Chapter 14: The Wild Moonwell

After the meeting with the priestesses, they decided to make a stop on their way back. One was to pick up two more scrolls, specifically of *create food and water* (375gp each – 750gp + 10% = 825gp) then 8 more potions of *cure light wounds* (50gp each – 400gp + 10% = 440gp). They would divide up the potions evenly, two each. Baldoor provided the coins for the potions and the scrolls; as for the scrolls, Haal would carry them in his infinite scroll case for Baldoor to cast, at least until he had enough experience to cast the more advanced spell.

When they reached the inn, they ate a large dinner and discussed the plans for tomorrow. Nihm practiced putting the muzzle on Lucky and taking it off quickly. She didn’t want it to be a problem in the middle of a possible fight. They had agreed that Haal would stay towards the middle of the group, likely with whomever was guiding the mule. Nihm would be at the front with Lucky accompanying the other Ranger. Baldoor and Kassuq would bring up the rear, though Kassuq’s position would be more fluid, depending on the circumstances.

Satisfied and happy that the priestesses had changed their minds, the group slept well that night.

~\*~

The next morning was routine. They were prepared earlier than expected, ate breakfast at the Leprous Leprechaun, and walked over to the Mission on the slightly elevated ground. They were led to the opposite side of the grounds, which they’d only seen from afar the day before, and now saw a wide exit for mounts and wagons.

Archer pointed southward, where their journey would begin, and said, “The mule can go along the driest path we are aware of. If we find it bogged by now we’ll have to take part of the load off of Zither here, and send her off home.”

“She knows the way,” Delia clarified.

Haal smiled and nodded, “Very smart girl, that’s good.” He then patted the mule along its neck and, if it allowed, rubbed its forehead.

Baldoor then asked, “How do ya want ta proceed, marchin’ order wise? I know Nihm en’ her companion will be up from with your ranger. Haal will be with tha mule and its handler. I will be at the rear, with tha lad,” he pointed to Kassuq, “moving about where needed.”

The trek was mostly over flat ground, and when it wasn’t level, it sloped downwards into swamps that they could initially skirt, then later hop across, and eventually they had to wade through them knee deep. They’d lost track of time in the trackless foliage and winding wetness that conquered dry land all around them, and Afternoon had crept upon them. They’d made considerable headway, and their comely guides anticipated arriving in about an hour’s march. They had just suggested taking a break before the last push southwestward when they heard movement to their north, southeast, and lastly west.



In single file with the guides and Nihm in front, Lucky second in line, Haal near the middle with the mule, and Baldoor and Kassuq bringing up the rear, they stopped. The sound of croaking alerted them.

Nihm removed the muzzle and leash from Lucky saying, “Heel.” She then grabbed her bow and readied an arrow as she looked to the west.

The guides also drew their bows. Delia cast *detect evil*. She then heard and understood—as did Kassuq—the croaking announcement that they’d been identified as local townsfolk by their insignia.

Haal grabbed his infinite scroll case as he looked to the west and north for any movement or any threats.

Delia detected no evil about.

At the rear of the group, Baldoor and Kassuq looked between the noises to their north and southeast, each ready with weapons in hand.

Within moments, they were surrounded by bullywugs, but not as they had expected to be. Nihm and Archer had almost fired upon two of them on sight, but noting that most of the dozen of emaciated frogmen were unarmed, she stayed her hand for the moment as the druid spoke in broken Batrachian, which among the Swordcoasters, only Kassuq could discern. << You of Clan Dektarin, are yes? >>

The humanoids could tell that about half of these locals were juveniles. Though nearly fully grown, they retained tadpole-like tails behind them, and the shorter ones had very underdeveloped arms.

One of the bullywug females spoke, << We are... what is left of our Clan. You are from the Mission... we know of you. >>

<< What here has happened? >>

Nihm kept an eye out for some ambushing party of braves using these knaves as bait.

<< We have been displaced from our homes, which were crushed. >>

<< Crushed? By what? >>

Kassuq began to summarize sotto-voce for the others as they continued.

<< Humanoids... not you... not Lathanderites or Shaundaukulites. >>

<< Who then? >>

<< Northerners from the Dernall Forests, warmongers and pillagers led by a priestess of Red Knight. >>

Delia turned to the others, saw that Kassuq was already relating what she was about to, added, “Syracuse’s forces have been through here.” She then returned to using Batrachian, << Would you like some food? How long you have faring for yourselves without homes? >>

About half of the dozen bullywugs approached the druid whose reputation preceded her, and she produced her bag of rations and said, << We can cook up some food by foraging. >>

The rest of the bullywugs approached and the ranger and sorceress also shared their rations with them.

As they were giving out food, Baldoor and Haal each looked to see if any of them needed any healing, and determined that two needed some light healing.

Haal and Baldoor each cast a *cure light wounds* spell. Haal forfeited an *obscuring mist* spell and Baldoor a *nimbus of light* spell.

Nihm also gave Lucky a treat before putting the leash and muzzle back on him then found a drier place (like on the log) out of the much for him to rest.

<< We are grateful. We feared you were with the Northerners, but when we saw your regalia, we recognized you as being from Pembroke, >> the chieftainess said.

Kassuq took a moment to catch the others up on what had just been exchanged. Their story corroborated and resembled that of the hobgoblins, though these folks seemed like a much less war-oriented bunch, and had simply been wandering here for the last few tendays. They would surely have perished eventually.

The bullywugs ate heartily of the meats and vegetables offered, as they could not eat dairy or nuts. They were grateful for the offerings, and humbled by the humanoids’ generosity. << I am Daphne, >> the elder female introduced herself. << We are at your service. >>

After helping pass out the rations to the bullywugs, Baldoor found a spot on the log next to Lucky, grumbling, “Give me solid stone over this muck any day.”

As Kassuq made his way among the bullywugs, he inquired about the attackers, “Do you recall how many and what direction they fled? Were they carrying a specific banner or wearing a certain logo?”

What was answered was consistent with what they’d learned before: the ranks of Red Knight were trampling through the area, pillaging what resources they could before moving on. They had headed west, which would eventually put them somewhere north of Grady.

He then asked the priestesses and their ranger guide, “Do you intend to have them follow us or send them on their way? I don’t know that they would be able to defend themselves if attacked.”

“The time has come for us to stop and rest anyway,” replied the druid. “I will give Daphne some tips on what to forage, and how to mix ingredients to make food healthier.” It was clear that no one wanted a wayward clan of bullywugs in tow, but leaving them to the elements would surely lead to their demise. “They need a bit of subsistence training. Perhaps you all can provide a bit of spear combat training as well.”

Kassuq and Baldoor both agreed to assist with the training while Nihm said, “I shall take the time to work with Lucky on some of his commands. Though the terrain isn’t ideal, there are some we can still work on.”

Haal added, “I may not be good at assisting with combat training, but I can certainly give them some information about their potential foes as well as some information about edible plants and such.”

After an hour’s time, the cleric had imparted much of his knowledge, and the frog people were grateful.

~\*~

As the afternoon set in, the bullywugs expressed again their gratitude for the sustenance, healing, and the druid’s knowhow, which she had imparted. They spoke with Kassuq, who understood and could emulate their croaking tongue, saying that he was very cute and fuzzy, and that they wished they could have gotten to know them all better.

Kassuq smiled and appreciated the comments. “Perhaps we will meet again someday. Stay safe.”

Then they left.

“Well,” Zhrezia sighed, “that wasn’t so bad.”

“All in a day’s work in the service of Lathander and Shaundaukul,” Delia offered. “Let us continue,” she then got them back on their southward track.

~\*~

“The Wild Moonwell is not far from here,” warned the druid. “Any spells you need to cast, do it now. Otherwise, an innocuous healing spell could be transformed into a demon summoning, and we haven’t the capacity to resist such creatures, let alone what we may encounter as we close in on the source of the wild magic.”

Round 1

Delia then cast *mass resist energy [expired on Round 1001]*, and said, we are now protected from acid attacks, which—based on prior experiences—is the most likely type of energy attack that we’ll sustain at the hands of corrupt goblinoids and the like.

*All PCs and NPCs gain Resistance 10 vs. Acid.*

Seeing Delia cast her spell, Haal asked, “How much further to the well? I do not have any extremely long-lasting spells, so I’d rather wait a bit longer before casting something.”

“A quarter of a bell’s toll,” she was fairly certain as she kept her eyes peeled.

Feeling the anticipation of some crazed assailant coming to defend their pissing ground, Archer cast *bless [expired in 5 minutes]* and drew her weapon, which had been resting in its scabbard.

Zhrezia spoke softly, saying, “Walk near me, and we will be bowered from Evil.” She then cast *magic circle against evil [expired in 50 minutes]*.

Kassuq activated his *detect evil* spell like ability and began looking around, searching for any possible ambushes. He also sniffed at the air, trying to pick up the scent of any creatures in the area that he might be able to identify.

Baldoor, using one of his gods granted powers, placed a protective ward on Kassuq *[expired in 1 hour]*.

*Kassuq gained +5 Resistance Bonus to his next saving throw.*

*Remind me when it’s triggered and I’ll add the bonus.*

Haal, seeing the others taking precautions, decided to go with his *protection from evil [expired on Round 41]* spell. It wouldn’t last very long, but if something happened in the near future, then he would be prepared.

Nihm cast *detect snares and pits [expired on Round 101]*, a druid spell she had learned. She then removed Lucky’s muzzle and took off his leash as she said, “Heel, guard me,” to the wolf who looked up and seemed to understand, or at least empathize.

*The Animal Companion’s link is empathic, not telepathic.*

“How big is your ward bubble?”

“10’ radius,” Zhrezia answered.

“That compacts us too much,” protested Nihm. “We’re sure to attract a *fireball* spell.”

“It’s a safety tradeoff,” shrugged the drow.

Round 2

Baldoor then cast *nimbus of light [expired on Round 52]* upon himself, hoping that it wasn’t being wasted as it would only last about 5 minutes.

~\*~

Round 31

Three minutes later, they were trekking through swamp too deep for the mule, so they now had to take a minute or so to (1) remove anything that had been packed onto the mule, (2) add anything that they didn’t need for the rest of the day, and (3) consume or discard anything not worth carrying.

*OOC: The PCs didn’t pack anything on the mule, so unless you want to do (2) or (3) above, we can continue the story.*

Delia had brought a tent, though none of the guides had bedrolls. They got the tent and some blankets, and packed a few unneeded things onto the mule, setting her off to return to the town, which she’d been known to do.

~\*~

Round 68

The seven bipeds and wolf then dredged on deeper into the marsh, and now detected a faint presence of evil about. Trekking more carefully, with Nihm and Archer in the lead now, the former spotted a snare, and motioned for them to walk around the well concealed trap trigger. Not a minute thereafter, they came upon the border of a pond on their right, with the faint trace of evil now pointing the archon’s spiritual compass forward. In the distance [~300’] they now approached and beheld a pier that led to what appeared to be a stone cottage that benefitted from the pond, using it as a moat.



“That is a new structure,” commented Archer.

“Aye,” added Delia, “and surely crafted by magic.

About 100’ from them, a catoblepas raised its head from the mucky pond, revealing only about 3’ of its elongated neck, and cautiously watching the adventurers, ready to defend itself.

Kassuq moved to the front of the group and asked that they remain in place for a minute for him to focus on his *detect evil* ability.

It soon became clear that the resident of the cabin in their line of sight was messy, and this was likely to dissimulate the traps that Nihm was able to discern before the spell’s effect expired. The rogue that set these traps was also an herbalist, evidenced by the trash, spell-trigger components, and other mishmash of stuff scattered about.

The marsh was teeming with fish, frogs, and birds, which would have made it easier for someone to sneak up on them, so they were extra cautious, and saw no one skulking about for now. Kassuq’s nose guided him towards the cabin, which was in the direction consistent with a gradually increasing amount of evil being sensed. Every trap had blood on it, suggesting that these were often triggered, and might actually have been part of the resident’s subsistence strategy.

The guides warned to not approach. They hadn’t been here in months, but this cabin looked like it had been built ages ago.

Delia urged, “Surely, the arcane craftsman who masoned it with their imagina-” she stopped as Kassuq—now about 200’ from Nihm and the others—failed to spot a snare that gripped down on both of his feet, pulled him up, and hung him upside down.

The front door then creaked open.

A character holding a torch

Description automatically generated

Holding a staff with a red-hot tip, and now dressed for combat, a hobgoblin woman emerged from the cottage and eyed the seven humanoids and wolf with suspicion. She looked the hound archon up and down, noting his equipment, then took another look at the party, then pulled a lever, releasing the tether that held Kassuq airborne.

“Be gone!” she then said in Common as the archon fell to the ground with a thud.

*No damage taken, but Kassuq is now prone, facing upward. A move action can restore him to his feet.*

Nihm took a step forward, but stopped when the door opened. She, held her bow with an arrow ready, but pointed at the ground ready to be used if needed. Next to her Lucky growled but held his ground as Nihm said “Stay.”

Baldoor and Haal both stood and watched, preparing to cast a spell if needed.

“We’re just passing through,” Haal called out. “We found it a bit odd that your house is here when there was nothing here not long ago.”

Delia, Zhrezia, and Archer remained quiet for the moment, glad that there was a diplomat among them after all. Their stances, however, bespoke of seasoned adventurers with solid contingencies and ample skillsets for all things outdoorsy. Like Baldoor and Haal, they held their bows downward, ready to approach and shoot a few arrows the hobgoblin’s way across 200’ of traps that Nihm had not yet identified, and that maybe Kassuq had only luckily walked by. It was a risky thing, and maybe what the hobgoblin intended all along.

Round 74

Kassuq got to his feet, a bit embarrassed but uninjured. He looked at the hobgoblin but said nothing as the hobgoblin spoke.

“Odd, yes... odd, indeed! Now go! Chaos keep you!”

Delia motioned for the path that circumvented the pier, which they could take at a leisurely pace as Nihm detected any additional snares and traps. They’d discussed this earlier *[DM assumption]* and estimated about three minutes were left on Nihm’s spell. They’d also discussed that Delia had also prepared this spell, and would cast it if they ran into a similar encounter before reaching the Wild Moonwell. “The closer we get, the weirder things get,” she had warned them after the mule had gone back the way it had come.

They all hesitated.

Round 75

“Well, piss off then!”

They ignored the hobgoblin’s jeers as Baldoor looked at Delia, “Lead on. Let’s get moving.”

~\*~

Round 157

They reached an area where the foliage stopped growing normally. “From here on, we need to move carefully, as the local wildlife—including this growth—” she pointed at the thistly vines at their feet, “can be quite unpredictable.”

Haal turned to the others, “Be careful, chaos reigns here. Our magic may be unpredictable and our actions not as effective.” He then looked at Delia and her friends, “Lead on; we are ready.”

~\*~

They kept on for a few minutes. Archer—who had been leading the formation with a 20’ advance—now whispered, “We’re not far. Just around that bend.”

They went around that bend, and instead of seeing the wellspring they’d expected, they saw a tree trunk with a humanoid hand protruding from it. At first, it seemed like a sick decapitation of an otherwise perfectly good tree, but then they realized it was a wooden creature the like of which they’d never encountered.



“Who trespasses?” the woody bark hissed as the hand turned slowly and a glaucomatous eye within its palm blinked with strain.

Delia spoke with the woodland being, “It is I—Delia of Lathander—and others of the faithful.”

“Ahhhh,” the wooden creature sighed, and seconds thereafter, they could see and hear the running water that was a mere 40’ from them. Haal identified the cancellation of the *silence* and *major image* effects, and suspected that this creature—like Delia—was a druid. The tree continued, “Then you, no doubt, seek the Wild Moonwell.”

“That we do,” Archer proclaimed. “Archer of Shaundaukul,” she then added as the elderly eye strained to focus on the ranger. “These heroes are investigating the Moonwells’ corruption, and-”

The tree cut the ranger off. “What corruption?” it asked rhetorically, its tone clarifying that no answer would be well received. “This is one of the last havens on Faerûn for absolute freedom.”

And yet, as far as Nihm could tell, it remained firmly rooted to the ground that sapped it of its lifeblood.

Round 183

Nihm smiled and said, “Then come with us and help us explore this realm of absolute freedom.”

The wooden hand laughed, “Heh... but alas, the trappings of the greatest luxury of all bind me to this place... plus I have no need to uproot.”

Round 184

Nihm and the others were ready for the druid/treant to react badly to the statement that challenged what it had just said, but the strange creature had instead answered with nonchalance, even indifference to the irony of its freedom.

Zhrezia posited as she pointed to the liquid flowing from the Moonwell, “I bet your roots would delight in basking directly in that wellspring.”

Round 185

“I suppose,” the tree-hand halfheartedly agreed, and added, “... and now I find your lot tiresome, so maybe you can go and see how the Moonwell transforms you... we might become friends yet.”

Round 186

Delia pointed upstream, and said, “Moonwell is that way.”

“Let’s continue,” Said Haal as the other three nodded. They were on the lookout for anything unusual. Nihm kept Lucky close by and scratched behind his ears adding, “good boy, stay close. Heel.”

The hand squinted at the heroes as they left, and bid them a, “Meh…”

Round 198

They’d climbed a rolling hill whose vegetation receded as the elevation rose, and in time they reached a strange, rectangular well with a series of squarish tiles randomly placed near it. This had undoubtedly been a serious effort on someone’s part, or the work of a powerful mage. They only now noticed that instead of a full stream flowing from it, only a few trickles and trails flowed down, where they gradually coalesced and magically formed the growing stream about 15’ behind them now.

A video game screen shot

Description automatically generated

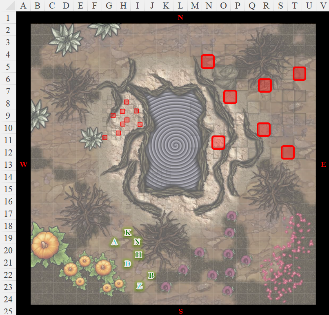
Kassuq looked around, using his *detect evil* spell-like ability, and noting a presence of evil in the vicinity; the others also looked around, trying to identify the plants, to make sure they weren’t poisonous. The majority of the foliage and flora consisted of things that were neither poisonous nor nutritious. The pumpkins looked like a delightful exception to this. Still, a *detect poison* spell would add confidence to their mundane observations.

After some time, Kassuq was able to discern the locations of evil, and noted random tiles emanating the telltale, red hues that flagged the foul alignment’s sway over an object or creature. “Careful not to step over there,” he pointed to the northwest and northeast of the swirling well, cautioning them to remain south of the landmark.

Round 199

Though Haal and Nihm were eager to get a closer look at the well, they were careful to use caution and temper their enthusiasm.

Haal inquired of Kassuq to describe what he was seeing, and he did his best to point out the areas.



Then—as their footsteps died down, amidst the faint sound of a forming brook, they spotted a Tiny sprite flying about. It immediately fled eastward and beyond the pink zinnias before disappearing behind a lush tree where the water began to pool and form.

Zhrezia repeated her invitation, “*Protection from evil* has been known to make the difference between a success and a fail in moments like these.”

Delia nodded, staying close, “M-*hm*.”

Haal’s sense of the situation had him a bit on edge. On one hand, all appeared calm, albeit anomalous, what with the trickle that magically grew in scope to the volume of a stream. On the other hand, Kassuq’s flagging of evil to their north and northeast—coupled with the general lack of predictability in the Weave—alerted his instincts, which he shared with the others.

Round 200

Kassuq led the others forward, moving to where he cautiously stepped over the vines. They could all then gather at the south end of the pool.

As they started moving, Haal asked, “Have any of you taken any water from the well or used it for anything, like healing or as holy water?”

Round 201

“Nay,” Archer warned, “I wouldn’t try it. A lack of intention behind it makes Wild Magic particularly difficult to anticipate and contend with.”

Delia added some useful lore. “Before the corruption, we would have done well to drink in the salutary spring water. It had healing *and* fortifying properties.”

A screenshot of a video game

Description automatically generated

Round 202

Miniature portals from some Abyssal realm puffed in gusts of brimstone and stench, and with no warning, there emerged sparrow-sized demons that coalesced into a chattering swarm. The rotund little demonlings bore wide, toothy grins and feeble pairs of madly flapping wings that now propelled the swarm southward. Haal instantly identified the collective of buggers, and blurted, “It’s a *broodswarm*!”

*OOC: Haal knows the following, but cannot say it until the next round:*

* *Piercing and slashing weapons are not particularly effective against a broodswarm, especially if they aren’t made of cold iron or infused with good.*
* *This swarm of sparrow-sized demonlings can create thick black thread, which it uses to stitch creatures into immobility with frightening speed.*



Just as suddenly, from one of the evil-emanating squares to the northeast, Kassuq spotted a four-winged, fiendish stirge the likes of which they’d never encountered.



“We’ve triggered portals from the Lower Planes, and possibly *to* them as well. Take care not to be taken captive!” warned Delia.

Nihm readied an arrow and picked out one of the fiendish stirge, firing off as many arrows as she could.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Longbow +1 | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | 3.0 | +8 | 11 | 19 | +1 within 30’ |
| Longbow, Rapid Shot | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | - | +8 | **20** | 28 | +1 within 30’ |

*Hit, threat. 1d20 = 9 + 8 + 1 = 18, critical hit.*

*Dmg: (4 + 1) + ([2 x 2] + 1) = 5 + 5 = 10.*

Both arrows stuck into the flesh-covered chitin that armored the beast’s inner organs.

Haal said, “Beware that swarm: they can cast threads to tie you up.” He then pulled out his infinite scroll case and began reading off one of the *flaming sphere* scrolls, wondering if the chaos would affect it, and hoping, if it did, that it did it in a positive way. A *fireball* about half of the size one would expect burst over the swarm before it could reach Nihm and Kassuq.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *shrunken fireball* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Broodswarm | Reflex | 13 | 18 | 31 |

*Success. Saved for ½ damage.*

*Dmg: ½ x 15 = 7 fire.*

Baldoor activated his barricade buckler shield and readied his warhammer, preparing to take on the swarm. Baldoor also yelled, “Form up back to back, don’t let them start wrapping you in their thread!”

Kassuq, unsure if his sword would do much against the swarm prepared to do whatever he could—be that bite or punch or swing of his sword—he would react to the swarm or stirge as they approached.

The four heroes now positioned themselves back-to-back with Baldoor facing north, Haal facing east, Kassuq facing south, and Nihm facing west, then slowly shifted in a clockwise rotation.

Delia and Zhrezia positioned themselves to get a line of attack to the swarm and stirge, then fired bolts at them respectively as Archer did as well.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **W+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** | **Crit** | **Threat** |
| Delia | Light Crossbow +1 | 1d8+1 | 4 | +1 | 1 | 5 | ***19*** | 24 | 19 | þ |
| Archer | Composite Longbow +1 | 1d8+1 | 6 | +3 | 1 | 7 | 15 | 22 | 19 | ý |
| Zhrezia | Light Crossbow +1 | 1d8+1 | 3 | +3 | 1 | 4 | ***19*** | 23 | 19 | þ |

*Threat, hit, threat. 1d20 = 6, 20, second threat is a crit.*

*Dmg: (8 + 1) + (3 + 1) + ([3 x 6] + 1) = 9 + 4 + 19 = 32.*

*2nd shot for Archer:*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **W+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Archer | Longbow, 2nd Shot | 1d8+1 | 1 | +3 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 8 |

*Miss.*

The stirge darted towards Delia, stinging at her.

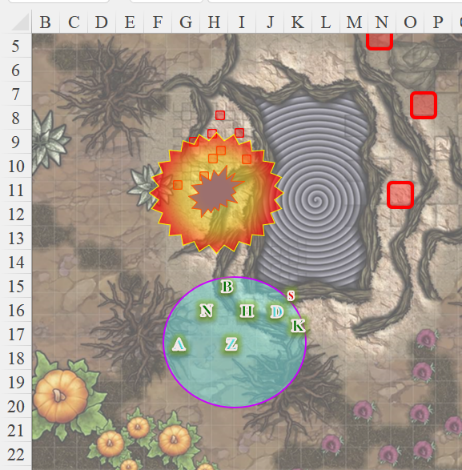
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Limbite Stirge | Touch & Attach | Attach | 1 | 6 | 7 | 15 | 22 |
| Limbite Stirge | Blood Drain | 1d4 Con | - | - | - | - | - |

*Hit/Attach. Dmg: 2 Con.*

Kassuq had positioned himself opposite the side from which the stirge had charged, and thus had to skirt around others before reaching the fiendishly potent stirge.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Properties** |
| Bite | 1d8 | 2 | 0 | 20 | Piercing | - | +6 | *1* | 7 | Sanctify Natural  Attack +1d4 |

*Miss.*



Round 203

Hoping to finish it off, Nihm continued to engage the stirge with her bow, firing as many arrows as possible.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Longbow +1 | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | 3.0 | +8 | 5 | 13 | +1 within 30’ |
| Longbow, Rapid Shot | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | - | +8 | 12 | 20 | +1 within 30’ |

*Miss, hit. Dmg: 8 + 1 = 9.*

Kassuq held his ground and swung his sword at the stirge this time, hoping to cleave off a wing or maybe cut it in half, but the Limbite creature burst into inexistence, its contents now a monochrome-green glitter that vaporized in seconds.

Kassuq turned towards the northwest, spotting a haggish creature akin to a yuan-ti slithering through one of the northeastern stones, though he could tell it was something else altogether. He called out, “A new threat to our northeast.” He then moved to his east and waited for the fiend to approach, sword held at the ready.”



Baldoor held his ground, his shield and its barrier ready to force the swarm to go around or over it. If they did, his hammer was ready to smack a few of them.

The swarm overran Haal and Baldoor, and threatened Nihm enough to distract her, but more so, the swarm now emitted an aura that spanned much further than its individual constitutents.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  Daze Aura | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| **Baldoor, Will** | **4** | Wis (+2) | 0 | 6 | 5 | 11 | +2 vs. Poison & Spells |
| **Haal, Will** | **6** | Wis (+2) | 0 | 8 | 1 | 9 |  |
| **Kassuq, Will** | **4** | Wis (+2) | 1 | 7 | 12 | 19 |  |
| **Nihm, Will** | **3** | Wis (+2) | 0 | 5 | 17 | 22 |  |

*Fail, fail, success, success.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  Daze Aura | **Ranks** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Delia, Will** | 5 | **Wis (+3)** | 0 | 8 | 14 | 22 |
| **Archer, Will** | 7 | **Wis (+2)** | 0 | 9 | 9 | 18 |
| **Zhrezia, Will** | 2 | **Wis (+0)** | 0 | 2 | 8 | 10 |

*Success, success, success.*

A screenshot of a video game

Description automatically generated

Round 204

Nihm had barely escaped the swarm for the moment, but Haal and Baldoor were overwhelmed by the tiny nasties. Dazed, and unable to do much against the miniature demons for the moment, the two men did their best to not get further bogged down by their bites, scratches, and the weaving of threads around the heroes.

*Dmg to Baldoor: [27/35].*

*Dmg to Haal: [26/31].*

Haal and Baldoor tried to step north, but were impeded by the nasty gremlins fast at work on subduing the humanoids.

Nihm, seeing the stirge was no longer a threat, and hearing the archon, looked in the indicated direction and saw the abomination. She then took a step to her east and fired off her arrows at the newly arrived creature.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Longbow +1 | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | 3.0 | +8 | 11 | 19 | +1 within 30’ |
| Longbow, Rapid Shot | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | - | +8 | **20** | 28 | +1 within 30’ |

*Hit, threat. 1d20 = 8 + 8 = 16, not a critical hit.*

*Dmg: (1 + 1) + (3 + 1) = 2 + 4 = 6.*

Those who had already fended off the swarm’s Limbite Daze Aura were now inoculated against it, but Baldoor and Haal were still struggling with it.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  Daze Aura | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| **Baldoor, Will** | **4** | Wis (+2) | 0 | 6 | 16 | 22 | +2 vs. Poison & Spells |
| **Haal, Will** | **6** | Wis (+2) | 0 | 8 | 9 | 17 |  |

*Success, success.*

The two heroes were able to get ahold of themselves once again as the serpentine hag-like monster fixated on Kassuq, who was outside the *magic circle against evil*.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  *suggestion* | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Kassuq, Will** | 4 | Wis (+2) | 1 | 7 | **8** | 15 |

*Success.*

The archon warned, “That one’s got psychic abilities; steel your nerves!”

The guides attacked the swarm, which they deemed to be the most time-sensitive threat.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **W+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** | **Threat** |
| Delia | Light Crossbow +1 | 1d8+1 | 4 | +1 | 1 | 5 | ***20*** | 25 | þ |
| Archer | Composite Longbow +1 | 1d8+1 | 6 | +3 | 1 | 7 | 7 | 14 | ý |
| Archer | Longbow, 2nd Shot | 1d8+1 | 1 | +3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 6 | ý |
| Zhrezia | Light Crossbow +1 | 1d8+1 | 3 | +3 | 1 | 4 | 18 | 22 | ý |

*Threat, miss, miss, hit. 1d20 = 19 + 5 = 24, critical hit.*

*Dmg: [(2 x 5) + 1] + (1 + 1) = 11 + 2 = 13.*

A screenshot of a video game

Description automatically generated

Round 205

Nihm took a step back, firing off a couple of arrows at the swarm, careful not to fire near any of her allies.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Longbow +1 | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | 3.0 | +8 | 17 | 25 | +1 within 30’ |
| Longbow, Rapid Shot | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | - | +8 | 11 | 19 | +1 within 30’ |

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

The last arrow hit the biggest of the demons in the head, effectively taking out their leadership structure, and forcing the individual fiends to flee northward, dispersing.

Nihm called Lucky to her side, doing her best to protect him.

Now no longer influenced by the swarm, Haal looked around and saw the hannya approaching. He was able to deduce that the enemies that had just come at them were not Abyssal in origin, but Limbic, or as some termed them, Limbites. In any case, their evil was as thick as their affinity for chaos, and it made little difference that they did not hail from the Abyss. Haal pulled out his Infinite Scrollcase and pulled out another *flaming sphere* scroll, but hesitated to cast it.

Baldoor risked the chaos of the area and cast *spiritual weapon* *[expired on Round 210]*. A spiritual heavy mace appeared and attacked the hannya.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Spiritual Hammer | 1d8 | 1 | 0 | x3 | Bludgeon | - | +5 | 11 | 16 |

*Miss.*

Glancing over his shoulder and seeing the swarm disperse, Kassuq focused on the snakelike foe approaching. With his tongues ability, Kassuq yelled to the hannya, “Stay back and we will not attack you. Approach at your own risk.” He then prepared himself for another mental attack as he watched the snake-like abomination.

The hannya likely understood, but paid the archon no heed as it focused now on Delia.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save** | **Ranks** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Delia, Will** | 5 | **Wis (+3)** | 8 | 19 | 27 |

*Success.*

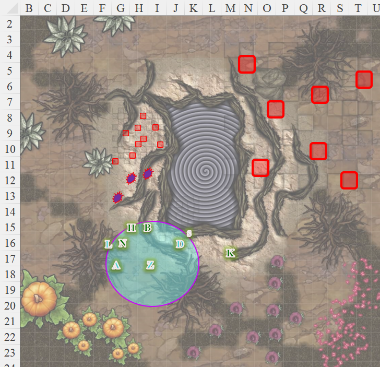
Delia shook her head as the hannya’s spell-like ability failed yet again. The enemy was clearly frustrated, and now fended off attacks from all three of the guides.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **W+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Delia | Light Crossbow +1 | 1d8+1 | 4 | +1 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 22 |
| Archer | Composite Longbow +1 | 1d8+1 | 6 | +3 | 1 | 7 | 9 | 16 |
| Archer | Longbow, 2nd Shot | 1d8+1 | 1 | +3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Zhrezia | Light Crossbow +1 | 1d8+1 | 3 | +3 | 1 | 4 | 15 | 19 |

*Hit, miss, miss, hit. Dmg: (7 + 1) + (5 + 1) = 8 + 6 = 14.*

That was enough to convince the hannya to flee back into the square to her northeast. She seemed to fall into the solid stone, suggesting these were two-way conduits across the multiverse.

All was quiet for the moment.



Round 206

Archer and Zhrezia looked around as Delia closed her eyes and listened for any movement about.

Nothing stirred. The druid opened her eyes and declared, sighing, “Heroes, behold the Wild Moonwell.” She was able to rouse the laughter of more than one of the others despite the turmoil they’d just undergone.

Rounds 207 – 208

As the hannya left, Haal turned to their three guides, “Excellent shooting. I don’t think we will see him again any time soon.” He then moved closer to the water as the remaining ragamuffins that had swarmed them now dove into the miniature portals to their north. “Is there anything that we can do to consecrate this ground? I don’t think any of us alone is strong enough.”

Baldoor advised, “Watch yer step,” to Haal as the cleric moved towards the pool. Baldoor also took a step closer, wondering if there was anything they could do to purify the pool.

Kassuq held his position, glancing back at the portals every few seconds to make sure nothing else emerged and caught them off guard.

As Baldoor and Haal moved closer to the water, Nihm and Lucky walked over by Kassuq and helped the archon keep watch.

A screenshot of a game

Description automatically generated

Round 209

The druid, ranger, and sorceress also approached and studied the pool. Delia murmured, “This Wild Magic is divine. I had not anticipated this, but it may be a fortuitous boon for us if we aim to rid the land of the Chaos that emanates from here.”

Haal looked at Delia and asked, “How so? What can we do as the next step here?”

Round 210

“If it were arcane magic, I wouldn’t know how to advise,” admitted Delia.

Zhrezia added, “And though I can wield arcane mana, I understand it no more than I understand how and why I sweat.”

Round 211

Haal was likely the resident expert in arcana here, and nodded as the druid continued, “I believe...” she considered her words, still studying the portals that emanated both Chaotic and slightly Evil auras. “... if we ponder on this with enough dedication and faith, we can likely divine the rightful method of reconsecrating this Moonwell.”

Delia cast *detect aberration [expired no sooner than Round 711]*, which wasn’t exactly the divination she had in mind, and concentrated on the portals, ensuring that none were ushering invisible foes towards them.

Round 212

*OOC: A short conversation ensues here, informing the PCs of the following:*

* *The aforementioned* [*Earthmother*](https://forgottenrealms.fandom.com/wiki/Earthmother) *had and may still have influence over the immediate area.*
  + *Also mentioned earlier was that she is an aspect of Chauntea.*
* *The guides worship Shaundaukul, Lathander, and Chauntea, in that order of preference, and are respected members of the temple that reveres Shaundaukul and Lathander.*
  + *The only deity the PCs have in common with the NPCs is Lathander (via Haal).*
* *The NPCs aren’t high-level enough to cast the proper Divination spells that would provide the information she’s hoping for, so Baldoor and Haal suspect that her IC text above is a bit of a leap of faith.*
* *This poses the question of a religious (as opposed to simply moral) nature, which the PCs can resolve IC: to which god(s) to appeal for guidance, and how to best do so.*

Haal nodded, listening to what their guides had to say. He then put forth a suggestion, “Perhaps a few of us should rest and pray to Lathander for guidance. The others can watch over us as we wait for his reply.” Whether just two of the guides, or all three participated, they would have Nihm, Lucky, Kassuq and Baldoor to watch for any threats.

~\*~

Haal had spoken with Baldoor and Delia extensively, and they all concurred that together, they could appeal to Lathander collectively for a bona fide *divination* spell that would aid them in ridding this land of corruption.

~\*~

The clerics and druids of the group sat and prayed to Lathander for several minutes while Kassuq, Nihm and Lucky kept watch.

As the others finished praying and began to stand, Nihm called out as Lucky growled. “Beings appearing from the portals to the northeast.”

Haal looked in that direction and after a moment, identified them as some type of demon. Kassuq and Baldoor both moved to stand in the path of the creatures while the females all drew their bows or crossbows, and Haal pulled out his infinite scroll case, preparing to use another *flaming sphere* scroll.

All of the commotion got the attention of the 4 dretch demons that had come through the portal. They were curious about where the portals led, and were now interested in seeing how the creatures of this plane tasted. The four surged forward, though they did not have surprise or numbers, they still felt they could intimidate the mortals before them.

As the demons charged forward, a volley of arrows came crashing in, 5 of the 6 arrows hitting their marks, striking one of the demons twice and the other three once each. Lucky, at Nihm’s command of ‘Guard Kassuq’ moved up next to the Archon and growled at the approaching demons.

Moments later, Haal completed casting his spell from the scroll and a small sphere of flames rolled for and erupted in the midst of the four demons. Their resistance stopped most of the damage, but the attack, combined with the arrows had the demons thinking this might not be an easy fight. As they began to hesitate, one charged too far forward. Baldoor, Kassuq and Lucky all charged forward and attacked the lead demon. Blows were landed by all three, leaving the demon severely wounded. Seeing the power of the attack, the demons quickly turned and fled the area, returning through the portal through which they had come.

~\*~

As night began to fall, the group decided that at least two of them would remain awake and on watch. The first watch was assigned to Haal, Kassuq and Archer. A few minutes after the rest of the group was asleep, Archer heard something crack to the northwest, near the larger portals. The three quickly began scanning, though Haal was limited by his lack of night vision. However, when Archer and Kassuq pointed out the shadows moving about, Haal pulled out another scroll and cast *flaming sphere* once again, the burst of the sphere didn’t do much damage, but revealed a group of drow that had emerged and were observing the party. Spotted, they decided to attack four of them rushing forward with swords and three remaining back with bows. A shout of alarm stirred the others awake as Kassuq stepped forward to challenge the first drow. They both slashed at each other, missing with their initial attacks.

Archer quickly got her bow into action, hitting another of the drow and injuring him severely. Haal, in the meantime, took a defensive stance, dodging the first swipe from the drow that charged him. In the rear of the three with bows launched their attack. Haal, Kassuq and Archer each took a hit from an arrow.

Nihm and Baldoor were both on their feet rather quickly, looking around as Lucky was also up and growling at the drow. Baldoor dashed to the front to aid Haal in his fight while Nihm, Zhrezia and Delia all launched arrows and bolts towards the drow archers. Two of the three were struck and injured. The leader, now realizing that this situation was not to their advantage, decided it best to withdraw and report their findings to their leader. In abyssal, he called for the others to fall back. The drow with swords disengaged and fell back, but not before another attack from the heroes finished off one of the sword-wielding drow and one of the already injured.

~\*~

Curious about where the portals led, the group took a few minutes after the drow fled before lowering their guard slightly. When they were sure the drow wouldn’t be returning, then pulled out a few bottles of *cure light wounds* and those with minor injuries were quickly healed back up to full strength.

As those that were not supposed to be on watch were preparing to go back to bed, several of them caught movement off to the northeast thanks to their Darkvision. Haal pulled out his everburning torch and pointed it in the direction the others had indicated. Though most of them were outside of the light of the torch, Haal did see a couple of fiendish goblins advancing. The others, though, could see all 15+ of the creatures moving their way.

Nihm quickly pulled out a scroll and cast *entangle* in the middle of the group of goblins. 10 of them were quickly trapped by the growing and grasping vines and plants. Archer, Delia and Zhrezia all began targeting the untangled goblins with their projectiles while Lucky, Kassuq and Baldoor met the goblins at the head of the attack. Haal pulled out his sling and joined their guides in attacking the untethered goblins.

Lucky, Kassuq and Baldoor quickly dealt with the first three goblins to reach their position. Behind those goblins, three more fell in quick succession from the bolts, arrows and sling bullets. The leader of the goblins, caught in the *entangle* spell began shouting for the others to fall back. Kassuq interpreted for the others that did not speak Abyssal. Another volley of projectiles cut the goblins’ number by another 4 before Nihm released the entangle spell and the remaining 8 goblins fled back into the portals to the northeast.

~\*~

Dawn, 20 Flamerule, 1370

After a fairly busy night of fending off chaotic beings, Zhrezia was the first to awaken after a brief meditation session, her powers restored for the day, minus the most potent forces at her avail, which were donated to the cause of Divination. By the time the rest were up and about, the sorceress was ready to finalize the prayer for the guidance they anticipated.

Before doing so, as the party had gotten their armor back on and had struck camp, the drow cast *magic circle against evil* once again, ensuring that they had at least some minor protection during the lengthy casting of the *divination* spell, which would be a first for all present company.

“This will be a tedious task,” Delia warned, manipulating a stick of incense and a sacrificial offering of purslane and wolfsbane, having only witnessed the casting of such a spell before. “The god and goddess have prepared the words to be recited, and the moment has been prepared for.” She placed the material components, and began to lead the verbal and somatic gestures that would—in good time—deliver the intended favors of intuition and wisdom from the divine.

*OOC: Feel free to freeform the verbal and somatic portions of this (not the whole 10 minutes) if you want. Otherwise, we’ll leave it all up to the imagination.*

~\*~

600 ticks of a gnomish clock later, the heroes were beholding an amalgamation of the Earthmother and Lathander in guise and manner, and were beholden to the vision at their center as the incense burned and its smoke embodied the genderless, airy avatar of two deities.

The information yielded by the spell came in the form of conclusive statements they could only form moments later, and the party was thereafter left with the sensation that they’d just undergone an entire investigative quest.

They discussed their respective understandings, each adding details that the others had not connected. Without doubt, their perceptions of the *divination* pointed to a single portal that led not to Limbo, but to the Abyss.

**A screenshot of a video game

Description automatically generated**

This was not too surprising, given the role that Chaos played in both of these Outer Planes. Nonetheless, the guidance their respective deities had given them unambiguously pointed towards the Abyss, where far more sinister motives were selected for than in the haphazard havoc of Limbo.

“So demons is what we are to face,” sighed Baldoor.

“At least a few should show their welcome,” Archer sarcastically remarked.

“We all received this revelation, right?” confirmed Kassuq.

No one spoke up to the contrary.

“So the idea is that we—mortals—cross into the realm of the most vile souls reborn,” confirmed Kassuq, “and survive, right? Or are we expendable pawns in the gods’ schemes?”

“Lathander does not squander the lives of his faithful like the foul deities do,” the druid’s faith professed. “And the Earthmother cares for us like her own offspring,” she paraphrased a passage that had stood the test of her experiences in this region.

“Peculiar that an archon would pose this point,” commented Delia, “though it’s a valid one.”

“Yes,” Kassuq replied with a smile, “but I am still young as archons go and going into the Abyss seems a task for those with more experience and training.”

If we are committed to the cause of restoring this Moonwell to its intended state, and reconsecrate the land around it, then our interests are aligned with the spirit of the spellcasting, and with the will of the Earthmother and Lathander. If we aren’t truthfully in league with this goal, then we should not venture forth.”

“I agree with Kassuq,” Haal said. “We are ill prepared at this moment to travel into the Abyss on anything more than a reconnaissance mission. We also would need to know exactly what we are looking for and what our objectives are. Simply going there will likely only lead to several of us perishing. Now,” Haal looked at their guides, “I still want to save the Moonwells, but this task seems a bit steep for out skill levels.”

Baldoor and Nihm remained silent for a moment before Nihm asked, “What do you three think? Are you prepared to go now, or should we return and revisit this task after we are better prepared and equipped?”

The moment was quiet, and then came to them another revelation from their gods. They were relieved at the unphrased news that this was more of a reconnaissance mission than a hack-and-slash microcosm of the Blood War. They saw themselves in a possible future nodding to one another in discussion over some finding, and were pleased to see that there was natural light around them at least.

“We are as equipped as our gods have willed us to be,” Zhrezia smiled and looked around at the Wild Magic-afflicted area.

Archer added, “The path ahead is clear. I’m ready to lead the way in.”