Chapter 17: The Heroes of Pembroke

Amara, Baldoor, Haal, Kassuq, Nihm, and Lucky now stood atop a bridge spanning the 10’ width of a stream that cut through a grove. The site was pristine, its flora flourishing and seemingly cared for by divine forces, and the air smelled of pines and pollen. Delia, Archer, and Zhrezia were in full health, and were now standing atop a platform to the northwest. They greeted the heroes, and Delia added, “We are in the Earthmother’s realm.”

A video game screen capture

Description automatically generated

The heroes could see the symbols of the Earthmother carved into the rock platform, as well as those of Lathander and Shaundaukul.

The group all looked around at the beauty surrounding them. Kassuq couldn’t help but sniff at the air, finding many new and unusual aromas wafting by. When they saw the others on the platform, they all breathed a sigh of relief. They thought they had lost the three of them along with the magma-elementals.

As they reached the platform, they each gave each of the three a hug. As they talked and listened, Xena and Lucky took a couple minutes to play and get better acquainted with each other. At first, Lucky was unsure what Xena was, but they both figured out a little game of hide and seek that they seemed to enjoy.

As the afternoon sun dipped, the Earthmother’s worshippers were about to begin a ceremony of gratitude for the three deities, and invited the other heroes to join in. Delia conveyed glad tidings based on a brief vision she’d been granted. “We have vanquished the evil that haunted the Wild Moonwell, and place our hopes in the restoration of the rest of the Moonwells.” She went on to relate that the Earthmother had resurrected them, and provided divine guidance that would keep them here for now.

“Where *is* here?” asked Nihm.

“We are in a sacred grove once tended by the Elders of the Eighth Circle,” Delia answered. “I will guide you out of here when you are ready. Are you hungry?”

They all were a bit hungry, and admitted as much, fostering a snack of trail mix and other goodies to be enjoyed as they prepared for the gratitude ritual.

After eating their full and listening to Delia, Archer and Zhrezia told them about the place they now found themselves in. They were also pleased to hear that they had been able to remove the evil hold on the Wild Moonwell. However, the group was not sure if continuing that quest was within their power. Though they had survived the encounter amongst the gods, they all felt that they had only done so out of luck as they were certainly overmatched by more than a few of their opponents. They had the fortune of having equally powerful allies.

When it came time for the gratitude ritual, the group gathered around a large and ancient tree in the middle of a grove. They listened to the songs of the birds and other animals. After a few minutes, one of the worshippers the lived in the grove emerged from the tree. She was carrying a bowl with a red substance made of crushed grapes and berries mixed with sap. She walked to each of the heroes, dipped her finger into the bowl, then made a small circle on each person’s forehead. She also placed a small mark on both Lucky’s and Xena’s foreheads as well. When this was done, they each walked up to the ancient tree and accepted a seed pod which they promised to plant outside the newly reclaimed Moonwell to help keep evil from reclaiming it.

When the ritual was done, the group rested for the night, deciding they could wait to leave until the next day. As she slept, Amara had dreams of large, fiery explosions and of undead creatures being harmed by her touch. When she awoke, Xena sitting next to her head, she told him of her dreams. She could feel the new spells surging through her and their names came to her. She could now disrupt the undead, cast fireballs and use a magical shield, though she felt that her ability to cast magical (mage) armor had faded away. Still, she felt confident in her new abilities and wondered when she would need them.

Once everyone was awake they gathered for a breakfast of nuts, berries and juices, the group was guided from the grove. As they reached their point of departure, hugs were again shared as they bid their three friends farewell. Delia turned back, and within a minute, they could no longer see the edge of the secluded grove.

As they merged back with the path that would take them back to the Pembroke-bound road, they looked around at their surroundings, noting a few telltale landmarks that they’d passed along the way to the Wild Moonwell, which was much further from Pembroke than they were now.

They all took a moment before discussing where to go next. They came to the conclusion that saving the other Moonwells was a noble cause, but would be a bit much for them right now. They would have to leave and return when they were better prepared and equipped for the challenges that the Moonwells presented. They took a few minutes, planting the seed pods as Nihm said a prayer over the newly planted seeds.

With that accomplished as they had promised, they headed back to Pembroke and made plans to return to the mainland of Faerûn to see what adventures lay ahead.

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The trek back to town was more of a leisurely stroll compared to what they’d endured over the last day, and by Afternoon, they’d arrived, booked some lodging at the Leprous Leprechaun, and sought their respective creature comforts for the next several hours.

Once they had secured rooms for the night, Haal informed the others that he would visit the temple and let them know the status of Dahlia, Archer and Zhrezia, in case they had not heard through their goddess.

Baldoor and Kassuq decided they would go for a stroll, though it felt more like being on a patrol as they walked around the perimeter of the town, always on their guard. When they returned, Baldoor brought up the subject of mind control. Having seen its effects in action on that large chessboard, he figured they could work on ways to help each other snap out of it.

*Teamwork Skill - Snap Out of It (DMG 193) sought.*

While the boys were off doing whatever they would do, Nihm spent time with Lucky working on several of his skills and tricks, including charging and opponent. She was able to get him to run fight past Amara, though he did get distracted a few times (working on Crowded Charge for Lucky). Nihm also spent a good deal of time on his Down and Stay commands, she did not want a repeat of the problems they had with the donkey before.

With Amara’s and Xena’s help, Nihm and Lucky also worked on his tracking skills. First by trying to track and find Xena or Amara. Then trying to find something that Xena dragged along and hid. With Amara’s direction Xena even doubled back over his tracks a few times to throw Lucky off. The four ended up having a good time and Lucky was happy with all the praise and activity, finding it all stimulating and satisfying.

The representatives of the Temple of Lathander and Shaundaukul commended the heroes after hearing their tale, noting the news of the Earthmother’s sacred grove’s restoration, and the Wild Moonwell’s cleansing.

All in all, they thought to stay in Pembroke for a few days, with everyone working on helping Nihm with Lucky to improve his skills. They would also do a lot of working on the ‘Snap Out Of It’ teamwork benefit.

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Morning, 21 Flamerule

The next morning, the Temple criers went out early, announcing the news that their diviners and scouts had confirmed overnight: “The Wild Moonwell is *reconsecrated*!” and other cheerful tidings rung out across the small village as the heroes rose.

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Highsun, 22 Flamerule

On the second day, the heroes were strolling in the outskirts of town with their animal friends, and happened upon a scrimmage of sorts. They’d seen the training ground before, and had wondered what rules structured the game that was manifesting. As the young men and women spotted the party, they asked if any of them wanted to play.

A map of a maze

Description automatically generated

They all looked at each other and Haal spoke up. “Sure, what are the rules?”

A few of the older youth covered the main points...

**Offensive Team:**

Sprinter, who carries a rod across the zigzagging path. This is the main player, who must touch every pillar and platform on their way to the goal (eastern edge of map).

Supports, who stand atop 5’ platforms hurling blunt-tipped darts at defensive team.

**Defensive Team:**

Strategically positioned near the path, these defenders of the goal will grapple and otherwise block the Sprinter’s progress along the path.

Delivering the rod into the goal, the Sprinter chooses one chamber from the two options. Each one has a closed chest, and each chest has a different trophy created by non-player spectators now standing around.

A Sprinter that fails to enter the goal in 4 minutes is on the Defensive team, while one person from the Defensive sequentially shifts to Offensive Support, and one person from there cycles into the Sprinter role.

New players would start on the Offensive team, with two of the PCs sharing one platform. One of the PCs would have the honor of being the first Sprinter.

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“So, if the Defender is hit with a dart are they down?” asked Haal.

“Yes,” confirmed a woman with a water bottle. “Take your best shot,” she even taunted the bookworm.

Kassuq also asked, “And as I run by, you all try to grab me?”

“That’s right,” a boy answered.

Kassuq transformed into his wolf form, and took up position at the Sprinter’s starting point as the others got positioned on the square platforms.

The Defenders—all six of them—also got into positions clustered along the western half of the field for now, and faced westward, keeping their eyes on the dart-throwing Supports atop the square platforms.

After hearing the rules and looking over the course, they made their decisions.

Kassuq had already transformed into his wolf form and would be the runner. This already put some doubts into the minds of their opponents as many of them had tried to catch their own dogs or strays in the area with little success.

Baldoor then went to the first tower near the first turn. Nihm took the spot on the tower at the fourth turn with Amara and Haal taking the last tower near the final turn. They all knew the darts would be useless near the middle of the field since they had such short range. Only Nihm was the only one confident that could do a lot of damage with the darts given her skill with ranged weapons.

As they got into position, the ‘defenders’ set themselves up along the second and third stretches of road. As they did, they made sure to keep further south, mutters of ‘beware of the elf’ were passed about. Often those were followed by taunts of, “Don’t worry about the tall bookworm, he’s not a threat.”

Haal took the jab good-naturedly responding, “If I don’t hit anyone, I will by you all a round of the beverage of your choice. If I hit any of you, those I hit owe me an ale!”

The ‘defenders’ laughed and responded enthusiastically, “You’ve got a bet, bookworm!”

Baldoor shook his head at the over confidence of the ‘defenders’ and hoped that Haal ended up with at least one ale owed him.

When everyone was ready, one of the ‘defenders’ yelled “GO!” At that time Kassuq took off, running as fast as he could. As he made the first turn in front of Baldoor, the dwarf launched a dart at the closest defender as she moved after Kassuq and missed badly, getting a couple of comments about Baldoor already drunk and had no aim.

As Kassuq made the turn the first three defenders lunged after Kassuq, but he nimbly dodged and maneuvered past them, headed for the second turn. As he neared it, three of the defenders moved to intercept him and got a little to far north. Nihm quickly launched two darts, each striking home, causing those that had been hit to grumble something about it not being fair. They, did, however, sit down and watch as Kassuq ran past. This time the defenders began running east and south intercept Kassuq on his next turn north and to get out of range of Nihm.

As the defenders tried to move out of Nihm’s range, she sent out a couple more darts, bringing down a third defender and narrowly missing a fourth. With half the defenders down, they kept moving east, one yelling, “Make our stand near the fifth and seventh turns!” This put them closer to Haal and Amara, but they made sure to stay about 30’ away from that platform, putting them at a difficult range for the cleric and the sorceress. It also put them at long range for Nihm who was taking her time to line up a couple of long range shots.

Kassuq had slowed down a bit after the third and fourth turns, seeing that Nihm had forced the defenders back. He stopped for a moment, and put down the rod to howl and wag his tail at the defenders, getting comments of “Oh yeah, come on fur ball!” “I’ll show you where you can stick that tail!” which brought another howl from Kassuq as he picked up the rod and began running again. As he reached the fifth turn, with the defenders waiting just 30’ away, he broke into a full out sprint, running as fast as he could. As he made the turn, Amara and Haal each launched a dart. Amara just missed, though her dart did cause the defender to stop moving as they saw the dart out of the corner of her eye. This, though, enabled Kassuq to get past them. Meanwhile, Haals dart missed as badly as Baldoor’s did, getting a round of heckling, “he even throws like a worm!”

As Kassuq made his next turn, Nihm threw two more darts which were meant more to keep the defenders away, and it worked. They saw the darts coming and took a stop back, allowing Kassuq to get past them to the seventh and final turn. However, one of them backed into a dart from Amara as Haal again missed badly.

With only two defenders left, Kassuq continued to turn on the afterburners and sprinted for the finish line. As he did, the last two defenders ran at him, intent on tackling him or knocking him down. Kassuq waited for them to make their move, then leapt over them, his jump of 20’ easily getting him over and beyond the defenders. Haal made an attempt to hit one of the now prone defenders, but again missed. However, the defenders were too distracted with watching Kassuq trot into the entrance towards the trophy rooms.

Transforming back into his normal Archon form, Kassuq place the rod on the floor and opened the chest to see what trophy lay within.

As the heroes came down from their towers, one of the defenders quickly pointed out, “Though you won, I believe you owe us all a drink of our choice,” directing it at Haal.

“You are correct my good sir, so, shall we head off to quench those thirsts, or would you like to try and stop my friend again,” Haal replied as he pointed to Kassuq emerging with the trophy in hand.

One of the older girls on the defense joked that this pretty much *was* the prize of winning: buying the other team a drink.

They laughed as they went to the Leprous Leprechaun’s basement tavern to contemplate the power of hops.

The basement was generally off limits to outsiders, so being let in here was a sign of trust among the faithful of the Earthmother, Lathander, and Shaundaukul.

A group of people playing cards

Description automatically generated

The Kegmaster—as he insisted on being called while his lifelong neighbors chuckled—was a halfling named Gustaf Tasteoftart. “I have heard of your exploits,” the wee man invited them down the stairs into what he termed the *garden level* for the moment.

The lighting in the single room was adequate, and entered partly from skylights, complemented by subdued torchlight. The air was neither muggy nor smoky, as a series of diagonal openings near the ceiling shafted moisture and stagnant air outward, allowing the room to draw fresh air from the staircase.

There were a few familiar faces from the Temple of Lathander and Shaundaukul, though they’d forgotten the locals’ names.

When the group was informed of the honor and escorted to the basement of the Leprechaun, they all smiled and nodded, adding, “Thank you.”

Looking around, there were several patrons about, but the tavern wasn’t full. The group found a couple of tables in the corner where both teams could sit and talk, plus enjoy the drinks. The ‘defenders’ were very impressed with Kassuq’s agility and with Nihm’s deadly accuracy.

They also found Lucky and Xena to be an interesting pair of companions as well. When they sat, Nihm asked, “Can I get a bowl of water for my four-legged friends, when you have a moment?”

Lucky had curled up on the floor next to Nihm, though his nose was busy sniffing out the various scents in the air. Xena then climbed down from Amara’s pocket to curl up on Lucky’s back. Lucky seemed to appreciate the back rub as Xena kneaded Lucky’s back and walked in a couple circles before finding the right spot for his nap.

As others in the room realized who the 6 heroes were, they walked up and asked to hear the tale, and inquired about which Moonwell they would revive next. Haal politely told the story and emphasized how lucky they were to have survived. He also emphasized his sorrow at the loss of the three guides, but reassured those that were saddened that the three were with the Earthmother now and were in good spirits.

As for the Moonwells, Haal explained that, based on their recent experience, it would be better for them to gain more experience and better equipment before attempting any further adventures into the Moonwells. He did, however, make sure to let them know that they did intend on returning to recapture as many as they could. He also added, “Perhaps, by then, my aim will have improved too.” The last brought about a few laughs as well as some pats on his back.

A cartoon of a person holding a bow and a flask

Description automatically generated

Kassuq met an alchemist who served as one of the town’s apothecaries. As usual, the archon couldn’t tell the humanoid’s gender, and after flagons had been brought to the table and emptied into mugs a few times, he couldn’t remember the spellcaster’s name, but they were cool, and claimed to know just about all the locations of the wild herbs, berries, and other flora that could be gathered from here to the Moonwell they’d just restored.

“It’s all one biome, with swamp and highland interspersed,” they assured Kassuq.

Kassuq nodded and listened closely. It was always good to know what berries or flora were edible and useful and which would kill you. Being a carnivore though, Kassuq usually avoided eating plants, but did find some fruits tasty. “So, tell me again which berries you suggest, and which would make you sick again,” he asked after about his fourth flagon of mead.

He got his answer on a napkin, which he pocketed for later.

*He can memorize this later, and recall it when needed.*

Kassuq accepted the offered fruits, placing them into a pocket for now. He then responded, “I do like many spices and herbs, as well as some fruits to spice up whatever I am cooking. I enjoy trying new recipes as well. If you like, though they are mostly for meats and hearty stews, I can share a couple of my recipes with you.” Kassuq knew that the man was mostly vegetarian, but he was interested in the recipes.

After a bit more back and forth about the finer points in the uses of spices and herbs, Kassuq finally stood as his friends were gathering, “It was a pleasure to meet you. Stay safe in your travels.” He shook the man’s hand then headed over to join his friends to depart.

A person in a blue suit holding a card

Description automatically generated

The nephew of Pembroke’s Mayor—they quickly learned—made his daytime home here, and had enough spare coins to wager them on games of skill and chance. To the average patron, a few silvers made the difference between eating every day and not, while to the young man on holiday from Athkatla, a city known for its diverse commerce, it was a mere sliver of his stipend.

He’d offered the heroes a match of dragon hearts, a game that could be partly gamed by counting the cards and gauging probabilities.

Baldoor and Haal both accepted the offer of a game. Baldoor enjoyed the chance and skill of the game while Haal was interested in the probabilities and calculating his chances of winning. In the end, though, they were both more interested in the game, company and conversation, not winning of losing a few coins.

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| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Baldoor, Bluff** | 0 | Cha (+0) | 0 | 0 | 18 | 18 |
| **Baldoor, Concentration** | 5 | Con (+1) | 0 | 6 | 13 | 19 |
| **Baldoor, Diplomacy** | 3 | Cha (+0) | 0 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| **Baldoor, Gather Information** | 0 | Cha (+0) | 0 | 0 | 8 | 8 |
| **Baldoor, Sense Motive** | 0 | Wis (+2) | 0 | 2 | 18 | 20 |
| **Baldoor, Spot** | 0 | Wis (+2) | 2 | 4 | 18 | 22 |

*Total = 94. See below.*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Haal, Bluff** | 0 | **Cha (+2)** | 0 | 2 | 20 | 22 |
| **Haal, Concentration** | 7 | **Con (+1)** | 3 | 11 | 19 | 30 |
| **Haal, Diplomacy\*** | 4 | **Cha (+2)** | 4 | 10 | 12 | 22 |
| **Haal, Gather Information** | 0 | **Cha (+2)** | 0 | 2 | 19 | 21 |
| **Haal, Knowledge: Local** | 4 | **Int (+2)** | 0 | 6 | 10 | 16 |
| **Haal, Sense Motive** | 0 | **Wis (+2)** | 0 | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| **Haal, Spot** | 0 | **Wis (+2)** | 2 | 4 | 20 | 24 |

*Total = 144. See below.*

*6 x 15 = 75 NPC total.*

Haal had gathered a bit more knowledge of the Moonshaes than Baldoor since their arrival, and it gave him a slight edge over the dwarf in this game. Both players kept their eyes on the table, quick to spot any mischief at play, which did not present itself. Still, young Friargaard of Pembroke played a shrewd hand, and made it evident that he did not like to lose. Baldoor and Haal were winning by a great margin, and it occurred to Haal (see Diplomacy checks above) that letting the lad lead by a few rounds to give him some confidence would help them establish some rapport with the privileged youth with the ear of the Mayor.

Seeing that the young man wasn’t happy with his losses, Haal quietly cast *message* and touched Baldoor on the knee. He then covered his mouth as if to cough and whispered, “let him win a couple hands, then we shall leave.”

Baldoor glanced over at the touch, then when Haal whispered and he heard the message clearly, he understood. Though Baldoor did not like to lose, he did realize it would be better to be on friendly terms with the mayor’s nephew.

So, over the next several hands, Baldoor and Haal lost more than they won, with the mayor’s son still a few coins short, but his mood was much improved. As they finished, Baldoor shared a few pointers on brewing, admitting he was no expert, but his honey mead was well liked. Haal got out some paper and his quill and wrote down the information for the young man who said that one of his friends might be interested in trying the recipe.

“If he does, and it is a good seller, be sure he donates a portion to the temple on my behalf,” Baldoor added. The pair then got up and said their goodbyes to young man.

A person sitting in a chair holding a glass

Description automatically generated

A charming half-elf who made a living distilling, brewing, and otherwise preparing libations and potions presented himself before Nihm, and said in Elven, << Your posture tells me you’ve adventured far more than you care to recount, milady. Perhaps you’d like to rest your legs and revel in the moment. >> He motioned to the empty chair beside him and offered her a drink.

Nihm nodded, replying in Elvish, << Thank you; it has been a long road, and some time to relax would be welcome. >> Her tone and the way she sat made it clear, though, that she was only interested in talking and relaxing, and nothing more at the moment. She did ask, shifting to common, “What is your field of expertise?”

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability**  **& Mod.** | **Misc.**  **Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Nihm, Gather Information** | 0 | **Cha (+1)** | 0 | 1 | **1 – 5** | ?? |

*See below.*

<< I’m in the commodities business. I heard from Thrashmosh (half-orc Ranger) and ProcolHarum (dragonborn favored of Lathander) that your group came in with their caravan. Your reputation as the *Moonwell Redeemers* and the *Heroes of the Sword Coast* precedes you, >> the man hid no pretense.

Nihm nodded, “Guilty as charged,” she responded in common. “We traveled with them and helped them fight off an ambush from some bandits along the way. As for the Moonwell Redeemers, we played a small part and luck was on our side.” She took a sip of her drink as Lucky nuzzled her leg, looking for a treat. She gave him a piece of cheese which he devoured before placing his head on Nihm’s lap so she could continue scratching behind his ears. “I would like to know more about the commodities you deal in, and if there is a place where I can write to you should I find a need for your service. Or even a place that could use your services.” She took another sip before adding, “We will be returning to the mainland soon, with the intention of returning to redeem other moonwells in the future.”

He gave Nihm his information, and she wrote it down, intending to follow up with a letter if the need arose.

There were also two bards who’d just started the night before, and they were a bit rusty, but both charming and humble. They were working for food, lodging, and tips, so one couldn’t exactly expect a symphony.

A person in a garment leaning against a wall

Description automatically generated

The woman bowed her string instrument while the man arpeggiated his own, and together they did manage a few rhythmic ditties that got some of the crowd rocking back and forth as they ate and talked.

A person playing a lute

Description automatically generated

They were dubbed by the locals what Haal considered a generic title: the *Heroes of the Sword Coast*. Given the tales of the exploits that got them here, they gave themselves quite a reputation to live up to, but none of it was exaggerated, and they were only getting mightier!

Amara enjoyed the music as it started and did a bit of dancing as well. Between songs she inquired where the pair had been traveling and how long they had been in town.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Amara, Gather Information** | 0 | **Cha (+3)** | 2 | 5 | 1 – 5 | ?? |

*Mosly a fail, plus secondary check (Knowledge: Local) is an automatic fail. See below.*

The sorceress from Silverymoon studied the bards’ expressions. They were somewhat defensive about their long-ago origins, but they mentioned having traveled through about a dozen locales along the Sword Coast, half of which Amara had never heard of. Their accent was local, so they had likely been here a good while.

“Well,” Amara put in, trying to be friendly, “should you ever end up in Neverwinter, be sure to look up my parents, Lyeecia and Trevor Theren. Tell them Amara sent you and they will likely provide you a few, warm, well cooked meals as well as cheap lodging should you need it.” She continued to dance as they played, even getting a couple of the others they had competed against earlier to join her.

As the group finished their 5th song, Amara bowed, “Thank you for the enjoyable evening, but we must go. We have much to do, but we promise to return again to this fine island.” Amara was looking forward to getting back to the mainland, but did find the island and at least some of its residents charming.

From the athletes, the heroes learned much of the recent history of the Temple to Lathander and Shaundaukul. In brief, there had been two temples, as one might imagine, but there ensued a rivalry between them, and in the end, the wisest among that generation of clergy amongst both Temples forged an armistice that existed to this day, and that had forged an entirely novel creed based on an accommodating convergence of two deities’ dogmas. That, and the Earthmother was seen as a base spiritual foundation in the Temple as well, which was a holdover from the indigenous practices of pre-Faerûnian settlements on the Moonshaes. The clergy was not without disagreement and scandal, but they kept a fairly functional operation that, in turn, set the spiritual basis for a robust economy of lumberjacks, farmers, horticulturists, and other primary producers.

From the bards, they learned that the majority of the lands to the north were now firmly occupied by the separatist group they’d already heard of. The following information—already known to the party—was confirmed bit by bit by the bards and other multiple patrons.

* There was a schism in the Kingdom of Calidyrr, and the Dernall Forest was the epicenter of the divide between the southern county of Stirgewick, which remained loyal to King Cymrych II, and the factions of the Fairheight Range to the northeast, bordering so-called Empire of Alaron.
  + The woman leading the rebellion against Cymrych was named Syracuse, and was reputed to be a dragon shaman, a type of spirited warrior with which they were as of yet unfamiliar. She took the title of General, raising an army of barbarians and other woodsy types, and fortifying the Fairheight Foothills against reprisals from their former King.
  + Though questionable, one woman swore that there were sightings of Syracuse’s forces advancing southward, and it was now inadvisable to travel into the Dernall Forest, and even the lands just north of Pembroke, which was still firmly loyal to King Cymrych.

In the end, the groups remained in the Leprechaun for a couple of hours drinking, eating, and telling stories before they all finally went their separate ways.

Reaching their usual room, the Heroes of the Sword Coast began to de-equip and prepare for slumber, wondering whether they should embark on a passing vessel in one of the port towns and head for the mainland, or remain here a bit longer. Some of them had voiced interest in magic items that were unlikely to be found on this rock, and thus it made sense to try to get to Waterdeep, Neverwinter, Baldur’s Gate, or Athkatla, where wares befitting heroes of their caliber could be found.

As they talked before going to sleep, the group was set on returning to the mainland, and planned on leaving Pembroke on the 24th of Flamerule, giving them one more day in the town. The consensus, led by Baldoor, Kassuq and Amara, was to head north to Neverwinter. Once there, they would decide whether or not to stay there or continue to the Icewind Dale area and Ten Towns. Haal and Nihm, though not thrilled about a trip Ten Towns and the cold, were intrigued by a trip to the area. Amara also looked forward to a return to her home of Neverwinter.

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Dawn or Morning, 23 Flamerule

The heroes awoke independently, each silently enough to keep the others asleep.

They went together to have breakfast, and there they acquired from one of the managers a fairly current manifest of each regularly passing ship’s itinerary, and its corresponding fare. “The port is in Llewellyn,” clarified Manager Saragoza, a simple man who knew what he had to in order to run the tavern and feed store here in Pembroke. “I’m assuming you all arrived there, since the other ports are local harbors only.”

“We did,” one of them nodded, and they studied the manifest. They would have to get to Llewellyn to find out more about expected arrival and departure dates.

**Locust Swarm**

Port Mintarn East **400 ₲**

Port Korinn **650 ₲**

Llewellyn **1000 ₲**

Noting the itinerary of the ship that had brought them here, their collective knowledge of the Sea of Swords let them trust that Mintarn had a connecting voyage either directly to Neverwinter, or with a stop in Waterdeep.

Misadventure Galley

Port Mintarn East **600 ₲**

Baldur’s Gate **895 ₲**

Candlekeep **1200 ₲**

Baggins’ Barnacle

Baldur’s Gate **800 ₲**

Waterdeep **1200 ₲**

Waterdeep itself was a naval hub, and Amara’s and Haal’s life at sea gave them the cursory knowledge that ships that crossed wide expanses of open water tended to be fitted for one type of climate, and therefore were better suited for the horizontal voyages that kept them within similar latitudes. By contrast, vessels that traveled along the coastline were often better equipped to brave shifts from temperate to mild arctic conditions, and thus, securing passage to Neverwinter once they arrived on the mainland would likely be cheaper, and they’d have far more options.

It was aboard such ships that word of mouth of heroic and sinister deeds spread across the Sea of Swords, from this archipelago to the mainland, and even to far-off Maztica and other lands beyond.

After eating and some brief conversation, it was agreed that they would seek passage on the Misadventure Galley headed to Port Mintarn East. Once there, they would see what news there was in the area as well as doing some shopping for any items they needed to upgrade, replace or purchase. From there they would seek passage north to either Neverwinter or all the way north to Ten Towns.

“So at 600 gold apiece, that puts us at 3,000 gold. I checked,” Nihm clarified, “and animal companions can travel free.”

“Any chance of lowering that cost with some security work?” asked Baldoor.

“We can check,” Nihm stated.

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They’d gone by foot from Pembroke to Grady, and then on to Llewellyn, and were now about to board the Misadventure Galley.

While walking to Grady, the group decided to take the opportunity to work on a few things. During the daytime, while on the move, they tried to determine a good marching order, especially with the recent addition of Amara. After trying a few different options, they came to agree upon one that seemed to work the best.



They knew this wouldn’t work very well indoors or moving through a dungeon, but they decided they would worry about that when the time came, though Amara had her ideas about how that would work.



As they traveled, they worked on maintaining their gaps and doing listen and spot checks as often as possible. Lucky and Xena even participated as they got the idea of what was being done.

On the first night, as they set up camp, they also decided it would be a good idea to assign tasks for this as well, seeing as there were now 5 of them. If each had a task, then it would be much easier and quicker to set up the camp. After a few minutes of discussion around the fire, before setting up the watches, they came to an agreement on several tasks. Kassuq was more than happy to do the cooking as he enjoyed doing so. He promised to include vegetables as part of the meals and not just meat. Other tasks like setting up the tents and bedrolls, and collecting firewood, plus the order of the night’s watches were also agreed upon.

*See Teamwork & SOPs DOC in Google Docs*

On the second night that they rested, Baldoor brought up something that had been on his mind since the battle on the chessboard. “I noticed that there were a few on tha board that were under some sort o’ compulsion or mind control.”

There was consensus on the peculiarity of that situation, and expressed sentiment of sympathy for anyone who had fallen prey to possession, and then perished in unwitting service to evil.

Baldoor looked around at the others, “We must make sure that is one o’ us is placed under a hold spell or other control spell that we help each other.”

Haal nodded, “That is an excellent point. A good way to accomplish that is to help them focus on concentrate on something positive. That will enable them to bolster their inner strength to defeat the hold placed on them. So,” Haal looked around, “if we all share a happy memory or story, it will help the others when the time comes.”

With that, they spent the night and next day each telling stories from their past about moments that brought them happiness and fond memories. Each providing their teammates with vital ammunition should any spell caster try and use a compulsion spell on them in the future.

The group boarded the Misadventure Galley and stowed their items for the relatively short trip to the east coast of the island of Mintarn. They had decided to forgo asking about a reduced fair in exchange for working as guards or part of the crew. For this trip, they would simply relax and enjoy the ride. Plus, this would be Lucky’s first time and sea, so Nihm really needed to pay attention to him and make sure he remained calm. All of the others also offered to make sure their wolf companion was well looked after, except for Baldoor who proclaimed, “He’s a good mutt ‘n’ all, but I’m no good with tamed critters, let alone wild one.”

When Baldoor called Lucky a ‘wild one’, the wolf’s ears perked up and he looked at Baldoor, tilting his head slightly as if trying to decide if he had just been insulted or not. However, the action brought a smile and laugh from the dwarf, prompting Lucky to trot over for a scratch behind his ears from the dwarf.

During the trip, Lucky spent more time below deck then on deck, which wasn’t a real surprise. However, he did seem to become more comfortable with sailing as time passed. He still tended to stay away from the side rails of the ship, staying more towards the middle of the deck.

The rest of the group, when not keeping an eye on Lucky, spent their time enjoying the fresh, salty breeze and the occasional spray of mist coming over the sides of the ship. Fortunately, the voyage was rather uneventful, unlike their trip to Llewellyn. When they arrived in port, and the gangplank was in place, Lucky went running down the ramp and onto the dock, where he sat waiting for the others to come down.

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Upon arriving in Mintarn East, the group was able to go ashore for the afternoon and evening. The Captain told them they would be leaving in the morning for Baldur’s Gate. Haal mentioned, “Some of us have experience as sailors from our trip to Llewellyn not long ago. Perhaps we can help out with some of the tasks on the voyage to Baldur’s Gate. We would only ask for a reduction in the fare to get from here to there.” Haal smiled, a little pleased with his bit of rhyming.

After a moment of thought, the Captain replied, “Well, you’ve been good passengers so far, not problems or complaints, even that wolf of yours behaved himself. Tell you what, come back and see my first mate in an hour. He will have a few simple tasks for you. If you complete them to his satisfaction, then I’ll cut your fare in half. It never hurts to have a few extra hands, especially on a long voyage like this.”

The group spent the time just wandering the streets and checking the stores. When three quarters of an hour had passed, they headed back to the docks, arriving a few minutes before they were expected. Finding the First Mate, Haal said, “The Captain told us to see you, and that you would have a few tasks for us.”

The man nodded, “I certainly do,” he replied with a smile that seemed to say he doubted they would pass. The man watched as they each preformed several tasks from tie ropes, to securing sails and climbing the shrouds. He seemed to be the most impressed by Haal as he’d expected the book worm to be less capable.

After several minutes, the First Mate declared, “OK, you know what you’re doing, but yer still not sailors. You’ll work on the deck durin tha daytime so I ken keep an eye on yah.” He then looked at Lucky, “Just make sure that yer mutt there don’t get in tha way.”

Nihm gave the man a glare, but responded in a calm tone, “Lucky will be just fine. He gave you no trouble on the way here, so he will be fine on this journey as well.”

The next morning, the group arrived and boarded the ship. They kept the same accommodations as they had on the trip to Mintarn East, which helped Lucky stay relaxed as it still had all of their familiar scents. When they set sail, Nihm made sure there was a spot out of the way on the deck where Lucky could lay down while they worked. The wolf gladly to the time to rest in the sun and enjoy the breeze, even if the salty spray messed with his fur from time to time.

The first few days at sea were rather uneventful; even the weather was a bit boring in its consistency. However, on the 4th day, some rough weather rolled in during the morning while Amara, Baldoor, Haal, Kassuq and Nihm were all on deck. Lucky and Xena remained below deck, the weasel keeping Lucky company and calm animal spell helping the wolf to relax. When the storm was over and their shift on deck had passed, the now soaked heroes headed down to their space, finding a wolf and weasel happy to see them all. After cleaning up and changing, they all grabbed a bite to eat before deciding that they all needed a nap. So they all climbed into their bunks while Lucky and Xena curled up on the blankets in the corner.

The next two days were again a bit boring, but the 7th day at sea became a bit more interesting. Shortly after dawn and the start of their shift on deck, the lookout noticed a ship ahead of them in the distance headed in their direction. As it approached, it was noted that it was not flying any identification flags, so everyone began to gather their weapons. A short time after that, as it got within a mile of the Misadventure, several objects were seen leaving the deck of the approaching ship. As they all watched them get closer, someone yelled “Repel Boarders!!!” That was when they realized that the things were all orcs flying through the air, likely with the aid of a mass fly spell.

As the flying orcs approached, they launched projectiles from their crossbows and bows, striking a couple of those on deck. One of them even fired a fireball from a wand striking the deck near the ship’s wheel, injuring several others. The heroes had taken cover and had avoided the initial attack. They quickly emerged from behind the mast and railing and countered the attack themselves. Nihm sent several arrows flying, striking one of the orcs while Amara sent her *magic missiles* into another. Baldoor and Haal both cast their *spiritual weapons* and both struck at the same target. Kassuq drew his sword and charged the first orc to land, striking him in the chest with his sword. The other ships crew also quickly rallied and began to fight back.

As the one with the wand landed and pointed it at the main mast, Lucky ran in and bit at his leg, then quickly followed that up by tripping the spellcaster whose wand bounced away (only to be kicked off the deck and into the waters below). Before the orc could recover, Nihm and another crewmember put a few more arrows into him at point blank range. Meanwhile, Baldoor and Haal backed away from the railing and began fighting a few orcs side by side, their spiritual weapons still striking the same opponent as he landed, bloodies from the repeated hits. Kassuq took a hit from his opponent, but returned it with another of his own. The orc was then struck by a series of *magic missiles* from Amara, finishing off the brute.

There had been about a dozen attackers, hoping to overwhelm the ship’s defenses quickly, but with the loss of the wand of *fireballs*, their outlook appeared grim. One of the orcs called out, “Fall back, take what you can grab!” With that command a couple of the orcs grabbed the weapons and jewelry off of a couple of dead bodies while a couple more grabbed a chest. They all then began flying back, a couple of them firing their bows and crossbows again to keep their targets from firing at them. As they fled, Nihm, Amara, Haal and Baldoor were able to get in a few last shots with their bow, *magic missiles* and *spiritual weapons*, respectively. The other ship unfurled its full sails and quickly headed south, aided by a bit of magic. There were 5 dead crew and several injured. Haal and Baldoor quickly got to work healing those that were injured then cast their *mending* spells in order to make what repairs they could to the ship.

As the other ship moved out of site, the Captain thanked everyone for their part in protecting the ship. “I’ve heard of those orcs, they are a new band roaming the seas. Their tactics are not effective, but I’ve heard of a couple of ships they have raided and killed nearly all aboard, leaving just a couple witnesses to tell the tale.” He shook his head, “Normally we don’t have many seasoned fighters aboard, so they must have thought us easy prey. Good thing the five,” a growl from Lucky got the Captain’s attention, “… six of you were aboard.” With the amended comment, Lucky stretched out on the deck and licked his paws. Meanwhile, the dead orcs were unceremoniously thrown overboard and the dead crew were wrapped in sheets to be given a more proper burial at sea. Haal offered to say a few prayers, having done a bit of research on Tempus while on Moonshea Isle. He felt he would be able to do a serviceable job on the crew’s behalf and not offend their beliefs.

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| ***Heroes of the Sword Coast: 1370*** |  |  |  |
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| ***Event*** | º | R |  |
| The party arrives in Llewellyn, securing passage aboard the Misadventure Galley, due to arrive in 2 days | Night’s End | 25 | Flamerule |
| The party boards the Misadventure Galley, heading for Port Mintarn East | Morning | 27 | Flamerule |
| The crew of the Misadventure Galley celebrates Midsummerfest on the high seas | All Day | \* | Midsummer |
| The party arrives at Port Mintarn East | Highsun | 1 | Eleasis |
| The Misadventure Galley departs for Baldur’s Gate | Morning | 2 | Eleasis |
| The party arrives at Baldur’s Gate | Afternoon | 12 | Eleasis |