Chapter 5: Emo Syd Cringe

Faram had gone off to pick berries and gather some spell components, and returned just as they had finished paying their respects to their friend, Lee.

They were ready to continue their search for the source of the spider scourge, and having spotted an aranea among the group that accosted them, they felt that they were at least on the right track.

Baldoor cast *light of Lunia [expired in 3 minutes]* upon himself when they started heading out again. Nihm had her bow in hand and an arrow ready. Kassuq had his longsword in hand.

With Faram in front, Baldoor about 10’ behind him, Nihm 10’ behind Baldoor, and Kassuq 10’ behind Nihm. The forest was not so dense that visibility was a problem, though there were times when rounding a bend roused the heroes’ innate sense of caution as they cleared blind spots in the path ahead by walking around them.

They zigzagged southeastward, then northeastward, as they had been doing for another hour, and as the horizon gave way to a downward slope dotted by bushes among a sea of grasses, they could now survey the next few miles of their trek before them. The trail meandered along a stream, and maybe 1000’ ahead, they could see a humanoid figure sitting atop a rock maybe 10’ from the stream. Dressed in black, and with black hair, the figure rested its head on its forearms as it sat with its knees bent upwards so that the forearms were supported by the knees.

As they stopped, Baldoor said, “We should approach with caution. Faram yee can come with me.” He turned to Nihm and Kassuq, “Tha two o you follow a hundred feet bahind us.” Nihm and Kassuq nodded.

Faram and Baldoor openly approached the figure. Baldoor had his shield at his side and weapon in hand also at his side, so not in a threatening posture. Nihm and Kassuq followed about 100’ behind, Nihm with her bow at the ready and Kassuq with his sword in hand. Nihm and Kassuq will be scanning their surroundings in a 360-degree pattern. Nihm keeping an eye on her half and Kassuq on his half.

The gnome and dwarf got quite a way before the figure lifted his head up, revealing a boyish face that had been crying. They were now about 200’ away from the boy with jet-black hair, seeing his bloodshot eyes as he wiped tears away with his sleeves.

The other two could not yet see such details, but soon would if they continued to approach.

Faram and Baldoor noted that this was an elven boy of about 30 or 40 years, not quite as tall as he might become in a few more decades. He stopped crying, trying to regain his composure as he realized that he would have to at least say hello.

Kassuq and Nihm continued to follow, staying about 100’ behind the other two and continued to look for any threats.

When the boy looked up, Baldoor continued to walk closer. He tried to make his deep voice sound as unimposing as possible. “What’s tha matter, lad?” he asked.

The melancholy lad looked up at the dwarf, squinting in the light with bloodshot eyes, and shook his head with resignation, uttering, “I forsake the moment, for my love has perished, and with every moment comes the anguish of living. No reprieve...”

Baldoor turned to look at Kassuq and Nihm. When he caught the eye of one or both, he held up his hand, palm toward them to indicate they stop and hold their positions.

Kassuq saw the signal then said, “Hold,” which Nihm acknowledged. The pair stopped and continued to look around them for any signs of trouble.

Baldoor then turned his attention back to the elf. “Sorry ta hear that lad. Kin ya tell us what happened?” Baldoor was curious about what happened and where. It might have something to do with their current task, and if so, any information would be helpful.



“Phhhh-hhhh,” the anguished boy languished. “‘Spare me the rest!’ you’ll ask me if I relate the entirety of the tale—the crystal ship, the prince-turned-cricket-by-polymorph, and the witch who rendered him so—so I’ll skip to the end and impart that I need you dead that my lover can live again.”

And with this, Baldoor anticipated Round 1.

Baldoor shook his head and attacked, hoping to discourage the boy from any further violence.

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Warhammer | 1d6 | -1 | 1 | x3 | Bludgeon | 3.0 | +2 | 11 | 13 |

*Miss.*

Round 1

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Group** | **Initiative** | **Roll** | **Modified Roll** | **Speed** |
| Syd Cringe | 2 | 5 | 19 | 24 | 20’ - 30’ |
| Faram | 1 | 5 | 13 | 18 | 30’ |
| PCs | 1 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 30’ - 60’ |

Syd cast *deep slumber* upon the adjacent dwarf.

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| **Save vs.***deep slumber* | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| **Baldoor, Will** | **3** | Wis (+2) | 0 | 5 | 17 | 22 | +2 vs. Poison & Spells |

*Success. Effect negated.*

“Aw, what?” the lad blurted, seeing his spell fail. “You’re supposed to be *helping* me!” he then spoke upwardly.

Faram had half-seen this coming, though he had been optimistic until this moment. His *unluck* spell might have worked well at a moment like this, but he was out of range, so he cast *shield [expired on Round 61]*, and made way for the lad in order to persuade him to stop his hostilities before it cost him his life. “We are not a lot to be meddled with, son,” said the gnome to the elf.

*Faram gained +4 to TAC and AC, plus complete protection from magic missiles.*

Baldoor continued to attack with his masterwork warhammer.

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Warhammer | 1d6 | -1 | 1 | x3 | Bludgeon | 3.0 | +2 | 19 | 21 |

*Hit. Dmg: 4 – 1 = 3.*

Seeing the youth look up, Nihm quickly scanned the sky above them looking for familiar or some other potential ally, but saw only puffy clouds. She then moved 5’ to get a good shot past Baldoor at the youth, but she would be firing into a melee from 100’ away, so the 5’ step made no difference.

Kassuq, not having his bow in hand, ran towards the kid, sword at the ready. He eliminated almost the entire 100’ between himself and his intended target, approaching from an angle so as to avoid tackling Baldoor on his charge. He was poised for a nice hit, and now only needed to clear about 20’ before contact.

Round 2

Syd foresaw his imminent demise, and cast *invisibility [expired on Round 62]*, stepping aside as his enemies closed in.

Faram gained another 60’ as he ran towards the boy, getting about 40’ away, and was about to cast *unluck* when the beguiler disappeared from sight.

Baldoor took a step forward, his hammer at the ready as he looked around the area for any signs of movement or any sounds. He motioned for Faram to join them and to be quiet.

Kassuq came to a stop and listened for the elf, hoping to hear him breathing or the ground making noise as he moved.

Nihm, seeing the boy vanish, ran forward to catch up to the others, looking for any footprints in the ground. Her studded lather armor and sheathed dagger and rapier slapping just a bit with every stride of her slender legs.

Round 3

They heard nothing but Nihm’s sprinting toward them until she reached them, then *[DM assumption]* they all stood still to listen for the fifty-year-old boy’s movements.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Baldoor, Listen** | 0 | Wis (+2) | 0 | 2 | 15 – 20 | ?? |
| **Faram, Listen** | 9 | Wis (+0) | 2 | 11 | 10 – 15 | ?? |
| **Kassuq, Listen** | 6 | Wis (+1) | 0 | 7 | 15 – 20 | ?? |
| **Nihm, Listen** | 1 | Wis (+1) | 0 | 2 | 10 – 15 | ?? |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Syd, Move Silently** | 5 | **Dex (+1)** | 0 | 6 | ?? | ?? |

*See below.*

Faram whispered, “Two can play at that game.” The gnome then cast *invisibility* as well, and disappeared from view. “I’m here,” he whispered again. About to play Double Blind with this nose miner.”

Round 4

When Faram vanished, Baldoor smiled slightly then turned to the other two, “Back to each other.”

With that statement, the three moved closer together and put their backs towards each other. Nihm put her bow away and pulled out her sword.

The three then listened for any noises as they maintained their position. Also, the kept their eyes open for any stones that might move or disturbance in the water.

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| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Baldoor, Listen** | 0 | Wis (+2) | 0 | 2 | 15 – 20 | ?? |
| **Faram, Listen** | 9 | Wis (+0) | 2 | 11 | 5 – 10 | ?? |
| **Kassuq, Listen** | 6 | Wis (+1) | 0 | 7 | 5 – 10 | ?? |
| **Nihm, Listen** | 1 | Wis (+1) | 0 | 2 | 5 – 10 | ?? |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Syd, Move Silently** | 5 | **Dex (+1)** | 0 | 6 | ?? | ?? |

*See below.*

The breeze kicked up for a moment, and they tried to look for footprints on the grassy dirt, but saw nothing.

Round 5

“There!” pointed Kassuq, first hearing the tiptoeing elf, whose steps now became fast and fleeting, kicking up dirt to their north-northeast as he tried to get away. He must have been 30’ away, and was about to be about 150’ away in the next six seconds if they did nothing.

Faram asked, “What should we do? Let him live to kill some other poor fools along the road?”

“When you put it that way,” Nihm—who now wielded her sword—answered as she quickly drew a dagger with her off-hand, and flung it after the fleeing elf, aiming for the middle of his back, or at least where she estimated it to be.

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| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Dagger, Thrown | 1d4 | 0 | -2 off-hand-4 *invisible* | 19-20, x2 | 30’ | 1.0 | +0 | 6 | 6 | +1 within 30’ |

*Miss.*

The dagger landed on the ground.

Baldoor, meanwhile, cast *magic weapon [expired on Round 8]* conjuring a hammer and aiming it for about where he thought the middle of the elf’s torso would be.

The hammer came into being, and attacked the area directed by the dwarf.

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Spiritual Hammer | 1d8 | 1 | -4 *invisible* | x3 | Bludgeon | - | +1 | 15 | 16 |

*Hit. Dmg: 4 + 1 = 5.*

In humanoid form, Kassuq began to charge after the elf, following the dust as it came up. Within seconds, he would be close enough to pounce upon the elf.

Faram ran 30’ to ensure that he was within range, then cast *grease* upon the area just beyond where the runner was making his position evident.

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| **Save vs.***Grease* | **Syd** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Syd, Reflex** | 7 | **Dex (+1)** | 0 | 8 | 1 | 9 |

*Fail.*

The elf slipped and fell across a good 10’ of slick pitch before rolling along some dirt that now negated his *invisibility* for the purposes of targeting him. He got up in order to continue his wayward stride, hoping he would not slip again.

Round 6

Kassuq ran after the now visible foe and slashed as him with his longsword once more.

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Longsword | 1d8 | +2 +2charge | +2 charge | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 4.0 | +7 | 11 | 18 |

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

The archon slipped on a bit of magical *grease*.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.***grease* | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Kassuq, Reflex** | 3 | **Dex (+2)** | 1 | 6 | **2** | 8 |

*Fail.*

And though he was past the spell’s main effect, he landed on his buttocks, and needed to get up.

Nihm stopped and dropped her rapier and pulled out her bow and an arrow, quickly sending an arrow at the fleeing elf.

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| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Shortbow | 1d6 | +0 | 1 | x3 | 60’ | 2.0 | +7 | *1* | 8 |

*Miss.*

Baldoor ran after the elf, directing his *magical hammer* to attack the elf once again.

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Spiritual Hammer | 1d8 | 1 + 2charge | 2 charge | x3 | Bludgeon | - | +7 | 3 | 10 |

*Miss.*

Faram zapped the now easy-to-spot figure doused in grease and dirt, becoming visible once again.

*Dmg: 10 + 3 = 13 magic.*

Syd wept now, one arm visibly acting to defend itself in vain against the three incoming missiles that hit him square in the chest. “You good-for-nothing heathen mongrels, and *you!*”—he now pointed to the archer who’d just missed him—“You should know better than to mingle with a dog-man and two hunchbacks. You are a *disgrace* to your *race*!”

Round 7

Kassuq got onto his feet *[move action]*, and growled, showing his teeth. “Do not judge my friends for they are good of heart; you, however, I judge you a worthless coward.” Kassuq then positioned himself to attack, hopefully subduing the elf.

Baldoor, continued to close the gap with the elf, making sure to go around the *grease* spell’s area. He directed the hammer to attack the elf once more.

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Spiritual Hammer | 1d8 | 1 | 0 | x3 | Bludgeon | - | +5 | 9 | 14 |

*Hit. Dmg: 2 + 1 = 3.*

Nihm now took a bit more time and fired off a pair of arrows, intending to end the fight or at least keep the elf from getting away.

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| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Shortbow | 1d6 | +0 | 1 | x3 | 60’ | 2.0 | +7 | 14 | 21 |
| Shortbow, Rapid Shot | 1d6 | +0 | 1 | x3 | 60’ | - | +7 | 6 | 13 |

*Hit, miss. Dmg: 1.*

The first arrow pierced the young man’s leg, and he fumbled in his step, falling onto the dirt yet again.

After firing, Nihm looked around and up, wondering if the elf did have any help that might have forsaken him, but saw nothing stirring in the breezes above her or in their midst.

The quinquagenarian elf cried in his own language, understood only by Faram and Nihm. << Spare me or kill me; it matters not! >> He stopped trying to get away, and sat holding himself up on his left elbow as he spat blood near the place where Kassuq would soon step with the intention of causing subdual damage.

Round 8

Kassuq stepped towards the elf, “Do you surrender?” he asked, sword pointed at the elf, then swung menacingly with the intent to at least communicate that Syd was about to make his last bad decision.

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Longsword | 1d8 | +2 | -4 nonlethal | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 4.0 | +1 | 11 | 12 |

*Miss.*

Baldoor stepped closer, his *magical hammer* floating near the elf as well. “We had no fight with ye,” Baldoor added to Kassuq’s comments. “If ye surrender we will let ya live.”

Nihm picked up her rapier and sheathed it as she walked towards the others. She carried her bow in one hand and an arrow in the other. “He asked that we spare him or kill him.” Nihm looked at the elf and shrugged her shoulders, “I’m fine with either,” she said then looked between Baldoor and Kassuq.

They could still not see his face, but could tell that he was having a tough time with that call based on what they heard. “P-ph-fffuuuuuuuuckk! Fiiine! I’ll choose life! What a great lot *you all* are for sparing my hide.” The entitled lad wasn’t quite grateful. “Now do me a favor, and piss off!”

Faram positioned himself for a better casting should the conflict reprise.

Emo Syd Cringe cried and ran away, thinking this was a smart thing.

Round 9

The three watched the lad run off crying.

Baldoor caught Nihm’s bow coming up out of the corner of his eye. He motioned with his hand for her to lower it, saying, “Let ‘im go. He’ll leave us be if he knows what’s good for ‘im.”

Nihm did as Baldoor said, and lowered he bow. She put the arrow back in her quiver, “I wonder what his problem is.”

Kassuq shrugged his shoulders. “Whatever it is, I hope he leaves us alone or next time I won’t be so forgiving.”

The three then turned to Faram. Baldoor spoke up, “Let’s continue ‘r quest.”