

*Learned readers please note. The following journal has been censored by both the leaders of the three Cities and of Vanguard to remove any notes or details of tactical or strategic importance in the ongoing struggle against Eclipse and the Iron Star. It is otherwise correct to the best of my Knowledge.*

I have spoken previously to Lady Kevralyn Soulfire and Lady Viranna on the matter of their ongoing Investigations into slavery on this world. I had requested permission to be detached from regular duties to join them so that I might learn more and see if they had any knowledge that may help me in my own quest.

I joined them as they travelled south and east from the Kern Valley passing below the Rainbow Lake and above the Icarthian triangle to the area above the three sisters.

We travelled for a number of days encountering nothing more than a few locals or patrols easily avoided and thus came close to the mothers rest Inn where we were to be based for a week of patrols and meetings.

Our number consisted of:

Warriors: Squire Arithis of the Eternal Order Spirit Warrior of the Fell Knights, Gutrot a Veteran of the Valley, Thumper a Veteran of the Iron Guard, Wilfrid a Veteran Crusader, Aldred a Veteran Crusader.

Mages: Lady Kevralyn Soulfire 15th Sorceress of House Tumdurgul, Harlequin Voidstalker 9th Wizard of House Tumdurgul, Melieth Blackbone Wizardess of the Black School, Phoenix Shadowflame Wizard of the Red School

Priests: High Priest Daark of the Dark Brethren, Lady Virana a Master Seer, High Priest Melkeron of the White Path, Rahima Suhayma a Priestess of the Hospitallers, Montezuma a Priest of the Humacti, Khortaz a Priest of the Humacti, Tersius a Druid, Devin a Priest of the Reapers, Sarathan a Priest of the Dark Path

Scouts: Roban Dreadbane, 19th Assassin of House Tumdurgul, Jihad of the Assassins Guild

Jihad was ahead of us and returned to report the Inn was under attack by a small band of uruks'. We formed into a fighting line and advanced through the trees that surrounded the Inn.

Reaching the Inn we found several uruks outside and the sounds of several more inside smashing crockery and breaking furniture. One of the uruks spoke and said they were waiting her for a group of the iron star that were to visit. They said we were here and so we must be the iron star. When pressed he said they were here to kill the iron star following orders given to them. They concluded they we were here and several of our number wore grey which was an iron colour so we were the iron star and the battle began.

They were tough enemies, each struck a heavy blow and fell only after being struck many times in return.

Finally we slew the last and took stock, wounds were healed and we entered the Inn. The innkeeper informed us that the Inn had been booked for a week and was well stocked to hold us. Aside from a scholar in a private room upstairs we were the only people in the inn. There were two letters for our company. One addressed to Lady Kevralyn from Sir Onyx and the other for Lady Virana from the dark seers. Sir Onyx wrote that he and other representatives of the three cities would visit in the evening of the morrow to discuss matters. Lady Virana said her letter was sect business.

The Inn keeper also had a number of letters addressed to Rahima which the Dy fa dyn had been unable to deliver and several letters written by her which had been found with her belongings after she disappeared. These were passed to lady Kevralyn and were letters written by members of this company to the healer and her replies to earlier letters.

While the company settled down a runner approached the Inn wearing Dy fa dyn colours. He reported a caravan on its way here had been ambushed and that they needed help. We made ready and set off into the darkness quickly finding uruks along with several dark figures whose glowing eyes left no question as to their identity. We engaged the uruks and found ourselves hard pressed due to the rushing strikes of the morgal wraiths. One by one we were able to slay the uruks and both wraiths fell. New figures were now seen in the woods, dark clad and stealthy. Casting spells against us. With the last uruk beaten to the floor they pushed their attacks although they were not working with the uruks and seemed to be taking advantage of them as a distraction during the fight. They pressed hard, circling us and trying to separate us. They knew several of us by name, called to Melkeron during the fight and identified jihad by name due to his use of an unusual attack.

Then one stepped forth and cast a thunderclap upon us and as we staggered back another rushed into the group and threw himself upon me with a slaying invocation on his hands.

After I had been slain the company withdrew steadily towards the inn under constant attack from these unknown assassins and the assassins withdrew into the darkness just as the group

reached the light of the building. During this withdrawal the healer Rahima had joined us and one of the assassins was slain. Several of the company noted that the assassins seemed determined to slay me, even after death my body was attacked several times and stuck by many blows. Others noted that the assassins referred to each other by number, were well briefed on the group and its individual members along with special abilities and weaknesses.

I was dragged back to life by the healer Rahima who had called to me as if through a dead sleep. I think I heard the king's voice command me to go to her and I awoke in the Inn.

After this I took watch and was present when several figures approached us. Two held back while the third came closer and identified himself as Caradac. I had met him some moons ago prior to his leaving the Kern Valley and he had been a master seeker in the White Retreat.

The following morning I arose and broke my fast then stood guard for several hours as the others arose. Once most people were up I retired to a sheltered spot to perform morning freshening and returned only a few minutes later to find the company healing after a brief attack. Some wolf headed creatures had rushed up and been slain.

I took up my post again and all was peaceful for a while until a man appeared from the air beside me bringing a cloud of dust with him. He identified himself as scholar Borteo of the Wizards Concilium and he was staying in the private room at the Inn. He was not doing any secret researched and was not working in the super secret lab upstairs and absolutely nothing was going wrong with the research he was not doing. Amidst his rambles it seemed that he was working for the Sultan of the Eastern marches doing research into magical transportation after someone called scholar Vilious had tried the same and failed. He several times spoke disparagingly of Vilious. He also stressed that his room was very safe and the fire should have gone out by now so he was returning to his not at all a secret lab.

Not long after this a suspicious figure was seen lurking in the area and it turned out to be the Assassin Roban.

Not long after that a limping seeker scout arrived with a map sent by Sir Onyx showing the location of what the seekers reported to be an iron star camp. We made our preparations and with our task firmly in our minds we set off towards the area shown on the map.

An hour or so of walking took us to the area and as the woods thinned out ahead of us our scouts spotted some morgothians at the same time that they saw us. There were several uruks and a few that looked to be priests or wizards and they numbered some half score. After several of our priests invoked with advanced to parley. They claimed the land was theirs and would not let us pass. After a short pause during with both sides faced off and Jihad was able to display his animal magnetism battle began.

The uruks were hard foes and each took many blows before he fell, the casters took less time and soon we stood victorious.

Wounds were treated and our scouts pushed on a way while we rested at a hut. Our scouts quickly returned to report a hordeling on the path trying to hide behind a twig it was holding. It kept repeating "you cant see me I'm hiding". We pursued and found more of these stupid beasts. They proved annoying and we slew them to be rid of them. We suffered little hurt as a result of this fight.

Continuing onward along the paths through the hilly woodland terrain we came upon a steep downward path and had not travelled more than 50 paces on this path when our scouts reported figures running towards us. The at first glance seemed to be outlaw scum and a number of Morgothians came into view chasing them. As the bandits came closer it could be seen that several of them wore the colours of morgoth beneath their rags. The bandits reach us and began to pass us, seeing this the morgothians arrayed for battle and began to advance on us. Lady Kevralyn commanded "kill them all" and all save those few of us at the front turned upon the outlaws. Seeing this the morgothian leader called upon his troops to hold and they watched as we killed them all. Once we had finished he advanced and demanded we return the bodies of all the traitors. Lady Kevralyn agreed and the morgothian troops gathered the slain outlaws. The leader somewhat brusquely congratulated us on killing the traitors.

These it seemed were iron star and the fact that they were being hunted by the morgothian troops supported the uruks actions last night. Several in the group called for us to retain one of the bodies or at least search them before they were taken but lady Kevralyn was insistent that we prove our good intent to the morgothians in this was and so they took the bodies and left.

Once more we followed the trail and after a while we came to the crest of a hill to find our path

blocked by several greater skeletons. The path here was narrow and only two of us could fight at once but our skill told and we smashed the skeletons in return for several moderately wounded warriors.

Once more we continued this time down into a Valley of sorts. As we descended a feeling of comfort came over me, reminding me much of the presence of the king at court. It has been a long time since I felt in the presence of true power and I must confess to relaxing a little and feeling positively happy. I may even have smiled a few times.

Others in the group strangely seemed to become more uncomfortable, as we walked the fanatic Montezuma in particular became distressed. Ahead of us our scouts reported more undead, skeletons and this time a Wight. The Wight's freezing touch combined with the skeletons and a rather tough greater zombie made this a hard fight, at one point we were flanked by a particularly aggressive skeleton that climbed the hill to get round us. This one managed to reach the vulnerable heart of the party and once the fight was done Melieth was on the ground crying in pain with both her legs broken by blows.

With our wounds once more tended we continued and drew close to a cave. This felt to me like the heart of the power in the area and left me feeling as if I once more stood in the throne room in the very presence of the king. This was spoiled somewhat by a group of what looked like undead humakti and other black clad undead. Divining them revealed they were fallen, a type of revenant. As they came closer one of the undead humakti pulled one of our humakti towards itself and began attacking. Stepping swiftly forward I struck the closest undead humakti several mighty blows only to find my empowered mace passed through it as if it was smoke. It seemed that only those among us who used the good sphere could harm them. The dark robed figures on the other hand then began to attack and these I could strike and harm.

All of these undead called upon the power of sir Montague, the same one that our humakti Montezuma called upon. At the front the fight progressed well and we quickly had the dark robed undead on the run. The rear of the group was more confused and as the fighting line pushed up to the very entrance of the cave we became separated from the others. One of the dark figures used an invocation to pull me into the cave and attacked me.

I was alone and facing a foe whose blows were mighty and struck with incredible speed. My calls for aid went unanswered by those outside and my calls for healing were likewise unanswered save for a gallant effort to grant me several of the cures of the neutral sphere. I took a score of blows from the undead and my strength failed me. I fell and all went dark.

The healer Rahima who had used an elixir potion on me and then shook me to make sure I stayed awake. When she banged my head into the cave wall I nearly passed out again but was able to hang on and rested in the pleasant feeling within the cave.

She then left to join the other casters of the life realm or good sphere as they call it here. They were attempting to release the spirit of sir montegue. He had been a humakti and had fought against undead in this area. He and his followers had failed and he had been raised as an undead spirit. His followers had also risen or been raised as the revenants we fought outside. To release his spirit requires the casting of the most powerful bless, protection from undead and dismiss undead that the company were capable of casting. This was done and the spirit of sir montegue was released, unfortunately that also released the aura I found so comfortable and the cave suddenly became dark and chill.

While all this was going on in the cave those outside had a vision or dream. According to Lady Virana what was seen did actually happen at the time it was witnessed and those of our company who seemed to be involved had actually been there and had taken part while still being outside the cave here. Please consult a seer for a clearer explanation as in truth I do not understand what happened. Please note that I did not witness this and am recording the recollections of others although many seem unclear as to what happened

Several figures dark robed and shadowed were knelling in a circle around another figure. This one has been encountered by members of this company before and is known as the primary antithesis. Another figure outside the circle was wearing a black king chess piece on a black thong and was thought to be Dread Lord Arakis, also present was the baby of Melieth and Phoenix.

As the vision began a dragon flew by far overhead and the baby pointed to it, a powerful omen though for good or bad I do not know.

The baby was handed to the primary antithesis, Harlequin acting as seneschal asked the mother Melieth and the father Dread Lord Arakis if they agreed with what was about to happen. Lord Arakis agreed, Melieth paused and then was heard to say "this is for the best". Harlequin then called upon the passage of time. The primary antithesis spoke saying "I am the primary Antithesis, let our powers be combined, turn the wheel of time".

The baby became a grown man and Harlequin instructed him to call him master Harlequin and to follow him as he would take him to his father. The vision ended and both Melieth and

Harlequin collapsed, they recovered after a few minutes with no recollection of what had happened although Melieth later said she had not be controlled or forced into doing what she had done.

Finally with every wound healed we were ready to set of towards the iron star camp once more. By now however it was well into the dusk and full night was close.

As we drew close to the area of the reported camp a voice called from the bushes beside the path, he commanded the mercenaries of van to attack. A number of figures appeared at the edge of the path and battle began. These summoned mercenaries did not seem greatly skilled nor were they supported by much magic and the fight was not long. With such injuries as we suffer dealt with our scouts set off once more and quickly contacted a morgothian scout who named himself corporal Tobias. He was here to guide us and to watch what we did.

He led us a little further to where the path split and we took the left path steeply up the hillside. This led to ruined walls and caves and here we found several guardian constructs and several grey clad figures hiding behind wards of magic. As we attacked the constructs stepped forth to block out path and we had to defend ourselves against the heavy blows they struck. At the same time the grey clad ones launched attacks through the wards and Retreated to safety when attacked.

We pushed forward hindered by the rough terrain but finally were able to get past the tough bushes and pin them into the ruins. The two constructs were much beaten and fell after blows too numerous to count. A third construct hid behind another ward but we were able to hold that off while Lady Kevralyn dispelled the first ward. The iron star could hear her casting and tried to find her, even several times coming through their wards to try and reach her. We slew one and dropped another with a power drain and then Lady Kevralyn dispelled the ward.

In we charged driving them back and slaying another two. The remainder Retreated behind yet another ward although this one left a small window uncovered and this quickly became the scene of a fierce fight. Outside of this building we were able to cover the front but access further up the hill was restricted by yet more wards. We were able to surround the last construct and smash it to bits though.

Lady Melieth began casting a dispel on the next ward and was attacked by the morgothian corporal. He tried to kill her then fled into the darkness. She began casting again this time well guarded and when the wretch tried again he was taken out by Devin who managed to render him unconscious with a powerful invocation. Inside the warded area others began to appear also wearing the colours of morgoth.

With the next ward down we pushed in again and slew more, the survivors fled behind a final ward, this one of power. A number of our company were able to push through this one though and combined with an attack through the un-warded window they were overwhelmed and slain. Two escaped the back of the building and fled up the hill and into the woods where we could not follow because of the ward there. Still we had taken the base and while the wounded were treated others began the search.

I must note here both the bravery shown by all involved attacking so well defended a base and the courage shown by those who were afflicted by the powerful death invocations used by the iron star priests. Despite being pulled to the brink of death they returned to the fight as soon as they were healed. Montezuma in particular drew their ire and suffered no less than three such invocations.

With the search complete we found numerous morgothian tabards, a tabard bearing the insignia of the Wolfhold ambassadors and another with the drow house Alzor symbol. We also uncovered several letters in a strange script that Lady Virana recognised and would attempt to translate back at the inn.

We began our long weary walk back to the inn, taking care on the rough and rocky path with little but the light of the stars to see by. Some minutes after leaving the base we found our way blocked by a unit of morgothians. The leader of this group identified himself as Sir Melar of the order of the vassals of the witch king of Angmar and said that he was satisfied with our work this day. He added that Wolfhold was currently held in high regard by his people both for the destruction of the traitors of the iron star and also because baron Ulthar had but recently rejoined his brethren within the morgothians.

We walked the miles back to the inn in silence and some hours later arrived to find no trouble there. We settled in and while a few of us stood watch the others prepared food. Once I had eaten I updated my journal of the days activities.

Visitors arrived from the White Retreat. Sir Onyx, Dreams of Shadows, Paladin Balthazar of the Michelines, high priestess Althea of the White path, Paladin Verick of the White path, Mandrake of the crusaders.

We were informed that Paladin Verick wore an amulet that allowed the shadowsfall to see everything that happened around him. A delegation from the Valley will arrive shortly.

Sir Onyx gave Lady Kevralyn a number of potions to fulfil his debt to her. Rahima was given an amulet that will resurrect her should she fall into death.

Due to his other duties Sir Onyx could no longer act as our liaison, he is to be replaced by Paladin Balthazar who will henceforth be the White Retreat representative to our company.

A number of small meetings took place where private matters were discussed. I completed my notes and Melkeron and Lady Virana worked on the translations. They were most diligent and had begun to read the text and record the content of the letters.

The Valley group arrived, Giles assistant guild leader of the grey school, high priest Shard, Zenith grey sorcerer and others.

It was explained by a speaker representing the Valley that the Valley were concerned about the problems within Wolfhold at present. The difficulties with violations of the Valley law and with the alliance were a matter of much concern and worry to them. He also ordered that two copies of any reports be made, one which contained every detail for the archives and the alliance leadership, another suitable edited for the people of the Valley alliance. He was later to add that

I should include the entirety of this evening and everything said to the list of things not to be reported to the common people.

Our company is to be officially known as Vanguard, actually we were to be called team Vanguard but by mutual agreement it became simply Vanguard.

Sir Faldor Steel was to have been the Valley liaison but he was attacked and poisoned recently. The poison is unknown as he is unconscious and in the care of the healers who have yet cannot cure him. It is suspected that eclipse were behind this attack.

Research into the lizardman shaman eyes of stars has revealed that he is the saurian subset of lizardman, that he is a seer and astronomer and learned these abilities outside of the lizardman city. He is a high priest of a power known as soc or sok. By the measure of this world he has fourteen status, three apprentices and a following of fanatically loyal warriors. He has four bases and moves between them every half moon. When not travelling he spends most of his time casting or in some form of trance. He is also not well regarded amongst the leaders of his own people and would seem to be something of an outcast.

Giles spoke at length at those assembled. He said that he, the grey school and the leadership of the Valley were now sick of Wolfhold breaking the laws of the alliance. He said that from now on anyone who breaks the Valley law will be arrested, tied and executed. Sir Onyx agreed with this and both became heated and angry. Sir Onyx further said that all of Wolfhold including the members of the council would be held responsible for countless murders done. Jihad tried to argue that the rogue seekers were also guilty of murder, he was told they would be dealt with but that they were few in number and the guilty in Wolfhold were many. Giles finally told him to be silent and stop disrupting the meeting.

A speaker for the Valley said that everyone in the alliance must work together and that the actions of Wolfhold were disrupting the alliance.

It was also said that Wolfhold and its people will be given a choice, either hold to the laws of the alliance or leave the alliance. The actions of Wolfhold will not be tolerated anymore and Giles and those of the Valley who were prepared to take action would arrest and try the council if need be.

By now it was clear that the room was divided, the visitors from the White Retreat and the Valley with a few of our company sat at the main table while all of the Wolfhold people sat at the other end of the room. The level of persecution directed towards Wolfhold bordered on madness. Those who spoke seemed to blame them for every ill in the alliance while ignoring the deeds of anyone from the other two cities. If this is the level of unity displayed by the leadership of these cities then this alliance is already dead and no one has noticed it.

Later on Jihad and Roban tried to explain that those who joined Wolfhold did so willingly and knew that the penalty for failure was often harsh, this was ignored or shouted down with comments that alliance law binds everyone and that anyone committing murder would be tried.

Once things had calmed down somewhat people separated and more small meetings took place.

A shadowfall named Turk arrived, several present had met him before. He spoke to Lady Kevralyn and related that the shadowfall knew two towers of the iron star, the celestial bureaucracy and the morgothian tower and that they suspected that the others were Wolfhold and the drow. The finding of the tabards at the iron star camp seemed to support this with a Wolfhold ambassador's tabard and a house Alstor tabard recovered.

More visitors arrived, this time from Wolfhold. High priest Puke and Sorcerer Khisanth. Others from the city were present but did not enter and one by one the Wolfhold people were called upon to go out for private meetings.

I spoke with the representative of the Valley leadership

At the end of this conversation Giles joined us and

News was spread that Vetslar had left Wolfhold with much status. It was not known where he had gone. With Baron Ulthar having left this leaves six on the council: Lord Spellsword, Dread Lord Arakis, Lord Snarlow, Sir Termigan, Bale and the leader of the Black School. It was mentioned by several present that perhaps Sir Termigan would be the next to go, something that causes me concern.

Harlequin went outside for a meeting and returned looking pleased and with a black pawn on a gold chain round his neck. Gutrot went outside for his meeting and returned as a member of the Ironguard wearing a quartered purple and black tabard.

Paladin Balthazar spoke to many of the White Retreat people and asked them to keep an eye on the activities of Dread Lord Arakis. He went to some effort to explain that he was speaking for himself and not as a representative of his order when he expressed his concern for events within Wolfhold and asked to be kept informed.

Our Healer Rahima was asked to go outside. She did not say what this was about at this time but it was explained more fully later. She had been given a scroll with which to control High Priest Boshek who had died of his wounds and risen as a morgal wraith, she was to use the scroll to capture him and return him to Wolfhold.

Others went outside and returned, some came back subdued, others seemed unconcerned. All were reticent about what had been discussed. Of those present from Wolfhold only I was not involved in the goings on outside.

It seems that the only White Retreat person in our company who was not spoken to privately was high priest Melkeron, perhaps the White Path as the more moderate representatives of the city are held in less regard during these troubled times.

Although the Valley folk present had several private meetings they said they had been given no special task or orders.

Finally I retired for the night leaving several people still talking over the days events.

The following morning I rose and broke fast then stood guard

Later in the morning we were assailed by strange creatures, some wolf headed harmed by power and some lizard headed harmed by magic. This was a brief distraction and several required healing of wounds.

A morgothian messenger arrived with news. He reported that many morgul wraiths and easterlings were moving towards the area. Also any reports about the iron star we wished to pass on to the morgothians should be done via the dark brethren of Wolfhold.

Lady Kevralyn called a meeting. Here she officially announced that high priest Boshek had died of the wound inflicted on him by a morgul blade during his duel with sir Gurthang. He had subsequently risen as a morgul wraith. Our healer Rahima had been given a scroll containing a very powerful spell of control and we were to use this to return him to Wolfhold. The letters captured at the iron star camp had also been translated and were read out for us. One confirmed that the iron star had taken Sir Beryvus, they had encountered difficulty breaking his will due to his martial honour and had passed him onto another iron star group under the command of one Ko'Su'Gara. His individual was to be in the area of this inn on the morrow for a meeting and we resolved to find him.

It has been a year gone since my lord vanished and finally I have proof he still lives and the name of the wretched fatherless offspring of a gutter whore who has him prisoner. No power shall hold me back from this meeting and I have many questions for this slaver when we meet.

The remainder of the letters relate to how many they have taken slave, the drow houses and the

wizards Concilium seem to have been targeted by these slavers. I am again led to ask why they seem to target those with certain skills or abilities. Is there some even darker purpose behind those who buy these slaves.

A lizard man approached, he was named eyes of stars by those who had met him before. This heralded the beginning of one of his visions. The first of three over the course of the day.

The first vision took place in the main room of the Inn soon after the first arrival of the lizard man eyes of stars.

The vision then faded.

Scholar Borteo appeared in our midst, yet again in a cloud of dust. He rambled much as he had before but the gist of what he said was that his work was going well. He was nearly done, his work with quasi elemental planes was proving successful. He was gathering the pre mana vortices and in the state between the pre mana vortex and the full mana vortex he was able to tap something to do with the quasi elemental plane and use this to travel. I tried to record much of what he said but he seemed to ramble and repeat himself and most of what he said made no sense what so ever. I did ask several of the wizards present and they had no idea either. Perhaps a very specialised field of research.

We again continued with our tasks. I stood the guard again and was outside when a group of mixed undead was seen approaching us. They contained several will'o'the wisps and many wore the colours of shadowkeep. They attacked straight away and we met them with a firm battle line. The wood ghoul came as something of a surprise and combined with many power drains left most of the warriors helpless on the ground. Many sustained heavy wounds and the battle had been hard but Vanguard was triumphant and those of us paralysed and power drained were revived.

Minutes later another group of shadowkeep were seen approaching. These were led by a skin-shriver and came forward more slowly than the last group. Since they were not charging headlong towards us I stepped forward and greeted them. I was told they were here to collect any mail held for them in the Inn. They entered the Inn, retrieved a letter and after a period of reading it they left again.

Sometime later I called another over to take watch and I went some distance into the woods to us the facilities prepared there. When I returned it was to find a battle raging. The company was scattered here and there across the grassland by the inn locked in battle with some form of elementals. I was unable to hurt these until Lady Kevralyn arrived and granted me use of her sword. She was sorely wounded and could not reach our healers who were trapped in the melee.

I found myself in the inn standing guard for Phoenix who was preparing a mighty spell, we were attacked by two and the fight became a chase through the inn common room and I followed one that was chasing Phoenix and the other chased me. Then just as we had managed to trap one and prepared to slay it both vanished. As the company drew back together Daark and Melieth required elixirs and Wilfred had been slain. It seemed that there had been a large explosion and that the group had been magically transported all over the field in small groups surrounded by elementals.

This seemed to be more of scholar Borteo's work but when the inn staff tried to reach him there was no answer from his room and the Dyfadyn who knocked received a nasty magical jolt from a ward.

The innkeeper was concerned by all of this.

Several Dyfadyn runners approached with word that a caravan was approaching with goods for us, components for an item that had been requested.

I added to his concern by reminding him that we were guests here and as such we had certain rights under the common laws of guest rite and host rite. Further to that this scholar Borteo was in the employ of the Sultan of the eastern marches and as such we were due recompense for the death of our warrior and the resources we had been forced to use in the fight. He offered some money but I explained that any offer he made should be negotiated with Lady Kevralyn. Roban later took up the post of chief negotiator and drove a hard price for the scholar's misdeeds.

The innkeeper had granted us permission to investigate the scholar's room and offered us funds to do so.

It was decided to send a small patrol to meet the caravan while others gained entry to the scholars lab and investigated what he was up to.

Melkeron was to lead the caravan group with Montezuma, Wilfred, Thumper, Lady Melieth, Jihad, Harlequin, Shard, Lady Viranna and Devin.

Lady Kevralyn was to lead the others and I was to document the search of the lab.

The first group departed to meet the caravan and we began to check the wards around the door to the scholars room when the lizard man shaman eyes of stars arrived again. Another vision began with figures walking past the inn. We ran to catch up when a warning shout alerted us to a group of hordelings coming across the grass towards us.

We fought through the hordelings and made it to the building where most of our number held

off the beasts while I stood with pen and parchment ready.

With the vision done I was able put aside pen and paper and take the battle to the hordelings. I pushed out of the hut and led the other warriors forward to engage the beasts. The battle progressed and I was able to avoid many of the attacks against me due to my superior skill over these creatures but I was sorely hurt by battles end and returned to the hut to enquire about healing. I was informed that there was some confusion with Rahima not healing me when I called for it. Montezuma said he would speak to her and find out what the problem was. The humakti asking a Hospitaler why she would not heal me. Truly he is become less the fanatic and more a civilised and useful healer and member of this group. I shall continue in my efforts to turn him from the fanatic's path and back to a more normal outlook.

We returned to the inn and continued working on the wards.

Three easterlings arrived, they said they and two others to arrive later had been hired by the innkeeper to stand watch at some distance and carry warning of approaching enemies. The innkeeper confirmed this was the case and said that the dyfadyrn as a whole had hired easterling warriors to guard many inns. At this particular inn they had a high casualty rate, due to the many dangers of the area and the cities around this area they often fell under attack. It had become normal for the survivors to flee to the inn with warning of the attack then carry on running past.

The innkeeper reported we seem to have dropped a piece of torn scroll, at least it was found after all the fuss earlier. His people will return the other pieces if they find them.

We received word from a source I gave my word not to reveal. Scholar Borteo was working on means of transporting groups of people and many goods from place to place. He had received a great deal of support from the Dyfadyrn both money and equipment.

Once we had final finished dealing with attacks and visions we were able to get back to the lab. The door was unlocked and open but there was still a ward just inside the doorway. While Phoenix prepared a dispel for this Roban was able to see into the room.

Aside from a red imp like creature the room was filled with traps, strung at various heights across the room and scattered on the floor. To the left was an alter or table with a delicate crystal ball mounted on the front edge, behind and around it were several large candles. Across from the altar was a large map of this world. Either side of the alter table and some three feet distant and a foot or so ahead of the front side of the table were a pair of the large candles. All large candles were lit. Each of the single candles and the table were inside wards. A red scroll also inside a ward was at the far side of the room also in a ward. Glittering green cords radiated from the base of the crystal, one to each of the single candles and the rest touching the map. The points on the map were the inn we were at, the dymforth hills, the dumping downs, right in the middle of the kern valley, the shadow dells and south of the dagwood.

The information we had received from the confidential source spoke of anchors and of transporting everything within several paces of one anchor to another and everything around that anchor back to the first to counter balance the movement. If this were to be finished it would make travel easier but I am sure the leaders of the Alliance would not be happy that an enemy could land soldiers between the three cities inside the patrol lines. A lot of soldiers can be squeezed into an area three paces in radius.

While I was recording what Roban could see I was called to the common room of the inn. The lizard man shaman and seer had returned. This time we saw dark figures walk toward the inn,

As eyes of stars left this time he said we had been given three visions of the past, three of the present and three possible futures. He will give us a tenth vision for free and if we wished to find him he would be two days north of the Rainbow Lake. It was later noted that the company had in fact seen five visions of the past, four of the present and now three of the future. This conflicts

with what was reported to me at the time I wrote my journal but it is clear that five, four and three visions have indeed been seen.

Once more we went back to investigating the room and had got no further than the dispelling of the ward across the doorway when some figures were seen approaching.

The other group returned and we exchanged tales of the day.

They had gone to find three items used in recharging a magical item within the company. The items, minotaur horn, a vampire skull and Dwergar brain had been at the caravan when it had been attacked by hordelings. The items had been reported as fresh, so fresh that with the guards distracted they escaped. The group had to hunt down the three creatures and recover the items needed, this proved arduous but they were successful and return to us without loss and with enough of the ingredients to recharge the item.

Later another visitor arrived, this one was scholar Vilious of the Wizards Concilium. He had been mentioned several times by scholar Borteo who was most disparaging of him. Vilious said he was looking for a renegade scholar of his order who was conducting dangerous and unstable research. We pointed him upstairs.

After checking he reported that Borteo had managed to open a vortex to an elemental plane which was steady. This was dangerous as any denizen of that realm could wander through the elemental princes would certainly make use of such an opening into our world if they found it. We must find what ever was holding it open on the other side and stop it, if an item remove it and if a person stop them. Only those who had been present when the ward was dropped could go as only they had a link to the elemental plane through the vortex.

We made our few preparations and prepared to enter the vortex while the others stood guard over the inn. Scholar Vilious activated the vortex and we were transported away.

We arrived after a brief period of magical travel that felt to me as if we travelled around in circles for a while in a cold exposed area bounded but thin-straggled trees. The wind was nearly constant and added to an already cold night to make the area most uncomfortable.

We began to search the area for the anchor point and quickly came across imp like figures who flocked to us and began to circle round us, one of these kept saying we shouldn't be here but would answer no other questions. A fight ensued when the annoying creatures began to bombard us with spells. Before we travelled here each sword had been en-spelled with fire magic and we were able to slay these beings without major harm to ourselves.

Our situation was a little difficult as we had no healer with us, he had not transported with the vortex, and our other casters were all somewhat depleted from the days activities. We healed such injuries as we had and continued the search.

We quickly found another sprite type, this one however talked to us and agreed to tell us where the wrong place was if we fed it one spell of every level of battle and ritual magic. It took three of our mages to achieve this and but it was done. The details of how this was done I shall not record.

I must note here that this plane seemed to exert a strange influence over its denizens and visitors and much strange behaviour was seen and done here. I agreed that unless it was important to my journal I would not record this behaviour and several times in my journal of this plane I will simplify events to avoid embarrassing those involved. I was not involved.

The imp gave us directions across the plane and we were able to head in the correct direction. We shortly came upon a thicker tangle of trees, a good defensive area and paused here to rest. Daark meditated and Lady Kevralyn recovered some of her mana. This area was very cold and both Gutrot and myself gave our cloaks to cover Lady Kevralyn and Rahima.

Aside from a brief skirmish with imp creatures who exchanged a few spells and blows before

running off we finished resting and set off once more.

We cleared the woods and entered a vast open area, dark as pitch and with the wind howling across it. We were making our way across it when we saw movement off to our right and a voice cried out demanding to know what we were doing on its land. A number of figures came close enough for us to see them, all elemental types with one talking and the rest silent. We explained our purpose here and the talkative one said he wanted the portal left open.

Battle ensued with spells beyond number thrown against us. Our magical blades and protections went down and Lady Kevralyn was barely able to replace them with dark skins and some dark blades. The creatures surrounded us and harried us trying to trap people with powerful spells such as welds that only Gutrot could break. Finally they entrapped one of us and we were forced to hold round him. One by one we slew the elementals but the final stage of the fight was done by those few with magical weapons while the rest of us parried and blocked the elemental attacks. Finally only the leader remained and he vanished under a flurry of blows.

We allowed Rahima to share our spiritual power and she was able to heal our many wounds but we were now very low on healing.

On we went and came upon the renegade. He was happy that he work was going so well now. He said he knew about the rift but that didn't matter. He was deliberately keeping water and earth apart on this plane making it unstable. This was what was keeping the vortex going and this is what he needed to continue with his work. He didn't want to shut it down and we gave up on trying to talk to the mad man.

We engaged him and he quickly fled behind his elemental guards. The fight raged on with us using the few magical blades shard was able to provide for us. At one point as the fighting drew away from me I was able to engage the mage directly. I struck him a good blow or two before he pushed me away with magic, when I attacked again it was as if I blinked and everyone was gone. I was informed that I had been vanished by a spell. Aldred was mortally wounded and Rahima was keeping him company, talking to him and trying to keep him awake. The others had defeated and captured Borteo.

We were able to disrupt his spell and carrying Borteo and Aldred we fled back to the vortex and

home.

We made it through the vortex and arrived in light woodland, not the area we had left from.

After some searching we were able to locate the inn and approached it to find the remainder of the company fighting morgul wraiths around the buildings. The wraiths withdrew as we arrived at the inn. They had been skirmishing with the wraiths for some time during the evening.

We rested and ate a welcome hot meal and had our many wounds treated.

While we had been away the others had continued to speak to the imp creature who in fact was a hepath of earth and water. They had also been able to remove the remaining items of interest from the room. A lizard man champion who complained that we had slain all of the unusual creatures in the area that he had been hunting had visited them. He demanded a duel against our champion. However this honour less vermin had paralysis venom on its blade and the rest of the group cut it down for its treachery.

In addition some form of elf visited and spoke with Harlequin and Melkeron. Some form of ritual was performed which left Harlequin considerably changed in outlook. This elf said he had information on the iron star but would need to work alongside a white seer in some way to reveal it. Hopefully more will come of this in the fullness of time. Harlequin is acting less like a hardened veteran and more like a love struck youth, he was and is refusing to hurt anything or anyone and on our return to the cities he announced his withdraw from the use of black magic's.

Creatures of some type made a small attack. Most were quickly slain but one appeared to regenerate the blows struck against it and required the casting of a fatal disease invocation to finally slay it.

A morgothian messenger arrived to inform us that high priest Boshek having risen as a morgul wraith was travelling through this area with an escort of wraiths and humans including several from the Kern Valley Alliance. They would pass along a valley not far from the inn and we could intercept them if we were quick.

We hurriedly prepared and set off into the night.

Pushing on through the darkness we finally found our progress halted at the bottom of the valley by a river that cut through the valley like a ribbon of black. As we held here our scouts ranged ahead and shortly reported figures coming down the valley towards us. The glow of wraith eyes in the darkness told us we had found our target.

One of the humans with the group demanded to know who we were, when he heard we were of the Alliance he and the others began to withdraw. Daark at this point became confused as he often did around morgothians and joined them peaceably shouting things at high priest Boshek. The rest of us engaged the wraiths in a hard fight against their many powerful invocations. As they withdrew we continued to chase them with our priests quickly dealing with the many touches of death and fears cast upon us. Finally I was struck by an invocation of fear and with no healer close enough to remove this one I fled. By the time I caught up with the fast moving fight they had left the valley and the company now stop upon a hillside, surrounded by the wraiths and some of the humans but with no sign of our target or of the other humans.

I rejoined the company and fought on until I was struck by a great terror and once more fled battle. I ran up the hill side and into the woods at the top where I was joined by Lady Virana and priest Devin. All of us had a great fear of the wraiths and we waited in the woods as the sounds of battle grew distant. One of the wraiths remained on the hill and entered the woods searching. His evil hissing and the glow of his eyes drew closer until he stopped close enough for me to touch with my sword. We remained like statues and after a few seconds he moved on again. Devin was drawing power from Lady Virana and missed the experience but we explained what he had missed.

Finally we no longer felt the terror and with Devin invoked we set off towards the sounds of fighting now far distant. The fighting stopped before we could reach them and by the time we arrived the group was treating wounds and Montezuma was in the act of casting a powerful dismiss on Boshek who sat on the grass nearby.

During the battle both Wilfred and Montezuma had been slain and resurrected, Rahima had been able to use the control scroll and had ordered Boshek to turn on the wraiths, with his aid the battle was quickly over.

Montezuma cast his dismiss and banished the undead spirit from high priest Boshek.

We returned to the inn to get warm and to talk over the days events.

We received a visitor from house Tumdurgul, one Asaramor Shadowblade, 7th assassin.

He bought news. Lady Kevralyn was promoted to 11th sorceress of the house. Master Harlequin was promoted to 6th wizard of the house. Roban was demoted to 34th Assassin of the house. The visitor and Lady Kevralyn then spoke privately and Lady Kevralyn then announced that she would be leaving us once our mission was done as she had received orders to attend a meeting with the patriarch of the house, Lord Spellword.

Late that evening Lady Virana prepared a special vision to try and find the problems Daark had been having. This involved going back into his past and finding what had originally happened to him. By all accounts this was a most impressive event and those who witnessed it were full of praise for the efforts of Lady Virana in this matter. I stood watch then retired and missed it.

It seems that many years ago an experiment was conducted to bring the ability to cast from the realm of death known here as the evil sphere to the uruks of morgoth. Several were combined with humans to create new creatures that seemed to be human and would be able to learn these skill. As they mastered the art and became full high priests then they would revert back to being uruks and then return to the service of the morgothians. Daark was in the later stage of this having begun to master the arts and skills of a high priest and as such the uruks loyalties had begun to emerge. This is why he was behaving so strangely when he came across morgothians or their signs. Lady Virana was able to stop this process and remove the uruk personality leaving Daark his old self.

I rose the following morning and as is normal in this land broke my fast then stood watch for an hour or two while the others rose. I was able to speak at length with Melkeron and Lady Virana about events and Lady Kevralyn, Shard and Montezuma all joined in from time to time.

With everyone up and ready we set out to find this meeting to be held with the iron star although as they were expecting another iron star group we planned to deliver a most unpleasant surprise. Our scouts ranged ahead and marked a direction we were to follow.

After some travel across the land we found our path blocked by a small group of monks in the colours of the celestial bureaucracy. They seemed somewhat unskilled and not too bright. One of them told us they were guarding the secret meeting over there. Then they clumsily tried to flank us and finally when battle began they proved most unskilled with several of the monk arts. The last few were hunted down and finally killed and we treated injuries and made ready while out scouts went ahead.

We then moved onward and came to the second line of defence, numerous elementals. Mostly very tough and hard-hitting earth types with a black and white elemental added to the mix. We engaged these and found them a harder fight than the monks. I came to the attention of the white elemental and spent much of my time affected by its spells. At one point both my arms were encased in ice and I was forced to stay helpless with the mages in the middle of the group until Lady Melieth was able to dispel the effects.

Finally the last elemental was destroyed and we healed our injured.

Ahead of us across an open area we could see a group of men and elementals, mostly monks in celestial bureaucracy colours but with a yellow garbed wizard and another figure in much finer garb.

We advanced to meet them in a copse of trees and battle quickly began. Devin dropped one of the monks with an invocation of suspending and I quickly pushed into their lines to split his skull. Only a few blows were return as they were clearly surprised by the speed of our attack. Then the general melee began.

Ko'Su'Gara was the finely clad figure and I engaged him in battle. He struck the hardest blows I have ever felt or even seen struck and as I parried and struck back his blows drew much blood from me. Only an invocation of heal from Melkeron kept me standing. As the fighting paused I asked the slaver where was sir Beryvus, where was my master. He seemed to think upon this for a short while then sneered at me and resumed his attacks.

The elementals pushed forward and were cut down by the main body of our company, the mage was sought out and soundly beaten by our scouts. The monks became separated and the melee became a series of small fights through the woods. I was able to slay one of the monks and joined Daark as he slew another. Finally the monks were all dead and despite the plentiful healing I had received through the fighting I was staggering from my wounds and exhaustion.

Ko'Su'Gara had fled and many of the group were in pursuit. I found Rahima unconscious and after receiving four of the most powerful battle heals from Melkeron and Shard I picked her up and set out to follow the others.

We came upon them still in battle, by skill several had acted together to disarm the slaver of his pole arm and he now stood surrounded and under constant attack. Even with his bare hands he was dangerous and several fell out of battle after suffering his blows.

Finally he fell and we were triumphant.

We took his body and return to the inn to recover and to prepare for our journey home.

Phoenix left us and went off with a sister of the flame.

Lady Kevralyn left us and went to her meeting with Lord Spellsword.

We returned to the cities of the Alliance for a well-deserved rest.