1 The Order of the Sceptre

With great power comes great responsibility. And as everyone knows, the power of magic is the greatest power there is, and the responsibility of rulership is the greatest responsibility there is. It is inevitable that the two be combined in the hands of one group.

Of course, it is only to be expected that those who currently hold the offices that govern the Realm are unwilling to acknowledge this fact; after all, they *are* only human, and you can't expect them to be willing to give up their luxurious positions, even if it would be best for the people they claim to be representing. Politicians are like that. So it has fallen to you, the Order of the Sceptre, to prove your point by using your own power to take over the responsibilities of leadership from them.

What *is* surprising is how successfully the politicians have managed to dupe your fellow mages into supporting them. It was over two decades ago that the original Order of the Sceptre was formed. When it became clear that the bulk of the Wizard's Conclave was not willing to accept the responsibilities that were associated with their training and powers; the original Sceptre mages took the job onto themselves. But they didn't expect the Conclave to turn upon their own, to aid the politicians in defeating their fellow mages.

You, the new Sceptre, will not make that error. Knowing the proclivities of the mages you once counted as brothers in the Art, who cast you out and excised you from the power-giving Orb of Nairaphi, you no longer count on their support and have indeed come to consider them your enemies. Now you are the only ones with the vision and the foresight to do what is necessary, despite the dangers inherent in your plans.

There are currently only three of you on the Castle, the remainder of your Order having been trapped on the surface when the teleport platforms stopped working. Luckilly, they are the three most important to your plans. The SceptreHolder, Ezakiel Leah, is here, along with Leannot Hiram, whose position as Advisor to the Table of Peers has aided immeasurably in the Sceptre's political undertakings, and Annanim Issachar, who has through the Sceptre's magical machinations taken on the role of Mahalael Jeremiah, son of the Peer, Enoch.

Hiram has presented a bill to the Table of Peers that, if passed, would place magic under the category of licensed professions, thus putting it under the House of Guild's supervision. You have no doubt that by allowing mundanes ultimate control over the functions of the Conclave, you shall seriously weaken their capacity for organized action, as well as encouraging resentment between the Conclave and the Peers. This will become crucial when your eventual takeover occurs.

Which, it appears, may have to be soon. Both Arpachshad Seth and Mahalael Enoch were opposed to the magic licensing bill, and they were both actively lobbying against it; thus it became necessary to deal with them. Since the Sceptre's plans involved an eventual takeover of the Peers anyway, this was the time to do it.

Hiram has been made responsible for dealing with Seth, and seems to have succeeded admirably; the Peer has gone senile, apparently entirely due to natural causes, and his influence on the Table is minimal. Meanwhile, the Sceptre has taken a completely different tack with Enoch, having had indications that he was planning to retire; rather than deal with the Peer himself, you targetted his son Jeremiah.

After some rapid research and some hurried planning, the decision was reached to perform a powerful spell of mind and body alteration on Issachar. The nature of the spell was such that appearance, voice and many subtle subliminal cues were transferred on to the target, so that Issachar is now the spitting image of Jeremiah. The only current problem is the question of whether the Symbol of the Peers will be transferred to "Jeremiah," now that the real Jeremiah is dead, and in order to determine that for certain you need to find the spell that created the Symbol in the first place. Unfortunately, you've all been hurried enough in the execution of your plans that that has remained a mystery. Surely the older Peers would know.

If you can arrange for the Symbol to transfer, the next step is to do away with Enoch (it would have to appear to be natural causes, of course) and put "Jeremiah" in his place. If not, then the Symbol will transfer to Enoch's next of kin -- but as far as you can establish he has no other offspring. What will happen then, you aren't certain of; it's never happened before. In either case, by that point Hiram will likely have been successful in steering Seth's son Chaim over to your cause and you'll be able to get Seth kicked off the Table (it would be rather suspicious if he, too, suffered a mysterious accident, but senility at his age should cause no comment). With nearly half of the Table and one of its advisors under your influence, you will be in good shape to impose your views on the rest of it, as your predecessors did with King Rashid.

In the meantime, of course, you don't intend to be remiss in other duties. The Wizard's Conclave has been suffering numerous problems, and while you haven't been responsible for any of it, that doesn't mean you can't take advantage of it. The death of their current candidate for the Heirophancy will undoubtedly create friction between the Orders and their representative mages, which can only be to your advantage.

On the other hand, the presence of the Justiciar and the Guard of the Realm is unexpected and rather startling, and is likely to put a crimp in your plans unless you figure out what it is they're after. If they really are just studying the mass slaughter that occured a few days ago, then they shouldn't be anywhere near your trail; besides, everyone thinks the Order of the Sceptre was destroyed during the Sceptre Uprising. By the time they discover otherwise, you will have successfully infiltrated the Table of Peers and weakened the Wizard's Conclave. Once you achieve that, the establishment of a proper manocracy in the Realm is practically guaranteed.

Table of Contents