

A number of Alliance groups converged at the World Window waystation, to support a request that the area was made safe for a number of Alliance dignatories. I arrived on Steel Day morning with Thumper (Iron Guard), and joined the group already led by Lord Giles (Assistant Guildleader of the Grey School of Magic), which also comprised Sorceress Melieth (Black School), Sorceress Aruna (Red School), Quicksilver (Purple Sorcerer), Slag (Rangers), Spingle (Rangers), Caradac (Pathfinders).

Apparently, this party had met a group of Axians on the previous evening, while the low status group had fought through a number of waves of groups from the Catacombs of Asherai. One of the members of the Catacombs had been carrying a letter indicating that the Cadre (now based in their Tower) were interested in taking up Dymwan experiments on elven undead, and were seeking to tempt across a number of Dymwan researchers to their Tower.

The Dai-fah-Dyne Sultan (Darius Sharfuzh) of the Northern Marches had also met with Lady Isabella (Guildleader of the Green School of Magic), and declared that the DFD were announcing a competition to appoint a Malik - the overall ruler of the DFD, chosen from one of the four Sultans. It had been declared that the Sultan able to make most money over a period of three days would be selected.

Assisting a DFD Sultan

Spingle negotiated a deal with the DFD, whereby our party would retrieve a "black bag" from a vessel (thought to be containing items of some wealth) for the DFD Northern Sultan; and that they would supply us with a healer during this trip. The healer arrived, mentioning that should he be in mortal danger and on the cusp of death, the Sultan would immediately transport him to safety. He named everybody travelling to a large blue vessel (true names were not required), and then we were all summoned inside.

Here we were swiftly assailed by a number of blue and yellow elementals, led by a blue creature of more power that teleported away when we beat down the rest of his defences. This later turned out to be the manifestation of the wind within this effective demi-plane - when it declared us "worthy" to be there. On a number of occasions, we fought some vicious sand-dwellers who spoke in some foreign tongue and were reminiscent of the Easterlings (although were decidedly not). We also met some broken Labyrinth of Xenos drones who appeared to be disconnected from the hive mind, discharging Powerhammer invocations

seemingly randomly. One of the drones complained that "this unit is not built for autonomous functioning", but was able to tell us a little more about the groups it had met in the area.

Our healer was attacked and thus transported away, by a group of lizard-like creatures. These were psionics who struck with poisonous blows, and they had compelled a female DFD guard to defend them. We slew them; upon one creature was the bag we sought, which contained an inordinately-large amount of Gests. The DFD guard indicated she had been upon Orin Rakatha when suddenly she was assaulted and brought here; she did not realise she was not upon Orin Rakatha. She indicated also that she would not be missed as guards were of low status within the DFD. We left her there.

During our conversation with the guard, a Pathfinder naming himself Nightshade arrived. He said he had been out collecting herbs to help with the sickness of the Green School of Magic (half a year ago), but seemed uncertain as to how much time had passed since. He also helpfully directed us to the way out, as he had noticed that the sky seemed to dome into a narrow point nearby (the neck of the bottle). We fought our way out and returned to the waystation, where the black bag and its contents were handed over to the Northern Sultan's representative.

Important Announcements

We heard that, during our absence, the low-status party had firstly buried our vessel within the sands for safety, and later been visited by a high-powered Shadowsfall group looking for the "ark of fire", which they did not find. The Shadowsfall had also declared that the Time of Reckoning was to be held next week.

We were then all summoned into the waystation and the doors closed. The Pathfinder, Nightshade, who we had helped retrieve earlier declared that he had a confession to make; that he was in fact Lazarus Steel (Head of the Pathfinders). He was recalling all members of the Pathfinders back to Fortunes' Keep for a "period of contemplation", and also requested Belem de Traverney's presence there. Pathfinders are no longer to be known by code names; a fact he later illustrated by symbolically burning his "Nightshade" pass in front of me.

During this announcement, all members of Wolfhold were called outside to meet with Dreadlord Araikas, Tower Leader of Wolfhold, who had arrived with a retinue including Sir Thoran, who had stepped up to the rank of Assistant Guildleader of the Iron Guard. We all pledged our Status to Dreadlord Araikas, and re-entered the building where shortly afterwards, King Paullandiss entered accompanied by - amongst other people - Sir Clavados (Steward of the White Retreat), and Ambassador Aurelius from the Senatus Empire.

The King took his seat and invited Spingle to publicly announce the Goblin King's stance on behalf of the goblinoids. This was that the Goblin King accepts King Paullandiss's recognition of his sovereign right to rule over the goblin people (trolls, bugbears, half-orcs etc); but that he declines the offer to move his people en-masse to Orin Rakatha.

King Paullandiss declared that the heads of various different peoples (such as Lord Darketh Nightspawn on behalf of the Drow and duergar) were willing to act as Sovereigns on behalf of their people and acknowledge him as High King. This means that people could pledge their fealty to their Sovereign without needing to do it directly to King Paullandiss, and still receive the benefits of the Spheres. That we were also to be known as the "Kingdom of the Valleys" and thus an appropriate rallying shout in combat would be "for the Valley".

The Ambassador from the Senatus Empire declared that King Paullandiss has been accepted onto the Senate as a probationary Senator; his acceptance on the Senate is conditional on the success of the removal of Chaos from the lands (most notably, the dealing with the Chaos Vortex). The Ambassador then departed, as he had pressing business elsewhere.

Due to the large bulk of Status upon Murandir, there was concern that we would not have sufficient Status come the Time of Reckoning, what with the bridge to the Halfway House having been destroyed by the "Mist Lord", who now also sought to attack the World Window. In the event that we did not have sufficient come the Time of Reckoning, those in authority had decided that the White Retreat would be the Tower to fall. Should this happen, Sir Clavados would - as a first step - move over to act as Steward of Fortune's Keep, assisted by Assistant Steward Lord Veltyn and Assistant Steward Isabella.

People were given choice of whether they wanted to move back to Murandir, or with their Guilds. Teaching of magic would be unrestricted, so that no discrimination would be made against anyone who wanted to learn a particular colour or join a particular School, as has occurred in the past. Giles later announced that the Grey School of Magic would be moving to Wolfhold.

King Paullandiss also mentioned that he did not believe in hereditary kingship, and so it might not necessarily be his son who would automatically become King should he pass away.

A number of people were also publicly elevated in rank: Thumper, recognised as Champion of the Iron Guard; Slag, recognised as Champion of the Rangers; and Sutnac and Anthrax (though absent) elevated to the ranks of High Priesthood of their various Sects.

Quicksilver was demoted from Captain to Cadet within the Order of Saint Michel for his clandestine use of assassins over the past couple of years.

With Lord Darkheart moving to Murandir, I was promoted to Controller of the Wolfhold Ambassadors.

After the meeting, the dignitaries stayed around for a while. Members of Wolfhold were invited to acknowledge Dreadlord Araikas as their sovereign, an act which would not conflict with any

spiritual views. Any who did so would be able to receive the favour of the Spheres (such as a strengthening of the spirit, and a small resistance against the odd spell or invocation - the latter by calling upon the Dreadlord's name in combat).

The Blood Wind

In the evening, we were joined by Gutrot (Iron Guard) and brought the Ark of Fire (an artefact recovered from a previous mission I led - it currently contains the essence of the North Wind), while the low-status group present were tasked to retrieve a potion for Lord Vetzlar. Smudge joined our party for this, as he had previously assisted on the mission to contain the North Wind.

The Four Winds are tools of the mystics, with the Dark Wind having been mis-used by the Dymwan during the Dymwan Wars. More recently, the Catacombs of Asherai have shown some interested in corrupting the Blood Wind. The Oracle of the Fire Wind had suggested that, as the Blood Wind Oracle had the greatest knowledge of healing, he would be best-placed to answer questions on how to cleanse the Winds of the taint and forever put them beyond the hands of those who would seek to meddle. He had also indicated he would come, should we call him.

We set up at a nearby arena, illuminating the place with many burning candles so as to draw the Oracle of the Fire Wind. He arrived, mentioning that he had been "creating" since we last met. He consecrated our ritual site, and Quicksilver performed the ritual of calling, that would summon the Blood Oracle - and unfortunately some of the hierarchs, who had been corrupted by the Catacombs (including the Herald of the Blood Wind).

The Oracle was most displeased to see "the corrupted ones" that we had summoned along with him, and we waged a long battle against them until they were removed from the area, at which point he spoke with us. His words were often highly cryptic, and - as seems to be the way of Seers - he frequently claimed to have foreseen events, that we would ask various questions, and so forth. The two Oracles constantly referred to each other as "brother".

When speaking of the mystics, the Blood Wind Oracle said a number of times that the Oracles await "His return". When asked to clarify this/his references to the mystics, he uttered some parable which I paraphrase here: "a student asked the master what was the secret to the world. His master answered, 'Two bags of rice'". Deciphering this remark is left as an exercise for the reader.

When speaking of the Shadowfall, the Oracle seemed confused by and expressed surprise at their actions to which the Fire Wind Oracle commented, "the knights of the Shadows Meet are

more diminished now Brother". This makes an interesting context, as the Shadowfall had told me on a previous mission that the Tower of the Four Winds had been created after the Second Cataclysm, and the Blood Wind were one of the last of the Four Winds to remain upon Orin Rakatha.

The Blood Oracle seemed resigned yet highly rueful of the Ark of Fire which the Fire Wind had originally ordered to be crafted; and made some comments about the Labyrinth of Xenos (which he did remember - they are one of the oldest Towers upon Orin Rakatha).

With regards to cleansing and freeing the Winds of/from malign influence from other Towers - which the Fire Wind Oracle described as "a noble goal" - the Blood Wind Oracle said that the Temple to each Wind would have to be re-forged. He set us a task to retrieve something he had hidden before Summer comes into ascendancy next year (Blood Wind being aligned with the Spring), although others already seek this - and should they retrieve it before us - they would gain his favour. These others certainly include the Knights of Our Dark Lady: he confirmed that they had awoken him early, which prevented his corruption by the Catacombs of Asherai. Should we obtain this hidden thing (he was not specific about how it manifested itself), and present it to him (by the token offering of Blood at his Shrine) then we would instead have his favour. Summoning merely the Oracle was not the same as summoning the Winds - an outcome that Giles seemed to fear might at some stage come to pass.

The Oracle clarified for Giles that when all Four Winds are in balance, there is little evidence of their presence on Orin Rakatha; whereas with just two Winds (such as Fire and Blood), the land would be filled with "fire and life". The two Oracles lamented that the Dark Oracle (the "Witch") was "broken", but one expressed hope that she could be restored to her original form.

With no further questions, we returned to the waystation to find that the Shadowfall had made further enquiries of the low status group about the Ark of Fire, but that some amongst the group had managed to deflect them. They had, amongst other things, fought some Saldoreans of the Brotherhood of Darkness and Despair.

Lord Vetzlar arrived with two asgnazi to collect the potion that this group had obtained for him - it seems he is working in some capacity with Lord Veltyn. When taking off the potion lid, he warned everyone to stand back, but no adverse effects to any present were observed. Lord Vetzlar confirmed that he is living upon Murandir in the Dark Camp headed by Geran sal Beridan.

Sun Day - Mist Lord Approaches

On Sun Day morning, a messenger arrived with a bag full of potions which were from Lord Vetzlar. The messenger offered these to everyone, but claimed that if you took one, you must also drink it. A number of people did so.

We were warned that the Mist Lord was rapidly approaching the waystation - along with the mists -, and that he had an advance guard of mistweavers. We were asked to defend one of the approaches to the World Window, and the low status group took up another. While we waited at our position, a group of Shadowsfall approached warily, looking to share information on the Mist Lord. He appears to have command of a number of mistweavers, and his origins are unknown to them. They first received reports of him during last year. They left as we were assaulted by a wave of hordelings.

Following the hordelings was a group from the Labyrinth of Xenos. No explanation was given for their purpose here.

Lastly, we heard urgent news from Teflon, a Dark Path Priest, that the low status group had been consumed by the mists and disappeared. Caradac went over to the area from which Teflon had emerged, only to return blind - presumably by some mist effect. We were then attacked by a large group of hordelings led by a mistweaver. The latter tended to remove spiritual protections before assaulting with a spiritually-enhanced weapon. One by one, the group started to fall; eventually Giles shouted for everyone to immediately return to the waystation and he would hold off the mistweaver by himself. We picked up everyone and their belongings, and ran back to the building as the mists were closing in. Fortunately, Giles arrived not much later.

After the mists passed, we were still unsure as to the location of the low status group. Later, it was confirmed that Arak Vembassa, Exulted Sultan of the Ruling Crescent, Warden of the Southern Marches, had won the Dai-fah-Dyne competition to become Malik.

Kevralyn Soulfire
Controller of the Wolfhold Ambassadors