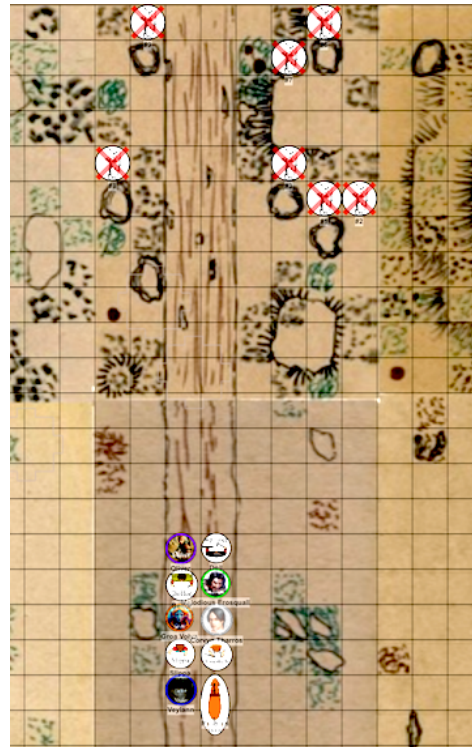
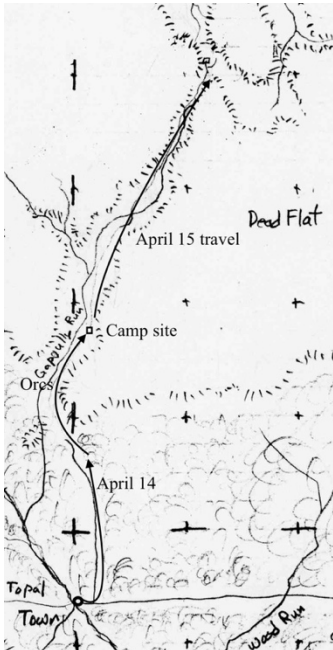


Episode 22 Scouting Guardway Tower

Saturday, April 15th: windy

1. The party was in Topaltown as a spot from which to venture north and scout the area of Guardway Tower, a couple day's travel to the north. There are now nine party members: Oliver (F5), Melodious (B5), Groa (S5), Corvyn (W2), all player characters. The non-player characters (NPCs) are Veylann (T4), Doil (F4), Slippa (T4), Belfor (D4), Elsapheth (C3), and Sheth (C2). The party also had a horse named "Pacman" by Oliver, used to carry tents and extra rations. Fargo's tasking had been to scout (carefully) Guardway Tower and see what was happening there. Orcs had been a problem. Was there a major concentration of them there? When the party got to Topaltown, it seemed that the town Manager, Wurmgrad, was expecting help against orcs much closer. Some lumbermen had gone missing and others had been killed by orcs encroaching from the north. He suggested that the party explore up Gapgully run and that area, off to the northeast. Well, that did happen to be the same general direction as Guardway tower.

2. A mile east of Topaltown the party turned north on Gapgully Run Road and traveled through forest until reaching the canyon from which Gapgully Run flowed out to join Hardwood Creek. The road is not well used and quite grown up, especially in forested areas. It was more path than road, though in the past it might have been used by carts or wagons. It was right around the mouth of the canyon that several orcs were waiting in ambush ahead about 60 feet or so. The party got the jump and made short work of them, with Groa accounting for four with her Fireball spell, and others picking off the remainder with crossbow shots and arrows. Treasure was gathered. The great axes were taken but only worth a few silver each. Soon after that the party camped undisturbed.



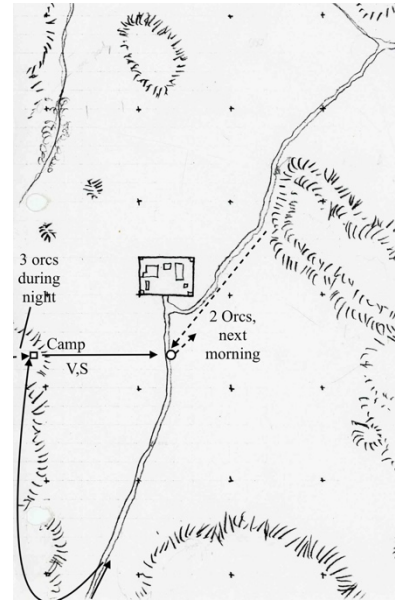
Sunday, April 16th: still windy

3. The party continued up the road that ran parallel to Gapgully Run. Eventually toward late afternoon the Run petered out, and the party found themselves looking down into a valley. Directly to the north several hundred yards away was the ruin of what must have been a walled manor house and its outlying buildings. The wall was maybe 10 feet high above the surrounding plain. The wall was mostly intact, with small watchtowers at the corners, but the gate

was completely missing. What must have been the Keep was a ruin. Most of the other structures were in at best in a decrepit state.

4. In order to better assess the ruined estate ahead of them, the party moved back along the road to where the hills to the left could be climbed (with the horse). They then moved to a spot a bit over 100 yards away from the compound, giving a good view. Nothing was seen moving. That seemed a good place to camp for the night, so they did.

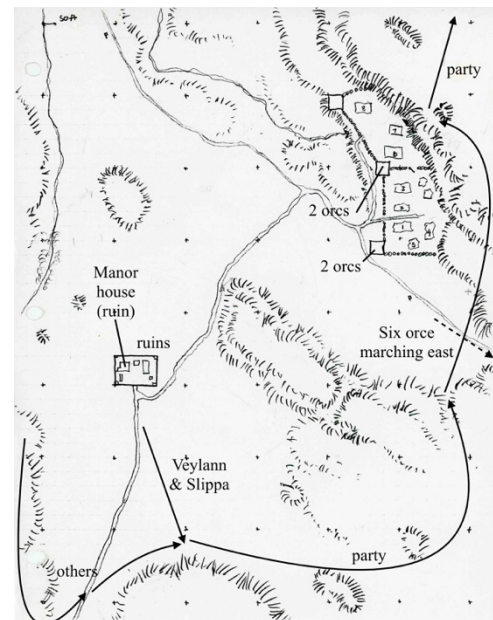
During the night, on the first watch when Veylann, Melodious and Groa were on guard, three orcs approached over the flat grounds to the west. Veylann happened to be on that side, and heard them, and prepared. The sky was clear, and he was able to see movement against the background of stars and shot, killing one of them. He then gave chase to the others, bringing both down as they sought to run away. He did not neglect to collect the coins these orcs were carrying.



Monday, April 17th: windy

5. The next morning, as the party prepared to explore further, three orcs were seen approaching the ruins compound from the north. They didn't enter, but continued south toward the gaggully Run canyon. They were just within range of Oliver's heavy crossbow. He and Doil took shots. Oliver brought one down. The two remaining orcs were confused for a few seconds, giving Oliver time to hit another. Doil missed with his longbow. Veylann and Slippa, though, gave chase, sliding and climbing down the steep slope to the valley floor and dashing toward the surprised orcs. They ran, but Slippa and Veylann managed to bring both down. They of course took the time to loot the bodies of these orcs. Meanwhile the rest of the party moved back south to get back to the road. They then moved around to the east and then north in order to see what else was in the valley.

6. The party moved over something of a ridge toward the east and came within view of a log palisade with what looked like dirt and log "towers". There was also an orc patrol of six orcs that passed by a road headed east. The party waited while the orc patrol cleared away, then proceeded to climb up the far valley wall to the heights above the wooden stockade below. There were three "towers," with two orcs standing guard on each. The orcs obviously were not being very attentive, and didn't notice the party above them to the northeast.



While the compound palisade walls were intact, the former wooden structures within were burned ruins. In fact, it looked like the partially burned wood planks were then used for firewood at a couple of old fire pits here and there. From the brush and trees growing up amid these ruins, it would seem that decades had passed since this place fell into ruin. But, obviously there were orcs about, making use of what was here. The party had already encountered 23 orcs, including the 6 orc patrol and four keeping watch on the towers below.

7. The party then continued on toward Guardway Tower, finding the Old Circe Road, then northward toward Guarddraw. Belfor was able to provide useful advice on the path to take. Belfor observed that there were boot prints in the mud here and there, not just tracks from orcs. As the party approached Guarddraw Tower, there was a small stream on the right that widened out into an elongated pond with marshland here and there. The Tower could be seen through trees along a small side stream from the west. The party halted under cover of those trees to take a look.

8. Guarddraw Tower is a formidable structure, with a base of about 60 feet on a side, and rising five or six levels. It was surely centuries old, but had held up very well, being quite solid in appearance. The lowest windows were about 20 feet up, and there was a wall and wall walk a level above those, but nobody was seen. After waiting and not seeing anything moving, it was suggested that Belfor assume a small animal form and go forward to investigate. So, he assumed the form of a small flying squirrel and approached the tower. He climbed up the wall easily there at the SW corner, up to the wall walk. He then hastily climbed back down and ran to where the party was waiting. As he ran, someone looked over the corner. On a higher level someone else did the same. Then they both ducked back down. Apparently the tower wasn't deserted after all. It couldn't be distinguished exactly what they were.

Upon getting back, Belfor again assumed his normal human form. "Hobgoblins!" he exclaimed. "The tower is being held by hobgoblins. Hobgoblins with longbows, swords, and wearing chainmail armor. It looked like one at each corner, but I only saw two, and needed to run quickly when I was seen." He went on to speculate that the hobgoblins must have evicted the orcs which formerly lived there. Hence, that was likely why there were so many orcs about elsewhere in the vicinity. Belfor supposed that the tower would hold fifty or so orcs or hobgoblins, not counting the outbuildings.

Having found out what had happened at Guardway Tower, and it being late in the day, the party retreated several miles, found a good spot to camp off of the road, and stayed there overnight without incident.



Tuesday, April 18th: breeze:

9. The party moved south along the Old Circe Road, crossing the stream at a ford. Once upon a time a stone bridge had crossed there, but it was a ruin now. As suggested by Belfor, they continued south onto “Dead Flat” and eventually came to Gapgully Run. Nothing was encountered but a herd of antelope. They bounded away at high speed, and the party continued on toward Topaltown. That night two orcs approached as the party camped in the valley. Oliver got the jump on them and killed both.

Wednesday, April 19th: breeze and partly cloudy

10. The party got back to Topaltown about noon, and reported to Wurmgrad about having killed 20 orcs, and had seen a few others. He was pleased at that, but is still concerned. “We know there are some orcs to the northwest along hardwood Creek, but on the other side, so they are not quite so much a danger. We have plans to build a gate across the bridge here, and the creek is hard to cross for a ways to the north. It’s the orcs to the north and northeast that we worry about. Too many! But now fewer, thanks to your efforts. We hope the survivors will retreat back to the north and leave us alone.”

The party found lodging in the Topaltown Tavern for the evening.

Thursday, April 20th: rain and wind

11. The party remained in Topaltown and did training, which under the weather conditions was mostly talk about tactics and ways to deal with orcs and hobgoblins. Everybody was impressed by Groa’s Fireball spell that had killed 4 orcs and badly hurt another in that first battle on the way north. It turns out Groa can cast four or five of those if she has to.

Friday, April 21st: light breeze

12. With the weather cleared up, the party traveled to Guardraw and got there in one day with a bit of hustling. The party found Mister Fargo and made a report to him. They told about traveling north finding numerous orcs in and around the ruins of an old manor house and a burned out stockade nearby. And that Guardway was now populated by hobgoblins. Hobgoblins wearing chainmail and using longbows and longswords.

“No orcs at Guardway? Hobgoblins? Really? Our best information was that it was orcs there.” Fargo muses on that a bit. “Did you recognize what tribe?”

“I don’t know the hobgoblin tribes,” Slippa says. “A long time since I’ve seen any around Sundown. They are mostly known to be in the east somewhere.”

“The Arachids,” Belfor says. “They were of the Arachid legion. Yes, from the east.”

Both Slippa and Fargo look at him in surprise.

Slippa looks annoyed. “If you knew that, why didn’t you tell us?” she asks.

“I didn’t think you’d care,” Belfor says. “It was surprising to see hobgoblins at all.”

“So, what can you tell me about the Arachid Legion of hobgoblins?” Fargo asks.

“They are in the east. Mostly north of Aarbat, west of the Horel River. A small tribe, relatively new, over last few decades. Mostly stay out of trouble. But, definitely more dangerous than ordinary hobgoblins. More cunning, I suppose you could say.”

“Not the toll-takers on the North road to Nextonover?”

“No. As far as I know. Might be related though. I’ve heard of the toll-taking hobgoblins. Never saw them myself.”

Fargo puts both hands on the table, staring at Belfor. “And, how do you know all of this?”

Belfor hesitates. With a sigh, he said, “I once lived in the Gildegulch area. I knew people who worked in the woods.”

“Lumberjacks?” Fargo asked.

“Well, yes. Lumberjacks.”

“And they told you about these hobgoblins, these ‘Arachids’?” Fargo continued.

“Yes,” Belfor answered, and says no more.

“And, why were you in the forests. Were you a lumberjack? You don’t look it.”

“I was... an orphan,” Belfor answers.

Fargo is getting irritated. “Look, Belfor. I want to understand why you seem to know so much about these particular hobgoblins. I’m getting tired of asking questions only to get minimal answers. I want to know about them, and I want to know about you. If you want to keep this job.”

Belfor seems to collapse for a moment. He obviously wants to keep some things to himself. Fargo is telling him he can’t do that.

Finally, Belfor says, speaking low, “I was raised by clerics. At a secret monastery. I don’t know my parents. They wouldn’t say. But I had to leave since I was, well, a young man. The place was for women, but they had me and some other boys they had taken in. I was taught about the forest. When I was evicted, I was put in the care of others who lived in the forest, there in the area north of Gildegulch. They called sometimes themselves ‘The Beardoin.’ They tested me and found me wanting. I was told to leave and never come back there again. I’ve been squeaking by on one thing or another since, mostly staying in the woods to avoid needing money.”

“Like a ranger. I mean, not like the Queen’s Rangers. Like an outlander ranger,” Fargo says.

“Well, yes,” Belfor replies. “But, that’s not quite the accuracy you seem to want. Call me a ‘druid.’ That’s what the Beardoin are. Even though I’m an outcast, I’m closer to that than anything else, I’d suppose. It was from them that I learned about the Arachids. When the Elders talked about the state of the World.”

After silence for a moment, Belfor pleaded, “Please, Mister Fargo, please hold what I just told you in confidence. There are those who would kill me if they knew what I was.” Then he looked at the rest of us. “And, you too, my friends. I ask that you not repeat any of this.” He shook his head. “I made a mistake offering the name of that hobgoblin tribe. Stupid to say that.”

Fargo thinks about it. “I’ll keep your secret, Belfor. Useful to know that additional information. Bad enough that we’re having to deal with super-orcs compared to what they once were. But, now, hobgoblins too? That’s worth knowing. I wonder how much about this is known by the Queen’s Rangers? They have an important post in Nextonover.”

“They probably wouldn’t know,” Belfor says. “Probably not in Gildegulch either.”

Fargo thinks for a few minutes. “My best guess would be that these hobgoblins took the tower from the orcs. Maybe after the orcs lost a lot of their strength on that raid in January. And what you did at that orc fort. Not strong enough to cause big trouble, and then the hobgoblins took their hold. Yes. Outside Lord Grantt’s area of responsibility, too. Possible trouble for Topaltown in the future though.”

Saturday, April 22nd: breeze

This was the end of the adventure session. The party planned to linger in Guarddraw a day, then travel to Sundown on Sunday, April 23rd.

Some retrospective material:

From Episode 21, Pennyink had promised that he would ask his father to send a reward to the party for saving him from the orcs. He planned to have that sent to Fargo. Melodious suggested that maybe have it sent by the bartender Liquidity of the Guarddraw Tavern instead. It seems Liquidity handles discrete matters like this and gathering information and doing small favors. Liquidity says he usually withholds only 5%. So, Melodious made that arrangement, and Pennyink was agreeable. (No telling what Fargo would see as his rightful commission.)

Veylann was commissioned (at 4% fee) to do a treasure division for the treasure pending from the adventures of Episodes 18 to 22.

Experience:	Oliver	Melodious	Groa	Corvyn	Veylann	Doil	Slippa	Belfor	Elsapheth	Sheth
7 orcs(GOM(CVD((..)))	108	108	215	54	54	54	27	27	27	27
3 orcs(V((MG)))	-	50	50	-	200	-	-	-	-	-
3 orcs(QVS(MCD)((..)))	92	23	23	12	46	23	46	12	12	12
10 orcs let go(OMG(..))	42	42	42	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
3 hobg. avoided(B)								75		
2 orcs (O((B,S)))	133						33	33		
Mission	138	138	138	69	69	69	69	69	69	69
Total this Episode	513	361	468	167	390	167	196	227	129	129
Previous total	8307	7842	7252	2250*	4149	4136	4061	4165	1576	636
Current total	8820	8203	7720	2417	4539	4303	4257	4392	1705	765

Training: + One day in Topaltown (April 19th and 1 day in Guarddraw (April 21st))

Oliver, Melodious +3 days toward 6th level (need 30)

Groa: +2 days toward 6th level (needs 30 for 6th)

Doil, Slippa, Belfor, Veylann: All now +3 days toward 5th level (need 24)

Elsapheth: 13 days (needing 18 to 4th)

Corvyn: +3 days towards 3rd level (needs 12)

Sheth: +3 days (needing 12) toward 3rd (NOT getting help from Elsapheth)

Pay: 4 days x 2 gp. each = +8gp each (plus most expenses covered)

Treasure, this Episode 22: 15 poor greataxes (4 sp each), 59cp, 72sp, 46gp total: 53.03 gp.

Veylann's distribution of treasure:

8 ways for Ep 18: 113.08 -4% = 108.56 total, 13.57 gp each

9 ways for Ep 21: 772.3 -4% = 741.41 total, 82.38 gp each

9 ways for Ep 22: 53.03 -4% = 50.91 total, 5.66 gp each

Oliver, Melodious, Groa, Veylann: (101.6 gp) 2x bloodstone (@50), 1 gp, 6 sp each.

Doil, Slippa, Belfor, Elsapheth, Sheth: (101.6 gp) bloodstone(50), 51 gp, 6 sp each.

Corvyn (just from Ep 21, 22): (88.0 gp) 88 gp.

Healing potions to Oliver, Melodious, Groa, Veylann, Doil; Climb potion to Slippa.

(Veylann receives 38 gp. fee for doing the division.)