*Chapter 44: The Arena of the Gods*

Round 117

Tore wasn’t thrilled with backing down, but was more accepting of the concept when Saradette revealed her revelation. He also kept looking back, making sure that the vampire didn’t get too close. If she did approach within 60’, he was prepared to drive her away. After walking through the dark veneer, he cast *protection from evil [spell not prepared]* upon himself, just as an extra measure.

“Doh!” he exclaimed as the prayer was unanswered.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Daily Spells* | | | | |
| **Spell** | **Level** | **Heal?** | **DC** | **Cast?** |
| Detect Magic | 0 | 0 | 13 | q |
| Detect Magic | 0 | 0 | 13 | q |
| Light | 0 | 0 | 13 | q |
| Message | 0 | 0 | 13 | q |
| Purify Food and Drink | 0 | 0 | 13 | q |
| Divine Favor | 1 | 0 | 14 | þ |
| Nimbus of Light | 1 | 0 | 14 | þ |
| Sanctuary | 1 | 0 | 14 | þ |
| Shield of Faith | 1 | 0 | 14 | q |
| **Calm Animals** | 1 | 0 | 14 | q |
| Ayailla’s Radiant Burst | 2 | 0 | 15 | þ |
| Luminous Armor | 2 | 0 | 15 | q |
| Summon Monster II | 2 | 0 | 15 | þ |
| **Hold Animal** | 2 | 0 | 15 | q |

Akilesh was about to say something when the ground beneath their feet felt like it was about to give way. Instantly, and without warning, the plane flashed in a bright light that—when dimmed—revealed to have left them in a different place altogether. Yes, the black veneer behind them was still there, but it was fully opaque, unlike the one they’d just crossed seconds ago, and in front of them was a massive, flat circle with an iridescent, smiling face, and beyond it a solid rock wall that stretched into the low clouds. Instead of the sea around them, there was now a frozen surface—partly snow and partly ice—that receded to a narrow, winding path that ultimately led westward. To their south, a snowflake ooze rose from a pack of ice and snow, and stared at them, and beyond it they could see mostly empty space with a few green stars. To their north, Saradette hazarded the guess that they were staring at an ice paraelemental, though she couldn’t be sure.

A screenshot of a game

Description automatically generated

The same wall of mist they’d had at their south was now to their north, so they assumed they’d been shunted into the southwestern corner of the plane where they’d been told they could not pass.

A pixelated image of a cat

Description automatically generated

There was a small chasm to their immediate west, and a few more along the path, which suggested a fragile foundation. The paraelemental and ooze stayed where they were for the moment as the temperature and light strobed momentarily. They could not tell if Leira had granted them the power of *teleportation* when Tore’s spell had failed, or whether the demons had lured them into a trap of some kind; the latter seemed the more plausible.

Round 118

Tore looked both north and south, then gave each a smile adding, “We come in peace, we mean no harm or ill.” The cleric repeated his greeting in every language he knew. They seemed to understand him, and kept their stances as icy elementals usually did.

“Frozen brains and balls aren’t much of a life,” the gnome grumbled.

Round 119

“Well,” Tore replied with a sly smile, “there are many ways to keep warm during those long, cold nights.” He then realized, with Zvetlana’s relation to reptiles, that this could be a very deadly climate for her. He then turned to her, “How are you holding up in the cold? If you need to, I can get out my bedroll (magic bedroll that is) and could carry you in it in snake form if needed.”

Round 120

Tore looked around and said, “I suggest the smiling face platform.” He then looked at Zvetlana and Akilesh, “Or do you two have something different in mind??”

The artificer waved toward the location. “Lead on.”



The snowflake ooze settled into what appeared to be a sitting posture.

“Seems as good a route as any,” Zvetlana said and Akilesh nodded as they followed the warrior-priest.

A screenshot of a game

Description automatically generated

Round 121

The ice paraelemental tilted his neck until it cracked pleasantly, and a bit of hail came out of the ear slot that had been lowered. He studied the party as it made its way northward now.



They then spotted an icy gargoyle perched on the ice just north of the giant, smiling arrow target, or whatever it was. As they came into one another’s lines of sight, the gargoyle turned its head towards them, shaking off the myriad ice crystals that had formed atop its actual frame.



The burly ice gargoyle hissed a crystalline cant as it motioned to the paraelemental, and the latter replied with a similar windchiming. The ooze rested silently as the four-limbed folks did four-limbed things.

“And me without anything fire-based,” Saradette muttered as she watched the ice creatures.

As they walked, Tore spoke up, “I suggest a direct route across the ice towards the platform. It’s possible that the paraelemental is waiting for us to get close enough to attack. If it does, it will likely try to do as much damage to as many of us as possible with a chill metal spell. As for the ice beast, it may have specific parameters within which to engage, and we have not met or exceeded those parameters.” He then glanced at the snow ooze, “As for the snow ooze, I have no idea why it’s just sitting there.” He shrugged adding, “It’s also possible that they are all of good alignment, and as long as we do not attack or do anything construed as evil, they may just leave us alone.”

Round 122

Tore then stepped off the sandy path, releasing the icy creatures from an invisible restraint that had kept them situated. Instantly, they rushed the heroes.

The gargoyle took flight as the paraelemental charge-attacked Zvetlana and the ooze got into position to charge-slam Tore.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Other+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Ice Paraelemental | Slam 1 | 1d4+1d4 cold | 3 | 0 | 2 charge | 5 | 2 | 7 |

*Miss.*

A picture containing screenshot, diagram, colorfulness, text

Description automatically generated

Round 123

“Damn,” Tore muttered as he activated the wings of his Hawkfeather Armor. He then flew up and past the gargoyle, striking at the creature with his longsword, knowing the frost ability of the weapon would do him little to no good in this situation.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Longsword of Frost | 1d8+1 | +1 | 1 + 2  Charge | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +15 | **20** | 35 |

*Threat. 1d20 = 18 + 15 = 33, critical hit. Dmg: (2 x 5) + 1 + 1 + 2 charge = 14.*

Saradette zapped the paraelemental with her glove.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Rng.** | **Notes** |
| Glove of Lightning Bolt | 5d6 Electric | 120’ | Ref DC 16 for ½; melts most metals |

*Dmg: 19 electric.*

The gargoyle was scuffed, and the paraelemental was badly hurt, but both remained aloft and afoot, respectively, turning their attention to Zvetlana.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex**  **Mod+** | **Other+** | **Total**  **Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Ice Paraelemental | Slam 1 | 1d4+1d4 cold | 3 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 14 | 17 |
| Ice Gargoyle | Claw 1 | 1d4+2+1d6 cold | 3 | 1 | 2 charge | 6 | 9 | 16 |

*Miss, miss.*

The ooze went for Akilesh instead.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Other+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** | **Threat** |
| Snowlfake Ooze | Slam 1 | 1d8+7+2d4 cold | 4 | 5 | 2 charge | 11 | **20** | 29 | þ |

*Threat. 1d20 = 20 + 11 = 31, critical hit. Dmg: (2 x 5) + 7 + 4 cold = 17 + 4 cold = 21.*

Suddenly, the tiefling and his party—the ones who’d struck a bargain of sorts with them—presented themselves by flying or hopping through the opaque veneer to their west. Flapping her wings, the halfling succubus pointed at Saradette as the two made eye contact, and screeched to her horned master something out of earshot.

Akilesh shouldered his heavy crossbow, drew his spiked club, and said, “It’s time to break out the big guns.” He’d been saving his spells for a worthwhile occasion, and the moment had all but presented itself by name. The cleric then began to produce his holy symbol, as he was about to show these fiends his mojo.

A screen shot of a game

Description automatically generated

Round 124

About 40’ above the ice, the lead tiefling replied to his succubus protégé, and the halfling tiefling grinned back, casting an unidentified spell upon herself.

The yuan-ti slithered about 5’ above the ground, already shrouded in more than a few abjurations. She eyed Zvetlana, and sought to eat the lesser serpentine being.

The vampire stared at Tore, aiming to strip him of his ability to turn her... somehow. She studied the cleric with thirst as the succubus tiefling flapped into a better position, eyeing the gnome artificer with an unignorable acuity.

Akilesh cast *spiritual weapon [expired on Round**135]*, and directed it towards the gargoyle.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Wis**  **Mod+** | **Total**  **Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Akilesh | **Spiritual Shortspear** | 1d6+3 | **5** | 4 | 9 | 6 | 16 |

*Hit. Dmg: 1 + 3 = 4.*

The dwarf then turned his gaze towards the tieflings up above, blurting out something in Dwarven that would have offended the enemies, had they understood it.

Zvetlana sought to end the paraelemental with a single shot, reloading thereafter.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **W+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Zvetlana | Light Crossbow +2 | 1d8+2 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 10 | 12 | 22 |

*Hit. Dmg: 6 + 2 = 8.*

This was enough to shatter what remained of the electrically melted paraelemental.

The serpent woman then reloaded and shouldered her bow, and prepared to take things to the next level, facing the yuan-ti with the knowledge that the latter was showing a keen interest in her.

Tore, seeing the vampire, flew back towards his allies, grasping his holy symbol as he approached. He knew the vampire was out of his range for now, but she wouldn’t be for long. He and Slitsevere locked eyes for a moment, exchanging a smirk of mutual acknowledgment.

The gargoyle attacked Zvetlana as the ooze slammed against Akilesh.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Snowlfake Ooze | Slam 1 | 1d8+7+2d4 cold | 4 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 13 |
| Ice Gargoyle | Claw 1 | 1d4+2+1d6 cold | 3 | 2 | 5 | 11 | 16 |
| Ice Gargoyle | Claw 2 | 1d4+2+1d6 cold | 3 | 2 | 5 | 15 | 20 |

*Miss, miss, hit. Dmg: 4 + 2 + 1 cold = 7.*

“Damnable ooze!” Akilesh protested as he prepared to put the ooze to its eternal slumber.

Saradette used her glove to zap the ooze.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Rng.** | **Notes** |
| Glove of Lightning Bolt | 5d6 Electric | 120’ | Ref DC 16 for ½; melts most metals |

*Dmg: 22 electric.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *lightning bolt* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Snowlfake Ooze | Reflex | -3 | 11 | 8 |

*Fail. Full damage taken.*

Despite the harm done, the ooze remained a threat.

A screen shot of a game

Description automatically generated

Round 125

A blue demon with horns

Description automatically generated

Fidgeting with two tiny iron rods in his left, hand, the tiefling pronounced some foul words and cast *arc of lightning* upon Saradette, coursing the electrical bolt through her and Akilesh before all was said and done.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  *arc of lightning* | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Saradette, Reflex** | **8** | **Dex (+3)** | 2 | 13 | 11 | 24 |

*Success. Saved for ½ damage.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Check** | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Akilesh | Reflex | 2 | 18 | 20 |

*Success. Saved for ½ damage.*

*Dmg to Saradette and Akilesh: ½ x 31 = 15 electric. Saradette resisted damage.*

“Blast!” the dwarf cursed.

A person in a garment

Description automatically generated

The succubus had already been reading the artificer’s mind, peering into the gnome’s subconscious with fascination. Now, with a snake’s tongue and a bit of honeycomb in her hands, she cast *suggestion [expired in 6 hours]*, and phrased her imperative: “To the west is your escape, Saradette Tarapple Febble Tallniss Nensy Gwaella Grangytee of Clan Warblerivet. Run that you might live!”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  *suggestion* | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Saradette, Will** | **4** | **Wis (+1)** | 0 | 5 | 6 | 11 |

*Fail.*

Saradette immediately ran south past the ooze, then towards the southwest.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Snowlfake Ooze | Slam 1 | 1d8+7+2d4 cold | 4 | 5 | 9 | 14 | 23 |

*Hit. Dmg to Saradette: 5 + 7 + 6 cold = 18 [24/53].*

A person in a garment

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

The vampire could do little until this moment, and thus quaffed a potion she’d been on the cusp of quaffing, then stepped back through the opaque veneer.

*Unidentified effect gained.*

A person with white hair and a snake skin body

Description automatically generated

The yuan-ti halfblood wasted no time in joining the fray now that the ruse had been spent. She hovered just behind the small chasm, her scales and skin seeping with acidic sweat, casting *suggestion [expired in 8 hours]* upon Zvetlana.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *suggestion* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Zvetlana | Will | 6 | 11 | 17 |

*Success. Effect negated.*

Seeing Saradette run away was disheartening, but Tore was sure it was some outside influence that had caused it. Taking a step forward (5’ step), Tore slashed at the ice gargoyle twice with his longsword, the frost ability disabled for now.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Longsword of Frost | 1d8+1 | +1 | 1 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +13 | 9 | 22 |
| Longsword, 2nd Attack | 1d8+1 | +1 | 1 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | - | +8 | 16 | 24 |

*Hit, hit. Dmg: (8 + 1) + (6 + 1) = 9 + 7 = 16.*

The gargoyle was nearly finished, and its self-preservation instincts kicked in, causing it to flee upward and westward, cresting the top of the smiling boss, meaning the giant target.

****

The ooze didn’t appear to have much of a self-preservation motive going on, and thus threatened Akilesh’s existence now.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Dex Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Snowflake Ooze | Slam 1 | 1d8+7+2d4 cold | 4 | 5 | -5 | 9 | 3 | 12 |

*Miss.*

<< Butt-blurt! >> Tore thought he heard Akilesh say, but it was actually Dwarven for, “Say ‘goodnight’!” The favored soul of Leira then swung his

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Dex Mod+** | **W+** | **Other+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Akilesh | Spiked Club +1 | 1d8+1+3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 flank | 9 | 6 | 15 |

*Miss.*

The spiritual shortspear flanked the ooze as Zvetlana fired and reloaded once again.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Dex Mod+** | **W+** | **Other+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Zvetlana | Light Crossbow +2 | 1d8+2 | 4 |  | 4 | 2 | 0 | 10 | 6 | 16 |
| Akilesh | Spiritual Shortspear | 1d6+3 | 5 | 4 |  | 0 | 2 flank | 11 | 9 | 20 |

*Hit, hit. Dmg: (4 + 2) + (1 + 3) = 6 + 4 = 10.*

The ooze faltered, and began to undergo mitosis. Tore was aware that this would make it immobile for about the next six seconds.

A screenshot of a game

Description automatically generated

Round 126

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Group** | **Initiative** | **Roll** | **Modified Roll** | **Speed** |
| BBEGs | 1 | 6 | 15 | 21 | \* |
| Akilesh | 1 | 2 | 18 | 20 | 30’ |
| Snowflake Ooze | 1 | 1 | 16 | 17 | 30’ |
| Saradette | 1 | 3 | 12 | 15 | 20’ |
| Zvetlana | 1 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 30’ |
| Tore | 1 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 30’ |

The air shifted in temperature and ionization once again, and those who were not of Chaotic disposition felt a bit queasy, but not quite nauseous.

*Akilesh suffered–2 to Charisma-, Wisdom-, and Intelligence-based checks.*

The dwarf proclaimed, “The pocket plane is likely orbiting near Limbo!”

The gargoyle continued to fly away, eventually reaching the low clouds of Ethereal mystery and disappearing within.

Imbued with an *abyssal might* spell whose dweomer Tore could now identify, the tiefling smiled as Saradette continued making her way to the sandy path and further down it. He then clapped his hands and with an arcane phrase, sent a magical gust towards Akilesh that covered him in sheets of ice and lumps of snow. The dwarf identified the *winter’s embrace* spell, but not before he was shrouded in the frozen shell.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *winter’s embrace* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Akilesh | Fortitude | 5 | 1 | 6 |

*Fail. Dmg: 1 cold.*

The dwarf continued to struggle to wrest his body free.

The succubus magister cheered her master’s mastery of magic, and chased after Saradette to ensure the gnome’s demise.

The yuan-ti repeated her attempt to overcome Zvetlana’s will, casting *suggestion* once again.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *suggestion* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Zvetlana | Will | 6 | 3 | 9 |

*Fail.*

Zvetlana turned towards Saradette, and followed her, heading west first, then south and southwest, leaving the two fellows wearing Leira regalia to fend for themselves against their hosts.

The vampire was nowhere to be seen, which troubled Tore.

Akilesh tried to say something, but could hardly move within the ice.

The snowflake ooze put up a fight still, targeting the cleric.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Snowflake Ooze | Slam 1 | 1d8+7+2d4 cold | 4 | 5 | 9 | 11 | 20 |

*Miss.*

Zvetlana ignored the flying succubus, continuing to make way for the sandy path that led further west.

The yuan-ti said something to Tore that he could not understand.

Tore wondered if the vampire was *invisible* somewhere in the area. He kept his holy symbol handy in his shield hand, but for the moment, he had other concerns. Tore cast *summon monster II [expired on Round 134]*, calling forth a Celestial giant bombadier beetle to attack the snowflake ooze.

A screen shot of a computer game

Description automatically generated

Round 127

The tiefling shook his head, seeking to kill Tore so he could tie him up, revive him, and learn what he could of the outside universe. He cast *orb of cold*, and aimed at the cleric’s chest.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| The Shædlord | Touch Spell | varies | 6 | 2 | 8 | 17 | 25 |

*Hit. Dmg: 20 cold [29/79].*

The succubus wondered what the gnome’s flesh tasted like, and followed her around the corner.

The yuan-ti suggested to Akilesh that he should cancel his *spiritual weapon* spell *[suggestion]*.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *suggestion* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Akilesh | Will | 3 | 16 | 19 |

*Success. Effect negated.*

The vampire waited for the latter to get behind the wall so no one could see what was about to happen to her.

Akilesh struggled vs the *winter’s embrace* spell.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *winter’s embrace* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Akilesh | Fortitude | 5 | 17 | 22 |

*Success.*

The dwarf was able to break free from the icy constraints, and now looked for his next target.

The ooze attacked Akilesh.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Snowflake Ooze | Slam 1 | 1d8+7+2d4 cold | 4 | 5 | 9 | 18 | 27 |

*Hit. Dmg: 5 + 7 + 3 cold = 15.*

Saradette and Zvetlana fled, hopping over the 5’ abysses along the way.

The Celestial giant bombadier beetle that Tore had summoned appeared before the snowflake ooze and attacked.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Dex Mod+** | **Other+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Celestial beetle | Bite | 1d4+1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 flank | 4 | 15 | 19 |

*Hit. Dmg: 3 + 1 = 4.*

Now that the dwarf was free of his bonds, Tore took a 5’ forward, and attacked the ooze.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Longsword of Frost | 1d8+1 | +1 | 1 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +13 | **20** | 33 |
| Longsword, 2nd Attack | 1d8+1 | +1 | 1 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | - | +8 | **20** | 28 |

*Threat, threat. 1d20 = 12 + 13 = 25; 13 + 8 = 21; two critical hits!*

*Dmg: [(2 x 7) + 1 + 1] + [(2 x 3) + 1 + 1] = 16 + 8 = 24.*

The spiritual spear attacked the tiefling.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Akilesh | **Spiritual Shortspear** | 1d6+3 | **5** | 4 | 9 | 15 | 24 |

*Hit. Dmg: 3 + 3 = 6.*

The fighter-cleric destroyed the ooze, turning it into a puff of snowy dust that fell lifeless amidst the ice.

A rainbow colored circle with a blue grid

Description automatically generated

Saradette veered south around a hole in the ground, and was fully taken off-guard by the vampire that darted through the black veneer to her left and accosted her.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Slitsevere | Claw/Touch Attack | 1d6+2 | 10 | 2 | 12 | 2 | 14 |

*Miss.*

Saradette was intent on getting a bit further west for some reason, but she managed to fend off the attacker who still stood in her way.

The succubus flew down upon Zvetlana, aiming to kill her or something.

A screenshot of a video game

Description automatically generated

Round 128

Saradette had enough wits about her to decide whether to fight or continue running, and she zapped the vampire with her glove.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Rng.** | **Notes** |
| Glove of Lightning Bolt | 5d6 Electric | 120’ | Ref DC 16 for ½; melts most metals |

*Dmg: 15 electric.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *lightning bolt* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Slitsevere | Reflex | 8 | 17 | 25 |

*Success. Saved for ½ damage: 7 electric.*

Akilesh yelled out, “Leira, I am thy vessel. I shall aim true,” and cast *storm of shards*, causing shards of heavenly light to rain down from above. As they fell, the shards sliced the flesh of the evil creatures.

*Dmg: 40 divine.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *storm of shards* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| The Shædlord | Fortitude | 7 | 19 | 26 |
| The Shædlord | Reflex | 8 | 8 | 16 |

*Success, fail; Blinding negated.*

That set the tiefling back quite a bit, and he flinched as the severity of the searing lacerations set in.

The dwarf then felt himself weakening further as his spiked club seemed to grow heavier.

*Akilesh lost 3 strength.*

Akilesh’s spear did its best to puncture the tiefling’s neck or chest.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Akilesh | **Spiritual Shortspear** | 1d6+3 | **5** | 4 | 9 | 16 | 25 |

*Hit. Dmg: 6 + 3 = 9.*

Drawing her shortbow, Zvetlana reached Saradette, put her back to the gnome’s, and turned towards the flying succubus, firing.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **W+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Zvetlana | Light Crossbow +2 | 1d8+2 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 10 | 18 | 28 |

*Hit. Dmg: 5 + 2 = 7.*

Ractivating the Frost ability on his sword, Tore noted how badly the tiefling had been hurt by the good-aligned storm, and commanded his beetle to go after the yuan-ti. He then followed as well, moving to flank the yuan-ti as the beetle attacked.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Longsword of Frost | 1d8+1 | +1+1d6 Cold | 1 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +13 | 7 | 20 |

*Hit. Dmg: 4 + 1 + 1 + 4 cold = 10.*

Tore’s beetle attacked the yuan-ti.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Celestial beetle | Bite | 1d4+1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 8 |

*Miss.*

Crestfallen, the tiefling commanded the yuan-ti to pursue the fleeing women, which she promptly did, effortlessly flying in their direction. The one whose minions called the Shædlord then cast something akin to *divine power [expired on Round 138]* upon himself *[spell descriptors identified were Chaos and Spider]*, imbuing himself with the favor of Lolth, or something the like.

*The Shædlord gained the spider climb ability as well as spiderskin bonuses: +3 natural armor bonus, +3 racial bonus to saves vs. poison, +3 racial bonus on Hide checks.*

A screen shot of a computer screen

Description automatically generated

The vampire thirsted for the gnome’s jugular juice, and lunged forward, then smelled the gnome’s pheromones, and gasped with astonishment, backing away. “This one has returned from undeath!” she warned the succubus, whose flapping took her eastward and upward a few feet. The halfling-sized demon then yelled the news in Abyssal to her master.

The ground beneath their feet rumbled, and the tiefling seethed as he looked upon Tore and Akilesh with disdain.

The succubus saw that her yuan-ti mate was making way westwardly, and thought it was time to reveal a minor warlock skillset. She zapped Zvetlana before deciding her next move.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Eldritch Blast | 2d6 | 0 | 1 | x2 | 60’/250’ | 0.0 | +16 | 16 | 32 | +1 within 30’ |

*Hit. Dmg: 7 magic.*

A screen shot of a computer

Description automatically generated

Round 129

Zvetlana reloaded her crossbow and drank a potion of *cure serious wounds*.

*Zvetlana gained 18 + 8 = 26 hps.*

Akilesh’s spiritual shortspear attacked the tiefling known as the Shædlord.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Akilesh | **Spiritual Shortspear** | 1d6+3 | **5** | 4 | 9 | 4 | 13 |

*Miss.*

Akilesh cast *flame strike*, hoping to end the tiefling’s miserable existence.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *flame strike* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| The Shædlord | Reflex | 8 | 7 | 15 |

*Fail. Dmg: 39 (19 fire and 20 good).*

<< Aaaargh! Bastards! >> And though this was not enough to kill the tiefling, it was enough to cut him down and incapacitate him. He fell to the ground, losing consciousness.

The yuan-ti saw this, then turned to Willow, the succubus, then disappeared southward into the black veneer.

Willow looked like she could not believe her eyes, and instead fled westward, charge-attacking Zvetlana and cursing in Abyssal.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Bloodfeeding Sickle +2 | 1d4+2 | special | 2 | x2 | Slashing | 1.0 | +16 | 2 | 18 |

*Miss.*

Slitsevere slashed at Saradette with her vampiric claws.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Slitsevere | Claw/Touch Attack | 1d6+2 | 10 | 2 | 12 | 1 | 13 |

*Miss.*

Saradette, now back-to-back with Zvetlana, zapped Slitsevere again with her glove.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Rng.** | **Notes** |
| Glove of Lightning Bolt | 5d6 Electric | 120’ | Ref DC 16 for ½; melts most metals |

*Dmg: 23 electric.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *lightning bolt* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Slitsevere | Reflex | 8 | 3 | 11 |

*Fail. Full damage taken.*

Seeing the tiefling fall, Tore moved over and sliced off the Shædlord’s head.

*Rule of cool: Coup de grace is performed awesomely.*

He had tricked them and sent them into a trap when Tore and the others had taken him at his word. So, since he and his minions wanted Tore and his friends dead, the Shædlord deserved that fate in return. Tore then sent his beetle to help Saradette.

The beetle turned towards the southwest, and prepared to buzz there.

A screenshot of a video game

Description automatically generated

Round 130

Tore activated the wings of his armor, and flew towards Saradette and Zvetlana.

The beetle did as well.

Akilesh similarly ran southwestwardly, and commanded his spear to do so also.

A screenshot of a computer game

Description automatically generated

Tore got a line of sight to the action in the narrow corridor, and spotted the succubus, the wereserpent, the artificer, and the vampire, in that order of proximity.

*Maximum movement taken. Don’t post for next round until the end of this round is resolved.*

A yellow and black tile

Description automatically generated

Slitsevere slashed again at the artificer.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Slitsevere | Claw/Touch Attack | 1d6+2 | 10 | 2 | 12 | 9 | 21 |

*Miss.*

Willow cast *suggestion* on Tore. “Go that way and fetch me some ice,” she then said.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  *suggestion* | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Tore, Will** | **6** | **Wis (+3)** | 0 | 9 | 19 | 28 |

*Success.*

“Nay, demon. My goddess is greater than yours,” Tore taunted the succubus.

Saradette stood her ground, fending off the vampire’s attack with her mailed lift arm, protecting her companion’s back. She snarled a gnomish curse and zapped the vampire again.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Rng.** | **Notes** |
| Glove of Lightning Bolt | 5d6 Electric | 120’ | Ref DC 16 for ½; melts most metals |

*Dmg: 23 electric.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *lightning bolt* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Slitsevere | Reflex | 8 | 11 | 19 |

*Success. Saved for ½ damage: 11 electric.*

Cringing from the pain, the alacritous vampire grimaced and pissed off southward, disappearing into the opaque veneer. If Saradette were wielding a melee weapon, she would have gotten a good jab at her.

<< Snatches! >> Willow called the vampire and yuan-ti in Abyssal, or perhaps the heroes that remained. Then she switched to Common, “See that your deity gets fucked! And sleep lightly! I will be stalking you all!” And with this, the daring succubus also flapped southward and disappeared into the dark veneer. Zvetlana reloaded her crossbow, also lacking the melee weapon to take an opportunistic swipe at the fleeing foe.



Round 131

Akilesh caught up, and looked at the black veneer. “Unlike the transparent one where we came from,” he noted, “This one is coated with a magical compound that I can’t identify.”

He and Tore then realized that Saradette and Zvetlana—no longer impeded by the vampire in their way—headed west once again, although they stopped at a T-intersection, and felt that they’d accomplished their mission.

Then they spotted a gelatinous mass that turned out to be a giant, sitting humanoid. It turned its head around, spotted Saradette and Zvetlana, and disinterestedly turned back around to face northward.

Round 132

Akilesh added, “I have very few spells left, but I can at least cast *detect magic* and see if I can glean anything.” He did so, and waited for his senses to attune themselves to the dweomers in his midst, facing south so he could better discern the grain in the veneer’s Weave.

Tore nodded as Akilesh got to work using his *detect magic* spell. Tore inquired of the others, “Do any of you require healing? I can provide a little help for now.” Then his friend, Saradette, turned around, and he saw the gashes on her, rushing to heal her.

Round 133

“It’s just a flesh wound,” Saradette insisted. “I’ll follow your lead at this point. I’m a bit distracted by the gelatinous giant over there.”

*Saradette gained (8 + 5) + (2 + 5) = 13 + 7 = 20 hps [44/53].*

“Thanks,” she added, feeling much better as the giant turned around again, its lumbering torso and belly looking like a lemon gumdrop with a hairless head.

Akilesh healed himself, casting *cure serious wounds*.

*Akilesh gained 19 + 10 = 29 hps.*

Round 134

Tore smiled and nodded, suggesting, “I think we should go to that smiling platform and see if that will transport us anywhere or if it will provide any sort of aid.” Tore would cast d*etect magic* when they approached within spell range of the platform.

Round 135

Akilesh overheard this, and replied, “I can also take a look in a moment. This curtain is as Evil as *storm of shards* is Good,” he referenced the spell that had dealt the greatest blow to the tiefling.

Round 136

“So it would kill us to cross it?” Zvetlana asked, drinking a vial of *cure minor wounds* to top off.

*Zvetlana gained 1 hp.*

The dwarf replied, “Not necessarily, but it would hurt us do-Gooders with about the same umph that you saw the *storm* doing to the Shædlord, or whatever he called himself.”

Round 137

Akilesh healed himself some more, casting *cure serious wounds* again. “Don’t forsake yourself,” he then warned Tore, who also needed some healing love.

*Akilesh gained 21 + 10 = 31 hps.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Melee** | **Fire** | **Cold** | **Acid** | **Electric** | **Magic/ Force** | **Total**  **Damage** | **Healing** | **HPs** | **Current**  **HPs** |
| **Saradette** | 12 | 3 | 6 | 8 | *R30+20* |  | 29 | 20 | 53 | 44 |
| **Tore** |  | 8 | 20 | 20 | *R20* | 8 | 56 | 6 | 79 | 29 |
| **Akilesh** | 18 |  | 11 |  | *15* |  | 44 | 44 | 70 | 70 |
| **Zvetlana** | 20 |  |  | *Imm* |  | 7 | 27 | 27 | 55 | 55 |

Round 138

Akilesh then went over to the smiling platform, careful not to slip on the icy floor, and inspected any magical auras around it as the others remained in the corridor.

The giant wallowing in a pool of acid then decided to heave itself up partly, then plopped down into the pool of acid, which now spilled over a bit.

Sacrificing his *luminous armor [randomly determined]*, Tore healed himself as they walked to the smiling face.

*Tore gained 10 + 10 = 20 hps [49/79].*

Round 139

Once near the platform, he cast *detect magic* and circled the platform before flying onto it. He reached a height of 60’ in order to get far away from Akilesh and company.

Round 140

There did not appear to be any magical auras in the vicinity of the 60’ sphere around Tore. The smiley was a mundane prop for target practice for icy creatures, it seemed. Or maybe it once had a magical purpose, but was in arcane disrepair.

Disappointed, Tore thought to land on the sturdy prop in this Chaotic realm.

Tore decided to land next to the smiling face, wondering if there was any way to get out of this plane of existence.

“My sense of this is that it’s for target practice,” Tore surmised.

Akilesh had by now started inspecting the eastern veneer that they came through.

Round 141

A rainbow colored circle with grey and brown lines

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

“Is it the same as the evil one to the south?” asked the cleric of Leira, turning to the favored soul of his patron deity.

A screenshot of a video game

Description automatically generated

“Yes, same fabric,” sighed the favored soul of Leira.

Round 142

Tore looked around adding, “I think we should head north. I will pray for some new spells, but I am not confident when, or if they will be granted.” Though he was not hungry, he drank some ale from his everfull mug, then knelt down and prayed for new spells to be granted.

Round 143

Saradette took some rations from her pack. “Is anyone hungry?” She prepared her own food to eat. “I don’t think it matters which way we go, so north it is.”

They had taken their attention off of the gelatinous giant to their north, and the mass of acidic goo now presented itself in the doorway.

Round 144

“Speaking of north...” Zvetlana proclaimed raising her crossbow as the blob tried to fit itself into the corridor. “We may need some help here!”

“Let’s get away from here, shall we?” Saradette moved east, weaving around the obstacles to avoid the acid blob.

Zvetlana followed with a full withdrawal, also careful to skirt around or skip over pits on her way eastward towards the glaciated area.

Akilesh came over westward about 15’, trying to remain at least 30’ from others, in case of some area-of-effect attack on the part of the blob that now poked a green antenna around the corner. He had spent his big spell slots on the lead tiefling, and now hoped the blob would be an easy obstacle to overcome.

*[DM assumption]* Tore joined his friends, remaining in the air before his flight expired.

A screenshot of a game

Description automatically generated

Round 145

The acidic blob poked its head out from the corridor, studying the heroes to its east, then retreated.

Saradette let out a sigh as the blob retreated out of sight. “What do you want to wager that there’s something in there we need?”

Tore looked back towards that area and shrugged his shoulders, “That is a very good possibility. Let’s look around, and if we find nothing else useful, then we will have to go and check it out.”

Round 146

Tore then pointed north, “Shall we investigate to the north? See what is beyond that mist?”

Saradette nodded. “Let’s see what’s there.”

Tore led the group, cautiously, and continued north slowly.

Saradette followed Tore’s lead while still munching on some dried fruit.

A pixel art of a duck

Description automatically generated

Round 147

Tore reached a point beyond which he could hardly see his hand in front of him, and the others could scarcely point him out as he vanished into the mist.

A screen shot of a computer game

Description automatically generated

Round 148

Saradette stayed with Tore. “Come on,” she told the others.

Seeing how thick the mist was, Tore turned back and called out, “Everyone stop, stay out of the mist for now.”

He will walk out, stopping by Zvetlana and ask everyone, “I believe, if we travel in that mist, we should be tethered together. It is too thick to see very far at all. It would be easy to get lost or separated.” He looks around and adds, “Unless someone else has a suggestion on where to go.”

“Oooh, kinky,” Saradette purred. “I don’t carry rope, though.”

Round 149

Akilesh agreed that after all they’d been through, “poking through a non-evil mist isn’t all that daring,” while Zvetlana hissed, mistrustingly jutting out her forked tongue to smell for scents of yuan-ti, vampire, and succubus.

Round 150

Tore gathered the others together. “Before we venture off, I truly want to hear what everyone thinks. Should we tie ourselves together and go through the mist? If anyone has a *faerie fire* spell, or similar way to outline ourselves: that could be useful in the fog as well. Or,” he paused and looked each of them in the eye, “should we go into that structure and see what is in there?”

Saradette looked at the structure. “Let’s look at that, first.”

A screen shot of a graph

Description automatically generated

Round 151 – 154

Tore looked at everyone and said, “Let’s try going south, then and past that building. If the blob giant comes for us, we just keep moving.”

Saradette nodded. “Lead on.”

He then moved past the entrance to the north where the blob stared back at Tore as if pondering another approach, and explored around the northbound corner beyond.

The others were not far behind. Saradette, too, looked at the gelatinous giant as she passed by the northern entrance once again.

A green and yellow background with a letter l

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Round 155

As the others caught up to him and took in a measure of the next ample area, they noted the eastern façade of what looked like a lightning bolt-shaped platform perhaps 10’ tall. Tore found himself at the southeastern corner of another acid-coated area with more of the sandy path that was once part of a rather nice beach.

To the far west was a continuation of the passage, and it appeared that it was the only passage forward.

“So,” Zvetlana asked, “Do we go poke around with the jelly giant back there, or proceed?”

“I say we push on,” the favored soul of Leira proclaimed.

Round 156

Saradette caught up with Tore. “I wonder what that lightning bolt platform does.”

“Something symbolic?” speculated Zvetlana, her python curled around her torso and neck.

All was quiet around them as the women’s voices echoes faded.

Akilesh did as he’d proclaimed walking northward cautiously.

A green and yellow pixel art

Description automatically generated

Round 157

“This wall ends to the north,” the dwarf pointed to the east, and added, “so be watchful of that blob we passed. It might intercept us.”

Zvetlana came up behind Akilesh, hoping to not have to confront a giant blob before reaching the end of this damnable planar gauntlet. By the sound of the shy, rippling surf to the north, they had to be close to where they’d started. “Do you hear the surf?”

Tore caught up to Akilesh and nodded in acknowledgement of the comment about the giant intercepting them.

Round 158

“Yes,” the dwarf answered. “We should be cautious of more kuo-toa undead, or whatever may come our way.”

Rounds 159 – 160

Tore then replied, “We should move quickly then and head to that other opening,” he pointed to the southwest corner of the area.Hearing the surf, Tore’s spirit rose a little, wondering if they should try going through the mist. However, the acid around them had him concerned that they could walk right into a large pool of it.

Just then, the bearded gnome with the wide-brimmed hat that they’d spotted before falling from the sky appeared once again, falling and casting yet another planar portal into which he fell as a balor flew down towards him casting a strange form of *plane shift* before disappearing, having taken no interest in the heroes.

Round 161

“What’s that about?” Zvetlana wondered, hoping the next time they saw the fleeting gnome, it would hopefully be without his pursuant, and they might perhaps even say hello.

Saradette considered how much flight time she had left for the day, and she gauged it to be less than a minute.

Seeing Saradette eyeing the thunderbolt platform, Tore said, “Let’s keep to the ground for now. If the giant comes out, then perhaps we will move ourselves and friends to the higher ground.”

The curious blob poked a bit of itself through the southeastern entrance, and observed the heroes jogging away.

“Trespassers!” a voice to their west called out, alerting others as the back-robed figure with a line of sight only to Akilesh ran south, west, and out of sight.

**A green and yellow grid with a lightning bolt and diamond shapes

Description automatically generated**

Round 162

Saradette ran to keep up with the others.

Tore had been looking at where the gnome and balor had just fallen through portals. He was pulled back to the current situation when he heard the shout of trespassers. Not sure what had happened, he ran up to Akilesh and asked what it was.

Round 163

“A robed man or woman; I couldn’t tell,” said the dwarf.

After getting the description, Tore nodded, “We need to move quickly and get to that opening or head to higher ground,” he said pointing to the lightning bolt platform.

Tore began moving along the sandy area, wanting to get to the other ‘entrance’ that the hooded figure had gone through. He ran with his shield in one hand and his sword in the other.

The blob squeezed through the narrow tunnel and into the wider chamber, continuing to observe the heroes as it soaked in the acid pool.

As Tore led the pack southward ,they could see something other than the jet-black veneer to their southwest. To anyone who had seen it before, it was easily recognized as the Astral Plane, which is where they’d come from before landing on the shores of this pocket plane.

And right around the corner was likely the hooded, robed figure that had fled them.

Round 164

As they rounded the corner, they took notice that the wall they’d just rounded was shrinking along all of its dimensions. It was now only about 90’ wide and half as tall, and continued shrinking.

The next few seconds were ambiguous to their senses, and the theologians in the group were cognizant of the otherworldliness of the moment. The robed figure reached another similarly clad person, knelt, held out its arms, and received a sacrificial stabbing right in the chest from its counterpart as the latter chanted the words necessary to unleash unspeakable evil.

A screenshot of a game

Description automatically generated

*[All four friendlies have expended a move action.]*

Akilesh shouldered his mace, and drew his crossbow. Zvetlana did the same with her staff and crossbow.

Saradette drew her blaster and looked for anything threatening.

Tore activated his buckler shield as he prepared to step around the corner.

Round 165

Akilesh and Zvetlana held their crossbows at the ready as Saradette did with her blaster.

Tore stepped around the corner. “Follow me,” he said as he advanced along the middle of the path. His shield’s 5’ x 5’ wall covered the path as he advanced towards the robed figures.

It indeed appeared that the Astral Plane was to the south, and two unidentified structures lay seemingly within the Astral Plane to the northwest.

Suddenly, a bolt of lightning struck the lightning-shaped platform behind them, lighting up the space they’d just left for a brief instant, leaving only a slight burn mark in its wake, which was too high up for the heroes to see.

Turning around the corner, the four of them stopped to see quite an unexpected site.

The robed figure that had fled them now knelt before a woman with a hooded cape who held a two-handed sword that looked to Tore and Zvetlana like a longsword made for a giant.

A person in a black robe

Description automatically generated

The kneeling man revealed his face by unhooding, and finished speaking words in a tone too faint for them to hear. Tore and Baldoor noted the regalia on the woman, though they could not identify the deity or other affiliation represented by the emblems. Without warning, the man extended his arms outward, and the woman cut his head off with a swift swipe.

The sandy ground beneath their feet trembled as the acid pools around them bubbled and gurgled. The air fizzled again with the same pulsation as before, and they suspected that Chaos was once again coursing through the pocket plane. Saradette and Zvetlana had a line of sight to the southernmost portion of the room they’d just left, and could now see shadows shifting against the ground, as if something were moving in there now.

A person in a black robe holding a sword

Description automatically generated

The wall that had been shrinking southward was now also visibly dropping in height, and would likely soon sink into the ground.

A screenshot of a computer game

Description automatically generated

To render all of the above mundane, the woman who had just decapitated her similarly clad associate now began to grow, and her thin-bladed sword began to widen, its hilt growing in circumference as her hands and the rest of her quickly grew to a stature of about 40’.

The dead body and disembodied head were spontaneously consumed in flames, leaving only charred embers.

Tore and Baldoor identified the being before them. If they were correct, they now beheld the living avatar of Mask, the Lord of Shadows. The woman’s body retained its feminine proportions, but was otherwise the embodiment of the god whose name was synonymous with trickery. This added a layer of uncertainty as to everything they’d experienced on this plane. The shaedlings and other adversaries had appeared to have been partial to Lolth in one way or another. Perhaps Lolth’s faithful were victims of Mask’s illusions as well as those who served Lurue and Mayaheine. More importantly, they now faced the dire prospect of being crushed by the hands of a living god.

Tore glanced back, “I will advance, you can all engage her from range.” Tore wondered if this would be the end, but would go down fighting. He also wondered if anyone had any ideas that would help get them out of this mess.

Having advanced as quickly as she could for now toward the whatever-it-was, Saradette readied her blaster to fire if the thing decided to attack. “How delightful!” she said under her breath.

Round 166

The wall continued to shrink and drop into the floor.

More breathtaking to behold than the aspect of Mask before them was the image of Lurue and Mayaheine now taking in the sights around them and noting their faithful in their midst. Fortunately for the heroes, Mask’s avatar took great interest in the gigantesque forms of Lurue and Mayaheine, and turned towards the east with a Swift casting of a *dimension hop* spell—or something like it, whereby she teleported between the two good-aligned goddesses, and jabbed Lurue in the leg.

The wide-brimmed-hatted gnome with the twirly mustache once again teleported into the area—this time falling straight into Mask’s reach area—and was swiped at but missed before falling into another portal. The balor that had been chasing it did get into Mask’s grip, and the Large demon was flung onto Mayaheine’s torso as she turned to fend the balor off with her shield.

The balor crashed against the shield, and fell onto the ground with a thud, foolishly ready to reckon with avatars.

The gnome then reappeared to the heroes’ far northwest, and instantly began to fidget with the leftmost console in that area. Within seconds, the panels on the console lit up, and mechanical cogs began to turn, making a clockwork ticking rhythm. The gnome took a moment to look up, and waved over to the heroes, shouting something about, “… way if… make it out of here,” in Common.

A cartoon of a person wearing a hat and holding a feather

Description automatically generated

Saradette noted the similarities between the gnome and her artificer mentor, Argent, who had trained her on the Life Tree, that being the domain of the cloud giants with whom Saradette had lived for the better part of a year. This was not an artificer—she surmised—but a gatecrasher, gauging by the gauged keys and graduated gadgets associated with the planesurfing trade, if such it was.

“You know him?” Akilesh asked.

They did not, and said as much. “Just the guy that keeps teleporting somewhere near us, and then making just as sudden an escape,” shrugged Zvetlana.

The gelatinous giant curiously approached the theistic melee.



Lurue cast a spell that coated Mask in a *glitterdust-*like sparkle that bore transplanar properties.

A green and yellow pixelated background

Description automatically generated

Round 167

“I’ve never seen an avatar grow that large,” Zvetlana remarked.

“How many avatars have you seen?” Akilesh asked, astonished at the spectacle, and keeping his crossbow at the ready.

“My fair share,” the python woman declared as she and the dwarf made way northward while the path was clear.



Mayaheine looked to Saradette to be the spitting image of Laryssa, her long-ago adventuring companion, and the mortal who brought to her the teachings of the Shieldmaiden. And then she saw recognition in the avatar’s face, and knew that Laryssa had risen to merge with the corporeal manifestation of their mutual patron deity. “Praise be!”

Lurue, on the other hand, took her horn-shaped spear and thrust it into Mask before Mask returned the favor with a laceration from her longsword. Screams were heard all around, and Tore’s knowledge of the Planes aided in his identification of the sound as the sounds of the souls of those Mask had wronged now willing him woe.

The blood of gods spilled onto the platform and into the pools of acid.

The giant blob remained in place, seemingly studying the deities.

“Let’s get out of here,” Saradette said as she ran north. “I don’t think we can help them much.”

Tore agreed, but wished he had a spell with enough range to reach Mask and strike a blow, but he did not. So he continued to run along, letting the others pass so he would bring up the rear.

A peal of thunder coursed through the chamber, blowing away the Ethereal clouds to the north a bit, such that they could now see the calm sea from which they’d come. Their boat looked like it was still docked along the shallow, coral-laden shores.



The small craft—emblazoned with Luruan and Mayaheinite colors, patterns, and sigils—was hundreds of feet away, and past a medium comprised of water and the Ethereal Plane itself, so it was likely further than it appeared.

As the heroes were reaching the ashes of the decapitated male’s carcass, they saw the conjuring or teleporting of three separate beings that now began to take form. And as they did, Zvetlana’s blood cooled as she identified the yuan-ti, succubus, and vampire—Slitsevere—against whom they’d faced minutes earlier. Slitsevere, the yuan-ti, and the halfling succubus looked around for a moment before spotting the heroes. The succubus spoke, “You *dare* summon *us*?” It seemed that the fiends were as much part of the Maskerrand game as the heroes.

**A green and yellow squares with letters and numbers

Description automatically generated**

Round 168

Lurue lured the lurid globule of acid that had tried to take on a more humanoid form, then hurled the hulking wad of goo towards Mask, careful to time it when Mayaheine was repositioning for the next move. The blob hit the Chief of Thieves in her torso, and corroded some of her topical essence.

Now taking on the semblance of another of her greatest heroes—Elsabet—the tactician Shieldmaiden executed a Stone Vise maneuver against the shifty adversary, careful to avoid the corrosive blob with her blade. The slice told Mask the fight was not quite in her odds, and thus the female avatar of the male deity shifted out of sight, and possibly out of the chamber altogether.

Mayaheine and Lurue spoke in Celestial, << Every second Mask has to their avail spells doom for someone. >> They both seemed to say in unison. << We must… >> they stopped as they seemed to hear or sense something to their east, and then Mayaheine manifested a breach in the wall, whereupon Lurue spotted Mask drawing upon the gelatinous soup that had forged the acidic giant.

The yuan-ti manifested her levitation ability, and coursed over the acid to accost the wereserpent once again. “You *will* make a fine meal after all,” she hissed in Common. Slitsevere took flight, circumventing the heroes, and positioning herself to their far south, blocking their return, and drawing her Craven hand crossbow. The succubus infused herself with a rouge aura, preparing to make slaves of at least two of these fools.

Still suffering from the Despair effects from their last scuffle, Akilesh and Zvetlana fired upon the yuan-ti before she could muster her persuasive magical abilities.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **W+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Akilesh | Heavy Crossbow +1 | 1d10+1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| Zvetlana | Light Crossbow +2 | 1d8+2 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 10 | 8 | 18 |

*Miss, miss.*

The yuan-ti smirked at her resilience against the bolt that ricocheted against her scales.

The gnome to the far northwest continued to fidget with the consoles there, and a variety of gadgets began to appear in that area.

A screenshot of a computer screen

Description automatically generated

“I’d rather wipe my ass with acid that have anything to do with you,” Saradette snarled. She fired her blaster at the yuan-ti.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Rng.** | **Notes** |
| Horizikaul’s Boom | 2d4 Sonic | 25’ + 2½’/lvl | Will DC 14 or deafened for 1d4 rounds |

*Dmg: 6 sonic.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *Horizikaul’s boom* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Ja’ama | Will | 4 | 11 | 15 |

*Success. Not deafened.*

Tore shook his head, “We did *not* summon you. We don’t associate with vermin like you.” Seeing the vampire fly out of his range, he focused on the yuan-ti and cast *Ayailla’s radiant burst*, hoping to damage the foul creature enough so that his friends could finish her.

Shards of heavenly light sprayed from Tore’s fingertips, blinding evil creatures in their path.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *Ayailla’s radiant burst* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Ja’ama | Fortitude | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Ja’ama | Reflex | 9 | 4 | 13 |
| Willow | Fortitude | 7 | 8 | 15 |
| Willow | Reflex | 14 | 8 | 22 |

*Fortitude fail, success. Willow saved vs. blindness.*

The luminous shards also seared the flesh of evil creatures.

*Reflex fail, success. Willow saved for ½ damage.*

*Dmg to Ja’ama: 21 divine.*

*Dmg to Willow: ½ x 15 = 7 divine.*

The yuan-ti was nearly a goner, but the succubus was barely scathed.

Akilesh and Zvetlana repositioned themselves before reloading.

A green and yellow squares with black letters and numbers

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Round 169

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Group** | **Initiative** | **Roll** | **Modified Roll** | **Speed** |
| Willow | 1 | 6 | 17 | 23 | 20’ |
| Ja’ama | 1 | 5 | 17 | 22 | 30’ |
| Zvetlana | 1 | 4 | 11 | 15 | 30’ |
| Slitsevere | 1 | 6 | 6 | 12 | \* |
| Saradette | 1 | 3 | 8 | 11 | 20’ |
| Tore | 1 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 30’ |
| Akilesh | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 30’ |

Mayaheine, Mask, and Lurue now embodied a flash-flurry of movement and combat two chambers away. The mortals could no longer discern how the avatars were faring against one another.

Dextir, the gnome to the northwest, was done activating the leftmost console, and moved to the right one, triggering the completion of a contraption quite familiar to Saradette: it was Argent’s transplanar vessel!

Willow—the halfling succubus—cast *suggestion* on Akilesh, and the yuan-ti did the same to Zvetlana, whose eyeballs she wanted to suck out of her skull. The succubus then flew southward a bit.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Check** | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Akilesh | Will | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| Zvetlana | Will | 6 | 1 | 7 |

*Fail, fail.*

Already weakened by Despair as they were, Akilesh and Zvetlana remained in place, and closed their eyes, turning to the east so as to be better slain.

Slitsevere watched with intent, smiling at the prowess of her allies against the do-gooders. She went over to Dextir now, confident that the succubus and yuan-ti could finish off the two remaining threats.

The balor considered whether to try to challenge demigods or take his chances with the mortals, and opted for the latter, flapping its wings westwardly, headed for Akilesh and Tore while the gods were busy with one another.

The gelatinous blob was reduced to a mere fragment of itself, and retreated into the acidic pool.

Saradette attacked the yuan-ti again.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Rng.** | **Notes** |
| Horizikaul’s Boom | 2d4 Sonic | 25’ + 2½’/lvl | Will DC 14 or deafened for 1d4 rounds |

*Dmg: 4 sonic.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *Horizikaul’s boom* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Ja’ama | Will | 4 | 18 | 22 |

*Success. Not deafened.*

Tore then turned towards the disgusting halfling, his shield and sword ready, and charged at the succubus.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Longsword of Frost | 1d8+1 | +1+1d6 Cold | 1 + 2  Charge | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +15 | 10 | 25 |

*Hit. Dmg: 7 + 1 + 1 + 2 charge + 5 cold = 16. Cold damage negated.*

**A screenshot of a computer game

Description automatically generated**

Round 170

Willow was not one to meddle with one with as much mettle behind his metal, so she smirked and withdrew straight upwards, flapping her wings with purpose before turning westward to join the vampire in her approach of Infester QS63’s control panel, the name displaying on the nearest monitor.

The young balor executed a flyby attack against Akilesh.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **W+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Juvenile Balor | Unholy Longsword | 1d8+5+1+1d6 Unholy | 15 | 5 | 1 | 21 | 7 | 28 |

*Hit. Dmg: 8 + 5 + 1 + 3 unholy.*

Ja’ama saw the might in the balor as it swept over the dwarf and raked him with his sword, and proclaimed in Abyssal, << Savior! >> Envigorated, the yuan-ti tried casting *suggestion* on Tore now.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  *suggestion* | **Rank** | **Ability**  **& Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Tore, Will** | **6** | **Wis (+3)** | 0 | 9 | 11 | 20 |

*Success. Spell failed.*

Zvetlana knew they would not be able to do much against the balor, even if it was not fully matured. The demon continued westward towards the gnome with the wide-brimmed hat.

Dextir punched a few more buttons on the console, turned a knob counterclockwise just a bit, then turned to face the balor, casting a portal that engulfed it, and placed it elsewhere.

A screenshot of a video game

Description automatically generated

*Portal is not to scale. It’s only about 10’ x 10’.*

Slowly, the hexagonal plates that comprised the transplanar vessel began to levitate a few inches off the sandy ground, and as Saradette would have predicted, began to orbit the central circle in a clockwise manner.

Slitsevere had begun to fly towards the gnome, but at this point stopped, cautious of the unidentified contraption to her north. The vampire instead flew a bit westward, and remained aloft at the edge of the Astral Plane.

Saradette blasted the yuan-ti again, and then she ran north to follow Tore.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Rng.** | **Notes** |
| Horizikaul’s Boom | 2d4 Sonic | 25’ + 2½’/lvl | Will DC 14 or deafened for 1d4 rounds |

*3 sonic.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  Deafening | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Ja’ama | Will | 4 | 6 | 10 |

*Fail. Yuan-ti deafened.*

Putting her hands to her ears, the yuan-ti cringed as her eardrums were traumatized.

Tore shouted at the halfling, “Coward!” He then began to run, knowing the daily usage of his armors flight was used up. As he ran he yelled to the others, “Follow me quickly and finish off that stupid yuan-ti!!”

Akilesh rubbed his lacerated shoulder, and drank a potion of *cure light wounds****.***

*Akilesh gained 6 + 6 = 12 hps.*

A screenshot of a game

Description automatically generated

Round 171

Willow drew her sickle and swooped down upon Dextir.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Bloodfeeding Sickle +2 | 1d4+2 | special | 2 | x2 | Slashing | 1.0 | +16 | 11 | 27 | Blood Points: 1 |

*Hit. Dmg: 3 + 2 = 5.*

Ja’ama floated away and towards her allies, who were fixing to end the plane-shifting gnome’s life.

Slitsevere flew towards the gnome, meaning to flank him in a moment.

Zvetlana and Akilesh lost focus for a moment again.

*[DM edit]* Right behind Tore now, Saradette moved about another 20’ north to ensure that the tiefling succubus was in range, then took aim at Willow, and zapped her with her glove.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Notes** |
| Glove of Lightning Bolt | 5d6 Electric | Ref DC 16 for ½; melts most metals |

*21 electric.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  *lightning bolt* | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Willow, Reflex** | 8 | **Dex (+6)** | 0 | 14 | 10 | 24 |

*Success, saved for ½ damage: ½ x 21 = 10 electric. Partial damage negated.*

The tiefling resisted part of the electric arc’s voltage, cringing from the bolt that coursed through her, sterilizing her Abyssal ovaries.

Tore rushed towards the gnome. When he got within 60’ of the vampire, he held his holy symbol aloft and began chanting, “By the power of Lurue, be gone from this place you foul, loathsome creature!”

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Turning Undead* | |  |
|  | **Max HD Turned** | 9 |
|  | **1d20 Roll** | 18 |
|  | **Turn Check** | 29 |
|  | **2d6 Roll** | 3 |
|  | **Turn Dmg.** | 18 |
|  | **Turns/Day** | 10 |
|  | **Turns Used** | 1 (reset) |

*See below.*

The vampire fled northwestwardly into the Astral Plane with expeditiousness.

Akilesh and Zvetlana turned to each other, “We’re under a compulsion effect,” one said to the other.

“I know,” the other replied. “I’m trying to shake it.”

Dextir punched a few buttons and the rest of the transplanar contraption came into existence. The assembled vessel with the now orbiting platforms began to buzz and beep, with lights flashing on.

A screenshot of a video game

Description automatically generated

Round 172

Saradette and Tore noted the difference in the sand here, which partly covered an ornate tiling pattern. A pink circle glowed in the middle, but it told the cleric nothing specific. Tore also noted a full map of the pocket plane’s surface, likely to scale.

A colorful pixelated image of a dinosaur

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Seeing that the human and gnome had followed them here, Willow and Ja’ama cursed them, and went back to the partly dominated dwarf and wereserpent, meaning to settle for 2 morsels out of four.

Zvetlana and Akilesh stood looking at the incoming gods to their east seconds before the succubus and yuan-ti came at their throats.

Slitsevere flew ever farther into the Astral, eventually blending in with the swirly, glowing background.

Saradette zapped the yuan-ti, hoping to kill it, but chagrined when she realized that the bolt did not reach the snake woman.

Tore kept his holy symbol in hand as he ran next to Dextir to defend him from the succubus and yuan-ti.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  Tripping | **Rank** | **Ability**  **& Mod.** | **Misc.**  **Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Tore, Reflex** | **3** | **Dex (+2)** | 0 | 5 | 10 | 15 |

*See below.*

Nearly falling flat on his face, the cleric managed to remain on foot as the female foes fled. “Stand and face us, you cowards! Or do you always run away and hide again like little infants!” Tore hoped to goad one or both of them to attack so that they could finish them off.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tore, Skills** | **Rank** | **Ability**  **& Mod.** | **Misc.**  **Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Diplomacy** | 0 | **Cha (+5)** | 0 | 5 | 13 | 18 |
| **Intimidate** | 1 | **Cha (+5)** | 0 | 6 | 10 | 16 |

*See below.*

The two fiends were not impressed by the cleric’s words, and continued to execute their contingency, quitting while they were ahead.

A screenshot of a computer screen

Description automatically generated

Round 173

Willow and Ja’ama pounced upon the flat-footed dwarf and wereserpent, respectively.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Touch Attack | +14 | 8 | 22 |
| Grapple | +14 | 9 | 23 |

*Hit.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Ja’ama | Touch Attack | Grapple | 7 | -1 | 6 | 14 | 20 |
| Ja’ama | Grapple | Grapple | 7 | -1 | 6 | 10 | 16 |

*Hit.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Akilesh | Grapple | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| Zvetlana | Grapple | 4 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 22 |

*See below.*

*[Placing this here for continuity]* “Damn!” Tore yelled. “We need to help them, is there anything you can do?” he yelled back at the gnome.

Zvetlana managed to slither out of the grapple quickly, but Akilesh was truly ensnared. Nonetheless, the yuan-ti activated the *teleportation* spell from a scroll, and the four figures disappeared as Mask’s female avatar also decided that she could not fend off these two goddesses at once, so she, too, bounced, leaving Lurue and Mayaheine to heal their own wounds as those who remained to the west tried to get a sense of what would happen next.

Dextir finished executing the protocols that would release the vessel from the planar insulation that had kept it grounded here. He then turned and greeted Tore briskly, “A good day, sir. I assume you’re with Saradette.”

Saradette heard this from about 100’ away, and was surprised to hear her own name referenced. She swore softly as her two companions vanished, then ran to rejoin Tore.

**A screenshot of a video game

Description automatically generated**

Tore was about to start running back towards Akilesh and Zvetlana, but with them now gone along with the succubus and yuan-ti, he remained in place.

A screenshot of a video game

Description automatically generated

Rounds 174 – 175

The goddesses disappeared.

Giving Saradette the nod, Dextir said, “You don’t remember me yet, but we have a mutual friend.”

“Oh? Who’s that?” Saradette was curious to know.

Tore looked at Dextir and Saradette. “What is this contraption? Can it help us find or look for our friends? I do not want to leave them behind, even if it means looking for them on my own.”

“You’re not going alone,” Saradette said as she watched Dextir. “Show me how to run this device, please.”

Dextir moved over to the vessel’s central operating station, and smiled, pushing a button. Before them, there began to manifest in the captain’s seat a humanoid figure.

They then heard a loud, thundering sound to their far east, likely well beyond the pitch-hued veneer that separated the icy area from the fiery one.

A screenshot of a game

Description automatically generated

Rounds 176 – 177

As he fully materialized, Saradette recognized her former mentor—Argent—now seated at the control chair. “Oh, my! *That* was uncomfortable!” The fellow gnome artificer was looking a bit frail, almost emaciated, but in good spirits. He thanked Dextir for springing him from stasis, and punched a few buttons on the familiar console of his new vessel. Within seconds, Saradette and Tore witnessed an accoutrement of gadgets and instruments materializing all around his body.

“You’ve been busy!” Saradette was impressed at how well he’d miniaturized his previous gear, allowing him a greater degree of versality.

Tore looked around then, grumpily, asked, “Will any of this help us find our friends? If not, then all I’m doing right now is wasting time.” Tore began walking south to exit the device. He wasn’t planning on waiting around while the gnomes got reacquainted.

Rounds 178 – 179

“Give us a moment,” Saradette called after him. She turned to the senior artificer. “Two of our friends were taken in what looked like a teleport spell. Can you help us find them?”

Argent replied, “We can certainly try to find them.” He then activated an overhead display that showed the same map of the pocket plane, highlighting living beings. “But first, sit down on any of the floating platforms. It’s where the ride is least bumpy.”

Round 180

Saradette confidently hopped onto one of the hexagons, remarking, “I like your new vessel.”

Tore could read in his friend’s face that she was comfortable trusting the man of whom she’d spoken several times. Her time with Barkley, Luran, and the others on the cloud giant stronghold had been a formative one, and Tore now recalled a few snippets of her tales about her former mentor, Argent. “Fine, but we must hurry,” Tore said as he sat on one of the hexagons. “They are likely being tortured if they aren’t already dead.” Tore then readied his bow and arrow, wanting to engage the evil creatures as soon as they were in range.

Rounds 181 – 182

Dextir—a professional gatecrasher—and Argent—a lifelong artificer—said a few technical things pertaining to the pocket plane’s membranal frequencies, and Dextir sat at the chair next to Argent’s, manning the sensors and monitors that informed them. Within seconds, Dextir announced, “I think we have a reading on your friends, but it looks like they’re in the midst of the ongoing battle with the avatars.”

A screen shot of a computer game

Description automatically generated

Rounds 183 – 184

The contraption levitated, each flat polygon orbiting the central circle, imposing no centrifugal force or vertigo upon the passengers. So long as they stayed inside, they were insulated from any inertial pressures outside.

“Cloaking,” Dextir informed Argent.

“Good,” the senior man said, grateful that he’d been liberated from the months-long stasis that to him had lasted but an instant. “I’ll take us closer, but we should keep a wide berth.”

The disks gained an altitude of about 200’ while at the same time heading eastward towards the most notable life signatures captured on the monitors.

A screen shot of a computer screen

Description automatically generated

Round 185

They rounded the wall that went up for hundreds of feet higher than they were flying. With the ocean below them forming an almost perfectly straight line delineating the beginning of paraelemental ice, they came back upon the jet-black veneer, and warned Argent that it may be a solid surface. “It sure is evil,” Tore recalled.

A colorful grid with different shapes

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Rounds 186 – 187

“No worries,” the artificer had already identified the anomaly, and had the means to traverse through the wall with no seeming difficulty.

“Let’s go then,” Saradette told Argent.

As soon as they got across the curtain of elemental evil, they witnessed the massive avatars continuing their fight. Mask’s elusive escape had gone sour, and she’d been reacquired by the do-gooder goddesses. What’s more, the balor was aloft, and had spotted the heroes, making a flying charge for them. They also spotted the succubus shackling Akilesh to a few rails on the southern wall of a somewhat cubic block, and the yuan-ti’s tail was also visibly rattling behind the succubus.

Argent halted the flying craft, and Dextir activated an additional defensive ward around the vessel.

Tore, seeing he wouldn’t likely have a good shot, put his bow away and readied his shield and sword. “Get us as close as you can. I can charge them once we set down.” He correctly hoped that the comment about the cloak meant that they were not visible and not just the vehicle that wasn’t visible.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Tore, Diplomacy** | 0 | **Cha (+5)** | 0 | 5 | ?? | ?? |

*See below.*

Argent piped up: “No way on this plane I’m getting us closer to Mask and that balor. We may be invisible to the lesser fiends, but I’m betting on the balor and gods having *true sight*, and Mask wants this vessel as badly as we do.”

Dextir added, “Don’t worry; we have big guns too.”

“Use sonic damage,” the expert demon killer—Argent—recommended.

The balor had aligned its trajectory with the vessel. The pentagonal and heptagonal platforms ceased to orbit the craft, and a turret under the circular platform now targeted the demon.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **W+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Dextir | Turret | 10d10 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 12 | 12 | 24 |

*Hit (Touch AC). Dmg: 56 sonic.*

“Woohoo!” the gatecrasher commended himself on a direct hit, though the fiery demon remained aloft.

A red dragon with wings and a sword

Description automatically generated

“We have to get to them now,” Saradette added. “Take us in closer.”

A colorful grid with different colors

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Round 188

Tore looked at Argent, “If you’re too afraid to get closer, then set this thing down so I can get off. I’ll take my chances running past the gods while you go cower in the corner!” He was becoming rather annoyed with the gnome’s concern for his own hide and not those being chained up and about to be tortured.

While he waited for Argent to make up his mind, he sheathed his sword, drew his bow, and fired an arrow at that balor after deciding it wasn’t a good idea to shoot Argent.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Longbow +1 | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | 3.0 | +14 | 10 | 24 |

*Miss.*

Mayaheine and Lurue collaborated on flanking Mask as the balor charge-attacked the vessel.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **W+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Juvenile Balor | Unholy Longsword | 1d8+5+1d6 Unholy | 15 | 5 | 1 | 21 | 18 | 39 |

*Hit. Dmg to vessel’s force chassis: 3 + 5 + 5 unholy = 13. Unholy damage negated.*

Argent asked, “How long had this one been chasing you?”

Dextir responded as he triggered the sonic blaster once again. “In absolute time, a few tolls, but out here it’s hard to tell.”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **W+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Dextir | Turret | 10d10 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 12 | 7 | 19 |

*Hit (Touch AC). Dmg: 53 sonic.*

Argent then lowered the craft for Tore to hop off, reaching a height of 20’, giving the demon the opportunity to swing yet again.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **W+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Juvenile Balor | Unholy Longsword | 1d8+5+1d6 Unholy | 15 | 5 | 1 | 21 | 3 | 24 |

*Hit. Dmg: 3 + 5 + 6 unholy = 14. Unholy damage negated.*

The succubus and the yuan-ti finished binding Akilesh and Zvetlana to the stone structure, and proceeded to bite at and eat parts of the dwarf and wereserpent in a gruesomely ritualistic fashion as their goddess grew stronger against Mayaheine and Lurue.

Saradette shot the balor with her sonic blaster. “Let’s get moving,” she urged Argent. “Our friends are being eaten alive!”

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Rng.** | **Notes** |
| Horizikaul’s Boom | 2d4 Sonic | 25’ + 2½’/lvl | Will DC 14 or deafened for 1d4 rounds |

*Dmg: 5 sonic.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *Horizikaul’s boom* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Juvenile Balor | Will | 19 | 2 | 21 |

*Success. Balor not deafened.*

**A screenshot of a computer screen

Description automatically generated**

Round 189

Willow and Ja’ama noted the incoming heroes once again, and braced for a reprise of their scuffle.

Zvetlana and Akilesh remained bound, but were now regaining their senses, having been attacked by their captors.

Argent pivoted the craft and Dextir shot the balor once again.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **W+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Dextir | Turret | 10d10 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 12 | 9 | 21 |

*Hit. Dmg: 48 sonic.*

The balor was nearly done for, and retreated straight upward in order to not be completely annihilated.

Mask disappeared once again, and this time, Lurue and Mayaheine were able to track their adversary, also disappearing from the mortals’ view.

The craft was now only about 15’ above the pool of acid. They could see the succubus and yuan-ti buffing up in anticipation of finishing off the heroes.

Saradette readied her glove for when the yuan-ti came into her range, but neither villain was advancing.

Tore looked at the two gnomes running the machine, “Can this thing go any faster? They’ll bleed to death before we get there.”

“You wanted’er down, right?” Argent confirmed, then moved them slightly closer to their adversaries as Dextir waited for the sonic turret to reload.

With both sword and shield in hand, Tore cast *shield of faith [expired on Round 269]* upon himself in preparation for battle.

*Tore gained +3 to AC.*

A screenshot of a computer game

Description automatically generated

Round 190

Tore looked back at Argent, “Once I have a safe landing spot, I will jump off.”

Argent moved the craft east of the acid stream, and Tore jumped off safely.

Saradette zapped the yuan-ti with her glove. She stayed on the craft for the moment.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Rng.** | **Notes** |
| Glove of Lightning Bolt | 5d6 Electric | 120’ | Ref DC 16 for ½; melts most metals |

*Dmg: 19 electric.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *lightning bolt* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Ja’ama | Reflex | 9 | 9 | 18 |

*Success. Saved for ½ damage: 9 electric.*

Dextir aimed carefully for the smaller target before them: the succubus.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **W+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Dextir | Turret | 10d10 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 12 | 2 | 14 |

*Miss.*

Willow hit Tore with an eldritch blast.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Eldritch Blast | 2d6 | 0 | 1 | x2 | 60’/250’ | 0.0 | +16 | 13 | 29 | +1 within 30’ |

*Hit. Dmg: 5 magic [44/79].*

Ja’ama tried her best to subdue Argent’s will with a *suggestion* spell.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *suggestion* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Argent | Will | 12 | 13 | 25 |

*Success. Effect negated.*

A screenshot of a video game

Description automatically generated

Round 191

Now on the ground, Tore activated his Boots of the Battle Charger and ran at Willow. He intended to strike her with his sword (Charge) and push her away from Akilesh and Zvetlana (Bull Rush), so he dropped his bow, swiftly drew his blade, and made a direct charge towards the winged halfling, giving her an opportunity to attack him as well.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Bloodfeeding Sickle +2 | 1d4+2 | special | 2 | x2 | Slashing | 1.0 | +16 | **20** | 36 | Blood Points: 2 |

*Threat. 1d20 = 6 + 16 = 23, not a critical hit. Dmg: 4 + 2 = 6 [38/79].*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Willow, Strength | +2 | 3 | 5 |
| Tore, Strength | +1 + 2 charge  +4 size | 12 | 19 |

*Successful Bull Rush by 14 points = 15’ push.*

Now positioned roughly between and in front of Akilesh and Zvetlana to defend them, he noted where his bow lay, just east of the acid stream, and stood to defend his friends with his sword

The fighter-cleric and the others felt another surge of Chaos across the pocket plane.

Zvetlana came completely to her senses, metamorphosing into a snake, and losing the limbs that were bound to the wall. Her frame was now a python that would momentarily transform again in order to regain her arms.

Saradette hopped off the vehicle and zapped the yuan-ti again with her glove.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Rng.** | **Notes** |
| Glove of Lightning Bolt | 5d6 Electric | 120’ | Ref DC 16 for ½; melts most metals |

*Dmg: 22 electric.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *lightning bolt* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Ja’ama | Reflex | 9 | 19 | 28 |

*Success. Saved for ½ damage: 11 electric.*

Though agile, the yuan-ti received a good amount of voltage through her slithering form.

Able to target the yuan-ti without compromising the safety of the two heroes on the ground, Dextir shot at her with a sonic blast.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack**  **Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex**  **Mod+** | **W+** | **Total**  **Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Dextir | Turret | 10d10 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 12 | 10 | 22 |

*Hit. Dmg: 67.*

This was enough to pulverize the yuan-ti into unrecognizable bits. The succubus was aghast with disbelief at the sight of her homie being disintegrated by the railgun, and realized that without her god here to help, this was a lost campaign. “You turdlings!” she simply blurted out.

**A screenshot of a game

Description automatically generated**

Rounds 192 – 193

Willow cast *dimension door*, ending up somewhere else on the pocket plane, leaving Zvetlana to morph back into wereserpent form, regaining her arms, and freeing Akilesh, whose clarity was also beginning to return after having been munched on by the succubus.

“You came back!” the wereserpent said, aware that they were under no obligation to do so beyond their bind to honor. “You truly are heroes today.”

Lowering the craft to the ground, Dextir and Argent urged the heroes to hurry back aboard. “It looks like the gods are still at it by where you docked your dinghy,” Argent reported, adding, “which is as of now destroyed, along with a chunk of the coastal reef.”

A screenshot of a game

Description automatically generated

Round 194

Ignoring the senior artificer’s heed, Tore gave a weak smile, “Of course we came back. I couldn’t leave without my favorite serpent and dwarf.” He then offered, “Allow me to heal your wounds, then we must get aboard this contraption and leave the area.” He began sacrificing his spells to cure Zvetlana first, and then, Akilesh who had been less severely mauled by the succubus’ smaller maw.

An explosion to the northwest dislodged part of the coastline, sending a seismic ripple across the plane. A second later, a crack along the ground beneath the vessel caused it to buckle, compromising the integrity of the base. Seeing the cleric and artificer ignoring his heed, Argent shook his head, and said something to Dextir, pushing a few buttons and disappearing from sight as a bright light emanated from the beach to the northwest.

Akilesh gathered his wits and took in his surroundings. With a well cultivated tremorsense, the dwarf announced, “This rock’s about to collapse.”

A screenshot of a game

Description automatically generated

Saradette ran to the others and pointed east. “Let’s get out of here!” Fortunately for her, she was able to clear the crack that opened just where she’d been standing.

Round 195

Akilesh began to feel nauseated by the wave of Chaos that actually boosted everyone else’s senses at the moment.

*Saradette, Tore, and Zvetlana gained +3 to Listen, Search, and Spot.*

The sky to the far northwest, still visible since the Ethereal cloud had been blown away, was growing magenta, with the blue receding towards the lava that they could see to their north, where they’d confronted shaedlings, drow, and other nasties.

The air pressure began to drop slightly, plugging up everyone’s ears, and causing a few to pop with slight relief.

The footsteps of gods could be felt and heard, and at one point, Lurue could be seen to the far northwest stopping her momentum after being catapulted by the force of her foe.

Rounds 196 – 197

Mask had had enough, and teleported her avatar into the center of Infester QS63. Deep within the core of the pocket plane, a force counter to gravity was mounting as the fusion of Weave elements initiated a chain reaction. Gravity began to wane, and the heroes felt themselves lighter at first, then weightless for a moment, then repelled by the ground and unable to stop rising. Sand, acid, and lava also rose along with them with greater force by the second, and before they could do much about it, the pocket plane exploded from within, sending the four heroes hurling into and across the Astral sky.

Tore closed his eyes as he soared through the sky, praying to Lurue offering his strength, whatever it was, to help his deity.

They were hurled across a maelstrom of debris and elemental sludge, tugged by a current that made itself evident as a conduit resplendent with the colors of Lurue’s garments. It was difficult to tell how much time had passed since the explosion of the pocket plane; it seemed like seconds ago, and a moment later, like ages.