

GAME SESSION 116: TEPEST -11 BATTLE WITH RED CAPS, TO KORAG'S LAIR TO SAVE THE HOSTAGES

(This Ravenloft game was played March 15th, 2026. Everybody is present)

August 27th, 748, morning

The heroes discuss Varadan's case, while Varadan is away. They think that the more time passes, the more difficult it will be to get him to let go of the sword.

They also wonder why Loht isn't coming back to take his sword (they have waited three nights), and if they should try a *sending* spell to him. Petrak suggests that, "perhaps Loht was the one bearing the curse of the sword, and for this reason he manipulated us to get the sword so the curse would fall back on somebody else's shoulders?"

Varadan – I want to go into the forest to hunt something and try the sword.

Petrak – the more you use it, the more it could be difficult for you. Some intelligent items are that way: the more you use them, the more cursed you are.

They decide to make *sending* to Loht: *We have the sword here in Viktal, when can we make the exchange?*

And Loht's answer is swift: *Excellent. Wait for my emissary tonight.*

The human heroes enter Viktal and make some errands. One of them is to have a jeweler appraises the gem that Exigu took from a bas relief in Tristessa's cave. An artisan offers 10 gp to buy it, but Exigu refuses and keeps the gem.

They go see Wyan and ask him if he has information about Loht's sword? "No, and I would not know where in Tepest to look for that information."

Varadan still wants to get into the forest to try the sword.

Petrak – don't you want to wait for tonight to give back the sword?

Varadan – No I want to try it

Petrak – the more you use that kind of item, the more it has power over you.

Tora reminds him that this team of heroes did already surrender one of them to justice, when he turned evil (when Virevan turned into werewolf for a rampage in Martira Bay – session 45), so they would do it again...

Petrak casts *remove curse* on Varadan, who is relieved from needing the sword for an hour.

Petrak – do you still want to try the sword?

Varadan – Yes

They wait for the remove curse effect to end, and they go into the forest, where Varadan starts hunting. He tracks a brown bear and attacks it. On his first strike, the bear's head is chopped off cleanly by the sword!

DM note: natural 20 (!) by Varadan's player with a Vorpal sword, confirmed with a second high dice.

It is then that Austizel notices that all physical characteristics of Varadan are higher than usual, while he seems a little diminished in mental prowess. He shares that with the group.

DM note: I had fixed a DC 22 Spot to realize that, and Austizel made it while looking at the bear's slaying, and then Varadan's reaction to it.

They bring back the bear in Viktal to give its fur and meat to a butcher.

They wait for the rest of the afternoon. Macrazbunare starts writing a scroll.

11h50 pm. There is a knock at the door. They open it. A powrie is there, flying 15 feet above the house. "Hey, you stinking lice, follow me, the prince wants to see you!", and he leaves in the direction of the bridge. Petrak first casts *remove curse* on Varadan (so he will agree to give the sword to Loht) and the heroes follow the small creature.

At one point, Austizel stops to cast a protective spell on himself. "Hurry up, you rotten hairy sack of dead balls!"

August 28th, 748, midnight

The powrie cross the bridge and they walk about 1,000 feet on the trail to Kellee. It is quite dark. Only the PC torches provide light.

Then they see Loht in the middle of the trail, arms crossed, waiting. There are several more powries flying above him (they fly around in circles while keeping out of the light, so it's difficult to count them exactly), and a goblin in leather armor and a bow stands 10 feet behind Loht.



When the heroes are 20 feet from Loht, they stop.

Loht – You have my sword.

Varadan – where are the girls?

Loht – The goblins took good care of them. Didn't I release a hostage as you requested? I swear I will release the others when I have the sword.

Varadan plants the tip of the sword in the ground, and the heroes move backward 20 feet.

Loht moves forward and takes the sword.

Loht – *at last! My father's sword. Finally!*, and then, to the Powries, *Kill them all! The hostages too!*

The goblin looks surprised when Loht says this. The powries laugh menacingly.

Austizel cast *haste* on the heroes. Loht cast a spell and vanishes (Macrazbunare identifies it as *dimension door*).

One of the powries comes in front of the group and contorts its face into a frightening grin before opening their mouth impossibly wide! Varadan is struck by *fear*!

The battle starts, as Exigu throws an arrow at the powrie, touches, it but it fails to do any damage. He throws the rest of his arrows at the goblin instead. Another powrie casts and suddenly there are six powries instead of one (*mirror image*). Macrazbunare cast *dispel magic* at Varadan and removes the fear effect.

The goblin runs toward the forest, and the heroes lose sight of him. The heroes think they have to stop this goblin so he doesn't bring the message "kill the hostage" to his tribe.

A powrie flies forward and emits a high-pitched scream, quite painful for the ears. Whatever the effect, the heroes resist. Another cast *color spray* at Exigu and his dog (the dog is unconscious).

The other powries make waves after waves of similar attacks – shrieks, fear grin, etc. Once in a while, one swiftly fly nearby a hero and stabs him with a poisoned dagger and leaves before his victim can react (*fly-by attack*).

Varadan starts running after the goblin and goes into the forest where they saw him disappear, but he doesn't see the goblin. When passing where the goblin was standing behind Loht, Varadan sees an empty bottle on the ground. The goblin took a potion, probably *haste* too!



Petrak casts *spiritual weapon* and attacks a powrie. That makes the powrie angry, and he shouts, “one of these stinking jackals has something that can hurt us!”

One powrie makes a distorted grin at Tora, who is struck by fear! Another powrie strikes Tora in the back (-11, sneak attack. Tora resists the poison), then another strikes Tora in the same manner (-16), and another misses.

A *magic missile* by Austizel kills one of the powries. When the screaming nasty creature dies, its body turns to stinky liquid manure!

Exigu tries another strategy and hurls cold iron sling bullets at an angry powrie, and he hits!

Macrazbunare casts *entangle* in the forest where four powries are (the ones that attacked Tora). He hears them swearing madly. But unknowingly, he caught Varadan too! The first round, Varadan is stuck.

One powrie shrieks, another stabs Exigu (-3).

Tora runs toward the forest, and barely misses being struck in the *entangle* too. He will run for 7 rounds.

The four powries stuck in the *entangle* are close to Varadan but they can't move. All four shrieks, but Varadan resists the effect.

Another *magic missile* by Austizel. More sling bullets by Exigu. A *magic missile* by Macrazbunare kills one of these creatures, also turning to liquid stink.

Varadan is able to exit the *entangle* and starts smelling around, following the goblin by scent. At one point, he realizes he went farther than where the goblin is (his smell fades), but he never saw the goblin when he passed by it.

DM: +17 hide skill of the goblin. The plan of the goblin was to use the haste potion and, if followed, optimize the arrow, move, hide routine, but Austizel's haste made it much more difficult (Varadan's monk move in hybrid shape, per round, is 2 x 50', + 30' haste!). The goblin could not get away when tracked by such a quick hero.

A shrieking powrie strikes Austizel (-4) and Austizel is blinded! (poison effect). The powries sadistically concentrate their sneak attacks on Austizel (-14, -20, -9), who eventually falls unconscious to the ground!

Petrak kills another with his *spiritual weapon*. Macrazbunare's wolf bites a powrie and keeps it grappled in its jaws.

Eventually, Varadan is closing close to the goblin, who exits from his hiding and attacks in sneak attack mode (-10). Varadan hits it back and the goblin falls. He takes the goblin and brings it back to the group.

Petrak casts *mass cure light wound* (+26) and this revivifies Austizel.

A shrieking powrie attacks the wolf in order to liberate his friend, but Macrazbunare's *magic missile* kills it.

Austizel hears a powrie, speaking in fey, "let's attack the headless chicken running away alone!", and some of the powries fly in the direction of Tora. Petrak kills one with his *spiritual weapon*.

Macrazbunare grabs his scimitar and attacks the powrie in the wolf's mouth. When this powrie is killed, he stabilizes the goblin using *goodberries* from his dryad belt.

Tora has now shaken off the fear effect (after 7 rounds of running) and he runs back toward his friends. One of the fast flying powrie reaches him and makes a grin attack, then another casts a shimmering circle of colors that mesmerize Tora (*hypnotic pattern*). While he is watching the shimmering colors, another powrie removes his belt pouch and flies away with it. The powrie thieves wanted to take more, but they saw Varadan coming quickly in their direction so they fled.

DM note: contained mainly potions – Holy water, Herbal potion w/ wolfbane (item #16.3), Bloodblock (#31), Antitoxin (#35), Bears Endurance (#66), Bull Strength (#74), Eagle Splendor (#76), Potion Spuma Vitae (#126) and Healing (#132).

Petrak casts *cure minor wounds* on the goblin to stabilize him, and then he heals the other heroes.

At 1 am, they go back to Viktal and ask the guards to urgently see Wyan. At first, the guards refuse, given the hour of the night, but they convince the guards of the urgency, "It's about Wyan's daughter".

They talk with Wyan and tell him what just happened, and more specifically, what Loht said when he left ("*Kill them all! The hostages, too!*").

So judging by what Loht said, the girls are still alive? The heroes give Wyan the goblin, and tell him to make him talk to find out where he was running to. That is probably where the girls are kept as hostages.

Wyan agrees to have the Inquisitors interrogate the goblin.

Meanwhile, the heroes will go to sleep and be ready to depart the next day.

Petrak also suggests that Wyan bestow the Inquisition with cold iron weapons, as those were the only weapons able to do damage to the powries.

9 am

They meet Wyan. The goblin talked. He said the girls are kept in the lair of a chief goblin named Korag. The goblin also explained how to get there. It is about 4 hours by horse, south of Viktal.

Wyan gives to the heroes what interesting loot was on the goblin: a potion of *haste*, and 12 arrows of alchemist fire (half strength to fit on an arrow).

The heroes discuss if they should try to buy back the girls from Korag with money. But they do not think it's a good idea and they dismiss it.

They also wonder if they should attack the lair with the Inquisition, but they do not keep this idea either – the heroes want to cast spells (and they could not while surrounded by the Inquisition) and the lack of subtlety of an approaching troop of Inquisitors could make the goblins spot them from afar and flee by a back door.

At 10 am, they leave Viktal by horse.

DM note – at 11 am, Varadan has the urge to leave everything and pursue Loht instead in order to get the sword back. He is able to resist the effect. He doesn't share that with his friends. Effect of Loht's sword on a non fey.

For half a day, their trip is peaceful and uneventful. The air is cool and fresh with the sweet smell of evergreen.

Around 2 pm, the heroes come upon a clearing in the forest. The jagged clearing is about 50 feet across. The ground here is scorched black by fire, and someone has scattered handfuls of salt around like birdseed, carefully covering the whole clearing with the tiny crystals. At the center of this circle stands a pillar with a corpse hanging from it. The body is a human male.

The trail passes nearby and they decide not to investigate the corpse. However, when they get nearer, a carrion stench threatens to choke the heroes as the rotting corpse starts speaking in a hollow voice:

Look upon my tortured body and fear the name of Korag, slayer of men. Let all who enter these woods know that my fate is theirs. Had you turned back an hour ago you could have saved yourselves. But now it is too late... far too late.

Exigu watches for traces but he only spots older goblin traces, maybe a week old.

Macrazbunare turns into a raven and watches the perimeter. He sees an opening in a hill, with old dirty banners hanging from it. He watches around to spot a back entrance, but he sees none. At one point, maybe 1 000 feet from the entrance, he smells grilled meat and smoke from burning oil. But he can't pinpoint the exact place the odor comes from. He guesses the odor comes out from cracks or similar small openings.

They leave the horses away in the forest.

2h30 pm

They check the entrance and Exigu only spots old goblin tracks, a week old.

The corridors have a downward slope that they evaluate at an average of 10 %.

Inside the caves, they see many rooms with dusty bunk beds. There are piles of dusty things on the floor. And many of the rooms have empty chests, left open. There are no traces on the ground.

It looks abandoned! Is it really here that the girls are kept hostages?

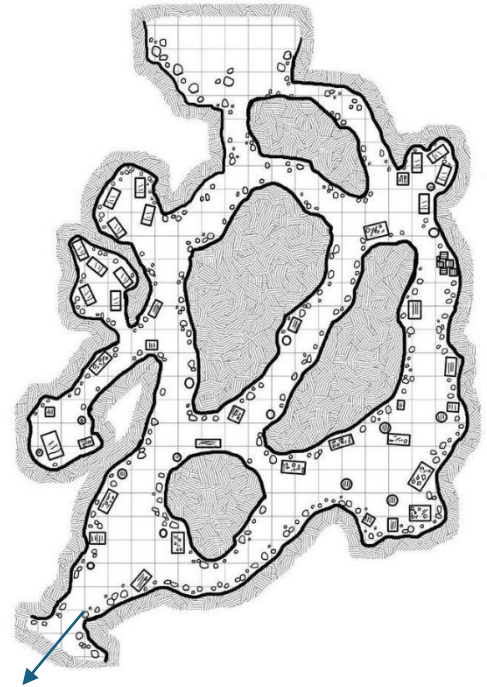
A long common area where the fire pits are cold.

An abandoned guard post. Half-empty bottle of liquor on the table.

Exigu then notices a few details that are wrong, and he realizes that it's all makeup! Dust was added everywhere to make believe the place is abandoned! He shows the dust patterns to the other heroes, pinpointing some slight dust coverup mistakes, and they agree on his conclusions.

They move on cautiously.

They get to a 400' corridor, also sloping down, leading to a large, cavernous, empty room. The ceiling is 50 feet high, dark, and is covered with spider webs.



A 30' wide pit separates this room from a narrow place on the other sides. There are two big rocks on this narrow space.

Austizel casts *detect magic* – nothing. Exigu scans the walls for secret doors – nothing.

The pit is 75' deep. They use the *rope of climbing* to get to the other side.

There, they quickly notice that there are many *recent* goblin traces on this side! Also, what they first saw as two rocks are in fact large objects hidden under a canvas painted to appear as a rock from the cavern side. Under it, two well-oiled ballistae with munitions!

Another canvas hides a room in the middle. In it, the heroes find many bows and quivers full of arrows.

DM note : the goblins were prepared to defend their lair in case of an attack from outside. But the goblin that was supposed to bring the message that the heroes are coming never made it...

A corridor is filled with rubble, so they take the other one. They see a long bamboo ladder, 40' long. They guess it is a portable bridge the goblins use to cross the pit.

They resume their journey through this rough stone corridor that descends into darkness.

The air becomes heavy, disgusting, sticky. There are long, glistening streaks staining the walls: animal fat? The floor is uneven, littered with human and tiny bones (birds, field mice...).

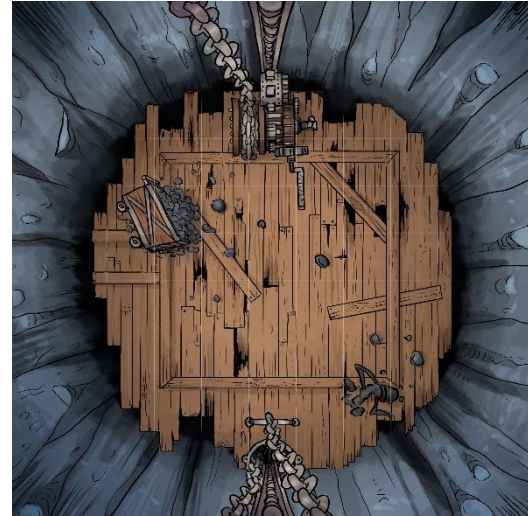
The corridor is also sloping, and is about 700' long.

They arrive at a guard post where 6 goblin guards are asleep around the table. The heroes surround the goblins and quickly slay them. Exigu suggest putting back the corpses on their seat around the table, as if they are still sleeping.

In another room, where three more corridors depart from, they see a 10'x10' hole. There are pulleys above the hole, with ropes going down in the hole. A rough and rusted mechanism is located near the hole. They understand there is a platform that can be activated from this level, and propelled by counterweights.

Exigu looks down and sees at least 6 levels underneath, all separated by about 40 feet. The lights of distant fires on each level are lighting the shaft. The platform is now stopped at level -6 below. Perhaps there are more levels underneath the platform, as Exigu can't see.

Exigu sees that the shaft walls are decorated with goblin drawings: silhouettes of tall humanoid women, burning human houses, and sinister big yellow eyes watching from a forest of old trees.



GAME SESSION 117: TEPEST -12 to KORAG'S LAIR to SAVE THE HOSTAGES

(This Ravenloft game was played March 29th, 2026. Everybody is present)

August 28th, 748, 4h pm

The heroes are gathered around the freight elevator shaft. They look at the pictures that goblins did draw inside the shaft. *Should we disguise as hags to frighten them?*

They look at the elevator mechanism: old and rusted, made of various unrelated parts, making it confusing to understand how it works. After studying it, however, they find one gear makes the thing go up, the other go down.

Petrak – do we kill every goblin we see, including the children?

The others – yes, they are evil.

DM note – I debated if a power check should be called if they kill children, and I decided not to. They are heroes, goblins are evil creatures, so their moral position is tough but makes sense.

Macrazbunare casts *longstrider*, *barkskin* and *greater magic fang* on him and his wolf.

There are three corridors on this level, they explore them, hoping to find another access going down other than the elevator shaft. All the corridors are made the same: a hundred

to a hundred and a half feet, then each opens to a goblin lair (dirty straw mattress, various broken things on the floor, empty cage). There is no way down from these rooms.

So they return to the freight elevator. Varadan pulls a lever, and the platform moves up at a rate of 10 feet per round. The machine works surprisingly well and is well oiled and balanced. The heroes get onto the platform, and Varadan pulls another lever to go down. This time, a loose spring pops out of the mechanism and bites into his flesh.

As they descend past level -1, they see four corridors. Nothing moves. From the shaft, they see faint light farther down the corridors—open flames from cooking fires, they guess.



At level -2, they see three corridors, again with light farther away. As the elevator passes, a young goblin sees the heroes and stands there, surprised. The platform continues its descent.

After they passed, they see the young goblin above, and he says, “Humans smell like wet cheese!”. Then he unbuttons his pants, and starts peeing on the heroes! The heroes are patients and do nothing. After he is finished, they hear him run into one of the corridors, yelling at someone unseen. The heroes think they should have shot the goblin child, as he will sound the alarm.

At level -3, 3 corridors. There are three goblins waiting, as if to take the elevator! A woman goblin and two kids. The goblins retreat 10 feet when they see the heroes on the platform. The heroes make funny “sorry, no space” signs. But when the platform is 20’ lower, the platform ceases to move: the goblins at level -3 stopped the elevator! They hear the goblins shout. The heroes restart the platform’s motion, from the mechanism on the platform.



At level -4, 2 corridors. Nothing moves.

At level -5, 4 corridors. From a corridor, they hear laughter and shouts from numerous goblins (more than 20).

At level -6, the platform stops. They are at the lowest level. There are 2 corridors. Six old and dried human heads are impaled on poles surrounding the elevator platform. On a wall, a cupboard with piles of old, dirty pots and greasy pans.

Petrak jams a mace through the gears of the lower-level elevator mechanism to block it at this level.

They explore one of the corridors. A round, vaulted room, its center occupied by a makeshift throne cobbled together from broken barrels, rusty tools, and shattered dolls are hung as decoration.

A pot of foul-smelling broth in the corner. They see cooked rats in this stew...

The room opens to another corridor. A 5' narrow passage, where many strings hang from the 5' ceiling, each bearing rusty bells of various sizes. The bells are hung at 1', 2' and 3' from the ceiling. There are hundreds of them!

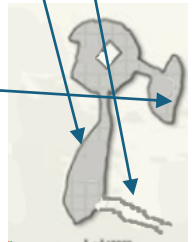
There is a two feet high space from the floor, clear of bells. Exigu and Virevan decide to crawl under the bells to investigate this corridor.

Varadan notices that all bells are connected. He guesses that if you touch just one, many more around will ring.

They crawl for 40', then the corridor turns. They see it is going straight for another 200', and this part is also filled with tiny bells.

They retreat and decide to explore the other corridor from the shaft.

Entering this area, Varadan hits a string stretched at knee height, that triggers the fall of a cold pot from the cupboard. It is filled with excrement! Varadan now stinks. This made a lot of noise.



They hear a great deal of goblin laughter from the levels above.

DM note: with mp3 of goblin laughs, tada, tiss!

Exigu decides to watch for possible traps in the first 20 feet. Nothing. This corridor opens to a 20' x 20' cavernous room, with a closed trunk near a wall.

Exigu then walks toward the trunk, without making trap detection. With a loud snap, a loop of rope closes around his ankle and pulls him off his feet. Before he can react or cry out, he sees the snare dragging him quickly toward a wall. The wall is a false one, a tapestry covering sharp spikes (-12).

Exigu is injured (in his body and his pride), but he decides to check the trunk for traps – nothing. Inside it, a dozen dead frogs, dried and flattened. All of this for nothing.

They go back to the corridor of bells, and decide to crawl into it. They see a light at the end of the tunnel: it opens to a room where there is a fire. And they start to hear many goblin voices.

Exigu watches for traps on the first hundred feet, finds nothing and decides to stop trying to detect, thinking there is nothing. 30' later, he barely clings to the wall, as a spiked trap opens in front of him! They carefully bypass it.

They are now 60' from the room. There are many conversations going on inside the room. Austizel casts *Tongues* and finds this is all chit-chat from goblin women about recipes, kids, gossips and similar things.

Getting closer, hiding, Exigu sees about 20 women and kids, mostly standing around one of the three fires in the room. The women are cooking things in large cauldrons. There are also six men, with leather armor and spiked clubs, near a door. The attention of three of the men is centered around a young female goblin. The other men look bored.

There are many piles of rubbish in the room: animal skins, apple cores, rat bones, and large bits of fabric soaked in urine in a corner.

The heroes decide to enter the room and slay everyone, the men first. Varadan, the quickest, runs for the door and stands in front of it. The men goblin try to hit him, but they are all killed quickly by the heroes.

Then, the goblin women see Austizel (an elf), and one of them yell, "let's catch him and eat his ____!" The women rush at Austizel and grab him! They try to bite him savagely.

DM note: 9-12 level1 goblins grappling with aid another is quite powerful against a low AC wizard!

Meanwhile, the heroes make a carnage of the goblins and slay them all, eventually freeing Austizel.

DM note – quick battle with 5-10 hp goblins...

Varadan opens the door of this room, a 45° crude staircase, going down for about 200'. Varadan listens, but hears nothing.

The rogue Exigu decides against detecting traps and again gets attacked by a trap! Falling bricks from above (-8).

DM note: bad day for Exigu :)

They descend the staircase, to find a large oval room. There is a mounted wooden timber frame to support the ceiling. Water is dripping in the middle and thick and dirty rugs are laid on the floor in the middle of the room to absorb any accumulated water. There are staircases at either end of the room, one going up, one going down.



A goblin was hiding behind a timber. He fires a crossbow, then actively tries to reloads it.

The heroes guess that the rugs are trapped and avoid them. Tora runs next to a rug to find himself there is a trap there! A 20 foot shaft with brackish water in it. But he succeeds to avoid falling in the trap.

DM note: to make things different, there are three 10x10 pit traps, close to each other.

Varadan leaps over the trap to reach the goblin.

Then two goblins run down from a staircase. One grabs a lever on the wall, pulls it and the trap closes. The heroes hear a click of the trap being solidly closed. Four more goblins appear and join the fight.

The goblin with the crossbow tries to run from Varadan but Varadan slays him before he gets away. Exigu attacks with arrows, Varadan with a flurry of blows. Macrazbunare in bear form kills a goblin. These are tougher, more experienced goblins.

DM note 65 hp fighter/rogue goblins

Tora moves on a trap to attack a goblin. The goblin at the lever pulls it and Tora falls in! The trap closes after Tora has gone down.

The goblins attack Macrazbunare (-12) and Exigu (-7).

Austizel attacks with *Scorching Ray*, Petrak with *Spiritual weapon*. The fighters and the goblin fight.

Another goblin appears, dressed in animal skin, with hanging feathers and bones stuck to his clothes. This goblin casts *hold person* at Petrak, who first gets held, but Austizel's *fickle finger of faith* enables him to try again to resist: success!

Austizel casts *Shackle* at the shaman, who is struck by the bands of force. The next action of the shaman is to cast *dimension door* to get away.

DM note: the Shackle spell is quite unbalanced if you ask me. Ray attack against touch AC, if it succeeds, target is paralyzed 1 MINUTE per level. Target can be slain or carried away. If you allow this spell in your campaign, fix it! Lower duration, or a save every round hereafter, or whatever...

Petrak casts *prayer*, and the fight goes on. The goblins are slayed one after the other, but they give a tough fight.

Only one goblin, the one that actioned the lever, is able to run away. They try to pursue him, and hear the noise of another freight elevator being activated.

Meanwhile, Varadan pulls the lever and opens the trap, to see Tora emerging from the water!

DM note: three consecutive failed swim checks followed by success! Tora has 0 ranks in swim skill (a PC with heavy armor), so his final Swim skill is -2.

They throw the rope of climbing at Tora, who takes two rounds to emerge from the pit. The others notice that Tora is covered by bloated leeches!

DM note: goblins love these suckers. Since the trap was closed after Tora fell, it was dark and he could not see the leeches and anyway had all his attention at trying to float. The critter has an anesthetize feature that enables them to get stuck on the flesh without being seen. Tora was in the water 7 rounds and he lost 7 points of Constitution!



Tora exits the pit and Exigu helps him get rid of the leeches. Tora finds himself unexpectedly weak, and he casts *lower restoration* on himself.

Meanwhile, Varadan and Macrazbunare run after the goblin that got away, to prevent him from spreading the alarm. They get into another throne room, a large and dirty furniture covered with red velvet.

There is a pile of excrement mixed with straw in a corner. Several bones are on the floor. A cold pot near the throne, filled with water in which float: rotten fish, rotten vegetables.

Farther, they see another freight elevator.

The heroes run to the shaft, to see the elevator platform going down. However, there is nobody on the platform.

Thinking the goblin activated the elevator to cover him fleeing elsewhere, they track him by scent (Varadan) on this level. However, the tracks end at the elevator and do not go elsewhere after that. Varadan jumps on the platform and sniffs the goblin's scent at one spot only, where he entered the platform.

Austizel checks for secret doors in the room with the freight elevator shaft: nothing. Macrazbunare checks a large wooden box: broken eggs, edible roots, a pig's foot, a half-eaten bird.

They check the walls of the pit for secret doors or other hiding places: none.

They'll understand later that the goblin climbed *under* that platform and climbed down the pit, possibly with the use of magic.

Meanwhile, Exigu descends the stairs and finds a strange room. Its walls and ceiling are covered with black canvas where orange flames have been painted. The walls seem to move. They slowly tighten and loosen, like if they are breathing. Looking behind the canvas, Exigu sees many tiny cracks where air seems to come out and re-enter the walls. The goblins have dug along an unstable air pocket, producing the unsettling movements of air.

Exigu sees a table with two locked drawers. He unlocks them, to see: giant tweezers, an earthenware pot with a cap where a purple mushroom was painted, an embroidered child's blanket, stained with blood, a necklace with human teeth, a broken rat trap, a hairbrush with hair, a black bead, two scrolls of paper, a bowl containing a handful of perfectly round pebbles, an owl feather stained with blood, a cord with three human fingernails attached.

He goes back to the heroes. They are curing themselves. After, Exigu leads them to the breathing canvas room. They cast *detect magic* in the room, and only a scroll is magical. Austizel looks at it: *hold portal, endure elements, disguise self (arcane)*.

Austizel looks at the other scroll, and find it hard to read crude writing: *Not us... no idea of kidnapping... girls... They, the Big Sisters, ask... to hide us. They promise gifts. Not good gifts. They lie. Always lie.*

Exigu takes the other items and plans to burn them, thinking these are for dark magic.

They gather on the freight elevator's platform and make it go down.

They pass a level that is completely dark (75' below the starting level).

The next level under is the last (150' below the starting level). They get to a well-furnished dining room, with dirty tapestries on the wall.

A wall with a double door, locked. Exigu unlocks the door and Varadan opens it. On the other side, a large monster! It appears to be two deformed and ugly goblins, giant-sized, that were fused into one body. The four-armed monstrosity attacks Varadan!

Exigu tries to speak to it but the monster ignores him.

Since this room appears to be a dead-end, the heroes decide to leave the monster there, and then look for the kidnapped girls elsewhere.

Varadan closes the door and Austizel casts *hold portal*, from the newly found scroll. They gather on the platform and make the elevator go up. While the elevator was going up, they see the door bursting into pieces under the blows of the ugly creature.

The elevator is going up, but suddenly it stops! Then the platform starts to tilt on one side. They see the creature has grabbed a rope from the mechanism and is pulling it, making the platform tilt!

The heroes decide they can't avoid fighting the creature and makes the elevator go down. They attack the creature with arrows, fist blows and swords.

Suddenly, a goblin appears behind Tora when he tries to backstab the paladin! It is the goblin that fled from upstairs. From the room with the destroyed door, the shaman (the one that was *shackled*) appears and casts a powerful *lightning bolt* (-30).

But when they thought it was over, it was not. They see a large and ugly goblin, wearing chain shirt, appearing behind Varadan: backstab! (-31). From what he says, the heroes understand that they have found the chief of the goblins, Korag. Varadan hits him hard too (-29).



DM note: the picture is the famous Weinstein goblin from LotR

Korag hits Petrak with his sword (-24) and then hits him too with a dagger that instills venom into Petrak (-8 Co!), Petrak collapses to the ground.

Austizel casts a *lightning bolt* but Korag takes no damage (evasion). Tora hits the large two headed monster.

Varadan hits and kills the shaman. The melee is moving fast, opponents moving in order to try to flank the heroes, and then the hero casters moving away from harm.

Macrazbunare casts *produce flame*, then a *magic missiles* that kills the two headed goblin giant. That angers Korag, "my brother!", who heads for Macrazbunare and he hits him.

Varadan gives a healing potion to Petrak to put him back in the battle. Petrak casts *cure mass wounds* (+26). Korag hits Tora (-24).

All during the battle, Exigu never stopped throwing arrow after arrow at the monsters, doing little but steady damage, and his final arrow kills Korag! The last goblin (the fleeing one) is then killed quickly.

Petrak casts *neutralize poison* on himself. In the silence after the battle, they hear, "we are here! We are here!". The kidnapped girls!

They find a concealed door in Korag's bedroom. In the next room, they find the four kidnapped girls, tied up around a pole in the ground. Gwyneth Clearwater, Anwen Wildoak, Fionna Brightwood, and Lorelei Wyandottir (Wyan's daughter).

Their condition is poor: clearly, they were beaten, and they smell of urine and feces. They have bruises and grazes on their wrists and ankles (from being tied up too tightly for too long). They are weak and also show vermin bites.

The girls speak too fast, nervously, as if trying to dispel the fear.

Gwyneth rubs her wrists, grimaces. *When we heard a noise in the next room, we were afraid you were goblins... That is, until we heard you speak after the battle. By Belenus... I thought no one would come. Where... where is Korag? He said he'd throw us in the leech pit if the fey didn't return!*

The heroes tell her that Korag is dead.

Fionna grabs a player by the sleeve, panicked. *They always came back laughing! Always! Kicks, bites! Sometimes they'd throw us bones for supper! The other day they took Rowena into the hallway. She never came back! Did you see her? Did you see her?! When we asked them where she was, they said obscene things, that she was in Korag's bed and that we were next.*

The heroes reassure her and tell her that Rowena is safe in Viktal.

Anwen is feverish. She doesn't say anything. Her eyes are fixed on the floor. She's breathing fast, too fast. When a player approaches, she recoils sharply, trembling. She is in shock.

The others say that Anwen had managed to break free – she was beaten, and the goblins brought her back unconscious. She hasn't spoken since.

Lorelei is rather quiet, and only says a quick *thank you* when the heroes untie her. She is watching the heroes and clearly still hates them. After a moment, it is also obvious the other girls don't like her.

Fionna: *A goblin shaman came and painted disturbing symbols with blood on the walls. He was talking about a sacrifice to the three sisters?*

The heroes say that the shaman is dead too.

Gwyneth – *We had no food for days, sometimes just moldy leftovers. Water in a dirty communal bucket. They always laughed at us, pulled our hair, pinched us ...*

The girls are very thirsty, and the heroes give them water as well as *goodberries* for their hunger.

The heroes cast *detect magic* on the opponents: four magical items on Korag - a *Greater dagger of venom* (poison 3/day, DC18), Longsword +2, chain shirt +2, and a *brooch of shielding* (20 charges left). The shaman had two potions, *haste* and *CSWounds*.

The heroes warn the girls that they are not safe yet, as they are still deep in the goblin lair...

GAME SESSION 118: TEPEST -13 MEETING MAEVE

(This Ravenloft game was played April 26th, 2026. Everybody is present but Jean-Guy, so Varadan is played by Phil)

Cut scene sent by email before next game.

Pitiful song heard in Mt Lament:

*Keening is my cradle now.
The rocks remember my misery more clearly than I do.*

*Every night, I think perhaps the Mists will let me rest.
I remain half-real, half-wraith, all sorrow.*

*This is my punishment.
This is my lullaby.
This is my scream.*

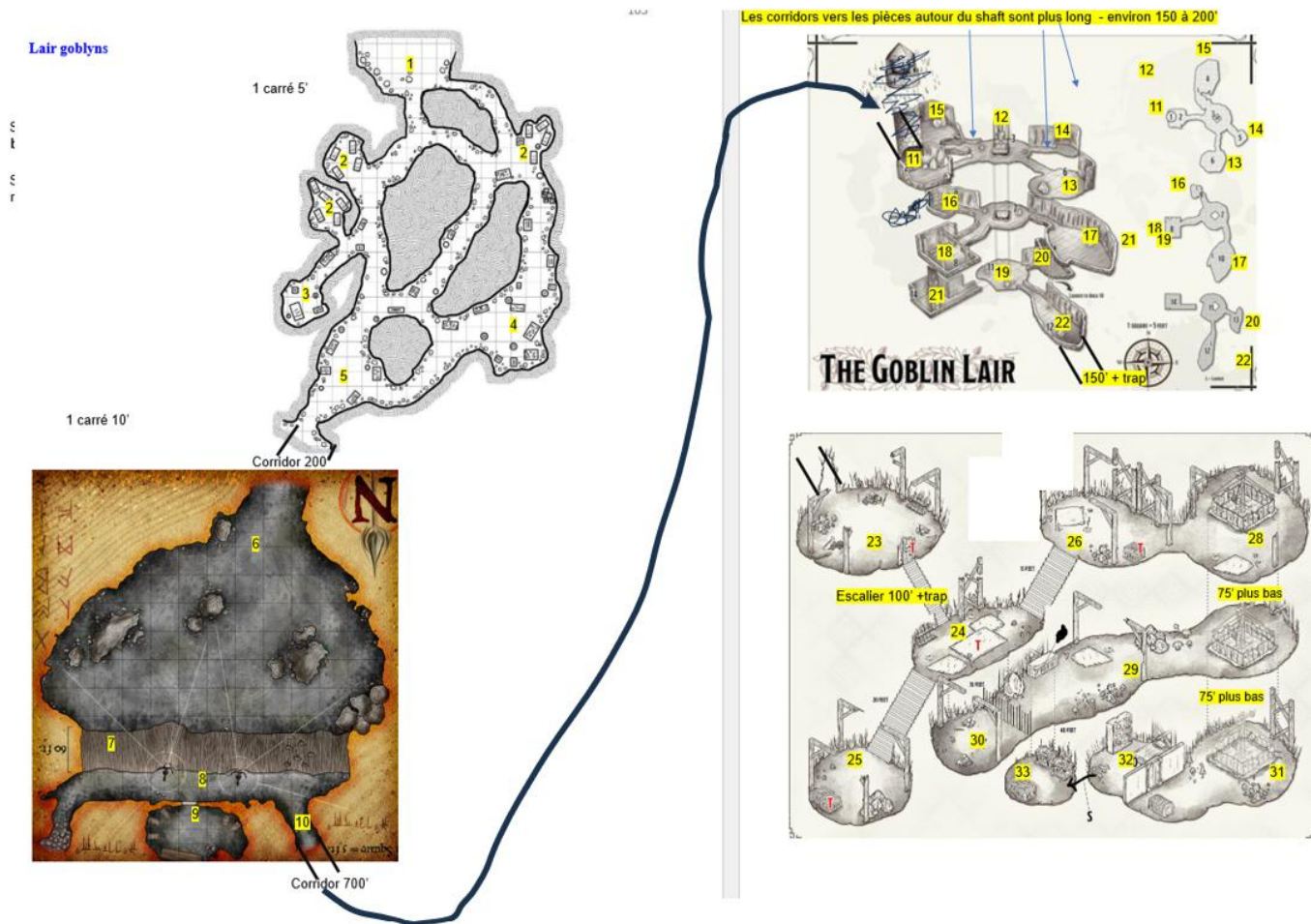
*I never meant to be a slaughterer.
I only meant to be a mother.*

August 28th, 748, 7h30 pm

The group divides up the loot from the battle. Fionna, one of the girls they just saved, takes a long sword and she appears to know how to use it. She says she is Ranger third level.

Being low on spells, they decide to sleep there before making the subterranean trip back to the surface. Exigu does healing to the girls.

DM note: these are the four maps I took on the web and assembled to make one fun and challenging goblin lair, with various features. They are now sleeping in room #32, and they have to make the trip back to room one to get back to the surface.



August 29th, 748

2 am. The heroes hear whispering goblin voices from the top of the pit (from area #28).

3h15 am. A goblin voice from the top of the elevator shaft shouts, “Korag!? Korag!?”. The heroes stay silent.

3h45 am. They see the elevator shaft being called from up there a few times, but the elevator does not move: the heroes managed to sabotage the lower level mechanism with a mace handle through the gears. The tilted elevator platform still has a side 15’ higher than the other, from the two-headed goblin monster’s pulling efforts.

4h10 am. More goblin voices call for “Korag? Korag?” and another shout, “Raglash vrek! Skrun Ghrik!”

Exigu – we should make the trip back carrying Korag’s head on a pike!

Fionna – Good idea, I found the lower ones are easily scared.

5 am. The casters learn their spells. Petrak cast *lesser restoration* on the girls to get them in better health. Macrazbunare provides *good berries* to Fionna.

7h15 am. The heroes see one of the ropes holding the elevator shaft moves, as if goblins were climbing down. They wait until the goblin arrives. The goblin sees the cadavers of Korag, his monstrous brother and the other dead goblins. Then he sees the heroes.

The goblin shouts “Korag zik zak! Korag dobra!”. The heroes kill the goblin with arrows.

Then they hear a goblin voice from up there shouts, “Gribble pluk?” a few times.

They repair the elevator platform to make it straight.

While they do that, they hear many goblin shouts from area #28: “Skree var pitkar Korag!” and this is repeated over and over as a rallying cry.

Noon They decide to climb up, without the girls, to cleanse the area of goblins.

Petrak cast *magic vestment*, Austizel *mage armor* and *comprehend language*, and Exigu *longstrider*.

They make the elevator go up. They stop at the level in between (area 29) to make sure there are no goblins left behind, so the girls are safe.

The heroes understand this is a common room – with games, dartboards, and other bone games. The ceiling has a wooden support structure. They see a bag containing withered human hands. Among other things, a bowl filled with mushrooms (edible according to Macrazbunare), a rusty bell attached to a string, a necklace made of game tokens, a bag filled with rotten hazelnuts, a small metal box containing glass eyes, a bucket of stagnant rainwater.

Goblin babies are treated little better than pets—they’re kept in cages and fed and watered when the goblins remember, and often left to fight and bicker as they will.

Salty foods and meat are much preferred. Goblins usually enjoy cooked food better than raw (mostly because they like watching things burn). Many goblins are particularly fond of pickled foods of any type. Soak anything in brine long enough and chances are a goblin eats it, given the chance.

Goblin games tend to focus on cruelty and sadism as core concepts—the suffering of creatures smaller than them is a surefire way to mirth in goblin society, and most of their games involve using small animals in key roles.

Fire is also a common entertainment in goblin society—the dancing of flames is a constant source of interest to them, and in many tribes, arson is considered an art form.

They see a large straw mattress, big enough for the large two-headed monstrosity they did slay the day before.

They climb back onto the elevator platform, and make it move upward. But at -50' from area #28, the platform stops. The goblin stopped it from above! The goblin shouts, "Krunzel! Krunzel!". Austizel understands: "oil! oil!".

They see as many as 20 goblins suddenly throwing oil flask on the platform! The heroes try to kill many of them with arrows, but the *confusion* spell from Austizel makes the best results at stopping the oil flask to come down on the platform.

But still there are a dozen oil flasks on the platform. One goblin appears with a flaming arrow but misses dismally!

DM note: roll of 1 from yours truly.

Varadan climbs up the shaft in *airwalk* and the heroes finish the killing of the goblins. Other goblins did flee before the heroes climbed up and the heroes hear more goblins shouting from farther in the lair.

This area being safe, they get the elevator down, and then bring the girls up to area #28.

They proceed back to the surface with minimal problems. In the other elevator shaft, they have arrows thrown at them, but this is not a major threat.

Near the entrance (area#1), they see many fresh traces of goblins leaving the complex and disperse in the forest. The heroes put Korag's head on a pike at the entrance.

They get back to where they left the horses. Suddenly, Varadan has a sudden urge: "I want to find Loht's sword! I need to find Loht and take back the sword!"

DM note: roll of 3 on the item curse

Tora manages to calm him, "Yes, but not here, we have to go back to Viktal first."

Varadan – "OK, but when we are in Viktal, I will search for Loht."

The four-hour trip by horse is quiet. The girls are smiling and their relief is obvious.

When they arrive in Viktal with the four girls, the heroes are treated as stars. The families of the girls celebrate with the heroes. Even the Inquisitors who had complained about them do congratulate the heroes.

Wyan is relieved to see his daughter again. He speaks to her in a low voice, then... takes her back to prison... He thanks the heroes.

Varadan – I’m going in the forest, that’s where we saw Loht the last time.

Macrazbunare and Exigu go with him to make he doesn’t do anything to hurt himself. He transforms and sniffs for traces, without results. He is really obsessed! He asks Exigu to look for traces. He even pushes Macrazbunare physically: “Make some spells! Find him!”

7 pm They are back in Viktal after the promise to try again tomorrow.

The group thinks they may have to go to Martira Bay’s university to gain information on this curse?

Briona comes to their cottage, and she tells the heroes that a celebration is being held at the city tavern in their honor. “But only the humans”, she adds, “some things never change, alas...”

The fat inn owner is proud to have the heroes as guests and their drinks are free. The heroes are treated as, well, heroes! The three girls, Gwyneth, Anwen and Fionna have a crown of flowers. Everybody wants to talk to the heroes, and many girls are openly flirting. The only people missing are Wyan and Lorelei.

They see that Varadan is talking to everyone about Loht’s sword, and he keeps asking if the person has seen it... After a discussion with the other heroes, Luther casts *Epiphany* on Varadan, and it has a calming effect on him.

They hear people talking about Wyan’s tough decision to put Lorelei back in jail as she arrived. Her trial will be held soon, they say.

Later in the evening, they see Luther talking to a man. Luther looks concerned and he calls for the heroes to come to hear what the man has to say.

I’m Halwyn Duskwell, a horse rancher. I attempted to expand my business by raising herding dogs. Two days ago, I purchased three dogs, but that night they barked for hours at the forest. At some point during the night, the dogs went silent. I thought they did calm down and went to sleep.

But the next morning, I found my three dogs lying dead, and one of my horses was out of the barn. The dogs had suffered many broken bones, and the horse’s spine was broken. As best could be determined by the wounds inflicted, the placement of the bodies and the traces on the ground, the dogs were dropped from a great height on to the back of the mare as it bolted about the pasture. Some of the dogs were clearly dropped more than once. I had to kill the horse. What horrible creature could do that?

DM note: snippet from VRGttF

The heroes do not tell Duskwell that they think the mean powries could have done such a thing.

The celebration ends around 10 pm, and the heroes go back to their cottage.

Near their cottage, they see a tiny fey perched on a fence, as if she'd been waiting for them all along! A one foot tall Carrot top!



She shouts at the heroes: *The White Lady is calling you! Yes, **you**, big feet!*

She continues with a butler-like tone, *Maeve, Princess of the Shee, is gracing you with an encounter. And it's not an invitation you can refuse!*

Then, more quietly, *This is important for us fey... For you humans. For all that lives in between... Find Aria in Briggdarrow; she'll know how to lead your steps.*

Then the fey turns into a moth and leaves in the darkness.

August 30th, 748

In the morning, the three saved girls they saved brought freshly baked bread, jam and coffee to the heroes. They thank the heroes another time for their rescue from these horrible goblins. Anwen is with them and the heroes hear her speak for the first time.

Exigu asks Fionna – since you are a ranger, do you know Ermintrude?

Fionna – no, why?

Exigu explains that Ermintrude is a ranger from Kellee, of great power, and that she could be looking for people to train.

Fionna – thanks for this information. But I now train with a man from Briggdarrow, Owen Vimus!

DM note – Tora's brother

During breakfast, the girls ask many questions about the life of adventurers. And, when they hear about Borca, many questions about Borcan's fashions and way of life. "Oh, Borca is so sophisticated compared to us!"

The heroes thank the girls and leave for Briggdarrow (4 hours by horse).

Tora goes to his parents to say hello and ask about Aria.

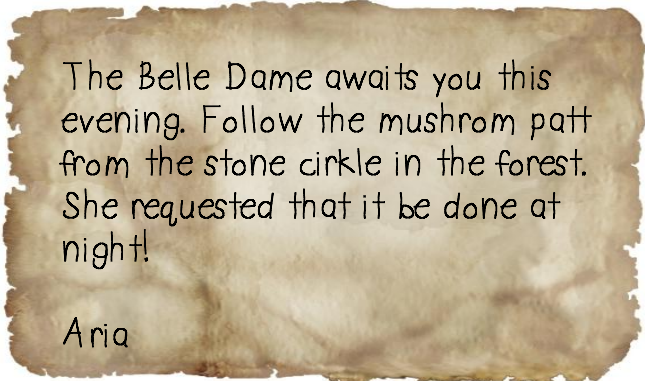
Tora's mother - *In Briggdarrow, Aria is well known but ignored... She is a little girl of about nine or ten years old. Her mother died a year ago from an illness brought on by malnutrition and poverty. Since then, Aria sleeps wherever she can, does odd jobs for food and a place to sleep, or eats whatever is left for her. She is intelligent and curious, but Aria rarely smiles. But since she doesn't seem to be wasting away too much, most adults look away (they just say "Poor Aria" but do nothing for her). Some whisper that she talks to herself in the woods at night. Your father and me try to make sure she has enough food and we often share our stew with her.*

2 pm they look for the little girl in Briggdarrow, but they do not find her. People can't tell the heroes where she is, as they didn't see her recently. But they learn that locals are concerned with goblins "There are many goblins in the forest to the north these days? Are they looking for something?"

At the end of the afternoon, they go to the Spider House Inn and they talk with Keirwyn, the owner.

He says "Little Aria came here this morning and told me to give you a message. She did describe you: six persons, one of them a hobbit and another is an elf."

And he hands over a folded piece of paper:



The Belle Dame awaits you this evening. Follow the mushroom path from the stone circle in the forest. She requested that it be done at night!

Aria

Around 9pm, after a dinner at the inn, the heroes head to the stone circle in the forest. There, they do not see Aria. They look around. The forest is quite silent. Maybe too silent.

Then, slowly... A line of translucent mushrooms lights up one by one, tracing a winding path between the trees. A sweet scent suddenly hangs in the air.

Exigu sees, along the mushroom path, children's footprints. Barefoot. Aria's, they guess. They follow this path.

After 20 minutes of walking, they notice by the tracks that Aria is now being followed by 6 goblins! Six more footprints appear on the trail, misshapen, clawed. Goblins.

They follow the tracks for another 30 minutes. Then something catches the heroes' attention: not too far ahead, they notice a slender coil of gray smoke twining into the night sky. Visible as much because of the stars that it blocks out as for the moonlight that

falls upon it, it looks very much like it is coming from a chimney of some kind. The heroes smell whiffs of tea and honey.

Then, without warning, the hero walking in front crashes into some sort of unseen barrier. Whatever its nature, magical energy or unseen construction, the barrier is solid enough to stop him dead in his tracks.

Looking at it closely, they can see it shimmer very faintly, like bits of moonlight reflected in unseen glass. The smoke in the sky is about 50' away on the other side of the wall, but they only see trees on the other side of the unseen barrier.

Exigu examines the tracks. He understands that the goblins did trample around the unseen wall for a moment, then they left. But he sees Aria's trace going *through* the wall, backward.

Exigu tries to walk backward through the wall and he passes through it! The other heroes follow.

They see a path of small yellow stones that leads into a forest. A small two-foot-high fence is visible 100 feet away.

The smoke in the sky now appears to be a thousand feet away! This place is larger than it seems from outside.

They walk and stop near the wooden fence.

A face carved into the stone on the right side of the gate seems to be watching.

Exigu tries to open the fence but finds himself outside the invisible wall. He gets back inside, walking backward, and reaches the other heroes. Another tries to walk in the grass and bypass the fence: same thing. Another tries to jump over the fence: same thing. When they are outside, they do not see the yellow road or the other heroes, just trees.

Exigu tries to speak to the face on the rock "We are here at the request of the White Lady"

The face answers: "Tell me something no one needs to know."

Exigu tells him something about his odd habit of farting. He opens the gate and passes.

Petrak says "I have a hidden scar on my left arm" and he passes.

Tora "I am Tora and I'm invited by the White Lady", but when he tries to pass, he finds himself outside the unseen wall.

Tora tries again "I make jokes that make only me laughing", and he passes.

Austizel “I’m very superstitious” and he passes.

Varadan “to my knowledge, I’m the only non-evil werewolf”, and he passes.

DM note: on that game day, Jean-Guy, Varadan’s player, was absent. Varadan was played by Phil, Jean-Guy’s son who perhaps took liberties with his father’s character :))
“My friends are mocking my intimate relation with Ivana and I fear my feelings for her are real”.

After reading this, Varadan’s player asked for it to change to what’s above.

Macrazbunare “My name has a hidden meaning”, and he passes.

DM note – the test was simple: you needed to say a trivial but true detail in order to pass freely. Lie, or try to pass without solving the puzzle: you go back outside the first gate. For Macrazbunare, his player just told us that his name comes from Romanian and it means “poppy revenge” :)

On the other side, the yellow stone path continues for 100 feet until it reaches another similar wooden gate. A stone is on the right side of the fence, with an engraved message: “follow what follows you”.

The heroes then see that their shadows are all oriented in a different direction!

The heroes quickly find the solution: each of them walks in the direction indicated by its shadow, and, after 20 feet, that hero finds himself on the other side of the fence.

The yellow stone path continues a hundred feet and then crosses a bridge over a stream.

When the heroes reach the bridge, a monstrous figure appears on the other side, blocking the path: a mass of flesh 15 feet tall and 8 feet wide, made up of eyes and many mouths that open and close.

They ignore it and pass through it without any arm.

DM note : if a PC attacks, the guardian becomes real and dangerous - infinite hit points, one attack +15, and 3d6 damage. Any bypass attempt brings them back outside the invisible wall.

As they continue, the forest thickens, forcing them to constantly scan the sky for the plume of smoke to guide them. Suddenly, they spot someone who looks like an elf, standing motionless just a few feet ahead of them! His white-blond hair and golden eyes seem almost luminous in the darkness of the night, his flowing white garments richly adorned with silver and gold threads.



"I am Cedraq, servant and advisor to Queen Maeve," he says in a melodious voice. "Let's go," he continues, turning around. "Her Majesty awaits us."

Cedraq responds to all questions with the same answer: "Her Majesty will answer all your questions when we arrive."

Following Cedraq, they walk for about 1,000 feet, and there they see the source of the smoke: the chimney of a charming little house. The building is surrounded by a vast garden of aromatic herbs, flowers, vegetables, and other plants.

The garden air is filled with the sweet fragrances of a dozen varieties of night-blooming flowers and the aroma of various herbs. Macrazbunare says that the garden is not threatening, although the combined essence of the different plants makes the heroes feel a little dizzy.

The heroes follow Cedraq and reach the cottage. It is a low, single-story structure made of wood. The roof is covered with bark shingles and green moss.

The large chimney at one end pours a winding plume of gray smoke into the night air. A flickering light warmly illuminates the windows, hinting of a hearth with fire.

The house is small, almost shy, nestled between two ancient oaks whose roots intertwine like grasping fingers. Both large trees lean slightly toward the house, as if curious, attentive.

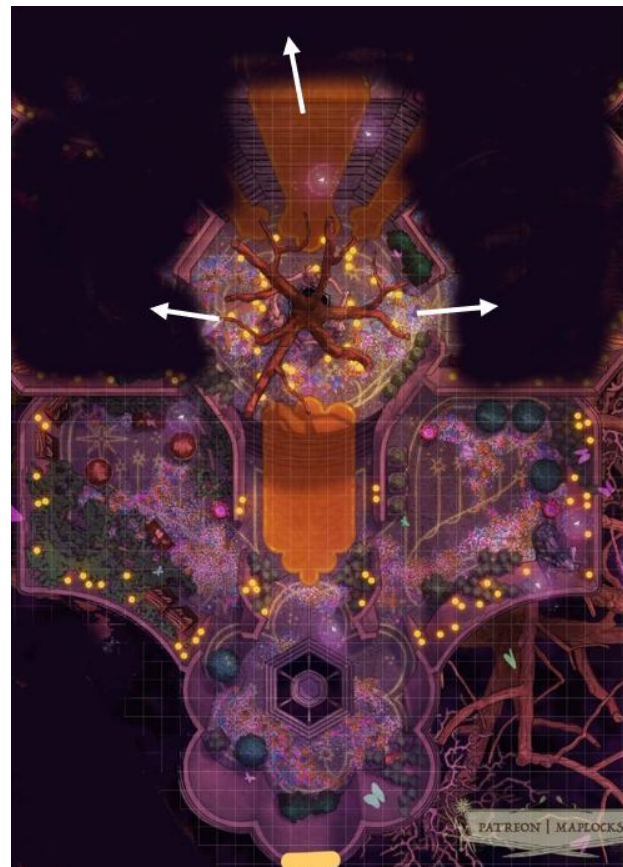
The thin smoke from the chimney smells of burnt honey and tea.

Cedraq leads you into the cottage's entrance. The door is low, forcing the humans to stoop.

They enter a small, roughly circular antechamber, partially overgrown with living roots that emerge from the floor and walls. The roots do not block the passage, but brush against the heroes' ankles, warm, almost attentive.

The floor is engraved with a dark purple hexagonal symbol.

In front of them, a circular room, 5 feet higher than where they are. In the center of this circular room stands



a living tree, its roots serving as natural benches, its branches supporting the ceiling. On either side of the room with the tree are openings to other rooms. And ahead, further on, are other rooms on a plateau 8 feet higher (again, the house is much larger on the inside than what its exterior walls suggests.)

Cedraq leads them to a room on the left, before the first set of stairs.

In this room, lanterns are hanging 8-feet high and they glow dimly. A crackling fire in the brick fireplace casts a soft amber light on the waxed pine furniture. Flowering plants adorn every corner, filling the air with a pleasant, if slightly overpowering, fragrance. The intermittent crackling of the fire creates a gentle, relaxing soundscape.

Cedraq: “Queen Maeve will be with you in a moment. Please make yourselves comfortable,” he said, gesturing toward the sofa. The messenger then bowed and left the room in silence.

After the heroes had a few minutes, Maeve's messenger re-enters the room with platters of fruit, pastries and cheese.

Then, from the stairs above, comes the most beautiful woman the heroes have ever seen. Nearly 6 feet tall, she has long white hair and youthful features. She appears neither human nor elven, but rather a third species, perhaps another foreign world, much like elves are to humans. Her supernatural perfection is such that the heroes gaze at her in disbelief, searching in vain for any flaw.

Only her large amber eyes, rosy lips, and a sapphire pendant brighten her face. An ornate black rapier adorns her belt.

Her blue silk dress shimmers with every movement, sparkling like the surface of a mountain lake on a sunny day. An intoxicating fragrance around her fills the air.

In a soft, hushed voice, like that of a delicate wind instrument, she says, *I welcome you to my home, in all its simplicity. I invite you to join me,* gesturing to Cedraq, who pours seven glasses of pale white wine from a carafe.

I'm sorry if my barriers have caused you any inconvenience, but they are necessary for my safety.

Tora “We understand perfectly.”

Cedraq acts as waiter, pouring each character a glass of the excellent wine. (the heroes find it has an elusive taste that tugs at the memory, like something tasted in childhood but long since forgotten...). Cedraq then sits in a corner and watches the conversation.



During the meal that follows, Maeve makes casual conversation with the characters while they eat. (Maeve only nibbles at a few berries and a light pastry.)

Allow me to present myself.

Maeve tilted her head slightly, as if listening to distant music.

I have worn crowns of flowers and thorns, and I remained when the songs died.

After a silence: *I have been called queen—but only by those who knew how to kneel without bending.*

Then, more simply: *My name is Maeve. I am one of the nine Lords of Arak. I am the princess of the Shee, and the ruler of the Court of Light.*

I left my kingdom—what you call the Shadow Rift—to understand what my brother Loht is plotting in the mortal lands.

Loht is my brother. Lord of the Sith and Prince of the Dark Court of the fey, or you may call it the Unseelie Court.

We both share the power over the Arak feys of the Shadow Rift. Before passing through the gate, perhaps because he foresaw his destruction, my father entrusted me with the Crown of Arak and gave Loht the Sword of Arak. Thus was sealed our right to rule in his name when he died. That was 4,000 years ago.

Her voice deepened. *But since our emergence from the darkness, the power of the Dark Court has steadily grown, while mine has declined.*

Tora asks, “What is an Arak?”

You sometimes call us elves, or shadow elves, but we are unlike any elven people in your lands. We are the Fey. The Arak. Named after my father’s name.

We do not age as you do, and we almost never die—except by accident, or... by betrayal.

It is strange to me, who can easily remember five millennia, to see how quickly you are born, then die.

Some of my own people, three times older than me, still call me young Maeve.

A bittersweet smile.

It also seems curious to me that you humans resemble each other so much. This is not the case with my people. We change with the centuries. We go from the tiny powrie to beings my size... and sometimes larger.

As she notices the heroes' surprise at the "thousands of years": *Time doesn't flow with the same patience everywhere. Where I come from, it likes to lose itself.*

She waves at the walls, *This current residency is temporary, I usually live in the Shadow Rift.*

Exigu – was it a good thing to give back the sword to your brother?

Another bittersweet smile.

Let me tell you a tale. The story of the Araks begins on another world. At the heart of this dark realm was a being of terrifying power and absolute malevolence, whom the Arak simply call the Twilight or the Daemon-Sorcerer. His true name was Gwydion, but few fey will use it. The Twilight forced the fey to work as slaves for centuries. Under his ever-present gaze, the feys toiled and wept for the glory of this dark and evil being.

When I turned 50, the Twilight grew weary of his kingdom and decided to conquer new worlds on other planes of existence. He ordered Arak, my father, his steward, to begin construction of a grand portal to send his armies of shadow fairies to conquer other worlds.

Unbeknownst to the Demon-Sorcerer, the fairies had been seeking for centuries to escape their master's domination. They yearned for their freedom. In the Obsidian Gate, then under construction, my father finally glimpsed a way out. The Twilight imbued the Obsidian Gate with a fragment of his spirit, allowing it to pierce dimensional boundaries to other worlds, including this one.

The day of the planned invasion, the immense army of shadow fairies swept into the new world, but the Demon-Sorcerer gradually realized that this force were far greater than his plan had anticipated. In fact, the entire fairy race, all twelve thousands of them, along with many of its other shadowy servants, were fleeing toward the Gate!

Furious, the Twilight gave chase, plunging into the Gate on the fairies' heels. My father confronted the Twilight in the tunnel between worlds, trying to hold off the demon long enough for all the shadow fairies to escape.

My father carried several powerful artifacts: his Crown and Sword, as well as other items now lost or destroyed. My father managed to slow the Twilight long enough for his people to flee.

My father, however, could not; when he finally turned to run toward the gate's exit, the Demon-Sorcerer struck him with a blast of negative energy as he reached the other end of the tunnel. My father Arak was instantly vaporized, and his artifacts were hurled into the new world, landing at the feet of me and my brother Loht.

Loht was paralyzed with fear. I managed to recite the incantation and close the Gate before the Twilight escaped into this world. The demon was trapped in an interdimensional space between our ancient world and this one. He must have been extremely frustrated!

But had I known, I would have thrown the Crown inside the gate, which would have sealed it forever!

After that, the fairies renamed their new kingdom in honor of their fallen leader and quickly settled in this new territory, finally free. As heirs of Arak, Loht and I ruled jointly.

We never dared reopen that Gate. For if Gwydion returned... he would enslave us all again.

Maeve looks at the heroes with a concerned gaze.

Most possibly the humans too...

Tora – So what is Loht planning?

I fear my brother has a mad plan. He also seeks my Crown. The only reason for such an act would be to open the Obsidian Gate. But still... I dare not imagine why he would want to awaken what slumbers behind it. He never responds to my communications.

During the great upheavals that shook these lands a few years ago, the Sword of Arak was lost. Loht searched for it for a long time among mortals... and has only just found it.

She casts a somber look at the heroes.

Loht knows that I alone know the location of the Crown of Arak. His Powrie spies watch me relentlessly.

Austizel – can you tell us more about the fey courts?

Once, the Arak were a single nation, under the rule of the Erlking—my father.

Today, we are divided: the Light Court, the Seelie Court, which I govern, and the Dark Court, or the Unseelie Court, ruled by my brother Loht. The Dark Court is stronger and much more eager to get more power.

She lists them slowly: *“The powries, the muryans, some firs, the siths, the tegs... follow the Prince of Shadow.*

The shees, some firs, the portunes, the alvens... still acknowledge me.

The brags serve both sides when it suits them.

Her gaze darkens.

Beware the Dark Court. In recent years, its power has grown until it encompasses almost our entire kingdom. My brother is cunning and slowly expanded his reach.

Tora – can you tell us more about the Gate?

Normally, it should be left closed! I don’t know why my brother seems determined to open it with the sword!

Both Arak’s artifacts can be used as keys to open the gate door, but only from this side. If an artifact touches the door, it will open. But not from the other side.

My Crown can also be used to close the open door by throwing it to the other side.

Loht is missing only one artifact: the Crown of Arak, which belongs to me. I know he’s looking for it because he’s been pestering me to give it to him.

Look intently at the PCs.

Before leaving my kingdom, I hid it in the eternal fire of my father’s tomb.

She clasps her hands.

It’s clear he hasn’t found the Crown yet, because his spies, the Powries, are still watching me relentlessly. If we are to stop my brother and save the world from Gwydion’s return, we must find the Crown.

I cannot do it because I am too closely watched. You, on the other hand, Loht will deem you unworthy of his attention. You can therefore act where I cannot.

Then, her voice down:

When you have retrieved the Crown, you must destroy it. It is my most precious treasure... and the last thing my father gave me... but it is the only way to stop the Twilight.

Therefore, once the Crown is retrieved, you must carry it to the Obsidian Gate, open it and throw it in, like locking a door and sliding the key underneath. As soon as the Crown returns to the realm of shadows from which it came, the magical energies of that place will destroy it.

Then, the gate will be closed forever and Gwydion will be trapped for eternity.

Exigu – can we touch the Crown without any ill effect?

Yes, you can hold its magnificence in your hand, it will not have any effect on you.

Austizel briefly explains Varadan's problems with Loht's sword.

I see. Here, she said, removing one of her silver rings and handing it to Varadan. *Put it at your finger.*

Varadan takes it and slips it at one finger. The round black gem set in the center reflected no light from the flickering fire, seeming to be made of the shadows themselves.

This will relive you from the curse of the sword.

Also, show this ring to those who have remained loyal to me. They will help you... if they can.

Petrak – But how can we go to the Shadow Rift?

Cedraq will lead you to a place on the edge of the abyss, not far from here. A passage will open. This is the Fracture. Follow it.

Seeing the heroes wanting to know more about the Fracture: *Know that the Fracture is a test.*

Petrak – what kind of test?

I cannot tell you, because I do not know. The fey completely forget the Fracture after passing through it. So I can't say what the test is.

The heroes discuss that they need to buy cold weapon weapons and that they can't find these in Tepest. Perhaps in Liara, through the Boritsi trading company, they think.

Maeve hears this and says:

Not all feys have the same weakness. But I cannot tell you more.

Because the only law universally respected is the Law of Arak. Before their exodus, the Twilight mercilessly tormented the Arak, mistreating them and turning them against each other for its own amusement. Just before the Arak escaped the Demon-Sorcerer's

control, my father enacted the law that now bears his name: no fey shall kill another fey.

This Law has been broken only once in 5,000 years.

Fey may wage war through changelings to settle disputes between Arak, yes, but no Arak shall deliberately kill another. Even those who injure other Arak or are suspected of murder can be found guilty of breaking this Law.

This law doesn't apply to you. Do what you need to find the Crown.

Also, the nine breeds of Arak cannot kill another Arak, but other types of feys can.

Tora – you mean it was broken for Tristessa?

Tristessa was executed on my brother's orders because her ideas were frankly repugnant.

Though shocking at the time, I now largely agree with this single transgression of my father's great law—no Arak shall kill another Arak.

Humans don't realize it, but the end of this vile cult is probably a good thing for them too...

Petrak - What can be found in the Shadow Rift?

What you find there... will depend mostly on what you bring with you.

Maeve then provides the heroes with a map of the Shadow Rift.

The north is a verdant land—farmland and beautiful forests—and the south is a dead land—swamps and stones.

She shows a place on the map: *You will arrive here, at the foot of the waterfalls. Cross the bridge and follow the road south, toward my father's grave. Avoid the Malachite Palace; it is our throne, and for the time being, Loht's.*

Then head south, into the dead zone, to the Darkenheights plateau, where the Obsidian Gate is located.

Tora – I suppose that there are very few humans in the Shadow Rift?

You are mistaken, there are a lot! Many changelings! The best of the humankind!

Tora – Changelings?

Petrak – yes, we met one once, remember Martha Ward? She was sad from the death of her lover, and we later gave her back her soul (see sessions 33+)

Maeve seems surprised.

I do not agree with you. I consider the creation of changelings as the ultimate compliment and a great reward for any mortal fortunate enough to undergo this magical transformation.

My people believe that transforming a mortal into a changeling is the greatest honor. When the Arak find someone skilled in any art, someone who inspires envy in all their peers, we seek them out. Be it a pastry chef, a talented colorist, a sculptor, an architect, a unique skilled warrior.

Some, we take with us for a time, as companions. Others, if we deem them worthy, we offer them a choice meal, then we separate their shadows and bring them back to our homeland. There, the shadow returns to its original form and the human can resume their artist work. The act of transformation frees the mind from all distractions, allowing the changeling to focus solely on their art, instead of continuing their dreary mortal life.

Tora – again, what are the different kinds of fey?

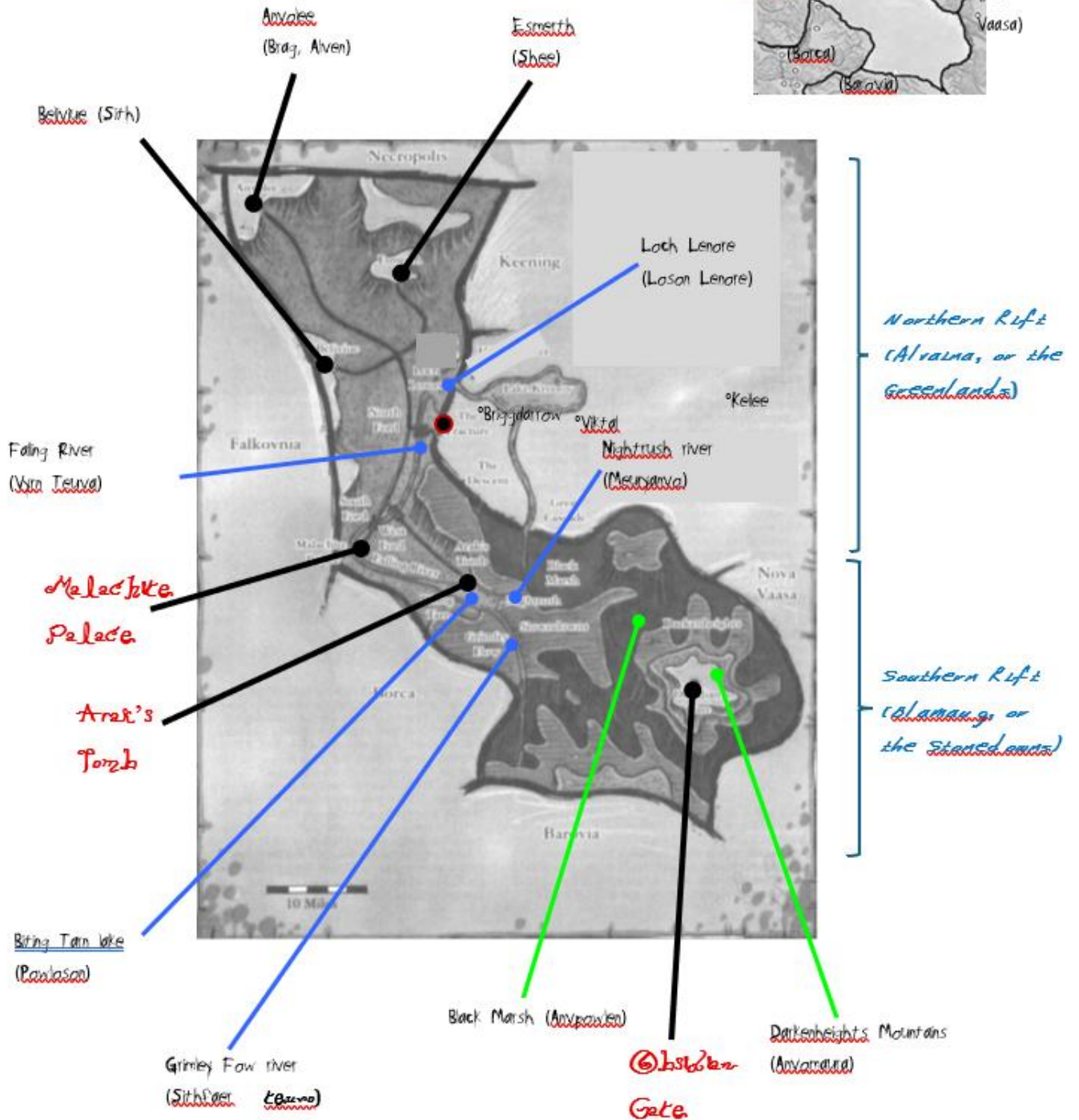
Like a teacher would, Maeve recites slowly the list of the nine Arak breeds.

Up: Alven, Powrie, Portune, Fir

Down: Brag, Teg, Muryan, Shee, Sith



ARAK-La Faille des Ombres



The Alven—small creatures with butterfly wings, they love plants and have green thumbs. They are my allies.

The Brag—builders and architects. They love stories and beer. Know that the Brag built this cottage for the price of one very intriguing story. They serve both courts but do not take side.

The Firs—they are divided into two, depending on the court they serve. You would say they look like strange human babies, 2-3 years old to you. They have a fascination with anything clockwork-based machinery. The Tolly-Knocks make replicas of natural creatures, like mechanical birds. The Gremlins, for their part, craft weapons that tear, slash, shoot, and explode.

The Muryans serve my brother. They are the most adept with a blade and in the art of combat. The Muryans move with natural agility and possess an extraordinary talent for fighting on the move.

The Portunes are also my allies. The Portunes are the most affable and timid of the Arak, and the least able to defend themselves. As a result, they are generally the most cautious. A race of guardians of information, the Portunes have analytical minds. They are by far the wisest and most learned of the Arak. Their erudition is invaluable, and so all the shadow fey races take care of their Portune cousins. Even the sadistic Powries do not abuse their Portune brethren.

The Powries, then. Of all the Arak who haunt the Shadow Rift, the powrie (or redcaps) are the most skilled in the arts of assassination and espionage. Malevolent creatures who revel in all forms of sadism, the powrie of course hold a prominent position in the Dark Court.

The Shee. The Shee are the most artistic of the fey, and they support art in all its forms. I am a Shee.

The Sith. Loht is their leader. Under the rule of the Dark Court, the Sith have flourished, attaining considerable power and influence. The darkest of the Arak, the Sith are methodically cruel and fascinated by death.

And finally the Teks, also allied with Loht. The Teks are a race in harmony with wild beasts. Though cunning and wise, the Teks interact more with animals than with humans. They even prefer the company of animals to that of their fairy cousins. They are often camouflaged in nature, whether hunting or ambushing.

These are the nine main types, but there is a great variety of other Arak fey - dryads, satirs, pixies, and so on. You can also meet these in the Shadow Rift.

Exigu – what are the powers and weaknesses of each breed?

I have already told you that if I answer that, I would break the law of Arak.

She thinks for a moment, looking at Macrazbunare's wolf and Exigu's Patu.

You shouldn't bring your animals, unless it's to eat them. Crossing the Rift will be difficult for them.

Also, in the Rift, it's perpetually dark. You'll only be able to see a maximum of 5 feet with human eyes. The fey can see in the dark and normally have no light when they move, or only a minimal amount. Of course, if you're moving around with six strong lights, you're going to attract attention.

Tora - Can vistani go inside the Shadow Rift?

I've never seen these folks inside the Shadow Rift. I've never met any myself.

Austizel – I have a lucky coin, which is very superstitious for me. Can you kiss it to give me your blessing?

DM note : Austizel is a Fate Spinner Wizard.

Maeve finds this odd, but she agrees and does so.

Oh, and do not eat anything a fey has made. No fairy food, for you, ever. It greatly increases your chances of becoming a changeling. You can do that later if you want, but right now you need to remain independent of thoughts.

Her smirking grin is malicious after saying this.

Petrak – what is the tomb of Arak?

It's a mausoleum to honor his name and what he did for our race. A room in it contains a pillar of fire. The Crown is at its bottom.

It is then that a little girl arrives in the room from upstairs. Clearly, she had recently awoken from sleep. Without saying anything to anyone, she pours herself a large plate of food, then sits in a corner and listens.

Maeve: *Aria has agreed to guide you here with her footprints. I thank you for that.*

Aria nods at the queen. Sometimes, she fingers up her nose.

DM note – Aria is an hag child exchanged for a human one. She knows she is different, but has no clue that her dead mother is not her real mother.



Aria asks the heroes – *you passed the barriers? What did you think of the monster at the third barrier?* And she makes childish growling monstrous sounds.

Exigu – why ask about truths that are useless?

Aria – goblins cannot answer that question. Proof, it took you a few times to pass...

Maeve, chuckling: ***This little girl is unique, and she is very much appreciated here.***

The conversation begins to end. The heroes discuss. Austizel casts *protection from curse* on himself.

Aria at Austizel – make sure the Tepestani priest never see you!

Tora at Maeve – before the Shadow Rift, there were other lands at the same place, Markovia and G'Henna? What do you know of their fate?

Maeve – ***I heard of it. As far as I know, the fey have nothing to do with this. When we poured out of the Obsidian Gate, this land was there, empty, and waiting for us. So we stole nothing if your question implies this, or as I once heard from a Tepestani.***

Pause. The heroes discuss.

So I understand you will leave tomorrow night?

A last piece of advice. If you remember to honor the memory of Arak the Erlking, you will find more open doors in the Shadow Rift.