

Investigating the Guild Vaults

GM : Andrew Withy

The Party :

Clementine Female Hobbit Airmage (used to be mind) Party Leader, also a bear at times.
Dellith Female Human Namer PB22 leather armour,
Clarissa Female Elf Airmage PB21 lots of stylised tatooes over arms and head, spent time as squirrel
Valery Female Human Wicca PB15 (with glaive) leather armour
Gerard Male Human Illusionist (from "Earth"), later turned into Gorilla
Alexander Male Elf Necromancer PB18 (clumsy) no weapons or gear, spent time as squirrel
Morgan Female Orc PB6 wearing metal armour. Said she uses a glaive, but didn't give any evidence for it.

Mission:

Some items that used to stabilise the mana have been removed from the Guild Vaults. Consequently mana is dripping off the items and flooding out the rooms. Tomorrow lunchtime they expect it to overflow into the Guild proper. Our aim is to investigate and sort it out.

Summary:

Expedition:

We don't take any of our own magical items as they probably would go funny. Enter through the door in the stone wall. Head down loose spiral staircase. Part way down, 25' heptagon room (i) with big lock, solid oak door, empty, with an empty iron cauldron stand. Stairs carry on down now thick with dust. Towards bottom, splotches of vivid green and orange "slime", giving off light enough to see. DA as mana, poisonous. This glowing mana is the only light source in the vaults.

Base of stairs oak door exploded, shards of wood both in & outside room. Perhaps magical lock explosion. Lots more mana splatters, merging together. This opens into a 25' diameter pentagon shaped room with a pentacle centred in floor. Pentacle is seething with mana, more orange, green, also blue and yellow. Slowly filling up the pentacle and overflowing to room. Pentacle is about 10' across, 3' deep. Mana in pentacle is writhing and writhing about like a basket full of snakes, or a heap of new-born kittens. When we go in, we find the mana is warm and slides within clothing etc. Nature of magic for different blobs of mana, of different colour seems to vary, apparently random, e.g. Pure, Energy, Emotion, Purpose. Five cold rods (iron?) within the morass in the pentacle at centre. Portals of some sort to :

Pentagon Arrive in the centre of a pentagon inscribed in the floor in silver. No mana blobs, except some that came through within clothing. Blue and yellow mana goes back through portal, orange and green doesn't. Room is 15' Heptagon, stone foot square blocks walls, with shelves of knick knack type stuff, generally magical. Also a case with books chained the shelves e.g. Elven Love Poems, Sheep (in Hobbitish), Drying Herbs and Flowers. Oak door with iron rails, iron clad completely on one side. This door is a portal to 5 different rooms, each time it is shut then opened it goes to one randomly, unless the someone is concentrating on which room in particular to go to. Guild security personel have training in this and so can move around the vaults in a controlled manner. These five rooms are (in order we came across them) a) Training room, access to the Abyss and Sanctum; b) Study, to pentacle with portals; c) Store room, with force walls, access to Tesselation; d) Empty room direct access to Tesselation; e) fifth room is aparently broken and the door doesn't open.

a : Training room Heptagon (7 sided) room 25' across, initially with walls covered with brightly glowing purple foam textured, with light blue mana marbling effect (and a few other colours e.g. pink), swirling and slithering over itself. Begins to slide out the open doorway, about half a foot per minute. Manage to contain it by bailing it back into the room. This blue stuff burns iron and moves away from it. Organic material (wood & hair at least) burns and vaporises instantaneously, even a book with preservation magic on it. Fumes quickly clear, not sure how. Silver, copper, pewter and water float on top. Crystal blackens, but aura doesn't appear to change. DA purple foam at mana construct / animated level, not sure about blueness. Coins slowly bob along to the far side of the room. Clear the purple and blue off the walls to reveal a 3' diameter bronze circular door, with central knob which rotates to open the door. As door opens rooms both engulfed with liquid (water consistency) glowing mana - fluorescent orange/yellow/green/azure/coral pink/rose red. As it comes in it reacts with the purple foam, dissipating/dissolving it. It settle down to 2' deep. This is slow acting poisonous. Those who went under (as bookcase fell on top of Dellith) have their skin turning red and rash-like, their hair falling out, armour/clothing slowly dissolving, that is, what the rest of us have except happening quicker.

a2 : Heptagon room 25' across. Looks like it had the liquid up to 5' deep, now only 2' deep. Bare stone walls between liquid level and the "tide mark". Above the tide mark is mana blobs covering wall, mainly pink and purple. Also invisible mana clouds within the air gently swirling about, can't tell where they're coming from or going to. The room contains remains of wooden bookcases (that used to be about 6' tall) dissolved up to tide mark. Also remains of 3 iron stands, recently corroded. Has a 10" diameter hole in the far wall (air inside is magically trapped, warded or cursed) which looks through to a3 : Aparatus Room.

After splashing the liquid mana over the walls to remove the purple foam, we discover another circular door. This leads to another version of Room aaa. That is, if one goes into one version of the room, another real seeming version appears in the other room. They're not mirrored. It also has a hole through to Room a3.

We chip away at mortar around stone block, indicating the bound earth which it aparently used to be was no longer in effect. When stone blocks are removed reveals, the straw and earth packing between walls, cleared away reveals another stone block wall. Break through this into another version of Room a3. This rough hole we found later lined with nicely mortared stone blocks, poissbly by the Masters, possibly by the Vaults of its own volition.

a3 : Aparatus room Heptagon room 25' across, has generally white light with flashes and flickers of colours coming from a 7' high 10' across huge crystalline apparatus. The hole looks like a chute which feeds directly into the top of this apparatus. The apparatus stops flashing after a while, since we've reduced the liquid mana level in Room a2 and it has no raw ingredient anymore. Strong sulphurous smell. Door in the far wall, initially a circular hole opened by the Masters. Later, the Aparatus was made to stop work by the Party removing a few pieces, to stop the creation of the hobbits. Subsequently the liquid mana built up until the room was full, until piped into the Abyss.

Hobbits There are half a dozen or so hobbits, which can't talk hobbit, only common. They say they were made by their Masters (by coming out of the crystalline apparatus) to serve The Cause (to overtake the world). Their Masters tell them they're waiting for the door to appear and open, which leads to the glowing path of enlightenment. They encourage us to join in The Cause by coming through the chute into the apparatus, by chopping ourselves up if needed, or if we put a limb through the Masters would know it off for us.

Masters are black flying squirrel size and shaped creatures (chittering understood with Speak to Enchanted) with bright red eyes that flash when enraged and a shadowy form, but not true ShadowForm. We initially see only two in this room. They have a quick acting poison (doing endurance damage) which is transferred when touched/attacked. The poison turns the skin black, radiating out from point of contact. It seemed quick at first, but actually slowed down, or at least I didn't die as quickly as the empathy first suggested. When they die, they vapourise into a cloud of black gas, which is poisonous when breathed. Magic, and silver weapons rather than iron are more damaging. The Masters also cast magic : Clementine got depressed, Morgan didn't want to kill them, and weapons became yucky to her; also turns floor of room a3 black, hot and burning for us to walk on.

Casting Those of us with more MA and spell ranks got an itch to cast magic, like the feeling of a sneeze coming on. At this stage we had choice and control of what spells to cast. As we prepare the liquid mana flows up from all sides, if the cast succeeds it is absorbed into one. If fails it sloshes down and creates waves/ripples. If it backfires, Alexander had mana pouring out of every head orifice, severely irritating inside canals, the feeling of one's head exploding. Also the mana moves away from his body, can't cast or use magical talents etc for some time. Empathy after successful casting suggests it is similar to alcohol use. Not poisonous but feels GREAT and one is left with the desire to do it again. It gets harder to resist casting the more often we do cast. Just the mere suggestion by one party member to possibly cast a spell, had four of us automatically and immediately casting. Definitely high mana zone, even Special spells are not fatiguing to cast at all. Seems like each colleges gets its most bonuses to cast. Those who cast each become Unstable Mana Zone. Second time down this casting urge no longer in evidence.

a4 : Abyss a 3' wide glowing white path wending its way for a very long way in the distance. Surrounded by blackness. The path winds up and down, gradually getting narrower. It doesn't take as long to travel the distance we thought, that is, it seems shorter than it should be. Path is made from Illusionary, Wall of Light spells. To get back into Room a3 an illusionary door is cast and then opened.

First time through, we seem to be catching up with some hobbits and a couple of Masters, however a Master casts behind them and creates a 25' gap in the 2 1/2' wide by now, path. Here we find the path is about 1/16th of an inch thick, and can't be seen through. Use ropes to swing across Clemetine then tie around the path for others to cross. Morgan flies across, carrying Dellith due to broken arm. When the Orc drops Alexander at later gap, he falls, and falls, not hitting bottom, even when out of our earshot. Come to a fork, take right turn. Walking single file now.

a5: Caterpillar room Come to a 1' wide perpendicular side branch of the path that goes to a locked and magically trapped, cursed or warded door. Brief encounter with Master with 2 hobbits, Bert and Mary. Master dies (lightening bolt) but not before creating another 30' gap in the path. Mary looks behind door, briefly, returns scared, citing a huge orange caterpillar, however its orange the same as the nothingness that we see beside the path - that is, black.

Hobbits are mana constrcuts - nothing from healing empathy. Hair and fingernails cut off turn into puff of rusty brown mana. Clothes have no pockets, and no seams. Hobbits have no concept of breakfast. Mary burns at touch of the Orc's metal armour. They didn't see the previous gap in the path, but picked up the coin we had left at the last path fork. Mary is good at picking pockets as she goes past someone.

a6 : Sanctum Plane

Hobbits join us walking along the path. At another fork in the path, to the right is a 20' blue cube rotating, in seemingly four dimensions. DA as mana dealing with planer constraint. The cube reminds me of one of the plane symbols. The hobbits walk on through and we follow. We come out onto a hilly grassy plain. Hobbits not seen, but 2 humans dressed in black approach from the next hill over. These Guild Security members had entered the vaults the evening of the fire at the guild, blasting open the door at the foot of the stairs, and have been waiting 6 months for some real adventurers to come and solve the vault problem for them. They seem rather perturbed at our description of what we've seen.

Johnston Human male, mid forties, looks experienced. Mind mage, does more of the talking and explaining.

Franklin Illusionist, Healer (5), younger male.

F&J kept away from the Masters and hobbits, and set up camp beside a short hobbit house. Its summer, so they sleep outside. Not many animals to eat, food from the towns isn't real. They have watched more and more Lesser mana hobbits come through from the vaults, which then settle into the towns, eating and living as per normal, except its all mana stuff that they deal with. The Lesser Hobbits have started to plant fields of green and orange mana, which the red and yellow mana "sheep" come and graze on.

Casting mana levels are normal here, except where the Masters are, then it is less controllable, and casting more likely to backfire. Mana levels are normal here, except where the Masters are, then it is High.

Travelling about is screwy with directions. Go North to one town, and leave it going North, one ends up back where one started. To carry on, one should have travelled South. The way out is through the Hub (inner sanctum), going North, South, East and West in any order. Rangers tended to get lost / confused due top their direction bump, others just went where they wanted to. Each road has a direction, for example, the West Road, and when travelling on that road, one is travelling West, regardless of which direction one walks. It is possible to travel between the towns not following the roads, but sometimes takes longer. Not as many Lesser Hobbits though.

Sanctum Plane, as described by Johnston, consists a point, where one is standing, surrounded by a tetrahedron, surrounded by an octohedran, surrounded by an inverted tetrahedran, surrounded by a sphere. This explains why the Outlands exist in between the town, yet there is no boundary or edge to the plane.

Sun and Moon rise in East and set in West, being directly overhead at noon and midnight respectively. The moon is always crescent shape. The stars don't move or change. The sky is blue.

Earthy We and F&J are considered "earthy" as opposed to mana, the same way that the whole plane was earthy when the Masters and hobbits arrived at the Inner Sanctum. They have spread out from there, pushing the Earthy Hobbits that used to live on this plane into the "outlands" (bits of "wilderness inbetween the towns). We didn't see any of the Earthy hobbits, called "Indies" (indigenous ?) by the Lesser Hobbits. We are seen by the Lesser hobbits as being "all colours". As we travel closer to the Inner Sanctum there are less earthy patches of ground for us to rest on, and mana fields and "trees" and blobs cover most of the plane.

Hobbit Resistance Wearing black, met them in the inn, depressed, as half of their number had been killed / dispelled by the Masters when they had tried rebelling. These “blue” or “white” hobbits were created on the first day by the Masters, about 40 in total. Then the Masters realised they weren’t being obedient so have only ever produced the Lesser Hobbits since then. They ran off and now keep away from the Lesser Hobbit towns and the Masters will still gibber/cast at them to dispell them if they are within range. Their skin is white and if disspelled they turn into white vapour (aparently). They call themselves Blue because the other “Lesser Hobbits” don’t have any blue mana in them. There is no blue mana in Sanctum, which was their whole problem. The remaining 13 of them travelled with us to the Inner Sanctum, since we could actually harm the Masters.

Shaping the mana in the fields, and the “sheep” to create anything, is done by both Lesser and Blue Hobbits. Sort of like shaping bread dough, but the mana isn’t elastic like dough is, and stays put when the hobbits hand isn’t directly over it, shaping it. The mana goes into to levels of usefulness, field lowest (food, rope, weapons) then the Sheep mana (walks about) then the “Tims”. The Blue hobbits haven’t ever attempted to shape themselves, that being uncivilised. The Gerard cast Spell of Seeming which shaped the mana as well. Being Invisible meant he started sinking into the ground if he didn’t keep moving. Couldn’t breathe underground, nor could the Blue hobbit when he tried later. The hobbits could see Gerard even though he was Invisible.

Tims seem to be incomplete Lesser Hobbits, made when there wasn’t quite enough mana. They didn’t have any names, so we all callled them Tims, even the other hobbits. They are smaller, with shorter attention span, follow orders easily, stupid. They don’t do any work. Turn into brown vapour when damaged/dispelled. Good for trying out methods for combatting the Lesser hobbits, as they’re made of the same mana. Three travelled with us to the Inner Sanctum.

Black Machine is being built in each town. 13 or 14 now completed. They are built inside a black (with occasional orange and green flecks) box 40’ high x 60’ square, with rounded corners. Walls aparently 1/2’ thick. Black smoke issues from the top of it, though no chimney or stack apparent. From a distance, it seems seamless, with no openings or features. However the hobbits egress by 2’ square flaps hinged at the top. Inside there is a stair that goes Down, to the cellar, where mana and stuff are kept. And a stair going Up, where the Foreman Lesser Hobbit stands and works. The Overseers live upstairs, the Lesser Hobbits don’t ever go there. The black machines make stuff which contain black mana. When hobbits eat food and use tools containing Black Mana, they gradually turn into Overseers ? Black Mana is created by some arcane method from all the different colours of mana that are found, and fed into it by the wroking Lesser Hobbits. The machine has knobs and dials which Mark, the Assistant Deputy Foreman (who we captured from “The Water”) had conrol of. The machine was about 8 hobbits high, 15 - 20 paces long. Recently production has slowed.

Comrades are what the Lesser hobbits call each other. They inhabit the burrows around the black machine and work the fields and the machine. Hierarchy is important, however they consider themselves "equal". They use Picks and shovels to feed the mana into the machine (the mana sticks together into clumps) and also as weapons to attack us. The Overseers like to keep them in lines, as it's easier to count them. They attacked us by running out of the Black Box in 2 lines of 10, down the hill. Seemed keen on keeping in the lines, but some ran off. These lines predictable in behaviour. Very scared of Iron Armour and iron weapons do endurance blows. When they die, they turn into clouds (15' diameter) of brown mana vapour, poisonous to us. They used to travel between the towns, but since the machines have started working and there are more overseers, they stay in their own town. They have no word for blue, describing the sky as black, but not as black as the Hobbit Resistance cloaks.

Overseers are Black. They wear out after a while, their skins turning from normal ruddy complexion getting greyer and darker greyer, until presumably black. They go upstairs before they quite turn black and a replacement Overseer walks into the town. One Overseer had been there forever, but there have been more added, 4 now at "The Water" town. They use black whips on the slower Lesser Hobbits, which hurts them, hence motivates them to work faster. They are the contact with the Masters. They apparently know how the machine works. They were slowly walking down the hill from the Black Box to fight us, in a square formation.

Path of Enlightenment - When there is one Black Machine in each town (and the Inner Sanctum - 16 in total), then the mana will be bound over the whole plane (turning black) overrunning the "earth" bits. Then the Masters will create the Path to Enlightenment (starting at the Inner Sanctum), and lead the Lesser Hobbits / Comrades to a Better Brighter Future as they go to the Ultimate Reality. Of course there will be no earthy bits left by then.

Inner Sanctum is township 200-300 yards across, with about 100 houses, surrounded by half a mile of fields, which have richer/deeper coloured mana being farmed. At the centre is the machine surrounded by 30' x 60' black wall, with one guarded entry. Clementine and Mark act as being guards taking the rest of us as prisoners to see the Masters, which gets us past these stupid guards. Into the walled area, lots of hobbits moving about quickly/purposefully, and half a dozen Masters watching over things. One chitters at us, which the Resistance hobbits understand, translates as telling us to move faster. The access into the machine was via catflap door 3' square, 2' from the ground. The machine's walls burning us, but iron weapons slices through the walls like butter, creating swathes of poisonous black gas. Inside the machine is a series of big boxes, connected by chutes delivering mana, etc. We fight off some overseer hobbits, 2 Masters, and climb up the stairs to platform with a blue cube on it.

Exiting Sanctum by touching the cube puts us back on the white path beside the rotating cube. We have no clothing or gear, and we are ruddy skin coloured flying squirrels, like the Masters (but not black). Our health levels remain the same, and we seem to be speaking in a chattering version of "common" or whatever. The Path seems 8' wide to us. 3 resistance hobbits, Lorenzo, Lucretia and Clearmond, also come back, bringing through a few pieces of mana sheep they can still manipulate.

Rotating blue cube gets bigger, 30' when we saw it last. The white path gets dissolved by black mana vapour emanating from the cube. Seeps out throughout the Abyss, reaching the vaults.

- b) Study 25' heptagon, initially with beige coloured carpet (disintegrated with the mana) and large wooden desk, chair, lecturn with book about cataloging magical items, several shelves with knick knock sort of magical items. One door, to b2.
- b2) study pentacle 25' heptagon room, with 10' pentacle inserted one foot into the floor. 8" wooden planks on edge seem to be the portal triggers, again controlled by thinking of where to go. This is the only way back to the base of the stairs. Has two doors to b3, b4.
- b3) item store 25' heptagon with magical items sorted in each corner on iron stands. In the centre is a 3 pronged iron stand which looks like its item has been taken. We take a bag containing a dark sphere, otherwise all the items (packing case, wooden gemmed throne, wand, silvered bull horn) get dissolved in the mana.
- b4) empty
- b5) Elemental Room Entered from the Study Pentacle (b2), each side of the 25' heptagon is : ice, earth, fire, light, air, water, dark. No mana flowing/dissolving here.
- c) Force wall store Apparently it used to be just a store room. When we first found it, there was sparkly vapourised mana at one archway which had no effect on iron, but exploding organic matter. The room had two Rune walls of Force directing the man towards an archway across the room. The mana solidified after about five feet, turning into what we called sheep type mana, all sorts of fluorescent colours. There was some sort of net about half way across the room, which was sieving off only the blue mana and directing it through the force wall and down into a hole in the floor. We stopped that (warped wood). The rest flowed through out the archway into the Tesselations. When we counterspelled/dissipated a wall, the blue sheep turned into blue vapoured mana which spread out over the entire sparkly area. This confirmed the archway led through to the sewers, accessed through the Tesselation (into d2).
- d) Tesselation Empty room 25' heptagon which is empty (except when filled with liquid mana) with one archway which is the start of the Tesselation. Each archway is 7' x 10' high, placed in the centre of the 15' wide wall of the heptagon. The rooms in the Tesselation proper, generally have archways on all walls, which generally has sort of mirror images of its room.
- d2) Sheep River Mana sheep flowed from Room C archway, straight through to archway opposite, into d3.
- d3) Drain 2' diameter hole in the centre of the floor, which wasn't there before, but has neatly arranged stones around the edge, as a stonemason would have. The river of mana sheep flows directly down the drain, with quite a strong suction, also a flow of liquid (water consistency) mana, flowing in from an archway opposite.
- d4) Sewer 30' diameter pipe, about half filled with liquid mana. The sheep dissolve in the liquid mana. Flows downstream, forks, with left carries on till it vapourises into sparkly mana stuff, which connects directly to Room C. The right hand branch carries on flowing downstream and loops back to the drain access above.
- d5) Fountain hole in the floor, with 1' high fountain spout, about palm of hand size spurt of liquid. Liquid mana quickly flowing up and out. Later seems to suck and blow randomly. Morgan dredges up some black mana from within the fountain.

- d6) Staff Study with desk, with note "W & KK meet @ * 29th last 3 weeks DC prob check with S" 3 books (Magic Construction, Nature of Reality, Necromantic Methods). Round porthole type door, sign over "Please Enter" in common, "Danger Staff Only" in Naming runes. Door opens to the Abyss, with dark path in the darkness, can't be seen, but felt as we moved along it slowly. We use this doorway to drain the liquid mana from the fountain and the Sheep River into the Abyss. Because the way the portals are set up, the mana flows better when enclosed in a pipe (illusions and then tarpaulins sewn into pipes) going through the archways. This keeps the Tessaletion 'set' to this room.
- d7) Safe room no mana enters. (We use it to dry off from our dousings in mana) Can't prepare spells, use talents, magical items don't work.