

By Ichabod, Wizard of the Blue School

An elite team of volunteers (plus myself) was assembled by Smudge Welk at the tavern to embark on a secret mission of vital importance to the Tower. These special forces were:

Baroness Kiara, Klyar, Vallan, Kakarot, Renown, Elan (who told us so), Driedyn and myself, Ichabod.

Earth (wind and rain) day.

We had all received a winning lottery ticket to be reclaimed at the tavern and so we were assembled. The ticket also held a brief hidden message outlining the nature of the mission. It seemed that the Halmadonians have maintained a secret prison of people and evil spirits and that two former Tower members were inmates within it. We would be sent in to perform an extraction.

While at the tavern a masked individual came to verify our winning lottery tickets and gave each 'winner' a small sweet egg which carried both spirit and mana. While I spoke with Ksandra of the Red School about her recent report of activities near Last Gate Wood, Kiara organised a vote on leadership whereupon she was elected party leader.

Soon we all began to fall asleep and awoke in a very damp wood with persistent rain coming down. After a brief discussion about where we might be, a group of hordlings arrived to confirm that we were still on Orin Rakatha. A little distance further off we discovered a man calling himself Agent Blue. He explained that, with the help of two magic candles he would transport us to where we needed to be for the mission. He couldn't tell us where that was as the destination was pre-determined in the enchantment. There were several hops through this portal, each accompanied by a small group of elementals, presumably by products of the casting. Agent Blue also gave us the Aldonar Artefact that was due to be returned to the Halmadonians. This was to be our cover for being in the area of the prison.

Finally we completed travelling and came across a Halmadonian who introduced himself as a Squire of Sir Lyonaise, a knight of chastity. After a little interrogation we were allowed to approach to speak with him. It seems that he was abroad looking for information of his missing daughter, one Rhianna, who had recently left the tower on her first excursion and been captured

by a group of Melnobonians. She was a particularly chaste and pure individual and I suspected that there was more to her than he was prepared to say. We agreed to pass on to him anything that we found out about her. In return he directed us to a small leaky shack where we could pass the 2 days before any of the Halmadonian watchers could arrive to take possession of the Aldonar Artefact.

After a short cold wait in the leaky shack several more agents arrived, White, Black and Brown. They gave us more details of our mission. Using the recently retrieved Adamancer crystal we would be inserted into the Halmadonians prison which was, in fact, a kind of demi plane. The two primary targets to free were Lensal Blackbone and Morthac Storm. Kettlar von Harzon had also asked if we could investigate whether another, named Ludwig van Helian, could be returned. There was no further reasoning behind this request. Our bodies were to remain in the leaky shack while we were transported into the plane in spirit form, leaving all our physical items behind. We would appear dressed in suitable disguises when we awoke but have no weapons or items. We would have, however, 2 scrolls. The first was to re-awaken our spirit should we be slain (a process that we discovered normally takes a day) and the second was to release a spirit from the prison. This required a waiting body and extra ones had been prepared for those we were to rescue. We were also told that there was a Halmadonian vault within the prison where we might recover some equipment to aid us with our mission. Mr Black performed the ritual with the crystal and we were consumed by blackness.

Upon awaking, we were in a rough tavern like place. We were dressed in differing tower colours and had some other affectations to aid our disguise. We had been joined by Agent Grey. Shortly after, a drone like figure in red and black with a masklike white face entered. It could only speak in a rudimentary fashion but appeared to be searching for its master. Kiara decided to become its master and we eventually named it Boris. We sent Boris out to search for the vault so that we might better equip ourselves for the coming mission.

Six Boris like drones turned up but these weren't looking for a master, but trouble. They were not powerful but it was tricky to deal with them due to the general lack of weapons and armour.

Hot on the heels of these were two Halmadonian spirits. Over the mission we gleaned that these were spirits left to watch over the prison and generally followed the same rules as the other inmates in that they were re-spawned a day after being slain. Originally they were Adamancers who had been retired or had lost all their spirit strength. I thought this a pretty miserable way to spend an eternity compared with being allowed to move to the beyond. The two spirits were only there to mock us and inform us that curfew had been enacted and that we should retire.

Fireday, although there was precious little heat.

While waiting for Elan to conjure us an amazing breakfast with the meagre scraps he could find (a miracle he repeated often) an inmate named Luigi arrived, sporting a ridiculous hat and mask and even more ridiculous accent. He was accompanied by multiple Guiseppe's. They all dressed in similar fashion and it became apparent that while he was a real live spirit, his followers were only spirit drones come to look, act and think like him. He advised us to speak to the Whisper Man, who knew everything. He also said that it rains everyday in the prison, except for one day of summer. Having experienced that the summer day, it was nothing to write home about, just less wet.

Boris arrived back and informed Kiara that he had located the vault and we prepared to head off that way. On the way we met six of the drone spirits and they fought with us however Elan tried to show them compassion, so that they might learn it, and three of them departed un-slain.

Outside the vault we met Halmadonian spirit guards and then more of the same within the actual vault ward itself. A large ward repelled anyone with a connection to the evil sphere from entering but Elan, Renown and myself could enter freely. Two tougher guardians only activated when the ward was crossed. Elan and Renown drew them off while I slipped behind them and entered the vault. It was necessary to disable one ward by pressing the correct sequence of shields and then a bless was required to deactivate the guards outside. Once that was done the others could enter and Kiara and I attempted to assess the contents of the vault.

The vault curator had a copy of the contents with a brief history of each item. We could use Identify and Commune to determine the advantageous properties of the items but nearly all had some kind taint that made me glad that we only had them for a short period of time. Personally, I took an extremely powerful artefact that doubled the amount of mana I had available and allowed me to cast battle magic with only the briefest vocalisation but even so this hat's disadvantages made me immediately regret having taken it in the first place. My mind became clouded with the whisperings of a long dead sorcerer who seemed to feed off my very spirit and life energy.

After a considerable amount of time we divided a significant amount of the contents between ourselves and I was content that a few of the most terrible sounding ones were left behind. The most wise decision was to leave The Cruciform Sword, given who we were to meet later.

Elan wisely took nothing from the vault, but without it's power I doubt that we could have completed the mission we were tasked with. The vault was reactivated and we departed back to the buildings.

While taking lunch accompanied by the Guiseppe's, a spirit named Jurgen came in and asked us probing questions. He wasn't killed but neither did he discover much. After this we set off to locate the Whisperer, whose general location we had been given by Boris.

We shortly encountered several sets of mixed undead, each group containing one or more spirits calling themselves Jurgen. There was one very memorable set with two Jurgens, one who seemed to want everyone to be friends and another with attempted to control us with beguilements and such like.

Eventually we traced the source of the Jurgens to the real Jurgen. A Dymwan High Priestess, beset by numerous 'Jurgens' or aspects of her personality, I think. There were also more undead and at least one shade. Once all the Jurgens were slain the real Jurgen became less agitated but still confused. Kiara asked her a few questions on what she could remember and, unsatisfied with the immediate answers, she ordered the all too willing Reapers to kill her. I thought this a lost opportunity to discover more of the realm.

Moving further on in our search for the Whisperer we were met by two Halmadonian guards who said that a Rage Storm approached and we should turn around. Unwilling to give up on finding the Whisperer we let the Rage Storm blow over us, or more correctly, straight through us. It hit us very hard and at least one of us was slain by it in just the few short minutes until it had passed.

Carrying on we scouted the area extensively before we managed to locate the Whisperer just up a slope concealed in the trees. He was very chatty and happy to exchange information. He said that Morthac Storm was here and that he could find him for us. Lensal Blackbone wasn't there however, or more correctly, no one of that name was there. Ludwig Van Helian was present but he was not to be trusted as he had previously had to leave three towers shortly before being arrested or expelled. Those towers were The Wizards Concillium, Barad Tirgil and The Saldorian Tower.

A while into our discussions we were disturbed by three waves of spirit creatures. I think there was physical, magic and spirit based groups. At the tail end of this, the Whisperer grabbed Kiara and spoke 'in tongues' into her ear. After that he was very remorseful but refused to illuminate us with what had happened. It was getting near dark and we decided it was time to head back so we took the Whisperer, who we now discovered was Ekhart Dalber, an ex Halmadonian, back with us. He had apparently been imprisoned for using inappropriate methods to combat evil.

The Guiseppe's were in residence when we returned to the hut, apparently awaiting for Elan to produce another fine meal. We released Ekhart after he reconfirmed his agreement to locate Morthak Storm for us. He returned a while later and said that he was in the ruins of Alagosh, where the first spirit to be trapped had gone to sleep. We released Ekhart again to search for the location of Ludwig.

At this point Driedyn discovered that he was unable to meld power or be gifted power due to the evil influence of using the Souldrinker sword.

Also Renown became possessed of an undead spirit due to his use of the Lifebane sword.

Boris returned to inform us that Morthak was indeed at Alagosh but he could entice him towards us rather than us having to venture outside, where the weather had taken a turn for the much worse. Although he probably wouldn't be too happy at being disturbed.

Soon after a group of Morthak's minions arrived manifested as evil warriors to test us but they proved to be little challenge.

Then Morthak himself arrived with a larger, tougher looking group and there was lots of shouting, I remember. Kiara managed to convince Morthak that we were from the Valley (KVA) by reading him the creed of the Great Lord of the Dark, once used by The Chosen and now adopted by the Dreadlord. He dismissed his minions and joined us for a discussion which involved filling him in on the fall of the Wolfhold tower and the setup of Fortunes Keep and it's council of lords. He agreed that he would swear to the Dreadlord and return to the tower with us. He also informed us that the rage beast we encountered earlier was infact a very unstable form of Lensal Blackbone who had not adjusted to life in the prison quite so readily.

A little while later Rage appears with his minions. The minions are defeated and Morthak says he will draw off Lensal and would return in the morning to be freed from the prison. We would have to subdue Rage before the spirit of Lensal could reform in a more sensible state, although that state wouldn't last very long so we would have to convince him quickly.

The night ended with planning our next moves in the morning which were to subdue rage and speak to Lensal, meet with Ludwig, return the evil items of awfulness to the vault and then exit the prison.

Steel day

The day started with an attack by a group of undead together with another willow the wisp which proved little challenge. Subsequently Ekhart returned with directions on how to find Ludwig.

Morthak Storm arrived to be released. He was slain and the ritual of release said over him. This prompted the appearance of the Halmadonian guards and an aura of suppression which hampered our abilities.

Once the guards were dealt with we set off towards the location of Ludwig and encountered a group of mixed elementals, which was promising, but next we met the Halmadonian guards that preceeded the arrival of Rage. We chose to engage Rage and after a stiff fight he was eventually subdued whereupon, he disappeared. Morthak had given us Lensal's tabard which is where he would reform after a few hours.

We continued on to search for Ludwig. Initially we encountered both power spirits and elementals but latterly there were more similar, but more intelligent types, seeming to combine aspects of both. Some of the creatures were leashed and set upon us by their handlers. They spoke in a high pitched voice, quite similarly to goblins.

Ludwig was not very far from his minions and we discovered him near a magical pool where he was conducting experiments on extracting spirits from the pool, tearing them apart and inserting their essence into an elemental, which, he claimed, was a success. It was an unpleasant thing to watch and, no doubt, a despicable thing to do to any spirit. Further, I don't believe he

achieved any more than merely housing the spirit within the body of the element.

Speaking with Ludwig himself, he didn't seem a very amiable fellow but without knowing why Kettlar required him we agreed that he could be slain and thence escape the prison. By way of collateral he gave me a fatal disease and promptly vanished me, the point being, I think, that if he was betrayed I would be slain.

After Ludwig had been released a group of uncontrolled minions arrived and those who were not indisposed with meditation and the like attempted to control them. This led to two opposing factions appearing in our group, led by Elan and Renown, and 'minion wars' commenced. Eventually the minions were reduced to a single victor that Renown kept but it was a fickle thing, often looking for ways to attack the rest of the party. It did lead us, however, to another group, not far from where we were.

Initial contact with the next group consisted of a group of wraiths and shadows which were dispatched. Then a herald of a knight arrived to ask who we were. He didn't recognise us but offered us a challenge fight with his master to assess us. Renown accepted the challenge on our behalf but needless to say was not victorious, mostly due, it seems to the use of evil power. While Renown fought alone (and out of our sight) the knights retinue assaulted the rest of the party. The fight was very tough but they did not press us to our destruction as the knight himself arrived to watch our abilities. Evidently, we passed his test as he called of the fight in favour of a discussion.

The knight introduced himself as Sir Lanion of the Cruciform Sword, one of the 7 original knights of the Halmadonians who have fallen to chaos and evil. At this point, I thanked my foresight at insisting that the Cruciform Sword itself was left in the vault as I fear he would have taken it from us regardless of any reasoning. Kiara was keen to secure his oath of allegiance to the Dreadlord so that she might release him into the spare body we had waiting. I had serious reservations about releasing him given that all the knights have an overriding desire to destroy one another and at least one other is already resident/hidden with our tower I think. How can one trust a being corrupted by chaos to keep its word and not break it's allegiance, even if they were once a noble knight?

He related the tale of the knights corruption to me. The original seven knights were fighting Barad Turgul and had surrounded their tower. With all the men they had, it was not enough to overcome their enemy in large part due to a great pestilence that was upon their men which

sapped their strength. A Sorcerer came to them and claimed that he could protect their army from the disease but needed a unicorn's horn to do so. The unicorn being a beast of great purity, the knights decided to use another, a hunter, paid to kill the beast, thinking to deflect responsibility for the act. The hunter killed the beast and returned with the horn but later died. The 'Green' (Sir Lanion said this meant Orin Rakatha) determined the knights complicit guilt in this act and cursed them with immortality through unlife and with the desire to slay each other.

Sir Lanion was obviously keen to be released from the prison and said he would swear to the Dreadlord. He preferred to be slain in battle, but not from behind, so the party endeavoured to put him down. He was then released.

After this we travelled back to the hut, the wise amongst us feeling distinctly uneasy. Shortly after arriving an Adamancer arrived attempting to determine who we were and what we were up to. Regrettably, he found out more from us than he should. I put this down to being both tired, cold and distracted by the larger matters at hand. I did manage to find from him that the Adamancers were all the same and that he considered there to be perfect people within his tower, whom he called 'the chaste'.

While speaking with the Adamancer, Jurgen of the Dymwan arrives with the intellect aspect of herself and some undead, who remain outside, to discuss matters. She was keen to trade information about the original spirit of the demi plane, Alagosh, for the knowledge of how we are releasing spirits from the prison. We had already discovered most of the history from a vision Kiara had had the night previously and at any rate we were unwilling to let any other inmates have any knowledge that might lead to a mass escape. Eventually Kiara cut a deal with her that we would remove the spirit from the site of Alagosh (which we had already done) and she could move in. She was satisfied with this and we could get back to preparing for the return to the vault and exiting the prison.

Lensal Blackbone arrived and expressed himself in a loud and unpleasant manner. He was unaware of recent tower changes but once he ascertained that the Dreadlord was in a position of power, he was happy to swear to him in order to secure his release. He slayed himself and Vallan invoked the ritual to free him from the prison.

Our resources were running low and Driedyn particularly had little power left to him. Kiara and I speculated that Boris might be able to fill Driedyn with spiritual power and so we asked if that was possible. Boris said it was and then proceed to fill him with another Boris spirit which took

over Driedyn's body. The DreidynBoris wasn't violent but was useless. We eventually asked Boris to remove the spirit and he did this by killing himself so, I'm guessing, that his spirit would reform, whole, later. Kiara was most upset at losing her minion.

We then set off towards the vault only to discover Jurgen and her undead there to collect whatever we had to make herself more powerful. It was a tough fight but they did not delay us overly long.

At the vault was a large force of Halmadonians. Myself, Elan and Driedyn entered the vault to speak with Andrew of the Order of Chastity about the situation. I said that we were going to return the items we had 'borrowed' and he said that was good. He said we (the three of us) could leave if we chose to but I replied by saying that I would not leave without seeing the items back in the vault and would he allow us to replace them and leave. He said that the remainder of the party would not be allowed to leave and we must choose whether to stand with them. Of course we could not abandon our companions so we returned to the stand with them against the Halmadonians.

The Halmadonians formed up and battle commenced. It was clear that they both outnumbered us and were more powerful but I'm glad to say that the Valley spirit of resistance was very evident and we managed to hold off the inevitable for some considerable time. Eventually we were taken down one by one and Agent Grey managed to send our spirits back to our awaiting bodies.

Shortly after I had awoken in my body, a wraith appeared over the body of Kiara and said that he was grateful for being released from the prison. This vexed me somewhat until I later discovered, to my horror, that Kiara had not awoken with the others and that she was still trapped in the prison. I eventually worked out that another spirit must have entered Kiara at the point when Ekhart Dalber had spoken in tongues to her. I had promised myself to get Kiara to commune on this, however I was distracted by the evil hat of sorcery I had taken from the vault and so it flew from my mind.

The other agents arrived and we were moved into a nearby waystation. It transpired that while we had been 'asleep' a group of elementals and some figures in black had overpowered our guards and taken the Aldonar artefact that was our cover story for being so near the Halmadons Heights. This proved quite depressing and embarrassing when a member of the Watchers sect arrived to take custody of it and I had to tell him that it had been taken from us. Especially as I

gave my word that we would return it to them when they lent it to us. I suspect that the combination of elementals and dark shadowy figures points strongly to the involvement of the Wizards Concillium and Erelan Black. Apparently, the Dymwan who collected the other artefact from us, Halborn Blight, suffered from a similar attack and is now missing, presumed dead.

A rather haughty Malcolm Middleton arrived from Kettlar Von Harzon to determine from us (well me, as Kiara was not present) why we had released Ludwig Van Helian. Apparently he had been incarcerated for being insane. I said that it wasn't clear that a value judgement on him was required and for all we knew he could well have been Kettlar's brother, so it was thought safer to extricate him from the prison than leave him there. Malcom wasn't overly convinced but frankly, having lost our party leader, there were more important things to consider.

Smudge and a number of our less than successful bodyguards arrived for a debrief. Basically we completed the primary mission on releasing Lensal and Morthak but failed by revealing who we are (although, I fear, that would be painfully obvious to any who studied who we had freed) and by freeing Ludwig, although he could be used as a prisoner exchange for Kiara. Also the Halmadonians Aldonar artefact had been lost.

The last one of the three is the one we own, for now.

Kiara's vision

Kiara had a vision of the origins of the prison and her recollections to me follow.

There was once a powerful evil spirit named Alagosh, possibly an aspect of the evil sphere itself, that existed in its own demi plane together with its minions. The Halmadonians discovered it and arrived to contest the evil. The fight continued for some time with the Halmadonians being hard pressed to overcome both the evil spirit and its minions together. A Grand Knight arrived and managed to subdue the spirit and put it to sleep. The Halmadonians erected wards around the sleeping Alagosh. Later, a Halmadonian bearing a crystal arrived and abandoned another evil spirit in the demi plane. Gradually over time the wards were expanded and more spirits were deposited. And so the prison was created. The minions of Alagosh, leaderless, became the minions of the prison and took up with the more powerful imprisoned spirits and became their factions.

Vault contents

I shudder to mention the evil items contained within the vault, less it tempts the weak of will but I will, for completeness, list them here. All the items were powerful but with serious disadvantages and not to be taken lightly. In my opinion, within the vault is the best place for them.

Weapons

Iron Fang, Soul drinker, Terror, Scion of Rist X 3, Deaths Touch, Evil's Grasp, Lifebane, Sword of the Cruciform, Executioner

Shields

Ushaz' Blessing, Spites Embrace, Rage

Armour

Mesopotamium, Deaths Embrace, The Immutable, Mummys Touch, Honours Mantle, Curse of the Prophet, Incandescence, Fury, Helm of the Innocent

Misc. Items

Ushaz Might, The Holy Prison, Damnation, Amulet of Instant Meditation, Ring of Heal, The Balancing Ground, Sorcerors Bond, The Hepaths Bargain, Curse of the Seer, Chaos of the Spheres, Eagles Sight, Liches Touch, Hat of the Ancient