

The following is one account of happenings during the Ecstarre Celebrations. I ask patience of all who read it regarding the spellings of names, as to one new to Orin Rakatha, the way a name is pronounced does not necessarily translate to its correct spelling. Furthermore, as one with little knowledge of what is considered important and what is not, I have edged on the side of caution and included all of my scribings here, on the basis that the smallest of events can, with hindsight, prove to be of greatest magnitude.

By my hand...

Naimh Lafitte

Green Mage

Crew of the Black Scab

"After a time of recent upheavals the KVA approach Eostarre wishing to make it a time of renewal. All towers are invited to renew their alliances, pacts and contracts with the KVA. As such the King has invited representatives from all towers to attend him at the Feast of Lanterns Waystation at the edge of the Fairelund forest. You are chosen to attend this gathering and do the King's command in order for the event to go smoothly."

Upon receiving the above notification it behoved the crew and diverse certain others to travel forthwith to facilitate the smooth transactions of the event...

After splitting into two groups, stasured - of whom Andarta was the leader, and non-status - of whom the chief was the chief, to discourage hordling attacks, we started off on our travels to a place called "The Edge"; a waystation near the Feast of Lanterns. We knew that we were to provide welcome and guard duty at the waystation for ambassadors travelling to meet with the king.

After an arduous time, where we thought for a while that the mists were drawing in upon us, we finally found our way to see "The Edge" in our sights. Yet upon the exterior of it's boundaries we met two DimWan. The spokesperson was named Trevellian. They were looking for two Valley members: Walks with Spirits and Annushka - people we had never met before. After leaving them we finally entered the enclosures to "The Edge".

A Jack Slacker, pathfinder, was seemingly in command and immediately set us to guard; telling us all the while that they were expecting many guests. Jack was also able to divulge some of the bizarre nature of this particular waystation. Apparently it was incomplete - in bits - pieces of it had been found, but not all of them. We were all warned that the station was strange and did not always look the same. With these warnings, and further discussion on our exact roles, and after the arrival of the stasured group, Jack left. We spent the time discussing the news that people were to swear fealty to the new king Paulandis on the morrow.

It was not long before our first visitor arrived, an ambassador from Halmaddins Heights, escorted by Sir Quantos. (They seemed unkeen to enter the waystation, despite the gracious welcome of Scorn, a reaper.) I find I have no further knowledge of these visitors, and would direct you to some other scribe who perchance was busy with pen that night. I instead found myself busy with a Reader by the name of Roberto de la Velarcane, who arrived accompanied by some Kalid. I have tried to faithfully transcribe his words below...

"Until recently this waystation did not protect against the mists and was a basic abode. I have come because of the uniqueness of this place - I have a tale to tell... A tale of the rise and fall of a Shadowskeep (at this point he was interrupted by some questions linking the shadows keep to the Dimwan - he made notion to all to keep silent and hear his tale before any further questions, indicating that the answer would jump the tale) ...

...Sometime ago a people were long subjugated by their king - subdued and split - they were rescued from their trials and brought from their place of suffering to Orin Rakatha. One leader, a Kelnoss Hachnett had a bold plan - with the aid of Valley he brought MorSilvani to this place. There were many fodder for the drow. Kelnoss Hachnett called again on Valley help to seek an artefact refused to Helnock Zarnarlone(?) The artefact was restored to him and he used his power combined with the artefact to become ascended and became SkinShreever.

He journeyed to many place, making many deals to ensure the safety of his people. He contacted Uzar Dayblight(?) and the Kalid. He turned the Drow Drannath to his cause also. With these allies Kelnozz formed and met and secured that which he wanted. The Shadowkeep was born. But this was not enough for SkinShreever - he needed more. He wanted to seek out more power as he embodied the spirit and power of the Shadowkeep. He found and searched many tomes in his hunt for power, and finally cast a great ritual to contact others from lost souls to dark spirits on another plane. He sought to turn them to his aid. However in the darkness there waited a more cunning and malevolent spirit... and when Cardinaris pounced he took power...."

At this point in the story the tellers suddenly seemed to fade and disappear. I had hardly noticed at first as I was focused on writing, but a steady blackness and shadow had crept through the room, closer and closer extinguishing all candles, until it reached the storyteller, causing him and all but one of his party to vanish. That single remaining one was perhaps out of the range of influence, being stood guard at the middle of the room. Initially we assumed this had something to do with the "Edge" bizarreness, and not much thought was expanded on his tale or sudden departure.

Two scuffles then followed with some wolf beast creatures and hordlings. After which we were visited by Raukass; accompanied by the Head of the Yellow Guild of magic, who began a much involved discourse on whether fealty should be sworn to King Paulandiss. The Yellow Guild Head declared for the king in front of all - urging others to do the same. Raukas was undecided - and there followed much discussion on the benefits and rights of a king with Raukas declaring that Paulandis "was a king by right", whether we recognised it or not. He then stated that for those who chose not to recognise it, although they could still call themselves affiliated to and remain in their towers - they could not class themselves of "The Valley Alliance" as the Valley was ruled by a king!

Many people lent themselves to the discussion and the Yellow Guild Head stated that all of our discussions were but mirrored by those in many council sessions in all three towers.

Whilst all this was taking place, I became aware of a farmer man, the brother or cousin (I believe) of Jack Slacker, who was concerned about his pigs and his livelihood. In discussion with him he stated his concerns that as King Paulandiss was "sorting out" the White Retreat Tower he could also make them self sufficient - whereupon they

would no longer require his services or those of his family industry - thus resulting in the destitution of his family, as their business for generations fell through lack of clients. In other words - no one would buy his pigs! He seemed very concerned about this, indicating that he had travelled all this way through dangers to deliver his petitions (which he needed help in transcribing) to the king himself.

In honesty his plight brought to mine, and others, attention the fact that the towers are not simply a stopping place between journeys and quests. Indeed there is a backbone of people living within the Valley Alliance that we as 'adventurers' know very little, if anything at all, about - and yet it is the essence of what we seek to stand for in our travels. A sobering thought...

After some time for slight discussion; a woman who seemed to have snakes in her head rudely interrupted us. She and her cohorts marched directly into the waystation - upon which a cry went up immediately from the valley members for all inside to exit directly. Responding quickly - we found ourselves and collected outside where this woman and her group demanded "The Reader". We assumed that she was talking about Roberto de la Velacane who had begun his story earlier - then disappeared. After a quick and slight fight, where at times our castings on our those of our own seemed to take no effect - she left - leaving some of us paralysed; and the remainder of the evening to discuss the events.

Upon the morrow it was discovered that Topper and Little Mo had been called away back to the towers. We were discussing this whilst breakfasting until rudely interrupted by a group of hordlings. After this brisk exercise a Shadowsfall representative who was irate that the Sativa had been opened and not shut soon visited us. Much discussion took place regarding why this had happened and why we had not

reported it to those concerned. He soon left, and we consolidated our beliefs that the Reader had opened the Sativa in telling the story but either:

- a) [] the bizarreness of "The Edge" had caused a shift, leaving his sto
- b) [] another force had sought to finish the Readers tale,

The memory of the approaching darkness during the tale leads me to lend credence more to the second option than the first.

However my mind was dwelling on another matter regarding our compatriots from the lands of 4+1. Whilst all was going on around us, they revealed that they had their own mission to complete. They each had to fulfil a promise to the fey of their land who had granted them passage and permitted them to dwell for a time in the land of Orin Rakatha. I was informed by Amandan that the Chief had agreed on my part for me to aid them. Indeed - all the crew had a part to play in their mission, aided by others of the non-statused group. As certain members of the 4+1 were not present - their promises still had to be fulfilled. Hence the crew and others were to carry stones holding the essence of these others - and perform the favours on their behalf. Amandan seemed certain that this would work, as the fey do not take much credence of looks alone - and instead use the essence of a person to identify them. The promises we had to undertake on their behalf were:

i)	wear what we were told
ii)	mime and dance an interpretation of a year in our life
iii)	be blind for half an hour at midday and midnight
iv)	have no name
v)	present a bottle of the finest wine

The promises that were to be fulfilled by those present from the lands of 4+1 were as follows:

i)	Ceradwins promise: to marry the king of the fey or tell him of a n
ii)	Amandans promise: to not call on the three for a year and a day
iii)	Kielty's promise: to be the first from the lands of the 4+1 to greet ev

I had not much time to dwell the reasoning behind this over - as we were informed that an ambassador for the DyeFaDyne had been lost and waylaid on their travels. It was requested that those with status look for this person, whilst the rest remain to guard the waystation. This we did for a while. We were then relieved of duty by the pathfinders, in order to complete the mission for the 4+1, joined this time by the much welcome presence of Lux, a bowman and scout of no undue skill.

After a few encounters with some hordlings and Kalid of the Brood and Saldorians (of whom it was noticed with some surprise that they were rather cordial to one another) we encountered the Ambassador of the Morgothians - Vandervoombar. He had dealt with the valley before but did not recognise any in our party (some surprise!). He drew the Chief to one side for a discussion, after both had disarmed to show good intent. Upon his return the Chief informed us that the Ambassador was leaving, having no wish to see the King in person. However, he had entrusted us with a message to pass on to those of

higher status. The message was as follows:

"Are you aware of the trade situation between the Kalid and the DyeFaDyne? Let it be known that we shall stand alongside our allies, the DyeFaDyne, at the Oasis of Souls. I offer a pact of non-aggression with the Valley. We won't attack the Valley. I will send appropriate ambassadors later to discuss actions against the Kalid."

Upon leaving him we found a suitable place to begin our ritual to summon the fey. I shall not embellish much upon this ritual, save to say that I have not seen the like of which done by those full stone cold sober. You would rather have thought the actions performed that morning were the results of much imbibing of grog...

A guide came and led us through the fey lands where sleep soon came upon us all. This sleep was that of the enchanted leading us to the court proper of the fey. After a short hordling fight, those of the 4+1 conversed with the fey. The outcome was the extension of some of their promises for a year and a day, to remain on Orin Rakatha for a further year. I suggest you apply yourself to those named as the 4+1 for further details, should you wish them, of the pacts they made. This being agreed to, we returned to the waystation to be greeted at the gates by a shadowfall who commanded our immediate return to the station, as the other party had interfered in dealings with the Kalid.

When we returned we gathered this interference was supposedly to do with the delicate balance of alliance between the Kalid and the Easterlings in the area, which seemingly hung on a knife edge and was not to be tipped either way. The stashed group did not seem to accept they had tipped the balance one way or the other... Scorn also relayed to me that the Knights of the Shroud of Harrow Steelwind had joined the DimWan.

We were again joined by the pig farmer (I never got his name - but understand that those of the 4+1 had dealings with him so apply you to their good nature should you require his identity), and one Villius Green (?) who apparently has control over 90% of the wine and spirits in Orin Rakatha. His rich appearance would certainly seem to bear this out.

After food and rest Jack Slacker, the pathfinder, informed us that we were to travel a

short distance to another part of "The Edge" to continue our welcomes and greetings to the Ambassadors. We were accompanied by Jack Slacker, the pig farmer and Villius Green. The journey was a gruelling one as the large number in which we travelled attracted the attentions of numerous hordlings, who according to some were the beginnings of a "shook", where I was told that up to 500 can gather at any one time. However, after some excellent flanking movements from certain of our party, whilst others held the line - we surrounded them and emerged victorious from a nasty prolonged struggle. Soon after we were again able to enter another aspect of "The Edge".

Whilst we were in the midsts of settling down and relaxing, things suddenly got hectic. Beings seemed to emerge and appear from the walls, surrounding us completely. Upon closer perusal it was noticed that they were in the company of the same Medusa lady as the previous night, and all immediately set to attack. This fight was not a welcome one and after prolonged struggle we were left with Caredwin, our bard, dead on the floor, whilst numerous others in our group were sorely wounded.

Whilst we were healing and recharging ourselves, a DyeFaDyne arrived - well guarded. She sat to trade with Villius, them both obviously having some prearranged business deal to protract. It transpired later that Jack Slacker had arranged the dealings upon request. The transaction, completed in front of us, although not specific, mentioned an exchange of 500 guest for a small bottle containing what looked like some potion of milky substance? Much bargaining ensued and they settled on 250 guest.

The DyeFaDyne then left just as both the Reader and Easterlings turned up at the same time. For a while things were a little tense, and much talking was done by members of the Valley to both parties, the outcome being to avoid an outbreak of hostilities. The Readers seemed finally happy to settle as the Easterlings were finally convinced to leave the building. The Reader wished to travel with us and proffered a business transaction. Whilst deliberations on this were going on it became clear that we were awaiting the arrival of the king. The Reader offered 70 guest for some of our party to travel with them back to the "Feast of Lanterns" which then became 60 in cash! This did not seem a popular request as we hearkened to the warnings of the Shadowfall earlier regarding the balance between the Easterlings and Reader.

The Reader departed alone, and soon after King Paulandis arrived accompanied by many high stasured and prominent persons, of whom Raukas and Dunstan, the White Path Sect Head, were two. It was noticeable that there were no representatives of Wolfhold however. King Paulandis seemed very wishful to be seen as approachable to

my mind. He announced that he was stepping down from the Order of King Michael "the better to lead my people". He seemed to me to be thoughtful and much wearied by the troubles surrounding him. He made a few announcements regarding some movements within the towers:

i	Duke Harrow is now the North Point of the Compass of the
ii	Sir Clavados remains as the Steward of White Retreat
iii	Raukas has been asked to resume his old position as King's

Seal
Council

King Paulandis then went on to give a somewhat desperate and impassioned speech. I have tried my best to record it faithfully as follows...

"I thank you for your efforts. It is important to remember that everyone, farmer, apprentice, guildsman (he continued to list a good many types of people), all contribute to the success of all. I have come here tonight because I wanted, (he chuckled) ...relief from the boredom of duties of being tower leader - but also because I wanted to spend time with the people from whom I belong. I have not forgotten the challenges and tedium that come with the guarding duties - as we do. I once stood as you do today, guarding whilst others performed their duties.... My advisors were concerned that I should walk among you, the forces, for fear of treachery, but I, Paulandis, have no wish to believe in the disloyalty of the Valley People. I wish to place my trust and chief safeguard within the loyalty of the people. I pledge my strength to the valley and the future in which we shall all share. The spheres have blessed the people of the valley and recognised my authority and responsibility as King to the people of the Valley. As long as the Valley people are true and pledge their loyalty to their lords and kings, as long as the King keeps his loyalty to the people, the spheres will look down and bless us all. I pledge that my reign will be for the good of the Valley and all."

Paulandis then faced many questions. He answered them all - but his answers seemed all of the same cut and all led back to the same response each time. When questioned about his personal beliefs he stated that he couldn't deny his history in the Order of King Michael but that he had made a choice to leave the order to be King. He believed that compromises must be made - and he had made his - I got the impression that he felt it was time for others to compromise too. In his words...

"Compromise must be made by all and I am prepared to start. This is a time for change, consolidation and compromise. A time for all the Valley to be united."

When asked why he did not renounce leadership of the White Retreat and move perhaps to the Valley tower instead as a more neutral ground he answered...

"First and foremost I am the Leader of the White Retreat. I am what I am".

There were many people there that seemed to fall for his speech. However, I admit freely to being wary of what seems to be to be a paper exercise. I cannot see how a person declaring himself king of all can suddenly unite forces together. Many were talking of the different outlooks and views of those within the Valley Alliance. Specifically represented by the White Retreat, Valley and Wolfhold. Those views will not disappear simply because a man declares himself high king over all. I perhaps could have more respect for such a man should he hold himself aloft from all three towers, and at least make the effort to seem unbiased and see the full picture. However, his statement that he was first and foremost a leader of the White Retreat seemed to me to indicate where his true loyalties will always lie. When I taxed him with this question, he could not deny otherwise, again his answer leading back to what he had already said.

Paulandis refused to answer questions to determine what had led him to the beliefs he had in the spheres and his actions. He stated that he had no time. Instead he simply replied ...

"I offer a chance to restore the greatness of the Valley People."

When finally asked what the opinion of the Lords of Wolfhold were he answered that they must speak for themselves. (I proffer in my small opinion that the fact that they had been invited but did not attend gave some indication of their opinion).

Then the pig farmer presented his petition, grovelling supremely on the floor. The king seemed much concerned that the farmer had had to travel out of the towers and brave the wildness to present this petition, and charged Raukas to discover why this must be so. He promised consideration of the matter and took the petition.

Then all those who would swear fealty to the king came and knelt before him. They followed the words of the Oath of Fealty to the King. (I suggest you apply to Nero, a Valley member present who was commanded by the King to make a list of all those who took the oath. To my eyes, it seemed that, in the main, all but those of Wolfhold took the oath of fealty to the King). Paulandis acknowledged the oaths of those freely given, charging them as "blessed". The king then left saying finally...

"If the people will have me as I have pledged... my loyalty is to the Valley Alliance".

It was noticeable that the newly made councillor to the King, Raukas, stated that he had not as yet pledged his fealty to the king.

We journeyed back soon after to the other part of "The Edge", only to find that the non status had to almost immediately depart again to hunt for the still missing DyeFaDyne Ambassador and guide. We soon found them, captured by the Kalid. After a quick skirmish we were able to rescue one, Anthrax loosing his fingers in preventing a Kalid from slitting the throat of a hostage, by grasping the blade held against the hostages neck in his hands.

The other DyeFaDyne we found trapped in a prison of his own making. Whilst he was completely safe, as none could enter past the ward that had been set up, he could not exit it himself, having let others of his group travel off with the ring that would dispel the wards. I freely admit that I have not travelled far on this land - or seen much to expand my knowledge - but this seemed to me to be a most ridiculous thing to have done. Indeed, I taxed the man with the query of why he had not kept the ring on his person - as then he would freely be able to dispel the ward at his own leisure. He had no answer for this.

It transpired (naturally!) that the ring was supposedly on some Kalid who had attacked the others of the DyeFaDynes party, and thus it became our want to retrieve the ring. However, this endeavour was to be at no little cost to ourselves as we were to discover. Chief Irwin and Bo 'son Sutnack, both Crew of the Black Scab, valiantly gave their lives to ensure the capture of this ring. Although many and much efforts were made, and copious amounts of grog applied, it was to no avail.

It was as a party keenly pressed and sorely charged, that we returned to release the trapped DyeFaDyne, whom we discovered to be called Mimitsali, and escort him back to the waystation. Although successful, it moved us to the limits of what was possible to achieve this feat.

At this point I would like to venture on the nature of some people regarding profit and expectations. I find it sorely trying when a person, who has been rescued from a prison largely made of his own stupidity, tries to charge guest for the use of such spirit strength in his body as will ensure the continued safety of those still guarding him to a safe destination. Especially when two members of that party have already lain down their lives for his freedom! The protestations of gifts of a glove are of no real essence. Indeed I find that I still seethe as I transcribe my notes for this report...

Upon our return to the waystation, and just as we reached the borders it became apparent that those left behind had been sorely pushed by the reappearance of the Medusa lady. In no state ourselves to venture into uncertain safety, we hid and searched for a safer entrance to "The Edge". Upon full entrance to the waystation, those of us that could be healed and who were able, aided in what seemed to be a final battle, killing the Medusa woman who, it transpired, had wanted to return to the Sativa but had found the way barred.

Not long after the Shadowsfall turned up, angry (again!) at us involving ourselves in the dispute between the Reader and the DyeFaDyne. He announced the following...

"That all waystations will be available to all peoples, free of entry. The Reader and DyeFaDyne are banned for one year and a day from the waystations, which are not to be used to make a profit."

When asked who will now run the waystations, the Shadowsfall replied that "The Shadowsfall will now run the waystations".

The Easterlings who were around seemed unhappy about this. When they complained however, they were informed that they could petition the Shadowsfall but that their petition would not be looked upon in a graceful light. Upon which they left.

Whilst discussing our relevant experiences with those in the stasured group we discovered that they had been visited by the Knights of Our Dark Lady, who issued a challenge to a melee. The basis being that apparently 2 or 3 years ago a person named Cirith had agreed, on the Valley's behalf, not to interfere in the politics of the Icarthian Triangle. Since then the Valley, according to the Knights of Our Dark Lady, had apparently interfered a number of times, hence the reason for the duel on the morrow, which was to be fought according to the Knightly Code of Honourable Conflict. Whereupon should a person yield on the field to a greater knight, he should be allowed to leave the field, and not return.

Whilst discussing this upcoming duel, the Pathfinder, Jack Slacker announced that the King had returned to the Feast of Lanterns, but that our job had not finished as more Ambassadors could arrive. At this point it was revealed by some that the Fey had said should a person of sufficient status invite them to attend the Feast of Lanterns, then they would consider attending. Some commented that this information might have been better given over earlier.

The next morning after being rudely disturbed again by hordlings, and I, owing much thanks to BobbyO for racing to mine and Waits screams for aid as we were trapped in the hostel by a hordling bent on causing much damage. (Perhaps I should point out at this juncture, not wishing to malign Waits, that the screams were emanating more from myself, as I had not read my spell book, having just got up, and had no real skills in defending myself). We soon set off for our appointed duel with the Knights of Our Dark Lady. After much honourable "well met's upon the field of battle" rubbish and speeches, it was determined that we should fight the training Knights dressed in Yellow.

All I can say is that if they were the training Knights, I am glad we did not have to face the experienced ones in red! The battle started and stopped as was its want, with a few calls against the honour of certain participants. After an easy start, the effort was upped on behalf of the Knights, and we found ourselves with but four remaining on the field of battle, all the others having yielded. Those remaining were Scorn, Tannis, BobbyO and myself. Scorn indeed did much to win others admiration that morning, and he gave much to aid us in defeating the lone Knight remaining. However, he too had to yield, leaving but three to face one. This Knight was a mighty force, doing at times the blows of seven men, whilst also causing damage to spirit strength, and at the same time issuing mortally damaging invocations with each blow. I will not deny that at several times we were offered the chance to withdraw from the field, others claiming we should. However, the courage and strength of BobbyO should stand as a beacon to us all. Tannis

was vigilant in his own methods - attacking when presented with the opportunity, but BobbyO stood the brunt of the attack, and although a close thing, we finally emerged victorious to the echoing calls of "BobbyO, BobbyO" as the whole of the Valley present chanted encouragements to an unstatused warrior who stood fearless, where others had yielded.

It emerged that because we had fought honourably, we had won the day and would not have to face the attentions of the true Knights proper, those decked in red. A fact for which I am truly grateful, because I believe it took all of everything to defeat the ones in yellow, and had we had to face others that day - the outcome would have been a very different tale.

As it was, we were able to return both to the waystation, and then to our towers, with much to ponder after the happenings of the Eostarre Celebrations. Thus ends my report.

Naimh Lafitte, Green Mage, Crew of the Black Scab