormous power contained in the magical device ripping through him and everything goes white. The next thing he remembers is waking suddenly from a nightmare and through crusty eyes seeing a beautiful garden and a large oak tree overhead and the sounds of a stream nearby. He then sees a beautiful lady in a gown telling him that all is well and to rest and sleep more and as she puts her hand over his eyes he sleeps again.

2. The next time he wakes he feels fully rested and better than he has in a long time. He sees that he is in a soft wheat coloured shirt with buckskin pants and soft boots. He sits on the side of the bed he has woken from and sees a magnificent garden centred around a large oak tree that the bed is underneath.

Through the garden from somewhere (he can't grasp where it comes from) meanders a stream that has been diverted by an oak tree and then continues on away again. (He can't grasp why he can't think about what is beyond the garden, when he looks his eye is drawn to the garden).

3. The beautiful woman arrives again from somewhere in the garden and smiles as she approaches him. She calls him by name and offers him to be welcome in the Garden of Essencia, and then confides in him that she is the Goddess Essencia (she smiles and suggests that you may have heard Crayon talking about her). She says that Ehlonna has agreed to let her speak with Ballard before he faces his God for his soul's judgement.

4. She says that Ballard is the rarest and noblest of men, and that he sacrificed his life so that his friends might defeat Rahotep and in turn prevent the rise of another evil god, which has helped keep the balance. She says that it didn't escape her notice that Ballard also sacrificed himself to save the Spirit Queen and by extension her brother. She notes with sadness that Ballard has not regained his sword as she touches the tattoo on his shoulder.



Note: This is the tattoo that the spirit queen put there when he spent time with her to show him the way to his sword.

5. She says that Ballard is at the crossroads of his life, he can either:
 - a. rest eternally with Ehlonna knowing that by his sacrifice he has done some small part to keep Oearth on the path to its destiny, and that his friends will honour and miss him; or
 - b. he can stand tall, accept his birthright as thrice-god-touched and beloved of the star people and return to the living, once more to put his shoulder to the wheel and pit his strength against those who would throw down Oearth into chaos and the time of the long dark. *Know you now that this is the hard road, travelled only by the true heroes, and may lead to despair and anguish if Oearth is to be kept from the coming shadow.*
6. But wait, first you must have your rewards that you have earned and suffer the gratitude of a happy Goddess. Essencia then bestows upon Ballard:
 - a. The knowledge of how to put his accumulated experience to use in every aspect of your life as a ranger (training to go to the next level due to experience gained)
 - b. The skills that were promised for smiting Rahotep (an automatic level advancement to the base of the next level)
 - c. Your sword, (+4 Defender) which was taken in a manner most foul by the **Freebold???**. The same sword that Essencia has herself cleansed and blessed so that it might lead you in your struggles against the dark powers. (now has additional functions TBA)
 - d. Your greatest desire granted. Choose wisely as this boon is not granted lightly and cannot be given away to another. You may spend as long as you like pondering this, even into your old age and know that you simply need to call my name so that I might suspend time and grant you your wish, or you may have your heart's desire now if you know what it is you wish.
7. Like a true hero, Ballard chose to return to the world of men, and Essencia sadly placed another burden on his back. The first of the 3 seals of Izmuth has been broken and the Old God is stirring in his dimensional prison, extending his influence once more over the planes, including the Prime Material Plane.
8. Deep below Pogrom Island lies the entrance to one of the nine dimensional rifts in which Izmuth, one of the 9 Old Gods, was imprisoned by the Young Gods over 500 years ago. The dwarves have dug too deep and breached the dome, and as the greedy creatures are want to do, they took the Blood of the Gods (a fist sized object that looks like a ruby). This was one of the 3 seals on the prison of the Old God Izmuth.
9. In CY573 (5 years ago) the seal at the end of the Obsidian Stair (the link between the pocket plane and the dimensional prison) was broken by the Grim Hand, these minions were expelled from the region by the safe-guards and the Astral way to the Obsidian Stair was closed again.
10. But now only one seal remains on the door to the prison in which Izmuth waits. Plotting his revenge on the Younger Gods, Izmuth must have withered over 500 years of declining worship. Today very few know of the Old Gods, and long may it stay that way. They were twisted creatures who used the races of Oearth as play things to enact their own petty squabbling and caused suffering to all the races and creatures of Oearth and the Planes.

11. You, Ballard, must carry these 3 new seals of the 9 dimensions to the Obsidian Stair (Essencia has arranged with the younger gods to open the way briefly in the Astral Plane to the Obsidian Stair, where Ballard will meet again his companions of old and give them counsel.
12. The companions must choose between replacing the 3 seals of Izmuth to keep the Old God in his existing prison, or having Crayon contain Izmuth in *The Seed* so that a new dimensional prison can be fashioned for the Old God, and then placing the seals there. A new dimensional prison will put the minions of evil back 500 years and force them to begin anew the search for the Elder God, for if Essencia can negotiate an opening to the Obsidian Stair, then surely others might too...
13. Essencia makes it plain that the companions must make this decision together and will be the representatives of Oearth in this matter. Once the decision is made, it cannot be unmade. There are great risks in either course of action.
14. So Ballard, will you take these seals (made from the blood of the Young Gods) to your companions and help them make the decision?
15. Upon answering yes, Essencia geases Ballard with safekeeping the seals until they are affixed onto the 3 great doors of the 9th dimensional prison of Izmuth, be it on the existing prison, or a new one that the younger gods will fashion.
16. What say you Ballard?