

Members of the group:

Rahima, ~~WAT~~ Priestess of the Hospital
Smudge Welk, Champion ~~VAT~~ of The Rangers
Finn, Sorcerer of the Black ~~WS~~ School
Spark, Sorcerer of the Red ~~WB~~ School
Skorne, Priest of the Reapers
Myrtle, Wizard of the Temple ~~WAT~~

Before we arrived at the Labyrinth Workshop, we lost some other members of our party, from whom we were separated during a fight with a large force of Khalid:

Lei Fung, ~~WB~~ of the Sacred Swords - who made his way back to us later
Harlequin WH
Cynnon VAT
Andarta WH
Timagin ?

Fireday Night

We travelled to the southern part of Orin Rakatha, through unseasonably hot weather, and relatively untroubled by hostile groups. We met our guide Chow Fat, a member of the Ming who was dressed in white, and he led us towards the Xenosian workshop where we had arranged to hand over the box containing the White Lotus to Master Kenjuro of the Celestial Bureaucracy. However, as we neared our destination, the weather worsened, and our luck turned. We encountered a large force of extremely hostile and powerful Khalid. We barely managed to escape the fight and in our haste, our group became separated. Those named above could not be found, and with heavy hearts, we decided to make for the safety of the Workshop.

Whilst on the outskirts of the workshop area, we came upon some Uruk-Hai, who were determined to fight someone; we were forced to slay them in self-defence.

A little later, we saw some Khalid fighting Morgothians. A decision was made to fight the Morgothians, as they attacked us, but a few terse words with the Khalid determined that we had no quarrel with them, and they passed on peacefully enough.

After a very short skirmish with some hordeling type creatures, we made our way up to the

gates of the Workshop. In a wooded area a little way from the Workshop, we met a group of belligerent Monk's Men and a couple of undead. When searching the bodies, we discovered vampire-like wounds on the neck of their leader.

At the gates, we were met by Callis, a Xenosian apprentice who assured us that his mistress (or master - there was some confusion, however, when I examined her later, she did appear to be female) Andronicus, was awaiting us inside. Grateful to be safe at last, we entered the gates of the Workshop. However, as Callis went to announce us, he let out a great cry of horror, and ran back to us, shouting incoherently. We rushed forward, into gouts of smoke, and confusion. We were attacked by black-clad figures, which, due to the smoke I could not clearly make out. I did not see this myself, but was told later that one of them moved robotically, struck with the force of many men, used several powerful Halt invocations and also many power hammers, he quickly disappeared into the darkness given chase by Spark and Smudge. After the fight, it was clear that Andronicus had been slain and a ritual that she was preparing had been disrupted.

We agreed to stay at the workshop - as there was nowhere else for us to go - for the night, and assess the situation in the morning. A scroll showing a strange diagram of a body with various annotations and some papers were found. Myrtle and Finn proceeded to set about translating them. This was a task that was to take them most of the mission to accomplish.

At this time, or thereabouts, Maynard, a Wolfhold 'scout' approached with a 'secret' message for Finn and Skorne. Both indicated that they wished to have no secrets from the rest of the group, but the 'scout' - an ill-favoured fellow - refused to talk openly in front of his fellow Valley alliance members. He rudely insisted that they talk outside, which Finn and Skorne eventually agreed to do.

When they returned, it became apparent that the Necromancers sect within Wolfhold was attempting to subvert the proper orders of the mission, and had issued instructions to Finn and Skorne that they should seek to betray fellow Valley Alliance members and steal the box of White Lotus. They were then to hand it over to the Dymwan, who would in turn, give them a 'great prize' for Lady Mortifeara.

Skorne and Finn both refused to act in such a craven manner, and instead the group agreed to hold to the principles which enable our towers to survive - we would keep to our original mission orders and deliver the White Lotus to the people to which it belonged - the Celestial Bureaucracy.

I am again disgusted by the pathetic manner in which some factions in Wolfhold conduct themselves. I can only keep faith that Valley groups continue to resist their contemptible attempts to grub power to themselves through underhand means, and show that this pitiable scabbling will not bring them the ends they desire. Only then, as repeatedly smacking a dog's nose will eventually teach it not to steal table scraps, will Wolfhold learn to act as a productive and respected member of our alliance.

That night we also met Turin, another apprentice of the Labyrinth. He was helpful, explaining some of the things that Andronicus had been working on. He also described to us a weapon that he had been working on - a glove or gauntlet that would increase the potency of any power hammers cast by someone wearing it.

Steelday

In the morning, we agreed that we should attempt to complete the ritual, in order to provide the defences for the Workshop that Andronicus had envisioned. Missing components were the first items needed, and we set out for a nearby mine to try to trade with the Duegar that Andronicus had previously dealt with. Turin agreed to guide us to him.

We had barely set off when we encountered a group of Khalid, unaccountably totally opposed to us walking down the path. Reluctantly we fought them, despite explaining how little we were interested in doing so.

After overcoming some manifestations of the earth, we reached the Duegar's lair. Whilst we debated the best way to gain entry, Myrtle and Finn continued to translate the papers we had retrieved from the ritual. We discovered that the Workshop had suffered a break in, and an attack. We also discovered that both Turin and Callis has a mutual dislike of each other, but that Callis was more unstable, with Turin being more talented. We became suspicious of Callis.

Unfortunately, the Duegar was in no mood to trade, and unleashed his terrifying minions upon us, including a rock creature as tall as two men. Fortunately, the creature, though very powerful, was clumsy and slow, and we all survived this clash, thanks to Smudge's skill and strength. After a search of the body, we discovered the components we had been attempting to trade for.

When leaving the Duegar's stinking cave, we spotted a group of Akari Islanders. They too were in little mood to talk, and, after demanding the White Lotus from us, attacked without further preamble. Skorne's hiding place where he was preparing a powerful invocation was discovered, and we barely reached him in time to bring him back from the brink of death. Indeed, he was only saved through the intervention of the Good Sphere through the power of Spiritbond.

We were hard pressed, and barely managed to hold off their attack. Myrtle fell to their blows, and again, was only just saved. However, eventually they were all defeated, and we pressed onward, joined by Lei Fung - a welcome addition to our group.

On the return to the Workshop, we were assailed by yet more Khalid, who attacked without reason or judgement. Again, we were forced to defend ourselves even though we had little interest in fighting.

That evening, as we were resting after having eaten, we were unexpectedly attacked by black clad assailants. I knew little of this fight, as, being the guardian of the White Lotus, I was targeted with a noxious substance blown from the palm of the Ninjas hand and fell into a deep sleep. From what I have gathered from my companions, I was dragged away, and the box removed from where I had secured it at my waist. Spark managed to find my still-sleeping form, awakened me and we returned to the Workshop, where the last of the assailants were giving their lives. We retrieved a pouch of the dust that had been blown at us, which was to come in very useful later on.

Myrtle and Finn had translated the greater part of the papers and were confident that they could complete the ritual. The documents indicated that the theft and the attacks had been due to another parties attempt to create a drone - which was the black-clad assassin of the first evening, and most probably part of the most recent attack.

The cry of 'Incoming' roused us from our plans for regaining the White Lotus. It was a Dymwan necromancer and a troupe of festering corpses dragged from their graves. Alongside these stinking carcasses was a shadow-witch and what appeared to be the remains of Melieth Blackbone. The necromancer assumed an arrogant stance and demanded the White Lotus. We explained that not only did we not have it, but that if we had, he would not be getting it. He did not believe us on either count. We were careful not to make any aggressive moves, as we were mindful of the agreement between Wolfhold and the Dymwan. No sooner had we exchanged some further insights, than the emissary from the Celestial Bureaucracy, Master Kenjuro, also

arrived, with his retainer.

He carried himself with great confidence; however, he had the wild-eyed look and uncompromising manner of one who is deeply under the influence of Black Lotus. Without pausing to respond to introductions, he took exception to the presence of the Dymwan and, declaring himself to be Ming, the sword of light and truth, attacked them, despite entreaties from us not to do so.

A difficult decision faced us. As ever, mindful of the agreement between Wolfhold and the Dymwan, we refused to take up arms against them, except in self-defence. Furthermore, we could not allow ourselves to be coerced into doing so by another tower, however much we wished to improve relationships with them. I decided, and the rest of the group abided by the decision, that we could not be seen to abandon an agreement in order to improve the chances of securing another one. We remained reluctantly neutral in Master Kenjuro's conflict with the Dymwan.

Master Kenjuro eventually fled, although his retainer sadly died after having bravely stood in the way of the Dymwan to help his master escape.

The Dymwan took up a position of comfort by the fire in the camp and insisted on searching for the White Lotus. I accompanied what claims to be Melieth Blackbone around as it lifted up bedrolls, and scabbled around in the ashes of the fire. Needless to say, they did not find it, as I do not lie, even to their sort. Despite their repeated attempts to goad us into attacking them, we abided by the agreement that Wolfhold has with this tower. Eventually, seeing that we were not going to break the agreement, the Dymwan did, and attacked us, no doubt hoping to lay their decaying maws on the White Lotus after all. The fight appeared to be going against us, until Skorne appeared from nowhere and took the Dymwan leader off guard, killing him instantly. We slew them and left their putrid remains for the birds.

After a short while, Kenjuro returned, with more retainers. He was initially incensed that we had failed to defend him, but, was no longer under the influence of the Black Lotus, and was more agreeable. In order to maintain 'face', I stated that we were not here to fight, but to trade, and this is what we would do. Spark apologised on behalf of the Valley Alliance, Skorne for Wolfhold, and honour having been satisfied, we were able to talk. However, as we moved towards the fire to talk, it became apparent to me that Master Kenjuro was suffering greatly from withdrawal from Black Lotus. Having seen this previously with Valley Members who have

succumbed to the lure of this drug, I offered him a choice between the Black and White lotus supplies I carried with me. I prepared him a weak tea of Black Lotus and waited for the effects to manifest themselves.

Fortunately, Master Kenjuro is a strong-willed man, and was able to regain control of himself shortly afterwards. We talked, and he agreed to return on Moonsday at midday in order to collect the White Lotus. He also advised us that the person behind the troubles that his people are facing was named Zwang Zei, a Manchu dedicated to exterminating the Ming.

I spoke with Lei Fung at length, and finally understood the import of what has been occurring within the Celestial Bureaucracy. The Celestial Bureaucracy includes those of both Ming and Manchu heritage. The manner of their joining left them unable to remember which to of these dynasties they belonged, and so the Celestial Bureaucracy lived in peace. The Black Lotus has been malevolently administered in order to awaken those memories within them, and those who were found to be of Ming descent were slaughtered. The man behind this plan was Zwang Zei, a suspicion confirmed by Master Kenjuro. The White Lotus is a means of again subduing those memories in order to allow peace to return to the Celestial Bureaucracy. However, it would be a terrible loss if those who are re-discovering their heritage were again deprived of it. I am resolute that there must be a way for the two dynasties to live in peace, without robbing them of their identities. I thank Lei Fung for his insightful words; he is a most wise and tolerant man.

During that evening, several fights occurred; Callis arrived with a Minotaur and several drones, clearly under the influence of the Black Lotus. We had decided that Zwang Zei must have been bribing him with supplies of the drug in order to ensure his compliance in the break-ins and attacks. His body supplied the last of the components that we needed for the ritual.

Spark, Myrtle and myself ventured out of the camp to a nearby stream to cleanse ourselves before sleeping. When we returned to the workshop we found it under assault by several shades or wraiths and what may have been a drow, the origin of which we did not discover that night.

That night, thanks for Myrtle and Finn's diligence in translating the scroll, we completed the ritual, and left the drone to charge overnight. Turin supplied the power hammer enhancer to the drone, which it will use tomorrow to defeat the black-clad drone.

Sunday

This day dawned brighter than the previous two, and our spirits were lifted a little. However, we were much troubled by the absence of Smudge, who had left to look for our still-lost companions. The drone had been fully charged and now stood before us in a semblance of life. Endearingly, Myrtle had named it 'Bobbin' and it whirred and clicked and even spoke. It was able to detect the presence of the black-clad drone, and led us towards him.

No sooner had we set off than we spotted three Uruk-Hai, who, as soon as they saw us, bellowed and charged. Skorne was mown down by the brunt of their attack and needed tending. Eventually they were subdued. It was clear that they were acting under the influence of Black Lotus.

We again fought Khalid, who unreasonably blocked our path, despite our explanations that we had no quarrel with them.

A little later we came across two Morgothians who were looking for the Uruks. They mentioned that the Uruks had eaten or drunk something and that after that they had become uncontrollable, and had rushed off to fight something - us - it turned out. They mentioned that six of the beasts had escaped, which left three still at large.

As we approached the source of the power that Bobbin was leading us towards, we fought and killed three Manchu. Bobbin became confused and indicated that the power source - and the ninja drone - should be where he stood, but nothing could be seen. We discerned that a powerful concealment spell was in effect, and that there was another powerful source of magic in a deep gully that we had already crossed. We surmised that the concealment hid the drone, and investigated the other magical source.

We entered the gully, and were faced with an incomprehensible Duegar trapped in a cocoon of magic. We finally worked out that he had been forced to cast the concealment, and had then been imprisoned. We freed him, after extracting a promise that he would dispel the concealment. After preparing for what we were certain would be a very difficult fight, we crested the rise to be faced with a dozen Manchu, including men in black, more monks, the large robotic Ninja-Drone, an enchantress and Zwang Zei, the author of all of this bloodshed and misery.

Myrtle unleashed the entrapments she had prepared, and several other effects were cast by my companions, blighting and weakening the Manchu, which effectively turned the fight in our favour. Bobbin rose to the occasion, firing off the Power hammer enhancer until he exhausted his power supply. Skorne donned the glove, and proceeded to finish off the other drone. Finn put the pouch of sleep dust to good use, again, reducing greatly the need for us to expend our resources. Unfortunately, during the fight, a second partially-completed drone and Zwang Zei made their escape. We recovered the box of White Lotus, seemingly un-tampered with.

Returning to the Workshop, and again accompanied by Chow Fat, we encountered more Khalid. Skorne, perhaps over-pleased with the power-hammer enhancer that we'd retrieved from the dead drone, attacked them. I cannot say whether they would have fought us anyway, but it would certainly have seemed likely from our earlier dealings with the Khalid on this mission.

We returned to the Workshop without further incident, and took our rest. Our belongings had been searched in our absence, but by whom we could not decide. Spheres know - there were enough candidates to choose from. A Xenosian Ambassador drone came to talk with us, and we assured it that we were doing everything in our power to resolve the situation. It in turn gifted us with a magical storage device, into which Myrtle cast a powerful invocation.

A short while later, we were alerted to the approach of further Khalid forces. They arrived and immediately formed up into fighting lines. I think the tension of the previous few days had got too much for Spark, as he launched a fervent attack on them. Shouts for talking were heard from the Khalid forces, and after some minor misunderstandings and renewed fighting on both sides, finally we were able to converse. The Khalid drew back and we stood facing each other.

The Khalid leader introduced himself as Commissar Tolstoi. I also recognised Captain Brenn from the incident at the Desert Gate Inn some 13 moons ago. Commissar Tolstoi addressed me as runt, and I acquainted him with my proper names and titles. He proceeded to tell of the slaughter of the River People some time ago, and claimed responsibility for at least part of this atrocity. He laughingly described how it was his pleasure to carry out these actions. He revealed his knowledge of my blood connection to these people, and declared that he was there to send me to join them.

At this point, and sick in my heart, I concluded our discussion, and indicated to Spark that the fight might resume. Having thus revealed his intentions, Commissar Tolstoi dispelled my

magical protection, and began to cast bolts of fire at me. I must commend Myrtle and Finn's efforts at keeping me protected, as the Commissar seemed to have an endless supply of dispels and bolts at his disposal. Deprived of effective healing and magical support, Lei Fung, Spark and Skorne began to crumble under the determined assault of several powerful Khalid. Finally, the Commissar was distracted long enough for me to return to my healing duties, and we were able to step outside the building to take the fight to the Khalid. I could see my companions in need of healing some distance away from the building, and, forgetting all my training regarding keeping yourself protected in order to better heal, I ran from the safety of the doorway to help them.

It was a foolish move. The commissar, seeing his opportunity, turned his attention towards me, and ignoring the blows of my fellows, intended to distract his attention, let his sword find its mark. The last thing I remember is his laugh of triumph as we both fell to the ground.

I woke to the sight of Myrtle sat beside my bed. She assured me that we were safe and the Commissar and all his troops were dead. I'm afraid my memory is a little vague for the next few hours, but I will tell what I remember.

Just as the sun was setting we were attacked by several large spiders, some that struck extremely powerful blows, and some that caused grievous wounds and cursed their victim on every hit. There was a strange spider that appeared to come through the walls. Every time it struck a blow, the victim cried out with pain in their heads. Then there was a small, horrible spider that fired a web around its prey rendering them unable to move before it scuttled in to deliver a poison sting that made its victims fall into a deep catalepsy. Three of our party were affected thus, and Lei Fung was extremely worried that they appeared to be dead. However, I had seen the effects of catalepsy before, and after healing the other wounds on their seemingly lifeless bodies, I was prepared to wait for the effects to wear off, which they duly did.

The attack was renewed a short time later, and at one point we were facing all four of these different spiders when a great hulking spider entered the fray from nowhere, even more powerful than the previous spiders and with an extra set of limbs delivering blows strong enough to kill a normal man in a single blow. However, this spider, like the rock monster earlier, was very clumsy, and it was easy to avoid its blows as it struggled to keep on its many feet. Eventually, and with much bravery exhibited by my companions, we defeated them, and dragged the sticky, many-legged corpses out into the ditch.

After a discussion, it was decided that we were going to continue to be assaulted in this fashion until we found and dealt with the source of the attacks.

Venturing only a short distance away from the Workshop, we encountered Drow Warrior from House Tilduring who seemed to be alone, although when the attack started he was soon joined by several shades that appeared from the shadows around us. The Drow retreated during the fight, so we went to find him. We found him by the bridge, with another two shades. We kept him talking to allow Skorne and Myrtle time to prepare. Some fast planning by Spark resulted in Myrtle casting a spell that made the Drow-Warrior sink up to his knees in the earth while Skorne jumped on him. The lifeless and somewhat surprised body of the Drow slumped to the floor.

Whilst scouting out the surrounding area we heard a voice form the dark asking us to return to the Workshop, where his 'mistress' would speak with us. As we entered we were met by dark figures; some of them were shades but there were also several Drow. They did introduce themselves, but I'm not acquainted with Drow names, titles, or anything else they hold dear, so they shall probably remain nameless in this report.

They also demanded the White Lotus, which was no surprise to anyone by this point. We were surprised, however, when the Drow warrior we had just killed returned and complained to his mistress that we had killed him, and that he wanted revenge. We told them they could not have the White Lotus and the fighting inevitably started. One of the Drow hit Lee Fung in the stomach with a shot from his crossbow, taking him to the floor, then felled Myrtle with a second shot. Again we hastily convened a plan, and Skorne prepared himself. Spark summoned a bright light, and while the Drow were blinded, Skorne ran forward and seized the female Drow Sorceress. She screamed out, and fell to the floor.

The Drow picked up the body of their fallen leader and beat a hasty retreat into the night. They left without the White Lotus.

We retired to bed, in the knowledge that most of Orin Rakatha had by now turned up and attempted to get the White Lotus, and that there were few towers or groups left to make a claim.

Moonsday

We were again assaulted by undead, this time the forces seemed to be led by Melieth

Blackbone, who is clearly enjoying her new-found role as a lackey for the Dymwan. We dealt with them all except for Blackbone, who shadow-shifted away. We were in a bad shape; both Finn and Myrtle needed tending, and Lei Fung had been afflicted by a disease. Myrtle was the worst affected, and I was only just able to save her with the intervention of the Good Sphere through Spiritbond.

Chow Fat ran into the camp, shouting for aid. We heard cries; it was master Kenjuro. We raced to his rescue and found him under attack by necromancers and undead. After dealing with all the remaining foes, we escorted Master Kenjuro back to the Workshop.

We were finally able to deliver the White Lotus to the Celestial Bureaucracy. We exchanged words of understanding, and I made an offer to teach the Celestial Bureaucracy healers how to best administer the White Lotus, whilst allowing those whose memories had returned to retain their identities. As I dictate this report, a cart awaits me, bound for their tower.

Scribed according to my words,

In the Light of the Good Sphere,

High Priestess Rahima Suhayma Riverkin