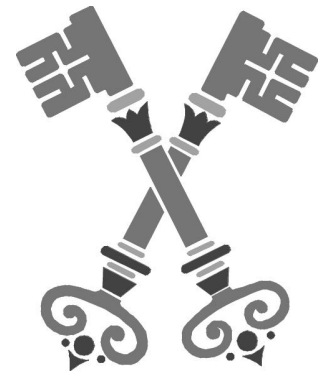


GATEWAY CHRONICLES



AUGUST 1999



WAR STORIES

HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS OF JULY 1999

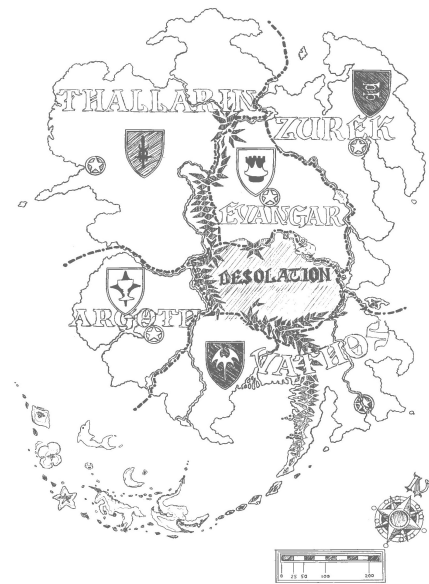
Forces of the Empire had taken Western Vathos and were stopped (barely) from taking the eastern portion, as well as all of Argoth. During the uneasy lull in hostilities that followed, the call went forth for all members of the Rams Head Tavern who were willing to gather at the Crusader Citadel in Argoth. There, under the direction of Knight-Commander Westlake (*Bob Hollister*), the Rams Head members were asked to contribute their time and skills to a number of activities that would help further Kaleth's war against the Empire.

Most of the best units in Argoth's army had been destroyed repulsing the earlier Imperial attacks. Those that were left were gathered at the Citadel and benefited from training at the hands of Liam (*Kevin Stein*), Charleston (*Dan Silver*), and other capable Rams Head members.

The walls of the Citadel had been breached in many places during the Empire's assault. With the help of able hands such as Drea (*Lori Ralston*), Alejandro (*Jon Marcus*), Sebastian Poe-Kerrigan (*Brian Curley*), and Tabitha (*Cindy Busch*), these holes were quickly repaired.

Lastly, there were countless reports on the numbers and movements of the Imperial troops in Western Vathos. But through the efforts of Paxson (*Jason Herr*), Reynn (*Rob Nichols*), Reman (*Marc Blumberg*), Lady Cassandra (*Anita Machamer*), and others these reports were analyzed and a clearer picture of the opposition was gained.

Also in attendance was Kedrik (*Tom Dowd*), former Inquisitor - now the Prelate of the New Church of Dain. Andor the Crusader (*Rob Wilson*) was at his side as usual, as was a quiet



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Priestess of Dain, Mina (*Corrie Hrubes*). Obviously with the defeat of the Church of Sangir and the rise of the "child" Dain, the Church has undergone dramatic changes.

Early in the day the gathering was graced by the presence of several of Argoth's nobility, including Duke Claridge (*Joe Adelsik*) and his heir apparent, Count Todd Claridge (*Jason Rownd*). Duke Claridge was seen conversing closely with Prelate Kedrick, no doubt discussing the place of the new Church in the policies of Argoth. After some discussion with the parties involved, the Duke bestowed

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War Stories

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new titles on two members of the Rams Head. Lord FitzRobert (*Mike Shoemberger*), a veteran of the battles with the Empire, was raised to the rank of Count. And in a move long awaited by some, Poe-Kerrigan, a commoner and chosen successor of the recently deceased Count Kerrigan of White Falls, was made a Lord. He currently serves as Regent of White Falls and it remains to be seen if he will retain long-term control of those lands.

Scouting parties were also sent out to help learn more of the Empires' movements and activities. Some of these parties captured Imperial supplies and prisoners. On a surprising note, these parties also freed several Imperial deserters. These deserters, inspired by the surprising strength of Kaleth's defense, defied their masters and were horribly punished. But many were freed by members of the Rams Head and have now joined the forces of Kaleth. It should be noted that these scouting parties did not always meet with success, such as the party led by Lord FitzRobert. Having been defeated by a large number of Black Hand soldiers, Ivan (*James Silvestein*) and Ximene (*Pat Skyhorse*) were executed, Tabitha maimed, and FitzRobert tortured. Only the fast actions of Faolain (*Barb Laff*) allowed them to be recovered and restored.

While the various scouting parties were being assembled, Faolain and Reynn found a strange deck of cards. Upon consultation with Ivan and Ximene, it was fairly clear this was a Deck of Fate, a magical item rumored to bestow great boons or terrible curses depending upon which card a person drew from it. Shortly after its discovery, Segial (*Doug Tabb*) and Ivan reported that the spirit of a little girl was searching for the deck. At this point, Faolain and Reynn decided to draw from it to see if the rumors of its powers were true. Faolain later demonstrated that she now possesses Great Strength, a fact that was instrumental in allowing her to summon aid for her ambushed Scouting party. Reynn, on the other hand, was "cursed" with such incredible sensitivity that the slightest touch was like being struck by a blow. He spent the rest of the day painfully shuffling from place to place.

Shortly thereafter, an emissary from Vathos (*Rich Shaufuss*) arrived in the company of Captain Korinth (*Dave Simkins*). This emissary came to plead for military assistance, for though the mountain passes to Eastern Vathos were currently being held against the Empire, they could not be held forever. A Lector from the Empire arrived at this time to deliver an ultimatum to the leaders of Kaleth's resistance. Captain Korinth attacked him on sight, but the Lector translocated the good captain with a wave of his hand. With the departure of Duke Claridge (and Korinth) Prelate Kedrik was summoned to speak with the Lector. The Imperial demand was simple... Unconditional Surrender. Kedrik stated this was impossible. The sneering Lector then reluctantly admitted he had been instructed to offer an alternative... if the powers of

Kaleth surrendered Western Vathos, now in Imperial hands, then the Empire would agree to a truce. Prelate Kedrik took aside those Rams Head members interested in discussing this offer, which soon included a sweating and angry Captain Korinth. Many stated their objections to the idea and left while other stayed and debated various related subjects, such as the strength of the remaining Imperial forces and the possibility of rebuilding Kaleth's forces faster than the Empire could ship in troops. During the discussion word reached the Citadel that a number of Ram's Head Heroes off on expedition had been captured. Several of the immediately set off to aid them, while other remained to continue the discussion (and some admonished the departed for favoring the safety of their friends over Kaleth itself...)

The discussion, however, was rendered moot when Xander (*Omar Gonzalez*) came into the meeting and explained that the Lector was gone. Apparently, a false "Kedrik" had walked into the room where the Lector was waiting and accepted the second offer. No one is certain who or what this false Kedrik was. However, with the burden of a legitimate answer lifted from their shoulders, the leaders of the resistance decided they would attack the Imperial forces in Western Vathos.

Shortly after the evening meal, all those of the Dainite faith departed with Kedrik on a journey of religious significance. It is unknown what transpired on this journey, but it did temporarily deprive the Rams Head of some of its strongest members against "evil" things. As if perfectly timed, shortly after the departure of the Dainites, a strange portal opened and a party lead by one called "Galen" (*Dawn Nystul*) stepped through. Apparently, this was the same Galen who had once served Drexus Shendari, the Gatekeeper who founded the Rams Head. Having been discarded by his successor, Risisin Oreth, Galen eventually became the Black Gatekeeper in the service of the black entity known as Mox. With Mox's defeat at the hands



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THE RUMOR MILL...

- Alas, tis a dreary day when there is little bold or scandalous to tell, but Phantor shall do his best to muddle through. With the Desolation dividing the continent, however, and troops of the Empire frequenting the bakery where your

humble servant prefer to buy bread it is indeed difficult...

Word comes from across the wind-ravaged land that Morgan Winterborne has been consolidating his forces and speaking more and more vehemently against King Jurel-Blacksteel, who it seems has chosen to remain quiet and safe in Zurek. Word has reached these delicate ears that a number of the King's military advisors have recommended that the King take his army into the field and demand that Winterborne stand down. It is their belief that though the forces that follow him wave his banner they will not directly oppose the King or fight his troops. They also think that such an action might be exactly the kind of backbone Winterborne is trying to provoke the King into displaying. So far, however, the King and his troops have not moved.

Another tale, written in tiny print and wrapped tightly around the leg of one of my favorite carrier birds, says that Winterborne has taken part of his army *north* into what was once eastern Thallarin in an effort to annex it for Evangar. The same note also says the Marshal Valenquen of Zurek has taken some of the King's troops into the same area to block the Arch-Duke's advance...or perhaps acquire the land for Zurek?

Much hay has been made in certain circles of the appearance of a "doppelganger" of Prelate Kedrik that appeared during negotiations with an emissary from the Empire. Hmmm...how odd...and who should show up later that same day, but the shape-shifting Changeling Gaelen who used to assist Drexus Shrendari in the early days of the Ram's Head, and who should also have known Kedrik from those times....

Congratulations to Lord Fitzrobert, now Viscount Fitzrobert...Phantor hears that the young noble got his position for a bargain price...while his friend Sebastian Kerrigan re-

ceived the lands of White Falls at a much higher cost...

If any of the members of the Ram's Head would care to comment on what the aging Duke Claridge and Prelate Kedrik had their heads together about at the Crusader Citadel, please do tell. Word spirited to me says that the Duke agreed to allow the Church of Dain an advisory position in *every* noble court in Argoth, but that the grand plan he's quietly explained to his closest advisors (but perhaps not to his grandson) is that he eventually wishes to hand the reigns of Argoth over entirely to the Church...My oh my, as some say...

Has anyone seen Kantr? Well, gander upon this if you have wondered where the Keeper of the White Keys has been of late...Paralor, some have said...in conference with the King, said others...but the truth is now revealed! The esteemed half-elven mage has hung up his keys (as it were) and taken up the trade of that of food utensil merchant somewhere in Evangar. Now that his secret life has been revealed he may be shamed out of hiding...



War Stories

(Continued from page 2)

of Kithkerian, Galen was able to open gates for her own purposes. And her purpose at that time was to offer Portals of Desire to the members of the Rams Head. Despite the protests of Robyn Goodfellow (*Aaron Loeb*) and Ivan, Stammel (*Dan Grendel*), Esmay (*Lis Shoenberger*), and Gwen (*Kelly Jordine*) departed through one of these portals to Fallow Spire (former home of the Tarot-mancer Zayen). Korinth, Poe-Kerrigan, Arthur (*Josh Rowe*), and Segial also used one of these portals to go in search of the soul of Darius the White. After that, Galen could find no one else willing to bargain for one of her strange portals. Prior to her departure, however, she and Robyn apparently signed an agreement that ended the War of the Gates. This conflict between the powers of the White, the Grey, and the Black had been the focus of the Rams Head for some time before the War with the Empire.

After Galen and her party left, Robyn raised a concern that she was evil and could possibly sell her "gates" to the forces of the Empire. Members of the Rams Head debated pursuing and capturing her, but decided to direct their efforts against their known enemies

and not potential ones. The Dainites returned and were most distressed that any of the Rams Head accepted the help of the former Black Gatekeeper. But both parties that went on Portals of Desire returned apparently unharmed.

The wizard Malachi (*Jason Rownd*) and Robyn Goodfellow then bluntly questioned the good Prelate as to the Church's stance on many issues. Kedrik explained that he had worn his new office "for a matter of days" and that not everything had been settled, but did promise that the Church of Dain would follow a more tolerant and moderate theology.

At this point, Knight-Commander Westlake began organizing the troops to assault Western Vathos. After some heated discussions and grudging apologies, it was decided that Westlake, Korinth, and Turan (*Curt Martin*) would lead the three assaults against the Empire.

POINTS OF VIEW



IVAN'S TALE

(by James Silverstein)

A moment in time.....

I started the day mad as the wind and sea. I tried to channel something much too big for me.

It was only by Reman's aid that I survived. It was the beginning of a day of learning, and death.

It was odd. Somehow the Changeling companion of Drexus Shendari had become a new gatekeeper, and judging from the company she kept, she was up to no good. I couldn't concentrate... That thing in the cage at her side was.... Moaning... Screaming....

My head was splitting with the noise, but no one else heard it.

What to do?

I looked around. Every time I had been in the Ram's Head and someone had come that was so obviously malignant, someone had stood up to them. Heroes. Like Andor, or Turan, or Kayla.

None of whom were there.

I had died that day. My second time this year. I did not relish doing it again. But someone had to do SOMETHING.

So... I don't remember exactly what I said.... I told her to be gone, I know. I told her that I had been looking for her and Volo and that she had not been forgotten, but that the Ram's Head was not ready to make deals the way she wanted, and that she should LEAVE.

It took all I had just to say it. And it wasn't enough.

I hadn't expected her to leave, but I had at least expected my companions to be strong enough not to voluntarily work with her... To go on her portals....

What did I learn? That I can die. And that as of yet, I am no hero.

But we all must be, and soon. Every night I go to sleep seeing in my mind the glass sphere the lector showed us- the one filling with blood. I go to bed shivering, wondering if I can ever do anything to make up for what we haven't yet done. It's more than beating the empire. More than wars and reclaiming land. It's saving ourselves. We stand on the precipice of genocide. I think of the faith that some draw from Dain, and others from Amagon, and still others from other names. I think of the faith some put in magic, or their own sword arm. I think of friends I had in Thallerin, both living and dead. Then the blessed darkness surrounds me, and I sleep.....



POINTS OF VIEW

GEHREN'S TALE

(by Mike Skyhorse)

These are strange and troubled times. As if I didn't have enough to concern me with the apparent de-

mise of Thallarin, but then to have to deal with Dainites too. Oh, well, but I'm getting ahead of myself...

The League of the Geen had sent me on a mission to Zurek, to contact some of our friends there. I took the opportunity on my return to drop by my father's farm, for it was not very far out of the way. I am not a Diviner, but those with the gift all seemed to talk of trouble coming. Was it my imagination, or did I feel it too? At any rate, it seemed important not to squander this opportunity for a visit.

I had not seen my father in many years. I was relieved to find Royli well and the land in good order. The death of my step-mother a few years back had hit him hard, and I felt guilty about not being there in his time of need. I was relieved when he greeted me warmly.

I must say, though, I was not fully prepared for what I discovered next. My half-brother and half-sister, Orim and Orinara, had become pantheist priest and priestess. They had always shown great devotion to the Pantheon, but I never thought it would come to this. Not that I have any objection, of course; it's just that it will take some getting used to. Orinara follows Allanara, and I was amazed to find that her healing skills (miracles, as she is always reminding me) are at least as powerful as my spells, and perhaps stronger. Orim follows Valdar, defender of the weak. He fancies himself quite the warrior, and cannot get enough of stories about the adventurers of the Ram's Head. After much prodding on his part, I was forced to demonstrate that a quarterstaff in skilled hands is a match for any sword. Luckily all that was damaged was his pride -- the bruises will heal well. Who knows, if he continues his training, he may become someone we can all be proud of. One thing hasn't changed though -- those two are joined together today almost as closely as when they were in the womb together. I wonder if they argued there too. These days, when they are not busy helping Father with the farm, they can always be found at one of the many Pantheist temples or shrines nearby.

I was preparing to resume my journey when the Empire's attacks began. The sky grew dark and the ground began to shake ominously. In the distance, it looked as if fireballs occasionally rained from the skies. They appeared to be targeting mainly the cities

and larger settlements, so we seemed fairly safe in the countryside, at least for the moment. I could not be certain then, but it seemed that the worst of it was happening to the west -- toward Thallarin. I wish I had not been so correct. Father must have felt something too -- I saw it in his eyes. So it was with a renewed sense of urgency that I finished my preparations and set out for what I hoped I would not find. I promised Father that I would send word, and that I would not spare him the truth. The twins made some protestations about coming with me, but it was not too difficult to overcome their false bravado and convince them that they belonged at their father's side; and I was off.

For many days, I traveled generally westward, staying to the backwoods and avoiding settlements wherever possible. Still, the level of death and destruction I encountered was staggering. Then I entered Thallarin, and things got worse. But I pressed on. It was a nightmare come to life -- whole towns reduced to smoking ruins. Dead and dying were everywhere, with wounds in number and severity far beyond my power to help, though I did what I could. When I did find survivors, they told fantastic tales of raining fire, half-human, half-machine warriors and winged minions. The terror-ridden mind is capable of much exaggeration, but even allowing for that, these people had been through a living hell. And then there was the flooding. Between what was burned and what was flooded (or both), it became very difficult for even me to find my way or to know with any certainty where I was at times.

Over the course the next many weeks, my worst fears were realized. A large section of my beloved Thallarin is completely destroyed -- most flooded and the rest burned and twisted into an uninhabitable and impassable wasteland. The Elf Wood lies (or rather, used to lie) within the area of destruction. Though I was not able to reach the Wood itself, there is no reason for me to believe that it fared any better than the surrounding territory, which was totally devastated. On a personal note, my mother's village is said to have been directly hit by one or more fireballs, leaving no survivors.

It was not until I gave up and, in despair, returned to my mentor's home in Evangar, that I fi-

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Points of View—Gehren

(Continued from page 5)

nally got some good news. The most impressive manor house in the realm could not have looked as good to me as the sight of Shamarek's humble home standing unscathed. And just when I had feared the worst, I find my friend Ximene safe and sound inside (with her cat, no less). She later explained that she had had a series of frightening dreams which seemed to forewarn of a great calamity. Even in the face of such visions, Ximene had been reluctant to leave her home. But when her cat made it clear that she wanted to leave too, there was no stopping the two of them. As it turned out, they did not leave Thallarin a moment too soon.

After taking a few days to rest, I felt compelled to resume my travels. I find it most disquieting that I have had no word from Antrim or other leaders of the League, nor have I been able to secure any information as to their whereabouts. I fear that many of my friends and associates in the League were lost in the devastation of Thallarin. I can only hope that enough of us survived to keep the League going -- our organization is young but we had such promise and noble purpose. If we are to survive, it would appear that we must do it without our patron, Highlord Blacksteel. Though I have been unable to confirm the reports of his death, neither have I been able to discover any evidence to the contrary. In dark moments, it has occurred to me that the Empire may attempt through their evil magics (if they have not done so already) to corrupt and use the League for some sinister tactical purpose. We are, after all, the best scouts in the land. And although we have only scratched the surface with our collection and cataloging efforts, we have, within our membership, access to the most complete cartographic knowledge of Kaleth that exists anywhere. Perhaps Antrim has gone into hiding for this reason -- to keep our resources out of Empire hands. I can hope. As for myself, I resolved to keep my documents and my identity well hidden until I can learn more about where we stand.

Sometime later, while traveling through some woodlands in northern Argoth, I came upon a rather strange fellow. His clothing was black, over which he wore a leather coat with many pockets. When I asked him who he was, he answered in strange and elusive ways, all the while absent-

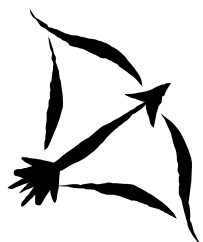
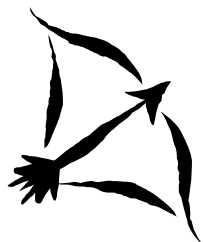
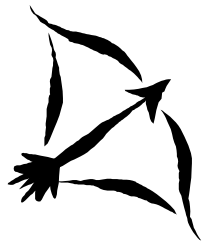
mindedly playing with a pair of glass dice he had taken from one of his pockets. I suspected that he might be more than a man, so I persisted. Finally, saying that he was "the master of the game I play", he gave me a golden die, asked me to give the die to Alejandro, spoke a strange word, and waved his hand. The next thing I knew, I was outside the Crusader's Citadel. To my amazement, I did find Alejandro there and gave him the die, though I never discovered what its significance was. (I'm not sure I cared to know.)

I was both relieved and dismayed to see that adventurers of the Ram's Head were present -- relieved to see friends and comrades, and dismayed at some of the notable absences. The sight of familiar faces lessened somewhat my uneasiness at finding myself in the company of so many Dainites. I was further relieved to find that volunteers were needed for various scouting missions, and I promptly volunteered -- this Citadel of theirs made my skin crawl after awhile. It felt good to get back into the forest and countryside where I felt like I belonged, even if the forest was in Argoth.

My first scouting mission went fairly well, as these things go. We encountered a battlefield where the undead began to reanimate and attack us. With the help of some local lads, we were able to fight off enough of them to escape with our skins. There was a Dainite in our party, a Crusader I think, who impressed me with his heroism. He seemed to be able to draw the undead away from others and towards himself. This ability could prove useful in future encounters with undead -- I must remember it.

On my second mission, we were not so fortunate. This was to be my first opportunity (if you can call it that) to engage those vile Empire creations called the Black Hand. What I found most disturbing about the whole experience was that they were able to attack our party completely by surprise. I am not being boastful when I say that there are not more than a handful of men in all of Kaleth that can successfully ambush me when I am watchful. Yet these creatures seemed to do it easily. I can only surmise that they were somehow magically aided. Even so, my self-confidence has been shaken.

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Points of View—Gehren

(Continued from page 6)

I was lucky enough to be riding ahead of the others in my party when we were attacked. For a moment I considered joining the battle, but reason won out. It was clear from the speed with which they dispatched Meredith and Arthur that we were hopelessly overmatched; escape was the only course of action that held any hope. Even with my head start and fleet horse, they nearly overtook me. I remembered the fire flask in my pouch and, praying to any god who might be listening, tossed it behind me. I don't think the explosion (smaller than I had hoped, but an explosion none the less!) caused my pursuers any harm, but it did buy me some time. I rode my horse as if to death.

I am not generally happy to see Dainite warriors, but that was an exceptional day. With my mount lathered and all but spent, and three Black Hand still at my heels, I heard Turan's voice calling to me. At first I thought it a cruel hallucination -- my Pantheist friends would have said it was the voice of Vanosh, the trickster -- but no, thankfully, it was real. With his last bit of strength, my horse delivered me into the protection of Turan and his party, where my pursuers did not stand a chance.

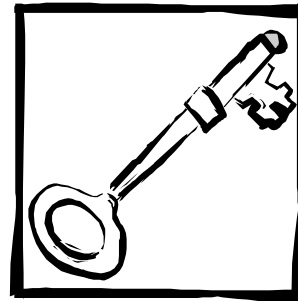
After taking a few moments to catch my breath, I led the warriors back to where my original party had been taken captive. Luckily none of them had been seriously harmed. After a very brief skirmish, Turan added yet a few more shackled limbs to an impressive stringer of prisoners collected that day, and we all headed back for the Citadel.

Later, I had my chance to be the rescuer rather than the rescued. Faolain returned to the Citadel to report that her party had been taken prisoner and were being tortured. A rescue effort was quickly mounted, and a large party was dispatched. I almost didn't go, as there were already better healers than I (including Alejandro) in the party, as well as better warriors. Luckily I reconsidered, for we found both Ivan and Ximene near death with throats cut. I was able to stabilize Ximene while Alejandro tended to Ivan, after which he was able to bring Ximene back too. To think I almost lost my good friend. In the end I had to laugh though, for the first thing Ximene said when she was again able to speak was to ask me to take care of her cat if anything ever did happen to her.

I'm afraid the pressures of the day, not the least of which was being elbow to elbow with all those Dainites, finally got to me. I happened upon a large group in the Citadel, and Kedrik was lecturing Reynn about some perceived lack of judgment

(Kedrik's perception; Reynn's judgment). I let loose with a rather stinging remark which made my opinion of the Just-a-whatever-he's-calling-himself-these-days plainly apparent. The ensuing stares and silence were enough to shock me out of my impertinent mood, and I quickly regained my composure. I downplayed the outburst to those who later inquired as to my reasons. Any differences I have with Kedrik are disputes for another time -- there are more important and more pressing matters at hand.

To that end, I have decided to join one of the units being formed to attack the Empire's positions in Vathos. I fear that the fate of Kaleth for many years to come may hang on the actions we take, or do not take, in the very near future.





SEPTEMBER GAME

NEXT SESSION: September 18th, 1999

LOCATION: Hollywood House



AND YOUR FAVORITE PLAYERS WERE...

...for the July 1999 Session -

Stammel (*Dan Grendel*)
Esmay (*Lis Shoenberger*)
Korinth (*Dave Simkins*)

Your favorite NPCs went to *Dawn Nystul* for Gaelen and *Corrie Hrubes* for Mina, the Priestess.

THE GATEWAY CHRONICLE

...is the newsletter of the
GATEWAY CHRONICLES, a
live-action role-playing game held in
the Chicago area.

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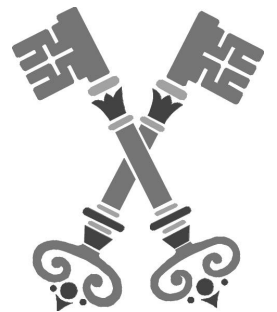
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