With our previous job mostly completed we headed through the Halfway House to Tharanduil (where they wouldn't let us out 'cause apparently it's really dangerous) to Orin Rakatha where we walked to Wolfhold. Once we got there we were told that we weren't quite finished and that we should head back to the Halfway house to hand the box of cups (Librarians Note: see report "A Spark of Chaos" by the same author for details on the previous mission) to a Kingsman who would be identified to us by our guide Martin from Wolfhold.

Those present were;

Jon Barleycorn – Party Leader

Gomeric Greyspire

Ivak Duhm Greyspire

Nobby Greyspire

Anabeer Greyspire

Kelvin

Kylar

Touretts

Arrannil

Lucifer

And Meself, Drokal Greyspire

We started out some distance from the Halfway house and quickly encountered some Hordlings which are apparently a bit like the Tribal creatures of Murandir only they don't like being called goblins. Anyway they were dealt with in short order but had no loot which was disappointing, makes you wonder why anyone bothers killing them to be honest. Only thing of note here is that everytime (pretty much) we met any of these fellas they seemed most interested in getting hold of our armour and weapons to go beating on towered folk, being new to these lands I'm not sure if this is just normal behaviour.

Pushing on we met "Tiny" who turned out to be a troll mate of the previous group. Him and a companion were trying to get to the body of a dead Dymwan that was being guarded by two skeletons. We dealt with all four and rifled the corpse for an amulet and a potion and quickly moved out.

We were fairly shortly headed off by a Dymwan patrol who wanted the potion we'd just acquired. When trade negotiations broke down (they didn't offer us anything) it all went a bit

wrong. Gomeric got himself beaten to the floor and with the group running around like headless chickens from an apparently really scary priest the decisions was made to hand the potion over in exchange for a chance to resuce Gomeric and Nobby (who had also been kicked in the head). They Dymwan said they were doing some research in the area and that the potion was part of an experiment they were undertaking.

We had barely finished deciding whether or not to bother saving Nobby when two strange drones from the Labyrinthe of Xenos wandered down and started giving us gyp. It didn't take us long to work out what was what and turned them into bits as well. Turns out that there were lots of these things in the area hunting for artefacts of some sort so we suspect they might have detected the Cards of Chaos that Kylar was carrying around.

From here we pushed up some steps onto the top of a rise where we were met by a hefty zombie, a skeleton and after some quality lurking what turned out to be a ghoul. After some regulation headless chickening and some scout-rescuing we eventually got our act together and after making sure Arrannil didn't cark it decided to go and poke a Dymwan ritual at the bottom of the hill.

The Dyman were doing something in a circle chanting about bring the Bonedancer, power, might and some other rather unsavoury stuff when a large boney figure appeared to rise from the ground and set about us. This horrible creation coupled with a dymwan mage, some warriors and another priest gave us a right kicking all the way back up a fairly steep slope. Finally though with the correct application of power (on the end of a hammer) we scattered the Bonedancer in a wide circle and scraped the bits of Anabeer up (who'd neglected to bother with a skin at this point much to his regret) and pushed back to the Halfway house to lick our wounds and catch up with another group from the Alliance who were to be stationed in the same area for the next couple of days.

This group consisted of;

Lord Giles

Quicksilver

Kevralyn Soulfire

Draal Llolthspawn

Khandis Greykoil

Thralk

Leitha Faye

Jack

Anthrax

Sutnac

Slag

Kylars Sister

Obelisk

They were in the area to help sort out the transition of the drow of House Valdurim to move from Tharanduil (where they had holed up last month when the left Murandir) to Orin Rakatha and I am sure they will have someone put a report in so I won't try and summarise their vital activities.

We settled in for some dice and beer and awaited the morning when we would apparently be given some additional orders.

The next morning a huge group of Xenos constructs along with several massive Cow things, called Minotaurs apparently, thundered down from the hills and proceeded to smash various members of the other group around the courtyard of the halfway house. Jon wisely organised our group to take a position on the high ground and observe as frankly getting too close was a death sentence, Ivak of course had a pop at one of them and scurried away with his dignity intact after his shield took a couple of exceptionally hard blows.

After the bits had been piled up neatly out of the way a druid by the name of Tobias offered Jon the chance to be initiated into the druids sect under someone called Arbor. All he had to do was take a small group out with him to go pick some flowers in a grove in the north of Orin Rakathan near the lands of the Pordaradrim.

So we set out for a nearby grove where Barleycorn would call on nature and this Arbor fella to shift us across the lands quick smart. On the way we were bothered by more hordlings again with no loot.

Arriving at the grove Jon did his thing and the trees blurred until we were surrounded by a misty, murky and downright putrid forest. The greenish fog seemed to burn into our throats and we all began to feel grotty and ill. Touretts sorted out the initial injuries and soothed our fevered brows and we moved off in search of the plants we need. A fireflower, sunflower and mist grass.

The forest itself was a mess. Rotted logs littered the place and fungus seemed to be sprouting from most of them. Apparently this is not normal.

It wasn't log before we came across three figures in white who were moaning and crying. A swift check indicated that they were Mourning Spirits and we set about cheering them up with a good beating.

Pushing past these we followed a path which was beset on both sides by large hopping mushrooms! We decided to ignore them for the time being as Jon had engaged a pair of Kalid on a bridge in conversation about a flower that was lying on the floor in front of them. Apparently this flower kept the mushrooms away so we (incorrectly as it turned out) believed it to be a Sunflower.

We turned our attention back to the mushrooms with Nobby deciding to use them as target practice (after Ivak had successfully identified that hitting the caused spores to fly out in all directions poisoning those nearby and they didn't seem to run out of them!) when all of a sudden a fight had also broken out with the Kalid behind us. It turned into a messy affair with lots of running around trying to avoid mushrooms while the Kalid rained magic and invocations down on our heads. Eventually we jobbed the both of them and decided to press on sharpish figuring that the mushrooms would take forever to catch up if they even had the mind to.

The path lead a winding route up and down a number of hills with the same rotting vegetation stretching as far as the eye could see (not that this was far with all the hills) until we came across a small group of Kalid doing some sort of ritual with a flower. On the assumption that this was something we wanted we proceeded to beat on them. The minions fell quite quickly as the anvils spirits ripped their power from them but the leader seemed to be filled full of magic as a result of meddling with the flower and he cause immense amount of problems until just as he seemed to succumb to a disease his body immolated itself and we were left with a pile of ash and a flower.

We started to pull ourselves together again (Ivak had fallen in the fight and needed a few beers to recover his strength) when a number of strange elemental creatures appeared and began to chase Arranil (who was carrying the flowers) around in circles. While bothersome we managed to see them off and when we turned around there was a wounded Pordaradrim Tender (both his name and title apparently) staggering towards us.

He explained to Jon that there were a number of groves where the special flowers that Arbor wanted grew but with the rot on the land bad things were happening in particular an infestation of lizardmen. He also explained that the flower we had was the Fireflower and the one we had found on the bridge earlier was a Ward Posey.

The nearest grove was that of the Sunflower so we set off up some very dubious wooden steps (no sense of construction some races) to a small grove that was now a swamp riddled with the Lizards. Jon lead the negotiations which seemed to go well while a number of others snuck around to try to recover the SunFlower. Kelvin managed to grab the flowers and run while a few of a lizards took a nap thanks to some coordination between Gomeric and Kylar. As we pulled back though the Tender reminded us that we promised to clear out the lizard problem so legging it with the loot wasn't really in the spirit of things.

By this point one of the lizards had sorted his mates out and we were faced with the whole band again at which point a fairly nasty scuffle broke out which left Gomeric dead on the floor and a caused a few heated arguments about certain peoples involvement in a scrap, this would be a common theme for the next couple of hours!

The Tender thanked us for our aid and in exchange for the death of Gomeric offered to try and recover the Mist Grass for us while a ritual he set up using one of the SunFlowers returned Gomeric to life and a number of us Meditated in the grove.

Apparently he returned during the meditation, handed over the mist grass and then dropped dead. Still not quite sure what happened but hopefully his sacrifice was rewarded in a better fashion than a name change to Fertiliser as he seemed alright.

With the required flowers gathered we set off for the grove we arrived in to shift home on the way we met some more Mourning Spirits which weren't troublesome (except maybe for Anabeer who was feeling really sick after trying to hug one!) in themselves but demonstrated that we needed a bit more of the "get stuck in" attitude some people as it was clear that most of the fighting was being carried on a small number of shoulders.

Chanting done we found ourselves in the slightly more wholesome woods near to the halfway house and pushed on back to find ourselves some lunch where we handed over the flowers to Tobias and therefore fully expect Jon to get accepted into the druids.

After a leisurely lunch Kevralyn started to get her group organised to take some big-wig cave-nancy back to Annanacy Morenannnanil which is apparently the place where the cave nancy's all ran off too when they left Murandir. Giles set off and started casting in the middle of the large open field next to the building and before we could settle in and really start drinking the area was swarming with Halmadonians.

Fortunately for our group they didn't seem interested in us so we took a comfy position and watched our superiors (in rank at least) show us how it was done. Slag was great. The hedgehog formation on a slippery slope not so much. When Giles was eventually done the group began to run through a portal that shimmered in the air and with a final rush of air we were left alone.

We settled in for a pint and had barely managed to get into some serious quaffing when Martin returned to inform us we had to perform a patrol in order to check the perimeter.

Just as he did this a squeaky green creature that looked like a goblin ran in pursued by a couple of burley hordling types. In confusion most of the group stood around doing nothing even when the Goblin was shouting about knowing where some of the valley people were. Ivak and I got stuck in and did our best but with a lack of cohesion the goblin got slotted, I was smashed into the ground by a berserking hordling and Ivak was also heavily battered. As a nice helaing brew was poured down my neck Ivak and I expressed our feelings concerning the previous fight in constructive and reasoned manner.

The patrol obviously began with a walk up a steep slope at the top of which were another group of hordlings that wanted to burn down the building and lock all towered people up in their towers. One of them was wearing the colours of the Valley tower. Talks eventually broke down into a random melee which resulted in them dead and us fine but still without loot. Martin went for a quick look around while we meditated at a nearby shrine.

Pushing down a steep slope we spied three grimlocks standing guard before a small building. They moved to block anyone going past them but Nobby managed to sneak the long way around until he was able to lie down at the back of the building to listen to what was going on. It didn't help much mind as after a bit of standing around our old mate Bracken (he's a pathfinder of the valley alliance, he finds paths and explores the area. He's also had his brain eaten by a mindflayer) came out and announced that the "Observer" his boss (Mr Wrigglyface) wanted to see us.

The story was that the they (well him really) was working for Vetzler to understand the Alliances place on Orin Rakatha and how we (the Alliance that is) fit into the grand scheme of things. To demonstrate that he meant the Observer was going to show us a vision and implied that he'd be in touch for more work at a later date.

We took our seats and after a few minutes a dark nebulous figure (that throwing axes passed right through) strode out of the mist and took a central position in the small hut.

It began to talk slowly in measured statements with long pauses between each.

It told us a story of the alliance pretty much. Stretching back to the days of Murandir through the wars with the Dark One and on to the retreat to Orin Rakatha and the betrayal of that created Wolfhold. It then mentioned the white tower from the old falling and the new white tower being made on the new land. Then there was the King that the Spheres had not ordained replaced by one which they had. Eventually he said that "those that were too disparate to have their story told are now united, the introduction is over and now the first page stands blank".

This kind of rang a bell with Kelvin as there might be something in some old reports about weird story-teller blokes who are linked in some way to the people of the Orin Rakatha and it seems that with the coming of the King the Alliance finally qualifies.

Not entirely sure of the wider ramifications of this mind.

The spirit also mentioned something about the Chaos Jester and said that a new hand had been dealt but that five cards were not in play. These cards included Death and the Tower but it was a bit noisy at the time because some Melneboneanss had just turned up.

They were following a sniffer hepath looking for some artefacts of interest and it had led them to Kylar. It was clearly something to do with the Chaos Cards that we had obtained at Mooray Farrunes lab some time ago. Kylar didn't actually have them on him so they offered to take first him, then his hand, then his blood none of which really appealed so a fight was gingerly started. At some point Jon decided that actually the melnobonean leader was a good mate of his and negotiations broke out. It was all concluded with Kylar chopping his hand off and the Melneboneans taking it with them to give it to their master who excelled at experimenting with flesh. I am sure nothing bad will come of that.

Martin returned then calling that the mists were rolling in and we all needed to get going quick.

Things went a bit fuzzy at this point and I can vaguely remember feeling peckish with a strong feeling that towered folk needed to be driven off back to the towers and their waystations burnt down.

We all came too back at the halfway house as we had all apparently become a little corrupted by these strange mists that. Klyar and Kelvin had been caught worse than the rest of us and Slag had been forced to beat it out of them they seemed to come around alright though.

So it turned out to be time for dinner and travel to Tharanduil. The Stew was excellent, the arrival on Tharanduil not so much. The other group set off fairly sharpish with warnings that we should stay close to the building for fear of black trolls, nazgul, morgul wraiths and all manner of other grobbly monsters that we weren't (apparently) prepared for.

The Melneboneans clearly didn't think it was that scary as a bunch of them decided to turn up and give us a kicking because we had apparently killed one of Bel'al's chosen ones a moon ago upon Murandir. Things were going quite well until we realised that Arranil, our only source of magic blades, had decided to go to bed and leave everyone to have there head's kicked in by a fookin' Hepath that we couldn't injure.

The fight went on for a while until the fortunate (for the rest of us) death of Lucifer gave us a chance to pin all the blame for the previous killing on him and let the Melneboneans pack up and leave with their honour satisfied. We weren't so happy with the outcome.

The 26th Priest of House Valdurim however though we needed more to do so she popped up to demand we escort her down the road past some patrols of Morgothian Kalid of the Shrouded Eye or some such. We set off and after a parade of misery and utter incompetence got her killed and came back to the building with our tails between our legs for beer and bedtime.

The next morning we were told to report to a ritual site and keep Mooray Farrune 4th, 3rd, soon to be 2nd Sorcerer of House Valdurim company until his Patriarch gave word that it was safe and permissible for him to go with us back to King Paulandiss at Kings Fort.

Farrune was a complete nutter, he's got a chip on his shoulder the size of an adult Duergar about not being allowed his own family, seemingly wants to lead the house down the path of Chaos Fiddling and was inordinately jolly about the deaths that resulted in his promotions. Oh and he didn't seem that keen on the Patriarch either. Part of the deal was that we gave him back his deck of Chaos Cards which we did but refused his kind offer of a game!

While waiting for him we were (shockingly) beset by some chaos creatures and morgothians (on separate occasions) but saw them off without much incident (aside from the usual mullering of Anabeer but we were used to this by now).

Eventually we went back to the Halfway House and prepared to head back to Murandir a little

richer (only a little mind the loot was very poor, less hordlings more traders to rob next time hopefully) a little wiser and with a few new things to consider.

Drokal Greyspire