

King Paullandiss had struck a deal with House Valdurim for the exchange of knowledge of how to properly deal with the Chaos Vortex and the use of some rare and expensive items. A group had already been despatched to arrange matters with the Patriarch of House Valdurim. In return for this knowledge and the items, King Paullandiss had granted the whole of House Valdurim safe passage through the Astral Bridge and the Kern Valley on Orin Rakatha. It was later clarified that this safe passage extended to wherever the members of House Valdurim "felt safe".

A lawful group were assigned to handle matters on the Orin Rakathan end of the Astral Bridge, next to the Halfway House. Those present were:

Wolfhold: Kevralyn Soulfire, Draal Lolthspawn, Lancorin Bloodcall, Khandis Greycoil, Thralk Stormbreed, Sutnac, Anthrax, Obelisk, Kiara

Valley Alliance Tower: Lord Giles, Slag

White Retreat: Leitha Fae

Wizards Concillium: Quicksilver

We were also tasked with assisting the Green School of Magic where possible, as their Sorcerers have been suffering some sort of poisoning.

FIRE DAY NIGHT

A Sorcerer of Green and Blue Magic arrived with news that a rare magical flower, a potential antidote to the Green Magic poison, grew upon Akari Island that might assist the Green School with their remedies, and so he teleported us to that plane.

Upon Akari Island we fought a series of people including warriors celebrating the new year, elementals (blue and black), many monks and some evil power casters in the gardens of "Zwang Zei". Upon hearing we were from the Kern Valley Alliance, one of the hostile forces declared that the Manchu Family had control of the Court of Chung Po, and any interference from the Valley Alliance on Shou Lun would be met with a strong response from the Imperial Army, a force of (apparently) more than a million men. We dispatched these and then obtained the requisite flower from what appeared to be a guardian nature spirit that conversed with Giles

for a while, although we were assaulted by more nature-like creatures. Upon returning to the teleport site, we were met with what appeared to be ghosts that struck fear into the hearts of some present. These ghosts were able to freeze people in their tracks and rend the flesh from their bodies. After we dealt with these, we teleported back to Orin Rakatha.

Prior to this mission, we had been left in some confusion about who was to be leading this mission. At this point we resolved matters, with myself taking the lead and Lord Giles acting as our much-needed Battle Commander.

Shortly afterwards we were visited by two members of Halmadons Heights, one of whom was named High Priest Clement, who held most unusual views for one of his Tower and was surprisingly bold all things considered. He resurrected two members of Wolfhold and declared that the Drow were one of the strongest forces for Law upon Orin Rakatha. Clement even seemed to welcome the idea of the return of non-Chaos-corrupted members of Valdurim to Annach Morannonil. He also sought to clarify the terms of the agreement as made by King Paullandiss and gain our word that we would uphold the deal as it had been made. I reassured him that we had no intention of acting otherwise and we allowed him to depart.

An unstatussed group comprising a large number of duergar, led by an aspirant druid named Jon Barleycorn, also arrived at the Halfway House. They had recently been dealing with House Valdurim in terms of collecting the items on behalf of King Paullandiss.

Another visitor to the Halfway House was my long-standing colleague Abadon Dreamweaver, 4th Sorcerer of House Drannath. He passed on the news that many unranked members of House Valdurim had already passed this way, before our arrival.

STEEL DAY

In the morning we were assailed by a large and powerful group from the Labyrinthe of Xenos that included a number of minatours. We surmised that they were drawn to the area by the powerful artefacts we were carrying: either the goblets intended for King Paullandiss or the Cards of Chaos. We decided to sweep the area to wipe out all forces who might pose a threat to our duty.

During this time we encountered:

- a couple more groups of Xenosians.
- some Melniboneans (swiftly dispatched by our evil Priests) who had heard some powerful items were to be making their way over the astral bridge.
- some Halmadonians who intended that no Valdurim drow would set foot upon Orin Rakatha as any of them 'might' be corrupted by chaos. Unfortunately these immutable views were in direct conflict with our orders from King Paullandiss and thus we were obliged to slay the Halmadonians on his behalf to uphold his agreement with the Drow. They considered High Priest Clement, whom we had met the previous night, a 'rebel'.
- some Drow from House Morcaeralin (10th), who seemed interested in gauging our intentions. I informed them that we sought to act most lawfully. They departed safely.

We awaited the arrival of some drow from House Valdurim, and finally one passed through over the astral bridge; their 9th High Priest, alone - clearly a test subject. We asked him to where he would need to be escorted to "feel safe", and the answer was none other than the Tower of Annach Morannonil itself. Giles began to cast a large teleportation spell, when a group of Halmadonians from the Order of Purity stormed into the area, declaring that the Valdurim High Priest was corrupted by or carried artefacts of chaos (I cannot remember which), and demanding his death. Quicksilver sought to reason with them while the rest of the group assembled. Unlike High Priest Clement - who believed he could detect the presence of chaos by examining us in a way similar to discerning spiritual influence - these Halmadonians claimed they could check for the presence of chaos in an individual, but only after they were dead. Despite Quicksilver and Leitha Fae's attempts at diplomacy, the Halmadonians were resolute in their offence and engaged us in combat as we made our way to Giles's teleport ritual. The combat was unresolved when we teleported away (our priority), but they were not present upon our later return. Sadly Wizard Khandis perished in the fight to defend the Valdurim High Priest.

We arrived in the Fallow Hills whereupon we met another, different group from House Morcaeralin. They claimed that our charge was carrying an "ancient family heirloom" that used to belong to their House, and that they had been sent to retrieve it. Additionally, they "recognised" the individual who was carrying it, that being the individual who had not introduced himself nor spoken in front of them, who had been living in relative isolation on Murandir for many years, who was wearing a hood that entirely obscured his face... I could carry on. They were correct in the fact that he was carrying a box matching their description, which he readily admitted to me, however he was not minded to hand it over to these individuals and thus we were compelled to slay them to ensure his continued safety.

Realising that we truly had no means to resurrect our fallen, the 9th High Priest produced a potion that restored Khandis to life. While Quicksilver meditated, Thralk found an abandoned ritual site with a potion bottle containing a severed finger. Following Kiara's careful examinations, we determined it was a potion of resurrection.

We encountered another gathering from the Dreaming Spire. There was a brief moment of shared hilarity when one of our group somehow mistook them for Halmadonians, then we proceeded to the more important business of dispatching them. They exhibited some powers of the Sphere of the Mind.

Finally, we reached the border guard, consisting of two members of House Morfeaglin (5th). At this point I queried the Valdurim High Priest to see whether he considered our duty fulfilled. He did, thereby discharging us of any further obligations towards protecting him. The Morfeaglin guards insisted that they check he was not carrying any contraband into the Tower. We were already departing when one of the guards located the box he had been carrying and opened it, unleashing a number of chaos creatures around us. We fought the chaos creatures and the guards slew the Valdurim High Priest for his attempt to bring an illegal item into the Tower.

We returned to the teleport site and Giles transported us back to the Halfway House where we were beset by more Xenos creatures. Arriving at the building with the mists closing in on us, we found that some of the low-status group had temporarily transformed into hordelings: they were released from this state. The Kingsmen activated the House so that we could travel to Thranduil. We heard from a Kingsman of unusual activity in the area. House Valdurim was gathering en-masse. There were Melniboneans also present - the first time I have heard of Melniboneans visiting Thranduil, most unusual, I do wonder where they had got their information from - a large group from the Shrouded Eye, and a further group from House Drannath. We were advised to assemble atop a hill, close to a shrine, to receive further instructions from Valdurim representatives.

We received first the 6th Sorcerer of House Valdurim, Fer'ezz Nightwing, an individual who had some history with one of our party - clearly a provocative invite. He was later joined by the 2nd Warrior of House Valdurim, a very confident individual who I am aware had been newly promoted to this position. We confirmed with them the earlier occurrences concerning the 9th High Priest, which had (as we suspected) been some form of test. They wished to speak with a representative of each of our Towers. While Giles and myself could represent the Valley Alliance and Wolfhold respectively, there were none present apparently capable of representing the White Retreat, an unfortunate fact that drew some scornful observations from their Warrior who declared that as only two from three Towers were represented, he would only pass on

two-thirds of the information. Following some sharp words from Giles, he amended this to "sufficient" information.

The ritual components had already been transferred to the Alliance group (the low status group had received the final chalice earlier in the day), and the last thing that remained was for the knowledge to be passed on. This came in the form of the "soon-to-be-2nd Sorcerer" whom I correctly surmised was Mowray Farrune, although his identity was not actually revealed until the next day, and who - the warrior advised us - was likely to flee should trouble arise. We would meet with the Valdurim Patriarch, Lord Bloodheart, the next day and we were to be "fully prepared". Once Lord Bloodheart was satisfied, he would convey a message to his "soon-to-be-2nd" Sorcerer, giving him leave to travel to King Paullandiss.

Once the warrior was satisfied that all members of the group understood these simple instructions, he departed, asking for us to wait a spell-duration first. We returned to the Halfway House and started speculating why their Patriarch wished us to be fully invoked when he met with us. My estimable acquaintance, Sorcerer Dreamweaver, who has some skill in foreseeing events, arrived shortly afterwards to clarify matters. He confirmed that there would not be any conflict between our group and the Valdurim retinue. He also offered us some resources of his, to safeguard the area on the morrow. After some discussion amongst the group, we agreed that these would be most effectively deployed against the Melniboneans, leaving us to potentially face the Knights of the Shroud and Shrouded Eye forces.

SUN DAY

We were disturbed by an eclectic mixture of creatures, possibly attributable to the forces of the Dreaming Spire in the area. My group travelled to the agreed location where we met with Lord Bloodheart, who was accompanied by a retainer and Sorcerer Dreamweaver. We were asked to defend the area while they prepared a ritual of casting that would allow their entire House to pass through in order to travel to Orin Rakatha. Only once they had prepared the way, and were ready to depart, would they pass on the signal to Mowray Farrune to conclude the bargain as made.

It is interesting to note that they had chosen a passage to Orin Rakatha that many, nay most, would consider far more dangerous than travel via the Astral Bridge and Kern Valley lands. Still, they seemed more than happy to pursue this option and assume its success. While the ritual was ongoing we were approached by an assortment of creatures including some members of the Shrouded Eye who had some lofty goals that they were entirely unable to fulfil.

Lord Bloodheart was finally ready to depart and gave the order for Mowray Farrune - who was at a remote location - to travel to King Paullandiss's abode. The Valdurim Patriarch then stepped through the portal and left with civilities intact.

We fought off a final wave of mixed creatures (elementals and perhaps chaos creatures) before the remainder of House Valdurim passed through - I counted over a hundred individuals.

Kevralyn Soulfire
Wolfhold Ambassador