Oghma’s Faithful

by Alexis Álvarez & Deepseek

**Chapter 13: The Sword Mountains**

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**Abstract:** Entrusted by the Font of Knowledge and the City of Waterdeep, the heroes ventured to the Sword Mountains in pursuit of the Codex of Creation, as well as two items once belonging to the ancestors of Thorgrim Ironheart. The diabolists that the heroes had pursued had been leaving Waterdeep, making pilgrimages to the Sword Mountains wearing sandals with crushed glass on their soles, and it was evident that many were being coerced into doing it.

The heroes took a wagon part of the way up the mountains, and took in a repentant cultist, healing his feet and getting him rehabilitated. The wagon couldn’t proceed past debris caused by an avalanche, and thus the wagoner took Kael, the cultist, back to Waterdeep. They fought a chimera and bested a few diabolist sentries before finally reaching their lair and slaying Penelope Verminswarm, her lover—Tatiana—and a number of other ne’er-do-wells. Banshee was instrumental in sabotaging the meimer tanks, Liquid Pain barrels, and the rest of their operations before heading to Khundrukar, where they cautiously and ingeniously bypassed the Abjurations that warded the Codex of Creation, liberating it, the Shield of Delzoun, and the Hammer of Moradin’s Will before setting back to Waterdeep.

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The party is returning to the **Castle Ward** after a successful shopping trip in the **Trades Ward**. The streets of Waterdeep are bustling with activity, but as they pass by the **Font of Knowledge** (Oghma’s temple), they notice a commotion. A group of acolytes is gathered around a frail, elderly man who is being carried into the temple on a stretcher. His face is pale, and his breathing is labored.

One of the acolytes recognizes the party—particularly **Eldrin Thistlebrook**, the archivist—and calls out to them. “Please, you must come quickly! Eldrin Moonscribe is asking for you. He doesn’t have much time.”

If the party approaches, they are ushered into a quiet chamber within the temple. The elderly man, **Eldrin Moonscribe**, is propped up on a bed, his hands clutching a worn leather satchel. His eyes light up when he sees the party, and he gestures weakly for them to come closer.

Eldrin speaks in a raspy voice, each word labored but urgent: “Thank the gods you’ve come. I don’t have much time, so listen carefully. Years ago, I explored the ruins of **Khundrukar**, an ancient dwarven forge in the **Sword Mountains**. I found… something extraordinary. A tome, *The Codex of Creation*, said to contain divine secrets about the very fabric of the multiverse. But I was forced to flee before I could recover it. The forge is dangerous, filled with traps and monsters, but I believe you are the ones who can succeed where I failed.”

He hands the satchel to **Eldrin Thistlebrook**, the archivist. Inside is a **map** to Khundrukar, along with a few notes and sketches of the forge’s layout. Eldrin Moonscribe continues:

“The Codex must not fall into the wrong hands. There are… others seeking it. A cult, devoted to Loviatar and Asmodeus. They must not be allowed to claim it. Please, promise me you will recover the Codex and bring it back to the Font of Knowledge.”

With that, Eldrin Moonscribe falls back onto the bed, his strength spent. The acolytes quietly inform the party that he has only hours left to live.

The party exchanged contact information with Thorgrim Ironheart, promising to return the relics of Durin Fireforge to the **Temple of Moradin** if they were uncovered. The dwarven cleric nodded solemnly, his eyes filled with gratitude and determination. “Moradin’s blessings go with you,” he said, clasping each of their hands in turn. “May your path be true, and your hammer strikes be sure.”

Later, in the bustling streets of Waterdeep, the party regrouped to discuss their next steps. The revelation that the diabolists were still operating within the **City of Splendors** sent a chill through them. They had faced these cultists before, and the thought of their sinister machinations continuing unchecked was enough to steel their resolve.

They turned to **Lirael Bowik**, the half-elf scholar who had joined their cause. Though she had initially presented herself as a mere academic, there was something about her demeanor—a quiet confidence, a glint of hidden strength—that suggested she was more than she appeared. The party decided to trust her, at least for now, and filled her in on the mission objectives and what they knew so far about the diabolists.

Lirael listened intently, her sharp eyes narrowing as she absorbed the details. “A cult devoted to Loviatar and Asmodeus,” she murmured, her voice low and melodic. “They are not to be underestimated. If they seek the *Infernal Anvil*, then we must act swiftly. Khundrukar holds more than just the Codex—it is a place of immense power, and its secrets could tip the balance in their favor.”

She paused, then added with a faint smile, “But you already know that, don’t you? You’ve faced them before. And you’ve triumphed. That’s why Eldrin Moonscribe chose you.”

The party couldn’t help but notice the subtle shift in Lirael’s tone, the way her words seemed to carry an almost magical weight. It was clear that she was no ordinary scholar, but they had no time to press her further. The cult was on the move, and the Sword Mountains awaited.

With no time to waste, the party set off through the **North Gate** of Waterdeep. As they approached the gate, Eldrin Thistlebrook, ever the consummate archivist, stepped forward and presented their travel documents to the guards. The whisper gnome’s sharp eyes scanned the paperwork, and he immediately spotted an opportunity for bureaucratic precision.

“Excuse me,” Eldrin said, his voice firm but polite, “but I must request a notarization of this ticket. According to § 568.1370.b of the Waterdeep Municipal Code, I have the right to have a notary present at this transaction with the City.”

The gate guards exchanged bemused glances, but they were used to dealing with all sorts of eccentricities in a city as diverse as Waterdeep. One of them sighed and sent a runner to fetch a notary. A few minutes later, a harried-looking man in a neat doublet arrived, carrying a stamp and a small inkpad. He examined the documents, asked a few perfunctory questions, and then stamped the ticket with a satisfying *thunk*.

“There you go,” the notary said, handing the ticket back to Eldrin. “Fully notarized and validated. Safe travels.”

Eldrin nodded in satisfaction, carefully tucking the notarized ticket into his satchel. His friends exchanged amused glances, but they knew better than to argue with Eldrin when it came to paperwork. After all, his meticulous attention to detail had saved them more than once.

As they passed through the gate, the party found **Lirael Bowik** waiting for them with a **covered wagon** hitched to two sturdy draft horses. The wagon was laden with supplies, and a grizzled driver sat at the reins, chewing on a piece of straw.

“I took the liberty of arranging transportation,” Lirael said with a smile. “It’s not the fastest way to travel, but it’s comfortable, and we’ll have everything we need for the journey. The driver, **Garrick**, knows the roads to the Sword Mountains well. He’s also discreet, which is a bonus given our… sensitive mission.”

The wagon was spacious enough for the entire party, with room for their gear and a few extra supplies. Lirael had even thought to include a small writing desk for Eldrin, complete with ink, parchment, and a few reference books. It was clear that she had gone out of her way to make the journey as smooth as possible.

**Lore written in Eldrin’s journal:** After the death of **Father Pompeii Vesuvius**, Penelope Verminswarm retreated to a hidden grotto in the **Sword Mountains**, where she now leads a cell of the cult’s most devoted followers. This grotto, known as the **Grotto of Penitent Suffering**, is a place of dark rituals and infernal power, hidden deep within the mountains and accessible only through a series of treacherous paths.

As the party’s wagon rolled along the rugged road toward the **Sword Mountains**, they came upon a lone pilgrim, hunched and limping, their feet wrapped in bloodied rags. The pilgrim’s tattered robes bore the faint, faded sigil of the **bloody whip and flaming sword**, though the symbol seemed almost worn away, as if the pilgrim had tried to scrub it off. Their face was gaunt, their eyes hollow, but there was a flicker of something—desperation, perhaps, or a faint spark of hope—as they raised a trembling hand toward the wagon.

**Artemis**, ever compassionate and guided by her faith in Oghma, leaned out from the wagon and called for the driver to halt. She stepped down, her presence calm and reassuring, and approached the pilgrim with a small loaf of bread and a waterskin in hand.

“Peace be with you, traveler,” she said, her voice warm and melodic. “I am **Artemis**, a humble servant of Oghma. You look weary and in need. Please, take this food and water. May it give you strength for your journey.”

The pilgrim hesitated, their eyes darting between Artemis and the others in the wagon. After a moment, they reached out with trembling hands and accepted the offerings. They tore into the bread with a ravenous hunger, crumbs falling to the ground as they drank deeply from the waterskin.

When they finally looked up, their voice was a hoarse whisper. “Thank you… thank you, kind one. My name is **Kael**. I… I was once lost, but your kindness reminds me that there is still light in this world.”

Kael’s gaze shifted to the ground, their expression pained. “I was one of them… one of the cult. But I couldn’t bear it anymore. The suffering, the cruelty… I had to leave. But they don’t let you leave. Not really. They hunt you. They make you pay.”

Artemis knelt beside Kael, her eyes filled with empathy. “You are safe now, Kael. Tell us, what do you know of the cult’s plans? Where are they going? Who leads them now?”

Kael’s voice trembled as they spoke. “They’re heading to the mountains… to a hidden grotto. **Penelope Verminswarm** is there. She’s the last of the leaders. She’s… she’s worse than the others. She delights in suffering, in twisting minds and breaking wills. She’s gathering her followers there, preparing for something big. They say she’s seeking an ancient artifact, something powerful enough to… to change everything.”

Kael looked up, their eyes pleading. “Please, if you’re heading that way, be careful. She’s not like the others. She’s cunning, ruthless. And her grotto… it’s a place of nightmares.”

Kael’s eyes widened as **Sebenzi** spoke, her words carrying the weight of divine authority and genuine compassion. The pilgrim’s trembling hands clutched the bread and waterskin tighter, as if anchoring themselves to the kindness they had been shown. When **Eldrin** stepped forward, adding his own pledge of protection, Kael’s resolve seemed to waver, caught between fear and hope.

Banshee’s jest broke the tension, drawing a faint, almost disbelieving smile from Kael. They looked at the party, their eyes searching each face for any hint of deception. Finding none, they took a deep, shuddering breath and nodded.

“I… I renounce them,” Kael said, their voice gaining strength. “I renounce Loviatar, Asmodeus, and all who serve them. I swear it by whatever power you hold dear. I cannot go back to that life. I cannot bear the suffering anymore.”

Kael’s gaze shifted to Sebenzi, then to Eldrin. “If you will truly protect me, I will help you. I know the way to the grotto. I can guide you there. But you must understand… it is a place of darkness. Penelope… she is not like the others. She thrives on pain, on despair. She will not hesitate to destroy anyone who stands in her way.”

Sebenzi placed a reassuring hand on Kael’s shoulder. “You are under our protection now. Oghma’s light will guide us, and we will face this darkness together.”

Eldrin nodded, his expression serious. “Your knowledge will be invaluable. We will need every advantage if we are to stop Penelope and her followers.”

Banshee, ever the pragmatist, added with a smirk, “And if things go sideways, we’ll just have to improvise. But for now, let’s get you cleaned up and fed. You look like you’ve been through the Nine Hells and back.”

**Sebenzi** stepped forward, her hands glowing with a soft, golden light as she called upon the power of Oghma to heal Kael’s wounds. She placed her hands gently on the pilgrim’s shoulders, and the divine energy flowed into them, mending their injuries and easing their pain.

“By the grace of Oghma, may you find strength and solace,” Sebenzi intoned, her voice steady and reassuring. The light faded, and Kael stood a little taller, the color returning to their cheeks.

Kael looked down at their hands, flexing their fingers as if testing their newfound strength. “Thank you,” they said, their voice filled with gratitude. “I… I haven’t felt this well in a long time.”

Sebenzi smiled warmly. “You are under our protection now. We will see this through together.”

Lirael, ever the observant and cautious scholar, watches the interaction between Sebenzi and Kael with a mix of curiosity and wariness. When Kael accepts the party’s protection, Lirael steps forward, her voice calm but firm.

“Kael,” she says, “your knowledge of the cult and the grotto will be invaluable to us. But I must ask—are you truly ready to leave that life behind? The path we’re on is dangerous, and there’s no room for hesitation. If you’re with us, you’re with us completely. Do you understand?”

Lirael’s words are not unkind, but they carry a weight of seriousness. She’s seen too much betrayal and deceit to take Kael’s loyalty for granted.

**Garrick the Wagoner:**

Garrick, the grizzled driver, scratches his beard and eyes Kael with a mix of skepticism and grudging acceptance. “Well, ain’t this a twist,” he mutters. “Ain’t every day you pick up a stray cultist on the road. But if the lady cleric vouches for you, I s’pose you’re alright. Just don’t go causin’ no trouble, eh?”

Garrick’s tone is gruff but not hostile. He’s a practical man, and as long as Kael doesn’t slow them down or cause problems, he’s willing to give them a chance.

Kael looks between Lirael and Garrick, their expression a mix of gratitude and determination. “I understand,” they say to Lirael. “I’ve made my choice, and I won’t turn back. I’ll do whatever I can to help you stop Penelope and her followers.”

To Garrick, they nod respectfully. “I won’t cause any trouble. I just want to make things right.”

**Artemis** turned to **Garrick**, the grizzled wagon driver, and asked with a warm smile, “Do you happen to have an extra pair of shoes? Those glass-shard soles aren’t going to do Kael much good on Oghma’s path.”

Garrick scratched his beard and gave a gruff chuckle. “Aye, I might have somethin’ in the back. Can’t have our new friend hobblin’ around like a broken-down mule, can we?” He rummaged through a small chest at the back of the wagon and pulled out a pair of worn but sturdy boots. “Here ye go. They’ve seen better days, but they’ll do the job.”

Kael accepted the boots with a look of gratitude, his hands trembling slightly as he unlaced the bloodied rags from his feet. “Thank you,” he said quietly, his voice thick with emotion. “I… I don’t know how to repay you.”

Artemis placed a reassuring hand on Kael’s shoulder. “There’s no need for repayment. Oghma’s path is one of knowledge and compassion. We’re simply walking it together.”

As Kael pulled on the boots, **Sebenzi** stepped forward, her expression thoughtful. “Kael, now that you’re healed and properly shod, we need to know more about the grotto and Penelope’s plans. What can you tell us about the defenses? Are there any traps or guardians we should be aware of?”

Kael nodded, his demeanor shifting from gratitude to focus. “The grotto is well-guarded. Penelope has summoned fiendish creatures to patrol the area, and there are traps set along the paths leading to the entrance. She’s also placed wards to alert her of intruders. But… I know a way in. A hidden path, used by the cult’s messengers. It’s dangerous, but it might allow us to bypass the worst of the defenses.”

**Eldrin** adjusted his spectacles and leaned in, his scholarly curiosity piqued. “A hidden path, you say? That could be invaluable. But we’ll need to move carefully. If Penelope is as cunning as you say, she’ll have anticipated someone like you betraying her.”

**Banshee**, ever the pragmatist, smirked and added, “And if things go sideways, we’ll just have to improvise. But for now, let’s focus on getting there in one piece.”

"Kael," Eldrin looked at the map he'd been given by the other man named Eldrin back in Waterdeep as they wagon continued along the northeasterly path. "Do you know the location of the place they call Khundrukar? Most importantly, is it between here and the grotto (i.e., southwest of the grotto), or beyond it (i.e., northeast of the grotto).

Kael leaned over the map, his eyes scanning the intricate lines and markings. After a moment, he pointed to a spot northeast of their current location. “Khundrukar is here,” he said, his finger resting on a small, unmarked area near the base of the **Sword Mountains**. “It’s a hidden place, not easily found unless you know what to look for.”

He then traced a line further northeast, stopping at another point. “The grotto is here, deeper into the mountains. So, to answer your question, Khundrukar is **between here and the grotto**. If we continue on this road, we’ll reach Khundrukar first, and the grotto lies beyond it.”

Kael looked up at **Eldrin**, his expression serious. “But be warned—Penelope’s followers are likely already at Khundrukar. They’ve been sent to secure the *Infernal Anvil* and bring it back to the grotto. If we’re going to stop them, we’ll need to act quickly.”

Kael looks at the party, his expression earnest. “If it were me, I’d go to Khundrukar first. The anvil is the key to Penelope’s plans, and if we can stop her followers from recovering it, we’ll weaken her significantly. But it won’t be easy—they’ll be expecting trouble.”

Artemis was daydreaming at the moment. Eldrin, on the other hand, ever the tactician at heart, preferred to get a taste of the diabolists' expeditionary force at Khundrukar before facing their presumably larger cluster in their lair, which was likely to be fortified and warded with cruel fates in mind for trespassers.

"We have no current need to split the party, but if we do, it would be wise to pair up," Eldrin posed.

Sebenzi agreed, "Straight to Khundrukar it is."

Banshee nodded silently as Artemis asked, "Khundrukar? We're headed there then?"

They pressed on, Garrick the wagoner urging the 2 (or 4 ?) horses along the path.

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They had camped a few miles from Khundrukar, their destination, and as they settled into camp, the night was eerily quiet. The stars shone brightly overhead, and the only sounds were the crackling of the campfire and the soft rustling of the wind through the trees. Suddenly, a low growl echoed through the darkness, followed by the sound of heavy footsteps.

From the shadows emerged a juvenile **chimera**, its lion’s head snarling, its goat’s head bleating, and its red dragon’s tail lashing menacingly. The creature’s eyes gleam with hunger as it surveys the camp, clearly considering the party as its next meal.

Round 1

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Group** | **Initiative** | **Roll** | **Modified Roll** | **Speed** |
| Banshee | 1 | 3 | 17 | 20 | 30’ |
| Eldrin | 1 | 2 | 16 | 18 | 30’ |
| Artemis | 1 | 1 | 10 | 11 | 30’ |
| Chimera | 2 | 3 | 7 | 10 | 30’/50’ f |
| Garrick/Kael | 1 | 0 | 8 | 8 | 30’ |
| Lirael | 1 | 1 | 6 | 7 | 30’ |
| Sebenzi | 1 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 30’ |

Banshee thought it was a diabolist ambush, but it was much worse: a chimera! Unarmored, she sprung to her feet, drinking a potion of *barkskin [expired in 50 minutes]*, and grabbing her buckler.

*Banshee gained +2 to AC.*

Upon awakening to something that ferocious, as a customary contingency, Eldrin cast *sanctuary*, *[expired on Round 7]*, and got onto his feet.

*Eldrin gained sanctuary, imposing a Will save [DC 16] on his would-be attacker(s).*

Artemis cast *nightshield [expired on Round 51]*, and got onto her feet, unsheathing her longsword.

*Artemis gained +1 to saves and immunity to magic missiles.*

The juvenile chimera, hungry and aggressive, surveyed the camp. It decided to target **Banshee**, the closest and most threatening-looking opponent. It used its **breath weapon** (3d8 fire damage, DC 13 Reflex save for half).

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| **Character** | **Save vs.**  *sanctuary* | **Ranks** | **Roll** | **Result** |
| Juvenile Chimera | Will (Eldrin) | 5 | 14 | 19 |
| Juvenile Chimera | Will (Sebenzi) | 5 | 3 | 8 |

*Success, fail. Cannot target Sebenzi.*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  Breath Weapon | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Banshee, Reflex** | **4** | **Dex (+3)** | 2 | 9 | 16 | 25 |

*Success. Saved for ½ damage. Dmg: ½ x 15 =7 fire* *[23/30].*

***Eldrin:*** *Roll = 10 + 8 = 18 (success, Saved for ½ damage. Dmg: ½ x 15 = 7 fire [31/38]).*

The chimera’s fiery breath engulfed the tent, scorching Banshee and Eldrin. Fortunately, they had considered areas of effects, and those in the wagon were unaffected by the cone that seared the tent.

Garrick and Kael, both caught off guard by the chimera’s attack, scrambled to their feet. Garrick grabbed a nearby torch, while Kael picked up a dagger from the wagon. They were not combatants, so they focused on staying alive and supporting the party.

Lirael, awakened by the chaos, assessed the situation. She decided to cast **haste** *[expired on Round 8 {thaumaturge level counts too}]* to give the party an edge in combat. She targeted the spot between the tent and the wagon, nearly sure to get **Banshee**, **Eldrin**, **Artemis**, and **Sebenzi** (the most combat-ready members of the party).

*All friendlies gained +1 to attack and AC, and (+30’ speed, or an extra attack on a full attack action).*

Sebenzi also cast *sanctuary* *[expired on Round 6]*, and used her quarterstaff to get up on her feet.

*Sebenzi gained sanctuary, imposing a Will save [DC 15] on her would-be attacker(s).*

Round 2

Though she hardly spent time out in the range, Banshee was called a ranger for a reason. Reassessing the situation now that there was no tent fabric left in the way, she dropped her buckler, and now produced her magical composite shortbow, aiming at the lion-dragon-goat aberration, and calling it one.

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| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Composite Shortbow +1 | 1d4+1 | +0 | 1 | x3 | 70’ | 1.0 | +9 | **9** | 18 |

*Hit. Dmg: 3 + 1 = 4.*

Eldrin could understand why Banshee would regard it as an aberration, though it was technically a magical beast, which required more of an understanding of Arcana than of Dungeoneering when it came to divining Dark Knowledge, speaking of which... he dove into the heuristic memory of his mind, and conjured forth the Dark Knowledge (tactics) with which to better neutralize the chimera.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Eldrin, Dark Knowledge** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Knowledge: Arcana** | 6 | **Int (+5)** | 2 | 13 | 15 | 28 |

*All friendlies get +2 to attacks vs. the chimera.*

“Go for the neck of the dragon and goat; not the lion; these are the bleeders!” Eldrin urged his comrades under the moonlight.

Artemis cast *shield of faith* and positioned herself before the chimera to better defend the others. “For Oghma!!”

*Artemis gained +2 to AC.*

“Not so loud!” the cleric urged her carefree counterpart.

The chimera, enraged by Banshee’s arrow, focused its attention on her. It lunged forward, attacking with its **bite** and **claws**. The lion head’s bite sank deep, dealing **11 damage**, and one claw slashed across Banshee’s side for **5 damage**. Banshee staggered, badly wounded but still standing.

* + **Bite (Lion Head):** Roll = 12 + 9 = **21** (hit). Damage = 2d6+4 = **11 damage**.
  + **Claw 1:** Roll = 10 + 7 = **17** (hit). Damage = 1d6+2 = **5 damage**.
  + **Claw 2:** Roll = 8 + 7 = **15** (miss).

Banshee takes **16 damage** (11 from the bite, 5 from the claw), reducing her to **7/30 HP**. She’s badly wounded but still standing.

Garrick and Kael, still recovering from the chimera’s initial attack, took defensive actions. Garrick held his torch aloft, shouting, “Back, you beast!” but the chimera ignored him. Kael threw his dagger at the chimera, but it missed its mark, clattering harmlessly against the rocks.

* **Garrick:** Holds his torch aloft, trying to intimidate the chimera. He shouts, “Back, you beast!” but it has no effect.
* **Kael:** Throws his dagger at the chimera.
  + **Attack Roll:** 8 + 3 = **11** (miss).

“Get back!” Artemis warned the repentant and the wagoner, and both went behind the horses, trying to calm them down.

Lirael, seeing Banshee’s dire situation, stepped forward and cast **cure light wounds** on her. The healing energy flowed into Banshee, restoring **10 hit points** and easing her pain. Banshee nodded in gratitude, her strength returning.

* **Cure Light Wounds:** 1d8+5 = **10 healing**.
* **Banshee’s HP:** 7 + 10 = **17/30**.

Banshee felt a surge of relief as her wounds began to close.

Sebenzi cast *shield of faith [expired on Round 7]* upon herself, and joined Artemis at the frontlines.

*Sebenzi gained +2 to AC.*

Round 3

Banshee fired into the melee.

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| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Composite Shortbow +1 | 1d4+1 | +0 | 1 – 4  firing into melee | x3 | 70’ | 1.0 | +5 | **10** | 15 |

*Miss.*

Casting *spiritual weapon [expired on Round 9]*, Eldrin called forth Oghma’s longsword, and had it attack the chimera. He lost his *sanctuary* buff doing so, but he would now start his offensive.

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 1 | 0 | 19-20, x2 | Slashing | 0.0 | +6 | 15 | 21 |

*Hit. Dmg: 3 + 1 = 4.*

Artemis also cast *spiritual weapon [expired on Round 8]*, relying on her reflexes to keep the beast from charging past her.

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 2 | 0 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | - | +4 | 16 | 20 | Weapon Focus included |

*Hit. Dmg: 7 [53/68].*

The chimera, now heavily wounded and wary of the party’s magical attacks, decided to retreat. It lashed out with its **dragon head’s breath weapon** one last time before attempting to flee.

*Attacks of Opportunity.*

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Artemis, MW Longsword | 1d6+1 | +0 | 1 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +6 | 17 | 23 | Weapon Focus included |
| Sebenzi, MW Quarterstaff | 1d6+1 | +0 | 1 | x2 | Bludgeon | 8.0 | +4 | 19 | 23 |  |

*Hit, hit. Dmg: (2 + 1) + (1 + 1) = 3 + 2 = 5 [48/68].*

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| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 2 | 0 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | - | +4 | 6 | 10 | Weapon Focus included |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 1 | 0 | 19-20, x2 | Slashing | 0.0 | +6 | 7 | 13 |  |

*Miss, miss.*

The chimera then spread its wings and took to the air, flying **50 feet** away from the party.

Garrick and Kael, still recovering from the chimera’s breath weapon, took defensive actions.

* **Garrick:** Held his torch aloft, shouting, “It’s running! Don’t let it get away!”
* **Kael:** Picked up another dagger, ready to throw if the chimera came back.

Lirael, seeing the chimera retreat, decided to press the advantage. She cast **glitterdust**, aiming to blind the creature and prevent it from escaping.

* **Glitterdust:** DC 16 Will save or be blinded for 6 rounds.
  + **Chimera’s Will Save:** Roll = 8 (failure).

The chimera’s eyes were filled with glittering particles, rendering it **blinded**. It roared in frustration, its flight becoming erratic.

End of Rounds

Sebenzi thought to cast *fly* and pursue the beast, but she knew she wouldn’t be able to face it alone, so she stayed her casting hand further, saving her remaining slots for the *cure wounds* spells of various tiers that she was about to cast. “Come, heroes. We all need healing.”

“It won’t be enough,” Artemis could top them off with *cure light wounds* spells, and they had some potions to cover any gaps.

They sighed as the cleric and favored soul got to casting their healing magics, and looked at what remained of their tent. It was a muggy wintry night, and the fire that had caught in the bushes was putting itself out, thankfully.

“How long ‘til first light?” asked Artemis.

Eldrin guessed, “Still several hours by the sound of the night birds and insects.”

The party spent the rest of the night tending to their wounds and salvaging what they could from the ruined campsite. The fire that had caught in the bushes smoldered and died out, leaving behind a charred patch of earth and the faint scent of smoke. The air was cold and damp, but the warmth of the campfire and the camaraderie of the group kept spirits from sinking too low.

**Sebenzi** and **Artemis** worked together to heal the party’s injuries, using their divine magic to mend wounds and restore strength. The **potions of cure light wounds** were passed around, ensuring that everyone was in fighting shape by morning. As the first light of dawn crept over the horizon, the party gathered their belongings and prepared to continue their journey.

They settled back to sleep, and were slow to awaken the next day, with spell preparers getting up first, and meeting the sun with their weary faces.

A chimera had nearly killed them all tonight….

~\*~

Backtracking 100’ towards Eldrin, she reported the 3 cultists coming their way, and they both made headway another 200’ back towards the wagon, which had by then made it another 100’ towards them. Winded, they made eye contact with those at the wagon, using the hand signal for danger, and pointing to their left and right to suggest that Artemis, Sebenzi, and Lirael go around to counter ambush.

The wagoner got down from the wagon and pretended to be fixing a wheel. The repentant ex-diabolist remained inside the wagon in fetal position, recalling months of trauma at the hands of the cultists.

~\*~

The party awoke to a crisp, clear morning. The events of the previous night weighed heavily on their minds, but they were determined to press on. **Eldrin** studied the map, plotting the quickest route to Khundrukar, while **Banshee** scouted the surrounding area for signs of the chimera or other threats. **Lirael** tuned her lute, her fingers plucking out a soft melody that lifted the group’s spirits.

**Sebenzi** addressed the group, her voice calm but firm. “We’ve faced worse than a chimera before, and we’ll face worse again. But we’re stronger together. Let’s stay focused and see this through.”

**Artemis** nodded, her eyes gleaming with determination. “For Oghma.”

By **9:00 AM**, the party was ready to set out. The road to Khundrukar stretched ahead, winding through the foothills of the **Sword Mountains**. The air was crisp, and the sun cast long shadows across the landscape. The party moved cautiously, aware that the cultists and other dangers could be lurking nearby.

As they traveled, **Kael** shared more information about Khundrukar and the cult’s plans. “The forge is deep within the mountain,” he said. “It’s a place of ancient power, but it’s also heavily guarded. Penelope’s followers will be there, and they’ll be ready for us.”

**Eldrin** nodded, his expression serious. “Then we’ll need to be ready for them. We’ve faced their leaders before, and we’ll face them again.”

Banshee moved silently through the rocky terrain, her keen senses alert for any signs of danger. Eldrin followed 100 feet behind, his footsteps light and his eyes scanning the surroundings. The wagon, carrying Artemis and Sebenzi, creaked along the road 500 feet further back, its progress slow but steady.

Banshee crouched behind a boulder, her sharp eyes taking in the scene ahead. She spotted a **cultist patrol**—three figures in dark robes, their movements cautious but purposeful. They were clearly searching for something—or someone.

Further along the path, she noticed a **carved stone marker** partially hidden by underbrush. The marker bore the symbol of a hammer and anvil, unmistakably dwarven in origin. It seemed to point toward a side trail leading deeper into the mountains.

Finally, she saw that the main path was **blocked by a rockslide**, making it impassable for the wagon. The party would need to find another way around.

Banshee backtracked to Eldrin and quickly relayed her findings. “There’s a cultist patrol ahead—three of them, searching the area. I also found a dwarven marker that might lead to an enclave. And the main path is blocked by a rockslide. We’ll need to decide which way to go.”

**Appearance and Gear**

* **Robes:** The cultists wear dark robes adorned with the **bloody whip and flaming sword** sigil of Loviatar and Asmodeus. Their robes are well-made but not overly ornate, suggesting they are mid-ranking members of the cult.
* **Weapons:** Each cultist carries a **light crossbow** and a **short sword**. They also have small pouches at their belts, likely containing alchemical items or spell components.
* **Armor:** They wear **leather armor** under their robes, providing some protection without sacrificing mobility.
* **Mobility:** All three cultists are **on foot**, moving at a speed of **30 feet per round**. They are not mounted.

**Behavior**

* The cultists are moving cautiously, their eyes scanning the surroundings for signs of intruders. They appear to be following a set patrol route, pausing occasionally to examine the ground or listen for unusual sounds.
* They are not heavily armed or armored, but their disciplined movements suggest they are experienced and dangerous.

Banshee notes that the cultists are **mid-ranking members** of the cult, likely tasked with patrolling the area and reporting any intruders. They are **on foot** and moving at a steady pace, but they are not heavily armed or armored. Their gear and behavior suggest they are more focused on reconnaissance and ambush tactics than direct combat.

Round 1

They’d discussed the tactic, and now Banshee—the resident expert in these things—needed to determine the exact spot where the cultists would have a line of sight to the wagon. It was there that they would likely start focusing forward, and not pay any mind to the whisper gnomes crouching just behind them.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Banshee, Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Bluff** | 0 | **Cha (+1)** | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| **Survival** | 0 | **Wis (+3)** | 3 | 6 | 16 | 22 |

*See below.*

“This is it,” Banshee said with false confidence. “They’ll have a line of sight to the wagon from here,” she was correct, “and we should be well out of their sight up there,” she was wrong.

“Alright, let’s do it,” Eldrin trusted her judgment, not realizing that they would be spotted almost immediately after the wagon was.

Meanwhile, Sebenzi had cast *detect magic* and was still seeing no auras as she and Artemis made their way to the east of the wagon.

Lirael cast *see invisibility* as Artemis cast *crown of clarity [expired in 5 hours]*.

*Lirael gained see invisibility.*

*Artemis gained +2 to Listen and Spot.*

The cultists made it another 30’ south along the road.

Round 2

The cultists made it another 30’ south along the road, which was about 340’ from where Eldrin and Banshee were now hiding.

Round 3

The cultists were now about 310’ from Eldrin and Banshee.

Artemis and Sebenzi were another 50’ southeast of the whisper gnomes, and took up positions behind a rock.

Lirael was about 50’ southwest of the whisper gnomes, and took up a position behind a tree.

Round 4

The cultists were now about 280’ from Eldrin and Banshee.

Round 5

The cultists were now about 250’ from Eldrin and Banshee.

Round 6

The cultists were now about 220’ from Eldrin and Banshee.

Round 7

The cultists were now about 190’ from Eldrin and Banshee.

Round 8

The cultists were now about 160’ from Eldrin and Banshee.

Round 9

The cultists were now about 130’ from Eldrin and Banshee.

Round 10

The cultists were now about 100’ from Eldrin and Banshee, and would not have a line of sight to them for another 50’.

Round 11

The cultists were 70’ from Eldrin and Banshee, who were both hiding behind a tree too small to effectively hide them.

Round 12

The cultists were 40’ from Eldrin and Banshee.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Banshee, Hide** | 1 | **Dex (+3)** | 3 | 7 | 6 | 13 |
| **Eldrin, Hide** | 0 | **Dex (+2)** | 0 | 2 | 9 | 11 |

*See below.*

Round 13

As the cultists approach within 10 feet of Banshee and Eldrin’s hiding spot, **Cultist 1** and **Cultist 3** spot the two whisper gnomes crouched behind the tree. **Cultist 2** only notices Eldrin, his eyes narrowing as he raises his crossbow.

“Intruders!” shouts **Cultist 1**, pointing toward Banshee and Eldrin. The cultists immediately take defensive positions, their crossbows trained on the hidden figures.

Sebenzi ran the 50’ of distance to get to the gnomes, and a bit further to position herself past the cultists, blocking their path. She was now 20’ to their north, blocking the road back to where the cultists had come from.

Eldrin wasn’t about to give warning shots. They had to neutralize or subdue them all, and from what he’d heard, these fellers were beyond redemption. He cast *searing light* upon the middle cultist (2).

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Ranged Touch Spells | 3d8 fire | +6 | 12 | 18 |

*Hit. Dmg: 13 fire.*

Banshee already had her handy bow handy, and shot at the dude on the right (3).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Composite Shortbow +1 | 1d4+1 | +0 | 1 | x3 | 70’ | 1.0 | +9 | **20** | 29 |

*Threat. 1d20 = 15 + 9 = 24, critical hit. Dmg: (3 x 3) + 1 = 10.*

Artemis caught up to Sebenzi, blocking the path for the remaining cultist(s). “Stand where you are, and we will spare your lives. I know your souls are hellbound; we can help change that.”

“You stand no chance.” Lirael noted the one uninjured cultist, and cast *hold person [DC 17]* on him.

*Cultist saving throw (you roll)….*

Round 14

The cultists were 40’ from Eldrin and Banshee.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Banshee, Hide** | 1 | **Dex (+3)** | 3 | 7 | 6 | 13 |
| **Eldrin, Hide** | 0 | **Dex (+2)** | 0 | 2 | 9 | 11 |

*See below.*

Round 15

As the cultists approached within 10 feet of Banshee and Eldrin’s hiding spot, **Cultist 1** and **Cultist 3** spot the two whisper gnomes crouched behind the tree. **Cultist 2** only notices Eldrin, his eyes narrowing as he raises his crossbow.

“Intruders!” shouts **Cultist 1**, pointing toward Banshee and Eldrin. The cultists immediately take defensive positions, their crossbows trained on the hidden figures.

Sebenzi ran the 50’ of distance to get to the gnomes, and a bit further to position herself past the cultists, blocking their path. She was now 20’ to their north, blocking the road back to where the cultists had come from.

Eldrin wasn’t about to give warning shots. They had to neutralize or subdue them all, and from what he’d heard, these fellers were beyond redemption. He cast *searing light* upon the middle cultist (2).

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Ranged Touch Spells | 3d8 fire | +6 | 12 | 18 |

*Hit. Dmg: 13 fire. That kills him, right?*

Banshee already had her handy bow handy, and shot at the dude on the right (3).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Composite Shortbow +1 | 1d4+1 | +0 | 1 | x3 | 70’ | 1.0 | +9 | **20** | 29 |

*Threat. 1d20 = 15 + 9 = 24, critical hit. Dmg: (3 x 3) + 1 = 10. Is that enough to kill Cultist 3?*

Artemis caught up to Sebenzi, blocking the path for the remaining cultist(s). “Stand where you are, and we will spare your lives. I know your souls are hellbound; we can help change that.”

“You stand no chance.” Lirael noted the one uninjured cultist, and cast *hold person [DC 17]* on him.

*Cultist saving throw (you roll)….*

Round 16 to End of Rounds

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Lirael, Intimidate** | 0 | **Cha (+5)** | 4 | 9 | 5 | 14 |

*Weighed against NPCs’ motives of self-preservation vs. loyalty/fear.*

Artemis, Banshee, Eldrin, and Sebenzi were all ready to strike them down if they did not submit (ready actions and contingencies to attack).

Lirael stepped forward, her voice low and menacing as she addressed the wounded cultists. “Your leaders are dead or fled. Your cause is lost. Lay down your weapons, and we may yet show you mercy. Resist, and you will join your masters in the Nine Hells.”

* **Intimidate Check:** 14.
* **Cultists’ Reactions:**
  + **Cultist 2 (9 HP):** Roll = 10 (moderate loyalty/fear).
  + **Cultist 3 (12 HP):** Roll = 15 (strong loyalty/fear).

**Cultist 2**, badly wounded and shaken by Lirael’s words, hesitated. His loyalty to the cult warred with his instinct for self-preservation. After a moment, he dropped his crossbow and raised his hands in surrender.

**Cultist 3**, though wounded, remained defiant. “You think you’ve won?” he spat. “The Mistress of Pain will see you broken!” He raised his crossbow, preparing to fire.

“The *hold* spell won’t keep for long,” warned the bard. “Restrain this one as well.”

Artemis approached **Cultist 2**, her expression calm but firm. She knelt beside him, her voice gentle but insistent. “You made the right choice,” she said. “Now, tell us what we need to know. Where is Penelope Verminswarm? What are her plans for Khundrukar?”

**Cultist 2** hesitated, his eyes darting between Artemis and the rest of the party. He was clearly torn between fear of the cult’s retribution and the hope of mercy from the party.

* **Artemis’s Diplomacy Check:**
  + **Roll:** 1d20 + 4 = **16**.
  + **Result:** Cultist 2 is swayed by Artemis’s words and begins to talk.

“Penelope… she’s at the grotto,” he stammered. “She’s waiting for us to bring back the anvil. She plans to use it to forge weapons for the cult—weapons that can’t be defeated. But… but she’s not alone. There are others. More of us. And she’s summoned… things. Fiends. To guard the grotto.”

While Artemis questioned **Cultist 2**, **Sebenzi** and **Eldrin** moved to restrain **Cultist 1**, binding his hands and feet with rope. When the **hold person** spell wore off, he would be unable to resist.

Once restrained, **Lirael** stepped forward, her voice cold and commanding. “Your friend has already talked. If you want to live, you’ll tell us everything you know. Where is the grotto? How many cultists are there? What kind of fiends has Penelope summoned?”

**Cultist 1**, still paralyzed but aware of his predicament, glared at Lirael. When the spell finally wore off, he spat, “You think you can stop her? You’re fools. The grotto is hidden, and the fiends… they’ll tear you apart.”

* **Lirael’s Intimidate Check:**
  + **Roll:** 1d20 + 9 = **17**.
  + **Result:** Cultist 1 is intimidated but remains defiant. He refuses to provide additional information.

From **Cultist 2**, the party learned:

1. **Penelope’s Location:** She is at the grotto, waiting for the *Infernal Anvil* to be brought to her.
2. **Cultist Numbers:** There are more cultists at the grotto, though the exact number is unclear.
3. **Fiendish Guardians:** Penelope has summoned fiends to guard the grotto.

**Cultist 1** refused to cooperate, but his defiance suggested that the grotto’s defenses were formidable.

1. **Head to the Grotto:** With the information they have, the party could proceed to the grotto and confront Penelope directly.
2. **Scout the Area:** The party could send **Banshee** or another stealthy member to scout the grotto before committing to a plan.
3. **Seek Allies:** The party could look for local allies, such as dwarven clans or other adventurers, to help them assault the grotto.

Banshee felt the need to scout the area for about 20 minutes during which they interrogated the cultists some more, trying to get any angle they could on traps, wards, sigils, illusions, and other curses. It appears that this is a sylvan area, not even rural, so the likelihood of finding allies here is expected to be low. Still, if Banshee sees any signs of settlements, she’ll gravitate there to see if there’s interest in getting rid of the diabolists.

**Banshee’s Findings**

1. **No Traps or Hazards:** The area around the grotto appears to be free of traps, wards, or other magical hazards. The cultists likely rely on their numbers and summoned fiends for defense.
2. **Dwarven Outpost:** Banshee discovered a small, hidden dwarven outpost. While it appears to be abandoned, there are signs of recent activity, suggesting that dwarves might still be using it as a temporary shelter or lookout.

While Banshee was scouting, the rest of the party continued interrogating the cultists. **Artemis** and **Lirael** worked together to extract more information.

**Cultist 2 (Surrendered)**

Artemis pressed **Cultist 2** for more details about the grotto’s defenses. “Tell us about the fiends,” she said. “What kind are they? How many? And how do we get past them?”

**Cultist 2**, still shaken, replied, “There are… three of them. Big, winged things with claws and fire. They guard the entrance to the grotto. Penelope controls them with some kind of magic. I don’t know how to get past them… I swear!”

**Cultist 1 (Restrained)**

Lirael turned her attention to **Cultist 1**, her voice cold and menacing. “You’re running out of time to cooperate. Tell us about the grotto’s layout. Where are the weak points? Where is Penelope hiding?”

**Cultist 1** glared at her but remained silent. It was clear he wouldn’t provide any more information willingly.

Eldrin’s hands seized the map as his eyes scanned the workshop.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Eldrin, Search** | 4 | **Int (+5)** | 2 | 11 | 15 | 26 |

*Deepseek determines based on its DC.*

Sebenzi snatched the journal and thumbed through it.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Sebenzi, Search** | 0 | **Int (+1)** | 0 | 1 | 9 | 10 |

*Deepseek determines based on its DC.*

It was time for biological needs to be satisfied. The party had coordinated with the wagoner and the repentant cultist to veer the wagon off the road and stay out of sight, not lighting a fire if night came. They chose some respectful peripheries to offload, and came back to sit with the journal, map, some trail rations, and some wine that Lirael had brought in a large wineskin.

Eldrin and Sebenzi were glad to have the time to study both artifacts. The map and journal together were invaluable, and the cleric and archivist now pored over both, exchanging facts and figures. As Eldrin and Sebenzi studied the map and journal, the rest of the party discussed their next steps.

“We need allies if we’re going to take on this many baddies,” Artemis said, her voice tinged with concern. “Even with the map and journal, we’re outnumbered.”

Lirael nodded in agreement. “Are there any extant dwarven communities in these mountains? They might be willing to help us reclaim Khundrukar.”

The abandoned settlement was not a comforting sight, and they asked the cartographer if it looked like they had any hope of finding dwarves or others on the map willing to join this cause.

**Search Check (DC 20):** 26 (success).

**Eldrin’s Findings:**

* **Secret Passage:** Eldrin noticed a faint marking on the map indicating a **secret passage** leading from the upper levels of Khundrukar directly to the forge. This could allow the party to bypass many of the dungeon’s defenses.
* **Traps:** The map also marked the locations of several **traps** within the dungeon, including pressure plates, tripwires, and magical wards.
* **Hidden Compartment:** In the workshop, Eldrin discovered a **hidden compartment** containing a small stash of dwarven-made weapons and armor. The items are of high quality and could prove useful in the battles ahead.

**Eldrin’s Findings:**

* **Cultist Numbers:** The journal mentioned that the cultists are numerous but spread thin across the dungeon.
* **Fiendish Guardians:** The fiends guarding the grotto are described as “winged and fiery,” likely **hell hounds** or **bearded devils**.
* **Penelope’s Location:** The final entry indicated that Penelope is deep within the grotto, near the *Infernal Anvil*.

Banshee, ever the pragmatist, added, “The abandoned outpost doesn’t inspire confidence. If the dwarves here couldn’t hold their ground, it’s unlikely we’ll find reinforcements nearby.”

Eldrin looked up from the map, his expression thoughtful. “The map shows a few nearby settlements, but they’re small and likely unable to spare warriors. However, there’s a larger dwarven hold to the east—**Mithral Hall**. It’s a long journey, but they might be willing to help if we can convince them of the threat.”

**Party’s Options**

1. **Proceed to Khundrukar:** Use the map and journal to navigate the dungeon and confront Penelope and her fiends. The secret passage could allow the party to bypass many of the dungeon’s defenses.
2. **Seek Reinforcements:** Travel to **Mithral Hall** or another nearby settlement to seek allies. This would delay their mission but could provide much-needed support.
3. **Set an Ambush:** Use the outpost as a base to set an ambush for any cultists or fiends patrolling the area.

Eldrin’s knowledge of the area’s history, and of geology, informed his suspicion of the likelihood of further mishaps like this pile of debris up ahead.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Eldrin, Skills** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Knowledge: History** | 6 | **Int (+5)** | 0 | 11 | 4 | 15 |
| **Knowledge: Local** | 5 | **Int (+5)** | 0 | 10 | 7 | 17 |
| **Knowledge: Nature** | 6 | **Int (+5)** | 0 | 11 | 14 | 25 |

*See below.*

Eldrin sighed, and said, “We will probably encounter more of these delays. Garrick, we’re in your debt. Please return to Waterdeep with Kael here, and see that he makes it safely to the Temple of Oghma. I’ve written this set of instructions for Priestess Xiomara to help him.”

They said their goodbyes, and the four-horse wagon turned around and headed back for the City of Splendors.

“We move on foot from now on,” Sebenzi vocalized as they made their way around the debris, and continued along the last 10-mile trek leading to Khundrukar.

~\*~

4 hours later…

They spotted a few cultists on sentry duty.

“We need to try to avoid cultists as much as possible,” Artemis said. “Our limited spell repertoires are needed for the endgame.”

“If we’re found, then we try to take them out with ranged weapons from our positions, and pursue those who flee,” Banshee reminded everyone.

“But yes,” Sebenzi concurred. “Better to remain unseen.”

Banshee moved silently toward the entrance of Khundrukar, her keen eyes scanning for danger and opportunities. She stayed low, using the shadows and terrain to remain hidden.

* **Hide:** 1d20 + 10 = **25**.
* **Move Silently:** 1d20 + 10 = **22**.

Banshee’s stealth was impeccable, and she remained undetected as she scouted the area.

* **Perception:** 1d20 + 10 = **27**. *[EDITORIAL NOTE: AI is defaulting to 5E conventions here, and I’m rolling with it.]*

Banshee’s sharp senses allowed her to gather detailed information about the entrance and its surroundings.

1. **Cultist Guards:** Two cultists stood watch at the entrance, armed with crossbows and wearing leather armor. They appeared bored and inattentive, occasionally glancing down the tunnel but mostly chatting with each other.
2. **Fiendish Guardian:** A **hell hound** paced nearby, its fiery breath casting flickering shadows on the walls. It seemed alert but not actively searching for intruders.
3. **Sabotage Opportunities:**
   * **Cauldron of Meimer:** Just inside the entrance, Banshee spotted a large cauldron filled with a bubbling, foul-smelling liquid—likely the drug **meimer**. The cauldron was perched precariously on a stone ledge, and a well-placed arrow or spell could send it spilling into the cultists’ barracks below.
   * **Barrels of Alchemical Supplies:** Nearby, there were several barrels of alchemical ingredients, including volatile substances that could explode if ignited.
   * **Collapsible Tunnel:** Part of the tunnel ceiling looked unstable, with cracks running through the stone. A well-placed explosion or spell could cause a cave-in, trapping or crushing the cultists.
4. **Liquid Pain Production:** Deeper inside the entrance, Banshee glimpsed a horrifying scene—a group of prisoners and less devout cultists were being subjected to unspeakable torments, their screams muffled by the thick stone walls. The process of extracting **Liquid Pain** was underway, and the air was thick with the stench of suffering.

Banshee returned to the party and relayed her findings. Her eyes gleamed with mischief as she outlined her plan:

1. **Sabotage the Cauldron:** She suggested using a ranged attack to knock the cauldron off its ledge, spilling the meimer into the barracks and causing chaos.
2. **Ignite the Barrels:** Once the cauldron was spilled, she proposed igniting the barrels of alchemical supplies to create an explosion, further destabilizing the area.
3. **Collapse the Tunnel:** If the explosion didn’t bring down the tunnel, she recommended using **Eldrin’s** spells or **Lirael’s** magic to trigger a cave-in, trapping the cultists and fiends inside.

“If we do this right,” Banshee said with a grin, “we can take out half their forces before they even know we’re here.”

Eldrin, the Lawfulest of the Lawful, got ahold of his anxiety as he heard the plan. He asked a few clarifying questions to set his mind at ease, and summed, “I understand your part in this, Banshee: cauldron, barrels, and a hopefully comprehensive collapse of the area. What are the other four of us doing in the meantime?”

Artemis, Lirael, and Sebenzi looked at Banshee with anticipation.

Banshee’s plan was bold, and the party listened intently as she outlined the steps. Her mischievous grin hinted at the chaos she hoped to unleash, but the others knew they needed to act swiftly and decisively to ensure success. After a moment of contemplation, the group began to assign roles.

Eldrin, ever the meticulous planner, nodded as he absorbed the details. “Banshee, you’ll handle the sabotage—cauldron, barrels, and the tunnel collapse. But we’ll need to cover you and ensure the cultists don’t rally too quickly. Here’s how I see it:”

1. **Sebenzi:** The cleric’s divine magic would be crucial for both offense and defense. Eldrin suggested she position herself near the entrance, ready to cast *Bless* or *Shield of Faith* to bolster the party as they moved in. If things went south, she could also use *Cure Light Wounds* to keep everyone on their feet. Additionally, her *Command* spell could be used to disrupt the cultists’ movements or even force the hell hound to flee.

**Sebenzi nodded, pointed out that she had the following spells still uncast for the day, and reminded everyone that she could convert these to *cure x wounds spells*.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Spell** | **Level** |
| Detect Magic | 0 |
| Detect Magic | 0 |
| Read Magic | 0 |
| Read Magic | 0 |
| **Longstrider** | 1 |
| Light of Lunia | 1 |
| Shield of Faith | 1 |
| Sanctuary | 1 |
| Resist Energy | 2 |
| **Detect Thoughts** | 2 |
| Restoration, Lesser | 2 |
| Find Traps | 2 |
| **Fly** | 3 |
| Clairaudience/voyance | 3 |
| Summon Monster III | 3 |

1. **Lirael:** The bard’s enchantments and illusions could sow confusion among the cultists. Eldrin proposed she use *Silent Image* to create distractions, such as the illusion of reinforcements or a collapsing tunnel, while Banshee worked her sabotage. Lirael’s *Inspire Courage* would also be invaluable once combat broke out, boosting the party’s morale and effectiveness.

Lirael—a bard and spontaneous spellcaster—listed her known spells:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Spell** | **Level** |
| Detect Magic | 0 |
| Resistance | 0 |
| Message | 0 |
| Prestidigitation | 0 |
| Read Magic | 0 |
| Summon Instrument | 0 |
| Cure Light Wounds | 1 |
| Grease | 1 |
| Inspirational Boost | 1 |
| Remove Fear | 1 |
| Sleep | 1 |
| Alter Self | 2 |
| Glitterdust | 2 |
| Hold Person | 2 |
| Circle Dance | 2 |
| Pyrotechnics | 2 |
| Crushing Despair | 3 |
| See Invisibility | 3 |
| Haste | 3 |

1. **Artemis:** As a favored soul, Artemis had both combat prowess and divine magic at her disposal. Eldrin suggested she take up a defensive position near Sebenzi, ready to engage any cultists or fiends that broke through the initial chaos. Her *Magic Weapon* spell could enhance her scimitar, making her a formidable opponent in melee combat.

**Artemis also listed her known spells for everyone to better strategize:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Spell** | **Level** |
| Cure Minor Wounds | 0 |
| Message | 0 |
| Mending | 0 |
| Guidance | 0 |
| Amanuensis | 0 |
| Detect Magic | 0 |
| Read Magic | 0 |
| Comprehend Languages | 1 |
| Nightshield | 1 |
| Conviction | 1 |
| Detect Undead | 1 |
| Shield of Faith | 1 |
| Longstrider | 1 |
| Detect Thoughts | 2 |
| Lore of the Gods | 2 |
| Spiritual Weapon | 2 |
| Find Traps | 2 |
| Chain of Eyes | 3 |
| Energy Aegis | 3 |
| Crown of Clarity | 3 |

1. **Eldrin:** The archivist would focus on support and control. He prepared to cast *Obscuring Mist* to obscure the party’s movements and *Hold Person* to neutralize key threats, such as the rogue or adept. He also kept *Cure Moderate Wounds* at the ready in case of emergencies.

**Eldrin listed the prayers/spells he’d prepared for today:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Prayer** | **Level** |
| Cure Minor Wounds | 0 |
| Detect Magic | 0 |
| Light | 0 |
| Mending | 0 |
| Cure Light Wounds | 1 |
| Detect Evil | 1 |
| Divine Favor | 1 |
| Sanctuary | 1 |
| Shield of Faith | 1 |
| Barkskin | 2 |
| Cure Moderate Wounds | 2 |
| Cure Moderate Wounds | 2 |
| Hold Person | 2 |
| Spiritual Weapon | 2 |
| Footsteps of the Divine | 3 |
| Call Lightning | 3 |
| Searing Light | 3 |
| Summon Nature’s Ally III | 3 |

And then there were—of course—the whisper gnome spells he could cast daily:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Spell** | **Level** |
| Ghost Sound | 0 |
| Mage Hand | 0 |
| Message | 0 |
| Silence (on self) | 0 |

1. **Banshee:** The urban ranger would execute her sabotage plan with precision. Using her stealth and ranged abilities, she would knock the cauldron off its ledge, ignite the barrels, and trigger the tunnel collapse. If necessary, she could also engage in hit-and-run tactics to keep the cultists off balance.

Banshee, also a whisper gnome, had the same four spells at her avail, plus *eyes of the avoral* (ranger 1), but it was mostly her stealth skills that she would exploit here:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Banshee: Relevant Skills & Saves** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Notes** |
| **Fortitude** | **4** | **Con (+0)** | 3 | 7 |  |
| **Reflex** | **4** | **Dex (+3)** | 2 | 9 |  |
| **Will** | **1** | **Wis (+3)** | 2 | 6 |  |
| **Climb** | 1 | **Str (+0)** | -2 | -1 |  |
| **Disable Device** | 0 | **Int (-1)** | 0 | -1 |  |
| **Escape Artist** | 0 | **Dex (+3)** | -2 | 1 |  |
| **Gather Information** | 8 | **Cha (+1)** | 2 | 11 |  |
| **Hide** | 1 | **Dex (+3)** | 3 | 7 |  |
| **Jump** | 1 | **Str (+0)** | 0 | 1 |  |
| **Knowledge: Arcana** | 0 | **Int (-1)** | 0.5 | 0 | Jack of All Trades |
| **Knowledge: Dungeoneering** | 0 | **Int (-1)** | 0 | -1 | Jack of All Trades |
| **Knowledge: Geography** | 0 | **Int (-1)** | 0 | -1 | Jack of All Trades |
| **Knowledge: History** | 0 | **Int (-1)** | 0.5 | 0 | Jack of All Trades |
| **Knowledge: Religion** | 0 | **Int (-1)** | 0.5 | 0 | Jack of All Trades |
| **Listen** | 4 | **Wis (+3)** | 0 | 7 |  |
| **Move Silently** | 1 | **Dex (+3)** | 3 | 7 |  |
| **Open Lock** | 0 | **Dex (+3)** | 0 | 3 |  |
| **Search** | 1 | **Int (-1)** | 0 | 0 |  |
| **Sense Motive** | 7 | **Wis (+3)** | 0 | 10 |  |
| **Sleight of Hand** | 0 | **Dex (+3)** | -2 | 1 |  |
| **Spot** | 4 | **Wis (+3)** | 0 | 7 | Eyes of the Avoral +8 (if cast) |
| **Tumble** | 0 | **Dex (+3)** | 0 | 3 |  |
| **Use Rope** | 1 | **Dex (+3)** | 2 | 6 |  |

“Let’s discuss this again now that we’re more aware of what each of us is bringing to the table right now,” Artemis proposed.

The party tensed as Banshee prepared to initiate the plan. Her keen eyes scanned the entrance, noting the bored cultist and the pacing hell hound. The cauldron of meimer bubbled ominously on its ledge, and the barrels of alchemical supplies sat nearby, ripe for sabotage. With a nod to her companions, Banshee nocked an arrow and took aim.

Banshee’s arrow flew true, striking the cauldron with precision. The vessel teetered for a moment before toppling off the ledge, spilling its foul contents into the barracks below. The cultist on watch shouted in alarm, but it was too late—the meimer splashed across the floor, filling the air with its noxious fumes. The hell hound snarled, its fiery breath casting flickering shadows as it turned toward the source of the disturbance.

**Round 2: Igniting the Barrels**

With the cauldron spilled, Banshee quickly shifted her focus to the barrels. She lit a fire arrow and loosed it at the volatile alchemical supplies. The arrow struck true, and a moment later, the barrels erupted in a fiery explosion. The blast rocked the tunnel, sending debris flying and filling the air with smoke and flames. The cultists in the barracks screamed as the fire spread, and the hell hound howled in rage.

**Round 3: Triggering the Tunnel Collapse**

The explosion had weakened the tunnel’s structure, but the ceiling held—for now. Seeing an opportunity, Lirael stepped forward and cast *Silent Image*, creating the illusion of a massive collapse. The sound of falling rocks echoed through the tunnel, and the cultists panicked, scrambling to escape the perceived danger. Eldrin, sensing the need for a more permanent solution, called upon Oghma’s guidance and summoned a bolt of lightning with *Call Lightning*. The spell conjured 10 bolts into the gnome’s hands, and he threw one at the already weakened ceiling; with a deafening crash, the tunnel collapsed, trapping the cultists and their fiendish allies beneath the rubble.

With nine bolts left in his hand to use, he nodded with satisfaction at the outcome so far. Their objectives had been met:

* The cauldron of meimer had been spilled, causing chaos in the barracks.
* The barrels of alchemical supplies had been ignited, dealing damage and further destabilizing the area.
* The tunnel had collapsed, trapping or crushing many of the cultists and the hell hound.
* The party was now poised to move in and clean up any remaining threats.

Round 4

“Oghmanytes, assemble!” Artemis motivated her faithful comrades, casting *spiritual weapon [expired on Round 9]*.

An azure longsword manifested near and floated around Artemis like an orbiting satellite, targeting the closest foe she spotted.

Banshee cast *eyes of the avoral [expired in 5 hours]*, scanning for anything or anyone hidden in plain sight.

*Banshee gained +10 to Spot.*

Having cast *barkskin* before executing their plan, Eldrin now cast *sanctuary [expired on Round 10]* upon himself.

*Eldrin gained sanctuary buff (DC 16). Enemies must succeed a Will save to attack.*

Lirael began to sing a cant to Inspire Courage in all friendlies. “Oh, hear now the tale of five Oghmanytes, who bested and fell yucky troglodytes, in their cave and then foiled all their plans tonight…”

*All friendlies gained +2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

Sebenzi cast *sanctuary [expired on Round 9]* upon herself.

*Sebenzi gained sanctuary buff (DC 15). Enemies must succeed a Will save to attack.*

They then went on the offensive, covering Banshee as she led the way further into the area.

The hell hound, its fiery breath flickering in the dim light, lunged toward the party. It targeted Artemis, the closest visible threat, and unleashed a cone of fire. Artemis and Eldrin—who was less than 10’ from her—had to make Reflex saves (DC 13) to avoid taking fire damage.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  Breath Weapon | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Artemis, Reflex** | **5** | **Dex (+1)** | 2 | 8 | 17 | 25 |
| **Eldrin, Reflex** | **2** | **Dex (+2)** | 1 | 5 | 13 | 18 |

*Success, success. Damage negated.*

The rogue, hidden in the shadows, attempted to flank the party. He moved silently, aiming to strike Banshee from behind.

However, she’d just cast *eyes of the avoral*, and spotted him coming from the moment he lunged.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| **Banshee, Spot** | 4 | **Wis (+3)** | 0 | 7 | 14 | 21 | Eyes of the Avoral +8 |

*21 + 9 = 29; No way she didn’t see him.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Diabolist Rogue | Kukri | 1d4+1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 13 | 16 |

*Miss.*

The scout, armed with a shortbow, fired an arrow at Lirael, hoping to disrupt her inspiring song.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Composite Shortbow +1 | 1d4+1 | +0 | 1 | x3 | 70’ | 1.0 | +4 | **7** | 11 |

*Miss.*

The adept, though shaken by the chaos, began casting *Cause Fear* on Sebenzi, hoping to drive her away from the battle.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  *cause fear* | **Rank** | **Ability**  **& Mod.** | **Misc.**  **Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Sebenzi, Will** | **4** | **Wis (+4)** | 0 | 8 | 5 | 13 |

*Success. Effect negated.*

Sebenzi scoffed at the knave’s attempt at divine magic. “My ancestors spit on your scriptures!” she condemned the diabolist.

The commoners, still dazed from the effects of meimer, stumbled about in confusion. Some attempted to flee, while others picked up makeshift weapons to defend themselves.

Round 5

Artemis directed her spiritual longsword towards the hell hound, and cast *nightshield* upon herself.

*Artemis gained +1 to saves and immunity to magic missiles.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 2 + 2 Courage | 2 Courage | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | - | +6 | 4 | 10 | Weapon Focus included |

*Miss.*

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

Banshee attacked the hell hound.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Kukri +1 | 1d3+1 | +2 Courage | 1 | 18-20/x2 | Slashing | 1.0 | +8 | **19** | 27 |

*Threat. 1d20 = 8 + 8 = 16; critical hit. Dmg: (2 x 3) + 1 + 2 Courage = 9 [13/22].*

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

Eldrin zapped the hell hound with a lightning bolt.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Rng.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| *Call lightning* Spell | 4d6 electric | 2 Courage | 2 Courage | Medium | +6 | 11 | 17 | 8 bolts remaining |

*Hit (Touch AC). Dmg: 13 electric + 2 = 15.*

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

The hell hound fell over dead, and eight bolts remained in Eldrin’s hand for later.

Lirael kept singing and swung at the adept.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Longsword | 1d8 | -1 + 2  Courage | 2 + 2  Courage | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 4.0 | +9 | 12 | 21 |

*Hit. Dmg: 1 – 1 + 2 Courage = 2 [1/3].*

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

Sebenzi clubbed the already wounded adept upside the head.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Quarterstaff | 1d6+1 | + 2  Courage | 1 + 2  Courage | x2 | Bludgeon | 8.0 | +6 | 13 | 19 |

*Hit. Dmg: 3 + 1 + 2 Courage = 6.*

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

The adept died.

With the hell hound and adept defeated, the party turned their attention to the remaining cultists. The rogue and scout, though skilled, were clearly outmatched by the coordinated assault of the Oghmanytes. The commoners, still dazed and disoriented, posed little threat but could not be ignored.

The rogue, realizing the tide had turned against the cult, attempted to flee deeper into the lair. He used his *Hide* and *Move Silently* skills to slip past the party and disappear into the shadows.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rogue, Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Hide** | 1 | **Dex (+3)** | 3 | 7 | 8 | 15 |

*See below.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| **Banshee, Spot** | 4 | **Wis (+3)** | 0 | 7 | 10 | 17 | Eyes of the Avoral +8 |

*17 + 10 + 8 = 35. Rogue failed miserably.*

The scout, seeing the rogue flee, decided to make a stand. He fired an arrow at Lirael, hoping to disrupt her inspiring song.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Composite Shortbow +1 | 1d4+1 | +0 | 1 | x3 | 70’ | 1.0 | +2 | **13** | 15 |

*Miss.*

The commoners, still under the effects of meimer, stumbled about in confusion. One attempted to flee, while the other picked up a rock and swung it at the party.

Round 6

Artemis and her *spiritual longsword* both attacked the defiant scout.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| MW Longsword | 1d6+1 | +0 | 1 + 2  Courage | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +8 | 13 | 21 | Weapon Focus included |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 2 | + 2  Courage | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | - | +6 | 4 | 10 | Weapon Focus included |

*Hit, miss. Dmg: 3 + 1 + 2 = 6 [3/9].*

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

Banshee pursued the rogue that thought he was going to sneak away… yeah, right!

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Kukri +1 | 1d3+1 | 2 Courage | 1 + 2 Courage | 18-20/x2 | Slashing | 1.0 | +8 | **6** | 14 |

*Hit (Flat Footed AC while fleeing). Dmg: 1 + 1 + 2 = 4 [8/12].*

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

Eldrin shook his head, and zapped the fleeing rogue with lightning.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| *Call lightning* Spell | 4d6 | 2 Courage | 2 Courage | - | Medium | - | +8 | 16 | 24 | 7 bolts remaining |

*Hit. Dmg: 15 + 2 = 17 electric.*

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

The rogue died on the spot, and Banshee turned to target one of the commoners next.

Lirael sheathed her longsword and unshouldered her light crossbow, assessing the situation to be one of fleeing foes now.

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

Sebenzi struck at the unrepentant commoner with the rock in his hand.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Quarterstaff | 1d6+1 | +2 Courage | 1 + 2 Courage | x2 | Bludgeon | 8.0 | +6 | 9 | 15 |

*Hit. Dmg: 4 +1 + 2 = 7.*

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

The defiant commoner died, leaving only the scout and frightened commoner left.

The scout and the last commoner, now realizing they were outnumbered and outmatched, scrambled to react. The scout, though defiant, was clearly shaken, while the commoner was paralyzed with fear. Seeing his allies fall one by one, the scout made a desperate stand. He fired another arrow at Lirael, hoping to disrupt her song and buy himself time to escape.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Composite Shortbow +1 | 1d4+1 | +0 | 1 | x3 | 70’ | 1.0 | +2 | **2** | 4 |

*Miss.*

The last commoner, overwhelmed by fear, dropped his makeshift weapon and attempted to flee. He stumbled toward the exit, his movements clumsy and panicked.

Round 7

Artemis and her *spiritual longsword* both finished off the scout.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| MW Longsword | 1d6+1 | +2 Courage | 1 +2 Courage | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +8 | 15 | 23 | Weapon Focus included |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 2 +2 Courage | +2 Courage | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | - | +6 | 14 | 20 | Weapon Focus included |

*Hit, hit. Dmg: (7 + 2 + 2) + (3 + 2 + 2) = 11 + 7 = 18*

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

The scout died on the spot.

Eldrin zapped the commoner, leaving six zaps left.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Rng.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| *Call lightning* Spell | 4d6 | 2 Courage | 2 Courage | Medium | +8 | 18 | 26 | 6 bolts remaining |

*Hit. Dmg: 16 electric.*

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

The commoner was as cooked as if a blue dragon had zapped him.

Banshee wasted no time, saying, “Come on; let’s continue through here.” She pointed to and headed towards the only tunnel in view, seeing to end all of this now.

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

Lirael continued to sing, and followed at the rear, giving the urban ranger some time to stealthily infiltrate the area.

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

Sebenzi cast *find traps [expired in 5 minutes]*, and followed behind Banshee, Artemis, and Lirael.

*+2 to hit, damage, and saves vs Charm and Fear.*

Round 8

Artemis cast *conviction* on herself.

*Artemis gained +1 to Saves.*

Eldrin searched the bodies of the rogue and scout as the others headed into the sole tunnel before them.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Eldrin, Search** | 4 | **Int (+5)** | 2 | 11 | 8 | 19 |

*Determined by Deepseek.*

Banshee walked at a slow pace in order to let others catch up before they reached the inner sanctum of these fiend lovers.

Lirael cast *see invisibility [expired in 70 minutes]* upon herself.

*Lirael could now see invisible characters.*

Casting *shield of faith [expired on Round 58]*, Sebenzi used her active *find traps* spell to help Banshee find anything in her way that might harm her.

*Sebenzi gained +2 to AC.*

Round 9

Artemis cast *conviction* on Sebenzi just as her spiritual longsword expired.

*Sebenzi gained +1 to Saves.*

*CONTINGENT ON WHAT SHE SEES; THIS ASSUMES NO HOSTILES ARE ABOUT.*

Banshee waited for some of the others to catch up.

Eldrin searched some more.

*2nd round of searching; use same roll as above.*

Lirael got closer to Banshee, saying, “When we spot the elites, I’ll cast *haste* on all of us. It’ll be great.”

With *detect evil* and *find traps* active, Sebenzi had seen the hell hound’s fiery attacks nearly overcome them. She now cast *resist energy [fire]* upon Artemis, who loved to get into frontline combat despite her shortcomings.

*Artemis gained Resistance (10) to Fire damage.*

The favored soul nodded to the cleric of her patron deity, and together they resolved to put down this tyrannical pain cult.

Round 10

Artemis cast *conviction* on Lirael.

*Lirael gained +1 to Saves.*

Banshee listened for movement ahead as her friends behind her caught up.

Eldrin searched a bit longer, then sprinted over to the others, filching what he could find on the rogue and scout.

*3rd round of searching; use same roll as above.*

Lirael sang some more, now lowering her voice to a mere lullaby to keep the boost active without alerting other cultists to their positions. It stood to reason that the sabotage of their barrels and cauldron already had them on high alert, and with a little element of advantage, they could quash the diabolists today.

In the dim recesses of the unlit tunnel, Sebenzi cast *light of Oghma [light of Lunia, expired no later than 50 minutes from now]*, and lit the path ahead for them all, obviating anyone who might have been hiding in the darkness, particularly for Banshee’s augmented eyes.

Round 11

Eldrin caught up, and Artemis backtracked a bit to cast *conviction* on him.

*Eldrin gained +1 to Saves.*

Banshee remained fully alert (Spot/Listen) and on the Defensive (+4 to AC) as she covered the front of the formation (is that north?).

Eldrin walked with Artemis back to the others who were waiting.

Lirael cast *detect magic [expired in 7 minutes]*, and scanned the area ahead, helping Banshee and Sebenzi to find traps and hidden foes.

Sebenzi cast *longstrider [expired in 5 hours]*, hoping the extra speed would aid her in catching any fleeing cultists. This needed to be an ultraclean operation; no loose ends to restart the cult elsewhere. They’d already seen that happen over a year ago, when they left Penelope and the other leaders of the cult escape.

Round 12

Everyone converged before continuing forward.

Artemis cast *crown of clarity [expired in 5 hours]* on Banshee, their resident sentinel.

*Banshee gained +2 to Listen and Spot.*

The party regrouped at the entrance to the sole tunnel leading deeper into the lair. Banshee, her senses heightened by *Eyes of the Avoral* and *Crown of Clarity*, took point, scanning the shadows for any signs of movement or danger. Behind her, Sebenzi’s *Light of Oghma* illuminated the path, casting long shadows on the rough stone walls. Lirael’s soft lullaby continued to bolster the group’s morale, though she was ready to switch to *Haste* at a moment’s notice. Eldrin and Artemis brought up the rear, their spells at the ready.

Round 13

The party moved deeper into the tunnel, their footsteps echoing softly in the confined space. Banshee’s sharp eyes caught a faint glimmer of light ahead, and she signaled for the group to halt. Peering around a corner, she spotted a larger chamber illuminated by flickering torchlight. The air was thick with the scent of sulfur and the faint sound of chanting.

Artemis cast *detect magic [expired in 5 minutes]*.

Banshee tried to scout ahead if there was a way to avoid a direct line of sight to the foes.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Banshee: Relevant Skills & Saves** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Notes** |
| **Fortitude** | **4** | **Con (+0)** | 3 | 7 |  |
| **Reflex** | **4** | **Dex (+3)** | 2 | 9 |  |
| **Will** | **1** | **Wis (+3)** | 2 | 6 |  |
| **Climb** | 1 | **Str (+0)** | -2 | -1 |  |
| **Disable Device** | 0 | **Int (-1)** | 0 | -1 |  |
| **Escape Artist** | 0 | **Dex (+3)** | -2 | 1 |  |
| **Gather Information** | 8 | **Cha (+1)** | 2 | 11 |  |
| **Hide** | 1 | **Dex (+3)** | 3 | 7 |  |
| **Jump** | 1 | **Str (+0)** | 0 | 1 |  |
| **Knowledge: Arcana** | 0 | **Int (-1)** | 0.5 | 0 | Jack of All Trades |
| **Knowledge: Dungeoneering** | 0 | **Int (-1)** | 0 | -1 | Jack of All Trades |
| **Knowledge: Geography** | 0 | **Int (-1)** | 0 | -1 | Jack of All Trades |
| **Knowledge: History** | 0 | **Int (-1)** | 0.5 | 0 | Jack of All Trades |
| **Knowledge: Religion** | 0 | **Int (-1)** | 0.5 | 0 | Jack of All Trades |
| **Listen** | 4 | **Wis (+3)** | 0 | 7 |  |
| **Move Silently** | 1 | **Dex (+3)** | 3 | 7 |  |
| **Open Lock** | 0 | **Dex (+3)** | 0 | 3 |  |
| **Search** | 1 | **Int (-1)** | 0 | 0 |  |
| **Sense Motive** | 7 | **Wis (+3)** | 0 | 10 |  |
| **Sleight of Hand** | 0 | **Dex (+3)** | -2 | 1 |  |
| **Spot** | 4 | **Wis (+3)** | 0 | 7 | Eyes of the Avoral +8 |
| **Tumble** | 0 | **Dex (+3)** | 0 | 3 |  |
| **Use Rope** | 1 | **Dex (+3)** | 2 | 6 |  |

*Please use whichever rolled checks above are necessary for her to move undetected and glean as much as she can on the infrastructure, furnishings, sounds (chanting, screaming, etc.) relative to the skills above.*

Eldrin cast *shield of faith [expired in 6 minutes]* and followed 30’ behind

*Eldrin gained +2 to AC.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Eldrin: Relevant Skills & Saves** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Fortitude** | **5** | **Con (+0)** | 1 | 6 | 7 | 13 |
| **Reflex** | **2** | **Dex (+2)** | 1 | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| **Will** | **5** | **Wis (+2)** | 1 | 8 | 12 | 20 |
| **Appraise** | 0 | **Int (+5)** | 0 | 5 | 13 | 18 |
| **Craft: Alchemy** | 1 | **Int (+5)** | 0 | 6 | 17 | 23 |
| **Decipher Script** | 4 | **Int (+5)** | 2 | 11 | 14 | 25 |
| **Hide** | 0 | **Dex (+2)** | 0 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| **Knowledge: Arcana** | 6 | **Int (+5)** | 2 | 13 | 1 | 14 |
| **Knowledge: Archit./Engin.** | 5 | **Int (+5)** | 0 | 10 | 5 | 15 |
| **Knowledge: Dungeoneering** | 6 | **Int (+5)** | 0 | 11 | 2 | 13 |
| **Knowledge: History** | 6 | **Int (+5)** | 0 | 11 | 15 | 26 |
| **Knowledge: Local** | 5 | **Int (+5)** | 0 | 10 | 19 | 29 |
| **Knowledge: Nobility & Royalty** | 1 | **Int (+5)** | 0 | 6 | 18 | 24 |
| **Knowledge: Nature** | 6 | **Int (+5)** | 0 | 11 | 16 | 27 |
| **Knowledge: The Planes** | 6 | **Int (+5)** | 0 | 11 | 11 | 22 |
| **Knowledge: Religion** | 6 | **Int (+5)** | 0 | 11 | 11 | 22 |
| **Listen** | 3 | **Wis (+2)** | 2 | 7 | 19 | 26 |
| **Move Silently** | 6 | **Dex (+2)** | 0 | 8 | 17 | 25 |
| **Search** | 4 | **Int (+5)** | 2 | 11 | 15 | 26 |
| **Spellcraft** | 6 | **Int (+5)** | 2 | 13 | 14 | 27 |

*Please use whichever rolled checks above are necessary for him to follow 30’ behind and glean as much as he can on anything relative to the skills above.*

Lirael stopped singing her lullaby, effectively ending Inspire Courage after a 3-round delay. “I’ll be casting haste in a moment,” she told those who were further back, urging Eldrin to stay within 30’ of her.

Next to Lirael and Artemis, Sebenzi cast *detect thoughts [expired on Round 63]* and pressed forward, hoping to find the foe with the most apparent clout, Persephone or maybe her duskblade lover, Tatiana, and scan their thoughts. Continuing to use *detect magic* and *find traps* as they went along, she remained quiet after the spellcasting.

Banshee crept forward, her movements as silent as a whisper. Her *Eyes of the Avoral* pierced the darkness, and the *Crown of Clarity* sharpened her senses further. She moved like a shadow, her keen eyes and ears attuned to every detail of the tunnel ahead. Behind her, Eldrin followed at a distance of 30’, his *Shield of Faith* glowing faintly as he scanned the area for signs of danger or magical auras.

Banshee’s sharp senses allowed her to gather detailed information about the chamber ahead. She moved silently, her footsteps making no sound as she advanced.

* **Move Silently Check (Total +7):** 7 (base) + 3 (Dex) + 3 (misc) = **13**

Her enhanced vision pierced the dim light, revealing the chamber in vivid detail. She spotted the massive, blackened **Infernal Anvil** at the center, its surface etched with faintly glowing runes. Around it, several cultists chanted in Infernal, their leader—a tall, cruel woman—directing the ritual. This was undoubtedly **Penelope Verminswarm**. Nearby, a duskblade, likely **Tatiana**, stood guard with a glowing sword in hand. A group of prisoners was chained to the wall, their faces twisted in pain as the cultists extracted **Liquid Pain**.

* **Spot Check (Total +20):** 20 (base) + 8 (*Eyes of the Avoral*) + 2 (*Crown of Clarity*) = **30**

Banshee’s ears picked up the harsh, guttural chanting of the cultists, the clinking of chains, and the occasional scream of a prisoner. The sounds echoed faintly through the chamber, suggesting that the ritual was nearing its climax.

* **Listen Check (Total +7):** 7 (base) + 3 (Wis) = **10**

**Eldrin’s Observations:**

Eldrin, following 30 feet behind Banshee, used his knowledge of religion to identify the ritual. The chanting and the Infernal script on the anvil suggested a summoning or binding ritual, likely intended to empower the Infernal Anvil or summon a fiend.

* **Knowledge (Religion) Check (Total +11):** 11 (base) + 5 (Int) = **16**

His arcane knowledge allowed him to decipher the runes on the anvil. They were infernal script, designed to channel pain and suffering into magical power. The ritual was dangerous and needed to be stopped before it reached completion.

* **Knowledge (Arcana) Check (Total +13):** 13 (base) + 5 (Int) = **18**

Eldrin’s ears caught the faint sounds of chanting and screams, confirming Banshee’s observations. The chamber was a hive of activity, and the cultists were fully focused on their dark work.

* **Listen Check (Total +7):** 7 (base) + 2 (Wis) = **9**

Round 14

Banshee stealthily led 30’ ahead of Eldrin, who was about 25’ from the other three, who now went over contingencies and coordinated actions. The party continued to advance, moving silently and cautiously.

Banshee turned around, and gave the nod to begin executing their plan. Before engaging, she waited for Liral to catch up and cast *haste* on all of them.

Artemis, Lirael, and Sebenzi made their way over as Eldrin caught up to her, casting *detect evil [expired in 60 minutes]*.

*Eldrin began to detect any evil aura within a 60’ radius.*

[assuming NPCs don’t approach]

Round 15

The five heroes being together now, Lirael cast *haste [expired on Round 22]* upon them all.

*All friendlies gained +1 to AB, AC, and Reflex saves, plus +30’ of movement or an extra attack on a full-round attack.*

“Yesss!” Artemis really enjoyed this buff, and cast *conviction* on Banshee.

*Banshee gained +1 to Saves.*

Banshee was then the first to move forward, finding a dark spot to crouch so she could start loosing arrows upon foes in her line of sight. If there was a spot that granted her Concealment, she would spend an extra round reaching it before going on the offensive.

Artemis and Lirael follow followed about 20’ behind Banshee, as did Eldrin, who cast *divine favor [expired on Round 25]*, drawing his masterwork light crossbow with his off hand as he kept the seven lightning bolts in his good hand.

*Eldrin gained +2 to AB and damage.*

Lirael started to sing another song, inspiring Courage in her mates.

Sebenzi had learned from Eldrin that *summon monster III* was a real winner against cultists when it conjured forth a Celestial ape, and that’s what she would do the moment she made eye contact with a foe.

Round 16

Hastened, and moving 30’ faster than normally….

Banshee got into a good spot and shot at the nearest cultist.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Composite Shortbow +1 | 1d4+1 | +2 Courage | 1 + 1 Haste  +2 Courage | x3 | 70’ | 1.0 | +12 | **15** | 27 |

*Probably a Hit. Dmg: 3 + 1 + 2 = 6.*

The cultist staggered but remained standing, his eyes wide with fear and anger.

Artemis cast *spiritual weapon* again, directing the spiritual longsword to attack the nearest foe.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 2 | 0 | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | - | +4 | 1 | 5 |

*Miss.*

The azure blade slashed through the air but missed its mark, the cultist ducking just in time.

Eldrin spotted Penelope Verminswarm, her cruel expression illuminated by the flickering torchlight. He hurled a lightning bolt at her, the crackling energy streaking across the chamber. The bolt struck true, engulfing Penelope in a burst of electricity.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Rng.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| *Call lightning* Spell | 4d6 | +2 Courage | +1 Haste  +2 Courage | Medium | +9 | **7** | 16 | 6 bolts remaining |

*Likely a Hit (Touch AC). Dmg: 13 + 2 = 15 electric [20/35].*

Penelope snarled in pain, her robes smoldering, but she remained standing, her eyes blazing with fury.

Lirael continued singing, and moved into position to fire on the weakest-looking foe with her crossbow.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Light Crossbow | 1d8 | + 2 Courage | 1 + 1 Haste  + 2 Courage | 19-20, x2 | 80’ | four | +10 | 19 | 29 |

*Likely a hit. Dmg to the weakest-looking foe: 6 + 2 Courage = 8.*

The cultist fell, his body crumpling to the floor.

Sebenzi stopped where she was and used her whole body to cast *summon monster III [full-round action to cast; expired on Round 22]*.

The party, now *hastened* and ready for battle, moved into position. Banshee crouched in a dark corner, her *Eyes of the Avoral* piercing the gloom as she nocked an arrow. Artemis summoned her *Spiritual Weapon*, the azure longsword hovering menacingly at her side. Eldrin, his crossbow in one hand and lightning bolts crackling in the other, scanned the chamber for targets. Lirael’s song filled the air, bolstering the party’s courage, while Sebenzi began the incantation to summon a celestial ally.

Penelope, though injured, raised her hands and began casting a spell. Dark energy coalesced around her as she prepared to unleash a devastating attack.

*NOTE: Casting Summon Swarm is a full-round action.*

Tatiana, her glowing sword in hand, moved to intercept the party. She charged toward Banshee, her blade crackling with arcane energy.

Tatiana used her move action to close the distance to Banshee and prepared to attack on her next turn.

The cultists, though shaken by the party’s assault, rallied around Penelope. Two of them drew daggers and moved to protect their leader, while a third began chanting a spell.

One cultist began casting *Cause Fear* on Eldrin (standard action).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Save vs.**  *cause fear* | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Eldrin, Will** | **5** | **Wis (+2)** | 2 | 9 | 12 | 21 |

*Success. Frightened effect weakened to Shaken [-2 to attacks, saves, and checks].*

Eldrin did his best to shrug off the necromancy, and managed to do so, for the most part.

Round 17

Artemis and her spiritual longsword both attacked the duskblade.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Longsword | 1d8+1 | +2 Courage | 1 +2 Courage  + 1 Haste | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +9 | 5 | 14 |
| Spiritual Longsword | 1d8 | 2 +2 Courage | 1 +2 Courage  + 1 Haste | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | - | +7 | 12 | 19 |

*Probably miss, probably hit. Dmg if hit: 5 + 2 + 2 Courage = 9.*

Hastened, the woman swung again.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Melee Weapon** | **Dmg** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Type** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| MW Longsword | 1d8+1 | +2 Courage | 1 +2 Courage  + 1 Haste | 19-20/x2 | Slashing | 8.0 | +9 | 7 | 16 |

*Possibly a hit. If so, dmg: 1 + 1 + 2 = 4.*

Banshee shot another arrow at the leader.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Composite Shortbow +1 | 1d4+1 | +0 | 1 +2 Courage  + 1 Haste | x3 | 70’ | 1.0 | +12 | **3** | 15 |

*Possibly a hit. If so, dmg: 2 + 1 + 2 = 5.*

Eldrin fired a *lightning bolt* at the eldritch-blasting Penelope.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Rng.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| *Call lightning* Spell | 4d6 | 2 Courage | 1 Haste  + 2 Courage | Medium | +9 | **16** | 25 | 5 bolts remaining |

*Hit. Dmg: 16 + 2 = 18 electric [2/35].*

Lirael shot at the duskblade.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Dmg.** | **D+** | **TH+** | **Critical** | **Rng.** | **Wt.** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Light Crossbow | 1d8 | 0 | 0 | 19-20, x2 | 80’ | four | +7 | 19 | 26 |

*Hit. Dmg: 7.*

Sebenzi finished casting *summon monster III*, and conjured a Celestial ape at Penelope’s flank. The animal ally full-attacked the warlock lady.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Character** | **Attack Type** | **Damage** | **BAB** | **Str Mod+** | **Total Score** | **Roll** | **Total** |
| Ape | Claw 1 | 1d6+5 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| Ape | Claw 2 | 1d6+5 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 16 |

*Miss, probably a hit. If so, dmg: 2 + 5 = 7.*

Anticipating that the warlock would *teleport* to safety like the last cult leader did, Sebenzi produced a scroll and cast *dimensional anchor* upon Penelope.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ranged Weapon** | **Atk** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| Ranged Touch Attack | +3 | 19 | 22 |

*Hit. Penelope cannot teleport or dimension door away.*

The battle raged on as the party pressed their advantage. Artemis and her *Spiritual Weapon* engaged Tatiana, the duskblade, while Banshee and Eldrin focused their attacks on Penelope. Lirael’s crossbow bolts flew true, and Sebenzi’s celestial ape joined the fray, its powerful claws slashing at the cult leader, and finally killing her. The air was thick with the sounds of combat—clashing steel, crackling lightning, and the guttural chants of the cultists.

The other cultists scrambled for their lives.

Round 18

Sebenzi directed the ape to go chase down the fastest fugitive and pummel him.

Finishing off the other remaining cultist with his *lightning bolt*, Eldrin shook his head as they began to survey the dead bodies.

The party began searching the bodies of the fallen cultists and the chamber itself. They found the following items of interest:

1. **Penelope Verminswarm:**
   * A **+1 dagger** with a hilt carved to resemble a coiled serpent.
   * A **potion of Cure Moderate Wounds**.
   * A **scroll of Summon Swarm**.
   * A **ring of protection +1**.
   * A **journal** detailing the cult’s operations and plans.
2. **Tatiana (Duskblade):**
   * A **+1 longsword** with a faintly glowing blade.
   * A **cloak of resistance +1**.
   * A **wand of Magic Missile** (10 charges).
   * A **belt pouch** containing 50 gold pieces.
3. **Cultists:**
   * **Leather armor** and **daggers** (low quality, not worth much).
   * A total of **120 gold pieces** scattered among the bodies.
   * A **key** that likely opens a locked door or chest in the chamber.
4. **Chamber:**
   * The **Infernal Anvil**, a massive and ominous artifact radiating dark energy. It would require further study to determine its full capabilities.
   * A **locked chest** near Penelope’s body, which the key from the cultists opened. Inside, the party found:
     + **500 gold pieces**.
     + A **masterwork light crossbow**.
     + A **scroll of Fireball**.
     + A **small vial of Liquid Pain** (used in the creation of meimer).

The surrendering cultist, now thoroughly cowed, begged for mercy. The party could interrogate him for information about the cult’s operations, any remaining cells, or the location of other leaders.

* The cult’s connections to other cells along the Sword Coast.
* The identity of any higher-ranking members still at large.
* The purpose of the Infernal Anvil and how it was used in their rituals.

Banshee remained on high alert, her bow at the ready. She kept watch over the chamber’s entrances, ensuring no reinforcements arrived to surprise the party. Her *Eyes of the Avoral* and *Crown of Clarity* made her an effective sentinel, and she signaled the others if anything seemed amiss.

The celestial ape, its task complete, lingered for a moment before disappearing in a burst of golden light. Sebenzi thanked the creature for its aid, knowing it had been instrumental in securing their victory.

~\*~

They had conferred on how best to proceed with the interrogation, and Eldrin had advocated for a diplomatic and humanitarian approach. Banshee had preferred a bit of mayhem, but in the end, they decided that Lirael would do her best to win over the man’s heart rather than resort to coercion.

Lirael stepped forward, her voice soft but compelling as she addressed the trembling cultist. “I can see there was once a kind soul behind those eyes,” she began, her words carrying the weight of Oghma’s wisdom. She spoke of the value of knowledge, the importance of free will, and the futility of serving masters who only brought pain and suffering. Her words were not just an appeal to reason but also a reminder of the man’s humanity, buried beneath layers of fear and indoctrination.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability & Mod.** | **Misc. Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Lirael, Diplomacy** | 2 | **Cha (+5)** | 4 | 11 | 13 | 24 |

*Deepseek determines outcome based on NPC motives.*

The cultist, his hands still raised in surrender, listened intently. His eyes, once filled with defiance and fear, began to soften. Lirael’s words struck a chord, and he slowly lowered his hands, his posture relaxing.

1. **Remaining Cult Cells:**
   * The cult had one remaining cell operating in the nearby town of **Leilon**. This cell was smaller and less organized, focused primarily on distributing meimer and recruiting new members.
   * The leader of the Leilon cell was a **warlock** named **Malakai**, who had been trained by Penelope.
2. **The Infernal Anvil:**
   * The anvil was a relic of Asmodeus, used to forge weapons and artifacts infused with infernal power.
   * Penelope had been using it to create **infernal weapons** for the cult’s enforcers and to extract **Liquid Pain** from prisoners.
   * The anvil could only be destroyed by a **holy weapon** or a powerful divine ritual.
3. **Prisoners:**
   * The prisoners chained to the wall were mostly farmers and travelers captured by the cult. They had been subjected to torture to extract Liquid Pain, but some might still be saved with proper healing and care.
4. **Treasure:**
   * The cult had hidden a stash of gold and magical items in a **secret compartment** beneath the Infernal Anvil. The key found on Penelope’s body would unlock it.

Eldrin and Sebenzi hung back, scribbling in their respective journals as they both looked at the journal and map of Khundrukar they’d found earlier. Banshee had gone back to the entrance to search the bodies of those who’d fallen near the hell hound, and made sure that the Infernal outsider’s body was fully destroyed. The Chaotic Neural urban ranger stabbed every cultist in the throat to ensure their deaths, then searched each body thoroughly.

The air of hope was again filling the chamber hundreds of feet away where the others were, and the interrogated cultist sighed as the weight of a thousand burdens was lifted. As many of the low-ranking fanatics, he’d been forced to wear sandals with crushed glass, and his feet were bloody raw. Seeing that he’d divulged everything he knew, Sebenzi rewarded him with a *cure light wounds* spell that restored the soles of his feet to the way they’d been when he was in his twenties. “Good as new,” the cleric smiled. “So, too, can your life be now.”

They all tried to give the man inspiration to live his life in as honorable a way as he could, now that he had taken steps to redeem himself.

Artemis stated, “We met another cultist on the road—a human named Kael—who renounced Loviatar and Asmodeus, and is on his way back to Waterdeep now to atone.”

“Atone?” it was as if the man had never heard the word.

Artemis elaborated, then asked, “What’s your name, Brother?”

“Why... my-” he had forgotten that he had a name. “It was... Hafiz.”

“Then so shall it be again,” Eldrin proclaimed. “We’ll make sure you’re initiated into Oghma’s covenant—if you will accept it—under your old name. I’ll get it notarized in case you have any problems.”

“You don’t need to get it notarized,” Banshee said as she returned from searching the bodies, coming back with a few weapons she’d found on the rogue and scout, and a list of supplies to get in town.

The party gathered around Hafiz, their expressions a mix of compassion and determination. The man, now free from the physical and psychological chains of the cult, looked at them with a mixture of hope and uncertainty. His feet, once raw and bloodied, were now healed, thanks to Sebenzi’s magic. The pain was gone, but the scars of his past remained.

Sebenzi placed a hand on Hafiz’s shoulder, her smile warm and reassuring. “Your feet are healed, Hafiz. So, too, can your life be now. You’ve taken the first step by helping us. The next step is up to you.”

Hafiz looked down at his feet, flexing his toes experimentally. “Good as new,” he murmured, echoing Sebenzi’s words. “But… how do I start? How do I live with what I’ve done?”

Eldrin stepped forward, his tone scholarly but kind. “We can help you, Hafiz. The Temple of Oghma in Waterdeep offers guidance and sanctuary to those seeking redemption. If you’re willing, we can initiate you into Oghma’s covenant. You’ll have a chance to learn, to grow, and to make amends.”

Hafiz’s eyes widened. “Oghma’s covenant? I… I don’t know if I’m worthy.”

Eldrin shook his head. “Worthiness isn’t about where you’ve been; it’s about where you’re going. Oghma values knowledge, truth, and the pursuit of wisdom. If you’re willing to embrace those ideals, you’ll find a place among us.”

Banshee, ever the pragmatist, crossed her arms and regarded Hafiz with a measured gaze. “Look, Hafiz, you’ve got a choice here. You can go back to your old life, or you can start fresh. But if you choose the latter, you’ve got to mean it. No half-measures. You’ve seen what the cult does to people. Do you really want to be part of that anymore?”

Hafiz shook his head vehemently. “No. Never again.”

Banshee nodded, satisfied. “Good. Then let’s get you to Waterdeep.”

Lirael, her voice soft but filled with conviction, added, “Hafiz, you’re not alone. We’ll help you find your way. Oghma’s teachings can guide you, but it’s up to you to walk the path. You’ve already shown courage by turning away from the cult. Now, let’s see where that courage takes you.”

Hafiz looked at each of them in turn, his eyes brimming with tears. “I… I don’t know what to say,” he stammered. “You’ve given me more kindness than I deserve. I’ll do it. I’ll go to Waterdeep. I’ll atone. I’ll… I’ll try to be better.”

He paused, then added, “But what about the others? The ones still in the cult? They’re not all evil. Some of them, like me, were just… lost.”

In the end, Hafiz agreed to come with them back to Waterdeep, but before they left, they still had a few items left to fine.

Eldrin had just scratched the Infernal Anvil off his list, but the other three were as important: the Codex of Creation, the Hammer of Moradin’s Will, and the Shield of Delzoun. The Codex was by far the most important, as that is what they had been tasked with retrieving.

OOC: This concludes the departure from the Forge of Fury module. What is left to get is—if I’m not mistaken—the canon items as the module specifies them. This is the cultist’s lair at Khundrukar, not the ruined site in the module, which is about a half-mile away.

The party’s priority is to go to Khundrukar proper, assess its condition, determine if they can sleep there tonight, then find a safe spot to sleep, set up camp, eat, rest, sleep, and in the morning prepare spells and venture forth.

With Hafiz in tow, the party left the cultist lair and made their way toward Khundrukar proper. The journey took them through the rugged terrain of the Sword Mountains, the air growing colder as the sun dipped lower in the sky. By the time they reached the gates of Khundrukar, the light was fading, and the shadows of the mountains stretched long across the landscape.

**Description of the Gates of Khundrukar:**

1. **Topography:**
   * The gates of Khundrukar are set into the side of a steep mountain, surrounded by jagged cliffs and rocky outcroppings. The entrance is a massive stone archway, carved with intricate dwarven runes that glow faintly in the dim light. The path leading to the gates is narrow and winding, with sheer drops on one side and towering rock walls on the other.
2. **Wind Speed:**
   * The wind howls through the mountain pass, its speed varying between **10–20 mph**. Gusts occasionally reach **30 mph**, whipping up snow and debris and making it difficult to hear or speak.
3. **Temperature:**
   * It is **Deepwinter**, and the temperature hovers around **20°F (-6°C)** during the day. As night falls, it drops to **10°F (-12°C)** or lower. The cold is biting, and the party can see their breath in the air.
4. **Vegetation:**
   * The area around the gates is barren, with only a few hardy shrubs and lichens clinging to the rocks. Snow covers the ground in patches, and icicles hang from the cliffs above.
5. **Visibility:**
   * Visibility is **moderate** during the day, but as the sun sets, it quickly diminishes. The fading light and blowing snow reduce visibility to **30–60 feet** by nightfall.
6. **Infrastructure:**
   * The gates themselves are made of thick stone, reinforced with iron bands. They are slightly ajar, the hinges rusted and the mechanisms long since broken. The archway is flanked by two crumbling watchtowers, their roofs partially collapsed. A faint trail of smoke rises from one of the towers, suggesting recent activity.

* The party arrived at the cultist lair at **3 pm**.
* The battle and subsequent interactions took approximately **2 hours**, bringing the time to **5 pm**.
* The journey to Khundrukar took another **1 hour**, placing the party at the gates by **6 pm**.
* The sun has just set, and darkness is quickly falling.

**Night Watch Schedule:**

The party decides to set up camp just inside the gates of Khundrukar, where they are sheltered from the wind and have a clear view of the entrance. They follow the watch schedule you provided:

1. **7:00 pm:** The last of the food is cooked over a small fire. The party shares a meal and discusses their plans for the next day.
2. **7:45 pm:** The fire is doused with water, leaving the camp in darkness. The party prepares for the night.
3. **8:00 pm – 10:00 pm:** **Artemis** takes the first watch, her eyes scanning the shadows for any signs of movement.
4. **10:00 pm – 12:00 am:** **Banshee** takes over, her keen senses and *Eyes of the Avoral* making her an effective sentinel.
5. **12:00 am – 2:00 am:** **Eldrin** keeps watch, his mind alert despite the late hour.
6. **2:00 am – 4:00 am:** **Lirael** takes her turn, her bardic instincts keeping her awake and attentive.
7. **4:00 am – 6:00 am:** **Sebenzi** stands guard, her faith in Oghma giving her strength as the night wears on.
8. **6:30 am:** The party begins preparing their spells for the day.
9. **7:00 am:** Breakfast is prepared, and the party eats before venturing deeper into Khundrukar.

The party sets up their camp in one of the watchtowers, using the partially intact structure to shield them from the wind and cold. They lay out bedrolls and blankets, creating a small, warm space to rest. Hafiz is given a bedroll and a place by the fire. The party keeps a close eye on him, but he seems genuinely committed to his new path.

1. **Artemis’s Watch (8–10 pm):**
   * Artemis hears the distant howl of a wolf or some other creature echoing through the mountains. It’s too far away to pose an immediate threat, but it serves as a reminder of the dangers lurking in the wilderness.
2. **Banshee’s Watch (10 pm–12 am):**
   * Banshee spots movement near the gates. A small group of **giant rats** scavenges for food, drawn by the scent of the party’s meal. She quietly dispatches them with her bow before they can cause trouble.
3. **Eldrin’s Watch (12–2 am):**
   * Eldrin notices a faint light flickering deeper within Khundrukar. It could be a torch or some other source of illumination, suggesting that the ruins are not entirely abandoned.
4. **Lirael’s Watch (2–4 am):**
   * Lirael hears the sound of footsteps echoing through the ruins. They are faint and distant, but unmistakable. She wakes the party, and they prepare for a potential encounter.
5. **Sebenzi’s Watch (4–6 am):**
   * Sebenzi spends her watch in quiet prayer, her thoughts focused on the challenges ahead. As dawn approaches, she notices the first light of morning creeping over the mountains, signaling the start of a new day.

* At **6:30 am**, the party begins preparing their spells for the day. Eldrin and Sebenzi study their prayer books, while Lirael tunes her instruments and Artemis meditates on her divine powers.
* Breakfast is prepared at **7:00 am**, and the party eats quickly, eager to begin their exploration of Khundrukar.

~\*~

Morning, 4 Deepwinter

They had eaten, prayed for spells, and geared up for the day’s challenges. In their armor once again, and all but Artemis with their ranged weapons in hand, the party took a measure of Hafiz’s wellbeing, and asked him to come with them.

OOC: Spell prep yields the following spell lists:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Eldrin’s Prayers** | **Level** |
| Purify Food & Drink | 0 |
| Detect Magic | 0 |
| Light | 0 |
| Mending | 0 |
| Hide from Undead | 1 |
| Detect Evil | 1 |
| Divine Favor | 1 |
| Sanctuary | 1 |
| Shield of Faith | 1 |
| Barkskin | 2 |
| Cure Moderate Wounds | 2 |
| Hold Person | 2 |
| Hold Person | 2 |
| Spiritual Weapon | 2 |
| Footsteps of the Divine | 3 |
| Call Lightning | 3 |
| Searing Light | 3 |
| Summon Nature’s Ally III | 3 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sebenzi’s Spells** | **Level** |
| Detect Magic | 0 |
| Summon Holy Symbol | 0 |
| Message | 0 |
| Read Magic | 0 |
| Read Magic | 0 |
| **Detect Secret Doors** | 1 |
| Light of Lunia | 1 |
| Shield of Faith | 1 |
| Command | 1 |
| Sanctuary | 1 |
| Resist Energy | 2 |
| **Locate Object** | 2 |
| Restoration, Lesser | 2 |
| Find Traps | 2 |
| **Fly** | 3 |
| Heart’s Ease | 3 |
| Summon Monster III | 3 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Banshee’s Spell** | **Level** |
| Eyes of the Avoral | 1 |

Spontaneous spellcaster’s spell slots refreshed.

The party stood before the gates of Khundrukar, their breath visible in the cold morning air. The massive stone archway loomed before them, its intricate dwarven runes glowing faintly in the dim light. Banshee took point, her *Eyes of the Avoral* allowing her to see clearly in the shadows. Eldrin followed 40 feet behind, his crossbow at the ready, while the others trailed another 30 feet back, their weapons and spells prepared for whatever lay ahead.

The gates of Khundrukar are imposing, their thick stone slabs reinforced with iron bands. The hinges are rusted, and the mechanisms are broken, leaving the doors slightly ajar. The archway is flanked by two crumbling watchtowers, their roofs partially collapsed. A faint trail of smoke rises from one of the towers, suggesting recent activity.

They cast buff spells as they ventured forth.

Artemis cast *conviction* on all of her heroic friends.

*All 5 PCs gained +1 to Saves.*

Banshee ventured forth stealthily, casting *eyes of the avoral [expired in 5 hours]*.

*Banshee gained +8 to Spot.*

Eldrin cast *barkskin [expired in 60 minutes]* and *detect magic [expired in 6 minutes]*.

Lirael cast *see invisibility [expired in 70 minutes]*.

Sebenzi cast *read magic [expired in 50 minutes]*, *detect magic [expired in 5 minutes]*, and *light of Oghma [light of Lunia, expired in 50 minutes]*.

Following Sebenzi’s magical instincts, the partyedheads west towards the Codex of Creation after Sebenzi cast *find traps [expired in 5 minutes]*.

The party moved cautiously through the gates of Khundrukar, their spells and abilities enhancing their senses and defenses. Banshee led the way, her *Eyes of the Avoral* piercing the darkness, while Sebenzi’s *Light of Lunia* illuminated the path ahead. Eldrin’s *Detect Magic* and *Barkskin* ensured the group was prepared for both magical and physical threats, and Lirael’s *See Invisibility* allowed her to spot any hidden foes. Artemis’s *Conviction* bolstered the party’s resolve, granting them a +1 bonus to their saves.

The stairs leading down to the lower levels of Khundrukar were wide and steep, carved directly into the stone. The steps were worn smooth by centuries of use, and the air grew colder and damper as the party descends. The walls were lined with faded murals, depicting dwarven heroes and ancient battles, and the faint sound of dripping water echoes through the passage.

After descending the stairs, the party entered a large, circular chamber. The room was dominated by a massive stone altar at its center, surrounded by crumbling statues of dwarven heroes. The walls were lined with shelves filled with ancient tomes and scrolls, and the air is thick with the scent of old parchment and decay.

They had bagged the Infernal Anvil, and were now focused on the other times. Eldrin made a note to peruse the book collection later; for now, the Codex was the priority. Though Banshee was good at gathering information from people, it was Eldrin who excelled at searching a place, particularly now that his *detect magic* spell was in full effect.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Rank** | **Ability**  **& Mod.** | **Misc.**  **Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** |
| **Eldrin, Search** | 4 | **Int (+5)** | 2 | 11 | 10 | 21 |

*Deepseek determines outcome based on what was in here and how hard it was to find.*

*What magical auras (e.g., Necromancy, Abjuration, Evocation…) can Eldrin see in this room, other than the ones emanating from PCs with active spell effects?*

Artemis asked Hafiz, “You’ve been in here before, right? What did the cultists do in here?”

“I... no, they never brought me here,” Hafiz shrugged. “They just used me to make Liquid Pain,” he showed them the holes in his forearms where they’d extracted ichors and humors galore.

Artemis asked Hafiz if he wanted anything to read while they were searching. He didn’t know how to, so he just sat at a desk waiting for the others.

Artemis cast *lore of the gods [expired in 50 minutes]* first upon Eldrin, then upon Sebenzi. The two scholars appreciated the boost to their font of knowledge.

*Eldrin and Sebenzi gained +5\* to all Knowledge checks.*

*\* Because Oghma was a deity who granted access to the Knowledge domain, the bonus was* ***+10*** *rather than +5.*

The favored soul’s mana was almost spent for the day.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Spell Level** | | | |
|  | **0th** | **1st** | **2nd** | **3rd** |
| **Favored Spells** | 6 | 6 | 5 | 3 |
| **Charisma Bonus** | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| **Total Divine** | **6** | **7** | **6** | **4** |
| **Cast?** | 1 | 6 | 3 | 2 |

With *eyes of the avoral* still aiding her sight, Banshee guarded the staircase they’d taken to get here, and kept an eye on the crumbling dwarven statues, hoping to not have to combat constructs today.

Sebenzi’s *find traps* spell was useful in her deeming the area safe of any. With both *read magic* and *detect magic* active, the cleric did her best to find tomes of immediate use to them, such as a commentary work on the Codex that might describe its binding and make it easier to find it amongst the collection. She shone her *light of Lunia* wherever her eyes scanned, coating her panorama in a soft-hued light.

Lirael produced her masterwork yarting, and began playing a soft instrumental for everyone, making it sound almost like a dulcimer, or a harpsichord. It wasn’t really to Inspire Courage; just to set a mood of resolution, success, and calm collectedness.

Eldrin’s *Detect Magic* spell revealed the following magical auras in the chamber, aside from the active spell effects on the party:

1. **Altar (Strong Abjuration):**
   * The altar radiates a strong abjuration aura, consistent with the protective ward Eldrin identified earlier. This ward is designed to prevent unauthorized access to the **Codex of Creation**.
2. **Statues (Moderate Transmutation):**
   * The crumbling statues of dwarven heroes emit a moderate transmutation aura. This suggests they may be **animated constructs** or have some other magical property.
3. **Shelves (Faint Divination and Evocation):**
   * The shelves of ancient tomes and scrolls emit faint divination and evocation auras. Some of the books may contain spells or magical knowledge, while others could be enchanted to protect their contents.
4. **Codex of Creation (Overwhelming Universal):**
   * The **Codex of Creation** itself radiates an overwhelming universal aura, indicating its immense power and significance. It is located within the altar, protected by the abjuration ward.

Eldrin reached into his masterwork scrollcase and produced his scroll of *stone shape*, and read it, releasing its incantation.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Scrolls and Potions** | **Qty.** | | **Level** | | **CLev** | **Value** |
| Scroll of Stone Shape | 1 | | 3 | | 7 | 525 |
| **Skill** | | **Rank** | | **Ability**  **& Mod.** | | **Misc.**  **Mods.** | **Total** | **Roll** | **Check** | **Notes** |
| **Eldrin, Use Magic Device** | | 1 | | **Cha (+1)** | | 2 | 4 | 12 | 16 | CROSS-CLASS SKILL |

*Success.*

Now able to effectively reshape 16 cubic feet of stone, the archivist wasted no time, and melted the limbs off the quartet of statues melding them all into the stone floor such that they could not gravitate back to their respective torsos. That wasn’t nearly 16 cubic feet of stone, so the stone heads went clean off down into the stone floor to be held down by other rocks.

Looking at his friends and nodding with satisfaction, the whisper gnome then conferred with the others on the other auras, particularly the Abjuration around the Codex. “We can try a *dispel magic* spell, but I don’t think that’s going to cut it.”

Sebenzi suspected, “Touching the Codex would surely trigger the statues, but they can do little to us now... crush us with their weight, if they can see us, maybe.”

“Now that we’ve found the Codex,” Banshee proposed. “I can go see if I can find the Hammer and Shield, then come back and get you all so we can see if there are Abjurations on those items. If the Codex is the only item being protected this way, we should grab it last, and make a mad dash for the exit immediately thereafter.”

Artemis liked the rashness of that idea. “We don’t have much more time left on most of these *detect* spells,” she warned. “Let’s use the time we have wisely.”

“I have plenty of castings left,” Lirael offered. “I can go with you, Banshee, and cast it when we get to a place we haven’t searched yet.”

“Good thinking,” Sebenzi nodded, and with this, Banshee and Lirael left the chamber, their senses alert for any signs of danger or hidden treasures. They moved cautiously through the ruins, their footsteps echoing softly in the ancient halls.

Sebenzi then went over and scanned the auras of the items on the shelves, particularly those with Divination auras.

Banshee noticed faint footprints in the dust, leading deeper into the ruins. They appeared to be recent, suggesting that someone—or something—had passed through recently.

Lirael detected a faint magical aura emanating from a nearby chamber. It was consistent with the presence of powerful artifacts, likely the **Hammer of Moradin’s Will** and the **Shield of Delzoun**. Pointing it out, she and Banshee proceeded towards the emanation.

Banshee and Lirael entered a large chamber filled with ancient weapons and armor. The room was dominated by a massive anvil at its center, surrounded by racks of weapons and suits of armor. The walls were lined with shields, each bearing the emblem of Delzoun.

They’d already collected the Infernal Anvil, and slipped it into Eldrin’s haversack. [assumption 🡺] This dwarven anvil was much more massive, and not really something one took with them.

Lirael studied the item that she suspected to be the Shield of Delzoun first, comparing it to what she’d read about it in Eldrin’s almanac. She then did the same with the massive hammer by the anvil.

She looked for any Abjurations that might have warded these items, but she saw none, and thus opened up her own haversack, grabbing the two items of note, plus a number of other shields and smaller hammers that might have been the sought out artifacts.

~\*~

Sebenzi exploited her *read magic* spell, gleaning as much as she could about the contents of the dwarven tomes. Eldrin helped her search with his off-the -chart skills.

Once she found some good reading material, Sebenzi sat down to review three books that appeared to be useful in their understanding of how to deal with the Abjuration warding the Codex. In one of the books was a scroll with an Abjuration spell inscribed. She tried to identify the spell.

Eldrin took a look, and discerned that the scroll contained a *Dispel Magic* spell, which could be used to bypass the ward on the Codex.

“It’s that easy?” the whisper gnome asked as they heard footsteps coming from upstairs.

Training their bows on the threshold of the staircase, they were ready to fire when they heard Banshee’s calming voice announcing their return.

They showed the others the contents of the haversack, and Eldrin took a moment to identify the Shield and Hammer.

He then explained that it appeared as though a standard *dispel magic* spell should do the trick with the Abjuration warding the Codex, and handed the scroll to Lirael. “You do arcane better,” he smiled as he handed her the scroll that had been scribed by a wizard.

The bard read it aloud, casting *dispel magic*, targeting the Codex of Creation and the altar atop which it sat.

Eldrin commended everyone for their parts in making this a successful venture, adding, “Oh, and I’ve got to get a look at that enchanted map later. Ready?”

They all nodded.

He then grabbed the Codex of Creation, and without waiting for anything averse to happen, they all booked it out of the chamber, up the stairs, and towards the exit. “Woohoo!”

The party moved quickly through the ancient halls of Khundrukar, their footsteps echoing in the stillness. Eldrin clutched the **Codex of Creation** tightly, its overwhelming universal aura pulsing faintly in his hands. Banshee and Lirael carried the **Hammer of Moradin’s Will** and the **Shield of Delzoun**, their magical auras blending with the dim light of Sebenzi’s *Light of Lunia*. Hafiz followed closely, his eyes wide with a mixture of awe and relief.

As they ascended the stairs and made their way toward the exit, the air grew colder, and the wind howled through the cracks in the stone. The party’s buffs and preparations had paid off, and they were now on the brink of completing their mission.

The party burst through the gates of Khundrukar, the cold morning air hitting them like a wave. The sun was just beginning to rise, its pale light casting long shadows across the rugged landscape. The wind had died down, and the only sound was the distant cry of a bird of prey circling high above.

The party paused for a moment, catching their breath and taking in the sight of the rising sun. Eldrin held up the **Codex of Creation**, its runes glowing faintly in the morning light. “We did it,” he said, a smile spreading across his face. “The Codex is safe, and the cult is finished.”

Banshee grinned, her eyes sparkling with mischief. “And we got a few souvenirs along the way,” she added, gesturing to the **Hammer of Moradin’s Will** and the **Shield of Delzoun**.

Sebenzi nodded, her expression thoughtful. “This is a victory for Oghma, and for all who value knowledge and truth.”

Lirael strummed a triumphant chord on her yarting, her music filling the air with a sense of accomplishment. “Let’s get back to Waterdeep and celebrate properly.”

Hafiz, still wide-eyed but now smiling, added, “Thank you. For everything. I… I don’t know where I’d be without you.”

“You’d probably be getting eaten by a hell hound,” Banshee’s dry humor was not for everyone.

And so it came to pass that the Oghmanytes had triumphed over the cult of Loviatar and Asmodeus. The last remaining cell that Hafiz spoke of would be reported to the Waterdhavian authorities, and the items would be restored to Thorgrim Ironheart and the Font of Knowledge. Within days, they would be back in the comforts of the city, and more than ready for a day on the docks, enjoying the wintry sunshine.