

Ventures new mission report. by White Crow

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I apologise if my report is foggy but having so many skulls in one place at a time tends to result in a patchy memory especially if that place is a tavern! Fellow party members are free to add details (such as names, etc) where the percentage addles my faculties. Also as per my motto "I am a Worrier not a Warrior" I am often outside of range to hear full conversations.

The group had been based at the Greasy Pole establishment running missions as requested in surrounding areas for a while. Upon the request of the council of Lords we set off in a lovely, fresh, invigorating Thunderstorm to check the borders. As an ex-cave dweller such extreme rain was a novel concept to me. I can say I've experienced it fully now and have decided not to indulge in it again where possible or at least pack a spare garment in my travel pack for such inconveniences.

We were met with many ex-Khalid hordlings one of which still had a letter on them with instructions for Khalid to gather near a way station (alcohol obscures the name at this time). We also met with a small Saldorian party and gave the Oracle's information about the Time of Reckoning. They claimed it was above their station and would send suitable representatives to meet us at a later date to discuss (they turned up later at our return to the Greasy Pole) Upon returning to the Greasy Pole we presented our findings to Kas (as representative of the council of Lords) and awaited further instructions.

Before retiring however an entertaining Leprechaun called Shamus came to us with further information from the Queen on how to join her for our dinner invitation. We were given instructions for performing the required entry ritual. 4 ritual components would make themselves known to us on our travels. When we found the fourth we were to cast the ritual in that exact location.

We were also visited that evening by a representative of the Oracle of Knowledge. Who seemed only to be there to ask us "What do we know?" and give the retort of "How do you

really know that?â€. The only information he gave us was that â€œThe Oracle will return soonâ€.

The next morning we were instructed to investigate the Khalid activity and headed off into the Rift (I thinkâ€again it becomes foggy) to investigate. We were met with further hordlings and a party from the Wizards Concillium (given the Time of Reckoning information). Khalid parties started turning up and blocking our path to the ritual site claiming everything from road blocks to â€œprotecting groups of civiliansâ€. We gave them option to leave of their own volition and cut them down suitably when they refused. During our encounters to this point we had found 1 of the required components on the bodies of the hordlings.

Upon reaching the ritual site we found a further component and 3 stupid peasants fumbling around with weapons they barely knew how to use. They were awaiting their sorcerers to help them take part in the transport the orders had hinted at. The Baron imbued them with suitable to fear and terror to keep them out the way and Tornado sat down to examine the site. One however was stupid enough to attack Tornado whilst he was concentrating and Vilc correctly showed him that actions have consequences with a single blow with his axe. Failing to understand the concept of parry or armour he of course found his soul now detached from his body. If you donâ€™t know how to use a weapon and want to remain living donâ€™t bounce it off a Barbarianâ€™s friends. Basic common-sense people.

The rest were unfortunately instructed to leave by Layla before we could give the other peasants similar lessons in life â€ much to my personal vexation given the risk of them bringing in further reinforcements. (None thankfully arrived.) Tornado discerned that it was indeed a portal but could not find the location of its destination but did discern that around 100 people had passed through. After an unfortunate incident where our green magic wielding gnome (Lowden) got himself stuck inside the ritual circle we destroyed the site to prevent its further use.

Having completed our investigation we turned to return to our base at the Greasy pole. At this point I would like to alert future adventurers. The Greasy Pole is not for the faint of heart. Over our time there we were attacked by rats, bats, depressed undead (itâ€™s built on an old burial site) and the mutated remains of curry night from the sewers. The cooks wash the dishes by licking them. Your feet do not stick to the floor but instead slowly dissolve upon contact. Donâ€™t ask what the food is made of â€ itâ€™s likely to be something that lives there. In brief, itâ€™s not for those of a delicate constitution.

As we returned on our journey we were met by a conceited, full of herself, hoity toity, irrational ignorant, shouty woman from some merchant tribe or other and her thug (I don't hold on to the names of people so unimportant as not to even hold a nation on our plane). She appeared to hold one of the components we needed describing it as "trash". After being most rude to me, including a repulsion spell and lots of unnecessary shouting our group convinced the horrid little thing to give us what she held.

As we got closer to the Greasy Pole we encountered members of the Labyrinth who had a Vampire with them. After delivering the Oracle's proclamation then then decided to have a go " they thought they were hard enough. They weren't. The vampire went gaseous.

As we sat celebrating our easy victory we were dragged to the center of a crossroads by the Queen's invitations in our possessions. Buried at the crossroads we found the final component and cast the ritual as instructed.

We were immediately met by a projection of her most exalted, beautiful and wise Majesty the Queen of the Fae herself. What an utter honour. She greeted us with a smile and good humour offering us her protection and help to enter her realm of Eternal Time.

It is fair to say that not all of our party relished the thought of going to a magical land. It is also fair to say that none of the others understood the honour we had been given nor donned an appropriate veil to cover themselves from directly looking at her most exalted majesty directly until told otherwise. It may not be the custom on the rest of the plane but in the Grove we were taught to cover ourselves in the presence of royalty, as we are not worthy to look upon them directly, until told otherwise. The Queen, thankfully, did not seem to be offended and invited us into her palace.

I would like to mention that the Queen did me the honour of revealing to me that I was in fact derived from her nation (a fact that when thought upon further makes sense of a lot of the Crystal Grove's customs). She also communicated to others such as Tornado and Bill Jingle that they were "one of hers" and should "return to her". Some members of the party most disrespectfully interpreted this to mean that she "I can barely bring myself to say it" "utterly mad". I believe in fact that her Highest Esteemed and Gracious Majesty was simply trying to convey (in words clearly above the head of some) that she views all living things as part of her love and are welcome to "return" to her at any time.

As we awaited the start of the dinner party we were approach by a lady in waiting to the Green Queen (her name escapes me) who informed us that the High Queen had lost a necklace and it had become a competition between the other courts to find it and win favour with the High Queen accordingly. The Spring and Autumn courts were closest to finding it and the Spring Queen requested our help in succeeding in return for a Boon. Telling us some goblins and sprites had been seeing fighting nearby and it was likely one of them had it. Whilst not giving our word we would we took the information gladly whilst waiting to see what counter offers might be made by other courts. She also gave Lowden details of the alignments of different courts with different types of magics “ which he may choose to share with the nation when he gets time. All courts have access to nature magic however.

We were then challenged to a dual by the Spring and Summer Courts warriors to prove that we were worthy to see the Queen. We showed them we were more than so lets say.

Dinner began with the procession and introduction of the various members of the high court and her most beautiful, intelligent, generous, kind and lovely high Queen herself. I presented her with a gift of a musical instrument from the Grove (thankfully I had the good manners to come prepared for such an esteemed occasion) and she seemed pleased.

Over dinner the Queen explained that she wished to return her people to Orin Raktha as this construct was draining on her powers. She could not keep it up for ever. More importantly she wished to reconnect with the plane as she had grown tired of the same company for so long. When they return (after this time of reckoning) she explained that they will no longer hide away but instead be an active part of the plane eventually seeking Nation status.

After a lovely meal (and where we shared the scrolls we had found that indicated a traitor in her ranks) we were treated to entertainment from the summer court with Fire juggling and magics.

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I will pause now to relay my understanding of the structure of the Fae nation:

The High Court rules over the other 6 courts with the Queen at itâ€™s head as ultimate ruler.

The rest of the High Court is made up of the royals of the seasonal Courts.

The Spring Queen, Summer King, Autumn King and Winter Queen.

Depending on the turn of the seasons the different seasonal courts also take on various properties either positive (Seely court) or darker (Unseely court).

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Each court is forever seeking favour from the Queen. At this time the Spring Court was coming to the end of itâ€™s reign and Summer keenly waiting to take the lead. Autumn Court was clearly out of favour as the King was not even allowed to sit at the High Table with the Queen and other High Court members. I can imagine that favour is won and lost at various times by both tribute and subterfuge as is their nature.

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Our delightful evening was unfortunately spoiled however by an assassination attempt on the Queen via a Fae poison that we could not ourselves cure. The Queenâ€™s unconscious body was whisked to safety and the King was outraged, accusing our party of the act.

We spent the rest of the night fending off attacks from the Seasonal Courts as a result.

During a pause in the fighting a representative of the Winter Court came to us and explained

that the Winter Consort (the Winter Queen's rules not him) was able to brew an antidote to the poison but needed our help to gather 4 ingredients: The Hoot of an OwlBear, A special Moss, The Howl of a Wolf and a Flower being nurtured by the song of Nymphs. Two could be gathered only at night and two only during the day.

The party split into 6 and 4. The 6 (myself included) were Fae stepped by our guide to gather the two required ingredients from caves whilst the other 4 remained and defended our position from further attacks from the Courts.

I must say I was surprised at the gentle and *quiet* nature of the OwlBears whose hoots were barely audible above the noise of battle. We did however succeed in retrieving the captured sound (in a specially provided sound container).

I was also surprised by the strength of the underground tree roots from which the moss had to be gathered. So surprised in fact that my guardian spirit had to dash to my aid. The rest of the evening was somewhat of a blur but I awoke again in a makeshift bed in the palace the next morning informed that the Winter Consort had kept the attackers "busy" overnight to allow us to rest.

The next "day" (we don't know really how long it was since time passes differently in the realm of the Everlasting) we sought out the two remaining ingredients successfully as well as retrieving the lost necklace from a group of Nymphs (as well as fighting a most entertaining group of axe worshipping Goblins).

Upon our return to the palace further attacks from the courts were dispatched. We were instructed in how to brew the potion (thank you potion master Dayleth) and passed it to the Winter court representative to combine with his half and administer to the Queen.

Thankfully the potion worked and we were soon greeted by the full high Court (minus the Winter court who were resting due to them being nearly at their nadir of the seasonal cycle and had exhausted themselves with the potion making). The Fae King issued us an apology and the Queen gave us all items that would allow us to return (with one other) to the Fae realm at anytime without an invitation (we had now proved our worth). We were also given one for a sector lord should they wish to visit.

We also made a serious misstep, in my opinion, by giving the necklace to the Spring Queen to present to the Queen herself. Whilst we received a Boon from both Queens as a result I am concerned that we have now allied ourselves with a particular court of the realm that will not always be in favour nor always powerful during the seasonal cycle. Such delicate politics require careful action. What is done is done however.

We were granted leave by the Queen and informed simply to perform the ritual we had used to enter again using her permission to leave instead of enter. It should be noted that to use the items we were granted (I believe) we need to perform the ritual again using the item instead of the invitation. Layla holds details of the ritual I believe and Driedyn the 4 required component items. I would ask these be shared or stored with the Council of Lords so that those of us that do wish to return can do so.

Upon our return we were once again attacked by hordlings and later by an ex-Khalid mist shaman (something Embers—we were back at the Greasy Pole by this point so names are patchy). He was a little upset accusing the Valley of not doing our job. Not putting forward enough people to walk the mists. Getting distracted by the Void. After being reminded who worked for who. The Shaman took personal upset at what had been done to the Khalid (an excuse me thinks) and attacked. Suffice to say we put him back in his box.

Lord Khandis and Kas later visited us in the Greasy Pole to hear of our adventure and a late night debate into various topics from Valley Law to “who are the Valley” (How do we really know that?) during which I fell asleep over the poster designs for “The House of Assignation” where Captain Vallen had been “testing our hospitality” for the past few days.