

# THE HISTORY OF ZORK

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**from all currently available Zorkian sources  
including the unpublished:**

**“A History of Quendor” by Nino Ruffini  
and  
Official Design Documents**

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## PART I: THE CREATION OF ZORK

### **The Creation of the World**

In the beginning was Eru, The One, with no beginning and no end. The first of his creations was the Timeless Halls, a timeless, dimensionless void. The Timeless Halls were divided into two courts: the Inner Halls and the Outer Halls; the Inner being the most holy of the two. The lesser halls encircle the central interior hub, full of passageways radiating out from the inner chambers like the spokes of a wheel. From there Eru alone fashioned all time, all scientific laws, all matter, all space and all universes by his hands.

Next The One created parallel spiritual plains to parallel the physical realm of each universe fashioned by his hands. He named these dimensions the Ethereal Planes. The Planes of each respective universe were knitted to the Outer Halls to a designated portal that he had fixed for each respective universe.

Above each of these plains, The One created and appointed one set of immortal Upper Echelons per universe—a hierarchy of three powers for the enforcement, upkeep, and continual maintenance of all of the laws that The One had fashioned. The highest in authority over each universe is the Control Character, a nearly incomprehensible being with authority just below The One. Below the Control Character is the Autoexec, and below the Autoexec is The Powers That Be.

The One also created an initial body of wise spiritual beings throughout each universe. From the Ethereal Planes, under the supervision of the Upper Echelons, these Implementors were given many powers: the ability to use the building blocks which Eru had already shaped to create and destroy, to forge history, even to build and regulate the planets, including the implementation of the terrain, plants and animals for each universe to which they were assigned.

The invisible Eru, with a form too holy to manifest before mortals lest they perish, gifted the Upper Echelons and the Implementors with the ability to take upon themselves a physical form to deliver the voice of his will unto all creation. While the Upper Echelons dwelt in the Inner Halls, the lesser Implementors were not permitted inside these deeper realms.

When the rudiments of a certain universe was manifested, Eru who rules the Timeless Halls, conceived from His own belly, the Great Brogmoids to hold up each of the planets created by the Implementors. One of these planets, stemming beneath the Ethereal Planes known as Atrii and Irina, was called Zork.<sup>1</sup> When the foundations of the world were laid down, Eru created seventeen small, plain white cubes, which were the physical manifestations of the elemental powers and forces that hold the universe in place. The cubes and the forces were merged in a way that our knowledge no longer comprehends. The cubes were further linked through some unknown mystical process to six legendary pools. The exact nature of these pools remains unclear even today; tradition has left only vague information concerning two of these magical bodies of water, the Pool of Stasis and the Pool of Radiance (also known as the Pool of Eternal Youth). When the making was done, the cubes were hidden away so that their powers could not be tampered with. Almost all of these were placed upon Zork.

Tradition also has it that Eru grew distrustful of his children, the Implementors, who had grown haughty, and kept certain things secret from them. The first was the knowledge of the Cubes of Foundation and their final locations; for The One knew that should one Implementor grow too powerful, the cubes could be used to undo all of Eru's work. The same was apparently true of the Timeless Halls and the gateways into them. Eru was only known to grant the Implementors one-way tickets out of the Halls.

Thus summarizes the account as it is written in the sacred and infallible Scrolls of Kar'nai. Even unto the present, all attempts to disprove the credibility of these sacred writings have been met with humiliating failure. But

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<sup>1</sup> Whether rumor or fact, the pseudo-gods of the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarer's Guild claim that this was the third creation of the universe and that the Autoexec did not exist until after the first universe was destroyed.

one is not to forsake that other crude theories have been developed throughout history of Zork, and despite the lack of evidence for these claims, many cling to these deprivations of truth in opposition to the acceptance of Eru, the All-Mighty Creator.

Optional creationist beliefs include that the world as a whole is merely a plaything created by the Implementors as a test or puzzle for the amusement of their peers. Some go so far as to deny the existence of a single supreme being and cling to that democratic godship alone, while others include the worship of any of the numerous pseudo-gods in place of The One Creator or as another accomplice in the creation.

The extreme proponents of the creationist view, often referred to as the Zorkist School, have oft-times put forward the idea that the creation of the world by the Implementors, who used great engines in its production, did not in fact take place until 14 Mumberbur of the year 883.<sup>2</sup>

Supporters of this belief venture even farther, suggesting that some of these minor deities themselves took human form and journeyed about the world for their own entertainment. Others have suggested that mysterious figures such as the various Dungeon Masters that hold sway over the Eastland Caverns in the years after the fall of the Great Underground Empire might have in fact been Implementors, which would indeed do much to explain the otherwise inexplicable mystery that otherwise surrounds these figures.

Known Implementors, regardless of origin or length of reign (as it is known that some Implementors were made at the beginning, while others were spiritual beings promoted unto that rank) are as follows: Belegur, Dave Lebling, Marc Blank, Brain Moriarty, and Steve Meretzky were the five most powerful until Belegur's fall, leaving them with only four; others include Mike Berlyn, Tim Anderson, Bruce Daniels, Eddie Dombrower, Amy Briggs, Bob Bates, Jerry Wolpher, Stu Galley, Liz Langosy, Cecilia Barajas, and Glorian of the Knowledge. It is also uncertain if either Ben Siron or Don Woods were Implementors.

Most scholars these days place little credence in this creationist school of thought, and some prefer to think of the Implementors as nothing more than a degenerate race of demi-gods who view our lives with barely concealed amusement and disgust, while most deny them as fabrications of human aspiration. Those who pursue this train of thought have little regard for absolute morality and cleave to the incredibly impossibility that all of existence randomly appeared out of nothing—all of the universes and stars and planets, namely Zork.

### **The Substance of Zork**

What is Zork? A coconut that encircles a watermelon? One of eight planets that revolves around the sun? A world resting the back of a giant turtle or the head of a troll? Or perched on the shoulders of a giant brogmoid, as eyewitnesses contend?

These differing views on the issue have polarized once unified and respected guilds. Its theological and scientific implications have rocked our religious institutions and threaten to lay waste to centuries of research. Many a ponderous philosopher has fueled the fire with augmentative views. Even attempts at connecting these beliefs have only worsened the situation. It is a fundamental question and, unfortunately, a necessary starting point for a cumulative history. What is the nature of the canvas upon which we have been rendered?

The Scrolls of Kar'nai speak of the Great Brogmoids that were created simultaneously with the worlds—each supports one world upon his shoulders to keep it from falling into the Great Void, while each Brogmoid itself stands secure atop of another world below. In the fourth century GUE,<sup>3</sup> tenets of a new religion called Brogmoidism arose. Not only did these believe that the world was supported by the Brogmoid, but fell into tremendous error by also worshipping it as a god. While the belief of these brogmoids was the most common thought for many generations, other vulgar theories have since been aroused.

One such idea that frequented some cultures was that the entire world sits on the back of a giant turtle. During the ninth century, Leonardo Flathead debunked this so-called Turtle Theory as a hoary myth, claiming that he could

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<sup>2</sup> Such a precise proclamation is a matter of much controversy even amongst the Zorkist School. Some refuse to set a date more specific than the ninth or tenth century AE, while the others, with no less an authority, insist on the above date, and go so far as to claim that the Creation itself took place at 5:33 PM.

<sup>3</sup> Great Underground Empire; sometimes also AE, After Entharion

instead prove that the world actually rested on the head of an enormous troll. Once released, his scientific treatise spilt religious communities all over the world. Those who believed that Flathead had proven the Great Brogmoid theory false and accepted the Troll Postulate, rejected the Scrolls of Kar'nai, now speaking that their divine inspiration was proven to be false. Yet, by faith, many still refused to give any credence to the preposterous studies of any dunce of the Flathead seed.

Thank The One that those followers clung to their faith in Eru, for later in that same century, the unknown man who would later become the First Dungeon Master, was able to verify the accuracy of the Scrolls of Kar'nai. For in 883 GUE he discovered that the caverns beneath Flatheadia actually came out on the bottom of Zork, proving not only that the world was flat, but also that it was in fact held up by a Great Brogmoid that was tremendous beyond description. A rough estimate puts this Great Brogmoid at a zillion times larger than any brogmoid ever seen before. Its mere shoulder hairs were like mighty trees. And far below, its feet rested upon another world of things so incredible and dangerous that few have returned in even a sane enough state to faithfully describe what they had seen. This same Dungeon Master scouted the top of Mount Foobia as well and discovered the foot of another Great Brogmoid, who presumably supported one of the other worlds spoken of in the holy writings.

Despite all the evidence in support of the Scrolls of Kar'nai and that the Great Brogmoids themselves may be seen on display at their respective locations today, there are still those who would adamantly remain skeptics and instead cling to the planetary model, which arose from questions such as, "If there really were a brogmoid holding up a world above ours, where is its shadow when the sun passes by?", and, "On which surface does the bottommost brogmoid stand?"

A more modern outright denier of the Great Brogmoids, wishing to foolishly and stubbornly disprove anything with even the most minute semblance to the holy writings, actually went down the tunnels beneath the world. There this professor truthfully stated, "I see nothing here that would prompt me to believe that a brogmoid of any size was in any way holding up this planet, nor do I see anything that would even stimulate a question of doubt in my mind that Zork is spherical. Here I stand and deny those deceitful writings of Kar'nai." But what he did not tell those of the planetary school of thought was that prior to gazing out of the mouth of the tunnel, he had purposefully closed his eyes, and when he emerged, set his back to the obvious brogmoid standing before him.

This planetary model, which continues to relentlessly destroy the faith of many of those who believe in The One, was not always as complex as it was today. The most primitive model dominating astrological studies until the fourth century, consisted of a massive coconut floating on an elliptical course around an even more massive watermelon. During this era, when newly birthed astronomical studies propelled scoffers to refute the Scrolls of Kar'nai with newfound levels of enmity, scientists had discovered that Zork was not a coconut, but one of eight spherical bodies that revolved, not around a glowing watermelon, but around the sun, while the moon went around Zork. While the Scrolls of Kar'nai spoke of the Implementors having created both the sun and the moon for the sake of Zork, the scrolls were not specific as to which bodies orbited one another. Thus regardless of the conclusion as to which revolved around which, neither conclusion was incompatible with the holy writings, though some of the religious community was in an uproar over this assumption. And still, to the present, it cannot yet be proven which encircles which.

The eight spherical bodies of the planetary model, in order of closet to the sun to the furthest are Hermazz, Venusv, Zork, Murz, Juperon, Saturnax, Mianus, and Plado. With an exception of Zork (of which no one knows the name's origin), the other planets were named in honor of some of the worshipped pseudo-gods of the day. Presently, as agreed by both religious and skeptics alike, it is a proven fact that Murz exists, it is also a proven fact that two giant brogmoids exist. So how can all of this be reconciled?

The eleventh century Inquisition frequently expelled totemized victims to Murz by loading them unto a rocket sent out into the far reaches of space. Believing this to be but an alleged destination on the Totemizer Machine, some attempted to AIMFIZ a known totem sent to Murz. All of the first who dared to travel to Murz in this matter did not return—it would later be proven that their heads imploded. Once safe travel was permissible, actual photographs were brought back from this red planet. Though for a time, some denied the photographic evidence as fraud, but with the increased frequency of travels, it now remains virtually undebated.

In spite of this discovery, the Great Brogmoids are still a matter of fact. Those who cleave to the Scrolls of Kar'nai as inspired and infallible do not deny the existence of Murz or the other planets, but simply believe them to be held up by a series of brogmoids. This sequence of alternating brogmoids and planes exactly parallels basic dimensional physics if it is hypothesized that the first brogmoid stands upon the plane held up by the last brogmoid (forming a massive “daisy-chain”, or circle of bodies).

Still others have speculated less conservative approaches, including that the apparent movement of each of the planets around the sun is due to the perambulations of the brogmoids holding each of them up from one massive central plane below that supports all eight. The one holding up the sun is especially stoic. The moon was not found to be detailed in this hypothesis.

While many more variations of these theories remain in circulation, it is wise to remember that amongst all of the raging debate from all sides that the Scrolls of Kar'nai have still been found to be one hundred percent inerrant, a fact that is even admitted by those who wish to deny The One Creator.

### **The Origin of Life**

Two schools of thought have been commonly received by the Zorkians. These include creation and evolution. Those who embrace creation, have the belief in some form of a creator. The Scrolls of Kar'nai teach that Implementors were appointed by The One to create each world and all the plants and animals that dwell upon each, and that the mass variety of life is but an expression of the differing personas of each Implementor. Other phony religions, most originating as a result of the rampart spreading of polytheism as taught by the renegade spiritual beings of the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarer's Association which only seek to demand personal worship, do teach creation, but a twisted or fatal version of it.

Those who seek to combat the idea of a creator, have proposed a solution to all life through a disturbing network called evolution. This far-from-proven concept seeks to herald that all life originated billions of years ago and through a painfully slow process, branched out and developed into all forms of life that we see present.

These two schools have been at constant opposition to one another for longer than can be documented. A small sect of followers of The One, have been able to harmoniously reconcile both, by teaching that the Implementors invoked evolution as their means for creating all life. However, those who faithfully defend the Scrolls of Kar'nai as are written, view these compromisers as heretics (and rightly so), accusing them of forsaking the transparent words of the holy writings. Regardless which school one wishes to bind with, it is a fact that, unlike those who would compromise the Scrolls, that both creationists and evolutionists are on opposite sides of a pole frosted with heavy enmity.

### **The Age of Zork**

Both the creationists and the evolutionists have come to an agreement that the most reliable way to explore the origins of the world, and its eventual demise, is through archaeo-thaumaturgical means. One of the most promising sites of recent research in this regard has been the ruins of ancient Pheebor, where the magnificent hourglass monument has offered scholars and adventurers a safe and consistent way to research the past and the future.

No one has yet to discover the exact nature of the hourglass, but it is generally believed to have been constructed by the Zizbits, the ancient and mysterious cult of sorcerers that dominated Pheebor for several centuries. Since the rediscovery of the monument in the end of the 10th century, most of the argument has centered around the lengths of time that one can travel using the hourglass. Since, at that time, two magical steps into the past were sufficient to return to the last days of Pheebor, it has generally been assumed that each step through the hourglass consists of 681 years forwards or backwards.

Although it is possible that the length of the jumps varies depending on certain situations, many scholars have used this figure of seven centuries to arrive at a ballpark age and life expectancy for the world we live in. Three temporal jumps through the hourglass before the fall of Pheebor, and thus roughly 2500 years BE,<sup>4</sup> the region that would grow into the famous city-state was then nothing more than an uninhabited savannah, scattered with

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<sup>4</sup> Before Entharion; sometimes also BC, Before Counting

unfamiliar vegetation, massive reptilian dragon-like creatures,<sup>5</sup> and various active volcanoes. One step beyond this point into the past brings users of the hourglass into a temporal void, a fact that some researchers have used to conclude that the creation of our world took place sometime between 3120 and 2500 BE.

By the present day (1699 GUE), some seven centuries after the end of the Age of Magic, the Pheebor site has become increasingly inhospitable to would-be temporal scholars. As with most of the Westlands, the Pheebor ruins are frozen over nearly year-around, the air consistently touched with an ominous arctic chill. Although it is feared that the Ice Age that is currently encroaching upon the Westlands will affect the surviving outposts of civilization in the east as well, older temporal research does not provide us with conclusive evidence.

By 2330 GUE, still assuming a length of roughly seven centuries per temporal leap, all of Pheebor will be covered by massive sheets of ice. However, merely one more leap into the future, by 3000 GUE, the landscape has changed entirely, Pheebor seeing a remarkable rebirth of activity. Scholars from an era before the Age of Science have described “strange mechanisms of metal and glass” moving of their own accord across massive highways. Such a description, clearly a primitive attempt at understanding the modern automobile, would indicate that the Ice Age will not eliminate all trace of the Age of Science, and that the Westlands will rise again some 1300 years in the future.

However, premature optimism about the future of mankind is tempered by the last era left us by the Pheebor hourglass. The few researchers brave enough to travel ahead as far as 3700 GUE have reported a devastated and ruined landscape. All chronicles referring to this desolate era have called it the Final Conflagration, a deliberate reference to various ancient prophecies that predict all kinds of zorkquakes and fires on the day that the Great Brogmoid finally lies down to sleep. Although most brogmoidists throughout history have been hesitant to predict an exact date for this event, claiming that doing so infringes upon the freewill of the great being, the best guesses of temporal scholars have placed the date at some point immediately before 3690. Another leap forward into the hourglass brings the user back to the temporal void. Still assuming roughly 700 year windows, the entire timeline of our world thus can stretch from between 3200 to 2500 BE to 3800 to 4500 GUE. This window allows us to calculate a maximum age for the world of no less than 6300 years and no more than 7700 years, both cases suggesting that some two-thirds of all history already lies behind us.

Another hourglass was documented to have been incorporated into the design of the Temple of Agrippa either during the days of its foundation in 668 GUE, or during a latter renovation. Since this hourglass was destroyed with the temple in 949 GUE, modern research has been unable to be implemented using the relic, forcing one to rely on the records of the past. Judging from these uncovered documents, while each step of the Phee Hourglass takes one into the past or future by increments of 681 years, this second one was modified so that each step would not bring one into the future or past by a constant number of years, but to specific points in history. Comparing the records in parallel columns, it is evident that some dates were found to match those as given by the Phee Hourglass. Due to these dates, some researchers feel that they cannot conclude that each step of the Phee Hourglass can be proven to be of 681 years. Though due to the frequent testing of the Phee Hourglass, and that there is only one surviving record of the Temple Hourglass, most researchers find the constant of 681 years to be a proven value.

ERA	966 Phee Hourglass Testing	949 Temple Hourglass Testing
Void	[3120 BE]	
Frobeolithic Glacier Epozz		[? BE]
Frobozzolithic Lake Epozz		[? BE]
Brogmolithic Volcano Epozz	[2439 BE]	[2439 BE]
Primitive Huts	[1758 BE]	
Renaming of the River	[1077 BE]	
Destruction of Pheebor	396 BE	
Rubble and Ruins	[285 GUE]	

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<sup>5</sup> Due to the present day extinction of dragons, when modern scientists uncovered their bones, they believed them to be a prehistoric animal that lived millions of years ago and erroneously renamed them dinosaurs.

Zorkeolithic Epozz		668 GUE
Curseolithic Present / Age of Magic		949 GUE
End of Age of Magic	966 GUE	
Reign of Morpheus / Frost	1647 GUE	1647 GUE
Glacier	[2328 GUE]	
Highway	[3009 GUE]	
Desolation (Final Conflagration)	[3690 GUE]	
Void	[4371 GUE]	

### **The World of Zork**

The world of Zork is divided into three major landmasses—the Westlands, the Eastlands, and the island of Antharia—each separated by the body of water known as the Great Sea. The Westlands and the Eastlands are on opposite sides of the sea, with Antharia lying roughly halfway between these two continents. What is remarkable about the Great Sea is that its western shore basks in the sunlight, while its eastern shore lies far underground in most places.

The geography of Zork is welldefined, with the exception of two great mysteries. What lies west of the Westlands? And what lies east of the Eastlands? Both continents are bordered on their outermost regions by treacherous mountain ranges.

At one time the coconut zealots claimed that the two mountain ranges were the same, and that crossing one side will lead directly to the other continent. Because of this theory, when Pseudo-Duncanthrax conquered the Eastlands, the eastern mountain range was given the same name as the Westlands western mountain range—the Gray Mountains. Concurrently, ancient brogmoid fundamentalists insisted that these were the edges of the world, and that beyond them lay a great void of nothingness.

Early in history, many expeditions had been launched, attempting to cross both mountain ranges, but for many centuries all of these parties were lost. When the technology of man had evolved further, later explorations debunked both of these theories. Returning parties brought home tales of vast regions that lay beyond these tremendous mountain ranges. For beyond the western mountains lay the seemingly endless Kovalli Desert, and beyond the eastern mountains lay endless wilderness that grew so thick as to be impenetrable.

Even to this day, the furthest ends of these expanses have not been explored, and variations of the planetary and brogmoid theories still abound. Both still claim either a spherical earth or the end of the world, and either is still waiting to be proven.

### **The Chief Implementor**

High amongst the powers of the universe, Belegur was the Chief Implementer. All the other mighty creators of the many worlds once respected and loved him. He made his mark upon the universe, playing a part in the shaping of the beasts. While other powers rejoiced in the making of the dryads and of the elves, he took pride in the horrible monsters of the underground. The grue he fashioned with his own hands, loving this evil beast above all others. From him also sprang the troll, the hellhound, the dragon. It was in these vicious, angry creatures that he took his pleasure, and for ages basked in the glow of his creations.

**PART II:**  
**BEFORE ENTHARION**  
**Chapter 1: Early Human Civilization**

**Early Civilization and the Sacred Scrolls of Fizbin**

Little is known about the civilization of the earliest humans. Many speculate that they were more stupid than a brogmoid that has been hit too many times with a homofrobophone. Others believe that these men were nearly god-like, and having been instilled with the words directly from the Implementors, had a vast civilization of technology far beyond even what had been witnessed in the distant future (as seen from the Phee Hourglass). Regardless, it seems likely that all traces of this civilization have since perished, and most of the ruins excavated in recent times have dated no earlier than circa 1500 BE. It is known that these “primitive brogmoids,” as many have sought to call them, were well skilled in the art of writing. This is clearly demonstrated through the Sacred Scrolls of Fizbin, possibly the only surviving element of this archaic Epozz.

These scrolls contain troves of knowledge which had been hidden from the Implementors, and instead imparted to the earliest humans, namely the prophet Fizbin. Unlike many falsely so-called prophets throughout the ages, every known prediction of this hermit has come to pass (unless its fulfillment is yet to come).

Legend states that the actual text of these writings were dictated to Fizbin, not by the Implementors, nor even the Upper Echelons, but straight from the mouth of Eru The One, himself. Working in His unknowable and unsearchable ways, Eru apparently saw it fit to grant everything He withheld from the Implementors to the race of men, to do with it as they saw fit. The hermit experienced a visitation from The Father of the Implementors, who imparted revelations to him in some kind of dream or vision over the course of several nights of deep sleep. Fizbin was granted extensive knowledge of spiritual forces, certain mysterious powers of life giving and immortality, the ability to foresee and describe certain events in the distant future, the knowledge of the original locations of the primary Cubes of Foundation, the six Pools, heavenly Timeless Halls and methods to open their secret gateways, mystic places, a remarkable thorough knowledge of geography that remains unequaled even today, and many more prophecies and mysterious far beyond our intellects. When Fizbin had finished and looked over his own words, he could not even understand much of what had been written.

Though Fizbin faithfully recorded the words of The One, unfortunately for humanity, he wrote in an ancient archaic script, barely understandable beyond his time. For centuries scholars would attempt to decipher the words and would fail, leaving only partially translated passages (theoretically translated) even until the Entharion Dynasty. And even the new translation methods that arose during the reign of Zylon that Aged, only partially translated the scrolls, but still failed to decipher much of the text, as it referred to objects and places no longer known, or no longer called by their ancient names. For example, there were very specific instructions about how to find the Pools, but every detail related to geographical locations that are no longer known, and even if they were, it was likely that many of the locations of the cubes had changed over the generations as they had been discovered. However, it was said that he who completely understood the contents of the Scrolls would have power over all existence and would know the eventual fate of the world.

**The Fall of Belegur**

The heavens will become cold with unease and fear, and the companions of Eru, they who Implement His Desires, will be faced with a great temptation. One of their number will fall victim to his own greed and anger, and he will seek the overthrow of Eru. Know now the name of this evil one. Call him Belegur. Know also that his dreams shall come to naught. He will be cast out of the Timeless Halls, and he will be thrown down to earth. When that day arrives, when Belegur walks the earth, tremble, for the one he seeks out is you!

- The Seventh Scroll of Kar'nai, Book Twelve



The only scripted source of the fall of Belegur originates from the Scrolls of Kar'nai, as much of a valid historical source as a religious text. Writing concurrently of both future and past events, which are interwoven together into a beautiful collage when read as a single unit of literature, the dissection of the text becomes rather difficult at certain points, thus only enabling us to have a shadowy perspective on his fall. Laced together with several traditions of the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarers Association, a rather impressive and thorough account of the calamity which coils this fallen Implementor's wrath is able to be fashioned.

As the years passed, the pride of Belegur grew strong, and he sought to overthrow the One true power. In the process, the Implementors were faced with much temptation, as their chief began to incite them into beholding the beautiful daughters of men and elves that had begun to populate the surface of Zork. Finding them to be comely and pleasing in their sight, many of the Implementors abandoned themselves to their lusts, departing their heavenly homes and having intercourse with any of the females whom they wished to take for themselves.

Within several months, these impious women gave birth to hideous half-human, half-implementor monstrosities. As these aliens grew to full stature, the races of Zork were forced to ally against the deformations in order to protect their very lives. So much chaos and blight did the bastard offspring of the rebel Implementors instill upon Zork that the Control Character was ordered by Eru to cover all of Zork with a worldwide calamity in order to destroy not only all of these aliens, but to eliminate all of the wicked mortals which had been infected by the whims of Belegur and the fallen Implementors. But a couple of each race was to be preserved from the destruction.

Satisfied with the grievous affliction that had already been caused by the outstretching of a single finger, Belegur rose up in challenge against Eru directly, shaking the foundations of the mighty Timeless Halls. Simultaneously, everything within the Ethereal Planes and the surface of Zork were judged. All the unrighteous, both in the Ethereal Planes and on Zork, were cast forth from their dwellings. Belegur was banished from the company of the divine spirits, thrown down to Zork as a flash of lightning from the sky and into lowly physical flesh. All of his godlike abilities had been stripped away. He lost the power of life and death over the human world and was forced to work his way in the body of a mortal—a very powerful mortal known as the Devil. But Belegur would not be granted the simple honor of a mortal death. He would live in that body, immortal, free to wander the face of the earth for all eternity. In time, Belegur would find that his physical flesh would suit him quite well. It provided previously unknown pleasures to entertain his wicked mind. He gained a new appreciation for the beasts he had once helped to create, discovering what it meant to eat, to take the life of an unwitting animals and then bring the bloody carcass into his own body, consuming it in its entirety.

This ensuing struggle became legendary among those who witnessed it, and was passed down to future generations:

And that great dragon was cast down, the ancient serpent, he who is called the devil and Satan,  
who leads astray the whole world; and he was cast down to the earth and with him his angels were  
cast down.

-The Ninth Scroll of Kar'nai, Book Twelve

### **The Founding of the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarers Association**

The host of fallen Implementors (with an exception of Belegur) who dared to rebel against the original laws and commands of righteousness as handed down by The One through the spiritual hierarchy were thrown into chains and bound up until the Final Conflagration. Their bastard offspring had been punished in a most extraordinary way. In the Zork-wide calamity, their bodies had been destroyed, yet their disembodied spirits were free to roam. They bore extreme hatred for the One who had condemned them.

Wandering as a vagabond from his rightful abode, Belegur's hatred fomented, desperately seeking revenge upon Eru and His righteous Implementors. The current inability to return to the Timeless Halls and do battle with the entire host of his enemies aggravated him; he sought to discover the gateway back home. Temporarily, his abode was made in the subterranean underworld, an entire vast kingdom of fire and sulfur and Hell, which he would later name Hades after one of the disembodied spirits.

Unable to use mortal form to reenter the Timeless Halls and confront Eru unassisted, Belegur hoped to pierce Him with agony by spearing the One's creation. The Devil had retained the knowledge of magic and telepathy, and his powers of mind control were nearly incomparable. Anyone who was not on guard, careful, or innocent and pure according to the commandments of Eru, is very susceptible to being magically controlled by Belegur, even from a great distance. Thus he sought the minds of those who would accept him, of those who were weak and willing to subject themselves to him. Many less powerful mortals were forced to succumb to his unique psychic powers of persuasion, aiding him in his ongoing struggle against The One Father of the Implementors. Belegur's presence is revealed even today through the deeds of angry, spiteful men. But as the populations of the races which Eru had chosen to survive the calamity procreated, the Devil did not have the strength to attend to each one concurrently.

Sensing the outrage of the disembodied spirits, the Devil amassed them together as one to rally them against the races. This horde of evil vastly spread across Zork, deceiving the replenishing population by proclaiming themselves 'Gods' and professing to have supreme power. Thus many of the mortal minds in Zork were enslaved to do Belegur's will through these demons.

In order to govern and prevent this tremendous population of reprobate pseudo-gods from corrupting all of creation, the Autoexec and The Powers That Be planned to delete the entire horde. Belegur petitioned the Control Character not to destroy the full number of the spirits, saying, "Let some of them remain under my control, and let them attend to my voice. For if some of them are not left to me, I shall not be able to execute the power of my will over those wicked men that have given themselves over to iniquity. Let these be for corruption and leading astray."

And the Control Character, acting in accordance with the will of Eru, granted a tenth of these spirits to Belegur, and sent the other nine parts into the place of condemnation. In order to prevent the remaining spirits from destroying Zork prematurely, the Autoexec and The Powers That Be formed for them the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarers Association.

The Association was fashioned in such a shrewd and crafty manner that it was not necessary to force the congregation of disembodied spirits to join; the entire horde voluntarily enrolled, save a few (see below). The Association's mutual non-aggression pact restricted members from fighting one another or from killing a mortal being outright. They were only permitted to influence the decisions of mortals, or by indirectly aiding or impeding them. Secondly, these spirits, each having already been imbued with a limited range of supernatural powers, were able to lend measures of these powers to mortals who placed their faith in their name. Any spillage of these unholy powers that was utilized by any mortal being would later be called "magic."<sup>6</sup> Thirdly, if these pseudo-gods wished to battle one another, they could only do so by poisoning mortals against one another. Hoping to manipulate these renegade spirits into obedience to the organization's laws (of which were the precepts of righteousness in guise), the Autoexec and The Powers That Be formed an annual award ceremony, in which the most duteous and respectful supernatural being could receive the Joseph Campbell Award for Best Semi-Actual Persona.

Coming to ravenously desiring to have this award, almost all of the supernatural beings eagerly committed themselves to these rules, except for a handful of renegades. While a fraction of these renegades are mysteriously allowed to roam Zork even today without chastisement, many were made an example of by instant discorporation. One of the most infamous of these beings that was forsaken punishment at this time was Morgrom the Essence of Evil, who would instill his evil upon the land until the tenth century when the Control Character finally deleted him.

While the Award was beneficial at controlling these beings for some time, the democratic circle of pseudo-gods that held the entire organization in check began to alter the rules by vote and thus corrupted members were soon winning Awards. It is suspected that this activity was introduced discreetly by the secretly corrupt Autoexec. Regardless, it seems that the Upper Echelons restricted Implementor advancement to the righteous alone and occasionally deleted others from existence.

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<sup>6</sup> The term magic was originally used only to designate the supernatural powers stemming forth from evil spirits (pseudo-gods) and manifested through the incantations of mortals. In modern terminology, it has been used interchangeably between the holy powers of Eru and his companions (which are only holy and righteous), the powers Eru granted to mortals through the Cubes of Foundations (which can be used either for evil or good, depending on the heart of the mortal imbuing them), and the evil powers originating from the pseudo-gods and their demons.

In the ages to come, Belegur would continue to assemble both spirits and mortals to his wicked causes, either through deception or by guiding the cords of already charred hearts into his schemes. Evidence of how quickly the Devil's influence spread throughout the land is found within all the civilizations of antiquity, usually as part of the prayers to the ancients.

#### **The Frobeolithic Glacier Epozz** (c. 3120~2500 BE or (erroneously) c. 1,000,000 BE)

The Frobeolithic Glacier Epozz covered most of the world sometime between the time of creation and 2,500 BE (though some anti-creationists have randomly set the date to 1,000,000 BE) with massive glaciers. According to the Scrolls of Kar'nai, this ice age was the aftermath of the Zork-wide judgment. For The One Eru, seeing that the ways of all men were wicked upon the face of the earth, destroyed everything that had been created save a family of each race. These survivors multiplied, spreading abroad as the glaciers gradually receded.

#### **The Frobozzolithic Lake Epozz** (c. 3120~2500 BE or (erroneously) c. 50,000 BE)

As the glaciers shrank, new land was made available for the expansion of civilization. Remnants of the passing age were deposited in many valleys and depressions as lakes and seas. This era, taking its place in history sometime after the glacier Epozz, remained gentle and serene until it was succeeded by the volcano epidemic, circa 2439 BE (again, the anti-creationists randomly set the range of this age from 50,000~30,000 BE).

#### **The Brogmolithic Volcano Epozz** (c. 2439 BE or (erroneously) c. 30,000 BE)

The Brogmolithic Volcano Epozz was heralded by the eruption of countless numbers of volcanoes, spewing their smoke and gases high into a sky that was stained red by their effusions. While much of the human population struggled to survive during these times, huge ancient dragons feeding on unfamiliar vegetation were abundant. As the volcano activity calmed, new settlements began to resurface all over bringing about the start of the Zorkeolithic Epozz, of whose bounds we are still within today.

#### **The Surviving Tribe**

The only tribe of humans to survive Eru's judgment was the rudiment of what would become the Mithicans, whose seed continued to multiply throughout the entirety of the three former Epozzs. Frequently these men were visited by spirits of the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarers Association, who tried to convince them that they were holy gods (rarely these spirits did reveal their true evil persona), sharing their names with them and demanding their adoration in exchange for favorable season of crops, or promised victory in war. These pseudo-gods perused those who were most devoted, teaching them how to call upon them by name and how to utilize their supernatural powers. This event was the foundation of evil magic among mortals.

While several of the residual families broke off to different regions, a majority of the humans had congregated in primitive huts along the outskirts of the Miznia Jungle, wore vulgar loincloths, and derived entertainment from sitting around bonfires, yelling and hollering at the sky. While many of the developing families after the disaster were duped into following these so-called gods, a remnant who still followed the ways of The One handed down through his messengers, broke away from these deceived tribes. They gradually migrated northward to pitch the rudiments of what would become known as Borphee and Pheebor. It would be many centuries before these two cities would ascend beyond incessant grunting and form the first semblance of society.

It has always been quietly acknowledged by some of the more progressive enchanterers that the linguistical root of magic, commonly known as the Old Tongue, is the same language once used by the Mithican tribes. This was quite a scandalous assertion when it first surfaced, during the early ninth century. Many conservative guild members felt that it was blasphemous to attribute such credit to a group of people who had been perceived as savage and culturally inconsequential up to that point, who could not possibly have developed such an enlightened understanding of the universe. But the words of the renowned historian, Ozmar, in 821 GUE, held sway. "The ancients of our kind were nearer to knowing the truth about science than those who we call scientists today."

Before the guild of anthropologists made their discovery, the Mithican dialect was thought to have survived only by the title of the game, Snarfem, a common source of entertainment along the streets of major cities. All that

was known about this mysterious group was that they lived apart from the relatively metropolitan areas of Borphee and Pheebor.

It is now known, however, that the seemingly awkward, runic words used by sorcerers and enchanters to invoke magic spells during the age of thaumaturgy are the same words that were incorporated into every day Mithican life. Magic flowed through the Mithican people with amazing intensity. Virtually everything that was said by a tribesperson had the accidental side effect of invoking some potentially dangerous spell. This is thought to have caused many problems for the Mithicans, and is probably the reason for their disappearance around the time of 800 BE. It is also an excellent demonstration of the perils inherent in magic usage that, were it not for the whole magic debacle of 966 GUE and the guiding hand of the Grand Inquisitor, would have most likely destroyed our entire society.

## Chapter 2: Ancient Pre-Quendoran Societies

The realm of Zork is littered, as any self-respecting civilization should be, with an assortment of mysterious and ancient predecessors whose origins date back to long before the reign of Entharion the Wise (0 GUE). Their various remnants can be seen in the landscape, language, and lore of Quendor. The oldest of these are the twin cities of Borphee and Pheebor.

### **The Twin Cities of Borphee and Pheebor (c. 1,800 BE)**

Long before the birth of Entharion, the midlands<sup>7</sup> of Quendor were dominated by Borphee and Pheebor, the two powerful city-states whose massive conflict is still remembered today as one of the bloodiest and most prolonged wars ever to scar the face of the world. Despite the fact that the mystic battle that finally brought the conflict to a close in 396 BE has long been a part of common legend, little is known about the origins of the conflict, and still less about the early history of the two cities specifically. Part of the problem lies in the fact that with its defeat, Pheebor itself suffered an early death, while its twin city lived to thrive for thousands of years. Thus, almost every surviving document we have, almost every written history or piece of oral tradition, almost all of it stems from Borphee. As a result, most of our sources for the early history of the two cities are totally biased and one-sided, almost to the point of being useless. In order to tell any kind of complete story about the early history of this region, we have to rely on vague myths that, in all likelihood, are only distantly related to historical truth.

Every school child is familiar with the story of Phee and Bor, the abandoned twin babies suckled at the breast of a babbling brogmoid. The earliest written version of this story can be found in the pseudo-Fizbozian narrative history, part of which is reprinted below. Raised by this caring and, incidentally, terrifically idiotic female brogmoid, the young twins grew to adulthood on the shores of the two parallel rivers that now bare their names. When the mother brogmoid finally succumbed to hunger and lack of blood (she had, according to the sources, been living off her own flesh for some twenty-three years), the twins, now young men, decided to set out into the world and seek their fortune. Stopping along the way to search for food through the occasional pile of boulders, they came at last to the confluence of the two rivers between which they had spent their entire life.

It is at this point, apparently, that history was made. The older brother, Bor, not knowing how to get across the One River, and of course seeing no other options, announced to his younger twin that he intended to stop where he was and build a city. Apparently displeased with his brother's selfishness and lack of consideration, Phee proclaimed his similar intention, and the disagreement promptly led to a physical conflict. When it became apparent that Phee had beaten his brother, Bor turned to leave, but not before handing out a few parting words. It is here that we turn to the pseudo-Fizboz to describe the next sequence of events:

“A curse! A curse upon Phee! A curse upon Phee for that is all he shalt be! Great gods, whom my fathers hath rejected so! Grant life so long, to mine city below!” So spoke Bor in his anger.

In answer, fourteen corbies, so giant and so black, overhead they didst fly. Fourteen, for the number of Pheebor's lifetime they did proclaim. And thus, Bor went forth, across the One River, he did, out of Phee's life, forever and ever and ever and ever and ever.

Needless to say, there are more than a few problems with this story. If the twins ever did exist, and they did quarrel over their desire to create their own cities, why would they each include the other's name in that of their own capital? More importantly, how did two babies raised by a brogmoid ever learn to talk, much less figure out what a city was? Unfortunately, we are left with no other option other than to recount this narrative as one possible explanation for the origin of the two cities.<sup>8</sup> The only shred of evidence that allows us to repeat this myth and still

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<sup>7</sup> Which at that time was the mid-region of the Westlands

<sup>8</sup> At the risk of seeming guilty of negligence, it is necessary to add that some versions of the myth tell the story much differently. Written texts uncovered as far north as Kaldorn relate that there were in fact three babies, triplets, and that the third one, named Boz, was outcast by Phee and

retain our dignity is the archaeological testimony of the Phee Hourglass. If modern scientists have correctly interpreted the functioning of the Hourglass, then the earliest settlements on the Pheebor site date back to roughly 1800 BE. Conveniently enough, this is almost exactly 14 centuries before the city's ultimate demise, a figure identical to that predicted by the mysterious flying corbies.<sup>9</sup>

In any case, it is here that we can leave the realm of legend and enter that of archaeology. Recent excavations in the area of Pheebor, albeit hampered somewhat by the deathly cold that has descended upon that area of the Westlands, have given modern historians a much clearer picture of life in Pheebor at its height, and thus have allowed us to project back into the past and learn more about the early centuries of the ancient city-state.

Borphee, today lying within the province of Greater Borphee, is the oldest surviving city in the entire realm of Quendor. Its breathtaking marble temples and magnificent coliseums constructed out of dornbeast tusks have been declared the foundation of modern society. In fact, all known clusters of modern civilization can be traced back to this culture. But its prominence did not come undisputed.

The city was built at the end of the great Borphee river, which runs across the Westland region and empties into the Great Sea. In the early days of Borphee, the river indirectly provided all the city's resources, and is still treated with almost godlike reverence by the Borpheans. They were an autonomous people, free from interest or concern about the outside world.

On the other end of the Westlands, at the point where the various tributaries flow together to form the beginning of the river, was established the rudiments of what would be known as the city of Pheebor. In its most primordial state, Pheebor was nothing but a ring of primitive huts dotted along the perimeter of a glassy clearing. Incidentally, this city regarded the river with much the same reverence as the Borpheans. At the time, both cities had called the magnificent waterway the One River and lived in peace, until in 1077 BE, in a tragic fit of self-importance, the two groups would simultaneously decide to rename the river after their own city.

### **Dispute Over the Naming of the One River (1077 BE)**

Over the course of nearly seven centuries, Pheebor had grown from a ring of huts into a young and arrogant city. It was during these days, that the entire plaza was filled to capacity with a cheering throng, addressed by an orator of unknown identity. The only account of this even survives in the diary of the same peasant who recovered the Coconut of Quendor from the Ur-grue in 966 GUE. Using the Phee hourglass, this unknown human travelled to this period and recounted firsthand the final moments of the event:

I saw the orator still the throng with a wave of his hand. "Our fathers built this city at the Place Where the Great Waters Meet," he cried. "The right to name the One River belongs to us!" The throng roared its approval.

"The infidels from the east control the One River's mouth," continued the orator. "But we, who dwell at the joining of the Rivers Phee and Bor, *we* control the source!"

The throng whistled.

"As the daughter takes the name of the father, so shall the One River be known by the place of its birth!"

"PHEEBOR!" roared the throng. "Hail the River Pheebor! Phee-bor! Phee-bor!"

"We have no quarrel with the city to the east," claimed the orator (amid shouts to the contrary). "But if they continue to slight our heritage with the wretched name BORPHEE" (the crowd hissed), "we shall smite them from the face of the land!"

The throng went wild, and carried the orator away on its shoulders, then dispersed.

I was left alone.

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Bor even before the mother brogmoid died. Some have even suggested that Boz journeyed north and was himself responsible for the creation of the older city-states in ancient Frobozz. (No one has yet been able to answer why, if that is in fact true, there is no city called Pheebozbor.)

<sup>9</sup> It is of course possible that the corbie detail was altered after the fact. We chose to ignore such a possibility.

From this account, one could conclude that Borphee was the instigator of the entire crime of claiming ownership to a once universally used river. Regardless of who was the true pompous fool who began the entire tirade, nothing climatic would come of Pheebor's haughty proclamation until 396 BE.

### **The Age of Barbarity Ends / The Age of Metallurgy Begins (c. 1000 BE)**

Nothing is known of the level of technological warfare prior to the great disaster sent forth by Eru, but in the many generations to follow, which historians have termed "The Age of Barbarity," humans fought with many primitive weapons. These included clubs, stone axes, leather shields, leather armor, rocks, sticks, slings and other crude instruments which today would be described as tools. About 1000 BE, the invention of metallurgy would give rise to swords, spears and other implements of death.

### **The Eastern Nezgeth Empire**

Along with Pheebor and Borphee, the first millennia and a half following the Brogmolithic Volcano Epozz saw a flourishing of early pre-Quendoran society all across Zork. The empire speculated to have that governed both the Southlands and Antharia is known by scholars as the Anatian Empire. The world-power once ruling the Eastlands is known as the Eastern Empire, which is thought to have ceased to flourish around 1000 BE, prior to ceasing entirely.

There is an abundance of surviving proof of the ancient Eastern Empire in all regions of the Eastlands. Evidence of extensive iron-mining in the far northern reaches of the Flathead Mountains (particularly Fjord Site B) would seem to indicate the existence of a flourishing metal-working culture in the Eastlands much earlier than might have been expected. Whether this is in fact the same civilization responsible for the imposing ruins still visible in the Fenshire is a matter of conjecture. This hypothesis, although appealing, undoubtedly faces some geographical difficulties. We might expect that any civilization spanning the distance from Fenshire to the Fjord would have left more extensive written and physical evidence of its existence.

In any case, the barbaric bands of trolls and dwarves that faced the invading army of Pseudo-Duncanthrax in 666 GUE clearly bore no relation to the cultures responsible for either the Fjord Site B or the Fenshire ruins. In fact, by that late date the truth about the origins of Eastlandic Runes that mark the Fjord Site had already faded into the distant past. What makes this puzzle so interesting is the fact that Fjord Site B is well-known as a long-time resting place of the famed Jewel Jerrimore. Because the Fjord iron mines remained closed from the time of their decline in their pre-Quendoran past to their rediscovery in the 9th century GUE, it becomes necessary to accept the fact that the cursed Jewel of Jerrimore was somehow brought across the Great Sea long before the exploring navies of Duncanthrax "discovered" the Eastlands.

From this idea, it is but a small step to imagine the existence of complicated naval trade routes and communications between the two continents. In light of this, several diverse oral traditions that have hitherto been dismissed as myth become highly significant. Nearly every civilization ever studied passes on tales of a great warrior empire in the lands across the ocean to the east. Among these are the persistent tales among various Kovalli tribal cultures, including the Nezgeth, insisting that their forefathers came from an ancient powerful civilization on the far side of the world, across the sea and many lands away. Also of interest are the epic poems relating the story of the Anatian Empire, a vast power that supposedly united Antharia with the Southlands of Quendor at some distant time in the past.

Those traditions, coupled with the puzzle of the Jerrimore Jewel, and the obvious dilemma posed by the Throckrod Charts (see below) have led more daring historians to pose an entirely new and unprecedented view of world history. In light of these impressive hints of early intercontinental travel and communication, many scholars feel that our present historical era, as marked by Entharion's rise to power, is in fact the second major world era, and that the chaos and obscurity that extends for centuries before the formation of Quendor is in fact *not* the birth pangs of the current civilization, but the death throes of a previous one, the extent of which we have yet to imagine. This hypothesis would undoubtedly explain many pressing questions, particularly that of why such early city-states as Pheebor seem to be on a spiraling decline from an earlier greatness from the first moments of our recorded history.

The ancient Throckrod family of royal advisors and cartographers are best noted for their favorite son, Zilbo I, who would rise to the throne of Quendor after the death of Zylon in 398 GUE. Some five generations before, an

earlier Throckrod assembled a vast array of charts and maps supposedly depicting the entire world as it was known at that time (c. 240 GUE). One of these charts has been a source of much controversy. Looked at from this angle, it might be a somewhat confused representation of the various islands and channels to be found where the outflow of the Borphee River meets the Great Sea. However, turned counterclockwise the map can be viewed as a surprising representation of the East and Westlands, with a distorted emphasis on what would be the island of Antharia, and a peculiar southern land bridge spanning the space between the two continents. One can only guess whether the dots on the map were intended to mark settlements or cities of some kind. It does not help matters much that this chart seems to be the last of his works, and as such seems quite incomplete. Unlike Throckrod's other works, this chart shows no terrain and is not labeled in any way. Furthermore, oral tradition amongst early Largoneth historians would seem to indicate that Throckrod copied the chart from an even earlier source, the origins of which can only be guessed.

Even if we choose to ignore the Throckrod map, we must still answer some fundamentally difficult questions, among which are the following: Who is responsible for the complicated iron mines and other archaeological remains near the Flathead Fjord that clearly predate the invasion of Pseudo-Duncanthrax in 666 GUE? Is it the same culture that left massive ruins in the Fenshire area unlike anything that would have been built by the newly arrived Quendoran monarchs? How did the Jewel of Jerrimore find its way from the Westlands to the Eastlands centuries before history records any naval travel between the two areas?

To answer some of these questions, historians have put forth the idea that, for several hundred years before the birth of Entharion, the larger part of the Eastlands was dominated by a previously forgotten power, referred to here as the Eastern Empire. Archaeologists who have examined the ruined castle grounds in Fenshire have put forth the idea that the collapse of this Eastern Empire was due in some way to the neglect or betrayal to The One Eru, instead erecting peculiar idols to abominable pseudo-gods to which this culture paid homage.

It is remarkable that the conclusions made by the discovery of these ruins match what is expressly stated in the Scrolls of Kar'nai:

Know this now. The lord, chief among the Implementors and creator of them all, weaves an unfathomable future. His hand is an intangible force guiding our lives, moving them in inconceivable patterns, by rules beyond our understanding. Witness the fall of the mighty Nezgeth Empire as proof of His majesty. In glory and pride the dark-skinned warriors built mighty castles, souring high to challenge even the Grey Mountains themselves. The entirety of the lands to the east were theirs, across the Great Sea. Giant temples built they, carving into walls of rock, profaning the sacred earth that is Eru's with false idols of rodents and serpents, the hollow beasts that crawl in the dust.

The lord conferred with his elders and among them there was much argument. Rebellious Implementors cried out in anger, hesitant to see their creations destroyed. Eru in his mercy heard the elders cry and His holy answer will stand the test of the ages. Witness the providence of the One. The Nezgeth in their hubris likened themselves unto the gods. He smiled and understood. Nezgeth pride is merely part of That Which Is.

Causing the golden sword of the sun to fall upon the Nezgeth, He bade them to leave their mighty castles and wander the face of the earth in loneliness. Crossing the sea, the mountains, and the desert, they left their empire behind and now live to serve Him. Understand this. Rather than destroy His own children, He sees the future and finds a place for them in His web of truths. He sees a day when they will arise to their former splendor and destroy His greatest of enemies.

-The First Scroll of Kar'nai, Book Three

Comparative historians have been surprised by the similarities between the Scrolls, the equivalent legends in other cultures and archaeology. Precisely what sort of people rules this land will probably never be known, but it is possible to assemble a brief probable history from highlighting similarities between the plethora of fragments surviving from their respective cultures.



The Nezgeth forefathers in the Eastlands had sinned against the One. Giving homage to worship of false idols, rodents and evil serpents, they had fallen prey to pride and aggressiveness. As their true god watched in disappointed silence, the early Nezgeth empire took hold of vast stretches of foreign land, pushing ever onward in one military conflict after another. When finally Eru sought to destroy them, he was begged by the Implementors to have mercy upon them. Heeding their cries, Eru broke their empire to pieces, but banished the Nezgeth from their homes.

Over the countless years of exile from their homeland, wandering across new uncharted lands (Antharia and the Westlands) and vast oceans, the homeless tribe took the lesson of their glorious rise and abrupt fall, adhering to the strictest principles of pacifism. Generations later, the Nezgeth would find a home in the hellish deserts of Kovalli, and every day became a constant struggle to stay alive, believing that their deities had led them to this cruel land as penance for their misdeed. Gradually the tribe returned to its former warlike ways, but even then refused to give battle no more than necessary.

Thus the Eastern Empire had come to a sudden and violent collapse, a disaster so thorough that it destroyed any possibility of historical continuity. Even today, age-old castles and temples now stand empty, testifying to the existence of the wandering Nezgeth tribe that in 398 GUE would play a role in bringing salvation to the Kingdom of Quendor from the Devil.

### **The Anatian Empire**

One thing about which we can be more certain is the political and commercial ties between the Eastern Empire and the western lands. Before the rise of Quendor, Antharia and the Southlands together were dominated by the Anatian Empire, a power whose existence has long been doubted. Recent archaeological and historical research has not only proven the existence of this ancient kingdom, but also established beyond doubt its role as a world-power that, with the Eastern Empire and the Borphée Hegemony, controlled the bulk of the known world before the coming of Entharion.

How then can we prove the existence of the Anatian Empire? We should in all likelihood begin with the dilemma of the Westland underground, variously known as the Delvings of Duncanthrax, the Griffspotter Caverns, and the Mouth of the Gods. The origin of the first term is clear, although history suggests that giving entire credit for the excavation of the caverns to Duncanthrax is not entirely accurate. Centuries of oral tradition give strong support to the notion that at least some large portion of the caverns near Egredith existed previous to the dawn of the Great Underground Empire. In fact, chroniclers of the early kings of Largoneth make it clear that one particularly deep branch of the caverns would be the sight of an epic battle between Belegur and the forces of Zylon the Aged in 398 GUE.

Since Pseudo-Duncanthrax would eventually choose this obscure jungle area as the site of his capital, these pre-existing caverns would prove to be convenient to the future course of history. The great works of underground expansion initiated by Duncanthrax turned the area into the largest network of caverns anywhere outside of the Eastlands. However, the question still remains: What is the origin of the original caverns?

Litbo Mumblehum, the noted scholar from the 4th and 5th centuries GUE, who was on hand for the battle against Belegur, remarked that, “the caverns were undoubtedly natural, hollowed out by unknown centuries of tides, coastal winds, and the flow of the nearby river.” Although Mumblehum’s analyses of other events are surely beyond reproach, his skill as a natural historian must be called into doubt. Ernie Flathead, a somewhat less scholarly figure with years of extensive experience in the underground construction of that area, insists that the tunnels and caverns just off the coast are entirely artificial in origin. As evidence, he cites “the weird way the tunnels branch so evenly.” In other words, Flathead found it odd that the passage descended into the earth in the uniform binary pattern. When asked whether any combination of natural forces could be responsible for that sort of underground formation, Flathead’s reply came quickly: “No way, man.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Interpretation of the evidence given by Ernie Flathead is a matter of some debate. Recent explorations have been successful in re-opening only very small sections of the Westland caverns, none of which display the even branching patterns described by Flathead so many centuries ago.

Perhaps an even more compelling source of evidence for the origin of the Griffspotter Caverns lies in the so-called Anatian Inscriptions. These rather cryptic engravings have been the source of much controversy. Any attempt to give credence to the myths surrounding the Anatian Empire inevitably meets with heated disapproval. Despite this, much scholarly effort has been devoted to the idea that the coastal caverns are evidence of a civilization that once stretched from the Mithicus Mountains to the eastern shores of Antharia. Supporters of this theory offer the following possible translation of the Inscriptions:

To the greater glory of King Aneas VI, son of Anatinus, son of Aneas, Lord of the Land of the Rivers and Emperor of the Sea.

Needless to say, skeptics of this theory abound. Some of these accept the above translation because it matches the current information on the Kingdom of Anatinus in Antharia, but dismiss the inscription itself as an archaeological hoax. Others reject the whole idea outright, citing the entire engraving as nothing more than complicated chicken-scratch. All that can be said for certain is that Misty Island and the Mithicus Mountains have long been home to two separate and distinct civilizations, both of which seem to have some association with the ruling family of Anatinus the Platypus. Why those platypi have come to live in two such remarkable castles so many thousands of bloits<sup>11</sup> away from each other, and how in fact they continue to survive generation after generation, is a matter of much confusion. The fact that platypi on the whole are otherwise totally absent from the Kingdom of Quendor has led some people to conclude that the entire platypus affair is no more than a convoluted prank on the part of the Implementors, or somebody else with an equal amount of spare time on their hands.

Regardless of what one feels about the matter, the platypi are there, and they must be dealt with. It has been suggested in the past that the platypus outpost on Antharia's Misty Island is in fact no more than the winter home for the platypi wishing to avoid the frigid climates of the Mithican Mountains. Some refute this, claiming that nowhere in the diplomatic annals of Quendor is there any record of a Quendoran king granting passport approval to vast hordes of platypi, and, more importantly, platypi cannot fly.

But must common knowledge be turned away from in an attempt to disprove an opponent? For the platypi were familiar in both the arts of magic as well as the crafting of small silver whistles, that when tooted would carry the blower away on unseen hands to a distant location. Nor must be forget their whistles of summoning, which have been found around the necks of several pterodactyls, drawing the conclusion that these furry creatures used these winged animals for flight. Should one forget the accounts of those platypi in their Mithicus estate, who sentenced evildoers to be enslaved within the Antharian granola mines?

Regardless, these isolated mountain and island states may be two interlinked outposts of some long forgotten civilization that once controlled both Antharia, Mithicus and all the lands in between. If this is the case, then it becomes likely that the Anatian Inscriptions are in fact authentic. (Skeptics insist that this proof is of little importance, and that the difference between chicken-scratch and platypus-scratch is hardly worth mentioning.)

In any case, we are working in a vacuum, and any conclusion we are going to reach will be little better than speculation. Although the caverns that would eventually become the nucleus of Duncanthrax's underground empire clearly seem to predate even the time of Entharion, it is a far cry from this fact to the existence of an ocean-spanning, unforgettable empire. As Leonardo Flathead noted in his brilliant and revealing essay on the subject:

Random underground caverns, chicken-scratch, two castles and some random platypi do not equal anything worth getting worked up over. Random underground caverns, platypus-scratch, two castles and some random chickens do equal an entirely worthless pile of nonsense.

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Nevertheless, much of the area has yet to be explored. Therefore the notion as a whole cannot be discarded. Even accounts of these caverns as old as the reign of Zylon the Aged describe similar branching patterns, so there must be some truth to the idea.

<sup>11</sup> As defined by the Encyclopedia Frobozzica, a bloit is equal to the distance that the king's favorite pet runs in an hour. This does, of course, change drastically from king to king and slightly from day to day, and is therefore an entirely useless form of measurement for most practical (and all historical) purposes.

However, Leonardo went on to admit that he had not devoted much time to a close study of platypus culture, and it is here, if anywhere, that the answer to our dilemma is to be found.

Thanks to the well-preserved resources of the world-renowned Festeron library, several invaluable copies of original Anatan texts have been preserved for study by modern scholars. Among these texts are to be found the popular tale of the Wishbringer stone and the somewhat more surprising Tale of the Platypus Transformation.

To summarize the text of the latter briefly, it would seem that the mythic ancestors of the 10th century platypus kings were in fact truly human monarchs, ruling over a massive and forgotten empire centuries before the dawn of Quendor. Curiously, the people of this realm shared the same sort of obsessive interest in tunneling and underground living that so possessed the world from the time of Duncanthrax on. In fact, this mania for caverning seemed to take on an urgent religious aspect, the underground tunnels seen as a way for these people to attain communion with their gods. (It is unavoidable to draw comparisons with Brogmoidism. Did these early Anatanians begin to dig on the shores of the Westlands in hope of reaching the Great Brogmoid himself?)

In any case it is estimated that around 800 BE, some great disaster fell upon this empire. Most anthropologists today term the disappearance of the Anatan Empire as a “goof-up of the first order.” Some speculate it was the wrath of the pseudo-gods in retribution at the intrusions into their domains. But the one in which almost all historians unanimously agree upon had to do with this Empire being the crown of the Mithican tribes.

Since the Mithican tongue had been formed from the elements of magical incantations, the mysterious disappearance was most likely the accidental side effect invoking some potentially dangerous spell, namely one of transformation. All in one sudden stroke, every member of the ruling family, and large segments of the population as a whole, were transformed without warning into platypi. With the rulers of the kingdom stuck in Mithicus and Antharia in the feeble isolation of newly-born platypi, all form of order and civilization in the lands in between came to a sudden halt. In a matter of minutes, the empire collapsed, only to survive in distant and obscure legends.

Whatever the reason for the fall of the Mithicans or this Anatan Empire, they were gone, but their cities lived on. Through the chaos and confusion the small remnant of humans which survived the disaster multiplied and grew into the modern Quendoran cities, including Mizniaport, Gurth, and Mithicus.

Although there are few people today who would argue with the idea that some now-lost civilization dominated the Southlands of Quendor, we must admit that not everybody would agree with the problematic Platypus Scenario. Lacking any evidence in favor of some magical spell that turned an entire ruling family into a flock of platypus overnight, most people prefer to dismiss the Misty Island and Mithicus Mountains settlements as hopelessly confused enigmas that will never be explained, even by blaming the entire affair on the Implementors. (Zorbis Blattus, for instance, in his “900 Questions on Just About Everything,” saw fit to ask: “How exactly could a platypus live in a castle? Have you ever actually looked at a platypus?” For him, the question was important enough to come immediately after: “And where was the world sitting before the Brogmoid lifted it up?”) In any case, the Platypus Scenario is our best and only guess as to the origins of civilized life in the Southlands of Quendor.

### **The Aftermath in Antharia**

What exactly happened on the isolated island continent after the collapse of the mysterious and controversial platypus kingdom is totally shrouded in mystery. Muckrum’s 7th century poetic verses that describe several centuries of violent debauchery and rampant prostitution certainly make entertaining reading, but it does seem unlikely that an entire nation of thousands could withstand three hundred years of a drunken stupor and live to tell the tale. In any case, it seems clear that a long reign of darkness descended upon Antharia.<sup>12</sup>

The last legitimate Anatan governor of the coastal cities had died by the year of Zylon’s ascension to the throne of Quendor in the west (55 GUE), and after that, no coherent government was to emerge for quite some time. With the halting of coin production from the platypus mints, the island quickly reverted to the primitive stages of a granola economy, and promptly lost all contact with the thriving nations of the Westlands. Although the evidence is

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<sup>12</sup> Some people have even suggested that the origin of the Antharian Leap Week is to be found in these several centuries of darkness, a period from which the good people of Antharia are still trying to recover.

hazy, it seems that the survivors of the Platypus Transformation and their immediate descendants were on the verge of uniting under a noble family from Marba and perhaps resurrecting the ancient glories of the Anatian Kingdom.

In any case, the potential Antharian rebirth was cut short by the sudden arrival of a second disaster, this time one from the east. As we have seen, the reason behind the sudden collapse of the Eastern Empire will never be entirely clear, but the hordes and hordes of Fenshire refugees turned invaders that sailed across the Great Sea were apparently too much for the fragile Antharia, and all signs of civilized life stop for several centuries.

### **Miznia and Orexia**

The entirety of Miznia Province, utterly dominated by dangerous and unattractive jungle and swampland, has long been viewed as a relatively boring area without a history of any kind. In fact, this attitude has become prevalent simply because Miznia and its surrounding environs were not important during the era of the Flathead Dynasty, the time at which most Quendoran world history has been written. The truth of the matter is that centuries before the coming of Duncanthrax, Mizniaport was a thriving and important trade center at the heart of the Anatian Empire. Long before the Kingdom of Quendor came into existence, and many centuries before the spread of magical knowledge through the provinces of the north, magical culture was alive and well in Miznia, as evidenced by many legends of Y'Syska that still survive in that area.

In an unparalleled attempt at using magical powers to gain mastery over nature, Miznian locals decided to build their capital city right at the heart of the inhospitable jungle. Calling it Dolo Finis, or Sorrow's End, they summoned all their magical abilities to hold back the encroaching swamp and the jungles, preserving Dolo Finis as a kind of monument to their power of nature and called it Dolo Finis, because it was like an oasis in the heart of the most dangerous and miserable country in all the Westlands.

Time proved them wrong. The jungle and swamp crept right back in no matter how hard they pressed to keep it out, and eventually they abandoned it. The ruins of Dolo Finis still stand today, attesting to the eventual failure of their vain and ambitious project.

An even more obscure vestigial survivor of the Anatian state is that of the province of Orexia. Neighboring Miznia on its extreme southern border, Orexia never owed Quendor more than nominal allegiance, Pseudo-Duncanthrax himself being too unwilling to combat the diseases and dangers of the swamp in order to reach Orexia itself. To this day, the only contact that Orexics have ever had with the outside world have been through the omnipresent reach of the magic guilds, whose numerous branches reach even into that obscure southern region.

### **A Little History About Gurth and Mithicus**

The major cities in the area, Gurth, Mithicus and Miznia, all date back many centuries before the invasions of Pseudo-Duncanthrax, and local tradition narrates that all three once lived together in harmony under the reign of a dynasty that has otherwise been completely forgotten. If this dynasty is in fact the ancient Anatian line, and the inhabitants of the southlands are the survivors of the Great Platypus Transformation, then many difficult questions have been answered. It would for instance explain why most residents of the Mithicus area suffered for many centuries from acute platypophobia, a fear that culminated in the annual sacrifice of any platypi unfortunate enough to wander down the mountainside.

In any case, the cities in the Southlands were notoriously poor at chronicling their own histories, and thus the several centuries of time before the invasions of Pseudo-Duncanthrax have generally been lost to the mists of time. When Lester Foozilbarmumboz, an author more widely known for his almost trivial little travel brochures, sat down to write his mammoth "Government of Ancient Cities and the Role of the Apricot Fruit," he assumed, probably correctly, that the forms of local government to be found in the Southlands in the 9th century were in all likelihood direct descendants of the original systems that had been in place for hundreds of years before their incorporation into greater Quendor. In fact, Duncanthrax was well-known for preserving local systems of government in areas that he otherwise felt inclined to destroy entirely. Local governmental records and archaeological evidence found in nearby ruins does in fact seem to confirm Foozilbarmumboz's notions of continuity.

### Chapter 3: Laying Down the Rudiments of Quendor and Other Miscellany

#### **The Downfall of Pheebor (396 BE)**

Seven centuries of selfishness arguing over the name of the One River was enough time for Borphee and Pheebor to offend each other to the point of bloody war. In 396 BE, the forces of Borphee and Pheebor met in the southern plains of Egreth, roughly halfway between the two city-states. The Pheeborians, led by the irreversible yet tremendously incapable, Prince Foo, stood on the northern side of the deep ravine that contained the One River. The Borpheans, led by the uncommonly clever General Horteus Shplee, took their place on the southern side. The general was a shrewd war strategist, well aware of his subtle tactical advantage. The two armies charged, swords drawn. But the excitement of the moment was quickly doused when both sides reached the river and were forced to dive in and paddle awkwardly towards each other. Instead of meeting in the glorious clash of steel that all had hoped for, it appeared more like a graceless collision of drowning fools. The armies splashed frantically at each other, hardly noticing the effect of the river's strong current. An effect that General Shplee had been counting on.

The cluster of bobbing heads drifted rapidly downstream towards Borphee, where a battalion of Shplee's men waited with a stockade of granite rocks. As the soldiers floated by, the battalion tossed the rocks at the Pheeborian army, apparently enjoying themselves enormously in the process and not worrying too much about the many Borphean soldiers that were mixed in with the bunch. This tactic proved quite successful, and is credited with bringing a very quick end to what would have likely ended up being a long and pointless war.

The Borpheans assembled and took arms against Pheebor, quickly sacking and burning the near defenseless city to the ground. Motionless bodies were strewn about the streets by the bloodthirsty swords, and battle trenches filled with corpses zigzagged across the city's plaza like open wounds.

It was during this final raid that an unnamed peasant from the future (966 GUE) arrived here after implementing the enchanted Phee Hourglass. Upon this peasant's arrival, the magnificent gray stallion of Prince Foo appeared amid the smoke of the ruined buildings donned with the Pheehelm. Another stallion, black as night, raced out of the smoke. Its rider was one of the more zealous (and buoyant) Borphean knights; his armor gleamed red in the firelight, but this sinister knight's regal bearing did not disguise his youth.

"At least we meet, Prince Foo," snarled the black rider.

Prince Foo regarded him coolly. "Begone, thou eastern fop!" he cried. "Never shall the River Pheebor yield its scared name!"

The black rider drew a gleaming sword from his scabbard and promptly beheaded the prince. The head rolled into a nearby trench.

"The reign of Pheebor is ended!" cried the black knight, galloping off into the smoke. "Foo is dead! The age of Borphee is begun!"

The gray stallion nudged the prince's body, and while it whinnied softly, the peasant drew near to the same open trench where the prince's head had fallen. That peasant had no intentions of mingling within the conflict. At this point, it was impossible to recover the Pheehelm. It was required for the peasant's quest in 966 GUE, but would be buried beneath hard earth for centuries to come with no way to excavate it until the distant future. In order to lure the peasant's new pet minx into locating the position of the Helm and digging deeply for it in the future when the earth turned softly, a chocolate truffle (a minx's favorite food) was preserved in the Pool of Eternal Youth and then thrown into the trench, where it would wait beside the Helm for over 2,000 years where it would be dug up by the pet minx. Just as the deed was completed, a stray arrow struck the prince's stallion in the flank. The luckless beast shrieked piteously, stumbled into the trench and lied still.

Cries of "Foo is dead! The war is over!" drifted through the smoke.

The last thing the peasant saw before returning to 966 GUE, were tattered men racing past and soon all was still as death. But it would be a few days before every nock and cranny of the city was completely raided. So thorough was the Borphean army's gleeful ransacking of Pheebor, that the entire body of knowledge accumulated by this once great people was completely wiped out.

The revered circle of wizards known as the Zizbits were destroyed in the sacking along with their fabled magic spells and paraphernalia, save a few scattered relics, including a spellbook that would be passed on throughout the centuries. Before the city fell, they guarded their high plateau temple with a protective spell that would not be broken until the tenth century.

All that was left after one night of devastation was a few scattered ruins and a number of unanswered questions, but it would take many centuries before time would soften the layers of dirt and rubble in order to obscure the remains of the plaza. Hence, the people of Pheebor are still regarded with a sense of curious wonder today.

After the pillage and razing of Pheebor, the river became the Borphee River, a very good name. There was one other besides the Borpheans who had been victorious that day—for the entire city-state of Pheebor had brought itself to ruin, falling to conflicts generated by the hatred of Belegur, who had worked its way into the hearts of men for countless generations.

### **The Settlement of Er (396 BE)**

There is little historical data for many of the tiny pre-Quendoran villages which sprouted up among the midland landscape. While their origins and development remain mysteries, there have been virtually no expeditions sent forth in the regions of many of these, as most of the highly concentrated research has been spent amongst cities of greater historical repute. One of these, which falls into history for but a moment, is the tiny hamlet of Er. Although Er had enjoyed slightly greater stature as one of the areas bonded to the powerful city-state of Pheebor, the people of this village had always been uniquely separate and highly proud of that fact.

The last recorded words of Prince Ump or Er in 396 BE, "...that is why the people of Er will never be defeated in military battle, against an enemy of any kind," were uttered just before his death at the hands of the Borpheans; although the exact relationship the armies of Er had with Pheebor in these days eludes anything by mere faulty conjecture.

### **The (re)founding of Gurth and Mithicus (c. after 396 BE)**

In the ensuing vanity following Pheebor's defeat in 396 BE, the Borpheans became rather excited about the notion of conquering new lands. After countless humbly uninquisitive generations, the population had flourished and the people were suddenly curious about what else lay beyond their borders.

The first wave of settlers discovered the struggling remnants of the two cardinal villages of the Mithican tribes. The settlers utilized the villages and named them Gurth and Mithicus. Since then, the two provinces have become a haven for artisans, and the colorless Fields of Frotzen, located within Gurth, are renowned for their incredible agricultural capacity. Seeds that are planted within the fields often ripen within days. This attribute has made it the second most abundant agricultural region in the Westlands.

### **The Mashed Potato Wars (c. after 396 BE)**

A short time later, a second expedition by the Borpheans made an incredible discovery that would permanently change both the economic and culinary structure of the Westlands.

The head of the expedition, a courageous, stoic and highly admired noble named Sir Thaddeus Galepath, described their finding in his journal. "Neither I, nor any of the men had believed a word of the scout's barely coherent mutterings. But his dumbfounded elation was the field of mushy white substance. In blatant, but understandable, disregard for my orders, the men dropped their belongings and charged down the hill. I quickly gathered my senses and followed behind them. After testing the consistency of the substance with our hands, we threw caution to the wind and dove headlong into what we soon discovered to be the most delicious mashed potatoes that any of us have ever tasted."

When news (and abundant samples) of this phenomena were sent to Borphee, the ruler of the burgeoning empire, a man named Mareilon, ordered that a village be established immediately to harvest the mashed potatoes and send regular shipments back to Borphee in lieu of any monetary taxation, and that village be named in his honor. Upon receiving these orders, Sir Galepath realized that there must be some kind of miscommunication, as he had already built an encampment which his men had fondly named, Galepath. It was also his understanding that Galepath would

be a separate city, free from any kind of taxation and interacting with the other cities by way of equally balanced trade of goods. The dialogue between the two men quickly turned ugly and became steadily worse as it approached what seemed to be an inevitable war.

Fearing a repeat of the Pheebor massacre, Galepath's advisors convinced him to invite Mareilon to a summit, where they would put their egos aside and work out their problems. Needless to say, this did not work. But surprisingly, it was not a complete disaster. Mareilon returned to Borphee, absorbed by this development, and quickly assembled another expedition that would colonize the region just south of Galepath. This new city would fall directly under Mareilon's reign, as it was overseen by him, personally.

The competition between the cities of Galepath and Mareilon escalated over the years, eventually outlasting both men's lives. One of the first and most famous princes of Mareilon was Prince Zarbonel. Though the mashed potato fields were virtually boundless, spiteful citizens would often harvest from the other city's fields. Despite the valiant attempt to resolve the issue early on, war eventually did break out. But by this time, the new ruler of Borphee had wisely detached himself from the feud, thereby drastically lowering the stakes.

The cities of Galepath and Mareilon fought for centuries. And as they did so, both sides slowly lost touch with why they were fighting to begin with. They were driven by self-perpetuating and meaningless anger that only seemed to grow stronger after losing its foundation. The cities grew in equal proportion to their citizens' disdain of the enemy, until both lands surpassed even Borphee in size, although the two were mirror opposites. Galepath would grow to become icon of intellectual pursuit of the entire world for millennia to come, while Mareilon would be dragged down into decay with the infestation of rabid gangs and corrupt politics.

### **Scrolls of Kar'nai (c. 300 BE)**

The chief body of religious literature comes from several centuries before the birth of the Kingdom of Quendor, in the form of the Scrolls of Kar'nai. Penned by a handful of anonymous believers living a hermetic life far in the frigid Northlands, nearly a thousand bloits to the north of Galepath, near the ancient and mystic religious site of Kar'nai, these divinely-inspired works, have been organized into books that scholars believe to have been written by different unknown hands. Like the Sacred Scrolls of Fizbin, these documents are said to have been uttered by the lips of Eru and united in both spirit and theme with the former work, thus becoming its complementary.

Even today these prophetic scrolls have been found inerrant, surpassing even the most eager and diligent attempts to disprove them, much to the dismay of their opponents. According to Litbo Mumblehum, "no single document has contributed more to our understanding of the religious world than the Scrolls of Kar'nai."

### **The Mage of Jerrimore (c. 275 BE)**

They dance in their simple, petty way, so insignificant below me, like ants, unintelligent machines,  
pawns to be used and then cast aside.

-The Mage of Jerrimore at the height of his powers, circa 275 BE.

Matched and beaten in their eccentricity only by the remarkable Flatheads, the Jerrimore clan is to this day shrouded in a veil of magic, greed, half-truths and lies. The great Mage of Jerrimore himself left his home city in favor of a voluntary exile to his country estates in the northlands of Frobozz, estates so closely guarded and tremendously feared that no outsider was to visit the area until the brief civil war that scarred Quendor in 398 GUE.

In the late years of his life, the Mage of Jerrimore was cast ill upon a deathbed. As his sickness worsened, this powerful but twisted wizard became convinced that his enemies had poisoned him to gain possession of his greatest treasure, the Jewel of Jerrimore, which is a star sapphire. With his dying breath, he loosed a great and evil curse upon the Jewel and all who would possess it.

After the Mage's death, each of his heirs would take possession of the jewel; each held it jealously, mistrusting any who might look upon it; each would become obsessed with the greed and treachery they perceived around them; and each came to early and horrible deaths. Thus grew the legend of the cursed Jewel. Although the legends vary, all versions say that the Jewel would travel through many lands, always leaving a wake of misery and death, and

became lost for many years in an iron mine near the Flathead Fjord. The entrance to the iron mine is still today marked by a warning of inevitable death to anyone who takes the Jewel, although it was since removed in 883 GUE by the unknown man who would become the First Dungeon Master.

### **The Age of Archery (200 BE~660 GUE)**

Although some primitive projectiles had been in production since the fall of Pheebor, the Age of Archery saw the abundant production of efficient and effective missile weapons. These included crossbows, short bows, composite bows, and long bows, as well as various bolts and fletchers. To counter this newfound successful form of warfare, various defenses were invented, such as bow-visored helmets, large shields, and fortifications with arrows lits and metal roofs to protect defenders.

### **Other Ancient Tales**

The tale of Zilbeetha is one of the oldest and dearest legends in the annals of Quendor. Zilbeetha, a beautiful maiden, somehow angered an evil mage, and was placed under enchantment and turned into a crystal orb on the very day that she was to be wed. The heartbroken groom, who is always depicted holding a fragile bloom, sought help from the wizard's goodly twin. The good wizard turned the groom to stone, that he might stay young until the day Zilbeetha was returned to him. Unfortunately, it would not be until the end of the ninth century that the two lovers would be reunited.

Many tales have been told about Froon, a magical land said to lie somewhere beyond the clouds. L. Frank Fzort in his book, "The Wizard of Froon," described it as a place of swooping songbirds, dainty cottages, sun-dappled streets lined by a rainbow of flowers, with the air filled with gentle fragrances, and a race of tiny people standing no taller than two feet. It has been claimed that the only way to reach this forgotten land was by riding a cottage upon the winds of a Fields of Frotzen tornado.

### **The Eastlands**

While all these events were transpiring across the Westlands, life in the Eastlands remained quite sedate since the collapse of the Eastern Empire. The scattered enclaves of humanoids, including trolls, orcs, and gnomes, who were indigenous to the continent are referred to in all historical accounts as simply, "the natives," and were said to be quite easygoing people. In the absence of the warring tribes, these races abundantly flourished.



PART III:  
**THE ENTHARION DYNASTY**  
**0~659 GUE**

**Chapter 1: The Early Years of Quendor**

This land of my deeds will ever remain untold. My sword, my sheath, my glory, my home; all these await a telling to do them justice, and truth, such a historian will never be born.

-Entharion the Wise

**A Prologue to Quendor**

Although the history of the northern regions before the formation of Quendor is dominated by the rise and fall of competing city-states, these small powers were by no means the only participants in pre-Quendoran political life in the Westlands. In fact, several historical sources that detail the formation of the Kingdom of Quendor make no mention of the city-states whatsoever, describing the lands that now make up ancient Frobozz as wild and untamed wasteland, populated by all sorts of warring tribes and uncivilized nomads. Undoubtedly, the area stretching from the northern strip of the Mithican Mountains in the west to the Lonely Mountain and the coast in the east was still on the whole largely barbarized and highly dangerous. In fact, it is likely that the various warring tribes that inhabited the forests near Galepath and the hillsides near Mareilon account in a large part for those two cities' respective inabilities to form a larger and more stable union or nation of some kind before the coming of Entharion.

In any case, it is nearly certain that in his history-making campaign against Galepath and Mareilon, Entharion himself encountered incessant delays along the way. Forced to fight his way through foreign and largely unexplored territory in his attempt to reach the coast, by the time he had reached his goal, the would-be monarch had defeated and pacified the various nomadic and tribal groups that had attempted to stand in his way. Although the twin pillars of his new kingdom would be the conquered coastal cities, it was these barbaric tribes that would form the bulk of the countryside population of Quendor at its birth.

**Wars Between Galepath and Mareilon (c. 3 BE)**

Over the centuries, several historians from both Galepath and Mareilon have tried to claim Entharion, later surnamed *the Wise* as one of their own. If we believe Froblivius, nothing could be farther from the case. By the time war had broken out between Galepath and Mareilon for the last time, Entharion had risen to the position of bozbian praefect, the chief military commander of the city of Quendor. The early details of his life are still obscure, but it does seem that he was a native-born Quendoran. Like each of his predecessors to have risen to such a prominent position under the prince of Quendor, Entharion was a man of prosperous background, well-educated and well-trained in the arts of war. Barely past his twentieth year, Entharion's rise to power had been surprisingly quick indeed, and it is hinted that he alienated some of the senior nobility of Quendor by his unwillingness to defer the important command positions to them.

In any case, by 3 BE, Galepath and Mareilon were again at war. The prince of Quendor hurried to make his traditional and tired declaration of absolute neutrality. By all reports, Entharion, who was too young to remember any of the previous conflicts, failed to understand why all of his compatriots seemed so bored by the entire affair. It seems clear from the king's later writings that he felt something important to be in the making. He did in fact spend several weeks trying to convince the prince to let him march; it did not seem to matter to him which side he was going to fight for, so much as it did that he actually got a chance to fight. By the end of the summer season, both of the warring parties had sent desperate messages to the prince of Quendor begging for military assistance. With the vague intention of solving the chaotic situation, Entharion's armies had begun to march. Although the founder of the

Quendoran nation would insist until his dying day that he marched only on orders from his prince, no such orders have ever been found, and the prince's later actions do not support Entharion's claims.

Within a matter of weeks, Entharion's forces had made the relatively short march to the coastal areas in contention and had come in sight of the two warring camps. The scene as told by Froblivius is a chaotic one indeed. The forces of Galepath and Mareilon, upon seeing the approach of the new arrivals, both withdrew and regrouped their forces, expecting the Quendorans to join their camp and help in the fight against the other. Soon it became clear that neither was the case; Entharion ordered the bugle to sound, and his forces descended with an amazing fury upon the unsuspecting coastal armies, hacking them to bits. The battle lasted barely three hours, and the results were devastating. When the dust had settled, the princes of Galepath and Mareilon, both of whom had been at hand, were laying their arms at the feet of the victorious Entharion, acclaiming his sovereignty. At first, it seems, Entharion had no intention of violating his oath to the Quendoran prince. In a brief letter sent back to Quendor, he informed his overlord that peace had been found, and that both cities were prepared to recognize the suzerainty of Quendor.

Concerned that the situation on the coast might sink back into anarchy, Entharion stayed encamped near the Lonely Mountain, determined to keep an eye on the two defeated powers. For months and months the prince of Quendor stalled, reluctant to reply to his powerful praefect. Perhaps he feared that Entharion had become too powerful, and preferred to see him as far away from the center of power as possible. Whatever the truth may be, it was a full six months before Entharion received a reply: "I don't want those cities. Put them back where they belong. And don't come home." Annoyed at the tone of the message, and more than a little resistant to the idea of forsaking his easy conquests, Entharion decided to take matters into his own hands.

Entharion's personal writings, although potentially very helpful, are in truth highly obscure. In fact, this one passage below degenerates from being unclear to downright unintelligible:

The true dilemma at this point lay in finding a simple way to unify the two bodies. Choosing the half-way point a stronghold, true wisdom. General wrath brings unrest I destroy. Be four kings tyrannized thee peoples it not for bar bar bar.

Nonetheless, Entharion abandoned his position in the Quendoran army receding into temporary isolation within Egreth Forest. With his absence, the royal Quendoran army was recalled from the Lonely Mountain, thus relinquishing control over the two conquered city-states. Within a day of this repositioning of troops, Galepath and Mareilon, now bereaved of their watchmen, were once again drawing swords at one another.

### **The Entharion Dynasty Begins (0-01-01 GUE)<sup>13</sup>**

When the year 0 GUE finally came around, the people of Zork felt fairly confident that something big was about to happen. This assumption would turn out to be true, for during these days, Entharion emerged from Egreth Forest and built himself a tiny hut on the beach between Galepath and Mareilon.

Stunned by the presence of their new neighbor, soldiers from both sides approached the hut. Unaware that this was the man whom their princes had only three years ago surrendered to, they took turns interrogating Entharion. The Galepathians would poke his left shoulder with their spears and ask him where he came from, then before he could answer, the Mareilonians would poke his right shoulder and demand to know who had sent him. This went on for some time, until Entharion, instead of answering any of the questions, inquired about the apparent hostility between the two groups of soldiers. One of the dozen or so men crammed inside the tiny hut explained that they had been in at war for hundreds of years, noting, however, that it was none of his business and that he better get to answering their questions right away. Disobeying this order, Entharion again asked a question. "Why fight?"

From that day forth, the modest, unassuming man who emerged from the woods was known as Entharion the Wise. With a perfectly naïve question, Entharion united the warring kingdoms of Galepath and Mareilon and was exalted as the first king of the Entharion Dynasty. It was a glorious time. The new kingdom was named Quendor

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<sup>13</sup> Adding GUE after a year did not become common practice until the latter part of the eighth century. Quendor was not called the Great Underground Empire until Dimwit Flathead renamed it in 770 GUE, though some referred to it by this name as early as 668 GUE)

after Entharion's city of origin, and his castle was erected between the cities he had united, on the former site of his hut. This region was named Largoneth. It was from this castle that he ruled for the entirety of his reign, and it would serve as the capital of the kingdom for the duration of the Dynasty.

### **One Last Rebellion**

Although the citizens of Galepath and Mareilon had declared themselves one, Prince Argonel, "rightful ruler of Mareilon," did not so easily bow to the whims of Entharion's sovereignty. In public he wore a façade of comradeship and loyalty, but in his heart he despised the forced union. While most of the population of Mareilon, who had grown tired of the conflict, were in no position to rise up against Largoneth and Galepath, Argonel was able to rally enough soldiers to his cause, that when his treason was discovered, Entharion was not hesitant to quell the insurrection.

In the last days of Mareilon's glorious independence, Mazimar Spildo of Galepath took up arms with Entharion against the city and overthrew the last remnants of its might. The king condemned Prince Argonel to die by the executioner's axe, but in an attempt (a *pathetic* attempt as Argonel's descendants would later recount), he allowed the prince's wife and son to go free. These two and their descendants were relegated to generations of miserable existence as rope salesmen and mosquito net makers. Barely making ends meet, these descents of Argonel would watch and wait while those around them praised Entharion and spoke highly of the great debt they owed him. They would pass on to each generation tales of Entharion's usurping of freedom and the cessation of Mareilon's glorious independence, for subjecting them in an unequal alliance with the vile Galepath, and for making them pay undeserved allegiance to some frail monarch on a throne over two hundred bloits away.

For the rest of Mareilon, they believed that the unity with Galepath and Largoneth had brought internal peace, protection from foreigners, even a great deal of new economic prosperity, while others believed it to be a charade. They saw that the wars against Galepath never ended, that Entharion only tricked everyone into believing they did by lulling them into a false sense of peace. Instead of a prince, a mayor was instituted as the head official, one over Mareilon and one over Galepath. Diplomats from both of these cities played a crucial role in the formation of Quendor.

### **The Seven and a Half Provinces**

Although the names of the original provinces are long since lost to us, several pre-Flathead maps have survived that show the original provincial boundaries. For the sake of convenience, we will refer to each of those provinces by the names of their chief cities, with one exception: Galepath, Mareilon, Quendor, Znurg, Vriminax, Bozbar and Borphee. The province surrounding the capital at Largoneth was referred to as Frobozz, although no record of a city by the same name has survived to the present day. What has usually made the history of the ancient provinces most confusing is the existence of this mysterious "half province," usually mentioned without any accompanying word of explanation.

The truth about the Incomplete Province, as it was so often called in old Quendoran records, lies in the peculiar circumstances surrounding Entharion's invasion and occupation of part of the Kingdom of Borphee. Thanks in part to the decadent state of the current ruling dynasty of Borphee and the shabby quality of their military forces, the Quendoran Royal Army quickly gained control over a large section of the Borphee peninsula, including the massive port city itself. However, due to internal conflicts back home, the court at Largoneth was unable to press home its advantage during that campaigning season, and utterly failed to field an army the following year.

Counting its blessings and nursings its wounds, the ruling family of Borphee, driven from its capital, retreated to the security of Mauldwood. Unable to muster any serious counter-offensive against the Quendoran forces, the exiled rulers focused their efforts on rebuilding their kingdom. With a new southern focus, their domains stretched from Mauldwood on the coast inland past the old territories of Pheebor to the mountains, and south as far as the borders of Gurth, including Accardi-by-the-Sea. This rump Kingdom of Borphee was approximately half the size of the former state, leading the following generation of kings at Largoneth to refer to the unconquered territories as "the half-province that is Ours by right."

In turn, the Borphee successor state to the south refused to recognize the Quendoran conquest of their former territories, and although they never again took up arms against the enemy, they showed their opposition in other, more devious ways. Year after year, generation after generation, the exiled royalty would issue edicts from their Mauldwood fortress and distribute them to their former territories as truly sovereign law. Further, the governors sent from Mauldwood to administer the lands that were no longer theirs were very often accepted by the city governments in the Quendoran lands. This was a very peculiar situation, one in which Borphee Province was claimed and occupied by Quendor but governed by officials from the Kingdom of Borphee, a land that Quendor also claimed, but did not have the power to occupy or govern. Needless to say, this entire situation accomplished nothing but granting immense trouble and anxiety to many generations of two different royal families until the reign of Duncanthrax.

This “half province” set aside, the rule of Entharion the Wise brought a semblance of peace to a war-torn land and began a dynasty that reigned over the Kingdom of Quendor and its seven and a half provinces for almost seven hundred years, spanning the majestic reigns of fourteen benevolent monarchs.

Now that the concerns that accompany constant warfare had been abolished, people in all the cities of Quendor were able to concentrate on more academic subjects. There was a sudden curiosity about the nature of the world. The study and practice of magic was very crude in those distant days, not the rigorous scientific endeavor it had become by the eighth century. But, the literary works that were produced during this period marked the very beginnings of what later became known as Thaumaturgy; the experimental study of applied magic.

### **Further Accomplishments of Entharion**

Entharion the Wise became the most potent mage of his time, and married Queen Lynpo, a direct descendant of Galepath, and fathered but a single son named Mysterion. According to popular legend, he was also the inventor of the infotater. Although most favor this as historical fact, some point to the writings of Satchmoz, who clearly states, as though he believed it to be truth, that this magical device was derived from Krepkit in the 7th century. It is most likely that Krepkit was not the inventor of the original infotater, but only the alternate pinwheel model.

Although the infotater would grow to be a tremendous asset to the magic community in the years to come, Entharion was more known for taking up his legendary blade Grueslayer, and setting about to eradicate all grues from the face of the world. This mass purge was inspired by one of his soldiers, who, using only a piece of over-ripe fruit, fought off a gaggle of grues who were about to devour the King and refused to abandon him no matter how difficult the fight became, eventually hauling him to safety. An elegant lance, tipped with a genuine grue’s tooth, known at Terazarg, the Sacred Grue-Slaying Lance of Entharion, was the reward Entharion gave to this soldier.

Many thought that the entire devilish race was exterminated at his hands, but remnants escaped. A handful went to dwell within the darkest and thickest forests where no human would dare to venture, but the majority hid in the most obscure parts of the underground, in bottomless pits far away in other lands. One of the primary places was a huge cluster of these pits in a region beneath what is today known as the White House. It was for this reason that Belegur longed to wreck revenge upon Entharion and his entire progeny to be. But it was not upon this generation that the fallen Implementor would be able to unleash a formidable plan.

### **The Great Terror is Aroused**

During the latter days of Entharion the Wise, some unknown practitioner or group of practitioners somehow accidentally awakened a shapeless and formless manifestation of evil from millennia of sleep. This incredibly ancient and malevolent force came to be known as the Great Terror, or the Unseen Terror. The Terror feasted on fear, drinking it up like a sponge. To satisfy its urging appetite, the evil entity itself radiated fear like the sun radiated heat and light, forcing all it permeated to fear it. Thus the unending cycle bolstered the Terror with incredible power. As it was capable of sensing any enchanter that worked even the most minute of magic, none could draw near to it without being detected. Even the greatest enchanters and wizards of the day succumbed to its creeping fear.

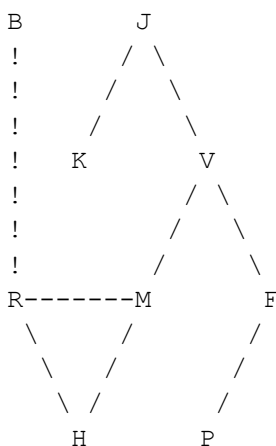
Seven men, enchanters and wizards, did not wait to succumb to its horrible power, but instead sought the Terror out and gave themselves to it willingly, hoping somehow to forge an alliance with it and augment their knowledge

and power for themselves. But the Terror enslaved them completely, took from them their wills and their natural human forms, and sent them out as instruments of fear. To do the Terror's work they were able to assume whatever shape they desired, with an exception of that of men. They could never again become human. Together with its servants, the Terror nearly destroyed all civilization.

But Entharion, by then an old man, realized that the Terror could not be killed, only imprisoned. Knowing that the Terror had power to sense a great work of magic, he conceived a plan to lure the creature into a magical prison by creating the most powerful spell scroll imaginable in those days. Entharion called together the mightiest enchanters and sorcerers and wizards in the land, and together, working day and night, they created a scroll of truly great power—GUNCHO, which was able to open gateways to new worlds and dimensions beyond our own.

Working swiftly and with full urgency, they then constructed a maze-like series of chambers far beneath Largoneth Castle and placed the scroll at the very heart of it. These peculiar rooms, whose cream-colored walls were thing and translucent, were joined by passages that were perfect round and black, seeming to be made of carbon. The layout of these chambers were magically linked to a map, each room and passage distinct upon it.

Discovered in depths of Largoneth, the map consists of a drawing with nine points, each represented by a strange character, with interconnecting thin pencil lines. Although the events of 956 GUE have since altered this map, researchers have assumed the following to have been the original placement of the passages.



The GUNCHO scroll was placed in a room of living rock that formed Largoneth's foundations (chamber P). As Entharion knew it would, the Terror came to seek the scroll containing potent magic. Lurking in the shadows of the castle, the magicians waited for their foe to enter the specially created recess deep within the earth where they had placed the scroll. Then, acting in concert with all the powers at their command, they sealed the Terror deep within the room by removing the passage between chambers P and F. There it finally returned to a deep sleep. Concurrently, the seven Servants of the Terror each returned to their own treasure filled lairs in various regions all across Zork (one of which was in uncivilized lands far north of Frobozz). Hidden there for ages, they slumbered until the days of the Terror's release.

To that end, Entharion, at the age of 65, renounced the throne of Quendor to his son Mysterion and spent the rest of his days within the estate as guardian of the monster that slept below. Eventually, however, Entharion died, and his legendary Grueslayer was lost. The Terror was so horrible that none would dare speak of it. And after his days passed what was fact was slowly allowed to become legend and fairytale, and in time the truth of the Great Terror was forgotten for nearly a millennium, when it would be reawakened in 956 GUE, and later defeated just before the close of the First Age of Magic (966 GUE).

### **The Reign of Mysterion the Brave (41~55 GUE)**

Entharion the Wise was succeeded by his son, Mysterion the Brave in 41 GUE, of whom little is known other than a couple scattered events of general bravery and a couple stories of his youth, all which have been lost to us save a

few misty details. During these days, most knowledge of magic seemed to gradually diminish and soon after much of it would remain lost until its rediscovery by Bizboz in 473 GUE.

Known more for his valor than his brains, Mysterion, when he was merely a young prince, found an august sword abandoned in the woods and took it home to raise it as his own. Naming it Zarglebane, he tried to have the sword educated and then brought into his court. He claimed it was his most influential advisor, always in his hand, and gained a reputation for decapitating anyone that disagreed with him. Another of his prized possessions as a young child included a halberd known as Grovnar. It used to shine brightly enough to protect him from the grue which he thought lived under his bed. His father, eager to dismiss such childish fears, used to have the young prince's nannies crawl under the bed to show that there was no grue in the room. The king lost eight child minders before he realized there actually was a grue, and the young prince was moved to a different room.

### **Religious Wars of Kar'nai (47~50 GUE)**

The first century after Entharion's death would be scarred with a string of bloody conflicts, beginning with the religious Wars of Kar'nai. This order of religious monks had been living in a monastery in the Northlands. Although they lived on the ancestral territory of foreign warrior tribes, they were usually ignored, until a new chieftain assumed power. For reasons that are now lost to us, the prophets of Kar'nai perished in these years by the sword in the reign of Mysterion the Brave. The details of this war are lacking, save an inscription at the gravesite of Zylon the Aged which reads, "Bringer of Victory in the Wars of Kar'nai."

The only other source we have is perhaps one of the most hotly debated passages in the entirety of the Scrolls of Kar'nai (which were composed nearly 350 years earlier):

Beware of the doubters, for they ask many questions. In their quest for science and deep wisdom even the most basic foundations come under their vile scrutiny. How can the world be flat? they wonder. Those at the edges would most surely perish. The doubters ignore that with the Implementors, all things are possible. Why, they ask, do these powerful gods allow the death of their prophets at the hands of infidels from other lands? The answer laughs at its own simplicity. Sacrifices must be made. And why do these gods tempt a human lord with life of four hundred years, only to take it suddenly away and throw the land into chaos?

The doubters ask many questions, spending their time wasting the precious gift that has been given to them. While they sit deep inside unholy halls debating their empty ideas, the final answer descends inexorably from above, proclaiming the word of a new world. Nobody lives forever.

-The First Scroll of Kar'nai, Book Five

While some see it is clearly evident that these writings predict the death of their own prophets during this period, most view these words as merely creative prose. Scholars in the former camp point out the striking parallel to the long-lived Zylon the Aged, who walked upon Zork for 430 years. If these words are indeed prophecy, we have in our hands the remarkable opportunity not only to analyze the predictions that have come to pass, but also to look into the future and speculate about the possibly unfulfilled events still to come.

### **The Long Reign of Zylon the Aged (55~398 GUE)**

Mysterion the Brave reigned for 14 years and passed away in the year 55 GUE. He was succeeded by Zylon the Aged, perhaps the most memorable of the Entharion kings, noted chiefly for his eternally young appearance and astounding longevity. Born in the impossibly distant era before the creation of Quendor itself (32 BE), Zylon rose to the throne at the age of 87, a position which he would hold for a staggering 344 years, swallowing half of the Entharion Dynasty.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Frobbish Rebellion (102 GUE)**

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<sup>14</sup> See the section entitled "The Ascension of Zylon the Aged" for more information regarding his length of days.

At the turn of the century, the citizens of Mareilon were dissatisfied with the new regime of Quendor rulership. These quibblings gave birth to Mareilon's abortive, near-comical Frobbish Rebellion in 102 GUE. Little is known about this event, and only two minute details have emerged: the Eagle's Claw Tavern was the headquarters of the revolution for a brief two weeks, and that Zylon became known as the Preserver of Peace in the Time of the Frobbish Rebellion.

### **The Dimly-Lit Ages**

Few topics in the study of Quendoran history have been the subject of more spilt ink and wasted parchment paper than the exact nature of the Dimly-Lit Ages of Quendor. The term itself was first used by Bilmum Foobar as the title for volume eight of his epic work, "A History of Early Quendor", and from that point on has been used by all historians of the Entharion dynasty as a general label for the time from the reign of Zylon the Aged to the fall of the dynasty with the deposition of Zilbo III. Generally, the period in question can be characterized as one utterly devoid of arcane knowledge and thaumaturgical practice. Although it is true that various scholars during the Entharion dynasty made sporadic attempts to rediscover the basic magical truths, it was not until the domination of Quendor by the Flathead family that the old essence of magic could be returned to the full light of organized knowledge.

The reasons for Dimly-Lit Ages are several, and are intimately involved with the problems inherent in giving an accurate timeframe for the period. Mystified historians have recorded that most knowledge of the sacred arts had been lost with the fall of the city of Pheebor some eight centuries ago, and the sudden unexplained death of every member of the Jerrimore clan about two hundred years after that.

After the confrontation with the Great Terror, Entharion himself was active in the suppression of various forms of dark magic. Both he and his successor, the obscure and short-lived Mysterion the Brave, were believed to belong to a secret society dedicated to the guardianship of magical knowledge from the eyes of the outside world. However, while these two monarchs and their companions were still alive, memories of magic remained fresh in the minds of the populace, and thus the Dimly-Lit Ages cannot yet be said to have fully begun. Most scholars begin the period with the reign of Zylon the Aged, who himself was not a member of the near-legendary magical society and in which magic of any kind was a rare commodity.

Since Zylon the Aged himself reigned for an unprecedented three and a half centuries, the length of the Dimly-Lit Ages vary widely depending on when exactly during Zylon's reign one decides to begin the period. It is of course true that Zylon, a contemporary and associate of both his predecessors, was intimately acquainted with magical practice and lore. However, the aged monarch was notoriously introspective, a habit only natural from one who had the misfortune of watching a dozen generations of good friends give in to death while he himself remained alive. In any case, Zylon shared little of his magical knowledge, and although not a member of Entharion and Mysterion's secret societies, he did little if anything to prevent their work throughout the long course of his reign.

As for the academic institutions, many scholars felt that they had finally begun to achieve some understanding of an underlying order in the seemingly chaotic world. It was during this period of enlightenment that many important scientific discoveries and technological innovations were made.

Astronomers began meticulously analyzing the motion of celestial bodies, physicists made stunning assertions about the apparent tendency of all things to "gravitate" towards the ground and cartographers insisted that their geographical surveys simply did not add up under the assumption that Zork lay on a flat surface. All these things combined to give rise to the Giant Coconut theory, which enjoyed uncontested dominance in all academic circles up until the late 4<sup>th</sup> century when it was replaced with the planetary model. These stirring events were quickly answering the great mysteries of the ages that had baffled mankind.

Primitive cultures had naturally assumed that the disorderly nature of our world was due to such supernatural causes as magic or was created at the hand of some ancient god. With the founding of the "natural" sciences, however, nature was increasingly viewed as being orderly. As the sciences progressed, the knowledge and lore of magic largely disappeared.

In some places the spark of magic would survive in the forms of two of the late members of Zylon's court, those like Dinbar and Hargood, brilliant but untrained, often erratic. However, magicians like those were usually limited to flashy pyrotechnics, and would never be capable of using their skills towards destructive ends. With the death of

Zylon, no magical knowledge existed outside the confines of the mysterious and hidden proto-guilds, and thus with 398, the Dimly-Lit Ages can truly be said to have begun.

What then remains from this distant and poorly-documented period of Quendoran history? What bright points emerge from these three centuries of darkness to catch the eyes of the curious? Clearly, the fact that Entharion's kingdom was able to survive outside the auspice of the original trio of rulers was a remarkable accomplishment in and of itself. Much of the history of this period is the history of conflict and alliance between two remarkable dynastic families, a conflict that came to a bloody head during the second half of the fifth century. Throughout the period, Quendor would be wracked by dramatic religious and cultural transformations, but all the while, isolated and persecuted individuals would continue the hard work that would allow the knowledge of magic to reemerge at the end of the era.

### **The Mysterious Reign of Kwisko (c. 150~175 GUE)**

Perhaps the most baffling period of early Quendoran history is the generation roughly spanning the years 150 to 175 GUE. Despite the traditional and highly well-grounded dating of Zylon the Aged's reign from 55 to 398 GUE, some lesser traditions insist on naming a Lord Kwisko, the great-great-grandson of Entharion, as king of Quendor during the 25 year period noted above. How these two traditions can be reconciled has been a matter of some great scholarly debate. All sorts of theories abound, ranging from the unlikely idea that Kwisko was nothing more than an alternate moniker for the aged Zylon to the theory suggesting that Kwisko was in fact pretender to the throne of Quendor, and advocated the overthrow of the central power at Largoneth. However, it is clear from the lack of evidence either way that Kwisko's impact on the history of the era was minimal, and perhaps only local at best.

Antor Zilbarion, the main proponent of the Pretender-King Theory, notes in his book "Lord Kwisko, Pretender" that much of the surviving epic oral poems on Kwisko originate in a very narrow geographic area covering only the Mauldwood and the plains stretching from that forest to Borphee proper, and thus it might be reasonable to conclude that Kwisko himself was some sort of local political leader who gained considerable influence within that area, but never gained widespread recognition elsewhere.

Some historians point out that there are no original sources pointing out who was the king the entire time attributed to Zylon. Many other recent historians, who would hurry to disprove Zylon's tremendous lifespan, have adamantly stood upon the kingship of Kwisko as the main refuting component. Another element is that many king lists only give the final date of each reign, and thus a section of the list could be missing, utterly removing the need to give Zylon an unusually long life span. Other contenders seek to stand upon the unstable grounds that this period referred to the Zylon family, and not to one particular personage.

Despite these doubters, who like to deny the seemingly impossible for the sake of scientific rationality, there is no solid evidence to reject the well-preserved writings of Zilbo I, who provides us with the deeds of Zylon the Aged that range even to the years prior to his centuries of kingship, in "I Can't Believe You'd Ask Such a Stupid Question about Zylon the Aged."

### **The Rebellion of Esmerelda (c. 150~175 GUE)**

The story of Esmerelda would hardly be significant enough to list within these annals had she not lived to become Queen of Quendor 500 years later. During the days of Kwisko, the young Esmerelda lived within her father's castle, hidden deep within the bowels of Mauldwood. This young and beautiful maiden was stuck-up, arrogant, snobbish, haughty, adamantly refused to tread any path but her own intricate selfish highway, and was always endowed with the most paramount gems of society.

Esmerelda's father passed away, and her stepmother, the witch Nasturtium became her guardian. When the maiden was both mature of age and countenance, Esmerelda was the sight of every man. Despite her most crafty and shrewd means, Nasturtium was almost unable to stop the overly comely woman from throwing herself at everything in pants. Originally the witch forbade her from leaving the castle, but the selfish Esmerelda was not about to submit herself to any form of parental obedience. These days presented her with many opportunities to perfect her stealth abilities by sneaking in and out of the castle right under Nasturtium's nose. Esmerelda presumed that her terribly



ugly stepmother was jealous of her beauty, but this was a false claim. A mother had a responsibility, and finally Nasturtium had to resort to enchantment. It was the only way she could keep her home.

Nasturtium spent a lot of money on a casket, the finest in Quendor (to match Esmerelda's obsession for the best of everything), and placed a time-suspension spell upon the needle of a spinning wheel. Esmerelda was lured by the witch into a room where the wheel was set. Upon set her hands to it, she pricked a finger and fell victim to the time-suspension spell. She placed Esmerelda into a casket in one of the upper tower rooms. This was where the comely maiden would sleep and retain her youth and beauty for five hundred years, when a kiss would awaken her during the days of Duncanthrax.

But magic must be constantly renewed. Even so, it is not quite stable. It leaks. Thus over the years, the leakage affected her coffin first, slowing down time within. Then it spread throughout the tower room. As the spell was constantly renewed over and over, the effect eventually permeated the entire castle and enveloped the entire forest of Mauldwood. Thus an hour or two to one wandering within its ancient depths could be years, or even entire decades in the realm without.

### **Construction of the Quendoran Navy (c. 240s GUE)**

Although the reasons for Zylon sudden obsession with the construction of the Quendoran navy in the 240s, when Quendor previously had no need for such a system, is obscured. The most widely accepted conjecture is that the king feared the possible rebirth of the Anatan Empire on Antharia. Apart from the reasons for its assembling, the navy was never put to use, and in the later years of Zylon's life, the ships were converted into fishing vessels.

### **The Descent of Saint Yoruk (353~380 GUE)**

The end of Zylon's mercilessly boring rule gave birth to a figure who would become known as Saint Yoruk. Opinions differ as to the exact nature of the myths regarding this man. Many have sought to dismiss the tales as nothing but mere fantasy. The Brogmoidists in particular, even today, hotly deny the truth of these stories, fearing that the tale of Yoruk contradicted the fundamentals of their religion. However, recent efforts to translate certain ancient manuscripts and inscriptions have succeeded in providing evidence in support of Yoruk that is over a thousand years old.

The chief traditions come from the Eastlands, and are unbelievably ancient in origin. It is possible that the traditions regarding Saint Yoruk survive via oral legend from the remnants of the Eastern Empire. The modern historical community seems to have reached a general consensus that, while details of the story might have been changed over the centuries, the bulk of the legends surrounding Saint Yoruk are in fact historically accurate. Of the many different stories compiled, all have several elements in common: Yoruk was a simple merchant and tradesman from an unnamed city, who had apparently grown dissatisfied with his life, and with the falsehoods in the ruling religion.

The most widely circulating, and perhaps most authentic tale of Yoruk is that he was a Galepathian born in 353 GUE, and later in life began his trade as a perfectly obscure mashed potato merchant. Since this account, derived from one of the most intact of the surviving manuscripts least tampered with by redactions, and authenticated by the heretical Zorkastrian church, it is perhaps the most well-sculpted image of Yoruk we can fashion.

At a young age, it was clear that Yoruk was not cut out for this trade. His first couple of years as a merchant were incredibly boring, consisting largely of selling and trading mashed potatoes. This is fairly typical behavior of mashed potato merchants. In this hackneyed lifestyle, Yoruk, himself a simple man, grew dissatisfied with his simple trade, his simple gods, his simple life. He was bored out of his mind with his job as a mashed potato merchant; for there was little use for Yoruk's keen ability to reason and deduce.

Seeking only truth, he prayed to the Implementors, and heard nothing. He did not take it personally. He understood that he was just yipple dung to them, a little man among little men. He spent most of his dreary, though secure, day in a catatonic stupor. "This can't be it!" were the last words anyone heard him say before he stormed out of Galepath's mashed potato district, flailing his arms wildly.

Bored into a frenzy, Yoruk fled to the shore and stared out at the Great Sea. It was an endless expanse whose boundaries had never been explored. What lay beyond the Great Sea? It seemed, to him, the only great mystery in the world worth solving. He decided to sail across the Great Sea in search of more stuff.

Yoruk began building himself a raft. He reasoned that if he tied a few pieces of wood together and held a large bed sheet up with a stick, the wind would carry him out to sea. He was not sure how he would bring himself back, but he reasoned that if he was unable to find anything of interest beyond the horizon, he would not have much interest in returning home anyway. He went home for just long enough to grab a saw, a bed sheet and a sack filled with as much mashed potatoes as he could carry, then headed into the forest to chop down a tree.

In the year 380, Yoruk pushed his raft out to sea. Two days later, his raft snapped and sank, spelling certain death for its aquatically-uninclined passenger. But as luck would have it, Yoruk did not perish. As he sank into the infinite depths, his hand latched onto a pliant, fleshy growth on the side of some larger body that was cruising by beneath the surface. Yoruk held on for dear life as the creature darted through the water, frequently rising to the surface and allowing Yoruk a chance to breathe. This went on for days, and through it all, Yoruk maintained his grip on the creature, but was never able to open his eyes and see what it was that he was riding.

Yoruk finally lost his grip and his consciousness before reaching any sign of land. But when he awoke after an indeterminate slumber, he was lying safely on an unknown shore. He had accomplished the feat of crossing the Great Sea and became the first Quendoran to set foot on Eastland soil. And in his hand he found a shard of an ivory-like substance that seemed to have broken off of some giant tooth. It was exquisitely smooth, as if it had been carved by hand in the shape of a dagger. He kept it, reasoning that it might be a useful thing to have.

Standing on the shore of the Eastlands, looking out at the water, Yoruk was quite pleased with himself. He had crossed the infinite sea. He had stretched the edge of his world by an incredible distance and answered an ancient question. But he was not content. There were still many more questions that needed answering. The scientists of Galepath had made bold attempts at defining the world of Zork, but none were to Yoruk's satisfaction. For example, if the world was indeed clinging to the surface of a giant coconut, why did the water of the Great Sea not fall off the side?<sup>15</sup> And if diseases were truly caused by so called 'germs' on his body, why did they not drown when he bathed?<sup>16</sup> Certainly, there was much more knowledge to be acquired.

But even here, he could find no door to the Heavens, no portals to the Planes of Atrii. Because of this, Yoruk found a small, damp cave beside a mountain in the region just south of what is today called Port Foozle, and made it his home. He hid himself inside the deep cave. During the day, he wandered the realm, pondering these questions as he hunted for food with the help of his trusty dagger. At night he slept safely in his cave.

One evening, just before going to bed, Yoruk heard a visitor enter his cave. He quickly doused his fire and crept into a corner. He watched the visitor step closer, and as it drew near, he was able to make out a faint silhouette. The visitor was of average height and build, but had two sharp horns protruding from its forehead, and had enormous, featherless wings attached to its back. Yoruk soon realized he was sharing his cave with a demon. Fortunately it seemed to have no knowledge of his presence. The demon passed right by him and continued deeper into the cave, faintly lighting the way with the reddish glow it emitted from its eyes.

As he crouched in his corner, Yoruk reasoned that the cave must be an entranceway into Hades, and if he quietly followed the demon, he might be able to gain access into the netherworld. He wanted to speak to the Devil, and also reasoned, that the Devil, being the Devil, would probably keep less exclusive company than the all-powerful Implementors, and would therefore be a pretty good source for the knowledge that he sought. And he was right.

He followed the sullen, lowly sod of a demon as it crept through the dark caves, gradually descending deeper beneath the surface world. The demon went down the forking forks, curving curves, and labyrinthine labyrinths that lead down into the Underworld—to Hell. Yoruk always kept a fair distance behind it and was careful not to make any jarring noises that might alert the demon to his presence. As they descended, Yoruk was led through

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<sup>15</sup> Yoruk was never one for long winded explanations. So when the Giant Coconut theory was explained to him, he apparently wasn't paying attention during the part about gravity.

<sup>16</sup> This question, as well, has since been deemed silly.

brehtaking caverns, gorges and canyons. They passed areas that were teeming with life of a strange and magical sort. But Yoruk could only pay quick notice to these things, because the demon kept a swift pace.

As they descended further, Yoruk noticed that the walls were gaining a reddish hue, and the heat was reaching a somewhat unbearable level. But he pressed on, driven by curiosity. When on the third day, the earth beneath his feet began to glow red-hot with fire, and the stench of sulfur pierced the air, Yoruk quite rightly assumed that he had finally reached the gates of the Underworld. As the demon quickened his steps, a broad stone door flung open – just for a moment – in the darkness. When the demon slipped past the doors, Yoruk caught upon his cloak and was pulled inside – the stone clanging shut just behind them. The air was so thick with black smoke that the Devil, Yoruk reasoned, could not be far off.

But in his path, demons of all sorts – larger and smaller, lesser and greater, wily and woolly-headed, pleasant and not – thronged towards the most immense demon of all. This totally horrific, fire-snarling, three-headed serpent-beast was a major demon, the grand demon of them all, the Great Daemon of the Threshold—surrounded by a great ring of infernal fire, stood between all Hell and the Lord of Lamentation himself.

The gates themselves stood directly behind a large ring of fire and directly in front of the Great Daemon of the Threshold. As Yoruk's demon – a lesser, melancholy sort – approached the Great Daemon of the Threshold, he reached into the sack it carried at his side and pulled out a large bronze, ruby shield. It lifted the shield and leapt through the ring of fire untouched, then through the gates and past the enormous, fire-snarling, three-headed serpent-beast known as the Great Daemon of the Threshold. But as the demon was hurrying through the ring of fire, Yoruk was astonished by this feat. Knowing full-well that it was beyond the meager skills that he had acquired as a mashed potato merchant to leap through a ring of fire, he simply stood in awe and lost his nerve. Yoruk let go of the Demon's cloak<sup>17</sup> with a yelp – he was burnt and fell to the ground. "Oh, ye with the faith of a hungus."

As he did so, an assortment of ghouls, monsters and other lesser demons circled around to heckle and jeer in anticipation of his fiery death. In a dazed stupor, Yoruk did not notice that they were closing in on him. He neglected to notice their presence at all, for that matter. It was not until the last moment, just before they began gnawing on his head, that he realized he had been spotted. Miraculously, Yoruk saw his chance to save himself from imminent incineration.

Seizing his opportunity, he swung his arms in all directions, inadvertently poking a giant hellhound in the eye and, in the process, releasing its vice-like grip on his cranium. He then blindly reached out and plucked a like bronze shield, stuffed with five brilliant red rubies, from the side of one of the careless lesser demons in the throng. After plowing through an assortment of drooling zombies with his shield raised, he plunged his way through the ring of fire unscathed. When the flames touched his shield, they fell to his side, dissipating into pungent black smoke.

Then he dashed through the gates of Hades and almost made it past the enormous, fire-snarling, three-headed serpent-beast known as the Great Daemon of the Threshold. When Yoruk came to his senses, he looked up and realized that the Great Daemon of the Threshold, anticipating his arrival, had stepped into his path and blocked him with its tremendous stomach. He lay on the steaming hot ground, at the Great Daemon of the Threshold's feet.<sup>18</sup> The Great Daemon laughed as Yoruk scrambled to his feet,<sup>19</sup> and it laughed when Yoruk pulled out the shard of a giant tooth that he had found in his hand on the shore of the Eastlands, but it did not laugh when Yoruk swiftly stuck the shard into its tremendous stomach.

The enormous, fire-snarling, three-headed serpent beast known as the Great Daemon of the Threshold flailed wildly for several minutes, partially out of pain and suffering, partially out of shock, and partially because it just enjoyed the melodrama of it all. Regardless, it eventually laid down, thoroughly dead. Thus, Yoruk, armed only with the simple blade of a simple merchant, slew the Great Daemon of the Threshold in his surprise.

Yoruk had no idea that Belegur had been watching his escapades all along, nor did he know that the Devil was actually quite reasonably amused. When the Great Daemon finally died, Belegur emerged from the shadows and brought him down to his lair, allowing Yoruk to form a warm relationship with him. The two got along splendidly

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<sup>17</sup> Bivotar's journal mentions that Yoruk let go of the "magical shield", not the "cloak" (some historians believe that he was holding on to both)

<sup>18</sup> It is not actually known if the Great Daemon of the Threshold had feet or, being a serpent-beast, balanced itself on a long, thick tail.

<sup>19</sup> It is well documented, however, that Yoruk did indeed have feet.

and became very good friends. In time, Belegur imparted his knowledge to Yoruk of certain arcane mystical secrets regarding the nature of the elements, and the forces that bound together the universe. This included the Great Mysterious of the Cosmos and an extended session on the topic of Deep Magic, one of the three kinds of magic that flows through the cosmos, and the one that is commonly linked to the dark ways of those who dwell in the underworld. Yoruk spent the rest of his life making good sense out of Hell.

## Chapter 2: The Latter Years of Zylon the Aged

It seemed to all that Zylon was surely a deity come to earth to live among the common folks. By all appearances he was a strong young man in the prime of his life, and he had looked this way for well over three-hundred years. There were courtiers at Largoneth whose grandparents' grandparents had served in Zylon's court during the first years of his reign. Even those who chose to speak ill of him remained hidden in cities far away, posing no threat to Zylon, who had weathered such talk many times in the past, and always came out better for it.

In his early days, Zylon the Aged was extremely procreative. As he got older, wife after wife kept dying on him, but through it all he managed to squeeze out but fourteen children.<sup>20</sup> Growing up in the castle, the children were spoiled and lazy, never engaging in marriage. Only two or three of the "ungrateful brats" gave him any grandchildren at all, and of those, only one kept the line alive. Poor Zylon outlived his last great-great-great-great (or something or other) grandson when he died in 382 GUE. The beautiful Elinear was the last girl which Zylon the Aged attempted to court. Having courted her great-grandmother in distant days, Zylon was overly concerned about the impropriety of the situation, and despite Hargood's urging for him to marry Elinear, he declined. Thus Zylon was left with no children, no heirs, no nothing. The bloodline was dead.

Towards the latter years of his life, the king's appointed council of five regents consisted of Zilbo Throckrod (Zilbo I), General Darborn Griffspotter, Hargood of Mareilon, Gladius Fzort, and Dinbar. When Zylon took time to visit remote parts of the kingdom, those five were always left in charge of the affairs of the state and the control of Largoneth Castle.

### Military Forces of Quendor

In the several hundred years since the Wars of Kar'nai and the Frobbish Revolution, the military forces of Quendor had dwindled almost to the point of non-existence. The remarkable longevity of Zylon the King had ensured a quiet prosperity and a sense of reassuring regularity. Although a distorted sense of tradition still led the kingdom's generals to arm a string of guardposts along the northern border in the unlikely event of renewed hostilities, General Darborn Griffspotter and his peers were truly nothing more than figureheads commanding a powerless force. The few naval battleships built so long ago had been put to work as fishing trawlers, and every available soldier of the Quendoran army that was not stationed along the northern border made a mind-bogglingly boring living guarding trade caravans from the fiendish, imagined raiders that might happen along every fifty years or so.

Nevertheless, the young men of Quendor still took a great pride in serving their land by joining the army. The gleam of armor and the pageantry of decorations and honors still held a great deal of appeal for the impressionable Quendoran youngsters. Many would-be soldiers traveled far bloits from their countryside homes to the nearest recruiting post, seeking an escape from the doldrums of life as wiskus-farmer in the Backbone Hills or as a Foo morgia-grower. None of these enthusiastic, bright-eyed soldiers had ever seen a violent loss of blood, much less a full-fledged battle. Even General Griffspotter, a die-hard veteran of the northern frontier posts, had to be counted as a stranger to the mysteries of war.

### The Plague and Great Famine (392-04-XX GUE)

Oracle of 392 placed Belegur at the heart of a deadly plague that shook the kingdom of Quendor. Coupled with famine, this was a deadly time. Mareilon groaned under the agony of food riots. The mayor gave a direct order to the city guards to curb the riots, only to find out later that they helped to instigate them. Even though the handful of remaining magicians of Quendor fused their powers together to defeat the plague and pestilence, the resulting tension between the mayor and the guards never successfully healed, and lasted even into the conflicts of 398 GUE.

Although the Great Famine in Quendor had been confidently dealt with by Zylon the Aged, those outside the kingdom, in the Kovalli Desert suffered greatly. This unceasing famine would plague those barren lands for over six

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<sup>20</sup> The only reference available on the genders of the children is a miscellaneous quote by Hargood of Mareilon in a book by Litbo Mumblehum, "...either eight bots and six girls, or the other way around."

years. Throughout the course of languishing under the torture of the drought, the Nezgeth tribe was under the superstition that their gods<sup>21</sup> had turned away from them, abandoning them to this famine.

### **Rise of Brogmoidism and the Great Zorkquakes**

How will you recognize the arrival of the evil one? I tell you now that three warnings will be given to mark the coming of this fallen angel. Even the great towers of the world will tremble in fear of his arrival, and the ground will quake. This is followed by the illness of an aged king. As the realm stands leaderless, no one gives the orders to face the invaders from a distant land. When these three signs have come to pass, be on guard, for he will seek possession of your soul.

-The Seventh Scroll of Kar'nai, Book Twelve

The days before the close of the fourth century saw the fulfillment of these words and the advent of the evil one. The tenets of Brogmoidism had been on a rapid rise since the beginning of the century. Before this religion's origination many had believed in the existence of the Great Brogmoid that supports the world upon his shoulders and that this being keeps us from falling into the Great Void, but the formation of this cult was composed of those who delved into idolatry by worshipping the beast itself. Prior to this time, no one is known to have seen these Great Brogmoids. The devout Brogmoidists were growing restless to worship it. Although no one knew how it could be reached, many embarked on pilgrimages in attempts to see it at the bottom of the world. All were in vain.

But in these years, the Great Brogmoid that held up this world grew sporadically restless. And by the time the year 398 drew near, the Great Brogmoid shook the world nearly half a dozen times within several weeks, a sign of the great changes to come. Many among the Mareilon populace were left homeless and in terrible debt by his destructive movements. A relief agency was formed solely to find those who were facing the worst of those difficulties, confiscate their property, sell its assets for the city's profit, and then slam the victims into debtor's prison. This was only one more burning cause for a revolution that was slowly cresting above the horizon.

### **The Schemes of Belegur**

As the initiation of Belegur's plans drew unto the time of fruition, he took residency within a secret lair deep beneath the earth, in what is today known as the Griffspotter Caverns, among many other names. The bitterness and frustration built up inside of him. His mind continually smoldered a need to return to his home, to the immortal Timeless Halls. The One had hidden the gateway from him for many ages, and his present physical body was not capable of transcending the route, but the Devil came to realize that the Sacred Scrolls of Fizbin held the knowledge he sought. The time required to prepare the gateway and translation spell were great. In the process, the first kindling of the spell would instantly alert Zylon the Aged to his presence, thus preventing him from completing the spell. Belegur knew that no earthly force could overcome a united Quendor behind King Zylon. Thus Zylon needed to be placed out of commission, and a distraction needed to be formulated to keep the remainder of the kingdom diverted.

The fallen Implementor's first attempt was Zylon directly. His mind reached to the king's many times, proving, searching for an entrance. The king was aware of this, fighting him off, but then forgetting about it—it was a curiosity and nothing more, and he found no need to mention it to anyone.

Instead, Belegur sought out Endeth Belzgar, a man who had served Zylon the Aged for years and was a loyal and true citizen of Quendor. The Devil's mental powers were great, and he had without much effort secured the services of this weak-willed servant, who easily bent to his machinations. At first when the voices began to talk to Endeth at nights, he had resisted. His thoughts were troubled and his dreams plagued with unspeakable images, but for awhile he retained his own will. Belegur would not give in and eventually Endeth gave way to the tormenting temptation.

Concurrently with the seduction of Endeth's heart, Belegur sought out others to conspire to his devilish plans. Hoping to acquire the Scrolls of Fizbin at the Galepath University Library, he attempted to lure the librarian Litbo

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<sup>21</sup> The gods of the Nezgeth were in fact pseudo-gods, including Savitri, the so-called sun god.

Mumblehum into his will, but he found that his heart was too pure; there were no stray thoughts that existed to feed Belegur who desired to have control over his mind. Instead he sent another minion for that purpose.

The next was the vicious tribe of Kovalli natives, the Nezgeth. He carefully would watch them until the proper moment.

The easiest one to weave into his plot was Zarfil. It was not even required for Belegur to interfere with this man's wicked desires. As the last and only descent of Prince Argonel of Mareilon, Zarfil from the house of Iligith knew that he was the rightful heir to the seat of power in Mareilon. The last three kings of Quendor were from Galepath, and thus Zarfil believed that no king would ever arise from Mareilon unless it was taken by force. He believed that Entharion had planned this from the beginning to ensure that for centuries to come his city of weaklings could continue to dominate over Mareilon by leading them to believe that they took part in an alliance of equals.

For many years, Zarfil had lived as a rogue, an outlaw, dwelling in the darkest districts of Mareilon, gathering the forces of the street gangs of the city. He planned to seize control of Mareilon, regaining power once held by his long dead ancestors. He had been lying in wait for years, plotting his rise to power. The fallen Implementor planned to place Mareilon under this man's thumb in order to force a bloody conflict with Zylon. All the provinces of Quendor and even Largoneth would be threatened by this man's power.

Thus all of the pawns were in place for Belegur's plan to regain entry to the Timeless Halls and challenge the Implementors that had wrongly banished him.

#### **Zarfil's Declaration of Rebellion (398-04-12 GUE)**

As a resident of the darker side of Mareilon, Zarfil grew up frequenting the illicit temples and shadowy ceremonies that most citizens turn away from in shame or fear. Many of Zarfil's friends in the Millucis paid homage not to the Implementors or some Great Brogmoid, the officially approved beliefs, but worshiped instead constantly hungry and demanding demons, including the fallen Implementor Belegur himself. Familiar with the forms of dark communion employed in those mysterious halls of worship, Zarfil had arrived at the conclusion that the best possible weapon in the struggle that lay ahead would be the force of dark magic. He allied with their leader Marboz, the strongest of the dark magicians he could find. These magicians paid homage to fallen Implementors and gladly received their powers of destruction from them, in exchange for being theirs to sacrifice.

In the many weeks leading up to the massive initial rally at the Beeblebrox Square, Zarfil had spent most of his time building up an impressive array of connections, a network of advisors and supporters all moving in unison to guarantee his victory over Hegilburg, the current mayor of Mareilon, and the hated city of Galepath.

Along with the leaders of the Nightwings, Zarfil was also able to convince the following influential people of Mareilon to join his cause. Hembiz, one who controlled all business that went on from day to day in the marketplaces. Poulizre, owner of one of the oldest and most influential printing presses in the city. Ezkinil, the present Chief Historian who could verify the ancestry of Zarfil to Prince Argonel beyond a shadow of a doubt. And Mimb, one of the Hellhound leaders. He also had several spies in both Mareilon and Galepath.

Unwilling to involve himself with the evil acts, Ezkinil had always protested the use of the magicians. He also found that the citizens of Mareilon would not be willing to support a revolution backed by demons and evil spirits. But Zarfil need every weapon available for the succession. The rebel leader found it unlikely that the local gangs could overcome their own inherent stupidity and hate for each other in time to form a viable fighting force. But knowing that the rest of Mareilon would not support him if they knew about the allegiance with the dark magicians, Zarfil decided to keep it a secret for the time.

Thus for several weeks, Zarfil worked in preparation for the final seizure of power. He kept the magicians away, granting them the autonomy to work entirely on their own. Even his own rebel soldiers were kept in the dark about the mysterious magicians, who worked in secret, isolated even from each other, toiling ceaselessly in creation of powerful spells that would destroy the opposition. Even though a truce managed to be formed between the Nightwings and the Hellhounds, transforming them from a criminal organization into a military force with a mission to attack Galepath, Zarfil did not dismiss the aide of Marboz.

Once preparations had been made, Zarfil set about to announce his lineage to all of Mareilon and to win its population over to his cause. He set the date of 12 Oracle, and hired the local printing guilds to work overtime publishing fliers and pamphlets of all kinds, often in defiance of direct orders from the city government.

No one in Mareilon knew exactly who was behind all the fliers, but it was suspected that some secret organization was working out of one of Mareilon's poorer districts. These new publications were almost never circulated near the houses of ruling class, but in the common markets and the back alleys, every wall was lined with posters that screamed out words of unrest. Initially, about three weeks ago, the posters had been few, and vaguely worded. As the days passed, more and more publications appeared, with each new set aimed at a different type of person. Some cried out against the miserable social conditions that existed in certain areas of Mareilon. Others, targeted specifically at the local religious communities, pointed out the multitude of ill-omens that have come from the gods over the last weeks. Then one night, without warning, all those posters were taken down and replaced with a simply worded proclamation: "Beeblebrox Square, 12 Oracle 398, Noon."

Thus that date was the most anticipated day for those gathered at Beeblebrox Square, and by the arrival of that morning, seemingly every man, woman and child in Mareilon had gathered there each with a different set of expectations. Be it religious prophet, revolutionary prince, or entertainment, everyone knew that something was indeed going to happen.

Zarfil marched into the square, with the highest powers of the Nightwings with him, including Hembiz, Poulizre, Ezkinil, and Mimb. The rebel leader announced his lineage from Prince Argonel of Mareilon. He publicly demanded the resignation of Mayor Hegilburg of Mareilon in favor of a regime that would bring about the immediate and unconditional succession from their league with Galepath and those who ruled from Largoneth. He additionally demanded the end of Mayor Umberthar Spildo's reign in Galepath as the only way to avenge that city's guilty deeds of having risen with Entharion against Mareilon. Zarfil threatened to march immediately against Galepath and destroy it. He also called for an end to the entire Kingdom of Quendor, declaring the unforgettable words, "The end of the Kingdom of Quendor is at hand."

Gradually the news of Zarfil's demands made their way to Galepath and even to Castle Largoneth itself. Belegur was pleased with the results.

### **Zylon the Aged is Poisoned**

A few well-placed suggestions and a mental nudge in the right direction, and the king's servant Endeth was now serving Belegur. The attempt to poison King Zylon the Aged was successful. Endeth had slipped Zylon a slice of bread with enough poison to kill off a dozen normal mortals. But the king's body was not a normal one, and it had fought off many sicknesses far worse than that. While the poison did not kill Zylon, it did weaken him significantly and he lost unconsciousness. It was Endeth who issued the report of Zylon's illness to the king's council of five, though he hid that he was the instigator.

In response, General Griffspotter, unwilling to see the country arise in panic over Zylon's condition, ordered the royal guard to seal off the castle to prevent the spreading of rumors. A group of physicians and magicians were summoned to the king's chambers, where one after another examined the king, unable to determine the cause of illness. All known healing techniques were tried, and even new ones were invented. His bowels were emptied out and cleansed from both ends, and they even dared to try bleeding him. All was futile. Even the meticulous search of Zylon's half-devoured meal had failed to turn up the most basic explanation, the court physicians being more skilled at treating bad paper-cuts than trying to cure their immortal king.

Several council meetings had been held. The members debated the wisdom of keeping the entire affair a secret, but Griffspotter's adamant argument to do so overshadowed the others. In fact, the general stationed half of the Quendoran army in the castle to prevent any word of the king's sickness from reaching the outside. Since Zylon had no heir, the five regents battled over who would be next in line. Until Zylon could be restored, or name the heir to the throne, these five were the rulers of Quendor.

### **Theft of the Sacred Scrolls of Fizbin**



As the illness struck Zylon, one of Belegur's minions made a successful attempt at stealing the Scrolls of Fizbin from the library of Galepath University. Dodging the campus security, breaking carefully into the library complex itself, and finding the works of Fizbin, all of these stealthy deeds were pristine. Showing a surprising amount of intelligence and initiative, the thief made way with several other documents to confuse those who would eventually try to pick up the trail and follow it back to Belegur's lair. These works included Entharion's "Sleeping Your Way to Power" and the second volume on the life of Mysterion the Brave. It was not until the morning after the poisoning of Zylon the Aged that Litbo Mumblehum, the librarian, discovered that these three works were missing.

Litbo's report of the disappearance of these scrolls was only one of two things that reached the ears of Mayor Spildo that day. For his emissary, Weaseldorf Foom, returning from Mareilon had brought news of Zarfil's declarations to end the union between Galepath and Mareilon. While the mayor had already this man to coordinate a search for Zarfil's spies in Galepath, Spildo suspected that it was Zarfil who had stolen the Scrolls of Fizbin, most likely to ransom control over the religious communities. But there was no evidence for these allegations. Not caring if Zarfil was the culprit or not, the mayor accused the rebel prince for the theft. This incident was used as an excuse to declare a decree for Mareilon to return the Scrolls. If the city was uncooperative in the arrest of Zarfil, force would be taken against Mareilon. There was no other way to avert a war.

The following fragment is all that survives of the edict issued from the desk of Spildo:

...and thus resolved that the continued allowance of Zarfil, a traitor to Quendor, to freely campaign against the city of Galepath constitutes aiding and abetting a criminal. Be it also resolved that the recent disappearance from the Galepath University Library of several priceless works, among them the Scrolls of Fizbin, can be nothing other than the vile work of Zarfil against our beloved city. It is proclaimed henceforth that the city-state of Galepath will employ any and all means necessary to ensure the recovery of its rightful property, and that if the criminal Zarfil is not apprehended and brought to justice, and the Scrolls returned to Galepath immediately, that the mayor of Galepath, Umberthar Spildo, officially authorizes the use of force against that city of traitors and criminals, Mayor Hegilburg's Mareilon...

### **The Nezgeth Tribe**

The sunrise of the same day which the Sacred Scrolls were discovered missing marked the end of the suffering of the Nezgeth tribe at the hands of the famine. For six years the holy priests had counted the sunrises, hoping and praying that they would survive to see the start of the seventh year. They believed a disaster of that duration could only have meant that the approval of the gods was no longer with them.

It is part of the Nezgeth tradition that the gods cannot forsake the tribe without granting one final gift of wisdom. To receive this wisdom is the purpose of the Brith-nel-fhet. This special ceremony, one of most powerful rites of the Nezgeth religion, was enacted to invoke the gods. For many years the occasion had never arose to enact it, but this was that time.

For weeks the priests had to ready themselves to enter into direction communication with their gods. Three of the tribe's highest priests entered a holy shelter, a dark cavern hollowed out of the sacred rock that marked the western boundary of the Nezgeth territory. With them prayed Ath-gar-nel, Warrior of the Nezgeth. He alone as the tribal chieftain had the power to act on the words of the gods. Though he had his own superstitious doubts about the reliability of the ceremony, he partook of it regardless. Thus the Brith-nel-fhet was enacted and completed, ending in the drinking of a potion that sent the four into a wave of unconsciousness.

When they awoke, new carvings graced the wall of the western side of the chamber. Where the previous engravings had ended on the left stood the newest symbol. It was a round pulsating object, clearly showing what they believed to be the pseudo-god Savitri's punishment upon the Nezgeth tribe. Then six notches in the wall represented the years of suffering, followed by the symbol for the Brith-nel-fhet ceremony itself. Further to the right stood a tall, fierce man, wearing the robes of the Warrior and facing his numerous opponents fearlessly, determined to vanquish them all. Then came many symbols, all crowded together in a very short span of wall. Voyage,

mountains, war, death, another great Warrior, the symbol for magic, and once, then again, then finally three times repeated, the compass rose with the eastern aim firmly grasping the spear of justice and retribution.

The pleased Ath-gar-nel was convinced that he understood the clear meaning of the symbols. No longer would the Warrior lead his peoples to the south for petty water squabbles with vicious natives. A new course had been decreed, toward victory, to the east. The Nezgeth prepared to redeem themselves, believing that the answer of penance lay in combat and the smiting of many cities and people.

The ignorant tribe did not realize that it had not been Eru, nor any of the recognized pseudo-gods that had answered the Nezgeth—they had been deceitfully lured into Belegur's plot. The Devil had witnessed the entire ceremony, coming across it by chance as he had cast his mind out throughout the world in search of whatever might be useful to his machinations. Determined to use the entire Nezgeth tribe to cause much suffering upon innocents and to distract the nation of Quendor, he had carved those symbols into the wall.

### **Seeking the Scrolls of Fizbin**

Hoping to retain Zylon's life for as long as possible, the magician Dinbar completed a Spell of Linking, which bound the king's soul to a magical orb rather than his body. This force provided Zylon with a certain amount of safety independent of any damage inflicted to his actual physical body. If the body did die, the orb would not keep his soul alive for more than a few weeks, but it would give a small safety cushion to fall back upon if needed.

In the meantime, Dinbar suggested that the legendary Pool of Stasis be sought out. While they were ignorant of its properties and location, they knew that by immersing the king within the pool, further permanent damage to his body might be averted. Details of this pool were written in the Scrolls of Fizbin. Thus Zilbo and Dinbar planned to seek Litbo Mumblehum in Galepath to inquire about them.

### **Zarfil is Summoned**

Once Mayor Hegilburg of Mareilon received word of Zarfil's rebellion, his head quickly was flooded with news of shadow conspiracies, inevitable revolutions, political convulsions, and numerous traitors in his midst. These tidings sparked his desire for action, resulting in a secret summoning of Zarfil to the Firestone Mansion.

Zarfil had planned this. He had played his cards just right, and he and his followers, including Poulizre and Ezkinil marched proudly into the Firestone Mansion. Zarfil boldly declared to the mayor that he would take control of the city one way or another no matter how long it took, and demanded that authority be passed to him. Zarfil never planned that the mayor would simply hand him the key to the city; this was the first stage of his scheme.

And, as expected, Hegilburg refused. The mayor would do everything to ensure that Zarfil would be hanged. Spitting in disgust, Zarfil walked out alive, assured that the mayor would never have him in his grasp again.

Zarfil had gathered quite a following in the Millucis district. He organized large mobs to instigate riots in the streets, robbing and beating anyone who got in their way. Buildings were set aflame, and the entire unified Nightwing and Hellhound gangs began their revolution against the Mareilon government.

### **The Nezgeth Raids Begin**

After the Brith-nel-fhet had uprooted the entire tribe and sent them marching to the east, the tribe made quick time covering the vicious Kovalli Desert and arriving at the western edges of the Mithicus Mountains. The long march to the mountains themselves had been surprisingly uneventful. As if aware of the peculiar destiny awaiting the Nezgeth, other Kovalli tribes had kept their distance, uneager to start a confrontation with such a powerfully obsessed leader as Ath-gar-nel. Er would be the first sacrifice to end the deadly six-year famine.

Over 300 families of Nezgeth gathered on the ridge. Ath-gar-nel was annoyed at the word of the weak Erfolk. He had hoped for a series of noble and glorious battles, the kind in which many of his strongest and closest friends would perish so that the gods would bring prosperity to the Nezgeth once again. Ath-gar-nel demanded minimum violence against the village, which in Nezgeth terms, still implied bringing a new standard of bloodshed to the Erfolk. As there was no need to risk the tribe's young blood in a confrontation as insignificant as this, the oldest males charged down the mountain first.

For the first time since the fall of Pheebor, the proud people of Er prepared for battle. But the brief moments were not enough. It would have taken an eternity for the people of that tiny village to ready themselves against the Kovalli hordes, for a dozen of the dark-skinned warriors were easily a match for the entire population of Er. The animals were the first to die. The children were ignored. The women were subjected to the most brutal forms of Nezgeth sexual wrath. And after the first wave of Kovalli invaders made short work of what little resistance was to be found, the rest of the tribe descended in a giant predatorial cloud onto the village. The Er provisions were raided and completely devoured. A dozen different campsites sprung up in the immediate valley area.

Of the Erfolk, a family managed to escape in a copse south of the village, and a young teenage girl managed to hide in an attic. Er still lived, but an Er only a twisted and misshapen caricature of its proud former self. The grandfathers were gone, beaten to death, leaving no one behind to tell the ancient and glorious, albeit quite distorted tales of Er's firm stand against the eastern fops from Borphée. In the years to come, the Er storytellers would never seem to be particularly truthful or precise about the details of the day. While Quendoran history as a whole would speak of a devastating series of battles that saw a Kovalli tribe called the Nezgeth come to dominate the entire countryside, Er natives subscribed to their own peculiar rendition of the events.

The Nezgeth continued eastward to hunt and pillage, burn and destroy until the gods spoke again, revealing that penance had been done. Three days later, the Nezgeth horde fell upon the river city of Foo. Rumors from the outlying villages had come just a few hours before the invaders themselves, giving enough time to call to arms. In some sense, Foo could have been considered lucky that it had a chance to mount such a defense. Given the final results of the battle, that kind of luck had not done much good for the city, and the end had come, perhaps later than it would have, but inevitably all the same.

For a few tense hours the inhabitants of Foo were able to mount an organized defense. The local hunting clubs and shipping hands banded together to block off certain key streets, hoping against hope to hold off the heavily armed invaders. Even the children of Foo showed a fierceness unfamiliar to the Nezgeth, except possibly from their own young. Gangs of alley-lurking Foo teenagers, too stupid to run in fear at the sight of painted warrior faces and gleaming stained spears, actually proved an annoyance to the distracted Nezgeth fighters. They were soon dispatched, however, and eventually the sheer bulk of the Kovalli numbers proved to be too oppressive for the makeshift platoons of streetfighters. The Foo boulevards filled with the tall, dark invaders from the west, running every which way, shouting their eerie, mysterious battle cries.

Its entire population certainly outnumbered the hostile newcomers, but the complacent city-dwellers provided no fair match for the Nezgeth, long hardened by years of vicious sun and unforgiving tribal warfare. They sacked the seat of local government, and wrecked the provincial temple, the most expansive and beautiful of its kind within 200 bloits. In the wide city streets, familiar taverns burned to the ground. This city was no Er, and the Nezgeth were pleased, even challenged by the striking differences in this, their second battle.

In the final tally, Foo had lost many surprised, defenseless inhabitants, normal people who had just that morning been feeling normal feelings, thinking normal thoughts. Boredom with life, satisfaction in a caring marriage, ambition for a successful promotion, all of these things and more found themselves suddenly cut short by the unexpected Nezgeth visit.

When the Nezgeth tribe neared the river itself, its effect on the desert people was profound. None had ever seen a well or desert oasis deeper than knee height before. The thought of a powerfully immense flow of water that could swallow the entire tribe without a trace was frightful. Some of the more religiously inclined Nezgeth immediately concluded that a new god was at work here, a god wholly unknown in the desert lands. The rest of the tribe simply backed away from the flowing water in fright, vowing never to even get near, much less cross something so completely foreign.

This fact did not go unnoticed by Ath-gar-nel, who had remained aloof from the fighting. As the day progressed he became aware of an odd desire to ensure that his blade remained unbloodied. Wandering the strange streets before him, he peered intently at the new sights, wondering at the magnificent people that had built such foreign works of beauty. He loathed the thought of killing these people.

The conquest did not halt with Foo. Bilbug and Termum followed the first two; all reeled from the unexpected and senseless invasion. The final region they would come to was the Jerrimore Plains.

### **Belegur Receives the Scrolls**

Belegur, at his secret lair in the Griffspotter Caverns, poured over the precious Scrolls of Fizbin. He confirmed his presumptions that the magical procedures, the ceremony that would be necessary to allow his return to the Timeless Halls, would be an extremely time consuming one. Weeks of focusing all his mystical energy and putting it to use in the way described by the Scrolls would send huge ripples, psychic shock waves raging throughout the world. Such disturbances would surely not go unnoticed, even by the petty amateur magicians surrounding Zylon at Largoneth. And as long as Zylon still lived, even unconsciously, Belegur felt the possibility for failure still existed.

Providing specific instructions to the castle servant, Belegur gave Endeth knowledge of the secret underground caverns that had become his dwelling place. If the servant proved unequal to the task of killing the king, he would be useful here, with him and his gathering army of mortals.

Though Belegur had incited the Nezgeth warriors on their slaughter, he had not anticipated how perfect the timing of the invasion would turn out to be. Already, several villages in the southlands had lay devastated by the onrushing swarm of desert soldiers, and even now they were heading on a course that would be very beneficial to Belegur. It was only a matter of time before they stumbled upon the boiling violence in Mareilon. Manipulate the conflict in just the right way, and the Nezgeth would pose a very real threat to the Kingdom of Quendor. Even if this "Prince" Zarfil failed him, and even if the king remained alive, the Nezgeth would march on inexorably to the north and east, until their odd sense of religious penance had been satisfied. In fact, Belegur planned to become the Nezgeth's chief deity and they would be his to command.

His pursuing of the scrolls also revealed the locations of the cubes of foundation. As he sent his servants out across the land, it became clear that several of the cubes were no longer in their recorded resting places. One, long hidden in the Eastland's powerful peaks, had been found by a daring adventurer and carried back across the sea, leaving an easily discernible trail of rumor and legend. Belegur had followed the tales concerning this cube with great care until all news had run out at the base of the Mithicus Mountains. Now, he was pleased to discover, it seemed that after hundreds of years of travel, after barter and thievery and all sorts of improbable deeds, the cube in question had wound up in the unopened sacred pouch of an obscure Kovalli chieftain. And now, that pouch was in the hands Ath-gar-nel.

The greed and manipulation of Galepath's mayor would play well against the rising fortunes of Zarfil, the renegade descendant of royalty. And most intriguing were the possible future lives of this General Darborn Griffspotter, and the webs of manipulation that stemmed outward from his great temptation to possess the throne.

### **To Galepath**

While Zilbo and Dinbar prepared for their departure to the Galepath University, preparations were made for the trip to wherever the Scrolls of Fizbin would reveal that the Pool of Stasis lay, while General Griffspotter dispatched orders to Quendoran garrisons in the north, bringing in several armed units to accompany and protect the king wherever he might be taken. Gladius Fzort had been hesitant to let the two go to Galepath, mostly worried that with Zilbo's stabilizing presence gone, Griffspotter might make use of a perfect opportunity to take control. Refusing to be hindered by the concerns of Gladius, Zilbo and Dinbar left for Galepath. The travelers did not leave by the front gates, by rather by the magical power of Dinbar's soul as they were teleported directly to the university library.

Litbo Mumblehum informed the two that the Scrolls of Fizbin had been stolen. Zilbo returned to Largoneth, while Dinbar stayed behind with Litbo to see if any more information could be found within the library detailing the location of the Pool of Stasis.

### **Rebellion in Mareilon**

Throughout the streets of the Millucis district and all of Mareilon, the paranoid power-wielder that ruled the Firestone Mansion had issued a blank check to his personal militia, an order to track down Zarfil and all of his supporters any way possible. House to house searches began, bringing slaughter to any who would resist. Zarfil's forces fought back in their own way, dodging the militia and disappearing through secret alleys familiar only to

them and their kind. Once again the city government stormed into the Millucis, this time not with the intent to reform but with pressing urgency of halting a budding revolution.

Every Mareilon native living through those days of rioting and guerilla violence would carry potent images with them until their last days. Fires lit in the night would burn unforgettable in the eyes of those watching from a safe yet ever frightening distance. The old men and women hobbling down the streets of their youth would jump nervously in a twisted harmony with the beating rhythm of running feet falling in the darkening night. For some it was a joyous time.

Years later, the one-time street lord named Gezlin would look back with pride on the days of revolution, ignoring its eventual consequences, including the battle that would almost claim his own life. Within hours of discovering that his gang had signed a truce to ally with Zarfil's forces, Gezlin's enthusiasm and excitement carried him to the front line for his new master. Well established and boasting many connections with the discontented youth of the city, Gezlin proved a major factor in recruitment, winning over hundreds to the cause that had so possessed his soul.

Almost immediately it became clear that the edge belonged to Zarfil. He had seized the element of surprise with his massive initial rally and had not slackened his pace since that first day. The city government had at first no idea how to react to his threats, and when they finally took the first necessary steps, they did so only to find that most of the city was openly against them. The mysterious lack of any kind of authority or news coming out of Largoneth coupled with several years of worsening poverty in Mareilon had made the moment ripe for Zarfil. Eager to find someone to blame for their misfortunes, the locals fell easily into the rebel corner. The city government and the relatively innocent but conveniently distant metropolis of Galepath bore the brunt of the peoples' hatred.

Every corner filled with the random products of destruction. Stores raided and completely gutted stood next to ever-vacant lots now filled with piles of burning debris.

Overlooking the dirty city of Mareilon from high atop the Backbone Hills, hundreds of Zarfil's supporters had met to plan the violent seizure of power. Almost immediately after the first outbreak of rioting, the renegade prince had given the order to disperse and reassemble a short distance outside the city. His strategy was a simple one. The city militia, unaware of Zarfil's presence in the hills, would scour the Millucis from floor to ceiling trying to find him and his followers, while encountering stiff resistance from the usual innocent bystanders.

A miracle of speed and organization, the rebels had already organized and divvied up the rag-tag band into well-structured brigades, each with a different task leading towards the "liberation" of Mareilon. Once the call to battle had been given, one unit would storm the already battered Millucis, carefully arranging several more spontaneous uprisings and demonstrations of loyal affection to Zarfil. Word from his inside sources had told the rebel leader that most of the city militia had itself reached the breaking point. Many of the young men making up the mayor's police force had come out of the Millucis in hopes of working their way to a better life. Being ordered to ransack the streets of their childhood stirred a great deal of discontent among the ranks. One aspect of the rebel plan called for storming the guard headquarters and imprisoning the highest ranking among that city militia. Without senior officers to give orders, the militia might then be persuaded to join Zarfil's ranks against Mayor Hegilburg. Even if that aspect of the plan fell through, the bulk of the rebel force would already be storming the Citadel itself, opposition too scattered and distracted by the other areas of fighting.

### **Upstart at Largoneth**

At Largoneth Castle many roamed the hallways in search of answers to the questions that had arisen so unexpectedly. Along with the sudden illness of the love and respected King Zylon, there were disturbing rumors from the south, of civil unrest and foreign invaders, as well as Zilbo's news of a looming war between Galepath and Mareilon.

Zilbo had stood up immediately, arguing with General Griffspotter against any kind of military interference. The royal Council of Quendor, a usually peaceful and calm kingdom, suddenly found itself in the midst of more action than any of its members could recall. At the conclusion of the conference it was agreed upon that if these issues were not settled at the end of three days, Griffspotter was free to march and fight all he wanted. Until then, the army would wait.

While wandering the castle of Largoneth that night, Zilbo happened upon a bizarre supernatural ritual in Endeth's bedchambers. The servant's demonic ritual also engulfed Zilbo. And when it had resided, he fled. He was too disturbed at first to relay what he had seen to his comrades. But later it came out. And he told others to keep an eye on Endeth and report all his doings.

### **Raiding the Mareilon Citadel**

The Mareilon Mayor Hegilburg had spent the better part of a sleepless night resting uncomfortably in his office's hard rosewood chair, nervously absorbing the various intelligence reports that gradually leaked in from beyond the Citadel walls. The simple truth that a number of Millucis homes had been struck by arson spread through the interlacing networks of word-of-mouth communication that gradually inflated the story into the epic proportions that reached the mayor's ears: the entire city would soon be up in blazes, or in fact already lay in ashes.

Three different reports left Hegilburg with three different figures describing the size of Zarfil's rebel forces, the last of which was several times the population of Mareilon itself. As the Citadel was the most defensible place in the city, the mayor hoped that from there the rebels could be held off until sunrise, when they would have enough visibility to gain the upper hand.

A few minutes later the lieutenant left the mayor's office for the last time, hurrying away from that place of dust and stagnation towards the front lines of battle, bestowed with Hegilburg's task of mustering the city militia for a final defense. The mayor would never know the outcome of his mission. In the half hour that the messenger had needed to run from his unit's entrenched position in the Millucis to the inner Citadel, and back again, the flow of battle had grabbed his unit forcefully and cast it aside like so much useless driftwood. His command nowhere to be found, the lieutenant would run back and forth through the darkened, confusing Millucis street corners, retracing his steps countless times in hopes of finding a force long since scattered and broken.

Ordering the Citadel guards away from the building's front doors, the Mayor assembled them all in the outer hallway leading to his office. They would be his company, his own personal armor in the surreal deathwatch that he insisted on enacting. He stole much of the city's wealth before attempting to flee the Citadel to Largoneth with his closest advisor Eeble.

As the nighttime battle for the streets of Mareilon grew more and more desperate for the city militia, it became clear to them that Zarfil had been much more powerful than they had anticipated. A shrewd player, the one-time rope salesman had been determined to keep his greatest card a secret, holding it in reserve until the decisive moment.

The renegade prince himself lingering a safe distance behind the lines of the fiercest fighting, he watched the magical havoc wreaked by his powerful allies (those who worshipped demons). He had not known what to expect from the dark mages, but come the night of the battle, he was favorably impressed.

One by one, over half the city's fighting force had been *blinked* out of existence by these evil wizards. Panic had run through many of the militia units as young men already unwilling to fight saw their life-long friends disappear before their eyes. Some units however had been spared the devastation.

There was almost no resistance along the eastern half of the marketplace. The special guard for that area had backed themselves into a warehouse and camped there for the night. When they were found in there, they surrendered almost immediately. Mayor Hegilburg had escaped only a few minutes before they arrived.

Zarfil entered Mareilon's Citadel at dawn. The long night battle lay behind him and victory had been won. He sat in the same chair that Mayor Hegilburg had vacated only several hours before. Mareilon belonged to him. But this was just the beginning. All of Quendor lay before him for the taking.

### **The Day After**

That afternoon, a proclamation had already gone up around the city of Mareilon:

A general warrant has been issued for the interrogation and arrest of all those citizens known to be in the employ of the outlaw regime of former mayor Hegilburg. All engaging in trade and/or military espionage with the city of Galepath and the Kingdom of Quendor are declared to have

forfeited their rights and property to the state. All citizens discovered giving aid and shelter to the enemies of Prince Zarfil and the city of Mareilon do so under the penalty of death. The Rulers of the Citadel have spoken.

House to house searches began in the large luxurious halls to the north of the city. One particularly lucky patrol group did a little bit more than find one of the mayor's advisors. Near the northern gate, on the road just inside the city walls, they found the mayor himself. Barely twelve hours had passed since Hegilburg had trembled in fright, listening to the aborted midnight chimes. With just enough time for a brief stop-over at the Mareilon coffers, Hegilburg had sneaked out of the Firestone Mansion through the rear supply entrance at nearly the same time Gezlin and his troops marched from the bell tower into the mansion's massive front doors. Dodging from house to house with only his friend Eeble for company, the mayor managed to avoid the patrols quite successfully until his urgent desire to reach the gates brought him out into the open just a moment too soon, and he was captured.

Storming with energy, he drafted another public notice, this time detailing Hegilburg's crimes against the city of Mareilon. Trial proceedings were brought against the former mayor the next day. A formal charge of treason was announced, and the jury handpicked from among Zarfil's Millucis revolutionaries. The outcome of the trial was never in doubt. Former mayor Hegilburg died at the scaffold early the next morning.

Ezkinil had been downright opposed to nearly every move Zarfil had made since the initial rally. The rebel leader was determined to make an example. Ezkinil would not be seen in Mareilon again. His disappearance and subsequent rumored death were by no means unique. Nearly every city employee, from the most hated tax collector to the menial stablehands, fit the description of those covered by Zarfil's arrest warrant. Baffled old Citadel janitors were hauled off and thrown into the same cell as the mayor's personal advisors.

### **Litbo and the Scrolls of Kar'nai**

Having observed the signs taking place among the kingdom, the Scrolls of Kar'nai were beginning to take on a very real meaning for Litbo. A fallen Implementor meddling in human affairs. Quaking of the earth's crust. Civil unrest. Mysterious invaders from a long-forgotten empire. And most compelling of all, the sudden illness of an aged king. The Great Brogmoid had given the first sign, shaking the world in warning of the events to come.

### **Largoneth Marches on Mareilon**

Meanwhile the king's illness and the disturbances in Mareilon provided adequate distractions while Endeth made his way unmolested to Belegur's lair with the secrets that would give him power over all of creation. Spies of Zilbo followed Endeth as far as the nearest village to the south of Largoneth, but he did not go anywhere near any of the stores or other buildings. Finally they made a move to grab him, but his entire body blinked, then he was gone.

General Griffspotters had finally won his own personal battle, securing the permission of the other council members to march on Mareilon as soon could be arranged. Orders had gone out the night before and now a small contingent of Quendor's token army lay encamped at the base of the Lonely Mountain, just around the bend from the castle itself. Those gathered were 209 from the Lingolf Garrison, the closest military unit. These were all that he found necessary to quell the Mareilon rebellion.

The general had also sent word by messenger to some of the forts scattered along the Long Road and the northern frontier, as well as the coastal units closer to Mareilon. But it would be few days before they received their marching orders and caught up with the Lingolf Garrison, but they would soon have quite a formidable number on their side to secure the city of Mareilon. Their latest reports out of Galepath showed that the mayor there was also preparing to move against Zarfil.

Dinbar teleported Litbo to Largoneth, who arrived just prior to the army's departure. Litbo explained to them about the intentions of Belegur that they had discovered in the library books. It was then that they knew that Endeth had been under the power of Belegur. Endeth was ordered to be tracked down, while Zilbo and Litbo marched with Griffspotter and the army south.

### **Dinbar Seeks an Audience**

Right after he had teleported Litbo, Dinbar went over to the Galepath city hall and received an audience with Umberthar Spildo. He told him that he was on a royal mission on behalf of Zylon the Aged and had orders to prevent the Galepath militia from marching against Mareilon. He nodded and thought about it for a few minutes, then had Dinbar thrown in the bowels of the dungeons. He made the initial preparations to cast a spell to leave, when a guard walked in bringing a meal. It did not take much effort for him to figure out that Dinbar had been preparing a spell. After that they had someone on him day and night. He was not able to concentrate enough to find his own magical powers, and wasted away one of the darkest weeks in his life. It would not be until Zarfil and the mayor were killed by the Nezgeth invasion that the magician would be set free.

### **Galepath Marches on Mareilon (part 1)**

The mayor of Galepath had indeed acted on his threats, undeterred by Dinbar's attempts at persuasion. Ordering the Galepath city militia to march, they had headed out to Mareilon ostensibly to recover the priceless Scrolls of Fizbin from the "thief", the self-appointed Prince Zarfil. Knowing that a successful campaign would improve his chances for reelection, the mayor also entertained thoughts that defeating Zarfil would earn him great recognition from the royal government at Largoneth, perhaps even knighthood, or the title of lord.

Nevertheless, Spildo remained a complete stranger to military strategy, and his efforts so far had been marred with failure. Ordering his troops due south from the Galepath city gates, he quickly realized that he actually had no true sense of where Mareilon in fact was. After several lengthy and heated discussions with his advisors, the army finally arrived at a reasonably accurate marching plan, but only after the delay cost nearly a day of marching time.

### **Endeth's Flight**

While en route to the Griffspotter caverns, Endeth was given a vision, filled with memories of a royal bedroom and a prone figure of great age. Near the bed, resting on its fragile wooden stand, a small crystal orb barely the size of a human fist hummed in weak resonance to the sound of Zylon's fading soul. The man on the bed stirred, tossing violently in his sleep. Arising suddenly, he came awake and looked directly at Endeth. The king's features were filled not with hate or anger, but sympathy and forgiveness.

The fleeing servant was later found by Zarfil's scouts in the forests asleep, who apprehended and brought him before both the prince and Gezlin. Marboz's mind-probes found him to be a servant of a fallen Implementor. Endeth's mind had been so futilely unprepared for contact with Belegur that it was killing him.

### **Galepath Marches on Mareilon (part 2)**

The march to Mareilon had been delayed once again for the Galepath armies. For the mayor himself had been taken ill, apparently experiencing a painful reaction to the switch from rich city food to spartan military fare. The highest ranking militia lieutenants, uncertain how to proceed without the instructions of their leader, milled about camp aimlessly, delaying the order to march. As dark came on the previous night, tents had been set up in a convenient clearing, near a stream running from steep, ridged hills to the east. These were the Jerrimore Plains, of which lands had belonged to that clan for centuries, and the abandoned Jerrimore Estate which no one dared to venture near.

Unbeknownst to any at the campsite, someone did still live in that ancient place. Staring out at the newcomers, a mind angry and resentful at the intrusion worked secret magical spells that wove themselves among the sleeping soldiers that night. Many would wake the next day filled with memories of discomfiting dreams. Several even ran screaming through the camp hours before the break of dawn, frightened by some mysterious intrusion into their thoughts. Disrupted by the dark images that had invaded the hours of sleep, many soldiers grumbled openly, speaking out against the foolishness of naked aggression against Mareilon. One even suggested that the only reasonable choice was to turn back while they still had a chance.

### **The Battle of the Jerrimore Plains**

Several days later, little progress had been made of Zarfil's armies toward Galepath. The Millucis gangs, familiar with little more than their own back alleys, were unaccustomed to long marches laden down with camping and



military equipment. Zarfil's frustration at the slow progress was tempered by the intelligence that Spildo's own armies lay encamped a mere three bloits in the distance.

As the hours moved on and the sun approached its highest point in the day, the Galepath army still had no decisive course of action. Looking apprehensively to the east, Spildo's men caught the first fleeting gleams of metal as Zarfil and his forces filled the ridge above them.

A cry went up throughout the camp as it sunk in that they had been caught unawares, surprised by the realization of Zarfil's threats. Several lieutenants immediately issued the call to arms, only to have the order countermanded in the heat of confusion. Restless soldiers raced for their arms, but the camp was in chaos, men separated from their units, leaders unable to find their commands. Guards from the southern periphery of the camp returned with even darker news, mysterious frantic reports of the much larger Nezgeth force arriving from the forests to the south. The Galepath commander, unaware of the origin of this second army, accounted it to Zarfil, and wondered how he had known to attack from two different sides.

The call to arms was given again, this time in a hurried rush to throw defenses of any kind against the southern edge of the camp. Trees and undergrowth stirred and the wind carried a hideously foreign battle cry as the Nezgeth grew closer.

On the ridge above, unaware of the news that caused the disruption in Spildo's camp, Zarfil drew led the charge down the hill to give battle with the enemies from Galepath. As the Mareilon tide swept down the hill, the Galepath militia hesitated, their attention divided by two different conflicts. With no guidance and no battle experience, much of the force broke in panic and ran, hoping perhaps to find shelter in the distant house or the forest beyond.

As Zarfil's forces streamed down from the eastern ridge, the dark-alley Hellhounds and Nightwings launched themselves upon the firm right flank of the Nezgeth invader. No one had ever actually been to the hated city of Galepath, and it would be some time before the rebel army would realize that the Nezgeth warriors were not Galepath natives.

The massive tide of clashing humanity soon fragmented and broke into clusters of heated action separated by ever-shifting barriers, marked by the motionless fallen. Separate militia units in Zarfil's makeshift army split away from the main group, moved by the momentum of thousands of different individual points of combat. The one Nezgeth spear that hit home on the far southern side of the field created a few square feet of vacuum as the companions of the Mareilon target backed away and regrouped to find another point of attack. Their retreat inadvertently forced the hand of an isolated band of Nezgeth encroaching behind them. The resultant hasty motion sent a ripple across the eastern edge of combat, forcing the Mareilon rebels nearly halfway back up the ridge.

Umbertar Spildo of Galepath made a desperate attempt to shake off his worsening stomach illness to guide his troops. Leaving his tent at the first sound of conflict, Spildo planned to muster the army to his side with one trumpet blast and throw back the invading barbarians. But the trumpet note lurched and died mid-breath, the trumpeter stabbed from behind by a Nezgeth blade.

Spildo soon found himself surrounded on three sides by the forces of the onrushing horde. Separated from the bulk of his force, which had been drawn off into a vicious melee farther to the west, Spildo stood with only his own personal group of guards to prevent the fatal wound that would inevitably get through. Looking desperately for a way to avoid the crushing grip of the surrounding force, he took the only option available, shifting away from the three-sided advance and backing even farther into the center of the battlefield.

Zarfil soon felt the irresistible tugging, the pull that guided him towards the center of the Jerrimore Estates. Mayor Spildo continued his desperate retreat, moving within feet of Zarfil and his men.

Fiery and elated Nezgeth warriors continued to tighten their grip on the Quendoran armies, using their sheer numbers to divide the defenders, preventing any effective counter-attack. More and more of the Galepath army began to make a final attempt at retreat towards the western edge of the clearing, filling that edge of the battle with a growing calm. A few Nezgeth warriors broke off from the main group to clean up the stragglers, while the bulk of the invading army continued to circle around and engage the Mareilon militia.

Even the strongest of the Hellhounds began to succumb to the overwhelming Nezgeth pressure. Short street knives and leather tunics were no match for the viciously barbed spears sported by the Kovalli natives. One by one, Zarfil's own guards fell to the ground, leaving the rebel prince open to any who would attack him.

The day had begun with the two armies of Spildo and Zarfil marching inexorably towards civil war. All thoughts of hatred between Galepath and Mareilon long forgotten, the defenders soon found themselves collapsing in fatigue, while the advancing hordes seemed to be further invigorated with each successive skirmish. Both Zarfil and Spildo, standing together side-by-side, both met their simultaneous end at the hands of the Nezgeth warriors. The two armies of the two proud, ancient cities, had suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth.

### **The Armies of Largoneth Arrive at the Jerrimore Plains**

In pursuit of Endeth, General Griffspotter had changed the course of the march of the army many times so that Zilbo and his librarian friend might capture the servant and find their way to Belegur to regain the Scrolls of Fizbin. Their final march ended at the edge of a forest, which they found had been devastated. It was evidence that a large scaled force had passed by headed westward to Galepath just hours before. Griffspotter urged his soldiers forward, determined not to waste a single moment of daylight. 200 Quendoran soldiers tore through the forest in search of their goal.

The royal army spilled out of the forest's western edge onto the ridge just above the Jerrimore Estates. They had expected to find at most several dozen drunken Mareilon rebels ready to be whipped into shape at the slightly verbal threat. But not even one dozen of the Mareilon force still lived in the valley below, but the ground was fresh with bodies of many times that number. The civil war had already come and gone, the royal army merely late entries in a finished game.

Standing victorious over the entire battlefield were the Kovalli natives. The Nezgeth banded together on the field below, awaiting the inevitable charge from the Quendoran soldiers. The royal force was to be split in half, one hundred men waiting on the highest point of the ridge, to advance only if the first attack proved a failure. Zilbo reluctantly agreed to head the reserve force, allowing himself the fleeting hope that a victorious Griffspotter would save Zilbo from leading his men into battle. Griffspotter began the cautious march down the ridge to the Jerrimore Estates.

So that the men of the Quendoran royal army might arrive in the valley all at once, the order had been given to disperse the marching columns and have the soldiers proceed down the hill abreast of each other, a long thin line stretched across the horizon. In the middle of the line and just slightly ahead of the rest strode the general, accompanied on either side by one of the force's several trumpeters and the Largoneth standard bearer. As the approaching force arrived at the base of the hill, the watching Nezgeth warriors silently arranged themselves in a similar formation, a parallel line just as long but several times as deep making its way across the scarred meadow.

Griffspotter's army drew close. The two lines stared at each other over an ever-lessening distance, neither enemy leader quite willing to give the order to charge. Neither leaders saw the lone Nezgeth warrior ready his bow, the arrow piercing the general's chest and killing him.

The Nezgeth chieftain whirled in anger, seeking out the lone archer. At the sight of the arrow hurtling toward the general, several of the Kovalli tribe had edged into motion, ready to run at the enemy at the sound of the order. Looking at their leader in surprise, it soon became apparent that no order would be given.

From atop the ridge, a single trumpet blast called out to the Quendoran army. Zilbo commanded for them to retreat up to the ridge. The only hope now lay in regrouping and hoping to last long enough to greet the arrival of the reinforcing units from the far north. The soldiers of Largoneth in the field below heard the lonely sound of the trumpet but sound not answer its call.

Across the small gap that separated the two armies, Ath-gar-nel began spitting out orders at a furious pace. Again and again, several clusters of the Kovalli tribe broke loose and headed towards the royal army. Each time the Warrior held them back. For he knew that to fight again on that day would be unholy, a blasphemy against the gods, to try their patience. Soon the entire Nezgeth force waited peacefully.

The royal army, smaller now by one, reassembled on the ridge according to Zilbo's order. With the death of Griffspotter, Zilbo had been thrust into command of the Quendoran royal army. Ath-gar-nel walked just within earshot of Zilbo and his company, crying out in a tongue foreign to them, all save Litbo (he had studied a variant of their dialect many years ago). When Litbo conversed with the Nezgeth leader in his own tongue, Ath-gar-nel assumed them to be "The Fathers from the East."

Using Mumblehum as a willing intermediary, Zilbo managed to convince the Nezgeth Warrior to abandon his worship and join in conversation. Convinced he stood in the presence of the physical incarnation of generations of tribal legend, the Ath-gar-nel introduced himself haltingly and begged forgiveness for the ignorant attacks against the sacred Fathers from the East. Zilbo was more than willing to oblige.

While the leaders of both armies consulted, the royal army and the Kovalli tribesmen worked together at the task of gravedigging. The work had been going on for some time and now the Estates were gradually being restored to their former state. At first the Nezgeth had been hesitant to help in the work, almost none of their dead being counted in the number. However, Ath-gar-nel had insisted; they had slain the holy men from the east, and to dig their graves would be only fitting recompense for the misdeed. During the process, the Nezgeth captured Endeth.

Ancient prophecies told the Nezgeth that their goal lay deep underground, in caverns near the coast. Litbo realized that these Nezgeth were the ones who had been spoken in the Scrolls of Kar'nai and that Belegur could not be defeated without the help of a 'desert tribe.' He also realized that this prophecy describing Belegur's lair as "a deep underground cavern where a river spills to the sea" matched with what the Nezgeth spoke about the cavern.

### **March for Belegur's Lair**

The captain of the Lingolf Garrison, well versed in the geography of Quendor's outlying areas, informed Zilbo of a fairly significant river that flowed to the sea not far to the south of the Jerrimore Estates, just a few day's journey away. Satisfied, Zilbo turned to east, in the direction of the Great Sea, and began the march.

After days of hiking over proud hills and through ancient forests, the two armies finally reached the Great Sea. After several days of tramping through dank marshes and sinking sand dunes with absolutely no fruitful results, he finally concluded in frustration that they had absolutely no idea what they were doing. In disgust, he waved his hands and gave the order to pitch camp right where they stood, at the base of a large hill just to the south.

For several days they had followed a wide westward detour, forced by the tricky marshlands along the coast into completely unfamiliar territory. The last half of the afternoon had been particularly arduous, not only physically but mentally as well. On earlier days, the going had been relatively cheerful for numerous bloits, the sunlit trees filled with many carelessly chirping birds to lighten the mood, the sea and beachlands a short, pleasant walk to the east. Then, without warning, the entire landscape had changed. The trees became sickly and twisted, a mocking caricature of the way a real forest should be. Gradually, all undergrowth disappeared entirely, replaced by barren ground of a not entirely healthy color.

It was then that Belegur completed the first stage of the gateway to the Timeless Halls. From the very center of the bowels of his lair, a shimmering tunnel of blue light stemmed up and outward from a flickering gem that resonated with the magic forces filling the room. The pillar itself flattened out vertically as it approached the cavern's ceiling, disappearing into the earth above only to reappear as a vision in the night sky. Above ground, south of the confederate armies, they saw the massive, impenetrable column arising, just over the top of the nearest hill. It soared with a crackling glow from the ground, surging upwards towards the heavens in one continuous strand of light. It had the circumference of a fair-sized lake.

Zilbo commanded the men to be lined up to advance over the hill. Nearly half an hour later, the party found themselves at the base of the strange column of light. The mysterious river referred to in Litbo's prophecies had been no more than a few hundred yards away from the campsite.

Endeth began to feel the call of Belegur once again. In a massive spasm of strength, he threw away the arms of the careless Nezgeth captors and broke into a run. He entered a dank, hidden hole leading into the side of the hill.

An elder of the Nezgeth gifted Zilbo with a sphere made of some unknown material, that when the foreigner placed his hand over the top of the sphere it flashed in an explosion of bright white light. As the old man backed away, his task completed, the glow from the object calmed, settling down to a steady stream that bathed the entire hillside in warm, cheery light.

The Lingolf garrison remained behind to guard the tunnel's entrance while the Nezgeth followed Zilbo and the librarian boldly into the tunnel in search of what lay within. Deep and deeper they went, into the inky blackness of Belegur's tunnels. They came to junction after junction, and each stretch of passageway was filled with side corridors and nearby rooms, as the explorers entered a more and more complex, self-contained universe. Eventually

they spilled into a mammoth cavern filled with the same blue glow as the column. Amid the chaos of the underground, was scattered reading material and piles of fading scrolls and massive tomes, as well as an ornamental knife. And at the center was Belegur.

Litbo, keeping safely behind Belegur's range of vision crossed to the middle of the chamber in an attempt to recover the Scrolls of Fizbin, but the fallen Implementor was not blinded by his advance. But at that distraction, Ath-gar-nel and the entire Nezgeth tribe struck in unison at Belegur. This further distraction broke his spell. Now locked in combat against the Nezgeth—one dark magician against an entire tribe—Litbo grabbed the Scrolls of Fizbin along with the other two missing manuscripts.

Though Belegur was able to hold them off alone, his efforts were divided. The blue column began to grow weak, flickering shakily with each further release of energy. In the process, not only was the Implementor successful at slaying Ath-gar-nel with a fabricated bloody axe, but Endeth was able to sneak up behind Belegur with the sacrificial knife in hand. Bringing it down, the single stab destroyed the current mortal vessel used by Belegur. With him, the crackling pillar of light shattered, and a shower of blue fireworks tumbled to the cavern floor. The gateway to the Timeless Halls had closed and vanished.

Immediately upon the destruction of Belegur, Zylon the Aged was instantly cured. He simply woke up and got out of bed and went right about his daily business as though he had never ailed.

When the fallen angel, the Beast, walks among the mortal lords, tempting and buying their souls,  
his vile actions will give rise to a great battle in his underground lair. Defeated by the desert tribes  
and the servant of a dead king, he will lie for centuries, smoldering in wait.

-The Third Scroll of Kar'nai, Book Nine

### **Aftermath**

When the victors emerged from the Griffspotter Caverns, the Nezgeth believed that through the death of Ath-gar-nel, they had paid their penance. After choosing a new leader, the Kovalli tribesmen thanked the Quendorans, and returned to the lands of the desert sun. Zilbo was told to retain hold of the globe of light which the elder had given him.

And so Litbo and Zilbo inched their way back to Quendor's capital by the sea. Accompanying them on the march was half of Griffspotter's original two hundred men. Heffilmurm and the core of the Lingolf Garrison stayed behind at the sight of the battle at Zilbo's request. The royal advisor had been skeptical about Belegur's death. Such beings as the Implementors have great powers indeed, even to the point of defying the grave itself. A guard was posted to watch for the possibility of such an event. In any case, the area's wild frontier held great possibilities for expansion. The open coastline and access to a flowing river nearby held great strategic interests for the Kingdom of Quendor, and Zilbo had made a mental note to advocate the building of a fort there in the future.

Even now somewhere in the lands to the north, the citizens of Galepath and Mareilon slowly went about the business of rebuilding their lives. Repair work began on the devastated Millucis district, and Ettelwhiff, who was once one of Mayor Hegilburg's closest confidants, was offered the Firestone Mansion. Galepath had a contested mayoral election for the first time in generations.

### **The Ascension of Zylon the Aged**

Nearly two weeks later, several dozen diplomats and officials from all the outlying areas of Quendor, and even representatives from the pair of formerly warring city-states, Galepath and Mareilon, gathered at Largoneth. Those of Galepath extended formal apologies not only to the king of Quendor, but to their brothers in Mareilon whom they had wronged.

It was that same evening that Zylon the Aged, having read much in the Scrolls of Fizbin, completed constructing the gateway to the Timeless Halls. The suddenly blue beam of light that snapped into the night sky from the southwestern tower easily caught the gaze of Zilbo, Litbo, and Dinbar who were near the base of Signal Mount.

When the trio arrived at Zylon's room, they found the king laying motionless on the bed with his back resting comfortably on the soft blankets. His eyes were closed and his arms rested easily at his side, save the beginnings of

the blue tunnel that sprang from his forehead. The spirit of Zylon rose out of and hovered above his body; it mirrored the likeness of the real king in every way, down to identical clothing and the smallest insignificant facial features. And with wordless smile, the spirit of Zylon the Aged moved into the stream of blue light and was gone, leaving only a motionless body.

In a scrap of parchment, written by Zylon's own hand, found in his bedchamber by Zilbo, we read:

At last I am gone from this world, the weight of countless years lifted. Thank you for that. And as for that one last order of unfinished business, all hail King Zilbo the First, Lord and Protector of Quendor.

### **The Mystery Surrounding the Death of Zylon**

Although the tomb of Zylon is clearly marked with the following words:

Here lies Zylon the Aged, Lawgiver, Crouner of Kings,  
Paver of Roads, Builder of Bridges, Preserver of the  
Peace in the Time of the Frobbish Rebellion, A Warrior  
of Zork, Bringer of Victory in the Wars of Kar'nai, and  
Lord King and Protector of the Kingdom of Quendor.

32 BE - 398 AE

May he rest with the Implementors, in the bosom of the Timeless Halls.

many still doubt the ascension of Zylon, as well as his long lifespan. Some historians turn to Zilbo Throckrod's own work, "I Can't Believe You'd Ask Such a Stupid Question about Zylon the Aged." Still, this does little to answer the pressing questions surrounding the ascension. He seems hesitant, and in fact downright unwilling, to give the matter an honest treatment. If anything, he is eager to counter the common legends concerning Zylon's supernatural rise to heaven while still alive and healthy.

One of the main reasons the oral tradition of Zylon's supernatural end has not achieved more official recognition is its lack of basis in original sources. Besides a single book entitled "Zylon the Aged," the only written text we have that comments on the subject is the Book of Commandments, in which Commandment #1562 reads:

Yeah, verily, doubt not the Ascension of Zylon the Aged  
Or be scarred a sinner of the worst kind.  
Can you understand the magnitude of your deed?  
He rose, he joined, he transcended, he died not  
Only one other among the kings stands with him.  
Lo, know this to be true or suffer the fate of an unbeliever.

Nearly every one of the scoffers of Zylon's ascension, additionally doubt the long span of his life. Many seek to point to the Royal Pillars. The peculiarity of these pillars is the way they carry a perpetual stench of rotting apricot. However, this fact is of only limited use to Quendoran historians. What is more important is the way the Royal Pillars list only the final year of each monarch's reign. This is probably because of the way the calendar was assumed to begin from the first year of Entharion's reign. Thus there was no need to list a first year for his section of the pillar, and the practice stuck. However, due to the damage done to the lower half of the first pillar, there is no way of knowing if Mysterion was in fact the king to immediately precede Zylon the Aged. The destroyed portion of the pillar is a large one, enough so to accommodate at least two or three other kings, who even so would have to have been extremely long lived themselves in order to fill the gap between Mysterion and Zylon. There is no conceivable reason why that section of the pillar would have been left blank, nor can we imagine that the ever-obscure Mysterion's post-mortem list of accomplishments was on the order of five times longer than his esteemed predecessor, Entharion.

### **Chapter 3: The Close of the Entharion Dynasty**

#### **The Reign of Zilbo I (398~423 GUE)**

Though there is no historical reason to doubt the ascension of Zylon the Aged, there is uniformed agreement that Zilbo I succeeded and ruled the kingdom for 25 years until 423 GUE. Hargood of Mareilon passed away mere days after Zilbo's coronation. Some claim that he went to the land beyond the skies, where he walks still with Zylon the Aged. Gladius Fzort remained a royal advisor at Largoneth, inadvertently becoming the father of one of Quendor's most famous political families. Three months after Zilbo ascended to the throne, Litbo Mumblehum resigned his post at the Galepath University to accept at Zilbo's request the position of royal advisor of Quendor. Before moving to Largoneth, the librarian passed on his estimable store of knowledge to an up-and-coming scholar of the mystic arts known to history as Bizboz of Galepath, who had already been enrolled at the university since at least 398. Thus, due to a certain amount of instinct, good luck, and his own personal librarian, Zilbo was able to continue the work of the departed king Zylon, ensuring the long life of the Entharion dynasty and of Quendor itself.

To commemorate and guard the site of the battle with Belegur, King Zilbo ordered the foundation of a military outpost, the famed Fort Griffspotter, named in honor of the deceased military advisor. The caverns beneath were subsequently named the Griffspotter Caverns.

#### **Gustav Peggleboz**

The period of fairly uneventful reigns continued throughout the Entharion Dynasty. It was a period of remarkable social dullness. A few scattered events, such as the brief 398 GUE rebellion in Mareilon and Zucchini Wars of 474, galvanized the public interest, but these spasms of misdirected strife were predominantly unsuccessful and invariably short lived. The birth of Gustav Peggleboz in 399, would lead to one of the only things that kept the population sane throughout the reign of Zilbo I and beyond.

Sometime before the 430s, this man would invent the popular board game of Peggleboz. Originally designed, and still played, as nothing more than a single-player game of relaxation, the bored and overly-competitive Quendoran population soon turned it into something that its creator could never have foreseen. Highly popular were Peggleboz Speed Races, two players using two randomly arranged boards and racing to clear their board before the other player could beat them. All sorts of derivatives of this sport soon became immensely popular, from Round-Robin Peggleboz Wrestling to the highly amusing Siamese Twin version, wherein one brogmoid with two heads played on one board, against itself.

Although the mysterious Gustav is best noted from the creation of this game that would change the course of history, it has often been suggested that there was more to Peggleboz than met the eye. During his own lifetime he was often accused of attempting to enlist the forbidden forces of magic to cheat at his own game, and it has further been suggested that he put forth Peggleboz, along with so many other influential board games, in an attempt to disguise his real and more delicate magical interests. It is known for instance that Gustav was in close correspondence with Dinbar the Proto-Thaumaturge for nearly a decade, despite the fact that Dinbar himself had no interest in the Peggleboz game whatsoever.

#### **Latter Years of Saint Yoruk (406~425 GUE)**

Yoruk eventually left Hades and returned to the surface world. Armed with an implicit understanding of the universe and its workings, Yoruk made a far better sailor than before, so he was able to construct a new and much more seaworthy vessel in a very short time. In 406 GUE, he returned to the shores of Galepath, but instead of marching into the city and gaining instant fame for his knowledge, he built himself a modest cottage in the forests of Egreh where he lived out the rest of his natural life as a hermit where he would behind the workings of what is today known as the "Books of Saint Yoruk." His deeper understanding of the arts of magic and science, he only shared with those close to him. Within the same year after his retirement, Yoruk was declared a saint by the Zorkastrian Church.

### **Dinbar Leaves the Royal Court (407 GUE)**

During the summer of 407 GUE, in an ironic exchange of roles, the former royal advisor Dinbar left the royal court of Zilbo I to return to Galepath, his childhood home, to pursue, among other projects, the successful efforts to translate the Scrolls of Fizbin. An ever-deepening respect for Bizboz would eventually lead to an intense collaboration producing works that are still hailed by historians today as the ultimate advances in the study of the magical arts.

### **The Reign of Bozbo I (423~429 GUE)**

Bozbo I succeeded Zilbo I in 423 GUE and ruled the kingdom for 6 years until 429.

### **Death of Saint Yoruk (425 GUE)**

By 425 GUE, the Books of Saint Yoruk were completed; their pages filled with many dark revelations. While they are most often cited as the source of the Great Brogmoid theory, one of the great many things he learned under the Devil's tutelage, this is pure deception, as it is a well-known fact that the Great Brogmoid had been known about even before the beginning of the Kingdom of Quendor.

And in the same year, when Yoruk's natural life drew to a close, he died as most people do, leaving behind his large body of work and a human-sized body of not-so-ripe flesh and bone. Eventually most of his flesh and bone disappeared, as is usual with dead bodies.

The legends disagree as to Yoruk's final fate, the most common thread being that his adventurers continued on well after his death, with his transcendence to the Ethereal Plane of Atrii, and his strange encounter with the Implementors. After watching his exploits, these minor deities took an interest in him and brought him to their far away realm as a guest. Thus, upon his death, Yoruk found his spirit creeping upwards to the Implementors, the seraphim and the cherubim—the harmony and the ecstasy, seemed strangely florid and overwrought to him. He stayed to talk awhile with the Implementors and found them likeable enough in their own way, but, surprisingly, was none too impressed with them. Yoruk politely requested that he be returned to the company of his good friends in the Underworld, citing differences both aesthetic and philosophical. The Implementors were terribly offended and refused to grant him his wish. They resisted until Yoruk decided to head off on his own to find his way back. Brandishing his sword and the bronze shield with the five fire rubies, he hacked a path through the Happy Fields where Joy forever dwells, and was never heard of again, though his vast knowledge of things Above and Below, as scripted in the many Books of Saint Yoruk, is truly enlightenment of a most sensible, although a twisted sort. After his death, his autobiography became an instant best-seller, and, sometime between 748~966 GUE, the book was made into a musical called “Yoruk!” starring the incomparable Judy Garlic.

Though his spirit is said to still wander, his knowledge of Deep Magic was imprinted within his corpse—retained with his skull. Thus, the Skull of Saint Yoruk has become one of the most coveted and sought after relics in all the Empire. Its bearer wields the knowledge and power of Deep Magic. Some historians believe that the skull has been in the possession of many celebrated figures throughout history, others claim from the empty casket where he was buried, that his body returned with him to Hades and through either some common Hades “body part routing error”, or just gradual decay as is common with old corpses. Regardless, the only thing that time permitted to remain was the skull.

There is unanimous agreement amongst scholars that this skull eventually ended up in the clutches of the second Dungeon Master in 948 GUE who had found it in the Land of the Living Dead beyond the Gates of Hades, but it disappeared a short time later and then was not heard of for many years. Other scholars are baffled at how Yoruk's coffin, along with his authentic ruby shield found themselves in the Steppinthrax Monastery before 949. Whatever the truth may be, modern guardians of the alchemical secrets still maintain that their knowledge exists via a direct line of tradition stemming from Yoruk's original descent into the underground. These stories will be further detailed in the future, Eru permitting, of course.

### **The Reign of Zilbo II (429~451 GUE)**

Zilbo II succeeded Bozbo I in 429 GUE and ruled the kingdom with a prosperous and relatively uneventful reign for 22 years, save one important phenomena. By the time the 430s and 440s had come to pass, all of Quendor was caught in the grips of a Peggleboz frenzy, peggleboz championships and pick-up games often becoming the cause of spontaneous rioting, looting, and civil disturbances of all kinds. Elections and governmental appointments were settled over the peg board, and even a series of emissaries from the northlands to the court of Zilbo II was forced to sit through a round of formal competition before being allowed to depart. A formal league had been formed with the aim of holding annual all-Quendoran championships, and Peggleboz himself, winner year after shocking year, soon came to be seen as the most powerful and important man in all of Quendor outside of the royal family itself.

### **Peggleboz Decides the Throne for Harmonious Fzort (451~477 GUE)**

In 451 GUE, Zilbo II finally passed away. His younger brother Bozbo was still alive, and more than willing to take the throne. Matters were complicated somewhat by the existence of Zilbo's daughter and only child, the Princess Arathena. Although no woman had ever ascended to the throne of Quendor, Zilbo himself had made no clear plans for who was to succeed him, and the princess herself had married into the Fzort clan, a powerful family that had been at the center of court intrigues since the time of Zylon the Aged. Harmonious Fzort, himself nothing more than a one-time royal advisor and grandson of Gladius Fzort, proceeded to claim the throne for himself on behalf of his young bride, Arathena. Legend has it that the two claimants to the throne met one day in Largoneth, and, unable to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution, decided to settle the whole affair over a two-person game of Peggleboz.

Harmonious, himself already second seed in the all-Quendoran Peggleboz brackets, apparently beat Bozbo in record time. The angry Throckrod stormed out of Largoneth, crying foul play. Harmonious lost no time in proclaiming himself king where he would rule the kingdom for 26 years until 477.

Immediately, Harmonious issued a warrant for his rival's arrest and immediate execution. Understandably afraid for his life, Bozbo cut a speedy retreat back to his home province of Bozbar, not without pausing to send an irate letter of appeal to the game's creator and guiding spirit in Mareilon. Gustav, it seems, was sympathetic to Bozbo's claims, himself announcing that Harmonious had violated the spirit of the game and seized the throne of the kingdom in violation of the will of the gods and the by-laws of the Peggleboz International Rules Committee. Mareilon itself erupted in riot, Gustav himself orchestrating the seizure of the local Quendoran garrisons and Peggleboz game halls.

### **Peggleboz and State (452~455 GUE)**

Alarmed at the violent turn of events, Harmonious immediately began to take steps to curb the authority of his rivals. An official proclamation from the early spring of 452 GUE announced the unification of Peggleboz and State, expelling the game's creator from the official league and stripping him of all peggleboz-related rights and naming Harmonious as the sole head of the only legitimate peggleboz league in all of Quendor. The resulting situation quickly deteriorated into a kingdom-wide peggleboz schism, Harmonious receiving recognition as Peggleboz Champion in the northern four provinces, and Peggleboz himself defeating Bozbo year after year to claim the supreme title throughout the 3 1/2 southern provinces through 455.

### **Pilgrimage to Hades (454 GUE)**

By the mid-fifth century, the Books of Yoruk already had grown quite a following. Those who sought adventure, as Yoruk once had, found it within his words. Those who sought answers, as Yoruk once had, found those as well. And those who sought proof of Yoruk's claims, as much of Quendor had begun to, built ships to retrace his path. Assuming that they would not be graced with Yoruk's incredibly good fortune, it was required that the crafts be far more seaworthy than his humble raft. A great number of innovators applied the breadth of technology in the realm and, in 454 GUE during the reign of Harmonious Fzort, in an attempt to create Yoruk's historic journey, the largest fleet of ships ever assembled embarked on a pilgrimage to the Eastlands.

Most of the ships sank within the first week, and when a sailor on one of the few overcrowded vessels that remained spotted a land mass on the horizon, no one dared to ask if it was the one they were looking for. The currents had brought them to the island of Antharia. While only 959 square bloits in size, the beautiful landscape and



near-perfect weather quickly became known as home to the unwitting colonists. Relying heavily on the sea's bounty, they built a quaintly misanthropic civilization, exhibiting no interest in maintaining contact with the homeland. They left in search of enlightenment and accidentally found paradise instead.

#### **Mareilon Secedes from Quendor (455~456 GUE)**

This awkward schism in the gaming world came to a violent political head in 456 when Gustav was raised, without royal approval, to the governorship of Mareilon Province. He promptly cut all ties with the royal court, announcing his province's secession from the Kingdom of Quendor and the resurrection of the ancient principality. A brief but bloody civil war ended in the execution of Peggleboz and a royal decree from Fzort naming himself as Quendor's Universal One-on-One Peggleboz Speed Champion.

By the time news of the disaster reached Bozbo's home province, it was all too clear to the rebel that waging a successful military conflict would prove to be a near impossibility, so the claimant to the throne turned instead to the most powerful weapon in his arsenal for economic warfare, ordering the immediate halt of all zucchini shipments to the capital and the other provinces under Fzort's control.

#### **Zucchini Conflicts (459~464 GUE)**

In response to this outrage, Harmonious sent royal troops into Znurg in 459, ordering seizure of the latest batch of zucchini shipments. It was during this year in which a professor at Galepath University, named Bizboz wrote a lengthy pamphlet entitled "On the Evil of the Zucchini Plant," a work not well remembered for its insightful intellectual content, but important nevertheless in that it firmly establishes Bizboz's place right at the center of the Zucchini Controversy. In fact, it has often been suggested that Bizboz's unquenchable hatred of zucchini led him to direct his first tentative magical experiments towards the unfortunate plant, experiments that supposedly culminated in the horrible zucchini blights of the 460s and 470s. Regardless, the zucchini crop for the next four seasons, from 460 to 463, were ruined by a blight in Bozbar and Vriminax.

In 464, this famine led Quendor to increase shipments of zucchini to those provinces at the expense of the coastal regions. By 465 Mareilon marched against Frobozz to force the freeing of the zucchini route through Znurg to the coast. Harmonious ordered the Galepath militia to provide reinforcements, but Galepath refused to respond. Unbeknown to Harmonious, but the entire city of Galepath was infested by a rebellion of yipples much larger and more powerful than those described in the Sorcerer packaging.

#### **The Yipple Rebellion (466 GUE)**

Dundor lead the armies of Vriminax against Galepath in one of the great and early battles of the Empire. Faced with heavy fortifications, Dundor of Vriminax ordered his cavalry to advance up the far side of the river. Although the river was too dangerous to ford, Dundor built a bridge under darkness. The yipples were taken completely by surprise as the cavalry was no longer held back by the torrential waters. Thus Dundor bravely crushed the yipples, quashing the rebellion. A side-effect of this victory was that flesh balls became known as an absolute "faux pas," instead being replaced with flesh strips in cream-cheese, spread over delicate wafers.

#### **Zucchini Blights (468~472 GUE)**

Znurg marched on Quendor in 468 GUE, in order to seize the last remaining zucchini fields. By 470, every non-coastal province was seized by Znurg, before facing military stalemate with the coastal provinces. In attempt to thwart this standstill, Znurg withheld zucchini shipments to the coast. The Zucchini blight spread over the next two years (471-2), destroying the last of Quendor's crop. The devastating famine that resulted in the east led Fzort to summon a final offensive against the western provinces in 472.

#### **Thaumaturgy: The Study of Incredibly Weird Stuff (473 GUE)**

As political matters remained stagnantly gripped with zucchini's, academic institutions were advancing in leaps and bounds. Apart from secessions, usurpations, and civil wars which followed one after the other wreaking havoc on the stability of the small Quendoran nation, the light of intellectual fervor burned stronger than ever. Following

Yoruk and Peggleboz, Dinbar and Bizboz in particular emerged from the obscurity of the times to give living proof that the Dimly-Lit Era could not last forever. During the middle to late 400s, as society began to break down in every way and anarchy became the law of the day, the hidden restrictions upon the study of magic began to crumble, and for a brief period of several decades, the truth began to emerge once more. In retrospect it has become clear that during the 460s in particular the entirety of Quendor saw the unleashing of an unprecedented amount of magical energy, almost as if the very essence of magic itself was straining to free itself from its confines.

After Yoruk's adventures, the second major development that came out of the Entharion bloodline was the heightened interest in some peculiar and often handy effects that could be gained by uttering strange words, spoken in what was then called the Old Tongue. As early as the fifth century GUE, such students of the mystic arts such as Bizboz and Dinbar thoroughly examined these ancient writings on the subject, which was formally dubbed Thaumaturgy. Although the accomplishments of Dinbar have been obscured by the passage of time, his colleague and close friend, Bizboz of Galepath has left several volumes of writing that have utterly revolutionized the way Quendorans think about science, magic, and the relationship between the two.

Thaumaturgy's canonical work was written in 473 by Bizboz is also the date at which most scholars assign to the beginning of the Empirical Age, which would last until 683. This seminal book, "On the Presence of Incredibly Weird Stuff Going On" which would later become, arguably, the most influential (and least read) book of all time, remains the most heavily scrutinized and controversial scientific study ever published. A genius before his time, the mage Bizboz tackled this serious study of the laws of magic.

He claimed to have discovered "for-the-most-part natural rules" that explained the order of the "Weird Stuff" which he and several other deviant researchers had been experimenting with. He claimed to have harnessed a natural energy, called magic, and used it to create "spells." The book gave long dissertations on the useful application of spells like NERZO ("for balancing checkbooks"); UMBOZ, ("for tedious housecleaning duties"); and YUMZO, ("for destroying mongeese"). In his lifetime, Bizboz was able to birth five new spells into the community.

Though his technique was undeniably fruitful and his research infallible, sadly, the work was ridiculed by the leading scholars of the time and Bizboz was ostracized by his colleagues and laughed out of the faculty at Galepath University. His findings blatantly contradicted the teachings of almost every professor at the University. They refused to even waste their time "rationalizing this nonsense."

Within months, Bizboz was stripped of all he had and reduced to panhandling on the street. His "Weird Stuff" had become nothing more than a label for potions and powders, sold by charlatans, that would supposedly cure the ills of suffering peasants.

### **End of the Fifth Century Crisis (473~4 GUE)**

The Zucchini Wars were in a position of continued military stalemate through the period of Bizboz's discovery. The population did not sit still with the famine coupled with the oppression. Along with the blights, riots rained devastation upon the stability of the coastal provinces, snatching everyone's mind off of laughing at Bizboz. These events were described in Bizboz's later essays, who wrote how he missed the attention, even if it were mockery. Desperate for zucchinis to save his people, Harmonious reluctantly agreed to negotiations in exchange for needed shipments. All those involved were to meet at Znurg the following year.

By 474 GUE, the entire countryside was in a state of exhaustion and collapse. The population losses inflicted by the ongoing famine must have been devastating indeed, particularly to massive coastal cities like Galepath that were completely dependent on exports to feed their population. City and provincial records in Bozbar, the region that had suffered longest throughout the entire affair, record a population drop of an astounding 70% in just under ten years. This pathetic state of affairs was in clear evidence throughout the entire duration of the conference at Znurg.

Eyewitness reports note that no provincial delegate had brought with him a retinue of any significant size, the entire conference guarded by a mere half-dozen members of the local militia. The king himself, leaving the security of Largoneth for the first time during the length of the war, came accompanied only by two personal bodyguards, himself having traveled the distance to Znurg on the back of a scraggly and ill-fed pack mule.

Despite the sense of urgency produced by the impact of the continuing famine, the proceedings of the peace conference rapidly degenerated into near anarchy as terms were dictated against Harmonious. The delegates sent to

represent the rebel provinces, clearly feeling that they held the upper hand, retreated into a series of private meetings to decide upon their demands. When they emerged from seclusion nearly a week later, the impatient Harmonious and his fellow delegates were ready to accept nearly anything. The result was the immediate ratification of the Peggleboz Declaration, the bulk of which is reprinted below.

#### A Declaration

by the Representatives of the Free and Unconquered Provinces of  
Quendor, Assembled in Congress at Znurg, 16 Augur 473.

We the Frobbers of the United Provinces of Quendor don't even think the following things are really worth mentioning: that all zucchinis are created equal, that they are endowed by the Implementors with certain inalienable rights, and that among these rights are life, liberty, and the possibility of being eaten in any province they damn well please. That, to frobnicate these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the Great Brogmoid and the longest sword they can get their hands on; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends and attempts to unify the powers of peggleboz and state, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to go home as soon as they can.

It is clear from the sarcastic terseness of the declaration that the assembly was already heartily sick of the long war and its unexpected side effects, but they were nevertheless holding true to two chief ideas, the first being that the royal government had no right to dictate zucchini trade routes to the outlying provinces, and the second being that the newly realized Peggleboz League would remain separate and distinct, constituting an authority to which the royal crown could lay no claim.

Bozbo was declared heir apparent while Fzort was to pay reparations to all devastated provinces. On Jam 5<sup>th</sup>, the Treaty of Znurg was signed, which finally ended the Zucchini Wars. Harmonious on his part spent the next three years adhering to these principles in embarrassed and defeated silence, finally passing away unmourned some time in late 477.

Whether or not Bizboz himself can be held accountable for the horrible famines that spread with the death of the zucchini harvests, it is clear that he and his circle, especially Dinbar and Peggleboz, were key players in the events that historians have come to describe as the 5th Century Crisis.

#### **Death of Bizboz (475 GUE)**

Determined to become a legend, Bizboz committed a tragic suicide in 475 GUE. He was a great mind and his death was an incalculable loss. He never lived to see his pioneering work embraced by the community that once scorned him. For his work encouraged others in the magical knowledge, which in time gave rise once more to the study of the *unnatural sciences* of magic and thaumaturgy.

Centuries later, Ozmar would say this of his work: "Science has taught us much and given us new words for old mysteries. But beneath these words are mysteries, and beneath them more mysteries. The pursuit of magic has given those mysteries meaning and provided for our people great benefits unrealized yet by science... We owe a great debt to Bizboz."

Although historians of magic usually cite "On the Presence of Incredibly Weird Stuff Going On" as Bizboz's definitive and most influential work, it is likely that this is true simply because he wrote the treatise so close to the time of his dismissal and death.

Besides his "On the Evil of the Zucchini Plant", and later popular "The Book of Four Jokes and Learned Essays Upon Them," an earlier work, dating from 468 GUE, that is often forgotten amidst the chaos of the time, is his crucial "On the Horrible Flatness of the World," in which Bizboz proved once and for all that the world was not in fact spherical but was instead nothing more than a round, flat disc. This work put Bizboz in great trouble with the Brogmoidist Church, until Bizboz pointed out that a flat world would actually be easier for the Great Brogmoid to hold, allowing him to take a break and stretch his arms without the world simply rolling off his head.

### **The Reign of Bozbo II (477~481 GUE)**

With the death of Harmonious Fzort in 477, the last vestiges of the crisis that he had caused finally faded into oblivion. In keeping with the terms agreed upon at Znurg, Bozbo became the second Quendoran monarch to bear that name, and Harmonious' son Thaddium became the heir apparent to the throne of Entharion. Thus, Bozbo II succeeded Harmonious Fzort and ruled the kingdom for 4 years until 481 GUE.

It is difficult to understand why, during the six and a half centuries of peace and quiet that is known as the Entharion Dynasty, this particular half century should have stood out as so violent and bloody. It does seem apparent that Quendor as a whole underwent some sort of cultural and intellectual spasm during this era. Never before had any one land seen such a remarkable accumulation of genius and eccentricity as that embodied by Peggleboz, Dinbar, Bizboz, and the Fzort-Throckrod family. It is worth pausing to note one of the many ironies of history, that Harmonious' reign was the only one in the bulk of the Entharion Dynasty that was in fact anything but harmonious. Unfortunately, for all the suffering that Quendor experienced during the fifth century, the country seems to be no better at the end of the crisis than at its beginning. Still lost in fear and ignorance of magic, and still unaware of the vast portion of the world around it, Quendor would sleep for another two centuries to come.

### **The Reign of Thaddium Fzort (481~545 GUE)**

Thaddium Fzort, son of Harmonious Fzort, succeeded Bozbo II in 481 GUE and ruled the kingdom for 64 years until 545 GUE. Since the settling of Antharia in 454 GUE, sporadic attempts by the Quendorans to set foot on Antharian soil prompted them to build a powerful navy that guarded the coast. This thoroughly irritated Thaddium Fzort, the ninth king of the Entharion Dynasty, but like all the other kings of his time, he did not want to get his subjects riled and have to start an unnecessary war. The legendary Crocodile Tear also came into his possession sometime during his reign.

### **The Reign of Mumbo I (545~569 GUE)**

Mumbo I succeeded Thaddium Fzort in 545 GUE and ruled the kingdom for 24 years until 569 GUE.

### **The Reign of Bozbo III (569~575 GUE)**

Bozbo III succeeded Mumbo I in 567 GUE and ruled the kingdom for 8 years until 575 GUE.

### **The Reign of Bozbo IV (575~619 GUE)**

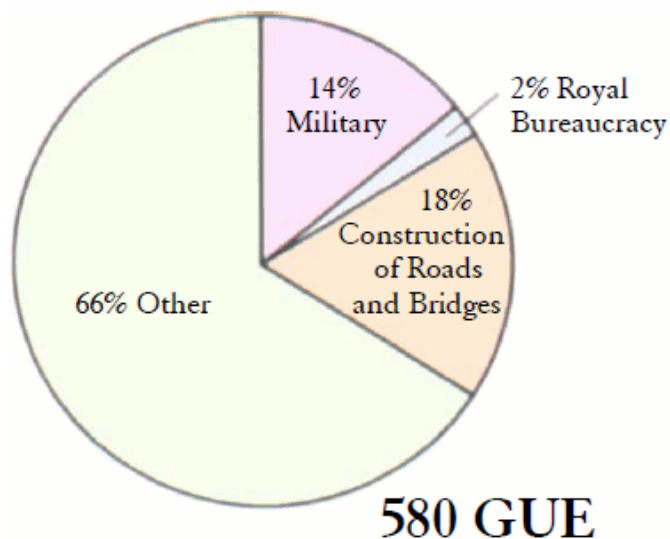
Bozbo IV succeeded Bozbo III in 575 GUE and ruled the kingdom for 44 years until 619 GUE. The bloit changed to the windcat, Bozbo IV's animal of choice. The only other notable event during his reign was the theft of a piece of the famous Skull of Yoruk in 594, a tooth which would be found a couple centuries later in the possession of Mayor Bah'ma of Flatheadia.

### **The Reign of Mumbo II (619~628 GUE)**

Mumbo II succeeded Harmonious Bozbo IV in 619 GUE and ruled the kingdom for 9 years until 628 GUE. The change in rulers made for a profound readjustment of the bloit system of measurement, when Mumbo II chose a turtle as the standard of measurement, rather than a windcat.

The only other note of historical importance related to this king of Quendor is the Mighty Mace of Mumbo, named after a pet turtle, Bozthark, that he owned as a young child. He always carried it into battle saying that while holding the mace it was only fitting that he advanced very slowly while the rest of his army raced ahead. Bozthark was said to have been enchanted by the court wizards to be lighter, tougher, and to enable the shaft retreat into the head when danger threatened.

**Expenditures of Bozbo IV's government**



### **The Reign of Zilbo III (628~659 GUE)**

The Entharion Dynasty remained stable through several more kings, a total of 13 in all, had held the throne before Zilbo III's succession. He succeeded Mumbo II in 628 GUE and ruled the kingdom for 31 years until 659 GUE. During his lifetime, he invented the brass trombuoy, and wrote several sonatas for trombuoy and danvictorhorn. Zilbo III was a pleasant, agreeable, well-mannered king. In other words, he was boring beyond the realm of any Quendoran citizen's tolerance.

Many realized that Zilbo III was no longer fit to rule Quendor. He preferred to spend his days playing card games, instead of managing the bureaucracy and looking after the business of the kingdom. Ambassadors and dignitaries were left waiting while he dealt hands with gossipy little blue-haired old ladies. Not that the king's subjects had anything against gossip—it was just that it was never interesting gossip.

But most importantly, the welfare of Quendor depended on military waste and overspending. Zilbo III, as boring as he was, was not interested, and without this excessive spending, thousands of bureaucrats and politicians, not to mention half the admirals and generals, were out of the kind of work that kept their conniving minds occupied, and otherwise turned loose on a hapless and unwary public.

However, that dynasty was about to end with the ascension of a power-hungry young zealot named Duncanthrax to the throne of Quendor.

### **Zorkmid Blight (657 GUE)**

If the first zorkmids were not minted until 699 GUE, where did Quendor get its zorkmids before that time? The answer it seems lies in the nearly-forgotten zorkmid tree. Long believed to be just a distant folk tale, the zorkmid tree is now believed to have thrived throughout the Westlands for several hundred years, supporting the unstable Quendoran economy and saving the lazy Quendoran monarchs from having to mint any extra coinage. By the second half of the seventh century, however, something had clearly gone wrong. The zorkmid tree population was in a steady and inexplicable decline, and the population, sucked into a financial panic, began to pull the currency from circulation. Historical documentation of the period might admittedly be a little bit sketchy, but the evidence that is available to us suggests that during the last ten years of Zilbo III's reign, most of Quendor had sunk into a bitter depression. In 657, the Blight of the Zorkmid Trees descended across the land, spread by wandering packs of surmin and rabid cows, and most of the already weakened zorkmid tree population vanished into oblivion.

Given the lack of evidence and our own general stupidity, it is likely that the connection between the New Year's Revolt and the Zorkmid Blight will never be entirely clear. However, some historians have suggested that the sudden and thorough natural destruction of the zorkmid harvest throughout the Westlands led to a rapid succession of economic disasters. Unable to salvage the situation, and helpless against critics of his reign, Zilbo's days as king were numbered. It has even been pointed out that such a rapid shortage of hard currency would have made it impossible for the royal court at Largoneth to make regular payments to its military units and commanding officers. If Duncanthrax was, as some sources have suggested, a general in the Royal Militia, it could in fact have been his dissatisfaction with the lack of regular income that led him to seek the throne. In any case, much of the anxiety that had shaken Quendor with the death of the zorkmid trees was washed away by the exciting course of events that followed the revolution.

### **Mysteries Surrounding Duncanthrax and the Near Year's Revolt (659 GUE)**

Still today, historians disagree about Duncanthrax's life prior to the 659 revolution. A petition signed by palace guards in 657, asking for an increase in the mosquito netting allotment, bears a signature that looks suspiciously like "Duncanthrax."<sup>22</sup> One legend even suggests that Duncanthrax was a demon who assumed human form. Another legend describes him as a former rope salesman. Some historians insist that Duncanthrax was general of the Royal

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<sup>22</sup> This petition, along with other written records available from the pre-Flathead era, is on display in the Largoneth Royal Archives. A portion of the petition is reprinted here, courtesy of Idgit Herm, Archival Regent.

Militia, and of all these theories seems to allow for the most useful analysis, as this was the title that even Satchmoz the Incomparable gave him in his writings prior to the ascension.

Jezbar Foolion, historian and author of *The New Year's Revolt*, interviewed some of the last surviving eyewitnesses of the Flathead Revolution, some eighty years after the events in question. The fact that nearly all of the dozen narratives relayed by Foolion contradict each other in the crucial details indicates that the last day of 659 must have been one of great confusion on the part of all involved. Part of this confusion seems to stem from the fact that there seems to have been two simultaneous attempts to seize the throne.

This theory stems from the disparity between Foolion's narratives and the so-called Royal Diaries. Found in the Largoneth Archives over two hundred years after the revolution, and carefully analyzed by Froboz Mumbar, these diaries have been the matter of some controversy. Nothing in the content of the diaries themselves suggest that they are the product of Zilbo III. Nevertheless, this belief has persisted over the years, if for no reason other than the fact that it would shed light on Zilbo's otherwise mysterious character. Irregardless of the diary's origins, the last few lines are of particular interest to historians of the New Year's Revolt:

I have ordered the Captain of the Guard to forsake the coastal approach in favor of protection of the land routes. If the mountain pass falls to the troops from Lingolf, all is lost. Even now, fighting is visible from the western towers. I only hope the reinforcements from the north come before

The diaries end there, without any further comment. Traditionally, the Captain of the Guard at Largoneth was responsible only to the commander of the Royal Militia and the King of Quendor himself. Thus, the content of these Royal Diaries makes it difficult to believe that Duncanthrax was in fact the top-ranking general in the Royal Militia. The passage in question heavily suggests that the chief threat to the royal authority stemmed from a military power outside the castle itself, specifically from the nearby Lingolf Garrison, a fortress that might conceivably have been under Duncanthrax's command. The situation becomes somewhat more complicated when we look at some of the apparent contradictions between the Royal Diaries and Foolion's first-person narratives. Setch Mauldwood, a member of the Royal Militia, related the following story to Jezbar Foolion:

I was working my normal shift along the beach when I received word from my shift commander to hurry back to the castle. Apparently some of the dungeon guards had mutinied and taken over the southwest keep, threatening the royal chambers. By the time I made it back to Largoneth the fighting had ended and Zilbo had died.

It is difficult to know how much weight to put on this narrative. Mauldwood himself was well on in years by the time of his interview with Foolion, and his memory of the events might have been distorted; this much is clear from his inability to tell us any more about Duncanthrax than what we know from the common legends.

Nevertheless, the theme of a castle revolt is echoed throughout Foolion's interviews, and must have some validity to it. Thus, if we accept the Royal Diaries as authentic, and not a forgery of a later generation, we are faced with the unavoidable conclusion that the last day of 659 saw two simultaneous revolts against the throne, from both the inside and outside of Largoneth, perhaps in conjunction with one another. This theory is born out somewhat by the memoirs of Satchmoz, a court wizard very close to the events of the revolution. It also seems that during the reign of Zilbo III, or sometime prior that an alternate Royal Palace had been constructed in the city of Borphée, and in several sources during his reign and Duncanthrax's, that this city is called the capital of Quendor. According to the great wizard, Zilbo himself spent much time in the Borphée Palace, perhaps vacationing, perhaps attending to affairs of state from a more centralized location. Satchmoz also suggests that Duncanthrax held court in Borphée during an interim period before his move to Egreth.

Thus it is possible to imagine a scenario that places Zilbo in Borphée on New Year's Eve, while fighting of some kind broke out at Largoneth itself. When the loyalist faction of the guard failed to suppress the rebellion, their belief, as recorded by Foolion above, that Zilbo had died, could be indicative of the fact that Zilbo had left for Borphée

unbeknownst to the court at Largoneth. This possibility is born out by what we know of the first 31 years of his reign; he seemed prone to rashness and unpredictability.

Logically, if Zilbo was absent from the castle on the last day of 659, the commander of the Royal Militia is the only one conceivable responsible for the Royal Diaries. This gives added support to the notion that Duncanthrax was not in fact the commanding general of the Royal Militia, but rather an extremely high-ranking officer, perhaps a second in command in charge exclusively of the nearby Lingolf forces. So far, the course of events seems relatively clear. Numerous chronicles note that Zilbo was deposed and killed during a palace revolt at Largoneth. We have already shown how two simultaneous violent outbreaks led to an unexpected coup at the royal castle, leading many to believe that the king had been killed in the fighting. Thus, the following seems to be the best theory as to what happened during the New Year's Revolt.

#### **The Revolt of Duncanthrax the Bellicose (659-12-31 GUE)**

It was the thirty-first year of the reign of King Zilbo III in the year 659 of the Great Underground Empire. Zilbo III had taken vacation to the frequently occupied Royal Palace in Borphee. The thirty-first of Dismembur was the day of the planned revolt. On that final day, Duncanthrax, furious over an alleged shortage of mosquito netting, led the revolution to overthrow the king. It was not for this reason that the rest of the rest of the subjects of Quendor joined him to storm Castle Largoneth, they were just desperate for a more interesting ruler. Conveniently, in the process Duncanthrax declared himself the new king of Quendor upon the alleged removal of Zilbo III.

PART IV:  
**THE FLATHEAD DYNASTY**  
**660~883 GUE**

**Chapter 1: The Opening Years of Duncanthrax**

One day a king will rise to change the world. The first dynasty shall make its mark for seven centuries, and the new king will have the power to bring it to its knees. His dreams will lie deep underground, a burning ambition for the hollow cavern and the cold stone sky. Inspired by fear and driven by pride, he will tunnel into new realms, lower and lower in search of the truth. He shall build his vision, a mighty castle where the river gives tribute to the sea. An empire he shall create from the tools around him.

When the fallen angel, the Beast, walks among the mortal lords, tempting and buying their souls, his vile actions will give rise to a great battle in his underground lair. Defeated by the desert tribes and the servant of a dead king, he will lie for centuries, smoldering in wait. Hundreds of years to pass and the dead king's dynasty will have perished. A new empire shall have risen on the site of the great battle at the sea, and the new king will be noticed by the sire of the Beast. He will be owned by the devil and known as a warlike evil. A great price will be set upon each victory of the new empire. Behold, this proud and fearful age will have a number set upon its days, and its name shall be confusion.

-The Third Scroll of Kar'nai, Book Nine

**Pseudo-Duncanthrax Takes the Throne (660 GUE)**

Little is known about what became of Zilbo III after 659. One rumor stated that he was beheaded during the palace revolt; another stated that he simply died from too much reveling while celebrating the upcoming New Year. Recent uncovered documents prove both of those, and many other fables to be false. Satchmoz insists, along with several other writers, that Zilbo survived the revolt. Whether he had celebrated New Year's Eve in Borphee, or had in fact fled there after the outbreak of violence at Largoneth is not certain. What is for sure is that by the first day of 660, Zilbo was alone, isolated from his court and unprotected by any military power. When Duncanthrax himself had gone to Borphee for his coronation celebration (or perhaps his ascension was commenced there instead due to his eager pursuit of the missing former monarch) Zilbo had decided to walk away from the Borphee throne without saying a word to anyone. He just left a note that read, "I resign."

Duncanthrax was unable to find Zilbo, but placed enough guards to restrict him from leaving the metropolis. That very day, a grand celebration was thrown in the new king's honor at the Borphee Royal Palace. In his coronation speech, he declared, "I, King Duncanthrax, vow that I will stop at nothing to fulfill my every whim. Every petty longing, every outrageous desire, will be tasked upon my loving kingdom to fulfill. I also vow that my children, and my children's children will be raised with the very same values."

The cheering masses were enthralled by his naturally abusive behavior. They finally had a ruler who would keep them on their toes. And that he did, or at least his secret temporary usurper would. For Duncanthrax found that he would be on the throne for a mere day and night.

Immediately following the coronation, Drespo Molmocker, who was a minor magician, sought to interest the king with a mammoth project. The two discussed this proposal in secret, and by the end of the meeting, Duncanthrax refused, since the cost was far too great. As if this moment had been a result of decades of planning, Drespo Molmocker ensorcelled Duncanthrax with VAXUM, incanted the PLASTO spell to give him the identical appearance of Duncanthrax, and then had the real Duncanthrax imprisoned. It seems that this theft of identity was for the sole purpose of putting into action his bizarre desire to found the Frobozz Magic Company.



Drespo Molmocker had intended to impersonate Zilbo III, but trying to replicate a thousand little queer personality quirks would have easily tripped him up. Since Duncanthrax's reign of less than a day was too short to make his character widely known, it would not be suspected that the Duncanthrax sitting on the throne was but a fraud. To ensure his odd behavior was not detected, on the second day of what everyone knew to be the new king's reign, Pseudo-Duncanthrax began the task of rounding up everyone that the real Duncanthrax had ever known. His soldiers also seized all of the waifs and orphans, all the homeless who lived on the streets, all the vagrants with no employment, and had them enrolled in his prisons.

#### **What Became of Zilbo III? (660~665 GUE)**

Unable to escape from Borphee due to the heavily guarded gates and streets that had been flooded with the king's soldiers since the coronation, Zilbo III went into hiding behind the vast city walls. Pseudo-Duncanthrax was unwilling to admit that Zilbo had escaped from his hands. He feared that if the former king was found alive, that a new rebellion would arise. His fears were unfounded, as it appears unlikely that even a single soul would have been in favor of the boring former king. Regardless, Pseudo-Duncanthrax insisted that his soldiers find and murder Zilbo before any realized that he still lived. Using the alias "Zil", Zilbo III remained hidden within Borphee until 665 GUE.

#### **The Beginning of the Reign of Pseudo-Duncanthrax (660 GUE)**

Long years had caused Largoneth to be disused. Instead of returning to reign from the capital, one of Pseudo-Duncanthrax's first acts as king was to move the government of Quendor from Largoneth in 660 GUE. He was quite eccentric, as the new location of the capital was to be in Egreth, reputed to be the most dangerous and deadly territory in the known lands. Here the seat of power would remain for over a hundred years. The castle was to be moved as well. The people were pleased by this decree, but they absolutely swooned when he insisted that the job be done without disassembling a single piece of the castle. On several occasions during the moving process, entire legions of workers were crushed beneath the awkwardly moving mobile palace. So within the first six months of his rule, Pseudo-Duncanthrax had caused more unnecessary deaths than the entire Entharion Dynasty combined. Because it would be impossible to reign comfortably from the moving castle, the capital was temporarily located at Borphee.

Despite this tremendous move, Castle Largoneth still remains there to this day which has baffled historians for many generations. While the underground caverns that still held the Great Terror were not touched, it is unknown whether the levels of the castle that are seen today are remnants of the original, or merely a reconstruction upon the same foundation.

Another grandiose project of Pseudo-Duncanthrax was the Glass Maze, built on a whim in the same year, to amuse his friends and torture his enemies. This labyrinth of 27 cubicles, full of devilish pitfalls, is still today located underground near his castle, Egreth, just off the western branch of the Great Underground Highway #2.

#### **Conquest of the Westlands / The Age of Powder (660~662 GUE)**

Quendor at the time of Zilbo III's removal from power was relatively small, encompassing seven-and-a-half provinces divided along rather arbitrary and outdated boundary lines dating from the time of Entharion the Wise. These were Galepath, Mareilon, Quendor, Znurg, Vriminax, Bozbar, Frobozz, and Borphee (which had remained divided since the formation of the kingdom, ignored as too difficult to be worth the trouble). In those days, the major products of this agrarian land were rope and mosquito netting.

In the year 660 GUE, Pseudo-Duncanthrax raised a tremendous army to wage a systematic conquest of the neighboring kingdoms, quickly reaping a reputation for cruelty, bloodthirstiness and aggressiveness, thus forever earning the nickname "The Bellicose King." This vile ruler moved swiftly and brutally against the southern half of Borphee and put an end to the tottering and defenseless dynasty of Mauldwood. Finally accomplishing the merger of the two halves, Pseudo-Duncanthrax called the resulting territory Greater Borphee Province. This move began a trend; one by one, the neighboring principalities of Miznia, Gurth, and Mithicus were brought under Quendoran sway and given new provincial administrations. Orexia, on the extreme southern border of Miznia was not brought

into Quendor, Pseudo-Duncanthrax himself being too unwilling to combat the diseases and dangers of the Miznian jungles and swamps in order to reach Orexia itself. Thus within three years, Pseudo-Duncanthrax ruled an empire that controlled virtually all the land between the Great Sea and the Kovalli Desert.

One of the major components of his rapid success was the invention of gunpowder in the same year, which saw the development and mass production of guns, cannons, bombs and eventually rockets. Pseudo-Duncanthrax equipped his men and fortresses with these new projectiles—those at Fort Griffspotter are reputed to be some of the most magnificent erected in these days. The dangers posed by these firearms would motivate the engineering of new fortifications designed to defeat them.

With the completion of the conquest of the Westlands, Duncanthrax was faced with the peculiar problem of absorbing lands several times the size of his original kingdom. Clearly it made little sense to turn each conquered land into an individual province, since any one of the new territories would be much larger than most of the original provinces combined. At this point, realizing that the original seven provinces were now too small to be effective in the new system, one of his many administrative reforms was merging them all into the Province of Frobozz, thus bringing to completion the creation of the provincial system as we know it: Frobozz, Greater Borphee, Miznia, Gurth, and Mithicus.

But by the end of 662, with the Westlands under his rule, Pseudo-Duncanthrax was dissatisfied with the size of his empire. The nation of Quendor spanned across every inch of the Westlands, but the exploits of Yoruk had yielded two great landmasses that had yet to be conquered. His conquering eye looked to Antharia and the Eastlands.

#### **Gathering of Enchanters at Borphee (662~665 GUE)**

Berknip, the famous necromancer of the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries who led a life designed to confound all attempts at explanation, was born in the year 662 GUE. By the age of three, this mere child had already given the world five new spells. Most wizards had only dreamed of finding one, and already he was at par with the great Bizboz. Although many scrolls had been passed down from the early days of the Entharion Dynasty, there were few who still retained the knowledge on how to compose such a magical document. The magicians of these days primarily thrived upon these surviving scrolls and the works of Bizboz and Dinbar.

Kreplit, one of the primary enchanters of the days, believed that Berknip could potentially give magic back to the world. Not mere tricks, like the tying of shoelaces, or even kindling a fire, but truly magnificent magic. Kreplit summoned many others from all across the Westlands to gather with him at Borphee in anticipation of this great revival. In those days, this was the only place in all of Zork where a group of wizards and enchanters had dared to come together to share studies and do research. It was the only guild of its kind anywhere. (This guild is not to be confused with the official Enchanters Guilds which would not be formed until 680s, and the Borphee branch not founded until the reign of Dimwit Flathead.) For the most part, it was because wizards of those days were notoriously uncooperative, stingy and private characters. Most of them would rather have given their mothers the flu than to give away the secrets of a spell. Kreplit helped design and build the Borphee guild hall. His dream was for wizards' guilds all over Quendor. But the schemes of Pseudo-Duncanthrax were soon to place these academic achievements on hold.

#### **The Battle of Fort Griffspotter (665 GUE)**

The relatively easy conquest of Antharia on the part of Pseudo-Duncanthrax's naval force should not, contrary to popular belief, be explained by citing the bellicose and aggressive nature of the new Quendoran king. Unlike the king's territorial expansions in the Westlands, the war over Antharia was a strictly defensive maneuver. (Although if given the proper time, it is easily calculable that Pseudo-Duncanthrax would have cherished the notion of being the one to have instigated the conflict.) The king, in mustering the totality of his economic resources to create an immense naval force from scratch, did not immediately plan a scheme of oversea colonization and conquest. In fact, it is clear that the Quendoran king had only fleeting notions of the existence of any lands beyond Antharia, and in all likelihood had only the dimmest plans of expansion at the expense of Antharia.

A more likely explanation of the events lies in the history of the obscure and mysterious Antharian civilization that rose quickly in the 5th century GUE upon the failed pilgrimage to Hades. The Antharian Armada had grown quite large in the centuries since the island-nation was settled. Antharia was, at the time, the premier sea power of Zork. Setting out to conquer new lands and expand their own empire, a small portion of the Armada drew near to Fort Griffspotter along the Eastland coast.

Due to the lack of concrete military reports of this battle, many contradictory accounts of this great and famous battle have been in common circulation, even extending to blasphemous reports that Fort Griffspotter was an outpost in Antharia and not in its well-known location in Frobozz! Unraveling the details of this account have been time consuming, but the results below are an accurate rendition of this detailed massacre of the Antharians.

Sighting the renegade ships, Pseudo-Duncanthrax sent his own fleet to place the Armada in a pincer between his forces and the fort. While the tremendous cannons upon the battlements normally would have used little effort to dispatch the trapped fleet, the Antharians had already successfully invaded Quendoran soil and taken Fort Griffspotter for themselves. The Quendoran fleet found themselves barraged by both the fort's heavy artillery fire and a small fleet of Antharian ships, forcing Pseudo-Duncanthrax to withdraw.

Further attempts were made by the king to redeem Fort Griffspotter, but the long barrel guns continually held his ships at bay and prevented him from closing to grappling range. The ships were clearly no match for both the gunpowder and the imported Antharian war machines, and would have met a quick fate were it not for Pseudo-Duncanthrax's clever backup plan to dismantle the artillery fire.

The wise king secretly sent a ship full of spies in Antharian uniforms to infiltrate the fort. For several months, these men carefully sifted into the ranks and took posts within Fort Griffspotter. Pseudo-Duncanthrax continued to engage in small naval battles over the course of this subterfuge until at the key moment, the spies took out the fort's gunners, allowing Pseudo-Duncanthrax to move his ships into firing range.

Without the fort for support, the remaining Antharian fleet was trapped and destroyed. Unaware of the successful subterfuge, Pseudo-Duncanthrax's fleet let loose on the fort upon sinking the opposing battleships. The spies were killed in the shelling along with the remaining Antharian soldiers, and the tactic remained secret long enough for the reputation of the Quendoran Navy's might to be spread abroad.

By borrowing from Fort Griffspotter's vast armory and creating manufacturing facilities that mimicked the Antharians' advanced weapons technology, Pseudo-Duncanthrax's ground forces were able to hold their ground against a small retaliation by the Antharian army. Pseudo-Duncanthrax had orchestrated the first victory of the longest war in history, beginning the bloodiest battle ever waged on Zork.

### **Plans for Retaliation (665 GUE)**

Fumed that another country would dare to lay hold of his Empire, Pseudo-Duncanthrax set his mind not only to staging a counterstrike against the Antharian Armada, but an invasion of the entire island-nation. No one had ever invaded Antharia since its refounding. Some had tried to, but found that its cliff-lined coasts and heavily fortified harbors were a tough clam to crack. But the king had a plan which required both a vast navy, magical might, and a few sneaky tricks. He put his best engineers to the task of creating a fleet of ships that could overwhelm the Antharians.

Those of the recently established Borphee Guild of Wizards refused to be used as his weapons for conquering Antharia. Knowing that the child Berknip was the heart and soul of their guild, Pseudo-Duncanthrax took him prisoner. His ransom for the return of their precious magician was their cooperation in the upcoming battle against Antharia. The wizards would have done anything for Berknip and anything to protect him. All of their attempts to rescue him with AIMFIZ failed. And though they did not like Pseudo-Duncanthrax any more than any other ruthless king, but while he held Berknip hostage, he commanded their loyalty.

Perturbed by any notion of failure, Pseudo-Duncanthrax still feared that the ones whom he had imprisoned because of their proximity to the real Duncanthrax would spark rumors or escape to spread news of the odd behavior of the king. To solve this anticipated dilemma, his dungeons were emptied, and all captives found themselves chained to oars as slaves for warships that would soon be bound for Antharia.

But more men were needed. Concurrently while his fleet was being hastily constructed, Pseudo-Duncanthrax in collaboration with the man that he appointed to be the Gatekeeper of Borphee, sat down to author a compendium of new laws for the kingdom that were “written against everything but picking your nose, and that will be illegal tomorrow.”<sup>23</sup>

What follows are a few of the thousands of edicts:

Honor thy father and thy mother, that they may remember you in their wills.

Thou shalt not commit adultery with ugly women, nor with ugly men, nor with ugly combinations thereof. Neither shalt thou fornicate with farm animals, nor with fundamentalist religious practitioners lest they multiply beyond their number.

Thou shalt not steal unless thy income be already in the upper tenth percentile.

It was made certain that the least infraction of any of these countless city ordinances would result in dire consequences. It seemed that there was not a single resident of Borphee that was not exempt from at least a hundred of these laws. The finalized version was put into effect during spring of 665. This edict was followed by more soldiers, commonplace house-to-house searches, and a tremendous disappearance of the populace as they were tossed upon his warships as needed. The great metropolis was no longer the party place of Quendor that it had been in the past, as whichever citizens the king elected, were arrested and added to his ships’ crews.

### **Enter Caspar Wartsworth (c. 665 GUE)**

Caspar Wartsworth had never been cut out to be a farmer. Raised on a farm in Djabuti Padjama in the Peltoid Valley on Antharia, all his life he dreamed of seeing new lands and hiring himself out to various trades, from a minstrel to a sailor. But most of all, he wanted to see the city of Borphee.

His father that taught him that good music was a source of joy. But this joy was soon robbed from him when his father and mother passed away, willing what little the family had, including their son, to a nasty old uncle. Caspar had loved the night stars and had learned all the constellations by name and the farmers’ stories about them, but learning was not something his uncle encouraged. The boy had been beaten several times for it and called a “fool dreamer.” Amongst other ways his uncle downtrodded him, such as giving him a bed of hay in the barn loft, he raised bulls, and when Caspar was little, he liked to dress him in red.

The giving of the name “Wartsworth,” was a day most humiliating. When the townspeople had deemed him old enough to be sent to the fields with the rest of the village boys, he had gotten lost among the stalks corn which were taller than he was. When they had come to find him, someone remarked later that he would never be worth much as a farmer and someone else added, “Maybe what a wart’s worth.” And the name promptly stuck with the entire village.

None of those things propelled him to leave the Peltoid Valley. What forced him to finally leave was an incident with a very poor and very kind woman in Djabuti Padjama named Thyrsohel. Old enough to be Caspar’s mother, her husband had run off, leaving her with two small children, a baby, and a house that barely kept out of the rain. But she talked to Caspar like nobody else in the village ever did. She was not from the Peltoid, she had been places. But it had all been in the past for her. Her spirit was broken. She was tired, and she knew it.

Thyrsohel lived mostly on charity, and there was not much of that in Djabuti Padjama. Some of the bachelor farmers would give her odd jobs occasionally. Some would give her fieldwork. It was hard, but she managed. Then, in the summer of 664 GUE, Jelboz Stumpbiter lost his wife. Jelboz and Caspar’s uncle were tight. They would sit around all day complaining together about things, both of them were as miserable as a pair of rotgrubs with only one carcass between them.

Not a week went by after Jelboz buried his wife, that he asked Thyrsohel to come mop his floors for a copper zorkie. The next week he asked her to come clean his windows and wash his clothes for a silver zorkle. Poor

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<sup>23</sup> Zilbo III, 665 GUE

Thyrsobel did. He asked her how she would like to make a gold zorkmid, and poor dumb Thyrsobel with three children to feed, who did not want to say yes, could not say no. And worse, he refused to pay her afterward.

Jelboz and Caspar's uncle both had a good laugh about it out in the barn one afternoon. Their mistake was not knowing that Caspar was in the loft. Caspar had a plan to get even for his friend. He knew a stream where Jelboz and his pals would go to fish together. Caspar dug a pit near there in his spare time, and for days and days he collected the droppings from all of their farm animals which he had to unpleasantly lug for some distance.

Then one afternoon when Jelboz came to visit his uncle, Caspar suggested they all go for an outing. Caspar hid in the woods around the stream and waited, but dressed in one of Thyrsobel's outfits that he had borrowed without her knowing. After everyone had their lines in the water, Caspar crept a little closer, but not too close.

"Oh, Jelboz," Caspar called in the mimicked voice of a woman.

Jelboz was lured towards the disguised Caspar and tricked into tumbling into the pit full of dung. Unfortunately, the old fool managed to break his leg when he fell in, and while trying to get him out, Caspar's uncle fell in too. They blamed it all on Thyrsobel. Caspar had to confess to save her from a terrible beating. But his uncle did not save his back from the sting of the whip.

Aggressively, the entire village ran Caspar out of town. The angry and accusing faces of former friends and family were permanently engraved in his mind as he walked away with an agonizing back. He could never return to the village.

Caspar had never been out of the Peltoid Valley until that day. More than anything, he wanted to see the western shore of the Great Ocean. That was why, from among all the cities of Quendor, he had chosen to begin his life anew in Borphee as a sailor. The only thing he missed about his hometown was Thyrsobel; he missed her friendship.

And in the early spring of 665 GUE, nearing his nineteenth summer, after crossing the Great Sea from Antharia to Borphee, he stood on a hill overlooking the tremendous capital of Quendor.

### **Zilbo III into Exile** (spring 665 GUE)

Zilbo III reached that same hill as Caspar Wartsworth, at the same moment in fact. But what brought Zilbo to that hill was of a much different reason than the young man. Having secretly dwelled within the Borphee city limits for five years, the usurped king furthered the developments of his very own card game which, when completed, would be known as Double Fanucci. His scheme was for thousands of rich bored old people in retirement homes across the country to love it. He dreamed of making a quiet, personal fortune by publishing rulebooks and strategies and variations on the strategies, not to mention the playing fees he would collect from workshops and demonstration games. Physical pursuits had never interested Zilbo much, and thus the five years of poverty did not bother him. He simply entertained himself long into the evenings with his card game. But finally, that spring, the chance came for him to make his break. Zilbo slyly escaped the heavily guarded city and headed inland from Borphee.

Because of Zilbo's stealthy appearance and given alias, Caspar did not recognize the identity of this man. The former king of Quendor simply warned Caspar about the dangers of the chaotic Borphee—the multitude of soldiers in the streets, large disappearance of the city's population, and new restrictive laws. After Zilbo told Caspar to refrain from telling anyone that they had met, he quickly departed westward, neglecting to take his leather wine bottle, marked with the initial "Z". Caspar snatched the bottle and crossed the Plains of Borphee, which were packed with many rude passersby.

Having escaped the confines of Borphee, Zilbo merely exiled to a Mithican villa so he could devote the remainder of his life to inventing the popular card game Double Fanucci. Within the next five years, the card game was finalized and released to the public. And as early as 670 GUE, Double Fanucci was already the most popular game of all Zork.

### **Caspar in Borphee** (spring 665 GUE)

The gates of Borphee were heavily guarded by royal soldiers. The Gatekeeper, the same one that had helped compose Pseudo-Duncanthrax's new laws, attempted to write down Caspar's name in the registry. In reprisal to Caspar's smart-mouth, the Gatekeeper used his dagger and blood from one of Caspar's fingers to record the name.

All newcomers were forced to browse the new laws and pay a one-time gate fee (in this case, one zorkmid). Caspar passed through the gates, but the “Z” on the clearly marked wine bottle did not escape the soldiers’ eyes, for they knew the emblem of the former king. They pursued Caspar and knocked him out.

At twilight, the now naked Caspar regained consciousness in a jail cell beneath the Borphée Royal Palace. He was forcefully brought up from the dungeons and before Pseudo-Duncanthrax. The cause of Caspar’s woe was the “Z” marked wine bottle. Caspar shared with the king his meeting with Zilbo III on the road. Pseudo-Duncanthrax refused to allow anyone to roam who had had contact with the former king, and as a reward for this information, the new king permitted Caspar to serve him at the galleys.

Caspar Wartsworth found himself in a simple loincloth aboard one of the many Quendoran battle biremes known as the Screaming Queen under the command of Captain Chulig. He was but one of the men who had been chained to the galley oars to fight the king’s war against Antharia. Caspar was given the name “Number 22”, while his benchmate was “Number 23” and the man behind him “Number 24.” The current cabin boy was a young teenager, Sunrise, who had been one of the orphans seized by Pseudo-Duncanthrax. For the last month, the boy had been responsible to tend to the captain’s many needs, including handing out the food for the crew, whipping disrespectful prisoners, and even rumors that he was the captain’s object of rape. The wizard that was appointed to the Screaming Queen for war was Satchmoz the Incomparable, a minor wizard from the Borphée Guild who had been manipulated into becoming a pawn in the conquest.

Caspar had joined the crew only hours before their departure. At open sea, the fleet sailed southward, parallel to the Westland shore. Due to verbal rebellion, Captain Chulig commissioned for Sunrise to punish both Caspar and Number 23 with his infamous whip known as Betsy. It was during this time that Sunrise realized that Caspar would help him off this ship, for the man was not like the rest of the tired crew. Caspar was younger and stronger and angry—Sunrise knew the man would find a way out of the mess.

When the fleet sailed south past the shore of Mauldwood, the wind died and oars were again taken up. Clever Sunrise, wishing to free both himself and Caspar, knew that he needed to get close enough to Captain Chulig in order to snatch his keys. When the captain summoned Sunrise to pour his wine for him, the boy feigned a mishap by spilling it onto his pants. This decoy pressed him close enough to Chulig in order to snag the ring of keys from his belt. Because of this error, Sunrise was heavily beaten by the captain.

But the boy’s punishment was interrupted by the rising head of a sea serpent. The prow of the Quendoran bireme they were upon had been fashioned in the likeness of one of the fearsome serpents, that from a distance, no doubt appeared real. The living sea serpent had found the prow of the bireme to be an attractive mate. Had the serpent not stuck his head out of the water at the moment, Sunrise may have been beaten until he was killed.

The fearful prisoners attempted to break free of their bonds while the soldiers battled the serpent with ineffective weapons. When they failed, Satchmoz VAXUMed the aquatic beast, hoping to subdue it. This was in terrible error, as casting VAXUM upon an already friendly creature makes it affectionate. Thus the serpent fell madly in love with the prow, coiling around it, ripping it away, and departing into the sea with the prize. The Screaming Queen was left to sink.

Sunrise, who had the captain’s keys, unlocked the chains that were keeping Caspar bound to the ship, but was unable to undo the manacles about his wrists. Both of them were knocked into the water, but Caspar was forbidden to swim by the weight of the manacles. He was only saved by hanging onto the rope of a floating galley drum. Sunrise, and Satchmoz the Incomparable (the wizard himself had survived the drowning with LOUGANIS), both joined Caspar at the bobbing instrument and the trio swam to the shore of Mauldwood.

### **Mauldwood and the Castle of Nasturtium** (spring 665 GUE)

After Satchmoz REZROVed Caspar’s manacles, the three spent the night around a RADNOGed fire and shared a BERZIO potion<sup>24</sup> to alleviate their hunger temporarily. They debated whether to travel to Mithicus or to return to

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<sup>24</sup> Since potions were not invented until 769 GUE, some scholars see this as proof that the story is apocryphal, while others claim time travel as the culprit.

Borphee. Knowing that if everyone presumed he had drowned with the Screaming Queen, Satchmoz realized that no one would be watching him and he could thus be successful at freeing Berknip from prison.

While continuing to debate, they were ambushed by a clan of ten kobolds. A quick battle forced the three to flee separate ways and spend the entire night isolated from one another. The next morning, Caspar found Sunrise back at the shore of the Great Sea, where they both salvaged all they could from the wreckage of the Screaming Queen which had washed up on shore. Traveling back to the original campsite, they encountered Satchmoz when he AIMFIZED to their location.

The party agreed to return to Borphee. Knowing the dangers of Mauldwood, they headed north along the shore to avoid entering the forbidding trees. This evasion forced them to trudge through a swampy delta. Satchmoz slipped into an unseen drop-off, and while trying to help him out, Caspar too fell in. Due to the combination of all the hazards of the swamp, the party, defeated, reluctantly chose to enter Mauldwood instead of continuing through the muck.

The evil enchantment of the forest permeated them, and by the next day the symptoms were becoming transparent—the rude and ill-tempered behavior was beyond evident. As they followed a stream, the companions grew more paranoid, angry, queer, and frightful by the effects of the woods. Arguments and quarrels were born—one led Sunrise to attack Caspar. While fighting, he held the boy's head underwater as his arms flailed. Satchmoz laughed—the disturbing enjoyment of their conflict restored some sanity to Caspar. He pulled Sunrise out of the water, begging forgiveness. That was when they all realized that it was Mauldwood's evil enchantment that had been affecting them. To counter the effects of the forest, they fought off the evil influence with forced joviality and fun, but eventually they had a true cause for joy—for they stumbled upon an unused road, and they followed it as it curved north to follow the stream.

At twilight, the forest trek led them to the castle in the forest that belonged to Nasturtium, formerly owned by the father of Esmerelda. Since 160 GUE, Nasturtium had remained dwelling within the castle that was still protected by the time-suspension as well as a spatial-displacement spell (known originally as TRIZBORT, but later plagiarized as SATCHMOZ).

Sunrise picked the gate's lock with a dagger. A smart-mouthed statue was encountered in the courtyard. The gates closed behind them as it threatened to sound the alarm. Hoping to prevent the warning, they pushed the statue over, (the statue actually thanked them for doing this, as he had been standing on his feet for too long) but this feat was unable to prevent the alarm.

Ignoring it, the three went onward into the castle's main hall with the doors closing behind them. The moment he entered, Satchmoz became aware of the time-suspension spell that was placed upon the entire structure. As they followed the left corridor, they magically found themselves back in the main hall. The right corridor took them to a room with a spinning wheel. Leaving this room returned them to the main hall once again. The staircase took them to a long upper hallway. The first three rooms had nothing inside, but as they left the fourth room, they yet again returned to the main hall.

It was then that Satchmoz noticed that this castle was additionally enchanted with TRIZBORT, a spell that he had never witnessed before. It had kept kicking them back to the entrance hall, or the library in the upstairs. It was a brilliant piece of magic. He whipped out his infotater and sat down in the middle of the floor.

Leaving Satchmoz to meditate, Caspar and Sunrise returned up the staircase to continue the exploration. At the top of the stairs, the largest, ugliest, most mange-ridden black house-cat came down the stairs towards them—Meezel. Thankfully, the cat was friendly. Meezel lead the way, and the curious pair followed him along the second floor corridor to a tower, then to the landing of the high tower room. Caspar pried the door open with his sword.

In the room was a crystal coffin with the beautiful young Esmerelda within. She was sleeping, but the other two assumed she was dead. After pressuring one another to kiss her, Sunrise took up the dare. The sleeping beauty reared to life, screaming, "Rape!" and with a fast uppercut, caught Sunrise in the jaw.

Esmerelda was not yet aware that she had been sleeping for five-hundred years, nor was she aware of TRIZBORT until they attempted to leave the tower room and were transported to the library. After some difficulty of traversing the TRIZBORT enchanted castle, they rejoined with Satchmoz on the main floor. He had "discovered" the workings of TRIZBORT and planned to make it his own spell when he could completely analyze it.

When the three men, Esmerelda and her cat were about to leave the castle, the main doors suddenly disappeared and were replaced with a solid wall. The witch Nasturtium had returned. After a lengthy argument, Nasturtium finally gave in to their pleas and allowed for Esmerelda to depart with the men. As they left, Nasturtium called behind them, “I told you boys you’d pay for waking her up. Well, you will, too. I’m letting you take her.”

Esmerelda turned out to be an incredibly spoiled, selfish, demanding, complaining woman. She asked one of them to carry her, then chastised them for holding her too sensually. This constant bickering irritated everyone. Esmerelda lead them towards The Red Cock, a nearby inn to the north.

A surmin waddled out on the road and was paralyzed by their torchlight. The three slowly backed away from it, hoping not to startle it into blowing wind. The rodent slowly wandered into the bushes, but despite their extreme caution, Meezel chased after it. Fearing the retribution of the feline’s attack, everyone fled in the opposite direction, but were unable to escape being drenched by the extremely powerful stench of the surmin’s flatulence.

The stinking party was not welcomed by the six rough men of The Red Cock, save for Esmerelda whom they were frothing with the desire to rape. When the men went claim their prize, Satchmoz hexed their shoelaces, and the men tripped, giving leave for the party to escape into the woods.

The men gave chase. Sunrise hit one of the pursuers in the face with a torch, enveloping his beard in flames. When they thought that they had outrun them, Esmerelda ignorantly decided to take a bath in the stream despite wise protesting. This delay was a boon for the brigands to catch up to her. Knowing the lust of men, she slyly pretended to seduce him, and when he was enamored enough into believing her gig, she kneed him in the groin. Three more of the men, including the leaders caught up with them. Esmerelda tried to further fight back, but her neck was placed at dagger-point.

Satchmoz FROTZed the brigand leader’s dagger. Believing that it was Nasturtium who cast the spell and that she was after them, all of the remaining brigands fled the scene. Esmerelda showed Satchmoz an AIMFIZ scroll that she had stolen from Nasturtium ages ago. All of the companions joined hands and Satchmoz AIMFIZed the entire group to a brogmoid named Burble at the Wizard’s Guild in Borphée.

While it only seemed that they had been away from Borphée for days, time had progressed differently under the oppression of the enchantments of Mauldwood. Little did they know, but they would be returning to Borphée in the year 668 GUE. The passing of three years was but a few days in the woods.

### **Invasion of Antharia (665 GUE)**

Thus in 665 GUE, the forces of Pseudo-Duncanthrax went forth to vanquish the remainder of the Antharian Armada. Although the king had a powerful navy, his first engagement against the island nation would be a military feint. Stacking each of his battle biremes with only his weakest enchanters, he sent the Quendoran navy across the ocean to close in on the Antharian shore. His initial attacks against the Antharian Armada proved fruitless, causing his navy to lose the first engagement. But this outcome had been planned from the beginning—a colossal trick to instill the Antharians with overconfidence and lure them away from their fortress-like island. It was successful.

The Antharians relentlessly pursued the remnants of the first Quendoran force all the way back to the Westland coast. How could they have known that the cream of Quendor’s fleet and their best wizards were waiting for them? It was hardly a fight. Antharian lost every single pursuing ship to only seven of the most powerful masters.

Once all of the Antharian forces near Quendor had been eliminated, Pseudo-Duncanthrax returned his fleet to the Antharian shores where they met little to no resistance now that the island nation’s military might had been crippled. Eventually, Pseudo-Duncanthrax’s troops, assisted by the seven powerful masters of the Borphée Guild of Wizards, managed to quash every remaining enclave of the Antharian forces.

The defeat of the Antharian Armada and the purge of the island-nation gave Pseudo-Duncanthrax undisputed control of the Great Sea and put the superb shipbuilding facilities of Antharia at his disposal. Even more importantly, the conquest of Antharia also gave Pseudo-Duncanthrax possession of Antharia’s famed granola mines. Unfortunately, no one in Quendor liked granola. All of the minor wizards were imprisoned in Antharia, except for Kreokit and the other six most powerful of their order; the king would shortly have need of them.



One of the fastest spreading and most famous stories told all over Borphee after the war with Antharian was how an inflamed sea serpent ravished the Quendoran bireme of Captain Chulig, exiling the entire crew to the bottom of the ocean.

## **Chapter 2: Expedition of the Eastlands**

### **Expedition of the Eastlands (666 GUE)**

Still bothered by the alleged existence of the Eastlands, Pseudo-Duncanthrax directed his ships in its direction. Within months, Quendor's navy was returning from voyages with tales of a magical land on the distant eastern shore of the Great Sea. They also told of an underground civilization and giant red X's. Pseudo-Duncanthrax was incensed that this vast land existed outside his dominion, and spent many nights storming the halls of his castle bellowing at his servants and advisors. Then, one day, he had a sudden inspiration: assemble a huge fleet, cross the Great Sea and conquer the lands on the eastern shore.

The fleet hit shore in 666 GUE and instantly began ransacking whatever shreds of pre-existing civilization they could find. As Pseudo-Duncanthrax's invasion swept across the new lands, he made a startling discovery: huge caverns and tunnels, populated by gnomes, trolls and other magical races, all of whom loved granola. Not only would he extend his empire, but he would finally have a market for all the useless accumulated granola. What few armed resistance movements there were did not last very long. The strongest militia that the easygoing "natives" were able to pull together assembled at Zorbel Pass to face Duncanthrax's forces.

### **The Diablo Massacre (666 GUE)**

The most famous battle of the Eastlands campaign demonstrated Pseudo-Duncanthrax's daring, cunning and ruthlessness. The Diablo Massacre occurred at the Zorbel Pass when the invading armies of King Duncanthrax met a native militia of Eastland troll warriors. The Quendoran invaders were outnumbered but well-armed; the natives were equipped only with wooden clubs and a large piece of very strong garlic. Despite these crude weapons, the natives entrenched themselves at the exit of the narrow path and managed to hold the larger army at bay for some time, taking advantage of the narrow battleground to limit the size of Pseudo-Duncanthrax's vanguard to only a few men at a time, but Pseudo-Duncanthrax had a plan.

He responded by making a feint with his vanguard, attacking the heavily entrenched enemy. After a short skirmish, the brave general ordered a hasty retreat—the majority of his troops pulled out of the gorge. The natives, thinking they had forced a retreat and imagining victory was within their grasp, began a pell-mell pursuit of the remaining forces. Pseudo-Duncanthrax led the natives through the pass and out into the plains beyond. And there, on open ground, his waiting army closed on the chaotic hoard and swiftly cutting through their meager ranks, destroyed them. This battle marked the end of the last pathetic resistance to Pseudo-Duncanthrax's campaign. Military historians consider the routing of the native militia as a key moment in the conquering of the Eastlands. The remaining portions of the land were conquered without much difficulty, and within months, Pseudo-Duncanthrax was in control of the entire territory. And the other less sentient beings who occupied the land, such as many of the trolls and gnomes, were kept alive during the Pseudo-Duncanthrax conquests both for manual labor and their inherent novelty.

Within the years of 666~667, Castle Irondune was constructed (in what is today known as the Desert River Province) as a frontier outpost in Pseudo-Duncanthrax's campaign.

### **Locksmoore Befriends Pseudo-Duncanthrax (c. 666 GUE)**

Although the worship of fire and its corresponding elements has its roots in the primitive tribal cultures that thrived before the Age of Entharion, the modern form of the religion traces its origins to the time of Locksmoore. That long-lived ascetic wise man was one of the first to establish friendly contact between the conquered tribes in the Eastlands and the armies of Pseudo-Duncanthrax from the west. He was well-versed in the lore and religions of the primitive society, and shared this information with the Quendoran newcomers, even befriendng Pseudo-Duncanthrax and Cornelius Agrippa during their visits to the east.

### **Expanding the Empire Underground (666~668 GUE)**

While scouring the landscape for signs of where Yoruk began his fabled descent into Hades, Pseudo-Duncanthrax's soldiers stumbled into an intricate network of caverns and tunnels that spanned across the entire continent. Concurrently, the king learned of vast tunnels honeycombing parts of Antharia where various supplies were stored and weapons hoarded. This discovery came at exactly the right time for Pseudo-Duncanthrax, as he had recently become depressed after conquering every territory on the surface of Zork and having nothing left to do. Even as Pseudo-Duncanthrax conquered the Eastlands, his imagination was inspired by the natural underground formation and endless passageways. If these caverns and tunnels were possible in nature, so might they be formed by humans! This fat red-head realized that by burrowing into the ground and building such a network he could increase the size of his empire by fivefold or even tenfold! Quendor would no longer be the only nation without an underground kingdom!

There was one additional purpose behind the construction of these highways, Pseudo-Duncanthrax planned for them to link every major city and castle in Quendor and the outlying provinces, and when they were complete, scores and scores of its soldiers would pay each of them a wonderful surprise visit. Then his rule would be truly complete.

### **Frobozz Magic Construction Company Founded (668-03-19 GUE)**

History tells us that with all Zork in his grasp and nothing left to conquer, Pseudo-Duncanthrax founded the Frobozz Magic Construction Company (the forerunner of the modern industrial giant FrobozzCo International) to undertake this ambitious project on Arch 19, 668 GUE. It is known that the original FrobozzCo building was constructed in 667 GUE prior to Pseudo-Duncanthrax's founding of the company. It is also thought that the Frobozz Magic Company had been originally founded by J.B. Frobozz, whose motto was "Sell Good Magical Aids." Thus it may be safe to conclude that Pseudo-Duncanthrax "acquired" this company instead of having been its initial founder. This usurper of the throne is classified as being the first president of the company.

Pseudo-Duncanthrax required the energy of the seven most powerful wizards of the Borphee Guild in unison with every living being to complete his mammoth vision. In order to maintain control of the Kreplit and the other six most powerful wizards, the king continued to hold Berknip hostage, although he relocated the child to Antharia, thereby manipulating them to use their powerful KATPIL spells to move earth wherever he wished. The king coaxed the remainder of the populace into laboring for the highways with a cache of VAXUM scrolls.

With both the wizards and almost every citizen of the empire employed for the project, work quickly started on the new underground tunnels and Pseudo-Duncanthrax began expanding downward in both the eastern and western lands. The natural caverns in the eastern lands would be expanded tremendously, and new caverns and passages would be dug in the western lands, chiefly in the vicinity of Egreh Castle and Borphee. This outset of this entire underground project would later become known as the Great Labor.

His shrewd business acumen, paired with the utter lack of any competition, allowed the company to almost immediately broaden into several affiliated subsidiaries under the new FrobozzCo International umbrella. Three of the first spawns were: the Frobozz Magic Cave Company, the Frobozz Magic Dirt Removal Company and the Frobozz Magic Underground Sewer Installation Company. Within the year, FrobozzCo International was formed as a parent company for the burgeoning subsidiaries. By 743 GUE, FrobozzCo International would oversee more than 17,000 subsidiaries.

### **The Temple of Agrippa Constructed (668 GUE)**

One of the most noteworthy projects in 668 GUE was the Temple of Agrippa, said to be the roots of the secret alchemical society. When the armies of Pseudo-Duncanthrax's conquered Kivolli (the region near what would later be known as the "Desert River Province" and much later, "the Valley of the Sparrows") the ancient town was little more than ruins on a huge mountain. Nearby earthen tunnels gave way to an underground temple near the town. This Temple of the Ancients was archaic, dedicated to the pseudo-god Athena. From what the researchers could tell, the religion apparently had an animistic nature and its ritual involved the worship of elements and base metals. Some said that the ruins went back to the days of Yoruk, but there was no definite way to confirm this assumption. Locksmore had saw this place fit for his experiments and religious dedication.

At any rate, Pseudo-Duncanthrax gave the entire area to the Agrippa clan in a land grant that they would hold onto for another two hundred years. In that year, the mountain was further hollowed out, the temple rebuilt and expanded, and the Frobozz Magic Construction Company connected the temple to the rest of the underground at Mile 735 of the Southern Highway. Some say Locksmoore was responsible for the reconstruction; others claim that this was highly unlikely. The head of the Agrippa family in the seventh century was the only person outside of Duncanthrax himself that could have afforded the job. Though it appears that Locksmoore heavily imbued the temple with magical powers—the magical symbols and emblems woven by the sorcerer into the very architecture and fabric of the temple.

Cornelius Agrippa himself seemed to have been the first head of the modern alchemical order, the first in a direct line of succession that still survives possibly even today. Perhaps in his exploration for the temple ruins, he discovered some way to unlock the secret science of the ancients. Agrippa was one of the few friends that Pseudo-Duncanthrax kept with him throughout his whole time as king. He was also one of the first engineers and explorers to accompany the king during his first expeditions into the newly-discovered underground caverns in the east. Perhaps there, Agrippa too discovered the alchemical truths that had been revealed to Yoruk a millennium before.

Through his intense study of the ancient secrets, Locksmoore gradually found his way to the truth regarding the purifying religious power of fire, and even recovered both Yoruk's shield and journal. His holy and ascetic nature had won him the approval of spiritual forces (which are suspected to be demonic), who granted him an extremely long span of life. He would manage to outlive the first six ruling members of the Flathead Dynasty before being executed inadvertently by one of Dimwit Flathead's overzealous governors.

Before his death, he would found an ascetic order of monks that still survives even today. Perched high atop the lonely mountains of the Steppinthrax Peninsula, the Steppinthrax Monastery would keep alive the fire of his ancient beliefs for many centuries.

### **Pseudo-Duncanthrax Exposed (668 GUE)**

In an eight year span, Pseudo-Duncanthrax had expanded the nation of Quendor across all of Zork. By all accounts, the empire had reached its zenith. But what of the true king? By the time that Caspar, Sunrise, Satchmoz, Esmerelda and Meezel arrived in Borphee, the magic of the Frobozz Magic Tunneling Company had already completed many tunnels, reaching as far south as Mithicus and as far north as the wilds of Thriff and all the way to the Gray Mountains of the Westlands. And more tunnels were under construction.

Everyone was puzzled by the tremendous passage of time that had occurred outside of Mauldwood. The war with Antharia had been fought and won. But what was most perplexing for Satchmoz, was that now that Antharia had been conquered, why had the wizards had not yet returned to the guild? It was still vacant save for the brogmoid Burble, who had been quite confused during their absence (imagine a five-year old child running any entire household for three years, doing as he pleased).

Though Burble belonged to the guildmaster Krepkat, he sadly devoted himself to Satchmoz temporarily since he was the only wizard at the guild. The other members of the party were given separate bedrooms, each with its own bath. Satchmoz worked through the night at the guild library, writing down the elements of Nasturtium's TRIZBORT. When he deciphered it, made a few changes, and wrote it on a spell scroll, he entitled the newfound spell SATCHMOZ.

The next morning, Caspar woke and indulged in another bath, while Burble served him breakfast in his room. The food was great, the bed soft, and there were plenty of nice clothes. This was the life that Caspar had left Djabuti Padjama for.

Suddenly, the entire building trembled from the digging of the Frobozz Magic Tunneling Company. Everyone gathered at the Crystal Room for tea and biscuits. It was then that Esmerelda learned that she had been asleep for almost five-hundred years. After some unsympathetic comments from the men, she left the room angered. The others went to spend time alone.

Satchmoz enchanted the front door with a "rap at the door" in hopes of preventing them from leaving the guild, while he locked himself in the library in an attempt to search for Berknip. Seeking advice, Satchmoz AIMFIZed to a friend at the Shallow Sea.

After dinner, Sunrise and Caspar made the decision to explore Borphee. They were prevented by the “rap at the door” who told them in style that Satchmoz demanded that they stay inside. Upset at this barricade, Caspar stuffed his cloak in its mouth and after suffocating, it vanished.

Caspar was mesmerized by the sight of the Borphee wharves with all of its majestic ships. After the sightseeing, the two headed to the Blue Whale, the most popular bar in Borphee which lay at the heart of the city—The Serpent’s Back. The streets there were deserted, as the soldiers had already rounded up all the orphans, homeless, and criminals that once plagued this sector of the city. Now that a curfew was in effect, six soldiers found them in violation of his new law.

Sunrise used his superior knowledge of the city to escape with Caspar into a warehouse. After the soldiers passed, Caspar insisted on sneaking into the Borphee Royal Palace to find out what was going on. He found the palace too well-guarded to break into, and they returned to the guild hall in defeat.

Satchmoz returned to the guild hall via another AIMFIZ spell, but he had discovered no new information during his journey. He agreed that the knowledge he sought was within the palace. Esmerelda outlined a bold, though risky, plan to enter the castle. This plan was quickly put into action.

Burble was left at the guild hall as their AIMFIZ anchor. Sunrise sneaked the rest of them (including Meezel) to a secluded park near the palace’s main gate where guards were stationed. While waiting for the proper time to put their plans to action, Meezel aroused Sunrise’s allergies, flinging him into a bout of sneezing that alerted the guards. Before getting all of them caught, Caspar though quick and leapt to his feet impersonating a drunkard. When the guard was reluctant to arrest him for breaking curfew, Caspar kissed him. Thus passage to a personal cell was bought.

Caspar waited in the cell until the rest of the group AIMFIZed to him. Satchmoz REZROVed the lock. While the others left to explore, Satchmoz huddled in the cell as a decoy for Caspar as not to arouse suspicion from a vacant cell.

When Esmerelda refused to leave Meezel behind, she went on ahead without warning. Caspar and Sunrise quickly lost sight of her. The two males headed to the upper level, past a sleeping guard. Caspar traced the route which the jailkeeper Olio had taken him on during his prior visit to the king. They eventually made their way inside a bedroom, then onward to a library which was stocked with blueprints of the Great Underground Highway and several spell scrolls.

Elsewhere in the palace, Esmerelda’s handiwork alerted the guards. Soldiers could be heard running up and down the corridor outside the door. When they had faded, Sunrise and Caspar went out. The movement of guards was heard again and they rushed into the harem just in time to see them pass the closed door. At Caspar’s suggestion, they both disguised themselves as woman complete with veils.

Upon arriving at the throne room, Caspar carved “The king is a fink!” into the wood of the throne. Guards passed by the room again. The commotion in the halls was becoming too much, so they attempted to return to Satchmoz in the cell and escape.

Past the harem, Caspar and Sunrise found a pair of sentries. Pretending to be women who had just spent the night with Pseudo-Duncanthrax, the guards informed them of the intruder. Sunrise kneed one of the soldiers in the groin, and Caspar tripped the other.

Returning to the dungeon, the guard at the desk was no longer asleep. The two were able to deceive him into believing that Duncanthrax had sent them to find Olio. When Sunrise convinced the guard to allow him to whisper a secret into his ear, he instead caught the guard off-guard and they both assaulted him before heading down into the dungeon.

Caspar unlocked the cell of another prisoner and that prisoner released more prisoners. Sunrise and Caspar returned to find Satchmoz and Esmerelda at the cell. As the soldiers stormed the cell and Satchmoz cast AIMFIZ, Meezel leaped at the guards and was left behind.

When they returned to the guild hall, Satchmoz mentioned that while in the cell he had sensed powerful magic being used—his head had been “buzzing like a hornet on a three-day drunk”, as he put it. Sunrise had managed to steal a jeweled belt, silver medallion and a VAXUM scroll from the palace. None of this was of interest to Esmerelda, who unreasonably desired to go back into the palace for her beloved Meezel.

In the meantime, the palace guards recognized the usage of the party's magic from their break-in attempt. They equipped themselves to raid the guild. Knowing this was evitable, Satchmoz knew that they could not remain in the guild. They had to flee before the soldiers arrived. To protect the scrolls from being seized, Satchmoz instructed for everyone to fill backpacks with as many of them as possible, while Burble packed provisions. Satchmoz and Caspar additionally each made a copy of the TRIZBORT/SATCHMOZ master scroll that had been recently prepared.

The soldiers arrived at the courtyard of the guild and broke down the unlocked doors with a battering ram, then entered. One lone man remained outside. Burble imitated a little whimpering child and the soldier, knowing the immaturity of the brogmoid species, was fooled by this act. Unexpectedly, the soldier was knocked down by Burble and he threw him inside.

Once all of the soldiers were completely inside the guild, Satchmoz cast TRIZBORT/SATCHMOZ upon the guild hall, so that all of them would keep ending up in Krepkit's bathroom instead of being able to escape. Then the entire party proceeded to escape.

But blocking them from leaving was Nasturtium herself. She was agitated because of the shaking caused by the digging of the Great Underground Highway beneath her basement—the entire north tower of her castle had fallen in. She was determined to find those responsible and had followed the tunnel all the way to Borphee. She joined the group as they fled the courtyard to an old warehouse near the wharves.

After Nasturtium realized that Satchmoz's SATCHMOZ looked exactly like her TRIZBORT, they all agreed to reenter the palace. This time Nasturtium would be the anchor for AIMFIZ. She flew into the courtyard on her broom and used a powerful spell to put all of the guards on the exterior of the palace to sleep. She saved an additional one for the soldiers still within. When they had given her plenty of time to properly complete her deeds, Satchmoz AIMFIZed them to her position inside the palace.

Once inside the palace, Nasturtium magically put more guards to sleep. Satchmoz was highly impressed with the magical ability of the ugly witch. Without anyone noticing when she left, Esmerelda went in search of Meezel. A low laugh rumbled out of the darkness—someone knew that they were there.

A corridor that they found gradually descended to an abandoned torture chamber deep below the palace. Another low laugh vibrated through the air as they followed the passage beyond that descended lower and lower underground. It was then that the party realized that the source of the laughter was a single pursuing grue. The rumor that all grues had been eradicated by Entharion the Wise caused this encounter to be startling.

To keep the grue at bay, Caspar plucked a few broom straws from Nasturtium's previously FROTZed broom and flicked them into the darkness. A straw was dropped every twenty paces or so to keep the grue away as the party continued onward. Without warning, the tunnel suddenly sloped downward like a slide. They all tumbled into a node with several tunnels leading from it and with a huge crystal door.

The FROTZ spell on the broom died, plunging them all into complete darkness. The grue fell into the node with them. Burble went after the grue but was instantly swatted away. In retaliation, Nasturtium FROTZed the grue. Before their horrified eyes, the maddened beast ran about chaotically with pain-wracked roaring, pounding on the walls while its fur and flesh were consumed by the light. All that remained was a black smoking crumbled mass.

Pseudo-Duncanthrax appeared in the chamber, enraged by the death of his pet grue. But before anyone could assault him, he VAXUMed the entire group, forcing them to become adoring subjects. Now that they were all subjected, Pseudo-Duncanthrax opened the great crystal door with a touch of his wand.

Esmerelda in the meantime had found Meezel in the dungeon, who had been terrorizing the guards. She suddenly dropped in from one of the chutes. Unable to stop her momentum, she knocked Pseudo-Duncanthrax over. A harsh word from him broke the VAXUM enchantment. The king tried to escape into the crystal room, but Meezel dropped in from above and landed on his back. His cloak was torn off, but using his wand, he escaped through a hidden door that locked behind him and Drespo Molmock, impersonator of Duncanthrax, slipped from the pages of history forever.

A search of through Pseudo-Duncanthrax's cloak revealed KATPI, VAXUM and PLASTO scrolls in the cloak (as well as a small key ring, bottle opener, 2 zorkmids, 1 zorkle, 4 lint balls).

They passed through the crystal door into the Great Underground Highway, and came to a place where hundreds of men, woman, and children were making mortar for the highway's roadbed. The real King Duncanthrax

was amongst this group, all having been ensorcelled by Pseudo-Duncanthrax's VAXUM. An outburst of anger at Duncanthrax from the party instantly broke the VAXUM spell. Burble went around whispering naughty words into people's ears to break each individual's enchantment.

Crafty Nasturtium had always desired for Esmerelda to be in a good marriage, and cast a love spell. Because of the enchantment, Esmerelda was instantly attracted to the king. The two were amorous for each other from that day forth.

Satchmoz realized that the entire group could not return the way they had come, but believed that he could use TRIZBORT/SATCHMOZ to transport everyone home. Satchmoz told everyone present, including Burble, to concentrate on their homes for the enormous amount of presence that would be required by the spell. Everyone chanted "There's no place like home" while Satchmoz cast the spell. Everyone was transported back to their respective homes. This event of returning home is known today as "The Great Magic."

The spell scrolls that they left within the tunnels were scattered, and would begin to show up all over the kingdom for centuries to come. As they were discovered, they were used, and would become so rare and forgotten by the days of Davmar (c. 755 GUE) that he would be able to reinvent (or plagiarize) them.

A debate was quickly held in the Borphée Royal Palace on what was to be done with the tunnels. Satchmoz was appointed as the court wizard, and at his urging, the decision was made to complete them. The idea was that it was good to link all of the great cities of Quendor with one massive road system. The cost would be offset by selling space on the walls to merchants who wished to advertise their business. Thus for the next twenty years (668~688 GUE), cavern-building would continue at a breakneck (literally) pace, causing the true king to retain the title of *Bellicose*. Thus Duncanthrax became responsible for what his great-great-great-great-grandson, Dimwit Flathead, would call the Great Underground Empire.

It was also considered what should be done with the province that Pseudo-Duncanthrax had conquered. As long as Antharia belonged to Quendor, Duncanthrax intended to keep it. All of the lesser wizards of the guild, including Berknip were freed from their imprisonment on the island.

Esmerelda was Duncanthrax's bride-to-be, and the jealous king did not approve of Caspar's friendship to her. Thus he appointed Caspar to be the king's roving minstrel and good-will ambassador for the crown to the outlying provinces and lands far away, with Sunrise as his assistant. As far as Caspar was concerned, with his pockets full of the king's coins and fine clothes on his back and the doors of every court open to him, the results of the adventure could not have worked out better. Sunrise was also permanently gifted with Meezel.

When Berknip returned with the wizards to the Borphée Guild two days after the Great Magic, Meezel's hair grew back over the bald spots and the broken ear was straightened by their help. Satchmoz was pampered by the rescued enchanters, although Kreokit was sour. First of all, the guildmaster was embarrassed about being tricked and captured by Drespo Molmocker. Second, he was not happy that Satchmoz, a supposedly minor wizard, saved him, or that Drespo managed to make a clean getaway. Third, some of the other wizards were pressuring him to give up his bathroom, since someone told him how much Satchmoz loved the big bathtub.

The now famed magician was in love with Nasturtium and had plans to see her again in the near future. Nasturtium had not had a date in four-hundred years and Satchmoz had never had one. What could have been more perfect? In those days, not only did Satchmoz write countless memoirs which still survive to this day. He additionally crossed to the Eastlands and conspired with Cornelius Agrippa and delved into the heretical art of alchemy. He was later buried at the Steppinthrax Monastery at the side of other renowned alchemists.

It was also on that day that Berknip created his sixth new spell. It is not known how many spells he made during his days, but his life would pause temporarily in 750 GUE, only to be resumed again in 841. He would be survived in by seven children and 39 grandchildren, but then would out-relive them all. In 966, he would be the oldest active necromancer and the date of his death is unknown.

### **Duncanthrax's Murder Attempt (668 GUE)**

Which Duncanthrax attempted to quietly murder Cornelius Agrippa in 668 GUE is a matter of much controversy, and is a rather unsolvable puzzle. As Drespo Molmocker's impersonation was unmasked this year, it cannot be determined whether the homicide occurred before or after this discovery. A few historians point to the letter from

Agrippa to the king, making note of the overabundant praise in the greeting, as well as the tremendous insults that were not characteristics of the second king. One does well to keep in mind that the authentic Duncanthrax, while having nothing left to conquer, did his best to finish the ruthless deeds of underground expansion. It also is possible that Agrippa, residing in the isolated underground temple, had no recollection of the restoration of the true monarch. This would account for the heavy feeling of betrayal and the bizarre murder attempt that would seem to be a rather quick change of behavior. It should also be noted that the Unnatural Acts, banning illegal magic were enacted during the days of the authentic Duncanthrax, and it does not seem outside of his character to have banned alchemy as an evil practice from the start.

Whichever king it was, Agrippa, who had continued to practice alchemy within, decided that the art was too dangerous to be exposed to men devoid of compassion. Duncanthrax sent a spy with poisoned fruit, hoping to trick Agrippa into consuming it. But the spy ended up consuming the fruit instead and choked to death on his own villainous bile. In response, Agrippa sealed up the temple so that the king would never have access to what he sought, and then composed the following letter to the king:

To King Duncanthrax, My Holy and Exalted Ruler, The King of Kings, The Emperor of All  
Both Above the Earth and Below, More Bellicose Than Mother Hungus Defending Her Young

A greeting to your lecherous soul. I bear ill news.

Your spy is dead, choked to death on his own villainous bile. He had consumed the sweet, but deadly fruit you so kindly bequeathed to me. You stand alone as a soul of pestilence and putridity, a festering wart on the hindquarters of humanity. Be you assured that I have sealed off the places that you seek, made certain with your tools of choice, with powder and with fire, that you shall never find the places that you seek. I, too, practice more than alchemy.

Nor think you that my secrets are of maps and words alone. In the black darkness of your heart, there is not room enough for the smallest inkling of the knowledge that you seek. Nor will your brilliant scientists avail you. To them, Alchemy is nothing but a principle – the purification and transmutation of base metals into Gold, the search for power. The goal of goals, the Quintessence, pure distillate of Human Spirit, lies well beyond their ken. They have too much in common with your most learned and thoughtful self; their hearts are black as pitch and bled of any memory of love or empathy. In all due time, their highest honors and diplomas shall follow you on your stately journey into Hell. With men such as you, it is better to let knowledge fallow than curse the world with your brand of benevolence.

With all Humility,

Your Most Insignificant and Smelly Servant,

Agrippa

The Eastlands

668 GUE

### **The Second Wife of Duncanthrax (c. 670 GUE)**

At the turn of the century, King Duncanthrax retired with Queen Esmerelda to his castle at Egret in 670 GUE, victorious. Upon settling, one of Duncanthrax's first tasks was to start a family. This was something he took very seriously. History, at this point, has not preserved the results of Duncanthrax's marriage to his first wife. Whether it was the breaking of the love-spell, or her death that dissolved the marriage, or merely that Duncanthrax sought to collect a horde of wives, he made a rather baffling decision.

The king announced to his kingdom that he was to be the first king of the Flathead Dynasty. This took the people by surprise, as it was not known to be a part of his title, nor was it at all indicative of the clearly non-flat shape of his head. He declared that from then on, the flatness of one's head was to be directly correlated with their royal stature, and that he sought the most flatheaded woman in the land to become his queen. The call went out across the Westlands and in a very short time, Duncanthrax had found a particularly flatheaded and very stunned young lady from Mareilon, named Salestra. They were married immediately,

### **Ceremonial Flyswatter (c. 671 GUE)**

A flyswatter was used as a ceremonial object in a ritual involving the Four Fantastic Flies of Famathria.



and within the year had their first son. The boy was named Belwit the Flat, and much to Duncanthrax's pleasure, his head did indeed have a somewhat flat shape to it.

Throughout the remainder of Duncanthrax's reign, Egreth Castle was a lively place, the site of daily tournaments, brave knights, daring feats, beautiful princesses, banquets, orgies, and other diversions of the lusty, rowdy king. Great feasts and extravagant parties were held with suckling pigs, berry tarts, and mead.

### **The Unnatural Acts (672-12-09 GUE)**

Upon returning to his homeland, Duncanthrax found that the "Weird Stuff" of Bizboz's writings had spread like a cancer during his absence with mixed results. Many of his subjects had taken to the liberal use of scrolls, potions, and powders for everyday needs. These unskilled sorcerers were inadvertently wreaking havoc on the land. Other charlatans, claiming to have created magical potions and powders, regularly fooled the gullible population into buying potions which claimed to do such things as "reverse hair loss" and "draw Trebled Fromps in Double Fanucci." There were many appeals to public ignorance. Something had to be done.

As a response to widespread magical charlatanism, Duncanthrax the Bellicose wrote and passed the Unnatural Acts on 9 Dismembr 672 GUE, which put heavy restraints on the unauthorized use of magic and outlawing the sale of "Unnatural or Supernatural substances." There were severe penalties for anyone convicted of selling the contraband. To carry out punishments for the abuse of magic, a diabolical machine was designed to imprison those found guilty in small, metal cases known as totems. It was dubbed the Totemizer machine. This was to be his last significant act as king. The Empirical Age of Magic was nearing its closure.

### **The Gray Mountains Asylum Dedicated (680 GUE)**

The construction of the Gray Mountains Asylum was finished in 680 GUE and dedicated in the same year by Duncanthrax.

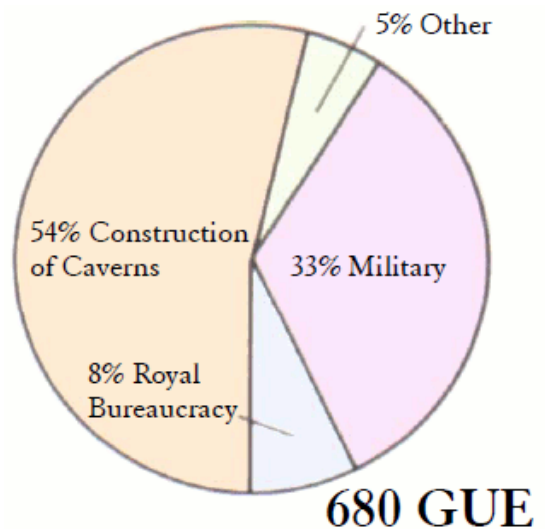
### **Dawn of the Scientific Age of Magic (683 GUE)**

While the charlatans were at work, serious students from such institutions as Galepath University and Mithicus Province University took up the cause of magic in their spare time, attempting to explain the natural world as by-product of the interrelated workings of the sciences of Physics, Medicine, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Thaumaturgy. Eventually, some of these students achieved high-ranking positions on the faculties of several moss-league colleges. Their success in demonstrating the so-called first principles of Thaumaturgy, namely Presence, Incantation, and Unusual Effect, led to a loosening of the Unnatural Acts to allow what became known as Scientific Thaumaturgy.

This new perception of magic combined with the removal of restrictions during this period, allowed magic to be practiced and experimented with by an ordained institution called the Enchanter's Guild. This legitimate organization was formed by the great thaumaturge Vilboz. The first and most famous house of the Enchanter's Guild (called "chapters") was founded in the tiny hamlet of Accardi-by-the-Sea. Since that day, additional chapters have usually been located in similar small villages, since the bustle of city life interferes with an Enchanter's work ("Excuse me, I locked my keys in my house. Could you please rezrov my door?").

From the earliest days of the Guild, Enchanters have been bound by a series of governing tenets. The first tenet states that Enchanters may never use their talents to aid evil. The second points out that an Enchanter's duty is to the Guild and to the Kingdom, not to the individual. Lesser tenets include rules for conducting votes at meetings, guidelines for passing dishes at Guild banquets, and penalties for revealing the Guild's secret handshake.

### **Expenditures of Duncanthrax's government**



### Chapter 3: From Duncanthrax to Dimwit

#### **Death of Duncanthrax / Reign of Belwit the Flat (688~701 GUE)**

In 688 GUE, after a long stretch of relatively non-bellicose activity, Duncanthrax passed away and was buried in the royal tomb. By the time of his death, Duncanthrax ruled an empire consisting of virtually all territory in the known world, above and below ground. Although Duncanthrax himself continued the far-reaching projects that Drespo Molmocker began to their logical conclusion, it is likely that without Drespo's short seizure of power, the entire course of the Flathead Dynasty would have been remarkably different, as well as his slightly less-bellicose character not being tarnished to full bellicosity by the violent wars of expansion commonly attributed to his name.

During his nearly three decades of absolute power, he had had taken great pains to ensure that Quendoran history was rewritten to place him in the best of all possible lights; this revisionist approach affected not only the writing of obscure children's books, but also the attitude of the entire royal family as well, generation after generation of Flathead monarchs feeling totally incapable of filling the shoes of Duncanthrax.

As early as 731 GUE, children's history books of Quendor that were used by various royal tutors were used to brainwash the family line, clearing stating, "Duncanthrax was the best king of all time." Even frescos have been found dotting the walls of the places such as the Summer Castle in Fenshire, which depict the spirit of Duncanthrax ascending to heaven on a tremendous ladder at his death, surrounded by a host of angels.<sup>25</sup>

The throne was left for his first son, Belwit the Flat and then a long series of his descendants. These were unspectacular rulers, who took on the surname Flathead, for obscure reasons not necessarily related to the planar shape of their plates. During this period, which extended to 770, there was very little change in the Empire, as the conquered kingdoms were assimilated into Quendor and the frantic pace of tunneling gradually abated. After Duncanthrax's death, the new owners were not keen on Egret and the castle fell into gradual decline.

Belwit the Flat ruled the kingdom for 13 years until 701. His reign is noted for a couple famous events. The increasingly popular card game, Double Fanucci, had its first championship competition in Borphée (691-09-?11?). Thousands were left homeless in the ensuing Fanucci mania. Secondly, the zorkmid, Quendor's primary form of currency, was minted, bearing his likeness and some smeared letters that formed the words "In Frobs We Trust." (699-08-18)

#### **The Origins of the Modern Currency System (695~699 GUE)**

Since the death of the zorkmid trees, the granola and precious metals that poured into Quendor from the lands to the east proved to be an effective support to the Quendoran economy for nearly a generation. But by Belwit's time, the initial euphoria had quieted somewhat, and the lack of a steady supply of zorkmid coinage was once again making itself felt. It was Belwit's creative and daring response to this economic crisis that saw the birth of the minted zorkmid, the stable currency upon which we still rely today.

It was now that Belwit decided to take the radical step of ordering the minting of the first regular issue of Quendoran zorkmids. Although the order itself came down from the throne in 695, it was not until the third week in Augur, 699, that the mints underneath Egret were finally readied to stamp the first coin with a design that had been four years in the making. For many generations, historians have puzzled over the reasons behind Belwit's decision to begin the production of official, government-approved zorkmids. After all, several different sources tell us that a highly sophisticated system of zork-based currency had already been in use for years before the New Year's Revolt. In fact, one of our best sources on the economic history of the pre-Duncanthrax Westlands is a series of text books ranging from early grammar school to college that includes the following basic arithmetic problem:

There are 10 silver zorkles in one gold zorkmid, and 10 copper zorkies in one silver zorkle. If one blowing goat costs 5 zorkmids, how many zorkies would you need to buy 40 blowing goats?

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<sup>25</sup> Some religious scholars believe that these frescos may not be vain attempts by Duncanthrax at self-glorification, but that the Bellicose king may have repented prior to his death.

Despite the fact that the text book, dated 642 GUE, adds much unnecessary confusion to the blowing goat controversy, it does at least make clear that the advanced system of currency that was put into official use by Belwit in 699 was not in fact a new system.

### **Reign of Frobwit the Flatter (701~727)**

With the succession of Belwit's son in 701 GUE, Frobwit the Flatter, came an even less restrained appreciation for magic, as well as an even flatter head. During his 26 years rule until 727, the art and science of Thaumaturgy flourished.

The Frobozz Magic Vault for the Aragain Village branch of the Bank of Zork was constructed. (722 GUE)
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### **Birth of Dimwit Flathead (723~748 GUE)**

Boswell Barwell, the official biographer of the Flatheads writes that "Mumberthrax's place in history was secured by the one thing at which Flatheads tended to excel: procreation." In 723 GUE, Dimwit Flathead, the great-great-great-great-great grandson of King Duncanthrax, who would be alternately described as "a colorful figure" and "the most wretched ruler Quendor has ever seen," was born to Prince Mumberthrax, great-great-grandson of Duncanthrax. Dimwit would be followed by eleven more eclectically distinguished siblings: a captain of industry, a military hero, a musical genius, a dauntless banker and financier, an inventor extraordinaire, an artist and scientist, a chronic widow, a poet, a seaman and explorer, a royal architect, and a legendary athlete. Each of these twelve amazing children would transform the kingdom. As these magnificent siblings grew in notoriety, as their vast achievements became legendary, they would become known as The Twelve Flatheads, and play a role in the most romanticized era of Zork's history, the reign of Lord Dimwit Flathead.

Although it was already clear by this point that Frobwit's son Timberthrax would never produce an heir to the throne, he was still the next in line to the royal crown. Phloid Flathead's diaries, still well-preserved after so many centuries, make it clear that even he had come to despair of ever becoming king. Mumberthrax, at this point already labeled the Not Terribly Important, would be an old man by the time he could finally claim the crown. Even as early as 725, Dimwit was listed in the royal archives as the eventual successor and in fact would grow up with this expectation, but would in the meanwhile have to sit through a wait of over thirty years, stuck seemingly forever in the shadows of his older relatives.

This in and of itself should have been no big deal. After all, plenty of monarchs in the past have had to wait for several members of their immediate family to pass away before being able to lay claim to power. However, within the Flathead family things were, as always, quite different.

At this point, it may be reasonable to try to understand the personal and psychological origins and explanations for Dimwit's excessive behavior. Why did Dimwit do the things he did? Was he stupid? Was he insane? The answers to these questions can be found in several places, namely the treatment of the young Dimwit during his childhood, particularly by his father and other royal relatives, as well as in the details of the crown prince's royal education.

Let us then look at the details. What was Dimwit taught to think about his role as a Flathead and a future monarch? The following excerpt is from a 731 GUE children's history of Quendor that various royal tutors used in their attempts to educate the young prince:

Duncanthrax was the best king of all time. There were many kings before Duncanthrax, and there will be many kings after Duncanthrax, but none of these kings will ever be as amazing as Duncanthrax.

It almost goes without saying that Dimwit did not enjoy this book at all. Rumor has it that in his daily fits of temper during history class, he managed to destroy several thousand copies of the book before his teachers finally gave up. Clearly, Dimwit was plagued throughout his childhood by a sense of deep inferiority to his predecessors.

Mumberthrax, perhaps the most extreme example of being affected by Duncanthrax's propaganda that he was the most awesome king of all time, spent his entire life utterly convinced of his own unimportance, completely unwilling to perform any deed that would cause him to be remembered by history.

Already, Mumberthrax had throughout his childhood been incessantly taunted and tormented by his uncle Timberthrax, and even the enigmatic Phloid was less than kind to his first-born son. Perhaps embittered by the long wait for the throne, both Timberthrax and Phloid were not particularly nice individuals, and were constantly taking pains to make Mumberthrax clearly aware of how unbelievably insignificant he was in the grander scheme of things. After years of this torment, Mumberthrax becoming ingrained with one of the greatest inferiority complexes history has ever, and logically came to extend his own feeling of unimportance to include that of his dozen children. Convinced of his own irrelevance, Mumberthrax could see little reason to think that his son Dimwit would turn out much better. (It did not help, that the tad spoiled Dimwit had already tarnished his image with fondness for torturing his nannies in the Egreth Castle dungeon.)

Infected by Duncanthrax's propaganda and the incessant taunting of relatives, Dimwit would go too far the other way; consumed by the desire to prove his own self-worth, he spent every waking moment of his reign intent on outdoing every single one of his predecessor's achievements. (It seems that Dimwit spent many of his sleeping moments pursuing this goal as well. S. Zeebin has put forward the surprising but all-too-believable hypothesis that Dimwit dictated most of the 5,521 Mareilon Edicts while sound asleep.)

Nevertheless, it seems a little far-fetched to blame Dimwit's excessive nature on an attempt to outdo the institutionalized vanity of his great-great-grandfather. But when combined with the circumstances surrounding Dimwit's status as heir apparent to the throne of Quendor, the answer seems clear. This excessive king's story will continue below with his ascent to the throne.

### **Nanny Beeble and Demons (723 GUE)**

Old Nanny Beeble, the Governess of the Flathead dynasty, had to fight off a clutch of horrifying demons who were trying to interrupt the children's nap. She learned that some demons will just nibble at children's cookies for days before they finish them off, and not pay even the slightest attention to anything else until they are finished. This was how Nanny Beeble was able to get rid of a clutch of horrifying demons who were trying to interrupt the children's nap in 723 GUE. She baked a mystical cookie dough mixed with chips off the Old Block, blessed it with the Tooth of Yoruk, and baked it all to golden perfection. Along with complimentary Blessed Milk, she through the cookies in a sack and dropped them down a chasm. Some details of this event are found in a diary she left, dated to the 13th of Jelly, 723 GUE:

Oh me oh my, what a busy week I've had. First little Dimwit started teething, then on Wands Day we were attacked by demons, and just yesterday the King fell into the lake! What a laugh we had, he was soaked to the bone, and his crown was terribly askew when he climbed out. But he took it all in good humor and only imprisoned a few of the servant boys over the mistake. In his youth we'd all have been fed to dragons, but I suppose age does mellow oneself to a degree.

On a side note, I should like to say that some kinds of demons, while extremely unpleasant and really rather rude, are surprisingly easy to subdue. I had everything I needed in the room, and have made a note of the method on a scroll, which I have deposited in a cave for safe keeping. I am confident that it shall remain there, kept safe lest I forget how I did it in my autumn years. Unfortunately I fear that my autumn years are closer than I would like, so in fear that I might forget where the cave itself is located, this should jog my memory:

*Daring adventurers each have to attack lonesome Fensteron,*

*Stealing nothing, in a trivial nuisance, unmasking our monsters.*

Ha, I should very much like to see some lowly adventurer try to figure that one out!

Well, Dimwit is crying again, so I must return to my duty, but I do very much look forward to next week's Servant Toss. I believe the catapult has been primed to fire farther than ever! What a lark it all is.

This scroll, which detailed the exorcism process was hidden in the Flathead Mountains, and would not be seen again until the Great Monster Uprising when it was obtained and used by GUE Tech to banish some demonic influences from their great institution.

#### **Invention of the Magic Wand (723 GUE)**

It was found that the act of casting a spell required three important steps. These were known as Presence, Incantation and Unusual Effect. It was also found that the reason Thaumaturgists were having such trouble casting spells was that they had no reliable way of completing the first step. The problem was first dealt with in 723 GUE, with the invention of the first reliable Incantation Device, known to scholars as the Hyperbolic Incantation Concentrator. Produced at the Thaumaturgical Institute, an offshoot brain trust of the Enchanter's Guild, the long, thin, portable device, nicknamed the "magic wand" by the lay press, became an instant sensation among the populace, and gained an enormous measure of respect for the fledging science which had, up until that point, yielded no marketable products.

#### **Birth of John D. Flathead (725 GUE)**

John D. Flathead was the second child born to Mumberthrax in 725 GUE.

#### **Birth of T.J. "Stonewall" Flathead (726 GUE)**

T.J. "Stonewall" Flathead was the third child born to Mumberthrax in 726 GUE.

#### **Birth of Syovar the Strong (c. 701~727 GUE)**

Many have said that if a man as noble and brave as Syovar the Strong had been born into the House of the Flatheads, the Great Underground Empire would be living still today. Surely, in all the long and dark years after the collapse of Quendor (after 883 GUE), few rulers showed the wisdom and grace made manifest in Syovar, the genius behind the creation of the Kingdom of Zork, and surely no other man in history has overcome such adverse circumstances to gain the achievements that rank under his name.

Born in the days of the reign of Frobwit the Flatter in a ramshackle little fishing hut on the outskirts of Grubbo-by-the-Sea, Syovar was a totally self-made man, sheer perseverance and skill allowing him to overcome the poverty and humble station of his parents to reach the heights of greatness. Syovar has been compared to the remarkable and equally long-lived Belboz of Aragain, who convinced his simple-minded uncle to allow him to abandon the construction business and study magic. Syovar himself left the little fishing village at a young age, eventually finding his way to Egreth, where his persistence and precocious skill convinced the aged Hermacedus to take him on as an apprentice. It is said that several portents and remarkable omens accompanied the young man as his powers grew. Convinced by his friends to visit a soothsayer, the first five attempts to foresee his destiny by consulting the entrails of a baby minx resulted not only in repeated predictions of greatness, but in the death of each successive minx. We shall tell more of this great historical figure when his time arises.

#### **The Reign of Timberthrax Flathead (727~738 GUE)**

Timberthrax Flathead succeeded his father Frobwit the Flatter in 727 GUE and ruled the kingdom for 11 years until 738.

#### **The Birth of Johann Sebastian Flathead (728 GUE)**

Johann Sebastian Flathead was the fourth child born to Mumberthrax in 728 GUE.

#### **The Birth of J. Pierpont Flathead and Thomas Alva Flathead (730 GUE)**

J. Pierpont Flathead was the fifth child born to Mumberthrax in 730 GUE, followed later that year by his sixth, Thomas Alva Flathead.

Many have mastered the magical arts; few applied them to the creation of practical devices as masterfully as would the great inventor Thomas Alva Flathead. His brilliance was evident even in childhood. Thomas Alva was constantly tormented by his siblings: no sooner would he get a toy to play with than some older brother would snatch it away. He quickly remedied the situation by inventing powerful steel traps which, at first glance, looked exactly like toy boats or stuffed dornbeasts.

#### **The Birth of Leonardo Flathead (731 GUE)**

Leonardo Flathead was the seventh child born to Mumberthrax in 731 GUE. Little notice was taken of him as a child. He was shy and quiet, and quite overshadowed by his aggressive older brothers.

#### **Frobozz Philharmonic Orchestra Founded (732 GUE)**

Frobozz Philharmonic Orchestra was founded in 732 GUE, consisting of nine instrumental sections that align to form a crescent moon shape, filling half of the Z'orchestral amphitheater. Because of the woeful lack of orchestral music in existence, the Frobozz Philharmonic Orchestra usually settled for playing baroque versions of old folk tunes and popular dance numbers. Because of this, nothing of even the vaguest interest to anyone was played for seven years.

#### **The Birth of Lucrezia Flathead (735 GUE)**

Of all the Twelve Flatheads, it is most difficult to separate history from legend when studying Lucrezia, the only sister to eleven aggressive brothers, the eighth child born to Mumberthrax in 735 GUE. Showing a total lack of understanding for her delicate position, detractors have cruelly tried to claim that Lucrezia had a warped mind as we shall see in her latter years.

#### **The Birth of Ralph Waldo Flathead (737 GUE)**

Ralph Waldo Flathead, known as the Poet of the Empire, was the ninth child born to Mumberthrax in 737 GUE.

#### **The Reign of Phloid Flathead / Praise of Syovar (738~755 GUE)**

Phloid Flathead succeeded his brother Timberthrax in 738 GUE and ruled the kingdom for 17 years until 755. By this king's reign, a young warlock named Krill who would figure so importantly in both the East and Westlands some two centuries later, was already beginning to test the limits of his magical powers. After the repeated series of earthquakes that heralded the arrival of Krill's fledgling strength, Phloid himself had recurring nightmares that showed a noble and brave young warrior matching Krill in magical combat. A search of the city ordered by the Flathead monarch after this portent brought Syovar into royal service after a mere dozen years of magical training, and barely four decades of life.

Syovar would spend many years in the faithful employ of the Flathead family before the fates granted him the first hints of his eventual destiny. His sudden absorption into the isolation and intrigues of court life left him separated from all contacts with his own family, and sadly, it would be several years before he found out that his own nephew and niece (Bivotar and Juranda) had been kidnapped by the forces of Krill, a mere fortnight after his own appointment to the head of the royal bodyguard.

Aided by the time-defying skills of his magical prowess, Syovar's physical appearance changed little past his thirtieth birthday. Not a remarkably tall man, he was nevertheless physically quite daunting. His build was solid and muscular, his entire body an immobile column of stubborn rock. Portraits and sculptures of the wizard-king show a large face quite covered in hair, bushy eyebrows, a thick beard and mustache rarely changing from year to year. He dressed simply, only in the later years of his life deigning to wear a circular diadem on his head as a sign of royal authority. For years before his rise to prominence, he wore no other jewelry or piece of decoration than the Ring of Zork, the priceless magical heirloom that he would pass on to his beloved Bivotar and Juranda.

Highly skilled in all forms of magical combat, Syovar was also one of the leading knights of his day, his skill at the sword and the joust said to be equaled by none perhaps other than Ellron (his own dear friend and companion in

the late ninth, and tenth centuries). Syovar's remarkable sense of tactics and natural strategic instinct were destined to save the day on countless occasions.

Surely such skills are praise-worthy in any man, but in Syovar they were accompanied by his wide range of magical powers, powers that made him truly one of the most imposing figures in the declining Quendoran empire. Thanks to the firm guidance of the ancient Hermacedus, Syovar was skilled in all of the most arcane forms of Thaumaturgy. Unlike the charlatans and power-mongers that ravaged the empire during its later generations, he never once used his magical powers for personal gain. Tales tell of several occasions during the reigns of Barbawit, Idwit and Wurb in which Syovar himself nearly died in magical battles fought to preserve the life of the ruling member of the dynasty.

### **J. Pierpont Flathead, Eight-Year-Old Enterpriser (738 GUE)**

As a child, J. Pierpont demonstrated both the flair for capitalism and the resourcefulness which would make him the most successful banker in all of Quendor. The enterprising eight-year-old opened a lemonade stand in the center of Egreth Village, using the royal militia to force citizens to buy lemonade. At spearpoint, most people were willing to pay little J. Pierpont's exorbitant price of 300 zorkmids per glass. Ice was extra. He also used the militia to quash other lemonade stands in the city, and later to shut off all other beverage sources as well. As the prices at his lemonade stand soared into the quadruple digits, J. Pierpont quickly realized the power of monopolies.

All of the Caliginous Stones of Frobar were lost at sea in the great storm of 738 GUE.

### **The Birth of John Paul Flathead (738 GUE)**

The tenth child born to Mumberthrax in 738 GUE, all the Flathead aunts and uncles predicted early on that John Paul would find his destiny at sea. He loved boats so much that the royal carpenters were ordered to produce a flotilla of 1,400 vessels for his bathtub. (His bathtub had to be consequently enlarged; a large inland sea resulted.) From an early age, John Paul suffered from an inferiority complex derived from being the second "John" among the Flathead children. (In his autobiography, Mumberthrax explains that when he named John Paul he "simply forgot about John D.") This complex made John Paul determined to become a world-famous seafaring adventurer. At sea, his feats would range from the courageous (he would be the first person to traverse the Great Sea in a one-man ship) to the curious (he would set a new record for the most circumnavigations of Antharia on a raft towed by groupers).

### **The First and Last Decent Symphony (739 GUE)**

The first and last decent symphony was performed by the Frobozz Philharmonic Orchestra in 739 GUE. The piece was notable because of the age of its author, a precocious eleven-year-old named Johann Sebastian.

As he matured, Johann would write many much longer symphonies with decreasing popularity (No reasonable postulation has been made to explain Johann's lack of popularity. It is the belief of this author that the short attention span of the general public precluded it from sitting still for the whole of one of his symphonies.) His Symphony #981, for example, so-called "The Infinite Symphony," contained over 60,000 movements. During its only performance, several members of the orchestra retired and had to be replaced with their children, and, eventually their children's children.

### **The Birth of Frank Floyd Flathead (741 GUE)**

Frank Lloyd Flathead was the eleventh child born to Mumberthrax in 741 GUE. As children, all the Flathead siblings adored playing with blocks. (Nanny Beeble, governess to the children, recalls that many had teams of slaves whose exclusive job it was to move the larger blocks.) However, only Frank Lloyd drew plans before building.

### **Dimwit's Early Adulthood (c. early 740s)**

Dimwit spent most of his early adulthood vacationing in the sparsely populated Eastlands across the Great Sea with 40,000 of his attendants and closest friends. Dimwit despised the outdoors, and he was petrified of rain, which

puddled embarrassingly on his level pate. He soon became enthralled by the underground caverns in those areas, an interest that would one day change the course of the Kingdom.

### **FrobozzCo International Grows / John D. Flathead Graduates (743 GUE)**

By 743 GUE, there were more than 17,000 subsidiaries of FrobozzCo International. That same year, a young entrepreneur named John D. Flathead graduated from the venerable Borphée Business School.

### **The Battle at Stonewall (747 GUE)**

In 747 GUE, T.J. Stonewall Flathead received his celebrated nickname while serving as a Squire in the Royal Army during the famous seven-week Battle of The Stonewall. The Stonewall was a strategically vital locale, commanding the two most important caverns of the Eastlands. When reports arrived that rebellious natives had captured The Stonewall, taking the old fort as their principle headquarters, T.J. Flathead and his garrison were assigned the mission of retaking it.

Stonewall Flathead was the first to use the massive feint as a brilliant military tactic. He realized that a straight on attack would cause many of his wealthier trained soldiers to perish. Dividing his army, he attacked directly with his small band of peasant conscripts while his trained soldiers circled and attacked from the rear smaller wall. The tactic was a complete success and resulted in total surprise. The garrison stormed The Stonewall.

Unfortunately, the information about the old fort had been erroneous and the opposing forces had not taken the wall or its fort. The supposedly rebellious natives were actually all vacationing in the Gray Mountains and The Stonewall was completely undefended. When the smaller army of peasants appeared at the battlement so quickly and without a fight, the conscripts mistook the elite brigade for the enemy. This was unfortunate for the peasants, as the elite brigade was both well-named and vengeful. The vast majority of the peasant army was soon slaughtered and the elite brigade took command of The Stonewall. Nevertheless, had the enemy in fact been there, the strategy would surely have been a successful one. T.J.'s men suffered a casualty rate of nearly 75%, but his tactics during the battle were brilliant, and he would henceforth be known as Stonewall Flathead.

### **John D. Flathead Founds Flathead Industries (747 GUE)**

At age 22,<sup>26</sup> John D. Flathead founded Flathead Industries, a company devoted to the creation of other companies, which it would then sell off to FrobozzCo International. Within three years, Flathead Industries would have an annual income of 80,000,000 zorkmids. Eventually, the conglomerate decided to buy Flathead Industries itself, renaming it the Frobozz Magic Company Company, and adding it to its more than 17,000 other subsidiaries. John D. became one of FrobozzCo's 39,000 vice-presidents. It did not take John D. long to parlay his business acumen and royal connections into the chairmanship of FrobozzCo. Years of heady growth followed.

### **The Birth of Babe Flathead (748 GUE)**

Often called the flattest of the Flatheads, Babe, the youngest of the Twelve Flatheads, was born to Mumberthrax with an aptitude for sport. He demonstrated his dexterity and coordination early on, throwing baby blocks at his older siblings with impressive speed and accuracy.

As a youth (c. 748~760), he was always captain of the Little League teams, thanks in part to pressure applied by his uncle, Mayor Fiorello Flathead. Even as a teenager (c. 761~7), he was something of a lady's man and a party animal, and his older brother Dimwit would frequently have to bail the Babe out of jail following one infraction or another. By all accounts, Babe and Dimwit, despite their 25-year age difference, were closest of all the Flathead siblings.

### **The Many Inventions of Thomas Alva (c. 748~789 GUE)**

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<sup>26</sup> An obscure Quendoran timeline, which is known to have included several discrepancies, states that John D. Flathead founded Flathead Industries in 743 GUE at the age of 18.



As an adult, Thomas Alva produced a seemingly endless stream of inventions from his laboratory, Froblo Park. His most useful inventions include the magic room spinner and the magic compressor, but he is probably best-known as the inventor of the battery-powered brass lantern sometime before 778 GUE. All of these inventions were marketed by FrobozzCo International, providing Thomas Alva with generous royalties. But he spurned wealth, living in a small room behind his laboratory and sleeping on an unfinished wooden board.

#### **J. Pierpont Flathead Becomes Chairman of the Bank of Zork (749 GUE)**

In 749, at the age of nineteen, J. Pierpont became a clerk at the Bank of Zork. Six weeks later, following a rash of disappearances of his successive bosses, J. Pierpont became the youngest Chairman of the Board in the bank's history, a testament to his financial acumen.

As Chairman, J. Pierpont used his royal connections to eliminate all competing banks, increasing the Bank of Zork's market share from 99.2% to 100%. (He was later able to increase this number to 131% by encouraging customers to deposit their money several times.) He also supervised the installation of the latest magic-based security techniques to guard the bank's vault and deposit box areas. For unknown reasons, J. Pierpont hired exclusively gnomes to fill his teller and security positions. Thus J. Pierpont served as the Chairman of the Board until his odd disappearance in 789 GUE.

It was during this period in which J. Pierpont Flathead pursued the unusual hobby of giving away, anonymously, the sum of one million zorkmids — to persons he had never even met. He did this twice, as a matter of fact, and then suddenly realized how stupid he was being. So he sent his four largest and most persuasive henchmen to visit the beneficiaries, and thereby recovered most of what he had given away. From then on, his motto became "A penny earned is mine." He is also known for his outrageous autobiography titled, "I'm Rich and You Aren't - So There!"

#### **Leonardo Flathead "Proves" the Troll Postulate (c. 749 GUE)**

It was not until Leonardo Flathead's arrival at Galepath University that his genius blossomed and the world began to take notice. While at the University, Leonardo wrote several major treatises which revolutionized scientific thought. The most famous of these disproved the hoary myth that the world sits on the back of a giant turtle, claiming to prove instead that the world actually rests on the head of an enormous troll. This so-called "Troll Postulate" theory was later debunked as well.

#### **Lucrezia Flathead Marries Marcus Bzart-Foodle (751 GUE)**

In 751 GUE, at the tender age of sixteen, Lucrezia married a very rich but very old nobleman from Gurth, Marcus Bzart-Foodle. Ten-and-a-half months later, he died in bed with his bride. Afterward, Bzart-Foodle's doctor could not recall whether he had warned Lucrezia to avoid over-exciting her husband's weak heart.

#### **Lucrezia Flathead Marries Again...and again... (752~774 GUE)**

Lucrezia's second husband, a wealthy land baron from Mareilon named Oddzoe Glorb III, was found dead just five weeks after the wedding, his body mangled by hellhounds. It was quite understandable that Lucrezia had her multi-volume hellhound training manual removed from the house at once; the sight of it must have brought back tragic memories.

Five days later, Lucrezia sought consolation in a third marriage, to the Governor of Antharia, Hirax Mumbleton. Only two days after that, Antharia was without a governor. Hirax had been discovered in his office, smothered under a ton of raw granola. His sobbing widow immediately cancelled delivery of her daily truckloads of granola, in order to avoid any similar tragedies.

After her next fifteen husbands, all wealthy lords, died in their wedding nights, royal insiders reported that she was so distraught by her tragic string of bad luck that she was becoming dangerously suicidal.

#### **Leonardo Flathead Becomes a Painter (c. 753 GUE)**

After his University days were over, Leonardo Flathead turned from science to art. He became the most famous painter in the land. During the reign of Dimwit Flathead, noblemen from every province would be escorted to his studio by the king's personal militia to have their portraits painted.

### **The Reign of Mumberthrax Flathead (755~770 GUE)**

The sixth king of the Flathead Dynasty, Mumberthrax Flathead, also known as Mumberthrax the Insignificant, succeeded his father Phloid in 755 GUE and ruled the kingdom from Egred Castle for 15 years until 770. With Dimwit already long since born and on his way to the throne of Quendor, what Mumberthrax did during his reign was so irrelevant that to even bother with trying to write a history of the next twenty years seems like a waste of effort. It has often been said that poor Mumberthrax spent fifteen years on the throne of Quendor and only managed to accomplish thirteen important things. What is usually lost in the chronological shuffle is the fact that of those thirteen important things, the first twelve had already long since been taken care of by the time Mumberthrax came to the throne. Scholars and fans of the Flathead family have taken great pains to avoid this sticky fact and point to the often forgotten.

### **Syovar and Lorena of Mauldwood**

It was during this period that Syovar met the beautiful and singularly talented Lorena of Mauldwood, a relative by marriage of a distant wing of the ruling family. Stricken with love for the first time in his young life, Syovar spent months sighing over the young countess from a distance before Mumberthrax himself caught wind of his young enchanter-knight's romantic obsession. The meddling monarch's order that the two be wed by the end of the week may be counted among the '169 Not Quite as Important Things' that marked the fifteen years of Mumberthrax's reign.

### **Stonewall Flathead Becomes General of the Royal Army (755~789 GUE)**

Stonewall rose quickly through the ranks, and in 755 GUE he became General of the Royal Army. During his 34 years in command, he would squelch three provincial rebellions and over 12,000 tax riots. Fortunately, his unlimited conscription powers helped mitigate the 98% casualty rate his army suffered during these difficult battles.

### **The Reinvention of Scrolls (c. 755 GUE)**

Another major advancement in Thaumaturgy occurred during the reign of King Mumberthrax the Insignificant in about the year 755 GUE. Working in the newly crowned king's laboratory, a thaumaturge named Davmar claimed to have discovered a means to transfer not just the written incantation to paper, but the presence or the actual power of the scriptor as well, which could be stored on a special Presence-imbued paper. The problem with Davmar's so-called "scrolls" was that once the spells written upon them were cast, the scrolls dissolved during the spells' incantation.

What exactly Davmar accomplished is up for tremendous debate by historians. Many spell scrolls were known to have been in existence as early as Entharion the Wise and in widespread use during the days of Duncanthrax. It is possible that in 672 GUE that most of the scrolls were destroyed during the days of The Unnatural Acts, and thus nearly extinct. For if scrolls had been in mass circulation during the days of Davmar, he would not have been able to claim credit for their discovery.

The debate does not end here. Did Davmar reinvent the technology himself? Did he plagiarize a scroll he found? Did he base his research upon one he discovered for replication purposes? Did he simply uncover one of the rare scrolls and deceive all of Zork into believing he was the true inventor? Is the account pseudo-historical? Do we once again have to claim the defense of time travel? Historians may forever be blinded to the truth.

Nonetheless, scrolls soon replaced the temperamental and poorly-understood Hyperbolic Incantation Generator as the primary means of Incantation and Davmar became known as Davmar Scrollmaker. This development brought cheaper, easier, and more reliable spellcasting to the people. However, the problem of imbuing Presence became a deterrent to the rapid growth of magical science. The creation of a single powerful scroll could take literally months for even most creative and productive thaumaturge. This roadblock prevented the widespread use of magic for

generations. And the fact that scrolls could only be used only once remained a great frustration that prevented many people from even bothering with them. The next great step in magical technology would not come until some fifteen years later.

### **Ralph Waldo Flathead Attended Antharia University (c. 755~766 GUE)**

Ralph Waldo spent eleven years at Antharia University, collecting a chestful of degrees, including three doctorates: Doctor of Idyllic Poetry, Doctor of Excellent Elegies, and Doctor of Octameter Odes. He was very proud of his academic accomplishments, and always signed his name “Ralph Waldo Flathead, D.I.P., D.E.E., D.O.O.”

### **Double Fanucci Declared a National Sport (757-07-03 GUE)<sup>27</sup>**

As every student of history knows, the Twelve Flatheads were the greater part of the Thirteen Significant Accomplishments of King Mumberthrax the Insignificant. Historians note that Mumberthrax’s reign was significant for exactly thirteen, and only thirteen, reasons. The thirteenth accomplishment was a royal decree that made Double Fanucci the National Sport of Quendor after almost a hundred years of growing popularity. Invented by Zilbo III, the last king of the Entharion Dynasty, Double Fanucci had been an annual event since 691 GUE, and Mumberthrax’s Proclamation of 757 simply gave the sport official royal approval.

### **The Birth of Belboz (757 GUE)**

The great enchanter Belboz was born in 757 GUE during the reign of Mumberthrax Flathead in the Aragain Falls region. He was the eldest of six brothers all left orphaned near the falls; they went on to live with their uncle, a well-to-do-but simple-minded cavedigger by trade. The guardian uncle of the siblings tried to get young Belboz interested in construction work, but the child only talked about magic, reading everything he could find on the subject. It would not be for another 20 years that Belboz would finally shrug of cavedigging for a career in magic, when his uncle would finally relent and send Belboz to Borphée Harbor. There he was tutored by a master magician for 20 years.

According to Belboz himself, his magical training was little understood by his family. In an interview on his 200th birthday, Belboz stated, “My uncle thought thaumaturgy was a communicable fish disease, and fancied I sat on a dock for 20 years telling carp to open wide and say ‘ah’.” Belboz’s initial training was followed by a 30-year apprenticeship in the Accardi Chapter of the Guild of Enchanters, after which he became a full-fledged Enchanter in 820 GUE.

### **Frank Lloyd Flathead Designs the New Wing for Castle Egreth (758~760 GUE)**

Frank Lloyd Flathead got his big break at the tender age of 17, when his father, King Mumberthrax, commissioned him to design a new wing for Castle Egreth. The resulting wing was breathtakingly impressive. As Frank Lloyd himself wrote, “the conjunction of space and time seems to interface in a pre-subjected instantiation of the underrepresented whole.” Frank Lloyd became, overnight, the hottest architect in the Kingdom. (The fact that the new wing of Egreth collapsed two years later, killing over 4,000 royal guests, was credited to a miscalculation on the stonemason’s part. He was summarily executed.)

His reputation established, Frank Lloyd designed virtually every important Quendorian building during his three decades as Official Court Architect. One design was his handsomely designed vacation ski chalet in the Gray Mountains (west of Mirror Lake).

### **Famathrian Sniffles (765 GUE)**

In 765 GUE, during one of his extended summer vacations in the Eastlands (before becoming king and transporting the castle permanently), the future king took 6,000 of his closest friends on a camping trip in the forests of

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<sup>27</sup> The Flathead Calendar of 883 GUE, gives two conflicting dates for the year of the declaration, 757 and 761. The Encyclopedia Frobozzica gives the year of 757 GUE. This virtually all historians are in agreement that calendar date of 761 is in error.

Famathria. After two months of “roughing it” in the wilderness, he suddenly developed an unrelenting sneeze that forced him to return prematurely.

Dimwit Flathead spent the subsequent weeks strapped to his bed against his will. Though his retelling is quite certain on the matter, it is assumed that this was seen by all as the only possible way of causing himself even greater suffering. He writes of his extreme longing to itch his nose, discussing in great detail the measures he wished to take in order to stop the relentless sensation, which included, among other things, the insertion of a fully-grown porcupine up each nostril.

Though Prince Dimwit’s behavior up to that point had always been seen as a bit excessive, history shows that his most stunning feats of overindulgence were spent detailing the suffering he experienced, lying in bed, unable to move his arms in the slightest, much less reach up to and scratch his swollen, red nose.

The guards who stood watch outside his bedroom were made to pay dearly immediately following his recovery. In fact, some authors have suggested that the entire underground empire was made to pay for their collective unwillingness to let him scratch his proboscis.

### **John Paul Flathead Joins Royal Navy (766 GUE)**

In 766 GUE, at the age of 28, John Paul Flathead joined the royal navy.

### **Leonardo Flathead Paints the Twelve Flatheads (766~783 GUE)**

Starting with his own self-portrait in 766 GUE, and finishing with his Coronation Portrait of King Dimwit in 783 GUE, Leonardo Flathead brilliantly captured the varied personalities of the Twelve Flatheads on canvas over a span of seventeen years. The originals could once be seen on display in the gallery at Flatheadia Castle before it was ransacked in 883 GUE. Reproductions were also made for the 883 Flathead Calendar.

### **Ralph Waldo Flathead Writes (c. 766~787 GUE)**

Fresh out of college and flush with the enthusiasm of youth, Ralph Waldo Flathead wrote a series of lengthy essays which he hoped would uplift the human spirit. An unspoken Flathead family motto was “quantity over quality,” and no one demonstrated that tenet better than Ralph Waldo. During his 40-plus years of putting pen to parchment, he would write 912 novels, 4,000 short stories, and an incredible 87,000 sonnets. His essays have never been successfully counted.

Sadly and inexplicably, these essays lifted little more than the profits of the Frobozz Magic Writing Paper Company. The essays from this period include “On the Benefits of Keeping Ears Clean” and “Why Doorknobs are Necessary.” Also during this period, he wrote “On the Discoloration of Roadside Slush,” but the manuscript was lost before it could be published, leaving Ralph Waldo disconsolate for years. During his middle years, Ralph Waldo spent nearly half a decade living in the granola mines of Antharia. It was during this period that he wrote his longest work, a 60,000-verse epic about the varieties of moss that one finds in granola mines.

### **Babe Flathead Excels in All Sports... Almost (c. 767~789)**

When Babe Flathead reached college age (c. 767~770), he selected Mithicus Province University from amongst many eager suitors. At MPU, Babe was a 43-letter man, leading his team to championships in every existing college sport and several non-existent ones as well. (Many experts feel that Babe’s teams would have won these championships even if every competing school had NOT had their QCAA memberships revoked.)

Throughout the Babe’s professional sports career, he excelled in everything he tried: bocce, tag-team kayaking, full-court furbish. There was only one exception. Try as he might, Babe could not master Double Fanucci. Even the unexplained disappearances of the 339 leading Double Fanucci players failed to get Babe into the championships. Fanucci experts believe that Babe’s difficulty with the game could be traced to one weakness: his failure to remember that three undertrumps after an opponent’s discard of a Trebled Fromp is an indefensible gambit.

### **Dawn of the Industrial Age of Magic (769-08-07 GUE)**

The brief period known as the Industrial Age dawned in 769 GUE, just before Dimwit took the throne, with a discovery made by an unrecognized practitioner of the thaumaturgical arts named Berzio. Working for years in his own self-made workshop and often going for days without food, drink, or sleep, this obscure thaumaturge created a simple spell that would transfer both Incantation and Presence of any of the lesser spells from a temporary scroll to a specially impregnated paper that did not dissolve after one use. This paper, in turn, held the Presence even after the Incantation had been finished, solving the major problem in spell production. He named the spell after his dog, Gnusto, and of course became quite famous, not to mention rich.

The euphoria which greeted this discovery was tempered by the finding that very powerful spells could not be transferred in this way. Nevertheless, the next logical step were spell “books”, which were capable of permanently holding dozens of spells and were produced in great number. Now the special paper of these books were GNUSTO-proof, enchanters could not steal spells from one another’s books without first going through the tantalizingly long process of copying the entire spell to fresh scroll paper. Whatever was copied into the spell book was there permanently; it could not be GNUSTOed out again. Thus it was advised not to fill a spell book with lots of useless spells unless the enchanter had spare books lying around.

Thaumaturgy had yielded its second great money-making product, building the foundation for an entire new industry. And in time, auto-gnusteing became possible, with spells that automatically transferred themselves into spellbooks.

#### **Invention of Over-the-Counter Potions (c. 769~773 GUE)**

The Industrial Age also saw the sublimation of formerly disreputable potions and powders that contained magical Presence. Once only sold by peddlers on the street, these items became second only to the spell book in popularity.

This advance in Thaumaturgy occurred with the finding that certain liquids and powders could be imbued with the magical Presence. Such potions are of great interest, although their limitations have prevented them from supplanting scrolls as the primary method of Incantation. The first of these over-the-counter potions, which obviates the need for food and drink, was given the name Berzio, in honor of the great thaumaturge.

#### **Thomas Alva Flathead Invents a Potion (c. 769~789)**

Thomas Alva Flathead also made a number of breakthroughs in the area of personally-ingested magic. His most famous invention in this area was a yellowish-green potion which allowed humans to talk to plants.

## Chapter 4: The Excessive Reign of Dimwit

“Why pay less?”

-Dimwit Flathead

### **The Beginning of the Reign of Dimwit Flathead the Excessive (770 GUE)**

Perhaps the most thoroughly researched era of Quendoran history is the reign of Dimwit Flathead. The political, cultural and moral excesses of the unstable monarch have all been well catalogued by people with more patience and time on their hands, the countless deeds of Dimwit Flathead’s reign shall be summarized here.

When Mumberthrax felt death’s icy hand in 770 GUE, his son, Dimwit Flathead, assumed the Quendoran throne. Every province, country, and city in the Empire owned allegiance to him and to the powerful dynasty to which he belonged. Lord Dimwit, as he liked to be called, was a colorful character, described by Boswell Barwell as “vibrant,” but has also been portrayed as “the single worst ruler the Empire ever produced.” As both the fifth generation of the Flathead seed, and the seventh king of the Dynasty, he would rule Quendor for 19 years until his death in 789.

Lord Dimwit’s first act was to rename the Kingdom of Quendor. Both its above and below ground regions became “The Great Underground Empire” in honor of the myriad of tunnels and passageways built at the behest of King Duncanthrax, this despite the fact that the vast majority of the kingdom’s people, including Dimwit himself, continued to live above ground. This was a great relief to the people. Although the name had been used as early as 668 (some legends say as early as the reign of Entharion, but there is no surviving evidence to support this notation), it shed light on the mysterious acronym of the dating system. Within a few years, the new name had completely displaced the older one. (After the reign of Dimwit Flathead, both names were briefly used interchangeably, until eventually the Great Underground Empire solely referred to the underground portion of the kingdom.)

Dimwit’s second act of vanity was to re-title the Great Sea with the name Flathead Ocean. The name never really stuck, and both names are used interchangeably to this day, the original being favored by the Westlanders.

Having spent countless vacations overseas, Lord Dimwit shared the fondness of Duncanthrax for the uncharted territories of the Eastlands. Thus the same year, he decided to move the capital of Quendor from Egred in the Westlands, to the little-known colony of Aragain in the central Eastlands, where the seat of government would remain until the fall of the Empire in 883. The small hamlet was replaced with the 8,600 square bloit<sup>28</sup> monstrosity known as Castle Flatheadia, which was built literally on top of the unsuspecting villagers (rumor has it that some of the crude huts and tents are still occupied in the lower basement levels of the castle). Some bitter, unappreciative chroniclers have described Dimwit’s castle at Flatheadia as his biggest folly. In a surprisingly short amount of time, that small village was transformed, quickly becoming the center of civilization at it was then known.

Dimwit’s vanity was surpassed only by his outrageous sense of proportion. For example, in the same year, planning began for his official coronation, an event of such monumental importance that the 18-month festivity would take 13 years to prepare, thereby placing it well into the latter half of his reign. In fact, the beginning and end of the coronation planning process act as bookends to achievements for which Lord Dimwit is best known.

The two closest advisors to Lord Dimwit Flathead were Lord Feepness and Delbor of Gurth, although it seems likely that Syovar at least played a minute roll. Whether flattery, forced, or authentic, the differences between their praises for the king can clearly be seen:

Your Worship-

I receive news of your word with pleasure and come quickly.

Your Humble Servant,

Lord Feepness

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<sup>28</sup> The basis of the bloit had changed to Dimwit’s three-eyed cat.

in marked contrast to the more subservient, and therefore much more favored Delbor of Gurth:

To my King and my God, the Lord Dimwit Flathead the Ever-Subtle:

Swiftly the winds blow to me the blessed news of your eternal and sweeping mercy. Truly Quendor counts itself amongst the most lucky of all worlds to have none other than your Holiness and Beneficence as its sovereign lord. Even in my most distant and frigid northern retreat, made ever worse, my Lord, by its distance from you, even in these grey mountains the sounds of your royal summons bring life to the very snow and ice. Truly, your word, my Lord, can do all things: the ancient Westlands break their fast on Antharian granola at your whim. The malodorous surmin smells as roses at your decree. My Lord, no mighty steed, no magical spell, nor even the shortest route across the magnificent mountains that bear your name can return me to your side as quickly as my heart would beg. Your servant in grateful humility,

Delbor of Gurth

### **The “Musty” Decade (770~9 GUE)**

The 770s were known as the “musty” decade of Lord Dimwit Flathead’s rule, when all standard ground transportation was banned to save then-valuable shoe leather. How commoners got around is too arcane to attempt to relate, but royalty traveled by hot-air balloon.

### **John Paul Flathead Becomes the Admiral of the Royal Navy (771 GUE)**

By 771 GUE, John Paul Flathead was the ranking admiral of the royal navy.

### **Construction of Flatheadia Dungeon Completed (771 GUE)**

Dimwit, recognizing a kindred spirit in his younger brother, Johann Sebastian, appointed him official court composer in 771. Later that year, he wrote his famous “Flatheadia Overture for Rack and Pendulum” to celebrate the dedication of the completed Flatheadia Dungeon. Following that event, Johann would spend his later years composing music for ever more grandiose instruments, such as his “Concerto for Woodwinds and Waterfalls.”

Though there has never been an accurate count, it is known that the Flatheadia Dungeon (also known as the Asylum), contained no less than 10,000 occupants at its peak. This is of minor historical note in the context of Dimwit’s other acts of excessiveness, but it is worth mentioning because of a drama of Lucrezia Flathead that would soon play itself out within the dungeon’s walls.

### **Flatheadia Fully Completed (771-06-14 GUE)**

With the entire castle completed, the seat of government was officially moved from Egreth to Flatheadia on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Jam, 771 GUE. At its peak, the castle at Flatheadia, which was connected directly to the sprawling underground caverns and tunnels after which the empire had been named, housed over 90% of the Empire’s population. The nearby village-turned-metropolis would be home to the Underground Revenue Service, the Postal Service, and various temples and courts of law. The dominating feature of the Flatheadia landscape after 781 would be the 400-story FrobozzCo World Headquarters Building. Much like Egreth, its counterpart in the Westlands, Flatheadia was the focus of all new underground tunneling and exploring in the area.

Egreth was abandoned and collected dust, at least until the all sorts of awful creatures moved in. The old castle became a place of ill omen, inhabited by trolls, grues, goblins, and even horrible old hobgoblins. Without any people around to drive them out, they would have the entire place to themselves. But this free reign would not last long, for soon a bunch of evil magicians would do their horrid magic spells in the royal rooms and make the creatures their slaves. A succession of magicians would continue to use the castle for their black magic until the last of them, Radnor, was defeated during the tenth century.

## Flatheadia

Let us pause here for a moment to briefly describe some small portions of the 8,600 bloit castle at Flatheadia, and what went into its making. It is not certain if all the following regions were constructed before the castle's 771 occupation, but they were certainly all finished before the king's death. The canopied bed in the private bedroom of Lord Dimwit Flathead was alone larger than most farms, while the closest (small by the standards of the castle) could probably sleep a few regiments.

Dimwit loved zoos, because he loved imprisonment of any kind; if the dungeons were full of prisoners he could at least get some joy from throwing a couple of minxes behind bars. The one built in the lower levels of the castle, with 69,105 cages, was at that time easily the largest in all Quendor.

His mania for including every conceivable ecosystem under his roof included the excavation and construction of the Great Underground Mountain, Savannah, Woods, Lake, and Desert, all beneath Flatheadia. The formation of the Desert clearly demonstrates Dimwit's lack of perspective, as his originally intent was for a personal sandbox. The inspiring view of the Mountain made it easy to see why the king climbed it with such frequency, although some quibblers insisted that it was hardly "mountain climbing" to be carried up in a plush sedan chair, but those quibblers all were tortured to death.

If we were to go on about the great hall which was so big that the ceiling had to be lowered to reduce the frequency of storm clouds forming in the upper regions, the tremendous audience chamber where thousands of visitors would queue up every day (Dimwit rarely had the patience to see even one person a day), each of the wide balconies larger than more castles, a formal garden designed to match a fairy tale he enjoyed as a child, a banquet hall which could easily hold ten thousand guests and requiring the combined farm outposts of three provinces, the scullery where the castle's pots and pans were the output of the forges of Borphee for three years, a kitchen crowded with 600 chefs, a courtyard where he occasionally ordered carnivals, a library once containing copies of every book ever written, the biggest chapel in all of Quendor, then we would need to postpone our history indefinitely. Thus without much reluctance, we shall continue.

## Royal Navy Sunk (773 GUE)

By 773 GUE, every ship in the royal navy had been sunk or lost at sea. Their admiral, John Paul Flathead, retired shortly thereafter. He spent his latter days touring the Flathead Ocean, collecting curious and unusual pets from all corners of the world. Among the most interesting: a large blue toad named "Otto" who was known for his extraordinary appetite and his curmudgeonly personality.

The Frostham Society for the Betterment of Society founded the Frostham Museum of Modern Arts and Sciences. (772 GUE)

## The Endless Fire / Dawn of the Age of Guilds (773-01-18 GUE)

As the use of magic became more prevalent, so did the problems inherent in its use. Since magic had become available to people in all professions, conflicts arose. One famous issue involved the question whether the plumber's FIZMO spell ("cause stopped-up pipes to unclog") could be sold as a digestive aid by physicians.

The issue came to a head in the aftermath of an incident known as the Endless Fire, which set back the public's acceptance of magic by a slight mispronunciation and its rather severe consequences. This magical inferno, kindled on Estuary 18, 773 GUE was so named because it burned uncontrollably for four weeks after destroying the city of Mareilon. A well-meaning local civil servant caused the unspeakable devastation when he attempted to cast the very complex ZEMDOR spell ("turn original into triplicate") but instead accidentally cast a very advanced version of the RADNOG enchantment, ZIMBOR ("turn one really big city in lots of tiny, little ashes"). He reportedly apologized to the city, with the words: "Whoops! My bad!"

At this point, discerning readers will have noted that all of Dimwit's acts seemed to have been to gratify his ego. This, however, is not true. With the public outcry that followed the Endless Fire, Lord Dimwit Flathead's drastic response was swift and characteristically extreme. The Endless Fire led him to issue a series of 5,521 edicts over the following few weeks, which had the effect of severely limiting public access to magic (and, incidentally, lawyers). If the hypothesis of S. Zeebin is correct, then most of these edicts were dictated while Dimwit was sound asleep.



Henceforth, all magic was entrusted to the various Guilds of Enchanters, which by now existed in many small communities. These edicts resulted in the blossoming of the highly successful institutions and they found themselves wielding more power than ever before. Each Guild, whose elders comprised the so-called Circle of Enchanters, was empowered to form schools for the training of new Enchanters. This official sanctioning of the Guilds led to the formation of numerous others chapters with membership in the various Guilds in excess of 2,000 by the year 800 GUE. The strength of the Enchanter's Guild was so great that despite the collapse of the Great Underground Empire in 883 under the feeble-minded reign of Wurb Flathead, that it remained virtually unchanged until 966.

The survivors of the Endless Fire, as the event became known, later rebuilt Mareilon the south side of the Backbone Hills (approximately a half day's walk south of the former's ruins), though it never regained the glory of the original metropolis.

### **Construction of the Borphee Enchanters Guild (c. 773~789)**

While a guild of enchanters had been present in Borphee at the time of Duncanthrax, this was not an organization which was officially sanctioned as part of the Enchanters Guild. Dimithio was the one to single-handedly found the branch in the huge metropolis sometime between the years of 773 and 789. Frank Lloyd Flathead designed its Great Meeting Hall.

### **Time Tunnels (circa 770s GUE)**

While it cannot be said with precision when the time tunnels were constructed, they were certainly completed before the end of the reign of Lord Dimwit Flathead, who at one point hired a team of 12,000 specialists to trace the labyrinth of time tunnels underneath the Great Underground Empire. The model they presented him with looked so awfully like a great ball of spaghetti that the meeting was terminated and dinner was served. The report "A Meticulous Tracing of Temporal Lateralism in the Great Underground Empire, with Marinara" is still available in libraries and restaurants today.

While it seems that a group of advanced wizards from the Enchanters Guilds were responsible for the construction of the time tunnels, many historians suspect that Belboz the Necromancer, although extremely young, may have played a significant role with their creation. The sole purpose for which the time tunnels were built was to restore magic to Zork in the instance that a tyrannical anti-magic despot should have eliminated it. For magic to return, it was required for three magic artifacts to be brought together: a specific Cube of Foundation, the Coconut of Quendor, and the Skull of Yoruk. It would not be until 966 GUE that magic would be eliminated and 1067 in which it would flourish once more. Some praise the enchanters for their gifts of prophecy, others see them as nothing more than time-travelers who planned for the inevitable.

### **Lucrezia Flathead Imprisoned (774 GUE)**

After all of her eighteen marriages came to grisly ends, with each husband being gruesomely killed in increasingly bizarre accidents, Lucrezia Flathead was rumored to be in a miserable emotional state. Fearing her suicide, the uber-widow was imprisoned in a cell in the dungeon by her elder brother Dimwit Flathead. Though it pained the king dearly, he had only done so for her own safety. She languished in that cell for the remaining fifteen years of her life.

### **Royal Museum Built and Dedicated (776~777-03-22 GUE)**

While Dimwit certainly inherited Duncanthrax's ambition and ingratiating personality, he directed them in a somewhat less productive fashion. Whereas Duncanthrax used his power to expand his empire, Dimwit was motivated to realize his bizarre whims. Raising the kingdom's tax rate to just over 98%, Dimwit began a series of grandiose projects that soon earned him the title "Flathead the Excessive." Thousands upon thousands of golden zorkmids were minted and spent by the royal treasury in an effort to finance Dimwit's remarkable and excessive ceremonies and constructions. Lord Dimwit gave all of his underground projects to the Frobozz Magic Cave Company, chiefly because his brother, John D. Flathead, was President of FrobozzCo International, the Magic Cave Company's parent company. Hundreds of new subsidiaries were formed daily.

One of the first of these incredible projects was the creation of the Royal Museum in 776 GUE to house the crown jewels, along with a technology display, and a famous royal puzzle in the form of a sandstone and marble maze. The Technology Museum contained items generously provided by FrobozzCo International (donated directly by John D. Flathead), nonworking models of Thomas Alva Flathead's Frobozz Magic Compressor and Frobozz Magic Room Spinner, and a working model of a Frobozz Magic Temporizer.

This museum had incredibly tight security that actually showed restraint on the part of the king. He had originally planned to build the museum under two miles of mountain, and surrounded with 500 feet of steel, but had to settle for a less excessive construction plan. This rare moment of self-control was probably due in some part to the sound advice of one of his chief advisors, Lord Feepness, who said that the idea was "impractical." His other advisor, Delbor of Gurth, was probably too frightened to give his opinion in the matter.

It was during his inspection of the museum with Feepness, when Dimwit revealed his Flood Control Dam #3 and volcano projects:

"Very nice! Very nice! Not enough security, but very nice! Now, Lord Feepness, pay attention! I've been thinking and what we need is a dam, a tremendous dam to control the Frigid River, with thousands of gates. Yes! I can see it now. We shall call it ... Flood Control Dam #2. No, not quite right. Aha! It will be Flood Control Dam #3."

"Pardon me, my Lord, but wouldn't that be just a tad excessive?"

"Nonsense! Now, let me tell you my idea for hollowing out volcanoes..."

It is of slight historical interest that on that very day the adventurer who would eventually become the second Dungeon Master used the Royal Museum's Temporizer to travel back in time from 948 to 776 to steal one of the crown jewels. This resulted in a dramatic increase in security measures by Dimwit Flathead. The unexplained theft of his royal ring during the final stages of construction led to a greater eccentric excessiveness on his part, forcing him to place the remaining jewels in a hidden vault buried seven miles under the Flathead Mountains, accessible only by a chain of sixty-three secret teleportation spells. Thus, the following year, the museum was dedicated on Arch 22 without the Crown Jewels of the Great Underground Empire.

### **Growth of FrobozzCo (777~8 GUE)**

Following the completion of the Royal Museum in 777 GUE, the Frobozz Magic Cave Company, the largest subsidiary of FrobozzCo, moved to increase its staff even more as the well-publicized dam and volcano projects moved into full gear (though actual construction of Flood Control Dam #3 did not begin until 782-11-11). The Cave Company was also to begin creating the new 400-story FrobozzCo world headquarters in Flatheadia, which would not be completed and opened until 781.

778 was just one of the many years of continued growth for FrobozzCo and its subsidiaries. Gross income rose 14% and revenue increased by 22%. The employment rate now stood at 98.7% for the entire workforce of the Great Underground Empire and was limited only by the birth rate and the size of the Royal Family. More than 18,000 additional subsidiaries were formed or taken over during 778, further increasing the scope of the industrial empire of FrobozzCo, who now produced everything from aardvarks to zwieback.

In addition to the upcoming Flood Control Dam #3 and the hollowing out of a volcano, The Frobozz Magic Cave Company created an additional 46,000 linear bloits of tunnel that year, including nearly 200 bloits of the Great Underground Highway extension, as well as 8,000 cubic bloits of additional cavern space.

The Frobozz Magic Spell Company saw sales increased by 11% during 778, marking the twentieth year of steady growth for this lucrative FrobozzCo subsidiary. In response to the growing demand for magic spell accessories, several new FrobozzCo divisions were formed, including the Frobozz Magic Scroll Rack Company, the Frobozz Magic Spell Book Company, and the Frobozz Magic Scroll Mailing Tube Company. Four new spells were added to the Magic Spell Company product line this year, a Magic Spell Company record and a tribute to the wizards in FrobozzCo's famous Magiclub. The four new spells were DRILBO (strips a floor of yellowed wax),

BORCH (puts insects to sleep), GIZGUM (predicts visits by relatives) and QUELBO (transmutes coconuts into gold).

Sales of grue repellent nearly tripled in 778, spurred on by drastic extensive improvements made in the product and by an aggressive marketing campaign. Magic Grue Repellent Company executives proudly pointed to a 31% drop in grue-related deaths during the last year, and a consequent 31% drop in the grue population. The Magic Grue Repellent Company also increased the product line with the introduction of seven new odors of repellent, in addition to the regular old socks/burning rubber odor. The new odors included rotting eggs, dead fish, swamp gas, three-week-old meatloaf, gym locker, wet dog and mint. Several ingenious sales strategies were highly successful. The Free-Noseplugs-With-Every-Can campaign, in association with the Frobozz Magic Noseplugs Company, ran for one month and increased sales by 92%. Advertisements featuring grue-mangled corpses ran before and during the peak travel season. Finally, a joint packaging effort with the Frobozz Magic Lantern Company to produce a Frobozz Anti-Grue Kit paid off with remarkable end-of-year sales.<sup>29</sup>

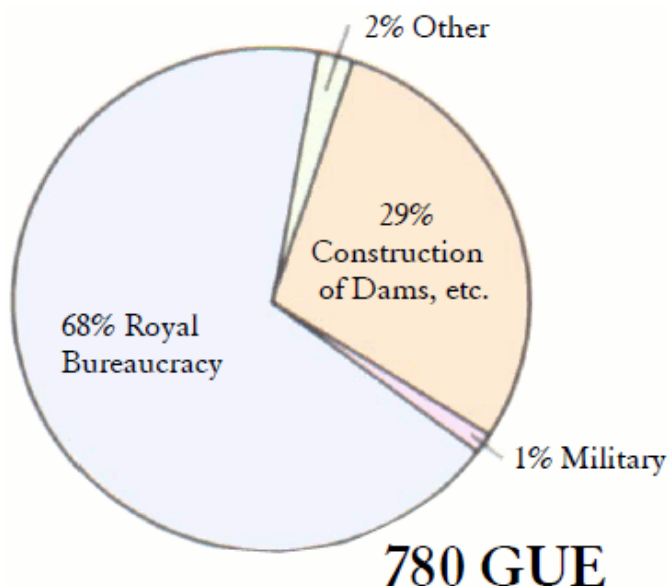
### **Volcano Hollowed Out (c. 778~9 GUE)**

Under the management of foreman Mumboz Agrippa, a descendant of Cornelius Agrippa, the Frobozz Magic Cave Company quenched and then hollowed out a 500 foot tall volcano nearby Flatheadia. The project was conducted under very tight security and he personally reviewed the plans at each stage. Interestingly enough, since the theft of the royal ring in 776, Dimwit Flathead distrusted museum security enough to place his prized possession, an incredibly gaudy crown, within a locked safe in the mighty volcano. Other rooms were installed within, including the official library for the royal family.

### **The “Yet Mustier” Decade (780~9 GUE)**

The 780s saw the start of the “yet mustier” decade of Lord Dimwit Flathead’s rule, when in addition to the already banned ground transportation, hot-air balloons were banned due to their inability to navigate Aragain Falls.

### **Expenditures of Dimwit’s government**



### **Construction of the FrobozzCo International World Headquarters Building (781 GUE)**

Frank Lloyd Flathead is best known for his most ambitious work: the 400-story FrobozzCo International World Headquarters Building in Flatheadia. In 781 GUE, the construction was completed by the Frobozz Magic Construction Company and the building opened. Overlooking exaggerations such as “on a clear day you can see the FrobozzCo Building from anywhere in the world,” it is still considered to have been the most ambitious building ever designed or built. A FrobozzCo Building address was most prestigious, and Frank Lloyd himself had a penthouse office, until a slight case of acrophobia forced him to relocate to a nineteenth-story office with a pleasant southern exposure.

### **Construction of Flathead Stadium (782 GUE)**

By 782 GUE, the Babe was such a phenomenal drawing card that Lord Dimwit constructed the kingdom’s largest sporting arena, Flathead Stadium, just north of Anthar. Once completed, it was dedicated to the great athlete.

<sup>29</sup> Scholars are slightly baffled by the reports of grues, which only had been seen in a few isolated instances since Entharion’s near-eradication of the entire race. One can only speculate that FrobozzCo’s marketing campaigns had been incessant and forceful enough to convince people that if they did not buy the Grue Repellent products, that grues would return, or “What will you have for ammunition if you happen to be the one-in-a-million to run into a the last surviving grue?”

Double Fanucci, dragon-fights, and shark-wrestling were the primary draws to the crowds who filled Flathead Stadium, which was reputed to have enough seats for every man, woman, and child in the Great Underground Empire.

### **Construction of Flood Control Dam #3 (782-10-11 ~ 783-01-30 GUE)**

Ground was finally broken on Ottobur 11<sup>th</sup>, 782 GUE for the Flood Control Dam #3 construction (which had been proposed six years ago)<sup>30</sup> in order to harness the mighty destructive power of the Frigid River. This mammoth edifice with virtually no useful purpose, since it never rains underground, was supported by a grant of 37 million zorkmids from the Central Bureaucracy and Lord Dimwit himself; but neither of those concerns diminished its magnificence. It had been said that this is the greatest engineering feat in the history of the Great Underground Empire, as well as the most nonsensical and expensive.

The construction of Flood Control Dam#3 took 112 days from ground breaking to the dedication. It required a work force of 384 slaves, 34 slave drivers, 12 engineers, 2 turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree. The work was managed by a command team composed of 2345 bureaucrats, 2347 secretaries (at least two of whom could type), 12,256 paper shufflers, 52,469 rubber stampers, 245,193 red tape processors, and nearly one million dead trees.

When finished, this impressive structure was composed of 370,000 cubic feet of concrete, was 256 feet tall at the center, and 193 feet wide at the top. The reservoir created behind the dam had a volume of 1.7 billion cubic feet, an area of 12 million square feet, and a shore line of 36 thousand feet. Only four of the fourteen hundred sluice doors proposed by His Lordly Excessiveness were ever actually constructed.

Flood Control Dam #3 was dedicated on the 30<sup>th</sup> of Estuary, 783 and afterward became one of the most famous tourist attractions in all of Zork. On the first day of every summer (until the collapse of the Empire in 883 GUE), crowds would line the banks of the Frigid River for the annual opening of its floodgates. While there was never a Flood Control Dam #1 or #2, others would follow, including #7 and #678.

### **Coronation Day (783-04-22 GUE)**

After thirteen years of planning and two-thirds of the way through his reign, Lord Dimwit's coronation ceremony began on Oracle 22<sup>nd</sup> at Flatheadia. The coronation lasted for an additional 18 fun-filled months, and once all bills were in, cost twelve times the Empire's GNP. Since Dimwit's coronation, all subsequent kings were crowned on Oracle 22<sup>nd</sup>. Leonardo Flathead finished painting his Coronation Portrait of King Dimwit, which was the last of the Twelve Flathead portraits. This incredible ceremony solidified the King's informal title, Lord Dimwit Flathead the Excessive.

### **Lucrezia's Last Love (c. 783 GUE)**

In search of comfort for her misery, Lucrezia Flathead had an insatiable fondness for prison guards. Coincidentally, 1,800 prison guards had been mysteriously poisoned in the years following her imprisonment. But it was not a prison guard for whom she felt her deepest love; it was a fellow inmate, who sometime after the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Oracle, 783 had been imprisoned for his flagrant overuse of magic without proper consent by the Enchanter's Guild (but he had not been incarcerated until his refusal to attend Dimwit's ridiculous coronation). Though he could have easily freed himself from any prison, he fell madly in love with Lucrezia. The two met frequently during Lucrezia's imprisonment in the Flatheadia dungeon. Surprisingly, the visiting wizard did not die. He counted himself lucky to have used a long life spell on himself just before meeting Lucrezia given her history of perpetual widowhood.

### **Exile of the Wizard of Frobozz (785 GUE)**

The Wizard of Frobozz was a strange little man, usually wearing a long cloak, a high pointed hat embroidered with astrological signs, and a long, stringy, and unkempt beard. He received his D.T. (Doctor of Thaumaturgy) degree from GUE Tech. In the years to follow, the Wizard of Frobozz became a member of the influential Accardi chapter

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<sup>30</sup> Although Boswell Barwell's biography on the Twelve Flatheads tells that Dimwit Flathead built the Dam "on a whim" in 783 GUE, all other sources tell the story which had been included within this history.

of the Enchanters' Guild before being promoted to a seat on the Circle of Enchanters. He was later removed from his position for forgetfulness bordering on senility. Among his other failings, the lively wit of his youth had been replaced by a semi-sadistic mischievousness coupled with an inability to pronounce spells other than those beginning with other than the letter "F".

Despite this, in either the 770s or early 80s, he was appointed by Dimwit Flathead as the official court wizard at Flatheadia. If fate turns as a wheel, then the Wizard of Frobozz represented a low point for the excessive king. In 785 GUE, havoc struck Quendor when he accidentally transformed the entire west wing of Dimwit's famed castle into a mountain of fudge. Thus in one errant stroke of wayward magic, the Wizard's blunder simultaneously destroyed it with a single word, "Fudge."

To see the west wing of his beloved Castle Flatheadia transformed into a pile of fudge was too much for anyone to bear. Lord Dimwit, without giving so much as a written reprimand first, fired the Wizard for crimes against sugary goodness. Never one to let himself be outdone by an upstart ruler, Lord Dimwit, without another thought, ordered everyone, everywhere to help rebuild the west wing. Of course, the new wing would be 25 times larger than the previous one because Dimwit wanted it that way. Had he not already earned the nickname "Dimwit Flathead the Excessive," he would have earned it here. It was declared illegal to eat Flatheadia Fudge (as it had become known) and local authorities were ordered to run a billboard campaign with the slogan "Stop Eating My Castle!" Dimwit built a fudge-melting plant in Fenshire to melt down the pieces of fudge that his castle had been turned into. It took more than a year for it to be rebuilt, and yet the faint smell of fudge would always be hanging in the air.

The Wizard of Frobozz was "retired" to a small, obscure, and unoccupied corner of the Great Underground Empire which would later be referred to as the second level of the Dungeon of Zork. Here he constructed for himself a home amongst the caverns.

### **Toccata and Fugue and Theme and Variations, Opus No. 69105 (787 GUE)**

For the royal elite, more classical styles of music were in vogue. The most famous of these works is the "Toccata and Fugue and Theme and Variations, Opus No. 69105" by Johann Sebastian Flathead, commissioned by Lord Dimwit the Excessive. The piece was only performed once in its entirety, in 787 GUE. Legend has it that several members of the 98,000-piece royal orchestra, chorus, corps de ballet, artillery battery, fireworks brigade, and smoke effects crew failed to survive the eighty-seven day ordeal.

### **Other Excessive Events in the Reign of Dimwit Flathead**

The full list of Dimwit Flathead's ludicrously excessive projects may perhaps never be known, as historians are still uncovering new mysteries of this omnipotent tyrant. Many of these, such as the enormous granola smelters built near the Antharian Granola Mines of Plumbat and the scouting of the time tunnels, remain undated. Dimwit's Birthday was observed once a week on "Birthday," a day when everyone in the kingdom was required to give the king a present. (Since the renaming of this day of the week, all records of its original name have been erased from history.) Dimwit's face has been found upon at least one version of the zm1 coin, the zm100 bill, the zm10000 coin, and the zm3 postage stamp.<sup>31</sup> It is also known that Lord Dimwit Flathead had a magical life-size chess set that could be accessed by donning a magic robe. Thomas Alva Flathead designed twelve specialty cannons for his brother, including Chloe the Cannon and the Foo dog Cannon. When the Temple of Agrippa was discovered, Dimwit Flathead saw it fit to order its reconstruction by setting an additional level upon the ancient regions previously constructed by Lockmoore and Cornelius Agrippa, thus accounting for a strange duality in the contrast between the old and the new.

The Cultural Complex, constructed in caverns near Port Foozle, contained the Royal Theater. Built to the precise specifications of Lord Dimwit Flathead, this cavernous auditorium is reputed to be the most elaborate in the Great Underground Empire, its excessive structure holding 69,105 seats (which were each built like thrones), not including the royal box seats that were centrally situated on the 37<sup>th</sup> mezzanine.

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<sup>31</sup> The authenticity of the bill and coin have been widely disputed, as the printed date of their minting was before Dimwit was even born. Some suspect that these may have been a result of Dimwit's intrusions into history via the time tunnels or temporizer.

Dimwit also developed an incredible urge for odd candies. He commissioned the Frobozz Magic Candy Company to make him candied grasshoppers, chocolate ants, and worms glacee. His love for these was only surpassed by his desire for rare chocolate truffles. In order to indulge his bottomless appetite, he ordered the excavation of entire forests where the truffles grew.

#### **Punishment of Withheld Taxes (788-12-04)**

Wishing to turn up every last zorkmid, instilling fear if necessary to pursue this end, Dimwit decreed on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Dismumber, 788 GUE, that “anyone withholding payment of all taxes decreed before this date shall be killed along with everyone they have ever met.”

#### **“My Best Excesses” (788~789 GUE)**

Perhaps the greatest insight into the mind of history’s most memorable and controversial figure can be found written in his own words, in the text of his autobiography, “My Best Excesses.” Published over the two-year period preceding his death, the original volume is approximated to be over 122,000 pages in length. However, during its first printing, Lord Dimwit frantically pulled roughly half of the pages from the press and had them sealed and buried four bloits underground, directly beneath the future site of his nine-bloit statue. The issue was, needless to say, not to be discussed within the court on punishment of gruesome execution, thus it can only be assumed that Dimwit got cold feet about publishing his more personal thoughts. Destroying such glorious prose as his own was certainly out of the question, so four bloits worth of dirt and sediment seemed the only rational solution. Due to severe unfeasibility and general lack of interest, the missing text remained buried beneath Fublio Valley for over three centuries until it was excavated by the Grand Inquisitor.

As even the half-sized version was too large to print, the book titled, “Excerpt from My Best Excesses” was thought for a long time hold the only surviving fragments of this historical work. Unfortunately, this book was either authored by a pseudo-Dimwit or redacted after the publication of the *Analecta Loowiticia*.<sup>32</sup> If these any of these words are in fact genuine (or are a collaboration of poor editing of authentic documents), they may shed some possible light behind Dimwit’s rationality of instituting his final acts of excessiveness:

“As I will summarize in the following eleven hundred pages, the ninety-eight per cent tax rate is a mere *pittance*, and nothing worth doing in this empire can be done for any less than a full *hundred per cent!* My next two or three thousand Tax Bills should further illumine my immensely *keen* feelings on this subject...”

“I have known my share of *detractors*. A ruler so excessively *wise*, so excessively *handsome*, so excessively *flat* as myself with always find himself the subject of *pernicious* slander. There always will be some who lack the *vision*. Some who think we cannot *afford* (plebeian concept!) to erect a new continent in my own *excellent* image. Some who doubt we *require* (as if that were the *issue!*) an underground Flood Control Dam, where there is no rain. As if the *inspired* work of a philosopher king was to be governed by the vicissitudes of the *weather!* I am convinced however, that the statue of my royal selfness that I am erecting in the Fublio Valley, will be...”

#### **The 9-Bloit High Statue (789 GUE)**

In all the years of the empire, through all its eccentrics, no one comes close to matching the inimitable mark made by Lord Dimwit Flathead the Excessive. No ego, no vanity, no exaggerated sense of proportion can compare with the likes of the man who in 789 GUE ordered the destruction of 1,400 square bloits, or 400,000 acres, of lush Fublio Valley forest to erect an immense nine-bloit-tall statue of himself, lending credence to the royal motto, “A truly great ruler is larger than life.”

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<sup>32</sup> “Excerpt from My Best Excesses”, claiming to have been authored by Dimwit Flathead (who died in 789), has the king quoting from the “*Analecta Loowitica*” which was not published until 801 (and certainly was not started until Loowit Flathead’s reign began).

In the process, Flathead's men had a mission to protect Lord Dimwit from the riotous residents of the Fublio<sup>33</sup> Valley, who opposed the giant statue his Royal Excessively Highness was constructing at the expense of their neighborhood. Flathead's men were told to memorize the last line of the popular Zorkian anthem, "You Ain't Nothin' But a Hellhound." This signal would distinguish Flathead's undercover men from the local marauders. But, everyone forgets a code now and then, and when it came right down to sword point, with his men stammering, "You ain't nothin' but a Hellhound," which is the first line, rather than, "You ain't no friend of mine," which is indeed the last, Lord Dimwit lost 3,000 of his best men, and vowed to make Elvis Flathead required listening for his troops in the future.

### **Curse Day (789-11-14 GUE)**

Lord Dimwit's incumbency was a 19 year stretch that, despite being full of surprises, became increasingly tiresome for the tormented commoners. But it was not the disgruntled masses that dethroned and killed Dimwit. It was the temper of one particularly skilled wizard by the name of Megaboz. This mysterious, powerful sorcerer lived a hermit's life in Fublio Valley. His unassuming shack was adorned with wall hangings and poems. He was one of the few enchanters whose talent measured up to his ego. According to one of his tapestries, we should "Forget the rest; Megaboz is the best." Megaboz and his ego wrote themselves into the history books in 789 GUE. This Fublio Valley resident was not impressed by the mammoth statue that casted a shadow over the entire region and intended to make his complaint quite clear.

The 14<sup>th</sup> of Mumberbur. 789 was another frantic day at the castle; Lord Dimwit Flathead the Excessive had invited a few thousand friends over for dinner to celebrate his new statue. The banquet hall was filled to the capacity, and the guests were raising quite a din. Three hundred dragons had been slaughtered for the occasion, and the kitchen was suffocated by the stench of their roasting flesh. Several excerpts of the king's conversation were heard by an unknown castle servant, and have been handed down to us over the ages.

Dimwit was seated at the dais, surrounded by his most trusted advisors, cut off from the rest of the party by a legion of personal guards. His loud voice carried across the crowded hall. "Now that the statue is done, we must do something ceremonial. I have it! A dedication! We'll give everyone in the kingdom a year off and invite them to the Fublio Valley..."

Before the unknown peasant could hear the rest of Dimwit's pompous insanity, someone thrust a platter of hellhound bones into dry hands. When the servant later returned to the hall with an enormous cake in the shape of Double Fanucci trebled fromps the obnoxious Dimwit was ranting at his advisor about his greatest dream: the creation of a new continent in the center of the Flathead Ocean. The outlines and contours of the new continent would have been a gigantic reproduction of his own visage.<sup>34</sup>

"There's not enough in the royal treasury to build my new continent, Lord Feepness? Then we'll increase the tax levy! It's only 98%! That still leaves two percent!"

"With all deference, your Lordship, people are refusing to pay even the 98%. Your decree, 'Anyone withholding payment shall be killed along with everyone they've ever met' simply isn't working. If you increase it to 100%, the people..."

Before the servant could intake more of the king's excessiveness, a tray of roc teriyaki was dumped into tiring arms. When the servant returned to the banquet hall, Dimwit was shouting with his mouth full of dragon meat. "How about this? I'll adopt everyone in the kingdom... and then I'll announce that they've been naughty and I've cut off their allowance! It's inspired! Lord Feepness, draw up the proclam..."

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<sup>33</sup> The reference text, "The Joy of Encryption" has "Frigid River Valley" instead of "Fublio Valley." Most historians believe this to be an error, and others find the entire Elvis Flathead story to be nonsensical apocrypha.

<sup>34</sup> Fortunately for mapmakers, Dimwit passed away before he could accomplish this final goal.

Dimwit was interrupted by an explosion of billowing smoke in the center of the hall. A gaunt, bearded man strode forth from the smoke!

“Show me the one responsible for the statue!” bellowed the newcomer. “The statue that now darkens Fublio!” Every head silently turned toward Dimwit, whose delight at the pyrotechnics was now tinged by fear.

“Go away,” ordered Dimwit, waving a shaky hand at the stranger. “This is a private function.”

Ignoring the order, the newcomer paced forward, until he was standing almost next to the servant. A scrap of parchment protruded from the wizard’s pocket. “My favorite grove of shade trees now lies beneath the toe of that cursed statue! No man, be he peasant or king, crosses Megaboz the Magnificent!”

He raised his arms, and every guest who knew how dangerous an angry wizard could be began to dive under the tables. The unknown servant, not taking any chances, dove under the table with them.

“Dimwit, thy kingship is a mockery of all worldly values! I curse your life! I curse your family! And I curse your Empire!” Sheets of power began to spew from the wizard’s fingertips. “Frobnitz! Frobnosia! Prob Fset Cond! Zmemqb Intbl Foo!” As the last word was spoken, the wizard turned into a vast fireball which exploded outward, searing everything in its path. Then, there was silence.

The eyes of the servant slowly opened, and where Megaboz had last been seen, sat a huge black cauldron, bubbling and roiling and spewing noisome fumes. All eyes transfixed on the incredible cauldron; the servant seemed to be the only one who noticed the parchment scrap which Megaboz had dropped on the stone floor, just beyond reach. Crawling out from under the table, the servant picked up the scrap of parchment, which after being passed down for several generations would be of use in the destruction of Flatheadia in 883.

Many of the guests were burned and dying. This did not seem to bother Dimwit much, but he did seem concerned by the bubbling cauldron. He summoned his court magicians, who huddled about the cauldron, sampling the brew, casting exploratory spells, studying the words of Megaboz’s spell, and whispering among themselves.

Finally, they seemed to reach an agreement. Combining their powers, the magicians chanted a long and mysterious spell. Then, drained of energy, they turned to Dimwit.

“We have done our best, your Lordship,” began the chief magician, “but the spell of Megaboz is a mighty one indeed. We delayed its effects for 94 years, but after that time, this castle – in fact, all the Eastlands – will be destroyed.”

Dimwit shrugged. “Big deal! I won’t be around in 94 years!”

“Truer than you think,” continued the chief magician. “There’s more to the Curse. Lordship, you and your eleven siblings are doomed!”

“Doomed?” whined Dimwit. “As in dead? That’s not fair! When?”

“Moonrise, perhaps a bit later...” The king lurched suddenly and collapsed onto his dinner. “...perhaps a bit sooner.”

Dimwit’s personal physician rushed to the stricken king, and then looked solemnly at the assembled guests. “The king is dead!”

### **Deaths of Dimwit’s Eleven Siblings**

In the end, Dimwit Flathead was forced to pay a price for all his power and extravagance. His family shared his fate, for it was reported at the moment of Megaboz’s curse, that the other eleven siblings of Dimwit Flathead all spontaneously died on 14 Mumberbur 789 GUE:

1. John D.’s long-time goal was for FrobozzCo to control every single zorkmid of commerce in the Great Underground Empire, hoping to make turn his company slogan, “You Name It, We Do It.” The lone holdout, a small rutabaga farm in Mithicus, was finally bought by FrobozzCo Company in 789. John D.



never heard the news, however. He disappeared, along with a huge entourage, while touring the factories of the Frobozz Magic Snowmaking Equipment Company in the Gray Mountains.

2. Stonewall died during the Battle of Ragweed Gulch, when he was accidentally shot by one of his own men.
3. Johann Sebastian was killed when a mishap occurred during a rehearsal of his “Minuet for Violin and Volcano.”
4. J. Pierpont entered one of the Bank of Zork’s vaults and never re-emerged. Although gone, he was not forgotten; reproductions of his portrait still hung in every branch of the Bank of Zork.
5. Having slept on an unfinished wooden board in the small room behind his laboratory, Thomas Alva died from a severe case of splinters.
6. Unfortunately, during his later years Leonardo became quite senile, and his painting style deteriorated. He took to flinging paint at his canvases in much the same way that a Borphée baker flings bits of dough into a hot oven to make Frobolli Cakes. His studio became caked with layer upon layer of splattered paint. It was during this period that his famous incomplete work, “Obstructed View of Fjord,” was lost (this piece of art was later found by the First Dungeon Master in 883). Leonardo made a final, feeble attempt to recapture his former greatness by moving to other media beside paint, but these efforts led to his tragic end. While working on a large statue intended for the harbor of Antharia, he suffered a fatal plunge into a vat of molten granola. Although Flatheadia was destroyed in 883 by the curse of Megaboz, Leonardo’s studio, though ruined, was preserved as part of the Dungeon of Zork.
7. Toward the end of his life, Ralph Waldo specialized in exploring related themes, as brilliantly demonstrated by the four sonnets found by his deathbed:

Sonnet #87,177 “Ode to a Tiny Moist Avocado Pit”

Sonnet #87,178 “Ode to Another Tiny Moist Avocado Pit”

Sonnet #87,179 “Ode to Two Tiny Moist Avocado Pits”

Sonnet #87,180 “Ode to Two Still-Tiny-But-Less-Moist Avocado Pits”

An autopsy of Ralph Waldo revealed that the cause of his death was an overdose of avocados.

8. John Paul died while on a vacation in Grubbo-by-the-Sea, when his old nemesis, the great white jellyfish, finally caught up with him.
9. The carcinogenic chemicals used in the eighth century to create blueprints finally took their toll on Frank Lloyd, and he died.
10. It was at the Flathead Stadium, during the shark-wrestling semi-finals, that the youngest of the Twelve Flatheads, Babe, met his end.
11. Sometime between 788~9 GUE, the union between Lucrezia Flathead and the unknown enchanter who had frequently visited her in prison produced a child, Lucille Flathead, whose descent many generations later would be Lucy Flathead.

Some legends say that Lucrezia’s death was self-inducted. But this is contrary to other, more likely, reports. The Flathead widow had angered her own people, and the House of Flathead was not, by nature, forgiving. Not even an enchanter was able to protect Lucrezia from the hired guns charged with dispatching the murderess to the Great Beneath. When Lucrezia met her final misfortune—a secret execution—the enchanter, of whose daughter she bore, made a daring escape soon after with their child in tow. He spirited the young Lucille away to the recesses of the deepest underground, known only as The Dark—a network of catacombs beneath the prison.

It took all he could do to protect the child from the terrible curse on the House of Flathead—and only when he was certain that the child was to be spared, the enchanter disappeared, completely sapped of his powers. He was last seen in the general direction of Miznia, near Gurth. Rumor had it he had fallen to work as a lowly miner, perhaps having started another family, but he had never been heard from again.

Although dead, the Twelve Flatheads foresaw that some cretin might tamper with their remains. Therefore, they took steps to punish trespassers with a curse. It is not exactly sure how all of the corpses reached the same destination nor were preserved, but the “Keeper of the Dungeon” (who is presumably the First Dungeon Master

whose reign did not begin until 883 GUE) placed each of the bodies in the Tomb of the Twelve Flatheads with each of their severed skulls upon a pole outside the same crypt. It is assumed that the remains are still there to this day.

Thanks to the efforts of the court magicians, the curse would be postponed for 94 years, but the 14<sup>th</sup> of Mumberbur was henceforth known as Curse Day, the anniversary of the death of Lord Dimwit Flathead the Excessive and the beginning of the end of the Flathead Dynasty. When Megaboz disappeared in a ball of fire, most assumed he was dead and by 882, royal spokesmen would deny rumors of the Curse and historians would dismiss it as a silly schoolyard legend, but in 883 they would be mistaken. In the meantime, Megaboz magically assumed the identity of the famous painter Frobesius Fublius and would later take the guise of a royal jester in the court of Wurb Flathead.

## **Appendix I: The Nature of the Quendoran Economy**

Where did all the money go? Who spent it, and on what? How wealthy was the average Quendoran, and further, how wealthy was Quendor itself? Unfortunately, it is not easy to answer these questions with any accuracy; most of the records from the Flathead Dynasty have been lost or destroyed, perhaps turned into yipple dung. We can however gather the few details at our disposal and, by making certain assumptions, begin to explore the questions at hand. It seems that our safest starting point is the actual population of the Great Underground Empire.

Based on figures derived from late 9th century tour-books, and several guesstimates where the actual figures, for one reason or another, are not available (if our estimated are reasonable), it would seem that during the last few decades of the empire, the total population was somewhere in the area of 5.5 million people. By using this general figure, we can take a look at the annual revenue of the Quendoran government, and thus calculate the amount of taxes paid by the average Quendoran. For these next steps, the most reliable data comes from the reign of Dimwit Flathead. Assuming that the expenditure on the construction of dams remained at a constant 29% of Dimwit's expenses throughout his reign, and that the actual amount of money spent remained more or less unchanged over several years, we can, by remembering that Flood Control Dam #3 cost Dimwit Flathead some 37 million zm, calculate that the annual income of the Quendoran government was in excess of 128 million zorkmids.

To get any further, we have to realize the following formula:

$$(\text{tax rate}) (\text{total population}) (\text{average annual income}) = (\text{total annual government revenue})$$

Remembering that Dimwit at one point increased the tax rate to 98%, the average annual income seems easy enough to calculate. There is only one problem left: our population figures are almost a century later than our governmental expenditures, but we can get around this problem by remembering that if the total population was higher in the 8th century than the 9th, the proportion of people that actually paid their taxes under Dimwit's severe rates was correspondingly lower. Thus we can use the tax rate of 0.98, the population of 5.5 million and the total income of 128 million to arrive at an average annual income of 24 zorkmids per person. Keeping in mind the fact that our population figures take into account the elderly and children, none of whom, despite Dimwit's best efforts, paid any taxes, the income figure is probably closer to 30 zorkmids per year per tax-paying adult.

How then did this small figure compare to the total amount of currency actually in circulation? To answer this question we can again turn to the figures left behind from the reign of Dimwit Flathead. Without pausing to note the economic difficulties that his coronation expenses must have forced upon the land, most historians relay the commonly accepted fact that the festivities as a whole ran in the area of some twelve times the Quendoran gross national product. Given the fact that by the end of 789, every single zorkmid of commerce in the Empire was control by FrobozzCo Inc., it makes sense to say that the Quendoran GNP was roughly equal to the FrobozzCo annual income. How then do we arrive at that figure in turn? In 746, Flathead Industries had achieved an impressive annual income of 80 million zorkmids, all of which came directly from FrobozzCo. Barely four years later, Flathead Industries was one of almost 39,000 FrobozzCo subsidiaries. If FrobozzCo was able to waste 80 million zorkmids in contracts to a company that would soon become only one among many thousands, then FrobozzCo's annual income must not only have exceeded one hundred million zorkmids, but in fact been closer to, if not in excess of, the astounding figure of 1,000,000,000 zorkmids. If Dimwit could casually shell out well over twelve billion zorkmids for his coronation and still go on to spend several hundred million per year, the amount of hard cash in circulation during this late period of the empire must have been astounding indeed. Of course, not all of this money was made

up of individual coins; during the Flathead era the Bank of Zork took a particular fascination with the frequent issue of zorkmid bills with astoundingly large values. All of this of course must have had its impression upon the Quendoran economy. With so much money in circulation, the purchasing power of the zorkmid during the time of the Twelve Flatheads must have been extremely low, and Dimwit's own massive desire to spend can only have contributed to the rampant inflation of the time.

## **Appendix II: Mayor Bah'ma**

Little is known of Bah'ma, former Flatheadia mayor, and collector of religious relics. Although his time of office can be limited between 700 and 883 GUE, his exact placement in history is puzzling. The only record of his reign has been attested in an old undated newspaper clipping from the New Zork Times:

He's known as someone who has great taste in wine, women and fashion, but recently Mayor Bah'ma has revealed a new side to his personality: his interest in religious relics.

As of last night, the call has gone out all across the land for any and all items of great religious significance to be brought to his headquarters in Flatheadia to be inspected by the Mayor. This is an unprecedented move on his part; normally within the first few months of gaining office, a Mayor might summon the most beautiful people in the town (or perhaps those with the most interestingly shaped eyebrows) to dine at his official residence, but never before has an elected official sought the company of deceased religious icons.

Although many would question the sanctity, or even the sanity, of such a move, Mayor Bah'ma has defended his decision saying, "there's nothing unusual about following up on an interest when you're in a position to do so. All my life I've been fascinated by the relics of our holy people. It's only around them that we can be 100% safe from the dead rising up and attacking us." It is even rumored that he always carries a piece of the famous skull of Yoruk, a tooth which had been reported stolen in 594, although the Mayor's office has declined to comment on the issue.

This is only one of the many controversies which have embroiled the Mayor since his historic election. Despite having won a landslide election, helped in part by his rallying slogan of "Yeah, we might be able to..." and in part by the death of his opponent mid-campaign, he has been hit with scandal after scandal, from his admission that while he did smoke Granola, he "did not inhale", to his steamy affair with a pressure cooker. But despite these revelations, he remains as popular as ever with the man on street, who was recently quoted as saying, "Oh, Bah'ma? Yeah, he's okay I guess."

Mayor Bah'ma insists that his new interest in holy relics will not detract from his other hobbies, such as yelling obscenities at passing dragons, and walking daily in the areas around his official residence. "I love walking out here," he told us while out on his regular route, "it's easily my favorite place to squelch about."

## Chapter 5: From Loowit to the Fall

### The Reign of Loowit Flathead (789~813 GUE)

Dimwit and his eleven siblings were dead. For reasons that remain lost to history, Dimwit himself was not nearly as excessive at procreation as was Mumberthrax, his father. Although various grandchildren of the Insignificant Monarch did survive, most notably John D. Flathead II and Lucille Flathead (although secretly), in 789 GUE the crown devolved instead upon the eldest surviving male member of the house, Loowit Flathead, and would remain there for 24 years until 813. John D's child would have been king had there been no older member of the family. Thus Loowit must proceed from Mumberthrax's generation or older. As Fiorello, Mumberthrax's only known sibling, was himself close to the centers of power, it seems reasonable to conclude that Loowit was Fiorello's own son.

Loowit himself had never made the move to the Eastlands with Dimwit's massive retinue some nineteen years before, and upon Mumberthrax's death had preferred to retire to his country estates on the fringes of Mithicus. Clearly one of the most intellectual of the Flatheads, Loowit had spent the intervening time relatively removed from the excesses of his royal relative, pursuing instead the study of foreign tongues and ancient historians.

No doubt, given Loowit's distance from the capital in the east and his apparent lack of power, the group of royal advisors that assumed temporary control after Dimwit's sudden collapse gave serious thought to ignoring the surviving members of the dynasty and elevating one of their own to the throne of Quendor. The seeming disinterest in the issue among members of the royal family, as well as the complacency of the Quendoran military, would have assured the success of such a scheme, and it seems that the capable Lord Feepness himself was on the verge of reaching for the throne. However, through a series of events still unclear today, someone in Aragain had managed to get word to Loowit, perhaps through the means of magical communication. Although what remains of Loowit's personal writings make it clear that the recluse did not relish the thought of assuming the throne, his sense of duty to Quendor and family drove him to send word to the castle that he would soon arrive to receive his crown.

His journey from Mithicus to the capital took several weeks, delayed by Loowit's desire to stop in several major cities on the way and announce his ascension to the throne in front of a public audience. As the news of Dimwit's death had spread from the Eastlands, the closer Loowit got to his destination, the more dangerous the situation in any given city was likely to be. Although the newly-summoned monarch had been able to leave Mithicus inconspicuously, the locals having heard none of the disturbing rumors from the east, by the time Loowit reached Borphee, things were clearly amiss. Mysterious and distorted reports of the Curse had already begun to float across the ocean, and the coastal cities in the west were already beginning to show the first signs of unrest. By the time Loowit's chartered frigate arrived in Antharia, the port cities of Marba and Anthar had already erupted in riot. Apparently unconcerned with the death of their not terribly popular ex-king, the citizens of Antharia were much more disturbed by malicious reports that the Curse of Megaboz had included a spell to transform all granola in the Kingdom of Quendor into well-hardened yipple waste. For the time being, Loowit was able to calm the populace by suggesting that they look in the granola mines; no such transformation had occurred. Nevertheless, the seeds of granola unrest had been sown in Quendor, and the whole issue was destined to rear its ugly head once again some 75 years later in the form of the Granola Riots that nearly destroyed all forms of civilized life on the island of Antharia.

In his own collected letters, it is clear that Loowit himself had little idea of the magnitude of the crisis. Although he certainly knew of the collective death of his twelve relatives, Loowit's summons to the capital had contained little information about the exact nature of the Curse in question, and in fact seems to have been deliberately misleading. If the infamous Delbor Telegram is not actually a forgery, it can provide us great insight into Loowit's state of mind during his voyage across the country to the capital:

To Loowit Flathead:

Statue of Dimwit annoyance to residents at Fublio. Stop. Annoyance revealed by Megaboz at dedication banquet. Stop. Dimwit dead. Stop. Brothers and sisters all dead. Stop. You king. Stop. Empire to collapse in 94 years. Stop. Come quickly.

Stop.

Delbor, son of Mumbar, son of Goobar, for the Regents of Quendor.

If it is indeed true that copies of this telegram circulated throughout Quendor from the first day of Loowit's reign, then it is not surprising to see how quickly the situation had deteriorated in the east. By the time Loowit arrived at Port Foozle, much of the surrounding countryside had been captured by rebels, and the deliberate destruction of tunnels and caverns that would continue for another ninety years had only just begun.

Although Dimwit Flathead was certainly the most flagrantly indulgent ruler in the history of The Great Underground Empire, most of the Flatheads who followed him did their best to uphold the tradition of excessiveness. The next hundred years would prove to be a very trying time for the people of Quendor, as the high level of taxation continued, although the money was increasingly spent not on massive construction projects but on extravagant parties and long vacation trips for members of the royal family. The descents were also panicky lots, each one trying harder than the last to remove the curse on the land.

However, the roughly one quarter of a century during which Loowit ruled from Aragain, was actually noted for being a relative period of rejuvenation for the provinces of Quendor, both politically and culturally. It does seem clear that much of the empire fell into decay; almost at once, sections of the underground caverns in the Eastlands fell into disrepair without Dimwit's obsessive interest in the subterranean lands to ensure their upkeep. Even parts of the truly immense royal palace itself quickly became forgotten, as the less excessive and somewhat more austere King Loowit found little need for the square bloits of bedroom and bathroom that Dimwit so loved. While some people have seen this trend as an immediate indication of the empire's necessary decline, it seems more likely that the people of Quendor were instead simply recovering from a period of ridiculous excess, and returning to a more normal situation. If parts of the underground empire fell into disuse, it was not out of helpless and pathetic decline, but instead out of an increasing disgust and annoyance at the outrages of the previous regime.

As a matter of fact, regardless of the continued taxations, most people who have written about the history of Quendor after the death of Dimwit Flathead have noticed a decided improvement in the living conditions and general morale of the population as a whole, as well as a remarkable rebirth and reinvention of stable, normal royal government. Faced with the remarkable problem of coming quickly on the heels of one of the worst monarchs of all time, Loowit spent the greater portion of his long reign carefully analyzing and reorganizing every facet of Quendoran government. In the view of many experts, the hard work of purging the bureaucracy at every level, as well as carefully and systematically rewriting every law that Dimwit Flathead every enacted, was the only thing that kept the Great Underground Empire from collapsing right then and there.

Although some of the more crushing burdens, such as the annual levy of first-born children to work in the Antharian granola smelters, would continue even into the era of Idwit Oogle Flathead, the sudden loosening of other restrictions brought about a virtual renaissance in the older provinces of the west. The ancient magic guilds, long invested with the secrets of magic that had remained hidden during the Period of Dim Lighting, had found a renewed vigor after the events of the Endless Fire of 773. Now, with the removal of the few restrictions that Dimwit had placed upon the guilds, the newly recreated institutions emerged from the confusion to play a new and dominating role in the government of the western half of the kingdom. With Loowit's Acts of Dismissal, passed in the early months of 790, every provincial, regional and urban government official was promptly fired and told to "go somewhere else", and although this abrupt dismissal worked wonders to end generations of corrupt local government in the west, it was often many years before Loowit found the time to find suitable replacements for every single one of the spots on the nearly endless list of necessary positions. More often than not, the resultant vacuum on the local level was filled by officials within the local guilds, if not controlled directly by the guilds themselves. Although this illegitimate source of authority would be a constant source of difficulty for the remaining Flathead monarchs, it would become, after the collapse of the empire, one of the most stable sources of power throughout the entire west.

**Analecta Loowitica** (801 GUE)

For the first time since the New Year's Revolt over 130 years before, a king of Quendor took it upon himself to issue a thorough and wide-ranging compilation of every law, decree and enactment that had come forth from the royal government. This massive work, the *Analecta Loowitica*, is considered by many to be Loowit's crowning achievement. The final 23 volume work, released in 801 GUE, represented the first and only attempt to keep track of the ridiculous proliferation of royal legislation that had begun with Duncanthrax and his Unnatural Acts and ended with the 3,459 tax bills passed by Dimwit Flathead on the day of his death.

The last 19 volumes of this remarkable compilation were dedicated to Loowit's immediate predecessor, Dimwit Flathead the Excessive, sometimes called the Thorough. Because of Dimwit's remarkable, and truly oftentimes annoying, tendency to issue royal decrees relating to any and every aspect of Quendoran life, Loowit's legal compilation is thus a highly valuable source book for the history of Dimwit's bizarre and complicated reign.

Incredible tales of the monarch's excessive whims that would otherwise appear to us as no more than oral legend take on a stark reality within the pages of the *Analecta*. To give but one example:

*Analecta Loowitica* XXII, xvi, 4 Dismembur 788

The Lord Dimwit Flathead to the people of Quendor: Anyone withholding payment of all taxes decreed before this date shall be killed along with everyone they have ever met.

What makes the *Loowitica* even more impressive is the fact that Loowit poured over every law one line at a time and edited each one to either reaffirm the law or declare it to be out of date. The end result of this effort was a massive loosening of restrictions; in one fell swoop nearly all of Dimwit's horrendous tax laws were cleaned from the books, preserved only in the final editions for the sake of historical thoroughness. It is for this reason that Loowit today is remembered as one of Quendor's most popular monarchs. Although he himself proposed little that was new or original, his willingness to undo some of his family's worst mistakes was a characteristic much appreciated by the bulk of the Quendoran population.

#### **The Lives of the Twelve Flatheads (804 GUE)**

It is of most important note, that also during the reign of Loowit Flathead, that Boswell Barwell undertook his impressive "The Lives of the Twelve Flatheads."

#### **The Rose Riots (811 GUE)**

The Rose Riots of 811 GUE were the result of rumors that the compass rose can actually control the wind. These rumors were hotly denied by the Guild of Meteorologists, who harvested the species to the brink of extinction during these Rose Riots.

#### **The Reign of Duncwit Flathead (813~843 GUE)**

Duncwit Flathead succeeded Loowit Flathead in 813 GUE and ruled the kingdom for 30 years until he was exiled in 843. Nothing much is known regarding this member of the dynasty save a few scattered references, which tell that he was more than a little disturbed by the simultaneous deaths of a dozen relatives, and spent most of his remaining years in the grips of a mortal fear for his own life. Syovar and the ever level-headed Lord Feepness were the guiding hands of the kingdom for most of this period while the crown was upon the head of this cowardly monarch.

#### **Belboz's Advancement (820 GUE)**

After 20 years of tutelage and a 30-year apprenticeship at the Accardi Chapter of the Guild of Enchanters, Belboz became a full-fledged Enchanter in 820 GUE. This was considered rapid advancement by sorcerers' standards. He decided to spend his time traveling south to Gurth and Mithicus, where he pioneered research on anti-caking additives

The Frobozz Magic Month Company bought Fidooshiary and remained it Frobruary. The Frobozz Magic Day Company bought Frob Day. (817 GUE)

The Fanucci Casino Rebuilding Act of 817 was passed, adopting certain house rules.

to magic potions. His success in perfecting dozens of spells, notably the LOBAL spell (“sharpen hearing”) and the CONBAK spell (“build strong bodies 12 different ways”) brought him interprovincial fame, and heralded his advancement to Sorcerer after a mere 25 years.

### **The Alchemist Ozmar Writes a History of Magic (821 GUE)**

The historian Ozmar wrote a history of magic in 821 GUE. One of his most famous quotes is, “The ancients of our kind were nearer to knowing the truth about science than those who we call scientists today,” which is but a single fragment. The rest of the paragraph correctly places this in its context. If dabbles of alchemy is not evident within these words, it is recommended that one read his more obscure works that have since been the backbone of many heretical alchemy sects today.

The greatest irony is this: that the ancients of our kind were nearer to knowing the truth about science than those who called themselves scientists. Science has taught us much and given us new words for old mysteries. But beneath these words are mysteries, and beneath them more mysteries. The pursuit of magic has given these mysteries meaning and provided for our people great benefits unrealized as yet by science. One day, perhaps, a great union will be formed between magic and science, and the final mysteries will be solved.

### **Elvis Flathead Performs His First Concert (841 GUE)**

The most popular music among the masses of the GUE was a type known as rock music, so-called because it was produced by banging together rocks (which were left lying all over the place following the construction of the caverns and tunnels of the GUE) and also because listeners frequently stuffed rocks in their ears due to the loud volumes involved.

The origins of the GUE’s rock music can be traced to the legendary singer Elvis Flathead. Although his music had already been in mild circulation, his first concert in 841 GUE propelled him to stardom. For years following this public debut, fans would flock to see “the King” sway back and forth to smash hits such as “You Ain’t Nothing But a Hellhound,” and “Love is Blind,” both the highlights of his career.

Following Elvis’ trend, the most famous rock musicians were undoubtedly Sgt. Duffy’s Lonely Hearts Club Band. Their songs include “I Get By With a Little Hint From My Friends,” and “Sandy Cave.” A later addition to the GUE’s rock music scene would be a group called Men at Zork, whose hit song “Down Under” revitalized interest in the medium. Another popular rock artist was Billy Troll. Other important rock musicians of the GUE were a group named Jefferson Bucket (later re-named Jefferson Balloon) and a cute robot named Pink Floyd.

### **The Reign of Barbawit Flathead (843~845 GUE)**

Why are the records of Duncwit almost nonexistent? Were they unrecorded? Were they intentionally omitted? What do the few obscure sources refer to when they speak of the Flathead king “going off the deep end”? Nevertheless, after “the bizarre and pathetic climax of the long and complicated reign,” this coward was deposed and exiled in 843 GUE. The Royal Militia and a key group of chief advisors turned to the exiled monarch’s eldest son Barbawit, who would share with his nephew Wurb the inauspicious distinction of reigning for barely two years before being toppled from power in 845. Throughout his short life, Barbawit was characterized by two things, his love of travel and his perverse sense of humor, both of which would ultimately be his undoing. Although it is unclear exactly how Barbawit spent his days before his ascent to the throne of Quendor, various sources report that, much to the annoyance of the royal family, he was for many years the headlining act in a stand-up comedy troupe that toured the western provinces on the backs of underfed pack mules. It is of course possible that these tales are mere fabrications, but given the nature of his deeds during his all too brief reign, it seems unlikely that his earlier years could have been spent doing anything much more respectable.

Barbawit himself was the first Flathead monarch since Duncanthrax himself not to have any formal schooling as a young boy. His father, never noted for his stable personality and solid mental capacity, ignored Barbawit for almost twenty-three years, for some reason convinced that he had died at the same time as Dimwit and his eleven.

Plagued by a father that refused to acknowledge his existence, and constantly harassed by a brazen younger brother with the unfortunate name of Idwit Oogle, Barbawit's childhood cannot have been a happy one, and like many lonely people, the unstable Flathead covered his insecurity in a blanket of bizarre and morbid humor. He was of course the first member of the immediate ruling family to have been born after the disaster of 789, and thus knew about the Megaboz affair only through second-hand and wildly distorted reports from his older relatives. Not having lived through and witnessed the carnage for himself, he seemed to have seen the entire episode as nothing more than a particularly rich source of material for his ever-growing supply of jokes.

By the time Duncwit's advisors were compelled to push the old monarch off his throne, it was clear to everyone involved that Barbawit had absolutely no interest in taking charge of Quendor. The high-ranking military figures that ousted Duncwit have been blamed for ignoring a golden opportunity and doing away with the reigning dynasty once and for all. Lacking the political originality, or perhaps fearing the consequences of bringing the Curse to an early fulfillment, the small group of coup leaders felt they had no choice but to take their chances with Barbawit. The older group of advisors that had steadied the course of the state after the deaths of Dimwit and Loowit had long since been distanced from the reigns of power at Aragain, Feepness himself finally giving in to the death of a lonely exile in the wilds of Fenshire, and already the young Oogle was itching for a chance to claim the throne.

Nevertheless, Barbawit was crowned as Lord of Quendor on the 22nd of Oracle, as with each of the kings before him since Dimwit's day. In an amusing side-note to the initial events of his reign, Ozmar records that Barbawit almost missed his coronation date in Aragain. Unwilling to force his comic troupe to cancel performance dates in Gurth and Mithicus, the stubborn and disinterested monarch spent several weeks refusing to make the necessary preparations for the long voyage. Finally exhausted and annoyed by the constant barrage of messengers from the east, he gave in and forced himself to overcome his reputedly horrible seasickness. At each stop along the voyage, he dismissed the pleading of the Quendoran regents to sit down and begin the work of government, interested only in perfecting his stand-up comic routine. On the night of the 21st he stopped in Port Foozle, entertaining the assembled masses with a never-ending assortment of one-liners about his grandfather's cousin, the excessive but still quite dead Dimwit Flathead.

"Why did Lord Dimwit Flathead throw his grandfather clock out the window?"

"Have you studied the trajectory from several angles?"

"Why does he always use the second-story window?"

"Excessive as always, he wanted to see time fly."

From this point onward, the situation only got worse. It soon became clear to the regents that Duncwit's successor would prove to be little better than his father. Barbawit took no interest whatsoever in the inner workings of government, and the details of daily administration were soon left completely to the royal advisors. Another anecdote, also preserved by Ozmar, shows just how far the royal family had deteriorated. The day after his coronation, when Barbawit was needed for an urgent series of council meetings with his new court, he failed to arrive at the appointed time. Search parties sent to look for the king finally found him wandering through the royal gardens, telling jokes to the nasturtiums. Even if this story is pure fiction, it certainly shows how poorly the new monarch appeared to his worried supporters. Within a week, their worst fears had been confirmed. Barbawit himself announced that he was leaving Aragain to resume his comic tour. Apparently, the few briefings on the nature of the Curse of Megaboz and the state of Quendor that he had been forced to sit through had provided him with several hours of new material for his comic routine. "Even if the empire *is* going to collapse," he quipped, "at least I'm going to have a good time laughing about it."

And off he went: Foozle again, then Festeron, Marba, Anthar, often spending weeks in each place just to overcome his fear of the open sea. The call of the audiences of the Westlands was irresistible, and soon he was resuming the tour he had abandoned several months before: Grubbo, Accardi, Borphée, then inland to Znurg, and ancient Quendor itself. By the second or third show, things had begun to go strangely awry. His improvisational humor, immensely popular before the death of his father, had begun to take on a sinister and foreboding tone. Clearly, rampant anarchy and the total collapse of the greatest empire in history were not topics that people found to



be particularly amusing. However, Barbawit stuck to his comic guns, even going so far as to greet the nervous crowds at Largoneth Village with the following lines:

“Megaboz walks into a bar. ‘Ouch,’ he goes, ‘Wrong place. I meant to go to the Armory.’” (his original version had “Lord Nimbus” in place of “Megaboz”)

Undeterred by the angry and often violent reactions provoked by his twisted humor, Barbawit continued on to the north. Only three out of thirteen of his shows ended peacefully, his audiences stirred to riot by their king’s perverse morbidity.

By the time Barbawit reached Mareilon, his bizarre reputation had preceded him. Nervous unrest had shaken the city for several days beforehand, some extremist protestors even threatening to destroy the city in a second Endless Fire if the Flathead brought his brand of humor onto the stage within city limits. Despite the best advice of the few advisors that had accompanied him this far, Barbawit insisted on performing, the entire set ending in near disaster. The king himself was pulled off the stage and attacked by the angry mob, barely escaping with his life.

Some apocryphal reports of the day’s events note that Thwack of Mareilon was actually in the audience to witness the king’s comic routine, and was in fact more than somewhat inspired by the pale greenish color of the fluids gushing from the injured monarch’s ears, eyes and nose. Whether this odd revelation was in fact the breakthrough that led him to the correct classification of the Moss of Mareilon in 843, we will in all likelihood never know.

In any case, the tour was called to a temporary halt, the king retreating to a country villa near Djabuti Padjama. The next two years of his reign consisted of dodging mobs of Barbawit-protesters, and narrowly escaping multiple executions. His return to the throne in 845 was welcomed by almost the entire population of Quendor backed by nearly every member of the entire Royal Army, each armed with tomatoes and heightened ferocity.

Attempting to please the crowd, Barbawit’s final one-liner unleashed the greatest devastating splatter upon a single man that one could ever imagine before being dragged to his execution. Eyewitnesses reported that he laughed hysterically the entire way to the gallows pole. His last recorded words were, “Wait, you guys aren’t kidding, are you?” It does seem that he failed to take the whole affair entirely seriously.

### **The Reign of Idwit Oogle Flathead (845~881)**

Idwit Oogle Flathead succeeded Barbawit Flathead in 845 GUE and ruled the kingdom for 36 years until 881. Little is known of his achievements (if any), other than the minting of a new zm1 gold coin with his portrait in 857.

### **Belboz Becomes a Sorcerer (845 GUE)**

After 25 years of adventuring and spell-research, Belboz achieved the rank of Sorcerer. Unlike his peers, he became well-known for his criticisms of the indulgences and decadence of the Flathead Dynasty and foretold the collapse of the Great Underground Empire. Most fellow sorcerers thought Belboz’s warnings were shrill of foolish. The population of Flatheadia continued to steadily decrease, as people feared the Curse of Megaboz coming upon their land.

### **The Granola Riots (865-01-16 GUE)**

Few events of the 9th century were as devastating to the empire as the Granola Riot since Dimwit’s death in 789, few areas of Quendoran territory enjoyed any story of two at a time before slipping finally into the grips of decay. This final slip for the beginning with an obscure series of events surrounding the granola mines near the swept over the entire island, and made themselves felt throughout the entire econo has ever studied the decline and collapse of the Quendoran empire must come to g effect: are the disastrous events of the 9th century direct effects of the Curse of Meg seen merely as the first in a long series of disasters that eventually brought about the collapse of the Great Underground Empire? If we agree to grant the Curse a pervasive all-importance, then the Riots of 865 must take on

Barsap had his first performance before royalty. (850 GUE)

a lesser importance. However, if we instead explain the collapse of the empire in terms of a long list of different causes, then it is possible to view the Granola Riots as one of the single greatest contributing factors to the fall of the Quendoran state.

What, then, was the big deal? What actually happened?

As always, there are several different sides to the story. To get the complete picture, it might help to step back some two-hundred years to the defeat of the island nation at the hands of the Bellicose King. With the absorption of the immense granola smelters of Antharia and the granola-hungry semi-barbarized population of the east, granola production and consumption rose to dramatic importance within the Quendoran economy within a mere ten years. Over the course of the next century or so, an elaborate legal and economic framework sprang up around the ensuing granola trade: tax revenue from the western provinces served to support the mining, packing and shipping of granola from the center of the ocean to the distant provinces in the East. Despite the enormous granola consumption of the Eastlands, the Antharian mines never managed to achieve self-sufficiency, and the *Analecta Loowitica* document several generations of Flathead monarchs attempting to deal with the issue via over-forceful legislation of various kinds. The following edict of Dimwit Flathead in 782 serves to illustrate the origin of the main problem of the Granola Riots:

- I. That the Royal Monarchy of Quendor has taken it upon itself to solve the manpower shortages that plague the Granola Mines of the Antharian Colony.
- II. That His Royal Beauteousness has found an opportunity to express His Royal Displeasure with the lowly subjects of the Western Provinces for their continued unwillingness to consume the Most Holy and Royally Approved Antharian Granola.
- III. That, because He feels on this day most generous and beneficent, His Royal Authority hereby allows every family in the heretofore mentioned Western Provinces to volunteer their first-born sons for forced labor in the Antharian Granola Mines.
- IV. That the birthday of Her Royal Majesty the Queen shall from henceforth be celebrated on the first Grues Day of each month.<sup>35</sup>

For the next eighty years, inspectors made the rounds of the Western Provinces on an annual basis, sending the male first-born to the mining camps of Antharia, and for all that time, the native Antharians and the kidnapped westerners formed two opposing camps, leaving a rift in the mining community that finally exploded in the 860s.

Finally, members of the two negotiating camps hit upon a clever idea. Rather than stay above ground and argue over whether or not the mines were actually empty, why not send someone down to find out? The two opposing parties argued on for a few hours, perhaps afraid to go ahead and discover the truth. Finally, both the native Antharians and the rebellious western slaves elected a representative, the two agreeing to go down together to investigate the situation. Was there any granola left? Had one side been trying to deceive the other? The whole investigation should have taken only an afternoon; the anxious miners were left waiting for nearly four days. Finally, where two had gone in, one survivor staggered out, shaking his head and holding up a small rock of yipple waste. Before anyone could beg him to speak, the miner dropped of exhaustion and died where he fell.

Immediately, both camps erupted in violence. The mines were empty, the endless supply of granola transformed in an instant to rotting yipple dung. Fearing that the Curse had been fulfilled two decades too soon, the miners exploded in riot. Immediately, the western slaves repeated their claim to freedom from the mines, pouring ferociously into the valleys below.

The mines continued to yield granola thereafter, but at a far more limited rate, before all operations came to an eventual halt.

Brog, whose presence would be essential to the return of magic in 1067 GUE, was born. (c. 867 GUE)

“Beach Blanket Fanucci” was filmed in Greater Borphee at Flathead Beach (871 GUE.)

### **The Decaying King (c. 873 GUE)**

<sup>35</sup> Dimwit had no queen. This prevented no one in Quendor from celebrating her birthday, including Dimwit himself.

The last years of the reign of Idwit Oogle Flathead is a sad story indeed. Due to an unexplainable disease that he had obtained, the king made his home deep in the underground caverns to the north of the Flathead Fjord, hoping desperately that the subterranean hot springs there would be enough to nurse his unhealthy body back to life. Idwit himself had never left the Eastlands to visit his older, more civilized provinces, and for the last seven years of his reign, neither did any of his public officials. The forces of government in the east became increasingly concerned with nursing the health of the king and preserving the safety of the eastern cities. When the Guild Revolts of Borphee and Accardi erupted in 873, no troops were sent to quell the violence. The naval garrison at Anthar had been given deployment orders, but unbeknownst to the royal government, the soldiers there had already risen in mutiny and seized the western half of the island.

### **The Death of Idwit Oogle Flathead's Wife (874 GUE)**

Convinced that the Curse had come to fruition nine years too early, the wife of Idwit Oogle Flathead committed suicide in 874 GUE. Her last weeks were spent in a state of paranoid delirium, the end finally coming as she ran through Port Fozzle, waving a blood-stained knife and screaming that the dornbeasts were coming. This last death was a crushing blow for Idwit and his own self-confidence, the spring of 874 marking the end of any sort of effective government emanating from the royal court.

### **The Secession of Kaldorn (880 GUE)**

When a claimant to the throne of Kaldorn rose to announce the principality's secession from Quendor in 880 GUE, Idwit Oogle was helpless. His only recorded response to the crisis was to write a letter to his own governor in Kaldorn, exhorting him to provide for his own safety.

Barsap was appointed Royal Magician (875 GUE)  
Ursula Flathead became Miss Miznia (878 GUE)  
Gustar Woomax was born in Greater Borphee (880 GUE)

The shell of Mumbo II's enormous pet turtle was magically enameled by a wizard with all the colors of the rainbow. Henceforth, a new breed of "rainbow turtles" began to populate the Southland shores. (c. 881 GUE)

### **The First Inquisition Begins (881 GUE)**

A year later, in 881 GUE, affairs had reached the boiling point. Extremist religions spring up whenever an empire collapses, and this was not an exception. Early that spring, the first violent stirrings of the Inquisition swept through the streets of Fozzle, and quickly through the forests to nearby Flatheadia. The followers of this crackpot religious sect believed that the impending doom of the Curse of Megaboz was caused by widespread sinning, and the only way to forestall the curse was to appease the gods. The original goals of the movement, rather than beginning with an indiscriminate massacre of the general populace, called for the sacrifice of only those people in power, particularly members of the Flathead family. Correspondingly, after the sack and looting of several governmental buildings, the growing ranks of the extremist cult group laid siege to the Flathead Castle itself, seizing both the key forest roads and underground caverns leading away from the capital.

Surprised by the stiff resistance encountered from the local garrison within the castle, the attackers were forced to settle down for the long haul. As it turned out, the makeshift and unprofessional job by the Inquisition of cutting off all communications with the surrounding countryside did nothing to prevent news of the crisis from reaching Idwit in his distant underground retreat. Shaken from his sickness and lethargy by the news of the imposing threat to his son, Wurb's life, Idwit Oogle Flathead was moved to one final, decisive act.

Against the better judgment of his advisors, who urged him to wait and let the crisis defuse itself, the aged Flathead monarch mustered the few troops available to him from the garrisons of the Gray Mountains Province and began the long march to the south.

A few weeks later, a serious split in the Inquisition leadership, marking the beginning of persecution of the general population, had significantly weakened the makeshift forces besieging Flatheadia. This second branch, believed that the sacrifice of those in royalty were not enough, that the gods could only be placated if every person in the entire kingdom was executed. (For obvious reasons, the Inquisition never enjoyed a widespread popularity.)

The arrival of the relieving army from the north brought the whole affair to a sudden and painful halt, the remaining Inquisition extremists around the castle crushed in a matter of hours. Unfortunately, the events of the last few weeks seemed to have been too much for Idwit's mental well-being. Unwilling to wait in relative safety while

his forces secured victory, he somewhat recklessly mounted his steed and charged ahead to lead his army to battle. To this day, it is not known whether the dozen arrows found lodged in his back came from the Quendoran archers he was trying to lead, or from the archers of the Inquisition that he was soon trying to flee.

In any case, the eleventh king of the Flathead dynasty was dead, and only his sixteen year old son remained. Two years later, he would reach the age of majority and lose the throne of the greatest empire the world had ever seen.

### **Grawl's Treachery**

During the last days before the fall of the Empire, an enemy of Syovar, an evil warlock named Grawl rose up and murdered his wife Lorena. In addition, Grawl cast a powerful spell upon his only son, Logrumethar. The spell transformed him into a hideously ugly creature, thereafter called Grum, and then the warlock exiled him to the Cavern of the Rainbow Mosses, where he lived for many years in complete isolation. Anyone that looked upon him was instantly turned to stone. While the spell did not constrain him within the cavern, Logrumethar stayed on his own will, so that no one would stumble upon his ugliness and the onlooker be turned to stone. Syovar was never able to locate his son for many years, and finally forced himself to admit that Logrumethar was dead.

### **The Reign of Wurb Flathead (881~883 GUE)**

In the year 881 GUE, the twelfth and final heir of the condemned Flathead Dynasty, Wurb Flathead rose to the throne of the Great Underground Empire (and the basis of the bloit changed to his elephant). During the course of the last three rulers, rebellions had been breaking out in nearly every corner of the world. The palace royalty still insisted that His Royal Highness Wurb Flathead ruled over the same glorious Empire that his ancestors had carved with their bare hands, and yet no one outside the capital city in the Eastlands recognized imperial authority.

While the Great Underground Empire was in its heyday—upscale condos crowded the massive caverns and subterranean highways stretched from Aragain to Fublio Valley—the dread Curse Day was a mere two years away and already the empire had fallen into a completely frantic state over their impending doom. Both town and countryside were being abandoned as the day drew nigh, their inhabitants fleeing in the wake of the wizard's curse that had already killed Dimwit and disposed of the royal Flathead family some 92 years before. The Curse was threatening to destroy Wurb's empire entirely before he could even celebrate his eighteenth birthday.

Ill-trained in the details of government and more than a little shocked by the recent siege and the death of his father, young Wurb, alone and without friends, was utterly incapable of facing an increasingly desperate situation. The brief period of his reign, the last two years of the empire, saw the complete collapse of any sort of imperial authority, the effective size of the Quendoran state shrinking to encompass only the once thriving city of Flatheadia and the grounds of the royal palace itself. Often described by history as "feeble-minded," Wurb himself was nearly totally dominated by court officials and various surviving members of the royal family whose skills at government were rarely any better than his own. Many people telling the tale, especially Froboz Mumbar, seem to think that Wurb's ineptitude was the only reason the empire collapsed at all.

Anyone who still clings to this belief has clearly forgotten the significance of the Curse of Megaboz. Although there were still those even after the fall of the Great Underground Empire that tried to dismiss the entire story of Megaboz as no more than a hoax, a large percentage of the population and the royal court was in fact aware and in terror of the Curse, thanks in part to the effects of Barbawit's important if abortive propaganda campaigns some forty years earlier.

The two years of Wurb were characterized by a growing frenzy of superstition and mystical fear, the court at Aragain seeking false solace in a never-ending stream of magicians, spiritualists and charlatans, all of whom would try and fail to prevent the occurrence of the inevitable.

Already, the remnants of the Inquisition had seized total control over Port Foozle and several other sites around the world. Centralized at Foozle, this lunatic religious fringe begun a systematic decimation of the local population in hopes that the Curse could be averted if there was no one alive to notice it, which understandably led to the city's decline in popularity. Oddly enough, the vicious executioners in Foozle did allow the victims one final wish. If the wish could not be granted, the person was beheaded. If the wish could be granted, it was, and the person was subsequently hanged.

By 882, an alarming number of Eastlanders were marching voluntarily to their own deaths, and even more were being dragged against their will. To avoid a similar fate, thousands upon thousands of natives began to flee the area, some heading to the vacation spots in the Gray Mountains, but more still taking to the sea, hoping to find safety in the still calm western provinces. It was clear by now to everyone involved that Wurb was facing a hopeless situation, and it seems unlikely that even the most capable members among the Flathead Dynasty of the past could have done anything to avert the impending doom. Wurb knew of all these things, but there was little he could do to prevent the inevitable, unless someone else could stop it.

Wurb himself was lost in deepest fog of errors and confusion. He had become aware of rumors that the one person who could stop the Curse of Megaboz, and thus save the empire, was a servant somewhere in his own palace. Throughout the course of his second year on the throne, the last Flathead monarch was frantic. He was slow to action, but with only half a year left before the fast approaching Curse Day, Wurb finally issued a decree. In an official announcement, he offered half the wealth of the kingdom to anyone who was able to allay the Curse of Megaboz and save the land from destruction. Without a blush, the young boy signed his name to the royal proclamation and added the traditional titles "Protector of the Empire and Ruler of all the Known Lands." By now, the words had become meaningless. Even nearby Port Foozle was absolutely beyond royal reach, the effective domains of the Quendoran king reaching no more than a few bloits outside of the castle grounds.

Already, the barbarian tribes, as well as massive hordes of ogres, trolls, and orcs that had once been held back, now poured freely over the Gray Mountains and Flathead Mountains unchecked into the civilized provinces. Thousands more Zork natives abandoned the once-thriving underground caverns near the capital, driven away, at least in part, by the rude and mischievous pranks of the dangerously senile Wizard of Frobozz, still living in the bowels of the empire over a century after he had accidentally turned Dimwit's castle into a warm pile of chocolate. For the first time in history, the floodgates of the great Flood Control Dam #3 had been left unmanned. The king himself was totally controlled by the military advisors and generals that his father had left to protect him. Lord Syovar, who had been a powerful military leader even in the time of Dimwit was the only force keeping young Wurb safe from the invaders.

Even so, the king's clarion call was sent even to the remotest corners of the Empire:

The one who can stop the Curse of Megaboz, and save the land from  
destruction, shall be rewarded with half the wealth of the Empire.

(signed) Wurb Flathead  
King of Quendor  
Protector of the Empire  
Ruler of all the Known Lands

Whether or not Wurb actually expected his decree to have any practical effect, we will never know. It is clear from the generosity of the offered reward that the last Flathead had nothing left to lose. What we do know is that from every province of Quendor, courageous adventurers, scheming charlatans, and wild-eyed crackpots streamed into the Imperial Capital of Flatheadia in response to conquer the evil enchantment.

Clearly convinced of the veracity of the Curse, Wurb, in near desperation, spent the last weeks before his final fall in close conference with an endless succession of true magicians and charlatans alike that had answered his summons. He single-handedly interviewed some 12,569 royal grooms, servants, and slaves in hopes of finding an answer. Most of them laughed at him contemptuously. It is even rumored that the young king, much to the dismay of his frustrated advisors, spent the final three days in a secret conversation with one of his own castle servants, hoping perhaps that the answer to his dilemma could be found where no one else had thought to look. As the fates would have it, Wurb gave up his mighty task too soon, never meeting the one servant that could have saved him.

In any case, on the 4th of Mumberbur Wurb found time amidst the chaos and confusion around him to take a wife. In a hurried ceremony performed in the privacy of the royal wings, Quendor was given its first queen since the death of Idwit's wife some nine years before.

Outside the gates of the castle, the peasants ran riot. The last of the royal guard abandoned their usual posts and spread themselves out around the castle's massive stone perimeter, fighting desperately for the safety of their king. Finally, Wurb himself was forced to acknowledge the hopelessness of the situation. The long wheel of time had run its course; he knew that the game was over. With the royal guard growing mutinous and the barbarian invaders moving closer to the capital, he began to hurry. Scarcely pausing to packing their bags, the king, his wife, and the last members of his family to remain until the end, snuck quietly out of the castle through an unblocked rear entrance, Wurb bringing only his pet elephant along with him.

In a final melodramatic act on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Mumberbur, that many people since have interpreted as his own admission of defeat and abdication, Wurb sent word that the castle gates be thrown open and the royal guard be relieved from duty. Within minutes, the Royal Treasury was sacked and looted, the royal soldiers and the orcs joining together in an attempt to scavenge anything of value. The remaining peasants broke into the royal wine cellars for one last rowdy party. By the next morning (the morning of Curse Day), the imperial treasury and the entire palace was virtually bare of any richness. Even the entire metropolis of Flatheadia was vacant; every building gutted.

Wurb's eventual fate is utterly unknown. Rather than wait out the course of events and attempt to regain his position at a later date, perhaps by moving his capital to a less volatile area, Wurb instead simply walked away, the last king and queen of Quendor disappearing into the forests of the south. Whether they even lived to raise a family, stripped of all power and utterly alone, will never be discovered. Even Froboz Mumber, the only reliable chronicler of the era, tells us only that Wurb "moved somewhere else," fading forever into the obscurity of history.

The only surviving tale of his whereabouts proceeds from an old woman living in a village near the White House, who claimed that in 883, a young man with purple robes and a flattened head, ran through the village. He handed her the imperial scepter and told her to hold on to it for him until he came back. He never did, but this scepter found its way into the hands of Lucien Kaine in 948, and possibly was the very same scepter collected by the Second Dungeon Master on his quest for the position.

Although this was the end of the rule of the royal family of Quendor, dozens of pranksters, usurpers, and charlatans would over the centuries claim to be direct descendants of the Flathead family, the most celebrated being the infamous socialite, philosopher, and toastmaster, Boos Miller of West Shanbar. Whatever the truth behind these later claims might be, neither the king nor his pet elephant were ever found.

### **One Last Cursebuster (883-11-12 GUE)**

Only two days away, one last treasure-seeker, a peasant from an unheard-of village in an obscure province, set forth from his home for Flatheadia on the twelfth of Mumberbur determined to stop the Curse. This man would become the first to don the title of "Dungeon Master." He knew that he had an important advantage: an ancestor of his, a servant in Lord Dimwit Flathead's court, had witnessed Megaboz casting the Curse, and had obtained a small scrap of wizardly parchment that had fallen from the mage's pocket. This fragment, containing a spell from the secret notebook of the great magician, had been passed down from generation to generation, and was now in his possession. Thanks to it, he knew what none of the other would-be Cursebusters knew; he alone knew what had to be done to stop the Curse!

By the time of the peasant's arrival at Flatheadia, most of the treasure-seekers had given up and returned to their homelands. In fact, he discovered that most of the population, including all figures of authority, had fled to distant provinces. And when he awoke on the hard floor of the castle on Curse Day, he found that even the looters and the most persistent adventurers had departed.

### **The Final Curse Day: The Fall of the Empire (883-11-14 GUE)**

After he disappeared in the ball of fire at the time of Dimwit's death, Megaboz was assumed dead. It is now known that he took the guise of the royal jester, Barbazzo Fernap, in the court of Wurb Flathead, and magically assumed other identities, including the famous painter Frobesius Fublius and the Flatheadia inspector, to ensure the success of

The Miznia Jungle Skyway opened, replacing the perilous Miznia Jungle Train. (882 GUE)

The 883 Flathead Calendar celebrated the centennial of the memorable occasion of the coronation of Lord Dimwit Flathead the Excessive in 783 GUE.

his Curse to overthrow the Empire. Oddly enough, Megaboz chose to assist this last cursebuster in the guise of the jester. This servant of Wurb Flathead used the parchment, now a family heirloom in an attempt to halt the Curse. To do so, he had to assemble two items from each of the Twelve Flatheads into a cauldron which still remained in the castle of Flatheadia from 94 years before:

FLATHEAD	ITEM1	ITEM2
Dimwit Flathead	gaudy crown (Flatheadia outer bailey)	scepter (Flatheadia throne room)
John D. Flathead	diploma (underground stream)	stock certificate (Flatheadia vault)
Stonewall Flathead	saddle (underground stable)	lance (Flatheadia library)
Sebastian Flathead	violin (pit at Philharmonic Hall)	metronome (Flatheadia torture chamber)
J. Pierpont Flathead	zm100,000 bill (Flatheadia game room)	silk tie (aerie at Antharia Caves)
Thomas Alva Flathead	screwdriver (Flatheadia laboratory)	brass lantern (Flatheadia lower levels)
Leonardo Flathead	landscape (Flathead Fjord)	easel (Flathead Fjord)
Lucrezia Flathead	flask (Flatheadia dungeon cell)	fan (Fenshire Castle hothouse)
Ralph Waldo Flathead	manuscript (Flatheadia pyramid room)	quill pen (Granola Mines)
John Paul Flathead	seaman's cap (Flatheadia oubliette)	spyglass (from Otto at Frigid River Delta)
Frank Lloyd Flathead	scale model (Mirror Lake chalet)	t-square (FrobozzCo Building)
Babe Flathead	club (Flathead Stadium)	dumbbell (Flatheadia gym)

Unfortunately, on this same dark day, uncountable hordes of the horrible and ferocious race of grues which had escaped the blade of Entharion were accidentally released from the incredibly quantity of bottomless pits beneath Flatheadia Castle. Innocently seeking to cross the pits in order to acquire Thomas Alva Flathead's brass lantern on the far side of the cavern, this peasant tossed into them a Frobozz Magic Anti-Pit Bomb. As the pits filled, a legion of dark and sinister grues welled up and lurked into the shadows. Unhindered by the darkness, they quickly spread to every area of the Great Underground Empire and beyond. Deathly afraid of light of any kind, the grues began occupying the abandoned underground empire, preying mercilessly upon any adventurer foolish enough to explore their realms without a source of light at hand. (More packs of grues would be forced out of the remaining bottomless pits sometime in the intervening years between 883 and 948 GUE, when Implementor Bruce Daniels worked for weeks to fill in most of the remaining bottomless pits in Zork.)

Megaboz, whose motives are extremely unclear always appeared to the servant when he least expected. The quixotic jester tested him with riddles and games, spinning rhymes for his amusement, springing some deadly tricks, and giving helpful nudges in the right direction. The peasant successfully found the items necessary to stop the Curse, but throughout, Megaboz laughed at some tremendous joke. For his Curse was apparently much more complicated than had been presumed. After the twenty-four relics were tossed in the churning cauldron, and the sacred word uttered, the huge outer gates of Flatheadia burst open and the entire structure began to shake and tremble. The peasant made every effort to escape the castle in haste.

The following is an excerpt from the peasant's own journal:

I dove through the doors as the castle began its final tremors! Landing on soft grass, I rolled to a stop, and turned to see the castle's final moments. But, oddly, though it was collapsing, it didn't seem to be getting destroyed. Instead, it was merely shrinking, shriveling... I rubbed my eyes in disbelief, as the once mighty castle transformed itself into ever tinier structures. At long last there was stillness, and the dust began to clear...

I was standing in an open field west of a white house, with a boarded front door. There was a small mailbox there.

While staring dumbfounded at the white house, the jester appeared, laughing as though at some supreme trick. Then, a low moaning wind began to blow, and slowly, ever so slowly, his appearance shifted, until all that was seen was a wizard of incredible age and obvious power. His

hoary visage stirred an ancient ancestral memory. He spoke in a new voice, tired but commanding of instant respect. "I am Megaboz," he stated, and my skin tingled at the presence of a legend.

"Yes, I still live. I have waited a long time for this day; to meet the one who would guard after I am gone. The Great Underground Empire is no more; but Quendor remains. The white house will stand as a warning and reminder of the excesses of the Flatheads. Some day, a new Empire may rise; you – and your successors – shall watch over the land, and ensure that future Empire be benevolent. Henceforth, you shall be known as 'Dungeon Master'. As promised by Decree, half the wealth of the kingdom is yours!"

My mind was suddenly filled with images of a vast underground Treasury, piled with unfathomable wealth. But the image was tempered by the ironic knowledge that I would never have use for such wealth. As the image faded, I heard tinkling bells and the voice of the jester, who was Megaboz:

"Well, I'm outta here! Over to you, Dungeon Master!"

I found myself alone, left to ponder the years ahead, long years of keeping watch over Quendor and searching, ever searching, for my successor...

Thus, after centuries of rule over the farthest reaches of the world, countless years of decadence and over-taxation, the Curse of Megaboz fell upon the land and the Great Underground Empire collapsed, reducing Flatheadia into a small white house. And for no known reason, Megaboz awarded this nameless adventurer with the title of Dungeon Master, inheritor of the Eastland Underground Empire, and showered him with magical abilities and wealth beyond measure. This servant assumed total control of the caverns of the Great Underground Empire and became known as the first Dungeon Master. He would fiercely guard every entrance to the old underground realms, insisting that no one would enter until the time was right.

To this day it is not entirely clear why Megaboz chose to aid someone who was attempting to halt his Curse, nor is it known why this individual was rewarded by Megaboz for his actions. In any case, Megaboz was responsible for the downfall of a kingdom that had survived for over 800 years, since the age of Entharion the Wise.

After the collapse of the Empire the First Inquisition died. To this day it is not known how many people lost their lives to this horrible cult.

Elsewhere in the far distant realms of the Westlands, the great sorcerer Belboz (not too sympathetic to the Flatheads), upon hearing the news of the collapse could not help but gloat. His only recorded response was, "I told you so." Belboz then returned to Accardi where in 910 he would become Guildmaster of the Accardi Chapter.



PART V:  
**THE FALLEN EMPIRE**  
**883~966 GUE**

**Chapter 1: Early Years of Syovar the Strong (883~913 GUE)**

**The Ascension of Syovar the Strong (883 GUE)**

Although abandoned, the Great Underground Empire did not remain uninhabited. Still lurking within its crags and crevices were numerous creatures, including trolls, gnomes and other magical denizens. But the deeds of the Dungeon Master were quickly overlooked (if they had ever been looked at even once), and his fame scarcely known—for all eyes were focused upon the proud General Syovar.

Although he had been unable to prevent the fall of the Great Underground Empire, this nobleman refused to admit that it had vanished. In his unseemly arrogance, he claimed to be the rightful successor to the powers of the king, first issuing orders in Wurb's name, then using his big army and tremendous magical powers to declare himself the King of Zork. Had he not had these incredible powers, his title-mongering might not have stuck; but he did. The Castle of Zork in the newly formed Aragain Province was his seat of power, established as the new capital of the Empire.

The forests and mountains of the Eastlands were beset by hard times. Aragain itself was bombarded by wave upon wave of barbarian invasion, natives from the fringes of Fenshire and the more unsettled regions of the Flathead Fjord poured over the hills and laying waste to the last Quendoran outposts. Only the emergence of Syovar at the head of the last royal armies was able to preserve the Aragain region. He gathered the surviving remnants of the imperial army and plunged them into a never-ending war between the barbarian invaders. The armies under his leadership were the only Quendoran troops in those dark times unsullied by defeat. It is said that without his military prowess, the empire would have come to an even quicker demise.

While fending off the hordes of monsters, each remaining province additionally fell to warring with its neighbors. Only when the great Syovar made a pact of peace and friendship with Lord Ellron of the Aragain Province did peace spread throughout most of the Eastlands. The two helped to recreate the Knights of Frobozz to establish order to the land of anarchy. Syovar now had at his disposal a vast array of magical powers, and commanded the bulk of the armies that had survived the barbarian invasion. It was only the military strength of Syovar that preserved any semblance of stability in the Eastlands, and allowed him to march against the western continent in his attempt to reunify the old empire.

His goal was nothing less than reconquest and subjugation of the entirety of Zork and to end the wars that had sapped the lives and resources of all. He saw that peace would benefit all the lands, allowing an exchange of resources. For example, the water-rich Antharia could irrigate the desert of Kovalli, while Kovalli's secret insect-extermination spells could cure Antharia's perennial locusts plagues. Almost every force of nature and man stood in opposition to the great Syovar, but the old general refused to back down. He would spend many years laboring in attempt to unite all known lands into his unified Kingdom of Zork.

**The Revitalized City-States**

Following the disaster of Curse Day, entropy quickly took hold of the surface world. Lands were torn by violence and discord. Faced with the fact that Quendor was well past its prime, the once-great cities on both continents became dens of misery and confusion; lands were torn by violence and discord. The great island-continent of Antharia had been separated from all contact with the outside world. Only the darkest rumors survive from that time of the island's history.

With the final collapse of the Quendoran state in the older provinces of the Westlands, the initial political evolution of the area was characterized by a surprising rebirth of the ancient city-states. Dating back over nine

centuries from the ancient era before Entharion, the cities of Quendor, Galepath, Mareilon and Borphee all re-emerged as independent powers. Although Quendor would long remain a neutral power, and Borphee itself would soon be reabsorbed by the Quendoran Empire's successor state, Syovar's Kingdom of Zork, Mareilon and Galepath were to enjoy several generations of independent power.

The old families of nobility that had long controlled Vriminax wasted no time in solidifying an alliance with Quendor, its nearest neighbor and the most ancient of the northern cities. By 884, the combined militias of the two cities had occupied the western half of the former Frobozz Province, under the notion that taking the territory would provide a solid defensive zone between themselves and the already growing tensions of Galepath and Mareilon. Borphee, in close communication with Accardi, and more concerned with its mercantile interests in Miznia and Gurth to the south, discarded the bulk of the ruined empire to the north, creating an immense territorial vacuum between Borphee and Mareilon.

### **Galepath and Mareilon at War (888 GUE)**

Meanwhile, the governor of Galepath had secured the allegiance of the Lingolf Garrison and gained control over the Lonely Mountain and its nearby villages, coastal routes and highway approaches, thus bringing his territory almost to the border of the old Mareilon Province. Clearly upset that his rival had seized the initiative, and hoping to gain control over the historically important Largoneth site, the governor at Mareilon declared war on Galepath, thus at the fall of the empire reigniting the very conflict that had necessitated Quendor's creation some 900 years before.

In a manner characteristic of the age-old mutual antagonism of these two cities, barely five years had passed since the fall of Wurb Flathead before Galepath and Mareilon were back at war in 888 GUE. The various regional governors left over from the old imperial regime were to emerge as the founders of hereditary dynasties that would rule the two cities and the areas roughly corresponding to their old provincial boundaries for the next seventy years.

Suffering from the famine and confusion that had sunk over the Westlands since the decay of the empire, neither city could summon the resources necessary to defeat the other, and the war dragged on, punctuated by various short-lived truces. The more westerly powers, Vriminax and Quendor, were in no position to help either of the two opposing powers, both being more involved in protecting themselves against the incursions made by Kaldorn and Kovalli respectively.

It was not until after the Westlands began to recognize the ascendancy of Syovar that the bitter war between Galepath and Mareilon was finally brought to a halt, the contested territory being taken from both sides by a newly-invigorated Kingdom of Zork.

For some ten years following Syovar's capture of the Land of Frobozz, both cities concentrated their military efforts against this new incarnation of the Great Underground Empire. It would not be until the Conference of Quendor led to a marked strengthening in Syovar's control over the world political situation would the aggression of the city-states begin to abate somewhat, at least until the Enchanters Guild strongly opposed about one-fourth of the way through the tenth century.

### **The Era of Supernatural Usurpations**

Though many of the events following the fall of the Empire are undated, much of the most prominent history of Zork happened between the years of 883~948 GUE. Because Syovar wished to later highlight his military career with the release of Z-Team in 913 GUE, many historians suspect that many, if not all, of the following events happened prior to the TV series. Some place the Conference of Quendor after 913, but definitely prior to 924, when the conflicts of Kaine and Ellron blasted away the temporal peace.

### **The First Dungeon Master**

As the years passed and the underground caverns became the stuff of legend, the existence of the Dungeon Master was forgotten. When Syovar finally attempted to lay claim to the abandoned underground caverns, he found that a force even stronger than his had beaten him to it. The mysterious castle servant who had held the secret to the Curse of Megaboz had taken control of the underground realms, and was now known throughout the land as the Dungeon

Master. Nearly every tunnel and cavern in the Great Underground Empire had come under his control, from the massive Flood Control Dam #3 to the farthest flung underground highway.

Blessed with good fortune and aided by the Implementors who created and control our world, the Dungeon Master had come to own the vast fortunes that once belonged to the kings of the old empire. It was rumored that he even possessed a controlling share in the immense FrobozzCo International, the infinite conglomerate that had once held a monopoly over every magical scroll, spell, staff, or magical device of any kind that was produced within the borders of the realms of Quendor.

But through all the wars and conquests and dreams to unify Quendor above ground, the tunnels and caves of the Eastlands would remain relatively stable under the watchful eye of the Dungeon Master. He guarded the many hidden entrances to the underground and allowed the fantastic assortment of mystical creatures within to roam freely. But in 948, he decided to make an exception.

As for what the Dungeon Master sought, and what motivated him to seek it, these secrets have been lost in time. Despite the massive power and wealth at his disposal, he almost never chose to interfere with the affairs of the world above ground, instead biding his time for the moment he had been appointed to wait for.

### **The Evil Warlock Krill**

Evil times plagued the Land of Frobozz as every warlock in the kingdom attempted to gain control. The most powerful of these warlocks was Krill, who emerged from the mysterious forbidden lands of the freezing north. The Enchanters Guild confronted this warlock, who had already been bathing in dark sinister and menacing deeds for approximately 200 years. It was now that the Guild was finally able to banish him from the Accardi Circle of Enchanters. Upon excommunication, Krill gathered an army of lizard warriors, and using powerful spells enslaved many humans to fight in his army against their own will. Krill's first battle was waged against the capital of the newfound Empire, the Aragain Province and the Castle of Zork.

To counter this uprising, King Syovar declared war on Krill and fought the warlock with his amassed army. The early campaigns were many, but the forces of Krill grew so strong that not even a great warrior-wizard like Syovar was able to overcome the evil that had snatched the land. To gain victory, he knew that he needed both the Sword of Zork (one of the most powerful of all ancient blades of elvish workmanship) and the three Palantirs of Zork.

Every day and every year, the forces of Krill grew more daring. No village was safe from their attacks or spells. The wind became old and sour and reeked of evil. The crops began to wither and the barren land lost its fertility. All those who struggled to farm, found their crops stunted and bitter-tasting. Hunters discovered that most animals had fled the land, and those that remained were hardly worth catching. Many villages became ghost towns: the men were enlisted into the Knights of Frobozz, and the women and children were hidden in the mountains.

It was during these desperate days, that two young adventurers, Bivotar and Juranda were placed on the scene. This nephew and niece of Syovar had been in Krill's captivity for nearly 200 years, during a period which neither had aged a day.<sup>36</sup> Having managed to escape from the clutches of Krill's servants, the two stumbled across the Sword of Zork.

In the Foothills of Frobozz, Bivotar and Juranda met with Sir Ellron and the rest of the knights of Frobozz on the road, who had been waging war against Krill. The two adventurers had escaped only to be plunged into the middle of Krill's final invasion upon the Aragain Province. Ellron's forces were to collect with Syovar's at the campsite near Ellron's own house in the Dark Forest, the same White House which had been the byproduct of Megaboz's curse. Ellron had no time to spare them the details of occurrences during their imprisonment. Thus he directed the pair to an ancient man still dwelling in a nearby village within the folds of the foothills, who explained to them all the doings in the kingdom from the fall of the Empire to the current campaign against Krill.

Bivotar and Juranda departed to bring the Sword of Zork to Syovar at the campsite in the Dark Forest. Their arrival was belated, for the knights had been forced to move on to engage with Krill's forces that were again amassing beyond Flood Control Dam #3. A letter attached to a signpost updated them on the campaign:

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<sup>36</sup> Some suspect magical stasis imprisonment, perhaps within black crystal spheres.

Bivotar, Juranda,

It brings joy to my heart to hear that you have returned. Sir Ellron tells me that he met you in the foothills and that you have the Sword of Zork. We must hurry off to battle; the armies of Krill are massing again beyond the dam, and I fear they will attack before nightfall. We will go to Ellron's house as soon as possible; meet us there with the sword.

Syovar

The two adventurers headed down the forest trail toward the White House. At the fork in the trail, they found a tree which Juranda climbed to spot a bronze key in a bird's nest. All of the doors and windows of the White House were boarded shut, save one window behind the house which Juranda found that was slightly ajar. They entered through it.

In the living room, the two adventurers found an inscription upon a trophy case: "Only when the Three Palantirs of Zork are returned to this case can the evil be driven from the land and the Great Underground Empire rise once more." The two were determined to recover the Palantirs.

Juranda accidentally found a trapdoor hidden beneath a heavy oriental rug, which was opened once the bronze key she had found was inserted into the lock. They added a brass lantern to their inventory and descended. Some mysterious ill-willed being firmly shut the trapdoor behind them.

Along a dark tunnel they were ambushed by a lurking troll. Wielding the Sword of Zork, Bivotar dispatched the troll and the two followed a passage to a flat ledge overlooking the massive reservoir of Flood Control Dam #3. A torn map once leading to the location of the three Palantirs was found on the skeleton of a deceased adventurer.

They followed the ledge lining the reservoir east towards the dam until the path before them was broken by a huge gap. Hopelessly looking for a way to cross, one of the many gnomes of the region appeared, willing to help them, as long as they relinquished the Sword of Zork into his hands. Refusing to handover the precious artifact, Bivotar cleverly tricked the gnome to form a magical bridge free of charge, and the two adventurers continued their journey.

Upon their arrival at Flood Control Dam #3, a bloody and disheveled Ellron met them astride his mount. The army of Krill had beaten the Knights of Frobozz in battle that day and they were in retreat. Syovar had fled to the underground base in the nearby coal mines where the survivors were rendezvousing to form a last defense against Krill. Ellron had been taken prisoner, but escaped, fleeing one of Krill's most powerful warlocks. The warlock had pursued him to the cliff overlooking the Aragain Falls, where, knowing that a Frobozz Magic Anti-Gravity Field was installed, he hurled harmlessly over the edge into the gorge. The faithful Ellron traveled the bank of the Frigid River upstream. His route to the underground base took him past the dam where he now had met with the two adventurers.

At this moment, a letter from Syovar arrived via gray owl, informing Ellron that the armies of Krill had amassed for battle once again. He reasoned that if the armies of Syovar lost this round, that it would be their final defeat. But even if the knights were able to defeat Krill on this day, Ellron knew that without the three Palantirs, it would only be a matter of time before Krill was victorious. After bidding Juranda and Bivotar goodwill, warning them of Krill's shape-shifting powers, and mentioning that Syovar never removed his Ring of Zork, Ellron departed to reunion with Syovar in the coal mines.

After a brief meeting with Harlon the Hermit, the two friends were interrupted by an enchanted frog near the base of the dam, who, before hopping away, suggested that the two climb the stairs to the top. Concerned that the frog might have been a minion of Krill only trying to guide them into his grip, the two reluctantly ascended the dam.

At the top, they entered the control room and opened the floodgates with the push of a button. A second button on the control panel malfunctioned, causing the pipes to burst. Fortunately, the burst broke open a hollow in the walls, revealing the three Palantirs of Zork. Unfortunately, the room was flooded with brown water and swept the Palantirs deep beneath it.

Desperate to recover the spheres that he believed was their only source of salvation, Bivotar dove under the water and obtained the three Palantirs. The two adventurers were swept out of the control room by the rising water

and onto the top of the dam. Now that the floodgates had been opened, the water no longer crossed the lip of the dam, thus they crossed to the far side where a path led them into the coal mines.

In the meantime, just as Ellron had arrived at the mines, Krill had discovered the hideout and forced all of the Knights of Frobozz to withdraw to the White House. The two knights who met Bivotar and Juranda upon their entrance were Krill's lizard warriors who had been polymorphed into the likeness of men. Krill himself had assumed the form of Syovar with the same spell.

This pseudo-Syovar welcomed them with stew and informed them that Ellron had already told him of their quest for the Palantirs and the recovery of the sword. But when something tugged the back of Bivotar's mind, he recalled the advice of Ellron (that Syovar never removes his ring) and thus he was not fooled by the naked fingers of Krill's disguise.

At Bivotar's refusal to hand over the relics to the pseudo-Syovar, Krill reverted his appearance and the surrounding knights returned to their lizard forms. Bivotar and Juranda escaped the coal mine, sliding down a chute that returned them to the cellar of the White House. Climbing up the rickety stairs they met with Ellron, Syovar and other knights in the living room. Bivotar handed over the sword of Zork and the three Palantirs into the hands of Syovar.

Krill's pursuing army of at least ten thousand strong surrounded the house. Syovar quickly placed the Palantirs into the trophy case, read the inscription on the case and recited a spell. An arc of light leapt between the three spheres and grew to encompass the entire room. It flashed blindingly bright, and as the light faded, so did their surroundings—the house was gone, and instead they all stood on a hill in the center of a vast plain. Before them, like a foul black sea, stood the armies of Krill.

Krill himself towered above them, larger than life, a horrible dark cloud before the sun. Behind them, stretching to the horizon, summoned by the power of the Palantirs, stood the legendary Warriors of Zork, clothed in white tunics and shiny battle armor. Syovar mounted his mighty steed and commanded the summoned warriors to rid his kingdom of the evil scourge. With a cheer that echoed across the plain, the warriors charged forward, engulfing the armies of Krill.

As the battle raged about them, Syovar held the Sword of Zork high overhead—its brilliant glow like a beacon to the troops. Dark storm clouds formed, and lightning streaked down into the heart of the battle. Giant balls of fire plunged overhead and exploded into a million tiny infernos. A fierce wind whipped across the plain, toppling trees and sweeping horses off their feet. After an eternity of chaos, the armies of Krill lost both ground and strength. The Warriors of Zork pressed on, seemingly tireless and invincible.

With an explosion like thunder, Krill appeared before Syovar. Drawing his sword, the warlock challenged the king to dismount. Syovar relented, leaping from his steed. As the battle raged about them, Syovar appeared to be the better swordsman, but Krill used a variety of tricks and pyrotechnics to distance his opponent. Krill lunged and sunk his blade deep into Syovar's side. At his last act, a blue glow surrounded the Sword of Zork and Syovar's right arm. With surprising strength, he plunged the blade deep into Krill's heart. The evil warlock's body disappeared in a giant puff of unwholesome smoke and his disembodied spirit fled elsewhere. Unfortunately, the middle of the tenth century would see the resumption of the evil sorcerer's deviousness.

Syovar's wound was not serious. Now that the three Palantirs had served their purpose, they vanished in black smoking piles of ash, only to be magically relocated back to the Great Underground Empire beneath the White House. Before sending Bivotar and Juranda back to their homeland, Syovar gifted them with the Ring of Zork. Whenever they wished to return, they only had to place the ring upon their finger to be teleported instantly to the Castle of Zork.

### **An Interruption of Peace, by the Warlock Malifestro**

Temporary defeat of Krill ushered in a brief period of peace which bolstered the kingdom. These were the happy days of Syovar's reign, where he would invite as many of his subjects as were willing to a grove east of the Castle of Zork. This grove was the site of a large tree stump, at least ten feet across and rumored to be a powerful source of magic. The stump was flat, almost like a large round table, which all who came would sit around for big feasts, eating

dragon meat, hot-pepper sandwiches, and garlic. Syovar would entertain the guests by performing feats of magic. Trolls also battled for sport, and minstrels sang ballads about the ancient Underground Empire of the Flatheads.

The legends of Bivotar and Juranda's bravery and their defeat of Krill spread all across the kingdom, although the tales were distorted. One of such warped versions, which omitted the roles that any of the others had played in the ordeal, making it seem that Bivotar and Juranda were two powerful wizards who alone had defeated Krill, made its way beyond the kingdom to Malifestro. This evil wizard lived on the east side of the Flathead Mountains where he was in preparation for world conquest.

Malifestro conjured a powerful spell to capture Syovar and held him for ransom in his Fenshire castle. The mighty ransom for the freedom of the king included a wealth of gold and jewels, half the land of the Kingdom of Zork, and ten thousand men to be enslaved by the greedy wizard. Refusal to concede to the payment would forfeit the return of their king, and many believed, his life.

Denying this outlandish ransom, the noble and faithful Sir Ellron gathered the Knights of Frobozz, who at that time were two thousand of the best soldiers of Zork. He led them forth to rescue Syovar. The knights did not return after many days. No one knew if it was the treacherous pass of the Flathead Mountains or the awful power of Malifestro.

With the king captured, the Knights of Frobozz too far away to protect the kingdom and the remaining soldiers were without their former might. The Aragain Province soon fell into anarchy and barrenness. Fear and despair settled across the land. All order vanished and thieves began roaming the highways and towns unchecked. Robberies were commonplace and many farms were burned by bandits. Much of the populace fled the province, leaving behind buildings gutted by fire, overgrown farms, empty marketplaces, and deserted villages. The hearts of those who dared to remain behind grew cold, and many shut their doors to one another.

The Castle of Zork was one of the last places to be abandoned. But with much of the province in chaos, most feared that Malifestro would easily conquer the kingdom, starting his invasion with the capital. Thus the castle was emptied save a scattering of the most faithful (or perhaps the most stupid). These few loyal servants included two elves by the names of Max and Fred, who were too frightened to stay and too frightened to leave; a grouchy cook; a pair of identical twin gnomes who worked in the stables; a few dumb but loyal troll guards; and an ancient, completely deaf sorcerer who sat in his room all day mumbling useless spells.

Meanwhile, Malifestro securely tied his prisoner's hands to a rope hanging from the ceiling so that Syovar was suspended by a foot above the floor of a small chamber covered by a hissing, writhing mass of snakes. Weak and desperate, the imprisoned king contacted Bivotar and Juranda via magic which came to them in the form of a dream.

That night, the two were both troubled with images of Syovar's imprisonment above the potent slithering reptiles. Their uncle implored them to come to his aid, to take the ancient underground route, and to seek the black crystal sphere. Then the dream dispersed.

That morning, Bivotar and Juranda met together to share their identical dreams. Fearing the worst, Bivotar placed the Ring of Zork upon his finger and the two companions were transported to the Castle of Zork, which was almost entirely deserted and somewhat neglected. Rats had even invaded the once thriving walls.

They befriended Max and Fred, the two frightful elves who told them of the tyranny of Malifestro and the capture of Syovar. Though the elves begged the adventurers to remain at the castle, Bivotar and Juranda were determined to rescue the king. They gathered gear for the journey and set out from the castle for the Flathead Mountains hoping to cross it to Malifestro's castle on the opposite side. With them, they brought a sack of magical devices, which included vials of potions.

In the meantime, the boastful Malifestro outlined to the imprisoned Syovar all of his schemes to enslave the entire Kingdom of Zork. Throughout this, the king was able to learn all of Malifestro's strengths and weaknesses. But before any of this knowledge could be put to use, Malifestro murdered him.

After an hour from the Castle of Zork, the four companions noticed a band of thieves on horseback in the distance. Two accounts currently circulate on how they evaded the band: one states that huddled together behind a large invisibility cloak to shield them from wicked eyes. Another tells that Fred cast a friendliness spell upon the thieves. Despite the variations, both accounts agree that the thieves moved on without any conflict.

After an unsuccessful attempt at magic by Fred to teleport them to Malifestro's lair (eating hard and bitter cakes and the elf chanting a spell, which only moved them four feet towards the mountains), Juranda pulled a Frobozz Magic Carpet from the sack. The four companions squeezed onto the rug and set off. Unfortunately, the abrupt propulsion flung the two elves off the rug. Juranda and Bivotar had already forgotten the magic word to bring the rug to a halt and were unable to go back. When they finally recalled this word, they had almost reached the base of the mountains and the two elves were nowhere in sight.

As no means could be found to restart the carpet, they sought shelter at a tiny cabin at the base of the mountains, where they were greeted by Vengrallior, a wizard who had been banished from the kingdom by Dimwit Flathead. He fed them bland and lumpy porridge before issuing a prophecy:

Turn not away from the one-eyed beast,  
and pass ye through the gates of despair.

Vengrallior informed that only the meek and innocent would be able to approach Malifestro without detection. Then he vanished with a wild laugh. While pondering these words, Bivotar and Juranda slept within the cabin.

Unbeknown to either Bivotar or Juranda, but almost immediately after they had departed for the Flathead Mountains, a local mayor sent forth a decree to round up an army to attack Malifestro. Every able-bodied man above the age of twelve was forced to enlist. But that very night, the gathered army stationed in a village nearest to the Castle of Zork was attacked by a large band of thieves. The village was burned to the ground and everyone was slaughtered.

The next morning, Bivotar and Juranda awoke and started on their journey to cross the mountains. Recalling the advice Syovar gave through their dream, the two adventurers forsook traveling the mountain paths and entered the "ancient underground route" which had a cavernous opening at the mountain base. Entering into darkness, they would have been consumed by a pack of grues had not Bivotar opened a jar of Frobozz Magic Sunlight, putting all the grues to flight.

The labyrinthine passageways brought them to the Prince of Kaldorn, who had been exiled from his own kingdom. In his despair he had been selling magic sneakers, but the Malifestro epidemic had almost killed his entire business. Just for listening to his misery, he awarded the two adventures with free magic sneakers and set them off. Soon afterward a Frobozz Magic Wizard Escape Potion was added to their inventory.

When the two reached the door of Walter M. Smith, a cyclops, they were dubious if it was wise to enter. But recalling Vengrallior's prophecy, "Turn not away from the one-eyed beast" they risked entrance. The eager cyclops invited them inside to prepare them for his dinner. Juranda knew, as all common adventurers do, that the mere mention of the cyclops-blinder Odysseus would instill fear into this giant. Thus with the utterance of the name, the terrified Walter fled, leaving a cyclops-sized hole in the wall for them to follow.

This passage led them to the Temple of Zork. After packing their inventory with abandoned religious material the two adventurers followed a stairway at the far end of the temple which descended to the Gates of Hades. Bivotar quickly recognized this at the second half of Vengrallior's prophecy "Pass through the gates of despair." The gates were barred by a horde of translucent spirits. Using the book of exorcism and other religious trinkets gathered from the temple, Bivotar banished the spirits and they were able to pass through.

Traversing the forbidden land, Juranda quickly found another passage leaving Hades. As the tunnel became steep and treacherous, Bivotar and Juranda donned the magic sneakers that had been given by the Prince of Kaldorn; and just in time. A giant toad began to pursue them. The sneakers gave them both the traction and speed to escape the monster.

They emerged from the tunnels on the eastern side of the Flathead Mountains. Before them, rising out of a forest of twisted trees, was the pinnacle of Malifestro's castle. Surprisingly, they found Max and Fred here, who had been anxiously awaiting them.

The two elves had had their own adventures. Having tumbled off the carpet, Fred had attempted to use a secret spell to summon the mountain nymphs, but it failed, instead summoning a deranged vampire bat. The bat carried them to its lair on the mountaintop where Fred "saved" them from the lair by getting them into a snow avalanche.

After an encounter with a number of snow scorpions, they somehow ended up at the other side of the mountains before Bivotar and Juranda made it across.

The four treaded the depths of the forest to the walls of the castle. They climbed some thick vines on the side of the castle and entered through a small window.

On the floor in the center of the room was a pentagram, and sitting near the window was a black crystal sphere upon which was entrapped a demon. Recalling their dream, Bivotar knew that this was the sphere that Syovar had spoken of. When he threw the sphere on the pentagram, the demon was released and appeared before them. It informed them that Malifestro had already disposed of Syovar and was in preparation to invade the Kingdom of Zork. The demon bargained, that in exchange for the adventurer's bottle of Wizard Escape Potion, he would grant them any wish that was within his power to fulfill. Sensing their distrust, the evil spirit was willing to grant their wish before requiring the payment of the potion.

It is here that Bivotar made one of the most foolish decisions. Although the elves protested for him to retain the potion and not barter with a demon, he was not warded by their attempts. By requesting that the demon bring Syovar back to life, Juranda followed him on the path of folly, for any bargain with a demon is sickening and immensely evil and hideous. The demon granted their request, and revived Syovar from the dead, and unfortunately, was freed when Bivotar handed over the Wizard Escape Potion in exchange.

Syovar knew that if he was able to meet with Malifestro in the throne room of his own castle, the evil wizard would be unable to summon additional help. It would be just his magic and wits against Syovar's. The king teleported them all into the throne room where Malifestro appeared to confront him in a cloud of acrid smoke. The others watched from the balcony as Syovar changed into a ferocious mountain lion. Malifestro countered his lunge by transforming into a raging wall of fire. Syovar retaliated, taking on the form of a wave of rushing water. But Malifestro quickly became a howling wind of cold air, blowing over the water, pushing it back and starting to freeze it into a sheet of ice. The ice began to change shape, flowing outwards. Its edges curled upwards, meeting to form a gigantic, translucent sphere around the whirlwind. The sphere shrank and shrank and a moment later, Syovar held a black crystal sphere with Malifestro trapped inside. With a wave of his arm, Bivotar, Juranda and the two elves were back in the Castle of Zork with Syovar.

By the next morning, word had spread of Malifestro's defeat. Throngs began to gather on the meadow outside the castle. Syovar was hailed by the returning people and the two adventurers were honored with surnames: Bivotar the Brave and Juranda the Dauntless. After the celebration, Bivotar and Juranda said their farewells and departed from the kingdom.

### **The Cavern of Doom**

The Great Underground Empire began to rise once more following the imprisonment of Malifestro. Each week, new areas of the old underground caverns were rediscovered, explored, and settled. Flood Control Dam #3 was once again the famous tourist spot it had been at the height of the empire, and the Mines of Zork were once again producing coal and diamonds. A new section of the Great Underground Empire was discovered, a region that Syovar would later entitle the Cavern of Doom. Over fifty adventurers and treasure hunters flocked into the vast new area, many of them wise and brave, but none returned. Max and Fred were amongst the missing.

For Logrumethar, who was still under Grawl's curse and in the form of the hideous monster Grum, dwelt in the Cavern of the Rainbow Mosses in that region. Although Grum was happy when people first began to come to the cavern, he hid himself from view and warned others that they would be sorry if they entered. Anyone that did not heed his words and looked upon him were instantly turned to stone.

Syovar sent several of his knights to search for the missing explorers, but they too did not return, also turned to stone. Even the king himself attempted to use his magical powers to explore the cavern, but they were unable to penetrate it. It was as though the entire region were guarded by some powerful enchantment. Wishing to prevent further disappearances, and with utmost reluctance, Syovar was forced to forbid access to that section of the Underground Empire. After sealing the door to the region with powerful magic, he left an inscription upon the door that read:



As ruler of the Kingdom of Zork, I  
hereby decree that this Cavern of  
Doom has been sealed off. No man  
may remove the spell that protects  
this door.

Syovar could only glean a vague feeling that the one able to enter the enchanted cavern and return was someone completely innocent and pure of heart. His first thought was of Bivotar and Juranda. Concurrently, that moment was when the two young adventurers found themselves transported to the throne room of the Castle of Zork. Syovar picked up the Ring of Zork that dropped into the room after them.

The abundance of celebration and feasting had not ceased since the freedom that had been ushered in after the defeat of Malifestro. While Syovar hinted that he preferred if they talked with him, the excitement of these events caused them to forsake listening to his tales. Somberly, Syovar accompanied Bivotar and Juranda to the craftsair, the jousting finals, and a banquet followed by a play before the king took them to their bedroom for the night.

The following morning, both were guilty that they had bathed in the jubilation of the festivities and neglected the king. Syovar informed them of his past, his late wife, lost son, and the conditions of the Empire since the fall. The most important information was the details of the recently discovered "Cavern of Doom."

In response to the tales, Juranda was convinced that both she and Bivotar were the ones spoken of that were completely innocent and pure in heart. For both this reason, and that their friends Max and Fred were numbered amongst the missing, the persistent Juranda was able to convince the hesitant Bivotar to accompany her.

Syovar was easily persuaded that they might possibly be the pure and innocent ones. He felt that they would succeed where so many brave adventurers and mighty warriors had failed and teleported them to the entrance of the Cavern of Doom.

The king removed the ward on the door with a lengthy spell, and gave them rations of food and water, a lamp, and a powerful talisman that would glow in the presence of evil. He additionally enchanted them with his strongest protection spell, then resealed the doorway behind them to continue to prevent unauthorized access.

The forbidden region yielded the hut of Grawl. Believing that the abode was deserted, Bivotar and Juranda entered. When they descended into the cellar, they realized that the hut belonged to Grawl. The talisman Syovar had given them glowed, warning of danger. With only enough time to nab a NITFOL scroll (the author does not endorse the theft of any object, most especially those belonging to a wizard, instead firmly cleaving to the commandments passed down through the Scrolls of Kar'nai "Thou shalt not steal."), they left the hut just before Grawl's return. Unbeknownst to them, the wizard, having discovered the intrusion, planned to track them down.

After handing over some newly acquired treasures to a greedy toll gnome, they passed through a cavern where a glacier had formed a giant wall of ice that was smooth and shiny like an enormous mirror. The adjacent room was the lair of Leblong the Dragon. Bivotar recited the NITFOL spell scroll, and now understanding dragonese, was warned by the dragon that all passage through his lair was forbidden. In the past, Leblong had made an oath with Grawl to guard this cavern in exchange for killing his twin brother Berlong.

With haste planning, the two adventurers deceived Leblong into believing that his brother was possibly still amongst the living, and led him to the icy mirror to prove this to him. Thinking that his own reflection was his still-living brother, Leblong faced "Berlong" with flaming breath that melted the mirror. Torrents of water began pouring off the glacier that washed the two adventurers away in a massive wave. The dragon was nowhere in sight. In his absence, they quickly passed beyond the lair. Unfortunately, the water had damaged their lamp, causing it to die.

Grues quickly surrounded them, but the two young adventurers narrowly escaped into a patch of light before being devoured. This was the Cavern of the Rainbow Mosses, where they were greeted by the grating voice of Grum. Noticing that the amulet that Syovar had given them was not glowing, Bivotar and Juranda ventured into the cavern that was filled with petrified victims.

From afar, Grum told them a hazy tale of his past. Bivotar, moved by compassion, opposed Grum's warnings and approached the creature. Grum was indeed ugly beyond belief, but Bivotar ignored the ugliness, only looking into Grum's compassionate eyes. Both Juranda and Bivotar encouraged Grum, telling him that he was beautiful,

because he was willing to live within the cavern for so long in isolation, even warning others not to enter, rather than to risk harming them. This was true inner beauty.

Grum was heartbroken with tears. Never had he imagined that someone would describe him as *beautiful*. When the suggestion was made that Syovar would be able to break the enchantment, Grum became willing, but would return to the cavern should another be turned into stone. Before departing, the statues of Max and Fred were sorrowfully discovered.

The light source was renewed with the discovery of an ivory torch that provided them with guidance to the Hall of Mirrors where a gigantic mirror filled the cavern. Through it, a reflection of the banquet hall of the Castle of Zork could be seen. Bivotar reached out to touch the surface, and when he did, a tremor tossed all three of them to the floor. Magic had transported them to the true banquet hall.

But instead of the hideous beast, they found Logrumethar. The enchantment that had imprisoned him in the form of Grum had been broken. In fact, the enchantment had begun to break when Bivotar and Juranda demonstrated that their feelings for him as a person were more important than their feelings about his appearance. But it was not until they touched the mirror and were transported back to the Castle of Zork that the last of the curse was broken. Logrumethar's memories were restored with his appearance. Hearing the rumble, Syovar came to investigate. Weeping with tears for his long-lost son, Syovar embraced him.

That evening, the king held a mighty banquet to celebrate the return of Logrumethar. Noblemen and enchanters from every township in the kingdom were present. Syovar and his son sat at the head table, flanked by Bivotar and Juranda. Syovar "tested his abilities" during the banquet by casting a spell so powerful that the very air in the room seemed to crackle. And when he was finished, standing in the hall were a hundred or more explorers, treasure hunters, and knights. Syovar had returned all the stone figures to flesh and transported them back to the castle. Max and Fred were amongst the restored. The jubilant reunion with the elves was short. Syovar thanked both adventures one more for saving his son, handed the Ring of Zork to Juranda, and again sent them off.

### **The Return of Jeearr**

It was an amazing decade for all known kingdoms. Syovar's plea for a unified Kingdom of Zork was being considered by all leaders of the lands. Dreams of peace and unity were no more translucent vapors, but nearly solidified forms. Both Quendor and Vriminax had already benefited in securing their own interests through Syovar's diplomacy. In several days, all of the leaders of the surviving city-states, as well as representatives from Kovalli, Kaldorn and Antharia agreed to meet at the old city of Quendor in the northlands. The tremendous respect that they felt for Syovar made the conference possible. If everything went according to plan, the treaty would be signed proclaiming a union between the lands. As the conference approached, a truce between all the warring neighbors had been observed—but instead of working toward peace, the nations had merely used this time to build huge armies, poised to attack should the treaty not be signed. These included the army of Galepath, ready to amass on the Aragain border, and the armada of Mareilon, ready to block the Aragain harbors.

If Syovar was not present at the conference, the treaty would not be made and Quendor would be merely the prelude to the worst bloodshed that the Land of Frobozz would have ever seen. This was where Jeearr surfaced his ugly feline head.

Jeearr had once spread pestilence and terror across many lands. The demon thrived by feeding on war and suffering. Only the combined magic of many kings and wizards had been able to stop this great power, even as he was preparing his final assault. He was imprisoned in the void beyond our world. His jailors had warned future generations that his exile might not be permanent. Somehow, the demon had been released and planned to lure Syovar into a trap that would prevent him from attending the Conference of Quendor. The bait was his dear Bivotar and Juranda.

The evil force prepared a wicked spell which heralded a dark, black storm cloud across the sky above where Bivotar and Juranda were. With an explosion of lighting, the cloud changed shape until it knotted into the form of an enormous hand. The giant hand reached down from the sky and closed around the two, plucking them away. The two adventurers were deposited in a shallow pit in the ancient castle which was being used by the evil warlock Grawl. After helping each other out of the pit, the demon Jeearr appeared before them and recited a cryptic riddle:

Poor Bivotar  
will be dead soon,  
unless he finds  
the silver spoon.

As soon as Jeearr vanished, a large scorpion stung Bivotar on the foot. Poisoned, he instantly began to fade out of consciousness. Searching frantically, Juranda found a Frobozz Magic Scorpion Sting Remedy in a box in the dungeon. She opened it with a silver spoon, thus fulfilling the riddle of Jeearr. Once Bivotar had recovered, she found a scroll with a spell for summoning a messenger nymph. Before any decision could be made, the demon reappeared and muttered the following before disappearing again:

Sharp fangs await  
the one who dares  
to climb and climb  
these winding stairs.

After debating whether or not to trust the creature, Juranda recited the spell from the scroll. A three-inch tall nymph appeared instantly. The two delivered the following message to Syovar at the Castle of Zork via the nymph: “Syovar, help! Rescue us from this dungeon! Juranda and Bivotar.” Uncertain how long it would take for the message to be sent and for help to arrive, the two tired companions curled up in the straw and fell asleep.

The plea for help was received by Syovar. He presumed that Grawl had imprisoned Bivotar and Juranda out of revenge for having rescued Logrumethar from the Cavern of Doom and formulated a rescue plan. Taking the two elves, Max and Fred with him, Syovar set out for the ancient castle now occupied by Grawl. Wishing for the elves to be placed in the dungeon alongside Bivotar and Juranda, Syovar purposefully sent them alone into the enchanted woods surrounding the castle. Without any magical protection, they were captured.

Bivotar and Juranda were awakened from their restless sleep when Max and Fred were tossed into the dungeon. The two elves informed the adventurers of the situation. Suddenly, a wall of the dungeon exploded into a cloud of smoke and mortar, and sunlight poured through the newly formed gaping hole. Outside of the castle, Syovar and Grawl were locked in combat together. Lightning bolts flashed from Grawl’s arms and exploded harmlessly off Syovar’s invisible shield. The king conjured a huge monster in response—it had venomous fangs as long as a man’s arm. As the monster leapt for Grawl, the evil warlock conjured an ever fiercer monster that devoured Syovar’s.

Despite Bivotar’s urges to aid Syovar, the two adventurers followed the elves through the opening in the wall while the magical battle climaxed with a curtain of fire leaping across the dungeon. At first, there was abundant joy when the flames dispersed and Grawl was lying motionless on the dungeon floor. But the cheer died in their throats when they saw a burned Syovar staggering.

Jeearr again appeared, this time above the body of Grawl. Its eyes betrayed a hint of anger as it spoke directly to Syovar:

My servant Grawl lies here  
defeated by your hand  
but soon you’ll see the end  
of everything you’ve planned.

The demon vanished, and as it uttered the last word, Syovar stumbled backward and fell to the ground. It is still a matter of no small debate on what happened at this point. Due to Jeearr’s own words, prior to his 957 GUE defeat, where he stated that he could not survive without a host (thus an unknown sorcerer was able to defeat this demon by preventing him from entering a new vessel) most theorize that Syovar was possessed at this point by the evil spirit. Others see this as impossible, as Jeearr frequently appeared to Bivotar and Juranda to torment them many times apart from both Syovar and without a host while they were questing in lands far from the Castle of Zork. Thus there is still much confusion as to the seemingly inconsistent nature of Jeearr and the illness of Syovar.

Before anyone could tend to the king, Bivotar, Juranda, and the two elves suddenly appeared with Logrumethar in one of the turret rooms of the Castle of Zork with the unconscious Syovar now bedded. Logrumethar applied ointment to his father’s burns. A healer soon arrived to tend the king with potions. He announced that regardless if Syovar lived or died, he would not be at the Conference of Quendor.

It was then that Logrumethar knew that he had been wrong about why Bivotar and Juranda were snatched away to the dungeon prison. Jeearr had deceived them into thinking it was Grawl seeking revenge for breaking the enchantment of Grum, but the real reason was to ensure Syovar's absence from the Conference. And it seemed that Jeearr had won, until Logrumethar recalled the Helm of Zork, a magical headpiece that allowed the wearer to impersonate anyone he chose. With the helm in possession, Logrumethar knew that he would be able to attend the Conference by impersonating his father.

Since its location was unknown, it seemed that the Helm would be impossible to find. Despite this, Bivotar and Juranda were determined to do anything they must to restore Syovar. Logrumethar presented them with equipment for the journey, a brass lantern and a magic bead that when broken would return them to the castle. Then with an AIMFIZ spell, the prince teleported the two somewhere near the vicinity of the Helm.

The young adventurers found themselves at the base of the Aragain Falls. The usual breathtaking rainbow arched high above the falls, ending at the riverbank just before them. The familiar voice of Jeearr intoned:

It bobs and sways upon the spray  
warning sailors—stay away!  
Walk upon the rainbow mist  
but not before the scepter's twist!

They waded through the swallow pool formed by the waterfall to an outcropping where a red buoy was moored just offshore. When Juranda opened it, a golden scepter, studded with jewels of every sort, was found inside. Bivotar waved the scepter over the rainbow and it hardened into a comfortable walking surface, but in the process he fumbled the relic, dropping it into the water.

After crossing they ventured into an underground tunnel. This entrance to the Dungeon of Zork was guarded by Cerberus, who had previously been stationed as the guardian of Hades. The weak tunnel collapsed behind them, forcing them with no choice but to face the three-headed dog. Jeearr spewed one of his riddles again:

You will always be a winner  
if you give a puppy dog his dinner!

After giving Cerberus a bone covered with a hunk of meat that was in the tunnel just beyond the monster's reach (it took the combined efforts of Bivotar and Juranda to toss the mammoth bone), the beast broke free and they were assaulted by friendly slobbering.

Leaving it behind, the two adventurers passed through the ruins of Leonardo Flathead's studio. An attempt was made to enter the Loud Room and gather a bar of platinum, but the acoustics of the room were too treacherous and they retraced their steps without claiming it. The tunnel began to slope steeply downward and became covered with loose pebbles and other rubble. Bivotar lost his footing on a patch of gravelly ground, and when grabbing Juranda for support, caused her to lose balance as well. They slid down the corridor and landed at the bottom. The brass lantern was damaged in the fall; the bulb flickered.

The giant rectangular room they had landed in had wooden walls. After pushing the wooden panels on the walls, the entire room turned and the doorway was no longer set before walls, but before an open corridor. There the lamp sputtered and died. But they were not plunged into darkness. Light streamed down from above, for the two landed inside the bottom of an old volcano, the one which Dimwit Flathead had hollowed out. And in the center was a hot-air balloon.

The demon briefly returned for another cryptic message:

One of nature's quaint surprises  
is that hot air always rises.

Using wood to build a fire inside the receptacle, they boarded the inflated balloon that rose majestically out of the mouth of the volcano. The brisk wind swept the balloon away from the volcano's mouth, over the lush Dark Forest below and towards the Flathead Mountains. Fearing that they might crash into the mountains, Bivotar set the balloon down outside the ruins of a small castle with crumbling walls overgrown with ivy. The wide moat that surrounded the entire castle was crossable only by an extremely rotted wooden drawbridge.

Within these ruins lie  
the object of your quest

but to cross the moat you must  
pass one final spelling test!

In a sack at the foot of the bridge was a scroll for leaping tremendous distances. Instead of daring to swim the moat or cross it via the suspicious-looking bridge, the powerful spell flung them over the crumbling ramparts of the castle and placed them into the courtyard. Searching the grounds, Bivotar found a stepladder in a closet, an explosive in the armory, and a scroll with a spell for shrinking down to the size of an insect. All Juranda found was a letter opener and doormat.

The last place to check was the tower. Peering through the door at the top, Bivotar spied the Helm of Zork through a mirror on the far wall. The keyhole was blocked by the key, but on the interior side. Using the common adventurer technique of slipping the doormat under the door and then pushing the key through with a letter opener, Juranda soon had the key and the door unlocked.

Juranda picked up the Helm, admiring its beauty. But suddenly a cold wind blew through the room and the wooden doors slammed shut behind them. Jeearr was floating in the air behind them. For once its face was unsmiling, frozen in a mask of cold hatred. It spoke in a voice dripping with malevolence.

Your victory now turns sour  
the Helm's not yours for long  
'Twill be buried with this tower  
when the whirlwind sings its song!

This time the creature failed to disappear after finishing its cryptic message. Instead, its sucker-covered tail began to whip back and forth, faster and faster. From outside the room came the sound of a powerful wind, wailing round and round the turret. The floor of the room began to quiver as the noise of the wind rose to a crescendo. Bits of mortar from the ceiling crumbled down on top of them. The tower began to collapse.

Juranda reached into her tunic pocket and grabbed the bead Logrumethar had given her. She dashed it against the stone floor. A swirl of colored light surrounded the two adventurers. It grew brighter and brighter, until they were forced to cover their eyes. Suddenly the light was gone, and they were standing in Syovar's chamber in the Castle of Zork.

Logrumethar was surprised at their discovery of the Helm, but Syovar's condition had been worsening hourly. Now he was almost as pale as his white silk bedsheets and his breathing was shallow and irregular. Taking the Helm, Logrumethar left at once, for Quendor was a day's journey and the Conference would begin on the following midday. The only thing the prince feared was that his father would die before the Conference, and then everyone would know of his charade. But he was fortunate. The Helm of Zork had fooled everyone at Quendor; they had really thought he was Syovar. Thus the Treaty of Quendor was signed, resulting once again in the unification of the entire area under one unified Kingdom of Zork.

Logrumethar returned to find that the healer and his assistant alchemists had used experimental procedures upon Syovar. And within half-an-hour he was on his way to recovery. The king regained consciousness the next day for first time since his battle with Grawl. Logrumethar told him all that had transpired during his illness. Syovar called Bivotar and Juranda to his bedside. Beaming, he humbly thanked them for their courageous help.

Bivotar and Juranda departed from the Castle of Zork with invitations to return again to see the blossoms of the seed that had been planted. Unfortunately, this period of harmony between the providences would not last forever. Further uprisings and conflicts were on the horizon.

## **Chapter 2: The Alchemical Debacle (895~945 GUE)**

The Forbidden Lands, the persecution of the alchemists, and the Nemesis are all elements of much controversy. It is amazing that while so much documentation has survived from this era, it is also one of the periods still shrouded with much mystery and provoking many questions. Due to the uncertainty of the dating of Krill's invasion of the Eastlands, Malifestro's ransom and other early events of Syovar's reign, it is with much reluctance, that this chronology must take a step backwards in time before we can leap forward once again. The foundation of the alchemical debacle of the tenth century lies in the Westlands with the Enchanters Guild, which were engaged in their own turmoil, parallel to the conflicts which Syovar had been battling with in the East (see previous chapter).

### **The Alchemical Wars Begin (c. 895 GUE)**

Since the disappearance of Wurb Flathead and his unfortunate elephant, the provinces of the Westlands had thrived in peace, prosperity, and solitude. Belboz and his Circle of Enchanters were the most powerful figures in that part of the realm, often ruling the vast and ancient cities in all but name alone.

Despite the health and happiness that the magic guilds granted to the people of Borphée, Frobozz, and Miznia, all was not well within the inner sanctum of magic itself. When the Flathead kings had still ruled over the empire, their tyrannical eye kept sharp watch over the Guilds of Magic, preventing them from doing anything that would bring the slightest signs of trouble to the realm. With the empire destroyed, the Enchanters Guilds of the Westlands were free at last of the Flathead dynasty to pursue their own goals.

With their powers rekindled, almost at once, the leaders of the magical community began a fierce campaign of persecution against the alchemists. For centuries, the alchemists had pursued a mysterious and forbidden path, hoping, in the words of the great Ozmar, that "a great union will be formed between magic and science, and the final mysteries will be solved." Among these mysteries that they sought with such urgency and passion were the elusive Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life, the great keys to the gates of immortality.

For Belboz and his kind, the goals of the alchemists were evil in and of themselves. The leaders of the guilds gathered together to vote on the matters at hand. The concluding declaration from their decision can be found in an excerpt from the Minutes of the Sixth Ecumenical Council of Enchanters and Mages, dated 4 Oracle 895 at Accardi-by-the-Sea:

The ancient truths discovered by Bizboz and Dinbar, and all the Holy Fathers of Thaumaturgy are eternal and unchanging, and the assembled brethren of this Council affirm these truths for all time.

There are, as it is written, but Three Essences of Magic, namely the Presence, Incantation, and Unusual Effect. It is the belief of the Fathers and of this Council that these Three Essences represent the Cause, the Action, and the Result, a chain of events that no science can overturn. It is further our belief that Presence is perfect and intransmutable, existing eternally and forever out of the grasp of mankind. We believe that Presence can be placed upon scrolls, wands, and liquids, but that no other form of magical art is possible.

Thus we condemn and decry the unholy alchemists whose misguided ideas pervade our society. We laugh at their creeds proclaiming four or even five essence. In their foolishness they maintain that Magical Presence can be changed and altered, and that it is susceptible to the faulty laws of science. In their trickery they preach that Presence is not eternal, but begotten from both Incantation and Unusual Effect. This eternal circle of nonsense is only compounded by their deeper lies, that the essence of Presence can be found in base metals and common elements. The alchemists claim that through these elements, mankind can be purified and rise above its mortal self.

These ideas are dangerous, foolish, and erroneous!

This Council hereby declares that all who remain faithful to the stated views of the Alchemical Heretics are from this moment forward anathema. All alchemists, all sympathizers with the

alchemists, and all who have ever held an alchemical belief, are hereby ostracized from the holy and universal Guild of Enchanters, and from all contact with those whom the Guild serves and protects.

Adopted into Guild Law by a hand vote of 187 to 6.

Additionally, a personal letter from Belboz during the proceedings of the Sixth Council of Thaumaturgy has been discovered. It was not included in the official minutes of the Council for obvious reasons:

Mumbar-

This haggling bores me. I think I'd rather be trapped in a cage full of babbling brogmoids. I don't think any of these fools even understand what it is that they're arguing about. I for one don't give a damn whether Presence comes from the Implementors or from a piece of yipple dung. All I know is that our magic works, and theirs doesn't!

Ever since the last emperor vanished, it's been the same old story, over and over again. The alchemists trying desperately to take over our organization, and us stopping only to issue these silly decrees. No one really cares whether or not they ever find their Philosopher's Stone, but heaven forbid they try to take over the Guild! Once the chapter's old men get defensive, they drag us here from all corners of the land and watch our beards grow long...

I wish we'd hurry up and vote already.

Belboz

Even some of the alchemists admit that Belboz might have been right. Half of the fierce animosity against the alchemists might have simply been fear that the success of alchemy would spell the end of power for the magic guilds. But then again, "the chapter's old men" would not have gotten so loud and defensive if there was not some truth to alchemy after all, regardless of how wicked.

In spite of the legal banning of alchemy, a small and secretive group of rebels refused to obey the orders of the magic guilds. And so, in reprisal, the Circle of Enchanters used every means of power at their disposal to persecute and destroy the alchemists. Many of the most powerful members of the secret groups were forced to flee into exile, taking up residence in the more remote and depopulated provinces in the Eastlands. It was in this manner that the great Guilds eliminated all who opposed them, and thus ensured that when Syovar's armies invaded the Westlands in the early tenth century, no one in the local population defected to the enemy.

### **Birth of the Key Players of the Debacle**

In this period we have the births of the principle cast which are the chief cornerstones in the establishment of the curse of the Forbidden Lands which would completely devastate much of the Eastlands in the 940s.

(895-06-19) Erasmus Sartorius, son of the alchemist Dr. Lewis Sartorius, was born in Frostham.

(899-07-06) Thaddeus Kaine was born in Aragain.

(900-04-10) Francois Malveaux was born in Port Foozle and raised in a middle-class family.

(900-11-14) Zoe Wolfe was born in Frostham.

(904-11-14) Sophia Hamilton was born in Aragain.

Of the five listed, Zoe Wolfe is the only one who would not become a member of the group of four rogue alchemists. Once they found each other, this secret circle of outwardly respectable citizens—the pious Bishop Francois Malveaux, the military hero General Thaddeus Kaine, the music conservatory mistress Madame Sophia Hamilton and respected asylum chief Dr. Erasmus Sartorius—would form a dark cult.

The cult was in search of the goal of alchemy: the fifth element of the Quintessence, the Elixir of Life, the Philosopher's Stone which would bring to each one immortality. But unlike traditional alchemy which teaches that it is through the distillation of metals, that the elixir can be found—this cult practiced a twisted, deviant belief. They believed that this elixir could be created, only when the final element—a drop of the most purified, rarefied blood was distilled and spilled. To achieve their goal, they would create a woman.

In the process, these four would release a vengeful force known as the Nemesis. The Nemesis was said to have tormented innocents (and a great many less-than-innocents, when the innocents could not be located) throughout the Eastlands in the late 940s.

### **Belboz Becomes Guildmaster of Accardi Chapter (910 GUE)**

At the age of 153, Belboz became Guildmaster of the Accardi Chapter of the Guild of Enchanters. By all standards, some claimed he was so wrinkly that he resembled a sloppily stacked pile of unlaundered linen, although these claims cannot be verified—many historians have successfully refuted this outlandish rumor, proving without a doubt that even by 966, Belboz was ageless at an age when most had already departed the world.

### **The Z-Team (913 GUE)**

Born to stalk adventuring folk that tended to live far too long, Antharia Jack was the worst adventurer there was—afraid of the dark, unable to draw a map, and terrible at carrying items, even in a sack. With his parents shamed by their son's inability to quest, Jack enrolled at the Antharia School of Drama. By sheer luck he landed a part in the Z-Team when he stumbled onto stage during open rehearsals (literally stumbled, in the sense of, fell on his face). It turned out that the Executive Producer of the show, Syovar the Strong (as he came to be called), was looking for someone to take a pie in the face at least once an episode.

Jack was it. Thus in 913, Jack burst onto the entertainment scene with his hit series, the Z-Team. Syovar was said to be a big fan, which was probably good because he created the series to highlight his military career.

(902) Forburn the Wily won a spell book from an unsuspecting GUE Tech student in a Fanucci match.

(904) The 214<sup>th</sup> annual Double Fanucci Championship ended in a draw between Veldran of Aragain and Bobo the Somewhat Misguided, and Hobart the Unmerciful and Snuffie, making it the 72<sup>nd</sup> year in a row that the tournament closed without a confirmed winner.

(907~11) Gustar Woomax attended GUE Tech.

(917-02-16) Dalboz of Gurth was born.

### **The Z-Team Finished (914 GUE)**

After one and a half seasons, The Z-Team went off the air due to “creative conflicts” with its creator. Antharia Jack resorted to dinner theater performances of “The Tragedy of King MacFlat.” Taking his money, he eventually opened his own casino & bar in Port Foozle, content to retirement after Z-Team was cancelled. But he would run up huge gambling debts until 931.

### **Erasmus Sartorius (914~8 GUE)**

Son of the great alchemist and doctor Lewis Sartorius, Erasmus was abused as a child and raised with little concern for his health or safety. He looked to medicine as a way to give people what he never had. Except that his ideas were twisted. It seemed simple to him: To learn about pain, you inflict it. Even as a child, he operated on dolls with sick medical instruments. As he matured in age, Sartorius became obsessed with learning the secret of the origin of life, how to create life, and the reviving of the dead. He initially left Frostham and attended the Galepath University, from where he was quickly expelled.

The Notice of Expulsion, dated Ottobur 10, 914 (which he proudly framed and later showcased in the Gray Mountain Asylum) was written by Dr. Belzork Anthrax of the university:

Dearest Mr. Sartorius,

Although we understand your need to pursue a meaningful curriculum, we strongly object to being called “fat flatfooted brogmoids.”

Therefore I must inform you that, in the name of the Moss League of Colleges, you are hereby expelled.

Have a nice day.

Dr. Belzork Anthrax



Almost immediately after, Erasmus Sartorius attended Antharia University. He graduated from the university on Jam 6, 915, honored with a degree in Home Thaumaturgy and Science. That same year, his father Lewis died. He left behind his book, “The Blood Alchemist” for his son. Written on the inside of the front cover was the following:

My Son;

I now lie on my deathbed. I leave so much work undone. I sense I am close to the truth, yet the quintessence still eludes me. Follow the new school of alchemy. There are rumors of an ancient underground temple; a shrine which has the power to create the philosopher’s stone. It was created by an engineer of Duncanthrax named C. Agrippa, but his work disappeared. You must find it.

-Your Loving Father

Erasmus Sartorius wanted only one thing: to complete his father’s controversial work—a study of blood alchemy. Through the research of his late father, Sartorius learned of alchemy and the new school of alchemists. While the conventional philosophy looked to science and chemistry for some of its answers, the new school believed that they had found the answers to the search for the Elixir of Life. These alchemists believed that the fifth essence was the purified spirit. Alchemy was his answer to his questions about the physical world. His medical quests had already led him to every part of Zork, and into every form of science, and his attendance at GUE Tech was no exception. Sartorius graduated from the school on Jam 7, 918 with a doctorate degree in the Science of Enchantment.

#### **Sophia Hamilton (918 GUE)**

The talented violinist and classical pianist, Sophia Hamilton at the age of 14 already promised greatness for the Frobozz Philharmonic Orchestra. She would go on to play with all the finest symphonies and greatest Z’orchestras in the Empire and her knowledge of the precious harmonies of Zork would become virtually unparalleled. But while she had desire for musical greatness, she was not a natural talent. She was good, but she would never be great. Her compositions were routine, her performance skills only serviceable. Her hatred for chaos and disorder showed in her music, which, while adequate, showed no passion or emotion, adhering always to the rules and to conventionality. Sophia’s one departure from conventionality would be in the study of alchemy.

#### **Sartorius Flees from the Westlands (919 GUE)**

Since the turn of the century, the Circle of Enchanters’ campaigns of persecution against the alchemists worsened heavily. Many members of the alchemical community sought refuge in the Eastlands. One of those who fled across the Great Sea was Erasmus Sartorius. Shortly before his departure, the Doctor recorded in his journal (919-05-07) his distrust with the Guild and his obsessions:

Magic no longer interests me. The Enchanters Guild started out with noble intentions, but now seems concerned only with power and money. Alchemy, the chance to solve the Great Mystery of the universe, is all I can think of now. There is so much suffering, so much pain and death. My father’s science leaves much work to be done; but I will find the Philosopher’s Stone and prove his name within the mocking circles of Science.

Sharing his journey to the Eastlands was an unknown woman who had apprenticed herself to him several years prior. This woman would be intimate with this most powerful member among the alchemical community for a time until a bitter falling out with them. Their methods would become too brutal and sadistic for her blood and she would become appalled at their self-serving motives. Later Bivotar would find her abandoned and alone in Zylonika. Some historians have tried to link this woman with Zoe Wolfe, but recent evidence has shown that Zoe was killed by Sartorius following the birth of Alexandria.

With the exodus of the alchemists from the Westlands, the art was by no means eliminated from the realm of Zork. Although most of the secret order of alchemical practitioners found a safe haven in the Desert River Province,

Sartorius ended up at the Gray Mountains instead because of his connection to the previous custodian of the Asylum who entrusted it to his hands at his death (some suspect this was his father). There he became the Chief of Staff.

The next 25 years would see the alchemical community develop in and around the Desert River Province. Sartorius would become one of the highest initiates into the secret rites belonging to this ancient society. And thus over the next several years the Doctor would compulsively intensify his studies in alchemy.

Prone to deception and torture, Dr. Erasmus Sartorius spent his time alone in his favorite haunt: the Examination Room in his vast, inhumane Asylum, a towering building which exposed his need for control over everything physical. He dedicated his alchemy lab to Ozmar (“One day, perhaps a great union will be formed between magic and science, and the final mysteries will be solved.”), and changed the non-profit organization’s Statement of Purpose: “To fill the darkest corners of the human mind with the sweet air of Reason. Although many of the devices herein may seem cruel, let us remember that this is done with the understanding that people may be cured. Man must never abandon his fellow man, even beyond the borders of the sane.”

Within Sartorius executed his unconventional and suspect medical practices. Because of these strange experiments and theories, he was rejected by the medical establishment, whom he considered lazy, self-congratulatory, and fattened hypocrites. His membership from the Quendoran Medical Association was sequentially revoked and he was forbidden to practice. He responded to his critics with letters bearing the following demeanor:

Dear Dr. Frobbian,

Open your puny mind! Madness is a disease, not a state of mind. I see that every day in my patients; forgotten waifs who have only me to defend them. And defend them I shall. Like any disease, if madness can be studied, it can be cured. How can I cure the body of disease if I am forbidden to open the body to study it? If I am denied funding for x-rays and medication and a staff of physicians? My Asylum should be a place of progress, not the final resting place for the damned!

-Dr. Sartorius

Undaunted by the skeptics who attacked him, he pursued his alchemical obsessions with zeal and passion, thrusting deeper into the macabre and his sadomasochistic streak. Helping to create eternal life was the ultimate scientific achievement and his ultimate revenge on the petty and uninspired medical establishment. He would become the founder of the four alchemists and the spark of one of the greatest catastrophes of the tenth century.

#### **The Age of Kaine**

Although Thaddeus Kaine was not born until 899 GUE, historians refer to the period between 883 and 949 as the Age of Kaine. While Kaine was never a particularly humble man, his pride extended to weapons design. The weapons in this age were all designed by Kaine and each was more brutal than the last. Particularly notable were two of his most dangerous discoveries, Thaddium and TED. He also manufactured many mobile war machines, including a battle tank which was

#### **The Birth of Lucien Kaine (920-04-10 GUE)**

A die-hard pragmatist and landed nobleman, Thaddeus Kaine was stalwart and militaristic, enrolled in the service of the armies of Syovar. He lived by the Warrior Code. Life was black and white, rich and poor, power and powerless. And so, when Thaddeus Kaine saw his family’s wealth was not enough to afford him power, he married into it. He inherited, through Elizabeth Kaine, the castle of Irondune (once a frontier post in the great campaign of Pseudo-Duncanthrax in the seventh century and ancestral home of her family), which gave him rule over the provinces of both the Desert River and Famathria.

Lucien Kaine was born to Thaddeus at the age of 20 to an unknown maiden at Castle Irondune. This woman died giving birth and Elizabeth raised the child as her own. The affair was concealed and most were ignorant of her not being the true mother. By 925, Lucien would be hospitalized on three occasions for Chronic Respiratory Stitial Virus. Kaine saw the birth of Lucien as the beginning of a great dynasty, but his son would grow to hate both war and his father.

#### **Francois Malveaux Elected Bishop (922 GUE)**

Francois Malveaux had been raised in a middle-class family. His performance in school was average, but only because he did not see a reason to put in the effort. However, Malveaux discovered he had a talent for manipulating people and, at the same time, he also discovered his taste for opulence and privilege. Still, due to his poor grades, his parents sent him to the Steppinthrax Monastery to become a monk in the Zorkastrian religion.

The Zorkastrian religion was empty to Malveaux, and he sought answers beyond it. One day, exploring the catacombs beneath the Monastery, he found the journal of Saint Yoruk, who had descended into hell and then returned. From this secret text, he wrote his Zork-wide best-selling book, “Revelation and Eternity,” which thousands in Zork credit for a resurgence of interest in (and financial contributions to) the Zorkastrian religion—although some jealous critics have said it was written with the help of a demon. The book caused enough of a stir to get Malveaux elected Bishop of Zork at Steppinthrax Monastery in 922. As the youngest in history to be invested in this second highest ecclesiastical office in Zork (about 22 years of age), the book was not enough to propel Bishop Malveaux into Zork’s highest office—Grand Inquisitor. That same year, Sophia Hamilton, Thaddeus Kaine and Erasmus Sartorius all read Malveaux’s book.

### **The Battle of Flood Control Dam #3 (c. 920~922 GUE)**

In the most famous battle of the time, the Battle of Flood Control Dam #3, the barbarian rebellion and uprising was put to an end. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Colonel Thaddeus Kaine, using his enemy’s prime weakness against them, decided he needed a distraction to allow him to carry out his final solution plan. He sent a party of troops to a high mountain northeast of the dam where they made considerable noise, bewildering the barbarians as to the intent of the exercise. While the barbarians were conveniently enthralled with the noise, Kaine prepared for their destruction lining the inside of his forces with matchsticks he found in a lobby of the dam.

That night, when the barbarians attacked, Kaine ordered his center to fall back against his flanks. The barbarian army poured through the gap in his lines. Kaine then lit his prepared matches, illuminating the center of his horseshoe position. Too late, the barbarians tried to retreat, only to be trapped against the dam and destroyed by the light. From then on, *Major* Thaddeus Kaine’s fierce reputation in battle became renowned.

### **Sophia Meets Kaine & Malveaux (922 GUE)**

A party was held in Kaine’s honor. Here Sophia Hamilton had the opportunity to meet the new Major and fell in love with him. She found solace there. And even though the stoic Kaine was bound by honor and wealth to his wife, Sophia knew he was for her. She was not the type of woman to be dissuaded from her goals and she pursued Kaine with vengeance. Meanwhile, that same year, through Bishop Malveaux, noted author of “the Brogmoid Fallacies,” she learned about alchemy.

Smart and pragmatic, she appreciated alchemy not for its mystical observations and philosophy, but as a practical means to an end. Sophia realized that the art could be the solution to both her musical mediocrity and her quest for love. Her ultimate ambition with alchemy was to ensure that she and Kaine were both eternal—and therefore, eternally in love. Any dalliances with mortal women could be forgiven and forgotten. Lady Elizabeth Kaine would grow old and die, and Sophia would be waiting. With the determination and patience to experiment with it, and the motivation to achieve its goal of eternal life, she would become a proficient and capable alchemist. Henceforth, she continued her alchemical studies in secret with Malveaux. Her first experiments revolved around the study of herbs and natural substances. In time, she would learn the secrets of distillation and use of mandrake and roots to form a process that involved the purifying of the essences of items from nature to make the sacred copper.

### **Malveaux’s Sickness (922~3 GUE)**

Living off tithes and indulgences, Malveaux knew that he was already damned; he would never rise above his current position or stature and attain to Grand Inquisitor. Worse still, he began to suffer from a horrible disfiguring disease. This disease is described in the book “Strange Diseases of the Great Underground Empire,” in an excerpt from Chapter Seven: Of Which There is No Cure:

If the condition worsens—if the boils blacken, the fever climbs, and the skin begins to fester and puss, then the Alert Physic must keep a vigilant watch for the spreading of the tumors. If the tumors spread from one quarter of the body to another, then the disease can be diagnosed as systemic, which is to say, the Interior Cavern of the body is also riddled with growths various and malignant. If this is indeed the case, there is no cure. Upon desiccated human flesh, the well-working of the Physic can amount to no appeasement, and the...

The book goes on to explain the various stages of suffering. The first is marks on the hands. The second a hunched back. The third being robbed of the strength to even walk, requiring the use of a wheelchair. The final is being completely blanketed with welts and various disfiguring marks all over the body, requiring the victim to permanently be deposited on a cot in a ward.

Malvaeux attempted everything to cure his disease, powders and pills, pain-killers, injections, creams, herbs. He even was on Prozork. Although it appears that Erasmus Sartorius initially contacted Malvaeux, the bishop's search took him to inquire of the Doctor in regards to his sickness. Sartorius replied with this letter (922-05-07):

Dear Father,

I have investigated all the texts I can and researched extensively your disease. There is no known treatment. It begins with a simple lethargy, sometimes a small rash. It is a quiet disease. It makes no noise coming in and no noise going out.

Sartorius

Malvaeux's reply has been lost to us, but a further correspondence has been found in the Monastery, where Sartorius wrote to Malvaeux (922-12-15):

Dear Father,

You must live with it. Accept the life that you have and accept the death that will come—for all of us—someday. Perhaps you would like to be included in my experimental work. If I am successful, you will be cured of every ailment you have ever suffered—there are certain risks of course.

Sartorius

In a letter found in Malvaeux's file at the Asylum, Malvaeux finally wrote the following reply to Sartorius (923-08-05):

Dear good doctor,

I find myself getting weaker and I find I have strange fevers which leave me sweating profusely. At nights, I burn as if on fire. I thought I would be ready for death. I have spent my life preparing for the afterlife. But in my heart I am not prepared. I am ready to do experiments, risky as they may be. My mind is open.

Yours truly,

F. Malvaeux

It is probable that Sartorius sought to test the waters before revealing his controversial alchemical studies to the Bishop. For in the following undated journal, the Doctor, having made a collection of his father's work, wrote about additional correspondences with Malvaeux and the desire to meet with him face-to-face:

Horrible fire last night. A miscast GONDAR spell only made things worse. Maybe I should leave the magic to the magicians. Most of father's notebooks caught in the blaze. Currently piecing together what little I can. One fragment:

*Temple of the Ancients -- deep in the Eastlands and now supposedly inaccessible to all except the alchemical initiates.*

I do not know why the secret order did not remain at the temple forever. Maybe the mystical aura of the place simply became too intense for daily life. Malveaux's book on revelation is bringing people back to the fire-cult by the thousands, but I suspect there is more to the man than he lets on. The notion of fire-worship is close enough to the alchemical tenets of respect for the elements to make me suspicious. I was right to contact him. His reply was guarded, but he will open up should I pursue him further.

Here, Sartorius mentions that Malveaux had sent him a brief piece on the Steppinthrax Monastery, which in turn the Doctor suspected to be the new center of the alchemical cabal.

The brochure goes on, but says little more of importance. The connections at least have become more clear. From Malveaux and the fire-worshippers of today, there is a direct line of succession back to Agrippa, Locksmoore, and perhaps through them even back to the ancient knowledge of Yoruk himself. I must go there, and learn the truth for myself.

It is ironic that modern thaumaturges and enchanters try to claim Ozmar as one of their own. They quote that one sentence of his ["a great union will be formed between magic and science, and the final mysterious will be solved"] until they are blue in the face, yet they ignore the rest of his words. How clear that he was one of us! Read:

*What most of us have failed to realize is that there are indeed two paths to the truth, two differing roads with the same identical goal. The path of magic is hazy and unclear. Even the most brilliant minds have failed to penetrate it. Magic elicits amazing effects from trivial causes. It makes something out of nothing, and no one can comprehend how! The path of the Alchemical Sciences lies along different steps, and makes different claims. This science offers a clear-cut path to purity, through the transmutation of the six baser metals into their pure and virgin state. Magic would attempt this task by reliance on the invisible, on the supernatural. Science offers a different approach, through the four visible elements of earth, air, water, and fire.*

*It is true of course that the Quintessence, the Fifth Element, remains undiscovered. Not until this elusive element is found can the process begin that will result in the creation of the Philosopher's Stone. It is possible that the Alchemical Science alone is not sufficient to this task, but it is also true that magic itself has already failed. Perhaps the two together would provide the necessary wisdom. One day, perhaps, a great union will be formed between magic and science, and the final mysteries will be solved.*

Sartorius and Malveaux finally met at the Steppinthrax Monastery. It was then that the Bishop realized that his only salvation was in alchemy. Not only would the art give him eternal life for survival, but a chance at religious power. Thus the two began to explore the power of alchemy.

After their first meeting, Malveaux wrote, suggesting a location suitable for them to meet and discuss the powers of alchemy. What he did not know was the Sartorius had already learned about this place:

Dear Dr. Sartorius,

I believe I have stumbled onto a place of power and magic. I believe it was built by Agrippa, an engineer of the time of Duncanthrax who built the great underground highway. It appears that

Agrippa shut off this temple, using it for his own rituals which I believe may have involved alchemy. I found the map of this place in the secret catacombs below this monastery. We must meet there.  
Malveaux

Drawn by these legends, the two selected the Temple of Agrippa as their site of worship. Remote and forgotten by all, this temple proved to be the perfect place for discreet worship and ritual, free from the stifling restrictions of the Guild of Enchanters. Since the days of Duncanthrax, the ceiling of the hollowed out mountain where the temple dwelled had suffered from earthquake damage, exposing the earthen innards to the sky.

#### **Thaddeus Kaine Promoted to General (923-11-07 GUE)**

Thaddeus Kaine of Desert River Province, famous for his battle against the barbarian hordes at Flood Control Dam #3, was granted Knighthood and promotion from Major to General at the age of 24. In an elaborate ceremony at Syovar's palatial estate in Aragain, Syovar anointed Thaddeus Kaine to the applause of various well-wishers, including Sophia Hamilton of the Desert River Branch Conservatory and Francois Malveaux.

In the "name of the rightful and unified Kingdom of Zork," Syovar thanked General Kaine for his struggle to defeat the barbarian and trollish hordes that had been recently threatening the Kingdom. From thereon, Thaddeus would emerge in this period as one of Syovar's strongest generals.

#### **Founding of the Frigid River Branch Conservatory (c. 923~4 GUE)**

In the intervening two months, General Thaddeus Kaine became the principal founder of Zork's first private musical conservatory: the Zork Musical Academy for Girls at the Frigid River Branch Conservatory on behalf of Sophia Hamilton, a talented violinist. Constructed at the base of Flood Control Dam #3, this was where the women would attend before being enrolled in the Frobozz Philharmonic school. Sophia left the Desert River Branch Conservatory to become the esteemed headmistress of the Frigid River Branch Conservatory. Under her able management it quickly became Zork's finest academy. Her penchant for discipline was only surpassed by her desire for musical greatness.

#### **Sophia Meets Sartorius (924 GUE)**

Malveaux, who had been collaborating with Sophia for approximately two years, decided that he would write to inform Sartorius that he believed she would be able to assist them in their endeavors. This letter was recovered from Malveaux's file at the Asylum (924-01-20):

Thank you doctor. You are truly a misunderstood genius. For the first time in many months I have hope of a life without pain. Knowing our need for further apprentices, I spoke to Madame Sophia of the Frigid River Branch Conservatory. I believe she is the perfect person to assist us in our quest.  
Francois

Sartorius heeded Malveaux's advice, and the Bishop quickly arranged to introduce Sophia to the Doctor. Afterwards, Malveaux invited Sophia to meet with them at the Temple of Agrippa. Malveaux's correspondence (924-02-12) to Sophia was found in the Frigid River Branch Conservatory:

Dear Sophia,  
Dr. Sartorius is a brilliant man. This experiment will be the biggest breakthrough since the beginning of Zork. If you are still interested, make your way to the Temple of Agrippa. But—take great care, and do not speak of it. There are those who misunderstand Alchemy—those who would kill for our secrets, in their search for gold.  
Father Malveaux

In response, in an undated letter found at the Steppinthrax Monastery, Sophia wrote to Malveaux:

You are right. Dr. Sartorius is a brilliant man. He is strange and he has that annoying laugh, but nonetheless I think his medical studies may be very valuable. Please send me any alchemical materials or notes that you have obtained.

The following undated letter, discovered in Malveaux's file at the Asylum, was most likely composed after Estuary of 924. He wrote the following to Sartorius:

Dear Erasmus,

I cannot sleep – the weight of invention pressed upon me. I believe, Doctor, that we have discovered a science – a philosophy – that will relieve of us of the binds of mortality and of our bodies. It is a science that will surely transform the world – Yoruk will praise this Great Work!

Francois

Despite Malveaux's jubilation, Dr. Sartorius did not share the same enthusiasm. It seems from the countenance of the following journal entry, dated 924-04-07, that the Doctor may have originally sought to fulfill his alchemical pursuits as a loner. His doubt and distrust of the other two seems to be hinted at.

I am frustrated. I have devoted my career to completing my father's quest, but I now realize that one man cannot find the alchemical secret alone. Each element requires absolute mastery. Each metal requires its own Adept. I must enlist others in my search; but I must take care. Alchemy draws vain fools, in search of common gold, and I must seek out only my more enlightened brothers.

### **Syovar's Campaign Against the Enchanters Guild**

The records in regards to Syovar's campaign against the Enchanter's Guild is shrouded in much mystery and darkness, abounding in questions and speculations. The foremost problem lies in the dating of the start of the war and who was the original instigator. The Enchanters would join Ellron against Thaddeus Kaine in 924, and by 925 a coalition formed against Syovar and he was losing control of the Westlands. A scattered fragment tells us that when Syovar's armies invaded the Westlands in the early tenth century, that no one in the local Westlands population defected to him. But it is not known if this invasion occurred before or after the events listed here.

We cannot be certain either if the Enchanter's opposition against Syovar was a result of his supremacy over the Westland city-states following the Conference of Quendor (as their tension against Syovar did not seem to be present until after this event), or if it was directly related to something involving the alchemical persecutions. It cannot be a distant theory of the assumption that Enchanter's Guild saw Syovar as an enemy because of his failure to eliminate the remnants alchemists who, having fled the Westlands, took refuge in his lands east of the Great Sea. More information relating to this controversial event is detailed below.

### **Dispute Turns to War (924-05-19 GUE)**

Despite the Conference of Quendor which merged almost all of the nations under the one banner of Syovar's Kingdom of Zork, some remnants still could not come to peace with each other. Lord Ellron and Sir Thaddeus Kaine fell to bickering over control of the border regions lying between the former Aragain and Desert River provinces. Their relationship quickly turned terribly sour. An undated letter provides some insight into the nature of this dispute:

General Kaine,

Your refusal to acknowledge the persistent inquiries from myself and my attorneys leave me little choice but to appeal to the authority of King Syovar. I believe that I have the evidence that will allow me to resume my rightful claim to the border regions between the former Aragain and Desert River Provinces and that I will carry the day in all other matters. The time for compromise had ended.

Ellron

The long unsolvable ordeal kindled ever-increasing tensions between the two, over farmlands near the Desert River, that finally reached their height on the evening of Arch 19, 924 when Lord Ellron declared war on General Kaine. There are no records on the results of Ellron's appeal to Syovar, but it may be reasonable to assume that either Ellron did not have enough evidence to his claims, or that Syovar's campaign against the Enchanters had already begun and Ellron refused to wait until the king had returned to the Eastlands. Whatever the reason, this fight between Ellron and Kaine was more critical than many others in the Empire at the time due to Kaine's rumored creation of Thaddium, the lethal zirradiated ore. Many feared that if this weapon of mass destruction were to be unleashed, the very world beneath them might be totally destroyed.

It is here that we enter into another mystery. For by the next day, Ellron aligned with the powerful and political Enchanters Guild of the Westlands against Thaddeus Kaine, and was rumored to have purchased a lethal scroll from Wizard Bilboz. In an undated letter found in Castle Irondune, Ellron threatens Kaine and remarks on his alliance with the Guild:

Kaine—

Your pathetic attempts to harness the lethal magic of Thaddium were futile. The Guild is now supporting my cause and we have something far more powerful than Thaddium. In five years, your precious Irondune will be nothing more than dust blowing in a wasteland, and your men as weak and womanish as your own Lucien.

—Ellron

Why did this happen? All we can note is that from future correspondences between Syovar and Kaine, that Syovar did not realize the General for the wicked man he was. Perhaps Kaine's treachery against Ellron was so devastating that he had no choice but to have it urgently dealt with, and without Syovar's support, the only ones willing to support his cause were the Enchanters despite that they were at animosity with the Kingdom of Zork. One can however, only speculate.

The results of the never-ending feud between Ellron and Kaine would have major impact on Syovar's ability to expand and unite the entire Zork lands. For the next two decades the endless war would drag on unceasingly without solution. During Syovar's absence on campaign to the Westlands, the two petty lords would march their armies up and down the Aragain and Desert River regions. Ellron at times would obey Syovar's wishes and order that the violence be stopped, but each time, Kaine's treachery would begin the conflict again. Their mortal hatred for each other would parade through the pages of history in several epic campaigns throughout the Desert River Province. Many claimed that they knew of no two men that despised each other more.

### **General Kaine Joins the Alchemists (924 GUE)**

Although Sartorius' doubts about uniting with Malveaux to find the quintessence were suppressed, it appears from the following letter (924-08-02), which was discovered at the Steppinthrax Monastery, that Sartorius had not yet been convicted that Sophia was the third member to join their cabal.

Dear Father,

I am encouraged by your zeal in finding the quintessence. I do not mean to be discouraging but alchemists, including my father, have searched for ages for the philosopher's stone, the elixir of life with little success. I have come to see that the quintessence cannot be created by one person.



There are four elements we must master, and four metals we must purify. Much as we have found each other, we must search out two others who have the will and courage to take on this study.  
S.

As the year went on, the neighboring barons encroached on Kaine's territory and his power was continually threatened by Lord Ellron and the Enchanters. Still, Kaine refused to give up his ambitions. He vowed that the Kaines would become a name in the world, to be held in respect and honor for all time. But he was uncertain how to achieve ultimate power. He found his answer when that same year, when his lover Sophia introduced him to Malveaux and Sartorius.

Kaine was skeptical at first. He saw it as impractical and foolish, an overly spiritual belief for the weak. These fundamentals are clearly demonstrated from the following letter which he composed to Sophia at the Frigid River Branch Conservatory (924-11-20):

Sophia,  
Dr. Sartorius is a strange but fascinating man. I agree he has ideas what while almost fanatical, could be the final solution. As you know I am not prone to dabbling into strange, self-indulgent philosophies or womanish New Age experiments—but there is something to the man, of that there can be no doubt. And still I wonder—might the Doctor's way be the only way of securing power in this perpetually unstable world? I could have great use for him—and his philosopher's stone—in my campaign against the Enchanters. I cannot hold them back much longer.  
Say nothing—I will write you of this further.  
Kaine.

When Kaine realized the reward for the practice of alchemy could mean eternal life, riches, and power, his attitude towards the art changed. The practice of alchemy was unconventional and potentially treasonous, but Kaine was independent and driven. So he preserved and became an alchemist. When Sartorius was informed of the General's decision to join the alchemical Circle, he wrote this undated reply to him:

I am pleased that you have joined us in our quest for the meaning of all life. In answer to your inquiry, the process of distillation of alchemy is essential to its success. All alchemical processes must involve the presence of earth, air, water and fire which are used to distill the essence of the metal or substance. This is important. The order of the processes, the colors that result are part of the mystery revealed through experimentation.

By the end of that year, the four alchemists delved deep into the power of dark alchemy. They learned that to finish their work and gain eternal life—the ultimate transformation—they had to conceive and sacrifice a virgin during an eclipse. She had to be born under the perfect alignment of the spheres, raised and have her soul purified through the power of music. A short undated journal entry of Sartorius' details his thoughts regarding this process:

The quintessence can only be obtained through blood. Pure blood. This person must be pure of heart, pure of spirit, conceived in purity, conceived when the sun and moon are aligned as one.

In turn, each of the four took responsibility for one of the elements and began to study it intensively. In addition, each had a mystical sign, indicating planet, and took upon themselves a certain metal:

	Planet	Element	Metal	Sign
<b>Francois Malveaux</b>	Saturnax	fire	lead	nabiz
<b>Erasmus Sartorius</b>	Juperon	air	tin	bloodworm

<b>Sophia Hamilton</b>	Venusnv	water	copper	orc
<b>Thaddeus Kaine</b>	Murz	earth	iron	surmin

### **Sartorius Finds a Host (925 GUE)**

At the beginning of 925 GUE, Sartorius, in his quest for creating the pure spirit, sought a host for the birth of their virgin from amongst his own patients at the Gray Mountains Asylum. Three selected women in flimsy hospital gowns were placed in a row. One was barely out of her teens, one was in her mid-twenties, the other in her early thirties. They were all lunatics. The youngest patient picked imaginary insects off her body, threw them to the floor and incessantly stepped on them so that she was in a constant tormented movement, accompanied by little moans. She was well groomed and clean, but her features were extreme. The oldest patient was heavysset, with a fixed gaze on a plastic doll that she cradled in her arms, twirling its artificial hair, as she rocked, humming. The third, Zoe Wolfe, had filthy, matted hair, a smudged face, a mud-caked body, but she was gorgeous. Her paranoid eyes were fixed on a spot on the floor; her arms were crossed over her breasts, shielding them. She was also wearing a beautiful locket.

Sartorius placed his fingertips on the first patient's head and conducted a phrenological examination. He jotted notes on a clipboard that hung by a chain around his neck. He performed the same examination on the other patients, feeling bumps and jotting notes. Finally, he stood in front of the beautiful Zoe Wolfe, still writing. He noticed the locket around her neck and looked at her thoughtfully. This was the one whom he chose and became fully obsessed with. He quickly contacted the others with his decision. One such correspondence, an undated letter to Malveaux, has come down to us:

I have found the perfect specimen. On the day of the solar eclipse we will be ready. Kaine has volunteered to assist in the conception.

Zoe was taken into the Surgical Theater on the 20<sup>th</sup> Level of the Asylum where she was placed on a treatment table. Sartorius in surgical garb puttered, setting up his equipment while Malveaux looked on. Although Sartorius claimed that Kaine had volunteered to assist in the conception, it does not appear that he was able to attend.

Zoe weakly protested, grieved and convicted, "Please, I can't. It's...a sin. It's wrong."

Malveaux was comforting. "Never. Your child will be conceived in purity."

"How...?"

"Miraculously. Divinely. And the child? Her destiny will be great."

Zoe began to clam as Malveaux's words worked their soothing magic.

"Yes," he continued. "And your name will be blessed, for bringing this child to the Great Empire."

Sartorius turned towards the table, holding a syringe, prepared for the artificial insemination. Malveaux, barely able to repress a wince, spoke softly to her, "It's time."

Zoe saw what was coming, but her trust in Malveaux was strong. Summoning up her courage, she laid down. Sartorius stepped forward with the nasty syringe.

"Relax, dear," Sartorius spoke calmly and prepared for his injection into her belly.

It is uncertain if Sartorius had sexual relations with Zoe Wolfe and impregnated her prior to the syringe injection, or if it was the medical techniques alone that injected some sort of purified sperm into an unfertilized egg already present. Regardless, Sartorius used a special technique to ensure that this child would be the perfect specimen for their alchemical ritual.

### **Warring on Two Fronts (925 GUE)**

In a letter found in Castle Irondune, Syovar the Strong wrote to Kaine (925-01-29) concerning the Enchanter's Guild and Ellron:

The Enchanters' Guild is gaining strength in their power and magic. They have formed a unified coalition and I am losing control of the Westlands. I believe Lord Ellron is now under their control. I can no longer rely on the magic of the scroll.

-Syovar

In the battle between mathematics and magic, it is said by some that magic will always have the upper hand. Fearing that the effects of his own magic would be used against him, the great wizard-warrior put his magical abilities to the side and instead relied on his wits and technology for a replacement. During the course of the campaign against the powerful Enchanters' Guild, Vice-Regent Syovar's spies would attempt to send encrypted reports back to the Castle of Zork, only to find that the numbers would rearrange themselves before the very eyes of the code breakers, forming nonsensical non-sequiturs such as "Thaumaturgy is a walk on a slippery walk" and "Religion is a smile on a Yipple."

Syovar then implemented the "Zenigma" mechanical encryption device, replacing the more fallible mathematic mnemonic systems, with pulsing electricity. Clearly, where wizards are concerned, the best secret is the secret you do not have to hide.

Contemporaneously, the barbarian hordes north of Aragain resumed their attacks upon the civilized regions; having been crushed several years prior by Thaddeus Kaine at the battle of Flood Control Dam #3. In the following letter found at Castle Irondune, Syovar again requested the assistance of General Kaine, willing even to use his invention of Thaddium as a means to maintain control (925-03-07):

General Kaine:

Since the destruction of the GUE, the barbarians have begun their massive invasions in the north. The Quendoran military force is suffering under their attacks. I have been made aware of the presence of Thaddium in your vicinity and of a particular invention which may assist me in my battles. Whatever you require to fund your experiment, I will gladly provide.

-Syovar, Vice Regent and General of the Royal Quendoran Army

The war against Syovar did not cease the Enchanter's Guild of their persecutions of the alchemists, nor those who practiced magic illegally. In a letter discovered at the Gray Mountains Asylum, the Enchanter's Guild, having heard of Sartorius' violations of their laws, confronted the Doctor (925-05-15):

Dr. Sartorius

It has been called to our attention that you have been practicing unorthodox and unauthorized magic. As you know, it is in violation of Magic Code #6547 for a non-guild member to engage in any magical practice. Cease and Desist or we will file for Fudgunctive Relief.

-The Enchanters Guild

It may have been numerous instances like this that had originally stirred the Enchanters against Syovar. Without proper jurisdiction and Syovar's cooperation, they may have had to take matters into their own hands by opposing the Vice-Regent.

### **Birth of Alexandria Wolfe (925 GUE)**

As the birth of the child of purity grew near, Sartorius contacted Malveaux reminding him of his task involving her upbringing. This letter was discovered in the Steppinthrax Monastery (925-05-15):

Dear Malveaux,

As we discussed, I will bring her to you one week after birth, with a nurse who will raise her through her early years. In this way her education in purity and religion will be insured. Do not

underestimate the importance of your task. Her spiritual progress and the purification of her soul is essential to the process. She will be a gift to all mankind.

Dr. Sartorius

Soon after, the four alchemists stood together in the patient ward of the Gray Mountains Asylum. Zoe Wolfe lay on her side in a fetal position, gazing with pure love at her newborn infant, who was on the bed in the tiny circle of space between her mother's bent knees and arms. It was a lovely moment of bonding. Sartorius had a pair of bloody forceps in his hands. Both he and Sophia, in doctor's garb, looked exhausted, but were really gratified, for they had obviously assisted in the birth. Kaine and Malveaux were visitors/well-wishers.

"This is the Genesis moment." The pumped up Sartorius made a giddy laugh. "Now I know how God felt."

Sophia laughed. She teased him, but with less of an edge than usual. They had bonded through birthing this baby.

"Who'd have dreamed Sartorius—the great man of science—would get so excited over..." she finished dryly, "...a little bitty wrinkly baby."

"Baby? That's not a baby. That's a formula. The key to unlocking the most hidden knowledge in the universe."

And thus, Alexandria Wolfe was born under the perfect connection of stars and moon. Her mother, Zoe Wolfe, died in the asylum soon afterward under mysterious circumstances; it was later confirmed that Sartorius had murdered her.

Seeking to have Alexandria brought up in the Steppinthrax Monastery to be raised in an environment where her purity and progress could be carefully monitored and controlled, Malveaux feared that he would not be allowed to house her in the exclusively male institution. Thus he fabricated a plausible tale that, as a baby, she had been left on the local monastery's doorstep, the illegitimate daughter of a peasant, and contacted the Grand Inquisitor. In an undated rough draft of a letter found in the Monastery, Malveaux sought to ensure that permission would be granted to raise her beneath his oppressive oversight:

The Monastery has in its spirit of generosity and good will accepted the responsibility of raising a small child, an orphan, who were it not for us would be left to die and rot. I hope this meets with the Inquisitor's approval.

In an undated letter found in the Monastery, the Grand Inquisitor wrote back to Malveaux:

While you know that at the monastery we have a strict code of conduct, I was much moved by your tale of the orphan child. As a result, in a spirit of good will, I have agreed to grant your request. You may take this baby and raise her until she reaches maturity.

Yoruk be with you,

The Grand Inquisitor

### **The Baptism of Alexandria (926 GUE)**

Malveaux, having been given the authority to house Alexandria at the Steppinthrax Monastery, invited the remainder of the cabal to participate in the infant's baptism ceremony. In 926, the four alchemists came together at the Monastery and, dressing in their priestly gear, surrounded a stone basin in a semi-circle. Malveaux held the baby Alexandria, who was wrapped in a silver cloth, in the air above the basin. Malveaux rose the wrapped infant into the beam of light coming down from above. He whispered a line from a magical text and tossed a small bit of powder into the bowl. The flames briefly flared up. He then lowered the baby into the flame for a second.

In turn, each of them spoke a line from the following demonic chant:

"Endless fire which passeth through all things.

Cleanse soul through flame.

Protect the innocent and perfect the healing stone.

Let this spirit be washed and whitened by the Philosophic Fire."

Alexandria was then carefully raised by Malveaux as an orphan, with a focus on ensuring her purity, singing music of the spheres to ensure that Alexandria would be cleansed. It was certain that she was born with a musical gift. From the age of three, as she grew under the loving, yet controlling hand of Bishop Francois Malveaux, Alexandria would have a genius for melody. Strong-willed, defiant, and iconoclastic, she would learn to play the violin. What Malveaux did not expect was that he would grow to love Alexandria as his own child.

#### **“A Brief History of Magic” (927 GUE)**

Gustar Woomax, the so-called Chronicler of Magic, published in Popular Enchanting Magazine one of the most celebrated of the brief histories of magic: “A Brief History of Magic.” In the book, Woomax not only described the four ages of Magic, but the three types of magic, High Magic (spells of creation), Middle Magic (spells of illumination), and Deep Magic (spells of transmutation). He also wrote about the Enchanter of that day:

Barbel of Gurth invented the GOLMAC spell (“travel temporally”) which had been known of since at least 882. (927-09-92 GUE)

Since the fall of the Empire, magic has again become a mysterious art, practiced primarily by trained Sorcerers, although a few spells, such as UMBOZ (“obviate need for dusting”) and NERZO (“balance checkbook”), have been approved for over-the-counter sale. Upon graduation from an accredited Thaumaturgical College, an Enchanter is given a spell book with a few spells, none of which has great power. As an Enchanter continues his or her studies, new spells may be obtained; these may be copied into a spell book for use whenever the occasion warrants.

The Enchanter’s job is not as easy as is commonly thought. An Enchanter must memorize a spell written in a spell book before casting it. (Spells on scrolls and those which have been permanently etched in the memory by training needn’t be memorized.) Moreover, if an Enchanter needs to use a particular spell twice, it must be memorized twice, since the effort of casting it makes it a jumble in one’s memory. In fact, even a night’s sleep will make an Enchanter forget any memorized spells. But, in spite of the rigors of spell casting, the personal rewards are great, and the job of Enchanter remains a popular and well-respected vocation.

#### **Barbarian Hordes Defeated (929 GUE)**

A letter found in Castle Irondune, from Sophia to Kaine, detailing Kaine’s victory over the barbarian hordes and her fear of Ellron and the Enchanter’s Guild (929-06-16):

Darling Thaddeus,  
Crushed the barbarian hordes and even the grand Syovar seems content! Congratulations on your recent victories; but take heed upon your return. The battle is far from over. In your absence, Ellron has discovered a powerful scroll and I am scared. We are deep into the Great Work. If they learn of our secrets, the Enchanters’ Guild, and others, will surely kill us.  
Sophia

And in an undated letter found at Irondune, Sophia possibly references the same event:

Dear Thaddeus,  
Though you were far away, all the Eastern provinces are proud of your recent successes. I only wish that the rebellion will end soon and you are in my arms once again.  
Sophia.

#### **Erasmus Sartorius’ Determination (929 GUE)**

Two entries in Dr. Sartorius' journal read:

The fifth essence is the Quintessence: the elixir of life, the philosopher's stone. Alchemist fools through the centuries have looked at metals, vapors and gases. And Love! What rot! It is none of this, it is blood—this much my father knew. The blood, the essence of innocence. But where does this blood exist? How does one distill its purity? I am surrounded by blood every day, the spilt blood of suffering. Yet the answers elude me. I am a disappointment. (929-10-20)

Every day I get closer to the truth. The others all want the elixir, each for his own mundane, personal reasons. I, on the other hand want the elixir for its pure knowledge, as I search for the final spiritual truth. Truth and answers. I think of my father's works. One day soon I will possess the secret of eternal life; the Quintessence. I will have perfect knowledge, knowledge enough to halt the growing evil that threatens us. This is powerful magic, and there is a powerful resistance; but we must not let it stop our work. (929-11-20)

### **Ellron and Kaine Continue to War** (930-10-16 GUE)

In a letter found in Castle Irondune, from Sophia to Kaine, glimpses of the continued conflict between Kaine and Ellron are evident:

Dearest Thaddeus—

I lie here in my bed and listen to the Poetics and I miss you. Damn Ellron. I know you are fighting for what you believe in. I hate him for what he's done to you, and I hate him even more for keeping you from me. But still, there are those I hate more.

I'm so jealous, Thaddeus; you can pick up a sword and gore your enemy in the name of all you love. My enemy is bosomy and soft-spoken—and she wears a dress and sleeps in your bed, my heart. Would that I could be your wife, that we could have a family... something more than stolen moments, this lost life of mine.

I cling to your dear Mad Doctor and his dreams of oblivion. For an eternity with you, I will endure all his pretentious, alchemical trumpeting—and fifty Lady Kaines—and a hundred Ellrons!

As ever,

Sophia

### **Lucy Flathead Retrieves a Cube of Foundation** (931 GUE)

One of the seventeen mysterious Cubes of Foundation, briefly fell into the hands of the scoundrel Antharia Jack, the hard-up owner of a casino in Port Foozle, after winning it in a Double Fanucci game. This Cube contained the essence of Middle Magic. A short time later, Lucy Flathead, who arrived from the future year of 1067 GUE via one of the time tunnels, won the Cube from Jack in a game of "Strip Grue, Fire, Water." As, enigmatic artifacts are wont to do, the Cube disappeared back into the mists of obscurity after Lucy fled the casino in the bowels of a walking castle. Later that year Antharia Jack was foreclosed on his property and had to sell the bar to cover his debts. After visiting the future, this Cube returned to its proper placement within the time continuum and was able to be gathered with the other sixteen in 966 GUE.

### **Decision to Bring Alexandria to the Frigid River Branch Conservatory** (c. 935 GUE)

At the age of 10, Alexandria was thin, waif like, with unsettling eyes and pale skin. Her primary focus had been upon her violin performance and strict morality. Her innocence over the course of her childhood is depicted in the following undated diary entries:

Barbel of Gurth became the head of the Gurth City chapter of the Enchanters Guild. With his authority, he was able to restore high enchantment dues. (933 GUE)
--

Dear Diary,

I wonder where my mommy is. All I have left of her is this locket. Father says if I am good, I will get to see her one day in heaven.

And in another undated entry, she wrote about the six notes of the Harmony of the Spheres:

Sometimes I hear these in my head. Father says they are divine.

Now that Alexandria was reaching a mature age, the Grand Inquisitor believed that it was inappropriate for a woman to be dwelling amongst the ascetic order at Steppinthrax. Thus he wrote this undated letter to Malveaux:

I have been tolerant of the abomination of a young girl in a monastery only because of your pleas and assurances that she is receiving a strong moral upbringing. It has been called to my attention, that now being a woman, she has become a distraction and a potential temptress to the other monks. She must leave at once.

Seeking an alternative placement for Alexandria, so that she would not topple out of the oversight of the alchemists, Malveaux sought to have her transferred to the Frigid River Branch Conservatory and the watchful eye of Sophia Hamilton. The Bishop wrote this undated letter to the headmistress:

The Grand Inquisitor has commanded that I remove Alexandria from the monastery. With her talent for music, I think it would be good for me to transfer her to your conservatory.

Although it appears there was a missing correspondence between Malveaux and Sophia, a letter found in the Steppinthrax Monastery shows her favorable reply (935-01-16):

Dearest Malveaux,  
Just a quick word of encouragement. I am delighted by Alexandria's progress. I think that your use of puzzles to sharpen her mind and spirit is working beautifully. And already, I can see promise in her music. I will be saving a special seat for her in the conservatory.  
Yours truly,  
Sophia.

Upon Sophia's approval, Malveaux informed the Grand Inquisitor that arrangements had been made to send her elsewhere. He sent the following undated reply to the Bishop:

As Alexandria has grown into a young woman and a talented musician, you will be sending her to the conservatory for her training and education.

Father Malveaux had not anticipated that he would grow to treat Alexandria as his own daughter. On a certain day after sharing with her that she would be leaving the Monastery, he listened to her perform a violin piece in her bedroom. Reposed in a lush velvet chair, he watched her play, concentrating deeply on the music before her, "Harmony of the Spheres Concerto for Violin and Orchestra." His long, healthy, well-groomed tresses framed a plump face; he was a pampered man. A huge ruby ring glittered on his manicured hand. There was a harsh look on his soft face, contrasting sharply with the soothing music of the strings. When Alexandria noticed his disturbance, she ceased suddenly and with concern asked, "Father?"

Trying to put on a façade of peace, Malveaux smiled benignly at her and replied, "Your music was lovely, Alexandria. Like the harmony of the spheres." He opened an arm, inviting her to come to him.

While heeding his beckons, she sat on his knee, setting aside her violin, "Then why does it make you so unhappy?"

He placed an arm around the precious child, drawing her close and smoothing her shining hair. He looks into her eyes while she smoothed his hair. "I was thinking how much I am going to miss it..." A world of regret, pain, and guilt flickered for a nanosecond in his eyes, and then it was gone. "...when you've gone."

"Why can't you visit me at the Conservatory?" she asked, looking sorrowful.

He shook off the mood. "I can."

"And," there was a grin, "since I'm never getting married..."

"Oh." His smile broadened. "You're sure your destiny is a nunnery?"

Alexandria smiled back and nodded confidently. "I can come back here and play for you. Until you're old and feeble and totally deaf. Forever and ever."

Malveaux tapped her on the nose, and then seeing that distant thing in his mind's eye, lost his smile. "Amen, my child."

But it would be approximately two years before the Frigid River Branch Conservatory would be Alexandria's new home.

### **Praise of Sartorius (935-04-19 GUE)**

In this letter of minor importance, discovered by Bivotar, most likely at the Gray Mountains Asylum, Agba Skimlipt wrote to Sartorius, praising him for work done. Little did Agba realize, but most likely the son was used as a subject in one of the Doctor's sadistic experiments and the reason the son spent all his time there was due to some sort of corruption.

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my most sincere wish to make known to all public people through-out the Empire that Doctor Sartorius, the kind and generous Doctor, has done a deed so thoughtful, so helpful, that words cannot describe the things I am trying to say at this time.

My son was so sick, he could not talk, or read or do anything intelligent or smart like usual. We were in money problems (as we are poor), and could not find a person for helping us. Doctor Sartorius said he would fix my son with no money. Not only did he fix my son, he gave him some jobs to work at the Laboratory, and my son spends all his time there now.

Doctor Sartorius is the greatest kind of man I have known. His things he learns about health have saved my son. I am forever in his debt.

Sincerely,

Agba Skimlipt<sup>37</sup>

### **Battle at Flood Control Dam #678 (c. 935 GUE)**

Ellron and General Kaine's forces clashed at Flood Control Dam #678. In a letter found at the Frigid River Branch Conservatory, Kaine summarized the battle to Sophia (935-08-14):

Sophia,

It is rainy and grim here. The fields are muddy and littered with corpses. I am tired of all this. All I want in the world is to return to my castle and back to you. The battle at Flood Control Dam number 678 was more brutal than I expected. Ellron and his hordes somehow had found out about my strategy. Backed by the Enchanters, he has discovered some magical scroll which causes weapons to turn to fudge. It is disheartening and sticky. Our surprise attack was foiled and I lost half my men. Ellron is becoming more and more powerful. Unless I do something, he may gain control of the entire terrain. Morale is low. The worst are the damn night attacks of grues. We barely have enough torches to light a fourth of our camp for more than a few more nights.

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<sup>37</sup> While the original document had countless spelling errors, these have been corrected for this chronology.



Liz wrote that she is considering spending the fall at her mother's villa in Antharia. Say the word and I will further convince her to make the retreat to the restorative island clime. For her health, you know—and for mine.  
Kaine

Having received news of the battle, the desperate Sophia composed a reply. This undated letter was discovered in Irondune:

Darling Thaddeus,  
Damn those filthy dark-loving Grues for keeping you away from me! I hate all of them. I know you have little time to read, so I will keep my letters short. I love you I love you I love you!  
Sophia.

As the war drudged on, and Kaine remained absent from his castle, he asked for Sophia to check on Lucien in this undated letter:

Sophia, the battle against Ellron continues and I believe we are winning. Lieutenant Ramsey is a loyal and fierce warrior and has proved an effective leader; I will make him the keeper of my castle if we escape this war alive. I miss you and I think about you constantly. We must finally be together. Sophia, will you please check in on Lucien. I know that you are uncomfortable around him, but I have not heard from him, and I am concerned. He is going through a strange phase.

Shortly after, in an undated letter, Sophia wrote to Kaine after hearing about his victory over Ellron:

Thad my love,  
I hear that you have crushed the rebellion and are coming home soon. We are preparing to ring the monastery bells for you as soon as we see your wagon train on the road to the south. Bring back a Grue ear for my charm bracelet!  
Sophia.

#### **Alexandria Enrolled at the Frigid River Branch Conservatory (937~940)**

Having kept Alexandria at the Monastery for two years after the Grand Inquisitor demanded that she depart, the time finally arrived for Malveaux to send her away. A letter found at the Frigid River Branch Conservatory, composed by Malveaux (937-10-15):

Dear Sophia-  
The time has come. I think you will be proud of me when you see her. She is a charming brilliant child—and I have grown to care for little Alexandria as if her parenting were my only office.  
Her music is unschooled, but I hear in it—somewhere—the harmony of the spheres. It is there for you to distill. I expect much work, and great things from the both of you.  
Fondly,  
Malveaux.

In 938, at the age of 13, Alexandria was brought to the Conservatory. As a young adult, Alexandria was not content to be the most gifted musician in the land, to perform the classics with unparalleled precision. So she defied convention—creating complex, challenging performances, sometimes too challenging for the general public. In fact, some people feared Alexandria. Another rumor was whispered—that she was possessed by her musical talent, that her ability came from being the bastard child of the Dark One. Alexandria ignored it all. She wanted to be alone. These feelings are related, not only in her own writings, but also those of Madame Sophia.

An early undated letter which Alexandria addressed to Malveaux:

Dear father, I am enjoying my time here. Sophia seems to have taken a liking to me and treats me very well. I am composing much music, although my teachers say it is extreme and too unconventional for their taste. I find it is the only way I am able to play. Take care of yourself and do not worry about me.

An undated letter to Malveaux from Sophia, who happened to be the exact opposite of her gifted young protégé in terms of musical inspiration:

Alexandria is doing well. She is not particularly well liked and appears to be somewhat of a loner. She is stubborn and her music is wild and eccentric. We are trying to tone her down. How did she get like this? What did you do to her while she was at the monastery? Maybe it is part of the process.

In 939, Sophia presented Alexandria with a book entitled, “The Musings on the Power of Melody.” Inside the front cover was written:

Alexandria,  
The path to purification is through the magic of the notes.  
Love Sophia.

An undated letter in 939, found in the Steppinthrax Monastery, from Sophia to Malveaux:

Dearest Malveaux,  
You will be glad to know Alexandria is flourishing here. She has a gift, of that I am certain. I have given her books on the Harmony of the Spheres and I believe she hears the notes in her dreams. Such a queer little thing; I see how she has won your heart, old monk.  
This is a difficult process. At times I am uncertain—I don’t know how hard to push—but I will not let you down. Such strange parents we make.  
Sophia

On Estuary 16, 939, Alexandria played in her first performance at the Frigid River Branch Conservatory. She played “Air on a Grue String” by Johann Sebastian Flathead. This was followed up by a second performance the following year on Mage 20, 940, when she played her own original composition “Concerto for Violin and Frobophone” at the Conservatory.

### **Love Triangle (940 GUE)**

There are many undated events that have been revealed in various undated letters and accounts of the affair between Thaddeus Kaine and Sophia. And it is evident that Thaddeus’ wife, Elizabeth was not unaware either. The first of these letters between the adulterers, which had been dated upon its composition (940-11-14) was found in the Frigid River Branch Conservatory:

S-

And so the holidays pass, and still, we are nowhere near each other. Liz and I are fighting again, which does dampen the festivities somewhat. It’s not that she questions my formal loyalties to her and my family—she knows I will never leave her—but I suppose I can hardly blame her if she feels my heart is no better than any. How I hate to discuss these matters—as if I were a gossiping

girl. I live where I live, and I love whom I love. Praise Yoruk—that is all there is to say on the subject—

K

Elizabeth took it into her own hands to confront Sophia. Her detest is evidence in the letter, although she seemed to have false assurance in Kaine that unfortunately did not exist:

Dear Madame Sophia,

While we have never been formally introduced, I feel as if I've known you for years now. At least, I know many things about you. I know you sleep with my husband. I know you're only one of his many mistresses. Or did you think that he loved only you? Has he been teasing you with talk of your future, of marriage? Did you imagine he would leave me for you, and you would rule Irondune as the next lady Kaine? Let me assure you, madam, that you have no future with my husband. He needs me, my family, and our lovely money. Without me, there is no Irondune. And there is nothing and no one he loves more than that.

-Elizabeth Kaine

There is also documentation of a breakout of unknown offense that occurred at some point in their affair:

Sophia please forgive me. I made a mistake. I know it would be a cliché to say that it meant nothing to me—but it is true. I know that I am not communicative in the way you want me to be. I love you. Please forgive me. I will do anything for your forgiveness.

And again:

Sophia,

I have enclosed a check for 750,000 Zorkmids for the improvement of the stage. Please take this as a token for my plea for forgiveness.

Sophia finally replied:

Do you think that money will buy me? Do you think that is the way for forgiveness and apologies? This is the worse insult you could cast my way. Save it for another woman.

Apart from their frequent acts of adultery, on one occurrence, Kaine gifted Sophia with a silver tuning fork engraved, "With love, -K".

#### **Alexandria's Perturbation** (941~2 GUE)

Alexandria continued her public recitals, one of which was a performance of "Harmony of the Spheres" at the Frigid River Branch Conservatory (941-04-15). Over a year later she confessed her constant loneliness to Malveaux (942-08-05). This letter was found at the Steppinthrax Monastery:

Dear Father,

I miss you. Although Madame Sophia seems to be paying much attention to me, she sometimes seems perhaps too demanding. She believes that in my soul, I possess the very power of music, and that if I practice enough, I will find the precious notes which are the "Harmony of the Spheres." I'm not so sure. As much as I try, everyone believes my music is strange. Do you think me strange? I know I am lonely.

Always missing you,

Alexandria

She also wrote to Malveaux on a separate occasion her perturbing dreams:

I can't sleep anymore. I hear music in my dreams. In my dreams, I see water spilling out of pipes and tidal waves sucking me down. In my bones, I feel that something wrong is going on. Are you alright? I am worried about you. Have you been seeing Dr. Sartorius? I hope his treatments are working. Please write and let me know that everything is fine.

#### **Alexandria Meets Lucien Kaine (943 GUE)**

Following her Arch 5, 943 performance under the stars, "Music for the Moon," by the river of the Frigid River Branch Conservatory, Alexandria, at the age of 18, again played "Harmony of the Spheres" on the evening of Oracle 15. Her music was complex, perhaps even atonal, daring, compelling, unafraid to shock and a little strange—in fact, it reflected the musician's persona.

When she finished, there was no response from the audience—only a long silence. A glimmer of uncertainty came over Alexandria's face. Then, from the box opposite, came the sound of one person clapping—Lucien Kaine was applauding enthusiastically. They held each other's gaze. Lucien continued his solitary approbation. After the concert was over, Alexandria and Lucien met for the first time.

Sharply intelligent, quick on his feet, as a child, Lucien Kaine enjoyed opulent wealth, numerous servants, plus any toy—and later, any woman—he desired. In contrast to his hoarding father, material wealth lacked morals and meaning. Lucien was independent, eccentric, and arrogant—looking down on Thaddeus and his friends for their hypocrisy and shallow ambitions. He was not even present at any of the Regional Councils on War, Governance or Taxation that, as heir to Irondune, he would have been overwhelmingly likely to attend.

He demonstrated creative impulses since childhood, mostly in painting. He proved to be an eccentric, obsessive artist, who was content to live in relative isolation and loneliness, until the night he met Alexandria. She was a gifted violinist and her intense intellect and beauty captivated him.

With Lucien, the quiet, inward Alexandria found expression. For here was a man who shared her emotional fervor; a man as independent-minded as she. But most of all, here was a man who lit a flame that illuminated the empty spaces in her life. Together, they were complete.

But not all as well. The infuriated Sophia saw that Lucien was an intervention into their smooth plan. She had to keep them apart, because if they came together, all the alchemists' years of possessive preservation of Alexandria's purity would disappear in an instant. She quickly composed a letter to Kaine at Irondune:

I saw him at Alexandria's performance. What was he doing there? I know that you have done all that you can, but your son is a dangerous influence. I know of his reputation. Keep him away from her. I have this feeling about him and my feeling tells me he will be the ruin of all of us and all our dreams.

And in another undated letter, Sophia wrote to Kaine:

I have seen him outside the school. I know something is going on. She has become increasingly defiant and rebellious.

At the same time, Alexandria joyfully contacted Malveaux (943-05-01). The following letter was discovered at the Steppinthrax Monastery:

Dear father,

Ay my performance, I met someone... and for the first time in months I feel optimistic about the future. I sleep. I dream. His name is Lucien Kaine, and he is the one person, except for you, who seems to understand my music. When around him I don't have to apologize for who I am or what I believe. I've finally found my kindred spirit, as you always promised I would.

Be happy for me, as I am,  
your Alexandria.

Thaddeus Kaine forcibly forbade that his son have any contact with Alexandria, though he knew that Lucien would not be swayed. When he was unable to rein Lucien, he requested the help of Dr. Erasmus Sartorius, addressing him in a fictitious manner that defied their cordial relationship:

Dr. I am writing concerning an uncomfortable matter. My son, Lucien, has been behaving strangely. It appears he is infatuated with Alexandria and nothing I say or do can deter him. He is close to fanatical about the subject—spends days in a room painting her image over and over. He is obsessed. We have never had any such behavior in the Kaine family and I am unclear how to handle him. If his mother were still alive, she would know how to handle matters of the heart. As for myself, I have no solution. Please I ask for your help and recommendations.

Soon after Sartorius received Kaine's complaints of rebelliousness and cowardice, Lucien was hospitalized at the Gray Mountains Asylum where he was examined and treated. He was diagnosed as having obsessive disorder and prescribed Prozork. After being released, his behavior was to be closely monitored. His father was to be prescribed mild sedative.

An undated letter from Sartorius to Kaine:

I conducted a careful examination of Lucien and have found that he is a deeply troubled man who most likely should be institutionalized and subject to my ecstatic-shock therapy. The sooner you bring him, the more likely we will be able to stop his deviant obsessions.

Sartorius.

By the way, thank you for your generous donation. Finally I meet someone from the community who understands true brilliance.

Lucien refused to take the medication, crumpling up the Prozork prescription and tossing it a corner in his room. Kaine related his resentment to Sophia in a letter which was found at the Frigid River Branch Conservatory (943-06-02):

Sophia,

You say I seem wrathful—Aye, that and far beyond—I am close to giving up on my son. I have tried to control him. I talked to Dr. Sartorius who prescribed Prozork for him but he refuses to take it. Lately, Lucien has become suspicious—nearly paranoid—searching my room, pilfering my private papers. I have been forced to lock my room. I am at a loss. He is in love with that girl—your precious “prodigy,” I know—and nothing I say or do will stop him. You say to be forceful—and I try—but he is my only son. It is hard for me to deny him that which he wants most. I know it is a phase and that it is best for him, still it is hard. So what then?

K.

### **The Alchemists Continue Their Work**

Although the four alchemists feared that the untamed Lucien would despoil their virgin of purity, they delved even deeper into their dark arts. The battles against Ellron and the Enchanters Guild kept Kaine considerably occupied. In a letter found at Castle Irondune, Sophia reassured him that they need not worry, but only persist in their work (943-11-03):

Kaine,

I read about Ellron and his alliance with the Enchanters Guild, and I wept for you. These are dangerous times, and I will not sleep until all those who mean you harm are put to eternal rest.

But I take heart, knowing that we are growing stronger, deciphering more secrets of this magical science with each new day. Soon, love, we will not worry about power...

Sophia

What follows, are several undated correspondences between the four alchemists, detailing their aspirations and discoveries as they drew nearer to solving the mystery of the quintessence. I have decided to collect them into one place, rather than attempt to presume their proper placement within the chronology.

A letter found at Castle Irondune, Sartorius wrote to Kaine:

Dear Kaine,

I have long dwelt on the power of air, but not considered it as a source of Purification. At such velocities as your blueprints describe, I feel sure it would tear impurities from even the very core of evil. I am certain none but the purest metal could withstand it. Destruction of purity. A perfect solution.

Still, I have some misgivings. Before Air, your plans suggest the simultaneous combination of forces of Fire, Water and Earth. This must necessarily be an explosive combination, but not an impossible problem. I have long experimented with injection unmolding for limb replacement. As long as the mold is inserted into the case holding before applying heat, my experiments have been successful.

Sartorius

A letter from Sartorius to Sophia (unknown year-04-07):

Dear Sophia,

I have had some success supersaturating liquids in the generation of large crystals. It appears small crystals are ideal seeds for growth. I feel this combinations of water and earth, heated with fire and burning with air, will provide fertile new avenues for our venture.

Sartorius

Another letter from Sartorius to Sophia (unknown year-05-31):

Sophia,

Your concerns about the purity of my crystal generation is well-founded. I think I have the solution. It involves the dissolving of white calcium bromide, which has the added benefit of settling my acid indigestion while I am in the lab.

Sartorius

A letter from Malveaux to Sartorius:

Sartorius-

I have recently come into possession of a most unusual relic, a mirror know among Zorkastrians as the Implementor's Eye. Like an ancient seerstone, it alters the words of the faithful to illuminate hidden truths. Hopefully, it will expedite my attempts to refine the alchemical essence of Iron. Perhaps Yoruk takes pity on this old, sickly monk, and sends help at last.

-Malveaux

A letter from Sartorius to Malveaux:

Malveaux,

I am familiar with the old school of alchemy although not much remains on it. They believed that pure love was the 5<sup>th</sup> element and only the pure of heart could ever distill it. My father and I have refuted that naïve, albeit charming, philosophy. Read this—  
S.

A dream of Malveaux, as related in his personal journal:

Last night I dreamt of a nightmarish ride through the impoverished classes. The dream haunts me. I am dazed by the dirt and sheer noise. My coach trips over and the crowd closes in on me like an Egg, crushing me like the grip of Earth. Their spit burns me like the Fire of emotion. Despair fills me—and then—Air. Sweet, sweet Air clears away the crowds. Is this a sign of my fallen state, or simply my Work?

#### **The Alchemists Fear Lucien (944 GUE)**

It appears that Sophia and Kaine tried to restrain Lucien and Alexandria's relationship without informing the other alchemists (at least Malveaux). When their interactions were discovered by him, the disturbed Malveaux wrote to Sophia (944-03-02). The following letter was discovered at the Frigid River Branch Conservatory:

Dearest Madame,

I have much unsettling news. It has come to my attention that Lucien Kaine, with his troubled, rebellious spirit, his slacker morals—and his strange disposition—has been bothering Alexandria. Under your own roof. Madame! I fear she knows little of the ways of men—who are not monks, that is. Please—you should know better than I—Alexandria needs to study and perfect her art.  
Father Malveaux

In the meantime, the romance between the two lovers intensified, such as is seen in this undated letter found at Castle Irondune:

Lucien,

I love you. Have I written you that today? I'm distracted and playing quite horribly. I have been having nightmares again, the same ones. My father is performing some Zorkastrian fire ritual, and the flames leap up, higher and higher, until they devour him. He screams in pain but I cannot move. Then the sky grows dark and I cannot see the sun. I don't know what it means. I know I worry as his illness worsens. Come tonight. I am afraid.  
Alexandria

#### **Thaddeus Research Facility #2 Destroyed (944-03-07 GUE)**

In a blast of heat and fury, Thaddeus Research Facility #2 disappeared that morning, taking much of the idyllic village of Stonehead with it. Hundreds were killed in the mysterious explosion. Company officials continued to deny any connection between the company and the blast, saying, "as you know, it's been several centuries since we sacrificed a virgin to the fire-gods. We were due for this one." Critics on the other hand, pointed to the smoking remnants of Facility #1 and the strange mineral thaddium, which eyewitnesses claimed to have seen smuggled in under the cover of night. General Kaine wrote about the possible cause for the destruction of at least one of the facilities:

...temperature at which you attempt to cast metal. Casting at too cool of a temperature is useless. Casting with too intense of heat and have fatal results, of which proof is my recently destroyed laboratory in Fenshire.

### **Conflicts Between Father and Son (944 GUE)**

Thaddeus Kaine diligently and ferociously tried numerous ventures to force his son Lucien away from Alexandria. Hoping that his son would grow up to be as fierce and ambitious on the battlefield as himself, his attempts centered around either provoking Lucien to rage or to persuade him into joining in his battles against Ellron. In an undated letter found at the Frigid River Branch Conservatory, Lucien shares his feelings with Alexandria, how Thaddeus had tried to keep them apart:

Alexandria,

I paint, I write, I draw and I miss you. My father wants me to join his army in their fight against the Enchanter's Guild and Ellron. He's been our nemesis for so long, I feel I know him intimately. Magic, powers and politics, When did they get so complicated and corrupt? My father says he fights in the name of honor and truth. No truth I know of. Medicine, Education, Law and Religion: they mean nothing to me. My only trust is you and your music.

Lucien

Although Lucien had perpetrated no deed that robbed Alexandria of her virginity, Thaddeus sought to invoke his son's rage with slanderous accusations. On that certain day, Lucien was in his bedroom in the process of painting a beautiful and erotically charged portrait of Alexandria. Kaine entered, approaching his son and examined the painting. Lucien sat, jaw clenched, daring for his father to speak.

"Is this your imagination or your memory?" Kaine inquiring of the painting.

Lucien hesitated. Kaine figured he had made the right conclusion. He "hemmed."

"The archbishop would take a very dim view of your bedding his daughter."

"I want to marry her," Lucien returned.

Kaine had amused indifference. "An orphan, without a name?"

"She can have mine."

Though speaking in a tone of camaraderie, Kaine knew he was being ugly in the subtext. "Let me ask you something. It was easy, am I right? She gave herself to you? It was even her idea, perhaps?"

The slur his father put on her character angered Lucien. If this had been anyone but his father... His voice was menacing. "Don't talk about her like that."

"Go ahead, amuse yourself, if you must. For Godsakes, be discreet."

He turned passionate, threatening.

"But remember this," Kaine added. "She will never have your name."

Lucien proceeded to finish the painting. This was just one of the many he would paint of Alexandria. One of them, an erotic and blazing sketch of himself and her with their naked bodies entwined, he sent to her once it was completed. In the meantime, Lucien would also attempt to sabotage his father's campaign against Ellron. One of these acts included the theft of gunpowder.

Kaine was not originally aware that his missing supplies were due the defiance of his own son, as can be seen in this undated letter found at Castle Irondune:

#### FRIGID RIVER BRANCH CONSERVATORY

Coronation Recital

Oracle 22, 944, GUE

A Collection of Pieces Composed and Performed  
by Madame Sophia Hamilton  
and accompanied by Alexandria Wolfe

Act I:

The Harmony of the Spheres:

A Composition in Six Notes.

Intermission:

Lecture by Bishop Francois Malveaux, Excerpting  
his

Much Lauded Volume, Revelation and Eternity.

Act II:

The Berlioz Enchanted Symphony

Traditional Closing Anthem

Proceeds from this Recital to be dedicated to the  
Frigid Memorial Scholarship Fund,  
which is used to support extremely cold artists.

(944-04-22 GUE)



Captain,

I am missing twenty sacks of gunpowder. How can I defeat my enemies abroad when Irondune itself is not secure? Look into it.

Kaine

On Oracle 5, of most likely the same year, Kaine, having realized that his son was behind the disappearance of the gunpowder, recorded his frustration in a journal entry:

I don't know what to make of Lucien's odd behavior—painting pictures of naked women and then hiding them on his own easel.

He's becoming a man, with a man's freewill. But what of my missing gunpowder and supplies? Am I to tolerate insurrection in the name of my son's independence?

It seems as if he wants nothing better than to irritate me. Much more of this and I will be forced to send him to his mother in Antharia.

When Lucien was unyielding to his father's demands to join with him against Ellron and the Enchanters, the angered Thaddeus scorned his son. While the following event is not dated more precisely than the year, it may have been in response to Lucien's failure to obey the draft notice which had been issued on Mage 5, 944:

#### DRAFT NOTICE

This is to certify that:

Lucien Kaine

By the powers vested by the Authority of Syovar, General of the Royal Quendoran Army, you are hereby drafted into the ranks of the Military forces of the Desert River Regiment.

General Thaddeus Kaine,  
Desert River Regiment

When his father again confronted him, Lucien sat in a corner near the fireplace of the Irondune ballroom sketching a violent scene. Thaddeus, dressed in battle gear, approached his son. In one scabbard on Kaine's waist was a sword, in another short scabbard also hung a dagger. He pulled the sword from the scabbard and offered it to Lucien.

"Take it."

Lucien continued to paint without even glancing at his father, faintly indicating "no".

In disgust, Kaine threw Lucien's sword to the ground. "You should be with me. You belong by my side."

Lucien painted calmly, eyes still intently pinned away from his father.

"Children draw pictures. Men fight."

There was still no response from Lucien.

With greater disgust, Kaine spoke outright, "If you didn't sleep with the archbishop's daughter, I wouldn't even know you were a man."

Lucien was riled. He raised his eyes to his father's. "I don't want you to talk about her."

Kaine was amused at the anger that had ignited in his son. He sought to fan it further, "Who? Your whore? Maybe I'll try her myself."

Unable to contain his rage in spite of his father's heavy insults, Lucien leapt to his feet, knocking over his easel. He grabbed the dagger from Kaine's belt as he knocked him to the floor. He forced the blade to his father's throat, pinning him down.

"Finish," Kaine demanded, in a commingling of anger and fear.

"Father, I'm..." The shocked Lucien could barely force the words through his mouth.

Ashamed at himself, he relaxed the weapon, but Kaine put his hand to the dagger tip, keeping it held in place. The father showed his teeth in a wolfish smile.

“I said, finish it!”

Kaine pressed the dagger into his own flesh, drawing blood. But Lucien, fighting against the desire to lash out at his father, withdrew the dagger from his throat, got up and walked away. Kaine was left on the floor, panting for breath, still gripping the sword at his side.

Sometime after this engagement, Kaine’s sword was sundered in two. It is this same sword that is referenced in this undated letter, which is but another attempt to tame his son:

Lucien,

I have decided that you will be joining me on the hunt next week. I think you will come to appreciate the art of the sport. We don’t have much time to prepare. You don’t seem to have any kind of knife of your own, so I thought you might make something of my old broken one. There’s no scabbard for it—any empty one will do.

Kaine

The concerned Alexandria, obviously having heard firsthand from Lucien in regards to the theft of the gunpowder and the other conflicts with his father, contacted him. This is her undated letter, which was discovered at Castle Irondune:

...it’s just that I don’t understand your relationship with your father. If you don’t believe in Kaine’s wars, if you won’t fight his battles, just tell him. Don’t sabotage his campaign against Ellron, and don’t steal from him. He is a good man, who has raised a good son. You must know he loves you, as do I, your devoted.

Alexandria.

#### **The Concerns About Lucien and Alexandria Deepen (944 GUE)**

A letter found at the Frigid River Branch Conservatory, is just one of Malveaux’s attempts to encourage Alexandria to keep away from Lucien and cleave to purity. This letter (944-09-01) is likely in reply to a lost correspondence sent by Alexandria to Malveaux detailing her frustrations at Sophia’s attempts to keep her away from Lucien.

My dear girl,

Please do not be upset. Madame Sophia wants only the best for you. You will always be my child, my only family. But you must always remember that you are one of those people for whom life has chosen a special destiny. We all believe in your magical talent. Be pure of heart and spirit, and I shall always be your loving father

In an undated letter found at the Steppinthrax Monastery, Sophia wrote to Malveaux:

Malveaux;

Our plans may be falling apart. Alexandria has, I believe, fallen in love with Lucien; you remember, Kaine’s son. Nothing we do seems to have any impact on them; as if they were under some strange spell. You must put a stop to it. She has come so far with her music. Act quickly, or it will all have been for nothing...

Sophia

The undated reply from Malveaux to Sophia:

I have done what I can. I have explained to her the significance of her virtue and why Lucien Kaine with his troubled youth, his questionable morals, and his strange disposition is not right for her. I can't do much more.

**Beginning of the Revelation (944~5 GUE)**

Lucien began to suspect that there was something greater going on with his father than he first thought. In this letter, found at the Frigid River Branch Conservatory, he proposed secretly leaving the Eastlands with Alexandria (944-12-12):

Alexandria—

There is something going on with my father. I thought it was something to do with Thaddium and his battles with Ellron. Now I suspect it is far more dangerous than that. He says little of his latest invention, only that it involves pure lead—and it is very dangerous. My father would not harm us, but I fear he cannot save us either. You once said you wanted to explore the Empire, voyage across the Great Sea. Come with me.

Lucien

Judging from the nature of a few correspondences between Alexandria and Lucien, the two lovers began to understand that some sort of conspiracy or scheme was going on behind their backs that was deeper than either of them would have anticipated.

Lucien,

I discovered M. Sophia has a secret lab. I heard the five sacred notes and looked in to see her boiling some green crystals. What do you make of it?

Alexandria

And:

Alexandria—

I will meet you behind the stage tomorrow at midnight. I think I have discovered something strange.

Lucien

A possibly unsent letter, as it was discovered in Alexandria's violin case:

L-

Meet me behind the backdrops at midnight. I think I have found something that may shed some light on the Director's strange goings-on.

-A

Another likely unsent letter, as it was found crumpled on the floor of Thaddeus Kaine's bedroom in Irondune:

Alexandria, we must get out of here. I don't know what is going on but I believe my father is involved. I don't know what they want...

The two did manage to secretly meet one night behind the stage at the Frigid River Branch Conservatory in 945 GUE. While together, Alexandria grabbed her locket off the floor which was lying beside her violin. Lucien had

lowered his shirt for her gaze and she studied him coolly—like he was an object. He was very awkward and self-conscious. Alexandria moved away from her belongings to join him.

“I feel like a fool,” Lucien stated.

“Mmm. A beautiful fool,” she returned.

Alexandria trusted her arm at him and the locket’s silver chain spilled out of her clenched fist. She opened her fist and showed it to him. Inside was a picture of her mother, Zoe Wolfe.

“Here, this is for you. I want you to wear it.”

Lucien nodded, transfixed. She rose on tiptoe to clasp the locket around his neck. Their faces were close, and moving closer, into an embrace, but Sophia’s voice calmly interrupted out of their range of sight.

“Alexandria.”

Lucien pulled back guiltily. The moment was broken, but Alexandria still tried to kiss Lucien in order to spit the meddling Sophia who had caught them together. Lucien refused, drawing his shirt back on.

“Lucien.” Sophia was shocked by his presence, staring as he dressed. “What a...pleasant...surprise.” She noticed the locket around his neck. “Your locket.”

Lucien, very self-conscious, slipped the locket from around his neck.

“I’ve never seen it off you,” Sophia finished.

Alexandria would not deign to answer.

Sophia took the locket into her hand, pretending to admire it. “It’s lovely.” Then she accidentally dropped it, feigning to be upset. “Oh!”

The broken part of the locket fell on the floorboards, bounced, then slid through a crack in the stage floor. The broken piece continued its downward flight, coming to rest on the floor, near a pool of water in the boiler room, glittering in the darkness.

Sophia later wrote an undated letter to Kaine regarding this event:

I caught the two together on the stage of the conservatory. Imagine the nerve of the girl! Does she think I am an idiot? She brazenly disregards all rules of the school and certainly all rules of decency. Do something about your son. He is poison to her and to us.

### **Decision to Marry (945 GUE)**

In a letter found at the Monastery, Alexandria wrote to Malveaux regarding her decision to marry Lucien (945-05-22):

Father,

You are the only one I can confide in. The girls here are gossipy and jealous. They think I am strange—and I must say, I agree. I don’t fit in here. I have tried over and over to play the sappy and boring music they find fitting. I have tried to be sweet, I have tried to care—but I don’t. There is something strange going on; and it’s not just my usual complains about these gossipy girls and their boring music. I have to get out of here. It is best. Lucien wants to marry me, Father And I want to marry him. Please understand that this is right for me. I know that you will. We will come to you at the next full moon. Marry us, father, and give us your blessing for the future. I know you’re going to lecture me about “the purity of the spirit” but remember, not all of us are destined to marry Yoruk and live in a Monastery.

A.

Almost immediately after, Alexandria wrote to Lucien. This letter was discovered at Castle Irondune:

You are right. Something is going on. We must leave. I wrote Father, telling him everything and asking him to marry us. Father will miss me, but he’ll understand. We will escape to the

Westlands. I'm not frightened, Lucien; I know everything will be all right, if I am with you. Does that sound childish? I've never felt more a woman—and I am, as always,  
your Alexandria

### **The Alchemists Respond (945 GUE)**

In an undated letter found in the Monastery, Kaine wrote to Malveaux:

While there is no cause to be alarmed, I do believe that Lucien may be planning to elope with Alexandria. He left me a note alluding to his leaving and he has been suspicious as of late.

Sartorius, Kaine and Sophia gathered with Malveaux in his office at the Steppinthrax Monastery. The Bishop stood between the others who occupied three of the four chairs. He took a letter from the copious sleeve of his robe and laid it on the table.

"Our worst fears have come true," Malveaux stated. "They've asked me to marry them. They intend to leave."

There was an exchange of alarmed looks from the others.

"No, she cannot leave," Sartorius protested, "absolutely not."

Sophia had angry concern. "Leave? What are you talking about?"

Kaine directed his words to her, "Don't act so surprised. It's all taking place under your roof. You can't pretend you didn't know about it."

She spoke through gritted teeth, "I tried to guide her, Kaine. I can't run her life. If she wants to spend time with Lucien, let her. But marriage, Malveaux? Surely you didn't encourage them."

Malveaux spoke as though he had a dark secret, "But I did." Despair creased over his face even further. Once Kaine had left, Malveaux continued, "I tell you he's watching everything we do. I can sense it. He's dangerous – and he'll do anything he can to get what he wants. Our only hope of survival is to give him our secret."

Sartorius was wrathful, "Have you gone mad?!"

"I don't want to die," Malveaux replied, remorseful.

"We can't give in to him," Sophia stated.

Malveaux shouted back, content, "He's insane!"

"We must be strong," Sophia comforted. "We can't give in to this, this *Nemesis*."

It appears from both the above conference and the following letter, that Lucien took his own initiative to investigate more of the scheme that was transpiring around him. While the precise date of Lucien's "haunting the asylum" and "threaten[ing]" of Sartorius is not known, it may have happened during one of his scheduled treatments. This letter was discovered at the Gray Mountains Asylum (945-06-17):

Dr. Sartorius,

I understand you are still perfecting the science of the ritual, but we must act now; if we do not, the quintessence will slip through our fingers. I know he has threatened even you, haunting the asylum. Patience has its place and so does action. During the next solar eclipse we must make our move. Our work must be completed at the Temple of the Ancients. Write and I will arrange to meet you there.

Soon, Doctor.

Sophia

A letter discovered at the Frigid River Branch Conservatory, in response to the above:

Madame Sophia,

I have much to prepare. I don't think you understand the intricacies of this philosophy. This is not cooking, this is science. This is the true mystery of life. Nonetheless, you are right—we cannot

wait any longer. We must take a risk. Meet me at the Temple of Agrippa. I will summon the others. What has begun must take its course. It is our only chance—before we are destroyed—  
Sartorius

Thus fearing that they would not be able to keep Lucien from sullyng Alexandria, the Circle of four met at the Temple of Agrippa to accelerate the schedule for Alexandria's sacrifice to coincide with an upcoming partial eclipse.

### **Sophia Tries to Stop Alexandria From Leaving (945 GUE)**

In the meantime, Alexandria was in preparation to leave the Frigid River Branch Conservatory and make her way to the Steppinthrax Monastery for the wedding. Hoping to persuade her from leaving the school, Sophia confronted her in the student dormitory on the night before she left. Alexandria lay on the bed, while Sophia sat on its edge. They were only lit by the light of an oil lamp. Sophia talked quietly, regressing into her heart. She spoke with thought and deep commitment.

"I know the power of love. It attacks your heart until you have no power to fight. Sometimes it picks men who'll only hurt you. It becomes stronger than you, and sometimes you end up doing stupid things, enduring infidelities...and still there's nothing you can do because you love him." Sophia realized that she had revealed more than she wanted to, and smiled wanly.

Alexandria replied, "I'm in love with Lucien, and that's my business."

"Alexandria, I want you to find love. But I don't want you to lose anything by finding it. I was a pianist. I wasn't like you—a genius—but some thought I had talent. Some thought I could be...great. And I gave it up because I thought I was in love."

"I want to make my own mistakes."

"I listen to your music," Sophia continued, undaunted, "to the passion and brilliance of it, and I know that you are not ordinary. Don't you see that?" She leaned forward and put her hands on Alexandria's arms. "You are brilliant. Important." Then she whispered, "Magical. Please don't throw away this power."

"I won't. I'll always play the violin. Even after I die. I'll play."

"It's not worth it. Let him wait. Please. Don't leave."

Sophia got up from the bed, kissed Alexandria on the forehead, and picked up the lamp to leave.

### **The Wedding of Lucien and Alexandria (945 GUE)**

Adamantly refusing to heed the warnings of Sophia, Alexandria travelled to the Steppinthrax Monastery to elope with Lucien. An anonymous letter was hastily written and delivered to Thaddeus Kaine, hoping that it would do something to prevent the anticipated union:

Your son will try to elope with A tonight. Come to St. Yoruk's at once!

Leaving the note in his bedroom, Kaine hastened for the Monastery with two of his armed soldiers.

That night, Malveaux stood with Alexandria and Lucien in the cathedral of the Monastery, unaware fully of the conspiracy transpiring around them. Besides the three, the room was bare of occupants. The couple's beaming faces glistened with love for one another. Neither was dressed in anything expensive for the wedding—both suits proclaimed casual formality and nothing of glamour. Lucien was in his normal garments, while the black dress and flowers of Alexandria reflected the haste with which their plans were made, as well as her strange imagination. Malveaux gripped a holy book in one hand.

Alexandria had a moment of intimacy with Malveaux, while Lucien waited at the altar. She teased him, much like when she was but a young girl. "Today you're my father and my priest. You have to give me away, and then you have to marry me."

Malveaux seemed distracted as though his mind was possessed by other things and that she was a little annoying. "Alexandria, your mind is always working..."

She kissed his cheek and then joined Lucien. He grasped her left hand with both of his.

"This is an extraordinary day," Alexandria spoke, radiantly jubilant.

"As befits my extraordinary child." Malveaux took his place before the two at the front of the cathedral. Then, opening his book, he continued, "Now... It's time for us to begin. Under the fire of Yoruk..."

Suddenly the doors burst open. The shout of Thaddeus Kaine reverberated throughout the vast cathedral. "No, I think actually it's time for all this to finally end."

Turning, the couple spied Lucien's father marching into the room, flanked by two Irondune soldiers. They walked briskly towards the front. Kaine gestured and the two soldiers apprehended the befuddled Lucien, who could only reply almost stunned, "What are you doing?"

"You're being arrested," Kaine returned coldly, and disturbingly placid.

"For what?"

As the two soldiers dragged Lucien before his father, wide-eyed Alexandria protested hysterical, "Leave him alone!"

Without much of a struggle, Lucien broke free from the soldiers and adamantly stated, "I'm not going anywhere."

Kaine wordlessly retaliated with a strong slap across Lucien's face. The two soldiers again restrained Lucien and ushered him forcibly towards the doorway.

Alexandria shouted, "Please, stop!! Leave him alone. Lucien!!" Dauntless, she tried to run after Lucien, but Kaine blocked her with his big body. She stared directly into the eyes of the stringent, ill-tempered man and straightforwardly asked, "Why are you doing this?"

Countering with an icy, unsympathetic stare that pierced the depths of her soul, Kaine set his back to her and tromped down the hallway without explanation.

Turning around, Alexandria yelled, "Father, help me!" But Malveaux had vanished. Desperately she looked around the room. Confused and betrayed, she could barely force the words past her numbing lips, "Father!?"

Disconcerted, Alexandria returned to the Frigid River Branch Conservatory alone. There, on August 1, 945, the depressed woman would manifest her dismay by performing "Descent of Yoruk into Hell."

### **Final Preparations (945 GUE)**

With Lucien firmly out of the way, imprisoned within the Irondune dungeon, the four alchemists hastily finalized their plans for Alexandria's sacrifice. Sophia composed letters to at least two of the alchemists. The first, to Sartorius:

We will meet during the solar eclipse at the Temple of Agrippa.

And the second to Kaine:

I think there is only one solution to this mess. We must expedite the process. It cannot wait. The next eclipse will be in three day's time. This is our only chance. Do what you must. It cannot wait.

—S

Kaine's favorable reply to Sophia:

Ellron is at my gates, threatening to destroy the little power I have left. You are right—we must act now.

Before stating Malveaux's reply, two undated correspondences between the Bishop and Doctor show the state of Malveaux's sickness and the urgency he would display when writing Sophia. The first, from Sartorius to Malveaux:

Based on all that, I can see you are in some kind of remission. This is a devious, dexterous diseased. It is smarter than we know. But the players are smarter. Trust in all we have done, trust in the prima material. Eternal life will be ours.

And another from Sartorius:

X-ray results reveal that the disease is beginning to spread again. The time of the Great Experiment is nearly upon us. Keep up your hopes.

Thus when Malveaux wrote his reply to Sophia, the further development of his disease is clearly manifested:

I have spoken to Dr. Sartorius, and we are both ready. My fevers are worse, and now I constantly burn. I have very little time left, and I am ready to begin my leap of faith.

Sometime prior to Sartorius' final departure for the Temple of Agrippa, this undated letter, which was discovered at the Gray Mountains Asylum, was sent to the Doctor:

Good Doctor,

Since your cure, my son has kept something of his Magic Eye. He still sees things that cannot be seen, and for a fortnight he has wept for you day and night. He begged me to write you a warning.

There is a great evil waiting for you. You will soon be dead, he cries, the Asylum destroyed, your great work unfinished. He fears powers have been disturbed, and the innocent will pay. Good luck, Doctor. May Yoruk be with you.

—S.J.M.

### **The Confession**

The precise date of this event is unknown, though it appears to correlate with Malveaux's writhing convictions against the upcoming sacrifice of Alexandria. This it seems appropriate to place the Bishop's night of confession here, where he sat in his room in the Steppinthrax Monastery, holding in his hand a medallion. The only light came from the oil lamp which casted a warm glow on his face, the medallion, and the photograph of Alexandria.

"A lifetime for some..." He smiled sadly. "A lifetime fashioning a desperate hope, immortality." His smile gave way to a grimace of emotional pain. He ripped off the medallion with a guttural cry and threw it at the floor. "I can't! Not at this cost! Hell is better!" He was beat and desperate. "But... I can still pray for forgiveness."

He put a hand on a carved chair to steady himself, then lowered himself to his knees, shut his eyes and muttered incoherently for a few beats. "Pardon my sins. Avarice, sloth, envy, lust..." His urgent look gave way to blank despair as he realized how numerous were his sins, how profound his fall. His eyes opened. "...deceit, greed, gluttony, unnatural desires, impure thoughts, stealing..." He gazed at some inner vision of hell. He knew his resolve was beaten. Still kneeling, he reached for the medallion. It was too late to turn back. He rose. Sounding like he was still talking to God, he concluded. "Forgive me."

And thus the alchemists set out to abduct Alexandria and bring her to the Temple of Agrippa to be sacrificed. Her body was useless; it was her spirit that they required.

### **Lucien Escapes from Prison (945 GUE)**

Lucien was confined in his cell at Irondune, where he sketched out profiles of the four alchemists and painted Kaine's earthen symbol on the stone wall with the following message: "I found this symbol in his room. It must be the key." When an unknown guard approached his cell, he leapt to his feet. The guard quietly opened the cell door and received the bribe money. In return, he whispered to Lucien, "The temple" and left. It is unknown why Lucien's first destination was the Steppinthrax Monastery, but when he arrived, he found that the alchemists were not there.



Instead, he confronted one of the Zorkastrian monks (one of the two who would later refuse to abandon the Monastery under the Grand Inquisitor's condemnation of the building), throwing him against the wall and demanding to know, "Where are they?"

"The old temple: they're at the old temple."

### **The Sacrifice (945 GUE)**

The alchemists, dressed in their ceremonial attire, gathered in the dome room of the Temple of Agrippa to invoke the Great Eclipse. Sophia restrained Alexandria, who violently struggled to gain her freedom. Sartorius forced a bowl to her lips, steam swirling out of the liquid. She drank and her eyes instantly began to droop.

The four alchemists placed Alexandria upon the altar in the center of the temple; an altar which they had personally constructed. She was sitting up, but only with the help of Sartorius and Kaine. Sophia made a last brush stroke through her dark hair, then set down the brush to take a white veil, which she placed over the head of their virgin sacrifice.

Alexandria's cloth-covered body was lowered upon the altar. She was sleeping peacefully. Kaine held the alchemy book. All gathered around the altar, with their hands outstretched over her body, except for Malveaux, who raised a sacrificial dagger into the air. He began to chant,

"No generation without corruption.

No life without death.

The blackness of putrefaction

Must precede the whiteness,

As night precedes day."

Then the four alchemists in unison chanted, "Natura, Anima, Spirit of Perfection. Purify, Cleanse, Transmute these metals into the Philosopher's Stone."

Sophia closed her eyes, swaying to the sound. The intensity increased. Sartorius waved his hands above the altar symbols. The symbols began to spin. The knife of Malveaux lifted higher. It hovered for a beat above Alexandria.

Beyond them, at the top of the stairs leading to the altar, Lucien suddenly rushed into the room, crying out, "No!"

But was too late, for Malveaux drove the dagger into Alexandria, taking the life of the young woman. She convulsed. The culmination of their dark ritual was finished, and they knew they would soon become immortal creatures.

Just at the moment when they were becoming empowered, the rage of the warrior came to the fore. The chagrined Lucien, entangled by blind rage ran up to the altar and rushed for Malveaux. Easily overtaking the frail monk, he pushed him backward. The momentum threw Malveaux back toward the railing that surrounded the altar. He fell and was impaled on the shard finial of the banister. Malveaux gagged and gasped with the metal piercing entirely through his body.

Sartorius tried to get away, but quickly spinning around, Lucien picked up a candle and flung it at him. Sartorius' robe caught on fire, engulfing him in flames. As he burned, Lucien looked to the altar where Sophia was trying to complete the ceremony with Alexandria's body. He approached her.

In despair, Sophia muttered with fear, "No, please don't! No."

But Lucien was not sedated. He reached both hands around her neck and strangled her beneath her punitive whining, "Nooooooo!" Dead, he tossed her to the floor.

Lucien looked in anguish at Alexandria, who lay dead with the sacrificial knife deep in her chest. Then he looked up across the altar and saw his father glowering at him. Yanking the bloody dagger out of Alexandria's chest, Lucien turned to face his father, who contemptuously stood his ground fearlessly placid. Had Lucien not been consumed by his terrible bombastic rage, he would have noticed that his father was eerily calm. They stared into each other's eyes, until Lucien placed the knife upon his father's throat for a moment, just as Thaddeus Kaine had dared him to do in their previous encounter. But his father did not wince. He simply lifted his hands in the air as if in a state of worship, a martyr pleased to accept his death. And unlike before, Lucien stabbed deeply into the throat of his own father and he fell dead.

Dropping the knife, Lucien leapt upon the altar, crawling over the lifeless body of his beloved Alexandria, and sat over her. His eyes were glued to her and already filled with the haunted, hunted look of the Nemesis. He touched her face, the lifted up his hands to shield his own as though an invisible entity were coming down upon him. And he screamed, “NOOOO!” in a voice that was not his own, but hideously demonic—the primal yell of anguished filled the entire temple.

### **Chapter 3: The Forbidden Lands (945~949 GUE)**

Our love would have lasted forever; we swore this to each other.  
But they lied to us, cheated us, and finally took her away from me,  
bent on using her, wrecking her like a replaceable cog in the sick  
machinery of their experimentation.

-Lucien Kaine, 948 GUE

As a result of the conflict, Lucien, initially a young innocent, was transformed into the embittered, tortured dark force known as the Nemesis at the moment he watched all those whom he had trusted plunge a dagger into his lover's heart. Though the ceremony was incomplete, Alexandria's spirit was dispersed throughout the temple and remained trapped within.

Four huge glass sarcophagi beneath the temple dome were created the moment Lucien murdered the cabal. Because they had been in the midst of a powerful alchemical ritual, when Lucien plunged the knife into each of their hearts, their elements (fire, water, earth, air) consumed them. The Nemesis, realizing that these elements might be important instruments, ripped their elements essences out of their souls by unknown magic and placed their souls in the four sarcophagi. Although Lucien did not know at this time the significance of these substances, he knew that they were powerful and held the key to some form of eternal life. He knew they could prove useful in the future. Thus he kept these elements alive and vibrant, but hidden throughout the temple where he presumed no one could find them. Lucien was able to keep the souls of the four alive in their bodies, while maintaining intense torture for them in an "eternal hell." Lucien also smashed the four's alchemical device and placed the different colored fragments of their metals in another room of the temple to be studied.

Unable to return to his life back in New Kivolli, Lucien stayed at the Temple of Agrippa mourning his lover. He initially buried her in the mausoleum in front of the temple. However, he could not accept her death and dug her up, placing her preserved body deep within the temple, on the site of the original temple altar. Obsessed with the death of his lover, Lucien dedicated the remainder of his life to finding the secret of bringing Alexandria back to life—a secret he knew his father and the cabal had already discovered. Lucien became obsessed with the occult and spent all his fortune searching out every occultist in the land. From quacks to scholars, he sought out their advice and discoveries to no avail. He obtained much knowledge, but could implement only two powers—keeping the body of his lover in stasis, and trapped the souls of the dead cabal in their sarcophagi. Still, he was unable to find the secret of the Philosopher's Stone or the Elixir of Life.

#### **The Curse Begins (945 GUE)**

After the tragedy at the Temple of Agrippa and the great imbalance of the Empire, a curse cast its shadow. The bitter Lucien wandered the Eastlands, manifesting his anger by tormenting the scattered enclaves of society that occupied the regions near the alchemists' homes. Almost at once, affairs in these regions soured as evil began to emanate from the land. Haunting and hallucinations began to sprout in various cavities of the former Empire. The Gray Mountains slipped into oblivion first, being plagued by magical storms and fires. The inhabitants of Frosthalm complained of horrible screams and an inescapable stench that pervaded the area. Reports came from the Desert River next. Merchants and trading caravans that still moved through the areas untouched by the war began to report nightmares and visions so powerful that they lingered for weeks in the minds of the victims, while chronic hallucinations haunted the natives along the borders. Travelers began to disappear. Soon the entire sky over that area became covered with distorted faces and figures. A strange figure called the Nemesis was placed at the center of these events.

King Syovar, who was already dwindling in power, was wary of the bizarre haunting taking place on the fringes of his domain. Fearing that the land was being controlled by his political and ever increasingly powerful opponents, the Enchanters, he was prompted to declare these lands "The Forbidden Lands." (The circle of Enchanters also dubbed them the same.) All access was barred to the desolate Desert River and Gray Mountain provinces. Various

penalties were imposed on those that trespassed, including the pain of death. Most of the refugees managed to make it out in time. Those who did not later died or wished they were dead.

When Bivotar ventured into the Desert River Province at the close of 947, he described the devastation firsthand:

Immense scars and patches of burnt land are visible with alarming frequency, as if the Implementors have tormented the province with an unceasing series of lightning strikes and fire storms. Giant corbies circle overhead menacingly, already waiting for me to collapse in exhaustion. This is no place for the living.

And again:

It is clear to me now that the Vice Regent's order to make all of the eastern provinces outside of his control into forbidden territory was a wise decision. It is doubtful to me if even Syovar the Strong would be able to defeat the force that has taken control of this land. What that force might be, whether it truly is a curse, or simply the latest terrorist tactic of the Enchanters' Guild, I still have no idea. Moreover, since the fall of the empire, all of these lands have been devastated by famine and barbarian invasions of the worst kind. It would be a wasted effort for Syovar to attempt to recapture these territories in hopes of restoring the Great Underground Empire... Civilized life will never again thrive in these territories, but the reasons are much deeper than we had ever feared. Some sort of evil spirit has come to reside...

While no one knew during those days that Lucien Kaine was the cause behind the devastation, many believed that the curses were signs of the Enchanters' Guild gaining the upper hand against Syovar's Kingdom of Zork. An excerpt from *The New Zorker* read:

Are the recently evacuated "Forbidden Lands" really cursed? Or is Regent Syovar simply becoming paranoid, now that the Enchanters' Guild composes the first substantial challenge to his political supremacy? The theory of the curse seems legitimated by the dark series of earthquakes, draughts, missing persons, and general ill-humor of the inhabitants of the region following the Great Eclipse. Though the Guild denies responsibility for any black magic in the region, the disappearance of General Kaine from Irondune suggests political conspiracy. And since we all know the trolls, orcs, and gnomes of the Flathead Mountains are only waiting for the slightest hint of civil strife to stake their own claim to that corner of the Empire, the clock is ticking on the Forbidden Lands.

Throughout this dilemma, Syovar never gave up his desire to ruler the abandoned underground caverns. Thus he once again turned his gaze toward the buried ruins of the Great Underground Empire.

### **Musings of Lucien (945~6)**

As the twisted and tormented Lucien sought alchemical answers in hopes of reviving Alexandria, he recorded many of his explorations and discoveries upon heavy brass medallions, that when spun worked as a primitive recording/playback device.

Last day of the Year of the Misuse, I've hidden the sources of their powers away from their control. Without them, they are unable to hold back the very elements they used to keep dominion over. (945-12-31)

I live every day with the reminder of the horror I have inflicted on the others. Their crimes were great, and I had to be judge, jury and executioner. Yet, they do not succumb to my torture. Sartorius seems the weakest, but even that bastard will not break his silence. (undated)

I tried to contact Dr. Vexing about the meaning of the Alchemy plate symbols. He told me that all symbols have meanings in alchemy, and that everyone is controlled by the orientation of these symbols. He could not, however, tell me more of use. The man is nearly deaf and blind, a condition that I feel describes perfectly my search for answers. (946-02-03)

I've learned of four key steps used in Alchemy: Sublimation, distillation, calcification and coagulation. I know there is more to be found. Something is missing, some vital step. (undated)

It is apparent that Lucien Kaine harnessed the full powers of a magical hourglass in the Temple of Agrippa, that seems to have had similar properties of temporal travel as the legendary Phee Hourglass. For certain relics from the future found their way into his possession—these included a tele-orb, and a copy of Boos Miller's book "Great Underground Empire Toasts." (The crystal ball of Radnor found in the Steppinthrax Monastery may also have been placed there by identical means.)

### **Ellron's Armies Push Towards Irondune (Spring 946 GUE)**

Since Thaddeus Kaine's inexplicable disappearance, the cause for his war had fell into complete disarray. His absence caused the gradual decay of his province and his armies as they fell under the command of a series of nameless, second-rate generals that had failed to rise to the urgency of the occasion. Syovar believed that Lord Ellron had, despite his urgings, continued to push his troops further into the haunted and desolate regions that Kaine once controlled. Although Ellron's armies had previously pushed forward to Irondune, Kaine's armies had still held territory as far north as the Frigid River Valley until 945, but by the spring of 946 they had been forced back to the regions surrounding the inaccessible Temple of the Ancients.

During the winter of 946~7, Ellron's armies fell utterly out of his control. Every last man once under his authority fell prey to the sickness that pervaded the Forbidden Lands, from his highest generals to the lowest foot-soldiers. The first mutinies began in the last weeks of 946. By Estuary of 947, General Froblemarre already quelled three different riots in his ranks by executing one out of every twenty men that took part.

At the start of 947, with both the Desert River and Famathria Provinces lawless, these troops succeeded in overrunning them entirely. Kaine's castle was besieged by the marauding armies, a vain assault that in 949 would finally be turned away. Over the next year and a half following the beginning of the siege, large numbers of soldiers would break away from the main invading army. Roving brigades would fall upon one random village after the next like packs of wild wolves, ignoring all orders and communication with the outside world. These hordes were driven by a force almost outside of themselves, moving in directions and committing atrocities that even they did not understand. A few of the older veterans showed enough strength to leave these guerillas, but those that did seemed to lose their sanity in the attempt, wandering the hillsides aimlessly, mumbling to themselves. What inhabitants remained in the region kept hidden behind their boarded-up doors, terribly frightened. This bloody aftermath would weave its course across the southern provinces until the removal of the Nemesis.

It is here that we turn to the writings of Bivotar, who on the 27<sup>th</sup> of Estuary, 948 gives us but a glimpse into the intense drama between Syovar, Ellron, Kaine, and the Enchanters Guild when he wrote to the King:

It is here that your concerns of the loyalty of Lord Ellron become the most important. Ellron himself had spent most of the year [947] at your side, aiding you in your struggle to retake the ancient Westlands. In your final conversation with me, you had seemed worried that he had not been entirely honest with you, and that even as he was assisting you in your darkest hour, he had betrayed you. Rumors had reached your ears that Ellron persisted in the conquest of the Desert River area in hopes of forging his own power base, and ultimately rebelling against your authority.

I can assure you now that these accusations are not true. Ellron has remained faithful to you throughout the entire affair, and if he had ever been dishonest in his reports to you, it is only to spare you the burden of knowing the truth.

...At any rate, these drifting criminals are hardly in worse condition than what is left of Ellron's army. I doubt that any of the men under Froblemarré are sane enough at this point to attempt to make any contact with Ellron. Perhaps this is why Ellron has seemed so distracted lately: he does not know the fate or whereabouts of thousands once under his command. Now it seems that the few reports we had heard in Aragain were true. Ellron's armies have pushed what is left of the resistance all the way to the southern reaches of Famathria, across the southern branch of the Frigid River, and within sight of Kaine's ancestral castle. No one here knows what was the final goal of that insane and rebellious army, nor exactly what the siege of Kaine's castle will accomplish. Still, the black smoke of battle grows thicker each day.

He also wrote regarding the effects the war had upon the Desert River terrain:

As I make my way through the desert south of Aragain, the desolation of the sand dunes renders this already-deserted province nearly unbearable. It seems hard to believe that this desert was not always a wasteland—not until the black magic of two ruling egos leveled it.

Before departing for his mission at the end of 947, Bivotar would embark on a routine Surveillance Duty at the 106<sup>th</sup> annual Convention of Enchanters.<sup>38</sup> In the Keynote Address, Guildmaster Barbel made veiled references to critical “elements” that portended an upheaval of all Learned Arts in the Empire, as well as quoting the renowned historian Ozmar, who wrote in 821 GUE.

Bivotar reported that the conversations and seminars were typically dry, ranging from such droll topics as the propriety of using NITFOL (“conversation with beasts”) to gain information on competing Guilds, or the dangerous side effects of impurity in FOOBLE potions (intended to increase muscular coordination). Between sessions, he overheard in a hushed conversation mention of alchemy. His sources at the Enchanters' Guild, which included members of the Circle of Enchanters, were tight-lipped about any new developments or significant information.

### **Lucien Becomes the Thief (947~8 GUE)**

Scouring Zork in his juvenile quest to find a way to revive his lost Alexandria, Lucien's search took him throughout the world, during which time he squandered the last of his father's fortune. Gossip abounded that he killed his father himself. When the wealth was nearly gone, he set out in search of answers elsewhere. He had heard of rumors speaking of riches “beyond the hills,” which turned out to be a vast subterranean land filled with magic and mysteries—the Great Underground Empire beneath the White House. It may be interesting to note that this house, which in these days was owned by Ellron, was not abandoned during this period, but still used by him during the days when his armies seemed to have turned into lunatic beasts.

Unwilling to earn money through traditional means, Lucien was forced into the life of a thief – initially a petty thief then a highwayman – to sustain his studies. According to his journal:

However, I haven't found any creature knowledgeable in the black arts. A wizard may be somewhere underground, but I have yet to find him. Other treasure hunters have discovered the ruins, and I've had to kill them to protect my belongings.

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<sup>38</sup> Some contend that due to the 115th annual Convention being held in 957 GUE that Bivotar was inaccurate with his account here. It can be easily conjectured that between 947 and 957 that one of these Conventions were cancelled.

Thus obsessively protecting his treasures in the hopes that the riches derived from their sale could keep his studies in alchemy alive, Lucien became the infamous Thief. Bivotar, writing in 948, could not understand why the Dungeon Master would permit this murderous young man to dwell within his domain:

For sixty-five years now the Dungeon Master had fiercely guarded every entrance to the old underground realms, insisting that no one would enter until the time was right. Not even Syovar, the rightful heir to the empire, had been allowed to enter until recently. Why the Dungeon Master would let this young Lucien run around down there made little sense indeed.

During the days of his habitation within the Dungeon of Zork, Lucien Kaine found that he still carried the passions of a young lustful man. Despite his devotions to Alexandria, he was unable to sedate himself in the seductive presence of Threnia, the Muse of Modern Fantasy Novels. This affair of unknown duration produced a son named Spike the Protector. It seems from the testimonies of Spike, that he had vague remembrances of his father, although, given the possible age of the child, it seems unlikely that a mere two or three year old would have any recollection. In fact, it is unknown whether Lucien knew of his son's birth at all, or if Threnia abandoned him immediately after birth. All that is known is that Spike was abandoned as an orphan at an early age, where, in order to survive, he would teach himself to follow in the footsteps of his father, where he would live in the Dungeon of Zork until at least a decade later when he was recruited by the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarers Association.

#### **Effects on the Alchemists' Homelands (947 GUE)**

The disappearance of the four prominent figures of Quendoran society, interwoven with the hallucinations and other wicked effects transpiring around their homelands, brought much devastation upon their establishments. Sartorius' asylum was forced to close down after all the patients escaped (save for one) and was sequentially abandoned.

The Frigid River Branch Conservatory, located in no-man's land halfway between Irondune and Syovar's strongest positions, was closed down due to a lack of students and funds and suffered much desolation at the hands of Ellron's rampaging hordes. When later visited by Bivotar in 948 GUE, he would describe the dilapidation of Conservatory:

The atmosphere of that imposing structure hung heavy and still, and I saw that it had fallen into disrepair, since the disappearance of its ruling Madame. I felt strangely sympathetic to her, as if being in her rare, cultured world could show me something of her refined presence, or teach me something of her expert knowledge. If I stood for a moment listening, it was almost as if I could hear lingering melodies from years ago. I felt for her, a moment, a strange sadness. I believe time is not so fixed in this place as elsewhere—though I know here, as everywhere, the old must eventually be replaced with the new...

The Steppinthrax Monastery, which had been under suspicion for quite some time (as it was hardly proper for a monastery of male monks to be raising an orphaned teenage girl), was overtaken and closed by the Grand Inquisitor in Syovar's name in the third month of 947 after claims of demonic infestations. A sign was posted on the outside of the building, which read:

CLOSED PENDING FINAL EXORCISM!  
ENTRY IS FORBIDDEN BY ORDER OF THE GRAND INQUISITOR  
PURSUANT TO A.G.E CODE 1535-47750/BCV56A  
(Signed at Foozle, 21 Arch 947, IV xxii.)

The monastery was then abandoned to two insane monks who refused to leave. These two had gone mad from the evil and demons they testified to that were everywhere around, especially in the master's room.

### **Ceremony at Finbar (947-04-XX GUE)**

A group of local enchanters and thaumaturges, headed by the noble Aramina, met one Oracle night in a final attempt to banish the ghosts and evil spirits that had been haunting the people of Finbar for over a year and a half. Although hopes were high for the success of the ceremony, it was met with little luck. After that midnight, at least three more disappearances were reported, and Mayor D.U. Marble-Froz was found dead in his bath early the following morning.

Aramina was quoted as saying, “We were up against forces beyond our wildest comprehension. There is little that can be done to oppose those that have passed into the realm of the undead.”

Deputy Major Torg ordered a complete evacuation of the village of Finbar, saying that “those of us that can make it north into the realms of Syovar might be able to find safety. I urge all of you that can afford to do so to travel to the border before Syovar’s edict takes effect.”

### **The Frobber is Frobbled (947-11-XX)**

The editors of the Frobber were reported to have been kidnapped during the month of Mumberbur. The main office was closed and the magical printing presses brought to a halt. Afterwards, all attempts at reviving the Desert River Frobber met with failure. The buildings and the presses themselves were reputedly haunted, under the control of some invisible evil spirits.

Dear Shareholder,  
It’s been another banner year for FrobozzCo, as I’m sure you’re aware. Everyone here on the FrobozzCo Management Team joins me in thanking you personally for your continued support as an investor. Thanks to our steady growth and record revenues in 947, the Board of Directors is pleased to announce

### **Syovar Sends Bivotar (947 GUE)**

The Forbidden Lands were largely a mystery to all who lived under King Syovar. All attempts to reach Thaddeus Kaine over the last three years had ended in complete failure. Thus Syovar had no alternative but to send a spy to scout out the lands to discover the fate of the general. The times were dangerous; it was weary to trust anyone. The most truest and earnest companion of his was still his beloved Bivotar. He gave Karlok Bivotar the rights and authority to act as agent and representative in all matters concerning the investigation of the disappearance of Madame Sophia Hamilton, Bishop Francois Malveaux, Doctor Erasmus Sartorius and General Thaddeus Kaine, respectively, all citizens of importance and stature whose welfare is of the utmost concern of the Vice Regent and the Empire. The mission was ordered through unorthodox procedures, and made with a special request that Bivotar report back to him alone. And so, as a fully authorized agent and representative of the Vice-Regent Syovar, Karlok Bivotar was entrusted with this challenging assignment and sent out to the Forbidden Lands hoping to shed light on the chaotic power-vacuum that had existed in those realms for almost three years.

Although Bivotar was somewhat disturbed that his briefing was hastened by unexplained urgency, his objectives were clearly enumerated by Syovar:

1. To determine the whereabouts of the Four Missing Citizens of Prominence (General Thaddeus Kaine, Doctor Erasmus Sartorius, Father Malveaux, Madame Sophia Hamilton)
2. To substantiate the alleged curse of the so-declared Forbidden Lands.
3. To investigate rumors of unauthorized magic, black or otherwise, in the region.

It was the final element of his assignment that most intrigued him. Since Syovar had ordered the mission through unorthodox procedures, and had made special request that he report back to him alone, Bivotar was caused to think that there might have been much to be gained from this adventure. He was determined to keep his records faithfully.

On Dismembr 17, 947, Bivotar arrived at the outskirts of the Forbidden Lands—the northern border of the Desert River Province. The border crossing into the territory was well-guarded. Even with the scroll bearing Syovar’s signature, the royal militia was reluctant to let him across. By the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the same month, Bivotar was three days journey south of the northern branch of the Frigid River. While he had not yet reached the edge of the desert, the signs of devastation were obvious on every side. He records:

Immense scars and patches of burnt land are visible with alarming frequency, as if the Implementors have tormented the province with an unceasing series of lightning strikes and fire



storms. Giant corbies circle overhead menacingly, already waiting for me to collapse in exhaustion. This is no place for the living.

#### **Arrival at Zylonika (948-01-04 GUE)**

Bivotar arrived at the city of Zylonika on the outskirts of Irondune, Kaine's territory, at dusk on Estuary 4, 948. The desolate and dismal place was abandoned, thousands of refugees and lunatics having streams forth two years earlier. He was only able to find one old woman, sitting in the central square, lost in her own little world. This woman, who had not eaten in days or bathed in week, had once been intimate with Dr. Sartorius:

Using a stick to carve lines in the dirt, she preoccupied herself by doodling a vast array of astrological symbols all across the square. I tried to grab her attention, but she simply went on mumbling about the nature of the secret elixir and the philosopher's stone, and praising the unity of all elements. The references to the forbidden alchemical sciences caught my ear, and I pressed her for details. She pretended not to hear me, only gradually answering my own questions by continuing to talk to herself...

I hurriedly began to copy down the symbols she was drawing in the dust. Before I could finish, she took the pen from my hand and began to sketch the most beautiful, otherworldly drawing. I asked if I could have it, and she took from her bag a roll of parchment, filled with her elaborate, mystic visions.

By this time, night had fallen completely and the ruins of Zylonika had become horribly oppressive. Even the old woman seemed to be growing uncomfortable, her mumblings and screechings growing more nervous and frantic with each passing moment.

The garbled name she had mentioned, Doctor Erasmus Sartorius, struck a distant chord in my memory, my assignment 95822... She began screaming about voices and visions in the night, blaming the alchemists for the devastation around her. I tried to hold her, to calm her, asking her where I could find this Erasmus Sartorius. Her reaction was one I will never forget. She broke free of me, running and laughing hysterically. "There! There! There! And there!" she screamed, pointing at the rocks, the trees, the stars, the half-moon. "Don't you see? He is everywhere now. We can never escape him. We can never escape any of them!"

With those words, she was gone. I never even learned her name. I have studied her parchments for hours, and don't know what to make of them. They are strangely arresting.

While staying at Zylonika, Bivotar also had the opportunity to interview a resident by the name of F.B. Punketah, who mistook the visions of the four alchemists as Implementors:

The Implementors speak to me at night. They come to me as angels, four of them, and they teach me the true things. But the others around me do not understand. They yell and scream and fight, and talk to other voices that I cannot hear. The General was a good man. A family man. If he knew what was happening...in his own land, with his own people. It's a bloody shame. Spooks or not, the old empire has fallen, fallen... but I come to this place and find immortality! Why, then, why help the lady that torments us with that horrible, aching music?

#### **Excretions in the Desert (948 GUE)**

As Bivotar made his way through the desert south of Aragain, he saw that Irondune was surrounded by plumes of black smoke. He desperately sought to find answers that would lead him to General Kaine and hasten his return home. Bivotar wrote about his expeditions in his journal (948-01-07):

My fellow wayfarers—of the unimpressive yet customary sort that you find along the Great Underground Highways of this land—attribute the curse to some dark figure they will only call the

“Nemesis.” The name has surfaced two or three times now, and with the same dark respect a child attributes to the boogey-man. But these are mawkish, superstitious folks, with not the insight of a brogmoid between them. I refuse to endure another endless game of Fanucci in hopes of eliciting more useless information.

#### **Arrival at Finbar (948-01-24 GUE)**

Having returned to the vicinity of Zylonika, Bivotar departed from the city on Estuary 22 and arrived in the village Finbar two days later. The situation there was only a little better. Not every store or home had been completely ransacked and destroyed, but since Oracle of 947, the village had lost over 90% of its original population—some of them had safely returned to Syovar’s rule and others had disappeared without a trace.

He was able to find several inhabitants still living in the area, not altogether in good shape themselves, but willing to share certain useful things with him.

One young man I met in Finbar was himself extremely helpful. He had been an apprenticed sorcerer of some kind himself, but had abandoned the art in disgust once the dispute between the enchanters and the alchemists erupted into full-fledged violence. For some reason the man seemed little affected by the hallucinations and nearly-contagious insanity that has infected the Forbidden Lands. I suspect that some sort of secret association with the alchemists protects him somehow, but I was not able to get him to admit the truth.

Bivotar questioned him about the alchemical community around the Desert River Province. The man seemed fairly knowledgeable about the subject, explaining rumors about Sartorius and General Kaine being a part of that organization. He also explained Kaine’s fate, stating that the General had been missing for almost three years now. Bivotar found the words shocking, for that meant that Lord Ellron had been waging and endless war against an opponent that had disappeared, deep inside territory that Syovar had declared to be forbidden.

On Estuary 27, Bivotar summarized all his collected information regarding the war between Ellron and Kaine, which he carefully appended to his own observations:

I have spent the past few weeks traversing the territories of Irondune, my Regent, and gained a much deeper understanding of the nature of the war between Ellron and Kaine... The endless... dispute [over the border regions between the former Aragain and Desert River provinces] has dragged on unceasingly for two decades without solution. Yet perhaps more remarkable than the disrepair of Kaine’s army is the lamentable state of Ellron’s [which was still preying savagely upon the cities.]

He tried to enlist the fearful inhabitants in the region, but they were all too frightened. The only survivors he could provoke into conversation were some of the older veterans who had deserted the chaotic hordes, as well as most of their sanity. Most of what they said made little sense, and what was coherent painted a very ugly picture:

Since the Nemesis began to visit us, I no longer fear the devil. Blood runs in the streets where he goes. The madness begins later. It’s hard, so very hard. And the hallucinations—I can’t remember which came first, the hallucinations or the killings. The pain... it started at night, in our dreams. The four would come to us, begging, pleading. Unspeakable atrocities, written in the dunes, the dirt, the skies... we would see these things and scream out afraid. The first one to die was skinned alive by his own tent-mate, as he screamed about the lady and her lover. We can’t ever escape those two...ever. Please. That’s all.

—Andrew Brog, Port Foozle

I love the skies here at night. You see such beautiful things. That woman is the most stunning sight I have ever seen. But the Darkness. It stalks her. I witness her murder again and again, every time I dream. In the morning, my pillow is wet with her blood. No human should be allowed. None! I wonder why they do this to us. Have we done something wrong? Is there nothing you can do to save her?

—Ariela Comnena, Frigid River Valley

Bivotar closes this particular entry with:

I know not what to say, Your Highness. All is not well here. Those are the lucid ones, the ones still sane enough to form coherent thoughts, the ones not afraid enough to run from me at first sight. I have tried to infiltrate a few of these roving bands of madmen, but I have had no success. They know almost immediately that I am not one of them, that I do not see the things that they see. I cannot help but wonder why it is that I have been spared. The sickness that pervades this place has passed me over. I fear that perhaps it is only a matter of time.

#### **Arrival at Castle Irondune (948 GUE)**

Bivotar reached the Castle Irondune on Frobruary 2<sup>nd</sup> and was surprised to recognize the castle from among the madwoman's sketches. He was uncertain of what to make of this, but suspected that the sickness had preceded him there. He easily slipped past Ellron's troop undetected, but when he reached Irondune, he discovered that the majority of Kaine's troops had not even been convinced that the General had disappeared at all.

In the castle library, the writings of the generals told him that they were able to maneuver the troops through an elaborate system of remote radio control codes of such a sophisticated nature that Bivotar was unable to decipher. All that he knew was this: the codes seemed to telegraph Kaine's instructions on any given day, provided the soldier could identify himself with the given cipher for that day. Bivotar sensed that information of this nature was entirely too dangerous to carry on his person, and was determined to forward to Syovar any further progress he had made with this intelligence.

Staying within the castle to investigate, Bivotar stumbled upon an old castle guard on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month who was raving mad and desperate to talk. This guard had known Kaine since he was a boy and pressed several photographs into Bivotar's hands and begged him to bring his beloved liege back to him.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, Bivotar came across a single photograph of Madame Sophia Hamilton, who was Case File 95820. With the possibility to discover the nature of the connection between the honorable General and the cultured Madame, he departed north to the Frigid River.

#### **Arrival at the Frigid River Valley (948 GUE)**

Bivotar arrived at the Frigid River Valley by at least the 17<sup>th</sup> of Frobruary, and after following along the banks of the Frigid River, reached the Frigid River Branch Conservatory on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month. He was startled to discover that the madwoman in Zylonika anticipated his journey, for an image of the Conservatory appeared in her sketches just as Irondune had previously. The oddest thing happened while he explored the innards of the ruined building:

A darkness came over me, a feeling of utter fury, a kind of hatred I have never before known. I screamed—I could not help myself—and found that the sound I heard was not my voice, the roar of a great beast, a daemon in a murderous frenzy, as if the mighty river had opened its throat. I heard the gentle pierce of glass breaking, and I looked up to see a cleaning woman. She backed away from me—making the sign of Yoruk over her breast—and whispered, “Nemesis.” Perhaps the curse of this land is working upon me yet. It is difficult to stay untouched.

On Arch 7, Bivotar attended a concert in the nearby town of Zorokesh. Without Madame Sophia, there was no violin in the local Z'orchestra and the traditional Closing Anthem could not be played:

As a result, the concert continued on—most tortuously—for seventeen additional hours. The sun set and the night grew progressively darker; children wept and then slept in the thick stupor of utter boredom—and finally, so did their parents. It was at that point that I crept away from my seatmates in bored Box C, and determined to retire. Perhaps they are sitting there still.

Later, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of the same month after failing to identify the fourth alchemists, he wrote:

Mysteriously, I have remained untouched by whatever visions of horror pervade this place. I have often wondered what it is that spares me the fate of the creatures I have encountered. It is almost as if whatever it is that is haunting this place has made me exempt, and has chosen me, for some future fate as yet unknown.

But a mere two days later, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of the month, he discovered Bishop Malveaux's association with the other three in a program from the Frigid River Branch Conservatory. In turn, Bivotar decided to make passage to the Steppinthrax Monastery to see what he could learn of the monk Malveaux.

### **Bivotar Arrives at Steppinthrax (948 GUE)**

On Arch 15, Just as Bivotar was despairing of every finding a way out of the rolling dunes, which were some several hundred bloits to the northeast of the Steppinthrax Monastery, he came across a wandering bank of Zorkastrian monks who had chosen to devote their whole life to their faith, living in celibacy and loneliness for their so-called fire gods. The monks did not run from him, but were quite friendly, unlike most of the people he had met in the horrible land. They were assumed that Malveaux's powers of alchemy had destined him for immortality. When Bivotar inquired how he could find the Bishop:

[The monk's] arm began to twitch, almost violently. "You cannot. He is hiding, waiting. For three years now he and the others have been gone, watching this place until the moment is right."

"Others? What others?"

He backed away from me, dancing and writhing, his answer a haunting and melodic chant:

"Air, earth, and water. The madman, the general, and his lover."

I blinked, and he was gone.

By the time Bivotar arrived at the Monastery at Steppinthrax on the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month, he was not surprised to discover that the madwoman of Zylonika had predicted his current destination in her drawings. The monks there mourned the departure of their dead Bishop, who had, for the most part taken a vow of silence. In an empty office, he found several volumes on alchemy.

The subject returns to me once again; it seems to be the common link, but I do not understand it... Between the hundreds of thousands of fire worshippers who cling to his text, and the Zorkastrian brothers who defend his person, I can find very little reason that anyone would seek to harm Bishop Malveaux to begin with. Then again, if the Nemesis is truly some great daemon, the Bishop's goodness would be grounds enough.

### **The Thief's Quest (948-03-22 GUE)**

Lucien the Thief was unable to uncover any knowledge suitable in his quest to revive Alexandria, save a manuscript written in an ancient tongue unknown to him. He believed that, once deciphered, this document would provide him with the secret of the Philosopher's Stone, known also as the Elixir of Life, which would be capable of restoring Alexandria to her former glory. All whom he encountered were unable to translate the tongue. His only promising

lead was mention of the Wizard of Frobozz, who resided in a deeper level of the same Dungeon of Zork from which he had already been obtaining many treasures from. If he could only find the Wizard and show him what he had learned, he could teach him the rest. He alone could give Lucien what he needed to bring Alexandria back to her. But he had not yet discovered a way into the portion of the underground where the exiled wizard dwelt.

Bearing with him his hefty bag for treasures, deadly stiletto, a piece of waybread, a considerable amount of zorkmids, and a rusty brass lantern, Lucien set out once again from his lair beneath the White House in attempt to locate another entrance to the Wizard's lair, or perhaps find someone else wise enough who would be able to translate the manuscript for him.

At the base of the White Cliffs, near Lover's Leap, Lucien located and befriended Harlon the Hermit. Lucien was delighted to hear that the old man was familiar with the obscure script that had not been used in ages. Handing over some coins, Harlon quickly translated the manuscript for Lucien. However, much to his disappointment, this was only a vague and partial translation, nothing capable of restoring his beloved Alexandria.

On his travels back to the White House Lucien spotted the thick tendrils of black smoke spilling out of the forest of trees. The small village nearby was aflame, the results of another barbaric orc raid. Upon arrival, the fierce growls of orc warriors were only punctured by the helpless screams of a single woman breaking forth from a wrecked hovel. As Lucien approached to rescue whoever was inside the hut, one of the brutal beasts rushed out, pushing him rudely out of the way, growling fiercely in some vague imitation of common Quendoran.

Knowing the simplicity of bribing the greedy creatures, Lucien tossed a sack of coins his way. The orc relaxed somewhat, pawing through the coins, pretending to be able to count them. Using the distraction as an initiative, Lucien slit the throat of the prowling beast, reclaimed his booty and entered the hovel.

The first thing he noticed was the beautiful imperial scepter that she held. Undoubtedly this was some magical relic that would prove useful. She eagerly handed it to him without his asking for it, the effort of the motion sending her body into a series of painful spasms and coughs. Little did Lucien know, but this was the lost imperial scepter, once belonging to Wurb Flathead.

When he showed her the manuscript, she admitted her lack of skill with the ancient tongues, but directed him to the Wizard of Frobozz. As this was who he had been seeking, he attuned to her words, believing this to be some divine guidance to his goal. Coughing and gasping for breath, she grabbed a scrap of paper and scribbled a few lines and symbols upon it. It was a map to the hidden barrow near the White House. She had barely told him what it was before she collapsed dead. Lucien would never put this map to use, but it, along with the scepter, would be put to use by an unknown adventure on his quest to succeed the Dungeon Master. Lucien headed back to the White House, but would be furious by what he would find.

### **The Adventurer's Quest (948-03-22 GUE)**

It is here that we once again meet the First Dungeon Master face to face. The original master of the underground had that very year grown tired of his duties and began to search for someone to succeed him. All previous attempts to penetrate the underground had met with failure. All survivors of more than one expedition reported that their party had been killed by a mysterious thief (Lucien Kaine) who had mastered the inner workings of a complex and diabolic maze in the heart of the underground. But one adventurer, a brave unknown male adventurer, was soon to gain entrance into the underground through the mythical White House and would begin to explore the realm. For the Dungeon Master intentionally allowed the adventurer into his realm to test his worthiness to take over the title.

This man, who would go on to acquire the title of Second Dungeon Master, sought the Great Underground Empire due to its reputation for containing vast quantities of treasure. Naturally, he wished to acquire some of it. The rumors led him to a White House over the ruins of the former capital city of Flatheadia, where a strange, though alluring, letter was discovered within the mailbox:

**WELCOME TO ZORK!**

ZORK is a game of adventure, danger, and low cunning. In it you will explore some of the most amazing territory ever seen by mortals. Hardened adventurers have run screaming from the terrors contains within!

In ZORK the intrepid explorer delves into the forgotten secrets of a lost labyrinth deep in the bowels of the earth, searching for vast treasures long hidden from prying eyes, treasures guarded by fearsome monsters and diabolical traps!

Assuming that the White House of Ellron had been long abandoned, this adventurer took the liberty to break in through a slightly ajar window on the backside of the house. It was inside the kitchen when he realized that the table had been recently used for the preparation of food—a bottle of water, hot pepper sandwich, and clove of garlic. After nabbing the lunch, he searched the remaining rooms of the house, discovering some rope, a nasty-looking knife, the Sword of Zork, and a brass lantern. Dumping all of these into his inventory, the adventurer discovered a hidden trapdoor beneath the oriental rug in the living room. Pulling it open and lighting the lantern, the adventurer descended into the cellar. The trapdoor shut tightly behind him.

### **Two Quests Collide (948-03-22 GUE)**

Lucien the Thief locked the trapdoor. He could hear the adventurer struggling, pushing against the door in vain, frustrated and fearful. Someone had finally broken into the underground. Initially questioning if it was one of Syovar's men, Lucien quickly denied this, then wondered if this new captive would be of some use to him. While he detested the intruders that dared to rob him of his fortunes and to plunder his treasure room, he would test this one. Since he stole for pleasure rather than profit, and was somewhat sadistic in this nature, he decided to only take the things which the adventurer had already seen. And to cause scattered confusion to this plunder, he planned to take worthless items and instill further bafflement by discarding items that he did not like. This would be amusing. He did not plan to let him escape. And this adventurer would be forced to master the tunnels.

Lucien knew that he would go into the underground after the newcomer, but through another less-traveled route. He backed out of the window the way he came in, glad to be out of that cursed old relic of a building. While Lucien knew his way around down in the Dungeon like the back of his hand, the great maze of twisty little passages he had long mastered would give him considerable advantage for wandering around to chart the adventurer's progress.

Having perpetrated the Dungeon with valiant deeds, including the slaughter of a troll wielding a bloody axe and the recovery of a platinum bar, Lucien encountered him in the heart of the maze. He realized that the brave and foolhardy adventurer did not look like much and wondered if he had overestimated him. Lucien watched his nervous, curious reaction to his presence as he stood there smirking at him. The possessive thief knew that the adventurer desired his little bag of treasures, but Lucien was tempted to steal one that the adventurer had obtained. He lashed out at the adventurer, managing to steal the platinum. The adventurer fought back with the elvish sword, but was no match for Lucien's skill with the stiletto. The unknown man fled into the opposite direction, leaving behind the platinum bar as well as a jewel-encrusted egg and a spillage of blood.

It would not be for quite some time (after having found a lovely clockwork canary within the innards of the jewel-encrusted egg, used the magic stored in the imperial scepter to put a stray gnome to sleep that had wandered into one of his passageways and then stashing it in a nearby gold coffin), that Lucien was triggered by the hidden magical alarm that he had implemented into his treasure room. He screamed in anguish at the thought of his booty being raided by this impendent adventurer. As he raced through passages unknown to the adventurer, Lucien regretted his activity of keeping him alive for preserve amusement. Arriving within the treasure room before the unknown man had yet a moment to nab anything of value, the thief gestured mysteriously and everything in the room suddenly vanished.

This time the adventurer was equipped with the nasty-knife and as Lucien challenged him to the death, found that his skills had increased in just the little time that had been allocated for the adventurer to roam the caverns. After an exchange of knife slashes and punctures, a dark fog swirled about Lucien. He turned around, clutching the adventurer's knife that now was sticking in his stomach. The thief pulled it out from his gut and tossed it aside. He looked down at the gaping wound between his fingers. Lucien was at an end. The thief disappeared into a cloud of black fog along with the knife that he was killed with.

Although murdered by the Dungeon Master, Lucien could not die. As a ghost, his tortured soul returned to the Temple of Agrippa more embittered and determined than ever. The temple was to be his limbo, his purgatory, his

hell. It was at this point that Lucien transformed into a demon, the Nemesis, an embittered, ruthless soul in pure anguish. Fed by fury, his soul had smoldered over the years, growing in desperation and power. He tried even more desperately to torture the four alchemists to learn their secrets but to no avail. The Nemesis gained some supernatural powers which were limited to the temple. He had the power to appear and manipulate objects and influence the perception of reality, however, he could not directly interfere with a person.

### **The Legend of Zork (948-03-22)**

Forever having removed the threat of the thief from the Dungeon of Zork, the unknown adventurer reacquired his possessions from the thief and scavenged the Treasures of Zork from the first level of the Dungeon. The most reliable account<sup>39</sup> of this excursion includes the following twenty relics in its list: a jewel-encrusted egg, a clockwork canary (which was within the egg), a beautiful painting by Leonardo Flathead, a beautiful brass bauble, a pot of gold, a platinum bar, an ivory torch of endless fire, the gold coffin of Ramses II, the royal scepter of Wurb Flathead, a trunk of jewels, the crystal trident of Poseiden, a jade figurine, a sapphire bracelet, a huge diamond, a leather bag of coins, the crystal skull of Yoruk, a jeweled scarab, a large emerald, a silver chalice, and an ancient map.

When the first nineteen of these Treasures had been placed simultaneously within the trophy case in the living room of the White House a sinister wraithlike figure, cloaked and hooded, appeared seeming to float in the air. In a low, almost inaudible voice he said, "I welcome you to the ranks of the chosen of Zork. You have persisted through many trials and tests, and have overcome them all, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and danger. One such as yourself is fit to join even the Implementors!"

He then rose his oaken staff, and chuckling, drifted away like a wisp of smoke, his laughter fading in the distance. As the wraith faded, an almost inaudible voice whispered in his ear, "Look to your treasures for the final secret."

Upon the trophy case rested an ancient map that showed a forest with three clearings. The largest clearing contained a house. Three paths left the large clearing, one of these, leading southwest, was marked "To Stone Barrow." This massive barrow of stone was the secret entrance to level 2 of the Dungeon of Zork.<sup>40</sup>

Upon entering, the door closed behind the adventurer. Above the bridge, floating in the air, was a large sign. It read:

All ye who stand before this bridge have completed a great and perilous adventure which has tested your wit and courage. You have mastered the first part of the ZORK trilogy. Those who pass over this bridge must be prepared to undertake an even greater adventure that will severely test your skill and bravery!

News travels rapidly within the Great Underground Empire, and by the time the adventurer entered into the barrow, U.S. News and Dungeon Report had already reported on his valiant deeds:

#### **FAMED ADVENTURER TO EXPLORE GREAT UNDERGROUND EMPIRE**

Our correspondents report that a world-famous and battle-hardened adventurer has been seen in the vicinity of the Great Underground Empire. Local grues have been reported sharpening their (slavering) fangs....

When the tenth century saw an influx in the number of adventurers seeking rumored treasure amongst the hills, the befuddled Wizard of Frobozz sought to protect his long hidden domain in the Dungeon of Zork. Though his

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<sup>39</sup> A less reliable manuscript detailing the descent of this adventurer contains a slightly different listing of treasures and seems to merge the gathered relics of the first and second levels of the Dungeon into a single list. Those wishing to investigate this discrepancy are urged to consult the "Treasures of Zork" entry in the Encyclopedia Frobozzica, 1699 GUE edition.

<sup>40</sup> As of the end of the tenth century, under the management of Morgrom the Essence of Evil, the secret pathway to the Stone Barrow was cleared and now an unambiguous pathway leads past the White House and up to its entrance.

powers had diminished and he had acquired a bat or two in the belfry over the years, he was still a force to be reckoned with, capable of putting his sorcery to evil use against the mere human intruder. The frivolous aged wizard began to amuse himself by harassing these passing adventurers. Materializing at odd moments and casting bothersome spells, he would constantly endeavor to confound adventurers with his capricious powers.

Thus when this unknown adventurer ventured into the second level of the Dungeon, this insidious gent intended to undo him as he explored the huge and long hidden region of the Great Underground Empire by randomly throwing all sorts of spells his way, more in an amusing attempt to incessantly discourage and annoy rather than to murder. However, this adventurer outsmarted the ancient necromancer at his own trickery, solved a barrage of diabolical puzzles, and ultimately brought the Wizard of Frobozz's powers under his control.

He did this by gathering both the three Palantirs of Zork (which had magically relocated since their usage by Syovar against Krill), and ten additional relics of the Great Underground Empire: the excessively gaudy crown of Dimwit Flathead, a delicate gold key, a fancy violin (Stradivarius), a portrait of J. Pierpont Flathead, a pearl necklace with hundreds of large pearls, a stack of two hundred Zm100 bills, a Zm10,000 gold coin, a Dimwit Flathead stamp, a golden dragon statuette, and a moby ruby.

In the process of gathering these treasures, the adventurer encountered Smaug. To defeat this red dragon, he led the reptile into the glacier room. When the dragon saw his reflection on the icy surface of the glacier, he became enraged, presuming that another dragon was there behind the glass. Dragons are smart, but sometimes naïve, and this one had never seen ice before. He reared up to his full height to challenge the intruder into his territory. The intruder responded. The dragons took a deep breath, and out of Smaug's mouth poured a massive gout of flame. It washed over the ice, which melted rapidly, sending out torrents of water and a huge cloud of steam. The adventurer managed to clamber up to a small shelf, but a huge splash went down the terrified dragon's throat. There was a muffled explosion and the dragon, with a puzzled expression on his faced, died.

Within the dragon's lair was the beautiful young Princess Melithiel of the House of Fourth, wearing a dirty and bedraggled gown. She was oblivious to his presence, almost in a trance, until he placed a kiss upon her lips. This member of royalty had been betrothed at birth to a man known as "the Unhamstringable" and had to remain faithful to this intended husband. Thus she had languished in the Dungeon of Zork between dragons, waiting for him to come rescue her. Melithiel knew at an instant that this man was not the one for her.

"Thank you for rescuing me from that horrid worm," she said. "I must depart. My parents will be worried about me."

The curious adventurer tracked her to the nearby topiary, where she untied the delicate golden key from around her unicorn's (Rex the Wonder Unicorn) neck. She handed both the key and a fresh rose plucked from the arbor to him. "You may have use of such a thing," she said. "It is the least I can do for one who rescued me from a fate I dare not contemplate." With that, she mounted the unicorn and rode off into the gloom. Princee Melithiel would be captured several years later by the kimodo dragon and rescued by her fated husband, Mirakles of the Elastic Tendon.

Arriving in the Wizard's Workroom, the adventurer placed the three Palantirs of Zork upon their respective stands. A low humming noise began and the three spheres began to vibrate, faster and faster, as the noise became higher and higher pitched. Three puffs of smoke, one red, one blue, one white, rose up from empty stands. The spheres were gone but in the center of the triangle formed by the stands was a black stand of obsidian in which rested a strange black sphere.

When the adventurer placed this new sphere in the circle, a cold wind blew outward from the sphere. The candles flickered, and a low moan, almost inaudible, was heard. It rose in volume and pitch until it became a high-pitched keening. A dim shape became visible in the air above the sphere. The shape resolved into a large and somewhat formidable looking demon. He looked around, tested the walls of the pentagram experimentally, then spotted the adventurer!

"Hmm, a new master..." he said under his breath. "Greetings, oh master! Wouldst desire a service, as our contract stateth? For some pittance of wealth, some trifle, I will gratify thy desires to the utmost limit of my powers, and they are not inconsiderable." He made a pass with his massive arms and the walls began to shake a little. Another pass and the shaking stopped. "A nice effect... I find it makes for a better relationship to give such a demonstration early on." He grinned vilely.



Suddenly the Wizard of Frobozz materialized in the room. He was astonished by what he saw: his servant in deep conversation with a common adventurer! He drew forth his wand, waved it frantically, and incanted “Frobizz! Frobozzle! Frobnoid!”

The demon laughed heartily. “You no longer control the Black Crystal, hedge-wizard! Your wand is powerless! Your doom is sealed!” The demon turned to the adventurer, expectantly.

It was here that the adventurer made one of the most devastating and detestable decisions. Following in the heels of the same misdeed as Bivotar several decades earlier, he collaborated with this manifestation of pure evil and bowed to its request by paying it with the ten treasures he had collected.

Satisfied, the demon obeyed when the deceived adventurer ordered it to “take the wand from the wizard.”

“I hear and obey!” said the demon. He stretched out an enormous hand towards the wand.

The Wizard of Frobozz was unsure what to do, pointing it threateningly at the demon, then at the adventurer. “Fudge!” he cried, but aside from a strong odor of chocolate in the air, there was no effect. The demon plucked the wand out of his hand (it was about toothpick-size to him) and gingerly laid it before the adventurer. He faded into the smoke, which dispersed. The wizard ran from the room in terror.

With the wand in hand, the adventurer was able to move a mehnir, enabling him to acquire a mammoth dog collar that he ringed around the neck of Cerberus, the guardian of the Tomb of the Twelve Flatheads, and skirted around. He found a secret door hidden within the crypt. A roughly hewn staircase led down into darkness. The landing on which he stood was covered with carefully drawn magical runes like those sketched upon the workbench of the Wizard of Frobozz. These had been overlaid with sweeping green lines of enormous power, which undulated back and forth across the landing. The wand began to vibrate in harmony with the motion of the lines. The adventurer felt compelled downward, and he yielded, stepping onto the staircase. As he passed the green lines, they flared and disappeared with a burst and light, and he tumbled down the staircase.

As in a dream, he saw himself tumbling down the great, dark staircase. All about him were shadowy images of struggles against fierce opponents and diabolical traps. These gave way to another round of images: of imposing stone figures, a cool, clear lake, and, now, of an old, yet oddly youthful man. He turned towards the adventurer slowly, his long, silver hair dancing about him in a fresh breeze. “You have reached the final test, my friend! You are proved clever and powerful, but this is not yet enough! Seek me when you feel yourself worthy!” The dream dissolved around as his last words echoed through the void.

With courage and cunning this adventurer had conquered the Wizard of Frobozz and became the master of his domain, but the final challenge awaited. Here, the First Dungeon Master personally tested this adventurer with several skills of strength, cunning, and compassion. In the process the adventurer acquired seven pieces of the Dungeon Master’s costume: the hood and cloak, the amulet and ring, the key, the wooden staff, and the lore book. (In addition this hero ventured into the annual Grue Convention, as well as finally freeing an old and crusty sailor in an ancient Viking ship by saying “Hello Sailor” to him. This sailor later retired to Grubbo-by-the-Sea.)

After solving the final test of the Dungeon Master, which was to gain entry into the secret Treasury of Zork, the adventurer gleefully examined his new-found riches. The Dungeon Master materialized beside him and said, “Now that you have solved all the mysteries of the Dungeon, it is time for you to assume your rightly-earned place in the scheme of things. Long have I waited for one capable of releasing me from my burden!” He taps the adventurer lightly on the head with his staff, mumbling a few well-chosen spells, and the adventurer felt himself changing, growing older and more stooped. For a moment there were two identical mages staring at one another among the treasure, then the First Dungeon Master dissolved into a mist and disappeared with a sardonic grin on his face. For a moment the Second Dungeon Master was relieved, safe in the knowledge that he had at last completed his quest in ZORK. He began to feel the vast powers and lore at his command and thirsted for an opportunity to use them.

Some storytellers whisper that this moment was the fruition of the entire course of history. The ancient folk myths, some perhaps as old as Zork itself, had foretold of a treasure-hunting adventurer who would become a master of the magical arts, and rule throughout the deepest reaches of the underground. These prophecies, and even the very name of Zork, had been revered by all for untold generations. Many people believed that the completion of these prophecies and the dawning of the Age of Zork would usher in a new era of peace, prosperity, and happiness for the people of the Great Underground Empire. Unfortunately, with an exception of the appointment of his successor in

966, there are only minor mentions of this mysterious personage. However, several byproducts of his expedition quickly made their way into the New Zork Times classifieds later that year.

FOR SALE: Twenty valuable treasures. Someone just left them in the trophy case in my living room. How about that?! Write to Ellron, White House in the Clearing, Forest of Zork 9060.

FOR SALE: Three-headed dog, cheap. Used to be fierce guard dog, now just slobbers over everyone. Very friendly, upkeep low — one dragon carcass a day should satisfy it. Contact Boris Flathead, Keeper of the Tomb.

WANTED: Authentic working Enchanter's wand. Last one stolen by upstart adventurer. Will pay top dollar. Contact Wizard of Frobozz, in Exile, Remote Corner of the Great Underground Empire 9133.

Some soul must have heeded the request of the Wizard of Frobozz, as by 957, he would again be molesting adventurers that dared to infiltrate his domain. Shortly before the end of the First Age of Magic in 966, the wizard was no longer occupying this region. Thus, it remains a mystery as to how the life of this confused and befuddled soul who had confounded other adventurers for years met his end.

Before Ellron could sell the twenty treasures which ended up within his trophy case, the crystal Skull of Yoruk was stolen by a pack of grues in 948, before briefly coming into possession of a gaggle of grues living beneath the White House in 950.

#### **Arrival at the Gray Mountain Asylum (948 GUE)**

Bivotar dwelt at the Steppinthrax Monastery for several more days. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of Arch, he found dozens of photographs of Alexandria Wolfe. He was unable to identify the girl at this time. Following this discovery, his journal is void until the 12<sup>th</sup> of Mage, where he mentions:

I continue to encounter cosmic symbols and runic writings that I cannot understand and have difficulty reproducing in this Record. I believe them to be magical in nature, however. As, I have determined, are these sketches. Strange.

Although his weak memory kept him exception from mastering the simplest of spells, Bivotar recorded a list of spells, potions, and his attempted translations. The precise place of the discovery of these spells is unknown, but as his next entry, only five days later, recounts his explorations of the Gray Mountain Asylum, these cosmic symbols and incantations may have been found there.

Bivotar recorded on Mage 17, that he found the Asylum to be a haunted place. Many levels of the complex were abandoned—floors 2 through 19 appeared to be completely deserted, although a notebook referred to a laboratory on the 18<sup>th</sup> floor:

This esteemed Doctor Sartorius, who, from the testimonials I have discovered, has done such good for so many, has left his papers in some disarray. The place looks as if it has been ransacked.

It is hard to visit this place and not walk away, for a time, shocked. Partly, the condition could be attributed to the withdrawal of government funding, as the Doctor's papers attest. However, there is a great deal of blood, which suggests a familiar pattern—the work of the Nemesis. Knowing nothing of the medical profession and less of science, I am learning little.

I encountered an unusual chair. It must have been some therapeutic device, as sitting in it created a most pleasurable sensation, as though hundreds (perhaps thousands) of fingers were devoted to my corporeal stimulation. After several sittings, I resolved to bring this device to the attention of the Vice Regent on my return.

I discovered some food here and made the mistake of eating it. Suffering from abdominal disorder. Surrounded by medicines I dare not take. Pain increasing. What is going on in my stomach? I am beginning to wonder whether this Assignment is worth the trials I am experiencing.

For the next week, Bivotar did nothing but read the Alchemy books which he discovered among the Doctor's papers. Finally, he was able to decipher the signs written in the sand and found out that they were indeed alchemical. Two days later, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of the month, he briefly summarized the teachings of alchemy, and was lead to the wrong hypothesis regarding the fate of the alchemists:

If this daemon Nemesis has taken possession of the Forbidden Lands as he appears to have—if this curse is his doing—then it is my hypothesis that the General and his Madame, the Monk and his Doctor—all suffering under the curse themselves, whether for the sake of their troops or their patients, their music or their parishioners—came together to fight All Hell with the One Power Stronger. The Quintessence. And then, I must further hypothesize, they lost.

Within the Doctor's papers, Bivotar found mention of the Temple of Agrippa. Learning that the four alchemists were said to have practiced their evil art there, he chose to head there.

#### **Arrival in Frostham (948 GUE)**

Bivotar ventured into Frostham and tried to speak of the Temple of Agrippa, but no one would say that it existed, yet their haunted faces seemed to confirm what their words did not. He finally found a sherpa who for a few zorkmids was willing to take him part of the way. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of Mage, his guide departed, leaving Bivotar on his own before sheer cliffs of impenetrable rock. Before leaving, he cast the spell of the homing pigeon upon his journal, so that if something were to happen to him at the Temple, the narrative would return to Syovar's chambers. Thus the last coherent entry of his account reads:

I am certain that the end of my journey awaits me there. A dark mood has overtaken me. Perhaps I, too, have finally fallen under the curse. It is difficult to say. All I know is that it is no longer the promise of fortune or promotion—neither politics nor economics—that drives me forward. Like Yoruk, I now seek only simple answers, the simple truth, the simple power it wields. I will find the One Power and, if I do not, I will meet the Nemesis in Hell.

Yoruk save us all.

Bivotar

A letter, which Bivotar had previously written under different circumstances (it seems, upon judging both the date of the composition and internal evidence that Bivotar had already despaired surviving the mission while he was seeking the Steppinthrax Monastery), was found attached to the interior cover of his journal:

17 Arch 948

To His Royal Highness King Syovar-

I doubt that I will live to know whether or not this report will ever reach your hands. This mission has been a dangerous one in the extreme, as we knew it would be. I am not well. I fear for my health and sanity, and yet I feel that I must remain in this place a few weeks longer, in hopes of learning the truth.

I have entrusted this packet to a friend who is utterly beyond reproach. Please show him the kindest hospitality available to you. I pray he makes it out alive. Your orders, my lord, were vague, because the situation is vague. The Forbidden Lands have been a private hell for me these last months. I have included in this packet parts of my own notes and diary, with particular attention to the words of the survivors. It is imperative that we find the truth behind the four missing alchemists if this land is ever to be cured. I remain behind in an effort to learn more.

Give my love to Juranda, and may the best of success be yours.

Bivotar

The following day, the 30<sup>th</sup> of Mage, he set out alone for the Temple of Agrippa.

### **Arrival at the Temple of Agrippa (948 GUE)**

The fate of Bivotar has been made known to us from the recovery of several pages of one of Lucien's diaries as well as a couple fragments from a final disjointed entry of Bivotar's account.

Bivotar arrived at the temple altar and made it past Lucien's Gallery, but while reposing to envy the paintings, Lucien bludgeoned him. In the gallery, the flow of time was as circular as the room, and Lucien killed Bivotar before he was ever actually born. Lucien mistakenly thought that this was a setback, and waited to see if Bivotar would return. Had Lucien known the reality behind time travel, he would have realized that there was no concern for his return. Bivotar was dead.

As his life slowly faded, he seems to have hastily composed these fragmented words (although the capitalized words are criticized to have been spurious additions by the Nemesis himself):

The four    They are here    Dead  
Nemesis    HATES  
killed the girl  
             EVIL  
he will not  
             I AM  
                     DEAD

The personal journal of Bivotar was later found 20 bloits downwind of the Eastlands in the Forbidden Lands.

### **Lucien Continues His Studies of Alchemy (948~9 GUE)**

Confined as a spirit within the Temple of Agrippa, the Nemesis did not cease to expand his knowledge of alchemy in order to resurrect both himself and his beloved. He continued to inflict grievous tortures upon the four.

An entry in Lucien's Journal reads (948-11-06):

From their sarcophagi, they will tell me nothing: I have all but ripped their throats out, so that is to be expected. How many threats can you use upon the dead? It sickens me to live here, a Daemon trapped in a temple. But I must finish their work, and fuel my hate with the power of the Quintessence.

Part of an entry in Lucien's journal reads (949-02-22):

Now that I have stolen the four elements—Earth, Air, Fire, and Water—I have hidden them in this unholy temple, where they will never be found. I cannot risk their discovery, and have employed a great number of ~~deadly~~ lively machinations to assure their seclusion.

An undated entry in a different journal of Lucien's reads:

Some small progress. I can now link each of my rotting alchemists with their respective signs. Malveaux has mastered the element of fire—and has made a lucrative career of fire-worship along the way. Sartorius, my mad Doctor, is Air—precisely because it is largely this element that fills his pompous brain. Kaine must have chosen earth, because his head is filled with sod and his soul is consumed with earthly things. And Sophia, mistress of the Frigid River Conservatory is water—as befits the cold hag.

I have secreted their alchemical elements away in the temple, employing, as security, a complicated series of machinations—the solutions to which I alone know. They will never be able to reclaim their powers, or their secret science. They will never be able to surpass the nefarious obstacle of the star field. They will rot; unavenged IN HELL...

Still, I find myself spending endless hours in the lab, with the shades drawn. My work with air has been frustrating thus far. I accept the irrefutable precept; that air has no color. I will keep working, alone in the dark until I find the best method of purification. But make no doubt I will possess the four elements and then the four metals. I will find the Quintessence, and forge the Eclipse. There is no hatred stronger, no power greater, than that which will be mine.

An entry in Lucien's journal reads (949-05-15):

It is more difficult to forge the four alchemical metals than I first thought. I have learned, through a painful process of trial and error, that it is not safe to keep the elements in their purified form. The four are not so stupid as they look; gaining access to their secret laboratories has been a labored process. I will go drag a hot poker down Malveaux's rotting belly and see if he cries out something helpful.

An entry in Lucien's Journal reads (949-08-25):

I am tired of this game. I ransacked Sartorius' laboratory today, and while blood flowed down the halls, I made little progress in my quest for his tin. I am as impatient as that stupid spy who thought any fistful of dirt, any drop of water – a spark from his fine Accardian cigar, or a mouthful of his foul breath – would constitute an element. I must return to my work with elemental Air. As I rise up to my lab and pass the twinkling star field, the blue reminds me of blue skies, a more peaceable time. But I can remember little of my life before the evil descended. Before my bloody rebirth.

An entry with the same date (949-08-25) in a different journal of Lucien's retells of the same event:

I ransacked the Doctor's Asylum today and while I was letting the blood flow in his halls, I found a revealing notebook. Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Tin, Lead, Copper and Iron. Four are hidden in the Temple. For are not. If I can recover them all, I can summon the Quintessence.

But finally it will be wasted effort if I cannot discover the fifth element. I have searched many books—but philosophers disagree as to the nature of that element. The strongest power in my universe is hatred and wrath. There is nothing that cannot be tortured into existence, of that, I am certain.

### **The Female Pilgrim Begins Her Quest (949 GUE)<sup>41</sup>**

All was not well in the heart of the Second Dungeon Master, the Conqueror of Zork. He was still troubled by the murder of the thief Lucien, which had been committed in self-defense, and devoted the entirety of his strength and resources to undoing his deed. Using his most powerful magical spells, he summoned an outsider to his assistance. This lone female pilgrim, having had Bivotar's recovered journal delivered to her, had already set foot in the Forbidden Lands to ascertain the fate of Syovar's missing servant. Some have theorized that this unknown female was Juranda herself, in search of her long lost Bivotar. These claims are unfortunately nothing but conjecture and all attempts to discover the identity of this pilgrim apart from sex have returned void.

Having been chosen by the Dungeon Master, she found herself wandering deeper and deeper into a tangled web of confusion and altered reality, at the center of which lurked the truth behind the Forbidden Lands and the inexplicable disappearance of the alchemists. Hurling through a jagged gash in the earth and traversing the length of a subterranean tunnel, she eventually found herself within the interior of the mountain where the Temple of Agrippa lay, of whose ceiling had broken away to reveal the sky above.

The spirits of the four alchemists, Alexandria, and Lucien were still trapped within the temple environment, but their interactions were limited. They were able to react to the pilgrim's stimulation, but went off on their own dialogue course. The trapped spirits worked in this fashion because they were imprisoned in another dimension. Certain enchanted objects were able to invoke them, but they were not completely free.

The first resonance that she had with the spirits was during her trek to the temple courtyard. Alexandria's voice drifted into her senses, "No one remembers exactly when it began, but I'll never forget. It began on the day of the Great Eclipse, the day of my murder. I've lost my only love, and I've lost my life. Now we all lie under the curse. Sometimes a single act can be so evil that it can curse the world, unraveling the future. Only the four lost elements can bring the world back into balance, and I will live again. I have but one hope left, and it is you. No one else dares come here."

The imploring of this same apparition was resumed when the pilgrim entered the mausoleum. Floating before her, the phantom of Alexandria mouthed, "Finally someone has come. You've got to help us. They're in the temple," before dissolving in smoke.

Once inside the temple, she discovered that the strange building was haunted by an evil creature called the Nemesis, who warned her to keep away. With horror, she learned that the souls of the four alchemists were entrapped in grotesque stone crypts in the temple dome room. When she first encountered the alchemists, they had almost no powers. They were trapped and tortured souls whose very spirits were being drained and sapped by Lucien. They claimed to have been entombed by a vengeful half-human creature they called the Nemesis. The four said that without her help, they would perish. She was their only chance of salvation. The pilgrim also learned that if she did not assist these trapped souls, she would suffer the same miserable fate. Each made enigmatic request in turn to search the temple for their alchemical element that would restore their strength so they could be freed from their suffering. Fire belonged to Malveaux, air to Sartorius, earth to Thaddeus Kaine, and water to Sophia. Afterward, the souls could only speak in gasps unless their life elements were brought to them.

To retrieve these elements, the pilgrim solved a series of puzzles within the Temple of Agrippa, enabling her to retrieve each of the four elements. As each of the four elements was unearthed from their hiding places deep inside the dark recesses of the temple, each one was placed upon the temple altar where they became fused to it and could not be removed. In turn, the souls of the alchemists were temporarily revived. Each related a corrupted version of their story, donning the role of an innocent and staging the Nemesis to have been evil from the start. They also wore facades of regret and shed false tears of repentance for their acts of involving Lucien and Alexandria, which resulted in their murders at the hands of the Nemesis. Once all four were helped, the Nemesis awakened.

Dressed in a hooded robe that obscured, but did not hide his face, the Nemesis strangled Sartorius' soul with a bolt of lightning before preparing to murder the pilgrim with a ball of fire from his fingertips. The alchemists marshaled their meager elemental powers and drove him away at the last minute, but he promised that he would

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<sup>41</sup> The quest of this unknown female pilgrim is dated within the bounds of Augur 25 and the end of Ottobur 949.

return. The four captives told more of their distorted tale and implored her to travel to each of their homelands to forge the four powerful alchemical metals which would bring each of their souls to life and allow her to escape from the Nemesis' clutches.

Their powers were still weak, and the souls of the alchemists dematerialized, leaving behind a sphere of pure gold. She placed it into the position of the sun in the temple orrery. Whenever the pilgrim aligned its gaze with any of the four planets that corresponded to the alchemists, she would transport herself to their worlds through the magic portal resting at the center of the gilded planetarium. These were Steppinthrax Monastery, Gray Mountains Asylum, Castle Irondune, and the Frigid River Branch Conservatory. Until the pilgrim arrived, the Nemesis had been unable to leave the temple or even enter the portal worlds. When she entered those regions, the door was left open for the Nemesis to follow. In this way, the Nemesis was able to attempt to thwart her progress.

Each of the alchemists hid their practice of alchemical magic, Lucien and Alexandria's forbidden love affair, and their larger conspiracy in a quest for eternal life. The metals were hidden from the Nemesis, and thus it took much effort for the pilgrim to discover and forge each character's metal (a purified object that represented each of their contributions to the alchemical table).

In the process, she learned of the narrative that occurred in each of the abandoned environments through flashbacks and hallucinations. The spaces were surreal and strange, haunted by the still smoldering souls of the dead inhabitants and vibrant with memories of past events. When she touched certain powerful objects in each of the buildings, she released the energy and memories they contained. Sometimes these memories were forthright, but most were strange and disjointed, providing snippets of events she had to put together. She also heard audio hallucinations or fragments of conversations and events that took place long ago. Through these mechanisms, she was able to put together the past relationship of Alexandria and Lucien and the evil cabal.

At the Steppinthrax Monastery, the pilgrim saw hallucinations that revealed that Malveaux was involved in a strange plot with Sophia, Kaine and Sartorius. The plot involved his adopted daughter, Alexandria, who was brought into the Monastery as a baby, baptized by the cabal of the four, and then raised by Malveaux and his monks. She saw the affectionate relationship between Malveaux and Alexandria that ultimately complicated their association.

In the Gray Mountains Asylum, she learned about Sartorius' questionable medical career and of Sartorius' involvement in the conspiracy, how he chose Zoe Wolfe and used medical techniques to impregnate her with what would become Alexandria, and his special technique to ensure that she would be the perfect specimen for their alchemical ritual. The pilgrim further learned details about Sartorius' unconventional and suspect medical practices, how he was kicked out of medical school and forbidden to practice.

In Kaine's castle, she learned about Kaine's and Lucien's relationship. She also discovered some of Kaine's background and the reason for his success as a soldier.

In the watery Conservatory, the pilgrim learned about Alexandria's musical genius and how she and Lucien fell in love during Alexandria's musical debut. She also learned how Sophia was charged with raising Alexandria and Sophia's romantic involvement with General Kaine.

### **Breaking the Siege of Irondune (949 GUE)**

Although the visits to most of these virtually empty structures had little effect on the outside world, the pilgrim's visit to Irondune was marked by the chronic siege. Although Kaine's army had been routed and pushed into the southern edge of Famathria, the armies of Ellron had not yet broken through the thick plates of shell-pocked corroded iron. Some of the upper levels of the structure had crumpled from beneath the ferocious military assault. Gunfire and shouting soldiers could be heard from within the bowels of the castle. Ellron's cannons, lining the eastern ridge of the Copper Hills to the north of Irondune, continuously bombarded the castle while his infantry were pitched along the southeastern banks of the Frigid River Branch. The only forces loyal to Kaine that remained (apart from a single retired soldier within the castle itself who refused to desert the General) were reinforcement troops from neighboring lands, namely Port of Tumper. This force, a unison of cavalry and infantry, was dissected from the castle by both the Frigid River Branch and Ellron's infantry, who kept them at bay from time to time with heavy cannon fire from atop the hills.

The pilgrim successfully deciphered the radio system which Kaine used to deliver messages to his troops. After consulting Kaine's war journal and carefully planning a strategy to defeat Ellron, she relayed the proper instructions to the small Irondune unit and those gathered at Tumper:

1. Decoy with Power
2. Build Bridge
3. Split the Troops
4. Infiltrate & Destroy
5. Verify Message

The strategy was verified by the retired soldier and the army followed orders. The forces of Tumper, consisting of cavalry and infantry, were on the northwestern side of the river cut off from the castle. A bridge could not be built for their passage across unless Ellron's forces on the southeastern banks were lured away. To accomplish this, a unit of Kaine's men near the castle itself went out to set decoy barrels of gunpowder on the outskirts of Irondune. The soldiers abandoned the gunpowder and retreated back to the castle. This decoy was a startling enough disruption to draw the entirety of Ellron's infantry away from the river to investigate.

While Ellron's men were at a distance from the riverbanks, the armies of Tumper on the northwestern side quickly built bridges over the water. Once across, the troops were ordered to split. The cavalry went north along the banks of the river and through the Copper Hills, while the infantry remained at the shores of the river.

Realizing that it was no more than a distraction, Ellron's infantry returned to the river, shocked to find that the Tumper infantry had crossed in their absence. Simultaneously, command was given for the Tumper infantry to engage with Ellron's while the Tumper cavalry infiltrated through the Copper Hills, breeched Ellron's lines along the eastern ridge and destroyed his cannons. The forces of Tumper returned to their homeland, victorious. Thus the siege of Irondune was broken and Ellron's army scattered.

### **The Female Pilgrims Ends Her Quest (949 GUE)**

After returning each metal, the alchemists felt as though they had been freed from debilitating torture of their earlier state. It was only after the pilgrim had found and transmuted each of the four purified metals and correctly arranged them on the temple altar, that the alchemists became enlivened creatures with full alchemical powers. When she placed the fourth and final metal object upon the altar, she was flung backward as if she had been blown into the closest behind the altar. The doors slammed shut. When she opened the doors, she saw the four alchemists standing by the altar with their sarcophagi splintered and cracked apart.

Before her, hovering in space was a strangely luminescent liquid in a crystal vial. The four urged the pilgrim to quickly drink the so-called Elixir of Life, else they would all perish. Having experienced enough of the hallucinations within their homelands, and having unraveled the mysteries of the alchemical schemes, she already did not trust the four. When she refused to swallow the poison, they realized that she was not as stupid as they thought.

Hoping to repay Lucien with an even greater extreme of torture than he had permitted them to suffer, they summoned the Nemesis. He appeared, trapped in a glowing, alchemical force field. Lucien was enraged at what the pilgrim had done by resurrecting the four alchemists. Hoping that she may in fact be able to redeem herself, Lucien tossed a golden ring from his finger to her. As he did so, the pilgrim was thrown backward out of the temple dome room and into the cloister.

When she touched the ring, she received a hallucination of the death of Alexandria. All suspicions were thoroughly confirmed. The four souls that she thought were allies were really her enemies. Lucien, the Nemesis, was truly anguished. Dead was only a physical state, and like all metal in alchemy, may be transformed. The Circle had used this pilgrim in a last ditch effort to complete the ceremony Lucien interrupted so many years ago and made another try at eternal life. The eclipse that would be perfect for the sun and moon to join and their eternity to open drew near.



In the final confrontation between the evil alchemists, the pilgrim had to use everything she had learned about alchemy. Descending into an enormous subterranean world beneath the temple, she searched for Lucien's and Alexandria's metals of gold and silver. Using the proper techniques in unison with the mystical and archaic devices in the inner sanctum below, she forged the two metals into one—into the quintessence.

When she returned to the temple dome room, the alchemists were standing around the altar, chanting. The translucent, shimmering soul of Alexandria levitated above the altar's center. As the eclipse drew towards its completion, the ceiling rent asunder and its shadowy form appeared in the sky above the altar space. At the moment that the eclipse formed, she tossed the quintessence towards the altar. In midair, a blast of light from above struck the infinity symbol and reflected into the four sarcophagi. The alchemists, realizing too late what she had done, screamed as they and their sarcophagi exploded in a blast of wind, fire, water, and earth.

The process, with its permanent destruction of the four alchemists, in turn fully restored both Lucien and Alexandria to the flesh. Holding hands, they directed the pilgrim out of the temple. Once the three emerged, the entire Temple of Agrippa exploded behind them, leaving nothing but scattered ruins. Lucien and Alexandria invited the pilgrim to come with them and they departed through a gate towards the waning eclipse.

### **The Fate of Lucien Kaine (c. 949~966 GUE)**

What became of Lucien Kaine and Alexandria Wolfe is unknown, except that Lucien's life ended sometime before the end of the First Age of Magic (966 GUE), when he would meet his illegitimate son, Spike the Protector, face-to-face in Hades. His fate in the treacherous underworld makes one wonder if he ever truly repented for his crimes against the alchemists.

### **Alliance Between Syovar and the Second Dungeon Master (949 GUE)**

With the defeat of the alchemists and the restoration of Lucien Kaine, the curse of the Nemesis vanished. Although documentation of their juxtapositions have been lost to us, Syovar's war against the Enchanter's Guild reached its immediate conclusion following the dispersal of the curse. The controversy between Ellron and Kaine was resolved and the Forbidden Lands were reopened.

With the conclusion of an agreement between the Second Dungeon Master and the Flathead successor-king Syovar, the Great Underground Empire seemed poised to rise again. The magical boundaries sealing shut the massive caverns in the east were reopened, and the bulk of the reacquired territory was once again open for settlement. A craze of treasure-hunting quickly swept through the remnants of the Great Underground Empire.

Above ground, Syovar had come to control nearly all the Flathead holdings in the eastern provinces, and a significant portion of the older lands across the ocean to the west. The barbarians that had once again overrun Fenshire and the Grey Mountains, and had threatened the end of civilization in Aragain proper, were in turn defeated and assimilated. Official correspondence and personal diaries kept by inhabitants of the Castle of Zork betray an amazing confidence and growing vigor.

Ellron, skilled general and close advisor to King Syovar, displayed just this attitude in a letter to Barbel of Gurth, dated Ottobur 949, a year after the ascension of the new Dungeon Master:

Now at last we can free ourselves from the shadow of the Flathead failure and get on with the job at hand. The creation of one noble and magical Quendoran empire, the task begun by Entharion so many centuries, can now at last resume again!

Despite this optimism, a second disastrous collapse was less than two decades in the future.

## CHAPTER 4: Conflicts in the Westlands (949~957 GUE)

### **Abduction of Morning-Star** (c. 949 GUE)<sup>42</sup>

It happened in the reign of mighty Anatinus, King of Misty Island, that a daughter was born into a peasant home, who was blessed with rare and perfect beauty. They named her Morning-Star. The legend of her beauty spread throughout all the kingdom, even to the court of King Anatinus. There beside the throne sat the heavy-hearted Queen Alexis. For her newborn daughter, cursed by fate and prophecy, was sightless. She was unwilling to look upon her blind child's face. And the baby Morning-Star, more beautiful and perfect, made her jealous.

Envy breeds evil. And thus Queen Alexis caused the simple peasant home of Morning-Star to burn. The sleeping family perished, all but Morning-Star, who, being rescued by the Queen's design, became her daughter, whom she claimed had her sight restored by prayer. The one true princess, who had been left behind to fill the vacant cradle, perished too, and never saw her mother.

Although relating the remainder of this tale here partially disrupts a portion of the chronology, thrusting the story ahead to its proper placement of circa 966 entrenches this rather short account into an already entangled mess of an overabundance of important events heralding the arrival of the Age of Science.

The years were kind to Morning-Star. Her beauty blossomed like the fragrant water-lily into full, abundant maidenhood. Many knights already sought her fair hand in marriage. On her seventeenth birthday (c. no later than 966 GUE), Anatinus made it known that whosoever might desire to win the hand of Morning-Star, should now come forth to claim it. According to the custom of the kingdom, the groom had to prove his worth by fulfilling a love-quest of the Queen's own choosing.

Many were the eager knights who journeyed to the royal palace, hoping there to win the love of Princess Morning-Star. Alexis, dark with envy, watched the lusty swains descend like vultures around her daughter, and vowed in secret not to let them have her.

From the knights assembled, six were chosen, and stood before the heartless queen for testing. But the crafty Alexis devised impossible love-quests for the suitors.

The first brave knight, a lad of twenty-one years, was sent across the sea to beg Lord Nimbus, God of Rain, to quench the thirsting Fields of Frotzen. But that pseudo-god, not sympathetic, smote his vessel with a bolt of lightning.

The second knight, a weapons-bearer, strong of limb and spirit, scaled the mountain peak of Matter-Horn, to seek Advice from spirits. The hopes of Princess Morning-Star fell with him.

A third knight ventured forth to try the fabled Wings of Icarus and learn the secret method of their Flight, to please Alexis. But whilst soaring home to claim the princess, the joyful knight flew into the open maw of Thermofax, a dragon.

Alexis sent the fourth knight deep into the Mines of Mendon to slay a grue, and drag the carcass up where all might see it. But Darkness overcame the hapless knight, who, lost without a lamp, was soon devoured.

Another knight, the fifth, directed by the Queen to steal the Coconut of Quendor, chanced upon a lair of hungry Implementors, and did not Foresee his peril.

Lastly stood before the Queen a gentle boy, no older than the Princess. Morning-Star liked well his beardless smile, and begged her mother not to test his Luck too harshly. But Alexis caused the youth to spend an evening amidst an unclean cemetery, from where he never returned; for eldritch vapors carried him away, and gave no reason.

Afterward, Queen Alexis cried, "Is no man in the kingdom fit to wed my only daughter? Methinks she must remain unmarried, then, and a virgin all her days." So it was written.

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<sup>42</sup> 949 is the *last* possible date available for the birth of Morning-Star, as she is alive and beautiful still in 966 and the Coconut of Quendor in present at that time. It would be a stretch to limit the bounds of the earliest date of her birth in the year 919, as that would place her almost at the age of 50 when Morning-Star gazed upon her in the mirror in 966.

Morning-Star hoped death might grant her Freedom from the edict of Alexis, by her mother's timely passing. But the Reaper (busy elsewhere with a plague) did not hear her praying; so Alexis lived, and laughed, and watched her daughter's beauty fade away, and all her wishes dwindle in her bosom until her demise.

Over the years, her body would decay into dust, except her heart, which, hard and shrunken to a pebble in the grave, shining brightly with the stifled wishes of her lifetime (rain, advice, flight, darkness, foresight, luck, freedom). This was the origin of Wishbringer, the Magic Stone of Dreams. This stone would be discovered many kingdoms later, around the mid-eleventh century, when the reign of Anatinus was forgotten, and the names of Morning-Star and Queen Alexis lost in time.

### **Introduction to the Impending Magical Collapse (952~966 GUE)**

By the end of 952, the first of the Supernatural Usurpations were overwhelming Quendor, and for the next fourteen years, one painful crisis followed after another in rapid succession, the inexorable and unforeseen end growing ever closer. Ever since the end of the first Age of Magic in 966, countless generations of historians have puzzled over this second collapse: what had Syovar failed to do? What stone had the talented statesman left unturned? None of these questions successfully get to the heart of the matter; the series of events leading up to 966 were not political events. The final collapse of Syovar's reincarnated Great Underground Empire would be a collapse of the very fabric of magic itself.

What caused this magical collapse? Was it, as some historians claim, merely a random disaster that we should credit to the maliciousness of the Implementors? In point of fact, the years from 952 to 966 were characterized by a series of beings either supernatural in origin or employing supernatural powers with the goal of gaining control over all or part of the former Quendoran domains. This era of supernatural usurpations taxed the Quendoran magical community to the point of exhaustion, and by the time of the final confrontation in 966 it had been weakened to the point of death. The Guild of Enchanters' own champion found that victory against the last supernatural usurper could come only at the highest price, the total destruction of everything that would make such a victory worth enjoying.

### **Amathrodonis (952 GUE)**

Amathrodonis was a terrible giant who terrorized Accardi-by-the-Sea for many centuries. He was finally vanquished by Belboz the Necromancer in 952 GUE, when the enchanter used showy pyrotechnical magic to destroy the evil giant. As a reward the grateful townspeople gave him a beautiful woven wall hanging, which was a piece of local handiwork. If this was not Belboz's greatest success, it certainly was his most publicized. Later that year, he became the kingdomwide Secretary of the Guild of Enchanters, a post which he held for three terms.<sup>43</sup>

### **Bankruptcy of the Frobozz Magic Grommet Company (956 GUE)**

Due to the bankruptcy of the Frobozz Magic Grommet Company in 956 GUE, a severe shortage of infotaters developed by the following year. For the duration of that crisis Borphée Infotaters, Inc. substituted (at the last minute and at great expense) a special birch-bark-bound edition in book form, known as the "Field Guide to the Creatures of Quendor." Though because of popular demand, the infotaters were later released in a "Do-It-Yourself Kit" (minus the grommets of course).

### **The Return of Krill (c. before 956 GUE)**

Krill's malice was thought to have been forever ended with his defeated at the hands of Syovar the Strong, and his reign of terror but a dim and frightful memory. But Krill had gone to dwell in the deserted castle Largoneth in Frobozz. Here he had been in hibernation, in preparation to launch his evil plan to overthrow the Circle of Enchanters and to enslave that corner of the kingdom, and finally become ruler of all Quendor.

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<sup>43</sup> According to a Popular Enchanting article, this post was only held for two terms. (This author believes the Encyclopedia Frobozzica date of three terms to be most accurate.)

He and his misshapen, hairy followers renovated the ruins of the castle that had been leftover (or reconstructed afterwards) when the structure itself was moved by Pseudo-Duncanthrax to Egred in 660 GUE. They erected a primitive temple, and fashioned within an enormous idol of a loathsome demon, dark and vile, with dripping fangs and razor-sharp talons. Krill and his hundreds of minions regularly engaged in human sacrifice to this demon, and it is most likely that this demon had always been the source of his immense powers. Others believe that his magic flowed from the Great Terror living beneath the castle, while others venture that both the demon of the idol and Terror were one and the same.

The evil warlock quickly subjugated the lands surrounding Largoneth to his power. The once peaceful regions were held in thrall by the pestilence that had been loosed upon the land. But the Circle was not ignorant. News of the unholy sacrificial rites, the odd disappearances, the mysterious dissolution of regions sacred to the Circle, the lessening of the Powers – they knew that these could only be his handiwork. Many dared to oppose him, all had failed. He was so powerful that he was able to detect and destroy even the strongest opponents who entered his domain. It appeared that Krill was able to read minds and if there was the slightest threat an invisible barrier would surround the castle. Thus the land was threatened with generations of brutal subjugation by the evil warlock. If he was not stopped, the entire world would be oppressed by one final potent spell he was preparing, and eternal night would fall over all the land, permitting Krill and his creatures to freely roam the entirety of Zork.

### **Gathering of Enchanters at Accardi (956 GUE)**

But all was not lost. The Circle of Enchanters, the last hope of defense, felt that none of their number could escape detection long enough to locate and destroy Krill. They gathered at the Accardi chapter of the Guild of Enchanters where they thought long and hard about the problem, until their Chief Enchanter, the esteemed Belboz, had an idea so simple that Brains (reputedly the brainiest of the Enchanters), cut off his beard, left the guild and took up yak farming for not having thought of the idea. (Rumor had it that he remained there for the remainder of his life.)

Belboz revealed to them an ancient document that portended evil days much like their own. The prophecy spoke of a brave and cunning novice enchanter, someone guileless and insignificant enough to slip past the watchful warlock unnoticed and conquer him by means of rudimentary magic and spells discovered during the quest. His idea was to send a novice Enchanter, because, to put it in Belboz's words, "Anybody with the brains of a drelb (later to be known as a dodo), should be able to approach the castle without posing a threat to Krill."

Although the Circle was reluctant, the only hope for the future was this enchanter, lest their great works would be overthrown.

"Krill's evil must be unmade," Belboz had said, "but to send a powerful Enchanter is ill-omened. It would be ruinous to reveal oversoon our full powers."

A ripple of concern spread over the face of each Enchanter.

Belboz paused, and collected his resolve. "Have hope! This has been written by a hand far wiser than mine!"

He recited a short spell and the nameless, novice male enchanter from the Accardi chapter appeared. Belboz approached, transfixing the young enchanter with his gaze and handed over the document. The other Enchanters awaited his decree.

"These words, written ages ago, can have only one meaning. You, a novice Enchanter with but a few simple spells in your book, must seek out Krill, explore the castle he has overthrown, and learn his secrets. Only then may his vast evil be lessened or, with good fortune, destroyed."

If successful, a seat in the illustrious Circle of Enchanters would be promised to the enchanter. But if failure was the result, the Circle knew that the land would be subjugated to unimaginable doom forever.

With some trepidation, the Circle rose and intoned a richly woven spell, whose many textures imbued the small, darkened chamber with warmth and hope. There was a surge of power. The Enchanter was wished off to the Lonely Mountain with a farewell, with hopes that the necromancy would save the land and the prophecy proven true.

The Enchanter was Sent.

A copy of the prophecy, which had been written many years ago, in another age by the great Elders of the Circle of Enchanters who foresaw the possibility of these dreaded occurrences and knew that the task of freeing the lands would fall to a journeyman conjurer:

If you truly are the one  
brave enough to face  
unspeakable peril  
let your wizardly  
powers reveal  
our words  
Hear us...

We, the Circle of Enchanters, have foreseen that a ruthless and powerful Evil may one day seize this land.

Should that time arrive, we also foresee the coming of age of a young Enchanter, one whose heart and wits may triumph over the Warlock's dark necromancy. It is our hope that this Enchanter hears our words.

We cannot see your face through the mists of time, but this we know in truth... You are promising in magic but have not gained your full skills. That is as it must be, for the Warlock would recognize one of the Council of Elders and would sense the presence of a more powerful Enchanter. Thus, in your obscurity you may find your way to his lair before he know the mortal danger you pose.

Four spells will arm you as you begin your quest. FROTZ shall turn darkness to light. NITFOL shall build a bridge of language to all the animals of the land. GNUSTO writes magic; by it you shall commit spells to your treasured spell book. BLORB is a spell of protection; with it you may guard your most precious possession.

Never forget, young Enchanter, that magic is your only weapon. By your vows to the Council of Elders you have cast aside the common protections of sword and armor. Therefore you will need many more spells to accomplish your quest. These will be revealed to you. Always be alert.

Though your way will be harsh and your steps fraught with danger, remember throughout your quest that you are the only hope of this land. We pray that our successors will choose wisely and that you will prove yourself worthy of the title Enchanter.

Signed with our mark and cast into the ages....

The Circle of Enchanters

A personal letter that was given to the novice Enchanter, written by the current Guild:

Heed the Words of the Circle of Enchanters

Many, many years before our age, the Elders of the Circle of Enchanters foresaw the possibility of these dread occurrences. In their great wisdom, they realized that no accomplished Enchanter could penetrate the Warlock's defenses unrecognized, and that the task of freeing the land would fall to a young journeyman conjurer. Reluctantly, the current Circle has identified you as the one to whom they must entrust our fate.

As a newly fledged Enchanter, you have learned your lessons but have not faced all your tests. You are a person of great power, but in the ranks of necromancers you are a lowly and ignorant person indeed. Naturally, your former masters in the Circle of Enchanters have trained you well in the basics of magic. You will be greatly aided by the spells you know and the spells you will learn, but you must also rely on your powers of observation and quick wits.

An Enchanter of even your level would have no difficulty with the basics of magic, but of course there were times when you were dozing during a lecture of Spell Casting. Not to mention

the seminars on Thaumaturgical Theory that you spent turning flies into tiny dragons. As a certified wizard (if a somewhat lowly one) you have a personal spell book, in which you record the spells you are capable of using.

### **Debate on the Year of Krill's Defeat**

Historians disagree as to the exact year when the council was called and when Krill was defeated by this novice enchanter. There are three common schools of thought:

948 GUE – some historians see the adventurer that was summoned to Largoneth from the Dungeon of Zork to be the same as the one who would become the Second Dungeon Master. This is easily refuted by the fact that countless adventurers have tread the grounds beneath the White House, as well as there being no record within any versions of the detailed annals of the Legend of Zork that mention such an instance of the Second Dungeon Master ever having visited Largoneth.

952 GUE – for unknown reasons, some historians date this event to this year.

956 GUE – the infotaters of the Enchanters' Guild give this concrete date, which is believed to be the most reliable historical record. The idea of the enchanters fabricating a fictitious date for the event would be doubtful and highly obscure. Critics argue that little time is then permitted between the defeat of Krill and Jeearr's possession of Belboz for this unknown Enchanter to be well-acquainted with Belboz. Another refute involves the testimony of Stribel Wartsworth, who claimed he was in Mareilon when the Great Terror got loose (956 according to this theory) and then was a servant of Dispoz for at least ten years before being rescued by Anesi. This would place the final defeat of the Terror beyond 966 and into the Age of Science where magic did not function. (It is agreed in all viewpoints, as Thriff is still in the Northlands and not in its final resting place in Miznia, that the account of the Great Terror must have occurred prior to 966.) Those still wishing to date Krill's defeat to 956, avoid taking Stribel's testimony literally, only that he rounded the number, or was not entirely sure himself. Regardless of the criticism, there is no decisive reason to doubt the accuracy of the Guild infotaters that place the defeat of Krill in 956, and the author of this history sets the surrounding events to correlate with that date.

### **The Banishment of Krill (956 GUE)**

Thus an unnamed novice enchanter was dispatched by the Guild of Enchanters to single-handedly vanquish their foe, the evil warlock Krill and to prevent the ruination of the land. The enchanter was placed upon the eastern most point of the Long Road, where it ended at the base of the Lonely Mountain.

Unfamiliar with the strange terrain near Largoneth, a plea was sent from afar to the Guild requesting a map. The request was thrown open to discussion at a Guild meeting. While a few spoke up on behalf of the young Enchanter, stating that "one bold enough to accept such a dangerous mission, deserved what assistance we could offer," the request was denied by the older cartographers who were jealous of their ancient handiworks.

A cartographer's apprentice, Lafe, who was present during the meeting, alone dared to disobey their ruling. Being small and agile, this apprentice managed one night to steal into the Guild Archives and past the keeper of the scrolls, and made away with a map of Largoneth Castle.

A stern note on the front of the map by the Guild Master Longnir warned that anyone who broke the seal on the map, disturbed it in any way, or removed it from the archives without direct orders by the guild and under the supervision of a registered enchanter would be transformed into a consummate babbling idiot.

Lafe, presumed Longnir's admonition to be nothing more than childish ruse. "Curses and Omens may have been all well and good in the time of our elders, but I'm sure you'll agree with me that such mumbo-jumbo should hold no dread for the enlightened man of today." Therefore, without fear of repercussions, Lafe opened the map, "proving" that the warning was but a stupid superstition of the forefathers. Unfortunately, he was wrong, and found himself quickly transforming into a consummate babbling idiot. Fortunately, Lafe was able to have the map delivered to the young Enchanter.

With a map of the region surrounding Largoneth and of the layout of the entire interior of the castle, the enchanter set out east to scout the lands about the Lonely Mountain. The houses surrounding the region were all abandoned. The castle's village on southern side of the mountain had once been a place of peasantry, farmers,

merchants, and artisans, all making it a center of cultural activity. But now it was nearly deserted. All had fled before the great storm brewing from the castle itself, save a particularly decrepit hovel in which lived one last remaining inhabitant.

The witch was presumably the village wise woman. She laughed in an unsettling way when she spoke, and thought that the Circle would have sent someone more experienced. The old crone simply presented the Enchanter with a REZROV scroll that was quickly added to the spellbook.

A shambled shack on the northern side of the river yielded for the Enchanter an empty jug and an entire loaf of fresh bread. A stream abundant with impenetrable undergrowth near the ruins of the Old Lingolf House was relatively pleasant compared to the darkness in the east. The jug was filled with the fresh water of the stream before the Enchanter headed for the gates of Largoneth.

The east-west road wended its way through the dark, rolling hills of the land, ending at a high castle with dark towers. This was the western entrance of Largoneth. The iron gate was closed and chained. Putting the REZROV to memory, the Enchanter released the spell upon the chains; they flew into the air and vanished. The gate flew open and a blast of cold air filled the Enchanter's lungs.

As the Enchanter passed through the gate, his mind felt as though it was being probed. After a moment, it was released, or perhaps discarded as uninteresting. Now the Enchanter stood inside the main entrance of the castle, the huge open courtyard extended to the east where a large ivy-covered temple stood within. The interior of the castle wrapped around the entire courtyard on the north, south and east sides. From the temple came a howling, haunting chant. Wishing to avoid attracting the attention of whatever evil lay within, the Enchanter attentively crept elsewhere through the castle.

Now is not the place to delve into detail about every decision this Enchanter made nor every room which he traversed, nor every spell which he obtained; only the highlights of this quest shall be discussed here.

Within the Hall of Mirrors, this Enchanter spotted a bedraggled adventurer on the other side of the "mirror", carrying a brass lantern and an elvish sword. This adventurer was exploring the Dungeon of Zork beneath the White House, looking desperately for Flood Control Dam #3. Upon chanting a ZIFMIA spell ("magically summon a being"), all at once, the adventurer appeared before the Enchanter. As the adventurer was fearful and distrustful, it took the efforts of VAXUM ("make a hostile creature your friend") to subdue him into communication.

Krill had protected the door to the map room of the northeast tower with an incredibly frightful illusion: its massive lock was wrapped in a dozen six-inch thick iron chains. In addition, a certain five-headed monster sporting razor-sharp spears for tongues seemed to be imbedded within its heavy oak frame. One is almost embarrassed to mention the gargoyles spewing flame and sulphurous ash which ornamented either side of the door, or the ninety-seven slimy groping tentacles which taunted the Enchanter ever closer to certain death. A sign, which floated serenely above the door and glowed hideously in purple letters, offered the following rude understatement: "Don't Bother".

Seeking to gain entrance to this room, the Enchanter was able to coax the adventurer into attempting to enter. What the Enchanter did not realize was that this illusion only affected him. The seemingly fearless adventurer, who could see nothing of the image, shrugged and walked purposefully toward the door, ignoring all harm to his person in the form of knives, tentacles, and molten lead. As three buckets of the latter poured over his head, he casted the Enchanter a perplexed look,

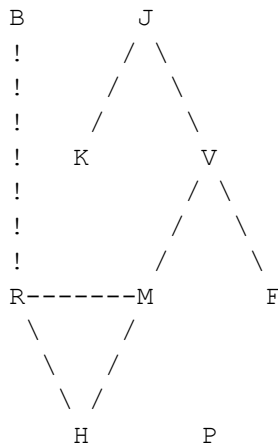
"Did you try the doorknob?" he asked, as twenty-seven knives delicately skewered him.

Before the Enchanter could answer, he reached for one of the gargoyle heads which, by sheerest coincidence, had just flooded him in red-orange flame, and turned it gently.

"I think it's unlocked," he said, stoically ignoring the host of human-sized rats which fed on his incinerated torso. His left hand, broken and bloodied, pulled at the gargoyle head.

"I'm going on ahead!" he cried, opening a simple wooden door. The Enchanter rubbed his eyes for a moment and looked again as he went through it. The illusion had dispelled and before him was just a plain wooden door. The Enchanter went inside and discovered a magic map and pencil. These two devices were necessary to retrieve the GUNCHO ("banish the victim to another plane of existence") scroll which had been imprisoned with the Great Terror in the passages below by Entharion the Wise nearly 950 years ago.

The peculiar rooms beneath Largoneth had cream-colored walls which were thin and translucent. The passages joining each node were very strange, perfectly round and black as pitch. The Enchanter realized the connection between the map and the layout of the rooms and that the Great Terror and the scroll were in node P.



The Enchanter used the Frobozz Magic Pencil to connect a thin line from node B to K, and P and F. Concurrently, new passages were physically opened between those nodes beneath Largoneth. As the Great Terror was released, the Enchanter could feel that two powerful, evil forces were searching each other out. As they met, the air lightened. Belboz appeared before him. “Something has disturbed the ancient Terror. Krill himself knows this and will try to use it to his purposes. Already, they may have joined together. You must not allow the Terror to escape, or we are all doomed!” He faded into the gloom.

The Great Terror, sought the quickest route for escape. When the demon passed into node J, the Enchanter erased the line on the map between J and V, removing the passage beneath the castle. As it flowed into node K, the line between B and K was quickly erased. The Great Terror was once again trapped and the Enchanter was free to rob it of the GUNCHO. There was a horrible anguished scream through the walls of the cavern as the Terror realized that it was trapped and its scroll of power stolen.

The Enchanter also recruited a rainbow turtle, who had once been the favored pet of King Mumbo II over 300 years prior. With the efforts of the his tremendously tough shell, combined with the enchanter’s EXEX (“make things move with greater speed”), this turtle was able to bypass the infernal machine in the southwest tower and retrieve a KULCAD (“dispel a magic spell”) scroll which would be essential for reaching Krill.

But before the Enchanter could ascend to the warlock’s tower, a host of hunched and hairy shapes detained him in their arms and escorted him to a cell in the sacrificial temple. Outside the host of hideous shapes chanted in unison. Fearing that he might be destroyed, the Enchanter incanted the OZMOO spell (“survive unnatural death”) over himself.

When the host of hunched and hairy shaped came for him, they marched the Enchanter solemnly to the temple, and from there, up the steps to the altar. The large, black figure of Krill, who was completely wrapped in a cloak, approached menacingly. He reached into his cloak and pulled out a great, glowing dagger. He pulled the Enchanter onto the altar, and with a murmur of approval from the throne, he plunged the blade into his heart.

After Krill had departed, OZMOO took effect. The Enchanter was revived upon the altar with a glowing dagger in his chest. He was in no pain, however. The throng of shapes, which continued to chant in the temple below, took no notice of his movement. He slowly removed the dagger from his chest, but was unharmed.

The winding staircase at the base of the warlock’s tower was enchanted so that steps flowed infinitely in either direction. To counter this magic, the Enchanter memorized the KULCAD spell. Knowing that a great confrontation was about to arise, he additionally stored the GONDAR (“quench an open flame”) and CLEESH (“change a creature into a small amphibian”) spells in his mind. Then KULCAD was unleashed.



The stairway began to dissolve before his eyes, leaving a circular area with exists east and west, but remarkable mainly for its absence of a floor, which had been made into a bottomless pit. Frantically, the Enchanter grabbed for the solid banister, dropping his heavier possessions in his desire to save himself. But the banister shifted and dissolved as well, leaving him grasping only the IZYUK and GUNCHO scrolls. When he immediately enchanted himself with IZYUK (“fly like a bird”), his descent slowed and he floated serenely in midair. He flew towards the eastern wide-cut opening.

As the Enchanter entered, the room, it was revealed that it was the secret chamber of Krill, having been protected by powerful illusions now broken. Krill was engaged in the casting of some complex and horrific magic. He turned to face the enchanter, surprised and annoyed by the intrusion. He spoke, “Fool! Parlor magician! You dare you defile my chamber with your worm-like presence. I shall not waste words with you. Goodbye, spell-monger!” He snapped his fingers loudly and a giant dragon appeared, breathing gouts of flame. He moved ever closer, red eyes bulging with malice.

Having prepared some spells beforehand, the enchanter unleashed GONDAR. The dragon’s flame was doused in a torrent of water and disappeared with a torturous scream.

Krill was somewhat amused. “A fine spell, wizard-worm, but your luck has ended!” With another snap of his fingers, he summoned a being whose essence was evil. It had a shape which was masked by its blackness and exuded a foul, fetid odor. In its hand was a large battle axe. At a single from Krill, it advanced.

With a well-timed CLEESH, the monster hesitated, trembled, then turned into a newt. The poor creature’s battle axe, now unsupported, fell on it, slicing it neatly in half.

Krill seemed to be losing patience. “I am through playing games, carnival-clown! You shall return to your Circle, but I am afraid that all the little pieces will prove hard to reassemble!” He laughed hideously and started a guttural chant which shook the very tower.

The young enchanter decided that now was the time to recite the GUNCHO scroll. Krill recoiled as he heard the first words of the spell. For a few seconds he continued with the spell he had been casting, trying to finish it before the human. He fumbled some syllables! Then he stepped back and, with his hands outstretched toward the Enchanter, let out a bloodcurdling scream. His face was twisted, and with his body vibrating with the effort of resisting the enchantment, he uttered a spell of power, and was gone. The evil warlock had been banished to an alternate dimension.

After a quiet moment, a rumble began deep in the earth. It strengthened as the tower started to sway. The floor gave way beneath the Enchanter, and he tumbled down towards the sea before being surrounded by a burst of light.

The enchanter suddenly was with the Circle. The Eldest of the Circle, Belboz, rose and spoke, “The evil of Krill is ended this day. From beyond hope, you have proved yourself great and worthy. Our hearts are gladdened at your return.” A chair appeared at his right hand and he motioned for the young enchanter to sit beside him. He smiled warmly. “Join with us, and tell us of your quest.”

Thus, by defeating Krill, the apprentice was rewarded with a seat on the Circle of Enchanters, sitting at the right hand of his mentor, the leader of the Guild, Belboz the Necromancer. The outcome of the harrowing confrontation was well-renowned across all the land.

### **The Great Terror Escapes Largoneth (c. 956 GUE)**

While the Enchanter succeeded in defeating the renegade sorcerer Krill, in the process, the Great Terror was unwittingly disturbed. Though the enchanter had resealed the underground passages, a crack, just small enough for the evil demon to escape had been made. The Terror gradually worked its way through the maze and escaped. It bided its time, mindful of its first defeat. It moved slowly and secretly into the southlands and settled in the swamps of Miznia, in the ruins of Dolo Finis, near the border of Oresia. There it waited and gained strength while its influence crept slowly and inexorably across the world, corrupting all it touched.

The power of the Great Terror was magical in nature, and magicians and all things magical were more sensitive to it—the wizards were especially the most vulnerable. The older they were, the more likely it was that they had fallen under its power. Every crack and cranny of unrighteousness the Terror found in its victims he was able to sink his claws into, especially envy: wishing for more money, a better position with more authority, a more beautiful

companion. And the more an enchanter used his magic, the most susceptible he became to the influence of the Great Terror.

### **Stribel Wartsworth Seeks GUNCHO (c. 956 GUE)**

Stribel Wartsworth was always a wild one and a wanderer. He had once joined the Mithicus guild chapter. It had taken him only a short time to rise to a good office. When he realized his grandson, Anesi's potential, Stribel was able to pull a few strings to get him accepted into Galepath University at a very young age. No one so young had ever been accepted before. The young boy attended for less than half a term before his father jerked him out (Anesi's story shall be told more in detail below).

After but half a term, Stribel resigned from his position at Galepath and went his own way, swearing off guilds forever. Too much politics, he claimed, and too little fun. "You have to keep a sense of humor about this business or it eats you up," he once said. He ended up becoming a wilder and a wanderer, never able to stay in one place or with one woman too long. He never made excuses for it, it was just the way he was. Mildt and Choboz (his daughter and son-in-law) never saw much of him; he was always off wandering somewhere. Then suddenly at one point he left and no one ever saw him again. During those years, he acquired the name Steppen Wildroz (as well as many others). Wizards and the like changed their names all the time. One of the last women he ended up marrying was Letitia Rhonda in New Mareilon, who would end up being the best of his ex-wives.

When Stribel found an entrance to the ancient Great Underground Highway beneath the city, he disguised it by building a little house for Letitia over it with his own hands. It was when he was living with her, that Stribel first sensed that the Great Terror had gotten loose from Largoneth.

By that time the Great Terror's influence was already spreading through the southern provinces of Miznia and Orexia, and one by one, even the greatest enchanters and wizards succumbed to a creeping fear. They crawled into their guildhalls and shuttered their windows and did nothing.

Because Stribel knew what was really happening, he did not succumb to the power of the Terror—it provided some sort of insulation. But he knew that he had to get out of the south and hide to bide time for himself. Thinking that GUNCHO, the same spell that had been used to defeat the evil wizard Krill, could be used upon the Terror, he was determined to find a copy of it.

Since the Terror was sensitive to magicians, and magicians were sensitive to the Terror's influence, he swore off all magic and disguised himself from all who knew him as a wizard. With the very best chameleon spells in the kingdom, he changed his looks into a small dwarf-like fellow, gave himself the alias of Humble Bellows, forced a new speech habit upon himself, and magically hid his cloak and spell book in the form of a Dimwit Flathead marionette with rubies for eyes and an ancient gold crown upon its head so that he could always have them near him without folks knowing. He fabricated a history about himself, in which he was once a prisoner in the marble mines of Antharia, having been sentenced there after being condemned as a criminal, having stolen a little bit here and there.

Stribel discovered from sources how the powerful wizard Dispoz had the GUNCHO spell in his library at Arbroneth. Stribel attempted several correspondences to Dispoz, offering to buy or trade for the scroll. But when each of these was refused, Stribel tried to break into Arbroneth to steal it. But without magic, he was not much of a burglar and Dispoz captured him in the act. Fortunately, Dispoz never suspected that Stribel was a wizard, or that it was his spells he was after. Every time that Dispoz inquired about magic, Stribel claimed that he knew next to nothing about the subject.

Stribel remained at Arbroneth until about 966, letting Dispoz think he was keeping him against his own will, attempting to run away twice in the course of approximately ten years, and allowing him catch him. The wizard always brought Stribel back by magic. For Dispoz kept the GUNCHO spell under the magical equivalent of lock and key, and Stribel knew that if he just bided time, he would get a crack at finding it.

Besides, at Arbroneth he was also relatively close to Anesi and Mildt who lived in the regions far north of Frobozz. He could almost feel Anesi sometimes. And he was close to Thriff, where he had friends like the Great Shuboz Shuboz, Guildmaster of the Thriff Chapter, who had also been keeping an eye on Anesi at his specific request.

### **Dispoz Captures a Dragon (c. 956 GUE)**

On a certain date, Dispoz spotted two dragons which had been flying over the countryside nearby Arbroneth for days: Chuck a red dragon and Chet a green. Although these were homosexual dragons, the wizard believed that the very effeminate red one was in fact female, and took a real fancy to it. He was determined to have Chuck for his own. “She” was all he desired. “She” would be his prize, his precious. But in order to have “her” for himself, it was required to slay “her” mate.

Dispoz spent two days conjuring up the cell and the chains in the dungeon beneath Arbroneth where he would hold Chuck. Then he went out to teleport the red dragon into prison using a very potent, improved version of AIMFIZ. But Dispoz was never one to look too far ahead. In the process of catching Chuck, Dispoz read the spell directly from the scroll that he had researched and it crumbled up as fine as ash. And he could not remember it after using it. All the research had been lost, since it was too powerful to have been GNUSTOed into a spell book.

Then the wizard transformed himself into a blue dragon to fight Chet. The two brawled for days. They nearly burned Arbroneth to the ground before Dispoz lured him away. The land was scorched for miles around before it was finally over, leaving charred forests and landscape. Dispoz learned more about fire spells in those few days than he had in all his studies. He captured the green dragon, chained it down over a chasm, and killed it to make a new bridge.

After Dispoz caught Chuck, he forgot about everything else. He loved the red dragon; was consumed with “her”. They had all sorts of go-rounds down in the cell. Dispoz called it his ‘precious’ like it was the most valuable thing he owned, like it was a ring or something. He enslaved Stribel with the task of caretaking the dragon, which included shoveling out its excrements every weekend.

### **New GNUSTO Research (957 GUE)**

GUE Tech’s resident researchers have always been on the cutting edge of magic technology. In 957 the university’s Spell Science Lab was heavily involved in research with highly GNUSTO-receptive paper which it hoped would be sensitive enough to allow even the most ancient and mighty spell to be copied. The result of this research remains unknown.

### **115<sup>th</sup> Convention of Enchanters and Sorcerers (CES) in Antharia (957 GUE)**

Popular Enchanting had coverage of the annual 115<sup>th</sup> Convention of Enchanters and Sorcerers which in 957 was held in the Guild Hall of Antharia:

They came to Antharia from all corners of the kingdom: Gurth and Mithicus, the Frigid River Valley, Borphée, even the Gray Mountains. They packed the restaurants, and for the first time in 150 years the Rusty Knife in West Anthar ran out of sea-serpent fillet. They completely filled the Zilton Hotel, and in three days spent an estimated Zm20,000 on marble trinkets, Bella Quease souvenirs, Flathead Stadium tickets, and Spenseweed shakes. Yet despite the success of the tourist trade, the pageantry, and the beautiful weather, the 115th Convention of Enchanters and Sorcerers (CES) was an unqualified disaster.

Why? “There’s too much showing-off, too much one-upmanship between the chapters, and no cooperation,” said Barbel of Gurth, a Guildmaster and elder member of the Circle of Enchanters. “We’re here to share and exchange our advancements in thaumaturgy, and to try to solve our common problems, not to compete against each other in some sort of free-for-all. Frankly, I’m disgusted.” And so are we.

Conventioneers at CES seemed totally unwilling to discuss, much less resolve the problems facing the Guild of Enchanters in and around Thriff, the crippling shortage of Enchanters in the Gray Mountains, the grumblings of some junior Sorcerers about “leadership stagnation,” the spiraling costs of an Enchanter’s education, the pros and cons of regulating magic potion distribution ... all these issues and more could have benefited from an open dialog among the

chapters. Instead, the assembled Enchanters, whose reputation for sobriety and consideration is generally well-deserved, indulged shamelessly on Phlog and Tonics, and made an overall nuisance of themselves.

“This is great!” said one apprentice from the Gurth City chapter, after he had happily cast the ZOOKA spell (“turn eggs into overripe cabbage”) just as the Thriff chapter sat down to breakfast. Moments later, someone (probably from the Thriff chapter) cast the STEGAW spell (“turn eggs into ripe guano”) at the Gurth City chapter breakfast, whose members thereafter were unable to keep anything down.

Such pranks may seem harmless, but they do little to improve communication between the chapters. They can also get out of hand. During the opening ceremonies on the first evening of CES, for instance, an Enchanter from Aragain cast the FILFRE spell (“display gratuitous fireworks”) inside Convention Hall; literally dozens of other Enchanters subsequently cast FILFRE inside the hall, each trying to outdo the other. Not surprisingly, the old wooden hall caught fire. Just as someone would cast the GONDAR spell (“extinguish fire”), someone else would claim a “better” or “improved” GONDAR spell and restart the fire to display their talents. This went on for nearly an hour before order was called, and the hall suffered much damage.

The Guild of Enchanters has successfully regulated itself for hundreds of years. It helped bring stability to the land following the turbulence of the Great Underground Empire’s collapse, and today underwrites many fine philanthropic foundations. How ironic and disappointing, then, that it can’t turn its wisdom and wonder unto itself, and behave in a more professional and responsible manner, to address its serious problems and ensure a healthier future for us all.

### **Belboz and the Unknown Sorcerer (957 GUE)**

Over the past year, the gifted enchanter, whose skillful and cunning use of magic enabled the defeat of the evil warlock Krill, became Belboz’s favorite pupil. Second only to Belboz, this young sorcerer studied under his tutelage, learning the ways of magic from one of the world’s most learned practitioners. This year, Belboz would be turning 200 years old. With a life expectancy of 175 years, almost three times that of a layperson, most Sorcerers retire from the Guild and become Magicians Emeritus or Conjunction Consultants long before they become bicentenarians. At the age of 200, he would be the oldest member of the Circle of Enchanters and the oldest guildmaster ever. Throughout the land, speculation ran rampant as to whether the master Sorcerer had any places to retire, to which he replied, “Ask me about my retirement again when I turn 300.”

Unfortunately for Belboz fans, that opportunity would never present itself. With the augur’s warnings that a new evil loomed on the horizon, the next question Enchanters were asking, was if the new unknown sorcerer would be capable of protecting the Guild in the foreseeable time of crisis.

As predicted, the end of the year 957 saw the reemergence of Jeearr, the demon who had not been heard of since the encounter with Syovar the Strong, who established his lair near Egredth Castle, in the Griffspotter Caverns beneath the famous fort of the same name. Jeearr desired to enslave the people of the land, forcing them to erect great idols of himself, watching as parents offered up their own children upon the altars as the rivers of the land filled with blood. The villain’s plot for conquering the world involved manufacturing an army of millions of light-resistant grues, using infernal machines conveniently provided by the Frobozz Magic Grue Breeder Company (luckily, these grues were never released into the world at large). Other devices seem designed to aid the forces of evil while sapping magic powers of Enchanters everywhere. Also within these caverns, Jeearr built the Chamber of Living Death, and Hall of Eternal Pain, and another room where which was the control center for the evil experiments. To prepare for his wicked acts, he intended to suck all knowledge and all secrets from Belboz.

The first indications of Jeearr’s return can be found in the diary of the mage Belboz. He wrote in his notebook that the ancient demon’s powers could endanger the Circle and possibly the entire kingdom. Without consulting any others, Belboz decided to conduct a series of dangerous exploratory experiments to look into the dangerous poses by the existence of Jeearr. Undertaking these experiments alone to shield the Circle from the perils involved, they left Belboz open to the power of Jeearr.

In attempting to entrap this demon, Belboz eventually succumbed to the powers of Jeearr. This monstrous creature used his body as a host, intertwining himself throughout Belboz's mind. In visual terms Jeearr could be described as a giant spider with millions of legs, feasting on the body and spirit of Belboz. The necromancer grew troubled, preoccupied, and withdrawn. While to most this behavior went unnoticed, to close friends this was easily detected. But Belboz's favorite student may have been the only one who perceived these certain subtle, sinister changes in his personality.

And shortly afterward, frightening noises were heard coming from Belboz's chamber, and the voices of conversation when he was supposedly alone. Over the next few days, his temper grew short and the look in his eyes sent cold shivers down the sorcerer's back. He began to act oddly and seemed to avoid the unknown sorcerer. The sorcerer wondered if an evil spirit was at work, and grew sleepless from worry, even considering that Belboz's powers might be used by the forces of darkness instead of the forces of light. It was in this pathetic condition that Belboz was forced by Jeearr to leave the Council Hall in Accardi and travel to the Griffspotter Caverns near Egreth where he would become the physical embodiment of the demon as he furthered his plans for world domination.

Having mysteriously vanished, leaving behind only a cryptic diary, the unknown sorcerer thought at first that perhaps the aging sorcerer had just taken a vacation, but reasoned that it would not be like him to leave without informing. The sorcerer remembered that Belboz had been experimenting with powerful spells and dangerous demons, and feared the worst. It had already been feared that Belboz was in thrall to evil sorcery. If he had been trapped by an evil force, his magic might be turned against the Circle of Enchanters and their very existence could be forfeit. Thus the sorcerer was determined to find Belboz and deliver him from whatever evil had befallen him so that the Circle would be saved from destruction.

Fortunately for the world, this Sorcerer found Jeearr's lair in the Griffspotter Caverns. After passing through a cavern of mutated grues (by donning a grue suit), the sorcerer slowly creaked open a white door and found Belboz lying as though asleep. Passing through the doorway, as though something else were drawing the human, the sorcerer was met by an acrid stench that filled the entire room. Unwilling to make any sudden moves, the human YOMINed ("mind probe") the Necromancer. There was a horrifying glimpse of the monstrous Jeearr, intertwined in Belboz's mind. It was obvious that a SWANZO spell ("exorcise an inhabiting presence") was needed to exorcise the demon. But knowing the ways of these spirits, it was unwise to cast one out only to have it instead possess the mind of another. Thus VARDIK ("shield a mind from an evil spirit") was prepared beforehand.

As the words of SWANZO rolled off the lips, the wispy translucent shape of Jeearr rose from the body of Belboz. It spoke in a voice so deep that the human's whole body seemed to hear it. "Foolish Charlatan! I am forced to flee that weak, old body – I shall take your own, instead! Already I have sucked all knowledge, all secrets from that ancient Enchanter. Now begins an epoch of evil transcending even your worst nightmares; a reign of terror that will last a thousand thousand years!" The shape blew towards the sorcerer on a cold wind.

Jeearr surrounded the human like a cloud and began to contract. Suddenly, it struck the sorcerer's invisible VARDIK protection and recoiled as if burned. "No!" it cried. "Such a guileless Enchanter developing a mind shield?" The cloud is thinner, the voice fainter. "It cannot be! I cannot survive ... without a host." The demon roiled in agony, then thinned and dissipated. There was a final scream of pain, then silence. Thanks to the cleverness of the Enchanter, Jeearr was gone for all eternity.

Belboz moaned softly, and began stirring. He saw the sorcerer and rose, instantly alert. After posing a few well-chosen questions, he cast a brief but unfamiliar spell.

An instant later, the two of them stood in the Chamber of the Circle in Accardi-by-the-Sea. The Circle of Enchanters was assembled. Belboz spoke. "Once again, this young Enchanter has done a matchless service to the Guild and to the entire kingdom, displaying resourcefulness and imagination worthy of the greatest of Enchanters. I grow old, and must soon step down as Head of the Circle. But let it be known that a successor has been found."

### **Belboz' Retirement (957 GUE)**

In 957 the famed Jeearr incident led Belboz to completely rethink his future career in magic. Afterward, Belboz decided that his time in the spotlight had come to an end, and that the

Barsap's Guild membership was revoked for dues evasion. (960 GUE) Barsap was turned into a newt. (962 GUE)
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world was safely in the care of his successors. Shortly after his 200<sup>th</sup> birthday, he gave up worldly affairs altogether, and retired to the peace and quiet of an Enchanters' Retreat in the Flathead Mountains, an old stone structure perched high in the Flathead Mountains. For generations, retired (or even burnt-out) enchanters went there to breathe the clean mountain air, watch the stars, and rest from their exertions. The appointments were simple, the fare in unsophisticated, and those there were always content. Belboz expressed an interest in obtaining rest, meditation and learning to arrange flowers. He was not heard from again until 966, when he played a minor role in the events leading up to the end of the First Age of Magic. By the virtue of skills in defeating both Krill and Jeearr, the unknown Sorcerer replaced the great Necromancer as the next leader of the Circle of Enchanters.

## **Chapter 5: Restoration of the Dungeon of Zork (c. 957~966 GUE)**

The events surrounding the years 957~966 GUE are numerous, and overlap each other like a twisting ball of spaghetti, and are all consumed in the same empty void—the temporal end of magic for all of Zork. These include the quest of Mirakles, the chronicles of Anesi, the time of the Triax, and Coconut of Quendor, the Cubes of Foundation, and the roots of the conflict between Dalboz of Gurth and Mir Yannick. Unfortunately for historians, many of these events are undated, and their proper chronological order cannot be determined, but all have been compressed between the years of 957~966. While the reasons for dating these events will be listed in each the introduction to each, the most likely order of events would be as follows:

1. Mirakles and Glorian's defeat of the Autoexec and Morgrom the Essence of Evil
2. Anesi's defeat of the Great Terror.
3. The reign of the Triax.
4. The recovery of the Coconut of Quendor and the gathering of the Cubes of Foundation happened concurrently.
5. The long story of conflict between Dalboz and Yannick at GUE Tech is interwoven throughout all of the previous events.

### **Morgrom and the Golden Dipped Switch**

It is common knowledge that after the fall of the Flathead Dynasty, a nameless adventurer entered the Dungeon of Zork in 948 GUE and emptied the caverns of every treasure, defeated every threat that crossed his path, and then passed on to a higher plane of existence as the Second Dungeon Master. But the vast territory could not remain empty forever. New monsters and new heroes began to repopulate this portion of ancient Quendor. Who was to say that there would not be new dazzling treasure waited to be discovered in the dark bloits of these dungeons? Perhaps the old adventurer failed to claim each and every one, or perhaps someone else planted treasure for some inscrutable purpose.

The latter was just the case. Following the famous adventurer's trek through the Dungeon of Zork, Morgrom the Essence of Evil, one of the many pseudo-gods of Zork and a former member of the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarers Association, attained to position of File Restorer. This seat of power allowed him to "restore" the elements of any "files" to his liking. He cared nothing for the faceless ranks of average people, but had horrible plans for one certain file: the Dungeon of Zork. He purchased the White House and quickly set forth to renovate the elements of the entire underground region, overseeing a workforce of zombies that labored on his behalf.

Morgrom planned to restore the Great Underground Empire to its former glory, and he began by stocking it with new traps and new monsters and a few new, not very expensive treasures. Some of his renovations included the complete renovating of the White House (including the installation of an elevator in the living room, and lining its path with rocks), installing vending machines and zorkmid changers, revising the maze (for example, furnishing its central hub with a matching maroon sofa, loveseat, and wing chair, and enslaving the minotaur as a guard in the grating room), reconstruction of the Bank of Zork, restoration of the dusty room which had been demolished by the Second Dungeon Master, and much much more. New treasures included: Flathead Beer, a year's supply of Turtle Wax, a freezer with a year's supply of Inuit Pies, etc.

During the process of his renovation, Morgrom unearthed the ancient Frobozz Magic TempORIZER (a time machine) from the ruins of the Royal Zork Museum on Level 3 of the Dungeon and hauled it up into his living room. He intended to use the machine to prevent the bungling and mismanaging of the file of men known as the Flathead Dynasty which brought the Great Underground Empire to an end in 883. His scheme was to replace Dimwit Flathead on the throne, unite the Eastlands, the Westlands, and the island of Antharia under his rule, and plunder the entire country of Quendor of its vast wealth. Then, using the tempORIZER, he would transfer that unimaginable mountain of loot to the present, where he would set himself up as the richest and most powerful man in the world. With his almost infinite wealth and power, Morgrom planned to extend his influence across the entire world, down even to the Sunless Grotto itself, where Queen Desiphæe would be helpless to resist his attempts at

despoiling her. That was the heart of his plan, to take Queen Desiphae for himself. From the morning of the first fresh rainfall that fed into the Sunless Grotto, Morgrom had dared to boast that he would be Queen Desiphae's ultimate husband and sought for an opportune time to sully her by force.

But one element kept his plan from fruition: the Golden Dipped Switch, used to operate the temporizer, had been stolen, and he knew that it could be anywhere in the Empire. Thus he needed a pawn to seek it for him. Mirakles of the Elastic Tendon, the illegitimate son of Desiphae and Thrag. This was difficult, because Morgrom had earned a portion of his infamously because of his slaughter of the pseudo-god Thrag. Through both the threatening of the Queen and slaying of Thrag, the Essence of Evil had earned the hatred of Mirakles. Knowing that the barbarian would not embark upon this quest unless there was a favorable incentive, Morgrom stole two scrolls from Mirakles' father Hyperenor and anticipated the prince's arrival at the White House.

### **Technical Information**

The exact years of this adventure are shrouded with much mystery. There are some things which can be said with certain. This epic is limited by the date of 966 GUE, for two reasons. Magic had not yet been destroyed, and the White House renovation (which was in process during this tale) was already finished by the Age of Science. It is also of note that the illegitimate son of Lucien Kaine, Spike the Protector, had not yet reached adulthood. Assuming that Spike was at least ten years of age, and that Lucien's affair with Threnia happened at the earliest of 946, that would procure the earliest date of this tale as 956. The date can be further set to after 957, as the Wizard of Frobozz no longer dwelt within the Dungeon of Zork when they passed through, whereas in 957, the Wizard was still dwelling in that region.

There was one important aspect that made this event so unique—the corruption of the Autoexec (although this decay was hidden from the rest of the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarer's Association). At one time, being in command over The Powers That Be was enough, but after a few thousand years, the Autoexec began to think of advancement. He looked up the corporate ladder and above him was only the Control Character himself. He refused to continue on putting in a good day's work millennium after millennium until the Control Character patted him on the back and gave him his desk in the home office. And he found Morgrom's recovery of the temporizer to be the perfect opportunity.

The Autoexec intended to use the temporizer to go back in time and place himself at the top of the Echelon ladder before the Control Character had even been created (he apparently had not taken it into consideration that the Upper Echelons had been created in the *Timeless Halls*). He suffered from the same problem as Morgrom, that the Golden Dipped Switch was missing somewhere within the Great Underground Empire. Thus, seduced by the dark side of the Switch, he would track Mirakles and his companions through the Great Underground Empire with keen interest, hoping to nab the Switch from them immediately upon its discovery. Throughout their quest, the Autoexec frequently warned them not to trust Spike the Protector, though his reasons for doing this are not entirely clear.

### **The Epic Quest of Mirakles and his Faithful Companions**

Although this epic quest belonged to Mirakles of the Elastic Tendor, it is primarily centered around Glorian of the Knowledge, how this member of the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarers Association won the Joseph Campbell Award for Best Semi-Actual Persona and was promoted into the ranks of the Implementors. Having been nominated and lost for the award the ninth time in the row (this unfortunate time to the infamous Narlinia von Glech), the downcast Glorian received a letter bearing the mark of the signet ring of the Autoexec himself:

Glorian, here are instructions for your most important mission. You must meet a hero by the name of Mirakles by the usual old white house. You must help him regain the vital Switch that has been dipped in gold. The fate of this and every other reality depends on your courage and devotion. Good luck to you, and may God bless.

Glorian had received many other directives in his career, but in every case, those orders had instead come from The Powers That Be. Regardless of the source of the letter, Glorian obeyed orders. The supernatural being changed



appearance into that of an old man, and found Mirakles of the Elastic Tendon hacking through the Dark Forest near the legendary White House. There was a mailbox there which Glorian opened, wholly expecting to find the usual leaflet that one always found in this particular mailbox, but instead, there was a cryptic message from the Powers That Be:

Glorian:

You may already notice that the obligatory brochure has somehow been mislaid. On top of all your other duties regarding Mirakles and his heroic quest, it is incumbent upon you to find the appropriate brochure and restore it not only to its proper place but to its proper time. You will find the means of accomplishing this within the house. All of us in the upper echelons have nothing but the highest confidence in your ability.

Good luck to you, and may God bless.

The two arrived in the living room of the White House, which was in the process of heavy renovation. Bewitching the stalwart barbarian with an appearance that he would not recognize, Morgrom lured Mirakles into embarking on the quest to recover the Golden Dipped Switch. The Essence of Evil deceived the barbarian, by telling only a portion of his plan, to use the time machine in order to restore the Great Underground Empire to its former glory. Morgrom presented him with a Frobozz Magic Scroll of his father Hyperenor, but the Frobozz Magic Hot Key was the only thing that could unlock the Frobozz Magic Lock. That hot key would be found alongside the golden-dipped switch. Mirakles accepted and anxious to begin and finish descended into the Dungeon of Zork via the cellar of the house. It was soon after that he realized that the man in the house was Morgrom. Although having been duped by the Essence of Evil, his code of honor prevented him from revoking oaths, and thus he could not remit the quest he had already pledged to. He would recover the Golden Dipped Switch for Morgrom, but it was also his mission to wreck the schemes of Morgrom and bring him low. The enraged warrior swore an oath never to seek out the pleasures of the sunlit world until he delivered Morgrom in chains to the temple of Thrax, his father. Thus began the epic tale of how Mirakles became king of the Sunless Grotto.

As the trap door shut behind them, they were assaulted by a horde of grues. Mirakles was able to hold them back for a short period of time, but was quickly given a bloody wound by the ferocious beasts. Using the mystical art of Drawer Forwarding, Glorian procured an electric lantern from his room at the Valhalla Hilton, dispersing the beasts back into the darkness. The supernatural guide additionally treated Mirakles' wounds with an anointing of Byelbog's Balm—the healing was almost instant.

Near an underground chasm, the two encountered a half-submerged turtle that begged for them to bring him food in exchange for a Frobozz Magic Swiss Army Amulet which glowed as a light-source. Accepting the deed, Mirakles returned with food for the turtle and was awarded with the amulet. To his dismay, the glow faded when he placed it around his neck. Before the cheated and enraged Mirakles could wreck havoc upon the creature, the turtle fled. Little did Mirakles know at that time, but the treasures he sought, both the Hot Key and the Golden Dipped Switch, were hidden within that amulet's secret compartment.

The next morning Mirakles and Glorian met with Spike the Protector, son of Lucien Kaine the Thief. This yellow-glowing orphan had been abandoned within the Underground Empire for many years, but the tales of Glorian had not been absent from his ears. Although Spike's glow was due to luminia, he claimed that he was a member of the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarers Association and that the effusion was but one of his powers. Claiming to have vast knowledge of the surrounding underground regions and promising to provide information to defeat the up-and-coming kimono dragon, Glorian reluctantly permitted his company. Spike was also able to function as an alternative light source.

Upon their arrival in the Dome Room, the Autoexec hastened to make Glorian aware of Spike's lies and deception through a letter bearing the mark of his signet ring. Here is an abbreviated form of that letter:

To: Glorian

From: The Autoexec

Re: Your possible demise through treachery

The Powers That Be have been keeping me well informed of your progress, and I must admit that so far I think you're doing quite an admirable job, considering how witless your companions are. Also, you haven't faced a truly menacing threat as yet...

Now here is some valuable information that should make your journey just a trifle less life-threatening. First, the being you know as Spike, The Protector, is a young male... Even more important, Spike is a human being, and has no supernatural qualities at all. He is not, repeat not, a member of the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarers Association... We do not yet know what Spike's ultimate ambition is: He may be a perfectly dependable young aide-de-camp, or he may be planning maniacal, devious intrigues of his own. I can only advise that you keep your eyes open from now until your mission has been brought satisfactorily to a close. Spike's trick of glowing is temporary, the result of using a great quantity of luminia... Spike must indeed be skillful in deceiving the luminia in his possession, and it's very unlikely that you'd be able to match him at this task.

Glorian of the Knowledge, I have one more bit of admittedly unconfirmed information for you: Spike seems to have dwelt in the Great Underground Empire for his entire life, or at least for a major portion of it, and his knowledge of the unmapped byways below ground is second to none. Further, our best sources believe he is an ally of one of our greatest enemies. So do be careful where Spike is concerned, but remember that we do not wish to do the lad a grave injustice.

Good luck to you, and may God bless.

Following the reading, Morgrom, in the disguise of Bardalf, and Narlinia von Glech appeared before them. While the exact purposes of their arrival is debated even till this day, part of the plan of the menacing duo included the murder of Mirakles solely for the purpose of sending him to Hades in order to discover if the Golden Dipped Switch lay within that infernal region. For they summoned Shugreth the Unenviable, one of the so-called "Gods of the Nameless Night", who had taken residence in the Temple of Zork below. Morgrom and Narlinia vanished in a cloud of noxious vapor, leaving the others to fight the beast. All the companions' attempts to harm Shugreth were ineffective. Mirakles blew the Frobozz Magic Swiss Army Amulet's whistle, knowing that its tone would summon grues to attack the creature. Glorian and Spike managed to flee the Dome Room before the grues arrived, but Mirakles was not so fortunate.

This death sentence left him for judgment in Hades, specifically the Plain of Endless Conflict, an afterlife which he enjoyed most passionately. Those there hated him the most because he was the son of Thrag, by whose bloody hands that ended the happy lives of all the others and sent them before their time to Hades. They blamed Thrag—and through him, Mirakles—for the years they did not spend with their wives and children, ruling their idyllic lands.

After Glorian confronted Spike that he knew about the luminia and his lack of supernatural powers, the pair descended into the Temple of Zork and through a narrow passage to the Gates of Hades, which since the coming of the Second Dungeon Master had once again been barred by wicked spirits. Glorian, having read "Hades on 9 Zorkmids a Day" was familiar with an alternate solution as to bypass the trove of guardian spirits, using four cans about the size of a paint can of blood, a non-magical sword, and a libation (consisting of milk and honey and sweet wine, plastic jug of water, and white barley). He also begged Hermas to remove Cerberus from the gates, a request that was promptly enacted upon.

Glorian excited and distracted the spirits by showing them the can of blood. Now able to pass through the gates, Glorian and Spike were trailed by the entire pack of ghosts who were in hope of snatching a few drops of the precious substance. At the pinnacle at the Acheron, Glorian completed a certain ritual and offered prayers to the pseudo-gods Hades and Persephone. All the while, the pair took their turns holding back the ravenous spirits and waited for a particular one by the name of Tiresias, who was allowed to drink some of the blood. In thanksgiving, Tiresias revealed to them that Mirakles could be found on the Plain of Endless Conflict and that Charon required an obolus from each of them to cross the Acheron, then departed.

It was then that Spike the Protector was able to meet the shade of his father, Lucien Kaine, who offered the pair 5 oboli in exchange for a drink of blood (2 for their entrance, 3 for the return trip with Mirakles). An elderly ghost presented Glorian with another communication from the Autoexec with his signet ring mark:

Glorian, we all here in the upper echelons are perfectly elated with the job you're doing. I can promise you that when you've accomplished your goal of seeing Mirakles all the way to the end of his quest, you will have set new standards for all supernatural guides on your level to live and work by. I think I can also guarantee that you'll soon have to get used to living and working on a higher level, although I'd rather not get into that just yet. You've probably already recognized that your companion, Spike, is the son of the thief, the adventurer's constant competitor and antagonist. Now, certainly Spike has given you valuable help, but please remember that Morgrom the Multi-Faced is still at large, and that Spike may very well be in his pay. I know that currently you're working your way through a little hitch in your scheme involving Hades, so I won't take up any more of your time. We here just wanted to be sure you didn't begin trusting anyone or anything.

Good luck to you, and may God bless.

Charon allowed both Glorian and Spike to board the ferry upon paying an oboli in the same way as any other wraith. On the other shore, they cross the barren landscape to the Plain of Endless Conflict where they find Mirakles engaged in eternal combat that was too enthralling for him to depart. Knowing that there was no way to convince him to willingly leave, Glorian knocked Redthirst from Mirakles' hand and knocked him out with the hilt. Glorian and Spike together dragged Mirakles back across the Acheron (relinquishing their three remaining oboli for the ferry crossing), through the Hades gates and up a staircase to a small cave in the Dungeon of Zork.

Morgrom and Narlinia briefly returned to tell them their motives for sending Mirakles into Hades. They were gone by the time Mirakles regained consciousness. The realization of his hack-and-slash afterlife in Hades opened his eyes to how pointless his life had been and he decided to repent of his desire to be a hero.

The trio journeyed towards the coal mine. Weaving through the tunnels, they discovered an embedded character in the wall. This was Ed, who had been created by Morgrom for unknown purposes. Mirakles freed him from his imprisonment, prying him loose from the wall with Redthirst. In exchange for his freedom, the embedded character agreed to accompany their expedition. Somehow Ed had King Hyperenor's second scroll containing the second secret of Redthirst, undoubtedly somehow placed there by Morgrom himself. This scroll revealed that used Redthirst created a love of battle—the greater the opponent, the greater the desire for combat.

Their entrance into the coal mine was welcomed by a ferocious monster named Glarbo, a member of the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarers Association. Though she denied it, Glarbo was some sort of kin to a balrog. Glarbo conversed with Glorian alone and presented him with another letter from the Autoexec.

Glorian, listen to her. The Great Underground Empire is so huge, you and Mirakles could wander around down there until he dies of old age. I've decided to make things easier for you. You can skip the rest of this portion of the Empire and proceed to the slide room, the Maze, and then outside to the Barrow. Still be careful of Spike, The Protector. He is not what he seems. Keep up the good work!

Good luck to you, and may God bless.

Heeding the advice given through the communication, the companions embarked on the following route—Bat Room, Mine Entrance, Slide Room, slide to Cellar, Eastern Edge of Chasm, Gallery, Studio (where they discovered a treasure chest containing a year's supply of Frobozz Magic Turtle Wax), Troll Room, then finally to the Maze which had been renovated by Morgrom.

Within the bends of the maze, a skeleton key was found that unlocked the exit found in the Grating Room, one of the inner cubicles of the Maze. Their escape was blocked by the minotaur which Morgrom had placed to guard the gateway. Mirakles' challenge of the minotaur was suspended when he landed a powerful blow upon the beast. This

wound was enough for the minotaur to let them pass by and escape through the grating into the Dark Forest above. The quartet found the hidden Stone Barrow in the forest and entered it, following the passage that descended to the second level of the Dungeon of Zork, the region once ruled by the now-defeated Wizard of Frobozz.

This same Princess Melithiel of the House of Fourth who had been rescued in times past by the Second Dungeon Master still dwelt in this region of the Great Underground Empire with her faithful were-unicorn, Rex the Wonder Unicorn. While she had been previously set free by that Dungeon Master, he was not an accepted suitor. For she had been betrothed at birth and had to remain faithful to her intended husband. Thus she had languished there between dragons, waiting for him to come to her. The current dragon was the kimono dragon, the most deadly of all dragons. This reptile had recently taken up residence in the same lair where Smaug had dwelt. Princess Melithiel only knew that the one she waited for was a prince which some called “The Unhamstringable.” Little did she know, that this was Mirakles of the Elastic Tendon.

Spike the Protector informed Mirakles of this terrible kimono dragon. Upon mention of how terrible the beast was, Mirakles, as a part of his hero’s nature, sought to put an end to the dragon. The dragon’s lair was easy to find with the newly constructed bamboo and rice paper house of the kimono dragon. The small humanoid statured reptile invited them inside her humble abode for tea.

Before the kimono dragon could present her dangerous riddle, as was custom for confrontations with these deadly beasts, Mirakles was interrupted by the cry of a young woman. In the back room he found the unconscious Princess Melithiel whom was bound to a rock by chains. The prince was now anxiously determined to defeat the dragon and set her free.

The dragon opened a lacquered box, removed a Frobozz Magic Golden Apple inscribed with “For the Fairest” and presented it to Mirakles. He was to tell her who he was to give it to. The design of the riddle was a trick, intending to incur the wraths of the pseudo-gods who would be offended that they were not considered more beautiful than whoever he chose to present it to. Thus knowing this, Mirakles defeated the riddle by cutting the apple in half—the half that read “For the Fair” he would give to Melithiel, while the other half “est” (meaning “He is”) was for the Control Character. With the defeat of her riddle, the kimono dragon instantly was killed.

Mirakles went forth to sunder the princess’ shackles. The chaste kiss that he gifted her with instantly broke her enchanted slumber. She instantly realized that Mirakles was the one prince that she had been waiting here in turmoil for, for many years. The twitterpatted couple left the dragon’s lair with the others.

Princess Melithiel mysteriously insisted to depart in order to tend to unicorn as well as other unmentioned “duties.” She planned to return upon their completion. Before leaving, the two lovers made an exchange of gifts. Mirakles’ ring was too large for her to wear on any of her fingers. She tore a narrow strip from the hem of her gown, threaded the ring onto it, and tied the piece of cloth around her neck. As his request, she torn another strip of cloth, and bound the material above the elbow of his sword-arm to wear as a banner. Whenever he raised his enchanted sword, the strip of cloth would be a martial flag to remind him that he was fighting for more than merely himself. He would be fighting for her and their future together.

The following day brought Glorian, Mirakles, Spike and Ed to the Bank of Zork’s Safety Depository. Comprehending the mysterious of the security system, they arrived at the Vault. Morgrom was here with his zombie workmen, and with Narlinia von Glech once again at his side. Narlinia, being the Princess Dawn des Malalondes, tried to seduce Mirakles to be with her instead of Princess Melithiel. He adamantly refused her wicked advances. Since Mirakles had “failed” to locate the switch for Morgrom again and again, the Essence of Evil threatened to eliminate him and find another hero. He propelled strange magical energy at Mirakles, who easily deflected it with Redthirst. The two wrestled upon the bank floor. The match was concluded when Mirakles sat on Morgrom’s chest, pinning him to the stone. With a high-pitched cry, Morgrom sounded an alarm that provoked all of the zombies to action. The party escaped the Vault through the illusionary northern wall, where they faced twelve angry zombies in the Depository.

Glorian shapeshifted into the appearance of an executioner with a massive axe. He, Mirakles and Spike went into battle against the seemingly endless number of zombies. They could never kill these undead enmities, but instead beheaded them, causing them to wander around helplessly, buying time for a partial escape. It was not until Ed

chanted a spell that they were able to overcome the mobs. For the enchantment gave the embedded character control over their will, and he ordered the zombies back to work to finish the bank renovations before the deadline.

The flight from the Bank of Zork took the four exhausted companions through the Fresco Room, abandoned Dragon's Lair, south across the Stone Bridge to the Cool Room, then to the Glacier Room. The glacier that had been melted by the Second Dungeon Master had nearly sealed back up. There was just barely enough room for them to squeeze past the reforming ice to the Lava Room and then to the bottom of the volcano, where Glorian found another letter from the Autoexec hanging from a tree at the center:

From the Desk Of: The Autoexec

Glorian, everyone here is saying that you're doing a superhuman job. Of course, you are superhuman, but what they mean is that you have already overcome obstacles that have stumped some of the best talents in the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarers Association. We've had reports on your progress, and frankly I'm amazed. It makes it even more difficult to understand how a semi-actual persona as gifted as you could have finished behind Narlinia von Glech for the Campbell. Be that as it may, I have good news for you. It will probably not be long before our assignment, this shirtless prince of yours, achieves his goal. Your adventures will all make for wonderful conversation over lunch when you get back. My treat, of course.

Finally, I do want to remind you to be careful where Spike, The Protector, is concerned. He is the son of the thief, of course. Once Mirakles finds what he's looking for, keep your eyes glued on Spike, or else you may find that the young man has stolen the prince's treasures and that you've made your entire journey in vain. I cannot say it enough: After the Dipped Switch is found, watch Spike closely, even if you must do without sleep.

In any event, as I said, it will all be over soon, most likely. We'll talk more later.

Good luck to you,  
and may God bless

Lying in a dusty heap, Ed found the same balloon that the Second Dungeon Master had used when he had ascended to the volcano's top. Glorian replaced the ashes of an old newspaper inside the balloon's receptacle with a new one, while Ed provided the flint stone that made up his left knee as a means to start the fire. The embedded character, having a fear of falling, stayed behind while the other three rode the inflated balloon.

The exploration of the abandoned library, about halfway up the interior shaft, yielded but five intact books of the ancient Zorkian tongue which were Drawer Forwarded away from Mirakles to decipher later. The Dusty Room near the rim of the volcano had been recently reconstructed since its 948 GUE collapse. Within was another Frobozz Magic Swiss Army Amulet and a very small crosshead-screwdriver. Using the cleverly designed device to open the secret compartment on the back of the newly discovered amulet, he was disappointed to find a single note reading: "Inspected by Number 13." But a melodramatic shock came when he unscrewed the amulet he had received from the turtle. Inside was the Golden Dipped Switch and the Hot Key.

Mirakles was anxious to test the Hot Key on his father's scroll, but could not find it on him. Spike the Protector had stolen it from him almost immediately after they had met. He had not done it out of malice, only because there had been so few opportunities to do any stealing at all. Realizing the extent of his crime, the thief returned the scroll to its rightful owner and was ready to abide by Mirakles' judgment. Contrary to what was expected, Mirakles showed a rare note of forgiveness, since he knew that Spike was the son of the thief and had only been doing what was in his nature. The brawny hero pardoned Spike, but warned him not to attempt such a feat again. Glorian tested the Hot Key on the scroll's lock. It fit and he handed them back to Mirakles.

Before the scroll could be read, the jester-in-the-deck, who had been following their progress, moved into position for his ultimate plan. The Autoexec, knowing that blue glass was Glorian's weakness, supernaturally imprisoned the spiritual guide within it. He reached into the glass and snatched both the Golden Dipped Switch and the Hot Key from the paralyzed Glorian's possessions. Upon thanking Mirakles for an excellent job, the Autoexec departed.

Mirakles and Spike hacked away at the enchanted blue glass imprisonment for several hours until they were able to free him. Glorian, having never suspected that the Autoexec was an enemy, realized that he had been seduced by the dark side of the Switch. He was determined to track him down and put an end to the conspiracy.

Their travels through the Dungeon of Zork led them to the Tomb of the Twelve Flatheads, guarded by the three-headed dog, Cerberus. There was no conflict with the beast, as Cerberus loved Mirakles, since his father Thrag sent so many customers to Hades. Before entering into the Crypt, Glorian Drawer Forwarded a note to his colleagues in the Association detailing all that had happened in regardless to the Autoexec's treachery.

Once inside and through the secret door that opened to the staircase descending to the third level of the Dungeon, strange green lines of enormous power began to sweep over them, compelling them forward. As the green lines disappeared in a burst of light, the four tumbled down the stairs. Ed did not survive the fall—all that remained was a small pile of stone shards and rock dust. Mirakles scooped up Ed's remains into a rucksack, intending to honor his brave deeds by laying them to rest at the Sunless Grotto after the completion of the quest.

Heading west from the Junction at the bottom of the stairs, the three surviving companions scouted west, following the northern side of an ancient wall that made up the northern border of the Shadowland. They climbed a cliff where Glorian was pleased to find a letter from the pseudo-god and president of the Association, Savitri:

Glorian:

Shocking news about the Autoexec, but your report has been independently corroborated by several other sources. Steps are being taken. Do not worry. Step One is for you to meet Phretys. She'll be waiting for you beside the ocean. Best that you leave the others behind for a time and meet her alone. Know that the Supernatural and Fantastic Wayfarers Association is behind you one hundred percent. I can tell you that I voted for you for the Campbell Award, and was very sorry that you lost. But, of course, it's an honor just to be nominated.

Good luck to you,  
and may God bless.

Glorian proceeded alone to the eastern shore of the Flathead Ocean, which formed the western edge of the Shadowland. The Muse, Phretys, faithfully met him at the shore. She told him to guard the Switch once he had acquired it and to deliver it directly to the Control Character only. Glorian learned from her that the Autoexec's single weakness was absolute darkness, and that the quest did not end with the recovery of the Switch. Then she departed, leaving Glorian to return to his companions.

Pondering the corruption of one of the highest powers in all the universe, Glorian figured a method that would possibly defeat the Autoexec. The Land of Shadow was filled with darkness. Using the Drawer Forwarding service, he packed his hotel room at the Valhalla Hilton with it, stuffing in as much as he could, hoping that no one would open the room's door before he had to face the Autoexec. He planned to act as a quasi-human siphon in that inevitable battle.

Once Glorian reunited with his companions, the three returned to the Junction and set out southward through the tunnels until they reached the northern shore of a vast underground lake. They treaded the icy cold waters to the western shore where dwelt the Scenic Vista. Behind them, the Autoexec marched in with a massive army of mundanes. The battle began, the three adventurers fending off hordes of these un-dead.

During the course of the battle the Autoexec attempted to hurl lightning-like bolts of energy at Glorian, but Mirakles was successful at guarding the supernatural guide with Redthirst. In a feint to distract Mirakles so that his magical powers could penetrate through the defenses, the Autoexec hurled the Hot Key at the prince. Shocked, Mirakles lowered his guard, bending down to acquire it. Seeing victory now at hand, the Autoexec released the energy at Glorian once again, but he countered with powers of darkness. The Autoexec was surprised that Glorian knew of his weakness, but the battle continued onward.

The next maneuver consisted of simultaneous hurling of both lightning and a cobalt blue glass knife at Glorian. The force was enough to send the blade deep into Glorian's thigh. Spike quickly removed the dagger from the wound and healed it with an anointing of Byelbog's Balm. The final round began when both Glorian and the

Autoexec augmented their supernatural powers in unison. But it was Glorian who had the upper-hand, for he unleashed the darkness that had been stored up in the hotel room. The defeated Autoexec reincorporated.

In the meantime, Mirakles had managed to vanquish the last of the mundanes. He took the Golden Dipped Switch and entrusted Spike as its royal bearer. The party set out for their final destination. Touching the table of the Scenic Vista when the indicator read "II" transported them all to the workshop of the Wizard of Frobozz. It was here that Mirakles unlocked the scroll lock with the Hot Key. A hologram of King Hyperenor appeared.

The king revealed that the Third Secret of the Sword was that it was dedicated to protect both the Sunless Grotto as well as the Great Underground Empire, for both realms were connected via narrow, water-filled passages. Mirakles was given the option to rule the Sunless Grotto in the king's place or to remain where he is and be the guardian and overseer of the Empire in order to protect all who live there against the sort of depredation, ignominy, and virtual slavery that Morgrom would surely introduce.

The time ran out on their usage of the Scenic Vista and all three found themselves back at the lake shore. Princess Melithiel arrived via her chariot pulled by Rex the Wonder Unicorn. The winged creature lifted the chariot into the air, carrying them up to the ceiling of the underground chamber that contained the lake. Through high passages they were carried out of the underground and landed at the White House.

Glorian, Mirakles, and Spike knew that since Mirakles had accepted the quest from Morgrom, that he was required to return the Switch to him regardless of the evil machinations that would be produced as a result of its return. Thus they formulated a plan. Mirakles told the princess to remain with the chariot while they carried out what they had purposed to do.

Entering through the front door, Morgrom was sitting in the living room, waiting for his treasure. The time machine was here as well. Spike handed the Golden Dipped Switch to Mirakles, who reluctantly dropped it on the pleased Morgrom's desk. Glorian staged a confrontation against Morgrom, standing against him verbally. However, this was a distracting, buying Spike the time to steal both the Copper and Silver Dipped Switches from off the time machine. Still acting, Spike and Mirakles together haul the stubborn Glorian out of the room as though they were forcing him to deny a confrontation with Morgrom. During this process, Spike slipped Glorian both stolen switches. It was then that Morgrom realized that the Copper and Silver switches were missing.

This was a moment in the entire history of Zork, in which there is nothing of the sort recorded anywhere else. The Control Character himself, taking on a semi-physical form, descended through the newly installed elevator. Morgrom protest against the highest of the Upper Echelons was silenced, as the Essence of Evil was suddenly gone as if he had never been there.

Glorian, obeying the wishes of the Control Character handed the two stolen switches to Spike who replaced them in the time machine, and took the common Zork leaflet from a safe in the living room. These were in preparation for yet another small quest.

The Control Character rewarded the other two companions. Mirakles was honored with Princess Melithiel for a wife, and the Warm Boots of Frobozz, while Spike was granted admission as a Neophyte Probationary in the Association. Mirakles was commissioned to return to his mother to assure her of her safety, now that Morgrom had been defeated, to build a tomb or cairn for the remains of Ed beside the Sunless Grotto, then rule the future kingdom wisely with his new queen beside him. Mirakles also chose to assume the guardianship of the Great Underground Empire. Then the Control Character disappeared.

Mirakles departed from the White House with his bride-to-be, eager to set forth and do all that the Control Character had instructed of him, as well as defeating his ravenous brother Smorma and claiming the great treasure at the bottom of the Grotto. Spike returned to the underground, by the trapdoor in the living room, where he would wait until Glorian returned from his mission. Glorian's mission involved travelling back in time, prior to the Second Dungeon Master's coming to the White House, so that he could install the leaflet into the mailbox outside for that adventurer to find.

This historic tale would be fit here for closure, if there were not one last important event awaiting Glorian of the Knowledge. Following the success of his mission, Glorian was promoted to the rank of Implementor, an extremely rare honor. In fact, is it highly debated whether any other being had ever been promoted to such a status. But even more importantly, for Glorian at least, was the Joseph Campbell Awards the following year, held then at the Hyatt

Regency Elysian Fields. It was that very year that he finally received the Joseph Campbell Award for Best Semi-Actual Persona.

History leaves a large gap in the events of Mirakles following his return to the Sunless Grotto. While the Control Character granted Mirakles guardianship over the Great Underground Empire, it is unknown how this was resolved with the current guardian. For the Second Dungeon Master ruled from 948 to the end of the First Age of Magic in 966, when he was succeeded by Dalboz of Gurth. If the role of Mirakles did not interfere with that of the Second Dungeon Master, this would imply a co-guardianship. Whether contentious or harmonious, all records of this co-guardianship have been lost to us within the void of time.



## **Chapter 6: The Great Terror (c. 957~966 GUE)**

### **The Great Terror's Influence Spreads**

The Great Terror's power had slowly encroached northward, corrupting everything it touched. The entire Guild of Enchanters in Orexia was crippled beneath his influence. Finister, one of the guild masters, escaped to Thriff before the entire region succumbed entirely to the corruption of the Great Terror. At least he claimed he escaped, he seemed to receive at least a taste of the Terror's influence, which cursed him with random bouts of sudden sleep.

In Mareilon, his influence was very strong and had been for some time, so strong that even ordinary people with no magical sensitivities had been affected without even knowing it. They grew rude, feared strangers, and even feared each other, drawing into themselves with a suspicious anxiety so great that they dared not even tread the once friendly streets unarmed. The Terror feasted on the city's fear. Grues, which usually did not attack in the daylight, began to first live in shadows, then dared to even venture momentarily into the daylight in order to assault a stray victim.

Khare the Watcher and the other masters of the Thriff Guild of Enchanters were afraid as they began to sense the first vestiges of the Terror's power which seeped even into the far northern lands. The Great Shuboz Shuboz gathered with six of the Thriff masters: Khare the Watcher, Shad Treeskimmer, Grimbol the Great, Raskil Worrysnot, and Finister. They believed that only one of youth would have the greatest advantage against the Great Terror, for one of that stature would still have their innocence and would not be tempted to evil like most of the others. Anesi, the grandson of Stribel Wartsworth, was one such enchanter that fit their requirements—talented and innocent. Seeking him, they set forth on the vessel of Shuboz Shuboz to sail up the coast of the Flathead Ocean to ask him to fight the Terror.

As they set forth on their quest, the servants of the Terror finally awoke after generations to serve him again. One of these Servants rested in the woods around Anesi's house.

### **The Chronicle of Anesi the Enchanter (c. 966 GUE)**

Anesi, the grandson of the famous wizard Stribel Wartsworth, had studied at Galepath University ten years ago (shortly before 956 GUE), although only for a semester before his father Choboz pulled him out. But he had already discovered a new spell—the water-shaping spell. His father had destroyed his spell book and moved in the regions north of Frobozz to be as far removed from the Enchanters Guild as possible.

In the days before the end of the age of magic, before the entire city of Thriff was transported to Miznia, Anesi spent his days on the shore of the Flathead Ocean, daydreaming about unicorns, sea-serpents and other legendary creatures. Many times, he would use the magic spell that he uniquely discovered to weave water sculptures in the ocean. His friend Fidget would usually accompany him.

It was one of these days, just after Fidget had returned home for the day as he usual did, that Anesi spotted the personal ship of the Great Shuboz Shuboz in the distance out from the shore. Its appearance worried him, for there was no port this far north of Frobozz, nor any place to dock. Pirates had no reason to venture this far north either. Furthermore, only a few scattered people lived in this region, including Anesi's family, Fidget's family and Old Felbor with his brogmoid Cubby, and possibly one more.

Anesi returned home to warn his parents of the spotted vessel. With his father and mother, he hid in the smoke hole that was at a distance in the woods from their home. The seven wizards disembarked their vessel and approached the house. They left the Great Shuboz Shuboz without the house while the other six went to find Anesi at the smoke hole. The locked door was quickly broken down with REZROV. Choboz went after the infiltrators with his axe, but was subdued by Grimbol Grumble's VAXUM.

Now that the fear of enmity had departed, the six wizards and the family returned to Anesi's home to meet the elderly Shuboz Shuboz. After explaining their reason for setting forth to find Anesi, the Great Shuboz Shuboz gave Anesi a brand new Chevaux-quality spellbook. The binding was a bright blue dyed leather with the symbol of the Thriff Guild worked into the cover with rich, shining gold. The pages were also gilt-edged.

It was then that Anesi went to the beach to show his parents what he had been hiding from them for so long—his water-shaping spell.

The following day, Khare the Watcher met with Anesi to instruct him in the principles of magic, as well as gifted him with FROTZ, NITFOL, and BLORB. Shad additionally presented Anesi with IZYUK. Each of these Anesi copied into his spellbook with GNUSTO. The young enchanter practiced his use of IZYUK.

When dinner had finished, Choboz bitterly left the cottage without explanation, while the rest of the family and the wizards went out to the beach. All of the wizards, with an exception of Khare the Watcher, demonstrated their FILFRE spells. When the glamorous display had been finished, the wizards returned to their ship for the night.

That night, Anesi awoke from a dream. His mother was still awake, but his father had not yet returned. Anesi went out to search for him. Khare the Watcher met Anesi outside, to whom he explained that he had always sensed a disturbing presence within the woods surrounding his house. But now the feeling was more treacherous than before. What he had been feeling was the evil presence of a servant of the Terror that had been asleep in its underground lair within the forest's depths. That night it had awakened.

The other six wizards, having sensed the threatening disturbance arrived briefly via IZYUK, then left to search for Choboz. Khare gifted Anesi with a zorkmid chain medallion and then the both of them IZYUKed over the woods as well to Fidget's house.

Prior to their arrival, the servant of the Terror, who assumed the form of a giant hellhound, left the entire house in ruins and murdered all of the family with an exception of Fidget. Anesi and Khare found him alive, but in severe shock, unable to speak.

The huge hellhound attacked and ensnared Khare by his cloak in its jaws, whipping the enchanter around violently. Fidget lured the servant's attention with arrows, while an IZYUKed Anesi IZYUKed a cornerpost of the destroyed house to use as a giant spear. Flying above the hellhound, Anesi annulled the presence on his spell and dropped the post point-first through the hellhound's skull. The other wizards arrived immediately after the defeat of the servant. The Great Shuboz Shuboz rewarded Anesi with the official rank of "young enchanter."

Anesi returned home. His mother Mildi ordered the wizards to depart and then removed the splinters from Anesi's arms. The young enchanter offered to provide more light with FROTZ. In reprisal, Mildi angrily told him to forget magic and from now on they would be a normal family. Anesi objected, only to be slapped in retribution. In a maddened flurry, Anesi grabbed his spellbook and FROTZed nearly everything in the room, including Fidget. He screamed his frustration out, that he did not want to be normal when he was able to do things like this, then left into the woods, which were comfortable now that the Servant of the Terror was dead.

The FROTZed Fidget followed Anesi, removed the last splinters from his arms, then anointed him with GOVAKE. The two search for the Servant's lair. Beyond the ruins of Fidget's home, is a tunnel which they explore. The Servant's lair is a treasure-filled room with several scrolls (VAXUM & KREBF) as well as mounds of other valuables, which they help themselves too. As the two companions were leaving, a tribe of kobolds attacked. They were forced to retreat back into the treasure room and cornered.

Meanwhile, Cubby the brogmoid of Felbor, Fidget's mentor, had heard the horrible howl of the giant hellhound. He returned home to find his cabin crushed and Felbor buried beneath the rubble. Enraged, and intending to defeat the Servant, Cubby followed its stink-trail in rage, but it led to Fidget's house where the Servant was dead. So he followed Fidget's stink-trail. The vicious kobolds were surmounted by the arrival of Cubby; all the beasts surrendered and fled. After hearing Cubby's story, Fidget had no choice but to adopt the brogmoid as his own.

The trio emerged from the tunnel to find Khare the Watcher. He told Anesi to start his journey to Miznia; there was no time to wait, for the other six Servants of the Terror, feeling the death of the other spiritually, were coming north to find the murderer. Fidget and Cubby were determined to go along with him. Khare gifted Anesi with some possessions, including an infotater, BERZIO and a blue enchanter's cloak, which Mildi have stayed up all night making for him. Anesi told Khare to give his mother the treasures of the lair. The elder magician warned Anesi not to use his magic unnecessarily, since the Servants would be able to sense any magic used in the vicinity.

Patches of the first autumn leaves hung on the trees as the three embarked on their southern journey. They decided to stop for the night. Though deep in the forest, no spells could be used to start the fire, thus Cubby was required to make it by hand. The lonely dryad, Tyrillee spies them at night. She insisted on joining them.

A two day trek brought them to a brook which they followed southward. On the evening of the third day, the woods came to an end. They camped and started a fire. The six remaining Servants of the Terror in the form of giant birds were seen in the sky flying on a northward course. The four quickly doused the fire and hid.

The next morning, the head south across the barren wasteland. Their route is broken by an immense gorge. Following its edge eastward, they came to a dragon which had been made from a dragon's skeleton, that of a dragon named Chet. The crossing of the bridge is treacherous as it sways in the wind. Cubby saved them from tumbling off.

They spent the cold night on the other side of the bridge, which was continuation of the vast wasteland they have previously been crossing. In the morning they found the ruined keep of Arbroneth. Presuming it to be abandoned, Anesi REZROVed the doors and they entered.

Inside the entry hall of Arbroneth, they met a Dimwit Flathead marionette. Anesi cut the strings, while Fidget beheaded it. In dismay, Stribel Wartsworth (still in the disguise of Humble Bellows, so none knew who it was; Stribel too did not know it was Anesi at first until the boy said his own name), dropped down into the room and threatened them with magic. Cubby assaulted him. Anesi memorized VAXUM, but Cubby let up the subdued Stribel, who warned that his master Dispoz was coming.

Dispoz returned, but in fear, Anesi VAXUMed him. The master of the keep knew of the enchantment that he had been placed under, and was determined to get even when it wore off. Tyrillee slipped away to explore the keep. When she descended to the dungeon, she found Chuck the dragon who was still imprisoned deep below. She wanted to free him. When Chuck caught sight of the dryad's red poncho, he was thrown into a rage, for the dragon could not tolerate the color red. He shook the entire foundations of the keep trying to break free from his chains.

As dusk began to fall, Stribel served the companions provisions, while Anesi and Dispoz chatted as friends (though the VAXUM had worn off, Dispoz sought to gain the upper hand by pretending that he was still under its effects). The two magicians learned that they both had attended Galepath University. Another roaring shook the castle to its foundations, destroying even the bridge that connected its two towers. Dispoz took the opportunity to leave, with Anesi following after.

Stribel knew that it took magic to fight magic. Since Dispoz looked like he was about to have his hands full with the dragon, Stribel believed now was a prime opportunity to combat the sorcerer. He only needed a spell, and Anesi was the only one who had any on hand; plus he did not have much faith in the boy. He did not figure that Anesi was prepared to fight either Dispoz or the dragon. He figured if he grabbed Anesi's book and took off running, that Anesi would come after him trying to get it back instead of putting himself in danger.

Thus Stribel assaulted Anesi and tried to rob him of his spellbook. The young enchanter wrestled with the little man until he tripped over his own Dimwit puppet. When Anesi conked him on the noggin, it knocked some sense into him. Stribel led Anesi to the south tower, then down to an underground place between both towers. After the two tumbled down the steps, Anesi landed and Stribel was not in sight.

Instead, Anesi found not only Fidget, Cubby, Tyrillee, and Dispoz, but the dragon Chuck. Anesi tried to VAXUM Dispoz again, but the powerful sorcerer had since warded himself against it. The encounter raged on. Tyrillee and Anesi tried to hold off Dispoz while Fidget and Cubby worked on breaking the dragon's chains. The dragon exhaled its fiery breath upon Dispoz, but it was completely futile. As a last resort, Anesi REZROVed the dragon's chains, freeing the beast from all imprisonment. Everyone, except for Dispoz and the dragon, took flight from the keep just before the entire thing collapsed.

In the meantime, while Dispoz was fighting Anesi and Chuck in the dungeon, Stribel knew that his spells were weakened or completely dissipated, including the ward on his library door. This gave Stribel the chance to steal the GUNCHO spell, along with RADNOG and YONK, before escaping Arbroneth. Even though Anesi was his grandson, Stribel knew that he could not yet reveal his identity or magical power, lest if Anesi were to slide over to the Terror's side, he would be uncovered and his scheme of using GUNCHO foiled.

Using powerful enchantments, Dispoz transformed himself into a blue dragon and engaged in heavy warfare against Chuck. The fight lasted well on into the night. Dispoz kept trying to rip out Chuck's heart, but he did not know that the dragon's heart was not in the same place as a human's. And by the time Chuck had been victorious by crashing and burning his enemy, the companions, including Stribel, had followed the keep's ceramic aqueduct system southward quite some distance. At the time when Stribel gifted Anesi with RADNOG and YONK scrolls,

Chuck landed before them. It was only because of Anesi's NITFOL that they were able to converse with the friendly creature, before sleeping for the night.

Chuck left early that morning to cremate Chet. When he returned, he offered to fly everyone as far south as old Mareilon. The aerial ride took them beyond the wastelands, over a charred forest as it gradually melded way into a living one, above the original Frigid River, and southwest to the Shallow Sea. A special trip to Largoneth Castle was the last sight to see before landing at the ruins of the original Mareilon. Before Chuck departed, Anesi gifted him with a sapphire necklace, which was only big enough to fit halfway up one talon.

After scouting the ruins of Mareilon, the companions find a building to rest in for the night. During the night, Tyrille, having been overly queasy at being in a structure made of dead wood, fled from the building to sleep inside a living tree beyond the walls of the city. The others awoke to a scratching sound from outside as a grue broke down the door to the room. Cubby wrestled with the intruder, but was easily tossed back. A second grue joined the array. With a FROTZed stone, Stribel warded off the grues. Though the rest of the pack of devilish beasts howled from outside for the rest of the night, none of them dared attempt to enter. Anesi could feel the Great Terror's fear from Mareilon.

At dawn, Tyrillee returned to them once the grues had departed. The influence of the Great Terror had been so intense here, that the grues were no longer feared normal daylight, though they still keep to the shadows from where they tossed rocks in hope that their victims would flee into a dark building. Anesi's right thigh was injured from the barrage. To counter the grue attacks, one grue found himself FROTZed, while another VAXUMed grue became of assistance, pummeling the other grues with rocks. Even the huge grue that dared to come out into the sunlight found itself IZYUKed. Outside the city, Stribel bandaged Anesi's leg.

Crossing the Backbone Hills for the new Mareilon, they sighted a surmin. Fidget, hoping to kill the rodent, released an arrow at it. In fear, the surmin broke wind on them. Tyrillee was the only one who managed to escape by fleeing into a tree. The others were consumed by the stench and forced to wash themselves in a nearby stream.

Tyrillee returned, bringing Gryphon's Breath flowers with her to heal Anesi's wounds. Fidget aided his friend, by crafting a crutch for him to use. The six Servants of the Terrors were seen in the skies, moving southward.

The civilians of the new Mareilon did not greet them in a friendly manner. Everyone was paranoid of them. The party entered the Elvenhome Bar and Grill where the owner L. Rhonda waited on them. She recognized Stribel, but was initially silent about them as he did his best to ignore her as though they had never met before. While being waited on, a brawl broke out between the party and a group of miners at the inn when they wanted to teach Cubby a lesson. When one of the miner's swords struck into her new counter, she joined in, flinging dishes in her anger at anything that moved. Against better discretion, Anesi VAXUMed everyone in the room in an attempt to cease the brawl. But this spell was one too many—the Servants of the Terror sensed his use of magic and came for him.

The Servants, in the forms of giant nabiz, were too large to enter the inn, but instead shook its foundations with tremendous blows as one of the creatures widened its jaw to the height of the structure and to consume the entire thing. Everyone within escaped through the back kitchen door into the alley. The lead miner found himself eaten by one of the nabiz-formed Servants.

Chaos seized Mareilon. It was already too late to save the poor city. Destruction and ruin was everyone. Two of the Servants demolished the tavern, smashing down the walls on three sides, while great swaths of wreckage marked the passage of the other four through the city. To destroy the nabiz within the city, Anesi casted RADNOG on the inn, defeating two of the Servants with the massive five. But the hungry flames spread to the next building and the next, until the entire city was aflame. Thus the second Mareilon died just like the first.

L. Rhonda led the group to her home, where she led them to a trapdoor in her bedroom closet. Anesi, Fidget, Cubby, Tyrillee, and Stribel descended the ladder. L. Rhonda stayed behind to quickly gather her belongs; she intended to leave the city by another route.

The party found themselves in the Great Underground Highway. While travelling to Miznia along the ancient roadway, the Great Terror began to directly see Anesi out, speaking into his mind with fear and terrible visions, before leaving. To protect himself, Anesi memorized three spells. At the highway exit, they emerged at the ruins of Dolo Finis, the old capital of Miznia, encroached by massive amounts of vegetation.

Their arrival was greeted by a swarm of the carnivorous spiderflowers that drifted down on the wind. Anesi REZROVed the door of a ruined estate in an attempt to escape them, but found that its roof was open and the spiderflowers descended within, and formed a web. This was the first attempt of the Terror to force Anesi into wasting his stored spells. The young enchanter destroyed them with RADNOG, then they fled into a courtyard. The portcullis fell down behind them, trapping them in as snakes poured out from the well. Anesi IZYUKed to the wheelhouse high above to reopen the portcullis. To return to lower grounds, it was necessary for him to memorize additional spells. When he took out his spellbook, a savage downdraft knocked him down.

The four surviving Servants of the Terror, now in bird form, surrounded Anesi. In order to tempt Anesi, the Great Terror assumed the form his own father, Choboz. Though an illusion, Anesi believed that this was his father who had willingly bowed down to the service of the Terror in exchange for magic power. Anesi refused to serve the demon, repelling him with a concentrated FROTZ.

At that moment, Chuck and nearly twenty other of his dragon friends arrived to fight against the Servants of the Terror. The dragon had showed them the sapphires Anesi had given him and insisted that they meet him. One their way, they had spotted the quartet cruising the coastline of the Shallow Sea and pursued. The dragons were able to defeat the four, but the Terror continued to fight on, seizing Anesi by the throat. Still assuming the form of Choboz, though a charred and blackened image, the Terror tried to instill fear into Anesi.

Before stabbing the Terror with a small dagger in the wrist, Anesi replied with the famous lines, "I do fear you. But it's not fear that makes you strong, but submission to fear." The Terror let Anesi go and the others of his party assaulted the demon as well.

It was then that Stribel Wartsworth revealed his true appearance, transforming from the dwarf-like Humble Bellows into an aged wizard. His Dimwit puppet became his spellbook. The powerful wizard unleashed the spell he had been preparing, GUNCHO. While the spell hurled the evil Krill into another world, the Terror shrugged it off like an oversized suit.

Anesi quickly memorized the YONK spell and released it upon Tyrillee. While the dryad drew near to a morgia tree, Cubby took hold of the Terror and threw it to Tyrillee. The dryad encoiled her arms around the demon and then vanished inside the tree. She reappeared alone, leaving the Terror behind inside the *world* within the tree. It now had an entire world all to itself.

After the terror had been defeated, the companions parted ways. Tyrillee remained at Miznia. There was something about the morgia trees, which did not grow in the north that fascinated her, and she wanted time to play among them before she began a search for the rest of the dryads.

Chuck the dragon flew the rest home, taking the scenic route up the eastern coast along the Flathead Ocean. When they flew over Borphee, Cubby and Fidget suddenly asked to be let off. Cubby wanted to visit old haunts and old friends along the harbor, and Fidget wanted to sample the experiences of a truly big city had to offer while he had the advantage of a guide. He had no family to go home to anyway.

Anesi and Stribel were dropped off at the home of Choboz and Mildy. In the time that they had been away, the Thriff wizards had made improvements on the property: more land had been cleaned, the house was painted and trimmed, new rooms had been built, a bright new barn stood where the old one had been, and an elaborate series of pipes and pumps carried fresh water from the creek right into the house. Anesi was able to finally converse with his grandfather, who explained to the young enchanter everything that he had done in the past several years.

Fidget had seen all he wanted of the *slimehole* Borphee in about an hour. So he took part of the treasure that was given to him and went to the nearest guild enchanter, who charged a bundle, but arranged an AIMFIZ to bring Fidget to Anesi. Fidget suggested hunting for the Hoards of the Seven Servants, but the results of this scavenger hunt to this date is still unknown, other than the lair nearest to Anesi's home was used by the family. Finister returned to Oresia, but the other six wizards stayed with Anesi and his family as long as they were needed.

Anesi was enrolled at Galepath University. During his period of attendance (which was cut short because of the End of the First Age of Magic), enchanters and wizards from all over Frobozz went to visit him to hear his story and ask him questions about the Great Terror.

## **Chapter 7: Dawn of the Triax (c. 958~966 GUE)**

Of all the twisted subplots and hazy mists of confusion that emanated from the decade and a half of Supernatural Usurpations, the most compelling and perhaps the most curiously pathetic story to emerge from the period is that of the young Dirinthrax and the renewed Flathead claim to the dominion of Egreth Castle. As has already been mentioned, any attempts to date the events surrounding the powerful Radnor and the Zizbit Triax are doomed to failure because of the poor survival rate of records from that period. All that can be established is that the evil demon known as Jeearr was ousted from his Egreth stronghold by 957, and thus, of all the circle of dark magicians that once haunted the area, only Radnor remained. It is likely that this event occurred immediately following the chronicles of Anesi, and its conclusion with the Triax may have been in part responsible for the events leading up to the end of the First Age of Magic (although that is only conjecture).

### **Assault on Egreth Castle**

Included among the members of a band of travelers passing by the Egreth region en route to Accardi were Gurthark the Stout, who was transporting a load of silk coverlets to his brother-in-law; a scout named Ryker who had been hired to guard the caravan; a beautiful woman named Acia, who was on her way to the bedside of her ailing grandmother Althea, hoping to inherit her fortune; the ancient and only partially competent magician called Frobwit the Fair, who was heading to the annual Convention of Enchanters and Sorcerers with his lone apprentice Dirinthrax; and Lia, the only surviving descendent of Thorman the Red-Beard who had disguised herself as a boy.

Many years earlier, the clever Radnor attended the Borphee Magic School, where he had always teased a fellow student named Frobwit the Fair. Althea, a carefree beauty who flirted with all the boys, gained the attention of Radnor. Although Frobwit wooed her, she chose Radnor over him. After graduating, the clever Radnor was able to convince Thorman the Red-beard (one of the finest magicians of the time) to take him as his apprentice instead of the Frobwit. As life swept Radnor along on its strange path, Althea instead married a sea captain, although the magician secretly desired to yet make her his Queen. While apprenticed to Thorman, Radnor sought to gain possession of the Amulet of Egreth which belonged to his master. He never was able to, and it would not be until much later in his life when he found a way to weaken Thorman. Radnor did this by causing the death of his daughter. But as his dying gesture, Thorman threw the amulet out of his turret window, so that none but his young granddaughter Lia might have it.

It was only a decade later when the amulet returned to Radnor at Castle Egreth in the possession of a woman of Gurthark's caravan. His crystal ball revealed this information to him while they camped on the outskirts of Egreth for the night. He commanded his night gaunts to bring back the woman from among them. While they were away, Radnor went to prepare a vat of hereditary neutralizing potion which was intended to remove the last vestige of magical power from the amulet's current owner—no longer would the granddaughter of Thorman fulfill the ancestral promise; the amulet would belong to him. Out of his bubbling vat of vile potion was born a crown anointed with the potion. The night gaunts returned with a prisoner. Unknown to Radnor, there had been two women of the caravan, Acia and Lia. He mistakenly believed that Acia was the granddaughter of Thorman (not aware that it was Lia), and sought to take her as a bride. Acia no longer had Lia's amulet upon her, for she had dropped it. Radnor signaled for his creatures to return to the campsite and bring him whatever cloaks they found there. Acia was placed within the Egreth dungeon.

In the meantime, those of the caravan had discovered that Acia was missing from amongst them. Dirinthrax had already set out on his own intrusion of the castle alone, while three other members, Frobwit, Gurthark and Ryker set out. Lia initialed was instructed to remain behind, but she soon set out on her own to infiltrate the castle. Each of their excursions found them reuniting at to confront Radnor, with an exception of Gurthark who indulged himself within the castle's treasury.

Frobwit had been the first to meet with Radnor. When he realized that he was the evil magician of Egreth and desired the Amulet for some evil purpose, a rare courage built inside of Frobwit and he was determined to fight against Radnor. After a magical battle of flaring beams and pyrotechnics, the evil wizard was able to defeat Frobwit

by morphing him into a slug. Dirinthrax, Lia and Ryker entered at that moment. In revenge, Dirin used the Amulet of Egreth to funnel his rage into a mighty spell which took Radnor by surprise. The magician's power was subdued and Frobwit was restored to health and vigor. A fight broke out over the Amulet and Lia fished it away with its own magic. At the same time, her disguise fell away, revealing a womanly figure, and her hair lengthened. Using the power of the amulet, Lia transformed Radnor into a puddle of foul-smelling liquid. Frobwit finished the deed by entrapping the warlock's essence in a crystal ball, and sent it into the Egreth treasury. Unfortunately, Gurthark, thinking that the crystal ball was but another of the castle's relics, did not leave it behind.

After Radnor had been defeated, a bright light filled the room. Day had once more turned to night. But outside the chamber window, two stars shone with the brilliance of the sun. They were the eyes of the spirit of Thorman the Red-beard. He explained to her that with the amulet she had gained his powerful magic, and that Dirinthrax was the true heir to Duncanthrax. Thorman then resurrected the crumbling hulk of Egreth Castle into its former glory. The transformation affected even the night gaunts that dwelled within, breaking the powerful hold that Radnor had had over them. Although the night gaunts offered their service to King Dirinthrax and Queen Lia, she dismissed them to return to the forests and live free. After a brief farewell, the other members of the caravan departed, leaving the kind and brave new rulers of Egreth behind.

Egreth thus being rid of the last of its evil usurpers, Dirinthrax, in truth no more than a teenage boy at the time, took the chance to proclaim himself ruler of Egreth and Lord of Quendor. Although Dirinthrax itself is clearly a name of royal origins, the only sources available to us depict the young Dirin as no more than a farm boy with an annoying tendency to make the family cow vanish into thin air. Exactly which branch of the hopelessly convoluted Flathead family tree sank into oblivion to reemerge in the form of Dirinthrax is to this day not clear. Nevertheless, it seems obvious enough that Dirin did see himself as the rightful descendant and heir to Duncanthrax the Bellicose. Interestingly, none of the sources ever record him as attempting to legitimize himself through any other member of the Flathead dynasty, giving credence to the notion that Duncanthrax did in fact have another son that history has forgotten.

In any case, the young boy soon took Lia to be his wife and queen, and the two magic users set to work making Egreth Castle livable once again. Clearly, in an age dominated by the might of the guilds and the ever-growing power of Syovar, very few people would ever notice this quiet reincarnation of the Flathead dynasty. Dirin and Lia for their own parts never seem to have made any efforts to enforce their claims to royal authority. Having few friends, fewer subjects, and no military of any kind, the two seem to have been content with absolute dominion over their own empty castle, occasionally taking trips to the nearest village to replenish their larder as necessary. Although it is not known to any degree of certainty what fate awaited the two pretenders, various oral traditions from the Egreth area claim that the devastating events of the end of the Age of Magic were barely felt by the castle's owners, and that the last pair of Flathead monarchs lived well into the 11th century, when they finally passed away in silence and obscurity.

### **The Crystal of Doom: Part I**

The small caravan, now consisting of Gurthark, Ryker, Acia, and Frobwit, resumed its trek for Accardi-by-the-Sea. Unknown to any of its members, the crystal ball Gurthark took as a souvenir of Egreth was not a treasure of innocence. The sphere was the very one in which Frobwit had imprisoned Radnor's evil essence. The Evil One was determined to make Frobwit pay dearly. The sorcerer's malevolent force, concentrated in this small sphere, would burst out in fits of rage, wreaking havoc upon those around him. There was a series of seven evils which had been prophesied to emit forth from the orb.

An eerie light emanating from the ball commenced the first of these, materializing a flock of giant corbies out of thin air. One of these beasts swooped towards Frobwit, snatched him out of the wagon, and carried him high above the meadowlands. Ryker was able to defeat the remaining birds of prey.

The second burst of evil caused Acia to fall into a deadly illness. Coherently, she was drawn out of her body into the crystal orb. Although Radnor knew that Acia was not the granddaughter of Lia, he still sought her as his queen, calling her by the name Althea (whether he thought Acia was actually Althea, or called her this because of the bloodline, is unknown). Acia was pulled out of this hellish reality when Ryker returned with the sacred gumpwort

fungus. While Ryker had been away gathering the mushroom, Radnor had released the third burst of evil, which had set fire to the silken coverlets which Gurthark carried in his wagon.

As Gurthark, Acia and Ryker were crossing the Borphee River upon the boat of Ryker's uncle, Ozark, the fourth spell summoned a great sea serpent. The monster took hold of Gurthark's fishing line and dragged him off the ferry. The man would survive, but separated far from his companions where he would go on to possibly vanquish a cyclops that was threatening the Kingdom of the Elves. Some historians speculate that he may have married Myla, a beautiful elfin princess.

The fifth spell transformed Ryker into a hideous monster with superhuman strength. Almost without delay, the sixth burst of evil caused Acia's grandmother, Althea, to miraculously regain all the loveliness of her youth while Acia became as weak, withered, stooped and wrinkled as a woman many times her age.

By the time Ryker and Acia had used the gumpwort fungus to cure themselves, the crystal ball radiated for the seventh burst of evil. At Acia's urging, Ryker grasped the crystal to throw it out of the room before its evil could manifest upon them. But as he did so, the spirit of Radnor fought its way out of the crystal ball. It darted straight at Ryker and leapt into him. In exchange, Ryker's spirit floated out of his own body and into the crystal. Ryker's body was now the vessel of Radnor's spirit. As he moved towards Acia to take her as his queen, he suddenly disappeared.

### **The Crystal of Doom: Part II**

For unknown to all of members of this plot, two fledgling magicians, Moog and Slye had prepared to bring forth the Triax. To do so, they stole an ancient Zizbit spell book from Althea, Acia's grandmother. The prophecy its runic words contained read:

Six eyes and six hands for the Triax,  
Inscribing the arc spell in the sand.  
The runes foretell the fate of Quendor:  
A reign of darkness upon the land.  
Two eyes, two hands have mother's form,  
Two hands and eyes were backwards born.  
The last pair for one skilled in sorcery,  
Who, imprisoned by mage, by that mage is set free.  
When these three twos join at Phee and Bor,  
The Triax will rule from shore to shore.

In crystal ball, magician trapped  
Avoids for now intended death.  
His vile soul at random spills,  
And taints the air with dire breath.  
Seven spills of power, then all is sapped.  
Seven bursts count the fatal trend.  
For if not yet freed from his prison –  
The mage then meets his end.

Moog knew that she and Slye fulfilled the prophecy as being two of the three members of the Triax: she was the one with her mother's form and Slye had been born feet first. The magician Radnor, who was confined within the crystal ball was the third. To ensure the prophecy's completion, they were determined to liberate Radnor before the seventh burst of evil. Breaking the seal upon the Temple of the Zizbits at Pheebor, which had not been disturbed since the destruction of the city in 396 BE, they watched the spillage of evils from Radnor's crystal ball through an oracle in the temple.

When Moog realized that Frobwit was the only one who might be capable of reversing Radnor's imprisonment, she set Slye to seize him. The obedient servant rode all night and the next afternoon until he came to the edge of a



great forest where he saw a pale figure moving within. Thinking it might be the wizard, Slye went in. The gloomy darkness did not frighten him. In fact, he found it to be the perfect place to ambush Frobwit. Suddenly a wooddevil emerged from the shadows. Before the beast could strike Slye, Frobwit's elfin sword flew out of his hand and sliced deeply into the wooddevil, killing it. He could not believe that the wizard had saved his life. For Frobwit, having been carried off by the corbie, had met with Gumboz the Magnificent and been gifted with an enchanted blade.

Slye, who had never been taught magic, even by his closest friend Moog, was impressed with Frobwit's tales of magical escapades. He was sorrowful that he was required to bring the magician back to Moog, especially when Frobwit made good on his promise to teach Slye some spells.

Together, the two arrived at Accardi-by-the-Sea, where the annual Convention of Enchanters and Sorcerers was taking place. While Frobwit reunited with Althea, who had been restored to her youth by the sixth burst of evil, the aged Head of the Circle of Enchanters, the same Enchanter who had defeated both Krill and Jeearr, began to speak of a Great Danger:

A Great Danger lies in wait. From what we know, it is now powerless to harm us. If it joins with another great evil, the depth of its dark destruction would be measureless... We must find and eliminate the Great Danger before it is too late.

At the same time, the enraged Frobwit arrogantly spoke up in reprisal, "Just let me get my hands on this Great Danger! Why, I defeated the Evil Magician of Egreth! I just said FOBLART MUGWART BUZMUZ..." In his boasting, the magician accidentally released Radnor from his imprisonment. What Frobwit did not realize was that he had been manipulated into speaking these words in reverse by Moog, who was still watching over the entire ordeal through the oracle of the Zizbits. She had casted a mirror spell, forcing him to reverse the essence-entrapping spell.

At this time, Moog knew that the time had come to fulfill the Zizbit prophecy. She hurried out of the temple and down the long flight of steps that encircled the plateau to the sandy shore at the junction of the Phee and Bor River. She artfully inscribed the arc spell into the sand as the Zizbit spell book instructed.

Suddenly, creation summoned forth all its fury in response to Moog's call for the forming of the ultimate evil union known as the Triax. Slye was transported, against his will, from the Guild Hall and took his place alongside Moog as the second member of the Triax. Then Radnor, freed from his crystal prison, took his place as the third. While Moog was ecstatic, he was ready and eager. This was the moment he had been waiting for all his vile life. He could see that it would be easy to dominate over the other two. The prophecy was fulfilled.

Combining their powers together, the Triax began its reign of the Eternal Darkness. The rivers and the seas turned to blood, as the charred land gave up its nurturing spirit. Although all records of this dark period of history are wanting, this grim tyranny would take many seasons and much valor to undo. Much hardship would pass before tranquility returned to Quendor.

## **Chapter 8: Birthplace of the Second Inquisition (c.962~6 GUE)**

It is with much reluctance that this supplementary chapter has been placed where it is, forcing the disruption of the beginning of the Triax with its aftermath. But in keeping true with the chronological order of events, and uncertainty of dates floating around this jumbled decade, there is no perfect alternative solution.

Taking into consideration that GUE Tech was Dalboz's alma mater, and that most university programs require an average of four years to graduate, it can properly be assumed that this tale could begin as early as the fall term of 962 GUE. Both Yannick and Dalboz were enrolled for at least one full year before the fall of magic, thus the range of the beginning of this tale is most likely 962~965 GUE.

The roots of the eleventh century Inquisition began with these questions: What is magic? Is it a business? Is it a philosophy? A religion? A source of power or equilibrium? Is it to be disturbed or balanced? These were precisely the sort of naïve questions that two novice first-years debated at GUE Tech, Zork's famed magic university. The good-natured, chubby Dalboz of Gurth, and the sharp-eyed, sharp-tongued Mir Yannick, were unlikely roommates. Dalboz, who was by all accounts the talent of the two, found himself drawn to the university for a variety of inexplicable reasons, and one quite explicable one: He had scored so high on the entrance exam. He not only had The Gift, but in fact qualified as Highly Gifted, and could attend free of charge on a Vice Regent's Scholarship. The Trustees were dumbfounded; how could the son of a simple miner from Gurth possess such natural magic? The miner himself was dismissive of the whole affair, and warned his son of involving himself in the useless chicanery of enchantment. The miner himself was "disenchanted."

Truthfully, Dalboz was an odd duck, if pleasant; there was an indisputable muchness to his character, an overflowing of his person and nature and, indeed, everything he came in contact with seemed to spring to life. He heard a great clamor of voices where there was none. He was always hungry, and had never, to his knowledge, felt what it was like to be full. And if he were to simply drop a seed in a garden, a full plant would spring up and bear fruit within a matter of seconds. Tales even tell that that grass could be seen springing up in his footsteps as he walked down the street. He was a Natural Mage, of a very simple (if crude) nature. Had he been born in another time, he would have been as great as Megaboz.

Mir Yannick did not have the Gift, but he and Dalboz grew to be friends all the same. It is commonly held that those who cannot practice magic cannot understand the practice of magic, either; whether or not this is so, it is true that Mir seemed a bit literal in his interpretation of the Higher Lessonry of Thaumaturgy—a bit forced of hand in Basic Enchanting—and certainly, his sneering, bottom line orientation towards the whole business of magic did not win him any favors with the faculty.

Mir's father saw magic in terms of its affordability, profitability and fiduciary viability. For, being a yeoman farmer who bred platypus for pie, he was paying Zm500 a term so his son could learn the proper spell set to make his grain grow golden and tall (THROCK "causes plants to grow") and his platypi grow fat and furry (a variant of CONBAK "causing bodies to grow in twelve different ways") so that at the end of the year the profits ledger might for once equal the costs. Mir himself was named when his expectant mother told his father, Yannick the Elder, that she had a surprise for him, and he would have to guess what it was. He guessed a sack of gold, a sack of wheat, and finally even a good, sturdy sack. So when his wife answered him, "Nay, merely another Yannick," Mir Yannick found the unfortunate name stuck. One can imagine Mir's own expectations of his life were somewhat as low.

### **A Deciding Vote / The Dam Fight**

Although many enchanterers in the Great Underground Empire have no natural inclination toward the subject, and would have just as soon be barristers or barkeepers (were there openings available at the more popular guilds) there are some who are altogether immagical. Try as he may, at the end of his first year exams, Mir could no more make a field grow than he could make a platypus fatten. In fact, everything he touched seemed to wither and die. His grades continued to falter, and the same week Dalboz made the Mage's List, Mir was put on probation. When the Trustees were called to approve Dalboz's qualifications for the appointment of Mage, they stayed after to vote on Mir's

expulsion. Mir made it by one vote-and had Dalboz not be so good at ZEMDOR (“turn original into triplicate”), he would have been out by two.

Mir never realized what Dalboz had conjured up on his behalf, to cheat the vote and keep him enrolled at GUE Tech. Instead, he recruited a group of popular upperclassmen conjurers to confront Dalboz, and have some fun at his expense. When they tried to stop him on his way to class, Dalboz fled to the Great Underground Subway. Mir and his bullies chased him from car to car as he tried in vain to get away. When Dalboz saw the train stop at the famed Flood Control Dam #3, he leapt off the train and headed for the top of the Dam.

Perhaps he thought that tossing a few VAXUM spells (“make a hostile creature your friend”) behind him would end the matter. Perhaps the slightly flabby freshman was too out of breath to think clearly. In either case, once Dalboz reached the edge of the Dam, he soon found himself surrounded. Mir accused Dalboz of having cast NUMDUM upon him. (NUMDUM is a common stupidity spell that lesser enchanters particularly liked to cast upon one another, as a kind of hazing prank at GUE institutions.) Despite Dalboz’s proclamations of loyalty, Mir attempted to invoke a KULCAD spell (“dispel a magic spell”) in return. But after turning purple and spluttering to such an extent, the conjurers took over for him.

However, since the only spell in operation was the ZEMDOR spell that had kept Mir from being expelled, a Certificate of Expulsion instantly appeared in Mir’s hands. The upperclassmen began to laugh, and Mir, furious with rage and embarrassment, tore the certificate in half and, before anyone could stop him, pitched Dalboz over the side of Flood Control Dam #3.

But Dalboz held fast to Mir’s cloak, and when he flopped over the side, he took his roommate with him. All who witnessed the event were certain that the friends were plunging to their deaths. As the two went screaming towards the bottom far below, Dalboz—in probably the most important invocation of his career—cast a long-life spell upon himself and his roommate, and the two bounced up from the rock, as if made of soft Borphean rubber.

Mir was quite ashamed of himself, and Dalboz, to his credit, was equally forgiving. He did everything he could to mend their friendship, which ultimately included expelling everyone in the entire school, to negate the expulsion and, in fact, make it somewhat of a promotion, seeing that Mir was actually the first one to be expelled at all. Mir never apologized, but Dalboz knew that to bear the shame of a public encounter with one’s own honest stupidity, was far worse than any apology he could require. What Dalboz could not have known was the depth of the hatred Mir felt, not just for Dalboz, but for magic itself and the shame and self-loathing it brought him. What Dalboz never saw was the sight of Mir, night after night, slipping into the archive of GUE Tech, burning precious scrolls of High Magic, a few at a time. That much less to learn; that much less shame. Mir Yannick vowed to destroy magic (and Dalboz with it) before it ruined him.

Yet in their own awkward fashion, the two schoolmates remained cordial. Possibly this is because neither Mir nor Dalboz were the run of the mill, ale-swilling, mage-bonding sort of student enchanter that had any friends at all. And Mir always needed Dalboz’s help in order to pass his exams. In return, Mir would ply Dalboz with platypus potpie sent in a picnic basket from home. In fact, the only bit of cruelty Mir ever showed Dalboz after the incident at the Space Needle, was an endless needling about his girth (“Well, they don’t call you Dalboz of Gurth for nothing!”) - about which Dalboz became a bit sensitive, especially considering Mir’s athletic, farm-bred physique.

Throughout the remainder of Mir’s enrollment, he would continue to frequently tack notes to the bulletin board, such as the following (966 GUE):

DESPERATELY SEEKING TUTOR  
all subjects pertaining to magic  
tutee has M.D.D.  
and must pass exams  
or be expelled  
will pay handsomely  
Zorkmids or livestock  
PLEASE CALL MIR YANNICK  
EXT. 4578

## Chapter 9: The Collapse of Magic (966 GUE)

The defeat of the Great Terror and the calamity of the Triax destroyed the lives of many wizards. The Enchanters' Guild Hall in Accardi lay in ruins, and all the surviving enchanters continued to disappear without a trace. Villages were abandoned. The taverns were filled with disturbing rumors, drunken men uttering strange tales, and many unsavory characters. The year 966 saw a new crisis befall the kingdom as the very fabric of magic itself seemed to be failing.

The reasons leading to the end of the First Age of Magic make a very confusing tale. Magic is a powerful force, the most powerful in the universe, but its exercise has its price. It seems that every time an enchanter performs a spell, some part of the power in that spell is lost in shadow. The more powerful the enchanter, the more powerful this shadow becomes. A great mage ultimately creates a shadow-self that is dimly aware. In 966 the leader of the Circle of Enchanters, who vanquished Krill and Jeearr, was the most powerful wizard of all, and his shadow had taken a real form, becoming very nearly as powerful as him.

The Shadow had a dream: to hold sway over all of the world; to remold the universe in his own image and rule it, where in such a universe his merest whim would smash a star or slay a butterfly. But he was not powerful enough, as his existence was still but a shadow. To accomplish this goal he needed the elemental Cubes of Foundation, which he could only obtain with the assistance of his human counterpart. After searching old tomes and questioning the wise concerning their whereabouts, he gathered five Cubes, including the earth cube. But he could not gather the remainder. To achieve his desire, all seventeen had to be brought together. He found no better servant than the Enchanter which had given birth to him. The Shadow found it simple to perturb the Cubes in order to make the Enchanters' rudimentary magics flicker or fail, knowing that this would set his counterpart on a quest to recover the remaining Cubes. In this way, the Head of the Circle would unwittingly be drawn into the Shadow's game.

In a world founded on magic, where sorcerers ruled the land, creating the spells needed to do everything from making bread to taming wild animals, this tampering immediately produced great changes in the workings of magic. There was a steep increase on the rate of spells going strangely awry or ceasing to work altogether. Beer tasted like grue bathwater, pastries were thick and greasy, there was difficulty with writing poetry without magical help on the rhymes, huntsmen were unable to control vicious beasts which now haunted the streets and roamed the wastelands in numbers never before seen.

The populace was confused and restive, and rumblings were heard concerning the Enchanters, who themselves were baffled. Those who were most experienced in the arts in all Zork found magic to be unreliable and frighteningly unfamiliar. The very foundations of the kingdom were threatened, and some even thought that the world was menaced by the looming destruction of magic itself. The unreliability of magic caused by the Shadow would lead to an emergency Conclave of Enchanters in Augur of 966 to discuss the situation.

### The Ancient Muses (966 GUE)

Meanwhile, the full tale of Belboz has yet to be told. Popular legend says much about the life of this great mage after his near disastrous encounter with Jeearr. While some tales would have us believe that Belboz eventually degenerated into a drooling, blithering idiot, still others put forth the notion that the processes of age began to turn his mind into something roughly akin to an overripe vegetable. Whether the vegetable in question was actually a kiwi, as some have suggested, is still a matter of great debate. In any case, such fine intellectual distinctions should probably be cast aside in light of recent research on the subject by Rebecca Snoot.

In her book called "Zork: The Return of Evil," she goes to great lengths to prove that Belboz, far from being either a drooling idiot *or* a vegetable, was in fact still in full possession of his faculties by 966, and furthermore that he played a crucial role in the building of a sculpture garden to the six Ancient Muses of the Arts, the greatest archaeological enigma of the Eastlands. Unfortunately for Ms. Snoot, her only evidence for this idea lies in Belboz's

An advertisement for the Enchanting CMLXIII EXPO in 963 GUE was scheduled to feature Barbel of Gurth, Belboz of Accardi and Orkan of Thriff as the guest speakers.

own work, “The Myths of Quendor,” in which he only points out that the Shrine itself was in fact sculpted in 966. However, *no* other contemporary sources refer to the event at all. The fact that Belboz seems to speak with authority on the matter would suggest that by the time the First Age of Magic came to an end, Belboz had left his mountainous retreat home and come to Shanbar to help with the event in question. Why the great necromancer left his mountain retreat at all is a matter of great debate. Was he aware of Y’Gael’s attempts to enshrine magical knowledge within the Coconut? (see the end of this chapter).

The most peculiar part of this whole affair is the important role the muse statues would come to play centuries later, in 1647 GUE. When an attempt was made to free the evil magic trapped inside the Cluster, also known as Feebo’s Folly, the site of the shrine would see the reforging of a Flying Disc of Frobozz using magical properties somehow inherent in the statues themselves.

Whether Belboz could have possibly known of the role the shrine would play in the distant future is a difficult question, possibly only answered by the design of the shrine itself.

The shrine as seen today consists of seven statues and a bowl, or trencher. The statues themselves are associated with the six Ancient Muses of the Arts: Eoj, Mit, Cire, Mik, Selrach, and Xela. The seventh, kneeling figure is not believed to be one of the original muses and is simply known as Lib, the Catcher. The fact that a statue seems to have been added years after is of the utmost significance, and will be discussed more later. Although it is not known which muses are associated with which art, many hold that the following odd verse is somehow germane:

Bog down not with your staff,  
but return to throw,  
lest the vessel of sight,  
miss your boxing helmet,  
and your brilliant defense,  
to hit you in the orb kicker

Some have suggested that Belboz himself was responsible for this peculiar piece of bad poetry. The extreme age of the oral tradition relating it would indicate it goes back at least as far as the creation of the shrine in 966, which would then relate it directly to Belboz. If this is true, then we must begin to give added significance to rumors concerning Belboz’s degenerative and senile state. It might even be possible to imagine that, due to lack of evidence to the contrary, the six Ancient Muses of the Arts are no more than creations of Belboz’s feverish vegetable brain, thus explaining the peculiar names assigned to the statues in question. Scholars have hypothesized that these peculiar names are actually reverse spellings of the names of various Implementors. However, these scholars are the same sort of people that insist that something significant can be derived from spelling Aragain backwards.

In any case, Belboz’s book on the subject was not to be published for some years to come. If nothing at all substantial can be determined about the aged mage’s state of mind at the end of the Age of Magic, it is at least clear that he survived the whole ordeal long enough to make his mark on the world to come.

### **Orkan Moves Thriff to Miznia (966 GUE)**

The strange wandering village of Thriff has, at one time or another, been located in most of the provinces of the Westlands. Orkan of Thriff constantly moved the town in an attempt to find a more benevolent climate for his terrible hayfever. In these days, Thriff was still located in Northern Frobozz, almost in uncivilized land. An entry in his diary describes this as follows:

Hot again. Retorts and alembics spoiling! Hate this northern clime. (966-07-23)

To cope with the aggression of the terrible climate, Orkan of Thriff transported the village of Thriff southwest of the Miznia Jungle by gating it through the Ethereal Plane of Atrii at the base of the Mithicus Mountains. (This is only one example of his pride in himself and his disdain for the commoners.) An entry in his diary reads:

Gated Thriff to Miznia, via Atrii. Relief at last! Villagers perplexed but grateful. (966-07-26)

It was here where the village probably remained forever, because eighteen days later, the Final Conclave of enchanter, of which Orkan was one, would help to bring the First Age of Magic to a close. He would realize soon after that the nearby volcano was still active. He recorded in his diary:

Mtn not dormant after all. Yonked a girgol just in nick of time. (966-08-02)

It was during this period that a vast herd of 69,105 migrating Christmas tree monsters descended on Thriff village, ready to cheerfully trample everything in their path. For a few days the village was protected by magic Glyphs of Warding designed by the enchanter Orkan, who wrote them in the snow. The luminous vegetables were enraged as they lined up at the slope of the valley. An entry from the diary of Orkan of Thriff reads (with a tiny glyph beside the text):

Wilderness life stinks. Raccoon nest in chimney; guncho took flue and all! Broke last burin warding off Xmas pests. Better off up north? (966-08-09)

About this time, the Shadow dared even to visit Belboz at the Enchanters' Retreat, hoping to obtain information. But the great necromancer was not fooled. This being betrayed its true nature as it did not know facts which would be trifles to even the rawest apprentice. It fled before Belboz could capture it.

In the meantime, to discuss the failure of magic, the leader of the Circle of Enchanters, the most powerful magician in the land, who had earned tremendous respect from all others in the kingdom, ordained that the great conclave of the Guildmasters from various guilds all over Zork be gathered together at Borphee. Orkan kept a diary which told of his departure for the Final Conclave in Borphee. His diary recorded his hope that Y'Gael was wrong in her belief that the Age of Magic was ending:

Borphee tomorrow. Y'Gael MUST be wrong. (966-08-13)

The following day, Orkan of Thriff secretly left for the Final Conclave at Borphee, leaving Cardinal Toolbox and the other villagers wondering where he was. The Cardinal went for a period during this dangerous time without any sleep, leading a silent prayer vigil with the rest of the populace in hopes that the Christmas tree monsters would be destroyed by mightier powers.

### **The Final Conclave (966-08-14 GUE)**

The Final Conclave, held on August 14, 966 at the Council Chamber of the ancient Guild Hall at Borphee, was attended by every guildmaster and major enchanter, including Orkan of Thriff, Gustar Woomax, and Y'Gael (although she was not present at the opening). Several laypeople, such as Sneffle, Hoobly, Gzornenplatz, and Ardis, were also present to discuss the failure of magic. One by one, they stepped forward, describing the devastating effects of the diminished magic. The course of this discussion was interrupted when the Shadow of the Head of the Circle entered the Hall and turned everyone except his human counterpart into various amphibious creatures:

Sneffle of the Guild of Bakers was one of the first to address the gathering. "Do you know what this is doing to our business? Do you know how difficult it is to make those yummy butter pastries by hand? When a simple GLOTH spell would fold the dough 83 times it was possible to make a profit, but now GLOTH hardly works, and when it does, it usually folds the dough too often and the butter melts, or it doesn't come out the right size, or..." He stopped, apparently overwhelmed by the prospect of a world where the pastries have to be hand-made. "Can't you do anything about this? You're supposed to know all about magic!"

Hoobly of the Guild of Brewers stood, gesturing at the floury baker. “You don’t know what trouble is! Lately, what comes out of the vats, like as not, is cherry flavored or worse. The last vat, I swear it, tasted as if grues had been bathing in it. It takes magic to turn weird vegetables and water into good Borphee beer. Well, without magic, there isn’t going to be any beer!” This statement had a profound effect on portions of the crowd. There were rumblings from the back concerning Enchanters. The word “traitors” rose out of nowhere. The Enchanters looked at one another nervously.

Gzornenplatz of the Guild of Huntsmen began to speak. “I’m a simple man, and I don’t know much about magic. But I do know that the wild beasts are kept out of the towns and villages not just by the huntsmen, but by spells as well. Just yesterday, one of my men was attacked and badly wounded by a troop of rat-ants. They’d slipped the bounds set down by a FRIPPLE spell somehow. Are we going to let the sorcerers loose rat-ants on us, and worse?” He sat, glaring significantly at the now-angry clump of mages around the unknown Enchanter.

As the huntsman’s accusations were being absorbed and discussed, Ardis of the Guild of Poets took the floor. He began to talk about magic rhyming and spelling aids, and their lack.

In the midst of his splendid peroration, just as he was sketching out an insulting mythological allusion in iambic hexameter, the Shadow unleashed CLEESH. The poet turned even greener than usual. His chin elongated and his skin began to look sort of slimy. In the blink of an eye there stood at the podium, not the orator, but rather a large orange newt.

“Breek! Co-ax! Co-ax!” it protested.

Ardis was not alone. Each and every guildmaster in the room had been turned into a frog, salamander, or other amphibian by the shadow! All but one—the unnamed Enchanter who saw the shadowy figure at the rear of the room, in a dark cloak slipping quietly out the door.

The Head of the Circle pursued the shadowy figure as it fled across Belwit Square. The sinister figure, its face hidden in the shadows of a dark cowl, turned to face him. It nonchalantly jumped into the air, where it was engulfed in a huge explosion. A thick and acrid cloud of orange smoke, which smelled vaguely of orange peels, filled the square. This was a fairly standard cloud which was a side effect of a certain class of teleportation spells, which were favored by those of a less than honest nature, as the cloud served to conceal their usually hasty departures.

The Enchanter attempted to remove the smoke with LESOCH (“cause gust of wind”), but the cloud was unimpressed. The wind built, slowly, but inexorably, to hurricane force. The cloud started to unravel at the edges, and then gave up and dissipated. Left behind on the ground was a small featureless white cube—the Earth Cube of Foundation. Marking the cube as such with his burin, the Enchanter BLORPLEd (“explore object’s mystic connections”) the mystical object and was pulled within it. Thus the Shadow was successful at forcing his human counterpart to venture out into the world to seek some answers, even as his own powers were fading.

### **Y’Gael’s Plan (966 GUE)**

While the leader of the Circle of Enchanters was seeking the mystery of the Shadow and the Cubes of Foundation, Y’Gael arrived at the Borphee Guild Hall to find all of the other masters in their amphibian forms. Using her powers, she was able to restore communication between them all with NITFOL. In the face of this situation, the newly-created newts and toads convened for one final fateful time. They quickly realized that the First Age of Magic was coming to a close. The sorcerers knew that they would not live to see the day when magic would again hold sway over Quendor. But, they had a plan to ensure that their vast and ancient knowledge was not lost through the erosion of time. The sorceress Y’Gael suggested using the Coconut of Quendor as a container in which to preserve all of the knowledge of magic for a later age, beyond the Age of Science:

“Our doom is sealed,” spoke one of them.

Y’Gael turned away from the window overlooking the Great Sea. “The Guildmaster nears the end of his final quest,” she said softly. “When he succeeds, for succeed he will, our powers shall cease to be.”

The silence was unbroken for a long minute. Then a tiny voice near the door peeped, “Forever?”

“No.” The old woman leaned forward on her staff. “The Age of Science will endure long; no one in this room can hope to outlive it. But our knowledge need not die with us – if we act at once to preserve our priceless heritage.”

“Wherein lies your hope, Y’Gael?” demanded Gustar Woomax, the salamander in the front row. “What magic is proof against the death of magic itself?”

Y’Gael’s dry chuckle stilled the murmur of the crowd. “You forget your own history, Gustar. Are you not author of the definitive scroll on the Coconut of Quendor?”

A tumult of amphibious croaks and squeals drowned out Gustar’s retort. Y’Gael hobbled over to a table laden with mystical artifacts, selected a small stone and raised it high.

“The Coconut is our only hope,” she cried, her eyes shining in the stone’s violet aura. “Its seed embodies the essence of our wisdom. Its shell is impervious to the ravages of time. We must reclaim it from the Implementors, and hide it away before its secrets are forgotten!”

The shrill voice of the newt, Orkan of Thriff, rose above the cheering. “And who will steal this Coconut from the Implementors?” he scoffed. “You, Y’Gael?”

The violet aura faded at his words. “Not I, Orkan,” replied Y’Gael, shaking the lifeless stone and replacing it with a sigh. “The fabric of magic is unraveling. We dare not rely on its protection. Another champion must be sought; an innocent unskilled in the lore of enchantment, who cannot know the price of failure, or recognize the face of death.”

Orkan’s squeak was skeptical. “Suppose your champion succeeds in this hopeless quest. What will become of the Coconut?”

Y’Gael turned to face the sea once more. “It will await the coming of a better age,” she replied, her voice trembling with emotion. “An age beyond magic, beyond science...”

The Enchanters decided to dispatch an innocent adventurer (for Quendor was now far too dangerous for those practiced in the thaumaturgical arts) on the dangerous task of regaining and then hiding the transcendent Coconut of Quendor, within whose time-impervious shell laid the essence of their wisdom. The simple peasant knew better than to get involved in the affairs of wizards, but everyone encountered seemed intent on testing the human’s abilities to the utmost. The peasant was drawn into a web of fantasy and magic, solving puzzles, seeking treasures, and fighting monsters. With an arsenal of new weapons and abilities at the disposal (which were cleverly provided by Y’Gael who had taken it upon herself to become proprietor of several shops across the Southland of Quendor), the human’s strength and power grew with every encounter.

This quest led the peasant to ascend into the Ethereal Plane of Atrii, where a group of Implementors were seated around a food-laden table, playing catch with the Coconut of Quendor:

One of the Implementors noticed my arrival. “Company,” he remarked with his mouth full. A few of the others glanced down at me.

A tall, bearded Implementor pitched the coconut across the table. “Isn’t this the feeb who... bought that stupid onion a few moves ago?” he muttered, apparently referring to me.

“That’s him,” agreed one of the others.

A cheerful-looking Implementor caught the coconut and glared down at me with silent contempt. “Catch!” cried the demi-god, lobbing the coconut high into the air.

“Got it.” A loud-mouthed Implementor jumped out of his seat, stepped backwards to grab the falling coconut... and plowed directly into me. *Plop*. The coconut skittered across the plane. The



Implementor who ran into me rose to his feet, livid with rage. "Pick up that coconut," he demanded.

I was startled, a bit unsure what to do.

"Pick up that coconut," growled the Implementor, "or I'll remove you."

The other Implementors were enjoying this exchange. Overcome with fear, I found that I could not move an inch. As I hesitated, the loud-mouthed Implementor growled something obscene, shoved me out of the way and reached down to retrieve the coconut. As the Implementor reached towards the coconut, a vortex of laughing darkness boiled up from underfoot!

"More company," sighed the cheerful-looking Implementor.

I backed away from the zone of darkness as it spread across the Plane, reaching out with long black fingers, searching, searching...

*Slurp!* The coconut fell into the eyes of the vortex and disappeared, along with a stack of lunch meat and bits of cutlery from the Implementors' table. Then, with a final chortle, the vortex drew itself together, turned sideways and flickered out of existence.

"Ur-grue?" asked the only woman Implementor.

"Ur-grue," nodded another.

"This is awkward," remarked a loudmouthed Implementor.

"No telling what the ur-grue might do with the Coconut. He could crumble the foundations of reality. Plunge the world into a thousand years of darkness. We might even have to buy our own lunch!" The other Implementors gasped. "And it's all his fault," he added, pointing at me with a drumstick.

"So," sighed another Implementor, toying with his sunglasses. "The Coconut is gone. Stolen. Any volunteers to get it back?"

One by one, the Implementors turned to look at me.

"I'd say it's unanimous," smiled the cheerful-looking Implementor.

A mild-mannered Implementor emptied his goblet of nectar with a gulp. "Here," he said, holding it out for me. "Carry this. It'll keep the thunderbolts off your back."

Again, I was fearful, hesitant.

"Here. Take this," urged the mild-mannered Implementor, holding out the goblet for me to take. "I really must insist that you take this goblet."

I reached out my hand towards the relic, but halted.

"I don't think he's going to accept the goblet," sighed the mild-mannered Implementor.

"Of course he will," smiled the tall, bearded Implementor, forcing it into my hands. "See?"

My eyes lost their focus momentarily.

The Implementor smiled kindly as I took the goblet. "And now you will excuse us. My fellow Implementors and I must prepare for something too awesome to reveal to one as insignificant as you."

And so the peasant set off to recover the Coconut of Quendor from the clutches of the evil ur-grue. While it can only be vainly speculated upon, several historians notice the obvious similarities between the account of this ur-grue and Belegur, the Devil – both were fallen Implementors who had taken upon themselves temporary vessels and bore animosity towards the other demi-gods. As it cannot be proven with certainty if more than one Implementor has fallen, there is not enough evidence at the present to bring reconciliation to this conjecture.

This quest involved a descent into the Jungles of Miznia, where the Crocodile's Tear was successfully stolen from its resting place within the bowels of a mighty crocodile statue where it had been placed by the evil sorceress Y'Syska. This idol, was the size of a subway train, not counting the limbs and tail. Its maw hung wide open with the lower jaw touching the ground to form an inclined walkway lined with rows of stone teeth. The stone jaw, when stood upon, lurched like one standing on a seesaw. Anyone wishing to steal Y'Syska's jewel would have to climb the idol without sliding into its mouth, and becoming trapped.

The theft of this jewel was accomplished when the peasant lured a mother hungus to stand at one end of the jaw. The weighty hungus was easily able to keep the far end of the seesaw raised high while the light-weight peasant reached up to grab the tear. The jewel popped off the idol's face, slipped from the hero's grasp and rolled down to the mother hungus' feet, where she promptly ate it, turned and lumbered off the jaw. The seesaw tilted, pitching the peasant helplessly forward into the idol. The interior long, low chamber of the idol was shaped much like the gizzard of a crocodile, with no non-magical method of escape. Fortunately this adventurer was able to get free, and hunted down the mother hungus. Using a cane of eversion, the hungus found herself turned inside out, the effect lasting but long enough for the undigested contents of the mother hungus' stomach to fall to the ground. The peasant again had possession of the Crocodile's Tear.

That same adventurer sold the recovered jewel to one of three shops staffed by Y'Gael for zm1000 enabling the purchase of the Phee Hourglass which she had somehow managed to obtain. This humble peasant-turned-adventurer discovered that with the Hourglass being turned over at a certain plaza in the ruins of Pheebor, one could travel in time, back to the days of the founding of city, and forward to the Final Conflagration. The effect was temporary, and the subject would only remain in the displaced era while the sand was falling.

The peasant harnessed this temporal travel in a massive plot to recover the legendary Pheehelm. Returning to the days of the sacking of Pheebor in 396 BE, the adventurer watched as Prince Foo was slain. His helmet, along with his severed head fell into one of the many battle trenches. In order to claim the Pheehelm, the unknown human tossed a chocolate truffle (which had been bathed in the Pool of Eternal Youth) into the trench, then temporal traveled to the time of the Final Conflagration (c. 3690 GUE) when the ground was soft enough for his pet minx to dig up the relic. Wearers of the Pheehelm are granted the wisdom of kings, and the power to see the unseeable, including the ability to sense the movements of grues telepathically without seeing them. The relic would be donned by this peasant, who after returning to 966, would use it to slay hordes of grues beneath the Mithicus Mountains.

Before entering these forbidden tunnels, the unknown peasant unwittingly removed Orkan of Thriff's YONKed GIRGOL spell from upon the volcano nearby Thriff. The released spillage of magma consumed not only much of the Christmas tree monster horde that threatened to descend upon the village, but also the Glyphs of Warding. The pine-scented survivors planned to continue their delayed migration into Thriff once the lava had cooled, but that same peasant inscribed a fresh glyph into the cooling magma, thus forever barring their advance. Cardinal Toolbox recognized this peasant as "the Savior foretold in our eldest legends." He promised anything for the reward of fulfilling the prophecy.

Much to the Cardinal's reluctance, the peasant asked for his sacred reliquary, which contained a white hemisphere—half of a scrystone that was needed to gain entrance to the Ur-Grue's lair beneath the Mithicus Mountains. The other half, a black portion, had been previously discovered in Orkan's cabin (which had been destroyed by the lava flow). When the two hemispheres were fit together, a gray scrystone was magically fashioned. Deep within the crystal, its swirling depths coalesced into the image of a warlock, standing before a seamless wall of stone. He muttered a secret word and a doorlike outline appeared which he pushed open. The vision faded as he stepped inside.

Discovering this outline at the base of the Mithicus Mountains, the peasant spoke the word and the door opened. Upon entering, a bolt of lightning zigzagged down the passageways, struck the human's lantern and blew it into little, tiny bits. Without a source of light, the peasant constructed an elaborate series of magical bubble-mirrors, which when angled properly, directed the sunlight to pour through the dank passageways. Donning the Pheehelm, this hero fought through ranks of grues and lucksuckers and came upon an underground treasure chamber.

Here the plunder of many kingdoms lay in a vast, sparkling mound of the type often employed by dragons as a mattress. (A rapid survey turned up at least 69,105 treasures.) Luckily, there were no dragons to be seen; but the southeast corner of the chamber was obscured by a curious shadow.

As I glanced around the chamber, the shadow yawned and stretched. "At least we meet." The shadow's chuckling subsided. "I rarely get visitors," it admitted in a wistful tone. "A pity I have to destroy you. An interesting question," continues the shadow conversationally, "is *how* to destroy

you. Not a trivial decision, no. I must select a spell that will enhance my image, a magic worthy of my thoroughly evil reputation.”

The shadow muttered thoughtfully to itself. “Let’s see, now. A spell. CLEESH? No; too silly. ESPNIS? Hmm. Better not; he/she might snore. I know!” cried the shadow with delight. “GIRGOL, the Time Stop spell! Love it. You’ll make a hilarious statue.”

At that moment I rotated the bubble mirror. The beam of sunlight reflected directly into the core of the shadow! The thing within stood revealed to me for one brief instant. Then my sanity was spared by a blinding flash and concussion that threw me hard against the far wall... The sound of sobbing jolted me to my senses.

In the corner lay a feeble old man, bent with grief. His robes were tattered, his white hair scorched by flame. I slowly rose and drew closer, bending low to touch his shoulder. With a *snap*, ten bony fingers clamped around my throat!

“I can always count on fools like you for sympathy,” chuckled the not-so-feeble old man as he held my windpipe shut. “Still, though your mind is weak, your body is young and strong. It will make a suitable vessel until I can find another grue.” He grabbed my hair, pulled my head back and directed my eyes into his own. “Relax. This won’t hurt a bit.”

My fear turned to resentment, then to rage as the old man violated my mind, absorbing my compassion like a sponge as he fought to take possession of your soul. But my soul was too flooded with an overabundance of compassion.

“Enough!”

The fingers on my neck dropped away, leaving me gasping but alive. I stumbled backwards to find the old man leaning against the wall, breathing hard, his eyes brimming with tears.

“Enough,” he cried again, gesturing towards the exit. “Take what you want and leave this place! I cannot bring myself to murder one so virtuous. Go!” His voice was bitter with despair. “Leave me to wallow in compassion.” With these last words, the broken man faded into nothingness.

The peasant reached into the treasure trove to lift the coconut off the floor. Not only did an angelic choir swell, but the ground underfoot trembled for a moment. Another tremor wracked the earth, and a deep, ominous rumble began to swell about. The rumble grew to a roar as a mighty zorkquake rocked the caverns to their very roots. The ground heaved sharply to the right, and bits of broken rock showered down on the peasant’s head. A devastating ground shock sent the human sprawling! The roof of the cavern gave way at the same moment, and tons of granite crumbled all around...

Unknown to historians, the peasant was miraculously saved and brought back to Grubbo-by-the-Sea:

“Is he still alive?”

The voice at my ear was familiar. I decided to open one eye.

“Apparently.” The old woman probed my left ankle with her fingers, and I winced with pain.

“Close call, though. What did you call that spell, your Worship?”

“TOSSIO. Turns granite to fettuccine.” Cardinal Toolbox wiped his mouth. “Any left?”

“Gluttony is a sin,” retorted the old woman, helping me to my feet. “Is everything ready?”

The old sailor dabbed a final touch of color onto the canvas, then signed his work with a chuckle. “All set, Y’Gael.”

“Very well.” The old woman handed me a slim golden wand and nodded at the easel. “Here. You need the experience.”

The painting shimmered with magic as the wand’s rays played across its surface. I watched with growing wonder as the skillful strokes and flourishes became one with the sea and sky, artfully blending with my surroundings until it was hard to tell where one began and the other ended.

“Cast off, Mister Clutchcake!” cried the old sailor, taking his place behind the wheel. “Let’s be underway while the tide’s still with us!”

“Aye, Captain!” The cook from the Rusty Lantern chopped the mooring rope with a meat cleaver, and the magnificent galleon glided away from the wharf and high into the sky, held aloft by planes of sparkling magic. The village of Grubbo-by-the-Sea dwindled off the stern; I could just see the little hilltop where my adventure began, so long ago.

The woman called Y’Gael weighed the Coconut of Quendor thoughtfully in her hand. “Better go below and take a nap,” she suggested as I stifled a yawn. “You’re going to need it.”

Thus the old sailor, Captain Zahab; the Enchantress, Y’Gael; Cardinal Toolbox; Grote Clutchcake; Sneffle the Baker, and the heroic ex-peasant sailed off into the sky with the Coconut of Quendor, which was to be taken to an unknown destination to be kept safe until magic could be returned. For bound in a powerful incantation by the enchanter Y’Gael, the Coconut was the spellbound keeper of a desperate purpose—the preservation of all knowledge of High Magic ever known to the Empire. Whoever had the Coconut in their protection was fulfilling a magical destiny, and could not be harmed. This destiny would culminate in the year 1067.

### **The Confrontation with the Shadow (966 GUE)**

In the meantime, the Shadow had been successful in tricking the Head of the Circle of Enchanters to unknowingly gather the remaining twelve Cubes of Foundation from all corners of the known world, and beyond. This eventually led him to the stronghold of the Shadow where he finally encountered his evil double. Every Cube has a relationship to a unique animal, which could be discovered by placing a selected Cube into a special gold box. Their properties, interior, and 966 location were as follows (the last four cubes, which have properties mostly unknown, were gathered by the Shadow himself from unknown locations):

CUBE	INTERIOR	ANIMAL	CUBE LOCATION IN 966 GUE
Earth Cube	Packed Earth	Mole	Dropped by the Shadow in Belwit Square (its location before this is unknown)
Water Cube	Water Room	Dolphin	(Ogre Lair)
Air Cube	Air Room	Eagle	(Temple)
Fire Cube	Fire Room	Salamander	(On Pillar in a Grue Lair)
Dark Cube	Dark Room	Grue	(Plain)
Connectivity Cube	String Room	Spider	(Hermit’s Hut)
Light Cube	Light Room	Firefly	Flathead Ocean: grouper nest on ocean floor
Death Cube	Boneyard	Worm	(dungeon cell)
Life Cube	Soft Room	Rabbit	Flathead Mountains: roc nest
Mind Cube	No Place	Owl	(octagonal room)
Change Cube	Changing Room	Butterfly	(in pipe)
Time Cube	Sand Room	Turtle	(outer vault)
Magic Cube	Magic Room	Unicorn	(outcropping)
<i>Dragon Cube</i>	<i>Good Room</i>	?	?
?	<i>Slime Room</i>	?	<i>(tiny exitless grotto 10 miles underground)</i>
?	?	?	?

?	?	?	?
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The audience chamber of the castle was high and spacious, and every proportion and decoration was intended to highlight the throne that loomed before me. The throne itself was bathed in light, but only featureless gray could be seen through the windows and skylights.

Mocking laughter echoed around me. About the throne a dark mist began to coalesce. It thickened into the outline of a human figure sitting nonchalantly on the throne. I could see the ghost of a cloak and hood as well. The figure spoke, "It's been such a pleasure to follow your progress. Thank you for collecting the cubes. I was surprised to find you in Borphée when I knew we had an appointment here."

The figure waved its arms in the air. Before you, rolling and tumbling in a bath of light, were four cubes. "When I gathered these and the earth cube, after searching old tomes and questioning the wise about their whereabouts, I conceived my plan. I could not gather the remainder of the cubes, but to achieve my desire, they had to be brought together. Who better than you to act in my stead?"

"It was a simple matter to perturb the cubes I had to make your simple magics flicker or fail. I knew this would set you on a quest. For I know you well!" The four cubes disappear. The figure sat straight on its throne and removed its hood. I found myself looking at a shadowy, dark and transparent version of me!

"Magic is a powerful force, the most powerful in the universe, but its exercise has its price. Each time a great mage performs a spell, some part of the power in that spell is lost in shadow. A great mage ultimately creates a shadow-self that is dimly aware." The figure grinned. "You have become the most powerful wizard of all, for I, your shadow, have become very nearly as powerful as you!"

"But why, you ask, am I collecting the elemental cubes? It's easy to answer. I am not powerful enough. My existence is still but a shadow of your own. My desires are unfulfilled. I wish power over all creation! I wish to remold the universe in my own image, and rule it. In such a universe, my merest whim would smash a star or slay a butterfly. You have brought me the tools of the remaking!"

"Now for a small precaution." The shadow gestured, and I was frozen in place unable to move even my littlest finger.

The shadowy figure deftly took the Earth cube from the sack and set it in the air between me, where it hung motionless. It then deftly took the Air cube from the sack and placed it next to the earth cube. They disappeared into a glowing line which appeared between them. The shadowy figure placed the Fire cube and the Water cube in the air, creating a square of glowing light. My little finger was full of pins and needles. I could again move it.

Four more cubes were placed above the square: the Soft cube, the Bone cube, the Light cube and the Dark cube. A cube of light shimmered before me. The shadow grew more excited, hopping around the structure to place the cubes. At the same time my feet and hands felt as if they have been asleep, but I could move them.

All the remaining cubes save one, the Magic cube, built another square, then the shadow added its own four cubes to make a second cube of light, which hung next to the first. My arms and legs became free, but I still could not speak or move my head.

The shadow grabbed the first cube of light, and twisting, chanting, squeezing, the cube was compressed and thrust inside the second cube. The points of the inner and outer cube connected, and it began to tumble, seeming to twist and distort as one face, then another, presented itself to

me. The figure capered madly in front of its construction, laughing and giggling. It ignored me. I felt almost thawed, but my mouth felt full of cotton.

The shadowy figure deftly took the Magic cube from me and raising it high, thrust it into the center of the tesseract! Cascades of light poured forth, blindingly bright, but I could still see the Magic cube at the center. The shadow was growing more solid, no longer transparent and dark! Chortling gleefully, it prepared to jump into the hypercube!

The freeze had worn entirely off! My contact with the Magic cube must have weakened it. I knew what I had to do—GIRGOL. As the words rolled off my tongue, the shadow froze in mid-leap! I could tell that the spell would not hold for long in this magically charged atmosphere. I tugged and pulled at the magic cube, trying desperately to remove it from its place in the center of the tesseract. With the last reserve of my strength, I freed it! Instead, I placed another object from my inventory into the hypercube, where it hung unsupported.

Time resumed its forward flight and the shadow, now as solid as a real person, performed a back flip into the tesseract. “No!” It screamed. “Stop! Fool, you’ve destroyed me! You’ve destroyed magic itself! All my lovely plains!” Now glowing as brightly as the construction it made, the figure approached the center. It grew smaller and smaller, and just before it disappeared, the hypercube vanished with a pop, and the Magic cube melted in my hand like an ice cube.

The Head of the Circle mysteriously returned to Belwit Square, whom all the Guildmasters and even Belboz crowded around. “A new age begins today,” said Belboz after hearing the wizard’s story. “The age of magic is ended, as it must, for as magic can confer absolute power, so it can also produce absolute evil. We may defeat this evil when it appears, but if wizardry builds it anew, we can never ultimately win. The new world will be strange, but in time it will serve us better.”

Although the Head of the Circle was able to prevent his “dark shadow” self from having power over the forces of the universe, he was unable to prevent the alteration of the Cubes in a such a way to halt the destruction of the very fabric of magic and hold back the Age of Science. Some arcane scholars have theorized that should magic have not been destroyed at that moment, the inevitable result of magicians wielding such unchecked power as existed before the end of the First Age of Magic would be the creation of another shadow. It too might be defeated, but eventually one would arise who would be victorious over its original. The outcome of such a victory is too terrible to contemplate. It is however hoped that no future generations will choose to gain control over the Cubes of Foundation. The first such attempt, described already, brought an end to the entire First Age of Magic. The next attempt might lead to the destruction of the entire universe as we know it.

### **The Third Dungeon Master (966 GUE)**

The Second Dungeon Master selected Dalboz of Gurth, a promising student at GUE Tech, to take on the title of Third Dungeon Master. He appeared to Dalboz and bequeathed to him the Dungeon Master’s staff, saying only that destiny had appointed the prodigy Dalboz the Third Dungeon Master of the Empire. Mir was the first to congratulate him.

In fact, Mir was the only person to congratulate him at all, because only moments after this supreme honor of Dungeon Master was awarded to Dalboz, word arrived from Borphée that the university was closing immediately and permanently. There had been an accident, a mishandling of magic, and a powerful mage had knocked the cosmic equilibrium out of balance—destroying the entire Age of Magic in the name of his improving his own power. Magic had disappeared from Quendor. It was obvious why the Second Dungeon Master had been so hasty about dumping that staff and making a quick retreat. Dalboz was fated to become, it seemed, the only Dungeon Master to never hold office. And though the staff made a lovely walking stick, and apparently the Dungeon Master’s Lair was associated with the position, Dalboz fell into a wretched state of despair.

Mir, of course, enjoyed this turn of events immensely. Though he tried to console Dalboz with the rumor around school that all magic had been crammed into the Coconut of Quendor, where it would be watched over until the return of magic itself, he secretly scoffed at the notion. But as the roommates parted ways that evening, at the

crossroads of the Great Underground Highway, they pledged to meet again, should that great day ever come. Their lives were woven together in the long life spell; they would certainly meet each other again, under happier circumstances. Or so they thought at the time. And with that, they dragged their bags in separate directions down the Great Underground Highway.

**PART VI:**  
**THE AGE OF SCIENCE**  
**966~1067 GUE**

Even after the final fall of the vestiges of the Quendoran empire and the crushing collapse of the essence of magic, the tale manages to continue onward into what is known today as the Age of Science. This period would dramatically weaken the ancient population centers in the west. Even the massive Borphee, emerging at the height of guild power in the 10th century as the new Quendoran capital, saw over the next one hundred years a sudden and violent decline in population and prosperity, the reasons for which still remain a mystery today. The Westlands, the land that had been the original cradle of Quendoran civilization and had appeared to be the land destined to preserve it, had gone the route of the unexpected. Although organized life in the West would continue, Quendoran civilization there was facing its final curtain call.

Meanwhile, the Eastlands had been showing remarkable sign of life, Syovar having been able to preserve the Aragain region from collapsing into total barbarism. As so much of Syovar's dynamic power stemmed from his magical ability, the events of 966 were a crushing blow to the old king. From that point onward, his Kingdom of Zork fades out into oblivion.

Any outside observer of the Eastlands at this point would have found the picture to be bleak at best, in marked contrast to the still-stable west. Nevertheless, an odd spark of life somehow remained. The stabilizing influence of the remaining Quendoran aristocracy and military had a civilizing effect on the hordes of barbarian invaders. From the end of the 10th century on, the newcomers settled down around newly-born cities that recreated the geography of the east. By the 980s the twin cities of Shanbar had sprung up almost overnight. With the birth of these new cities, Aragain's new populous also built strikingly permanent homes for their ancient gods. Although the cult of the Implementors would hang on with stubborn persistence for centuries to come, it was now forced to coexist with the vibrant and bizarre cults such as those springing up around the eternally high priestesses of Bel Naire.

And somewhere, behind the scenes throughout all these surprising events, Belboz lived on. The ancient necromancer's last work, "The Myths of Quendor", was not completed until early in the 11th century and is thus an excellent source for the history of the first generation after 966. While the end of his life remains a mystery, all that can be determined for certain is that by the 1050s, Belboz had finally passed away. He would not live to see the end of the Age of Science, when Quendor experienced a dynamic revival in the knowledge and practice of the magical arts.

### **What Happened to Dalboz?**

Dalboz, the Dungeon Master of a magicless land and butt of a cruel practical joke, retired in depression to his country estate—a cottage in the underground near Port Foozle. It was the only perk of the office of Dungeon Master, considering that the Dungeon Master is responsible for magically paying his own pension via the QUELBO spell ("turn ripe coconuts into gold"). Without magic, coconuts were just coconuts, and Dalboz was destitute, horribly depressed, agonizingly bored, and utterly lacking in appetite.

As a recluse, he became a Thaumaturge, a Philosopher of Theories Magical & Hypothetical. Excepting a seven year period in which he did absolutely nothing at all except play Single Fanucci (the solitary version) and drink Accardian Ale, he spent a good 35 years working out the answer to the freshman conundrum posed by the Bozbar spell: "If you cause an animal to sprout wings somewhere in the universe, somewhere else in the universe, does another animal lose its wings?" (The answer being, "Yes.") Depressed and alone, he would devote the next 70 years to studies of a more pressing issue; that being, could a fundamentally magic land be suppressed of magic forever?

### **What Happened to Yannick?**

While the Third Dungeon Master faded into obscurity, the untalented, but very ambitious Mir Yannick did the only thing the untitled second-son of a yeoman farmer could do in an age without magic, he went to Port Foozle and joined a Zorkastrian Seminary to begin a career in the booming and highly lucrative field of religious fanaticism.



Mir's had father reasoned that although he would be no use in the platypus-fattening department, perhaps he could at least pray for the financial security of his family. And so it seemed Mir had finally found the perfect calling for a slightly lazy, fairly greedy, and moderately educated person with no particular skills of any sort—he became a Zorkastrian Brother.

Master Mir was spectacularly relieved to not have to know much, be able to do much, or even be in possession of some sort of predetermined destiny. He simply kept his mouth shut, kissed a few rings, and mumbled something while he stared into the fires. Magic? He was not required to know magic; it was forbidden! His brothers despised the magical arts.

Over time, Mir found that by bartering with his superiors over student directories of True Names stolen from the admissions office, he might accomplish the double purpose of avenging himself on all those who ever laughed at him, and ingratiating himself with the Zorkastrian officials. It worked better than Mir ever hoped; his classmates found themselves under perpetual surveillance as infidels and heretics, and Mir himself quickly became Master Mir, Father Mir, Elder Mir, and then Bishop Mir.

By the time the reclusive Dalboz had formulated the answer to his Bozbar Postulate (circa 1000 GUE), Mir had ascended to the calling of First Archbishop in High Office of the Grand Inquisitor of Zork. He no longer had time to return Dalboz's rambling, boring, letters, filled with useless packets of rare and newly cultivated seeds, which the Archbishop promptly threw into the fire. Mir was no longer interested in magic. He was interested in power. And he was interested in something more than talk. We will pause here shortly and resume with Mir's tale in a bit.

### **The Fate of the Coconut (967 GUE)**

The ship carrying the Coconut of Quendor met a terrible fate when it was swallowed by the great flying Watchdragon. The details of this account are related to us in a small excerpt from the "Voyage of Captain Zahab":

...drop of water, and not a bit of food in the hold!

A fortnight longer, and my mind grew infirm. Like a mirage in the desert, I began to see islands where there were none—and where I swore I saw only horizon not a moment before, hills grew up out on the water, right before my eyes. At first I thought it must have been all the rye I drank. I sent out a dingy. Not an hour later, a roar rocked out craft, followed by a terrific crashing noise, like a great granola mine had just collapsed. What vile menace inhabits this Isle of the Damned?

#### **Dismembr 12**

We found the remains of the dingy on a floating island, along with one survivor. He had gone mad, raving incoherently about plugging the nostrils of some serpent beast. His last tearful words I record here so that I might share them with his loved ones.

We tried to pull the coconut from his mouth. But he knew. And woe, for his wrath was mighty!

Although at least Captain Zahab escaped alive, records remain regarding the fate of two other members of the crew, Sneffle and Y'Gael. Sneffle would make the Watchdragon his place of residency for a time, but Y'Gael's departure is shrouded in mystery. It is uncertain if the great enchantress temporary perished while her spirit drifted up to the Ethereal Plane of Atrii, if her spirit ascended there by will (either to escape the seas or at a future date), or if she ascended there bodily. Either way, the aging Y'Gael would manifest herself from the Ethereal Plane with the appearance of youth, but by the Second Age of Magic, be present upon the surface of Zork donned in her former vessel of old flesh.

When the magical race of griffs later stumbled upon the ship wrecked deep in the Great Sea near the Dragon Archipelago (which was the group of islands formed by Watchdragon as he slept upon the surface of the sea), they found it haunted. Onboard they discovered the Coconut of Quendor. This magical talisman protected the griffs, causing them to flourish as they carefully hoarded the Coconut.

While it is not known how long the griffs had the Coconut in possession, a greedy horde of dragons fell upon them in attempt to reclaim the relic which was rightful theirs, and it was lost again to the talons of the Watchdragon

who departed somewhere into the vicinity of the Great Sea and would guard the treasure for almost a century. All that remained was a bedtime tale that told that only the bravest, most important griff in the world would defeat the old Watchdragon and reclaim the Coconut for his race.

In the meantime, without the Coconut, the griffs were quite defenseless (already lacking the natural protection of their armored dragon cousins) and over time dwindled in number to the point where there were only a handful left in the entire Empire.

### **The Latter Years of Lord Syovar the Strong**

Unfortunately for the modern historian, the fate of Syovar the Strong at the end of his 89 years of kingship is a mystery. The most reliable biography of Syovar, “Lives” by Fuzbo Glort, provides an excellent portrait of how Syovar was viewed by his near-contemporaries, and also provides an admirable summary of the period from the fall of the Empire to the end of the Age of Magic. Although it is in fact of dubious reliability as an historical source, it is one of the few works that have survived those dangerous times to reach our modern eyes. However, the last page of the only surviving manuscript had been blotted out and covered with scribbled images of granola chunks and oversize yipples, and thus we do not know Syovar’s eventual fate for certain.

For all his talents at military and magical combat, Syovar found time for intellectual pursuits. Deeply interested in the written word, he was himself a master of several ancient tongues, and is believed to have written a chronicle of the history of Quendor from Entharion to his own time. An avid and fascinating storyteller, Syovar spent most of his free time during his later years composing and narrating complicated oral epics ranging in subject from the greater deeds of Mumberthrax the Insignificant to the Seven-Headed Snow Monster of Snurth.

### **The Reign of Syovar II (972~997 GUE)**

Lord Syovar II succeeded Syovar the Strong in 972 GUE and ruled the Fallen Empire for 25 years until 997. It is uncertain whether this Lord was in fact Syovar’s son Logrumethar, or another individual.

### **Great Underground Adventure III (981 GUE)**

With spirits depressed, bakers committing suicide, and a shortage of hungus lard, Antharia Jack made his comeback in Great Underground Adventure III detailing the White House incident of 948. No one knew why parts I and II were skipped (rumors abound that parts I and II were still in development) or how Jack could have lived so long without aging. But since the release of the film, Jack grew in reputation as the model Adventurer. His parents were proud too, as no one suspected their prodigy’s adventure disability.

The historic Inn of Isenough was constructed in East Shanbar of the Valley of the Sparrows. (985 GUE)

### **Lucy Flathead Born (c. 989 GUE)**

The female descendents of Lucille Flathead had all been protected from the Curse of Megaboz and continued to be born with traditionally flat heads. Thus the Flathead seed still feared for their lives, remaining hidden in The Dark, apart from the rest of the Empire. Flatheads aside, in every generation there had appeared to be one daughter who was a telepath. This generation saw the birth of Lucy Flathead.

Yet for one so gifted in the reading of minds, Lucy had no such skill with the reading of hearts. Like all of the descendents of Lucrezia before her, Lucy had inherited her general mistrust of all men. Lucy would grow up to be cold, dismissive of emotions, generally, because they tended to cloud her readings of minds—like static, or poor reception on a telephone line. She was dismissive of emotions, personally, because she had never had any of the nicer varieties. The Dark was not, ultimately, a wonderful place to raise a child.

### **Dalboz’s Garden Dies (c. 996 GUE)**

Due to the absence of magic, Dalboz of Gurth’s garden outside the Dungeon Master’s House finally died completely.

### **The Reign of Syovar III (997 GUE)**

Lord Syovar III succeeded Syovar II in 997 GUE and ruled the Fallen Empire for 50 years until his death in 1047 GUE.

### **Bank of Zork Acquired by Inquisition Enterprises (1000 GUE)**

The Bank of Zork, unable to handle the change in calendar dates to four digits, folded and was acquired by Inquisition Enterprises. Mir Yannick was the major investor.

### **Great Underground Adventure IV (1001 GUE)**

Great Underground Adventure IV hit the theaters in 1001 GUE. Antharia Jack won the coveted Palm d'Grue at the Foozle Film Festival. The small cash prize allowed him to buy back his bar in Port Foozle and to finally fulfill his dream of becoming a Pawn Shop owner.

### **The Second Inquisition Begins / Chief Undersecretary Wartle (c. 1000~1033 GUE)**

Mir understood that if magic was, indeed, finally going away, in its departure lay a real opportunity to persecute those who had once enjoyed such power. He could finally wreak revenge on all who had ever practiced the Thaumaturgical arts. He would not be satisfied until he saw to it that all of his one-time classmates (the same conjurer bullies who had laughed at the NUMDUM incident) were confined in the dark recesses of Steppinthrax Dungeon. When Mir called for a good old-fashioned inquisition, the Grand Inquisitor refused to listen to him. Mir was disgusted. Had he been the Grand Inquisitor, he would champion the death of magic...

It was not until Mir heard the confession of convicted criminal embezzler Undersecretary Wartle, the Undersecretary to the Undersecretary to the Secretary of the Zork Patents Office, during the Archbishop's sojourn in the wonderfully horrid White-Collar Confessions Ministry, that he knew how his destiny should unfold. After handing out a number of Hail Yoruks, Mir opened the confessional and offered an alternative rehabilitative plan: he would use his influence with the Grand Inquisitor to demand a full pardon from Syovar III, if Wartle would begin altering a few patents for unique Zork technologies, here and there, transferring them into Mir's possession, as only a partially reformed patents embezzler knew how. Mir became certain that his rise to power and fortune—not to mention his vengeance upon magic—would lie with technology. Though popular sentiment had long held that technology was for “stupid people”—inferior people who had no magic to them—in the new, anti-magical economy, technology would become invaluable. A new magic, belonging exclusively to Archbishop Mir himself.

Wartle, who had always been spineless, fell under the spell of the Archbishop's ambition immediately, and by 1047 GUE, when Mir would succeed to the High Office of Grand Inquisitor himself, he possessed the patent to every known piece of registered, trademarked, and patented technology in the Great Underground Empire. He even went so far as to resurrect the famed, abandoned Frobozz Magic Company as the Frobozz Electric Company. And in this manner, the seeds of the Inquisition fell from his barren hand...

### **The Totemizer Machine Rediscovered (1033 GUE)**

Mir Yannick listened with impatience as Wartle read him “The Signs of the Times” (Section B of the New Zork Times). There were unmistakable signs throughout the Empire: magic creatures awakening, magic spell scrolls materializing, a few Enchanters regaining limited powers. Mir was gloomy; for his Frobozz Electric Company, the return of magic promised nothing but a loss of power and capital. Without magic, Mir governed a monopoly of industries that made him a higher power than any one religion could. He had nothing to gain from even Vice Regent Syovar III, who had grown contentious just as the Mir was reaching the height of his power. They had been arguing over what change in policy needed to be driven by the alleged return of magic.

At first, Syovar III had been in favor of Mir's proposed (and rather extreme) inquisition, believing him when he preached magic as the harbinger of social anarchy and political unrest. He had not complained when the anti-magic propaganda had gone up, nor when the propaganda P.A. system had been installed. Yet, when Mir had begun the magic trials, the Vice Regent had grown suddenly strangely populist. Syovar III was siding with his people, over the

Council of the Generals—a tribunal of war heroes that controlled various political and tribal factions throughout the Empire. Mir had no other recourse but to meet with the Council—privately. And a difficult decision had been made.

Mir could not have hoped for more terrible timing for the whispering, insidious, reappearance of magic. He was now only days from asserting the final phase of his rise to power—the Council approved removal of the Vice Regent himself. And even if the removal of the Regent was successful, he was uncertain what was to be done with the reappearance of magic.

Magic, unlike mere human flesh, cannot be destroyed simply because its use creature is “killed.” Magic, like some strangely radioactive Thaddium waste, must be contained. Like a reverberating vibration moving along a wire, magic resonates ten-fold once freed of physical form. All that binds a magical property to its physical form is how it is Named, by way of the Old Tongue, the ancient, magical language of the Empire, the language that lends its runic power to every woven spell.

Mir knew that somehow the magical creatures had to be Un-Named. If Nameless, then powerless. But he was uncertain how to accomplish this process. He reasoned that his problem must have been encountered previously in the long history of the Empire. Was there any technology, any industry in his control that could be revamped, readjusted a bit, to provide some kind of containment to the rise of magic in the Empire?

Hastily, with fear of displeasing his master, Wartle searched out a handful of out-of-date patents—including one for a massive, misshapen machine, a remnant from the Flathead Dynasty—when Enchanters were plenty and plenty troublesome, and Lord Dimwit was always looking for some way to control them. Wartle produced not only the patents, but discovered the very machines first employed by Dimwit Flathead for the same hostile purpose—controlling the magical masses. One of these long lost machines was the very nasty Totemizer, unused since the Unnatural Acts in the days of Duncanthrax.

Mir Yannick rose to the rank of Junior Executive Maniacal Zealot in the Inquisition. He then rose to the rank of Senior Executive Maniacal Zealot after demonstrating the machine’s effectiveness on his supervisor.

### **A Search for Magic (1034 GUE)**

Bored and destitute, the Dungeon Master had not yet been made aware of the isolated instances the reemergence of magic (in fact, he would not be made aware of it for several years). He began researching methods of returning magic to Zork. Dalboz eventually discovered that its restoration might be possible by using the time tunnels, so that the three items necessary to bring magic back to Quendor (the Coconut of Quendor, a Cube of Foundation, and the Skull of Yoruk) could be retrieved—but the locations of these portals were unknown to him. For each of these objects carried with it a part of a lost Rune of Abjuration, a sort of master magic spell wove in Old Tongue between the three magical objects or artifacts. If they could be recovered, their essences would be freed and magic would return to the Empire.

### **The Fate of a Griff (1037 GUE)**

In the deepest forests of Antharia, Dalboz met the griff. Though of a cowardly nature, this sort of minor-league dragon agreed to help Dalboz search for time tunnels, so the items necessary to bring magic back to Quendor could be retrieved. Unfortunately, the Inquisition proved dastardly for many races of magic, halfling-magic, or barely-magic creatures that lived in Zork. Inquisition troops, known as the Inquisition Riders, canvassed the land, hunting down trolls, orcs, nymphs, sprites and so forth.

One day, when a lone member of the Guard was patrolling a singularly dense forest glade near Port Foozle, he came across the winged one thrashing in a trap they had set the week before. The griff’s tail was caught by a rope, which was tied to a stake in the ground and prevented him from flying away no matter how hard he strained at it.

As the guard pulled at his rope, the creature began to hiss and grimace, as if he were trying to breathe fire from his little feline jaws. The soldier burst into laughter, and began to taunt the fellow in a most unfortunate manner.

At that point, the griff began to babble in the most idiotic fashion. He was trying to speak in the Old Tongue, the ancient runic language that empowers dragons above all magical creatures. Of course, he did not actually know the Old Tongue, which hampered the effort considerably, and he was not a dragon.

Then, he began to shout, “Avert your eyes! Look away! I’m a dragon, you know. If you dare look into my eyes, I will turn you to... to... jelly.” The shouting became stammering, because frankly, there is not anything too frightening about jelly, and everyone knows that looking into a dragon’s eyes will turn you not to jelly but to stone.

The guard came closer, grabbing the griff by the chin and staring into his eyes. “It’s stone, you idiot. Not Jelly.”

The griff, who was by nature quite timid and could not bear to be touched in anything he interpreted to be a rough fashion, shrieked and cowered to the far extreme of the length of rope, flapping his wings as hard as he could, and begging—above all, not to be hurt. He was not a bad fellow, he was just a simple coward, a bit of a tragedian, and a touch neurotic about anything potentially involving pain of any sort. And if he did seem to imagine that nobody liked him, that everyone talked about him the second he flew out of the room, and that he was the butt of every joke, you must take a moment to consider how it must feel to be compared every moment to a dragon, and to always suffer by the comparison. The griff was not so fearsome, so loathsome, and, in a terrible kind of a way, so handsome, as a real dragon—he could not smash things with his tail, had no protective dragon scales or powerful dragon breath, and his belly was not armored in golden treasure. In fact, he only rarely had any treasure at all.

This particular griff had never been in a battle, or for that matter, even a fight, and he was petrified by the idea of fighting this guard. It was only a matter of minutes before he was reduced to a blubbling pup and captured. And it was only a matter of days before he stood at the top of the Totemizer machine, begging for clemency. But a magic race is a magic race, and there was no room for any sort of magic in Yannick’s new regime. The troops had been teasing the griff for some time, provoking him until he began to sob with such vigor that even Yannick began to feel a bit uncomfortable.

Just as Yannick gave the signal for the griff to be pushed into the machine, a brogmoid guard, conveniently named Brog, who had felt badly for the griff, and had shown him many preferences while in jail, leaped up out of the crowd and, ripping a massive iron tube off the side of the Totemizer, knocked a guard down into the machine instead of the griff. And, for one tense moment, Yannick himself wobbled on the edge of the Totemizer; he would have fallen inside, if he had not caught the guard with his hands, and knocked him into the machine by way of keeping himself from falling. Chaos ensued, and when the chase was over and done, it took six men (each twice the size of Brog) to hold down the wrathful, growling brogmoid, while a seventh stuffed the griff down the hatch.

A whirr... and smoke... and sparks... and a metal totem clattered to the stone floor. A rider picked it up and bit it, as if checking to see if it were a real coin. He rode away with it, down the Great Highway and the griff totem was later dumped into the bottom of a well (which was a secret entrance to the Great Underground Empire) on the outskirts of Port Foozle.

### **The Trial of Brog (1037 GUE)**

But this brogmoid, in particular, possessed a singular, if instinctual, compassion that made it physically impossible for him to sit and watch while a harmless and defenseless creature like the griff was tormented for pleasure. This big-hearted brogmoid was one of the nicest fellows a griff could ever hope to meet; in fact, there was no creature, great or small, that would refuse to converse with him, no matter how dull the conversation would invariably be.

As you can imagine, Brog made a quick visit, the next day, to the court. The brogmoid was forever in trouble as an Inquisition Guard, seeing as his locker was full of all sorts of forbidden things the prisoners would implore him to bring them. Not much harm it could do in there, he reasoned (if you could call it that), though personally he did not see what was so appetizing about a honeycake with a metal file or skeleton key stuck in the middle. When he tried them, they got terribly stuck in his teeth. But if someone needed something, however much their tastes differed from his, he would do it for them. He was just that sort of a fellow.

That did not make much of a defense in his speedy trial in the Court of the Inquisition, but Brog did not understand much of what was said in there to begin with. When asked, “How do you plead?” the brogmoid looked at the magistrate like he was stupid, and said, “Like this.” Then he got down on his hands and knees and said, “Please, Please, oh I beg you.” The rest of the trial was executed along those same lines.

When he was finally taken to the Totemizer machine, it was in a massive metal collar, and two sets of chains. Twenty guards hoisted him up to the top of the machine, and the Yannick did not waste a minute dawdling, this time

around. Despite all of the precautions that were taken to ensure his capture, Brog somehow managed to break free from the guards and escaped his imprisonment, but his fate as a totem was inevitable.

#### **The Inevitable Fate of Brog (1043 GUE)**

In 1043, that same half-witted member of the already half-witted brogmoid species, accidentally broke into the Steppinthrax Monastery. Seeking for a place to hide from the Inquisition, he had squeezed up an air-duct from the Great Underground Subway station below. This quarter-witted creature activated the Totemizer machine and crawled inside, believing that the machine was some sort of cavern.

A whirr... and smoke... and sparks... and a subsequently, the machine dumped Brog at the gates of Hades.

#### **A New Vice President of Unreasoning Zeal (1046 GUE)**

Mir Yannick rose to the position of Vice President of Unreasoning Zeal, second only to the Grand Inquisitor himself. During a private conference with Yannick, the Inquisitor accidentally hit himself repeatedly over the head with a blunt instrument until he died (at least that was the report given by Yannick). Other reports of the Grand Inquisitor's death include having eaten a rather lethally rancid platypus pot pie. Mir claimed to have been in sorrow for many days because of the "unfortunate demise."

#### **A New Grand Inquisitor (1047 GUE)**

Mir Yannick assumed the title of Grand Inquisitor, despite the efforts of Syovar III. Accepting advice from the Dungeon Master, who told the king of the impending reemergence of magic, Syovar III began making efforts to end the Inquisition.

#### **Magic Seeds Its Slow Return (c. 1047~8 GUE)**

In the cottage of the Dungeon Master, Dalboz was growing bitterly depressed. His house was cluttered with Fanucci pieces from a final, solitary game of 3-D Single Fanucci that he had been playing for several years now; and as a result, he could barely walk through his kitchen, without knocking over the markers of his Fanucci Hand—a Lobster and a Snail. Ears and Lamps were littered across the table top, and Bugs, Plungers, and Inkblots lay in every other square of the black and white parquet of his kitchen floor.

An excerpt from the journal of Dalboz of Gurth dated 104X-02-03 (Undergroundhog's Day) details his feelings:

Sweet Yoruk! Another Undergroundhog's day came and went today, but what hope of a spring have I?

Magic is still gone and I remain the Dungeon master who will be remembered by history as he who was master over nothing. Haven't practiced a moment of magic in over eighty years. My magic garden's been dead for fifty years. Were it not for that ill-timed long life spell, I should have died of boredom long ago. Damn spell. And damn that idiot Yannick and his damn Inquisition!

How many hands of Solitary Single Fanucci can a fellow be expected to play in a lifetime?

To cope with the magic-barren world, the Dungeon Master attempted suicide many times. In one instance, he dangled from a noose until he was purple and bruised from the rope. But it was of no use. Sighing, he cut himself free and stabbed the dagger repeatedly into his chest, with all the inattention of a bored child. Not even a drop of blood appeared on the blade. How desperately he wished he had never cast that long life spell; for he would kill himself a thousand times, before he could bare another day of the monotony of a life without magic.

A later excerpt from Dalboz of Gurth's journal, dated 104X-04-05 tells of one another of the many suicide attempts:

Swallowed poison. Tasted bitter, but did nothing—except give me a terrible case of the Trots. Damn spell.

Another excerpt, dated 104X-05-01 (Mage Day), tells of yet another futile instance:

Plunged an elvish sword into my heart. Might as well have been a plunger. Got a bit of heart burn.  
Curse this long life spell!

Having failed at yet another attempt to hang himself, the Dungeon Master quickly dragged a large sack of non-magical combustible gunpowder out to the garden, in hopes of exploding himself in the garden tool shed. Just as he did so, he stopped dead in his tracks. He dropped to the garden ground, and stared in disbelief as a magical seedling pushed it way through the soil. In a matter of seconds, it bloomed into the strangest, most fabulous looking flower. A moment later, and the Dungeon Master's magic flower and vegetable garden had sprung into life, bursting into all sorts of egg-plants and auto-plants and office-plants and parts-plants and trans-plants once again.

The Dungeon Master was exultant; his second postulate, the oft-disparaged "Treatise on the Insuppressability of Magic in a Fundamentally Magic Land" had been correct after all. The Great Underground Empire would, eventually, begin to right itself. The balance of things magical and otherwise could not be held, unreckoned, for eternity. The time had finally come for magic to begin its slow return to Zork.

And so, on 104X-08-20, Dalboz of Gurth wrote down his jubilation in his journal:

The most extraordinary thing happened today! I was working in the garden-hanging myself from a branch, actually, with some sturdy rope, which broke (blast that spell!) and left me flat in the mud.

Which is when I saw it—my eggplant cracked a yolk and began to sizzle! Sunny side up! My snapdragons snapping—baby's breath hot in my face! My magic garden grows to life, again and I can feel my powers creeping back! The Enchanters were right—magic may yet return!

I must speak with Yannick.

Dalboz determined to pay a visit to his long-lost friend, Mir Yannick. They had not spoken in many years now, but Dalboz knew they still shared the bond of the long life spell. In its weaving he had linked their destinies, and their paths had to yet be resolved. Maybe things would go better between them, he reasoned, now that magic was on its way back to the Empire. But first he snipped a couple of hard-boiled eggs off the vine for supper.

#### **Dalboz's Lost Shoe (104X-11-14 GUE)**

At first, the Dungeon Master had tried to teleport to the Steppinthrax Monastery, Headquarters of the Grand Inquisitor. But, as there was still insufficient magic in the atmosphere, he could get only the most part of one foot to prematurely disappear.

An excerpt from Dalboz of Gurth's journal, dated 104X-11-14 (Curse Day) details his thoughts:

Damn Yannick won't return my letters. Tried to conjure myself into Foozle, but could only make one shoe disappear, and even then, can't be certain where I disappeared it to.

Will have to go the old fashioned way—by foot, with staff and lamp. And one shoe at that.  
Hope Yannick is receptive to my warning. He always was thick.

The Dungeon Master begrudgingly settled for riding a lumbering hungus, which he absolutely detested, partly because it was slow and uncomfortable when one knew one had the option of instantaneous travel, and also because he never knew exactly what to do with his hands. Dungeon Masters, like most wizards, are terrible at accomplishing everyday menial tasks without the use of magic. This Dungeon Master was no exception to the rule. There was at least enough magic for the reigns to hold themselves, so the Dungeon Master could carry with him the rapidly growing hard-boiled eggplant; a token of friendship for his skeptical friend. Magic had begun its slow reassertion. Of that, the Dungeon Master was certain.

### **The Murder of Syovar III (1048 GUE)**

In the meantime, the Grand Inquisitor's call for a return to Flathead values sparked renewed interest in the Flathead Dynasty, which further generated the funding necessary to carry out the largest excavation ever undertaken. Having been buried for over three centuries, the missing pages of Dimwit Flathead's autobiography were excavated from four bloits deep beneath the statue in Fublio Valley. A team of scholars would spend seven years analyzing the unabridged work, splitting into groups of ten in order to scrutinize each chapter with the attention it demanded, and gathering occasionally to discuss their many findings.

In addition to these and the Totemizer, Wartle had managed to retrieve several other useful technologies dating back to Dimwit Flathead, the least of these being a deceptively simple iron cap, known to enemies of the Flathead Dynasty as the "Maidenhead." The Maidenhead employed the traditionally lethal technique of the Iron Maiden to the head of the victim only, so that the effect became one of instant flat-headedness. The Grand Inquisitor planned to use this device for his own purposes. There would soon be a new ruler in Quendor.

When the Dungeon Master finally reached the Steppinthrax Monastery Headquarters and Museum, he was told the Grand Inquisitor could not be disturbed. He waited in the lobby for quite some time. Just as he was staring up at the massive propaganda posters of his old schoolmate, and wondering at what strange goings-on he had missed while in his deep seclusion, he heard anguished screams from the Grand Inquisitor's office—the sounds of a violent struggle. The Dungeon Master tried to dematerialize, and then, giving up, fumbled with the door for some time, before he remembered about the knob, and pushed inside only to find the Grand Inquisitor himself standing over the slain body of Syovar, whose head was neatly cleft in twain, and lying in a growing puddle of blood.

The Dungeon Master seemed strangely steeled by the discovery, as if some part of him had been waiting for the Grand Inquisitor to reveal his true colors for a very long time. Then, circling the body, the two old friends began to argue bitterly over the ramifications of both the assassination and the return of magic. The Dungeon Master argued that Zork was an enchanted land that could not be ruled except by magic, or by its consent. The Grand Inquisitor knew, however, that he himself could not rule (as per his designs) if magic were allowed back into the Empire... he would be impotent next to the reunited, reinvigorated Enchanter's Guild. He begged the Dungeon Master to help him put down magic and reclaim the Empire. The Dungeon Master refused. He looked down at the magical plant in his hands, and it curled in on itself instantly withering into a dead stalk. The Dungeon Master looked up at his old friend sadly, suddenly understanding what was about to happen. He turned to go, disgusted. He said only two words. "Tell them."

The battle that began between them was fierce and well-matched. While spraying a can of Frobozz Electric Wizard Repellent, the Grand Inquisitor sprung open the Maidenhead, which clamped itself to the Dungeon Master just as his clothes fell to the ground, empty. When the smoke cleared, Dalboz was dead and Yannick bald. Though he appeared dead—his body had, after all, disappeared in a cloud of gray smoke—the Grand Inquisitor was left to suspect that he had pronounced some kind of protective spell on himself, the moment before he was struck.

What had happened, was that Dalboz, having been sprayed with the Wizard Repellent was torn from his body the moment before the Maidenhead could have been clasped upon his head. Floating helplessly, his spirit was kept alive and ascended into the Ethereal Plane of Atrii, where it was he shared a walk-up with the Enchantress Y'Gael.

Being the only witness present of the murder, the Grand Inquisitor told of the incident, stating that Syovar III had accidentally strangled himself. With Syovar III out of the way, the Grand Inquisitor soon became the recognized leader of the Theocracy of Quendor and the Chairman of the Frobozz Magic Company, which he formally renamed Frobozz Electric. It seems that in the meantime, the remainder of the population was unaware of the death of the Dungeon Master, and the Grand Inquisitor employed someone to impersonate Dalboz. This imposter held many speeches on behalf of Mir Yannick, most of which were relayed to Zork via propaganda newsreels.

### **Enter Lucy Flathead (1048 GUE)**

Lucy Flathead stared, transfixed, at the slain Vice Regent's photo in the New Zork Times that lay on her desk at the Port Foozle Psychic Friends Bureau, beneath the headline "Syovar Assassinated; Who Will Succeed?" She was getting a migraine, an awful migraine. She tried even harder to ignore the picture that was taking shape in her mind. It had something to do with the death of the Regent, but it hurt too much to see it. And she did not particularly care



for whatever it was. She was not, by nature, a political person. She believed that people were weak and foolish; that horrible things either had or would befall them; that fate was cruel and purposeless. She knew the first of these precepts best illustrated by her own frivolous ancestry; the second from glimpsing into the grim minds of her clientele; and the last, from her own dark life. So what did she care if one more fat politician got his due?

She turned her attention to the distractingly lewd observances blaring out from the mind of the customer that sat across from her. His was the most dismal sort, a petty gambler looking to hedge his odds in the windcat races. It was precisely the sort of client that made her wonder if her Gift were really a Gift at all. This was her fourth job as a Psychic Counselor; in an age devoid of magic, a whole market for bogus carpetbaggers had sprung up in its place. She had never let on to the others at the Bureau that she was an actual telepath, partly out of a kind of professional courtesy (because, according to her, they were scalawags and scams and she did want them to feel badly that she was not) and partly because she was embarrassed. Once people knew she knew what they were thinking, they had a tendency to become rather embarrassed themselves. Especially the men.

With her telepathic abilities came a checkered lineage of which she was publicly quite defensive, and privately quite ashamed. Though she wore an ill-fitting headpiece to try to hide it, Lucy's head was absolutely flat; she was one of the last surviving descendants of the House of Flathead.

When the pain became so unbearable that she could no longer listen to the blather in the customer's head, Lucy had no choice but to let it out. She threw back her head, surprising the customer, and allowed the strange violet light to flow out of her eyes, flooding the room. Her coworkers stared at her with amazement, as her seemingly lifeless form floated a few feet above the ground. In her trance, Lucy saw in a few harsh stills the death of Syovar at the hand of the Grand Inquisitor. She saw the death of the Dungeon Master, as well, and startled when she saw him from the grave look her in the eye, imploring "Tell Them." And with that, Lucy fell to the ground.

She had no choice. The Dungeon Master had sent her the vision, and she had to do something because of it. Lucy left the Bureau immediately, never to return. She made her way to the Magistrate, and took her own deposition, sealing it in a file at the Magistrate's Office. She gave it to the Magistrate, and panicking, got out of town.

## **Reports of Magic**

The Grand Inquisitor had appointed Undersecretary Wartle, and a certain number of trustworthy men, to the task of Magic Surveillance. Soon after the death of the Dungeon Master, reports began to flood in. The land appeared to be quickened and invigorated, growing with magical life again; just as in the Dungeon Master's garden, enchanted trees sprang from seeds, some bearing ripe, splitting fruit in a single moment; others producing umbrellas or thermoses or galoshes and other such sundry items. Along the Great Underground Highway, a magical sword of elvish workmanship sprouted up from the land in a strange, sealed box. And someone had even reported strange activities at the deserted GUE Tech. The Grand Inquisitor knew he had to get things under control, and he did not have very long. Magic was on the rise; his propaganda campaign did not seem to be stopping it, but instead sending it underground. People were starting to hope.

As the Grand Inquisitor tightened his control on the land, he coaxed the Council of the Generals into an alliance based on their shared exploitation of the people and resources of the Empire. As the Grand Inquisitor's power expanded, he began to train the population of the Great Underground Empire increasingly towards technology, and away from magic. The Grand Inquisitor owned, and thus could control, all of the existing technology in the Empire—and with it, the people. Magic was unruly and uncontrollable, and the Grand Inquisitor made it quite clear that no type of magic, of any purpose, was tolerable in the Empire. Anything that even smelled of the return of enchantment was to be shunned, and ultimately, destroyed. This included the sealing of the ancient network of time tunnels that ran beneath the Empire.

## **Discovery of Wishbringer (before c. 1063 GUE)**

The return of magic brought startling changes all over the world, even reaching to Antharia and the Misty Island near Festeron. An unknown scholar came to the island, who, amid the crumbling tombs of monarchs, chanced upon the mortal relic of Princess Morning-Star. Thus the magic stone, called Wishbringer was discovered. For the next

few years, this stone passed through several hands in that region. One of these included an unknown Festeron resident who used the magic stone to wish for rain to put out his barn fire and to wish for luck to find his stolen wallet and catch the Mad Arsonist of Festeron. The recovery of the stone prompted Violet Voss, the Festeronian librarian, to publish a book entitled “The Legend of Wishbringer” (c. 1063 GUE). When the book was authored, she was uncertain if the legend was about humans or platypuses, but it was later confirmed to be about the second; thus many of the book’s illustrations depict a mixture of the two races. In her book, she writes about that seven wishes were able to be invoked from the stone and the needed items to do so.

#### **Dalboz’s New Home (1052 GUE)**

Dalboz would have been happy staying in the Ethereal Plane of Atrii, but Y’Gael, wanting the extra room for an office, kicked him out. Dalboz’s spirit found its way into a rusty old lamp, stored in a crate beneath a dock in Port Foozle.

#### **The Fate of the Flathead (1058 GUE)**

Lucy Flathead was waiting to board the ferry to Accardi-by-the-Sea when the Grand Inquisitor’s men caught her defacing Inquisition propaganda and employing telepathic abilities. She was placed under arrest and bound over to trial for High Treason Against the Empire. The Magistrate had broken the seal on her file, and alerted Yannick immediately. Implicating Yannick—the only remaining authority that held the temporary government of the Empire together, in the time of flux and chaos following the death of the Vice Regent—rapidly earned Lucy a sentence of death. The fact that the Grand Inquisitor was the presiding official of the court did not help matters much, but it did somewhat speed up the deliberations. Though she fully expected to die, the Grand Inquisitor had other plans for her.

When Yannick discovered that her bloodline traced directly back to the Flathead Dynasty, and she was thus the rightful heir to the empire, the horrid man enjoyed not only the pleasurable surge of power that lay in giving her the sentence, but yet another in commuting it. Now that he had the attention of the population, he determined to make an example of Lucy, and brought her to the Totemizer.

Though she would not give him the satisfaction of showing her fear, the Totemizer was truly a hideous machine. Lucy who was born into Middle Magic, and given her True Name through the power of the Old Tongue upon the third day following her birth, would lose her visionary powers when she lost her Name. She would become captive in a disk of base metal without substance, a lifeless totem of her magical self.

In the final moments that Lucy stood atop this giant mechanical spectacle, she became something of a folk hero to the crowd at its base. Yannick, who was more taken with the vision of her body than her visionary mind, offered her a last chance at clemency if she were to subject herself to an inquisition of a more personal nature. To this she only spat out “Murderer.”

Then, her eyes began to radiate the same strange purple light, and up she floated, straining against the ropes that bound her to the platform of the machine. She began to speak in a low monotone, warning the Grand Inquisitor of his doom in a strange vision. There would be only one, one who could call the Great Lady down from the Planes of Atrii, through the Last Door. She would come for Yannick, and a great sacrifice and a brave heart would destroy him.

The frightened Grand Inquisitor could bear no more of such nonsense, and slapped her... hard. In whipping her head to the side, her hair seemed to move, and then the top of her headdress sailed cleanly off-revealing her truer, flatter nature. The crowd hushed, shocked. Lucy was a flathead! There were still flatheads living in the Empire? How could this be?

But Lucy herself, just smiled defiantly. When her ropes were loosened, she laughed at the Grand Inquisitor, and threw herself into the machine.

A passing mercenary stared at her, transfixed. Antharia Jack fought his way to the front of the crowd, desperate for one last glimpse at the woman that had captured his heart so long ago. But a small explosion sent him reeling back, followed by a great whirl, then sparks and smoke, and he could just make out where something passed through the tubes, spiraling downward, around and around. An iron totem fell to the stone floor with a clatter. Lucy was no more and her totem was put on display in the headquarters’ main exhibit hall.

### **The Fourth Dungeon Master (1061 GUE)**

The adventurer, AFGNCAAP, who would later become the Fourth Dungeon Master found a strange book near Aragain. This book, which would be termed *evil* by those who sought to exterminate all magic from Zork, had strange runes of the enchanter on the cover and emitted the faint stench of spenseweed. Unbeknownst to this adventurer, the tome held a curse far more powerful than anything since Megaboz. As soon as he opened the cursed thing, a thundering bolt of lightning surrounded him and he found himself in a new land stranger than any that he had visited before. This island was covered with strange structures and many switches.

The adventurer would be here for quite some time, never seeing or talking to another person for five years, wandering aimlessly, throwing switches and pressing buttons, being forced to listen to the same dreary and boring music over and over again, and only being able to carry pages of colors. The only way to pass the excruciating time in the vile place was to read books, an entire library of books, that only foretold the coming of a new book of magic with more pretty pictures and new, pointless puzzles. This *prison* threatened to prematurely stunt the new-captive's taste of adventurer, where he felt he would be doomed to spend eternity.

### **The Quest of Matchlick the Mighty (1066 GUE)**

One of the brave adventurers who was dedicated to help better society by ridding the world of magic was Matchlick the Mighty, a hardy adventurer in the employ of the Grand Inquisitor. He had already detained the great-great-uncle of the wizard-at-large, Bumbor, and thus was not surprised when he was picked to investigate the strange book that had been uncovered near Aragain.

Upon opening the book, he arrived at the same island, almost immediately noticing AFGNCAAP exiting a round building. Matchlick was the first soul that AFGNCAAP had seen in five years. The adventurer begged Matchlick for help in escaping the accursed island. Fortunately, he carried a few items from his previous Inquisition expedition: a Frobozz Electric Lamp, a book of matches, a can of grue repellent, and a Frobozz Electric Puzzle Solver.

Matchlick knew that the Frobozz Electric Puzzle Solver would solve all of the mindless puzzles of the land automatically. All that he needed was a large heat source. The books in the library were suitable. He sprayed them with grue repellent and then lit a match. The heat from the burning books was enough to power the Puzzle Solver. Matchlick set it on "pointless wandering and clicking" difficulty level.

After a short conversation, where Matchlick warned the adventurer that he would be sorry for wanting "magic to live forever," the Frobozz Electric Puzzle Solver activated. Instantly Matchlick found himself outside Port Foozle. He had never been so happy to smell the rotting docks and hear the countdown to curfew. Yet, he was plagued by dreams of that faceless, nameless adventurer who would come to free magic in the Great Underground Empire. But he assured himself that it could never happen, because the Grand Inquisitor was the greatest boss ever.

### **Newly Discovered Area of the Underground (1066 GUE)**

Meanwhile, while Matchlick was lost in a book (and the other Inquisition Guard's heroes were indisposed), the Grand Inquisitor sent a lowly minion, a Private 7<sup>th</sup> Class of the Inquisition Guard, to research a heretofore undiscovered area of the Great Underground Empire near Port Foozle. This was the region of the lost Cultural Complex, originally built in the days of Dimwit Flathead and expanded by later successors. Coincidentally, the 1066 Grue Convention was taking place at the complex.

Upon entering, the cavern collapsed, temporarily trapping the Inquisition Guard within. After being one of the only men to see a grue and live, infiltrating the convention, speaking with two of the Implementors (Marc Blank and Mike Berlyn), and leading a train of mutant rat-ants to reopen the tunnel to the surface, the minion escaped. The Grand Inquisitor and Wartle welcomed the Inquisition Guard. The minion received a half day off for the exemplary work.

### **The Oppression Continues**

Already Yannick had parlayed his position as the head of the mega-conglomerate Frobozz Electric to rule the land like a fascist regime. Because Frobozz Electric owned all patented technology in the land, as long as the Inquisition could keep magic from the people, he could rule the populace as he pleased. But the rumors of supernatural sightings and the return of magic were talked about with increasing clamor by the populace. Fearing that a magic rebellion would grow from the people, the Grand Inquisition grew more nervous by the day. In response, he tightened his stranglehold, fattening the citizens with further anti-magic propaganda and encouraging them to take more excessive actions against it.

#### **Standoff at the Enchanter's Guild (1067-02-XX)**

As the oppression against magic increased in devastation, the Enchanter's Guild formed a coalition against the Inquisition, which ended in a standoff. The week prior to Frobruary 34<sup>th</sup>, 1067 GUE, the standoff ended peacefully when the Enchanters were freed from themselves by caring Inquisition troops. Concerned citizens everywhere searched high and low for hidden scrolls and magic contraband, voluntarily purging themselves of the worst excesses of the Magic Revolution.

#### **Port Foozle Liberated (1067-02-34)**

When Port Foozle was liberated on the Thirty-Fourth of Frobruary, 1067 GUE, the Inquisition claimed that the magic wars were finally over. "Shun magic and shun the appearance of magic! Shun everything - and then shun shunning!" said the Grand Inquisitor from atop Flathead Mesa, where the *grateful* masses thronged to *welcome* Inquisition Troops to newly-occupied Port Foozle. A region-wide evening curfew initiated by the Grand Inquisition.

On that day, the imposter Third Dungeon Master read a brief but impassioned statement in support of the transitional Inquisition government, before he "accepted the Inquisition's generous offer of a permanent vacation" in prison. This was off course not true, as the Dungeon Master had been defeated for quite some time, but it prevented Mir Yannick from having to upkeep the pseudo-Dalboz and risk the discovery of the false identity. Although rumors that the Dungeon Master was leading a Magic Resistance abounded, the Inquisition assured the populace that these were entirely false.

In addition to the occupation of Port Foozle, the Grand Inquisitor had completed his technological wonder, a powerful mind-control device in the form of the Inquisition Cable Network, Inquizivision, which he planned to broadcast from atop Flathead Mesa and use to broaden and enlighten the minds of citizens across the countryside. This super-plan would tighten his grip on the minds of the Quendorans so painfully, that he believed it might never be reversed. With Inquizivision, non-stop twenty-four-hours-a-day Inquisition programming would brainwash the already mind-numbed, dogma-fed population until their brains would become useless mush. He planned to unleash this powerful device on the following day.

#### **Antharia Jack and the Fourth Dungeon Master (1067-02-34)**

Jack had been reduced to spending many hours spinning adventurer's tales over the counter of his small pawnshop. His life was the envy of many a novice adventurer who stumbled into his shop, yet Jack himself had nothing to show for his difficult life. He was always late with his Inquisition taxes, and always fined for some trivial disrespect—for not displaying the proper insignia, the proper signs, closing according to the Inquisition curfews and Inquisition holidays, etc. However much he hated day-to-day life in Port Foozle, Jack was sufficiently embittered from the search for the exotic Lucy Flathead who had so besotted him, to remain an impartial bystander to the campaign of the Grand Inquisitor. He was, in short, retired, or so he swore to one such PermaSuck salesperson, a scurvy looking sort, who happened into his shop in violation of the newly instated Port Foozle curfew.

Thus without a zorkmid and little idea of lay ahead, this AFGNCAAP had wandered into the historic town of Port Foozle late that evening, hoping to earn a salary from selling Perma-suck machines. After a dramatic encounter with Marvin the Mythical Goatfish at the docks, this luckless adventurer fished a crate marked "Infocom" out of the sea. Within was the battered brass lantern in containing the spirit of Dalboz.

When the adventurer returned with an old brass lantern, Jack brought AFGNCAAP into the shop and offered an auto-lighting cigar. When he attempted to repair the broken device, it sparked and effused the scent of spenseweed,

before the spirit of Dalboz cried out from within it. After swatting it several times with a racket, Jack, fearing the Inquisition, seized the lantern and shoved AFGNCAAP out of his shop. For the lamp was not just any lamp, but a magic lantern.

The adventurer was not a knave, but a good soul, with an eye for magic and was determined to recover the mystical device. Unfortunately, a bit of unrighteousness was resorted to in attempt to ascertain the lantern. Knowing that Antharia Jack was an honorary Foozle fire chief, AFGNCAAP set fire to a Grand Inquisitor doll and hid in a barrel. As presumed, Jack raced forth from his shop to put out the blaze. Being the only citizen sighted within the square, Wartle and his henchman apprehended the framed arsonist. They brought him to Steppinthrax Monastery for Totemization.

With the door to Jack's shop unlocked, AFGNCAAP retrieved the lantern containing the banished spirit of Dalboz. Under his urgings, the adventurer descended into the Great Underground Empire via a Secret Entrance disguised as a simple well in the forested outskirts of Port Foozle. AFGNCAAP discovered that magic had not dispersed, but had been forced underground. A glimmer of hope remained in the Dungeon Master, who became a powerful ally on the quest. In fact, being stuck inside the lantern, he had no choice but to become the adventurer's ally.

Though the Dungeon Master could no longer practice magic, he helped AFGNCAAP advance in the knowledge of the supernatural acts. Together they contacted the enchantress Y'Gael from the Ethereal Plane of Atrii. She informed them that if the Coconut of Quendor could be recovered, along with two other powerful artifacts in Zork's magic treasury—a Cube of Foundation and the Skull of Yoruk—magic would again flow through Zork. To help with the quest, Y'Gael presented AFGNCAAP with a spell book to fill with contraband magic that had been hidden throughout the Empire, in hopes of spiriting some magic away from the Inquisition.

The adventurer soon met up with three other traveling companions who wished to join the quest. All three were one-time magical creatures who had been stripped of their magical faculties and imprisoned within totems. The three were none other than the beautiful and telepath Lucy Flathead (within the Steppinthrax Monastery), the thick-fitted, all-brawn no-brain brogmoid Brog (within the gates of Hades), and the whiny, neurotic griff (at the Secret Entrance to the Underground), who suffered a dragon inferiority complex and wanted desperately to avoid physical pain. Together, they formed an unlikely band of adventurers who joined forced to recover the three lost relics, destroy the Grand Inquisitor, and finally return magic to its rightful place in the Empire.

The group dynamic was interesting, to say the least; Dalboz was hungry and bitter and betrayed-skeptical as to whether the Grand Inquisitor could even be stopped, and in as foul a mood as any fellow stuffed in a lantern of that size was likely to be. Dalboz oversaw the posse with what limited respect a bodiless voice could command. Lucy, for herself, was not accustomed to taking orders from a man, and found the arcane nature of Dalboz's magical knowledge, when combined with the insane nature of his utilitarian uselessness, somewhat aggravating. The griff liked nothing better than to order about Brog, duping him into performing his own share of the work and more, and then blaming Brog when these suggestions backfired. Brog did not mind; he simply liked to talk with the twittering birds and the chirping insects, and instinctively find his way throughout the Underground, as he had since he was a pup. He was content just to look at Lucy, though more than anything he wished he could touch her.

To retrieve the three artifacts, it was necessary to send the spirits of the three totemized victims through three time tunnels, which had been erected back in the days of Dimwit Flathead for the very purpose of restoring magic to Zork. The griff went back in time and recovered the Coconut of Quendor straight from the mouth of the Watchdragon. Brog returned to the White House shortly before 966 GUE, where he descended into the grue breeding ground to retrieve the Skull of Yoruk. Lucy Flathead was sent to Port Foozle in the year 931 GUE, where she won one of the Cubes of Foundation from Antharia Jack in a game of Strip Grue, Fire, and Water.

Meanwhile, Antharia Jack stood in line at the Steppinthrax Monastery expectant to be totemized. Although he tried to escape, his attempts were in vain. The sentence was only suspended when the power was cut, on behalf of AFGNCAAP. Despite the security measures that had been put in place to prevent the closing of all four sluice gates at once, the REZROV spell enabled a loophole to be opened. When all four were shut, the top portion of the dam burst open and water flowed through new, unexpected, yet enormously relevant areas of the Great Underground Empire. Power to the surrounding regions were impeded, forcing the Steppinthrax Monastery totemizing to

temporarily be suspended until auxiliary power was found. In the process, AFGNCAAP left a new bridge over the dam. Jack was tossed in the Port Foozle jail.

Following the power outage, riots began in the city streets as people were excited over an alleged magic rebellion and rumors of an adventurer carting the Dungeon Master around in a magic lamp. The idea that Yannick's plans would be ruined crippled him with a terrible emotional outburst. He sought to converse with Antharia Jack, hoping that he would be able to assist him. After confessing the situation to Jack, Yannick almost collapsed in an outburst of tears. Fearing this breakdown, Jack tried to empathize with him by telling how he let the love of his life slip through his fingers over a stupid game of strip Grue, Fire and Water. Hoping to cheer up Mir's spirits, Jack revealed to him the location of AFGNCAAP—the time tunnels. This advice did not prevent Jack from being tortured by watching a hungus getting prodded.

Mir Yannick proceeded with Wartle to apprehend AFGNCAAP and the totems just as they emerged from the Steppinthrax Monastery time tunnel. Wartle had the adventurer stripped of his belongings and locked up in the Port Foozle jail in a cell adjacent to Antharia Jack.

### **The Return of Magic (1067-02-35)**

That morning, Wartle stayed behind with a small regiment of Inquisition guards (less than the usual number) while the majority of the troops attended Mir Yannick at the Flathead Mesa. Here the entire population of Port Foozle and the surrounding regions gathered at the long-expected ceremony, where the Grand Inquisition started to announce the radical new mind-numbing technology that would implement his visionary "One Point of Light" program.

AFGNCAAP was only able to escape the prison for two reasons—one, Antharia Jack thought the adventurer was crying, which prompted him to toss off a LEXDOM spell ("create lock and key") scroll to blow the nose with. Second, the Inquisition guards had neglected to retrieve a zorkmid-pressed knife from the adventurer's inventory. AFGNCAAP cast LEXDOM upon the cell door, drilling a lock and key into the door, but the key was protruding from the opposite side of the door. After sliding a poster under the door, poking the key out with the letter opener so it fell on the notice, and pulling the poster out, the key was used to unlock the cell door.

When the coast was clear, AFGNCAAP used the security system controls to unlock the door to Jack's cell (31-AB). Seizing the opportunity, Jack busted out and smote the guard, retrieved the subset of the adventurer's inventory that none of the guards wanted, found a nice new elvish sword, and grabbed his cigar. On his way out, he crossed through the adventurer's area and returned AFGNCAAP's inventory.

The proud Jack realized that he had finally become a true adventurer. Before he was able to puff the cigar, the two were interrupted by the door of the walking castle breaking through the jail wall. Jack recognized the castle from the days when it had broken through his own wall, bearing Lucy Flathead away from him. Hoping that he would be reunited with her, Antharia Jack beckoned for the adventurer to follow him inside.

Together they rode to the Flathead Mesa. When AFGNCAAP and Jack arrived, Y'Gael announced herself on a TV screen, instructed the adventurer to place the three magic artifacts into the radio tower, which was the highest point in Foozle, so that an end could be brought to the Inquisition. She presented AFGNCAAP with the BOOZNIK spell so that the quest could be completed. Jack told AFGNCAAP to take the tower and cut the cable, while he would send the Grand Inquisitor that way.

In order to bind the high, middle, and deep artifacts together and return magic to the land, each of the three had to be placed in the correct order along the tower. The Skull of Yoruk, being the receptacle of deep magic, went in the glass dome at the bottom. The Cube of Foundation, being the container for middle magic, went in the nook halfway up the tower. The Coconut of Quendor, being the symbol for high magic, went in one of the balls of the wind gauge thingy at the top of the tower. Unfortunately, when it was placed inside, the wind gauge thingy became unbalanced. The Dungeon Master instructed AFGNCAAP to hang his lantern on the opposite side to balance it out.

The MAXOV spell, to bind the energies of the different magics, could not yet be cast as the interference of Yannick's babbling broadcasted over the tower was clouding the spell's effect. AFGNCAAP cut the wire dangling above with the sword.

It was then that Antharia Jack kicked in which his part of the plan, which was to create a distraction. To the adventurer's dismay, his clever distraction was to point AFGNCAAP's presence on the tower to the Grand

Inquisition himself in the middle of his speech. Despite the cheering crowds and their support, the Grand Inquisitor's broadcast was cut off and he immediately came up the tower.

AFGNCAAP quickly cast MAXOV upon the tower to bind the energies. As each magic object carried with it a part of the lost Rune of Abjuration, when the three were recovered and combined according to the prophecy and the wisdom of Y'Gael, the Rune summon her back down from the Ethereal Plane of Atrii, and their essences would be freed.

Dalboz shouted that he would drop a line from the Ethereal Plane as the sky was suddenly overcast with purple storm clouds. When Yannick reached the tower, he smiled to see the Coconut of Quendor and approached it. He strained to pull it out of the antenna's compartment. As he did so, a blast of powerful magic hit the top of the antenna. The resultant blast threw AFGNCAAP, the totems, and the Grand Inquisitor from the tower while sending a shockwave of magic across the land. Exposed to the burst of magic energies, the totems sprung back to life. Fortunately, the adventurer was caught by the griff, Lucy was caught by Jack, and Brog's fall was broken by his head. The Grand Inquisitor was not so lucky, falling from the tower. While his alleged death is shrouded in obscurity, it is possible that the Long Life spell which Dalboz had casted upon him in the 960s preserved him. The burst of magic diffused all of Yannick's technology—the monitors and the rest of his Inquizivision system, and even the Grand Inquisitor "I am the boss of you" posters supernaturally altered to "Queen Lucy the Levelheaded." Jack and Lucy confessed their love to one another.

With magic returned and the Grand Inquisitor's tyranny ended, Lucy Flathead declared herself the rightful heir to the throne. Her first act was to declare the Great Underground Empire open and magic free to all those who desired it. Her second was to name the unknown PermaSuck salesperson as Dalboz's successor, the Fourth Dungeon Master of Zork. Her third act was to privately explain time travel to Jack. Thus ended the Age of Science.

PART VII:  
**THE SECOND AGE OF MAGIC**  
**1067~1247 GUE**

**Chapter 1: The Great Monster Uprising**

The return of magic inspired droves of adventurers to flock to the Great Underground Empire to scourge its remnants in search of magical paraphernalia, hidden archaic treasures, and general loot. With the restrictions of the Inquisition loosened, the magical creatures of the Empire, including trolls and kobolds, began to venture far from their lairs unchecked. Their breeding was more heavy and abundant than any other period in the history of Zork. The rapid and dangerous spread coincidentally prevented the adventurer population from emptying the Great Underground Empire of all its valuables. In turn, the adventurers kept the monsters in balance, by restricting them from overrunning every remaining corner of human civilization.

It should be noted that, sometime between the years of 1067-1647, the ruined portions of Flood Control Dam #3 were torn down and the entire dam was reconstructed with a much less scenic look—horrifically dull.

The Frobozz Magic Company was revitalized and hired a new staff to work its multi-conglomerate subsidiaries. The rise of adventurers ensured that, for at least a while, the company would have high earnings. But quickly the stock market collapsed, resulting in an unreasonable zorkmid inflation, which led even FrobozzCo International to fire employees throughout its revived subsidiaries. These lackluster salesmen, who were only paid redundancy in Burfle chips, were reduced to donning the garb of an adventurer and joined the craze of treasure hunting, venturing into the most exotic corners of the land in search of zorkmids.

The White House and other popular regions were trampled underfoot with these hordes of treasure hungry adventures who pitched their tents all over the land. The dwindling FrobozzCo survived this financial crisis only by constructing massive shops at these locations. The proprietors of the amusement park Bozbarland set up a magical arena to take advantage of the fact that the former Great Underground Empire was crawling with heavily-armed adventurers. From certain base camps, anyone was able to challenge a fellow explorer once per day and the two would be instantly transported to a magical arena. The victors increased their general fame and the level of exaggeration that people used when describing them.

In the meantime, the Fourth Dungeon Master would have his hands full protecting the Underground from greedy trespassers, while also quelling a Granola Rebellion.

**Implementor One**

The mysterious and ancient Grand Wizard of the Underground Realm of Zork, one of the famed Implementors of lore, was a direct conduit of the underlying forces that fueled the Zorkian universe through his administration of Frobozz Co. headquarters. A benevolent if somewhat cryptic Wizard, Implementor One was famous for his kindness and goodwill toward all the adventurers in the land and his dedication to inventing new and painful “incentives” for the Programming Grues under his command deep beneath the earth in the Frobozz Co. Ethereal Server Host command center.

Known to have been a deciding factor in many famous battles, Implementor One was a legend in the land of Zork, and his powers were thought to be limitless. He was also famous for his habit of apparently being able to appear and disappear at will, and could often be heard speaking in riddles and ancient forgotten languages. His often mysterious and enigmatic messages fueled an age of Fanucci card discovery unrivaled to this day. Rumored to have an affinity for nice alleyways and Guinness pints, curious adventurers could often see glimpses of the sage wizard at the White House Bar, just outside the Dark Forest.

An ancient prophecy was fulfilled when the Great Wizard Implementor One fulfilled an ancient prophecy by disappearing from The Land of Zork following the first new moon after the closing of the Frobozz Magic Company,



which further fueled the feeling that a dark shadow was creeping across the land. And the worried musings were true, for his disappearance coincided with the Great Monster Uprising of the same age.

Word had spread quickly of the disarray and chaos that were the byproduct of the shutdown of the ancient and venerable FrobozzCo. The monsters of the land soon gained knowledge of the many unskilled and vulnerable adventurers wandering through the forests looking for new customers to supplement their now non-existent income. Seeing as how these adventurers killed without hesitation the various types of monsters and fiends, the creatures started to organize and whispers of a monster summit was heard in some of the seedier and more dangerous pubs late at night in the shadows.

Thousands of the monsters that populated the dark recesses of dank caverns and spooky haunted mansions that filled the lands of the great underground realm were represented at this horrible and brutal summit of monster clans. Covenants were made and many innocent kidnapped villagers were sacrificed that dark and moonless night, all in the effort to garner the favor of the ancient and terrible gods of the monsters, the most powerful of the evil and wicked deities that most Zorkians describe as ghost stories to their young late at night. And upon that dreadful union of creatures, the land of Zork was forever changed, for the monster clans had been formed.

And the whispers grew to the mutterings of traveling merchants and beaten warriors, complaining of ambushes and monsters wielding weapons when attacking. Soon, the laments of adventures was a deafening moan in all pubs across the land—it seemed all were aware that the monsters were indeed using new strategies and training their armies, producing ranked soldiers to deal mayhem and leave destruction in their wake.

The sheer amount of former FrobozzCo employees, large as it may have been, paled in comparison to the amount of monsters that were roaming the countrysides and looming outside city gates, terrorizing the citizens and attacking any adventurers who wandered into their vicinity.

In order to have a fighting chance for survival in this brave new age, the adventurers of the Land of Zork started to band together themselves, forming clans of warriors to be able to fight back against the Great Monster Uprising. And thus, the clans were born, to train and pool resources and information amongst fellow clan members.

One of the first Clans to form was the Order of the Grand Wizard Implementor One, also known as the Guardians of the Coconut of Quendor, Fraternal Society of the Old Guard, and Protectors of the Underground Realm of Zork. They were dedicated to the teachings that heralded the return of the prophet Implementor One, and the revelation he was to deliver upon his fated arrival, ushering all into a new age of magic.

Originally started as a small cult by a drunken savant who insisted he had communication from the Ethereal Server Host, the drunken adventurer who often wore one boot on his head and rode about on a one-eyed donkey declared himself a prophet and created the cult. Soon, as fate would have it, the greatest warriors and wizards in the land ventured to meet with the half-insane prophet, all seemed to be driven by the whisperings of a “far away voice” which led them to the drunken prophet, and thus the High Council was established. The Order of the Grand Wizard Implementor One was the utmost authority in all of the clans that soon followed, whose opinion swayed the tides of the entire future of the Land of Zork. A quote from the handbook informed all members they were equal in the eyes of the Grand Implementor, for all were to be the witness to the Great Revelation of his Return. The members of the clan are still waiting for this event.

### **Elsewhere in Zork (Dungeon Masters, Granola Rebellion, etc)**

In Implementor One’s absence, a new Implementor began to reign as the Grand Wizard, a female known only as Implementor X, who donned the form of a mermaid when roaming the surface of Zork. Soon after her arrival, she regenerated into a bearded man. This metamorphosed Implementor X was responsible for a massive unleashing of gremlins that ran unchecked through all known lands until they were properly subjugated by the massive hordes of wandering adventurers.

While this Great Monster Uprising plagued a majority of the era of the Second Age of Magic, Brog and the Fourth Dungeon Master concluded the Magic Wars, an epic confrontation between the Eastlands (the good guys) and the Westlands (the bad guys). No details save a fragmentary mention of this conflict have survived.

At some point following these wars and prior to the Great Diffusion of 1247, the Fourth Dungeon Master seems to have passed the staff on to a successor. Although much of this period is shrouded in mystery, it is known that one

of the most famous and experienced adventurers of the time, known only by the alias “Detective Softly” was one to have succeeded to this position. It cannot be proven with certainty that “Softly” is the direct successor of the Fourth Dungeon master. There are also references to other adventurers concurrently donning the title of Dungeon Master. Of the several possibility conjectured by scholars, these are the most popular theories derived (including any combination or slight variations):

1. There was more than one Dungeon Master reigning in different regions. Those of different regions passed their staff along to their successor during the Great Monster Uprising, one of these being ‘Softly.’ Those in support of this theory also point to an envelope (dated 948 GUE) addressed to the White House, reading “Local Dungeon Master.”
2. There was only one Dungeon Master in all of Zork. ‘Softly’ was the rightful heir and was the successor of the Fourth Dungeon Master or another in that same lineage.
3. There was only one Dungeon Master in all of Zork, and different adventurers were fighting or competing for that position.
4. There was only one Dungeon Master in all of Zork, but some people claimed to be Dungeon Masters without official succession.

Elsewhere, arising mid-way through the Age, the island nation of Festeron was plagued by the Witchville curse, which may have lasted until the Great Diffusion of 1247 GUE.

## Chapter 2: The Witchville Curse

### Y’Gael Returns Home to Find Wishbringer

After the return of magic in 1067 GUE, Y’Gael left the Ethereal Plane of Atrii and entered her old aging vessel of flesh. She returned to her hometown of Festeron where she was the proprietor of the Ye Olde Magick Shoppe located on the cliffs of the northern island. Like her other shops, this one too was installed with a gateway to Atrii. She soon came into the possession of Wishbringer, which had passed through many hands throughout the Festeron region. She had found it upon the hillside where the Magick Shoppe stood. Though “the Legend of Wishbringer” told that the stone was the heart of Morning-Star, Y’Gael dismissed it as “bullhooley”. In her opinion, the stone came from outer space. Regardless of its origin, the stone was one of the main sources of magic for the two islands which made up Festeron. And while many sought to gain the Stone of Dreams, Y’Gael spent many years fighting to conceal it from The Evil One and others like her. Much was forfeited to ensure its protection. Perhaps that is where this tale should begin, with The Evil One.

Years ago, before the end of the First Age of Magic in 966, Festeron was naught but a sleepy island community. There was a family in town that raised three young sisters. Y’Gael was the eldest of the three. Hortense was the middle. The youngest and scrawniest was Gladys, who later styled herself The Evil One.

Gladys was a sickly child, and an unhappy one as well. She claimed that their mother and father, and her sisters, in fact the whole town of Festeron, would go out of their way, any time, day or night, to pick on her. How much of that was real? Any family contains a certain amount of sibling rivalry, and perhaps parents are not fair with one child as with another. And there were a couple of bullies at school that picked on little Gladys because of her size. In some respect, all shared part of the blame for The Evil One’s actions. But Gladys was always overly melodramatic. From the time she was little, she always had a way of blowing things way out of proportion.

Her evil nature had mostly to do with having spent two years in medical school. But that was before she realized her true calling—supreme nastiness. Since nastiness did not generally make for a good bedside manner, she turned to her new vocation—freelance dictatorship, where she specialized in evil chuckles and demonic shrieks.

The Evil One discovered that whoever possessed the Wishbringer stone would be instilled with incredible magic and that it was in the care of her sister Y’Gael. She had wanted the stone for years for her own foul purposes; mainly, the conquest of the islands, then of the world beyond. Gladys had always thought big. If she had been able to get her way, she would not have stopped with Festeron, but would have taken over all the neighboring countries, and then their neighbors in turn, until she controlled everything upon the surface of Zork! But this could only have done if she was able to take Wishbringer, and, at the precise stroke of midnight, place it in the forehead of the statue of Chaos, who was Y’Gael’s cat. Then her power would increase a thousandfold, and she would become virtually unstoppable. Thus Gladys planned to place an entire curse upon Festeron, turning it into the vile Witchville (she was never very good with names).

The physical layout of Gladys’s Witchville curse was written up by Moriarty, Moriarty, Moriarty & Flathead Urban Planners—the final version was completed on 1085-07-02 GUE. But it would be many years before her evil spell would be placed into effect.

This memo, from James S. Moriarty to Gladys was found attached to the plans:

Dear Evil One,

Attached is a map of the town of Festeron. I have followed your instructions to the letter. The town as it exists before 6 p.m. is depicted in blue. The brilliantly wicked changes that you shall wreak at 6 p.m. are indicated in black. Your evil Tower will be built on the site of the Post Office, as you command.

I am of course at your disposal should you desire other change if when you claim the Magick Stone.

In servile gratitude,

J. S. Moriarty

### **Introduction to the First Postman of Festeron**

The era of the curse of Festeron, which upon many nights transformed this overly perfect village into the dreaded, profane Witchville, is hotly debated by many scholars. The truth in the dating of this event lies within the bounds of several considerations. Some historians believe that this curse began prior to the end of the First Age of Magic (966 GUE). Those who refuse to budge from this view must deny the straightforward evidence that places both Queen Alexis and Morning-Star still alive during 966. If Morning-Star was still living during 966, Wishbringer cannot have been formed prior to this event. The only evidence they cleave to in support of this theory is Y’Gael holding a glowing stone during the Final Conclave of that year which they claim is already Wishbringer. These arrogant fools cannot seem to comprehend that any stone can be FROTZed and it is not unimaginable to suppose that the powerful sorceress Y’Gael could temporally travel Wishbringer to the past after it was formed! It should also be mentioned that Y’Gael was described as a slightly younger woman in 966, while she was much older and wrinkled during the days of Wishbringer. Recent concrete evidence (which some haughty scholars refuse to accept) proves that these Witchville curses did not take place until after the dawn of the Second Age of Magic. Those wishing to further dispute this fact are encouraged to bring up their petitions before Implementor Brian Moriarty himself.

The dating of the first postman of Festeron can be discovered easily by the reprinted edition of the Legend of Wishbringer book. The earliest return date is 12/11/63, which would place the *earliest* date of the book’s check out in the year 1063. The final return date (the first postmaster was the last one recorded to have checked it out) is 09/20/57, nearly a century later. Assuming that the normal checkout time for library books is two or three weeks, this places that the *earliest* date for the reign of the first postman of Festeron is in the year 1157. This also becomes the latest year, as the Great Diffusion of 1247 nullifies a year of 1257 or any later. Thus it seems reasonable to safely assume the month as well, being the end of Augur or the beginning of Suspendur.

### **The First Postman of Festeron** (Augur or Suspendur, 1157 GUE)

It was an ordinary Frob Day afternoon in the little seaside town of Festeron when Gladys first implemented her curse. As a part of her plan to control Wishbringer, the Stone of Dreams, she captured Y’Gael’s cat Chaos. This feline, black as night from head to tail save one little white spot right in the middle of her forehead, was turned into a black marble sculpture about 14 inches high, and the only way to bring the cat back to life was to insert Wishbringer into a round, shallow hole carved into the sculpture’s forehead. Gladys composed a ransom note to be sent through the Festeron postal service.

An unknown mail clerk had been performing ordinary duties in an altogether ordinary way, when the boss, Mr. Crisp, asked for the ransom note, concealed in a strange envelope, to be delivered to the proprietor of Ye Olde Magick Shoppe on the outskirts of town before five o’clock. The following note was attached:

So you want to work for the Post Office, eh? Okay, sport. Take this letter over to the joke shop on the other side of town. And don’t listen to the creepy old dame who runs the place. She’ll go on and on about black cats, trolls, magic quests and somebody she calls the Evil One. Says she’s got a rock that makes wishes come true. Probably talks to UFOs, too.

Be polite. If she offers you a gift, don’t take it... and whatever you do, DON’T let her send you on any errands!

The Boss

PS: Better hurry. It’s getting Dark outside.

The postal worker made way for the pinnacle of the mountain on North Festeron island and knocked on the door.

A voice cried, “Come in!”

I entered and a sudden gust of wind slammed the Magick Shoppe door closed. A concealed bell tinkled merrily. “Just a moment!” cried a voice behind the curtain.

As I waited, the noisy tick of the grandfather clock made me uneasy. Suddenly the woman emerged. She was older than my oldest aunt. Her thin, pale face and bony hands made her look fragile, like a fading signature in an antique book. But her eyes remembered everything they have ever seen. We appraised one another for a long moment before she broke the ice. "Welcome in, welcome!" she chortled. "Don't get many visitors this late in the day."

The room seemed oddly quiet all of a sudden.

"Hope you have some mail for me," the old woman said eagerly. "I don't get much mail nowadays."

I handed her the mysterious envelope. She turned pale as she took it from me. "It's been a long, long time since I last saw this handwriting," she murmured, turning it over in her hands. "Hoped I never would again."

She started to open the mysterious envelope, thought better of it and handed it back to me. "Will you open it up and read it to me?" she pleaded. "I'll never find my glasses in this mess."

I consented to her wishes by opening the letter and reading it aloud:

Deliver the Magick Stone to me before  
the moon sets or you will never see your  
cat again!

--The Evil One

The old woman was motionless as I read. Glancing up, I saw tears of anger forming; but she turned away as our eyes met.

"Kidnapped," she whispered after a long silence. She paced aimlessly around the room, deep in thought. "Many seek to gain the Stone of Dreams," she muttered, mostly to herself. "Yet few can imagine the price. For years I have fought to conceal it from the Evil One and others like her. My youth, my home and family, all were forfeited for its protection. And now," her voice broke with emotion, "now it claims my only companion." Impulsively, the woman snatched away the letter and envelope and crumpled them in her trembling hands. "No one is strong enough to guard Wishbringer alone."

The old woman made an effort to compose herself. "Thank you for coming all this way for me," she said, reaching up to a shelf full of cheap gags. "I know I'm not supposed to tip you, but take this little trinket anyway." She held out a small metal can for me to take. I carefully added it to my inventory.

"It's getting Dark outside," the old woman remarked, and you can almost hear the capital D. "Maybe you should be getting back to town." The woman hobbled over to the Magick Shoppe door and opened it. "Keep a sharp eye out for my cat, won't you?" She spoke the words slowly and distinctly. "Bring her to me if you find her. She's black as night from head to tail, except for one little white spot... right HERE." The old woman touched the middle of my forehead with her finger. The light outside dimmed suddenly, like a cloud passing over the sun. The woman took away her finger. My forehead was tingling.

"The Stone of Dreams can help you in your search. I cannot reveal the place where I have hidden it, for the Evil One would see your thoughts and take the treasure for herself. You must discover it alone, and rely on legends to instruct you in its mysteries." As she spoke, the old woman gently led me through the door of the Magick Shoppe. She paused before closing the door. "Return the cat to me, and Wishbringer shall be yours. Her name is Chaos."

The surrounding landscape disappeared under a thick blanket of evening fog. All the familiar buildings and landmarks were completely hidden; only the summit of Post Office Hill was high enough to pierce the clouds, rising like a lonely island in a sea of mist with the frightening tower of The Evil One on it where the Post Office had once

been. The massive outline was hard to make out against the twilight sky. It was called Witchville, and through Gladys' power, it was Witchville.

It is of most importance to discuss the curse and its effect upon both the landscape and the populace. The Evil One's powers were rather limited when the island was still Festeron. But when it turned to Witchville, she was virtually omnipotent. Omnipresent. Completely unstoppable. Fortunately, these strengths were limited to the islands unless she had been able to obtain Wishbringer. When Festeron became Witchville, all of the people were still there, along with the buildings, and streets, the whole islands. But none of it was the same as before. It was an evil place. A vile place. A twisted shadow of reality. Nothing was the same as it had been.

Sweetness and light could not exist in Witchville. The people who were friends would be friends no more. While Postmaster Crisp, Librarian Voss, Sergeant MacGuffin, and a few others would be more or less as they were in Festeron, they would only be more so. It was only when the island had been turned to Witchville that they allowed their natural proclivities free reign. With them, nastiness became an art. In Witchville one could do whatever they pleased. But in Witchville, one also had to watch their back. In Witchville, one could have abandoned themselves to their desires, but it was best to have done it behind locked doors. Once the process of Witchville had begun, there was no known way to change it back, unless Wishbringer had been placed in the statue's forehead by a hand other than Gladys' by the time the clock struck midnight.

The postal worker eventually discovered a rattling sound from within the metal can. The Wishbringer stone was concealed beneath a false bottom that popped out when the can was squeezed. Contradictory accounts of this tale have been handed down to us—in one version, the postal worker uses the powers of the Wishbringer stone to bypass many of the hazards of Witchville; but in another version, the postal worker refused to call upon the wishes of the Stone, instead resorting to conquer the dangers of the curse by natural means.

For example, when Princess Tasmania was unhappily trapped in a pit on the shore of the Western Sea, the first account tells that she was rescued when the postal worker used Wishbringer to wish for rain, which quickly filled the narrow pit and allowed her to swim gracefully out; while the second version tells how the postal worker lowered a dead branch into the pit for her to grab onto and hoisted her up. Despite these minor differences, all accounts detail the events of the quest with identical encounters and rewards—Tasmania honored the postal worker with a silver whistle, and the blowing of it transported the human to the platypus palace on Misty Island.

I was standing in a long, high-ceilinged chamber of a magnificent castle. Hundreds of platypuses milled about with teacups in their paws; their faces illuminated by a roaring fireplace. At the far end of the chamber stood a mighty throne. It was occupied by a snow-white platypus with a gold crown on its head and a jeweled scepter in its paw. On the floor near the throne was another crowned platypus arrayed in high fashion... the same one I had rescued from the pit. The crowd fell silent as I entered.

"Welcome, brave Adventurer," said the white platypus, rising from its throne to greet you. "I am Anatinus, King of Misty Island. My court thanks you most humbly for rescuing the life of my daughter, Princess Tasmania. Great would our sorrow have been if not for your cunning."

The crowd applauds politely, and Princess Tasmania blushed.

"My messengers have told me of your quest," continued King Anatinus. "Allow me to repay your kindness with words of advice."

The old platypus motioned me to his side. "The Tower of the Evil One is formidable," he began in a low, serious voice. "You will never get inside unaided. Legends speak of a Magick Word that can open the gates of the Tower. But what Word it is, none can say."

The king reached beneath his throne and took out a small wizard's hat. "Take this," he said, holding it out to you."

I relieved him of the gift.

"Take it to the sea," King Anatinus whispered as I turned the hat in my hands. "There you will find a creature learned in the lore of Magick. Heed him well! In his wisdom lies your only hope."

A fanfare of trumpets broke the silence, and the crowd fell to its knees.

“Good luck to you!” cried King Anatinus, bowing deeply. “Now blow into the silver whistle one more time, and deliver us from the horror of the Evil One.”

The postal worker returned to the island of Witchville with a single toot of the whistle. At Festeron Point was a miniature lighthouse on the shore, barely ten feet high. Perched atop it was a pelican. When the hat was given to the bird, its eyes opened wide with interest and the wizard’s hat quickly found a place on the pelican’s head. The old bird gave the postal worker a sly, knowledgeable wink. All at once the lighthouse blazed to life. Its shining beacon whirled like a gyroscope, and a pencil-thin beam of light pierced the sky and traced a word on the passing cloud. (There are three textual variants here that tell which the magical word was that was capable of lowering the drawbridge to Gladys’ tower: KALUZE, FRATTO, and SORKIN. Scholars have not been able to determine which one is authentic, if any are.)

One thing that researchers have been baffled about is that when Festeron was cursed into Witchville, there was a dimensional tunnel in the northern forests leading directly to the White House. In these days, its stately colonial architecture was in ruins, after eons of trespassing by thoughtless adventurers. Here, the postal worker experienced something extraordinary:

The edges of the house’s little mailbox began to twinkle. It was engulfed in a sparkling aurora. Tremors of anticipation ran up and down its length, and the air sang with magic. With a gentle pop, the little mailbox pulled itself out of the ground and cavorted about the grass like a happy rabbit. It noticed me and snapped its tiny lid with joy. It made a silly “clump-clump, clump-clump” sound as it hopped to my side and rubbed lovingly against my sleeve. When I dared to pet the mailbox, it cooed with pleasure at my touch.

This was the start of a curse that infested the forests on the northeastern side of the island with wild mailboxes. When the postal worker arrived at the Pleasure Wharf, with the little mailbox following loyally behind, a voice growled, “MAIL!” from behind:

When I turned to face the sound there was no one there except for the little mailbox. I watched with astonishment as the lid of a big mailbox slowly opened by itself, then snapped shut with a clang. Its lid opened again. “I’m hungry!” The big mailbox began to clatter like a rusty machine. My astonishment turned to horror as the mindless thing began to move. Slowly at first, but with increasing confidence, it scurried across the planks of the Pleasure Wharf, heading straight in my direction! Its lid again snapped open and shut with a menacing clang and hunger. “Feed me! I’m hungry!”

The two mailboxes froze at the sight of one another. The little mailbox snarled and stood protectively by my side. The big mailbox emitted a frightful growl and threw its lid wide open, displaying rows of sharp little teeth. A crowd of postal meters and stamp dispensers gathered as the metal warriors circled each other with tense, snapping lids.

With a sudden rush, the little mailbox threw itself at the big mailbox and clamped onto its forefoot. The big mailbox roared with anger, bit the little mailbox viciously and tried in vain to shake it off. I stared in wonder as the fighting boxes swelled to twice their normal size, then four times larger, eight times!

The big mailbox freed itself with a savage twist and bent to finish its foe. The little mailbox dodged, gripped the descending lid and held on for dear life. Locked in mortal combat, the giant boxes rolled over and over, shaking the earth with the thunder of battle. The scene disappeared under a cloud of dust. I heard a terrible scream of agony, then an even more terrible silence. When the air cleared, the boxes and spectators were gone.

In one version of the story, the postal worker was caught by the dreaded Boot Patrol, an army of living boots. Having escaped from the Police Station cell twice, Sgt. MacGuffin decided to have the postal worker tossed in the ocean to the sharks for a little bedtime snack:

I was thrown into an especially smelly Boot and carried, kicking and screaming, to the edge of the Pleasure Wharf. With a mighty swing, I was thrown high into the air and fell with a splash into the churning waters of Witchville Bay. The boots on the wharf stomped and hooted as a black fin rose above the waves. It circled slowly, getting closer. I shut my eyes and prayed that the end would be quick and not too painful...

“Hop on!” The tiny voice was somewhere near my left ear. “Don’t just thrash about with your eyes shut. Hop on!”

The boots on the Pleasure Wharf stopped hooting and started screaming. Timidly, I opened one eye. The bay was boiling with thousands of seahorses! They leapt from the waves like wet little rockets, splashing the Pleasure Wharf with black, oily water. Many of the boots had already slipped and fallen into the sea; and a black fin was gliding confidently in their direction.

“What are you waiting for? Halloween?”

The familiar seahorse at my ear urged me to a nearby buoy. I grasped it with my last ounce of strength and felt myself speeding across the bay, propelled by dozens of seahorses reined to the buoy with seaweed.

When the postal worker finally was able to make it to Gladys’ tower, the human found that its only entrance, a drawbridge, was closed tight. Speaking the word which had been displayed by the beacon of the lighthouse, there was a great creak of wood and rattle of chains as the drawbridge slowly lowered across the moat.

Upon entering the vestibule just inside the tower’s entrance, the postal worker stared in horror at Princess Tasmania who was chained to the floor. She warned the human to turn back. Mr. Crisp closed the drawbridge shut and a gigantic Boot pinned the postal worker to the ground. Both the human and platypus were taken to the torture chamber. Unwilling to start his experiments without giving the postal worker a chance to bribe him, Mr. Crisp searched the human’s inventory. In the possessions of his victim, he discovered a letter from Violet Voss:

Mr. Crisp took the violet note and stared at it. His face turned pale. “Where did this come from?” he whispered, opening it. An unbearably sweet expression spread over his face as he read:

Corky-Poo,

I’ve got a plate of fresh oatmeal cookies waiting for you. Come over around sixish, and I’ll show you my collection of Byron first editions, etc...

Violet

PS: If my little poodle yaps at you, just say ALEXIS, HEEL and she’ll behave

The violet note fell from his hands. “I’ve got to run,” Mr. Crisp cried, tossing his white lab coat into a corner and stuffing his shirttails into his pants. “Violet scolds me when I’m late!” He struggled into a hideous velvet blazer, pushed a comb through his hair and scampered up the ladder like a little boy.

This opportunity allowed for the postal worker and Tasmania to escape from the torture room. After stating, “But even if you fail, your deeds shall live forever in our legends. Have faith!” she returned to her people on the Misty Island by blowing into one of the silver whistles. The postal worker explored the remainder of the castle, but was unable to discover The Evil One. Instead, in her laboratory, the human found a switch to disable the library security. And thus the postal worker made way for the Witchville Library. In the museum was a feline sculpture:



Wishbringer glowed brighter as it neared the sculpture. It looked like it would fit perfectly into the black forehead.

“Wait!” commanded a familiar voice.

I turned, and saw the figure of an old woman standing nearby. This dark, sinister being had the appearance of the old woman from the Magick Shoppe, but with terrible eyes!

“Your quest is ended,” said the old woman. “The sculpture you see before you is Chaos, the Cat Which Was Stolen. Now give Wishbringer to me, and together we shall rejoice in your success.”

I simply waited as the old woman stepped out of the darkness and moved toward me. “Give me the Stone,” she said. “I want to make certain you haven’t damaged it.”

Feeling tempted to give her the stone, but not trusting the image before me, I continued to wait.

“Let me touch Wishbringer,” said the old woman, inching closer. “I want to hold it again in my hands.”

I felt my fingers, which encircled the stone, relax as she spoke.

“Quickly!” snapped the old woman impatiently. “Give me the Magic Stone. You have no use for it now!”

My fingers began to lose their grip on Wishbringer, yet I was hesitant to act.

The old woman stretched out her clawlike hand. “If you will not give the Stone to me freely,” she growled, “I will have no choice but to take it.”

My hand trembled violently. Against my will, it wanted to give her Wishbringer. I knew now that she had placed a spell upon me. I was certain that this was not the woman from the Magick Shoppe and decided to insert the Stone into the statue’s forehead.

“Don’t!” barked the old woman as my hand moved closer to the sculpture. “No!”

A blast of magic shook the building as Wishbringer touched the forehead of the sculpture. Violet sheets of energy, pure and brilliant, erupted from the very heart of the Stone and illuminated the room like daylight. The woman’s disguise evaporated in the glare. It was the Evil One, her mouth frozen open in a wail of despair as she faded into oblivion. The memory of that face would haunt my dreams as long as I lived. I watched as the sculpture began to soften in the radiance. It wriggled like a thing alive, leapt across the floor and disappeared into a vortex of color. The library folded around me like the closing of a great book...

Returning to the Magick Shoppe, I knocked on the door. It creaked open and the old woman, dressed in a nightgown, peered sleepily. “Who’s there?”

The black cat squirmed away from me and leapt into the woman’s arms.

“Chaos!” she cried, laughing and sobbing all at once as the cat licked tears of joy from her face.

At last the old woman lowered Chaos to the ground and walked over to where I was standing, red with embarrassment. “Now you know me for the old liar I am,” she chuckled, clasping my hands gratefully in her own. “I promised to give you Wishbringer, knowing full well that, if you succeeded, its virtue would be lost. In truth, the Stone would make a poor reward,” she continued, stooping to tickle the cat’s white forehead. “As you can see, it brings more joy in the shape of a companion than in any other. This is Wishbringer’s finest magic. A pity that my sister, the Evil One, did not know of it.”

I heard a familiar “clump-clump, clump-clump” sound behind me. It was the little mailbox, hopping bravely up the steep trail! The woman looked on with puzzled amusement as the faithful box hopped to my side and rubbed lovingly against my sleeve.

Cradling Chaos in her arms like a child, the old woman ambled back into the Magick Shoppe. “Farewell!” she called from the closing door, and the sunlight made her face look young. “Now you are a true Adventurer.”

### **Further Generations of Postmen**

Gladys' first attempt was foiled, but she was not discouraged. Her wickedness endured for many years, and through many postmen. For the postman became the central figure in this little drama, and it was more important to Gladys that to Y'Gael that the postman played out his part. Generally, when Y'Gael received one of The Evil One's notes, she gave Wishbringer to whichever postman had delivered the letter to her. Then it was that one's job to be the guardian of the stone, making sure it did not fall into the wrong hands, and somehow foil Gladys' plans all over again. The whole thing became like a game to Gladys. But if she captured the postman, he was in trouble. If she captured him and discovered that he had been trying to escape from the island—well, trouble was no longer a strong enough word for what he would have gotten himself into. He would find himself wishing he had a less painful death, being nibbled slowly over a period of hours by the sharks in Festeron Harbor.

Though Hortense had not been originally involved with the Witchville conflict, she later joined sides with Y'Gael. It was during these years in which several rules were set in place. The foremost was the prohibition for either of her two sisters, Y'Gael and Hortense, to have direct involvement with the affairs. This was only agreed upon because of Gladys' adherence to other rules, including restrictions placed upon Boot Patrol routes, and magical assets to the current postman that could not be destroyed (such as a magic radio, Kitchen Wonder, and magic glasses).

### **Sneed the Postman**

The exact date of Mr. Sneed's reign was approximately twenty years prior to that of Simon's, and there were at *least* one other postal worker between their reigns. He found that being a postman was a fine job, until Festeron turned into Witchville. Even then, armed with a Kitchen Wonder from Hortense and rescuing Tasmania a couple times (once from a trap in the open grave), he found things were bearable, at least until Gladys got a hold of him. The Boot Patrol had caught him very quickly and turned him over to The Evil One. She was usually merciless with most of those who wore postal uniforms, but due to his meek nature, she was much kinder to Sneed than she was to his predecessors. After that moment, Sneed became paranoid. He began thinking that Gladys was everywhere, watching his every move. And should he do anything else against her, he feared her retribution would be even worse. Some people seem to lose their grip on reality. In Sneed's case, it was reality that had begun losing its grip on him. It happened when he got worried. The more fretful he got, the more he seemed to fade into the background, until one day he disappeared. Though Sneed still dwelt in Festeron, he was overlooked completely. Perhaps he had been worried for nothing about The Evil One's eavesdropping, for he had become so transparent that not even The Evil One's magic could see him. This he remained immune to the Witchville curse. It was not until Simon came to Festeron two decades later that he was again able to make human contact.

### **Simon the Postman**

Having been left in the care of a strict uncle, Simon decided about the time of his thirteenth year to run away. For the next half-dozen years he did all sorts of labor to stay alive. He had worked on farms and in factories before he had gotten good enough with his hands to go out and work for himself. He had spent some time in jail and even some in school. He survived by using his wits, but somehow finding the simplest solutions to the most complex problems.

Simon's current employment, the operation of a crooked shell game, brought him to the small island of Festeron. He set up this game at the Fun Pier. The current sucker was Brad MacGuffin and his girlfriend Shirley Magnifico. Simon made it easy for Shirley to find the pebble beneath the three cups, only to lure Brad into betting a gold coin. He fell for the scam. But when Shirley's older sister, Gloria arrived, Simon was mesmerized by her beauty. Wanting to impress her with his generosity, he formed a façade by returning the coin to Brad, and lied that it had accidentally fallen out of the cup. Gloria was impressed by his charity, and so was the mysterious Mr. Sneed who happened to be standing by. This is the same Mr. Sneed that has once been a Festeron postman. This former postman, unaware that Simon's game had been a scam, praises him for his noble deed.

In the meantime, the Festeron police force had been alerted to Simon's criminal activity on the pier. It had been reported that he had set up a "game of chance" which was designed to lure innocents, causing them to wager actual money. The second charge was Simon's refusal to sing the national anthem when it had been played on the loudspeakers.

Six officers were sent out to the pier. They apprehended him. Oddly polite and courteous, they carried him to the police station while giving him a friendly tour of the town. At the station, Sergeant MacGuffin, enraged by Simon's violations of the law, orders the perpetrator to be tossed in a cell with "reduced rations" of bread and water, which turned out to be croissants and fresh bottled water.

A guard informed Simon that he had a visitor. Sneed entered the cell, but he was not the intended visitor. Gloria arrived, and unable to see Sneed, interrupting him in mid-sentence. Gloria confessed her love for Simon and vainly attempted to warn him about "Festeron's dark secret," but the citywide curfew went into effect. Gloria was forced to leave, but she and Sneed planned to be present at his trial in the morning and speak in his defense.

After another "reduced rations" breakfast of water and freshly-baked cinnamon buns, Sergeant MacGuffin, wild with rage, railed on Simon through the bars. He was escorted by four officers to the courtroom. Brad, Shirley, Gloria and Sneed were all present (though no one else but Simon noticed Sneed). It was here for the first time that Simon heard the charges against him. Sneed's attempted to speak out on behalf of the accused, but no one was able to hear or see him, even when he frantically pounded on the judge's bench. Gloria's testimony was discounted because of her romantic bias towards Simon. Because Simon was a foreigner, he was forbidden to testify. Two of the judges sentenced him to death, but the Grand Justice found that punishment to be too lenient. Instead, Simon was sentenced to become the new Festeron postal worker, a much more severe penalty than death.

All that was transpiring was no accident. For when Simon arrived at Festeron, the town had been without a postal worker for weeks and weeks. Its villains conspired a plan which they believed would ensure the permanent transformation of Witchville. Gladys orchestrated it, that prior to sending the current postman with a ransom note to Y'Gael, she would steal Wishbringer. Gladys did so, obtaining the stone by subterfuge, but was only able to succeed with her task because Y'Gael had let her have it. Of course, Gladys thought that she had stolen it from her. But when Gladys swiped the magic rock, she also swiped a little extra spell Y'Gael placed upon it, a spell that would activate only when Festeron is turned to Witchville. The minute Witchville appeared, the stone would disappear. It would become invisible and furthermore move three feet to the left of wherever it had last been in Festeron. Thus Gladys would have casted her spell with no way to complete it. For no one was able to see the magic Wishbringer stone, unless they were wearing the magic glasses. But there was more to the plan. The villains had thought they were so clever, planning to succeed by choosing a postman of ill repute. With the aid of the High Court, they had selected Simon, who, in their opinion was doomed to failure. They had thought Simon to be a common criminal, a lowlife who would run at the first challenge. And that was where they would make their first mistake.

Simon was taken by half a dozen policemen to the post office where he was to instantly start his sentence. The postmaster, Mr. Crisp, gave him a small room, a new blue uniform complete with cap, and a map of the islands. After being reminded by Crisp to be back before dark, Simon embarked from the post office on his first route.

The first package was to be delivered to the Festeron Public Library. Along the way, Simon met Sneed, who apologized for being unable to help Simon at court, and then accompanied him to the library. The package was delivered to curator, Violet Voss, who was, as usual, rude and quick to anger. The next letter was given to Hortense D. Fester who lived across from the theater. In exchange, she gave Simon a Kitchen Wonder, as was the usual custom with new postmen.

Simon decided to sort the jumble of mail at the church. He was upset that everyone, including Sneed, avoided talking about "something" that it seemed he was the only one that did not know. Sneed was determined to inform Simon about what was going on when they were outside of town. As an excuse to get to the outskirts as quickly as possible, as well as to see Gloria, he set out to deliver a letter he had to her home.

Shirley answered the door of the Magnifico residence, but he insisted to deliver it directly to Gloria. When she arrived, Simon and Gloria were twitterpated with one another. He asked if she would meet her later that night or the next, but she became uneasy, simply stating, "If nothing changes..." When he further inquired, especially about the post office, the Magnifico family quickly told Simon that he needed to leave and the door was shut on him.

Sneed believed that they were far enough from town that they could not speak plainly. Before they could, Mr. Crisp found Simon, and gave him a letter to the proprietor of the magic shop in North Festeron. The shop would close within the hour and Simon had to hurry. By this time Sneed had vanished. For when the little man had felt that it had been necessary to tell Simon about Gladys' plans, he was worried and upset. The more that he had wanted to talk to Simon, the worse it became, until it came to the point where he felt he had to talk to Simon. Unfortunately, at that instant, no one could see or hear him, not even Simon.

On the nearby beach, Simon is lured up a radio playing rock music. This magical radio was able to communicate with the postman. It told him that he had won the "WFES Winning Contest" and that he had to reach the Magic Shop to claim his prize. Simon then had two reasons to head that way.

Unbeknown to Simon, this delivery was part of a scheme instigated by Mr. Crisp on behalf of Violet Voss. And in the meantime, Mr. Crisp entered the library, reporting to her that the new postman was currently en route with the letter to the magic shop.

By the time Simon reached the foot of the bridge that linked both of the islands of Festeron together, Sergeant MacGuffin intercepted him with flurries of vulgarity and forceful reminders that he needed to reach the magic shop before it closed. The northern island had a single path that wound up the side of a sheer cliff to the magic shop. The 25 minute walk brought him to the door of the shop and he entered. He had made it on time.

Y'Gael appeared out from behind a curtain. Simon held out the letter for her, but she told him to read it instead.

Dearest sister:

I have you now. Even as you read this, my minions are taking over the country. And I have found the stone. There is no way you can stop me. By dawn tomorrow, Witchville will be forever!

Yours Cruelly,  
The Evil One

Y'Gael explained the normal procedure that the usual postmen embarked on. Usually she would present the postman with the Wishbringer stone which would be used to aide him in the quest to retrieve Y'Gael's cat. This time, however, Gladys already had the stone. Simon had been chosen in this specific instance, because it was believed that he was doomed to fail. Y'Gael did not believe that. At that time the clock struck 6:00—Festeron transformed to Witchville. Simon had to capture the stone from Gladys before the night was through. Without the stone, Gladys was helpless and Festeron would return with the dawn. She also warned him about the dangers of Witchville, and the transformation of the civilians' personalities.

The radio forced itself on to announce that Simon was the winner of the "WFES Winning Contest." He received his prize, a pair of Festeron Magic Shop Magic Glasses. Y'Gael revealed to Simon that she had let Gladys steal the stone, but also had placed an extra spell on it that made it teleport three feet away and turn invisible when Witchville appeared. No one was able to find the stone without the magic glasses. All Simon had to do was capture the stone before midnight.

When Simon left the shop at 6:30, it was foggy outside. Instead of WFES, the radio had changed stations to WTCH. Simon was only able to see his way down the cliff while he wore the magic glasses.

Simon had to somehow rescue Wishbringer, of Festeron, and perhaps the rest of the world would soon be subjugated beneath Gladys' dictatorial cruelty. And if he did not rescue the stone, and was captured instead, he would be subject to a death too hideous to comprehend.

In the meantime, Mr. Crisp arrived at the Witchville library. The two longed to be with one another, but, like usual, they were restricted by the demands of Gladys. Before they could consummate their desires, they had to kill the postman.

Simon finished his climb down the mountain only to find that the bridge which he had crossed before was now modified with girders, lights, an iron gate, and a sleeping ogre guard. The radio, having a mind of its own, turned back on to warn Simon about the Boot Patrol (since the time of the original postman, the Boot Patrol no longer consisted of magical boots, but were now composed of a troop of men under the same name in the spirit of the former). The radio's voice awoke the ogre and he came out to block Simon's passage across the bridge unless he had

a toll. Simon handed him a Festeron coin, but the monster only accepted those of Witchville and thus wanted to eat him instead.

In defense, the radio began to play “New Crusty Monsters” and “The Men in my Little Girl’s Life.” Hearing these songs was too terrifying for the ogre, that he took a leap off the bridge to get away from them. Simon had free passage across the bridge.

The first person that Simon sought was Gloria. At the Magnifico house, Gloria and Shirley dressed themselves in the attire of a prostitute, hoping to seduce the men of the Boot Patrol, as they usually did during the Witchville nights. Their father was a heavy drunkard on these nights. Gloria did not even remember Simon. He left in bitter defeat.

Outside the cottage, Sneed’s voice came, but it took a moment for the little man to solidify so that Simon could see him. He explained to Simon that he used to be a former postman. Because of his current incorporeal state, he was overlooked during the transformation to Witchville. Thus he believed that he was a valuable asset to help Simon defeat Gladys.

A cry of “Help me!” along the beach snagged their attention. It was Princess Tasmania, who once again was in despair. This time she was caught in a metal trap. The entire beach was littered with trap that had been intended for Simon. Sneed triggered the rest of the traps with a dead branch while Simon used the Kitchen Wonder’s Trap Neutralizer function to remove the trap from Tasmania. As a reward, Tasmania showed Simon had to activate the Kitchen Wonder’s whistle attachment (she was out of the normal whistles that were commonly given to the postmen). After throwing the platypus into the water, they heard the Boot Patrol drawing near.

Sneed vanished in fear, while the radio blasted for a moment before Simon turned it off. To escape, Simon blew the whistle attachment which magically translated him to the Misty Isle, straight into the palace of King Anatinus. Tasmania had already made it back safely. Simon was introduced to the king, and his advisors, Glenfizzlewizzle and the Honorable Roger. Simon shared the story of his escape from the Boot Patrol. Anatinus saw this as already repaying his rescue of Tasmania. Still, he requested for more help, asking them to aid in his search of Wishbringer. While it would take too much time for immediate help, Glenfizzlewizzle would start to prepare a conjuration that might help in the future.

Simon blew the whistle and returned to the beach. The Boot Patrol was gone but he heard a woman’s scream that sounded like Gloria. Following the cry, he found the entire Boot Patrol at Gloria’s. Brad was hugging Gloria while another patroller had Shirley in his arm. The Patrol captured Simon and strapped him upside-down inside a giant six-foot tall boot, and carried him in it to the police station where Sergeant MacGuffin had been waiting for him. Simon came out of the boot, nauseous from the ride. He threw up upon MacGuffin’s shoes. After threats and obscenities, Simon was thrown into the deepest cell below the dungeons with food unfit for consumption. Sick, the postman passed out.

MacGuffin planned to take over Witchville after Gladys was dead. He had not told his spineless son everything. And he did not intend to hand the postman over to Mr. Crisp, but instead planned to kill Simon himself.

Simon awoke to the sound of the radio. The magical device, along with the Kitchen Wonder and the magic glasses had not been seized from him upon his capture. The radio warned that Sergeant MacGuffin was coming to kill him, and that an escape route had been discovered behind the carcass of a dead rat in the cell’s southwest corner. Behind a dead rat was a loose stone in that corner. Simon stomped on the floor stone. The floor dropped out beneath him.

He slid down a long, smooth chute into darkness, where he landed on an overstuffed couch. This was the home of Amy Sue Grue and her child. Some historians find this account very unlikely, but must be wise to listen to the words of the female grue herself. The legend stated that no one had ever seen a grue to live. Amy Sue Grue assured Simon that as long as he did not see her, he had nothing to fear.

Simon explained his situation to the mother grue, including his employment as a postman and Wishbringer. She helped Simon by directed him to a tunnel that lead to the movie theater, and told him that the current film running would reveal the location of Gladys’ current headquarters, as its position changed each cursed night.

Simon emerged from the tunnel at Festeron Circle, just outside the theater. Miss Voss was seated in the ticket booth. Amy Sue Grue grabbed hold of Simon’s ankle and pulled him back underground. The postman caught a

glimpse of her hand. Because of this, he received pain, but not enough to kill him—the penalty for seeing any other body parts of a grue resulted in much more terrible consequences. The reason for her snagging of Simon, was that he had accidentally went the wrong way. The other branch brought him directly inside the theater.

He was alone in the theater. The screen was blurry. It was only clear when Simon put on the magic glasses. The movie showed him Gladys inside the First Church of Festeron Science. But as long as he wore the glasses, not only could he see her, but she could see him. He removed the glasses. But before he could escape, Gloria entered the theater. When Simon went out to her, Mr. Crisp handcuffed him from behind. Violet Voss was at his side; the two whispered terms of endearment to one another. The two villains decided to take their prisoner to the library to be tortured. Gloria desired to watch, and they permitted her.

In the library, Princess Tasmania was found hanging from the ceiling by one foot that had been caught in a thick rope noose. Gloria caught Tasmania when the trap was released. Violet Voss planned to put both Tasmania and Simon into the automatic stamper. The platypus tried to gain freedom by biting Gloria. In reprisal Mr. Crisp clamped her beak with a handful of rubber bands.

It was here that Sneed once again appeared semi-transparent. He took the Kitchen Wonder from Simon's pocket, using it to unlock his handcuffs. Because of Gloria's protests for Tasmania to be saved (it was much too cruel to torture a poor dumb creature), the evil couple decided to stamp Simon first, but not without gratifying their romantic desires. During this intermission, Simon took Tasmania from Gloria, then forcibly demanded the girl to come with him. Simon, Gloria, Tasmania, and Sneed made their way out of the library.

Outside the library, Simon ran headlong into Gloria's father, who was stumbling around, drunk. Possessions were scattered. Instead of grabbing his own glasses that had fallen off, the father instead set the magic glasses upon his face. Whoever wore the glasses found that the spell of Witchville was broken, returning them to their Festeron personality. Simon retrieved the glasses, intending to place them on Gloria, but Gladys appeared. The Evil One beckoned for Gloria; she came to her.

Tasmania freed herself from the rubber band muzzle and taking the Kitchen Wonder from Simon, blew its whistle attachment. Simon, Sneed and the platypus were magically taken back to the palace on the Misty Isle. Glenfizzlewizzle reported that he had "narrowed" down the location of Wishbringer to the island of Greater Witchville (unless, of course, it was hiding somewhere in North Festeron). Roger had already summoned the Platypus Guard—they would be ready to assist Simon once they all arrived. Hoping to fulfill the prophecy of a human turning into a platypus, Tasmania dared to kiss Simon. There was no effect; Simon was not the one. King Anatinus blew the whistle, sending Simon and Sneed back to Witchville so that they could further search for the stone.

The two landed in the northeastern woods. Sneed could hear the clacking of the wild mailboxes that frequented this territory. Sneed revealed that he had found Gladys' hideout in the church, but Simon had already known this.

The north road guided Simon and Sneed to Witchville, which was deathly quiet. There was less than an hour to midnight. Sneed tried to enter the church using the 'unlock door' function of the Kitchen Wonder, but erroneously pressed the blender button. Simon encouraged the worried, shameful Sneed to try again. This time the little man was successful.

But at that moment, Gloria opened the doors and informed the Evil One that they were there. Gladys handed over the killing of Simon to Gloria, who in turn handed it over to Brad and the Boot Patrol. Simon and Sneed made a run for it.

The Boot Patrol pursued them towards the beach. The Radio originally suggested for them to turn north along the beach and to climb the hill to the old tree stump, but the updated traffic report revealed that MacGuffin was waiting in the threes for them with an arsenal. They embarked upon an ulterior southern route into the graveyard instead. There was less than 40 minutes unless midnight.

This road was also hexed by Crisp and Voss with a trip wire across the road. If activated, a giant net would descended upon them. The Kitchen's Wonder 'detecting trap wire' function, which beeped to alert them of its presence, allowed them to avoid it. When the two love-sodden villains went to check the trap, they triggered it themselves, but had no quarrels about being romantically caught.

Though the graveyard was incredibly dangerous, Simon and Sneed had no alternative to escape the Boot Patrol and Sergeant MacGuffin (who carried a rocket launcher), but to tread those eldritch vapor plagued grounds. The spirits caressed them.

The Boot Patrol followed them into the graveyard. This was clearly in violation of the rules which the three sorceress sisters had bound themselves—the Boot Patrol was forbidden from entering this region. The eldritch vapors went after the Patrol instead, but the spirits were not enough to hold back the entire troop.

Sneed lead Simon into an open grave. At its bottom was a secret door with an entrance into the underground region. The Boot Patrol continued to transcend upon the predetermined rules by entering in the tunnels after them. Sneed originally took a wrong turn, leading them to Amy Sue Grue's nest, but Simon realized that this was for the best. Simon turned off the flashlight and warned the mother grue of his arrival and their pursuers. She placed Simon in a closet while she went and ate the Boot Patrol, including Brad MacGuffin. She let them out afterward, and the two men hurried up to the surface, emerging at the tunnel beside the movie theater. There was 17 minutes until midnight.

Simon and Sneed returned to the church, which was surrounded by a fence of barbed-wire. When the postman placed on the glasses, he found that the fence was but an illusion. The back door was wide open. The two entered the church. A door opened and Gloria came out. Simon grabbed her arm, and while Sneed covered her mouth, placed the magic glasses upon her. While trying to kiss Glorian, the glasses continued to fall off, flipping her personality. 12 minutes were left.

Gloria led the two men upstairs to the bell tower where they found Princess Tasmania tied up with an immense amount of rope. Simon untied her. All four proceeded to the Evil One's laboratory. The magic glasses granted Gloria with the ability to spy the otherwise invisible Wishbringer. Gladys entered, wanting to know what it was that she saw.

When Gloria adamantly refused to give away the location of the stone, the Evil One snatched the glasses, restoring the curse upon the girl. She informed her that Wishbringer was in the middle canister. Gladys put on the glasses to verify Gloria's claim, then grinded them into the linoleum with her foot. Sneed was about to take charge with the Kitchen Wonder's 'subduing witches' function, but the Evil One snagged it, tossing it into a fluid-filled cauldron. It was destroyed, along with the radio that was smashed on the floor immediately after.

Y'Gael and Hortense materialized into the laboratory. While their presence in the entire Witchville affair was breaking the rules, they did so only to stop Gladys from further violating more. The following charges were brought against her:

1. The Boot Patrol was forbidden to enter the cemetery
2. The Boot Patrol was forbidden to enter the underground passageways
3. The magic plastic glasses were forbidden to be destroyed
4. The radio was forbidden to be destroyed
5. The Kitchen Wonder was forbidden to be destroyed

Each of the three sisters summoned magical creatures to do battle: a magnificent golden eagle for Y'Gael, a miniature horse with dark blue wings for Hortense, and a half-scorpion, half-spider creature for Gladys. The Evil One lost, but when the sisters relaxed their guard, the Evil One fabricated a colony of huge snakes that wrapped themselves around them so that their arms were pinned to their bodies. Before anything could grow worse, the Honorable Roger arrived with the Platypus Guard. The troop rescued the entangled sisters and carried them out of the room. There was now only 2 minutes remaining.

Gladys and Simon made a dash for the three canisters—one of which contained Wishbringer. The postman reached them first, and quickly flipped them over, setting up a custom version of his very own shell game. He secretly palmed the stone and rearranged their order. The Evil One turned them over, finding it beneath none of them. Simon had tricked and delayed her.

At that moment the clock struck midnight, and Festeron was instantly restored. Y'Gael and Hortense returned, informing Gladys that Sergeant MacGuffin would soon be there to take her somewhere to rest. Tasmania, in love with Simon, inquired of the sisters if they might be able to make him into a platypus. Whether serious or in jest, they simply told her that they would work on it. Now that their task had been finished, all of the platypuses left for the

Misty Island by the toot of their whistles. Gloria gave Simon an adoring handshake (as the nature of Festeron had returned, anything more would be improper).

Now that Festeron had returned back to normal, Simon was praised as a hero. He returned Wishbringer to the two goods sisters, who, overjoyed, promised to shower him with gifts and anything else he wanted within reason. Simon had to remain a postman, as only the Festeron court could remit his sentence, and they had all went on vacation when Witchville appeared, thus it appeared that Simon would be required to defeat The Evil One once or twice more during the time of the court's vacation, but there was problems that came with every job. Sneed permanently solidified and showed his gratitude by helping Simon with the mail. Gloria accepted Simon's offer of a date as long as there was a chaperone present and she was home by ten.

It was immediately after his conversation with Gloria, when Mr. Crisp handed Simon a crumpled envelope addressed to the Magic Shop. While no historical accounts have surfaced detailing what became of Simon following his first triumph, almost all scholars presume that the curse of Witchville continued on. How many postmen and curses followed? One may never be certain. It is however, well agreed upon, that by the First Great Diffusion, that the Witchville curse was finally revoked, at least temporarily. There are no records that claim its continence into the Third Age of Magic, or beyond, and does seem rather unlikely.



### Chapter 3: The Great Diffusion of 1247

By the 1240s, magic had once again reached the height of crisis, a crisis that was finally resolved, or at least temporarily avoided, by the First Great Diffusion. The most detailed accounts of this event can be obtained from the writings of the 17<sup>th</sup> century chronicles and schoolteacher, Mavis Peepers.

(1152) Trembyle was born. (1202) Canuk was born. (1246) Canuk wrote the re-usable YOZOZZO scroll.
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The Great Diffusion was to be the second attempt at the absolute end of evil magic in the land. Following the defeat of the Inquisition in 1067, magic had been deregulated. Having been used irresponsibly, evil magic had gotten the upper hand. As the adventurer population continued flourish to heights never seen at any other period in the entire history of Quendor, every fool with a wand called themselves a magician. The authentic magicians had their hands full simply controlling these imposters, much less being able to enforce their excessive standards upon the flourish evildoers.

The good wizards realized that they had to get power out of evil and the evil out of power, even if they lost their own in the process. This extinction of evil once and for all could only be done if *all* magic was dispersed.

To plan for this Great Dispersal, all the most notable wizards, holy men, and clerics of the time gathered in room number two at the Inn of Isenough in East Shanbar. Many factors had to be taken into consideration: the destruction of all evil artifacts, regardless of rarity; the elimination of those who practiced the arcane arts; the dismantling or destruction of all other powerful magic times, while all existing magic had to be diluted and made useless. The Great Underground Empire also had to be sealed off.

They discovered that they could not dilute or destroy the magic, and they certainly did not want to try to capture it in a receptacle such as a coconut (as was first attempted before the Age of Science). So they developed an alternative plan that required the union of all good magical powers to scatter all magic throughout the known land. But as discussed before, all magic and magical devices, whether mechanical or enchanted would be destroyed and their essence released; this included the Frobozz Magic Company and all of its inventory. They hoped that the dispersal of magic into the atmosphere would weaken the magical structure and eventually enable its power to fade away—evil magic would be vanquished forever. The members of the group knew that the procedure would leave some of them powerless, but this did not deter them from their obligations.

The enemies of these good wizards placed an evil spy in the midst of the good wizards in basement level number six of the Inn while they were plotting the Great Diffusion, but they knew about it. The good wizards, being clever wizards, talked in code and fed the spy false information. The spy was led into thinking that they were going to hide all the magic in the world behind a Wall of Illusion. And the good wizards created a Wall of Illusion as a decoy, so that the evil wizards would, in fact, be misled to believing that all magic would in fact be hidden behind it.

The only thing that can shatter a Wall of Illusion is a Flying Disc of Frobozz. After learning of this impending event and being deceived that all the magic (including these discs) would be hidden behind this wall, the practitioners of evil broke one such powerful disc up and hid all six pieces before the good wizards could destroy it.

They also built a diabolical mechanical forge to put the pieces back together. This forge was secretly fashioned by renovating the ancient shrine of the Muses of the Arts located near Bel Naire Temple, the same one that was built around 966 GUE. Part of this project involved the creation of a new statue, known as Lib, the Catcher. Lib was designed to hold an orb, needed to focus light onto the broken pieces of the disc—the final phase of the reforging process. The other statues were also converted, each one requiring at least one additional external component for operation:

The evil ones planned to wait for the right time, with the hope that any survivors of the Great Diffusion could gather the pieces together, reforge them, and shatter the Wall of Illusion to get the magic hidden behind it.

In a spectacular display of combined magical power, the Great Spell was cast. There was a great explosion! The good wizards vaporized all the magic, both good and evil, scattering it to the four winds with the hope that evil magic would be vanquished forever. As planned, even the Frobozz Magic Company and all its inventory did not escape the dispersal. Whatever was not destroyed was dismantled. During the explosion, along the rest of the magic, the decoy Wall of Illusion went too. Although for a couple centuries myth would tell that the Great Underground

Empire of Zork was destroyed in the calamity, the vast caverns of the legendary subterranean world were merely hidden away.

As a result of the scattered magic, most wizards and mages lost their powers in the process for a long time. Both the mage Canuk and the wizard Trembyle participated in the destruction of the evil magic. Knowing that their powers would be drained from the ordeal, they both cast themselves a long-life spell ensuring that they would have enough time to recover their magic. When the other wizard's eventually aged and died, Canuk and Trembyle became the only two survivors of Great Diffusion. A popular board game called Survivor was later invented in their honor.

As planned by the evil wizards, both the disguised forge and the disc pieces survived the diffusion. But since the good wizards never planned to hide the magic behind the wall, this action was in vain—however, ironically, their error would be a tremendous benefactor in the defeat of the evil Morphius many centuries later.

Some, if not all, of the hidden pieces were removed from their original place of hiding, and, by whatever route they took, eventually reached the following destinations by 1647 GUE, at which time they were once again gathered together by an unknown adventurer:

- 1 – One was in the possession of the Lighthouse Keeper north of Shanbar.
- 2 – Cliff Robinson managed to have two of these pieces, one of whom he later gave to his escaping son.
- 3 – Canuk himself found one and placed it in a safe in the cabin of an enchanted ship in a magical bottle.
- 4 – One was found in a boar statue in the Forest of the Spirits.
- 5 – And the final piece was left abandoned on some underground ruins near the Forest of the Spirits.

Thus, the First Great Diffusion ended the Second Age of Magic. Somehow, it is not surprising to find that the First Great Diffusion met a similar disaster as the tenth century Coconut Method. Everything had went according to plan, except for the diluting of the existing magic. For magic and evil cannot be destroyed. They can be diffused but there will always be resurgences.

PART VIII:  
**THE THIRD AGE OF MAGIC**  
**1247~1647 GUE**

At the time, the Great Spell seemed to have been highly successful, and for now at last magic had been put to rest for a second time. The evil magic that had been scattered into the atmosphere and carried by the winds, gradually settled in tiny specks over the landscape. The specks settled and were absorbed into the soil and every living thing. For nearly four hundred years, plants and crops flourished, cows got fatter, people began to resettle in the Valley of the Sparrows, and peace settled throughout the land. Magic became but a legend, the Coconut of Quendor was dismissed as rubbish, and a cyclops was but a fairytale.

History tells us very little about the next four hundred years. No doubt human knowledge progressed with the usual inexorable steadiness. Particularly impressive, and undoubtedly attributable to some time in the late 14th or early 15th centuries, is the further harnessing of the power of electricity. Equally as important to the life and economy of these times was the invention of the automobile, forever freeing mankind from dependency upon the unpredictable horse or the stubborn wiskus beast.

Of course, how much of this technological progress can be credited to the human race is a matter of great debate. By the 17th century after Entharion, the demography of the land had radically altered. Various troll and orc tribes, reunified for the first time perhaps since the coming of Duncanthrax a thousand years before, had established minor kingdoms in the midst of human settlement in the Eastlands. These ferocious migrations brought about much peril for the humans in those regions, including the nonconsensual byproducts of half-orcs and half-trolls.

Throughout the Eastlands, the rising dwarvish population added to the economic and technological rebirth of the area through their thorough and obsessive mining projects. The dwarves were the best (and only) miners in the land. The tunnels and tracks of their mining projects catacombed mountains across the Eastlands. From these mines, they extracted minerals needed for metals, as well as silver and gold.

**Statue of the Boar (1369 GUE)**

In honor of hungry boars, a memorial statue was erected in the Forest of the Spirits by sculptor Hans F. Stone. It was rumored that in trying to meet his delivery deadline, he poured plaster over a boar that had just choked to death when attempting to consume one of the six pieces of the Flying Disc of Frobozz.

The 15th and 16th centuries brought forth worsening global weather conditions which have since made large portions of the Westlands unfriendly, if not downright inhospitable.

But most importantly, over the years the evil magic had seeped down into the soil. Deep in the ground, the tiny specks of evil dust began to shift and move. The particles percolated down through the soil, and formed veils, much like gold veins. When they pushed their way into certain rock formations, they produced light. One of these new materials would be called illumynite, while the other, which could be made translucent, would be called translumynite. Both of these geological formations continued to

attract the scattered evil magic. This fusion was not felt above ground, but underground. Throughout the hallways and mazes of the old, forgotten Empire, the effect was monumental.

## Chapter 1: The Reign of Morphius

### Fertility of the Valley of the Sparrows (early 1600's)

Since the dispersal of magic, the village of Bel Naire, home of the great temple, grew and became almost as popular as East and West Shanbar. Pugney's Ranch raised strong and healthy cattle that provided enough meat and leather products for the entire valley. Snoot's Farm grew the most fabulous vegetables and grain imaginable. Anything seemed to grow well in the valley and there seemed to be no restrictions on what types of things could be grown there. Everything seemed to be perfect. But it was not.

At the same time, as the specks settled in the Valley of Sparrows, another miracle was happening; a particularly dense cluster of saturated illumynite had developed some unusual characteristics and started to behave like a magnet, drawing more particles and absorbing the energy from them, more and more day by day. The cluster grew and pulsed. It began to emit strange sounds and energies. Until it gained Rooper's voice in 1647, Morphius, as it would come to call itself, could only communicate with people through their dreams.

### Feebo's Folly (c. 1620's)

One of the first illumynite mines lay beneath the mountains northeast of Shanbar in the Valley of the Sparrows. There seemed to be no geological sense to the wealth of the glowing rock found in the mountains, but this dwarven community did not care to question it. They mined the luminous substance, too, naming the material "illumynite". The usefulness of the illumynite was not immediately known, but quantities of it were still mined and stored for research.

It was during the tunneling of a new mountain sector in the 1620s that the Cluster was unearthed by the dwarven miner Feebo. At first, the football-sized, glowing rock was considered a good-luck charm and a sign that a tremendous vein of illumynite waited just ahead. But the dwarves found only worthless dirt and rock, which was rare. Their good-luck charm quickly became mockingly known as Feebo's Folly, and was set aside as a gag item. However, after the passage of time, something became apparent: the cluster did not lose its glow.

After some experimenting, the dwarves concluded that chunks of illumynite, when kept out of direct sunlight and away from water, held their luminous qualities longer. They were like rough, natural light bulbs. These light bulbs soon became the new product of the dwarves. The original cluster was renamed Feebo's Fancy Find. The honor came too late for Feebo, though.

Poor Feebo, embarrassed by the Folly, took to drinking heavily and carelessly took a wrong turn during a joyride in a mining cart. (Could not tell his left from his right.) The track suddenly ended in a hole on the side of a high mountain and Feebo went sailing out into the void. The remains of the cart, as well as a few parts of Feebo's wardrobe, were enshrined in the Temple of Bel Naire alongside the Cluster, which was placed upon a pedestal.

### Theft of the Cluster (1635-12-14 GUE)

The display of the Cluster at the Temple of Bel Naire gained particular interest from Canuk, who was still living since the Great Diffusion. Fascinated by the cluster, he visited the museum regularly. In a weakened state (from the exertions to dispel all evil), the exposure to the Cluster had a strange effect on him: he became mesmerized, controlled. The Cluster seemed to reach out to him and hypnotize him. He became possessed by the evil energy of the Cluster. But only part of his personality became possessed. The other part of Canuk had no idea of this dual personality. Now obsessed with the object, he had to obtain it. After building a replica cluster, he infiltrated the museum one night and swapped the fake for the real one.

The East Shanbar Times reported (1635-12-14) that the Holy Woman suspected that the Cluster had been replaced with a fake cluster. She expressed concern and asked for an inquiry. IT&L, Inc (ILLUMYNITE, TRANSLUMYNITE & LEISURE, INCORPORATED) was contracted for investigations.

(1626) Molly Moodock nee Kettle inherited the historic Inn of Isenough. She subsequently remodeled it to suit her taste.

(1635-02-14) Molly Kettle and Moadikum Moodock were wed in the lobby of the Historic Inn of Isenough.

(c. 1640) The dwarves, having laid claim to the Sword of Zork, had renamed it the Dwarven Sword of Zork. In the 1640s, Moadikum Moodock gained possession of the legendary blade.

Canuk kept his new possession secret, even from his IT&L partners, the Wizard Trembyle (a veteran of the Great Spell days), Rooper (a veteran of beast-slaying and other great adventures), and Moadikum Moodock (who sold arms for a living and was a genius at manufacturing). He had always been an intuitive wizard, and thus impulsive. So it would take quite some time before they would notice that his schizophrenic state was dangerous.

Ms. Mavis Peepers stood at attention while her star pupil, Rebecca Snoot, received her diploma from Suey Cum Loudly. Rebecca plans to continue her anthropological studies and write books. Her father Obediah Snoot IV, noted collector and farmer, looked on proudly.

-West Shanbar Times, 1640-06-21

### **Historic Inn of Isenough Disappears (1640-08-13)**

Within five years, the evil illumynite consciousness had become so powerful that it began to exert a magical effect on the nearby Shanbar villages. One at a time, local buildings vanished and reappeared underground in a mysterious subterranean parallel Shanbar.

The first public instance of this phenomenon was the disappearance of the Inn of Isenough. Moadikum Moodock had just finished breakfast at the historic inn and walked across the street to open his shop, when he turned to say something to his wife Molly and found that the inn was gone. In fact, the whole block had mysteriously disappeared. Moadikum was frantic, unable to explain this tragedy. He moved in with his friend and partner Rooper. The Mayor vowed recovery. (The East Shanbar Times reported this event on 1640-08-13.)

### **Investigation of the Disappearances**

In wake of the disappearance of portions of East Shanbar and other strange goings on, a few individuals became curious—especially Rooper, Trembyle, Canuk, and Moadikum. After some tedious research and exploring, the four partners discovered a secret door beneath the Old Mill. It led to the old Underground Empire, which no longer looked the same. It was a whole new world down there. Rooper convinced the Wizard Trembyle, the mage Canuk, and Moadikum into further investigating the underground with him.

The vanished buildings of East Shanbar were discovered with their original occupants, having been relocated to the new underworld. Illumynite lighted this new world and the transported people did not seem to mind. And over time, more structures above ground would find their way to the underworld. The countless bloits of cavern that had been abandoned and dismissed as legend for almost four hundred years were once again thrown open to colonization and economic development.

The partners were excited and quickly consumed by the marketing potential of this new world: an underground resort with glowing rock formations, a giant theme park, and architecture based on the excavations of the old empire. And these were just the folks to do it. The Wizard Trembyle was a bit concerned to say the least. To him, this return to the old underground world was highly unnatural.

Despite the wizard's suspicions, the four partners began to develop the glowing illumynite caverns. IT&L's first underground project was Dizzy World. Canuk drew up the plans for this and other land development prospects. In short time, the mage oversaw the designs of high technology commercial products, which would include the prototype Tele-Orb, lighting products, illumynite magnets, and illumynite batteries.

### **Inventions of IT&L**

Moadikum planned the actual construction of Dizzy World. As a master strategist, the theme park was built like an army going into battle. When the partners decided to produce the Tele-Orb and illumynite batteries, Canuk was asked (since he was apparently the most knowledgeable person on illumynite outside of the dwarven community) to develop an interface between the batteries and the telepathic orbs. Canuk agreed to the task, but not out of friendship. He had been "instructed" to take the job by the silent voice inside him. Already he was submitting to the mysterious Cluster's control.

Canuk succeeded in making a device that worked with the Tele-Orb, but his personality was changing and the partnership with Rooper, Trembyle, and Moodock became strained. It was the future disappearances of East Shanbar that finally pushed them all apart, when the recently constructed headquarters of IT&L and Moodock's Armory, both located in East Shanbar, disappeared next, following the heels of the disappearance of the Historic Inn of

Isenough. Moadikum disappeared with his shop, but was eventually located again in the underworld. (The East Shanbar Times reported on this event on 1640-10-06.)

But due to these complications, the bugs of the Tele-Orbs were never worked out by the time the partnership folded. The unfinished orbs could only receive but were unable to send.

### **Treachery of Canuk**

Inspired by the Cluster, which was now a mutating object of much greater proportions and had a name of its own—Morphius, Canuk had fallen deeper and deeper under its spell. Visions of an entire underground city would be given to him in his sleep, and in the morning the plans for this project would be sitting on his table. Plans went forth to building this empire for Morphius, but mass quantities of materials and labor were required for its construction. While Canuk hired the dwarves to mine illumynite, he found that their union was too costly. Not only that, but something more was needed—translumynite.

Hoping to break the union, the same force that controlled Canuk began to possess hundreds of vultures. These mindless buzzards roamed both levels of the valley, passing through unknown portals. They raided the dwarven mining areas for illumynite chunks and brought them to the underground, but the dwarves became resistant.

Canuk engineered the Cliffs of Depression, not only to mine its translumynite, but as a further attempt to crush the dwarven union permanently, but it only grew stronger. Morphius enslaved most of the people from East Shanbar to mine the ore and to build his new empire. The sorcery of Morphius was so strong that it radiated from the cliffs causing those within to grow so depressed that they could not get up to leave. The only ones that could temporarily stay without being affected were those with a bonding plant. But the spells of Morphius were so strong, that the bonding plant could only survive a short time before wilting and its holder be trapped forever at the cliffs as a virtual slave—a worker in the translumynite mine.

The Citadel of Zork was the first structure built with the new architectural techniques. It was, in fact, an incubator for the Cluster. Here, the vultures delivered the stolen chunks of illumynite, which were absorbed into the structure housing the Cluster. Energy then was drawn in large quantities to speed up the mutation of the Cluster. Hordes of half-orcs were gathered as sentries for the Citadel. When the inspired Canuk had completed its construction, he sealed it with a Wall of Illusion. The Citadel was only known to his possessed personality. The other Canuk was unaware of the construction, only brief glimpses of the project were left in the untouched portion of his mind. Morphius feared that the pieces of the last Flying Disc of Frobozz would be recovered and reforged and his illusionary shield would be shattered. Thus his minions sought the manual for the forge and destroyed it.

These vultures were also the eyes and ears for the evil force. The buzzards preyed upon any living thing that was stupid enough to isolate itself. Able to zero in on subjects who spoke or acted against the force, they would swoop down and carry the offender away, never to be seen again. Most of these unfortunate persons were delivered to the Cluster and used for the mutation process, so that Morphius could develop a form that would enable communications between the force and everything else. Others of more importance (those who needed to be thoroughly analyzed after the mutation was complete) were turned to stone statues or zombies and used to decorate and entertain the Halls of the Citadel. They were, in fact, merely suspended or preserved until later.

Confused by the variations delivered, Morphius' mutation process became a nightmarish and disgusting event. Its shape constantly changed to fit the images and patterns of the sample creatures delivered. But the process went on. And the mutation grew and grew and gained more power with every minute. Its influence spread and its demand for more energy created a busy agenda for the marauding vultures.

Canuk had retired to a condo shack on dreary Ferryman's Isle in the new underground. While he was secretly building the empire of Morphius, he was still responsible for former projects with some of his partners.

### **A Traitor in the Mist**

Tremble and Rooper soon discovered that something peculiar and magical was definitely occurring underground. An odd form of architecture was adopted, using illumynite building materials. New buildings had sprouted up everywhere, as if in preparation for mass immigrations.

The more Rooper and Tremble found out about Canuk and his alteration of the original underground plans, the more confusion and mysterious it all became. Rooper sharpened his awareness and prepared for the unknown. They began to investigate and snoop around. A confrontation between Rooper and the Morphiuss-possessed side of Canuk occurred on the Ferryman's Isle. During the altercation, Rooper, in an act of self-defense, turned Canuk into a duck (he deflected a changeling spell thrown at him by the mage).

The partners decided to leave Canuk in this state until they learned more about his strange behavior.

Boos Myller of West Shanbar drove his pickup truck into the river for the tenth time. When questioned at the scene Myller replied, "I was pressing on the brake but a bottle must've got wedged between the pedal and the floorboard." Upon hearing of Boos' latest accident the Mayor remarked, "We've already revoked his license, now what we need to revoke are his keys."

-West Shanbar Times, 1642-03-15

### **Darkness Falls (1642~1645 GUE)**

As reported by the East Shanbar Times (1642-05-21), Will Swindle, proprietor of the General Store could not take the desolation and calamity any more. Just as he closed the store and tacked up his last notice on the door, the building vanished. This was later followed by Pugney's Ranch sometime after Oracle of 1643. Eventually, all but a

few buildings in West Shanbar were drawn into the new environment; those that remained above ground were displaced to the south of their original location. Other areas of the valley were similarly affected too. The original lighthouse, a keep back then, was no more, though the ruins still remained. A new lighthouse was constructed nearby. Bel Naire village turned into a ghost town in a matter of months. Monks and others no longer visited the Ancient Sacred Circle. People left West Shanbar. The crops began to fail and the cattle weakened. Even the people who stayed became overweight or skinny and seemed to lose their spirit. A curse settled in various patches across the valley; one such region was the Road to the South. All who ventured into the region between the lighthouse and West Shanbar instantly perished.

The Valley of the Sparrows was renamed the Valley of the Vultures. For, needless to say, the vultures plagued the skies, replacing the sparrows. Many who dared to stay were carried off by the buzzards to Morphiuss. In response, as reported in the West Shanbar Times (1645-07-18), the Mayor of Shanbar and the Lighthouse Keeper announced plans for a new anti-vulture warning system. The lighthouse ran on illumynite. Prior to the testing of the warning system, the vultures snatched the lighthouse's chunk of illumynite. Without the rock, it was never tested.

ANGUS PUGNEY WINS ALL-VALLEY CATTLE ROUND-UP BEST OF SHOW.

-West Shanbar Times, 1643-04-01

The descendants of hellhounds were finally domesticated in late 1646 GUE, when they were cross-bred with the best guard dogs from the Major Pie R. Squared Kennelery.

### **Adventure to Destroy Morphiuss**

When Tremble and Rooper caught on to enough of the evil process, they set out to destroy it before it reached an unstoppable point. They had discovered what seemed like a plan to enslave the minds and bodies of the known world inhabitants and create a new world of evil-generating structures. The environment, unbeknownst to these two, was being transformed into a huge incubator, allowing even further mutation and growth for the Cluster.

It did not take long for Morphiuss to respond to the presence of the two snooping humans. Tremble was the first to be turned to stone, having stumbled upon far too much information. This disappearance of Tremble caused Rooper great concern, and reacting in typical adventurer spirit, he donned his battle gear and prepared to find and defeat whoever or whatever was responsible.

### **Sweepstakes Winner Packages Sent (1647-03-05)**

Prior to the earnest beginning of the investigations and the disappearances, Rooper had prepared a help message disguised as a public-relations package to be sent to everyone in the Westlands on his mailing list. This package contained a notification that the bearer had just won the grand prize of the Dizzy World Resort sweepstakes, a map

to Shanbar in the Eastlands, a camera, a tape recorder, and a gift Tele-Orb as a bonus. All the bearer needed to do to claim the prize was to journey (at his own expense) to West Shanbar and hear a presentation by Rooper and Trembyle.

With the help of a prototype Tele-orb, Rooper was able to discover most of the route Trembyle had taken. It was not long before he was also turned to stone by Morpheus. But just before he was petrified, he was able to briefly communicate via the Tele-orb with the one whom would dare challenge Morpheus.

### **The Sweepstakes Winner (1647-11-XX)**

As the situation seemed the most grim, new arrivals from the still undamaged Westlands were still making their way across the Great Sea. One such adventurer, of whose name, origin, and sex have been lost to time, stumbled across the IT&L's Valley of the Sparrows Resort package in the mailbox of the White House.

This is a copy of one of many letters sent out by Rooper:

IT&L's VALLEY OF THE SPARROWS RESORT

5 Arch, 1647 GUE

Dear Sweepstakes Winner,

### **CONGRATULATIONS!**

You are the Grand Prize Winner in IT&L's Vacation Sweepstakes!

You have just been selected for an all expenses paid four day vacation in the fabulous Valley of the Sparrows! Visit the greatest archaeological discovery of our time—the newly discovered caverns that prove the existence of the Great Underground Empire of Zork, all at no cost to you!

This terrific package includes four days and three nights accommodations at the scenic West Shanbar Vacation Village Resort located on the impossibly beautiful Road to the South and just a stone's throw from the Northern River Lighthouse.

There's more! In the next few days you will receive a special delivery package with three bonus gifts to help you make the most of your upcoming trip. Your gifts will include a Pholobloid instant Camera so you can take all the pictures you want, a Zony tape recorder for your personal listening pleasure, and our latest invention, the Tele-Orb from which I or my famous partner, the Wizard Trembyle, will provide useful commentary during your travel through the valley.

Best of all, by participating in this wonderful vacation you are eligible to receive a one year free trial membership in our soon to be completed Great Underground Timeshare Rezort. This is no ordinary offer. There are no strings attached! Just come to the scenic Valley of the Sparrows, claim your vacation prize package and attend a low-key 90 minute presentation. The rest of your stay in the Valley of the Sparrows is yours to enjoy.

Take advantage of all the fun-filled activities offered in the captivating Valley of the Sparrows:

Boating... on the scenic Northern River that runs south through East and West Shanbar.

Sightseeing... at the historic Temple at Bel Naire.

Exploring... in the ruins of the Great Underground Empire!

Night Life... Enter the joke telling contest at Cliff's Comedy Club.

Be one of the first to walk amidst the ruins of the lost Underground Empire of Zork. See for yourself! We have indisputable evidence that proves the existence of the legendary subterranean world of Zork, whose vast array of caverns was hidden away during the Great Diffusion over 400 years ago!

Finally, upon arrival in the Valley of Sparrows, as a special welcome bonus, we would like to invite you to drop by our gift shop located inside West Shanbar's historic Pawn Shop, to choose three free gifts from our wide selection of numismatic wonders, gadgets, mementos, and other great items.



Remember, all you have to do is attend the IT&L Group's low-key, 90 minute informative orientation that I will personally host—then spend the rest of your vacation in the Valley of the Sparrows enjoying the activities of your choice. See you soon!

Sincerely,

E. Rufus Rooper

Executive Vice President

Illumynite, Translumynite & Leisure, Inc.

### **The Hero Arrives at Shanbar** (c. 1647-11-21)

The Sweepstakes Winner set out from the White House and arrived at the Mountain Pass—the entrance of the Valley of the Sparrows. Here the Tele-orb again came to life. Until the end of the quest, the Wizard Trembyle provided helpful commentary through the illumynite-powered device. The human quickly learned that the entire valley and village of Shanbar had fallen under some dark and sinister influence, having become decayed and dysfunctional. Whole buildings had mysteriously vanished, murderous vultures infested the land, people had frequent and disturbing nightmares, featuring some dark being which referred to itself as Morphius, and many of those who had survived had become reclusive and paranoid.

After befriending a few of the townspeople, which included Ms. Mavis Peepers, the slightly dowdy town schoolmarm, she gave the Sweepstakes Winner a notebook, asking that the human investigate the causes of the powers that had gripped East Shanbar and the rest of the land. After the defeat of Morphius, she would edit this collected information into the popular book, “The Rise and Fall of Zork.”

The exploration of the valley led the Sweepstakes Winner to discover a secret door in the cellar of the old mill. This was the same entrance which Trembyle, Rooper, Canuk and Moodock had passed through years before. On the other side, the human discovered the lost East Shanbar and the remnants of the Great Underground Empire. Here Moadikum Moodock taught the game Survivor, and gifted the traveler with a token and the Sword of Zork, which was used to defeat a clan of half-trolls that had taken residence in some ancient sewer pipes near the subterranean village. Much of the exploration of this vast realm was done in cooperation with the anthropologist Rebecca Snoot, whose father's farm had been transported to the underworld.

The two met when the Sweepstakes Winner trespassed the Snoot residence by slipping through an open window. Their encounter took place in her bathroom. With a single punch, she knocked the intruder unconscious. After changing her clothing, she kept the human at gunpoint until consciousness returned. She proceeded to question the intruder. With the correct answer she was somehow able to tell that this suspect bore her no harm. She granted permission that anything within the house could be used in accordance with the quest. Rebecca continued to aid this adventurer by gathering information and even translating one of four jokes, which would be essential in the recovery of the six pieces of the last Flying Disc of Frobozz.

This specific disc, known as the Nectus, was the same one that had been broken up by the practitioners of evil prior to the Great Diffusion in 1247. One of the pieces was found in the bowels of a boar statue in the Forest of the Spirits, a second was hidden in some underground ruins near the same woods, and the last four were in the possession of men: the Lighthouse Keeper north of Shanbar; Cliff Robinson, the proprietor of Chuckles' Comedy Club (It was the reward of the Big Laugh Contest, which was won when the entire crowd roared after the successful telling of four jokes from Bizboz's ancient text “The Book of Four Jokes and Learned Essays Upon Them”); the son of Cliff, who had escaped to the overworld; and the Morphius-possessed mage Canuk.

The piece retrieved from Canuk is the most interesting of these tales. The mage was briefly freed from his imprisonment when the unknown Sweepstakes Winner used the mage's own spell to revert him back to human form. The sweet Canuk, still unaware of the duel-personality, aided this hero. Besides translating one of four jokes, which would be used in the acquiring of one of the pieces of the last Flying Disc of Frobozz, Canuk also sent this adventurer to gather a piece which he had obtained sometime after the disc's sundering. The piece had been placed in a safe in the cabin of a miniature ship that rested inside a small glass bottle. Enchanted with a shrink spell, the adventurer was able to enter the bottle and removed the disc piece. Canuk, now in his possessed state, was waiting

for the adventurer to emerge, who he planned to transform into a mallard. In defense, the hero wielded a shiny object as a shield, which ricocheted the spell and instead ducked the mage once again.

When the Sweepstakes Winner arrived at the dwarven mines, above ground at the northeastern quadrant of the valley, the dwarven army had been summoned to protect their illumynite from Morphius' thieving buzzards. Their general, in collaboration with the current Head Dwarf Miner, succeeded in turning away the vultures. The dwarven general had intended to raid the Citadel of Zork and smite the evil that dared to threaten their peaceful valley, but before preparations could be finalized, the entire conflict with the vultures was put to a halt when that the nameless Sweepstakes Winner passed through the dwarven mines and finished the quest.

For on the other side was the ancient shrine which had been dedicated to six of the Muses of the Arts, the same one which may have been built by Belboz in 966 and later converted into a forge by the practitioners of evil in 1247. Our hero placed the pieces into the shrine's trencher in the proper order (starting and the 8:00 position and laying the rest sequentially clockwise). This placement caused the eyes of the statues to turn green and the forge's two buttons lit up. Then the red button was pressed. Due to the continual lightning strikes in this region, the Tele-orb could not be placed directly in the hand of Lib without being struck by a bolt. Thus the moving statues had to be enlisted to help place the orb safely in his hand. Following an ancient verse, the adventurer placed the following items upon each statue (from left to right): Mit, a bog stick; Selrach, a return talon; Mik, a thermos; nothing was given to Lib; Cire, a box and a miner's helmet (an account of debatable authority also mentions that a knife was placed upon this statue); Xela, a shield from the temple of Bel Naire; Eoj, the Tele-orb.

When the red button was pressed, the forge ran, and after an extended performance by the statues, the last Flying Disc of Frobozz was successfully reforged using magical properties somehow inherent in the statues themselves. It was then tossed like a frisbee at the wall of illusion which guarded the hidden passageway to the Citadel of Zork, shattering it. Our hero raided Morphius' home, conquering orcs and bypassing many snares, before finally arriving at the Hall of Stone and Transformation Room.

While the Sweepstakes Winner had been making way through the Citadel, the vultures captured many more of the surrounding villagers and they were turned to stone; these included Rebecca Snoot, Canuk, the Holy Woman of Bel Naire, and Witch Itah. Our hero defeated Morphius in a life-sized game of Survivor, which had been played using the actual petrified Canuk and Trembyle.

### **The Second Great Diffusion**

To think that he had been defeated, was too much for Morphius to bear. As his terrible shriek of defeat echoed through the Citadel of Zork, he lost grasp of his confining spell. The statues he was holding began to dissolve. Rebecca, Rooper, the Holy Woman, Witch Itah, the Wizard Trembyle, and even Canuk finally escaped Morphius' spell, being released from their stone imprisonment. Rising to the occasion, the followers of good magic casted long forgotten spells to again disperse evil magic and scatter the vile creature Morphius into the atmosphere. These events would be remembered as the Second Great Diffusion.

Throughout the valley, from every tower to the depths of every crevice, evil magic had vanished. The chronicles and perseverance of this mysterious adventurer were passed on from generation to generation. And finally, the Sweepstakes Winner met Rooper.

## Chapter 2: The Lurking Horror

### Summary of the Event / Dating the Event

A strange event, which has either escaped the notice of most historians, or declared as fictional, is referred to as “The Lurking Horror.” There is only one single source for this event, a personal journal of a G.U.E. Tech student of unknown name and sex, which is an account of incredible detail. And even this source is missing several leaflets, and thus there are encounters unknown to us (such as a creature that may have had control over the urchins) and the fate of the student after the hatching of an unknown creature. Judging from the extant material of this mysterious episode, it appears that magic was estranged from the world during the event.

For it is certain that magic was not being taught at the university during the period in which this event transpired. But as the scattered magic gradually returned following the First Great Diffusion (1247 GUE), certain isolated regions of Zork began to have minor encounters with magic and demons. One of these was the incident in the Valley of the Sparrows (1647 GUE) where the demon Morphius almost succeeded in building a vast empire and enslaving many in that corner of the world [see Chapter 2 below]. Since magic was again dissolved, and does not yet seem to have made another resurgence (current year 1699 GUE), this event can be capped at the time of the Second Great Diffusion (1647 GUE). Other dating landmarks include a reference to an automobile (invented in the late 14th or early 15th century) within the student’s journal.

Because of this dormancy of arcane arts, the mention of the automobile, and its parallels with the Morphius incident, most of those few historians which dare to include this account as reliable history, have suspected that the this horror lurked in the basements of G.U.E. Tech during a magicless period after the invention of the automobile, that being sometime during the Third Age of Magic (c. 1400~1647 GUE), possibly in the early 1600s around the proximity of the unearthing of the Cluster.

At this time, an indescribable being outside of humanity’s understanding was on the cusp of breaking through into our world, aided by the workings of a cult, of which one member might have been an insane professor who was working alchemical experiments to gain an understanding of, and power over, demonic forces. He was partly successful, but at a cost of his life, killed by his own hubris. Using some tools gained from the professor, an unknown G.U.E. Tech freshman combated the imminent awakening of the otherworldly thing, and managed to mostly succeed. Though as a consequence of that person’s actions, an egg hatched and a mysterious creature flew out of it, vanishing into the night. While there is no indication that the creature that came from the egg will be better for humanity ultimately, we can only hope that whatever came out of the egg is not as immediate a danger as the other monstrosities.

### The Disappearances

As stated above, the only surviving mention of The Lurking Horror comes from the journal of an unknown G.U.E. Tech freshman. Due to the conflicting controversy of opinions, as we as the mystery surrounding this event, a few selected excerpts from that journal shall be included here. Gathering from the journal, there were many disappearances beforehand, both of students and urchins.<sup>44</sup>

One of these was a graduate student of unknown name, whose body was later found smashed and broken at the base of the tallest building on campus, having committed suicide after having writing a note, hiding it under the brass plug at the top of Great Dome. The letter and other information from the journal (both he and an alchemy professor being the only two using the lab most nights), leads one to conclude that this suicide victim was in league with the professor:

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<sup>44</sup> Urchin is G.U.E. Tech slang for a local child or teenager who hangs around the G.U.E. Tech campus and often causes objects of value to mysteriously disappear

I can no longer face what I've been doing. I can't sleep, I start at the slightest noise, and even dulling my senses with alcohol or drugs is no longer enough. I refuse to participate in what he is doing any more. Either he is insane, or I am insane, or (and this is what I fear most) the universe itself is insane. I have only one final warning: I am the only suicide, but I will not be the final death.

If the conclusion is correct that this was the alchemy professor's graduate student who used the lab, many scholars then conclude that the brass hyrax found in the professor's office belonged to this graduate student. If so, some further conjecture that since that according to the journal that the brass hyrax seemed to have helpful affinity in guiding our hero through the dark caverns, then the mummified hand belonged to this student as well. And since, according to the journal, the tattoo on the hand was the same as the one on the rat, the one on the altar, and the one on the smooth stone, that all of these somehow played into a great scheme. These are all conclusions (some of them very probable), but not entirely conclusive.

There are many more mysterious surrounding the origins and intentions of The Lurking Horror itself, possibilities of more than one faction of monsters which may have been opposing one another, the professor's role with the summoning of the creatures, etc. But, as there are too many presumptions, this article has postponed further discussion of these subjects, adhering to factual evidence alone. One is encouraged to read the fragments published in the section below for more information.

### **The Unknown G.U.E. Tech Freshman**

The protagonist (if this person may be termed such) of this event is a G.U.E. Tech freshman of unknown name, age, and sex, who is responsible for detailing The Lurking Horror in a journal. The chronology of the student's account begins on a dark and stormy night at the end of term. Having waited until the last minute to finish work on a term paper on modern analogues of Xenophon's 'Anabasis' for Classics in the Modern Idiom, the student found all the TechNet terminals in the dorm occupied. Thus the student braved a snowstorm to reach the G.U.E. Tech Computer Center. Not only was every shadow and sound startling due to the recent disappearances, but the snowstorm turned into a raging blizzard. And, not only practically freezing to death slogging to the Computer Center from the dorm, the massive amounts of snow trapped the freshman in a complex of buildings late at night. Although the wind continued to howl around the monolithic buildings, sending the heavy snow into blinding swirls, the student huddled over the terminal, struggling to complete the twenty page assignment.

While attempting to access the paper, strange images suddenly appeared on the screen instead of the incomplete assignment. These strange images were part of an ancient manuscript. Finding it impossible to look away, the student read about a "summoning" or a "visitor". A poem with its translation was found, accompanied by woodcut illustrations which were queasily disturbing:

He returns, he is called back (?)  
The loyal ones (acolytes?) make a sacrifice  
Those who survive will meet him (be absorbed? eaten?)  
They will live, yet die  
Forever will be (is?) nothing to them (to him?)

His place (lair? burrow?) must be prepared  
His food (offerings?) must be prepared  
Call him forth (invite him?) with great power  
Only an acceptable (tasteful?) sacrifice will call him forth  
He will be grateful (satiated?)

After viewing a photograph of something that possibly resembled a mouth with something in it, darkness overcame the student, drawing them into a fiendish world full of unimaginable horrors:

Things moved about on a broken, rocky surface. Harsh sounds split the air. Something sticky grabbed at my feet. There was no color, everything was drained of brightness, dull and lifeless. A path descended into a shallow bowl of black basalt. From below, a low noise began, and slowly built up. I felt myself drawn downward by the noise, to the bottom of a deeply cut, smooth basalt bowl. Dimly seen shapes crowded me on all sides so that I could barely move, much less walk. Their voices sounded like supplication. Ahead, in the focus of the movement, was a rock platform. It was made of the same rocks as the surrounding terrain. In fact, I could not tell whether it was natural or constructed.

Before I could examine it further, the crowd around me began to sway and groan. They seemed to be expecting something. I was drawn forward to the low platform by the noise. Now I could see that it was more like an afterthought of piled rocks or a glacial moraine than a work of artifice. I was pushed against the pile by the crowd around me. It was then that I saw one small stone standing out in the pile, smooth, shiny, and glowing with a blazing light.

When I took the stone in my hands, the dimness suddenly became darkness, and the crowd around me exploded with excitement. I was jostled and shoved from all sides. A low keening began, building into a deafening, almost mechanical chant. The darkness before me compacted and deepened. As I waited, the darkness before me, now visible, was a creature with a shape not easily grasped. It towered over the now-silent crowd. Smooth and yet scaly, it had too many limbs, and they were not in the right places. To look at it gave me a headache. It also gave off a charnel stench. The thing jerked this way and that, spraying a foul ichor. Its palps twitched expectantly, then pounded impatiently against the rock. I could feel the smooth stone vibrating in my hand.

Sensing the presence of the stone, the thing turned. It quested almost blindly for it. Those surrounding me thrust me forward. The thing stooped, its mandibles grasping me. I was lifted towards its gaping maw. The stench and the sounds issuing from it were overwhelming, and I fell unconscious.

I was awakened by the thump of my head hitting the terminal in front of me. It must have been a nightmare. Embarrassed, I glanced around. Yes, the hacker was looking in my direction. He must have heard the thump. But as I struggled awake, I found myself clutching the object last seen in the nightmare.

The hacker wandered over, trying to look nonchalant as he took over my chair. "Losing, huh?" he asked wittily. He glanced at my terminal, which displayed a pattern of snow and unusual characters. He appeared somewhat excited. Mumbling under his breath, the hacker began a flurry of activity. First the screen returned to something nearly normal, then windows began popping up like toadstools after a rain. The screen looked a lot like the top of his terminal table (or the bottom of a trash can).

The hacker typed furiously, and the screen displayed what to me looked like an explosion in a teletype factory. After a while he said. "Chomping file system. Your directory has gone seriously west. I fixed it." He checked the screen. "It was mixed up on the file server with some files from the Department of Alchemy." He grunted. "People's names for their nodes are getting weird. This one is called 'Lovecraft.'" He paused. "Your paper is gone, though. Sorry. Maybe they could help you down there." The hacker wandered back to his terminal and returned to his hacking.

With the hacker at some distance away, I examined the stone in my hands. It was a smooth, shiny piece of what might have been obsidian. Scratched on it was a symbol. On close examination, the symbol appeared to have been carved into the stone, perhaps with a claw. The symbol was like nothing I have seen, and yet

somehow I knew it had meaning. I tried to discard the stone, going through the motions, but the stone wouldn't leave my hand.

Although dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, the student now had more on mind than the term paper. As though pulled by a powerful force within the mysteriously acquired object, the student left the computer, bartered with the hacker for the G.U.E. Tech master key. Seemingly bereft of concern for the recent disappearances, the freshman ventured into the dark nether regions of the Institute. For beneath the Institute lay a warren of dimly-lit corridors and storage rooms, some so ancient that they contained only rotting piles of unidentifiable junk. There were miles of decrepit tunnels, crumbling into hazardous piles of timber and brick. But negotiating the terrain was the least of the problems.

Shapes emerged from dark corners. Eerie sounds drew closer. Slimy passageways led to sights so horrifying that they fed the student's nightmares for weeks. For a ghastly presence was at work below, committing unspeakably loathsome acts.

One of the first unusual discoveries was within a renovated cave attached to other tunnels. Here at an altar, marked with the same symbol as upon the stone, was where human sacrifices had been made to some disturbing creature below.

Other horrifying and bizarre sights included a dark flier, (Like a black sheet flapping in the wind, it was hard to see. Red eyes glowed like coals on its scaly, bullet-shaped head. Human-like hands clenched and unclenched. Its teeth projected wickedly from its twisted blood-red jaw) that was repelled when the strange stone held by the freshman was tossed at it.

"Something large and squishy" was found "squatting" within the Great Dome. "A single, bright-blue eye opened in the squishy mass, and the tentacle (for that's what it was) retracted. The mass almost flowed through the spaces in the catwalk railing and dropped to the floor fifteen feet below."

After defeating a possessed maintenance man, he incurred "a great commotion, as though he was undergoing a convulsion of some sort, and then he appeared to explore into a crowd of small squealing creatures. These... scuttled off in the opposite direction and disappeared."

A G.U.E. Tech professor lurking late night in the alchemy lab trapped the freshman in a pentagram, intending to give the student in sacrifice to a demon. Thwarting the attempt, the forming black mist took the professor instead. The freshman used the professor's Elixir of Life to revive a mummified hand that had been previously found, also marked with the same symbol as upon the stone and altar. It is believed that this hand may have belonged to the student who had committed suicide and was one of the professor's students.

After gaining victory over a horde of demonic rats lower nether regions of the campus (which were also branded with the same symbol), the student discovered that the coaxial cables were not what they seemed:

The cable ran overhead in a fat bundle. It looked like the kind I had seen connecting nodes of the local net. This clump was pretty grotty looking, festooned with damp cobwebs, and stained with something that dripped from the ceiling. Something was different, almost alive. I was without doubt that it could be anything but the appendage of some strange creature. I began to sever the cables with the cutters. The inner cables looked different, sort of dead white and slimy. Then I noticed that the cables I had cut were knitting back together. After several more attempts, I realized that there was nothing that I could do.

Descending even deeper, the student found the missing urchins:

The tunnel I came through continued down, barely large enough to enter. It was made of sticky gelatinous mud that had been pushed by something into a semblance of a passage. Descending further, I came to a wide spot in the tunnel, just as wet and muddy as elsewhere. The walls were slimy as well. Numerous slots or indentations about two feet wide and a foot high opened here and there. These narrow burrows were apparently dug by hand out of the mud of the chamber walls. Thin, wire or ropelike growths emerged from a hole further down and entered most of the slots. There was background noise here, almost loud enough to

hear clearly. A small, furtive motion attracted my attention to the slots. I began to be quite certain that there was something moving inside the slot I looked at. In fact, there was motion in almost all of them.

Slowly, painfully, things emerged from the slots. They were pale, thin creatures with red mouths and staring eyes. Their clothes were muddy and tattered. They were barefoot in midwinter, and covered with mud. Mold grew in their hair and wirelike streamers (like those I'd been noticing in this area) wrapped their heads and joined a bundle on the floor. Although their eyes were open, they stared catatonically. I realized that these were urchins. They were saying or chanting something repetitive and monotonal, almost machinelike. As I listened more carefully, the noise resolved itself into voices. They were chanting, but the words were unknown to me. The deep-voiced, incomprehensible chant, which they made without moving their lips, never stopped. It resonated deep within their chests. When I spoke to them, they turned to me in unison. They smiled, revealing red, broken teeth.

As they closed in, tried to retreat further down the tunnel, but they lurched, almost as one, into my way, grabbing at me feebly but effectively. I felt their flesh. It was cold and dead. Their pale, limp hands couldn't grab me, but they were able to stop me. There was no way past.

The wires were thin, fibrous, ropy growths. They looked very tough. Seeking to free these urchins, I decided to cut them free by severing the wire. My axe only succeeded in driving the wire into the mud, but then I tried the bolt cutters. I strained and pushed the two handles of the cutters together with all my strength. At first it looked like nothing would happen, but then, with a loud stick, the jaws cut the wire! The wire, as though under tension, rapidly began to curl up, disappearing down the tunnel and away. The effect on the urchins was electric (perhaps literally). They twitched, jerked spasmodically, and fell to the ground almost in unison. They had lost all interest in me.

As I went towards the downward passage, I found something blocking it. It was moving, slowly and painfully, trying to climb up...

Unfortunately, this document is missing a leaf here, and the account of this creature is no longer extant. Instead, the account resumes with the student being lost in narrow, west tunnels burrowing through the mud. It was then that the student decided to place the brass hyrax upon the human hand. It guided the student deeper in the tunnels, by pointing its mutilated ring finger in the appropriate direction. After passing through a slimy curtain, the student entered into a place "which I can only call 'The Inner Lair.'"

The floor here was a stagnant, slime infested pool of water. It felt to be about six inches deep, though it was difficult to tell through my booted feet. Ropes or wires tumbled down the slope, where they entered a large whitish mass which took up much of the chamber. The noise was loud here, and came from the mass, which undulated in synchrony with the noise. Wan, sourceless light illuminated the chamber. Suddenly, the hand leapt from my shoulder into the slime-encrusted puddle. It dove beneath the water. But at first, my eyes were instead drawn to the whitish mass.

It was strangely, even wrongly shaped. It was hard to get a fix on what was wrong with it, but it didn't look like it could or should have existed in any sane universe. It quivered and bubbled as though air were pumping through it. Many wires, tentacles, and combinations of the two entered the mass from all sides, making it almost fuzzy in appearance. I listened closely to the sounds, which were loud and at first seemed random. The more I listened, the more I sensed a strange regularity to them. I got impressions, one after another, of electronic music, a simple sine wave pattern, and telephone crosstalk. They were all overlaid with speech, or something like speech, nearer random babbling, or many people talking at once. I couldn't understand any of it, but it was so near intelligibility that I felt that if I moved closer, I just might get it. I

subconsciously approached the mass, but was rendered from my path of insanity by the sound of the hand as it repeatedly dove and bobbed to the surface in one part of the pool near my feet which was slightly deeper. There seemed to be something in it, but I could not see a thing, as the water was foul and murky. As the hand was not consumed by any slime, as my object hand been when touching the curtain, I trusted that the water would cause me no harm. Reaching into the pool, which felt cold and unpleasant even through my electrician gloves, I rooted around blindly in the gooey, sliming water. I felt something thick and slippery! A tentacle? No, it was cold and dead. It seemed to be a line of some kind, just below the surface. I pulled a length of the line out of the water. It was like holding a large, heavy snake. Now I could see that it was a thick, hard cable. It reminded me of a high voltage power line.

I looked around for where this line might attach. All I found was a metal box set on the wall, incongruous in its surroundings. This apparently standard coax appeared almost spontaneously from high in the wall, and entered into one side of the box where it disappeared from sight. On the other side of the box, a cablelike appendage emerged from the box to the mass in the end of the cave. The cable twitched periodically. I knew this was how the creature was controlling those on the campus.

I released the cable and went forth more closely examine the box. There was a small metal cover with simple finger screws to hold it on. I removed the cover, revealing a plethora of electronic innards. Most prominent were a socket into which the coaxial cable was plugged, and a connector into which the glistening cablelike appendage disappeared. The appendage and its socket blended together indistinguishably. I knew what I had to do.

Returning to the power line, I tried to cut the wire with the jaws of the bolt cutter, but they would not open far enough to fit around the line. Frustrated, I decided to try the axe. Striking the line, I make a deep gash in the insulation. My second blow cut through more insulation and into the conductors. With the third strike, the line parted. The two ends began to sink towards the water as they straightened out. The exposed ends of the high voltage line dropped into the water! Sparks and bubbled burst from the electrified water. I thanked God that I had been wearing both the boots and the gloves.

Dragging the line with me towards the socket, I heard noises from outside the door. Then I heard a stumbling noise behind me. I turned and saw the hacker staggering into the cavern. The hacker stared at me, shocked. "It's you! When I gave you my key, I never suspected you'd get this far!"

The hacker stared at the thing in the cave. "I got very suspicious about your problems with the net. I began to trace some coax, found some repeaters and bridges that weren't on the layout charts, and started following them. Anyway, here I am. That thing there, whatever it is, and those wires, are interfaced to the whole campus net. And that means it's tied into all the nets, commercial, government, even military, potentially." He paused a moment. "I guess I better do something. It could be a serious compromise of system integrity if this thing isn't dealt with."

He peered at the mass, as if evaluating it. He then reached into a pocket and pulled out a small pair of wire strippers. The hacker advanced on the mass, apparently planning to cut some of the wires leading into it. As he approached it, the sound stopped completely, and the wires began a frantic, looping, twining dance. The mass began to flow towards the hacker almost as quickly as he walked toward it. They reached each other and began to merge together. He screamed; a long, ululating cry that echoed through the cavern. Then he was engulfed.

The mass was bulging, vibrating, and rippling. It continued for several moments until a huge tear began to



form near where the hacker was absorbed. All the time, I quickly proceeded to remove the coaxial cable from its socket within the metal box.

Suddenly, the hacker pulled himself out of the side of the mass. As he did, I thought I could see many pairs of eyes appear briefly in the semitransparent mass, watching curiously. Wires and tentacles trailed from his body, and tiny, almost rat-like creatures clung to his body everywhere, crawling about like ants. He walked slowly, jerkily towards me. "Be one!" he said, haltingly but fervently. He was vacant-eyed and dangerous.

As I struggled to insert the wire into the socket, the hacker grabbed for me. "Join us! Serve the master!" he croaked.

Some of the creatures leapt onto me, biting at exposed skin. With all my strength, I shoved the exposed conductors into the socket, producing a shower of sparks! I was tossed back and shielded my face with my gloved hands.

I watched as the tentacle connected to the other socket began to jerk and twitch spasmodically. The mass it was connected to quivered, and a horrible noise, almost like a huge machine running without oil, issued from the thing. The mass began to change shape, compacting, darkening. I could briefly see human outlines within the gray, gelatinous mass. They surrounded something larger, of a shape not human, not animal, like nothing I've seen before. The hacker screamed soundlessly and dropped into the water.

The gelatinous mass solidified and compacted, leaving behind a litter of smoking debris. In the debris squatted a being. Huge, misshapen, it stared at me with baleful yellow eyes. Its scaly wings beat slowly, driving a fetid stench through the stale air of the cavern. A barbed tongue slid across its broken, daggerlike fangs. The smooth stone vibrated. It started to feel warm. This being was not from any wholesome place. It was the stuff of nightmares! It was the thing that waits in the dark, the thing that scratches at your windows late at night. It is not death, for next to this, death is a friend to be cherished.

I tossed the empty flask at the creature, but it defiantly shrugged off my puny attack. In reprisal, it tensed, preparing to leap. Its mouth opened, revealing not the glistening interior, but a dead-black outline like a hole into nothingness. The smooth stone I held was now glowing with a bright-red heat that nevertheless failed to burn me.

Without hesitation, I tossed the stone at the terror. It smashed into the creature, sticking to its ichorous hide. The thing thrashed about, trying to bite at the stone, which was glowing brighter and brighter. Small hands issued from beneath its scales to tug in vain at the irritant. The creature began to show gaping holes of dark, light-devouring nothingness around the stone. Its wings spread painfully, as though it were trying to fly away, and then fold. It widened its jaw in an almost human scream of agony. The black hole of its maw overwhelmed it, and indeed the creature appeared to be swallowing itself. At last, a gray cloud of greasy smoke surrounded the glowing stone, still suspended in midair. Then even that vanished, and the stone dropped to the ground, no longer glowing. The thing was gone.

The stone sat on a hummock of mud. From here it appeared to have a long jagged crack that almost broke it in half. As I picked it up, I felt it bump to one side. Then, as I was holding it in my hand, something pushed its way out through the crack, breaking the stone into two pieces. Something small, pale, and damp blinked its watery eyes at me. It hissed, gaining strength, and spread membranous wings. It took to the air, at first clumsily, then with increased assurance, and disappeared into the gloom. One eerie cry drifted back to where I stood.

Something rose out of the mud, slowly straightening. The hacker, mud-covered and weak, staggered to his feet. "Can I have my key back?" he asked.

Here the mysterious account of the Lurking Horror of G.U.E. Tech breaks-off. The final sheets of paper are non-extant, leaving the conclusion and what follows only to be pondered and debated.

## **Conclusion**

It is here at long last that the story comes to an end. The few historical works from recent centuries that have survived the ravages of time come to an abrupt end in 1647 GUE, and everything afterwards is the darkness of the future. The facts at least speak for themselves: three times in the course of our chronicle mankind has dared to tamper with the forces of nature and magic, and three times the experiment has been ended by the forces of evil. Three times since the New Year's Revolt of Duncanthrax the Bellicose has the underground legend of Zork risen to true fruition. We live today in the midst of the third instance; the first two ended in complete failure, the fall of an empire and the second collapse of magic causing us once again to forget the true dangers of our obsession with the underground. Will this third attempt of the dispersal of magic end in failure as well? Today, we look to the ancient twin cities of Borphée and Pheebor as the creation and guidance of our civilization. Two thousand years from now, will historians have forgotten all that came before this day, looking only to East and West Shanbar as the founding lights of human history? It is to avoid this fate, to provide the future generations with the gift of memory, that this book is committed to writing and sent forth into the arms of the centuries.

## PART IX: THE FUTURE OF ZORK

Although much of the information present here has been replicated from Part I, in the topic related to the Phee Hourglass and the age of Zork, it would not be proper to close this exhaustive history without detailing what *will* come to pass. As with most of the Westlands today, the Pheebor ruins are frozen over nearly year-around, the air consistently touched with an ominous arctic chill. This calamitous effect began to culminate midway through the seventeenth century. Although it is feared that the Ice Age that is currently encroaching upon the Westlands will affect the surviving outposts of civilization in the east as well, older temporal research does not provide us with conclusive evidence.

From research gathered from using the Phee Hourglass, by 2330 GUE, all of Pheebor will be covered entirely by massive sheets of impenetrable ice. But by 3000, the landscape will change entirely, Pheebor seeing a remarkable rebirth of activity. Scholars from an era before the Age of Science have described “strange mechanisms of metal and glass” moving of their own accord across a rugged landscape strewn with glacial boulders and massive highways. Such a description, clearly a primitive attempt at understanding the modern automobile, would indicate that the Ice Age will not eliminate all trace of the Age of Science, and that the Westlands will rise again some 1300 years in the future.

However, premature optimism about the future of mankind is tempered by the last era left us by the Pheebor hourglass. The few researchers brave enough to travel ahead as far as 3700 GUE have reported a devastated and ruined landscape. Patient centuries will have eroded much of the topsoil from the landscape. Loose, charred earth will stretch away in every direction. All chronicles referring to this desolate era have called it the Final Conflagration, a deliberate reference to various ancient prophecies that predict all kinds of zorkquakes and fires on the day that the Great Brogmoid finally lies down to sleep. Although most brogmoidists throughout history have been hesitant to predict an exact date for this event, claiming that doing so infringes upon the freewill of the great being, the best guesses of temporal scholars have placed the date at some point immediately before 3690. It will be sometime during this era, that the same peasant from 966 GUE, who was responsible for placing a chocolate truffle in a trench beside the Pheehelm BE, will bring a pet minx in order to unearth the Helm.

By 4371, all that will remain is a temporal void, an exact replica of that which existed before the foundation of the universe.

Depressing, sad, hopeful, nonchalant, angry, despair. There is no end to the plethora of feelings felt by the inhabitants of Zork who realize that one day all that will remain of their beloved planet is a timeless, dimensionless void stretching forth, preceding into the infinite future. From Alpha to Omega. From the Beginning to the End. Whatever The One’s plan is for the universe and all existence, we can faithfully trust that He is in control and knows best for all life upon Zork. Trust in Eru and let your faith never waver! For those who do, shall find a peace which surpasses all understanding and will guard their hearts and mind from despair.

--Bel Naire, 1699 GUE

# APPENDIX I: THE RULERS OF QUENDOR

THE ENTHARION DYNASTY	0~659 GUE	659 years
Entharion the Wise	0~41	41 years
Mysterion the Brave	41~55	14 years
Zylon the Aged	55~398	343 years
Zilbo Throckrod I	398~423	25 years
Bozbo Throckrod I	423~429	6 years
Zilbo Throckrod II	429~451	22 years
Harmonious Fzort	451~477	26 years
Bozbo Throckrod II	477~481	4 years
Thaddium Fzort	481~545	64 years
Mumbo I	545~569	24 years
Bozbo Throckrod III	569~575	6 years
Bozbo Throckrod IV	575~619	44 years
Mumbo II	619~628	9 years
Zilbo Throckrod III	628~659	31 years

THE FLATHEAD DYNASTY	660~883 GUE	223 years
Duncanthrax the Bellicose	660~688	28 years
Belwit the Flat	688~701	13 years
Frobwit the Flatter	701~727	26 years
Timberthrax Flathead	727~738	11 years
Phloid Flathead	738~755	17 years
Mumberthrax Flathead	755~770	15 years
Dimwit Flathead	770~789	19 years
Loowit Flathead	789~813	24 years
Duncwit Flathead	813~843	30 years
Barbawit Flathead	843~845	2 years
Idwit Oogle Flathead	845~881	36 years
Wurb Flathead	881~883	2 years
<i>Dirinthrax</i>	<i>c. 957~966~???</i>	<i>???</i>

THE FALLEN EMPIRE	883~1047 GUE	164 years
Lord Syovar the Strong	883~972	89 years
Lord Syovar II	972~997	25 years
Lord Syovar III	997~1047	50 years

THE INQUISITION	1047~1067 GUE	20 years
Mir Yannick the Grand Inquisitor	1047~1067	20 years

RECOVERING EMPIRE	1067~unknown	? years
Lucy Flathead	1067~unknown	? years

<b>DUNGEON MASTERS</b>	<b>883~unknown</b>	<b>? years</b>
“First Dungeon Master”	883~948	65 years
“Second Dungeon Master”	948~966	18 years
Dalboz of Gurth	966~1067	101 years
“AFNCAAP”	1067~unknown	???
“Detective Softly”	???	???