

## **synopsis**

### *Game 1 - No Fighting in Church*

Faile, Gwynnith, Modalye Grellen, Roland Gray, and Vesper Cotton discover two babies have been kidnapped in Dunham. They save a third baby from a strange woman who's actually a harpy disguised by the Ring of Greater Pulchritude, and who's working for "Astrid." Investigating the theft of the Penance Stone at the Chapel of Ajana, they're attacked by three wire-fu-fighting women who disparage Roland as Tiberius Gray's "brat." The party defeats the women, and one says she's also working for Astrid.

## **players, characters**

The players and their characters are:

- Carissa: Faile (pronounced "Fa-yeel")
- Karen: Gwynnith
- Nick: Modalye Grellen (pronounced "Mod-a-lie")
- Rob: Vestor Cotton
- Scott: Roland Gray

## **warmup**

The players introduced their characters and themselves. My notes:

Carissa (Faile): warlock, wanderer, wandering around many towns for a while, kind of an orphan. Searching for things, Hollin is her current town she's been traveling around. Real life: Carissa, worked with Dennis for a couple years, Magic Leap, software eng. Haven't played 5e before, ran 4th, am familiar with second edition. So, some experience with DMing.

Karen (Gwynnith): Scott's wife. Last time we saw Dennis Jacob was a toddler and he's now at the University of Pittsburgh. Started out as a gaming wife, but now a full fledged gamer. Work at U Pitt, com and marketing writer for IT. Character is Gwynnith, opposite of an orphan, oldest of 9 kids, quite poor, she set out to work on Market Street, works in a weapons shop sweeping and dealing with customers, owner took a liking to her and gave her a sword. Imagines an adventurer one day, looking for adventure, building a reputation as scrappy fighter. Is a good member of an adventuring party, wants to get out of Hollin.

Nick (Modalye): Web developer in Chicago. Modalye Grellin, human late 20s, mid 30s, pendant of leaf with elven inscription, spends most of his time outside the city with other rangers, has an owl close by.

Scott (Roland Gray): Other half of Team Beaudway, started gaming with Dennis in college a while ago. Out of touch so this is fun. Roland Gray, born as a poor person in Hollin, on the streets, stayed out of gangs largely, was eventually taken in by a wizard who taught him some basic magic, now lives in Hollin as a private investigator. Solve people's problems, especially if they have an arcane nature, he's an arcane trickster rogue. Also, has an owl pet, took like a theme, not mechanical reasons. It's a familiar.

Rob (Vesper Cotton): Microbiologist, cancer therapies at U. Miss in Columbia. Character is Vesper Cotton, he is a second son of a very minor noble house, got nothing in inheritance, got sent away first to seminary but found it too boring, he ended up jumping into being a church liaison with the Hollin navy, field medic / cleric, sailed with the navy for a couple years, pirate problems, now there's a lull, so reassigned to be a harbor medic dealing with sailors coming back and treats their injuries, cures their conditions. So, he's basically in his mid 20's. Very worn naval uniform, has some wear. Trident and holy symbol which he wears around his neck. He's in between posts, so sitting around curing sailors that come in...limbs treated, venereal diseases cured. Because he is the son of a minor noble, he just has the name, so he's used for retinues if the church or navy meet each other, to slightly increase the prestige of those groups. So, now he's basically working as the surgeon for all the sailors that come into port.

I asked Karen a few questions: whether Gwynnith's parents were still alive, and she said yes, Gwynnith is young so they're still alive. And, the weapons shop where she works, would that be the existing Winter Wolf or another one? Karen said the Winter Wolf was fine.

I asked Scott about the map he had and I think he said or implied it was one that Roland had made himself from years of living in Hollin.

I asked if people wanted to buy anything else before the game started, e.g., healing potions and a few or everyone said they'd like to get some headline potions. I said they could buy them at Chambers the Apothecary.

### **game**

I said that Dunham was Hollin's administrative district, where the Anhalt Charter Company has its buildings and also the upscale trading houses ("Meade Street") have their offices and fine houses. Besides Roland, what might the characters be doing there around dusk?

- Carissa: she might be at the tavern relaxing.
- Gwynnith: delivering something that has been commissioned to its upscale buyer.

- Modalye: Probably tons of things. Cover for being there would be that his owl isn't eating well, looking for a vet.
- Rob: There to treat a naval lieutenant, but after going to get beer.

For Scott: Roland Gray is at home in his rickety apartment building in Braddock a half hour before dusk. An errand boy arrives and asks if he's Roland Gray...the Roland Gray who investigates lost items and magical matters? Two days ago there was a theft at the Chapel of Ajana in Dunham, and the Night Watch hasn't been able to find anything. Could Roland come right away?

Travelogue from Roland's to the Dunham Roundabout, near the Chapel:

To get to the Chapel of Ajana, Roland leaves his rickety office/apartment and goes north on Market Street a few blocks, to the river and the intersection with Quay Street. In the square there, fruit, vegetable, and animal mongers are packing up for the day, and sailors and girls are starting to mix it up at the Mooncalf tavern on the square.

The Osborne Bridge crosses the river to Lofton there, but instead Roland takes a left onto Quay Street. He walks past the commercial docks, where longshoremen work twenty-four hours a day. Quay street here is choked with all sorts of pedestrians - like longshoremen and shipbuilders. Many are relevelers, like two curious men in the two halves of a horse costume taking a stretcher of food to a celebration somewhere. You also pass Gregor the Naturalist's home/lab, on the south side of Quay across from the docks, and you actually see Gregor hoisting some lab animals in cages up to the third story window of his house on a pulley.

As Roland leaves the district of Braddock, the commercial docks turn into construction yards and partially finished ships tower overhead, including the Admiralty's new flagship, Harbinger.

Just as the Admiralty's Morning Star Observatory comes into view, Roland takes a left onto Ballard Street and heads south into Dunham. Ballard street is lined with beautiful two- and three-story townhomes. The townhomes have fine marble facades that come right up to the sidewalk, and wrought iron balconies looking out on the street.

Roland comes up on a hectic intersection that locals just call the Roundabout, which is a English-style roundabout where horsemen, horse-drawn carriages, and horse-drawn carts enter at speed and then negotiate inside the circle to exit. It looks wild and potentially dangerous.

As Roland reaches the Roundabout, he suddenly hears a frightened woman above him, shouting "Luna! Luna!" He looks up and sees a young woman, frantically looking every which way from the balcony right above him. Then she runs downstairs and out into the street where Roland is, still shouting "Luna! Luna!"

The woman ran toward the Roundabout and the entire party could now see her. Faile and Vesper made DC 10 Insight rolls to realize that the woman was out of her head and would run into the roundabout and get hit. But, both failed Athletics checks to grab her, and she ran into the Roundabout and was hit by a horse-drawn carriage, and was thrown back out of the roundabout unconscious. But Vesper rolled 25 on Medicine and revived her.

The party aggressively questioned the woman in the street. She said she was Mia Hollinshed and her baby Luna had just gone missing. Gwynnith asked what Luna was wearing and Mia said a red jumper and she had blond hair (details that Karen suggested as a parent. :)) Roland sent out his owl to look around the streets for a baby like that.

After some more questioning, Mia said that she was being careful because the Shaw baby Flora was kidnapped last night, so she was being careful to stay by Luna's crib but she still fell asleep and when she woke up, Luna was gone. (And at some point mentioned that both the Hollinsheds and Shaws sat on the Anhalt Charter Company Board.) Faile suggested they talk to the Shaws, but Modalye suggested they investigate Mia's house first. The party asked if there were any scratches on the door (no), Carissa asked if there was any magical presence (no), and Vesper asked if she ate or drank anything weird before falling asleep (no).

Modalye went up stairs to look at the crib, and found that the 2nd floor balcony door was open. Roland found a very large feather, and asked if he could identify it. No, although it did smell, maybe like urine or an unwashed animal.

Gwynnith said it was weird that Luna didn't raise holy hell when someone tried to take her. Could the feather smell be like ether or something like that? No.

Roland asked if there were claw marks on the balcony, and he did find some. Modalye asked if there was anything in the sky? No. Vesper asked if there was anything perched on the roofs nearby? No.

Gwynnith asked Mia if they had any enemies - any problems with anyone, and Carissa asked if in her research if Faile would know something about the Company. Mia said that the Company Board was kind of like the politburo, there was a lot of finger pointing and mutual recrimination on the Board, and it was generally a dangerous arena. Vesper asked if someone was trying to pressure the Board members (nothing unusual) was there anything conspicuous happening with the navy (not particularly).

Roland gave the errand boy that originally found him a silver piece to go to the Chapel and tell them he'd been delayed.

They went to the Shaws on the Roundabout and talked briefly with the mother Zoe there. Zoe told them there was one more Board family with a child, the Volsteads who lived opposite from

the Shaws on the Roundabout. The party looked over from the Shaws balcony and noticed the Volsteads' balcony door was open.

Modalye and Roland sent their owls over to the Volsteads' balcony and saw through their owls' eyes that there was a woman leaning over a crib there. They had their owls try to get up in the woman's face and distract her.

In the meantime, the party cut across the Roundabout as quickly as they could without getting injured. Gwynnith used her Acrobatics to climb up the outside of the house and over the balcony, and drew her sword and tried to look intimidating, to block the woman's exit. In response, the woman picked up the baby in one arm. I believe that Vesper also went up the outside of the building, while the rest of the party went into the first floor door and then up to the second floor, where they found a man and a woman asleep on the floor. Faile got her invisible friend (a sprite like a Tinkerbell type) into the action, and tried to hit the women with the sprite's sleep arrow attack (but no success). Modalye muttered some incantations and cast a spell on the woman.

The party fought the woman, who used a song to put Roland to Sleep, and then did a second song that Charmed...**one or two characters but I'm not sure which ones**. The party beat her, with Modalye attacking with crossbow + spell and Faile attacking with Eldritch Blast. Gwynnith attacked the woman with her sword and tried to cut her arm off, which caused the woman to drop the baby - Gwynnith deftly caught the baby then made her 30 foot move to get away from the woman with it. Modalye's lingering spell finished the woman with non-fatal hits. Nick described that spell effect as "green flames, bubbly, and necrotic energy." Roland put manacles on her and Vesper gagged her.

**Q: My notes say that the woman's Sleep song put Nick to sleep but my memory was that Roland went to sleep, and also m yother notes say that Nick continued to attack. Can anyone remember exactly what happened? And then who was Charmed by the woman's second song?**

Gwynnith detected that the ring was magic; Gwynnith and Modalye took it off and when they did, the woman transformed from a beautiful woman into a grotesque harpy.

**The Volsteads thanked them for saving their baby and gave the party 1,000 gp and some snacks.**

Modalye did a Speak with Animals with the harpy and the party interrogated her.

In crude language, the harpy said she was stealing the baby for "Astrid," and to eat the baby, and that harpies were from "the eyrie" and asked multiple times to have the ring back and to be let go, and offered to sell out another harpy if they let her go and gave her the ring back. After a while the party did let the harpy go but kept the ring. The harpy flew off the balcony; Roland and Modale and Faile had their owls and sprite follow her but she didn't go directly anything,

instead she flew out of Roland's view over the rooftops and then went from rooftop to rooftop for a while.

They took a short rest and Faile used that hour to identify the ring.

- Ring of Greater Pulchritude:
- A plain electrum ring.
- Cast Friends 1x/day.
- Cast Charm Person 1x/day.
- The bearer gains the Diplomat skill feat (<http://dnd5e.wikidot.com/feat:diplomat>).
- Wearer can Disguise Self as long as it's wearing the ring.
- The bearer can speak and understand Common. ("Language. The bearer can speak and understand a language of the DM's choice while the item is on the bearer's person" DM guide page 143.)

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Since the harpy wasn't immediately going anywhere informative, Roand said he had an existing engagement and would go to the Chapel of Ajana; the rest of the party joined him.

On the way they stopped by the tavern that Faile and Vesper were originally going to in Dunham, to talk to the Night Watch there. The Night Watch captain said he didn't know any Astrid but they suggested talking to Gregor the Naturalist about harpies.

Arriving at the Chapel:

The Chapel of Ajana is a whitewashed brick building, two stories high. It's more modest than the marble-facade townhomes around it.

Inside the Chapel:

Just inside the Chapel's Ballard Street doors, there's an empty wooden pedestal standing to one side. The party might note that there's a dark spot on the floor nearby where maybe the pedestal used to stand.

Otherwise the Chapel is a typical simple church. Two rows of pews fill most of the first floor and look toward an altar and pulpit at the far end. Ten or twelve people are sitting in the pews, contemplating or talking softly. On a second floor above, there's a ring balcony that goes all around, looking down on the first floor.

The Chapel's keeper Merrick is at the altar, using it as a dinner table. Merrick can tell them:

For many centuries, there's been a large obsidian stone, the Penance Stone, sitting on the pedestal at Chapel's entrance. It was a tradition that when people came in, they could touch the stone to dispel guilt or do a silent confession. But the stone was stolen two days ago.

Roland introduced himself to Merrick and I believed they talked about the circumstances of the theft; that often there are people in the Chapel all hours of the day and night, but that night no one was there so Merrick locked up the front door and went to sleep. In the morning he woke up and went to unlock the front door (which was still locked) and found the Penance Stone gone. They talked briefly about the second floor, and that there were windows there, and I think Roland went up and looked around the second floor.

Faile cast Detect Magic near the pedestal, and discovered that two women in the pews had magic pendants on. Those two women got up, along with a third, and confronted the party. They disparagingly said that Roland Gray being there "made sense" because he was Tiberius Gray's "brat." They apologized to Merrick for violating the sanctity of the Chapel because they were going to kill the party.

They draw their weapons showfully, flourish them with a quick swipe, and bow to the party as an invitation to fight. Roll initiative.

One of the women ("A") was wearing a modest, long white cotton dress with a red vest over it and a bonnet, almost like a puritan or a 16th century Elizabethan. The other two woman ("B" and "C") were wearing close black dresses with silver buttons all down the front.

"B" and "C" attacked Karen. They had wire-fu-esque attacks and moves, with one doing a run across the tops of the pews to get to her. "A" did a Crouching-Tiger-type leap up to the second floor balcony to where Roland was and attacked him but failed. Roland Acrobatted down to the first floor and attacked B, and B answered him with Hellish Rebuke (the women generally had Warlock-like attacks.)

Vesper stepped up on B and C, saying "there's no fighting in church," then cast Shatter on them, using his Channel Divinity, Destructive Wrath to maximize the damage. B went down, and Rob described it as:

You see some visual distortion behind them, then she's thrown forward and slams down right in front of Gwynnith's feet. She basically bounces once on the ground and crumples in a ball, and Vesper repeats: "No fighting in church."

Faile's Eldritch Blast brought down "C".

During the fight, Gwynnith asked (I think twice) Modalye about the attackers, if he knew them, but Modalye said no each time.

Modalye Paralyzed "A" and Vesper handcuffed her with Roland's manacles.

There interrogated "A" but she was more resistant than the harpy had been. Roland ridiculed "A" because the three woman were beaten so easily, and got out of her that they were there to attack anyone who came to investigate the Penance Stone. Roland asked why there had it out for Tiberius, he was a good man, and "A" replied that Roland only knew Tiberius as an old man, he didn't know Tiberius's entire story.

Ultimately "A" agreed to give them a name but only if they let her go. After 1 or 2 iterations Roland agreed and "A" gave him the name "Astrid" and they let her go. Roland Gray told her he'd be coming for Astrid.

They found the two magic pendants that Faile's Detect Magic had originally found before the fight, on "A" and "B":

- The Ward of Ajana is a pendant with a finely-crafted electrum figurine, about 2 inches high. The figure basically looks like a little Oscar. The wearer can cast the Shield spell as a reaction 1x/day without using a spell slot.
- The Talisman of Ajana is a pendant with a finely-crafted electrum figurine, about 2 inches high. The figure basically looks like a little Oscar. Gives the wearer +1 to AC.

Rob and Merrick did Religion together and thought the two pendant figurines might be representations of Ajana.

There was some speculation about why Ajana worshippers might attack a chapel of Ajana, with Karen speculating they might be different sects.

Merrick also lent the party:

- Amulet of Ajana's Asylum: the Amulet is a string necklace with a simple iron ring pendant, 1 inch in diameter. The Amulet has been passed down to each Keeper of the Chapel of Ajana since Gradskan times. The wearer can cast Sanctuary 1x/day as a standard or bonus action, or as a reaction. If cast as a reaction, it applies to the triggering attack.

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Gwynnith and Vesper suggested the party go to Gregor the Naturalist next.

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Other: Vesper got an inspiration point for rolling 0 initiative in one of the fights. :) But I'm also going to retroactively award it for "No fighting in church."