

We were tasked to act as the entourage for the Yellow Guild representative at a meeting within the Garden of Elements. This had been arranged by invitation only some time back by the Wizards Concillium. As it transpires, the Dean of their Yellow College had left Orin Rakartha for some unspecified reason and therefore the WC were offering the Deanship to any qualified competitor after their skills and suitability had been tested – so long as they had NO prior or current connections with the WC.

US:

Kal, Veteran of the OKM and Micheline Priest
Khortaz, Priest of Humact
Taigan five moons, Druid guardian
Ansell, Wizard of the Red school
Wheech, Druid
Dretch, Wizardess of the Yellow guild
Melieth, Wizardess of the Black school
Phoenix, Wizard of the Red school
Gravesong, Veterans of the Iron guard
Mandrake, Veteran Crusader
Alabrion, Wizard of the Temple of earth
Puke, High priest of the Reapers
Caradac, Journeyman seeker
Me, Luke, Priest of the good sphere

Arriving late on Earthday, we met with Pel of the Collegium Magicka and were given the itinerary for the following few days; Earthday – settle in (a day earlier than everyone else) and discuss the nature of yellow magic. Fireday – Await the arrival of the representative of the Yellow guild and do a task for Scholar Vilmius, as previously agreed. Also discuss who was the greatest caster of yellow magic upon Orin Rakatha. Steelday – Visit two other gardens as chosen prior to arrival and awaits the results of the congregation to see who had one the Deanship. Sunday – Await any possible acceptance speech by the new Dean and leave at our leisure.

All attendees and their entouages were to be tested whilst at the gardens (and each garden was physically identical but existed slightly out-of-phase with the others, so we were allotted a facilitator who would transport us around when we were unable to do so ourselves).

EARTHDAY

Arriving at the Garden of Fire, we set up camp and completed a test there successfully before Scholar Vilmius arrived and we discussed the nature of yellow magic. This then got very involved – and somewhat long-winded – until only Kal, Ansell and myself remained up with Scholar Vilmius to continue the conversation. Many things were said that opened up our eyes, as it were, to not only magic, but the spheres and how people view/worship them. Effectively, there seems to be no ‘set’ way of casting magic/power through connection or teaching; it is dependant on where and how it is learnt from. I’ll stop now before I run out of paper. **FIREDAY**

Scholar Vilmius came to us after a brief but nasty fight against ‘melded’ elemental constructs. He then took us to the Garden of Earth where we fought with earth and sand constructs before meeting with Wassat Assama, a holy wise-man of the desert tribes. Scholar Vilmius had been advised to seek this holy man out by the Oracle, for a question he needed answering about the connection of all waystations for a portal system. Once this was done, we fought some Morgothians before we left the Garden of Earth.

Returning to the Garden of Fire, we met with Lord Velteyn and he asked us how we fared and informed us he was dedicated to the Valley Alliance and was not intending to stand for the Deanship, but would send another from his guild to act as delegate. He – quite reasonably – berated us for our lack of information gleaned from the Easterlings and told us to return to the Garden of Earth and learn more, whilst revealing nothing of the Valley Alliance. Alabron was then publicly berated for his giving of status to the T’an within Wolfhold and told to look after all of Dretch’s needs for the remainder of our stay at the Garden of elements. To this I say that Alabron did his best and was a willing aide to Dretch for the rest of the stay. I don’t think anyone could fault him on this front.

Not long after returning, we fought a scouting group of Easterlings before we managed to speak with Shariyah Shahib, a female chieftain and Master of the Desert Storms. She was an Easterling, but personally neutral to the Valley peoples. She talked about how they ‘cast’ lightning and storm spells and how they learnt to use them. This was very interesting, even for those of us who worship the spheres! All their casters learn by experience, rather than teaching scrolls. It turns out the Holy man, Wassat Assama, was not of her tribe, but had taken the role of Advisor or Vizier to her. They consider themselves to worship the desert storm as a sphere rather than an element and she sought to become Dan so that her tribe may learn to cast more easily. She knew none of the other candidates at this point and seemed reasonably well disposed towards us. We then were informed the favour we owed Scholar Vilmius was transferred to the Holy man – he in turn wished our help in aiding them drive the vampiric spirit out of Roberto Carlos; a vampire we encountered at Eostarre who seemed to be fighting his condition. We agreed to this task happily (for the most part). It turns out the Easterlings need no spellbooks, but must ‘pray’

or 'ritualise' above battle magic spells before they can cast them. All their titles are given on merit of sheer ability.

In the evening a Sindar elf named Falfinir arrived looking for another member of Halmadons Heights who had been evading capture for some time. Apparently this Istin had been encountered by Valley members before and was most dangerous – he had stolen a portion of Caradac's memories on a previous meeting and HH were eager to bring him home as fast as possible. Falfinir then spoke to the elven members of our group before departing at high speed. If anyone encounters Istin, he should be avoided at all costs as he subsumes a persons memories/spirit – so far he is believed to have taken over 100 innocent minds/spirits into his own and acts as if speaking from many voices and minds.

Later on we performed the ritual to remove the vampiric spirit from Roberto and we were complacent and made the situation worse for ourselves by having some of the group slay Suthrasessin. They had come to destroy the vampires spirit and despite my attempts to convince them we could do it without a death, they continued to assault Roberto. He fought them back and group members struck the Thissessin which provoked a fight and caused their deaths. I feel partly responsible for this and carry the remorse and guilt for those amongst us who seem not to be able to spell these two words, let alone feel them. We continued with the ritual and Ansell bravely accepted the responsibility of allowing the spirit to enter his body so that it may be banished. We then performed the ritual and were assaulted by not only the newly transferred Vampiric spirit, but several wraith guardians also... Elixirs were used and I was slain. Yes, I could have fled with the others and been safe and aided those who were still standing against the wraiths, but a promise is a promise. I will say no more, except that I am no longer a member of the Humacti Sect and I apologise to those who counted upon me. Later still, Davrok Thunder, administrator of the Yellow guild arrived and announced his candidacy for the Deans position. He spoke to Dretch and Kal at length about our business, actions and tests to be taken before we retired for the night.

STEELDAY

Our facilitator, Rodol Flametongue, arrived and advised us we could take 2 tests. Before we set off, we were approached by a lady Taigan took two instant likes to and she announced herself as (sorry about the spelling, perhaps the WC can be contacted to confirm this) H'enic Yreth Elessa D'mar Kirnos S'an. Also known as the Mistress of Pain and most definitely a Melnibonean Lady from the Vanishing Tower. She had been secluded within her own Tower/at the Gardens for so long she had never heard of the Valley Alliance! We have been here over 12 years! A brief conversation revealed little information fro either group and she went about her business whilst Taigan was congratulated for his - possibly - best behaviour ever.

This led us to finish off the full list of delegates (although we had not realised the last on this list was part of the nine until later, as we had believed there to be only 8 delegates at this point):

1. Valley Alliance – Davrok Thunder
2. Melnibonean – H'enic Yreth Elessa D'mar Krnos S'an
3. Doth'lodass Kalid – Parth, 1st Sorcerer
4. Labyrinthe of Xenos – High Enchanter Euclidas
5. Dai-Fah-Dyne – Minabi
6. Easterlings – Shariyah Shahib, Master of the Desert Storm
7. Annach Morranonil – Ganthor Stormblood, Patriarch of House Alzor
8. Saldorians – Mandreth Icini
9. Chequered Tower – Baron Erantor Cloudstrike

We then travelled to the Garden of Air and performed three tasks successfully before we encountered Minabi along with Master Lore, the Mindflyer! The summation was Minabi was hired/controlled to allow Master Lore to accompany his entourage to the gardens so he may investigate Irastirs Tomb (as we were). Speaking with Minabi, we gleaned little information we did not already know and then were approached by – we think – a desert Djinn named Ra-Habir Belem. He is know to the Valley peoples after Group Thorns heroic mission to deal with Kalen-Mar fen several years ago. This time he had no wish to trade blows, rather he traded/gave information about the invisible Hepaths who we had found guarding the tomb. These Windstalkers could be 'bypassed' by use of a ritual hidden by the tombs real guardians' A Hepath of War and a Hepath of Construction. A story was told of a WC member from the College of Hepathology who was bribed to reveal the ritual to a member of the Doth-lodass. Both these men were found out by the Hepath of War and promptly 'dissapeared'. Ra-Habir encouraged us to recover the ritual from where it was buried and get into the tomb to recover the Canticles – the real purpose behind our mission to the Garden of Elements. A member of the College of Hepathology, Rellius Stormweaver, was responsible for the Windstalkers and we were to perform this ritual before we attempted our second entrance to the tomb.*

Going to the hill where the components and scrolls were buried we proved why KFW's original title was more accurate and got involved in a hideous fight against many powerful constructs. Sadly, I was knocked unconscious and was unable to cure those in need. Melieth and Ansell unfortunately lost their lives in this battle and our last elixirs were used... Needless to say, the Valley way or hurling spirit strength at a problem until it went away won through and we then travelled to the Garden of Light to quickly complete three more tasks before heading back to the Garden of Fire. On the way back, we met the delegate from the Chequered Tower (why am I

always right about these guessing games?) named Baron Erantor Cloudstrike. It seems they have a similar make-up to the Valley Alliance in peoples, races, Gilds and so forth – though they are titled ‘Nature of...’ He was from the Nature of Storms and indicated those who came to the Estarre celebration were from the Nature of Shadow and were currently on the upsurge. THEY are the ones who wished no contact with outsiders, whereas the Baron and others welcomed contact with other Towers. One of their main skills seemed to lie in some kind of vivisection – similar to that the Children of the Brood employ – whereby they dissect several creatures and put them back together as a unique ‘construct’ or being. All of the ‘donors’ appear to survive this cutting and splicing technique. They also make use of a LOT of Bugbears! Eek! After having a shockingly pleasant and informative conversation with the Baron and his companions, we headed back to the Garden of Fire. A nasty shock greeted us as we found Davrok Thunder dead, and upon resurrection he related a meeting with the Mistress of Pain before being struck and poisoned from behind. The consensus here was it was the work of the Doth’lodass as we had been informed earlier that they had already met and spoke with the Melnibonean at length... We still search for hard facts.

During the evening we were informed of the delegates who had failed the tests. These were:

- Valley – Delegate slain
- Saldorians – Entourage wiped out (by us earlier on as we approached the hiding place of the ritual components)
- Melniboneans – Cheated and visited ALL Gardens without leave
- Doth’lodass – Performed with no real intent to win any tests and seemed to be only interested in visiting the two allotted Gardens for unspecified reasons...
- Dai-Fah-Dyne – Attempted no tests and apparently spent their time currying favour and trade.

Later on we were approached by the four delegates who had passed the tests (who all offered varying rewards/penalties for casting our vote their way – or not) These mostly went on the Carrot and Stick variant except for the Chequered Tower, whom we decided to ask Dretch to vote for (as it was ultimately her decision).

Very late in the night, we got our acts together and practiced the ritual to enter Irastirs Tomb until we were satisfied we could perform it correctly. Again we should have thought a bit harder about this and not spent so long eating wonderfully scrummy and spiritually empowered cake

the Easterlings gifted to me as a mark of my 22nd-and-a-bit birthday. This had led us to mill around in true Valley style for the previous 3 hours...

Performing the ritual with only a minor hiccup, the amazingly wonderful Wizard Ansell confidently and masterfully led us to the Tomb itself where a drawn-out early morning fight against the Windstalkers and traps laid within the ruin cost us the life of Alabrion and nearly took the spirits from myself, Melith and the majestic Ansell. End result – we got the Canticles but were informed Kal and Caradac, er Taigan, had been cheesed, er, Geas'ed to slay the Hepath of War that was tormenting Irastirs spirit within the Abyss. This Soul Ash was going to get some, Valley style!

SUNDAY

Rellius Stormwalker turned up VERY annoyed we had disturber Irastirs rest and destroyed the majority of the Windstalkers. We explained about the reasons for this and Soul Ash, and he gracefully gave us the opportunity to make up for the desecration by giving us the time to prepare and defeat the Hepath who tormented their Colleges founder and inspiration. The ensuing battle was mercifully short and luckily no-one died, though there were some close calls and a bit of overcasting. Um.

Baron Cloudstrike was then announced as the new Dean due to our vote and we became aware Irastirs' tormented spirit had defeated Soul Ash and been able to move on to his final resting place.

Then we went home.

If I missed anything important, or anyone's sacrifice, I am sorry – I am somewhat less than my usual self these days...

Luke, Priest of the White Retreat

**I will not go into detail about Irastir and his lifes' work here, as it is not relevant to the outcome of the mission, though I am available most days at the White Retreat if anyone has any*

questions.