

The Soul Well - August 2019 HQ

Report from Skalgrim Skyfather, High Priest of the Wardens & High Priest of the White Path.

Party Members:

- Wulfric Baneguard (party leader)
- Lady Kevralyn Soulfire (second in command)
- Nerak Soulblade
- Lancorrin
- Lord Giles
- Driedyn
- Dame Layla Mayfield
- Knight Aspirant Casper Meadows
- Kyle Om'Pak
- Neko Maneki
- Caradac
- Spark
- Vilk Bloodmoon
- Davros Epsom
- Dayleth
- Skalgrim Skyfather
- Malice
- Edvard Le'voire – a guide sent by the Hospital

Day1: We travelled to Dai Fah Dyne lands, sent on a mission from the Hospital to recover Bill Jingle and other Valley people; to investigate the nature of slavery seen on Orin Rakatha in recent moons; and to identify the nature and purpose of a construct called a Soul Well which was believed to hold the spirit strength of several hundreds of people. I am pleased to report at the outset that our mission was a complete success.

We were hosted by Bae Nadim Al Farooq of the Dai Fah Dyne, supported by Easterling guards of the Iron Brotherhood tribe. He passed onto us letters (written in black speech) recovered from Easterlings they had slain. These were swiftly translated by Dame Layla, Casper and Caradac, and revealed that the Easterlings were indeed involved in bringing slaves to Dai Fah Dyne lands at the instruction of the Savage Chieftain. The souls of these slaves were being fed into the Soul Well, with the aim of strengthening the spirit strength of the Savage Chieftains closest followers – a task that was fortunately still proving to be beyond them. A key name revealed in the letters was that of Bilig, an Easterling who had the service of a powerful Efreet. While we did encounter Bilig in our mission, he was teleported away by the Efreet, so remains at large.

From the Bae we learnt that he was being troubled by unusually strong Black Djinn, who are drawn to places of evil power. Furthermore the Grey Man from the House of the Weaver arrived and advised us that followers of Ungoliant were at the Soul Well and that we were free to attack them without consequence. With this in mind, that evening we travelled towards the source of the Djinn. The Djinn themselves were weakened by dispel magic, but used power drains to knock many of us down. Be warned that the Djinn like to copulate with any who find themselves

powerless and isolated, which both Vilkh and my Lord Wulfric found out to their cost.

Our journey took us directly to the Soul Well, which we found surrounded by powerful Black Djinn, Easterlings, followers of Ungoliant, spiders and most worryingly a Morgul Wraith. The area around the Soul Well was free of all spirits, and even our guardian spirits left us while we were in close vicinity. The fight was difficult, in hard terrain, the black of night and with many of us struck down by repeated power drains. But we prevailed, and the Morgul Wraith fled back through a portal to the Plane of Sleepless Dead. Unfortunately both Davros and Casper fell in the fight, losing spirit strength in the absence of their guardian spirits. They were not the last to fall on this mission.

I spoke to Sol regarding the nature of the Soul Well, and learned that it was connected to 4 spheres, and was full of around 1000 souls both good and evil. To destroy the Soul Well, Sol informed me that we had to reverse the ritual used to create it, and break the bonds of its makers. Davros felt drawn to the blue face of the well when he died, and Casper to the red face, but the well was full and, fortunately, could not accept them.

We returned to the hall of the Bae to rest, where I was struck down with a terrible pain in my chest, saved from death from a Fatal Disease only by the combined prompt action of Lady Kevralyn and Davros. I had apparently been struck in the back with a Morgul Blade, and the tip had lodged within me. Working its way to my heart, unless removed (which proved to be no easy task) it would eventually result in my permanent death. Edvard was able to provide me with a herbal remedy which delayed the movement of the blade, and I spent a fitful night, with a potion of Cure Fatal Disease by my bedside kindly provided by Dayleth, and was glad to see the dawn.

Day 2: Edvard advised us that he could take us through the portal to the Plane of the Sleepless Dead, from where he could track those who had come through to Orin Rakatha to the Soul Well. While we prepared for this journey, Dame Layla was forced to perform field surgery on both Vilkh and my Lord Wulfric, to remove the black Djinn growing within. More fights with Black Djinn ensued, perhaps drawn by the screams of the new born. Most disturbing for all involved.

We entered the plane of the Sleepless Dead, following the trail of the Morgul Wraith, first into the Realm of Pain, then the Realm of Bone, then the Realm of Disease and Decay, then the Necropolis (where we were given 12 hours of safe stay guaranteed by a death knight Sir Marias de Hal as thanks for our peoples actions against Cardinaris) and then into the Undying Lands. The day was long and hard, with little chance for rest, and our powers were worn down by the never ending hordes of the undead. However, our final stay in the Undying Lands proved most pleasant, at least mostly, as we met Fingolfin, High King of the Noldor. I learnt that Lembas not only tastes good, but also that only a small portion grants one a Heal, and that elven wine restores power and magic to elves – to me it was pleasantly sweet, but that is all. Numerous Heals later (I ate three, perhaps unwisely), we put away the remaining 18 portions of Lembas in our pouches, all of which proved to be needed later in our mission! I had the pleasure of speaking directly with Fingolfin, who cast some magics upon me that offset the Cause Fatal effects from the Morgul blade, though he did not have the skill to remove it safely from me – the conversation was most edifying for he is wise indeed.

Our conversation ended with the arrival of a group of agitated eleven spirits, knights who some ten years earlier had been sent to their deaths by a valley group including Lord Giles, as part of a war against one of the Nine. After much shouting, and some combat, Giles spoke of his regret for the past actions, and we promised to slay the Morgul Wraiths that killed the knights all those years ago, so that their spirits could finally rest. Fingolfin sent us back in time and, prepared as we were, and in the light of day, the seven Morgul wraiths fell before us, though sadly young Neko was slain by a Death invocation that my Heal was not to reverse. Nerak was also struck with a Morgul blade that lodged within him.

From there we travelled onto Thranduil, arriving in these lands of legend, for many of us for the first time, though some had been there many times before. Much to our surprise we found ourselves immediately assaulted by a group of Barbarians, who struck with powerful blows. They seemed to relish the fight itself more than anything, and the warriors amongst us found themselves in personal combats around the field of battle. Our foes proved to be Beorn and his Beornings, and Beorn was most upset when struck with a silver weapon by Lord Giles. Only once he had torn Lord Giles arms from his body with his bare hands did the fight come to a halt, as they realised we were not Easterlings. At this point we were welcomed into their lodge, and there was drinking and eating, and both Dame Layla and Vilk became one with the Boornings, gaining some of their powers of regeneration – Vilk ‘entertained’ us by showing that his fingers could grow back within just a few minutes once he chopped them off, even if that made immediate use a shield or axe a little tricky

Beorn told us of the forces in the area, namely many Easterlings, together with black trolls which cannot be killed at night. He also told us of a witch, Alice, who had the knowledge of a potion that could draw the slivers of Morgul blades from Nerak and I. We were advised to look for the Athelas flowers, that grew in places of dark power, that would be needed for such a potion. We were able to harvest many of the next couple of days, though only our druid, Malice could pick them without Harm. We also met an elf from Rivendell, who was seeking his companions. He had seen them taken inside a nearby structure, and as night fell we went to investigate. Once at the structure I once more communed with Sol, where I learnt that it was the Pit of Despair, linked to the Savage Chieftain, and an anchor point for a series of demi-planes. I also learnt that I was not welcome, and was struck down with a Death, Cause Fatal and Feeblemind. So in turn was Vilk who had unwisely decided to perch himself upon the structure. Once more my life was saved by the prompt actions of Davros and Driedyn (a familiar theme) and as a black troll appeared along with other forces, my Lord Wulfric led a fighting retreat of the main group, while Spark and Lancorin lured the beast away, following a powerful flash effect from Lord Giles that blinded it for some time. At this point we decided to rest for the night, with the Beornings offering us protection.

Day 3: I again survived the night, and come morning we met with Beorn once more. He had contacted Alice during the night, and advised that she would meet with us that evening. Now it was daylight we decided that we would once more investigate the Pit of Despair, night and day having great impact on evil and good in Thranduil. Sol revealed to me that to enter into the Pit of Despair, one person would need to smear themselves with the blood of a chosen one of the Savage Chieftain, and also give their spirit strength, such as a guardian spirit. At this point the Black Troll re-appeared but was much easier to kill in daylight. Driedyn bravely gave his spirit to

the Savage Chieftain – an action that was ultimately to cost him his life – and we wiped him down with the severed leg of the black troll. Stepping inside the structure, he released the wards and I was also able to enter. Within was a box, a small tray, and a scroll. Sol revealed to me that the box contained the means to enter the demi-planes within the Pit of Despair, but that once within we had no more than one hour within each before we had to depart for another. Sol also revealed that within the box was a mechanism that once triggered would destroy the structure and all the demi-planes within, and that all within would die – including ourselves. Only by swiftly completing the assembly of a magical puzzle within five minutes once the device was activated, could we escape with our lives. Lord Giles took ownership of this complex task.

We set off to journey to the demi-planes, choosing the order of; governor; architect; hall of plenty; punishing room; solitary; holding cells; and processing area. We did not go to the barracks or guard room. We had no more than one hour on each demi-plane, and had to depart before darkness fell. This meant much work for the scouts amongst us, and that had to press on swiftly in each case. We first slew the governor (a Haradrim tattooist), and freed a valley pathfinder (Willow). The architect contained a Labyrinth of Xenos enchanter (Mobius) who was building the demi-planes, but had been tricked and trapped within for some time. He had been instructed by High Enchanter Wayland. He was grateful to be able to return directly to Orin Rakatha, and was able to take others with him. As we travelled through the other areas we sent all the freed slaves through to him, being two more valley pathfinders, one Dymwan, one Halmadan's heights, one Saldorian, and one Rivendell elf.

But finally we heard the sounds of drums getting louder, and the air getting colder, and we determined it was time to leave and to destroy the Pit of Despair. We activated the self-destruct device, and Lord Giles, Spark and then Lancorin, all attempted together to solve the puzzle so that we were not all slain. I watched with increasing trepidation as the clock ran down, as I was committed to the only other way to avoid certain death for all – namely swearing my soul to the Savage Chieftain. The clock hit zero as the last piece failed to fit, and my soul had to be given. I was able to save six of the party from Death, choosing the least experienced amongst us. Fortunately our more powerful members had the means to avoid Death, and Driedyn was saved by the Chieftain himself, so none of us fell. But this action was to haunt me for the next few days – and I am still unsure how I did not perish in the battles to come against the Savage Chieftain. Suffice it to say that I lost my connection to the Good Sphere, and gained a connection to the Evil Sphere, at least until daybreak.

That evening we found Alice and she told us how to prepare the potions for removing the Morgul shards (which worked successfully) and also how to prepare potions to protect against the aura of the Nine (or Eight as they are now). My companions were understandably concerned that the Savage Chieftain might be able to see and hear through Driedyn and my senses, and we are asked to step aside as tactics for the following day were discussed.

We were then warned by a captain of Rivendell that the movements of the Savage Chieftain had changed and he was headed right to us. A force of Morgul wraiths descended on us, and Dayleth was captured. That night I cast a Vision, using the evil sphere that flowed through me, which showed that Bill Jingle and Dayleth were being held prisoner by the Savage Chieftain amongst a large force of orcs, Easterlings and Morgul Wraiths.

Day 4: In the morning an Ent arrived and, in return for help in taking his entling daughter to Orin Rakatha, offered to open up routes to the 4 chosen of the Savage Chieftain so that we could break their bonds, and collect their blood and eyes to reverse the ritual of the Soul Well once we returned to Orin Rakatha. This we did, through a series of challenging fights against powerful forces.

Then we had to prepare to rescue Bill and Dayleth and return to Orin Rakatha. Edvard prepared a ritual to return us via the Plane of Sleepless Dead which, once activated, would return one individual back to Orin Rakatha every 30 seconds, in a specified order. Kyle and Vilk immediately offered to be the last two to return, with Dayleth, Nico and Bill being put forward as the first. My Lord Wulfric had to set the ritual in motion, communicating with the undead that would travel with us. We set off to assault the camp of the Savage Chieftain, first cutting through powerful orcs and then a force of Morgul Wraiths, before the Savage Chieftain appeared with a further group of Morgul Wraiths. Driedyn and I immediately fell under his influence, and were compelled to walk swiftly towards him. I heard the shouts of my companions but could see nothing in my mind other than the Chieftain. Then the Triad whispered to me that I was being possessed, and through their power I was able to resist it. The Savage Chieftain immediately struck me down with Death from a great distance, and I fell to the floor. Driedyn then saved my life, and as consequence lost his, and his spirit strength. Reaching down he poured curing into me to save me from death, but this gave the Savage Chieftain time to approach. Reaching down he severed Driedyn's limbs from his body, while I am not ashamed to say I fled the scene. I joined my companions who were searching the nearby woods for Bill Jingle and Dayleth, while Nerak and Lord Giles fought the Morgul Wraiths and my Lord Wulfric taunted the Savage Chieftain, narrowly evading his blows and luring him away from the rescue efforts. I supported Kevralyn, Spark and our scouts, Caradac, Neco, and Lancorin amongst others in recovering the prisoners and we returned to join our companions. We withdrew in good order while the powerful blows of the enemy fell upon us. Eventually we were all together and my Lord Wulfric instructed the undead to start taking us away. There were deeds of great valour from all, and I thank my Lord Wulfric for saving my life as I was again possessed by the Savage Chieftain - my Lord broke my arm and held me with his one remaining limb. Finally we all returned back to the Bae's hall in Orin Rakatha, glad to be away from Thranduil. I for one am in no rush to return.

Day 5: Lady Kevralyn cast a vision overnight to complete our understanding of the Soul Well ritual. We determined that we had all we needed other than the key stone. We also discovered that four of the party (my Lord Wulfric, Lord Giles, Spark and Nerak) were marked by the Savage Chieftain, with flames shining in their eyes. Through the contacts of Caradac, supported by advice from the Bae, we had determined that the key stone was likely to be found in the grotto, a underground place holding goods stolen from the Dai Fah Dyne and others. Our young entling helped to find this store, and we travelled there. We found Bilig and his efreet within, as well as a Dai Fah Dyne traitor, but we did not see his face before both fled. We recovered the key stone, but had to leave many powerful artefacts within, as we were only able to remove one object.

In the afternoon we had to fight off a large number of orcs, Easterlings and a projection of the Savage Chieftain himself – though fortunately without all the powers he manifested in Thranduil. This was a very challenging fight, and again I am not sure how I did not fall. Finally we drove

him off, and thus stopped him from being able to return for a number of years. Nerak touched a ring left behind by the Savage Chieftain, which immediately appeared on his finger. Sol revealed to me that this was Nazgul Bane. This ring marks his location to any of the Eight – and used unwisely has the potential to turn him into a Morgul Wraith. It cannot be removed.

In the evening we completed the reverse of the ritual to destroy the Soul Well. Though we were damaged as the well shattered, we were successful in destroying the Labyrinth of Xenos creatures, both drones and minotaurs, who emerged. The spirits within were freed, and many of those of our people returned to bodies identified by the hospital.

So in summary I deem this to be a successful mission. I now wear the Champions Armour and my Lord Wulfric wields a powerful Morgul Blade – which we have determined is not a thing of evil or chaos. As for me, my connection to the evil sphere lingers, though I am not willing to support the Savage Chieftain. But my association to the Triad, the three different aspects of the spheres of my lands, is now complete, for the true fight is against chaos, not good or evil, so that we may protect the weak and the vulnerable wherever they are found.

Signed as a true record to the best of my recollection, and my apologies to those of my companions whose many deeds of heroism and valour I did not mention,
Skalgrim Skyfather.

Addendum: I also attach a separate summary of the markings of the Easterlings, for those interested in such details.