

I had received orders to join an ad hoc patrol assembling at the Tangled Web Inn. We were to investigate sighting of someone named Raul Jonas. A Seeker scout is to provide more information when we reach the Inn.

I spoke to several people prior to setting out seeking more information. A seeker named Maple provided some information and Lady Kevralyn was most helpful.

Raul Jonas has been seen several times by the Alliance, most recently being last year when he went to visit the Oracle. It seems that although he acts normally he cannot be discerned or detected by any means and seems to have no pulse or any sign of life. He said he had no memory of why he was here or who he was beyond his name.

The Tangled web Inn is a place of low repute to the south east. Formally held by Xenos it has a bad reputation. It was the home of some form of spider creature that was psionic and could read the thoughts of visitors. The alliance have been here several times and had difficulties each time.

Once assembled the group was:

Warriors: Squire Arithis of the Eternal Order Spirit Warrior of the Fell Knights, Sergeant Orlando of the crusaders, Lupacuore of the rangers, Kalliste also of the rangers,

Mages: Jeremiah an elf mage, myrtle a gnome.

Priests: Nero silent and resentful minor criminal sent out on patrols because of some crime, Jack of the Druids

Scouts: Zug, a skilled archer but otherwise an annoying and somewhat stupid half orc.

We travelled for a number of days, following less used paths to avoid possible trouble due to the small size of our patrol and lack of any life realm healer. We made good time without incident and came close to the inn late on fireday. We elected to push on into the night rather than spend another night in the woods and thus came upon the inn late in the evening.

We approached the inn and found a pair of easterling guards, hired by the Dy Fa Dyn to watch this inn. I have previously spoken to Dy Fa Dyn and been informed that this arrangement is now standard at their inns.

The guards were somewhat hostile and would not let us enter, they said we were not welcome here. Much arguing followed before a figure came out of the inn and shouted at the guards to let us pass. The guards accepted his authority and stood aside. This figure would not give his name, saying simply that he was a business associate. A black cloth covering everything below his eyes masked his face. He then left.

Entering the inn we found it to be tiny, a main room with just enough room for all of us to sit, a kitchen scarcely large enough for two servants to work in and bedrooms that would suit children not grown adults.

A woman was in the inn already, a bandit by her dress. She spoke to Jack then fled the room in some distress. Jack said he did not know what was wrong, as he had not said anything.

Shortly thereafter a woman from Halmadon's Heights arrived, Deryss by name. She was here to attend a meeting with the seekers. She spoke much with Sergeant Orlando and explained that the seekers who were investigating a problem in the White Retreat had contacted her city. The Halmadonians' recognised the illness described as something that was also affecting them and Deryss was sent to attend a meeting to learn more. It seems that a number of children had gone to sleep as normal but would not awake. Healers had tried and powerful spells and invocations cast. Nothing had worked and to every discern and detection the children were not there, no sign of life could be felt save that of a warm living flesh. They gave no sign of suffering from lack of food or drink and had been in this state for some two moons now.

Hordelings were seen off in the darkness. We formed up and slew them then treated our wounded. One had struck heavy blows and those who fought against it needed much healing. This was the first fight this patrol had engaged in and our lack of a true healer was clear from the outset. We had nought but the realm of balance for healing and it is far less capable than the higher cures of the realm of life.

A lizard man arrived, apparently it was expected by the easterling guard. It did say its name to a few people but no one could remember it. It sat and said little.

A Dymwan then arrived, Ulon Teirman by name. He was here to speak to the seeker. He was reluctant to speak of why until the seeker arrived.

Not long after this two seekers arrived, Maple a master seeker and his apprentice. A journeyman named Tulip.

He began the meeting.

Over the last two moons a number of children in the farming sectors have not woken and despite the best efforts of the hospital and the guilds of magic they could not be woken. At first it was a few children and caused no great alarm. Once the number affected climbed significantly it became clear this was a major problem and once spell and invocation failed messages were sent to allied cities to seek information.

The Dymwan confirmed that the children were not dead, or at least their spirits were not in the realms of the dead.

The lizardman said the spawning pools were not hatching. I was curious as to any link between this and the strange stopping of spell and incantation that took place at the slave fair

Several of the children longest affected were scribing strange runes if given the chance. Paper and pens had been put out and the results had been copied. Deryss had one such scroll, Maple had another. Both were in a strange script of very complex characters.

The Alliance was undertaking a number of researches into this matter, one of which was to locate an individual named Raul Yonas or Jonas. The undetectable nature of the sleeping children is exactly the same as his and it was thought that he may be able to either help or be another subject for research.

An ad hoc patrol was assembled around the core of Sergeant Orlando's group and sent here. We were to spend a week searching this area along with Maple and a contingent of seekers. This Jonas had been seen here not a moon ago and was thought to be in the area still.

After more talking of no consequence the seekers left along with the other visitors. The scrolls were passed around so that all could examine them and Nero, Myrtle and Jeremiah began the long task of understanding the script and beginning a translation.

Time passed uneventfully until a small group of morgothians arrived. They said they were from Barag Tir Gul and wished to share the warmth of our fire on this cold night. I agreed and they came closer. The easterling guard then became hostile, ordering them away and saying that they had no right to be here. The uruk with the morgothians mocked the easterling somewhat

and the others did not seem to like him. The easterling however was clearly aggressive, demanding they leave and saying they had no right to share the fire as they had no booked the facilities here. I said that we were paying for the Inn and that we had the right to allow others to share our fire but the guard was not listening.

The easterling then tried to push the morgothians away and when that failed he attacked them.

At this point sergeant Orlando said for us to help the easterling guard. I disagreed. He had clearly started this fight on his own and I saw no reason to attack the morgothians. Several of our number belonging to the rangers and crusaders cleared steel and engaged the morgothians who fought back. At that point I had no choice as members of the patrol were now under attack so I joined the battle. The fight was protracted because whenever the warriors of our group stopped attacking the morgothians then the morgothians backed off, concentrating on attacking the easterling.

Then the easterling fell and members of our patrol ignored the morgothian comment that they only wanted the easterling. They attacked again and a morgothian was felled, from this point they attacked us in earnest. They were quickly defeated. I engaged the Uruk and beat it soundly then Sergeant Orlando joined me and we quickly slew it, the other morgothians fell minutes later.

We treated our many wounds and went back to standing watch or returned to the warmth of the inn.

Over the next few days the sergeant and I were to discuss this matter. His crusader attitude was that it was the honourable thing to do helping the easterling. My own view was that had four attacked one they overmatched then honour would have been had in joining the weaker but since the easterling clearly and deliberately started a fight against a four stronger enemies he deserved the death he received at their hand.

Some time passed without incident when I spotted white figures moving in the darkness.

Two figures, one heading straight for us, the other moving at an angle across the front of the inn. I called the others to arms as both drew closer.

One figure came within the firelight and was revealed as a seeker, he said he was following the other figure.

The other figure was in pale grey robes and surcoat, a hood pulled up over its face. A silver amulet round its neck. Its face was blank and featureless save for the eyes and a mark like a large stylised eye around its own left eye and curling down its cheek.

This figure was very strong, could not be detected or discerned and was not hurt by us. It entered the inn, searched then left vanishing quickly into the darkness.

We then worked late into the night translating the scrolls. Seekers had arrived to stand watch and so I was able to remain inside for a change watching the progress of the translation..

I retired.

The following morning I rose and broke my fast. A poorly equipped inn, there was no way to prepare toast. So fortified with coffee alone I armed myself and watched the sun rise through the clouds.

I stood watch for an hour or two as the others rose.

Tulip arrived to tell us that she would be with us for much of the day as liaison with Maple and that the seekers on watch were withdrawing to sleep.

Shortly thereafter Ulon Teirman approached the inn with several undead and a figure in grey. The grey figure was identical to the faceless visitation last night save that this one had a normal face.

Ulon demanded we tell him the source of the affliction. He said he had been told we knew and we must tell him. I asked who had told him this lie, he would not say. He was agitated and insistent and several times glanced at the figure in grey. When asked who the figure was he replied one of his group.

Several among us said we had no knowledge of the affliction, he asked who would tell the truth. Finally I gave my word as Squire and Spiritual Warrior. He paused at this and looked at the grey figure. Several times before he had done this briefly, now he paused for several seconds. The figure finally nodded and he began casting.

Battle began. His ghoul was engaged by our mages who fixed it in place long enough for it to be repeatedly struck with weapons of power. Unfortunately the Dymwan Priest was also a mage and dispelled the ward. The ghoul was then able to catch both Myrtle and myself. Sergeant Orlando was struck with a powerful invocation or cause wounds and the others withdrew into the inn.

After quickly healing those within the inn they counter attacked and the ghoul was chased off and killed too far away for the Dymwan to rescue this time. One of the lesser undead was also crushed and I engaged the grey figure. It quickly fell to my blows and as it died Ulon suddenly stopped his attacks and looked confused. I ordered Jeremiah and Sergeant Orlando to hold before they slew him. I then demanded to know why he had broken the alliance between our cities.

He was very confused and could not remember anything after leaving the inn after the meeting last night. Clearly the grey figure was involved in some way, as Ulon did not recognise it. A silver amulet was recovered from it, an upside down ankh covered in runes. Nothing could be detected or discerned from this although much else here was likewise undetectable so I advised caution.

After more talking Ulon left, he took the grey figures body with him to see if his people could interrogate the dead spirit.

After a deal of time spent by members of the patrol they were finally ready to leave the inn for our first search of the area.

We headed south across the open land around the inn and soon came upon the edge of the heavily wooded hills. Zug was sent to scout ahead and returned quickly to report hordelings. We entered the woods and quickly engaged them.

The troll proved hard to defeat, taking many blows before it went down and still attacking from the ground while those with weapons of magic or power tried to stop it regenerating. The other hordelings fell more quickly.

While treating our wounded from this fight figures were spotted moving past us deeper in the woods. A mor silvani elite and two lesser warriors in shadowkeep colours. They ignored attempts by Zug to talk to them, not that I was surprised they chose to ignore him. However they also did not respond to hails from others and pushed on at a fast pace. As they were going in the same direction we were intending to head we ended up following them.

They stopped at a small peasant's shack and the elite went in while the others stood guard. As we approached the elite came out with a pair of kalid. A scroll was given to the mor silvani and they quickly moved away from us. The kalid were more forth coming and identified them selves as being from the valdamar legion. They were not aware of any children of their city being struck down with the sleeping affliction. Also they had not heard of Raul Jonas or seen anyone of that description.

They moved off shortly after that.

Several in the patrol wanted to more actively find out what was going on. These valley folk seem convinced that everything that happens is about them and cannot understand that other cities do business that does not involve the Kern Valley Alliance.

We continued down the trail through the woods and saw a pair of Concilium ahead of us. That is they wore the colours of that city but they introduced themselves as Mr Carter and Mr Fitch. They said they were strangers to this land and did not know its customs. After a little talking they mentioned they were hunting for Jonas, there was a bounty on him. He had been seen in this area yesterday. They would not say what crimes he had committed, what the bounty was or

who was employing them to hunt Jonas. Their manner of speech was strange and every so often they paused briefly to stare off into the air or at each other. As things seemed peaceful I moved slightly to the back of the group to keep watch when fighting started.

Those talking to them said they suddenly attacked and nothing had been said to upset them. They were strange foes, fast moving and striking heavy blows they made little attempt to protect themselves and fought separately. Our warriors had difficulty as these two would not stay to fight but constantly moved and struck at many of the non-warriors. Both were stronger than any of us and could not be held or restrained by spell or strength. With considerable effort and much healing of wounds they fell and we paused to recover.

Nero was out of power and it was decided to stop and meditate. We returned to the hut we had passed earlier that day and here Nero recovered his strength. Jack drew upon the power of others and I allowed him to take much of mine as well. I then stood watch while the others rested in the hut and engaged in crude or frivolous chat and time wasting.

Once Nero was recovered we again set off, passing deeper into the woodlands.

Tulip and Zug had scouted ahead while we rested and we were aware of the skeletons blocking the path ahead. We approached them with maces ready. We were alerted to the ghoul trying to flank us by the keen eyes of our druid who spotted it creeping through the bushes. While Sergeant Orlando led the fighting line against the skeletons I joined the two mages and we went after the ghoul. The mages were able to bind and weld it and we beat it down from a safe distance while it clawed helplessly at us..

Then we returned to the main group to find some confusion with the skeletons separated and either side of the group. It seemed that Nero had held one and in their enthusiasm the warriors had bypassed it fighting the other so when it became active again it was behind them. I joined the fight against the one at the back while the fighting line crushed the one at the front. They returned to join me as we slew the last one.

With wounds treated we continued on and soon came out on the far side of the woods into more open hand. Here the sky was clear and blue with a hot sun beating down. Most strange as we had entered the wood to snow and driving rain. Clearly some strange power was at work here.



Continuing on our patrol we followed what was now a clearly well travelled route although aside from a few peasants that fled on sight of us we saw no one for a while.

Then our route was blocked by a group of morgothians. They were not aggressive and were willing to talk to us. In fact they asked us several questions. They had lost one of their patrols and wanted to know if we had seen it.

They said that they were one of several groups of morgothians who were in the area of the tangled web inn searching for traitors. When I asked were they hunting the iron star the morgothians became alert and demanded to know what I knew of the iron star. After I explained that I had aided in the destruction of an iron star base and had earned the favour of sir Malar of their order they relaxed once more. It would seem that those of Barag Tir Gul are actively seeking the iron star within their ranks across a wide area of this land.

The morgothians wanted to know if we had seen any of the traitors and we would know them because the groups would have no uruks present. It was mentioned that the Uruk are loyal to morgoth and none serve the iron star. This knowledge may be useful in the future.

One of the morgothians was slightly away from the main group and had seemed to be ready to cast, as the talking continued he became relaxed and even lay down at one point. Perhaps it was this relaxed and peaceful meeting that led a few of our number to lie so obviously and so stupidly. I will not lie and choose not to speak at all but the morgothian leader asked several times had we seen any morgothians in the last day or since this time yesterday. Finally he asked had we slain them in a manner which told me he knew full well we had. Finally he had enough of the blatant lies and said that the dead spirits of the morgothian slain that he had found had identified us as the slayers.

Battle commenced. The line held back even under a barrage of spells, our skins were taken down and many bolts were cast at us. Finally they obeyed my shouted command and advanced to attack. The morgothians were aggressive and capable, their casters kept up a steady stream of spells and our archer seemed incapable of returning fire. We met them warrior to warrior and cut them down with our mages both defending us and striking at them.

Once the last had fallen we were left with many wounded and few spells or healing left.

We decided to meditate again even though only a few hours had passed since the last and we would have none left who could meditate after this.

Zug was sent to find a hidden and sheltered spot. It was out of sight of the path certainly but involved climbing through thorn bushes and went I woke from my meditations I found snow piled upon my shoulders and head. After transferring much of my own inner strength to Nero we were able to continue.

Walking along a trail we followed the path of a small valley until our way was blocked by shadowsfall. Just behind them stood one of the grey clad figures with the eye rune. They demanded we go no further and instead return to the nearby inn. They did not seem to know the name of the inn and when we spoke to them they frequently looked to the grey figure.

Faced with the shadowsfall hostility we withdrew slightly to talk among ourselves. A plan was decided upon.

The patrol would advance and engage the shadowsfall, blocking their blows and holding them off while I went through them and attacked the controller. We walked back to the shadowsfall who readied weapons at our approach. Then the sergeant called for the attack and we engaged. While the others kept the shadowsfall busy and with the good sergeant guarding my back from the many blows of the shadowsfall I struck down the controller and slew it.

At this point the shadowsfall stopped fighting and were confused.

They were unwilling to admit they had been controlled but while we talked they did say that they were miles away from where they should be, a half days travel or more and several days later than they thought it was. They had come into this area hunting these strange bandits who had been seen here in numbers. They thought they had captured one.

We tried to explain what was happening but they were reluctant to admit they had been

controlled and finally left promising to return later that day and speak more.

Zug had scouted ahead and returned to report several buildings and movement a distance ahead on a side path. We walked there and found the side path led down a steep bank. At the bottom were several ruined buildings, a group of strange looking lizard men I was told were Sargin and someone who called himself Kale priest of Geb. This last while dressed more ornately looked like the controllers we had been meeting

Kale said much while we talked. He was a priest of Geb and had travelled here with many followers of Geb. He was hunting the Yonas who had committed sacrilege and blasphemy here in this land. He had captured the Yonas who was held in Geb's talon. The Yonas was wanted for his crimes by the great one whose name would not be spoken here because we were not worthy. Now that they were here Geb was much interested in this world and they would be staying after the Yonas was returned. He had heard of the valley. It was written in stone in some of the newer temples of a visit by strangers to his world, these had been of the valley. If we wanted the Yonas back we must go to Axos and ask at the temples there.

He did not understand magic as we did. Things were different here. He was able to call upon powers at will but in his own land what would make people his friends became lightning bolts of the smallest ritual power here. He also had no concept of how he travelled here or how he would travel back, simply repeating that Geb would carry them or they would travel by Geb's will.

He had compelled the Sargin to serve him and he had an acolyte with him.

In the ruined building where he stood was a tall wild looking figure trapped in some form of web. This was the one Kale referred to as the Yonas.

After much talking to little point fighting began. Kale was unhurt by normal weapons, only those with enchantment on then could hurt him. In return he freely cast lightning bolts and shocking grasps against us. The Sargin and his Acolyte skirmished as well but this fight was brief as once we proved we could hurt him he retreated into the building. A ward of some type across the door and windows blocked any object bearing spell, invocation or enchantment but could not be detected or discerned.

With Kale inside the ward all fighting stopped and the talking began again. While Sergeant Orlando spoke to the priest I checked the area and watched the Sargin who had withdrawn a little. At this point I noticed that the pool we had been fighting beside was in fact some six feet

deep to the rocks at the bottom. I decided to move my position to somewhere a little safer.

Kale came out of the ward and continued talking, saying nothing more and mostly repeated what I noted above.

Finally enough time had passed and Jeremiah appeared, he had finished his casting and struck the priest with a powerful ritual level shocking grasp followed by a pair of lighting bolts. The rest of us attacked as well and quickly moved to block him from his ward.

Battle began again. One of the Sargin fell quickly, I paused to slay the acolyte while Lupacuore and the sergeant fought the priest along a narrow path beside the building. The priest fled but was caught on some open land past the ruins and was surrounded and quickly slain. His many powerful spells took their toll however and we all carried heavy wounds. Lupacuore had thrown herself headlong into the fight and had been thrown down by spells of lightning. She was returned to us through the use of an elixir.

While Lupa recovered the others freed the Yonas and found many items. Some scrolls, a book and great sheaf of loose pages held together with stitching. Also the Yonas when released was able to talk and act and proved to be insane. Many personalities came and went, he would scream and rant, behave like a child and then claim to be one of the patrol. During the time he was with us he proved annoying in the extreme and although several of the patrol joined in his frivolity I took no part in it.

With Lupacuore able to walk once more and without resources we returned the many miles to the Inn.

Arriving there safely, presumably we have killed anything hostile nearby, I took watch while the others went in to warm themselves.

Some time passed when two figures in purple approached the inn. They introduced themselves as Mr Carter and Mr Fitch. Although physically not the same as those we met before they had the same mannerisms and after asking us about the Yonas attacked in the same way.

We held them off and finally slew them but due to our lack of healing sergeant Orlando had fallen, fortunately we had a remaining elixir and he was revived and taken into the Inn.

Myrtle, Nero and Jeremiah continued to work on the many pages we had recovered from Kale, these were in yet another script and they worked diligently on the translations late into the night.

More figures in the gloom, this time a patrol of shadowsfall with a controller in the middle of them. The leader of this group identified himself as Justicar Antilus. He entered the inn and pushed the controller to its knees.

He and a group of his people had attacked a group of these controllers, quickly slaying all but one who was power drained and taken prisoner. They had questioned it and gained some information.

The shadowsfall had become aware of a large number of these non colour wearing figures and had come in to investigate. They had reports of many in this area and of sightings of a few in other parts of the land. The patrol we had freed had reported back to him and he had sought us out in return.

An amulet such as we had seen before was recovered from this controller's neck and also a scroll written in yet another script.

This controller and the others like them were from Axos, this is one of the planes of the grand conjunction of many years ago. The Wizards Concilium had visited this plane as part of the co-ordinated effort to prevent the destruction of this world during the conjunction.

The shadowsfall are now actively hunting the Axians as they have identified them as outlaws.

He questioned us about the Yonas who was drawing attention to himself by behaving childishly. Then the Yonas claimed to be a seeker named Tulip and others said Tulip was of our alliance. This seemed to satisfy the shadowsfall as he chose to ignore the half orc Zug who

stupidly join the conversation at several points loudly proclaiming the Yonas as outlaw and then was not a member of the alliance. Having spoken to him before about this I feel that harsher measures are needed. This is not the first time that the stupidity of these half orcs and sprites has threatened the completion of mission objectives. However as the White Retreat and Valley people took great delight in pointing out to me on this occasion, he was wolfhold and therefore my problem but I could not kill him because that was against valley Law. I shall pursue the matter further upon my return.

The prisoner tried to escape and was cut down and slain.

At one point the Yonas and the half orc went into one of the rooms and started making a great deal of noise, it sounded like a fight. The shadowsfall on guard outside burst in expecting trouble then left hurriedly when he saw he had been tricked. I sympathise with that guard.

Then after commenting on yet another colourful encounter with the valley the shadowsfall left.

Tulip rejoined us, having left shortly after the return to the inn to contact the seekers in the area. She reported she had passed on a message via one of the other scouts.

More time passed without event. The hard word of translating the scrolls continued. Zug spent a great deal of time trying to start a fire. I stood watch.

A group of lizard men came towards the inn. Some distance behind them was a controller and I alerted Myrtle who told the others. These we quickly dealt with in what was becoming our standard tactic in the face of these creatures. The main group of the patrol held a fighting line and defended themselves while the sergeant and I broke through to engage the controller. He covered my back while I beat it down and slew it.

As usual with the death of the controller the others stopped fighting and were confused. They left to speak to a shaman about what had happened.

During the evening the Yonas had continued with his strange and annoying behaviour. Then for no reason he fled into the woods. I was on watch and did not know what caused this, the others said they did not know. He left the inn screaming, ran so fast none could keep up and vanished deep into the woods. We will need to search for him in the morning, as we are not fit to stand up to any enemy at present.

Maple arrived. He reported that the seekers had returned and were taking up the perimeter watch.

Many gathered around the now blazing fire to drink and talk, Nero and Myrtle continued to work on the scrolls. They had by now translated several pages and these seemed to speak of religious matters, the names and deeds of beings of power.

By now I was very tired. Since we had the seekers on watch I retired.

After this we had several more visitors which were reported to me in the morning.

A Xenos ambassador to the Dyfadyn. It came to share information. The dreamers are on Axos, the labyrinth can track them. More are asleep than had come here from Axos. The forces of Xenos are willing to help but at this time can do nothing. The Axians here can be tracked.

Earlier in the day we had spoken much of this and I had suggested that the children and the undetectable controller had been manifestations or dreams and could not be detected because they were not really here. It would seem I was correct in this assumption. This means that the children who are missing may well have been drawn off world. A mission to recover them and end this threat may need to be sent to Axos itself. It is always wise to demonstrate strength in the face of a threat, these strange beings should be shown the strength of the Alliance and how it responds to attack.

A drow by the name of Abadon Dreamweaver from the nearby cave of dreams visited. He spoke of much but his words were cryptic and confusing. He suggested that the facial markings on the followers of Geb indicated how much of his concentration was being given to each and

therefore how powerful they were. He said that his dream powers were being interfered with by many dreams from outside the cave of dreams. He also looked at dreams and nightmares in a strange way so the others were not sure he meant dreams as we know them.

He wanted to walk the dreams of others to help with his problem in some way and five of the patrol agreed to this. Each drew a bead from a bag and he said the following: In the future Myrtle would not be here, Kalliste would be more than she is and Jack, Lupacuore and Orlando are flesh and bone. Over night each of these had a strange dream.

Myrtle's was not relevant, Sgt Orlando would not repeat his, the other three dreamed of being in water, of rescuing a girl from drowning and of a burning ship.

While Dreamweaver was present one of the dream images or manifestations of the controllers we had seen the night before again visited the inn. It checked each of the rooms then left again. It woke me by opening the door to my room, looked round quickly and closed the door again. Dreamweaver said it was being more than it was and it could not, as usual, be discerned.

Dreamweaver said he would return to meet the five in the future.

The following morning I rose and broke my fast with naught but coffee again. What sort of Inn has a kitchen but no means of preparing toast!

As usual I saw the sunrise hidden behind the heavy cloud as one by one the other members of the patrol roused themselves. Most had by now leaned not to go anywhere unarmed due to my frequent reminders on the subject and only one left the inn without weapon or armour.

Two purple clad figures were seen in the distance. The strange drones calling themselves Mr Carter and Mr Fitch. There was no point talking to them so battle commenced at once. Zug began by loosing an arrow at them from no more than five paces, which missed completely, he then repeated his shot by missing again. Giving up on his archery we engaged in melee. We slew both of these strange creatures and treated our wounds.

Shortly after this a small group of morgothians came into sight along with one of the acolytes of



Geb. They stopped a distance away and one of them sat to begin casting. We quickly moved out to meet them before the spell could be finished.

The leader of this group offered Sergeant Orlando single combat, the sergeant declined. I asked his name, he said his name was not important. I engaged him but then he attacked others who were not fighting him so I treated the battle as a general melee. He was able to cast invocations through his sword strikes and sent several of us running with invocations of fear. He was also able to cause wounds with his sword blows. Warriors and a priest supported him. The group was uncoordinated in this battle, despite us outnumbering the enemy and having an archer and my shouted instruction the priest was able to cast in safety, something I found of great annoyance when he blighted my sword blows. It was not until our own mages began casting that he was threatened.

Pushing in hard against the enemies trying to reach first the caster and then the acolyte I sustain many wounds and requires a great deal of healing from both Jack and Tulip.

I offered the morgothian leader a chance to yield at one point in the battle. He declined and was bolted to death by the mages a few minutes later as I went after the acolyte. Finally the acolyte was run down and slain.

We treated our many wounds and saw to Nero who had drawn too deeply of his power and was unconscious, then returned to the Inn.

Jack declared he would meditate and needed to do so in the woods, he moved away a short distance with Sergeant Orlando to guard him.

Then four figures came into sight. Acolytes of Geb. They rushed us when they spotted the sergeant and Jack a distance away and alone. As the two rejoined us the acolytes stopped out of reach and said they were the last of the followers of Geb. They demanded we return the sacred scrolls to them. We would not do so. Then one of them commanded Zug to attack the rest of the patrol. He wandered back to the inn asking where his arrows were while both mages prepared to cast spells at him. Then he stopped and wandered back to join us. What ever they had tried had not worked, he was too stupid to notice and had started doing what they said anyway.

Then the other caster among the acolytes commanded Lupacuore to defend him and attack any who came near him except his three companions. She moved to take up a guard position by him.

We attacked. I engaged first one of the warrior acolytes then as he backed away I went after the priest guarded by Lupacuore. She attacked me while the priest withdrew to help his warriors hold off the sergeant, Kalliste and Jack who were pressing them hard. Our mages meanwhile were on my right and were striking the last acolyte with a combination of spells.

The enemy were too strong for me to remain out of combat for too long so as Lupacuore attacked me I took several of her blows, beat aside her guard and knocked her to the ground with several blows to her head. Once I was sure she was down I returned to the fight to hear one of the priests order someone else to kill the one in red. I looked to guard Myrtle who was wearing a long red coat when Kalliste came straight at me, clearly the priest had been talking about my red surcoat.

She attacked me and I spent a few seconds blocking her attacks while I assessed the state of the battle. Jack was near me. Zug was running around with a dagger. Our mages were close to the inn, Sergeant Orlando was fighting one of the warrior acolytes and a priest and the other priest was engaging the mages. The other warrior was guarding the priest by the mages.

I then engaged Kalliste, she blocked several of my blows but I was able to beat her defence and struck her down with several blows. With her down I moved to engage the followers of Geb when Jeremiah came between a priest and myself. He blocked my first blow and engaged me. He too was under the influence of these acolytes.

His skill with a staff was much better than I would have expected from a mage and he was able to guard himself such that I could not quickly drop him. Then I said I had an idea and advanced towards him, he turned to keep facing me as I advanced. I then stopped and he stood facing me when one of the acolyte warriors ran up behind him and struck him several times in the back. I then killed the acolyte.

By now Jack was down, sergeant Orlando was down, Zug was still standing, I had defeated both Lupacuore and Kalliste, Jeremiah was down, Myrtle was almost out of spells, Nero was still

unconscious from over casting earlier. One priest and both warriors were down, the sergeant had fought well before falling to his many wounds and Myrtle had cast herself out of her more powerful spells to great effect.

Only a single priest remained, this one had entered the inn and returned with Nero as hostage. He held a sword against Nero and started to make some sort of demand when I walked straight up to him and struck him. He was able to strike Nero and then fell back before my attacks. He then turned to flee and was caught and slain by Zug and Jack who was back on his feet but sorely wounded.

We turned to treating our many wounded. Nero recovered a few minutes latter. Sergeant Orlando and Lupacuore were both unconscious and recovered after healing to chest or head wounds. Kalliste required an elixir. Jeremiah was healed.

With both our healers awake they were able to meditate and we were fully healed once more.

Rather than continue to hunt for the Yonas it was decided we had to return all of the information we had gained to the cities at best speed. We gathered everything, taking care we had all of the many scrolls and pages and with a small escort of seekers scouting our path we set off back to the city.

Additional notes upon my return to the city.

The Axians are capable and dangerous enemies. The entities I have called controllers are perhaps the most dangerous as the range of their controlling abilities are not yet known. However they have demonstrated the ability to take over groups so this power is either fast or subtle and unnoticed at first. Even the lesser shadowsfall patrol fell prey to this control. On first encounter with a controller, clad in grey with surcoat and hood, a stylised rune circling the left eye and down the cheek and often with a rune covered upside down ankh amulet, they should be slain with all speed. Alone or with a group of controlled people the controller is the priority target. With it dead combat often stops as the controlled become confused and will stop fighting if no longer threatened.

Carter and Fitch are melee only, as strong as it is possible to be and striking heavy blows. They have been slain several times and return each time. These are either constructs of some form produced in pairs or the same beings reforming into a new form each time they are defeated. Either way they talk at first then will suddenly attack. Unless you have any reason to waste time with them attack them on sight.

The Acolytes and Priests of Geb demonstrated the ability to control people that the controllers have, they also cast a great many spells. The priest was able to cast spells without the effort required normally, he simply called upon Geb and cast the effect. The acolytes and warrior acolytes were all hurt by normal blades, the priest was hurt only by enchantments.

Many of the powers and abilities of these beings were undetectable by spell, incantation or skill. The ability of the controllers to scout while in a form immune to harm must also be noted.