

Mission Parameters

The purpose of our mission was to progress attempts at freeing Ison, son of Rhianna of the Order of St Michael, from the bonds placed upon him by the Fortress of Pentar and return him to our people. This would be made up of a number of tasks;

- Rendezvous with the Wizards Concillium
- Locate 'Finnias' and seek aid in removing drone protection from the child Ison
- Be available to meet representatives of Halmaddons Heights who wished to speak with us on this matter

an additional mission parameter became available during our time in the field which was also undertaken;

- Perform a 'surgical strike' into the Abyss to weak the power of a major Hephath used in the control of the child Ison

Personnel

- Aspirant Roesis Order of St Michael. Group Leader
- Sorcerer Talon "The Count" of the Yellow School. 2nd in Command
- Eminent Sentinel Kyle Ompaq
- High Priest Dreidyn of the Grey Path
- High Priest Flint Baleforge of the Gauntlet
- Hierophant Malice of the Ways and Groves

Earth Day

After some minor skirmishes our small group arrived at the planeside edge waystation. Here we were met by a number of representatives of the Wizards Concillium including the assistant Dean of the White college. They offered us aid in locating Finnias but on performing a divination it was revealed that he was clouded in their site by some means. Fortunately they were aware of an item, and Eye, that could be used to enhance scrying magics which may allow them to force their way past the shield and identify the location of Finnias. We agreed to seek this item for them in order to pursue our primary objective.

There was also quite the kerfuffle while preparing for divination. Casters of the white magic seemed to suffer some kind of seizure and many of them writhed in pain. When they came around they revealed that one of the nodes of White Magic had been destroyed and the effect upon those connected to it was what we witnessed.

As we discussed our plans and the state of the Valley in general we were spied on at this time by a member of the Kalid. He was a most disagreeable fellow but within the safety of the Waystation we remained true to our duties and left him be. He would return to plague us later however.

Fire Day

The day started well with a clear brief. We were to be teleported by the Wizards Concillium to a location close to the Eye and were given an item attuned to it's presence so that we would be

draw toward it's presence.

The teleport went off flawlessly with out group appearing together and unmolested. Following the pull from my pouch we proceeded in what we believed was an Easterly direction.

Not far down a wide path we met with a number of woodland creatures and walking trees that seem to have become more common since the Podaradrim were put in charge of tending the land. They were however strangely dark and corrupt. This was a familiar experience from previous missions and we quickly glanced around looking for dark shapes of nothingness which we believe is the void corrupting the land. The Void tendrils are stretching from the Icarthian triangle and causing widespread damage on OR and needs to be resolved as quickly as possible. We did indeed spy in a hollow off the path one of the large tree spirits being molested by two shadowy figures. We engaged them quickly our protections from the void proving their worth this time as the entire group were able to engage and quickly destroyed this tendril things.

Sadly most of the nature creatures were too far gone and also had to be lain to rest aside from a single tree which seemed to put down new roots and sleep. Hopefully healing as Malice was unable to sense any remaining taint. A small victory perhaps.

We pressed on until we spied a number of figures in an obvious guard formation. Watching briefly it became clear they were undead of some kind suggesting that we were encroaching on the lands of the Dymwan perhaps? We went forward with the intention of diploming our way through but to no effect. The guards proved too eager to destroy the living, tortured as they are in their foul forms, and we defended ourselves with vigor until nothing but shattered bone remained. For border guards of a land they were of practically no consequence being merely minor skeletons.

While assessing our minor wounds a cry came over the hill and a large group of the Forgotten came over the crest. Wasting little time they engaged our line immediately accusing us of being their to aid the Dymwan in their battle with the Forgotten (something we cared nothing for at this time). This battle was dangerous and difficult, pushing us far harder than we had been to this point. We were victorious in the end however with the last of their strange returning spirits finally destroyed we tended to our significant injuries to discover our battle was being observed.

A Dymwan observed us from the hill and I approached wishing to talk. We explained our purpose in the area and requested permission to continue into the lands of the Dymwan (the Oasis of Souls) to pursue our sworn duty. We were refused and the Dymwan left, while leaving more of his undead abominations to hold back our small numbers from pursuing him as he sauntered off no doubt to prepare the defenses!

We moved quickly now. Aware that our location was known and that it would be easy for the Dymwan to harry us within their own borders. We fought through a number of patrols of minor undead until we spotted a larger force ahead.

A Dymwan priestess hailed us loudly. Telling us to stay away from her master. We took this as a good sign that we were on the right track. When it became clear (pretty quickly) that this would lend in conflict we set on them attempting to whittle down their superior numbers while

being constantly harassed by their Priestess and Wizard casting upon us while we engaged with their undead. Eventually Talon and I managed to cut through a weakpoint in their lines while the rest of the group held the majority of the undead forces. With some considerably effort we caught their mage and slew him with Talon engaging him in a fearsome exchange of magical power. This left their Priestess who was beginning to show classic signs of evil on a losing bet, begging for her life and spinning tales of woe of how she got into this position. With Michaels song in my ears I ignored these guileful lies however Flint was taken by them and on his honour accepted her surrender. I was not pleased (to say the least) but far be it from me to break anothers word.

As Flint was debriefing (and de-colouring apparently) the Priestess a new group ventured over the hill. They were Knights of the Cold Dawn. We spoke at length with them regarding the current situation and learned more of their people. In summary;

- The Knights themselves are a lawful people who follow Law above all else and seek to combat Chaos
- They come from a plane called Hyatt Galayia (spelling?)
- They follow neither good nor evil spheres feeling that neutrality in that axis allows them greater focus on the fight against Chaos
- Many of their leaders and warriors seem to follow the Chivalric code although it was neither the time nor the place to compare specific tenets

These fine people revealed to us that the Eye we sought was a remnant of a Hepath their people had long ago destroyed. They are gathering it's parts to ensure that this Hepath cannot reform itself and begin to wreak havoc on the mortal world again. It seems that certain elements of the Dymwan are using the power of Chaos to imbue their undead with strange abilities which is how the KotCD were drawn here. I explained the situation we were in and expressed our need of the eye for a true purpose (although now felt great concern and distaste about it's use) and swore that we would seek to destroy the eye at the culmination of our duty. In exchange they offered to "take care" of our prisoner (a fine offer I feel) but Flint declined and against all belief or understanding of his code beat her to death himself in front of us! The Knights seemed both impressed and appalled at this turn of events. In a final, unparalleled, gesture a sword named 'Hepaths Bane' was placed in our hands to aid us in our quest, something that would prove more than useful in the very near future.

As if by fate as we passed over the next hill (after some considerable time mending out hurts and meditating) we saw a large beast of clearly Hepathic nature accompanied by a number of smaller beasts. We engaged it and a drawn out struggle ensued. The beast seemed to be injured sorely by Hepaths Bane but it quickly regained it's strength when not constantly pressed. Eventually Talon and Kyle convinced me that it couldn't be destroyed at this time and Kyle engaged in a discussion with it. This was apparently the very Hepath to whom the eye belonged! Following a conversation Kyle revealed that the beast would no longer aid the Dymwan who held the eye but in return we had to give the eye back to it. This would prove troublesome given our previous agreement with the Knights of Cold Dawn but we agreed to discuss it later. We still had our primary goal to accomplish after all.

Finally we found the Dymawn we sought in a clearing surrounded by a ward of great power. We

set about clearing the field of minions and then approached the central ward. I felt myself overcome by some strange controlling influence and spent much of the fight protecting the very man we came to recover the eye from. Still the group triumphed in the end and we recovered both the eye and a number of items from the body. With that we moved to an open space nearby and used the teleportation item to return to waystation to meet again with the Concillium.

Following a well deserved hot meal we gathered around the fire to utilise the Eye in the ritual that would allow us to locate Finneas.

Strangely the ritual, rather than being a simple scrying, resulted in us appearing to awaken from a dream confronted by a strange hooded figure bearing a lantern that shifted hues repeatedly through all colours of the rainbow. It seemed that we had been transported in some way into the mind of Finneas and were being guided by a fragment of the Hephath from which the Eye was taken. Needless to say this made us somewhat uncomfortable but we pressed ahead seeing no other way to respond.

We passed through a number of groups of mental guardians taking the form of Valley members or other Orin Rakathan natives but we were confident they were simply constructs designed to protect Finneas mind from our unwarranted intrusion.

After what seemed a short walk we found ourselves confronted by a small building being assailed by forces of the LoX. They seemed fully cognisant of where they were and that our presence was unusual and apparently unwelcome. We fell into an uneasy discussion with them and one of our number was allowed into the building to converse with Finneas who was the target of the LoX aggression. The results of the discussion were that we were forced to engage the LoX in battle and destroy them in order to provide sufficient safety for Finneas to properly escape in exchange for his support later.

The battle was a trying one but we did ultimately overcome. Finneas emerged and we engaged him in conversation. It seems he was created in some way to replace the dead child of Xenos and has become the pattern for the creation of their drones although he has considerably more consciousness, and power, than all of the others that were created in his image. He agreed to aid us by removing the drones protection from Ison at the appropriate time.

During the discussions he seemed to grow interested in the boy Ison and actually summoned him (or his mental projection? I am unclear on the mechanics of such things) and a squabble ensued. I am happy to face down any incarnation of evil or chaos that blights the face of this or any world regardless of the cost to myself but I never again wish to get between the raging hormones of a drone construct who has apparently never left puberty and a child with the power and tragic history of Ison who is clearly just entering it. Fortunately for us all the children were brought under control we were dismissed from whatever the dream thing was by Finneas.

We awoke back around the fire with darkness having clearly fallen with a small group of female halmadonians of the order to which Rhianna used to belong. We enquired as to where the WC were (as they still carried the Eye which needed to be properly disposed of) and were told that we had been found in this state with no-one around and they had taken to guarding us.

We thanked them for the aid and asked if there was anything we could do for them. It turns out it was an auspicious question as they came together in chant and summoned the Angel Fairfax (who has a history with the Valley) a being of purity and light to us to guide our hand. It was foreseen that a surgical strike into the Abyss was needed to sever some of the power that fuels Umma Ghul and his control over Ison. St Michael was surely guiding our path with such an opportunity!

I asked for volunteers from the group as not all were entirely comfortable with the Angel or the plan but to their credit they agreed to a man that this needed to be done. So we prepared to be sent into the roiling layers of the Abyss to continue our quest!

With the touch of the Angels hand we were banished. Appearing in a small, well appointed, hut containing two Hepathic beings (I will deliberately not be using the names of any of the Hepths encountered owing to the risk of them becoming public).

One was a servant of some kind bound to do no harm in the hut but who would tempt people to come outside so he could play with them. The other was a being of strange contradiction. A Hepath of Law (Lore? Damn Homonyms) that explained that she was a long time associate of Fairfax and was here to guide us in our task.

Rather than the glorious surgical strike I was expected it became clear that what we actually needed to do was make contracts with two of Umma Ghuls abyssal lieutenants such that they would be forced to withdraw their support from him (and the Fortress of Pentar more generally was a our plan) removing another key part of Isons control/protections. It was at this point, being unsuited in so many ways for such a task, that I handed operational control of the mission to Talon who, while I have misgivings over this, showed extreme competence in the contractual negotiations required.

The two Hepaths we had to deal with seemed to share certain delightful traits (only Hepaths would care enough to split hairs between Treachery and Deciet) and their main distinguishing feature seemed to be that one specialised in poison while the other seemed to have an unhealthy fascination with disease and flies.

We made plans to handle the poison one first thing and deal with the diseased flies after lunch, a choice in some ways I regret. . . .an empty stomach would have been a benefit when dealing with the larval vomit.

Steel Day

The weather was as you might expect on the Abyss, changeable, as we awoke with the sun in our eyes and rain dripping down our backs. But still we had contracts to do and hopefully smiting to cheer us up and we cracked on.

Venturing on the layer where the poison Lieutenant dwelt was a fairly unpleasant experience. But we quickly identified the location of the eggs we required to draw them out and proceeded

with the plan. Threatening a blind brood mother even a Hepathic one is not something that requires detailed summation.

We pressed on to the location of the breeding pits and recovered a large number of eggs from the nesting mothers (who as you might expect were virulently opposed to us). With some righteous smiting however we had what we needed.

The boss was summoned to a filthy hovel where Talon and Malice took the lead in striking a deal with it to meet our primary objective. In exchange for not destroying any more of the eggs (apparently Talon smashed on early as part of the negotiation tactics) and for Malice carrying some essence of poison to plant in a grove (somewhat carelessly created and left close to the entrance to the waystation I believe but Malice would have to be contacted about the details) he/it agreed to pull its support from Umma Ghul and the Fortress for a year and a day.

With that distasteful deal done we headed back for some food and further tormenting from the local hepaths who seemed more of the irritating child variety than anything that would rip your head off and shit down your neck. Frankly I think I would have preferred option two.

The afternoon saw us move on to another location that won't be finding a good review in the tourist handbook. A layer of the abyss swarming with flies and covered in carrion. Charming.

We pressed on trying essentially to cause enough ruckus that we attracted attention. This we managed fairly successfully and quickly became enmeshed in a typically treacherous arrangement. It turns out the chap in charge (whose support we needed to remove) had two sub-bosses of his own both of whom were seeking to replace him obviously. There was also a loyal seneschal who used to be the boss who was happy to support whoever was in charge (I think).

First we arranged for Pretender number one to meet us at a ritual site where we would summon the boss and have it all out once and for all. To do this we had to remove her brother who was an embarrassment to the family. To be fair he wasn't wrong and a tussle with some outrageously weird Ninja Flies game us a number of amusing anecdotes to share particularly Talons exasperation with the diplomatic approach. Still I digress.

Second we met with Pretender number two and had her meet us at the same ritual. She required persuading by sending out champion to fight her one on one. For which Kyle bravely stepped up, followed by Driedyn once we realised we had missed a pretty vital protective enchantment. I can't help but feel we missed something important about the nature of the place we were in and how this particularly engagement went but perhaps I should be proud of that?

Thirdly we met with the Seneschal who offered to come and see what came of everything that was going on.

So there we were. Summoning pentagram in place. Two traitorous abyssal sub-bosses and a seneschal. Three true names of the boss (yes they all had different ones for him. . no we had no clue which one was actually real) and very little in the way of a plan.

Still Talon took charge once again and this one went down in a fairly predictable manner. Pretender number one proved her boast and struck down Pretender number two in a single blow. The Boss offered his word then betrayed that almost immediately. Flint saved Pretender number two with a well timed potion and a massive fight kicked off. Blessedly free of distractions and unnecessary conciliation with the beast I laid into the boss with a the fervour of an aspirant finally allowed to let loose with a surgical strike and thanks to a sterling effort by all involved we ended up standing victorious. Of course it all went weird again where it became clear we were now responsible for putting a new Hepath in charge of that layer of the Abyss but a deal's and deal as Talon said and her power to was withdrawn for a year a day.

Hurrah.

With our job done we were transported back by the Hepath who was now calling herself Clitastrofee. There we found the Wizards Concillium in something of a pickle. They had forces from the Kalid and the Fortress pushing them in a pincer movement. Given that they wouldn't be expecting us to reinforce the Wizard we volunteered to assist and were given free choice over which engagement we would like. With very little thought we went for the traditional choice and stuck it to the Kalid.

It was a tough fight with a Kalid Captain and several waves of his men. I was eventually felled by a well coordinated team of Kalid warriors while trying to defend our fallen. Fortunately the Spirits of the Valley were with me still and I came around in time to see my worthy comrades in seeing off last of them.

With that we went back to the Waystation. Happy in the thought that we managed to strike into the Abyss and returned alive with a bonus mission completed and without a single one of our group making personal side deals with a Hepath. At least I hope that is the case!

Walk in the Light of the Saint,

Aspirant Roesis,
Order of St Michael