23 Eleventhmoon. Illmythil Outpost. Amarthiel Eldasilquendil.

We began today by speaking with Maírion. He described that the initial lockdown had been lifted, meaning that outpost researchers were once again free to come and go. Regular townsfolk and other visitors, however, required some level of clearance. As a result, we have been receiving more visitors, particular researchers and archmages from other schools interested in the King's disappearance.

Maírion was particularly concerned with the presence of other schools in Illmythil Outpost. He urged us to not give them any help or information about anything, and went as far as explicitly referring to their presence as "threatening". He claimed that they were coming here with bad intentions. I suspect as an archmage's apprentice himself Maírion is especially sensitive to such inter-school politicking, but I did agree that a policy of non-cooperation with these visiting representatives was a good idea. There is a lot up in the air right now and a lot we don't understand not only about the disappearance but the relationship between the schools as well. It seems as though it would be very easy to make some sort of slip-up that has political ramifications we would not be prepared for.

The missions were as follows, with some additional details as I remember them:

- >Tour visiting mages around Illmythil Outpost, research
- >Archmages request meeting, interview with adventurer
    - Maírion described that "request" was the kind way of phrasing this, and that it was really more of a demand.
- >Assist visiting mages performing own investigations

These first three missions were all different ways to tackle the visitors. The general goal for all, as described earlier, was to be as unhelpful to them as possible and keep them away from our research.

- >>Search for missing researcher, rescue if necessary
    - Elethir informed us that this individual was specializing in divinity as well as the Brilliant Faces
- >>Demons sighted in mountain passes -- scout out
- >>>Track elementals sighted moving through area
    - Exceedingly rare considering our outpost is where it is because of its lack of elemental / leyline influence!
- >>>Village reports talus problems, request urgent help
- Other
    - -> Track Taluses
        - I believe this was suggested by Deluhel a bit later in the day.

The first mission we decided to do was visit the village requesting urgent help with taluses. On our way out we were flagged down by a Illmythil research assistant and asked about the nature of the Naurë river Elidhu the group met with last moon. We were a little suspicious at first given our conversation with Maírion about the dire consequences of divulging too much information, but once we learned the individual was from Illmythil Outpost we opted to share with him. The assistant's questions were generally regarding specifics about how the Elidhu manifested, i.e "Did it rise up out of the river or did the river become it?". I did not meet with the Elidhu last month so I did not have a ton to report to the research assistant. I hope we were able to assist.

Once we got outside of the outpost we found a few patches of ice covering the ground. There was a vague, unconfirmed sense that there was something unnatural or perhaps magically exaggerated about the ice but we did not spend much time investigating or thinking about it. If I am not mistaken I am the only member of our group who was foolish enough to step onto one of the patches and lose my balance. I was able to catch myself but I did have to flail my arms about frantically for a moment. Not my finest work.

A little bit further up the mountain we found a group of faeries fighting with green, faceless imps. The imps tended to fight very aggressively, opting to swarm and overwhelm individuals when possible. They also notably had empathic rays instead of flame rays, and did not speak besides a strange sort of crackling, perhaps resembling the sound of rocks hitting each other. They sort of sounded like how dry leaves crackle when you step on them. It is also worth noting that this was not the first time we had encountered such green imps as a group, but it was my first time running into them personally.

Last time we had seen imps and fey interact was the seemingly territorial dispute from when we went up into the hills to investigate the rockslide back in Eighthmoon. In that instance, the two groups sort of squabbled at each other and only resorted to combat in moments of deep frustration. These green imps were remarkably more focused and brutal than previously encountered regular red imps. We later learned that these green imps are a kind of Vraak, an otherworldly category of creature associated with the aforementioned Brilliant Faces pantheon. The imps are sometimes able to resist the kind of magic their color is associated with and are sometimes able to instead be healed by any kind of contact with that magic.

Further still up the mountain, we encountered a group of very furry white monkeys hanging out in some hot springs. These hot springs were INCREDIBLY hot, going so far as to break a vial the water was placed in. We identified the material and learned the water was not mundanely hot, but magically affected as well. I touched the water and was scolded by magical fire. We tried to scoop some up in a vial which was immediately broken by the heat. The monkeys were unaffected by the water. Good for them.

The village was in dire straits when we arrived. There was intense battling between two large groups of taluses, one group red and one group green. Unsurprisingly, the red taluses were able to use pyromancy spells and the green ones used wild spells. There was also a large pool of lava that the red ones were able to traverse with no problems. The fight was frankly touch-and-go at some

points, as we quickly learned these taluses were able to regenerate similarly to an outsider. They also were able to resist magic of their respective types. The strategy that ultimately proved successful for us was to help the green ones win so they could treeform the red ones, then defeat the green ones and place them in the lava.

Once the fighting was done, I was able to take some time and identify a small talus of each type. I was able to confirm[1] the following about them:

- They shared base characteristics with regular taluses (difficult to penetrate armor, fighting until dead, etc.)
- They were able to cast spells innately with the same skill as someone who had trained to 5th rank in their respective colors/types
- They had a selective ability to either resist their respective color/type or choose for it to heal them instead
- They could regenerate somewhat similarly to an outsider, except that their healing could be interrupted with magical damage
- They were categorized as amorphous creatures (same as taluses), but read as outsiders as well as a new category, Vraak.

This was incredibly important information, as we were able to further confirm our suspicions regarding the Brilliant Faces influence. My understanding is that Vraak is a category of creature originally from the plane / world that the Brilliant Faces pantheon is. There is a lot I admittedly do not understand about the Vraak or the Brilliant Faces.

As I was writing this, I briefly attempted to search through old chronicles and records for information regarding the Vraak. I quickly became distracted reading about the Dark Council, but managed to find a piece of information that may prove useful regarding our situation, found in records attributed to an ancient pre-fall adventurer named Shimmer:

"*The Dark Council has gotten themselves into some kind of duel with a deity known as the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life is an extremely major divinity. From prophecies received, it sounds as though the Council is attempting to feed off of it and take its energy somehow, and in order to do this I guess they're dueling it, and when you duel something it brings you into a space between realms. In this case, a group of people on primarily material, etherial[2], and dream realms got into a duel with a bein[g] on the divine realm. As a result, the realms are merging and mixing and acting funny and elementals are showing up fighting all over the place and especially along the leyline up north and that's all just general fun stuff.*"

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[1] On a side note, the imps we have been encountering appear to sometimes have slightly different abilities. For example, one group of imps resisted their type and could heal from it, and another group lacked the same resistance. All this to say that the abilities confirmed here may not be universal across Vraak of a given base.

[2] It is my understanding that the term Ethereal (spelt "etherial" here) is some sort of antiquated term for the Spiritscape.

The key piece of information here is that a duel brings beings into an in-between space, and also seems to mix up the realms that the duelers originated from. This struck me as similar to what we are dealing with now. The difference is that we seem to be experiencing this mixing across worlds rather than across scapes. It certainly could be the case, then, that the King's disappearance was caused by some sort of duel involving entities from that other world.

What remains unclear to me is what exactly these otherworldly creatures are interested in. Based on our encounters with the green imps before, I had internally hypothesized that these "Vraak" were interested in general domination or destruction of our world. This assumption was muddied, however, by seeing the conflict between the two groups of Vraak taluses. This indicated to me that their goals may not be as direct or uniform as I had initially suspected.

After the village, we decided to tend to the visiting mages. We chose to assist with the mages that were performing their own investigations. It seemed as though this mission would perhaps have the highest concentration of bad actors and those pushing for additional facility access.

We ran into two individuals on the way to the grounds of the school. The first was a research assistant who gave us a small owl figurine and asked us to give incredibly detailed descriptions of it. The individual also pushed for us to be thorough and specific about what a "figurine" is or what an "owl" is or whatever else we were describing. I suspect, in hindsight, they were trying to learn a sorcery word. I would assume "owl".

The second person we ran into was, I believe, a researcher of some kind. They had many formerly passively magic items that had been corrupted, or perhaps infused, by magic of various colors. They appeared vaguely warped and had physical manifestations of the color of magic as well. A few of us suggested the individual take them somewhere I did not note, and the individual went on their way.

The school grounds were unsurprisingly vast, and there were a few categories of locations that were noteworthy to us and our mission:

- Records chambers / libraries
    - Essentially, places where potentially sensitive written information is kept.
- Research rooms
    - Rooms for testing, experimenting, etc.
- Critical spell workings
    - Places where the magical infrastructure of the school and likely some of the surrounding area is kept.
- Common areas
    - Things like communal kitchens, tables to socialize in, etc.

Our job was to control who could access where. Anyone was allowed to go to the common areas. Anyone not from the school or the surrounding outpost was not allowed to go anywhere besides the common areas. We were warned that some people were interested in sabotaging and/or compromising the non-common areas.

Our baseline strategy was to spread out as a group and vaguely try to keep up a buddy system to avoid someone being able to incapacitate a single individual and make a mad dash for a restricted area. We also sought to be as unhelpful as possible and not answer any questions. Some of us were a little unfriendly with the visiting mages. I was against this at first, but was convinced by the idea that standing our ground and presenting strong boundaries could be a good idea. I personally tried to be as cordial as possible but I did not try to stop anyone from being confrontational.

I unfortunately am only able to recall a small handful of individuals I interacted with:

- A visiting mage from Illion who had a broken magic item. It was associated with wild magic. It was an orb that under normal circumstances could let one look from the perspective of a nearby plant. When activated, everything was purely green instead. I sent them to a common area in the hopes that he may be able to ask someone else for help.
- A diviner from a school I do not recall. She spent a long time wandering around and talking to us. Eventually, I ended up alone with her. She iceballed me and immediately sabotaged a restricted area. Unfortunate.
- A research assistant from Illmythil delivering a package to a records area. I grilled the individual briefly and worriedly let them in. They did not sabotage the area.

There were a few sabotages but we managed to ensure that the majority of the restricted areas remained uncompromised. Overall, the mission was successful.

I did not go on the other two missions we did that day. I can unfortunately only provide a vague description of what happened:

- >>Search for missing researcher, rescue if necessary
    - We managed to rescue the researcher. They were deep in a cave with some intimidating Vraak creatures around. Many of the party died. Last I heard, Tolipincë, a construct in our group, was still out there.
- >>Demons sighted in mountain passes -- scout out
    - This was a few greater demons(!) who had gathered by a large rift in the ground up in the mountains. I believe a deal of some kind was struck and the party learned some ideas about the whole king and Vraak situation. They seemed to suggest there was some kind of big change coming.

Thank you for reading. I look forward to the next moon.

Amarthiel Eldasilquendil