

Magic Realm Beginning/Intermediate Play-By-E-Mail Game 3 August 2003-February 2004

The complete record of this game is archived on the web at:

<http://www.thewinternet.com/bimr/>

This site has a Game History link with a day-by-day record of the orders and moves, an image of the board at the end of each day, and a detailed record of each day's combat with images of the Melee Sheets at crucial points.

Gamemaster: Steve McKnight

Rules: Second/Third Edition Base Rules

Advanced Rules: None

Optional Rules: "Seasons/Weather"

Unpublished Optional Rules: "Watchful Natives", "Extended Treachery", and "Knights' Adjustments"

Weather: Autumn

The Players:

1. Tony Rowe as Lothar, the BLACK KNIGHT

Victory Requirements: 1 Great Treasure, 1 Fame, 2 Notoriety, 1 Gold

2. Bill Skulley as Iftandir/Iftanrel, the ELF

Victory Requirements: 2 Fame, 2 Notoriety, 1 Gold

3. Alan Busby/Craig Perras as Ogion, the WIZARD

Victory Requirements: 1 Spells, 1 Great Treasure, 2 Notoriety, 1 Fame

4. Matija Vidmar as CAPTAIN Alatraste

Victory Requirements: 1 Great Treasure, 2 Fame, 1 Notoriety, 1 Gold

5. Al D'Amico as Voldemort, the WITCH KING

Victory Requirements: 2 Fame, 3 Notoriety

6. Chuck Shrader as Naal Han Artal and Imameen Elf-Slayer, DRUIDS

Victory Requirements: 2 Great Treasures, 1 Spells, 2 Fame

7. Michael Roden as Berek and Ur-Berek, BERSERKERS

Victory Requirements: 1 Great Treasures, 2 Fame, 1 Notoriety, 1 Gold

Replaced by:

Ed Hoden as Brother Matthew the Basher, a PILGRIM

Victory Conditions: 1 Spells, 1 Great Treasure, 2 Fame, 1 Notoriety

and as Snorri Gundarchuksson, the BERSERKER
Victory Points: Gold 1, Fame 2, Notoriety 2

8. Bobby Bissett as Hermione, the WITCH, and Crookshanks the Familiar
Victory Requirements: 1 Spells, 1 Fame, 3 Notoriety

9. James McCann, as the nameless WHITE KNIGHT
Victory Requirements: 2 Fame, 1 Notoriety, 1 Gold, 1 Great Treasure

10. Mark Mitchell as Blaize, the AMAZON
Victory Requirements: 1 Great Treasure, 3 Fame, 1 Notoriety

Game Summary

The gamemaster didn't begin the BIMR3 game with the idea of creating a showcase for magic-using characters and "Absorb Essence." Indeed, the gamemaster's intention was to create a game where the "go-it-alone" character strategies that have appeared on various Magic Realm forums would be less attractive, and characters would be forced to team up and find their own strategies for success. Thus the "Watchful Natives" Optional Rule eliminates the "sucker punch" on natives by specifying that if a character attacks an unassigned unhired native, all the unassigned, unhired natives of the same group in the clearing attack the character in the same round. This rule makes the natives safe from solitary attacks by Purple-magic-users with "Fiery Blast" and from serial, hit-and-run attacks by warriors. "Extended Treachery" provides that hired natives that are assigned to attack unhired members of the same group "rebel" and stop being hired. These Optional Rules give the Rogues at the Inn a chance of surviving Day 1.

Finally the Knights' Adjustments makes the White Knight merely "Friendly" (instead of "Allied") with the Order, and the Black Knight "Friendly" instead of "Allied" with the Company. As Allies, these groups are just too easy to hire or buy heavy equipment from using the Knights' "Honor" and "Fear" advantages. Once the White Knight has traded for a warhorse or the Black Knight has hired the Company, they become so much more powerful than the other characters that they just leave the rest of the players in the dust. And without the Knights' Adjustments, this can happen in the first few days of the game.

However, Magic Realm players are infinitely resourceful, and with one technique of native abuse shut off, their fertile minds quickly began exploring the rules for other techniques of mass murder. The first sign of what was to come revealed itself in the board-building process. With the other players carefully playing their valley tiles close to the center of the board to make the dwellings centrally located (a geography that they were assured by the gamemaster would create an easier game), Al placed Cliff as his first tile in an orientation where three of the clearings could only be reached by discovering a secret passage or by enchanting a woods tile, suggesting that he had his eye on a character that could fly. And, indeed, during character selection Al grabbed the Witch King, a notoriously difficult character for beginners to play. With Bobby subsequently taking the Witch, BIMR4 began with two characters who could make Black magic

and cast Type V spells.

Once the dwellings were placed, the board was revealed to be relatively character-friendly (as much as any Magic Realm board can be described as character-friendly!) The Inn, where the Berserker, Witch, Elf, Black Knight, Druid, and Amazon would start, was centrally located in Curst Valley, approximately equidistant from five possibly treasure-site-containing tiles to the north (Crag, Cavern, High Pass, Deep Woods, and Caves) and the other five treasure-site tiles to the south (Ruins, Mountain, Borderland, Cliff, and Ledges). The Wizard, starting at the Guardhouse in Dark Valley, was right next to Ruins, and the Captain, starting at the House in Evil Valley on the southern edge of the board, was right next to Ledges and only two day's march from reaching the isolated clearings in Cliff. The White Knight, starting at the Chapel in Bad Valley on the northern edge of the board, was also only two days away from Cliff.

On Day 1, though, things were revealed to be not quite so nice. Apparently intimidated by the difficulty of battling the watchful Rogues, the characters at the Inn headed out immediately for the clean air of the country, leaving the Black Knight waiting at the Inn without any accomplices to help him launch an attack. The Elf, moving to the north, immediately turns up a pack of Wolves in Linden Woods that block the Druid when he tries to go through before hiding. At the same time, the Amazon and the Witch, moving south, are blocked by six Ax Goblins in Borderland. In the battle in the evening, the Amazon is badly battered by the Goblins before she can run away after the Witch lures and flies to safety on her Broomstick. The Druid and Amazon retreat back toward the Inn where they join the Black Knight, cut off from the rest of the board by the Wolves in Linden Woods and the Goblins in Borderland.

In the next few days the characters at the Inn slip past the Wolves and Goblins, leaving the Rogues unmolested. The Statue in Deep Woods is discovered and cleaned out by the Elf and Druid. The Captain, having successfully hired the Soldiers from the House, discovers the Lost Castle in Ledges and, along with the hired SHQ, finds and loots the Hoard. The White Knight vanquishes a Tremendous Giant and eventually finds the secret passage to the Pool in Cliff 6. Revealing some of his bag of tricks, the Witch King casts "Absorb Essence" on a Tremendous Giant and then uses the Giant's strength and tremendous vulnerability to wipe out a Heavy Spider and five of the six Ax Goblins in Borderland. In a tremendous stroke of luck on Day 4, the Witch flies to Ledges and absorbs an even more awesome monster, the Tremendous Flying Dragon. But on Day 5, the Berserker, on his way to the Vault in Mountain is killed by a Tremendous Troll that is just too quick for Berek's Great Ax.

Reincarnating at the Inn, the new Berserker, Ur-Berek is immediately blocked on his way north by the six Wolves. But fortunately the Druid is watching from the shadows and with his lightning-fast dagger the Druid and Berserker rid the Realm of the Wolves. The Elf and Black Knight also strike up a friendship and make good use of the Elf's magical powers to enchant a woods tile and arrive at the Small Campfire where the Elf needs to use his "Persuade" spell to befuddle their enemies, the Lancers, who ride up looking for a fight.

The Witch (cum Tremendous Flying Dragon) and the Captain join up and finish cleaning out the Hoard. When Giant Bats arrive on Day 7, the Captain and his TFD friend make quick work of

five of them in Ledges while the Elf brings down the sixth in Cliff 3 with a single arrow.

Week Two is lovely Autumn Summer weather, and it begins with Dragons. The Witch King casts "Dissolve Spell," freeing up his "Absorb Essence" spell and leaving the confused Giant wondering what happened to the last four days. Voldemort then absorbs a Tremendous Dragon and uses that form to clean up a couple of Serpents and his previous absorbee, the Tremendous Giant. The Captain's hired men survive a Power of the Pit attack and finish off the Demon who finally arrives to protect the Altar.

The Black Knight and Elf find the secret passage in Cliff, rush right past the Pool where the Amazon and White Knight are diving for treasure, and head up the back side of Mountain toward the Vault while the Berserker and Druid climb up the other side. Winning the race to the Mountain 3, the Black Knight uses the Elf's Lost Keys to open the Vault and pulls out the Garb of Speed, which he dons just before the Berserker and Druid arrive with the intention of driving the competition away. In a quick and deadly combat period, the Black Knight freezes the Berserker by charging out of hiding with his Garb of Speed and kills him with one blow with his alerted Mace. Completely helpless against the unexpectedly quick Knight, the Berserker abandons his Great Ax and helmet to keep them out of Lothar's hands (presumably throwing them off the edge of the mountain) before he expires. At the same time, the Elf alerts his Light Bow to take down the Druid, but before he can let the arrow fly, the Druid casts an alerted "Stones Fly" spell that outreaches the bow and kills the Elf. Turning away from their victims, the Black Knight and Druid confront one another for a moment before the Druid runs away from the armored Knight.

Michael, having run through two Berserkers and having trouble keeping up with the game pace due to limited e-mail access, bows out of the game at this point. Since Dan, playing Ur-Berek as an alternate, declines the restart as well, Ed takes his place and elects to restart at the Inn as Brother Matthew the Basher. Brother Matthew selects "Small Blessing" as his spell and on the first combat period gains a "Wish for Strength" which will cause his next blow with his Staff to inflict Tremendous harm. Speaking softly and carrying a big stick, he wanders north into Deep Woods. Bill reincarnates as another Elf, Iftanrel and goes north too.

Not all treasures are beneficial. The Amazon dives into the Pool and comes up with Cloven Hoof which radiates Black magic into the clearing and adds 1 to all die rolls, putting a crimp in the Loot rolls for the Pool treasures. It takes two days for the Amazon to move out of the clearing to ditch the Hoof and return. The Black Knight spends his days Looting the Vault and his evenings chasing the Druid out of the clearing until he loots the Golden Icon. Worth 100 gold if it could be sold to a native group, the Icon is too valuable to abandon and, with Tremendous weight, too heavy to carry, so the Black Knight hangs onto it while he continues to loot on the off chance that he might find the 7-League Boots that would give him a T move capability. Instead he attracts a Tremendous Troll that he can't run from while carrying the Golden Icon. Fortunately the Druid is willing to let by-gones be by-gones, and, in exchange for the promise of a treasure, agrees to lure the Troll and run away so the Black Knight can abandon the Golden Icon and flee with his Garb of Speed.

The Wizard arrives at the Lost Castle in Ledges after a long trek from the Guardhouse, but not until the Captain, his hired SHQ, and his friend the Witch/TFD have just about cleaned out the treasures from the Hoard and Altar. Nevertheless, Ogion loots the Flying Carpet from the Altar and learns the “Illusion” spell by Reading Runes. On his first flight with his new toy, the Wizard flies over to the Pool in Cliff and lands directly on top of the Tremendous Octopus! Fortunately, the Amazon agrees to lure the speedy Octopus while the White Knight’s Great Sword and the Wizard’s “Lightning Bolt” both attack the eight-legged horror. Old-fashioned steel proves superior to modern electricity: the Lightning Bolt zigs while the monster zags but the White Knight’s aim is true and the Sword spits the Octopus in two.

Meanwhile, the Witch King reenchants Maple Woods to reach the Small Campfire where the unsuspecting Lancers are relaxing. At the end of the day his friends, the Bashkars, ride up on their ponies. Shrewdly calculating that his friends are worth more to him dead than alive, the Witch King plays a Black magic chit to activate his “Absorb Essence” and turn into a Tremendous Dragon. Completely invulnerable under his armored scales to the Medium and Heavy attacks of the woodland natives, the Witch King/TD methodically kills all six Bashkars and four Lancers, netting 220 Notoriety points and 20 Gold and nearly converts the game into a contest for second place!

As Week 2 ends on Day 14, the Captain and Witch arrive at a scene of devastation at the Small Campfire with abandoned lances lying on the ground and ponies milling around aimlessly. A regenerated group of Lancers rides up in the evening, draw the wrong conclusions from the evidence of slaughter, and insult the Witch and Captain. The Witch plays a Black magic chit to activate her “Absorb Essence” spell, transmorphizes into a Tremendous Flying Dragon, and proceeds to teach the new Lancers to mind their manners by killing them all.

The weather in Week 3 continues the beautiful Autumn Summer days, and the characters continue their murderous ways. The Witch and the Captain make their way to the Inn where they sell all their looted items to the Rogues as the Company shows up. In the Evening, the Rogues decide to battle the Captain. A bad decision, as the Witch transmorphizes to the Tremendous Flying Dragon and, with some assistance from the Captain’s hired band, wipes out the Rogues and the Company too, for good measure, netting 247 Notoriety points and spilling all of the bartered goods on the ground to be looted again.

With the treasure sites in the southern half of the board nearly all cleaned out, the characters begin to converge on the northern tiles, but the Lost City is still undiscovered when Week 3 draws to a close.

The weather for the last week is Cool with the normal two Basic and two Sunlight phases. The Wizard enchants High Pass to activate his Flying Carpet, arrives at Cairns at the end of the High Pass ridge, and is met by a Tremendous Spider. The Wizard prepares two Lightning Bolt attacks from hiding, but the T Spider shrugs off the sparks and the Wizard has to fly away. The next day he lands on top of the Spider and is blocked again, but the Pilgrim has arrived in the meantime. With his Fight M2** Staff and Wish for Strength, Bro. Matthew annihilates the Spider before the Wizard can blink his eyes.

The two mages are just beginning to search for the Cairns when the Black Knight rides up on the workhorse he has purchased from the Captain and Witch. Lothar charges the Pilgrim with his Living Sword alerted. Bro. Matthew's desperation "Small Blessing" gives him a vision of the Sacred Grail among the treasures in Cairns but cannot save him from the Black Knight's attack, and he is killed within reach of the Grail. The Wizard's "Lightning Bolt" attack hits but does not harm the Black Knight's workhorse, and the Wizard makes his escape by Flying Carpet leaving Lothar in sole possession of the clearing with its treasure site.

Elsewhere, revenge rather than greed motivates violence. The Druid ends up hidden in the same clearing with the Elf who has an alerted Light Bow and has found hidden enemies. The Druid appears to have forgotten that he killed the present Elf's brother in the encounter at the Vault and neglects to run away during the Encounter Step. The Elf settles the score in the Melee step by targeting and killing the Druid with a single arrow in the back.

On Day 25 the Witch activates her "Absorb Essence," transmorphizes into a Tremendous Flying Dragon, and flies with the Captain on her back into the Caverns where the Lost City, the Lair, and Shrine are finally revealed! They are soon joined by the Elf coming through the passage from Deep Woods, the Wizard plummeting out of the sky from High Pass, and 12 Goblins. Moving cautiously not to attract the Goblins, the characters are not able to loot anything out of the Lost City sites before the game ends.

The White Knight, gifted with the Golden Icon that the Amazon found abandoned at the Vault but couldn't carry, lugs the treasure over to the Chapel where he gets his "Ashes" curse removed, keeps the Icon, and sells all his other worldly possessions to the Order, fulfilling his Victory Requirements. Unfortunately, attempting to exit the board as an unarmed (but very wealthy) penitent, the White Knight stumbles over two Ogres in the Nut Woods and is killed on Day 26.

Back on High Pass, the Black Knight is trying to loot the Cairns when he looks up and sees the Witch King, his absorbed Dragon temporarily inactive, galloping down the ridge toward him on a pony. Trapped on the end of the ridge and unable to escape, the Black Knight composes himself to die as the Witch King casts the "Phantasm" spell he has learned to help him find the hidden Knight. But the Witch King is unable to deliver the coup de grace because of the timing of the actions in the Encounter Step. Taking his actions before the Black Knight on Day 27 and 28, he must activate "Absorb Essence" to convert to a Tremendous Dragon before the Black Knight plays an action, and the Dragon's move speed isn't fast enough to keep the Knight from running away. After a round or two of trash talk, the two characters celebrate their joint evilness by the Witch King giving 10 gold to Lothar. Thus the game ends.

