Chapter 16: The Chessboards

Their expectations to end up in a similar room or in some hellish firepit were not only unwarranted, but they found themselves standing on a giant 4x4 chessboard up against a sheer cliffside beyond which they could not see. On a 2x2 board to their right-hand side were the four paraelementals armed and ready for whatever was about to come their way.

*The numbers above correspond to squares on each board, not feet. The boards are 20’ x 20’ and 10’ x 10’, respectively.*

Then, they spotted about 100’ up a humanoid torso and head looking down at them from the top of the cliff.



Before they could respond with a wave or anything else, however, two crypt things appeared across from them on the chessboard, and rose from stone thrones to assault them.

Below the chessboard there appeared to be nothing, though there was certainly a center of gravity pulling them down.



Round 1

The five heroes looked around and noticed that their guides had vanished. “I hope they are all safe,” Haal voiced what they were all thinking.

Kassuq called over to the para-elementals, << Are you all OK? >> he inquired, wondering how long they could last without getting to a magma pool.

The paraelementals nodded, and the woman among them shot a *scorching ray* at the crypt thing that was now coming for Baldoor and company.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Dex Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Magma Paraelemental | Ranged Touch Attack | 4d6 fire | 2 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 14 |
| Magma Paraelemental | Ranged Touch Attack | 4d6 fire | 2 | 3 | 5 | 18 | 23 |

*Hit, hit. Dmg: 17 + 11 = 28 fire.*

The first crypt thing was nearly done for with that much fire damage.

The other three paraelementals were about to jump down to meet the crypt things in combat, but saw that Haal and Baldoor each pulled out their holy symbols and began chanting to turn the crypt things. They each called upon their respective gods to send the undead away or destroy them.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Turning Undead* | Baldoor |
|  | **Max HD Turned** | 5 |
|   | **1d20 Roll** | 7 |
|   | **Turn Check** | 12 |
|   | **2d6 Roll** | 7 |
|   | **Turn Dmg.** | **12** |
|   | **Turns/Day** | 3 |
|   | **Turns Used** | 1 |
| *Turning Undead* | Haal |
|  | **Max HD Turned** | 4 |
|   | **1d20 Roll** | 13 |
|   | **Turn Check** | 17 |
|   | **2d6 Roll** | 9 |
|   | **Turn Dmg.** | **15** |
|   | **Turns/Day** | 5 |
|   | **Turns Used** | 1 |

*See below.*

Amara, Nihm and Kassuq also held their ground, noting the effect that Baldoor and Haal had on the two undead. The crypt things instantly darted away: one jumped off the chessboard and fell to its doom with seeming calmness while the other did its best to climb up the 75o cliff, getting maybe 10’ above the clerics.



Round 2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Group** | **Initiative** | **Roll** | **Modified Roll** | **Speed** |
| Haal | 1 | 6 | 19 | 25 | 30’ |
| Nihm | 1 | 6 | 17 | 23 | 30’ |
| Crypt Things | 2 | 7 | 12 | 19 | 30’ |
| Baldoor | 1 | 6 | 13 | 19 | 30’ |
| Kassuq | 1 | 6 | 7 | 13 | 40’ - 60’ |
| Amara | 1 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 30’ |

Haal pulled out another scroll of *flaming sphere [expired on Round 5]* and sent the ball of flame up the cliffside to strike the crypt thing that had tried to climb away.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.***flaming sphere* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Crypt Thing | Reflex | 5 | 2 | 7 |

*Fail. Dmg: 9 fire.*

The creature was already critically wounded, and was now a kick away from being destroyed altogether. “Keep the flame on it,” one cleric told the other.

Nihm followed up the sphere with a couple of arrows, hoping to strike a bone or the creature’s skull. Lucky stood next to her, growling at the undead beast.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Longbow +1 | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | 3.0 | +8 | 13 | 21 | +1 within 30’ |
| Longbow, Rapid Shot | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | - | +8 | 9 | 17 | +1 within 30’ |

*Hit, hit. Dmg: (1 + 1) + (6 + 1) = 2 + 7 = 9.*

The crypt thing disintegrated.

The *flaming sphere* persisted where Haal left it for now.

A giant *fireball* the size of a city block burst near Mayaheine, outlining the silhouettes of Aasterinian and Lathander behind her. It got a bit toasty for a few moments in the afterglow of the explosion, but nothing the heroes couldn’t handle.

With their immediate threats dealt with, they all looked around to see if there was any way for them to assist with any of the other platforms. By this time their eyes had adjusted to the peculiar lighting in this corner of the Astral Plane, if such it was, and they could see 100’ below them, atop a vast, metallic surface, what appeared to be the druid, ranger, and sorceress who had guided them to the Moonwell. They were stabbing the crypt thing that had jumped down from the ledge, and had rolled to its doom, only to be finished off with swords.

The smallest of the paraelementals pointed upward and announced, << Incoming demon! >>



It was either a devil or a demon—the heroes couldn’t tell at first glance—about twice the size of an imp, and bearing some halfling traits. Haal sought to classify the staff-wielding fiend as a tiefling as it swooped down, flyby- and charge-attacking the largest of the elementals.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Azaron | Staff of Wounding | 1d6+1 | 3 | 0 | 3 + 2Charge | 13 | 18 |

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

The halfling-sized tiefling flew past the elementals and was now 5’ above the others, and bit to their east.



Round 3

Haal directed his *flaming sphere* towards the demon, attempting to strike it with the flaming ball.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Save vs.***flaming sphere* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Azaron | Reflex | 6 | 12 | 18 |

*Success. Saved for ½ damage.*

*Dmg: ½ x 10 = 5 fire. Damage negated.*

Haal noted the demon’s resistance to the sphere as Nihm quickly turned and fired off two arrows at the ugly beast.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Longbow +1 | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | 3.0 | +8 | 10 | 18 | +1 within 30’ |
| Longbow, Rapid Shot | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | - | +8 | 3 | 11 | +1 within 30’ |

*Hit, miss. Dmg: 2 + 1 + 1 = 4.*

As he gained altitude, Azaron was stung by one of Nihm’s arrows, and began doing what he did best: befoul the place. He began with a casting of *desecrate*, centering it between the chessboards so as to entirely cover just about every square.

*This level is now cut off from Red Knight’s influence.*

With the cowardly demon gaining altitude, it was out of the reach of Baldoor’s and Kassuq’s weapons, so Baldoor cast *spiritual weapon [expired on Round 8]* and sent the magical hammer after Azaron. The hammer swung itself at Azaron.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Spiritual Hammer | 1d8 | 1 | 0 | x3 | Bludgeon | +5 | 5 | 10 |

*Miss.*

There wasn’t anything for Kassuq to do at the moment with the creature out of his reach, so he just took a step forward so the others could move to make room for their magma friends is they decided to jump over. Two of them read his cue, and jumped over effortlessly.

Amara quickly cast *magic missile* which she wound up not needing against the crypt things. She sent the glowing missiles at Azaron, striking the beast in the chest.

*Dmg: 3 + 2 = 5 force [magic].*

All around the precipices were the gods contending. Aasterinian and Malar were in the throes of a grapple as Lathander and Shaundaukul aided the Earthmother against the avarice of Mask and Lolth. Red Knight’s spade met with Garagos’ spiked, flailing balls of unheavenly steel. It was a moment for historians and theologians to behold and capture.



Round 4

Haal, seeing that the *flaming sphere* did not do much, allowed it to expire as he cast his own *spiritual weapon*, sending the magical creation after Azaron. As he maneuvered the weapon, he stepped forward to also make room should the elementals move to their platform.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Spiritual Heavy Mace | 1d8 | 1 | 0 | ×2 | Bludgeon | - | +3 | **20** | 23 |

*Threat. 1d20 = 13 + 3 = 16, critical hit.*

*Dmg: (2 x 2) + 1 = 5.*

Nihm took aim and launched a full volley of arrows at Azaron. As she did, she called Lucky to her side.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Longbow +1 | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | 3.0 | +8 | 3 | 11 |
| Longbow, Rapid Shot | 1d8 | 1 | 1 | x3 | 100’ | - | +8 | 7 | 15 |

*Miss, miss.*



Azaron said something nasty and fled away at full speed, giggling as another arc of lightning crackled across the sky from one colossal deity to another.

The paraelementals could do little against the flying foe, and thus even their sorceress stayed her casting hand.

move to make room for the magma para-elementals to join them.

Two of the magma para-elementals set up near the other heroes. Kassuq ask how they were doing, and they huffed something about being readier than a red-cheeked maiden.



Round 5

Then, the entirety of Malar’s form came crashing down near the chessboard, and they all went flying into a seeming maelstrom of shadowstuff that ended up being harmless as it strewed them all across the multiverse.

Haal, Nihm, Baldoor, Kassuq, Amara, and the paraelementals could do little but cast spells and talk at the moment.

As they seemed to be falling, Nihm reached out with her bow for Lucky to bite onto it. When he did, she pulled him closer to hold him with one arm. She then called to the others, “Join hands so we do not drift apart.”

The other 4 nodded and all began joining hands. Kassuq was able to get a hold of one of Lucky’s paws to complete the circle.

Kassuq then yelled to the para-elementals to do the same. Haal could see three figures falling above and behind them, and as they all heard their voices, they could now tell that it was Delia, Archer, and Zhrezia.