

*(Celebration Theme, March 2003.)*

This is a document detailing some of the happenings over the turbulent days that marked the end of the Hold of Azard upon Orin Rakatha. I apologise in advance for not mentioning everyone by name however I am going to try to summarise the events as opposed to document individual heroic action.

### **Belam De Traverny**

A large gathering of Alliance members was called to investigate the activities of Belam De Traverny, Ex-Scribe to the Fellowship. A mixed alliance group had taken him into custody some months ago during a separate mission. De Traverny had been involved in running a covert group of Seekers that assassinated various alliance members (principally from Wolfhold) as he was aggrieved that they had, in his opinion, escaped justice. He admitted his culpability and indeed seemed to exhibit no remorse for his actions, he accepted sole responsibility for the deaths claiming that the Seekers working for him should not be held accountable.

The Seeker operatives are still at large and there may only be one method of recalling them. I shall not reveal that method for fear of placing another alliance member in danger. Once the matter is resolved I am sure that all information shall be revealed. De Traverny has been operating the group since the time of the Dymwan war and it is clear that they hold personal loyalty to one another. They could still be a proven and effective force the Alliance if the matter of the assassinations can be successfully and completely investigated.

De Traverny regrettably died during the investigation session when he drank from a poisoned cup. It is the suspicion of Verrick, Priest of the White Path, that Belam new of the poison and in reality committed suicide, his death his final act of punishment for breaking Valley law. When asked he did state that he deserved death for some of the acts he performed.

### **Drow Justice**

The Black Rod, a capable drow warrior in the service of Lord Dalvain Spellsword and functionary of Drow Politics that I am afraid I am not well versed in. Then arrived at the meeting requesting to speak with "Nightveil" the "8th Sorcerer of House Turmdurgal". It transpires that Verrick of the White Path had taken a Drow name and title to advance a subterfuge some moons ago. Apparently the real 8th Sorcerer took offence to his title being usurped and demanded retribution. A duel was arranged with an unarmed healer of the White path proving (unsurprisingly) no match for the Sorcerer.

With the sanctioned duel complete (orders were received from King Micheal Rol Dantig and Lord Dalvain Spellsword permitting the duel) several other Valley Alliance members came under attack from both the 8th Sorcerer and The Black Rod. These attacks resulted in a number of broken bones and grievous injuries. I would like this matter investigated as I believe that the remit surrounding the duel did not give carte blanche authority to launch such attacks, I trust the relevant authorities have been informed by those injured in the proceedings.

We were then introduced to the 2nd Sorcerer of House Valdurim, one called Peacemaker. He offered a truce between the House and those remaining members of Spirior with whom there have been a number of incidents spanning the past several years. Matters were resolved peacefully and Peacemaker was then informed of certain activities by House Alzor that may warrant further investigation and action.

## A call to Arms

With drow business concluded a Sorcerer then approached us from the Hold of Azard. He was in need of as much help as we could provide as apparently a large number of Hordlings were gathering around the Hold and many hundreds of the Azard-dan had fled their tower. Orders were apparently given that we should offer what aid we could so the entire gathering of us (some 40 or 50 people) set out to a teleport point to travel to the Hold of Azard.

Upon performing the transport we found ourselves very close to the gates of the Hold themselves. Between the gates and us however were a number of hordlings, some quite potent. However skill and numbers were ours and the battle was won with a few injuries sustained, but nothing serious.

Approaching the gate we were challenged by the Gatekeeper who after words from the Azard Sorcerer allowed us passage, after reminding us that we were entering a tower and as such no harm could come to us, nor would magic and power function.

We were guided to sumptuous guest quarters where much food and drink was prepared, as

many made themselves comfortable others began to mingle to speak with the various people in the tower. It turned out that a number of Shadowsfall have arrived at the Hall to investigate "Status Anomalies" and they had been in discussion with Azard and his council for some time. Also present was a Kalid Ambassador.

## A Bold Announcement!

Azard returned to the main hall with a flourish, however it was also with some shocking news. The Hall of Azard was to be closed due to Azards "holding status that did not belong to him". With this proclamation Judge Helm Brighthand, once a Knight of the Shadowsmeet, read from a large scroll, which apparently prevented status being held at the Hold of Azard. He made some other pronouncements, many simply reaffirming the Shadowsfalls power upon Orin Rakatha. However one threat rang disturbingly throughout the hall,

If the Alliance fails to perform the ritual of Ashes successfully this year, then Wolfhold will be destroyed in the same manner as the Hold of Azard.

With his posturing complete the Judge and his two adjudicators left.

It also turns out that one of Azards sons, Hal, had joined the Kalid with a large number of Azards men, having been given the status of Legion Commander. The Kalid offered homes to any other of the Azard who wished to join.

At this point in the evening I was stuck by a vicious headache and I was unfortunately not present for a vision of several of our guild-leaders who arrived to dispense orders and advice.

For the morning we were I believe tasked to try and find homes for the remaining Azard-dan without having to resort to the Kalid gaining more troops, and each of the towers requested that one person of status be found and brought into the alliance. There was also the matter of a Melnibonean Sorcerer who had a magical portal inside the tower. We were to investigate this also.

The night wore on and most went to bed eventually.

## The Next day

From this point on I shall cover a number of points under separate headings. It should be noted that until the actions of the late evening this shall not be in Chronological order as the day was mixed up with many things happening in and around each other. During the course of the day the protection of the tower fluctuated a number of times sometimes allowing casting, sometimes not.

We were awoken by a number of Hordlings banging on the doors and windows, most impressed with themselves that they had gotten so far into the Tower boundaries. After some difficulty due to not being able to cast inside the building itself we sallied forth and destroyed them with trifling ease.

### **A mission for those of little status**

A seer arrived from Wolfhold to take those of little or no status on a short mission that required attention. I shall leave it to someone of that group to relate the information they found; indeed I believe Mirrabillini a Wolfhold scout has already posted a fairly detailed report.

### **A fight and a puzzling path**

Those remaining at the Hold gathered to consider the actions that were required of us and determined that we would attempt to break the wards surrounding the Melnibonean Sorcerers sanctuary. We began our preparations casting spells, invoking and such.

However as we did a Reader merchant whom a number of our companions were guarding raised a cry that our men were under attack. We rushed across a broad expanse of open ground and into a copse of trees close by to see Bloodbark and Caradac unconscious in bushes with one of the Azard-dan. Three Kalid and another Azard-dan approached us from the tree line claiming that those injured were their men. The Azard-dan scout with them had clearly sworn to join them and as battle was joined he fought at the Kalid side. The Kalid claimed to be of the 4th True Blood Legion. Our small group (many had stayed behind to protect those casting) pushed back the Kalid, enduring numerous evil invocations and many trips and entangles by a most proficient green Wizard however eventually I was able to reach our fallen comrades and diagnose that they were all alive, Bloodbark having been elixired, Caradac with a

broken back and the Azard-dan with a broken skull. With the final Kalid slain we returned to the Hold of Azard to find that our wounded companions had been recovered and ministered to. It turned out that the traitorous Azard-dan who fought with the Kalid had possibly arranged a deal with the 4th Legion to take in some of the soon to be Towerless Azard-dan, he had lured some of our group off to "help with the negotiation".

So we gathered again to enter the portal. Sky led the way followed by the eager Ruck, Quicksilver and Roban. As Roban passed the threshold the door slammed shut trapping us outside, no sound seemed to emanate from within.

After some time the four returned and explained that there was a creature of Chaos, a Puzzle Imp, inside that had numerous games and riddles that needed to be solved in order to take down some extremely powerful wards that prevented passage to a swirling vortex-like portal that presumably lead to the inner sanctum. In small groups throughout the day most of our group took part in this "test" some meeting conflict when tasks were failed other groups doing very well and solving all puzzles put before them. I would like to make a special mention of Wizardess Zephyr of the blue school who struggled with a puzzle all alone and under great pressure (the others with her had their lives threatened if she failed), but kept a level head to come through the task perfectly.

Many hours later the final wards were brought down, however the portal itself could only be entered during the hours of daylight so we left it be for the night vowing to return to it two hours past dawn.

## A sorrowful Woman and a Rowdy Hordling

While standing guard on the extremes of the tower fields Cad spotted a woman walking towards the guest quarters. She was timid, fleeing from those bearing obvious arms and trying to stay as hidden as possible. Crion came to fetch me, thinking I assume that I am less threatening than most. I laid my sword aside and went to speak with her to find out what she wanted.

I had already been informed that her name was Anya, which was a name familiar to me as she has been identified as one of the 3 ties that bind a certain spirit to Orin Rakatha, and unlife.

The Spirit in question is an unranked Spirit of Despair that went by the name of Drakken during his life. It transpires that Drakken loved Anya and sought her love in returned. However Anya's heart was sworn to another, a Necromancer by the name of Malvinous. Another man by the name of Otion Wraithschild entered the scene here, working with Malvinous in order to create a Shadow-Wraith during the heights of the Dymwan war. I am not entirely sure of the

timelines around this point but Anya was informed that Malvinious had fallen and that he had been raised as a Fetch by the Valley Alliance. This cut Anya to the depths of her heart and she left the Dymwan tower to seek solace in her pain and somewhere else to dwell. She has wandered for the past four and a half years swearing her status to Azard-dan in order to hide in his tower fairly recently I believe. Meanwhile Drakken agreed to a pact with Otion Wraithschild whereby he was slain and raised as the Spirit of Despair in order to increase Dymwan forces during the war. As a result of an investigation on All Hallows Eve by Silverheart the ties previous mentioned were identified as being his love for Anya, his commanding officer (Otion) and something else. Only by removing these ties can Galithial Nomass (Assistant Guildleader of the Humacti Sect) put Drakken to rest.

I spoke with Anya concerning her future plans and offered her a safe place to rest while we attempted to resolve the issue of Drakken and Malvinious. She hates Drakken but would wish to see Malvinious restored to life again, if such a thing is possible. However she is somewhat fearful of the reaction of certain elements in the White Retreat owing to her past affiliations. I arranged to have her contact me again in the future and I will keep Galithial Nomass informed of any further developments. She is clearly key to this issue but just how the key is used is not.

Some hours later, from a similar direction to Anya came another Hordling of great power. He stormed his way around casting magic freely and attacking alliance members. While in the tower boundaries we were unable to affect him however he could affect us. Eventually a contingent of our people managed to “persuade” him out of the tower where he was beaten down and slain.

## **Dodgy trades and unsheathed blades**

A number of Reader were out and about for much of the day “measuring up”. Apparently they had purchased some of the outer buildings of the Hold in order to turn them into a waystation. We took some money from them in exchange for guards on the gate and nearby during their survey.

Quicksilver, Roban and I also engaged them in a trade of another sort (although Roban was not empowered by Wolfhold and therefore could not formally accept the deal that was struck, he acted in an advisory capacity only). We had been requested to ensure that Azard and his captains and other leaders not join the Kalid, which meant finding other accommodation for them. In the end after other possibilities were rejected we had to strike a deal for him to be accepted back into the Reader tower for the time being. We accomplished this by offered the Reader leases on three alliance waystations, one within a day of the Alliance Tower, for a period of 5 years. While the alliance retains free use of them and a veto on use of the closest to

prevent certain towers using it dependant on political situations, the loss of trading revenue has had an impact on the number of elixirs that are provided to adventuring parties. Azard however accepted our deal and has joined the Reader happy that we have supported him the way he supported us (the Valley) on our arrival on Orin Rakatha.

A further figure was seen wandering about the confines of the Hold for some time. Garbed in a tattered yellow robe and carrying a staff with a skull atop it (a wolf skull?), he was apparently the Serbitor of the Cult of Ravannon. Apparently he was a figure of much awe and fear, earning such in particular of longer serving alliance members such as Melkeron. When approached by Quicksilver and I he claimed to have a prior appointment at which point a cry was heard from the gate of "Incoming".

The group approaching was a Knight of the Dark Lady and his retinue of Kalid with a large and dangerous Wolf in toe. The Serbitor joined them preparing to leave and offered a melodramatic "if you follow me you will die". His departure was slowed however by a martial challenge issued by the Knight which was taken up by Wolf, Kal and Quicksilver. During the course of the duel the Wolf was unleashed and savaged several of our number before being blocked by Bloodbark and eventually recalled.

Unfortunately as the Serbitor left a member of the low-status group Run-with-Wolf as seen sprinting around the field toward us, almost causing a fight to begin. As it turns out he was acting very sensibly as the remainder of that group were lying battered in a copse the other side of the field, and he was trying to lead the Knight away.

While the rest of our people postured and generally tried to draw attention I did what I could for the trainees. They had been part of a vision quest and five were dead. However due to the nature of the deaths their spirits could be recovered with swift enough action. I used a scroll to recover one, while Quicksilver and Melkeron recovered two others in time. The other two unfortunately passed to far and their spirits were depleted.

## **Together again with Shadows and Food.**

Apparently while I was with the group in the Puzzle Imps realm a mighty force of Shadow Apprentices attacked, severely wounding many present and draining further essence from several alliance members. However they were fought off in the end and fine warm food was prepared for us, which we took gratefully as who knew what this night would hold.

It was during dinner that Sorcerer Daedalus and Seeress Virana arrived to perform the ceremony they required in order to further research the Shadow-disks and their effects. Those

who carried disks, or who have had essence drained from their bodies were required to take part with the remainder guarding, staring fearfully into the shadows expecting further attacks.

Fortunately that attack never came however and the ritual was completed successfully. I shall wait for Sorcerer Daedalus and Seeress Virana to report the results of their work rather than mention anything now that may or may not be entirely accurate.

## Azard and the Kalid

During the ritual Shamus (Head of the Green School of magic) arrived with the Blue Sorcerer of the Azard-dan we had met earlier. Apparently Azard had been ambushed by the Kalid and was in need of a rescue mission. The Blue Sorcerer opened a portal to the area where Azard was and we all entered. Those of lesser status agreed to stay and protect the vulnerable casting materials while those of more experience and Crion struck forth on Shamus' directions to rescue Azard.

What we discovered was a very spiky box gully with a horde of Kalid warriors inside all waiting for Azard to come back from a Vanish or something similar. We engaged them in combat (something heavily hampered by the Ghasts they had with them) and defeated them at a cost of many elixirs and close calls. Azard returned and with an errant blow on Sky realised the situation and joined us on our march back to the portal.

Meanwhile the other group had staved off another heavy attack by the Kalid but had succeeded against difficult odds in keeping our way home open. We all entered and returned to the Hold where Azard swore there "must still be some beer left". We drank and made merry for the final night for the Hold of Azard-Dan.

## The Melnibonean, teaching scrolls and surprising offer

With the sun coming up a cleaner and several strange elementals, that we speculated were part of the chaos surrounding the destruction of a tower, swept us from the building. With seemingly nothing else to do we decided to enter the final portal and try to find this Melnibonean who apparently was in possession of a number of Grey teaching scrolls that the Alliance wanted.

On entering the portal we were greeted by an empty room but the Lord of the place made his ostentatious entrance with a single lackey. After some discussion he agreed to give us the scrolls with sought and provided a key that would guide the wearer (Kevralyn Soulfire) to them.

Kevralyn also managed to surprise most of those present by offering a position of authority within Wolfhold to this Melnibonean, it was accepted and suddenly any consideration of hostility had to be quelled. This individual does come with baggage however many of his race see him as a traitor for breaking some codes of society apparently, it is worth bearing this in mind if you meet any Melniboneans in the future.

## Hordlings Galore

With the broach guiding us we sought out the teaching scrolls. It led us deep within the tower where the Laws were in something of a flux. Armour and Constitution became irrelevant as a single blow would render the limb useless or render the victim unconscious if it happened to the head or body. We discovered that we could bind these injuries and allow use again but a second strike was irreparable and manifested serious injuries once we left the tower.

Our way was blocked by seemingly endless waves of hordlings who harried us all the way to back from a hidden grove where the scrolls were located. In such a battle (especially when the rocks began to be hurled) casualties were inevitable however and by the time we began our journey back we had almost as many unconscious and crippled as could walk, it made for a trying time. In time we fought through and while those few of us who could still fight held a defensive line while our diligent Hospitallers Runt and Cuddles dealt with getting people out of the tower and ensuring they were healed by Melkeron and Quicksilver just outside.

## In summary

The Hold of Azard is no more. The Shadowsfall have more power then perhaps most realised. Azard has returned to the Reader.

If anyone requires more details on this mission please contact myself and I will try to put you in touch with someone who may have more details if I cannot help myself.

*May the Spheres Guide and Protect You,*

Shard Farsight.

High Priest of the Grey Warden Sect.