

## Episode 17: The Equinox Party and The Lurker

**Tuesday, March 21<sup>st</sup>:** windy (from SE).

1. The Equinox party is underway. Slippa came with Oliver, and Elsapheth with Doil. Slippa had arranged for Belfor to meet a local girl who worked at the dress shop, Plentisha, at the party. Sensa, Veylann, Melodious and Groa came without any arranged partner. (See end of Session 16 ½ document for a party description. This was a “+3” (good) party, with a +3 party bonus on romance checks and 3 rounds of interaction.)
2. Doil and Elsapheth stayed together, talking, eating, and drinking for the whole party, finally parting having spent an enjoyable evening together. Sensa almost immediately approached a tradesman at a nearby table named Bullgear. They also spent the evening together at the party, ultimately sharing a room in the tavern for the night. Veylann, at first remaining idle first at the party’s table, and later at the bar. Late in the party he found a woman named Lacea, who is a driver with a merchant who happened to be in town that evening. They hit it off well and he arranged for a room for them for the night.

Belfor started the party in the company of Plentisha, the seamstress from the dress shop, who Slippa had found for him. It didn’t take long for Plentisha to make an excuse and depart, leaving Belfor alone. But he was approached by another woman, Vidalia, who found him, and they talked for a bit. Melodious was keeping an eye on things with Belfor and secretly giving Bardic encouragement to his interests. Vidalia stayed with Belfor for the rest of the party, the two of them seeming to enjoy the company, but parted at the end. Vidalia was expecting to depart for Orctown on a venture the next day, and was a bit nervous about it all.



Oliver, who had come with Slippa, was gentlemanly and courteous, but seemed surprised at her eager affection. The two of them were together talking and dancing and enjoying the party to the end. Oliver finally agreed to get them a room together. Meanwhile Melodious, who had started with just an intention of watching the action, found himself swarmed by an eager young woman named Ambrosia, a worker at the

herbalism shop. Melodious managed to pay attention to Belfor enough to help him out a bit. Ambrosia was persistent and attractive enough that Melodious eventually gave her a yes to what she was seeking.

Groa perhaps had the most interesting evening. At first she went over to near the stage, and was dancing alone in a sort of spiritual manner, attracting the attention of several nearby men who had been watching the entertainers. One, a heavy footman named Heaveho, stood up to take her and dance with her. But Groa turned to face him and demanded that he prove himself to her by slaying others. [Not sure I got that quite right.] Heaveho let her go and said he wasn't going to kill anybody. Not at a party! Groa then walked away.

Later, Groa walked in an enticing manner past a table with a gentleman and a young lady near the middle of the room, and made a point of catching the gentleman's eye. She nodded, and walked over to the bar, still giving him attention. He seemed nervous and uncomfortable, and the young woman with him seemed to notice the distraction. Both were wearing fine clothes, above the normal standards of the tavern perhaps. But, then, there were others, especially merchant types, and some flashy young women, in elegant and nicely fitted clothing. Groa hovered in the area, but the gentleman never did leave his seat to approach her. The young lady seemed exasperated, and must have told him to take her home. The two of them rose and left, the gentleman nodding towards Groa on the way out.

After the entertainment wound up, while the entertainment manager Foxconner was auctioning the entertainers, the gentleman returned to the tavern, as noticed by Belfor and Melodious, who were still there. Groa had retired to the women's bunkroom by then, and didn't see him, and he didn't see her. He departed after a brief look around.

3. Slippa told Oliver that she really didn't want to have a continuing romance all the time, just this once was nice, and maybe again sometime. Ambrosia told Melodious that she wanted to marry him. Melodious let her know that he was a bard, after all, and would be traveling around. That really couldn't work out very well. She was disappointed but said that she understood. Maybe next time he came to town... Veylan and Lacea might have sustained a romance but she was due to leave with a convoy to Tonstol the next day or soon after. He told her that he had to stay with the party at least long enough to get his share of the treasure. So it was that in the morning, of the various romance partners, only Elsapheth was still there seated with the party.

### **Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, windy**

4. About the time the party was finishing breakfast, Lady Kaykenyon appeared and introduced herself to the party members. She is about 60 years old and well dressed, and seems to have an exacting manner of speech. She wanted to ask about the ceramic tablets that were found. Had any copies of the scribal marks been made? Was there any additional description the party could offer? Any sketches of them, or of the ships reported? She was disappointed when there really wasn't much the party could offer. The tablets had been taken into custody by Captain of the Guard Trudue when they were raised up the shaft, and then turned over to the Temple of the Sun priests and priestesses.

Kaykenyon told how the population of Sundown had nearly been wiped out 30 years or so ago by a Nomad invasion. Very little of what had survived, and the history of the

place was lost, except for what might be in that pyramid. The Sun clerics there have not been cooperative in sharing knowledge. These tablets may have important information.

She told the party that she expected that, under Mister Urtles's orders, the party along with some others would return to Sundown to "see about" the tablets and some other things. Some sort of sea monster. The expedition would be led by Mistress Exzema, Lord Grantt's staff wizard. She, Lady Kaykanyon, would come, and there would be a bodyguard Lima and two porters, Imbroglia and Jumbotron, who would carry needed baggage for Lady Kaykanyon and Mistress Exzema. There was still some concern about finding someone expert in mechanisms.

At this point, Sensa volunteered that her friend Bullgear would be an excellent candidate to go with the party for this purpose. Surely he could not refuse an invitation to do so from Mister Urtles. Lady Kaykenyon said she'd be pleased to convey that.

The plan had been to depart tomorrow, but Father Rupert had received a "Woe" on doing a divination on this sea monster aspect. The indications were that this would be dangerous. Mister Urtles had asked for another Divination with conditions of warnings given, but that divination needed to wait for the next morning for assurance of accuracy. That was the reason for the wait. She expected that the whole group would leave Friday morning.

#### **Thursday March 23<sup>rd</sup>:**

5. So, the party stayed in Guardraw for an additional day. That provided opportunities for selling and distributing treasure (still needed) and shopping and possibly other "in town" activities. Sensa retained the room that she had shared with Bullgear, and he appeared briefly to share it with her again. It's assumed that other characters are back in the bunkrooms (?) [**DM Note:** Theft is a possibility. That's more likely in the bunkrooms. Also, regardless of what was said, both Slippa and Ambrosia would be happy to share rooms with Oliver and Melodious if either was to retain a room for another night.]

#### **Friday, March 24<sup>th</sup>: light breeze, cloudy**

6. The party left Guardraw and hustled to get to Sundown. The party proper included Oliver, Melodious, Groa, Veylann, Doil, Slippa and Belfor. Elsapheth offered to come too, and did. Sensa and Bullgear were in company as well as Mistress Exzema, Lady Kaykenyon, Lima, Imbroglia and Jumbotron. So, fifteen in all. The party got to Sundown with no particular trouble, except, of course, everybody was tired. Exzema took a private room. Kaykenyon shared a room with Lima. Sensa shared a room with Bullgear. Everyone else was (or presumed to be) in the bunkrooms. Exzema and Kaykenyon paid a call on Trudue to make arrangements for going down into the caverns via the Mayor's Mansion.
7. The next day the party descended, as usual, using ropes. Imbroglia and Jumbotron were particularly helpful and well equipped so that Exzema and Kaykenyon could be lowered in comfort and safety. Also, Bullgear had brought with him considerable equipment, including a portable forge. So, getting down took considerable time, and the party had to cross over the trapdoor. There were no undead around except the remains of past skeletons. There was no sign of the Lurker, either. Several people carried lanterns, including Imbroglia and Jumbotron. Melodious was using his Mage-Hand held lantern,

and Groa provided Dancing Lights. The party made its way to the big doors and the western side of the big pool.

8. An examination of the doors by both Doil and Bullgear suggested no evidence of deliberate sabotage. Bullgear observed that a big bronze bar, which spanned both doors, was holding them shut. The normal mechanism for opening and shutting the doors was indeed damaged and likely not workable. However, there seemed to be pressure from the other side of the doors. Removing that one bronze bar might allow them to swing open. Bullgear used a rope to help him climb out along the bar and used his hammer to sound the door out. But, he lost his footing and fell into the water. He had on only light armor, so was able to swim to the side, and didn't even lose his hammer. Jumbotron gave him a hand back up.

Someone suggested that a Detect Magic ought to be cast (Oliver?). In case the doors were a Portal. Exzema dismissed this suggestion, saying that a portal would have to be much smaller. The area of the doors was too large for a portal. Still, she could do a Detect Magic as a ritual spell without cost, so she did that.

After the ten minute wait, Exzema opened her eyes and looked about to see what magic, if any, there was. She said, "Oh, my!" Pointing first to one, then another, of the party, she said, "You. And you. An Aura. A necromantic aura on you all. Yes, you, and you. She pointed to each of Oliver, Melodious, Groa, Veylann, Doil, Slippa, Belfor and Sensa. "What have you done? What is that? Unmistakable. It's on each of you. You need to find out what that is, and do something." Hesitating, she said, "Oh yes, the doors." After ten or so seconds, "I see no magic on the doors. They won't be a portal. I don't think there's any kind of magic lock."

"Then the only thing holding them shut is that bronze bar," Bullgear said. "It's definitely got pressure on it. It's going to be hard to remove. Something odd about that bronze, too."

"Would a 'Knock' spell work? I could cast that," Melodious suggested. "Do you think it would work?"

"I doubt it," Exzema said. "Knock is for normal doors usually."

"Wouldn't hurt to try, would it?" someone asked. Probably Oliver.

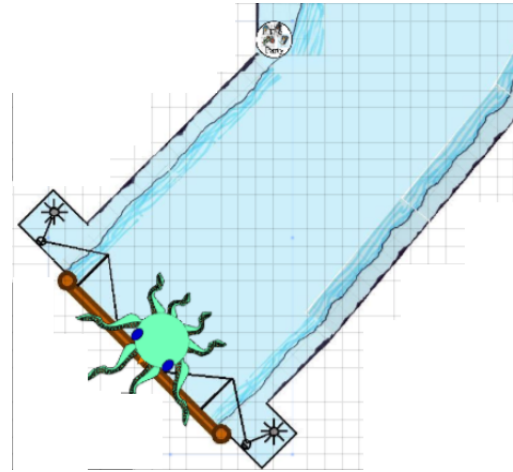
"Well, alright. We can try, Exzema answered. "But, I'll do it. I can cast a more powerful Knock."

"Better back everyone up," Bullgear said. "Those doors flying open will admit whatever's pushing them. I don't think it's water. There'd be leaks."

The party backed off to the turn in the wall, except Exzema, who stayed just within range, about 20 yards, from the middle of the doors. Then she cast it, proclaiming "Knock!"

Nothing happened for maybe a second, but then the bar broke right at the junction of the two huge doors. The doors swung in creating a wave that was low enough not to reach the party, 4 feet above the water level. The doors opened to about 2/3 of their full swing, admitting brilliantly bright daylight into the dimly lit cavern. Amid the waves dirt, stones and debris crashed into the cavern through the portal opened as the doors reached their limits. There were rough stones but also ashlar, lintels and other architectural stonework among the debris and dirt that now formed a mound, or a berm perhaps, just outside the huge doors.

There was, then, movement within the water as a tentacle reached out and delicately touched Oliver, who elected to allow it to happen. Suddenly, Oliver perceived a vision. In his mind he again saw the doors open and the light flood in, except now from the perspective of the middle of the cavern, in the water. Then after darkness, the scene was below water. There was a chest, and he was sifting through many coins and jewelry and such with his hands. With the perspective of a bit more distance, he saw himself swimming in the water doing that, the chest having been embedded in the mud about seven feet from the prow of a large ship that extended off to the right.



As Oliver was coming out of his trance, Someone, Sensa maybe, shouted, “There it goes!” Indeed, the Lurker was emerging from the water. As the party watched, he crawled out of the water on his eight tentacles, passed through the doors, climbed the berm, and disappeared beyond. The Lurker had been set free.

9. Oliver shared the vision that he had received. Groa used her “Alter Self” spell to adapt to the water. With that she swam down to indeed find a mud covered chest at the indicated spot near the western shipwreck, Others helped retrieve it. The chest itself fell apart, but the time was taken to make sure all that it had held was gathered up. The party then left the cavern by the shaft, being careful to take every precaution to avoid a fall.

Exzema with help sorted out the treasure. What was found included 50 Copper coins, 1200 silver, 120 gold, and 7 platinum, all of Kingdom of the Sun mintage. Mistress Kaykenyon remarked that from what she knew of their coinage these had to be hundreds of years old. In fact, the copper showed considerable decay, and the silver was tarnished, but the gold and platinum coins were bright. In addition there were four necklaces of silver and turquoise which also date from some centuries earlier, probably worth 250 Sovereigns now. A fifth necklace had a heart shaped stone, perhaps jasper, that Exzema determined to be magic. From its aura under the spell Exzema figured it was likely some sort of Periapt of Health or something similar, though she could not speak to any details of what such an old and foreign origin item might do. A sixth necklace had six carnelian beads and an aura of invocation magic. It was Exzema’s guess that this was a necklace of Fireballs, with similar caveats to the other magic item. A final magic item seemed to be a flask of Dimunition potion that was still good. Three other supposed potion bottles hold fluids that are no longer magic, likely dangerous. They went bad over the many years.

10. Exzema decided that the treasure would be split into 14 shares: 1 share each except she as leader would get two shares, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  share to Lima and  $\frac{1}{4}$  share to Imbroglio and Jumbotron since they were just hirelings. The necklace (share 13) would be a share, and the periapt (share 14) too. Shares 1-6: 4 cp, 95sp, 23 gp., 1 pp. Share 7: 4 cp, 105sp, 22gp, 1 pp. Share8: potion(10), 22 gp., 115sp, 6 cp. Shares 9-12: necklace(25), 7 gp, 115 sp, 4 cp. Each a bit less than 43 gp in Kingdom of the Sun currency. As leader, she

would pick first and take the fireball necklace (#13) and a turquoise necklace share (#12). Kaykenyon chooses the Periapt of Health. Sensa takes a share with a necklace (#11). (Party members assumed to take shares 1-8. Say if not. Share for the hirelings is last.)

- 11.** While Exzema is seeing to the treasure distribution, Kaykenyon (with Lima, Imbroglio and Jumbotron in company insists to Captain Trudue that she be given a chance to study the ceramic tablets. He tells her they are now in possession of the Kingdom of the Sun clerics. She has to ask them. "Then, send for them," she demands. The messenger girl is dispatched to do so. Oliver, Melodious and Groa decide to see what happens. Sensa too.

Soon, priests Limnis and Calypso and priestess Canopus appear. Kaykenyon insists on inspecting the tablets. She is told no. The High Priestess Vega forbids it. They are of antiquity and the property of the Priesthood of the Sun, being of their religion and heritage. It is Limnis who is doing the talking.

"Then I must put my demand before this high priestess," Kaykenyon says. "I understand her name is Vega. I must put my petition before her."

"She does not answer to a summons from barbarians," Limnis replies.

Canopus interjects, "That is, The High Priestess refuses summons by those other than authorities of the 'Way of the Sun,' as you call our religion."

"So, you are saying my seeing these tablets is forbidden, and the one who says that refuses to let me address her. Do I understand that correctly?"

Limnis says, "Yes." Calypso shrugs helplessly, and Canopus nods apologetically.

Kaykenyon says, "Do you know who Lord Grantt is?"

Calypso answers, "Yes, of course." As the others nod.

"I can ask Lord Grantt to authorize a band of what you call barbarians, to enter your temple, kill all those within who oppose them, melt down any golden holy objects and carry off those as well as any other valuables as loot. Anything that cannot be carried off can be burned or destroyed in some other convenient manner. With certain magics, the temple, your pyramid itself, can be destroyed, and its building blocks cast into the river. Is that what you wish?"

"Of course not," Calypso answers.

"He dare not!" Limnis answers simultaneously. "He would be cursed with a terrible curse. Radiance from the heavens would be called down to destroy him and his family and the graves of his ancestors. The Temple is Holy, and transgressors cannot be allowed to live."

"You think so?" Kaykenyon says to Limnis. "Tell your high priestess what I told you. Because that's what I'm going to do. You had better be ready to show me those tablets before I return."

"I would destroy them first," Limnis says. "You will fail."

"Maybe, but I expect we will be greatly enriched by the loot we will find, and you will be dead, you and your high priestess. The decision is yours. Now go. Tell her."

Kaykenyon turns her back on them and goes back down to talk to Exzema, who is still working out the treasure division in the basement.

- 12.** Captain of the guard Trudue was told of what had happened with the Lurker while people and treasure were being hauled up from below. He immediately had word taken down to the boat landing by one of the guards, and the messenger girl was sent to

summon someone to take an urgent message to Mister Urtles in Guarddraw. It was late in the day for a long ride, but, well, this was urgent. A warning needed to be given.

The party spent the night again in Sundown with the same arrangements as before.

### **Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup> light breeze**

13. Their work done, the party returns to Guarddraw with one day of hard marching. For part of the trip Lady Kaykenyon rode on a chair carried on poles by Imbroglia and Jumbotron. Obviously the three days of intense effort have been a bit much for her. Exzema tells the party (via Oliver as leader) that they will each receive 10 Sovereigns for the three days' pay including an extra Sovereign for bunkroom lodging expenses. She will have Fargo deliver that. (Sensa goes to so that she can collect treasure due to self and Armitan.)

She also says that the release of the Lurker really ought to remain secret. Urtles had not thought of that detail, or, at least he had not mentioned it to her. But, if someone should happen to be killed by an unexpected river monster, it would be best that no fault might attach to Lord Grantt or any of his people. Strange things do happen sometimes, like that Norse raiding band that attacked Rivendown some decades back, appearing from nowhere and returning to nowhere, as far as anyone could tell. Rivendown, being fairly low lying compared to Sundown, and even Tonstol, would be particularly vulnerable. It might just be an unlucky town.

Exzema also reminds Oliver that the necromancy aura on him and the others is still present. She checked. Whatever it is, should be taken seriously. She suggests he go to Father Rupert in Guarddraw about it. Clerics can usually figure out things like that. If they are experienced enough.

She also tells Oliver he need not report on this back to Fargo. Fargo reports to Triggerman, who reports to Mister Urtles. She is planning to report directly to Urtles upon getting back to town. This is probably something Lord Grantt doesn't really need to know about unless there's some sort of problem from the Lurker going on his way to the ocean. On the other hand, Lord Grantt will need to be consulted before anyone would be dispatched to raid the Temple of the Sun and recover the tablets. Exzema doesn't think there's any urgency to that decision, though Kaykanyon may push for it sooner rather than later.

The party reaches Guarddraw and obtains lodging at Guarddraw Tavern. The Saturday evening party has wound up by the time they get there. However, the bartender Liquidity, while arranging for rooms (or bunkrooms) tells Groa that there have been a couple of inquiries about her. One was from a gentleman who was able to describe her, but did not know her name. He was unable to help him, he regrets. Liquidity suggested the gentleman leave a message should the lady he sought return, but he declined to do so. [DM: Groa is pretty sure Liquidity knows her name; he was just trying to shield her identity.] There was also a query that may have been indirectly from a young lady the gentleman had been with at the Equinox party. Again, he was unable to help.

### **Sunday, March 26<sup>th</sup> light breeze, partly cloudy**

14. Elsapheth wants to go to the church service in Guarddraw in the morning, but would prefer to not go alone. (She is disguised to appear human, as "Henna." Doil didn't want to go anyway, but he'd also be a risk to her going as a dwarf.) Slippa offers to go with Elsapheth. (Father Rupert is, coincidentally, the Pastor of St. Aether's Church in

Guardraw.) Veylann is definitely not going. Belfor prefers not to. But, he has prepared “Detect Magic” and had cast it, finding that, yes indeed, he is being affected by some sort of necromancy magic. He doesn’t know how to detect anything further though. He had already tied a “Lesser Restoration” on himself without it doing any good.

<b>Experience:</b>	Oliver	Melodious	Groa	Veylann	Doil	Slippa	Belfor
Lurker(XOMG(SDBVSBK(LIJE))	+212	+212	+212	+106	+106	+106	+106
Previous totals:	6873*	6458	6144	3245*	3384*	3276*	3385*
Current totals:	7085*	6670*	6356	3351*	3490*	3382*	3491*

\*: indicates sufficient xp for next level (5<sup>th</sup> for Oliver, 4<sup>th</sup> for V,D,S,B) but still needing training.

**Training:** March 20, 22, 23<sup>rd</sup>: 3 days

Oliver, Melodius, Groa all: 3(to 5<sup>th</sup>); Diol, Veylann 4 days, Slippa 8 days, Belfor 3 days((to 4<sup>th</sup>).

Note: Going to 5<sup>th</sup> level, each training day costs 30 xp (up from 20xp going to 4<sup>th</sup>).

(30 days needed to 5<sup>th</sup>, 24 days needed to 4<sup>th</sup>.)

(Oliver could afford to “buy” 19 days, but that would give him 22, short of 30 needed.)

(At this point, Veylann, Doil, Slippa, and Belfor could all buy training up to 4<sup>th</sup> level. I’m not going to do that until an adventure is pending, to avoid unnecessarily expending valuable experience points.)

**Money:** Each character has the following expenses:

March 20<sup>th</sup>, March 21<sup>st</sup>\*, March 22, March 23, March 24, March 25 lodging  
 bunkroom ½gp/d but 1 gp/d for 21<sup>st</sup> + 2gp party = 5.5 gp if all bunkroom (Groa)  
 room 2 gp/day (for 2) except March 21 5 gp/d Mar 21<sup>st</sup> only – party fee 2 gp/p  
 Oliver, Melodious: Pay for bunkrm except March 21<sup>st</sup> room, 2 x door fee = 11.5  
 Veylann: Pay bunkroom except March 21<sup>st</sup> room, 1 x door fee = 9.5  
 Belfor, Doil: Pay bunkroom except March 21<sup>st</sup> 2 x door fee = 7.5  
 Slippa: 5 x bunkroom = 2.5

March 24<sup>th</sup> pay for Lurker rescue mission to Sundown: +10 gp each

Treasure to for Lurker rescue treasure is all KOS money: 1pp, 23 gp, 95sp, 4 cp. each  
 (NOT being added to “money” since exchange rate to Aarbat currency varies.)

**Conclusion:** The party is back in Guardraw without a defined mission. Waiting for Fargo’s orders. A good guess is being sent to Topaltown, where they had been expecting to go before being returned to Sundown concerning the Lurker.

There is still considerable treasure to be divided, and people have a lot of KoS coins that are best cashed in Selleze if someone wants to spend time (and training opportunity) going there. Figure that’s a week lost going there and back.

Finally, there’s the lingering question of what that necromantic aura is.

There will likely be some number of idle days before the next mission is assigned. The party needs to decide what they are doing so we will start the next session without undue administrative burden wasting time. If it amounts to much that will be an Episode 17½, for example, if the party divides treasure and wants to cash KoS coins and goes to Selleze to sell them and buy stuff.