

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Shaylamar, 1675 -**

This has been the strangest day of my life. It began as any other might - tending to Smalls and preparing for an afternoon with the church's youth group. On my way to the stables it suddenly became very foggy. Upon reflection, it seems a cold, unnatural fog, but at the time bothered me no more than would have a light drizzle. My next memory is of damp, spongy ground surrounded by the darkest, most foul water I had ever seen. As if the confusion as to my state were not enough, I soon notice I am not alone. Surrounding me are four others. I recognize no one. When we are all fully in control of our faculties, we take a moment to quickly introduce ourselves, sharing our complete bewilderment. The first of the group to draw my scrutiny is a small stump of a man named Baldor. He is what I imagine every dwarf strives to be - stern in character and strong in combat. He is as committed to his god as I am to my own. Next is a little fellow who calls himself Radkin. As a halfling, prejudice urges me to label him a thief, yet there's something in his manner that begs to be liked - perhaps even admired. The next fellow, an elf by my reckoning, fancies his self a bit more than is wise. He calls himself Amerous. I can't decide if that name reminds me more of amorous or morose. Although a bit more sardonic than I would consider prudent, he strikes me as affable. Finally there is the mage. Although never proclaiming himself to be such, he fairly oozes magic. His skin is pale and his eyes glow a bright gold. He believes himself superior to the lot of us, and I can't say that I would conclude differently if pressed. He calls himself Kelugth. We eventually concluded that sitting still in this place after nightfall would not be wise, so we five set off into the marsh. What followed was such a terrible, fantastic, and confusing tale that I dare not commit it to paper. If not for the continued company of my newfound allies I might very well dismiss the entire episode as a dream or vision. But know you this : We five unlikely colleagues shared that vision. Whatever sorcery it was that threw us into that hellish dream has left me deeply affected. I believe my new friends share this feeling.

## 12<sup>th</sup> Shaylamar, 1675 –

What a week. No sooner than we returned from whatever nightmare it was that the five of us shared, does my cousin Beldun come to me requesting our aid in retrieving some holy artifact from deep within the undead's swamp. Where 10 days ago I alone would have dismissed such a request as lunacy, we five accepted Beldun's plea for assistance. Enlisting the aid of a guide, we headed into the swamp. It was as one would expect – crawling with horrors. We eventually made our way to a very old building. Deep within, just as Beldun had indicated, we found the relic. As we fought the vile inhabitants of this place, my cousin, whom I trusted implicitly, grabbed the ancient weapon and, with a disturbing grin, vanished. We slowly made our way out of the swamp, having most probably aided some unknown evil power. I was astonished to find that my new friends showed no contempt toward me for placing our faith in my cousin. On the contrary, they seemed happy to have participated in such an adventure, and were happy to have claimed some of the valuables from the evil lair. It was after we returned from the trip into the gloom that we encountered our most difficult problem. Having collected a substantial amount of treasure on our voyage into the swamp, we were all busy purchasing equipment and preparing in our own ways for whatever adventures awaited. In a turn of events that truly puzzles me, Amerous betrayed our trust. Although I claim no familiarity with the persons or places employed by the scammer, he managed to make it known to the "wrong" people that Baldor was in possession of a gem of great value. If not for the trustworthy Radkin, Amerous' deception would have gone undiscovered, very possibly costing Baldor his life. Realizing the magnitude of Baldor's temper and the depth of his competence, I was particularly careful in revealing the truth to the good dwarf. His reaction was understandable. As we went to meet Amerous, I was very attentive to Baldor's mood, worried that a fight might erupt. As the deceitful elf came into view in the distance, my attention was focused squarely on Baldor, and I could see his anger building. But before I could interject some thoughtful comment, it happened. Without so much as a word, while Amerous was no more than a dot in the distance, Kelugth let loose fire from the heavens. His expression never changed. His countenance portrayed the

same, familiar pensive guise, even as he ignited the presumably confused elf. I have several times heard my father say, without knowing why, that one should never anger a mage. I now know why. Amerous hit the ground having never even seen his attacker. Being considerate of the legal difficulties associated with killing an individual, no matter how despicable, I encouraged the group to revive Amerous. We informed him of our discovery, and asked him to leave. He agreed. We were soon after joined by a very capable fighter by the name of Tracy. Tracy is a gentleman that I have known for some time, and feel that he will add greatly to our company's capabilities in the field. During the next few days, It became clear that something was wrong in Leonay. People were getting sicker, and the church was losing control of the epidemic. We have decided, before the illness catches hold of one of us, to head out to Xraxus, to inform them and possibly acquire some assistance.

### **15<sup>th</sup> Arthom, 1675 –**

As I last reported, we left Leonay, heading for the city of Xraxus. We didn't make it. Some time into the trip we managed to get captured and locked in a keep by a group of rat-man creatures. While captured, my father came to me in a dream, telling me to find an individual named Auron who could offer some help in repelling the undead horde that was, in our absence, threatening to overrun Leonay. Radkin's capable hands freed us from our vassalage and we began fighting our way out of the keep. After defeating an evil magic user, we made our escape. We feared that we had lost Radkin, but Kelugth administered a potion that revived the halfling. The keep that the rat-men and mage controlled was part of a small village. We freed the imprisoned villagers, and set out to find a group of goblins and ogres that had taken some of the townsfolk away, presumably to be sold as slaves. It didn't take us long to track the monsters, and with Smalls' help I cleared the front lines and vanquished the leader of this gang with my lance. The remainder of the creatures didn't last long against the capable force of fighters that our party had become. We did manage to find out that the rat-men were planning a campaign to attack and possibly take control of Leonay. I believe that

eventuality has been avoided. On our way to find Auron, we stopped in a small town to acquire passage to Auron's island (apparently he has an island) by way of boat. While in this town we learned of Radkin's horrible affliction. The potion administered to Radkin by Kelugth, unknown to any of us, was slowly turning the little halfling into a vampire. This fact was evidenced in a fight between the halfling-vampire and Tracy. If not for the efforts of our new companion Kyros, crusader for Arthom, things could have gotten very ugly. He warded off the now vampiric Radkin with his clerical power, saving Tracy from what would have been a nightmarish death

## **22<sup>nd</sup> Arthom, 1675 -**

We finally met Auron. Father was right. If anyone could help Leonay, this was the person. Or perhaps person isn't quite the word I'm searching for. Auron, as luck would have it, turned out to be a gold dragon. We were greeted at his door by a kindly older gentleman who, after some prodding, allowed us to give Auron our message. Upon hearing our news, he quickly took us to Leonay. Our group fought valiantly against the hordes of undead that were sacking the city, while Auron defeated their master. The leader of this undead army looked like a giant lich (or so I'm told, having never actually seen such a creature). I had promised myself that I would not allow personal affairs to creep into this journal of our adventures, yet I cannot let this event pass without note. After returning to Leonay, I was informed that my father had been murdered. Moreover, my own sister, Kitala, has been implicated. She is wanted for questioning, yet the authorities have been unable to locate her. I must say here and now that, regardless of what the courts find in this case, I cannot believe that she had any hand in the death of my father. Unfortunately our duties as a group will not allow me to pursue the mystery of my father's death. Other responsibilities presently take priority.

## **25<sup>th</sup> Arthom, 1675 -**

After The customary ceremony for my father, we took on the task of escorting a mage from the state of Tekat back to his home nation. While on this mission, the mage told us about the Seal of the Ages. In the wrong hands, this seal could allow the ancient evil gods to be brought back to walk among us. He explains the value of the complete seal and tells us where we can find the pieces. He tells us that with all of the pieces, he can put the seal together, assuring that the dark powers that be will never be able to bring the evil gods back to our world. With this quest we part company with the strange mage, in search of the first piece of the Seal of the Ages. This first piece lies in the ancient elven city of Anath Tirinth.

## **10<sup>th</sup> Telule, 1675 -**

After parting with the mage, we head for the elven city of Eareth, hoping to find a map that might guide us to Anath Tirinth. In Eareth, we met the Regent of Eareth, Sir Daramus. One of his colleagues, a bladesinger named Kianis Talien, provided us with a map and several potions to counteract poison. We were informed that we would need the potions just as much as we would need the map. They then provided us with an escort to the border of their lands. From there we traveled into Deepwood.

## **16<sup>th</sup> Telule, 1675 –**

Our first real problem in Deepwood was a Basilisk. This beast used its natural abilities to turn Kyros to stone. Kyros' petrification would have been a big problem if not for the kind assistance of a woman by the name of Keratesha. It was particularly nice of her to aid our petrified companion considering our rather rough introduction to this lady of the forest. It started when Baldor decided that he would attack a large cat that we saw tracking us in the forest. Unknown to us at the time, this cat was Ms. Keratesha's animal companion. She responded to Baldor's attack on her cat by promptly placing

three arrows in the middle of the dwarf's chest. Baldor, unceremoniously, dropped. Some quick explaining to the distraught lady earned us her trust, and she responded by reviving Baldor and curing Kyros of his rocky affliction. Soon after we met up with another lady of the forest – a druid. This young friend of ours, however, soon fell to the hungry maw of a dire wolf.

### **20<sup>th</sup> Telule, 1675 –**

It seems that there is no end to the number of good folks willing to aid our group on our mission. Several days ago, a strong fighter by the name of Kaylae joined our ranks. With our new companion, we made our way deeper into Darkwood. After several battles with giant, venomous spiders, we came across a small cottage in the woods. Suspicious, but none the less glad for an opportunity to rest, we entered the small house. As has been the case throughout our journey, this cottage brought us yet another challenge. The owner of this small domicile was a werefox, and in her company was a small band of adventurers who had succumb to her evil enchantments. With some effort we dispatched the werefox, and were forced to also kill several of her charmed allies. Some, however, were spared our blades, as their tie to her was broken upon her death. I must also add to this account the description of my first real world duel. It was not nearly as exciting as I imagined it would be. On the contrary, it leaves me with a rather hollow feeling inside. It's difficult to relish a technically sound performance when my skill cost another his very being. Indeed, the real world is no training hall. One additional problem we as a group may be facing is an apparent personality conflict between Tracy and Kaylae. After our victory in the cottage, these two proud warriors had a small dispute, the conclusion to which was the placement of Kaylae through a rather large window. They seem to have taken care of their differences, at least for the time being.

### **25<sup>th</sup> Telule, 1675 –**

As we made our way through the forest, we came across a small group of wanderers who appeared to be holding a winged elf captive. We managed to free

the captive elf, but Tracy did not come out of the battle unscarred. A fire spell from the opposing wizard caused Tracy's helm to melt on to his face and head. The result is nothing less than monstrous. Fortunately Tracy was less than handsome before the incident, and as such seems little perturbed by the scarring. The winged elf, Padrias, has decided to assist us on our journey, though I'm not sure what good a flying elf that lost his ability to fly will do our party. I'm also beginning to understand why so few people choose the life of professional adventure seeker. Our most recent combat cost our group two of our own. During what seemed a rather minor fray with two hill giants, both Baldor and Kaylae were killed. Worst of all, Kaylae's death was so senseless. Having been knocked unconscious during the battle, Kaylae lay prone at one of the giant's feet. Just as she was revived by one of our healers, she sat up and was crushed by the blind flailing of one of the monsters. Kelugth had, quite thoughtfully, blinded the beast by placing some bright light source over its eyes. What should have been a brilliant tactical decision turned into another lost life. I cannot help but place some of the blame for this loss on our lack of familiarity with fighting as a group. If we can keep everyone alive and well long enough to develop into a coordinated fighting machine, success should find us. On a more positive note, we have picked up two more companions to replace those that fell in battle. Thrax Forestwalker was pulled from one of the giant's large bags, and a rather dapper lady warrior joined our ranks some time later. Both are welcome additions.

### **7<sup>th</sup> Tekka, 1675 –**

Yet another of our group has been lost. Tracy, rather than falling to some horrific beast's claws, was lost down a hole in the forest's floor. We tried to retrieve him, but it was useless. Several hundred feet down the hole was a rushing stream, and I fear he was knocked out by the fall and drown in the water below. We have been joined by another brave soul. A lady elf named Senora gives us the advantage of a capable ranged attack with her bow and arrows. Ms. Keratesha introduced the elf maiden to our party, and her presence paid off almost immediately. When we finally found our way to Anath

Tirinth, we entered an ancient Temple of Arthom. Once within, we were attacked by a small army of skeletal warriors. This force seemed almost invincible, until we realized that the undead creations were guardians placed here by long dead priests to defend this holy sanctuary. When I identified myself as a Paladin serving Arthom, the undead warriors halted their attack, allowing us to fully investigate the temple. In addition to uncovering countless magical items and religious relics, we also came across a magical door. This door could only be opened by defeating its magical lock. Cryptic instructions for unlocking the door were provided, and our party's combined wisdom proved sufficient to solve the riddle. Behind the door we found a golem made of clay. This magical creature held the first piece of the seal. After several unsuccessful attempts to take the piece by force, we were able to subdue the golem with a magical phrase provided on the front of the door. We now had the first of nine pieces to the seal.

### **10<sup>th</sup> Tekka, 1675 –**

If not for the importance of our mission, I might be swayed to abandon this quest and return to my home in Leonay. Not long after joining our group, the dapper swordswoman fell in combat with a wolfwere. Just yesterday, Both Senora and Thrax met death in the clutches of a wyvern. Sometimes it seems as though our mission is destined to fail.

### **23<sup>rd</sup> Kinsu, 1675 –**

Two nights ago, as our party rested in camp, we were ambushed by drow. Their assault was, as one might expect, stealthful in the extreme. I woke a short time later to find myself, along with Kyros and Padrias, being held in a small cell. Kelugth was conspicuously absent. The undead fellow hauling the cart of torture implements didn't concern me nearly as much as the elf standing at the opposite end of the room. It was Amerous. The traitor was attempting to wring information from us, but of course we all held fast against his demands. When he decided to go the route of torture, I made my decision. I'd have to kill

him. Unarmed and flanked on either side by a guard with a sword, I knew my options were limited. When the opportunity presented itself, I made my move. I pummeled the guards with my bare hands, and was making my way for the traitor when he took my sight with brightly colored magical lights. Blind and unarmed, I waded in on the double crossing elf. Knowing his sword would soon find me, I braced for the blow, hoping to wrench the weapon from his grasp. My gamble paid off, and I disarmed the startled elf. At this very instant, the room was filled with the feral roar of a giant wolf. Kelugth, who had magically assumed the form of a giant wolf, stormed the room, along with a small band of adventurers that he had found in the forest. They were able to free us and reunite us with our belongings. Somehow, in the confusion, Amerous managed to evade my sword. Together we made our way out and in to the forest. The newest members of our adventuring company number three. The first is Gwendolyn, a lady Druid. Second is Debrianna, who by my estimation is a rogue. Finally there is Jarus, a mercenary. It is my most sincere hope that we all remain together to carry out this mission.

## **29<sup>th</sup> Kinsu, 1675 –**

These past 24 hours have proven quite interesting. Last night, as we camped, I received a visitor. The older gentleman who greeted us at Auron's home was standing before me – fully armed and armored as a Paladin of Arthom. He introduced himself as Rainok Ameratha – my great grandfather. I'm sure my shock was evident. My father had told me of Rainok, a faithful servant of Arthom. Now the man stood before me. We exchanged pleasantries, and I answered several of his questions regarding current family affairs. After some time, he explained to me the reason for his visit. He came to warn me of the danger facing my companions and me. To aid us in our cause, he then removed his armor, placing it at my feet. I was dumbfounded. After a short pause he handed me his weapon – a bastard sword like none I had ever seen. No sooner had the weapon left his hands did he begin to age. In the time it took me to draw a full breath he fell into nothingness. When our group awoke this

morning, I made a point to gather everyone and detail my encounter with Rainok Ameratha. I told them of the gifts he had bestowed upon me, and of the warning he had issued. As we packed up camp, preparing for another day of travel, it happened. I have always had a certain sense about people – I can feel ill will. As we packed, I felt that feeling like never before. Most the time it is a kind of uneasiness, requiring my utmost concentration. This hit me like icy air when walking from a heated Inn on a winter morning. I turned to see the indescribable. Hovering above us was pure evil. It swung a huge axe with one arm. Where the other arm should have been, it lashed at us with whip-like appendages. We all returned its attacks with our own, yet some of us seemed unable to damage the thing. In retrospect, we believe some weapons did not contain sufficient enchantment to do the beast harm. What was certain was the harm being wrought by my new weapon. Caredakas, as my great-grandfather had called it, cut through the demon, and I could feel the unholy beast writhe under Arthom's exquisite power. After a tiring battle, we overcame the demon, forcing it back to whatever nightmare it calls home. It should be noted that Jarus, though unable to harm the demon, proved to be the difference in the battle. Knowing that his best attacks had little effect on the creature, the wise warrior stood right along with me, providing a distraction and absorbing the majority of the demon's offensive efforts. Such clear thinking in the midst of heated combat is rarely seen. As I commit these words to parchment, the gravity of today's events has yet to fully settle on my mind.

## **24<sup>th</sup> Tylo, 1675 –**

For quite some time, little happened to warrant record in this journal. The time spent peacefully traveling served us well. Less than a month ago we made our way to the great city of Xraxus. What a splendid place! Upon arriving, we secured the services of a guide. Halon, though quite young, has proven a very capable guide, and has more than earned his wage. The very day we arrived we entered our talented group in the city's annual tournament. I will not waste ink with long tales of our exploits, but it should be noted that we performed well beyond expectations, winning the preliminary tournament

and taking second in the veteran's tournament. Kelugth's unusual talents proved to be the difference for us in the competition. He was simply brilliant at both running and swimming. His skills on horseback were unmatched. Most interestingly, the chariot appears to be the preferred mode of transport in that magical land he calls home. For winning the preliminary tournament, we were awarded a home within the lower half of the city. Though old, it will serve us well once furnished.

### **30<sup>th</sup> Tylo, 1675 –**

Not long after taking the key to our new home, Kyros brought us some shocking but welcome news. Within Xraxus' Adventurer's guild (I'm not kidding, its called FODDER), held as part of a museum collection, was the second piece of The Seal of the Ages. After some discussion with the guild, we agreed to take on a mission, for which the seal piece would serve as payment. The mission was straightforward – eradicate whatever evil had taken up residence in the crypts just outside the city. We carried out this mission, destroying two vampires and a mummy in the process. In addition, we found a wealth of magical items, some of which we claimed as our own, according to our agreement with FODDER. With the second piece of the seal in hand, we will attend to affairs here in the city before heading out for the third piece located somewhere in 'The Land of Black Ice'.

### **9<sup>th</sup> Fiolonna, 1675 –**

We honestly had every intention of resting this past week. No sooner was the second piece of the seal in our hands then we encountered another obstacle. Earlier this month, we discovered that our prize house was not without an occupant. A ghost had taken up residence in the old inn, and several days ago, it took over the body of Gwendolyn. A consultation with the church gave us the method by which the ghost's soul could be put to rest. Less certain were the instructions on returning Gwen's displaced soul to its own vessel. An educated guess led us to the gem in the pommel of her sword - the depository for her

displaced soul. The capable hands of Arthom's priests returned Gwendolyn to us, and we booked passage on a ship bound for the arctic. We left our home in the trusted care of our now good friend Halon. In addition, we've picked up yet another companion. A lady entertainer by the name of Anastasia was introduced to us by Halon. Though not the most capable fighter, I think having a companion with bardic skills should serve to keep our spirits high on our long journey north. Additionally, Padrias has decided to return to his homeland. His presence will be missed, and we all wish him well.

## **22<sup>nd</sup> Fiolonna, 1675 –**

Less than two weeks into our sea voyage, our vessel came under attack. A pirate calling himself Dalemon Windcharmer boarded our vessel, intending to seize its cargo. Tactics proved the difference in the battle that followed. Choosing to remain hidden in the bowels of our ship, we formulated a plan while Windcharmer's goons carried out his orders. Easily doing away with several individuals who climbed down into our ship's hold, we eventually decided on the plan. Kelugth's responsibility was the opposing force's female mage. Magically invisible, it took our powerful wizard little time to overwhelm his opponent. He had assistance from Debrianna, who rained arrows on the mage from a strategic higher position. On the ship's deck, the rest of our party had our hands full. I accepted an invitation to honorable single combat with Windcharmer, who was at least my equal in armed combat. We fought to what was essentially a draw, though it should be noted that he, not I, was the first to retire from combat. He was carried away to safety by one of his other planar servants. Kyros, who had initially followed me into combat with Windcharmer, respected my desire to fight him individually. In a move of truly theatrical proportion, Kyros vaulted from the deck of our ship, landing in the midst of Windcharmer's armed force on his own vessel. Kyros, along with Jarus, quickly dismantled the enemy unit, sparing those that threw down their weapons. With the enemy force defeated and prisoners in tow, we began searching through our newly acquired pirate ship. In addition to the usual material gains, we also came across another enemy mage. He however, made no

effort to resist us, instead inquiring as to the disposition of the other enemy magic user. Hearing of the lady mage's death in the preceding battle, he appeared to deflate before our very eyes. It turns out that the lady wizard was his wife. In a rather bizarre turn of events, we agreed to use the power of our resurrecting device to return his spouse to life. In exchange for this consideration, he agreed to educate us in the use of the magic item that controlled the pirate ship's movement. It turns out that a magical helmet (I'm sure Kelugth has a more technical term) allows the ship to be motivated and navigated by a single, spell-wielding individual. With this information, we were able to tow our original ship, along with all captives from the battle, to a nearby island. We rested on our new ship while repairs were made to the other vessel. A short time later, a group of harpies attempted to capture and consume some of the ship's men. With little effort, we were able to defeat the harpies. It seems as if my hopes for a well-organized fighting unit are finally being realized. Kyros has proven to be a formidable fighter, often sacrificing his own well being to assist one of our own. His clerical gifts also serve us well. Jarus is raw fighting power. His technique is brutal and direct, not wasting energy on movements that do not provide results. Together, we three form what is essentially our 'front line'. Gwendolyn is intelligent and conservative in battle. Her clerical magic is her primary weapon, providing healing for our front line, and offensive strength when the situation allows. Her sword arm should also not be discounted. Additionally, Gwendolyn often serves well as a scout, staying well ahead of the party as we travel. Debrianna's strength is in stealth. Several times I have seen an opponent's teeth gnash and face contort, knowing that somewhere behind him she lurked - twisting her sword. She is also very capable with a bow. Anastasia is our least capable armed combatant, though her skill is increasing rapidly. Fortunately, she recognizes her own strengths and weaknesses, and takes steps not to engage in melee unless absolutely necessary. In any other group, I would also say that she is a very capable spell caster. Kelugth's magical prowess, however, is far beyond any I have witnessed. I know of other magic users who would perhaps be considered 'more powerful', but I know of no other that possesses the aptitude for magic that Kelugth possesses. Indeed many magical affects seem to him to be second

nature, requiring no more than his will. Together we have all come a long way.

### **11<sup>th</sup> Kadinastis, 1675 –**

These last two months have been exhausting. We arrived at the port city of Fjordheim on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of Aflenton. Soon after docking we met Dell, the guide that would lead us north into the Land of Black Ice. We were a bit shocked when we met Dell, as he is a giant lynx. None the less, he has performed his function exceptionally well. We wasted little time moving North, Dell leading the way. The cold here was extreme, but nothing, we were told, compared to the temperatures farther north. As we traveled, the danger of this place became very clear to all of us. The place is fairly infested with giants. Several times we found ourselves fighting for our lives, the vast white landscape offering us no ready concealment. Additionally, we were also lured into a battle with a frost mummy. Fortunately, Kyros was able to destroy the undead abomination before it did any real damage. As these obstacles were not enough, we all narrowly escaped an encounter with an angry white dragon. Indeed some battles are best left for another day. Dell eventually led us into the green wall, a thick forest that somehow evaded the icy grasp of the eternal winter on this continent. The first thing we (well not everyone) noticed about this place was that we somehow were cut off from our gods. It was very unsettling to suddenly have such a strong bond severed. After several skirmishes with plant-persons, we encountered a group of elves. Ordinarily, elves in a wood such as this would be a welcomed sight, but there was something odd about these elves. I first attributed any perceived peculiarity to differences in cultural development. The differences, however, ran deeper. Due to their extreme isolation, these elves believed themselves to be the only on the world! You can imagine their confusion upon meeting our small band. In addition, the disruption of our spiritual link with our gods was apparently an inherent property of this place – these elves had no gods. They claimed there were no gods, and our declarations to the contrary were viewed with extreme suspicion. Having soon set aside our differences, we developed a dialogue with the elves.

They told us of a powerful evil that was controlling the surrounding area. The few towns that existed in this inhospitable region had been overrun by undead. This band of elves, perhaps a race in its own right, had suffered tremendously while trying to combat the overwhelming number of creatures that were destroying their homelands. Their numbers had dwindled to the point that it looked like the entire community might be lost forever. Our appearance has served to spark some small hope within these elves, not to mention severely altering their worldview. After spending a short time in their village, we were briefed in more detail on the infiltration of the area by undead hordes. Having experienced similar problems in my own home country, I was not surprised to hear that they suspected a single powerful individual was behind all of the undead activity. Their suspicions fell squarely on a tower that stood, suspended, in the center of the lake bordering their forest. This individual, whom they called the Kormadeth, was supposed to be the single motivating factor behind all of this area's difficulties. Seeking the most direct solution to this problem we have arranged to meet with a small community of pegasi that live in the mountains just north of the forest.

## **21<sup>st</sup> Kadinastis, 1675 –**

The Pegasi agreed to take us to the tower in the center of the lake. In exchange for their services, we agreed to kill a group of nearby griffins that have been attacking the intelligent, flying equine. We carry out this mission, and discover a building not far from the griffin's nesting area. Investigation reveals a colossal structure – clearly a home or meeting place for giants. Having seen the menace these creatures pose to the area, we decide to attack. Our first order of business was attending to the large canine creatures being held in pen in the center of the compound. After some deliberation as to our course, Gwendolyn took the lead. Moving in within earshot of the confined dogs, she was able to, in some way, communicate our intentions to the animals. Her methods elude me, yet she was able to free the animals from their confinement without turning them against us. Our next objective was the destruction of the main giant stronghold. Of course by this stage of our adventures, we were

sensible enough to formulate a solid plan. As we hid in the trees that surrounded the building, we would periodically see a giant come out and head for the trees to use the latrine. Seeing an opportunity to thin their ranks, we decided to jump the next giant that showed his self. As we waited in ambush, Kelugth tried to gain access to the building. Under the cover of magical invisibility, he had little difficulty infiltrating the giant's lair. When the next giant emerged from the structure, we were ready. Our attack was quick and effective, easily overwhelming the unsuspecting giant. We soon after realized that something was wrong. Jarus, mere moments after sinking his axe into the immense humanoid, began changing. Before we could fully comprehend what was happening, he had transformed into the very giant he had just struck. After overcoming our (and his) initial shock, we realized that Jarus had experienced an effect caused by one of his magical possessions (most likely his gauntlets). Understanding the advantage that this offered us, we were quick to formulate a new plan. Kelugth soon returned to us with a detailed account of the layout and contents of the building. The giant contingent within the structure was formidable, but certainly not unbeatable. Admittedly there were those among us with doubts about the wisdom of our decision to attack the giants, but their fears were eventually laid to rest. With Debrianna stationed on the roof and Kelugth waiting, invisible, within the main room of the building, we moved in. Jarus' newfound 'condition' provided us with the subterfuge we needed to take the giant's by surprise. Once within, all hell broke loose. Within three minutes, Kelugth had the every board in the structure either burned or burning. Jarus, chopping through the giants with unbelievable strength, shifted form with every new victim he vanquished. The rest of us tore through the building, fighting as many giants as we could get our hands on. It soon became apparent that the fire was becoming more of a threat than the giants, so we exited the structure with haste. Among the prizes claimed from this encounter was the third piece of the Seal of the Ages. Unfortunately, it came magically joined to the pommel of a giant sized sword. Upon seizing the sword, Jarus realized that the sword contained an intelligence. The intelligence advised him on the removal of the piece of the seal. To accomplish this, we would need to break the sword,

and the only means we had for doing this was with lava from a nearby mountain. After informing our pegasi friends of our intentions, we set off to find some lava. After a bit of travel, we came across a cave. In our weakened state, we were unable to take on the giants that lurked at the cave's entrance. Instead, we found ourselves quickly retreating, a group of giants on our trail. With bears to follow our trail, we knew we would be unable to evade them. Before long, we made our way to a cliff. Looking at a thirty-foot climb straight up, we reasoned that the bears would be unable to follow. Kelugth was the first to make the ascent. As others followed, the sounds of the approaching giants grew louder. Finally, with only Anastasia and myself left to make the climb, Anastasia started up. About half way up the wall she lost her grip and came crashing to the ground. After a couple more unsuccessful attempts, including an effort on my part to carry her up with me, she finally made it to the top. With precious little time to climb, I made haste. Just as I reached the top of the wall, the giant's arrived. They quickly discovered that our position was just too easy to defend, so they returned (presumably) to their cave. This gave us the time we needed to gather our strength and plan our next move. The next morning, we made our way back to the cave entrance. Within the cave, we found a giant-led mining operation. To our dismay, we also find that the giants are using human slave labor. It took little coaxing to convince the group that this situation required our attention. Fighting deep within the cave, we engage a rather large force of giants in an immense cavern. After a well fought battle, we were able to defeat the slave driving giants, freeing the imprisoned humans. Further investigations in to the caves led us to a separate chamber occupied by fire giants. Of course, we reasoned, lava must not be far away. Sure enough, we found a pit filled with molten rock that would serve to break the giant sized sword that Jarus now carried. Leaving the smelting to Jarus, the rest of our group planned the attack on the couple of fire giants inhabiting this cavern. Seated on the edge of a large pit, the giants offered Debrianna the perfect opportunity to move in for an attack from behind. As soon as she let loose her attack, we rushed in for the kill. Once again, strategy proved the difference in the battle, and the giants were defeated. Areas of silence, strategically placed by Kelugth, prevented the sounds of our combat

from alerting any giants in other portion of the cave. No sooner was the battle complete than Jarus was rocketed through the cavern by a tremendous explosion. We all now know why it's a bad idea to break a magical sword. Our objective met, we fled from the caves before more giants could be alerted to our presence.

## **25<sup>th</sup> Mistbringer, 1675 –**

It has been over a month since my last entry, and much has happened in that time. After we defeated the giants and freed the third piece of the seal from the hilt of the giant's sword, we planned our invasion of the tower in the lake. The pegasi sped us to the towering structure, dodging flying creatures set on preventing our arrival. Shrewd maneuvering by Kelugth drew most of the attention away from the group, and we were all able to land safely. Upon landing on the tower's roof, we immediately found ourselves in melee with several golem-like guardians. Before the battle had really developed, it was brought to a halt. A gentleman, human by all appearances, burst from a nearby door, calling for an end to the fighting. We were all too shocked not to comply. In a move that truly baffled us, he launched into a lengthy apology, asking us what he could do for us. Sensing the distrust from the rest of the party, I guardedly greeted the man. Explaining, in simple terms, the reason for our sudden arrival, I used my natural ability to read people, trying to determine his motives. The man exuded nothing but genuine hospitality. After a fine meal and a brief introduction to this gentleman mage's apprentices, we were given free reign over a portion of the tower. Kelugth was even allowed access to the tower's library. When the time came to retire, we were each given our own room. As we slept, the nightmare began. Their attack was fierce and well orchestrated. As we all rested in our rooms, Kelugth remained in the library. The gentleman mage, seizing his opportunity, caught our mage off guard. As this transpired in the library, one of the apprentices sneaked into Kyros' room, magically charming him. By the time we realized something was wrong, it was too late. A full-scale war erupted in the tower. The deception was completely revealed when, one by one, the apprentices showed us their true

natures – they were vampires. As Jarus, Gwendolyn, Debrianna, Anastasia, and I fought for our lives, we saw things go from horrible to sickening. Kyros, under the evil influence of the vampires, was turning on us. He started attacking me from behind. Having enough trouble fending off the undead, I feared I would not be able to escape the capable attacks launched at my flank. No other time in my life have I felt more prepared to die. As the possibility of my own demise started to sink into my conscious thought, I surged at the female vampire standing before me. Forcing her back with my blades, I was trying desperately to put ground between Kyros and me. As soon as Jarus realized Kyros' condition, he took action. Concentrating all of his attacks on the mighty crusader, his axe bit into Kyros like a sapling. Before I had finished off the vampire I had engaged, Kyros lay at Jarus' feet. Pausing not, Jarus swung around to contend with the remaining vampires. It took the two of us little time to finish off the remaining apprentice-vampires. As the fight drew to an end, our master-vampire host hit us with a few spells and vanished. Suddenly the situation was clear – we had survived their attack. Our losses, however, were devastating. Kyros was dead, Kelugth was missing, and several people were unconscious. As we sat, heads swimming, we realized that Kelugth's animal companion was stirring. If our mage's familiar was alive, then so was our mage! Unfortunately, the teleporter device used to reach the library had been deactivated by the master-vampire. Even if Kelugth was alive, we had no way of reaching him. Knowing our enemy could come back to finish us off at any minute, we quickly began formulating a plan. It soon occurred to me why they had chosen Kyros as the target of their charm spell – his morning star. Kyros' morning star was a weapon renowned for its power to destroy the undead. The master-vampire must have realized this, targeting Kyros to disable his weapon. We quickly ran back to Kyros' room and, sure enough, there was his morning star. With this weapon, it was just a matter of time for our not-so-generous host. As we anticipated, he returned to finish us off. It took no time to invoke the power of the morning star, bathing the vampire in powerful sunlight. In a matter of minutes, our attacker was no more. Reduced to ashes, only a necklace was left of what used to be our host. The necklace proved to be the device through which the tower could be

controlled. Our first order of business was finding Kelugth. As we suspected, he was alive, though a bit shaken up. The most notable outcome of his encounter in the library was the orange hue that replaced the familiar white pallor that his skin once held. Additionally, his once white hair was now a brilliant, flaming red. Together, we all made our way back to our rooms, and set about resurrecting Kyros. Back amongst the living, it was clear that the proud crusader was very uncomfortable with his actions while under the vampire's control. Inconsolable, he cast his enchanted awl-pike, the weapon he had used to attack me, off of the tower and into the lake. Time and prayer are the only remedies for what is ailing him now. Our mission accomplished, piece of the seal in hand, we headed back into the forest. Inside the tower, we had uncovered an ancient relic of Kelugth's god, Kadinastis. With this relic, we provided the elves of the forest the means to rediscover the gods that they had so long ago forgotten. Tired but satisfied, we made the long voyage out of the forest and back to Fjordheim. From there we boarded our ship (Dalemon Windcharmer's ship!) and set sail for home. The voyage back to Xraxus would have been completely uneventful, if not for a visit we received just prior to reaching the city. As we went about our daily activities, we were attacked by another demon. Similar to the beast that attacked us the morning after I received Caredakas, this embodiment of evil launched a vicious assault. I will not recant the details of the battle, other than to say the victory cost me my left hand. I hope that once in Xraxus, I will be able to have the injury attended to by a cleric in Arthom's Temple.

### **10<sup>th</sup> Mathouk, 1675 –**

Our arrival in Xraxus proved anything but restful. Upon docking, we all made our way back to our house. We walked in the door to find a disturbing scene. There appeared to be a struggle in the entry parlor. Calling for Halon, we received no reply. We soon made a grisly discovery. Halon's decapitated head sat on our dining room table, like some horrendous centerpiece. As I entered the dining room, the head lifted from the table and began speaking. Its message, delivered in a detached, unfamiliar voice, insisted that we take our collected pieces of the seal to a keep some three days outside of Xraxus. In exchange for the

seal pieces, we would receive Halon's body – and Smalls. They had Smalls. We left immediately. I would have to wait to have my hand repaired. Our journey to the keep, which we had visited several months earlier, was interrupted by a large band of trolls. Commanding the trolls was a fire giant. I could see Jarus' eyes light up when he spotted the giant. With his customary resolution, he waded into the conflict. Around me fire erupted as Gwendolyn's incendiary spells exploded into the trolls' ranks. Kelugth stood in the center of our campfire, hurling spells that held the bulk of their force at a distance. Several of our group fell, but Jarus' efforts turned the tide. As soon as he drew blood from the fire giant, he began his magical transformation. It wasn't long after that we had finished off the last of our opponents. After finishing our night's sleep, we continued our journey to the keep. We later arrived to find the keep well defended by a group whose armor bore a symbol identical to the symbol worn by the fire giant leading the Trolls. Reconnaissance by Kelugth and Gwen revealed that a small army was guarding the keep. Leading that army was Amerous. 'Tis hard to keep a good traitor down. It was obvious that a frontal assault on this force would be suicide, so we chose a more surreptitious strategy. We would all enter keep inside of our portable hole. Kelugth, with Gwen in animal form, would carry us into the keep by way of an extra-dimensional door. Once inside, we would climb from the hole and undertake the business of locating Smalls. We soon located Smalls, magically ensnared inside of a tapestry. This tapestry sat at the foot of a sleeping soldier's bed. We expected the soldier entrusted with guarding this prize to be formidable, but we could have never in a thousand years anticipated this man's power. Rising from his bed, he drew his sword. Immediately, our mage's invisibility spell was negated. Fortunately, our force wasted no time in launching a full assault on the guard. No other member of our group had any inclination as to this individual's power, yet I could feel it like sunshine on my face. He was an antipaladin – and a powerful one. The one saving grace was that we caught him sleeping. He was wearing no armor. For this reason alone, we were able to overwhelm him. Towards the end of our struggle with the antipaladin, Our old friend Amerous paid a visit. Stepping into the room from an extradimensional space, he strode up behind Kelugth, intent on burying a blade in the elf's back.

The sound of that blade scraping against the magically stone-hard skin of our wizard was almost humorous. Did he really think that Kelugth would fail to completely prepare for this encounter? It would have taken us mere moments to skewer the traitor, had he not fled to the safety of his pocket dimension. By this time, a general alarm had sounded, and the echo of boot heels could be heard reverberating through the halls of the keep. Snatching up the cloth that imprisoned Smalls, we decided to make our escape, giving up any hope of locating Halon's remains. We slipped from the keep just as we had slipped in, and made our way back to Xraxus. Though I failed to bring Amerous to justice this day, I promise myself that he will know the smooth wood of a courthouse bench - or the cold steel of my weapon – for what he did to Halon.

### **14<sup>th</sup> Kinsu, 1676 –**

It has been several months since I laid quill to parchment, and much has happened in the intervening weeks. Most notably, I was called home by Arthom. On our way to the great jungle continent, seeking the next piece to the Seal of the Ages, we encountered several hostile sea beasts. In the battle that followed, I lost my life. As I left this world, I felt the joy of Arthom wash over me. As I approached a large structure, I was greeted by an old man that I did not recognize. With a broad smile and a wink, he said, "Oh no my friend, he's not even close to finished with you". I can only describe the feeling that followed as overwhelming calmness. Through this calmness came the sound of water lapping at a ship. I opened my eyes to find Kelugth staring down at me, a look of mild satisfaction on his face. He flashed a quick grin (almost a smirk, really) and walked purposefully away. He, apparently, had other things to attend to. Deeply impacted by my short visit to the afterlife, it has taken me some time to gather the will to commit our experiences to parchment. After a long journey, we eventually made our way to the city of Foothold. I use the term city loosely in this particular context. Foothold is essentially a village. The most notable thing about foothold was that it was completely empty. Some investigation throughout the town revealed that the inhabitants of this town had been carried away by a local group of reptile creatures. Against Jarus' wishes, we set out to find and free the captured people

of foothold. It should be noted that Jarus has shown an increasing tendency to not volunteer his services in any purely humanitarian endeavors. He has, thus far, abided by my decisions despite his feelings. Thus is the way with military men. His lack of compassion has, however, become disturbing. I hope this change is not the result of any influence exerted on his will by the intelligence in his weapon. On second thought- I hope it is. A young fellow from a nearby tribe offered his services to us as a guide. We gladly accepted. We eventually located the stronghold of the reptile creatures. Despite what turned out to be a textbook example of how NOT to infiltrate an enemy camp, we managed to defeat the lizard creatures and free what slaves remained. It suffices to say that our compatriot Kyros spent a short amount of time after the combat in the form of a snake. Needless to say, this was not his intention. While escorting the residents of Foothold back to their homes, I had the opportunity to chat with one of the surviving captives. It turns out that he had once adventured with my parents! On top of this he tells me that my mother was one of the greatest mages in all Arrea! Uplifted by such a fantastic revelation, I set about planning our strategy for locating the next piece of the seal. In truth, the bulk of the trip was planned by Kelugth, our one and only expert navigator. We returned to Foothold intents on setting out for the seal piece. We already had a vague indication of its location, based on a map uncovered at the reptile people's stronghold. We received another shock upon boarding our vessel. Anastasia was gone. Having been entrusted with caring for a lone child found hiding inside of stronghold, she was to wait with the child on board the ship. The child claims that, while playing her instrument, Anastasia summarily vanished. Though concerned for her wellbeing, there is little we can do to locate her. After several weeks of travel, we eventually locate an obelisk indicated as significant on our map. The monument is located in the center of a goblin encampment. We decide to test fate and stride boldly into the goblin village. Quite to our surprise, the little beasts did not attack us. Though they were clearly unsettled by our appearance, the little monsters made no effort to attack. Their attention to us can best be described as curiosity. The obelisk, we soon discovered, was engraved with an ancient message. Closer examination revealed that the message was written in two

languages. One of the languages was recognized by none of us. The second however, was an age-old script that Kyros almost immediately picked out. Gwendolyn, using Kyros' translation of the second language, was able to decipher the first language. The brief exposition on the obelisk offered us a rather detailed description of the path that we had to follow to find the next seal piece. After several more weeks of travel, we finally reached our destination. Buried beneath hundreds (thousands?) of years of swampy muck sat an ancient vault. The vault, a storehouse devoted to Arthom, was where we expected to find our prize. We soon after met the present occupant of the establishment. The current tenant was most assuredly NOT a follower of Arthom. The most horrific sight I have ever seen emerged from within the vault. An absolutely enormous black dragon took flight soon after exiting the building. If not for the cloud of magic that hung over our group (an after effect of our effort to gain entrance into the vault), the creature may never have even seen us. But he did see us. After politely asking his permission to enter the vault, he decided it would be much better to kill and eat us. In an uncharacteristic orgy of self-preservation, we all turned and ran, full speed, into the relative safety of the nearby forest. The wyrm, mildly amused by our reaction, waited for our next move. After what seemed like a day of deliberation, we settled on a strategy. I would challenge the evil yet honorable beast to a feint of honor (yes, this is the best thing we could come up with). My invitation to honorable combat at first surprised the wyrm. He, however, acknowledged the ancient request and we soon after had agreed on the terms of the battle. He was not to use his breath weapon or flight capabilities, and I agreed to fight him inside his lair, away from possible intervention by my friends. I entered the battle fully expecting to be crushed by the mighty creature. Somehow, though, I rose to the occasion. Attacking in a fury, I unleashed all of the power in my mighty weapon. The wyrm, as magnificent a creature as it was, was no match for the holy might of Arthom. With four blows from Caredakas, the dragon fell. I soon noticed that the beast was regenerating, so I waited for it to regain consciousness. Upon awakening, it conceded defeat, and allowed each of the party to make one selection from its collection of personal treasure. Everyone chose, save Kelugth. Apparently

overwhelmed by the creature's sense of personal honor, our mighty mage refused to take any of the wyrm's many impressive treasures. He instead took a single piece of gold, and that was taken only to fulfill the honorable arrangement made between the dragon and myself. I must say that every time I feel I have lost all capacity for surprise, our wizard does something else to astonish me. Making a quick exit from the dragon's lair, we retreated back into the jungle. Our return journey was shockingly uneventful. We traveled for many weeks without any need to resort to combat. As I finish this entry, we sail home. Xraxis? Of course not! Our destination is my TRUE home, the beautiful land of Leonay. It should be noted that it is now obvious to everyone in the group that Debrianna is pregnant. I have yet to speak with her about the situation, but I fear that this will most likely bring an end to her career as an adventure seeker. I only hope that my suspicions as to Jarus' involvement in this situation are unfounded. He is, however, the only male in our group who warrants such suspicions. I must now find a way to discuss this sensitive topic with Debrianna.

## **21<sup>st</sup> Tekka, 1676 –**

As I wrote earlier, we made our way home to Leonay. What I hoped was going to be a pleasant homecoming turned instead into yet another nightmare for our party. Upon our arrival, we learned of a series of unsolved disappearances that have plagued the city over the past several weeks. Before long, the truth as to the crimes was revealed to us. A band of doppelgangers had moved into the area, and were killing people so as to assume their identity. This fact was revealed to us through scrying magic cast by Kelugth. One of the creatures had assumed the identity of my Aunt Dalia and killed her recently born child. Although the deception was revealed, the doppelganger escaped. We soon after found ourselves invited to dinner with some of my relatives at the Greyshield's newly acquired keep. Seeing an opportunity to catch up on family business, I managed to convince the rest of the group to come along. Most everyone was happy to go, although Kelugth and Jarus seemed a bit starved for action. Unfortunately we got more action than we could handle. Upon arriving at the keep, we were given a short tour of the grounds and made to feel very much at

home. It's an absolute shame that a group of friends cannot, even amongst family, let their guard down. As my twin cousins headed to the nearby village, Kyros decided to accompany them. Jarus stayed in the courtyard, along with Kelugth, to watch the infantrymen drill. Gwen and Deb decided to stroll/fly around the keep while I stayed inside to talk with a few of my cousins. Alone with my cousins Duncan and Damon, both of whom are talented swordsmen, I never felt the slightest hint of trouble in the air. For this reason I was nearly skewered when Duncan lunged at me with his sword. His sword thrust caught me clean in the abdomen, causing an all too familiar stabbing nausea to well up in my gut. Before my mind had an opportunity to analyze the situation, my sword arm was doing its work. With one smooth motion I drew Caredekas, intent on dispatching this capable foe. My cousins, both Entreverde trained swordsmen, would ordinarily have overwhelmed me with an assault too rapid to counter. But I had Caredekas. Using the same holy enchantment that I had invoked against the black dragon, I slowed their attacks, while at the same time speeding my own. My first thought was clear – kill Damon as quickly as possible. Damon was, by my estimation, the more dangerous of the two (though the distinction would prove moot should I fail to dispatch either foe in the first minute of combat). Much to my surprise (and joy), Damon made the cardinal error in armed combat – he underestimated me, assuming my skills to be less than they were. His lax sword work opened him up for two master passes as we exchanged feints. As his weapon searched for my midsection, I side stepped and pivoted, giving me a clear shot at his back. As I landed this blow, I sensed his next move - a counterclockwise spin. Where this intuition as to his intent would normally afford me the opportunity to land a blow, my magical advantage allowed me to execute yet another back attack, identical to that which I had just landed. As he began to turn, My magically hastened movements carried me opposite his spin, again letting me deal a sword stroke to his back. This flurry of sword work proved too much for the able swordsman, and he fell face first to the floor. As I spun to meet Duncan's attack, something strange invaded my otherwise impenetrable battle concentration. Where Damon's body should have fallen, instead sat the corpse of some strange humanoid creature. Then it hit me – Doppelgangers. Both of

these men – my cousins – were actually doppelgangers. The ensuing battle between myself and the Duncan imposter proved one of the fundamental rules of armed combat – Do not, if avoidable, attack a man in plate mail with a rapier. Though the imposter possessed all of Duncan’s technical skill, my superior armor proved too much for even his finesse. After several expertly executed hits to the joint between the plates in my sword arm’s armor, I summarily hacked him down. Though less visually appealing than the previous exchange with Damon, the ends justified the means. As this combat was completed, my thoughts went to my comrades. I knew they were scattered throughout the compound, and there was no way to tell how many of the Greyshields were actually doppelgangers. Exiting the keep I found Debrianna standing under a tree. The fact that she was alone was a comfort. I was reasonably sure she had not been set upon by the doppelgangers. As I talked with her, Kyros walked up. He almost immediately launched an attack on me, urging Debrianna to join in. At first I parried his blows, but I soon decided that Kyros was too formidable to toy with. After a brief skirmish, I finished off the Kyros imposter. Fortunately, Debrianna did not fall for the creature’s cries to aid in my defeat. Upon killing this doppelganger, Gwendolyn showed herself. I was pretty sure that she was really herself, so I nodded in agreement when she declared that she would go to find the real Kyros. After explaining the situation to Debrianna, the two of us headed back into the keep to find our compatriots. Checking through the keep, I eventually came across Kelugth and Jarus. They were eating dinner with a large group of infantrymen. I was able to relay my earlier encounter to Kelugth by way of his familiar’s mind-reading ability. They excused themselves, and we left the room. Apparently, none of the soldiers were imposters, as no one showed the slightest hint of suspicion at our actions. Our next order of business was finding Gwendolyn and Kyros. As we walked from the building, my cousin Tyrus approached us. Covered in mud, I remembered that he had left about a week ago for a scouting mission. Figuring that he could be trusted, we enlisted his aid in tracking Gwen and Kyros. His expert skill in the woods soon brought us to the bodies of our fallen friends. Hovering over their corpses was a doppelganger. As it prepared to feed on our druid and crusader, we attacked, quickly dispatching the creature.

Kelugth then set about the business of returning our friends to the land of the living. But something went wrong. As our mage recited the words that would invoke the power of his magical resurrection device, the magic in the air built to the usual crescendo, but then faded, leaving the soulless bodies of Kyros and Gwendolyn prone on the ground. Apparently, as Arthom had decided some weeks ago that my time on this world was not complete, so he decided that Kyros had some other purpose to fulfill. Likewise Gwendolyn's god had determined that her time had come. It has been quite some time since our party had lost one of its own in battle. Gwendolyn's capable forest sense will be missed. As for Kyros, I can only say that luck turned her back on the good crusader that day. What I am sure of is that he went down fighting, declaring the glory of Arthom even as the final sword blow stole his last breath.

### **9<sup>th</sup> Telule, 1676 –**

After our experience with the doppelgangers, we decided that it would be best to get on the road as quickly as possible. We arrived at our ship's dock to find our vessel missing. A short chat with the harbormaster revealed that our ship had been stolen during our absence. This, of course, was no surprise. We were fortunate to have made it this long with the old pirate ship. Rather than lay out the coin for a new ship, we decided it would be reasonable to make our way back to Xraxus by horse. Having spent little time with Smalls lately, I felt it was the perfect opportunity to spend some time with my steed. As luck would have it, a dwarven fellow by the name of Belzim ended up tagging along with us. Sturdy and strong, he has proven to be a capable fighter. Having traveled many days without incident, we were nearly lulled into thinking our journey to Xraxus would be uneventful. We soon found otherwise. As we made our way down a well traveled road, we began to hear the percussive rumble of a marching army. Those among us with sharper vision were soon able to make out a small army in the distance. Not wishing an encounter with the marching men, we gave them a wide berth. We were rather surprised to find that they adjusted their course to intercept us! Just as I figured the situation couldn't get any worse, we discovered that the entire force making its way toward us was undead. That took the situation up two notches on our urgency

scale. As we fumbled to put together a plan, Kelugth grew tired of waiting and called forth an immense column of fire between ourselves and the legion of undead. Seconds after his spell exploded, the cavalry unit of the undead army broke through the flames and descended on the party. At the same time arrows rained down on us, hitting as many mounted undead as party members. I immediately pulled my holy symbol from my belt and invoked the power of Arthom. All but two of the riders were instantly blasted from existence, but their undead mounts fought on without riders. As we all engaged the skeletal horses, a familiar flash lit out from behind me, indicating Kelugth had stepped through one of his magical doorways. As soon as it was clear that our battle with the undead horses was under control, I set out around the column of magical fire to take out the archers that continued to launch arrows into the melee. Just as I had done moments before, I drew my holy symbol and commanded the undead archers to be gone. All but a handful was blasted to dust, allowing me to make quick work of the stragglers. As I finished off the last of the archers, I saw Kelugth behind the enemy lines unleashing blast after blast of magical fire on the leader of the undead army. From my original position I had been unable to see the enemy commander, but from here his face was all too clear – Halon. The youngster's corpse had been animated as an undead abomination. As I momentarily paused to consider aiding Kelugth, I heard the shouts of a still raging fight from around the column of fire. I immediately turned back to help finish off the rest of the Skeletal horses. Fortunately, most of the undead foot soldiers had been killed by Kelugth's column of fire. It took us only a few minutes to finish off the few that remained. As Kelugth's flame column spell faded, we saw our mage put the killing blow on the animated corpse of our friend Halon. I was later quite relieved to learn that what I thought was Halon's corpse was actually a kind of illusion cast by a powerful mage wishing to cause us as much personal trauma as possible before doing us in with the undead army. As we all tended our wounds and gathered our equipment, a half-elven ranger emerged from a nearby copse of trees. Apparently, he had watched the entire battle, even assisting us with arrow shots from his hiding place amongst the trees. He

introduced himself as Dakkari and offered to join us on our way to Xraxus. We, of course, accepted his offer.

### **?th ???, 1676 –**

Upon our arrival in Xraxus, we all took the time to relax and enjoy a brief vacation from the turmoil that, of late, has defined our lives. Kelugth, seeking to make the most of our down time, spent many hours in the library. After quite a few visits to sages and scholars, we eventually found a bookstore owner who was able to tell us of a way into the land of Aranknar – the resting place of the fifth piece of The Seal of Ages. Much to our surprise, the only known gateway into Aranknar was located in the astral plane. I admit that this had me quite concerned. Kelugth, on the other hand, hadn't looked happier in weeks. In addition, we learned that the trip through the portal into Aranknar would cost us all our hearing. To remedy this, we purchased six scrolls bearing restoration magic. The price – 72,000 gold. Scrolls in hand, we all entered the astral plane through the doorway located in Kelugth's tower in the Land of Black Ice.

### **?th ???, 1676 –**

I woke this morning with a piercing headache. Poking my head out from my tent, I let my vision settle on the group of adventurers that lay scattered about the smoldering campfire just ten paces from my tent's flap. Yes, I know them all. But what of yesterday... or the day before? I sat there, head poking from my tent like a turtle's shell, for what seemed like an eternity. My only clear memory was of a dream. Last night, I was visited by my god. Arthom, as magnificent a sight as any mortal could behold, spoke with me. No, this doesn't do the encounter justice. I had a conversation with him! Last night it was revealed to me that the man I had always called 'father' was in fact my step-father. My birth father is... it seems blasphemous to write it... my god. If not for the clarity of the dream in my mind I would have thought the entire episode a figment of an overactive imagination. But no, he spoke with me. He revealed that he placed me in my mother's womb, and entrusted my human father with the usual responsibilities associated with that role. I am to serve a

purpose on this world. A purpose I do not fully understand. As I replayed the dream in my head, My conscious mind noticed that one of the people laying at the campfire was no longer sleeping. In fact, he hadn't been sleeping when I first looked upon him. Kelugth sat staring straight up at the dimly lit sky. As I emerged from my tent, some of the others did likewise. Those laying around the fire rose up and we all gathered together. As each person assembled their memories, we soon realized that we were all missing a portion of those memories. Our last recollection was that of entering a whirling vortex. Yes, we were entering Aranknar through a portal in the astral plane. But that was certainly some time ago. I had since changed my clothing – but how long ago was that? None of us knew. Each of us, however, knew what lay ahead. We were camped outside a complex of ancient ruins. Somewhere inside lay the fifth piece to the Seal of Ages. How did we know this? We could not answer. With much trepidation, we packed up camp and set off into the ruins.

### **?th ???, 1676 –**

Setting out into the ruins, we soon came across a large building. Once within, we discovered a pair of double doors that, had we had the opportunity, we certainly would have opened. The opportunity never presented itself. We were immediately set upon by shadow creatures. It was soon evident that any lost time in our recent past did not, in any way, compromise our fighting efficiency. We valiantly cut through the ranks of the shadow creatures. To my dismay, however, one of the vile creatures managed to take control of Belzim. I was left with no choice but to cut down the dwarf-turned-shadow monster. My only consolation is that the good dwarf was spared the misery of that evil existence. Following the combat, we located a secret door off to the side of the room. This, fortunately, diverted our attention from the enormous double doors that had earlier dominated our curiosity. Within the secret area behind the hidden door, we had a brief skirmish with a strange creature that engulfed both myself and Debrianna. After being extricated from this predicament, we all set out to investigate the area. Following the one and only hall in this area to a dead-end, we soon discovered we had access to the room that lay behind the double doors we had originally planned on opening. Kelugth, entering the

room both invisible and magically insubstantial, quickly returned with what, were he visible, would certainly have been a look of horror painted across his face. He immediately relayed to the rest of us that, within the room, was the fifth piece of The Seal of Ages. Also within the room was Amerous, an anti-paladin (THE anti-paladin), and my cousin Beldun. From Kelugth's description, Beldun has become utterly dominated by the weapon/artifact that he, over a year ago, had fooled us into helping him steal. Additionally there was the small matter of a shadow dragon keeping company with these three ne'er-do-wells. We exited the building with much haste. As we headed from the ruins, content to leave this battle for another day, we happened across a dwarf by the name of Mordax. Mind you, this was no ordinary dwarf. Standing over a head higher than myself, and wearing armor made of bone, he was truly an intimidating sight. As we headed into the forest that bordered the ruins, I took the opportunity to introduce Mordax to the rest of the party. As I chatted with the big dwarf, we saw the anti-paladin and Amerous emerge from the ruins. As they stood, scanning the surrounding for some sign of the intruders that Beldun had detected (Kelugth has no idea how Beldun saw him while invisible and insubstantial), my first instinct was to charge them while the odds were more in our favor. A quick glance at Jarus' disapproving countenance showed me the folly of my impulsive thinking. With a shadow dragon so near, it would be highly foolish to tempt fate by entering combat. We all remained still, waiting for the two men to return to the ruins. As we sat still, Mordax informed me that he had been heading here to find those very men. Apparently they had slaughtered a number of his tribesmen about a half-day ago. For his sake, I'm glad he found us first. Once our two enemies retreated into the ruins, we spoke at some length with Mordax. He revealed that we were indeed on the outskirts of Aranknar. His clan's mountain home was a short distance away, and he indicated a willingness to show us a way out of the area. As it turned out, Aranknar was a nation beneath the surface of an island located somewhere near Kelugth's homeland. Upon hearing that we were indeed still on Arrea, I was quite pleased. Pleasure turned to confusion when I realized that Mordax was implying that we were presently underground. Looking up, the "sky" had the appearance of a pre-sunrise glow. No

ceiling was visible. Everyone save Kelugth marveled at this revelation, and we all headed off to Mordax's tribal home. Arriving at the mountain home of Mordax's clan, we immediately realized that the place was now occupied by some evil force. After contending with a magic induced panic by the entire party and attacks by shadow monsters, we all regrouped and made our way toward a temple that Mordax suggested may hold some of his clansmen. As we arrived at the temple doors, we were attacked by more shadow creatures. These, however, were different from the creatures we had fought earlier. These took control of our shadows. Once controlled, our shadows coalesced into forms matching our own. We were forced into combat with exact replicas of our selves! Fortunately, these replicas lacked our magical abilities, and we were soon able to dispose of the shadow-snatching fiends. After this brief struggle, we entered the temple, finding the few survivors of the evil invasion. Moving on, Mordax guided us out of the mountain complex and onto the surface of the island. The salt-tinged aroma of the air immediately lifted my spirits. Finding ourselves at the bottom of a 200 foot chasm, we decided to set up camp for the evening. It should be noted that Mordax consumes truly heroic portions of food. Apparently, this appetite is the price he must pay for his enormous size. We spent the next several days traveling south across the surface of the island. After a few small detours around what looked like giant-populated villages, we arrived at the beach. We are now in the process of marching the perimeter of the island, hoping to find a harbor city where we can book passage back to Xraxus. It should be noted that, sometime during our "missing time" I acquired a new ability. I have no idea how, but I have somehow gained the elven ability to see when there is no light. Things glow in red hues, particularly living things. This new skill has taken some time to grow accustomed to, but will no doubt aid me in my coming travels.

### **?th ???, 1676 –**

While camped on the islands southern tip, a large group of giants was spotted marching north along a road some three miles from our camp site. Kelugth set out to identify the marching giants. Upon returning, our mage verified our suspicions – the marching giants were a military unit. Late that night, the

stealthier amongst us infiltrated the marchers' camp site. It was revealed that this group was marching north to meet another band of giants. Together, these giants were to launch an attack on one of the giant-villages we had spotted on our trip south. Kelugth's familiar, being perhaps the most well read member of our group, was able to identify the various types of giants we were dealing with. It became clear that the marching army, the aggressors in the coming attack, were decidedly evil in their world view. With the welfare of the citizens of the unsuspecting giant-town in mind, we have set out to warn its citizens.

### **?th ???, 1676 –**

If not for my elation, I would lack the strength to make this entry. With Smalls' speed offering me an advantage, I was easily able to reach the unsuspecting citizens of the targeted giant-village. After making formal introductions, I was able to convince the good folk of the city that an attack was imminent. After riding back to report my success to the party, we all returned to the giant-village hoping to aid in the town's defense in the upcoming confrontation. The attackers were unprepared for their assault. Having (naturally) not anticipated the presence of our small force, they were overwhelmed by our combination of magical defense and brute force counter attacks. Within a day, the attacking army was cut in half, driving the opposition's survivors away in a hasty retreat. Luckily, our large allies were able to aid us in our efforts to return home to Xraxus. We were sent into the island's western mountains in search of a powerful but isolated mage who, the giants told us, was most likely to aid us in our efforts to return home. Last night, while camping, we were set upon by ogre-magi. The evil creatures were able to destroy almost the entire party. Only Kelugth and I survived their initial onslaught. While Kelugth feigned death, I pretended to fall under the charm-spell of our opponents. As soon as the situation allowed, Kelugth and I attacked, utterly destroying the ogre-magi before they were able to raise a defense. Kelugth soon set about the task of magically raising our slain comrades from the dead. Unfortunately, both Jarus and Mordax failed to respond to Kelugth's clerical efforts. As we mourned the loss of these two friends,

we found the magic user that we had set out looking for! He had been ensnared within a magical prison by the ogre-magi. In appreciation of our efforts, he offered to grant a wish for the group! I immediately responded by asking the mage to return our fallen comrades to life. Miraculously, he obliged! Moved by the apparent selflessness of my request, the mage offered to grant us yet another wish. Of course I have asked that we all be returned to Xraxus. Tomorrow morning, he has promised to send us home.

### **12th Kinsu, 1684 –**

The weight of recent events smothers my psyche like a leaden blanket. The year is 1684. **1684!** Eight years have passed since we entered the Astral vortex leading to the magical city of Aranknar. Our combined recollection accounts for, at most, three months. Kelugth seems to think that some strange magical property of the lost city slowed our time in that far away place. All I know is that they've foreclosed on our home here in Xraxus. Fortunately, the kind elven ladies who now occupy the building have been considerate enough to offer us sanctuary after our long journey. As I write this, Dakkari rests in the adjoining room. Kelugth has gone to the university to do some research, and the others are out on the town. Hopefully, tomorrow will prove less draining.

### **13th Kinsu, 1684 –**

The hour is early and, if not for my elf-sight, I would lack sufficient illumination to write. Late last night (early this morning really) I was set upon by one of our hostesses. What we thought were kind elven ladies were in reality succubi. Dakkari and I were attacked as we slept. The same happened to Jarus. Jarus and I were able to destroy our attackers. Dakkari was not so fortunate. At least he was able to flee with his life. At this time, a lone succubus and a demon that she gated into our world roam free in the city. We've promised the church of Arthom that, in exchange for casting the restoration magic that will return our drained life energy, we will find and destroy these two other planar fiends. Arthom help us.

## **15<sup>th</sup> Kinsu, 1684 –**

Our ordeal with the denizens of the lower plains has ended. After having our drained life energy returned to us by the clerics at the temple here in Xraxus, we set out to locate the demons before they could do too much damage. We, as a group, went back to our former home to gather clues. As we attempted to piece together the possible whereabouts of the demons, I heard a knock on the door. Answering the knock, I was greeted by a comely lady elf by the name of Allieya. She was searching for her master, and informed me that this was his “home in the city”. After Relaying our experience with the succubi, we all agreed to follow Allieya to her master’s house outside of the city. I secretly hoped that he had nothing to do with the demonic invasion. As it turned out, he was indirectly involved. As a mage specializing in summoning magic, Allieya’s master had managed to trap the demon’s within the circle of power that surrounded his home. The Demons’ ability to gate in others of its kind, however, soon put the mage in a desperate situation. Trapped within his own home, he found refuge within his private sanctuary to Kadinastis. As we arrived at the home, it was evident that the demons had set about the task of gating in allies. After a long battle, we overcame the demon hoard, and freed Allieya’s master. Pleased with our efforts, Allieya has decided to join with our party. After a day or two of rest, we will begin researching the location of the next piece of the Seal of Ages. We only know that it lies in an ancient place known as the “Great Necropolis of Mathoma”.

## **20<sup>th</sup> Kinsu, 1684 –**

With the true location of our next destination still a mystery, we have all taken the opportunity to attend to personal business. Kelugth is gone, presumably studying in his tower at the northern pole. The others, myself included, come and go daily. Out of appreciation for our efforts in fending off the demonic horde, Allieya’s master has been kind enough to return our former house to us – free of charge. In attempting to ascertain the location of the next piece of The Seal of Ages (we know only that it rests in an ancient city known as The Necropolis of Mathoma), I have enlisted the help of a sage, a necromancer, and my own church (what a combination!). With an eye

toward future battles, I have also decided to spend a large portion of my campaign earnings on a splendid set of full plate barding for Smalls. The dwarven craftsman whom I have entrusted with the construction of the armor has given me a 30 week estimate on the completion time for this exceptional commission. We will not be spending that much time in Xraxus. I will have to return for the barding at a later date.

### **23<sup>rd</sup> Kinsu, 1684 –**

I have at last met with a measure of success in my efforts to track down a possible location for the Necropolis of Mathoma. A cleric from the church of Aflenton has directed me to the great library in the village of Gilem. Perhaps this world's largest storehouse of knowledge, the great library is the most likely source for ancient texts that refer to the long lost necropolis. Though a rare tome is required of any person seeking entrance to the great library, I suspect some of the books in Kelugth's possession will earn him access. If not, we may have to purchase a rare text from a local sage or wizard. We won't head out immediately for Gilem, but will instead wait until the party grows restless before heading south.

### **12<sup>th</sup> Tylo, 1684 –**

Our stay in Xraxus has lasted a bit longer than I had originally anticipated. Honestly, the time resting has served us all well. I've taken the time to fully recuperate from various small pains that have plagued me of late, while Kelugth has immersed himself in his studies. I admit some degree of shock concerning the activities of Jarus. Expecting the solemn mercenary to spend his free time enjoying purely hedonistic pursuits, I was pleasantly surprised when he approached me asking for thirty-thousand gold pieces. When I inquired as to his need of such a gross quantity of coin, he informed me that he was purchasing land and constructing a building for use as a martial training academy! You can imagine my delight at this news. Jarus has always demonstrated superior skill with any weapon he has wielded, but I doubted he possessed the determination to carry through with his dream of opening his own fighting school. I feel a bit of shame for misjudging him so. Though the

buildings were only completed a week ago, A small army of would-be fighters has already enlisted to serve under Jarus' capable tutelage. Among those seeking Jarus' instruction is a young Elven fellow by the name of \*\*\*\*. A competent mercenary in his own right, \*\*\*\* will act in Jarus' stead during the long periods of travel that await our party. We are scheduled to head south for Gilem in two days. From there, we know not where our road leads.

### **17<sup>th</sup> Fiolonna, 1684 –**

I make this entry from a very comfortable chair in an inn in the village of Gilem. About a month ago, we began our journey south. Kelugth first used his teleportation spell to carry our entire group to the city of Alranda. From there we traveled by horse, as Kelugth was not familiar enough with Gilem to safely teleport directly to that location. Upon arriving in the village, we witnessed a tremendous battle. A group of nine lesser dragons were assaulting a great wyrm! After Kelugth's familiar confirmed that the metallic wyrm being attacked was indeed a goodly creature, we ran to the aid of the tremendous beast. A short battle ensued, and we were all able to handily defeat the attacking lesser dragons. As we enlisted the aid of a local tanner in collecting the skins of the defeated creatures, Kelugth set out for the library. Some ten hours later, our mage returned to us as we settled into an inn. He brought back with him knowledge that will not only aid us in our effort to find this piece of the Seal of Ages, but several future pieces as well. Additionally, the mage handed me a parchment bearing notes written by one of the librarians of the great library. The notes detailed several passages from a book that I recognized as belonging to my church's list of blasphemous tomes. The book, titled "The Book of Legends" (by Herod), apparently relates a story from untold years ago in which my god, Arthom, walked the world as a mortal man. Though my superiors naturally view this as heretical, the information handed down to me regarding the relationship between my mother, my earthly father, and my god leads me to believe that the story may have merit. Amongst modern scholars, the works of Herod are generally given credence. Additionally, from my own personal experiences speaking with Arthom, he struck me as a particularly humanistic deity. I dare say it is not hard to imagine that, one day long ago,

he walked the surface of Arrea, defending those virtues that I myself presently strive to defend. On a related note, I feel I must comment on my church's practice of marking some books as "unfit for consumption". Though my memories of the woman are not fond, Gella Savard is to be credited with imbuing me with a sense of "academic honesty", as she so dryly described it. Ms. Savard, as my tutor and teacher during my formative years, risked quite a bit by teaching me things that were occasionally at odds with the teachings of the Church of Arthom. I would occasionally hear her and my father in heated debate over the material to which I would be exposed. Though my father sometimes protested, she invariably won my father's approval (or his acquiescence). It was her "academic honesty", or openness to seemingly heretical (yet logical) notions that has stuck with me. To this day, I am not comfortable with the idea of protecting people from information. "Let the wise judge", she would say. In retrospect, I believe Ms. Savard had judged – and I've yet to encounter any wiser than she.

**??<sup>th</sup> ?????, 1684 –**

After a long journey, made quicker by the aid of the metallic wyrm we assisted in Gilem, we arrived in Gharaful. A tremendous city, the inhabitants of the place did not enjoy the same standard of living as those in Xraxus. Long before we reached the city proper, we were besieged by paupers and children. We, with our finery, stood out amongst these motley masses like a bottle of Amerathan in a dwarven saloon. As we strode four abreast through the filthy streets, we witnessed a funeral procession. The mourners walked through the center of the city and into what appeared to be an outdoor temple. We then saw the deceased, along with several others, enter a portal and vanish. After speaking with a few locals, we determined that the portal took the remains of the deceased to a necropolis where the body would be interred. This provided our first clue as to a possible way of finding the Necropolis of Mathoma. After further research, we determined that Mathoma was likely the necropolis used by the inhabitants of an ancient city known as Firth. Now ruins, Firth lay many days distant. We leave tomorrow with a local caravan.

??<sup>th</sup> ?????, 1684 –

Much has transpired since my last entry. Two of our comrades, Mordax and Debrianna, decided to leave our group. It was obvious to all of us that Debrainna was grossly unhappy of late. Urban by nature, our long journey south and through the desert wore on her more than any. She ultimately decided to head home, not wanting to jeopardize the success of our mission. Concerned for her safety over the long trip home, Mordax decided to accompany the lady rogue. He also longed for the company of dwarves, and this place offered little hope of satisfying that longing. In their stead, we have picked up the most unlikely of companions. We discovered Gradon near death as we traveled to Firth through the harsh wasteland of the desert. Being a Minotaur, Gradon was not a likely candidate for our hospitality, but we decided to revive him with the hope of learning something useful about the immediate area. Our hopes paid off. He detailed a raid on his village by a group that bears striking similarity to our arch-rivals in this quest for the seal. Seeming good at heart, we gave Gradon the benefit of the doubt, allowing him to join our group. Of course it didn't hurt his chances that we had recently lost Mordax and Debrianna. With our new friend in tow, we headed for Firth. Before we reached the ruined city, we were paid a visit by a most unlikely ally – Amerous. He told us that The Seal was no longer a necessary ingredient in the freedom of The Triad. According to the traitorous elf, The Triad had found a way to escape the extra-dimensional prison that bound them. By joining into a single deity, the prison could be compromised, loosing the single deity on the mortal world. Arrea would then be at the mercy of the three faced god. Necessary to the god's power, however, were three items- armor, a helm, and a mace. All three of these were known to us. Chiefly, the mace was the same mace that transformed my cousin Beldun into the thing that now calls itself "Legion". The other two pieces of armor could similarly be located on or around Legion. With directions and a magical land-boat left for us by Amerous, we split apart from the caravan and headed east to find Legion. He, along with my nemesis the anti-paladin and several other conspirators, were traveling directly towards the coast. To say we doubted the veracity of Amerous' story

would be an understatement. Kelugth, however, seemed inclined to believe him  
That was all I needed to know.

**??<sup>th</sup> ?????, 1684 –**

Well met! I write this from the bow of this ship as we all stare in disbelief towards a distant, beautiful, horrible temple. This temple lies in a peak on a large volcanic island off the eastern shores of the desert in the southern region of Arrea. Should this ship be found, know that its time adrift originated at this location. Though unsure, we suspect that some terrestrial form of the three faced god formerly known as The Triad lies within the temple structure. We know that we are this world's only hope for survival. In time, the entity within will develop the power to leave this place, dooming the inhabitants of this world for an eternity. The dread amongst us is palpable, yet we all no what must be done. The events put into motion nearly a decade ago have brought us to this place. We, Ahrlin, Kelugth, Jarus, Alleiya, and Gradon, leave for the temple immediately.

Should this journal be found, do not resign it to some dusty shelf in a little-visited library. Do not deposit it within some corner of a decrepit museum, a relic of some lost place and time. Instead, share the stories within. Those with quill and capable voice, write songs celebrating the triumph of Arthom over the doom that nearly befell our fare world. For anyone reading this text owes a debt to the greatness of my god. Live well, friend.

## Ahrlin Aragon Ameratha

Paladin of Arthom, Swordsman of Entreverde, Wielder of Caredakas, Master of Smal Is the Amerathan