

Coming of Age Mission Report

By Ichabod, Wizard of the Blue School

A group was required to meet with representatives from the Humacti guild at the Wraithshead Waystation to continue the ongoing mission to deal with Tiresias and to put to rest as many Soul Garden essences as possible from the nine that remain.

That group consisted of the following:

Randolphin
Smudge
Ichabod
Ezekial Bramble
Aruna
Lancorrin
Renown
Anthrax
Sutnac
Vallan
Kakarot
Tarquin
Jack (the druid)
Captain Jack
Kalliste
Obelisk 0

and our guide, Janet of the Pathfinders.

Earthday - To the Wraithshead

Some distance from the Waystation we encountered a solitary Humacti named Felan who seemed particularly unsettled and claimed to have a message for myself. When he delivered his message, that I should stay away, he attacked me, and was slain. I believe he was an undead of some kind. He had three scrolls, Exorcism, Heal and Bless 8.

Our scouts Lancorrin and Jack discovered a group of humanoids a little distance from us so we moved closer to investigate. They wore red robes and black tabards with golden trim. They were not forthcoming and attacked us. They channeled some evil invocation effects at us.

Discovering we were at the base of small rise to a ruined castle we moved further up towards it. We were then hailed by a figure in white that turned out to be Priest Polis of the Humacti. He spoke of his master wishing us to go away but when asked who that was he was unable to say. Clearly he was dominated in some way. Unwilling to leave our comrade behind we pressed on to the castle where we encountered one of the Ral vampires from the Dark Pass together with some of their warriors and a number of our Humacti who had been slain and turned to spirit undead. A difficult fight ensued with the vampire seemingly walking amongst us at will and the Humacti spirits curing his warrior minions. The vampire stated that we had meddled with the Dark Pass and that now they considered us their enemy and they

would also take a more active stance against us. During the fight I was laid low by a ranged evil invocation but was saved from death by my guardian spirit.

The vampire was forced to flee and we took stock of our situation. Polis had been rescued but was under the influence of a possession from his master. He had not been turned to undead so that he might more effectively interact with the living. He knew that they were there to intercept Calix Wraithspawn of the Dymwan who was coming to meet with us in payment for his interference on the Dark Pass during our last mission. I used the scroll of exorcism to remove Polis possession and he was finally back with us. I offered him a sincere apology for having to leave him and his comrades behind on the Dark Pass but I think it may take some while before he can come to terms with his experiences.

Calix Wraithspawn arrived with a large entourage of spirit undead and our meeting went ahead as planned. He stated he spoke for Lord Cardinaris and his tower and he expected us to do the same. After seeking approval from Randolphin (as I do not have that rank or privilege) I told him we did also. He reiterated the agreement we had talked about previously to exchanged the three essences they had for the body of Tiresias. I confirmed that we would agree to the proposal but that Tiresias would be dead rather than alive on delivery. As a show of good faith he gave to me the three essences and introduced them to us. They were:

Irkon the bloody, a shaggy, axe wielding barbarian type with a psychotic glint in his eye,
Sir Palix Winterborn, a knight of the Denetharion Empire in mail
and Alicia Crow, a Sorceror of the Otomi with a rather fancy jewelled headpiece.

Calix said that he would leave Watcher 4 in the vicinity to handle the spirits until we needed them for our rituals. I asked him whether Dymwan relations with the Dark Pass were amiable currently and he said that they were and whether we desired to go there (important note for the future, I suspect, in case we must carry the fight to the Dark Pass itself). In reply, I told him that we had saved him from an ambush and that he was in danger from the rulers of that place.

Our business done we parted and our group continued to the Wraithshead waystation where we were met by Bob, the barkeep

After a brief respite to settle in we were attacked by a group of Kalid who were swiftly defeated.

Our next visitors were Dreadlord Arakis and the Darkbringer together with Saladine Hashashin. The Dreadload announced that Saladine and Lancorrin would compete for the position of Baron of the Darkholme scouts. The Darkbringer would retire to a nearby fort and the two scouts must relieve him of a token and return it to the Dreadlord. The first to do so would be the victor. A number of the Dreadlords men would provide extra obstacles. The scouts disappeared and some time later Lancorrin reappeared with the token. He was duly announced as the baron of the Darkholme scouts. He later departed with the Dreadlord.

The dreadlord announced a combat trial for Smudge as part of his trials for the Darkholme barony of the warriors. When this was announced to be against the Dreadlord himself,

Smudge managed to enlist the most of the rest of the party to fight with him and claimed that as he had shown strength in gaining allies. The Dreadlord agreed and Smudge passed his test with combat.

The Darkbringer spoke to me of the Aldonar artefact that we borrowed from Halmadon's Heights and had originally agreed to return after a month. It seems that there has been no opportunity to do so after the Halmadonian's complicity with the Kalid massacre of our people. He still intends to return it when possible.

Darkholme forces were encamped in the area and allowed us to take some rest.

Fireday - Trapped

Shortly after a fine breakfast at the waystation a small group of Halmadions approached us. Their leader was High Priest Alton Vale and they claimed to be in the area searching for straggling groups from Barad Tirgul after the fall of that tower. We discussed briefly the Aldonar Artefact and I subsequently sent a message to the Darkbringer to enquire whether it might be made available to return to them. They left without a fight.

I had decided to attempt to confine the three spirits we had gained from the Dymwan sooner rather than later in case they turned up to do mischief. Watcher 4 was in the area and we asked him to send them to us. The spirits arrived in dribs and drabs. Alica Crow and Sir Palix Winterborn were happy to be transferred to a soul vessel. Irkon the bloody was decidedly against however and took a significant amount of of subdual. The wounds he inflicted did not cease bleeding despite repeated curing. Smudge performed the rituals to bind the two compliant spirits with Vallan performing the ritual to bind the unwilling Irkon.

While the rituals were being prepared, Alicia told me a little of her history as I knew nothing of the Otomi. Although immortal, they strove for more power. Her superiors said that they had a ritual which would enhance her powers. She was willingly sacrificed and the next thing she was aware of was that she was in this spirit state and tied to the essence crystal containing her soul. It had been a most unpleasant experience. A number of the other spirits told me similar stories of being deceived into a willing sacrifice.

After the rituals were complete we were visited by Pochanti, High Enchanter of the Labyrinthe of Xenos together with an entourage of drones. She wished to know what our decision was regarding locating Tiresias. I told her that Tiresias' body was non-negotiable. She accepted our decision with cold logic and ordered her drones to reclaim their property, namely Obelisk 0. Pochanti departed and the drones were destroyed.

A little while afterwards a Duegar scout named Borrel arrived. He said that Banyl Ironmind, whom we had had dealings with previously, could take us to where Tiresias is. It would involve a ritual to calm our minds before the transport could begin. Those less able to calm themselves for the transport suffered mental damage upon arrival.

Our arrival was less satisfactory than expected as we found ourselves within a cell, barred from release by a powerful ward. The strange Humacti spirit approached from the outside but this time he showed his true face, that of an Illithid. He said that we were in Tiresias

constructed prison where he conducted his experiments and abandoned his failures. The Illithid spoke with us and said that there were three essences within the prison that were binding him. He could release us from the cell if we agreed to disrupt them and secure both his (and our) release from the prison. We agreed and he released us. We went off in search of the essences. In conversation, at a later time, we considered the possibility that the three essences binding the Illithid could mean that he was the psionic Vere created by the Agoth experimenters. I asked him later and he confirmed that it was so.

Firstly we encountered a drow from Ananch Moranannil named Ezra Moonspray who had been contracted by Tiresias to help construct the prison, which she described as something of a mini plane, but had then been imprisoned within it for payment. She claimed to have been there about three months but knew nothing of the fall of her tower so she'd most likely been trapped considerably longer. The prison housed numerous groups, none of whom worked together to escape. She was the last of her own group but she did not want to join us.

Next was a group of Duegar who had obviously become rather unhinged and our discussions quickly dissolved into a fight. They did not know anyone by the name Banyl.

Rounding a hill we encountered a Labyrinthe of Xenos Enchanter named Xxolopsius (pronounced zolopsius). He recognised Obelisk as he claimed to be one of original designers of the Obelisk range of golems (there were others). We told him that we aimed to destroy the prison and secure everyone's release and ultimately destroy Tiresias so he told us some useful information about him.

1. He can cast the evil sphere.
2. He can cast all colours to High Magic level (I think no sorcery).
3. He can cast while being hit.
4. He can cast through his weapon.

I also asked him if, when he escaped, he might intercede with the LOX so that they might be less antagonistic towards us. A slim hope, but he said he would. It is strange that when LOX units are disconnected from the Hive Mind they are much more rational. Perhaps there is some power that affects them so?

Shortly further on, by a river, we met with a Kalid stone panther priest who seemed to want to be left alone. He had no wish to leave the prison and I believe that he had become rather institutionalised. He was very depressed about the Kalid/Valley alliance (which has long since dissolved) so he was also well behind the times. When we didn't leave him alone (we thought he may have an essence, or know where one was) he summoned a flock of ravens and attacked. During the fight, I found he had a snake totem that seemed to be the first essence.

Moving on we discovered some rather broken LOX drones, some of which exploded rather nastily. This was followed by more drones. It was noted that they were using the activation phrase By the power of new found lore rather than the normal one. Most likely these were cast off from Tiresias own hive of drones.

Cresting a hill we saw a group of Obelisks coming towards us. Unfortunately we had become rather spread out so a very scrappy fight ensued with the our own Obelisk being turned against us for part of the fight.

Spying a figure atop a nearby hill we approached to speak with him and found him to be Viola, Keeper of the Archives of the Eternal Flame from Thanatos. He had been trapped here as a spirit after being sacrificed as part of an Agoth ritual. He was originally on a quest to discover the whereabouts of Prince Thoran and High Prince Araikis of House Ashkrevon. He had one of the essences, a crystal scroll tube, with him and he agreed to hand it over to us. He willingly accompanied our group, eager at the prospect of being reunited with Araikis.

We headed to the very outer edge of the prison which manifested itself as a great sea. Near the edge itself, where the waves lapped, were great magical energies some of which seeped into myself, Aruna and Randolphin, which was most helpful. There was no way out that way however.

Crossing back across the beach a mixed group of guards and/or undead, including a particularly nasty banshee, assailed us. We surmised these were the real prison guards triggered into action as we had strayed too close to the prison boundary. They were garbed in black and yellow. They were closely followed up by a group of assorted undead.

Travelling back the way we came we encountered a Drow atop a high hill. He refused to believe that he was imprisoned and wouldn't listen to reason. He was particularly difficult to approach as he was able to target invocations at line of sight. Eventually a small group managed to sneak up on his position while others kept him busy from the front. He had the last essence we required, a small spider talisman.

Returning to where we were entrapped we encountered the Illithid again who told us that we had to destroy the three essences binding him which were Lanis, the Humacti spirit and the Stone Pather. First off, we had to quell the reluctant spirit of the Stone Panther and put his spirit into a soul vessel. Vallan conducted this ritual while the rest of the group kept off the ravens that he summoned to assail us.

Once we had all three essences contained in soul vessels we needed to destroy them. The Illithid led us to a prepared casting area in the form of a great triangle. At each corner we would need to build fires to consume the soul vessels while casting offensive magics and invocations at them to destroy the spirits. The Illithid was at the centre of the ritual as they were his shackles. Banyl Ironmind and others of his group were present as servants of the Illithid. As the last of the spirits were destroyed there was an enormous explosion and a very peculiar thing occurred. Once we had recovered, standing before us, where the Illithid was, was a large floating disembodied brain with one large eye positioned in its frontal lobe and another eight (I think) eyes on stalks sprouting from around the crown of the brain. All our active magics disappeared in its presence and rays and effects flashed from its eyes for a short while, while it was confused I believe. I myself was turned to stone. A most disconcerting experience. The first words it spoke, directly to our minds, was This is unexpected. The creature proceeded to thank us for our help in freeing him and moved off. We made no attempt

to stop him.

Free of Tiresias prison we returned to the waystation. Shortly afterward a large group of heavily armed Kalid approached. This was the Kalid holy man (a Shanu-atiu) named Sen Atu-on Ab that we had heard was in the area and that Smudge Welk had been tasked by Dreadlord Araikis with killing as part of his testing for Baron of Darkholme. He had willingly come to discuss a possible cessation of hostilities between our two towers and creation of trade agreements. As Smudge had been tasked with dealing with the holy man I left him to speak with him, initially in private. I did advise Smudge that a truce or treaty with the Kalid could be worth a great deal more than him becoming a baron of darkholme and I believe that he did take some of that advice on board.

Once we could all enter and listen to the conversation I was better able to judge this holy man. He said that a lot of the Young Blood Kalid were being stripped away from the towers and that the more traditional Old Blood were beginning to take control once more. Their views were less warlike and confrontational and looking around Orin Rakatha, they had identified the Valley people as being the most similar to themselves. With this in mind he came to offer a cessation of hostilities and small trade agreements.

On our part, Smudge was suspicious of his motives, believing that since the Kalid had lost towers recently and that they were suffering from the Decimation, they probably needed a period to rebuild their forces. Also, the offers of trade agreements were paltry compared to the history of animosity between our towers, insulting even. Smudge invited the holy man to come back to our tower as a guest as a show of faith in his words but he stated that that was impossible.

Neither negotiator in discussion seemed to me to be an effective diplomat and the conversation quickly broke down without any ground being given.

For me this was a great lost opportunity. I do believe that the Kalid are suffering and probably would benefit from a period of peace with our tower but also we are in a similar position. Also, if there were the beginning of diplomatic relations with the Kalid it could mean that we may be able to help shape the future outlook of the Kalid toward our towers. The holy man was right when he stated that our peoples are similar and that continues down to our matched dogged determination to not let go of a good enemy. For me, despite the other outcomes of the mission, this was a great failure.

Smudge decided to try and kill the holy man who promptly fled. The rest of the party pursued and killed his guards but he got away.

Steel day - Death of Tiresias

Diplomacy over, we took a break until Seer Mathis from Darkholme arrived. He brought me a message that the Aldonar artefact that we needed to return to the Halmadonians is still at the tower and wouldn't be available to return, currently.

A group of elementals attacked and were repelled. Ezekial communed with the spheres to determine the name of the spirit of the drow we'd defeated in Tiresias prison and it was Harnak

Lolthchosen, 3rd High Priest of House Morphaeglin.

At this point we had a party meeting to discuss how we would gather the spirit and essence from the Realm of Battle. It was decided that the Chorien would retrieve it for us but at the cost of two souls. I wasn't entirely happy with this approach.

This was followed by a stiff LOX drone attack that saw Kalliste killed and Renown using his guardian spirit. Following this I suggested that we use the soul store to sustain Kalliste should she die again. Included in the sharing of spirit was myself, Ezekial, Kalliste, Smudge and Jack the druid.

Around this time a group of Valdemar sword sworn passed through saying that they had quit from the Kalid and were returning to their own tower. Against my advice, Sutnac killed one and subsequently the others were slain. This was ostensibly to obtain souls for the Chorien. One Valdemar scout fled.

The spirit of Harnak arrives and Vallan completed the ritual to bind him to a soul vessel.

High Priest Sarah (aka Scary Sarah) of the Dymwan arrived and said that they had discovered Tiresias' location. We had already embarked on destroying the essences of Alicia, Irkon and Harnak and letting their spirits move to the beyond so she agreed to return shortly.

Sarah returned and gave us Tiresias' location and told us they had removed their forces from the area. Moving off towards a nearby ruined castle, which we were to skirt, we encountered a group of Uruks. These proved no trouble and in fact Captain Jack and Renown claimed two throat slits each.

Further on we encountered the first of Tiresias' defences in the form of elementals and magic and power wards. Following that were LOX drones and two lots of mixed undead and elementals. Finally we arrived at a complex ward which consisted of both power and magic. It required a dispel of all levels up to 8, a Greater Dismiss Undead and a Bless 8 to remove.

Finally we came upon Tiresias and his minions, a large group of elemental champions. Once they were killed, several waves of undead appeared until finally only Tiresias remained. He had numerous embodied undead which, apparently, was unusual. The undead were vampire, wraith, ghastr, skeletal warrior, ghoul, skeleton and zombie. At the end he begged for his life but his words could not be trusted. It was Obelisk who, at the end, who took his life.

Back at the Wraithshead, we relaxed for a brief period and reflected on what we had achieved. Priest Polis arrived with news that the LOX were closing in on our position with a significant force. The Dreadlord and the Darkholme group were trying to hold them off. The Dymwan remained encamped about half a day away. There was a large group of towerless moving off.

Suddenly, speaking through Mathias, the beholder spoke to us and said that he was very grateful for the help from Randolphin and his group. He and Banyl were to join the tower of

The Weaver.

Shortly after our respite we endured two waves of competent LOX drones. I believe these were intended to soften us up for the main event.

Unexpectedly, a group of Halmadonians arrived, who wished to speak with us regarding the Aldonar artefact. They were, Sir Palahad, Sir Callefax and a scout who was identified only as a Watcher. They were keen to get the artefact back and I assured them our tower was still going to hold to its word to return it. There was significant Halmadonian baiting by certain elements of the party but peace was maintained.

Finally, the expected attack by High Enchanter Pochanti arrived. She demanded back the Labyrithe's property with respect to Tiresias and Obelisk. I replied that we could not give them back Tiresias's body and she requested whether we would return his property, the staff, which we had discovered was some kind of hive artefact and probably how he controlled his own drone flock. Returning the staff she announced that we could keep Obelisk. She still demanded the return of Tiresias' body which we denied.

In combat the High Enchanter was a difficult opponent. Superlative in Yellow magic, any that struck or touched her had their weapon armed stunned. She was vulnerable to lightning herself, however, and eventually retreated when her drones had been defeated several times and we had hit her with as much lightning as possible.

Believing our troubles to be nearly at an end, we began to wind down only to be brought up short by the arrival of Scary Sarah and Watcher 4 of the Dymwam and a large group of undead. Watcher 4 was wary of us and demanded Tiresias' body which we duly gave over as per our agreement. He was content if not openly pleased. He spoke to me privately and expressed the hope that, although he didn't expect our towers ever to be friendly towards each other, our dealings on this occasion might herald a dawning of more trust in the future between ourselves. I reminded him of our people's wide variety of outlooks but that said I too hoped for further straight dealing in the future.

At this time Sorcerer Randolphin, who had sustained himself for many months past the loss of his last spirit strength, finally succumbed to the inevitable and left us. His long animated body collapsed to the ground and was collected by a Mhydraahl from Darkholme.

Once the Dymwan had departed, The Dreadlord arrived with Viola and the newly appointed Shadow Baron of Darkholme. Smudge, unfortunately, got in the Dreadlord's way and was spiritwacked for his trouble. It transpired that he was upset at Smudge's failure to slay the holy man (which was probably in part my fault for reining him in so). In due the Dreadlord voiced his displeasure with Smudge and gave him a fatal disease and we were forced to let him die. I do think that Smudge's application for the post, while he has all the required martial ability, is not a good fit for his personality.

On a lighter note, he congratulated the group for our success in dealing with the nine spirit essences and with the bringing of Tiresias to 'justice'. In recognition of my part in organising

the group and assisting Randolphin, he announced that there would be no impediment to me claiming the title of Sorcerer when I had completed the appropriate training.

He promised that the remaining spirit essences could be laid to rest back at the tower but requested that the spirit of Viola be allowed to endure so that he may speak with him. I acceded to his request.

So in summary of the mission, we managed to slay Tiresias but turned his body over to the Dymwan. I suspect they desired some knowledge from him, possibly his abilities to raise undead away from the Oasis of Souls and perhaps his ability to embody multiple undead simultaneously. Of the nine essence spirits we set out to put to rest, eight have been successfully sent to the beyond and only the spirit of Viola persists at the the bequest (and under the keeping of) the Dreadlord. Lastly, we lost forever the mighty Randolphin but I hope that his spirit may take some comfort from those successes we achieved here.

Ichabod.