

An interesting time of year. The Plane of the Sleepless Dead draws ever closer to our own, until for a short time the two planes intersect, and the dead may walk amongst us. A large group of Valley Alliance members were sent out from the Towers to investigate the effect this would have upon Orin Rakatha after the war with the Dymwan, their subversion of the Mists and the sundering and restoration of the Necromantic powers.

A mixed group, we travelled South and East towards the Icathian Triangle: Hospitallers and Seers, Ice Elven Sorcerers and Drow High Priests, Barbarian warriors and cultured Bards. It was always going to be difficult acting as a single unit, and we soon formed smaller bands within the larger group.

We closed on the region we had been assigned and in short order began to investigate the area. Particularly wary due to the nature of the region and time of year we were still lucky to have some warning of a large group of what are colloquially known as hordelings, attracted to our presence. While we were able to make some preparation for the inevitable attack, the opposition was too strong and we made the decision to make for safety. Perhaps of greater concern was the strange mist that began to creep down from the hills to the South. We could not go as one large, easily tracked, group so we arranged to meet at an old waystation known to us from before the war and split into our smaller groups.

As the night progressed the mists deepened, and my group was delayed by taking on two small bands of hordelings. Our concern that we would soon join them gradually swelled, until we came upon the waystation we had sought. Not knowing what had become of it during the war, we were cautious, but the Mists demanded prompt action. We knocked on the door, and were greeted by an undead butler, who in the situation we decided to take at face value. In fact we had made good time being the first of our number to arrive. Soon what was left of our larger company, a score or so in total, assembled.

How do I describe the house and the events of that night and the following morning? Simply put the place had been set up as a nexus for the dissemination of messages to certain groups or Towers, and then taken over by an undead Lord (the butler's Master) looking for a place to call his own after the free willed undead became unable to hold status. The resulting mixture of visitors and undead was very dangerous and unpredictable, and I count myself fortunate to be able to write this report.

That the Master allowed the trade in or dissemination of messages to continue I would imagine was intended to keep his presence hidden. He had, however, cut off a lot of the building with defensive wards, specifically at this point it was difficult to access the top floor, which later was

found to be his resting place. We were restricted then to the lower floors. I should note that it seems the visitors to this place had all decided to keep its new nature to themselves, probably to keep their reasons for visiting secret.

We fought undead of many descriptions appearing from nowhere, while attempting to find out the secret of the house and deal other visitors to the house. Finally we met the Master of the house, who had descended from the upper floor to see what had been destroying his servants. An interesting entity, the Unranked Spectral Keeper told us of his wish for a quiet unlife living in the house, but that much of his attention had been focused on resisting a combination of Necromantic rituals aimed at controlling him. He also pointed out that certain of us had been infected with this Necromantic power and had become 'Rank 6 Hosts', open to possession by undead spirits at a moments notice. Unsettling to say the least.

An agreement was made, we would help him by interrupting the ritual, and he would attempt to release us from our taint. The Necromancers, of course, had stolen items that he required to perform this purification for their own ritual. He guaranteed our safety, at least from his undead, and we were able to sleep without further interruption until the morning.

The visitors seeking messages (throughout the night and morning) included groups from the Drow Houses of Morfaeglin and House Drannoth, the Morgothian Tower, Shadowsfall and in a strange way ourselves. The messages were held in boxes, which could only be opened by the ranking member of the correct group identified by a sygil. One box was for the Valley Alliance, another box bore an unknown mark, that of a crescent Moon. The others were a red Wolf, a Burning Eye ??????. The messages we were able to retrieve spoke of some agreement, a meeting of 'principles' three days from the full Moon, but had no specific details of what it was a meeting about. Whoever the Moon represented, they arrived during the next day and left with their message.

In the morning we realised that the Shadowsfall's message gave them a new contract for assassination. They left in a hurry seeking the Sorcerer Quicksilver, who had left us during the night, and were gone before we could do anything to stop them. Perhaps we will wish we had taken action then and there. We were forced to deal with a number of freshly changed hordelings. One of their number appeared to be a senior member of the Church of All Time. I fear we will have further dealings with them in the future, none good. Their colours are an hourglass on a Green field. In addition we met one who has been cursed with immortality by the Church, Sir Valmir de Sissudura, who seeks a way to die finally.

At the height of the sun, what little there was that day, we split into two groups, each seeking a specific Necromantic ritual. I will only tell of my group's success, apart from saying that the other group also succeeded. Given directions to follow by the Master of the house, we came upon a strange group. First we met and dealt with four more hordelings and a wandering ghoul. We then came across two of the Church of All Time and their guardsmen. May I say at this moment how important it is to pay heed to your pathfinder's advice. We attempted to speak civilly with them, but they were condescending and ill mannered. Their guards only held off by want of their Terror of one of our number. Our scout warned of an approaching group of Shadowsfall. But we did not truly listen to his warnings and ended up battling the Church at the very moment the three Shadowsfall assassins were best able to take advantage of the situation.

The powers of the Church seem to be in self fulfilling prophesy. One of our number had their magic stripped from them, others had similarly strange things occur. The Shadowsfall were very skilful, and took good advantage of the situation to harry us. We were split up again and again, fighting on two or three fronts simultaneously. Perhaps the most dangerous situation we had been in so far, mostly of our own creation!

The battle turned when the lead Churchman was killed by three quick darkbolts while his guards tried to protect him, and they fled with the body. The lead Shadowsfall was then felled by multiple power drains and his two minions put to the sword. The cost was high, though all of us survived.

Injured and limping we moved on, to be faced by a Drow, accompanied by a number of undead (two skeletons, a ghoul, two ghouls, a skeletal warrior and a mirror wraith or some such that was able to inflict on us whatever was inflicted on it). They barred our way, obviously guards for the Necromantic ritual. We withdrew, marshalled our powers, and struck. Again we won through, but barely and at the cost of one of our number.

Recovering from the paralysis and wounds took some time, but within minutes our fallen comrade became animate once more, with a powerful spirit seeking some unknown goal that fell in with our own.

Finally we found our way to the ritual site, guarded by a Spectral Anomaly. I would be please to receive any information regarding what this was. However the ritual site seemed otherwise deserted. Perhaps the anomaly was somehow empowering the ritual while the Necromancers were finishing the other part of the ritual. It certainly guarded the ritual and was well beyond our

powers to destroy. We were able to distract its attention long enough for our scout to run through the ritual site, taking the items we had been sent to gather. At this point discretion became the order of the day and we retreated in no small hurry. That whole night we were worried that the Anomaly would follow us and we would be forced to face it anyway. Again we were lucky it seems.

Upon returning to the house we found our fellows similarly successful. We had earlier purchased an alchemical potion from one of the visitors that allowed us to bring our fallen back from the dead, and we rested a while. The Master of the house joined us soon after our arrival, and performed the promised ritual successfully, freeing us from our taints. However at some point it had occurred to him that this All Hallows Eve would be the time for him to return to the plane of the Sleepless Dead, to take up his position once more, as he put it, and that we were obvious candidates for bolstering his undead forces as Spectral Knights. His power was not enough to overtly kill us all, recover from protecting himself and return to the plane of the Sleepless Dead so instead he set his house upon us and retired to prepare for his home coming.

The house had been warped by his influence during the day, and had become a nightmare of traps, poisons and undead.. Whatever powers he used to do this they seemed to be "binary" in nature, either needing two components to solve or producing an extreme in results. Each major trap either restored your power or mana, or put you into a cataleptic or suspended animation state. Each ward appeared to require swapping certain 'keys' or in the case of that which trapped us within the house completing two mosaics with pieces found around the house, one black and one white.

Of course we succeeded, eventually, but not before confronting poisonous spiders, undead spirits, particularly ones summoned in the likeness of any who looked into a mirror opening onto the Plane of the Sleepless Dead, Skeletal Warriors and more. The restoration of our powers helped enormously, though there were members of our party with little power or mana of their own but a compulsion to solve puzzles and had to be convinced to allow others to take the challenges, not always successfully.

Finally as the house began to move towards the Masters true home, we completed the final puzzle. And none too soon as the Master let his final creatures loose. The Butler in particular was extraordinarily potent in his blows, and soul suckers fed on those unlucky enough to be caught, producing more anguish in them than I have seen in any other. We won through though, through heroics, power, magic and hiding in toilets. Finally, moments before the Master fled to the netherworld, building and all, we escaped its clutches to be greeted by the first light of dawn.

Daedalus Ebonheart, Green Wizard