

Members of the group:

- Silvane (Leader)
- Tuchi
- Lucca
- Sweetpea
- Yewbee
- Yarp
- Narp
- Idrissa
- Little Red
- Spork
- Valentine
- Ezekiel Bramble
- Durmyel
- Cake
- Melisande
- Aruna
- Jimmy the Stoat

The mission brief was initially to go to Meadow Hill and investigate the area, but beyond that we had little idea of what it was we were actually to investigate. Each of us had, however, been given a short note from Orlon Tenquil, which was only to be read after we had arrived. Bearing that in mind, we teleported to a location a short distance away from the village and set about gaining our bearings. We had barely had a chance to make more than a few minutes' progress before we were set upon by a number of strange birdlike beasts. Closer examination of the bodies showed them to be unlike anything the party had seen before.

Pressing onwards, we met some members of the Wizards' Concillium – more specifically, representatives of their Blue and Red schools who demanded to know what we were doing, and more specifically, why we were venturing so close to their mining operations. Silvane, our leader for this mission, handled the diplomatic formalities with practised skill, and when we had appeased the mages' inquiries as to our intentions in the area, we moved on and continued our search for a place from which to base our expedition.

Arriving in the miners' village, we met a few of its denizens who informed us that one of their mineshafts had recently seen a cave-in, trapping and killing several of their co-workers. Further

conversation revealed that one of the miners had seen an associate felled by a “rock that looked like a man” – undoubtedly an earth elemental. We offered to investigate the mines, and in return the miners agreed to let us camp in their village. Later in the evening, a third Concillium representative, this time from the Brown school, introduced himself and asked after our intentions. When he heard that we intended to investigate the cave-in at the mine, he warned us that it might be dangerous to do so, but voiced no formal complaints. Later, some Dai-Fah-Dyne merchants came by to visit the Brown mage and discuss the sale of minerals, but our contact with them was peaceful, and after a time we were left alone to rest and form a plan for the expedition.

That night, we were attacked by a group of undead. The battle was a hard one and many of our number fell wounded, but those few left standing managed to dispatch the last of the walking dead and tend to our companions. Bruised, battered and wary, we posted guards to watch over the camp while the others rested and recovered.

The next morning, we compared notes and found that our mission had already been compromised – some of the mission briefs we had been handed were fakes. Fortunately, the individuals responsible had forged Orlon’s signature imperfectly, and after careful examination and comparison, we assembled our true mission brief:

1. To investigate the disappearance of a certain individual, the name of whom had been passed to a different party member.
2. To investigate rumours of a mysterious gateway.
3. To find out who else was investigating our missing person and why.

In addition to this, we found two more cryptic messages – one stating that “the name is Whipple Van Buren” and little else, and another that said simply “Generous All Terrain Environment open. Gloom Drops interested.” From there, it took little discussion to realise that Van Buren was our missing person, and if Generous All Terrain Environment referred to the gate, then the subject of our third mission part likely had the initials GD.

Before we could theorise further, our discussions were interrupted by the arrival of the Brown mage, who had not heard from his Blue companion and was becoming concerned. To cement our recent good relations with the Concillium, we offered to search for him (for a nominal fee), and added his disappearance to the list of mysteries we were to investigate. There were two further visitors to the camp that morning; the first from the Celestial Bureaucracy, who wished to inspect the mines and bore a compass capable of detecting magical objects and sources of

Power, and shortly after the Kalid, who demanded to know if we had found a gate or a sign, and left with no explanation when we told them that we had not. As distasteful as the slaughter was, we knew that we could not allow the Kalid to proceed with whatever plans they might have for the gate, and so we set upon and slew them before they could go further. Realising that time was of the essence, we headed for the mine as quickly as we could, encountering hordelings on the way but dispatching them without too much difficulty.

When we arrived at the mine, a group of Kalid were already there, claiming ownership of the mine and refusing to let us investigate it further. Despite our attempts at peaceful negotiations, they attacked us and we were forced to deal with them as we had the previous group. This battle severely drained our resources however, and the party had to rest before we pressed on. While the acolytes and mages rested, a druid stumbled upon us, claiming to be part of a sect that investigated and analysed all forms of life. Between his comments on the more exotic members of our expedition, he informed us that the Mist was never normally found so high in the mountains, and that the appearance of hordelings, undead and strange creatures like the bird-beasts we had encountered were both unusual and concerning. When asked for his opinions on their recent arrivals, the druid told us that there was not normally anyone or anything of sufficient status to attract hordelings to the mountains, and postulated that the undead must be the result of either a necromancer or a gateway to the plane of the sleepless dead, though he had seen signs of neither. The mention of a gateway attracted interest given our mission briefing, but we determined to investigate further before jumping to conclusions. Unfortunately, the mines contained nothing of note but a few mineral veins and some vicious spiders, though something clearly had the earth elementals upset, as while a few party members investigated the mines the rest of us were repeatedly attacked. Not wishing to upset the elementals further, we retreated from the mine as soon as it became clear that the cave-in was a natural one and that the gate we sought was not present. Returning to the camp we came upon more undead, which we dispatched swiftly before attempting to rest.

Back at the camp, one of the Dai-Fah-Dyne merchants visited us again with the prospect of trade. We had little to offer him but our hospitality, and while we attempted to find out what he knew of local events, he was approached by a member of Shadowfall. A fight broke out in which the Shadowfall assassin was slain, and the merchant fled, offering only that there was apparently a contract out on the other merchant as explanation.

While we considered our next move, a group of earth elementals from the mine slipped into the village and summoned a huge creature of rock to attack us. The creature was seemingly unstoppable, hardly seeming to even notice our most powerful attacks. It seemed that our mission and our lives was about to come to an abrupt and premature end, but fortunately when the last of the lesser elementals was dispatched, the huge rock creature's summons ceased and it dissipated quickly, leaving us with nothing but injuries and more questions.

There was no time to speculate before spies were spotted circling the village. A few of us gave chase, but the interloper managed to escape before he was captured. Also disconcerting was a strange lizard-like creature that emerged from the woods for a brief moment before disappearing once more. Searches for both the creature and the spy proved fruitless, except for in attracting attention from more Shadowsfall members seeking their companion. They took a number of our group from the camp and questioned them about both our intentions in the area and the Dai-Fah-Dyne merchant who had slain the assassin earlier. Those taken returned mostly unscathed, except for Idrissa, whose inability to recall exact details was taken as refusal to help, and rewarded by severing her leg. Fortunately, our skilled healers were able to regenerate the limb, and the damage was not permanent.

While we rested and ate, the miners came to us once more to see how our investigations had gone. When we told them of our findings, they told us of the strange things they had seen in another of their mines – a strange gateway in another of the shafts, and moreover the mines had recently started flooding and strange creatures had been seen swimming in the murky depths. This second shaft seemed more promising than the previous, and we resolved to investigate it when we could. More importantly, they told us that a man had recently been seen to enter the gate, write a few notes in his journal and commit suicide shortly afterwards. Unfortunately for our mission however, the enterprising miners had seen fit to sell the journal to the Dai-Fah-Dyne. We had no way of knowing where the merchants had gone, and while we had sent a Pathfinder to seek him, there was little hope of seeing him again so long as the Shadowsfall remained.

Later that evening, our guards spotted a necromancer in the graveyard outside the camp. Immediately we put a stop to him and his schemes, and headed out to find the mineshaft that contained the gate, reasoning that night and day made little difference to the darkness inside the mine and that swift action was the more prudent course. What we found was not the mine, but instead a shrine where the cultists were in the middle of a ritual. Our negotiations with them came to blows, and we were forced to slay them. Their deaths, however, caused the release of a powerful undead which we were only able to dispatch with great effort. A few of our party fell during this extended battle, and we were hard pressed to tend to the wounded and fight our remaining foes at the same time. Finally when all had been dealt with, we investigated the shrine, finding both the corpse of the missing Blue mage and a few locked boxes. The corpse of the mage was beyond resurrection, so Ezekiel blessed the remains to prevent his return as an undead, and we opened the boxes carefully, only to be cursed in return. Tired and more than a little bloody, we took what we could of the ritual materials for later examination and headed back to camp. The undead we encountered on our return were almost more than we could handle, burdened and wounded as we were, but we were eventually victorious. That was not the last of our troubles that night however, as we were approached by some strangely dressed individuals who stared at us disturbingly by way of introduction. At this point the darkness was making it

difficult to make out details, but the face of their leader was definitely...wrong, in some way. After a moment of silence, the leader of the group declared that we did not have the object that he sought, an object that had been stolen from them. Our attempts at questioning were met with silence, but at last the strange group left quietly and without conflict. We had no proof, but the general opinion of the party was that the object he sought was Van Buren's journal. Further expeditions at that point would have been tantamount to suicide however, and so we had little choice but to retire for the night and rest for the day ahead.

The next morning, the Brown Concillium mage came to visit us once more, asking after his Blue companion and noting that the Red mage that completed the trio had also gone missing. We told him of our findings the previous night, and after conversation we realised that the necromancer we had slain was in fact the missing Red mage. The Brown mage agreed that we had fulfilled our duties in the search for the Blue, and with some regret that we had had little choice in dealing with the Red. He was, however, stranded in Meadow Hill with nobody to teleport him home, and so we informed him that he would be welcome to join us when we returned to the Alliance towers later that day.

Before any thoughts of return could be entertained, there still remained the mineshaft containing the gate to be investigated. After our failed search the night before, we recruited one of the miners to be our guide, and soon arrived at the seemingly undisturbed shaft. As soon as we opened the trapdoor to the mine, we realised just how bad the flooding had been as a torrent of water rushed out, turning the surrounding ground into knee-deep sticky mud. Worse still was the appearance of more lizard creatures like the one spotted the day before. We fought valiantly, but for every lizard that was cut down, another seemed to spring up in his place and we were forced to retreat. This was not enough for the lizards however, and a group of them chased us, forcing our group to find a suitable spot to stand and fight. The battle was a hard one, and the group was led by a particularly powerful specimen that carried a strange trinket into the fight. When the battle was over and the wounded had been tended, we examined the trinket. Not only did it bear a striking resemblance to an amulet worn by the Celestial Bureaucracy we had encountered, but in its center it bore a symbol that matched one of the four ritual candles we had taken from the shrine.

With more questions raised than answered, our efforts were called to a halt by the arrival of the Blue sorcerer to return us to the Alliance towers. Whatever is going on in Meadow Hill, it would bear further investigation.

Durmyel

