

Keith joined us for this game in a Kasskar cameo, answering Faele's questions about the Hollin firestorm.

### **date**

2020 April 4 Sunday

### **synopsis**

*Game 4 - Astrid - 2021.04.04*

The party captures Laurel in the catacombs. Laurel says that Astrid will kill Hollin's fairies using the Penance Stone in three days, and that Astrid is also the Company Board Advocate, Lena. Roland discovers that "ishild" is the Coven's codeword. Kasskar tells Faile that his old friend Aeris burned Braddock, and that Aeris is dead, but the seven strange women tell Faile that her target is in Hollin now. The party assaults Astrid/Lena's house and destroys the Penance Stone there. Modalye argues that they should spare Astrid, but Gwynnith kills Astrid with her necrotic sword Nadim.

### **warm up**

- previously unclaimed items
  - Roland claimed the encoded tomes and cipher disk since he had the highest intelligence.
  - Gwynnith claimed (and put on) the breastplate since she normally wore a breastplate.
- Last time I improvised that Captain Burns said his ship with 70 cannons was the Hedgepeth, but when I revisited my old campaign notes I found that (1) the Hedgepeth burned 17 years ago, and (2) the Hedgepeth was a lower-profile ship, not a 70-cannon ship of the line. So, we changed Burn's current ship's name to the Dervish. We discussed though how a ship of the line isn't very dervishy though.
- Vesper gets Counterpoint as well as Gwynnith.
- Players were on board with Keith playing Kasskar in this game.
- Reminder to people to use up their inspiration points if they have them.

### **the game**

In the last game, we'd just finished up in the catacomb spell lab. Faele's invisible familiar Aardist was watching the T junction a quarter mile down the tunnel, and now Aardist saw that 5 women were coming down the T's left hall. The women took a right and came down the main tunnel toward the spell lab. The party discussed what to do, and Gwynnith said she "liked the

sound” of just killing them, but they also discussed running. They discussed disguising themselves so the women wouldn’t just run back out again down to the 40-woman service down the hall. Ultimately the party decided to push the spell lab shelves 5 feet out and hide behind them, with Roland creating an illusion that the shelves were in their normal place; they’d hide there and ambush the women if they came into the spell lab.

The five women did come into the lab. Faele put one to sleep immediately, and Vesper killed another with Shatter, and described the death as:

The woman is staggered back and suffer some kind of feedback from “passing jet aircraft”, vibrating the two desks, shattering some writing implements on them, causing blood to spurt out of the one’s ears, epicenter of the spell, and she collapses like a doll with cut strings.

Gwynnith came out of hiding behind the shelves, maneuvering in and out of the room, making her the only visible target. She “took credit” for all of the unseen attacks and saying:

I control all the spirits, I am more powerful than all of you put together!

Modale cast a minor illusion on G., making he glow with blue and white flames, and giving her advantage on intimidate. Gwynnith successfully intimidated the women’s leader and the other two women still up fell in line with her. G. told them to prostrate themselves and R. put manacles on two of them and tied up the other two (including the sleeping one).

Gwynnith tried to tell the women that Astrid was no longer in charge, that she was, but her intimidate roll failed and the women just rolled their eyes.

Gwynnith asked where Laurel and Astrid were and the leader said Laurel was in the apothecary room, which the party thought was probably the straight-ahead door at the T intersection. The leader said she didn’t know where Astrid was, and that it wasn’t Astrid leading the ceremony down the hall.

Modalye took the women’s component pouches.

They went down to the straight ahead door at the T. Aardist when in invisible to see what was there, and just as he went in, he was pushed back out by a pale, red haired-woman - Laurel - coming out just then. As she came out and saw the party, her mouth opened wide in alarm, and specifically when she saw Roland, she went for her dagger. The party had 1 second to respond before she screamed, and she suggested a few contradictory things in a hurry. In the heat of the 1 second moment, Roland said he’d attack her with his rapier, Gwynnith said she’d use Command to make her sit down, and then the party as a whole decided to just “KO” her. They quickly pilfered the apothecary and found some apothecary ingredients worth 500 gp, and decided to take Laurel and strategic retreat. They went down the left-hand hall at the T, coming up through an iron trap door into an empty chapel / monument. They found they were now in the City of the Dead, a mile from the Foundling Gate where they’d entered Ulm’s monument.

They waved down a wagon to take Laurel to the Circle to interrogate her there.

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On the way from the City of the Dead to the Circle, they stopped by the Mooncalf so that Faile could follow up on Aurora's suggestion that Kasskar could help with her search.

Kasskar was Keith's PC from the original Hollin campaign, so Keith kindly cameoed as Kasskar, telling Faile what he remembered from the events of the original campaign. In short, Kasskar told Faile that Aeris created the Hollin firestorm that destroyed Braddock, but that Kasskar's party had killed Aeris and destroyed his phylactery, and Kasskar claimed that "everyone" responsibly had been brought to justice. My notes from their discussion are:

Kasskar asks "who is it?"

F: Aurora sent us.

K: thuggish guy, has some scars old and new, then welcomes them in.

F: they squeeze in, they drag Laurell in with them.

Keith: the place looks like a common one-bedroom, generous size, there's living space, welcomes them in. K is wearing armor with 2 daggers - both casual and ready for danger at once.

F: K has information about how Braddock was destroyed?

K: which time? Which fire? Grabs some liquor and offers it to the party? "Seriously, which time?"

F: When I was six, a fire burned down her town. From family of Calante? Were a wealth family?

K: That family was in Braddock, 17 years ago was when that happened.

F: who started the fire?

K: actually it was a good friend of mine.

F: pulling out her dagger. :) Your friend, huh?

K: Once long ago my friend was Aeris, part of his party. Had adventures in Braddock and lands beyond. Aeris changed, he wanted power and immortality. He cast a grand

spell 17 years ago, pretty horrible, started the fire first, then followed up it with a spell to summon up the dead and unleashed them in braddock.

F: He killed my parents.

K: Kasskar also lost his family to a fire.

F: where is A now?

K: Eventually we were able to defeat him...Kasskar also thought to join Aeris. But he had become a lich, so couldn't destroy his phylactery except by stopping time by going to a land without time...which was actually "here" we didn't have to travel to distant lands. So removed the protection from the phylactery.

F: how do you know that he's destroyed? Was it just him?

K: it was his responsibility...everyone who was responsible has paid.

F: Are Faile's parents undead?

K: Doesn't know, was fighting Aeris. Don't know the full aftermath, not sure about the destruction.

M: Was Aeris working alone?

K: Aeris had allies and those he used?

F: Wants total justice for the murderers.

K: Let me think about it. The person responsible has been destroyed. The body was destroyed.

F: Do you know the place where he did the ritual?

K: Apogee, that's where he was destroyed.

D: clarifies that's the top of Brice Hill above Lofton Castle in Braddock.

F: Does Kasskar know about the Coven and changelings?

K: he knows a bit. He doesn't know Laurel.

F: We found a practically an army of the coven. They've developed a spell to identify Fey / changelings.

K: it would be a bloodbath if they pulled that off.

M: couple more questions on Aeris? How did he become a lich?

I believe that Kasskar didn't have a good answer for Modalye's last question there. Kasskar then said had to go and couldn't join the party. Keith sent out some of his own handwritten notes from the fight on Discord, which mentioned Aeris's allies Treasach Miller and Kane who he said were still alive; Dennis noted that Keith's notes also mentioned Aeris's brother Jaris.

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The party then continued in the wagon down to the Circle; Carissa said her idea was that Aurora could cultivate a connection with Laurel and send her back into the Coven as a spy. Roland hid so that Laurel wouldn't see him again when she woke up at the Circle.

The party woke Laurel up and she was disoriented waking up in Lofton Castle and didn't know where she was. Vesper cast Detect Fey on her to show that she was a fairy, which she accepted since she knew that Detect Fey was valid; the party asked if anyone else lit up (e.g, Faile) but just the Circle and Laurel lit up. They then also had to separately persuade Laurel to help them; Gwynnith took the lead on the Persuade with Faile assisting, "Working Together" and G telling Laurel that the Coven would kill her once they found out she was a fairy.

Laurel told them:

- Astrid has a spell called "Fey Extinction Event." She's going to cast it from the top of Brice Hill in three days, using the Penance Stone.
- Astrid is also the Board's Advocate Lena, so they could potentially find her at the Board meeting today.
- She also tells you what Astrid looks like.

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The party took a short rest, found the properties of the breastplate and xbow arrows, and Roland decoded the 5 encoded tomes, finding that the cipher word was I-S-H-I-L-D.

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After the short rest, still at the Circle, the party then had a long discussion about what they were going to do, ultimately deciding that they would try to go to Lena's/Astrid's house while Lena was at the afternoon board meeting, and look for the Penance Stone there.

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On the way from the Circle to Lena's house by the Roundabout, in the market square at the foot of the Lofton Bridge by the Mooncalf, the party again encountered the seven strange women who they'd encountered in Lofton Forest in Game 3. They basically told the party:

- Vesper
  - "Vesper Cotton: we suggested your brother Christopher could easily be derailed by an accusation, and you warned Christopher to watch himself."
  - "That's like, the exact opposite of what we were suggesting."
  - "You're surprisingly benign for someone so 'ambitious to enhance his own standing.' We tell you again, time is short. Fortune favors the bold."
- Faile
  - "Our visit is to whet your almost blunted purpose. Kasskar is an unreliable narrator. Your target is in Hollin now, don't delay."
- Gwynnith
  - "Gwynnith, your sword is Nadim, meaning 'the drinker.' Or, as I prefer to translate it, 'drinking buddy.'"
- Roland
  - Generally disparaged Roland for not following up on why witches knew him.
- Modalye
  - No discussion with Modalye.

The party discussed between themselves and with the women who they were. They did some experiments to see if the women could read their minds, which the women could. One party member said that the women weren't helping them, and the women said emphatically they were not there to help them, but to "hold a mirror up to them." The party asked if the women were gods and they said no, instead they were spectators watching the drama from outside; there was some discussion of breaking the fourth wall.

The women then lost interest in the party and dissolved into the crowd in the market square.

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After talking with the strange women, the party continued toward the roundabout. On the way, near the docks in the river, they see Burns's ship the Dervish prepping to fire on the Eyrie, but it looks like there's a big hole torn in one side. But they continue first to Lenna/Astrid's.

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The went to Lena's house near the roundabout and cased it; they went before the board meeting and saw Lena leaving the house for the meeting.

They found that it was like the Hollinshed, Shaw, and Volstead homes - a marble facade building with a door and second-story balcony in front, and a door in the back. I believe that Aardist tried to look in the balcony door but curtains prevented him from seeing anything.

The party went around around back and found the backdoor was open and went into a kitchen. Gwynnith said that “we got to assault to this place.”

Aardist went in invisible and scouted, and found 2 women on the ground floor, and 2 women on the second floor near a bag that looked like it could hold the Penance Stone.

The party attacked, with fighting on the first floor, in the stairwell and balcony landing, and in the second floor room with the Stone. Gwynnith used the Ring to disguise herself as Lena, but in the first round one of the woman did Detect Magic on Gwynnith and concluded she wasn't the real Lena, and summoned back the real Lena, who teleported in with 3 more helper women to fight.

Faile put one of the women to sleep on the first round, and later used Fey Presence to scare three more of the women into inaction. Astrid/Lena was of course the most dangerous enemy, and repeatedly used Legendary Actions to cast spells on the party's turns. During the fight, Roland stole the stone and jumped out the balcony, trying to break it as part of his fall; a followup attack from Faile (I think) succeeded in breaking up the stone. Gwynnith's scored a crit on Lena with her sword, which fired up the sword's necrotic power.

With Lena/Astrid on death's door, Modalye inserted himself between Gwynnith and Astrid, arguing that killing Astrid would leave the Circle in total control of Hollin / the board, letting them undermine the city and steal more children.

But, Gwynnith and her sword took Astrid down on a second round of necrotic damage.

Modalye had also stolen Astrid's back away from here during the fight and confirmed that it had a Fey Extinction Event scroll in it, and had Greg the Owl take the backpack and dismissed Greg into an alternate dimension.

As part of the fight, Astrid Banished Faile, and Carisssa described the plane she was banished to as:

demiplane: char, smoke, earthqual, rumbling, in a safe spot, molten environment.

Scott also had some good notes / details on the fight - from his notes:

We ask the three families to keep the Board Meeting going awhile since we believe someone on the Board may be implicated in the abduction of their children. We go to Lena's (Astrid)

Trading House near the round-a-about. We see Lena leave to the Board Meeting. Front door, 2 nd floor balcony, back door. Roland enters the back door into the kitchen. Some women are talking in the next room. Artis searches the house and finds witches in the living room. Upstairs are more witches with a bag which may have the stone. We attack the witches in the house with Gwynnith enters as Lena. Astrid and three witches arrive as well. Battle rages on. Modalye steals Astrid's bag. Roland grabs the bag with the stone and jumps off the balcony with it and tries to smash the stone but fails. Faile uses the Shatter Spell on the stone destroying it. Astrid casts Banish on Faile in retribution to a plane of char, smoke, quaking and molten earth. Astrid casts Death Spiral on all of us. Modalye dismisses his owl with the bag of scrolls. Gwynnith uses her Drinking Buddy on Astrid. Modalye intervenes trying to convince Gwynnith to not kill Astrid. Astrid Lightning KOs Gwynnith and Roland. Faile heals Gwynnith and she attacks with Drinking Buddy who turns her to ash. Roland is healed.