

What Came Before...

The Halmadonians had declared a Crusade against Lord Cardinaris, the Head of the Dymwan Tower, as he was identified as one of the three 'evil anchors' that could cause the evil sphere to ascend upon Orin Rakatha at the Grand Conjunction. More recently, the Dymwan Tower stole the powerful artefact known as Moragar's Inheritance, using a possessed Michelene High Priest Anthony, and an angel that was in the care of the Alliance.

This caused Sir Clavados, who had requested the Halmadonians bring the artefact, to declare his own crusade to recover Moragar's Inheritance and join Halmadons Heights in their Crusade against Cardinaris.

To support Sir Clavados, a group sponsored by Darkhome headed to the Ikarthian Triangle, where our intelligence and Seers were indicating that a shadowy force was growing in power, and where a powerful Dymwan contingent had made camp. Dismissing protests from the Halmadonians who did not want a Darkhome group in the area, we took residence at the House of Shadows, a place I resided at over a decade ago.

The Darkhome-sponsored group comprised:

- Darkhome Barons: Irwin (Warriors), Lancorin Bloodcall (Scouts), Kevralyn Soulfire (Drow)
- Harlequin Voidstalker, Seneschal to Dreadlord Araikas
- Ambassador Kudos
- High Priests of the Evil Sphere: Sutnac, Anthrax, Kylar
- High Priests of the Good Sphere: Bill Jingle, Smudge Welk
- Undead expert Ezekial Bramble
- Jack Morgan, Dudge, and Sarathan.

To Summarise How We Defeated Lord Cardinaris

Lord Cardinaris had been weakened over the last few years. One such event was when the Valley group had managed to destroy the Kelnozz Hatch'nett component of Lord Cardinaris's merged personalities. This left the spirit of Cardinaris with just the body (and to a lesser extent, mind) he occupied - Cranium Doomwraith.

The Dymwan had set up a central ritual point fuelled by three other linked ritual sites aligned to the three Spheres. Each of these ritual sites were attuned to a 'Wraithspawn' - the most senior and loyal lieutenants of Cardinaris. Thadius Wraithspawn held the neutral node, Armand Wraithspawn the evil node. We determined that those who were not attuned to the wards around these sites could pass through with a key. When the lieutenants were slain, they would automatically be returned to another node.

Lord Cardinaris was due to arrive at the central ritual site at midnight on All Hallows.

Of the other Wraithspawns, Calex was running operations in the Oasis of Souls, and Zalix (a shadowmancer who could simultaneously exist on the Plane of Shadows, the Plane of the Sleepless Dead and Orin Rakatha) and Bonehand travelled in Cardinaris's retinue. Cardinaris's forces also contained a Dymwan Herald, whose spirit would periodically emerge with different types of undead, declare a certain person an enemy of the Dymwan Tower, and fight us. Eventually

we met the Herald in person and slew him.

A trap had been laid for Cardinaris by Aldonar members of the Wizards Concillium, led by Rex Mundi - who had previously resided within our Alliance - leveraging the power of the nearby Book/House of Shadows. Once Lord Cardinaris travelled through to the ritual site, the trap would be sprung, and the shadow magic would ensnare all within the area, ensuring that none - including Lord Cardinaris - could leave. The Aldonar believed that it could contain Cardinaris for perhaps two days. And that the longer that he remained in the area, the weaker he would become. We could not trigger the trap before his arrival, otherwise Cardinaris would become suspicious and remain within the Oasis of Souls.

Lord Mian arrived under the pretence of hostility towards us, but once the eyes of Cardinaris no longer lay upon him - via the spirit of the Dymwan Herald whom he had accompanied - Lord Mian revealed his colours. He provided us with a key that would enable us to access the outer ritual sites, information about Cardinaris's weaknesses, and a guide to how we may approach assaulting Cardinaris in the field.

Amongst other things, Lord Mian also informed us that he had managed to speak with the Doomwraith part of Cardinaris, when Cardinaris had been significantly weakened on another occasion. Mian believed that we may be able to persuade Doomwraith to reject the spirit

of Cardinaris should the opportunity had arise. However, it appeared that Doomwraith's personality would only ascend after Cardinaris had been subject to a great battering.

Sir Clavados called a meeting with the different forces in the area, enabling us to co-ordinate with the four Halmadonian Orders and their allies - such as Kalid and Saldoreans - and we arranged to simultaneously attack the outer ritual sites using a weakness discovered by our party (much credit should go to Dudge here), uncovered when we had earlier assailed the neutral node with the key.

We also needed to find some - ideally willing - victims to essentially sacrifice themselves on Lord Cardinaris's altar upon his arrival when he would be at his most powerful and almost impossible to defeat. Fortunately the Halmadonian Knights of the Order of Purity, led by Sir Godwin, were raving for such an opportunity. One of the Adamancers, whom we had met a few moons before, counselled Sir Godwin against such action but was resigned to the fate of his leader and was there to transport his body from the field when he inevitably fell. Lord Mian had also informed us that Cardinaris regarded Moragar's Inheritance as a weapon against him, and that we should obtain it and use it to help force the spirit of Cardinaris from Doomwraith's body. We discovered that Cardinaris had travelled to the central ritual site with the

possessed Valley members who were controlling an angel that carried the Inheritance. As is widely known, the Inheritance could only be carried by two High Priests of the Good Sphere. Our group contained Bill Jingle and Smudge Welk, who had both achieved this status. We arranged for some allies to lure Cardinaris away from the ritual site, and assaulted the remaining Dymwan group there - freeing the Humacti and Hospitaller from their possession. The non-Evil component of our party managed to persuade the angel to hand over Moragar's Inheritance.

So these allies who had lured Cardinaris off? Vampires of the Dark Pass, originally of Aldonar heritage, and extremely vengeful for the fate of their people at Cardinaris's hands. They provided us with much assistance over the course of our mission: they enabled the less experienced adventurers amongst our group to stand up to the fear that would engulf them from being in Cardinaris's presence. They also provided an extremely powerful scroll of banishment, to be used upon the spirit of Cardinaris once he had been displaced from Doomwraith's body. Each letter upon that scroll had been engraved using the life force of one person, and there were many letters upon this scroll that dripped with blood. They also handed us a large number of scrolls to remove possession, as it seemed that the spirit of Cardinaris would try to find a home in each of us after it

had been removed from Doomwraith.

Lastly, we needed one further powerful dark ally, and in this case it was The Chorien - the boatman who carries the spirits of the dead through the lands of the unliving. We had with us Anthrax and Sutnac, High Priests and followers of the The Chorien, and nearby was Sorceress Aruna, his handmaiden. We believed that when Cardinaris was pressed, he would flee back to his realm upon the Plane of the Sleepless Dead to recover.

However, The Chorien possessed the ability and strength to drag Cardinaris back to Orin Rakatha. This meant we could assault Cardinaris further before he recuperated his powers. It also meant Cardinaris had nowhere to hide.

There was, of course, a complication. The shadow ritual that bound Cardinaris and us all within the area was suffused with the power of the Void, and we started to experience its life-draining effects shortly after his arrival. The Chorien reminded us during Anthrax and Sutnac's meditations of the ritual I have cast before to prevent our essence from being consumed by the Void, and we performed this swiftly. The next day, we passed this information on to our allies in the field - whose numbers had been considerably reduced by that time. Although as the ritual involved the use of all three Spheres and extensive use of magic, one presumes that the Halmadonians fended for themselves without it.

Finally, we met the master of the Shadow House - this was Owajawar, formerly a Crusader within our Alliance. In times of great need, the Shadow House was able to summon forth aid. Perhaps due to Owajawar's jovial nature, this came in the form of a 'circus', with all sorts of strange creatures and a 'clown'. The events of the evening put an even larger smile upon Harlequin's face than normal, particularly after he won the tournament of weapon skill and almost succeeded in repeating this feat in the test of natural strength. The circus came with a benevolent fortune teller, who was able to provide some assistance to our group through her prophecies, and a scholar who educated us on the means to travel through the darkness to the heart of the Aldonar Ritual.

The Shadow House had earlier provided many scrolls that Harlequin and Dudge had spent painstakingly deciphering, including a ritual that would enable our group to stand up to the strength-draining effects of the Darkness.

So we were set. We entered into the void-like area and found that the Aldonar Sorcerer had become a creature of the Darkness, a welcome reminder that meddling with the forces of Shadow and the Void - no matter how powerful you are - is always likely to end badly. We attacked his forces, including an Immutable of an Aldonar Claw, and dismantled the ritual. Kudos took possession of the three Aldonar totems, which - as original creator of

these artefacts - the Sorcerer had earlier promised to gift to Kudos.

With time waning on how long Cardinaris would be bound to the area, we needed to go to the site to assail him with our resources and plan in place. Sir Clavados, Cirith and their groups bravely offered to proceed before us, clearing the way, and weakening Cardinaris's forces. They managed to remove several of the undead lords that had travelled with Cardinaris, as well as engage him in combat on the field. We unfortunately encountered only Sir Clavados, who had retreated from the field to both allow our assault and see to the many fallen. He told us that Cardinaris had demonstrated a previously-unknown skill, which had enabled the Necromancer to take Cirith and the Sacred Swords back to his realm, however Cardinaris had returned without them and their fate was thus unknown.

Having fought through waves of what might be considered a Dymwan Elite guard, we then dispatched the remaining undead lords amongst Cardinaris's forces: Mummy Lord, Fetch Lord and a Skeletal Lord as well as Bonehand Wraithspawn and a swathe of lesser undead. Drawing near, we could see the outline of Cardinaris's staff, as well as many dark figures, upon the top of a hill in the pouring rain. He opened his attack with a mass death invocation, causing many of our number to fall. As agreed earlier, Smudge Welk sacrificed his own life and

spirit strength to The Chorien, which meant that those who were unable to resist the touch of death were later able to withstand it. It is worth noting how important Smudge's noble sacrifice was to our group.

Cardinaris could also forcibly embody undead into individuals, despite spiritual protections, as well as destroying all ritual and lay spiritual protections with but a blow.

After some initial chaos, Smudge called our dispersed forces to regroup. Harlequin and I caught up with the Shadowmancer (Zalix Wraithspawn) who had accompanied Cardinaris and was blinding members of our group, and we put an end to his actions with a slew of darkbolts.

Around the time that the fight turned, and we were more than capable of dealing with the evil high priests and undead that accompanied Cardinaris, leaving the Necromancer himself. Cardinaris proved possibly more deadly up close with a dagger than he did with the Staff of Doom, which was one reason I declined his kind offer mid-battle to lend me the Staff. Eventually we surrounded him and pressed our attack with spiritually-embued weapons.

As expected, once weakened, Cardinaris fled to his Realm upon the Plane of the Sleepless Dead. Having the chance to invoke, we awaited his return, and shortly afterwards he re-emerged with The Chorien and more

undead, greatly displeased about the situation. Kylar and I then proceeded to chase Cardinaris round the field, while the rest of our group dispatched his remaining forces. It came to a point where Cardinaris was so weakened that Doomwraith was finally in control of his own body, and Smudge and Bill wielded Moragar's Inheritance to force the spirit out.

We waited in silence as, one by one, Cardinaris's spirit attempted to assail us individually to find a new home. The scrolls to remove possession and a few spells from Harlequin staved off this unpleasant assault, and finally we were left with a forlorn dark spirit before us. Ezekial Bramble read clearly the words etched upon the blood-ridden Scroll of Banishment provided by the Vampires, and Cardinaris was banished from Orin Rakatha.

We understand that his realm was to come under severe assault by other Realm Lords vying for power, and that it is likely it will be greatly reduced in size and power.

Sorceress Aruna informed us that The Chorien was weakening rapidly - his efforts in fighting Cardinaris's resistance had been significant and taken their toll.

Shortly thereafter, he subsumed the body of his handmaiden and Aruna was lost to us.

Lord Mian had warned us that many would be eager to claim the trinkets from battle with Cardinaris, and sure enough, the Kalid - who had been 'mustering' all day -

decided to face us, assuming perhaps that we would be short on resources having defeated the most powerful Necromancer on the plane. They were wrong.

Other Kalid groups were assailed by Valdemar who were also in the area.

Now Came The Time To Pay Back Our Allies

We gave the regalia of the Dymwan Tower Leadership to Lord Mian, to assist him in his future battles against Calex Wraithspawn to claim the newly vacant position. Should Lord Mian be successful, the Dymwan Tower will become very different from the one we know now - much more reclusive, and potentially even withdrawing from affairs upon Orin Rakatha in a return to their roots as a place of residence and teaching for travelling Necromancers who have off-planar battles to occupy themselves.

We thanked the Vampires of the Dark Pass for their aid. They politely warned us that our alliance was fleeting and now at an end, and

that nobody is welcome in the Dark Pass. We gave Moragar's Inheritance to ex-members of Fortunes Keep who seek to reform the Order of the Broken Arrow and return the Inheritance to its original purpose, cycling the planes, and bringing life and hope to places other than our own. It will return back to Orin Rakatha eventually. The Valley members, known to us as 'Uncle Rogan' and 'Uncle Istvaan', had other powerful people within their plane-travelling group and together were a formidable force. Others who may remember them of little power should be aware that they were once weakened by their extended travel to this Plane, but demonstrated that they have the ability to keep the Inheritance safe in their travels. They headed towards the Void, which they intend to use to travel to the next plane in the cycle. As the evening became late, Sir Godwin and the Knights of Purity arrived, along with some Saldoreans, loudly demanding Moragar's Inheritance be returned to them. Smudge, having pledged to guard the Inheritance with his

life, attacked Sir Godwin, much to the Adjutant's outrage. Sir Godwin cast a 'holy word' invocation which of course had no effect upon the Good High Priest Smudge. Unfortunately for the Halmadonians, moments later, Dreadlord Araikas, Chosen of the Knights of Our Dark Lady, and his retinue arrived. As you might imagine, the fight thereafter was short, although the defeated Sir Godwin had someone at the ready to teleport him from the field once more. Next time Sir Godwin or someone of equivalent status is encountered, I suggest the person there to provide the teleport is dispatched first.

Dreadlord Araikas commended us for our efforts. With Lord Carfleen (who had been Head of Barad Tirgul) and Lord Cardinaris dispatched, the Dreadlord is the only remaining anchor for the Evil Sphere upon Orin Rakatha. He works openly to cause the Evil Sphere to ascend at the time of the next Grand Conjunction. Dreadlord Araikas intends to use this power to ensure that the inevitable

Cataclysm will favour our people.

I would also like to take the opportunity to commend my group. This was the finest mixed group from the Alliance I have travelled with - and that is not to disparage other excellent groups I have worked with before - but to indicate how highly I think of their efforts. Everybody gave their all. Everybody was courageous. And we needed everybody to succeed.

As we have demonstrated, so much can be achieved through unity and strength of purpose.

The Future Of Cardinaris

Those with knowledge of such things tell us that the mechanisms that Cardinaris put in place to claim control of the necromancer Cranium Doomwraith were elaborate and would be hard for him to replicate. They believe that the spirit of

Cardinaris would take a long time to regain any sort of power.

Naturally, his vast realms upon the Plane of the Sleepless Dead have now also been greatly reduced in size, with other Realm Lords seizing what power and territory they can with Cardinaris so weakened.

However, Cardinaris's spirit still exists upon the Plane of the Sleepless Dead and we have retained the Staff of Doom and plan to travel to the realms of the unliving to destroy what remains of this spirit. I suggest a mission is also put in place to help recover Cirith and his Sacred Swords, who are also stranded upon this plane.

Other Matters

Wizards Concillium were in the area performing further investigations as part of their 'Grand Experiment' to break through the bonds that prevent us from leaving Orin Rakatha. They seemed wary of the Aldonar component of the Concillium. The Temple of the Four Winds had provided us with a magical map that we could use to monitor forces that we encountered in the area, and communicate with individuals from those different groups. This proved to be very useful. An Adjudicator of the Shadowsfall arranged via us for the Shadowsfall

to meet with the Temple of the Four Winds in a couple of weeks' time, as they would like to verify the claim that the Oracles within the Temple speak for the mystics. Plenty of Shadowsfall were in the area, trying to wipe out the Valdemar forces. Having already heard conflicting opinions about the Valdemar from different Judges within the Shadowsfall, and being informed by The Green ('Orin Rakatha') that the Shadowsfall no longer speak for the mystics, we chose to assist the Valdemar. The Shadowsfall fear others from finding out the secrets that lie within

the Tower that was once the Tower of the Four Winds, once the home of the Valdemar, once the home of the Taranor, once the home of the Dymwan, once the home of the Shadow Keep. A 'rogue' Shadowsfall Judge used the powers within the broken Tower to create the Mist Lord, which obviously caused great problems across Orin Rakatha. There is a way to mend this Tower, but the answers lie within the Void, not upon Orin Rakatha. The Valdemar continue to seek these answers.

By my hand, Kevralyn SoulfireBaro

n of Darkhome

High Priestess of Lloth, 1st

Turanthir of House Drannath