

Once more I put pen to paper to record another of my unusual and sometimes interesting adventures in this strange land.

My search for my lord is till without end. I have spoken to the lady Kevralyn and have arranged to meet with her and others who are investigating matters of importance to the cities which may well have bearing on my own search. In the mean time I continue my search alongside my chosen duty to the city of wolfhold.

I have returned but this day from a week long patrol of the area known as the summer meadows, a mistake of a name if ever I heard one for such a constantly damp, cold and generally miserable area. Perhaps the person who named it visited the area on a particularly fine summer day rather than its more normal weather. Anyway I digress, my cloak and boots are drying. I am well fed and comfortable sat beside a roaring fire.

With the return of that strange magical feature of these lands, the mists, to the summer meadows which had been free of such for some time it was decided by the rulers of the three cities alliance to send a patrol to investigate the area. We were to report back on what had happened in the area and if new threats to the safety of travellers had arisen.

The patrol assembled was made up of whoever was available at the time, we ranged from somewhat experienced soldiers such as myself and sergeant Orlando to a farmer fresh from the fields and a very quiet scribe who had never left the scrivening chambers before. The group had not been assigned a leader and there were only two suitable candidates. Sergeant Orlando declined as he already led his own patrol group and thus the members of the patrol acclaimed me as the only other worthy choice, leader.

The patrol consisted of:

Warriors : Myself, sergeant Orlando, Scar and Orme troublesome half orcs, Inakara a lass fresh from the farming sector, Bobbyo also new to the militia and Topper.

Healers : Nero a quiet and dour scribe sent to join us because of some crime, Scisor half lizardman, Gawetic our main healer and a confused pasifist, Cupris a skilled monk and healer

Mages : Virosh of house Tumdergal

Scouts and Monks: Sun Tzu, Lao See, Shawn Gillings.

Our two day journey to the meadows was initially easy as we travelled through the well guarded areas by the towers but as we marched deeper into the area we came under attack by orc and goblin type creatures known as hordelings. Just like the creatures of my home land, barely intelligent, stupid, easily confused and aggressive. Due the repeated attacks by these creatures we suffered casualties and had used two of our elixir potions before even setting our eyes upon the rumoured ruined Inn we were to base ourselves at.

In addition the mists seem to arise quickly and several times we were engulfed in mist that swirled from the trees or rose from the ground before we were able to flee. If this continues it will make travel through this land most difficult and will cause a days delay in journeys between the towers as groups will be forced to take a longer route around the meadows.

Finally however we came in sight of buildings and with the mist rolling across the land behind us we had little time, I sent the scouts ahead and we waited in the darkness. Finally the scouts returned to report that the building was occupied by three people downstairs and another upstairs behind a trapped door. The mists were closing in and we had no choice but to approach. Once we were at the Inn the people inside were seen to be those bandits and outlaws. They claimed that it was their Inn and we could stay if we paid them.

I ordered them out of the building and when they refused I had one thrown out. It was at this moment when others of their kind arrived and claiming some kind of outrage at our treatment of them they attacked. The fight was brief and all without were slain then we all returned to the Inn to slay the last few who still lived within. With the building now empty of enemies I set the scouts to search it and took guard while the others opened packs and prepared food after our long day's travels.

There was a room upstairs accessed by an outside stairway which was heavily trapped, our scouts spent some time working through a complex mixture of traps and a magical ward.

While they were hard at work two figures approached and were seen to be shadowfall. They asked for our leader and then when I stepped forth they called me an abomination against nature and would not talk to me, nor would they speak to sergeant Orlando. They demanded we send someone to speak to them and I sent Inakara. Shortly thereafter she cried for help and when we went towards her the shorter of the shadowfall demanded we send someone more intelligent to do the talking. Having been informed that Inakara was fresh from the farms I sent Viros the drow mage instead as he seemed to be an intelligent sort. A few minutes later he returned with Inakara and the shadowfall left. They had been asking about our purpose here and were very interested in the activities of the dymwan.

The scouts had managed to get past the traps and the ward was dispelled to allow a strange figure called Reginald out of the room. He explained he was a survivor of a valley patrol sent into the area four days before us, led by Ember. They were ambushed and the survivors scattered.

He had concealed about his person a few potion bottles, which he gave to us after washing them.

Some time later in the evening figures were spotted in the fog and as they came closer we saw it to be a dymwan and undead. I spoke to the dymwan who said he was about his business in the area and insisted we leave. As we would not abandon our duty we refused and the undead attacked. My contribution to the fight was shorter than I would have liked as I was first struck by a most damaging touch invocation and then twice had my power ripped from my body. The group as a whole prevailed and the dymwan fled into the darkness.

It became noticeable over the evening how troublesome and argumentative the half orcs were and I spoke to several in the patrol that had met them before who explained they were not normally this bad.

Once more we settled down and I took the watch. Inakara and Viros are to be recommended for their diligence in standing watch on this patrol. Duties I must note the half orcs were absent from.

Again we spotted figures and this time they were in the colours of the steelwind. One named himself as Toranaga and was known to Sun Tzu. He was once leader of the steelwind of the Kalid but was now a mistwalker. He had business with Sun Tzu and also wished words with us. He wished an investigation into a group of steelwind called the harrow who may be behaving without honour but who he could not challenge without proof. He was of the ministry of the right who upheld the old ways of honour, the harrow were of the ministry of the left and did not follow the old ways. He wished us to get that proof. In return he would offer us a cure for the affliction that was beginning to affect us. We had been into the mists and would suffer from insanity and become as the hordelings. The half orcs, being somewhat less intelligent than most of the rest of us were half way there already and were showing the signs fastest.

Given the choice I willingly agreed to seek this evidence for him and in return he said he would send a guide and make arrangements for a cure.

He then spoke of a cross shaped talisman which warded the building against the mists, we had found this earlier and he explained that when placed on a door it sealed a building against the mists and hordelings but it only worked when the mists rose.

Then he went outside with Sun Tzu and later spoke with several others while demonstrating that some of our warriors are not skilled men at arms. He then left.

As a note here, the harrow is an order of users of the realm of death, known here as the evil sphere. They punished members of the steelwind who acted without honour by slaying them and raising them as undead. They were suspected of performing this punishment, called harrowing, on those who were not guilty of the crimes they were accused of.

Late that night after some had already retired for the night we were attacked by bandits and slew them. Over the course of the few days we spent at this run down hall we were attacked several times by hordelings and bandits. Aside from the death of Reginald who for some reason wandered off and was captured and then killed by them they proved at best an annoyance and a drain on our magic and healing. I will therefore not recount every attack they made against us.

The following day I rose early and having fortified myself with a goblet of coffee stood watch till the others began to wake. We were visited by a strange goblin scout called Millet or Milip who was to guide us on our journey and advise us of what we were to do, most often too late to be of any help.

Aside from beating off the bandit and goblinoid scum that came to bother us we eventually ready to leave and set out across country following the directions of our small green guide.

After less than an hour of travel we came to a sizeable hill covered with more of these goblin hordelings. Faced with the difficult tactical choice of either using some bushes as flank cover but giving them the advantage of height or fighting in the open I choose the latter. We formed a rough circle and fought them off. Our archer Shawn demonstrated his skill here with some fine shots and was to continue to prove a skilled marksman over the next few days.

Our fighting formation was rough and a number of times the circle opened allowing some to be struck in the back but we prevailed and cut down the horde creatures to the last goblin. A quick search of the area revealed nothing and we began the climb up the hill.

Atop the hill was a dell and within that was a foul pool of muddy and stagnant water guarded by some strange creatures with faces like fish but full of teeth. These attacked us as we approached the pool and we found our weapons glancing harmless off them. Only blades of magic seemed to harm them and we three of our number so armed we hunted them down. Those of us without magical weapons attacked to draw their blows and parry them or help back from the fighting.

On death these things collapsed into greenish slime. Clearly a magical creature of some type.

Within the pond were three oranges and Cupris was able to hook them out while I braced him as he leaned far out over the mud. The guide said these were the first ingredients and we should continue on.

Through the wooded hillside we walked, down and then up again but before we reached the crest of the hill our path was blocked by undead and a dymwan. I spoke to her and she told us to leave the area. I explained we needed to cross the hill and did not wish to intrude. She was unfortunately adamant that we could not pass and as she stood upon the only clear path through the thicket of trees and bushes we could not go around.

I told her that we had no choice, as we must pass and if she would not stand aside then it would come to battle. Her response was to send a zombie to stand against the fence that cut across the path.

The fight began with a few of us striking the zombie and keeping a wary eye on the ghoul that crouched a few paces away. The priestess along with some form of skeleton and a spirit stood on the crest of the hill and watched. The zombie was an unusual type, although weak its animating power constantly renewed its undead form making it all but immune to physical attacks.

We had no choice, without the potion to cure us of the mist's taint we would become mindless goblin filth and death in battle is a far better fate than that. Stepping away from the zombie I climbed the fence and then engaged it to allow others over. The ghoul took this opportunity to strike and although I struck it several times I was struck in return and all went dark. I came too what felt like mere seconds later to find scar shielding me from the blows of the zombie while other warriors climbed over the fence.

What followed was a difficult battle as we were in a dell just below the crest of the hill and had steep climbs up to reach the foe. The spirit cast numerous fears and despite my confidence as to its nature there was a deal of argument before a discern was cast proving it was a spirit of fear. The ghoul was killed by Cupris and the zombie dismissed by Gawetic. A second ghoul was dealt with and with her skeletal warrior battered the dymwan retreated with her spirit of fear preventing us following.

Due to her casting of power drains and the attacks of the undead we were sorely hurt and after healing most of our casters needed rest to meditate and recover their strength.

They withdrew into the woods with some guards while the remained of us held the top of the hill to guard against attack.

Here we met some bandits, outlaw rabble from monks band who seem to infest this area. They seemed to be fighting the undead but by carefully watching their actions I did not see them

press home the attacks. Also when they came over to talk they mentioned that they were for hire is we could pay more than the dymwan. I was under the impression that employing such outlaws was illegal.

They also mentioned that they had seen a big meeting between a load of dymwan and some kalid earlier. Both groups had lots of undead with them and they had talked and then left the area leaving only the priestess and a few undead behind. The bandits while seeming helpful and friendly did try to bypass our guard and fled away from us after having a good look into the trees.

While this was going on our scouts and scar had spread across the top of the hill and had seen the dymwan the other side of a line of trees. She was engaged in some form of ritual involving an upright stone. Not wishing her to finish this, as it almost certainly would bode ill for us I ordered the scouts to try and disrupt it.

There was a fierce cross wind on the hilltop and the undead prevented a close approach but our archer took up the challenge and after firing a number of shots the outraged scream of the priestess was heard.

She came towards us, clearly angry and demanded we turn over the archer to her. No was the answer and battle was joined. The spirit was attacked with remove fear invocations while everyone with a mace engaged the skeletal warrior. Orlando threw himself on the creature and we tried to guard him but scar and I suffered a number of blows in the melee. It was only afterwards that it was mentioned that he was guarded by a skin of stone and was almost impervious to the creature's sword blows. Scar and I were not impressed when this was said.

Now only the bandits remained and as the priestess had told them they were welcome to take our items as payment as she had no need our them we treated them as an enemy. They had fallen back and were now astride a steep path down the side of the hill and a distance away.

The goblin guide said that the alter the dymwan priestess had been casting at was another component and that we had to cover it with the blood of a living man. All the blood had to come from one person and it had to be all the blood in their body, which would kill them.

To my mind the presence of the outlaws who were human solved this problem rather neatly but some of our number objected to the whole idea of sacrificing anyone. To my mind it is far better to use the life of a bandit to save ourselves than sacrifice a worthy member of my patrol.

So we set off after the bandits. At first they talked, they claimed they were not working for the dymwan and were there to prevent us from following monk. They did not want us finding the cave where monk was as his business was none of ours.

Then they spotted our scouts behind them and they fled. This turned into a long pursuit as they went down hill and uphill until finally we caught them after many minutes of exhausting pursuit. Here we fought and despite my shouting for a prisoner to be taken they were cut down and slain. Some in the group almost berserk as they ignored my orders and killed the last outlaw.

Below the clearing where we fought were hordelings and they had somehow taken Sun Tzu. With the bandits dead they were in our way but I did not wish to engage them without reason. Particularly as scar had walked ahead of us and was now claiming to be one of them and shouting get off our land or some such. Then they showed us the body of our scout and we had no choice. By splitting our warriors so that two attacked each goblinoid while the scouts went after the caster concealed in some form of drain the remainder of the patrol could engage the troll. This should have allowed us to prevent attacks on the non-warriors. Unfortunately I found myself fighting the troll alone as those I designated to join me went after weaker enemies. I was able to keep it occupied despite several deep wounds from its blows while the other warriors slew the lesser foes. Then we surrounded and slew the troll. The last part of the fight was chasing the caster down, which the scouts did with speed.

Sun Tzu was barely alive and an elixir was able to save him while our healers dealt with our wounds.

Our goblin guide said that one of the components was close by and the last was in the woods above us. We set to searching and herbs were found in the woods but nothing could be found in the clearing where we slew the hordelings.

Then we were greeted by a Dai fa dyne who came to us for help, he was trying to take samples from a nearby lake but was unable to do so due to the creatures there. He wanted us to drive off the beasts and allow him time to take his sample. In return he would offer us some trade goods he had. A scroll of herbs in fact that he had. Despite the efforts of a half orc in the group to rob the man I did not wish to stain my honour or wolfholds reputation by stealing from one of these neutral traders. We followed his directions and came to a lake where more of the magical fish things from earlier were to be seen.

We moved to attack and they fled so splitting the group and with magical blades cast we went both ways around the lake and caught them between us. The majority of the creatures were engaged and slain with two others moving away separately and having to be hunted down. Several of these creatures were not harmed by magic and only empowered weapons seemed to harm them.

They were slain to the last and with the trader's samples taken we were able to withdraw.

Now we were faced with a difficult choice. The final component was the blood of a man and we had taken no prisoners. As we walked back to the altar elements of the group quietly suggested the Dai fa dyne but I refused this most clearly. Having offered him my personal protection the very suggestion was offensive but in this land so lacking in honourable men they did not realise this.

Scar and Scisor both offered Nero, they were most vocal about him being the choice. To my mind however as a healer he was far too valuable to the patrol and I would not choose any of the casters nor the scouts or capable warriors.

Before I declared my choice I asked if any were willing to volunteer and Sergeant Orlando stepped forth. I would not have chosen him as he was a valuable warrior and held the fighting line for the patrol but I also could not refuse his noble offer. He asked the others to move away and with only a few of us to witness his deed he offered up his own life on the alter. As he died three bottles appeared containing his lifeblood and we were able to take these and his body back to the Inn.

On arriving again we found yet more of the bandits had sneaked in. By this time we were all

tired, wounded and much depleted of magic and power. I told the scum to leave and when they argued the Dai fa dyne offered to mediate. I told him to go ahead while keeping an eye on the bandits. Others began to prepare food.

When the trader came back he said that they were willing to let us stay in return for forty guests and six chicken. I explained to him that I was thinking more along the lines of I am tired, cold and wet and hungry and could be persuaded not to splatter their blood all over the walls if they offer us something! He went back to them to explain this and returned to say they were not prepared to make a deal so I threw them out of the building and told them to walk a long distance away. With much sullen comments they left.

Finally with the patrol fed and resting I was able to prepare a meal for myself which was when the shadowfall arrived again. Having managed to eat most of my food I then spoke with them at length on what we had seen of the dymwan activities in the area. They also were most critical that we had let outlaws live. I said that it was done by my order and that we were sorely wounded from our days battles but that we have slain more than twenty of these bandits in the last few days.

Scar slipping further into the illness caused by being in the mists spent some time loudly proclaiming that he had no tower, that he wore no colours and that he was outlaw to one of the shadowfalls. I was able to persuade her that he was a dribbling idiot and avoid further problems.

I was also forced several times to order the half orcs to treat sergeant Orlando's body with respect.

Then while talking to the shadowfall something arrived. I was told it was an alchemist from the steelwind named custardbelly and it was female. It was ugly in appearance and lacked any respect for my patrol or my own person.

It was able to resurrect Sergeant Orlando with a potion but did so with little respect for him. I will not repeat the numerous statements it made, simply they were without respect and the sort of behaviour that I would not expect from any save the lowest and most filthy wretch. Several times it laid hands on me and I asked it to stand away with my teeth gritted.

With sergeant Orlando back among the living it then began to make the potion. I am no

alchemist but most of what it asked us to do in aiding the potion creature seemed designed to be humiliating and would have had no effect on the potion. Several of the group seemed to take great delight in aiding in this and at one point I was forced to be most firm with Siscor when he tried to get cheese to be added to the brew.

Finally the brew was done and each drank of it.

With the thing gone the little goblin guide returned and said we needed to go to a meeting that very night to obtain evidence.

Our scouts were sent out and returned after some time having found several guards and a white circle on the ground inside a copse of trees' The guards had been speaking of protecting a teleport portal and millet said that was what we sought.

Upon approaching the guards challenged us and one said he was an aspirant knight of the Doth Lodass. He ordered us to leave. I said we could not and he should yield. As neither of us were prepared to back down a fight ensued. The aspirant knight fought with skill and his blows were mighty indeed, his companion used invocations of fear to drive several of us away from the fight and it was only the quick response of our healers that saved Inakara from death.

With our wounds restored we assembled round the portal and as one stepped into the circle and in the blink of an eye found ourselves in a low cave. We were forced to crouch and could see little of the surroundings. I ordered our scouts forward to check the area and they immediately came to a corner opening into a larger chamber. A line of undead was facing us and several of the Steelwind harrow stood with two of the Doth Lodass. They demanded we leave and when I refused the Doth Lodass people pushed through us, the leader struck sergeant Orlando a mighty blow and in addition to cutting through his armour and all but severing his arm he was struck to the floor and left weakened by illness.

The Harrow had been most respectful toward the Doth Lodass and the necromancer clearly said wait until he is safe before we attack. As we lacked the means to stop him the Doth Lodass reached the portal by which we entered, chanted something and vanished. As a note one of the patrol heard him refer to himself as a sorcerer of the Doth Lodass. If that is the strength of arms of their mages I would not wish to stand against one of their battle knights until my skills are

much improved.

Now battle commenced and we held a line across the cave protecting our casters. A ghoul in their number tried to attack several times but each time was met by and fled from our scout Shawn Gillings. The common undead fought against our line and we held our own apart from some casting from the necromancer. The leader of the harrow was a skilled warrior and several times pushed against our line but we held.

Then the necromancer struck me with a terrible invocation, in a heartbeat I was struck such a blow that my life held by a thread. The warriors either side guarded me while Cupris literally hauled me backwards and plied me with healing. Somewhat restored I had but stepped into the line when the harrow leader made a strange gesture with his hands and I felt as if a blade had cut my throat. Again I fell back and again I was healed.

The fighting was concentrated at the far end of the line from where I fought and scar and I were able several times to flank the undead and slay several of them. The necromancer fled through a tunnel at the far side of the cave and we were unable to pursue. Finally with the undead line broken scar and I engaged the harrow leader and after a hard battle slew him.

Now we came to take stock with a number down, dead or dying or drained of strength or power. Such healing as we had left was spread around and aside from our dead or severally wounded we were able to search the chamber. Here we found nothing and I was considerably displeased when our goblin guide choose that time to say he master would be unhappy as we were supposed to listen to the meeting not attack it. Had that been said earlier our scouts could easily have done so and with their skill I have no doubt they would have been unheard. The entire patrol however was not quiet and to be told after the battle that we were not to fight is one of the most stupid things I have heard uttered. It is no wonder these goblins look to others for protection if they have so little sense.

On the body of the leader was a fine blade, bound with magic. Virosch said it was as powerful as one of his blade spells. He gave it to scar to use. Unfortunately it was an honour blade and would not permit itself to be used with a shield. When scar picked up his shield the sword struck and destroyed the arm that held the blade.

With our wounded and crippled behind us we followed the tunnel and came out not far from the Inn.

Returning to the inn we were able to bargain with the dai fa dyne who was still there and he obtained a potion of resurrection. With our whole group alive if not hale or whole I again took guard allowing the others to eat and rest in the warmth.

We were visited by a several drow of house Agrathan who wished to speak to the group leader. I went inside with them and Virosh joined us. The more senior of them did the talking, he was Anduran Deathstrike, 16th assassin of the house and he carried a message on behalf of his master Coven Nightshade who is 9th high priest. They wished a message carried to Blackrod of wolfhold regarding two matters. The first being the involvement of one in wolfhold colours during the meeting between ambassadors from wolfhold and their house as told in my scroll entitled travelling with gypsies. The second being the death of the 13th warrior of their house at the time of a meeting with the alliance a year ago. The name of one of the alliance who was involved had been given to them and they wanted to put questions to him, he being one Alabron of the earth school. House Agrathan felt that in both of these matters the alliance was not acting quickly enough and wished for results. Deathstrike charged Virosh with delivering this message at once and he said he would.

The drow then left. Given the dangerous nature of the area it would have been certain death for Virosh to travel alone and so I decided to cut short our patrol and head back to the cities in the morning to carry this message to Wolfhold and Blackrod.

Aside from some minor annoyances we retired for the night.

The following morning was overcast and rain fell heavily. We made preparations to leave but before we were able to do so a dymwan scout was seen in the area, I sent our scouts to check and they reported a large for of undead heading our way.

We quickly gather our valuables and moved out to meet them. As we had no reason to protect the run down inn we left it and tried to break through the dymwan lines before reinforcements surrounded us.

The battle was hard fought as from the start I ordered the shield wall formed against them only to have most of them and myself rendered powerless by a wraith. The remaining members of the patrol fought hard and slew several of the dymwan and the undead. The leader then fled at speed.

Having recovered and with the body of Nero we set off quickly into the rain to escape the undead.

Aside from a few skirmishes during our return we made it back to the cities and to shelter.

I must note here how pleased I was with the performance of the patrol in battle when organised. There were times over the week when I was able to get them organised properly and obeying my orders. When sergeant Orlando formed a fighting line and held firm I was able to direct the actions of the patrol and in several of the battles we fought we suffered far less harm than when the group acted without discipline. It has always been clear to me how much more effective these alliance warriors could be with organisation and discipline. Perhaps with my continued efforts they may come to realise it themselves.

I have also sent a message to the steelwind mistwalker Toranaga, He provided us with an antidote but we were unable to furnish him with his proof. I feel the debt still exists and I shall attempt to honour it. I have also explained this to the city authorities such that if other come across such proof it can be sent to him. He is an honourable being and we must behave with honour in return or he may well join the ranks of enemies the alliance has here.

Monk's men are or were up to something in the area, there were in the employ of dymwan and whatever monk was up to in his cave was important enough for these bandits to remain in the area despite the return of the mists. This perhaps should also be investigated.