

Campaign Notes

Mystaran Campaign

Session 051026

Miles Flavius adjusted his metal breastplate and looked at the soldier next to him. The sun was quickly retreating from the sky but there had been no word from inside the meeting room. And no sign that their talks would end soon. The soldier next to him was Miles Brucius, a non-descript Thyatian of few words. Flavius hated guard duty with him. The hours crept by like a tortoise on Lucinius Beach.

It had been three years since Flavius had joined the Legions of Thyatis. His enlistment was all but over. In fact, as soon as they returned from Specularum, he would be an average citizen again. That sounded just fine to him.

All told though, his position was not a bad one. He had been spared going to the Hinterlands by being made a guard for Deputy Trade Counsel Montius Extragillius almost immediately upon leaving Tiro (recruit) status. Because of Extragillius, he had been trained in advance sword arts without ever really risking his life. In his position he had also been able to travel throughout the mainland of the Empire as well as to Karameikos and the Five Shires. Ah! The people of the Five Shires. Though Halflings all, they had heart and they knew how to have a good time. The memory of the taste of Moon Hill rum made his mouth water. He would have to go by the Hungry Halfling tonight after this meeting ended. If it ever ended . . .

Oh, that was probably one too many, thought Flavius. But where as that barmaid's looks seemed almost hostile earlier, they sure looked inviting now. Perhaps he should have a word with her. He stood up or at least meant to do so yet his legs barely cooperated. It was time to go. The Trade Counsel would not like that he slipped out tonight.

Flavius walked towards the door. Hmm. What about that barmaid? He looked around and saw that her eyes and words were with another gentleman. And they were both staring at him but trying hard not to look as if they were not staring at him. His inner soldier's voice was trying to tell him something but his dulled mind

and enlarged bladder got in the way. "Oh well. No matter. Time to get home."

Flavius shuffled into the alley outside the tavern and leaned against the wall to relieve himself. "I don't think I had that much but I sure seem to have lost control over my pants strings," he chuckled. While he was fumbling, he failed to notice the men quietly slipping out of the tavern behind him. One, the staring man, carried a sap, the other a large knife gripped in sweaty hands. "Umph!!" A blow to the base of his skull and Flavius was dead to the world . . .

"Argh. Another day of this. How did I get here?" Akair's head hurt and his eyes strained to eke out any form or shape in the dark. Shouts and screams are heard from all around. It stinks. No, it really stinks. This must be a boat for the waves are rocking it. Side to side and up and down. The monk has never been to sea before and this is much too rough to be a lake. At least any lake near where he was before he was attacked. Trying to relax his mind and muscles, Akair slips back to sleep.

The mystic awoke again. "How many days has it been?" His last clear memory was walking on the docks in Specularum, taking in the night air and the sounds and smells of that strange city. He had never been to such a large and crowded place. Though his monastery was a short distance north of Kerendas, he had never really stayed in that city. Besides, it was not nearly the size of Specularum and the city of horsemen was very different. Calmer and cleaner. But, as Master Esterius often said, the true servant of the Gods must be aware of both the word of the Gods and the make of their people. All brothers, whether they seek the path of the mind or the path of the body (like them), the true servant must venture out beyond the protected fields.

He had been on the docks when a man walking past brushed into him. He looked at the man to say that he was sorry when two others appeared and struck him with clubs. He was able to throw one of them in the water but then there were two more men. One must have slipped behind him and whacked him with a sap because next thing he knew, he was waking up in a covered wagon, tied to several other people. He found out that

he was now the property of the Iron Ring. That was a name knew little about other than the rumors from his childhood: slavers, black marketers, pirates; takers of naughty children. But that was a far off fairy tale and this had become all too real a few days ago.

After a while in the wagon, he was gathered with other slaves, being picked to ship to market. It was all done in a desolate warehouse. A man all in black (even the eye slits of his helmet were black steel and his eyelessness was utterly disturbing) inspected them. He was accompanied by the tallest, gauntest man he had ever seen. The man in black killed a slave right beside Akair, without word or look, just a quick flick of a wrist and a dagger to the throat. But after that, Akair's sole focus became Hafkris. The sailors and slaves call him the Half-Orc and if such abominations truly exist, he is surely one of them. Hulking and ugly with a turned up snout that reminds one of nothing less than a pig. Stringy black hair, full of grit and grease. Red skin, harshly treated in the salt and sun of the sea. Cruel as the legends of Orcs suggest. He was the chief slave master during the sea voyage and he named them all "meat."

For what seemed liked many days, the mystic tossed in the hold of the ship, sick from the smell, the gruel served once per day, the constant waves and most of all, Hafkris and his whip. When he has been in a good mood, Hafkris has said the slaves are bound for the slave markets of Highport. From the sound of it, it is a great and secret city of pirates and slave traders. No matter. Akair and the other captives are firmly chained to the deck and there appears to be no way out of the shackles. Mockingly, the keys to them are hung from a hook right by the hatch to the deck, only five or six feet from the group of prisoners. They might as well be miles away.

Now, however, it is dark and perhaps night. It is hard to tell because of the storm. Crash! Another thunderous boom and the ship feels as it will turn full over through the water. A while ago (who knows how long since hours seem like days in the hold), Hafkris came and took twenty slaves above deck. He is now back and picks twenty more, leaving but six slaves in the hold. In the flash of lightning with the hold door open, Hafkris can be seen to be in an even fouler mood than normal. And is that a sign of worry or concern or even fear . . .

Still later, the cries and screams can barely be heard above the din of the storm. The wind is becoming stronger. Then . . . KABOOM!!!!!! A gut-rending, limb busting crash and a black maw appears in the hull of the ship, the wood splintering like kindling. Wind and rain and seawater and sand spray the slaves. All is confused as the ship turns over on its side. Akair closes his eyes against the stinging sand and rocks. He does not see the piece of ship's timber that strikes him in the head. He just faded to black . . .

The ship had run aground on a large sandy beach. The front end of the boat was disintegrated. A few bodies were lying face down in the sand and Hafkris walked amongst them. After the crash and the subsequent turning and tumbling of the boat, Hafkris awoke. He had consumed his lucky bottle of wine first. Then he searched through the remains of the aft storage and found the only unbroken bottle of wine and consumed that too. He was rip roaring drunk so he went for some air on the beach.

Meanwhile, the last of the slaves were awakening in the damaged hold.

"Unggh!! What happened?" Flavius forgot that he was chained and tried to bring his hands up to his aching head.

Next to him was a Dwarf. "It appears we have come to a sudden stop."

The soldier looked sideways at his short, stocky companion. "You don't say. I guess I am just glad you speak Thyatian. Well, I believe that my bonds are looser. Perhaps we can get ourselves out of here."

A voice called from the other side of Flavius with a distinct Alpathian accent, "Can anyone now reach that key that has been tormenting me these past few days?"

Flavius pulled with all of his might and what was once impossible due to a lack of leverage was suddenly easy. The chains came unripped from the wall with a mighty screech. "I think I can get them," he said.

The Thyatian dragged his chains over to the hatch and grabbed the key ring. Quickly

undoing his bonds, he turned back to his fellow captives. "Ladies first." He walked over to the sole female among the six captives and undid her bonds. She smiled weakly and rubbed her wrists. Flavius moved from one to the next until all were free: a thin man with the look and voice of an Alphatian, a Dwarven man, two men with the look of fellow Thyatians and the woman.

"Well, now that this is done. Let's see where we are and how we get out of here." The Alphatian moved passed the group towards the gaping hole in the bow. Rain came down in sheets and the gusting wind forced it in sideways. Through the gloomy light, they saw a man walking haphazardly on the beach. Shouting and thrusting his fist into the sky. Above the roar of the wind, they could catch snatches of word: "Cursed luck . . . kill him . . . ran us through the worst . . . die!"

There was no mistaking that form. It was their captor Hafkris.

"Now what?" asked the woman.

"I think we should take care of Hafkris before he comes back to take care of us," said the Dwarf.

"He appears to be inebriated," said one of the two Thyatian men. He had the shaven head of a monk. It was hard to tell since they were all in rags and barefoot.

The Dwarf and soldier started looking around. The other Thyatian looked puzzled and said, "What are you doing?"

"We are looking for wood to use as weapons," they said in unison.

"Good idea. I will look for enough wood to fashion together a symbol of the Church. We will need the luck of the Immortals on our side." He went towards the back of the broken ship.

The monkish looking man spoke again, "I will lure him back here. Wait in the shadows and take him when he gets close."

Akair leaped out of the hole in the bow and started to climb the broken timbers up to the main deck. He glanced back cautiously at Hafkris. The drunken sailor was staring right at him.

Hafkris came charging after the Monk. "Get back in there, meat!"

As he got close to the hole, he hesitated. A flicker of something caught his eye but by then it was too late. Chronos stepped from the shadows and swung the club into the slaver's shoulder. Flavius quickly followed, holding his club like his gladius and jabbing the ugly man in the chest. The Dwarf scramble under the priest's swing and tried to land a blow of his own but was off balance and missed. Hafkris's leg jerked unexpectedly, in strange rhythm to the gestures of the Mage. His swing was thrown off and the blade went inches above Flavius' head.

From above, Akair yelled, "Up here Orc!" Hafkris paused and became unsure. He had forgotten the monk. Akair jumped down behind the Dwarf and the Fighter as they together landed blows from their makeshift clubs. Hafkris, surprised at the daring of these slaves, cursed and slashed his sword at Sarmboc. A line of bright red ripped through his tattered shirt and the pale tan began to turn crimson. A smile snarled Hafkris' lips.

Then, a sound like popcorn, and the voice of the mage sang clear, "Behold your doom, slaver." A streak of blue sparkles flew from Syndylus' hands and like an arrow, pierced Hafkris' neck. His eyes grew wide and a little gurgle mixed with blood escaped his lips. With that he was dead, his body twisting backwards into the sand.

"I have never said this about another living thing but I am truly glad he is dead. May the gods redeem his spirit. Thank you for killing him. Hafkris was truly an evil soul." Those were the first words the woman spoke and the group was surprised she was there. They had forgotten her in the heat of their first battle. "My name is Melisana."

"Well met, fair lady. I am Brother Akair of the Order of the Mountain Sun." The monk bowed as was his fashion.

"A mystic? No wonder you were climbing up the boards like a monkey." The Dwarf said as he moved to see Melisana a little better. Akair smiled and nodded at the short figure.

Flavius bowed to the lady. "A monk maybe but the Order of the Mountain Sun is at least Thyatian. This . . ."

"We have no allegiance but to the gods and the purity of self, sir," interrupted Akair.

"Yes, yes. But what I was to say is that the one back there is clearly no friend of ours, despite his vanquishing of Hafkris. The wizard is Alphatian by Vanya."

"Ay, that I am. From your tone and hooked nose, you must be Thyatian. It would seem though that at this moment we are less of our nations and more of each other. The wind is picking up and we should find some shelter." The Alphatian squinted at the rain as water ran into his eyes. "If you must call me a name it is Syndyls."

"And mine is Chronos," said the Cleric. "Chronos of the Church of Karameikos."

The Dwarf chuckled. "Look at the lot of us. An Alphatian, a Thyatian and a bunch of Karameikans. It would make for a good joke." He reached a hand out to the Cleric. "My name is Sarmoc of Rockhome, Clan of the Stonetowers."

After finishing their introductions, the party turned to Hafkris' body. Carefully searching him for any valuables, they only found his sword, boots and leather armor of any use. In death, the slaver was even more foul. Besides the equipment they stripped, the only thing of note was the crude tattoo of black manacles found on his wrists.

The group then climbed the broken planks of the ship to the top deck. What remained of the mast was lain across the hatch which once held them in their doom. The deck was buckled and broken and only three cabins appeared at all intact, their doors still on hinges. The first was at the far aft and contained the remains of the grain and wine held on board for the captain and senior crew. Smashed bottles, broken barrels and wine soaked grain lay scattered about. Hafkris' boot prints could be seen here as well as the empty bottle he had tossed to the side after draining its contents.

The next room had a small cot and a chest. Inside the chest was a pair of slippers, a shirt, a cloak, several navigational charts and maps, a log book and a spell book. Syndyls examined the spell book carefully and has determined that

it contains at least six spells. He can only identify the first one: Read Magic. He will need to use that spell to unlock the secrets of the others.

The final room was obviously Hafkris'. It smelled like him. However, there were two hammocks slung on the walls and one chest. Inside the chest was another pair of boots and a crossbow with 50 quarrels. Everything else has been smashed.

Having searched the remains of the ship, Melisana begins to tell the group of herself. She is the daughter of Melkeras Basarius, a merchant in Specularum. She thinks her father would surely pay a handsome reward for her safe return. He must be very worried as she has missing since she left to go to the market and was convinced to delivery a giant lizard to some unknown person. She remembers that he cast a spell at her and she was then waking up in a dark dungeon. From there she was given to the slavers and smuggled aboard the ship.

The adventurers agree that they will keep her with them (and as safe as possible) then return to their grim work of looking through the wreckage; this time at the bodies washed up on shore. They all appear to be slaves as were they. None have any worthwhile possessions.

As they carry on their exploration, the wind and rain are relentless. With little to protect most of them, they are soaked and chilled to the bone. However, they cannot agree on what to do next. Akair and Syndyls decide to climb the sand berm that borders this beach to the west. Looking around reveals little except that the terrain is hilly with many small valley like trails through the dunes. No trees are other vegetation is visible but the rain makes sight short. North of them, the sand berm extends into rough, rocky land and perhaps stays high to the sea. It will be a difficult journey going that way. To the south, the sand berm flattens eventually into the sand. In that direction and to the east the terrain is more even and less rocky. While no civilization is visible, it appears that if they are to find any shelter, they must look inland.

The Dwarf and the Priest decide that a shelter may be made out of the remains of the boat and the sand. With pieces of timber, they begin digging in but the sand is heavy with rain and

the wind causes it to slide in upon itself as soon as it is dug. They persevere with Sarmboc talking about the engineering skill of his clan and how he knows he can build a shelter with two toothpicks and a rock, if necessary. The Priest does not seem to hear him but keeps his back in his digging.

"I do not think that digging a sand shelter in this storm is wise," says Melisana and the mage nods in agreement. He says, "Let us search in two directions and return in two hours. I will go with the legionnaire and Brother Akair, you go with Mistress Melisana."

The soldier, stares at the wizard as if to say something but holds his tongue. He instead goes to the Dwarf and takes Hafkris' sword. "Just in case," he says.

So the party splits up: the Dwarf and Cleric attempting to make a shelter in the sand, the Mage and Soldier heading north and the Monk and Melisana heading south. Meanwhile, the winds howled a little louder and the rains fell more heavily. It is growing colder . . .

Treasure Total:

- Leather armor
- Normal sword
- 1 light crossbow
- 50 quarrels
- 2 Daggers
- 2 pairs of boots
- A pair of slippers
- 2 cloaks
- 1 shirt
- 2 net hammocks
- The remains of a cot (canvas and wood)
- A book of spells
- A log book
- Assorted maps and navigational charts

Base Experience given: 61xp.

Campaign Notes

Mystaran Campaign

Session 051116

“Arghhh! This is pointless!” The Dwarf stands in the middle of a shift depression on the beach. His face is raw from the bite of the blowing sand, howling wind and pouring rain. Chronos says nothing but squints at the sky where he thinks the sun should be. Despite his name, he has no idea how much time has elapsed since their companions ventured off. He shares the Dwarf’s frustration though. It is obvious that they will be unable to make an adequate shelter that will protect all of them. Hopefully, the others were having more luck . . .

Just at that moment, Sarmboc could make out the shapes of the Mage and Soldier coming back from the north. They were shuffling and hunched against the wind.

“Well?” grumbled the Dwarf.

“There is nothing of use in that direction,” said Syndyls. “Barren beach, bleached rocks, a few dead bodies from our ship and a cliff wall too sheer to climb without equipment.”

Flavius nodded his agreement with the wizard’s assessment.

“Alright then. The priest and I have not had much luck with building sand castles here. Let’s pack up our stuff and head south to find that monk and the lady.”

Quickly the group gathered the waterlogged bounty they had scavenged from the ship including the broken cot and two net hammocks. Without looking back, they began to move out to the south along the beach.

The wind howled on the beach and sand began to kick into Jonathan’s face. He could hear the sounds of the pig men around him and he held his breath. Just maybe they would think him dead and move on. Out of one barely open eyelid he had seen what happened to the Captain when he ran. It was not pretty. And though Jonathan was no stranger to violence, it was definitely not his favorite pastime. The

Captain had begged in the end and Jonathan’s anger won over his humanity. He hoped the pigs would not spare him. They did not.

Now, they were moving amongst the washed up bodies, searching in vain for loot on the poor dead slaves. Those who stirred go a swift sword to the back or the head or the neck. He had to make them believe he was dead.

Jonathan could smell the salty stink of one. His boot was so close that the air from it moved Jonathan’s hair. The hair rose up to meet the cloth boots and Jonathan willed it down. One would have thought the rain that was steadily falling would have plastered it to his scalp but that one hair was being stubborn. Please, gods, let him move on. A grunt. A yell from somewhere to his left. This one yelled in return. Harsh words spoken from the back of a nasty throat. Jonathan could not tell what language that could possibly be but whatever, it was sweet to Jonathan for it caused the pig man to move on to the next body.

Jonathan tried moving his eyelids just a little again. The pig men were moving away. Unfortunately, he could not see where. Just away from the water. Away from him. Their sounds grew fainter and finally melted into the wind and rain. Jonathan still dared not move.

Brother Akair moved as stealthily as possible over the sand. Reaching the first body, he noticed it was one of the slaves he had seen aboard the ship. The body was battered and if that had not killed the poor soul, surely the deep dark slash in the back did.

One did not look quite right. Brother Akair crouched motionless and silent, letting his body adjust to the movement of the world around him. Yes, there it was. That body was moving; breathing, almost imperceptibly. Alive but how alive, thought the monk. Well alive by the breathing. Whoever he was, he was dressed like the other captives and he was controlling his breath as not to be noticed. Brother Akair called out, “I think it is safe now. I am Akair.” For a second the body did not move then quickly the head turned and looked at him, eyes blinking against the wind, rain and sand.

"There were pig men about. Orcs. They slaughtered everyone who moved. Including the Captain as he tried to run away."

"Were you one of the captives on the ship?"
Brother Akair moved closer to the blinking man.

Getting up and brushing the sand from his rags, the man spoke, "Yes. I am Jonathan." He shivered as the wind hit his now exposed wet front.

"Well, Jonathan, we had better get off this beach. You said there were Orcs around. I do not want to be here when they return. Plus, we should go meet my companions. One is there," he said pointing to the sand and rocks where Melisana was hiding. "Are you at all injured?"

"No, I am okay but I am cold. And hungry."

"I am sorry. I may not be able to help with that. We were not able to salvage too much from the ship and the Immortals have seen fit to keep this wind and rain up beyond all imagination. I have never seen anything like it."

The two quickly checked the other bodies to see if they could be helped but all were beyond saving and quite dead. There was also nothing of value amongst them. Even the Captain's body had been stripped. They walked to Melisana and returned back up the way they had come, bending against the wind and rain.

Just then, the rest of the party came shuffling down the beach. Brother Akair quickly introduced Jonathan and the group decided to follow the Orc footprints. They led between two large dunes. Many of them ran together and finally led to several paths. Following one, they went up a bluff which looked down upon the beach where Jonathan had washed ashore. Nothing there but some bones from what may have been a chicken (Jonathan eyed them hungrily but did not pick them up).

Following the main tracks, the group ventured deeper into the island's interior at some point, it became clear that those who were making them were dragging something. Flavius guessed that it was a person but Melisana thought it might be a chest. Jonathan hoped it was food. Sarmboc didn't care as long as the tracks led out of the wind and the rain. He longed for a dry cave in Rockhome with a nice fire.

As the party walked along in the depression between two large hills, they became aware of a noise — a very faint noise, like grunting voices and steel clanging on steel, barely audible over the noise of the rain and the wind. It seems to be coming from the left, beyond the hill to their left. The characters scrambled up and noticed that below them, there was a ravine separating the line of hills from the next ridge. And there's a battle going on down there.

It looks like a dozen squat yellow skinned humanoids (Sarmboc identifies them as Goblins) and half a dozen Orcs going at it pretty fiercely. The goblins are fighting with bows and spears; the Orcs have axes and pole arms, and one of them appeared to have armor, too. Most of the fighters don't have any sort of armor, but all of them have cloaks.

About 50 feet behind the line of Orcs there appeared to be someone lying in the ravine; a human man, a white-bearded old man wearing tattered robes. He's lying down, twisted over to watch the fight; his arms are behind his back and look as though they've been tied.

Flavius turned to the others. "We cannot leave that old man to those beasts. We must rescue him."

Jonathan looked down at the fight and the man. "I think I can sneak around and release him without them seeing me."

"Do any of you remember him from the ship?" asks Melisana. They all nod no. "Just wondering," she says. "I agree that we cannot leave him alone but we cannot fight all of those creatures."

"Let us let nature takes its course and have them fight each other," says the cleric.

"Meanwhile Jonathan here can sneak around and free the man. Then when the rest are worn down and down with fighting, we will swoop down and finish them off."

"Does not sound too honorable . . . but I like it," smiles Flavius.

So Jonathan began sneaking around to get the man while Brother Akair covered with the

crossbow and the party watched the fight. Swords swung and pole arms lunged. The Orc on the right flank was pierced with arrows while one goblin archer on left flank was killed by daggers and one goblin on the line took a deadly axe blow. Jonathan made it to the man and began to untie him.

Next, an Orc on the left flank went down under a hail of arrows while the second goblin archer on left flank fell to Orcish daggers. Jonathan started to move with the old man, motioning him to keep quiet.

The battle kept raging but a Goblin had a feeling something was happening outside his range of vision. He fired his bow then turned to look around. Meanwhile an Orc in the center of the line was run through with a Goblin spear and the Orc commander was brought down by arrows). The Orcs were not through though and two goblins on the line succumbed to axe blows. Jonathan and the old man were on the move back to the group.

The goblin archer turned towards Jonathan and fired an arrow at him right as he and the old man got back to the group. Just then the one of the last Orcs was speared by a Goblin as the Orc chopped off his arm with his halberd. The other Goblin archer was too intent on the last Orc to notice the other archer turning to confront the Humans.

Akair let loose a crossbow bolt at the archer as the Cleric, Dwarf, Melisana and Soldier began a dash down the hill to the remaining Goblins. It stuck the Goblin in the neck and his companion looked on in fear as he realized the battle was not over. He let loose his arrow at the Orc anyway (striking him through the heart) but the Orc was able to swing one last time and fell a Goblin.

The Cleric's charge carried him to a surprise Goblin and his club pashed deep into the shoulder of the small creature. A sickening crunch and a small whimper came from him. The Dwarf and Melisana were just as deadly in their efforts, overwhelming their opponents and creating pools in the sand. The last Goblin archer weighed his odds. He was alone but surrounded by his dead comrades. He could run but was not sure if he could win. He decided to go down fighting and let loose an arrow at the Dwarf. It flew over his head and stuck into the

sand dune. By then the Cleric was upon him and knocked his head from his shoulders like a golf ball.

The party scanned the wreckage of humanoids. None were left standing. Flavius and the Dwarf, without speaking, began the process of stripping the bodies and collecting the useful salvage. They were used to the carnage of a battlefield. All in all, they found many weapons but all of dubious quality. Given their dire straits though, they were happy to have some weapons, armor and clothing.

Once the clean up was done, they turned towards the old man. He was a scarecrow of a man: bald, with a matted dirty beard that would be white if washed, a sallow complexion and wide eyes. Since he had been rescued, he had been mumbling to himself; always chattering. Finally, the old man spoke, "Thank you for saving me. My name - haven't needed it in a long time - is Keestake, and you're the first human faces I've seen in more years than I can remember. It's true.

"And you wouldn't know it to look at me now, but in my day, in my day, I was personal groom to himself — to Viledel, the Sea King. Yes, this is the Island of Viledel — you didn't know that?"

"But himself died when the pirates crushed the island, years and years ago, when my hair was still black and my face unlined. I didn't fight on the day the pirates came, just hid in an overturned, ruined boat no one looked under, while the murdering and the burning went on day after day. And finally the pirates were all gone, and I've been here alone since then. Living in the house of the Sea King, protecting the treasure left behind — for the pirates never found the real goods of Viledel, just some of the trinkets and baubles kept in the manor—and becoming tired and gray. How long has it been?"

"The Orcs came a few days ago. They captured me, and said the stories said that the treasure of the Sea King had never been found, which was true enough, I guess. And they said I knew where it was, which was true, too, but I never told them so.

"The goblins came two days ago. The Orc chief and the goblin chief talked, and the goblin chief said they were there to claim the island as their new stronghold, but the Orc said they were there

for the treasure too, and as soon as he said it the goblins wanted the goods, and there's been war ever since.

"The Orcs are all set up in the old soldiers' barracks, and the goblins are all in the old stables, and the manor in the middle is where they hunt around for treasure and fight one another most of the time. But there's another place, where they went once but leave alone now — the temple of the goddess. It's on the far side of the hill overlooking the manor, and if you and your friends want to take shelter there, no one will bother with you."

The group agrees to follow the old man. Keestake leads the characters down back trails and across rough terrain; he explains that he doesn't want to be recaptured by the Orcs or the goblins. Eventually the group arrives at the hillside below the temple and sees it silhouetted against the dimming sky—the first indication that it was almost night time.

When they got within a hundred yards of the temple, the characters see the unimpressive sight of the building. The building was obviously once a beautiful temple - two stories in height, crafted from well-fitted planks of dark hardwoods brought from the mainland. The windows were spacious and cheerful, closed against the wind with brightly-painted shutters; a gate of well crafted wrought iron once stood before the large front door, and a trellis for well tended ivy once leaned against the right half of the front face of the temple.

Today, after 60 years of neglect, the temple is a wreck. The expensive wood is old and pitted, cracked and decayed. The windows are still spacious, but most of the shutters are gone; the few that remain bang open and closed in the wind, or hang crookedly from a single hinge. The wrought iron gate is as intricate as ever, but rusted over, rusted clear through in places. The ivy once planted as decoration now covers the entire right side of the front wall, and continues around the whole right side of the temple. It's a spectacle of gloom and disrepair. There are, however, no lights within, no sign of habitation, and the walls may be sound enough to keep out the worst of the weather.

The old man leads the characters clear up to the gate at the entrance, pulls it open a little—it makes a squeak, alarming but really not too

loud—and steps through the still working doors of heavy oak into the temple itself.

Once the characters entered, they found that the main hall where they stood was thoroughly shielded against the wind, for it has no windows, and the front doors are sound. After being in the temple for a few minutes, their shakes subsided and their fingers and toes became less numb. This first room once had plastered walls painted with frescoes of the goddess, her symbols and her deeds. The paint and plaster have badly flaked over the years. There is no furniture in the room, only wind-blown rubbish. There are two sets of double doors in the room, one leading outside and the other, further into the temple.

Beyond these doors, was a very large chamber, two stories in height. There is broken furniture all over the tiled floors; the remains of chairs, tables, and perhaps low couches. Most of the wood looks aged, but the breaks are all fresh. On the east wall, in the middle, is a set of double doors, closed. On the south wall is the set of double doors by which the party entered the chamber. On the north wall, at the east corner, is a very small and inconspicuous door. All the doors in the chamber are still hanging on their hinges.

The west wall was actually a flight of three shallow steps leading up to a line of pillars. Between the pillars, cloths or tapestries, now ratty and sagging, have been hung, blocking off the view of the chamber beyond. The walls of the hall were once plastered smooth and painted with frescoes of the goddess in all her aspects. Now the paint is curling, the plaster is broken and peeling, and there are large cracks in the plaster, probably from the foundation of the temple settling over the years. Additionally, someone has taken a club to the walls here and there, evidenced by deep gouges and tears in the plaster, and places on the wall have been smeared with filth.

Keestake says that the damage to the room (the smashed furniture, the damaged and befouled walls) all took place when the Orcs investigated the temple, looking for treasure. Enraged because they found no gold, they destroyed all the furnishings and much of the painting, defiling the decoration; they would have done more, but the sudden arrival of the violent storm made them break off their vandalism and flee.

Pushing past the hanging tapestries and the columns, the characters see that the far end of this chamber is raised about a foot and a half above the floor of the rest of the hall. The ratty cloths were once fine velvet, purple embroidered upon in gold, but they had aged now into a uniform, revolting brown and it was impossible to tell now what the embroidery represented. "The hall of the goddess," says Keestake, "it was once the glory of the island."

Sitting here is a statue of the goddess: Diulanna. Akair and Chronos tell the group that she is the goddess of will power, heroes and luck. They all nod solemnly except Syndyls who smiles. Alphatians believe in the Immortals but hold that they have little sway over mortal man. Especially those who become masterful of magic.

As a statue, Diulanna is sitting on a throne, looking down into the hall of the goddess; her expression is thoughtful, with the faintest trace of a smile on her lips. The sculptor must have been a tremendous talent, for the statue is posed in a very natural manner, head slightly bowed, left hand extended in a gesture of blessing, right hand gripping the arm of the throne. But it, too, is a ruin now. The nose has been broken off, the left hand likewise, a great crack runs across the torso and the face and torso are smeared with filth.

The other object in this area is a low table, obviously an altar, set down before the statue of the goddess. Since it bears no trace of bloodstains, new or old, it must have been an altar for offerings instead of sacrifices. Both statue and altar are sculpted out of fine marble. The walls of this chamber are white and unadorned.

Akair, Melisana and Chronos, try to clean the statue some but the dirt is ingrained. The others want to explore before it gets too dark so they enter a few rooms and find nothing useful. However, they decide that the hall of the goddess is too open and decide to rest in a smaller room where they can block the door. After starting a small fire, they find it is fully dark outside, they are exhausted and hungry but warm and dry, and eventually they drop off to sleep.

"Akair."

The monk heard his name, clear as day. He looked around but everyone was still asleep. Sarmboc was snoring.

"Akair."

"Who was that," thought the mystic. "And where is that voice coming from." It was a woman's voice, soft yet forceful. Perhaps the most beautiful voice he had ever heard. It was alluring in a non-sexual way.

"Akair, come to me." He was certain it was coming from the other room; beyond the hallway. He moved over and tried to wake Jonathan but he did not budge. He decided he would not go without someone but no one would awaken. He sat back down.

"Do not be afraid, come to me Akair."

Flavius was awake and staring at Akair. "Who and what is that?"

"I don't know," said the monk.

"Let's go find out." Everyone was awake. They all went into the hall of the goddess. A glow appeared around the statute. The statue changes subtly; slowly: the filth disappears, the broken nose and arm float up and affix themselves, the crack in the torso repairs itself, and the statue even moves and stands, inhabited by the essence of the goddess.

The goddess spoke, "You see about you the results of the raid of the Hak-kubra, the pirate Orcs. They have defiled my sanctuary. When men came hither three generations ago, they slew the men of this island, but let my temple be — as is proper. Since then, my sanctuary has been subject to wind and storm, age and rot, but I was not offended, for that is nature's right — to beat down what men have raised.

"But the acts of debasement you see about you have offended me I choose to destroy this island, and all living upon it: a proper cleansing of the stain made by the Hak-kubra. I see no reason for you to die for another's offense, however. So I will not cleanse this island this night, as I had planned, but will stay my hand another day, and lay waste to this place at nightfall tomorrow. If you are fled by then, I will adjudge you fit to survive, and the storm which destroys this place will do no harm to your craft.

"It is a difficult test. I see you have not chosen your adventuresome paths willingly. So this aid will I give you: there are items of power to be found on this island. For the time you remain here, I will allow you to use any as if you were trained in their use. Should you find an object of magical power, use it wisely; perhaps it will help you toward your goal."

The goddess answers a few questions then the glow begins to fade. Again she reminds the group that they must be off the island by night fall tomorrow and bids them farewell. They decide to build a fire here and sleep in the shadow of the goddess' statue which is now repaired.

After speaking with the goddess, the adventurers settled down to sleep in her hall. With the goddess watching over them, they were certain that no harm would come in the night but the goddess had other plans; testing their mettle would begin tonight.

Quietly, slipping down from the chimney in the kitchen came a dark figure. His skin was gray green and rotting; his clothes were rags in place of his once proud vestments. It had been many years since Curate Kantinomeiros had heard the sounds of humans. For the past many years, he had been undead and no one had come. He had been undead since he had starved to death after the raid, his soul tormented by his lack of courage to help his king or even to warn his people when the raiders came ashore. Cursed by the goddess he was.

Kantinomeiros crept silently across the hallway, the scent of living beings thick in his dry nostrils. Not much of his mind was still there. Just enough to make him hate all that was living and those who reminded him of his former glory and final fall from grace. "Oh," he thought, "they are peacefully sleeping and will not notice him break their necks."

Akair was used to sleeping while still monitoring what was happening around him. The slight change in air pressure from the opening of the door aroused him but he lay still in the darkness. His eyes groped for some sign of what was there but the flickering of the fire made it impossible to sort through the shadows. His

ears strained to hear above Sarmboc's snoring. There. No. Maybe. A shuffle. Someone was moving around; stepping between them and coming closer. He quickly reached out his hand and grabbed a leg.

"Who are you?" he commanded. In fear, he then realized that maggots were covering his hand and the face looking down on him was not alive.

"We are under attack!" yelled the monk.

The ghoul backhanded him across the face and slipped from his grasp. The adventurers were surprised but quickly stirring to action.

Keestake awoke and ran for the doors leaving the place. Syndyls looked at the old man then at the creature. Turning again, he yelled, "Come back here!" and followed the man to the doors.

By now, everyone was up but Kantinomeiros was in their midst. He lunged for the soldier and raked his skin with bony claws. A chill went down the Thyatian's spine and for a second he seemed stunned. He shook off the feeling and swung his sword, narrowly missing the ghoul. Chronos by now had his makeshift holy symbol in hand.

"By the power of the gods, I banish you foul beast and pray that your spirit seeks peace not on this earth." The cleric stood tall and the light of the fire shone a little brighter. The ghoul paid it no mind and went back after the fighter. This time as his hand grasped around the soldier's neck, a feeling of utter peace swept through Flavius. He went limp and fell to the floor. The ghoul laughed dryly, the giggle echoing in his hollow chest.

Akair had retreated and grabbed the crossbow. He took careful aim and sent a quarrel into the undead creature. It turned to him but was confronted by the Dwarf who swung at him with a sword. Bits of rotted flesh and maggots flew from the place where the blade bit.

During this, Jonathan was sneaking around trying to get behind the beast but it saw him and snarled. It leapt away from the Sarmboc and clambered towards Jonathan. The cleric let his holy symbol fall on its leather thong against his chest and brandished his club against the ghoul. Both he and Melisana struck at the same time

knocking it off balance. It turned and swiped at her but missed.

Another quarrel came whizzing into the melee but struck nothing but the wall. The ghoul leapt at Jonathan, colliding into him and rending his arms. Foul, gray teeth came inches from the man's neck as he rolled the creature off of him just before his body went limp. Sarmboc stabbed at the beast and struck home. A feral light shined in the creature's eyes as he leveled them on the Dwarf. But he was distracted by the double club attack from Chronos and Melisana.

Somewhere in the recesses of his failed mind, the ghoul knew he was in trouble. Having been a coward in life, he was just slightly less a coward now. He glanced towards the doors in the room and calculated which exit would be best. Just then a quarrel found his neck and knocked him off his feet. He scrambled away but the Dwarf was there. "Thwack!" The sword bit again into his undead flesh.

He grabbed at the Dwarf's legs and knocked him off balance, scratching him but not paralyzing him. An opening appeared and he ran. Unfortunately, the Cleric and Melisana were there on either side of the gap and rained blows down on him. He slipped and spilled across the floor. Another quarrel found its mark and the sword came down upon his neck.

Finally, after many years of undeath, he was done. In his last moments upon this planet, he felt the warm embrace of the goddess as he pled for forgiveness. Forgiveness of his cowardice; forgiveness for his lack of faith and forgiveness for his bitterness and evil which led him to ghouldom. In that instance, his face relaxed and he smiled. The light was gone from his eyes and Curate Kantinomeiros was finally and truly dead.

The standing adventurers sighed and smiled. Relief fleeing as they noticed their fallen comrades.

Syndyls came dragging the old man back into the main room. "He tried to escape rather than help us."

"And you thought it so important to chase him that you left us here?"

"I am not a trained soldier. I did what I thought was best."

And so, the night was quiet. Akair, Melisana and Chronos tended to Jonathan and Flavius who were paralyzed but not dead. Syndyls kept an eye on Keestake and Sarmboc ruffled the rags on the floor and went back to snoring as loudly as he could.

Treasure Total:

- 1 suit of leather armor
- 1 pair of heavy boots
- 8 spears
- 4 short bows
- 36 arrows
- 3 bardiches
- 3 poleaxes
- 18 daggers
- 18 cloaks (12 Dwarven/Goblin sized)
- 13 gold pieces (Thyatian Lucians)
- A drift wood and leather holy symbol of Diulanna (from the ghoul)

Base Experience given: 170xp.

Campaign Notes

Mystaran Campaign

Session 060809

His body wanted to shut down but the cold was keeping him awake. Each wave that splashed over him was full of little daggers which pricked his skin. It took all of his concentration to not swallow the briny seawater. The stormy waves swelled and carried him more than he could swim. This was a long way from the forest of his adolescence.

Ariston tried to open his eyes against the howling wind and driving rain but each time he did, saltwater splashed in them. He was suddenly hit by something. A shark? A sea monster? No, it was a board; most likely from his ship. While he hated that ship, he was happy to find a piece of it now. He grasped blindly and caught it. It was large enough for him climb half on and begin kicking his legs. If his sense of direction was correct (he was a Forester not a Sailor), he was going to shore. If not, he was going to his death.

It was his lucky day. After what seemed an eternity, he reached a rocky shore and dragged himself from the water. His chest heaved as he coughed out water and breathed in fresh air. The wind was making it hard. He laid on the rocks for a while, the pelting rain stinging his face. He did not care; he was alive. However, he knew if he stayed here, with not shelter, the elements would kill him. He turned over, spit out the water which had collected in his mouth and looked bleary eyed at the beach around him. A sheer cliff totally surrounded him. He had only two choices: go back in the water to try to swim to another beach or climb that wall. He rubbed wet sand on his hands and started the climb.

Rocks cut his hands and snagged the rags he wore as clothes. His knees became a bloody mess, rain water mixing with his blood and running like rivers down his shins. But he did not give up. He did not make a sound and he kept his breathing steady. Finally, he dragged himself to the summit and rested for but a moment. Looking around he saw the island: it was hilly; very, very hilly. It looked as if a ridge of mountain tops had pushed its way above the waves of the ocean.

Looking across the island, Ariston saw that the highest and most forbidding hills were westward, running the entire length of the island from south to north. Northward was broken terrain, passable but not easy going, while eastward the terrain seemed to flatten out a little. There was no sign of shelter or a human community in any direction. There was not much green to be seen either. The island seemed barren and abandoned; almost scoured and totally lifeless.

Between the hills were some possible trails and Ariston slipped down the hill to see what type of game had run along them. In the rain it was difficult to tell from afar but up close, it was clear that marks had been made by humanoids, some in boots and some barefoot. They went in all directions but he picked one and wandered the island. Where there were humanoids, he would find shelter.

Coming around a bend he saw the carnage of a great battle. Arrows stuck up from the sand and the stripped bodies of a dozen Goblins and a half a dozen Orcs were scattered across the sand. He noted that all useful items had been stripped; there were no weapons and little clothing. Drag marks indicated that someone had survived. He followed them, cautiously looking around to make sure no one was watching.

Several hours later, he was standing at the base of a hill in the dark. Above him lay a dark and mostly ruined structure. It may have been a temple at some point but not now. What was that in the ruined window? A light. No, a fire. Someone was inside and there were more than one of them. He decided he was too tired to fight should they prove hostile (who ever it was appeared to have beaten a dozen and a half beasts down in the ravine). He covered himself with remains of clothing he had found on the Orcs and Goblins then on top of that buried his legs in dirt and sand. His body heat warmed it slightly and he fell asleep in the shadow of the temple.

Akair awoke with a start. It was nearing daybreak. All of his companions were sleeping, undoubtedly worn out by the evening's activities. He left them sleeping and slipped out of the Hall of the Goddess. He quietly opened the main

doors and stepped outside. The overcast was keeping it dark still but a flicker of pink was beginning on the horizon. The monk stretched then began jogging down the hill.

As he reached the bottom, he stopped. Something was wrong. "Unghhhh!"

A sword dug into his side, the blade jaggedly ripping his skin and cutting into his vital organs. The monk twisted around, wrenching the sword out of his body. Attached to the weapon was an Orc, glaring at him with a pig faced grin. Another was standing beside him and was about to strike. He dodged quickly to his right, avoiding the blow while drawing his dagger. He parried a blow from the first Orc but lost his grip on the dagger. It went flying into the dirt. Another sword swipe nicked his arm and blood trickled down it.

The mystic jumped and kicked one Orc in the face, a satisfying crunch of bone and cartilage responding to the blow. The Orc went down but the monk landed on his feet. The blood from the first blow had seeped through his rags and cloak, a dark brown spot on the already brown cloak. He had no time to think about it because the other Orc was swinging at him with the sword. He side stepped and landed a blow to the back of the creature's neck, causing the Orc to stumble.

He knew he should run but he thought he could win this fight first. He turned to the Orc he had just punched and swung for his face. The Orc was not as winded as he thought and ducked the blow then landed a clumsy blow with his sword, the flat of the blade slapping the monk's thigh. It sounded like a bolt of lightning.

The other Orc was stumbling to his feet and trying to rejoin the fight. Akair hesitated for an instant while he decided which one he should attack first. However, his danger sense told him it was time for reinforcements. He turned towards the temple and began to run. The Orc he had kicked lunged at him and caught his cloak, knocking Akair off balance. He spun and punched the Orc but the other was with them and ran him through with his sword.

The monk's eyes grew wide and he tried to speak. No words came out as he crumpled to the ground, sliding off the Orc's blade.

Ariston awoke to the sound of combat. He leapt to his feet and ran towards the sound. He saw two Orcs staggering and stumbling over the body of a human. Running, he smashed into one, swinging his fists as he came. The Orc fell over backwards and twisted into the sand. His head hit a rock and he was out. The other was surprised and jumped away from the Forestor.

Ariston had the battle fever upon him and gave no quarter. He ducked under the Orc's sword thrusts and lit into the beast's chest with his fists. The Orc stumbled back, winded. A roundhouse kick from the ranger sent the Orc into the sand, his sword flying. Ariston leaped onto the Orc's chest and put both hands around the beastman's neck. With all of his might he squeezed until the Orc stopped breathing.

Slowly the Forestor got to his feet. He gathered the two Orcish swords and went to go check on the Human. He could see from where he stood that there was little hope. The man's body was twisted in the pose of one who had died a violent death.

Just at that moment, the doors to the temple opened and the party began down the hill. They saw a human male with long dark hair, matted by the wind and rain, holding two bloody swords and standing over what could only be the body of monk.

"Drop those swords and move away from the body!" shouted Chronos. He came running down the hill, Flavius close at hand.

Ariston looked up at the rag wearing group. "You have it wrong. You should drop your weapons."

The party was surrounding the young ranger now but he was defiant. The battle fever was still on him and now he had a real weapon. He was very skilled in handling a sword and felt confident versus any normal man. He eyed the one who had spoken. He spoke Thyatian with a slight foreign accent but he looked Thyatian. Probably a Karameikan.

Another man spoke. He had the look of a Thyatian soldier and an accent to match. "On

three we will all put down our weapons and talk. You appear to have been a victim of the same boat voyage as us. And you look vaguely familiar.” He did not smile but he did not appear to be threatening either. Given his size and the sword in his hand, it appeared that he could be if he wanted to be.

“Alright,” said Ariston.

All of them carefully laid down their weapons and Syndyls spoke. He explained who they were and the predicament they were in. While he was talking, Melisana and Chronos bent down and ministered to Akair. He was beyond aid.

After the mage finished explaining the situation, Ariston introduced himself. He acknowledged being a captive on the slave ship and then briefly gave his story of how he found the dead monk. There were solemn nods then the cleric moved to bury him.

They stripped his body of useful items, wrapped him in his cloak and buried him in the shadow of the temple. Chronos said a few final words and the group moved back down the hill.

Syndyls, who was not one for ceremonies of the sort, spent the burial going through the items the group had collected. He decided they would need to travel quickly and only kept the items they needed. He wrapped the extras in the hammocks and left the bundles inside the temple.

Keestake found a large leaf and drew a map of the island for the adventurers. He noted the location of the manor house, the barracks (which was taken by the Orcs) and the stables (taken by the Goblins. He described the once proud little town on the edge of the shore which now was in ruins, having been utterly destroyed by the raiders many years ago and rifled through again by the Orcs and Goblins more recently.

Keestake also described the manor house as a low but sturdy H shaped building. He also looked away, stary eyed and quietly stated, “Aye, I know about some odd bits and pieces hereabouts. The Sea King had many treasures from his years of adventuring before settlin’ down here. The pirates ran off with most of ‘em, but they didn’t recognize all of ‘em. Nor would I.

“But one of ‘em that he gave the queen was this little stick o’ wood that would throb in your hand when it was near the Sea King’s funny treasures. I never bothered with it, these 60 years. “

He mumbled, under his breath, “Not my place to be meddlin’ with the treasures of the family. Nor yours either . . . if it weren’t life or death.” His voice grew louder again, “I’ll show you where it is, if you want.”

The cleric said, “Yes, you should show us.” And the group decided they would make it to the manor house, avoiding what creatures they could. Two hours after burying Akair’s body they settled on a slight rise above the manor house.

The mansion, just as the old man described, was an H-shaped building, very long and low. It seemed to be built of granite. The exterior looked like it had stood up to the elements better than the temple. Unlike the temple, all the exterior windows had solid-looking, if rusty, iron bars across them. It looked as though it was made to be defended, though it was no castle.

From their vantage point, they could see the Orcs and Goblins at opposite ends of the manor. There was a cluster of Orcs in front of the entrance to the northwest wing, and a trickle of Orc traffic between there and the barracks, a little north-west of the manor. There was a somewhat larger cluster of goblin-guards in front of the entrance to the southeast wing, and a corresponding trickle of Goblin traffic between there and the stables, a little to the south-east.

The terrain around the manor was rolling, with great patches of grasses and weeds and scrub growing all over. Keestake pointed out another topographical feature: a depression, some sort of little ditch or break in the ground which starts a few hundred feet southwest of the manor and runs almost to the southwest wing.

“That’s how I’d creep up on the thing,” Keestake asserted. “Along that ridge. We couldn’t go in the door there, we’d be spotted in a second, but there’s a window on the west wall near the south side where the bars are loose. I ‘magine we can get in there.”

Everyone agreed that that seemed to be the best approach. However, Jonathan and Ariston

believed they should go first, stealthily make it to the window and ensure that the bars could be removed. As they set out into the ditch, they noticed it was filled with junk. Unsure of his footing, Ariston slid on the mud, tumbled through a broken chair and knocked Jonathan off of his feet. A loud crash echoed against the stone of the manor house.

Syndyllys and Sarmboc shook their heads while Melisana held her breath. From their vantage point, Chronos could see that several Orcs were looking in their direction. He quietly motioned for the Jonathan and Ariston to be still but they were picking their way through the rubble in the ditch, crouching and walking. Chronos dared not make more noise or motion.

Two Orcs split from the group of six and started heading towards the ditch. They were perhaps 250 feet away but looking towards the sneaking Jonathan and Ariston. They stopped and looked at the ditch.

Looking back towards the group, Ariston saw the motioning cleric. He tapped Jonathan on the shoulder and they came to a halt. They were about half way, 50 feet, away from the end of the ditch. The ditch ended perhaps five feet from their destination window.

The Orcs closest to the ditch were not moving. The far Orcs were involved in a dispute which had them pre-occupied. Occasionally one would look at the outlying Orcs and shake their pig like head.

The two adventurers in the ditch began moving again. Unfortunately, the mud was slippery and being totally quiet was out of the question. They moved ahead twenty-five feet. The Orcs were on the move again, as if they had heard them but did not know who they were.

Chronos and Syndyllys had a plan. Syndyllys would try to take out the far Orcs with a spell then they could charge the other two and pepper them with arrows. Flavius and Sarmboc got their bows ready. Chronos motioned to Ariston to stop and wait for a barrage of arrows. Unfortunately, the Forester did not completely understand the signal. He came to a halt.

Tapping Jonathan on the shoulder stopped him as well. He decided to sneak a peak at whatever was distracting the cleric so much. He

stood up and exposed more than he wanted. He thought the ditch was deeper and it was not.

The Orcs saw the head of a human pop up out of the ditch and they yelled something in Orcish. Swords out, they began to run towards the ditch.

Seeing their plan kick off before he was quite ready, Syndyllys cast the spell he had been able to decipher from the old spell book. He guessed it was the will of the goddess to reveal it to him without the standard Read Magic spell. He hoped that it was also the will of the goddess that this worked. He said the last word and closed his eyes. He felt a slight tremble in his hands and looked at the far group of Orcs. One by one, they fell to the ground, asleep.

Sarmboc and Flavius let loose with their bows, catching one of the Orcs with their arrows. The sudden onslaught caught the Orcs short and one turned tail and ran back to the group of four sleeping on the ground. Ariston fired an arrow his way but it missed. Jonathan ran the rest of the way out of the ditch and began tugging on the barred windows.

Chronos urged Melisana and Keestake into the pit and told them to run for the building. Syndyllys followed them.

More arrows were unleashed from the archers in the group. One caught the lone Orc nearest the ditch in the thigh and he slumped to one knee. The others fell short of the fleeing Orc who was just arriving at the group of sleeping Orcs. He woke two and moved on to the next.

The archers formed a line and awaited the Orcs getting into range. Chronos formed behind them, ready to heal any damage. Jonathan made it through the window, disappearing into the darkness. The others were still running to the window. The lone Orc on his knees slumped down to the ground, in a pose suggestive of death.

The last two sleeping Orcs were awake and the running Orc kept running, rounding the corner and disappearing from view. The others saw what was going on and drew their weapons. They began their advance at double time and spread out to avoid the archers.

Another adventurer disappeared in the window. And the archers moved forward and took aim.

Arrows flew, dropping one of the Orcs but they came running into the group.

They clashed into the adventurers but the archers had their arrows notched. At close range, they stuck another one, dropping him. The others began swinging their swords but found no purchase.

Syndyllys was inside the room by now and he could hear footfalls and grunts on the other side of the door. He quickly aligned those inside the room to strike anything that battered the door. Jonathan had his sword out but did not look to comfortable holding it.

The Orcs outside again swung their swords. This time, one found Flavius. A slash opened on his arm and he dropped his bow. Ariston dropped his bow voluntarily and moved to his sword. Sarmboc, on the end, let loose an arrow which stuck in an Orc's shoulder. It screamed in pain. Chronos moved in beside the other Orc and bashed its shoulder with his club.

Inside the room, something heavy struck the wooden door. A loud grunt came from the other side.

The last two Orcs on the outside again swung for the adventurers but Chronos hit his again with his club. Ariston stepped into the other Orc's body space and grinned. The swing of his sword was smooth but firm. With one stroke, the Orc's head was separated from his shoulders and his body stood for a second, as if stunned, blood spurting high in the air. Sarmboc turned in shock at the Forester, "Nice lad."

The door inside the room burst into a thousand splinters just at that instant. A rolling ball of Orc flesh burst into the room but Jonathan and Syndyllys were ready. They brought their weapons down on its neck and laid him flat on the ground. Orc blood spread in a pool on the floor. Behind were two more Orcs, the first slipped slightly on the blood of the now dead one and missed with the swing of his battle axe.

Outside, the last Orc had had enough but saw that it had no way to escape. He pressed his attack against the cleric but was met with the dual swords of the Thyatians, Flavius and Ariston, as well as the club of Chronos and the battle axe of Sarmboc. He succumbed with little fanfare.

Meanwhile Jonathan, Melisana and Syndyllys dispatched one Orc and stepped aside for the last to enter the room and meet his maker.

The group outside ran to the window to see if they could help. However, the group on the inside easily dispatched the last Orc. The group on the outside began climbing into the window.

Flavius was the last one in but as he was climbing, a sword struck out at him. It was the Orc who had pretended to die outside. His blade opened a cut on the soldier's side.

Flavius screamed and turned, swinging his sword. The Orc deftly snuck under it. The group inside the room was surprised and Chronos went to the window and tried to pull the warrior inside.

"What are you doing?!" yelled Flavius, his sword stroke ruined by the cleric.

"Hold him for me," chuckled the Orc in his native tongue. Unfortunately, no one spoke his language. He attempted to skewer the soldier but he moved just in the nick of time.

Flavius struggled free of the cleric and sliced the Orc across the chest. It looked surprised as life fled his body and he fell backwards into the dirt.

Finally, the battle was over. Flavius gave Chronos a quizzical look then climbed inside the window. Ariston gave him a hand.

Huddled in the darkness of the room, all of the party took a moment to catch their breath. Melisana looked at Keestake and thought for a moment. "Sir?" she said. "Wasn't it customary for sea people like King Viledel to bury their family with boats for the afterlife?"

The other adventurers began to take notice. Sarmboc moved closer so he could hear and everyone stared at the old man.

Keestake turned to her, "Why of course. Don't all civilized people do that?"

She was undaunted. "Did the king ever bury any of his family on the island?"

"Aye, of course. T'was very sad, very sad indeed. He lost his only son, Prince Horedel, to seaweed fever. The child was barely a man and had just begun to sail with his own crew. It tore the king's heart as it did the queen's and everyone on the island. They buried a good boat with him, they did, I watched it be crafted myself." Keestake seemed a little misty eyed but the party could not tell if it was the memory,

his age or the misty rain blowing into the room through the open window.

"Keestake," Melisana said, "Can you draw us a map of how to get to that boat?"

"Certainly," said Keestake, "but it is the Prince's boat . . ."

Treasure Total:

6 broad swords
10 daggers
4 battle axes

Base Experience given: 50xp.

Campaign Notes

Mystaran Campaign

Session 060823

Gathering the spoils of their last fight, the group quietly peered out the broken door. The corridor led both north and south. In the dim light spilling in from their entrance room and other unknown sources, they saw that the hallway was once nice, paneled in wood, but now was the victim of 50 plus years of neglect: cobwebs hang; dust balls lie scattered and mold seemed to be growing on the slightly damp walls. No sounds came from either direction so they began to check out the doors to the south.

The adventurers were as quiet as possible and entered each room cautiously. Syndyls made a joke about Jonathan and Ariston walking quietly but no one paid it much mind. By one door, Keestake stopped and almost seemed to whimper.

"Tis me own room. Someone has been inside, I know it!" Keestake wanted to see it but he had not seen it since he was captured by the Goblins. Inside, they find it is a mess. The furniture he had taken to his choice room and kept up all these years was recently destroyed and picked through, including his bed, his chest of drawers, his tables, his chairs. He complained and moaned loudly until Flavius turned to him and glared.

In most of the rooms to the south, they found nothing. Keestake said they were the quarters of servants like him except the next to last one on the eastern wall. In this room, they find only enough broken furniture for one person. On the northern wall is a large (8 feet tall, floor to ceiling) wooden plaque, only slightly damaged weapons. It is a piece of relief sculpture showing a harpooner (full size) drawing back his weapon to release at a distant whale. The plaque has been pulled bodily from the wall, presumably by those searching for secret doors, and leaned against the wall. Braving the moldy conditions of the room (they can hardly breathe), Sarmboc and Ariston examine the sculpture. They soon discover that the harpoon the figure is holding is a separate piece, inlaid into the wood of the plaque but easily removable. It has been painted to look like part of the plaque, but it

is not. Ariston tugs on the harpoon and it easily slides free of the sculpture. When he did so, the harpoon head dropped off and revealed a golden and quite sharp head underneath. Not knowing what to do with it, he kept it, tying it to his back with some of the rags of his clothing.

The characters turned towards the northern part of the hallway, going by their entrance room. As they headed that way, Syndyls heard something and called the group to a stop: voices perhaps and the scuffling of shoes or boots on the floor. Quickly listening at each door they pass, it becomes clear that it is the last door on the eastern wall that hides someone or something. The group confers quietly in the hallway and Sarmboc decides they should bust open the door like the Orc did previously. "Perhaps we can surprise them," he says.

Flavius and Chronos were silent about the plan but Syndyls nodded his agreement that it might work. The Dwarf backed up in the corridor then ran as fast as he could into the door. In slow motion, the door splintered then Sarmboc fell into the room. Three Orcs stood at the ready with their swords and all three connected with the Dwarf. Blood splattered onto the door's frame and he crumbled under the blows. The party, having hoped to surprise whatever was on the other side of the door was in turn surprised.

The first seconds of the fight were almost the last for the party. Flavius and Ariston were both hit and nearly brought low by the Orcs. But then, from the far shadows came a tumbling shape. It expanded into a woman and she struck one of the Orcs with her fists. That rallied the party and distracted the Orc.

Ariston thrust his sword into the heart of one of the Orcs and twisted it out just in time to avoid the blade of another. From tip to hilt, it was covered in Orc ichor. Droplets sprayed as Ariston swung his sword.

The third Orc found his mark and Ariston winced from the blow. Flavius stepped up and hacked into the unarmored Orc's shoulder and the beast shuddered from the blow, moving back five feet from the Forester.

The party noticed that there was not just one more human in the room but two others. They were busy untying themselves in the far corner.

The one who had tumbled up to the fight was scrambling for the fallen Orc's sword. She grasped it just in time to block a blow from the lead Orc. She side stepped and swung but he moved out of the way and into the way of Jonathan's sword. A line of red appeared on the Orc's forearm.

The Orcs' nerve was unwavering and they pressed the attack. They focused on the obviously wounded Thyatians. Ariston was forced to his knees and Flavius was knocked to the wall. With a yell, the new woman landed a blow to one of the Orc's back as Melisana landed a club to its head and Flavius cut its stomach. It clutched its entrails as it fell; dead before it hit the floor.

The last one, the obvious leader, stood over Ariston. Syndyls stood poised behind the large Orc, dagger at the ready but the Forestor grunted and jumped to his feet. The primal sound and spring powered his swing and his sword separated the Orc's head from its shoulders. The body took three steps backwards then fell onto the dirty floor.

Once the Orcs were dispatched, the group made introductions. One of the new people, a man, did most of the talking.

"This here is Kyri," he said pointing to a slight woman. It was clear that she was an Elf, not human as the party first thought. She bowed gracefully then turned to pick up one of the Orc swords.

"My acrobatic friend is Jael." The man turned to the woman who was cleaning Orc's blood from her newly acquired sword. She was tall and attractive with dark matted hair which was probably quite nice when clean. "Besides her tumbling skills, she is a great singer and kept us heartened during the last night."

"And I am Chae de Trey," the man said with an overstated bow. He spoke Thyatian but with a distinct accent. Flavius knew it to be Darokinian.

Chae explained that they were all three onboard the slave ship together, taken up to row (Melisana and Syndyls recognized Jael but none of them remembered an Elf onboard).

Chae continued, "So lightning struck the main sail and cracked it in half and some of the slaves

jumped off the ship. The slaves started revolting and we Jael, Kyri and me) were all bound together. The deck was rocking and rolling, pitching and acting right ornery. Just then, a wave hit the ship and we were knocked off our feet. Being bound together, we were probably a sight to see as we struggled to get back up. Unfortunately, the Immortals had other plans for us and the water reached right up and pulled us in. Luckily, that Jael is pretty quick and she grabbed onto the broken mast that was bobbing in the water."

"We all grabbed on for dear life," said Jael. She had begun searching the Orcs and finding nothing.

Seeing that he was perhaps missing out on loot, Chae kept talking but started searching as well. He cut off the little steel belt buckles from each Orc and motioned as to put it into his pocket. He seemed not to notice that he did not have any pockets in his rags.

"So, anyway, we grabbed onto that mast and floated. We kicked and kicked against the tide. It was not much use so we just went with the flow. We wrapped our chains around the giant log so we would not fall and let the Immortals take us." Chae slipped another buckle into his imaginary pocket. It stuck somewhere and did not clatter to the floor.

"We were very lucky." These were the first word the Elf had spoken and everyone looked at her. She looked away. She moved closer to the Cleric, who was tending to the Dwarf, trying to stop the bleeding of his wounds. Sarboc was not yet dead but close.

"Well as I was saying," said Chae, "We eventually wound up on shore. Using the wood that was all around us, we were able to get our bonds off. The rain was coming down like widow's tears and we knew we could not stay on the shoreline. So, we trudged around in the muck and eventually found what looked to be an old and forgotten village. There were rotten piers and a few sloping chimneys. We found the largest chimney and curled up inside its fireplace. Jael sang us to sleep with a song I had not heard since my childhood. She's from Darokin too.

"Anyways, we stayed in the fireplace as a break against the wind and the rain. We were stiff and

still tired when we awoke but Kyri was stiff as a board. I asked what was the matter and she pointed at the largest, meanest group of pirates I had ever seen (not that I have seen many). They were all Orcs.

“They had us surrounded so we decided not to fight. Besides, we had just been slaves a little while ago and the Immortals saw fit to release us. I figured they would come help us again. So luckily, I speak a little Orc from my days helping my parents as a scout. They kept asking about “the old man” and if “he” was working with the Goblins. None of us knew of an old man nor any Goblins but I don’t think they believed us. Instead they tied us up and marched us here. Then you came along and helped us escape, just like I thought it would happen.”

“Oh, that’s a mighty nasty wound you have there,” Chae was looking at Ariston. “Let me see if I can do something about that. I learned some of the healing arts when I was scouting.”

Ariston looked hesitantly at Chae and then at Kyri. Kyri again looked away but there seemed to be a smile on her face. Chae was already tearing off bits of his rags and tying them on to Ariston. Tighter and tighter, like a tourniquet.

“Hey, stop that!” Ariston pulled away. The tightened rags had turned bright red. He was on the verge of swooning and leaned on the wall to steady himself. “I will be okay. Save your touch for someone else.”

“Suit yourself,” said Chae. He moved on to try to help Flavius who looked at him with slightly widened eyes.

The cleric took a few moments to pray for the party and the Immortals answered his ministrations by making Flavius and Ariston feel slightly better. However, they are faced with a dilemma. Sarmboc is still unconscious. Ariston states that death is natural and the weakest die first. He wants to leave the Dwarf behind. Flavius and Chronos balk, “He will most certainly die if we leave him here. There has already been enough death on this island.”

The new party members seem indifferent. “I just don’t want to carry him,” said Jael.

“I will carry him. My spirit is lightened by the weight of this burden,” said the priest.

“Well, I will hold any heavy items he may have been carrying,” volunteered Chae.

The cleric ignored the scowling Ariston and joking Chae and shouldered the Dwarf. The party then gathered up everything of value or use and decided to explore more deeply into the manor.

Back in the hallway, the party listened at the door to the north. Hearing nothing, they went through it and into another hallway. This one was also lined with dusty, cracked wood panels and showing the wear and tear of 60 years of neglect. Tattered cloth on the walls indicated the hallway was once hung with tapestries and drapes. Keestake wistfully said this wing housed the royal family of Viledel. The hallway stretched both east and north.

Jael moved to the front of the group. “I am going through those double doors.” She moved eastward to the doors in the northern wall. Syndyls looked indignant. “No, we should go north. Keestake’s map says the throbbing stick is that way.” Jael ignored him and moved to the doors. Chae, Kyri, Flavius, Keestake, Jonathan, Melisana and Chronos (and of course Sarmboc) followed her. She shook her head. The Mage and the Forester moved away to the north.

Listening at the door, Jael heard nothing. She forced the slightly stuck door open and saw a rather large room. There were the moldy remains of a rug on the floor, three smashed desks, and two ruined tables. On the far side wall, a small barred but glassless window looked out on a courtyard. Heavy rain was pouring down and the sound of thunder could be heard in the distance. A tapestry hung on the wall beside the window which Jael moved aside with her sword. Beneath was a small wooden door. She motioned for her entourage to be quiet then listened at the door. Nothing was heard so she opened it, forcing it with her shoulder.

Keestake appeared in awe as he entered this room. He muttered, “The chambers of himself, the King.” He bowed slightly and averted his eyes to the floor. It is clear that this room was once lavishly appointed but now has been slashed brutally. Broken sofas and tables are piled in the center and it looks as if someone

tried to start a fire at some time in the past. The party briefly searched but found nothing of value. Double doors led to the west and a single door led to the north. Jael listened at the single door but heard nothing.

As they were going through, Syndyls and Ariston joined them, moving quietly but quickly. They were clearly agitated.

"There are Orcs around the corner and up the hallway. Perhaps four or more of them." Ariston looked back as if they were being followed.

"Well, I guess we should go back and take them out," Jael said matter-of-factly.

"Wait, I need to check this out." It was Kyri who spoke. She was examining a desk which had escaped being totally demolished. "It does not look quite right."

The room in which they were standing was again large. A barred window was on the eastern wall, through which flashes of lightning could be seen. A single door led north. The contents of the room were demolished furniture but one desk, the one at which Kyri was standing, appeared to have an untouched drawer.

"Stand back, Kyri," said Chae. "When I was a scout, I learned to find and remove the traps of overly cautious hoarders. Let me take a look."

He examined the desk but found nothing. He agreed with Kyri, though, that there appeared to be extra space. She nodded then moved him out of the way and yanked on the drawer. It came out, empty, and she dropped it on the floor. Peering into the space left behind she said, "Aha" and reached in.

She pulled out a dagger in a moldy leather sheath and a small, blue, glass flask, stoppered and sealed. She pulled out the dagger and it was amazingly shiny, showing no sign of rust after all these years. It was a good double-edged fighting-style dagger with a black stone hilt inlaid in gold in the design of cresting waves. She handed it to Jael who began to study it; searching her memory for clues to its origin. She came up empty.

The little glass flask definitely contained a liquid but there was no clue to what it was. No one wanted to open it but Jael wanted to examine it. There were no marks on the bottle and she could not tell what it was. She handed both back to Kyri for safekeeping.

"Let's go get some Orcs," she said and headed for the door to the south.

Treasure Total:

- 4 broad swords
- 4 daggers
- 4 cloaks
- 1 pair of boots
- 3 pairs of soft shoes
- 14 silver pieces (Thyatian Asterii)
- 1 golden tipped harpoon
- 1 shiny dagger
- 1 flask of liquid

Base Experience given: 50xp.

Campaign Notes

Mystaran Campaign

Session 060906

The group followed Jael back through the Sea King's rooms. They eventually came to the double doors in what was once the king's study. Jael and Ariston approached the double doors to the west and Kyri was right behind them.

Ariston quietly opened the doors and listened. For a second, there was nothing then there was the distinct sound of footsteps both from the north and the south. The Forestor looked at the Bard quizzically. She shrugged then squinted into the darkness, carefully standing in the doorway. In the shadows, she could see nothing. But the footsteps stopped.

A loud and deep yell from the north caused Jael to flinch. It was quickly followed by a higher pitched scream from the south.

"Let me take a look," whispered Kyri. She stepped in front of Ariston without stepping into the hall. A quick peek and she saw the heat of large humanoids to the north and a group of smaller ones to the south.

"YAAARGGGHHHHH!!!!" The deep yell came again from the group to the north and was answered by the group to the south.

Kyri backed up. "Let's close the door," she whispered.

A voice from the north demanded something in a language most could not understand. Kyri and Chae knew it to be Orc: "This is our section of the manor! Leave now."

Kyri whispered as loud as she could, "Close the door!"

A large pole flew past the door, headed north. A shout was heard from the northern group then running footsteps from both directions. Kyri pushed Ariston and Jael out of the way, "I said close the door!" she shouted. She slammed the door shut as the two groups clashed together outside of them.

"Now what?" said Syndyls.

Jael was back to her senses. "I will sneak around and see if I can see how many of them there are. We will only have to fight the winners and they will be weak." She headed towards the southern door and quietly slipped through it before anyone could stop her. Syndyls went and listened behind her.

Flavius and Jonathan listened at the double doors. A large battle was obviously developing. Cursing in Orc and Goblin could be heard as well as the cries of the wounded and the grunts of the straining warriors.

Jael slipped back in. "Some of the Goblins slipped into a side room. They are all still fighting but I cannot see much in the darkness.

The party listened to the fight. Finally, they heard a high pitched yell and footsteps ran off to the north. The group waited for a few minutes then moved to the door. Opening it carefully, they were confronted by the battle's gruesome results. The bodies of several Orcs and Goblins lay scattered. None were moving.

Jael and Ariston moved to the door opposite them. They could hear arguing in an unknown language. Gathering together, the group bashed the door down and charged in. In the far corner, three Goblins were faced away, arguing with someone or something they could not see. The Goblins were surprised, turning towards the sound of the bashed in door. Quickly, the adventurers surrounded the little beasts and attacked. The first two were quickly and bloodily dispatched. The third put up his hands and prayed for quarter. Jael was not swayed and swung at him but he deftly moved out of the way of her club. Flavius stood next to him to protect the creature. No one knew Goblin but they could tell he was fearful.

"What do we have here?" said Jael. She had spotted a Halfling, bound and sitting on the floor. She temporarily forgot the cowering Goblin. "Hello, sir. You are safer now. Let me get those bonds off of you." She moved to release him and as she unbound him, Chae and Kyri used the rope and rags to bind the Goblin.

"He's so small," whispered Chae to Kyri. She did not acknowledge his comment but Chronos nodded.

"I may be small but if you would give me a sword, I can show you how it is used." The Halfling rubbed his wrists as he stood.

"That's not necessary. I am Chae and I seem to remember you from the ship. There was only one Halfling that I saw."

"Halfling is impolite," said Jael. "They are the Hin."

"Oh, sorry little guy." Chae looked around to see if there was anyone to heal. He didn't hear the Hin say he was quite comfortable with Halfling, Hobbit or Hin.

"Well, I thank you for saving me. They kept asking something but since I don't speak Goblin, I had no idea what it was. They dragged me here but I am not exactly why. By the way, I am Orin Hornblower Took. I have an odd question. Does anyone happen to have any tobacco?"

The group stared at the little man but no one had found any tobacco. The Halfling shrugged. "Never hurts to ask. I don't have a pipe either so I guess I had just better make due."

Syndyllys stepped forward and continued the introductions begun by Chae. He also described their predicament and need to get off the island as soon as possible. "Sounds like we have tarried long enough. However, one thing I did catch was that the Goblins were looking for a stick. Something that shook when it was pointed. Not sure what that would be."

"Oh yes," said Keestake. "The queen's funny treasure stick."

"Keestake. Is this the queen's quarters?" Syndyllys looked at the old man.

"Yes, these be the rooms of herself, the Queen."

"Everyone, look for the wand." The mage began shuffling through the broken furniture on the floor. The rest of the group followed suit except Jael. She had walked behind the bound Goblin. "I cannot have you watching us," she said. In one smooth motion, she struck the creature with her club. He crumbled, unconscious, to the floor.

"Is this the stick you are seeking?" Orin held up a gnarled piece of wood, about twelve inches

long and slightly tapered. The type of wood was hard to distinguish. It was covered with some grime.

"That looks to be it," said Syndyllys. "Please carefully hand it to me." He took it from the Halfling and cradled the stick in his hands. He held it out to judge its weight then tried to clean off some of the dirt and grime. He then stuck the stick into his rag belt.

"Well, now that the wizard has found the wand, we need to focus on getting out of here." Ariston looked around at his comrades. They all agreed so they gathered what things of value they found on the Goblins (one had a little pouch with a few plens (Minrothad copper pieces)). Chae carefully collected all of the belts and buckles he could find. The Hin looked at him oddly but said nothing.

Lining up in their traditional marching order, the adventurers headed out. Not knowing how long it had been since they had entered the manor (the dark clouds outside hid the true time of day), they were concerned over the goddess's deadline. They decided to skip rooms rather than explore further.

While creeping down the hallway, Keestake kept mumbling to himself. It was hard to make out so most of them paid him no mind. He was quiet enough and they figured that fifty years on an island by yourself probably took its toll on one's mind. Melisana, however, turned to Keestake. "Are you okay? Your voice keeps changing while you are mumbling."

The old man stared at her for more than a few seconds. He then shook his head and giggled. Melisana shrugged and looked at Ariston. He shrugged too. The group kept walking.

Following Keestake's map, the group briefly stopped at the chapel. It was amazingly untouched though dusty. Benches were gathered in the center of the room, facing an altar. A statute of Diulanna stood behind the altar and the walls were painted with scenes from her liturgy. Nothing of value was found.

The group next stopped at the kitchen. Someone had the idea that perhaps there would be food available. Unfortunately, fifty years of neglect did not leave anything edible. The adventurers kept following Keestake's map and

headed for the room which contained the hidden entrance to the catacombs.

Listening at the door to the scribe's room, the characters heard nothing. They boldly strode inside and found it filled with the remains of two broken desks, numerous broken chairs and shelving units which featured small trays filled with mold and scraps of paper. The shelves stretched almost to the ceiling.

Keestake closed the door to the room. "It was here that the scribes kept the paperwork for himself. Always busy they were." He walked to the north bookshelf and pointed to the top. "All you have to do is push the big button on top. The goblins were too teensy to ever see it."

The characters could not see it either but Chae said he could climb to it. Indeed, on top of the bookcase was a round button, about two inches in diameter. He hesitated for an instant, looking around for traps. Then with his thumb, he pressed the button. Nothing happened. He pressed harder and it sunk perhaps a quarter inch deeper. Again nothing happened. "Now what?" he called down from on top.

Everyone looked at Keestake. He shrugged. "It always worked in the past. . . ."

Looking around for a few minutes, the group saw nothing that appeared to help. Kyri began inspecting the bookshelf. "I think we can pry it off the wall. It looks heavy though."

Everyone gathered around and decided that that was their only option. They used the pieces of broken desks and chairs as levers and started to pull the shelf off the wall. As it came loose, a large grinding noise almost deafened them. The top of the rack began to teeter. "Look out!" yelled Chae and the group jumped away. As it in slow motion the bookcase began to fall.

CRAAASSHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

It fell with an earsplitting boom that shook the walls and floor. Dust, dirt, scraps of moldy paper and splinters of bookshelf flew everywhere and covered the adventurers. Syndyls stifled a cough.

"Well, that seems to have worked," said the mage. He caught himself trying to clean himself with a cantrip but realized that he did not have it memorized.

A dark shaft, three feet wide went down into darkness. The shaft was lined bricks and small, somewhat rusted steel rungs (like staples) led down the shaft. A single torch in a bracket on the wall hung above the hole.

"Do we have any light?" asked Orin.

"None. Nor do we have flint," responded Ariston. He took the torch from its bracket and looked at it. It appeared dry but usable.

"You're the Forestor. Can you make fire?" Jael looked sideways at him.

"I will try." Ariston began hitting his sword on the floor, throwing sparks. Using some of the drier paper, he quickly lit the torch.

"Impressive," said Orin.

Using the torch, they peered into the hall. The shaft went only about ten feet down then opened up into sloping downward hallway. More torches could be seen below.

Kyri thought she heard a horn somewhere in the distance. Perhaps somewhere in the manor. "Let's not tarry. Who's first?"

Keestake practically jumped into the shaft, pushing the Hin out of the way. "I'll go."

The party wasted no time in going down the shaft and proceeding down the hallway. However, they did collect the old torches for the wall and vowed to keep two burning at a time. By their best estimate, each would burn about forty to sixty minutes. They would keep track of their time below with the burning of them.

As they walked down into the growing darkness, they could hear something behind them. There was little doubt that either the Orcs or Goblins had heard the crash and now were in pursuit. Keestake yelled that they must move more quickly and the party began to run in the shadowy light. Flavius and Chronos struggled with the weight of the Dwarf but they were determined to get him out alive (if they made it out alive themselves).

They could see the walls expanding into a chamber and Keestake, still in the lead and

amazingly spry for his age, turned left around a corner. Running into the room, they noticed Keestake standing at a lever. The air was dank but they were only concerned with their pursuers. Keestake made sure everyone was in the chamber then he tugged the lever down.

A tremendous crash resounded from overhead and the sounds of descent changed momentarily to screams and then to silence. Then a tremendous cloud of dust rushed out of the hallway and a hail of medium to large rocks crashes to the floor, covering the party in a fine dust and fluttering their torches but not putting them out. Finally, a solemn silence descended over the chamber.

In the torchlight, the characters could see that the chamber, not just its air, was dank. The room had rough stone walls and a damp, oppressive atmosphere. Just as Keestake had indicated on his map, the space seemed to have been partitioned off into three storerooms, each piled high with crates and jars; each storage area was about 20 feet broad and 40 feet deep, and the areas were separated from one another by walls of red brick. To the south, a low shaft led deeper into the catacombs. There was no noise except for the distant drip of water, a faint scurrying, and the burning of the group's torches.

While the characters were debating, Keestake again began mumbling. He was growing louder but caught no one's attention yet.

The old man wiped his brow and shook off his hands. "Well, we made it. Knew we would. Haven't been down here in a while. Remember the worst trip I ever had to make down here. Right after them first pirates left, 60 years ago. I had to do right by my sovereign, don't you think? I couldn't leave him lying there, hacked up and stripped down. Had to prepare him right and fine for the afterworld. So I hauled his body down here. Hard work that was. Dressed it up in some clothes and goods that the pirates missed. Laid it in a crypt near his son. Hauled his queen's body down, laid it between her husband and her son. That was grisly work. I was sad. Never been so sad since.

Himself had a ring, something he'd found adventuring. Made things happen, if you just wished for it. But they'd stabbed him in the back before he got a chance to do any wishing. I took

it off him and prayed that they'd never decay, they'd always be in one piece when it was time for the dead to rise up for the afterlife. Knew I'd done right; it always seemed his eyes followed me after that. Year after year after that, he never decayed. He's in as good a shape now as he ever was, likely. Don't know for sure. Haven't been down here in a while."

Jael's ears had perked up at the mention of a ring. "Did you say there was a wishing ring down here, Keestake?"

The old man ignored her and kept, mumbling. "You need to get used to your quarters, you know. You're going to be down here a piece. You're not leaving, you know. No more so than me. Y'see, I really couldn't let you wander off with the Sea King's treasures and pretties. Can't let you profane the tomb of his son. What kind o' servant would I be if I let that happen? I wanted to get down here and shut up that shaft when the Orcs first landed, but they got me. You've done me a favor. Got me down here so that I could shut it off."

The others were now listening. Orin interrupted him, "What are you getting at Keestake?"

The old man turned to the Hin. "Sorry to say you won't be leaving. You're not going to find the entrance to the tombs. Going to die here, like me."

Melisana was bewildered and looked around at the rest of the party. "What are you saying, Keestake? We trusted you. We have to get off this island." Melisana appeared to be on the edge of tears.

The mage stepped up to the old man. "Listen here. We are getting off this island. We have come too far for this nonsense."

Suddenly, a very long knife appeared in Keestake's hand. "Back off wizard or I will hasten your death." The knife glinted evilly in the torchlight but the mage refused to step back. He had quietly drawn his own dagger.

Ariston and Flavius were slowly moving to opposite sides of Keestake. His eyes caught Flavius' which caused the warrior to stop. A weird cast came over Keestake's eyes and the entire party realized that he had been crazy all this time and leading them here, to their deaths.

The old man began to giggle somewhere in the pit of his belly, an unnerving giggle that sent shivers down their spines. Then, like a cat, the old man who once appeared frail and weak, leaped at the mage and attempted to drive his knife into the wizard's heart.

The Forester, Bard and Soldier were too quick for the old man. Syndyls side stepped and Flavius' sword caught Keestake in the shoulder. The old man grunted and spun, avoiding the blades of Ariston and Jael.

The old man grabbed at Melisana's hair. He pulled her off balance and into the way of his attackers. He let go as she fell to the floor screaming. His dagger flashed and he slashed Syndyls across the stomach. The mage looked down in disbelief at the growing red slash. He put his hand to his stomach and drew it away as he felt the warm blood. He staggered back into Melisana.

Meanwhile, Flavius, Jael and Ariston were back to attack Keestake. Jael faked a wide swing but then walloped Keestake's left shoulder with her club. He again grunted in pain. He turned to move away from her but Ariston's long sword was coming across like a scythe. It cleanly cut through the man's neck and severed his head. Blood splattered the wall and Orin looked away in disbelief. Keestake's body slumped to the floor and spasmed slightly.

Ariston calmly wiped his sword clean. Flavius checked out the body to see if Keestake had been hiding anything else. He had not.

Chae moved to look at Syndyls's wound. It was deep and painful but the scout did what he could. Syndyls was shocked that he had been hit and did not move away from Chae's ministrations.

The party regrouped and debated for a few minutes what to do. After a while, Syndyls turned to Kyri. "Perhaps that liquid we found is a healing draught. Let me check it out."

"Okay," she said. She unstopped the flask and smelled it quickly. "Oh. That is awful. It smells like sweaty humans. No offense."

"None taken," said the mage. He took the bottle and tried to figure out the color in the torchlight. He then smelled it. He agreed. Sweaty soldiers

perhaps. He stuck his finger in the bottle and dabbed into the liquid. It was thicker than expected and the smell was almost overpowering. He tasted it. Salty but nothing happened. He did not feel anything different.

"Seems like a potion of do nothingness," quipped Chae.

Orin turned to the mage, "In my experience, potions often have clues to their use in the way they smell or taste. Perhaps this is a potion of speed. Syndyls, try running."

The magic-user shrugged his shoulders then jogged across the room. He did not feel faster.

"Oh well. It was worth a try. At least we know it is not poison." The mage passed the bottle back to the Elf.

The group turned their attention to the alcoves. In the first one, they found large wooden bins that contained the residue of what appeared to be grain. If indeed grains were kept here, they were probably long ago eaten. The wood of the bins was damp and rotted and showed signs of chewing from large (possibly) rodent teeth. Nothing of value was evident.

Chae and Ariston were anxious to check out the spot that Keestake had indicated was full of good armor and weapons. They went to the third alcove while the rest of the group checked the second. In that one, the group found many decayed bolts of cloth, mostly utilitarian linen and wool, and hanging masses of mold that once were probably animal hides. If they were hides, not one of the party can tell what sort of animal it was. Though Syndyls thoroughly examined the find, he discovered that none of the stuff could still be used as clothing. They did think about using the linen for torch wrappings but they had enough torches to last through the destruction of the island so extras made no sense.

In the third alcove, Chae and Ariston found it was piled haphazardly almost to the ceiling with very large wooden crates. The crates appeared to fill the chamber from front to back and from side to side. Unfortunately, in their zeal to get to the promised weapons and armor, the two did not notice a spider web thin steel wire stretched from wall to wall at ankle level just inside the opening to the chamber. As they entered, the

top part of the pile of crates (loaded with bricks) tumbled down on them. Chae tried to give a warning but it was too late. The crates shattered, sending wood and bricks showering painfully down upon the two adventurers.

Orin quickly came to bind their wounds. While he was doing that, Chae and Ariston noticed that the crates were probably only piled up in a wall designed to collapse. The room was empty beyond the fallen wall of crates. Orin wondered aloud, "Who would do such a thing?" The others were silent on the issue.

Collecting themselves again, the group moved what they thought was south, out of the chamber and down a wide hallway. In the torchlight, they eventually came to a large curtain which blocked their path. Cautious after the experience of the falling crates, both Jonathan and Chae checked the curtain for traps but came to the conclusion that it was just a rotting tapestry. They had no idea why it was hanging here in the hall way.

When the characters parted the curtain, they saw, perhaps twenty feet ahead, another tapestry, just like the first one. Orin and Chae went ahead to inspect the next tapestry. Luckily for the group, Chae discovered a thin steel wire running through the bottom of the curtain. Orin decided he should look on the other side and slithered under it (and the wire) into the darkness. He shouted that it was dark on the other side of the tapestry so he began to try to light a torch.

Meanwhile, Kyri, Chae and Syndyls had decided to cut the top of the tapestry so that it would fall without disturbing the steel wire. At first, it went well. However, about half way through Kyri's cutting, Syndyls began to get a cramp in his hand. He tried to ignore it but it was bad. The lack of sleep and food had been wearing on his body and the muscle concentration involved in holding the curtain steady was taxing him too much. His hand involuntarily jerked. At first, they thought nothing had happened. But just when Chae was about to let out a sigh of relief, the floor beneath them started to drop.

Kyri and Chae tumbled forward, through the curtain, ripping the rest of it from overhead. Syndyls on the other hand, fell. He tumbled head over heels and landed on his back, in an inch of water about ten feet below. Though he

was alive, he was afraid to move, lest he discover he had broken something.

The characters who had been standing back, rushed to the edge of the now present pit. Using the rope that Jael had saved from various people being tied up, Jonathan and the cleric lowered themselves down to check on the mage. He was surprisingly unhurt. "You Alphatians are tougher than I thought," said Chronos. The mage's shoulder did appear to be out of socket but the cleric painfully put it back in and the mage felt much better. The three of them carefully used the rope to get back out of the pit.

Having survived another trap and getting back together, the group bravely resumed their walk down the dank hallway.

Soon, it opened into a room which like the first in the catacombs, was divided into three alcoves. The first was piled high, front to back, with dirt-filled, rubbish-filled, and earth-filled crates. Thinking of the trapped crates in the first chamber, the group decided to leave this space alone. Kyri did think that it was weird that someone would take the time to fill these crates with junk but not to make a trap (at least she did not find a trap) like the first one.

The next alcove again appeared to contain trash filled crates. But when Ariston began to move a few, he heard large scurrying. He thought rats but their scurrying was heavier. As if these rats were larger than any he had ever encountered. The group again decided to leave well enough alone. Besides, according to Keestake, the boat was not here.

The group checked the last alcove and found it to be different from the others. It was empty except for a circular, stone-lined well set into the floor and the bucket and winch apparatus erected above it. The characters could hear water rushing far below. They decided not to lower anything down (including the bucket) and instead to move along. They were confident that only a few hours remained before the goddess would cleanse the island.

Proceeding down the hallway, Orin noted that on Keestake's map, it said, "Go slow hallway." Syndyls shook his head. "Nothing he has told us so far has proven to be true. Why should this be any different?"

Ariston agreed with Syndyllys. "The scratches I received from those bricks attest to that; as well as his failure to mention that pit trap. Let me roll something down the hallway to make sure. It does appear to sag a bit up ahead."

Ariston ran back to the alcoves and grabbed a large rock. He then bowled it down the hallway. It bumped along out of sight into the darkness. "Hmm," said Ariston. "Nothing happened. I still think we should do the opposite of what Keestake said from now on."

Orin shook his head. "I am pretty light. Let me go first. I will probe ahead with this stick." He hefted the broken table leg he had been carrying since they found the entrance to the catacombs.

The entire party looked at him then shrugged. "Be my guest," said Syndyllys.

Orin tentatively moved ahead. He moved slowly, using his stick as a probe. Melisana held her breath. The Hin was just beginning to cross the sagging area when there was a loud creak. He froze but the floor did not. He dropped through a gaping hole and screamed. It sounded like he hit something but the yelling continued, moving further down. The group rushed to the hole but it was too late. The Hin was out of sight. They could only hear him screaming and crashing. Then it was silent except for a distant sound of running water.

Ariston turned away from the hole and ran down the hallway. The rest of the party followed suit; even the cleric, who was still shouldering the Dwarf. No one looked twice for the Halfling.

The group emerged in yet another large chamber. However, it was not as they expected from the map. Instead, there was a large squarish block built into the eastern wall. The adventurers' hearts sank a little as they realized that there was no boat here. There was not even an entrance to the outside.

Visible from where they had entered were small wooden doors, spaced about every ten feet on the brick block's wall facing the group. There were five doors. Walking around the block, they found five more doors.

Each adventurer picked a door to open. Inside the first few, they found rotted cots and chairs, but no treasure, furniture or weapons of worth. Inside one, Syndyllys found a surprise: a trap which fired a crossbow bolt at him. The old rusty crossbow was barely able to send the quarrel across the little room and Syndyllys jumped out of the way easily.

After exploring the entire large chamber and each of its smaller brick rooms, the party was exhausted. There was no boat, no way to go forward and no way to return to the surface. It appeared that Keestake had been right. They were destined to die down here.

Melisana sat down on the floor and tried not to cry. She would never see her father again nor the streets of her home, Specularum. No one would ever know what happened to them because in a short while, the goddess would wipe the island clean. They had failed.

Kyri stood motionless. She was thinking. There had to be a way out. There was always a way out. "Was there anything we missed?" she asked.

"Nothing," said the mage confidently. He was tired. His wounds had taken a toll. He was almost ready to accept their fate.

"We did skip searching through all of those crates in the second room," Chae noted.

"Then we had better go back and search everything," said Kyri. "I plan on living a few hundred more years. Besides, it is unfitting for a child of the forest to die so deep in the dark underground." She adjusted her rags and started for the northern hallway.

They stood in front of the two alcoves, both piled high with junk and crates. Kyri motioned to the middle one, "Ariston, Jael and Jonathan. You search the one with the scurrying noises. Flavius, Chronos and I will search the other one. The rest of you, keep watch."

Melisana did as she was told. She kept thinking she could hear the Orcs yelling but knew it must be her imagination. There was no way that they could have gotten through the cave-in that Keestake had pulled down with that lever.

Syndyllys stood back. He was happy to not be moving those dirty crates. A wizard had to keep certain standards. He pulled out the wand they had found. A funny little stick indeed. He did not know if it had a magic word and if it did, he knew of no way to find it on the island. He pointed the stick at his companions and waved it. Nothing. He concentrated harder.

Suddenly the stick began to grow warm and jiggle slightly. The mage was sure he was not imagining it. Then, he saw something else. The dagger that the Elf was carrying, appeared to glow. She did not seem to see it but he certainly did. He turned towards Ariston and noticed that the spear the Forestor carried also was glowing. And so was the bottle that Kyri had.

So it worked after all! He was excited but said nothing to the rest of the party. He slipped the wand back into his rag belt.

Meanwhile, the others were making progress. But Ariston jumped back. "What was that?!"

Suddenly, large rats, each the size of a dog, scrambled forward, following Ariston. They looked ravenous, as if whatever they subsisted on down here was not enough. Unfortunately for the adventurers, the rats seemed to think that the group was for snack.

Before the Forestor could jump too far away, a rat sank its teeth into his leg. He grimaced in pain and stumbled away, wrenching his flesh from its fangs. Jonathan stuck it with his sword and it squealed. Black blood spurted and the creature turned belly up, dead. However, more were crawling over the top of the crates and one leapt onto Jael, almost knocking her over. Its claws dug into her shoulder but she shook it off.

Flavius, Chronos and Kyri were oblivious to the battle. They were moving around the crates in their room, trying to find anything that would help them escape. Kyri began to stare at the back wall.

Chae stepped up to assist the battling members of his group. He felled the one that Jael had tossed off. Jonathan turned to another and nearly sliced it in half. Ariston, recovered from the shock of the bite to his leg, dispatched one with his blade. Jael, having the one that had clawed her dispatched by Chae, turned to the

last one and bashed it with the makeshift club in her hand. It tried to get away so she hit it again . . . and again . . . until it stopped moving.

"I think I found something!" Kyri yelled from the other chamber. Still oblivious to the fighting she looked back at Melisana who appeared to be in distress. "What's wrong?" asked the Elf.

Melisana pointed and Kyri crawled back to the entrance. She peeked over and saw the carnage laid down by her companions. "Oh. Well, I think I found a door."

She explained that there was a definite frame in the rock. The heat looked different at the edges due to the thickness of the wall there. She surmised it was a secret door.

The group quickly cleaned up the bitten party members and crammed into the back of the room where Kyri had found the door. With great trepidation, they attempted to open it. It did not budge. Kyri noticed something else: a discolored rock. It was hard to spot in the darkness. She reached out and twisted the rock. It turned easily and the secret door slid open. Beyond, the secret door opened inward into a rough-hewn tunnel cut out of stone. The air of the tunnel was danker and less wholesome than that of the catacombs, but it was not completely foul.

Just then, Melisana and Kyri both thought they heard something. Perhaps an Orc from far away. Surely they could not have made it through the ceiling collapse but the characters wanted to take no chances. They went through the secret door and closed it behind them.

After many hundreds of feet and through several twists, the hallway opened into an enormous chamber, with a partially smooth and partially rough-hewn floor and rough-hewn walls. In the torchlight, the group could not see its limits. Without a doubt though, the characters knew they had reached the crypts. If Keestake had been at least a little truthful, there was probably a boat and a way out down here.

The group cautiously peered around in the torchlight. This was the sixth set of torches. If the adventurers were right, somewhere at the end of this set or the beginning of the next, the

goddess would wipe the island clean. Everyone felt the urgency.

Using the wall left wall as a guide, the group began to move around the room. They came to a chamber that appeared to be about thirty feet deep and twenty feet wide. The northern wall was rough. In the cent of the room was an upraised slab of stone. Otherwise the room was empty. The group searched the walls for any markings but found none so they went on to the next one.

Inside, was another thirty by twenty room. This one had some brick walls and the center slab was occupied. On it was the body of a man bedecked in rich blue garments (not tattered) and dulled scale mail. A large and shiny mace was laid out beside his right hand and a golden coronet was worn on his brow.

Roughly carved in the front of the slab was the inscription:

**VILEDEL
SEA KING
TAMED THE ISLANDS
LAID LOW BY PIRATES**

Ariston and Jael moved closer to the body. In the torchlight, they could tell that the flesh of Viledel was not decayed. It was just as Keestake had predicted. The Sea King's face

was pallid, with bruises and cuts still showing vividly. The blood in the cuts was brown, not red. But most disturbing was that his eyes were open, but did not move.

"He will not need that armor," whispered Ariston. I am going to take it off him. Sad to dishonor the dead but death is natural and the body just a husk. I will cut off his head to make sure he will not fight us."

Jael nodded her agreement but said nothing. The others stood back, watching.

In the torchlight, Kyri noticed movement in the third crypt which was still unexplored. There was no sound and she watched breathlessly.

As Ariston crept closer, Viledel sat up. The body swung its legs off the slab and stood.

Meanwhile in the other crypt a woman emerged from the shadows. She looked to be about 40 years old and would have been extremely attractive, but she was cold and pallid in death, with one great brown stain in the chest of her once-lustrous green robe. Her hair was still blonde and shining but her eyes were lifeless.

As the undead Sea King approached Ariston, Jael drew her club. "It's about time we had a good fight, eh Forestor?"

Treasure Total:

Numerous spears and axes (not taken)
13 daggers (includes Keestake's)
6 copper pieces (Minrothad plens)

Base Experience given: 50xp

Campaign Notes

Mystaran Campaign

Session 060920

The king, still regal despite his undeath, stood in front of Ariston silently. His scale mail still shone, little crested waves etched on the scales. His tabard was ripped and brown stains darkened the light blue cloth. Dark scars crisscrossed the king's cheek, having never healed but the blood had dried more than fifty years ago. As the Forestor took a step back, the king stepped forward; not speaking, unblinking, his heavy mace held at his side.

None of the party knew what to do. Ariston and Jael stood near the king. The others stood back and kept an eye on both the king and the queen.

"We mean you no harm, my lord. We just seek passage off of your island." Ariston spoke to the king but there was no response. "Sir, I implore you in the name of Diulanna, provide us the assistance to leave you to your rest." The king stared mutely.

Not knowing what to do, he decided to fell the king with his sword. He swung but the zombie lord was quicker than expected and blocked the Forestor's blow with his large mace. The king slipped his mace down the blade and struck the Forestor with such force that Ariston staggered back, a little stunned. Jael stepped up to meet the king and the fight was on.

From the shadows to the south, came something shambling. In line, three long dead warriors appeared out of the darkness. Their clothing was rotted and barely there. The faded blue cloaks of Viledel's royal guard had been ripped in the fight to save the king originally and time had not been kind on the remains. The guards themselves were no more than skeletons, their flesh having turned to dust or been eaten by rats many years ago.

Kyri and Syndyls had been standing apart from the rest of the group and were the first to notice the skeletal guardians.

"Chronos!" yelled Kyri. "We could use your help with these departed souls."

The cleric slid Sarmboc gently to the floor and moved back as Jonathan, Melisana and Chae moved up to stop the queen. She moved forward, no light in her eyes but clearly intending to kill the adventurers.

Flavius, Jael and Ariston flanked the king but their blows were easily deflected by Viledel. He in turn bashed the Forestor, opening a large gash on his forehead. Blood ran into Ariston's eyes and he attempted to move slightly away from the undying creature in front of him.

The skeletons were closing in on Syndyls and Kyri and they readied themselves for a fight. However, Chronos appeared between the Elf and Mage. His arms were raised and he looked fearlessly at the advancing undead.

"By the power of Vanya and all the Immortals, I banish thee to your eternal rest. Let you no longer walk amongst the living. Thus to the undead!"

The skeletons stopped in their tracks. The air in the chamber seemed less dank and the light of the torches appeared to shine a bit brighter. The skeletons turned and moved away into the shadows.

Meanwhile, the queen focused her attention on Jonathan, raking his arms with her jagged undead fingernails. Melisana bashed Liala with her club but the queen showed no emotion nor any sign of being deterred.

King Viledel swung his mace again, the wind of his blow whistling. It came to land on Ariston's unprotected left flank and the ranger spit out all of the air in his lungs. He staggered back but ignored his bruised ribs. His own weapon reacted, slicing at the king. Sawdust like blood spilled from the gash Ariston had opened in the king's neck. Flavius stabbed with his sword and his blade slipped under the scales and entered dry flesh. Jael missed with her club.

Chronos turned from the skeletons and shouted again, "King and Queen, once very alive and now not quite dead but animated by evil. Stay your hands and lay down your heads upon your cold slabs. Let your spirits depart to the next world!" There was no effect on the royal couple.

Thinking that the king was the more dangerous of the two, Chae left the queen to Jonathan and

Melisana and maneuvered to get behind the king. Jonathan and Melisana's landing blows appeared to do little to the queen. Instead she struck at Jonathan and knocked him aside, scrapping his face with her hands.

Syndyllys and Kyri were still curious about the skeletal guards. They advanced into the darkness. As Syndyllys moved away with the torch, it became darker near the crypts and Chae smiled as he disappeared in the shadows. "I will backstab this undead king," he mused to himself.

The king had other plans in store, however. He pressed his attack upon the ranger. The gleaming and now bloody mace fell upon Ariston again. It was an upward blow though, that caught the young Forester under the chin and sent him sprawling and unconscious. Jael barely noticed and struck the king again to no avail. Flavius stabbed again, using the short sword as he would his gladius. This time, it went right through Viledel's body and the king turned to him. Flavius barely was able to pull the sword out.

A trickle of blood was running down Jonathan's cheeks, red and broken lines down his handsome face. He smiled and wiped them with the back of his hand. He then swung again at the queen but his blows seemed to do nothing to dissuade her. She punched him in the chest and he felt breathless. He wheezed, "You are stronger in death than you likely were in life, my queen."

Melisana struck again and the queen turned towards her, death in her eyes.

Chae's chance to hide was ruined by the king's finishing of Ariston. The king was glaring at the spot where the rogue was. He did not attack him though. Instead, the mace was meant for Flavius who just barely sidestepped it. "King, I grow tired of this fight," said the soldier. "You should not have to die twice but you will."

Jael clubbed at the King but the blow was shrugged off. Flavius stabbed again but this blow was caught by the corpse's tattered cloak. Flavius twisted the sword and the blue fabric ripped in half, flying behind the king.

Chronos had stopped to check on Ariston. A hint of blood was on the unconscious

adventurer's lips. However, the priest found he was still alive; barely but alive. He began to administer to him as best as he could, tearing off parts of the ranger's rag clothing to act as bandages.

Syndyllys and Kyri turned to go fight the queen. The skeletons were clearly no longer an immediate threat. Syndyllys marveled to himself over this display of clerical magic. He knew of no spell that was its equal. He would have to learn more about this power. Now was not the right time though. He slipped one of his daggers out of his makeshift belt. He wished it was the one that Kyri had in her belt.

The queen again went for Jonathan. This time she pushed him with both hands, knocking him off his feet. She then kicked him. He howled in pain.

Melisana turned to him and backed away from the queen. Suddenly, she felt as if the tide was turning. She could see that the king may have killed Ariston (she could not tell if Chronos was administering last rites or trying to heal him). She also saw Jonathan down and had no idea where a few of the party were. She was afraid for her life and a tear slipped down her cheek. The king turned to Chae and swung his mace. It just grazed the acrobatic rogue. Jael and Flavius were there in response and both struck the undying royal.

Syndyllys and Kyri reached the queen but she was ready. In one swift movement, she grabbed the mage about his neck and squeezed with undead might. Luckily, Kyri's blade struck and forced her to drop him. Syndyllys' dagger fell to the floor, quickly followed by him.

Flavius knew that they could not fight much longer. They were hungry, thirsty and tired. Most of all, they were mostly unskilled humans who would quickly tire in a fight. Meanwhile, their opponents were undying, tireless minions animated by evil. He had to do something.

Under his breath, he prayed, "Oh Diulanna, you have challenged us on this island. But my goddess is Vanya, the ever victorious. I will make her proud this day."

Flavius stepped next to the king and swung his short sword with all his might. It sang through the air and cut deep into the dry flesh of Viledel's

neck, above the protection of the scale mail. It was the same wound that Ariston had opened earlier but this time, without dry muscle to oppose it, it connected with the neck bones, cracked them in splinters and came out the other fleshy side. A sound like the crackling of fire or the snapping of twigs, but much louder, came from the king. Blood long powdered in his veins puffed out and his head went in the opposite direction of his body. A chill wind sent shivers down Flavius's sword arm and King Viledel, the once mighty Sea King, was finally truly dead.

The queen did not notice but kept fighting. She swung at the advancing Kyri but the Elf was too quick. She responded with a swing of her sword which if the queen had been alive, would probably have felled her. Instead, Liala kept fighting.

Chronos had finished giving Ariston what aid he could. The Forester was awake but groggy and in no condition to fight. The priest had heard Jonathan grunt but saw that the man was still crawling. Chronos got to his feet and gripped his club.

"If you want someone to take care of not quite departed spirits, you need a priest," he murmured to himself.

Flavius was glad that the king was down and for a second he rested. However, he knew he needed to fell the queen too. Melisana could be seen on the far side of the queen, panic stricken. It appeared that Jonathan and Syndyls were down and the priest was finishing up tending to Ariston. Jael looked at Flavius and they grimly nodded to each other than moved to attack the queen.

Liala struck at Kyri, scratching at her rags. The Elf sidestepped and thrust the long sword into the queen's side. This too would have been a killing blow but the queen was already dead once. Vital organs were dust inside her body and their piercing did not have the same effect as it would have fifty years ago.

Chae was trying to figure out how to sneak up upon the queen but there were no close shadows. He decided to follow the Bard and the soldier instead.

The queen tried once more to rake Kyri with her fingers but all of the fighting adventurers were ready for her. They cut her down all together; clubs and swords landing upon her and forcing her to the ground. Finally she could join her husband in eternal rest.

With the battle over, the group took stock of their situation. Sarmboc was still mostly unconscious. Ariston, Jonathan and Syndyls were barely able to walk. Looking around, the skeletons were no where to be seen. The crypts of the king and queen appeared bare. However, Ariston roused himself enough to begin stripping the armor from the king's body. It was still in outstanding shape, glistening slightly in the torchlight and was just his size. He liked the little crested waves on some of the scales but silently wished they were something sylvan instead. The cleric took the mace of office gently from Viledel's unmoving hand while Syndyls removed the circlet of gold from his separated head.

Searching this area of the chamber, they found yet another tomb. However, this one had been bricked over. A finely engraved bronze plaque was centered on the wall. It read:

**HERE LIES PRINCE HOREDEL
BROUGHT DOWN BY ILLNESS
IN THE TWENTIETH YEAR OF VILEDEL'S REIGN**

Ariston, Jael, Jonathan and Flavius examined the wall. Not knowing what else to do, they began to bash it, trying to break the bricks. Chae did not participate. He was focused on comforting Melisana who still seemed upset over their near death experience.

Syndyls, Kyri and Chronos slowly walked in the direction of the skeletons. They did not relish being attacked again in the party's current condition. They found the skeletons huddled together in a far corner. They appeared to be either flattening themselves against the wall or unsuccessfully trying to climb it. They also found a very large wooden door, twenty feet wide and perhaps as much tall. A lever was on the wall to the right of the door.

"We should put those spirits out of their misery, like we did to their king and queen," said Chronos.

“Ok,” said Syndyllys. Kyri said nothing and went to examine the lever.

Syndyllys and Chronos began bashing at the skeletons who did nothing to oppose them. It was quick and odd work. When they were done, they turned to Kyri.

“Well, what do you think?” asked Chronos.

“I say we try to lift it up. It probably opens the huge door. I also thought I heard water or wind on the other side. I definitely heard thunder.” Kyri motioned for the other two to put their ear against the wood.

Kyri lifted the lever which moved easily. At first there was no response. Then, slowly and creakily, the wood started to rise but then stopped. A squeak of twisting wood came from the door.

“Uh oh,” said Kyri. Syndyllys began to back away from the door. Kyri followed suit.

“Uh oh what?” said Chronos.

“Move away from the door, priest,” said Syndyllys. The door began to creak and pop. It was buckling in the middle. However, a great blast of cold wind and rain crashed into the chamber. Lightning flashed but when it was over, it looked completely dark.

As the realization hit the three adventurers that it was dark outside, the door splintered with a loud boom. Splinters of wood showered them, hanging in their hair and rag clothing.

On the other side, in a flash of lightning, they could see a tiny figure, perhaps a human child. It was wet and barely moving but started to slowly stand. It stood on a deck and the deck jutted into the water inside a cave.

“Orin!” yelled Syndyllys. “You are alive.”

“I think I am. I was almost not. I was hoping you would find me but I had resigned myself to being scoured. It is almost dark.” The Halfling looked a mess. What remained of his rags were ripped, wet and dirty. He was covered with bruises and small cuts. He was definitely developing a black eye and he was favoring his left arm as if it was broken or severely sprained.

Chronos helped Orin and looked at his wounds. The priest thought the arm was just tender not broken. Together, the group of four joined the others back at the bricked in tomb.

“Orin,” called Chae. “I am glad you are still alive little guy. You missed all of the excitement with the king and queen. Turns out they were not quite dead yet.”

“What does that mean?” Orin asked but then he saw the remains of the two royals. “Oh,” he said.

The others were still bashing in the wall and soon had a Halfling sized hole. Using Syndyllys’ torch, Orin slipped in and everyone could see their final prize: a boat, a gloriously large, seaworthy boat. However, Orin stopped in his tracks and yelped. He saw someone in the boat.

“Orin, what is it?” asked Flavius. He knew that they were not really up for another fight.

“Oh,” said Orin. “I think I found the prince.”

Lying in the boat was the body of a man. His clothes were old but he was also wearing chain mail and held a large bastard sword and a shield painted with crested waves. He was surrounded by grave goods: several small chests and golden dining ware. The man was unmoving but Flavius and Ariston hurriedly removed more bricks so they could help Orin if he needed them.

The entire party started to remove bricks as they needed to make a much wider hole. From where they stood, they could see lightning and hear thunder through the open large doorway. The cave made it look dark as if night were upon them but since they were still alive, they knew they had not yet reached the goddess’ deadline.

Once the hole was big enough, they began pushing and pulling the boat. Melisana stopped and looked quizzically at the entrance to this large tomb.

“Did anyone hear that?” she asked. No one had heard anything.

“Sounds like shouting,” she continued. Then she heard it again. Clearly someone had found the secret hallway and was coming this way.

“Let’s hurry!” urged Orin as he climbed into the boat to supervise. He gently stepped around the body of Horedel.

As they began to push the heavy boat down the room, Kyri could see warm shapes moving rapidly at the entrance. The party’s torchlight did not extend that far but there was no mistaking what she saw with her infravision.

“Everyone,” she started, “we have company.”

They were nearly out of the hole but Kyri could see five large man sized shapes moving quickly. As they got closer, she could tell that one was different. He was bigger and his heat image was different somehow.

“Everyone get in the boat, I will push it in the last bit,” exclaimed Flavius.

“We will be too heavy,” cautioned Ariston.

“Just get in the boat or we won’t get away,” responded Flavius. The boat was now outside the door and resting on the dock. The figures were clearly Orcs and closing in. They could be heard running towards the group.

Most of the group clambered inside. Flavius squinted into the darkness then put his shoulder to the stern of the boat.

Flavius gave one final push and the boat slid off the dock. He stole a glance backwards and saw the Orcs were nearly upon him. The lead one was clearly different. He was a good three inches taller than any of the others, and his skin was greener. His ugly Orc nose was pierced with a straight bone and he had a necklace of feathers and bones which hung down to his hairless chest. But what struck Flavius most was the wooden stick the Orc held. It was like a paddle with pieces of squarish metal stuck into the sides but the creature held it like a sword. The determination to kill the group was clear on the Orc’s face.

The boat was pulling away from the dock and Flavius jumped as hard as he could. He felt as if in slow motion. An arrow (where did that come from, he thought) appeared in the stern of the boat as he moved through the air. For a second, he thought he was not going to make it but he did although a little clumsily. Most of him

landed on Chronos, knocking the priest back but not out. His shin hit the gunwale and a stab of pain drove straight through him. A few more arrows hit the boat but none struck any of the characters.

As a flash of lightning streaked across the sky, the little boat shot out of the mouth of the cave. There was little time to note (but both the Halfling and the Scout noticed) the large statues carved into the rock of the small cavern. They were of the king and queen and perhaps their ancestors, standing silently while guarding the sea entrance to the tombs.

The group did look back and see the group of Orcs turn around and head back into tombs. The big one stared for a moment but eventually turned as well. The adventurers had little time to ponder the Orcs, however. The little boat and its crew were being tossed and buffeted by the wind and waves. Loud crashes of thunder and jagged spears of lightning surrounded them. Jael had a stoic look upon her face but Kyri looked a little worried. Orin watched her and grew worried himself. Flavius and Ariston had the oars and feverishly struggled to get the boat further out to sea.

The sky overhead was completely covered in storm clouds, but the group could still see the island. It seemed to be lit by a faint glow, enough for them to see what was going on. Tornados, 10 or 12 at least, descended from the heavy mantle of clouds cloaking the sky. The tornados began tearing along the island and stripping great tracts of territory up into the air. Hurricane-force winds scoured the island and from the characters’ vantage point they could see the ruins of the town, plus the manor, barracks, and stable, begin to disintegrate, being thrown plank by plank and beam by beam into the air. The Orc and Goblin boats on the beaches were driven up onto the beach, torn apart by the winds and battering seas. Crews could be seen running, scattering, some of them being thrown like leaves up against the cliff side, others swept out to sea by the waves.

By the time the little boat was a quarter of a mile out to sea, the rocking and pitching had begun to subside. It no longer threatened to throw Orin overboard. But things were worse, not better, back on the island, which seemed strangely obscured, covered from shore to shore by a gray-brown whirlwind of rocks and scrub brush

and sand and sea which seemed to scour the island.

By the time the boat was a mile away, the whirlwind lifted and the island was gray-white and smooth, resembling not at all the island the

group had landed upon the day before. There was not one hill, not one topographical feature that they remembered. Suddenly, the seas around them were still, the clouds overhead clear, and the stars and moon could be seen overhead.

Treasure Total:

- 1 small galley with sail & oars
- 1 suit of Human sized scale mail
- 1 suit of Elf sized chainmail
- 1 fancy mace/symbol of Viledel's authority
- 1 bastard sword
- 1 dagger
- 1 shield
- Viledel's coronet
- Three small chests of coins (varied but equals 600 gp value)
- 8 settings of gold dinnerware

Base Experience given: 1739xp