

Paladin's log – Day 1 and 2 of our quest

And so it came to pass that I was waiting in the Mountain Pass Inn for the spring thaw so that I could cross the mountains and continue to the Great Citadel in the East.

I had spent some time waiting in the Inn and talking to the only other patron, a strange old man with a glowing ball that floated around his head all the time. He never moved from his chair the whole time I saw him and the Inn staff brought his food and drink to him without his askance.

As I waited, two elves came into the Inn. One, of apparently poor constitution and the other ill-tempered. Whilst I had not talked to anyone, apart from the old man, for some time, and very few elves at any point, I was interested to talk to them, but they kept to themselves and were not much interested in conversation. Soon, after a young male fighter, Gareth, appeared. While apparently quite vain, at least he was friendly, in contrast to the elves, and agreed to cross the mountains with me. A day or two later Carbine, a cleric of Kord, also appeared in the Inn. He obviously fancied himself as a bit of a warrior, and agreed to join Gareth and myself in crossing the mountains. Shortly afterwards another Elf arrived, Regina, who made contact with the other elves in the Inn, but was friendly and did converse with us. She also agreed to cross the mountains with me.

After several days of waiting, the old man warned us that the next day would see the passes clear at least for a few days and that we should prepare to set off at next sun-up. On awaking the next day, the Inn staff had prepared a hearty breakfast for all the patrons of the Inn and also presented us with 3 days of rations for the trail. My companions and I set off for the pass and found to our surprise that the wheezy elf and the rude elf also followed us. Apparently, they wished to take advantage of our numbers to cross the mountains safely, though they did not divulge their goals with us.

After climbing some way up the mountains, it was coming on to dark when we came across the body of a fallen titan outside a cave entrance. The titan's papers swirled around on the breeze. From the journal he held clutched in his hand it appeared that he had been on watch in this place for some time, but that some enemy had now managed to make their way past him. Somehow the titan believed that this would cause his death and that his blood would freeze. His words asked that those of us with noble thoughts should enter and free his blood from the ice. After spending the night in what, apparently, was his former residence, those of us who did have noble thoughts followed the passageway, leading from the back of the cave, into the dark, accompanied by our other companions.

The passageway turned out to be some sort of natural rift that we travelled along, by the light of Gareth's lantern, until we reached a worked stone room. The rift continued on for some way before narrowing too much to follow. There were two doors out of this room. I tried the door handle of the first door and surprisingly found my hand stuck to the handle. I tried to push the door open and found that I was in fact walking through the very substance of the door itself. I continued to push through and came into the dark on the other side of the door. A voice that I could not see called to me, so I lit a sunrod so that I could see where I was, but barely had I lit the rod when Gareth appeared through the door next to me with his lantern. Together we headed off in search of these voices in the dark. As we worked our way across the large room, the rest of the party made their way through the door, and we came in sight of a group of orcs. I asked these creatures to surrender to us, having detected their evil from some distance away. On their refusal I was forced to strike the first one down, Gareth the second, and Regina slew the third with a well-timed bow shot.

There were several doors in this room and Regina took to inspecting them for traps, having an apparent skill in this regard. The first door I opened to find a room much similar to a crypt or meat locker, with piles of dead bodies of varying races. This room was not pleasant and with nothing further we could do for these creatures I shut the door

again. The next door proved more difficult and as Regina checked to see whether it was locked a burst of fire sprang from the door and injured her. However, being a brave lass she opened the door revealing a new room. Seeing a door in the far wall of this room, I walked through with my companions, other than the 2 elves, who were off muttering to themselves. We passed through several rooms of rotting and broken goods, and when it appeared that this structure would continue on similarly for some way, I asked my companions to halt so I could go and find the elves to see whether they wanted to join the rest of us.

When I returned to the room with the dead orcs the elves did not seem pleased to see me and were convinced that they needed to pass through a door other than the one that the rest of us had gone through. Having no preference for direction, I returned to my other companions, in the process being burned by the same fire that had injured Regina earlier, and asked if they were prepared to go in this other direction with the elves. On our way back to the elves, Regina discovered a secret door in the wall of a room we were passing through, but concerned for the safety of the elves we decided to make our way back to them rather than investigating further. Returning to the orc room, we found that the elves had opened a door and wandered off. We pressed on after them, hoping that they had not been consumed by some horrible beast, but we came across them shortly afterwards in a connecting room.

Volunteering to clear the way in front of them, Gareth and I moved to the front of the group. As I passed through the next doorway, all light was extinguished making it impossible to see. I called out as to the reason that someone had done this to us, but there was a great flapping noise around me I sensed the presence of evil. Miraculously, the light was restored and I was able to strike at the hideous flying creature and smite it to the ground.

The door to the next room was also open and as I stepped in I was almost overwhelmed by a large carpet of rats. As I struck around me, killing the creatures by the dozen, I was on the verge of being overwhelmed until Gareth and Carbine also entered the room.

Carbine did his best to support us while Gareth and I tried to deal with the countless number of rats. At this point, the wheezy elf in the room behind us, at the suggestion of the rude elf, closed the door trapping us in the room. Unfortunately, the cowardly actions of these two, who appear to have no particular skills themselves, prevented Regina from aiding us in our battle. Ultimately, Gareth, Carbine and myself were able to drive the surviving rats from the room and Carbine attended to our injuries.

I can only hope that by my actions I am able to dissuade the 2 contrary elves from their cowardly and unhelpful ways, as they must realise that they need the cooperation of all if they are to survive in such an environment. It may be that they can also look towards the example of Regina, as we continue on to find the slayer of the Titan. Otherwise, it may be that the main group of us must continue on in pursuit of our quest leaving the 2 contrary elves to their own amusements.

Day 2,3 & 4 (21 March 2005)

Just as we finished slaying the carpet of rats, there was a flash of light and suddenly all three of the elves had disappeared. Whilst I rued the loss of Regina who had been a good companion, I felt no sadness over the disappearance of the other two elves though I chided myself for my lack of charity in regard to them.

Gareth, Carbine and myself continued a search of the adjoining areas and under a decaying bed found a box with 3 padded indentations for what appeared to be vials of liquid. One of the indentations still contained a vial, which appeared to be in good order, another a broken vial from which the contents had escaped and the third was empty.

Shortly after this find we were attacked by a group of flying creatures that had long probosces. They attached themselves to myself and Carbine and I could feel them sucking the very life force from me. We slew the creatures but I did feel weakened.

It was at this point that we discovered that the map that Gareth had been meticulously keeping, seemed not be altogether accurate and he did not appear to know where he was directing us. We came across a room containing a latrine. My companions believed the smell reminded them of the elves and looked into the depths, however I could not bring myself to think so ill of our former companions, as tempting as that may have been.

Remembering a secret door that Regina had found earlier, we returned to where it was. On the way to the door, forgetting about the fire trap that had injured both myself and Regina, Gareth opened the door and was burnt. The secret door proved difficult to find without Regina's aid, even when we were sure it was there. Behind this door was a sort of storeroom with stonemasonry equipment. Due to the defensible nature of the room we blocked the exits and rested for a full 24 hours, recovering from some of the weakness that had earlier assailed me.

Leaving our rest area, Gareth again set off the fire trap (he may not be as bright as he looks). We started our search again but were interrupted by a glowing ball of light that hovered near us. Carbine addressed the ball as Mickey, but at this point the ball named itself Alphus. From what I could glean, Alphus was some sort of keeper for this area and was, with only a minimum amount of waiting, able to provide us with supplies of food and oil. Though an expensive service, this could be quite lifesaving in the long run. Alphus told us that the exit from this underground area lay through the northeast, but was unable to provide more specific directions. Alphus also told us that he would be available to provide other services should we so desire and that there were other beings similar to him patrolling other areas of the caves.

We headed north and came to a room containing a number of evil creatures, who I believed to be kobolds, barricaded behind two hastily erected stone defences. As we entered the room, one of the creatures threw a spell that encased us in a sticky web. Luckily, I was at the edge of the web and quickly escaped, but Gareth was well and truly

caught in the middle. I struck at one of the creatures behind the wall and was lucky to strike him down, given his cover. I started over the wall but was struck by some sort of magic arrows from the fingers of the creature who had thrown the web. I retreated back down the wall, followed by one of the kobolds who attacked me, but luckily I was able to take one of my healing potions and kill the fiend while he struck at me with little skill.

Meanwhile, Gareth who had been freed from the web though burnt in the process, moved over and attacked the spell caster, striking through his multiple images to hit the real one. I also moved over and luckily hit the correct image of the spell caster, killing him, and cleaving through to kill the remaining kobold next to him. At this time, Carbine was fighting some sort of wolf and Gareth moved over to help him, however, on seeing the wolf pull back the skin from its face, Gareth fled down the hallway. Luckily, Carbine finished off this evil beast with much skill.

We found some items that Carbine informed us were magical. Gareth taking the cloak and I some bracers, though I have not found the use of the bracers as yet. I also took a beautifully crafted dagger that was not magical. We continued heading generally north and east, through vast halls many hundreds of feet long until we came to a room inhabited by many evil orcs. Gareth, reacting faster than me, raced into the room and was surrounded by a group of the orcs, but Carbine and I were able to assist Gareth kill the orc between him and the doorway and he retreated back to the cover of the door. With Gareth, Carbine and myself attacking these creatures through the doorway, we were able to limit the number of them attacking us and with some curing of Gareth, we were able to dispose of 9 orcs in total. The orcs had nothing of value and so we headed on.

We continued north and east until we found a short corridor in which to rest, with a standard door at one end and a secret door at the other. We rested for another 24 hours before moving again. The life force drained from me 2 days earlier finally returned and I can feel my skills in dungeoneering improving. However, on awaking I felt weak

from some illness that assailed me. Carbine has promised to see what he can do to cure me from this affliction.

Day 4 (28 March 2005)

After having breakfast, there was a blinding flash of light and Gareth had disappeared and in his place stood Regina and the rude elf. This certainly is an interesting environment, where people keep appearing and disappearing. Carbine and myself did have some momentary anxiety as Gareth had disappeared along with his magic tablet on which he draws his maps of this place.

The rude elf was interested to look back at a room we had recently been in with a large crescent on the floor and so we took him there to investigate it. Surprisingly, he stepped onto the crescent and vanished. Not wanting to leave a companion along (no matter what his demeanour) I also stepped onto the crescent. I then found myself in an almost airless room with the rude elf searching the bodies of dead orcs. I would probably be in a rude mood too, if I spent my time in such a gruesome fashion. When he was finished his searching he stood back on the crescent on the floor of this new room, on which I had appeared, and disappeared from sight. I did the same and appeared back in the original room with my other companions. How strange.

We continue searching this area, heading north and east, where possible (as we did yesterday) until we came to a room in which a rotting warrior stood guard over a metal rune covered staff. The staff was also bathed in a field of light from the ceiling, and while this looked a likely spot for a trap, the rude elf was able to take the staff without mishap. Regina took 2 potions she found while Carbine and I secured a set of plate mail that we felt Gareth may like, if he ever turns up again, along with a magical shield. Carbine agreed to carry the plate mail for me, as I was feeling a bit weaker than usual.

Continuing north and east we walk through an area with thin corridors where we are forced to march in single file. However, at the end of one such corridor we come across a room containing a massive

beast with 8 heads, possibly a hydra of legend. Knowing, that even with our developing powers we are not a match for such a creature we retreated back down the passage. Carbine did ask the creature to surrender, but sadly it would not comply and Carbine warned it that its reckoning day would come. Surely, right will always prevail against these evil creatures.

I feel my experiences are opening more and more power within me and I can now feel my holy purpose pushing the disease I had struggled with from my body. I feel stronger than ever have I felt before.

We come to a room with a loud buzzing sound emanating from it, like thousands of bees trapped within and so we continue on. Taking the advice of the rude elf, we have decided to re-explore some of the areas we had bypassed earlier in search of the slayer of the titan.

Another blinding flash heralds the arrival of the wheezy elf, but Gareth is still yet to appear. We come to a room with a 6' floating red crystal which Carbine tries to touch, but it sends out some sort of protective shockwave that hurts both Carbine and myself, who were standing closer to the crystal than the others. Continuing further we come to another door that burns both Carbine and myself when we try to open it. Going through the door we come to an area that appears to be a former forge. Regina finds several hiding places that do not appear to have been used recently and only contain pebbles. Regina was injured by traps at a number of these hiding places.

Through the next door there is a room that appears to have been some sort of stable for the same sort of wolf that attacked us earlier – the one that peeled the skin back from its own face, frightening Gareth. A large number of rats swarmed over the top of me and some of the party in this room, but I am quickly able to kill a sufficient number of them that the others run off.

The next room we came to contained a magical portal of some sort and we could see an imp in the room. The rude elf and the wheezy elf

seemed to be all excited about finding this room. Suddenly, before we have a chance to react, a large bearlike creature, that also looks somewhat like an owl comes out of the portal. I can sense the evil of these creatures quite clearly and enter the room. The owlbear manages to swiftly and seriously wound me but to keep the remainder of the party free from harm, I stand my ground to show the foul beast that it cannot prevail.

Suddenly, Regina and the rude elf tumble into the room, bypassing the owlbear with their acrobatic manoeuvres. Regina shoots the owlbear and the rude elf attacks it with his bare (bear) hands. This is certainly a side to the rude elf that I haven't seen before. I certainly have more appreciation for his mood now, as I would also be rude if I had to slap at evil creatures without the use of my sword. From behind the rude elf a humancoid/rat type creature appears which shoots some sort of magic spell, injuring the rude elf. The rude elf and Regina attempt to distract the owlbear with their offensive manoeuvres, while Carbine quickly enters the room and cures me. Suddenly, I make a lucky strike and severely injure the bear. However, it still manages to inflict damage on me until I smite it to the ground.

Meanwhile, the wheezy elf, who I had believed to be some sort of door opener for the rude elf, enters the room and casts an incantation at the rat creature. A very surprising turn of events. I make my way over to the rat creature while Regina continues to harry it with her bow. As I reach the creature, the wheezy elf stuns it with a colourful spell, but I am unable to harm it whilst it is reeling. However, as the rat creature tries to pull something from its backpack, I see an opening and slay the evil thing.

This just shows that there is no way that the forces of darkness can overcome those who follow the light and I am given hope of our eventual escape from this place by the sudden newfound talents of my companions.

Days 4,5 & 6 (4 April 2005)

Unfortunately, the newfound talents of my companions and many of my companions did not last long. A flash of blinding light and they are gone again and Gareth returns. Whilst I am blinded I am set upon by a stirge, similar to those who attacked me some days ago, but even blinded I can feel its evil presence and end its foul existence. So, now I can see again and all 3 of the elves have gone. Obviously, a sense of responsibility would keep them from wandering off all the time.

Then, through the door floated Alphus. I asked Alphus whether he would be able to identify items, that we had detected the magic powers in, so that we could use them to their proper purpose. He said he could do this if we could adequately recompense him. I offered him some bracers I had found earlier as payment for identifying a half dozen items that we have found and any left over coin to be used to purchase healing potions. Unfortunately, the bracers turn out not to be worth sufficient to buy us any potions but Alphus does kindly identify our other items. From the rat/humanoid I have found a pair of glasses that lets me see in the dark, Gareth now has the platemail we found for him earlier and a magical shield that is embossed with a crest of a now defunct order of paladins. We also swapped a wand for more curing potions. Alphus desired us to close the magic portal in the room, but we did not have the magical skills, and Alphus could not furnish Carbine with a spell sufficient to the need. We did agree to return to the room later, when we were better equipped to deal with the portal.

Unfortunately, our brief moment of collecting our thoughts did not last long and another owlbear appeared out of the magic portal. I was slow to react being surprised by its appearance and watched as Gareth faced up to it, only to seem him knocked down. Luckily, Carbine, being short on curing spells from our previous encounter, was able to pull Gareth to safety and for the sake of Gareth's health we were forced from the room.

Resting in a nearby corridor, we were able to revive Gareth and rest long enough for us all to feel healed. Carbine tended our injuries whilst we rested. With Gareth being missing earlier in the day, and

now the rude elf missing, we were not particularly sure of our bearings, but I guided my companions back towards the areas of this labyrinth that we had explored yesterday. I found the room with the fire trap that injured Regina and then we found other familiar places until Gareth was able to resume his mapping.

We travelled down many passages, but found no sign of life. Many times I almost felt ready to call for something to challenge us to break the monotony, but rejected such a foolhardy notion. Finally, we came to a room that turned suddenly black and my head was enveloped by some foul creature. Dropping my sword, I drew my dagger from its sheath and plunged it into the creature, killing it instantly. The darkness dissipated at this point. Retrieving my sword, we continue.

We open another door and enter an unstable room, with bits of the roof dropping onto us if we are not agile. The door at the far side of the room appears partially blocked by this rubble, so we head towards it. Suddenly, everything goes dark again and more of these flying black octopuses attack Gareth and myself. Once again, one of these creatures grapples me and I need to use my dagger to remove it, whilst Gareth pummels the creature latched onto him with the hilt of his sword. Meanwhile, we can hear sounds that appear to be Carbine trying, in vain, to open the blocked door. Eventually, disposing of the evil creatures, the light returns and Gareth, Carbine and myself push the door to open it. The door opens, but a part of the door frame collapses onto Carbine. Carbine seems enraged by this falling stone and attacks the door frame with his sword, only to be knocked out by the cave-in his actions cause. I give Carbine one of the potions from his backpack that restores his health but we stop in the next room to rest until we are feeling well enough to continue.

Early the next day we are swarmed over by another large group of rats. I kill a huge number of these rats and then seeing Gareth enter the fray, stepping on a rat, and killing it, in the process, the others run away. Gareth seems very self-congratulatory for someone who has killed one rat, but surely his presence did aid me and I should not be so uncharitable to one of my more reliable party members. I shall

have to pray to Heironeous about this later when we rest. If only Gareth were not so full of himself, and more chivalrous, he might then be someone I could confide in.

We continue on, down through this endless maze of passage and come to a disused torture chamber. The very stones themselves seem to shriek with the horrors performed here and I am deeply shaken by the evil of this place. Carbine and Gareth seem less affected by the horrors of this place than me.

As we walk down another passage, there is movement ahead, and an orc ducks back into a doorway. Perhaps somewhat recklessly I chase after it and find myself faced with 9 of the foul creatures. I attack the one closest to the door. The orcs in the room move to attack me and I find myself perhaps overextended from my supporters (a valuable lesson to remember). Eventually Carbine and Gareth arrive, though Carbine blocks the route I had chosen for a strategic withdrawal. The orcs call for a parley and ask us to spare their lives. I reject their misconceived bargaining attempt, as I know that we cannot let evil run rampant in this place. As the fighting continues, I gradually move back towards the door, damaging orcs where I can, until a lucky blow drives me to my knees. Fortunately, Carbine is able to drag me back through the doorway and cure my wounds so that I can continue fighting. Gareth moves back to the door and together we block the doorway and kill the remainder of these horrid creatures.

On one particularly large creature we find some fancy looking leather armour and a battleaxe.

Day 6 & 7 (25 April 2005)

There is another flash of light and the elves reappear, though everyone gives the impression that it was I that disappeared. Surely, they are being made delirious by this place.

I lay my hands on Wheezy and try to cure his woes and this does seem to lend him some relief. Walking through the next door we are

attacked my more of the flying black octopuses and some jackals that had been hiding in the darkness of the room. The rude elf slays one of the jackals, but the others run off, one of them possibly picking something up off the floor first. The octopuses refuse to surrender and we are forced to slay them.

We follow the retreated jackals into another room and are attacked by more of these octopus creatures. We finally slay them and move to the next room where there are even bigger octopuses than we have seen previously. The rude elf now seems intent on some basic combat strategy where he pins these creatures so the rest of us can slay them. I suppose that we all must act in accordance with our abilities, and if this is the best he can do then surely I should be grateful. After all, it is hardly charitable for me to think ill thoughts of these poor wretches.

Another room and huge octopuses which cause me some injury, but Carbine heals me and I am able to assist my comrades dispose of the beasts. Due to a number of us being injured, we decide to rest.

In the "morning" (we aren't really aware of the time anymore) we continue our explorations. I try to heal the rude elf, who has picked up some strange disease (what a surprise – it is only the non-righteous who suffer these problems) and do aid him somewhat, but apparently not enough to satisfy him.

We come to a door, which has voices behind it. I open the door and am bathed in flame. We come across two human type lizard creatures within the room behind the door. These creatures attack us without provocation and do cause me some slight injury with their weapons and various spells. Luckily Carbine is able to cure me. Thinking them to be evil creatures (why else would they have attacked us) I try to smite the evil within them, but then discover to my surprise, that they are not evil after all. If only they had been more willing to parley, rather than fight then we may have jointly aided one another. But surely Heironeous has judged them now and they have been banished to a place along with other evil creatures who attack the righteous.

I heal myself as I can and also try to heal the wheezy elf again. We shall see if this is more successful than when I healed him last.

Day 7,8 & 9 (1 May 2005)

We come to the next doorway which we walk through, only to find that Gareth, Carbine and Regina standing at the doorway almost in some sort of trance. The rude elf and the wheezy elf search the room while I guard my companions. As we leave the room the others of us who weren't affected before, also fall under the spell of the doorway and we are caught like rats in a trap. Luckily, I am able to pull myself together before any of the denizens of this place happen upon us.

We wander through the endless corridors of this place, but find that the magic tablet on which Gareth draws his maps of this place seems to not be working properly and he spends inordinate amounts of time arguing with the rude elf who is drawing a map on paper, which also seems to be quite inaccurate of our actual surroundings. We seem to spend more and more time standing around whilst Gareth and the rude elf become ever more obsessive about their maps. I can see Regina shares my exasperation.

We discuss returning to the room with the portal, through which evil creatures pass, and closing it forever. Carbine now feels that he is strong enough to do this. However, we must rest ere we attempt this undertaking, and so we stop in a secluded part of this labyrinth for some hours.

Returning to the portal chamber, I cautiously enter the room but am immediately set upon by two of these creatures that appear to be bears but have the head of an owl. I can feel their evil presence affecting me and I am mightily wounded and retreat back through the door. Gareth and I hold one of the creatures in the doorway with covering fire from the elves and some spells and healing from Carbine and eventually kill the beast. The other creature has moved away from the door and the rude elf charges after it, slapping feebly at it. I bring

my longspear to bear and stab the creature, whilst leaving a gap between me and it. However, Gareth interposes himself between the bear and myself and both he and the rude elf are knocked unconscious.

Carbine and I pull our two disabled companions from the room and I continue to hold yet another bear, that has appeared through the portal, off at the doorway. Carbine heals Gareth who attempts to crawl to safety, but heads north up the corridor, rather than back south where we have come from. Though the light is dim, I eventually spot the wheezy elf has also headed the wrong way down the corridor. While my companions retreat, I hold the door and signal wheezy and Gareth to run behind me, using me as a shield, between themselves and the evil creature. Unfortunately, both of them are too scared to move from the position that they are in and eventually I need to retreat back from the doorway. I am certainly disappointed in Gareth's apparent cowardice in not wanting to venture past the doorway. However, he may have felt that he was protecting wheezy, though I have not noticed he had any particular affection for wheezy in the past. Obviously, wheezy's cowardice is to be expected.

Whilst the evil bear cannot come through the door, it certainly threatens any in the corridor outside the door and it is several hours before the bear moves away from the door and Gareth and the wheezy one are able to rejoin us further down the corridor.

We rest for a full day and night during which time Carbine attends to our wounds. Gareth now seems to be making some sort of feeble affectionate overtures towards the rude elf, including giving him the bracers we had found earlier. Surprisingly, Regina seems to be upset by the attention that Gareth gives the rude elf. I explain to my companions my plans for our next foray into the portal room, but have to go over the plan several times for Gareth's benefit. Surely he understands the common tongue. He is started to act more and more like the elves.

The following day, I do not feel 100%, but am well enough to fight evil. Gareth also does not look to be completely cured of his many

injuries from the day before. Carbine does not seem particularly concerned with our wellbeing this morning. Perhaps his mind is on something else. He does, at times, seem to obsess about the whereabouts of Alphus, who he calls Mickey.

As we advance towards the door of the portal room, Carbine warns us of an invisible creature ahead. I cannot see it, but can detect its evil presence. I advance on it, holding its evil scent in my mind. It swoops by me and attacks me in the process, before settling on Carbine. Suddenly, it appears and seems to be some sort of small flying mouse. It is surprisingly difficult to hit. I suggest to the wheezy that he could use his web spell that he keeps talking about but is yet to cast to catch the flying mouse. Unfortunately, and as I should have expected, he throws his spell ineptly and only captures the party, rather than the flying mouse. Carbine summons an eagle to attack the mouse, but seems unable to pierce its defences. Wheezy removes the web covering us all and I smite the evil creature and finally kill it.

Carbine seems very concerned about the eagle flying out of his control and away from him, but tears himself away from his bird problems to dispel the evil portal. We enter the portal room, and find that the bears have disappeared as well. Maybe Carbine's spell did more than we knew.

Alphus reappears and thanks us for destroying the portal. I buy some food for the elves, as they are running low, and in the hopes of creating a more friendly environment for us all. The rude elf pays to get the rune carved staff, that we had found some days ago identified. Alphus advises that this staff is priceless, but we will need to liaise with the celestials in the north if we wish to trade it. The staff seems to be somehow integral to the defences of this labyrinth. Alphus advises us that we should not destroy it.

We exit the room, following a direction that we haven't taken before, as the bears have stopped us passing through this room, and find one of the bears in a battle down the hall with a number of the flying back octopuses that we have fought previously. We wait for the bear to kill

all the octopuses. Gareth charges into the room and is seriously wounded by the creature. Carbine casts a spell upon me, that makes me feel stronger, and I enter the room and kill the bear with one mighty blow, though it does seriously injure me with its death throes.

Maybe now that we have dispelled the evil portal, the evil creatures in this place will start to dissipate. However, from what we know, there may be one more of these bear/owl creatures still on the loose.

Day 9 & 10 (8 May 2005)

The rude elf and Gareth spend some considerable time discussing which direction to take from this place. Gareth wants to go east towards the hydra, that we saw some days ago, while the rude elf wants to go north. Gareth seems to be outwitted by the rude elf (doesn't seem too difficult) and we head north. At this stage I don't really mind which direction we go, but I would like to find the exit soon. I really need to get to the council and sort out my father's estate. While I feel like I am learning a lot, this is only a side track to my quest. Anyway, as no exit seems available around here, it doesn't really matter which direction we head at this point.

We come to a room where the very shadows seem to come alive and attack us. Luckily, from my studies into religion, I have some knowledge of these creatures, which drain the very strength out of me. Unfortunately, I have no magic items with which to drive them away, but my faith is strong and I drive them away with the aid of Heironeous and Carbine.

Continuing on, we come to a room with a silver and steel bound door on the floor. There is also a door recess in the wall, but only stone apparently behind it. We break away the boardings covering the doorway and place the bound door into this space, in the hopes that this may trigger some magical effect. Unfortunately, nothing seems to happen and we move onwards. We walk into a corridor and are caught in the middle of a massive blast of fire. Regina and Gareth are scorched into unconsciousness and the rest of us are very wounded,

other than the rude elf who seems to have very nimbly shielded himself from the blast. Dragging our unconscious party members out of the room, Carbine cures Gareth and I pour what little healing ability I have into Regina, until she awakes.

We rest nearby until we are all restored. Regina volunteers to go back into the room and disable, what she believes to be a trap. Carbine throws a spell on her that he says will protect her from fire and she enters the room. Some minutes later Regina reappears, apparently unharmed and tells us she has disarmed the trap, though it went off several times before she was able to do this.

We continue through some corridors that contain paintings of good creatures – celestials, angels etc. . . . As we wander along, the elves find a cleverly hidden door in an otherwise empty wall which we enter. It is disturbing to note the increasing paranoia that seems to assail Regina as we travel. It is almost as if she distrusts her abilities to find and deal with these traps that we continually encounter.

We arrive at a room with a dead creature in the centre. As Gareth moves over to search it, we are once again assailed by these shadowy creatures that attacked us before. Luckily, Carbine is able to send them away from us with his clerical powers. The dead creature seems to be a dead female humanoid of some type that is strange to me. With my skills as a healer, I am able to determine that she seems to have been dead for a couple of months. Carefully, detecting for the presence of evil, I reach out and grasp the greatsword that she holds. I say a prayer for her as there is nowhere here that we can afford her proper burial. However, the sword seems particularly fine. Clearly the work of a master craftsman.

Carbine searches the room and finds a number of weapons and armour, hidden throughout this armoury. He does seem surprised that one would find these types of items in an armoury, but sometimes he is of a strange humour, so I believe he making have been making a joke.

I make mention of something of interest at this point and am spoken to most rudely by the rude elf (not surprising) and also Gareth (more surprising). I am most surprised by Gareth's rudeness. Clearly, he knows not how to address a lady. He seems to be unable to rise above his heritage of associating with the commonest of serving girls. I shall be more careful to protect myself from him in the future. Even though I rebelled against it earlier in my life, I can now appreciate why my father always tried to have other ladies of noble birth around me as I grew up. I start to miss father's manor and my old friends.

We come to a wooden door. Regina check it most thoroughly for traps, but being unable to unlock it, I chop it down for her. Unfortunately, this is nothing more than a decoy and only stone lies behind the door. I would have thought Regina would have been able to tell the difference between a real door and a fake. She does look at a lot of them up close.

Wandering down a narrow corridor, two wolf-like creatures suddenly appear in front of me. The closest one attacks me and I am forced to deal with it. Carbine casts spells on me from behind, making me stronger, and harder for the creatures to hit. Eventually, when it is almost dead in any event, it seems almost to bite itself and falls to the floor. The noise behind me indicates that there may also be similar creatures at the rear of the party. Unfortunately, the sounds of combat are almost drowned out by the sounds of Gareth whining behind me. I suggest to him that he squeeze up next to me so that we may both attack the creature, even though I know that this is detrimental to me getting a full swing with my sword. However, he doesn't take up my invitation. Eventually, I overcome the creature and the rude elf calls for my aid at the back of the party. Gareth moves forward along the corridor, not back to help the party and disappears around a corner. I push back to where the rude elf has one of these creatures attacking him. As I get to him, the rude elf very nimbly tumbles over the head of the creature and to its rear. With the creature distracted, I am able to quickly finish it off.

Days 10,11 & 12 (15 May 2005)

At the end of the combat Gareth returns from his trip around the corner. He doesn't seem perturbed that he wandered off when he could have aided us. Then he starts coughing much like the wheezy elf. The rude elf has clearly been affected by something in this labyrinth and starts calling himself the "love shack". With my long training at putting up with men with these sorts of pretensions, I ignore him until he gains control of himself.

We continue through the corridors and come across a creature that looks very similar to goblins I have fought when I was younger, but much tougher. This creature deals us a large amount of damage and Carbine seems to have disappeared and so is unable to heal us. The wheezy elf has also disappeared. Very strange. Those of us remaining are gradually forced back and need to retreat if we have any hope of survival. As we retreat, we come across Carbine again and we look for a place to rest. The rude elf leads us to a room that he believes is suitable, not realising that this will be his final resting place.

Carbine does what he can to heal us, though we are still weak. We rest and the elves keep watch. Apparently, they don't need as much rest as the rest of us. We are awakened during the night by the splintering of the door that I am leaning against. The tough goblin creature has tracked us down and has brought some of the wolves that we also fought yesterday with it. Whilst we kill the wolves the goblin strikes me down, having already knocked out both the rude elf and Regina.

I awaken in some sort of infirmary. With a clearly noble creature tending to the wounds of all. I note that the rude elf is missing. The creature tending to us, which does have some canine features, tells me that he was unable to rescue the rude elf and the goblin did eat him ere it was driven away. This new creature is called Sanjit. The other members of the party awaken gradually. Carbine does not seem to endear himself to our rescuer and keeps treating him as if he would a dog. Bad Carbine. Gareth seems to be parading around the room in his undergarments, though I am not so sure what he has got to be so proud of with his sunken in chest and that strange birthmark shaped

like a turnip. Though surely the way he has that pin placed through his nipple would hurt. Whilst he is watching his pecs in the mirror, I get dressed.

We are taken to another room to see 2 humanoid creatures that also seem to have some sort of aspect of a lion about them. They tell us their names are Kilara the fearsome and Mokor. They ask if we would like to stay in this area for eternity to battle evil. I explain to them the reason we entered the caves in the first place and that I, at least, need to find my way across the mountains, however, I am happy to stay temporarily to aid them in any way I can. They offer to aid us as they may, but have apparently lost the silver door to their storeroom. We tell them that we have seen a silver door as they describe and they ask us to retrieve it for them. They show us out of their demesnes and we go and recover the door. We pass through the fireball trap room twice, and Regina sets it off for us both times. Odd how she keeps on doing that.

The door is returned to the lion-like creatures. They tell me that the greatsword that I have recently found belonged to one of their number and is a powerful and holy weapon. I ask whether I need to return it to the family of the creature that I found it on, but they seem happy for me to continue to use it. They also provide Regina with some more arrows, as she is running a bit low. We rest again so that we are at full health and in the morning the creatures give us some directions so that we are able to track down the evil goblin.

Reluctantly, we head in the direction of the goblin without the rude elf. Strange how as rude as the rude elf was, I was started to become accustomed to his ways and may even miss him to some extent. I say a prayer for his soul. I assume elves have them.

With the aid of some spells by Carbine we prepare for battle with the goblin, but hearing us in races towards us out of its lair. Gareth and I inflict some damage upon it. Regina tumbles past it so that she can attack it from behind, but the evil beast has summoned more wolves to help it and Regina is knocked down. With the aid of Gareth, and

much healing from Carbine, I continue to harry the creature, but it forces us back down the hall. Eventually, I am able to slay it and some of its minions, but we then discover that there has been another one of them behind the others that has been feeding on Regina. We kill the remaining creature, but it is too late for Regina who has also been killed. Truly, this was an evil creature to have caused us the loss of 2 comrades, before we could defeat it.

Days 12 & 13 (22 May 2005)

We search the evil goblin creature, and his lair, and discover the remains of the rude elf. We find a finely crafted giant axe that the goblin used so effectively against us. Surely, this must be a powerful weapon. We pause to say a prayer over the bodies of Regina and the rude elf and take the usable equipment remaining on them. We rest in the creatures lair, thinking that it is unlikely that any other creature would come near such a dangerous place and feel much restored. However, I have taken to sleeping in my armour. Even though this does not allow me a restful nights sleep, it does allow me to be ready for battle if we are attacked in the night. A quick prayer in the morning restores me from any lingering fatigue.

Gareth leads us east, though very slowly, as he is totally consumed with his magic tablet on which he draws his maps. He babbles about find some lost ancestor. Whilst I would like to find the secret behind the titan's fall, and eventually get out of this place, one way is as good as another, when we don't know where we are, and so we allow Gareth to lead us. He seems to feel more important when he thinks he's in charge. I am happy to pander to his inferiority complex for the time being.

The air is dryer and hotter as we head east. We travel down more of these seemingly endless corridors, which surely must have kept stonemasons in business for many years, when we come across two travellers. The sight of the first one, who calls himself Malachy, not only surprises me, but also blocks my view of his companion. Malachy seems to be some sort of giant humanoid, who almost looks to be made

of stone. His companion was some sort of darkened elf and called herself Maizy. Even though I had some initial misgivings, I could detect no evil in either of the pair and not wanting to leave these travellers to their doom, if they were to continue travelling alone, I allow them to join with us, so that we can protect them. Gareth seems quite sulky with the arrival of our new companions and keeps looking in his pants, saying "I'm bigger than him". Clearly Gareth is being slowly maddened by this place as obviously Malachy is much taller than him. Malachy also has his hair styled in a manner I have not seen in many years. Back home we called this sort of hair style a mullet, but I fancy not telling this giant creature that this is no longer the fashion.

Whilst we are introducing ourselves to these creatures, we neglect our rearward defences and some bugbears sneak up upon us. Gareth and I dispose of them, while Malachy and Maizy stay behind us, where they will be safe. Though, with his long arms, Malachy is able to hit these creatures over the top of our heads.

We come to a room containing several more bugbears. Malachy and I enter the room and dispose of the brutes, who attack us first, before we are able to offer them parley. Gareth seemed not to want to enter the room, and continued to stare down his trousers, mumbling to himself. I feel like we walk in circles in this place, but Gareth assures us he is leading us somewhere.

Eventually, we come to a room, with what appears to be a sack of gems beside a well. I have an uneasy feeling and start to back away, but before I can get to the door Gareth, who seems to be attracted by anything sparkly, picks up a gem and throws it in the well.

Suddenly, the door slams shut and the water in the well starts to fill the room. We ask Malachy if he can break down the door. He starts to hammer away at it and I assist with my sword. Malachy manages to break down the door, just as I am starting to get a bit worried by the increasing water level, though it probably only got to Malachy's kneecaps.

More passages – oh, for a nice grassy field, and we a squeezing down a narrow passageway. Gareth has taken the lead. He feels better when he's in front. He opens a door and is attacked by a strange wolf-like creature. The wolf trips Gareth over and starts to eat him. I move up to the wolf and smite the evil within it. With Malachy once again reaching over my head to pound the creature, it soon falls to our combined might. Carbine heals both myself and Gareth, though he does seem to be a bit surly that he always seems to be looking at Malachy's backside. Apparently, there is a funny smell at the back of the party. I have noticed that such a smell does seem to pervade this whole region lately.

Maizy finds a secret door in a wall, which we can hear grunting behind, and opens it enough that Gareth and myself can enter the room behind where there are yet more bugbears. Unfortunately, the opening into this room is too narrow for Malachy to enter so he remains behind. This is probably safer for him in any event. Though Gareth and I certainly have been protecting him well, as I have not yet seen him lose a drop of blood in combat. Maybe he is made of stone and doesn't have blood. I may need to discuss this with Carbine.

Meanwhile, without feeling overawed by Malachy, Gareth seems to be almost his old self and charges into the group of bugbears. He and I return them to their maker, though a lucky blow from one of them wounds me.

As we walk along one section of corridor, Malachy suddenly grabs me from behind and I see Gareth fall into a pit in front of me. Simultaneously, a scything blade come from the roof and injures Maizy at the rear of the party. Gareth has fallen onto some of the spikes that are at the bottom of the pit, but Malachy lowers a rope to him and pulls him back to safety.

We come to a door covered in strange runes, but we cannot detect any magics on them and open the door. A stone block falls from the roof and injures myself and Gareth, but then crumbles into dust. Behind the door is a gold idol on a pedestal with a path leading to the

pedestal. I find myself to be suspicious of such situations these days and when Malachy expresses a reluctance for us to enter the room, I am happy to respect his wishes and move on. It's lucky that we don't have anyone in our group attracted by big shiny things. Gareth....

Days 13, 14, 15 & 16 (29 May 2005)

The next door we get to leads us into a corridor. There is a very fancy door at the northern end, which has a keyhole in the shape of a griffins head on it. I turn the handle but am hit with a huge blast of sound from the door. As I see Malachy attracted to the door by the large boom, I move away to have my wounds attended to. As he moves towards the door, he says that he once met a thief who told him that once a trap has gone off the door will be safe to open. I don't know if his acquaintance lived for long though, as Malachy's theory seems to have some holes in it, highlighted by the door booming at him and the rest of the party as well. Luckily Carbine and I had moved around a corner so he could hear me.

With the party wounded, we rest for the night in the booming corridor, on the condition that no-one try to open the door during the night. We open a different door from this same corridor, and are attacked by some wolves. Malachy enters the room, but Gareth says that he can't fit through the door past Malachy. Wondering, what on earth Gareth is talking about, I enter the room and attack one of the wolves, so that Malachy will not be alone. I wound it nigh unto death, then Malachy kills it and then the remaining one. There are also some other dead wolves in this room. It almost looks like the wolves were so hungry they were fighting with each other. Once we are in the room, the door slams shut behind us.

Opening one of the doors in the wall opposite, we head down another narrow passage. I take the lead so as to guard the others, as is always the duty of the virtuous (I suspect this is why Gareth always seems to not want to go first – but maybe I am being uncharitable again – I shall pray for him, he certainly needs some help). At the end of the corridor is a makeshift door, which I knock to the ground and come

into a largish room with four bugbears inside. I move in to end the miserable lives of these evil-doers, but they do not appreciate my trying to help them and throw their javelins at me. I move in and quickly send the nearest one to the judgement of Heironeious. Malachy strides in behind me and polishes off the rest of them, before I can deal justice to them. Surprisingly, or maybe not, Gareth has been lingering back in a corner, not coming near these beasts. I am glad that at least I am able to guard him and keep him safe from these evildoers.

I must say I am surprised to find that in the heat of battle, Carbine seems to have been hitting on Maizy. Our new companion certainly seems to have attracted more than her fair share of attention from Carbine and Gareth. I hope she is not encouraging them during our rests at night. I almost find that I have some small amount of regret that Gareth no longer pays me the attention he did before Maizy's arrival, however, no real suitor would be distracted by the posturings of this darkened strumpet. I will ignore him and his floozy from now on, except in so far as I need to protect them or use their services to escape from this place.

We find some keys on the dead bugbears and use these to let us back out of the locked door in the wolves room. We enter a new room, which immediately turns to mirrors. We try smashing the mirrors in the walls, floor and ceiling to escape, but the mirrors repair themselves faster than we can smash them. This is a moment to regret our careless guarding of Regina. She would have been someone who could have found a way out of this mess for us. Gareth seems very happy in this room and seems to spend his whole time looking at himself in the mirrors. I don't mind if he wishes to comb his hair on his head, but I am appalled by the rudeness of him asking Maizy to comb the hair on his back. Eventually Maizy finishes searching the room and finds a button in the floor that releases us from this trap.

We travel from room to room in this area and they all seem now to have traps of almost every type. I suggest to Gareth that perhaps we should travel in a different part of this maze, so that our companions

are not injured by these devices. We rest again, but for a shorter period this time.

Moving back to the booming corridor, Carbine throws a spell to stop the noise of the door injuring us, and we set to attacking the door. I can see we are doing small amounts of damage, but it is eerily quiet. Suddenly, the door sprays us with something freezing cold and we are forced away from it. I find the cold has injured me more than I expected. We rest again, so that Carbine can attend to our wounds.

Heading off the next morning, we come to a room with yet more traps. Poor Carbine looks like a pin cushion as the very walls shoot him with arrows as we cross. Another dead end. However, I know that I am now strong enough to summon a companion to aid me in my quest to fight evil. I summon Valerion, a unicorn, who wishes to aid me in my quest. He is a beautiful white unicorn. Clearly, a very noble creature. So, why do I feel nervous when I see Gareth staring at him so intently, and why is talking down his trousers again. "Down boy", he says, but I look around and I can't see a dog anywhere.

We decide that maybe bracing the hydra that we came across in our early days in this place would be the best thing to do. So, off we go. Suddenly, Malachy starts bothering me about walking in front of him with Gareth. He seems to be worried that I won't stand in front of him anymore now that I am riding Valerion. I try to reassure Malachy that I will still look after him, but he seems to have trouble understanding. Surely, he should realise that Valerion and I will present more of an obstacle to evil creatures trying to hurt him.

We head towards where we believe the hydra to be, and are attacked by more shadow creatures. I can feel them stealing the very strength from my bones and it is all I can do to hold to Valerion's back and not fall off. Eventually, Carbine turns them all away from us. I try to help him, but find my mind distracted by my physical woes and I cannot summon adequate concentration to deal with the creatures. Carbine seems to have little sympathy for my plight and goes so far as to laugh at me when I ask him for aid. Bad Carbine.

I fall to the rear of the party, as I feel unable to even draw my sword from its sheathe, and Malachy opens the door ahead of us. Suddenly, the hydra is revealed before us, but it is almost at the door and Malachy is forced to straddle the doorway as he attacks it. What little I can see of the creature shows that it has a number of heads (and necks) sprouting from its body and that it keeps breathing a cold mist onto the Malachy and Gareth and Carbine, who are standing behind him. Unfortunately, the next time the creature breathes on us, Carbine falls (frozen) to the ground. Maybe Kord should have told him to take a step backwards.

Anyway, Malachy and the hydra are engaged in a frenzy of whacking each other. Malachy has numerous bite wounds, but seems to be giving the hydra a bit of a pounding. Gareth suddenly, and out of character, enters the room to assist Malachy, whilst I move Valerion forward to cure Carbine. Unfortunately, Carbine seems to be beyond my help at this time and may be having a more personal talk with Kord than he usually has. At least he's bound to be happy. He always wanted to be closer to his God.

However, in the next room, Malachy has finally disposed of the hydra and Gareth seems to have cut off one of its necks with head and stuck in down his trousers. All I could hear him saying was, "now we'll see who's bigger". He would have been better off standing on top of the hydra if he wants to be bigger than Malachy.

The loss of another companion, just highlights to me that without Malachy's services, we would be hopelessly overpowered by creatures in this area. Maybe we should move back and try to find another way out. However, Gareth reminds me that we should return to the celestials, we visited a few days ago, and see if they have the means to bring Carbine back from the dead. This sounds like a good idea, but I do need to rest and regain my strength before we travel too much further.

Days 16,17 & 18 (5 June 2005)

We head back with Carbine's body to find the celestials. As we follow Gareth and his magic tablet, we come across a large humanoid, who calls himself Dodge. Funny, I remember a man by the same name who used to sell carts back home, and he used to write his name on all the carts he sold. Anyway, Dodge tells us that he is hunting barghests, which are the big goblin/wolf things that ate Regina and the rude elf. We tell him of our encounter with the beasts, but he says he already knows about that. Very strange. He agrees to accompany us back to the celestials so we can get Carbine resurrected.

We finally meet up with Sanjit, who strangely seems to be eyeing off Maizy most suspiciously, but noone else seems to notice his stares. I also notice Dodge is looking at my sword most speculatively. I'm sure if he has some issue with me having it, that he will mention it in due course. We ask Sanjit whether he has it within his means to bring Carbine back to life. He says he will see what he can do, and leaves the room. Strangely, Malachy tells us that he can hear arguing on the other side of the door, but eventually Sanjit comes back and agrees to bring Carbine back to life if we will provide a service for him.

Sanjit tells us that the celestials are having troubles with an army of drow to the north. The drow have other allies with them including two in particular, Anguish and Madness, that he says we must slay. We agree to do what we can about these evil doers. Maizy states she has no knowledge of the activities of her brethren. I ask Sanjit if he can help me obtain a saddle for Valerion, but apparently there are none available. He also advises me that, as Valerion does not disappear each day, as he is supposed to – so he can rest and eat, that there is grazing available for him in the nearby indoor forest. Dodge agrees to escort Valerion to the forest while we rest, as he is starting to get a bit hungry. Poor Valerion, I don't think he is too keen on this place, but then again, neither am I. Sanjit tells us that we are welcome to return to the Celestials home whenever we have need.

The following morning, with us all feeling much better after healing from Sanjit, we set off to the north, with a slight detour to pick up

Valerion on the way. Valerion seems much happier, with a belly full of food and I pick up enough grass to keep him going for a while if we have trouble returning here in the near future.

We head to the north, but get to a point where the others seem unwilling to follow further. I too can feel a great sadness in this place, but seem to suffer less effects than my companions. Eventually, I am able to rouse them all enough to continue on. We seem to be passing through an area with meat clinging to the walls. Very strange. We travel down more new passages until we come to a room, where we are attacked by black creatures that are almost like some sort of blanket and they keep trying to wrap themselves around me. Luckily, they are no match for the combined might of Gareth, Malachy and myself and fall quickly.

Gareth continues mapping on his magic tablet, but he does get very touchy when he is playing with it. Sometimes, when I'm feeling a bit naughty, I think I should shake up the tablet, so the sand that draws the maps on the face of the tablet are moved. I should not think such thoughts though, for without Gareth's map, we would have trouble moving around this area.

We come to another room which seems to have a pool of inky blackness hiding back in the shadows. I can sense the evil of the thing and Carbine and I move into the room. Strangely, I almost feel like I may have been functioning without my conscious knowledge as I awaken to find I am no longer riding Valerion and Carbine is near me lying on the ground. There are also 2 black pudding like creatures in the room with us. Valerion seems to be stomping on one in the opposite corner to me and he warns me not to strike the creature with my sword. I focus my healing powers on Carbine and he is conscious again, though I notice that his armour has almost dissolved on him.

Gareth seems to be attacking Malachy in the doorway to the room, but Malachy pounds him on the head until he stops and falls over. Gareth's helmet seems to be a lot narrower now. That must hurt, he'll have a headache when he wakes up, though what on earth possessed

him to attack one of our companions is beyond me. Valerion kills the pudding creature closest to him and Maizy and Malachy pound the other into submission. However, Maizy seems to have something moving under her skin now. I try to cure any disease she may have, but this doesn't seem to help her. She keeps muttering that she just needs some sleep. So, against Malachy's grumblings, we take her and Gareth back to the Celestial's area, for some rest. More graciously than I could have imagined, Malachy escorts myself and Valerion back to the forest so that Valerion can graze. How very noble of him. Malachy, though surprisingly tall for an elf, certainly seems to be more of a gentleman than the Gareth. (I heard Carbine calls Gareth, "the Gareth" – very funny, but don't tell him).

We rest for the night and everyone seems a lot better in the morning, so we head north again. Once again, my companions seem to be unable to move to the north without my assistance. They seem to have no willpower to keep them focussed on their mission. They just stand around whining about how they don't need to further honour our agreement with the Celestials. I certainly hope they don't intend to breach our contract. I think we have more need of the Celestial's services than the others may appreciate.

Taking a different route this time, we come across more of the black blanket creatures, and are forced to slay the evil things. This does not take Malachy and myself long.

Days 18,19,20 V:21 (13 June 2005)

We continue through this maze, following what appears to be a trail of small brightly colored objects, which could be a child's play things. They are made out of a strange material and almost look like you could suck on them.

Coming to the next room, we are attacked by some grey creatures with very long arms that scamper all over the floor and walls of this place. One seems to be choking Gareth, but when I kill it, it looks more like Gareth is choking on one of the brightly colored objects that we picked

up off the floor earlier. Malachy quickly disposes of a few of the evil creatures that have escaped the wrath of my blade.

Next, we come to an intersection where there is a black statue of a creature that Carbine calls a "drider". Some sort of spider by the looks of it. I think we caught a glimpse of it a day or two ago when we were to the south of here. Suddenly, Malachy whacks the statue, which blasts out a ball of fire which singes us all. Now Gareth seems to be getting hairier and growing fangs, and now he's taking his clothes off (again). He almost looks like a spider. He's certainly uglier as a spider. If only Malachy had a big roll of parchment, he could whack him with it. That's what my father always did when we had a spider about the house at home. As I watch the Gareth/spider creature, I can tell, strangely, that it is not evil and it still seems to think it is Gareth. What to do. I might mention to Malachy that he keep a roll of parchment handy.

Meanwhile, Carbine has started gibbering and ranting quite insanely. Then he tries to run off and Malachy has to catch him by the collar, before he gets too far. Bad Carbine. Maizy also seems to be screeching and screaming. The normal ones of us, decide to take the others back to the celestials area for healing. I have heard that it can be quite difficult to cure an insane person, but we will see what can be done for Carbine.

We all travel back to the celestials area and Sanjit explains to us that to the north, the very stones try to heal a person who is too badly wounded, but generally there are side effects that will wear off. We rest overnight and Gareth seems to resume his more 'normal' form, though maybe there's not as much difference between the before and after as I thought. Maizy also gets better later in the day. We wait in the celestials area for 2 days, but Carbine stills seems to gibber insanely. Heaven knows what he is doing to those poor light ball creatures that he is locked in the room with.

After waiting around here for a while, Malachy decides that he is bored (maybe less excited than usual would be a better term) and we

all head off to the indoor forest with him to have a look what is there. I am attacked by an invisible mushroom type creature, but we slay it with the aid of its smell, that Valerion is able to trace just as easily as if the creature were visible. We leave Valerion to graze and head back to our new base.

The following day, Carbine seems back to his usual level of insanity and so we head back out, stopping to pick up Valerion from the forest. We find a dead celestial creature pinned to a wall, and Carbine seems to decant its blood, for some purpose that he doesn't share with the rest of us. I hope he isn't going to start drinking it. Yuck.

We move into a room with purple slime on the floor, where we are attacked by some tentacled snake type creatures. Valerion and I move into the room to attack these abominations, but it is very slippery and we need to be careful that I don't fall from his back. Eventually, I slay them, with some help from Malachy and Gareth and we move on.

Travelling down a narrow corridor, we come to a room with more of the snake creatures, but Gareth blocks the corridor completely and neither Malachy nor I can push past him. Eventually, he slays the creature at the end of the passage and we push into the very broad passage beyond. There are many more of these creatures, both big and little and Gareth and I take turns in the vanguard with Malachy, before returning to Carbine for some healing. As I look closer, I note that many of these creatures look somehow warped from they are meant to be. One is all sticky and grabs a hold of me and I can't get it off. Malachy whacks it with his sword, almost knocking me off Valerion, but then finds his sword his also stuck to the creature and me. Eventually, we kill the thing and Malachy pulls his sword off me.

Now, Carbine seems to be complaining about some strange green monster attacking him at the back of the party. He keeps moving around as if to avoid it, but I can't see what the problem is. When I move to the back of the party, I wave my sword through the space the creature is supposedly occupying and Carbine seems satisfied that I have driven it off. Very strange. Just when I think my companions

can't get any stranger, they do. Maybe he still retains some of the insanity that possessed him so recently.

Days 21 & 22 (19 June 2005)

As we go to move onwards, Gareth has a sudden temper tantrum about our ribbing of him using his magic tablet to draw his maps on. It turns out, that Gareth had picked up all the brightly coloured objects we had found on the floor a couple of days ago and starts putting them in his mouth and blowing them at us. Obviously, the insanity in this place is growing. I know that Gareth would not normally act so childishly, so I try to console him as best I can, in the hopes that we can find someone to heal him later on. Then he throws the magic tablet on the ground and it looks like he has broken it. He puts the pieces of it in his backpack. So, now we must rely on the most basic of maps that I started to draw yesterday when Gareth was not feeling himself (in either sense of the term).

We find another room filled with more of the tentacle snake creatures, which Malachy and myself dispatch as quickly as we can. Gareth mumbles about being "superfluous". I'm not really sure what this means, it almost sounds to be some strange dialect – maybe now he's starting to gibber as well. Anyway, I'm sure back at home one time, I heard a doctor say that someone had caught "superfluous". I think he prescribed a course of leeches to be placed under the tongue. I will try to mention this to Carbine and keep an eye out for some leeches to help Gareth.

Our wanderings now become more random, as we don't have as much detail on our paper map as was on the magic tablet. I start to feel very frustrated when Gareth pulls the magic tablet out of his backpack and starts giggling and talking to himself about having already been in this area of the dungeon. Finally, Malachy appears to also be worried by Gareth's sanity and picks him up by the backpack and shakes him. Unfortunately, the straps on the backpack were probably not designed for this treatment and Gareth falls onto the ground, on his head! Luckily, this seems to knock some sense into him and he

starts mapping again. It looks like this is a growing madness in Gareth. Luckily, we now know how to cure it. And I mustn't forget to get the leeches to treat his "superfluous" problem.

We start to cover the same ground we have only just covered again, so that Gareth can put it all into his magic tablet. Lucky it didn't break when he dropped it before. Gareth seems back to his usual self. He has this strange tapping noise emanating somewhere on his body though, everytime he comes near me. Its very off-putting, especially when I have no idea how he does it.

We enter a room filled with old and rotting tapestries. In here Maizy finds a secret note, that only she seems to be able to read. Having now travelled for some time, we head back to rest in the celestials' quarters. Surprisingly, Maizy starts to gnaw on some old wolf pieces that Malachy has been carrying with him for a couple of days now. Yuck.

On the way out the next morning, we go to the indoor forest for Valerion to have a feed. Then, travelling down some new corridors that Sanjit has described to us, we come to an area we haven't been to before. Gareth is trying to lead us to an area where he believes Anguish and Misery to be residing. Having no intelligence to the contrary (or, in some cases simply no intelligence), we follow his lead. I open a door to the south of us, whilst simultaneously, Gareth opens a door to the north. The northern room apparently has nothing of particular interest, but there is a creature in the south room. It is a curious combination of man, horse and bird, but apparently made of metal. It tells us that it is an "inevitable" as well as being a lawyer and the "Adjudicator of the Host". Apparently, it has some sort of argument going with the celestials, but ultimately they are allies.

Leaving this strange creature, we head into a room to the east, where there is an indoor tree and stone benches to sit and look at the tree. Unfortunately, the tree appears to have died. At this point, Malachy decides that he hasn't talked to the metal creature enough and he heads back to see it. We hear his chatter with the creature for some time. To the south of this room is another metallic looking creature,

though different to the previous one, and it has a whole storeroom of various goods. It offers to sell us any goods we require. So, Carbine buys a new set of plate armour and I, finally, acquire a saddle for Valerion. This will keep me more stable on Valerion's back, particularly when we are beset by evildoers.

We walk up a corridor to the north when suddenly the floor falls from beneath us. Valerion and I plummet down and I fall onto some sort of spike, which appears to be poisoned. I feel weaker from the poison, but Valerion cures the poison remaining in my body before it can cause further damage. I do some minor healing to myself and I feel noticeably better. However, Gareth, who has also fallen into the pit, seems to have started babbling again. Malachy throws down a rope and I tie one end to Gareth and throw the other end back up to Malachy (you'd think it would have been easier if he'd just held onto one end). Gareth is pulled from the pit and then Malachy pulls both Valerion and myself from the pit also. Lucky he's so strong, as Valerion probably weighs a fair bit.

When I get back to the top, Carbine heals my wounds and works another one of his magics on me to make me feel stronger again. I feel back to my usual self now. Thanking Carbine, I head to the south and ask the Storeman golem creature whether there is a way that we can bypass the pit to the north. He tells me of a hidden lever that when pulled will allow us to cross. Apparently, there is a matching lever on the far side so that we can come back.

We head to the north as far as we can, but come to rubble filled room that seems impossible to bypass. Then, when we are least expecting it, some of the tentacle snake creatures crawl out from under the rubble and attack us. Luckily, Malachy finishes them off in quick order. But now there are no other exits from this area and we move back to the room with the dead tree to decide what to do.

Days 22, 23 & 24 (26 June 2005)

Through the east door we meet the “watcher for bargains”, who is apparently in charge of the odd assortment of inevitable creatures in this area. Malachy messes up the neatly ordered papers in the Watcher’s room and so we apologise for disturbing him and move on.

The next room has another inevitable called “Penna”. Gareth keeps snickering and talking about something called “airten”, maybe he means he has gas. Better move a bit away from him if that is the case. There are enough nasty smalls around here already. Penna titles himself the “keeper of the lists” and tells us of a secret path to the north in exchange for copies of Gareth’s and my journals. He has a number of arms and seems to be able to quickly read and draw a copy of any document that he sees. He copies our journals in only a few minutes.

We head to the north, through the secret passage, and come across another door that Maizy is too afraid to walk through. Malachy simply picks her up and carries her through. We come into a very large room with a number of exits, but I can sense an aura of evil and it turns out that the things that looked like cloaks on pegs by the door are actually the cloak monsters we met a few days ago. Malachy seems frenzied as he fights them and as he lashes about blindly around him, he knocks Maizy to the floor with a resounding whack. I help Malachy finish off the evil creatures. I also try to assist Gareth, but he keeps whining whenever I kill something that he is fighting. He’ll be sorry the day that I decide not to help him out.

Carbine checks on Maizy. At first it looks like Malachy may have killed her (bad Malachy), but with Carbine’s arrival her condition is upgraded and she is soon moving around again. We rest for some healing and Carbine attends to our wounds.

The following morning (I say morning – but it all looks the same down here), we come to a room with an elegantly set dining table, but no food. Leaving this room, we continue to head north when suddenly the floor turns into a greasy slide beneath our feet and we all are swept to the north end of the room and a portcullis seals us from any

exit. Then, on top of that, the portcullis turns to ice. Malachy bashes at the ice with his sword and it explodes, showering us in a cold spray, which causes much damage to the less prepared of us.

We break free of the portcullis and into the next room which appears to be some sort of huge laboratory, set up by some crazed mage no doubt. There seems to be a number of light creatures, similar to Alphus, that Carbine tries to communicate with, but to no avail. Maizy finds a silver ingot, but is unable to pick it up in her weakened condition, after being blasted by the ice. I pick it up and put in on Valerion's back. Searching the area we find some more of these silver bars and a scroll, which Maizy tries to read, but suddenly she turns into a toad. Coohhh, magic afoot here methinks. As the toad sits and looks at us, Gareth picks it up and starts kissing it. Apparently he has been reading that old fairy tale about kissing a toad and it turns into a handsome prince (?!?!). But I'm sure in that story the human kissed the toad on the mouth, rather than where Gareth is kissing it.

We rest again, as we feel very weak after the ice explosion, but we feel better after a while and continue on. Gareth tells us that he is leading us south now, but then after a while he turns his magic tablet around the right way and it appears that we have, in fact, been heading north. We come across a statue of what Malachy calls a "drider". Some sort of spider creature by the look. However, the room it is in has an evil presence and I hurry along as soon as the others have finished their examination of the statue.

The next room has flesh walls, like all the others in this bizarre area, but these walls almost appear to be breathing. We decide to head back into safer areas. On the way we stop at the storeman and give him all the silver we have found. We ask him if he has anyway to convert Maizy back from her current toad form. He suggests a particular clerical spell will cure her condition, but apparently Carbine is not yet loved enough by his god to have been granted this spell. The storeman does give us some food though. This is good, as I was starting to run a bit low.

We head back to see Sanjit, but stop and drop Valerion off in the forest to graze. Poor boy, he was getting very hungry. When we see Sanjit, he tells us that he may have a scroll that can restore Maizy in exchange for another favour. Of course I tell him that we are happy to perform any service in exchange for the life of our companion. However, Malachy and Carbine start complaining and go so far as to threaten Sanjit with harm. Bad Malachy and Carbine. We are lucky to have any allies in this place at all, without starting to beat up the ones we do have. Mind you, I do have some appreciation of their frustration, now that we have been stuck in this place for a while. I would really like to get out of here soon myself. I must get over the mountains and fix up my family's business before it is too late.

Days 24 & 25 (3 July 2005)

I almost feel like I black out for a minute as we are talking with Sanjit, and when I come to I find that Malachy has negotiated for Maizy to be returned from toad form in exchange for us finding (or creating) another scroll to replace the one that Sanjit has used to restore Maizy. Very odd.

Anyway, we rest for a while and head back to the north in search of Anguish and Madness. We pick up Valerion from the indoor forest on the way through and he seems happier now he has had a bit of a graze.

We travel through a series of circular rooms, which are quite small, which means we are spread out between 3 rooms by the time we come to a halt. With Malachy insisting on going ahead of me, it is a bit hard to see what is going on, much less protect Malachy from danger. From the glimpses I can see through the next doorway as Malachy moves around, he is being attacked by some strange, almost insubstantial, snake type creature. As he is blocking the doorway, I can't get through to aid him. But his stone buttocks prove to be less than the substantial protection that they appear to be and I am injured by some sort of bolt of lightning that comes from the snake creature.

Valerion and I do some healing to ourselves and Carbine retreats into the next room, to avoid further damage. Then, another bolt of lightning shoots through us. Valerion and I are quite injured by now, but Maizy has gone black(er) and sort of crispy looking. She doesn't seem well, and Carbine tries to stabilise her only to find she is dead. It almost appears as though Carbine could have saved her, but just didn't try hard enough at the proper moment. Valerion and I move back down the corridor to find another way through to the creature, doing some more healing as we go, but it is to no avail, with a sheet of ice blocking the way behind us. We move back and squeeze against the wall, in the hopes that any further lightning may miss us, so we are well enough to go in and aid Malachy, if we can push past.

Eventually, Gareth kills the creature. Malachy mumbles something about how he did most of the damage to it, but it was clear that Gareth killed it, so I don't know what he is talking about. This is why I must protect Malachy better in the future.

We head back to where the inevitables live, near the room with the dead tree, and ask Wellok whether he can do anything to bring Maizy back to life. He sells us a scroll that will do this, in exchange for the nice goggles I found a while ago. He also gives me a spare greatsword to replace the one that I have lent Carbine, after he broke his own,

We rest to cure our wounds and so that Maizy can learn her spells again. I am getting a bit sick of the rations we eat down here all the time. It's getting to the point now where we need to break out of this place just to get something a bit nicer to eat.

The next morning, we set off yet again. We come to a room with a big pit in one corner. The floor is also slippery and slants towards the pit. Malachy goes over to look into the pit, when some tentacles come out and attack him. As he tries to fight his way out, Malachy drops his huge sword into the pit, and then jumps in after it. Maizy starts to slide towards the pit, but I grab her to stop her falling. Gareth moves over towards the pit and is grabbed by tentacles, which I whack with

my sword. Carbine also moves over towards the pit and throws some sort of spell at the creature, but as he is looking the other direction a tentacle comes up and drags him into the pit.

I tie a rope around the pommel of my saddle and throw the other end of the rope into the pit, Carbine grabs a hold of the rope and Valerion pulls him back up out of the pit. Before I have time to untie the rope, Maizy is also pulled into the pit and I throw the rope back in and pull her out. I watch as Gareth jumps in, and mindful of my duty to protect Gareth and Malachy, as they have less sense of danger than the others, I also jump in.

I fall onto a fleshy, pudding like ground that is covered with tentacles, or the remains thereof. Malachy is covered in gore and seems to be pulling tentacles off whatever this creature is. Eventually, I help Malachy and Gareth sever the last of the tentacles, but the floor is still writhing. As we do not seem to be substantially damaging the creature we are standing on, we decide to move out. Valerion pulls myself then Gareth back out of the pit, and Malachy climbs out by himself.

This place is getting weirder.