

Dark Dice, Chapter 10 - Tortured

Travis

The team continued in a jog down a path through the ooze infested tunnel for over an hour, without slowing. Muscles weak, exhausted, and covered in a cold sweat, the adrenaline and fear wore off only well after the walls around them were no longer alive and in motion with gelatinous hunger. As their eyes bore witness to solid limestone they team reluctantly slowed their pace, pushing their arching muscles on for another hour as the ever-descending passages narrowed, barely accommodating single file passage. Gradually the chill of the icy passage warmed to an oppressive humid decay, which further unsettled the team, sweat visible upon their garb, stinging their eyes, and loosening their grip on dying torches and pitted steel... The team caught their breath over the next hour of slow travel, until Soren silently hissed at the others. As they slowed their descent to an even more cautious pace, now checking for traps, they became acutely aware of dim blues and greens in the distance and all at once they saw an opening ahead that lead into a vast chamber, well-lit by the faint colored light.

Peter (Soren) - hushed

Up ahead, it looks like a...

Eypór (Sindri) - hushed

A forest.

David (laus) - hushed

Did you say a forest?

Peter (Soren) - hushed

I'm just as confused as the rest of us. I thought we were descen-.

David (laus) - hushed

-All the way down here? That sounds like the work of magic. Welp, age before beauty. Lead on.

Eypór (Sindri) - hushed

Were you referring to me?

David (laus) - hushed

You are the 'age', yes, so please go through and tell us all what we are dealing with.

Eypór (Sindri) - Hushed

If it is for the good of team... Then I will take the lead for the next couple of seconds and look for traps. Please hold on a moment so I can... (stressed) So I can *squeeze* by.. Okay... No traps... Okay... (whisper-yell back to party) Okay we're clear!

Travis

Led by Father Westpike, the bruised and sweating team slowly emerged from a hollow, seemingly set within a large, white, leafless tree, located in the middle of what appeared to be a great forest. The ground underfoot was grassy and the crisp scents of autumn permeated the air, defying logic, as they very clearly must have been deep underground. An orange maple leaf passed by on a warm breeze, almost seeming to carry a melody with it.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena) – Hushed at first, then speaking normally by the end

With a 22 in History, I recognize the sound as an old Silvan harvesting song... It's obviously a

leaf so it's not singing the lyrics in Sylvan or Elvish but it's a typically sung by dryads, nymphs and such... And elves who live in the woods.

Eypór (Sindri) (impressed)

Ooh.

Travis

High above, countless fireflies swayed gently, and in the twilight sky beyond, no sun was visible but hundreds of unfamiliar stars seemed to twinkle and shift within a dazzling display of dancing, rippling colors that stained the sky.

Peter (Soren)

(A whisper, to self) They're so pretty.

David (laus)

What?

Peter (Soren)

(barely louder than a whisper) The stars... Old constellations... They seem almost familiar.

Travis

Soren recognized a great baleful star overhead, a beacon to something he hadn't seen in years, the constellation of Ireta... From here, it looked less like a star and more like a hole through which something bright stared at him from the other side. In his weakened mental state, this somehow comforted him, relieving him of 5 stress damage.

David (laus)

Well, there are no sounds of animals, no dogs or wolves... Something's definitely off about this place... But over here there's a dirt path that leads in two directions... We'll call one North and South. Which way Soren?

Peter (Soren)

The tracks lead north. We're not too far behind.

Eypór (Sindri)

Can we stop to look around the tree for a moment?

Kessi (Flygia) (amused)

I thought we didn't have time to sit around?

Eypór (Sindri)

No, that's true, but I'd like to get a better idea of where we came from so we can find our way ba-(Icelandic / Surprised/scared) -Good Gods!

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

(scared / startled / surprised) Feck!

Travis

Suddenly, a shape dropped from the branches above with a sharp crack. The small figure of a man, a gnome with a misshapen face grinning from ear to ear ended at eye level with Rowena. The gnome's legs had been cut off at the knees, his arms were broken backwards and decaying, and the smaller of his two eyes was missing from its socket. The only thing keeping the gnome suspended at eye level was the bloody noose tied around his neck... As the team started in shock, startled and

unnerved by the mutilated body, Soren calmly walked up to it, and read from a small scrap of leather affixed to the gnome's chest by a dagger.

Eypór (Sindri)

(nervous/scared) What does it say?

Travis

"I zruid ao eizuylyt isiuw haf hu-zee. Da haf wyyc Mah?"

Peter (Soren) (grim)

A trial of patience awaits you yet. Do you seek him?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Are we ever going to say yes?

Eypór (Sindri)

The thing is we're not seeking him, we're seeking the children he took. So the answer is no, we do not seek you, we seek your prize! I basically say to the corpse for some reason, but ok.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

That was stirring. And I give you a good pat on the back. Not like the hearty like smacks you've been delivering to me, but you know, gentle.

Eypór (Sindri)

Oh there have been no smacks since the incident with Lady Cavernsfall.

Peter (Soren) (to himself, different voice)

Soren, is this the time?

Peter (Soren)

(casual, morbid fascination) Yes.... Does anyone want to see what he has to say? Does anyone want to watch?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I, I do not want to be looking at this.

David (laus)

I'm quite happy not to.

Peter (Soren)

I do. Out with the dark lantern.

(In Infernal and common –

Soul of the fallen I command you to return.

Soul of the lost return to this vessel!

Grant me your wisdom, grant me your thoughts, and I might free you from this torment!

Saf'd ao zmy oiddyl xe tappilv haff za ryzfrl.

Saf'd ao zmy dawz ryzfrl za zmuw jywwyd!

grilz py hafr suwvap, qrilz py hafr zmafqmzw, vorv xe puqmqz oryy haf orap zmuw zarpylz!

Kessi (Flygia)

(amused) That was quick.

Travis

From beneath his heavy traveling cloak, Soren produced an old bronze lantern, worn with age and tarnish, and containing a small black candle. Without action, the candle flashed to life, burning with an emerald flame. Speaking low and incomprehensibly, the flame's light grew and grew, casting hideous green glow in a wide radius around him. The flickering light threw writhing shadows that danced around the pale leafless tree, and the pale bark seemed to undulate like flesh. Moments later, an ethereal swirling figure descended toward the hanged man, pulling itself on broken limbs down the length of the rope, pushing itself down into gnome's mouth, seeping through the gaps in teeth filed to points, past the remains of the tongue, which had been cut out, and into the now convulsing body. The sanity of the onlookers immediately came into question... Who...was...watching...

David (Iaus)

Not me.

Eypór (Sindri)

I think basally, as soon as the thing starts moving or making any kind of sorts of movement I look away, or at the ground, but I'm still listening.

Kessi (Flygia)

(amused) I will watch.

Travis

Both heroes stared at the corpse with morbid fascination as its jaw popped and it began to sing.

"None who seek shall ever find it, those who find it cannot leave. Welcome to the Roaming Forest. It's found you within its reach. Rejoice for now you're in its presence, dance and dance be oh so free. Try and to fight and you will find the hangman's noose soon, just like me."

Peter (Soren)

Cease your spasms, corpse! (whispered intensely like a magic spell) Xe rydyiw y haff! (In Infernal: I release you. (BLOW OUT THE CANDLE SOUND)

(annoyed) I've never met one who enjoyed being brought back...

Travis

As Soren expunged the light from the candle the forest returned to its uneasy hum, free from the spirit he'd sought to converse with. The soul of the gnome, grey and smoking, clawed desperately at the corpse as it was pulled unwillingly, into the glimmering stars above.

David (Iaus)

Maybe there's something else on the body that we'd need to have a look at... (disgusted) Eh... He's got tatters for clothes which just sort of... hang on him... Yeah, he's pretty mutilated. I suspect he probably doesn't have any hidden pockets or compartments.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Is the nature of the mutilations that have happened to him indicative of any sort of like ritual or related to any sort of gods or myths that I might know about?

Travis

That will require a Knowledge religion check.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Damn, could I argue history?

Travis

You literally just said rituals and gods so probably not. Could you tie it into history with a different line of thinking?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Yeah, I was thinking more like myths and legends. I'm not really a god person.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

That's more my cous, that's not my job.

Travis

Let's go with that, I'll take it

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Yes! 14.

Travis

Rowena thought of some information she remembered...

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

So, not that I'm checking this guy out or anything, but he's now wearing much, and well, bleeding in quite a few different areas... *historically* the remove of genitals is kind of like a serial killer thing, you know like a religious serial killer thing? But that's really as far as I can guess at. His leg's missing, his arms are fucked, and the other bits that have been torn out of his face that I can't really place with anything in particular... I also don't wanna get too close to it anyways because... EUGH!

Eypór (Sindri)

You think this could have been some kind of religious murder? I think I'll take a look. I would like to do religion on the corpse.

Eypór (Sindri)

I got 21.

Eypór (Sindri)

I agree with Rowena. This is most likely a religiously motivated.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Perhaps we ought to just try move on.

David (Iaus)

What about that map that I found and gave you?

Eypór (Sindri)

It seemed more decorative than actually useful. It didn't seem like...

David (Iaus)

-Yeah, but didn't it look like it was some kind of forest, you know, like where we are at the

moment?

Eypór (Sindri)

Actually, my memory fails me. I'm gonna grab the map and open it again.

David (Iaus)

That's a good plan.

Travis

Even glancing at the moving map again required a test of sanity from Father Westpike.

Eypór (Sindri)

Yup, 23. I'll take a few moments to look at it and try to ascertain helpful details.

Travis

Father Westpike gazed deeply into the map... He initially noted the same conclusions as he'd made when he looked at it the first time: a regional map of a great forest that seemed to shift under the rippling twilight above, letters written in a language that he could not read, much less identify. Shifting features that seemed to change as he blinked or shifted his focus on different parts of the page... Yet the longer he stared, the more it seemed to draw him in, its secrets becoming more clear as patterns became visible. He eventually found a place on the map that may have depicted his present location, a large leafless tree with a small blotched figure hung from a noose, and a road immediately set before the tree leading off in two directions. One, the northerly direction, seemed to lead through a series of split paths toward a castle, tower, or fortress, the imagery was unclear. The other direction continued to wind south, then bent eastward toward a different set of mountains which comprised a different set of castles affixed in place with what looked like spider webs. Giant spider webs. Many locations were marked on the map in that alien language, and it wasn't until Rowena put a caring hand on his shoulder that Father Westpike noticed he could almost feel himself being pulled deeper and deeper into a trance-like state, almost as if the map itself were pulling him, transporting him somehow toward the place which his finger rested.

Eypór (Sindri)

(surprised sound) Ah! Rowena. Don't scare me like that.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

(nervous) I'm sorry cuz, but you've been staring at that thing for over twenty minutes now and we were all getting' kind of concerned.

Eypór (Sindri)

(ignoring her comment) Can you help me? I can't read this language, and I think what it is saying here may be important.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Erm, sure, but I don't think I's don't speak anything you don't, but I'll have a look.

Travis

Rowena required a Sanity Saving Throw.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

God damn, you're gonna kill me. 20

Travis

Rowena looked at the map for the first time, staring at its crisp shifting features, the lines seeming to dance and sway in rhythm with the music in her head. Mirroring the strange glow from the stars above, Rowena felt as though the ink itself were alive. And as she briefly regained focus enough to stare at those alien characters she was rudely bumped by Iaus.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

(surprised, leaving a trance) Ah!

David (Iaus)

You okay there? I've been calling at you both and you've been unresponsive.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

No, I can't read it. Maybe try someone else.

Eypór (Sindri)

Pretty sure you speak in, infernal which I don't have.

David (Iaus)

I do speak infernal yeah.

Kessi (Flygia)

Me too.

David (Iaus)

And Dwarven, and a variation of the Thieves Cant, but um...

Travis

Iaus, having already seen the map dozens of times, thought of the best lie he could, given the circumstances.

David (Iaus)

-And... uh... I would try but, you know, I don't really feel like it at the moment.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Alright, sure.

Eypór (Sindri)

Alright, I roll up the map. Well there seems to be two paths we go. One leading northern more to a single castle by itself. The more, the one that goes more south leads to a castle and the drawing is adorned with spider webs. And it's more than one castle, more like fortresses in the mountains.

Peter (Soren)

I'm getting a strange feeling from that star. North would seem to be the correct direction.

Eypór (Sindri)

I have no objections.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I mean we don't have anything else to base it off of, but what you basing it off of? Apart from a really odd looking star?

Peter (Soren)

Just I feel like I've known that star all my life...

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Have you got any more idea of who you are since you've come here?

Peter (Soren)

Well I've certainly felt better about myself after since seeing that legless corpse. I'm doing pretty good. In terms...

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

That's not disturbing at all.

Peter (Soren)

Terms of existential growth, I think I'm in about the same place.

David (Iaus)

There's also a trail of footsteps heading north. Can we go?

Eypór (Sindri)

Yes yes, we can go. Lead on Soren.

Travis

The team left the shadow of the leafless tree and followed the path. The trees, which flanked the path on both sides were a multitude of colors, seeming to constantly sway and shift. The wind occasionally picked up patches of leaves, swirling them into various shapes, and for the briefest of moments they team could almost hear a faint whisper... but in a blink, the wind scattered them again. The first hour was marked by the death of their torchlight, but lights above never seemed to relent; ceaselessly pulsating with strange and disturbing colors, some of which they had never seen before. With a gust of wind the team could smell mildew and fresh dirt, the scents of the wild, as they continued past the brightly colored orange and yellow trees.

After another hour or so a strong breeze pushed toward them, changing the colors of the trees as it blew closer, darkening them... (long pause) Since no one reacted, the party was hit with a strong gust of sudden wind, as if an exhalation, or ripple of powerful magic. But beyond a generally uneasy feeling, the change in color among the trees to darker browns and yellows, there appeared to be no other adverse effects.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Ern, I'm gonna plant my feet and stop. 15 for perception... (to team) Alright, I feel confident that the wind came from the direction we're headed, far up the path.

Kessi (Flygia)

Weird, right? I almost feels like breathing...

David (Iaus)

Or pressure changes. I've heard of places deep underground where geysers go off regularly, that sort of phenomenon.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Ummhmm.

Eypór (Sindri)

Yes, but I'm still unclear if we're outside, in a forest, or if we're still underground. This place has a sky... and stars... So it's all a bit confusing.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I think we ought to try and be as sneaky as we can. I don't know what's ahead but that's either breathing or some sort of weird, I don't know I can really explain it. But if something is big enough to make the trees move when it breathes, we ought to be bloody careful.

Eypór (Sindri)

Agree that we should be careful, but we do not have all the time in the world anymore.

David (Iaus)

I can sneak quickly enough.

Eypór (Sindri)

Do you want to go ahead? Scout for the party?

David (Iaus)

As long as I take someone else with me

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I agree.

Kessi (Flygia)

I volunteer.

David (Iaus)

You tried to kill me in those tunnels.

Kessi (Flygia)

(Smiling/amused) I almost forgot about that.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I'll go, I'll go with you.

David (Iaus)

Thank you, right.

Eypór (Sindri)

Do you think that's right Rowena?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Yeah, I'll, I'll be fine, I got this.

Eypór (Sindri)

I trust you to make the right decisions.

David (Iaus)

Well that's, that's a nice, that's damning with faint praise innit?

Peter (Soren)

While that's happening, I'm going to concentrate on these whispers... 17 on Perception...
(listening) Hm... (to team) Does anyone else hear that? In the trees?

Travis

Soren could hear it, a voice coming from the woods.

Travis (As the trees)

(whisper) Soren.

Eypór (Sindri)

That wind sound? Yes.

Kessi (Flygia)

(serious) It sounds almost like the trees are trying to apologize, or warn us of something.

Peter (Soren)

Iaus, and Rowena, before you scout ahead, would you mind checking out just off the path here with me?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Sure.

David (Iaus)

Alright then.

Eypór (Sindri)

I wanna say this before you guys go on, I am on my guard around Flygia.

David (Iaus)

Yeah, thank you.

Peter (Soren)

(serious) Let's try not to lose sight of the road. Follow me. -Ugh! What in the nine hells!?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Feck!

Travis

As Soren took his second step from the path a thick glowing mist enclosed him, obscuring his vision greatly. The mist appeared instantly, rising from the ground itself, or perhaps the roots of the trees.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

We're all seeing this mist right?

David (Iaus)

Yes. Thanks for the weather forecast!

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

...If he's only two steps ahead? I'm just gonna reach out and grab Soren and pull him back onto the path.

Eypór (Sindri)

Ohh.

Peter (Soren)

How dare you?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Oh if you'd like to wander off into the mist, go right ahead but I'm not coming after you.

Peter (Soren)

Oh no, no, I appreciate it. I'll hang back.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Well whatever you got to say, you might want to say it here, because clearly you walking off the path is not a good thing.

Peter (Soren)

Yeah I think we would get fairly instantly lost if we try this. I'm still hearing that whispering though.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

What is it you wanted to say? You wanted to say something to us?

Peter (Soren)

I just wanted to investigate, I thought I hear somebody...

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Oh, right.

Peter (Soren)

... calling my name from the woods. I just wanted an extra hand.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Ok, so how about this? Don't.

Peter (Soren)

Good plan. Let's be cautious of the whispering but I don't think we should leave the path at this point.

David (Iaus)

I think I would agree. There have been plenty of things that have tried to take us away from everything, like, er, I saw some strange little thing pretending to be my son when we were camped out in those houses, so... yeah.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Ok maybe splitting ups not a good idea, we're just gonna have to hope everyone can sneak, really bloody quietly. I don't think we should go off: this is too dangerous. I mean the mist seems to be disbursing now, but it was really thick for a moment there. I think we should stay together I mean I, I can do things that make everyone else a bit more sneaky, but that's about all I've got.

Peter (Soren)

Did anyone else notice the way the trees changed color? The trees seem to be changing color, not at regular intervals, but during those breathy moments, where the wind comes through. They can change slightly or entirely into different shades. So as of right now they're darker greens and purples and blues on the larger trees.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Father Westpike, can you give me the map?

Eypór (Sindri)

Yes, here you go. I hand her the map.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I'm going to look at the map.

Travis

Rowena's sanity was tested once again.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Nope, that's 10.

Travis

Rowena's eyes and mind ached as she looked over the map again in greater detail. Her stress damage increased by 10, edging her closer toward the tipping point.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

That's fine, I can take that, I'm great.

Kessi (Flygia)

(faking being helpful) I suspect since that since the trees said Soren's name, that maybe the mist only affects him? So I try...

Eypór (Sindri)

No, don't!

Kessi (Flygia)

I go into...

Eypór (Sindri)

We mustn't-

Kessi (Flygia)

... I take a step toward the forest.

Travis

Poised low to the ground like a runner, Flygia's right foot took a step as the left remained firmly planted to the path... Yet the mist continued to dissipate slightly. With a visibility of 90ft Flygia cautiously took the other foot off of the path, edging slightly further... Yet the mist remained when it was... Tail twitching, Flygia took two more steps, noting the fog's indifference to her progress.

David (Iaus)

I better follow her...

Peter (Soren)

(nervous) Probably... Yeah.

David (Iaus)

I know, I know it's not a good idea but...

Travis

As Iaus followed Flygia a dozen steps off the path, weapons raised and ready for attack, both of them were required to make a Wisdom saving throw.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I am looking to see whether when the breathing happens if the ink shifts.

Travis

Concentrating her stinging eyes on the map of the forest in front of her, she noticed a sudden shift in the ink in rhythm with the breath of the forest... But as a headache began to form around the left side of her forehead she could detect more shifts in the ink not in time with the phenomenon. She equated the feeling to watching wet ink move underneath the light of a dying candle. It wasn't until Father Westpike bumped into her moments later that her concentration on the map was broken.

Travis

Iaus took a few more steps, trying to keep pace with Flygia but suddenly found himself no longer in sight of her.

David (Iaus)

Fuck.

Travis

Nor the rest of the party.

David (Iaus)

Bollocks.

Kessi (Flygia)

Hey, Iaus, where'd you go?... (more worried) Iaus?

Eypór (Sindri)

(worried) He was between us, I was standing behind him when you... Flygia, walk back towards me and look around the ground, he may have fallen.

Kessi (Flygia)

No, I don't think that...

Kessi (Flygia)

(calling out) Iaus? Iaus? Did you fall into some kind of trap or hole? Iaus? Perception roll of a 13.

Travis

Flygia failed to find Iaus Innskeep. Visible to all, the brand of the Allshadow on her neck began to singe and gave a slight glow, acting up. Flygia could not place what was happening, but perhaps it could have been protecting her from something.

Kessi (Flygia)

Ah (pained)! There's some kind of strange magics afoot.

Eypór (Sindri)

(calling out) Iaus? Iaus?

Travis

As Father Westpike and Rowena left the path toward Flygia, both were required to make Wisdom saving throws... And seemingly vanished into thin air after a dozen paces.

Peter (Soren)

(calling out) Hello? Hello? Is anyone left?

Kessi (Flygia)

Come over here. See if the fog still comes when you approach the trees.

Peter (Soren)

Everybody's being eaten, and you, you want me to walk into the fog?

Kessi (Flygia)

Well it isn't affecting me!

Peter (Soren)

(nervous) Okay. I'll take a tiptoe, I'll, I'll got for it.

Travis

As Soren tiptoed into the woods, locking eyes with Flygia, he required two wisdom saving

throws.

Peter (Soren)

24 and 21.

Travis

As Flygia watched Soren walk closer, the fog began to creep in again and all at once he vanished. Flygia was left in the woods, alone. As she took a few moments to frantically search for Soren in the mist she could hear the faint whispers growing in volume, and the sounds of echoing glass. The voices called out, speaking only a single name.

Kessi (Flygia)

(haughty) They sing my praises. I go back to the path because obviously there's nothing else I can do... I will meditate on this and try to commune with the forest.

Travis

Meanwhile, the rest of the party now found themselves back at the white leafless tree. Rowena had called out to Iaus, who had already begun a jog up the path north, and the team regrouped by the shade of the old tree.

Peter (Soren)

Well that's unpleasant. I guess that's why they call it the roaming forest.

David (Iaus)

Well, now we're all here except Flygia, who apparently wasn't teleported for some reason.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

New plan, let's just run along the path, we're like two hours behind now.

Eypór (Sindri)

We are, but I had a thought while we were traveling the path. We can ask the people questions, the ones you bring back with your lantern right?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Are you sure that's a good idea?

Peter (Soren)

If you don't mind hurting them, yeah.

Eypór (Sindri)

We have two paths to take and we randomly choose one. I want to ask you to bring him back so that we can ask him a question.

Peter (Soren)

Lantern out.

Travis

Everyone was required to make a Sanity Saving Throw.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I'm walking away.

Travis

Ok, except you.

David (Iaus)

Yeah, I think I'm going to walk away as well.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I'll go hang out with Iaus.

David (Iaus)

Wanna play some Rakoi dice?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Sure, how much you willing to lose?

Travis

Father Westpike and Soren both passed their respective tests of sanity. Okay for the sake of time I'm going to do the SheRa thing and say that the ritual was repeated with the same effect as the last time... And the two men both started at the grinning lifeless corpse of the Gnome with no tongue, no legs, broken arms, and sharpened teeth.

Peter (Soren)

(to the corpse) Hi again.

Eypór (Sindri)

Can you ask him which one of the two paths leads to our destination? If he knows our destination that is?

Peter (Soren)

Why is this called the roaming forest?

Travis (As Pullo)

"The roaming forest never sleeps. It travels, journeys indiscreet. You roam within, you leave the path, you'll find yourself at the gate you last - You'll find yourself back at the place, You'll find yourself back at this gate!"

Peter (Soren)

And who are you?

Travis (As Pullo)

"Pullo, Pullo is my name, born out of song and stories gained. I've traveled far, I've traveled wide, I was sent here and then I died."

Eypór (Sindri)

You were a bard when you were alive. Does that name mean anything to me? Pullo.

Travis

Father Westpike did not initially recall having worked with or heard of a bard named Pullo within Westmann's Hold, nor Imater's Hope.

Eypór (Sindri)

Mr Paulo, the castle to the north, what is it? What is there? What's its name?

Travis (As Pullo)

"Follow the path, to where it goes, follow the path, and then you'll know. You left a week and a half ago, if you seek him then you'll know. You'll catch the children, they are slow."

Eypór (Sindri)

Wait-what was... (sigh) So, um... the, the Castles to the south what are they?

Travis (As Pullo)

"Delightful perhaps. Things you'll hear. The spider's silk, the giants near. Of unicorns, and so much more, and vile drow, with -"

Peter (Soren)

Alright, so fuck the south. So it sounds like we still need to go north. It sounds like that's where the other party went, but it sounds like they have been trapped by the same obstacles we, we ran into and may not have made it to their destination yet.

Travis (As Pullo)

"Ye shall pass three night of chagrin before ye reach the one who is Him. Do not turn around or you will find, yourself here, quite soon. Should you leave the path you'll meet the Silent Faithful... The Clay Hag and her dolls. Above all, beyond grey gates you will find your fates. Trust not all for one here betrays, the other will betray and wake... Him.. It is your fate."

Peter (Soren)

Oh I don't like this forest at all.

Eypór (Sindri)

Clearly a cursed place we are stuck in. please, put away the lamp I have nothing more to ask, unless you have more questions. Although he seems to be enjoying the spot light.

Peter (Soren)

You said it takes three days to reach the destination to the north. Are there any areas to rest along the way or is it all the same?

Travis (As Pullo)

"The world is your nest, you'll soon find much rest. Only four will arrive. And shortly after you will die. Knife in the back by one who is near, and with some new friends you'll persevere. A dragonborn and madman woes, for the other nine leagues below, a trial of patience it waits... As worms await your fate! As He awaits your fate."

Peter (Soren)

Let's put the lantern away. Goodbye Pullo.

Eypór (Sindri)

Yes I think we need to book it. Try to catch up with Flygia. I hope she's fine, or that she hasn't joined whatever roams the forest.

David (Iaus)

I don't care.

Peter (Soren)

Sounds like we're about three days out and we cannot turn around or stray from the path or we'll end up right back here. It is strange though, I keep seeing and hearing that phrase everywhere. It's a 'trial of patience.' I'm wondering if there's more to it than simply running for three days. I don't know.

Eypór (Sindri)

Perhaps this place will play tricks on us. Try to lead us off the path using puzzles and riddles and such.

Peter (Soren)

Calling my name.

Eypór (Sindri)

Yes. Actually that was why we're all here.

Peter (Soren)

Sorry about that by the way.

Eypór (Sindri)

I do not believe you did this intentionally.

Travis

Iaus won the game of dice, by the way, he's very good.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

How? I didn't even roll!

Travis

Rowena did, but you don't need to, she never stood a chance. Iaus' sanity recovered slightly as he alleviated 5 stress from running through the familiar actions of his game. His large grin formed, contrasting the fresh scars on his face from where the ooze had burned him.

David (Iaus)

(to Rowena) Ha! That'll be 17 copper.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Really? I thought we were just playing for fun!

David (Iaus)

You most certainly didn't. Pay up or Rakoi'll haunt us... That's totally a thing.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Yer' makin' that up... But here's the 17.

David (Iaus)

Anyone else want a game?

Eypór (Sindri)

No, I would like to hurry up to catch up to Flygia.

David (Iaus)

Right. Guess we're done with the corpse party then.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

So the gist is, we just keep going north.

Peter (Soren)

That seems to be where the children went at least yeah.

Travis

Iaus pocketed his special dice set, his right arm noticeably still weak from Flygia's attack earlier the same day.

David (Iaus)

And how do you know he was telling the truth?

Peter (Soren)

Usually my lantern gets the truth out of people but we never know for sure.

Travis

And so the team began their journey north through the Roaming Forest for the second time, warned about some of the dangers that lurk mere paces off the path...