

Dark Dice, Chapter 8 - The Eternal Vigil

Travis

As the funeral concluded, and the body of their companion was buried, the team, still shaken from the recent turn of events, stood in the face of the dark tunnel beyond the great gateway, none daring to take the first step...

Peter (Soren)

...I'll go first.

Travis

Soren Arkwright, the human ranger lit one of his torches and slowly proceeded down the hallway, followed by the young dwarven bard Rowena Granitepike, a sense of guilt and defeat plainly visible on her face. Father Westpike, the old Dwarven cleric of Pelor, Fylgia of Zarketh, the Tiefling Druid-Witch of the Wilds, and lastly laus Innskeep, a tiefling assassin-turned-father followed closely behind. While Soren watched the hallway ahead, the rest of the team could not help but unconsciously keep their eyes on Rowena, fearful that her sanity might break again at any moment... However, eight paces in, a muted pop met Soren's ears, followed by a quick mechanical grinding. The gate began to quickly close, forcing the team to rush inside...

In the same instance a thin bladed wire rushed toward the team from somewhere deep within the hallway, forcing them to make a dexterity save to avoid being sliced open...

The wire cut through Soren's legs, flipping him prone in an instant, then cutting into chest height at Father Westpike, and Rowena, knocking them down. Only Flygia seemed to avoid the cruel machination... as she had only just ducked to pick up a copper piece, the blade only cutting lightly into her horns. As the wire reached the back of the group it caught laus, biting deep into his legs, cutting all the way to the bone, crippling him.

Peter (Soren)

(sound of pain as he's hit by a bladed wire trap)

David (laus)

(sound of pain as he's hit by a bladed wire trap) Great fucks! 'D...(pained sound)

Eypór (Sindri)

(sound of pain as he's hit by a bladed wire trap)

Kessi (Flygia)

I just bent down like 'oh a nickell'

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

(sound of pain as she's hit by a bladed wire trap)

David (laus)

(As David) Just so you know everyone, I've only got 2 hit points left.

Eypór (Sindri)

(panicked, pained) Is everyone alright?

David (Ilaus)

No!

Peter (Soren)

(pained, calling out) No.

Kessi (Flygia)

(panicked) Rowena has that, that skill that can heal everyone right?

Eypór (Sindri)

(pained) Yes. No it is I...

Kessi (Flygia)

(pained) Would you please-...

Eypór (Sindri)

(pained) ...I have the prayer of healing.

Kessi (Flygia)

(pained) Would that be in order now? My damn horns almost got knocked off my head!

Eypór (Sindri)

(pained, working through it) It is much in order right now. But it does take some time and we are stuck in this cave for now. So I ask everybody to be on the look-out while I perform the ritual...
16... "Lord of Light please bring your healing grace to all of us mere servants..."

Travis

Father Wespoke, bleeding profusely began to pray to Pelor, the Lord of Light for healing... The room itself began to light up as the wounds on each of the party members began to glow with the warmth and light of Pelor, muscles weaving, bones mending, and flesh mending back together all at once.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

That's better.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Alright. Crazy, so you're all back to ...

David (Ilaus)

Almost full.

Kessi (Flygia)

Just a flesh wound

David (laus)

I've had worse.

Travis

Continuing on, the path descended into the darkness stretching out as far as their vision would allow. Though the passage remained roughly 10 meters in diameter... I started writing everything in meters by the way hallway through, before you say anything. In accommodation of you guys....

David (laus)

That's how rockets blow up you know... -I mean that's how ritual-spells go wrong.

Travis

Though the hallway remained roughly 30 feet in diameter, it felt sparse aside from the occasional spiderweb or puddle. laus continued to scan for traps at every step for the next three minutes of cautious travel, aided only by the shifting flames of Soren's torch.

David (laus)

(to self) This tile's maybe a bit fishy... No, nevermind. Maybe this wall?... Nope... (to team) There's something up ahead... A doorway. It's... open... Maybe 10 feet tall. It's a fancy stone frame, and... And I can hear the quiet sounds of flowing water on the other side. Gonna really make sure it's not trapped this time.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Keep your eyes open wide and no trap is gonna be able to hide. And: bardic inspiration.

David (laus)

Cool. Thanks so... I think the generally sweep through and what we can see of the room. 16.

Travis

A tense few moments passed as laus vanished into the darkness of the doorway alone... In the echo of the main passage a muted clink was followed by a light dragging noise only audible to Rowena.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

So, um... You okay in there? What do ya see?

David (laus)

(calling back) One sec... **(SFX: Thunk of tapping a chair with a wooden stick to test it's stability)** Okay, all clear! There's a big fountain, someone ought to check it to see if it's water or not, cause you never know in this place. There's some braziers there's some cloth and mannequins, and... it's a clothes shop basically up, -up at the other end. And the door is on the other side. I can't see any traps or anything like that though.

Travis

The team passed the archway into a room roughly 30 feet in all dimensions. They were immediately relieved to attribute the sounds of water to a small stone fountain next to the entrance, its face, inlaid with elven patterning hewn into the stone wall of the room. The room was lined with metal braziers and six massive stone columns which bore intricate carvings. The walls and even the ground itself seemed to have been marked with inscriptions and imagery that almost seemed to dance in the firelight. The room contained two wooden desks, one wooden chair, three mannequins, a dresser, and a pile of decaying fabrics in the far corner, but no enemies. On the far wall was the room's only other door, but it was difficult to make out from this distance.

Eypór (Sindri)

What is the purpose of this room? Is it an entrance hall of some sort?

David (Ilaus)

(instead of 'beats me') Search me.

Travis

You all walk toward the room, if you'd like to make just the general intelligence.

Peter (Soren)

It looks like a, a room where people would sleep. The pile of things in the corner are a mixture of fabrics and bedrolls, clothing perhaps, some former inhabitants.

Eypór (Sindri)

So this is the place where they go to rest between working their evil rituals down there.

Travis

And again there are murals on almost every surface. There are 6 large pillars, there are 4 walls each one intricately designed. A West, east and such and so forth.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

There are large murals on the side walls and six large pillars likely full of information... I'm gonna sort them out. The left wall first... A mural depicts two figures battling a horde of monsters rising from the depths below. Both figures have been defaced and various phrases are carved into the wall in Old Elvish. A single intentional caption is delicately carved above... Seems harmless to say, aloud so here's the translation: This is the resting place of Kel-Paeris (Kale Pay-ris) and Lorriac (Lorry-ack), the Twin Shields of Mithral, enemies of darkness, the eternal protectors. May they be blessed with the strength of the gods during their eternal vigil. The graffiti carved over it is also in old Elvish: Roughly translates to: "Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!," "When does eternity cease?," "All shall join us in damnation!," etc.

David (Ilaus)

Cool.

Eypór (Sindri)

I feel like I recognize the names...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

The names from those two statues outside, they're, I think they're them. This is clearly where they've been laid to rest.

Peter (Soren)

I'll check the opposite Wall... The mural on this side wall depicts what I believe to be deities... the dragon god Bahamut or maybe Io, various elven deities, The Mordinsamman, the giant god, a few celestials, and the legions of hell battling a common foe... the Nameless God.

Eypór (Sindri)

How do you know it's the nameless god? What does it look like?

Peter (Soren)

Well, it's mostly been chiseled away, defaced, but what's left looks like a giant maw... Also, it's labeled in Elvish.

Kessi (Flygia)

I thought only Rowena could read Elvish.

Peter (Soren)

It's coming back to me... (fake cough) I didn't see that I had it under my list of languages earlier (cough)..Anyway it reads: 'The gods align to cast out the 'nameless one', however, the nameless god itself has been defaced, chiseled away with a single repeating phrase in Old Elvish: 'Awaken my lord!'

David (Ilaus)

So, the fountain, can someone check to see if that is actually before I go and have a bath.

Kessi (Flygia)

I'll do the finger dippy test thing. Oh wow: it's actually very fresh water. It's a continuous stream, like a traditional dwarven fountain.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

It seems to be really fresh water.

Eypór (Sindri)

Even the tools of evil need to drink water I guess.

Eypór (Sindri)

Wait a moment. I'm gonna search the pillars for any mentions of Pelor, but I do not speak elven so... Wait one of theses is in celestial!.. It... It depicts Pelor! Many of his prayers are present and depictions of him!.. (relieved) I am able to feel his presence... Perhaps this place is not as accursed as the rest of this world, as the rest of this plane. We are quite possibly in a holy place right now!

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

What's it say?

Eypór (Sindri)

Okay so one of the 6 pillars is a celestial pillar to Pelor. It speaks of his praise and how he shall, he shall guard this place! It also mentions Ferati: The Weaver of Dreams... The imagery shows a great battle raging: The god of light and the goddess of dreams craft a pocket dimension to contain a nameless evil.

Alright, I take a knee in front of the pillar, and I pray to Pelor to guide Sister Cavernsfall to the heavenly places that she deserves. And I lay her holy symbol there to stay until I re... come back, in case I ever make it back.

Kessi (Flygia)

Okay, this pillar is in infernal. It shows and describes a nameless evil being unleashed from the Abyss, and the legions of the Nine Hells battling to contain it. The Blood War, the eternal battle between the demons of the abyss and the demons of the nine hells was imbalanced and... And the battle gets dangerously close to the Material Plane. The Lord of Hell, Asmodeus, requests aid from his mortal enemies...

Eypór (Sindri)

By the saints! I see little demons fighting alongside the armies of Pelor! -Fighting with him!

David (Ilaus)

Okay, I'm gonna stop my little hand-bath and check one of these out...and-Oh... This one is Dwarven... The greatest dwarven crafters, aided by the Mordinsamman, -who obviously don't exist, imbue great arches, a bastion, and the giant gateway with powerful runes... That gate kind of looks familiar...

Peter (Soren)

I don't read giant but I can get the gist of this one. It shows giants building great tunnels, arches, and a... castle or bastion to seal the Nameless God using some kind of magic stones that limit its power... The next one is in Draconic. The first dragons aid the Nine Hells in the battle against the Nameless God, pushing it through the gateway, past the stones, and into a prison of sorts.

Kessi (Flygia)

The final pillar is in old elvish but its also very much defaced... Corellon Larethian, Lolth, Labelas Enoreth, and the Allshadow are in it and it looks like they're putting the Nameless God to Sleep somehow... There seem to be two elves left behind to guard the big gate.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

The mural of Pelor said the same also as you get further - about two eternal guardians. Probably Kel-Paeris (Kale Pay-ris) and Lorriac. *To me it looks like this is their resting place. It's a place dedicated to stopping the nameless one getting out. And there are 6 gods or pantheons on that the one over there. Each one of these dedicated to those so, they must be empowering the guardian. We have to be careful not to piss them off.*

Peter (Soren)

So on the floor... I'm just kneeling around of course, but with my face very close to the ground,

the floor is covered in notches, tallies, each adding to five. They're incredibly small. Very very small. They cover the surface of the floor in its entirety. I don't see any sort of visual pattern to them. Looks like somebody's been marking time in here.

Eypór (Sindri)

Do you think these are days? I'm looking at the stonework. Dwarf all that stuff... 19... Looking at the age between the strike sections it seems like week counters, and they are very very small... Looks like an incredibly long amount of time to spend in here, willingly.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

The door on the far wall appears to be warped and twisted beyond its frame. The handle is... looks very worn but no keyhole seems to exist.

David (laus)

I'm...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

And above it there's a phrase scratched...

David (laus)

I'm going to...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

...scratched into the door sorry, laus.

David (laus)

I'm going to check out the all the clothes and the bedrolls and things, -see if there's anything of interest.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

You mean gold don't you?

David (laus)

No idea what you're inferring.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I'm not judging.

David (laus)

Murderer.

Peter (Soren)

(in lieu of saying 'sick burn') Ouch.

Travis

laus passed the closest mannequin of the three. It wore a robe that might have once been elegant but under the layers of spiderwebs the moth-eaten garment showed significant signs of decay.

David (laus)

Just before I, I keep going, Father Westpike could you come and join because, usually when I go off and look at things, something stabs me.

Eypór (Sindri)

That is a very good point yes, yes I would gladly help you.

David (laus)

Okay, let's see... I see some well-used bed rolls, some different types of clothing that have been thrown on the floor. They're all very fine quality, but they've seen too much decay to be of value. One or two things are maybe salvageable, the silk ones in particular, sleeping clothes. Might look good on you, Father Westpike.

Eypór (Sindri) PLEASE READ THIS ENTIRE EXCHANGE with some dramatic tension THIS ENTIRE SCENE IS LOW VOICES TO AVOID THE OTHER PARTY FROM HEARING

Probably not my size... Everything seems to be in pairs though...

David (laus) THIS ENTIRE SCENE IS LOW VOICES TO AVOID THE OTHER PARTY FROM HEARING

You're right, although the sizes are slightly different. Maybe two different people's clothes?

Eypór (Sindri)

So laus, you claim you don't like the gods yet you wield their power.

David (laus)

That's... a random Segway...

Eypór (Sindri)

Well, either you wield their power or you stole it. The way you boom your voice. It's a known spell for the, the wizards of gods.

David (laus)

That's news to me.

Eypór (Sindri)

Hmm. This child we're looking for, your son sorry.

David (laus)

Um-hm. Yes, Baron.

Eypór (Sindri)

Where did you meet him for the first time?

David (laus)

I think you've long suspected... (threatening) I was escaping your friends and he helped me

get out of Strathmann's Hold. What are you gonna do about it old man?

Eypór (Sindri) –

(tense) If you think I am friends of Kordarlum, you do not know my history.

David (laus)

I only know what I heard. You're a Westpike, and you're related to Rowena, who's part of the Kordalum.

Eypór (Sindri)

Do you know me by name?

David (laus)

Nope.

Eypór (Sindri)

You simply know me by my last name.

David (laus)

I know what I heard when you were talking to, your little murderess friend back there.

Eypór (Sindri)

Please, don't be cruel. I promise you...

David (laus)

I like her, she's ok but... you know-

Eypór (Sindri)

-I can promise you, I don't know what the Kordarlum did to you. I know they trade in slaves and other such things, so I can only imagine what torturous things you have experienced at their hands. But do know that the two of us, we are not on friendly terms with them. I am actively working to undo some of the damage they've done to my hometown. That is the only reason I am not with my own son and daughter, and my wife.

David (laus)

Ok. Let's say I believe your story.

Eypór (Sindri)

I'm not asking for your trust, just that you don't distrust us on a false idea that we work with the Kordarlum. We do not. I do not approve of their methods, I do not approve of their doings. While I don't...

David (laus)

Ok.

Eypór (Sindri)

seek their downfall as a whole. I seek their relinquishment of my home town, of my home city – Westmann's Hold.

David (Ilaus)

...Ok. You don't have my distrust, but you don't have my trust either.

Eypór (Sindri)

I can't ask for more. I hope that we find your son soon.

David (Ilaus)

Thank you.

Kessi (Flygia)

Soren, what are you doing?

Peter (Soren)

I'm reading the doorway's inscription. It is in a language I've seen a few times before. (serious)

"Hy mflqeey-rhir oar haf, sma wmidd lyjyr kai smau-die. Da haf wyyc Mah?" He hungers for you, he shall never be hole. Do you seek him?" (Lighthearted) I'm starting to see this everywhere we go.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Starting to see what?

Peter (Soren)

Just that same phrase the silent one seems to love so much. "Do you seek him?" And some other gibberish.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Hmmm.

Travis

Soren, who's sanity had already been damaged significantly was gently pushed beyond the tipping point into the edge of madness.

Peter (Soren)

(startled sound) Whoh! And a bit more it seems... A mural is appearing above the stone! Warped figures taking a knife to their own hand, blood flowing from their hands onto a door, seeping into the ground, feeding the void below...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I don't see anything.

Peter (Soren)

The door is opening. The mural is... moving... The small humanoids are being led by larger warped figures with... with distorted proportions... They are carrying knives, painting the mural,

feeding the massive void beneath with black, white, and red... -I'm going to try the handle of the door... It's... It's cold... metal.. it won't budge. The door has warped, twisted in its frame... Perhaps we need to give something to it... feed it...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Um... Soren, are you feeling okay? You look a bit...

Peter (Soren)

Let me try the handle again... (exertion trying to push the door) Urgh... Urgh! It won't move... I'm willing to give an offering freely...

David (Ilaus)

(from other side of the room) So, we've looked at the clothes, found some nice linens, a really nice pair of men's knickers, elf-sized, but that's about it. No money... But I've got a crowbar and we should probably try that before making offerings or sacrifices or whatever to a fucking door.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I think that sounds very agreeable... But I don't think the door even fits the frame, I'm not sure where we could squeeze it in.

Eypór (Sindri)

(from far away) We should probably check the desks before we go down there. Maybe there's a map or something of the tunnels deeper down.

Kessi (Flygia)

Oh great.

David (Ilaus)

You can have my hammer as well then.

Eypór (Sindri)

(from far away) Has the door kinda expanded due to like natural effects or does this look like unnatural how the door is fitting there?

Kessi (Flygia)

It's really, fucking old. And the wood itself is white, it comes from a tree I cannot easily identify. I'm going to take an educated guess here and say this is unnatural.

Eypór (Sindri)

Alright.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Wait, how a, how sneaky do you want to be? Or do we want to just try and barrel through, because I might be able to blow it apart.

Eypór (Sindri)

Let's not be too loud. But again let me go, let's go through these desks first, maybe we can find some information about the cult of the unnamed -er... The Silent Clan. And I'm starting to go through one of the two desks.

David (laus)

I'll go through the other one then with you... Sturdy, but worn. Fairly nice craft.

Eypór (Sindri)

I said that we should look **inside** of them!

David (laus)

(opening a drawer) I'll look inside, 18... Ooh! A moth.

Eypór (Sindri)

I guess I'm looking for anything map like, 3...Ah! (dust in eye) cough cough cough...

Travis

Father Westpike got dust in his eyes and was unable to see anything for a moment. laus noted that any papers had long disintegrated into dust... But he was able to locate a hidden compartment with a small pewter miniature of an elven soldier.

David (laus)

While he's, while he's got dust in his eyes, I'm going to use my sleight of hand, hopefully, to pull out a certain map that I am carrying and make it look like I found it. 24.

Travis

laus was confident that no one saw him pull out the cursed map.

Eypór (Sindri)

Moths! Get out of here, good god.

David (laus)

I found this, it was in a hidden compartment along with this pewter soldier.

Eypór (Sindri)

What is that?

David (laus)

It looks like a map. I don't really like it but here, see if you can make anything of it.

Eypór (Sindri)

Alright. Oh god.

Travis

Did Father Westpike look?

Eypór (Sindri)

Yes, I start going through the map.

Travis

Father Westpike saw what he felt might be a map moving in slow motion -places he'd never seen, illogical locales and creatures, a language entire alien to him, and he felt unsettled... Requiring him to roll a sanity saving throw.

Eypór (Sindri)

Oh you bastard! Ah natural 20 I can deal with it.

Travis

Perhaps it was merely a trick of the torchlight... But besides being very, generally unsettling, he was able to focus on its features... a great forest, that almost appears to shift and move across the map as he stared at it. But it's not in any location he was familiar with, nor could he identify any of the symbology.

Eypór (Sindri)

I shakily like roll it back up. This does not seem to be of this cave. Creepy piece of paper, it seems magical, probably cursed, with the whatever the unnamed god is. I should probably keep it and destroy it at a holy place.

David (laus)

Actually, I'd kind of like it back.

Travis

Meanwhile, at the other side of the room Soren Arkwright had pulled out a dagger and pressed his face to the door, smiling slightly. He watched, curiously as the dagger seemed to bleed into the door... Which seemed groan, and creek... But after a few moments it stopped adjusting back into position, partly satiated by the dagger but still not entirely reformed.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

What did you do?

Peter (Soren)

Oh it was just hungry.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

For, for what? And if you say blood, so help me god I'm going to throw up.

Peter (Soren)

I would suggest you grab a bucket. It does appear to be a blood lock of some sort, and my dagger seems to have done the trick.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Do you want to give it another try?

Peter (Soren)

It still needs a little bit more.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I put my hand out to him.

Peter (Soren)

Is anyone actively wounded at the moment, do we have any...

Kessi (Flygia)

Actively.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

No, my cousin made sure...

Peter (Soren)

...already existing blood?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

...that we were all fine, but go for it.

David (laus)

I've, I've still got 5 hit points down.

Eypór (Sindri)

I actually think laus has a little bit of damage if I remember correctly.

David (laus)

Yup I do.

Travis

Everyone was healed above and beyond I think.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Uh-uh. Uh-uh

David (laus)

Nope

Travis

Oh sorry you're, he was pointing to a whiteboard behind him for those of, who can't see this.

David (laus)

Oh yeah sorry.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

For this audio podcast...

Travis

... that we're seeing right now. This audio podcast. He's smiling and pointing to his 18 of 24 health, on a whiteboard that he has in the video.

Peter (Soren)

laus, would you mind sensuously gyrating your wound against this door for me?

Travis

laus nodded... for the audio podcast...

David (laus)

I've had worse.

Travis

laus stepped forward and placed his injured hand on the door and all at once began to feel weak. He lost 6 health as the blood was physically pulled from his hand, the door groaning and creaking in delight. laus' mental bulwark cracked ever so slightly as he was brought back to his days with the Kordalum. The handle, now warm to the touch, wiggled ever so slightly under Soren's hand.

Peter (Soren)

That should do it.

David (laus)

(pained) Heals, please!

Eypór (Sindri)

I'm going to cure wounds, laus. "May the lord of light seal your wounds and give you strength to overcome your afflictions." 7 health recovered.

David (laus)

Thank you...

Eypór (Sindri)

Before we open the door and go to the next room, you said you found a statue in one of the desks in a hidden compartment? Maybe the other desk has one as well.

David (laus)

Oh right, the special compartment yeah.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Can you pass me the little soldiery dude? I want to see if I recognize that from like any, any tales of ye olden times?

Eypór (Sindri)

I by the way am just running on the assumption that it is one of the two people

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Me too, but I want to make sure. 19.

Eypór (Sindri)

Of course.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Actually no... This is actually something given to the parents of elven soldiers, for when they first join the military. laus, how many of these pairs of clothing did you say there are? You said they come in pairs?

David (laus)

Yeah one big and one smaller. Two pairs.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

This this sort of things are given to the parents of kids who've just joined the army and such like, you wouldn't keep your own.

David (laus)

Unless you're really vain.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Yeah.

Eypór (Sindri)

I think the assumption here is that this is the statue of the two people. Of Cal'paris and Lor'reak. That their...

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

That's not....

Eypór (Sindri)

... child joined the army. But that may be a strange leap because we don't know if this desk belongs in here or was brought here by the followers of the nameless god.

David (laus)

Let me see if I can find that hidden compartment on the other desk, seeing as I know where it is on the first desk... Bugger... Nothing here, but it was a matching desk, if that helps.

Eypór (Sindri) (during – nothing here)

Alright, alright.

Eypór (Sindri)

Ooh.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Lots of pairs in here.

Eypór (Sindri)

2 pairs of clothing, I don't really understand what's going on.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Little and large looks likely to be male and female. I don't know but we're wasting time. If that door is the only way to go, we should go.

Eypór (Sindri)

We should.

David (laus)

Who's opening the door?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Perhaps I should go first?

Eypór (Sindri)

No!

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I mean, well no offense but ...

Eypór (Sindri)

You're not going first!

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

...I am the strongest, smartest, most armored person here.

Eypór (Sindri)

Oh there is a, there is a forceful shove on you when you say that.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I playfully dodge, but I, just it's true. It's blunt and honest but it's true.

Eypór (Sindri)

I will pound you into the ground when we're done with this thing!

David (laus)

What you dwarven cousins do in your own time is up to you. Who's going first? Is it Flygia or is it Soren. Or is that actually going to be Murderess?... Or Father Westpike.

Peter (Soren)

I open it while people are being shoved.

Travis

Soren touched the warm handle and pushed open the door, which creaked only slightly. He found himself at the top of a wide stone staircase overlooking a vast room. A central 60-foot long pathway was clearly marked by white-blue flames on both sides. The path lead to a massive stone archway at the far end and while the walls and floor of the room beyond the faint light of the torches was difficult to make out, successive metal racks were visible next to each torch. Each of the six racks were shaped differently, and draped or wrapped around each successive rack were humanoid shapes. At the far end of the room, the archway was illuminated by six torches, but from the distance not much more was visible. The room smelled strongly of sterile cleaning fluids and powerful chemicals, a welcome change from the rot that had assailed the team's nostrils.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

You said there were humanoid figures on these racks?

Travis

Rowena had difficulty seeing from her vantage behind Soren and Flygia.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Are we talking like torture rack racks or just racks? What are you guys seeing up there?

Kessi (Flygia)

Similar to mannequin style racks, made of metal though as opposed to figurines.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Yeah I'll sneak forward a little bit. Follow me, guys... Buddy system.

David (Iaus)

Um-hmm.

Peter (Soren)

I'm gonna sweep for blade traps on the way, but yes.

Travis

Iaus and Soren silently looked for traps, but found none on their path. The first was a simple rack with a dark green cloak draped over it. Fastened to the cloak was a leathery parchment with two words scrawled on it in Elvish, "I'm sorry."

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Walk past it. Nope.

Travis

Hmm? Not even a--

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Nope. walk past it. Nope. Nope.

Travis

The next rack held a full set of gleaming armor, a shortsword sheathed at its side, though the shield is missing. On the third rack was draped a pale leather coat and pants set, accompanied by what was either a mask, or a cap crowned with dark locks. The next was very intricate, a compilation of leathery objects that appeared to have been sewn together in rough form of a grotesque humanoid. The figure was posed in a manner implying worship in the direction of the far door. It was very life like in the pose, as if a played figure. The second to last rack held a series of dark sinews that formed the shape of a humanoid. The expression, one of sheer terror, was accompanied by the addition of eyeballs. The figure was also posed in a manner implying worship in the direction of the far door. The final rack displayed an immaculate set of bones that appeared somewhat distorted. While the figure was vaguely humanoid, something had clearly warped the proportions, elongating the limbs, fingers, feet, and teeth. This, too, was affixed in a gesture of worship.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

It seems as if they're going from life to, dead. It's like, scanning down like the degrees of grossness to finally a skeleton. (Startled sound) Ahh!

Lorriac & Travis

Rowena was suddenly startled as a figure instantly materialized in front of her, An elven woman garbed in elegant silks, with dark hair, numerous piercings, and striking facial tattoos, stared back at her with a scared expression plain on her face. She spoke in old elven: "Shai eisi o? Which Rowena knew to mean "Who are you?"

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I'm Rowena, these are my companions.

Travis

Rowena replied in elven.

Lorriac

"What are you doing here?"

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

We're looking for this one's kid. And I point at laus.

Eypór (Sindri)

I'm just staring, hoping to try to understand this, words I understand laus, and the pointing.

Peter (Soren)

Am I able to recognize her tattoos in any way? 12 on a history check... They seem strangely familiar, but I'm not sure where I can place them.

Lorriac

"Others passed through with children, but they were cruel. They passed through the archway behind me... I could help you pass, if you could but remove that which binds me to this plane... Sorry."

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Is that supposed to be you? And I point at the 6 racks.

Lorriac

"Yes, they are all me."

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

What are you sorry for?

Lorriac & Travis

"I don't wish to impose upon you. The men who passed here seemed evil, and you seem not so. You speak with me as an equal, unlike them. They laughed at my fate and boasted that they could do worse if I didn't get out of their way". The spirit motioned to the 6 racks again. The team who dared glance noticed that the arch behind her, similar to the previous one, had 6 blue torches casting light on ancient characters which made up a distinctive and unique set of runes in draconic above. The hideous gargoyles that made up the archway itself were larger than the ones on the previous arch, and it lacked the two statues on the either side, replaced instead with two cycloptic gargoyles, physically woven into the archway. Their hands seemingly holding up the top of the arch, which flattened to accommodate the ceiling. The double doors in the middle, crafted from two pieces of massive gnarled white wood bore an inscription.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I'll distract her, you guys like break through the doors. *How would, what do we need to do to free you...*

Lorriac

"Destroy that which holds me here. These pieces are what's left of my mortal coil, painful reminders of my final moments of torture. They are all I remember of life, and they bind me to this plane, preventing from rest. I've been here for longer than I care to estimate... Alone with nothing but my thoughts... I know not what is real anymore but I've never imagined conversations with a dwarf woman before, much less one so charming."

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Are you Cal'paris or Lor'reak?

Lorriac

"Those names sound familiar.... Perhaps... I have been left here for so long. I feel that I am probably the owner of one such name..."

Eypór (Sindri)

At this point I'm going to tap the shoulder of Rowena and go, what is she saying, what is going on?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

She's saying she's scared and confused. She's been here for a very long time. Those are supposed to be the remnants of her mortal body. She's saying that if we free her from this plane, destroy those possibly, then, she'll help us get through but I'm not sure if we have the time.

Kessi (Flygia)

laus, what are you doing?

David (laus)

I'm just looking at those 6, -the 6 racks and just looking around in generally seeing if I can see anything. But part of me wants to find a hiding place... But the room's too sparse and I'm not sure what's in that magical darkness beyond the lights. Right. So I'm just gonna get into a defensive position, and probably move behind one of the, -one of the racks.

Peter (Soren)

I'd just like to ask the woman: You said that the other people, the cruel ones, they passed right by you. You also say that you can help us follow them. How did they get through?

Lorriac

"They pushed the door open."

Peter (Soren)

Can we not just push the door open?

Lorriac

"No", she says suddenly. "No you can't. You would need my help."

Peter (Soren)

How were they able to do it without your help?

Lorriac

"I'm not sure."

Peter (Soren)

I insight that... 18... And tell my fellow travelers in common: She seems terrified and is trying to suddenly lie about the door. She desperately wants our help.

Eypór (Sindri)

Rowena, translate what's going on!

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I catch him up, roughly.

Eypór (Sindri)

Soren, doesn't she just want us to free her? I am assuming we are probably the first people in many centuries to come through her that will interact with her. Doesn't she does simply want to be

freed?

Peter (Soren)

She's... (sigh) That does seem to be her goal, for us to free her.

Eypór (Sindri)

I look at the new door, the new archway, is it the same white wood as the other one? 21 with a roll on perception... The door isn't warped, the wood is gnarled but held up better than the blood door. Marks on the front of the door suggests that it simply pushes open... Wait, -The gargoyle statues appear to have seams around their massive arm-things. I would think that perhaps they just help open the door, but they might also cause the ceiling above to partially collapse. Not necessarily blocking the door, but damaging those who are beneath. And there is an inscription carved in the door as well, in infernal. Does anybody know what it says?

Peter (Soren)

Hai wyyw haf suzmafzuh. Da haf wyyc Mah? -He sees you without sight. Do you seek him?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Ah no. This shit again.

Eypór (Sindri)

Again? Implying it ever stopped. Can somebody ask her if all these things are her belongings including that spectacular sword?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

There's, she said that was all a part of her. The remains of her body or whatever.

Eypór (Sindri)

I'm getting a feeling of this sword, that it might be quite powerful. Can you ask her? -My cousin wants to know about your sword.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

My cuz wants to know if we might borrow yer sword, or if it's keeping you here as well?

Lorriac

"It has been cursed, and no longer acts in the defense of the greater good, so it too much be destroyed."

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I relay that back.

Eypór (Sindri)

Oh, is she a previous cleric or paladin or any such sorts?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I translate.

Lorriac

"I don't remember. I remember being a guardian of... of some kind. I don't know if I protected this place from something, or something from this place. These were my most important possessions in life as a guardian."

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

They are her things, but she says she thought she was some sort of guardian, but she can't be sure. She can't remember. There should be two of them.

Eypór (Sindri)

Maybe he is ahead? Beyond the doorway?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Perhaps.

Eypór (Sindri)

Soren, do you think we should just free her and get passage through the door?

Peter (Soren)

I have doubts. I'd like to ask her another question. "What are you so afraid of?"

Lorriac

"Being left alone. Please... I don't want to be here anymore... You... Seem familiar. Do we-"

Peter (Soren)

(demanding, curt) You who have been alone for so long, why does it scare you so to be alone, still?

Lorriac

"Because you've only just been here mere moments, and the thought of being alone again..."

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

What would it take to free you? I mean, you said destroy that stuff, but it's all magic. Magical items are notoriously difficult to destroy.

Lorriac

"It is my bones, my flesh, my body, my cloak, my armor, and my sword."

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

But your sword is magic. That's really hard to destroy. Will these flames do it? And I'll point at the 6 hell flames surrounding what the hell it is, the doorway.

Lorriac

"I'm not sure, but you can certainly try. Please try..."

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Are you going to attack us if we start setting fire to your stuff?

Lorriac

(Sad/scared) "No, you would be helping me!"

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Then what will?

Lorriac

"I'm not sure. I saw one place curses on my body while I was being tortured."

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

What do you guys... back in common... what do you guys want to do?

Eypór (Sindri)

She seems tortured, I want to free her.

David (Ilaus)

She was also, she may have been placed here to make sure that the, whatever's down there, doesn't get out, for all of this eternity.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

I agree.

Eypór (Sindri)

But if she used to serve a purpose, she probably doesn't any more. She doesn't even know what she's doing here. I don't know the power of the soul, but maybe just her presence is enough to keep the thing down, but I feel like that would be cruel to bind somebody.

Peter (Soren)

Ilaus' son is in danger. Do we really have time for this?

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

(weighing options) Maybe we should press on, and then we should assess when we get down there. Like, if we find your kid and things look hunky dory, we can free her on the way back, but until we have more information, we just don't know.

David (Ilaus)

I agree.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

If we free her, we can do it on the way back: it'll make no difference for her. She's been here for thousands of, hundreds, a lot of time. Another couple of hours will not hurt her.

Kessi (Flygia)

I'm not entirely sure what we're talking to here, but I can sense that she means us no harm. We should try to help her.

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

Also a fair point.

David (laus)

Again, my son is in danger right now... We can come back for her because she's already dead. She can deal with waiting a little bit longer because the worst thing that will happen to her is some hurt feelings on her way to oblivion... Because that's where she's going after we unbind her.

Peter (Soren)

The tattoos on her face, I, I can't stop looking at them. They look like the three holes in the silent one's face, it's more of a feeling than a direct comparison. But I, I don't trust her.

Eypór (Sindri)

You think this is an illusion of the silent one?

David (laus)

It wouldn't be the first time

Lorriac

"You will not help me?"

Hem (*Speaking as Rowena*)

We'll help you on the way back. I promise.

Lorriac

"You seem like a kind soul, an honest soul. I trust you. Please do return and free me from this place."

Travis

The spirit turned around and grew brighter and brighter until it vanished in a blinding flash of light. -The began doors to slowly creak open and noticeably, above, the gargoyles remained motionless. The team stayed motionless for a few moments, straining their eyes in the darkness ahead and around them for any signs of the ghost or of traps, but there were none... Then they ventured through the great gate, casting strange shadows as they passed beyond.