

synopsis

The party finds the fairy Circle in Lofton Castle, where the fairy king Aurelian and queen Aurora tell them the harpies are working for the Hollin Coven. Aurelian and Aurora say that one Coven witch, Laurel, is a fairy changeling and doesn't know it. The party goes to Cankerblossom's Black Cabaret hoping to find Laurel there, but instead finds the two surviving harpy Duchesses of the Wake, Hecate and Ursula. Casca throws down on the Duchesses and the party kills Ursula after a chaotic fight.

in more detail

warmup

We discussed why, in-game, Wendy's human character Casca might mysteriously have immunity to sleep and charm. She gave us a little more character background, saying Casca might be a changeling. Wendy says Casca woke up in the forest and had all her gear and clothes but doesn't yet know who she is. "Casca" was scrawled across her equipment so that's what she's been calling herself. She met some merchants on the road, traded some herbs with them and she went into town with them.

We discussed with Keith where the monument that Hughe maintains would be. He said it's in Braddock the city wall that separates Braddock from the City of the Dead. We similarly discussed where the orphanage that Hughe supports might be, and Keith that Hughe is maybe or maybe not actually doing that.

the game

The party leaves the Chapel of Ajana in Dunham and heads out for the fairy Circle in Lofton, with Gregor and Barley. They get a little walking tour of Hollin travelling from Dunham to Braddock to the Thoroughkill Bridge:

To go from Dunham to Lofton, you can take Mendes Street from the Roundabout north to Quay Street, then follow Quay Street along the riverside to Market Street in Braddock. Along Quay Street in Dunham, you see the hectic Admiralty shipyards. There, a dozen ships under construction tower over the street, including the Admiralty's new flagship, Harbinger. The shipyards are industry on a modern scale. You know that, if needed, the shipyards can focus to build and launch an entire common warship in one day

As you follow Quay Street out of Dunham into Braddock, commercial docks and warehouses replace the shipyards. People here seem to be more working class, including lots of foreign sailors, and peddlers catering to them. Here you see the Stiles

and the Intractable, which are asylum and prison hulks respectively, that have been berthed here since before memory.

You reach the intersection of Quay and Market in Braddock, which is the heart of Hollin. From here Market Street goes south past the open market, called the Shambles, and the ancient Mooncalf hotel, eventually leading to the City of the Dead. Market Street also goes north to the old town, Lofton, crossing the river on a high pedestrian bridge.

As you turn north on Market and cross the bridge, at the high midpoint, you can look down into Lofton - an old medieval town now reclaimed by forest. Among the overgrowth you can still make out that Market Street continues north through Lofton, and is crossed by another major avenue that leads west to the abandoned Lofton Castle. It looks like about 2 miles from the bridge where you are. In the distance, Lofton is bordered on the north by two high granite cliffs, one on your left and one on your right.

The continued on Market Street into Lofton, then turned left on the east-west thoroughfare leading to Lofton Castle. About a quarter-mile from the castle, they met Gerty and Thelonious, two street urchins from Braddock looking for herbs (wormwood and love-in-idleness) to sell to the apothecary Chambers back in town. As the party is talking with Gerty and Thelonious, they see a silvermote emerging from the ground as part of the 17-year silvermote brood:

On the ground off the road but nearby, you see a red insect about an inch long crawling out of the ground, struggling to do so. It has a narrow forebody with six black legs, and a more bulbous rear section. It climbs a few feet up a tree's trunk, then seems to attach itself there, and then moult. Its skin breaks apart and a silver bug emerges. The red shell left behind is kind of creepy, it's a skin shell that looks like a complete dead insect, with its own legs and everything.

This first silvermote attacked the party (Casca?), and as Casca was dealing with it, several more silvermotes emerged from the ground and attacked the party. The party soon realized the entire 17-year-brood was emerging from the ground and filling Lofton forest. Hughe grabbed Gerty and Thelonious and they ran for the castle gate.

Pushing through the castle gate, they were alarmed to find in the castle's outer keep courtyard that dryads were attacking Admiralty lumberjacks who were cutting down the biggest oak in the courtyard. Casca loosed a blast at one lumberjack (hoping to earn the dryad's sympathy?), then the party skirted the out keep wall to get to the inner courtyard gate without fighting.

Once inside the inner courtyard, they found a large circle of very large mushrooms - a fairy circle - and the Circle soon materialized out of the air, including human-sized fairies including the fairy king and queen Aurelian and Aurora, some tinkerbelle-type fairies, and some little-person-sized [brownie](#) fairies.

Feeling safe from the silvermotes inside the inner keep, they talked with Aurelian and Aurora. A&A bowed low to Barley and showed him great respect. A&A told the party:

- Harpies are “from hell” but there’s an intersection between the world and hell in the right-hand cliffside above Lofton; this cliffside is where the harpy eerie is, where the harpies reside. They say there are as many harpies there as there are silvermotes in the 17-year brood.
- Harpies stealing changeling were probably working for the Hollin Coven, the fairies’ eternal enemies; and that the Coven keeps very well hidden and the only Coven place the fairies know of is the Monument of Ulm in Braddock.
- But, they said there is a pale-skinned, red-haired witch in the Coven, Laurel, who was a fairy changeling and didn’t know it. They said that Laurel had reportedly been seen a few times at the Black Cabaret in Braddock.
- If the harpies / coven are now systematically finding / stealing changelings in the city, maybe they have finally created a Detect Fey spell, which would be a turning point in the millenniums-long war between the Circle and the Coven. The lich Ishild was working on a Detect Fey spell for centuries while hidden in the Mooncalf hostel.

The players discussed whether to try to go to the harpy Eerie but decided to try to find Laurel first, and decided to look for her at the Black Cabaret first.

They went into Braddock and had some lunch at the Mooncalf. They asked barkeep there where the Black Cabaret would be and he said it’s in a different place each time, but tends to be in seedy underground type places; the barkeep did see some costumed little-people carried some stretches full of food east past the Mooncalf, so they might have been going to the Cabaret’s location for the evening. He said Kasskar who lived in the Mooncalf might be able to tell them more (and I believe they already had Kasskar on their radar because the fairies told them Kasskar knew about the lich Ishild).

The visited Kasskar at his mooncalf room. He told them he didn’t know where the Black Cabaret was going to be that night but that the Whipsaw bar, where there’s normally an underground bare-knuckle boxing ring, was the “kind of place” it might be. Kasskar said it was to the east, so consistent with what the barkeep told them.

They decided to wait until midnight to go to the whipsaw / cabaret, but with Rowan going early at 10:00 to check it out. At 10:00 Rowan was able to get a table for the party near the stage, but she was unrecognized. When the Hughe, Beale, and Casca came in, the Cabaret MC Cankerblossom recognized Hughe as a regular, and seeing that Beale was a bard, told them that he would give the party information if Beale could best him in a performance competition on stage.

Beale roundly beat Cankerblossom in the performance. Cankerblossom told him that Laurel wasn’t there that evening, but pointed out two beautiful women at a table near the stage, spinning their charms on a young unsuspecting man. Beale recognized them as the two girls

who'd left their fight Chapel of Ajana the night before and Cankerblossom told him that there were Duchesses of the Wake, harpy arch-duchesses who ruled the harpies in hell; and that those two Duchesses were Hecate and Ursula.

Casca went to the Duchesses's table and threw it over, demanding to know what the Duchesses were doing with "her boyfriend." The Duchesses back up from the table then attacked; with Hecate turning invisible and escaping. Ursula summoned a devil and two imps (like Golnaz had at the chapel). A couple of tinkerbelle-type fairies appeared and killed the two imps; the party killed the devil and captured Ursula. On Ursula's body they found the Girdle of the Cool Appraising Stare and when they took it off of her, she reverted from the beautiful to a grotesque harpy.

They interrogated Ursula, who told them the the harpies were working for the Coven in exchange for the Ring of Greater Pulchritude, the Girdle of the Cool Appraising Stare, and a similar broach. They then discussed whether to release Ursula as a gesture of goodwill, but Rowan stepped in and killed her.

The party planned next to go to the Monument of Ulm.