

Mission report for The Colour of Darkness

Brief

The Blue School of Magic had created and maintained a trans-planar portal to Murandir at the site of The Aldonar Tombs, using the energies of the tombs to help sustain their magics. Increasing undead activity from the tombs required the assistance from a Valley group.

Team members

- Randolphin, Yellow sorcerer
- Anthrax, High priest of the Brethren sect
- Sutnac, High priest of the Brethren sect
- Kylar, High priest of the Reaper sect
- Leitha Fae, Crusader
- Tarquin, Priest of the Grey Gauntlet
- Anebir, Wizard of the Brown School of Magic
- Jack (aka captive Jack), evasively either a scout or a ranger
- Tarndeth, Aspirant Knight of St Michael
- Alariel, Ranger
- Layla, Warrior of the White Retreat
- Ichabod, Mage of the Blue School of Magic
- Kylar, High Priest of the Reaper Sect

At the outset Randolphin was recognised as the party leader.

As we approached the area of the Aldonar tombs we encountered two groups of Aldonar undead before arriving at our destination, an old Aldonar Fort. Within the fort we met with a flamboyant blue sorcerer named Ashlin, under-assistant administrator, who has been trusted with running Blue School operations in the area. He detailed that there were four nodes of power in the area powering the portal with each node of power protected by a ward. Also there was a larger ward preventing the recently un-restful undead from leaving the area. Our primary mission in the area was to be to replace the words on each of the four power node as there have begun to be eroded from without and in one case from within. We agreed to attempt the nodes first thing in the morning.

We had a visit from a mist shaman named Ragamuffin Heartbreaker who was already known to Randolphin. He wanted to know who our new Mist Weaver was (that is the Mist Weaver covering the area around our towers) and was put out when we concluded that we did not know (including having a message sent to Orlon Tenquil to verify that this was the case). Ragamuffin said he would be able to summon this new Mist Weaver unwillingly tomorrow so we may be able to find out who he was and who installed him. We could summon Ragamuffin again by saying his name three times.

Layla overheard Ragamuffin say that there was something strange occurring in the Ikarthian Triangle.

During conversation with Ashlin and Randolphin, I speculated that a new Mist Weaver may have been emplaced by an enemy in order to hasten the next time of reckoning. This turned out to be only half right.

We were visited by Eric Shrike, Fortunes Keep administrator and Hanson of The Order of St Michel. Shrike upbraided Randolphin and Thralk, who had recently turned up, that they had not reported back events on a recent mission (in cold moon) that would have contained vital information on aspects of the Mist Lord. There was some general embarrassment and some heckling by Anthrax and Sutnac which eventually required them leaving the room.

Later, a drow from House Tilduring named Utari Nightblade, 4th sorcerer (some doubt on this name) arrived with a number of shades. He came to claim Randolphin to fulfil a bargain that he had made on a previous mission and he had to depart with them. We are not sure where. Before Randolphin left he invoked some incantation over me that gave me a magical link to him. The shades were left to fight us. Leitha then explained that on a recent mission the team were indisposed by the enemy and required to bargain for their lives. Randolphin promised a month of teaching and someone named Lancorin also made promises.

Altea of the Humacti arrived to discuss the recent discovery of an Elven vampire named Marina. Leitha Fae seemed to know about this already and it had some connection to his personal history. Altea and I counselled Leitha to find out more about the way these elves are being corrupted by the Dymwan and if possible find a way to purify them rather than solely pursuing his warriors instinct of just slaying them.

We were visited by Chun Chay Yu, a representative of the Starry Wisdom group within the Celestial Bureaucracy. They came with a request for aid as they were in the area and had a problem with two things. Firstly, an old enemy of theirs, an Aldonar sorcerer named Marcus Armitage, was returning into unlife and secondly, that the Dymwan were harassing them. They were evasive about exactly they were doing in the area.

We agreed to help them in return for them determining for us the name of the new Mist Weaver and who installed him in his position.

Late comer, Kylar of the Reapers arrived.

Eric Shrike insisted that we nominate a new party leader now that Randolphin had been taken from us. The choice of this fell to those with higher status and they had the opportunity to take control but instead they decided to appoint myself. Several others were considered suitable but I believe that fact that I had a notebook swung their opinion. I'm glad to say that the rest of the party condoned the decision. I made Leitha Fae second in command.

Next morning

Ashlin returned accompanied by Menelaus, a Blue School ward expert and they gave me (as a Blue School member) a map of the nodes, a ring of tempest (which is a device to contain things within it) to remove the existing wards together with its activation phrase and four sealed sets of instructions to replace the wards. These instructions were to be opened at each node site in a need to know fashion. The new wards, when erected would have two areas of defence. The outer defence consisted of 100 paces of spells and affects that would afflict any who came near the node, the exact effects being different for each node. The inner defence was an impenetrable barrier. When we had completed the incantation for each ward we had only 15

seconds to leave the area otherwise we'd be trapped within.

The four nodes to deal with were; Node of Hebetude, Node of Silence, Node of Displacement and Node of Whispering Drifts. The last of these was to be left for time being as the Blue School was investigation some strangeness with the node.

A messenger from the Celestial Bureaucracy arrived to give us the answers to our queries, which was particularly prompt service. The new Mist Weavers name was Arnold Sparkfist and he was installed by the Mist Lord. It occurred to us that this was a bad thing.

After an attack by hordelings we struck out for the Node of Hebetude working on the assumption that being put to sleep won't be fatal if we get the whole thing wrong.

A short walk led us to more hordelings and a disorganised fight. Out white retreat warriors, Specifically Tarndeth and Layla, wished to get the fight started before the high priests could invoke their spheres. This led to a scrappy battle with fewer of us to fight that expected. After a short fractious discussion between these two factions I ruled that we'd allow time for invokes to be cast so that we could make best use of resources.

The Node of Hebetude

The Node of Hebetude was surrounded by elementals and while the party engaged them I lowered the existing ward and attempted to get the two others required by the ritual to surround the node but due to the scrappy fight and general confusion about what was happening it proved very difficult.

I cannot detail the wards construction here for security reasons but eventually Layla, Anebir and I completed the ward shouted for the evacuation. We all quickly left the immediate area but many people were confused about the extent of the secondary defences and were consequently slept.

One node down we returned to the fort to evict the hordelings that had installed themselves there against the sudden heavy rain shower.

After a short rest and a second explanation of what happens at the nodes we set out again for the Node of Silence

The Node of Silence

Shortly we were beset by a group of Dymwan. They were a tough group and when several of our team were laid low and raised as undead it nearly went badly for us. We recovered however and they were eventually all slain. There was no time for negotiation with them, nor any time to find out who they were as Tarndeth began the encounter with an assault.

The node of silence lay a little further on and again there were elementals to fight. It proved much easier to remove and complete the ritual for the new wards however after we had exited the secondary effect range (which was dumbness) it was realised the Leitha Fae had been stuck within the inner ward. We toyed with a number of ways to extricate him but being unsure as to whether we could recast the ward we decided to leave him there and get advice from Ashlin at the fort.

Node of Displacement

Before returning, we moved to the Node of Displacement, located by Jack our ranger/scout. Again more elementals around the node, but this time initially less hostile as they were attracted to the node of power. It proved difficult to complete the ceremony this time due to the elementals continually crowding the node of power. Eventually it was recast and we retired.

There was considerable amusement from the displacement effect removing items and people and placing them in random locations. I dropped a copy of the ritual scroll when hit but managed to regain it although nearly at the loss of my life.

Luncheon and the Mist Weaver

While taking lunch back at the fort I spoke to Ashlin about the problem of Leitha Fae stuck inside the wards around the node of silence. He said that he would be able to provide us a key to enter the wards and retrieve him. At this I asked him if the scrolls carrying the incantation for the wards were still required to which he said not, so I burnt them (as was required of all the ward scrolls).

Shortly, Menelaus, the ward expert, arrived who was somewhat aghast that Ashlin had instructed us that we no longer needed the ward scrolls. A short embarrassed silence later and the Blue Schoolers went off to confer. Later it seemed that the original plan for a key would be feasible after all.

Ashlin confirmed that the last node would still have to wait so we set off to free Leitha Fae. This was easily done with the key provided although Leitha seemed to have some contagious dumbness effect which was transmitted by touch.

With no immediate tasks to perform we decided it was ripe to summon Ragamuffin Heartbreaker the Mist Shaman and inform him about our new Mist Weaver. He was less than impressed by the new Mist Weaver being a creature of the Mist Lord and said that we were running out of time to reverse this new appointment.

He suggested that we would be able to take the place of the Mist Weaver if we helped to reconstruct him. Basically this involved us gifting him with a sacrifice of permanent spiritual power. As he grew in power the other Mist Weaver would diminish to the point where he could be overcome and destroyed.

We relocated to a propitious location, passing a number of waves of hordelings on the way, one of which was a particularly organised group, and began gifting our spiritual strength to Ragamuffin. Each gift accompanied by a short incantation and then a declaration of what part of ourselves we were giving to the new Mist Weaver.

There were four waves of hordelings to endure, including one stone troll with a wicked stone hammer crushing everything it hit. At the end of this combat there was a rather rash game of how many times one can hit him without being struck in return. He could swing a lot faster than his frame belied.

In the last wave was Arnold Sparkfist, the Mist Weaver, with his vanguard and in the face of his attack we were hard pressed to stand. We kept on sacrificing our power to Ragamuffin until he had accumulated enough to become ascendant and then eventually the enemy was defeated.

Ragamuffin stated that he now needed to endure a mist walk to become a Mist Weaver proper

and that if he survived he would return to us.

I commend all the members of the party in giving as freely as they did of their power with 31 recitations of the incantation in total. Some of the abilities/characteristics gifted to Ragamuffin are listed below:

- Blue, green, grey, brown and red magic
- Good, evil and neutral spheres
- Loyalty to the king (Paulandiss)
- A love of living
- Love of honour, justice and truth
- Skill at arms (at least twice)
- A love of schlopp
- Duegar martial skills
- A duegar point of view
- Loyalty to Dreadload Arakis
- Malice
- Fortitude as a warrior

After this, we retired back to the fort to recuperate and noted some scouts in purple hoods. Shortly after our return to the fort a group of Wizards Concillium arrived together with three of the Aldonar. The Concillium group were led by a wizard of the School of Arcane Wizardry named Anstiss. He stated that he and his men were tired after gathering things from an Aldonar tomb and insisted that they be allowed to rest at the fort on their own. We offered to share with them and even to provide them with security but he was inflexible in extremis and ordered his purple guard to attack. The purple guard we obviously already injured and the fight did not go their way.

During the fight I spoke with one of the three Aldonar, who were not involving themselves in the fight. I outlined our purpose in dealing with the unusual level of undead in the area and he seemed satisfied with that. It was clear from his manner that he was disappointed with the Concillium wizard and would leave him to his fate.

Once the wizard was dead the Aldonar leader forbade the others of the group from looting the body until I had had time to look him over, I'm assuming that this is to make sure that any valuable items were not unduly overlooked. This was particularly odd behaviour and I can only speculate that they wanted us to find, and take note of, what was found on his body.

We found two scrolls in the Aldonar script, both prophecies by Sothsarris, and an evil looking artefact. It was trapped in some way and removed all my power from me. It consisted of a short cylinder half a thumb in depth and less than a hand span in diameter. A pyramid rested on this base which was topped by an evil looking grinning skull. The artefact defied analysis by an identify spell.

Dinner

During dinner we had a visit from Chun Chay Yu who directed us to the location of his enemy, Marcus Armitage. No coincidence that this was also where the last node was located. He also said that they had ancient blood feud between them.

Mayvar of the Order of Mandragon of Halmadons Heights arrived. He spoke for a short while about the Aldonar scrolls we had found, stating that at least one was a well know prophecy by Sothsarris. Then he moved onto the meat of his visit which was that he, and his group, had been following the Concillium group in order to prevent that which they had falling into the hands of evil doers. He wanted the artefact we had just retrieved but could not tell us what it was for. I decided that we should keep hold of it for now in the hope that we may learn more of it and that it may in some way aid our current mission. He let slip a thinly veiled threat that they'd be back the next morning to collect the item, by force if necessary.

Ragamuffin Heartbreaker arrived to tell us that he had completed his mist walk and was now the Mist Weaver for the area covering the valley towers. Also we had taken on the aspects of the people who had help construct or birth him. I think he may be quite conflicted but a true reflection of the Valley peoples.

He also stated that the spirit form of the Mist Lord was close by and that we should prepare ourselves to encounter him. If we could harm his spirit form then his physical form would be diminished.

Node of Whispering Drifts

Ashlin arrived to announce that we could now go to the last node site.

On the way to the site we fought and overcame two groups of Aldonar undead (skeletons, zombies and ghouls) and a group of Dymwan who were claiming Marcus Armitage for themselves.

At the node site we met with Thursday the scout and prepared ourselves. I dropped the ward and then from within the crypt we heard the Lich, Marcus Armitage, rousing himself.

As he left his tomb he denounced us Cardinari and summon his attendants to despatch us. These were a powerful collection of undead against whom we held our own for a while until Tarquin and several other members were paralysed and our curing dried up.

Just when it seemed dire Marcus Armitage swept up his followers and left us to pursue some other agenda. Taking stock it proved that both Anebir and Alariel had been killed.

In preparing to perform the ward ritual we decided that if the Mist Lord arrived we would attempt to trap him within the inner ward but it was unclear exactly how we'd accomplish this. Hordelings started to appear and then the Mist Lord himself. We cast the last ward but having only fifteen seconds to lure him in we failed to get him trapped within the ward.

However we didn't fail to trap Leitha Fae!

What followed was somewhat farcical as the ward was dropped again and recast, this time trapping Jack within. A third recasting trapped Layla, although she had the defence of being horrible mangled on the floor.

Finally, after recovering her, the Mist Lord decided we'd had enough of wards and went to commune with the power node, presumably in an attempt to disrupt the planar window. While he was thus engaged we performed the ritual literally behind his back which was a rather tense

moment.

Finally the ritual was completed and we escaped from the inner ward with the Mist Lord trapped. We then retreated back to the fort with various of our group hobbling with broken bones, or indeed every bone turned to dust!

We retrieved another Aldonar scroll from within Marcus' tomb which I later translated.

At the fort Ragamuffin Heartbreaker arrived to congratulate us and to state that with his spirit form trapped the Mist Lord would be that much easier to defeat in the next moon. I suspect however that he won't be too much easier!

Last Morning

After translating the latest Aldonar scroll I found that it cast significant light on Marcus. He was an astrologer of the royal court who had discovered the plot of Cardinaris against them and then been entrapped, presumably within his tomb. He had discovered signs of a great cataclysm in the future and wished to prepare the Aldonar to face it and thus placed himself under unlife. He gave details of where his phylactery lay but coincidentally we had already found it, at the first node site, together with his masters, Arnold Mandrake.

Ashlin came to congratulate us on a job well done and to retrieve his ring. We gave him both Phylacteries to transport back to the towers for safe keeping.

We were attacked by hordelings, looking for the Mist Lord. Most satisfying.

Squire Bartholomew of the Halmadons Heights arrived together with Mayvar and a number of other troops. We engaged in a short discussion and I gave over the evil artefact he wanted without a fight. I made this decision as I could see little benefit in us keeping it. I elicited an agreement from the squire that he would share that which they discovered about it and that should it be in some way vital to our towers then we could negotiate its return.

During these discussions there was a considerable amount of teasing of the tense Halmadonians by the Wolfhold members of the group.

Mopping up

After getting advice of a Dymwan group in the local area attempting to cast a ritual to bind Marcus Armitage to them we decided to decamp and destroy them, which we duly did with little difficulty.

As we returned to the Fort we met Chun Chay Yu looking very stern. I was feeling very bad about not being able to complete our side of the bargain with him by destroying the lich Marcus.

He crossly stated that we had failed him in two ways. Firstly we had not killed Marcus and secondly we had entrapped the Mist Lord. He explained that they had set the Mist Lord on his path in order to fulfil the prophecy they had seen in the stars.

This greatly relieved me, even though it meant that we'd inevitably come to blows, as it meant that the Kingdom of the Valleys and the Celestial Bureaucracy were now enemies and Marcus, being an enemy of the Celestial Bureaucracy, was more like an ally as the old saying goes. It also explained to me why Marcus and Chun Chay Yu were feuding as they both knew of the

prophecy in the stars but one (Marcus) sought to prevent it and the other (The Celestial Bureaucracy) seek to make it happen.

It was a hard fight against Chun Chay Yu and his men but we were victorious.

After that we quickly returned to the towers. We received news that a powerful squad of Humacti were being despatched to the area to track down the escaped lich.

Epilogue

I have recently received communication from Mayvar regarding the provenance of the artefact and it appears to be one of a set of three, each aligned to one of the spheres and possibly linked to one of the prophecies of Sothsarris (or possibly Sithsarris). I have more information on this item.