

A large number of Valley adventurers were assembled into a number of adventuring parties to head south from our lands beneath the spine and into the East. Our particular group was to assist Cartographer Graupel Arrowsmith in mapping the borders of the Oasis of Souls and the surrounding area.

Group present was;

- Sorcerer Khandis Greyspider (Group Leader)
- Sorceress Kassandra
- Wizard Elleneor of the Red School
- Priest Mordecai of the Hospital
- High Priest Dreidyn
- Priest Vomit Scum of the Reapers
- Gizmo
- Dayleth
- Aspirant Tarnddeath OSM
- Aspirant Roesis OSM (myself)

Once we were past the southern mountains of the spine we headed east before our individual orders caused us leave the proximity of the other groups with whom we had traveled for the past weeks (an approach I am assured does not breach the Law of Travel). Michael's group travelling almost due North while we proceeded in a more North Easterly direction and High Priest Nathan took his team toward the South East.

Shortly after the groups split we were joined by two additional members who arrived surprisingly in our midst during a mid morning break. The shorter one, wearing the colours of the Grey Wardens, immediately bent over and began retching uncontrollably. Mordecai went to assist but was waved off. The other figure introduced himself as POD (Planar Operating Device). There was a brief discussion and it transpires that POD was now working for the Valley, specifically Shard Farsight in exchange for some debt incurred, to facilitate transportation.

After a number of days travel we arrived at the Wards End waystation on Fireday which would be out jumping off point to skirt the Foghorn wood with a view to exploring the borders of the Dyman's lands within the Oasis of Souls. We had seen little in the way of trouble thus far. A few wandering nomads who gave us a wide berth and Hordling activity becoming more pronounced the further we traveled although still in fewer numbers than the old stories I have heard.

As we arrived for a late lunch laid out, as usual, by Rhiannon we heard the crash of a storm not far away through the trees followed by the splitting crack of a falling tree. We formed up outside unsure of whether this was a natural phenomenon or not as the weather, while slightly overcast, didn't appear to be sufficiently grim. Not far off we saw a staggering figure emerge from the treeline one side of his body smoking and charred. The other side clearly displaying a Valley shield upon his chest. We ran to his assistance and as Mordecai tended to his wounds he explained that he was a member of Malcolm Middletons retinue and that they had come under significant attack from forces unknown.

Khandis called us to action immediately and we pressed into the woods seeking to protect the lives of the Valley group but also ensure the capture and containment of Malcolm himself given the Valley Lords recent declaration. We came upon Malcolm accompanied by a small group

of what I assume are his loyal followers. Rightly Khandis approached the matter diplomatically explaining the situation and requesting Malcolm return with him immediately. We escorted Malcolm back to the waystation where he seemed content to wait with us, appearing at relative ease although he would not commit to returning to the Valley he also made no move to escape our company.

A fairly large group of hordlings wandered past at this time, no doubt attracted by the considerable status now present with both our groups in residence. We forayed out and dealt with them in the usual fashion. It is frustrating that we are trying to improve their numbers but they still insist on pointlessly throwing their lives away in conflict with us. Still that is their purpose I suppose.

After this the conversation became more heated. It was clear we had to return Malcolm back as commanded and we were a significant distance from our lands. POD suggested that he could facilitate travel but not for everyone. He did explain why but I did not follow all of the reasoning used, I am sure those learned in the magical arts were clear! We agreed to split the group and moved a short way from the waystation (again some interference from Wards End may have been at play?) to allow POD to take Malcolm and a small escort back to the Valley.

We found a leafy glade and had barely taken up our positions on a perimeter before a number of figures appeared all around us. Dressed in purple most were robed and carrying staves or swords. A number however wore ornate breastplates and gold sashes. Almost all had an elemental or two at their shoulders and none said a word before falling up on us with spells and conjurations of all kinds flying around us without cease. It didn't take long before a number of both our group and Malcolms could be seen on the floor. The groups pulled together, trying to avoid the hedgehog, but we were simply outclassed. Malcolm seemed confused and the last thing I saw before everything faded to black was him starring bewildered at a tall richly dressed figure from the attacking wizards.

I awoke later to find that we had been overwhelmed but not a single one of us bore physical injury. It seemed our foes had taken considerable care to disable us safely which while not pleasant could have been far worse. Of greater concern however was that Malcolm Middleton was gone. Presumably taken but possibly fled in confusion. We gathered ourselves together and returned to the waystation.

We spent the evening discussing the options and we agreed to search the area in the morning for any clue to his location otherwise we would dispatch his companions back to the Valley for debriefing and continue our mission. POD meanwhile took the opportunity to visit with Nathan's group as part of the co-ordination between our forces in the East.

The Steelday morning began in traditional fashion with the arrival of bacon hunting hordlings.

After the workout we gave thanks to St Michael, ate and prepared for the day.

Khandis lead us on a spiral search pattern from the site of previous nights attack. We found little evidence of use and the day become a frustrating mix of fighting angry forest beasts and chatting with Nomads seeking a better place to live as the North East was apparently no longer as safe a place as it once was due to a significant increase in the hordling population (probably owing to the Mistweavers having been sent to break up the war there and to use the combatants to 'recruit').

By lunchtime it seemed obvious that the assailants were no longer in the local area and given their ability to arrive, presumably via teleportation or similar, then they could quite literally be anywhere by now. Khandis drew up new orders and we set up off North West heading for the Oasis of Souls as planned.

We had barely walked an hour when two more figures appeared unannounced a few yards off the path. We heard the sound of vomiting and it quickly became clear it was POD returning with his beleaguered Warden companion (whose name, I apologise, still escapes me). They had traveled to us in order to carry our group to the South East to support Nathans team in a hostile engagement with something they referred to as a "Void Master".

We gathered around POD who marked each of our faces with a sigil I didn't recognise. There was then a disorientating shimmer and twisting feeling and the world went went. We reappeared somewhere else and my stomach roiled and I lost my balance ending up in a heap on the floor expelling my lunch with some force.

Khandis quickly brought us to order, he seemed somewhat less troubled by the travel although perhaps his skin tone hides the shades of a green I am sure were visible on my face, and we took stock of the local area. Tall pines dotted a nearby hillside from which, almost immediately, a number of skeletal beasts charged. These strange creatures seemed akin to undead grimlocks and we required mundane blunt weapons to harm them, something we discovered we had a distinct shortage of. Still we battled through with most of us taking defensive stances while those suitably armed destroyed the beasts one by one.

At this point POD confirmed that we were on the borders of the Halls of Sutekhs land and were positioned to ambush the Void Master and his minions as he moved away from Nathan's groups assault.

We waited in position fighting off a few more incursions of creatures from the border and a number of void creatures that seemed to be coming from a different portion of the woods.

Khandis directed Dayleth to investigate and he returned with a description of a ritual that was being performed just back in the woods halfway up a steep hill.

Operating under the assumption that dark rituals summoning void creatures isn't something we want on our flank when a void master arrives we moved to strike it and remove the threat as quickly as possible. At the centre of circle marked with odd runes at the cardinal points was a short figure garbed in fine black robes with a gold and black headress like a rearing cobra. He chanted continually while tearing a bloodstained corpse into pieces with his bare hands. Initially we were unable to penetrate the circle and began to come under attack from waves of void creatures pouring from the holes he tore in the body before him.

Kass sat down by one of the points, protected in some way I do not understand, and banished the magic from one of the runes. This seemed to weaken the protections of the ritual but alerted the caster to our presence (he was seemingly oblivious until this point). At this point Khandis pushed his way into the ring and smote about himself with his staff. The fight was over in short order after this with the ritualist unable to recover from the assault and eventually dying in a heap over his previous victim.

The majority of the group returned to our position while Gizmo kept watch over Mordecai while he meditated in a hidden dell a short distance away.

The sky was growing dark when we finally saw the approach of our quarry. A strange thin figure like a silhouette of a naked man wearing nothing but a cloak and hood accompanied by a large number of void creatures. We engaged directly with Khandis, Staff of Life glowing in the darkening haze, moving to engage the cackling Master flanked by Tarndearth while we began to systematically whittle away at the minions.

The battle was going well for many long minutes. We clearly had the advantage over the lesser minions and the Master could not seem to find breathing room to deal with Khandis and Tarndearth. When we had felled about half of the minions we head pounding steps behind us

and a swarm of the strange skeletal beasts from earlier charged from the woods accompanied by casters in dark robes edged in gold. We tried to turn our lines and defend against the new threat but this distraction proved to be disastrous. In the confusion the Master broken free of the engagement and with a swirl of his hands he gestured toward Khandis and in an explosion of mana he collapsed to the ground bleeding from numerous rents in his flesh. At the same time Dayleth too seemed to fall beneath the grasping hands of the void creatures and didn't rise. Dreidyn called for everyone to stay together and under a torrent of bolts from Elleanor and Kass we retrieved the fallen and sought a more defensible spot. Unfortunately the Master decided that survival was worth more than our deaths and he fled through the now engaged Hall forces and into their borders beyond.

We spent the next hour fighting clear until POD was able to place new marks on our faces and take us to the North close to Michaels group and safety.

We will face this foe again I am sure. Next time he will not escape.

Aspirant Roesis Order of St Michael.