

Dark Dice, Chapter 13 – Silent Faithful

Travis

The team had concluded a brief funeral in the shadow of the great archway. It was a simple, old bare arch, and if it once boasted runes on its worn surface, they had now long since eroded.

David (laus)

Is there any way to go pass this archway without going through it.

Peter (Soren)

Well, we could leave the path and try to go around.

David (laus)

Not gonna happen.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I pick up my stuff and I just walk through.

Travis

As the team followed close behind and stood mere feet from the archway, they each felt an inherent connection to it. A sort of strange familiarity and significance, as though they had been here before, perhaps in a dream... The last to walk through, the ranger, Soren Arkwright could see his fellows on the other side move slowly, as if underwater or under a spell. Carefully stepping around them until -as he passed through the archway, the spell seemed broken and everything returned to its normal pace.

Mere seconds later, a gentle gust of wind whistled by and the trees themselves shifted slightly from deep oranges and yellows and browns to greens, again. This sensation put them all oddly at peace.

Eypór (Sindri)

(relaxed) Did it just change from spring?

David (laus)

Yeah. But considering the things that have been happening of late, I'm rather okay with that.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

You said it felt like it was in a dream, that I had been here before.

Peter (Soren)

Possibly. I'm getting that feeling as well.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Any way of recalling that dream?

Travis

Rowena needed to roll an unmodified luck check.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Alright, 12.

Travis

Rowena was able to recall her dream from the previous rest...

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

It is?

David (Ilaus)

Oh I was just thinking, I, I've got my hammer and pitons and everything. We could have maybe climbed over. Possibly made sure that time didn't go quicker.

Peter (Soren)

I don't think it works that way.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

If I dreamed about losing money to Ilaus...

Travis

Rowena suddenly had flashes of Renaxe, a smiling healthy dwarf and her former lover, living a pleasant life with his wife and children. In the dream Renaxe was with his two children, who each bore a strong resemblance to him, in a large yard. As the nightmare continued, he helped his wife in the kitchen, she lovingly watched as he puts the children to bed, they began to kiss in their bedroom, and passionately copulate. Afterward, they fell asleep, naked, happy to be in love. This image was more torture to Rowena than many of her recent trials, being forced to watch the man she loves with his wife and happy children. Living the life she wanted. Rowena was then reminded of exactly where she was and sadly, she was unable to recall the events of the dream that were particular to this location.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I'm on the other side, feeling like worse crap. Excellent.

Peter (Soren)

Would we like to continue down the road?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Sure.

David (Ilaus)

Is it still just the one path? Nothing else?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Still just the one path for now. Yeah.

Travis

The team walked for three hours until they reached a crossroads, a single split, each path trailing off in a slightly different direction until passing beyond view.

Peter (Soren)

Was this on the map?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I remember seeing a couple of splits on the road, yeah, but we'd have to check the map to confirm it exactly... Which none of us want to do... It only looked like one main road though and then a couple of really small offshoots from what I remember. It wasn't like, you know, a big split and two large roads. But thankfully one of the roads ahead is more prominent.

David (laus)

Is it the one that goes to the castle?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I don't see a castle ahead because both roads bend and ebb through a fuckin' forest. But the one veering off to the right gets a little bit, um, it's a bit thinner road and it doesn't appear to have been trodden as much, and appears to be more just dirt as opposed to compacted dirt from wear and use.

David (laus)

Is there anyone that could maybe have a decent look at the ground to see if anyone is, if any small footprints have passed that way?

Peter (Soren)

I can try it, with a 20.

Peter (Soren)

I do see recent footsteps on the wider path, to the left, I believe.

David (laus)

It's good enough for me.

Eypór (Sindri)

Soren, do you want to take the front and maybe follow the tracks? Maybe see if they veer off first, or if they slow down or stop at all. It would be helpful for us to know if they are moving slower than we.

Peter (Soren)

Absolutely, I will keep an eye on them here.

Eypór (Sindri)

Thank you.

Travis

An hour of silent travel passed, boots passing over the packed dirt and fallen leaves of the path... and after that hour, the landscape began to change. Within 5 minutes, the air grew warmer, more moist, the surroundings gradually taking on the feel of a swamp more than a forest. Then, unexpectedly, the path led directly into a thick liquid, as clear as water, though dense as mud... Beneath the crystal clear thick liquid, footsteps were plainly visible, almost as if captured in the liquid, preserved just moments ago. The visibility remained clear, even as the path descended further beneath the liquid to a depth of roughly 2 ft.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I'd like to try skimming a stone across this.

Travis

Rowena succeeded in skimming a stone across the liquid's surface, skipping five times before splashing and sinking, bubbles escaping beneath it as it landed harmlessly on the path.

Peter (Soren)

It doesn't look like it dissolved or anything. I don't know what this liquid is.

Eypór (Sindri)

I don't know it from my travels, but I would like to do a little test. And I wanna walk up to where

the, the viscous liquid starts, and I want to push my finger into it, and see if I sink by pushing on it.

Travis

Yeah it appeared to be just like mud, but as clear as water.

Eypór (Sindri)

So... (finger into the liquid) it appears to be just like mud or a syrup, but clear as water. And when I pulled my finger out it had just a little bit of resistance... Soren can you tell if the feet were moving fast when they passed this area?

Peter (Soren)

let me check if there's anything I can discern from the footsteps, with a 22.

Peter (Soren)

I'm just rolling well today (cough) I mean (jumping into character).. It looks like whoever was walking through here was very tired. Looks like they were able to make it through, it didn't slow them too badly. I agree with your assessment. "Just like mud."

Eypór (Sindri)

Alright, I was assuming it was some kind of trap. Maybe if you stopped it would swallow you whole. Maybe not.

David (laus)

I suppose we can't go off the path to get any trees to hold onto. So, who's going first.

Peter (Soren)

I'll go for it.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I'll go, we'll both go.

Travis

Slowly, cautiously, Rowena and Soren took cautious steps into the liquid, confirming their hypothesis... The steps started slowly, but after they waited a few moments and confirmed that they were indeed safe, the other two joined them and continued to follow the path.

It was a slow moving journey, and lacking waterproof boots it only took a few minutes for their feet to chafe, ache, and hurt. The pain from walking was not inconsistent with the situation, so there was no cause for discussion or alarm, yet this was only one of the many inconveniences that assailed them over the next four hours. Thankfully there was no difficulty in following the footsteps, even as they reached another split in the road, as the footfalls clearly favoured the left. The right path was untrod, and off the path, further to the right could be discerned, the faint echoing of chimes off in the distance...

Eypór (Sindri)

Another split... Though the direction we need to travel is plain, even to me, so why have we stopped?

Peter (Soren)

Two things... It may be worth noting that even though we are following the group that has the children, the gentleman without legs did say they've been wondering around here for a very long time, though we are following them, they might not be on the right path to whatever their destination is.

David (laus)

That's a good point.

Eypór (Sindri)

You have a very good point. Does either path take us away from the viscous liquid?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

It is basically a swamp at this point.

Eypór (Sindri)

And no end in sight?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Not for either path as far as I see, nope.

Eypór (Sindri)

As soon as we are out of this liquid, I would love to check the map again... You said there was a second reason that we stopped.

Peter (Soren)

The chimes... Can you hear them?

Eypór (Sindri)

I don't think I-...

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Stop moving yer chainmail and try to listen... That way.

Eypór (Sindri)

Oh, I hear it now. (quietly) What do you suppose it is?

Peter (Soren)

Rowena, is there any pattern to the chimes? Does it seem just like wind chimes or is it a melody of any sort?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

It does not feel melodic. It feels kind of like when you have a glass and you put your finger over it if it's slightly wet and you get that resonance. But it's just the one resonance, very clearly, fairly constant but... not. And then there's a couple more faint ones that pitter after. Then it starts up again, a few seconds later, irregularly. It'd be a shitty musician if it were intentional. Maybe some kind of natural sound here?... -So, *We've got their tracks right? We're following their tracks, it's not that old a track. Can you tell to make sure it's still them?*

Peter (Soren)

They all look fairly fresh to me, I'm not able to tell.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Thing is we can either go chase and kind of maybe go off the path and have to start again, All the way back there, or keep following the tracks where we definitely know where they were.

Eypór (Sindri)

Rowena, please hand me the map. I am going to make sure, I, I think Soren made a very good point. We are going for the castle, and the children probably don't know where they're going.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

No but we are following the tracks right? And I'll, I'll pass him the map.

Eypór (Sindri)

Thank you. I'm assuming sanity check because I am checking out the map.

Travis

Looking at the dizzying images of the map would require a Sanity Saving Throw.

Eypór (Sindri)

Right, 21.

Travis

Father Westpike had become somewhat accustomed to the shifting lines of the map... He was not sure if this level of familiarity should upset or please him and pondered this while he examined its images.

Eypór (Sindri)

I am checking the map and I'm, I'm making the assumption that we've went the main path at the fork that we didn't look at the map, and I'm looking this area up... Ok. This path we're on, the one that appears to be the one that the footsteps follow and favor, seems to be the one toward the castle.

David (laus)

Have you got any idea of what's, what happens with the other one?

Eypór (Sindri)

The other one leads literally into the woods, as if it's like a cave, or canopy, -an enclosed canopy space. Super dense woods. And I can't follow it after a certain period of time. There are number of places it very well could emerge from. The map tells us, tells us we should follow the steps to get to the castle, and the, the offshoot... I, I fear that if we try to follow it, we may find ourselves stuck in a loop, maybe, have to go back to the beginning, to the tree.

Peter (Soren)

We definitely can't afford that at this point

Hem (Speaking as Rowena) & David (laus)

No No.

Eypór (Sindri)

No. We must soldier on.

David (laus)

Although...

Eypór (Sindri)

Sorry.

David (laus)

What happens, you say it goes into, it goes nowhere, somewhere? Nowhere?

Eypór (Sindri)

It goes into something that looks like a drawing of a cave or tunnel of tree cover, and the track itself does not show where it goes from there. But there are other cave openings randomly strewn about the map.

David (laus)

Are there any caves closer to the castle?

Eypór (Sindri)

Let me check. Hmm... There are like four or five different types of caves that are fairly close to the castle. The marks look similar, for one of them... So the path to the right enters into an area of woods. If you can think of a, like a subterranean system of very dense foliage that the map does not show, it's more like that now that I'm looking at it again, and the map shows where all the entrances to that dense forest are... The canopy is a connected continuous forest piece that does lead, technically, to where we want to go, but I do see an exit on the other side close to the castle. We could possibly use the side track to cut through the forest. Maybe get to the castle faster, maybe slower. I don't know. But we are risking the chil-... We are taking the risk of getting lost in the forest because the map will not help us in there.

David (laus)

How long is the path to the castle compared with what we have already done?

Eypór (Sindri)

We're about a third of the way there. It's not a straight path, it bends quite a few ways, but is generally, the feature is a sort of an "s" or series of S's to get there.

David (laus)

Are the archways marked on the map?

Eypór (Sindri)

At risk of pissing off the DM by abusing my amazing sanity roll from earlier... I can see the first archway we passed through. And sure enough there appear to be two more. I do not see any archways in the forest, which would mean a massive time win for us. This is a gamble, you realise that laus?

David (laus)

I know. I know but at this point, we've already lost two of our party, why not?

Eypór (Sindri)

There is a saying from where I am from: go big or go home.

David (laus)

Yeah, the same from where I am from as well. You're gonna have worse.

Eypór (Sindri)

It could always get worse. Rowena, Soren are you ok with trying to go through forest?

Peter (Soren)

Just to clarify, we can either go through the forest, which might exit near the castle, or the swamp... And there were archways in the swamp but not the forest?

Eypór (Sindri)

There's the main road that we have been following and it has archways on it up ahead, or there's the thick forest which kind of closes itself off and we don't have a map for that. And there's potentially no archways there.

Peter (Soren)

Got it.

Eypór (Sindri)

Did I explain that sufficiently?

David (laus)

I say we go for the shortcut. I know it's a gamble, but I'm a gambling man.

Peter (Soren)

So there is what we're up against is the possibility that if we choose the path through the forest, the shortcut, we might end up back a day ago at the hanging tree

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I've got an idea. Why don't I go, I should test it. Cause if I disappear, you can keep going.

Eypór (Sindri)

The assumption is not that we will be teleported like we were when we entered the forest. The assumption is that we will get lost, and that by turning around we will be teleported to the forest, to the tree, I think.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Either way, laus, you can't be at the front of this any more.

David (laus)

Right.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

It's your kid, if we fuck up, we need to be the ones at the front to take that fall. Cause if we take a path and it's wrong, and we have to turn back, you can probably find another way by forging a different way. You shouldn't be in the lead at all.

David (laus)

Thank you. I appreciate that.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

You're welcome. This is your decision, so if we're going through the forest, let's do it now. We could gain a lot of time. So let's do it.

David (laus)

It's, it's worth it.

Peter (Soren)

Ok.

Travis

The discussion ended and the team watched as Rowena led them down the right path from ten paces ahead... They travelled like this for 20 minutes in silence, the swamp gradually reaching a sort of shore at the edge of the promised forest.

Rowena, first to reach the edge, realized just how dense and very dark the woods ahead were. They seemed somehow colder, even two paces in, and she came to quickly miss the perpetual twilight overhead, it's aurora dancing and the lights in the sky shifting, as they had now been replaced with total darkness. Unfortunately, one among the party did not have low light vision...

David (laus)

I do have a lantern and some candles, if anyone wants them... Ah, bullocks, my blue candle seems to have vanished, and my lantern seems to have cracked, probably from the fight... but I'm just assuming I'll light the lantern at this point as I'm sick of fumbling around by this point and can't be bothered to find my torch.

Eypór (Sindri)

I think laus, like I have, both the dwarves have low light vision, darkvision sorry.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Oh yeah.

David (laus)

I do as well.

Eypór (Sindri)

Yeah you're a tiefling right?

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

It's just the human.

Eypór (Sindri)

So you're holding...

Peter (Soren)

Stupid humans.

Eypór (Sindri)

... the torchlight for Soren's sake?

David (laus)

Yup.

Eypór (Sindri)

Ah. Good on you.

David (laus)

Here, Soren, he's got a point. Here's the lantern.

Travis

Soren was given the cracked, mundane lantern.

Peter (Soren)

Finally, a lantern I can use.

Travis (Speaking as the Silent Posse)

The team continued on their path, and within a few minutes of their track into the woods, a thick viscous orange sap began to fall, almost like rain... The storm grew in intensity as the heavy, sticky rivulets that stung ever so slightly frosted immediately on contact with skin and armor... But the team had little time to process this phenomenon, for by the time they drew their cloaks, raised shields, and found cover under roots, the phenomenon began to subside, almost as quickly as it arrived, leaving them with the foul stench of rot...

David (laus)

Well, fuck...

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Don't worry about it. I'll cast prestigitation to clean us all off... It'll take a few minutes but just hold still...

Eypór (Sindri)

Thanks.

Travis

Rowena spent the next five minutes cleaning off the team and their gear, carefully clearing every bit of sap from them before they were ready to move on... But before they could continue Soren was the only one to notice glowing eyes in the shadows belonging to five humanoid figures, garbed in wood, animal hides, and bone silently step forward, whispering a phrase over and over again. "*Da hath wick ma. Da hath wick ma. Da hath wick ma*".

Travis

Before the chanting voices caught the attention of the others Soren threw the lamp toward the figures while notching an arrow on his bow. The figures had grey ashen skin and were garbed in a mix of animal hides, wood and cloth. The eyes of the two unmasked figures glowed with a hellish red while the other's eyes were not visible behind their distorted masks. Most disturbing however was their leader, a tall gaunt figure wearing nothing but the skull of a unicorn and a tattered cloak, seemingly stirring with a life of its own, stitched together from pale elven flesh.

Peter (Soren)

(shouting, quickly) We're under attack! Five total, unicorn is the leader! (to self, aiming) I'll shoot the unicorn face as best I can.

Travis

Though masculine, the body was emaciated, lacking defined features, and as it crept forward with an unnatural gait, the three glowing orbs from beneath the unicorn skull it wore gave the distinct impression that the skull was laughing, while also suggesting the wearer's true identity.

Peter (Soren)

(tense) 18 to hit, 8 damage.

Travis

Soren's aim rang true, and even as the creature moved to dodge out of the way the arrow caught it in the shoulder with an audible crack.

The creatures began to move in a shifting, twitching rhythm as one of their number, a misshaped figure buried beneath a swathe of furs, held up his two scythes, both visibly dripping with blood. As the scythes lacked handles they clearly dug into the user's hands, indicating the source of the crimson... And in a series of swift motions, ashen skin was visible beneath the fur hood and red eyes glowed from beneath the bear skull as it began to chant in old draconic, slowly bringing the blades down in a strange pattern. The scythes seemed to carve into the very air itself, opening a rift of sorts and ushering a heavy dense fog. The hairs on everyone's skin rose as the team began to feel the weight of the fog squeeze their lungs, seizing them as through the air itself were water, and they were now drowning... -Now, for those of us unclear with the rules of drowning.

Eypór (Sindri)

Ahhh.

Travis

The team had a bit of time, it was ok for now. But there was a countdown on each character based on their Constitution, which dictated just how many rounds they'd be able to breathe.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Number of con rounds right?

Travis

Yeah, the big number, not the little one.

Eypór (Sindri)

Yeah.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Sweet.

Travis

-Okay, back to the fight... The second figure, a wide humanoid male with a mask of thin bark, rushed toward the closest thing he could reach, Rowena. Her normal reflexes were temporarily distracted as she saw the antlers that he held in each of his bloodied hands had been sharpened, edged, and were not in fact being held, but rather pierced through his mangled hands and sealed to become part of his body through magics. The figure caught Rowena across the side for five damage.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

(pained) Ah!

Travis

She was also required to make a Constitution saving throw...

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Of what? What the fuck? -A 22.

Travis

Rowena didn't care, she was good. Very good.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I know.

Travis

An athletically-thin female wearing a mask made from the skull of a deer moved to engage Father Westpike. The mangled ruination of bone and metal filled the absence of her right arm, which was missing from the elbow down. The weapon, seeming formed from part of her bone struck at Father Westpike who was able to pull his shield up just in time to block the reckless assault of strikes that followed.

Eypór (Sindri)

(sound of blocking a hit with a shield) hmph!

Travis

A smaller figure with a featureless wooden mask was next, her very hands ending in massive unnatural talons, her body warped and stretched around the neck, biceps, and ankles. She hit Soren from the side, clawing at his left arm for 7 damage.

Peter (Soren)

Ugh! (sound pain from being cut by clawing talons)

Travis

Failing his constitution saving throw, Soren's damage was not curable, reducing his maximum hit points.

Eypór (Sindri)

Alright, Father Westpike moves very far forward so that he is blocking or in the way, like creatures have to move passed me to get at, I'm basically trying to put myself between the party and the monsters. He also raises his hammer to the sky, and blesses the three of you.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

The three of us?

Eypór (Sindri)

You're the only ones who are left.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Hashtag blessed.

Eypór (Sindri)

I just need one more person to die, and then I can bless myself every time.

David (laus)

That was oddly grim!

Travis

Father Westpike raised his hammer to the canopy above, and three beams of sunlight pierced the darkness, engulfing his allies, the targets of the spell. Almost like motes of dust in the air, the light quickly coalesced around their heads into halos.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I move up to Westpike and pull out my harp: "*You might be strong, you might even be brave, but you're not gonna outlive this thunderwave!*" and I strum down the harp, casting Thunderwave at level 3 and hitting all of 'em with the attack and 15 damage.

Travis

The deafening sound was accompanied by a crash of energy and while the figure with the bear furs and the deer skull figure were hit hard enough to be knocked back ten feet, the others remained firm-footed and eager to get revenge.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I use my bonus action to turn and look back at laus and I say *you can stop, you can drop, you can roll, over your life I'm giving you control*. And I'll give bardic inspiration.

David (laus)

(tense) Crossbow time. I hope you're the silent one under there! (as David) 20 to hit, 23 damage thanks to bardic inspiration and sneak attack.

Travis

Distracted by the thunderous crash, The Silent One could not see laus' shot until it was too

late, catching the creature under the mask, very nearly missing one of its glowing eyes. It shrieked in disgust and rage, its long talons clawing into Rowen's flesh for 12 damage, slashing her face, shoulder, and side, while the shroud on its back flexed and battered Father Westpike for 5 bludgeoning damage.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Eugh! (pained from being slashed in the face) (exasperated) Balls!

Peter (Soren)

I'm assuming I might have time to ask myself, if the bear skull guys dies, we stop running the risk of drowning right?

Peter (Soren)

It would really seem that way, Soren.

Peter (Soren)

Okay, Sindri blessed this shot so here goes... -A natural 20 to hit and 7 plus...

Travis

Setting to the familiar work of killing monsters Soren took aim just under the bear's snout and let loose the arrow... It pierced the flesh beneath, boring straight through the center of the skull, dropping the creature, hard. As a small grin crossed Soren's face, from his shadow, emerged a black figure, roughly the shape and build of a humanoid, seemingly identical to Soren. As it rose to meet him it's features bubbling, hissing skin, that dripped oozed, whispers in a dozen different voices escaped its drooping mouth and Soren recognised one of the voices to be his own. Soren required a wisdom saving throw as the voice commanded him in Infernal.

Peter (Soren)

(gasped/stressed) 14.

Travis

Soren overcame his battle of wits as a separate figure emerged from the shadow of laus, similarly identical except for the hissing, crackling, and melting skin. Faint whispers of agony escaped, its mouth, visibly lined with a perfect set of pointed pearlescent teeth, requiring laus to make a similar wisdom saving throw.

David (laus)

16.

Travis

(grumpy) Fuck. Uh... ok. As the creature with the bear-skull fell all at once the sensation of being underwater ended, and the mist retreated... As the creature with mangled hands slashed its edged antlers out, biting in Sindri's exposed flesh at the point where the Ooze had left a hole in his armor. But due to the old Dwarf's hearty constitution, the wound would surely heal.

Eypór (Sindri)

(getting cut across the arm) Ahh!

Travis

The final two creatures sought retaliation against Rowena, the deer-skull woman redirecting her flurry of blows toward Rowena ineffectively but, distracting the Dwarf as the Talons from the final creature slashed her exposed back for 4 damage... Which would also heal thanks to Rowena's

constitution.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

(Slashed in the back) Ack! ...

Eypór (Sindri)

So there are two shadowy figures attacking our buddies in the back row right now?

David (Iaus)

(tense) Yes, well, more sort of just like hissing at us, but yes.

Eypór (Sindri)

Alright. (yelling in combat) "Keep these things engaged! -By Pelor's light protect my cousin with Warding Bond!.. I'm gonna go help them!"

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

(in combat, tense) No! *Don't! what are you doing?* - I will totally forgo doing anything to stop him from moving.

Travis

Father Westpike was swiftly struck in the back of the head with a hand-harp.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Fecking idiot!

Travis

Father Westpike took the hint, turned around and glared menacingly at the creatures attacking his cousin.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

"Your lives don't matter, I'm casting shatter" -cause fuck this! 21 damage on a failed save.

Travis

With a strum of her handharp, the reverberation created a burst of sound and energy that resonated with the bones of the deer-skull woman causing her to shatter outward in an explosion of gore and simply no longer be.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

"At the moment I don't know what is wrong and what is right, but as long as you're next to me I guess I will fight."

Eypór (Sindri)

(in combat, tense/winded) Thank you!

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

You're welcome. You're inspired. Speaking of which, Iaus is up.

Travis

Iaus took aim at the creature with the mask of bark...

David (Iaus)

We hate you, please die! 19 to hit, 13 damage.

Travis

The crossbow bolt shattered the bark of the mask sending the exploding splinters to embed into the face beneath. A painful death, the creature writhed and screamed as it tried to scratch at its face with its mangled hands of iron and bone... As mere paces away, Soren thought of his lucky dagger, which had now found its way into his hand and took a stab at his shadow.

Peter (Soren)

Shing shing! Is a 17 to hit.

Travis

With 11 damage, Soren plunged his murderous dagger into the heart or whatever was in that place of the creature... and the entire shadow structure dissolved into crimson, bone, and bubbling shadow... But something was wrong and Soren found himself also taking 11 damage as a nearly identical wound opened on his chest, missing his heart and not piercing quite as deeply. His real shadow visible beneath his feet thanks to the light of the thrown lantern, Soren watched as the two standing figures slashed wildly at Father Westpike and Rowena, who successfully dodged and blocked the incoming blows. A loud shriek pierced the din but Father Westpike resisted its call, as closer to Soren, laus dodged the attacks from his Shadow, his pitted Rapier now out and at the ready. Realizing the ebb and flow of battle had turned against it, The Silent One fled, dodging Rowena's attack and subsequent spell, as it ran off into the darkness beyond the light of the lamp... Vanishing entirely as Father Westpike raised his hammer above his head and spoke the holy word of Pelor, a blinding radiant light coming down from above, piercing through the darkness, punching a hole clear through the taloned creature, disintegrating it.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Fleck, the Silent One's runnin'! Stay here – Rowena's gonna run to get a better view of him and say *'you can run, you can hide, but you I will always find'* and I'll cast hold person on him!

Travis

With a very lucky roll-I Mean Iron will, the Silent one continued its departure, jumping over a fallen log and vanishing entirely.

David (laus)

So, yeah I'm going to attack with my dagger, causing seeing what happened to Soren, I know that I'm going to take damage.

Eypór (Sindri)

Yeah.

David (laus)

Unless there is anything else I could possibly use to stop this thing, but I can't imagine that there is.

Peter (Soren)

(clearly in pain) You'll be fine. Just look at me.

David (laus)

Anyone else any ideas?

Eypór (Sindri)

Only that...

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Just stab him up... You're fully healed, dude, you're fine.

David (laus)

That's, that's true. Ok yeah I'm gonna hit with my dagger. Natural 20.

Travis

Double damage so.

David (laus)

(gasping in pain, almost whispered) Fuck! I hit it too hard...

Travis

As laus stabbed in the creature, aiming for its shoulder, fortune favoured his strike and landed the blow across its neck, decapitating the shadow, which swiftly evaporated... laus was less than pleased however, to receive a similar but less-than-lethal cut across the front of his neck. The team was then left to themselves in the silent darkness of the forest with the few corpses, and the light of the cracked lantern.

David (laus)

(pained) We've had worse.

Eypór (Sindri)

Indeed we have.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Aye.

Eypór (Sindri)

I wanna walk and pick up any of the masks that survive, that is not the disgusting talon mask, and inspect it,.. (looking at a mask) Hmmm... Tree bark... Little loop on back... Sort of fitted but it does not seem magical. (to team) -Okay. Now that we're out of the battle, quick inventory check, how badly hurt are people?

David (laus)

Severely.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Enough for a rest... I suggest that we just take a short rest. And people will naturally heal up and if I sing a little song you'll feel a bit better too.

Eypór (Sindri)

That's true, that's true.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Do not waste your magics, I'm running pretty low myself.

Eypór (Sindri)

Alright. A quick rest, but no letting me nap or I'll be grumpy when I wake up!

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I mean we only need like an hour. Just like read a prayer or something.

Eypór (Sindri)

I support this decision Rowena I think we should take a short rest.

Travis

Ok, so – breaking the immersion for a second to explain how this works. The team took a few paces away from their battle site and sat down to relax. This does not mean that they required sleep, just to be relaxing and not engaging in strenuous activities.

Eypór (Sindri)

Yeah.

Travis

They each had a limited pool of dice called Hit Dice they could use during the short rest to heal themselves, aided by Rowena's magical abilities. As Level 4 heroes, they each had 4 hit dice, and they could roll that dice to recover health. Hit dice were recovered after each long rest. As the group would still be fairly awake and aware it's not like they'd have any real risk of too many horrible things happening. Hence the dry explanation of why I think it'd be unfair in this instance to pull any real dickery.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

Because I'm pulling out my harp, and singing a song of rest, for every hit dice you roll, you get to roll an extra 1d6.

Eypór (Sindri)

Nice

Travis

The team took a quick one hour break by the light of the battered lantern, drying their feet and shoes, and nursing their wounds, which were sealed magically by the enchantments in Rowena's music... It had been 9 hours since their long rest. Beyond the gentle strumming of the hand-harp, the team was mostly silent, with laus and Father Westpike both looking over the remains of the creatures that had attacked them... They were mostly naked, saved for furs and those masks, which were made of mostly bone or wood.

Eypór (Sindri)

I was hoping for food, I'll admit.

David (laus)

No. Their skin is really weird, it's like, sort of like how drow skin is supposed to be but like this is more of like a chalky colour.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I'm gonna draw a line in the sand, we're not eating them.

Eypór (Sindri)

I, I, I never said out loud that we were going to do it.

Hem (Speaking as Rowena)

I know you. Line in the sand, we are not eating them.

Eypór (Sindri)

Good line, good line.

David (laus)

Okay, I feel rested and there's nothing of value on these things, are we good to go now?

Eypór (Sindri)

Yes.

Travis

And so the team continued down the path toward the Domain of the Nameless God.