

Team members

- Ichabod, Mage of the Blue School, Party Leader
- Kudos, Diplomat
- Sasha, High Priestess of the White Path
- Malignant Jaundice, Wizard of the Yellow School
- Constantine, Veteran Ranger
- Leitha Fae, Druid Priest
- Beren, Adventurer
- Ivak Greyspire, Duedgar Barbarian
- Ember, Mage of the Red School
- Shen Manchu, Wizard of the Yellow School

- Vallan, Warrior
- Alariel, Veteran Ranger
- Drokal Greyspire, Duegar Priest of the Grey Gauntlet
- Roger the scout

Mission brief

The party had been detailed by Lazarus steel to accompany an aged Taranor, named Jo-Seth Mundi, to the area of the Aldonar tombs, there to meet with a Darkhome member and to help them complete a ritual, ostensibly to communicate with the dead.

First night

After leaving the towers, Roger produced one of the three Aldonar artifacts and gave it to myself, claiming that it had 'spoken' to him.

During our travel Jo-Seth spoke of how he was coming to the end of his life's journey and wanted to come to a final rest. He believed that this mission would help complete that aim. He wasn't sure what exact part he had to play in the ritual but that is was concerning his inability to speak with his great grandfather at All Hallows.

Presently we encountered Mary-am from Darkhome together with a Xenos drone carrying a large box being hotly pursued by a large force of Khalid in two groups. These Khalid were of the 4th Legion, I believe.

Mary-am spoke briefly and we determined that the box contained ritual components. We continued with Mary-am towards to the nearest accommodation.

Nearing shelter we encountered a Dai Fah Dyne named Farouk Marouk Carouk who offered us accommodation within his Inn at a price. I confirmed with Mary-am that she wished to have us sleep there and some negotiations ensued. Finally Drokal stepped forward and paid the required 15 gests after finding myself embarrassingly short of funds.

After payment Farouk proceeded to explain that the Inn proper was full but that we could be accommodated with the stables.

Also the stables themselves had recently become infested by wild beasts.

The beasts turned out to be wild cats, dogs, spiders and, curiously, polar bears!

Once settled in the stables I spoke to Mary-am to flesh out our duties regarding the ritual. Showing us the ritual contents in her box she explained that the ritual was to draw the spirit of Jo-Seth's grandfather out of the Plain of the Sleepless Dead and let it pass into Jo-Seth himself.

However we would need to travel there first to clear the way for the spirit to leave.

Also, as part of the ritual we had to receive twelve gifts.

The source of these gifts was unknown but would apparently present themselves.

Mary-am left to continue her ritual.

An alliance ranger named Ardak Creed arrived sporting an inverted cross in black, apparently the symbol of his plane, but he rebuffed further queries about his origin. He was a dark power user.

Farouk also arrived to dice with the party and eventually left somewhat richer.

A goblin arrived and said that his boss was looking for someone ugly and stupid as he had a gift for them. I personally thought anyone asking for a gift from a hordeling and expecting anything other than a clout could easily be considered stupid. We then engaged a mixed group of hordelings including two trolls capable of breaking bones with their blows.

Upon one was the first gift, a small packet of treats.

Kudos pointed out to me that the goblins in the previous group were unusual as they had not seen in the horde since the disruption of the Mists caused by the Mist Lord.

About this time, in a period of reflection, I re-read the recently discovered prophecy of Sothsarris, the Aldonar prophet, and abruptly we realised that the first stanza of the script could be interpreted as fitting with the mission details so far. The Xenos drone with Mary-am had apparently stated that the Labyrinth had been navigated, which is a close match to the start of the prophecy.

Also twelve people are mentioned which coincided with the number of gifts required and Jo-Seth's description of himself match perfectly with the first of the twelve.

We then proceeded to guess what the others would be and in process thoroughly scared ourselves by using the worst case scenario.

This was a great leap forward as we now a better handle on what to expect as gift bearers. Sasha contributed (correctly) on one description when she identified a recent encounter with the essence of a Realm Lord from the Plane of the Sleepless Dead.

This was released by the Wizard's Concillium while they were probing planar access.

More on this later.

Blessed sleep.

Morning and The Plane of the Sleepless Dead

After breakfast I briefed the party on our suspicions and that we were to travel to the dead

plane. To everyone's relief there appeared no ready access to that plane.

A herald from Halmadon's Heights arrived announcing that her lord required our presence and was waiting for us. When asked, she stated he was Arch Knight Gabriel of the Order of Mandragon.

The Halmadonians awaited us not far away and were arrayed for battle. In conversation with the Arch Knight it appeared that he had a gift to give us but was unwilling to surrender it until he was assured that we were competent, so a battle to the yield was arranged between our parties.

I remained out of the combat as tender of the fallen but also so that I could speak with the Arch Knight.

I asked him who had given him the gift to give to us but he could not tell us (or didn't know).

I asked about the Order and confirmed that it was named for Sir Mandragon, slain by Erelan Black and avenged by his son Sir Daendragon and members of our alliance.

Interestingly Sir Mandragon's father was Sir Pendragon but he would not speak further about him.

We convincingly defeated the Halmadonian force and received the gift.

Roger performed a ritual on a cloth of mine and attuned it to the Plain of the Sleepless Dead so that he could use it as a compass to any portals in the area. Despite specifically requesting only two way portals he led us to a one way portal (which we only discovered once we had stepped through).

On the other side of the portal we were confronted by the front rank of the purple guard. I spoke briefly to their leader, Wizard Worwy (or possibly Rory pronounced with a severe defect) of the Wizard's Concillium who demanded that we stop meddling with other planes and that we might destabilise the balance.

This seemed rather rich bearing in mind Sasha's words on the Concillium running into trouble on the Plane of the Sleepless Dead recently.

I suspect that they were trapped on the plane, as we were now, and merely enacting their last orders.

When we pointed out to Worwy that we had no return portal he stated that he knew a way to make us leave and battle was joined.

A little further down the path we met a white spirit who instructed us that we had to pass some tests to continue. A mime spirit appeared and proceeded to challenge us to guess what he was miming. Hilarious, I'm sure, but not my cup of tea. One test was failed and Leitha, Drokak and Vallan were chosen to face the consequences.

These later manifested as severe accidents and all three suffered broken legs.

At the end of the path we were met with a small group of laughing people. We eventually twigged they were puppets and they were dispatched.

This confirmed the suspicion that we were in the Realm of Laughter.

Moving off we met a group of drunken spirits. Some were very angry and looking to pick a fight which we eventually gave them. The others were very happy and made 'friends' with several party members, so killing them was hampered by the 'friends' interference.

A few people exchanged drinks with the drunks and they duly became sick.

Fortunately, Sasha was able to cure them.

Fanning out our scouts to continue our mission to clear a path through this realm we encountered a large number of puppet spirits, all laughing maniacally, and the Puppet Master, Realm Lord of Laughter. The spirit of an Aldonar was also present, this being the spirit we were clearing the path for. During the very scrappy fight (the puppets inspired fear, paranoia and drained power) he mentioned that if we could entertain the Puppet Master then he would cease to attack us. Shen and I attempted to do this but we did not capture his attention properly and suffered for it.

At the end of the fight Drokak lead us in a chorus line with a butchered rendition of a well know song from a place named 'New York, New York' and that seemed to do the trick.

The Puppet Master destroyed his own dolly and moved off after giving us a gift.

Watching this exchange were two Xenos drones in red.

Speaking with the Aldonar spirit I discovered that he was Rex Mundi. He had felt the call of his grandson at All Hallows but had been prevented by the Realm Lord from responding but now he should be able to do so.

He could not remember much of his previous life so I was unable to ascertain his overall importance.

Before leaving through a portal Roger had discovered that we had to make a sacrifice to the Realm Lord and nobly Constantine was struck dumb to allow us to leave.

Lunch, visitors and gifts

After lunch we were visited by a High Priest of the Warden sect named William. He was quite nervous, seemingly of Shard Farsight whom thought might mean him harm.

Apart from bringing us a gift he also brought news.

A new group have taken residence within the old White Retreat

tower called The Court of a Thousand Swords.

Almost nothing is known of them except that they have a sunburst emblem and that they have been seen in discussion with the Khalid 4

th

Legion.

He stated that Lazarus Steel is organising an envoy to them.

A pathfinder arrived and reported that Lazarus Steel (busy fellow) has asked to investigate a ritual being performed in our vicinity by the Wizards Concillium with one or more Aldonar present. Our overriding concern was to establish the nature of this ritual.

Once close to the site, Kudos volunteered to approach them diplomatically but this was quickly rebuffed by the Purple Guard surrounding the area. A swift change of plan involved us forming the party up in front of the guard with the intent to lure their attention away from the ritual site so that Kudos could slip through to identify the ritual.

This inevitably involved us coming to blows with the guard.

Before any fatalities occurred the two Aldonar completed their ritual and came forth to demand explanation of our conduct. Both were in black, one in armour and the other with a silver mask (or face). Pointing out that since Wizard's Concillium rituals had recently had a tendency to go bad and that they were right on our doorstep we had good cause to investigate their actions. Their guards had been discourteous and ignored our requests for information.

I was forced to provide some supplication to their quench their annoyance.

The armoured Aldonar identified himself as the Champion of All Elements and demanded an honour fight to satisfy himself. Bravely, Constantine stepped up again and fought for our honour. He was clearly out matched however and I had to step in and yield for him as I realised that he still could not speak!

The two Aldonar took me to the ritual site, pointed out a gift for us and then struck me down and left me dying. They then left and set the Purple Guard upon the rest of the party. Drokal did sterling work to get to me before my time was up and I survived the night.

I noted that the ritual components bore a striking resemblance to those used by Mary-am and I surmised that the ritual was probably an attempt to get to Rex Mundi before us. Kudos reported that he had overheard words along the lines of chaining something.

It later transpired that the ritual was intended to anchor the spirit of Rex Mundi to the land so that the Aldonar would be able to claim him for themselves.

Returning to the stables we found it occupied by a Mist Weaver (or Shaman) who demanded that we play a game of one, one, many, more in a line. Sasha volunteered and was victorious. Before she could be given the gift however the Mist Weaver had to perform the appropriate

presentation dance.

The dance was very amusing but the words ended in accusing Sasha of cheating so a fight ensued.

Next a visit from an aged Sorcerer from the Wizards Concillium's College of Arcane Research, named Rufus Eastbridge. A recent mission had recovered intelligence in the form of a letter from him so he was not unknown to us. He brought a present, but also very interesting conversation, the delivery of which was only occasionally marred by his deafness.

Rufus was particularly distressed by the changes taking place within his tower since the admission of Erelan Black, although he did not name him directly. Erelan has been gathering the remaining Aldonar to the Wizards Concillium tower and are seen, by some, as his personal army. Also he has been giving away items to those he wishes to make friends of, and it is in this way that the triplet of Aldonar artifacts were released from the Wizard's Concillium tower before they had been completely researched.

Erelan originally gained entry to their tower with the promise that if they helped him recover more Aldonar (is this from the tombs?) then they would eventually discover one who knew enough to teach them the embodiment of elementals. This knowledge had not yet been discovered however.

Rufus was also concerned that the admission of the Catacombs of Asherai was also having a destabilising effect on their tower.

He was not alone within his tower in the way that he felt and it seemed that a lot of people were keeping their heads down. This, we suspected, may lead to internal conflict in the future. I offered him and his fellows sympathy and friendship with the Alliance should they need it.

Sasha and Vallan spoke of the recent mission involving the Wizard's Concillium portals and messages but could not remember much detail. To discover more I sent a whispering wind back to Sorcerer Tornado, who was also on that mission, requesting more information. His reply

follows.

Ichabod,

We discovered that the Wizards Concillium are conducting a number of exploratory rituals to try and discover what planes are still accessible from Orin Rakatha. We encountered three groups and recovered an identical letter on each group which Randolphin has.

They were attempting to establish contact with 9 realms which included The Formorian Homeworld, The Plane of the Sleepless Dead, Aether Plane and some elemental planes.

To our knowledge the only success was the Plane of the Sleepless Dead.

Some debate followed about the actions of the Wizard's Concillium and the likely goals of Erelan Black. Kudos pointed out that the Formorians were used as the shock troops of the Aldonar so they would be keen to open access to that plane once again. Also their access to the Realm of Laughter on the Plane of the Sleepless dead is unlikely to have been a coincidence with the presence of Rex Mundi's spirit there.

It was also noted that there had been several attempts on Jo-Seth Mundi's life at All Hallows and interference in him communicating with this grandfather's spirit.

We were brought back to the present by the arrival of the some Barbarians of the Badger clan on a woman gathering mission. There was some banter where Constantine was offer as a 'lady' for 20 gests but the barbarians didn't have any money. When they tried to take our 'women' a fight ensued.

The leader had a gift.

A pathfinder arrived and announced a group of 'animals' in a shelter nearby. Investigating we discovered a number of highly skilled and dextrous animals, cats, monkeys etc plus at least one ogre mage. They were dressed in a manner normally associated with the Celestial Bureaucracy and were so skilful, in fact, that the six of them managed to surround the entire party!

A gift was recovered from the largest cat.

When we returned to the stable several members of the shark cult were there, attempting to lift anything they could get their hands on. They eventually made off with our cutlery which was eventually returned by our helpful pathfinders.

At the stable, Farouk the inn keeper returned bearing a gift. He obviously wanted to sell it and although we made him an offer he wanted to gamble for it.

Ember took up the challenge, wanting revenge for their earlier final where Farouk was victorious.

This time, however, Ember bested him and the gift was ours.

Mary-am and Jo-Seth arrived to give us our last gifts and to announce that the ritual was about to be completed. She presently rushed off to commence the beginning of the end.

A little while afterwards Ivak noticed considerable giggling from the adjacent field which we quickly surmised to denote the arrival of the Realm of Laughter and Rex Mundi's spirit. A large number of puppets had been brought through the summoning and had to be dispatched.

As well as puppets the silver faced Aldonar was present attempting to shackle Rex's spirit to their ritual rather than to allow him to pass to us.

Several spirits were trying to hold him back and these had to be eliminated.

The silver faced Aldonar also had to be defeated.

Wrapping up

In the relative comfort of the stable again we spoke with Rex, now in Jo-Seth's body (although the spirit of Jo-Seth was also present), and he told us about himself. He was an Artificer and the original manufacturer of the three mysterious Aldonar artifacts.

Explaining their purpose he said that together they could produce a very potent ward.

I could immediately imagine a number of possible reasons why Erelan Black would desire this.

The most obvious to me would be to erect a ward about the Aldonar Tombs area so that more Aldonar could be brought back from them.

Also the reverse could be true if his enemies gained control of them.

Rex stated that he had no desire to return to the Aldonar as they had attempted to kill his grandson and interfered with his own spirit so we made him an offer of freedom, accommodation and workspace if he came back to Fortunes Keep. This offer he duly accepted.

As reward to ourselves he used the single artifact present to invoke a ward on us all to last for a year. Given that a single item could do this I tremble at what all three together may accomplish.

Faithfully recorded by

Ichabod, Mage of the Blue School