

Once more I put pen to paper to record one of my strange adventures in this land.

Still no word or sign of sir Beryvus. Perhaps this would dishearten a lesser man but my duty and loyalty remain strong and I shall continue the search. In the mean time I was again asked to add my skill at arms to a small patrol escorting an ambassador from the drow within the city of wolfhold to meet with drow from another city.

The patrol was lead by one Yana, a gypsy woman who travelled with her sister and had some minor skill with the realm of death known here as the evil sphere. She was accompanied by a very mixed and strange group of people. The sister anushka had a very strange desire to cuddle and hold dead body parts. My people use undead, we don't get that friendly with them!

Scouts were sly like fox, a tribal savage but a good skirmisher. Edge, a good skirmisher and Elbow who was a goblin with a very annoying and whiny voice but who proved his use in several fights and did murder to the giant rats in ambush. Finally scisor, a half lizard man scout. I didn't ask how, this is a very strange land and its often best not to question such things. Warriors aside from myself were Arrol of the iron guard, a stout warrior and one of the few proper soldiers I have met here. Also Jynx, a fur clad barbarian and a tough warrior.

Casters included Crone, a woman surely too old to be allowed to wander the wilderness although her cat proved most capable later. Dibbler and Democritus who were our healers. Walker who was guide and who provided amusement by tormenting the goblin. Also an elf who called himself a mage but had almost no spells and who I later learned was a warrior by training and was hiding at the back like a coward.

As a man of honour I feel that I owe Sergeant Orlando and his patrol an apology and I will thus make it publicly here. I have referred to his people as rabble in previous accounts but I see that I was clearly wrong. Having now seen Yana and her rabble wandering the wilderness I see that Orlando's patrol are clearly superior in organisation and henceforth I shall refer to them as militia as to refer to them with the same word I apply to Yana's mob is to insult them undeservedly.

We had travelled together some distance with little trouble and drew close to the way station where we were to meet this drow. Our scouts reported harsh guttural voices ahead and we thought to find orcs or some such. We were somewhat surprised to find a group of drow on the path blocking our way. After much talking they agreed to let us pass and split with half of their number standing either side of the path. More debating followed and I finally asked Yana did we continue and walk between them. She said yes so foolishly forgetting I was not in my homeland I accepted the leader's order and advanced.

To find myself in the middle of the path on the other side of the drow and alone. The others then began to follow and as the group split up with some passing the drow and others holding back they attacked.

A brief and bloody fight ensued which ended with all the drow dead.

Yana then began to scream at me like some fishwife, why had I gone ahead, why had I walked between the drow, why had I separated the group. I endured her ranting for a minute or so and then said that I asked her do we advance and she said yes. This silenced her but she spend much of the next few days screaming at someone or another for not following her orders when she gave none or for doing what was right at the time even if she thought it was wrong.

We then travelled on and after more stumbling over the very rocky trail in the dark we came to the Inn.

Here finding the door locked our scouts then went round banging on all the windows which disturbed the other guests and upset the inn keeper who was most annoyed when he opened the door to us. He was one Mohamed hammed of the merchant dai fa dyn. We then spent a while outside his door while he tried to get us to pay for the rooms or to pay extra as there were not enough beds for all of us or to pay a small sum to cover disturbing the peace of the Inn.

Finally however we got in, well most of us did. Having been attacked not to far away Arrol and myself stood a guard while the others rushed into the warmth.

The Inn was searched and several other guests were found along with a number of message boxes. One message box was for wolfhold and contained a message which I was informed related to the drow ambassador we were to escort and his arrival late the following day.

Other message boxes were for a dymwan and an unnamed person.

Two drow were at the Inn when we arrived, one a senior warrior (23th I seem to remember being told) who was escorting a sorcerer named venomblight (15th sorcerer). They were of house gurthel who are hostile to the house our ambassador was to meet.

While still on guard Arrol and I were approached by a dymwan with a small escort of undead who was here for a message. He went to collect this with most of his guards although his ghoul seemed like running around the outside of the Inn as he did it repeatedly. He then left having said little to any of us.

That evening aside from some problems with rats biting at peoples ankles we settled down. The Innkeeper came to us with a scroll he wished translated and our scribe, the goblin, had a go. After he gave up I took the task upon my self and would spend several hours cracking this somewhat complex cipher and then translating the scroll. While the goblin was first trying the scroll I stood looking over his shoulder when we were interrupted by a number of men dressed much like the garish gypsies. One was identified as their king and he spoke mostly with yana and anuska. Another, a small weasel faced man spend a deal of time asking me questions and avoiding my questions in return. Asking me about this land when I know so little of it is pointless but he was persistent. Eventually he went away and I was able to concentrate on the scroll interrupted only by the odd scream of someone being bitten by the rats.

Tired after the days travelling and beginning to develop a pain behind my eyes from squinting at the scuffed and faded letters of the scroll barely visible in the candlelight I went to bed.

Up first in the morning I had coffee and toast and worked on the scroll some more while keeping a watch and waiting for the others to arise.

With a number of the group up and about or at least stomping their feet on the floor above we came under attack as lesser undead attacked the main door and quickly pushed inside. Several of us were in the common room and arrol who had been on guard was fighting in the hall. I called arrol to join us in the room where we were able to hold off the undead while arming ourselves. The ghoul appeared, paralysed arrol and tried to claw me. As I parried and dodged its blows and struck back several times I moved away from the door allowing the zombies in and a melee ensued with people and undead all over the room. I was holding my own against a zombie or two when I saw the ghoul come back in and using the zombie to shield me from the ghouls claws I was able to beat it almost to death before it fled. Upstairs there was much shouting and sounds of battle as the others engaged several of the zombies who were by now wandering freely throughout the Inn.

The ghoul came back into the room and started to drag arrol outside, I pushed past the zombies and went after it only to be ambushed by it in the corridor. All went dark.

Some time later I recovered and much healing and binding of wounds went on.

Then once all were ready, we set out to travel to the shore of a wide river that was but a short distance from the Inn. Here we were to find the item the gypsy king wanted. The trip was uneventful until nearly at the shore when a man without faction colours wearing a red edged black tunic met us. He was peaceful and simply talked to our scouts then left along the path we had just used.

We then came out into the open land of hills and shrubs that bordered the river. Here after passing some locals with a large pack of dogs our scouts easily spotted a small number of truly ugly fish men.

Easily as ugly as the sub human fish men that inhabit the marshes of home. They kept peering over a knoll and as we advanced towards them they stood up.

Attempts to talk with them failed and after several attempts at being peaceful they began casting hammers of power at us. We of course engaged them in battle at once and fell into a stretched fighting line. I found myself holding one flank and was able to avoid serious harm by skilled parries and dodges while Arrol and jynx slaughter these foul creatures one by one. One of the creatures, perhaps thinking itself clever, tried to get behind us by pushing through a bank of reeds. Our three scouts simply waited till it was almost through and cut it to pieces.

Some bandaging and treating of wounds later and we were ready. From here our path led onto the beach itself, a treacherous walk if ever I have seen one. Aside from a number of long thin ridges of bedrock the whole beach was covered in pebbles and stones up to the size of large head. The only way to make any kind of speed without twisting our ankles was to stay on the ridges, which we did for some distance.

Then we saw more of the fish men in the distance and closed with and slew them fairly quickly as both they and we stayed on the ridges allowing us to hold several front lines against them.

By now we were beginning to run low on healing and some transferring of spiritual power was undertaken. It was while we were doing this that the scouts reported some sort of cave and four of the fish men ahead of us. Advancing confidently we were rather taken aback to find four fish, a dymwan and half a dozen undead creations.

Yana went slightly ahead of us to talk to the dymwan who answered a few questions but then refused to allow us to pass. We then advanced slightly to form up with yana as the undead and fish attacked.

We very quickly became flanked and although we were able to hold a front line both arrol and I found ourselves surrounded. Attempting to withdraw arrol fell and I suffered many wounds. Catching up with several other members of the party and receiving some healing we tried to make a stand. I was able to beat several of the undead almost back to death but they were able to withdraw and I saw the necromancer healing them. Then the necromancer advanced to battle, I parried his blow at me but had no defence against the terrible fear that he cast at me and I fled.

Once the fear had faded I was far down the beach with but a handful of the group nearby, the others all seemed to be down. We were able to heal some wounds and regroup then a few of the undead caught up with us. I engaged and heavily damaged one of the creations then left it to sly to kill while I went to aid some of the others that were hard pressed. We were able to kill these undead and then advance back to the necromancer.

With the undead and fish things down the necromancer fled chased by elbow and sly while dibbler went to aid those who were down. Elixirs were used and with one left we had both anuska and crone dying. I asked which was more useful to us alive as we had no resurrection and we told crone had more spiritual power so I said to use the elixir on her. Shortly thereafter walker pulled a resurrection potion from a pocket to use on anuska and the whole party was up.

Now we had no choice and rested while the healers used meditation to recover power.

Then fully healed we went after the necromancer. Walking further up the beach we found him resting behind a ward which seemed to be controlled by a puzzle guarded by two fish man statues. After much confusion and twice activating the statues to attack those within the circle the ward was dropped and we were able to reach the dymwan at last.

Trapping him on a ledge at the cliff beside the beach we skirmished with him at a distance until jynx was able to scramble onto the ledge and draw his attacks. This allowed me to reach the ledge and as he turned against us the others below got him in the back.

All our enemies were dead and we were left with a box radiating power. Elbow started with the trap disarming, then arrol stepped over his body to continue. Then while unconscious elbow's hand was used to spring another trap. Then with arrol and elbow down the next volunteer

stepped in, and was blinded. This went on for some time while I stood guard a distance away.

Eventually the box within a box within a box was opened and a small, evil, shrunken head was recovered. This was apparently the artefact that kills people the gypsy wanted. Although the bit about it killing people was not mentioned last night to me at least.

There seemed to be a side effect of touching the item, it turned walker into a driving idiot and although it had little effect on the crone. With two idiots and one still blinded we set off back along the beach having met a gypsy scout who had gone to his master with the news.

Not 50 paces off the beach and we met a captain of halmadons heights from a knightly order called the knights of purity. He demanded the item be turned over to him or he would be forced to discuss the matter with us. After much pointless talking the group finally decided, with some prompting from me, to hand over the item as we were in no condition to fight with little healing and all wounded.

Then once we were agreed to hand it over, it could not be found. The captain was becoming angry and with battle imminent I asked that he allow our blinded companion to stand aside. Being a true chivalric he of course agreed and ordered that none harm the defenceless man.

Finally the item was found in the grasp of the crone who refused to hand it over. The captain hearing and seeing this then ordered his men forward, to test our mettle, he said. This fight was pointless and would lead to harm or death for no reason other than one feeble-minded old crone's stupidity. I grasped her by the arm, dragged her toward the captain and called for a hold. Using my strength I forced the old crone to hand over the item. I am not happy I did this but I could not let her cause this battle. The captain withdrew once the item was held by one of his men.

Finally done at the beach we walked back to the Inn and were within sight of it when we saw two in the colours of the city of wolfhold struck down by a single man in black who then fled. Those closest said he was the one from the beach who had spoken peacefully to us when we first arrived.

Checking the building revealed no sign of him although we suffered several attacks from the rats that seemed to be infesting the place now. Every room had to be searched and a score of

rats were killed over the evening.

Then while arrol and I stood guard again the others were able to prepare and eat hot food. Finally some of the others came out to take guard and I was able to settle down to hot food, a drink or two and another hour of scroll translation. Not long after I had finished my meal someone ran into the room shouting there was a giant rat in the passageway. Taking up my sword I expected to find one of the normal big ones we had been killing all evening. I was somewhat surprised to find a man shaped and sized rat facing me but beat it to death quickly. I was left with several wounds and a nasty cough, which was dealt with by dibbler.

Several times over the next hour or so we came under attack from these giant man sized rats both from outside and appearing in the corridors of the Inn itself. After much searching for what we suspected was either a nest or lair or some kind of curse calling them to us the scouts found a tunnel leaning into the woods which the rat men had used to enter the building.

Scouting outside lights could be seen in the woods in the rough direction that the tunnel ran so the group was called to arms to investigate.

Fortunately we found no enemies as the rabble took off at whatever pace they could manage and we arrived in small groups. By the time I arrived it was to see most of the group listening to several gypsies in a well lit clearing. One they called the gypsy king, was giving judgement on whether two should be kept with them or killed and his ruling was they be exiled instead. Asking what was going on I was told this was a vision of the past and something to do with two babies, the gypsy tribe and yana and anuska. There was a second part to the vision whereby those who had called for death waited till the others had left with the king and then talked of killing the king.

Several of the gypsies present in the vision were very similar to those who had visited the night before and the gypsy king from Friday night was apparently one of those who spoke of killing the king in the vision.

Back to the Inn and more work on the scroll. At one point the attacks of the small rats became so bad that one of our number had his leg bitten almost off and the goblin was so weakened by diseases that he could do no more than crawl the corridors.

It was during these fights that the goblin, elbow, proved himself a deadly slayer of these creatures. Hiding in the darkness and striking with surprise he was able to kill several in quick order.

Later in the night as I paused from my translation to sup a goblet of fine drink in the common room half the group rushed in shouting we found them and looking very scared. As I stood and took up my sword a single man rat appeared in the doorway then fled.

Leaving the common room I found giant rat men everywhere, in the corridors and filling the courtyard.

A confused fight began with our people in twos and threes fighting against the rat men who seemed to be appearing from everywhere. Having mostly cleared the courtyard and shaking from the number of rat bites and wounds I had suffered I sought out a healer who had barely banished the foul diseases I was suffering from and dealt with my wounds when more rat men were seen in the building. I went after two that fled into the common room while others fought on outside against yet more of the foul creatures. Entering the common room I found one of the rats on the floor frantically twisting and turning and the other trying to hit him. I engaged and slew the standing one then turned to the other to find it dead. The crone's cat had jumped onto its face and clawed out its throat.

Yet another was found in the kitchen and this one was able to flee outside while jynx and I tried to slay it without striking the shelves, cupboards and plentiful crockery that filled this room.

Finally however the rats were dead. Searching the outbuilding where they were nesting revealed a few items of worth and the skeleton of a hanged man. The scouts took the treasure and anuska took the skeleton that she named and carried around with here from then on. Even going so far as to dance with it.

I spend what remained of the evening translating more of the scroll and finished all but the final section, which was in a different and more complex code. The translated section was instructions for making a love potion and I believe the final few lines to list the ingredients but have not as yet broken this code.

Arising the following morning to again find myself first up I restored myself to life with good strong coffee and waited on the rest of the group.

Our plan for the day was to take the body of the drow ambassador to the meeting where the innkeeper would gift us a potion to raise him. The innkeeper was to travel with us as he wished his generosity to be seen by both drow houses.

Shortly before we left we were attacked by some hordelings and a brief fight ensued.

Then we set off to the meeting.

Travelling up a number of hills we came, after much walking, to a group of drow blocking the way. They wore the spider symbol of gurthel and informed us that we could not pass. Some attempt at diplomacy followed until Yana called for attack. A most tiring and fierce fight ensued. All of the drow carried spell enhanced swords which cut through our armour with ease leaving us sorely hurt. We were outflanked and one of the drow reached dibbler who chose to run away. This took him away from help and he was cut down and killed. He was the only victim of this battle but by the time the fight was done I collapsed from many wounds and exhaustion. With the healer dead we were added by Mohammed the inn keeper who proved skilled and powerful in the healing art. After a great deal of healing I was able to stand once more and with all healed we again set off up the path. It was at this point that we talked of the urgent need for magical protections and learned that we had none as our group mage was in fact a warrior and had very few spells to his name.

So when we came upon a second group of drow alone with a human, a valley alliance traitor no less, we had no defence against the magical attacks they used against us.

This battle continued much as had the first with our number striking when we could and trying our best to keep their blades from our flesh. We were able to push them back for a while until the mage in their number struck me with a might bolt of darkness striping leaving me staggered and near death. I stumbled back and was healed quickly which doubtless saved my life as the drow warriors were quick to follow up my withdraw. Finally after much hard fighting we prevailed having suffered no loss this time although the traitor made his escape, fleeing at a speed hard to believe given his short stature and little legs.

Finally after two days of travelling and fighting we came upon the meeting place, he innkeeper gifted us a potion of resurrection and our ambassador was able to hold his meeting. That done we returned to the Inn and from there we will be setting out to return to the cities of the alliance.