

Episode 27 Visiting the Portal

Tuesday, April 25th: calm, clear; afternoon

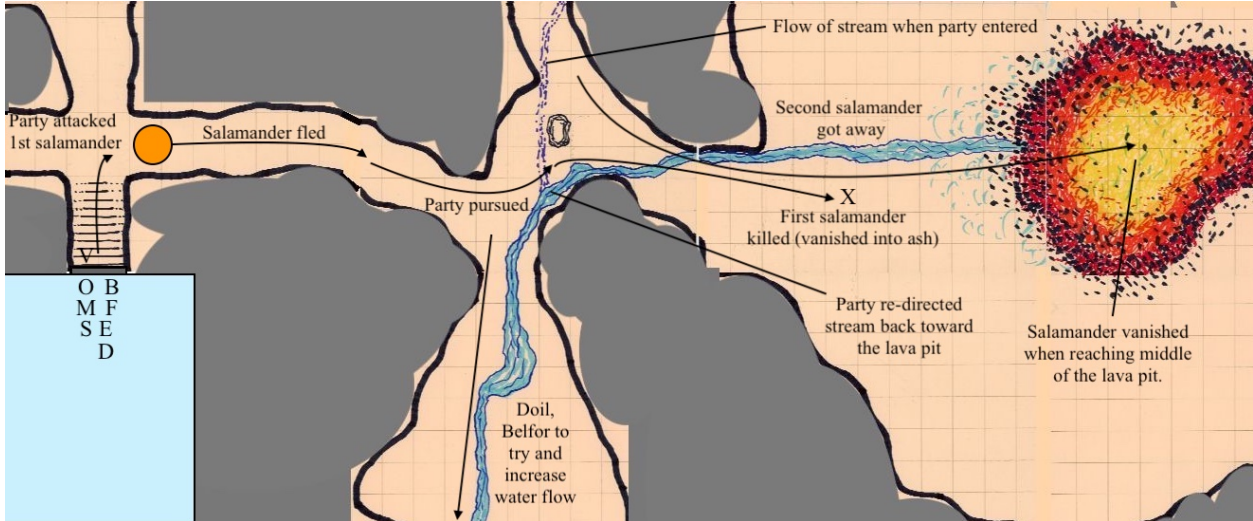
1. The party short-rested at the entrance to the big sea cavern near the Sundown Creek waterfront, as they prepared to re-enter the caverns. At the moment the party was F5 Oliver, Bd5 Melodious, T4 Veylann, F4 Doil, T4 Slippa, D4 Belfor, C4 Elsapheth, and F2 Felicity. Party members S5 Groa and C2 Sheth were in Guarddraw. W3 Corvyn was somewhere, perhaps Guarddraw as well. Previously the party had fought three salamanders, a fire elemental, and a huge demon-like monster later identified as an efreet. They had had retreated, after the efreet disappeared after saying he'd be back. Likely with more salamanders. Importantly, Oliver had come to the conclusion that the lava pit in the middle of the big cavern was the Portal that the party had been seeking. So, the question remained: what to do about it. Flood the cavern? Elsepheth told Oliver that she could do an "Augury," which might help with deciding what to do. So, rather than re-enter immediately, Oliver had decided that the party should take a short rest.
2. During the rest there on the berm in front of the big sea cavern, Oliver prepared a note to be taken to Captain of the Guard Trudue, telling Mister Urtles of the Portal situation and asking for help. Oliver took the note up to Trudue, who sent a messenger by horse, Sensa, to deliver it. He also sent a message to High Priestess Vega to let her know about the developments. Oliver returned to the party. Meanwhile, Elsapheth prepared to cast an Augury ritual, but would wait to do so until the party was in the ghoulish room, just before entering the Hot Caverns by the big iron double doors.

While resting, there was some conversation about the nature of the Portal, the lava pits, and the overall Sundown situation. Doil seemed to know more than anybody else, but he couldn't think of what to say until Elsapheth helped him with a casting of "Guidance," and Melodious gave him a bit of "Inspiration." He then recalled a bit of lore about "volcanos," where such magma or lava pits might be found, and also conduits and such. Around magma, water was dangerous, because if it encountered the lava and the situation was not good, there could be a catastrophe, where the water turned to steam and caused an explosion or earthquake, either with fell consequences. He had heard a tale of a mysterious island that had once blown up like that, and almost entirely disappeared.

3. The party entered the sea cavern about noon, and carefully swam to the western landing pier, and got out of the water. Melodious, as before, helped all of the party members dry off using his magical Prestidigitation spell. After that was done, they walked to the ghoulish room. As usual, Melodious illuminated the way with his Mage Hand holding a lantern going forth before.

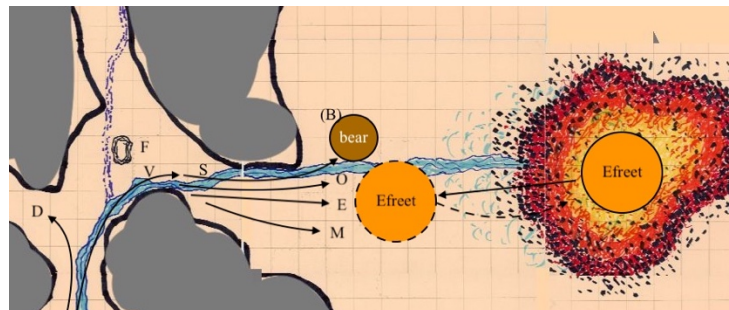
There in the ghoulish room, Elsapheth cast her Augury ritual. The question was, "Is it for the good or bad of Sundown, to flood the steam side caverns to the north." After about ten minutes of Elsapheth praying and seeming to be in a trance-like state, she opened her eyes, and said "Woe!"
4. Oliver decided, based on that answer, that the party should still re-enter the hot caverns and at least re-direct the stream of water from the deeper passageways back into the big

cavern with the lava pit. So, the party assembled in front of the big doors, and opened them. Immediately ahead and to the right, at the bottom of the steps, was a salamander. The party attacked with missile weapons. Belfor transformed into a bear. The Salamander did not try to fight. It fled to the east. The party pursued, getting off shots here and there. A second salamander joined the first one in fleeing toward the magma pit in the big cavern. The pursuit stopped when the first salamander was killed, falling apart into a pile of ash and dust, and the second one disappeared when it reached the middle of the lava pit. Slippa gathered the spear from the dead salamander, along with a hot stone left behind. (That turned out to be a garnet.)



5. Oliver's plan was to re-direct the stream. Doil and Oliver got started on that, with Diol doing most of the work. It took less than a minute, and the water started flowing back into the big cavern toward the magma. The party all clustered around there at the passageway intersection to guard and watch. With the stream re-directed, Oliver told Doil and Belfor to go into the cavern to the south where the stream originated at the iron water gate, and see if they could increase the flow. Belfor's bear claws were useless for trying to open the cracks and fissures where the water spurted into the cavern from the big sea cavern on the other side. Doil set to work with his war-hammer, and managed to chip away some rusty iron where the iron gate was supposed to seal against the stone stop. He did manage to get a marginal increase, with maybe 50% more leaking through. But he was interrupted when Slippa noticed an efreet appear, standing tall in the magma pit, and called out a warning.

6. The party needed to hold off the efreet long enough for Belfor and Doil to get back out from that cavern to the south. Slippa, Oliver, Veylann and Felicity were shooting at it. Others too. Melodious was throwing insults.



The efreet moved forward as it threw two balls of fire at Oliver, missing. Then as missiles continued to fly, and Oliver backed up, Elsapheth found herself the target of the huge efreet's wrath. Two more balls of fire were cast, and one hit her. But, then, moved by Melodious's heroic inspiration, she charged forward to where the efreet was and invoked a brilliant flash of radiance. (That was "Radiance of the Dawn." She's a Light cleric.) Not willing to leave her alone against the big monster, Belfor, Oliver and Melodious charged forward also to support her.

The efreet had obviously been hurt by now. Even though non-magical attacks were having reduced effect, they were so numerous that they had taken a toll. He was not glistening with confidence anymore, and pinpricks of flame showed here and there where there had been smooth deep red skin before. He announced, "You nasty vermin! You stay here. I'll be back soon!" With that said, he turned and swiftly moved back to the middle of the magma pit and vanished, just like the salamander had earlier.

7. The party didn't linger. They made their exit to the ghoulish room and re-barred the iron doors. Then they made their way out of the big sea cavern the way they had entered, getting wet again while swimming out. They were pretty tired by now, and spells were pretty nearly exhausted. The tavern was inviting. After drying out, the group adjourned there to get some food and drink and rest.

While there a young fighter woman came up and tried to get friendly with Oliver. Prissimmon had been one of the Tower 2 gate crew when the party had arrived in Sundown during the winter. She had been in Ladlissa's squad in the battle with the orcs at Gold Mine Camp. "I heard that you defeated a demon!" she exclaimed. Oliver put his arm around Slippa and politely declined Prissimmon's advances. She got the message and backed off. [DM: This was a random "party/external romance" event on a d6=5 for the daily town event roll. It happened to fall on Oliver.]

Wednesday, April 26th: rain and wind, and Thursday, April 27th: breeze, partly cloudy

8. Over the next two days the party waited for a response to the message sent to Mister Urtles in Guardraw. They just didn't think they had the means to do anything to block or destroy the Portal, and Elsapheth's Augury had predicted "Woe!" for the best idea anyone had come up with, flooding those hot caverns with water. Training and planning had benefits, but something more was needed. (Some party members advanced.)

Late on Thursday, help arrived. Led by a "Sister Judith," the help included also Lady Kaykenyon, her bodyguard Lima, porters Imbroglio and Jumbotron, and Brother Sheth. Sister Judith, immediately upon arrival, went to talk to Mayor Alicia and the Captain of the Guard, Trudue. Kaykenyon's porters were carrying, among other things, about a score of the ceramic tablets to be returned to High Priestess Vega. Arrangements were made for that to happen. Then Judith found the party at the tavern and more or less commandeered the common room for a meeting to get a full report on what the party had found beneath Sundown.

"Where is Father Benaiah?" she asked. "Why isn't he here, and helping you?"

Sister Judith immediately left and went over to the Church, returning with Father Benaiah. So, explanations needed to be made to him. (You get the impression that, whatever her humble title might be, Benaiah is a bit, well, deferential toward Sister

Judith.) Sister Judith ascertained that he didn't know anything about what was going on because nobody told him. "We need some divinations," she said.

Neither Father Benaiah nor Sister Judith were prepared to do a "Divination" that day. "Not something that's commonly needed in a hurry," she explained, and said she would prepare to do one in the morning, and that Benaiah would too. Then she, and he, and the party, would prepare to see about this business in the caverns.

Meanwhile, High Priestess Vega refused to meet with and talk to Lady Kaykenyon. She demanded all of the Ceramic Tablets back, and she wanted them now. That's what Lady Kaykenyon reported to Sister Judith after getting to the tavern with her entourage. "She expressed no appreciation at all!" Lady Kaykenyon said. "She even refused to accept copies of my translations as a token of good will."

"Did you tell her what we were doing, and about the demon in the caverns below, and the rest of it?" Sister Judith asked.

"Of course not. Why would I? She's as unreasonable as ever." Kaykenyon replied.

Turning to the rest of us, Judith said, "Excuse me for a bit. I'm going over to see Trudue. I want to see if I can get an audience with this High Priestess Vega. I suspect she has an interest in all this. Maybe she can even help."

There was some additional talk, but it was pretty clear that this Sister Judith was in charge now. She expected to be listened to, at least. Spell choices and such were talked about. Father Benaiah asked what the party might need that he could provide. Obviously "Dispel magic." "Spirit Guardians," perhaps? Brother Sheth asked if "Magic weapon" might be helpful. Eventually Sister Judith returned, maybe an hour later. She was able to speak with High Priestess Vega, but not in an open and friendly manner. She told Vega that a large party would be venturing into the caverns to try and put an end to the efreeth and his minions, and if possible, destroy the Portal. High Priestess Vega insisted that there be no entry of the unclean party into the Temple of the Sun. According to legend, there is a connection. She suggested that dispelling the Portal would be unwise. Indeed, there have been no problems from the caverns below until very recently when this adventuring party started stirring things up. "The Flame" has been mis-behaving. Vega would not elaborate on that statement.

Note: Groah and Corvyn could come, and would have, if they are in next time.

Friday, April 28th: breeze, partly cloudy

9. Sister Judith performed her Divination as a ritual in her room before meeting the party. She came down to explain what she had discovered. Her intent as to provide this information early before other spellcasters had prepared their spells. Here's what she found out:
 - a. There indeed is a Portal under Sundown. It connects to the Plane of Fire. It is a permanent two-way portal, put into place by some powerful being. [DM: figure spell level 9+.]
 - b. The Portal can be used as a destination coming from elsewhere, including other planes. As such it functions like a wizard's Teleportation Circle. Anyone who knows the code, and can cast a teleport spell, can use it. Though, landing in a pit of magma is dangerous. That may be how the demons or devils got to Sundown's lower reaches in Lord Grantt's day.
 - c. Lava seems to be coming through the Portal from the Plane of Fire. Or elsewhere?

d. It should be possible to dispel the Portal. (There is a third level spell “Dispel Magic” which in theory ought to be able to do so. But the odds are low. Multiple castings? This is uncertain. At worst, a “Wish” would likely work.)

As far as Sister Judith knows, “Bless,” and a bard’s inspiration, may be helpful in improving the odds of a “Dispel Magic” being successful on the Portal. She plans to prepare to use “Dispel Magic” at 4th level; that may help.

When Benaiah came in, Sister Judith asked if the Party had something in particular that he could use his Divination on. The request was, were there other interesting things in the parts of the Hot Caverns that the party had not seen? Benaiah said he’d do the Divination as a ritual. An hour later he returned to say, “There is one connection to the Temple of the Sun.” (By then, the spellcasters would have prepared their spells.)

This is where the session ended.

Experience:	Oliver	Melodious	Veylann	Doil	Slippa	Belfor	Elsapheth	Felicity
1.5 salam.(OMSV(B)((DEF)))	514	514	514	129	514	257	129	129
Efreet(OME)(VSFB(D))	1029	1029	514	257	514	514	1029	514
<u>Mission – redirect stream</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>17</u>
Total this Episode	1560	1560	1045	419	1045	788	1175	660
<u>Previous total</u>	<u>15875*</u>	<u>13224</u>	<u>7393*</u>	<u>6882*</u>	<u>7000*</u>	<u>7260*</u>	<u>3954</u>	<u>2131</u>
Current total	17435*	14784*	8438*	7301*	8045*	8048*	5129	2791**
After advancement	16475		7868	6791	7503	7478		

Note: Groa remains at 7877. Corvyn remains at 3607*. Brother Sheth was at 774 (2nd level) as of Episode 23

Training: Groa and Corvyn remained in Guarddraw and got 2 training days. (Assumed.)

- Oliver at +6 days toward 6th level (needs 30)
- Melodious at +5 days toward 6th level (needs 30)
- Groa: at +5 days toward 6th level (needs 30)
- Doil, at +7 days toward 5th level (need 24)
- Belfor, Veylann: Now at +5 days toward 5th level (need 24)
- Slippa at +6 days toward 5th level (need 24)
- Elsapheth: at+2 days (needing 24 to 5th).
- Corvyn: at +2 days towards 4th level (needs 18)
- Sheth (at 774+ xp): +6 days (needing 12) toward 3rd
- Felicity: at +4 days towards 4th level (needs 18) and has not paid for “training” yet.
- (Corvyn needs to pay 45gp training to 4th, Elsapheth 80 for training to 5th, and Felicity 45 training to 4th.)
- (We can catch up on training expenses for advancing characters when a treasure distribution is done.)

Advancement:

- It is assumed that anybody that can buy training days in order to advance does so.
- Oliver at +6 days toward 6th level (needs 30) buys 24 days at 40xp/day = -960xp -> Now 16475 xp.
- Melodious at +5 days toward 6th level (needs 30) would buy 25 days at 40 xp/day, but that would put him below the total xp’s needed for 6th level (14000), so he can’t do that yet. He’s just 216 xp’s short!
- Veylann, at +5 days toward 5th level (need 24) buys 19 days at 30 xp/day = -570xp -> Now at 7868 xp.
- Doil, at +7 days toward 5th level (need 24) buys 14 days at 30xp/day = -510xp -> Now at 6791 xp.
- Slippa, at +6 days toward 5th level (need 24) buys 18 days at 30 xp/day = -540xp -> Now at 7503 xp.
- Belfor at +5 days toward 5th level (need 24) buys 19 days at 30 xp/day = -570xp -> Now at 7478 xp.
- Felicity: at +4 days towards 4th level (needs 18) would buy 14 days at 20 xp/day, but that would put her below the total xp’s needed for 4th level (2700), so she can’t do that yet.

Treasure, 4 times ago Episode 23 (not allocated yet):(with Groa, Corvyn, Sheth; not Felicity)
Magic shortsword (needs minor repair) (~1150 gp)
Coins from chest (all KoS): 250 cp, 140 sp, 50 gp
Navigator's kit (needs refurbishing) (6 gp)

Treasure, 3 times ago, Episode 24 (not allocated yet):(with Corvyn, Felicity; not Sheth, Groa)
11 bronze shields, 11 bronze war-hammers
Garnet gems: 5x200gp, 8x100gp, 8x50gp = 2200gp value

Treasure, 2 times ago, Episode 25 (not allocated yet):(with Corvyn, Felicity; not Sheth, Groa)
18 bronze shields, 18 bronze war-hammers
2 metal large spears (from salamanders) – unknown metal.
Garnet gems from salamanders: 3 x 50gp = 150 gp. value
Garnet gems from Azeri: 2x200gp, 10x100gp, 12x50gp = 2000 gp. value

Treasure, last time, Episode 26 (not allocated yet): (with Felicity; not Sheth, Groa, Corvyn)
2 metal large spears (from salamanders) – unknown metal.
Garnet gems from salamanders: 6 x 50gp = 300 gp. value

Treasure, this time, Episode 27 (not allocated yet): (with Felicity; not Sheth, Groa, Corvyn)
1 metal large spear (from salamander) – unknown metal.
Garnet gem from salamander: 1 x 50gp = 50 gp. value

What's coming up: The next anticipated adventure is expected to be the party, augmented by Sister Judith, Father Benaiah, and possibly others, going down to the “Hot caverns” and trying to dispel the Portal. It is anticipated that there might be monsters there that would not react favorably to such a purpose.

I'm open to independent actions or adventures by characters during the two days between the trip under Sundown of Episode 27 and whatever happens with Sister Judith and company a couple of days later. That's enough time for something to happen.

Rules issue: Both Portals/Teleportation and Dispel magic is very different in 5E than in the earlier 1E and 3E editions when the Aarbat campaign began. In a previous 3E campaign, a party of characters of about 12th level had great difficulty dispelling 9th level portals in the Temple of Elemental Evil. It took a higher “Greater Dispel Magic” and a lot of luck (rather, a lot of low odds tries) to do so. This is that kind of portal, but I conceded the 5E properties of a teleportation circle as well. Information about what the odds are would NOT be available to the party, or even the 7th level characters (Judith, Benaiah) now involved. The bottom line is, Dispel Magic casting is going to be against the odds. How much so? I'm not disclosing.

A side issue is what sorts of magic aid can be given. “Guidance,” “Bless,” and a bard's “Inspiration” all seem applicable because, in the text of Dispel Magic, this is an ability check (using spellcasting ability). Guidance applies to “Ability checks.” “Bless” applies to attack rolls and saving throws. I did allow it to apply to Father Rupert's dispel attempts to dispel strong curses earlier. Maybe that was a mistake. Bardic inspiration applies to an ability check, attack roll, or a saving throw. So, it would seem that source of enhancement is applicable. I'll accept one or the other but not both of Guidance and Bless. (This use seems extreme for a cantrip, but the language of Dispel is very explicitly an ability check. Since both give a d4 modification, maybe the difference isn't important, as long as the use of both stacked is prohibited.)