



To HELL ... AND BACK?



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARIES OF DAGNARIS DREAMCHASER. COMPILED BY BALASAR JHARTH RAXYN
FROM DOCUMENTS FOUND ON THE PLANE OF AVERNUS.



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INTRODUCTION

The tome you hold in your hands was compiled by I, Balasar Jharthraxyn, from a set of diaries found on the infernal plane of Avernus. The story of how these journals made their way to my hands could fill a book of its own. In fact, it did. See volume 14 of "Balasar Jharthraxyn on Balasar Jharthraxyn" by yours truly, Balathar Jharthraxyn.

Contained within are the autobiographical adventures of one Dagnaris Dreamchaser, a halfling thief of some renown, now that I, Balathar Jharthraxyn, have put my literary approval on his work.

Read the unbelievable journey that he and the band of misfits that surrounded him undertook. No one could have known the excitement and peril that was in store for them. Live the tales told in his own words. I won't spoil it, but it is quite the page-turner.

I have included my own notes for the edification of the reader.

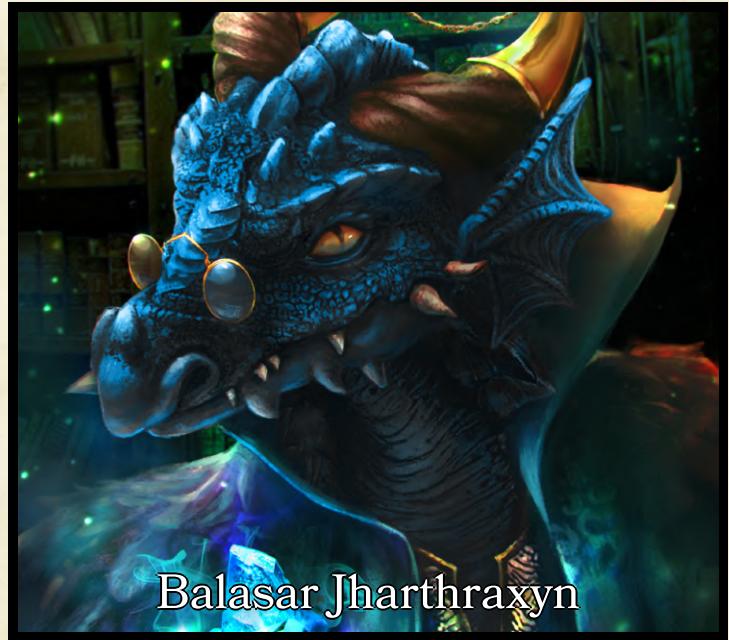
ORIGINAL PARTY

These Journals begin with Dagnaris already working in a group.

- **Dagnaris Dreamchaser** - A Halfling Thief
- **Sappi Cogsworth** - A Gnome Artificer
- **Zoey** - An Elven Archer

What led to this and what his life was like prior to these escapades is a matter of much debate among literary scholars. It is something that I, Balasar Jharthraxyn, will continue to study.

-- B.J.



ENTRY 1 - TRAVELING TO BALDUR'S GATE



ur intrepid band was hired to ...liberate a certain object from its current, unworthy holder. The heist went mostly according to plan, but the crew managed to pick up a warforged during the getaway.

THE WARGORGED 5-11

The "Life" of the magical sentient construct originally designated 5-11 is interesting in its own right. What is known about this entity comes from the writings of Dagnaris and 5-11's own recordings. 5-11's writings are less narrative driven than the writings of Dagnaris. I will use 5-11's notes to illuminate the halfling's brilliant storytelling wherever possible.

-- B.J.

He seemed useful enough - *if a bit too talkative most times!* - so the band of 3 became 4 as we began the journey from Waterdeep back to Baldur's Gate as hired guards for Caster Morden. He's a rug merchant who just needed some muscle for the journey, and it made a nice cover story for our escape.

The item itself is a locked puzzle box about the size of a cigar box. As we traveled, my misgivings about the box grew stronger and stronger. The damned spirits that have been stalking me seem to have a special interest in the box itself. I thought I was running FROM them, but apparently I ran straight TO them as their incessant gibbering now emanates from the box itself. They want out. They demand release from the box day and night, but I've resisted so far. That busy-body Sappy Cogsworth tried to snatch the box one night, but my precautions payed dividends and he failed. I expect he won't give up so easily though. His curiosity about the box is almost as strong as my dread.

As we approached Baldur's Gate, the stream of travelers, most looking like shell-shocked refugees became more dense. We managed to get a little information out of them, although it didn't make much sense. It was just some nonsense about Elturel being gone. Not sacked or burned, but simply gone. Now THAT'S a heist story I'd like to hear!

THE STEALING OF ELTUREL

There is some dispute among sages over weather the Fall of Elturel actually occurred or if it is just a mythical story from Faerun's distant past.

-- B.J.

The journey to Baldur's Gate itself was uneventful, but once we neared the gates and were stymied by the flow of travelers, Sappy got us involved in a fight with some hucksters taking advantage of desperate refugees. It worked out in the end as we were able to retrieve the statuette the old couple lost as well as a few gold pieces for our trouble. It turned out to be a fortuitous event though. The old man's son is a guard in the Flaming Fist, named Sebastian Smith. He said to look him up if we ever need a hand. Having an "in" with the guards is never a bad idea.

Now the only problem is we are about to enter the city and the rest of the band still wants to turn the box over to the buyer. After what the spirits did to those poor bastards the first time they got what they wanted, I can't imagine what would happen if the buyer opens this box.

5-11'S NOTES

Things Learned:

- Dagnaris has included me in his group.
- Zoey is deadly with her bow.
- Dagnaris will show mercy if the enemy has been broken.
- Sappi likes to throw a burning stick.
- Sappi said: "Old People are good."
- Sappi said: "Merchants are bad."



ENTRY 2 - JOINING THE FLAMING FIST

So as we started to forge our way through the crowd towards the customs gate, we were assailed by - and I'm not making this up - goostergeist. There was no physical signs of geese in the area, but this crazed honker persistently badgered us through the crowd and into the customs rotunda!

The customs inspector did not find the ghost goose's regaling at all pleasant and called in the garrison mage. He discovered it was some infernal contraption of Sappi's devising (which he of course denied). Caster was fined for, well, I'm not sure exactly what, other than pissing off the inspector. Caster took part of the fine out of our pay, but Sappi was amused by his prank, so made up the difference to the rest of the party. Luckily, Caster's wife was no where around during this whole debacle, or I doubt Sappi would have survived the encounter!

With our safe return to Baldur's Gate, we were assailed from every direction with people vying for our attention. It seems our ragtag band has already begun to develop a reputation, despite our efforts to go unnoticed. The customs inspector informed us the city has been locked down and if we wanted entry, we would have to "make ourselves useful". He sent us to speak with Cpt. Zojh about some work the Flaming Fist could use a hand with <wink wink>.

On our way to meet the good captain, a messenger scamp told us our "employer" would contact us when they were ready, but to stay close until then. I STILL haven't devised a good argument for keeping the box, or even better, dumping it into the bottom of the ocean!

Anyhow, once we met the Cpt, it seems the town has a problem with The Dead Three cult, but are already stretched thin maintaining any semblance of order with the crush of refugees. He generously offered 200g each if we manage to ... disappear the cult by whatever means necessary without getting sacrificed ourselves.



He sent us to his local informant, Turina, after deputizing us. I don't know if I am amused, irritated, or befuddled at the twist of fate that, essentially, brought a mismatched band of thieves into the lawkeeping line of work!

Once we got to the tavern, 5-11 used his normal subtle approach to find our informant. He very subtly, while wearing a damned badge, announced he was looking for her! Luckily, it seems a well known "secret" that her information is for purchase from most anyone with the coin. Once we found her, she informed us she's in a spot of trouble, but if we would negotiate on her behalf, she would waive her normal info fee. We reluctantly agreed. While waiting, I tried to explain "aggressive negotiation" to 5-11. I fear we are doing a less than adequate job of educating this construct. He seems absolutely determined to misinterpret every plain, simple explanation I give him! <sigh>

We did hear some interesting rumors while waiting around for Turina's business partners. It seems the Grand Duke of the Flaming Fist was in Elturel during its demise. There seems to be quite a stir about who should lead the Flaming Fist in his absence, and if that absence is temporary or permanent. Velma Vamper has shown a distinct lack of sadness at his demise and has been consolidating her power in what many expect is a grab for his seat.

Once Turina's pirates showed up, negotiations quickly turned from verbal to physical. It was almost as if it was a forgone conclusion. If they had not been so inept, I would have been quite cross with Turina for misleading us so. It turned out well in the end, as we managed to resolve the situation with only minor damage to the bar, and we liberated some jewelry from the now-retired pirate.

QUEST

Wipe out the Dead Three Cult.

Reward: 200g each.

THE DEAD THREE CULT

The Dead Three refers to three gods.

Deity Domain Symbol

Bane Tyranny Upright black right hand, thumb and fingers together

Bhaal Murder Skull surrounded by a ring of blood droplets

Myrkul Death White Human Skull

-- B.J.

TREASURE

Item	#	Value Each
Necklace	2	25g
Ring	1	125g

Turina pointed us to a public bathhouse as a known point of interest for the cult members. After what seemed like a total waste of time and effort, we managed to find the entrance to some catacombs just before giving up and leaving.

The catacombs were filled with etchings, tapestries, etc of The Dead Three, so we were fairly certain we had found the right hideout. We liberated Klem Jaso from a couple of thugs who appeared to be torturing him for fun rather than for profit. We should look him up later for a proper reward, although I think the blustering fool may have overstated his wealth and local importance by some small degree.

TREASURE

Item	#	Value
Iris of the Oracle	1	???
Silvered Flail	1	110g
Spellbooks	4	1950g

We haven't found anyone that seems to be in charge yet though, so I guess we shall have to blunder on until the right thug presents himself for dispatching!

5-11'S NOTES

Things Learned:

- Dagnaris said: "Gooses are not worth it."
- I was made a deputy of the Flaming Fist.
- Dagnaris said: "Negotiation is a loose term. It starts with words and can end in violence."
- Sappi's electric stick is dangerous.
- At the bathhouse, Dagnaris told me. "No Badge! Don't talk!"
- We missed a lot of attacks in the catacomb.
- Fire! A room of fire. Will not go back!

ENTRY 3 - NEW PARTY MEMBERS

 Life is never dull around here. After our last foray into the depths of the city (and its rather toasty conclusion), we executed a strategic retreat - with 5-11 herding us at a pace my legs were NOT comfortable with - back into the light. I must admit we received a few more glances at our disheveled state than was comfortable. Who leaves a bath house dirtier than when they went in?!

We went back to the inn to recuperate and formulate a new plan, but Sappi and Zoey were quiet and kinda mean. Sappi started drinking and Zoey grabbed her stuff and stormed out in a huff. We did just get blown up, so I didn't think too much about it at the time. After taking a nap, 5-11 and I decided we needed to stock up and give it the old guild-try. Sappi wasn't quite so enthusiastic. He refused to join us and Zoey was nowhere to be found. Frustrated and short-handed, we decided to let the good captain know what progress we had made and see if he had any backup he could lend us....he didn't. He did however, give us the power to deputize a couple of mercs and pay them upfront to get the job done. With gold and badges in hand, we set off back to the inn to look for some hired muscle and MAYBE let Sappi and Zoey know the captain was not pleased with their cowardice. On our way, we saw Zoey. 5-11 tried chasing her down, but she managed to avoid us until darting into a mini-fortress we later found out belongs to one of the city patriars.

When we got back to the inn, Sappi was nowhere to be found and the barkeep let us know there were some people upstairs waiting for us. I'm not sure how they found us so quickly, but the most obvious answer was the 3 dead-heads were not happy with us blowing up their little clubhouse. It might also be admirers simply looking for autographs, but the former seemed more likely, so we headed upstairs ready for a fight.

As we topped the stairs, good ole' 5-11 just marches out in the open and tries to get to the room, thinking Sappi would still be there (I begin to despair of teaching this thing anything at all). I dodged into the shadows, waiting for my moment to try out some new moves I was working on. There were 2 separate groups waiting for us. One obviously wanted to kill us.

The other group...well, I'm not sure what to make of them: one was a scary girl rambling on about dreaming about me, and the other was a quiet elf, who I SWEAR knew I was carrying IT as soon as she looked at me with those too-knowing eyes.

NEW PARTY MEMBERS

- **Cascadazul** - An Elven Dignitary arriving from Evermeet
- **Vaneshi** - A Hellrider from Elturel

These new members joined Dagnaris and Five on the extraordinary adventure that began in the catacombs below Baldur's Gate.

-- B.J.

PARANOIA?

The "It" that Dagnaris references is the Puzzle Box that the group stole in Waterdeep. Whatever was inside it seemed to have a strange effect on both Dagnaris the halfling and Sappi the gnome. Is its hold on them related to their size? I will need to investigate more.

-- B.J.

Anyway, as was all-too-predictable, the first group was there looking for round 2. After I dispatched them with some fancy footwork and the pointy end of the stick, the ladies introduced themselves as being from Elturel, but they felt their destiny was to join my illustrious party. Since we were in the market for some help, this seemed like a great plan...and they seemed pretty handy in a fight, if a bit on the judgy, uppity side.

VANESHI

A Hell Rider from Elturel, Vaneshi escaped whatever fate befell the nightless city while on an assignment to escort Cascadazul. Her "Vision" led them to Baldur's Gate to join Dagnaris's Party. Who or What is the source for her "Visions"?

-- B.J.

The only thing of interest we found on the bodies was a note that said their contact told them where we had our rooms and to take care of us (I don't think that meant they were supposed to bring us snacks). It was just signed "V".

After the innkeeper begged us to stay, we declined since our fame seemed to be drawing more than just fans. We headed out to find an inn nearer to the bath house and discovered our, um, mishap below ground may have left a bit of a mark on the surface. The bath house and some of the surrounding area had collapsed into the room we detonated. Silver lining: it was much easier to re-enter the lair of the fiends!

We made some small progress in exploring the dungeon, but only managed to find a mostly-dead tiefling named Vendetta Cress, dispatch a few zombies, and a barracks of ill-prepared guards. I had a single moment of hope for 5-11 during this encounter! He actually lured one of the guards into the room with us! Then he dashed all my hopes for him right after. He had another chance to deceive another guard, and botched it in the most 5-11 way possible. <sigh> He told the truth. Ah well. It worked out anyway as the tiger-elf chased the guard down and we finished him and his friends off.

CASCADAZUL

The "tiger-elf" appears to be a reference to the druidic powers of Cascadazul. Cascadazul is a published author in her own right, though her works are more "academic" than the writings of yours truly, Balasar Jharthraxyn.

-- B.J.

Still no sign of the cult leader though, so our journey towards fame and glory continue!

5-11's NOTES

Things Learned:

- I'm learning to lie from Dagnaris. I don't think I get it.
- Cas is also a cat.
- Van misplaced her town.
- Did Zoey abandon us?
- Did Sappi abandon us, too?
- I was tricked into re-entering the fire room!



ENTRY 4 - MEETING MORTLOCK

After clearing out the barracks, we regrouped and prepared to carry on the fight. As we surveyed the carnage in the hallways, it occurred to me we still had not found anything that would fit Vendetta's description of a grinding noise. After an expert evaluation of the passage, I found a hidden doorway. This seemed to cause some confusion for 5-11 for some reason. Who hasn't heard of secret passageways?!

Anyway, we stalked down the slightly-less flooded passage and discovered a massive bear of a man getting soundly beaten by a faceless... thing. It looked very human, except for the bare skull sitting atop its shoulders. As we rushed to the fray, it seemed to taunt the giant and run away.

We soon discovered the giant to be Mortlock Vanthampur, son of the Vanthampur patriarch family. He was betrayed by his own family and we chased off the last assassin that was meant to kill him. In return for our aid, and in retribution against his family, he is willing to testify to the guard if we can get him back to the Flaming Fist headquarters. He didn't have many details, but he knows his mother was in league with Thavius Creeg. The 2 of them hoped to sow enough chaos to kick the powers-that-be out and take over. I have to assume that things got out of their control in Elturel, and Baldur's Gate could soon suffer the same fate if we don't find



out how it happened. For now, we know the Dead 3 were bought and payed for by the Vanthampur family to make the Flaming Fist look incompetent. Fortunately for the Fist, they showed they have excellent instincts and hired us to solve the problem!

THE ELTUREL CONSPIRACY

It appears that Dagnaris and his followers stumbled upon evidence that Thalmara Vanthamper and Thavius Kreeg, leader of Elturel, conspired to remove Uldar Ravengard from power. The result was the destruction of Elturel. Vanthamper wanted to control Baldur's Gate. What did Kreeg get from the agreement?

-- B.J.

We found a fair amount of treasure stockpiled in one room. It looked like it was either to be a gift to a dragon, or gods forbid, the stolen hoard of a dragon. Either way, we have liberated it! Now we just have to decide if we are to chase down that craven assassin Vaaz, or go directly to the guard and hand over Morti.

TREASURE

Item	#	Value
Bronze Crown	1	250g
Cat-Eye Agate	10	10g
Porcelain Dragon Mask	1	25g

We left 5-11 guarding the exit while we explored the treasure, but he let someone sneak past. We've likely let Vaaz escape, but this wooden-headed dolt refuses to go back through the "fire room" and woke up some skeletons digging for a new way out. <sigh> I think its time to get creative in extricating my party from this now-defunct lair of vile worshipers!

5-11'S NOTES

Things Learned:

- Dagnaris can open walls!
- Dagnaris said: "Sometimes Walls and Doors are the same thing."
- Vaneshi said: "Help the person not the skeleton."
- Cas was a tiger? and now is a Lion?
- Found a Dragon hat!
- Vaneshi's boss helped drag a city to the Nine Hells?

ENTRY 5 - ATTACKED BY DRAGON CULTISTS

After catching our collective breath, we proceeded up the steps where we saw Vaaz run away. Fortunately for him, he was gone and all we found was a room with 3 wooden effigies to the Dead 3. As I approached one of these wooden horrors, I was overcome by a powerful urge to bow before it. Despite my heroic efforts to the contrary, I was forced to one knee, head bowed, while I felt a sneer of contempt from the statue, and heard soft laughter from this damned box. I don't know if they are related, or if the box just took perverse pleasure at seeing me humbled.

Luckily, Vaneshi saw my strange behavior and pulled me out of my forced stupor. Upon coming back to myself, I set the statue ablaze with immense satisfaction! All of this seemed to intrigue Cas, so she began inspecting the statue of Merkul. She managed to separate the mask from the statue, but after a brief inspection and a sniff of disdain, she merely tossed it away over her shoulder. She's a strange one.

Beyond the room of statues, we found a supply room. It had miscellaneous sundries, but a few items of value, such as some potions of healing and some alchemist's fire.

TREASURE

Item	#	Value
Alchemist Fire (Flask)	3	50g
Caltrops	1	1g
Potion of Healing	4	25g

We decided that we had lingered long enough and went back to the half-collapsed room and pulled out the support beam. After some minor struggles, we managed to climb to the surface and exited an abandoned warehouse into the welcoming embrace of Baldur's Gate. We proceeded cautiously back to Capt Zojh with Mortlock in tow.

We escorted Vendetta to the Capt, where she lodged a formal complaint and went on her way. We offered our future help if she is ever in need. While reporting everything we found in the underground temple, the Capt, at the subtle urging of Morti, spotted and killed an imp who was spying on us. It was presumed to be a spy in the employ of Mort's brother. We will have to be wary of more invisible spies hanging about whenever we discuss anything of consequence! The Capt told us he doesn't have the power or support on his own to move against the Vanthampur family, but Liara Portiar should be returning to the city soon. If we can find some substantial evidence to back up Mort's claims, she would have the necessary clout to do something about it.

QUEST

Gather Evidence on Thalamra Vanthampur.

Reward: 200g each.

With that in mind, the Capt offered to double our pay if we can find said evidence. So we returned to the inn to rest up before doing a little shopping, interrogating Mort about the family compound, and raiding said compound. As seems to be typical for us, when we left the inn, another poor group of souls begged to be released from this mortal plane upon the edges of our blades. I must admit I was quite impressed by 5-11. He tried very hard to be diplomatic before - and even during - the fight. The dragon worshipers came to us demanding back their treasure. They stubbornly refused to offer a modest finder's fee in exchange for the crown. We dispatched the sad souls easily but I have a feeling we will be seeing more of their ilk before long.

5-11'S NOTES

Things Learned:

- Dagnaris prays to Bane? I didn't think he was a religious person.
- Some dragon people wanted my Dragon Hat. They did not get it.
- Dagnaris and Vaneshi were very effective when I commanded them to strike in battle.



ENTRY 6 - VANTHAMPUR RECONNAISSANCE

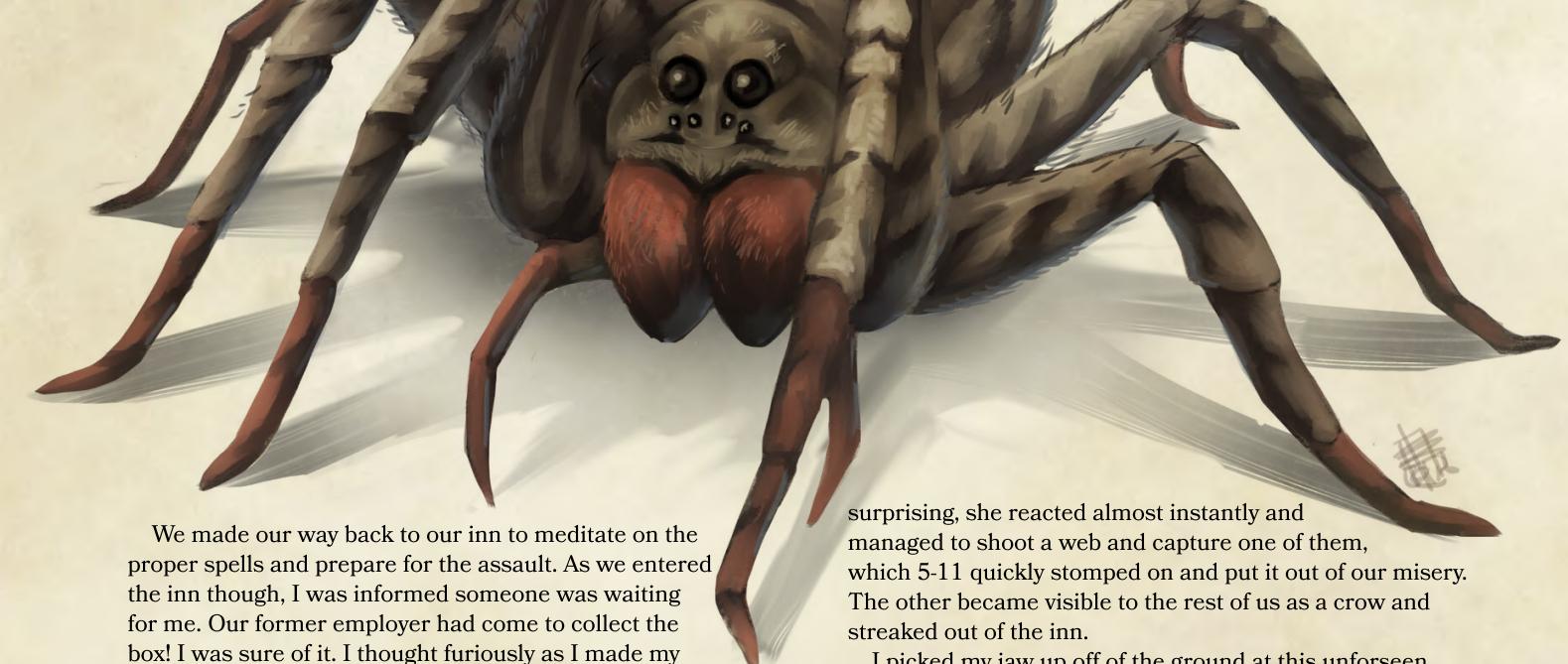
Ve made a general supply run after picking up what little the dragon cultists had of value. Cas upgraded her armor, but I didn't find anything worth my time. I need something with a certain panache! Flare! But also subtle, powerful, and intimidating. Hmmmm. Maybe I can commission something suitable. I did find a rapier with a beautiful, yet simple guard that seems quite a bit more striking than my old shortsword.

Anyway, after doing some light shopping, we headed back to the Flaming Fist headquarters and interrogated Mortlock about the estate. Capt. Zojh watched over us with his magic goggles to look for imp spies, but never spotted anything. Mort drew a legible, if not artistic, map and explained the workings of the villa as well as he could. There are 9 guards on patrol, in groups of 3. There is a stable in the NW corner, the main house in the center, and gates in the N and S walls. There is a basement off of the kitchen, which is near the NE corner of the house.

He told us we may be able to get his brother to aid our investigation, but it would be risky. He wasn't sure his brother would be willing to sell out his family. We sketched out a loose plan to cause a distraction on one side of the house and try to sneak into the kitchen, then basement. Capt. Zojh thought that would be certain to put everyone on high alert. We discussed it some more and came up with a brilliant strategic compromise. We will have Cas enter the estate as a cat, go into the stables, talk to the animals to get them to cause a ruckus. While that draws the attention of the guards, we sneak into the house. Cas can join us at her leisure as a cat. Hopefully, the guards will quickly settle back into their routine once they don't find any signs of problems in the stable. So we will scout out the estate today to verify Mort's info, and make our way into the estate tomorrow eve!

We went to the Upper City to do our scouting. We used our badges for now to get into the upper city, but we will have to stash them when we put our actual plan into action. As we entered the Upper City, it dawned on me that the Vanthampurs may have already distributed likenesses of myself and 5-11, so we stayed near the gates while Vaneshi and Cas went to check out the villa. While they were gone, 5-11 and myself went looking for some goods of a less common nature. We managed to find a pair of Sending Stones for sale. That will make future endeavors such as this, when our party must split up, much safer for everyone. They were pricey, but I think it will definitely be a worthy investment. When we returned to the gates, the ladies were there waiting on us. Mort's information checked out quite well. The plan is a go.





We made our way back to our inn to meditate on the proper spells and prepare for the assault. As we entered the inn though, I was informed someone was waiting for me. Our former employer had come to collect the box! I was sure of it. I thought furiously as I made my way to the private room he waited in. It was as I feared. He said I was to turn over the box immediately, but I fashioned a brilliant story of half truth and half deception. I convinced him we didn't have the box. That Capt. Zojh had confiscated it and was forcing us to work for him in order to get it back. He was skeptical, but I was brilliant! I pretended to be pained by his threats against Sappy and Zoey - the cowardly traitors! - and that I would "do my best" to retrieve the box by tomorrow.

After he left, we retired to my room, and I explained my tapestry of misdirection to the crew. This was the perfect opportunity! We would have to move our plan forward a bit, but we could run our normal plan in the early hours of the morning. If everything went perfect, we could have the evidence we need and present it to the captain, or go find Liara Portiar if we were being pursued. If our plan failed (ha! slim chance) we could take a counterfeit box with us, claiming we were just early to the meeting and anxious to get rid of it as we had to snatch it from the captain and the guard may be looking for us. When they take it and discover its a fake, well, how were we supposed to know? It fit the description and we were not told what it contains! Ah, a masterful plan and backup, just in case.

This backup DID require a convincing fake box though, so we decided to prevent being spied upon, I would take the real box, hide it somewhere, get a fake, and return to the inn. That way, only I know the location of the real box, and no spies could overhear our plan and take advantage. All we needed was a distraction so I could get out of the inn.

I went to the bar and sat down to wait for the action to begin. I didn't really think this was necessary, but its always better to be safe than dead! Moments later, Cas walks into the room and turns into a giant spider! I think Vaneshi will need a change of clothes after this. She is apparently not a fan of spiders. Huh. Anyway, as she changed, 5-11 began running around the room screaming "Bloody Murder!". Don't misunderstand me. He didn't run around screaming as IF he was being murdered, he literally ran about screaming the words "bloody murder". I can't tell if he is that unaware, or if he is playing us all for fools.... Anyway, against all odds, Cas spotted not one, but 2 imps when she shape shifted! Apparently a spider's Blind Sight can spot the little buggers. That could be a very useful skill in the future. Even MORE

surprising, she reacted almost instantly and managed to shoot a web and capture one of them, which 5-11 quickly stomped on and put it out of our misery. The other became visible to the rest of us as a crow and streaked out of the inn.

I picked my jaw up off of the ground at this unforseen confrontation, and lost myself in the crowd running for the door. After being as sure as I could that I wasn't being followed, I went back to the shop 5-11 and I were in previously. I found a very similar puzzle box for sale for a Ridiculous Amount of gold. I managed to bargain him down to Simply Exorbitant, and went on about my business. I put the flask of alchemist's fire inside of the box as a possible little surprise, but more importantly, to make our fake seem to be a weight that would suggest it actually contained SOMETHING. I then took the real box to [REDACTED]. With the fake safely in hand, and the real treasure hidden away, I returned to the inn. Tomorrow, we make our way into the dreaded lair of the Vanthampurs to find evidence of their treachery against the city, and possibly even an answer to this damned box and what resides within, so desperately seeking to get out!

5-11'S NOTES

Things Learned:

- Captain Zojh let me try his magic goggles!
- Was able to buy Sending Stones to communicate within the group. They remind me of my homeworld.
- Dagnaris was a Double Agent for both the Flaming Fist and the Vanthampurs! I guess this makes me a Double Agent too?
- With my work for the Pathfinders, does this make me a Triple Agent? Is that a record?
- We created a diversion so that Dagnaris could sneak away from any invisible imps. My performance was both subtle and effective.
- I found out that Vaneshi is afraid of spiders. If we run into a fire spider we are in trouble!

ENTRY 7 - VANTHAMPUR INFILTRATION

So we awoke this morning ready to enact our bold plan! We set off, strangely unhindered, to the Upper City. The guards passed us through with hardly a glance, recognizing us from our previous visit. We made our way near the estate, then everyone except Cas settled in to wait for the signal. Cas went on to the estate to trigger the distraction. It took long enough that I was beginning to get nervous, but at last we heard a huge ruckus, and quickly headed to the gate....and that's when things began to get back to normal.

I asked 5-11 to boost me up so I could see over the gate to check if the coast was clear. He did. With gusto. He actually flung me well OVER the gate! I grabbed at the gate as I sailed over the top, but to little beneficial effect. I only accomplished sending myself into a windmilling stone, falling back to earth, cussing my muscle-bound companion. To add insult to injury, the gate was not locked. The only upside, was the guards were well and truly distracted by the rampaging horses. I dusted myself off, opened the gate, and ran to check the front door, which was indeed locked. It opened quite easily, and we darted inside as a couple of guards came charging around the corner pursuing one of the horses.

We thought we had a moment to catch our collective breaths, but were immediately assailed by several imps hiding in the entryway! We dispatched them quickly, but not before the little monsters managed to do a fair bit of damage to the group.



This, of course, just lead to the next disaster. In walks the butler with his nose in the air. While 5-11 failed miserably at ... whatever he was attempting, speaking to Sir Butt Ler, I hid the imp carcasses in the vases around the entry. Then I just gagged the butler and escorted him into the servant's quarters in the next room over. We tied him to the bed while reassuring him he would not be harmed.

Next came the kitchen. It was inhabited by the cook and the cat. I chose to ignore the cat, but jumped on the surprisingly stout cook, muffling her shouts, and instructed her to give me a piggyback ride back to the servants quarters, quietly. She complied and we gagged her so she could join Sir Butt Ler in a little nap while we explored. As if we didn't have enough problems at this point, 5-11 decided to stop and feed the damned cat! Which then decided to attach itself to 5-11 as we proceeded to the basement.



We found a plethora of crates there, just as Cas had told us. We began to check them out, looking for incriminating evidence, besides imp corpses, but only found more LIVE imps, waiting to burst out of the crates as soon as we touched them. They were a different type of imp, with spiked tails, but we dispatched these little pests too. I began to worry we were taking too long to get anywhere, and not finding ANYTHING, but we were well and truly committed to the path now, with little hope of the backup plain being of any use. The cook and butler screwed up that beautiful idea! People truly have no respect for my strategic genius.

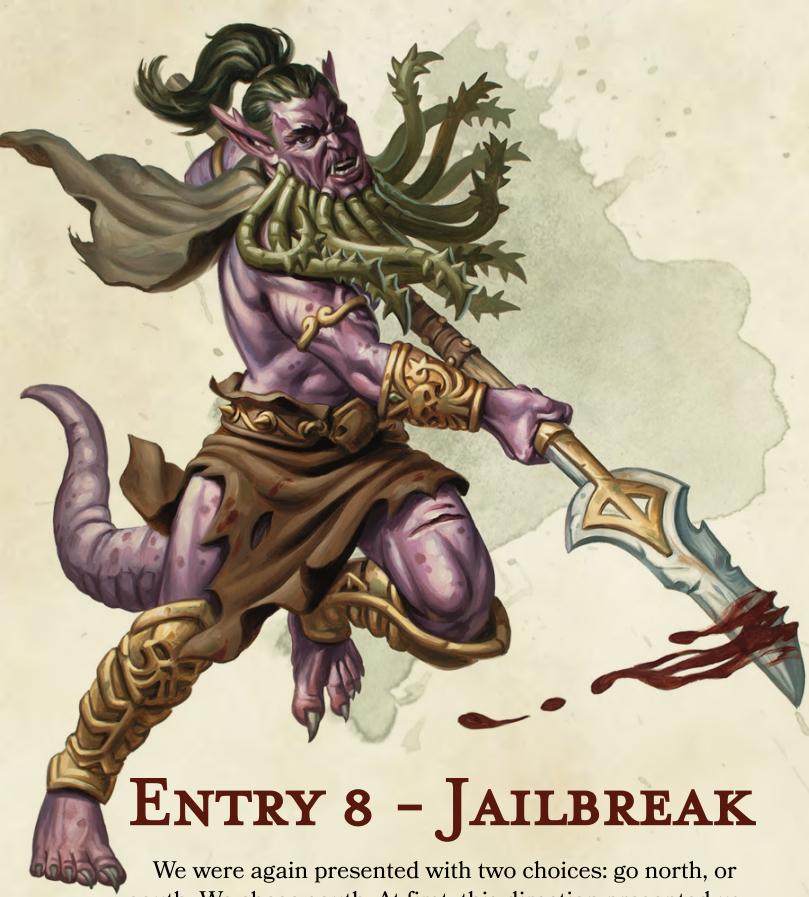
There were 2 doors leading out of the main basement room. We chose the heavier, iron door and quickly found a couple of guards coming up the hallway. We sneaked up to the corner and surprised them as they came around the corner. They didn't put up much of a fight, but they also didn't offer us any evidence either. Very unhelpful chaps. So, our search goes on, while time grows short! We need to quickly find some solid evidence, and make a quick getaway before they call in the reinforcements!

5-11's NOTES

Things Learned:

- Met a new friend. He is furry and has wings. He needs a better name. I don't know many names.
- We need a better way of seeing imps.
- We need to get magic or silvered weapons. Our weapons and magic weren't effective against the fiends.





ENTRY 8 - JAILBREAK

We were again presented with two choices: go north, or south. We chose south. At first, this direction presented us with very little help or excitement. Then we came across the prison! There was a devil jailer watching over some prisoners, but we couldn't tell who. If they found these people important enough to guard, then we definitely needed to liberate the poor souls, even beyond just not leaving them to the gentle care of a devil!

We used our dispatched guards' uniforms to convince the jailer to let us in. Vaneshi began to converse through the door with the ugly purple beast in some foul-sounding language. It eventually let Vaneshi and Cascadazul lead 5-11 in, as if he were their prisoner. I stayed behind in the shadows. Before they could lock 5-11 in a cell, I leapt on the purple devil and plunged my rapier into its back! It grunted in irritation, and its beard flailed about wildly, but it didn't seem overly distressed at this sudden attack, so I slipped back into the shadows. We slowly wore the tough beast down until Vaneshi suddenly unleashed a holy storm upon and left little behind except his weapon and key ring.

Inside the various cells, we found the following prisoners. Satir Thione Hhune is an elderly patriarch of the city. She was being held as ransom to keep her family in line while Vanthampur tried to snatch the seat of grand duke. Falaster Fisk was sent by Sylvira Savikas of Candlekeep to investigate the Vanthampurs and, if possible, steal the Devil's Contract that they suspected would secure Vanthampur's rule of Baldur's Gate.

Fisk has guessed from our conversations that our box contains the contract. Its possible, but I'm still not convinced its a good idea to open it to found out. He believes Sylvira can open it safely. We will consider it.

We also found 2 other sad souls locked away. Sappi and Zoey! They admitted to conspiring with the Vanthampurs to get the box from us for a better price. Neither believed we would turn it over, so they sought to improve their pay, but were instead rewarded with rooms without a view. The other prisoners say their story lines up with their observations, and they didn't seem like the dastardly type from our time together. They just seemed like trouble.

Fisk has agreed to make us a decent map of this lair and wants to help us find better evidence than just their testimony. We plan to send Satir out with Sappi and Zoey as protection, and continue on with Fisk hanging about. He seems a useful type, if a bit on the back side of his adventuring days. Hopefully, Satir's position as a patriarch as well as whatever else we can find down here will prove sufficient to bring down this odious family.

5-11'S NOTES

Things Learned:

- Vaneshi vaporised a devil!
- Slobberchops can talk! Can he converse or is he like a parrot?
- Sappi and Zoey betrayed us! I did even know that was a possibility. What else have I trusted?



ENTRY 9 – SHIELDS AND OVERSEERS

He headed to the southern exit on the map and found a metal grate covering the exit. With a crowbar and a little elbow grease, we made the gap between bars large enough to squeeze through. We sent Satir, Sappi and Zoey on their way. The rest of us continued down the hall to look for additional evidence. We

managed to avoid the patrolling guards, but could not find the secret entrance into the marked room. After fumbling around for a time and referring back to the map frequently, we decided to move on. We found a southern room locked a little way further down the hall. We managed to unlock that door and get inside before the guards came back around.

Inside we found Thavius Creeg! He seemed to be in good physical condition, but his shadow looked like a fat devil. We could not divine his exact ailment, but it quickly became obvious he was as corrupted as we were led to believe. While we were speaking to him, the shield on the wall began speaking to us telepathically. It warned us Thavius was up to no good. It informed us it was a celestial being named Hidden Lord, and it offered to assist us in getting to Elturel, which is now in Avernus. This was a good-news, bad-news situation. It was good that the city is still intact, but it was quite disconcerting to find out a whole city had been transported not only to another realm, but to Avernus! We tied up Thavius, gagged him, and searched the room. We found a nice cache of Vanthampur treasure to avail ourselves of, collected the Hidden Lord shield from the wall, and prepared to continue our hunt.



TREASURE

Item	#	Value
Azurite Gemstones	20	10gp
Glaive	1	???
Pieces of a Dagger named Fang	2	250gp
Electrum Ingots	30	10gp
Potions of Healing	2	25gp
Shield of the Hidden Lord	1	???
Silver Dagger	2	???

We next checked another southern room. It appeared to be a summoning circle for some sort of pit fiend. We just assumed if we summoned it, it would be less than willing to testify against the Vanthampurs without compensation we were unwilling to give. So we sneaked up to the main temple, but found it was filled with fanatics chanting praises to the arch devil Zariel. We had no desire to interrupt such a solemn gathering, so we checked the living quarters on the map.

We had a little more success here. It seemed to be Thavius local residence, or at least the desk was littered with his correspondence, as well as a holy symbol of Torm in the footlocker. The only other thing of note was a book titled Apocalyptic.

TREASURE

Item	#	Value
Book Titled "Apocalypto"	1	???
Holy Symbol of Torm	1	???

We decided we had probably overstayed our welcome, so we decided to recover Thavius and head out. Before we got far though, the alarm was raised. We sprinted for the room where we left Thavius. After 5-11 retrieved him like a sack of grain, we sprinted for the sewer exit while being pursued by another devil. We managed to get most everyone through the grate just as it turned the corner. 5-11 managed to bend the bars back into place while I fended the beast off with my rapier. It was caught halfway through the bars, so 5-11 took that opportunity to liberate its head from its shoulders, which had the positive effect of silencing the wailing nuisance. From there, we wandered through the sewers a bit looking for an exit to the surface. 5-11 seemed to believe Slobberchops was leading us, but I have serious doubts about the navigational skills of that animal. I think we just finally managed to wander out.

We quickly and quietly returned to Captain Jozh and reported everything and everyone we had found. Portiar came in while we were regaling him with our exploits below the surface. She seemed to be impressed and annoyed in equal measure by the things we had discovered, but we were paid handsomely for our efforts. As a whole, everyone agreed that the next logical step would be to retrieve the puzzle box and continue to Candlekeep with Falaster Fisk to see what Syvira could tell us about the box and the events so far. After doing a bit of shopping, that will be our next destination!

5-11's NOTES

Things Learned:

- Dagnaris said opening a wall was a "piece of cake", but he was unable to open the wall marked on Fisk's map. Maybe the wall is broken?
- Thavius Kreeg's body didn't match his shadow. Was he lying or his shadow? I don't trust either of them.
- A shield started to talk to us. It claimed to be a celestial but it looked like a devil. I don't trust it either.
- Is everyone a liar?
- Vaneshi translated chanting about Zariel winning the Blood War. This is information Feeny was after. Hopefully I will learn more.
- Slobberchops is a good navigator. I paid him with fish.
- We learned that the talking shield can make fire. I didn't want to hold that thing any longer.

ENTRY 10 - TRAVELING TO CANDLEKEEP

I don't understand. Everything was going so well. We were on our way to saving the entire realm from the machinations of Avernum and their human puppets....then a simple trip from Baldur's Gate to Candlekeep unraveled the whole thing.

We started to leave town, and Falaster suddenly remembered he needed gear from his house. We went back and retrieved his gear, and started again. Then Vaneshi was suddenly overcome with a need to commune with her ... Boss? Guardian Spirit? God? Whatever. She just stopped in the middle of the road, dismounted, and walked off talking to the air. We didn't want to draw the ire of ANY gods, considering our current task, so we waited patiently for her to stop mumbling to herself.

Off we go again....for maybe 10 minutes before my horse through a shoe. Luckily, Cascadazul knows enough about animals, and we had the supplies to repair the problem without turning around. Except now, we had wasted so much time, we decided we might as well stay put for a meal before getting moving again.

FINALLY, we mounted up and were on our way....for a short time. Then this farmer with his cart came over the hill, glaring daggers at us, as if WE looked like brigands or beggars in his way. When he drew near us, before I could speak up to alay the poor fool's fears, he FLEW up out of the wagon and transformed into a winged devil. Three humans jumped out of the wagon and looked ready for a fight. Well, this suited me just fine. I was ready to find something squishy to bury my daggers and my frustrations in!

The fight went our way pretty quickly, as Vaneshi used Hidden Lord to summon a wall of flame to consume the humans while we harried the devil about. The devil did seem particularly interested in Vaneshi and the Hidden Lord. I get the impression he might either be important to their plans, or could be a key to STOPPING their plan. Either way, we should take special care to keep him close. Besides, he seems like quite a useful fellow to have around!

That seemed to be the end of our bad luck, as the rest of the trip was quite uneventful and we arrived safely at Candlekeep. Now we just need to gain admittance and find Sylvira.

5-11'S NOTES

Things Learned:

- We can't even trust simple farmers!
- Vaneshi made a Wall of Flame right next to me! Does she realize how dangerous that is?
- Vaneshi told us the story about how then the Angel Zariel saved Elturel and about the origin of the Hellriders.
- She seemed offended when I asked if she was with Zariel a hundred years ago.



ENTRY 11 - DESCENT INTO AVERNUS

Fisk used his recipe (scholars are so strange) to gain us admittance into Candlekeep. Once inside, he led us to Sylvira's tower. Sylvira was not that exceptional, except for her companion. She keeps a demon as a familiar! Nobody seemed to mark this as terribly odd though, so I tried to ignore it. What caught HER attention about us very quickly was Hidden Lord. She informed us he hasn't been completely honest with us. The SHIELD is of celestial origin, but the entity it contains is actually the arch demon Gargoth. Between her knowledge and what we discovered in the library, the shield is a bit odd. Its considered a sign of the triumph of good over evil, but it was actually several dark gods such as Bane and Bal who banded together to end Gargoth's divinity, that actually trapped it in the shield. During the Harpstar Wars, Gargoth managed to become a lesser god and achieved immortality. I guess its just crowded at the top, because his fellows put an end to that! Regardless of how it happened, he is there now. Gargoth is the lord of betrayal, and takes particular pleasure in making contracts with mortals, then fulfilling the LETTER of the contract, but betraying the intent.

After the introductions and we filled her in on our triumphs so far, she let us know the box was likely key to knowing what was happening and she believed she could safely open it. She kindly allowed us each a magical weapon from her vault as another line of defense. We were told we could keep these beautiful implements of death to aid our journey against the forces of evil. After we were all girded in the magnificence befitting our station, we began the ritual to open the box. As the box sprang open, the voices fell silent, and contract consisting of 9 panels was revealed. It was the contract the worm Thavious made. It read as follows:

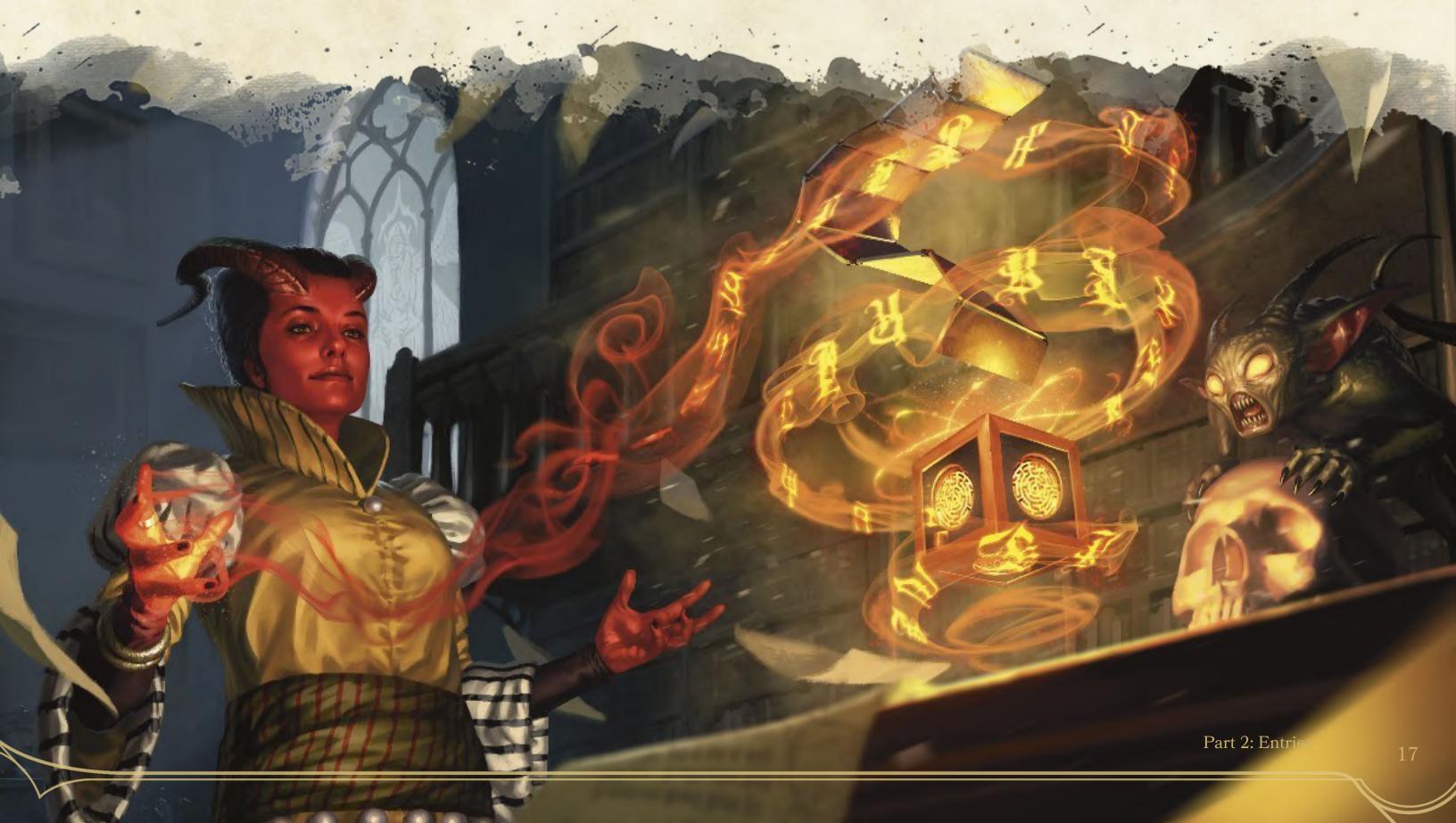
Be it known to all that I, Thavious Kreeg, High Overseer of Elturel, have sworn to my master, Zariel, lord of Avernus, to keep the agreements contained in this oath.

I hereby submit to Zariel in all matters and for all time. I will place Her above all creatures, living and dead. I will obey Her all my days and beyond with fear and servility.

I recognize the dispensation of the device called the Solar Insidiator, hereafter called the Companion. In my capacity as High Overseer of Elturel and its vassal territories, I acknowledge that all lands falling under the light of the Companion are forfeit to Zariel. All persons bound by oath to defend Elturel are also considered forfeit. I further recognize that this dispensation will last fifty years, after which the Companion will return whence it came, taking Elturel and its oath-bound defenders with it, if that is Zariel's wish.

All this is my everlasting pledge.

After this less-than stunning revelation, Sylvira asked if we would be willing to go to Avernus to try and rescue the city and its people. We were of course willing, but needed a bit of direction. While she gathered resources and worked on a way to get us to Avernus, we did our own research at the archives. I looked into Gargoth and Zariel. I have already committed what I learned of Gargoth to the text above. Zariel seems to be exactly what she claims: an angel frustrated with the war between good and evil, looking for a way to directly strike a blow for good. She failed when she was defeated during Elturel's assault on Avernus. Most of the world believes she was destroyed, but it would appear she was instead somehow converted to the side of evil and ended up destroying Elturel instead of saving it.



Cascadazul looked into the Companion, which we now know is also referred to as the Solar Insidiator. She did not have much success. There are apparently many theories about its composition and origins, but no solid conclusions other than it exuded no heat and had no apparent energy source.

Vaneshi researched contracts with devils. She found some how-to manuals that might be of some use on how to AVOID getting bound, and some miscellaneous information. The contracts are always written in Infernal and the binding ranges from a simple signature, to a vile or evil act. The gift conferred by the contract is always immediately granted, but the cost is part of the contract. In Thavius' case, the payment came due after 50 years. If the contract is breached, there is usually a penalty detailed in the contract fine print that is inflicted. We wondered if Thavius didn't try to breach the contract and that caused his odd shadow problems. Voiding a contract requires the consent of both the devil and mortal involved. The original contract is always kept by the devil and can be summoned at will.

5-11 was predictably useless in his research. He asked about the Blood War and wanted details about battles, notable figures, strategies and <yawn> stuff NOBODY cares about except for him and a few scholars apparently. He did accidentally run across a bit of useful information though. We now know devils start as Lemur devils and have to work their way up through the ranks by getting souls. Where they get their resources for making contracts, how normal human souls can be converted into devils, what most of the souls are used for or what happens to them, and what happens to the human mind or where the devil mind comes from is still a mystery. We also know demons are not really interested in souls so much as just useful human tools to do their bidding. A reference to the devil Asmodeus being the Lord of the Nine Hells was found. He is known to be a supreme strategist and his leadership of the devil legions have managed to keep them one step ahead of the seemingly more powerful demon army in their war.

The next day, we returned to Sylvira for dinner. She told us a friend of hers, Traxigor, owed her a favor and could teleport us to Avernus. He had a teleport circle directly to Elturel which should get us there. There is also another person with Traxigor, Lulu, that should be of assistance to us and our search and rescue of the city. Sylvira also gave us a map of Avernus with the caveat that the map maker went insane creating it. Not exactly a glowing recommendation. Lastly, the contract between Thavius and Zariel we provided netted us a free pass back to Candlekeep. With the new information at hand, it was time to go meet Traxigor and get on with this nasty business! Now we come to the good stuff!

We flew to Traxigor's keep via gryphon! Now THAT is what I call flying in style! They were remarkable creatures, but covered the distance to Traxigor's flying keep MUCH too quickly. Annnnd, thus ends the good stuff.

Upon arrival, we landed on the roof and wished our flying friends well. Descending into the keep, we were greeted by a flying, small, golden mastodon. You read that correctly. A flying, TALKING, dwarf yellow elephant. I assumed at this point I was suffering some sort of euphoria, or altitude sickness and was hallucinating. That's when I noticed the otter walking around and muttering to himself. That was when I remembered the map. That was the answer. Reading

the map of Avernus had made us all crazy. Our mission was a failure. But, in the indomitable spirit of my people, I decided to trudge on through this lunatic hallucination and hope for the best.

We learned Lulu was the mount Zariel rode into battle against the fiend horde. When defeat was inevitable, Zariel commanded Lulu to take her famed sword away and hide it. That was 50 years ago. A short time ago, Lulu was found wandering the Fields of the Dead. While in Avernus, she lost almost all of her memories. Traxigor and Sylvira think if she comes with us, she might remember more, and possibly even where the sword is hidden (oh yay - it didn't seem to do Zariel much good). So now we are headed to hell with a shield containing a near-diety devil and a dwarf yellow flying elephant. Elturel is doomed.



Traxigor managed his spell perfectly. We all arrived in Elturel with all of our extremities still attached at the correct locations. The first thing we noticed is we were indeed in Elturel, but the previously bright and shining Companion was now a black sphere of darkness shooting bluish-white lightning down upon the city. Traxigor took one look at it, uttered some arcane phrase, and was gone. Thanks for the show of support, you mangy little rat!

Lulu was nearly hysterical and accidentally cast Light on a nearby rock. Not exactly useful in-and-of itself, but nice to know the oversized anteater might actually be of some use. Gargoth made a break for it also. He seemed pretty excited to be home and acted as if he were leaving, but then went sullen and silent. We assume that means his initial plan to come home and escape failed. Lulu then started ranting on about the Demon Lord Yenaguh is determined to destroy Zariel's sword, if it is found. So I guess its a race to find it since everyone is interested. Hopefully Lulu can keep us in the lead.

Before we could recover from all of THIS nonsense, a woman carrying 2 small children came sprinting around a corner with 3 bearded devils in casual pursuit. It was obvious they were enjoying their sport. We all quickly agreed that was unacceptable and intercepted the devils and put them down.

After retrieving their glaive blades, she told us the town is falling apart. Food and water are already growing scarce. Many people were killed when the city was relocated here, and many more have since perished at the hands of deprivation or the devils. She was originally moderately safe at an inn, but the food ran out, so she was out scavenging when these recently deceased fellows found her.

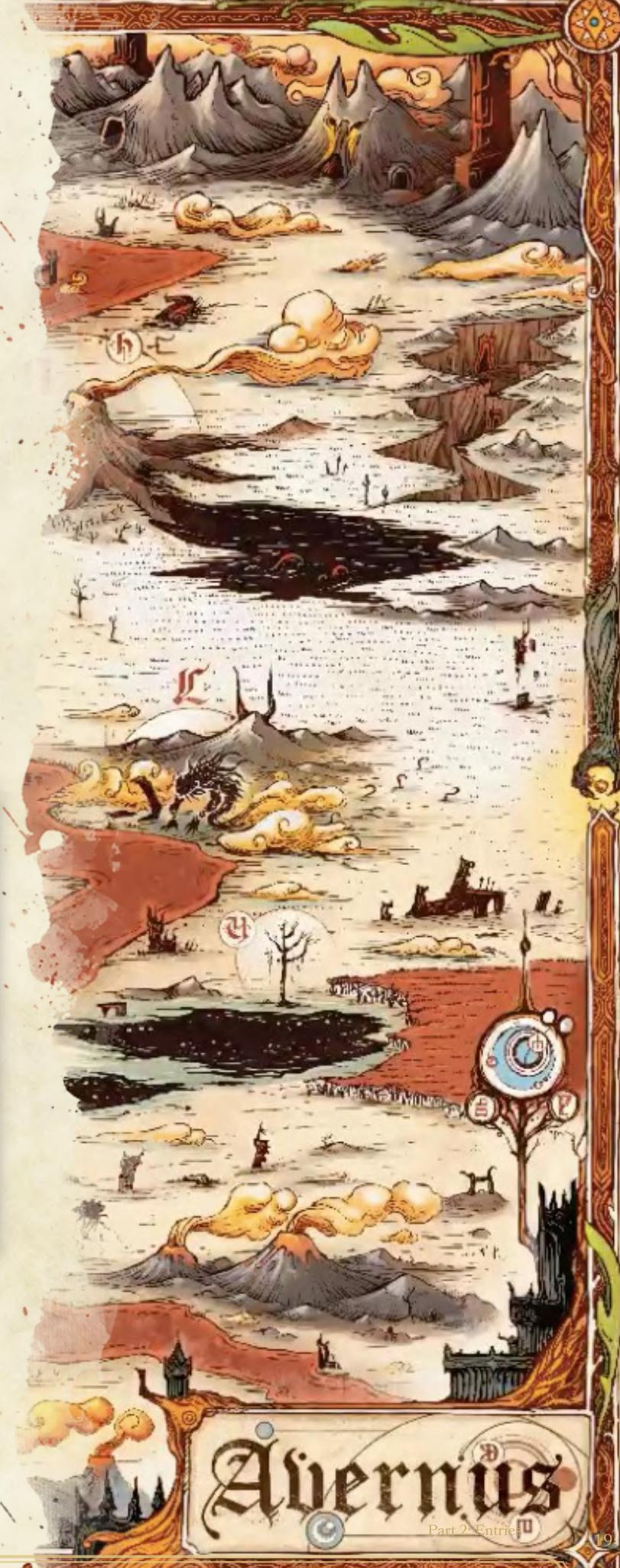
She told us more about the city as well. It is suspended high above the floor of Avernus, but is crumbling day-by-day. The city is currently split and held together by a pair of bridges connecting the halves. We were on the eastern side of the city, which is rumored to be worse off with supplies and devils alike. The western side, with the high hall, is supposed to be better defended, well supplied, and may include the Grand Duke of Baldr's Gate. We agree to accompany her to the High Hall. The bridge was defended by a host of devils, but we charged them on their chosen ground, as there were few options to cross the city. I found myself missing my gryphon terribly. It was at this point that we discovered Lulu was quite an impressive mastodon, despite her diminutive appearance. She has remembered she can trumpet several different spells to either aid us or flatten her opponents. She is no gryphon, but I may need to approach her to see if she is amenable to the idea of a rider of appropriate proportions.

AFTER the battle was over, Vaneshi discovered the runes on the bridge could be activated. They seemed to burn the devils. That would have been wonderful to know WHILE fighting them, rather than charring their corpses, but it may come in handy in the future. Now we just need to catch our breath and continue on the High Hall.

5-11's NOTES

Things Learned:

- The glaive I picked up was Hell Forged. Anyone killed with it is reborn in Avernus as a Lemure.
- The talking shield was lying to us. He is infernal and not celestial. Sylvira says it is dangerous.
- I learned more about the Blood War. Feeny and Ryukhar will be pleased.
- Asmodeus's strategizing is the reason that the demons havn't overrun the devils.
- Flying cats and now flying elephants. Can anything fly? Could I get built in wings?
- Lulu seems to have a lot about herself that she doesn't remember.
- Traxigor transported us to Elturel on the plane of Avernus. Did anyone ask him how we would get back?



ENTRY 12 - HIGH HALL

As we began the trek from the bridge to High Hall, the Solar Insidiator continuously threw its baleful, dark lightning around the city, destroying buildings seemingly at random. It never directly targeted us, but it certainly put an itch between my shoulder blades!

When we made it to High Hall, it was not looking like a strong bastion for good. Only 3 of its 5 towers remain standing, but a good portion of the complex was already destroyed and the wall was pocked with holes. There were no guards to greet us, or any living beings at all. There were two dead guards near the destroyed gate and two hell hounds asleep on the steps of the main hall. We managed to sneak up on one and slay him before he could rise. The other woke up with some awful morning breath! They can breathe fire. Wonderful. 5-11 shouldn't want to keep it as a pet at least!

After dispatching the dog, we proceeded into the main hall. There were eight pillars around the room. Vaneshi explained they were once murals to the gods, but now, all except Torm had been corrupted. The formerly beautiful murals were warped to represent the likeness of a winged female devil wielding a luminous sword. It seems likely that would be Zariel staking her claim.

As we were evaluating her artistic license, another devil came around the corner with a herd of giant crabs. I'm sure there's a "devil walks into a bar" joke there, but it didn't seem the appropriate time to regale the party with it. So instead, we dispatched the critters as quickly and quietly as possible. An interesting thing happened during the fight though. The devil kept trying to shoot some fire spell at 5-11 and it would fizzle or weaken almost immediately. It would seem The holy power of this place is fading, but not yet dead. Hopefully, its residents can say the same. The search for survivors goes on.

5-11's NOTES

Things Learned:

- Does everything breath fire?!



ENTRY 13 - HIGH HALL CRYPTS

Vaneshi suggested we head to the residences or the crypts, but the crypts were below the main hall and had a single main entrance. This would make it more defensible, so more likely to be the stronghold for any resistance. We decided to do a little scouting before rushing in. When I peaked behind the ripped and blood-stained curtain masking the hall, there was a big room with an alter shaped like an open gauntleted hand. There was an open trap door in the center and a larger lever off to the side. The alter was surrounded by 3 gibbering humans and a single devil.

Before we could decide on a course of action, the cursed voices that I thought were gone with the puzzle box began to speak again. The foul presence tried to coerce me with a little "help". They pointed out that one of the "corpses" was still breathing and there were still enemies in the balcony. As much as I wanted to ignore them, and even more, to be FREE of them, I couldn't ignore the accurate analysis they provided.

We found Setern Obranch cowering on the floor, playing dead. Once we convinced him we were not actually devils or going to torture him, he gave us a fair amount of information. He told us we were correct. The survivors were holed up in the crypts. They were led there by the grand duke, but he had since left on some other mission. The entire cathedral was under assault and he had survived the last wave by playing dead. Pherria Jynks was likely in charge below and should know more.

We decided to have Caz lure the devil and mumblers out to us and we would ambush them as they came through the curtains. It went reasonably well, but for lunatics, they put up a decent fight!

After finishing them off, we took Seltzer and headed below. He wanted to stop and tell old tales of all things! Some rambling story about a scruffy girl slaying a young red dragon with nothing but a common long sword and her bravery. Nobody saw exactly what happened, but she slew the dragon, but died in the fight with no visible marks on her. They laid her body to rest down here, but it has never decayed and hasn't a mark upon it. I'm beginning to think this entire CITY is filled with simple saps and charlatans coming to their rescue every 50 years or so. Good grief.

We found the central room of the crypts filled with roughly 100 sorry-looking souls. Mostly women, children, and the elderly. We did find Pherria doing her best to guard them wielding a book and an antique ceremonial mace.

As we began to tell each other our stories, an Abishai walked in with a group of cultists in tow. He demanded everyone line up and prepare to be taken. I cringe to remember it, but 5-11 immediately started a line. I don't THINK he had any intention of surrendering, but he struggles a bit when faced with direct orders. With so many innocents around, I tried to bluff and convince THEM to surrender to US. They didn't seem to take me seriously though. I don't understand. My cape was billowing appropriately. I brandished Devil's Bane threateningly. I magnanimously offered to accept his surrender, and then he dismissed me and threatened the people. Vaneshi decided to take a more direct approach and dropped a wall of fire on the cultists, who had kindly lined up for her. They gave off a nice purple smoke as they incinerated. The Abishai seemed enraged rather than frightened STILL. So we eliminated him too and took a bow to our adoring audience.



We continued our discussion as if we hadn't been rudely interrupted. Pherria explained the duke was on a mission to recover the Helm of Torm's Sight, in the hopes it would provide a way to escape this plane. It was entombed in the local cemetery, which scouts had reported was overrun with undead. He should have returned some time ago, but had yet to make an appearance. That seemed to be the next logical place for us to go as soon as we secured the refugees here.

We also found out the book she was so dearly clutching was the Creed Resolute. It contains a list of all citizens and their signed oaths to defend the city with their bodies and souls. A nice touch by Thavius to unknowingly get every last citizen to bind their soul to the city. They may have to create a new level of hell down here just for him. Pherria was able to provide a Ring of Protection that they found while checking out the area down here. She felt it would serve us better than them.

We made sure there were no more surprises lurking down in the crypts, then went back upstairs to clear the cathedral before venturing on to the cemetery. Seltzer had told us about a private altar that had been desecrated and cursed. Vaneshi would not be dissuaded from at least attempting to right this wrong before continuing on. Just approaching it made Vaneshi physically ill and a touch mentally unstable too. Regardless, we were able to use some holy water that Pherria provided us with to reconsecrate the altar. We then proceeded to the balcony, where the damned voices smugly proclaimed there were more unwanted visitors. We found one local guard nearly unhinged, but 5-11 managed to assert some martial dominance and get him moving towards the crypts where hopefully he could be useful defending the less able. We also found the hound keeper and his pair of hell hounds. Did I mention this things breath fire? Well we apparently forgot and made it too easy for them to surround us. It was almost a disaster, but we managed to pull through and send them on to their next realm. We took our scorched backsides and wounded pride to the crypts to rest up before venturing on to the cemetery.

5-11's NOTES

Things Learned:

- Cas was very effective with her new bow.
- I did not like the white lizard devil. He was a bully.
- My recollection of the last fight is hazy. I remember fire... then nothing. Fire... then nothing. Fire... then nothing. And then the fight was over.
- We need to position ourselves better against enemies that can breath fire.

ENTRY 14 - THE GRAND CEMETERY

Gargoth invaded our dreams last night. He tried bargaining, cajoling, even begging. He didn't accomplish much besides making us all restless...except 5-11, who doesn't bother with sleep of course. Regardless, we made it through the night and headed out early, feeling mostly refreshed.

We didn't make it far before we heard someone yelling for help. Cascadazul was off in an instant in the direction of the call. We all followed and soon found a single human being accosted by a pair of demons! It seemed odd to find them in a city full of devils, but what about this whole place makes sense? We were able to quickly dispatch one demon and protect the poor soul from the other one. Once it became obvious his target was beyond his reach, the demon quickly fled.

We checked on the human once we were sure the area was clear and something just didn't seem quite right. He was immaculately dressed, if not too richly, and looked completely unscathed. He was quite a handsome fellow, kind, and good-natured as well. I decided it would only be fitting if we escorted him back to the safety of the crypts. Vaneshi was being QUITE unreasonable though, and insisted on pestering the poor fellow. Everyone's questions seemed to make him quite nervous though, and he decided he could make his own way and started to leave on his own. That was when Caz turned into a wolf and frightened the human right out of him. He sprouted wings and flew away. I guarded his back from my traitorous party, but as he gained distance, I realized I was being played for a fool. It was a devil in disguise the whole time... but he really didn't seem like a bad sort.

We continued on our slightly more cautious way to the cemetery and made it there without further incident. When we arrived, it was a horrifying sight. Body parts slithered and writhed. Zombies and skeletons shambled about. It seemed the entire population had decided to just get up and wander about aimlessly. We did find some booted tracks that seemed to indicate the duke and his party had passed this way, but there were no recently deceased bodies about which we took as a good sign. We decided our best course of action would be to carefully make our way to the central chapel while avoiding as many undead as possible. They did not seem particularly interested in us or anything else, so it seemed a safe enough proposal.

We made it most of the way to our uncomfortable destination before the unexpected attacked, as usual. Three massive undead minotaurs burst from the ground and seemed much more focused than the rest of the locals. Devil's Bane was efficient, as usual, at dispatching evil, but Vaneshi and her mace seemed to take umbrage at these unholy shambling fiends. The minotaurs were soon returned to their graves, but in a great many more pieces than there were initially. That just left the question of why in Torm's name were they here in the first place?!

We made our way to the chapel without any other residence putting up a fight. The chapel had seen better days, like much of the rest of the city. The stained glass windows were mostly broken out and the doors stood ajar. There were many pillars spaced around the chapel with each dedicated to some great hero. Caz and Vaneshi knew all the hero's names and Vaneshi told us if we speak their names, their pillars will glow with radiant light. Normally, this would just be to honor their heroics and sacrifices. In our current circumstances though, the light will also ward against the undead. Good information to know. Also, I've picked out the spot where my pillar will be! Now, into the belly of the beast!

5-11'S NOTES

Things Learned:

- I don't trust Orin. I don't understand what Dagnaris sees in him.
- Vaneshi is very dangerous against undead.



ENTRY 15 - THE GRAND CEMETERY CHAPEL

So I misjudged the pillars. They were not JUST a tribute to fallen heroes. There were also hideouts for damned shadows and spectres! As we approached the doors to the chapel, one stepped out of each pillar and attacked. We didn't have too much trouble getting rid of them, but each touch seemed to leave us weakened. Devil's Bane had never felt so heavy before, but he continued to show his mettle to undead just as well as devils!

After we took care of those menaces, we stepped into the chapel. We only took a few steps before a group of undead minotaurs stepped from the shadows and attacked. I don't know if it was the shattered stained glass scattered about the chapel, or the undead treading upon them but Vaneshi let out a rage-filled bellow and began to radiate a brilliant light. The undead fell before her rage and her mace like so much wheat before the scythe.

After catching our breath AGAIN, we noticed a curtained-off central area. I peaked in and saw 2 insect-looking fiends guarding some stairs, and some sort of undead fellow either praying or sleeping at a desk. It was hard to tell which. As we entered the room, we found he was actually capable of speech and seemed quite calm at our sudden appearance. Once he started rambling on about Zariel's glory and consuming the city though, 5-11 just bashed him in the face and the fight was on.

We were hardly getting started though when 5 pig-ape demons rushed up the stairs with a giant scorpion. Lulu decided this was an opportune time to trumpet though, and that took care of THAT group. This seemed to confuse the undead, whose name was Gideon. He couldn't seem to decide if we were on the side of demons or devils at this point. His primary concern seemed to keep demons from coming up the stairs more than preventing us from going down.

Before I could inquire if he had seen the duke though, Vaneshi introduced him and his fiends to a wall of fire. Strangely, this seemed to curb Gideon's willingness to converse. We finished them off, but Gideon was extremely resilient, and his fiends were casting very powerful spells. I think it is fair to say we have dispensed with the introductory dance, and will be dealing with more serious competitors from here on down. We decided to catch our breath, regroup, and investigate the portal that Gideon spoke of down the stairs.

5-11's NOTES

Things Learned:

- Vaneshi glows when she is angry at undead.
- Gideon was worried that we were in league with the demons. Feeny will be glad that I defended her, sort of.
- Vaneshi said that Lathander is always listening. I haven't seen him.



ENTRY 16 - ULDER RAVENGARD

Ulde made a rudimentary perimeter check before we headed down. We found a hole in the ground, roughly 20 feet in diameter with undead crawling out. That was strange for the obvious reasons, but... we are on a floating city in hell. The ground can't be THAT deep.

Where are they coming from??? Other than that mystical portal of corpses from nowhere, there is a small out building in the distance, but we chose to leave it be for now and concentrate on the stairs below.

We found a workshop at the bottom of the stairs. It appeared to be where the priests prepared the bodies for internment. The new owners were not taking the same care of the place as the previous owners obviously did. There were broken tools strewn about, embalming fluid covered the floor, and shattered glass everywhere. Despite the mess, there was a single set of double doors leading out of the room on one side, and the stairs leading up the other. It seemed fairly secure, and we needed a rest.

After catching our breath, we began to explore. We found a room with several statues. One matched the stained glass window. It was a kneeling man. It appeared to be the resting place for the helm, but it was already gone. We backtracked to see if it, and the duke, were still below somewhere else.

We found a lot of interred skeletons and crypts, but little else. Vaneshi insisted on messing with the poor dead guys. She actually went digging through the corpses! I can only assume she was digging for loot. She is a strange one for a holy type. I guess she thought they wouldn't mind their belongings continuing the fight! She didn't find anything other than dust and bones.

We found bones and more bones. There were an incredible number of dead people below the city! Luckily for the current situation, most of them seemed beyond the point of being reanimated! We eventually found another room designed more for the living. The wall had a morbid, but somehow still beautiful mosaic made from colored bone chips. It showed funerals and souls migrating to the celestial realms. Lettering at the bottom read "Contemplate life. Death comes soon enough."

Beyond that room, we found a meditation pool, the duke, the helm, AND the portal. It was a bit of a good news, bad news situation. Yes we found the duke and he was wearing the helm, but it appeared that the helm was possessed both by the minions of heaven and hell, and they both wanted to control the duke. The rest of the duke's party was scattered about in the pool in small pieces. The fight for control of the duke's body was apparently quite painful and also confusing. He kept muttering in different languages, but never more than a few words in each before switching again. We couldn't rouse the duke himself, so we decided maybe Pherria, with her knowledge of possession, may be able to help. The simplest solution would be to carry the duke back in his current state rather than try to resolve it ourselves and possibly do more harm than good!

That was when the portal activated and 3 minotaurs stepped through. 5-11 tossed the duke onto the step above the pool and went to work slicing and dicing. These fellows were living, so I darted in and out between targets, letting them each get a taste of Devil's Bane. It was not to their liking. We made short work of the minotaurs, gathered up the duke, and began our return to the High Hall.

On our way back, a major quake hit. A building collapsed and pummeled Vaneshi and 5-11, who was carrying the duke. Nobody was seriously injured, but we heard voices calling from the rubble. Caz shifted to a cat to more easily navigate the rubble. She found some dwarves trapped in the mess. When she came back up, she directed our efforts to remove the rubble safely, without collapsing it on them. We managed to safely recover Strovin Ironfist, Kartra Boulderstern, and Velkora Ashenwell. They asked to follow us back to the hall.

Now to see if we can save the duke and learn if this helm was worth the trouble and lives lost to get it!



ENTRY 17 - THE RITUAL

He made it back to the hall with the dwarves in tow, and the duke delirious, but mostly intact still wearing the helm. Pherria was upstairs and waiting for us. Upon seeing the duke's condition, she immediately began preparing a ritual that would hopefully cleanse the Helm's corruption and release the duke. She let us know she would need a powerful symbol for the ritual. We needed a symbol of strength, integrity, and purity. I offered myself, of course, but the ritual apparently needs an object rather than a person. My cloak was the next offering, but it too did not seem to meet all the ridiculous requirements. Instead, I was sent to fetch the sword of the Unknown Hero. It seemed to me there were plenty of idle bodies standing around doing nothing productive, but I selflessly went anyway.

She said we should expect a fight from the forces of evil. They were not likely to stand aside for the ritual. They seem quite possessive of something that they so recently stole! The ritual would require the sword to be positioned in various ways while Pherria offered appropriate prayers. All of this would be done on the alter we had already cleansed, so I guess Vaneshi didn't EXACTLY waste all of our holy water. Anyway, we decided 5-11 would wield the sword for the ritual and everyone else would protect Pherria, 5-11, and the duke. The ritual would take a while to complete and there would be multiple phases. We arrayed ourselves around the group and prepared ourselves for....something.

When the ritual began, 5-11 grunted in pain and 2 will-o-wisps appeared and attacked. The wisps continued to blink into existing around 5-11, but he proved his strength, and stood strong through the various attacks by the undead. Vaneshi saved the day though with her Spirit Guardians spell. It kept the wisps from overwhelming us. As the ritual completed, thousands of spirits came into the room, but vanished again as soon as 5-11 touched the sword to the helm and the duke. Once again, we saved the day.

The helm separated from the duke and he slowly came back to himself. We moved back to the crypts to give the duke a chance to rest. Once he was made comfortable, he recounted his journey to get the helm and what he discovered while wearing it. His group went through the graveyard without too much trouble. Gideon let him down stairs - as I expected. As they made their way below and took the helm, the demons then rushed them and forced them into the meditation room. In desperation, he put the helm on and was accosted by visions of hordes of demons ransacking Baldur's Gate. Then he saw an armored woman with an amazing long sword bleeding on a battlefield. He saw Lulu with the woman. They seemed to be fleeing from an enormous demon. Lulu trumpeted and hurled back the demon. The lady plunged her sword into the ground and an alabaster palace grew around it. Almost immediately, the land grew a great bloody scab over the palace, sword, and demon. Lulu flew away and found some bird people. When the duke mentioned them, Lulu remembered them - Chukka and Cluck or something like that. They are in fort Knucklebone. Good lord. Lulu also remembered she used to be able to turn into a war mammoth, but can't remember how. That seems like a useful skill. We will have to work on her memory!



HELM OF TORM

Artist's interpretation. In fact most images in this work are an artist's interpretation. As with most legendary stories, we only have the descriptions that the author, Dagnaris, provides.

-- B.J.

We filled the Duke in on what he missed while he was away and our current situation and forces. We decided we would have to find the sword. It seems to be the key to our escape. Unfortunately, we are 500 feet in the air on a floating city over a vast melee between two insane armies that are hell-bent on destroying each other. We debated various plans for getting to the fort. Lulu showed us where it is at. It is only a short trek from Elturel once we get TO the ground. We came up with LOTS of ideas. Unfortunately, we didn't come up with any GOOD ones. Caz and Lulu can easily get down, and the rest of us could climb down without too much risk, but that would place us in the middle of the fight below.

We also checked the demon portal in the cemetery chapel. It leads to a city full of demons, so that didn't seem like forward progress. The purple pit spewing zombies and skeletons seemed like another dead end. Much to my horror, 5-11 seems to have come up with a plan, if you want to dignify it with that title. We are going to jump off of the edge of the city holding sheets and boat sails and let the wind carry us over the battle. Lulu will be able to tug on our guide ropes to direct us if the wind doesn't blow us the proper direction. What could POSSIBLY go wrong?

It took some time, but 5-11 managed to get the city's artisans to create a prototype. His first attempt at flight from the choir loft was not particularly graceful, but it did seem to indicate the contraption MIGHT work. We made some modifications and work began on a contraption for each of us. After I finished updating my will and leaving it with Seltzer, I practiced with my FDT. What is an FDT you ask? Its a Flying Death Trap. That's how we are going to get to the fort <sigh>. Everyone except for Caz seemed to grasp the concept of using the FDT. We decided it would be better if Caz just transformed into something small and rode with one of us rather than crash her own FDT. I'm almost convinced to say a prayer myself as we prepare to leap off of the edge of the city.

5-11'S NOTES

Things Learned:

- I offered to use Dagnaris's crowbar to remove Torm's Helm from Uldeguard's head. Pherria had a different plan.
- I am strong, so I volunteered to hold the greatsword during Pherria's ritual. I was attacked, but Vaneshi healed me and the whole party kept us safe.
- I visited the Abyss while looking for a way off this floating city. We decided there was probably a better way down.
- Thinking about flying reminded me of the House Lyrandar airship I rode to Xen'drik. We didn't have an air elemental but it sparked some ideas.
- I will dedicate my Flying Death Trap to Ryukhar and "the dragon" Feeney and call it the "Pathfinder".

FLYING DEATH TRAP

I have excluded over twenty pages of sketches, notes and revisions made by 5-11 from both before and after the "flight". I am unsure how he managed to convince anyone to get in one, let alone fly the thing.

-- B.J.

ENTRY 18 - THE FLIGHT

J° never expected to be alive to pen this entry, but we made it! The FDT worked. We decided to tether ourselves together and jump from heaviest to lightest. The takeoff went very smoothly and the first part of the flight was quite uneventful. As we neared the ground though, we had a visitor. I huge wasp came by to check us out. It eventually came right up to us, but Lulu blasted it and it took off. The encounter sent Vaneshi into a bit of a spin, but we recovered and all landed safely.

When we landed, we were still some distance from the fort, but we were well away from the melee. My prayers seem to have been answered. Who would have ever guessed? We started our trek to the fort with me up front scouting the way. We paralleled what seems to pass for a road in this place that was heading toward the fort. Along the way, we found an old broken down infernal vehicle. 5-11 and Vaneshi seemed quite taken with the rusted out hulk, but it just made my skin crawl. It felt like a trap, but if it was, they thought better of springing it on us. Vaneshi did find some sort of object laying hidden inside the cockpit. It seemed to be some sort of power source or control device with a very angry soul trapped inside. She decided to hang onto it until we know more about what it is and possibly what KIND of soul it contains.

Lulu seemed fairly certain the occupants of the fort would not be hostile, so we walked up to the gate out in the open. The guard post was occupied by some half gnome, half mole rat people who were completely out of their minds. They ended up with 5-11 hopping up and down and doing a weird dance while he conversed with them. It seemed obvious to me there was no chance of getting anything useful or helpful out of them, so I just walked in the gate...which was unlocked...and unguarded.



The fort itself looked like a giant partially closed hand encircled by a ramshackle wall. It looked fierce, but not very defensible. Inside the wall, there was trash and mechanical parts strewn everywhere and little huts built from the trash were scattered about. More of the strange gnomes were milling all around. Disgusting little creatures. A pair of kenku were also near the entrance. Lulu introduced us. It was her old friends Chukka and Cluck. They were not very talkative though and insisted on introducing us to the "boss". That turned out to be a bizarre old hag named Maggie who had some....thing following her. It looked like a patchwork nightmare of enormous insect parts sewn together into a bipedal giant. It was quite passive though, so we tried our best to concentrate on Maggie's words.

5-11 began telling her our entire history, including all the sensitive bits that might not be safe in the hands of a total stranger, but I've learned once he gets started, its a waste of breath to try and stop him. I just started scouting exits instead. Maggie believed that Lulu drank from the river and that caused her memory loss. She thinks she can help, but hasn't explained how yet or what the price will be. She did seem quite excited to show us something though. She led us to a cave between two of the "fingers". It appeared to be a makeshift garage for many more infernal vehicles in various states of repair. She led us to a side room and showed us her creepy collection. She is a big fan of the fall of Zariel and collects anything the creature has ever touched. Very creepy and quite worthless. The collection didn't contain much of value except a tapestry that showed Zariel's history in pictures. After the creepy old super-fan finished her tour of the trash pile, she told us she believes she can cast a ritual that will restore Lulu's memory. All she wants for payment is a detailed account of Zariel's fall from Lulu once she remembers exactly what happened. It seems risky to put ourselves at this crazy old bat's mercy, but she seems like our best, well honestly ONLY, hope for now. I almost hate to ask what we will have to do to prepare this almost-certainly infernal ritual. Vaneshi should love this!

5-11'S NOTES

Things Learned:

- The flight went great!
- We found a derelict vehicle. These don't seem as advanced as the mechanisms from home, but they could be fun.
- We found found Fort Knucklebone. I think the creatures with the red hats were mocking me.

ENTRY 19 - LULU'S MEMORY

Jaggie said the ritual is very complicated, but she will prepare it while we wait. The ritual itself will allow us all to experience Lulu's memories ourselves. Hopefully, the experience will then restore Lulu's waking memories. The experience may not be exactly historically accurate, but it will be how Lulu remembers it. We were given leave to look around while Maggie prepared.

Between Maggie and her minions, we learned a little more about the area. Maggie is a warlord of this realm. Chukka and Clonk are her mechanics and keep the machines running. The gnomes are just cannon fodder for the frequent scavenger runs and skirmishes with other warlords. The vehicles are powered by souls. That is what Vaneshi found in the broken down vehicle. Maggie has a bag full of these soul coins. We can't carry many of the foul things at once. The evil emanating from them causes awful nightmares while sleeping, and worse while awake. On the flip side though, we can use them to free the souls from their bondage, and gain whatever benefits the coin provides, such as powering an infernal vehicle or even granting us temporary benefits.

Caz tried to start a fight with Maggie, but luckily backed down before it got too out of hand. She doesn't trust Maggie and was fairly...blunt about making her feelings known. Maggie didn't seem terribly offended though once we made it clear we had no intention of doing anything precipitous. We wandered off to talk to Chukka and Clonk. They were working on a demon grinder bike. It was messed up and they couldn't figure out why. I talked to the voice in my head and it knew what was wrong – latent demon energy feedback. I figured it takes one to know one. I have to find a way to learn more about this voice and how to defeat it! For now though, Vaneshi cast protection from evil on the bike, and that stopped the flow of demon energy and it started up. 5-11 drove it around the compound with Vaneshi on the back. He popped a wheelie while showing off and Vaneshi fell off. I'm not sure what was more astonishing: seeing 5-11 showing off, or seeing Vaneshi tumble off the back and simply get up as if nothing happened! The birds were really grateful for the help with the bike, but not enough to let us use it again later without Maggie's approval.

Then Barnabus floated up to us. He is just a green flaming skull. He used to be a powerful wizard, but after he died, his old enemy dug him up and turned him into this. That wizard lost Barnabus in a contract to Maggie. Barnabus seemed sad about the current arrangement, but rather resigned to his lot as Maggie's minion. He is Maggie's quartermaster and uses his spells to make up for the serious handicap of no body. The redcaps had stolen one of his teeth. Against my pride's arguments, we went and retrieved his tooth for him. 5-11 played some bizarre game with the redcap where you try NOT to stab your opponent. If you do, you lose whatever you bet. If you manage not to stab them, you win. No matter how you look at it, these little gremlins have definitely lost ALL of their marbles. Anyway. While they played their sick game, I swapped out the tooth for a simple stone. 5-11 "lost" the game when he accidentally chopped off the redcap's finger. The redcap won the rattraps 5-11 had been carrying around and seemed happy with the trade. We returned Barnabus' tooth to him and he seemed extremely grateful. He seems to smile more now and whistle less. Vaneshi and Caz helped Mickey, Maggie's flesh golem, out by fixing his foot. There was a piece of bone lodged in it that caused him a lot of pain and to limp. The redcaps seemed quite upset that the ladies ruined their entertainment, but soon wandered off. Mickey seemed...well...like a golem that no longer had a limp.





The imps finally came and told us Maggie was ready. An area of the garage was cleared and a fiendish circle was drawn on the ground, containing some black cushions. Maggie was holding a pair of skulls – not Barnabus. She started the ritual by placing the skulls around the circle and instructing us to help Lulu through whatever trials we witnessed. Vaneshi stayed outside the circle to keep an eye on Maggie while we were all trapped in the memories. It started with rainbows, butterflies, and happiness, but Maggie told us that was just what Lulu wished had happened. Maggie could see what we saw and could communicate with us, but not actually participate. She told us we had to push through it to reach the real memory. It took a great effort, and some pain, but we pushed through with sheer willpower. Then we found ourselves surrounding Lulu and an angel who were both direly wounded. We were facing outward, fending off some devils. We fought them off and the scene faded and changed. It was very dark and foreboding, but now the devils were around us again, bowing before us and offering to serve us. We refused their evil servitude and the scene faded out once more.

When we could see again, we were all constrained by a black sludge. Maggie told us we needed to escape in order to help Lulu push through and face her fears and memories. It took a titanic effort, but we pulled free from the sludge and the dream faded once more. We next found ourselves in the void with Lulu floating on a cushion. She was unconscious and alone with a beam of brilliant white light shining down upon her. Next to Lulu, a large gleaming brass spyglass rested atop an ornately carved tripod.

Lulu awakened and looked peacefully around her. Seeing the spyglass, she approached it, pressing one eye against the eyepiece. Lulu then stepped back suddenly, eyes wide, mouth open, her face alight with excitement. She cried out, "The sword, the sword! I know where it is!" The dream faded and we all awoke safely back into hell. Maggie was so happy with the vision and that we helped her people that she allowed us to repair a vehicle and keep it. She also gave us 3 soul coins. She told us we were among the few who could call her friend. Another friend of hers is Smiler the Defiler. If we run across him and mention Maggie, he MIGHT be inclined to help us out....as helpful as anybody in Avernus would be.

Lulu was fine after all of this and remembered the sword was near Haruman's Hill. Chukka and Clonk were able to fix up a Devil's Ride which was missing its wheels and a Tormentor. The Tormentor was pretty badly corroded, but was functional with reduced armor. It also has a station for a harpoon flinger, but that was missing. They needed about a day to repair both vehicles, replace the flinger, and find some harpoons. That gave us time to recoup, discuss our next move, reprovision, and prepare to head out.

Now we are ready to head out to Haruman's Hill and find the sword. As the excitement of the dream and finding the sword starts to wane, I find myself wondering...how are we going to get back up to Elturel?

5-11'S NOTES

Things Learned:

- Vaneshi fixed a Devil's Ride with her magic. I got to drive it but Vaneshi fell off.
- I lost my rat traps in a game that I still don't understand. Dagnaris was able to steal back the flaming skulls tooth. I wonder if it was still hot.
- We entered Lulu's dreams and protected her and the Archangel Zariel from attacking devils and black goo. We chose not to accept the devils's fealty. I've learned to never make a deal with a devil. There are always conditions.
- We were given vehicles. We need a better name than the Tormentor.

TREASURE

Item	#	Value
Soul Coin	4	---
Devil's Ride	1	???
Tormentor	1	???
Tinker's Tools	1	50gp

ENTRY 20 - HARUMAN'S HILL - PART ONE

The drive to Haruman's Hill was fairly uneventful. The vehicles only travel about the speed of a horse. I was really hoping these things would MOVE! I guess over this rough terrain, they are fast enough. As it turned out, we had some raiders try to intercept us, but we managed to outrun their larger, slower vehicle.

We considered defeating them so they didn't mess with anyone else, but decided we ARE in hell. In all likelihood, anyone they raid probably deserves it or can defend themselves.....and I didn't want to mess up my new bike!

As we approached the hill, we could see a path leading from the base up to the narrow hilltop that looked out over the river. The path up was too small for the vehicles, so we parked them and took a long look around. Lulu felt like this was the right place, but something was very wrong. The landscape itself was not encouraging. The path was lined with jagged, metallic trees. Each tree harbored a humanoid body and a nest of the most hideous birdlike creatures I've ever seen.

We elected to avoid the path and climb the side of the hill instead, away from the trees and mosquito-birds, but as we climbed, we were near enough to make out more about the tree's contents. Each body was impaled multiple times by the vicious tree limbs, but continued to moan and writhe in agony as the stirges clawed and pierced them repeatedly. Vaneshi soon recognized the original emblem of the Hell Riders through the tree limbs and flitting bodies. There was nothing to do at that point but approach and assess the situation in more detail, so she and I cautiously approached. The stirges did not seem to mind our initial inspection and continued their gruesome work. The plaque on one tree read "Leander – for traitorous actions against Zariel". We could not decide if that meant the knights betrayed the angel Zariel and abandoned her here, or if these were stalwart knights that fought against the devils. Either way, their suffering had lasted long enough. Vaneshi tried to give one knight a drink of holy water and the nearest stirges flew at us in a rage. We swatted them down easily and the rest of the party came over as well.

When 5-11 lifted the knight off of the tree, the relief on his face was immediate. He whispered his thanks as he turned to dust. We can only hope that meant his soul was released from this hell. Unfortunately, that sent all the stirges into a rage. They were easily beaten back, but there were quite a few of the little nuisances and they were soon joined by a nightmare being ridden by some evil knight. We resolutely decided to send them all onto their final resting place, along with Leander and his companions!

INTERUPTION?

Why did Dagnaris split this story into two entries? He must have been interrupted while he was recording his experiences. It is the only answer that makes sense.

-- B.J.



ENTRY 21 - HARUMAN'S HILL - PART 2

Jt turned out the creature riding the nightmare was Haruman himself! He was an officer in the Hell Riders but was changed to a devil and spent the last century or two punishing the men who failed him by running from the field of battle. He was a fearsome opponent who's very aura struck fear into my stalwart companions. He struck down 5-11 as he road by, almost as an afterthought, with his focus purely on Vaneshi. When Lulu struck him, another tree sprouted with a plaque that read "Lulu – striking an officer". Caz was absolutely terrified, but managed to get 5-11 back on his feet and into the fight. He was slightly groggy from his brush with death, but rushed to the fight. As he ran towards Haruman, who was taking out his ire on a visibly weakening Vaneshi, a giant wasp flew in and grasped Lulu. She struggled mightily to aid Vaneshi, but was held tightly by the huge, infernal insect. 5-11 managed to swap places with Lulu, which startled the wasp! With a mighty yank, and some slight-of-hand I would be proud of myself, he freed Lulu and grasped the wasp. It fell to the ground with 5-11 on top of it, smashing it into the dirt with a wet crunching sound.

While all of this was taking place, I approached Haruman and began looking for weak spots... which I did not find. Despite his formidable mien, Devils' Bane and I were determined to end this menace. I stabbed him in the arm pit between the joints of his armor and sneered at him as a new tree sprouted beside me with my name. I taunted him "I'm going to need a whole forest of those before this day is done" and moved around behind his back, trying to pull his attention away from Vaneshi. He roared in anger and turned to me. Vaneshi limped away while he was distracted. Haruman pointed an accusing finger at me and attacked with all his fury. I remained standing, mostly just to irritate him more than due to any constitution of my own. With the last bit of strength I could muster, I drove Devil's Bane through the eye of Haruman and he collapsed at my feet. We were bruised and exhausted, but Haruman and his minions were no more.

After taking a rest, we studied the sword Haruman wielded and it was a powerful magical sword from the original Hell Riders. Vaneshi laid claim to it as a holy relic. She obviously had no proficiency with such a weapon, but her eyes shown with religious fervor while holding it. I would not be surprised if she soon masters it! The tack the nightmare was equipped with is Infernal Tack. It allows an evil creature to summon a nightmare such as the one Haruman rode in on. Among other things, it can teleport its rider and 3 willing nearby people between the ethereal and material planes. Just holding it made each of us sick to our stomachs, although I'm not sure what 5-11 felt exactly.

We freed the rest of the poor souls on the trees. Each one turned to dust and expressed thanks and relief at being released. At the top of the hill, we found Jander impaled on a tree. Lulu remembered Jander was one of the cowards that turned and ran, closing the gate behind Zariel. He told us his story before we released him. He was a vampire that lived around Elturel before Zariel's defeat. He eventually tried to redeem himself by hunting other vampires. That did not make him feel as if it was enough, so when Zariel came, he eagerly joined them. He freely admitted he fled in the face of the devil onslaught. He was sure defeat was inevitable and he broke. He took his men and himself and fled, closing the portal behind themselves. He eventually gave himself to Lethander and the sun, hoping for forgiveness, but was denied any respite. Upon his death, he found himself here in Avernus. It didn't take long before Haruman found him and impaled him here with the souls of the other deserters. Vaneshi said a quiet prayer for the damned souls, hoping the price they had paid was enough to redeem them.



Lulu was rather crestfallen and embarrassed, but it seemed as if this wasn't the place she remembered after all. It was close, but not the right place. There are only two other places she feels are related though: The Spawning Trees and the Demon Zapper. She suggests we visit one or both places to see if she can remember more. The spawning trees seemed the more likely hiding place, since it is a place where demons cross over to Avernus. It's possible since both sides would be so busy fighting each other they may overlook the sword. It is also on the same side of the river as we are, so we don't have to find a crossing place yet.

We headed back to Fort Knucklebone to try and trade the evil tack for more coins to power the machines to get to the Spawning Trees. The trip was quite uneventful after our experience at the hill. Maggie was initially reluctant to trade with us, but at hearing a bit of our story and how it pertained to Zariel's history, she came around. She took our story and the tack and gave us another 4 soul coins. With that power and the provisions from the fort, we should be ready to head to the Spawning Trees.

TREASURE		
Item	#	Value
Infernal Tack	1	???
Ornate Longsword + 2	1	???

5-11's NOTES

Things Learned:

- Haruman struck me down quite easily. Cascadazul was able to heal me while Vaneshi an Dagnaris delt with Haruman.
- What would have happened if I had died. What would become of my friends. Would Ryukar and Feeny even know that I failed them?
- Can I teach Sloberchops to administer Health Potions during combat?
- I helped Vaneshi remove those impaled along Coward's Way. It seems many of them belong to her order.
- Vaneshi entrusted me to wield Haruman's Longsword. I will use it wisely and protect it until it is time to return it to her.
- I have given the Candlekeep Longsword to Cascadazul. She will be able to put it to better use than her scimitar.



ENTRY 22 - MEETING MORDENKENIEN

Me took the vehicles and drove down to the Spawning Trees. The river gave us a little bit of trouble, as it seemed to go different directions each time we looked somewhere else. It seemed to circle back on itself. We just kept heading south, trusting our instincts, and found the trees. Before we left though, one of the redcaps seemed to attach himself to me. It was quiet though, and 5-11 has a pet cat, so I decided to let him tag along as long as he kept quiet and didn't cause trouble. What's the worst that could happen, I thought.

We drove around the lake for a while, which was hatching abyssal chickens in quite the disgusting manner. They didn't seem to be much of a threat, so we chose to ignore them. We eventually came to a bluff that we couldn't drive up, but it blocked our sight. We climbed on foot and found a group of creatures in the distance below us, along the coast. Caz turned into an eagle and flew over them to scout the situation. It turned out to be 5 bearded devils piling kindling around the trees, trying to burn them down. There was another group of devils across the lake doing the same thing. The behavior seemed very odd, so we decided to investigate more closely.

We quietly got above them on the bluff, looking down on them. They were complaining about the grunt work of cleaning up the demon chicken infestation. They are burning the trees to kill the chickens. One of the devils was defending the demon chickens and had a serious head wound. His companions were all making fun him and harassing him. Apparently "demon-lover" is quite the curse for devils. We decided to have a word with the demon-loving devil since he seemed to be a pacifist.

Vaneshi cast Cone of Silence on the group, leaving the demon-lover outside of it. She then called down to that guy and asked him to come up and offered to heal it. When we offered to help save the chickens, especially Earwax, he agreed to come up and talk to us. It seemed that it had adopted one of the chickens and named it.... Earwax. This devil is definitely different. The other devils started to freak out about not being able to hear, but Vaneshi banished the spell before they figured out what happened. As the spell ended, they all seemed to be screaming, trying to hear anything. With their hearing suddenly restored, they realized the demon-lover was gone. They started looking around for it, but quickly gave up and moved off to the next tree. Vaneshi tried to reassure him as he ran up to us. He looked to be simple due to the head wound, but didn't run away. Vaneshi wrapped the head wound, but didn't heal him as we assumed his pacifist demeanor was due to the wound. He told us his name was Krikendul and the chicken he carried was Earwax. The other devils were burning the trees to kill of the demon's food supply. He also told us a powerful wizard named Mordenkeinin lives near here. He offered to lead us to him. We went back to the vehicles and drove to the wizard's tower. It was in the middle of a lake of boiling blood-like stuff with a small bridge leading to it. Krikendul was surprisingly adept at navigation considering his mental state. There was a balcony near the top and 2 metal protrusions with lightning arcing between them. The tower was quite intimidating, but the man at its base was.... not. At the foot of the tower, there was an old bald man before a group of Mezzoloths and a bunch of Nycaloths. It seemed to be a very orderly, even mundane, situation.

I stayed back with the vehicles while Caz circled above, and Vaneshi and 5-11 got in the line. One of the Ugoloths told the group that the wizard pays well for random tasks and that's what everyone is waiting on. They waited patiently in line for their turn to speak with Morden. After almost an hour, they were close enough to start hearing pieces of the conversation. Morty was asking each Ugoloth "What can you do for Mordenkeinin" and they would respond with some variation of offering their services for pay.

The whole ridiculous process seemed to take forever, but eventually they spoke with Morden and found out he wasn't much help, which was NOT a shock, but he referred us on to another wizard named Ubulux and gave us directions to his obelisk. In a rather bizarre twist, he wanted ape armpit hair in exchange for info on the bleeding citadel. We all agreed, there was not a great motivation to spend days wandering around Avernus looking for an abyssal ape to shave, so we shaved Caz instead when she shapeshifted to a normal ape, and then offered the hair to the wizard. He seemed genuinely surprised and just laughed. He was just screwing with us! After he had a good laugh at 5-11's expense, he told us the citadel moves around, and only Zariel and her high level minions know where it is at any given time. We would have to infiltrate their organization to find its current location. Ubulux is in the inner circle though, and Morty offered to teleport us there. He felt bad for messing with us, so he gave us a ring that we can use to communicate with him later if we have questions.



As if we would trust him after that nonsense!

That left us with the option of chasing down someone who might know the citadel's location, beating it out of a powerful wizard, bargaining with said powerful and evil wizard, or trying our luck at the Demon Zapper. Some days, it just feels as if Avernus is cursed and nothing goes right.

TREASURE

Item	#	Value
Demon Ichor	2	???
Mordenkainen's Ring of Communication	1	???
Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes	1	???

5-11's NOTES

Things Learned:

- Cas has learned to fly. I envy her. Our flight on our Death Traps was exhilarating.
- At somepoint, Dagnaris invited a small friend along.
- Mordenkainen wanted us to travel two-thirds of the way across the known plane of Avernus and back to bring him armpit hair from a rare ape that feeds off hellwasps so he could tell us to travel to the other side of Avernus to talk to Ubolux in his Obolisk.
- Mordenkainen isn't what I expected. For being a famous and powerful mage, he doesn't seem to know what he is doing.
- We tried to trick Mordenkeinen with fake monkey hair, but his simulacrum was murdered.
- The "real" Mordenkeinen revealed himself and offered what little help he could. He didn't even want the monkey hair.
- Mordenkainen is an asshole.
- I received a copy of Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes directly from Mordenkainen himself. Maybe the information it contains on the Blood War will help me on my Path.
- Mordenkainen said that Krikendulp is now a "Good" devil. Maybe we can redeem all devils if we inflict enough head trauma.
- Did we even meet the real Mordenkainen?



APPENDIX A: QUESTS

ALL QUESTS

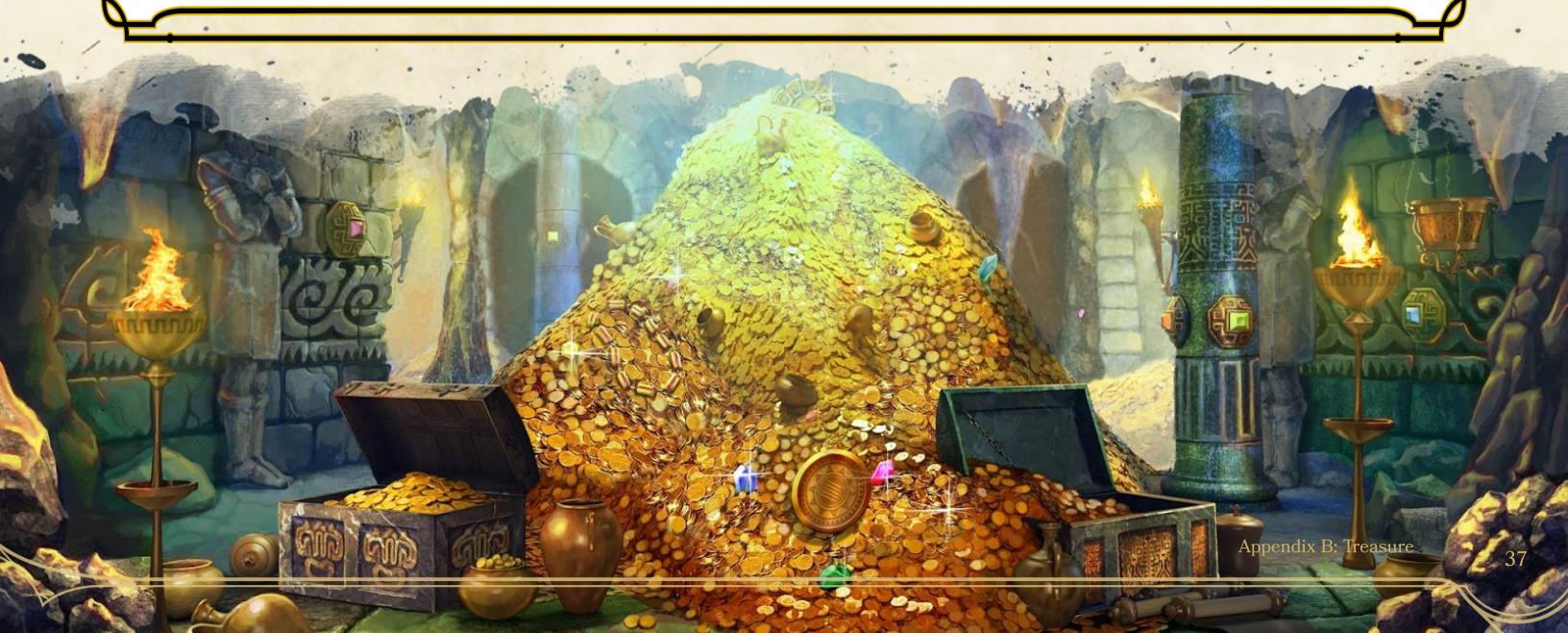
Quest	Giver	Promised Reward	Status
Wipe Out the Dead Three Cult	Captain Zojh	200g Each	Paid
Gather Evidence on Thalamra Vanthampur	Captain Zojh	200g Each	Paid
Talk to Sylvira Savikas about the contents of the puzzle box.	Falaster Fisk	Gold or Magic Items	Paid
Find Ulder Ravengard and help return the Torm's Helm	Pherria Jynks	...	Completed
Rescue the city of Elturel from Avernus	Sylvira Savikas	...	In Progress
Regain Zariel's Sword	Ulder Ravengard	...	In Progress



APPENDIX B: TREASURE

ALL TREASURE FOUND

Item	#	Value Each	Status/Location
Alchemist Fire (Flask)	3	50g	Split
Azurite Gemstones	20	10gp	Sold
Book Titled "Apocalypto"	1	???	Cascadazul
Bronze Crown	1	250g	5-11
Cat-Eye Agate	10	10g	Sold
Caltrops	1	1g	5-11
Demon Ichor	2	???	5-11
Electrum Ingots	30	10gp	Sold
Haruman's Longsword	1	???	5-11
Hellfire Glaive	1	???	5-11
Holy Symbol of Torm	1	???	Vaneshi
Infernal Tack	1	4 Soul Coins	Sold
Iris of the Oracle	1	???	Taken By Sappi
Mordenkeinen's Tome of Foes	1	???	5-11
Mordenkeinen's Ring of Communication	1	???	Vaneshi
Necklace	2	25g	Sold
Pieces of a Dagger named Fang	2	250gp	Vaneshi
Potion of Fire Breath	2	25g	Dagnaris
Potion of Healing	6	25g	Split
Porcelain Dragon Mask	1	25g	Cascadazul
Puzzle Box	1	???	Dagnaris
Ring	1	125g	Sold
Shield of the Hidden Lord	1	???	Vaneshi
Silver Dagger	2	???	Dagnaris
Silvered Flail	1	110g	Sold
Spellbooks	4	1950g	Sold



Appendix B: Treasure

APPENDIX C: CHARACTERS

5-11

A member of Dagnaris' Party. A warforged from a far away land.

AMRICK VANTHAMPUR

The son of Thalamra Vanthampur and brother of Mortlock.

BALASAR JHARTHAXYN

Biographer, Scholar, Adventurer and Writer. Author of this historically significant document. Daring Dragonborn. Confidant of Kings. Editor of the Royal Gazette of Who's Who in the Sword Coast.

CAPTAIN ZOJH

A Captain in the Flaming Fist. Tasked the group with destroying the Cult of the Dead Three.

CASCADAZUL

A member of Dagnaris' Party. A Druid on a research expedition from her elven home.

CASTER MORDEN

A Rug Merchant that hired the group to protect his carts on the trip from Waterdeep to Balder's Gate.

DAGNARIS DREAMCHASER

A curious halfling whose adventures inspired this tome.

EARWAX

An Abyssal Chicken kept by Krikendulp.

FALASTER FISK

A prisoner rescued from a prison below the Vanthampur Villa. Pointed the party toward Sylvira Savikas at Candlekeep.

GIDEON LIGHTWARD

An undead follower of Zariel who guarded Elturel's cemetery agianst demons.

HARUMAN

A formar Paladin from Etrel who fell along side Zariel. As a devil he rounded up former allies that he thought abandoned thier duty and tormented them.

JANDER

A vampire that fought along side Zariel's invasion of Avernus. After fleeing the battle, he was tormented by Haruman.

KLEM JASO

A man the group saved from torture in the catacombs below the bathhouse. Offered a reward at a later time.

KRIKEDULP

A bearded devil of good alignment due to head trauma. Has a pet Abyssal Chicken named Earwax. Left in the employ of Mordenkainen.

LIARA PORTIAR

A member of the Flaming Fist and Uldar Ravengards replacment as leader.

LULU

A Hollyphant that was once a companion of the angel Zariel. She has joined Dagnaris and his party.

MORDENKEINEN

A famous wizard that aided and annoyed the party.

MORTLOCK VANTHAMPUR

The son of Thalmara Vanthampur. Rescued by Dagnaris and crew in the catacombs below the city.

PHERRIA JYNKS

An old lady that was leading the refugees in the crypt below the High Hall.

SAPPI COGSWORTH

A former member of Dagnaris' Party. A gnome artificer from the island of Lantan. Betrayed the party and was rescued from the Vanthampur prison.

SATIR THIONE-HHUNE

A prisoner rescued from a prison below the Vanthampur Villa. An opponent of Thalamr Vanthampur.

SEBASTION SMITH

A member of the flaming fist. The son of a couple that the group helped outside of Baldur's Gate.

SELTERN OBRANCH

An old man that was found faking death in Chapel of the High Hall.

SLOBBERCHOPS

A Tressym that Five befriended in the Vanthampur Villa.

SYLVIRA SAVIKAS

A sage who operates out of Candlekeep. She has been monitoring devil activity in Baldur's Gate and Elturel.

THALAMRA VANTHAMPUR

Head of the Vanthampur Patriar. Conspired with Thavius Kreeg to kill Uldar Ravengard and is attempting to take over the Flaming Fists.

THAVIUS KREEG

Leader of the city of Elturel. Last seen fleeing the city. Conspired with the Vanthamps to kill Uldar Ravengard. Found by the party underneath the Vanthampur Villa. Seems to have the shadow of a devil.

THURSTWELL VANTHAMPUR

Son of Thalamra Vanthampur and brother of Mortlock. Has invisible imp spies throughout Balder's Gate.

TRAXIGOR

An otter wizard that transported the party to the city of Elturel in Avernus.

TURINA

An informant at the Elfsong Tavern in Baldur's Gate. Possibly a member of a pirate group.

ULDAR RAVENGARD

Former Grand Duke and leader of the Flaming Fist in Baldur's Gate. Found by the party in the Grand Cemetery of Elturel while on plane of Avernus.

VAAZ

A faceless assassin sent to kill Mortlock Vanthampur.

VANESHI

A member of Dagnaris' Party. An Aassimar cleric and Hell Rider from the lost city of Elturel.

VENDETTA CRESS

A tiefling that was rescued from a torture chamber in the catacombs below Baldur's Gate.

ZOEY

A former member of Dagnaris' Party. An enigmatic elven archer. Betrayed the party and was rescued from the Vanthampur prison.

