

## **A Report of Lizards, Fights and Short bad-tempered purple people.**

*(November 2003)*

No sooner had our business near the World Window been concluded, and we had settled down to relax and maybe have a few small sips of ale; when a communiqué arrived. Stating that some of us should progress North – close to the fallen tower of the Azad-An, to a Reader Waystation.

We were to be joined by a contingent from the Towers to support a diplomatic mission to said Reader and gain some goodies for the glory and edification of Wolfhold. From the previous mission and journeying with myself were:-

Thumper Kneebiter of the Ironguard; Phoenix Shadowsflame, Wizard of Fire; Melieth Blackbone, Wizard of Darkness all from Wolfhold.

From the Valley Alliance were Runt Riverkin, Hospitaller; Tsika, Priest of the Grey Gauntlet; Nethris, a skilled Pathfinder; and myself, Tersius, Druid of some small means.

We soon met up our friends, fresh from the Towers, these were:

Montezuma, Goblin Priest of Humact and shouting; Luke, Priest and little finger of Humact, but with less shouting; Wilfred, a crusader aspirant and all-round nice chap (with a natty line in moustache stroking); all of the White Retreat.

From Wolfhold arrived Devin Amber, Priest of the Reaper Sect and our leader for this mission; Xaria, a warrior, yet to make a decision about her future; Tarren, possibly of the Dark Wizards – yet somewhat evasive of which guilds precisely.

Of my Valley Alliance arrived Gutrot, a fine and doughty Half-Orc warrior – though suffering greatly from the shadow-blight; and Alabrion, Wizard of the Temple of Earth.

We had journeyed all day and were a little weary, well some of us were anyway – it was time to seek shelter from the cold night. We chanced across a group of Kalid – Steelwind and Earthwarp Sects, I believe. They claimed the area to be their lands, a steaming heap of leafmold, and could they be persuaded otherwise? Could they, my staff. So we warmed up a bit there, a short way up the path was another Earthwarp gimp, I mean really, these guys get on my tits – they're not quite as bad as the Children of the Brood – but they still mess about with Nature. Given half a chance I'll give a smacking to anybody doing that. This Earthwarp was accompanied by some Sargyn who had another, not unlike with them. He was however somewhat different in colouration as the Sargyn were more mottled brown and this other was a lighter green. This one was Thessessin, named Sssarr, and was prisoner of the Sargyn.

The Sargyn were innately magical or powered, requiring power or magical specific skills to defeat – this should be recalled in case of further valley meetings. I was about to cast a spell to communicate with Sssarr, when he revealed that he could speak, if somewhat quietly and with a sibilant accent. He also told us of a cavern close-by where we might rest for the night and speak with their shaman. The cave was protected by a ward where we had to speak our name, then enter this was to give warning against their ancient enemy – the Sargyn.

The Shaman – called Gecko, was a wise leader, he was thankful for the return of his tribesman – although family might be a closer analogy. The Thessessin are closely tied to each other, through centuries of attacks and conflict from their ancient foe – the Sargyn. Do not speak of the Sargyn by name as this gives great offence – rather if you must, name them as the ancient enemy.

Sssarr had spoken of the recent increase in the stealing of their spawn; again this was a very sore subject with Gecko. It was revealed that the Kalid had been of late in the area, taking the Towerless and Hordelings, equipping and training them. I feel it is no coincidence that there has been an increase in the pilfering of the Thessessin's spawn. Trust the Kalid to bugger up a place. The shaman also spoke of undead roaming the area – which was another reason why the wards were necessary. Then again, this close to the Maegnor Swamp to find undead would not be a surprise.

We agreed as a boon to take some herbs to a Thessessin Seer who would be located close to the Reader Waystation, as it did not interfere with our mission – Devin agreed. We were alerted to the presence of undead in the vicinity of the cave. As good guests (and not because we had two Humacti and a servant of Nature) we decided to jump up and down on them – which we did.

Particular note should go to Luke who quickly and efficiently prepared us for the fight.

The Dim-wan leader, who carried an embodied Fetch additionally, carried a bid from the Dim-wan for the Items we were supposed to also bid for. I feel that some of us became aware, at that time, of the possibility of intercepting further bids from other interested parties.

Upon returning to the cave – Phoenix and I spoke for some time with Gecko, learning more of their ways. We learnt that the Thessessin have an agreement with the Reader for support in the future. In return the Thessessin give the Reader items that they find deep in the pools and underground ways of the Rundig River. Two things occur to me: one, that the Reader were selling newly acquired items, - this is most likely to be the source. Two, that an alliance to protect the Thessessin might also be profitable for the KVA.

Phoenix and I spoke of how we were keen to assist the Thessessin, I felt particularly motivated – especially on reflection, I consider that the Kalid Earthwarp are allied with the Sargyn. In order to counter this nurtureless alliance and to help protect the Thessessin spawning pools I offered my assistance. Phoenix and I were accorded the ‘title’ of friend to the Thessessin.

Morning saw an attack upon our positions by Kalid Earthwarp spoor, unfortunately we were beset by Earthwarp Wizard throwing an Earthquake at us, which broke up our front line.

Kalid Earthwarp should be given no quarter – and use the usual array of Kalid spells. Additionally they have a particular fondness for Brown Magic, so blunt weapons are the best physical offence – or a good magical Blade.

We were badly mauled in that fight – by the end both our Priests of Humact were on the ground. I would like to thank Xaria and Gutrot for standing by me when I was Welded and beset.

Later that morning – upon our forced march to the reader Waystation – as time was short. We met three Celestial Bureaucracy, they were also journeying to the Waystation; Devin attempted to ascertain the nature of their bid that we might have a better understanding of what to bid ourselves. Unfortunately the Bureaucracy have a stern approach to carrying out orders, and

were not about to reveal the information. Matters became heated and conflict ensued. Hordelings were also in the area, seemingly awaiting somebody – they seemed particularly interested in the clothing and bodies of the Bureaucracy; what can I say, straw hats don't suit Hordelings.

We also wandered across a Dim-wan, who was carrying a bid; well the bid kind of got destroyed in the confusion.

Whilst taking a small break a little later, some Kalid Earthwarp chanced upon us. We learned that they were looking for Thessessin eggs, even offered money for them. That they were to be used in experiments and breeding programmes was implicit in the way they spoke.

We must have been resting close to a well-trodden path as Reader guard was also on his way to the Waystation. We learned from him that there was also to be a test of martial skill that evening at the Waystation – as there was on many Steelday.

Upon the extended journey, we chanced across some more Kalid – against whom we stood and fought with considerable ability. Our front line pushing solidly and our skirmishers hacking away at their confusion. If only we could fight so well in all situations.

Soon after that – almost without giving us a chance to breath – we were attacked by Towerless; yet these Towerless said nary a word and were impassive as they tried to bash our skulls in. They were as if being controlled.

Yet another wave of these eerily silent people – and our resources were sorely pushed – fortunately the Waystation of the Reader was in sight.

Arriving in short order, we were greeted by Mistress Mirriden, who was in charge of the Waystation and environs – but also of the most important bid. Unfortunately there was a surviving Celestial Bureaucracy from earlier that had made it; I had not been aware of one escaping the jaws of the Hordeling – but perhaps I wasn't as observant as usual, at that time. There was a good contingent of Reader guards at the Waystation as this was a place of great note. Upon the wall was a message board – it had comments from previous persons who had stayed here and fought in the 'Fight Circle'.

There were many who arrived that evening to give up their bid to the Reader for these items, including some clan Gethell Drow from Annach Morrannanil, and a Doth Lodass with some kind of Golem construct.

Additionally a Shadowsfall Captain named Eredan was at the Waystation; he had the markings of a contract upon his face – he spoke with a few people I believe and concluded his business. He stayed on to observe the Fight Circle.

A bit later on there was also a visit of a somewhat more confrontational nature by some Dim-wan; who we saw off. There were some bureaucratic issues raised by our intercepting diplomatic packages earlier, this seemed to be pretty much sorted out by our defending the Waystation, however.

There was quite some interest in the Fight Circle by Valley members – not just the warriors I should mention. Some interested in fighting, some in upholding Valley honour. In all five of our number entered: Gutrot, Nethris, Phoenix, Thumper and Wilfred. Gutrot was a clear winner in his first round – but faced a Drow of surprising skill in his second – by stunning Gutrot's legs it gave him time to cast a Skin upon himself. Nethris faced a wizard of some skill in his bout, it was a close thing – but was defeated, perhaps by his hesitancy. Phoenix too was defeated in his first round, by the very dextrous Lannock Elfblight – who went on to defeat Gutrot. Thumper was clear winner in all of her bouts – this doughty warrior of the Iron Guard went on to defeat Elfblight to much cheering and adulation. Wilfred, Crusader Aspirant was out-matched in all of his fights, yet his straight no-nonsense skills proved him the greater warrior – including fighting an embodied ghoul. When it broke free – paralysing many, the Reader took steps to punish its second.

The rules of Fight Circle were clear: The area of combat (actually an oval) was where all combat must take place. There shall be no stepping outside of the 'circle' – there will be one warning if this should occur, then disqualification. You may not take any armour, nor be magically/empowered in any way to step into the ring. The only exception to this seems to be that of the weapon of combatant's choice. There is a ringmaster who presides over the whole event and has absolute jurisdiction here. The one of the combatants who is judged to be the less skilled of the two may ask a boon of the Ringmaster. This extends to limiting the other's strength to that of his or her own, that no magic be used and so on... This in no way guarantees the acceptance of said boon by the Ringmaster – who is there to make the fight interesting, not fair. The weapon of choice of the combatant may not be challenged (including by boon); and each combatant must have a second to present them and carry their weapon.

There were a series of bets going on in the sidelines, by none other than our old friend Rahime of the Dai-fah-Dyn; who had just a day before been fleecing the Valley Alliance out of many Gests. There was no sign of Wensell Harber-Forkington – but as Rahime was under the direct protection of Mistress Mirriden, no action was taken against him – although the Mistress was duly warned.

Upon returning to the Valley we sent a message to the Bey Nazir Khan also of the Dai-fah-Dyn (who wished to catch Harber-Forkington for his misdeeds), of Rahime's whereabouts.

But I digress...

The result of the circle championship was that our illustrious warrior – Thumper was declared winner and Champion of Fight Circle.  
Hurrah! I say – she surely deserves the accolade.

There was also a round where all could compete – all-comers, no less. Alabrion was the one to take this – and won among other things, a good beating from the Master of the Circle. But also a wad of cash.

Just before bedtime we received the information that the seer was nearby- so we delivered the herbs as agreed. He proposed a boon for those who would accept: a vision; we would have to return in the morning for the full deal – although some got prophetic replies that required more questions – isn't that always the way with Seers though?

Morning saw us keeping our promise to return to the Seer. Sargyn attempted to interdict our path their attacks were difficult, as they can be immune to many things – oft requiring merely power of magic to dispatch them.

Our return journey chanced us to come upon slain Reader – we did our best for them; quickly we returned to Mistress Mirriden with the surviving guard. They had been protecting that which we had been sent to bid for, the guard passed on to his deity's embrace soon after. Devin seemed sure they had been attacked with psionics – which in hindsight would certainly go a

long way to account for those towerless the day before.

We picked up the trail quickly and hurried after the poachers. They seemed to be made up of similar towerless as me had met the day before... Certainly they seemed to have the same tailor. A protracted fight ensued, and what can I say about it? Many showed the makings of heroes – Gutrot and Thumper fought strongly – Wilfred showed his sense of honour in no way detracts from his skill.

Tsika, Monty, Alabrion, Xaria and I managed to hold off a good proportion of their number – while Devin went straight for the throat so to speak – the leader. I saw Nethris lead one of the towerless a merry dance and blur of knives, Runt and Luke – thank you so much for the grace of your healing.

Their leader was a Duegar – purple, ugly of mind and spirit. Truly he possessed mind powers though – I was struck by a couple of those mental bolts – which left my ears ringing. Eventually the combined magic of Melieth and Phoenix, as well as our martial prowess wore them down. The Duegar struck down Phoenix and with a great cry Melieth got involved in the melee that surrounded the – by then lone leader. We beat the unpleasant little man into the ground.

He bore a symbol – a silver arm, holding a hammer upon a background of brown. I have not heard of this tower – could it be extra-planar? Devin recovered the items we had been sent for and we returned home.

Upon reaching the towers we discovered that Wolfhold had been mobilised to protect their tower – the rest you know.

Tersius

Druid and Servant of Nature.