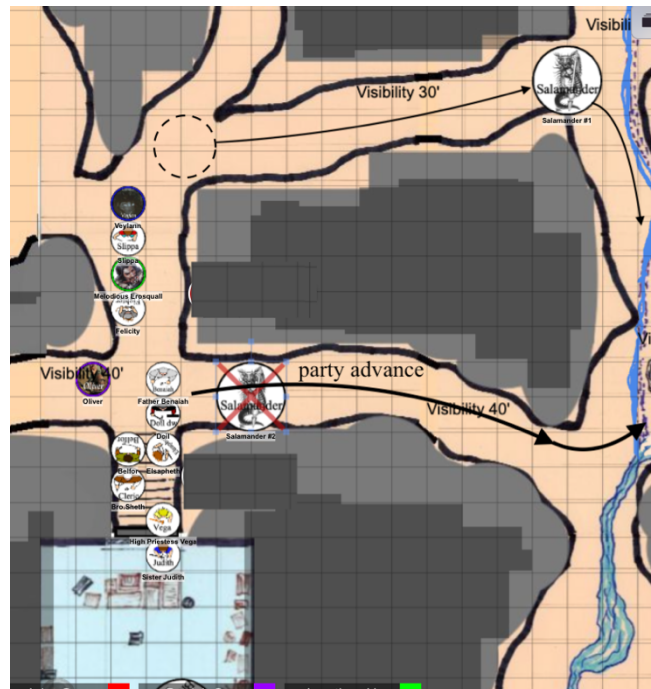


Episode 28 Closing the Portal

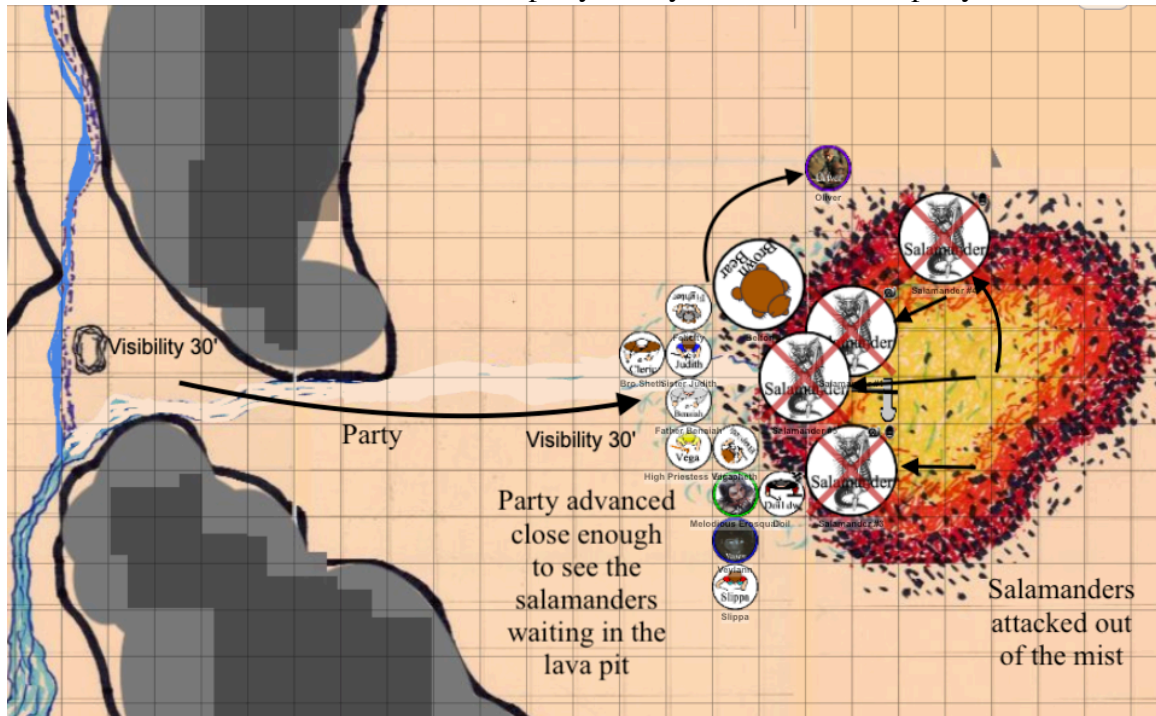
Friday, April 28th, early afternoon, breeze, partly cloudy

1. The party, now supplemented by Sister Judith (who came in from Guardraw the night before) and Father Benaiah, and well as rejoined by Brother Sheth (who came in with Judith), prepared to return to the Hot Caverns under Sundown. Earlier in the morning Sister Judith had done a Divination that showed that yes, there was a portal under Sundown connected to the Plane of Fire. It could also be used as a destination from elsewhere, and was a conduit for lava as well. The spell “Dispel Magic” might be able to dispel the portal, since it is a magic effect. Father Benaiah also determined by his own Divination that there was a connection from the Hot Caverns to the Temple of the Sun that was previously unknown. Sister Judith went to the Temple of the Sun (entering by the building just south of the temple) and was able to speak with High Priestess Vega, who is opposed to dispelling the Portal. To everyone’s surprise, Vega showed up at the tavern and insisted on going with the party. So the party included Oliver, Melodious, Veylann, Doil, Slippa, Belfor, Elsapheth, Sheth, Felicity, Judith, Benaiah, and Vega.
2. After traveling to the sea cave entrance, Vega, as well as Judith, insisted on using the boat there, rather than swim into the cavern. That was easily done. The boat was left tied up just inside the big doors on the western side. The party proceeded to the “ghoul room” where the double door entrance to the Hot Caverns was. After the party was assembled, Veylann and Oliver opened the big iron doors by removing the bar, and ventured in.

The steam was not as dense as it had been when the party had first entered the Hot Caverns. Visibility was about 40 feet. As Veylann moved down the steps in advance of the others, he spotted two Salamanders, one immediately to the right at the intersection at the bottom of the steps, and another directly ahead. The party seemed to surprise the salamanders. Attacks with crossbow bolts, arrows, and magic were focused mostly on the nearby salamander on the right, though the other was hit too. The nearest Salamander fell and disintegrated into ash, leading a metal spear and a couple of garnets that someone collected. The other fled down a corridor toward the right and ultimately into the big cavern with the magma pit, the place thought to be the Portal. Veylann, Slippa and Melodious followed by a few others pursued, but lost sight of the salamander in the thickening mist of steam in that direction. The party pursued by the western passage that also led to the large cavern, but the fleeing salamander disappeared into the steamy mist in that cavern.



- The party had followed the passage west from the steps, and entered the big cavern. The rivulet that flowed north from the sea cavern to the south, which Doil had diverted to flow into the large cavern, had been re-directed again to northward away from what was thought to be the Portal, that magma pit in the middle, now hidden in the steam mist. Doil set about redirecting the stream back into the big cavern. As the party slowly advances, that could see a bit further to the actual magma pit, and then, Veylann first, were able to make out the glowing salamanders in the midst of it. That was when the salamanders must have also seen the party. They attacked, but the party attacked first.



- Critically, Melodious was successful with a “Slow” spell that affected the three salamanders that could be seen at that moment. Belfor managed to strike with Ice Knife, then hit with his Tidal Wave spell. It didn’t do much with all that hot lava present. Oliver with crossbow bolts, and others with what they could. The salamanders were clearly taking damage. The slow spell kept two of them from getting spar attacks, but they did lash out with their snakelike tails, missing. The middle salamander moved northward after being hit hard by Oliver, apparently deterred from pressing closer. The fourth salamander appeared in the middle, perhaps coming from further away, and pressed an attack in the middle. Elsapheth moved forward into danger to do invoke “Radiance of the dawn. Doil was grappled by one salamander by its tail, and he was dragged somewhat forward into the magmap pit. At least he only was dragged in just at the edge. He was released and got away when the creature was killed. High Priestess Vega was casting “radiance” Scorching ray spells, Benaiah and Judith were both casting spells as well. Belfor took bear form to try and attack one of the salamanders. It was a big, confusing fight.

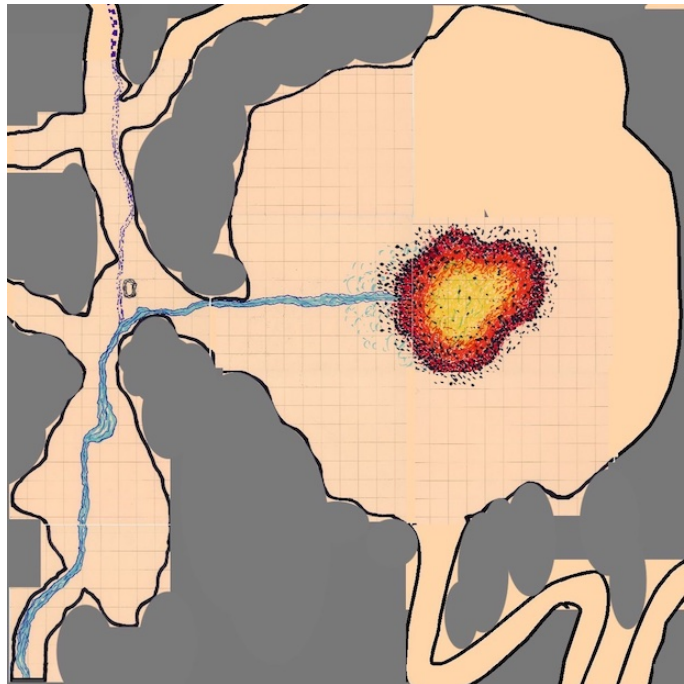
Very soon, instead of attacking, Father Benaiah called for help; he was going to attempt a “Dispel” on the Portal. He had cast a detect magic spell, and, yes, he now knew exactly where it was. Melodious let out a bleat of his bagpipes and Brother Sheth (?) cast

a Guadance spell. With that help rendered, Benaiah cast “Dispel Magic.” Successfully? Sister Judith then cast Detect Magic, and said, “Yes, the Portal is gone. I don’t detect magic from the pit. From a few weapons and such here and there, but nothing from the lava pit.” There were still a couple of salamanders fighting, especially the un-slowed one that had just moved toward the party from the center of the pit. But, no more appeared. The last two disappeared into dust, melding into the hot magma in the pit, as the battle ended. Melodious with Mage Hand alertly retrieved the four spears from the magma before they disappeared. Father Benaiah did healing on Doil; he needed it!

5. “The Portal is gone?” Oliver (?) asked.

“It seems to be,” Sister Judith said. “I’m detecting no magic.”

No more salamanders were showing up either. But, the stream, having been redirected by Doil before the fight, was now entering the lava pit, sizzling to steam, and starting to reduce visibility. Oliver and Veylann quickly looked around before the steam got too dense and the party had to leave. The party had never seen the northern or western extent of the cavern before. They still couldn’t see the whole picture, but there were no exits found, so the idea of what the big cavern looked like, in the context of the whole complex, was not apparent. (The map shows the stream having been redirected to the middle of the big cavern.)



6. The steam was getting thicker. It was starting to get difficult to breathe, now that water was coming in. Oliver asked, “Is the magma in the pit subsiding? Is it getting smaller?”

Doil took a look. “No. In fact, it seems to be growing somewhat. And hotter. More lava coming in from somewhere. Wherever it comes from.”

By now visibility was down to about twenty feet.

The High Priestess Vega said to Father Benaiah, “You didn’t have to do that!”

Doil said, “I don’t like this. It’s growing.”

Oliver wondered about the town above; did it need to be evacuated?

Sister Judith said, “I will do another divination. Yes, only a good chance of it being accurate. Is there a peril to the town? That’s what I’m asking. I have a portent, that I will get a correct answer. Indeed, a doubled portent.” She must have cast that as a spell rather than as a ritual, because she was very quickly able to say, “Not immediately. The Portal had apparently diverted lava from here to the Plane of Fire. Since it is not

operating anymore, the additional lava is coming here. I can't tell whether in the longer term it will destroy the town or not."

Oliver asked Doil if he could tell anything. He had expertise. What could be done?

Doil didn't have any answers. But, High Priestess Vega said, "Perhaps I can re-open the Portal." She explained, "I am supposed to be the Gatekeeper. The Mistress of the Portal. But, I have not been 'Empowered.' I have been praying that the Keymaster might appear, that I might be Empowered. If that can happen, I should be able to re-open the Portal with my staff, and relieve this dire threat."

7. Brother Sheth had a different idea. "If I could receive Guidance and Inspiration, I'd like to invoke the gift from God of "Knowledge of the Ages," to understand the threat that this lava influx presents, and perhaps discover what might be done about it."

Molodious again produced a comforting and encouraging series on his bagpipes. Sister Elsapheth provided "Guidance." (Brother Sheth rolled "Investigate" d20=20.)

"What we need to do, that is, what might work, is to quench this incoming lava into stone with water coming in from the sea cave. Somewhat like we were attempting before, but on larger scale. If the lava is frozen into rock, it may form a cap on this lava vent. It will produce a lot of steam. But if all of the doors can be opened, the big double doors we came through, and the smaller one at the skeleton, and any others that can be found, the pressure can be relieved, and the town above preserved. We clearly need more water coming in than there is now. Maybe holes punched into that iron water gate? If the river overflows over the docks and through the ghoulish room, that might be too much, but then the steam escaping will slow the flow. I think. I hope."

"That sounds like it could work," Doil said.

"One way or another, it's high time for us to get out, before the steam gets thicker, and we can't breathe," Sister Judith said.

So, the party left, returning to the sea cavern by the way they came. (Nobody thought to explore further, and doing so would have been dangerous.)

8. It was Brother Sheth's idea to use the boat, rigged with a couple of bronze bars projecting forward, to ram into the iron water gate to punch holes in the gate. Doil directed the placement and reinforcements and supports for the bars in order to hit the weakest part of the gate, where it was rusted, near the bottom. The project seemed to be a success. The momentum of the boat with eight rowers slamming into the gate added holes, but didn't destroy the whole gate. "That should be enough," Doil commented. Sheth supposed so. He couldn't comment with authority since by then his inspiration of Knowledge had expired.
9. Even though the fight with the salamanders and the retreat from the lava cave happened relatively quickly, it took a good bit of time getting to the ghoulish room, and then managing the boat and the punching of holes in the water gate later. It was fairly late in the afternoon when the party returned the back to its place at the bid cavern doors. By then it was apparent that steam was starting to fill up the big sea cavern, and was escaping out the big doors. High Priestess Vega left to return to the Temple. The remainder of the party went to the tavern.

(This was the end of the adventure episode.)

Experience:	Oliver	Melodious	Veylann	Doil	Slippa	Belfor	Elsapheth	Sheth	Felicity
1.5 salam(OM)(SBJShBn(V)(DFEVe	514	514	129	64	257	257	64	257	64
3.5 salam(OM)(BEVSDF(ShJBnVe	1050	1050	525	525	525	525	525	263	525
Mis. DispelPort(BnM(SJO)((...)	343	686	171	171	171	171	171	343	171
Mis. MitigLava(Sh(OMDJ)((...)	126	126	63	126	63	63	63	253	63
Total this Episode	2033	2376	888	886	1016	1016	823	1116	823
Previous total	16740	14664*	7968*	6791*	7503*	7588*	7478*	969	2131
Current total	18773	17040*	8856	7677*	8519*	8604*	8301*	2085	2954*
After advancement		16040	8286	7167	7979	8034	7641	2025	

Note: Groa remains at 7877. Corvyn remains at 3607*.

Training: No change from Previous status except for advancements (since Episode 27)

Oliver at +0 towards 7^a level(needs 36).
 Melodious at +5 days toward 6^a level(needs 30), paid 1000xp for 25d. Now 6^a level, 0 days to 7^a(need 36)
 Groa: at +5 days toward 6^a level (needs 30)
 Doil, at +7 days toward 5^a level (need 24), paid 510xp for 17d. Now 5^a level, days to 6^a(need 30).
 Belfor, Veylann: Now at +5 days toward 5^a level (need 24), paid 570xp, Now 5^a level +0d to 6^a (need 30).
 Slippa at +6 days toward 5^a level (need 24), paid 540xp for 18d, Now 5^a level, +0d to 6^a (need 30)
 Elsapheth: at+2 days (needing 24 to 5^a), paid 660 xp for 22d, Now 5^a level, +0d to 6^a (need 30)
 Corvyn: at +2 days towards 4^a level (needs 18)
 Sheth: at +9 days (needing 12) toward 3^a earned, paid 60xp for 3d, Now 3d level, +0d to 4^a (need 18)
 Felicity: at +4 days towards 4^a level (needs 18), not enough xp to pay for training still needed, so still 3^a.
 (Corvyn needs to pay 45gp training to 4^a, Elsapheth 80 for training to 5^a, and Felicity 45 training to 4^a.)
 (We can catch up on training expenses for advancing characters when treasure distribution is done, Ep27½)

Treasure: From 5 salamanders: 5 metal spears (value unknown), 2 garnets (100).

Nothing has yet been decided about the distribution of this treasure, or the disposal of all of the spears and bronze war-hammers and shields from previous adventuring.

Major Accomplishment:

The Portal no longer detects magic (as of when the party departed). Whether the portal is merely temporarily disabled, is closed but still exists, or is utterly destroyed, remains to be seen. The near-term consequences of a more massive steam production in the Hot Caverns from the mixture of water with the incoming hot lava is yet to be understood, and the future consequences are even less well understood.

Near term plans and expectations:

Sister Judith plans to spend the night in Sundown. Lady Kaykenyon had an unproductive meeting with High Priestess Vega, but did return the ceramic tablets, about a score of them, that had been in Lady Kaykenyon's possession. (The remained tablets are still in Guarddraw where Sister Rahab continues the work of copying and translating.) Lady Kaykenyon expects to travel with Sister Judith back to Guarddraw, along with her bodyguard Lima, and porters Jumbotron and Imbroglio. And perhaps Brother Sheth. (Lady Kaykenyon still has not found the chest she is looking for or any indication of where it might be. She had wanted to look in the Sea Cavern, but with all the steam now, that may be impractical.)