

Five out of six of the prime Sorcerers of the Green School vanished overnight along with a large fraction of the magical ingredients of the Tower. Shamus, Alorn Varithis, Nathdranor Anduguin, Moragor Massoon and Tauron vanished, leaving behind only Aradel of the prime circle to keep the school functioning and handle any day to day matters that might come up.

We were sent off to investigate case of the missing Sorcerers, to determine what they were up to, and to offer aid if necessary, or take other appropriate actions if necessary. The group consisted of Zilvan Taranthson, Magellen al-Rashide Mohammed (nominated leader), Kell, Gillrehyan, Jharkor, Ezekiel Mourntark, Sven, son of Olaf and Quentin of the Rangers (a Half-Orc who was to join us later in the Quest).

### **Day One (Journal Day Six)**

We travelled to Dragur Forest, there the forest was alive with many magical creatures, we found the way station that evening. Members of the Green School occupied it. Under siege by Khalid from the Stone Panther Legion. After dispatching the Khalid we gained entry into the building, there we met with Ira and Iris (Green wizards) and Sirius (a Ranger, their guard). Ira was in contact with the Sorcerers and passed on word that we were looking for them. He received a reply that someone would come to deal with us in the morning. We retired for the night, safe behind the Wards erected by the Ira.

### **Day Two (Journal Day Seven)**

In the morning Alorn Virithis, assistant guild leader to the Green School, the very person we had been looking for arrived! He questioned us as to what we were doing, again as we had no reason to dissemble we told him everything. Alorn was very pleased that we were here and he asked us to help him. He told us that the Green School was engaged in casting a spell of such delicacy and power that it required many of the sorcerers the prime circle and much of the magical ingredients. They were casting a spell on all the waters of Orin Rakatha, a grand identify if you like, in order to discover the source of all these problems assailing Orin Rakatha. Rainbow Lake is at the centre of Orin Rakatha and all the rivers flow into it, so performing the ritual at six sites around the Rainbow Lake should allow them to affect every part of Orin Rakatha. Something or someone was interfering with the ritual that the Green School was engaged in casting - from what Alorn was able to deduce it was unintentional interference rather than a deliberate attempt to thwart the ritual. We were tasked by Alorn with finding and sorting out the interference with the grand ritual.

We spent most of the day wandering the woods in the area Alorn had indicated was the source of the problem, meeting ShadowsFall, Druids, Wizards Concillium, Halmadonians and forest creatures - much activity in this area. At one point a woman with a valley symbol on her fled past us, closely pursued by several people, we saved her from these miscreants. She introduced herself, Stella formerly a member of the Red School of Magic of the White Retreat Tower, now a member of the Tower of the Four Winds. She was travelling with several others

who were also formerly from the White Retreat and requested our aid, which we agreed to give. The others of her group, Red and Blue wizards were being hard pressed by the water worshipers in this area. She led us to the place where the wizards were, on the way we fought with many of these water worshipers. In the end we slew the leaders of these water worshipers at the place of their power, a babbling brook as it emerged from the ground. Stella then turned around at this point and told us of how she had been deceiving us! She had been instructed to deal with the problems in this area by Sir Gilreyn Hardwick himself. To kill these water worshipers, because they were in the way of some things that were going on with the Red wizards from the Tower of the Four Winds, although she did not explain in detail just what it was. She paid us off for our troubles and assistance that we had given and left.

Returning to the building, we were greeted by Ira, who enthusiastically welcomed us back being overjoyed that we had dealt with the interference. It seemed that these water worshipers and in particular the leaders had, simply by their presence been causing the problems with the ritual. Slaying the leaders at baptismal brook had solved the problem and the Green sorcerers of the prime circle were now going ahead with the spell.

Later that evening in the building we met with the Druid Balor Evensong, who was investigating the strange goings on in the area. We directed him to the place of power of the water worshipers where he was going to commune with nature, to find out what the problem was. Later we fought a might forest creature that summoned Treants.

### **Day Three (Journal Day Eight)**

We were set to guarding the building for this was the focus of the spell and the place where Alorn would be casting the spell. Several groups attacked us during the day, but the most troubling attack was by the Tower of the Four Winds, who we discovered have declared war on the Halmadonians and their allies. Jharkor was slain in this fight.

Alorn arrived as evening drew in and cast the spell. As Alorn concluded the spell a figure of most forbidding aspect appeared at the door. "You have summoned, I have come, I am Sab're the Shark God." Alorn then proceeded to question the Shark God, whom had come in response to the summons of the spell. To summarise the information; We needed to go to The Twisted Black as Midnight Hags of the magic forest (Whoresod Forest) who were the only people who could tell us how to put things aright. At the completion of the questioning Alorn dismissed Sab're.

As Sab're left the building stepping out of the door, between one step and the next he turned from the Shark God into the creature that summoned the entlings last night. But this creature was not alone, being accompanied by several entlings, these we dispatched. As we were recovering Balor the Druid returned, accompanied by Tolic, High Priest of the Pulse sect of the Khalid EarthWarp. He confirmed that the creature was the Green Man, and asked us to help move him out of this area. He wanted us to attack the Shark Cult forces in this area, distracting them which would let him slip the Green Man away, we agreed to do this in the end. By killing and causing a lot of confusion in the Shark Cult forces in the area we disrupted them enough that Balor was able to succeed in slipping the Green Man away.

On returning we met Alorn Varithis, Moragor Massoon and Ira inside the house. We volunteered to investigate the information recovered so far as best we could. If we could get to Whoresod Forest we would go and seek council with the Twisted Black as Midnight Hags. We discovered

then that we were in Reader's Hut and had been all along. Using this we were to be sent us to Whoresod Forest for the morning. Alorn and Moragar were intending to continue their investigations into what was going on - for they had discovered that there were nine focus' of power on Orin Rakatha and organise a Cabal meeting as a part of this.

A little while later a Celestial Bureaucracy party arrived. An Astronomer was apparently leading the party. He tried to dissuade us from interfering in the course of the Grand Conjunction. He told us that the effect of our actions would only cause more problems not less, that nothing could avert the coming destruction of Orin Rakatha. We were resolute though, if something might be about to destroy Orin Rakatha then we were certainly going to interfere with it. At that point the real leader revealed himself and declared that a state of Hostilities now existed between the Celestial Bureaucracy and the Valley Alliance. A declaration of war! They then left to go and inform their tower of this and to let us do the same.

### Day Four (Journal Day Nine)

We arrived in Whoresod Forest, where the locals believe that anyone who casts any sphere other than Neutral is a witch, similarly anyone who casts any magic other than yellow is also a witch. They have witch finders and believe that witches should be burnt alive at the stake! We spent much of our time on this plane trying to not give away the fact that we were witches (as far as the normal inhabitants were concerned). We spent several hours in a tavern finding out information as to the location of the Black as Midnight Hags. There we narrowly avoided being fingered as witches by Richard Du Flaum, the King's Witchfinder. Fearing he may return and discover us we left the tavern and continued on our way. In the darkness of the night we met some locals who were rebels (witches) they directed us to the area of the forest where we could find the Hags.

Our conversation with the Hags was most revealing, and explained what we needed to do. The splinter plane created five years ago by the Ariakis group when they served the Chaos Jester was what was interfering with the normal course of the Grand Conjunction. The effect of the splinter plane was causing the great disturbances and problems on Orin Rakatha. There were nine foci of power on Orin Rakatha, coming from the splinter plane. This splinter plane was anchored in place over Orin Rakatha through anchors to the 8 original planes involved in the Jesters game. We had to sever the anchors on each of these planes then the Splinter plane could move away and thus save Orin Rakatha. What we had been told was staggering indeed! Having had a long and wearying day we retired to Reader's Hut, knowing that we would be arriving in Orin Rakatha in the morning were we hoped to take council with the Green School.

### Day Five (Journal Day Ten)

Alorn Virithis and Moragar Massoon joined us in the morning to discuss the situation. The Cabal had had its meeting. Below I have summarised the position of the various schools;

<b>Name</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Status</b>
Orlon Tenquil	Blue	Orlon is still missing, at the Tower of the Four Winds
Sir Gilreyn Hardwick	Red	Sir Gilreyn has returned, but his mental state is unstable
Shamus	Green	Fine
Tarn Gurack	Brown	Tarn is unwilling to commit his school, but otherwise fine

Lord Veltayn	Yellow	Fine, active
Gilliard Greyarm	Grey	Gilliard's location unknown. Raucus is commanding
{unnamed}	Black	Unavailable for comment
Helios the Luminary	White	Unavailable as he is assisting the Halmadonians

Because so many of the other schools are greatly affected by what is transpiring, Alorn and Moragor feel that they must return to the Valley Alliance with all speed to offer their skills in supporting our peoples.

We were told that both Morgoth and Witch King of Angmar are now present having been summoned by the Morgothians. The Tower of the Four Winds is at war with the Halmadonians. The Halmadonians are readying themselves for war, and they have called on the White Retreat as we are allies for aid, many of the Michelines have already answered this summons and most of the rest are doing so. The Khalid have sealed their borders. The Drow are on the move. Sir Faldor Steel has set out with his Rangers and Wizards from the Yellow School to seek out and slay Sab're.

The Green School had identified the locations of nine beings of great power. Two of them were in the Tower of the Four Winds and one was where we had been, by Rainbow Lake. We then drew the conclusion that the other beings must also be elemental kings of similar stature to those we knew of. The number of them though puzzled us. Nine just didn't make any sense to us, for there are eight elements.

Alorn and Moragor agreed with us that these Anchors needed to be cut, for if the information we had discovered was correct then the real threat lay not in what was going on in Orin Rakatha, but elsewhere. We of course volunteered to continue investigating these things and to try find and cut the Anchors. We thought that the finding and dealing with all eight would be too much for us in the few days left before the height of the conjunction. Alorn said that he would try to contact fellow sorcerers in other towers to arrange for them to come and give us some aid. It would be up to us to persuade the people. The Green school would continue to fund Reader's Hut throughout these activities.

First to arrive were the ShadowsFall. These we managed to persuade to go to Thanatos and investigate things there. Next to visit us was Sir Arial of the Order of Purity of the Halmadonians. We explained to them that the things happening on Orin Rakatha were the symptoms of what was going and that it was best to attack the underlying causes. When we told them that the ShadowsFall were going to investigate one of the locations one of the Halmadonians said "If the

ShadowsFall can do one we can do two. At least.” We suggested Axos and Shadowglade to them and they eagerly took those on. The next group to arrive was three Sorcerers from the Wizards Concillum. They were fully conversant with the situation having discussed the matter with Alorn already and took on the planes of Dalehoven and Akari.

That left three plane for us, something that we thought was still too much for us. Then we had what we thought was a brilliant idea. The Rangers and Yellow guild were operating together (as Alorn had told us). They would be ideal to go to Whoresod Forest and deal with things there. So we asked in the journal if they could go there and deal with that plane. That left us two planes, which we hoped was a task we could handle, Moki Mountains and Cirius.

Because of the current conditions, the nearness of the Grand Conjunction, Reader’s Hut would be able to make several transitions this evening, so all four groups would be able to get to their planes. We prepared ourselves to get ready to leave Orin Rakatha and arrive on Moki Mountains.

A few moments before we left Orin Rakatha the Astronomer of the Celestial Bureaucracy arrived alone. We let him enter and spoke whilst we travelled. He told us that the declaration of war was not his decision but the one from the Ministry of Thought. The Ministry of Astronomy knew more about the Grand Conjunction than the other ministries of the Celestial Bureaucracy, in particular they knew that it was permissible for mortals to try and interfere with the Grand Conjunction. He wished to offer us some aid in recompense for what had happened and how he had been compelled to deceive us. Upon our faces he drew tattoos, attributes we could call upon to strengthen us over the coming time. Magellen refused to take one of these, I believe it’s that he thought that it could be turned against us. More importantly he told us some vital information about the Celestial Bureaucracy and how they operate. When those who master mind skills attain a certain rank, seemingly equivalent to our priest/wizard ranks it seems that they link to the communal pool of thought where they all share their mind strength.

Reader’s Hut arrived at Moki Mountains. It was full dark, undaunted, we set out into the night. The forests were full of undead creatures. After several skirmishes with these creatures we encountered a ranger. He seemed amazed that there was anyone in the woods other than himself. Because the bodies of the fallen undead surrounded us, clearly slain by our own hands he directed us to place of refuge nearby, called the Shrine of Life where we might go and take council with others of his folk, the Otomi he called them.

We set off to the Shrine of Life, but on route we were ambushed by a group of people wearing light and dark blue. These people were from the Temple of Blood. In the course of this fight both Magellen and Kell were slain, fortunately we were able to resurrect both.

Arriving at the shrine we met the folk there. Most importantly of these were Kaltak the Gate Keeper and Marath Anui the Shrine Master. We spoke with these and others present about our quest, but they were unable to assist us in locating the Anchor, as they did not know who or what it was. We discovered that these people were the Otomi from the Tower of the Sun, who had fled here from Orin Rakatha from the Khalid. Here on Moki Mountains the Otomi are now engaged in a war against the Immortals (very powerful undead), their Dedicates (powerful mortal servants) and the Temple of Blood. Only one seems to be prosecuting a war against the Otomi, Metui of the Jade Mask, he who brings the rain.

Most had gone to bed when into the building came rushing the Ranger we had met earlier. He cried out that a messenger from Metui was passing through the forest and if we left at once we may be able to intercept them. Only myself Kell and Magellen could be roused, fortunately some of the Otomi joined us in the endeavour. We managed to intercept the creations and slay them, recovering a scroll carried by the messenger, a scroll written in Cosmic Runes.

### **Day Six (Journal Day Eleven)**

Deciphering the scroll, we deduced that another messenger would be coming that day on the same route with a candle that would allow one to ask a question and receive an answer about Moki Mountains. We decided that we could use this to tell us the location of the Anchor.

We set out to intercept the candle along with the GateKeeper. After fighting off several undead wandering the area, we saw the messenger's approach. A human of the Temple of Blood, a construct bearing the candle and Dedicate clad in gold. This we slew, but not without cost, Kell gave his life in the course of the fight (and was resurrected once more). The Dedicate was a very tough though, as powerful as one of our Heroes.

Returning to the Shrine we burnt the candle. We then felt a presence growing closer. Outside we saw a mysterious figure, a birdman, Texaquatl, who had come in response to the candle's summons. Magellen asked Texaquatl about the Anchor and it agreed to tell us but only if we could prove ourselves worthy of the information and pass the challenges it faced us with, we agreed to take these challenges. There were three challenges for us to overcome. Strength, intelligence and wisdom.

The first of these challenges was that of strength, to see if we were strong enough to hold the

answer. We entered the building at the behest of Texaquatl to be immediately assailed by ShadowsFall. We fought them and as they were felled one by one they vanished, these things were not true men but images or constructs of some form created by Texaquatl. We passed this test by destroying them all.

The next test was the test of our intelligence to see if we were capable of comprehending the answer. The building became filled with all manner of puzzles and we had to solve them. We ended up by solving them all in the end, although it took us a good number of hours to do so.

The final test was wisdom to see if we would be wise enough to understand the question and answer. Texaquatl told us that he would show us the image of the Anchor, someone we would meet soon enough. We were to ask three questions of this image, and then when we would meet the Anchor he would be compelled to answer the three questions we posed. The image of Tolic, High Priest of the Pulse Sect of the Khalid EarthWarp appeared in front of us. After discussing the matter we posed these three questions for him.

- What is the best method by which we can permanently stop you being the Anchor?
- form of attack do you fear most?
- are the identities and locations of any of the other Anchors?

After that Texaquatl returned us to Moki Mountains, to the Shrine of Life, with the Otomi around us. A little while later Tolic entered accompanied by a group of Khalid. As he did so he fell to the floor, overcome by something, Texaquatl's compulsion. He then gave us these three answers in turn:

- Persuade me to leave the plane or kill me.
- Psionics.
- I do not know anything about any other Anchors.

In our discussions we now discovered what the plans of the Otomi were and how they involved Tolic. At the height of the Grand Conjunction Tolic's powers would be greatly enhanced. So much so that he would be capable of moving a section of Moki Mountains from here to the shard of Moki Mountains that was ripped away several years ago – the shard that now forms a part of the Splinter Plane. He had spent the last few days attuning himself to Moki Mountains, again, something only possible by the nearness of the Grand Conjunction. The section he was going to move was the place that contained the Temple of Blood and he was going to do it at

the height of the ceremony spoken of in the message we had intercepted. This would help the Otomi in their war against Metui tremendously as he would lose much of his power base. We sought to find a way to resolve these difficulties, the threat to the Otomi and the threat to Orin Rakatha, but Tolic proved to be most uncooperative in every way. There was no easy solution that allowed us to achieve both ends. It seemed that for Orin Rakatha to live the Otomi must die and the reverse was also true! Tolic withdrew for a while to discuss matters with the Otomi to see if they could find a way to resolve this.

After Tolic and the Otomi withdrew, some five or ten minutes later the doors of the shrine were thrown open by two gold clad Dedicates and their Immortal master, Metui of the Jade Mask! Metui wore his arrogance around himself as a shield; he had no fear of us. "I have come in accordance with the Codex to aid you. Tell me the name of the one I must kill." These were his words to us. Time and time again he tried to get the name of the person we wanted dead, time and time again we denied him. Time and time again Metui tried to get the name out of us, in particular exhorting Ezekiel to give him the name, but Ezekiel stood with us, and although sorely tempted he obeyed the commands of our leader Magellen not to answer. Finally Metui told us that when we changed our minds and sought his aid he would come. All we had to do was to speak his name on the winds and the name of the person we wanted dead. Metui would hear and that person would die. Then he took his leave.

A short while later High Priest Tolic returned with the Otomi for they had fled at the signs of the approach of the Immortal. We sought one last time to find a way in which Tolec would renounce his status as anchor, but no way could be found. Tolic was adamant that he would stay on this plane until after the conjunction and would move part of it as he had agreed to. Relations broke down between us, Tolic and his Khalid went outside into the undergrowth where they began invoking, we began our invokes inside the building. Then the Shrine Master intervened. He refused to allow us to come to blows. He decided that our quest was more important than the lives of his people and so he chose to sacrifice himself and his people for our sake. He released Tolic from his vow and asked us all to set aside our thoughts of anger and violence towards each other. Tolic then left after castigating us at length. Saying how he would remember what we had done this day and how we were once more causing great harm by our actions.

The Shrine Master then asked us to leave and we did so, travelling through the night to Reader's Hut. We arrived there to find the Reader bubbling with news of the other groups success on their planes.

### **Day Seven (Journal Day Twelve)**

We spoke with Ira that morning who had been briefed by Alorn about what was going on. Their researches had shown that on Cyrius (the next plane we were going to) we were looking for someone called Tiberian Nictus who was the Anchor. The researches of the Green School had



indicated that all the Anchors were people of power, they were, had been or would be capable of mastering a plane themselves!

As for the other groups:

The Wizards Concillum on Dalehoven had met Lucia Valkar and had persuaded her to attack another island rather than the one she was set on conquering. This change was enough for her to no longer be accounted as the Anchor. They were now moving onto Shou-Lun (the land from which Akari Island comes).

The Halmadonians on Shadowdale reported success, although they declined to discuss details of what they had done. They were now moving onto Axos where they search for Kanver Sullust.

The ShadowsFall reported success in their mission on Thanatos, blessing the tomb of Rafaj being all they needed to do.

Representatives of the Rangers and the Yellow school of Magic were in Whoresod Forest and were meeting with the Baron.

Other things going on in the world we were told. A Grand Knight of Halmaddons Heights wielding the Sword of Law was on Orin Rakatha and going to fight Morgoth. Sir Faldor Steel had after several hours of combat and the deaths of many of his companions had slain Sab're the Shark God.

Arriving on Cyrius we fell in with Ignateous of the Tolarian Academy, a research wizard. He spoke of the Senator who ruled all of these lands, called Tiberius and the Inn of the Five Hollows that lay nearby. At this point that is whom we thought we needed to deal with. The obvious similarity between the names Tiberius (the Senator, obviously a person of power) and Tiberian (the name the Green School gave us) was enough for us. It caused us to see them as the same. Ignateous agreed to guide us and give us an introduction to the Senator if we would help him - we had to guide and guard him thorough the forest to a particularly large tree at the centre of the forest which we did. After Ignateous finished his study he guided us to the Inn of the Five Hollows as he had agreed, an hour's walk away.

On arriving at the Inn we discovered that the Senator was not currently present but that he would be arriving on the morrow for the Games. It seems that every year the Senator (a man who likes his comfort) holds Games, where teams compete for his amusement and pleasure. Only one word can adequately describe the inn. Opulent. As we understood it the Games on the morrow would be entered by several teams, Magellen entered us into the Games as Team Sable Rose. Over the course of the evening the Sponsors of each of the teams and some of the members met us coming down to drink or gamble, all save that of Team Eagle. We mingled with them and discussed many things. All of them had competed here before and knew quite a bit about each other, they were all interested in finding out about us, just as we were about them. There were several teams entering the Senators contest, below I have summarised them

<b>Team Name</b>	<b>Colour</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Brief Characterisation</b>
Team Manticore	Black	Julius	Evil Power Casters
Team Salamander	Red	Carius	Red Wizards
Team Troll	Green	Sir Galenus Rusticus	Trolls
Team Eagle	Blue	One Eye	Local Natives
Team Sable Rose	Yellow	Unknown	Us

These people here were invaders, from another world and everything that we saw confirmed our suspicions. These people were the old Empire who chased us off Murandir to Orin Rakatha. We made sure not to mention anything about Orin Rakatha to them.

### **Day Eight (Journal Day Thirteen)**

In the morning the Senator Tiberius arrived. We assembled on the lawns surrounding the Inn as commanded for the Senator to give his speech opening the Games. We decided to apply ourselves to the Games. It was our hope that the Senator would grant a boon to the winners, and that we could use this boon to persuade the Senator to leave. Thus we hoped that we could accomplish our mission without combat.

The first event was Javelin throwing. Quentin's final throw proved to be the winning one.

The second competition was the marathon, for which Kell was our competitor. Suffice it to say that despite the dirty tricks played by the other teams (ambushes, a ghoul runner etc) Kell managed to win.

The next event was Single Combat, each team would enter a champion and these champions would fight each other for one minute to determine who was the best. In Single Combat anything was allowed. Ezekiel, our invoked evil priest was entered into this as our champion. He gave us some of the funniest moments I've seen in a long while and ended up coming second in the competition. One Eye of the Eagles winning.

The fourth contest was Pit Fighting, man against beast. Jharkor was entered into this, he came third, a result we thought was fixed against us.

Before the next challenge started, Senator Tiberius' bodyguard met with us to discuss how we were doing. He introduced himself as Tiberian. We had very nearly made a terrible error. It was not the Senator it was his bodyguard, Tiberian, the greatest Gladiator on Cyrius who was the Anchor. He was unaware of the fact that he was the Anchor. He was hoping one day to buy his freedom. We decided that if we could do well enough in the side bets and winning the remain competitions we would have enough money with what Tiberian had amassed over the past five years with to buy his freedom.

The fifth contest was Blades. Sven was our champion for this. He fought and defeated the Salamander Carrian, and then the Eagle, next came the troll, Galenian. It spent several minutes beating against Sven's shield, being unable to penetrate his magnificent defence. Whilst Sven landed perhaps a hundred blows on the troll it landed three or four on him. In the end so frustrated was it that it threw down its sword and danced on it in rage. After we stopped laughing the referee decreed the contest a win for Sven. The last round, Sven against Julian, blade of the Manticores. Back and forth the combat raged, until with one magnificent blow Julian cut Sven's shield in twain. Once that was done, Sven was lost. We finished second in this event.

The sixth contest was a contest of Archery. Magellen was our champion for this. The target was a prisoner, and this was his punishment. Magellen was unwilling to shoot a man for sport and deliberately missed with all of his arrows. We came last in this event all of the others competitors hit at least once.

The final event was Group Combat. Four persons from each team were entered. For us it was Sven, Kell Ezekiel and myself We were called for the combat against the Manticores. Evil

Sphere casters and me a Micheline. In the course of the Group Combat, Ezekiel was slain by having his throat cut, as was two of their number before Julius called out for the combat to halt, conceded victory to us. At this point I noticed that all the dead were evil power casters so I have to say that I consider it a great victory all round and no loss at all.

I resurrected Ezekiel, and we began preparing for the next round. One Eye came in and announced that his was the team to face us. But that he was withdrawing his team from the competition as he did not wish to fight us. He said that had proved that his peoples were strong and could do as well in the games as the invaders. This left us as victors of the Group Combat. In fact Magellen somehow managed to have us proclaimed as both first and second place.

We totalled up what we had and we were still three hundred short. From our discussions with Julian we knew that he was desperate to become the Senators blade. Julian had some money, enough in fact to make up the difference. Magellen got Julian to hand over his money to us, and we gave all this to Tiberian.

The Senator then summoned all of us and after a short speech presented us with the trophy and a bag of eyes for becoming his champions. Magellen accepted it on behalf of our mysterious Sponsor and gave a marvellous victory speech in return praising not only the Senator but also the other competitors. Such a superb speech did Magellen give that the Senator excused us the payment of the fees for the inn.

Then Tiberian bought his freedom. Tiberian gave the Senator his blade and asked the Senator for one more thing, his old name, which the Senator graciously gave back to him. The name of Nictus. We all then welcomed Tiberian back into the ranks of the free. It was a wonderful moment; Nictus was overcome for a few moments at gaining his freedom.

The Senator retired to negotiate with Julius about acquiring Julian as his bodyguard.

We were left alone with Nictus and asked him about his former life. He had been a powerful Sorcerer of Cyrius, in the course of his researches he had opened a portal between two of demi planes of Cyrius just at the moment that the shard was ripped away by the game. Because of this he had been enslaved. He had been purchased and was sent to Gladiator School, where he had discovered that he was truly gifted, perhaps even more so that as a Sorcerer. We were

able to explain to Nictus how it was not his fault that a demi-plane was lost, but that it was an effect of this game that had been played by others. We explained to him all the details as to what had happened and how and why we had got there and what our interest in him was. As he was grateful to us for giving him the two thousand five hundred eyes and so we managed to persuade him to leave Cyrius and come away with us to Orin Rakatha. As soon as he agreed we set out to go to Reader's Hut.

Moving swiftly through the night we arrived at Reader's Hut in the matter of two hours and bundled Nictus inside before he could change his mind.

There we met with Chalum a wizard of the Yellow School, we had been advised of this ahead of time in the Journal that he was in charge of the mission, the reason being that only the Yellow School of Magic was unaffected by these tumultuous times. He gave us an update on the current situation.

On Shou Lun the Wizards Concillium had managed to persuade the Anchor, an Ogre Mage called Pan Yau to come to Orin Rakatha. On Axos the Halmadonians were still pursuing Kanver Sullust On Whoresod Forest Baron Oberloin, the Anchor, had been slain by the Rangers and Yellow Guild.

From the Hags on Whoresod Forest the Yellow School had discovered some more information. Severing the Anchors was not enough. The splinter plane was still located "above" Orin Rakatha and it would take quite some time for it to move "away". They had determined that it needed to be moved in some way and that the best way to do this would be to do something on the Splinter Plane itself.

On Orin Rakatha, a dozen Grand Knights of Halmadons Heights had assembled to fight Morgoth and they had the Sword of Law. One last piece of information was most worrying. Sab're the Shark God had been seen and reported by a Ranger. This matched with what we believed – that as long as the planes were aligned the embodiments on Orin Rakatha could not be destroyed.

So we were on our way to the Splinter Plane. We chose Akari Island, because that was the only one of the planes that we had any contacts who might help us. When last we were there, some

six months ago we had aided the society of the Red Lotus and we hoped that we might be able to draw on them for aid.

### **Day Nine (Journal Day Fourteen)**

Moving around we encountered peasants and provincial guards, all very normal stuff for Akari, at least until we met a Ronin called Mo-Wah. He mentioned that he was a member of the Heron Blades, a group who opposed the Governor. He spoke somewhat disparagingly of the Red Flower society when we mentioned them, scorning them for their lack of action. He did indicate that if we were to travel to the ruined manor near the top of the hill we may be able to find some of the Red Lotus society, as they often congregated in that area. Taking our leave of him we did travel to there. Imagine our surprise when we got up the hill to discover that the building Mo-Wah spoke of was not ruined, but in perfect condition and occupied. Clearly Mo-Wah had lied to us, but why?

Approaching the house we met the major-domo, Wun Hun-Lo who invited us in to rest for a while. He assumed that we were traders or outlanders of some sort come to visit his master, Chau Kun-Man. We spent a long while discussing things with Chau Kun-Man as we worked out what was going on.

Chau Kun-Man was the leader of the Red Lotus Society who are opposed to the Governor. The Heron Blades are another group opposed to the Governor, they are composed of disaffected guardsmen, and their methods tend to be far more brutal than the Red Flower Society. One thing that he was convinced about was that it was not possible for mortals to move a plane. Such a task lay beyond the capabilities of mortals.

What follows is the recent history of Akari, since it was ripped away from Shou Lun. The Opawang, a great evil spirit and it's four chief minions, the Ochimo, were destroyed some six years ago by the people who came from another land – we identified these as the Ariakis group. Some five years ago the Governor seeking to have himself proclaimed the Son of Heaven, to become the spiritual as well as the temporal leader of Akari Island revealed to the people that the chief temple, the Temple of the Four Winds was now occupied by their nine gods. With the Gods there he thought that the reverence of the people would raise him to the status of the Son of Heaven. At the first when the peoples saw the gods there was great rejoicing and the people worshipped them for here they hold their gods in great reverence. But after a short while the Gods began to bicker amongst themselves and in the end fell to warring upon each other. More recently half a year ago there had been a battle at the Temple of the Four Winds and the temple had been destroyed, the Gods now each walked the land where they were. To each god came worshipers, pilgrims if you would have. Here now are the names and aspects of the Gods of Shou Lun.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Aspect</b>
Wu Shu-Zha	The King of the Earth

Hsin Shu-Zha	The King of Steel
Feng Shu-Zha	The King of Water
Shui Shu-Zha	The King of Air (also known as Lord Sandaster)
Li Shu-Zha	The King of Fire
Wai Shu-Lun	The Prince of Light
Ch'ou Shu-Lun	The Prince of Dark
Chai Shu-Lun	The Primal Lord of Chaos
Ma Yuan	The Primal Lord of Law, also known as the Killer of the Gods

We discussed these things in detail and came to some conclusions. The power of the Grand Conjunction was being focused through the Gods onto Orin Rakatha. The nine gods on Akari Island and the nine beings of power on Orin Rakatha, the names Temple of the Four Winds – these were too similar for it to be coincidence. Another fact we thought was significant was amongst the Gods was no King of Storms, of Yellow Magic – this tied in with the fact that the Yellow School of magic alone was not being affected by the current troubles. Whilst the Gods were here and whilst this plane lay where it did destroying the aspects on Orin Rakatha would prove to be ultimately futile. As Sab're had been, they too would be reformed. Moving the plane was beyond our capabilities, but perhaps not beyond the capabilities of a God.

We resolved to seek out one of these Gods and see what we could do to persuade Him to exert His powers and move the plane. Chau Kun-Man advised us that we should seek out the Heron Blades for they had been present at the battle at the Temple of the Four Winds and that they might know of the presence of the Gods. We travelled to where the Heron blades had their camp, a miserable and cold place compared to the opulence of the Governors mansion. There after some discussion we were instructed by them to travel down the hill to the place of two bridges where one of the Gods and his petitioners had been seen recently.

When we arrived what confronted us amongst a sea of worshipers was a being of most fearsome aspect indeed. He called himself Shui Shu-Zha and asked who we were and where we were from. When we told him his words were simple. "Ah! Good! I have a message for you and now I will not have to look for you to deliver my message." When we asked what the message was his answer came swiftly "My message is Death." With that he fell upon us, his might fully revealed.

His worshipers, pilgrims from across the face of Akari Island assailed us. His worshipers were not as skilled as us in the arts of war and were soon felled, but Shui Shu-Zha was mighty indeed. What we faced here was a creature of great power, but not a god. Taking heart we threw ourselves upon him again and again, until at the last he began to weaken, his substance being chopped away by our blows. His strikes and magics became lesser and lesser until at the

end he disintegrated, leaving behind sticks, straw, mud and fragments of metal.

We made our way back to the mansion of Chau Kun-Man. We discussed what had happened and Kell identified the remains. It was a constructed creature, and it did have a control mechanism. We believed that the Governor must have found or made them in Opawangchenchun and had brought them out. Because they had seemed to be real the people worshipped them. The nearness of the Grand Conjunction enhanced the power of belief as the Hags told us. Together this caused the Mannequins to believe that they were the Gods they were portrayed as and thus break free of the Governors control. If killing Shui Shu-Zha here meant that Lord Sandaster died on Orin Rakatha then that would give us another way of dealing with the problem – destroying all the Mannequins.

After I retired to my bed, the house was penetrated by Ninja. They captured Magellen and Sven. Each was asked many questions separately but the answers they gave were the same after confirming this the Ninja left.

### **Day Ten (Journal Day Fifteen)**

We discussed the matters of the Golem with Chau Kun-Man and managed to convince him. He resolved to help us if he could and left to see what more he could do. He believed that he knew where he might find the location of two of the Gods – they were in the same place, the black one and one unknown other.

A while later, in the early afternoon a runner came to us and told us that one of the Gods was approaching. The Green Mannequin came to attack us with a coterie of warriors and a pair of Ninja. In the course of the fight we discovered that one of the Ninja had a Green Rod and that the Green Mannequin would obey the commands given by that Ninja. We vanquished the Green Mannequin and all his forces, recovering the rod. Kell identified the rod and discovered more information that confirmed our theories. It was a control rod, one of nine, each one tied to a specific Mannequin and that the Rod and the Mannequins had been constructed by the Oppowang.

In the early evening the first fruits of Chau Kun-Man's aid came to pass – for he had asked Dai-Oni, Ogre Magi and Leader of the Horde for help. We were summoned to a place of Dai-Oni's power. There we spoke with Dai-Oni and showed him tokens we had taken from the Mannequin's to prove the truth of our words and convinced him. Dai-Oni's taught us blood magics that would strengthen our attacks and allow us to penetrate the unnatural defences of the Constructs. Magellen and Kell refused to accept this from Dai-Oni concerned at the costs of these blood magics upon their souls. All the others of us accepted it, including myself.



After the completion of the ceremony, Dai-Oni came back to the mansion of Chau Kun-Man with us, for he had been invited to dine that evening along with another guest, Master Sun, who had previously held the post of Imperial Warlord. Throughout the course of the meal we held extensive discussions with Dai-Oni, Master Sun and Chau Kun-Man. We had three powerful leaders at the table with us, Chau Kun-Man leading the Red Flower Society, Dai-Oni leading the Horde and finally Master Sun leading the Heron Blades. However over the course of the evening, with some tongues loosened by the powerful rice wine, (called Saki and drunk hot), we revealed far too much information. We had thought that we were helping to convince Master Sun, but it seems that Chau Kun-Man was playing a game more subtle than we understood. At the end of the meal Master Sun hurried off, eager to be about his own business, whilst the others remained behind. Because he seemed so eager Chau Kun-Man had a servant follow Master Sun. Some time later this servant returned with a tale that was most interesting. Master Sun had travelled for some distance, an hour or so, to a place where he was met with the Heron Blades and then on to a compound where he further met with outlanders. There was a great burning at this compound. We deduced that this was the Fire Mannequin, but we did not know who these outlanders were although we were greatly interested. It seems that Master Sun had some very interesting allies, and we were looking forward to asking him some very pointed questions about matters.

We set out, along the way we were waylaid by groups of Heron Blades, their skills proved to be no match for our own, we took little hurt from them. We pressed on with all speed until we approached the compound. There we discovered the Dark and Fire Mannequins and Master Sun. With the blood magics taught to us by Dai-Oni we slew all three. But at a terrible cost, Kell was slain - we resurrected him, but this was the last time he could be brought back.

We retreated to recover and after completing meditation we entered an enclosed occupied compound. We moved deep into the heart of it and then another group stood forth. Morgothians! These were the outlanders that Master Sun had been meeting with. What were Morgothians doing here? We spoke with them at some length but neither group gave anything away. In the end we ended up attacking each other and we were victorious after a long and hard combat. From the body of the Anti-Paladin leader was a Journal. Filled with page after page of writing – tens of pages, detailing what they had been doing. We took it and resolved to read it after returning to the mansion of our host Chau Kun-Man.

### **Day Eleven (Journal Day Sixteen)**

To summarise the important notes from the Journal:

- The Morgothians were led by an Anti Paladin called Uraj Kapoor, who was charged by Lord Khamûl leader of the Tower with a vital mission as part of their overall plan to destroy the Halmadonians.
- Using the Mannequins as foci the Morgothians would control beings of immense power on Orin Rakatha. With these beings they would then summon Morgoth himself onto Orin Rakatha, and thus prosecute their war against the Halmadonians. They had succeeded at this. They

controlled the Blue, Red and Black Mannequins, who were the ones they needed in order to perform this dastardly plot.

- They had intended to destroy the other Mannequins, but as the effect of the other beings on Orin Rakatha was to magnify the chaos and confusion there the Morgothians had changed their plans and so had not sought out the other beings to destroy them.