

Upon this day I find myself within the shelter and comfort of an Inn or as the locals call it a waystation hosted by those of the city called the White Retreat. I have decided to put pen to paper and begin a journal of my travels and adventures in this strange land. It is my hope that should I be reunited with Sir Beryvus then these pages can be added to the royal library at court. Should I remain trapped here then they shall serve to record my deeds and those deeds and events that I have witnessed and may well prove of some use to those that follow.

As I shall be making copies of my writings available to my hosts here I shall start by introducing myself.

I am Squire Arithis of the Eternal Order of the kingdom and land of Lorderon. I am in service to Sir Beryvus, a True Knight of the order. It is my honour to serve King Artus who has led our people through a terrible war and into ultimate victory over the demons who assailed us.

My tale begins when Sir Beryvus was called to court by the king. Some years before the king had received a message from a land called Orin Rakatha and now that the kingdom was at peace he was sending an ambassador to answer the message and learn more of both this land and of those who lived there. The ambassador was to be guided and protected by Sir Beryvus and as his first squire I would, of course, travel with him.

After much preparation and the casting of a spell of considerable power we found ourselves in this land. Locals advised that there was an Inn along the path we found ourselves on and I was sent ahead to arrange rooms for the party. This I did and having agreed a price of gold for the rooms I returned quickly to the spot I had left the party.

Here I was greeted by signs of battle, all the servants, guards and bearers had been slain and of Sir Beryvus and the ambassador there was no trace. Several of the guards and bearers had been cut to pieces with limbs and bodies severed by mighty blows and although I found a great deal of blood and signs of a mighty battle where I believe Sir Beryvus fought I could see no trace of the attackers.

Having searched the area and found nothing more I returned to the Inn to seek the help of the local lord in searching for the attackers and missing people. No sooner had I explained what had happened to the merchant who ran the inn than he called upon some red-garbed thugs to take me and I was beaten to the floor and remembered no more.

I woke to find myself in a small prison of uncomfortably low height with a tiny opening warded with strong magics. There were several others with me, one of whom died of his wounds during the night and the other was taken away in the morning by more of the red garbed people. I was able to speak to both but the dying one made no sense and the other was badly wounded and seemed to think I was another. He told me several things which seemed important to him before he was dragged forth.

At midday his body was returned and placed in the prison. Shortly thereafter a runner arrived calling that they were attacked and that all forces were needed to fight off the attackers. Most of them left and it was quiet for some quarter hour. Then sounds of battle were heard from the opposite and I was able to see a small group of what looked like militia attack those in red. After much confusion the militia were triumphant and someone noticed me in the prison and asked who I was. A small green creature I was later told was a sprite came to the prison and after examining the magic ward across the door became trapped inside with me.

Eventually the ward was removed and I was able to leave the prison. The militia told me they were valley folk and after I had explained who I was they invited me to travel with them as they were crossing the area and it would be safer to travel in a group.

I agreed and as we walked I learned that the merchant at the Inn had also betrayed them. We also came across several more of the red garbed folk who I was told are easterling slavers. They were hostile which I found perfectly acceptable, they attacked us and we killed them all. I also had the opportunity to avenge my imprisonment when we encountered the leader of the slavers. His people captured several of the valley militia and ran off with them, the valley folk ran after and as everyone ran in every direction I found only myself and the slaver lord left upon the field. I engaged him in single combat and though his blade carried powerful magic that cut through my armour he was no match for my skill.

Our battle was twice interrupted as the other valley folk returned in ones and twos and joined the fight, after I ordered them to withdraw they again ran off in all directions. Eventual I was able to defeat the slaver and gave him a quick death upon the field. With many wounds I then sought the healer among the valley militia.

Once the group had assembled we travelled back to the Inn to find that the merchant had fled.

Later in the day the group went forth again to oppose and defeat someone who was summoning undead into the area. I did try to speak to the necromancer but he was lacking in manners and after much running around thanks to the fearsome invocations used he was cut down.

Returning to the Inn we enjoyed refreshments until a group of scouts from the hold of wolves arrived, they had been told my story earlier and had agreed to help me search the area.

Several weeks of fruitless effort revealed not a single trace. Several of the slaver scouts were taken but none knew anything of Sir Beryvus and the slavers themselves seemed to have left the area leaving only small parties behind.

A messenger caught up with us some days ago bringing word that I should travel to an Inn in the kern valley where many of the people of the valley alliance were to meet. There someone from the city of wolf hold would speak with me about my presence in this land.

Aside from avoiding some groups of orc like creatures we made good time and arrived after dark. I was introduced to a high priest named Puke who was to take responsibility for me while I was there. Aside from some elementals that seemed to wander in at will attacking people I was able to speak with many present.

Those of the valley city called the white retreat that I spoke to were polite but many of their number seemed to harbour ill towards me when I told them more of my land and peoples, some among them shared the ways and beliefs of the fanatics of my own land and may well meet the same fate as their unreasoned hatred towards the undead leads them into death at the hands of undead who may not even be enemies.

The few I spoke to from the city called the valley alliance tower either grunted and walked off or spent some time trying to explain to me how valley peoples cast spells with chickens. One named renown spend much time telling me how to tell the future from chickens blood and animal entrails, perhaps there are civilised folk living in this city but I met none that night.

Also there was much coming and going of people who had the air of importance but I have no

names or titles for most of them.

A lord from the white retreat came and many ambassadors bearing gifts, one of which was a box that had a strange effect when opened, visited him. The one who opened it then fled the room and after several of those present had found him and checked to see if he was hurt then fled the building.

With the following morning I was able to meet more of the people there and found that several of those who had rescued me from the slavers were present. Fortunately their group now had a healer called Jack rather than the less than useful one I had last met. All of the group were those without what was called status, a means by which skill and power is measured here. Several were in fact untrained and leaving home for the first time. I find it strange that this land risks it people in such a way, to send those without battle skill out into the wilds to prove themselves.

However they have not had nine of every ten slain in war and so do not guard their few remaining living folk with as much care as my people do, as strange as it seemed to travel with folk whose skill and organisation marked them as militia I must confess to enjoying the freedom to travel granted here. In my own land skilled knights or men at arms introduce squires and soldiers to battle and until they have earned their armour none travel unescorted.

An announcement was made to the effect that something called the oracle was here, having been in the box from the night before. It was now within the body of the one who opened the box and it would be answering questions of any who came to it bearing a token, a slim candle with a crystal stand. Many of these had been scattered around the area and a patrol was to be sent to retrieve them.

As I had not yet been contacted and with no other duties I joined those I had fought with before as they set forth on a patrol.

We were lead by a scout named Pansy and after an hour of travel and a brief skirmish with some creatures called hordlings he explained that we were not on patrol but in fact on a secret mission to locate a necromancers lair and research base. I wondered at the time why we had not been told our true mission from the beginning as it showed lack of trust in those being sent out.

The group was clearly new to campaign, by organisation they were militia but many showed promise and with time should prove worthy of high honour. The group leader, Orlando by name needs to grow a louder voice to be heard over the din of battle though. The scouts sun zu and his companion, a lady whose name I did not note down, were most able. Travelling far ahead and providing early warning of enemies. The mage molly cast many spells when most needed, the other mage whose I also did not note showed willing although she needs to spend some time improving her throwing arm for distant targets. Our archer likewise was a fine shot and a dedicated hunter of mages. The fighting line stood firm in the face of mighty foes. The warrior maid Lupa is one of those who rescued me and I was honoured to fight along side her once more, she shows much promise but must either learn the skill of evading and parrying enemy blows or buy a shield lest she fall before her time.

After retrieving a small stash of supplies we travelled up a great hill to find several folk I was told are dimwan at the top. Again I was reminded of the strangeness of this land when an invitation to parley was answered by most of the valley folk advancing with weapons drawn in a shield wall. Perhaps they have no heralds here. After some little talking and much of what I would call aggressive posturing a fight began, the fight would have been quickly concluded were it not for the fleetness of foot of the enemy priest and his many invocations of fear.

With wounds tended the group set off once more and all was well until a lone enemy scout began to pace us, always staying just ahead. With great enthusiasm and a complete lack of discipline many of the group gave chase so that upon rounding a corner when the undead attacked the group was spread along a hundred paces of the path. The few at the front were felled quickly and the remainder of us were isolated, fighting in small groups. I did battle at the rear of the group trying to protect the non warriors but was caught by a ghoul while pulling someone to safety away from the enemy leader.

When I recovered the battle was done and our healer had exhausted himself curing our wounds.

We sought a place where he could recover in peace and after a strange interlude involving an archer on a grassy knoll we settled in a heavily wooded section to rest.

Fully restored we set off once more searching for a cave in which this dimwan base was to be

found. After much wandering and another enemy scout pacing us we came upon a cave and attacked the dimwan within. It was a hard position to attack and although many were willing not enough of us were able to reach the enemy. A shade weaknessed many of us and my ability to fight was removed when I was weaknessed, bound, blinded and had my sword shattered. The fighting stopped at this point and after some talking a truce began, the dimwan then fled at speed and sent his shade back to keep us occupied while he escaped.

Once we were all able to continue we followed the path the fleeing dimwan had taken and found him once more, this time talking to us from the mouth of a gully. He asked us to move on and when we did not he fled up the gully. We followed, killing a guardian undead in a small cave by putting our shield wall in front of it to block its blows and then beating it back to death most quickly.

Further up we came upon many caves and ruins set into a cliff face, the dimwan we had been following stood behind a warded cave mouth and several more dimwan and undead were on the cliff above. One dimwan in black with a red cowl proved a formidable enemy with his dispels and bolts of fire, few among us were able to take such damage and we fled out of range. Molly spoke to the red cowed one and some agreement was struck whereby he called the dimwan to come out of the wards and we killed him.

Within the warded area was a flesh creation and we obtained an amulet from the dead dimwan which allowed the wearer to enter the cave and ask three questions. After much talking and many good ideas we were able to answer the flesh creations question what is the nature of the key to set the mist weaver free. It turned out to be the name of a goblin trapped within the undead which when taken to the prison of this mist weaver would let it out. When the question was answered the goblin appeared.

The red cowed man left with his undead around this point and aside from the attacks of elementals we were not further threatened.

Taking the goblin with us we headed back to the way station. Shortly before arriving the scout who guided us, pansy by name, took the goblin with him to be safely returned to the city. We later learned that this scout was one of those known as rogue seekers and he and the goblin vanished.

Back at the Inn we met those who had stayed during the day to act as hosts for those visiting the oracle and after a short time food was provided. A plentiful feast was put before me and not wishing to insult my hosts by refusing their generosity I ate heartily.

Many arrived over the evening, dignitaries and travellers. Meetings were held for the mages in the number and for those from specific cities. It seemed that one of the leaders of the hold of wolves was accused of crimes and he called on those of his city to aid him, those of the other cities were told not to aid him by leaders of their own cities.

A group called shadowsfall had come to take him away and as they took him from the building those of the hold of wolves came to his rescue, a very brief battle ensued where upon the prisoner escaped and fled leaving the handful of those who aided him either unconscious or very outnumbered behind him.

I do not understand the politics of this but the prisoner was then named traitor to his people.

Also during the evening a patrol was sent out to locate one of the oracles tokens and to prevent some drow from finding it.

The same group from earlier went out into a bitterly cold and wet night and I once more went with them. We travelled but a short way when we met a small group of these drow. There was a deal of confusion amongst many of the group as to the rightness of following orders, I myself saw no problem here as there was no conflict in the orders we had been given and I find questioning of lawfully given orders to be a strange concept. In the end however just as the group leaders were calling for us to leave the drow attacked us.

We killed them.

Travelling onward again we came upon a larger group who were searching the area. They had an assassin type with them who for some reason decided to attack half the group on his own. Perhaps he thought he had not been seen, no doubt he realised his mistake as he was quickly cut down.

A parley followed with much talk. Individuals on both sides called for blood and death to the others. The drow revealed that they had a token and wished to be let past in peace. Again I saw no confusion in our orders but others did and more argument followed. Finally logic prevailed and the drow were allowed past us toward the oracle.

We then began to return to the inn when a healer by name of Luke ran up to us saying we had little time and must return to the oracle now. We did so and as we walked back drow were seen following us. A warrior named Smudge and a seeker, Caradac, came to our aid. They guarded our rear and set ambush but the drow fled being outmatched. We made it back to the building safely although I saw a shade flanking us as we reached safety.

The oracle it seemed had set a time limit on questions and there was a rush to visit it. Our group had retrieved several of these tokens which were given to someone called Giles who organised their distribution to those with questions.

Back in the warm I again felt honour bound not to offend my hosts when they waved apple pie and custard at me and warm and well fed I settled down to watch the goings on. Although I saw many people pass by I am not certain enough of their names or deeds to record them here.

Finally as I was dozing off and considering bed I heard the sound of someone falling down the stairs, approaching to see if they were hurt or just drunk I saw a figure in an orange tabard who called himself the herald of the claw and that he had taken away someone who had transgressed against the aldonar.

A number of people had responded to the news and in the seconds before they reached the herald he vanished.

Bed called to me and I retired.

Come the morn I learnt that the oracle had been taken by the herald the night before, it was the



body of the oracle I had heard falling.

A white seer arrived saying that the oracle had been taken through a rift and was being held by these aldonar. A rescue was needed at once. The most skilled present were to venture through this rift while those less experienced would guard their backs and keep the rift opening safe for their return.

Setting out quickly the day which had been sunny and warm turned cold and windy once more. We walked a short distance and found shelter in some trees, here there were speeches much rousing of spirit before the rift was crossed and the rescue was on.

We who remained set up guards and had not waited long when we were approached by undead. The leader of the undead struck heavy blows breaking limbs here and there and many of the others required mace or powered weapons to harm. I found myself fighting firstly skeletons and a ghoul, none of whom were much hurt by my blows. However I was able to keep them busy while others in the group were able to defeat the leader. I suffered little harm doing this due to my skill at arms aided in some small way by the three foot reach advantage I had over my enemies.

With the leader finished and several of the others either bound to the ground or slain the group was able to concentrate in number and crush the few who remained. Afterwards I offered some advice on organisation and we spoke of battle plans and tactics.

Then a figure in white and gold approached, followed by two in black. All ignored us until the one in white began to read from a great book he carried. Several undead approached and as the book bearer told a tale of the fall of the aldonar the black robed figures and the undead fought each other and the black robes fell. The book bearer finished his tale with the aldonar dead as the undead they called killed them all and left. We stood watching the remaining undead expecting them to attack us next and were not disappointed.

This battle progressed well, we suffered little hurt this time as several of us blocked their attacks allowing those who could hurt them to destroy them one by one.

We had barely recovered our breaths when a herald in orange arrived and challenged us to battle against a group called the fox claw. Molly agreed on our behalf and we formed battle line against them.

Much had been spoken of the aldonar claws and how they fought and so we were ready for them. Their warrior was engaged by three of our warriors and the cunning shield work of our wall held off his attacks while our blows cut him to size in minutes. Their assassin repeatedly tried to flank us but our own scouts were more than up to the task and not only held him off but aided in his death. The fire mage in their number was unable to cause any great hurt thanks to the magics given earlier in the morning and of the others only the herald struck with any might.

At one point Orlando was controlled by the ruler of the claw and turned on us, after he attacked me I put him down and returned to battle with the remaining members of the claw.

I was able to engage the firemage and ruler and keep them busy as neither could do more than bruise me, while I did this our archer was able to deal with the healer and keep him off balance so that others could catch and slay him.

Someone had healed Orlando as he attacked me again and I gave the group a choice of either they stopped him without harm or I would put him down properly. Molly then bound him to the ground and we were able to ignore him.

Now it was simply a matter of finishing off the remained as the group showed fine promise, acting as pairs and groups each enemy was caught and quickly slain. Finally the herald yielded and was allowed to leave taking the slain with him.

This proved to have been the final attack and we held guard until the others returned victorious.

Reunited once more many tales were told back at the inn.

This concludes my first scroll. I put aside my pen, unsure as to the future and await my visitor.