

Once again as is Nature's way did seasons four turn full circle.
Came the call to Celebration, a gathering together in congregation.
Many comrades intent on revelry moved to the waystation of Rednow's Rest.
All had come to make mirthful merriment, filled with fond regard for their fellows.
The hall witnessed the tread of Heroes, more than a handful and heard by all,
And also many others mighty and full worthy of reputations in their own right.
Also there were some whose worth was not yet proved, and anxious for testing,
Though none of these came from Wolfhold, who had sent no sons and daughters to drink wine.
Then, before feasting and fellowship settled into full sway came a summons.
Something these willing young warriors from the White Retreat and Valley towers wished for,
No less than their young companions whose skills bent towards the ways of power, wizardry
and stealth.

Sycamore the Seeker gathered these bold daughters and sons of the Alliance
Sworn to service yet still seeking fame and reputations of their own.
Years past a scout more daring than most slunk into Dymwan society seeking secrets
With passing time the dark paths of these people preyed upon her sense of duty
Until there was little left of her love for brightness and life and those she loved.
Now Sycamore craved her return and showed the path towards a rescue.
All being equal and unproven Orlando was chosen to lead by common acclaim.
Pale snow crunched underfoot as the rescuers commenced their quick excursion.
Many was the sword-flurry, the flickering of blade and magical fire against fearful foes that
night.

Keeping close together they drove back rank after rank; undead servants of Dymwan
Shields locked, they willingly advanced, weapons and wizardry weaving horrible harm.
Coming after, kept safe by companions, healers dispensed power through their hands, A
welcoming balm sealing wounds, a comfort to crushed flesh.

Finally the weary expedition wended uphill to a tree-clad hummock full of hope.
The lost scout was close by and so Sycamore spoke his secret sentence, a phrase of
fellowship opening streams of memory.

Several times was Sycamores skilled persuasion required before the scout began to recall her
past life.

Finally she found her way free from the maze in her mind and the mission was won.
All had proved themselves capable that night and Orlando was well pleased with his
battle-band.

~+~

The following day more was required of this new troupe of fighting friends.
Overnight, ambassadors were greeted from many towers, some bringing gifts.
Dai-fa-Dyn, ever-generous friends, gave the World Window once without fee.
Thissessin gave safe passage across spawning ponds but Reader's gift was far less obvious:
Discounting Salmon gills, a luxurious delicacy to lizards leaving others at a loss.
Unknown Chequered Tower announced it desired and gave nothing but solitude and isolation.
Then came Crimson Feast Kalid bestowing the Oracle, a truth they could no longer tolerate.
Taraman opened the Oracle's box and in turn it took him and dwelled in his form.
All mourned his loss, legendary Taraman, Seekers guildleader. Who would guide them now?
The Oracle announced every Tower was welcome to ask its opinion, an open offer to all.

Many slender tallow tokens lay round and about, each granting the gift of questions. Several were held by hordlings, Orlando's band set forth to seek them straight away. Soon it was made clear by a Seeker that this mission would take a new turn. Nearby lay languishing a Mist Weaver, long captured and held by Dymwan sorcery. Though two wards were broken, one remained, beyond the skill of solitary scouts. So the Dymwan wish for a Flesh Weaver still flourished, a fear to all. Soon skull-emblemed warriors blocked the way. Orlando overcame the foe easily. Pressing on, a mightier host straddled the path hotly contesting the right of way with our comrades.

Then a grim monster, a ghoul, sprang into the shield-clash and sword-flurry. Venomed claws did quick work, warriors froze in their tracks, outwitted in war. So it came down to one young warrior, Saul, left to face three foes singly. He was barely hardened by battle, a druid his solitary support. Deadly was that last desperate stand, both sides determined to deal death. Sword and mace bit into flesh, the chunk of meaty blows and rasp of breath. Gaping wounds hacked deep in living and dead until all Dymwan were dispatched. Not only had Saul proved his worth he had saved his companions.

Following this brutal battle two hordlings holding Oracle's tokens were less than a match for this battle-crew.

Powerful Dymwan fell back after much contention, withdrawing to cliff-side caves. There a red-robed creature, fell in his power over fire, held sway over the Dymwan lair. Suffering the monster's magic strikes all wrestled in turn with the puzzle-poem of the last ward. Then it was resolved, a goblin embodied in the undead riddler released. All congratulated themselves on their brain-power. Bearing the goblin ward-key they departed, a long and weary trek in the dark. In good heart all arrived at the waystation, handing the goblin key to the one who wanted it. It was the Seeker Pansy who departed with this treasure, discovered to much dismay later on. This renegade had robbed them, leaving them with no recompense for their efforts. Mightier folk than Orlando's band had met these rogue seekers and let them go.

~+~

Deep in the dark night the Oracle cried out, abducted by the race of Aldonar
Taken by a Herald from a lawful Claw, justice bringers for that ancient clan.
Soon it became apparent a rift into the realm of myth and legend lay open,
Taraman, still owned by the Oracle had been swept into this outlying land.
Heroes and those with reputations rushed to the rift ready for the rescue.
An important task became Orlando's, holding the way between worlds open despite any trial.
Soon a horde of undead, powerful skeletons and nimble ghouls appeared.

This was a test worthy of the word combat, but nothing compared to the final challenge. A mighty Aldonar Claw arrived, intent on honour, announced by their herald. Terms were agreed, then everyone's mettle was tested by these mighty echoes from myth. But the rift was held and all returned in triumph, Taraman was returned to his grateful guild.

JACK
Acolyte Druid.