

By Cirith, High Priest of Humact

Verrik, Djim, Nathan, Lupus, Silverheart, Cirith, Cuddles, Annatharion, Zephr, Rancor ,
Beren, Li-Fung, Woolf, Tankred, Gravesong

We were heading to our appointed meeting place after the major disruption of the Hordling convergence. We continued encountering tough Hordlings although once our group was re-united they were no real threat. After dispatching a group who attacked us with cone of cold we were approached by a stranger looking for Nathan. I cautioned him to approach carefully but he was casual and was attacked, I leapt to his defence as the Monk rained down mighty blows upon him and was surprised when a pack of greater Wraiths leapt out and attacked me. The party soon rallied around us and we soon prevailed killing the wraiths and driving the monk off, thanks be to Djim Daggoreth and his mastery of the good sphere their power draining blows barely affected us. We rallied after the fight and pressed on to meet our Otomi contact. As we approached a rough hewn mud hut we were greeted by a rather angry Mor Silvani elite with some undead and Dymwan. He confirmed that Cranium Doomwraith is now the new Soul Shriver for the Mor Silvani and that the Mor Silvani are now within the Dymwan fold. He also revealed that the Elite Mor Silvani are grown in a similar manner to the Arboreal constructs are. He refused to let us in so we quickly dispatched his undead with the light of Humact and he was forced to concede.

Upon entering the building we discovered that we had an invite to the "Carnival of Souls" and that he was to be our guide- thus making our conflict unnecessary but it was most gratifying to dispatch his unruly constructs anyway. Four other sealed scrolls were also present which we noted but did not open. They were named on the outside Niing Tsai Shen, who later arrived to collect her invite with two Spirits of Vengeance and was from Akari Island. Azar Mahmood who arrived last on Thursday night a first time Carnival visitor from the Dye-fer-Dyne was quite helpful. Third, was addressed to Baron du Jardin des Larmes whose wife later arrived for the invite. Gregory Amersham, on off planer, arrived Friday morning to collect his, a Neutral Priest and Marshall from the plane of Marda. The final invite was picked up by Puke on behalf of the wolfhold Necromancers. He arrived late and seemed unusually hostile, refusing to co-operate with reasonable requests and soon leaving. The group settled in to their new base assigning guards and preparing food whilst I set about Hallowing this ground for Humact thus ensuring our success in our forthcoming trials. There was however a problem, our group numbered fourteen and the invite only 10. I spent hours pouring over the invite trying to make a connection between those who had or hadn't been invited and could make no sense of it. The invite also made clear what the Carnival of souls was- a grand inter planar trade meet hosted by the Dymwan with the intention of spreading the use of what they called the Amarinthine arts- Necromancy, Nacromancy and Niggromancy-

summoning and controlling undead, embodying undead and the creation of undead through alchemical means respectively.

Why would anyone invite us to such an event- especially Cranium Doomwraith our erstwhile host? Could it be as Puke suggested that we were to be ingredients, fillet of Hospittaler, Heart of Humacti High priest, Soul of White Path Avatar? Certainly, a formidable sounding possibility. Or, as Nathan suggested, could it be that they wished us to dispatch some rival faction or unruly group such that Cranium Doomwraith would bear no responsibility, Housekeeping as Nathan so eloquently put it. Or, as I felt, perhaps they had a new weapon and to try and prove its effectiveness to clients they would demonstrate it on us. Further, who in Humacts name would invite the Sacred Sword to such an event, Doomwraith's name was on the invitation. The Swords bristled with the possibility of a confrontation with our ancient enemy though we would not brook being led into a trap.

We resolved that if our Otomi contact had not arrived by the return of our guide on the morrow we would investigate the carnival in the hope that we would be able to connect with them through that. As to the other concerns there was nothing to do but press on and trust in Humacts light to guide us. I slept fitfully and woke early to find Djim and Gravesong risen already and began my morning rituals. Suddenly we were attacked again by the Monks, the group were scattered and somewhat unarmed but we prevailed though at the cost of 2 elixirs. Soon the peace was disturbed again by a group of beasts accompanied by a vampiress, wife of the Baron one of the Dymwans invited guests. As this did not relate to our mission directly I tried to let her go but her beasts attacked and tried to take Gravesong so combat was engaged. Soon the beasts were driven back, but Tankred fell into her thrall and then Gravesong was maimed by a kiss blown at him by the creature. As we pressed her many of us fell into the same state as Tankred and she soon made her escape.

The Mor Silvani returned ready to guide us to the Carnival so we followed. First we met an elemental of some sort who confirmed our invite and marked us ready for travel. After he had finished the 10 names listed I took his stamp and stamped our 4 remaining brothers and we moved on. We then met a Dymwan priest who opened a portal for us to travel through the Plane of Sleepless dead (POSD) to one of the camps of others attending the carnival. We proceeded and the first thing we came across was a dyfer-dyn selling trinkets, perhaps the purpose of their invitation. We bought some Holy Water and hatched a plan to slay the Vampire should we meet her again (or her husband) We pushed on and slew a pack of Ghouls followed by a pack of Spectres followed by a pack of Ghosts wielding mighty power damage and removing ritual level good sphere invocations with every blow, this was a hard fight indeed and we fell into our familiar

routine of chain heals and a mass cure mortal to renew ourselves. Though on this occasion Cuddles had over extended himself and as a result was invaded by a spirit of cause mortal which I soon dispatched with a couple of cure mortal and my stored heal. We pushed on until we came to another group of undead this time Wraiths which we dispatched with Humacts bright light. Finally we came to our guide who was hosting a carnival seminar on The various dispicable practices of the Necromancers. I intervened demonstrating the weakness of constructs to the potential customers by swiftly dismissing the creature the mor silvani had with him to demonstrate. The meeting was ended and we meditated before passing through the portal, this time to the Otomi camp.

Once again on the POSD we met stiff resistance but with Humacts light we were prevalent though even we did not tarry. After a particularly hard fight we were curing our wounds and I forgot to stay Woolf who had been doing a great job of scouting and he had found our exit portal so we pressed on and passed through returning to Orin Rakatha in the vicinity of the Otomi camp. We soon made contact with an Otomi citizen who informed us that the Otomi delegation would arrive shortly. The men were tired and cold and the Otomi seemed to take an age to arrive, eventually Matos, a mortal man, arrived with an Immortal and a couple of other citizens. I was most pleased to see him and greeted him as friend. He informed us that the Emperor Orbanix was soon to arrive which it duly did. I had never met the Emperor and hadn't fully realized that he was a Skeletal Lord. I detected a murmur in the men as I engaged him in parlay, but I have learned that the laying to rest of the undead is rarely a simple matter especially when it comes to sentient immortals. Despite my tiredness I feel I handled things alright though I nearly angered him without even thinking. He explained that it was him who had got Doomwraith to invite us. He was also pleased that our actions against the Skin Flayer on our previous journey had had positive results. This also pleased me and to my mind showed that the creature had some humanity left in it. I also noticed his hand twitch often during our conversation as if there should be something in it. Having conditionally agreed to aid him we pressed back to our mud hut eagerly awaiting Matos arrival to catch up on the mortal affairs of the Otomi people. The emperor was off the meet with Cranium Doomwraith and I warned him about Doomwraiths power and deceitfulness.

Warmed and fed Matos duly arrived and we shared a cup of wine and he told us of the Otomi history, a story that has never been told before. (see enclosed) The telling of the story filled us with dread but in its telling some of its dark power was destroyed and at the end we resolved to act decisively. I was filled with joy at the thought of allowing Humacts light to guide these people out of the darkness and grasping Matos to my breast I swore that we would do all in our power to help the Otomi people and in return they would do all they could to help themselves. Matos left into the night to plan our assault on the Emperor and bear his good tidings to his people. Overjoyed at the turn of events I sat and shared food and wine with my brothers. We looked out upon this fair land and told of our lives and loves whilst sharing a cup. Suddenly, after many had already

retired an Otomi mortal bearing some lode approached and climbed the stairs to our door. "take it" he said to me, but unaware of what it was I refused, looking closer I saw it was a corpse so I discerned on it. He threw it down and stormed off, shocked I realised that it was the desiccated remains of my friend Matos. Distraught I fell to my knees weeping over his defiled corpse. Through my weeping I heard my friend's voices and then felt Woolf's calloused hands on my shoulder "err..boss, fink u better look". Turning to my left I saw an angry Emperor accompanied by two fellow Immortals and several mortal Otomi.

"I trust you and you betray me" he screamed at me. Leaping to my senses and my feet I heard a gasp as the others saw Matos's desecrated body. I pressed down the stair to parlay with the Emperor whilst the others gathered themselves and we engaged. The battle was hard fought and the Emperor, wielding an evil looking sword, was able to wrack our spirits or destroy a limb with a single blow and his creatures were fierce. They broke our line and burst into the building but we were held and could not follow. Orbanix soon returned and I feared the worst for those inside. We had a strong defensive position though and were holding well. Soon, Gravesong called a parlay revealing that the Emperor had stolen our souls with his sword. We had been informed by one of the mortals and it seemed surprised that we knew. The Otomi appeared to be tied to the sword also. I continued the parly and pressed Orbanix on the matter, the wry and decayed smile that crossed his fleshless jaw told me all I needed to know, it was true and our souls were bound to his. I could hear my brother's breath on my shoulder as they sought to slay the unlife and were burning brightly with Humacts legacy. It then slew and desecrated the body of the man who had helped us, it was too much to bear and foolishly I let them recommence the fight and even though we had had the upper hand the Emperors fury was a sight to behold as my brothers fell I tried to hold him off but I too fell.

I awoke to find one of the Otomi mortals curing our people and the reassuring sound of Cuddles squeaking. None had been slain thanks be, for I had feared that this could be the field upon which the Sword make their final stand for humanity. This was not the day. Alarmed and still in shock over Matos I fell from my joy into sorrow and my fitful sleep was accompanied by nightmares, forebodings and apparitions. I woke early again with a deep sense of dread and barely rested. We didn't know what to do next. We knew that Orbanix was onto us and angry and that it had our souls, the only tactic we had was to get the sword off it. Further, was it the sword, Doomwraith or my betrayal that had turned it so mad? We resolved to press on and seek as much information about it and its sword in an attempt to free ourselves and the Otomi before laying the Emperor to rest.

In the morning we met with Xipec the most recently created Immortal and therefore the most human. She agreed that we would strike against the Emperor and agreed in principle to end the era of the immortals on Chi chem. She was accompanied by an elderly mortal advisor who was also able to clarify that the souls had been taken by the Emperor. Our guide arrived and we passed through the portal continuing our journey.

I felt that we had returned to the POSD and we were quickly met by some primal beasts that were fierce. We slew them but shortly after they returned in a more natural form. We were not expecting this and found out after Zephr got hit a couple of times in the back. These elemental versions were also tough but we bested them and recovered a journal which Silverheart took charge of. My feeling of despair began to grow and then I started to lose the others becoming isolated in my own mind. We pressed on Silverheart reading from the journal as I dallied at the back. I heard the sounds of conflict from the front as the brothers had encountered more beasts including a big one. As I rushed to the line I did not recognise my brothers but saw a Priest performing an evil ritual, when I challenged him he named himself Arron and I recognised him, my despair grew at the thought that I had invited such a man to join us on such a quest, a feeling his demeanour only amplified. We fought again and prevailed but I could now see nothing beyond Humacts light and seeing it in Silverheart I resigned my leadership and undertook to travel the Dark place alone unable to care for my fellow men. Thus began the worst time of my life. Feeling compelled to press on we arrived at a ritual sight, with a totem and many of these primal beasts. Repelling one of them I suddenly realised that we were not upon the POSD and that these creatures were not undead.

An extremely hard fight ensued, with us prevailing narrowly. At this point I must explain that these events have been put together after the fact as I was no longer in my right mind. I do have perfect recall of what happened to me and an awareness of the others actions but I had reached the greatest crisis in my life for without brotherhood what point is there to life. I had resolved to sacrifice myself for the lives of my brothers in the traditional Otomi way of a "Flowery War" The journal that we recovered was the diary of Seran-Dur of the family of all elements of the Aldonar and told of a ritual performed on his bother Eran-Dur, an ancient Aldonar prince. This place was the Paths of the Dead (POTD) a place of legend where Immortal beings abide and control the affairs of mortal men. The journal described the mental effects of travelling the POTD, such as my sense of isolation and various other conditions, and the compulsion to press on and some of the rituals needed to survive in such a place. Should any wish to undertake a journey to this place I suggest they contact the Humacti before they begin.

I cast a discern on the Aldonar body, the last invocation I was able to cast. It revealed some presence, confirming that we were not on POSD and then we were attacked by the elemental spirits of the beast. It was hard fought. One skulled beast harming us with his very touch. Just as we had prevailed a third wave came and we were forced back. We had lost Djim, Beren and others and the line was sorely pressed but held, thanks to the

strength of our battle captain Rancor. Unable to think I drank a dexterity potion and assaulted the third wave turning the tide just as the fourth wave arrived. Humact had smiled upon me for despite taking many blows and Wizardry bolts I was unharmed and we prevailed. We took breath for a moment but my compulsion returned as soon as the adrenaline had subsided. I left, and though the party needed to meditate I would not stop. Finally, Silverheart was able to get through to me and bound me to his word. Then we met Xibalba's minion ready to take us for sacrifice. As soon as Silverheart let me I willingly took to my doom wandering the spider filled forest asking for release. Soon the party followed and we came to Xibalba's layer where I tried to give myself to her. I guess you could say that I was lucky she was not home. However, as soon as I arrived I knew that the souls were here bound into Xibalba's web. There she had captured Mathika- the Lord of Dishonourable Death, and bound him to her, binding those souls he held to her also. There were candles and I knew they needed to be lit to free the souls. We did this, although with all but two of us insane and surrounded by spiders, finding and lighting the multitude of candles in the darkness was most difficult. But with each one lit Humact's light grew as the souls were released from this foul place. Once most had been lit, Mathika was released and let all the souls whose time had not come yet leave his realm. Returned to Orin Rakatha and refilled with our souls, we all felt better- though our journey through the POTD had cost us all dearly, myself especially as I felt completely empty and incapable.

I would like to thank Silverheart for bearing my burden when I could no longer, and Rancor for being the strength that allows the Sword to go to war, and to Djim and Gravesong for bringing us home. My journey through the Darkness to the light marks a new dawn for me. I believe that in the Darkest times Humact's light will guide us. I trusted to this belief during this journey through Darkness and Humact showed me the light, so now it is no longer belief with me but truth, Humact's light burns in the hearts of all good men.

With all exhausted we ate and drank wine and several took their leave. Knowing I was too weak to fight I cast many invocations and meditated and gifted my power. We were attacked again by the Monks but held well. We were then attacked by spiders- no problem, but, then again and this time Xibalba was with them and our compulsions descended again. As many of us were asleep or too weak to move it fell to the few to take care of the problem. Unfortunately, Rancor's compulsion was to assail the most powerful creature around. With few to support him he raged upon Xibalba, but she left him needing an elixir. Fortunately the other spiders were killed and she scuttled off up a tree before she was able to take Rancor. On empty those of us still awake huddled hoping there would be no more trouble when Beren, Verrick, Gravesong and Nathan volunteered to find where the spiders were coming from and take care of it. They were right and even though I didn't want so few to go we had no choice. So we gave them everything we had left and they went off into the Darkness. We sat waiting nervously taking comfort

in the fact that we were still alive. During their mission we were visited by mortal Otomi who said that the emperor had conflicted with the rebel force and lost. We would have to lay him to rest ourselves in the morning. We were also visited by some off planeters who used the good sphere to raise uncorrupted undead. I berated them for their foolishness in light of what I had learned. Soon the others returned, but they had become trapped on the other side of the portal in Xibalba's realm and had to rip Beren's heart out of his chest as a sacrifice to return. Trust him to volunteer, he has been never known to refuse what is needed of him, and trust him to survive the experience. Once again we took our rest, this time I slept better knowing that we would prevail upon the morrow.

I rose early again and began my preparations. The others rose also and soon after we were attacked for the final time by Monks, this time we discovered that they were Denatharian and from the Order of the Midnight sun obviously pursuing Nathan for his involvement in thwarting their plans on Setheria. Still too weak to engage I cast everything I had and trusted to my Lord Humact that my brothers would return safely after laying the Emperor and his immortal companions to rest. This they did in what I am told was a hard fought fight. Tankred was slain by them but his spirit is still strong and his experiences of Humacts' light will only further his resolve. The Emperor and two of his Immortals were laid to rest. They were accompanied by the Earthwarp who had betrayed us for a second time, but now we knew why, they themselves came from the Temple of Earth on Chichem another of the many interplanar reprobates who have allied with our most troublesome enemy.

I am sure that there is more to this than I have written but it is truly written and my best account of these events. I have met with Mathos again and he is most favoured of the Temple of the Sun and a descendent of the imperial bloodline. The Immortals on Chichem still hold much sway but the tide is turned and I believe all mortals would wish their next ruler to be of them so we hope and will that the future of Chichem lies in the hands of mortals who will choose to forgo the inevitable taint that comes with any use of the ways of darkness and abomination.

By my hand

Cirith of the Sacred Sword of Humact