

synopsis

Laurel tells the party that Astrid is also the Company Board's Advocate, Lena, and they corner her at the Grand Council Palace. Astrid turns Laurel against the party, but they kill Astrid and recover the Penance Stone. They find the lich Ishild and convince him to bury Fey Extinction Event in exchange for Word Without Warning, the Circle's assassination spell. Ishild reveals Casca's background as his fairy test subject, and that "casca" is his cypher word, not her name.

warmup

- +1 inspiration to Carrie for playing along with the paranoia, adapting backstory to it
- +1 inspiration to Keith for saving the party with his Minor Illusion

game

harpies

We discussed the logistics of how the party would scale back up the cliff. They'd come down on one rope, so Rowan climbed up that rope; Hughe climbed that rope while Rowan sent down two more ropes.

Of the three ropes, they tied Gertie and Thelonious to two of them and pulled them up, while Beale went up the third, while Laurel, Aurora, and Aurelian waited below. At this point, two harpies appeared from other holes in the cliffside; one attacked with a Sleep song, which Beale countered with Counterpoint; and one attacked Rowan and Hughe on the mountaintop. After one round the harpies were driven off and went to get more harpies to help.

In a few more rounds, the fairies scurried up the ropeds and ran for cover in the forest on the mountaintop, as a swarm of harpies appeared to search for them. They hurried through the forest and evaded the harpies's with the help of Hughe's Pass Without Trace.

Company families

Back at Market Street in Lofton, the party decided to return the changeling children Flora and Luna to their parents, the Hollinsheds and the Shaws, and drop Gertie and Thelonious off in Braddock on the way. The Hollinsheds were thrilled to have their child back and asked if they could do anything for the party; the party said no. Similarly the Shaws were thrilled to have their child back and asked if they could do anything for the party. The party asked the Shaws if they could use a room in their house to short rest and plan; and asked for some wine and cheese. The party decided not to tell either family that their children were changelings, and advised the

families to take their children out of the city for a few or several days, in case the harpies came back. The party didn't revisit the Volsteads.

Great Council Palace

The party discussed what to do next. They wanted to find Astrid before the Fey Extinction Event, and Beale suggested asking Laurel where she might be (+1 inspiration for Beale). They rolled well on Persuasion, and Laurel told them:

Carver House is a Hollin trading house that controls the import of guano. The Admiralty uses guano to make gunpowder, so Carver House has become very wealthy and even has a seat on the Anhalt Charter Company board. Carver House's board member is named Lena. Lena's current role on the board is the Advocate, who can call a trial on anyone in Hollin.

However, Carver House has long been controlled by the Coven, and Lena is actually Astrid.

The board's weekly meeting is right now, so if you hurry to the Great Council Palace in Dunham, you might find Lena/Astrid there.

So, the party headed to the Great Council Palace. They scoped it out, but didn't see anyone coming or going from it. They sat down at the Glitterglobe coffee shop on the Palace Square to have some cake pops and beignets while they watched the Palace's grand entrance.

After an hour or 1.5 hours, they hadn't seen anyone come or go from the grand entrance, so Casca and Beale turned invisible and scouted the Great Council Chamber inside, and the sides and rear of the building. Inside the building, Beale went to the second floor and listened at the one door he found there, and though he heard a few words suggesting a mundane meeting; the speakers seemed close to the door so maybe it was a small room.

In the rear, Rowan found that there was a everyday-looking man loitering on one corner of the building and also noticed that there was a second floor overhang in the back of the building. Soon she saw an official, naval-looking man exit from a secret door on the corner, and the everyday-looking man made for him and reclosed the secret door after he left.

The party approached the everyday-looking man and Casca charmed him. He started to tell Casca some information about his job, but three more men who'd been surveilling the secret door from the overhang came out of the secret door and dressed him down; but the party quickly subdued them (in a non-combat combat) and tied them up under a spiral staircase inside the secret door.

They went in a first floor door and found it was an upscale room and office with access to the back of the lion's mouth.

They went upstairs and found a long hallway with 5 doors and another spiral stair at the end. They listened at the 5 doors and only heard noise behind one of them, which they concluded was the same room that Beale had already listened in on another door. Still invisible, Beale/Casca opened the door a little and saw that it was the Board room, and that the Master of Revels was updating the board on his search for the Black Cabaret and for the second-to-last Master of Revels, who seemed to be missing.

The party waited for the meeting to finish; they saw Astrid come out with a man (Durer, the head of the Security Service), go down the hallway, and go into the fifth door. The party burst in on Astrid and Durer and attacked.

Durer attacked with two mundane swords and Astrid attacked with witch-craft type spells like Hex and Hellish Rebuke. Astrid cast Detect Fey which lit up Casca, which threatened Fey Extinction Event, and prompted Casca to move out of sight into the hallway. Astrid also used Persuasion to convince Laurel to come back to her side and attack the party, which Laurel did. However, the party beat Durer and Astrid, with Casca delivering the final blow to Astrid with Witch Bolt. They let Laurel live.

During the battle, they found the Penance Stone and took it.

Ishild

Initially Hughe wanted to take the Penance Stone and return it to the Chapel of Ajana, but Casca said she wanted to hold onto it until they'd wiped out any remaining knowledge of Fey Extinction Event.

Casca knew from decoding the Fey Extinction Event that Ishild was the author; they went to Kasskar who told them that his former colleague Aeris had given Ishild the Hollin Oracle / Grimoire 17 years ago, and that nothing had been heard from the Oracle since then. So possible Ishild was there. They told them that the Oracle / Grimoire had been hidden under Gramercy Books in Braddock.

They went to Gramercy Books and it looked like it had been abandoned for a long time. They found their way downstairs, through the 10 levels of the Grimoire, where they saw many disturbing, stunted, translucent, hostile, monster-looking people in cages.

At the bottom, they found the grotesque lich Ishild relaxing in a chair and smoking a cigar. He was thinking aloud that each reflection in a puddle or lake is actually a slightly different, fey copy of our world; and that left-handed people in Hollin actually come from those reflected worlds. He then noticed the party, and asked Casca, "You're back!"

Casca and Ishild discussed how he'd kept in a cage for 400 years to develop Detect Fey and Fey Extinction Event, then when he'd developed them, he Mind Wiped her and dumped her in the Lofton Undergrowth so the Silvermote Brood could eat her. He said since that didn't happen, he should have just thrown her off the Thoroughkill Bridge like Cankerblossom had told him to.

He said that she had no name and that when he wanted to address her during the 400 years, he'd just bang on her cage with his cane and shout "Hey you!" He said Casca wasn't a name, it was just the random letters he used to encode Detect Fey and Fey Extinction Event. What would she call herself going forward? She said the first thing she saw when she woke up in the forest was a waterfall / cascade, so she'd go with "Cascade."

Casca asked what the monsters were. Ishild said that hundreds of years before, naturalists in Hollin had discovered that if you selectively bred foxes for aggressiveness, then after a few generations they became very hostile. He tried to do the same with people, but they time to adolescence was too long, so he instead started selectively breeding people for shorter times to adolescence, and over a few hundred years he got it down to 2-3 years, but that also made the people the unsightly monsters they saw. He said with the 2-3 year breeding time, he could then also select them for aggressiveness, which was protruding extremely hostile monsters.

Casca asked what deal they could make for Ishild to forget Fey Extinction Event. She suggested he selectively mindwipe himself, which Ishild declined. She gave him the fairy assassination spell that Aurora had given the party to bargain with, and Ishild accepted it with glee, saying it was the Circle's "Word Without Warning" spell he'd long sought. Casca asked what guarantee they could get that he wouldn't reproduce Fey Extinction Event and he offered to expose to the Circle the locations of three more Caliphate gods in Hollin, so that he and the Circle would have leverage on each other, a sort of Mexican standoff. After some discussion / convincing, the party accepted this although they weren't necessarily really convinced.

after the campaign

Wendy said after the campaign, Cascade would spend the next few hundred years creating a Fey Extinction Counterspell to counter Fey Extinction Event if it ever surfaced again.

Beale had asked Ishild if he could seek out history in the Hollin Grimoire, and Ishild said yes, but also suggested that Beale chronicle Ishild's own history. So possibly Beale is doing that after the campaign?

