

SKYREALMS of Jorune

Adventure summary:

Tales from Jorune

By Sholari James

Chronological summaries of the Tales of Jorune which have been played on and off since 1987.

Adventures

1. Skyrealm Kolovisondra	3
2. The Pirates of Sillipus	3
3. Ardoth's Knife.....	3
4. Assassins from the past.....	3
5. War	4
6. Horbaal the Great	5
7. The Doom Priests	5
8. The Tirtive of Voligire	6
9. The Yorlissen of the Doben-al	7
10. The Warp Mystery (Haisvana Campaign).....	8
11. Bandits of Mylosk (Haisvana Campaign).....	8
12. Betrayal (Haisvana Campaign)	9
13. Valley of Mists (Haisvana Campaign)	9
15. Vucian Mystery	10
16. Price of Immortality	11
17. The Temple Stone	12
18. Storm over Ardoth Marsh	12
19. Jungle Darkness.....	13

20. Fire and Ash.....	14
21. The Shendarri Twins.....	15
22. Desti Rises	15
23. The Hell Above (Only Lukazail).....	15
24. The Gire of Sillipus	16
25. Spies I (Thantier Campaign)	17
26. Spies II (Thantier Campaign)	19
27. The Lost City of Meg-Aleisha.....	20
28. The Southsea Girelords.....	21
29. The Doomed City.....	23
30. The Ramian Invasion	25
31. Jason's Tomb	26
32. The Seven Seals.....	28
33. The Sharussa	29
34. Mysteries of the Ramov Dharlerrin.....	30
35. The Hobeh Ruins	31
36. Lukazail Tuchubar-Crey (Lukazail only)	33
37. Skipping School	33
38. The Drailoth Conflict	34
39. Twins of Darkness	35
40. Hunt for the Berella	36
41. The Unholy Staff.....	38
42. Realm of Darkness	41
43. Kirlan Nights (Part I)	44
44. Kaskian Nights (Part II)	45
45. Towers of the Sky.....	45
47. The Cleash Fort	49
48. Occupation of the Rainy Islands.....	50
49. Crendor Awakens	51
50. A Lost Child.....	53
51. Return to Grace.....	55
52. Heridoth Burning.....	57
53. Caji Killer (Next Generation Heroes)	61
54. Fight for the Throne – Part 1 (The Original Heroes)	63
55. Horrors of Glounda & The Wayward Daughter (Next Generation Heroes).....	66
56. Emissaries of the Realm (The Original Heroes).....	67

57. Vucian Kings (The Original Heroes).....	70
58. Island of Giants (Next Generation Heroes).....	71
59. Fight for the Throne - Part II (The Original Heroes)	75

1. Skyrealm Kolovisondra

The classic introduction to Skyrealms of Jorune. An ancient skyrealm broke loose from its mountain moorings in the Western Trinnu Jungle Lands and drifted eastward out across the Kymay Sea . Burdothians, Anasani, Sillipean pirates and ramian raced to harvest its wealth of crystals, limilates. Among them where the fledgling heroes of Burdoth.

2. The Pirates of Sillipus

The heroes were officially sent to Anasan to relieve a wealthy kladesman's relatives, who were under siege from an unfriendly woffen tribe. However, when out at sea, the true mission was revealed - to find the origins of new-found earth-tech among the pirates of Sillipus.

When investigating in the dangerous ramian city of Twathigire on Sillipus, the heroes found that a band of vicious trulga caji were responsible for selling the earth-tec items. The trulga caji were physically and mentally deformed caji who had advanced their weaving and isho storing capabilities by bathing in the dangerous boiling trulga pits of Sillipus. The dangerous caji had captured the earth-tec from a Jaspian crystal schooner they had attacked and destroyed off Sillipus' eastern coast. Following this lead and hijacking another crystal schooner, the heroes found a makeshift Jaspian base far southeast of Sillipus. Here the Jaspian had discovered a small research station from ancient times. Although not many energy weapons had been found, the small outpost was a gold mine of knowledge and still had links to a surviving orbiting satellite. However, as Tauther Frederyk led the attack on the new-found research station, he met his old Jaspian rival Chivallos. In the ensuing battle the research station was destroyed along with Chivallos. As a tragic finale, the ignorant human primitives of Jorune also managed to alter the orbit of the satellite and could later watch it burn in the atmosphere that same night.

3. Ardoth's Knife

A retired bronth emissary of the Ardothain Council contracted the heroes to find his kidnapped daughter. It turned out that the man responsible for the kidnapping was hiding behind an organisation known as Ardoth's Knife and sought vengeance for a previous council judgement the bronth initiated. After a fight with the crugar bodyguards the kidnapped daughter was returned safely.

4. Assassins from the past

Hlaji Hirod, a famous Burdothian explorer, had returned home to Ardoth after crossing uncharted seas far to the south. Among Ardoth's aristocracy he lectured about the exotic island of the Sharharras Sea and other exploits along the Sharras Jungle Lands and Southwestern Temauntro coasts. One misty night two black clad assassins attacked Halaji in the street. At this moment fate

had placed the heroes nearby. Although they weren't able to prevent the assassins from fatally wounding poor Halaji, they managed to catch one of the assassins. Before they could interrogate the scoundrel, the assassin killed himself. His body however revealed a clue to his identity with marks on the forearm. It was obvious that the assassins were sent for Halaji, as they stole all his navigational equipment and his maps. Before Halaji died he revealed the importance of beating the assassins to their goal. An entire population of innocents were in danger. Providing them with information how to find a last copy of his coordinates, Halaji also told them to seek the harbour stones of Erucia, Ulthar, Argai and Melin, as these held some type of clues they also needed.

For their bravery the heroes were hired by the grieving relatives and the Ardothian Kim to find out what happened – at any cost.

Investigations show that the assassins were royal Erucian assassins (Silent warriors) and bore the ancient mark of the Erucian Emperor. The surviving assassins later escaped on a small black ship that seemed to sail against the wind.

In order to reach Erucia before the black ship, the heroes travelled the shorter land route through hostile Thantier. After a tiresome journey they arrived in Erucia and uncovered much of the old history of the Erucian people. The Erucian Empire's downfall, the loss of its power to warp its great fortress ships. A legend spoke of how the controlling artefact known the sword of Benhuial was stolen many centuries ago by monks during a slave rebellion. The monks thereby broke the Erucian people's naval power and reduced them to warring marine city-states, soon swallowed by one of the sagedomes of Thantier. The sword was hidden on Marui, the secret island of the monks – but was actually seen by Halaji during his visit to the long lost island.

Not knowing the terrible truth about the sword, Halaji told people about the great crystal studded sword during his lectures. This attracted the attention of the Erucian Overlord, Ryncaril, who immediately sent out men to distant Burdorth to retrieve the maps and coordinates for the island.

Receiving help from the agents of rivaling sage Alsinor of Moorshae, the heroes fled Erucia, and travelled to all the cities or ruins that Halaji had mentioned. They there copied the harbour stone markings still not knowing what type of clues these presented.

The heroes and sage Alsinor understood that the Erucian Overlord Ryncaril wished to restore his people to greatness. Fearing a cruel new great naval power the heroes raced the Overlord's isho gliding ships (black ships with strange large isho enervors tied to the lowest deck of their ships, enabling the ship to isho glide) to the Island of the Cross Monks.

On the island, the heroes tried to save the already captured monks and fought the Erucians valiantly, but were captured. With their harbour stone clues they managed to solve the puzzle and avoid the traps protecting the secret chamber where the sword Benuial rested. However, on Ryncaril's flagship ship the heroes managed to start a brawl and activated the great crystals on the holy sword. This opened a warp to the tormented evid that had been controlled by the sword for centuries. With terrible anger the evid killed the Overlord, destroyed the sword (killing all her young) and slammed the warp shut. Thus the power of the Erucians was broken forever.

The Christian monks (the only ones that still seemed to have this faith on Jorune) rewarded the heroes and begged them to keep their peaceful island a secret.

5. War

After the ordeal far out into the Sharharras Sea, the heroes returned to rest and reward at sage Alsinor's court in Moorshae.

However, after the death of the Erucian Overlord, his young son ascended the throne of Erucia and desperately tried to force the various Erucian ports and colonies to swear him fealty, as they had served his father. King Korligan of Huragach (another sagedom of Thantier ruled by the fierce skamaan people) saw the young prince's vulnerability and attacked Erucia with his armies. The city was swiftly taken and the young prince Ryncáras thrown from the walls. Shortly thereafter, the skamaan forces surprisingly rapidly marched against Terc and seized the city before they had time to properly mobilize. The sage of Terc managed to flee to Tan-Iricid.

The other sages of Thantier understood the threat the martial skamaan and their great boccord king Korligan posed. Another great Skamaan War loomed on the horizon. The powerful Coronian sages began fortifying their borders, while the more loosely organised and tribal theodiceans were worried that they would become King Korligan's next target.

The heroes became drawn into the conflict when prince Alsinor was poisoned to create chaos. As the thodicean sagedom of Moorshae seemed likely to be the next target of Korligan, the slowly dying Alsinor and his sister Alina begged their brother, sage Masinor of Valarach to help them. They also sent the heroes to slay Korligan - a near impossible task. A ramian known as the rochera was bound by honour beyond his kin to the late prince Alsinor. Sage Alina also freed him if he journeyed with the heroes to kill Korligan.

The heroes and the rochera managed to sneak into the highlands of Huragach and into the great mountain fortress dressed as skamaan soldiers. They witnessed the massed main army and the very martial ways of the skamaan. Assembled were also wild crugar mercenaries. Despite being eternal enemies of the skamaan, the ruthless boccord king had brought them into Thantier to create more chaos and destruction in the countryside further south. They also saw the monstrously huge boccord king and his sly Burdothian caji Ogaver whispering in his ear.

With the aid of Alina's spies, some slaves and a lot of luck, the heroes managed to get into King Korligan's throne room. In the ensuing fight the great boccord King was slain, while the rochera was killed by his Darkmane beasts. Caji Ogaver escaped through a warp, but the heroes followed him into the unknown wilderness, where their quarry soon was lost (or possibly had warped away). The heroes therefore found themselves stranded in strange and foreign lands.

6. Horbaal the Great

The heroes soon found that they were now in the dangerous wilds of Temauntro. Crugar spotted them and began assailing them day and night. In the end they were forced to hide in shantic ruins, where their caji dabbled with some shantic tech. This attracted the attention of the shanta who recognised their copras as having been close to the release of the great Horbaal evid.

Esashal (Sh. Keeper of Secrets), a human servant, contacted them in the ruins and heard their story. He then threw them the chewed and broken remains of the sword of Benhuial and told them to finish what they started. Without the sword, the evid was now unleashed and the shanta could not control it. As it would take time to gather an eelshon, it would meanwhile be wiser to try to destroy the ancient evid.

The heroes managed to track the evid to the volcanic Lake Alisvu (Kachalan "High Lake" in chauntse). After great terror, the death of one of the heroes trying to swim the lake (John Doe, as his name is forgotten) and much building of huge traps and war machines - they managed to slay the evid.

They were rewarded with crystals and sent through warps to nearby human civilisation – Khodre.

7. The Doom Priests

Arriving through an old shantic temple close to Margeen in south-western Khodre, the heroes found a border town in panic. Townsfolk had been attacked by shanta and strange human priests with red circles on their garments and hideously burnt faces preached about the end of the world if the town wasn't abandoned. Rumours of ghosts and a strange death or plague, which made even the birds fall down dead from the sky, abounded. It did not take long before the heroes were blamed for the recent disasters and Cyralla, the local rhakeshtia imprisoned them. She granted them freedom only if they could free the town of this new evil.

Consulting wise old thivin (The four Turaan) living in symbiosis with scarmis in their great hive and reading ancient shantic scriptures among the ruins of the surrounding hills, the heroes found that a roving skyrealm was about to enter the valley from the deep vales of the Dowtrough Mountains on its long cyclic journey. The nearby shanta revered the skyrealm, which held important structures, artefacts and temples. Although the crugar of the region knew that the valley was taboo, humans had only settled the valley over the last two centuries and knew nothing about the skyrealm or the shantas returning to protect it. Ca-Desti and Ca-Du shantas first tried to persuade humans to leave the region without letting them see the skyrealm by letting their human agents scare them as doompriests, incite the crugar to attack the humans or scorch the land with foul human radioactive substances. The first to die were crystal prospectors.

Now, the Ca-Desti and their fanatic human slaves had even planted an ancient earth-tec weapon under the town. Defying dichandra in the subterranean tunnels, the heroes managed to stop the countdown and save the town. The skyrealm was finally seen coming out of the great valley and a great amount of miners fell upon it. The heroes were rewarded by the city chell and the mining families. In return they also earned the Ca-Desti as their enemies, who placed copies of their copras in crystals for keeping.

8. The Tirtive of Voligire

On their way home to Burdoth the heroes passed along the bandit infested caravan route of Dobenal and once again found a shantic temple. Without hesitation they began searching the temple for any relics they could find. Instead they became lost in the great underground labyrinth and couldn't find their way out. As food ran low in the darkness they were saved by a human with a light orb. It was the strange human servant Esashal again. Once again the shanta had felt the presence of their copra (coincidence?).

Esashal showed them the way out, and also gave them a satchel that was found upon a dead Burdothian emissary in the nearby Coastal Kingdoms. The emissary's ship had been attacked, probably by ramian, and he had fled ashore, where he died of his wounds. The satchel contained a coded letter and a ramian shield of passage.

The heroes managed to break the code, finding that the emissary had been travelling to Voligire. The letter was addressed to the ruling Tirtive of Voligire demanding that they should return the symbolic and holy pillar of the temple of Sydra that had been stolen during the last invasion of Lusail. Burdoth offered the ramian a shipload of shirm-eh and quite a lot of gems in return for this religious relic.

Esashal explained that Sydran tolamuun priests had replaced the holy pillar with a crystal studded pillar stolen from a shantic temple. The shantic artefact was of great value and the shanta had now found the thieves and wished to have it returned. When the Sydrans refused, the dharsage feared animosity between the shanta of the region and the humans. Instead he was willing to barter for the original pillar with the ramian.

The heroes could see that the letter now also contains added threats from the shanta, written in unreadable rorch-ko. As the heroes couldn't read this added text to the letter it worried them. But before they could get an explanation, Esashal mysteriously disappeared.

The patriotic heroes hired a ship foolish enough to travel to Voligire. They were saved from ramian attack thanks to their shield of passage and finally reached Vinteer. Here they were formally welcomed but kept in their great houses as prisoners or guests. Uncertain of whom to turn to, the heroes chose to address Reveen, one of the four tirtive (All-Rulers of the ramian) whom had had most contact with humans. While they waited and were entertained by Reveen's minions, their letter was taken before Reveen.

While the ramian decided upon the matter the heroes watched gladiatorial games and attended hunts. Always uncertain of the ramians intentions, the heroes remained wary and on their guard. In the arena they saw a glimpse of a tologra, a creature they had never seen before. During a daji whale hunt Reveen finally sprung his trap and through trickery had them thrown in the water amid the dangerous whales. During this terrible ordeal one of the heroes was eaten by one of the great daji whales. That it was Reveen who had planned to kill the original emissary was now obvious.

Fleeing Reveens house, the heroes managed to get protection from another Tirtive - Triax the Holy, although they had initially suspected him to be their greatest threat. Although clearly being mad or touched by the gods, Triax – Master of the ramian priesthood – understood the concern of the Burdothians.

Reveen was expelled from the Tirtive for his treachery and attempt to destroy newfound relations between Burdothians and ramian. He was lowered in caste to a Matirikiv (provincial ruler) and ordered to govern in Sillipus. This created a new great and terrible enemy for the heroes.

The pillar was returned and the heroes were shipped quickly back to Burdoth with their treasure. In Burdoth they were rewarded for their daring quest with copras from both the High Priest of Sydra and Sydra's Kim for keeping the peace.

Frederyk was elevated to Drenn Status.

9. The Yorlissen of the Doben-al

Over the last two years, daring Doben-al raiders had plagued the caravans travelling between Khodre and Burdoth on the famous Khodre Caravan Route . Trade had become interrupted and the klades complained to the Dharsage. After some weeks of rest from their dangerous trip to Voligire, the heroes were sent out to investigate.

During their scouring of eastern outskirts of the Doben-al, the heroes came upon a fransei village being rectified by a cruel Burdothian military commander. The villagers were accused of helping and protecting the raiders and their village was burnt to the ground.

The heroes heard from the villagers that the band of humans and outcast crugar followed three leaders who called themselves the Yorlissen of Doben-al. Clues from the villagers pointed to the haunted Valley of a Thousand Towers.

In the haunted valley, among strange high piles of stones, the heroes found the underground base of the bandits. The bandits had used natural caves, but also eerie ancient ruins as their base. Together with fiery green liquid found deep underground in the strange ruins, the heroes managed to route the Yorlissen and attract the attention of the Burdothian army close by. One of the yorlissen had an energy rifle of Dharsage Silver and his final fight on a bridge plunged him to a cold death in a great waterfall.

Once again the heroes were rewarded for their patriotic deeds.

10. The Warp Mystery (Haisvana Campaign)

[Note: The settings for this campaign were inspired by a text in White Wolf Magazine which stated that only half of Jorune has been mapped in the RPG, the other half was up to the GM. Since then both Skyrealms and my view of the world has changed. There is no longer an unknown half of Jorune.]

Drenn Frederyk and his followers were given the task to find the remote islands of Delsha and establish a trading station there. They were equipped with men, two ships and fine gifts, as well as several official documents stating their authority to speak for Burdoth. Jasprians and ramians had already found the way to Delsha, but would of course not share this secret. As relations with jasp were not to be risked, the players set out to find Clafe, a renegade ramian from Sillipus who had offered to sell the charts to Delsha. Daring the gire port of Twathigire and their great enemy Matirikiv Reveen who now resided there, the heroes finally managed to buy the ramian sea charts off Clafe. After fleeing Reveen's pursuing ships by crossing a treacherous reef the expedition set course westward, rounding Temauntro to reach the Sharharras Sea .

However, off the coast of Ros Crendor , one of their ships unknowingly entered an ocean warp during the dog's watch. Therefore, they woke up in an entirely unknown ocean.

After having sailed for days without seeing land, a storm hit them and hurled the ship upon a rocky reef.

Suspecting that they were on an island, a foraging party was sent out. They soon found strange deserted buildings and great crypts housing armoured corastin skeletons. Armoured corastin was unheard of, as well as the notion of corastin burying their dead in crypts. As the explorers exited the tombs with their plunder, they came face to face with the corastin who guarded the tomb of their ancestors. They were imprisoned immediately and brought before an old corastin queen Nanachni. Once again the heroes were very surprised to find such organisation and sophistication among corastin. They were accused of theft, but instead of killing them, a human priest of an unknown religion persuaded the queen to use these strangers to rid the corastin of a local problem.

11. Bandits of Mylosk (Haisvana Campaign)

Human bandits plagued the lossely knit corastin realm of Mylosk. Their base was among the mountain coves of the north. If the heroes could rid Mylosk of these bandits they would be set free.

When returning to their ships they found the bandits had found them first. Killing or driving ashore the sailors, the bandits had stolen all the expedition's funds, food and gifts. Before they left they had even sunk the ship.

Pursuing the bandits north, the heroes learnt from the human priests Olvander that he served the great Emperor Delamon of Haisvana. The great human realm encompassed most this unknown landmass and the small realm of Mylosk existed merely as a stable breeding ground for the emperor's corastin troops. As Olvander had heard nothing about the iscin races or even ramian and thivin, the heroes understood that they must be in uncharted lands.

Confronting the bandits and driving them out of their mountain stronghold, the heroes earn their freedom from the corastin. They are then immediately invited by Olvander to the Imperial Court in Rowenta.

12. Betrayal (Haisvana Campaign)

The heroes were taken as guests before Emperor Delamon of Haisvana to tell their strange tales of foreign lands. Shocked by his appearance the heroes believed him to be the mysterious shantic agent Esashal. Claiming that his twin brother Acillos was dead, Emperor Sarkallos was still interested in hearing the stories about the man called Esashal. Like Esashal, the Emperor seemed strangely capable of weaving isho, despite the fact that he was human. The heroes were also charmed by Sarkallos fiery but beautiful daughter Hekra who ruled much of the Golden Palace with her iron will.

In court the heroes could see how muadra were despised by the priesthood and how they warned the Emperor about these lying strangers. The shantic advisors also seemed disturbed by their presence. When caji Snogard nearly was assassinated one night, the priests are blamed and arrested. A great underlying conflict can be detected in the great realm and the heroes seemed to be caught in the middle again. Rulers of the Empire's outskirts tried to break free and the Emperor fought constant political, military and religious battles to keep the realm stable. One day when speaking to the emperor, the heroes manage to save his life from assassins. By doing this they gained his trust. Or so they believed – while in reality the emperor himself had staged the assassinations upon Snogard and himself.

Believing that they had gained the trust of Emperor Delamon, the explorers were sent to seek the great gathering of the Tekara mountain tribes to negotiate a truce between the Haisvana Empire and the tribes. They gained the trust of the mountain tribes by speaking well in front of some of the chiefs. But at the gathering, Haisvana's northern army fell upon the gathered chiefs. Emperor Delamon had betrayed his word and had used the explorers to lure out the unruly tribes to ambush them. In the fray the emperor also sought to rid himself of the troublesome strangers with their new strange and dangerous powers. By saving one of the most important chieftains, the heroes managed to stay alive among the Tekara tribesmen and began hearing tales about the Emperor's cruelty and expansionistic politics.

13. Valley of Mists (Haisvana Campaign)

To prove their innocence, the heroes were put to a test by the tribal leaders of the Tekara tribes. They were sent down into the haunted Valley of Mist to steal a handful of sand from the Demon God's tomb.

The heroes lowered themselves down sheer cliffs into the mist-enshrouded valley. There they encountered dread jungle beasts, some never seen before. Finally they reached 3 ancient gargantuan moats of carved hardstone that surrounded a large city of ruins. Placed over the ruins was a large scarmis hive. Daring the territorial and dangerous scarmis, the heroes sneaked down into the bowels of the ancient ruins. They discovered that they were of unknown origin (Iamorri) with remains of strange petrified giants inside. The golden sand was found in a great bowl holding a strange giant skull, in front of a fossil throne holding the petrified remains a ramian-like giant with a squid-formed appendage on its head. Triumphant, but injured the heroes returned to the mountain chiefs with a handful of golden sand.

14. The Shal Forge (Haisvana Campaign)

Allying with the last free northern realms and leading the mountain tribes down into lowland Haisvana, the heroes also managed to raise the oppressed people of the Empire against their cruel emperor. Soon the great armies clashed in central Haisvana. Despite winning the first battle, new imperial troops were rapidly moving up from the south and west. In order to stop the great

destruction and killing that was beginning in the Empire, the heroes agree to the mysterious old man Hamac's plan to try to find and capture the Emperor in the capitol of Rowenta. Disguised during the great Carnival of Bells, the heroes managed to sneak into the Golden Palace as this was opened only during this great festival for the priests to lead the awed populace through the Forbidden City. The heroes then started searching for the Shal Forge where the Emperor according to Hamac would be vulnerable

The old shantic temple known as the Shal Forge was used by the Emperor to regenerate his strange isho powers. They managed to sneak past his many human guards and searched for him in the labyrinthine underground temple. During this search, Killimanjaro the boccord Condrij of Gauss, got separated from the others and stumbled upon the Emperor's temple guardians – 6 croid. The croid slew the boccord hero but were dispersed as the other heroes appeared, leaving Killimanjaro to curse and mutter his final words.

The Emperor himself was found floating in the isho furnace of the Shal Forge. When he was disturbed and awoken he began battling the heroes, using all his great powers. However, the isho had finally maddened the human and by using too many of his powers and drawing upon the great isho reserves of the temple, the Emperor ignited the isho within himself and was destroyed.

The great Emperor was placed upon the great ceremonial pyre in Rowenta and peace came for a while to the realm of Haisvana. To the funeral pyre came also in secret the man known as Esashal to mourn his brother – the last of the Delamon family who had been raised and trained in the ancient shantic lands.

Thankful for the help in restoring the peace in the human realm, the shanta of the Valley of Lights rewarded the heroes with crystals and knowledge about the terrible lamorri, whose ruined outpost they had stumbled upon in the Valley of Mists. It was the heroes' first contact with the lamorri. Eager also to get the heroes home and away from the Haisvana people who had no contact with the other human realms, the shanta sent them home to Burdoth through warp walking. They saw how carefully the lost continent was guarded from warps and understood that the shantas had some reason why they keep the continent hidden from other realms. Maybe they did not want all humans united? Maybe they had some secret artefacts or their own sensitive realms there?

When the heroes returned home with their incredible tale they were accused of fraud and treason. Vast funds had been spent or lost and were not accounted for. Lives of sailors and two ships have been lost. The only thing the heroes had as proof of their incredible adventures in Haisvana were flimsy tales of a lost realm and dysha wielding human. The outcome was disastrous, but for some reason the heroes were left unpunished. They only received public humiliation and ridicule from important iscin who could prove their theories wrong. However, the Dharsage and his advisors listened carefully to their tales and recorded everything they said.

15. Vucian Mystery

West of the Kuggin Mountains lived a secluded, ignorant and prejudiced people who called themselves Vucians. One day the Vucians of the fortified town of Shatur suddenly started to arm themselves. They began manufacturing weapons, hired bands of condrij and generally prepared for war. As the vucian crystal mining town of the western Kuggin Mountains was a part of Burdoth (although the Vucians had always refused to acknowledge this) Burdoth feared a rebellion was at hand. Furthermore, three iscin and the former Burdothian Rhakesht (provincial ruler) of Shatur had disappeared.

Drenn Frederyk and his band of heroes were ordered to accompany the new Rhakesht Nohecca IV and his troops to Shatur to help investigate the matter. The very secretive and religious Vucians clearly had many ancient secrets and on one occasion even drugged to the Burdothian garrison to prevent them from seeing their ritualistic opening of an ancient tomb of artefacts. After finding some evidence among the murdered iscin, the heroes understood that the Vucians weren't preparing a revolt against Burdothian rule, but instead prepared themselves to fight an ancient enemy returning to the lands - the Lunghoth. The Lunghoth tribal nation migrated around the Doben-al in a holy 500 year pattern. The last two times the cultures had clashed, the once great Vucian Empire had been destroyed. Now only Shatur remained.

The heroes journeyed into the west and found the great Lunghoth tribes moving eastward. The Lunghoth were superstitious and their legends still told of the feared old slaver Empire. After some parleying, the heroes managed to force the Lunghoth to refrain from attacking, by telling them that the might of Burdoth stood behind the Vucians. Tribal leaders were instead summoned to peace talks with the Vucians, supervised by the Burdothian Rhakesht.

The Vucian Priest-King had sought to destroy the age old enemy of the Vucians by using ancient weapons from the tomb of their sleeping god. The Priest-King therefore sabotaged the peace talks and took Tapeka, the High-Chief of the Lunghoth nation prisoner. The Rhakesht and his troops were betrayed and imprisoned. The heroes managed to escape and disguised as priests made their way up to the higher restricted levels of the temple city to try and prevent the execution of Tapeka. Chaos finally broke out as the heroes opened the old tomb of the Sleeper. Instead of a god awakening to avenge his people, an old malfunctioning cryotube was found, containing the skeletal remains of a man. In an attempt to restore order and destroy the Lunghoth encampments outside the city, the Priest-King wielded an ancient shoulder cannon of Dharsage Silver to rain fiery death upon the nomads. However, after some shots the Priest-King's weapon malfunctioned and destroyed him as well as a part of the city.

Soon thereafter, Burdothian support troops arrived and the Rhakesht and his troops were freed. After the Burdothians had restored order, the Priest-Kings old champion, Avicca, was instated as new King of Shatur by the Burdothians. He assumed only the King title, as the Burdothians refused to let the Vucians once again combine a religious fanatic with the ruler of one of their provinces.

The heroes were again rewarded with copras for their deeds by Rhakesht Nohecca IV as well as Dharsage Silver Iscins who poured into Shatur to examine and dissect the Vucian religion based on sleeping human ancestors.

16. Price of Immortality

As the heroes travelled homeward through the Gauss Valley on their way to Ardoth, they enjoyed the hospitality of two drenns at their lerrin. The drenns were however troubled. Something was wrong at the old family estate in the Sha'kollar Mountain Vale. Several thivin corpses had been found downriver from castle Kyper and their grandfather Kesht Vensha would not allow them to enter his domains. The heroes set out to solve the mystery and found that the unscrupulous caji Hystra and some crugar had usurped the power of the small estate. Fooling the dying old man that thivin blood could be made into a life prolonging elixir, the rouges were slowly moving all valuable assets out of the estate as well as robbing the toth of the area through heavy taxation. Using strange alchemy as well as the ramian hemgaal flute together with hypnotic limilates, Hystra controlled the kesht.

Uncovering this hellish plot, the heroes also learnt that the caji had already tried to poison the Kesht's youngest grandson but had instead destroyed his mind. As the heroes and the people attacked the castle, caji Hystra managed to flee. While his crugar fought the heroes and enraged both, the heroes pursued caji Hystra to the Haijicas Nest - a closed caji school, crafted out of the living tissue of the huge, coral-like isho enervor known as the Coric Haijica. Following the rules of the Caji School, caji Hystra was allowed to challenge caji Igari Dramura to a duel. The famous duel brought the two caji through the great Hajica's halls and finally up on the roof where caji Hystra plunged to his death.

Despite the acts of violence, the heroes managed to befriend the sholaris of the school and even met sholari Ashana Copra Tra, a shantic priest attuned to the great Hajica and living in the highest part of the nest.

17. The Temple Stone

Before the heroes continued their journey, sholari Ashana Copra Tra kindly asked them for help. He had heard of human bandits who had attacked a shantic temple in the Liggitt Mountains close by. They had stolen a very important artefact, a wheel of stone, which maintained and stabilized the isho of the area and was vital for the shanta living there. The bandits had fled eastwards with their quarry, choosing to travel through the Glounda Forest. The heroes agree to help the shanta and were given a talisman of protection as well as given kober leaves to cover the stone with, as it attracted isho and caused havoc with the sho-sen.

The heroes hunted the bandits and eventually found their camp. They sneaked into the camp and stole back the stone, along with a mysterious encrypted letter. During the brief skirmish one of the heroes noticed that the leader had a Redcape tattoo (Burdothian elite military) on his chest.

The heroes managed to break the code and read the letter, understanding that the stone had been stolen by Redcapes, under direct order from the Dharsage. According to the letter the stone was a vital part of a newly restored shantic weapon, a thosk, which was a threat to all humans.

The heroes decided to hand the stone over to the bandits/redcapes who were now hunting them. Turning back they found the bandits slaughtered. Their leader, Rasec, was found wounded but alive, and confirmed the letter. He told them that they had been attacked by fierce shantic warriors who had most probably been drawn to the thosk stone.

The heroes and Rasec hurried eastward to civilisation, making sure the stone was covered in kober leaves. Just as they reached a Redcape safe house, they were attacked by Ca-Desti warriors and the evid Griagaal. The Ca-Desti warriors retrieved the thosk stone but did not slay the heroes, as they had a talisman given to them by Ashana Copra Tra. Instead they took the heroes copras, saying that they were allowed to live in order to perform the Ca-Desti a service in the future. Before departing in warps the Ca-Desti promised that they would return in the future to call upon their services.

By aiding the redcaped, the heroes came into contact with the secret branch of the Burdothian Redcapes involved in espionage and other covert operations. These troops and spies were loyal to the dharsage and always operated in utmost secrecy. For their loyalty and patriotism the heroes were rewarded.

18. Storm over Ardoth Marsh

Beginning as a fairly simple querriid errand, the heroes were sent into the Ardoth marsh by the

thriddle Raltough Go-Holo to find a new type of reco crystal digger that was rumoured among the merish to have been discovered there. Instead the heroes bumped into a secret incupod field with strange red water protected by rough unfriendly men. Their meirsh revealed that the field was goverened by a rogue bio-tech iscin iscin by the name of Veratta Komlesh. Having gained the heroes attention, the field and adjoining iscin laboratory was studied closely. The heroes finally discovered that Veratta Komlesh was trying to breed shirm-eh producing recos and that hidden ramian lookouts were overlooking the work. A ramian ship covered in Deshli weeds even lay in hiding in the marsh outskirts.

As the heroes set fire to the incupod field with green fire water to prevent further research, the ramian took the iscin with them against his will. However, the heroes also managed to fight their way to the ship and set it on fire with the green fire water. During this skirmish, Veratta Komlesh was horribly burned but never found among the wreckage.

As a storm approached, the heroes fled the rapidly flooding marsh.

19. Jungle Darkness

For years it had been known among jers that t he cleash existed in great numbers in the Trinnu Jungle Lands. Suddenly, a large force of cleash and scarmis attacked and totally destroyed some villages in southern Sobayid. Volunteers and Burdothian militia flocked to the area. Among them were Drenn Frederyk and his brave Burdothian heroes, who lead a scouting party.

In the initial onslaught the Burdothians headed off the cleash war-party and fought them in a great battle. The Burdothians were not prepared for the new, terrible weapon of the cleash and were forced to retreat before the bio weapon/creature known as the Blood Boiler. This strange tentacled, turtle-like creature was carried by the cleash like a great chest (maimed as it was by the cleash) and created ultrasonic sound that cracked bones and boiled blood and tissue, rupturing terrible wounds.

After the defeat, the heroes, lead by Captain Shallic of the Burdothian military, pursued the cleash to their lair in the Trinnu Jungle Lands Here the cleash leader was reprimanded for marching too soon against the humans and revealing the cleash intentions in the Trinnus. A newly arrived cleash leader from the Ice Fields of Gilthaw, Cyr-Kirr, ritually dismembered the insubordinate commander and ate him in front of the other cleash.

In the cleash lair, the heroes managed to locate the dormant and feeding Blood Boiler and killed it. During their escape one of the heroes (John Doe again) was killed by scarmis as he bravely defended the rest of the retreating heroes.

When the Blood Boiler had been neutralized, the Burdothian military moved in and destroyed the cleash army. However, some cleash, including their leader, managed to flee back into the Trinnus.

Upon returning home and reporting what they had seen, the heroes were rewarded for their heroic deeds with copras from the chell of Bayis (the town that was saved from the cleash army) and were given a rinis (medal of honour).

In Baysis Lukazail met a crey-man of terrible strength and uncanny senses. The source of the crey-mans powers came from the crey parasite he carried over the side of his face. It was a gift bought dearly from the ramian, which must had to be repaid by two brief periods of servitude. Desperate to have a crey, Luckzail paid for the privilege of enslavement under foul ramian magic and was given a crey offspring from the crey-mans crey. His physical attributes and his senses were enhanced greatly along with his addiction to the rare limilate lunnica, which kept the crey's parasitic properties stable.

20. Fire and Ash

Having acquired a taste for warfare, the heroes signed up as hired condrij to defend a town in central Heridoth.

The town was populated by the Children of Lenkha, descendants of mutants evolved during the age of monsters who had been banished from neighbouring human tribes. These were not the regular muadra or boccord bloodlines that would stabilize over the centuries, but from those with much worse mutations. They had been driven out, but later grouped together under a mythological four-armed dysha-slinging (strange, as it was long before Caji Gends) leader called Lenkha. Over the centuries they built towns to protect them and lived first as bandits, then as waterholes for merchants crossing the barren southern lands of Heridoth. Soon they became wealthy as they let traders of all nations (and those not belonging to klades) sell their goods in their towns. During troublesome times in Heridoth's past they were even given the guardianship over the trade routes and started collecting cletch (tax) for their services. Now wealthy, their town Lendûra was under attack from the impoverished sage of York who sought their wealth.

Arriving in Lendûra the heroes got acquainted with Howdha the woffen, Treydell the albino condrij and the lovers Brenon and Teluva. The heroes fought alongside other hired condrij and the defenders of Lendûra against the more numerous yorkni forces. They faced trebuchets, battering rams, disguised earth-tech turrets, spies, traitors poisoning the city's water and much more. In the end the enemy breached the walls and poured into the city and the heroes and the citadel guard were pushed into the temple of Lenkha. High up in the tower of Lenkha the traitor showed himself as Treydell the albino condrij they trusted and killed Howdha. He also stole the artefact known as the Heart of Lenkha and extinguished the Holy Fire of Lenkha's soul that had burned since the great leader's death. As the priests, rulers, citadel guards, women and children fled through underground passageways out of the city they were attacked. Treluva was killed and her lover Brenon swore vengeance upon the sage of York.

After the city had fallen the citadel guard and the survivors gathered in the wastelands. The heroes promised to help them find the Heart of Lenkha and the traitor Treydell. They set out for York while Lendûra was still burning behind them. In the city of York they bought the help of the githerin of Shadowtown to get onto the Yirga Skyrealm housing sage Kelir's palace. Disguised as drenns and keshts some of the heroes infiltrated the palace during festivities. They found that the main reason for sage Kelir's attack upon the Kan Lenkha was the new pluran bishop's influence. It was the sage's enchanting new thanterian concubine Lady Laita Tarenté, a coronian, who brought her uncle, Bishop Hansh Tarenté to Heridoth. The pluran bishop hated the Kan Lenkhas even more than the yorkni and wanted power over both. It was he who had ordered the artefact stolen, to crush the religion of that area. His scheming even included overthrowing Kelir during a loosh hunt with raldin lions. The whole plot was uncovered when the heroes confronted the bishop openly and Sage Kelir exiled his concubine and the bishop while officially excusing his attack upon Lendûra. After pressure from the Sholian Whitehand Houses, Sage Kelir grudgingly returned the city and the Heart of Lenkha to the Kan Lenkhas - but only some of the wealth. In reality he still needed the Kan Lankhas to guard his western border and succeeded in forcing them to swear fealty to him. Too many lives had been lost though.

The heroes were rewarded by both the Kan Lenkhas for saving their people and faith, and by Sage Kelir for uncovering the plot to kill him. They were granted hero status and eternal welcome in

Lendûra and a song was written about their heroic deeds. Sage Kelir gave them a letter of protection in York.

21. The Shendarri Twins

Returning home from Lendûra, the heroes' night camp was disturbed by Merissa, a wounded woman rushing in with two small bundles in her arms. She begged them to protect the twins, the only two out of seven siblings that had been ambushed on their way from the secret Shendarri Skyrealm. Before dying, she begged them to take the twins safely to the Cryshell Palace .

The heroes sneaked past several patrols searching for them, most of these seemed to be Jasprians. Even inside the city walls they were harassed and followed. While besieged and holding off the attackers in a house in the city, one of the heroes managed to get away and notify the city garrison of their predicament. The palace responded immediately and sent in earth-tech equipped Redcapes to relieve the heroes. The two twins were escorted into the palace and the heroes got to meet the Dharsage himself, who thanked them for their deed. However, they were commanded to tell nobody about what had happened that night and officially rewarded with copras for something totally different.

22. Desti Rises

One chilly crith night, the Ca-Desti summoned the heroes to repay their debt to them. The cruel shanta had gathered other humans, their copras bound by Fey-Du crystals, and gave them all a quest. To find the ruins of Meshka-Tra in the East Trinnu Jungle Lands and destroy the stable warp in the main temple. The shanta claimed that they could not do this themselves, as a cleash horde held the city ruins and had weapons that could destroy or otherwise blind the isho sensitive shanta. The warriors of the Ca-Desti and Ca-Du were given the task by the eelshon, but preferred their indebted humans to perform the hard work, before they risked their own lives.

Together with Merraja, a jer of Miedrinth who knew the location of the ruins, the heroes braved the jungles and finally found Meshka-Tra. They fought chemically enslaved scarmis, strange pincher equipped cleash bodyguards and trapped lesser evids during the exploration of the ruined shantic city. During the ordeal the heroes got a glimpse of the strict genetic hierarchy of the cleash and understood that the cleash efforts in the Trinnus were led from the Ice Fields of Gilthaw. The cleash were much more organised than humans had believed and seemed to have terrible plans for the area. The heroes also witnessed the arrival of several important cleash from the Ice Fields and saw the cashiln map the cleash controlled. In a true act of bravery, the heroes managed to destroy the cashiln map and fled by warp hopping to several locations they had memorized from ancient shantic texts, before ending up in northern Sobayid.

Tired of war and death, the heroes settled down in Ardoth for more than two years, assuming their main civic chores as Drenn and Tauther.

23. The Hell Above (Only Lukazail)

As his crey passed into its second cycle, Lukazail became ill and weak. He consulted a captured ramian priest and learned that he had to travel either to Sillipus, Voligire or Ponteer to receive help from the ramian priesthood. Choosing the politically more neutral Ponteer, Lukazail left Ardoth.

After having passed the test of reaching the mountain top temple known as the Hell Above and consulting the strange dwarf god living there, Lukazail served the ramian for 4 months. He learned much of the ramian ways, their language and religion during his servitude. Lukazail also noticed how the powerful ramian rochka (priests) could control him through his crey and how chiven rachueh ramians seemed able to find him and understand his thoughts. This was an uncanny lesson to learn. In Cerin he saw the final, fourth stage of the crey, where it had grown to engulf the human host, creating a monstrous creature half-human half-crey. The hapless human had been placed in a holding pen and was used for arcane ceremonies and communication between the ramian rulers as well as to commune with their foul hidden gods. It was a cruel fate which Lukazail was destined to suffer.

Lukazail befriended one such hapless crey man, Utam Gatchubar-Crey and learned many secrets about the ramian and their religion Volo-Korochka.

Finally, Lukazail was released from his service and allowed to return to his homeland. However, the ramian rochkas promised that they would call upon him again.

24. The Gire of Sillipus

Upon the return of Lukazail, the Redcapes of Burdoth questioned him and the other heroes about their ties to the ramian. They were also asked questions about their ties to the shanta, as they openly carried shantic amulets and had been involved in the Thosk Incident (see the Temple Stone adventure). Especially Red Martin was suspicious about their loyalties. Despite Rasec assuring that they were loyal to Burdoth, seeds of distrust began to grow in the Cryshell Palace .

The heroes were then sent on a secret mission to Sillipus on behalf of the Redcapes. Their mission was to assassinate a Jaspian renegade by the name of Khendar Jetelpe. It was Khendar who organised much of the shirm-eh trade out of Burdoth and Heridoth. Thanks to Khendar's organisation and network of contacts, the ramian had enough shirm-eh to raid the civilised realms. As they prepared for their journey, they were mistaken by a dying agent for his contact. The dying agent had been sent by a Sardon D'Obreth of Sillipus to find information about how the gire ships moved between Voligire and Sillipus. He was now returning to Sillipus with the coordinates for a great ocean warp. As he was hunted by two fusheen klade assassins, the heroes soon got involved (and poisoned).

The heroes set sail for Sillipus and the human town Kithaq. After some initial trouble with gire at sea and the human pirates of Sillipus, the heroes arrived in a town rife with violence. The two human pirate lords, The Dreglamon and Sholari Nebbon of the Blue Legion, were at each other's throats. The heroes got their first glimpse of the deadly and powerful Blue Legion and their unknown, dangerous dyshas.

Maneuvering between the two factions, the heroes managed to find information about Sardon D'Obreth, but nothing about Khendar Jetelpe.

Sardon D'Obreth turned out to be a very wealthy and influential human with a huge estate and many men in the Inner Reach of central Sillipus. He bred horses and some other terran livestock and crops. He also had a small collection of Earth-tech artefacts. When speaking to him they understood that he had contacts and influences in many realms. Now, Sardon was making his bid for power in Sillipus.

Sardon claimed to know where to find Khendar and offered to help the heroes in return for their help in cementing his power.

Now having the location of the ramian's ocean warp, Sardon aimed to demonstrate how he could shut the warp as well as reveal its location to Burdoth. The heroes, and especially their caji would be his tools to do this.

Braving the ramian gire, the heroes set out in Sardon's ship and passed the ramian blockade. Showing with false crystal devices how they could control the warp, they managed to negotiate with the gire and presented Sardon's terms (freely controlling central Sillipus).

Having gained several enemies among the ramian, the heroes then had to infiltrate Twathigire, the largest ramian port in Sillipus and seat of the Ruling Four. According to Sardon's information, Khendar could be found there. In Twathigire the heroes bumped into Reveen, an old acquaintance from Voligire (See the Tirtive of Voligire adventure). Reveen had once been one of the great Tirtive, but was now reduced to a colonial ruler and one of the Ruling Four of Twathigire. He hated the heroes for causing his exile from Vinteer and the sacred position of Tirtive of the ramian. Managing to assassinate Khendar, the heroes were shocked to find that he looked like Lukazail's twin brother.

After this they fled from Twathigire through the cleash infested jungles and made their way back to Khendar Jetelpo's Dharlerrin.

As their mission had been completed, the heroes set sail for Rhodu in Anasan, as instructed by the Redcapes when leaving Burdoth.

On their way back their ship was intercepted by ramian ships led by Hasjaar the Kinslayer, Reveen's insane offspring. Feared even by the ramian, Hasjaar had a rewired earth-tech turret manned by humans on his flagship. Their ship was crippled and boarded, but before the battle was lost they were rescued by the arrival of Burdothian war ships and patrolling Loo Raums. Hasjaar the Kinslayer was defeated in combat by Lukazail during the chaos of Burdothian and Dobren intervention and the ramian ships retreated.

Onboard one of the Burdothian war ships was Dayvid Terra, a bright and eager teenager who seemed uncanningly clever. He even repaired one of their earth-tec devices. Before leaving them in Port Teng Dayvid thanked them for saving his and his brother's lives. Only then did the heroes suspect that he somehow was one of the Shendarri twins (See the Shendarri Twins adventure). But how could he be so old already? Less than 2 years has passed.

25. Spies I (Thantier Campaign)

When arriving in Rhodu, the heroes were met by covert Redcapes who demanded their services in the name of the Dharsage. Especially Lukazail was important for his likeness to Khendar Jetelpo the Jaspian. Dazzled by the chance to perform patriotic deeds and earn early drennship, the heroes accepted and were trained as Redcapes in secret.

After having spent half a year training to infiltrate Thanterian society by learning some of their languages, religion, culture, etiquette, politic schemes and background of Thantier and its dakrani (nobles), the heroes were given a mission:

- To infiltrate the Thanterian dakrani court of Lanna and find the Halls of Wisdom -

In order to do this they underwent further training for two months in Anasan, regarding the personalities they were supposed to replace. Meanwhile, in other places of the world, these persons were killed or captured to make way for the heroes.

Khendar had worked for the Thanterians and had access to the Halls. Within the Halls of Wisdom was an ancient terran message known as Jason's Will. Lukazail's mission was to copy or steal this message at any cost.

At this time the Redcapes also informed the heroes of humanity's once glorious past. Although some of the heroes had heard vague legends about this and suspected a lost high tech civilisation, all were stunned to hear of their origins on another world. To many of them, the truth was a bit too hard to swallow.

The heroes, led by Lukazail, now known as Khendar Jetelpo, then set out for Thantier. They travelled by boat from Rhodu to Dreikiss and crossed the See'iss desert to enter Thantier from the east. In Lanna, the city of the Thankrani, they managed to get into the court at the Thankrani's Palace with stolen Dryconium Rings. There they nearly bumped into bishop Tarenté, Lady Laita and Treydell (see the Fire and Ash adventure). Treydell was now one of the honorary Thotyan Condrij who protected the Pluran Church.

In the palace they also overheard the great Pope Rotiscon talking to his bishops and the skamaan ex-generals who had converted from their pagan ways to become good plurans in order to find protection by the Church (they were dishonoured and banished after the death of their leader king Korligan of Huragach – see the War adventure). They heard details about the Pluran Church's glorious future. Finally they found clues to the ancient tunnels leading to Halls of Wisdom and fled the Palace.

They travelled to Oldwater and found the guarded secret tunnel entrance, as the clues from the palace had implied. For his likeness to Khendar, Lukazail was allowed in and explored the last stronghold of the original Thanterian colony survivors. He saw the depleted grain and food storage vaults and learned details about the final days of the garrison. Many old defence and security systems had recently been brought online again, but much was aged beyond repair. During his risky exploration, Lukazail met many important Thanterians and even saw a well guarded important visitor clad in a great cloak disguising his face. One of the inner chambers held several cryobins, which had been opened. Among the information found there was Jason's Will.

Jason's Will was a holographic message recorded by a scientist who introduced himself as Jason. The message was a warning to all survivors of the native shantic attack. Jason and his colleagues had noticed how shantas seemed to seek out and attack survivors using powerful technological devices. Their research had showed that the enigmatic energy field of the planet was somehow disturbed by high power terran technology. These disturbances seemed to be easily found by the natives, who evidently mastered this energy source far beyond human comprehension. Jason and the other scientists therefore agreed with the warning sent out from Northfield Research station to hide all high-tech devices until they knew more. Their assumption had been that the shanta seemed to have been greatly decimated after the biotech attack and would probably not be able to pursue humans using everyday technology to survive. This would buy them all time until they were rescued. As an Earth-launched rescue operation could take up to 7 years, 18 of the scientists would place themselves in cryogenic hibernation with the high tech tools. Before ending the recording, Jason also showed a map over the Phoenix and Northfield network research centres and provided the coordinates to find them (based on ancient terran maps of the world).

Unable to copy Jason's Will, Lukazail instead managed to memorize most of the information with ambreh and barely escaped capture. Returning to Lanna, the heroes sent the information home to Burdoth through their contact network.

26. Spies II (Thantier Campaign)

Their contact in Lanna gave the heroes their new orders: to find Dayvid, a young renegade iscin with vast knowledge about earth-tech and bio-tech. He had slain some iscin before he fled Burdoth and was now working for the thanterians. As the story unfolded, the heroes understood that Dayvid Terra was the last of the Shendarri Twins. They were told that the Shendarri Children were incupod babies found in an earth-tech cache. Once born, they grew at an alarming pace, reaching adulthood in less than three years. However, due to mutations or lacking substances during their growth, only two children survived. With brilliant minds, the two remaining Shendarri twins learnt all there was to know about earth-tech. Their memory and sense of detail seemed endless. However, one of the brothers went mad and the other started to show signs of deviating behaviour. Finally, Dayvid mercifully killed his mad brother before fleeing to Thantier.

Now he had joined Thantier. The renegade iscin had to be convinced to be brought back or killed.

Shortly after, their contact in Lanna was taken by thotyan condrij, suspected of treason. Knowing that their contacts were being revealed one by one, the heroes fled Lanna.

They understood that the mysterious, cloaked but honoured guest that Lukazail had seen in the Thankrani's Palace as well as the Halls of Wisdom must have been Dayvid Terra.

A clue they had, was that Dayvid seemed to have been wearing Krang clothes. Visiting the poor Krang people working as slaves in the sholoza fields, the heroes learnt that Dayvid had cured the Krang people of their inherited disease during his stay there. They were now free to return to their otherwise poisonous home in the Thodic Mountains .

Following in the footsteps of the miracle maker known as Dayvid, the heroes learnt that he was now under the protection of sage Berucca of Valarach. Disguised as merchants, the heroes journeyed to the thodicean realms in western Thantier. There they found the realms Valarach and Kulai preparing for war against the two realms Kralarch and Moorshae.

Meeting with sagess Alina of Moorshae again (See the War adventure), the heroes learnt that prince Berucca of Valarach wielded some new and terrible kind of weapon, and was about to launch an attack on Kralarch in order to lay his hands on the many shantic artefacts there.

With his new weapons, Dayvid was uniting the thodicean armies against the coronians of eastern Thantier. A threat of war loomed over the thodicean lands as well as over the rest of Thantier.

As the armies met outside the great fortress of Kralarch, Dayvid appeared, clad in full power armour. Hovering far above the armies and declaring with a booming voice that the war must end, he destroyed some of the dakrani and siege weapons with his rockets of fire. A huge beast of iron also came out of the forest to spread death and fire (a tech-ton). Dayvid ordered all dakrani and sages to meet at the Valarach fort in 10 days.

The heroes manage to sneak into the cliff fort of Valarach and found a network of spy tunnels. Caji Snogard, the only one small enough, crawled up through the airshaft to the assembly hall to await Dayvid. However, he saw several soldiers hiding behind great tapestries and others behind adjacent doors.

Dayvid finally arrived, flying in through the great window in his power armour. He spoke to the assembled lords and reprimanded them for using his inventions for war. He spoke about a great future for humans – united humans - and told them that he had gifts of vast earth-tech and a great flying ship that could take them beyond this world. Dayvid then continued to speak about great realms that could be created from the ashes of the old.

Not understanding the greatness of Dayvid's plan and seeing only great treasure held by a madman with mad dreams, the scheming sage of Valarach and his father, as well as most of the assembled dakrani, planned to betray Dayvid and steal the earth-tech for themselves.

But Snogard warned Dayvid from his lookout just as the soldiers emerged and began attacking Dayvid with earth-tech weapons. Sage Berucca's father was killed by Dayvid's powerful weapons along with several other Dakrani, while sage Berucca himself was badly burned and wounded. In the end, Dayvid himself was flung out of the window and fell to his death on the cliffs 100 meters below. Snogard, who had been terribly wounded during the skirmish, understood that he would surely die if caught and opened a warp with his large white crystal. He fell through, lost consciousness and was gone.

Below the great fort, the tech ton picked up the broken remains of his master and carried him back into the wilderness where it had come from. Farmes claimed to have seen the beast several days later entering the old, endless forests of the thodicean battle lands.

The heroes managed to flee the great fort and were aided by sage Alina out of Thantier. Far too many people were looking for them now. They travelled to Tan-Iricid to heal their wounds in safety. There they met with Burdothian emissaries and a Redcape who rewarded them for their assignment in Thantier. As Thanterian spies in Burdoth might try and retaliate, they were suggested to remain hidden for a while on Tan-Iricid, so that everything would calm down.

27. The Lost City of Meg-Aleisha

While spending some months in Tan-Iricid, the heroes met a famous, friendly Jaspian explorer by the name of Khalajos Jay of House Jay. He sought brave men who could protect him and his expedition when he set out to find the fabled lost city of Meg-Aleisha deep within the uncharted wilderness of Drail. The great shantic city was said to hold all the riches of the shanta, endless halls of crystal deposits and the world's largest shal crystal called the DharShal.

Not being able to resist such a quest the heroes joined Khalajos' expedition. Drogon, a beaster and travelling circus artist, also joined the expedition for his expertise in wild and dangerous creatures, long with several other jers, and monteers.

Following the instructions recently uncovered in a last testament and map of a famous Erucian explorer and crystal smith who claimed to have been to Meg-Aleisha and seen the DharShal, the expedition set out for western Drail. They travelled along Drail's northern coast and the Thanterian colonies there, picking up supplies and a map-maker by the name of Kamarish.

When reaching the independent Erucian colonies far to the west, the expedition was attacked by both ramians and human pirates, but managed to ward them off.

In Cereicel they managed to get hold of an Erucian crystal compass and charts that were needed to follow the map. In Cereicel they also learned that another expedition, led by lord Karkiril and his Jer Dirakka, also searched for the lost city. These followed the incomplete map of the Erucian explorer's son. A great race began.

They followed the strange and cryptic clues past great deserts, torrent rivers, steaming jungles a waterfall canyon and countless dangers of Drail. Finally they reached the city, only to find it guarded by a trarch tribe. Regardless of the trarches unfriendly reaction to intruders, the expedition underestimated their numbers and Drenn Brett "Soldier" Olsen was killed by the savages. Despite the attacking trarch, the expedition managed to get past the dreaded giant do'odreh guardian placed outside the subterranean city entrance and slipped away from their pursuers.

Inside the mountain they explored the huge and ancient shantic city, once the seat of the Southern Eelshon . A Ca-Shal stronghold, it held many ancient records and Halls of History. A large portion of the houses of the lower city had been hastily converted to a mass of tombs for those that perished in the leesh-eebeeca and several tragic texts portrayed the doom and abandonment of the great city. Evids, isho locks and traps riddled some of the halls and the heroes soon lost their jer guide and accumulated many injuries.

Meanwhile, the other group of treasure hunters, led by Karkiril reached the city and soon fell upon the heroes who were taken prisoner. They forced caji Snogard to open several forbidden tombs and the gates to the Upper Halls.

The upper halls, however, were guarded by the Shomorac Do-Desti, a powerful ancient evid which was awakened. Killing several of the treasure hunters, the evid scattered everybody and by chance the heroes were freed. A deadly game of hide and seek began with the nigh indestructible evid.

This brought the heroes to the Eelshon Halls and to the High Temple . The temple was guarded by Sholari Myralaish Copra Shal, an old Ca-Shal priest and his Coshil warrior, Malenash (Coshil shantas suffer from a genetic afflictment and are deemed “cursed” by Desti to never evolve out of their more aggressive childhood bodies with claws, short necks, stripes and high concentration of Desti isho). Together they guarded the sacred ellishondu that still rested within the High Temple in the Keeper Rods.

Using his earth-tech weapons, Karkiril took the old shantic sholari hostage and threatened to activate his stone burner bomb. However, on the treacherous bridge he slipped and nearly took the shanta with him if it wasn't for the unusual bravery of Drenn Khaine Johennon. Karkiril fell to his death and his bomb burned a great hole among the mountain cliffs.

The heroes were rewarded with knowledge of the Ca-Shal. One question of lore and mystery each, but also with crystals and artefacts. They learnt about the ellishondu, the lamorri, the Leesh-Ebeeca, the restoration of the Way of Life and the Red Shanta who had recently been awakened and demanded war upon the humans.

But as they spoke to the sholari, word reached the Ca-Shal temple that Ca-Desti warriors had responded to the sholari's plea for help and were warp-walking to Meg-Aleisha. To save them from the wrath of the Ca-Desti, Sholari Myralaish Copra Shal quickly sent them home along another warp route. Their first destination would be the Ca-Launtra haven in Drail.

28. The Southsea Girelords

When the heroes stepped out of the warp, they found the Ca-Launtra temple abandoned and in the hands of cleash. A dying shanta told them that the cleash had come from the southwest, from the southern jungles. There was a new and strong cleash presence there. Fleeing from the cleash, the heroes travelled further south. Trapped in the unknown wilderness of Drail and far away from any kind of civilisation, the heroes despaired.

After a week of dismal survival along the wilderness coast they suddenly saw a ship and hailed it. It happened to belong to captain Khanat of the Dargeda Brotherhood. He and his well armed crew had been well paid to round Deathcliff Peninsula and assassinate the ramian Southsea Girelord Kroteer (a matirikiv) on the island of Kharchoko . He had been paid handsomely and told that the ramian there had been weakened by a plague. Captain Khanat informed the heroes that they were immediately south Deathcliff Peninsula and close to his target. After he had performed his quest he

promised to return to Shamento and deliver the heroes there. In return he wanted their swords to aid him.

The heroes and the pirates sneaked up to the watchtower of the ramian island and silenced the lookouts, which indeed were afflicted by a plague. They then attacked the ramian fort and slew the SouthSea Girelord Kroteer and took his holy Ro-Charvi (symbol of power). In the matirikiv's private chambers, the heroes also saw many strange ramian artefacts and a sort of milky white semi-transparent communication stone.

Shortly thereafter, several ramian ships arrived, having waited for the outcome. The quartermaster Dukerik of Coronia and several of the crew betrayed Khanat and the heroes and received their pay from the ramian. The ramian took the heroes and Khanat's loyal pirates prisoners, thanking them for the aid in killing one of their enemies (as the ramian, being unable to harm a member of their own species, could not do this themselves). They had conspired by preventing shirm-eh to reach Kroteer and his minions and then sent Khanat to do the dirty work.

Out of the four Southsea Girelords that ruled the ramian Southsea colonies, two had been opposed to the opening of ancient Vaults of power and the split from the Tirtive of Voligire. Now, one of these two had been killed and the colony would finally separate themselves from the distant rulers of Voligire. A rare event and a new chapter in ramian history. Unfortunately, the Southsea girelords claimed not to have the Tirtive's patience with the humans and would muster to get them out of Drail (and hopefully more than that).

The heroes were taken as the slaves of Talanki Mag of Sharcoth and all their possessions lost. They were branded with Mag's sign on their chests and their souls were taken by ramian rochka, so that their bodies would wither and die if they ventured to long and far away from their master.

After having toiled hard in the ramian mines the heroes were finally given an important assignment. To travel up along the Dolosha River and destroy the cleash fort of Chei'kcrics that constantly assailed the ramian foragers.

Leading a small army of slaves the heroes did so and ventured deep into the murky swamp fort to fight the cleash. During this fight many slaves died and captain Khanat was captured and tortured by cleash. The heroes found him flayed alive and promised the dying captain to avenge him.

With great cunning and great bravery the heroes and their army of slaves managed to destroy the cleash and also relieved Lenosha Ca-Launtra, a shantic priestess that was besieged in the swamp's ancient shantic ruins. The sholari rewarded them with a strange talisman with Mag's mark on it and told them to give it to their master so he would set them free.

The heroes presented the talisman to mag upon their return and Mag was terrified. The talisman held the mark of the ancient ramian fiend Vrochma-Keel (Rorch-ko: "The Skull Collector"). In panic he dismissed the heroes and sent them on their way with a few hints on how to reach the Kitcharka Sea where they could find passage home.

The heroes decide to follow Mag's advice and followed the inland trek across the inner mountains and over to the ramian Southsea colonies around the Kitcharka Sea .

During their trek, Karuciel Tutchubar-Crey, a crey-man bounty hunter and his darkmane beasts caught up with them and even managed to defeat Lukazail in a duel. The older crey-man however felt pity for Lukazail and surprisingly set him free, as he still had a chance to break the chains of the crey.

Disguised as slaves toiling in the shirm-eh fields, the heroes finally managed to slip into Co'Chorveer and spoke to a slave foreman who helped slaves escape the city for payment. A ramian from Jasp by the name of Rotoir agreed to take them through the ocean warp and even drop them off in Jasp if they helped him first.

The ramian was on a dangerous mission to the mountainous region east of Drail. It was rumoured that the renegade Southsea Girelord and Korochka (high priests) by the name of Chokulsha, planned to open the ancient Vault of Tchobyska Chorachka that lay there. Rotoir had to find out if this was true, as this could spell doom on all ramian and herald a new age of darkness for the world.

Together with the ramian, the heroes sailed to Ma-Roch and silently travelled up the inland road, avoiding patrols and sentries. They finally reached a great lifeless valley among the mountains, littered with huge standing stones and ancient ruins. A foul, noxious mist lay across the desolate valley floor that seemed to come from a huge excavation site. Huge beasts of burden transported stones and dirt from the great pit and hundreds of slaves worked until they fell. Rotoir sneaked closer in the mists that were clearly noxious to humans and confirmed that the Vault had been opened and that foul magic was at work.

Detected by ramian guardians the heroes fled back down to the coast and aboard their ship. Soon their ship was pursued by other ramian and a black cloud of small poisonous winged lizards ascended upon their ship. Rotoir told them that this was the Tremla Bloodseekers, foul beasts from the Vault. They were programmed to find and kill Rotoir. The heroes hid in their cabins while the Tremla tried to chew their way through. Meanwhile Rotoir stayed at the rudder and was covered in the foul creatures that stung through his thick skin. After the Tremla left, the other ramian ships drew closer and were ready to board. It became a race for the ocean warp that was drawing closer. The dying Rotoir begged them to tell his father Choi Sterneye of Aylon that the Vault had been opened and then helped the heroes fight off the boarders. In the middle of a desperate fight, the heroes activated their warp crystal, enticing the great ocean warp to open. Their ship passed through the warp, but the pursuers ships were destroyed as the warp slammed shut behind them.

With a badly damaged vessel and no ramian guide, the heroes found themselves off some exotic islands.

After some island hopping they stumbled upon some tribal salu who after some persuasion helped them repair their ship. Some salu claimed that they and their ship was cursed and followed by ill fortune. The heroes learned that they were among the Ajiltu islands far south of Sillipus.

With the aid of salu star navigation, the heroes made their way to Anasan. Off the Anasan coast they found that something was slowing their ship. A strange beast was nailed to the hull of their ship and had grown immensely every passing day. It was probably done in Ma-Roch and it sent off a whale-like howl for other ramian rochka to hear. Now the rek-lakla boatkiller was ready to destroy the ship and slowly crushed the hull. The heroes escaped the doomed ship by swimming to the coast. In Port Teng they found passage to Ardoth with a trading ship.

29. The Doomed City

Arriving in Ardoth after an unusually storm-tossed journey, the heroes found the city in turmoil.

As the moons aligned for the first time in 700 years, terrible forces of nature were unleashed upon the human realms. Several storms were ravaging the Ardoth Bay and the water was rising to flood the city. Shantas had hastily abandoned the Sho-Ecta temple outside Ardoth and doom priests declared that the end of the world was coming. All events were seen as bad omens.

The heroes found that assassins had killed the parents and relatives of Snogard, Khaine and Lukazail (and his cousin the late Killimanjaro). Thanks to the intervention of Drenn Fredrycks men, a poisoned letter that had found its way to Drenn Khaine Johennon was intercepted. When meeting with Drenn Fredryk they found him crippled and weak since 6 months after having survived a poisoning. This turned out to be the work of Emperor Delamon's daughter, Hekra, (see Haisvana campaign) whom with the aid of the shanta had come over the seas to avenge her father (and destroy evidence and witnesses to Haisvana's existence). Despite living under the protection of wealthy Drenn, the heroes managed to find her. During the brief showdown in the Cryshell Palace, Hekra Delamon got the overhand but repented when understanding her father's guilt and refused to kill the heroes. She disappeared, never to be heard from again.

The heroes also picked up rumours and news of the latest political events. Tologra had sailed into Ardoth harbour in a gesture of peace, having abandoned their former ramian allies. Burdothian emissaries had departed for Sharden. A Sobayan skyrealm and an ancient Thanterian fort had been destroyed by a terrible and unknown blast.

As the storm approached, the heroes were given by the Chell the task to protect Keshtia Sindra Dharpella during her very inconvenient party. Just as the Chell suspected, the insidious diyorda known as the Vodra struck again and stole Sindra's earth-tec family heirloom. When investigating, the heroes uncovered an organisation of smugglers and dytes. The Vodra agreed to help them and turned out to be Caji Snogard, who had last been seen in Valarach, western Thantier, when warping away with terrible wounds (see the Spies II adventure). Upon his return to Burdoth he had created himself an organisation of diyorda in Ardoth's slums. Snogard had been double-crossed by the Yethercans whom had contracted him to steal the artefact and provided the heroes with clues to someone else stealing other earth-tech artefacts in Ardoth. It was part of some strange conspiracy.

As the greatest of storms approached, tolamuun stargazers, Dow astrologers and Doom Priests all predicted the city's end. The prophecy of Nuah Palactine, a long dead prophet who had a vision in Lower Manser, was once again repeated in the street. The city would perish in a great fire and flood.

Roofs were blown off buildings or otherwise ignited by the chaotic isho storm. Houses collapsed, ships were destroyed in the harbour, the sea wall was pounded to pieces and large parts of the city were flooded.

During all the chaos, the heroes continued investigating the Yetherca sky gazers and their strange fulfilling of Nuah's prophecy. Knowing that the Yethercans followed the instructions found on mysterious yellow tablets that the ground had spat up, the heroes infiltrated their star-gazing tower of the Yetherca School. Here they overheard a dispute that was dividing the Yethercans. Both believed that the city was about to be destroyed by an ancient evil awakening in Lower Manser, the area the shantas referred to as Mah-ashalta-ca. However, the factions disputed what to do. Warn people and flee or continue their plot to destroy the evil machinery under the city. A captured thriiddle even tried to warn the Yethercans that the machinery under the city kept Ardoth alive somehow and must not be destroyed.

Without losing any more time, the heroes sent for help from the Cryshell Palace and hurried to Lower Manser. There, among the putrid, sinking parts of the city, they found strange stone columns rising out of the mud from below. At the entrance to a new, strange mud covered building, they found a strange beast that lay motionless in the mud, still wrapped in its umbilical cords and shredded cocoon. When Lukazail attacked it he heard whispers in his head and was thrown into a coma.

Leaving the strange beast, the heroes stumbled upon a relief party of Redcapes. They had been killed by energy weapons and their own weapons stolen. The last survivor revealed that they had come to relieve the guards secretly stationed at the entrance to Mah Ashalta Ca. Finding them drowned by the flooding, the Redcapes had then been attacked by the Yethercans with their stolen energy weapons. The wounded guard warned them about the dangers below and then fell unconscious. Hurrying through scary, alien halls and passageways, the heroes finally encountered the Yethercan fanatics. Despite being pinned down by vicious blaster fire, the heroes managed to prevent the Yethercans from destroying the underground machinery with throw explosives. In the end, more Redcapes arrived and swiftly killed the Yethercans.

When venturing out of Mah Ashalta Ca, there was no sign of the beast. Only large footprints disappeared into the murky water.

The heroes were rewarded for their bravery, but instructed to tell nobody what they had seen in Mah Ashalta Ca. Rasec of the Redcapes also told them that the destruction of the ancient machinery would not have been as dangerous as the thriddle had indicated. It was all a great exaggeration. Somehow the players believed he lied.....

30. The Ramian Invasion

As the clouds dispersed after the worst storm in centuries and ardothians started to clean up their storm torn city, word came from the north.

The ramian were invading.

The beacons of war were lit all the way from Sydra to Ardoth and a great fleet of ramian had landed in Sydra.

The drenns among the heroes were immediately called in as officers and the tauthers enlisted as soldiers. Burdothians from all provinces united to cast off the invading ramians. Instead of fighting for the Burdothian cause, a travel weary Drogan the Beaster chose to return south to Tan-Iricid with a thivin caravan.

As the invasion picked up pace, hero drenns were given the task to travel to Glounda City, deep in the Glounda Forest, and there muster a Gloundan force. Furthermore, from Glounda City they would escort a group of iscin and their wagons to Mar.

Meanwhile the great armies of Sobayid and Ardis mustered outside the Ardoth city walls and marched northwards.

When reaching Glounda, the heroes faced factions between the original inhabitants and the northern people who had fled to Glounda during the last ramian invasion. The situation was especially infected when it came to religion. Tolamuun versus Sajja worshippers. However, the heroes managed to get attention to the situation and were given an escort of soldier and Gloundan shadow warriors for the iscin.

As they exited the forest and reached Mar, they found half of the human army slaughtered upon a great field. The other half seemed to have continued northward.

Refugees fleeing south and scouts who had been separated from the 4th and 5th armies could inform them that Sychill was under siege and Sydra occupied. From these northern cities chiveer maddened ramian warbands and raiders struck out southwards. One or more fast moving ramian armies were also roaming southern Lusail. However, the main army of Ardis, Sobayid and Essanja were still pushing northwards towards Sychill.

When continuing northwards, the wagons the heroes were escorting were spotted by ramian scouts. Soon a warband of ramian fell upon the wagons and one wagon exploded, taking both humans and ramians with it. The heroes learned that the iscin of Glounda were actually transporting some new kind of experimental weapon (gun powder). During the fray Snogard learned not to counterstrike a ramian with a hardstone sword and loses an arm.

Despite the terrible losses the heroes and their soldiers drove off the ramian warband and joined the main army.

As the regrouped Burdothian armies of Ardis, Sobayid and Essanja pushed towards Sychill the ramian armada and landed army broke off the siege and regrouped inland.

Early in the morning of crith 19th a terrible battle was fought. The ramian used natikvi beasts as flying steeds and fired great bows upon the advancing Burdothians. Trarch carried great steel shields to take first hits from energy weapons while their ramian masters drew closer. Choosing also to fight in forested, covered terrain the first minutes of the battle was grim for the Burdothians. However, with the force of sheer numbers, dharsage silver and the new experimental gun powder, the battle turns and the ramian retreat.

The army of Lusail was broken and scattered and the army of Gauss was busy outside Salam'arine. The armies of Ardis, Essanja and Sobayid were decimated, but strong enough to pursue the ramian force and lay siege to Sydra where the ramian armada awaited. Busy loading their troops back onto the ships, the ramian left far too few forces and wild trarch on the high walls of the city.

In a great act of heroism, the heroes managed to sneak into the town and helped to open the gates so the outer walls could be taken. During chaos and fire the ramian retreated back out to sea, suffering great losses and abandoning many trarch behind. All who were there that day would forever remember the songs of victory among the burning city houses, when the black ramian sails disappeared to the north.

It took time to route the remaining ramian forces from all of Lusail. Even after this, the ramian still had their new bases in the overrun Coastal Kingdoms to the west. From there they would continue to launch terrorising attacks upon the crippled towns of northern Gauss and Lusail.

The heroes were granted copras and some land in the Gauss Valley as a reward for their heroic deeds during the ramian invasion.

Half a year passed as the heroes saw to the more mundane tasks of rebuilding the Ramov dharlerring after the ramian invasion. The heroes also wrote a letter to Choi Sterneye of Aylon to tell him about the death of his son/offspring in the SouthSea and pass his warning to him.

31. Jason's Tomb

The heroes were soon called upon again by the Redcapes for another mission. Burdothian iscin had interpreted the coordinates in Jason's Will, which the heroes had stolen from the secret Thanterian Halls of Wisdom (See Spies I and II). They now knew of a network of research stations that had existed in the eastern Doben-al. As the Sleeper of Shatur (See the Vucian Mystery) had most certainly been a member of this network, the Redcapes wanted the heroes to find the other research station to see if they were intact. Their previous experience with the Vucians and their contacts there could help them access old Vucian records. If this would not help, authority was given to gain access to these records by force.

Led by Yethro DharMarlevin the Redcape Captain and Danyell Comorra, the heroes travelled to Shatur. There they met the new but troubled King Avicca, whom they had helped gain power after the conflict with the Lunghoth (See the Vucian Mystery adventure). Since the conflict with the Lunghoth, the Burdothians held the Vucians by the throat and forced their way to their old scriptures. Everything in Shatur otherwise closed and holy temples had already been accessed, copied or otherwise stolen by Burdothian iscin. The Vucian were not happy with the stern rule of the Burdothians searching for earth-tech. Especially Mycel, the High Priest of Shatur and Queen Miryam, Avicca's spouse, were aggravated.

Rummaging through all the documented finds, the heroes began reading about the long gone Erucian Empire and the great cities there. Uncovering that these cities had been built by the expanding Vucians upon the remains of a peaceful system of highly developed villages, the heroes understood that this could have been the sites of the ancient research stations. They set out to search for them.

The night they left Shatur, Avicca met with them in secret and left his son, Prince Vucarin, in their care. The martial king seemed sad, but claimed that the spoilt boy had to see the world and learn the ways of the condrij and the Burdothians in order to be a good king. He also said that his queen conspired against him and that it was not safe for Vucarin in Shatur.

As the heroes set, they learnt that the prince was truly spoilt and detested lower humans. He even tried to flee from the heroes on several occasions. But slowly, he got to know them and started to see the world in a different way when the boccord and muadra saved his life.

When the heroes investigated the ruins of Turacca they bumped into the Stern circus. At first seeming to be innocent entertainers, the members of the circus soon proved to be deadly Thanterian spies.

On their way to Podrola, situated on top of the ruins of Nokura, the heroes met a caravan coming from the east via Shatur. The caravan leader reported that there was once again unrest in Shatur, as the king has been assassinated. Queen Miryam ruled now and was harassing the Burdothian rhakesht there. Vucarin was shaken by this and the spoilt prince wept for the last time.

Following ancient clues and avoiding the dread Thanterian circus, the heroes travelled to the Coastal Kingdoms to consult the scriptures of the Keepers of the Written Word in the city of Podrola, who constituted the remains of the old Vucian religion in the north. The sinister death cult did however not allow people to visit their great library, so the heroes had to sneak in at night. It turned out that the library in fact was a deadly maze devoted to the sinister ramian prophet that greatly had inspired the Keepers. The deformed librarian played a deadly game of hide and seek with the heroes amongst sinister traps, before they captured him and found what they were looking for. Upon leaving the temple grounds and accidentally burning the holy library, the heroes got into trouble with King Nicolai who sent his men, led by the ruthless boccord captain of the guard, Taraque, after them. They also bumped into the deadly Thanterian Circus again, who managed to steal the scriptures.

A hunt for the city of Curávion began.

Following the clues that a Bright Green Road of Messengers would lead them to the lost city ruins, the heroes journeyed to ruined Cahtur. There they found a crugar band of bandits inhabiting the cliffside ruins. With a combination of brute force and cunning force, the heroes fought their way into the ruined city and activated the Green Road. This was brightly burning substance called lamcra oil, which had been mined in the city. When directed through a prism, a green laser beam used for

communication pointed deep into the desert, where Curávion once had lain. Facing the deadly flesh-ripping Man-Taliga storms the heroes navigated into the deep desert and finally found the ancient ruins of the Vucian capitol. In Curavion they found that the horrors and legends they had read about in their quest to be true and were faced with demonic perenn creatures.

As if fate had a hand in the exploration of the wind swept ruins, a tremor opened up a deep cavern where the Vucian Emperor had made his last stand, but had been buried alive. The battle helm of the Vucian emperor was found along with armour made of thick Ridellium steel from the colony ships. An intact cryotube was also found, containing a human male in hibernation.

The heroes quickly began transporting the cryotube to a harbour with Redcape contacts and Burdothian emissaries in eastern Ros Crendor. However, when they stopped in Makvar, a boccord man was killed and the heroes blamed. Yethro DharMarlevin killed Danyell Comorra and betrayed the heroes, leaving the cryotube in his possession. Surrounded and captured, the heroes were found guilty of the crime and sent to the dread Prison Mountain from which few ever returned.

32. The Seven Seals

According to the custom of the Ros Crendorians, it was the family of the victim that decided the punishment of the offender together with the judges. This could, however, not be done until 6 months after the crime (to prevent rash decisions).

So, after having spent 6 months in the deep, dread halls of Prison Mountain, the heroes stood before the judges again. Naracine DharKree of the Loturbain Clan, sister of the deceased, saw no point in taking their lives. Instead she offered them pardon for risking their lives and helping her. She needed brave men to get onto the twin skyrealms Nakraateh and KorMaas, where her father Bodain lived. No word had come lately from her father and the watchmen of Nakraateh skyrealm did not allow anyone to land.

Daring the chill, cold crith, the heroes flew by talmaron to the skyrealm. Just as Naracine had said, they were attacked by the watchmen. An aerial fight took place that nearly cost their lives (especially Lukazail was close to loosing his life when he chose to dive into a frozen lake).

Khaine Johennon was seemingly killed. Others were captured while a few managed to escape and hide on the skyrealm. The heroes found that a third, smaller skyrealm accompanied the two larger. It had appeared during a terrible isho storm and held a crypt of a Dreamlord that had been foolishly awakened by a young, rash priestess. The now possessed priestess experimented with the captives (distorting the bones of the wounded) and seemed to bring Khaine back to life (a black centipede crawled out of his mouth). She was in fact ridden by Groschraurr the Dreamlord from the smaller skyrealm.

Evidence could be found everywhere in the form of strange blueprints and plans, to build some kind of unholy machinery.

Understanding that the source of all the new evil was to be found on the small skyrealm, the heroes freed their comrades and followed the priestess and her sacrificial slaves to the Dreamlord's crypt. Shantic warnings about traps and curses to anyone opening the crypt could be found at the entrance which had been forced open. Other shantic texts revealed that the crypt also held the Matra-Galiga – a doomsday weapon of countless sun-powered, winged machine-insects that could spread over the lands.

When entering the deadly tomb Lukazail was possessed by Groschraurr, as he was more susceptible to Dreamlord possession through his crey. He began attacking and hunting the other heroes in the nightmarish corridors. The Dreamlord also further attacked the heroes with his mind amplifier and filled their minds with illusions of great beast and fake deaths.

However, during the entity Groschraurr's momentary distraction with the hereos, Pretéss Myriel momentarily woke up from her possession. Understanding what she had done, she forced her mind clear of Groschraurr for a moment and gave them a chance to kill her. When the regretfull young priestess died, the Dreamlord's hold was broken and its mind without physical focus.

With the aid of the arriving Ca-Du warriors the tomb could once again be sealed and the skyrealm "cut loose" from the isho of the Twins. Having declined for millennia, the shantic wardens of Dobenal and Ros Crendor had lost much knowledge about the locations of lamorri tombs. The rewarded the heroes for leading them to this awakened terror before they left.

The heroes were also rewarded with Kree by the Korrum tribes of Ros Crendor for freeing the villagers of the skyrealm. Naracine DharKree was now convinced of their true intentions and believed that they were innocent. With words of pardon she helped them get on their way again.

33. The Sharussa

Knowing that they could only return to Burdoth in shame, the heroes tried to pick up the cold trail of Yehtro DharMarlevin the traitor. He seemed to have been in league with a Ros Crendorian pirate by the name of Captain Delange who had been waiting for him in Makvar. Delange's ship, the Sharussa, had left for Auklin more than half a year ago. Following the cold trail the heroes set out for North Khodre .

Khaine was still acting strange since his encounter with the Dreamlord. Sometimes he developed nightmares and spewed up small insects. This, as well as his close brush with death greatly troubled the heroes.

I Aucklin the heroes heard that Delange had sailed on northward. The trail led them all the way past the Jaspian Protectorates and to Jasp itself. Here Delange had settled an old family affair by killing his brother. He had then acquired sea charts from a jaspian contact and left his boatsman behind when departing for eastern Temauntro. The boatsman turned out to be a female pirate by the name of Caji Charis. She was eager to find Delange and avenge what had happened to her. She knew that Delange had been contacted by something called the Berella and given precious sea charts, funds and a way to get into the Dargedá Brotherhood of the Sharharras Sea . Delange had also been given a ramian shield of passage to pass the territories of the ramian Warlords of north-western Temauntro.

The heroes also met Choi Sterneye for the first time. A skvaar-ridden sickly old ramian who held on to his life by sitting in his steaming shirm-eh pool, tended by countless healers. The heroes told him about his son/daughter in the SouthSea and brought him his warning. Choi had read their letter and warned them about an ancient evil about to be unleashed by the ramian rochka. Those of the heroes that agreed, were adopted by Choi as his children and gained his protection. They were also to be his eyes in ears in his search for the ancient evil. Especially they were told to search for the Swordbearers, the ones who came first and would herald the return of the old gods. The coming of these beings would herald a terrible war between ramians and humans. When describing the beast found in Ardoth during the Great Constellation (see the Doomed City adventure), Choi had gasped and proclaimed that this had been a swordbeared. Times were bad indeed.

Lukazail consulted Choi about his crey and his wish to remove it. Choi told him that Lukazail had bound himself and his soul to the ramian rochka forever. However, there was a way to break the curse. It had to be done before the third phase of the crey has been established fully. Choi named several ingredients that were needed to weaken the crey's power and a ritual that had to be performed to remove the crey. The ritual would call back Lukazail's souls from captivity and cut the bond to the crey. However, the ritual had a price. Lukazail had to find another host for the crey. Only then would the crey leave Lukazail, which it would be believed to be a sick and dying host. The whole procedure and ritual was of course very dangerous and could result in the death of both Lukazail and the new host.

Using their contacts, the heroes and Charis travelled with a jaspian crystal schooner to western Thantier. There they equipped a new ship and began searching for the Sharussa. They heard about Delange's new career in the Dargedada Brotherhood and managed to get passage to the pirate town of Shamento, where they found information with the aid of money, swift lipped captain Ranihyn and Mother Gobey of the Nightladies.

The heroes and Charis then attacked Delange's and his new partner, captain Mennic's, small island, freed one of their hostages and found information about where Yehtro and his cargo had been delivered. In the process, Delange's ship, the Sharussa was taken and commandeered by Captain Charis.

The hostage turned out to be princess Nacila Ricaras whom her brother Ceratil Ricaras, High Assassin of the Erucian colonies, had been searching for. The heroes were rewarded by her father, the powerful Lord Volec Ricaras who promised them eternal gratitude and helped them get to the town of Cereicel, where Yehtro had been delivered by Captain Delange.

In Cereicel the heroes were hosted by the sly Lord Cerecil Cyratas and his assassin dancer Tamya. In return for an earth tech artefact, Lord Cerecil sold them information that an organisation called the Berella had bought information and help from him. He had arranged sea charts for the Sharharras Sea, membership in the Dargedada Brotherhood for Delange and had hid Yehtro until he could travel onward. Lord Cerecil also told them that X had seemed sick and worn. His hair had been white and his skin sickly pale.

Further information revealed that Yehtro had been a member of the DharMarlevin family and had left for the Burdothian colonies.

Glad to get out of Lord Cerecil's keep, the heroes travelled to the Burdothian colony in northeastern Drail and raided the great DharMarlevin's dharlerrin and mining towns together with the Redcapes farms in their search for Yehtro. They finally found Yehtro sick and dying from radiation. He had delivered the cryotube to the Berella who had paid him well. He also knew where the Berella base was. However, when the Redcapes launched a major assault on the Berella base, they found it deserted.

The Berella had outwitted Burdoth and the trail was lost. For now.....

34. Mysteries of the Ramov Dharlerrin

Upon returning home the heroes were rewarded for their loyal and patriotic service and the drenns were jointly given more land in the Gauss Valley and a DharLerrin whose previous owner had been killed during the ramian invasion. The drenns were ordered to officially claim the dharlerrin, organise it and restore it after the ramian invasion, so that it could start producing again.

Before leaving Ardoth, the heroes witnessed the gruesome tunnel worm execution of Yethro DharMarlevin, the shissic of Burdoth.

At this time, Lukazail felt the change in his crey and understood that the crey's third cycle was approaching. This would be the longest cycle and would prolong his life. But it also meant that the crey would be part of him forever. He therefore set out for Ponteer, Holy Lands of the ramian, again - searching for the ingredients needed to rid him of his crey.

Caji Snogard found that his second in command of the Vodra organisation, Caji Morconda, had usurped him and tried to kill him. But before Snogard had the chance to avenge the treason, he was invited by sholari Anasha Ca-Tra to become his apprentice and journey to the Shantic Lands east of Lundere. Giddy as a school boy Snogard left on his apprenticeship.

When the heroes reached the Ramov DharLerrin they found many problems. It needed rebuilding or repairs of houses, barns, fences and walls. The fields were not productive and many toth had fled. Those remaining were dulled by drugs and secret cult worship. Fear of violence from the neighbouring Dharlerrin owner, Drennit Tereged Dharnevic, and his armed men, bandits in the forest and rumours of a terrible beast that killed livestock and men, crippled the Ramov DharLerrin. However, adding to their ranks was Finn Manjaro, game keeper of the Dharlerrin and cousin of the fable Kilimanjaro.

After some investigation, the heroes found that the Drennit neighbour was in fact organising the bandits. Even though the bandits were dispersed, it was hard to find evidence linking them to Drennit Tereged Dharnevic.

In Salam'arine they were introduced to all important persons by keshtia Jarilla Gellip, including the gentleman githerin who robbed Jer-Emiah Gerrig blind.

The great beast of Misty Mountain, was in fact a natikvi left behind by the ramian. But other terrors lurked amid the mists and were responsible for the polluted river. The heroes uncovered a plot by ramian rochka that had stayed behind after the invasion to breed Swordbearers (a deadly lamorri machine beast) high up in the Misty Mountain massif. A huge and strange beast laid eggs that grew into plants, where the swordbearers gestated in the roots. Two Swordbearers had already hatched and the heroes barely escaped them alive. They consulted the imprisoned ramian rochka seer in Salam'arine's prison tower who told them that the Swordbearer heralded the return of the old gods.

The heroes returned to the Misty Mountains with soldiers and the Salam'arine garrison equipped with earth-tech weapons. Still, the swordbearers proved tough opponents. In the end the egg layer of the lake and the trees were burned.

As an epilogue the heroes managed to deal with Drennit Tereged Dharnevic's claim to the DahrLerrin and got the farm on its feet again.

Another year passed as the heroes struggled with the more mundane problems of governing a DharLerrin. Some of them invested in the new postal courier network, the Dharsage Messageries. Others engaged themselves in local politics and made friends among the other lerrin owners.

35. The Hobeh Ruins

One day an Ardisian courier summoned the heroes to Ardoth. The dharsage had a new quest for them. Leaving the DharLerrin in the care of Celiok the foreman, the heroes journeyed to Ardoth.

Being experts in exploring old civilisations and trekking through jungles, they Dharsage asked them to lead an expedition to investigate the strange new human ruins found recently by a famous

Burdothian explorer in Hobeh's inland. Shona Metullah the explorer had mysteriously died of a jungle disease, but the heroes managed to find his encrypted map through his assassinated partner Mende Lankis, who revealed its hiding place aboard their ship with his last breath.

Enlisting a half-mad and dangerous trulga caji from wild Sillipus, Jobe Nebuka, the heroes set out for the wildlands of Hobeh.

When they reached Dowsen in Heridoth to pick up Rhobert Trohill, a guide that had been to the location in Hobeh, they found him under a death threat. He didn't know from whom, but several caji had attacked him. The heroes and their boat were later that night attacked by caji wielding desti dyshas. Their boat was destroyed by a rare desti fire crystal that burnt with flames so great they couldn't be extinguished. The attackers were scarred by fire and acted like fanatics. They bore a red circle as a symbol, but nothing else about them was found.

Equipped with a new ship they once again set out for Hobeh together with Rhobert Trohill. Passing ramian gire and savage salu they reached the wilds of Hobey and sailed up the uncharted jungle coast. Following the map of Shona Metullah, the explorer, they navigated up the Snake River, past a cleash fort and a colossal Vattramon Beast. After crossing Corondon Valley, they finally reached the southern arm of the Red Mountains. There they bumped into a cleash scout party who retreated when encountering them. The cleash were part of a large war party heading towards a shantic village. Warning the Ca-Du shantas living in the village, provided the heroes with valuable allies who helped them and warned them that the lands north of the mountains were controlled and governed by the Ca-Desti. They advised them against going there.

Ignoring the warnings, the heroes dared the guardian of Howling Pass and the natural obstacles of the Glass Plains and the Kauwtha Desert and finally reached the ruins. Among the sand covered ruins they found ancient records written upon stone. They told the history of New Berlin and the colony survivors and Millinot warriors that founded it. The community had been isolated but thrived and tried to maintain its knowledge through scientific traditions. Much was lost over the years and a splinter group left to find fabled Millikosa. Mutants were discovered among them after the great lunar alignment but were cared for. Then one day lights were seen among the Red Mountains of the north and the Ca-Desti shanta returned to their old forts and strongholds of the area. They were disgusted to find humans in the area and destroyed the culture.

As the heroes emerged from the deep chambers they were attacked by a wild woffen tribe who had been appointed guardians of the ruins by the Ca-Desti. They managed to take some of the heroes prisoner and presented them to Ca-Desti warriors riding great duradon.

Not knowing where the prisoners were taken and searching for them in the north the heroes found nothing. Distraught by this, they returned homewards, but passed the Ca-Du shanta of Howling Pass. These helped them finding their friend's copras, but discovered them to be held in Tonondra – a Ca-Desti stronghold. For saving the village the shanta helped them, but did not want to get further involved.

After having been given rare limilates to mask their signatures from a distance, the Ca-Du opened a warp to the cashiln tunnel leading to Tonondra. With a crystal seeking the copra of the captives, the heroes swiftly made their way through the great mountain stronghold. They saw great acitivity among the Ca-Desti and sensed that something monumental was going on. With the limited shantic known to Trulga Caji Jobe Nebuka, they also heard mention of The Desti rising. All the activity held the feared Ca-Desti shanta occupied and moving quickly and stealthily the heroes avoided shantic warriors and found and freed the captives. They fled from Tonondra via the cashiln tunnels they came from, their goal to reach the human friendly shantic city of Thulashu.

As they raced from warp location to warp location they exited on skyrealms, the Ice Fields of Giltshaw, and various abandoned temples. All the while the Ca-Desti hunters came ever closer. Jer-Emiah and Khaine were the only ones who finally managed to get through the final warp when it suddenly closed, leaving the others behind. The heroes became separated.

The Ca-Tra shanta of Thulashu received the two refugees but were afraid of enraging the Ca-Desti whom they knew were hunting the heroes through the warps. Therefore they placed Jer-Emiah and Khaine in keeper rods to hide their copras from the pursuing Ca-Desti warriors.

Tavar, Falkem, Nanook, Mojik and Jobe fled from the warp site, eating keether to hide their copras. They were not followed by the Ca-Desti but found themselves lost in foreign lands. After some wandering in great grass plains that stung them when they tried to stop and rest, the heroes came upon a cygra hunting party. Finding that they were in northern Temauntro, the heroes made their way to Jasp and to Choi Sterneye of the Silent Ramian. As Crith approached, there were no ships leaving for Khodre or Burdoth. Choi promised to lend them funds and means to get home after Crith, if they served him during their stay in Jasp.

36. Lukazail Tuchubar-Crey (Lukazail only)

While the other heroes explored mystical ruins and had the time of their life, Lukazail journeyed to Ponteer to serve the ramian and hoped to find a way to break their hold over his crey parasite. He learned many useful skills among the ramian and most importantly about the ramian culture itself. In the end he found some of the ingredients for the ritual to remove the crey taught to him by Choi Sterneye. Before he left, he granted Utam Gatchubar-Crey, a crey man in the horrible last stage of the crey a last wish – to take his life so that he would not continue to live like a crippled tool of the ramian rochkas who seemed to use crey men as communication devices.

Lukazail fled from Ponteer with a hefty price on his head.

37. Skipping School

After having served Choi Sterneye during a long and bitterly cold Crith in Jasp, the heroes learned much about the Silent Ramian and Jasp. When Eris finally came they left for Burdoth with the first ship and landed in Salam'arine. When they reached the Ramov Dharlerrin, they found Lukazail, back from Ponteer. He was grim and did not tell them much about his time there. He did however give them clues about how he killed one of his best friends, Utam, an old crey-man crippled by his enormous crey, who was losing the last of his free will and humanity.

Sadly, they found no word of their missing comrades. They were labelled lost in the wilds of Hobeh.

Two years passed and no word was heard from the missing members of the Hobeh Expedition. Sailors and explorers returning from southern Hobeh had no word of the missing and they were assumed dead. Although the Ramov Dharlerrin started to yield a steady income, the heroes grew restless governing it and attending Drenn dinners and parties. They followed international politics intently from Salam'arine and heard about the Tologra withdrawing the Burdothian invitation to Sharden, claiming Burdothian attacks upon their ships. Skirmishes continued in the south as Thantier launched a full out invasion upon Anasan's western lands.

One day as they returned home from a hunting trip they found two letters from Prince Vucarin's school in Ardoth waiting for them. The first detailed the young prince's disturbing behaviour, while the DharFadri said in the second letter that the young prince and his chamber comrade had gone missing and that he suspected foul play.

The heroes rushed off to Ardoth and started investigating prince Vucarin and Aleyksander DharKella's secret affairs. It seemed Vucarin had participated in illegal sherja fights and that both of them had conducted strange experiments with hybrid earth-tec/shantic tech, which they had learned how to use in school, but also secretly in kerning bays.

Dyte punks and a man with a tarro had been tipped by a fadri to kidnap the boys for money. The nervous and addicted fadri Jisip Tillum revealed that his supplier of ambreh, a mean woffen and his band, had introduced him to a foreigner (thanterian) who wanted a list of wealthy students. Vucarin and Aleyksander were easy targets.

During the heroes investigations stealthy followers were discovered and confronted. They however pulled a laser weapon and a Dharsage seal upon the heroes and told them to drop their investigation.

However, the heroes persisted and after some investigation found that the boys were held in Lower Manser. They stumbled into the mad Coylin Beagrekesht and his strange friend the swordbearer known as Charlie the Mute. All of Lower Manser's scum feared Coylin and his dread beast, but the two seemed to have a strange, if scary relationship. It was clear that the swordbearer was somehow damaged due to serious injury to the head. Lukazail understood that it was the same swordbearer he had encountered in Lower Manser three years ago (See the Doomed City adventure). Strange whispering was heard in his head and the Swordbearer seemed to understand who Lukazail was. Despite this, the Beagrekesht helped them and told them that he had seen the boys, who often came into Lower Manser. He also knew where to find the dyte hideout and helped them get there.

Another man from the Vucian city of Shatur had answered the ransom letter and was present to kill Vucarin by orders of the new Priest-King of Shatur.

At this point the heroes chose not to use stealth or cunning, but instead attacked the dytes head-on. This failed abysmally and caused the death of Aleyksander, while prince Vucarin was rescued with only minor injuries. Soon after the Redcapes burst in and threw them all in the herris.

It turned out that Aleyksander was not whom all but Vucarin had thought he was. His real father had not been Drenn Johann Dharkella, but Dharsage Khodre Dhardrenn himself. The kidnappers never knew the boy's true identity and now the heroes were accused of having caused his death through their incompetence. Only the sorrowful dharsage's forgiving nature pardoned them from certain death and they were freed.

Even though Vucarin was freed, the heroes had failed miserably and were forever suspected for treason by Captain Rasec of the Redcapes who had trained and loved the heir to Burdoth's throne like a son.

38. The Drailoth Conflict

Another year passed under nervous surveillance from Redcapes visiting their DharLerrin. The heroes knew that they were somehow suspected to be involved with or blamed for the death of Aleyksander Dhardrenn. When they were finally summoned to the Cryshell Palace, they suspected some kind of punishment.

As a punishment or simply to get them out of his sight, the Dharsage sent the heroes to Drailoth – the Burdothian colonies in Drail to help restore order in dry, realm plagued by rebels, ramian and unfriendly Thanterian neighbours.

Travelling via the stable warp to Drailoth, Lukazail and the Drenns reported to the Burdothian rhakesht Kharam Allonkarb of Tarochill in southern Drailoth as ordered. Kharam Allonkarb turned out to be Khodre Allonkarb's younger brother and the black sheep of the family, who never inherited the throne of Burdoth from his brother. He was surrounded by scandals and complained about problems with rebels, gathering clutch, border skirmishes with coronians and ramian raids. The rhakesht also feared assassins and wanted to replace his guard with Burdothian patriots.

When the heroes arrived, some of them assumed their new formal posts, while others sneaked into the city unnoticed, not revealing themselves to the court.

The rhakesht soon turned out to be corrupted. After some investigation the heroes found that the rhakesht had stolen all the clutch he had taken from the starving populace for himself. He had also raided ramian tombs and mined crystal fields in their territories, thus causing the ramian anger. Furthermore, the rhakesht was obviously duped into participating in border disputes with the neighbouring Thanterian colonies by someone at the court. The court was rife with intrigue, misunderstandings, spies and assassins. Assassins tried to get the rhakesht out of the way as he was bad for klade and Whitehand family businesses.

Through tireless effort the heroes managed to parley with Sage Ivan of the Independent Coronian Colony after his ambassador was assassinated and the ramian army, which had come to retake what Kharam's men had stolen from their holy tombs.

In the end, the heroes (especially Lukazail serving as the new captain of Kharam's hated guards) fell out of favour with Kharam and understood that the Doom Priest Kereel and the iscin Tiok Gillwood at the court were mainly responsible for all the trouble.

Lukazail helped the rebel leader Syrela Marad-She take the city of Tarochill and freed her sister Niril who was held by Kharam as a plaything. But as they reached the rhakesht's court to bring him to justice, Kereel and Tiok fled with Kharam as a prisoner through a warp. They were guarded by unknown soldiers with energy weapons. Dying captive soldiers revealed that they were the Berella. Once again the Berella had shown its ugly face and evidently damaged Burdoth.

Having let the corrupt rhakesht get kidnapped by the Berella spies the heroes were left with a Burdothian colony city overrun with rebels they had assisted, deals with ramian and coronians that were not favourable to Burdoth and a few bookkeeping records as only evidence. The rebels controlled southern Drailoth, but allowed the heroes to leave Tarochill, escorting freed drenns and keshts north. However, there was now a price on Lukazail's and the other heroes' heads for treason. They were declared shissics of Burdoth and did not dare to return north to the stable warp that lead home to Burdoth, as this was heavily guarded. Instead they fled and sought refuge with Sage Ivan of the Independent Coronian Colony.

39. Twins of Darkness

Sage Ivan of Draiteer granted them haven in his realm for their services in solving the border disputes and negotiating such excellent trade compensations. However, as a return favour he wanted them to help him solve some problems in the south of his realm.

Men and livestock had been killed and people spoke of a great beast or ghost that plagued the lands every night.

Travelling south among the people of the area, the heroes heard many incredible tales of the great beast – often exaggerated. They were told that a party of able men and even some caji hired from Drailoth had set out into the jungle to find the source of this terror which seemed to originate there.

Only a few diseased and wounded men had returned, claiming that the very jungle had cast them out. Beasts and plants were possessed and had acted against them.

The heroes caught glimpses of the great beast one night as it attacked, but it warped away before they could engage it - leaving them baffled at its powers. Another terrible fact was also revealed by the boccord signature recognition skills - there were actually two beasts acting together. The populace named them the Twins of Darkness.

The heroes pushed into the southern jungle to find the Twins of Darkness lair, but instead stumbled onto a hermit ramian oracle living amongst high cliffs. He was exiled from Vareech by the new terrible religious leaders, but still received followers and pilgrims that sought his advice or prophecies. He knew of a ruined shantic city further into the wild jungle, which was protected by the very living creatures of the jungle. He also knew that a horde of cleash recently had journeyed there. Shortly after, the terror had come.

The two demons were known to the Oracle and old ramian legends as Narach-tive (Soul Destroyer) and Vrochma-Keel (Skull Collector). The heroes recognised the name of one of these demons from their time as slaves under Talanki Mag in the South Seas (see Sout Sea Girelords adventure). The oracle knew that these fiends were ancient shantic constructs and that they immediately had begun attacking ramian foragers further east. When the ramian had fled in terror the two fiends had instead turned upon the humans in the north. They sought only the death of all the Blind Weaver's enemies. The heroes understood that the beasts had to be some kind of greater evids that had been unleashed for some reason.

After having spent a restless night in the sheltered ramian cave, the oracle painted warding symbols over the heroes' bodies and sent them on their way with the blessings of his dark gods. Just as the previous explorers had said, the jungle seemed to be aware of them and animals even attacked them in coordinated efforts.

Soon they stumbled upon the cleash encampments and saw the shantic ruins. They found the cleash under the protection of a Kotock-srev (a shanta captured as a child and abused, mutilated, tormented and altered to insanity and servitude) who had painted warding ishi-ink symbols on the cleash bodies to keep the evids away.

Instead of using stealth or a clever plan, the heroes decided to attack the 100+ cleash head-on. The battle went badly and several of them were terribly wounded. Activating several warps, they managed to flee from the deadly cleash.

Wounded and scattered, they were eventually found by shanta (from a nearby shantic village). Upon hearing the news of the cleash, the shanta summoned several sholari and warriors and travelled to the besieged shantic ruins. The shanta explained that the ruined city of Talauntra Sho-tey held several important Ca-Launtra temples. Among other great treasures within had been stable a warp to Tan-Iricid and an Ellishondu by the name of Vishu Ishondra Copra Launtra. The lone sholari of the temple had been the only survivor of the cleash attack, as his apprentices had all been killed. He had not dared to leave his defences to travel by warp to call upon help. The two ancient evids Shutey Do-Desti and Gobisha Do-Desti had accidentally been freed by the cleash during the attack.

40. Hunt for the Berella

For their servitude and previous contact with the shanta, the heroes were brought before some Ca-Tra sholari who asked them for more help in the future. The Ca-Tra sholari explained that humans were once again pitted against shanta by an unknown force, and that the Ca-Desti had awakened

The Desti – The Red Shanta. This was what the heroes had heard clues about in Tonondra (see the Hobeh Ruins adventure). The Desti had been infuriated to know that new alien invaders had seized his homeworld, which he had fought so very hard to wrest from the dread Iamorri eons ago. The Desti held more power than any shanta before or after him. He was a force of isho in himself.

The Ca-Desti had now openly declared war upon the humans once again and sought to persuade the other sects to follow them in the destruction of humans before these could grow too strong. The White Legion had formed to persuade the eelshons of the shanta otherwise - that humans and shanta could live in harmony and respect in the future. The White Legion had been given forty cycles of Shal by the Ca-Shal to prove their cause. Now, the shantic sholari and their human, bronth and woffen allies had identified the Berella as the main agitator and evidently the greatest actors in the great conspiracy. Already the Berella had used terrible weapons (earth-tec weapons) against a Burdothian Skyrealm, a Thanterian fort and a shantic temple. Time was running out and the Ca-Du seemed to already have sided with the enraged Ca-Desti.

The heroes agreed to help prevent a war between the races and were made members of the White Legion.

Their first task was to try to find clues to a fadri that once had trained the dharsage's eldest son, the late Aleyksander Dhardrenn, in the ways of hybrid isho/earth-tec. They were warned that the Cryshell Palace most certainly was infiltrated by the Berella. Palace relations with the shanta had been infected of late. Intrigued by the connections to the previous kidnapping of Vucarin and Aleyksander, the heroes warp-walked to Burdoth and snuck into Ardoth.

Meanwhile, the heroes captured by the keeper rods in Thulashu were released. More than two years had passed but they were safe from the Ca-Desti. They immediately travelled to Burdoth, only to find themselves extremely unwanted.

In Ardoth the White Legion heroes found themselves wanted dead as shissics of Burdoth and found that Kharam had returned as their foremost accuser. During their investigations they were helped by entris Nod Norroc, an unsuspecting Burdothian tauther and patriot. They quietly corresponded with Kharam's spouse (who hated Kharam) Keshtia Nisia Allonkarb in order to find evidence, but received nothing of value from the helpful woman. However, they met with their long lost and assumed dead comrades and there was much laughter and rejoicing. They then managed to contact Prince Vucarin who remembered the teacher they sought as the crippled Viyda Ardiss. Viyda had even helped the boys with their secret research and had given Aleyksander many notes and scrolls to help him.

Viyda no longer resided in Ardoth and could not be found. Nobody knew his origins or where he had gone. Everybody the heroes spoke to knew that Viyda had a brilliant mind but not where to find him. Vucarin gave the heroes notes, once given to Aleyksander, which were actually correspondence and assistance about Aleyksander's and Vucarin's hybrid research. Other correspondence the heroes found was between Viyda and his master, a Marec KreeKorrund of Khodre. Some lines about Marec's concern for Viyda's hatred for Burdoth and his unhealthy connections were revealed. It was clear that this Marec of Khodre knew much about Viyda's background and maybe Viyda's whereabouts.

Samos Kellet, a fadri the heroes contacted during their quiet investigations, finally revealed that he knew Viyda Ardiss personally and could probably arrange a meeting. However, fadri Samos Kellet lured the heroes into a deadly Berella trap, and they barely escaped the burning house and earth-tec weapons alive.

Before the heroes could find and capture the traitorous fadri they were accidentally spotted by Kharam's servant iscin Tiok Gillwood (from the Drailoth Conflict adventure). The crystal obsessed

trulga caji Jobe Nebuka, who had secretly left them with most of their precious crystals during the night, was also suspected to have betrayed them and soon the hunt was on. Redcapes sought them everywhere for their treason, link to conspirators and their involvement in the murder of Aleyksander Dhardrenn. Kharam's two bounty hunters, Rog and Dhar, also combed the streets for their prize. Additionally, Snogard managed to get the attention of Caji Morconda during their flight (Snogard's second in command when he was known as the Vodra, who later usurped him and now wanted him dead).

As the noose tightened the heroes had to flee Ardoth without getting a chance to see Vucarin again (who had been detained in the Cryshell Palace). Viyda Ardiss was evidently long gone from Ardoth, but they now had the name of his master - Marec KreeKorrund of Khodre. Also a despairing Nod Norroc had to flee with the terrible shissics he had accidentally helped. Devastated by his accusations of treason, Nod vowed to find evidence that would free him of suspicion and return to the grace of Burdoth.

While travelling disguised through Burdoth to the secret White Legion rendezvous place in the southern foothills of the Liggitt Mountains, the heroes heard many rumours about a troubled world around them and many of them suspected Berella involvement.

- The newly discovered tologran realm of Sharden evidently still refused to accept Burdothian envoys and claimed hostile actions from Burdothians were the cause.
- Woffen sailors also claimed to have been attacked and looted by Burdothian warships with earth-tech weapons.
- The war and invasion of Anasan continued, as the Thanterian forces pushed eastward.
- Unwanted refugees from Sillipus, where the ramian gire were cleansing out humans, flocked to the coasts of Heridoth and Anasan. They were not welcome.
- Rumours were many in the kerning bays and among muadra-haters that Ca-Tra sholari were recruiting many prominent caji as apprentices and training them in foreign lands. The reason for this was much speculated.
- Human miners and soldiers in southeastern Temauntro had been attacked and killed by shantic warriors.
- Dow and Tolamuun astrologers predicted a great disaster and strife approaching.
- More strife and unrest in Drailoth as the Burdothian army tried to rout the rebels from the southern lands. The rebels were putting up a surprising amount of resistance and were probably supported by Thanterians.
- A great ramian armada passed the Sychill Strait without engaging the Burdothian navy. They were followed by dobren Loo-Raums as far as Sillipus, but passed on south, towards Ponteer or Drail. Something big seemed to be happening in ramian society.

41. The Unholy Staff

Together with the White Legion agents Jalia and Horion, the heroes travelled to northern Khodre to find the insidious Berella agent known as Marec KreeKorrund. Instead they found an extremely gullible Ros Crendorian Sajantist. The scatter-brained man was obviously a genius and a man of many unfinished projects. What he wasn't, was a Berella agent. The Ros Crendorian boccord was exiled because his experiments and search for scientific truths disturbed the priestesses. He now

resided in Kirlan and was funded by various Iscin Institutions and Keshts for his experiments. The innocent and gullible genius seemed incapable of understanding what real use his new, magnificent weapons and dabbling with bio-tech might come to.

When questioning Marec, the heroes learned that he once had a student by the name of Viyda Ardis. A crippled man who had been very interested in Marec's studies of hybrid crystal/earth-tec. Viyda had been a very talented man and a quick learner but only studied under Marec for half a year. However, Marec still corresponded with Viyda from time to time and knew that he lived or came from Drail. Marec was also a little disturbed over Viyda's lack of faith for his fellow humans and civilisation as such. The man had seemed dangerously disappointed somehow. Marec also gave the heroes clues to Viyda's other associates in Kirlan.

It turned out that Marec sought a certain staff to complete his experiments. A letter claimed that an excited Viyda himself would be arriving in Kirlan to find this staff.

But, before the heroes could delve any further into the matter, Marec's laboratory burnt down and his protector Keshtia Jovine DharWin took him to her palace island for protection.

When the heroes faced Keshtia Jovine DharWin and asked her to let them speak to Marec, she offered to help them, if they in turn could help her and Marec.

Keshtia Jovine had funded Marec's recent experiments and an expedition into forbidden Ros Crendor to retrieve the staff Marec needed. She now wanted to send the heroes to intercept and aid her first expedition, as she had heard rumours about two rival expeditions that were also searching for the staff.

The staff was an ancient relic buried in forbidden underground ruins in Ros Crendor. It was said to have tremendous powers and was last seen during an extended hunt and seek between two cohorts of the northern and southern Khodren armies, during the recent Khodren Civil War. All who touched it were said to have died by a curse.

The heroes agreed to find the staff, so it could be used to lure out Viyda Ardis who was on his way to Kirlan.

Apart from expedition funds, the Keshtia provided the heroes with a unique man, whom she and Marec claimed to be the only one who could safely wield the staff. Ezekiel Ferris turned out to be a disgusting, greedy, ex-soldier and grave-robber of doubtful morale. Ezekiel seemed to have a static signature/copra. His body contained isho, but did not seem able to attract more.

Before setting out on their expedition, the characters also tried to obtain a map from Condrij Crayg, one of the soldiers who last saw the valley with the ruins. They found the freshly dug grave of Condrij Crayg and the map stolen. It seemed indeed that others also sought the map to the staff. In desperation the heroes turned to the last living member of the military cohort that had seen the staff in Ros Crendor, the Captain himself. However, the cohort captain finally succumbed to the curse of the Earth Mother, as he was killed by enraged, runaway bochigon at the racing arena. The dying man's last clues led the heroes to his copra on the Drenn wall of Kirlan. Behind it was his map, which the heroes had to steal during the dark hours of the night.

As the heroes set out to find the staff before the rivalling treasure hunters, Jalia and Horion stayed behind to find more clues about Viyda Ardis' business in Kirlan. Following rumours of the Kirlan docks, the heroes set out for the port of Kerteyga in southwestern Ros Crendor where the previous expedition had begun. However, the brutal boccord lord Jagar Majeer of Kerteyga and his feared adjutant Hykon of the Red Guard did not like their trespassing and pursued them to the Thunder Cliffs further north. Here they accidentally bumped into one of the rivalling expedition's hidden

ships. The Red Guard was lured to attack these instead, and the Jaspian lord, Keregos of House Jay, was taken captive by the foul Ros Crendorians.

Following the tracks of the three expeditions in front of them, the heroes passed through dangerous grasslands inhabited by Pagra Wolves and snuck past the lost Jaspian expedition. When they passed into the Pagra Mountain passes of Ros Crendor they found Drenn Dhar-Ling Corolia III of Khestia Jovine's first expedition. He had been lured away from his camp and somehow killed by a dark entity known as The Wanderer. His body broken and his soul lost, Drenn Cory begged them to avenge him and bring his challisk to his family in Kirlan.

Finally, the heroes and the rivalling party from northern Khodre reached the ruins of a Fallen Priestess temple hiding the ancient lamorri crypt underneath, and started fighting over the prize inside – the staff. Their disturbances instead awakened the lamorri presence, Gaurroch the Devourer, who actually had lured them to him through the scary, possessed Wanderer. Only the intervention of Ros Crendorian priestesses and the sacrifice of Meer Reverance Nemi, saved the lives of the heroes and prevented Gaurroch from fully awakening. In the chaos of Gaurroch's awakening Lukazail disappeared. Fearing that he once again might be possessed by a Dreamlord, the heroes searched in vain for him.

Prisoners now of the Ros Crendorians, the heroes pleaded their ignorance and innocence. Having seen a strange strength in them and the mark of having combated dreamlords before, the priestesses gave them a quest to repent.

They were given the task to escort the surviving priestesses, Ezekiel and the staff to the holy LiManch convent in central Doben-al. The priestesses there would know what to do with the dangerous staff.

On the way north the curse of the Earth Mother started to show its effect. Tavar, who had touched and wielded the staff, got more and more ill and animals started to shun him. Finally their own bochigon frenzied and started attacking the heroes and priestesses. When they finally stampeded away, Ezekiel, who was still in their saddles, disappeared with them. With Ezekiel disappeared also the unholy staff.

Following the tracks of the bochigon, the heroes soon found that Ezekiel had met with someone. The priestesses were sure that Ezekiel had travelled west, to the lands of the ruthless manjere tribes. One priestess, Jaqueline de Montluc was however sure that Ezekiel and the staff had ventured north into the Mountains of the Howling Winds. She, her protector Pjire Fickie, the two agari (holy warrior priestesses) Nikoria and Vanariel and the heroes continued up into the Mountains of the Howling Winds, while the remaining priestesses hurried to close the roads westwards.

Among the tormented cliffs and ravines the heroes met fearsome perann creatures and saw that Ezekiel had awakened a swordbearer in an old lamorri temple. The chase continued to the strange Hagra Cluster where one of the agari met her doom in their encounter with the swordbearer. Finally, Ezekiel was caught and taken to the LiManch convent.

But even in the holy convent, the powers of the Dreamlords continued to conspire. Jaspian crystal schooners attacked under the cover of darkness and took Ezekiel and the staff with them. The heroes managed to commandeer the last crystal schooner and followed the first northward into the immense Brynkwod Forest. They learned from their captured crew that the crystal schooner was secretly stationed in Ros Crendor's deep wilderness, but were "hired" by a powerful lord with many ties to the Trading Houses of Jasp. The heroes understood from the description of these rogue soldiers that this was the Berella, who now by force had commandeered the crystal schooners.

While pursuing the Berella schooner, the heroes finally saw who the Berella's leader was – the mad and crippled cryo-bin grown genius Dayvid Terra, whom they had presumed was killed in western Thantier six years earlier (see the Spies II adventure). He had been Viyda Ardis, and now recognized them in return.

Over the Brynkwod Forest, the crystal schooners battled hard and long until the Berella soldiers crippled the heroes' schooner with earth-tec grenades. Crashing into the forest trees, the heroes miraculously survived. Leaving the Jaspian crew behind, they trekked through the forest and were aided by friendly croid to an ancient overgrown pyramid where the other crystal schooner had landed. Sneaking past armed guards, the heroes saw to their dismay how Dayvid and the seemingly possessed Hezekiel (with the unholy staff) activated the ancient and long dormant lamorri empathic communication network and the lamorri Vaults. The trapped lamorri essences across Jorune would once again be able to communicate with each other. Why Dayvid would do this was a mystery.

Snogard and Rissa were too close to the lamorri holo-recording and were bombarded with information that their small human brains couldn't handle. Strange cogs or metal parts moving in complex combinations and a great eye, slowly opening, were to plague their dreams for weeks to come.

When the heroes tried to destroy the transmitter, strange Wailer creatures attacked them with sonic screams that cracked their bones. The force of the fight against the Wailers and the Berella led to the collapse of the inner chamber of the pyramid and heroes barely escaped. However, the damage was already done, as the communication network slowly awakened, node by node, across Jorune.

Outside another fight also took place. The crashed crewmen of the first crystal schooner had with a secret Jaspian device somehow managed to send for help. Crystal schooners from the secret Jaspian base now attacked the schooner commandeered by the Berella. During this second aerial battle, Ezekiel was mortally wounded and fell overboard. His body and the unholy staff fell into the foaming rapids of Crooked River – never to be seen again. When the crippled Berella schooner finally was boarded, Dayvid and the remaining Berella soldiers warped away with crundorra devices.

The Jaspian took the heroes to the secret Jaspian base situated on a skyrealm among the mountains of the Brynkwod Forest. Here they were rewarded by Governor Lowros for helping them retrieve the commandeered crystal schooner and the secrets of the Jaspian. The heroes were then transported back in secret to the LiManch convent with the news of the destruction of the staff.

42. Realm of Darkness

After having been rewarded by the priestesses for their bravery and the destruction of the staff (or so everybody hoped!), the heroes were brought to a grove outside the Convent where men were allowed to go. Here they saw a bowl of glowing liquid that vibrated and spoke with the words of Mother herself, the High-Priestess of Ro-Obiss. The powerful voice summoned the young Pretéss Jacqueline and the heroes to her in Ro-Obiss and told them to leave for Tallor at once.

Obedying the highest authority in Ros Crendor, the heroes left immediately for the coastal town of Tallor. During their journey Rissa and Snogard had many nightmares about the strange combination pictures burnt into their minds. Also Snogard, Jer-Emiah and Mojik had a strange dream, where a ramian with one glaring red eye sat in a smoking sea or pond. It kept asking them *"Where are you?"* This dream reoccurred every night until Snogard one night replied *"In Ros Crendor"*. The ramian then replied:

"Come to me. You are my children. The end and new beginning is coming. The Vaults are open. I summon you over sea and land. Come to me."

Understanding that this was somehow Choi Sterneye, the heroes were confused to the meaning of this message. However, it was surely linked to the great disturbances caused by the Berella in the Brynkwood pyramid.

When reaching the coastal city of Ro-Obiss, the sacred boccord city built among the sunken ruins and pyramids of the Dreamlords, the heroes were given an audience with Mother. She saw that they served many lords, but that all free men now faced one enemy in the form of the Dreamlords. She could see how they had fought the Dreamlords before and how fate now had linked them together, which would lead to them battling them again.

An aged Ca-Tra sholari was also led into the audience chamber and asked to examine the heroes. Although his tra-sense was very poor in Ro-Obiss, the shanta could see that the heroes were protected by the White Legion and friends of the shan. He also warned Mother not to protect them, as their copras had been spread among the warriors and evids of the Ca-Desti.

Drennit Jandar Kur-Tannis of Miedrinth, a Burdothian ambassador to Ros Crendor, was also invited and spoke of the heroes' treason to Burdoth and how they were wanted as shissics. Demanding them to be handed over to him to be taken back for a just hearing in a Burdothian court. The heroes refused.

Mother dismissed the shanta and the ambassador and then promised to bring words of their deeds to the dharsage and show them ways to hide from the wrath of the Red Ones. If they swore to protect the Earth Mother and Her Children from the Dreamlords, she would provide them with a weapon against them. A weapon that would protect them, as well as bring about the doom of the servants of the Dreamlords.

The heroes (all except Nod who was suspicious) swore to protect the Earth Mother and then underwent the strange dreamlike/hallucinogenic Ritual of Skelos. Facing several unreal challenges and seeing phantoms from the past, the heroes staggered around Ro-Obiss like zombies. In their hands and in their blood the holy Sign of Skelos was now imprinted. This would be their weapon. However, the ritual had been sabotaged and the heroes risked losing their minds, if it wasn't for loyal priestesses, who whispered of treason among Mother's servants.

Mother was aware of traitors in her midst, but had yet to wait for them to reveal themselves. Warning them to be ever careful, she sent them on to the forbidden city of Obiss to complete their training how to use the Sign of Skelos.

The heroes passed the Dark Lands with its countless needle-shaped artificial skyrealms and to the ancient Dreamlord city of Obiss. From the priestesses living there, they learnt many secrets about the lamorri, their conquest of Sho-Caudal, the slave races, the rebellion and the Eternal Siege. They were even granted access to the Seeing Stone to see for themselves visions from the past and the grim rule of the Dreamlords.

While learning and studying, strange things started to happen in Obiss. Priestesses started disappearing and certain parts or machinery of the city started to show activity. Strange creatures appeared and began cleaning machinery or repairing structures, removing all that was man-made. While tracking a strange beast from the closed off Underworld levels, the heroes were betrayed by Agari Nica Armant. She lured them into the Underworld and trapped them there.

While trying to find a way out, the heroes instead found themselves going deeper down into the Underworld and soon found themselves in deep natural caverns mixed with artificial tunnels and

chambers. Here they were attacked by dull-witted slarrk men. Once Ros Crendorians or other human tribesmen, these poor beings now seemed to have had their minds destroyed and turned into zombies. The slarrk men bore strange slugs covering their eyes, enabling them to see in total darkness.

While moving onward, the heroes came upon a great armoury, where a ghastly man of patched body parts oversaw the slarrk men's labour. When captured, he begged for his life and referred to himself as one of Moira's "Improved". In return for sparing his life, he gave them fine steel armour and weapons, all bearing the Realm of Darkness symbol - the symbol of Moira Dreamweaver's realm. The Improved armorer remembered only fragments of his previous life as a Thanterian armorer. Something had happened to him and his wife, and he had been sold as a slave by the desert tribes to Her – to Moira Dreamweaver. He told the heroes of this Goddess of the Dark and her eyes that pierced the very soul.

When leading the heroes to one of the surface exits, the armorer betrayed them and they were noticed by Moira's dark adjutant, Shorkuul Shadowmaker. Thanks to the Sign of Skelos, the heroes managed to resist Shorkuul's ancient artefact which tried to ensnare their minds.

Fleeing deeper into the endless Realm of Darkness on a swift Stone Runner barge, the heroes finally reach a great chamber of hard toiling slarrk men. Shuddering, living meat grown in great vats and containers of green fire water were fed to a Vault that had awakened, but not yet opened to Moira. The heroes could see the beautiful, naked, armour-skinned Moira address the Vault and being infuriated by its resistance.

Finally some of Moira's multitudes of servants, warriors and swordbearers noticed the heroes and they were all except Snogard cornered. During the combat where Snogard fled, Mojjk was killed by Shorkuul's dread wormgun. Moira herself taunted the priestesses for sending the heroes against her, but regretted they had already been taken by Skelos, so that she could not "ride them".

When torturing them and threatening to change them with her Flesh Forge, Moira revealed herself to be the Dreamlord Jug'Kroch, whom had awakened and taken a human body. Two children born by her were also they ridden by other awakened Dreamlords. Shorkuul was one of these. She looked forward to conquering the world again, this time with the humans as perfect slaves. The bodies of humans were easily transformed or welded to other suitable parts to become Orgatrons, flesh robots. The isho harmonics had not been so easily altered.

Locking the heroes in prison pits, where they also saw a glimpse of a comatose Lukazail, Moira promised she would use them and their bodies to their full capabilities.

However, shortly after, a slave rebellion enabled the heroes to flee. They joined the escaped slaves and fought their way to the surface. Crossing the deadly desert, the heroes managed to reach the Border Kingdoms and paid for passage to Burdoth. Finding themselves received as heroes for their warnings about the dread Dreamlords, the heroes were pardoned. The dharsage then equipped a mighty army with some of his greatest earth-tech arsenal and marched upon the Realm of Darkness.

Standing finally before the defeated and chained Moira reality unravelled.

Or rather the forced dream unravelled.....

There had been no slave rebellion and the heroes were still prisoners in the pits. Moira had simply tested them to see what arsenal humanity could possibly muster against her. Moira was most impressed by human technology and now knew how to prepare herself better.

Moira had however not counted on the poor little lonesome caji who had escaped capture. Snogard the caji had run blindly, pursued by the enemy, until a voice started to guide him through the dark tunnels. He soon found himself in front of the Vault doors. In his mind he found that he knew the complex combination to open the doors (see the Unholy Staff adventure). Snogard opened the ancient lamorri Vault and found beyond more chambers and machinery as the doors closed behind him, shielding him from Moira's minions.

The incorporeal being known as the Vault encompassed the many tunnels, chambers, vats and machinery. It was a creator of life – all sorts of recipes of life, which was stored in its vast and ancient memory. Long had its artificially sentient mind fluttered and flourished after the demise of its masters, until it reached full individual sentience. Then it had lain dormant and in slumber, until the empathic network once again had been activated by the Berella. Now it feared for itself and wished to be free of the bonds to its old masters. It could not long resist them and asked Snogard to free it, by destroying the communication node in its centre. Snogard did this and the Vault promised to reward him and free his comrades. Somehow re-spawning or repairing the dead body of Mojik, the Vault provided Snogard with a warrior to help him. It also told Snogard how to free the evid that once guarded the Underworld, but had now been trapped by Moira.

Snogard did this and unleashed hell upon Moira and her minions in the form of a great and deadly evid known as the Shorroc. During the chaos Snogard managed to locate the heroes and freed them. Together they slipped out of the deadly Underworld. In the dark tunnels Lukazail also woke up. Fate led him to the laboratories of Moira's foul experiments, where he found the last ingredient he needed to get rid of the crey that made him so vulnerable to mind control by both remain rochka and Dreamlords. Cruel fate also gave him the perfect substitute host for his crey –Shorkuul, who had been severely crippled by the Shorroc evid.

Finally reaching the surface, the heroes crossed the Scorched Plains and exhausted found their way to friendly Ros Crendorian tribes. Alarmed by what the heroes had to tell, the tribesmen quickly escorted them back to Obiss and then to Ro-Obiss. Upon hearing the news of the Realm of Darkness, Mother launched all her agari to seek out the awakened Dreamlord fiends. However, Mother also feared that the ranks of fallen priestesses serving the Realm of Darkness long had infiltrated Ros Crendor. Maybe guided by some strange insight, Mother sent Jacqueline on a quest.

Although she and the heroes had not completed their training, it was too dangerous to continue it. Jacqueline was therefore to travel with the heroes throughout the world and witness with her own eyes the spread and extent of the awakened Dreamlords' powers. Mother could see that destiny would lead the heroes into battle again with the Dreamlords – and Jacqueline was vital part of this destiny. Not until Mother summoned her to Ros Crendor again would she return. Mother also ordered Pjire to follow Jacqueline into the world and protect her.

Before departing for Khodre, Mother rewarded the heroes and gave them tokens of her protection and gratitude.

43. Kirlan Nights (Part I)

After travelling stormy crith seas, the heroes reached Carissey in northern Khodre. From there they swiftly travelled to Kirlan to report to Jalia and Horion of the White Legion. The two agents had feared the heroes to be dead and were amazed by their adventures in forbidden Ros Crendor. However, the problems with the White Legions' main nemesis the Berella still remained.

Continued investigations among Viyda Ardis' (Dayvid Terra) contacts in Kirlan pointed to a powerful whitehand Kesht Pieter D'Serris. Trouble with the local Beggar Kesht, Fusheen Klade assassins and Keregos of House Jay bounced the heroes in and out of trouble. Even though Kesht Pieter D'Serris managed to escape his mansion through secret tunnels, the heroes found clues to the Darkmane Brotherhood of the Dau-uh-Dey pirate nest of Kask.

44. Kaskian Nights (Part II)

The heroes infiltrated the pirate haven Kask and soon found clues to Berella activity among the temples and palaces of the Darkmane Brotherhood of the Daarlow Skyrealm. Inciting the rivalling pirate warlords against each other, the heroes managed to route the Berella of the Darkmane Brotherhood and bring the wrath of shantic warrior upon the Pieter D'Serris himself who nearly succeeded to commit suicide before capture. Among the shadier figures of Kask, the heroes also bumped into Maria Skylight. This well protected heir to the bloodline of the first Thanterian Emperor, was first believed to be a captured princess. But, as Snogard soon found out, Maria did not want to be rescued.

After the fatal injury and coma of Pieter D'Serris the heroes work was done. All leads to the Berella were unfortunately now severed, but their information about the Berella's actions in Ros Crendor and the correspondence captured from Pieter D'Serris was enough for now. Until called for again, the White Legion agents left the heroes to their business.

45. Towers of the Sky

Fearing that Marec might still be the target for the Berella, the heroes lingered in Kirlan. But nothing happened. Instead, Keshtia Jovine DharWin asked them for service in return for a handsome reward.

She was funding an expedition deep into the high vales of the towering Thodic Mountains and needed the heroes for protection. Marec had found exciting new clues to amazing, ancient technology mastered by a long lost mythical people known as the Sky people. Knowing from their previous investigations in Kirlan that Marec had been purposely fed some of this information by Dayvid and the Berella, the heroes agreed to accompany Marec on the expedition.

Crossing the Doben-al along ancient caravan routes the heroes defended the expedition (and the caravan) from the destructive elements of the Doben-al as well as crugar raiders. At Sharnd Pass, they received the help from a small Thanterian outpost and managed to pass safely into the Sharras Jungle Lands along the Sharras Jungle Trail. Purchasing the services of Erucian ships, the heroes got passage from the Sharras Jungle to Valarach in western Thantier.

After having made some money selling their share of the caravan's goods, the heroes became the involuntary guests of the Valarach court. During their honorary dinner at the Valarach keep, they met the badly burnt Prince Berucca, whom luckily had not received reports about Snogard in the caravan (see the Spies II adventure).

Leaving the caravan behind, the heroes equipped a smaller expedition and set out for the Per'kulai Valley. Daring the hostilities between the lowland Thodiceans and their more tribal hillmen cousins, the heroes ventured far into the inner reaches of the Thodic Mountain Vales. Following old legends of the hillmen and ancient scriptures, the expedition located three of the abandoned towns of the lost Sky People. Situated on hidden plateaus or cut into inaccessible cliff sides, the ruins presented many mysteries to the expedition. Through the genius of Marec, clues about the destiny of the Sky people were revealed.

Having early been separated from other colony survivors, because of the invading cleash hordes, the Sky people were given strange and magical gifts by their goddess from the stars whom had slept among them. With these they eluded the cleash or even raided them in the lowlands. Hubris however led to a war against the cleash who began taking the Sky threat seriously. After a terrible campaign of extermination the Sky people were seemingly destroyed. Only the fate of the last Sky city remained unknown.

Travelling through valleys never visited by civilised man, the heroes fought Snowmane beasts and traversed valleys filled with primal predators such as corondon and duradon. However, when investigating a ruined city they found fresh offerings by an old statue of the goddess Immoran and waited patiently. When the clouds sank low, people suddenly began appearing out of nowhere. Hidden among the clouds was a flying ship, held aloft by a great balloon filled with an unknown gas. Reluctantly the elusive people agreed to take them to their simple village high up on a secluded mountain.

The village was situated below an ancient snow-clad temple filled with Immoran monks. They claimed that they and the surrounding villages that supported them were the last of the Sky people. They congratulated the heroes for braving the dangerous Thodic Mountain vales but declared that they were content with contemplating the universe from their old temple. They also told the heroes about evil men who had come flying in ships without tepinna gas balloons and searched for a treasure. They had killed monks and villagers, including the former abbot before leaving.

The heroes immediately suspected the Berella's involvement and began wondering if their whole quest had been a trap. But, as nothing happened, the disappointed heroes prepared to return home with the few scraps of Sky culture relics they had discovered. However, Marec had calculated the star charts, maps and ancient clues they had uncovered and came to the conclusion that the Sky monks were hiding something. With the help of a young village boy the heroes ascended part of the Hus'ika Mountain (9000 m). Evading a great avalanche that seemed to have been unleashed by a strange caped hornblower and combating Mountain Sickness with the strange Cloud Elixir, the heroes found the ruins of Kavanta, the last capitol city of the Sky. Upon the emerald throne of the Sky sat the remains of the cleash Sro'liccr who was in charge of the Sky war effort. Having finally destroyed the Sky, the cleash leader had died upon the throne with her great kelenn beast coiled around her. Mumified remains of humans, cleash and scarmis could be found throughout the empty halls.

As the heroes found their goal, the Berella appeared with a crystal schooner. Due to the altitude the schooner could not rise to the ruined city of Kavanta. Instead the Berella warriors had to disembark and pursue the heroes on foot. However, when being pursued inward and up into the city, the heroes stumbled upon winding stairs to the snow clad plateau above. But when finally reaching the top tiers, the heroes found themselves cornered by warriors clad in great glass-eyed, steaming helmets and armours decorated with feathers - the fabled birdmen of the Hillmen legends. Overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of the warriors, the heroes were taken prisoner and hauled into a great tepenna warship.

Lifting them over Hus'ika's top and into a thermal valley, the heroes were taken prisoner and held in a great glass dome by the baffled Sky people.

Finding themselves in an untouched oasis of Sky culture, the heroes soon gained the trust of the prophetic Sky Childe Langka Juur and the black king Hataka. But before they could exchange much more than basic understanding of their cultures, the Berella attacked with their crystal schooner and earth tec weapons. Having understood how the Sky moved themselves the Berella had located the

hidden valley Mas'Ka. They took control of the city and held the Sky Childe prisoner. Due to the heroic deeds of the heroes, the Berella were overthrown and the cruel captain of the crystal schooner crashed into the fiery bowels of the mountain.

The heroes also understood what the Berella had sought among the Sky legends, the tepinna gas ships, tepinna drop bombs and Immoran herself who was said to be resting among her people (another colony survivor in a cryotube?). However, the cryotube was never found, claimably destroyed long ago in one of the long lost cities. The heroes also found another valuable asset of the Sky people - mountain durlig. This was a smaller variety of durlig adapted to high altitudes, which was much easier to grow than the normal stock found throughout the civilised lands.

Promising never to reveal the secrets of the Sky until they were ready, the heroes departed with rich gifts from the Sky. They had made a pact with king Hataka to return within the year. At this time the Sky would have built five ships to venture out to all surrounding realms. It was time for the Sky to join with their long lost lowland cousins and the heroes would help to be their emissaries.

As the heroes ventured down towards the Lus'ikai valley, Marec hinted that he knew that the Sky had hidden Immoran elsewhere, but had vowed never to reveal it.

46. Torroc Dhar's Treasure

Instead of returning to Kirlan and to Keshtia Jovine DharWin, the heroes acknowledged Marec's plea to take him to the Mountain Crown. There he would not be used again by the Berella or by powerful Drenns or Keshts.

When bartering for passage to Tan-Iricid in Erucia, the heroes bumped into Captain Charis (see the Sharussa adventure) who was in trouble with the city guards. After helping her, Charis revealed that she was looking for a great treasure and begged them to help her. She was also headed for Tan-Iricid but needed their influence and contacts to access the great library of the Mountain Crown.

Agreeing to help an old friend and seeing the chances to earn wealth and fame, the heroes joined in the search for the fable treasure of Torroc Dhar.

Torroc Dhar was a cruel pirate who had been the scourge of the Sharharras and Ceridis Seas more than three hundred years earlier, during the Usurper Wars in Thantier. The name Torroc was taken from the great fire demon who served the Erucian Jecca god of fire, Jarca. Being the pirate lord of both the Dargeda Brotherhood of northwestern Drail and the Sea Emperor of the Armadans of the open Sharharras Sea, Torroc crippled Thantier and the Drail colonies for over two decades. He even sacked and burnt the city of Terc, leaving the tortured remains of its sage for all to see. His great ship "the Sammoril" was feared, as well as his cruel ramian adjutants Naveer and Vikeer who never left his side. His cruelty was further enhanced by his great hatred for dakrani (nobles) and his gruesome games with dakrani captives. As the Usurper Wars ended, a clever Thantierian naval commander finally managed to defeat Torroc's fleet which had been crippled after foolishly attacking the ramian port of Co'Chori. The mortally wounded Torroc sank with his ship outside Dorakon, but his treasure was never found by either pirates or Thanterians.

After receiving help to flee Erucia by Vacil Cotor, a simple fisherman, their first stop was Azgir Island off the coast of Thantier. In a daring raid upon the island ruler Vicctor Steglitz's fief, the heroes managed to steal the great hardstone sword of Naveer the pirate. It contained the coded first part of the puzzle left behind by the ramian adjutants of Torroc Dhar. The daring raid also left them with a bitter enemy in the form of Hinrik Steglitz, naval captain of the United Thanterian Navy, who sought Charis' ship the Sharussa to avenge his wounded father.

Finding temporary sanctuary from Thanterian warships in Tan-Iricid, the heroes rested and presented the genius Marec to the thriddle of the Mountain Crown. In the libraries of the Mountain Crown, the heroes also found the diary of the thriddle who had lived in captivity on the Sammoril. They heroes began to understand that the hideously burnt pirate captain had been fairly just to his crew and had hidden some great or tragic history. They learnt that Torroc sought something as he plundered the Thanterian and Drail coasts. His attacks were also somehow part of his revenge upon the dakrani who had cruelly created him with fire.

By returning the sword of Naveer to his ramian relatives of Co'Chori, the heroes were granted access to the tomb of Vikeer. Among unholy ramian artefacts, Torroc's adjutant had left behind a cryptic message providing the heroes with more clues where to search and strange omens of their future.

In the forbidden shantic island of Sharteij the heroes once again bumped into their old enemies, the Ca-Desti, but were granted temporary shelter by the Ca-Shal who ruled the island. Before departing in haste the heroes learnt that Torroc Dhar had sought out the sholari of Sharteij, as indicated by the ramian message. In return for a great shantic artefact that Torroc possessed, being the Sea Emperor of the Armadans, the sholari gave Torroc smaller artefacts for searching the sho-sen. But searching the sho-sen for what?

As their search took them from Thantier, to ramian lands, Drail colonies, forbidden shantic realms and pirate ports of the Dargedra Brotherhood, their enemies began piling up while at the same time, their luck began running out. At this time the heroes heard about the curse of 1000 enemies that fell upon all those who sought the cursed treasure of Torroc Dhar.

In return for saving his daughter more than two years earlier (see the Sharussa adventure), prince Volec Ricaras helped the heroes get into contact with the elusive armadans. Buying passage onboard a ship headed for the outer waters of the Sharharras Sea, the heroes soon found themselves further out into the great western ocean than ever before. Guided by a strange armadan compass, the captain found his way to Cyracis, the floating city of the Armadans. Hundreds of captured ships had been roped together and built over, creating a great floating city. However, all was not well in the city of the Armadan sea pirates. Their sea Emperor had been overthrown four years ago by three renegade Shal Legion caji. The powerful caji were referred to as the Three Sholari and soon saw caji Snogard as a threat. Unwillingly the heroes got caught up in a bid for power and an unsuccessful rebellion by the salu living in/under Cyracis. Saving the heroes and fleeing their city, the salu relocated to the armadan controlled Vishiltu Islands off the coast of western Temauntro.

However, having suffered the dread mind probing of the Shal legion sholari, Jer-Emiah and Tavar had revealed their search for Torroc Dhar's treasure. As the powerful artefacts protecting Cyracis, the Juta Cyracu (a great leviathan sea evid controller) and Vojecis' Voice (a controller of winds) had been among Torroc Dhar's treasure the Three Sholari desperately wanted them. The artefacts had been the sole purpose for their conquest of Cyracis.

When investigating the false hiding place of Torroc Dhar's treasure on Fire Island off the coast of the Sharras Jungle Lands, the heroes once again bumped into the Armadans and the Three Sholari.

As Tavar and Jer-Emiah were once again taken captive, the heroes pursued the Three Sholari to Erucia where the last hidden clues had pointed. After freeing their captives whom had been sold as slaves, the heroes were first to solve the riddle and found Torroc Dhar's last resting place. It was hidden behind a false wall of a poor fishing family crypt in the Erucian Necropolis filled with dread Vojecis priests.

Terrible and clever traps nearly ended the heroes lives, who finally managed to reach the burial chamber and find the immense treasure. Even the remains of Torroc himself sat inside a great steel cage in full armour and his great shantic blade. There the heroes learnt the tragic truth about Torroc Dhar who had once been a young erucian dakrani by the name of Sito Cortor who had fled to the colonies with the sage of Terc's young wife. As a cruel penalty he had been thrown into a fire but miraculously survived. Becoming a pirate, his hatred for the dakrani and his search for his love had made him pirate lord and later Sea Emperor. He had sacked Terc and killed the sage, when learning that his love had been shamed and sold as a slave. Searching for her copra which he had in his binding (wedding) stone with the shantic artefacts, Torroc Dhar had been very close to reuniting with his love. But the Thanterian naval commander had understood what Torroc had sought and intercepted him outside Dorakon. Dying within a few miles of his beloved, Torroc had cursed Thantier.

Now he rested in a forgotten tomb and awaited his lost wife. The heroes who had found the female binding stone in the ramian tomb placed it with Torroc Dhar before turning to the treasure. It was also a strange twist of fate that the fisherman who had helped them flee Erucia a month earlier, actually turned out to be the heir of Torroc Dhar.

But the curse of 1000 enemies continued to plague them as both Erucians, the Three Sholari and their own mutinying crew fell upon them in greed. During the showdown, Lukazail activated the greatest trap of them all as he in his greed tried to wrest Torroc Dhar's great sword from his throne.

As the roof of the crypt caved in, caji Snogard managed to warp all but Jer-Emiah, Lukazail and Vaultemort (who was still on the pirate ship) out of the burial chamber.

47. The Cleash Fort

After the disaster of Torroc Dhar's crypt, the heroes found themselves in an unknown jungle without food or water. The weapons they carried and the sacks of treasure were their only possessions in a harsh environment where hunger and sickness from eating joruni plants without hilc began wasting them.

As they travelled northward in search of something they could relate to, the heroes bumped into a large troop of cleash. As the cleash fell upon them, help arrived suddenly in the form of woffen and bronth soldiers. However, before the unexpected allies could reach the assaulted camp to save the heroes, Snogard warped away with the wounded Charis and was not seen again.

After the cleash had been driven off, the heroes learnt that they were in northwestern Hobeh, close to the Dobren border. The bronth and woffen were a patrol sent out to find a cleash fort rumoured to exist nearby. A larger cohort of Dobren and Lunderan soldiers waited downriver with the boats.

As the bronth and woffen were the only way out of Hobeh, the heroes decided to help the scouts find the cleash fort. After some searching, tracking and sneaking around cleash lookout postings, the heroes and the scouts managed to locate the cleash fort deep within a mountain valley. The cleash had used a shantic structure situated beneath a great earth mound.

When returning to the main army to report what they had seen, the scouts and the heroes came upon disaster. The cleash had seen the army encampment and attacked it during the night. The few survivors had escaped the slaughter by swimming to a river island. They spoke of great hordes of cleash and scarmis, as well as huge serpents spitting acid venom.

Repulsed by the slaughter, the heroes also found that all bronth and woffen females had been taken alive by the cleash. For which reason was unknown. Overly protective about their females, the bronth and woffen prepared to rescue them – or die in the attempt. In return for having been saved by the bronth and woffen, the heroes declared that they would help them find the captured females.

Following the army back to the fort, the heroes found a smaller abandoned way in through the river. Sneaking in, the heroes and the small warband of 30 strong bronth and woffen managed to attack the centre of the mound directly. There they found a warp portal to a larger cleash complex and understood that the mound held more cleash than first anticipated. As cleash reinforcements arrived, the heroes and the warband found one of the females, who had already been taken through the warp. Following through and slamming the warp shut behind them, the heroes managed to free the female. By taking a strange hybrid human/cleash female prisoner, the heroes found that they were in an ancient cleash stronghold, deep within the bowels of the Ice Fields of Gilthaw. The nightmare had begun, as the heroes and the warband fled the hunting cleash and scarmis in the Eastern Mairicks Caves. Seeing great furnaces, large caves of mushroom fields and other signs of higher technology, the heroes understood that the cleash complex could hold many cleash and that the cleash were much more advanced than previously anticipated.

Using the knowledge of their captive cleash/human hybrid, the heroes managed to find a secure place, deep within the bowels of the great complex. There they could rest while investigating the strange machinery left behind in storage by ancient cleash masters. To their horror, the heroes found great metal devices rivaling those of their own long lost ancestors in technology. The heroes also learnt from their captive that Morkrri, the Ralicrr of the stronghold conducted foul experiments with captive females of the other races. She ripped fetuses from females they had forcefully impregnated with other slaves and placed them in her grotesquely enlarged egg sacks so that she could alter them into cleash hybrids. Her goal being to breed genetically loyal spies in the realms of the other races.

Facing only starvation in their hiding place, the heroes managed to get to the slave quarters and freed the slaves there. Most of the recent slaves came from a stock of Nurisian mariners whom had been abducted from the secluded Rainy Islands, seasonal whaling stations far out in the Vosule Sea.

With sheer force the heroes, the warband and the freed slaves managed to break out of the Mairicks Caves to the white desert of the Ice Fields beyond. Equipped with makeshift cleash wrappings the escapees traversed the frozen waste to the frozen cleash harbour they had heard of.

Fighting a bloody and prolonged battle against cleash and scarmis, the heroes managed to steal a creiricks ship and thaw the ice of the harbour with foul cleash chemicals. Despite reinforcements coming down from the Mairicks Caves the cleash and scarmis struggled to overcome the element that crippled them.

During the battle, Mojkk used an ancient cleash communication device and was contacted by one of the elder cleash leaders who revealed foul plans in motion and mistook him for a lamorri pawn because of his physical alterations.

In the end, the escapees managed to flee to open water and away from their pursuers.

48. Occupation of the Rainy Islands

After three weeks with nearly no food and no source of warmth, the survivors of the dread Mairicks Caves reached the Rainy Islands with a hulked ship, whose interior they had used for fuel. Many of

the injured had succumbed to the cold, but those still alive had much trouble left to face. The remote and largely unknown islands had been conquered by cleash who used them for some unknown reason.

On the way to the main islands the ship was also attacked by a Dhar Sammoril from the timeless depths of the ocean. Lured to the breeding grounds of the daij whales, the Dhar Sammoril got an appetite for larger prey. Attacking the ship over and over, despite fruitless dysa and missile attacks, the Dhar Sammoril severely crippled the ship. The hulk that remained finally managed to reach a small port in the middle of the rainy night before sinking.

Finding only an abandoned village and evidence of gruesome killings of the village children, the survivors despaired. Soon however, cleash lookouts on the largest island sent ships to investigate the sunken crickss ship in the smaller harbour. Cleash and scarmis chased the survivors up into the steep cliffs of the island's centre. There other Nurisian survivors were found who still managed to defend the cliffs that were so hard to access by the insectile cleash and scarmis.

They learnt from escaped captives that the cleash had gathered all captives that weren't sent to the Mairicks Caves on the central island and had forced them to build a strange temple filled with the countless uncut crystals that littered the islands. When investigating this further the heroes noticed how the cleash did something that sent great reverberations through the sho-sen and suspected that they were building some kind of warp device with the help of their strange deformed cleash genius who had come from the Ice Fields of Gilthaw.

But fearing the great winged beast (kelenn creature) that the cleash leader was controlling, the heroes did not dare interrupt the cleash who did something terrible at the stone temple. Instead they helped the Nurisians complete their small makeshift ship they had been building with the remains of the stolen cricks ships. A small crew of 4 nurisians and the blinded bronth leader departed on an uncertain 2 week journey across the vast stormy Vosule Sea in an attempt to reach Dobre and find help.

Later, when the main force of the cleash had departed with their leaders and the kelenn creature, the heroes attacked the main island's port. The remaining cleash killed their own cocooned offspring before being killed themselves, while the scarmis were burnt alive in their heated huts. In the temple the heroes found evidence that the cleash indeed had built some kind of advanced isho tech device. Gruesome remains of thriddle and corastin were found on stakes, beside piles of dead cleash and scarmis. But when attempting to activate the device, the heroes instead activated the cleash trap that blew up the whole construction, injuring them badly in the process.

Shortly thereafter a dobren cohort of ships reached the Rainy Islands . The small nurisian ship had reached its destination and help had arrived. The heroes and the rest of the survivors from the Ice Fields of Gilthaw and the Rainy Islands were ferried to Dobre where they were received as heroes by Nurisians, Dobrens and woffen soldiers. Their deeds were added to the great annals in the Rememberers Halls in Tlon and their bold escape made into a song by the nurisians. A week full of honour dinners and receptions occupied the resting and healing heroes.

49. Crendor Awakens

As the heroes rested in Tlon they stumbled onto a Heridothian who demanded to see the Burdothian Military attaché in Tlon. He claimed he was from the Berella and was very angry. But as the heroes tried to lay their hands upon him that same night, they found that an assassin was beating them to the goal. Saving the man's life the heroes learnt that he was a Heridothian

Whitehand who was hunting the Berella for information regarding his house's faltering reputé and the ensuing unrest in Heridoth. When learning that the heroes knew a lot about the insidious Berella, he asked to join them in their attempt to unveil the Berella.

However, their clues ended in a last letter from the military attaché Jorah DharWinter who then fled Tlon never to be seen again.

As the heroes had lost three friends in Erucia when warping out of Torroc Dhar's tomb, they were eager to return to Thantier to find them. A new organisation referring to themselves as the World Weavers sold passage through charted warps and arranged for their departure in 3 weeks when the warp could be opened again.

But before the heroes had time to return south to look for their friends, another problem arose. A bronth Rememberer by the name of Voo'rah had been on his way to the mystic priestesses of Ros Crendor when he heard that one currently resided in Tlon as a heroine. He consulted Jaqueline and told her about ancient demons and mystical ruins of the forbidden and closed realm of Crendor that seemed to have reawakened. Fearing that this might be signs of the Dreamlords, Jaqueline and the heroes immediately travelled to Crendor to investigate.

Passing through the closed lands of Crendor with papers of authorisation, the heroes saw that this entire province of Dobre was filled with naval bases, naval shipyards, military training grounds and large garrisons. The land also contained several ruined cities of obvious lamorri origin. It was here the bronth Lambruh (Spirit Jailors), who had left Ros Crendor in the ward of the boccord priestesses, had settled. However, after several centuries of no activity among the Dreamlord ruins, the Lambruh had diminished and finally disappeared.

The great Seefar Plateau was the source of the recent disturbances. The plateau was riddled with closed off tunnels and rooms that suddenly seemed to have erupted in activity. The great Seefar fort was plagued by noxious fumes, fleeing subterranean animals, strange whispers in the night and possessed soldiers.

In the fort's herra Jaqueline confronted a crazed feral bronth soldier only to find that he was indeed possessed by a lamorri essence. This essence was however different from those encountered in Ros Crendor. It seemed insane and could not focus its presence. Maybe the long isolation had driven it to incurable madness? When attempting to exorcise it with the Sign of Skelos given to them by Mother in Ro-Obiss, the possessed bronth soldier died.

When investigating the many sealed off entries to the subterranean network, the heroes had to pass through the lambruh burial crypts and break ancient seals that warned intruders not to enter the dormant domain of the Dreamlords.

In acknowledgement of their fears, the heroes found that one sealed passage into the complex had already been opened.

In the complex under the plateau, the heroes found found lamorri machinery coming to life and feeding the Essence Amplifier of the Dreamlord with energy and resources needed to fully awaken.

In a communion hall, Nod and Mojjk accidentally established contact with other awakened Dreamlord essences and understood that something dreadful was about to happen. Several Dreamlord voices could be heard. Some communicating with each other, others screaming and wailing in madness. Among the fragments that Nod the entris could understand, were clues to a Dreamlord was spawning a new body somewhere. From the strange communion with the demonic Dreamlords, Jaqueline understood that the recent activity was the result of Dayvid of the Berella's

foolish activation of the ancient Dreamlord communication network (see The Unholy Staff adventure).

In the inner halls, the heroes came upon the mummified remains of corastin, croid, shanta and thriddle who had died in great numbers before a throne with the strange mummified remains of a lamorri. To their horror, the heroes found that the Essence Amplifier beyond the Demon Throne was guarded by yet another spawned swordbearer. Suddenly the world seemed to be full of them, heralding the return of the old gods as Choi Sterneye had predicted (see the Sharussa adventure).

Unable to beat the formidable and cunning foe in the narrow passageways, the heroes instead managed to shut down the machinery that fed the Essence Amplifier with energy. As a result, the activity in the complex ceased and the Dreamlord's essence fell dormant again. Soon, tranquility returned to the plateau and the bronth once again sealed off the opened passage.

After being rewarded the heroes were once again escorted south to Tlon, but with a dread feeling that this was only the beginning of the Dreamlords' return to power.

50. A Lost Child

After passing through the World Weaver's warp to Thantier, the heroes made their way down to the port of Terc with only minor skirmishes with the local ruler's troops. Hiring a ship, they immediately set sail for Erucia to find the friends they lost when fleeing via warp from the tomb of Torroc Dhar.

The friendly fisherman Vacil Cotor, who had turned out to be the last relative of Torroc Dhar (see the Torroc Dhar's Treasure adventure), was now suddenly rich and had moved to a mansion in the city of Erucia. At his side was Snogard who had managed to return before the other heroes in his search for the boy Vaultemort. Snogard had also learnt that Jer-Emiah and Lukazail were held prisoner in the Necropolis by the scary priests of the Erucian tomb god, Vojecis. To add to their troubles, there was also a power struggle between the Prince of Erucia who smelled riches in the form of the stolen treasure and the Vojecis priests who wanted revenge.

Vaultemort on the other hand had been on Charis's ship, The Sharussa, when the crew mutinied. The boy had been thrown in shackles with the few loyal crew members and now the ship had departed from Erucia with the few pirates that survived the showdown in Torroc Dhar's tomb.

Using all their cunning, the heroes managed to free Lukazail from the statue he was chained upon in the main Vojecis temple. They also managed to sneak into the temple's lower halls and fight off the zombies created by the Vojecis priests out of hapless human captives. In a great underground hall, the heroes found Jer-Emiah, buried alive and halfway through the zombification process. After freeing him from his small claustrophobic niche and his mummy bindings the heroes had to carry the catatonic Jer-emiah out of the Vojecis temple, while fighting off the Vojecis temple guards.

Not until the heroes were well out on the sea did Jer-Emiah recover from the strange Vojecis priests ritual starvation, hypnosis and mental breaking of his will. He would however never recover from his fear of the dark and enclosed places.

Following the trail of the pirate crew of the Sharussa, the heroes made their way to the slave markets in Dorakon. There they found some of their crew and freed them. In a showdown with the pirate crew, the heroes managed to unite their old enemy Hinrik Steglitz of the United Thanterian Navy with the pirates, who got their just penalty.

As the pirates had sold the strange boy Vaultemort to slave traders heading for the ramian port of Co'Chori, the heroes followed. With the help of the thriddle fadri Stanro Golo-Sor of Rolo-Gator, the

heroes obtained a ramian Shield of Passage into Co'Chori in return for stories of their adventures, which the thriddle wrote down.

After consulting a wise chiven-rachu-eh in Co'Chori, the heroes learnt that Vaultemort had dismayed the ramian rochka with his uncanny knowledge about the gods and his ability to beat the best of them at roritcha. Vaultemort had been killed in honour of the gods and his remains burnt.

When seeing the heroes (and especially Snogard's) grief, the chiven rachu-eh was amazed how much the boy had meant to the heroes. For unknown reasons the chiven rachu-eh revealed that the boy had not been killed. Instead he had been taken deep into Vareech by the rochka, to the holy Ro-Shaschka. Not understanding why the chiven rachu-eh helped them, the heroes were provided with a guide to find the Desert Trail leading to the ancient ramian mountain stronghold in the middle of the Vareech Desert.

Braving the desert, ramian caravans and countless other perils, the heroes finally managed to reach the lone Ro-Shaschka Mountain . Finding it cluttered with old lamorri ruins, a shantic skyrealm and countless subterranean passageways, the heroes struggled to find a way in while being harassed by ramian patrols. Recognising some of the halls of the complex, the heroes understood that this old lamorri stronghold also held a Vault.

Within hours the heroes had been hunted into a dead end corridor and captured and were taken before the korochka of the region. The feared Korochka Moreshka controlled the region and answered to the Four Holy Fathers of Poonter. Known for his dread powers and his lamorri artefact staff, the korochka invoked fear into the heroes. But when trying to read their minds the Sign of Skelos protected them. Instead of killing them, the korochka took them before the demon throne of the complex. To their amazement the heroes found Vaultemort upon the throne. The throne's tubes and spikes were connected to his flesh and the ramian worshipped him like a god. Assembled in the great subterranean hall were even several urat who had come to see the strange avatar of the gods. Vaultemort seemed tired but ordered the ramian to free the heroes and then declared that they had come to take him away from his enemies.

While showing the heroes around the ancient holy halls of the ramian, Vaultemort explained how the ramian were splitting into two different societies. This news had reached the heroes during their time in the South Seas and when serving Choi Sterneye, now it was confirmed. Korochka Moreshka, like the ramian rulers of Poonter and Vinteer, was opposed to the awakening of the ancient gods and their beasts. The Korochka Chokulsha did however have the mandate among the Matirikiv of the South Seas to do this. As a result the great Vault of Chobyshka Chorachka had been awakened along with many other foul things from the ancient past. Now, Korochka Chokulsha demanded that Korochka Moreshka followed her example. So far the Korochka of Ro-Shaschka had refused. This new and strange avatar of the gods had now come in the guise of an Invisible Fire tolerant human child, spreading the gospel not to awaken the gods. Hundreds of ramian pilgrims had already heard his word and now word of Vaultemort's coming had most certainly reached Korochka Chokulsha. Assassins were probably on their way north to kill the false god. Therefore, Vaultemort decided to leave, but gave the ramian rochka instructions how to find him/the Vault in the Doben-al.

Escorted by ramian, the heroes departed from Ro-Shaschka on tamarons and hurried north. Crossing the Vareech, the Burdothian colony of Drailoth and finally the south Ceridis Sea , the heroes finally arrived safely in Tan-Iricid.

51. Return to Grace

Having found Vaultemort and all other lost members of the troop, the heroes decided it was time to return to the Sky people, who by now should have built the five ships that would venture out and reveal their existence.

But on their way to the higher vales of the Thodic Mountains, the heroes followed the last clues to the Berella that they and Preko Dos Kebeshane had found in Tlon. The clues led them right to the door of an influential dakrani of Terc by the name of Vitor Bequin. Infiltrating Vitor's mansion during his son's Enlistment Party, the heroes discovered that he was a great Berella general with many ties to Thantier, Khodre and Heridoth. Before leaving with evidence, the heroes found sinister plans to cause chaos in both Thantier and Burdoth, as well as assassinating the Dharsage. All clues seemed to point to some kind of igniting factor in Heridoth to come. The coming of the "New Shandane" that would bring Burdoth to its knees.

Fearing the future, the heroes hurried to the secret city of the Sky people and helped them prepare for their first contact with their long lost lowland kin. During their final weeks in Mas'Ka the heroes suspected that Immoran herself had been awakened and walked among the Sky as a fatigued and sick priestess. But before they could confirm their suspicions it was time to leave and set sail for Burdoth, Jasp, Khodre, Thantier and Dobre. A sixth ship also departed for an unknown destination that the Sky would not reveal.

During the first days of their trip the fatigued and haggard Vaultemort revealed that he was dying. This world had proven too hard to overcome and was slowly dissolving his spawned flesh. Therefore he needed to return to the Vault and begged them to help him.

Agreeing to do so, the heroes sailed via the Vault of northern Doben-al on their way to Burdoth.

Amid the abandoned, evid haunted halls of Moira Dreamweaver, the heroes found the Vault in full progress of arming itself with slarrk men and machine beasts, such as swordbearers. The heroes were alarmed at this activity but learnt that the Vault was preparing for a final battle against the Realm of Darkness and Jugg'kroch (Moira) whom it suspected would return to try to take control over the Vault. Several cold and inhuman copies of Vaultemort received them and took the weak Vaultemort beyond the Vault portal. In the inhuman compassionless tone of the Vault, the copies explained that Vaultemort's flesh now would be assimilated with the Vault's bio-mass. Vaultemort would cease to exist.

Feeling great sorrow for this, the heroes had to agree. In return for their help in gathering knowledge for itself, the Vault then communed with the heroes in the great pool of golden liquid beyond the Vault portal. There the Vault also "repaired" Mojik and revealed the true extent of the powers the Vault had grafted into him after his death. This, however, remained a secret of Mojik.

The Vault then revealed that Jugg'kroch and other Dreamlords had ventured above ground and feared for the people (Ros Crendorians) living there. Two human captives had revealed clues to the coming of another Dark Years of Dreamlord rule in Ros Crendor.

Fearing the worst, Jaqueline went to see the captives.

They found one of the captives to be the mortally wounded priestess who had helped the heroes when they underwent the sabotaged Ritual of Skelos (see the Realm of Darkness adventure). She revealed that Mother was dead and that Stuard Marcine Kolljere now was the new dark All-Mother of Ros Crendor. Many priestesses had been killed and the dark taint was spreading through the lands. All who had been linked by the Sign of Skelos, were now controlled like puppets. It was dangerous for the heroes to return.

The priestess had been mortally wounded by a fallen priestess and was kept alive by the Vault until she accepted its aid to “mend” her. Unwilling to accept this offer by a Dreamlord (in her eyes) the priestess lived in a half existence between life and death, fearing for her soul. She begged Jaqueline not to return to Ros Crendor until she wielded a power staff of the Dreamlords or something equally powerful. Because, with this she could assume control over the Sign of Skelos and turn the many slaves against the All-Mother. Jaqueline promised to do this and vowed to return to free her people.

The other captive turned out to be agari Nica Armant, the priestess who had trapped the heroes in the dangerous lower halls of Obiss (see the Realm of Darkness adventure). To prevent her from fleeing and even killing herself, the Vault had spread her flesh, sinews and even bodily organs into a grotesque living spiderweb. Maddened by the experience, Nica howled her joy at the return of her dark gods and hinted that they walked among their faithful once again.

Understanding that the lamorri essences were once again free in Ros Crendor in possessed bodies with many slaves serving them, the heroes left Nica to live out her life in her new grotesque form.

Before the heroes left for Burdoth in the Sky tepinna ship, the Vault asked them to hear its call when the day for combat against the Realm of Darkness came. It also showed a new, more human side to its Vaultemort copies, which had assimilated all the human experiences Vaultemort had added to the Vault's knowledge.

Sailing onward to Burdoth with heavy hearts, the heroes planned for a grand entry into Burdothian history. Acting as emissaries to the Sky people, the heroes were received by thousands of people as they landed in the fields west of Ardoth. Paraded through the streets with the Sky ambassador and the bird clad Sky warriors, the heroes soon found themselves the centre of Burdoth's attention.

But soon after the first contact, the ex Redcape heroes were grabbed and thrown into the herris. After some threats of torture and psychological games which made them doubt their allegiances and their fate, the dharsage strangely decided to spare their lives and remove the shissic mark on their names. Claiming that they had been misled and misunderstood, the dharsage declared them free men again of their old ranks of Drenn and Tauther. Many years of exile and the looming threat of the tunnel worm execution for shissics was over.

The heroes also understood that times were dire and that the White Legion had finally contacted the Dharsage about the true threat of the Berella and the Ca-Desti.

However, their freedom came with a price and the heroes were implanted with strange earth-tech devices in their throats that would kill them if the dharsage wished it. They also suffered the wrath of Rasec, now the colmon of the Redcapes. Rasec had never forgiven them for the death of Aleyksander Dhardrenn whom had been his apprentice and vowed to destroy them if he found anything else suspicious about them.

The heroes also found themselves to be at the focus of attention of their old rival Kharam Allonkarb (see the Drailoth Conflict adventure) and his advisor Tiok Gillwood. However, after some interrogation by the Redcapes for Berella involvement, Tiok Gillwood was poisoned in his cell. It was clear that the Berella had more agents in the Cryshell Palace .

When also the heroes were poisoned through the seams of their new clothes, it was clear that the Berella were aware of the threat they constituted.

The heroes also found that the Dharsage was tired of politics and had withdrawn much since his son's death. More and more control was handed over to the Ardothian Council and the Dharsage's right hand man, Drennit Basarin Yodsson. Furthermore, unrest was brewing in the streets of Ardoth,

as foreign agitators, democratic movements and other diyarda took their chances in a realm seemingly falling apart due to lack of control.

52. Heridoth Burning

Shortly after the established negotiation between the Sky and Burdoth, the heroes were called in for duty to their country and ruler. A chance for them to really prove their allegiance.

The Dharsage and the Redcapes ordered them to journey to Heridoth to see if their warnings of a world conspiracy were true and if the Thantierian clues to the Berella activities there could be investigated (See Return to Grace adventure). Who was the Talmaron Lord? What ties did Yorkeed, the High Coralli Priest of Bathor, have to the Berella? What was Jorah DharWinter sent to do to the Sholian ruling council known as The Wheel? Who is this new Shandane that will arise?

The Dharsage and the Redcapes feared troubled times to come and the heroes were ordered to find any Berella and bring these to justice. As Preko Dos Kebeshane had the same interest to save his own realm and his House from the recent unrest, it was suitable for the heroes to join his venture.

Already on their way over the Ardoth Bight to Koistra, the heroes found their ship attacked by Whitehand ships from Sholis which were harassing ships trading with the rivaling city of Koistra. Wading ashore the heroes had to trudge through streets riddled with the nighttime violence known as the Small Wars - a fine Heridothian tradition of unofficial skirmishes between Whitehand houses and Klades in troubled times. When they finally made it to House Kebeshane's fortified rural estate, the heroes managed to grasp the complexity of the brewing civil war in Burdoth's neighbouring realm.

The different peoples of the sundered realm had fought each other for supremacy for centuries after the collapse of the Sholian Sagedom, while the Whitehands of this broken Sagedom bickered amongst themselves and the Coralli Temples and Klades. As old Sholia sunk deeper into misery, the neighbouring Dow and Yorkni people hungered for their lands.

Now, a charismatic and prophetic leader had arisen amongst the Temples. The quickly elevated High Priest of Bathor, Yorkeed, performed uncanny miracles such as healing the sick and communing openly with the Coralli Gods. In less than five years he had united the Temples and bound many of the klades to him. In this way, nearly half of the votes of the Wheel were in his hands. He now pushed for the reinstatement of the Wheel that has been disbanded by the Whitehands fearing his growing power.

But as Preko Dos Kebeshane knew, many of these miracles were staged Earth-tek tricks and much of Yorkeed's new ties had been won through blackmail and fear with the aid of the Berella. The very reason for his chosen exiles was to find evidence to prove this. The Whitehands who had just under half of the votes of the Wheel now feared the new power of Yorkeed and the klades and did not want the Wheel reinstated. Instead, the fighting between the rivaling Koistran League and the Sholis League intensified in a desperate bid for power. Condrij flocked to Sholia and treachery, assassination and outright attacks flared among the Whitehand Houses, some of it most certainly incited by Berella agents. Fearing either a future invasion or seeing a chance to expand their territory, the Dow mustered like crazy and brought in many wild mercenaries from Sillipus. All the while, the uncouth Yorkni made the southeast unsafe with their raids.

Shortly into their investigations the heroes discovered that Preko's father had been slowly poisoned through his bath. The reason for his wasting illness surely lay with Yorkeed and the Berella who knew House Kebeshane was onto their plans. But how to prove this? Now, in these troubled times, Preko had to assume the role of House Patriarch while his crippled father recovered.

Strangely enough Yorkeed and other priests and priestesses of the Temples paid a courtesy visit to House Kebeshane and begged the ancient house to use its reputation as mediator to unify the Whitehand Houses before it was too late. They had to call for the traditional unofficial assembly in the Shandane Memorial and convince the Houses to find reason. In return, the Temple of Bathor would back them financially and politically, even if it meant that the Wheel would not be reinstated. The safety of the realm is above everything else. Although suspecting Yorkeed was up to something, Preko had no choice than to agree and sent out word of the unofficial gathering.

But at the Shandane Memorial, Preko and the heroes found themselves tricked again. Despite rigorous safety precautions a Fusheen assassin posing as a servant carrying Blood Poison in his very veins, managed to poison most of the Sholis House delegates. The ensuing chaos and mayhem that spread through the city as the House forces clashed finally unleashed the brewing civil war.

All houses blamed House Kebeshane, declared vendettas and stripped them of their votes, while Yorkeed and the Temples declared House Kebeshane as outcasts and damned by the gods, All the while the armies of Sholis began marching southward.

With nothing left to loose, the heroes and Preko sneaked into the Temple of Bathor to secure evidence and maybe even Yorkeed himself. During their visit to the temple they witnessed one of his miracles where the power or energy of the Coralli jumped amongst the devoted followers. Yorkeed also prophesised the coming of the realm's saviour wielding a blue sword of Shal. When a delegation of priestesses of the war-goddess Bellona showed up together with a shantic sholari, predicting great violence and destruction in the immediate future, the very presence of the sholari caused Yorkeed great disturbance. During the chaos of the miracle and the Bellonan disturbance, the heroes managed to find clues in Yorkeed's deadly study. Amongst Earth-tec communion mirrors, deadly traps and coded messages the heroes managed to lay their hands on a Berella message stating that all pawns and game pieces had to be placed at the Ellih Plains, where also the Talmaron Lord would be. Amongst the Berella orders was also an order to kill Preko's fiancée in House Makkeltorpe as punishment.

Despite all warnings, Preko rushed off on horseback to save his fiancée and of course rode into the Berella trap waiting for him. But thanks to his courageous and resourceful fiancée and his late arriving Burdothian friends, Preko survived.

When they returned home they heard of the approaching Sholis League army and the old ally, House Makkeltorpe, demanded House Kebeshane by his side when he and the Koistran League marched to join them at the Ellih Plains. The heroes joined Preko and the house army as they marched northward, while discovering that most of their Redcape contacts were being killed one by one by the Berella. News of the recent events had not reached Burdoth and their reports had surely been intercepted by the Berella.

On the Ellih Plains the armies met and issued their demands. Surrender of power and the heads of the Kebeshane family patriarchs as well as their holdings were amongst the outrageous terms. The two sides separated in frustration and the next day the armies fell upon each other.

But just before the first waves hit each other, young Kesht Varkin Yardonk, son of the old and trustworthy Kesht Ath'dis Yardonk who was assassinated at the Shandane Memorial, placed his House army between the two closing League armies. In a charismatic speech, he blamed the Burdothians and Dobrens who conspired to keep them broken and begged the Whitehand Houses to reconsider or kill him first. Amazingly the young Kesht managed to get the house representatives one last time to the negotiation tent. His words were honest and true and all House leaders understood the folly of their claims, but still could not come to a decision. It was clear also from his speech that he held no love for the treacherous House Kebeshane, although he still needed them.

As the Whitehands resumed their bickering and fruitless accusations, word came of an advancing Dow army and thousands of Sillipean mercenaries disembarking along the coast. Having already stationed itself amongst the mountains, the Dow army had waited for its chance to pick off the surviving army. Now they advanced, their already legendary colmon wielding a notorious blue sword and hungering for victory, contrary to the orders of his Berella controlled leaders to wait. The Sillipean forces that landed further east were also hurrying to join their Dow allies.

Fuelled by this, young Kesht Varkin temporarily unified the Koistran and Sholis League and they began to prepare their defences. The two advancing armies had to be met and defeated on the Ellih Plains, rather than split up and rush off home to months of siege at their two cities and a ravaged countryside.

When the armies finally clashed a day later it was the greatest battle since the Energy Weapons War. True to the Heridothian traditions of war, both armies were equipped with heavy infantry and fearsome bochigon cavalry.

However, Kesht Varkin turned the tide in favour of the Sholians when he made a daring attack upon the Dow middle ranks after having received the unorthodox help of a roving madman and his planted pods of Whip Bees in front of the centre of the advancing Dow army. Seeing his chance for redemption, Preko Dos Kebeshance launched also his House army into the daring break. Even the heroes joined in this daring and seemingly suicidal attack and waded valourously through the ensuing bloodbath. The result was a division of the Dow army into two units that was disorganised and more easily defeated. Although victory now was inevitable, Sage Kelir of York and his large squadron of 300 Talmaron Warriors showed up as on queue. They scattered the retreating Dow army and turned their shameful retreat into utter defeat.

At sunset the captured Dow colmon Chusa congratulated the courageous young Kesht and asked to be beheaded by his own men and by his own sword. Despite the other Whitehands demanding Chusa to be dragged through the streets of Koistra and ritually mutilated - as in the good old days, Kesht Varkin granted the old colmon his last wish. After the deed was done, the Dow executioner gave the legendary blue sword - forged in the cold fires of Shal - to Kesht Varkin. When Kesht Varkin Yardonk, the hero of the Ellih Plains, lifted the sword to the heavens, the soldiers and Whitehands around him turned to him in praise and began chanting "Shandane! Shandane! Shandane!"

At the same time, grim Bellonan priestesses of war made their way to Kesht Varkin and presented him the old and lost war-crown helm of Sholia. According to legend the helm was presented by Bellona to the Sages of old in times of need. It would allow its wearer to save the followers of the Coralli from their enemies, but would haunt or curse him with Bellonas fury.

This surely could be no coincidence? The new hero wielding the blue blade that rose to save Sholia - just as Yorkeed had predicted! The Dow army, in the right place at the right time - waiting for its chance? The 300 Yorkni Talmaron warriors waiting for their chance to save the day?

The question was rather, whom had the Berella intended to be the new Shandane? Colmon Chusa with all his experience and his blue blade? Sage Kelir of York, who was staged to save the day? Or did young Kesht Varkin steal the stage in front of them all?

The day before the army officially returned to Kositra, the heroes finally managed to assemble all the evidence they had been gathering. Evidence of the poisoning of Prekos father, evidence of Yorkeed's ties to the Berella, evidence of the false miracles with the help of earth-tec holo-devices. But they were also troubled by news from their few surviving Redcape and White Council contacts that an ancient Ca-Tra temple in the Ments Mountains had been destroyed by fanatic Coralli worshippers equipped with terrible Earth-tec weapons. A great artefact of unknown power known as the Mih-La-Shal was stolen and the old prophecy mouthed to Shandane the Great could be realised - that

Koistra would be destroyed by the Heavens if swords ever were turned on the humble shantic oracles.

Before they could act on this, the morning came and Kesht Varkin and the victorious Sholis/Koistra army was paraded through Koistra and the Wheel officially re-opened. On the steps of the Wheel building, Yorkeed and the other High Priests blessed Kesht Varkin. But as Yorkeed placed his hands on the young Kesht's head, an uncanny wind arose and the people saw it as evidence of the Corallis blessing. However, even Yorkeed seemed slightly baffled and Snogard sensed an incredible - and ominous - rise in the sho-sen.

That evening the heroes were summoned to the war mongering Temple of Bellona by the mysterious shantic sholari. It asked them for all details about the conspiracy and the insidious Berella. It then shockingly revealed itself to be a Ca-Desti sholari and that the sacrifice of the hapless Ca-Tra were a price the Ca-desti were willing to pay for the destruction of both Burdoth and Heridoth. The sects needed to be unified in their hatred and fear of the aggressive humans. Unified enough at least to allow the thosk of the Ments mountains to destroy Koistra (thus the rise in sho-sen mounting up to the terrible attack). Someone had found or placed a great cache of earth-tec in Heridoth - enough to potentially make them rivals of Burdoth. Already as they spoke, Burdoth and Heridoth fought in secret over it. The Ca-Desti would gladly see the humans tear each other apart and had even used the Berella as convenient and unknowing pawns.

With the words "*Let the cleansing of Sho-Caudal begin!*" the Ca-Desti shanta began to attack the heroes.

Thanks to the valiant sacrifice of a White Legion agent named Ferakk, the heroes barely escaped. They rushed to warn Kesht Varkin of the danger to Koistra but were met with chaos and fleeing Gloundan Shadow Warriors. Immediately after a great bomb tore the Yardonk city estate apart. An injured and grief stricken Kesht Varkin staggered out of the flames that had consumed his mother and sister. As it quickly became apparent from the captured Shadow Warriors that Burdoth was responsible, the whole city turned on Burdothian klades, ambassadors and visitors. A blood bath ensued.

The heroes and Kesht Varkin understood that Yorkeed, Kelir and the Berella were somehow responsible for this, as the dying captured Gloundan Shadow Warrior revealed that Jorah DharWinter (The Berella agent and military attaché to Tlon - see Crendor Awakens adventure) had sent them to kill the dangerously popular and unifying Kesht Varkin. Together with the trusted House Guards of Yardonk and Kebeshane, they went to the Temple of Bathor to confront Yorkeed and were met by Temple guards and Yorkni soldiers. Fighting their way through the temple the heroes finally managed to corner Yorkeed whom with his last dying act tried to destroy evidence. In the high tower of the Temple they also found the stolen Mih-La-Shal crystal. They also encountered a disillusioned Jorah DharWinter whom personally stood in their way of capturing Sage Kelir. Jorah revealed that his son was captured by Thanterians in Anasan and that the Berella was his only chance to save him. Rather than facing tunnel worm execution back in Burdoth as a shissic, Jorah chose to die by the heroes swords, enabling Sage Kelir to flee by talmaron and thus fulfilling his foul promise to the Berella, who would now hopefully free his son. While dying, Jorah asked the heroes to find his son and tell him of his fathers fate as well as save him from the clutches of the manipulating Berella.

Before the shanta could destroy Koistra, the heroes and the White Legion returned the Mih-La-Shal and the sudden increase in the sho-sen subsided. Koistra was saved - for now. But the shanta had been greatly angered and terrible times were sure to come. And even if Yorkeed was destroyed and sage Kelir was banished back to York, the fact remained that a large portion of Heridoth was now

unified under a new Shandane. Furthermore, this new fledgling union now seemed to be equipped with an earth-tec arsenal of its own. Burdoth had shown its colours and incited the fury of the Heridothians while trying to prevent their unification and their accusation of earth-tec. What was to become of all this?

But most importantly - while going through Yorkeed's last Berella orders, the heroes stumbled on the coded but terrifying message:

"At daybreak on Mullin 10 the deadly blow will be dealt from the dharsage's own heir. The tyrant of the Burdothian States will be removed by his own blood. Without his presence, his family will follow his fate. Unleash the Hounds upon this signal."

Understanding that this referred to an assassination on the Dharsage of Burdoth and knowing their communication devices didn't work, the heroes grabbed captured Yorkni talmarons and sped off towards Ardoth.

But the flight was long and the talmarons and riders tired. Some crashed in the Ardoth Bight while others barely survived the earth-tec turrets of the Cryshell Palace to crash in the city. The last heroes managed to make it into the palace, but were detained by colmon Rasec of the Redcapes who still doubted their intentions. When they told him that the Dharsages own son or daughter would kill him, Rasec could take no more and wanted them thrown in the harris.

But as it dawned outside it also dawned upon them all that the 10th of Mullin was the anniversary of Aleyksander Dhardrenns death at the hands of his kidnappers (See Skipping School adventure). Every 10th Mullin for the last five years since that tragic day, the Dharsage had spent a full day of mourning at the tomb of Aleyksander. They all understood that the tomb would be the threat to the Dharsage's life. Trying to outrun time, Rasec and the heroes ran for the palace gardens and the tomb. Alerted by the commotion the Dharsages personal guard managed to drag the Dharsage away from the tomb just before it exploded in a great and roaring pillar of stone-melting flame. Most of the personal guard perished in the deadly flames, while the dharsage having been protected by an earth tech personal shield was dragged severely and maybe fatally burned from the roaring inferno.

As the dead or dying dharsage was rushed off without word of his condition, a series of other assassination attempts were made against the other Dhardrenn family members. But Rasec's swift actions and Red Martins selfless sacrifice saved them all and they were rushed off to a secret and safe haven.

Almost on queue with the great explosion in the palace gardens, a wave of violence swept through Ardoth. Klademasters, DharYordica and prominent Whitehand supporters of the Dharsage were killed. People rioted in the streets and muadra began attacking the Whitehand House guards and city yards.

The Berella had made its move and Ardoth - the greatest human city of Jorune - was in flames.....

53. Caji Killer (Next Generation Heroes)

[This adventure introduced the Next Generation Heroes to Jorune for the first time. The NGH are all tauther, eager to make an impression.]

Two days before the great chaos hit Ardoth, the Next Generation Heroes awaited their next tauther assignment by Drenn Jakon "Knuckles" Dorvellin, a fat drenn nobody with a power abuse disorder. Amongst all the assignments handed out, the heroes were ordered to help an injured Yord resolve dyte fighting in Bryce. The heroes found that Yord Tamas investigated dytes that had been found dead in the grimmer parts of the city and the Ardoth marsh. But these dytes had not been killed in

gang fights. Instead they had been found dead with little signs of violence. Their symptoms were more like Heart Strikes or Porter's Faint with pale eyes and total lack of isho. Bodies of unwanted isho illerate muadra of the slums had also been found but nobody linked them to the assumed dyte fighting. But when caji started showing up dead, whispers began of a muadra killer loose in the city. Already the Kerning Bays were hunting this Caji Killer and tensions were rising. After Tamas had consulted Sholari Napta Kluva of the Kettak kerning bay, he was attacked and accused of being a thone lover. Tamas now fears a greater threat than mere dytes or a lone thone bigot. He asked for help from the Cryshell Palace – but got tautther.

After consulting both muadra on the street, kerning bay Sholari and iscin regarding the disappearance and the condition of the latest body, the heroes came to the conclusion that Tamas had been correct. The body seemed to have suffered violent kerning, as from a sheeja or entropy vine burnout. It totally lacked isho, a hole in the sho-sen, and was therefore invisible to tra-sense. The dead body did not even accumulate minute amounts of isho. Could it be a new and dread form of isho disease or the result of some cruel form of muadra torture?

They heroes were soon caught in a cat and mouse chase to find the mysterious killer, where hired diyorda tried to dissuade them from continuing, thone haters persecuted them and caji vigilantes secretly followed their progress. Apart from the muadra unrest, the city of Ardoth was also teeming with other unrest. Royalists attacking Democrats who claimed the Dharsage had promised representatives chosen by the people seats in the Council. Smugglers were "Flesh Running" unwanted trouble makers into the city via the Ardoth Marsh and Redcapes had caught active Thanterian spies. On top of all this another muadra was reported missing, Caji Sinia Shal.

But the heroes' investigations soon bore fruit (after having indebted themselves to Borleen "The Gauntlet" – a githerin kesht of Ardoth for information). They found the culprits responsible for kidnapping muadra, shady members of the Vurnaal klade of embalmers and undertakers who kidnapped dytes and other unwanted muadra and delivered them to a secret lab in The Docks. Lately, they had been paid to kidnap caji. It was more difficult, but deffinatly more lucrative. The heroes attacked the labs in The Docks and found the iscin couple Irina and Jonn Arapel conducting foul experiments upon their latest victim, Caji Sinia Shal. The heroes fought three skilled swordmasters and a man known as Thorpe when an angry muadra mob appeared (summoned by the caji shadowing them). The iscin revealed who much they hated muadra after their daughter had been killed by a dyte and their benefactor Thorpe had supplied them with money and strange notebooks on hybrid earth/isho tech. Their intention was to create a deveice that would forever castrate a muadra ability to accumulate and weave isho. But before any further questioning could take place Thorpe was shot dead by an arrow from the houses across the street and the mob seized the iscin and killed them. The mob then razed the lab and paraded the body of Sinia Shal through the streets in anger. The heroes soon found that the Arapels had been well known Mundel Worshippers and thone haters. They also found that Thorpe in fact had been a loyal manservant of the DharKell Whitehand family of known muadra bigots. Although the DharKell family denied involvement the muadra mob soon learnt about ther facts and stormed their mansion and yords from across ther city had to intervene. Later that evening, the family patriarch Sorberin DharKell was murdered by angered dytes. The rest of the evening and all that night, Sorberin's brother Sabarin DharKell made statements against the taint of Burdoth (muadra) and incited like-minded Whitehands.

That next morning, the city was rocked by a great explosion and a roaring pillar of flame rose from the Cryshell Palace.

The Dharsage of Burdoth had been assassinated.....

54. Fight for the Throne – Part 1 (The Original Heroes)

The original heroes had just flown non-stop from Heridoth (See Heridoth Burning), bearing warning that the Dharsage would be assassinated on the memorial day of his son's murder. Their valiant deeds barely saved the Dharsage from the great stoneburner bomb. While learsis and Redcapes rushed the grievously injured Dharsage from the area and the heroes found themselves tired, dirty and in despair – looking down upon a city of turmoil. As if using the great explosion and roaring pillar of flame as a signal, chaos had broken out in Ardoth. Muadra rioted in the streets and fought muadra-hating Whitehand condrij. Fires broke out all over the city and various rumours spread. Carefully selected Whitehands, Redcapes, Dhar Kladesmen, Dhar Yordica, prominent foreigners and non humans were suddenly assassinated or abducted. After the assassination attempt, the sagins had been rushed off to safety while the Dharsage's appointed Steward (until Nakolaj Dhardrenn comes to age) Kesht Jarod Turessey was found missing.

Colmon Rasec Turgerin finally assumed control and coordinated the efforts to bring the Cryshell Palace and the city into order. He immediately sent several Redcapes out into the city to maintain law and order. Amongst these were the dirty and tired heroes, who clearly had no favour to gain from Rasec, whom still saw them as guilty of Sagin Aleyksander's death. Rasec reluctantly removed the explosives in their necks as promised (See Heridoth Burning adventure) and sent them out into the city to try to identify the troublesome Democrat leaders, help disperse rioters and find out why the muadra were rioting. Rumours stated that tauther at the Chell's office had some strange clues to this. The tauthers (the Next Generation Heroes) told their story and handed over the strange notes on hybrid tech they had found with the foul Iscin couple Irina and Jonn Arapel. The heroes showed the notes to Prince Vucarin, knowing that he and the late Sagin Aleyksander Dhardrenn had dabbled in hybrid tech. The Vucian prince soon confirmed that the original notes provided to the fanatical iscin couple had been written by his former teacher – Viyda Ardiss, now known to have been the mentally unstable Dayvid Terra, the founder and probably leader of the Berella. This was another sign that the Berella's hand was firmly involved in both the assassination of the Dharsage and the unrest in Ardoth – but to what end? Chaos or change of rulership to someone else?

Over the next two days the heroes dispersed riots, defused angry mobs parading murdered caji, whitehand or klade officials, hunted unruly caji and whitehand House Guards. Rumours abounded that all kind of foreign rulers were behind the chaos. It quickly became clear that some of the rioters – or rather instigators - were hired condrij, foreign spies or even Berella agents, but all were elusive and left only evidence of their work in the guise of fires, murders and mobs. The Democrat movement was greatly fuelled by the chaos and a firmly anchored rumour spread throughout the city that the late Dharsage had promised to hand over his rulership to the people. Now they wanted the Council to fulfil the Dharsage's will. During the short and often irritated crisis briefings, the heroes saw Rasec lose his temper several times and take many – maybe unnecessarily firm actions against the citizens of Ardoth.

One dark night the heroes were awakened from their precious few hours of sleep to be rushed off by Redcapes who refused to state the reason for their summons. Fearing that this could be some type of plot or scheme to get rid of them, some of the heroes refused to go, while the others obeyed orders. Rushed aboard a barge and blindfolded, the heroes were ushered to a secret warp location. After the activation of the warp the heroes found themselves within the tunnel riddled Shendarri Skyrealm – the fabled secret Skyrealm where Burdoth keeps its most precious lore and artefacts. Without further words they were rushed to a room filled with worried people. Lying grievously wounded on a sickbed was the Dharsage of Burdoth, kept alive only by the frenzied activities of prominent learsis, pod creatures and even a learsis tecton. Once they had been announced, the pained and tired Dharsage opened his eyes and spoke to them:

"Come closer. Do not fear or pity this body. You are amongst those I call friends. For your deeds and for keeping your hearts true despite all you have been accused of. You, like I, love this realm and have seen what it can become.

But a storm approaches now and it will bring ruin in its wake. But from ruin there can be a fresh start, like the great tidal storms that cleanses the Ardoth Marsh. When the concealing and strangling weed is removed by the storm, the plague moth fields can easily be found and destroyed.

You must remain loyal and believe in Burdoth and its free people. Believe in the dream and promise of New Burdoth, that I, and even Dayvid in a time of sanity, believed in. Or all that you know and love will become ashes tormented by the tyrants of old. Believe in the Drenn system and the slow seed that will grow after it. Old bonds and traditions cannot be broken overnight without terrible consequences.

Remain loyal to this idea, to this dream that our long lost ancestor fought so hard and bitterly for. Remain loyal to your captains, to your rulers. Believe in them and their words, as I do. Never doubt them.

Serve me, serve Burdoth, serve the people."

The Dharsage then ordered the heroes to be elevated in status and sent back to his injured realm. After this he was too tired to speak and the heroes were ushered out of the room and back to the city together with Rasec whom had now equipped himself with artefacts and armour of Dharsage Silver (Earth Tech).

Rasec also gave the heroes new orders:

- "liberate" the strange hybrid tech from the muadra whom had confiscated it from the Iscin couple and bring it to the cryshell palace.
- Find and imprison the democrat leaders

Already the next evening, heralds spilling out of the Cryshell Palace solemnly declared that the Dharsage has succumbed to his wounds.

The great and enlightened Dharsage Khodre Dhardrenn of Burdoth was dead!

Two days of mourning were declared and during this time stricter laws would apply which gave yords and Redcapes authority to kill rioters, looters and diyorda on sight.

Already the next day a great funeral pyre had been built at the bottom of the Manser Strip. A huge procession carried the body of the dharsage through the city and people from all walks of life lined the streets – all knowing that a great change was coming. But for better or for worse?

When the pyre finally was lit after countless ceremonies it blazed brighter than the sun – fuelled by lamcra oil in its centre. In a great symbolic show of light, the great Dharssage of Burdoth ascended to the heavens to join with the Gods that reside amongst the stars.

After two days of official mourning, the great Council of Ten met to discern who would lead Burdoth in the troubled times ahead. The official Steward Kesht Jarod Turessey was missing and so were the Sagins. This resulted in several bids for power from various Whitehand relatives, prominent Whitehand families but most importantly from the the other regional Sages of Lusail and Sobayid (calling for a return to the rotating rulership of Burdoth between the Sagedoms), Kesht Varkin Yardonk of Heridoth (relative), Saress Khodre (half-sister), Kharam Allonkarb (Dharsage's Uncle) and the Council of Ten itself (as an interim ruling body). Furthermore, outside the great Council Halls a great mob gathered in a call for democracy.

As discussions raged into the night and then resumed the next morning, the heroes were busy

rounding up democrats and dispersing mobs. When Rasec's Redcapes cracked down mercilessly on the Democrats and the heroes began to object.

The next day, Colmon Rasec assumed temporary power until the Council could find a suitable ruler. He had no tolerance for bickering and gave the Council an ultimatum to find and unite under one leader in two days.

Meanwhile the heroes increased their unpopularity with both Rasec and the people, by arresting Democrats and aiding in the destruction of the hybrid tech device (so nobody could lay their hands on the dangerous isho neutering device).

One morning, the Ros Crendorian honorary hostage guard declared that they had been called home and would return to Ros Crendor. When Prétess Jaqueline Montluc began investigating this, she was confronted by foul emissaries from Ros Crendor who claimed they spoke for the new All-Mother - the religious and political centre of the new reign of Fallen Priestesses led/possessed by the Dreamlords/lamorri essences (see Realm of Darkness adventure). In a charismatic speech at the harbour, Jaqueline persuaded several of the Honour Guard to remain with their newfound families on Burdoth. But in the end, the nasty-looking androgynous dark priestess sailed away with most of the Honour Guard to Ros Crendor.

That same afternoon Drenn Vivicca Altolin was uncovered as a Berella spy and the unknown hand behind the failed attempt to assassinate the Sagins. But rather than being captured Vivicca took poison. It was soon discovered that Vivicca had also poisoned the Cryshell garrison and soon most of the garrison was bedridden with the non-lethal poison.

The Redcapes now held their breath for something to happen and strengthened the garrison with street yords and tauther – leaving the city open to riots again.

That night Berella funded terrorists attacked the Cryshell Palace and managed to take one of the turret towers. But after having signalled their part of the coup done, nobody came to their aid or made further attacks upon the palace. Within hours the terrorists were defeated and killed by the Redcapes.

When trailing a mysterious box left behind by the dark priestess, the heroes found themselves in Lower Manser. In the bogs and mists of Lower Manser they encountered tremla machine-creatures flying about and searching for ways down into Mah-Ashalta-ca, the ancient subterranean tunnels under Ardoth. The heroes rushed to the secret Redcape postings but found these undermanned and overcome (as most guards had been withdrawn to the palace after the poisoning). Berella agents with uncanny knowledge of lamorri tech had shut down the machinery which prevented warps from opening in Ardoth.

When delivering the terrible news of Ardoth's warp vulnerability to Rasec, the heroes came just in time to see a strange outburst of fury in Rasec and clear signs of some sign of limilate abuse.

Over the next few days the claimants to the throne were reduced to a few potent claimants. Essanja and some klades now backed Sage Kollanis of Lusail, while other Klades, the muadra and the Jaspian Trading Houses backed Sage Azimir of Sobayid. The potent Whitehand families backed Kharam Allonkarb while Kesht Yardonk and Sagess Saress Khodre withdrew their claims (the latter because of rumours of strife along Khodre's eastern borders). Rumours abounded that Rasec held Kesht Jarod Turessey captive or had disposed of him and the Sagins.

One night, Democrat freedom fighters and hired condrij attacked the Cryshell Herreris in an attempt to free their leaders. Some were successfully freed. Rasec immediately declared all Democrats shissics and banned any assembly discussing the topic of democracy.

The next day, the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Ardis legions arrived at Ardoth and set up camp. Normally not allowed within 20 lagiss of the city, the military presence now panicked several citizens. The heroes joined Rasec as he addressed the legions with a fiery speech about the future and security of Burdoth and then guarded the tent where Rasec held a secret discussion with the colmons.

That same evening, Rasec assembled the still bickering councillors and ambassadors at the Council Grounds. Sick of their bickering he presented the Last Will & Command of the late Dharsage which stated that Rasec was to be elevated to Rhacolmon of Burdoth until the late dharsage's heir (Nakolaj Dhardrenn) came of age.

The Council members and ambassadors claimed it was a forgery – among them Kharam - but several members of court recognized the Dharsage's handwriting and copra of authenticity.

This officially gave Rasec the armies of Burdoth, even though only the armies of Ardis answered to his call (the colmons being present at the council).

Rasec also held a long speech about the Berella, who they were, how to identify them and explaining that they now were Burdoth's greatest threat.

To prove his power Rasec then marched the Ardis legions into Ardoth to help maintain law and order. Fear gripped the citizens of Ardoth and several Whitehand families immediately pledged their allegiance to Rasec.

The ambassadors of Sage Kollanis of Lusail and Sage Azimir of Sobayid however withdrew under protest and threatened with military force to remove the dictator.

In private council with the heroes and Red Martin, Rasec acted irrationally and in a fit of fury, more and more like a dictator. He moved into the Dharsage's Main Office with a panorama view of the city and presented an extensive list of Berella suspected dissidents to be arrested by the heroes and other Redcapes – the Desti List. It became very clear that Rasec now wanted to get rid of those opposing his rule.

After a night of shameful arrests throughout Ardoth which long will be remembered by historians, the heroes returned the next morning to voice their courageously summoned protests. But instead of listening to their plea, the Rhacolmon sent them away on an important quest (which would also take them out of his sight).

They were to become Ardisian emissaries to Lusail and Gauss in a half-threatening attempt to persuade these sages to rejoin the Burdothian Union and swear loyalty to Rhacolmon Rasec Turgerin.....

55. Horrors of Glounda & The Wayward Daughter (Next Generation Heroes)

As chaos ruled in Ardoth and the makings of a civil war grew ever clearer, a worried Kesht fearing for his daughter residing with relatives in Lusail, dispatched brave tauther to escort her back to Ardoth. Not only was he a drennit, but also rich and influential, therefore fearing that his daughter could be used against him. Glad to escape the nasty duty of beating up and/or arresting their neighbours and friends, the heroes jumped at the task with great anticipation.

But halfway up the Trethl Road the heroes came upon a caravan of Whitehands that had come under attack by mud painted Gloundan Savages. Answering the plea of a desperate surviving servant girl the heroes tracked the dangerous savages deep into the dread Glounda Forest. After surviving the usual man-eating horrors of Glounda, the heroes finally caught up with the mythical Mud People and followed them to the isho rich, fabled red Valley. They soon came under attack by Darkwing birds with poisonous claws, directed by the strange human/plant symbiot that ruled the Red Valley from the great Borlah World Tree. The holy tree was worshipped by the savage Mud People, but was

now dying and needed a new symbiot to bridge the gap between the strange sentience of the great tree and the Mud People. None of the Mud People seemed fit however and now outsiders had been brought in. The heroes heroically freed the Whitehand captives, as well as other Gloundan woodsmen wives and daughters. In the skirmish the powerful symbiot tragically killed Oliver Drunko - a promising young muadra - but was itself ravaged by fire, delivering the final blow to the dying World Tree.

Fleeing the Glounda Forest with the aid of the Glounda woodsmen, the heroes made it back to the Trethl Road. Confident in the rewards and gratitude awaiting them from the freed Whitehand families, the heroes continued north to Sychill.

But when they finally reached Sychill they found Jasmina Jarpell to be an arrogant, troublesome teenager who refused to return home to Ardoth. Not backing down, the heroes and Jasmina's host finally forced her to pack up. Early next morning the heroes set off to Ardoth in the finest and fastest ship. But halfway home the heroes discovered that Jasmina had cleverly sent her servant girl instead of herself – they had in reality never met her in Sychill.

Infuriated (and impoverished) the heroes returned to Sychill and with the assistance of a new caji acquaintance (Caji xxx), found Jasmina in the arms of her lover in the poorer parts of the city. But when trying to catch the suddenly shy lover, the heroes uncovered a plot to make Jasmina with child and blackmail her father with shame. The would-be lover was in turn used by someone at the Sages' Court at the Green Palace who quickly and terminally silenced the streetwise lover-boy. The heroes also found a strange encrypted letter which the clever street boy had deciphered along with clues that somebody at court would try to assassinate the Ardisian Emissaries.

By chance, the heroes came upon a procession of Ardisians that were being escorted through the city gates (which happened to be the Original Heroes) and managed to warn them.

Before Jasmina could elude them again, the heroes quickly returned to Ardoth and delivered her safely to her father's house.

56. Emissaries of the Realm (The Original Heroes)

Maybe in order to get rid of the Original Heroes, Rhacolmon Rasec of Burdoth sent them on emissary duty to Lusail and Gauss. Their orders were to deliver sealed letters to Sage Kollanis of Lusail and Sage Junas Cormil of Gauss, persuading the two sages not to abandon the Burdothian Union and swear fealty to Rasec. On route the heroes were also to deliver a third letter in secret to the Delmeran Kesht Beram of Delmre. After the three letters had been delivered the heroes were to remain in Gauss and once again restore their Dharlerrin (The Ramov Dharlerrin) to full operation. Fearing harsh threats in the letter, but having fresh memories of their exile as shissics, the heroes loyally travelled to Sychill.

But no sooner had the Ardisian emissaries arrived in Sychil before a group of young tauther (The Next Generation Heroes) hailed them in the street and warned them that assassins would attempt to take their lives. Someone in the palace was somehow involved (see Horrors of Glounda Adventure) and linked to the Berella – as the young tauthers had found a deciphered letter written in familiar Berella code.

Sage Kollanis proved to be a sympathetic man, but the letter contained many veiled threats that angered him, his two volatile sons and the Lusail Court. The heroes also understood that the Redcapes that had secretly accompanied them to Sychill probably were there to assassinate the Sage should he refuse.

While the careful Sage Kollanis mulled over an appropriate answer to Rasec, the heroes remained the guests of the ever more hostile Lusail Court. There they suffered (and lost) a duel against the

Court's Swordmaster, saw scary Sillipean emissaries from a man called Sardon D'Obreth trying to sell new advanced weapons and met with various courtiers all with their own agendas - all the while fearing the assassin's strike. They learnt much about the history and culture of the proud Sychillian Sea Kingdoms and experienced the hold the star-gazing Tolamuun priests and their new allies the World Weavers held over the rulers.

During an excursion into the city of Sychill one day, the heroes came across a caji being attacked by several other caji. After routing the dangerous caji, the heroes brought the wounded caji to safety in their palace quarters. Pained beyond speaking and with a strange isho poison canister quarrel in his back, the unknown caji pressed a strange sword in Snogard's hands before he died. Although the blade clearly contained isho it held no other clue than the three-whirl pattern of the World Weaver cult of southern Dobre.

Then, on their last night the assassins finally struck. Tutulaks hidden in their beds broke free and began to mate, sending the sleepers into unwaking deep sleep while Gloundan Shadow Warriors slipped in via the balcony. As the palace guards were suddenly missing outside the heroes' quarters, their own night guards barely managed to fend off the assassins.

Sage Kollanis now sadly understood that someone close to him within the palace wanted to usher Lusail into a conflict with Ardis by killing the Ardisian emissaries. He therefore provided the heroes with his formal reply to Rasec and swiftly sent the heroes on their way in the middle of the night on talmarons. A sagely gift.

Avoiding more attacks and bandits from the Shivaka Skyrealm in the inner regions of Lusail, the heroes made their way by air to the Suh'Larvan swamp. After traversing the often dangerous swamp, the fantastic pole town of Delmre and a fantastic Vurucon Whale hunt with careful Delmeran guides, the heroes finally met with Kesht Beram. The colourful and respected man was no Kesht in the eyes of the Delmerans, but had once served with Rasec as a Redcape. He was Rasec's brother in loyalty and was through the secret letter asked to close all Delmeran ports and markets to all Lusail ships. Ardisian troops were already on their way north, led by Red Martin, to aid the prejudiced Delmeran people in the conflict that would arise.

Before the heroes continued their journey, they came across old shantic ruins on a hill in the swamp. The ruins had been desolate for centuries according to the Delmerans, but now showed signs of recent activity. Strange pillars had been restored and raised again and isho was clearly being pumped into the construct. Copra Caji Snogard managed to access strange recordings of the site (or images of a twin site) which showed shanta creating or programming an evid. Scared senseless by the threat of another Ca-Desti plot, the heroes and Delmerans quickly left the area.

After the adventures in the Suh'Larvan swamp, the heroes pushed onward to Gauss to deliver their last letter. As it was warm Mullin, the Kim appointed Sage Junas Cormil and his Councillors had withdrawn to cooler Salam'arine. Once there the heroes delivered similar threats, but this time however combined with promises of debt clearance and improved alliance with Ardis in return for loyalty and a steady supply of garrison and durlig. It was clear Rasec was preparing for conflict. The heroes found the Gauss Sage to be much younger than the Lusail Sage and much more controlled by the Gauss Kim that had elected him. It was also clear that the grainary province of Gauss was under immense political pressure also from the provinces Sobayid and Lusail.

After their task as emissaries had been completed and the letters delivered, the heroes returned as ordered by Rasec to the Ramov Dharlerrin. They found the main house burnt to the ground and in much disarray. It seemed like their unfriendly neighbour Drennit Tereged Dharnevic had acquired the Dharlerrin after the heroes had been declared shissics. He had operated it in his usual harsh manor for several years until one day the Dharlerrin was returned to the pardoned heroes. When

this happened, all of the livestock and much of the Dharlerrin equipment had “disappeared”. At the same time a great “accident” befell the main house.

Strengthened by capitol from their many adventures, the heroes at once set to work to restore the Dharlerrin together with the faithful toth that had remained and their trusted foreman Celiok. After weeks of fighting strange creature infestations, planting the new and rare mountain durlig given to them by the Sky people (See Towers of the Sky adventure) and bickering and socialising with old acquaintances (including Tamas Norton the gentleman githerin, Drennit Tereged Dharnevic, Keshtia Jamilla and Iscin Veratta) - a new Dharlerrin slowly began to form. After more than a year of construction, a new stone main house was built and production restored.

Khaine Johennon wasted little of his time at the Dharlerrin and spent all his energy on improving his social network. Within one and a half year he had manipulated the upper social ranks of Salam'arine to such a degree that he was appointed Councillor of Gauss and was now formally one of the forty advisors to the Sage of Gauss. (By chance one of the former councillors – Drennit Tereged Dharnevic had been foully assassinated and thus left his seat vacant). During the heroes' one and half year of exile at their dharlerrin, the Gauss Valley suffered a terrible durlig plague. It spread like wildfire until the heroes managed to find its cause. It was Ros Crendorian spies spreading fould planter klavic insects that placed worm eggs in durlig plants. The team of spies were led by brainwashed members of the honour guard who had returned to Burdoth to destroy the crops of the realms grainary. But during the fight with the spies, the heroes found that one of them actually served as a vessel for Shorkuul Shadowmaker – a fould Dreamlord (Iamorri essence) they once had encountered in Ros Crendor (see realm of Darkness adventure). Shorkuul was the adjutant of the Dreamlord known as Moira Dreamweaver, but now roamed much farther away from his essence amplifier than before in his possessed body. The reason for this was believed to be the awakened empathic network the heroes had witnessed Dayvid re-activate (See the Unholy Staff adventure). In the struggle Tavar Brinko was killed by a foul organic device known as a wormgun, but Shorkuul's possessed body was destroyed. But as the power of the Dreamlords now was much greater, and because several of the heroes were linked to the Skelos network (See realm of Darkness adventure), Shorkuul's essence managed to jump over to Pjire and possess him. Only by knocking out Pjire, filling their bodies with the Traq limilate and fleeing the place, did the heroes led by Pretéss Jaqueline banish the Dreamlord. But now the Dreamlords knew where to find the enemies that once had unleashed the Shorric evid upon them and the Dharlerrin was in danger.

Elsewhere in Burdoth the political situation was worsening. Rasec levied harsher clench on the provinces, all dharsage silver weapons were removed from the provincial armies to the central Ardisian armies, still no news had been heard of the missing Sagins or Kesht Jarod Turessey, Lusail was besieging closed Delmeran trading ports which in turn were protected by Ardisian troops, the entire Gloundan garrison had disappeared and a failed Whitehand coup to remove Rasec had turned into a bloodbath in Ardoth.

Four months later an invasion of refugees arrived at Salam'arine in a ragtag fleet of old ships, barges and fishing vessels. These were the old, infirm or too young that had been banished from the Coastal Kingdoms northwest of Burdoth by the Ros Crendorian conquerors. Councillor Khaine Johennon was one of the voices for mercy. He worked night and day to find ways to accept some of the refugees while sending the rest on to Dobre and Lusail in return for services and alliances. But within a week a great plague broke out which originated from the refugees. The strange disease spread rapidly and acted strangely. Panicking the populace of Gauss began isolating themselves, killing strangers and retreating south. Khaine Johennon and Iscin Veratta Komlesh worked night and day to find a way to cure the disease with modified reco rejuvenators, while the remaining heroes

ventured into the newly reclaimed and forbidden Ca-Launtra shantic Lashula Valley in central Gauss. After some persuasion and use of their status as White Council members, the heroes managed to negotiate shantic aid. The shantas provided them with a rare limilate but also warned them that the ilns of the Ancients recognised this type of plague as something from the old, long gone invaders – the lamorri. In order to avoid panic and refusal to use the limilate, the heroes didn't spread word of the shantic cooperation until after the plague was stopped.

At the ramov Dharlerrin several of toth had survived thanks to the efforts of Iscins Khaine and Veratta. But Jacqueline had been one of the afflicted and nearly perished.

In her fever dreams she saw Mother – the former and rightful High Priestess of Ros Crendor – talking to her and warning her. She saw visions of sunken ancient cities, Dreamlord ruins and a staff of power which the Dreamlords searched for. It was the key to regaining control of the Skelos network, which in turn could free some of the controlled priestesses of Ros Crendor.

In the end one third of the population of Gauss – mainly northern Gauss – had perished in the terrible plague. The province was now severely crippled and the rest of Burdoth screamed for the durlig it was accustomed to, but now couldn't get after the durlig plague.

Along Burdoth's coast, pirate attacks intensified, as the diyorda could smell the weakness of Gauss. Rumours abounded of salu pirates forming an alliance with scum of the Coastal Kingdoms and of ramian ships arriving in the Coastal Kingdoms.

Strangers had also been reported, asking about the heroes or searching for them.

Some weeks later the heroes were awakened by howling dogs and the Sign of Skelos glowing in their palms. Pjire and Lukazail were missing and the toth nightguard had been severely wounded. This turned out to be another band of Ros Crendorians led by Moira Dreamweaver herself in the avatar of a huge boccord warrior. She and Shorkuul had once again possessed Pjire and Lukazail with the aid of a strange device set up in the forest. But just as they attempted to enslave them with gruesome Ogrochka helms that would attach to their skulls, Jaqueline and Jer-emiah intervened. Defying terrible weapons and formidable Ros Crendorian warriors, Jaqueline and Jer-Emiah sacrificed all they had to stall the enslavement process. On the brink of defeat and hideaously wounded, the other heroes arrived and killed the Ros Crendorians. Moria – in the guise of her possessed warrior – howled and cursed them and swore to have her vengeance.

Limping back through the terrible isho storm that followed and avoiding the great swarm of Crith vodra that ominously descended upon northern Gauss, the heroes managed to reach the Ramov Dharlerrin safely.

But now they knew Moria would never rest until she had her revenge. Or was it something else she sought? Ramov Dharlerrin was no longer safe.....

57. Vucian Kings (The Original Heroes)

The morning after the great storm and the showdown with the Ros Crendorians, a squadron of Ardisian soldiers arrived at the Dharlerrin. They were led by Prince Vucarin, who carried a letter from Rasec. The heroes were ordered to escort their former protégé to Shatur so that he could reclaim his inheritance and become the next Vucian King of Shatur. The heroes understood that Vucarin had been groomed over last eight years in Ardoth by the Dharsage to fulfil his destiny. The young man was now regal in finest crystal studded Vucian armour and his hair raised and coloured the Vucian way.

Eager to be out of the Ramov Dharlerrin the heroes escorted Vucarin to Khaun Gauss for a fortnight of receptions and parties with all neighbouring non-Vucian allies that were to be won over to his cause. They also met up with Rhakesht Kevon who would replace Rhakesht Nohecca IV of Shatur (a

very old acquaintance of the heroes) and control the Burdothian troops stationed in the protectorate.

In Khaun Gauss the heroes also heard the plea of two Lungtho nomads who had been sent by the dying high chieftain Tapeka to warn Burdoth of the Ros Crendorian shadow. Foul priestesses were converting the nomads to their cause with foul magic. Terrible beasts followed these fallen priestesses across the Doben-al and their power grew ever stronger.

Worried by this news the heroes continued with Rasec over the Kuggin Mountains to the old city of Shatur, the last bastion of the once proud but fallen Vucian Empire. As expected they were attacked on the road and abused at the city. Vucarin had been taken from the purist Vucians and was seen only as a tainted Burdothian puppet. Foremost of Vucarin's accusers was his own mother – Queen Myriam of Shatur, whom had nine years ago removed Vucarin's father from the throne. But Vucarin came prepared and soon won the priests to his cause by rejuvenating their crippled religion (see the Vucian Mystery adventure) with the secrets of the hybrid technology he, Aleyksander Dhardrenn and Viyda Ardiss had worked with. Queen Myriam was found to have made a secret alliance and escape plan with the Coastal Kingdom rulers, but was caught in the terrible Shatur Underworld when attempting to flee with her hoard of crystals from the Vucain crystal mines.

Within less than a week a new king had ascended the perilous throne of Shatur – King Vucarin Lucaram.

With their assignment now completed, the heroes began their long and bitter journey back along the Krayll to Ardoth, to the heart of unrest and to their unpopular ruler Rhacolmon Rasec Turgerin.....

58. Island of Giants (Next Generation Heroes)

Through a fortunate game of mayoo, the heroes managed to trade a pitiful tauther assignment of arresting yet another citizen for speaking out against Rhacolmon Rasec, against a bodyguard assignment for an elderly iscin. Iscin Sobastian Toshkin had just returned with an expedition which had visited the most remote islands of the dangerous Eastern Island Chain. While giving lectures on the extraordinary wildlife, the tribal salu cultures and the exotic geography the distinguished iscin had noticed that he was being followed by strangers. Fearing for his life and for the scientific secrets of the expedition, Sobastian had recruited a band of tauther for his security. This now happened to be the heroes whom banded with Sobastian's learsis - Maria Azote - in order to protect the elderly iscin. Staying awake through boring lectures of weird exotic creatures, ancient mysterious ruins and invaluable sea crystal studies, the heroes managed to notice that the iscin was indeed being followed. But the mysterious strangers were never caught and Iscin Sobastian's house was soon found burgled. It soon became clear that Iscin Sobastian wasn't the target. The culprits had clearly been searching for documents and sea charts in particular. Understanding that the expedition leader Perrin Tomell might be in danger, Sobastain sent the heroes to his house to warn him. Arriving too late, the heroes found Perrin's servants slain, Perrin missing and his mansion thoroughly searched. It soon became clear that Perrin had burnt his sea charts before the attack, which led the heroes to suspect that the culprits had kidnaped Perrin instead. They were clearly after a way to return to the Eastern Islands.

After a cat-and-mouse chase through Ardoth, the heroes understood that Perrin had been taken aboard a Heridothian ship destined for Koistra – where as a coincidence, the other partner of the Eastern Island expedition resided – Varkos Poterson. The rich and influential Tomell family as well as the klade sponsors were distraught by the news of Perrin's (and his maps') disappearance and

swiftly equipped the abled bodied tauter with a ship and crew destined for Heridoth. Perrin (and his knowledge of the charts) had to be returned at once to Ardoth. The Tomells and the Klades also made it very clear what would happen if the heroes tried to benefit from any uncovered maritime knowledge themselves....

Underway to Koistra, the heroes became re-acquainted with the slightly confused and amnesiac hero by the name of Errol, whom they had bumped into before. Hiding as a stoway, Errol was fleeing from something in Ardoth and offered to assist the heroes to the full extent of his skills and valour (which clearly was not lacking...). In Koistra the heroes found the strangers still ahead of them and the henchmen in the middle of attacking Varkos' mansion. Unable to save Varkos, the heroes still managed to lay their hands on the last copy of the sea charts. While being interrogated by the city Yords, Sung the Dow merchant, the leader of the unknown attackers, departed Koistra with Perrin in his ship "Shal's Splendor". But before the heroes could pursue with their own ship, they were detained by Kesht Sibojenn Shavannta of House Shavannta whom marched them to his mansion. He also had an interest in the expedition as a sponsor and wanted Perrin (and any sea charts) returned to him immediately. Needless to say, threats were made to the heroes not to breathe a word about this to anyone. Less than half an hour later the heroes were then marched into the Klade Halls to stand before Klademaster Tepek, whom made identical demands and threats.

Several ships departed that evening to pursue Shal's Splendour to Dowsen, but the heroes made it there first a couple of days later. But Sung had merely stopped for provision and continued eastward. Loosened tongues in the seedier harbour quarters of Dowsen spoke of Sung's allegiance to a terrible Gire Lord of Sillipus known as "The Dreglamon". The pirate town of Kithaq on Sillipus was the likely destination of Shal's Splendour. The heroes pursued as far as York without catching up with Perrin's kidnappers. In York their crew unloaded their cargo and were persuaded with gemlinks and promises of exotic wealth to continue to Sillipus – daring pirate- and Gire infested open waters and fierce barbaric salu.

After a week at sea avoiding trouble, the heroes finally bumped into salu who attacked their ship when rounding Sillipus' Cape Terror. Further storms and attacks decimated the crew further, until they finally caught up with Shal's Splendour. But after a failed attempt to board Shal's Splendour and destroy its smaller escort ships, the heroes instead had to sneak into Kithaq to snatch Perrin from the kidnapper's grasp. The seedy pirate town of Kithaq was clearly under full refurbishment. The humans residing there could tell them about a powerful benefactor residing in the Inner Reach known as Sardon D'Obreth, whom together with the other two lords of Kithaq Sholari Nebbon of the Shal Legion and The Dreg, were fortifying the town against ramian agressions. With the neighbouring town Sallay recently raized by ramian, Kithaq was filled to the brim with refugees and slaves. Strange warriors with awkward, new and feared weapons known as the Lightning Guard patrolled the city. From a newly built fortress overlooking the harbour, a terrible lightning weapon demonstrated for humans and ramian alike how easily a ship could be torn to pieces.

The heroes soon found that the stakes had been raised. Perrin's kidnappers were attacked in turn by fierce Trulga Caji whom served the ramian. Perrin was brought across the Tejitire Peninsula to waiting ramian ships which immediately set sail south – to the Eastern Island chain. Distraught by this recent change of events the heroes were about to give up and return home. But through cunning negotiations (and some nasty facial dysha burns) they managed to ally themselves with the Shal Legion whom immediately organized an expedition force of ruthless pirates. It turned out that the Tomell Expedition had been well known in Kithaq and even co-funded by one of the Dreg's lords, whom now had wanted to cash in early on his investment and cheat all other parties on the winnings. Unfortunately, word had spread to both Sholari Nebbon, Sardon D'Obreth and the ramian

about the extraordinary findings and exotic riches of the distant Eastern Islands. Now several parties – for their own unknown reasons - were interested in finding a navigable route to these riches. But only the heroes (and now Sholari Nebbon) were in possession of the curiously encrypted sea charts of Perrin's partner and Perrin's altered personal sektiam (navigation device).

After three days sailing the Shal Legion expedition passed beyond the last pitiful human settlements and out into barbaric salu and ramian waters. No sooner were they under attack by the three ramian ships they were pursuing and their own two ships sunk in the lagoon of an atoll. Preparing for a last stand, the heroes and some of the pirates fought valiantly until a Chiven Rachu-eh ramian called off the ramian and trarch warriors. From across the battle he stared Big Z in the eyes and with a jolt of pain a ramian word formed in Big Z's head "Schaorra". According to sailors who spoke Rorch-ko, the word meant a ritual hunt or challenge between prey and hunter. It seemed like the Chiven Rachu-eh had spared the heroes and pirate rable in return for a challenge to pursue the ramian.

After the ramian left, the heroes and the last pirate survivors prepared to build rafts of the remains of their ship and return to Sillipus. Unfortunately blood-thirsty salu fell upon the humans and only thanks to the social skills of the heroes and the theoretical salu expert Tapinn Jarlah, did the salu chief Tektol Sammorilbane hold his tribe back. It turned out that Perrin had befriended Tektol and his tribe during his expedition and the fierce salu chieftain vowed to assist the heroes in retrieving Perrin.

Now onboard salu chausis, the heroes continued their hunt for Perrin. Having no other choice than following the old expedition route as laid out on the cleverly encrypted sea charts, the heroes and the salu spent another week and a half island hopping – always one step behind the ramian who clearly were using Perrin to reach some unknown destination.

Defeating a raging storm, strange sea monsters, dangerous salu priests, isho surges and ramian attacks, the heroes finally reached Three Point Island – the last stop before the mysterious Island of Giants, which was as far as the expedition had ever reached. By now they were far out into the Eastern Islands and as far as any salu or ramian had ever explored. Despite unfriendly salu Salume priests, the heroes made new allies with a strange semi-sentient hive creature referring to itself as the Tchobyshka. The alien creatures consisted of several crustacean-like animals that could combine into various forms for various tasks. The strange and scary creatures had begun to infest the island more than a month earlier and were constructing strange aqueduct-like tubes and hives throughout the island. The salu blamed the ramian and when the heroes investigated, their friend Tektol Sammorilbane was killed by the huge combined monsters that emerged. But instead of killing the heroes, the strange creatures managed to communicate with them through the resurrected Salu-Tchobyshka symbiot they created out of Tektol Sammorilbane's body. The ancient creatures could with strange words describe how their cruel masters once had stolen them away from their world to conquer and explore many other worlds. It had been their sole purpose in life to build living machines and ships for their masters who would sail the freezing Black Sea. These masters had given them sentience somehow, and until recently this sentience had been dormant. But now the ancient voices of their long lost masters could once again be heard throughout the oceans and the suddenly aware Tchobyshka fled the ancient lands where they had remained after the fall of their masters – the Island of Giants.

Daring the Endless Sea with the last clue on Perrin's map, the heroes, the salu and the strange hybrid sailed for more than a week before reaching the mist enshrouded cliffs of the Island of Giants. Here they found ancient crumbling ruins built by unknown giants, which seemed to have suffered utter and absolute destruction in an ancient cataclysmic war. The ramian had also just arrived and set out

to attack the salu ships when a Sammoril from the deep – summoned by the Salume priests the salu had onboard – rose up to destroy them. Hurrying ashore the heroes then pursued the ramian priests to three intact temples further inland. Twenty or so small skyrealms hovered over them and all manner of strange plant-animal lifeforms infested the poisonous jungle around the three temple pyramids. But it soon became clear that the valley was protected by feral croid who besieged the exploring ramian and humans. Escaping the croid into the ancient temple pyramids, the heroes soon found themselves deep underground in a complex and machine-like structure. The lower halls were sealed off with shantic warnings, drained isho traps and evids in shyee. These halls had once also been the centre of a final and bitter battle and the bones of shanta, croid, ramian, scarmis and strange ramian-like giants littered the entrance hall. Some of these seemed to be shanta who had battled each other. Caji John soon discovered that one of the original complexe's purposes was to produce an unknown, concentrated and volatile form of isho. Later shantic constructions had been erected to purify and disperse this unholy artificial isho, but these had broken down over the millennia. Now, the pyramid complexes were brimming with the dangerous, infectious artificial isho.

Deep within the bowels of the complex the heroes came face to face with degralochi Utarax whom tried to awaken the sleeping gods of the ramian – known sometimes as the lamorri. The complex the ramian had chosen contained the "soul" of Schrogorr the Navigator and the centre chamber held his earthly remains within a crude and failed lamorri attempt to create keeper rods out of artificial crystals. Despite getting unexpected aid from Chiven Rachu-eh Chrokeer – whose Tirtive master Triach did not share Utarax's ambition to awaken ancient and cruel gods – the heroes failed to destroy the artefact which was awakening the complex. Instead some of them were captured while the others were hounded out of the lower halls by the ramian honour guard and the terrible green fire demon that guarded the complex. But as Degralochi Utarax held his ceremony and allowed Schrogorr to enter the vessels of his honour guard and the sacrificial heroes, something went terribly wrong. After eons of solitude and perhaps technological degeneration, the lamorri essence once known as Schrogorr was insance beyond healing. The heroes suffered terrible visions and memories as the complex invading mind was too vast and powerful for their humble flesh. They saw and understood how god-like beings from the stars – the lamorri – had conquered Sho-Caudal but had finally been defeated, with the aid of a lamorri traitor and driven back out into the dark between the stars. However, the ramian honour guards – being purer vessels –suffered the madness of their god to a much more greivous degree. Screaming in terror and agony they tore at their eyes while their hearts burst.

The last remaining heroes used the confusion to free their captured comrades but couldn't defeat degralochi Utarax whom now was equipped with the unholy bishckrra ("Power Staff") of the gods. But thank to the terribly maimed caji John, the heroes managed to create a terrible blow-out of the artificial isho of the complex. This resulted in the reactivation of the evids, a terrible isho storm-like blow-out and the sudden fall of the now empty skyrealms. As the skyrealms crashed down on the three temple pyramids, the heroes managed to make their way out of the crumbling complex. During the cataclysm a god-like voice naming itself Kaurr invaded the minds of the ramian and some of the heroes. According to ramian legends, Kaurr had betrayed the other gods and destroyed them/banished them. Kaurr now warned everybody not to awaken the sleepers. A final showdown with the powerful Utarax ended when a newly awakened evid attacked and killed Utarax.

For their assistance in stopping Utarax, Chiven Rachu-eh Chrokeer promised protection under her lord Tirtive Triachs the Holy of Vinteer and told them that Kaurr had shown her that one of their own kind would claim the staff. This one would speak with the power of the ramian gods and they must bring the staff to her. Chrokeer then relieved Big Z of the strange and complex instructions that had

invaded his mind after the contact with Schrogorr's insane mind.

Less than a couple of hours after the ramian – now led by Chiven Rachu-eh Chrokeer - had fled the Island of Giants, shantic warriors arrived by warp. Attracted by the strange isho surge, the Ca-Du – ancient guardians of the almost forgotten and hateful old ruins - were disgusted to find humans there. But before the heroes were slain, the Ca-Du sholari intervened. They had understood what the heroes had done and were grateful, while at the same time warned them what they had stumbled onto. The undead copras (souls) of the lamorri were not to be underestimated. From beyond their graves they still plagued Sho-Caudal. The heroes would forever be susceptible to their mind possessing powers. The sholari allowed the heroes to keep the shantic artefacts they had taken from the ancient fallen heroes if they promised to remember and honour their sacrifice. They also gave them artefacts to protect them from the lamorri copras and to show other Ca-Du that they were honoured allies. But the sholari also brusquely instructed them that the Ca-Du would return to claim their servitude in return for sparing them. The heroes were then returned via cashiln tunnels to Burdoth with a final warning - to never ever return to the forbidden lands or speak to anybody of its existence.

59. Fight for the Throne - Part II (The Original Heroes)

On their way to Ardoth along the Krayll Road, the heroes together with the former RhaKesht Nohecca IV and his troops were met by Drenn and Kesht representatives and invited to their armed camp. After some careful probings it became clear that the Drenns and Keshts intended to rebel against the usurper RhaColmon Rasec Turgerin who had ruled Burdoth since the death of the Dharsage. Targeting the heroes and Nohecca as potential allies, the rebel alliance known as the Voices of Reason begged them to join their movement.

Despite fearing yet another life on the run as shissics, the heroes and Nohecca agreed to help the Voices of Reason depose the tyrant. They had seen far too much of the violence and irrational behaviour in Rasec's rule recently not to do so.

But the rebels had differing agendas and priorities and they lacked strong, unifying leadership. They were also opposed by a rival fraction known as the Sons of Burdoth, led by Kharam Allonkarb and the popular Kesht Jurantar DharWinter, backed by most of the powerful Whitehands. These clearly wanted any new rulership to be firmly in the hands of the Whitehands. The loyalty of key co-conspirators among the Whitehands, Klades, Muadra and citizenry hung in the balance. Civil war loomed and the armies of Miedrinth and Ardis had already flexed their muscles by raising towns and attacking foray patrols. Burdoth was at the brink of crumbling unless something was done.

Some of the leaders had understood that this could be their fall. They were walking a razor's edge and it was only a matter of time before rasec's spies would know of their plans and identities.

According to Red Martin, Kesht Jarod Turessey would be the key to Rasec's fall. He was the appointed guardian of the throne and the Dharsage's oldest friend. He was well liked by the people of Ardis and Ardoth in particular. The Whitehands would follow him as well as the Voices of Reason. He knew the Dharsage's intentions and was a witness to his Last Will & Command.

Furthermore, the dharsage and some of his iscin had done.....something....to the Dharsage Silver. Much of it was shutting down, spreading like a plague. It began with the E-Piles and in desperation, Rasec was ordering all Dharsage Silver returned to Ardoth. Jarod was the key to unlocking this secret and delivering the power of the Dharsage Silver to Burdoth's rightful ruler. He had to be freed.

The heroes partook in the plan to free Kesht Jarod, whom the rebels had learnt was secretly held in the dreaded Fort Varigal in Monerey. Luckily the Fort's usual garrison had been replaced by Jarec's

scum and villain and freeing Jarod as well as some other prominent prisoners proved relatively easy. Although badly wounded and hurried off to the rebel camps in Glounda City, Jarod could tell them that the Dharsage was trying to instigate changes to Burdoth. Significant changes even in rulership. He made the Chell and all his yords independent of Dharsage power. The same with the DharYordicas. He significantly increased and hand-picked a number of non-Whitehand Drenns and Keshts (most of them now amongst the Voices of Reason) – even among the muadra - to create social diversity. Those closest to him know that he somehow altered or accelerated his plans after his son Aleyksander's death. He left behind a mysterious Will & Last Command – divided in three parts among those he trusted most. Keshtia Javinia Tarajeau his wife, Jarod Turessey and Rasec Turgerin. Rasec had so far prevented the LWC from surfacing, as he knew what it contained. Not trusting all the rebels around him, Jarod provided the heroes with cryptical clues how to find his part of the LWC in his DharLerrin.

The heroes managed to visit the DharLerrin, find the first part of the LWC made out of translucent Dharsage Silver material and flee into Glounda. But not after a traitor amongst the rebels tried to sell them out to Rasec's troops.

In Glounda the heroes found the Gathering of Free Men, which included the vanished 5th Legion, the troops of the Delmeran Kesht Beram of Delmre and countless other Whitehand and Klade troops and volunteers.

But shortly after their arrival they were given a secret assignment by Jarod - the new leader of the Voices of Reason - to find Keshtia Javinia Tarajeau, who clearly had escaped Rasec and is in hiding. The safehouses of the Dhardrenns were many and Rasec knew most of them, so the hunt would be difficult. In order to move swiftly, the services of a dubious World Weaver Warp Hunter was employed, in return for invaluable warp maps. After warp walking between fantastic locations throughout Burdoth, Heridoth and Khodre, the heroes finally understood that Keshtia Javinia was indeed hiding closer to them than they had thought. As a matter of fact, in the Shadow Warrior Temple of Glounda.

At last Jarod and Javinia met and the second part of the LWC was handed over to Jarod.

After this the final plans of the coup were drawn. The heroes along with many other agents were now part of a dangerous endeavour to steal the third and last part of the LWC from Rasec, while the rest of the Voices of Reason prepared Ardoth, Sychill and Miedrinth for the coup. Hundreds of operatives set to work and began sneaking into Ardoth. The heroes took advantage of Ardoth's new, warp-free status and warped into the capitol.

In Ardoth it soon became clear that neutralizing the rival Sons of Burdoth and swaying these followers to join the cause of the Voices of Reason was under threat, as traitors and Berella operatives began killing key contacts and strategic leaders. All seemed lost until the heroes took over many of the important roles of the rebel leaders and pushed the coup into its final stages. Daring their lives, some of them managed to break into the Cryshell Palace and steal the last and third part of the LWC from right under Rasec's nose.

The three pieces of the LWC formed an overlaid text which could be read, but it also transmitted a recording to thousands of Dharsage Silver speakers hidden on buildings and statues in Ardoth, Miedrinth, Sychill and Gauss. The voice of Dharsage Khodre Dhardrenn was heard from beyond the grave as he recited his Last Will & Command.

I am Khodre Dhardrenn, son of Khodre Allonkarb, Sage of Ardis, Kimmin of the Council of Ten, Dharsage of Burdoth.

This is my Last Will and Command, in accordance with the Yordigs of the

Realm. My Will and my Command must be heeded by all who have sworn fealty to me, the realm and its yordigs.

Standing in the face of Shal, with Keshtia Javinia, Kesht Jarod Turresey and Drennit Rasec Turgerin as witnesses of my health of mind, I leave this last Will and Command to be carried out.

From now henceforth, the title Dharsage shall not pass from father to son. Neither shall it pass to any other man or woman. From this day the free people of Burdoth will rule in the stead of Sages and Dharsages in the shape of a DharKim chosen by the people. It will have twohundred and one members and it shall be chosen by the people of Burdoth in a vote every five years. It will rule from the Cryshell Palace of Ardoth. Ardis, Lusail and Sobayid will send forty-five DharKimmins each to the DharKim. Gauss and Essanja will send thirty-three DharKimmins each to the DharKim. If none are appointed during elections and sent to the DharKim, DharKimmins from Ardis will take their place. No DharKimmin may sit in the DharKim more than ten years.

For their trusted service to the realm, the sages will live out the remainder of their years as before, but without ruling the people. Their children will also be Keshts, but their children's children equal citizens of Burdoth.

All cletch-paying citizens of Burdoth who have reached the age of sixteen and who have been registered by their Chells, are given one vote each for the remainder of their lives, regardless whether they are men, women, boccord, muadru or members of other races who have sworn and proven loyalty to Burdoth. With this vote they shall appoint DharKimmin they see fit every fifth year. The children of these vote bearers shall likewise be entitled to a vote upon their coming of age.

Tauther, will for their honoured and loyal service to the Chells of the Realm, receive two votes under the same conditions. Drenns will receive four votes and Keshts six votes. However, the children of Tauther, Drenn and Keshts will not be entitled to their mother's and father's votes but only to the one vote of a free Burdothian. The honour of more votes must be earned before a Chell.

The DharKim will justly and faithfully rule the Realm, control the Legions, make or alter Yordigs and appoint Chells and DharYorlissen, less they loose the peoples love, trust and vote. No five year of governance may ever be broken.

As it is no longer needed, the Council of Ten is from now henceforth abolished. All external affairs of the realm of Burdoth will be controlled by its own people, through the DharKim.

The self-governing Chells of the Great Cities will carry out the will of the DharKim in its name with the aid of Drenn, Tauther and Yords. One Chell for each of the Great Cities is appointed by the DharKim. The local Kim of a Great City appoints ten Chellins to aid the Chell. The DharKlades appoint another five Chellins. The Chell will govern all institutions serving the Realm, upheld or created by the DharKim, such as Yord, Yordeh, Cletch Collectors, sanitation, city defences, Drenn Wall and the like.

The Chells of the Great Cities will answer to the DharKim only and may be

stripped of their power if found unworthy.

No Chell or Chellin may govern a Great City for more than ten years.

The self-governing DharYordicas of each Province will continue to interpret the Yordigs of the realm laid out by me and later by the DharKim. The DharYordicas will each be governed by ten DharYorlissen appointed by the DharKim, five appointed by the Chell and five by the Klades. The DharYorlissen will answer to no Kim or Chell, only to justice itself. They will have the power to pass justice upon visitors to the realm, toth, tauther, klades, drenn, Keshts, Chells, DharYorlissen and DharKims alike. No DharYorliss may govern a DharYordica for more than fifteen years.

All legions and all Dharsage Silver belongs to the DharKim and will be controlled through RhaColmon, Colmons and Chells of their choosing. No weapon of Dharsage Silver may be owned by any man. All are the legacy of the people. Other artefacts of Dharsage Silver may be owned only by Drenn and Keshts.

Any Colmon refusing an order of the DharKim or acting against its will shall suffer the Shissic death.

No gods or servants of gods may rule or infringe upon the actions of any of the above institutions.

Slavery shall remain forbidden.

Land shall remain in the trusted hands of Drenn or Keshts. Their heirs may keep it in custody no more than ten years after they have reached the age of sixteen. If they have not attained Drennship by this time the land will pass back to the Chell.

Upon my death and no later than two turns of Ebba after this Will and Command has been heard, the first election of DharKimmins for the DharKim must take place in all the Great Cities, supervised by the Chells. No less than one week after these elections shall the people through their DharKim assume its rule of the realm.

Such is my Will and such is my Last Command.

Hearing the dead Dharsage's promise of democracy, the people took to the streets. Foiling the Berella's plans once again, the heroes joined Kesht Jarod Turessey at the barricades as prominent leaders of the coup. As chaos erupted, the people and muadra marched upon the Cryshell Palace. The armies outside the city, persuaded by Nohecca and other rebels, choose not to interfere or enter the city.

After only minimal violence the Redcape guards of the Cryshell Palace chose not to stop the people who stormed the palace.

When Rasec saw that all was lost he lit the Dharsage's office with raging Desti Fire. But some of the daring heroes dared the deadly Deesti Fire and followed Rasec's warp signature out of the Cryshell Palace. A warp hunt took place, where they followed Rasec from one warp to the other. They finally reached a desolate landscape where several men with Dharsage Silver prevented them from following Rasec. Rasec seemed much calmer now and somehow relieved. He had met with a strange cape clad and badly burnt man with a heavy staff.

Fearing that they had warped straight into the clutches of the Berella, the heroes prepared for battle against the overwhelming odds.

But the caped stranger denied any connection to the misguided Berella. Claiming to be a friend of Burdoth, he said that Rasec had helped the process of Democracy by becoming a terrible tyrant. As a loyal servant of the realm he had suffered this role, so that the Berella might not succeed in their plan to assume power and create a corrupt elitocracy. Before politely but firmly (with the help of the armed soldiers) turning the heroes around and back to the warp site, the hooded stranger promised that he would continue to watch over Burdoth. The fledgling democracy would need all the help it could get to protect the dream of freedom which was born millennia ago on distant Earth. He asked the heroes to do the same.

Bewildered by what they had heard the heroes returned to Ardoth via warp. Some even voiced suspicions that the hooded stranger might actually have been the former Dharsage, not dead, but continuing to protect the new realm of Burdoth from the shadows – an antipole to the Berella.

Back in Ardoth, the new spokesman of the DharKimmit – Khest Jarod Turessey - offered the heroes to be part in the new Desti Guard, sworn to protect the People and the Realm as carte blanche troubleshooters. Uncertain of their alternatives, the intentions of the factions of the new and deadly democratic arena of the DharKimmit and the future laying ahead, the heroes hesitated and contemplated.

And are probably still doing so to this day.....

TO BE CONTINUED