

How and Why We Got Where We Are

[ed: This document was written by Clark Slocomb, recapping the last ten years of our Dungeons and Dragons adventures under his dungeonmastering. It was written as a brain dump from memory over the course of one or two days at the end of March, 2007. Red text indicates metagame notes from Clark. Player, and soon-to-be dungeonmaster of this group, Shawn K. O'Shea, offered to read over the entire thing and edit it. To that end, this document has been edited for spelling, grammar, typographical errors, disambiguation and narrative flow. Any errors in it at this point are likely due to the fact that it took me about three weeks to get through all the editing, and I haven't had time to go back and proofread the whole thing again. Please enjoy! -Shawn]

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A hundred or so years ago, Hendrick, the King of Jacinth, was approached by his advisers. Together, they concocted a plan to make the world a better place, "simply" by removing evil. With a great deal of magic this was done, but at the cost of the King's life. As events unfolded, odd things started to happen to the most powerful in the land. A poignant example, a trusted paladin, a captain of the royal guards was corrupted. She was found to be a mass murderer and was killed, although her body was never found.

The story of this paladin was told in detail in a different adventure.

Jehu, Hendrick's son, became king. As Jehu got older, he began to suspect that the problems flowing through the land were the direct fault of his father. Luckily, his father had the foresight to build a failsafe into his plan (or perhaps he did not trust his advisers that much). A series of five temples were to be built, each holding a single weapon, that when brought together would return evil to the land. The King began to research what was needed. Fortunately, the locations of all five temples were widely known.

Soon, King Jehu died and the task fell to his young son. King Joram called on a group of adventurers from the local training site: Cornelius the Great of the Ukon, the wizard; his associate, Cordelia, a rogue; Cassandra, a sorceress with a flare for fire; Chi, a diplomat's son who had a flair for shadows and a foreign looking sword; Thal, the Halfling, who excelled in reconnaissance and acquisitions; Thain the Dwarf who never once uttered "Hi-Ho" or "You have my axe"; and the King's 'cousin', Aurelia, a Cleric of Zeus.

Kassandra was originally rolled as a Wizard, Thal as a Scout (a second edition kit that was half ranger and half rogue). This document deals with these characters in a revisionist history as they were re-classed during the conversion from second edition rules to the d20 third edition rules. Chi was rolled as a Ninja but during the conversion became a custom class during the 3.0 conversion. Primarily, he was treated as a fighter... mainly because, until reading this, most people didn't know he was a ninja. Also of note, Thain is related to the builders of the temples.

You might be wondering why Aurelia is listed as the King's 'cousin' -- it all goes to the way politics work in Jacinth. The royals keep track of the next 100 seats to the throne (the Dwarven King is always seat 100). A royal's position changes based on births, deaths, and marriages of those around him or her. Aurelia in the month or so leading up to this point has just slipped into position 104. Her family has a plan to push her back up in ranking... she is betrothed to one Sir Garrison Kayne.

King Joram told the group what was happening. The lack of evil in the land was causing an imbalance and it needed to be fixed. A more experienced group would have troubles on the quest as the imbalance would affect them first. In order to further protect them, a magic item was created to help delay the personal imbalance, and so they were sent to Argo to find Talteron (Dr. Tal). This wizard had created the Amulet of Alignment Shift Protection... one for himself, one for each member of the party, one for the King, one for his captain, Sir Garrison Kayne (who is second in line for the throne), and one for the Dwarven King.

And no, his name was never "Captain Good Guy". That particular title can be held by any paladin. Kayne was originally going to be Clark's character because Paul was going to run the game. Paul then promptly moved to California and left Clark all of his books and the adventure. Kayne and Aurelia are betrothed despite the fact that she is well over 100 years older than he is.

The group heads off to Dr. Tal (posing as postmen on the Great Road). There were several hazards along the way, but they finally reached their destination, picked up the amulets, and headed back to the capital of Jacinth. When they arrived, they distributed the amulets. They were told that Kayne would be heading north into foreign lands to collect evil creatures and return them to Jacinth. No sooner had they also been informed of their task to quest for the five temples, then a large portal opened and a dwarf spilled out defending himself against three minotaurs. The minotaurs were subdued and the dwarf introduced himself. Unfortunately he could not speak the common tongue. A few starts and stops later (and thank goodness for racial languages, like Dwarven), the party found that Donakar had been separated from his group and was a Cleric of Thor. Having no way to return to his native lands, he joined the group figuring that saving one world was as noble a cause as saving any other.

Why is it always eff-ing minotaurs?! (Characters being dumped through portals fighting minotaurs is a plot device that has been handed down to me from my DM in college... and I'm sure that he had received a similar treatment sometime in his gaming career.) This "mail run" is where Thal developed her cattle scam with Aurelia... stealing common cows, marking up the price three times and charging Aurelia a finder's fee for finding purebred cattle for sacrificing to Zeus. If Aurelia ever knew that Thal was doing this, she never let on.

After a short delay dealing with some highwaymen, the party made it to the first temple. Unfortunately, it was infested by kobolds. The assault lasted several minutes, and the survivors were allowed to escape, literally with their tails between their legs. The single room consisted of five large obelisks, one at each corner and a larger one in the center. And also an Earth Elemental. With the elemental defeated, the four corners were rotated and colored gems lined up, making the larger, central obelisk slowly lower revealing a staircase. The main temple was found to be infested by large insects (such as spiders and centipedes) and partially collapsed. It was also discovered that everyone's weapon had improved as if by magic during the combat with the elemental. In one large 'lake room', Cordelia found a ring. Thain discovered that he really didn't like water, after falling in a couple of times. After making it through a long corridor filled with webs, they were faced with two rooms. One contained a pedestal with a sword, the other, filled with chests of gold coins and gems. Both Cordelia and Thal's fingers itched to get to the gold, but knew that it must somehow be a trap. It was Donakar who first stepped foot into the treasure room, tipping the corridor and dumping everyone into the room. The piles of coins turned out to be gold leaf and the gems glass. A rain of creepy-crawly bugs that started shooting out of the vent in the ceiling were of great concern, however. Just as Thal was about to go under the sea of bugs, Donakar produced a wand, and expanded the depth of the room, making a new doorway. Bugs were everywhere, stinging and biting. Cordelia became unhinged pulling bugs from under her clothes. Everyone stripped naked to clean off the bugs. A large millipede had made a comfortable home under Cordelia's breast. After everyone was clothed again, and Donakar scolded, the room with the sword was entered. This door slammed shut as well, and the sword disappeared. One of the statues came to life, a stone Golem. It was eventually defeated, which opened a secret room containing not a weapon as promised, but a wooden rack and some glass stones about half the size of a basketball.

By placing the stones in the correct divots, and putting a torch in the torch-holder, a map of the country was displayed on the wall complete with the locations of the temples. This map revealed a new location for the second temple.

The ring was initially planned as a subplot for Thal, but she missed the roll, and Cordelia did not.

Tammy (Cordelia's player) was so wiggled out by the whole buggy experience that she took several showers when she got home. It bothered her so much; it was written into her character that from this point on, she suffers from entomophobia. Thain falling in the water was the first time the running catch phrase of "Dwarf doesn't care" was used.

The land of the Dwarves, UnderRealm was close by. Having a delivery to make, it was the next logical stop. The horses were housed half-way down, under a lake and the party stopped by to give the Dwarven King his amulet. There was a big feast in our honor, mostly that of Thain for taking such an honorable mission. Donakar was taught common, and Chi and Kass found that they shared many similar interests. They soon found themselves sharing each others bed. Cordelia, bothered by strange nightmares, wandered the streets of the underground citystate and soon found she was being followed by a seven foot tall, grey-skinned, scarlet-robed, bald man. Whenever she would turn to see him, he was gone. One time though, she turned around nearly walked into him. He told her that she was to get her fortune told for free. She refused, but he insisted. She had her fortune told by a pale man who looked like he could have already been dead, but not realized his passing. He told her that her quest was folly and she should go home, taking her friends, and become a very rich woman. Perhaps it was the lack of sleep, but she declined, and went back to her room where she fell fast asleep.

This was the first time we saw the grey guys and the nearly-dead man. Too bad she never told more people about this... more on them later....

The morning broke with news that the royal vault had been robbed. Only a small trinket was missing, but the newcomers were first on the list of suspects. Cordelia awoke completely naked in her bed (not the way she remembered going to sleep) with the missing trinket in hand. After quickly getting dressed, she sneaked off to the vault. The trinket was found by a guard in the hallway near the vault, calling off the hunt for the thief. The party was informed, not so subtly, that they must be going. The party made a quick stop at Thain's ancestral home. With no one at home, it was time to begin the trip to the second temple.

Also in the Dwarven Realm, there was a visit to Thain's favorite watering hole. A sign outside read that there was a ten drink minimum (not bad for a Dwarf). However Tammy was holding baby-Amanda and swung her around and in a baby-talk voice proclaimed "Ten drink minimum! Oh-No!" which lives to this day.

There was much discussion as to whether the Great Road should be used or if the party should travel through the forest to the 'new' second temple. From the entrance to the dwarven kingdom, the Great Road makes a winding path away from the area where the second temple should be located. The direct wooded route would be significantly shorter, so the group blazed a trail through the old forest. From the forest, they would head north to the city of Near Shore, home to Aurelia, before continuing on to the temple. Along this path, Kass and Chi both decided that they shared similar taste in women, and Cordelia fell into that category. The plan was for Chi to seduce Cordelia and spring a threesome on her. Cordelia, already losing her grip on reality, slowly fell into Chi's seduction, further separating her from Cornelius. Additional sightings of the Grey-man did not help her hold on reality.

Just before cutting north in the old forest, a copse of sequoia-sized trees were found. A quick search revealed a door in one. There were several broken statues lying around as well. Just inside the door was a staircase leading up. Several hundred feet up, there was a platform guarded by a basilisk. Once the basilisk was defeated, a chest was found just beyond it. The chest was empty, however there was a statue of an elven woman dangling from the platform with something just barely in her grasp. Once this statue was pulled onto the platform, it was discovered that the scroll case contained a few Flesh to Stone scrolls. One was used and the statue became flesh-and-blood again. The woman was named Terran and calculations showed she had been stone for several hundred years. Her quest brought her here long ago to find something called the Dagger of Fours. In fact, there were four daggers that could combine into one powerful weapon. She had one piece now, but had lost her party to the basilisk and been turned to stone herself. Her memory was foggy, so she could not recall all of the details to find the next part. She chose to join the group in an attempt to try and wake up her mind. Thain spat over

the edge of the platform. After walking down the stairs again and making it outside, Thain was hit on the head with something wet. It turned out to be dwarf spit. Luckily, he didn't care.

Sadly, this was one of the few sessions that Terran's player actually made it to (if not the only). Terran's story was to become more intertwined with the finding of the weapons, but also, the best laid plans of Mice, Men, and DM's..... From here until her departure (see below), she was played by several guest players.

A few months after initially setting out with Donakar and a little over a week after Terran joined, the party eventually reached the city of Near Shore. It was so named because it is the closest to any neighboring lands, just a short day of sailing north. Aurelia's father was not too happy with her party, mainly because they were mostly (well, OK, were all) commoners and thus beneath Aurelia's station. Unfortunately, the party did nothing to change her father's mind. Donakar was caught by the guards proselytizing for Thor. Cordelia and Cornelius tried to pull a scam on bystanders attempting to relieve them of their money, but did so poorly. Lucky for them, Thal was there to take advantage of everyone. Cassandra turned up pregnant and attempted to use a potion to abort the pregnancy. Several failed Alchemy checks however, nearly killed her. Chi finally bedded Cordelia, who then started having massive headaches. Thal decided to purchase some much needed gear, and borrowed a ring from Aurelia, only to be caught trying to put it back. Cordelia's headache went away, but she had cat eyes. Thain noticed this and told Cornelius, who wasn't very happy about anything. Cordelia decided to break into one of the other rooms of the castle and help herself to some items. The only problem was it turned out to be the captain of the guard's room, and she had to return everything. Cordelia was finally pinned down, the ring removed and the feline curse lifted. She still wanted that ring back and hence the plotting began.

So, about the only person who did not embarrass Aurelia at all during the stay was Thain -- thus giving birth to Aurelia complaining to the group "Between the stealing, trying to kill yourself, and trying to convert the populous of the city to a whole different group of gods, yes, I'm having a bad week! I mean, right now, my best freakin' friend is the Dwarf!" Aurelia got everyone out of hot water long enough to leave town. Funny, but it wasn't until writing this that I recalled two towns in a row we were asked to leave. During this stay, we converted from AD&D (2nd Ed) to the d20 system (3.0)

Back onto the Great Road, a few more sightings of the Grey-man by solely Cordelia, and then the group had a sighting of an army of greys. They issued a warning that the group should just give up and go home. Soon after that, they just kind of disappeared. Creed and Peregrine (part of Kayne's group) joined up for a couple of days, while Kayne had business elsewhere. The party headed through a desert and onto a large butte (think Ayres Rock) which required a long climb up its steep, vertical slopes. At the top was a small pool which held the Water Elemental guarding the temple entrance. Again, everyone's weapon improved as a result of the combat with the Elemental. This temple, which was essentially a long wide spiral staircase, was filled with undead. Zombies and Skeletons of a people unknown to the group. At the bottom, there was a door that emptied into a large maze. After a long time in the maze, they found the end, an odd pucker in the wall. Thain pushed his way through and held the strange door open for the rest of the group. Inside was a soft, almost squishy, three-dimensional path, that eventually spilled out into a large room with an acid lake. A rickety bridge allowed entrance to another squishy path then leading to a windy room. The route eventually spilled out into a large room protected by several three-headed dogs and hellhounds. A statue of a squid-headed man bugged Cornelius so much it planted words in his brain which he kindly refused to utter. Finally, the room which should contain a weapon was nearby, only it contained a flesh golem instead. Upon his defeat, another stone was found, that when used with the rig from the first temple, pointed to the real location of the third temple. It was starting to become obvious that no weapons were going to be found until the end of the last temple, if even then. The exit from the squishy path turned out to be the nose of a colossal giant, meaning that the group had passed, in reverse, through his digestive tract to get to this point. He was extremely helpful in getting the group back on their way, so long as they stopped to chat awhile.

Creed was Paul's character when he was running the adventure and Peregrine was rolled up for his now-wife when they visited the east coast. Sadly, this was the only time in the entire adventure Paul

After climbing all the way out of the giant and down from the butte, the party started traveling along the savanna to get to the closest town, which was only a few days away from Paradeises. Paradeises is Kass's home town and the port from which to sail to the next stop, a nearby island. Walking along, they bumped into a lone traveler, a bard named Dusty (or so he said). He said he was going the same way. He seemed to have some kind of mutual attraction for Aurelia that ended with them spending a lot of time together (ahem). One late afternoon, an arrow dropped into the center of the group. Attached to it was a declaration of war, stating an attack would come at daybreak. Dusty said it was the work of Nil and Null and a people called the Ruck. Thal and Cordelia scouted ahead, and found a camp of the grey-men. There was also a human male, who looked like death warmed over, and a human woman wearing tight, black leather armor. It seemed like this might be the end of the adventure. The news from the recon was reported, and when daybreak finally came, a single volley of arrows rained down...in a perfect circle...not hitting anyone. Dusty said the attack was over and the party moved on, not seeing a single soul until the next town.

At this point Ginny (Aurelia's player) announced she was leaving, and a plot was modified to ease Aurelia's exit, only it didn't fully go quite as planned....

In town, Chi convinced Cordelia to stay the night, and Kass watched from the closet. The party awoke naked and shackled to the floor of a dungeon. The two orcish guards got a little too close to Aurelia and she zapped them. They took turns violating her while the rest of the group was basically forced to listen (or watch depending on where they were specifically located). A little while later, a young mute girl came in, cleaned up the mess, fed everyone and took care of their personal needs. When prompted to talk, she showed that she lacked a tongue. A few days later, the group was unshackled and given back their clothes. They were brought before the master of the house. The young girl led them to a long table filled with food and three others (a human, an elf, and a half-orc), who introduced themselves as Barnet, Laurl, and Grom respectively. Thal took some flatware (it was gold). Cornelius swore he spotted a statue of the squid-head man, but when he went to point it out, it was gone. Then the master came and told the group that he was their "Benefactor". When complaints arose about the treatment the group had received, he acknowledged them and apologized, passing a box to Aurelia. It contained the heads of the two orcs. He took Chi, Cordelia, Cornelius, and Terran aside and outfitted them with collars and sent them on a mission. They were to deliver a shipment of "coffee" and the collars would keep them in line. The rest of the group needed to 'just take care of Bessie'. The group got all of their equipment back and Bessie turned out to be a pyro-hydra that regrew its heads whenever one was cut off. Eventually, Bessie was dispatched and the group was let free. The "Benefactor" was reported to the authorities, as were the missing party members.

Finally, after what seemed like an exceptionally long time, the party (with new members) made it to Paradeises. Kass was thrust into a depression, due to the loss of Chi and tried a little retail therapy with Laurl, taking Grom along as a shopping cart. It turned out that Barnet was interested in Laurl, Laurl considers Grom a pet, Grom considers Laurl a "pet" and won't let anyone near her (even Barnet). Passage was booked to the Isle of Formia, an artists' colony, that for some reason held the third temple. When the party arrived, carrying supplies for the artists, an odd storm was brewing and no greeting party met them. Upon entering the building, Thain swore he saw the squid-head man statue, but again, it wasn't there for at a second glance. There were blood and bodies everywhere, and many doors ripped off hinges and such. A handful of surviving artists were scared out of their minds, claiming some kind of monster was terrorizing them at night. The group was told not to wander after dark, and were locked in their rooms. They followed the advice, although they did hear the monster roaming the halls. The storm was pretty bad, dropping nearly eight feet of snow, trapping the group at the 'hotel' with the caretaker, a woman named Cali, and the handful of artists. Grom discovered the art of the snowball fight, Laurl and a few others created anatomically correct snowpersons, Aurelia was convinced to become a model for a bust, and Kass volunteered to pose nude for several paintings. Several days later, the monster defecated on the Aurelia bust and destroyed some other artwork. Since they were trapped, the group set a trap to capture and kill the monster. The trap worked and the monster was killed. It was a strange little skittering thing. It almost seemed too small for the destruction that had

been wrecked. Cali thanked the party and let them know that they had been a great help. She explained that she had also seen the squid-head man statue, but never for very long. Several weeks later, the snow melted enough that the group could move on to the other side of the island, in order to tackle the next temple.

What nobody ever noticed, was that there was a hidden joke that I will now reveal. The group stayed at the 'hotel' of Cali of Formia. A place where the group could check out but not leave that had a monster that the artists had stabbed (probably with steely knives) but could not kill. See? Isn't DM humor fun; even if the PC's never get it.

Marching across the island, Thal first noticed a bump in Aurelia's stomach, although she neither mentioned it. After several rock-throwing giants and a expansive steam field, they finally came to a large hole in the ground. Climbing down and then swimming (remember the fishbowls?) down and then up, they came to a platform suspended over lava with a fire elemental standing on it. As the battle began, the platform started shifting and lowering. Thal shimmied up the chains and worked to disable the lowering mechanism. She succeeded at disabling it, yet did so at the cost of braking it. A gout of water forced Thal back through the mechanism and shooting her out. The flood of water extinguished the elemental, but nearly knocked several of the party members into the lava below. Again, the weaponry was magically improved. Passing though a large underground complex (complete with spooky sounds, obscure frescos, random weaponry hung on the walls, and the occasional monster, but funny, no squid-head man), they arrived at a crossroads. Similar to the first temple, there were two rooms, one with a large pile of coins and gems, the other with a simple brazier. Donakar, having learned his lesson this time, chose the room with the brazier. The coals in the brazier swirled and formed into a Coal golem. After the golem was defeated, another stone showing the way to the fourth temple was found. By now, it was apparent that each temple had a pattern. An elemental guarding the entrance, followed by weapon improvements, the temple, some kind of golem, and lastly, a map piece. (Don't you hate predictability?)

The party trekked back to the artists' colony. They discovered that everyone was missing. Some poking around discovered that there was an entrance to a secret complex hidden in the library. More of the skittering things were found, and then larger ones and even larger ones. Finally the mother of all of these beasts was found and killed. The artists were saved from their cocoons (at least some of them were) and brought back to the surface. Cali told the group that she was simply one of in a long line of guardians to hold back the monsters. Unfortunately, on her watch, one of the artists found the secret entrance and opened it. The monsters had been sealed away for thousands of years, but now all are safe since the monsters are dead. The group had to wait for the next supply ship before being able to returning to Paradeises. In the end, nearly five months were spent on Formia.

No sooner had the adventurers arrived back at Paradeises than an explosion shook the ground. The group scattered to help. Kass got separated from everyone else, was accosted, and dragged down a dark alley where she met her dear ol' dad. Of course, she thought he was dead, but who's counting. He remarked how much like her mother she was (crossing a few lines with that comparison) and offered her a job in his organization. She declined, but decided to take his contact information in case she changed her mind. The gang moved onto the next town, where they found some kind of revival going on. It seemed that some of the commoners were being converted to worship the 'new gods', twins named Nil and Null. Aurelia was incensed. She and Thal went ahead to see what was happening. Thal spotted the near-dead guy and leather babe from back at the savanna, lording over the people in the tent. Thal was about to return to the party, considering the whole thing some kind of hoax, when one of the pair called for a volunteer to become a cleric. Someone from the back of the room came forward and with very little ceremony, Nil and Null infused him with enough energy to convert him from a commoner to a cleric. Perhaps it all wasn't a hoax after all, and the new gods truly were out to get them? Soon after, Kass disappeared.

Word on the street was that Kass had been seen leaving town with a gentleman. A lot of time and effort was spent figuring out that she had gone to one of the cities near Castor and Pollux. Since Castor was their ultimate destination, finding out Kass was headed where they were planning on going anyway, felt like a colossal waste time. However, it seemed that the gentleman she left with was a major crime boss dealing mainly in drugs, so the group was off again to track Kass down. One night, one of the Grey-men walked into camp with the desire to desert his people. He said his name was Gwion and that he felt he needed to warn the people of this world to prevent what had happened on his. His people, the Ruck, exist on a different Material Plane, in fact a second layer. The Ruck are the only sentient race on their level and feel that this is because they are the most important of all beings. In fact, they didn't even know that other races existed until a short time ago. This knowledge was brought by the new gods, who had killed the old Celtic gods. The new gods called the Ruck to this plane in order to push it to a lower layer and destroy it. The new gods go by the names of Nil and Null. Gwion is one of a small number still loyal to the old gods, hoping to revive them by destroying Nil and Null. They realize that this is a long shot, however feel they owe it to the old gods to try. Gwion was tied up by the distrustful band, soon after which, Dusty rejoined the gang. Aurelia pulled Dusty aside and spoke to him. Dusty vouched for Gwion's honesty. Soon an arrow dropped into camp (seemingly a common warning sign of a Ruck attack) just as Aurelia went into labor. As most of the company tried to hold back the Ruck, a woman came out of nowhere claiming to be Hera and started yelling at Dusty, who she continually called Zeus. Meanwhile an adult woman was pulling herself from Aurelia's birth canal. Energy crackled between Zeus and Hera and several points off in the distance. Several bolts zapped the newly birthed woman. Aurelia's body was lay flat on the ground. The new woman said, "I have a power all my own" and thrust the crackling energy back whence it came. Hera attacked the new woman and then tried to slap Zeus. Hera decided the best way to hurt both of them was by killing Aurelia, so she turned to do so. The new woman threw a sai at Hera. Hera raised her hand to deflect it. The sai sailed straight through her hand and thrust back into her throat. Hera stumbled backward, tripped and fell on Aurelia, the tip plunging straight through Aurelia as well. Moments later, lightning flew from Hera's body into the sky. Hera was dead, as was Aurelia. The Ruck left and the new woman erected a temple on the spot. The new woman was Thea, a new god and she was shortly joined by Aurelia, now also a god. Some of the group converted to worship of Aurelia, with Zeus' blessing, as he was now part of both the old Greek pantheon, and this new pantheon of gods.

When Ginny announced she was leaving, the above story arc changed into this form. Unfortunately, or fortunately, she returned to us... just one session before this was to happen. Events were already unfolding based on her character's death and couldn't be changed without a large re-write, and so she died. This portion of the adventure also has the honor of being the only part of the game NEVER PLAYED. This was constructed as a story and did not seem to fit well within the RP experience (as it would have just been me talking for the entire session) so it was created as a short story. If you are interested in reading it (or re-reading it) please let me know. I've got it... somewhere.

On the way to Castor, the group met up with Kayne and his page, a young man named Mathaus. Kayne had come to spend time with his betrothed, Aurelia. Kayne was not very happy with the outcome, but it was difficult for him to argue with the greater good. Kayne and Mathaus joined the search for Kass. Kass had been selling one of the most addictive drugs known to the land, Devil's Bane, from her father, the supplier, to his distributors. Kass would not partake of the drug, until one day after diminishing returns (distrustful buyers being wary that she would not sample her own product) she finally gave in and was hooked. One thing lead to another, and she landed herself in one of her father's brothels, a strung out prostitute. The group finally got her out and cleaned her up enough to go back to her father's estate to reclaim her equipment. Kass helped herself to as much of the drug as she could shove in her bag of holding, knowing you can never break the addiction to Devil's Bane, only lessen it. Thal helped herself to as much of the riches in the family vault as her little arms could carry. Too bad about the Gold coin golem guarding the vault though. It was eventually disrupted enough to make a getaway. An unfortunate side effect of this venture is that now Kass has a price on her head.

Castor, one of the twin cities, was a welcome place to rest. Barnet and Lauri finally managed to ditch Grom long enough to have a heart-to-heart. Kass had a night visitor, someone trying to assassinate her. The next night, Thal had a visitor. The assassin had returned, and wanted to chat. The assassin turned out to be Cordelia. She still wore a collar, but said she had a plan to remove it. She would give the group 24 hours to leave town and make it difficult for her to find them. This would not only allow for no harm to befall the group, but wouldn't unleash the wrath of the collar on her. She also wanted her ring back. Somewhere in the distant sea, there was a strange bolt of lightning. Thal

told her she would look into it and then Cordelia jumped out the window and disappeared into the night. Thal tried to follow, but was pulled aside by the dead-looking guy and somehow ended up in a large reverse fishbowl. It turned out he was Nil and wanted Thal to take out his sister, because his ultimate goal was to destroy the world. He even offered her godhood. Thal didn't bite. He got angry, but let her go. Kass, Grom, and some others were down near the docks when the water started draining away very quickly. Some alarms sounded and Thal ended up running inside a townhouse. The rest of the town started running for transport points throughout the city and scrambled for higher ground wherever they could find it. A large wave rushed into town putting almost everything completely under water. Thal was still inside the townhouse, nice and warm. Null was now suggesting that Thal kill Nil because he was "more trouble than he was worth, although he was quite good in bed...you should try that next time, thank you very much." She gave Thal a dagger, big enough to be a sword to the halfling, on good faith and also told her that she could select twenty people to save. While Nil wanted to destroy the world, Null wanted to nearly destroy the world. Null liked followers and people who believed that they had a chance to survive. Soon the flood waters receded and several bodies were found, including those of Barnet and Lauri. Moments later, Nil and Null arrived, raised the dead, and started calling for new followers. The group ran to Pollux. In Pollux, Kayne wrote a letter to the King informing him of what had been happening. The letter was sent and the group headed south into the tundra to tackle the fourth temple.

It was unfortunate that the Castor Tsunami happened so very close to the Indonesian Tsunami. Neither event was influenced by the other. Although it was speculated upon, Nil was entertaining in Poseidon's study... just after Poseidon was killed.

Marching through the tundra, a weird fog rolled in. The group pressed on. Soon after making it through the fog, they were attacked by a large band of Gnolls. Unlike typical Gnolls, these seemed to have a spark of intelligence and civility. However, they treated the group like a bunch of savage dogs and were completely shocked when the adventurers spoke. A short trial decided the group were a bunch of trained savages, but savages nonetheless. As such, they must have been those responsible for destroying the gnollish crops. The group were to be put to death. Just as this sentence was passed, the savage humans attacked, and the outfit was left with a gnoll, considered the least valuable by his people. His name was Rith. He offered to help troop get back to where they belonged. Things he had overheard made him think that the party was not from his plane. The price for his assistance, you might wonder? He wanted to go with them. The deal was struck and Rith led the group through the fog again, back to the place where the stars looked correct.

Entering the ice cave, the group defeated an air elemental, and the weapons were improved yet again. In the middle of the room was a sarcophagus that contained a naked red-headed woman laying in a gelatinous pool. She motioned that the group should leave. Eventually, she got out of the jelly and dressed herself. Her name was T'sia and she was the key to the temple. It took some long explanations to convince her that they needed to find the weapons because the King asked them to, but off into the temple they finally went. Each room seemed to have monsters popping up from nowhere and then popping away when they were defeated. T'sia was the only one who could make any sense of the twisting tunnels and eventually brought them to a metal golem. This time, along with finding the next stone for the map device, their armor was improved. Most notably, Kass' skin turned to metal. Upon returning to Pollux, the group found that Castor had fallen to the Ruck. In fact, the Ruck were starting to take over cities across the land. Gwion gave some hints on defending the city, but the group needed to head north to the final temple.

With civilization left behind, the group headed to the heart of Jacinth. Weeks later, they came across a large valley at the center of which was a large mountain. According to the map, this was the location of the fifth and final temple. The large valley was home to several large dinosaurs, and several races of insectoids, human-shaped insects. The group was captured by some of the insectoids. They were locked up for a short time and then brought before their leader, an ancient, nearly blind dwarf! Indeed, he was one of the builders of the temples! Despite the elves in the party, he gave them safe passage through the land. Additionally, he gave them a bottle of wine and a bottle of vinegar. He then had scouts escort them to the base of the mountain. After much climbing, they came to a small plateau.

Four tiles were placed in the correct order (the four classic elements, placed in the order of the temples) and a door opened, as did some kind of gizmo. The wine and vinegar combined forming a primitive battery and light bulb. Behind the door was a statue of a man in a very obvious state of arousal. T'sia looked sheepish and kicked everyone back outside. A few moments later, T'sia returned, adjusting her belt and said the door was opened. Inside was another dwarf. He threw a feast and told the group to pick one of two doors. One would lead them where they wanted to go, the other to certain death. After much deliberation, one door was chosen. On the other side, it was obvious that both doors went to the same place. It was apparent that this temple followed the floorplan of a standard Dwarven stronghold. There were long corridors and four main rooms. Each room held something reminiscent of each of the previous temples. There were no elementals at the entrance of the temple however, the band encountered some combined elementals, each a mixture of two elements. No traditional golems, either. In their stead were four dwarven half-elements standing in the way of a different room. Just beyond them was the final room...the room containing the weapons! When the door was opened, there they were, a weapons rack full of weapons. As they drew near, the wall exploded and the head of a very large red dragon surged into the chamber. A claw entered next and snatched the weapons rack. The dragon wrought its fiery breath upon them, and took to the skies. Dusty appeared and said, "Well, that was unexpected."

Each of the temples followed a theme, a group of monsters that thematically fit together, whether it was insects or fire subtype it didn't matter. I had problems with finding a theme for the last temple... that is until I realized that I screwed up some monsters in the 4th temple and Ed said "Gee, I wouldn't mind having a shot at those run the correct way" It made me think of the old Fighter joke with the ring of wishes ("I don't know about any of that, I just wish me and my buddies got another shot at that dragon") and so the theme of the temple became "It's all Ed's fault". Funny thing is, I would have expected Thain to say something like that. The funnier part, is that one room had a bunch of 'crunchy' monsters in it, built specifically for Thain to use his Mighty Cleave that he worked so hard to get.... sadly, Ed missed that game... the only one in the entire run. Dee rolled for him and, well, Thain did well that day.

Dusty mentioned that someone wasn't playing by the rules and the best he could was get them to Paradeses. He could do his best to delay the dragon, perhaps give them six, maybe eight hours, possibly even ten, but that would be pushing it. The troops in Paradeses were rallied and the waiting began. Thal told Mathaus that she was going to spill the beans on his secret, but Mathaus tried to tell Kayne first. Kayne told Mathaus that it would need to wait. Barnet and Laurl were married in a simple, quick, and secret ceremony. Cordelia, now with no collar, showed up with Cornelius, Chi, and Terran...and a baby. At daybreak, Mathaus tried again to speak to Kayne, but again was told it would need to wait. Mathaus could wait no longer. Mathaus told Kayne that he loved him and planted a big kiss right on his lips. He then mumbled something like "I'll explain later", and was off to his post. A little more than eight hours after the last room in the temple, the signal went up. The dragon was coming! Big Red broke through the clouds, followed by Big Black and Big Green. Quickly reassigning the troops, the party went to work on Red, while Black and Green were handled in other parts of the city. Red did some strafing runs, but was knocked from the sky by a combination of archers and ballistas. Red fell in such a way as to further split the cities' defending forces in half. One of the inns exploded knocking out several of the support crew on the heroes' side of the battle. Then a hail of arrows knocked out the rest of the supporting crew. The Ruck had joined the battle. Grom was swallowed whole by Red, but managed to fight his way out. The dragon was not looking very healthy. Big Red started to make a run for it, grabbing Barnet as it made its way skyward. Laurl screamed and launched everything she had at it. Grom ran after it for one last swipe and Kass summoned a Roc. The weapons rack bobbed and something fell from it. The dragon had made its escape, the rack in one claw, and Barnet in the other. The tides began to turn and the battle with the Ruck started in earnest.

When the Ruck were defeated, Dusty, well, Zeus said that the task wasn't yet complete. Laurl went back and got the one item that fell from the weapons rack. She is also very distraught. Grom called Dusty out for trying to have him kill Barnet, and then Barnet disappeared. Zeus explain that it was not him that had appeared to Grom and given him the dagger. He had found out that what was going on was much larger. He had been used as a pawn, and was none too happy about it. The crew needed to find that dragon. At the docks it was discovered that Big Black had taken out all of the ships when it died. The group was stuck. Kayne would not go on. He needed to stay here and rebuild. Mathaus finally revealed that he, was in fact a woman, and would stay with Kayne. Kayne would not accept

Mathea, and so he/she decided to leave as well. Kass was fed up with the whole situation and stormed off in a big huff. Although there were thousands of dead, there were also hundreds missing, like Cordelia, Cornelius, Chi, and Terran. However, those going on after the dragon had no transport. A Death Knight riding a Nightmare galloped out of the sky. She knew what was going on, and was seeking some redemption, so she raised a sunken ship from the bay with a crew of zombies and skeletons. She offered to take the group where they needed to go. A trip that should have taken weeks was completed in mere days. The credits roll as the ship approaches a new land....

The exact crew is not yet established, some new characters may be on this trip and some other older characters may not.