

My Lords and Ladies, I bring to you another recount by Hak Leafbiter. It is all in his own words and from his own viewpoint. – Bill The Barman – Hobbits Arms PH.

### Party

Master Cirith (Party Leader) – Guilderleader of the Humacti.

Anatharian – 2 I/C of the Humacti.

Sir Verrick – Guildleader of the Micheline Sect.

Xernes – Guildleader of the Guild of Spiritualism.

Silverheart – Humacti.

Beren – Reavers.

Lei Feng – Reavers.

Michael – White Sorceror and Seer.

Ligner Larsson – Archives.

Ksndra – Magical Baroness of Darkholme.

Vilk Bloodmoon – Warrior Baron of Darkholme.

Caradac Fireapple – Skirmishers.

Hak Leafbiter – Reavers.

### Mission:

Go to the Oracle of Knowledge and get the Valleys Questions answered.

### Earth Day.

The party were told in the mission orders to head to the area of the Garden of All Elements Waystation. We were told that we'd all be accommodated as Nations, also that various Nations would be there too. It was going to be a Fun Mission, fights and treasure opportunities galore. When we assembled there, the usual pleasantries were exchanged. Master Cirith was the Party Leader, Many(4) Good Priests meant lots of healing. There were Lots(13) party members with a good mix of each type of Adventuror.

We had been assigned a building used by the Wizards Concillium. When we got there Caradac told us that the doors were all trapped with magic. We were also attacked by lots of weird elementals which had spiritual attacks. Weird.

Well we eventually dealt with the odd elementals, it was tough. Still no Magic Sword. After getting healed up we headed back to the building where we found an open door. The door had a Lightning Trap on it which zapped the front party members as they went in. We were stumped by the ward whilst those inside were attacked by a Guardian.

Well I was at the back of the party outside and getting very bored with nothing to do. So I just walked through the ward, got hit by the Lightning Trap, activated my new Curing Ring and got straight into the fight. There was a dead wizard (the best kind) on the floor surrounded by a load of books. He was protected by a Golem that would activate, then attack for a bit and then go to sleep for a bit before attacking again. So Beren, myself and later Vilk dealt with the Golem, whilst I think Ksndra and Michael dealt with the warded wizard.

So eventually the wards were broken and the Golem returned to its watchful rest next to the wizard. After getting healed up we got to our accommodation. Here we had a beer, rested and the talking began. So over a few beers I re-sharpened my bastard sword which had sustained quite a few ugly dings in its blade from fighting the Golem. Anatharian also cast an invocation on me which boosted my dexterity for the whole weekend. Gradually everyone went to sleep. I

dreamt of Battle.

Fire Day.

Upon waking we all had a wondrous cooked breakfast. Two poncey Wizards Concillium turned up and retrieved their dead comrade, then two more scum-bags turned up. They were Shadowsfall, they were asking if we would ask the Oracle a question on their behalf. Some of us were all for killing them and claiming Lord Giles' bounty, but Master Cirith stated that we should just leave them alone as he didn't want to unduly antagonise them. He shouldn't have bothered as we were later to find out. So we let them depart after they said that they'd return with an offer.

After the scum-bags left, the party headed out to see what was what. We eventually came to a big field composed of two hills. At the top of the opposite hill we could see a group of Dehori conducting some sort of ritual next to a fountain.

So we trudged down our hill and up their hill to have a nice chat with them. When we got close to them they attacked us. It was a very tough fight, we were well matched and their ritual had a strange effect on the Humacti when they tried to cure us. During the battle I looted one of their bodies and found Many(3) blue bits of paper and an old Pre-cataclysm Map of Orin Rakatha. I only had a quick glance at the papers, they had a picture of a hand on them that had eyes and a mouth on it, also a lot of squiggly writing. I stuffed the papers under my armour and carried on fighting.

The battle had changed to lots of Orcs / Hordelings and the Realm-Lord of Disease. It was strange. It was a very tough fight with lots of life-draining attacks. I had to use my Curing Ring again and also my Cure Mortal Potion Bottle, I got a load more Cure Mortals off of the Priests too. Well anyway we eventually managed to send the Realm-Lord of Disease back to wherever he had come from and the Orcs must have been Hordelings as they all vanished upon death, so there was nothing left to loot.

I gave my looted papers to Master Cirith to look at. They must have been important somehow, anyway all the squiggly writing made my brain hurt. We were unable to move the ritual items from where they were. This was a shame as I bet that Fountain would have fetched a fair few gests.

When we returned to the first hill we met a single Shadowsfall. He told us that we were to ask the Oracle Many(3) questions on their behalf. When we asked him what was in it for us he said nothing. So acting on Master Cirith's earlier instructions we told him to sod off and let him walk away alive. Stupid!

So we returned to our Waystation building for a slap up Lunch and a drink. During lunch Master Cirith burnt one of the Dehori pages, I don't know why.

So after lunch, Agents of the Oracle turned up and the challenges were started. We were told that when we'd completed a Challenge we could submit a certain number of our questions to the Oracle. Each Challenge would be different, physical, mental or skilful.

The Agents of the Oracle told us that we had to defend a Ritual Area from enemies, failure would cost us asking questions. Success would grant us Lots(4) questions.

So we went off to do our first challenge. The Ritual was in a hut and we had to stop the enemy from entering. The enemy was naturally loads of scum-bag Shadowsfall.

It was hard fight, I got bored and charged into their lines whilst everyone else was defending the hut. I really should listen to my Sentinel tutor more! So anyway after laying into everyone about me, I got laid low and my Guardian Spirit had to tend me. Some of the party dragged me back in

to the hut where I got a few Cure Mortals.

I said it was a hard fight, it was also a weird fight as party members just vanished and re-appeared talking about some story.

It wasn't exactly hordes of Shadowsfall, just waves of them. So during waves there was a lull. During the first lull some of us, I think it was Caradac, Ligner and myself we went off to kill a Fell Beast and bring back its eye.

So we went off and found this beast, it was a Cyclops with a big axe and he had two Orc henchmen. So after a good fight with these monsters we won. I yanked the Cyclops' eye out of its socket and we returned to the Ritual Hut.

Just after we got back to the hut and I dropped off the Eye I got magicked away somewhere odd.

In this odd room where I ended up were other members of the party. I can't remember who was there but there were Many(3) of them. Someone was telling us a story about lies and a murder whilst the rest of us were stuck in a tiny corner of the room that we couldn't move out of. There must have been magic involved as I was getting really angry. It was great when I was sent back to the party, even though it caused me pain.

So I was back at the Ritual Hut at the end of an assaulting wave of scum. One of them was an archer who had a quiver of power-draining arrows. Good job that I had a shield, although he did hit me in my left leg which knocked me back into the hut and put me to sleep. After getting some power from Ligner I awoke and found that we were in another lull.

During this lull I went out with two other members of the party to get the skull of a witch. So we went off to the trial area. When we got there we found Many(3) Goblins who told us that we had to defeat them at a game of Skull Ball. They would throw the Hag's Skull at us which we would have to catch and then throw it back to them and that if anyone dropped the skull they would be out of the game. We played this game with them and managed to beat them so they let us keep the skull. As we were walking away the Goblins set their wolves upon us which we had to kill. So a bit of fun with Skull Ball and then another bit of fun with wolf killing. We left the dead wolves alone, we didn't want to further antagonise the Goblins by skinning their wolves and it would probably have pissed of Vilk!

So then we returned back to the Ritual Hut and I was magicked off once more to the weird room. Here I could see Vilk and Anatharian off in the far corner of the room. Eventually all of the party turned up and we were allowed in to the room proper. It seemed that another mini-trial had occurred to get a Tongue. So again the story was read out and we had to work out who the Murderer was. We also had to sign some scroll which I put my H on it as my mark. There was also this strange box called the Eye of the Oracle which everyone had a look through. Well I say everyone, I had a tiny peek inside it but I tore myself away from it. It was clearly filthy magic as it started messing with my head and made me feel very weird. I could hear voices and I had a vision of getting chucked out of the Barbarians Lodge by Master Woolf! I don't know how Vilk managed to look inside that box and he was looking for a fair bit. So I left that box well alone and did my Tribal Dances to ward off evil spirits that I'd seen the Shaman doing when I was a kid. Ugh!

We didn't manage to work out who the Murderer was so we returned to our building. Here the Oracles Agent told us that we had achieved many(3) questions from our Challenge, but that we would have to forfeit one of the questions due to Master Cirith's actions.

That night Vilk had to play a Trial of Dexterity versus the Oracle's Champion. It was a board game, a walled box divided in two halves by another wall. This wall had a small hole in it. Each

player had a number of wooden discs that he had to flick into his opponents half through the whole in the wall by using a bow-string tied to his half of the board. The game would be won by whichever player got all of his discs through to the other side before the other. We had all been able to practise this game earlier and Vilks was the party member that showed the best prowess at it, so he was the Valley Champion.

So the game was played and the discs were blasting back and forth, and back and forth. Vilks was beaten by the Oracle's Champion. We later found out in conversation that the Oracle's Champion had been taught the game as a young boy and that he practised the game every day.

Later on that evening was weirder, odd but not permanently dangerous I hope. The Head Agent of the Oracle challenged us to a game of Chess. Michael answered the Challenge as the White Player and the game was on. Each time that a piece would challenge another piece one of the party would vanish outside. Looking outside the window we could see the pieces actually fighting each other. It was all filthy magic! As I was watching the game I was magicked outside on to the game board. I had been turned into a big White Castle armed with a sword and shield and I could cast two Power Hammers. I felt like a Big Golem. I was fighting the Black Queen who was armed with a large Halberd. I shot her twice with my Power Hammers and then got stuck in. I only managed to get another good hit in against her, as she was fighting hard with her halberd. Each time it hit a limb I couldn't use it no more. So I was defeated and upon being killed I was magicked back inside the building unharmed. So just to make sure I did another tribal dance. Michael won the game against the Head Agent of the Oracle so we won that Challenge.

There were no more challenges that night, so we set to drinking and deciding what questions we would put to the Oracle.

We did get a visit from the Dai-Fah-Dyne, their head was a stick thin weasel of a man who gave us the usual patter. Asked us about the Trials, bragged, boasted, the usual thing. I don't think he was a proper Bey like last mission but he was certainly a Chief of some sort.

We healed up, had a few beers and then went to bed.

I dreamt of treasure.

Steel Day.

We awoke refreshed and had another hearty cooked breakfast.

A short while later the Agents of the Oracle came to us, he asked us if we'd be continuing with the trials. We told him that we would be continuing and he said that our success at Chess had won us another question.

The Head Agent told us of the next Trial. It would be Many(3) challenges, so the party were divided into small groups.

The Trials were:

Endurance.

A small party fought against some monsters for Lots(5) minutes. Vilks was in this group and he fought against a Shambling Mound. Vilks's party endured and passed the test.

Subterfuge.

I was in this one with I think Sir Verrick and Caradac, but I'm not too sure. We were told that we would be attacked by a Slaver and his Slaves. Our task was to identify the Slaver and kill him and thus free the slaves. So all of them were attacking us, and they all looked alike. As the minutes counted down we did identify the Slaver, but we didn't manage to kill him. We failed this test.

Understanding.

This group had to identify what the creatures were that were attacking them before killing them. One of them was a big bird. This group successfully passed this trial.

The Agents of the Oracle told us that we had won another question.

The party were then told that the next Trial would be in two parts and so the party halved, with each part doing a piece of the Trial. I was in the part with Master Cirith and Vilik. We were told that if anyone was disabled in the test that they would vanish back to the building. We faced a load of Pentar, but we quickly lost a couple of our number and so Master Cirith ceded the battle to the Pentar. I don't know who the other group fought.

After this Trial we returned to the Building and had Lunch.

Whilst at lunch we had another Trial by an Oracle's Champion. This was weird. It was a two player game, one of us versus the Champion. There were two bags with tiles in and each of us drew up to Lots(10) tiles from either bag and put them on a rack. Each tile had a squiggle on it and the players had to make the longest squiggly pattern that they could, with the longest winning and they'd say a word. We didn't best the Oracle's Champion at this game. I didn't play this game as all of the tiles made my brain hurt, so I had a drink!

So after lunch we went out and did separated Trials. Our group consisted of Beren? Lei Feng? Michael, Caradac, Ksandra and myself, we went to do the Trial of Blind Faith.

We were taken to a grove surrounded on four sides by a thick high hedge with only one entrance. Inside was a grassy area with chalk lines drawn on the grass. There were two straight lines leading from the opening that led off to the left and right, and there was another line in the centre but this line was like a twisty snake. At each end of the left and right lines was a circle with a Monster inside it. We were told that everyone of us had to travel along these lines with our feet astride the lines and not to step on the lines. So Caradac chose the left trail. As soon as he entered the grove he stated that he couldn't see anything, so we had to carefully shout instructions to him and guide him towards his opponent. We got him down the line to circle where he defeated the monster by repelling it out of the circle. We then set about guiding Michael, we were aided at this point by Caradac who could now see. We then guided Michael to his circle and he destroyed his foe using his sorcery. So now we had two sets of eyes further inside the grove to guide us up the wriggly snake. Well we eventually got all of us either down the snake or on to an eye before dusk fell and we could see no more. On the way as we traversed the lines if we did touch the lines we would get hit by steadily increasing strengths of magic bolts. I think we passed this test, but I could be wrong.

I'm not sure on this next point. Next we fought against the Dehori, but I think the group had changed. It was a hard fight but eventually we won against the new undead freaks. So after a load of healing we headed back to the building for Dinner.

Just before dinner another Oracle's Champion turned up and challenged us to a Trial of Skill and Luck. It was our old friend Liar Dice and Gob's favourite Ten Two's.

(Readers may have noticed Hak's funny way of counting and I have added the true number in brackets next to his number after he's shown it with his fingers. Although Hak can't read he can count, although he gives the appearance of being thick by saying out loud his counts using his thumb and first three fingers. He counts them as "One, Two, Many and Lots." Readers don't be fooled by this as Hak has fully mastered numbers for dice and money.)

So fully taught this game by Jingly Bill, Gob and others, I fully wiped the floor with the Oracle's Champion, as did most of the other's of the party. We won this Trial easily.

Over dinner we again met the Dai-Fah-Dyne Leader. We traded one of our questions that we

had earned and swapped it with one of his factions questions that they'd not been able to have asked. Our reward for this action was to have the Dai-Fah-Dyne trade Food to The Valley at 'Cost Price' only with his faction making no profit on the deal for the duration of the war with The Pentar.

Our final Trial was very nearly our Final Battle indeed. The Trial was a three way battle, The Valley versus The Pentar versus The Dehori. We were also attacked by hostile spirits.

Anyway we got stuck into The Dehori or was it The Pentar? Both of our opponents had united against us and they were also aided by the scum-bag Shadowsfall. These thieves attacked us on the fringes of the battle lines like the common dogs that they are. I got suckered, I was spooked and frightened by a Dehori Ghost which caused me to run away, I then got entombed by one of the Shadowsfall and then throat slit!

So there I was off of the battle lines stuck up to my knee's in the ground with blood pouring out of my throat! Stupid Hak! I had to gargle roar for the party's attention to my plight, spurting out more blood each time I did so!

I was thankfully rescued from my plight by Ligner and Anatharian, They cured me and pulled me out of the grounds embrace. We then saw off the Shadowsfall, who slinked back in to the darkness.

So we headed back in to the proper melee. Here we were immensely helped by Silverheart who used his ability to Repel Undead numerous times to split up the Dehori into manageable chunks. So these smaller groups were dealt with better and we ended up winning the battle. We didn't manage to kill the Shadowsfall though, we even had to rescue Caradac from them after he'd chased them into the tree line.

So victorious we healed up and headed back to the building to meet with the Head Agent of the Oracle. He told us that The valley had achieved through the Trails a total of Lots(9) questions, but we lost one to the Dehori and we held by our traded question to the Dai-Fah-Dyne.

After we'd got the results of the Trials we set out celebrating. As we were getting it on, notable Valley Heroes appeared.