

Episode 29 Searching in Minotaur Hill

Tuesday, May 16th, 1313: breeze; party in Guarddraw.

1. The party was in Guarddraw again after traveling to Selleze to do some business, primarily purchasing weapons after cashing in treasure from the adventures under Sundown. But, they returned to find that Groa and Corvyn were not present there in Guarddraw. Word was that they had left for the town of Standpipe, further west. Melodious decided to leave and see if he could find them. So, that left Oliver as now really the sole leader of the group. So, all present included F6 Oliver, T5 Veylann, F5 Doil, T5 Slippa, D5 Belfor, C5 Elsapheth, C3 Brother Sheth, and F4 Felicity.

Brother Sheth had made the trip to Selleze with the party primarily to see if he could find more information on the religion of Sundown, which seemed to be a mix of the religion of the Kingdom of the Sun and a mysterious cult of “The Way of the Spheres” which originated in Xrune, apparently. He was planning to return to helping Lady Kaykenyon with copying and interpreting the ancient tablets found in the sea cave under Sundown, which were ultimately to be returned to the Sundown High Priestess. So, Brother Sheth, at least for a while, would not be adventuring with the party.

After all the travel and efforts of the trip to Selleze, the party planned to remain in Guarddraw some days to rest and do training. Oliver was making plans for an expedition to attack the hobgoblins at Guardway Tower, north of Topaltown. He needed treasure, and he wasn't the only one.

2. That evening, though, Mister Fargo found the party in the tavern. Fargo had a mission he wanted the party to do. “I'm hoping this will be quick. If you are not back before something more important comes up, I will send for you. Here's the problem. Not long ago a party of fools got themselves into Minotaur Hill and never came out. North of Strabis. It's a dangerous place. We've received a demand from someone important that one of them was this noble's daughter Lilith. She's supposed to be a spellcaster. She ran away with some adventurer clod named Statin. There were two others. See if you can find the bodies and bring them out. The girls, that is. Maybe someone in Strabis knows where they went in. There's supposed to be multiple ways in and out. Hell, it's a minotaur's maze, so what do you expect? Don't try to go in too deep or you might not be coming out either. I'm guessing you will get further than those four did. Hopefully far enough to find something.”

Fargo also had some help to offer. “I understand you people are without that wizard fellow Corvyn that you had along with you until recently. Ran off somewhere I understand. Maybe with that Sorceress you had too. There's a new guy, just came in looking for work, and willing to do whatever. You can have him if you want. The name is Atreyus. Don't know if he'll be useful, but with this task I've given you, it will be a relatively easy way to find out. See what he can do. He's over at Headquarters being talked to by Mister Triggerman. Assuming he gets approved, I'll send him over.”

Sure enough, about fifteen minutes after Fargo left, the prospective new party member Atreyus came into the tavern common room looking for a fighter named Oliver. The bartender Liquidity sent him over, and introductions were made. (Atreyus is a new Player Character, starting as a 2nd level Sorcerer.)

The party made plans to depart for Strabis in the morning.

Wednesday, May 17th: calm, partly cloudy; party from Guardraw to Strabis.

3. The trip to the small town of Strabis was about eight miles, covered easily by the party within about three hours, getting them to Strabis before noon. On the way, the party members exchanged what they knew about Strabis and Minotaur Hill.

Strabis itself is the domain of Lord Kingston, who has a small hold there. Lord Kingston is a vassal of the Earl of Ghatt, in Tonstol, and not under Lord Grantt. So, this errand to another Lord's domain is a bit unusual, perhaps a favor to someone. Someone associated with the missing party.

Strabis is even smaller than Torquis, and has no wall, or even a fence. There's an Inn, called "The Simple Maze," and a general store with nothing that wouldn't be of interest to the local townspeople or farmholds nearby. The staff includes the innkeeper and a couple of people running the kitchen. There was a young girl, not much more than a drudge, early teenager you'd suppose, that would bring food out and collect dishes. There was a stable big enough for several riding or draft animals.

Some of the legends about Minotaur Hill you had heard. There is good reason to think a minotaur still lives there. Likely a particularly powerful minotaur. Just about anybody would want to avoid it, and run if they could, it's said. You can also expect in or around Minotaur Hill goblins, maybe hobgoblins, and possibly orcs. Legend says that there is, or once was, a source of gems in the hill somewhere.

4. The party stopped at the Simple Maze for lunch. The proprietor of the inn is an old man named Billechik, but the fellow who kept bar and rented out the rooms is his son Backardion. The place had four bedrooms to rent, plus a men's bunkroom with 5 bunks, and a women's bunkroom with three. Actually, all of the rooms are about the same size, but with differing numbers and sizes and quality of beds. None are really good. As in most places, the bunkroom beds are 5 Ducats per night, and the rooms 2 Sovereigns.

After all that was settled, Oliver asked about the party of four adventurers that Fargo had sent the party to look for, the one named Lilith particularly. What they had been doing, too, if Backardion would tell him. For a couple of pieces of gold, Blackardian gave the party a bit of the story. Oliver, short on cash himself, borrowed two Sovereigns from Doil to give him.

"They were operating under the assumption that the minotaur was dead. Anyone around here would have told them that warn't so, but why should they believe us? They was led by a fighter by the name of Jaybob, big strong guy, but kind of slovenly, if you ask me. A girl cleric named Lufthansa was pretty but not real smart. Those two were renting one of the rooms. The other girl was smarter. Sellest was her name. Neither named Lilith, but I suppose they used assumed names. The wizard was supposed to be of some considerable power, so she said. I never saw her do anything more remarkable than open and shut doors, snuff candles, and stuff like that. We've got a crazy girl here in town that can do that kind of stuff, and poltergeists too. But, yes, this wizard girl, Sellest, was sharing a room with a fairly slimy thief sort. Botulism. That was his name. Not someone you'd want your daughter to marry. But they had money, and figured to make some more by finding the minotaur's treasure. Good quality equipment. At least masterwork quality. Probably some magic stuff too. They were in and out of the caves

on the Hill several times. Mostly the direct route from town, I gather from their talking. Did manage to come back with some stuff that they went to Selleze to sell, before coming back here. Mostly raw gems, I think. Then, about a month ago, they never came back. I figured the minotaur got them, took their stuff, and ate them. That's about all I can tell you. If you think that was useful, I'd appreciate a few Sovereigns more."

Oliver reluctantly parted with two Sovereigns more, and said, "Someone wants to recover the bodies. Or, at least the body of one of the girls. Lillith. Not sure which that would be. Did either of them, the girls that is, have or wear anything distinctive?"

He snorted, suppressing a laugh. "Well, yes. The cleric girl, she had really light yellow hair that was unnaturally bright. Had a nice red cloak. I heard her say it would protect her from fire, and even the red dragon. The way she dressed, you'd have thought she was a prostitute. Except she had this big jewel encrusted cross that she wore hanging between her breasts. As if it was supposed to attract attention there. Very short chainmail skirt. Nice legs, I have to say. She wore a chest protector, I hesitate to call it a shirt, of chainmail. That covered her breasts, somewhat, and not a lot else. Some kind of heavy bracers, too. There was a headband she wore with a big red jewel on it. I'd have thought a ruby, but it was too big to be one of those. Looked like it though. If you find any of those things, that was her. The other one wasn't as flashy but was big on blue and black. Black hair, as a matter of fact. She also wore it long. Her gown was blue under a black cape, and she wasn't shy about showing herself off either, but wasn't as obvious about it. Blue pointy hat. She had several rings on, and a necklace that had a big blue gem hanging from it. I think it was silver. The necklace chain, that is. Again, if you find any of that, the minotaur missed some good stuff. That's not like him, as far as folks say. But, you asked. If you find something, and want to ask if I recognize it, just ask."

"You ought to give him a few Sovereigns more for all that," old man Billechik said, from the table off to the side where he was sitting.

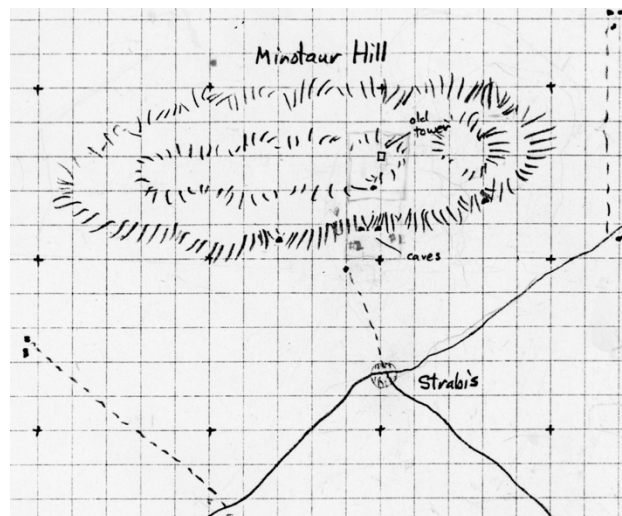
"I'd tell you more about the two men, the fighter and the thief, if you asked. And gave me some encouragement," Backardion said as he pocketed the added Sovereigns.

"How much for everything you can tell us?" Oliver asked.

"What I told you already and the rest, call it six more. Total of ten," said Backardian.

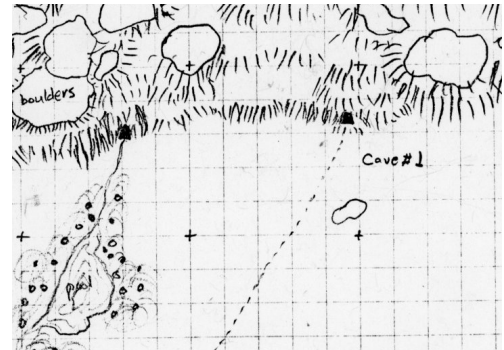
Oliver reluctantly borrowed the rest of the ten, six more Sovereigns from Doil, and paid it.

"The thief type, Botulism, wore black," Backardian continued. "Not just black, but looked oiled, like everything he wore was slick and coated with slime or oil. Didn't leave a mark on the furniture though, for some reason. So, maybe just a look? Hadn't seen anything like that before. He had a packet of tools, thief tools I figure, and they looked polished and fine quality. Masterwork, maybe even magic. Had a small crossbow and a couple of shortswords. Never would look you in the eye, know what I mean?"

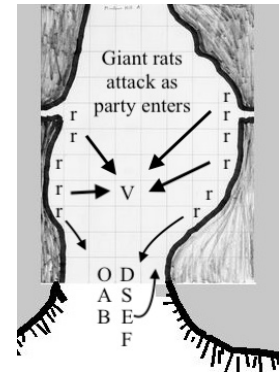


Shifty. The big guy was obviously a fighter, wearing well-made half plate armor, and had a really big great-sword. A bow too. Good quality clothing, but it didn't look good on him. For some reason he favored the color green. Green tabard, shield, and other trim. You'd have thought maybe a ranger. That's about the worst choice you could make for going into the caverns. But, I did say, I think, he didn't come across as smart. You ask him something, and then need to wait a moment for the idea to get into his head. Then you could see in his eyes that he had figured out the question, and after some moments more, then you'd get an answer. And, that's about the extent of what I can tell you.

- It was early afternoon and there was plenty of daylight left, so Oliver decided the party would go on north to Minotaur Hill and make a preliminary check. Backardion had said the party of four had used the direct route. Oliver asked, and was told that the way there was a path directly north from the town. There was a cave entrance about a mile away. "You can't miss it," Backardian said.

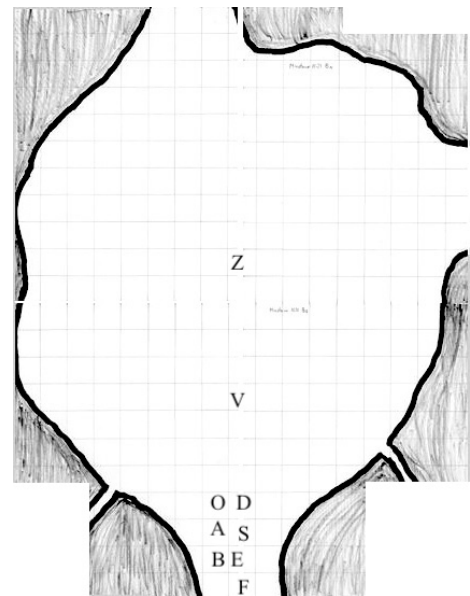


There were actually two visible caves. A path led to the one on the right. The one on the left had a small stream flowing out of it, so, obviously the one on the right. The entrance was wide, about twenty feet, and high enough to pass in without stooping. Just looking in, the party could see considerable debris – bones, rocks, some sticks, and the remains of a dead fire beetle. The party entered, with Veylann out in front by about 15 feet, followed by Oliver with Doil and then the others close behind them.



Veylann was attacked by six or seven rats and bitten three times, and Oliver once. But then the tide turned. Veylann escaped and then turned and killed one of his attackers with a crossbow shot. Oliver killed one and hit a couple of others. But what won the battle was Elsapheth coming up and delivering "Radiance of the Dawn" with the aid of Sunlight behind her to the remaining rats, killing all but one that Doil finished off.

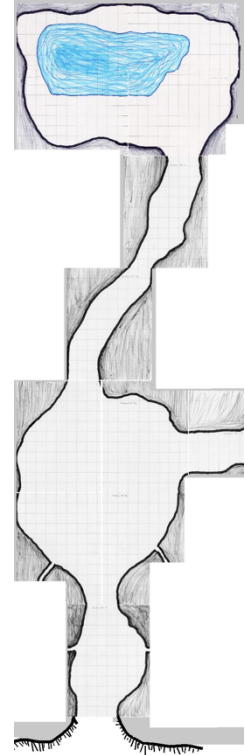
- Elsapheth then gave Veylann some healing, and the party moved on to the north, to a really big cavern. Atreyus helped by producing "Dancing Lights" that went ahead of the party. Even before the party could see the far wall, there in front of them rose up a zombie, a rather spastic zombie, at that. Well, what to do? The party pummeled it with arrows and such, until it collapsed. But then it rose up again, sort of going up and down, maybe dancing. More arrows and bolts, and then Veylann got close



enough that he noticed something. “A string?” he called out. “It’s held up by a thread!”

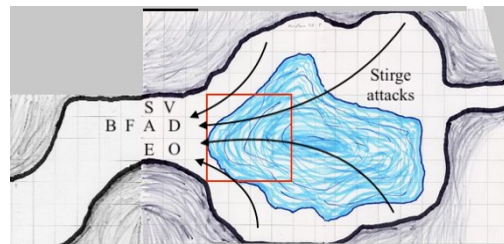
Oliver tried to cut the thread with shots from his hand crossbow, but failed. Veylann dashed up, cut the cord with his rapier, and then jumped back as the zombie, if that was what it was, fell to the floor of the cavern.

Atreyus raised the level of his Dancing lights high enough to reveal that the top of the cavern, some seventy or so feet up, was covered with spiderwebs. A giant spider must have been dangling the thread that animated the zombie. But, nobody could see the spider. So, the party looked around a bit. There was a north exit and an east exit. On the floor of the cavern was debris similar to that in the rat cavern, including a broken sword, husks of dead beetles and rats, and the now inert corpse that had been suspended.



7. The party went north. There were holes about half a foot wide here and there along the passageway, most near or on the ceiling, and from some of those hung snakes. The snakes were sizable vipers. None made any effort to attack the party, but Oliver shot them anyway, killing six. The path sloped gradually downward, and after another 100 feet opened up into a fetid cavern with a large pool. The floor was covered in bat guano, and there must have been hundreds of bats roosting on the ceiling. The water in the pool was nasty too, from all the bat droppings. The whole place smelled pretty bad. There was also a decaying dead orc in the northeast corner. The party slowly made their way around the pool, going north, then west, south, and finally east to get back to the passageway. Then they left, returning to the big cavern.

8. The wide passage to the east went downward too, but only about fifty feet, ending in another pool cavern. This one wasn't so benign. The party was attacked by stirges, several at a time. Elsapheth's "Faerie Fire" spell helped make the stirges easier to hit. Most of the party got in on the action. By just waiting for the stirges, and shooting them as they came, something like a score were killed and nobody was bitten. A count wasn't possible because many fell into the pool. Somehow a giant cave cricket had managed to survive in the cavern, hopping out of the way to steer clear of the party as they advanced.



9. Unlike the north pool cavern, this one had an exit on the far side, a narrower passage, and one that showed some signs of traffic through there. The party moved on into the narrower passages, looking as far as they easily could in either direction as they met side passages. At the first intersection, they went left. That brought them to a T intersection where a giant spider attacked from the left. It was quickly killed by Oliver and Veylann. The party went right, then straight across a four way intersection. The passage narrowed

and they had to squeeze left and then right, bringing them into a widening intersection where a spider attacked from a passage off to the right. This time Oliver was bitten, but he was able to resist the poison and fought back. The spider too was soon killed. The party continued left.

10. But, here was a surprise! There were lights from the left at what amounted to a T shaped intersection. A voice called out, "Hello!" It was another party of adventurers.

Their leader, a wizard it would seem, then called out, "Hail! Are you the adventurers come from Guardraw?" They showed no sign of attacking. There were six of them. One a cleric.

Oliver said that the party was indeed the party from Guardraw. "And you?"

"We are come from Gildegulch," the wizard said. "I'm Mardur. We are looking for that lost party of four. I understood someone from Guardraw might be looking for them too. So far we have found nothing but confusing twisty passages and a few monsters. Nothing serious." He paused, then said, "You wouldn't happen to know the way out, would you? We thought we had that tracked, but it seems there are errors on our map."

Oliver thought that the simplest thing to do was to simply show them. The party had now seen a good bit of the passageways, enough to have an idea of the monsters and dangers that might be expected, and it was probably getting on toward evening. So, the party led the way out, with Mardur's crew following.

"Much obliged," Mardur said.

"Are you staying in Strabis?" Oliver asked.

"Yes. At the Simple Maze, of course. Not many choices."

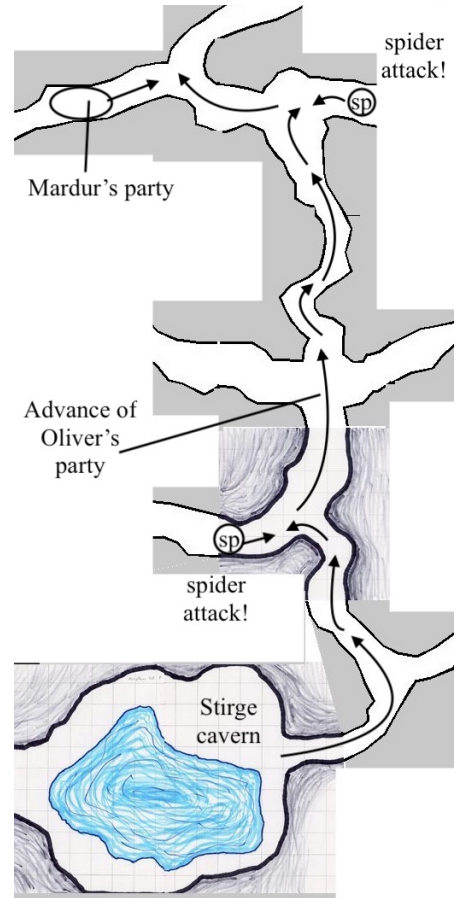
"How far in have you gone? Into the Hill, that is?" Oliver asked.

"Hard to say. Far enough to lose track – all these twisty passageways. You'd think someone deliberately made it confusing! Fancy that."

No monsters appeared on the way out.

Besides the wizard and cleric, one of that other party was a fighter and the other three appeared to be thief types, two being women. They didn't appear to be wealthy. A couple of the thief types looked like they did maybe because they couldn't afford good armor or clothes or weapons. (This was where the online adventure actually ended.)

11. Both parties went back to The Simple Maze in Strabis. Mardur immediately went up to Backardian and rented a room for himself and one other, and rented three beds in the men's bunkroom and one in the women's for his other party members. Well, that left us with two beds in the women's bunkroom that were left. So Elsapheth and Felicity took



those, and Slippa got a room with Oliver. Veylann and Belfor shared a room, and so did Atreyus and Doil. So, that left the whole place filled but for the two empty bunks in the men's bunkroom. Doil was rather irked that Mardur had preempted Oliver in choosing accommodations, but that was not really a problem, except maybe for Elsapheth and Felicity being in the same room as one of them.

The other party was seated around one of the larger tables, talking quietly, and we took two tables and pushed them together so that the eight of us could be at one table, a bit away to give us the chance to talk with some privacy too.

Mardur, the wizard in the other party, walked over. "Thank you again for the help getting out," he said to Oliver. "No monsters along the way, either. Just dead ones."

Oliver rose and said, "If we are going to be looking for these same people, I suppose it might be useful to be cooperating friends instead of competing. My name is Oliver, and these are ..." He introduced the rest of the party.

Then Mardur called his own party over and introduced them. The cleric was named Brother Biles. He didn't wear a recognizable holy symbol, which clerics usually have visible. He wore scale mail and had a mace. The male thief looking character was Toenail. Fuego was the big strong fighter who wore a scowl on his face. He had a scale mail, and a shortbow and a great-axe. Toenail had studded armor and a shortbow and two short swords. He had a shifty look to him. The two women, also thief looking, or indeterminate, were Trixie and Ptomain. Trixie was quite small but fairly agile, and she looked rather shifty too. Pretty, but not overwhelmingly so. Ptomain, on the other hand, had a commanding presence, but didn't seem to have yet grown into knowing how to use it. Both girls wore leather armor, not particularly well fitted. Trixie seemed more self-confident, but Ptomain looked more dangerous. Fuego seemed to be taking a bit too much notice of Felicity. Like, he could be trouble. Mardur, their leader, seemed pleasant enough though. The others didn't say much of anything. They returned to their table, and talked quietly among themselves without saying anything more to Oliver's party.

Mardur, though, stayed a bit longer, and asked what sorts of monsters Oliver and his party had encountered. Oliver told him: giant spiders, stirges, and giant rats.

"Oh, my!" Mardur said in reaction to some of these, especially the rats and stirges encountered in numbers. He ended up saying, "We could be in trouble with some of those things, especially if there's that many of them. One fight like that, and we will be done. Assuming we survive. I had understood that the Hill was fairly well explored and shouldn't have such monsters in large numbers."

Oliver asked what his party had met. "Rats, several of them, and a couple of stirges. I think it was goblins, maybe three or four. They ran one way, and we ran the other. I expect that was when we got confused with our mapping. Again, we appreciate your helping us."

Experience:

	Oliver	Veylann	Doil	Slippa	Belfor	Elsapheth	Felicity	Atreyus
	F6	T5	F5	T5	D5	C5	F3	S2
11 grat(EOVD(A((SBF)))	44	44	44	50	11	88	11	22
z.sp(big cav)(OVA(...))	12	12	3	3	3	3	3	12
6 pvip(Q(A)((...))	38	5	5	5	5	5	5	9
100 bats(uneng)(all)	25	13	13	13	13	13	13	25
18 stirges(QEVA(SF)((BD)))	138	69	17	35	17	69	35	69
g sp(QV(...))	84	42	11	11	11	11	11	21
g sp(QVA(...))	76	38	10	10	10	10	10	38
<u>Rescue NPC party (all)</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>
Total this Episode	457	243	123	147	90	219	108	216x2
<u>Previous total</u>	<u>19195</u>	<u>8433</u>	<u>7410</u>	<u>8222</u>	<u>8360</u>	<u>7897</u>	<u>3181</u>	<u>300</u>
Current total	19652	8676	7533	8369	8450	8116	3289	732

Melodious (Bd6) remains at 16182xp; Groa (S5) remains at 7877 xp.
Corvyn (W3) remains at 3607* xp. Sheth at 2193xp.

Training credit: M,T in Guarddraw at 2 days each except Doil, Felicity (training from Oliver) and Sheth (training from clerics at the Cathedral) 4 days. Groa, Corvyn get 2 days.

Oliver at +7 towards 7^a level(needs 36).
Melodious at +7 days toward 7^a level(needs 36)
Groa: S5 at +17 days toward 6^a level (needs 30)
Doil, at +14 days toward 6^a level (need 30)
Belfor, Veylann: Now at +7 days toward 6^a level (need 30)
Slippa at +7 days toward 6^a level (need 30)
Elsapheth: at+7 days toward 6^a level(need30)
Corvyn: W3 at +14 days towards 4^a level (needs 18)
Sheth: at +14 days (needing 18) toward 4th level
Felicity: at +4 days (need 24) toward 5^a

The party remains in Strabis, expecting to venture into Minotaur Hill further the next day. It will be: **Thursday, May 18th, weather calm and clear**