

*From many years ago...*

Most Valley members will know by now that with the arrival of the Taranor to the Valley Alliance, the Green School has gained the ability to teach Arcane Green magic. What they probably will not realise is how much time and effort has been put into making this possible. In order that they appreciate the work that has been undertaken, I am writing this account of the events that have enabled the Valley towers to teach Arcane level spells in all colours of magic.

Let this also stand as a tribute to all those who have aided me over the last year - it is largely due to their efforts that I was able to succeed. They have placed themselves in great danger, and in most cases their only reward has been to see the successful completion of my task. There are no words to describe the gratitude that I feel towards these people - if wealth is measured by friendship then I am rich beyond imagination.

This is by no means a comprehensive account of the search for Arcane Green teaching scrolls, merely my own efforts. Many others have pursued the scrolls with as much vigour and in the decisive meeting with the Taranor, it was the efforts of Alorn Verithis coupled with my own that persuaded the Taranor to come to the Valley tower.

The search for Arcane Green magic has taken some eighteen months, but I must begin my account some three years ago. This is how long it has been since the Valley Druid fell to the Empire, and this is the event that made my search necessary, for with him were lost the teaching scrolls of Arcane Green magic.

The loss of the Druid sent a wave of shock and grief through the Valley and the Green school in particular and was a great boost to the Empire's campaign. They understood little of Nature's magic and so sought to destroy what they could not subvert, as is their way. To this day I remember hearing the sad news. I was just beginning my career as a Green Mage and my dreams and ambitions seemed, along with many others in the Green school, to be shattered. I vowed then to fight the Empire to the best of my ability, and to extract the cost of the Valley Druid's loss from its servants.

Maravir Cequinth was chosen to take over the leadership of the Green school and try to lift it from the despair that had settled over it and its members. Events were moving swiftly towards the final conflict with the Empire, and so there was much to keep us occupied. The Heroes Alliance Guild were searching for a suitable place that the Valley could escape to, while Valley forces valiantly stood against the Empire's advance troops. There was no time to even consider seeking to replace the lost teaching scrolls during those long months.

Upon our arrival on Orin Rakatha, there was work of a different nature to undertake. We had a new world to explore and scout, new peoples to make contact with, new alliances to forge and new lives to build as we sought to establish ourselves as quickly as possible. Again the needs

of the Valley were of paramount importance, and it is only in the last year or so that I have been able to pursue the matter of Arcane Green magic, and devote all my efforts to obtaining it.

My tale begins in earnest well over a year ago. I began by considering the places where we knew that Arcane Green magic was available. The first of these was the Wizards Concillium, who I considered unlikely to help us. Until the Valley's arrival they had held the monopoly on magic in Orin Rakatha. It was obviously to their advantage that we could not teach all colours of magic to Arcane levels. I was not prepared to leave the Valley in order to learn more Green magic. The whole point of my search was to make Arcane Green magic available to the Valley again, not my own advancement.

The only other place that I knew for certain had what I sought was with the Valley's old allies, the Deep Wood Elves. I decided to begin with them, and to seek their aid and advice.

Travel back to the old Valley was dangerous but still possible. I knew that Elthan, now a Valley Hero but then a man driven by a desire to seek out the fate of his family at the hands of the Empire, had at his disposal the means to return to our old home. Several people apart from myself expressed a wish to visit the Deep Wood Elves, including Galnin, Fearon and Quicksilver, and Elthan agreed to take us with him.

Cequinth had been intending to travel with us, but shortly before our departure he had written to me to say that circumstances had meant he had left before us and would await our arrival in the Deep Woods.

We returned to the old Valley and set about establishing contact with the Deep Wood Elves. The Empire were very much in evidence, and it made my heart sad to see the lands I had grown up in under their domination. We were able to slay an Empire Commander while we were there, but it was a small consolation for losing a homeland.

Once we had secured passage to the Deep Woods, those of our number unable to enter them returned to Orin Rakatha with Elthan. The rest of us remained, to follow once our business was complete. The Elves were willing to teach some of us High Level Green magic, but indicated that I was the only one to whom they would even consider teaching Arcane spells. I was also to learn sad news from Cequinth. He had stepped down as leader of the Green school and thought it unlikely that he would return to Orin Rakatha for the foreseeable future.

I was to receive another blow. I had been in the Deep Woods only a few hours when my visit was cut short. The Elven seers had sensed a dark presence around me that has somehow entered the Deep Woods despite powerful wards. Unsure of its nature and the effects it could have upon their home and people, the Elves asked me to leave. They advised me to discover what this malign presence was, and bade me return to them once I rid myself of its attentions. They told me how I might contact them again, and then I was returned to Orin Rakatha ahead of my companions.

I arrived back disappointed but not disheartened. Always the optimist in those days, I did not consider the seriousness of my situation until much later. It would be simple to shake this

darkness from me, whatever it was, and then I could return to the Deep Woods! What an over-confident fool I was.

Shortly after my return, Alorn Verithis was named as Cequinth's successor as head of the Green school of magic. A difficult task - the school had just seemed to be establishing itself again, despite its difficulties, but now we seemed to be back to the chaos that had reigned after the Valley Druid's death. The only way to improve matters seemed to be obtaining Arcane magic for the school.

These events took place almost a year after we had arrived on Orin Rakatha, and at the same time, the first Time of Reckoning that we had experienced was called. Among those that lost their towers were a group who had been allied with the Dai-Fah-Dyne - the Taranor.

Evicted from their tower, the Taranor wandered Orin Rakatha in search of a safe haven. A large number of them passed close to the Valley tower, and patrols were sent out to report on their movements. They appeared to be setting up a permanent camp at the Aldonar tombs, and initial contact with them provoked a mixed response, from hostile to cautious parley.

I was part of a patrol that encountered the former, who attacked us. The Taranor are most certainly not an evil people, but there was no opportunity to speak with them before battle was joined. Among the Taranor fought a man whose significance was then unknown - both to us and I think to them. He was Guy de Valors, a Knight of the Dark Lady, and the very same man who was involved in the recent Ravenon Wolf cult and Serbitar plot against the Valley. I suspect that the Taranor had fallen prey to the very thing that was attempted against the Valley and we must be grateful that the actions of certain Guildleaders was discovered, or the Valley may well have found itself in a similar situation as the Taranor.

A few months later another large Taranor presence was reported and patrols were despatched to keep a careful watch on them, especially after the last encounter with them. These patrols returned with tales of Arcane Green magic being used against them by the Taranor, although at the time I did not suspect that this meant they held the means to teach it.

These Taranor were in the company of a group of Kalid, and we discovered that the wives and children of these men were being held 'safe' in one of the Kalid towers, thus ensuring their co-operation to Kalid suggestions. In this way, the Kalid were able to launch an attack on Valley forces with the minimum of risk to their own troops, effectively blackmailing the Taranor to do most of the killing and dying for them.

I spoke with one of the Taranor and discovered that they had been given vague hints and promises of a place within the Kalid towers, but these amounted to nothing. The man I spoke with, however, said that it was more than anybody else had offered them, and it was then that the beginnings of an idea formed in my mind, although I still did not think Arcane Green magic could come as a result of the Valley aiding the Taranor.

It was during the battle with these combined Taranor and Kalid forces that I saw Arcane Green magic for the first time, used against us by the Taranor. This confirmed the earlier reports and I

remember the awe I felt at seeing what my chosen school of magic could accomplish. For those that scorned Green magic there was a warning - its nature is as the ocean, sometimes calm but with the power to become a destructive, raging force.

Superior numbers and a wider range of skills, however, allowed us to prevail and we were able to capture a Green sorcerer, who was handed over to the Neutral camp.

It was at this time that I met two people, one who was to become a close friend and source of encouragement to me in my search for the Arcane Green scrolls, and one who was somewhat of an enigma, and still is.

The first was Felix, a Blue and Green wizard of the Good Camp. Without his support and encouragement I fear that O would have abandoned my search at a very early stage. It was a long conversation that I had with him and the ranger Fearon that caused me to begin my quest in earnest.

The second person was introduced to me by Felix, and this was Seamus, a leprechaun who appeared to be able to cast Green magic at will. I found him somewhat exasperating, but at the same time I felt that there was a lot more to this fellow than met the eye. He was (and still is!) evasive about himself but was interested in my efforts to bring Arcane Green magic to the Valley and advised me not to lose heart and to keep on with my search, for he knew that what I sought was available, but felt it was not his place to tell me too much.

Meanwhile the dark presence noted by the Deep Wood Elves was beginning to manifest itself in the form of a dark, cloaked figure which placed a severed head before me. I was also affected by a low ranking curse, and I promised myself I would take steps to discover the nature of this being and have it banished.

After speaking with Volminor the Nice, I discovered that I was under the influence of a powerful geas, that was beyond the ability of any in the Valley to remove. This geas had been placed upon myself and a number of others almost a year earlier whilst on a Valley mission by a hideous being - a skull that was a Black sorcerer and ex-High Priest of Morgoth. It was named Master Edas. Volminor advised that the only way to rid myself of this geas would be to discover the conditions that had to be met, as prescribed by Master Edas. I was at something of a loss - I had no idea where this skull was to be found. Instead, I tried a different approach. The group I had been with had heard tell of an item named the Eye of Zaritanita, which seemed to be connected in some way to Master Edas, in that he had sent another group of adventurers to find it. Following the directions given by a survivor of this group we set out to locate this item.

I will not go into all the details of the journey undertaken. Needless to say, the paths that I and my friends took were dark and the memory of this time pains me still, for on this journey Alaric fell for the last time. His sacrifice was not in vain however, and thanks to his efforts and those of the people who accompanied me the conditions of the geas were met. The ill-effects experienced by myself and others were finally gone.

With the geas removed I sought to return to the Deep Woods once more. Unfortunately we

found our means of travel barred to us - a sacred grove through which we had been told we could contact the Elves to arrange for our passage to them was stricken by some foul disease. After some discussion it was decided to seek alternative arrangements which resulted in our using the Dai-Fah-Dyne's World Window.

We arrived in the old Valley in good spirits, but before long it became apparent that all was not as it should have been. We expected to find Empire troops but instead we found strange creatures, nightmares from the Valley's past, long before the Empire came. It seemed that the Chaos Wastes had breached the Forbidding Wall and its creatures now occupied our old home. Our most chilling discovery, however, was that the Chaos Jester, thought long defeated, had returned and held the land in his thrall. We were puzzled at how this could be and amazed at the thought of the Empire apparently defeated and driven off in a matter of months, without leaving any trace.

We stumbled through the familiar yet alien place, unsure of what our next move should be. Finally we encountered a lone Deep Wood elf, and thought that we would have some explanation of what had happened here.

This elf gave us directions to a place where those of our group unable to enter the Deep Woods could spend the night in relative safety, and then the rest of us were transported into the Elven woods.

There was, however, another shock awaiting us in the Deep Woods. The Elves were courteous but not only were they not expecting us, they did not even know who we were. Our visit some months earlier was not remembered - the Elves we spoke with swore that they had never laid eyes on any of us before. They had heard of the Valley and recognised the names of several Valley Guild Leaders, including Raucus, but the more we talked the more obvious it became that these were not the same Elves we had met before. They were as puzzled as we, as to what had happened.

They concluded that somehow we had crossed into an alternative time line of a parallel plane to our own and if this was the case then our presence was potentially dangerous, for what was history to us could well be these Elves' future and vice versa. We decided that it would be prudent not to exchange too much information and so after spending a troubled night within the strange Deep Woods we returned to our companions in the morning. Arcane Green magic seemed as far as ever from the Valley's grasp.

We returned to the Valley through the World Window and turned suspicious eyes at the Dai-Fah-Dyne who had arranged our passage through to the Valley. Could he have somehow altered the workings of the World Window to sabotage our journey? He protested his ignorance and swore to investigate the strange occurrence. Having no evidence to suggest that he was deceiving us we could only accept his offer to look into what had happened.

On my return to the Valley tower I discovered that I was carrying a scroll that had appeared amongst my belongings. My heart jumped as I realised that this was an Arcane scroll given by the Elves but even as I finished reading it, it vanished into golden dust. I sensed that a spell of

Arcane level had passed into me, but I was unable to use it, as I did not cast this particular spell in its High level forms.

I became despondent and close to giving up my search. Ill-fortune seemed to cling to me as a limpet to a rock. I began to believe that my school, rather than aiding me in my quest, was attempting to thwart my every move. There were some more ambitious than I, and it was true that whoever brought Arcane magic to the Green school would be in a strong position to challenge for Guild Leader. I had considered the possibility but good sense prevailed. I sought the Arcane scrolls for my school, not to further my own causes. I was ambitious, certainly, but for the Valley, not myself.

I became more infuriated with the school, as I felt that I was being denied help to prevent me from finding the Arcane scrolls. I now know that my fears were not entirely justified, but at the time, that is how I felt.

The Cabal was also losing patience with the Green schools seeming inability to introduce any semblance of organisation into its ranks. Alorn Verithis' position as Guild Leader was only acting and I am sure the other Wizards made his task more difficult than it should have been.

After my disastrous attempt to return to the Deep Woods I considered the possibility that the Deep Woods of our time could be barred to us indefinitely. With this in mind, and still determined not to seek the aid of the Wizards Concillium, I set out with a group to visit the Oracle.

My question was simple - what path should I take to bring Arcane Green magic to the Valley? We each have one question in our lifetime that we can ask of the Oracle. Mine was now gone and I fervently prayed that I had used it wisely.

I returned to the tower to await an answer, but uncharacteristic impatience coupled with the knowledge that the Oracle is not always prompt with his answers, drove me to pursue what I saw as my last hope to obtain Arcane magic. I look back now and think that this was my answer from the Oracle, for I determined to find the Taranor.

I visited the captured Taranor sorcerer, Marek, to discuss the possibility of aiding him and his people. Honesty seemed to be the best policy, and although he was angry and understandably unhappy with his imprisonment he was still willing to listen to my ideas. The Neutral camp offered to release him into my custody, but as I knew that I was shortly to leave the tower on another patrol, I decided that Marek was probably better off where he was, for the time being.

And so I left the Tower again on a dual mission. The people I was with intended to follow the path taken by the three missing Micheliners - Duke Hanrow, Sir Clavados and Taraman, and they agreed that on the way they would come with me to look for the remaining Taranor. The best place to start seemed to be the Aldonar tombs, which was the last place we knew a large group of Taranor had been. However, once again we came up empty handed. There was no sign of the Taranor and the only resident of the tombs was an old adversary, the Mindflyer who had fled the Empire with the Valley after making an arrangement with the Night Guard. He was

not especially talkative and berated us at some length for intruding on what he claimed as his territory, but after a short but potentially fatal fight he allowed us to continue on our way. He haunts my dreams still, and I often wonder why he allowed us to leave after having us at his mercy. I hope I shall never find out.

We continued with the rest of our mission, knowing that the Taranor had been slain or driven from the area of the Aldonar tombs. My hopes of finding them seemed remote now. We found a lone Taranor on our return journey, who told us that the people he had been with had been decimated. This seemed to be the fate of all the Taranor, and we sadly invited him to return with us to the Valley tower, to start a new life with our people.

On our return, it became apparent that another group of the Taranor had been betrayed and murdered by the Kalid - the very same people who not long before had been promising them a place in their tower. I began to think now that the Taranor had been totally dispersed, and survived only in small groups, spread over Orin Rakatha, making them difficult to locate.

My despair did not last long, however. Seamus made another of his surprise appearances and I discovered that there was indeed still a large group of Taranor surviving, and that this group contained the greater part of the Taranor Green magic users. Seamus would not reveal their whereabouts, having given his word not to, and so I entreated him to speak to them on my behalf, asking if they would be willing to meet with me.

I was filled with a new sense of optimism after the talk with Seamus, but my search for Arcane Green magic and the Taranor was temporarily halted, as what should have been a straightforward mission to repay the Dai-Fah-Dyne for the use of the World Window turned into the discovery of the treachery of certain Valley Guild Leaders.

I cannot begin to describe the full horror of those days, the despair that I and my companions felt, and the fear for the Valley should we be slain. For we discovered that some powerful members of the Valley were in fact working against us, and that knowledge made us targets. They could not allow us to return with our discoveries, and so sought to kill us and other Valley Guild Leaders that they had betrayed. If we had not prevailed I fear the Valley tower would no longer exist, and that we would find our lot very similar to that of the Taranor.

The dark memories of those days will remain with me always. I will not dwell on them as that is another tale in itself. During them, however, I had the best opportunity I had had to speak with the Taranor Sorcerers. Three of their number were meeting with a representative of the Wizards Concillium, concerning their teaching scrolls. Their discussions did not go well - I believe the Concillium member was mocking and insulting towards their plight. Caught unprepared for them, and with my mind darkened with concern for the Valley, I acted foolishly, and allowed them to leave before I had collected my thoughts - and my manners.

Our group returned to the Valley tower to find suspicion and mistrust rife. We hoped that our news, together with that of the Seeker, Taraman, would allay some of these suspicions. The Inquisition was announced, to discover how deep the Ravenon Wolf Cult had cut into the Valley.

I was pleased to discover that in my absence, Felix and Fearon had not been idle. Fearon gave me news of the suspected location of the Taranor Sorcerers, which seemed plausible. It was thought that they had not travelled far from the vicinity of their old tower, and as this was near where I had met the three Taranor it seemed likely that the Rangers information was correct.

I was doubly pleased to find that the Green school had established some form of order. I was invited to take a seat upon the Council of Green Wizards, which was the decision making body of the school. I was determined to try once more to find the Taranor, and this time to have something to offer them. I wrote to Raucus, seeking his permission to invite the Taranor to meet with him to discuss the possibility of their joining us. He agreed, and so I led another group back towards the old Taranor tower. The Rangers and Pathfinders were already in the area, seeking signs of any further Ravenon activity. They had covered a wide area, and so the small group I was with concentrated our search where they had not already been.

With us came Marek, released into my custody. I had given him a choice - he was free to go if he wished, I would not try to stop him. Or, he could remain with us and help to find his people, and help persuade them to meet with Raucus. Thankfully he chose the latter.

After much searching, and after avoiding a potentially fatal encounter with a large force of Lizardmen, we found two lone Taranor pursued by a group of Wizards Concillium. We urged Marek to flee with them, and return to us later at an agreed meeting place.

We defeated the Concillium, and moved on to await Marek, but as darkness fell there was no sign of him. As time passed I became more and more concerned for him, but then help unlooked for arrived in the form of a Deep Wood Elf who had travelled to Orin Rakatha seeking me. He had been drawn to an item I had once carried that had belonged to the Valley Druid. This item is in the care of the Green school and at the time of the Elf's arrival was held by Alorn Verithis. He bore surprising news - Alorn was with the Taranor, and had been for some weeks.

The Elf - Hedric - led us to the Taranors camp and there we met Alorn. I was unsure what his reaction would be at our arrival, but I need not have worried. He was pleased to see me, and glad at the news I brought of Raucus' invitation.

After speaking with Alorn and the Taranor at the camp, it became apparent that Marek had returned and taken two of the Sorcerers back with him to meet us. We were immediately concerned - they had not reached us, and there had been no sign of them as Hedric had led us to the camp.

During the night the camp was attacked by undead, which the Taranor identified as one of the guards who had left with Marek and the other Sorcerers. On his body was a message saying that unless the Taranor handed over the Arcane Scrolls of Green magic their remaining friends would suffer a similar fate as the guards.

The following morning we decided to pose as the Taranor, and travelled to the place instructed. There we met, fought and defeated a large force of Wizards Concillium, including a Crystal Guard. Thanks to the bravery of the Michelineer, Onyx, Marek was rescued, but sadly the



surviving Concillium forces opposed long enough to remove the other Taranor away from us. We could find no trace of them and must conclude that they were slain or taken to the Concillium tower.

We returned with Marek to the Taranors camp and there I spoke to them of the reason for my visit. They were grateful for what we had done, but were cautious of our offer, wondering what conditions would be imposed on their joining. Another tower was negotiating with them, but this offer did not extend to all the remaining Taranor, only the Green school of magic. We assured them that the Valley's offer included all of their people, and with this assurance they agreed to send representatives back with us to meet with Raucus.

On our arrival, discussions commenced with Raucus, Galnin and Mian. The talks went well, and after a few compromises on each side, the Taranor agreed to join us. This meant that a few changes had to be made within the Valley, the most significant of which was the Green school of magic's move to the Good Camp. The Taranor had expressed their wish for their people to remain together within the Valley, and as one of their groups, the House Pilar, felt that they would be most comfortable in the Good Camp, the Green Sorcerers decided likewise.

The final thing to be decided was the question of who should now lead the Green school. The Valley wizards were unwilling to hand over control to the Taranor, and the Taranor were equally adamant that the Arcane Scrolls should not pass so quickly into Valley hands. It seemed that the most logical thing to do was to find somebody who both could agree on. The task was given to a neutral party, one known by both, the leprechaun Seamus.

And so, some three years after the Valley Druid fell to the Empire, the Green school is in a position to establish itself once more and work to the benefit of all the Valley people. A new beginning is possible, not only for the school but for the whole Valley.

I would give my warmest thanks and gratitude to all those who have helped me on my search - without them I could not have succeeded. They are too numerous to mention individually, but they know who they are. My thanks to you all, I owe you a great debt.

May all the forces of Nature watch over and guide you all.

Aradel na Leith