

Dark Dice, Chapter 7 - The Great Gate

Travis

The team walked for what felt like ten minutes, passing the overturned cart, the graves, and the remains of a few additional ruined blackened structures. Led by Soren's torch through the fog, they passed the last tombstone and continued for another ten minutes, until a dim glow up ahead beckoned them closer. The glow came from a series of points somewhere high up, perhaps thirty feet in height at their highest point, and the muted sound of light footsteps could be heard retreating through the drying dirt up ahead.

Eypor (Sindri)

I don't suspect that the sound we just heard is one of the children...

Kessi (Flygia)

You see a series of lights up ahead and your first thought is the footsteps?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Well the sword told me we should be looking for a light.

Peter (Soren)

I'm going to sweep for more bear traps, because I'm paranoid now... 17.

Kaitlin (Sister)

I'll watch our backs.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Someone go with him, buddy system.

David (Iaus)

Ok, I'll go with him

Travis

The Ranger Soren Arkwright and Tiedfling Rogue Iaus Innskeep walked ahead of the team to search for tracks, their light vanishing into the fog... A few moments later they returned into view and signaled the rest of the team to follow.

David (Iaus)

You guys are gonna wanna see this...

Eypor (Sindri) (in awe)

By Pelor...

Travis

As the team stepped forward a massive stone archway came into view. Six hellish torches cast

light on ancient characters, massive runes, and hideous gargoyles hewn into the stone that made up the ancient archway. The carved figures represented were comprised of stern-faced humanoids, ravenous monsters, and freakish abominations in an orgy of death and torture that seemed to shift slightly under the torchlight. Two large statues flanked the edges of the arch, its sealed passage seeming to lead directly into a large mound of earth, the edges of which were obscured from vision, perhaps the beginnings of the Frostiron mountains? Large piles of stones lay nearby, accompanied by mounds of excavated dirt, wood from felled trees, and various tools for labor.

In the center of the archway was a massive stone door with no visible lock, keyhole, or method of entry. Instead an inscription was carved on the door in a language that most recognized as Elvish, due to its elaborate and fanciful nature. However, dark spatters of blood marred the door, and two corpses were outstretched at its base in a pool of their own blood. Though the nearby air was still stale and warm, the overwhelming rotting stench had dissipated some from the trek away from the graveyard. The tracks that the team was following appeared to lead through the gate, which was closed.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

To clarify, you all see 6 statues?

David (Iaus)

There are 2 statues, there are 6 gargoyles holding torches.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Gotcha, thanks.

Eypór (Sindri)

Hellish torches.

David (Iaus)

Yes.

Eypór (Sindri)

I'm gonna, gameplay wise point out that I think everybody's is fully healed at this point and you have your spell slots back.

Travis

Unfortunately, yes.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Does anyone else speak and read elvish?

Kaitlin (Sister)

I'm going to examine the particularly fine masonry work, with advantage... 18, plus whatever I have for history stonework... It appears to be elven -Extremely high-quality elven masonry with dwarven and dragonborn influences and something else I can't quite place... Perhaps demonic? I've never seen infernal stonecraft but this falls in line with things I've read about. I hate to say that it's

really great elven craftsman ship, (cough – Dwarven craftsmanship is better - Cough) but this definitely wasn't made by slaves, and if I had to guess: this is all made by a team of craftsmen who knew what they were doing. This is a mix of form and function, art and... well, it's quality.
I do have to acknowledge that they do get some things right. This is one of those instances.

Kessi (Flygia)

So you're saying this, -this wasn't made by slaves like the inn was and everything else?

Kaitlin (Sister) (ignoring Kessi)

Perhaps the stones brought here were. But all the gargoyles and intricacies within the stone structure itself.

Kessi (Flygia)

Sister Cavernsfall?

Kaitlin (Sister) (ignoring Kessi) -Writing notes

The two statues though, depict figures clad in elven armor, each armed with a sword and shield. They are depicted as being elven, and their stern features have largely eroded, indicating this to be fairly old. Predating man perhaps? One figure is male, the other is female... The archway and door, however, appear uneroded. Perhaps magic?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

So, there's some elven inscriptions on the door panelings and I'm pretty sure I'm the only one here who reads Elvish. I, of course I will read this, but I won't read aloud because that's the line in the sand. -*Oh my god that's bloody long, excuse me guys. (Cough)* Time to pull out my old reading glasses.

Eypór (Sindri)

I didn't know that you needed glasses?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Only when I read elvish... and from this far away.

Kaitlin (Sister)

Really nice stone work. I mean it's disgusting and, you know elven, which isn't as nice as dwarven but very nice stonework in general.

Travis

And on top of the elven runes, the elvish inscription was also recently smeared blood in what could be a message.

David (laus)

So, on top of the elvish inscription is that message in blood... It's definitely in infernal, though a bit messy. Well, shall I try reading that?

Eypór (Sindri)

Not out loud please.

David (laus)

Ok, so I'm going to read the infernal, but not out loud though.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Oh dear.

Travis

laus Read quietly: "Ill vryipdiyw wdyye mot myir wahafr smuweyr. Da haf wyyc mah?"

"In dreamless sleep he hears your whispers. Do you seek him?"

David (laus)

It's the same shit we read before.

Eypór (Sindri)

More 'do you seek him' stuff?

David (laus)

That's the one yeah, something about 'hearing your whispers in dreamless sleep'.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

This is not good.

Eypór (Sindri)

Oh?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I'm just gonna walk closer and just like do a proper double take read. Just making sure I'm translating everything correctly. She looks up and she points at the two, there's these two are protectors -enemies of darkness. They protect elfkind from unknown horrors. Beyond this, it says basically don't pass. That people have died to keep this place sealed. And it basically says if you really got to pass, you basically may as well kiss your ass goodbye.

Eypór (Sindri)

Hmm so..

Kaitlin (Sister)

Abandon all hope ye who enter here.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Put in the lot. And, if we want to seal this gateway it's got to be sealed with life. Basically the more people who kick the bucket, and sacrifice to this thing, the stronger the seal is going be. For it to have been broken through... Basically, you go through this it's probably a one way track. And we've to make sure it's got to be sealed again otherwise, who bloody knows what the hells gonna come out of here? Well probably the nameless one, blatantly obvious actually.

Eypór (Sindri)

Does it say how we can seal it again?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Yeah, basically we die.

Peter (Soren)

You're also saying if we pursue the children through there, neither the children, nor us are coming back?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

There's that chance aye. I mean it's basically if you have to go through it, just, make peace with your gods and hope for the best.

David (Iaus)

That's alright.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Just stay on the path, don't venture.

David (Iaus)

I don't have any gods, so I'm going through.

Travis

Iaus pushed the large stone door with his hand, gently at first, then more firmly... He pressed his full weight behind it, smacking it with his fists, flicking his tail wildly... but the door failed to budge.

David (Iaus)

(strained from exertion) It's... It's stuck! Dammit! Maybe there's some kind of...

Eypór (Sindri)

When Iaus says he doesn't have any gods, Father Westpike gives him like a weird smile.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I'm not missing anything, it's not telling me how to open it is it? I'm not missing anything?

Kessi (Flygia)

There are runes surrounding the archway that appear to be magical written in the old language of magic, draconic.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Alright, I'll have a go at reading these runes.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

History! 22?

Hem (Rowena)

Ok, so Draconic is one of the few languages to remain unchanged throughout time. You know, there's old elven, and new elven, it's changed a little bit over the millennia, evolved as new trends in dialect influence overall speech. So, real Draconic is considered a sort of dead language because most practitioners of the humanoid variety had few opportunities to converse with monsters that speak the language. You know, like dragons.

Kessi (Flygia) (bored, hurring things along)

We know this. What's the significance of this, bard?

Hem (Rowena) (*Speaking as Rowena*)

So Dragons speak Draconic while Dragonborn speak their own unique dialect of Draconic called Tymantheran, and the Kobolds' dialect is Yipyak. This is old Draconic, true draconic. The runes appear to be some sort of ancient spell, but something is off. While my knowledge of the draconic language from a practice perspective is minimal at best, I've identified extra runes that do not belong in an ancient spell of warding, which I believe these to be. On a scale of 1 to 'definitely', I've identified the out of place letters with maybe a '7' on the scale of certainty. They loosely translate to "R, B, A, A, R, B, A, A, A, and one I can't figure out.

David (laus)

Well, the door's locked... We've also got two dead bodies to have a look at, so I'll get started on those. (mumbling) Maybe one of them has a key... Two humans: an adult and a child. Unless you want to do your funky shit, Soren, I will start on their pockets.

Kaitlin (Sister)

Maybe we shouldn't go about torturing the dead as a gut reaction. I mean one of them's a kid.

David (laus)

So?

Kaitlin (Sister)

Well, when he brings them back from the dead, usually it's pretty painful.

David (laus)

I've seen worse... (mumbling to self) The child appears to have been bled to Death. (sigh) It's Gilly.

Kessi (Flygia)

Who?

David (laus)

Gilly. A little bastard who used to bully Barin from time to time... I never liked him after he hit puberty, but he probably didn't deserve this. (to the kid) Now who left perfectly good copper over your eyes? -No good to you dead, so I'll just... (to other body) Now who are you...

Travis

laus then had to roll a wisdom saving throw.

David (laus)

8... (realizing the face is the silent one) Oh, fuck. (sound of anguish getting stabbed)

Travis

As laus flipped over the body of the larger man, he was suddenly paralyzed with fear as he realized that the face did not contain features, but three hollow cavities in its stead. (SHRIEK) Before he could react a flash of bone and flesh stabbed into his shoulder for 7 damage as the creature shrieked, contorted backwards and fled. The others, caught by surprise, were unable to react before the Silent One was already more than 40ft away from laus and completely lost to the fog. laus, shaking hard, slowly began to curl his fingers, twitch his tail, and overcome the effects of the Silent One's paralyzing gaze, as well as the test this experience had on his sanity.

Eypór (Sindri) (yelling at his friend who is attacked)

laus!

Kaitlin (Sister) (urgent, loud outside voice)

What's happening?!

Kessi (Flygia) urgent, loud outside voice)

It's getting away!

Peter (Soren) -Urgent. Outside speaking voice (slightly loud).

Don't pursue it. We need to stay together.

Eypór (Sindri)

I rush over to laus. Are you ok? Oh god we need to be more careful round these corpses, this is what, second time this has happened to you?

David (laus) (shaking, scared, clearly disturbed)

....I've... I've seen worse.

Eypór (Sindri)

Yes but having done it before doesn't excuse, what shall we call, the stupidity of repeating it?

David (laus)

Yeah well. I got what we needed. This little brat is a punk so I don't care if he's dead. You can bring him back though Soren, I don't mind.

Eypór (Sindri)

I tap...

David (laus)

Painful or not.

Eypór (Sindri)

I tap you on the shoulder and like, these are children you know.

David (laus) (tired, still shaken)

Yeah.

Eypór (Sindri)

I understand we're going to find your son. Do not worry that is always my point but let's not be cruel to the treatment of others, other's childrens.

David (laus)

Well if you'd been what I've been through at the hands of other people...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

That doesn't...

David (laus)

...as a child...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

...doesn't mean you should join them.

David (laus)

...then you would understand.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Don't be that level of dick.

Eypór (Sindri)

Trust me I've seen the dark that dwarves can do...

David (laus)

So have I.

Eypór (Sindri)

...when, in greed.

Kaitlin (Sister)

So I think our biggest issue is the huge door.

Eypór (Sindri)

It is quite obvious that this is the elves we're trying to contain the Nameless god behind it and apparently Sil'Yal has dug it up. Exhumed it.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

(to self) I'm sure that I haven't seen that letter... (to the others) Oh! Cool. I missed a letter. I missed a letter in the translation. There you go: "D." "D" for 'Dead Certain I didn't miss any other out of place letters except the one I can't read.'

Eypór (Sindri)

I'm assuming...

Eypór (Sindri)

Soren if you could bring back the child. Well I'm assuming he is one of the children we were following?

David (laus)

(affirming) Mmm Hmmm...

Eypór (Sindri)

I look to laus.

David (laus)

He is. His name's Gilly, he's been a little shit to my son.

Eypór (Sindri)

Oh, oh... (sad) I remember him... he's been somewhat helpful around the village. Always struck me as a bit of a brown-nose'r but otherwise he wasn't a bad kid.

Peter (Soren) (Interested, scientific)

So, hold on a moment. There's something off about these draconic runes. This, this one you're not able to recognize here, the question mark-ish symbol.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Yeah.

Peter (Soren)

I think that's a C or a K sound.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I just can't tell what that is.

Peter (Soren)

Yeah, definitely a "Khh" sound. [NOTE: Kuh = mimic the sound of the 'c' in 'Candle']

Eypór (Sindri)

You speak draconic?

Peter (Soren)

It just sort of stuck in the back of my mind.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

So...

Eypór (Sindri)

Like you've seen this before?

Peter (Soren)

I think so, I couldn't pinpoint a memory as to when, but this all seems very familiar to me. Like pieces of a puzzle hidden away.

Kessi (Flygia)

So, Soren, if we need to, would you be willing to bring back the, I don't remember the child's name.

Kaitlin (Sister)

Gilly.

Kessi (Flygia)

Gilly.

Eypór (Sindri)

Gilly.

David (Iaus)

The bully.

Kessi (Flygia)

For quick questioning?

Kaitlin (Sister)

Rowena?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Yeah?

Kaitlin (Sister)

If you don't want to say it out loud, which is a good choice, could you write down in common on paper, so that we could all assess the problem?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Have you got any paper?

Kaitlin (Sister)

Actually, I think I do cause write down prayers.

Eypór (Sindri)

Oh you know how to write?

Kessi (Flygia)

If all else fails you can write into my journal.

David (Ilaus)

Or there's some blood here and there's a wall.

Kaitlin (Sister)

Oh I'm thinking of my other, other paladin, I'm thinking of my orc paladin.

Travis

Your friend, your orc paladin *friend*.

Kaitlin (Sister)

My orc paladin *friend*, she always carries around all of her..

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Well that's, that's...

Kaitlin (Sister)

... papers.

Kessi (Flygia)

I have paper.

Kaitlin (Sister)

Let's write it in her journal then.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Oh that's a good point yeah.

David (Ilaus)

I still think blood on the wall is more functional.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

And I'm saying let's not do that. (mutter) Darklander.

Kessi (Flygia)

Soren are you going to open up the lantern?

Peter (Soren)

I am able to, if that's the group decision: whether or not we want to torture a small child? Who was a bully...

Kessi (Flygia)

I think laus asked to.

Kaitlin (Sister)

Can we get some more eyes on this riddle first?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I like how most of these letters spell bard...

Travis

Rowena began to write the elven translation into Flygia's Journal in common. It read as follows:

This is where Kel-Paeris and Lorriac, the Twin Shields of Mithral, enemies of darkness, the eternal protectors, guard elfkind from the depths.

Beyond this gateway [karaerdae], no mortal should venture. It is sealed and hidden with clear intention: do not pass. The blood of countless lives has sealed this stone, and many more before its construction. If reading this will not deter you, may the guardians take your last breath.

For those who must pass: make your peace and ready yourself for the task ahead. We honor your sacrifice and will sing your praises at the feasts. Be strong and do not venture from the path.

If you should find this in dire times, the gateway may be sealed with life. The more given, the more powerful the ward. Do not dare venture forth.

David (laus)

So, if this has been sealed with life, and there's dead child... -Yeah if it's been sealed with life and there's a dead child here isn't that life that's been sacrificed to it?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Yeah.

David (laus)

Just a thought. So wouldn't a sacrifice seal-

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Possibly to seal it behind it. Again, the letters translate to: r b a a r d c b a a a

Kaitlin (Sister)

Alright, I'll further investigate the statues... (scientific observation) They've been worn and faded a bit. And the gargoyle torches are large, likely lit by magic.

David (laus)

Is anyone else...?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Oh my god, no fucking way. I think maybe I know what it is, but I'll let you guys finish that first.

David (laus)

-Well what was your idea?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Hang on, I need to move my mouse. I need to double check the letters that we were given.

Travis

Rowena's small mouse squeaked.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Yeah, I think its abracadabra, but there's too many b's.

Travis

The door immediately started to move.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

YES!

Travis

With the groan of stone-on-stone, the center doorway began to shift, attempting to retract into the side of the archway. It ceased moving after a few moments, seemingly stuck in place.

Kessi (Flygia)

Another puzzle?

David (laus)

No, it just appears to just be old. It hasn't been opened for a long time or if it has been perhaps something moved last time. Looks like it's just a bit lodged in the dirt or roots of trees that've grown around it. We clearly can't get through right now, but I do have a defoliation vial.

Travis

Aww... 😞

David (laus)

Which would get rid of any roots of trees in seconds.

Kessi (Flygia)

You think that might work, but keep 'dat stuff away from me.

Kaitlin (Sister)

What about brute strength?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I was going to go with brute strength and ignorance yeah.

David (laus)

Ok, well my strength is 10 so I suggest you get someone else.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Alright, I'm well stronger than you two.

Kaitlin (Sister)

I have a 16.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Oh my god I'm stronger than you too!

Kaitlin (Sister)

Then why are you a bard?!

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Because I'm really pretty.

Kaitlin (Sister)

Alright, can we find like a fallen, what's around us that isn't this stone? There are fallen buildings or maybe trees we passed a few minutes ago.

Kessi (Flygia)

If we backtrack you can see more but in our current position...

Kaitlin (Sister)

Not venturing away...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Nah-uh.

Kaitlin (Sister)

...without a buddy.

Eypór (Sindri)

The fog is very limiting. We can see the archway and it appears to go into, like, a mound. Like a, a lot of dirt. There's an exposed area where there are roots as if some excavation has taken place recently.

David (Iaus)

I'll go with you to look at the roots, because then at least I can use the defoliation thing, if needs be.

Kaitlin (Sister)

Alright.

David (Iaus)

Look, I, I've got it, I might as well use it.

Kaitlin (Sister)

Ok, but we're going in a buddy system

David (laus)

Yup.

Kaitlin (Sister)

Or at least with half of the group at a time.

David (laus)

Yeah we were the most successful watch, so I think we can, we can deal with anything. Go "Team suffering".

Kaitlin (Sister)

Yeah nobody got stabbed or...

David (laus)

Yup

Kaitlin (Sister)

... thunderblasted on ours...

David (laus)

That's the one.

Kaitlin (Sister)

Did you just call us Team Suffering?

David (laus)

Yup.

Kaitlin (Sister)

I like that.

David (laus)

Yeah. That's just us though. Not the other pairs. It's Team Suffering, Team Bunny-Shit Crazy, and Team Sleeps-a-lot ...In my head at least.

Eypór (Sindri)

Hey!

Kaitlin (Sister)

Okay, ...so let's go do this thing.

Travis

laus and Sister Cavernsfall took a few moments to survey the perimeter and examine the large

mound of earth. Beyond the area that had been excavated, the foliage became suffocating dense. Above them, they could spy what was left of ancient thick roots digging around the archway like twisted worms on either side, creeping notably just beyond the stone doorway's path.

Kaitlin (Sister)

So, the stone door is trying to move out of the way and there's part of a tree root blocking it. It's a fairly large root.

David (Ilaus)

On the evil side?

Kaitlin (Sister)

The evils side would be beyond, it's on the outside... Presumably. Well I guess they're both evil.

David (Ilaus)

Ok.

Kaitlin (Sister)

Presumably... Well I guess they're both evil.

David (Ilaus)

The root's about a foot in diameter, so it'll take some time to cut through.

Kaitlin (Sister)

Alright, just defoliate this thing.

David (Ilaus)

With pleasure.

Travis

As the cork was pulled and the liquid dashed upon the root, it began to shrivel briefly before bubbling, then melting away in puff of noxious black smoke...

David (Ilaus)

Probably not good for the environment, but it's working.

Travis

The tree itself began to bubble, hiss, and bend away from the stone until, as the corrosive toxin continued to eat away at the once-great oak, fatally damaging it.

Slowly, the great door slid open, revealing a dark empty passage available to the team. Ilaus and Sister Cavernsfall began to make their way down the mound while the others began to examine the darkness beyond the entrance... However, A mere step from the bloodied door, Rowena's blade began to shake violently at her hip, but seemed unable to do anything without her touching it.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I touch it.

Travis

Rowena needed to make a Charisma saving throw...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

13?

Travis

As feelings of overwhelming hatred and duty overcame her mind, Rowena was forced to immediately attack the person closest to her.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Oh no! I'm sorry!

David (laus)

Well at least now I know I've got more charisma than her!

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I've got charisma out of my arse dude, but on the occasion. I'm so sorry that was a natural 20.

Travis

Did she attack Father Westpike, Soren or Flygia? You have your choice, who would you like to ruin today? Or I could roll a dice that might be easier... A nat-20 to hit, geez...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Who would you like to ruin?

Kessi (Flygia)

Not it!

Peter (Soren)

It can be me, I'm ok with this.

Travis

Rowena still has the choice: the blade seeks blood but she could direct its rage... somewhat.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I think it would be funnier to hit Father Westpike, just because I think it's funnier.

Travis

Rowena very well could kill him with a strike.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Oh no, oh no I'll take it.

Travis

Alright. As she rolled a Critical, please roll a D-100. The higher, the more deadly and powerful.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

10. Oh, wait no, that's 100.

Travis

Urgh! (laughter)

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

...I've I just smote him into oblivion?

Travis

Basically... um.. give me a second for a better description...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

NO!

Travis

The sword pulled toward Father Westpike's chest and screaming for blood, finding a direct path toward his heart.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

No!

Travis

Father Westpike.

Eypór (*Sindri, deceased*)

Yup.

Travis

I'm sorry. She's literally run you through with a blade in a way I couldn't have possibly imagined... -Father Westpike looked into the horrified face of his loving cousin Rowena, and then his gaze fell down toward the blade in his chest. Blood began to appear through his chainmail shirt all at once the world began to spin and go dark. None of you were expecting this. -I wasn't even trying to have this work *that* effectively!

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

No!

Travis

But that works for me... by fluke here, by means of the bard failing a charisma check to control her actions, followed by a natural 20 followed up by a natural 100. Father Westpike was fatally stabbed through the chest by a mythical elven blade – The Bane of the Nameless. Rowena's expression shifted from confusion to one of utter terror. She looked up at Sindri Westpike, her beloved

cousin, and began to cry. Father Sindri Westpike could utter one sentence before his life passes if you'd like, Eythor...

Kaitlin (Sister)

I'm not more than 50ft away! I use my reaction, and my helm of the martyr, to teleport myself in front of the blade because that is exactly what my magic does.

Travis

... An unexpected twist of fate. Sister Tavorite Cavernsfall, as she looked down from the mound, could sense the incoming blow, a feature of her blessed helm of Ilmater, had to roll a d20 'luck check' to see if she could react quick enough.

Kaitlin (Sister)

Will a 17 let me see it?

Travis

She saw it.... Ok, so let's reconfigure this... The last 6 seconds unwound, reversed... Rowena briefly had that vision of her cousin being killed, however that was not actually what happened. We'll all forget that ever happened. That was simply her imagination at work...

As Rowena unexpectedly stabbed stab forward toward Father Westpike, Sister Cavernsfall suddenly appeared between them, teleporting, literally out of thin air, knocking the surprised Father Westpike onto his back. Rowena could not curb the blade's path as it sunk itself firmly into the heart of Sister Cavernsfall. Fierce determination in her eyes, Sister Cavernsfall grabbed the blade and used her off-hand to knock Rowena free of the blade and its influence. Sister Tavorite Cavernsfall collapsed, dead before she hit the ground.

Kaitlin (Sister)

UGH!

Eypór (Sindri)

I rush over and try to heal this, if I can. Or try.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

She doesn't even get a word? She doesn't even get a line?!

David (Ilaus)

(Snarky)...Thus end's Lady Cavernsfall... She was good on watch. (serious/urgent) by the Allshadow! -Rowena, I'm going to need you to not move! I will shoot you.

Kessi (Flygia)

(urgent/spooked) Cavernsfall! Lady Cavernsfall!

Eypór (Sindri)

I'm staring at Rowena. Just, I'm looking straight up at her, I'm down on my knees holding the blade. Cavity deep in Lady Cavernsfall. I'm trying to cast...

Eypór (Sindri)

...I'm trying to heal her...

Eypór (Sindri)

...but it's not doing anything.

Travis

As Father Westpike touched the blade, attempting to pull it from Cavernsfall's lifeless body, a battle of personality took place requiring a charisma saving throw.

Eypór (Sindri)

18.

Travis (Speaking as BotN)

Father Westpike was able to resist the screaming voice in his mind as the blade shook: "The blood must flow. The blood must flow. The blood must flow! Seal the gate with blood! Seal the gate with blood!"

Eypór (Sindri)

Ahh! (startled, letting go of the sword)

Travis

All at once the blade went silent as father Westpike took his hands off it. He slowly backed up and look at Rowena.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Rowena basically has her hands basically exactly as I have them, they're just like clasped in front of her, like across her mouth, like what the fuck.

Kessi (Flygia)

(Sad/urgent!) She's dead!!! Oh no... Oh no, oh no... (very sad/emotional) Sister Cavernsfall!

Peter (Soren)

(very sad, but determined – weapon raised) She's gone, Flygia. (Fill-gee-uh)

Eypór (Sindri)

I turn around and I'm assuming both Ilaus and Soren both have their weapons at ready.

David (Ilaus)

(threatening) Don't you fucking move, murderer.

Travis

Father Westpike held out a hand, putting himself between Ilaus and Rowena.

Eypór (Sindri) (Urgent)

It's not her fault, it's not her fault!

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I didn't mean to.

Eypór (Sindri)

It's not her fault!

Travis

As Rowena just murdered a member of the party, she required a sanity check.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

(defeated/broken) I'm, I'm not taking a check, I'll fail. That's.. I'll take the fail man...

Travis

Rowena took 15 sanity damage and her whole body continued to tremble, a cold sweat formed on her brow, and her mind reeled.

David (laus)

(cold) Speaking of murder... I get advantage versus murder. Step aside old man!

Eypór (Sindri)

She, it's the blade, the blade made her do it! She's just a child, she's just a child.

Travis

Fylgia snuck around Father Westpike, whose eyes were locked with laus' and gently caressed Rowena's shoulder.

Kessi (Flygia)

(caringly/scared/lying) It will be okay Rowena... Everything will be okay... Just let me...

Travis

Flygia moved her arms down to Rowena's hands, pinning them with a mixture of strength and magic... Rowena offered no resistance.

Kessi (Flygia)

-And there... Please do not try to resist. It will only make things worse.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

(despondent) No no no.

Peter (Soren)

(tense/honest) I know how it feels to not be in control of your actions, I don't blame Rowena for this, but it does appear as though the blade will do anything it can to keep the gate sealed despite our wishes.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

"That is true. That is... I heard the blade screaming when I touched it. I shouldn't have touched... Nobody should touch that blade" and I stare back at Flygia, "Don't touch the blade please!" as I look again towards laus.

Kessi (Flygia)

Should we try to pull the blade out of...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Please don't.

Kessi (Flygia)

... Sister Cavernsfall's body...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*) & Eypór (Sindri)

Please don't.

Kessi (Flygia)

...because... no?

David (laus)

Kindly move, old man. She already tried to kill you once.

Kessi (Flygia)

No, not with our hands like to put it out with tools or magic... Stop it.

Eypór (Sindri)

(desperate, weak) laus, Our friend just died.

David (laus)

(tense) Get out of my way or a second might follow.

Kessi (Flygia)

(angry/intense) Stop it! Do not make me invoke something to shut you the fuck up! Stay calm and listen to me... The sword said that the, -the blood must flow. And if you'd all take a moment to look at the pooling blood, (under breath) With a roll of a 15, (intense again) you'd see that it's being pulled toward the gate.

Eypór (Sindri)

(desperate, weak) I, I think it just needs the blood. I don't the sword itself is a key, it's simply a tool trying to seal the gate!

David (laus)

(stern) And what about the cloak?

Eypór (Sindri)

My cloak? -I...

David (Ilaus)

No, yours. Rowena's.

Eypór (Sindri)

(loving) ...Rowena? Rowena, please take off the cloak.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

(despondent) My hands are currently behind my back. I won't resist.

Eypór (Sindri)

I...

Eypór (Sindri)

Flygia, please, take off her cloak.

Kessi (Flygia)

Ok.... Hmph! (pulling off Cloak. It's attached to her and rips off flesh)

Travis

As the cloak was removed, deep strips of flesh came with it, dealing 8 damage as the gaping wounds across her shoulders began to weep blood.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

ARGH!

Kessi (Flygia)

(surprised) Ahhh!

Travis

The cloak itself began to flutter violently in Flygia's hands, as if possessed. As she let go, it flew off into the fog.

Kessi (Flygia)

(surprised, scared) What in the Allshadow was that?!

Eypór (Sindri)

It was a cursed artifact she stole from her father. The Kordalum are known for this, known for trading these in disgusting things. I'm very sorry for what has happened here. But please, do not hold it against her.

David (Ilaus)

If she's got anything to do with the Kordalum, I'd like to return the favor for Lady Cavernsfall.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I don't want anything to do with them.

Eypór (Sindri)

I can promise you she is here because she won't obey them!

David (Ilaus)

A plausible story... But one I'll consider as truth for now. I'm going to lower my crossbow, but I need you stay where I can see you.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I can do that.

Peter (Soren)

(breaking the tension, serious) So what's our course of action?

David (Ilaus)

We've got children to save.

Eypór (Sindri)

We've got a friend to bury.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Flygia, (fill-gee-uh) can you please get off of me?

Kessi (Flygia)

Alright but I'll keep an eye you. Any more of such artifacts or trickery and I'll do more than simply bind your hands with magic...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

(defeated) I don't have anymore.

Kessi (Flygia)

I believe you, for now... I'm going to stop the blood from resealing the gate. (to self) Where the eff's that shovel?

David (Ilaus)

We need to go.

Peter (Soren)

It's going to start raining soon... Do we want to continue ahead, or bury the body first? At the very least I would suggest searching her for rations before we depart... No telling how much further we have to go still.

Eypór (Sindri)

I want to bury her, but I don't,...

Kessi (Flygia)

(composing herself) (sniff) Look, if it were me, I'd want a proper burial. I know she's the sort who would value such things as a proper sendoff...

Eypór (Sindri)

... we had a shovel at some point. I don't know what happened to it.

David (laus)

Rowena has it, ironically.

Travis

Rowena took a few steps away from the group and silently began to dig a hole in the mud as the rain fell harder.

David (laus)

Is there anything that Cavernsfalls has that we can use?

Eypór (Sindri)

She had the blue candle we might need.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

(while digging) She has a shield.

David (laus)

Well, I want to know what else she's got. Flygia (Fill-gee-uh), keep an eye on her.

Travis

As laus began to examine the body of his former friend closer, he discovered that she was also bleeding in small rivulets around her forehead. The helm itself appeared to have dug into her forehead, tearing at the flesh. Upon closer examination, it bore the iconography of the Martyr, the bound hands and red cord of Ilmayter and his sufferers.

Eypór (Sindri)

Does her shield have the holy symbol on it?

David (laus)

It does, of Ilmayter. Also maybe a Clan personalization if I'm not mistaken.

Eypór (Sindri)

Then I am not taking her shield.

Eypór (Sindri)

Are you looking for something in specific or are you looking for more gold?

David (laus)

(unamused/sarcastic) "Ha ha"... -No. I'm making sure we don't miss something we might need.

Lady Cavernsfall is dead, and make no mistake, while she cannot use her tools we will most certainly need them if we're to survive the coming night... Some of them anyway... (disinterested) She had mason's tools, a holy symbol of Ilmater, (interested) a healing kit, the blue candle.. Those seem useful possibly.

Eypór (Sindri)

I think so.

David (laus)

Then quit complaining. (to self, quietly) -Also 37 gold, 1 platinum, 23 silver, and 8 copper.

Peter (Soren)

Before we make any permanent dirt based decisions here are we sure we're not going to need this sword on the other side of this gate?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

(quickly, scared) I'm not taking it.

Eypór (Sindri)

I fear that any of us that would try to wield the sword would strike again, in the same way Rowena was forced to.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

It just wanted to shut the gate I think. Its purposes is to make sure the Nameless God doesn't escape. Don't get me wrong it's a good sword to wield but, we have enough people who can't control themselves.

David (laus)

(to team - quickly) Also there's that weird mechanical bird. A blanket, a bedroll, a backpack with 10 candles, a tinder box, an alms box, 2 blocks of incense, a sensor, vestments, 2 day's trail, sorry, yeah, -technically 3 day's trail rations but one of 'ems got blood on it so 'Not it', and a water skin... and 20 ft of rope. Also she's wearing that helm.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

(sad, despondent) This situation matches the description of an old relic called the helm of the martyr. Which is said to allow its wearer to take defense and the damage intended for an ally. It's powered by blood, true to the way of the sufferers. That's kind of a thing they do.

Eypór (Sindri)

So that is what happened... I should be very grateful to her, but all I can feel is sadness. It should have been me to die.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Is there any way to take it off of her head?

David (laus)

If you wanna take things off of a dead body you just killed?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Sure

David (Iaus)

Okay, you can have it.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

It's my burden now, then... I'm, I'm, I'm taking, I'm taking the shield and the suffering helm as penance so, if anyone's about to die of mortal damage, I'll take the hit.

Kessi (Flygia)

(quietly, muted happiness) I'm taking the incense, I like incense.

David (Iaus)

Wow you're all suddenly okay with looting our recent deceased friend just seconds after judging me.

Travis

As Iaus grabbed the gnomish lamp, he glanced curiously at the bird made from bone and metal inside. On the base of the lamp, the phrase 'old spriggy' was carved in dwarven.

Kessi (Flygia)

Can we let the bird free?

David (Iaus)

You could but it's dead. Its feet are nailed into place with nails and everything. (to self) I know a good joke about this one... (to others) I'm going to keep it with me.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

The grave is just about ready. Thanks for your help, Soren.

David (Iaus)

I take the coin when everyone else isn't looking.

Travis

As the tallest members of the team, Iaus Innskeep and Soren Arkwright moved into position to grab the body, and Iaus required a slight of hand check to see how well the coins vanished.

David (Iaus)

Natural 20.

Travis

Gone!

Eypór (Sindri)

Ah ok.

Peter (Soren)

I am sorely tempted to touch the sword. Everything...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Please don't!

Peter (Soren)

... in Soren's body is screaming for him to grab the sword right now, but he's, he's got it under control.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I look closer at the shield for a moment before helping to lower her.

Travis

Rowena noted depictions of a few little temples around its edge, and words inscribed in Dwarven, most notably "Pillar's Mine" and "Faxifoss" which Rowena knew to be temples that Sister Cavernsfall had aided in the construction of. The shield also bore iconography of the Cavernsfall clan... Lastly, she noted a partially drawn temple symbol bearing the mark 'Ilmater's Hope'.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I am so sorry...

Eypór (Sindri)

Alright I'm going to take the amulet of Ilmater and respectfully like put it in a cloth and I'm gonna hold it and when we finish burying her I'll say a few words...

Kessi (Flygia)

Gimme a sec... I'm going to use a few muttered spells to remove the sword and place it in Sister Cavernsfall's hands... (sigh)... I'm also gonna light some incense and stay back a bit. No one's gonna see this witch cry...

Peter (Soren)

Thank you Flygia (Fill + Gee + uh)... (to the others) Are you ready to lower her? Westpike, laus? 1-2-3-(sound of exertion lowering her) (heavy breathing subsides for 10 seconds into normal breathing)

Eypór (Sindri)

Yes. (sound of exertion lowering her) (heavy breathing subsides for 10 seconds into normal breathing)

David (laus)

Yeah. (talking while exertion, lowering her into the ground) Well if she did want to have a last sentence, we can always get Soren bring her back. (heavy breathing subsides for 10 seconds into

normal breathing)

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Please don't do that.

Peter (Soren)

How else are we going to say goodbye I mean...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I'm gonna quickly predegitate the shit out of the bloody helm before putting it on... After the funeral...

Peter (Soren)

(sad, whispered) Goodbye, sister...

Travis

As Soren began to fill in the muddy grave, Father Westpike cleared his eyes and formed the party into a circle around the grave. (sounds of digging continue)

Eypór (Sindri)

PLEASE MAKE UP A BADSS ILMATER PRAYER, or ask for help, AND REPLACE THIS TEXT BLOCK. I say an Ilmayter's prayer, which I heard her say often when we were building the church. And I finish the prayer with, "**we will save the children, and we will finish that church in your name. This I promise.**" (#Spoilers... You guys didn't finish the church)

Eypór (Sindri)

Those of you who can, please join me in a traditional dwarven song that was a favorite of hers, the [NAME OF THE FUNERAL SONG]. Rowena, if you would...

[Rowena pulls out her hand-harp and the Funeral song goes here]

Kessi (Flygia)

She is with her god now... I don't know what more to say...

(long silence)

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

"Life still goes on, even though you're gone, wrapped up in your shroud, we'll make you proud. You're still in our hearts, even though we're apart so now that you're gone, life still goes on."

Peter (Soren)

(sad whisper) We'll see you soon...

Travis

The rain continued falling, and the team stood in silence, shocked by the recent turn of

events... oblivious to the three glowing orbs watching them from the darkness... After a few minutes, Rowena broke the motionless silence, donned the Helm of the Martyr, and turned to face the archway.