

Storm Lord's Wrath & Sleeping Dragons' Wake Session Recaps

by Martino Ciaramidaro

Let it be known to all those that can read and all that cannot

By the authority of The Lord's Alliance, I call upon the following adventurers who have proven themselves in the past capable of righting great wrongs and performing great deeds:

*Antaxis
Klumbar Arjun
Catti-brie Battlehammer
Drizzt Do'Urden
Ganamash
Nellio
Yumia Phiespira
Renard of the Wandering Wardens
Darven Spiketoe
Tordek Stoutale
Sunny
Arden Theotter
Mirri Vetis
Zagul, functionary of the College of Arcana*



Brigands, monsters, and more threaten overland trade between Waterdeep and Neverwinter. We charge you with safeguarding the restoration of the Town of Leilon; that it might become successful enough to support a defensible waypoint between our two great cities. Perhaps one day it shall join the Lord's Alliance in its own right.

In compensation we offer you each a modest estate in your choice of Neverwinter or Waterdeep, free of taxes and a paid housekeeper to the end of your days (subject to certain restrictions).

Those named persons willing to avail themselves of this offer should report to Never Keep at midday on the 21st day of Eleint

-Signed

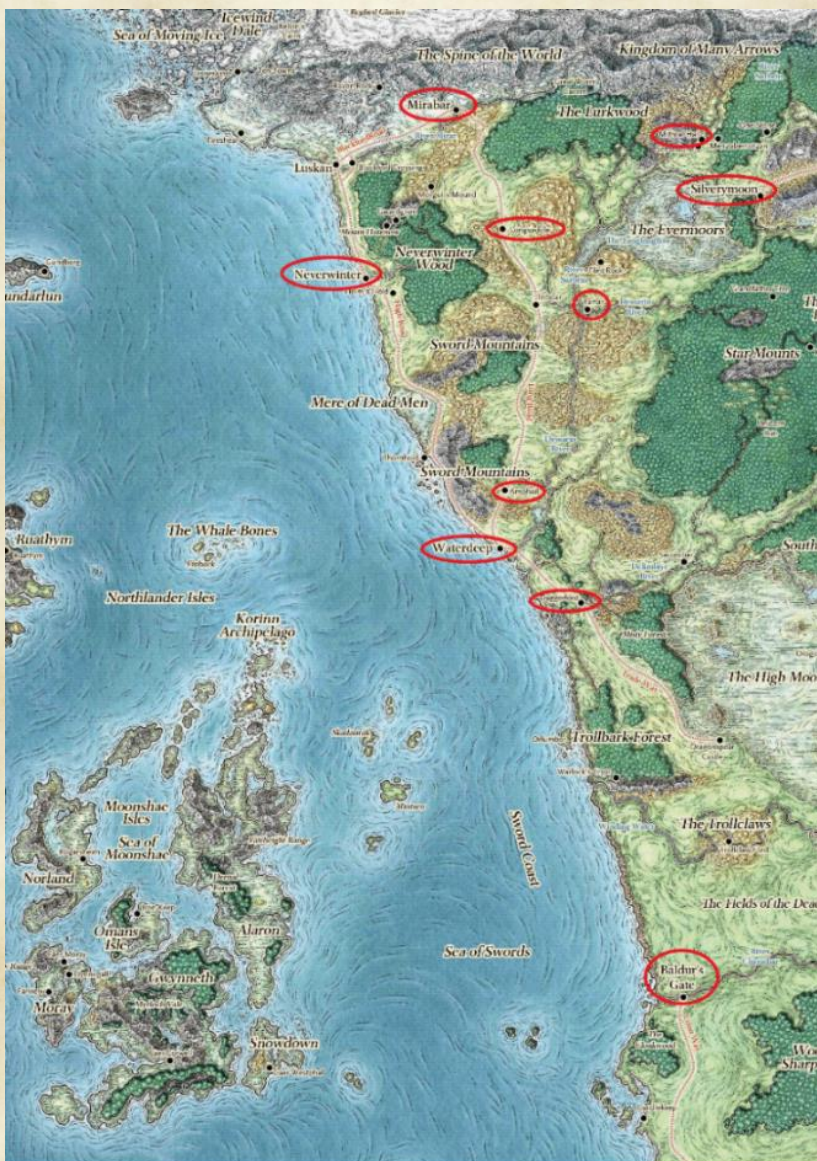
Lord Protector Dagault Neverember

10th day of Kythorne Year of the Rune Lords Triumphant, 1487 DR.

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Session 1 - September 23rd, 2023



The Lords' Alliance

The next day Yumia, Klumbar, Mirri, and Ganamash, reunited while waiting to meet with Lord Dagault Neverember. William was also there but he kept to himself. Then Lord Neverember arrived. He gave a few pompous and vague statements, then yielded the floor to his assistant, Administrator Theiss.

Five years after the party slew Cryovain, the above notice was posted in every town in the Lord's Alliance, a trading and defense pact among some of the cities and towns of the Sword Coast. Of the slayers of Cryovain, Klumbar Arjun (a dragonborn paladin), Mirri Vetis (an elemental warrior), Yumia Phepsira (a tiefling barbarian turned monk), and Ganamash (a half-orc bloodhunter) answered the call and reunited in the Great Hall of Keep Never.

Joining them was William Sinclair (a half-elf wizard). William was a man who had sold his soul to Myrkul (the god of death) to return his friend Arden Theotter back from death decades ago. On the 20th day of Eleint, William was visited by Ularan Mortus, a High Priest of Myrkul. He told William he could earn back his soul if William could retrieve the "runestone". Mortus showed a minor illusion of the runestone (a crystal ball with a swirling blizzard within) but refused to tell William what the runestone was or what it did. Mortus then said he had arranged for William to join the party meeting the next day and left William to his thoughts.



Ularan Mortus

Theiss then reiterated the terms of the notice with more detail (and racist commentary). Nonetheless, everyone accepted the terms and made their preparations to leave.

First, William tried to find out anything he could of the runestone by browsing bookstores. Unfortunately, he couldn't find anything.

Yumia and Mirri paid a visit to the Alchemical Paradise to buy some liquid mercury (to synergize with Yumia's lightning powers).

The party then made a visit to their favorite hangout, the Spitted Pig inn right by the Southern gate of Neverwinter. Little Nethipone was outside playing hopscotch and she ran up to Mirri and gave him a big hug. Klumbar of course went right in for the pork stew.

The Spitted Pig was in the midst of their lunch hour, so Egra only had time for a quick hello before waving her into the back. Yumia went there to see Mephista. She looked far better than she had 5 years ago, no longer constantly afraid and worrying about her next meal. They caught up a bit, said their goodbyes, then the party left to go south.

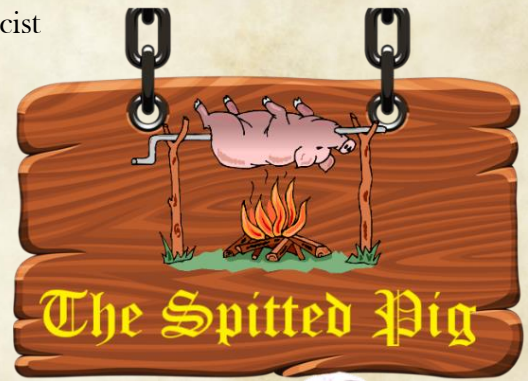
They traveled south along the high road for the rest of the day. Just as the sun was setting at the intersection of the High Road and Triboar Trail, they came upon the Wayside Inn. It was under attack by a small group of zombies. Confident they could take on a few measly zombies, the party closed in only to be assaulted by a pair of wraiths. A fierce fight broke out in which the party was ultimately victorious although Ganamash was briefly struck down and emerged badly wounded.

Session 2 - October 13th, 2023

The party was promptly invited within the Wayside Inn by the patrons and staff, who were huddled within in fear. They cheered as they learned the party had vanquished all the enemies outside. Backes, the bartender, offered the party free food and lodging (much to the irritation of Martisha, the manager of the inn). The party decided to take her up on that offer. Soon after, they all heard the ringing of a hammer to anvil as someone was working a forge.

As they sat down to eat, a knight of the Order of the Triad named Jeremium Guibour walked into the door. His order had learned of devilish activity around Leilon so he had been dispatched to investigate. Almost immediately after walking in, he heard the faint sound of what seemed to be a bat's wings. He first used his divine sense ability to detect an infernal presence in the rafters above. He then cast *see invisibility* and looked up.

Jeremium locked eyes with an imp, then raised his crossbow and fired. He grievously wounded the imp but did not kill him. The invisibility ended and the imp made a beeline for a nearby window but was unable to lift it. Ganamash drew his ax and cut the imp in two.



Egra, proprietress and bartender of The Spitted Pig of Neverwinter

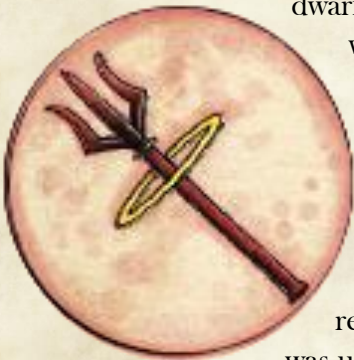
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² Egra, Wooden Sign, Spitted Pig and Fire

The entire room was frozen in shock; not understanding what just happened. When the surprise wore off, the patrons of the Wayside Inn erupted in cheers again. The staff, however, were noticeably cooler to the party despite feigned attempts otherwise, a fact noted by Ganamash, Jeremium, and Klumbar.

Meanwhile William went to investigate the ringing of the metalwork. Teega (the dwarf which had helped them in the fight by shooting wraiths with her crossbow) had resumed her work in the smithy.

William was just about to talk to her when he noticed a very familiar symbol of a trident piercing a halo pressed into several sets of armor. Without alerting Teega to his presence, William backed out of the smithy and returned to the common area. The party all agreed that something was very wrong with this situation, but they needed to rest and heal and so did not investigate further. Instead, they retired for the night though not before casting *alert* on their beds. Fortunately, their rest was undisturbed.



The next morning the party set off South to Leilon. Later in the afternoon and about a mile away from the city, they came across a group of about 50 people or so huddled together in dismay. After a little investigating, it turned out the crowd of people was the entire population of Leilon (minus two children). Just hour earlier they had suffered an attack by zombies, banshees, ghouls, and wraiths bearing the symbol of Myrkul. Immediately after the attack, the undead horde were themselves attacked by a small company of powerful orcs and devils. The leader of the town and the representative of the Lord's Alliance was Grizzelda Copperwraught. She recognized the party for who they were and implored them to confront whichever side was victorious. Furthermore, two children, Smithwell and Burnice, had gone missing during the hasty evacuation and were presumably still trapped in Leilon. Finally, she mentioned the wizard Gallio Elibro was holed up in the tower in the centre of town.

As they approached the Northern Gate of Leilon, they saw a small squad of orcs cut down a group of zombies.

The party was impressed because they had fought orcs before, and orcs were typically chaotic; clad in ramshackle armor and wielding rusted weapons, orcs fought with strength but little skill. These orcs were wearing standardized half-plate armor with rank insignia. They fought in a brilliant and disciplined manor together, one orc supporting another, one feinting to one side while another struck the other side. They made short work of the zombies.

Klumbar charged the orcs single-handedly but was met with a formidable and furious defense bolstered by the sudden appearance of a spined devil. He suffered many wounds and almost fell before his party came to support him in battle. The party quickly gained the upper hand, killing three of the orcs, subduing the fourth, while the spined devil retreated.

The fight ended as quickly as it began. The party questioned the captured orc. He initially resisted their questioning, but Ganamash managed to intimidate him into compliance. He said they assaulted Leilon looking for something called "the runestone" and gave a description consistent with Ularan Mortus' illusion (upon hearing this, William stiffened, no one noticed). He also revealed he was part of something called the "Eighth Order" and that their motto was "domination through obedience".



Spined devil

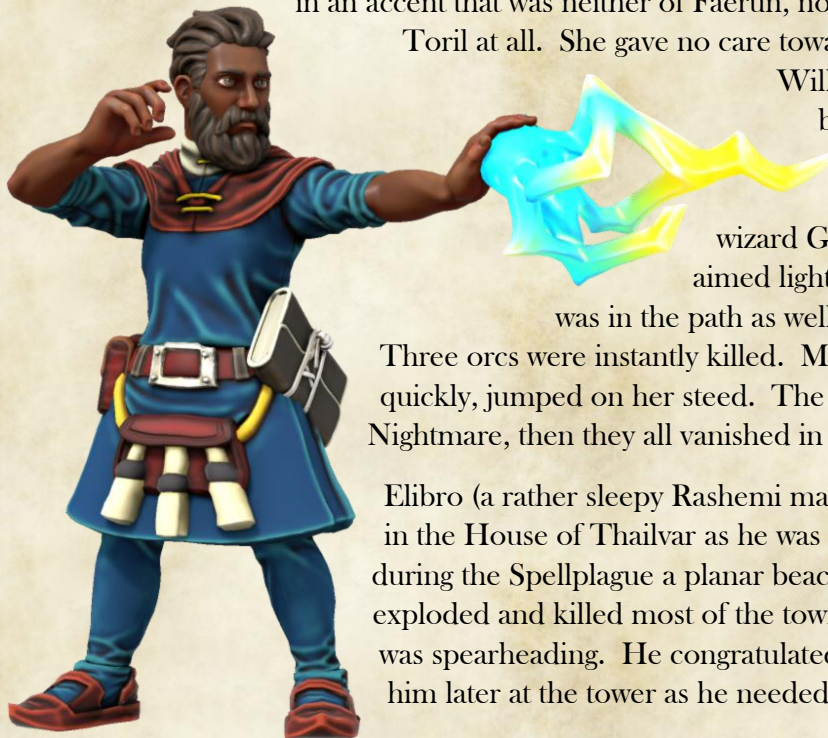


As the party debated what to do with the surviving orc a rider approached. She was a woman wearing a full plate armor wrought of the same green steel as the orcs. She had white hair (despite her age) and ominous glowing blue eyes. Most impressively she rode a nightmare, a fiendish mount of the lower planes whose hooves sizzled as they touched the ground. Accompanying her was another 4 infernal orcs and the same retreating spine devil. Already bloodied, the party drew themselves up for a fight...



Session 3 - November 3rd, 2023

And a fight they would have. The infernal paladin Maladikta Harran stated her terms; they would only be in the village for a short time so the party could enter after they were done with it. She spoke common but in an accent that was neither of Faerûn, nor of Toril at all. She gave no care towards



Maladikta Harran astride a Nightmare

William's entreaty about the missing children and so battle was joined. The infernal orcs lined themselves in an orderly line and attacked the party. At first, the fighting was evenly matched but then the wizard Gallio Elibro appeared behind and shot a perfectly aimed lightning bolt straight through the line of orcs. Yumia was in the path as well but she expertly back flipped and avoided the bolt. Three orcs were instantly killed. Maladikta, seeing how the tide of battle had shifted so quickly, jumped on her steed. The surviving orc and the spine devil converged on the Nightmare, then they all vanished in a whisp of mist.

Elibro (a rather sleepy Rashemi mage) introduced himself to the party. He had set up in the House of Thailvar as he was investigating the shattered tower. Over a century ago during the Spellplague a planar beacon which had been placed in the top of the tower exploded and killed most of the town, thus leading to the recovery effort which the party was spearheading. He congratulated the party on their victory and asked them to see him later at the tower as he needed their assistance.

Gallio Elibro

The party rested for a bit, then started to explore the empty town, looking for the missing children while William cast *Locate Object* looking for the runestone. He was unsuccessful but he was noticed casting the spell. It didn't take too long for them to find Burnice (age 9) and Smithwell (age 7) huddling in the Shrine of Lathander. Smithwell was still very frightened by sacking of the town, so William gave him his wand of conducting and bade him to keep it. At around this time the rest of the town returned, and the two children were reunited with their parents.

At this point, the party (other than Jeremium) decided to explore the town. They happened upon Aubrey's Peculiarities Shoppe run by Aubrey Silverspun, who owned the shop by the virtue of being the first to claim it. After a little bit of chatting and haggling, Mirri acquired a magical key that William wanted and immediately offered it to him-on the condition that William tell the rest of them what was going on. William finally confessed that he had long ago sold his soul to Myrkul and he was looking for the runestone in order to win it back.

Meanwhile Jeremium decided to explore the House of Thalivar (the shattered wizard's tower in the centre of town). The paladin met with some guards who told him the tower was haunted at night. He met an exhausted Gallio Elibro who became more and more tired after each night's "rest" and so decided to quit the tower until he could properly rest and return.

Session 4 - November 17th, 2023

The party woke up the next day fully rested and planned their next move. Two leads were apparent. The first was the House of Thalivar. Jeremium caught the rest of them up on the details; that something had destroyed the top 2 floors a century ago during the spellplague and the explosion was what killed much of the town and was why Leilon was abandoned in the first place.

The second lead was the Wayside Inn. William told the rest of the group about the ominous symbol of a trident piercing a halo he saw Teega hammering into armor, which Jeremium was able to identify as the symbol of Mephistopheles, Archduke of Cania, the eighth level of Hell. An of course, Ganamash had killed an Imp there.

The party decided to follow up on the latter lead as that one seemed the most promising and the most urgent, so they left in the early afternoon. As they journeyed north on the High Road, they meet up with a traveler who alerted them that the Wayside Inn was locked up, which confirmed their suspicions that something was going on.

The traveler proved correct, the Wayside Inn's door was locked, and the windows all shuttered. At first, they considered forcing their way in through the door, but some fortuitous magical investigation revealed the front door was warded by magic. Instead, they pried their way into a window with a crowbar. Nothing was there to greet them. Yumia made some loud banging with *thaumaturgy* but to no avail.

The party then decided to explore the first floor. Yumia again cast *thaumaturgy*, this time with more luck as they heard a gasp of fear coming from one. Mirri looked under the bed to see the frightened eyes of Cray Onderquill, a young gnome apprentice wizard. He managed to coax young Cray to come out from under the bed and she told them what had happened.

Cray Onderquill had been journeying on the High Road from Neverwinter to Waterdeep and rented a room at the Wayside Inn. Sometime in the early morning she heard banging and thumping as the cultists attacked and restrained the other quests for sacrifice for their dark ritual. She managed to hide under the bed and remained there until the party arrived that evening.

Cray was unable to tell the party where the cultists had gone so they explored further. They found the smithy unoccupied but now in addition to the suits of steel armor with the sigil of Mephistopheles, they also found several suits of weapons and armor made of Baatorian steel.



Cray Onderquill

Continuing to explore, they heard chanting coming from a trap door in the kitchen. The party readied themselves for a fight (while Cray hyperventilated). Yumia decided to go down first to see if she could parlé/deceive the cultists. She descended first and saw the

slaughtered remains of all the Wayside Inn guests within the ominous-looking summoning circle. Only the bound and gagged Martisha Vinetalker remained alive squirming in one of the far corners.



Yumia was not successful and was unable to prevent the completion of the ritual. A tornado of fire burst from the circle to the ceiling, engulfing the bodies and burning them to ash instantly. The head, then the body of an osyluth (a bone devil) emerged from the flames. At once battle was joined. The fight was brief but spectacular. At first it seemed the infernal side was winning but a spectacular smite by Jeremium wounded the bone devil deeply, and such was the blow that two of the cultists surrendered immediately. The leader of the cultists, Baackes, was killed and soon after the bone devil fell as well.

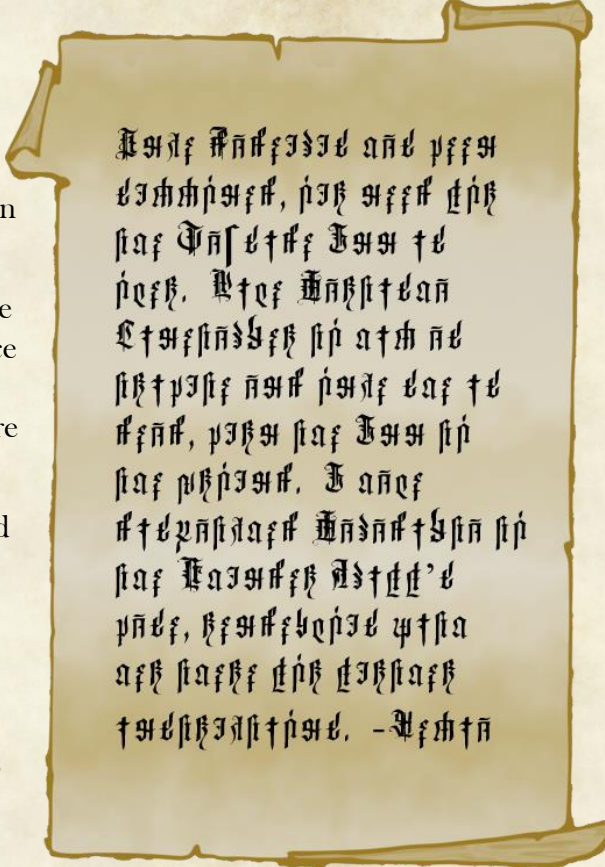
Bone Devil

Session 5 - December 1st, 2023

The party took stock of their victory. Two cultists lay dead and two groveled in abject surrender. The party first searched for the bodies. Upon that of the leader (Baackes) they found a note written in infernal. Translated into common:

Once Dadeulus has been summoned, our need for the Wayside Inn is over. Give Martisha Vinetalker to him as tribute and once she is dead, burn the Inn to the ground. I have dispatched Maladikta to the Thunder Cliff's base, rendezvous with her there for further instructions. -Nemia

They then released Martisha Vinetalker from her bonds. She seemed a bit shaken but not panicked. She explained that she had only purchased the Wayside Inn 6 months ago. She hired Baackes because she sailed with for many years and trusted him. He, in turn, recommended the rest of the staff, all of whom turned out to be members of the Cult of Mephistopheles. She urged the party to either kill the surrendered cultists or turn them over to the authorities for trial (and likely execution).



³ Pentagram, Symbol of Mephistopheles

Yumia intimidated the surviving cultists into giving up the location of their main base on the Sword Coast called the Thunder Cliffs base, located close to the Tower of Storms (which they had visited five years earlier). William then played a little solitaire with one of the cultists while the rest of the party decided to retire for the night and figure out what to do with the survivors the next day.

The next day they arose to find Cray cooking in the kitchen. She explained that she was an apprentice to an archmage who summered in Neverwinter and wintered in Waterdeep. Her mistress teleported back to Waterdeep but had Cray walk back because Cray had no experience with the outside world and needed a little adventure in her life. She sure got it! Cray said her thanks (again) and goodbye, and set off South on the High Road to Waterdeep.

The party reconvened to discuss the fate of the cultists. Some wanted to kill them outright as Martisha requested. Others wished to turn them over to the authorities in Leilon or just release them altogether. A key sticking point was that they could warn their fellow cultists of the party's approach - or rather it was a key sticking point until one of the cultists pointed out that their lives were forfeit according to the cult for their failure. Furthermore, (and ominously) the cult already knew they were coming as Eikolos was listening. When queried as to who Eikolos was, the cultists responded that he was an imp, a rather familiar one. And indeed, the party found an open window in the kitchen. After this revelation, the party decided there was no harm in letting the two cultists go, so they did so and set off for Leilon.

Arriving in the late afternoon, the party told the town leadership (Valdi Estapaar, Grizzelda Copperwraught, and Merrygold Brightshine) of the developments. Valdi Estapaar said that she could authorize commissioning a ship for the assault on the Thunder Cliffs base. There were two ships appropriate for such a mission:

The *Dancing Delight*, a fast and maneuverable Corsair captained by the tabaxi Stand-In-Tar and manned by a crew wholly comprised of tabaxi.

The *Ice Floe*, a slower galley but one with a shallower hull that allowed for amphibious landings. The Ice Floe was captained by Kristoffen, a white dragonborn manned by a variety of species.

The party elected to meet the two captains and for them to make their respective pitches for their ships. Kristoffen appeared calm and professional while Tar-In-Boots seemed a little off kilter. It took a bit, but the party realized she was drunk! It turned out Tar-In-Boots had been losing jobs and the respect of her crew. Nonetheless the party decided her ship was better suited for their mission, so they chose the *Dancing Delight*.

Leaving immediately, the party sailed most of the way to the Thunder Cliffs without incident until they were attacked by two spined devils and a hydroloth. A brief but furious fight broke out.

One crew member was killed, and Tar-In-Boots was seriously injured, but the party was ultimately victorious.



Hydroloth

Session 6 - December 15th, 2023

The Party landed on the shores of the Thunder Cliffs and were greeted by an empty beach. They began to explore the immediate area. They found a ship that was packed with supplies and undergoing maintenance, indicating the inhabitants were preparing to leave. Yumia and Jeremium explored the caves to the south (Yumia doing some impressive gravity-defying wall runs to avoid getting wet). They found the buried bodies of three sea hags, presumably the previous inhabitants of the caves. With those bodies was an emerald which had been missed by the killers (likely because of the horrible stench of the sea hags).

Concurrently Ganamash and William explored North. They didn't get far before they saw the imp Eikolos, throw off his invisibility in the air before them. He motioned to his left and when they approached that direction, they saw 8 infernal orcs, 4 on a side in ceremonial formation, with Maladikta at the end. She had not come to fight but to *parlé*. Given Ganamash and William were outmatched, they elected to stand down and agree to speak. Maladikta led them into a meeting room and told them they were to wait for her mistress to arrive.

Meanwhile Jeremium searched a large area that had been packed up for any lootable supplies. He was not disappointed for he found a potion of vitality, a dagger of venom, and a wand of magic missiles. As Jeremium was searching, Yumia wandered into a larger area with more supplies all packed up. Suddenly a dark portal appeared to her right and 4 purple beams slammed sequentially into Yumia, hurling her through a portal and against the far wall. Yumia tried reacting with *hellish rebuke* but Nemia swiftly counter-spelled her. "The flames betray you, because they belong to me!" she cackled.

Confidently Nemia sashayed into the demi plane she had just created, dismissing the portal behind her. As she did, Eikolos materialized on her hip and reached into a bag of holding producing a vial of luminous red liquid, which was a potion of healing. He mockingly waved it at Yumia before vanishing into invisibility.

A shaken and badly hurt Yumia pulled herself to her feet and fought back. She did manage to score a slight nick on Nemia's side, but Nemia responded with a powerful spell targeting Yumia's mind. Yumia felt as though her head was going to burst (as indeed, it almost did) and collapsed, close to death.

Yumia felt her grip on life slipping away before she felt tiny claws pry open her mouth and pour in the revitalizing healing potion. Just as her eyes fluttered open, Nemia's lizard-like foot slammed down on Yumia's chest. Nemia had a proposal for Yumia. Having established dominance, she offered to cease the fight so that Yumia might hear her offer. Yumia agreed, because what choice did she have?



**Nemia, Arch-Warlock
of Mephistopheles**

Nemia knew what the “runestone” was and knew it was somewhere in Leilon. Indeed, their entire presence on the Sword Coast was exclusively to seek it out. What Nemia didn’t know is why the party sought the runestone, since not one of them knew what it was. Yumia explained that William had sold his soul long ago to Myrkul and that Ularan Mortus had offered to free it in exchange for the runestone. Since any further negotiations had to involve the rest of the party, Nemia led the way to the meeting room. Along the way, they collected a surprised Jeremium. He went along with Yumia and Nemia but tried to surreptitiously heal Yumia along the way. He did so but Nemia noticed. Far from angering her, she seemed pleased with his action.

In the meeting room Nemia laid out her proposal. First, she noted that Ularan Mortus was one of her long-standing enemies and they had clashed before. Secondly, she also noted that there was no way for the party to trust Mortus would uphold his side of the bargain since he worshipped a deity of the chaotic evil Abyss. By contrast, Nemia was a Warlock of Mephistopheles, an Archdevil of the lawful evil Nine Hells of Baator, and devils always fulfilled their agreements. Furthermore, she claimed she could free William’s soul with but a few words. This seemed dubious and yet, the party intuited her claim was true.

A long process of bargaining ensued as they hashed out the outline of their agreement. Towards the end of the negotiation, Yumia wondered aloud if Nemia had anything to do with Mephista’s birth. Upon hearing that name, Nemia choked “Mephista lives!” as her face twisted through several emotions. First was utter shock, followed by anger, then a hint of fear, before finally her lips curled into delighted malevolence.

Nemia revealed that twenty-five years ago she had made her warlock pact with Mephistopheles. He demanded she sacrifice one of her blood to him. She had no blood relations as she was a destitute tiefling from the unforgiving streets of Neverwinter – so she made one. She gave birth to a daughter, naming her after her Lord, and carved that name into the newborn’s chest. She then left her on an altar in the dead of winter to die of exposure in homage to the frigid depths of Cania, Mephistopheles’ layer of Hell. It was sheer luck the gnome ranger Sunny found Mephista mere minutes after Nemia left the altar all those years ago.

The agreement was made and signed in blood:

Yumia agrees to deliver the "runestone" to Nemia and in exchange:

- William's soul will be freed (upon delivery of the runestone)
- Mephista will not be harmed (into effect immediately)
- Nemia will provide the assistance necessary to defeat Ularan Mortus (upon request of the party)
- Leilon is to be left alone (into effect immediately)

If they wish to contact Nemia, they will leave a black candle in their place's windowsill.

The party was wary of Nemia but the deal was more reliable than the one William had with Mortus. The party was allowed to leave to the *Dancing Delight*. One silver lining, however, was that the extreme difference in morality between Nemia and Yumia impressed upon Jeremium that he was mistaken in assuming one could judge the character of a person by their species and perhaps the beginning of a friendship began to bloom.

Online December 16th - 21st, 2023

The party decided to take a break from adventuring. Jeremium wrote his commanders a letter⁴, and the response follows. The turnaround time was approximately 5 weeks.

⁴ "Dear generals of the Triadic order" written by Bogdan Ostashevskiy.

Dear generals of the Triadic Order,

I have greatly sinned. Upon discovery and pursuit of the infernal threat in the region, my companions and I were forced into the signing of a pact with the enemy forces. This pact obligates my companions and I to search the town of Leilon for the artifact known as the Runestone. The enemy is willing to go to great lengths to acquire this artifact, and refused to hint at the magnitude of its power during negotiations. I will now provide a summary of events to serve as an explanation for these unfavourable circumstances.

About 20 miles north of the town of Leilon, I came across an inn by the name of the Wayside Inn, outside of which were multiple zombies, recently vanquished and bearing the symbol of Myrkul. Upon entering this inn, I saw a small group of adventurers being congratulated by the staff and patrons of the bar regarding their recent victory against the undead assaulting the inn. This group consisted of William Sinclair, Ganamash, Klumbar Arjun, Mirri Vetis, and Yumia Phespira, who had been entrusted in the safeguarding of Leilon during its restoration. Seeing as though I was headed in the same direction as this group, I decided to accompany it on its journey to Leilon. It must be noted that an imp was spotted inside of the Wayside Inn, and promptly eliminated by my companions and I.

Setting off from the Wayside Inn the next day, we encountered a large group of panicked civilians a mile north of Leilon. From them we learned the town had been assaulted by hordes of undead, followed by a rival force of orcs and devils. Pressing onward, we encountered a well organized group of orcs, who were in combat with a group of undead, dispatching them with a great deal of speed and efficiency. Upon confronting these orcs, they responded with aggression, forcing our party to battle them, killing all but one of them, who was questioned and incapacitated. Shortly after dispatching the last of the orcs, we were confronted by a woman astride a Nightmare, wearing full plate armour akin to that of the orcs, and accompanied by a spine devil and yet another group of four orcs. Upon a short conversation with this woman, who cared not for the townsfolk still trapped inside of the town, we joined battle with this group. This battle was interrupted when a mage by the name of Gallio Elibro shot a lightning bolt through the line of orcs, killing three orcs and dissolving their morale, provoking retreat.

After the battle, the party split and I probed the town for any signs of infernal activity, unable to locate any. The next morning I regrouped with my companions, us deciding to go back to the Wayside Inn, as that was our best lead on to the infernal activity in the region.

Upon arrival to the inn, we found all of its windows and doors boarded, confirming our suspicions. Furthermore, the front door to the inn was warded, forcing us to break into the inn through one of its windows. Inside it was dark, with us managing to locate Cray Onderquill, one of the inn's guests, hiding on the second floor. Cray recounted that early that morning the other guests had been kidnapped and taken away. Investigating the inn further, we found a group of cultists in the basement, sacrificing the captured guests and summoning an osyluth. We were unable to halt their ritual, and were forced to join battle with and defeat the cultists and the osyluth. We managed to force two of the cultists into surrender, then yielding us a map of the Thunder Cliffs; the location the cultists were meant to rendezvous at after the completion of the ritual. We then set off back to Leilon, in the search of a boat to use to get to the Thunder Cliffs.

Finding a suitable ship and captain in Leilon, we set out to the Thunder Cliffs. Shortly before arriving, we were assaulted by a small group of fiends, most notably a hydroloth, whom we quickly butchered. Upon arrival at the Thunder Cliffs, we decided to split the party into three, two of us staying on the ship, and the remaining four splitting into two to search the cliffs. The cultists seemed to be packing up their supplies to leave shortly after the time we arrived, with most of their supplies being already packed. Some time after we arrived, Yumia was assaulted by yet another, far more powerful tiefling, casting high level divinations such as foresight, and trapping Yumia in a demiplane, effortlessly incapacitating her, before sparing her life and leading the entire party in negotiations.

This powerful tiefling goes by the name of Nemia, and was accompanied by the mysterious woman from earlier, who goes by Maladitka. They explained to us that they were after the Runestone, and wanted us to find it for them. Debating amongst ourselves, we determined that to fight these beings head on would be suicide in our current state, and we had no choice but to agree to the pact, while adding in a few clauses to benefit us. William, who had previously had an agreement with Ularan Mortis, a follower of Myrkuil, to reacquire his soul in exchange for finding and yielding the Runestone to him, had a clause in the pact to acquire his soul from Nemia after acquiring the Runestone for Nemia. The forces of Myrkuil also wish to acquire this Runestone in direct opposition of the infernal forces, and in the pact, it was agreed that they would be assisted by the infernal forces in defeating the undead forces.

One thing is of utmost clearance to me: We cannot, under any circumstance, yield the Runestone to either party. This is why I ask you, generals of my order, for any and all assistance you can provide to us in the defeat of these forces. This assistance would likely have to be provided discreetly, so as not to alert the infernal forces of any transgression by us, but it would be appreciated nonetheless. In awaiting your response, I will be assisting the local church of Lathander in their ceremonies and prayers, as a method of atoning for my involvement in the pact.

Sincerest Regards,

Jerimium Guibour

Brother Guibour

I read with great concern the report you sent several weeks ago, and I appreciate the gravity of the situation. First, if your account is accurate, our sages believe you were not forced into the pact as described. Had you been coerced to sign the agreement; it would not have been valid. Perhaps they intimidated violence but didn't outright threaten you?

In any event this discussion is merely academic as you are correct, you cannot maintain your side of the bargain. Whatever this "runestone" is, it's certainly an artifact of great powers and cannot fall into either Mortus' or Nemia's hands; no one man's soul is worth the danger to the people of Faerûn. Major artifacts usually cannot be destroyed easily so you must deliver the runestone to us for proper isolation. If this is not possible, banishing it somewhere where it can do no harm to goodly folk is also acceptable. Note this may require betraying your current companions. I trust you can see this is in the greater good.

We will assist you in any way we can, however our order itself has little direct presence on the Sword Coast. Instead, I have written letters to the Temples of Tyr, Ilmater, Torm, and Bahamut in both Waterdeep and Neverwinter informing them of the situation and beseeching them to provide whatever aid they can. As you noted, you must be subtle with the aid you seek lest our enemies suspect you don't intend to honor the pacts you have made.

To that end, you may wish to appeal to the Scaly Eye for assistance. They are located on an island just off the Sword Coast about halfway between Leilon and Neverwinter. Decades ago, they were a strong force for good in the Northern Sea of Swords battling pirates, raiders and Mortus himself on at least one occasion, all under the command of their founder, the bronze dragon Lhammaruntosz. Indeed, my grandfather fought with her and spoke highly of her valor and her skill as a mage. Sadly around 50 years ago she became afflicted with a malady of the mind and retreated to her island home. Still, two dozen or so of her followers (undoubtedly the longer-lived races) stand vigil in hopes she will regain her mind. This seems unlikely but they can surely aid you with knowledge about Mortus and perhaps equipment of power.

Speaking of Mortus, we know very little about his current capabilities, only that he was an old man over 50 years ago, so either he is not human or he is extending his life through (certainly foul) means.

On the subject of Nemia, we know almost nothing of her, but we do know about those she leads. They are called the "Eighth Order", and they were formed far in the Southern Sword Coast in the Wealdath Forrest. From what we can gather, the Eighth Order is a small army (approximately 1000 orcs) formed about ten years ago that are unusually intelligent, ordered and disciplined. They had been steadily and systematically conquering elven villages and selling the inhabitants in the slave markets of nearby Calimport. However, we have ominously learned three months ago they commissioned a small fleet of transport ships to sail up the Sword Coast.

Finally, our sages have looked into the runestone itself.... and found nothing at all. However, they may be able to help nonetheless. They know Leilon used to be a small yet thriving trade and fishing town whose folk fished the sea. Trade flowed between Waterdeep, Neverwinter, In the centre of the town stood the tower of the Arch-mage Thallivar. Two centuries ago, he conducted research into other planes of existence, using something call a "planar beacon" which drew strange creatures and objects from other planes to his tower. He then disappeared. A century later when the Spellplague occurred, the planar beacon exploded and all the people in Leilon turned to ash, leaving all the buildings intact. Our sages find little else of note regarding Leilon in the historical record, so it seems likely this has something to do with the runestone.

Keep me apprised of any further developments.

War Captain Haelimbrar



Session 7 - December 22nd, 2023

During their month of rest, the party split up for a bit:

- After Jeremium wrote his letter, he performed penance in the church of Lathander and helped with the reconstruction of Leilon.
- Ganamash journeyed to Neverwinter and clinked ale glasses with his old comrades in taverns. Klumbar did the same.
- Mirri also went to Neverwinter mostly to check in on Mephista & Nethipone.
- William appropriated an abandoned building (plenty of those), fixed it up with judicious use of *mending*, and started a small library.
- Yumia's time was the most eventful; several days after their parlé, she was visited by Nemia. Nemia was disgusted by how poorly Yumia fought and proposed another pact. Mephistopheles would share a tiny sliver of his power with her in exchange for the runestone. Should Yumia fail to provide it before she died, her soul would be claimed by The Lord of Hellfire.

After some time apart, the party reconvened to decide what to do next. There were two options before them. The first was to explore the House of Thalivar (the wizard tower at the centre of town) as it seemed the most promising lead to find the runestone. The second was to seek allies for the conflicts that lay ahead; in the churches in Neverwinter as well as the Scaley Eye mentioned in the letter to Jeremium. The party opted for the latter.

They booked passage on *Dancing Delight* for Neverwinter. As they were pulling out of the harbor, Eikolos appeared before Ganamash. He noted the party agreed to search for the runestone in Leilon, yet here they were leaving the town. What gives? The party basically told him they were following up on a lead and then told him to get lost. He narrowed his eyes and said this wasn't over before vanishing into invisibility.

The sail up the Sword Coast was uneventful and they pulled into Neverwinter's harbor in the late afternoon, after which the party split up again, agreeing to meet later that night at the Spitted Pig.

- Jeremium went to the local temple of Tyr to seek aid, as per his letter to his commanders. The head priest confirmed they had received the letter and offered his assistance, namely payment for the *Dancing Delight* to travel to the Bronze Shrine and a new suit of plate mail.
- Ganamash & Klumbar went directly to the Spitted Pig, had a nice bowl of stew, and caught up with Egra.
- William purchased some books for his burgeoning library, including *an unabridged history of the fall of Cryovain*, by Nellio.
- Yumia and Mirri did some shopping at The Alchemical Paradise, purchasing some liquid mercury to use in combat in conjunction with Yumia's lightning powers. Then they picked up Yumia's dragontooth sabre from the Brothers Thorax. Finally, Yumia went to see Aniza. She was glad to see Yumia again but when she heard of the pact Yumia had made with Mephistopheles, she became very concerned. Yumia was stuck however, since she would lose her soul along with William should they fail.

The next morning the party set sail for the Bronze Shrine. They took a rowboat to shore while the *Dancing Delight* sailed to the western shore of the island, just within range of a *dimension door*, should the party require a fast retreat. At the dock they encountered an old man and an old Dragonborn fishing. They were the remnants of the Scaley Eye, two dozen or so who had remained after Lhammaruntosz went mad 50 years prior.

The two dozen Scaley Eyes knew nothing to help the party, though they were sympathetic to their goal of confronting Mortus. Undaunted, the party elected to speak to Lhammaruntosz herself, making their way to her



vast upper-floor lair. There they found an ancient bronze dragon surrounded by the bones of sea creatures, fetid puddles of sea water, and mold on the walls.

Lhammaruntosz noticed the party, but she spoke to who spoke to them of nonsense, accusing them of being minstrels.

Very gingerly, Jeremium touched her and used his lay on hands to try to cure her of her affliction. It didn't bring her back to lucidity except for a slight clearing of the madness for a moment. William decided to try stronger magic, casting *remove curse* upon Lhammaruntosz. This worked, returning her to her old self (at least for a few minutes). The party quickly plied her with questions while her sanity remained.

They asked if she knew what afflicted her; she did not, though she suspected Mortus was somehow involved as they had been enemies for many years.

That naturally led to the subject of Mortus, and Lhammaruntosz did have some useful information about him. First, she confirmed that though he appeared human, he had lived for many more years than a man's life, so either he wasn't human, or he had a way to extend his life. Secondly, she told them he had challenged and defeated the lich Iniarv

sometime before her madness, taking his tower and dominating Iniarv's undead hordes.

Then the party asked about the runestone. Lhammaruntosz didn't know what that was, but she did know Thalivar. She thought him a fool for his research into extra-planar entities and believe he was killed by the creatures he thought to study. Lhammaruntosz described the planar conduit Thalivar used, and it was clear that it wasn't the runestone, yet it seemed his tower should be the most promising lead. She suggested the party explore the tower as that seemed their most promising lead.

At this time Lhammaruntosz's sanity began to wane and she slipped back into madness. Sadly, the party turned to leave her to her fate... until Jeremium distantly sensed the presence of evil. This was not the infernal evil of ordered domination, rather the evil of swirling chaos and madness. Casting *divine sense*, he explored the lair. As he drew close to the northern window, Jeremium discovered the source of this malice... on the mold surrounding the window. Then one by one, solid red eyes opened on the "mold"....



Session 8 - January 19th, 2024

For half a century the alkilith had poisoned Lhammaruntosz's mind. Now that its purpose had been exposed, it no longer hid. Instead, it responded by opening a portal to the Abyss. Several manes and dretchs poured out of the portal, to be met handily by the Jeremium,



Mane



Dretch



Rutterkin

Ganamash, and Mirri. Meanwhile William cast *remove curse* again to revive Lhammaruntosz again, at least for the fight. It worked- her mind cleared again, she quickly surveyed the battle, saw the portal to the Abyss surrounded by the alkilith, and breathed a great bolt of lightning upon it.

The alkilith looked like it couldn't survive another bolt and the fight seemed as though it would end as soon as it began with the impending slaughter

of the minor demons. But then emerged a demon decidedly not minor. A maralith burst out of the portal, a spinning, slithering whirl of blades and cackling laughter.

She turned first on Mirri and with a furious bloody flurry of her six blades, downed him before turning to Ganamash. She effortlessly parried his attacks as she charged right into the middle of the party, splitting them into half.

Several rutterkin also emerged and Lhammaruntosz had to make a difficult choice, eliminate the alkilith to prevent more demons from arriving or help her new allies fight a foe for which they were clearly outmatched. She chose the former and tore the alkilith apart.

Meanwhile the party recovered somewhat from the initial assault and surrounded the marilith, even scoring a few minor hits. William used *projected ward* to revive Mirri. Still, the marilith seemed unconcerned as she reveled in the battle - until Lhammaruntosz joined the fight. Instead of attacking with tooth and fang she pounced on the marilith like a cat on a mouse, holding her down while the party rained down blows upon her.

The marilith teleported away but she clearly understood an ancient bronze dragon was a foe beyond her. Still, dying away from the Abyss merely meant she would be banished to the Abyss for a century less a day, so she closed with the party, not the dragon, hoping to kill a mortal or two before she fell.



Marilith

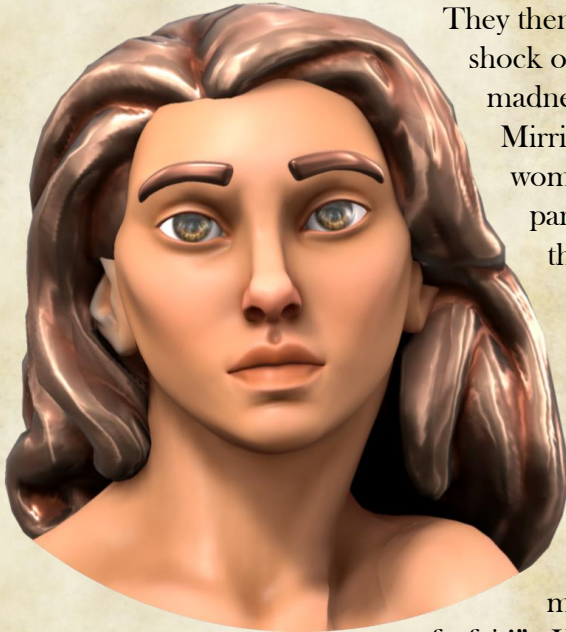
She didn't succeed. As Lhammaruntosz held her down again, Jeremium cut off four of her arms, her tail, then slammed the pommel of his sword right into her head, rendering her unconscious while the rest of the party moped up the remaining demons. Then Mirri quickly slapped his dimensional shackles on the marilith. Just like that, the fight was over.



The party was still a bit wary of Lhammaruntosz at first though it only took a few sentences of lucid speech for them to conclude she was (partially recovered). They then searched the immediate surroundings. The minor demons had nothing on them but one of the marilith's swords were a

different story. 5 of the 6 were well-made but otherwise unremarkable, but the 6th was, in fact, remarkable. It was covered with draconic and celestial iconography, championing the platinum dragon Bahamut.

Then the marilith's eyes fluttered open. Jeremium had his sword right at her throat, so she unsuccessfully attempted to teleport away but was foiled by the dimensional shackles. Jeremium demanded to know where she had obtained the sword. The marilith proudly asserted she had claimed it from a paladin of Bahamut she had slain long ago named Lederick of Volsh (this name and location was unfamiliar to everyone). There didn't seem to be any more to ask of the marilith, so Jeremium promptly dispatched her.



They then turned their attention to the recovering Lhammaruntosz. After the shock of the battle wore off, she was confronted with the memories of 50 years of madness and all that she had done. Lhammaruntosz borrowed a cloak from Mirri and polymorphed into human form, taking the appearance of a human woman except for her hair which was metallic bronze. She spoke again to the party about her enemies and her suspicion that it was Mortus who had sent the alkilith. Lhammaruntosz also mentioned shortly before her madness Mortus had tried to ally with one of her other enemies, Claugiyliamatar (an ancient green dragon who resided in the Mere of Dead Men), but Claugiyliamatar had spurned Mortus.

The party then returned to Neverwinter. Jeremium returned the Marilith's trophy to the temple of Bahumut and confirmed that no one had heard of either Lederick or Volsh. Finally, William received a sending from Mortus: "You have restored Lhammaruntosz and so I must accelerate my plans, hurry and find the runestone or your soul is forfeit!". William responded with a single word; "OK".

Session 9 - February 9th, 2024

At the Spitted Pig the party decided to investigate the tower of Thalivar back in Leilon for any leads on the Runestone. Before they left, Yumia decided to speak to Aniza as their relationship needed a little attention after two months of being away. Mirri spent a day or so spreading the word of Lhammaruntosz's return on the streets. William spent a fair chunk of change on 90 books for his library.

The party then set off towards Leilon on the *Dancing Delight*. Bright and early the next morning, they went to the House of Thalivar to look for the Runestone. They found Gallio Elibro there and exchanged information. He welcomed the adventurers and bid them to look around. They did so, spending several hours looking through the tower. Thalivar had invented his own system of hieroglyphics for his notes. Yumia spent several hours looking through his notes trying to decipher them, to no success. Meanwhile William asked about Thalivar's library and if Gallio would be willing to contribute to the community library William was creating. Gallio responded that he was happy to donate any non-magical texts though William would have to do the work.



Star Spawn Mangler

Thalivar was investigating the ethereal plane before he died, using a planar beacon to pull creatures and items from that plane to their Prime Material plane (Toril). After a while it occurred to Jeremium that one of his spells (*see invisibility*) could see into the ethereal plane so perhaps it would be worth casting. Indeed, it was fruitful as

Jeremium immediately found there were differences between the house of Thalivar on Toril and the border ethereal. The tower's third and fourth floors were not half destroyed and exposed to the air and there was a fifth floor. Most dramatically the planar beacon was on the fourth floor surrounded by two aberrations known as star spawn manglers. The party decided they must explore the highest floor in the ethereal plane, but they had no means to get to it. William knew of a spell called *blink* that could bring him briefly to that plane, but it was not one he had yet mastered. Fortunately, it was in one of Thalivar's old spell books and so William spent a couple days learning the spell.

The party returned determined to see this through. William stood on some boxes piled 10 feet high on the fourth floor so he would be slightly above the fifth floor in the border ethereal and cast *blink*. Immediately to his left he saw.... the runestone as demonstrated by Mortus several months ago. Every few seconds it would depict a different landscape. First the blasted battleground of Avernus cut down the middle by the river Styx. Then the disease infested swamps of Minourus, followed by the flames of Phlegethos, finally the falling snows of Cania. William cast *Nystul's magic aura* upon it to prevent scrying, then grabbed it before flashing back to the Prime, but not before a star spawn mangler heard him, charged up the stairs, and wounded William.

Exaction of the Nine Hells

Wrought in the distant past, just after the Reckoning, was the Exaction of the Nine Hells. Its original purpose and who created it (and how) is lost to history but whatever its provenance, The Exaction of the Nine Hells is an artifact which allows one to demand a power from each of the Archdukes & Archduchesses of Baator. One can attune to it as normal, then choose powers from each of the Lords of the Nine. Each time the user does so, he or she must role an exaction check (DC 1 + the number of exactions already performed in a lifetime). On a failed check, the power works but the alignment of the user shifts to lawful evil along one of the two moral axes thusly:

- If the exaction check fails by an odd number, they become evil (act of corruption).
- If the exaction check fails by an even number, they become lawful (act of obeisance).
- If the user fails the check but the parity of the failed check corresponds to their current alignment, no change occurs.
- If the user is already lawful evil, they must still perform an exaction check for each use until they fail once, as per below.

If a user unattunes to the Exaction of the Nine Hells and then reattunes, they regain all their previously chosen exactions. Any alignment changes cannot be reversed by any means short of divine intervention (including *wish*).

Exactions:

Zariel: Use Vow of Enmity once per day.

Dispat: Legendary Resistance once per day. If the user fails a saving throw, he or she can choose to succeed instead. You may take this exaction up to 3 times.

Mammon: The user creates a ruby worth 5000 gp. †

Belial/Fierna: The user learns one fire cantrip and one fire spell of the following levels 1, 3, and 5 from any spell list. They may cast each leveled spell once per day without components or expending a spell slot. If the user is a spellcaster, they also add them to their known spells and do not count against their daily prepared spells limit*

Levistus: The user can cast *haste* (on themselves only) as a bonus action at will and do not need to maintain concentration.

Glasya: Twice per day the user may cast *charm person* as a reaction against an attack, regardless if it hits or misses.*

Baalzebul: The user has advantage on persuasion, deception, and insight roles.

Mephistopheles: All fire spells and abilities transformed into hellfire. They do maximum damage and ignore fire resistance.

Azmodeus: The user casts *wish*. †

* Spellcasting DC of user. If the user is not a spellcaster, calculate the DC using the highest mental stat of the user.

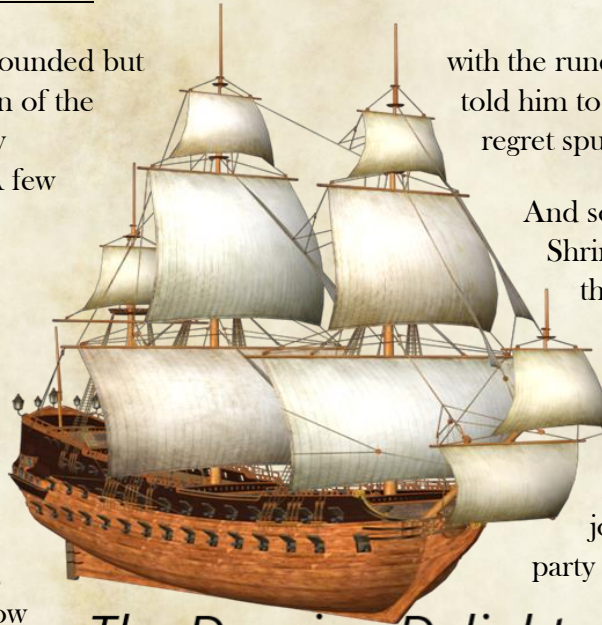
† Each use requires the user to make an exaction check and these exactions may only be used once every 5 years, regardless of the user.

Background courtesy of [Rgbstock](#)



Session 10 - March 1st, 2024

William landed on the floor wounded but alive and clutching the Exaction of the Nine Hells. They immediately discussed what to do with it. A few options were proposed but the consensus settled on Lhammaruntosz. She was powerful enough to defend it and trustworthy enough to not use it. As they settled in to wait for the crew of the *Dancing Delight* to finish loading their cargo, they received an unwelcome visitor; Eikolos. He demanded to know why they were leaving town again



The Dancing Delight

with the runestone still unfound. They basically told him to get lost; he responded they would regret spurning him.

And so the party set sail for the Bronze Shrine upon the *Dancing Delight*. As they docked at the Bronze Shrine, they saw the Scaley Eyes had already acquired another ship and had begun to rebuild their shipping empire. The Scaley Eyes proposed the *Dancing Delight* join their shipping company and the party left them to their negotiations.

They met with Lhammaruntosz, and she agreed to safekeep the Exaction. However she was unfamiliar with *Nystul's Magic Aura*, so William agreed to teach her the spell. Once she had mastered the spell, the party returned to Leilon.



Just as they pulled into Leilon's harbour, Yumia received a dire sending from Aniza. She said "Nethipone taken by a woman on a fiery horse, Mephista's distraught, get back as soon as possible!" Yumia immediately jumped on her horse Skelly and rushed North, the others close behind. They bypassed Neverwinter and went North to the base of Mount Hotenow to the alter where Nemia sacrificed Mephista over 25 years ago. No one was there and there were no clues as to what happened.

They did know that there was a colony of fire elementals that lived in the lava of Mount Hotenow and Mirri thought perhaps they might know something that could help. Mirri cast *Pyroclastic Eruption* in the hope that a fire elemental might sense the spell, and indeed, one did. The elemental demanded to know why such magic was cast as soon as it manifested. The party inquired as to if the elemental knew anything about the Cult of Mephistopheles. It took a minute or so to commune with its brethren and said "no".

They then asked if the fire elementals knew of a portal to the Nine Hells. They did, and reported there was one in the Devil's Fee, a shop in Boulder's Gate. Finally, Mirri asked if the Fire Elementals knew of one of theirs called Ciro (Mirri's father). It responded that Ciro was an honored elder who lived far to the South, and he was known to all fire elementals in Faerûn.

Little Nethipone⁵

The party could not put off going to the scene of the crime and so journeyed to the Spitted Pig in Neverwinter. No one had the strength to face Mephista, so they spoke to Egra. She said the witnesses reported Nethipone was playing hopscotch outside the Spitted Pig when a white-haired woman in green plate riding a fiery horse (obviously Maladikta) appeared in a puff of mist, reached down and pulled her up on her steed, then vanished the same way. The party asked around to see if any more details could be gleaned from neighbors and even pigeons (via *speak with animals*) but to no avail.

⁵ Original artwork by [Henrick Johansson @overnoes](#). Altered image used with his permission.

Finally, Yumia reluctantly returned to her home. Her trepidation was warranted; as soon as Aniza spotted Yumia, she crossed her arms in anger. Before Yumia even had a chance to speak, Aniza asked Yumia if Nethipone's kidnapping had anything to do with the pact she made with the Cult of Mephistopheles. Yumia confirmed it did. Aniza told her to go away and not come back until Nethipone was found. Without a word, Yumia slinked away.

The party returned, dejected, to Leilon. Yumia went to the centre of town and called out (using *thaumaturgy* to amplify her voice) to speak with Eikolos. He appeared triumphantly and told them they were reaping the consequences of neglecting to find the runestone. Now they had more incentive than their own souls to worry about, also the life of a little girl. He then told her that Maladikta had instructed him not to hurt Nethipone, but he had cleverly followed her orders while also having his fun. He said he had many times turned invisible, then would appear right in front of her face a hissing clawing monster until he reduced her to a trembling mess, hidden in a bed with her eyes tightly shut. As he gloated, Yumia, enraged, hit him with *eldritch blast*, killing him (temporarily).

So angry was Yumia that she wanted to go back to the Bronze Shrine, retrieve the Exaction, and do the deal. Jeremium firmly refused to let that happen and matters looked as though they might come to blows. Finally Yumia backed down. Jeremium then began to reconsider his opposition. He reasoned that Nemias serves Mephistopheles, and the Exaction forces the lords and ladies of the Nine Hells to perform boons of magic to the wielder. If it is given to her, she is likely to turn it over to her lord. If that was the case, would that be so bad? Indeed, one of the instructions War Captain Haelimbrar gave Jeremium in his letter was that if the runestone could not be destroyed, it should be banished.

Session 11 - March 15th, 2024

Picking up where they left off the party decided to go back to the Bronze Shrine and retrieve the Exaction in case they needed it. The consensus was that while they shouldn't use it, they may decide to do the deal with the cult of Mephistopheles since giving it to them was akin to banishing it. They sailed there on one of the Scaley Eye's merchant ships and went to Lhammaruntosz. She was reading a book in her dragon form, using *mage hand* to turn the pages.

Lhammaruntosz greeted the party, and they filled her in on the recent developments.

Lhammaruntosz was apprehensive about returning the exaction and only did so reluctantly out of a sense of gratitude for freeing her from her madness. She did have an idea, however, to keep the Exaction undetected from scrying. Rather than casting *Nystul's Magic Aura* every day, she simply kept it in a bag of holding since it was an extra-dimensional space and hence, immune to scrying. A bag of holding she gave to Yumia.

Lhammaruntosz and William then hit the books. William wished to see if he could figure out where Nethipone might be held and by what means Maladikta could transit between the material plane and the border ethereal. After a few hours of Lhammaruntosz found a reference to a Nightmare (Maladikta's steed) which mentioned it could change between the prime material and the border ethereal at will.



Lhammaruntosz reasoned that since Nemia had taken her army north along the Sword Coast, it was likely they had also encamped somewhere on the Coast. Of course, the Sword Coast was thousands of miles long, but she would order her growing fleet to keep an eye out for any encampments.

The party then left with everyone other than William returning to Leilon and William traveling to Neverwinter. William first went to see Aniza (on Yumia's behalf). She was haggling with a merchant for a bulk supply of rice, and they seemed unable to agree on an amount. William stepped in and offered to make up the difference, allowing the transaction to be concluded. Aniza stiffly thanked William and asked about Yumia. William said she was doing as well as could be expected. He then asked for Aniza's sending stone as the party may need it in the future. Aniza parted with it, noting she hoped Yuma would return it herself once she made it right.

William then returned to the Spitted Pig at the scene of the abduction. He noted the ash from the searing hoofprints had almost disappeared over the past few days. In a stroke of insight, he cast *blink* to again travel to the border ethereal plane. There he saw one set of hoofprints coming from the south and another returning south, both fresh and undisturbed (since the border ethereal plane was all but empty of inhabitants).

While William was in Neverwinter, the rest of the party was waiting in Leilon. Unable to contain her rage, Yumia again called for Eikolos. He warily appeared on a rooftop behind a chimney. Yumia didn't have anything to say about the Exaction, she simply vented her rage and promised to kill Maladikta and Nemia. Then she once again shot *eldritch blast* at Eikolos. She didn't kill him, but she wounded him. He screamed "unlawful, unlawful!" before vanishing into invisibility.



Flameskull

The party then set off to the Mere of Dead Men, hoping to form an alliance with the ancient green dragon Claugyliamatar. As they approached his lair, it occurred to Klumbar that his blade of Alagondar was not vibrating as it did when they grew close to Cryovain over 5 years ago. They spotted in the distance a skull burning green flame. When they approached it, the Flameskull bade them to leave on the authority of Ularan Mortus. When the party refused, it attacked. The flameskull was joined by two wraiths, a wight, and a zombie ogre. The party made short work of them, but they knew stronger opponents were likely nearby.

Session 12 - March 24th, 2024

They reached a large cave opening about 20 feet off the ground with two flanking tunnels and decided to climb to the central opening. They found 4 well-maintained statues of famous female adventurers (Vajra Safahr, Lady Tanamere Alagondar, Danica Bonaduce, and Laerel Silverhand). To the west was a small lake of festering green slime with a few islands upon which stood more statues of famous women of the Realms. There was a small passage to the north in which the party found a Crystal Ball of Telepathy.

Mirri immediately attempted to use the crystal ball to scry for Nethipone, but he was hit by a blank wall, as though some magic was preventing the scrying. They then returned to the central room. They could see Claugyliamatar's lair on the far side of the slime, so Yumia tried leaping to one of the statue islands. She failed, fell into the slime, and began to sink. Mirri stopped her submergent using a *pyroclastic eruption* to solidify the ground under Yumia, after which she was recovered.



Crystal Ball of Telepathy

The Gnawbones



Delis Venomcauldron



Argina Therrow



Zuri Kimyak



Saija Hurwi

The party pondered how to cross the slime pit when they noticed a middle-aged woman with a shaven head on a bridge to the south. She was already observing them and left when she drew their attention. Then several minutes later the party was greeted by an elderly woman. She (Argina Therrow) told them she was the leader of a coven of druids called The Gnawbones who served and worshipped Claugyliamatar.

⁶ Argina explained that she had served Claugyliamatar since she was a young woman but in the last few weeks, he had

become increasingly unstable and paranoid, once even lashing out at Saiia. Then just an hour ago they heard the sounds of combat and Claugyliamatar roaring in his lair, then everything fell silent just before the party arrived.

This was very familiar.

The Gnawbones were too afraid to approach Claugyliamatar's lair, but the party knew that they had to confront the victor, whomever that might be. So the Gnawbones agreed to a temporary alliance. Argina led the party to the lair, picking up the rest of the Gnawbones, a phase spider, and an owlbear as backup.



Phase spider

They crossed the bridge the party saw earlier which led to a small balcony overlooking Claugyliamatar's lair

and there they saw the great green wurm dead, surrounded by dozens of pools of tar, the remains of the demons he slew.

Standing next to his head was Ularan Mortus and a woman. Mortus was uttering the words of a dread ritual, and the woman was absorbed in watching him, so neither noticed they were no longer alone. The party wanted to use the element of surprise but before they could discuss how best to exploit their enemies' lack of attention, Argina screamed in pain and rage. Battle was joined!

Mortus didn't react at all to imminent combat, continuing with his ritual. His subordinate whirled around and drew her blade. It was obvious from her (Viantha Crulhex) pale skin and red eyes she was undead, but she didn't have the characteristic rotting flesh which marked most undead. She acted first and cast *hunger of hadar*, instantly enveloping the party and the Gnawbones in cold darkness in which acidic eldritch tentacles

grasped at them. Then from the shadows emerged an undead horror known as a boneclaw.



Owlbear

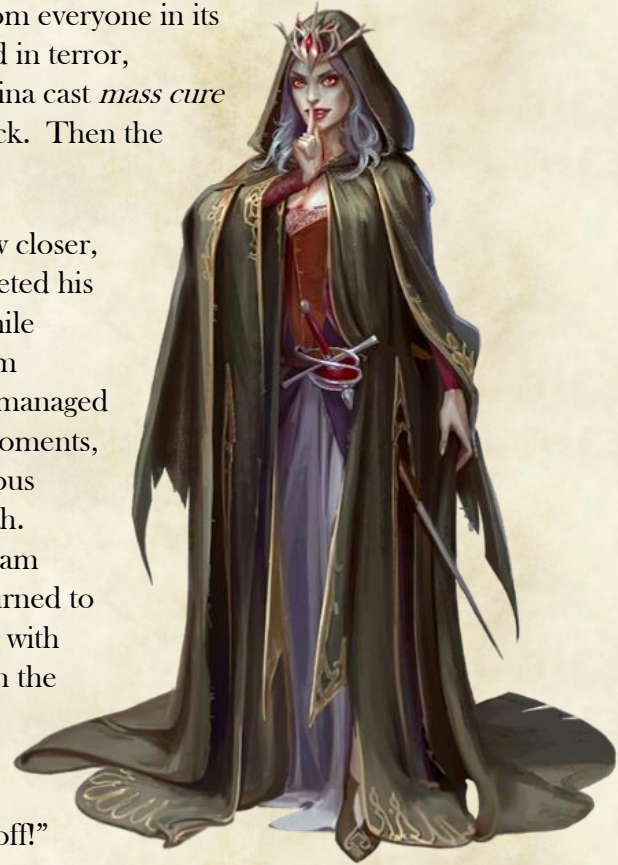
⁶ "The Gnawbones" artwork by Jacob Johnston and used with his permission.

It unleashed a wave of necrotic energy, sapping life from everyone in its wake. One of the Gnawbones (Zuri Kimyak) fled in terror, however the rest of the allies rallied. First, Argina cast *mass cure wounds*, reversing most of the boneclaw's attack. Then the rest of the party drew towards the dread pair.

Cruelhex moved to engage those who drew closer, hoping to stall them while Mortus completed his spell. She engaged Yumia and Mirri while William hurled a fireball and Jeremium confronted the boneclaw. Cruelhex managed to keep them occupied for a few moments, but she was overwhelmed by a furious Yumia who blasted her into undeath. Then a second fireball from William finally disrupted his ritual. He turned to face his assailants only to be met with Mirri's flaming spear dart right in the chest. It dug deep into his heart and the last thing he heard before he slipped into death's embrace was William shouting "the deal's off!"

Boneclaw

embrace was William shouting "the deal's off!"



Viantha Cruelhex



Claugiyliamatar

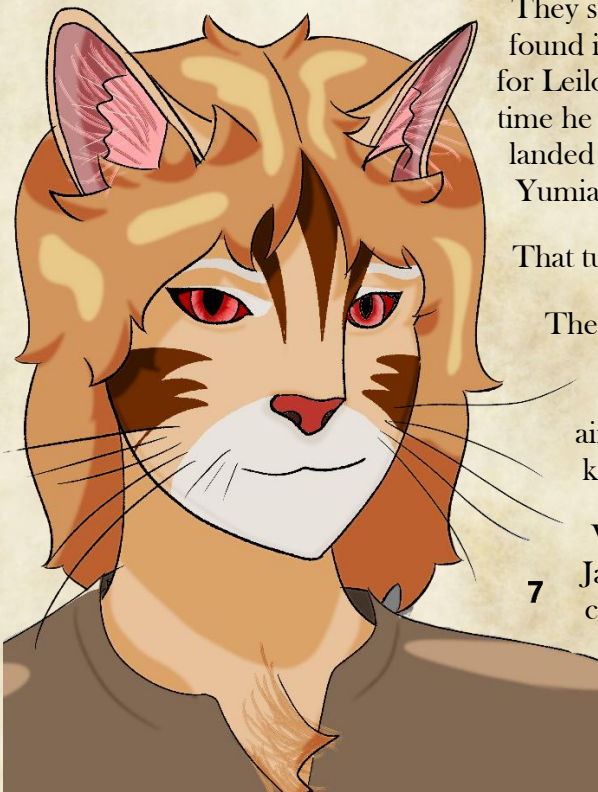
The fight lasted no more than half a minute, but the consequences were profound; Ularan Mortus and his right-hand woman lay dead at their feet. The remaining Gnawbones began to weep and wail over their slain lord while the party did what you would expect adventurers to do in this circumstance - loot the bodies. They found on Viantha Cruelhex a Rapier of Wounding and a Cloak of Protection. On Mortus they found a Spell-Store Ring, Winged Boots, and a powerful artifact, the Bloodstone of Fistandantilus.

Bloodstone of Fistandantilus

(Wonderous item, legendary, requires attunement by a smear of your blood upon the gem)

The Bloodstone of Fistandantilus was a magical pendant wrought by the wizard Fistandantilus. It is a round bloodstone gem, three inches in diameter. If the wielder holds the gem against the chest of another, he can steal their years at a 10 to 1 ratio per round. (i.e it will age the victim by 10 years for every year it reverses the age of the wielder). The victim must not be able to physically resist for this act to function.

While attuned to this pendant, you stabilize whenever you are dying at the start of your turn. In addition, whenever you roll a hit die to regain hit points, double the number of hit points it restores.



They surreptitiously returned the crystal ball of telepathy where they found it, made a few awkward condolences to the Gnawbones, and parted for Leilon. As soon as they arrived, Yumia again called for Eikolos. This time he appeared but decided to take a hostage to protect himself, so he landed on the shoulder of an odd-looking nearby tabaxi and declared Yumia couldn't kill him without hurting his "hostage."

That turned out to be a mistake.

The tabaxi (named Jade) grabbed Eikolos with one hand and set off a radiant bomb with another, severely hurting Eikolos and causing him to drop his invisibility. Then Yumia killed him with a well-aimed *eldritch blast*. The crowd clapped and cheered (they hated knowing the little creep could be watching them at any time).

7 William healed Jade's wounds and the party introduced themselves. Jade was a tabaxi alchemist who was looking for adventure and the chance to blow stuff up. The party said Jade would have plenty of chances to do that, and so Jade joined the party!

They decided their best plan was to go to Neverwinter and follow the tracks of seared hoofprints in the border ethereal plane. The idea being they would cast *see invisibility* at regular intervals and double back once the hoofprints were gone. That's what they did.... all the way back from Leilon! They did find the remains of a campsite in the ethereal plane just North of Leilon. Furthermore, the tracks continued South on the high road around the Meer of Dead Men.

⁷ Art by Cameron Roblin, who plays Mirri in this campaign.

Rather than following the tracks further south, they decided to return to Claugiyliamatar's lair as they really wanted to use that crystal ball. When they arrived, the Gnawbones had somewhat recovered. They asked if they could use the Crystal Ball of Telepathy for a time, until the current situation was dealt with. Delis agreed provided they return it forthwith. She also revealed Claugiyliamatar had an interest in powerful women (hence the statues) and used the crystal ball to creep on them.

First Mirri tried to scry Nemias and Nethipone, getting a blank each time. Then he tried Eikolos, and it worked. He saw Eikolos in an attic somewhere in Leilon recording his notes in a search plan of the town (presumably for the Exaction). Then Mirri tried a random soldier whose dagger they had taken. That also worked! Mirri scryed the orc training against a dummy. He was in a large encampment (estimated to be roughly 2000 orcs plus various devils). Furthermore, they spotted Maladikta. She was doing pullups and counting in that strange language. Mirri could just barely see the coast in one direction and looking in the opposite direction was a completely blacked-out cube. The party reasoned the cube didn't really exist; it was some kind of anti-scrying magic.

It was running late in the day, so the party decided to pitch camp. Mirri decided this was his chance to contact his father once more, so he attuned to the crystal ball. He attempted to scry his father Ciro, an elemental lord and succeeded. Ciro was holding court somewhere deep underground listening to a dull dispute between fire elementals about mining rights. Mirri contacted him and said "Hello, Ciro. This is Mirri. I am willing to speak in person. I am somewhere along the Sword Coast; you can come find me if you like. Otherwise, you cannot come hunt me again." Ciro responded saying he if Mirri wanted to know him as a father, he intended to challenge Mirri's might again. Mirri said to bring it on.

Next Mirri passed on the crystal ball to Jeremium and Jeremium used it to contact his superior, War Captain Haelimbrar. He filled in Captain Haelimbrar with the details since he wrote the letter. Finally, Jeremium passed it on to William who attempted to scry Arden. William met with a very familiar wall anti-scrying wall....

The next morning the party went due West and rejoined the High Road. The tracks were still there headed South, so they followed them. Finally, they diverged from the High Road headed West. They stopped for the night in the small sleepy town of Thornhold.



Ciro, elemental lord

Session 14 - May 3rd, 2024

The next day they left their mounts in Thornhold and continued West toward the Coast. They didn't see any sign of a large encampment and reached the Sword Coast. All they could see was a small house and a dock several hundred feet away. Jeremium cast *see invisibility* only to see the tracks disappear as they headed to the house & dock, though they were able to find the wisps of tracks from a booted foot and a tiny hoof, indicating Maladikta and Nethipone had been here about a week prior.

Jade decided to just walk straight into the house. It was unlocked and a woman was inside chopping vegetables. She shrank back in fear and brandished her knife. Jade decided to retreat, and they heard the chunk of a stout-bar. Jeremium decided to try a more polite approach, he knocked on the door. She cracked open the door (with a door chain) and asked him what he wanted. He apologized for his companion and asked if she had seen two people with Maladikta and Nethipone's description. She (Hannah) confirmed she did as her husband had ferried them both a week ago to Crecent Island of the Red Rocks (an archipelago just off the Sword Coast and visible from their current location). The party decided to hire her husband (Harrald) to do the same for them. He agreed to do so but not until nightfall.

Since they had some time to kill, they decided to try scrying again. Jeremium managed to scry one of the orcs and made a general study of the camp. He noted several imps throwing off their invisibility as they landed, indicating they were patrolling. He also saw Nemia at the far end of the camp. Nemia was speaking to a distinguished looking tiefling with great wings and glowing red eyes. He tried to scry her directly and succeeded. They were discussing the Exaction, of course. Nemia concluded the party had failed to find the runestone, so they had to take Leilon entirely and raze it to the ground, if necessary, to find the artifact. Then the gentleman tiefling noticed the (invisible) scrying sensor. He drew Nemia's attention to it. She preened to the sensor, said she hoped it was Yumia, then destroyed it with an *eldritch blast*.



Just after sunset Harrald dropped them off at the Northwestern tip of Crecent Island. They were immediately confronted by a dense forest. Jade and Mirri took to the treetops, and they saw a castle in the distance, so they decided to go there. Jeremium cast *see invisibility* to look out for imps and indeed, they soon ran into one. Jeremium hit it with a crossbow bolt and Yumia finished it off with an *eldritch blast*.

Continuing, they arrived at the castle. It was old and crumbling and there were 2 infernal orc sentries on top of opposite parapets. They took one out quietly and Jade & Mirri slipped into the castle. Meanwhile the rest of the party went around to the other side. There was a path leading down to the now familiar camp - and Nemia & the noble looking tiefling were walking up the path, flanked by 4 infernal orcs and a grinning imp on Nemia's shoulder (indicating that imp found the party).

Yumia strode out to meet with a delighted Nemia. Nemia briskly ordered Maladikta to bring Nethipone before turning her full attention on Yumia. The dark paladin emerged from the mists on her Nightmare, dismounted, and walked past Yumia to do as she was ordered. Then Jeremium stepped out of the forest to challenge her.

"You," Jeremium coldly stated, "a paladin who works with fiends, a paladin who betrays thy holy light... I seem to recall your desire for a duel, a rematch, a test of your mettle."

Jeremium pulled out and extended his sunblade beside him.

"Betrayal," Maladikta echoed.

"I have broken no vows, all my adult life have I fought to hold back the chaos!"

She drew her blade.

"I have sworn myself to the Nine Hells and was knighted by General Furcas himself - few mortals can claim that honour!"

She dropped into her fighting stance.

"And yes, I desire a rematch!"



Meanwhile Jade and Mirri found themselves in Nemia's bedroom. It was clean and sparse, with only a few books on a shelf and a silver makeup kit with an engraving of a succubus preening in front of a mirror (all of which Jade swiped). They crept into a hallway and barely heard noise from a door before walking through it. Jade stealthily cracked the door open and saw 6 orcs hurriedly strapping on their armour. They threw a bomb inside. They heard their cries as the bomb exploded, then from the door on the other side of the room Mirri heard a familiar man's voice (Arden) yell "WHOA" and a little girl's voice (Nethipone) shriek "EEK!"

Online - May 5th & 6th, 2024

After splitting up with the party, Arden decided he had to figure out what William had done for him and make it right, to relieve the burden William had assumed for him. Arden didn't really have much to go on, so he tried exhaustively searching all the religions and cults in Northwestern Faerûn until he finally found a lead it was Myrkul who had bargained with William. He then searched for the leader of that dark faith. He was hot on the heels of the cult of Myrkul and managed to track down Viantha Cruelhex just a few days before the death of Claugyliamatar.

Arden demanded Cruelhex release William's soul or bring him to someone who could. She refused and they fought. Arden originally tried to take her alive as she was his best lead, but she was strong enough that he had to kill her or else he would die. Indeed, even fighting with lethal force, he barely won and was badly wounded, easy prey for Nemia and an entourage of infernal orcs, leaving the corpse of Cruelhex behind. Mortus soon found her body and raised her as a unique form of undead before they left to kill Claugyliamatar in the Meer of Dead Men.

In the fortress of Crescent Island, Arden was thrown into a cell with Nethipone. Arden quickly figured out who she was (he only knew her as an infant) and did his best to comfort her over the next few days. He wasn't the only one, Maladikta had wordlessly given her sweets twice in the 10 days or so of her captivity.



Arden Theotter

Session 15 - May 17th, 2024



Jade's bomb exploded and all 6 infernal orcs were badly hurt. Mirri rushed in and struck hard at the orcs while they were staggered, killing one. Yumia rushed Nemia and attacked. Despite Nemia having cast *foresight*, Yumia managed to get a good hit in. Both then Nemia responded with an *eldritch blast*... which sent Yumia to Hell! The eighth level of hell - the frozen wastes of Cania and the domain of Mephistopheles. Yumia was only there for a few moments, but it gave her such a shock that she collapsed from the fright of it upon returning.

Jeremium and Maladikta began their duel. Maladikta struck first, ineffectively. Jeremium

parried her slashes and then went on the offense. He struck back twice and smote her. She staggered but recovered, thrusting, and slashing at him. She hit him powerfully with a mighty smite and downed him.

Meanwhile the mysterious noble revealed himself. He grew and transformed into a giant creature resembling a pit fiend, but larger and far greater. Hutijin then grappled Klumbar with but a single hand, laughing off the slashes Klumbar laid upon his arm as those wounds began to regenerate quickly.

William then used his wand to cast *magic missile* hitting Nemia solidly in the chest with 10 missiles. He then moved to Jeremium and used *dimension door* to teleport them both back to Mirri & Jade.

Jade and Mirri finished off the staggered infernal orcs and unlocked the door to the makeshift prison cell. They found Arden there, Nethipone clutching his leg tightly. The 5-year-old was fearful Eikolos was still around, so Mirri comforted her while Arden found his equipment in Nemia's room. While this was happening, Jade climbed up to the top of the castle.

Meanwhile Yumia was fighting for her life when Nemia unexpectedly forced a healing potion down her throat. She had her guards accost Yumia and took her equipment. Yumia pretended to submit - then summoned her glaive and attacked the guards, elegantly rolling out of their grasp. Nemia then put her down again with a strong casting of *synaptic static*. Then Jade threw a bomb which hit Nemia, Hutijin, and the orcs. This immediately drew Hutijin's attention. He dropped Klumbar, teleported to the top of the castle, and struck Jade twice with his mace, launching them off the castle top and left them fighting for their life when they hit the ground. Finally, the freed Klumbar rushed over and healed Yumia, bringing her back from death for the second time.



**Hutijin,
right hand of Mephistopheles**

Session 16 - June 2nd, 2024

Yumia burst to her feet, ran past Nemia, while attempting a last-ditch effort to snatch her bag of holding from Nemia's hands. She failed due to Nemia's active *foresight* but she did draw Nemia's attention to the bag of holding. She peered in and shrieked "THE EXACTION!!!" At once Hutijin's & Maladikta's heads snapped towards her. The former sailed down to Nemia to protect her from any threat while Maladikta turned to join her mistress as well - until she took a bad wound to her neck from an expertly thrown dagger from Arden who had been hiding in the shadows. Arden then used *wails from the grave* to draw out the last bit of life from one of Maladikta's already wounded orc soldiers.

Jeremium, *hasted* by William then attacked Maladikta. A flurry of swipes, slashes, and smites ensued and this time Jeremium proved the victor. Maladikta collapsed to her knees, gravely wounded and spitting up blood. She managed to blurt out that she yielded. Jeremium felt honour-bound to accept her surrender and so permitted her to withdraw. He zipped past her and spoke to Nemia "I will be expecting a rematch on the morrow." She brightly responded that they should come to the camp in the morrow ready for a fight, "one that they would win, mystifying Jeremium. She asked him to pass on to William to bring her kimono. His confusion deepened when Klumbar jumped off a parapet and struck down the second of Maladikta's orcs with a mighty smite. Rather than responding with blood, Nemia congratulated and thanked Klumbar for his kill.

The party retreated to the castle to rest, bind their wounds and recover. Nothing bothered them for the rest of the night. About half an hour later they heard the raucous sounds of a rally. Nemia was shouting (amplified by *thaumaturgy*) about their great victory and the disciplined orcs were treated to a night of party and drink. Then an hour or so later, all the sounds of revelry abruptly stopped.

The next morning William went off to pass Nethipone off to Harrald, then they all approached the camp. They were met with an eerie silence. There were no guards on the walls and the gate was slightly ajar. Jade decided to climb up to the top of the gate and what they saw horrified them – a camp full of dead orcs. There were bodies scattered everywhere lying in pools of blood and vomit. The party heard some sounds of violence on the other side of the large central tent.

They rounded the corner to see Nemia gleefully finish off a retching orc with an *eldritch blast*. Hutijian casually strolled amongst the bodies; “what a magnificent harvest” he proclaimed. Maladikta stood next to him, a grim look on her face as she looked over the bodies of the orcs she had served with. When Maladikta and Hutijian noticed the party, they didn’t ready for combat. Maladikta crossed her arms over her chest while the great arch-devil leaned casually on his enormous mace.

Nemia turned to the party and greeted them heartily. She told them they would soon fight but before she had to uphold her side of the bargain. “Yumia, the Exaction is now in my Lord’s hands and so your contract with him is fulfilled and your soul is no longer forfeit. And you, William, I claimed I could free your soul with but a few words and so I shall! You sold your soul to Myrkul, did you not? What if upon your death you were to refuse him? Does he bear a Ruby Rod? Has he signed the Pact Primeval? Does the structure of the multiverse enforce the binding of your soul, like it did for Yumia? NO! All that does so is your belief that you are so bound, and thus, now you no longer are, and my debt to you is paid. You may examine this tomb as it served me well over the years. A fine addition to that little library of yours” she said handing over the Codex of the Nine Hells.



Codex of the Nine Hells

Nemia then backed up 30 feet and dropped all her equipment to the ground except her dagger and staff. Nemia exclaimed that she would “leave this world the same way she entered it” and removed her dress to reveal she was wearing nothing underneath. She then drew in a deep breath and let out a final cackle - the fight was on!

Nemia acted first and lobbed a fireball right to the party, causing some moderate burns. They quickly recovered and surrounded her, hack, slashing, piercing, smiting, bashing the diminutive tiefling. Badly wounded Nemia turned to face Yumia and she spread her arms wide and dropped her weapons. She said “Yumia, it has to be you!” Yumia obliged and chopped her glaive deep into Nemia’s body between her shoulder and neck. Nemia staggered but then pushed the blade even deeper, sawing herself so she could get close to Yumia, grabbed the astonished younger tiefling by both sides of her head, and kissed her deeply on the lips. Nemia then threw up a mouthful of blood onto Yumia’s face, she shuddered deeply, and collapsed in Yumia’s arms. Nemia was dead and the fight was over.

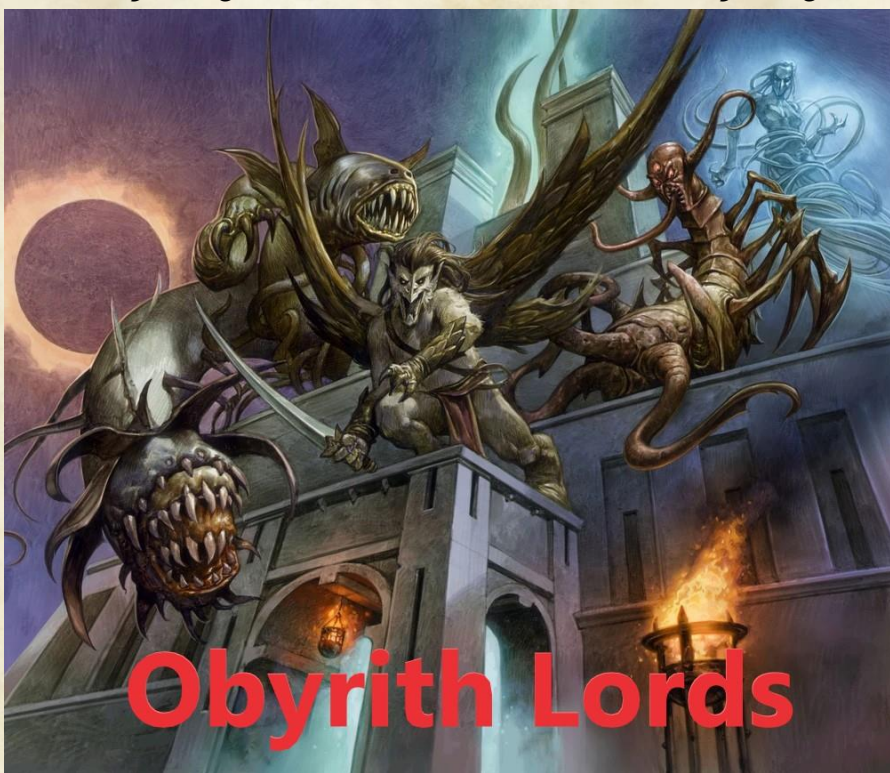
Hutijian approached Nemia’s body as the party warily backed away. “She was impressive, something I rarely say about mortals” he said, speaking in common for the first time. He removed her ring and took her staff. “You don’t understand, do you? She will not suffer the torments of the chain devils; they will treat her soul shell with respect and deference as the high mark of Mephistopheles is imprinted upon her soul. She will not be a pathetic and quivering lemur, not long at any rate. No, she will serve my Lord as she was in life, her memories intact. Few mortals can claim such an honour!” Hutijian gestured to Nemia’s equipment, “you may keep the rest”.

Codex of the Nine Hells

(An excerpt near the beginning)

No mortal knows how the multiverse came to be but in the Age before Ages, the Gods arose from the astral plane while the primordialism arose from the elemental planes. The Prime Material Planes were at the intersection and so they fought over them. Over eons the Gods slowly won and pushed the primordials back to the elemental planes in a conflict that would later be named the Dawn War. The Gods then wished to populate the Prime Material Planes it with their mortal children.

Meanwhile in another reality, another multiverse, a race of eldritch horrors known as obyriths had long ago conquered their realm and drained it of all hope, vitality, and anything other than themselves. They sought another realm to spread their



utter vileness. They couldn't cross into the planes directly, but they were able to distill their nature into a single Shard of Pure Evil which pierced the boundaries of the realms. Then they waited for eons more.

Eventually the god Tharizdun happened upon the Shard and was instantly corrupted by it. The obyriths wanted him to place it into the astral plane so that they could corrupt the Gods and allow the obyriths to cross over and conquer the multiverse. But Tharizdun

didn't do that. Instead, the Mad God plunged it into the elemental chaos of Limbo, creating a new realm of chaos and evil that would later be known as the Abyss. The Gods were sparred but this act did allow the obyriths to cross over between the multiverses into the Abyss.

The shard created the first layer of the Abyss known as Pazunia, then continued to create layers as it burrowed deeper. Those layers then spawned tannar'ri demons. The obyriths, led by the Queen of Chaos, enslaved the tannar'ri. The Queen of Chaos took the strongest of the tannar'ri, Miska the Wolf Spider, as her consort and launched a war of conquest against the planes.

The Gods were called to war again, but they didn't wish to fight another ageless war, they had just created mortals and seeded the Prime Material Planes with the first of their subjects. They wished to be creators, not warriors, so they created

untold millions of servants (celestials) to fight the Abyss for them; so fight the celestials did. And at the head of all the armies of the heavens was the celestial known as Asmodeus. He led them from a newly created celestial realm known as Baator.

And so the celestials and the obyriths fought. The celestial army was much smaller, but their ordered hierarchy was far more effective than the mob armies of the obyriths. Still, the Shard of Pure Evil slowly but surely created layers which produced more demons. At some point the obyriths would be able to overwhelm the armies of heaven and the rest of the planes as well. Something had to be done so allies of the Celestial Army, The Wind Dukes of Aaqa, crafted a great artifact called the Rod of Law.

The Rod of Law was given to the greatest combatant in the Celestial Army, a mortal recruit whose name is lost to history who took up the Rod of Law and smote Miska the Wolf Spider, banishing him to imprisonment in Pandemonium. He then braved the Abyss to the very depths and struck the Shard of Pure Evil as it burrowed ever deeper. The resulting blast destroyed the Shard, killed the nameless mortal, blew apart the Rod of Law into seven pieces and scattered them across the multiverse.

The victory of the Abyss was now in serious doubt and so the tannar'ri revolted against their obyrith masters. Only a few of the strongest obyriths survived and the Queen of Chaos retreated to her realm, the Steaming Fen (the 14th level of the Abyss) and has not been seen since. The Abyss fell into civil war.

For a time, the demons only fought amongst themselves but eventually the war against the celestials continued... and continued. Millenia went by while the two sides fought. As the mortals began to emerge into their first primitive societies, those celestials who fought endlessly slowly began to change. They certainly did not embrace chaos, (never that!) rather they took on the same darkness of their demonic enemies. This transformation increasingly set them at odds against the Gods and so a new moral axis emerged, the multiverse was no longer split just between order and chaos, but also good and evil.

Furthermore, another problem began to emerge; the mortals created by the Gods often didn't do what they were told. They often fell into wickedness and fighting, this being inevitable since they were granted free will. The god wanted them to have the ability to choose, but to always chose to do good.

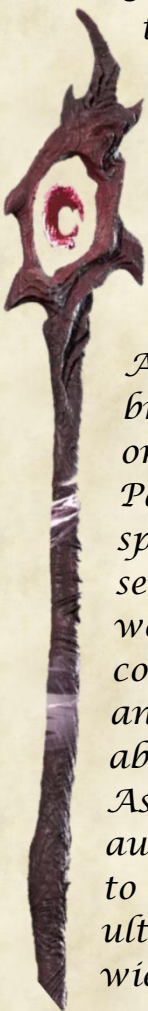


The Rod of Law, later to be known as The Rod of Seven Parts

Eventually the Gods barred their celestial soldiers from entering the upper planes as they had almost entirely become infernal as we know them today. The Gods refused to create more of them, nor did they provide them with the divine energy needed to promote soldiers into higher forms. This of course meant the war would eventually be won by the demons since they could replenish their numbers and their enemies could not.

Soon Asmodeus approached the Gods and proposed a solution to their mutual problems. Those mortals who by their own free will chose to consign themselves to darkness and order would be sent to the infernal realm of Baator where the spark of the divine within each one of them would be wrung from them and then they would be sent to fight the demons as new infernals. Such a grim fate would serve as a deterrent to still-alive mortals to not choose ordered evil.

The Gods and Asmodeus signed an agreement called the Pact Primeval. Three copies were made, each entombed in a massive ruby, and one each sent to Mount Celestia, Mechanus, and Baator. This appeared to work for a time- but then the Gods noticed it wasn't just the lawful evil souls that went to Baator, some of them arrived there not because of their nature, but because they had signed their souls away in infernal contracts in exchange for various things (power, wealth, magical abilities). Outraged, the Gods went to Baator to seize Asmodeus and punish him for what he had done. When they arrived, they were aghast at what they saw. They had created Baator to be a second paradise, but it was a hellish landscape full of unbelievable suffering.



Asmodeus was taken to Mechanus and put on trial. He was charged with breaking the terms of the Pact Primaeval by taking the souls of those not of ordered evil. The Gods said Asmodeus had perverted the intent of their Pact. He defended himself by pointing out the terms of the Pact Primaeval specified those chose to consign themselves to darkness and order would be sent to the Nine Hells of Baator. Such wording encompasses both those who were naturally lawful evil but also those who were not but had signed a contract of their own free will. Primus listened dispassionately to both sides and ruled in Asmodeus' favour - mostly. Primus noted Asmodeus was correct about the word of the law however nowhere in the Pact Primeavel was Asmodeus noted by name as the supreme ruler of the Nine Hells and the authority of infernal contracts. So Primus ordered the creation of a Ruby Rod to be bestowed upon the ruler of the Nine Hells of Baator and grant the ultimate authority to bind mortal souls under contract - to whomever the wielder might be.

(An excerpt from around halfway through)
When those whose souls are of either ordered evil (the majority) or those who have sold their souls in an infernal contract die, they appear some days later in Avernus (the first layer) upon the shores of the river Styx as soul shells, horrid looking versions of themselves as they died with any wounds and missing limbs they had in life, however they were rubbery in appearance and their eyes pupilless.

Devils gathered up the soul shells and brought them by barges to processing centres. If a soul shell had signed an infernal contract, then that contract was imprinted on their soul. Any intelligent devil would know at a glance the details of their contract, particularly which devil was responsible for their damnation and to which archduke that devil ultimately owes allegiance. If that was to an archduke other than Zariel, then they were transported to that archduke's layer.



Soul shells arriving on the shores of the Styx

Once they had reached their destination, the soul shells were tortured horrifically by chain devils to extract the divine energy within them to promote devils into higher forms. Once all had been extracted and the soul shell's personality and memories had been completely destroyed, the insensate shell was thrown into a pit of carnivorous maggots. The shell was then consumed and excreted. That excrement then slowly recongealed into blobs of molten flesh called lemures,



Chain devil

the weakest type of devil.



Lemure

Session 17 - June 14th, 2024

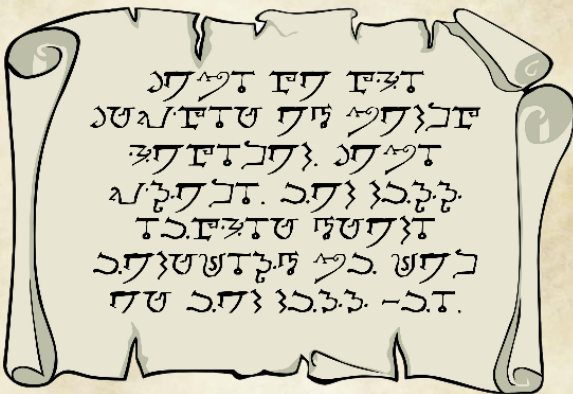
Hutjian then turned to leave. After a final nod from Maladikta to Jeremium, she also joined him. The party wasn't sure what to think. Nemia and her entire army lay dead at their feet, yet they didn't feel this to be a victory like they did with Cryovain. Still, they had rescued Nethipone, so they decided to return to Neverwinter to report what they had done and collect their reward. Harrald picked them up and brought them to the mainland and from there they made their way to Leilon.

They entered Leilon just as the sun was about to set and who did they see but Eikolos. At once Nethipone started to panic and Yumia had to clasp her tight to prevent her from falling off. Eikolos grinned and said, "I love children, they traumatize so easily!" It was all they could do not to kill him right then, but they stayed their hands. Eikolos proposed a final deal, they tell him where the Exaction was all this time, and he would tell them what was going on with Nemia's necklace. The party had looted Nemia's corpse and taken her necklace. They noticed the skulls would occasionally move on their own, so they were curious about it and agreed. Eikolos told them a "wonderful" experience he had early in his familiarship. Nemia had killed a young halfling couple with newborn triplets. Rather than just torturing the infants, she trapped their souls in their own skulls and fashioned a necklace out of them. "Now their souls wail for their mother in a void" cackled Eikolos. This was too much for Jeremium who promptly slew Eikolos, an act the latter welcomed as he needed to go back to the Hells.



Nemia's skull necklace

Later that night Jeremium conferred with War Captain Haelimbrar via crystal ball. Haelimbrar was disappointed they had not retrieved the Exaction but he noted they were against powerful enemies and neither the Eighth Order nor Mortus' forces had overrun Leilon. Furthermore, the Exaction was at least gone from Faerûn. Haelimbrar bade Jeremium to do what he thought best if he judged anything further need be done.



The next morning they set off for Neverwinter. Nethipone soon became bored, so they played eye spy for an interminable amount of time. The party arrived in Neverwinter and went straight to the Spitted Pig to reunite Nethipone with her mother. While doing that, Klumbar spoke with Egra and caught her up on the events. She asked Klumbar what he would be doing now and he wasn't sure. Egra also gave a letter to Mirri written in primordial: Come to the Crater of Mount Hotenow. Come alone. You will either prove yourself my son or you will die."

And so the next morning Mirri did come, though not alone. He had backup hidden some distance away. Mirri waited for a bit and then Ciro emerged from the lava. They spoke briefly and then they fought. Mirri wanted to go home without fear of attack, Ciro wanted to force Mirri to choose between "fey and flame" and to choose his fire elemental origin, at that. Ciro was obviously the stronger and goaded Mirri to just not allow the flames to hurt him, however Mirri refused to follow the path his father laid out for him and held his conviction until Ciro struck him down and left him barely alive and smouldering before returning to the lava lake of the volcano in disgust. Mirri's friends then helped revive him and return him to Neverwinter.

Finally the party went to see Lord Neverember to collect their reward, a home anywhere in the Lord's Alliance. Klumbar and Jeremium chose to forgo the reward, William chose the House of Thalivar in Leilon to convert into a library, Jade and Yumia asked and received ownership of their current abodes, which they were currently living in and Mirri asked (and was granted) for more time to decide. And with that, the current adventure ended and a new one beckoned.

Epilogue - June 14th, 2024

In the throne room of the Palace of Mephistar, the capital of Cania, the Eighth of the Nine Hells, sat a wickedly satisfied Mephistopheles. Over two thousand souls had been delivered to his ranks, a noteworthy amount though not enough to

capture his attention. No what interested him was the artifact he held in his left hand; the Exaction of the Nine Hells, and the one who had acquired it; her staff in his right.

The doors of the throne room swung open and his servant Hutijin, who had served him loyally since they served as celestials in the Dawn War, walked in. Behind him was a litter reverently bourn by four chain devils. It was a curious sight as atop that litter was a lemure, the lowest form of devil. Unlike any other lemure, however, this one's eyes were not stupefied by torment, nor glazed over from stupidity. No, this lemure's eyes gleamed with intelligence and

An erinyes returning from the front lines of the Blood War

malevolence. The chain devils carefully set down their charge, bowed, and backed up to leave. Mephistopheles paid them no heed. He languidly approached the lemure and spoke a single word - "exurgo"!

The lemure's body undulated and expanded for several moments before it burst. Sloughing off the flesh of its previous lesser form was a female body kneeling in a ball, covered by her wings. She no longer had lizard feet or a tail, her eyes now pupilless and glowing red; she was over a foot taller and appeared half the age than she was as a mortal. As soon as she could force her limbs, quivering with afterbirth, Nemias stood to obey. Mephistopheles said nothing, he simply handed her her staff. The newly born erinyes took her staff, flashed her unmistakable wicked smile, and spread her wings wide....



Mephistopheles, Lord of the Eighth



Nemias reborn as an erinyes

To be continued.....

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