

# GOOD vs the Princes of the Apocalypse

These are the compiled journals, reports, songs, and poems that chronicle the adventures of GOOD (The Good Order of Dessarin) in the Sword Coast Region of the Forgotten Realms during 1491 DR.

## The Members of Good

Character Name	Player	Class	Race
TBD (thats the name)	Ian	Ranger	Elf
Olga Rein	Josh	Monk	Hum
Almas yi Almraiven	Andrew	Rogue/Wizard	Human
Ander	Alexei	Cleric	Halfling
Denethor	Amos	Ranger	Elf
Sledge Battlehammer	James	Barbarian	Dwarf
Renata	Kathryn	Warlock	Gnome
XOR	Nick	Bard	Half-Elf
Sabal	David	Rogue	Elf
Siculo	Nathan	Paladin	Human
Berik Irongut	Russ	Druid	Dwarf
Von Vinkle	Harry	Warlock	Half-Elf
Noam	Chris	Monk	Gnome
<i>Durian Sharkshoulder</i>	<i>Mike</i>	<i>Fighter</i>	<i>Dwarf</i>
<i>Aven</i>	<i>Alexei</i>	<i>Bard</i>	<i>Half-Elf</i>
<i>Iff</i>	<i>Nick</i>	<i>Bard</i>	<i>Half-Elf</i>

\*Italicized characters died by Necromancer, Half-ogre, and Umber Hulk, respectively

## Session One: Aven's Journal (Alexei)

### ***Aven's Journal***

*(Aven is a level 1 half-elf bard)*

#### **Day 1**

Today we headed out towards Red Larch, which is nested cozily in the Dessarin Valley. I feel like I can finally breathe again. Waterdeep became a toxic trap ever since... she refused. I'm traveling with a few companions: Olga the monk, TBD the elf, Durian Sharkshoulder the dwarf, and IFF the half-elf bard. They

are a quite bunch, and we travel for a full day without saying much. I start to doubt my decision to join this team.

### Day 3

From my companions I find out more about the goal for this new party. This is one of the first parties put together cooperatively by the 5 factions. It sounds like the plan is to create a base in Red Larch, where we'll train to fight evil and protect the realm. I hope some dragon starts pillaging the city soon. Surely slaying a dragon would fetch me enough gold and fame to win her hand.

### Day 7

We finally arrived to Red Larch, the Gateway to the North. We are greeted by an overly friendly half-orc handing out [pamphlets](#). We take a few: they are informative. We proceed to meet up with our point-of-contact, [Elyn Wesalt](#). She is an elderly human woman. Clearly she had a lot of adventures of her own in the past. She will surely be helpful as we practice, train, and rise to fame.

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We've explored a bit of the city and got some valuable information. There was some talk of a ghost at the Haunted Tomb, but apparently it's just some girl who thinks she saw a ghost. "[Haunted](#)" [tomb](#) indeed. There is some talk of [bandits](#), some [weird weather](#), and some kind of [plague source](#) by [Lance rock](#).

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Today I've seen a dwarf eat an entire chicken.

### Day 8

Want to jot this down before we head out. We met with the [constable Harberk](#). He confirmed what we've heard: there are bandits on the southern road. While killing bandits won't fetch us much fame, I did convince him to promote us to "assistant constable" if we help clear out the road.

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This was my first real team fight. Everybody did very well, including Durian the dwarf, who smashed one of the bandits with his maul so hard the bandit's teeth came out of his shoes. Even though the dwarf is a bit crude, I do admire his skills in combat. I'll nickname him "The Finisher".

We captured the bandit leader and brought him back to the constable. The title of "assistant constable" is ours! A small step, but I'm feeling very optimistic about what we can accomplish. Going to rest and grab lunch. Afterwards, we are heading out to Lance rock to explore rumors of some plague.

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Woe, the perils of our adventure!! How did this happen? Weren't this supposed to be training? Weren't this supposed to be easy?? The horrors I've seen today will surely haunt my dreams and songs for eternity. I can't bear to write this down, for I feel it will seal this fact in stone... but... our dear companion, Durian, fell in combat as we were exploring the cave near Lance rock. Turns out the disease was caused by a [necromancer](#), who has surrounded himself with an army of zombies and skeletons. After having fought valiantly through their mass, Durian fell from what looked like a barrage of Magic Missiles. I doubt even a dragon could have withstood that assault. But he wasn't yet dead! As if to mock us, the necromancer drained Durian's body of all life force and turned him into a zombie. Even though we finished off the necromancer, the price we paid was too high. Our friend, now a mindless zombie, was gone. We brought him back to town, but the price to pay for his resurrection was not something any of us could afford. For his valor and foolish bravery, I will sing this song until the end of time:

Oh Durian the dwarf,  
He defended his turf,  
He was bit by a shark,

And had oodles of snark.  
His maul was so great,  
He brought down all its weight,  
With the grace of a dancer  
On the evil necromancer.  
But it wasn't enough,  
And he fell with a huff,  
With a shot from a wand,  
He got totally pwned.  
Then his life was all drained,  
And his honor was stained,  
Zombie Durian dwarf:  
What a strange polymorph.  
We'll forever remember  
Our dearest member  
Who had courage and brawl  
To consume chickens whole.

### **Day 9**

Just a quick note before we head out to the "Haunted" Tomb: I just realized yesterday was the first day I haven't thought about Rose even once. I'm still dead set on winning her hand, and I have a good feeling about this mission!

## **Session One Continued: Iff's Perspective (Nick)**

I found Aven's Journal in his adventuring sack, still upon his once headstrong frame. A freak accident with a loathsome half-orc who swung and hit him, right in that critical place upon the neck where half-mens heads are cleanly severed. No amount of sing-song good times healing songs would allow these two pieces of flesh to become attached again. Not that I knew any. No, it was over for Aven.

Up until this moment I had been the accountant-bard, an overseer of our party finances. My rain stick did the talking, and my ledger recorded our spoils. We had been making good money - treasures and coin added up and real fortune seemed within reach. One day, I thought, I could host my own decadent parties and become king of my own beautiful kingdom. Finally settled, finally powerful.

Now I question this dream. You see, our ill-fated adventure was my first. I kept quiet and held back. Except of course when our enemies showed their faces and I could not help but laugh and mock their deformed visages. You really must have seen these ugly, foul creatures. But I digress, this was no laughing matter. Just a day after losing that stinky, dour, yet oddly charming dwarf, we had lost Aven, a bard brother. We had joked at the beginning of the adventure that there were too many bards. It seems the fates had a similar sense of humor.

As I went through Aven's adventuring sack, I learned that while poor in luck, he was quite rich in coin. In death he gave the party more than he had in life - 140 gold. This bittersweet discovery made up for the

tragedy of Durian, the simple dwarf who had been quite the fighter, but sadly wasn't worth the shoes he wore.

I have composed a song for this adventure, as it is how we Bards cope with adversity:

There's tales that this bard must recall  
Of Aven and Durian's fall  
Two-fifths the party,  
We feel sad and hearty,  
For it was all such a close call.

O! A new adventure is born!  
And from us some lives are torn!  
But gold awaits,  
In sacks and crates,  
So no reason to be forlorn!

Disease spreading has causation,  
Turns out its reanimation,  
Durian soon bled,  
And found himself dead,  
Then awoke past expiration.

O! A new adventure is born!  
And from us some lives are torn!  
But gold awaits,  
In sacks and crates,  
So no reason to be forlorn!

This tomb has some ghosts we were told,  
Twas a dead knight, friendly and old,  
Yet ambushed by two,  
And sliced right through,  
A clean hit and Aven's head rolled.

O! A new adventure is born!  
And from us some lives are torn!  
But gold awaits,  
In sacks and crates,  
So no reason to be forlorn!

(Rain stick solo)

# Session One: Postscript (Randy)

Meanwhile, in cities across the Sword Coast, flyers have been appearing, imploring young adventures to take part in a new experiment:

## **Join the Inter-Factional Peacekeeping Joint-Venture, Pilot Program: Dessarin Valley Division (IFPJV-PP:DVD)**

The Realm's five dominant **factions** have formed a provisional joint venture to help keep the keep the peace, defend the weak, protect trade, smite evil, balance nature, and promote greater prosperity. The IFPJV is recruiting for its first pilot program to test this bold new collaboration.

Recruits will travel to the exotic Dessarin Valley where they will be based in the charming town of Red Larch - Gateway to the North. There they will receive training under the famed Elyn Wesalt - hero of the Great Troll Wars. During your deployment, you'll have a chance to prove your skill and bravery as you banish bandits, oust orcs, and massacre monsters. But the Dessarin Valley is not all adventure, there will be plenty of time to sample local cuisine and enjoy the sights. Walk the famed Stone Bridge (two miles long and four hundred feet high), sample the fresh produce at Goldenfields temple-farm, and take a pleasure cruise down the Dessarin River.

Don't miss your chance to see the world and help the Realm! Sign up with any of the factions and start your legend today!

Also - there's a new issue of the [Red Larch Gazette](#)

One evening, soon after you've arrived at Red Larch, an exasperated Elyn Wesalt looks up from her papers to complain to the group.

That's it! I'm refuse to write *Inter-Factional Peacekeeping Joint-Venture, Pilot Program: Dessarin Valley Division* any more. It smacks of the very bureaucracy I'd spent my whole life avoiding. I'll be damned if I belong to such an absurdly named organization, especially when it's backers are always late with the funding and sending me amateur recruits - no offence.

If you have any suggestions for a better name - I'm all ears.

After much discussion, the party decided to rebrand as GOOD - the Good Order of Dessarin

# Session Two: Iff's Retelling (Nick)

On the day of the Red Larch Highharvestide, we were greeted by Elak Dorner's "Don't fuck up this festival! I'm watching you!" speech. Intent to try our best to follow the suggestion, we cautiously investigated the rumors of **robed figures with golden masks** appearing at night in the town's quarry. Albaeri, the owner of the quarry, thought it was just worker's being lazy, but we suspected something was afoot and decided to stake out the place that night.

Meanwhile, we've also heard rumors of a treasure in the Trickle Rock Cave, just an hour outside of town. Having a few hours to spare before the festival started, we decided to investigate it. Unfortunately, we haven't found much there aside from a few cavern beasts, which we dissected into tiny chunks. On the way back through town, we found some punks from nearby Womford trying to spike a casket of festival ale with a laxative. As punishment, Denethor and Iff made them drink it instead. The punks were last seen (and heard) writhing in the woods just outside town.

We cajoled Iff into entering the **Battle of the Bards**, which he won by staging a performance of the well-known local legend about nearby Lance Rock. Right at the conclusion of the performance, a **large sinkhole** opened up and swallowed a few kids. Of course, we rescued them, but not without facing some serious resistance from a few village elders. They told us not to bother the "**Delvers**". We decided to listen for now, and went to the quarry to see if we can catch the masked individuals in action.

The quarry was completely deserted, but we did find a small entrance into an underground hallways. The architecture was definitely **Dwarvish**, and we realized this was built by the Delvers the elders referred to. Our suspicion was confirmed when the tunnel led us to the sinkhole, and then further on.

We found a room with a few dead bodies, which were gnawed by giant rats and had a **strange triangle mark** carved into their skulls. We decided not to go through that room, but explore a different hallway. There we saw **Grund**, the town half-wit, behind a closed door. He asked us for the password, which we didn't know, so he started to drop cages on us. We were able to get through the traps and out into the room, where we tied Grund up and helped a little boy who was being punished by his father, the town elder Rotharr Htherhand. The boy told us about "**The Believers**" who watched the **movement of stones**.

In the adjacent room we found some gems, gold, and a magic dagger with a "Reszur" engraving used to carve the triangle mark into the bodies. Above them stood a 1000 year old petrified dwarf that was recently excavated from the quarry. We left the treasures where they were, but as luck would have it, had an opportunity to come back and collect them later.

We've realized there were some men coming after us (summoned by Grund). We dropped the cages on them, and managed to tie a few of them up. However there were still four of them left armed with bows, so we decided to continue exploring, which led us to the main room with the moving stones.

At the entrance we found **Baragustas** Harbuckler, an old Believer, who quickly spilled most of the secrets about what was going on here. Turns out the elders of the town have been using the stones to foresee upcoming dangers. This local ritual was seized upon by a fellow named **Larrakh**, who showed up a few months ago and promptly began **foretelling some unknown doom** based on the stone's movements, convincing the elders of his prophetic capabilities. Or may be Larrakh was making most of it up.

When we entered the room, Larrakh ambushed us with some terrifying spells. Two of our teammates dropped unconscious, and the cleric soon followed as well. But luck was on our side, and soon everyone was back on their feet, pursuing Larrakh who was trying to flee. Just as he was about to escape through a backdoor entrance, Almas' expertly shot arrow hit him in the neck, and he dropped dead.

After discovering the floating stone room, which seemed like a geological formation that allowed anything to float in a confined area, we went through the escape tunnel, learning that it led to Wellsworth's **Wagon Works**. We immediately went to Elyn and told her everything. She suggested we talk to the constable,

which we did as well. The constable and his crew came back with us to the tunnels and helped us clear out the place. Unfortunately the men who pursued us were gone, leaving only a gold mask that matched the description of what the miners had seen in the quarry at night. That is, except for one, whom we tied up and had fallen unconscious. As it turns out, they were Larrakh's lackeys known as the '**Bringers of Woe**'. The constable rounded up all the elders (Albaeri, Ulhro, Perego, Ilmeth, Elak, and Rotharr) and put them in jail. They will be tried for the dangerous situation they put the town into, and the Bringer of Woe lackey will be questioned.

## Session Two: Postscript (Randy)

The morning after Highharvestide, you gather in Elyn Wesalt's quarters for the daily briefing.

Well done crew - your actions last night saved lives and won the respect of many townsfolk. Parents of the children who fell down the sinkhole have brought some meat pies and fruit baskets for us to enjoy.

Elyn waves at a series of gifts laying on her desk and helps herself to some berries.

The Mirabar Delegation should arrive any day. They'll bring much need funds, courtesy of our Zhentarim sponsors. There should be enough to establish a proper headquarters and barracks - I know you're all tired of crowding into the upstairs rooms.

Here are a few options I've found; I'd like your feedback.

1. Rent the old quarry from the town - it's been sitting unused for years. It has a dilapidated warehouse that we can rebuild and refurnish. The quarry grounds might make a solid training field though there are large pools of water when it rains.
2. Build a new structure on some farmland nearby. There are a few farmers about an hour outside town that have invited us to build on their land. The land is free but putting up a new structure will cost time and some money. We might be able to get the townsfolk to help build it.
3. Take over one of the Believer's businesses. As Constable Harbuck sorts out the mess of the Believers, there's a decent chance some of their property and businesses will be confiscated. It'll likely be put up for auction and we stand a chance of acquiring it. Odds are it'll be less space than the other options but it could generate revenue; that frees us from begging the factions for support.
4. Try to attain the Tomb of Moving Stones. The complex is currently cordoned off as a crime scene but we might convince the town to let us use it. The main downside is that it's a bit dank and there isn't natural light.

Also - a new issue of the [Red Larch Gazette](#)!

## Session Three: Ander's Retelling (Alexei)

We started the day off by talking to Elyn. She introduced to us our new recruit, **Sledge**. A former pirate, Sledge recently had a change of heart and decided to dedicate his life to **GOOD**. Elyn also told us that the **delegation** bringing us supplies from **Mirabar** has completely disappeared, and nobody knew what happened to them. This was especially troubling because it was a pretty large caravan, which meant that whatever happened to them wasn't likely just a bandit attack or some such. Aside from general supplies the delegation was carrying a few Dwarven history tomes, money, some special seeds, and a body of a fallen knight. The delegation was last seen at **Beliard**, and was supposed to head south to **Summit Hall**.

It was clear that we had to go investigate what happened, but before leaving town we decided to stop by the jail to have a few friendly words with **Korder**. He was one of the "**Bringers of Woe**", Larrak's henchmen, that we captured in the tunnels. After threatening to spread rumors of him betraying his cult, he gave us a few troubling pieces of information. Apparently there is **Cult of the Black Earth**, which will unleash **devastating doom** and have the earth swallow the world whole. He also mentioned that they were headquartered in a monastery up in the hills.

Before leaving the city, we got a **Sending Stone** from Elyn. It will allow us to communicate with her as we travel. "It's kind of like a walking talking imp", Elyn said. I have to admit the analogy was lost on me. However, I was briefly excited by a vision of the future where everyone would carry one of these stones with them, and could talk to anyone else at any time. It would be called a "smart telestone". Anyway... we reached Beliard a few uneventful days later (if you don't count some roaming barbarians and wolves).

We stopped at the Watchful Inn, where we met the Mayor of the city. He confirmed that the delegation was indeed in town, but left about 19 days ago. He also mentioned sightings of **knights in blue cloaks and white armor flying** on hippogriffs and giant vultures. Apparently they are based at the **Feathergale Spire**, not too far from Red Larch. We also talked with the tavern waitress, who saw the delegation. She said she spotted someone in a golden mask eyeing them through a window. It's becoming more clear that they are likely behind the disappearance.

Next morning we left Beliard and headed south towards Summit Hall. On the way we got a message from Elyn (via the Sending Stone) that one of the tomes from the missing delegation was found at Womford. There were also some fresh graves dug in the vicinity of the Feathergale Spire.

15 miles outside of Beliard we spotted a swarming flock of vultures a mile off the road. It was, as we feared, the **missing delegation**. Dead bodies and broken wagons were scattered everywhere. The earth was upturned and all the valuables were stolen. Guards from Mirabar were easy to recognize by their red axe emblems. We also found five dead bodies of the Black Earth cult. Seems like they were behind this raid after all. However, not all bodies were accounted for. The dwarf carrying the tomes, along with some other nobles were missing. We searched around and found footprints of a large group leaving west.

We followed the footprints to the river where they ended. It was clear they had boats here, which they probably took **down the river**. Luckily a merchant was sailing by. We convinced him to give us a ride south. A few hours later we saw what we later learned was the **Riverguard Keep**. There were white banners with a blue gauntlet, and the keep was ran by a man called **Jolliver Grimjaw**. We decided to investigate, since these people might likely have useful information. We approached the gates, and after what appeared to be a banal conversation about the weather between Almas and the guards, they let us in.

We were able to meet with Jolliver, a no nonsense pirate leader. He told us of the **Scarlet Moon Hall**, which is home to the **Cult of the Eternal Flame**. Their goal is to take over the world by harnessing the



power of flame. Clearly not a fan of fire himself, Jolliver promised his good will if we were to take out that cult. During the conversation we spotted some strangle men geared in sea-themed armor with giant clam shields and shark helmets. There was also an intriguing blue-skinned, heavily tattooed man; unfortunately we couldn't dare to ask about his mysterious skin condition for the fear of offending our host.

After leaving the keep, we headed towards the **Summit Hall**. On the other side of the river, and only half a day hike away, we were soon dining with **Lady Ushien Stormbanner**. (Their emblem is a crossed torch and sword.) She was dismayed to learn about the fate of Marabar's delegation, and quickly dispatched a party to recover the knight's body, which we forgot to look for. She told us about the existence of the **Sacred Stone order**, which wore golden masks, and have recently been more active. Like us, she wanted to see them dead. As Almas wisely said: "There are good people. There are people who do what they must. And then there are fucking lunatics who cut symbols into people's skulls." Clearly this order was of the latter kind.

After a night's rest, we left towards the the Earth cult's **monastery**. We found it snugly hidden amidst the hills (nowhere close to a river). TBD used his ranger ability to sense which monsters roamed in the vicinity. After he finished recounting the long long list, which included minotaurs and liches, we decided that now was perhaps not the best time to explore the monastery.

By now we were only a day or so away from Red Larch, but there were two more destinations for us to explore. First were the recently dug graves. We examined the bodies: a male dwarf, two Earth cultists, and a human with black feathers in his hair. He was wearing an interesting necklace that looked like a carrot. Intrigued, Ander decided to take it with him to learn more.

A few miles off stood the **Feathergale Spire**, which as we later learned, is home to the **Cult of the Howling Hatred**. The spire is surrounded by a large canyon, which makes a sighing (howling?) sound as the wind rushes through it. We were greeted by **Sevra**, who was very welcoming, and showed us around. At the top of the spire, which was completely open and even had growing grass, she introduced us to the **Lord Commander, Thurl Merroska**. Thurl was happy to share what he knew about the Earth cult, which he also hated, and then invited us to partake in the feast.

Later that night when the feast began, we were suddenly interrupted by a report of a nearby **manticore**. Apparently this creature has been a giant nuisance for the the knights. Thurl quickly ordered everyone to take flight, promising **his golden ring** to whomever killed the beast. Apparently we were invited to partake in the hunt as well, an opportunity we gladly took. Having never been on a hippogryph, or frankly even higher than 50 feet off the ground, Ander had an almost religious experience as wind rushed through his hair. A few minutes later he and Olga spotted the manticore perched on a rock below. Together with Sledge and TBD we killed the beast before it even had a chance to react. We returned to the spire with everyone cheering us on!

Amidst the chaos of the sudden hunt, Almas snuck off to explore the spire more. He made his way into Thurl's room, and discovered a letter from **Queen Aerisi Kalinoth**. The letter mentioned some **captured prisoners** and **a woman from Waterdeep**.

After a full night's rest, we left the spire to head back to Red Larch. On the way out, Sevra offered Ander an invitation to come back and train with the flying knights, who served **Yan-C-Bin**, the **Prince of Elemental Air**. It became clear that there was a struggle for control over Dessarin Valley between four factions. If one were to guess, each one was probably led by an elemental prince. And while we were not

sure of their intentions, it was safe to say the the prince of Elemental Earth meant to cause some kind of apocalypse. One might even wonder if *all* the princes had their own plans to remake the Forgotten Realms as they saw fit, which would make them, if one squinted hard enough, **princes of the apocalypse**. But that's just a theory!

As the party made their way across the hills and back to home, it was clear that Sevra's invitation struck a cord with Ander, as he was often raising his head towards the sky and flapping his hands. A few hours later, the town of Red Larch loomed on the horizon. Having seen first hand what else Dessarin Valley had to offer, we came back to town with a newly developed appreciation for its peaceful charm.

## Session Three: Postscript (Randy)

Here are a few of the highlights from the most recent issue of the Red Larch Gazette:

- Ilmeth Waelvur has testified that Albaeri Mellikho helped him commit the murders in the Tomb of Moving Stones - she is now held in custody with him. Her cousin has moved up from Waterdeep to run the quarry and watch after Melikho's daughter Miv.
- Red Larch has restructured its government to a mayorship with term limits. The first election will be held in two-tendays.
- An informal polling of Red Larchers reveal a mixed response to the rebranding of FPJVPP:DVD to GOOD. Some villagers rolled their eyes at the new acronym but all agree it is better than the original one.
- The Mirabar delegation was attacked between Beliard and Summit Hall. It's unclear if there are any survivors or if Mirabar will send a second delegation.
- Several families have reported illness after eating chicken from Drouth Fine Poultry. Sales at Mhandyvver's Poultry are booming.
- We have reports of increased Iceshield Orc activity throughout the northeast of Dessarin Valley, moving further out from their camps in the High Forrest
- The weird weather continues throughout Dessarin Valley. We've heard that a mysterious group of druids called the Circle of the Scarlet Moon will be conducting a ritual in the Sumber hills to return the weather to normal. Several seekers wishing to join the Circle have passed through Red Larch on their way to help with the ceremony.

This issue of the Gazette came with 10% off coupons for Lorren's Bakery

## Session Four: Almas's Retelling (Andrew)

At the end of Session Three, the members of G.O.O.D. had discovered evidence of several cult hideouts in the Dessarin Hills, and had linked one specific group -- the Cult of the Black Earth -- to the recent attack on their supply caravan. We had three possible leads to follow:

\* Knowledge of the actual location of the Cult of the Black Earth at the Sacred Stone Monastery

\* Rumors that some Dwarven tomes carried by the caravan had ended up in Womford  
\* News from **Nalaskur Thaelond**, a Zhentarim-aligned innkeep from Womford, that he had spotted "suspicious activity" around his property. Nalaskur asked the party to watch over his inn while he travelled to Waterdeep to organize a replacement caravan for G.O.O.D.

Elyn Wesalt also introduced to the party to **Renata**, a Gnome sorcerer and artificer who would be joining G.O.O.D. The party sighed in collective relief at finally having a spellcaster able to do something more obviously useful than *Mold Earth*.

The party decided to follow up on the first lead and go directly to the monastery\*, partly because we realized that we had an initiate of the Cult -- **Korger** -- conveniently locked up in the Red Larch town jail. Iff interrogated him -- the better to assume his personality for infiltration purposes -- and took his clothes. Our deception was about to begin.

After reaching the Sacred Stone monastery, Iff donned Korger's mask, then approached the front gate and asked for admittance; meanwhile the rest of us took up position on the surrounding cliffs. Almas and Sledge were to the west, and Olga and Renata to the east. Between the two of them, Almas and Renata were able to maintain telepathic contact using the *Message* spell no matter where Iff was in the monastery. While Iff entered, the party discussed the possibility of recruiting help from Feathergale Spire and/or Summit Hall to clear out the monastery once Iff's reconnaissance was complete.

Iff managed to convince the monks inside that he had escaped from capture in Red Larch, and, fortunately, was quickly accepted as a trainee. Unfortunately, the training consisted entirely of eating gruel and being beaten mercilessly by **Hellenrae**, a cult member with remarkable martial-arts prowess. In between pummellings, Iff spied two things of note (and reported them to the party): a stairwell leading downward from the main hall of the Monastery, and a group of **Duergar** entering one of the rooms of the monastery. He also managed to learn, while nursing his wounds, that there were at least 15 monks in the monastery, in addition to the Duergar.

In the middle of the night, Iff baked a cake in the kitchen (so that, if caught sneaking around, he could claim that he was delivering it to Hellenrae) (???) and, carrying it, stole downward through the mysterious stairwell. In the room at the bottom of the stairwell was an **Umber Hulk** with two of its eyes removed and two of its claws replaced by blades. The **Umber Hulk** was in a cage...but not for long, as it took one look at Iff and broke down the door of the cage.

What followed was a madcap chase twice around the inner perimeter of the monastery, with the Duergar and several monks being woken by Iff on the first go-around and then mercilessly slaughtered by the Umber Hulk on the second go-around. At one point, Iff dodged into the training hall, hoping that the suspiciously lifelike gargoyles there would come to life and battle the Umber Hulk on his behalf. The gargoyles did in fact come to life...but took one look at the Umber Hulk and fled through a hole in the roof.

In a last, desperate move, Iff ducked into a side room to avoid his pursuer. However, the Umber Hulk proved capable of breaking down walls just as easily as cage doors and, doing just that, bit Iff's head clean off.

Aware of Iff's untimely (though perhaps not unwarranted) demise due to their magical contact, the rest of the party hightailed it to Summit Hall to ask **Lady Ushien Stormbanner** for assistance in clearing out the monastery in exchange for suzerainty over it once it was conquered. Lady Ushien promised 20 troops (of

yet-to-be-determined fighting skill and resolve) to the cause; however, such a large contingent would have to march southward through Womford in order to cross the Dessarin River.

The party decided to take the opportunity of our Womford visit to question the traders (smugglers?) who had allegedly been trading in Dwarven tomes from the raided caravan. Posting Summit Hall troops up and down the river in case our targets decided to make a getaway\*\*, the party approached a keelboat\*\*\* manned by two humans, a **heavily-tattooed halfling**, and **Shoalar Quanderil**, a **water genasi**.

Despite Renata's attempt to peacefully question the smugglers, the atmosphere was tense -- we *had* brought a posse of fully-armed soldiers to talk to them, after all. Negotiations broke down when the traders attempted to cast off from the shore and the party attempted to stop them.

The skirmish began badly for the party, with the water genasi summoning a *Tidal Wave* that knocked most of the Summit Hall troops prone in the mud of the riverbank. A quick boarding action by Olga regained the initiative, and a well-timed *Shatter* spell from Renata (which incidentally caused a third eye to sprout from her forehead) turned the fight in our favor. The two human smugglers lay dead (having failed to unmoor the boat from the riverbank), the genasi dove overboard, and the halfling threw up his hands in surrender. As Olga lifted him up by the collar, the halfling babbled inchoately about knowing the location of "prisoners -- a dwarf historian, some aristocrats, and a nature-lookin' elf lady."

The total take from the battle with the smugglers was:

- \* 100 gp
- \* Several Dwarven historical tomes from the caravan
- \* A halfling prisoner who we should really question before Ander gets back from his training at Feathergale Spire
- \* A sweet keelboat

As the party prepared to spend the night in Womford, we contacted Elyn back in Red Larch to provide an update and explain Iff's demise.

"He tried to give a cake to an Umber Hulk," explained Olga.

## Session Four: Postscript (Randy)

While you are on the road, Elyn Wessalt gives you periodic updates about happenings in the Dessarin Valley. Here are some of the things going on:

- Upon hearing of IFF's tragic death, Red Larchers held a candlelight vigil and a memorial performance of the 'Story of Lance Rock' - the rainstick has become a fashionable instrument around town.
- The Iceshield Orcs have been devastating the homesteaders in the northeast of the valley. Some refugees are staying with families in Red Larch, others are passing through on their way to Waterdeep.
- Ilmeth Waelvur has now testified against Marlandro Gaelkur, implicating him in the murders beneath town. Gaelkur fled town before he could be apprehended.

- Red Larch voters have elected Jalessa Ornra to be Mayor. She owns the town butchery and her husband is Constable Harburk.
- Ever since Ander returned from Feathergale Spire with the town youths, Knights on Hippogriffs have been regularly spotted in the skies above Red Larch. We've been hearing about abductions from outlying farms and increased attacks on caravans between Red Larch and Beliard.

## Side Adventure: Ander's Confession (Alexei)

My dear friends, I come back from the Feathergale Spire with some bad tidings. I went to train with the knights, ride a hippogriff, explore the valley from the sky, and learn more about **Yan-C-Bin, archomental ruler of the Plane of Air**. In my journey, I became lost and misguided, and have made some irreversible mistakes. Let me relay what I have learned, and then you can do with me what you will:

- \* There is a group of **Priests** who exert a large amount of influence over the Feathergale knights. They are led by **Aerisi Kalinoth**, an Avariel (winged elf), the chosen prophet of Air,
- \* But the Feathergale knights are not evil, and Thurl is often reluctant to follow Aerisi's rule. They'd prefer to learn the power of air for good. Perhaps there is some way to **free them from the influence of the Priests**.
- \* The Priests are based at the **Temple of Howling Hatred**, east across the Sighing Valley. Inside a chasm, there is a narrow stairway leading down to the ruins of a famed dwarven fortress city, Tyar-Besil.
- \* The cult also has **Hurricanes**: highly trained martial artists, and **Skyweavers**: highly trained magic users. Both are extremely dangerous.
- \* The cult wants to **summon Yan-C-Bin**. If they were successful, he will likely destroy this plane of existence with cosmic storms. Apparently they plan to do this **within a few tendays**.
- \* Yan-C-Bin communicates with Aerisi and Thurl through dreams. I've only seen a glimpse of him.
- \* There is a group of **Aarakocras** in the Valley, who want to use the power of Air for good. They have demonstrated their noble intentions by helping with the escape (more on that later). They are led by Kazra, who hasn't been seen recently. Unfortunately there aren't very many of them.

But my conscious won't be clear without the full disclosure of my misdeeds. During my training, a Priest taught me a few very useful spells, which were strictly outside of a priest's usual scholarship. It was clear they (and only they) possessed a lot of secret **knowledge**, and I must admit I wanted it all!

Of course, they asked me to **prove myself**, and I did. It started with pushing an Earth cultist off the Spire. And then it was two unworthy initiates. Though reluctant at first, I became more eager to demonstrate these acts of obedience, since each one led to more discovery and garnered me more respect in the eyes of the Priests.

Until, one day, they caught **Savra** trying to leave. You might remember her as the nice initiate who welcomed us to the Spire. They took her to the top of the Spire, and there... I had to put an end to her life. I should have turned back then, but it seemed to me like the training was about to be over, like I was about to be accepted into the inner sanctum. I drastically underestimated the depths of their evil.

With my help, they round up **children from Red Larch**. Naively, I thought they'd give them an option to join or just tell them about the cult. But they brought all of them to the Spire and told me to **drug the kids' food** to help them convert these innocents into potential recruits. At that point, I could no longer ignore the

horrible situation I've created. I drugged the knights' and priests' food instead, and **escaped** with the children and a few other initiates. On the way back they caught up with us and were about to kill me and capture the kids when **Aarakocras** swooped in and saved us. I and Red Larch's families owe them a debt of gratitude.

Naturally, none of these children would have been in danger if not for me. And Savra would likely still be alive. I've done some terrible things, and for that I am deeply sorry. **I leave my fate in your hands.** If you think I've sullied G.O.O.D.'s name and am no longer worthy to be its member, I will understand. But if you give me another chance, I will fight with all my life to undo the harm I've done and put an end to these abominable cultists.

## Session Five: Denathor's Recap (Amos)

The adventurers of G.O.O.D have had a tough time since losing a member. We join them back in Womford, grieving.

"G.O.O.D. That's why we're all here, isn't it? And IFF was as G.O.O.D as anyone out there. Brave, master impersonator of rain, teller of epic tails and swinger of sticks. He will be remembered greatly."

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But not for long...because we have been joined a SHINY NEW BARD (with a shield-drum and a rapier)

\* XOR, IFF's less clumsy long lost sibling traveled to Womford to see how his brother has fared since becoming an adventurer..unfortunately he just missed him...forever.

\* He has agreed to join us in our quest to avenge IFF and bring justice to whoever is responsible for his death.

Our party of 5 (Almas, XOR, Olga, Sledge, and myself (Denethor)) decided to head back to the Monastery and deal with the Hellenrae and the cultists once and for all. We made for the Monastery and arrived at dusk, right after dinner, avoiding heavy activity.

There were a couple of half focused monks patrolling the outside of the monastery. Deciding it was too risky to create distractions we had Almas pick the lock to the kitchen, attempt to disguise himself and give the monks orders. He failed incredibly and quick and battle ensued. I performed incredibly and

We were able to stop them from spreading our presence in the monastery, and continued to move stealthily, at the ready. Until we burst through a door finding Quarbo and two of his guards (who appeared to have the same rock armor we've encountered before). And you know what they say: "Never startle a Jose Quarbo and his guards". Needless to say, it didn't take long to eliminate all three of them. Sledge was on a rampage! Before we could even get a chance to question Quarbo, his head was blown to smithereens.

After killing all but one of the guards, who we tied up and left for later, we kept searching rooms, looking for Hellenrae. We found a couple of scrolls in the scriptorium: Dust Devil (for stirring up a tiny dust tornado), and Scroll of Earth (for trapping your foe in rock).

We came on the Laboratory, and heard some noise inside. We knocked and were affronted by the voice of an elderly man exclaiming "LEAVE HERE NOW! I won't help the cult!" . Almas decided to storm in on them but the unexpected happened: time froze. None of us have any memory of the next few moments. All we know is when we became aware again, the man (a Lich we now know) was nowhere to be seen, and a powerful spell had been cast.

A little shocked, and nervous of what we would run into next we continued on until we discovered Hellenrae's room. As soon as we saw each other, things got messy. Hellenrae leveled XOR to the ground with a single hit, knocking him unconscious. I thought he was going the way of his brother (may he rest in a rainy peace).

Blow by blow, we kept up the assault, aiming to capture and question Hellenrae. But, there goes Sledge again, on another insane rampage. He hit her so hard it blew her head clear from her body.

With nothing more of Hellenrae (except her head, kept for persuasion) the only person to learn anything from was the guard we had tied up. The guard didn't have a lot of information to share but did have some tips for navigating the cavern below.

Mostly notably:

- \* the basement contains the other half of the cult's base
- \* the basement contains a slave mine

We headed back out of the monastery and rested, recouping strength before finishing our raid.

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Almas found and picked the lock to a chest.

In the basement we found a cavern with a couple of slaves and lot of tunnels to head through. We freed the slaves and in return they provided us with some detailed information in the layout of the dungeon, as well as the location of the drunk guards.

We got into another fight with a bunch of guards, but they were no match. With no more guards (or really anyone) left we freed the rest of the slaves and found a dwarf named Bruldentharr who gave us some very revealing information.

- \* The cult killed all rest of the guards
- \* The stone cultists were overtaken in the night
- \* They got angry and took off chasing something

- \* There were vultures with people riding them

- \* Desolyn Norvale was with them

- \* Most of the important cultists were taken further into the dungeon below (which is about 10 floors deep)

We find a stack of pallets as well as an additional exit which appears to run outside. We find the Lich's room, but when we opened the door we were greeted by SIX zombies! That's a lot of zombies. We just ran away. Cause you know what they say...

"Lichs ain't shit but foes in crypts"

Finally confident we had found everything there is to find in the basement, we headed lower into the dungeon. The rock here dungeon was no longer the same rough stonework as the monastery. It was perfect in every way. Immaculate. It matched stone work thousands of years old.

We (again) stumbled on the Lich's private residence, and decide to attempt and convince him to let our armed bowsmen share the space with him. After getting his attention using a not-stopping-time sort of approach, we were able to negotiate him with him.

He agreed on a few conditions conditions. We must return the bones of his brother.

- \* The bones are buried at summit hall

- \* He was a knight of Semular

- \* He was extremely interested to find that we had the knights of Semular right outside

- \* The dungeon/mine below us is the Temple of the Black Earth in the city of Tyar-Besil

- \* We agree to give him IFF

We agreed to the conditions, and are already in the process of retrieving them for him.

XOR and I have started the Sacred Monastery Ale Company (starting by just reselling the ale we discovered)

We touched base with Elyn who let us know about increased orc attacks northeast of Belyard.

We decided to head to Scarlet Moon Hall, because we learned from some druids that they were preparing a ritual to improve the increasingly strange weather.

Scarlet Moon Hall is a massive semi circle of druid camps, with a 30 foot tall wicker statue. We heard of a group of druids called The Scarlet Druids. We moved through the groups until we found them, however they weren't interested in talking.

The druids perked up after hearing our questions about the Cult of the Howling Hatred.

They drew us inside and we were confronted with the roaring sound of "ARISE AND CLEANSE THIS PLACE OF THE UNWORTHY"



A druid was animating the Wicker Statue. Olga blew the druid into the statue where they were burnt to a crisp.

Haggard and broken, the team fled for their very lives from an approaching guard with two hell hounds.

We called Elyn back up and she encouraged us to take some rest, and gave us a pep talk.

All in all, things went very well, albeit somewhat fruitless. And nobody died!

## Session Five: Postscript (Randy)

While in the Scriptorium of the Sacred Stone Monastery, you found copies of *Marlos's Testament* - teachings and philosophy of the Black Earth Prophet.

Most of his rambling are pretty banal but here are the main things you learn:

- Marios Urnrayle is the Prophet of the Cult of the Black Earth
- He was drawn to a place called "the Fane of the Eye" by powerful visions. There he found "Ironfang, the Holy Implement of "Earth Power," and took it for his own;
- Marios established the Temple of Black Earth in the ruins of a long-abandoned dwarven stronghold that exists below the Sacred Stone Monastery;
- He nurtures something called the Black Geode, and when all is ready, "the Evergrowing Mountain shall come and remake these lands in his own image."
- You get the sense that Marios is vain, cruel, and well educated

## Session Six: Ander's Report (Alexei)

I caught up with the rest of the team at the **Sacred Stone Monastery**. They've already mostly cleared it out, save for a lich, and unimaginable hordes of beasts dwelling far below. Almas tactfully convinced the lich to put an arcane lock on the door and watch the monastery for us. This way we could take our **Summit Hall brigade** with us.

After a long deliberation, we decided to attempt taking over the **Riverguard Keep**. While we scouted the Keep's guards, we were attacked by three **hell hounds**. Dispatching them with ease, we collected their fire collars. I cast Augury to divine the outcome of our invasion, and the gods said the plan had a good chance of working. Onwards!

After sunset we took out one of the guards on the wall with a silence spell followed by Olga's masterful kicks and punches. This became our bread-and-butter combo for the rest of the night. We put the archers on the wall and continued further into the Keep. Olga and XOR snuck into the barracks and silently killed about a dozen soldiers by snapping their necks while they slept without causing an alarm.

We continued with investigation of one of the towers, which was a bugbear den. We dispatched them with the help of our archers, and continued to a nearby building. There we ran into a **Fathomer** (blue skinned, tattooed humanoid). XOR had a brilliant plan to heat up her chair armor, which would quickly dispatch her.

Unfortunately (and unsurprisingly) she cast an ice spell that cooled the armor down. Nevertheless, she had to take it off, so we were able to capture her with a greater ease.

We carefully fought our way onward into the Keep's main building, and were surprised by a sudden appearance of a **wereboar** behind us. After Olga ripped his heart out, it turned out this was our old acquaintance, **Jolliver Grimjaw**. Once we cleared the main building (including fighting a lady who turned into a water serpent), we were able to find some of Jolliver's possessions, amidst which we discovered a **distinct letter** talking about G.O.O.D. and our deeds. I pocketed the letter just in case. We also found three women who apparently were captured and brought here from Womford. Obviously, we'll try to make sure they get back home safely.

After taking a short rest, we saw a **keelboat** entering the Keep. While I haven't seen it before, my fellow adventurers recognized it as the keelboat they sailed on earlier. We quickly positioned the archers and had them shoot at **Shoalar Quanderil**. Having been alerted to our presence by a volley of arrows to his face, he cast a Tidal Wave that swept half of our archers down into the bay. Thanks to Alamas' quick reflexes, she was able to save about half of them, but a quarter of our brigade ended up dying. During this Olga and XOR were taking another tower, where they managed to capture a **Crushing Wave Reaver**.

We celebrated our successful capture of the Keep, although at the cost of a few lives. After a long rest, we buried the bodies just outside of the walls. Then we interrogated the few prisoners we were able to capture. By now my companions' methods don't even make me flinch. So when they decided to put a transformed Fathomer into a cask of ale, I didn't even blink an eye. The fellow was resilient and didn't give us much information, even when we threatened to boil him. He tried to escape through the spout, which we immediately closed, resulting in his untimely death. Thankfully, we got most of the information from Drosain. She told us about certain doom when **Olhydra, The Princess of Evil Water**, comes to this plane to wash away all the unbelievers. Her representative is **Gar Shatterkeel, the Prophet of the Cult of the Crushing Wave**.

Inspecting the Keep further, we found a small **underground river** leading into the **Dwarven ruins** below. No doubt that's where Gar resides inside the Water temple.

We briefed Elyn on our accomplishment. She was very proud, but gave us a piece of very sad news: multiple **kids were captured** from Red Larch by the **Feathergale Knights**. Obviously I blame myself. I hope we can rescue all of them in time before they find themselves at the bottom of the Spire or shocked to death by some crazy fanatic.

## Session Six: Postscript (Randy)

Elyn Wesalt checks in with the crew after you've cleared Scarlet Moon Hall. She's pleased to hear that you've secured the four 'haunted keeps' on the surface of the Sumer Hills. However, it's clear that you must enter Tyar-Besil and root out the cults and their prophets before they do more harm to the valley.

Elyn also updates you with some pressing concerns:

- The citizens of Red Larch are worried and angry about their kidnapped children - some of the townsfolk want to take matters into their own hands and attack the Temple of Howling Hatred. Elyn has talked them down for now but doesn't think she can hold them back for long.
- Kleeck, a badly wounded Aarakocra, stumbled into Red Larch last night. He says that his squad was emboldened by GOOD's success at Feathergale Spire and attempted to infiltrate the Temple of Howling Hatred to free their captured leader Kazra. Just inside the tunnel, they were assaulted and outmatched by three Hurricanes. Kleeck barely escaped and fears his friends are dead or worse. He's recuperating with Elyn.
- A member of the Harpers has relayed rumors of a Fire Witch near the Nettlebee Ranch. Symbols of the fire cult have been appearing on their livestock and a nearby barrow was consumed by flame. The Nettlebees' have sent out a general call for assistance and are terrified of further attacks.

Finally, Elyn provides an update on the marauding **Iceshield Orcs**:

She has heard from a representative of the Emerald Enclave that the Iceshield Orcs' rampage has been stopped. They had been pillaging a large swath of the valley northeast of Beliard, killing and kidnapping homesteaders. While some families fled to Beliard and larger towns, many decided to make a stand at Dellmon Ranch; they were joined by a small contingent from the Knights of Samular.

Before long, the Orcs laid siege to the Ranch. The Knights and homesteaders put up a valiant defense, driving off successive waves of Orc attackers. Ultimately, the Orcs proved too strong, too numerous and they overran the Ranch. A large band of Elves from the High Forrest arrived later that evening and slew many of the Orcs as they feasted amid the burned ruins of the Ranch. The Elves had responded to the summons for help, but too late. They rescued a few of the captive humans who survived the raid and have since been chasing down remaining Iceshield Orcs in the region.

Though the Orc's rampage is over, they have taken a great toll in human, livestock, and harvest. Some farmers are returning to their homesteads but others are moving to bigger settlements. Some agriculture prices are already on the rise; it's going to be a long winter.

## Session Seven: Olga's Haikus (Josh)

Lone "initiate"  
Enters Feathergale spire with  
Invisible friends

Xor in Iff's footsteps  
Though noon, not night, and fathoms  
And tendays distant

We now interrupt  
This brief tour for a slaughter  
Of priests and storm monks

Wake Thurl Marosska!  
We have some questions for you  
But you are useless

In the trunk you go  
Hope you can eat and drink air  
Cause we forgot you

To the roof  
Knights for us to fight  
Can they fly?

No, but hippogriffs  
can. See Olga soar! She bores  
Leaps back to safety

A short rest  
Is anything but  
Knight did fly!

Xor commands as Thurl  
But these knights have too many  
Brains, swords and muscles

Sledge and olga smash  
Door in their stupid faces  
Xor enflames metal

Their hasty retreat  
Is absurdly fast. Better  
Runners than fighters

All take flight, like birds  
Except one hurricane who  
Dies so pointlessly

We sleep, wake stronger  
Another fortress for GOOD!  
Elyn must be pleased

Where to next?  
Gotta catch them all:  
Scarlet moon!

Warn friendly druids  
They bring Oattie the Otter  
To near fireball death

At the hands of flame  
priests, thugs, and bears. Our lesson:  
Don't stand in big clump

Let's camp, we decide  
Stealth and darkness are allies  
Of many GOOD men

We sneak in the back  
Find hellhounds feasting on elk  
The gullible's fate

Sleepytime hellhounds  
Now we snap your necks because  
You would have killed us

Guards on tower  
Too smart for Xor's trickery  
Best to smash them off

Down they fall  
To blows and hammers  
While priest shouts:

"Arise and cleanse this  
place of the unworthy"--ugh  
please shut up! she does.

Into the tower  
Our merry band now ventures  
It's awfully warm

Maybe the Azor? (fire dwarf)  
Nope, killed him, threw his thugs  
In the pit. Still warm.

Up we go  
They slept through all that?!  
More necks snap

To the top we go  
Find Elizar Dryflagon  
Smoking his pipe--what?

His wit is dryer  
Than his name. He's arrogant  
Unimpressed by us

Rude ways to  
end a chat include:  
walls of flame

Forgot about stairs  
We go down and wait for flames  
To die. Like he will!

Smoke mephits  
Descend upon us  
Sledge smashes

Poison gas? We're too fit!  
Thunder clap? No fear of noise!  
Blight? No I stun you!

One more head  
For our collection  
We are GOOD!

Burning man is done  
We tell them "Go home hippies!"  
Only said nicer

(In case that wasn't clear, short version: we took Feathergale spire and the Scarlet Moon place by basically killing everything. Though we really did leave Thurl in his own chest and totally forgot about him. We tried to convince him to reform the Knights but he's too much the zealot, unless we were to kill the high priest first, but then why would we keep him around? We also learned some things like there is a prince of fire called Imix, and there is an entrance in the Scarlet Moon tower. They were luring druids there to sacrifice. Oh and Xor kept track of all of our sweet loot--I think we found some scrolls and gold and stuff)

## Session Seven: Postscript (Randy)

You have clear access to three paths into Tyar-Besil, and a hunch about the fourth (under Scarlet Moon Hall). Elyn has given you an update with some clear leads but the Valley is yours to explore as you see fit... though the world will go on without you (e.g. Iceshield Orcs rampaged when they weren't kept in check).

Here are the leads from Elyn:

Elyn also updates you with some pressing concerns:

- The citizens of Red Larch are worried and angry about their kidnapped children - some of the townsfolk want to take matters into their own hands and attack the Temple of Howling Hatred. Elyn has talked them down for now but doesn't think she can hold them back for long.
- Kleeck, a badly wounded Aarakocra, stumbled into Red Larch last night. He says that his squad was emboldened by GOOD's success at Feathergale Spire and attempted to infiltrate the Temple of Howling Hatred to free their captured leader Kazra. Just inside the tunnel, they were assaulted and outmatched by three Hurricanes. Kleeck barely escaped and fears his friends are dead or worse. He's recuperating with Elyn.
- A member of the Harpers has relayed rumors of a Fire Witch near the Nettlebee Ranch. Symbols of the fire cult have been appearing on their livestock and a nearby barrow was consumed by flame. The Nettlebees' have sent out a general call for assistance and are terrified of further attacks.

## Session Eight: Olga's Report (Josh)

Met at Feathergale Spire. All the windows were shattered. Thurl was gone. We grabbed disguises and headed to the Cavern of Howling Hatred.

The hurricanes fell for our disguise. Probably partly due to Almas's excellent sobbing performance. She's very good at crying and looking distraught. Then they fell off the cliff because we pushed them. Slowly at first because of featherfall, then quickly until thump.

After walking on twisting stairs for a few miles (!!!), we came upon an ancient dwarven city under glittering rock.

We waltzed through the front gates with our disguises. TBD joined a band and played a flute made of a human thigh bone. Then we knocked out the band leader and some raven guard things, and rescued the initiates.

In spite of our past failures to gain anything useful when interrogating people, we decided to interrogate the band leader (Windharrow). Almas attempted to threaten him and convince him that we were black earth cultists, but he knew we were members of GOOD. Turns out he was getting kind of sick of this place anyway, and he told us everything.

Using the information from Windharrow, we pretty quickly freed most of the initiates and slaves on this part of the temple. He also told us that Alessi Kalanov[sic] (lead priest of the cult of air) had an invisible friend (stalker / air elemental). We also learned from the prisoners that there is an even LOWER level, where one guy's wife was taken, and probably the friendly bird man prisoner.

Next up was the main temple. Again we waltzed up and past the guard on a giant wyvern. Almas told him we were coming from another temple to trade knowledge and initiates.

We also simply strolled past some guards in the bottom level of the main pyramid. They were mostly meditating. We walked up and there was Alessi, sitting on her throne, surrounded by drugged initiates.

She knew we were members of GOOD, so we couldn't really get much surprise. Thanks to my extreme awesomeness, we managed to stun her before she could do literally anything at all, and between Sledge and every else's pummeling, she was quickly felled. Her invisible stalked disappeared, and she exploded in a gust of wind. Fortunately all of her stuff dropped (which was awesome, see inventory below), but there was no head for us to collect. We did get her spear though...

After that it was mostly cleanup. We took out the stormweaver and hurricane on the lower level, rescued all of the initiates, and killed the wyvern and its rider. We lost track of the number of initiates we saved, but it was a LOT.

We sent Windharrow back to RedLarch with all of the initiates. Hopefully he doesn't eat them or get them killed.

While exploring the rest of the temple, we met a genie who had been enslaved to clear out the dwarven city. After a bit of debate, we freed him and he gave us even more awesome stuff.

We cleared out most of the back area of the temple, although there are still a few interesting things left, including an EXTREMELY valuable platinum goblet just laying in the (now emptied) moat, guarded by a 12-ft stone magic dwarf statue, and something menacing in the back, and perhaps something in the room with the giant dead worm. Also a tunnel that leads off and grows warmer, and the lower level, which can be accessed via an air shaft in the pyramid.

Finally, on our way out, we found some friendly hippogriffs waiting for us! Another gift from the genie!

## Session Eight: Postscript (Randy)

Elyn responds after hearing about the success in the Temple of Howling Hatred:

"Well done, members of GOOD! The defeat of the Prophet Aerisi and her Cult of Howling Hatred is a strong blow against the evil forces at work in this valley. I'm sure our benefactors will be pleased at the news. Keep it up and Dessarin Valley will be the safest region in the realm."

She then provides a quick update of other issues:

- The Nettlebee's problems with the fire witch have spread to nearby ranches. Other families are reporting the symbol of the fire cult being branded on their cattle; the homesteads in that region are extremely nervous. Some families are sending their children and elderly to hold up in Westbridge until this is resolved.
- GOOD's minor contingent at Riverguard Keep caught a Fathomer sneaking about. Apparently they got in through the Iron Gate to the underground stream. The Fathomer fought to the death; we didn't suffer any casualties. We now have round the clock guards watching the Iron Gate but we need a more permanent solution.
- Bruldentharr, the Dwarven Historian whom you rescued from the Sacred Stone Monestary, has returned to Red Larch. He was researching Tyar-Besil in Waterdeep's archives and has some information to share (see below). He believes there might be Tomes with more information kept at



the Shrine of the Sacred Oath in the Vale of Dancing Waters. This dwarven holy site used to be the Summer Palace for the ancient empire of Besilmer. He wants to visit the Shrine himself but is worried about cultists in the region and wants GOOD to escort him. It's typically off limits to non-dwarves but Bruldentharr says he'll get a special exception for you.

Finally, Elyn relays some troubling news just in from a traveling merchant:

"Womford has been devastated by a horrific flash flood and cultists are likely to blame. The merchant was staying at the Bargewright Inn and was watching the sun set over Womford. She saw a group of pilgrims walk into the city carrying a large box with odd symbols carved into it; several appeared to be guards with shields that looked like clam shells, one was heavily tattooed and might have had blue skin. They opened the box at the Womford docks and then fled.

"A minute later, the clear sky turned dark and a torrential downpour began. After an hour, Dessarin River overfilled its banks and the water level increased at an alarming rate. Many villagers and light buildings were carried away in the ensuing flood. It was night by then and rescue efforts were difficult. The Bargewright Inn was spared by its position on the hill. The hard rains continued until the following dusk, after which the sky cleared. The merchant left for Red Larch the next morning."

## Session Nine: Almas's Retelling (Andrew)

Members of G.O.O.D.,

As you probably already know, we recently travelled north to investigate reports of Fire Witches branding livestock with the Fire Cult symbol near the **Nettlebee Ranch**, northwest of Westbridge. **Olga** and **Almas**, fresh off of the expedition to the Temple of the Howling Hatred, were joined by **Renata**, recently back from a sorcery-for-hire engagement in Waterdeep, and **Sabal** -- a new addition to our group -- an elf who seems to know quite a bit about poisons and infiltration. Maybe more than he's telling us?

Flying north on our hippogriff steeds, we touched down in Westbridge and were immediately surrounded by fawning crowds, eager to see the local heroes they had heard so much about. After questioning the barkeep at the local inn, we discovered that:

- \* The Fire Witch troubles were not limited to mutilated livestock; an Uthgardt burial mound had also been recently burned and desecrated

- \* A dwarven prospector had gone missing in the northwestern portion of the Sember Hills, in case we wanted to look for her later

Travelling next to the Nettlebee Ranch, we questioned the members of the helpful halfling clan who ran the ranch. Unfortunately, they were able to offer no theories regarding the livestock mutilations. Renata was, using her Gnomish empathy for beasts, able to converse with a sheep, but the creature -- despite being vaguely aware that it had been branded -- was too stupid to identify its brander.

When the Nettlebees informed us that they had recently discovered the burial mound with its door cracked in twain and strange voices whispering around it, we naturally decided that this would be our next

stop. One of the Nettlebee sons led us to the mound. We heard no whispering voices as we crept into the burial mound, but as we reached an altar with a totem obviously removed from its surface, the torches in the mound went out, and the temperature dropped precipitously.

Before we could do anything, the bones on the floor of the mound -- along with a bone helm -- assembled themselves into the form of a **skeletal Uthgardt warrior**! The revenant informed us that he had returned due to the desecration of his altar, but was fully aware that we were not the desecrators. In fact, two of the desecrators were right outside the mound as we spoke!

Unfortunately, at that moment, the entrance to the burial mound collapsed. The revenant rushed to the entrance, shouting about digging his way out and "having his vengeance." While following him -- he was trying to dig us out, after all -- we were ambushed by an **Earth Elemental** who burst in through the side of the mound's entryway.

After defeating the elemental, we emerged into the daylight to find that **a dozen Uthgardt barbarians** had arrived and were regarding the skeletal chieftain with awe. The revenant announced his intention to slaughter those responsible for desecrating his tomb, and set off toward the ranch. Due to a combination of natural fleetness of foot, improvisational horse-stealing, and Haste spells, the members of G.O.O.D. arrived back at the ranch just ahead of the barbarians.

Olga and Renata ushered the Nettlebee family into the cellar, while Sabal and Almas remained aboveground to try to prevent the barbarians from torching the ranch in retaliation. Unfortunately, the revenant burst into the cellar and, before anyone could react, slaughtered the two eldest members of the Nettlebee clan as they cowered on the floor. Apparently satisfied, the revenant pointed to a hidden panel in the wall which contained, of all things, **a brand in the shape of the Fire Cult symbol**. Apparently the Nettlebees had fallen under the sway of the **Cult of Black Earth**, and had faked a "Fire Witch problem" in an attempt to simultaneously **lure G.O.O.D. into a trap (!)** and to get a leg up in their generations-old turf war with the Uthgardt people.

Meanwhile, Sabal and Almas managed to convince the barbarians to leave with about 1/3 of the livestock as compensation for the crimes against their ancestors, rather than engaging in wholesale pillage. After the peaceful parting with the barbarians, the eldest surviving Nettlebee gave the party a **Bag of Holding** for saving what they could of the ranch.

On the way back to Riverguard Keep, the party stopped at the **Temple of Howling Hatred** to explore it further. While there, they experimented with the behavior of the **giant stone dwarf** and discovered that its behavior was much simpler than previously imagined. Because it would not climb out of the moat to pursue intruders, we were able to use Mage Hand to scoop **3100 gp worth of treasure** out the moat, including the **platinum goblet** we missed the first time around. Sabal suggested levitating the goblet, which it seemed programmed to follow, in order to lure it off of the side of the cliff, but the hilarity of such a plan was deemed not worth its risk.

Then we headed back to Riverguard Keep. Now we must begin planning our next move...

## Some time soon after, Almas proposes the following:

Fellow members of G.O.O.D.,

It is time for us to establish ourselves more securely in the Dessarin Valley. It is time to establish a stronghold.

Doing so will allow us to better carry out our collective mission:

- \* We need a place to start storing all of the totally-legitimately-acquired lucre we've been finding
- \* We need proper stables for our hippogriffs
- \* It's becoming difficult to route reinforcements and deliveries to our constantly-roving band

Beyond efficiency, there is the matter of prestige. Establishing a bulwark against the chaos in this region will send a message that every structure with four walls between Red Larch and Yartar is not, in fact, crawling with murderous cultists.

There is also the mundane concern of being secure and well-rested in between expeditions. We have been essentially camping in ruins for almost a month. Even Sledge, a corsair possessed of a peregrine heart, likely misses his simple nautical cabin with its homespun charm.

It is time for us to settle down and start building a stronghold.

The arguments in favor of establishing our base at Riverguard Keep are many; fortunately, they can be condensed to "hey, free castle!"

Improving such an existing stronghold gives us a way to spend all of this illiquid jewelry we've been acquiring. I've been in contact with the stonecutters', carpenters', and associated guilds in Everlund and Waterdeep, and they are willing to accept these objects as payment for improving the Keep.

I have made a list of the following improvements we'd like to make; let me (and/or the group!) know if there's anything you'd like to add:

- \* Conversion of the current shrine to a shrine of Oghma
- \* Hippogriff stables!
- \* Construction of a prison, possibly with a [permanent Zone of Truth](#), so we can avoid cutting the throat of every morally-dubious-but-valuable-information-having person we encounter
- \* Traps to protect the underground river

I'll get prices and send out a budget and a construction plan once I've heard back from the team.

## Session Nine: Postscript (Randy)

From Elyn's previous update:

Bruldentharr, the Dwarven Historian whom you rescued from the Sacred Stone Monestary, has returned to Red Larch. He was researching Tyar-Besil in Waterdeep's archives and has some information to share. He believes there might be Tomes with more information kept at the Shrine of the Sacred Oath in the Vale of Dancing Waters. This dwarven holy site used to be the Summer Palace for the ancient empire of Besilmer. He wants to visit the Shrine himself but is worried about cultists in the region and

wants GOOD to escort him. It's typically off limits to non-dwarves but Bruldenthlar says he'll get a special exception for you.

Bruldenthlar says his research uncovered the following:

- The dwarves of Besilmer were not the first to settle the caverns under the Sumber Hills. They found an ancient drow hold beneath their city, though it was long abandoned by their creators.
- The dwarves began exploring the deeper caverns but couldn't spare the strength to clear out the various monsters within. Ultimately they gave up on securing the chambers beneath Tyar-Besil and fortified the only paths down.
- Before the fall of Besilmer, some Besilmer explorers and historians were able to conduct research in the lower levels. Bruldenthlar found mentions of tomes containing their findings but couldn't find the tomes themselves. He suspects these tomes might be found at the Summer Palace for the Besilmer.

## And a construction update from Almas (Andrew)

I've managed to convince the appropriate trade guilds in nearby cities to make improvements to Riverguard Keep.

In exchange for making these improvements, the guilds are taking the platinum goblet we retrieved from the Temple of Howling Hatred off of our hands.

### **New Buildings, Improved Buildings**

\* The old shrine is now a shrine of Oghma. I encourage any of you whose interests lean more towards self-education and less towards punching people until their heads fly off to join us for services.

\* The horse stables are now hippogriff stables.

\* The brewery equipment from the Sacred Stone Monastery is now set up in the Keep.

### **Alarm System**

We now have a means of raising the alarm should the need arise. At each of the four corners of the keep is a gong; next to the gong is a vial of oil that will amplify any sound created by an object it covers. If you need to wake up everyone in the keep (and possibly the surrounding several miles as well), do the following:

1. Get to a gong
2. Pour the oil all over it
3. If you're XOR or someone else who can make a loud sound magically, do so. Otherwise, just ring the gong.

## Traps

There are now 4 Glyphs of Warding -- two that freeze and two that electrocute -- guarding the chokepoint connecting the two passage from the underground river to Riverguard Keep. There are enough magical components in the Keep's storage right now for Ander or I to set up 2 more Glyphs should the need arise.

The Glyphs will trigger if anyone besides the following people tries to pass it:

- \* The current members of G.O.O.D.
- \* Elyn
- \* Bruldentharr
- \* Anyone carrying a token that Ander and I can hand out upon request (in case we need to get someone else down there without accidentally killing them)

In addition, there is a chain of magic mouths leading up the barracks that will trigger if anyone triggers the Glyphs or attempts to dispel them.

## Session Ten: Ander's Recap (Alexei)

"INTRUDERS IN THE UNDERGROUND STREAM!!!"

"BOOOM!" (there goes one of the glyphs)

We abandon our dinner and rush down to the underground river through the secret passage way in the library.

"BOOOM!" (there goes the second glyph)

As we reach the river, we see multiple ghouls in the water, along with a Fathomer on a small keelboat.

Olga immediately jumps onto the keelboat to take him out, while we start to take care of the ghouls.

"BOOOM!" The third glyph explodes right beneath us! Almaaaaaaaas!

As we finish fighting the ghouls, again "BOOOM!" goes the last glyph.

Lesson of the day: remember where you put your traps and don't fight next to them.

After a night of rest, we decided that now was a good of a time as any to secure the **Riverguard Keep** from further attacks by cleansing the Water cult below. We took the small keelboat upstream deep into the Dwarven ruins until we came upon a small underground lake. It took us about two hours, during which Ander scouted the entire area with his **Arcane Eye** spell. No surprises for this party! (One thing that is now super obvious is that all the cults are located close to each other in these Dwarven ruins, and one could walk from one end to the other. The cults that hate each other are on the opposite ends.)

We started by clearing out one of the barracks. One of the guys fled outside of the room and jumped into the water. Olga followed, but soon found herself paralyzed in the water. With some help from Ander, she was able to get out, but not before **Eyon** showed up riding a shark. After a brief battle with some stellar acrobatics and jumping from Olga and Sledge, we captured the bastard. He didn't have much to say though, and as we later found out, what he said was mostly lies. He is now in our jail if someone wants to spank him.

We continued clearing out the rooms, until Xor stumbled into a room with a **sea hag, Thulana Maah**, second in command. After a brief chat full of transparent lies on both ends, we fought her and her two ogres. Our reward was a magic sword, which glows when it's within 120 feet of a dragon. The sword was glowing. Crap.

Thankfully, by then we had a pretty good idea where the dragon was, and had no intention of going there. We also discovered some lizard people, who weren't very hostile, but didn't care much for humans.

We also found **Morbeoth**, the third in command. His most notable feature is a **frosty-white eye** that shoots rays of frost. He has an arcane workshop, and after we beat his guards to a pulp, he begged for mercy and agreed to help us. He told us about the **Water Node**, the water tanks he was inventing for carrying a water weird with you, a **healing fountain** surrounded by **Nothics**, and a **giant octopus**. Given his education and willingness to help, we agreed to spare him. Perhaps he also might help with ale brewing.

Looks like there is a lot more to explore in that area!

## Session Eleven: Ander's Recap (Alexei)

"INTRUDERS IN THE UNDERGROUND STREAM!!!"

"BOOOM!" (there go the two glyphs Almas just set up)

Is there a deja vu in here?

The magic sword is glowing! This must be the dragon! Ander quickly casts Divination and sure enough: it's the **turtle dragon** from the underground lake. It batters down the gate from the underground river and enters the inside of the keep.

After a futile attempt to negotiate with it, we decide to settle things by force. After all, there is no way we are parting with our new fancy chairs or letting this creature roam the wilds! After a polymorph snafu by XOR, Almas' earth hand spell grabs the dragon's snout while we finish it off. At the end, only Siculo, a human paladin, our new member is a bit burned. Welcome to GOOD, Siculo!

Today is moving day. We fly back to Red Larch to start fetching people and equipment. It takes most of the day and many trips. As we make our way back to Red Larch for the last time, we see a group of hooded men in the middle of town. They are carrying a **box**! Same kind of box that ended up destroying Womford with a flood! Some of the men are wearing masks reminiscent of the **Sacred Earth Cult**.

No time to wait! We swoop in and start quickly dispatching the cultists. XOR's Hypnotic Pattern is very effective. Unfortunately, one of the cultists opens the box and takes out the orb. When he is killed the orb is on the ground, but the box is still surrounded by the cultists. Ander has a bright idea of Stone Shaping a box of our own, and so we throw the orb in there.

Almas' perceptive eye notices that the box they were carrying the orb in has air glyphs inscribed on the inside. We put two and two together and realize that the **Air glyphs kept the Earth orb from going off**. That means our simple stone box won't suffice! We quickly dispatch the rest of the cultists and throw the

orb into the box. The box is shaking violently! We order one of our hippogriffs to carry it up to the sky for half an hour, before we are sure that it won't go off.

We interrogate the new prisoners. They don't tell us anything we don't already know, but what's bothering us is:

1) How did the earth cult get a box with Air glyphs? Did they make it themselves? Did they steal it from the air cult? Or is there a **deeper conspiracy**?

2) This means that there are likely **two more boxes** on their way. When will they strike, and where? We send letters to the nearby towns warning them of a potential attack.

We take the boxed orb to the temple of the Howling Hatred and **drop the orb** (without the box) down the shaft that leads to the lowest level. From the faint rambling below us, we surmise that the orb did go off, but it's not clear how much damage it did.

We decide to clear out the area under the Riverguard Keep completely. The area is mostly empty. We find the **Nothics** by the restorative fountain. No sight of the lizards. In one of the rooms we find a **weird beast with insect-like features** who is guarding the stairs leading down. We fail its password challenge, so it attacks us with a very poisonous fog. We run away; it's quite likely if we come back prepared, we would be able to take him out.

In another room we find all the lizard people. All 13 of them. A huge fight ensues, with the foul-smelling **demon creature, Hezrou**, showing up from under the bridge. We dispatch them with a relative ease. In a nearby hidden cavern we find the **missing Dwarven tomes**. Bruldentharr will be extremely happy!

One of the tunnels leads to the Earth cult section. Ander briefly explores it with his Arcane Eye. Nothing particularly interesting stands out, except for a strongly implied presence of a **medusa**.

## Session Twelve: Grumink's Story (Alexei)

Elyn looks up and down our new prisoner, Grumink the Renegade. "Well, well, You look like a pretty sharp fella. How did you get caught?" Grumink just scowls at her. "Well, he was..." start Ander, as Elyn interrupts him. "No, no, I'd like to hear it in the words of our own guest." "In my own words?" says Grumink. Elyn nods. "Fine..."

"Hurry up, we haven't got all day," shouts Obratu. "What am I paying you for?"

"What indeed?" I think to myself. Obratu, a blue-skinned ogre, contacted us a few days ago and paid a pretty coin to come with him to the Shrine of the Tender Oath. Killing all the Dwarven priests was not really necessary, but Obratu insisted, and I was all the more glad to add a dozen notches to my belt. I'm running out of space now. We piled the bodies in one of the rooms to the west, and the other Dwarves went to work bashing away at the wall behind the altar.

I wasn't exactly sure what Obratu was looking for, but from a few clues I pieced together I suspected he was looking for the lost cellars in the Summer Palace. It seemed he also had a partner, Reulek, who was working towards the same goal, but from underground.

As the rest of the Dwarves rhythmically chipped away at the wall, I stepped aside to look out at the courtyard. We were on the second floor of the main building. In the middle of the courtyard was a large statue of some Dwarven lady. I felt a sting of shame for not knowing the history of this place, but who gives a shit. In a decade this place will be a forgotten pile of rubble.

Across the courtyard was the entrance arch. The shrine was pretty high up, and we rigged the steep switchback path to get here with a trap to deal with any unexpected visitors. We also put up two guards near the arch, just in case.

It was a clear day. Above, in the distance, I saw a few hippogriffs. "Fucking, Feathergale Knights." Obratu looked at me. "Did you say something? Get back here and help clear the dirt."

Half an hour of menial labor later, we heard a shout from the courtyard. "Help, intruders!" Fuck. I ran to the window and carefully looked out. There was a mixed group of adventurers. By the looks of it, they killed one of the guards and convinced the other to join them. Fucking traitor...

Obratu gestured a few commands and the Dwarves scattered to cover the two entrances to the room. I was about to remind Obratu how I told him to buy everyone a crossbow, but he turned into a bird and flew down into the courtyard, and shape-shifted back behind the statue. I grinned. It's going to be a deadly surprise.

Something was off. It's like the adventurers knew our moves. They quickly turned around and got ready to fight. Obratu sensed that as well and quickly went invisible. After a few seconds he appeared again, looking surprised. Shit, looks like one of their spellcasters interrupted his invisibility spell. Obratu was about to retaliate with another spell, but a bard materialized right behind him and stabbed him in the neck. Looks like they have invisible people too! I started shooting at him, but at that distance it was challenging. "Dammit, Obratu, why did you have to go fight them by yourself," I muttered under my breath, as I send another arrow flying.

It was clear Obratu was hurting. He turned into a cloud to try to escape, but was quickly caught by a monk, and collapsed back on the ground. The adventurers headed into the main building, and I could no longer shoot them. "Attack!" I ordered the useless Dwarves. I heard them scatter downstairs, followed by eight quick thumps as their bodies hit the ground. I wanted to jump out the window, but they were too small. Ah, well, I'll die fighting, as long as I take one of those fuckers with me.

The monk ran into the room, and I shot an arrow straight into her face. She expertly caught it and sent it right back at me. Argh! It's lucky I'm resistant to poison, otherwise that little scratch would be quite deadly. The others poured into the room, and I was quickly outnumbered. They capture and interrogate me. Looks like they had a lot of experience with this. I have to admire their intimidation skills. I hear something about slitting my eye and cutting out my tongue. Hmm, I like this bunch of weirdos.

Nah, looks like they just want information. I tell them what I know. They take me prisoner, but promise that if I follow orders they'll let me earn my freedom. Not sure how I feel about that yet...

They explore the rest of the shrine. Near one of the entrances to the room where we dug, they find a magical great axe. Damn, why didn't I see it? They also find some ancient Dwarven tomes. Not that I care, but I thought I'd just mention it for completeness' sake. Now leave me the fuck alone!



## Session Twelve: Postscript (Randy)

Ander and Xor decide to create a rehabilitation program for the captured cultists:

B.E.T.T.E.R - *Breaking Evil Thoughts Through Empathetic Retraining*

They set out to Summit Hall with 10 promising prisoners who were to join the Knights of Samular. After a difficult journey, they arrived missing a few prisoners including Grumink (who escaped). The Knights begrudgingly accepted the survivors.

## Session Thirteen: Almas's Recap (Andrew)

After doing an initial scouting (using Ander's magic) of the Earth Temple on our last outing, the team decided to use that intelligence to follow up with a raid. The objective -- to kill or capture the leadership of the Earth Cult, in the hopes that doing so would, as in the case of the Water Cult, provoke a full-scale retreat into the levels below.

While preparing for the expedition, a keelboat moored at the Keep and dropped off two new recruits to the cause of G.O.O.D.:

- \* **VonVinkle**, a half-elven warlock with a family claim to part of the Sumber Hills and an unnerving habit of shapeshifting to the appearance of whoever he was talking to

- \* **Berik Irongut**, a Dwarven druid who seemed -- perhaps based on what the leaders of his Druidic Circle told him -- to have expected a far more peaceful situation in the Dessarin Valley than the mess we've been dealing with

These two, plus **TBD** and **Almas**, descended into the Earth Temple through the entrance from the Water Temple.

An initial battle with some **bulettes** was made manageable by a stratagem devised by VonVinkle, markedly improving on the one the party previously attempted to use on the Turtle Dragon attacking Riverguard Keep. VonVinkle polymorphed the beasts into sloths and threw them over the side of a cliff, then reverted them to their bulette form immediately before -- THWACK -- they hit the ground below. The fight was tough, but thanks to the healing fountain in the Water Temple, plus Berik's magic, the party managed to patch themselves up.

Having secured the entrance, the team then donned Earth Cult robes and masks and, using VonVinkle's shapeshifting ability, convinced a group of guards to reveal the location of the Cult's top two members:

- \* The prophet and leader of the cult, **Marlos Urnrayle**, had already abandoned his chambers and fled to the level below the Temple

- \* The second-in-command, an alchemist and Dwarven antiquarian named **Miraj Vizann**, was in a chamber filled with deactivated Dwarven constructs

Sneaking into Miraj's chamber and pretending to be bearing fresh intelligence on the activities of G.O.O.D., the group managed to gang-tackle him and prevent him from casting any spells -- but not before he uttered the command word that activated one of the **Ancient Dwarven Constructs**. Fortunately, VonVinkle managed to banish the construct from the Material Plane for a short while, during which the party unceremoniously stabbed Miraj to death, stole his papers, and fled the room.

Deciding to make double-sure that Marlos had fled the temple, the party made its way to his chambers, and discovered a pile of loot, including:

- \* 770 gp in coins and gems
- \* A carved lyre
- \* An elaborate tapestry, portraying a dragon
- \* An embroidered silk robe
- \* A suit of **Elven Chainmail**

In the middle of looting the room, however, a **dark, wraithlike spirit** entered the room and demanded that the party leave. The party managed to prevail in battle, but the creature fled, presumably to warn Marlos of the intrusion.

On the way out, the party discovered a torture chamber and, after quickly subduing the guards, released a series of prisoners:

- \* A disgraced Earth Cultist
- \* A captured Air Cultist
- \* **Wulgrede**, the Dwarven prospector who had been reported lost to G.O.O.D.
- \* **Grevor**, a half-elven noble who was in pretty bad shape, so we'll have to question him later

We also found some treasure in the torture chamber that is now in the party's ledger, most notably a **Wand of Magic Missile** with 10 charges.

At this point the party, wounded and winded, made its way to the passage through which they had entered. A group of guards attempted pursuit, but a quick series of entangling and warding spells by Berik prevented them from following.

Notably, we did not encounter any creatures that turned people to stone. Either that was a power of Marlos himself, a pet he took with him, or some creature we failed to encounter along the way.

## Session Thirteen: Ander's Recap (Alexei)

We went back to clear out the Earth Temple. We tricked **Brug and Noob**, a two headed etin, to kill some ogres for us, by claiming that they stole the beer that we brought for him.

We then explored the forge room with a **dao** (an Earth genie) and a few duergars. They were creating boxes for holding earth orbs. We left them alone, since as long as we can stop the orb supply, the boxes are harmless. They were also making a **set of giant metal Umber Hulk claws**.

For the rest of the adventure, our strategy was:

- 1) VonVinkle shapeshifts into someone in command, and then tells the few cultists that the etin is on a drunk rampage.
  - 2) They leave the room.
  - 3) We jump them and tie them up. (Except we told a few of them to wait by the lake.) Easy breezy!
- We rescued **Rukhelmoth Glitterstone**, a strange looking gnome with grey skin. She was about to be sacrificed to some ooze.

Had an epic fight with **Dynath** and **Narthan** and another woman clothed in rock armor, where we tricked them to attack and kill the etin, Oghma bless their poor soul(s?).

We decided to scout the fire Temple with the Arcane eye, and then proceeded to kill the Chimera that was guarding some treasure.

In the next room we fought a bunch of fire cultists and a fire lady, **Ignatia**, who almost killed us with her fireballs.

We rescued **Orgaal**, a crushing wave reaver, who was captured and tortured. He told us that the elemental prophets are freaking out and have established a truce to fight together against us.

When we came back to our boat, we realized that a few prisoners we told to wait there, instead took it and most likely got attacked by the giant octopus. We had to hike all the way back to the Air temple, up to the Sighing Valley, and all the way back to the Riverguard Keep. From now on, we are tying up \*everyone\*.

## Session Fourteen: Postscript (Randy)

Elyn has called an emergency briefing.

"We have reason to believe that criminals have secured a devastation orb and are planning to auction it off to the highest seller. We must not let it fall into enemy hands.

"The trouble began outside Triboar a tenday ago. A patrol of the Twelve, the militia of Triboar, met and defeated a group of cultists in the nearby hills. Based on their description, they sounded like members of The Cult of the Eternal Flame.

"The militia men recovered a box covered in triangle glyphs and brought it back to Triboar. Based on what we learned from the Earth Cult, this was likely a containment case for a devastation orb and the cultists were going to attack the town. The chest, with orb inside, was stored in the vault of the Lord Protector. Soon after, the chest vanished.

"I just received word that the orb has turned up in Yartar, where the local thieves guild is auctioning it off. We've seen what the devastation orbs can do and we must reclaim this one at any cost."

Session Fifteen: Renata's Recap (Kate)

"We've seen what devastation orbs can do and we must reclaim this one at any cost."

After a debrief by Ellen with the news an orb was up for auction in Yartar, we were compelled to action. Atop our Hippogriff steeds, we adventurers five (Sabal, Almas, TBD, Noam, and Renata) flew to the snowy fortified city. Our mission: retrieve the orb and stave off the inevitable disaster were it to fall in the wrong hands.

After some intel collecting (especially fruitful using Almas' connections with the Zhentarim), we made our way to the Wink n' Kiss, a tavern for local unsavories that doubled as the make-shift auction house. Impersonating two scholars from a distant sorcery university, Almas and Renata were invited to the backroom to initiate a bid. Meanwhile, TBD and Noam stood at the ready as back-up and Sabal skulked in the shadows.

Orchestrating the auction was none-other than Nareen Dhest, famed thief and infiltrator from the Hand of Yartar. "The bidding starts at 1,500 gold pieces...but it's yours immediately for 2,500." Given our bevy of coin, we squabble but eventually agree to pay the sum. Our agreement was to leave half of the payment with the barkeep and the rest upon receiving the orb.

As we talked terms for orb pick-up, a crossbow bolt flew through the window and struck Nareen. Wounded and bleeding, she survived, but it didn't bode well for smooth retrieval plans. The GOOD adventurers reconvened as a group and decided to accompany the thief and her lackeys to the orb site: a mausoleum surrounded by a graveyard.

Approaching the graveyard, our group spotted 5 figures near the mausoleum, one conspicuously towering at 8 feet tall and cloaked in a black robe. It quickly became clear they were attempting to loot the tomb and steal the orb. After a moment of furious planning, we did what we do best: attack.

This battle was one of epic proportions: fire walls, grease slips, earthen grasps, grappling and poison. Eventually our foes were leveled. From Nareen, we learn the cloaked figure is Ghald, an 8-foot tall sahuagin and prominent member of the Kraken Society. It's a true victory the orb hasn't fallen into one of his four reptilian limbs.

Triumphant, we grabbed the orb from its holding place in the mausoleum and moved it to our bag of holding. We departed, an orb richer, but not before casing the tombs for loot and trying to swindle a lower price from Nareen. As you do.

## Session Sixteen: Xor's Log (Nick)

### Unfinished Business

Where we last left the Temple of the Black Earth a few days prior, an effriti contracted by the cult was making rune-covered boxes to contain destruction orbs. Olga, Siculo, and Xor decided this unfinished business should get finished, and donned their GOOD branded wingsuits. They might have even high fived. Unfortunately when they arrived, the boxes and the effriti were gone. Low five.

### Unfinished Business, Part 2

Now angered and disappointed in themselves, the team made haste to the Temple of Eternal Flame, with intel from Ander's arcane eye in hand. A few things had changed since the eye had last floated through, and at the entrance the team was attacked by well-armored orcs and half-orcs. In a break with her usual Monkish dexterity, Olga was shoved by a half-orc into a tripwire, causing an axe to swing down on her. Meanwhile, Siculo ran his sword into a Razor Blast, causing it to explode into fire. Everyone was eventually dispatched, save one Razor Blast cultist who Xor decides to polymorph into a fish as retribution for choosing the wrong cult. The team sighs, and helps Xor realize that polymorph is for *us*, not *them*.

### The golem wakes

The team was walking back to dump the fish off when they accidentally woke a **stone golem** at the north entrance between the temples. Olga and Siculo dash by the golem while Xor was stuck behind the golem's wall-like legs that blocked the exit. Xor goes invisible and sneaks back through fire area and meets up with the team at the water temple recovery pond. After the 'short rest', the team dispatches a few hobgoblins before coming to the main lava chamber.

### The beast wakes

The team makes its way into the central part of the temple - a large room with four great stone pillars and lava flowing underneath, where an efreeti and other baddies are driving several Aezor slaves to craft weapons. Siculo signals to Xor to execute *plan polymorph*, and soon **Siculo becomes a gigantic T-Rex**, smashing everything in sight with his gaping maw and 6 ton tail. After an attack by the efreeti's conjured fire elemental, Siculo-Rex is set ablaze, creating an even more terrifying sight. Eventually the flaming Siculo-Rex is killed, only to be re-Rexed immediately (phase two of plan polymorph). After being severely injured by Siculo-Rex and Olga, the efreeti was finally felled by Xor's crossbow, whose otherwise useless bolts lined the various walls of the Temple of Eternal Flame. Meanwhile, the unarmed and at this point totally beaten up Olga was killed by a Razor Blast, who is then promptly **eaten by Siculo-Rex**. Siculo returns to his human form and stabilizes Olga, and the party tends to its wounds in another short rest.

Soon, there is a prison fight between Salamanders that escaped from their prison cells and Aezor slaves that ran away at first sight of a pissed off T-Rex. After letting them fight it out to the death, the team encounters the hiding prison guards - 2 Flame Wraths and 2 Guardians. A fireball or two later, they all fall to a strange hypnotic pattern, allowing the team to interrogate them. We learn **Lizzy** is a powerful spellcaster to the south who commands hobgoblins, and **Bastian** is a Fire Genasi to the north who is 2nd in command and vying for power against the prophet Vanifer. We also learn there are no special boxes being created here, and there **is a gong** in the fire temple that operates an elevator, with the command words "**Ember**" to fall, "**Ash**" to rise.

### Rest and Back Again

Injured and tired, the team made its way back to Riverguard Keep for a long rest, but not before a bit of attempted misdirection on the part of Olga, who leaves a note saying everyone there had decided to leave the cult (she hoped the recipient wouldn't notice the blood soaked floors). Arriving back, it's eerily quiet until they arrive at barracks in the south, where some low level guys are hanging out. But it's all a ruse - hobgoblins stand ready and ambush our worthy adventurers! A few hypnotic patterns later, there's a lot of necks for Olga to snap. Soon, Lizzy shows up and starts to chase the adventurers back into the

main lava room. While Olga is taking care of Lizzy, Siculo and Xor hear footsteps in the distance, and it's Bastian with an army of hobgoblins princer from the other side!

## Jurassic Park 2

Lucky for the good guys, there were no survivors to tell Bastian about the flaming T-Rex that beset the last group of cultists in the very same room. Siculo runs in, and his beast form again emerged. Fending off spears and swords, he chomped and swung his tail through the entire hobgoblin phalanx and let out a mighty roar.

With the hobgoblins dispatched, Bastian and his two guards run away, with a T-Rex in hot pursuit. Bastian calls 'Imix defend us!' and four obsidian columns turned to magma and radiated (weak) heat. Siculo-Rex slips under the low ceiling and chops at them from the stairwell, but fails to squeeze through, and Xor de-Rex's Siculo. Meanwhile, Bastian brilliantly casts a wall of fire *down the whole stairwell*, and his last remaining guard suddenly sees in his mind an image of a T-Rex chasing him from the other way. He runs down the stairs, trips, and dies. What a nightmare. The team waits for the fire wall to dissipate, and Olga attempts to chase after but the chase is fruitless. Unfortunately, nobody (ahem, Xor) had noticed a secret passage that Bastian left through.

As the team scouted the base further, the elevator had been taken down. Bastian was gone, and since the rest of the leadership had also left, there was only like 70gp in the whole place. The team managed to get 3 potions of fire resistance and 1 potion of greater healing from the Hobgoblin captain, though.

## Coda

On the way out, the team discovered a secret room that contained two Dwarven sarcophagi. Never missing an opportunity to desecrate graves for treasure, the team found smaller coffins inside with gold and silver trim & fittings worth 300gp, and the remains of two dwarves wearing extremely fine funeral masks. Bruldentharr examined these later and said they were finer than anything he had ever seen.

And thus concludes another chapter in the illustrious tale of GOOD.

# Session Sixteen: Postscript (Randy)

During your morning briefing, Elyn addresses the group. She conveys the following updates:

- She is pleased that you've cleared out the Temple of the Eternal Flame
- She requests that Xor doesn't polymorph anyone into a T-Rex in the Riverguard Keep or any of the valley's towns except in the case of emergency
- Cultist, Bandit, and Pirate activity in the Dessarin Valley is at an all time low and she credits GOOD with this achievement.
- The bizarre weather patterns continue with heat waves, earthquakes, and flash floods becoming a daily occurrence
- The worst weather, however, are the fierce and persistent winds. Yesterday, an uprooted tree was blown into Riverguard Keep and caused damage to the stables. Homesteads across the valley are reporting structural damage and travel on the roads is taking longer than usual.

She then cedes the floor to Bruldentharr.

- He thanks the crew for recovering the funerary masks and deems them to be relic of extreme cultural significance
- He asks that the group send the masks to the Dwarven leadership in Mirabar where they can be further analyzed and put on display.

Finally she brings up an urgent request from Endrith Vallivoe in Red Larch. He says that the Harpers suspect the elemental cultists have just made a powerful and dangerous alliance which GOOD must break up. He requests you meet him in Red Larch ASAP for a full briefing.

## Session Seventeen: Xor's Recap (Nick)

### Session 17

We start by talking to Bruldentharr, who wants to take the fine masks we discovered to Mirabar. This doesn't sound exciting or mysterious to our adventurers. Meanwhile there was also an urgent message from Endrith Vallivoe in Red Larch. He says that the Harpers suspect the elemental cultists have just made a powerful and dangerous alliance which GOOD must break up. Just the trick!

The team (Von Vinkel, Siculo, TBD, Almas, and Xor) assemble over a pint of Riverguard Keep Ale and decide an urgent message from fearful locals beats an old historian's desire to take some dusty books to some place.

### To Red Larch

It's very windy on the travel over on hippogriffs. We meet up at the tavern and we're asked whether the levitating, cabbage obsessed, slightly insane warlock Von Vinkel is part of GOOD, or part of **THEM (The Hateful Evil Monsters)**. We inform Endrith he's on contract. Endrith then details the odd finding that caused him to send the message.

### Mystery House

Rundreth Manor is an old manor in disrepair on the road south of Red Larch, abandoned by the Rundreth family long ago.

The manor is currently occupied by a Shadow Dragon by the name of '*the dark lady*'. Her real name is **Nurvureen** but everyone is afraid to mention her name. She's known as a mischevious dragon, playing tricks on people in the area. She can appear as human. Rumors about her about taking souls and turns them into shadows, but she's more a trickster than someone amassing an army.

Nobody has ever seen anyone exit the manor alive, however **recently robed cultists were seen leaving**. They were earth and water cultists. Could they be in league with a shadow dragon? It's up to the team and their *scooby-doo investigation skills* to get to the bottom of this. *Zoinks!*

We fly to the manor and its foggy outside, the wind having slightly let up. It's a spooky gothic like place with two main wings. TBD, wearing his trademark green shirt and brown ranger pants, scouts around and discovers some drops of blood - at the sight of it VonVinkle jumps in TBD's arms. *Ruh-roh!* From further scouting we discover in the foundation of the manor there is a hole that reveals stairs going down.

Eager to find out more about this possible deal made between the cultists and the dragon, and totally willing to risk our lives on a madman talking to a deity by way of muttering softly to himself, we ask VonVinkle to reach out to the god Tiamet (God of Dragons). After an intense muttering session, with several "oh, and also ask..." moments from Siculo and Almas, we find out that we would be able to offer a deal to the dark lady that would be better than that of the cultists.

Armed with this (possibly misplaced) confidence, we being walking down the stairs. The well meaning but rather distracted / possibly stoned TBD forgets to tread lightly and breaks one of the steps, falling 40ft down into a chamber. The team quickly rappels down out of obligation.

The chamber, with a vaulted ceiling, contains rotting remnants of tables, sinks, and other artifacts of a long forgotten manor. The air shimmers and a female Drow appears. "Are you a shadow dragon?" we ask. "Is there any doubt?" she responds. VonVinkle's teeth clatter.

We ask her to teach us about being better at making mischief, including a cultist eating contest against a T-rex, but she sees through our ruse. It probably didn't help having the straight-laced blond paladin (Siculo) wearing a GOOD-emblazoned blue jumpsuit trying to convince her we were troublemakers. To the surprise and dismay of Xor, the dark lady is unimpressed by Xor's music, new purple outfit, and general role as 'the pretty one' in the group. With a bit more probing from the group's bespeckled smarty pants Almas (clad in bookish orange wizard robes), we discover the dark lady actually wound up eating several cultists and found them a boring lot. Interesting.

The dark lady has been in the valley for a long time, and has seen many cults come and go, but we convince her that this one is more dangerous. She asks about destruction orbs and wants one if we can get her one. She explains:

*"I don't love spending time in material plane, except maybe to blow off steam. I can offer some information. If cultists bring about the princes coming into this realm that's not good. Each elemental cult has an elemental node they have access to. in the node, the boundaries between our realm and the respective elemental plane is thin; they get devastation orbs and other things that have elemental power. From here they'd be able to open a portal, though it doesn't mean princes can come through - just that power can flow more freely. My hunch is that summoning the prince is a long drawn out ritual that probably involves sacrifices. Hopefully it doesn't come to that. Portals have key that is attuned to them, which is the only way to open/close them. I believe there are 4 elemental weapons given to elemental prophets given by an emissary, and that these weapons are the keys."*

We learn the wind in the valley is due to the air prophet's death and the air node being open - the lack of balance is sending chaotic energy. Note that *we possess the elemental weapon to close the air portal*, so we should do that. However we shouldn't use it as a weapon in the meantime because anyone who attunes will have a 'high bandwidth channel to elemental prince' and be regularly tempted by them (ahem, Sauron).

The dark lady gives us a **+1 magic sword of jumping** (tripled jump height). However, there's a gem socketed in it that has a tracer spell where Nureveen always knows where it is.

Increasingly menacing, she ends with: "Never return again unless you have a devastation orb." Our adventurers legs are a flurry of circles as they dash away, leaving a cloud of dust in their wake.



### Fane of the Eye

We return to Red Larch, and then decide to head down to the Fane of the Eye, walking through the Temple of the Howling Hatred (air temple). We walk down the skeleton stairs of the worm's mouth, and find 5 magic balloon backpacks, that let us levitate for 10 minutes. 1 charge, must be recharged in air node.

The Fane seems to have four passages down - one from each elemental temple - and in each corner of the map are the different elemental influences. In the center is an **impenetrable darkness** that no light or sound can penetrate.

In the air side, we see destruction around a 10 foot area - battered armor, clothes, etc. We assume this area probably contains magic air spell that goes off when it is disturbed. We avoid this.

In the earth section, we hear singing from above and are nearly charmed to start rock climbing. We avoid what seem to have been **rock sirens**. We also find fresh shards of armor, from the polymorphed razor blast thrown over in last session.

In the water section, toadstools and fungi line the ground, and the passage follows to a river and a waterfall, and some slick stairs go far down. We get attacked by 2 Water Weirs here and swiftly deal with them.

Toward the center we walk into an ancient dwarven crypt and see a stone sarcophagus. A name inscribed: **Hendrel Foebreaker**. Brulthendar mentioned him to us - he valiantly fought off creatures of underdark. Wave after wave of creatures fought them so they ceded the Fane. Foebreaker was able to fight off the creatures enough to make a tactical retreat. The sarcophagus contains some kind of magical well of courage, but unfortunately we break it and the magic energy dissipates. Sigh.

We enter a room with crystal light, barrels full of provisions, and two hill giants dressed in ringmail. They're actually friendly, albeit a bit stupid, and we feed them then. Much like the water section, we find another path in their room that goes downward, though we avoid that for now.

We make our way to the fire section, where fire-resistant minotaurs attack us. After many battles and chases, we kill them. Except for the one that we polymorph into a sloth and have VonVinkle offer to the hill giants to eat. Sadly, moments later a minotaur explodes out from the hill giant, and the other hill giant lets out a warcry as VonVinkle makes a hasty retreat.

The session ends having cleaned out many of the (surprisingly weak) creatures in the Fane. Perhaps there are no scary monsters, and just some crotchety old man that's trying to trick people that the cults are powerful? Our five adventurers ponder this as they leave the Fane by way of a mysterious teal smoke-filled wagon.

## Session Eighteen: Renata's Recap (Kate)

[Placeholder summary by Randy]

- The party delved into the Black Geode - the Earth Cult's stronghold beneath the fane of the eye.
- They made short work of the initial guards, helped by VonVinkle's banishing of any elementals back to the Plane of Earth
- Soon they found themselves surrounded and outmatched by Hook Horrors and Galeb Duhr
- Clever tactics and quick thinking were all that kept them from a total party kill
- VonVinkle Polymorphed into a T-Rex and drew off half the enemies
- The party fought their way through the remainder and then all scrambled back to base to rest up and heal
- The next morning the party decided to focus on the Fane of the Eye and they succeed in defeating Gar Shatterkeel, Prophet of the Cult of the Crushing Wave
- After killing him and his minions, they shattered an altar that the cults were using to communicate with the Elder Elemental Eye

## Session Nineteen: VonVinkle's Retelling (Harry)

With the weather becoming increasingly untenable, the forces of good receive a messenger to their keep, a poor victim we have rescued once before. She informs us that many of the towns-folk have been beguiled by the earth cult, which is now operating in the open... and claiming that they will fix the weather.

A quick straw-poll, combined with *the power of divination* indicates that we think dealing with closing some of existing nodes is probably the best course of action. With some persuasion, and a great number of feral grunts and dubious looks, **Sledge** is persuaded to attune to the trident of watery evil.

The G.O.O.D. work begins, and **VonVinkel**, **Sledge**, and **Siculo** head down into the thane of the eye. A previously encountered highly dangerous "fog creature" is encountered at the stairs down from the water temple, but it is banished with some difficulty by **VonVinkel**. For completeness sake, we decide to scope out whatever is still here, and discover a large clan of lizard people, who don't see us, and we decide to leave unmolested, as well as some sort of enhanced air elemental, which we also decide to leave unmolested.

A Evil Drow tomb is discovered, and promptly defiled resulting in a brief but horrible animate sword encounter, and a Rust monster ambushes the party but **Siculo** slices it in half with an absurdly mighty blow on his very first swing.

The three intrepid adventurers, bolstered by their success, descend carefully into **the plunging torrents**, the very heart of the watery evil element. There they find a little boat, and a huge floating orb of water. Taking the boat, they head down one of the many branching paths, and discover a number of water cultists, locked into a half submerged cage.

As the members of good hold some respect for the sanctity of human life, these prisoners are freed, but the ungrateful prisoners, *who are also water cultists*, immediately turn on and attack their liberators. After about half of them are slain in the first round of combat the rest forfeit, and are interrogated to great effect.

The now cowed inform us of several serious dangers including a giant octopus, and several particularly dangerous individuals. They also tell us that the floating orbs of water are some sort of magical monorail that has a central stop right at the water node.

The forces of good cleverly dress in cultist robes, leave the cultists tied to the ceiling where they are in no danger of drowning, and ride the watery monorail, seeing each of the terrifying threats that were mentioned, Arriving fresh and dangerous at a small island in a large chamber containing the water node.

Here they encounter the Abolith, A watery aberration they were warned of, along with it's two Chuul guards. A Desperate and epic battle ensues, with **Sledge** dealing and taking massive damage, **Siculo** throwing similarly epic smite-attacks while guarding and blessing the party, and **VonVinkel** handling crowd control to maintain *local advantage*.

These abominations are dispatched, but wear the forces of good down to a horribly exhausted nub. They proceed to close the water node, by *hurling in the trident*. This finally answers the question everyone in Redlarch has been asking... "who'll stop the rain", but also shuts down the water-monorail, trapping the exhausted hero's deep in hostile territory...

Using some sort of magical communication stone, They call for re-enforcements, and **Ander**, the mighty cleric came to the rescue. **VonVinkel** was able to, with a short rest, use his magical abilities to teleport directly to the entrance to the plunging torrents, and then to teleport back bringing **Ander**, who was able to invoke mighty divine intervention, extracting **VonVinkel**, **Sledge**, **Siculo** and himself back to the keep.

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After a short rest, The forces of good decided that fixing the weather completely was a significant priority, and reclaiming the evil air spear from **Olga Rain**, headed down

The four person excursion team returns to the thane, and ventures into the heart of the Air cult. They quickly find a chamber that was clearly devastated by a destruction orb once dropped in it, and moving forward discover and ambush a lone *air elemental*.

They further encounter a number of Air cultists, who are lead by a priest, and distracted in some sort of dark ritual or revelry, leaving the forces of good capable of ambushing them with little difficulty. The priest is slain easily, and as are several of cultists, and the rest surrender. They are shocked to discover that **Ander** has joined the forces of good.

After a short interrogation by **Sledge**, revealing that they know almost nothing. **VonVinkel**, insisting on thematic imprisonment, digs a large stone pit for them with the *claws of the umberhulk*, And then places them in (tied up) inside, leaving a heavy capstone on top.

The forces of G.O.O.D. press on, encountering a group of four air priests, who are easily dispatched with **Sledge & Siculo's** massive damage dealing capacity, and **Ander & VonVinkel's** combined crowd control and magical might.

Continuing deeper, the Node of Air is discovered... Guarded by two Myrmidon air elementals.

These are promptly banished back to the elemental plain of air by **VonVinkel** without a fight. **Siculo** uses the spear to close the node of air, the weather is restored, the forces of GOOD escort the prisoners back to the keep.

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With the weather completely repaired, the forces of GOOD are able to ride their Hippogriffs to Redlarch, and enter the town disguised as local farmers to find out what is going on with this conversion to the earth cult.

They discover a number of cultists, hobgoblins, and a hill giant having taken over the inn, with many locals following them, and listening to their preaching. **Ander** gives **VonVinkel** the gift of tongues, and he uses it to *mass suggestion* and pointing out that GOOD has massive military superiority, which causes all of the cultists, priests, and hobgoblins to surrender. The Hill Giant, outnumbered and confused is easily dispatched.

The Cultists ask to just leave the area... but knowing that their reform will only last 24 hours, GOOD threatens them into staying, trying to enroll them in the reform program. The Hobgoblins point out that they are mercenaries and are allowed to flee to another region. The townsfolk call for executions, and are persuaded to wait a little.

While GOOD is trying to figure out what to do, the towns-folk start holding trials for other towns-folk and hanging each-other. They are persuaded to set aside the death penalty, by the offer that GOOD will execute the remaining cultists.

The remaining cultists each had *feign death* cast on them, their "corpse" was then presented to the townsfolk, and then they were smuggled into the B.E.T.T.E.R. program. Due to an increase in the number of totally dubious recruits, jail cells were carved into the stone at B.E.T.T.E.R. H.Q.

## Session Twenty: Ander's Recap (Alexei)

What is up, my GOOD fellow companions! I have a feeling this adventure is drawing to a close. Only one cult is remaining, and once we destroy them and close the final node, we can finally claim the Dessarin Valley for ourse... I mean, restore the ruined villages and help the townsfolk prosper in safety.

Ever since I learned about **the crown of King Flametongue** through casting Legend Lore, I knew I had to get it. I implored my companions to go with me to retrieve it. Lucky for us, the crown was in the **Black Geode**, where we had to go to close the **Earth node** anyway.

After adventuring through the rock, mud, and dirt, we ran across several earth elementals and quickly dispatched them. It was clear the magic was ever-present as it shined through the purple crystals sprinkled everywhere throughout the tunnels. Even though we were mostly following the tunnels blindly, we stumbled onto the crown pretty quickly, and wrestled it from the hands of the Drow specters. Apparently it's cursed and has trapped a **Duergar ghost, Reulek**. (If you recall, he was partnered with the Oni who took over the Shrine of the Tender Heart.) He begged us to return the crown to the Tomb beneath the **Halls of the Haunting Axe**. We agreed, but promised to do it only after we dispatch all the cultists.

In another part of the tunnels we found a Dwaven prisoner, **Rhundorth**, who was part of the long-lost delegation. He mentioned **Lady Teressia** is still in Fire cult's captivity. We'll rescue her in time!

Shortly after we found the antichamber that led to **Marlos**. He was busy doing various sacrifices and didn't hear us approach due to the ever-present noise of grinding rocks. However his guards and gargoyles spotted us. The combat quickly ensued. Thankfully we had a plan (and about 5 backup plans)! We carefully avoided Marlos' gaze so he wouldn't turn us to stone, and dealt with his henchmen first (Almas' wall of fire and a scary looking sphere with lightning coming out of it was very helpful!). Then we disarmed him and with Xor's polymorph we were able to capture Marlos in the form of an armadillo.

We took his weapon and closed the Earth node. The place immediately began to collapse. We ran to the exit, but not before rescuing all the prisoners. After all, who will farm our la... I mean, that's why we are here!

We decided to drown Marlos in a boiling puddle of mud, but he went through the ground and attacked us. What a fool! Siculo and TBD were on him in an instant and beat his ass back into the dust from which he came. RIP!

## Session Twenty-one: Prologue (Randy)

Here's the final session setup, which played out in beginning of the night:

Early on the morning after defeating Marlos Urnrayle, the heroes awake to yelling in Riverguard Keep. Endrith Vallivoe (friend of GOOD, and owner of a shop in Red Larch) is perched high atop one of the Keep's towers without any way to get down. VonVinkle levitates up and brings the shaking man down.

"The Dark Lady, she paid me a surprise visit last night - in dragon form. She lifted the roof off my home and plucked me out of bed. She flew me across Dessarin Valley to Riverguard Keep.

"The whole Valley is up in flames. I could see wildfires spreading near Red Larch, Westbridge, Womford, and Beliard. It looks like they were being stoked by fire elementals and little fire men.

"Oh - she said this is for you" Endrith hands VonVinkle a gift basket, "She said you'll know when to use it and that it tastes best when toasted."

The gift basket contains five s'mores. Ander identifies them as being magical and conferring some resistance to fire.

Elyn calls for an emergency briefing. With most of GOOD present, she hands out potions of fire resistance and sends squads off to combat the various fires. A courier from the Knights of

Samular shows up and requests help - they're trying to save Beliard. Elyn gives them potions as well.

She then turns to the remaining five heroes: Almas, Ander, Olga, VonVinkle, and Xor. She implores them to close the fire node as fast as possible - the attacks will keep escalating until the cult is defeated. She hands out a potion of fire resistance and some greater healing potions and they head upstream to Tyar-Besil

## Session Twenty-one: Ander's Retelling (Alexei)

Lo and behold, five champions set out from the Riverguard Keep to close the final gate. Armed with delicious s'mores gifted from the Dark Lady herself and dressed in their best winged suits, they make their way down into the Fane of the Eye, as the world above them slowly continues to burn. When our heroes reach the hovering platform leading into the Fire cult section, they notice it's not there. Unperturbed, they ring the gong to summon it, only to be surprised by Bastion Thermander sitting calmly on the rising platform. He greets Olga with Hold Person and assaults others with fire spells. But the arrogant fool is quickly squelched by our unstoppable heroes.

Another set of enemies awaits them as they descend down: a flamewrath, a fire priest, and a razerblast.

They all swiftly fall, but not before one of them alerts a giant. VonVinkle swiftly morphs into a T-Rex and a massive battle ensues. But the giant is no match, as Olga swiftly kicks him in his toe, the rest of the team bring down the beast.

Further into the hot tunnels, our adventurers run through a room filled with noxious fumes. There is a passage leading down that's blocked by a wall of fire. As they learn later, the passage leads to the prisons where Lady Teresiel is being imprisoned.

In the adjacent tunnel, our heroes find another gong. Surely only good things can happen as Ander rings it! Alas, a tentacled monster emerges and quickly snatches our beloved halfling. Thankfully, VonVinkle already cast Alter Self to mask himself Bastiaan. He orders the beast to drop Ander, and it grudgingly obeys, allowing our party to move on.

In the next room, VonVinkle charms two guards to do our bidding. They are ordered to kill the third guard and lead the group to the prisoners. Our heroes disspell the wall of fire and try to convince the two merchant prisoners to be T-Rex meatshields. They refuse (cowards!), but **brave Lady Teresiel** agrees!

VonVinkle, still appearing as Bastiaan, walks into the next room and sees: a small red dragon, a colossal stone statue weeping tears of lava, with a giant glowing mini sun above it. Leading up to the colossus is a narrow path; at its end is Vanfier standing besides a sacrificial altar. VonVinkle only has a second to react before the dragon sees through his illusion! With but a single word he banishes the dragon into another realm for one minute. The clock is ticking!

Just as the dragon vanishes, Vanifer finishes the last sacrifice. The giant orb grows bigger and turns into none other than Imix, Prince of Fire. The apocalypse is nigh, but not if GOOD has something to say about it!

A swift and deadly battles commences. **Swift Olga** chases after Vanifer, who tries to blink away and hide. She is still holding the key, a dagger, which can close the portal. Imix summons three fire elementals, but our **noble Ander** is quick to banish them back to whence they came. (But not before taking a bite of the delicious s'more, which turns his skin into graham cracker!) The lair produces an impenetrable cloud of smoke around Olga and Vanifer, but **cunning Almas** is quick to blow it away with a Gust of wind.

The T-Rex is soaking up a lot of damage as Imix is unleashing all his power. Sheets of flame rain from the cavern's ceiling causing massive damage, but Ander is quick with a timely group heal. As the lava begins to rise, the floor of the cavern slowly vanishes beneath. Thankfully, Almas was prepared and cast flight on everybody. As Olga deals the killing blow to Vanifer, **talented Xor** picks up the dagger and tries to get to the gate. But Imix won't have it and towers in the way. **Unstoppable VonVinkle** is unperturbed! He grabs the dagger and casts Dimension Door to appear right behind Imix and tosses the dagger into the orb!

The orb implodes, sucking **wimpy Imix** back into the Plane of Fire. The flames subside, but our heroes quickly make it out before the dragon reappears. When they get back to the surface, they are greeted with wonderful news: the surface fires have subsided and it is finally snowing. Our heroes lift their eyes towards the starry sky and stick out their tongues to catch the flurries, enjoying, for the first time, the serenity and peace they fought so hard for.

The next day is full of ceremonies. Lady Ushien Stormbanner congratulates our champions, and Knights of Samular join GOOD and the Order of the Gauntlet. Red Larch mayor decrees a GOOD day that will be celebrated every year. The joint faction program is officially a success, and our heroes dial in Imix to have the last laugh! May the shame of his defeat burn in his heart for eons to come.

## Session Twenty-one: Postscript (Randy)

The day after defeating Imix, Elyn summons everyone to a feast. She makes important announcements and many toasts are made.

Elyn congratulates you on successfully defeating the cults and securing peace for the Dessarin Valley. She's been on the sending stones with GOODs sponsors all day and they've declared the peacekeeping force a success. They will create chapters of GOOD across the Realm and Elyn will help start them.

She calls Lady Ushien Stormbanner to stand and announces that the the Knights of Samular will be taking over the responsibilities of GOOD in the Dessarin Valley. Lady Ushien thanks the members of GOOD for their efforts in securing the peace and safety of the Valley - your efforts have convinced the Knights of Samular to join the Order of the Gauntlet and take on the mission of GOOD.

Endrith Vallivoe, raises a tankard of ale and expresses his gratitude to GOOD. He says he'll have Red Larch create a new holiday to honor the work of GOOD and that it will be called

Good-day. You will always be welcome in Red Larch and he'll be happy to host you once his roof is repaired.

Bruldentharr, the historian stands up and toasts. He is immensely grateful for you rescuing him from the Earth Cult and elated that you've found so many Dwarven relics. Now that you know the location of King Flametongue's tomb, he intends to excavate it and then return to Mirabar with all of the artifacts - they belong on display, where all dwarfs can study and admire them.

Elyn addresses you one last time, "You are some of the finest heroes I've had the pleasure to work with. You're welcome to stay in the Valley and work with Lady Ushien, travel the realms to set up new chapters of GOOD, or leave for adventures of your own - or maybe just some relaxation, you've earned it."

## Epilogue

### Bruldentharr (Randy)

The dwarf historian successfully excavates King Flametongue's tomb and finds his legendary axe - Orcsplitter. He returns to Mirabar with a vast array of artifacts from the Kingdom of Besilmer and is honored by various academies throughout the realm. He spends some time studying the artifacts and basking in the praise of his peers. As the years go on, he itches for more knowledge and glory. He returns to Dessarin Valley and leads an expedition down into Tyar-Besil. While exploring the Black Geode, his team is beset by a clan Hook Horrors and torn apart. One student is able to flee to the surface and relay the story of the expedition's defeat.

### Ander (Alexei)

After all the adventures, Ander settles down in Red Larch for a few years. He becomes the head priest at the monastery where only a short while ago he was a junior abbot. He starts a small library and writes a few books. One of them covers GOOD's history from beginning to end. He exchanges frequent letters with Bruldentharr, learning more about local Dwarven history and ruins. He continues Scrying, Legend Lore-ing, and sending out his Arcane Eye to make sure all is well in the Valley.

When Bruldentharr's expedition fails, he gets restless and his ever-curious spirit starts yearning for more. He takes frequent walks; often leaving for a few days at a time. He hands over the monastery to his apprentice and moves into the Feathergale Spire.

He hasn't been seen in Red Larch for over a year now. Some say he still lives in the Spire, spending his time writing and reading. Some say he left long time ago on a journey to a distant land. He is certainly not forgotten. Every now and again, when a certain child is being unruly, his



parents joke: "You better behave yourself, or Ander will swoop in on a griffin and steal you away."

## Endrith Vallivoe (Randy)

Endrith Vallivoe, Harper and proprier of Vallivoe's Sundries in Red Larch, is helps transform GOOD from regional heroes to Sword Coast legends. He stages a play about your exploits and tours it around the north. He makes a small fortune in merchandising which include knock off versions of If's Rainstick and Xor's shield-drum and a line of puppets for the various heroes and villains.

After Ander writes his book, Endrith parters with a Waterdhavian press and makes a small print run. It sells fairly well among the aristocracy and helps raise funds for many regional chapters of GOOD.

## Ripley VonVinkle (Harry)

**Ripley VonVinkle** was born nearly 1800 years ago to the noble house **VonVinkle**. As a child he was given given to the fairy king Oberan to live in the fairy court as an assurance that a pact between house **VonVinkle** and the fay folks would not be broken. Apparently it was.

Though time moves strangely in the fairy court, after what seemed a few years **VonVinkle** realized he was never going to be released. To gain status in his new home **VonVinkle** swore allegiance to a fairy nobel in return for his service received boons, secrets, and tutelage until he was traded to a dairy farmer on the prime material plane for a cabbage. After about 2 months of manual labor as a servant, **VonVinkle** was able to persuade the dairy farmer to give him a year and a day to earn his freedom, at the cost of 7 cows.

In the meantime his fairy lord gave him instructions to return to the lands once controlled by house **VonVinkle**, and re-establish peace and order, by aiding the forces of good. For his part **VonVinkle** is deeply bitter about having lost his inherited land, and seeks both to know **why** he was given to the court of fairy king, and to re-establish his title.

After the exciting *Imix* was banished back to his realm, and peace and order had returned, **VonVinkle** used some of his earnings to purchase 7 cows for the Dairy farmer. **VonVinkle** then used his G.O.O.D. name to gain access to the royal courts where he set to work on the twin projects of discovering why he had been traded to the fairy court's and re-establishing his title.

In a musty tomb of royal birth records he finally discovered the records of his birth, and the treaty with the Fay which stated that he was sent to eat at the table of the Fairy king in return for assurance that should extra-dimensional evil ever threaten the lands of House VonVinkel, the

Fay would send a powerful champion to aid in banishing and resisting it. The humor of this was not lost on him.

Repeatedly thwarted in re-establishing his Duchy in the Dessarin Vally, he began a campaign of extra-dimensional travel, visiting the city of doors to raise a force capable of simply taking what he see's as his. nearly 1,200 years later by local time **VonVinkle** returned at the head of an army of strange creatures and the living dead in a fast, effective, and largely bloodless conquest of the Vally. The humor of this was *a/so* not lost on him, nor was it's demonstration of the [Unity Of Rings](#).

Finally having conquered the valley, He ruled in the name of house VonVinkle for nearly 70 years. He was colloquially known as "Ripply the mirror Duke" because of his unsettling habit of assuming the visual appearance of whoever he was addressing. His rule was mediocre but not terrible, and he was generally well liked by the population. His longest lasting legacy was the "great fall cabbage competition", held each year where cabbages were put [head-to-head](#) in a number of categories, and the best are awarded lavish state sponsored prizes. There is also a State sponsored feast.

## Grumink the Assassin (Randy)

GOOD last saw Grumink when Xor and Ander transported him and other prisoners to Summit Hall for B.E.T.T.E.R. Ander promised him gold to help fight some Ankegs and Grumink took that as a sign that he'd be free to leave afterward. When the monsters were vanquished, Ander informed him that he gets the gold but still has to spend the rest of his life in the Knights of Samular (where he can't have any gold or possessions). Grumink fled while Ander and Xor were distracted.

Grumink spent a few tendays working his way north along the Dessarin River: stealing a horse in Beliard and riding north to Yartar. He entered the local thieves tavern to look for a new gig but GOOD came through the front doors looking for a stolen devastation orb. Terrified, Grumink sneaked out through the kitchen and immediately rode east to Silverymoon.

The assassin grew paranoid that agents of GOOD were lurking around every corner. He continued east to the Moonsea, rarely stopping in one place for more than a night. Only when reaching the strongholds of the Zhentarim did he slow down and think about rebuilding his life. He took a new name and began reestablishing his reputation as a ruthless assassin. Business was good - the lands of the Moonsea were rife with intrigue and clients were plentiful.

The good times would not last. Grumink met his end after accepting a contract from a shady middleman. He'd unknowingly become a pawn in a false flag operation and was set up as the fall guy. He was captured outside his target's bedroom and executed after a quick show trial.

## Siculo (Nathan)

Siculo stumbled into G.O.O.D. and his first quest as a Paladin after the loss of his brother and wife Janet in a barbarian raid several years before. He took the Paladin's call and found himself righting many petty wrongs, spending time in pubs and towns always standing up for those who were picked on. It felt ok, but didn't satisfy the oath he took to fight evil.

G.O.O.D. changed that. Meeting a party willing to fight evil even if it meant shutting portals to other dimensions tickled his inner urge and his passion for justice turned into a roaring flame with G.O.O.D. After all of the portals were shut and things calmed down he took a position at B.E.T.T.E.R., believing that he had found place to make a difference. He thought reform is possible for all.

One of the cultists going through BETTER appealed to Siculo's desire to reform. This cultist seemed to really take to heart the training and inspiration BETTER provided to fight against evil. Yet, just as the cultist seemed to be devoting himself to mentoring others in the program, he escaped, killed a villager and was nearly out of the town when Siculo hurled a javelin through his heart.

The incident devastated Siculo. He went back to his dorm, packed his bags and left BETTER before dinner, deciding he may not be able to reform others, so he needed to destroy all evil. He charged from town to town finding villages plagued by overloads who taxed them too much or barbarian tribes.

One day an evil spirit approached a town he was in and Siculo felt its presence. He hid behind a wall waiting for the spirit to come around the corner and lashed out at it with a magical sword. The sword went through the spirit, injuring it but the spirit pulled Siculo through time and space into another realm and ran away. Siculo found his next quest in this new dimension and is searching through the realm for alliances to hunt the spirit down.

## Lady Ushien Stormbanner (Randy)

Lady Ushien Stormbanner, leader of the Knights of Samular, was extremely skeptical of GOOD. When she leant them a contingent of 20 knights, 5 returned alive. When the homesteads of Beliard plead for protection from the Ice Shield Orcs, GOOD was silent. When GOOD promised eager new recruits, they delivered thugs and miscreants.

However, as the threat of the cults grew, the Lady's opinions changed.

When the cults reached out to the shadow dragon, GOOD braved her lair to break up the alliance. When the valley suffered from unceasing rain and wind, GOOD closed the elemental

portals. When Westbridge was overrun by cultists, GOOD liberated the town. And when Imix appeared on the material plane and threatened all of existence, GOOD struck back and banished the Prince.

Lady Ushien was convinced of the merits of GOOD and their benefactors. She pledged her Knights to the Order of the Gauntlet and, when Elyn left the valley, was rewarded with leadership over the Dessarin Valley chapter of GOOD. She was a firm but fair peacekeeper and the valley flourished under her watch. Banditry became scarce and wandering monsters were pushed back far from the settlements. She even arranged a lasting truce with the barbarian tribes of the region.

Under Lady Ushien's stewardship, the Dessarin Valley chapter of GOOD became the shining example against which all other chapters were compared. She led well into old age. When she retired, she passed the reins to her top lieutenant: a man who had joined the Knights as a teen through the reform program BETTER.

## Olga Rein (Josh)

The night after the adventure concluded, Olga left (along with the jumping sword). She decided that she had grown strong enough, and it was time to return to her home in the far east and make right the things that were wrong (namely, that there were barbarians whose necks had not been snapped). She raised a small army and after a few years of what would best be described as ruthless terror, brought peace to the land.

The local governing bodies of the land were pleased about the lack of barbarians, but less happy about the informal, growing, unsanctioned army. Olga's lack of political ability (or anything remotely resembling tact) made it relatively easy for them to convince her followers to disband, except for a relatively small, loyal contingent. They retreated to the mountains, where Olga started what would eventually become the Leaping Manticore Punch school of martial arts.

Olga enjoyed her time training monks, but ultimately seemed to grow restless. One day, 10 years after the founding of the monastery, she disappeared.

Around this same time, the Dark Lady seems to have disappeared from Dessarin Valley.

## Lich Renwick Caradroon (Randy)

Despite his reticence to help GOOD, Renwick kept a close (arcane) eye on their progress. He hated to be disturbed by mortal affairs but had a strong preference not to have the material plane remade in Imix's image. During the final showdown with the elemental prince, Renwick was scrying on the battle and ready to jump in if things went poorly.

A few nights after GOOD's success, Renwick teleported into the office of Lady Ushien Stormbanner. They spoke late into the evening about the Knights of Samular and the future of the Dessarin Valley. Having built a rapport, the lich implored Lady Stormbanner to deliver the bones of his brother Samular to his chambers in the Sacred Stone Monastery; the Lady obliged.

It's unclear what exactly happened next but several ten-days later a scouting party found the Sacred Stone Monastery significantly altered. The walls and doors surrounding Renwick's quarters were transformed into opaque crystal. Where the door to his lab once stood, a message glows in golden crystal:

*We have ascended to surf the planes, to indulge in that knowledge we have yet to imbibe. We have cast a forbiddance on the Sember Hills strong enough to last a millennia; you need not worry about future elemental threats. Do not attempt to enter our quarters, trespassers will receive no mercy.*

## Appendix A: Ander's Trials at Feathergale Spire (Randy & Alexei)

### Sember Days and Feathergale Knights

Early in the campaign, Alexei had to miss a few weeks. We decided to run a side-adventure over email and it got dark. I was playing a game of "Let's see how far Ander will go in search of knowledge" and the answer was wayyy further than I expected.

There were no dice rolls, just back and forth emails where I'd describe the situation and ask Alexei what Ander aims to do. Alexei did a fantastic job of playing Ander true to his motivations and ethics.

Here's the compiled email transcript (minus some side-talk):

#### **Randy**

Just wanted to get this started - I'll have the first bit of your side adventures take place before Session Four, though you'll likely leave for Feathergale Knight initiation right before the session. For this first bit, feel free to communicate anything you learn or any

ideas you have with the rest of GOOD. Once you're off into the hills, you should restrict any in-character communication until you're back in Red Larch (or send a message).

The two things you mentioned were:

- Writing a letter to Summit Hall about recovering the Knight's body
- Researching the Dwarven Tome

Anything else you want to communicate in the letter? Anything else you want to do around town?

### **Alexei**

In the letter I thank Lady Ushien for her hospitality and express how sad it is that we couldn't stay for longer and talk more. I apologize for not recovering the knight's body and ask her if they found it, or if we should continue the search. I mention that I belong to the Order of the Gauntlet, and that I hope an alliance between the two groups can form, and ask if there is anything she needs help with. I also mention that we've met up with Thurl Merroska, and that I'm planning to train with them. I ask if there is anything I should know about them, or if there is anything she would like me to look into while I'm there.

I'll most likely want to communicate what I find in the tome to the rest of the team before I head out.

### **Randy**

You spend many hours pouring over the beautifully illuminated Dwarven tome. It is an epic history of King Torhild Flametongue founder of the Dwarven Kingdom of Besilmer and wielder of the magical axe Orcsplitter.

Torhild believed that the dwarven race would remain in a beleaguered state if they continued to live underground in mines, so he set out to create an overground farming realm, where dwarves could act as builders, inventors, and repairers. His realm came under constant attack from giants, trolls from the Evermoors and wolves, but initially managed to fight them back.

At the height of his rule, the Kingdom covered much of the Dessarin Valley and their works included the Stone Bridge, Halls of the Hunting Axe, Vale of Dancing Waters, and

fortress city of Tyar-Besil. He died in one-on-one combat with a hill giant, atop the Stone Bridge. Soon after his death, the kingdom collapsed.

Endrith explains that he bought it from a peddler passing through town. The peddler told Endrith that he bought it from a shady keelboat skipper in Womford, who had somehow come by a dozen similar books.

## **Randy**

After several days, a messenger bird arrives with a response from Lady Ushien.

She accepts your apology and thanks you for your offer to help search. Her Knights were able to recover his body, though not his shield that is ornately engraved with the symbols of Tyr (balanced scales resting on a warhammer). She asks for you to keep an eye out for the shield and return it if possible.

Lady Ushien acknowledges your overture to join the Order of the Gauntlet but remains cautious about value of subordinating her Knights to the order. She says that she will track your adventures as she considers the merits of an alliance.

On the subject of Thurl, she reacts with disdain. The so-called Feathergale Knights are no real Knights - just wealthy Waterdhavians playing at chivalry. If you are really interested in becoming a Knight, she suggests spending time at Summit Hall with the Knights of Samular and learning the proper code of conduct and ethical responsibilities that all Knights should uphold. If you insist on joining Thurl, she asks you persuade him to scout out evil in the valley and provide reports on which the Knights of Samular can act.

She concludes by saying that you and GOOD are always welcome to stay at Summit Hall and that her Knights would be willing to garrison a location once you've ridden it of a threat.

## **Randy**

That's about all that happens before the next session - I think it makes sense for Ander to leave town just before the session begins. Feel free to convey some or all of the above to the broader group before Monday Night.

When you're ready to depart for Feathergale Spire, let me know.

## **Randy**

You leave for the spire early one morning, in the company of a caravan heading to Beliard. The ride is uneventful, though you pass a few wrecked and looted carts as you enter the Sumber Hills.

A little ways into the Sumber Hills, it's time for you to split off from the caravan and make your way to the Spire. There's no trail but you pick your way through the terrain with ease and the Spire is visible for miles around. There isn't a lot to see, though you occasionally glimpse a Feathergale Knight on Vulture or Hippogriff flying near the Spire.

As you get closer, you can shake the feeling that you're being watched. Looking around, you don't see anything menacing though you think you see some movement out the corner of your eye. You round the final hill before the Spire; glancing back, you see a figure that looks to be half bird and half man perched amid some boulders in the distance. You blink and it's gone.

It doesn't take long to reach the Spire and Sevra lowers the drawbridge and greets you warmly. She encourages you to eat a big dinner and get some rest as tomorrow your training begins.

*What are your aims and objectives during your stay at Feathergale Spire? What general approach do you want to take?*

## **Alexei**

Objectives:

- 1) I'll ask around about the half-bird half-man creature I saw.
- 2) Rise through ranks as fast as possible.
- 3) Learn more about this cult, Yan-C-Bin, and how the two are connected. (Do they have books?!)
- 4) Become steadfast friends with everyone, especially with Thurl Merroska and Sevra.



Approach:

- a) I'll generally stick to following the rules.
- b) It seems like the knights value certain kind of recklessness, so I'll try to demonstrate that to the best of my ability.
- c) From what I saw, it looks like they don't have a cleric on their team. I'll be sure to use that to my advantage.

## **Randy**

Great!

That first evening, the Spire is quieter than it was on your previous visit. Some of the Knights are in Waterdeep or elsewhere in the realm - there's no feast planned but a hearty dinner is had by all.

Lord Commander Thurl Merosska is present and he makes a point to personally welcome you to the Feathergale Knights and hope your training goes smoothly. He lets you know that he liked your groups moxie and that while you'll have to put in your dues, he expects great things from you.

Savra joins your for part of the meal you ask her about the cult and Yan-C-Bin. As she mentioned when she invited you to join, the Feathergale Knights are all members of the Cult of the Howling Hatred. It is through worship of Yan-C-Bin (Prince of Elemental Air) that the Knights gain mastery of the air. She makes light of the dark name 'Howling Hatred' and says many of the Knights have advocated for a rebranding; she says the Cult (in general) Knights (especially) aren't interested in using the power of air for evil, but rather as a means to end: protecting Waterdeep and the realm from it's enemies. She knows the cult dreams of summoning Yan-C-Bin from the plane of elemental air into Faerun but doesn't know how they would do so.

When you ask for further reading material, she says there is none at the Spire but she can ask if there are any in the Temple of Howling Hatred. She says the Temple is nearby, deep underground, and that she hasn't been there herself. She says that there will be Howling Hatred Priests on hand to help with your initiation and that you can ask them for more information.

When you ask about the bird-man, she says she's never heard of such a thing but perhaps is a good omen and a vision from Yan-C-Bin.

That night, you bunk with other initiates, some of whom have been here for a few weeks. Before going to sleep, you learn that many of the initiates were attracted by the Cult's philosophy of non-attachment and the rejection of material things. They seem nice enough.

Early next morning, you are instructed to wait at the top of the Spire. After a few moments of solitude, a mist rolls in and consolidates into a Howling Hatred Priest.

He welcomes you to the Cult and outlines the initiation. You are to live on nothing but air for the next month, to purify your body. You will be helping the Cult with various tasks and chores and be closely watched and evaluated. Depending on your skills and temperament, you will be trained as either a Priest, Hurricane, or Skyweaver. He then orders you to report to the kitchen to make breakfast.

The next few days are spent mostly doing chores - cooking with other initiates, though not eating; cleaning out the Hippogriff and Vulture stalls; and sweeping the floors of the Spire. A Hurricane drops in for a day to teach some basic skills to the initiates. Hurricanes are martial artists who have incredible speed and focus. As a demonstration, he has you fire a crossbow bolt at his head from across the room. He catches it mid-flight and snaps the bolt in half.

A day later, you get your first encounter with a Skyweaver. One is visiting the Spire for dinner and gets in a fight with a Knight over the last chicken wing. The Skyweaver casts a lightning bolt out from his hands which causes the Knight to collapse to the floor and start spasming; the Skyweaver then casts fly on himself and leaps out from the window, chicken wing in hand. You rush forward and stabilize the Knight with Cure Wounds. He and the other Knights are grateful for your aid.

In chatting with Thurl a bit more, you learn of his story:

Once a griffon rider of Waterdeep, Thurl retired after a storm nearly claimed his life. Obsessed with his near-death experience, Thurl learned of Yan-C-Bin and swore an oath to serve the elemental prince in exchange for power.

Thurl realized that there were others among the wealthy of Waterdeep who might make worthy servants of Yan-C-Bin. He formed the Feathergale Society to lure likely individuals into the air cult. He indoctrinated his Feathergale knights, one by one, into the cult's beliefs.

When Aerisi Kalinoth arose as the chosen prophet of air, Thurl reluctantly pledged the Feathergale Knights to the cause. He resents Aerisi Kalinoth's rulership of the cult, but tells himself that he can use her and her followers to make the Feathergale Society strong enough to rule Waterdeep as it should be ruled.

*That's all for now, let me know if you want to change your objectives or approach; otherwise I'll send more material in a day or so*

## **Alexei**

As Ander lies in bed thinking about how the last few days unfolded, he is beginning to have some second thoughts...

I guess I should have realized that Cult of the Howling Hatred might not have been the best place for me. That said, everyone seems very nice, the allure for flying is as strong as ever, and I'm all about "non-attachment and the rejection of material things". The best course of action is to continue training for now, while collecting more information. Specifically:

- 1) I want to know as much as I can about Yan-C-Bin. What is he all about? What would he do if we was summoned?
- 2) I want to know as much as I can about the Cult (aside from the knights). What are they all about? What are their values?
- 3) I want to know as much as I can about Aerisi. What is she all about? What's her role? Does she speak to Yan-C-Bin directly? Could I meet her? On which points does she disagree with Thurl?
- 4) What's required for initiation? How does one become a Priest? What are the steps after that?
- 5) I'll ask Savra about reading material from the temple. (Ideally, if allowed, I'd go there myself.)

## **Randy**

You remind Savra about your request for books on Yan-C-Bin. She says she looked into it and there are no books on the Prince of Air or the Howling Hatred Cult. The knowledge is kept by and transmitted through the Priests. She hasn't been to the Temple and says that few of the Knights have visited.

You learn about Yan-C-Bin from the Priests that visit the Spire. Yan-C-Bin rules from a floating palace in the endless, cloudy skies of the Plane of Air. He is an archomental -

the most powerful type of elemental and as strong as lesser-deities. If summoned, he has the power to rip the material planes apart with the power of air and wind.

A Howling Hatred Priest heard about your magic healing of the Knight and commends you on your skill. he says that you still have a ways to go before you finish your initiation but that you have the potential to be worthy of priesthood. Over the course of a few days, he teaches you the cantrip [Gust](#).

You start to have reoccurring dreams flying about in the middle of a storm and a large, dark figure drifts at a distance, studying you. He doesn't speak but you understand that he offers you immense power if you continue your training.

As your initiation continues, you get to spend some time with various factions within the Cult. Occasionally you get to fly with the Knights and some of them express contempt for Skyweavers and annoyance with the Priests. While training with a Hurricane, he reveals a disgust with the world's decadence and states that physical world must be shattered so that the creatures of the Material Plane can live unshackled by physical things. During your mercifully brief encounters with Skyweavers, they appear to be interested in raw element power for it's own sake.

In further conversations with the cultists, you learn that Yan-C-Bin tends to communicate with Aerisi and Thurl through their dreams. Some of the more senior cultists have worked with Aerisi but these days she rarely comes above ground. They say that she's an Avariel (winged elf) who is Yan-C-Bin's Prophet on Faerūn. She tends to treat the cultists well, as loyal subjects, but she can have a fierce temper if she doesn't get what she wants. From what you glean, Thurl is interested in power for the good of Waterdeep and Aerisi wants it for its own sake.

One night, dinner is interrupted when a pair of Feathergale Knights return to the Spire with a monk wearing a golden mask. Thurl brings you and the other initiates out from the kitchen and brings everyone up to the pinnacle of the Spire. Thurl denounces the monk as a dirty stooge of the Cult of the Black Earth and sentences him to the death for his crimes against society. The monk proclaims his innocence and says he merely studies scripture and meditates on way of earth. Flashes of lightening illuminate the sky and the wind screams.

Thurl turns and orders you to push the monk off the Spire - a 500 foot drop to the rocks below.

What do you do?

## Alexei

Needless to say, Ander's curiosity burns even stronger when he finds out that there is a vast collection of knowledge locked away in the Priests' minds. Between his vivid, vision-filled dreams he twists and turns, imagining himself learning the unwritten secrets and being the first one to commit them to paper. This desire came back full force as he was standing on top of the Spire, looking at the whimpering monk. This is not an easy decision, though Ander would be lying if he said he never thought about facing a situation like this. "What would I trade for the most secret knowledge? A thousand platinum? In a heart beat. My right arm? Willingly. A stranger's life? If there was no other option... yes!"

Ander looked around him: at grim Thurl, at loud cheering of other initiates, and, behind them, at Savra, who wears a neutral look of determination. "I wonder if she had to do this too... Did she...?" It wasn't clear, amidst all the lightning, but Ander felt like he saw her give a quick nod.

Turning back towards the monk, Ander slowly approached him. "I *am* sorry about this, but there is something I value even above life." Ander cast Gust to push the monk off the Spire. "Knowledge," Ander finished under his breath, and, if not for the chaos of the whole situation, he would have noticed that the word that came to mind right before that was "power."

## Randy

Your Gust shoves the monk teetering over the edge and the howl of the wind abates for a moment. All on the Spire can clearly hear the monk's scream for the six seconds as he plummets and the crunch when his body hits the rocks. The wind picks up with renewed intensity and the cultists rejoice. Thurl grins and pats you on the back on his way downstairs. It's tough to gauge Savra's reaction though she appears a bit paler than usual and seems a bit distant the rest of the night.

Over the next few days, the priest who taught you Gust returns and teaches you [Gust of Wind](#). You're assigned fewer chores and advised to spend more time meditating on the nature of air.

A couple of the other initiates are doing as well as you - one has been training with a Hurricane and can now move his hands after than you can track them - but most of the initiates are in about the same place as when they started.

One night, after dinner, the same priest takes you and the Hurricane initiate up roof of the Spire. There you find two of your fellow initiates; you know they have been struggling in their training, despite trying hard. The priest says he caught sneaking food from the pantry, violating their month long purification by air. He orders you and the Hurricane initiate to throw them off the Spire as a sacrifice to Yan-C-Bin; they are not worthy of belonging to the Cult.

What do you do?

### **Alexei**

Monk's screams echoed in Ander's head for days, but while in the beginning they arose a sense of guilt, lately they were met with resolute determination. "No knowledge worth seeking is easy," Ander told himself. And it was clear that the most difficult thing for him was to end another's life; thus the path towards the highest knowledge would likely be paved with some dead bodies.

So when the priest came to take Ander and another initiate back to the roof of the Spire, Ander was mentally ready. But at the sight of whimpering fellow initiates, whom he had trained with for several weeks, his resolved dissipated. He looked at the priest, whose face was grim determination. Then he looked at the Hurricane initiate, whose face was hard to decipher. "He is probably going through the same dilemma," thought Ander.

Why did this feel different? It must have been because these were friends. Surely, there weren't great, and probably wouldn't amount to knights or priests, but... sacrificing them outright felt wasteful, somehow.

Ander looks at the priest, and asks: "Why do they have to be sacrificed? Is there no other way? Can't we just let them go?"

### **Randy**

One of the initiates immediately chimes in, "Please just let us go - all we wanted was to study the philosophy away from the distractions of the material world."

The priest frowns and says "Ander, you must trust me and Yan-C-Bin. These pathetic acolytes have no value to us or to themselves - they should consider it an honor to die in Yan-C-Bin's name. Besides, they know too much about the Cult of the Howling Hatred and their knowledge must not reach the outside world."

The Hurricane initiate looks at you, his face full of fear and doubt.

What do you do?

### **Alexei**

Of course!! The value of knowledge is determined not only by how valuable it is or how rare it is, but also by how few people possess it. Even if Ander was to find out everything about Yan-C-Bin and the cult... perhaps writing it down wouldn't be the wisest decision after all. He'd think more about this insight, but for now he completely agreed with the priest: "the knowledge must not escape!"

One arm raised to the sky, another holding a legume seed in front of him, Ander proclaims: "You were given an opportunity of a lifetime to understand the mind of great Yan-C-Bin. This opportunity you have squandered." No more needs to be said, and he casts the Gust of Wind.

(After this resolves, Ander will try to find and talk to Savra: "What kind of trials lie ahead?")

### **Randy**

After your show of faith, the Hurricane initiate lashes out at the initiate in front of him, with a strike too fast to see. The two unworthy initiates scream as they plunge into the valley, followed by two thuds a second apart. The Hurricane initiate collapses to his knees and vomits over the side of the Spire. You look back at the priest and he gives you the faintest of grins. He then transforms into a mist and floats down into the valley.

You find Savra in the solarium, staring out a window which the two sacrifices had fallen past. She looks shaken and says that they seemed like decent folks. She doesn't know too much about your trials ahead as she is a Knight, not a Priest, and she had joined the

Feathergale Knights months prior, before the membership had started to worship Yan-C-Bin. She expresses concern that the Cult is more focused on attaining power than using that power for justice.

## **Alexei**

Ander: "Power is like currency, Savra. Once you have it, it is up to you to decide how to spend it. I am sure you will use yours wisely." He thinks to add, jokingly: "And if you decide you don't want it after all, there is always the fast way out of here," but for some reason he doesn't feel like he can deliver it in a joking manner, so he bites his lip and bids Savra a good night.

## **Randy**

The next day, the same priest interrupts you during your morning meditation. He says it's time for you to visit the Temple of Howling Hatred.

He and you borrow giant vultures from the stables and fly east across the Sighing Valley. You follow him low up Knifepoint Gully and alight in front of a crevice. The gap in the rocks open onto a stairway leading down, three Hurricanes guard the top. The priest makes a sign with his hands and the guards make a slight bow, then move to let you past. You and the priest descend.

An enormous chasm splits the earth as far as the eye can see in the pervasive subterranean darkness. A crude, narrow stairway hugs the rock alongside the chasm, twisting madly in hairpin turns around sharp outcroppings. Jagged and uneven, the stair threatens to spill travelers into the chasm's mouth. After several treacherous miles, the stairway terminates on a broad, flat landing that juts out over the immense black chasm. In the gloom, a lost dwarven city lays in ruins beneath the glittering cavern vault. Broken statues stand in the midst of empty plazas, staring sightlessly into the darkness. A huge step pyramid rises at the edge of the precipice, and from the moat that surrounds it a misty waterfall whispers over the chasm's ledge.

You recall descriptions of Tyar-Besil from the Dwarven Tome and feel this must be the famed fortress city.

As you approach the city, you overtake a Skyreaver prodding three manacled farmers. He grins at you as you pass - fresh sacrifices, or recruits if they're pliant. You enter the city proper and begin to hear screams and wailing in the distance. You pass through the



gatehouse and see Kenku through the arrow slits; the wingless birdmen (unlike the one you think you saw days ago) are parroting human sounding screams. The priest ignores them and marches forward.

You pass a grand plaza where a half-elf is conducting a group of flute players in matching uniforms - the 'music' is horrible and even the priest grimaces. He catches your eye and says that Queen Aerisi loves them. You continue onward to the step pyramid in the center of this part of the city.

A deep moat surrounds a plaza consisting of a step pyramid encircled by a stone walkway. Stone colonnades to the north and east span the moat and connect the plaza to other parts of the ruined dwarven enclave. A short bridge spans the moat to the south. Holding up the bridge and colonnades are enormous statues of dwarves submerged up to their necks. Perched atop the pyramid and watching over the vault is a humanoid figure in a feathered cloak mounted on a large, draconic creature. The water in the moat flows west before plunging over a waterfall into a dark abyss. The sound of rushing water echoes like thunder within this vault, the ceiling of which glitters with mineral deposits like a perpetual starry night.

You enter the pyramid through main doors to the east and find yourself in a grand hall. Two rows of pillars support the twenty-foot-high ceiling of this marble hall. The pillars are sculpted to resemble dwarves locked in solemn stares. Each one clutches a stone axe. East of the pillars are two ascending marble staircases without handrails. In the middle of the room, several cultists in gray feathered robes levitate a few feet above the floor while chanting a hymn. Howling air rises from a pit in the middle of the floor.

Two more priests rise up out of the pit and walk over to you. Your priest introduces you as a promising initiate and the other two look you over. Your priest tells them to entertain while he conveys valuable information to Aerisi. The two priests say they will teach you [Shocking Grasp](#) and proceed to repeatedly shock you. You weather the attacks with stoicism and they seem impressed. Your priest returns and dismisses the others.

The two of you depart the Temple the way you came and along the way he talks about the principles at work behind Shocking Graps - by the time you reach the surface, you're beginning to get the hang of it. As you fly back to the Spire, you see the bird man watching you from a distance, it might be the same you saw on the day of your arrival. By the time you get the priest's attention, the bird-man has vanished into the clouds.

You arrive back at the Spire at dusk and climb up from the stables to find an argument in progress. You learn that Savra was caught packing and planning to leave the Knights. She argues that the group have drifted too far from their initial vision and that all anyone cares about is power - she wants to return to Waterdeep and use what she has learned. Thurl seems conflicted but a priest, flanked by two Skyreavers insist that she is craven and unworthy of Yan-C-Bin. They brush past Thurl and drag her up to the pinnacle of the Spire.

Thurl and the Knights don't follow, presumably they don't want to see the death of a longtime friend. You and your priest climb up the Spire. At the top, it's just the six of you:

you, Savra, two priests and two Skyreavers. You priest condemns Savra to be thrown off, as she lacks enough faith in Yan-C-Bin. He then invites you to do the honors.

Savra locks eyes with you as tears stream down her face. "This isn't right," she says "I have faith in Yan-C-Bin and want to use his power for good."

She then whips up her hands and casts Ray of Frost at a Skyreaver, catching him off guard.

What do you do?

### Alexei

"Savra, stop!" Ander yells. "I knew your faith was growing weaker, but I never thought you'd raise a hand against your own. Stop this foolishness! You know we can't allow you to leave. There are only two paths out of here: beg for mercy or take a step off the Spire. I will not push you, for you have deserved my sympathy and respect. If you choose to take that step, and your faith is true, I am sure Yan-C-Bin will intervene somehow, and your life will be spared. Please choose wisely."

### Randy

Even as you plea for her to stop, the Skyweavers lash out at her with Witch Bolts. Blue bolts light up the top of the tower and Savra screams in agony. She lets loose a Gust which shoves one of them off the Spire, but he soon reappears: hovering through magic. Your priest uses an especially strong Gust of Wind to pin her to the grassy roof of the Spire. He turns to you and says, "finish her with Shocking Grasp."

*Meta question: is Ander just playing along to learn more about the Cult or has he been corrupted by the allure of power?*

### Alexei

Ander carefully approaches Savra, maintaining a steady eye contact as she desperately wriggles on the ground. He kneels next to her and holds her hand, like he has held so

many other hands. But this time, it's not healing power that surges through. "I wish I had more time to know you, Savra. But we must take responsibility for the choices we make." Ander casts Shocking Grasp.

*So, Ander is Lawful Good, so this definitely goes beyond just playing along. Ander's strongest passion has always been for interesting (and especially forbidden) knowledge, and joining GOOD seemed like the perfect opportunity to go adventuring, help people, and find interesting leads. Now that for the first time he found some real secrets, he is compelled to try to learn everything about them. (Also flying presents an opportunity to learn and gather information quickly from around the world, which is what got him interested in the first place.) However, recently he is certainly beginning to be more driven by the allure of power, though he is not consciously aware of it yet. Having been a low-rank, physically weak and small halfling sage at his temple, Ander had never experienced real power. That part of him is now waking up, slowly taking over his decisions, but Ander is for now oblivious to it, rationalizing it by claiming that he is just making the necessary sacrifices to learn the secrets of the Cult. So he is definitely being corrupted, but the corruption isn't complete and there might be yet some chance for redemption.*

## **Randy**

Her face is a mix of confusion and disappointment. When the bolts of electricity shoot from your hand, she refuses to look away despite her obvious pain; she only breaks her glance when her heart gives out and her eyes roll back into her head. After a few last twitches, she lays still on the roof.

A Skyweaver, the one who she Gusted off the roof, storms over and starts kicking her dead body and inching it toward the edge. When she falls off the Spire, he lets out a shout of glee.

Your priest scowls at the Skyweavers display but then nods at you with a faint grin; the other priest seems impressed with you, too. When you return downstairs, the other Knights and initiates distance themselves from you; stopping conversations when you're around, avoiding rooms you're in and generally not engaging with you.

The next day, you're called up to Thurl's room, where he and your priest are waiting for you. The priest holds up a letter and says, 'One of the Knights received a note for you from Elyn Wesalt in Red Larch. A promising initiate in the Cult of Howling Hatred cannot have other entangling obligations... especially not with G.O.O.D.'

Thurl pushes a blank paper and quill across his desk and says 'We need you to tell her that you're quite happy here and want to formally terminate your relationship with G.O.O.D.'

Your priest adds, 'Since you've spent some time in Red Larch, we'd like you to make a list of the town's youths who are impressionable and weak minded. We need to expand our ranks as the time of Yan-C-Bin approaches.'

How do you respond to their requests?

### **Alexei**

"I understand the request, and you have nothing to worry about. My path now lies with the Cult. However, it seems premature to abandon connections I've worked hard to establish. GOOD is supported by five factions; they were the ones who killed; and their current mission is to destroy the Earth Cult. I think there is a lot they can help us with, and a lot we can learn from them still, if we keep the connection open. If I go on an occasional mission with them, I can keep tabs on their plans and benefit from their discoveries. And for now at least, their plan to destroy the Earth Cult is definitely aligned with our goals. And, I think if I make the right impression, I could convince a few of them to join the Cult too. There is one monk in particular, Olga, who I think would make a very good Hurricane. As for recruiting, I'd be happy to do so."

Ander writes down the names of all the youths he can remember.

### **Randy**

Your priest considers this and then nods, 'Very well, maintain your connection with GOOD and keep us apprised of any developments. We're especially concerned that they'll turn their focus on the other elemental cults once they've finished off the Cult of the Black Earth.' He thanks you for the list of names, hands you the letter from Elyn, and dismisses you from the room.

The letter of Elyn is fairly short, she's mostly checking in and asking about your progress. She relays information about IFF's tragic death and says that GOOD could use more healers.

Over the next couple days, you are taught a new ability, Guiding Wind, which dramatically improves the accuracy of your crossbow shots:

***Guiding Wind (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).*** As a bonus action, the initiate gains advantage on the next ranged attack roll it makes before the end of its next turn.

A few days later, a big group of Dessarin Valley teens show up to the Spire for an air show by the Feathergale Knights. Many of the kids were from the list you made. After the show, the kids are invited into the tower for a feast. You're assigned to cooking duty and you have been instructed to drug the kids' food so that they can be easily indoctrinated... or sacrificed.

What do you do?

### **Alexei**

"Sacrificed?!" Ander thinks to himself. Clearly things have gone too far. He really thought the kids would just be entertained, and perhaps given an offer to join and train. But this went far beyond anything sane. There is no way he could do this... right?

Ander talks to the priest who ordered him to drug the food: "Look, if so many kids disappear after visiting the Spire, this will cause an uproar in the entire Valley. You'll have an army outside your doorsteps in less than a fortnight. These are kids we are talking about! Their parents will stop at nothing to get them back or to have their fate avenged. This is just not a smart move right now; let's not get greedy, but instead select a few promising teens, offer to train them, and then see how they do."

### **Randy**

"Obviously we're not going to sacrifice ALL of them, just the ones who aren't interested or lack aptitude. And don't worry about retaliation, we're going to frame the Cult of the Black

Earth. We'll make it look like they were ambushed on their way home and leave some golden masks lying around. It's what Yan-C-Bin wants."

### Alexei

Ander carefully consider his options. Letting even a single child die seems like crossing over a line he'll never be able to come back from.

*Metagame: Does Ander know the nature of the drug he is tasked to put into food? What kind of effects does it have? How much of the drug does he have? Enough to poison all the food?*

### Randy

You know the drug is supposed to make folks extremely woozy, uncoordinated, and suggestible. You have a huge amount of it, easily enough to poison all the food. There are plenty of Knights in the Spire but relatively few Priests, Hurricanes, or Skyweavers. Everyone in Spire, but for a couple guards, will be at the impending feast.

### Alexei

*Does Ander know: What others feel about the kids being roped into this? In particular, what Thurl thinks? If not, Ander finds him and says something like: "It will be interesting to see how this situation with little ones plays out. Have you attempted anything like this before?" and carefully watches his reaction.*

### Randy

The Knights feelings are pretty diverse. The plan was developed by priests and is much more aggressive than they prefer; most of the Knights loath and fear the priests. Other

Knights are troubled by the potential death of so many innocents but are hopeful that most will become initiates.

Thurl has mixed feelings. The Knights have never done anything on this scale, though the priests have kidnapped small caravans a few times and converted just few of the victims to the Cult; he shrugs and hopes that the youths will be more pliant. He prefers not to try something as risky or costly as this but Aerisi has been demanding more recruits and she personally approved this plan; He is unwilling to cross her. He shares that the other cults are growing too and that the Cult of the Black Earth must not get an advantage.

## **Alexei**

As Ander prepared the food thoughts and images from the past weeks raced through his mind. Screaming people falling off the Spire. Savra's piercing look of disappointment before she lets out her last breath. The manacled farmers at Tyar-Besil. Was it all a mistake? Was it all for nothing? Did he come this far only to turn around now? A thought went through his head: he could drug everyone at the party and try to rescue the kids. Best case scenario, they all escape unharmed. Worst case, they and Ander get killed.

On the other hand, he could go through with the plan. There were no illusions now, the path to becoming a priest of Air would involve a lot of unpleasantness, but Ander felt like he might be able to do it. The training, harsh and intense as it was, quickly hardened him into a grim halfling. The naive, head-in-the-sky lad who joined the Cult only a few weeks ago was no more.

Current Ander understood that knowledge came at a price; often a price someone else had to pay. If he could only get a glimpse of the higher secrets the priests had, it might make it all worth it; it might make his decision so simple, but they've been doling it out so very slowly.

This situation felt unfair; he wanted to blame Thurl, Savra, the priests, Yan-C-Bin, but mostly himself. Surely he walked into this willingly, but it felt like the Cult used his search for knowledge against him. And yet, it wasn't without a reward. Already he learned four new spells that most clerics wouldn't have access to. Already he has been inside Tyar-Besil. Already he had a glimpse of the terrifying Yan-C-Bin.

The dinner time is fast approaching, and while the food is mostly made, the decision to add the drug has not yet been made. Unsure of anything, Ander runs to the top of the Spire and looks up at the sky. Perhaps the powerful Oghma will send him a sign. May be

the bird-man will appear and offer some advice. Or would the mighty Yan-C-Bin himself grace Ander with a vision?

*Ander spends some time meditating and praying until 15 minutes before it's time to serve food.*

## **Randy**

It's quiet at the top of the Spire - there are two imitates posted as guards, monitoring the surrounding area, but they ignore you.

Your attempts at meditation are interrupted by the squawks of blood hawks and vultures. You peek over the edge and see them feasting on the accumulated corpses strewn across the rocks below.

It's time to go back down.

## **Alexei**

"That figures," Ander sighs to himself as the time passed by uneventfully. He slowly makes his way down to the kitchen. "This is insane. I'm insane," he keeps muttering. "There is no way... no way I can do this." In the kitchen, Ander makes sure he is not observed, and with a long sigh he picks up the drug.

*It sounded like the food for children is separate from the food for adults. In that case, Ander drugs all the food for adults. Otherwise, Ander drugs all the food. The amount of drug he puts in is very high, but non-lethal. During the dinner he doesn't eat the food, but waits until the drug kicks in.*

## **Randy**

There is separate food for the Knights and you drug it heavily. You and the other initiates don't eat it (you're subsisting on air) but the Knights and other Cultists dig in. After a half



hour, they're all slurring their words and soon after they're all slumped over in their seats. The youths are confused, as are the other initiates who are deeply concerned.

## Alexei

Ander stands in the center of the room and addresses the initiates and the youths:  
"Many of you already know me, for the rest: I'm Ander. I've been an initiate at the Cult for many weeks now. I was allured by the secret knowledge, by the open skies and the freedom to fly anywhere and see everything, and, yes, by the glimpse of the power Yan-C-Bin can give to those who follow him. But at what cost? I had to throw two of my fellow initiates off the Spire because they couldn't keep up. I had to electrocute my best friend here, Savra. Some of you have known her. And now they want to take all of you," Ander points at the youths, "and sacrifice those of you who are not strong enough. I say I've had enough! If you agree, then follow me out of here. Otherwise, stand aside, and pray that you don't end up being the next body lying at the bottom of the canyon."

"Come," I motion to the youths specifically, but the invitation is extended to all.

\*Ander is planning to lead them out through the main entrance and then towards Red Larch. If at least one other initiate follows, Ander will ask them to fly ahead and warn the town. It's possible that they might be pursued and would need support.\*

## Randy

A stunned silence hangs over the room. After a moment, the youths stand up and start following you out, the initiates look at you and each other, unsure of what to do. The hurricane initiate stands at the door to the hall, arms crossed. He looks like he's about to stop you but then he exhales and drops his arms - I'm with you and have been harboring doubts of my own. Two other initiates throw in their lot with you, the rest shake their head but don't interfere.

You send one initiate ahead to scout the way and request help from GOOD and one initiate fly behind as a rear-guard. You shepherd the youths on foot and the hurricane initiate circles above you on hippogriff. A storm rages above as you leave the Spire. Winds screech and lightening flashes - you get the feeling Yan-C-Bin is displeased.

The first two hours of retreat are hard going, sometimes the gusts are so strong that the group needs to huddle among the rocks and the hurricane initiate needs to ground his mount. After one such break, the hurricane initiate takes off only to be ripped from his mount by a giant vulture, ridden by a Skyweaver. Another Skyweaver and a priest, the one who has been training you most, alight on the path in front of you. The sounds of the storm ebb and the priest booms at you, "Ander, I had such high hopes for you. Yan-C-Bin had such high hopes for you. What a waste."

What do you do?

### **Alexei**

"You guys need to take a lesson in teaching. You shouldn't kill best students. And you certainly shouldn't make them kill each other! What kind of message do you think that sends to everyone? Step aside, or I swear by Oghma's scroll, I will fight until my last breath."

### **Randy**

The priest summons a dust devil at your feet and it whips up rocks, cutting and bruising you. The Skyweaver steps forward and blasts you with a lightning bolt. You struggle to stay conscious through the pain. You get out a Gust of Wind and knock the Skyweaver back but the priest knocks you down with a gust of his own. He stands over you and prepares to deal the killing blow.

From above, you see three bird-men swoop down and one sinks his talons into the priest's neck. The other two launch javelins at the Skyweavers and engage them in melee. The priest turns into a mist and then re-materializes on the other side the bird-man, grabbing the things throat and using Shocking Grasp. While the priest is focused on the bird-man, you leap at his back and unleash your own Shocking Grasp again and again until the cultist lays limp on the ground.

The other Skyreavers are taken out soon enough and soon enough the storm lets up. You use your magic to heal the bird-men's wounds and they introduce themselves. They are Aarakocra - good beings of the Plane of Elemental Air and sworn foes of Yan-C-Bin. They had been watching the Cult and the Knights grown in power and were trying to

figure out when to act. The bird-men are not strong enough to take out the cult on their own but offer to do what they can to help you. As the sky clears, they offer to escort you and the youths back to Red Larch.

### **Alexei**

Ander graciously accepts their help and shepherds the youth back to Red Larch.

### **Randy**

You journey through the night and leave the Sumber Hills without coming under further attack. On the Long Road, a few hours north of Red Larch, your initiate scout returns, accompanied by a few members of GOOD. When it's clear you're in safe company, the Aarakocras say they'll depart and return to the Hills and keep watch on the Spire. Their leader says he had his doubts about you after witnessing your actions atop the Spire, but now believes that you are a true ally of the forces for good.

### **Alexei**

Questions for Aarakocras:

- 1) How many of you are there?
- 2) Who is your leader? And their leader? And their leader? Where does it end? Is there a good version of Yan-C-Bin?
- 3) What do you know about the Cult's long-term mission and plans?
- 4) What do you know about other Cults? Do they have good counterparts too?
- 5) Where are your headquarters?
- 6) How can we contact you if we need your help? And how can we help you?

### **Randy**

Questions for Aarakocras:

1) How many of you are there?

Only a few small bands - and we've been disappearing, picked off I fear by the Cult of the Howling Hatred

2) Who is your leader? And their leader? And their leader? Where does it end? Is there a good version of Yan-C-Bin?

Kazra is leads us here but we haven't seen her in a tenday - we fear she's been killed or captured. We are tasked by the Dukes of Aaqa, former lords of the Plane of Elemental Air, with rooting out Temples of Elemental Evil across the planes. They are distant leaders and unlikely to offer us direct help. Chan is the good equivalent of Yan-C-Bin but she has been locked in combat with Lissa'aere for over a century.

3) What do you know about the Cult's long-term mission and plans?

They intend to summon Yan-C-Bin, who will destroy this world with storms unlike you have ever seen. We don't know their timeline but we suspect it will happen soon, within a few tendays. Once they're ready, there is a ritual that will open the portal and then allow Yan-C-Bin through. There is a key necessary to the ritual and if that key is thrown into the portal than it will close and Yan-C-Bin will be recalled to the Plane of Air.

4) What do you know about other Cults? Do they have good counterparts too?

Where ever one shows up, the other cults appear soon after, always driven by an ancient elemental evil. The cults are often bitter rivals and yet they are connected through the deeper evil influence. We don't know of any analogs to the Aarakocras but evil cults are bound to gain enemies.

5) Where are your headquarters?

We make small camps in the areas around the Spire and the Sighing Valley - we keep moving to avoid detection and capture.

6) How can we contact you if we need your help? And how can we help you?

We'll be near the Spire and will see you coming. You have a friend in the Aarakocras. We are few but the Cult of Howling Hatred must be stopped; you must do anything you can do to prevent them from summoning Yan-C-Bin.

**Appendix B: G.O.O.D. Whiskey and Beer (Harry)**

