

synopsis

Game 2 - The Eyrie - 2021 March 7

The fairy changeling Barley tells the party the kidnapped babies are changelings. In Lofton Forest, the party outruns the seventeen-year silvermote brood and Modalye saves Admiralty lumberjacks from angry dryads. At the fairy Circle, Aurora orders Faile to rescue the babies from the harpy Eyrie, and describes the Hollin Coven, the Drussilan Maven Astrid, and Laurel, a witch who doesn't know she's a fairy. At the Eyrie, the party rescues the babies from a woman - another disguised harpy - and devils wooing her.

warm up

The Talisman of Ajana and the Amulet of Ajana's Asylum from Game 1 were still unclaimed, and I suggested that Modalye take the Talisman, since he had the lowest AC and hits, and that Vesper take the Amulet of Ajana's Asylum, since it fit his character.

I asked if the characters were wearing their magic items, or maybe just putting them on when they needed them. It sounds like characters were wearing them, with Karen and Carissa explicitly saying they'd wear them all the time.

We discussed a little about the Cotton family with Rob. For instance, if they're a prominent family, are they a trading house? Rob said yes, the Cottons historically had grazing land and their retainers would raise cotton, livestock, and wool, but they invested in different trading interests over time and they now trade spices and metals.

We also discussed Vesper's older brother, and Rob said his name was Christopher.

Karen said that Gwyinnith still had a delivery to make for the Winter Wolf, and said it was a ceremonial dagger, so we'd handle that as part of the long rest.

the game

finish up at the Chapel of Ajana

We picked up again at the Chapel of Ajana, still the night that the party had fought the three women there. Vesper had some more detailed questions for the Keeper Merrick, about the Penance Stone - how did the Chapel get it, and was there any event that explains how they go it? Merrick told him no, (metagame) that it was maybe meteoric iron, and so maybe it was brought to the Chapel when it first landed. Vesper asked if the stone had ever done anything strange? No. Was it known to have any actual power? No. Vesper asked about its shape, and we decided it was about the size of a bowling ball and was smooth and pitted like something

that came through the atmosphere. Rob/Vesper suggested that Merrick was stonewalling him, but I said no, there's just not that much to the Stone except the tradition that people touch it to dispel guilt when they come in.

For Roland, with his strong Perception and Investigation:

When the party first came into the Chapel of Ajana in Game 1, they saw the keeper Merrick sitting at the altar using it as a dinner table. Now after taking the electrum Talisman of Ajana and the electrum Ward of Ajana from two of the women they fought, they notice a reliquary on the altar, which is also made of electrum and glass. Merrick says the reliquary contains the femur of an early maintainer of the Chapel, Kira, or maybe it's a humerus or a shinbone, who really knows.

When Roland asked, Merrick told him that the femur was ancient, but that the reliquary was new, and was made by a jeweler in Rankin, named Hodges.

They decided to long rest; Roland preferred to hoof it home to Braddock and long rest there, whereas the others decided to just lay out on the Chapel pews. They agreed they'd meet at Gregor the Naturalist's house/lab in the morning.

The Cotton home

As the sun came up, as part of the long rest, Gwynnith wanted to finish her delivery of the ceremonial dagger for the Winter Wolf. She looked again at the delivery slip and discovered the name was Christopher Cotton, Vesper's brother! Rob said that the Cotton home *could* be near the Roundabout so we did that, and Gwynnith and Vesper headed there. Vesper let them in a back door, where Vesper found the underbutler Maurice and asked if Maurice would like to take the delivery. Instead, Maurice suggested the two take the dagger to Christopher's room. When they went to Christopher's room and knocked, there was a noticeable delay before Christopher loudly answered "come in!" Inside Gwynnith and Vesper found Christopher busily doing paperwork at his desk, with a maid in a long white cotton dress and bonnet nearby busily dusting and rearranging nicknacks on a shelf. Christopher and the maid seemed...a little too busy, and maybe a little flush in the face. Vesper and Christopher small talked briefly and Christopher said he was working on his taxes.

Gwynnith and Vesper took their leave.

Aardist the sprite, Greg the owl, Oz the owl return

In game 1, Faile, Modalye, and Roland had sent their familiars to track the harpy after it flew away from the Volstead house. Now with the sun coming up:

As the party exits the Chapel back onto Ballard Street [or after their long rest, wherever that is], Faile's sprite (Aardist), Modalye's owl, and Roland's owl Oz come back. They report that the harpy flew around different random Hollin rooftops for a few hours, then flew north across the river to Lofton. Lofton is bordered on the north by two cliffs, Brice Hill and Durning Hill, and the harpy flew into an opening in the Durning Hill cliffside.

The familiars also told them they could hear singing inside the opening somewhere, which sound like a lot of voices and was some kind of religious piecing chorale.

The party speculated again that the harpy must have been directed by someone.

Gregor the Naturalist's house/lab

The party met as planned at Gregor the Naturalist's house/lab.

Gregor the Naturalist's lab/house is on Quay Street in Braddock. The river and commercial docks are on the north side of Quay here and tall narrow houses line the south side. When Roland came through here with the errand boy yesterday, he saw two men in a horse costume carrying a stretcher of food to a party somewhere; today you notice a very manly man hauling an upright piano somewhere, on his back.

Gregor's house is a narrow three-story house with a tall lightning rod on the roof, and a big brick is holding the front door open while busy folks carry crates in and out. You poke your head in, and you see that the first floor is the kitchen, but has crates stacked floor to ceiling, with shipping labels from every corner of the earth. There are hundreds of small potted plants with tags saying what experiment they're part of, and many cages full of rats and small foxes, similarly tagged. Books and unwashed beakers are everywhere.

Two men are making a chalk drawing of a strange animal specimen at the kitchen table, and they stop to look up at you. One is a white-haired man with goggles pushed up on his forehead, while the other seems to be in the prime of life.

The man with goggles quickly scans you to find the most Nature-y character, then introduces himself as Gregor the Naturalist and his friend as Barley.

Modalie introduces himself and says they want to know about harpies from Lofton, who were kidnapping children. Think the harpies are working for Astrid. Gwnnith said they were children of Company Board members. They gave Gregor the feather to look at.

Gregor said he didn't know anything about harpies or any Astrid, but his friend Barley became very concerned when he heard about the children of Company Board members being kidnapped. Barley asked if the party was all together and they generally said yes, but he re-asked Faile specifically she said that they had only known each other for a few hours, but

there were very close. :) Barley took that as an OK and told the party that the children weren't just the children of Board members, but all three were also fairy changelings, and it quickly came out that Barley himself was a changeling.

They asked Barley a few more questions, but Barley suggested they go talk to the Circle (the fairy court) in Lofton Castle.

The party (Gwynnith?) asked if Barley and Faile knew each other and Faile didn't think so. Gwynnith asked if Faile was a changeling and Faile said no, and explained that she was human but raised by fairies, and had met the Circle a few times.

Gregor asked if he could keep the feather and asked if they had a harpy specimen for him to catalog; they said yes and no respectively. Gregor said if they could get a harpy specimen he would be very happy to get it to catalog.

Gregor gave them:

- Modalye: The Naturalis Historia, Abridged
 - bearer gets +1 to Nature checks

and party members also noticed a few other curious items that Gregor gave them:

- Modalye: Piece of Fulgurite
 - Properties inspected by the party on the way to Lofton: one-time use, 5th level thunderwave
- Roland: Naturalis Historia, Edible and Inedible Fungi of the Tolland Wood
 - bearer gets +1 to Survival checks

Gregor asked to go to Lofton Forest with the party:

If the party says they're heading to Lofton Forest, Gregor says he's headed there himself and asks if they would like to walk together. If the party asks why he's going there, Gregor shows them some little red insect skins or exoskeletons and says he wants to find the bugs that moulted them in the forest.

lofton

The party headed for the Circle as Barley suggested.

As you cross the river on Lofton Bridge, you can look down from the bridge's high center and see that Lofton is an abandoned medieval town. It has long been reclaimed by forest and most of its streets and buildings are hidden by overgrowth. You *can* see that Market Street continues north from the bridge into Lofton to Oak Street, which goes west

to the abandoned Lofton Castle and east to the abandoned Lofton Cathedral. You can see the Castle has a hexagonal central tower, surrounded by inner and outer curtain walls. Further out, Lofton is bordered on the north by two high granite cliffs, Brice Hill on the left and Durning Hill on the right.

Lofton Castle is about two miles from the bridge.

They went into the forest, with Greg the Owl and Oz the Owl scouting ahead for danger. About a quarter mile from the castle:

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.

Roland seemed to have a particular phobia about fighting bugs, giving his misgivings maybe 3 times.

The first bug landed on one party member, who made a DEX save to crush it; then three more appeared and attacked 3 more party members, and Roland missed his DEX save and took 5 damage. They then looked back east along Oak Street and saw that actually the entire forest, and then the entire sky above the forest canopy were filling with the bugs.

They ran for the castle, and ran through the gate, which was ajar. Inside, they saw:

Lofton Castle's outer courtyard is sparsely forested. You see an inner gate across the courtyard from the outer gate you just came in. Very near that inner gate, there's a giant oak bigger than all of the other trees here. The big oak is just the kind the Admiralty likes for ships' keels, and in fact an Admiralty lumberjack party is near it and their whipsaw is embedded in its trunk.

But, several spirits are attacking the lumberjacks - feminine forms who have treeish features suggestive of bark, branches, and leaves.

Vesper recognized one of the lumberjacks, Sturgis, and Sturgis and one other lumberjack called out to Vesper to help them.

Vesper tried to warn the lumberjacks a few times that silvermotes were coming, and to break off the fight, but they ignored him, already in the heat of battle. Modalye went to the whipsaw in the tree, and cast Mend on the trunk cut there, healing the tree (+1 inspiration Modalye). The dryads immediately stopped fighting, and a few dematerialized after the giving the lumberjacks

the finger. The dryad bound to the cut oak, Parvati, gave Modalye 10 Goodberries in thanks and then dematerialized.

The party ran into the inner courtyard along with the lumberjacks. There they saw:

The inner gate is open and you go into the inner courtyard, where the hexagonal castle tower is. There, you see a bright yellow light flying or meandering in the air, like a firefly, and it leads you to a broad circle of unnaturally large mushrooms. The yellow light resolves into a little Tinkerbell-size fairy, and then a series of about twenty fairies materialize out of the air, some Tinkerbell size, some child size, some human size.

Two of the human size fairies - the fairy queen Aurora and king Aurelian - greet you. Aurora bows slightly to Faile.

Faile and the party told Aurora the situation, saying that harpies have been taking changelings. This led to a long discussion in which Aurora told them:

- Coven
 - The Circle and Coven are ancient enemies, probably the Coven is behind the kidnapping and the theft of the Stone.
 - The Coven has a specific order, the Drusillans, who oppose the Circle. For instance, the Circle finds confused souls in Hollin to lead to the restful plane, Hereward, whereas the Coven finds confused souls in Hollin to lead to Pandemonium. The Drusillian Maven is Astrid, who's escalated that war since she became the Maven.
 - Laurel is a Coven witch who's a fairy and doesn't know it.
- The Black Cabaret
 - The party might be able to find Laurel or even Astrid at the Black Cabaret.
- Wake (harpies)
 - The Coven and the Wake are generally antagonistic, so it's surprising they'd be working together.

The party asked how changelings and the Company Board were connected, and Aurora explained that the Circle was infiltrating the Board with changelings, playing a long game. Aurora pointed to Lofton Forest around them and said that Lofton was once the Gradskan capital, the original Hollin, but that the Circle brought the Gradskans down by infiltrating the Gradskan royal line; now they were going to do the same to the Company Board and possibly extend the fairy domain from Lofton into the rest of Hollin over time.

Roland suggested that if the party helped with the changelings, in exchange the fairies could lay off the Company, but Modalie took Roland to a sidebar discussion about it. Roland said he doesn't want Hollin destroyed. In response, Modalye said he didn't have any love for the Company, and that the Company drove his family out of the docks long ago. Roland said ok, he just wanted to rescue the babies and deal with the harpies.

For their part, Aurora said the Circle's infiltration of the Board wasn't going to be violent, it would be more like a financial overthrow of the Company. Also, she reiterated it was a long game and might not happen within the characters' lifetime.

Faile asked how the Coven might know about the changelings, and Aurora suggested if the Coven/harpies found 3 secret changelings, maybe the Coven has finally discovered a "Detect Fey" spell, which would be a turning point in their struggle.

Aurora ordered Faile, as her servant, to rescue the two kidnapped changelings from the harpies.

Aurora told the party that she could think of three ways to get to the Eyrie (the cliffside openings): fly (which is what fairies would do), rappel down the cliff from the top of the hill, or find the opening at the bottom of the cliffside and take the difficult internal climb up.

Before wrapping up at the Circle, Modalie told the lumberjacks: the sprites and fairies have not forgiven them; but they've allowed them to get them out of there 24 hours ahead of when they'll start brutally murdering and hunting them. So, get rid of their suits, appear as anything but lumberjacks in the cities. Modalye's Deception roll failed, but the lumberjacks still ran out as fast as they could.

The Eyrie

The party decided rappelling down the cliffside was the easiest way to get into the cliffside openings; they discussed using Roland's 2 Featherfall uses but decided to keep them for emergencies.

They sent Aardist into the opening invisible to scout more ahead. Aardist came back and said she saw:

- After a tunnel about 100 feet long, the tunnel comes to a kind of natural balcony overlooking a giant cavern full of 500 harpies singing a dark chorale. However, given the amount of noise from the singing, it would be easy to stealth past the balcony.
- After another 100 feet, the tunnel came to a medium size cavern with three crude stone thrones. A beautiful woman was on one, and she was being wooed by 3 devils and one more ethereal-looking, nature-spirit-looking man. There were three natural windows with light streaming in on the far wall, and under the windows there were two cages with 2 two-year olds in them.
- Outside those natural windows on the far wall, Aardist could look down and see something spatially inconsistent: there was another major city down there, with it's own palace square with busy-looking devils coming and going from it!

The party rappelled down, snuck past the balcony, and up to the far, medium room. They talked at length about how they could by stealth attack the woman, who they took to be a harpy queen, but soon the harpy they let go in the first game came hopping up the tunnel behind them, and they launched into a surprise-round attack.

They targeted the apparent harpy queen in the surprise round and almost brought her down; Roland finished her off early in the 1st non-surprise round before she got any chance to ack. Gwynnith's Smite caused exactly enough damage to finish off one of the devils, while Vesper killed another with Wrath of the Storm. The ephemeral-looking man dematerialized as soon as he could in the 1st round.

Faille and later Roland confronted the harpy from game 1 in the tunnel, and Roland brought her down before she had a chance to escape and warn the 500 harpies.

They found an electrum necklace on the "harpy queen" and she did indeed transform from a woman to a harpy when they took it off.

They escaped with the children and *all* their enemies' bodies (the two harpies and the 3 devils) and used Roland's Featherfall to float everyone to the bottom of the cliffside.

for next time

For the next time, the party said they would visit the electrum jeweler Hodges and then the Black Cabaret. They said they would return the two children to their parents without telling their parents they were changelings; they would not take the children to Aurora first.