

By Ichabod, Sorcerer of the Blue School

A group was assembled to assist in the search for two missing tower members, Sorcerer Joseph Riverflow and High Priest Ellian of the Hospitallers who had been liaising with the Halmadonians near the Jade Pass.

As well as myself, the group consisted of:

Ksndra - party leader, Rasc, Uncle Istvaan, Uncle Rogan, Ziel, Lithos, Gob, Kyle, Kurt, Thoran and our guide Aurora Earthday

I was late to join the party but when I did, Ksndra reported to me that the following had already occurred.

After encountering and defeating a group of Kalid they met Sorcerer Joseph alive but raving about being hungry and wanting to eat people. He was subdued.

After encountering a group of elementals there was, as described to me, a wave of evil swept over the party causing those with connections to the good sphere to collapse, severely weakened, to the ground. After this wave, Joseph arose as an undead and had to be promptly slain.

It was then discovered that several of the party, those who had touched Joseph, had contracted an unpleasant weakening disease which was part magic, part power and part unknown (but probably herbal).

They arrived at the Everwatch way station to be told by Bob that there were numbers of undead in the vicinity.

I joined the party at this point and we duly set out to find the undead and deal with any accompanying Dymwan we might find. It was, however, very dark and after a couple of waves of undead we determined that we may not find the Dymwan themselves. After a period of stumbling about in the dark, a lone Dymwan was discovered and chased down. He had in his possession a scroll case covered with protective rituals and spells. Also, I later discovered, when he died a whispering wind was activated, no doubt to send the contents of the message regardless of his death. We removed what we could of its protections and then Gob bravely opened the scroll case whilst protected from Death therefore surviving the touch of evil and gaining the scroll.

The scroll was written in reverse writing and used a simple single character alphabet shift encryption. When decoded, the message gave us the following points:

1. The Dymwan used some 'Allies' to awaken an ancient creature and transfer it's 'affliction' onto a number of undead servants. This ancient may have been the undead spirit of disease we laid to rest at the end of our mission.
2. These undead would be placed at focal points and a final ritual would be completed in two days to cement the spread of the disease amongst the Halmadonians in the area.
3. They had discovered 4 artefacts of power surrounding a small pocket of mist and had removed them and intended to use these to make the ritual permanent.
4. The disease could be avoided by having both a protection from disease and a protection from weakness in effect but this was outside of our capabilities.

Fireday

During the early part of the morning we were harassed by a group of elementals and some Halmadonian locals who had become infected by the disease. One had a giant fungus growing from his neck which he seemed oblivious to. They became more and more confused in their thinking and eventually attacked.

The Labyrinth of Xenos ambassador to the Heights arrived to speak with us. He said he was aware of a small area of mist that had remained in situ for a great length of time but had now been released due to removal of four artefacts. Obviously those referred to by the Dymwan. He was keen to collect these artefacts for the Labyrinth should we be able to retrieve them. I made no direct promises. The artefacts took the form of four orbs.

Sir (or Aspirant) David of the Heights arrived to discuss why we were in the area. We told him of our mission to recover our fellows and the likely Dymwan disease plot but drawing on his overconfidence and self assurance he told us that the Heights would be able to handle it and that we should stay at the waystation. We insisted that we would not remain there and after a little horse trading it came down to a test between them and our warriors in a non-lethal trail of combat. No spells or invocations were allowed. Our warriors put up an excellent show and Sir David was convinced that we could handle ourselves. He mentioned that they would go and check the 'Hepath Cage' nearby to verify that it had not been interfered with in any way.

We determined to journey towards the mist area, where our people had been headed when they disappeared and where the artefacts were removed from.

We bypassed a shade lurking in the trees who followed us and only attacked once we were later engaged with a group of mist-touched.

Soon after we met a Halmadonian scout who led us further over some sandy hills. Just over the hill we met a small group of Kalid who acted very cagily. The Halmadonian scout mentioned that they shouldn't be in this area so he was going to have a word with them. We let the kalid withdraw (as they are part of the crusade) and the scout went to speak with them. The Kalid then tried to kill the scout so we intervened. Rasc tried his best to get the Kalid to explain but it ended up with their deaths. The scout said they were 2nd legion and he would go and report this incident.

Next we endured a wave of elements closely followed by a Wizards Concillium Sorceror of the Collegium Elementa. He was in the business of trapping elementals and was frustrated that we had just eliminated some. I agreed to carry some traps for him (in the event Ksndra carried them) in return for any information on our missing people should they discover any. Disturbingly he described their great experiment to reach across the planes as building a enormous cannon powered by elemental essence and using it to blow a hole through the mists. To my mind this seems like a disaster waiting to happen. I sincerely hope another way is found off the plane before they are ready.

After a group of Hordelings we encountered a large warded area. There was a twisting path through the ward which had to negotiated whilst suffering an unremovable blindness. While we

negotiated this hurdle an evil spirit was waiting on the other side and small but formidable group of Dymwan prepared themselves for us. In the group was the body of Ellian out Hospitaller. It transpired that he had been killed and a evil spirit embodied within him that caused him to act like an anti-hospitaller. Very nasty. The ensuing fight was very unpleasant but we prevailed. The chief Dymwan managed to escape, however by using some teleport item.

A Halmadonian scout arrived to direct us back to the waystation, via a wet muddy path, where we took some time to dry out our gear. During this period it was discovered that Kyle's near death experience in the Dymwan fight had removed the disease from him which seemed to offer some kind of hope for removing the disease from ourselves and the infected Halmadonians.

The Podaradrim ambassador to the Heights was present and he said that if required he could make us potions of protection from weakness.

Suddenly a Halmadonian rushed in, desperate for our help as Sir David was under attack by significant undead and Dymwan. We discovered David fighting his own men who had succumbed to the disease and thought David was an undead. After the fight we convinced him to return to the waystation to rest as he was very weak and we continued to investigate the area.

We destroyed a wave of real undead and then discovered a ritual site where there were more undead and Dymwan. The leader was a vampire and caused significant confusion by beguiling a number of our party. Eventually he got away from us. The ritual consisted of one of the artefact orbs in a conical basket hanging above a ritual area with the whole enclosed in a ward. The ward required simultaneous dispels from three mages, one of which being had to be of the highest wizardry level. Once the ward was removed it was discovered that the orb had been aligned to death and undeath and that required another wizardry dispel magic and a ritual blessing. There was some risk to the casters as malevolent effects were released.

Back at the waystation we did our best to identify the orb and discovered only that it was one of four and that it could be used to sustain a person or object. Combining orbs allowed exponential objects to be sustained up to 16.

Over dinner, the Podaradrim ambassador said that he'd been looking at the Heptah enclosure

and that he'd spotted a number of flowers within that he felt he could use to make a potion to delay the effects of the disease allowing us more time to come up with a cure. This caused some discussion in the party but we agreed that we would go there if Sir David gave us his permission, which he did. It seemed he had now realised that the Halmadonians would be unable to stop this disease by themselves and he was considerably more contrite.

The Hepath was caged in the nearby ruins of a castle but before we could get there a larger group of Kalid barred our way and had to be despatched.

The Hepath was clever and difficult to deal with. Gob initially started with an all out offense but ended up being beguiled by it. He did managed to secure the flowers from the Hepaths room however. The Hepath summoned fire sprites at will which continued to harry us as we searched for the flowers. Ksndra also managed to be beguiled by the Hepath but eventually managed to withdraw with all our party members.

After that we finally turned in for the night.

Steelday

The day started with a mixture of hordelings and disease victims.

I attempted to attune myself to the orb of power, along the lines described by the LOX ambassador and eventually I had a vision of a sphere near a burned out building and a Dymwan ritual. Our guide Aurora said she knew of a burned out village not far away.

On route to the village we encountered a strong group of mixed elementals and a smaller group of shades.

Whilst recovering we heard screaming coming from nearby but waited until we had recovered a significant portion of our strength. When we did advance we discovered a Dymwan ritual that had been disturbed by a group from The Once Vanishing tower. They were torturing a Dymwan prisoner until we intervened. Above the Dymwan, hanging from a tree was another orb in a basket. We despatched the Dymwan and his ghoul returner and subsequently the

Melniboneans when they decided that the orb was their property despite Rasc doing yet another impeccable, but futile, job in trying to talk them out of a fight.

Shortly afterwards a large force of Dymwan advanced on us and managed to withhold power from Uncle Istvan, our main healer, so we had to make do with what little else we had. The battle raged for some time but eventually our front line managed to push them back and they were defeated.

Now we managed to retrieve the second orb after removing the same protections as previously and we headed back to the waystation to regroup.

During lunch we had visits from the a Halmadonian scout, the Labyrinth ambassador and a mist shaman.

The Halmadonian scout spoke to me about the area around Everwatch waystation saying that there were a number of concealed and trapped entities and objects in the vicinity. They would very much like the four orbs returned to their places surrounding area of mist as they feared what may be hidden within it although they had no idea what that might be.

The Labyrinth ambassador said that he'd detected that we now had two of the orbs and that we should give them to him. We decided against that.

The Mist Shaman came to say that the orbs were too powerful for this land and that they proposed to take them away never to be seen from again.

After some concentration I managed a vision of the third orb somewhere amongst an area of thorns. Again Aurora knew of a suitable thorny area and we set off to investigate.

Once among the thorns we were beset upon by a group of Kalid with Brood creatures. There were pig, bat and snake varieties.

Shortly afterwards we encountered a group of zombies/disease victims. While we were dealing with them Aurora thought she could hear the voice of one of her missing pathfinders from the other side of some bushes.

After investigating the bushes further we uncovered the third Dymwan ritual site and fought off it's guards of Dymwan, undead, a shade and a wraith.

Within the ritual area, suspended high from a tree was the orb we required but protecting it was Aurora's companion, obviously embodying an undead and apparently unkillable. There was some significant confusion as how to proceed until it was figured out that he must be being sustained by the orb (which makes the orbs very powerful artefacts indeed)

We returned to base for some food and a rest before making any attempt to get the last orb. While resting we had a visit from a Valdemar who explained that he was searching for the lost regalia of his tower and that he thought that they might be within the area of mist. The Valdemar believe that the regalia items that they lost at the time of the breaking of their tower are required before the tower can be fixed. The regalia items may be a crown, orb, sceptre and sword but he wasn't certain that these were necessarily the items required.

Later, after concentrating with the three orbs a vision quickly came of the fourth in a ritual within a wooden fort nearby. On our arrival there, we found the place defended by a number of undead. Skeletal warriors, a unique undead disease carrier of some kind, the vampire we'd failed to kill previously, Ellian, the anti hospitaller and the Dymwan High Priest. A tough fight entailed but we pushed them hard enough that they elected to withdraw (via another teleport) which enabled us to gain the last orb.

Returning to the waystation, we found that the Dymwan had occupied it and the High Priest demanded the return of his orbs. The disease carrying undead was finally destroyed with cure disease invocations and the vampire eventually fell once we had organised enough power damage. I spent the last moments of the fight keeping Ellian out of the fight with repulsions while the rest of the party mobbed the Dymwan High Priest. We then attempted to beat the undead out of Ellian which we did but we discovered that he was already dead.

After some curing and taking stock we sat down to decide what was to be done with the four orbs. Nobody seemed keen giving them to the LOX so it essentially came down to whether to give them back to the Halmadonians so they could put them back around the mist patch or whether to give them to the Mist Shaman in the hope that they would be put out of harms way. Eventually we decided on the later as there was no guarantee that they would not be misused in the future.

The Labyrinth ambassador arrived while I was in the process of giving the orbs to the Mist Shaman and Uncle Rogan (I think, they are so similar) 'entertained' the ambassador with a game of 'find the lady/orb' but I don't believe he was amused as he shortly left without conversation.

A Halmadonian representative arrived to discover what our intentions were and he was surprised that we had put them out of reach. I explain my worries about their potential for mischief and offered aid in the case that whatever was released from the patch of mist should prove too troublesome for them to deal with.

Faithfully,
Ichabod