

A small elite group were tasked with opening contact with our new neighbours The Court of a Thousand Swords (CoaTS). The group consisted of -

Myself, Kudos – Pathfinder and Valley Diplomat (Party Leader)
Master Delta – Monk and Valley Hero
Gomeric Greyspire – High Priest of the White Path and Legend
Drokak Greyspire – High Priest of the Anvil
Ivak Duhm Greyspire – Of the Barbarian clans
Lucy – Grey Gauntlet, Scout and Bar Wench
Also of note, Bob - Waystation Keeper and hired mercenary.

It's only a day's walk what can possibly happen!

A few Aldonar undead nothing unusual but as we got closer to their tower the frequency increased dramatically.

Our first encounter with members of CoaTS was here and it was evident from their faces that they were confused and concerned by the undead.

After a complex conversation (More explanation later) we summarised that they didn't have a clue as to how to deal with undead in any shape or form so we offered to assist.

On approaching where they said the source of the undead were emanating from we found a group of Dymwan casting a ritual! The caster suddenly died with his brains dribbling out of his ears, oh well if you go messing with dark rituals what do you expect. The others after a brief conversation we let go as an act of diplomatic good will.

So that was that and we entered the inner protective Tower Zone only to find a Revenant Spirit and entourage occupying one of the gardens, this really shouldn't happen due to the nature of the area we were in, the natural stabilizing powers of the Tower should of dealt with this.

The spirit demanded the blood of his betrayers spilt on what was stolen to be placed before him and proceeded to beat us into a hasty retreat. We decided this warranted further investigation in the morning. Information was sought from the White Retreat archives and it was found that this was the Tomb of an Aldonar 'Immutable' named Deleth Thanhar

Settling into the Waystation we were visited by members of the following Towers.

Reader – Trying to explain the 'Gest' system and set up trade agreements.

Wizards Concilium (WC) – Headed by Dean Far of the Grey College.

The Pordaradrim – Asking for seeds and warning them of the 3rd Cataclysm.

Of important note we later found out that the Wizards Concilium were offering inter planer

travel, this is something that really needs following up.

We were informed by a member of CoaTS that we would be visited by members of the Court the following evening and we offered in the interim to continue looking into their undead issue.

Also a very odd fellow named Srafonel claiming to be from the Orith None Tower which is rumoured to lie outside the mountain ranges through Valgrind Pass. He was seeking the 'Sword Sworn' and claimed his limp was caused by a Hepath curse.

Meddling with cards

So in true Valley tradition in the morning we strode off looking for answers to the undead problem.

It wasn't long before we bumped into a chap from the WC casting a ritual with some cards on a body of a Melnibonean! No sooner had he finished and summoned a Hepath into the body that he declared we should not have seen this and proceeded to attack backed by the Hepath and Elementals. This occurred a number of times till we again were drawn to sound of chanting and found more WC who openly declared themselves as from the College of all Elements i.e. Eralan Blacks lot and proceeded to attack us with Hepaths as well as his Purple Guard.

It was a hard fight with Drokkel being laid low, but in the end we found the ritual components which were identified as being a pack of Chaos cards.

This is completely beyond comprehension why is the WC messing with Hepaths?

Aldonar wise the only answer we could think of was the Fomorians?

We decided it was wise at this time to return to our primary mission only to have our way back blocked by Dymwan after the cards themselves.

Of other note we found a disconnected Labyrinth drone which is odd.

Getting back none the wiser we prepared ourselves for our primary mission opening up Diplomatic relations with the CoaTS.

The Court of a Thousand Swords – Culture and Diplomacy

Covered here is what occurred over two evenings of meetings.

I would like to say here how proud I was of all our party in the way they conducted themselves during these delicate negotiations.

They have come here through necessity as their home plane was struck by a continual winter causing shortages in food stocks to a point of exhaustion whence they were forced to move.

A Note on greetings: It is considered rude to use their names unless they have offered them to you so even though I will name the main people met please no matter what rank you hold use them until they have said 'You can call me....'

A Note on abilities: Where we and most other peoples are Trained/Taught to use weapons or cast spells etc. their teaching comes in the form of 'Gifts' kind of like a mental transference of knowledge is the only way to explain it, though this may be wrong.

On first meeting it is tradition to exchange 'Gifts' we of course brought material things and were rewarded with 'Gifts' of knowledge ranging from appointment, ability to capability.

If we could learn how to do thisSomething for the Diplomatic table.

The CoaTS is split into three sub courts

The Court of the White Ambassador led by 'Boyjn'– Representing the people. This includes the workers, farmers and general ancillary staff anyone can be called from service in the White Court to serve in the Red or Black court at any time.

The Court of the Red King led by the Red King and was represented by 'Danar'– Representing the Warriors. All people in the CoaTS are gifted the use of swords at birth and their representative was truly skilled slaying Ivak in a duel in 4 blows apparently it only takes 2 usually so he was quite impressed!

The Court of the Black Queen led by the Black Queen represented by 'Malik' – Representing the Casters though they do not call it that the way they explained it was the manipulation of one thing to create another. One thing that showed their darker side was that people serving the Black Queen can be called to service and will die 101 days after.

Primarily I talked to the White Ambassador and agreed at the end of our meeting over some gold wrapped chocolates that this was a positive start to diplomatic negotiations between our two peoples.

I have opened further exchange of information and invited their scholars to study Orin Rakatha history so they can understand the place they find themselves in better.

The Court has bestowed me with the title of

Official Representative to the Court of a Thousand Swords from Fortunes Keep.

And the title 'Friend of the Court' this allows me to talk directly to the Court and also meet the Red King and Black Queen a great privilege indeed which I shall carry out to the best of my ability.

The court asked us to advise on the Halmadonian's question to join their crusade against the Dymwan we advised caution as they appeared to use evil in the Court of the Black Queen and therefore the Heights might eventually turn against them; also pointing out their weakness against the undead. They thanked us for our words.

I give great hope that we can move forward to a greater understanding with these people and a bright future.

Fire Day Night.

After the members of the CoaTS had left we were visited by Sorceress Tilia of the Green College who highlighted the Green and Grey College's issues with The College of all Elements, upon mentioning Hepaths she seemed horrified and offered aid. I asked her to cast a high level identify on the pack of cards which showed them to be what the Revenant spirit was looking for being unable to venture out due to heavy mists again odd so close to a Tower, we had fixed plan of action for the following night.

She also informed us of the experiments they were conducting where they were finding about 1 in 5 elementals upon destruction were reforming by Starmere Lake in the area of the former world window.

A knight Sir Alanor and a Squire arrived from the Valdemar and confirmed that they had occupied their former Tower. They asked for a treaty of peace which I agreed to saying if they managed to hold their tower at the next TOR then this was a good starting point to mend old wounds from their alliance with the Kalid and also it might be possible to start talks prior to this time.

It was at this point a large force of Shadowsfall turned up declaring the Valdemar people to be Towerless by 'Will of the Mystics' I pointed out they had a year to find a tower and that they were in a Waystation where the Law of the Mystics decreed no combat, they replied stand aside and proceeded to attack us and the Valdemar whom we decided to protect along with Bob the Waystation caretaker. A running battle ensued with the Shadowsfall being slain no doubt this will come and bite us but I feel like the rest of my group the Shadowsfall are overstepping their remit and stand by our actions.

Poking into others business.

Fire Day Night a Reader enforcer Bernardo known to us offered us work to help him track down Crescenzo to discuss the ongoing problem he was having finding the murderer Alessandro as we had nothing better to do and cash was involved we took him up on his offer.

Lucy informed us that Lord Vetzlar had reason to believe that Crescenzo would be the target of an assassination attempt and that she was to prevent it if the opportunity arises.

Upon the morning we ventured out to where Bernardo had scried Crescenzo's location.

Meeting a group of Saldorians they asked us if we were in 'The competition' which we replied 'no' but they of course didn't believe us and combat commenced.

It seemed that everyone in this area was in the competition which we found out to be run by Crescenzo and was 'Last Group Standing' so we decided to join in! Later we found out the prize was for a 'Reader Coin'.

Other groups encountered: LOX, WC, Pordaradrim and Melniboneans.

To me there was a lot of Chaos based ideology going on in the area and rumours of secret societies and the winner being able to join such.

In the end it came down to ourselves and the LOX headed by an Enchanter we decided as we were in no fit shape and out numbered to concede victory to them.

Of note the Melniboneans seemed to be policing the competition rather than taking part and we encountered a large group of Hepaths.

Part way through this 'Competition' we met up with Marten a scout that had been relaying information to and from Fortunes Keep for us. He revealed himself to actually not be Marten but in fact Alessandro whom Bernardo was looking for! This put us in a predicament as he had been a member of our tower for over a year so we came to the agreement that the Reader would need to petition Fortunes Keep to agree extradition.

What Alessandro did reveal was that it was in fact Crescenzo who had hired him to carry out the murder, to this Bernardo after negotiation upped our fee if we would help him find and persuade him to come in. We agreed that if we did then he would not be killed for his crimes just punished therefore mitigating Lord Vetzlars concerns.

Unable to find Crescenzo we headed back for our meeting with the CoaTS.

Chaos Night

After our second successful meeting with the CoaTS some Reader turned up saying hand 'Them' over in a most maniacal manner and proceeded to attack us.

We believe they were after the cards so went off to place the cards we had found back in the Revenants tomb. As we were short on numbers we hired Bob the Waystation keeper to aid us at a rate of 20 Gest.

As we were about to leave we were assaulted by a fearsome force of undead Mummy, Banshee all that sort of level which took all our prowess and skill to defeat.

We entered the tomb which was being observed by some Melniboneans and gave the cards to the Revenant spirit he seemed pleased but not sated as the pack was not complete he agreed not to slay us and to accept our word but not to cease from using his forces to track down his betrayers. Bernardo offered to scry the location of the other cards from the rag we had had them wrapped in and determined that the cards were in fact coming to us in an ever tightening spiral pattern!

So we settled in to defend ourselves for the night. Eventually the cards arrived and their full force was unleashed upon us but despite this we stood victorious.

We re scouted the Tomb to find it shrouded in Mists and unapproachable and decided to allow the CosTS to complete this mission the next night under our guidance to give them standing with the Revenant spirit.

Just when we thought it over for that night a purple guard came and called us out to combat to face a fearsome Hepath and his guard wanting return of the cards. A hard fought battle

played out with Master Delta standing toe to toe

with the beast which re summoned its guard again and again till eventually it was laid low and so was I.

Death is a strange thing you think you remember what went on but just when you are about to write it down it slips your mind.

All in all our primary mission was very successfully completed but what mess have we uncovered as regards the WC remains to be seen.

Kudos

Valley Diplomat to

The Court of a Thousand Swords