

Episode 36 7/8

Around Guardraw after the Solstice

Friday, June 23rd: rain and wind; Saturday, June 24th: storm; In Guardraw (training)

1. The party remained in Guardraw after the Solstice party and other celebration events were done. The time was dedicated to training since the weather was bad. [Due to a calendar error, the events of the Saturday party reported in Episode 36 ¾ took place on June 24th, not June 22nd. Those events are reported (again) in #2 below.
2. This being a Saturday there was also a party at the tavern that evening. It clearly wasn't going to be much compared to that great performance for the solstice. The food and drink was good, but the performers must have exhausted themselves, and just were not prepared as they should have been. (DM: They rolled d20=5 with advantage, so a +1 party, which doesn't count as a party. There are still chances to sustain romances.) Just one round.

Assuming Oliver is in favor, his romance with Slippa continues. (She still seems a bit moody but was enthusiastic about staying together.)

Belfor and Rabab politely part. Her decision not to continue. "Really shouldn't have let myself get carried away last night."

Felicity is through with Fargo. "I'm no longer probationary. He said so himself. I don't owe him anymore. He did say that he was going to send us to help Lord Ovenberg. Some problem with goblins, though. He didn't think the red apparition is real."

Doil and Redwind are partying company on friendly terms. He told her that with two thief types in the party Oliver wouldn't want her to join. Unless one of them quit. She's looking for some sort of work that can both honestly sustain her and be worth doing. Maybe going on to Orctown.

Sellerdore stops by to tell Atreyus she really shouldn't continue with him. Her mother didn't think it was a good idea. But maybe at the Equinox, why, that's when rules are set aside. Maybe she can be with him again then! She seems disappointed to be saying this, yet eager at the idea of getting back together in the future.

Veylann doesn't get involved with anybody. Nor Elsapheth. You see Mellioney there. She spent some time with a commoner man you don't know, but nothing seems to be happening. Pargon did not appear.

Sunday, June 25th: clear and calm; In Guardraw

3. Sunday morning the party got together for breakfast. News from Gildegulch had just been received, and everybody was talking about it. The orcs have been forced away from the town, but are still in the area and dangerous. Four companies of the King's Army are there battling them: The Steel Boots and Silver Skewers from Tonstol, and the Pigstickers and Heavy Blades from Selleze. (The Heavy Blades did not pass through Guardraw on the way; they took a different route.) The news also says that Nextonover was also attacked by the orcs, but was reinforced from Aahfundit by the King's Gulfwatch Marines from Aahfundit. Less is known about conditions there.

Felicity said that she talked to Fargo Saturday night at the party. He told her that he wasn't sending Oliver's party to Torquis yet. Triggerman's orders. Just in case they are needed at Topaltown or somewhere else. Yes, the orcs are attacking Gildegulch, but

where else? The party and guards who might be spared from Guarddraw are the reserve. Lord Grantt is concerned Sundown may be a target, or Topaltown. So, Mr. Triggerman is holding off on sending you to chase goblins for Ovenberg while waiting to see what happens out to the east. The goblins can wait.

4. Elsapheth and Belfor went to the Church service Sunday morning.

Oliver went to the church also. He noticed that Brother Sheth and Sister Rahab were there also. Afterwards Belfor was telling Sister Rahab what has been heard about Gildegulch over at the tavern.

Oliver checked in with Fargo after hearing the news. He found Fargo at Guard HQ. He was talking to a messenger, apparently about the Gildegulch situation. Oliver had to wait. After some minutes, the messenger was sent to Urtles, and Fargo learned that Polver was waiting. You were conducted to his office.

"Still a lot of fighting going on at Gildegulch," Fargo said. "Looks like the orcs are getting the worst of it now. So says Captain Leadfoot. The question is, of course, what next? Are they going to attack elsewhere too? Was this a diversion? Orcs ain't real smart, but whoever is commanding them is likely not an orc. Maybe a half orc, maybe someone else. Could be aimed west or southwest, especially now that the hobgoblins aren't at Guardway anymore. Triggerman's put a hold on my sending you people to Ovenberg. For now. But keep yourselves ready. Could need you to go to Topaltown or Sundown or on a scouting trip north from here up towards The Crag." Fargo looked at Oliver, then said, "Felicity is off probation. If you need someone else, let me know. Serious danger, orcs are."

Sunday evening Fargo appeared in the tavern and walked over to where the party was gathered for dinner. He says, "I want you lot to remain here and available. Stay in town. I'm going to pay you a Sovereign a day for that. So no running off to Selleze or Gildegulch or somewhere. In case something comes up. I don't really expect it, but could happen. We are still not sure that the orcs have expended themselves. Should know in a few days. The Rangers are supposed to be checking on things off to the north and east. Any questions?"

Doil asks, "starting with today? You paying expenses too?"

Fargo answers, "Yes. And no. Pay for your own bunk. That Sovereign per day should be enough to live on. I'm not putting you up at the Platinum Palace."

Experience, Training to this point: No changes. The training time to this point remains the same since the two days of stormy weather (training) lost before the solstice were made up for by the most recent Friday and Saturday.

Monday, June 26th: light breeze (from NW); In Guarddraw (training)

5. Monday passes with nothing much happening. There is good weather for training, and the Arena is a busy place. Workers are putting away the platforms and other paraphernalia from the games. The area is very muddy from the swimming competition pool from which all the water has been let out. Still, lots of pairs are sparring, occasionally getting muddy in the process. The archers have to be careful with their keeping an eye out for unwary people. There's lots of talk about what's going on at Gildegulch but nobody really seems to know. It's all speculative. The Grey Cloaks probably got there to help first, followed within a day by the Skewers and Steel Boots from Tonstol.

Tuesday, June 27th: light breeze (from W); In Guarddraw (training)

6. Pretty much the same as Monday: still no definitive word back. A large convoy is being organized to travel to Gildegulch carrying foodstuffs. Polecat and his party has been hired to escort it. They are there in the tavern too, but pretty much have nothing to do with Oliver's party. (The Gorilla doesn't seem to be with them.) Several of the convoy drivers are staying in the men's bunkroom.

It turns out Redwind is still in town. (Dwarf Tf) You didn't see her for a couple of days. She seems to still be on good terms with Doil, but they are not sharing a room. She had expected to join a convoy to Orctown, but that's been preempted by this one being gathered to be sent to Gildegulch. She's going to try to join Polecat's party in order to get paid for that.

Still no reliable news from Gildegulch or other points about what's going on with the orcs.

Wednesday, June 28th: breeze, partly cloudy (from W); In Guarddraw (training)

7. Word came in last night: Orcs still are there, but being pushed back. There had been claims of killing hundreds of orcs, but scant evidence. Maybe a hundred. The orcs are not quite fighting like orcs usually do. Not in big masses. Of course, that may be because of the terrain. Apparently they are falling back toward the north, and no longer a direct threat to the towns. That's the report.

The supply convoy left early in the morning, several other wagons, empties, straggle in during the day. The drivers are from the several military companies fighting the orcs, and they are looking for food and rations and the like to buy. You hear other wagons are visiting other towns and villages doing the same thing.

Fargo comes by your table that evening and says, "The Rangers report that there are orcs in the area north of Topaltown, at Guardway and at some of those ruins further south. Not being particularly aggressive though. So, it doesn't look like we are about to have a crisis from that direction. Also, a messenger just reported that Captain Ironfist is sending the Grey Cloak Scouts back here. A company from Aahfundit has replaced them. They bore the brunt of the early fighting, aside from the guards and militia in Gildegulch, that is. So, expect to stay here until the Grey Cloaks get back, then you'll probably be off to help Lord Ovenberg. Probably Friday."

Thursday, June 29th: light breeze (N), partly cloudy; in Guarddraw (training)

8. Most of the day continues to be routine, but in the late afternoon the Grey Cloak Scouts march back into town. There's a lot of celebration. Military order dissolves as they pass through the gate to be greeted by friends, families and lovers. There are men missing. Of the twenty or so that marched out, only a dozen are back, including the commander Lt. Tabard. Father Abelard, the unit chaplain, is there too, and speaks to the women who were looking for someone who didn't return. Some are healing in Gildegulch, but four are dead from the battle.

That evening Fargo comes to the table and tells Oliver, "Tomorrow, go to Torquis to help Lord Ovenberg. He's paying us for your help. I'm paying two Sovereigns per day plus 5 Ducats per day to cover lodging expenses. Starting tomorrow when you depart. I expect he will have you lodge in the tavern. They shouldn't charge more than that. As I understand it, his main concern is goblins. They have been ambushing people and especially convoys on the road. They shoot the animals, then plunder wagons that have

to be left behind. They typically run when confronted by force. Best thing to do is probably to find where they hole up and wipe them out there. Wish I had a ranger to give you. But I don't. Decent rangers are hard to find. Come back and report to me within two weeks or so."

Friday, June 30th: breeze (SE), partly cloudy; in Guardraw (travel to Torquis)

9. Oliver's party departed Guardraw at a normal pace. It's about 24 miles to Torquis (which is about 16 miles West of Tonsol). The party included Oliver, Atreyus, Veylann, Doil, Belfor, Slippa, Elsepheth, Felicity and Brother Sheth, who Oliver asked to go. Oliver asked Brother Sheth, "What is your opinion of the red vapor thing, and what do you know about it?"

Brother Sheth is skeptical. "Why red? Doesn't correspond to anything I know about. Anything incorporeal would be colorless, I'd think. What would it be, ghost? Banshee? Spectre? Shadow? Nothing makes sense."

10. As the party passed through Tonsol, a young woman gave chase, calling out to Oliver, "yoo hoo!" She was holding out something that she seemed to be trying to give to him. But the party was faster and started to outdistance her. So, she tossed it to him. Something on a string. "I love you, Oliver!" she called out.

But, then the party had to stop for the bridge. The tolltaker and his two goon enforcers were blocking the way over the river. The girl must have picked the thing up and caught up with Oliver, and pressed it into his hand. Oliver looked at it.

"It will help you!" she said.

The charm is made out of wood, looks a bit like a coin. has a heart on it, and maybe lip prints on the back. There's a string so it can be worn like a pendant.

Oliver thanked her.

With another "I love you, Oliver!" she fled back to the spot at the end of the bridge where Tonsol is, holding her arms together and watching, focused on Oliver.

Oliver asked Slippa if she had any idea who that was. She didn't. Then it came to Oliver that he had seen her at the solstice party in Guardraw. So, yes, not a complete stranger, but pretty close to that.

The tolltaker wanted one Sovereign per person. So Oliver paid up, and the party moved on. There were no other events on the way to Torquis. The party got there in late afternoon. The sun was still up.

11. The gates were opened for the party to enter, and one of the guards said, "If you are looking for the tavern, just continue straight; it's on the right." When Oliver got to the Torquis Inn, as the sign said, he and the party went in. It was a small tavern, with about a dozen locals there for supper. Bartender Bourbon is also the proprietor. Barmaid is Hilda. Two rooms, and a single bunkroom (sleeps 6) 5D per night

About then a cleric came in and offered his help. He's a cleric of St. Hosea's Church of Prophecy in Torquis. Brother Nickelsworth. He assists Father Festus.

Brother Sheth introduced himself, and asked what kind of church is it? Church of Prophecy and all. It is, he trusts, of the Way of the Cross. Right?

Nickelsworth answered, Yes, they are of The Way of the Cross, of course. Dedicated to helping the people of Torquis and environs. Really, People of Torquis. Not many stay outside the walls, such as they are, at night.

Nickelsworth said, "There's also a Brother Gabe, and a Sister Hannah, who assist Father Festus." Then he asked, "You are here for some reason, or just passing through?"

Oliver said, "Yes we are here to see about some goblins, and maybe some red vaporous mist."

Nickelsworth understands that goblins have been a problem. Sneaky little bastards. There have been occasional stories, hardly very credible, of some sort of red vaporous thing that appears at night. Seems to attack, but then goes away. That was what he heard. You ought to report to the Palace, such as it is. Lord Ovenberg. He might not be available, but both his assistants are very capable and should be able to help you.

Slippa proposes that she take a room with Oliver, Elsapheth and Felicity the other room, and the men (other than Oliver) in the bunkroom. Unless the party is invited to stay in the palace.

Nobody else lodging in the inn. About a dozen locals are there to take supper.

One, who was listening, said, "Them goblins are a problem. Hard to keep animals outside the town at night. That's why you don't want to be standing in the gate sunup or sundown. That's when they all get driven in or out. In, I'd say, right about now.

Sure enough, you start to here braying, cattle mooing, and all sorts of animal noises outside and often some animal or another, maybe with someone chasing, pass down the street in front of the tavern. Sheep, cattle, horses, mules, geese, goats.... At least a hundred or more. It's at least half an hour that this is going on. Then it quiets down.

Someone else suggests, "If you're going to be in and out, make sure someone authorizes the gate guards to open the gate if you happen to get back from goblin hunting late. Otherwise they won't let you in."

The party gets supper. Comes with the lodging (somewhat better for those in the two rooms).

Nickelsworth departs to tell Father Festus about your being here. He again says you ought to check in at the palace.

Oliver answered, "Well do that when it's the appropriate time."

Bartender Bourbon tells you, "I heard tell of those red things. One merchant through here said he saw one, out west somewhere along the road when he camped overnight. Closer to here than Ripeview, it seems to me he said. Not far from that Hornberg place that the Nomads claim is theirs.

"By the way, if you need supplies of various sorts, ordinary stuff, I mean, you can get it at Merchant Torqwrench's general store. He can supply you with rations cheaper than I can, and he's got tarpaulins, even tents, ropes, oil, and stuff you might need. He might even buy the crappy stuff the goblins use, their shortbows and the like. Might not pay much, but a silver's better than nothing.

Oliver tried to see Lord Ovenberg late Friday. Mister Tweedlum, who answered the door, said it was too late to disturb His Lordship, and suggested you come the next morning. The third hour would be convenient

Saturday, July 1st: windy (N); in Torquis

12. Oliver and the rest of the party headed back over to the Palace in the morning.

Mr. Twidlee meets you at the door and says, "His Lordship is expecting you." (All of the party) The party was conducted into what must be a dining room, but it seems relatively small for a Lord's keep. Lord Ovenberg is there finishing his breakfast. "Ah, Twidlee. These must be the people Grantt sent over to help with the goblin problem."

"So it would seem, My lord," Twidlee answers, then nods to you (Oliver). Oliver introduces the party.

Oliver replied, "Yes, and the red vapors."

Lord Ovenberg said, "Well. I'm most concerned about the goblins. They have been attacking people. And animals. They shoot to wound and cripple the animals, and some poor merchant, even if he and his people escape the arrows, well, they can't carry everything on their backs. The goblins come back later and loot what gets left behind. Have killed people sometimes. Not good for business. Seems these goblins have come up from the south. But they must be using caves or whatnot to hide in. More of those north of the road. Those red things, if they exist at all, don't seem to have killed anyone. Can't really be sure, you know. Sometimes someone, some poor traveler, just disappears."

Oliver replied, "We can look into the goblins first. Do you have anyone available who knows the area well or where any goblin trails may be?"

Just about then a young man, teenager it would seem, comes in. "Who are these people, Father?"

Lord Ovenberg says, "Here to help. Goblin business." He turns to you and says, "This is Xorrace, my son."

Xorrace turns to his father and says, "I thought you were going to let me be in charge of hunting the goblins!"

Lord Ovenberg turns to you and says, "Xorrace here isn't really ready to do this himself yet. That's why I asked Lord Grantt for help..."

He might have gone on, but Xorrace says, "You don't trust me, huh? Well, I'll show you." he stomps off.

Lord Ovenberg sort of waves his hand. "Don't let Xorrace concern you. He will grow up in time. But, I don't want him going out and getting killed by goblins. Uh, you wouldn't happen to be willing to take him along with you, would you? Some experience would do him good."

Ovenberg continues, saying, "The goblins are rather new to the area, just since winter. Guess they've been breeding and want more room. And other stuff. Likely to be in caves. No, I don't have any rangers or anyone like that. I expect when you find goblin tracks, you can follow them back to where they hole up. Most of the attacks have been closer to here than to Tonstol, mostly within maybe 5 miles to the east."

Oliver answered, "Yes he can come along, as long as he follows orders and stays in the back." Oliver prepared to leave, the party with him.

Lord Ovenberg turned to Mister Twidlee and said, "Twidlee, would you convey that to young Xorrace? Tell him to meet them at the gate. I don't want to waste any more of their time here." He then turns to you and asks, "Do you have any other questions?"

Oliver and the others stopped by the tavern to get everything they plan on taking with them.

Experience, Training: Not yet.

Money: Oliver +30 gp for contests. (Carry party goods – tents, etc. against future treasure)