

MILES OF TRICKS AND TRIALS

The campaign this season to push into the Sarangrave was a big gamble for the combined forces of the League, Dawn, Varushka and the Urizen, but that one that seems to have paid off. Whilst the beachhead is not yet secure, the armies have made sufficient progress to establish a toehold in Bloodwater Marsh. More importantly, the Citadel Guard are in the Sarangrave, allowing them to utilise the Law of Dominion and cast rituals upon the Druj-held territory. To the east lies the thick trees of the Whisperwood, to the north is the lapping shore of the Feverwater, and between them the ominous and foreboding boughs of Bendol and the vallorn heart that blankets ancient Béantal Dol. The road ahead is long and there is far to go.

War scouts have made a peculiar discovery operating near the border with the Bendol vallorn. In the depths of a sodden forest they have located what appears to be a powerful edifice of white granite and ilium alongside a Spring regio. A brief examination, before they withdrew to avoid a Druj patrol, suggests that the stone is one of the powerful wards that encircle the vallorn heart in Bendol. The Mirelith as it has been named, is comprised of three pillars of light grey stone and a black star-metal infused rock. Wreathed in vital plantlife, it is infused with winter magic. The Mirelith is most likely one of the original creations of the Terunael said to have been erected to try and contain the magicks of spring before disaster befell their people. To this day it has held the vallorn in check, preventing the power that lies in Bendol from spreading into Bloodwater Marsh.

Prognosticators have identified a conjunction that will allow travel through the Sentinel Gate on the Sunday of the Spring Equinox to Mirereach in Bendol.

OBJECTIVE: ARMOUR THE TRODS

- **Connect Sarangrave to the Trods**
- **Cast Dance of Navarr and Thorn at Spring regio using the stones**
- **Conducting the ritual will link the Bendol Stones to the trod network making them unbreakable**

The spring ritual Dance of Navarr and Thorn can only be cast at a spring regio within a region infested by the power of the vallorn. This requires overcoming difficult circumstances, enduring the spores of the vallorn's miasma, avoiding shambling vallornspawn and other creatures roused by intruders. Even if a regio is reached, there is still a great risk to the casters whilst they work their magic, and to those who are there to protect them. In addition, the Druj have proven themselves capable of severing the trods in a territory - they would not be expected to last long.

The unexpected alignment of the Great Wyrms this season has opened up a unique opportunity to take advantage of the large amounts of ilium used centuries ago to create the Terunael stones. With the strong influence of the Great Wyrms, the ritual would weave a powerful transformation on the artefact construction, binding these anchor stones into the trod network. The effects would be dramatic, making the trod network effectively unbreakable, without first destroying the anchor stones.

Successfully enacting Dance of Navarr and Thorn at the Terunael stones would connect the vallorn that covers Béantal Dol to the other vallorn hearts already linked to the trod network. That would bring them one step closer to connecting all the former Terunael cities to the trods, leaving only Cavan in distant Axou and the recently severed trod in Therunin to be reconnected. Perhaps just as importantly, the power flowing through the stones would extend through the Barrens into the network of trods as a whole. As long as the circle of stones in Bendol remained intact, it would be impossible for anyone to destroy the trods in any territory without significant effort, requiring 120 rings of ilium.

ALTERNATE OBJECTIVE: UNLEASH THE VALLORN

- **Destroy one or more of the Terunael stones by casting Inevitable Collapse into Ruin**
- **If one stone is destroyed the Druj will have to bring armies to the Sarangrave to protect Bloodwater**
- **If two stones are destroyed, the Druj won't pull back, because nothing will be able to save Bloodwater**
- **If all three stones are destroyed, Bloodwater will be lost and the Druj will have to pull armies back to avoid losing control of the Sarangrave**
- **Unleashing the vallorn will damage Imperial relations with the septs of the Sarangrave**

A different, and highly controversial, suggestion has been proposed following a discussion between a scholar in the Towerjacks and several spring ritualists in the Citadel Guard. They note that if the stones are what is holding the vallorn back, then destroying one or more of them would be catastrophic. The stones are made of white granite, they're not easily destroyed, but the winter ritual Inevitable Collapse into Ruin would be enough. There are three stones that comprise the Mirelith, and it would take three castings of the ritual to totally destroy the construction.

With the barrier containing the vallorn inside the neighbouring region broken, spring magic will begin to flood out and across Bloodwater Marsh. It's impossible to say exactly how bad that would be, but it could be disastrous for the Druj if the vallorn heart is as powerful as it is elsewhere. The monstrous energies, and the accompanying monsters of the vallorn, would be unleashed on Bloodwater and the surrounding lands. The Druj would be forced to pull back armies to deal with the threat or else abandon the region to the vallorn.

If one of the stones is destroyed it will create a major problem for the Druj to have to deal with or else lose Bloodwater. If two stones are destroyed then it will be impossible to stop the flood of Spring energy that floods out. The threat to the Druj may actually be smaller, because they will have no choice but to abandon the region. If that happens the route between Lustri through Bloodwater Marsh to the Whisperwood would become blocked by the presence of the vallorn. This would be certain death sentence for any Imperial army that remained in the region, but would also create a barrier through which the Druj could not pass. This would effectively block passage between Zenith and the Sarangrave, with armies having to pass through either Therunin or Tsark instead.

If all three stones can be destroyed, then Bloodwater would be swamped by the vallorn, and the Druj would be forced to pull back armies to prevent the loss of Nesustak Forest and Whisperwood, otherwise they would lose control of the territory to the vallorn. If the Bloodwater Marsh falls to the vallorn, the Bloodwater Spears will be wiped out. If the vallorn extends into the Neustak Forest, the Grynbor risk the same fate. In any case, hostility and fear of the Empire will increase markedly among the other septs in the mallum.

BATTLEFIELD ENVIRONMENT: MIASMA OF DESPAIR

- **The entire battlefield is affected by an oppressive Druj miasma**
- **The miasma weakens anyone exposed to it who does not have the ability to overcome it**

Currently, the entire battlefield, and all of Bloodwater Marsh, is under the effect of the Druj miasma a pall of a potent fear that blankets the lands the Druj claim dominion over. Any hero entering the area will need to protect themselves from the clawing dread or succumb to a terror that creeps into their mind.

The primary effect of the miasma is that it weakens anyone exposed to it who does not have the ability to overcome it. The easiest method to overcome the miasma is to receive an anointing, but particularly heroic individuals, or those in possession of certain enchantments or magic items may also be able to counteract the effect. In particular, those of the changeling lineage are able to fight the effects of the miasma, but at the expense of becoming extremely angry - which can cause problems all its own.