

Under instructions from Lightfoot Flame, (inset below) acting guild leader of the Red School of magic, a group of alliance adventurers were gathered under the leadership of Rasc the Ard-wiz. Our mission was to take part in a competition being held by the Xenosians where the components required to perform the ritual of ashes were the prize. Apparently, after a certain amount of uses the components needed to be recharged before further use. Traditionally the Xenosians then have a competition to decide who will hold the components and therefore complete the ritual.

Rasc and Suresh,

Read the information below if you wish (but you MUST read what is written at the bottom in Red)

You may not be aware but for the past two years we have been in the position of seven artifacts, believed to belong to the Ikarthians, which were used to complete a great magic known as the "Ritual of Ashes"

The Alliance has completed this Ritual for the past two years and those completing it have gained some from of permanent magical fire protection. (Some have been on both missions to carry this out and have continued to gain the protection.) We believe that this ritual must be carried out every year and those deemed responsible are held under an ancient Shadows fall contract to ensure its completion.

At the end of the last mission to the Ikarthian Triangle to complete the ritual, an Ambassador approached our group from the Labyrinth of Xenos, as they were on the first mission, claiming to own the Artifacts and wishing that they be returned for "reprocessing". As this Ambassador (his name was Galisan) seemed only willing to take the artifacts by force the Alliance group did not give them to him. (Even though they had negotiated for an opportunity to attempt to gain ownership of the items after "reprocessing" had been completed)

Once the items had been returned to the Red School, after the last mission, we decided to attempt to return them to the Lox. We know little of this tower and did not wish to make an

enemy of them before we had completely lost the hope of any form of alliance. We sent a group of Wizards and Guards/Scouts from the Red School to attempt contact in the Ikarthian triangle.

Only one member of this group returned, without the Artifacts, or any of his own possessions, but with a strange Red Gem, he had little to tell us other than of constant harrying attacks by Minotaurs and similar magical creations until all was lost at one final assault.

Upon identification the Gem revealed the following message.

*Within 2 cycles of our moon, journey to the Way Station given the name "The Tangled Web",
Therein all those wishing to gain ownership of the Artifacts of the Ritual of Ashes will, short of
petition from the Ikarthian Race, be given due opportunity to prove their worthiness.*

We have researched the Tangled Web and recent information suggested it to be an Inn of ill repute, we have considered the resources available to the Red School and feel that you two will be best suited for the role of getting the information we need at this inn.

We have petitioned the other schools and our Tower Leaders to send those to your aid whom either know this Inn or know of the Xenos and the Ritual of Ashes. In addition we have requested that others (from outside the Alliance, but with whom we have links) whom we believe may be able to assist, attend the inn or send representatives, be prepared to receive strange guests (we can say no more)

Meet them at the Tangled Web and do what you need to do to gain any information relating to the Artifacts. As Rasc is senior he will speak for the red school on this matter, you do not need to claim to "lead" any Alliance group if you do not wish. Once any information is available send Suresh back to the school with it, preferably with some other alliance members in guard. Rasc should remain in the field to pursue any leads.

Efficient action will be justly rewarded.

Red School Administration

RASC & CURESH

GO IMMEDIATELY TO THE TANGLED WEB INN CLOSE TO THE LAST GATE WOOD

MEET THERE WITH OTHER VALLEY ALLIANCE MEMBERS

FIND OUT ALL YOU CAN ABOUT THE ARTEFACTS OF THE RITUAL OF ASHES

SEND CURESH BACK TO REPORT

RASC TRY TO GET THE ARTEFACTS BACK

RED SCHOOL

As we gathered to journey to the tangled web it was clear that the Shadowsfall would punish us severely if we failed, motive enough for any of us who weren't quite sure how we found ourselves on red school business under the leadership of a half orc. Bethan, Tullan, Beren, Mortis, Pod, Cedric, Rancor, Lancorin, Roban, Myrhh, Early and myself, Cirith.

We journey to the Tangled Web, where the Xenosians had told us to gather. At the web we met Hail Black-Boy (the Drannath turn coat assassin Ilha Soul-reaver in disguise) who had

information for us. Black-Boy told us that the Xenosians would hold a trial for possession of the ritual components. We were visited by Diamond Von Forst who told us some of Shad Firequake and the Ritual of Ashes. Abdullah Storm of the wizards Concillium came and declared the Concillium's interest in obtaining the components

The inn was infested with spiders who harried us, it turned out that it was under the control of Xelios the Hive Mind and as the attacks worsened we were forced to break into the deeper parts of the way station we encountered many more spiders including a large psionic spider.

Meanwhile Shad Firequake, 4th sorcerer of House Drannath came and attacked us declaring her interest in the components and the ritual.

Finally, Galisan the 4th, Ambassador to the Labyrinth of Xenos showed up and introduced us to the competition. Apparently he had been killed 3 times before hence the moniker 4th. We had to quest after a number of the components, now apparently in the form of Daggers, that were concealed in various locations all over Orin Rakatha, there were a series of cryptic clues in Xenosian runes to guide us to the various prizes. We were informed that we were not the only group competing.

We chose seven locations where we would quest for Daggers, from many shown on a map of Orin Rakatha, We ourselves would contest some and a note was sent back to the towers to ask for aid in contesting for the others.

My readers you must forgive me as when these events transpired I was naïve in the ways of the valley, and the significance of many things passed me by- further I was not in the habit of taking notes so this is recounted from memories and with the help of my companions.

There were 7 clues in total, and each group had access to all the clues. We were against the Kalid, the Concillium, the Morgothian, House Drannath and the Dye-fe-Dyne. We worked on the clues and decided to go after three of the daggers nearest to our lands, we also tried to work out which ones the other groups would go after.

We set off first to the Eight Hills I think. We discovered a dagger in a trap and recovered it. As we left Shad and her dream warriors attacked us again, she cast an earthquake and took the dagger from us. We observed that she also already had one. Things were not going well.

Next we went to the Rabb plains where we recovered a dagger but were attacked by Abdullah storm. This was a long hard fight; she had a djinn, a dancing sword and a number of elementals. A number of our group were slain but we were triumphant and recovered another dagger from her.

Our final task was to spend a night in the Labyrinth of Xenos itself.

The gate was guarded by Checkmate, whom we had to play at a game of his own devising. Somewhat similar to chess with different pieces having different function, each side playing alternately. Unfortunately we played this game very badly and Lancorin died as a result. If anyone has to do this in future, take some time to understand the rules and designate the most intelligent person to play the game, we all tried to play and it meant we were not able to think properly.

However we gained access. The area we stayed in was within the tower but open to the world, we were attacked continually all thru the night. Strangely inside the tower it appeared possible for the body to be harmed by permanently empowered or ensorcelled objects, as we had few of these our time inside the tower was fraught with dangers.

Eventually we made it and were rewarded with a dagger by Xelios the Hive Mind, high enchanter of the Labyrinth of Xenos. Xelios was unhappy with our victory and possibly our destruction of his spiders at the Tangled Web and attacked us. After a long combat we were able to slay him.

We felt that we were no longer safe at the Labyrinth of Xenos and set off into the night to seek shelter.

We sought shelter at an abandoned way station, along the way encountering barbarians first,

Jerag flame tongue shaman of the children of fire and stone. Later, Olag Stone eye shaman of the children of water and stone. We had no idea who they were and I can't recollect what was said.

We settled to discuss how to proceed. However, Ilha Soulreaver 4th Assassin of House Drannath was waiting for us and took advantage of our tiredness and the darkness to assassinate Rasc, however, he got his comeuppance and we then recovered his field laboratory which caused Roban more than a few problems.

During the night, a magical projection of several alliance guild leaders came to give us news. We heard that our allies at the Halmadonians had recovered the dagger from the Crown of Haval and that Seekers had been unable to recover one in the Valgrind Pass, but they would not say how or why the position was lost.

We were contacted by Jezra Hunnet of the Earthwarp who said he could transport us to Shad's underground lair that night.

Possessing several of the artefacts we decided to find somewhere safe to wait for transportation. As we hid we saw Easterlings, Drannath and Kalid all hunting us, a lone Easterling scout being the only one to find us but too late to prevent our escape. We rendezvoused with the Earthwarp who transported us.

However, mid-earth journey we found ourselves the esteemed guests of Wenzel Harborfolkington, chief negotiator of the World Window. I can't quite remember what he wanted but we were pleased for the hot food and comfort of his hallowed halls. Wenzel informed us of a pact that had been made between him, Abdullah Storm, Wayland Wycan, and Shad Firequake. Anchored by Wayland's high magic these four had developed a magical tattoo that would compel anyone who had it to do their bidding. Several valley members had been thus tattooed

He informed us that they had to bind their fears into an enchanted box for the power to work. During the night we traded information with him for the magical box we possessed bearing his symbol, the box bearing the symbol of Abdullah Storm and the key to the box we had taken from Abdullah Storm. (Wenzel wore the key to his box around his neck on a chain)

I fear that the deal was not well negotiated, but Wenzel's words, food and wine were highly persuasive.

However our relaxation backfired for we failed to take notice that he had merely interrupted our journey, and while we were still sleeping off our full bellies we arrived in Shad's underground layer and several of us were butchered in our beds before we could repel her dream warriors.

Still we got ourselves ready. Unfortunately warded doors immediately split the group. On our side we got in but it had already kicked off. The others opened Shad's box and a Hepath was released. Shad had two simulacra wielding mighty magic blades and Drannath the Wolf was there also. Roban killed himself immediately on a trapped bottle that he had greedily grabbed and we were all getting a kicking, Shad butchered our Hospitaller, and Mortis bled to death. Meanwhile myself and brother Cedric stood against Drannath and despite his powers he was slain.

In the deepest core the lifeless yet magical body of Shad lay surrounded by a veil of magic fire. We had discovered that she could only be slain by ranged magic damage so our wizards Rasc, Myrrh and Rancor were there destroying her, eventually they were successful and she was destroyed.

I believe that only 3 of us remained standing, Lancorin, Myrrh and myself. Tullan who had been mana drained by the Hepath was the first up, and was clearly warned before he ran over to where Shad's magic wand lay, and killed himself on the powerful trap that protected it.

We gathered our dead and looted the tomb before departing, she had three daggers and as such we had all 7 so we returned to the towers successful.

Forgive the mistakes I have made and the things I have forgotten, but I felt it was best to get this information out in case it helps during these dark times

