

A brief communiqué on the Guild sanctioned mission to The Crucible

By Clifford Amberglade

Participating Guild Members:

- Clifford Amberglade
- Finn Packwell
- Pallida Procella
- Rirra Swiftrunner
- Russel Sprout

Location: Bandit Coast, The Crucible

The following is a report by Clifford Amberglade of the Amberglade family, to inform the Guild about the ongoings in the Crucible. All discoveries and conclusion reported in it, that are of a magical nature are property of Clifford Amberglade and are not to be used, distributed or studied without his consent.

Arriving at The Crucible

Upon arriving we are greeted by two individuals, presumably by the former champion Mad Dog Mcree and his companion Julian, who organise the fights. To participate we must sign a waiver that clears the organizers should we sustain injury or even die during the fight. Participation without signing the waiver is not possible.

Upon signing the waiver, the paper vanishes into smoke and we hear laughter. I postulate that this was some kind of demonic pact. Should the Crucible continue operation, I strongly recommend further investigation into the nature of these pacts, and the use the organizers see in them.

We are guided into a dark waiting area, where we are greeted by an individual calling himself "Mess". He appears to be some kind of goblin/human hybrid; however, I wasn't able to find any mentions of a creature like this in my research. The closest I was able to ascertain were mentions of half-goblins¹, however the description doesn't match what I observed. Going forward I will operate under the theory that he is a singular specimen created by some kind of demonic ritual. For what purpose I could not say. Perhaps simply for experimentation.

Mess recognises that Pallida has a fondness for animals, and delights in informing her, that the animals here are not well kept, and are in fact tortured so they go into a frenzy and try to kill everything in sight. While undoubtedly useful for fights in the arena, the moral implications are surely lost on Mess.

Shortly before entering the arena fighting ground, Russel reveals three vials of poison, that can be used to coat our weapons. Finn takes on, while the remaining two remain in Russel's possession.

¹ As described in „Realms of Infamy“ by Elaine Bergstrom

Entering the Arena

Upon entering the arena, we are greeted by a big and loud crowd. There are stands all around with entrances at the ground level, where the fighters and animals are able to enter the fighting grounds. It's a sandy surface with pillars rising up to 15ft tall. On the opposite end from where we enter is an observation lounge, though we are unable to see if it is occupied.

Most striking to me however is the magical barrier that surrounds the fighting area and protects the spectators from any stray arrows or magical incantations. Interestingly however, is that the observation lounge itself is not protected by this barrier. If this is because of the limitations of the means in which the barrier was created or if that is simply because the occupants are very confident in their own ability is hard to say. The latter would certainly be of concern.

How this magic barrier is created and maintained is a mystery to me. I highly doubt that a single mage is able to hold it constantly and there is no indication that the barrier is only activated shortly before the fight to conserve energy. So I assume that some kind of runes are used to maintain the barrier. The barrier itself is clearly derived from the Wall of Force spell², however much bigger and longer lasting. Where the energy for that is coming from, is another mystery to me. I worry that some kind of demonic being is used to power the barrier, but this is simply speculation on my part. Should the Guild send another expedition to the Crucible, I hereby formally request to accompany it and to study the barrier.

² As described in Solomon's „Guide to Frankonian's high level spellcraft“

First Round

For the first round the handlers bring in two griffons and four blood hawks³. I am sure the readers of this paper are all familiar with griffons, and so can understand the crime against nature that is being committed here by trapping and torturing such magnificent creatures, for the entertainment of the crowd.

The start of the fight is signalled by a loud gong and a high-pitched whistle that clearly is uncomfortable to the animals and drives them to attack.

We are unable to try anything to calm down these animals as one griffon straight away attacks Russel and tries to drag him away in its beak. Luckily Finn is able to stop this.

A fight ensues with Rirra claiming first blood by killing two blood hawks with her lightning infused fists. I focus on the Griffon that attacked Russel, and I am able to use a new spell I found while studying recordings of the First Catalogue. The spell named “Witch Bolt” by the Librarians, though I find that a poor name since it is neither a bolt nor exclusive to witches, is quite effective. Although I am unable to use its long-lasting effects, due to the fact that Finn is able to quickly finish off the griffon.

The second griffon also attacks Russel, and this time is able to drag him away, but is saved by the intervention of Rirra, who is able to quickly pursue the animal.

Meanwhile Pallida unleashed a wave of thunderous energy and hits the two last birds, instantly killing one and badly injuring the second. The crowd goes wild and chants “kill the bird”. They are clearly not concerned with the plight of these poor animals.

Pallida quickly finishes off the last blood hawk, putting it out of its misery.

³As described in „a comprehensive listing of our animal companions“ ordered by the Verdant Circles

Back to the Blood Pit

We are ushered back to the waiting area, apparently called the “Blood Pit”, and are able to rest and rejuvenate ourselves.

While waiting for the next round we discover that we can see through a window to the floor some 100ft below us, where most of the animals are kept.

We observe some guards struggling with one of these animals, one already showing signs of injury.

We decide that we have to find a way to help these animals and release them from their torturous captivity. We use some rope to climb down to the cages but are immediately spotted.

Mission: save the animals

Rirra takes the initiative and pounces on one of the guards. Knocking him down and killing him by deflecting a thrown hook, by one of the other five guards, into their brethren, before pouncing on the next one.

I make good use of my Chromatic Orb by killing another guard and injuring a second one.

However, before we are able to use the momentum, seven creatures emerge from the water⁴. The creatures see no difference between us and the guards and kill one of the bandits.

Rirra continues to focus on the guards, killing two, while I’m using another one of my spells to burn two of the creatures, killing one and injuring another.

Strangely the creatures seem to take a particular dislike to Russel, focusing on him and knocking him unconscious, but he is able to rally and get up quickly.

⁴ see chapter “sea devils” for further information

It's a hard fight, but we are able to slowly turn the tide.

Russel manages to knock one of the creatures unconscious, planning on taking it alive, but another creature, seeing this, rushes over and slits the throat of his comrade.

They clearly don't want to be taken alive, luckily Russel is able to knock another one out, and Pallida finishes off the last monster.

Sea Devils

These creatures we fought are unlike anything I have ever seen or read about in my studies. They were well coordinated with five of them focusing on melee, while they are being supported by two slightly different creatures, who seem to have the intellect to cast spells, using them to bolster and support their companions.

They seem to feel most comfortable in the water, seemingly able to stay submerged for a very long time, perhaps even indefinitely. They have blue scaly skin with red fins between their toes and fingers, and protruding from their head, back and tail. Their fingers and feet end in long claws while their teeth are sharp and dangerous. They have red iris-less eyes.

Strangely they seem to be able to communicate at least partially with other water creatures, as I observed them commanding a shark in the water to attack one of the guards.

I strongly suspect they are of demonic nature, due to their appearance and shown abilities.

Freeing the animals

With all immediate threats being taken care of, we are able to focus back on rescuing the animals.

Russel and Pallida take the lead and try to calm down the animals by speaking to them and feeding them some rations, but only to limited success.

In the end we simply decide to open the cages and run as fast as we can, hoping to escape in the confusion.

Rirra makes a quick detour into the arena, to show the crowd the torture instruments that were used on the animals. Hopefully this will at least cause some of the spectators to rethink their attendance in future fights, should the Crucible remain operational.

Due to her incredible speed, she is able to catch up to us, as we escape into the city, having successfully freed the animals.

Russel managed to communicate with some Ankhegs⁵ and guides them back to their natural habitat in the Badlands.

He also requests that the Guild imprisons the captured Sea Demon we took with us, as he wishes to interrogate it. It will be delivered to the Citadel in short order.

I recommend strong security measures. Should my theory about their demonic nature prove correct, we can't under any circumstance allow it to escape.

⁵ See „a Bestiary of the Badlands“ for details

Recommendations

I recommend that the guild continues observation of the Crucible and organizers, Mad Dog Mcree and Julien.

Should they continue operation, either in the Crucible or in a new location, I recommend, that another party is dispatched to deal with them permanently, as such a cruel sport should not be allowed to exist.

A separate issue is the demonic signs present at the arena. The contract, Mess, the sea demons and perhaps the magic barrier itself might all suggest some kind of demonic plot at hand.

Because of that I recommend that two other groups are being dispatched.

One to examine the Crucible and find the source of the magic barrier, I offer my services for this endeavour

And another to find Mad Dog Mcree, Julien and perhaps Mess to question them on the demonic contract and their involvement.

I am available should further questions arise.

Signed



Clifford Amberglade