

Episode 26 ½
Getting Ready to Act on the Hot Caverns

Tuesday, April 25th: calm, clear (still mid-morning)

1. Some explanation of Sundown geography: The water level in the sea cavern is very nearly the same as that in the river. The berm there now between the gates of the cavern and the creek/swamp area is from debris that fell down the cliff when the nomads were tearing things down and debris that fell when the doors were opened. (A lot of debris fell into the cavern making it unusually shallow near the doors.) The berm had a lot of loose large rocks and stonework debris that lets water filter through, so the cavern will follow the river with some delay. That's why the water level in the cavern goes up and down a bit, and did even before the doors were open (they were not watertight). The reason for the deep shaft from the Mayor's basement to the sea cave is that the cliffs are fairly high.
2. Oliver: The ultimate goal is to try and flood the place and leave Sundown completely safe. Not sure that's what's going to happen, but that's the goal. I think we stick with the plan of getting that water gate open asap and then long rest. The hot caverns doors are barred so Oliver is hoping it's safe to get in, get the door open, and get out. Unless, of course, Melodious and the others insist on a short rest first. I think Elsapheth has 1 or 2 2nd level spells left and wouldn't benefit from the short rest. Oliver, Doil, and Belfor could benefit from a short rest, but I'd rather get the gate open and long rest after. Oliver wants to get as much water in that thing as possible as soon as possible so that Efreeth can't send some other crazy creatures up there and destroy the town.
3. Intelligence/Investigation checks: Oliver rolled a 19 Investigation and Felicity got an 18. Doil only rolled a 6, and a 10 for Belfor DM: Oliver at 19+0 is just short of DC20. But, he did figure out a number of things himself already, so I think that gets to the threshold. Felicity at 18 +1 (She's I=12) is a native of Sundown, so that gives her a tiny bit of help. So, you both get something.
DM: OK, consider this: What happens when all that water meets all that hot lava? There's at least two lava pools that you know about, and the one in the big cavern is pretty large. Belfor about the same as Felicity. Knows geography better, but doesn't have the local knowledge. But he rolled low. Oliver at least thinks about all that water hitting all that molten lava. I'm going to try rolling for the other NPC's: Elsapheth 8, Slippa 9, Veylann 19. So, figure Veylann is wondering about things too. Elsapheth will again volunteer to do an Augury (ritual) before the party does something. (Oliver thinks that's a good idea.)
4. Oliver will mention that concern to everyone else and see if they have any ideas.
Melodious does still have two (I think) Bardic Inspirations. So, yes, if he does that I'll apply it to a new Doil intelligence/investigation roll. Along those same lines, Elsapheth could do a "Guidance" cantrip (she will). I rule that, at least in this case, the bonuses can stack (different effects - inspiration vs. Divine guidance)
No big rush to resolve this now. Ultimately when Elsapheth does her Augury I will figure out what happens. I have in mind a range of possibilities, and I'll roll a d6 to see where on the scale of possibilities we are. Generally d6=1 is awful ("Woe!") and d6=6 is

good ("Weal"). Elsapheth has the opportunity to define what Woe and Weal mean. (See comments about Augury in rules document.) She will be open to suggestion. This will be the first time she has tried to do an Augury.

5. Spells expended: Belfor: Healing word, Ice Knife x 3, 2x Spike Growth. One of the Ice Knife castings is believed to have been 2nd level. So, he has remaining one 1st level spell. Elsapheth: Guiding bolt, Bless, Healing Word, Cure wounds, Spiritual weapon, Bless(at level 2). So, she has one 2nd level spell left. Melodious: I don't see any spells slots expended. Did use "Mantle of Inspiration" twice.

Hit points: Veylann at 11/23, Doil at 27/40, Oliver at 38/44. (Felicity should be 28 hp. at 3rd level.)

6. Boat found: When the party got to the big doors to the sea cavern, there was a boat there. It looks like someone dragged it over the berm so that this entrance could be used to the sea cave. In the boat you can see one of those bronze pieces of stock (1" x 2" x 12 feet). There are several others piled there on the berm waiting to be carried up to town. Apparently the crew that is "cleaning out" the sea cave is using this more convenient way of getting in and out. They are not around now. It's the same people who are busy blocking the Tower #3 basement with stones. (The boat is about 20 feet long and six feet in beam, with three pairs of oars.)

7. Oliver: "With all of this being said, I vote that the party short rests on the docks, goes back into the hot caves and reconstructs the dam. Then we need to get word to or get to Guardraw ASAP to find some real help. Namely by way of Urtles or Exzema. I don't think we as a party are suited to get this taken care of the right way. Maybe we can get a messenger there so we can stay and protect the town if need be. Let me know if anyone feels differently!"

DM: If you are going to "Send a message," maybe someone could write it out. If you tell Trudue about this, he'd certainly find someone who could take a message.

Master Urtles,

We have found 1, potentially 2 portals to a fire realm or hellscape in the hot caverns below Sundown. We were attacked by some sort of greater demon who we managed to push back before he killed anyone. He said he would be back and I believe him. We request urgent help in the form of a powerful magic user and church leader to close these portals immediately to save the town of Sundown and Lord Grantt's lands. We will remain in Sundown to do what we can to fend off any attacks from below in the mean time, but please hurry.

Yours in honor, Oliver

Oliver presents his message to Trudue to have it sent to Guardraw.

Trudue takes a look at this message that Oliver wants him to have sent. He calls in the Mayor, and she looks it over too. "We need to contact Vega," she says. Trudue says, "We have to get this sent off first. Sensa? The mayor nods, then send the messenger girl (her daughter) to find Sensa and then go to the Temple and ask for High Priestess Vega.)

"What about Benaiah?" Trudue asks.

"I'd rather not," Alicia answers.

Trudue turns to Oliver and says, "We'll send this off to Guarddraw as soon as Sensa can get here and get going. She's reliable. (You are free to return to the party)

8. The DM is giving Melodious a chance to offer a bardic inspiration to Doil, to reroll his Intelligence roll for ideas in how to deal with the lava before flooding the caves, if you choose to do so.

Melodious will jump on his bag pipes and drop a dope beat for some inspiration.

(Doil rolls a 17 with +4 from Melodious included.)

A d4 for "Guidance" from Elsapheth: d4=...4! So, that makes it 21. Yes DC20.)

Doil: "Can't say I have personal experience, but you know how we dwarves are.

Always sharing lore among ourselves, passing down lore." "These lava pits, for example. You don't normally find such things. Where you do is smoking mountains. I guess a better translation into Common is "volcano." That's a mountain that spews out smoke and fire and sometimes lava. Occasionally one will sprout up where there was just a flat field before. I doubt that's the case here. That sea cave has been here a long time, and I guess the lava caves too. But you never know. Things are not predictable."

"But there's a special case, you see. And, that's volcanos or such along a coast. This place is along a river instead. If water gets mixed in, it turns to steam. You've seen that. Now, that can go two ways. If there's enough water, it can quench the lava, cool it down so it goes solid. That puts a lid on what's underneath, so maybe the pressure builds and then all unexpected the thing explodes. If there's enough hot lava. And, maybe after a while. Perhaps even a long while."

"The other possibility is that there's so much water the lava turns it all to steam, and there's so much, it blows its top right away. Or maybe the steam can escape as fast as the lava can do that and it blows out without causing destruction."

"Me, I'm no expert. This thing here could be any one of those. Or it could be something else, an unnatural lava pit that is just there because lava comes through the portal from someplace that's hot. So, that's about all I can tell you. Someone more expert than me might be able to tell you more."

9. Oliver: I really think I'm starting to get an idea of what's going on down there. I just can't quite put all the pieces together yet. There is more caverns to explore beyond the big room the Efrete was in. Depending on how this afternoon goes, I may have a lot of messaging back and forth to ask a number of questions to a number of NPCs from Oliver.

Honestly, depending on who shows up from Guarddraw, going off of what Doil said about the volcano, it may be best to try and kill that efrete if it shows up again. The current plan remains the same. Short rest, message to Guarddraw, Augury, put the dam back up (we will enter the hot caves through the central door that has stairs leading down once you open the doors, where the ghouls were) and wait to see who shows up in response to our message.

We can assess a new plan once we see who arrives, but I would like to explore the remaining caverns. I'm not sure if trying to close the lava pits is the right move (again, based on Doil's assessment) unless someone from Guarddraw says it's magical rather than geographical. But I think we are missing something, and that something may be in the caverns beyond the efrete lava pit.

