*Chapter 5: Saradush*

*[Intro paraphrased from* [*https://forgottenrealms.fandom.com/wiki/Saradush*](https://forgottenrealms.fandom.com/wiki/Saradush)*.]*

Once a great bureaucratic center for the city’s royal dynasty, Saradush was now primarily a producer of agricultural products, and an important waystation for trade in the area surrounding the Lake of Steam. Given its proximity to several kinds of biomes and habitats, along with increased prominence as trade traffic with Riatavin had risen, Saradush was a haven for travelers and adventurers alike.



While taking up residences and professions here, the quartet of friends had learned that in 1368 DR—just four years ago, when the four heroes had just met—the fire giant Bhaalspawn Yaga Shura, leading his mercenary army, had besieged the city of Saradush, briefly occupied by Calishite forces under command of his weaker Bhaalspawn half-orc sibling, Gromnir Il-Khan. Finally, another child of Bhaal—Abdel Adrian—defeated the giant commander, but Saradush was left a smoking ruin as a result of the conflict. This was said to be the last disastrous event in Tethyr associated with the Time of Troubles, which had begun almost two decades before this siege. The remnants of those fateful days showed themselves from time to time in small portions of the walled city not fully mended by *make whole* spells cast years ago, or a ruin deliberately left as such for the sake of posterity’s commemoration.

The most notable accomplishment that this band of heroes could claim while in Saradush was the uncovering of a conspiracy at the highest levels of the city’s small and chummy government. Lord Mayor Tanithe Beyross was the current leader of Saradush, as were his father and grandfather before him, but the archon and his three lady friends had assisted local investigators in the deciphering of clues and pursuit of Lord Oon Santele, Count of Surkazar, who had been the de facto sole oligarch behind the Beyross Dynasty for three generations now, and this was the tip of an iceberg of sin and corruption that had held this trading city back from truly becoming what it could have. Perhaps now it would have an opportunity to do so.

After solving the Beyross-Santele case, Laryssa had grown familiar with a handful of Saradush Guardswomen and Guardsmen, and had learned a few things about the 200-strong defense and peacekeeping force, which effectively and regularly resolved most disturbances within the walls of the city. When it found itself unable to do so with internal resources, it shopped some of its endeavors out to ex-adventurers or mercenary citizens of the city.

The four heroes had grown accustomed by now to the fact that Saradush boasted no major temples within the city. Those people who regularly worshiped did so in small shrines within their own homes. There were a few temples just outside the city’s borders, such as that dedicated to Beshaba in the hills to the east. Shortly after the Time of Troubles at least, a Temple of Waukeen was erected permanently in Saradush.

Saradette of Saradush—as she had come to be known by some—had been selling her services as a machinist when not working on the caravan jobs. She’d also been consulting with her blacksmith friend on some basic heat treating, though she was keeping much of that information for herself. The soon-to-be artificer was developing several alloys that would help her build better devices. That said, she still had the urge to travel the land, where she could do more research while she saw and experiences new things.

The others in her adventuring party had also had their occasional wanderlust satisfied by their short stints across the land over the course of the last year. Unlike years earlier, they hadn’t done any long-range gigs in 1372, nor would they. Their responsibilities in Saradush kept them returning to their respective workstations, which were conveniently situated within a few blocks of one another, with plenty of bakeries between them.



It was late Marpenoth, and the last few leaves were now being stripped from the branches of otherwise bare trees against the brisk wind. They had just gone on a jaunt across a dry tributary of the River Ith. The defunct creek’s name—northeast of Saradush—had been lost to posterity, and nary a sign remained from the last time that this land was inhabited by humanoids.

Once the wagon had stopped at a bend circling the foothills of the Omlarandin Mountains, they’d continued on foot for an hour or so along an unblazed path that meandered mostly northward and westward, led by their merchant employer, a male dwarf named Eberhardt, who had promised the heroes a share in the loot, in addition to an up-front fee. He was a friend of a friend, and had been introduced by this mutual contact—a gnome named Dredge “Badnews” Thrambolskie—to the party. He was jovial enough, but knew to keep quiet once they approached their destination.

Having already dealt with some lurking zombies, the group was apprehensive upon entering a large natural chamber. The vaulted roof was some 20’ above their heads with a gaping hole open to the outside. The fresh breeze of air was invigorating after the stale atmosphere they had slogged through for nearly an hour. Suddenly, the light from the outside dimmed. As the group looked upward, a horrid sight was visible - three immense spiders crawling down the shaft towards them!

While some of the others unshipped their bows and began firing at the monstrous vermin, Laryssa drew her sword while intoning a minor spell to invoke her patron’s guidance. Moving to intercept the largest of the spiders - a specimen as large as a horse - the warrior priestess hoped her armor would prove sufficient against the creature’s fangs. While the others ganged up on the two remaining man-sized arachnids, Laryssa and her foe engaged in a furious duel. The spider seemed unable to penetrate the enchanted armor Laryssa wore, while her own magical blade drew gouts of ichor from several wounds. Just when it seemed the paladin would be the victor unscathed, the aberration’s mandibles found a chink in her shoulder and sank into her flesh. Laryssa tried to withstand the spider’s venom, but felt some of her strength ebbing away from the poison. Desperately drawing upon the guiding hand of her goddess, Laryssa’s return stroke sank deep into the spider’s thorax, felling the beast.

Their monstrous sire dead, the wounded pair of spiders attempted to retreat but were brought down before they could escape. Fortunately, none of the group had sustained major wounds and only Laryssa was affected by their poison. A Lesser Restoration spell from Elsabet cured Laryssa’s stolen strength and the stock of curative potions their employer had brought was depleted but sufficed to renew the health of the heroes. The group explored onward, unaware of the ambush that awaited them.

~\*~

The expedition had succeeded, and each hero had found a new sword or other item with which they padded their inventory. However, on their way into the crypt where the treasure had been stashed, they’d inadvertently triggered a trap that was sprung upon their exit, killing the dwarven merchant, who had been leading the quartet of heroes back out of the stone mausoleum.



Saradette had felt quite culpable for this, seeing as her coin and promise of goods had come with the understanding that she was keen of sight enough to have spotted such an implementation. She wasn’t, and had asked Laryssa and Elsabet—the group’s strongwomen—to carry the dwarf’s body back to the wagon by the man’s forearms and ankles. They’d drunk their potions of healing and gotten themselves back up to full health, but they’d depleted some of their spells in an effort to acquire their newfound loot.

They were fairly certain that the deceased could be *raised* without too much of a loss to their coffers, which they assumed would be returned to them by the *risen* dead upon his resurrection. In either case, it was the right thing to do, and this group had been predominantly led by that virtue when the test presented itself.

As they emerged from the cupola that housed the entrance to the dungeon where they’d scored their loot, they’d intended to go directly back to the wagon with Eberhardt in tow, but just as they’d begun to enjoy the entwining melodies of songbirds that decorated the breeze whispering through the trembling branches and rustling leaves now on the ground.

Before Laryssa even had a line of sight to the area outside the cupola, Saradette was first to spot a centaur with a longbow on a platform to which they’d paid little mind before. The archer uttered something insulting in Sylvan, then fired an arrow.

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| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Paralyzing Composite Longbow Str +4 | 1d8 | +4 | 1 + 2height | x3 | 110’ | 3.0 | +11 | 17 | 28 |

*Hit. Dmg: 3 + 4 = 7 [18/25].*



A redhaired human woman dressed in a chain shirt and armed with a longsword came out from behind one of the stone arches in the abandoned compound, and manifested some gesture that wasn’t recognized as any somatic spell component.

*Enemies gained Resistance (2) to fire.*

Having already cast *detect magic [expired on Round -43]* and *mage armor* on himself *[expired on Round 1718]*, Badnews cast *shield* *[expired on Round 31]* on himself.

*Badnews gained +4 to Touch AC and AC.*

The party had come up the hill from the east, and knew from Eberhardt that there really was no easy passage down from here in any direction other than back eastward. The enemy likely knew this, and they had likely tracked and/or tailed the heroes’ wagon on their way over.





Round 1

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Group** | **Initiative** | **Roll** | **Modified Roll** | **Move** |
| Ravensblood | 2 | 5 | 19 | 24 | 30’ |
| Regis | 2 | 4 | 19 | 23 | 40’ |
| Laryssa | 1 | 3 | 15 | 18 | 20’ |
| Elsabet | 1 | 4 | 12 | 16 | 30’ |
| Badnews | 2 | 3 | 10 | 13 | 30’ |
| Barkley | 1 | 4 | 8 | 12 | 30’ |
| Tarzana | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 30’ |
| Saradette | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 20’ |

A fully armored warrior of elven height came out from behind a pillar and drew a longsword, saying a few words to his comrades near him. Ravensblood—a male elf fighter clad in metal from head to toe—then lifted his visor to drink a potion *[of cat’s grace, expired on Round 21]* unidentified by the heroes.

*Ravensblood gained +4 to Dex.*

Regis shot at Saradette again.

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| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Paralyzing Composite Longbow Str +4 | 1d8 | +4 | 1 + 2height | x3 | 110’ | 3.0 | +11 | 2 | 13 |

*Miss.*

Laryssa and Elsabet were both carrying Eberhardt’s body, and Elsabet had a line of sight to the centaur and the redhaired human. Spotting them, the favored soul of Mayaheine went over the spells she had left to cast today, and studied the moment as it unfolded.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | *Spells per Day* |
|  | **Spell Level** |
|  | **0th** | **1st** | **2nd** | **3rd** | **4th** | **5th** | **6th** | **7th** | **8th** | **9th** |
| **Favored Soul Spells** | 6 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Charisma Bonus** | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total Divine** | **6** | **7** | **4** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **DC** | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| **Cast?** | **1** | **2** | **1** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **-** |

|  |  |
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| **Elsabet’s Known Spells** | **Level** |
| Amanuensis | 0 |
| Cure Minor Wounds | 0 |
| Guidance | 0 |
| Light | 0 |
| Mending | 0 |
| Read Magic | 0 |
| Cure Light Wounds | 1 |
| Divine Favor | 1 |
| Protection from Evil | 1 |
| Resurgence | 1 |
| Bull’s Strength | 2 |
| Restoration, Lesser | 2 |
| Silence | 2 |

*[Due to line of sight issues and initiative, Laryssa’s options are dependent on whether or not Elsabet tries to lower Eberhardt onto the ground.]*

Laryssa also accounted for her cast spells, which had allowed her to detect a poisonous dart guarding one of the central chambers in the dungeon below.

|  |
| --- |
| *Daily Spells* |
| **Spell** | **Level** | **SF** | **DC** | **Cast?** |
| Detect Poison | 0 | 0 | 12 | þ |
| Guidance | 0 | 0 | 12 | þ |
| Guidance | 0 | 0 | 12 | q |
| Light | 0 | 0 | 12 | q |
| Bless | 1 | 0 | 13 | q |
| Divine Favor | 1 | 0 | 13 | q |
| **Magic Weapon\*** | 1 | 0 | 13 | þ |
| Blade of Blood | 1 | 0 | 13 | q |
| Hold Person | 2 | 0 | 14 | q |
| **Spiritual Weapon** | 2 | 0 | 14 | q |
| Cloud of Knives | 2 | 0 | 14 | þ |

*\* Magic weapon was cast on longbow on Round -22, and expires on Round 18.*

The cleric-paladin then dropped the dwarf’s body, making a mental note to apologize for the rough treatment should the party survive the ambush. Stepping up to where the centaur archer came into view, Laryssa intoned a quick plea to her goddess *[spiritual weapon, expired on Round 4]*. “Bright Lady, guide your weapon to smite those who deserve it.” As a glowing bastard sword appeared next to her target, the martial priestess unslung her bow and prepared to fire away.

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 1 | 0 | x3 | Slashing | 0.0 | +6 | 4 | 10 |

*Miss.*

Now with Laryssa right in front of her, Elsabet squinted and recognized the gods-damned gnome who’d set them up with this gig—Badnews—was now among their attackers. Surely, these ruffians were here for the treasure, now that the heroes had scuffed themselves and their employer had died in the attempt to seize it. Wanton and self-serving betrayal was not something Elsabet was known to easily forgive.

Elsabet’s adrenaline surged as she realized the betrayal which had occurred, and felt the goddess grant her maneuvers with which to fight. She swiftly called upon Mayaheine to protect her and her companions with her Protection Devotion *[expired on Round 11]*.

*Elsabet and her allies gained +3 to AC.*

Elsabet then dropped the body in tandem with Laryssa. She had already cast *bull’s strength [expired on Round 19]* on herself, and now, with a better view of the foes, it didn’t look like Elsabet had a target she could charge. She thought, “Well, they probably are evil after all,” and cast *protection from evil [expired on Round 41]* upon herself as she resolved these miscreants would pay for their perfidy.

Using her buckler hand for the simple gestures of the spell, she moved again, trying to line up a charge on the armored foe with the longsword, willing to allow the shaman’s to charge her first if the woman wanted to; as she moved, she called out, “Come on, coward, make my day!” As she returned her buckler to defensive position, she felt her Shield Block maneuver being granted.

As her muscles flexed, Elsabet strode towards the nearest enemy she could see, drawing her bastard sword as she moved. As she finished moving out into the open, glancing back to make sure she was not blocking Laryssa’s line of sight, she felt her third maneuver being granted, and she contemplated her options. There were stairs up to where the centaur is—the closest enemy—so the favored soul approached the muscular but less-than-fully-grown centaur.

Badnews busted out a wand of *magic missiles*, then deferred his actions, picking his target.

Barkley recognized Badnews Thrambolskie at this moment as well, and could tell that the foes before him (except the ironclad fighter) were all slightly wounded, and all displayed with gashes on their clothes, armor, and/or flesh as if a party of predators had waylaid them on their way here. The hound archon quick-drew his sword and charged towards the closest enemy, reaching the bottom of the ramp that led up to the platform.

Tarzana knew that all of her crew were wounded from their scuffle with the wild beasts on their way here, and having no cleric among them, they’d already drunk all of their healing potions. She emanated an Aura of Toughness, and shot the dashing favored soul of Mayaheine with her hand crossbow, then put the crossbow away, going for her longsword.

*Tarzana and her allies gained DR 1/magic.*

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| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Hand Crossbow | 1d4 | 0 | 1 | 19-20, x2 | 30’ | 1.0 | 5 | 10 | 15 |

*Miss.*

Saradette didn’t get a good look at Badnews at the moment, though she *did* recognize Tarzana—a spotlight-loving, self-promoting red dragon shamaness whom Saradette had spotted at half the taverns and other holes in the wall in Saradush. The artificer-to-be was out of range for her own weapon, and she was apparently a prime target, so she took note of her spent spells, ducked, and jumped down and northward from the ledge.

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| *Memorized Spells* |
| **Spell** | **Level** | **Bonus** | **DC** | **Cast?** |
| Detect Magic\* | 0 | 0 | 12 | þ |
| Daze | 0 | 0 | 12 | q |
| Message | 0 | 0 | 12 | q |
| Mage Armor\*\* | 1 | 0 | 13 | þ |
| Alarm | 1 | 0 | 13 | q |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *Rock Gnome Spells* |
| **Spell** | **Level** | **SF** | **DC** | **Cast?** |
| Ghost Sound | 0 | 1 | 13 | þ |
| Dancing Lights | 0 | 1 | 13 | q |
| Prestidigitation | 0 | 0 | 12 | q |
| Speak with Animals\*\*\* | 1 | 0 | 13 | þ |

*\* Detect magic expired several minutes ago, but revealed some of the information necessary to find the treasure.*

*\*\* Mage armor expires on Round 2,225.*

*\*\*\* Speak with Animals was used to learn about hazards in the dungeon from a shrew.*

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| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Saradette, Jump** | 0 | **Str (+0)** | 0 | 0 | 16 | 16 |

*See below.*

Landing solidly, she scampered back out of her enemies’ sight.

Badnews used his wand do dispatch 2 *magic missiles* *[CL 5]* towards his own apparent ally, Regis.

*Dmg: 5 + 2 = 7 magic.*

“What the blazes is *wrong* with you?” Regis asked bleeding from the *magic missile* damage. Suspecting the rogue-diviner to be under the effects of some magical compulsion, the centaur, continued to target their intended victims.

The heroes realized that the villains were not a united front.



Round 2

Ravensblood made his way past the centaur barely big enough for a halfling or gnome to ride, then charge-attacked Barkley.

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| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Ravensblood, Jump** | 0 | **Str (+2)** | 0 | 2 | **20** | 22 |

*See below.*

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Greatsword of the Profane Burst | 2d6 | +2 | 1 + 2 jump | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +10 | 6 | 16 |

*Miss.*

Barkley fancied the greatsword that almost cleft him as the ironclad fighter overstepped his mark and ended up on the other side of Barkley, who instinctively turned to face his aggressor.

Regis tried to kill Elsabet with his bow before she could reach him.

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| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Paralyzing Composite Longbow Str +4 | 1d8 | +4 | 1 +1 Point Blank | x3 | 110’ | 3.0 | +9 | 3 | 12 |

*Miss.*

Letting the *spiritual weapon* continue its attack, Laryssa drew back the string of the bow upon which she’d recently cast *magic weapon [expired on Round 8]*, and added her own volley to the assault on the centaur archer, then moved towards the other foes.

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| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| MW Composite Longbow +2 Str | 1d8 | +2 | 0 | x3 | 110’ | 3.0 | +5 | 11 | 16 | +1 *magic weapon* |

*Miss.*

Laryssa’s *spiritual longsword* attacked Regis once again.

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 1 | 0 | x3 | Slashing | 0.0 | +6 | 16 | 22 |

*Hit. Dmg: 7 + 1 = 8.*

Badnews targeted the already badly wounded centaur, and let off another pair of *magic missiles*.

*Dmg: 7 + 2 = 9 magic.*

And this was enough to take down the centaur. “Friends, I apologize for this,” the rogue-diviner seemed to be saying to Barkley and his girlfriends. “I’ll explain later. We *must* take out Tarzana now that her best archer is down! The shmuck in plate will have no heart to fight on his own.”

Elsabet was just about to go and finish off the centaur as the latter fell upon its knees, one at a time, then its body collapsed onto the platform. And with the centaur down, but with Barkley suddenly facing an enemy much closer, Elsabet discarded the idea of casting another spell, instead moving around the tree and into flanking position next to Ravensblood, opposite from Barkley. “Big mistake,” Elsabet growled at Ravensblood as she set her feet firmly and felt the power of the earth move through her, unleashing her Mountain Hammer strike against the foe.

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Bastard Sword, 1-handed | 1d10 + 2d6Mtn. Hammer | +4 | 2 + 2Flank | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 6.0 | +12 | 12 | 24 |

*Hit. Dmg: 5 + 5 + 4 = 14, partial damage* ***not*** *negated due to maneuver.*

After her swing, she felt her last maneuver, Foehammer, be granted.

Facing Ravensblood, Barkley howled as he swung his great sword at Ravensblood!

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Greatsword +1 | 2d6 | 3 | 1 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +6 | 14 | 20 |

*Miss.*

The hound archon’s greatsword bounced off of the fighter’s visor, breaking it off of its left hinge and revealing the elf’s eyes.

Tarzana hefted her sword as she cursed Badnews and attacked him.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Longsword +1 | 1d8 | +1+1 | 1 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 4.0 | +4 | 2 | 6 | Weapon Focus included |

*Miss.*

“Fool! You stood to gain the *most* from this!” she spat at Badnews’ feet.

“I stood to lose my *soul* to *your* patron!” he protested. “I’d rather see you brought to justice.”

Saradette changed her shiftweave to her green and brown ghillie suit, and looked for a way to flank the bastards, while remaining hidden.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Saradette, Hide** | 4 | **Dex (+3)** | 4 | 11 | 8 | 19 |
| **Saradette, Move Silently** | 4 | **Dex (+3)** | 4 | 11 | 20 | 31 |

*Result uncertain.*

She had a line of sight to Regis now, and saw his body collapse.

A nosy but wily racoon made its way over, hearing the sounds of the scuffle to the south. It stood flush with the stone wall to the north, taking in the sights and sounds of the ensuing carnage. Spotting the smallest of the eight humanoids in sight, the racoon nosed in her direction as the breeze brought the sweet scent of this gnome’s pheromones. The scent was comfortingly familiar to the procyonid, who studied this one a moment longer than each of the others, including the bested centaur on the platform to the south.

Saradette looked closely at the little creature, and then she went back to the battle. While her enemies were, hopefully, preoccupied, she dashed to the tree to her front and took cover.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Saradette, Hide** | 4 | **Dex (+3)** | 4 | 11 | 1 | 12 |
| **Saradette, Move Silently** | 4 | **Dex (+3)** | 4 | 11 | 1 | 12 |

*LOL.*

Snapping more than one dry branch on her dash over to the tree, the spirited gnome was about as stealthy as a flapping, squawking peacock on the desolate banks of a still-water lake... at noontide... with no breeze. Tarzana heard the gnome as she busied herself in the ways of murdering Badnews, turning only briefly to spot the gnome over 100’ feet behind her.



Round 3

Ravensblood wanted to eliminate Barkley above all else now.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Greatsword of the Profane Burst | 2d6 | +2 | 1 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +8 | 4 | 12 |

*Miss.*

He sucked, though.

The centaur downed, Laryssa had intended to make Badnews her next target of priority, but the gnome’s suddenly turning on its supposed allies made his true inclination unclear. Deciding to give the gnome the benefit of the doubt at least for the moment, the paladin instead worked with the other to try and down the clearcut foes as quickly as possible.

Laryssa’s *spiritual longsword* lunged itself towards Tarzana.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 1 | 0 | x3 | Slashing | 0.0 | +6 | **20** | 26 |

*Threat. 1d20 = 18 + 6 = 24, critical hit. Dmg: 3 x (1 + 1) = 6.*

Tarzana then changed her Aura from Toughness to Power.

*Tarzana and Ravensblood gained +2 to weapon damage dealt, losing Toughness bonus.*

Elsabet glanced over at Barkley, who looked unfounded, same as Elsabet, so she unleashed her Foehammer strike at the armored elf.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Bastard Sword, 1-handed | 1d10 | +4 | 2 + 2Flank | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 6.0 | +12 | 14 | 26 |

*Hit. Dmg: 10 + 4 + 8 = 22.*

The woman sliced into a crack in the elf’s armor, and the man went down with no more protest.

“Heathens!” Tarzana called out with tears in her eyes now.

Then, reacting to Badnews’ call, she sneered “idiot” at Ravensblood, and moved off in the direction of Badnews and Tarzana, shouting “Badnews! To me!” She reached a spot that was just 10’ from the platform atop which the gnome was standing.

*Badnews gained +3 to AC [Protection Devotion].*

Badnews had thought to run away, but with Elsabet in his midst now, he knew the able swordswoman would be able to best Tarzana. The gnome calculated that he would not be able to cast a spell defensively very well before the dragon shamaness’ attacks, so he simply withdrew from the melee, jumping down and tumbling past Elsabet.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Badnews, Jump** | 0 | **Str (-1)** | 0 | -1 | 9 | 8 |
| **Badnews, Tumble** | 3 | **Dex (+5)** | 0 | 8 | 14 | 22 |

*See below.*

The gnome tripped a bit upon landing, but managed to roll out of the way of Elsabet’s charge, if that was what she intended to do as she faced Tarzana, who was 5’ above her and 15’ east-northeast of her.

Barkley had smiled and howled when Ravensblood had missed him, and now cast *aid [expired on Round 13]* upon himself, bared his teeth, and growled as he charged up the ramp towards Tarzana.

*Barkley gained +1 to attack rolls and saves against fear effects, plus 3 + 1 = 4 temporary hit points [31/27].*

Tarzana used her still unimpressive breath weapon on Elsabet, deeming the favored soul to be the primary threat to her own swordsmanship.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Rng.** | **Notes** |
| Breath Weapon (line) | 2d6 fire | 30’ | DC 10 + 2 = 12 |

*Automatic hit.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**Breath Weapon | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Elsabet, Reflex** | **4** | **Dex (+2)** | 1 | 7 | 7 | 14 |

*Success. Saves for ½ damage. Dmg: ½ x 3 = 1 fire [36/37].*

With her element of surprise compromised, Saradette looked for another bit of cover further ahead, so she could work her way around behind the enemy group.

The raccoon was spooked by the sprinting gnome and darted behind the wall. Curious but cautious, it then peeked its head back around the stone masonry and continued to nose the air as the fight continued.



Round 4

The exchange between Badnews and the red-haired foe bolstered Laryssa’s inclination to give the gnome the opportunity to explain himself; she continued the assault on the woman while moving to close the distance.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| MW Composite Longbow +2 Str | 1d8 | +2 + 1 | 0 | x3 | 110’ | 3.0 | +5 | 10 | 15 | +1 *magic weapon* |

*Miss.*

The paladin then hopped down onto solid ground, and made her way south-southeast.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Laryssa, Jump** | 0 | **Str (+2)** | -5 | -3 | 18 | 15 |

*Nothing bad happens.*

Laryssa’s *spiritual longsword*, meanwhile, swung at Tarzana once again.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 1 | 0 | x3 | Slashing | 0.0 | +6 | **20** | 26 |

*Threat. 1d20 = 3 + 6 = 9, not a critical hit. Dmg: 6 + 1 = 7.*

As she neared Badnews, with no new maneuvers to grant, Elsabet felt her remaining maneuvers drain away... and then felt Crusader’s Strike and Mountain Hammer return. She couldn’t jump up that high without risking injury and her defensive stance against Tarzana, so she swung at her legs, which were at eye level with Elsabet.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Bastard Sword, 1-handed | 1d10 + 2d6Mtn. Hammer | +4 | 2 + 2Charge | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 6.0 | +12 | 6 | 18 |

*Hit. Dmg: 2 + 10 + 2 = 14.*

*Badnews heals 3 points of damage [Crusader’s Strike].*

Badnews didn’t have much left in the way of offensive spells, so the diviner-rogue cast *acid splash*, hoping to speed upthe defeat of the woman who’d thought she’d cajoled him into betraying his far more esteemed associates.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Ranged Touch Spells | +8 | 14 | 22 |

*Hit. Dmg: 2 acid.*

The acid ate through the woman’s scale mail, and the breeze now carried with it a stench of her right deltoid dissolving.

Barkley charge-attacked Tarzana.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Greatsword +1 | 2d6 | 3 | 1 + 2Charge | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +8 | 8 | 16 |

*Miss.*

Tarzana took a 5’ step eastwards, and swung at Barkley, who was now in a better position than Elsabet to finish her off.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Longsword +1 | 1d8 | +1+1 | 1 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 4.0 | +4 | 9 | 13 |

*Miss.*

Saradette didn’t waste time on recriminations; she moved to cover behind part of the stonework.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Saradette, Hide** | 4 | **Dex (+3)** | 4 | 11 | 17 | 28 |
| **Saradette, Move Silently** | 4 | **Dex (+3)** | 4 | 11 | 15 | 26 |

*Probably wasn’t spotted by Tarzana.*

Laryssa’s *spiritual bastard* sword poofed out of existence.



Round 5

Barkley swung at Tarzana again and growled as he tried to finish off the woman!

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Greatsword +1 | 2d6 | 3 | 1 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +6 | *1* | 7 |

*Miss.*

Laryssa’s *spiritual longsword* swung itself once again against the redheaded red dragon shamaness.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 1 | 0 | x3 | Slashing | 0.0 | +6 | 6 | 12 |

*Miss.*

Badnews said, “You’re done for, Tarzana. What you’d intended for my homies here is likely what’s about to happen to you.” The gnome then unfurled a scroll of *flaming sphere*, and cast it *[expired on Round 8]* just east of Tarzana’s position.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.***flaming sphere* | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Tarzana, Reflex** | **1** | **Dex (+1)** | 0 | 2 | 20 | 22 |

*Success. Saves for ½ damage. Dmg: ½ x 9 = 4 fire, partial damage negated.*

The diviner knew that the shamaness was partially resistant to the fire, but not completely, and anticipated being able to corral her a bit as the others brought her to bay.

Tarzana fended off the archon, slashing at his armor, but not doing much to the Celestial warrior beyond upsetting him.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Longsword +1 | 1d8 | +1+1 | 1 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 4.0 | +4 | 13 | 17 |

*Miss.*

Laryssa closed the distance between herself and the lone remaining overt foe while firing another shot.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| MW Composite Longbow +2 Str | 1d8 | +2 | 0 | x3 | 110’ | 3.0 | +5 | 18 | 23 | +1 *magic weapon* |

*Hit. Dmg: 2 + 2 + 1 = 5.*

Elsabet looked up, and it seemed like Tarzana had moved too far away to strike at, but Barkley looked close enough to reach. “Barkley, gimme yer foot!” she called up to him, then cast *bull’s strength [expired on Round 45]* on the hound, which ought to provide him enough extra mojo to whack the shamaness hard.

*Barkley gained +4 to Strength.*

Then, using her own enhanced strength, she leapt up into the air to get a little bit of boost.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Elsabet, Jump** | 5 | **Str (+4)** | -1 | 8 | 5 | 13 |

*See below.*

Having achieved a stable foothold on the elevated boardwalk with her right foot, Elsabet pulled herself up onto the walkway next to Barkley.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Elsabet, Climb** | 0 | **Str (+4)** | 1 | 5 | 6 | 11 |

*See below.*

As she finished pulling herself up, though not without some difficulty, she felt Shield Block being granted, and smiled at Barkley, almost ignoring the shamaness. “Got yer back, brother!” She did not have a chance to stand from her crouched climbing posture once she’d gotten both feet on the ground.

Saradette hesitated.



Round 6

Tarzana saw Elsabet in a crouching position, and took advantage of the favored soul’s disadvantage, swinging at her face.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Longsword +1 | 1d8 | +1+1 | 1 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 4.0 | +4 | 17 | 21 |

*Hit. Dmg: 4 + 1 + 1 + 2 Power Aura = 8. Partial damage negated (PfE) [30/37].*

The *flaming sphere* continued to burn Tarzana.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.***flaming sphere* | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Tarzana, Reflex** | **1** | **Dex (+1)** | 0 | 2 | 18 | 20 |

*Success, saves for ½ damage. Dmg: ½ x 7 = 3 fire. Partial damage negated.*

Tarzana was on her last legs now.

Badnews cast his last *acid splash* spell.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Ranged Touch Spells | - | - | 0 | - | - | - | +8 | 6 | 14 |

*Hit. Dmg: 3 acid.*

Elsabet saw Tarzana fall with a gob of acid on her face. She fell back into the *flaming sphere* and her red hair instantly caught on fire in a puff of smoke.

Laryssa closed the remaining distance just in time to see the final blow struck. Slightly disgruntled to yet again be foiled of the chance to get in the thick of things, she at least was able to contribute in some way. Turning to the gnome, she attempted to project an aura of menace, “Badnews, you got some ‘splainin’ to do!”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Laryssa, Intimidate** | 0 | **Cha (+1)** | 0 | 1 | 13 | 14 |

*See below.*

When the last of their opponents fell, Saradette sat on a stone and unbuckled her armor to check her damages from the arrow strike. The projectile hadn’t penetrated her armor, but it’d left a nasty bruise just below her right breast. The rogue closed her eyes, and spoke the word to activate her healing belt. When she opened them, the raccoon she’d seen earlier was sitting in front of her, perched on its hindquarters. “What?”

The creature tilted its head and regarded her with amusement.

With the last of their enemies down, Barkley looked around to make sure there were no more threats. When he looked over at Saradette, he noticed the raccoon sitting in front of her. He looked curiously at the creature, put his bloody sword back in its sheath, and slowly walked over.

Elsabet nodded at Laryssa, and said “Yeah, what’s the deal, Badnews? And are any of these bozos folks we should try to keep alive? Laryssa, can you do your Detect Evil on them? Also, who needs healing?”

Saradette’s eyes widened as she felt the animal’s growing sense of amusement at Saradette’s confusion. Then, it came to her. “You’re here to be my companion, aren’t you?”

The raccoon’s sense of amusement faded, to be replaced by a hint of uncertainty. It reached out and tugged gently at a strip of cloth on her ghillie suit.

“That’s part of my camouflage,” she explained as the hound archon made his way over. “If you want to come with me, that’d be fine.” She focused on projecting a sense of welcome to the tiny creature. Well, it – she – wasn’t that tiny, Saradette reflected.

The raccoon’s sense of excitement grew, and Saradette reached into her belt pouch for a piece of jerky. The animal snatched it up and started to eat it. Saradette took another piece, and they ate it together. “Now, what do I call you? I’m Saradette, and you’re...” She thought of something Maja, that strange engineer, had mentioned. “Widget! You’re a widget, well, not a widget. That’s something called a ‘program’ run by a machine called a ‘computer’.” The raccoon stopped chewing and tilted its head as a feeling of mild consternation surfaced. “Okay, okay,” Saradette said. “I know you don’t really understand what I’m saying right now, but I’m Saradette,” she put her hand on her chest, “and you,” she pointed at the raccoon, “are Widget. Saradette, Widget. Widget, Saradette.” She pointed at each of them for emphasis. “Got it?”

Widget nodded with a sense of mingled amusement and satisfaction.

“Good,” Saradette said. She refastened her armor, and went to join the others with her new friend beside her.

Barkley got within earshot and greeted the raccoon in its own language.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Barkley, Diplomacy** | 0 | **Cha (+2)** | 2 | 4 | 3 – 6 | 6 – 10 |

*See below.*

The rogue was completely engrossed in staring at the raccoon, and completely ignored him as he walked up to them, but the raccoon chirped back, “You look like the thing that ate my mother…. Piss off!” And with this, the raccoon bolted away northward.

Saradette now stood looking at Barkley with parted lips and disbelief on her face.

To the south, the two humans had cornered Badnews, and were now looking at him quizzically but somberly.

“Uhkay, uhkay, lemme explain,” the nervous rogue-diviner dispelled his *flaming sphere*, put away his hooked hammer, and showed the palms of his empty hands as he began to divulge to Laryssa and Elsabet the credible and consistent scenario in which Tarzana recruited him on the basis of his ties to Eberhardt and others present. Badnews had been approached by Eberhardt to participate in the treasure hunt from which the heroes had just emerged, as had Tarzana. The dwarven merchant did not know Tarzana beyond a single interview, whereupon he had decided that she was not the right person for the job. Through a series of network contacts, Tarzana found out about Badnews having been approached for the job, and got him to tell her more and more. By the time he realized that her intentions were foul, he considered himself to be in immediate danger, so he played along for the better part of a day, pretending to conspire with the irredeemable three whose bodies now lay on the floor, ramp, and boardwalk.

“So you intended this all along?”

“Depends on what you mean by ‘all along’,” Badnews specified. “From the moment that I realized that Tarzana had murderous intentions; that’s when I intended for this to be the fix to the fix I got myself into.” Having already spotted Eberhardt’s body, the gnome then added that the dwarf was a friend, and he didn’t know of any other way to avert the worst. “She wouldn’t let me out of her sight once I agreed,” he swore. “My solemn desire is to see these hoods brought to justice.”

Neither Elsabet nor Laryssa could sniff out any deviations from a perfectly plausible narrative. Elsabet knew Badnews was Neutral in practice, but also remembered several occasions when he leaned towards Law, and didn’t find this last statement out of the ordinary at all. The man worked as a locksmith, and though he’d had his troubles with local law enforcement, he was a pretty straight shooter, and they’d never known him to deal with illegal goods or services. His worst fault—as far as the worshippers of Tyr and Mayaheine could tell—was that he didn’t bite his tongue when it came time to speak ill of one’s spouse.

Barkley looked at Saradette, “I’m sorry, I was trying to say hi. Apparently a wolf ate his mother. I’ll be right back.” Barkley transformed into a Pomerhound, a dog. Little bit bigger than the raccoon and just as quick and agile. He called after the Raccoon, “Wait, Widget, I am Saradette friend, I promise to protect you!”

Saradette looked agape at them, and then the absurdity of the situation came to mind, and she started to laugh. “Come back here, both of you!” The gnome waited a moment, and then she turned away with a sigh. “They will sort it out.” She went to see what Elizabet and the others were up to.

Laryssa checked the bodies to see if any still had a breath of life to them and any such would receive a minor healing to prevent their slipping further towards death. Any who survive she intended to have face whatever village likely had legal justice domain over the area.



Ravensblood’s possessions were few, and the greatsword alone was of notable value and ability. Badnews pointed out its properties as Laryssa hefted the weapon with both hands. However, it was the elf’s composite longbow that really impressed the woman. She tested it with an arrow, lodging it into a nearby tree trunk.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** |
| Greatsword of the Profane Burst | 2d6 | +2 | 1 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** |
| Composite Longbow of Distance Str +2 | 1d8 | +2+2 | 0 | x3 | 165’ | 3.0 |
| Comp Longbow, Rapid Shot | 1d8 | +2+2 | 0 |   |   |   |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Armor & Shield** | **AC Mod.** | **Dex** | **Check** | **Arcane** | **Speed** | **Wt.** |
| Mithral Chain Shirt | 6 | 6 | 0 | 10% | 30’ | 10.0 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **Missiles** | **Qty.** | **Wt.** |
|  |  |  | Alchemist Arrows | 1 | 0.2 |
|  |  |  | Sleep Arrows | 1 | 0.2 |
|  |  |  | Arrows | 30 | 4.5 |

Elsabet asked, “Just how evil were our assailants, Badnews?”

The gnome lifted his eyebrows and smiled, nodding his head, “I’d love to tell you that Tarzana was the worst of them. I think some of you knew her. She was pretty self-absorbed, but *these* two guys? I can’t decide which one was worse than the other. The centaur was a barbaric slaughterer of kids and elderly alike, but this one—the one whose bow you now hold—” he looked to Laryssa, “this one had some irredeemable goals. He wanted to set fire to the residential areas of Saradush, and then watch the townsfolk flee in terror while they stood on Serpents’ Bridge beholding the whole thing.”

They looted what weapons they could, and left any unwanted armor and shields behind. Grabbing Eberhardt’s body, Laryssa and Elsabet made their way back to Badnews, Saradette, and Barkley.

The favored soul asked, “We’re not lugging any of these villains, are we?”

After a nearly unanimous shaking of their heads, Laryssa asked Saradette, “Who’s your friend?”

Saradette turned to look behind her, seeing the curious procyonid.

“Oh, this is Widget, and I think she wants to be my familiar, not that I ever thought I’d have one of those.” She grinned, “Barkley tried to make friends, and scared her away. Come on, Widget; these are my friends.”

~\*~

They eventually got back to the single wagon, somberly placed Eberhardt on the floor of the vehicle, gave the horses a sip of water to remind them of the taste, and pulled the cart around, making headlong for Saradush. The trip back was uneventful, though they did see a humanoid child pooping on the side of the road, and soon, they were amidst the charming architecture of the new city outside the old walls.



They took Eberhardt to the Temple of Moradin—which was a more modest shrine than one would have imagined—and presented the body of the dwarf to the priest who knew him well.

The priest—Fembrus, son of Erithnul, of Clan Arægnain—was a pragmatic sort, and in a world such as this, saw the death of such a fool as merely the debt that it engendered once the *raise dead* spell was cast. Fembrus knew only Laryssa among the four living heroes present, and recalled, “You’re one of the faithful of Mayaheine, yes?”

“That’s right.”

“Eberhardt was wise to bring you along... and any friend of Laryssa’s...” he left the obvious unsaid, washing his hands before preparing to cast the spell.

When Fembrus greeted Laryssa, he saw a holy symbol identical to hers on Elsabet’s necklace. Elsabet noticed his glance, and introduced herself.

“I am Elsabet, favored of Mayaheine, though I have much to learn still. I am honored to make your acquaintance. Perhaps on another more auspicious day I might speak with you or one of your fellow priests? I’d like to learn a little more about your god Moradin - I believe he and my goddess are not too different in what they teach us.” She then bowed respectfully to the dwarf cleric, and stepped back to let him prepare himself properly for the spell.

Fembrus bowed his head, and did a thing with his eyebrows that dwarves did, which seemed to exaggerate the bow as his eyes closed for a second.

~\*~

The two strongwomen had laid the body out on the resurrection altar, and were producing the sack of diamonds worth at least 5,000 ₲, and that they’d allotted to the expense, which the dwarf had said would come out of his portion in the event of his own demise.

“Alright, if you’re ready,” Fembrus cracked his neck before beginning to cast the spell. There were a lot of buzzed and rolled consonants in the casting, complemented by somatic overtures, wigglings, and nuances, and by the time the dozen or so diamonds had been consumed, the flesh of the dwarf began to heal, wounds closed, and the dwarf’s heart beat once again.

Blinking, Eberhardt looked around first before lifting his head to thank his comrades, then frowned when he saw the rogue-diviner, “Badnews... what are *you* doing here? Oh, wait, that’s right, you all know each other.”

“I knew most of these folks before, but now I know them all,” Badnews smiled, adding, “It wasn’t the best way to meet, I’ll admit.” The gnome slowly related the main points of the Highsun conflict to the healing dwarf.

“Fembrus, thank you,” Eberhardt was sure to say to his fellow believer when a silent moment presented itself.

Fembrus nodded. “I’m still not sick a lookin’ at your face, lad,” the elder dwarf said to the resurrected one.

Laryssa had listened to the cleric’s chanting to the dwarven god with interest. She was hardly one to dispute the rightful worship of other deities, be they familiar or not... after all, her own patron was herself a servant of another greater power—what was the name again?—oh, yes, Pelor. Just as the Shield Maiden herself came from elsewhere, that god was previously unknown on this plane, but Laryssa venerated his name now since Mayaheine does. She had several discussions with the Moradin cleric with what little she’d been able to glean regarding Mayaheine’s patron and had posited the possibility that Pelor might actually be an aspect of Torm... or vice versa. The pair had argued the points good-naturedly on several occasions without coming to any consensus, as such matters were nigh impossible for mere mortals to discover. Alas, the nomenclature of the deities was a mystery understood only by the gods themselves.

The conversation eventually meandered through the topic of Horgar Steelshadow V inheriting the throne of Gracklstugh. By this time, the party was weary from the day’s excitement, and were happy to get back to the business of divvying up the treasure. Some, however, in inquired further into this, and can learned some of the more trivial details of Gracklstugh.

IC info for interested characters: <https://forgottenrealms.fandom.com/wiki/Gracklstugh>.