

synopsis

Game 5 - Faile - 2021 April 18

The party reports Lena/Astrid's death to the Board, where Vesper also takes control of Cotton House by accusing his brother Christopher of colluding with the Coven. Vesper and Burns destroy the Eyrie with cannon fire, and the party helps beat the harpy counterattack. Modalye helps Faile find Aeris and the party kills him in Lofton Forest, with Gwynnith finishing both Aeris and his guardian spirit, Isaf the Black Worm. Modalye goes to the Hollin Grimoire alone to attack his lich patron Ishild, but Ishild captures Modalye for his grim experiments.

date

2021.04.18 Sunday

warm up

- confirm people leveled up to 5.
- Inspiration for Modalye for his blue-and-white flame minor illusion that gave G advantage on her intimidate in the spell lab and generally for roleplaying
- I improvised in Game 4 that the catacomb apothecary had love-in-idleness and wormwood, but let's change that to some other herb since l.in.i and ww are specific to the Circle.
- If I'm not seeing your direct message, please just call me out in the audio channel.

Some also briefly mentioned Viva la dirt league.

after killing Lena/Astrid

A crowd had gathered in the street while the party fought Lena/Astrid there, and Gwynnith had been calling out Lena as a witch during the fight, but the crowd actually saw Gwynnith's sword killing Lena with a disturbing necrotic power, and a few in the crowd started to murmur that Gwynnith was a witch. Gwynnith demured with a vaguely Kitty-Foreman-like apologetic "what me?" tone. So, the party quickly moved out of the street. I believe they left Lena's body in the street.

Rob says, "now you and my brother will not harm Hollin any more!" Modalye looks at the crowd...Gw tells the crowd they're all safe again!

They still had the shards of the broken Penance Stone in the bag, which they returned to Merrick at the Chapel of Ajana. He was happy to have it back even if broken. They briefly discussed how Merrick should maybe put up some kind of replacement, although they recognized that would probably restart the hundreds-year-long process of accumulating evil in the replacement. My notes from their discussion there, G. seems to have been the lead:

They talk to Merrick...he asks if he have the penance stone. G: with great sadness, they located the stone, but it was destroyed. We have it's remnants in case you want to ritually dispose of them or whatever. They had been stolen by a coven of witches who had hoped to use the empower of the stone to do terrible and nefarious things to destroy the city! So sorry he wasn't able to retrieve in fact .V. suggests to use another stone so they're's not another time bomb in front.

board meeting

The players then said, they'd gone to Lena's house at that time because it was the board meeting time, so they could actually now go to the board meeting and report, with G. advocating this. Vesper led them there; they saw the empty Great Council room on the first floor, and the smaller board room on the second floor, and let themselves in. The room was quite crowded with the ~8 board members present and then the 5 party members.

Although Rob had been on the fence about Vesper going to the board to discuss Christopher, Vesper now took the lead and addressed the board. He basically told them he was put on the witches' trail via his own brother's consorting with them, and that the party had stopped Lena and the Coven from nuking Hollin with the Penance Stone. When questioned for evidence, Modalye produced Detect Fey and Fey Extinction Event, and with Mia and Zoe's support the board was swayed, and dispatched the secret police to find Christopher. My rough notes from the discussion:

Master of Revels is saying they can't find the Black Cabaret!

Vesper: "Good people! We have the solution to your problem! We have vanquished their leadership! With great horror, I say the person in charge was Lena!"

Melina asks, what is your evidence for this claim?

V: it's with a heavy heart, I must recount this story. My own brother gave me the scent of this trail, I then used my seaman's instinct to run down Lena and put her in Davy Jones' locker!" Recounts the story of how they, when he was going to his brother to dissuade him from consorting with the witches we traced the witches nefarious doings to the temple and how they'd stolen the sin stone to basically ruin the town itself using these spells to take over the town and to destroy their rivals the fey. We tracked them down to their coven, their spells that they had gathered, magical tactical nuke on the town itself.

This alarmed them so much, we saved the stone to keep fair Hollin from being destroyed. Lena that was going to be at the meeting but she returned and battle in the street, defeat her in the street. Public knows the coven exists, so we indeed need to keep the peace in Hollin but reassuring them things are under control.”

Watchman comes in and say they found Lena in the street. Melina: How do you back up your assertion that she was a witch?

Modalue: recalls his owl and grabs the bag from it and shows the spells, Detect Fey and Fey Extinction Event.

Mia and Zoe have already told the board that their children were kidnapped and returned by the party.

Rob: how is that ship coming along?

V: Horrified that my brother was consorting with witches. This is what started me on the path into the witches coven. He’s done all he could.

The board says the secret police will dispatch to get Christopher.

long rest at the Volsteads; Modalye and Faile discuss Aeris

Badly roughed up from the fight with Lena and the other witches, the party decided to go to the Volsteads for a long rest; we said two of them would be in guest rooms but the rest would share the living, e.g. with Roland on the couch.

After the long rest, Modalye approaches Faile to discuss her search for Aeris/vengeance. Modalye told Faile that the lich Ishild had helped turn Aeris into a lich, that Ishild gave Aeris Firestorm and Yawning Graves, that Aeris was still alive; and Faile concluded that Aeris might be at Lofton Castle where his phylactery was and that she should warn Aurora that a lich could be near the Circle. My notes from that discussion:

Modalye: gets up in the morning and goes to Faile: “I’ve been meaning to ask you something since a couple days ago? Does she know Polaris and Lacewing?”

F: Not familiar with them. Maybe if they describe their look.

M: remembers their names from when he was 10. Doesn’t remember what they look like, they’re fey though.

F: Was raised by Aurora, played with a lot of fey kids, fey children. Some best friends, they may know Polaris.

M: They would have been adults when you were a child.

F: Did they spend time in Lofton Castle?

M: Yeah, he thinks so. Druids were charged with watching the goings on in Lofton, watching the powers moulding the city. I have reason to think the person who killed your parents is not dead, you were lied to. That person is a lich and would not die that easily.

F: Did your friends know this lich, or my parents?

M: They knew a lich Ishild had helped turn Aeris, they discovered his phylactery and it was going to be used, in a ritual that Ishild was using to turn Aeris into a fellow lich. Polaris and Lacewing traveled to the castle and tried to destroy the phylactery but they couldn't, instead in order to disrupt the ritual they created 20 duplicates to meddle with the ritual but that also failed. It was shortly after that that Aeris became a lich along with many spirits and some other characters from Hollin along with Gradskan kings.

M: it was Ishild who provided Aeris with Firestorm and Yawning Grave spells that helped destroy Braddock. This is what I heard from the druids. Aeris would have simply been killed if that phylactery [...]

F: Aardist can ask other Fey and can find the fates of your friends, could be 100 years old.

D: Aardist would refer to Aurora.

M: Aeris would not travel far from the city.

F: So maybe he might be in the castle close by his phylactery. Sounds like something to raise with Aurora, she wouldn't want a lich near where she is.

docks

The morning after the long rest they headed to the docks to find Burns and attack the Eyrie. I gave them an off-the-top-of-my-head version of:

When you arrive, Burns's ship Dervish has been tugged back to the shipyards for repair. If Vesper asks, there was some kind of an explosion on the ship night before last. The gunpowder on board was dispersed and a wide hole was knocked in one side of the ship. The Admiralty is investigating but no leads right now.

But, rowboats are tugging two other ships into place for the attack - the Umbrage and the Sea Bat.

Burns tells you that Admiralty gunners and navigators have already computed the trajectories to the Durning Hill cliffside. Burns introduces you to Weiss, the master of the Admiralty forge. Burns and Weiss say that a normal cannon's range is about a mile, but Weiss and the forge have developed a new steel that can withstand the explosive power of more gunpowder, for the new flagship Harbinger. The Eyrie openings on the cliffside should be just within range, and this will be the first combat test of the new cannons.

There, Modalye raised his concern that attacking the Eyrie might disrupt a balance of power in Hollin. He argued that the Coven and Wake counterbalanced the Circle, who were themselves kidnapping children, and that the party had already neutralized any immediate threat from the Coven/Wake. Vesper argued that the Circle wasn't an immediate threat since they were playing the long game, and suggested they deal with the Circle later, use the threat of Fey Extinction Event to tame the Circle if necessary, and even become "a new Coven" themselves if "they did things right" (!). My notes from that discussion:

M is concerned about firing on the cliffside - basically about the balance between the fey and coven. He argues that the fey aren't good, they're kidnapping children.

V: We can take out the harpies and then deal with fey afterward.

M: Look at Faile when V says this.

V: We both saw this portal to pandemonium when we were in the eeyrie. So, we don't want to do multiple fronts and once...they fey are playing a long game.

r: harpies are monsters, not any reason to allow them access to Holin or Pandemonium.

M: argues that no living person is under danger from these people...

V: we still have the Fey Extinction Event, we can use that to come to terms with them. We can be the deterrent.

M: that's a big gamble.

V: If we do things right, we can become the new coven.

M: Sighs and gives up on convincing them. They might just be hittin the hornets; nest with the stick.

V: Yes, but do we have the forces to kill them all in the eyrie.

M: the ships as powerful as they are, would have a hard time flying around.

G: doesn't feel the need for them all to do, but the harpy nest has to move. Give the harpies some kind of warning.

Modalye demurred, so Burns gave the signal to fire.

The three ships fire. When the first few guns fire, it's hard to see any effect on the cliffside, but once all 70 guns are going, rocks start to fall off the cliffside and dust rises to obscure your view of the cliffside. After a minute of firing all of Lofton seems covered in dust.

As Modalye mentioned, you're kicking a hornets' nest by firing on the Eyrie, and just then, hundreds of harpies fly out of the dust cloud and attack the Umbrage and Sea Bat.

7 attacked the party on the dock where they were with Burns; 4 normal harpies and 3 slightly tougher ones.

The harpies tried Luring Song on the party three times, but Gwynnith and Vesper both had Counterpoint. Gwynnith was able to Counterpoint the Song one, Vesper was able to Counterpoint the Song one time, and the Song succeeded one time, affecting (just) Roland.

Gwynnith was a killing machine in this battle, killing three of the harpies. Modalye had a crit on one harpy, and Nick described it as "my owl distracts the harpy, so it pushed it right in the way of the arrow, straight in the face; hex then exploded in some kind of gross necrotic energy." At the end of the battle, Gwynnith's crit on one fired up her sword's necrotic attack, and Vesper finished that harpy off with lightning, saying the lightning "strikes it on its head, causing sparks to come out of its eyes and beak."

With the battles at the dock, Umbrage, and Sea Bat complete, Burns told the party that he could send Admiralty marines up the destroyed Eyrie to clean up any remaining harpies there.

second long rest; Arlin appears to Faile

After the harpy fight at the docks, the party long rested again in anticipation of Faile's mission.

At the end of the long rest, Faile got an unexpected visitor.

Faile stirs from her sleep, feeling a presence nearby. She rolls over and sees a small man in a jester's outfit sitting by the side of the bed. She rubs her eyes as she takes him in, and realizes that the jester is actually a ghost or spirit.

The jester/ghost introduces himself as Arlin, the court jester of the long-deceased Gradsan high king Marduk, and laughs shrilly. Arlin says there's a fast-spreading rumor in Hollin that Faile is hunting Aeris.

Arlin also told her that Aeris was on his way to Lofton Castle to get his phylactery *now*.

After a brief discussion the party decided to close the loop with Kasskar before going over there. Kasskar conceded he may have been wrong about Aeris being dead, and volunteered to join the party in Lofton.

Lofton

The party headed to Lofton Bridge with Arlin and Kasskar. There, they met Aurora, who was coming to find them and told them that Aeris had just come through Lofton and Lofton Castle "like a thundercloud." She offered to lend the party Laurel (good magic help option) or two fairy archers Meadowlark and Quicksilver (military help option); the party quickly opted for Laurel.

So now the party, Arlin, Kasskar, and Laurel headed for Lofton Castle. On the way, near the area where they'd encountered the silvermote brood before, they saw a grotesque skeleton headed toward them on the forest-lined street - Aeris, and Aeris stopped about 50 feet from them. He had a bag in one hand with what looked like a bowling ball inside, and was also carrying a backpack.

The party and Aeris briefly discussed how/why he could be going around as a skeleton; Aeris said that Lofton didn't have many people in it, and also people tend to get out of the way of a grotesque undead.

They fought. Scott played Kasskar as essentially a second copy of Roalnd, and Carissa played Laurel as essentially a second copy of Faile, but with the additional ability to cast 9th level Counterspell. Arlin didn't fight, but gave out a Bardic inspiration to a party member each round.

Nick asked about sending his owl to take Aeris's bag, but we concluded it would be too heavy for Greg the Owl. On the first turn of the fight, Roland tried invisible mage hand to pickpocket the contents of the bag, but discovered the ball inside was "100.0% slippery" so not stealable with Mage Hand.

Generally Aeris's didn't cast any of his deadly spells (e.g., Power Word Kill) because Laurel had the power to Counterspell any of them; instead he relied on his non-spell abilities like Frightening Gaze and Disrupt Life. Aeris wasn't shy about using Legendary Resistances to pass failed saves, or using the Afterclap ability of his Orb of Contravention to make a party member fail a save.

On the first round, Vesper hit Aeris, which caused Aeris's Guardian Spirit to appear, Isaf the Black Worm.

When Aeris is injured, a massive flightless dragon suddenly materializes near him - Aeris's guardian spirit, Isaf the Black Worm. The materialization causes a thunderclap that rolls out through the forest with a low rumble. Isaf flicks his tail menacingly, blasting several of the nearby trees into splinters. Isaf blasts other trees with his breath weapon, a blue liquid that burns like napalm, smells like rotten egg, and continues to burn while Isaf turns his attention to you.

Isaf used his Brimstone breath attack on each round.

Even after Isaf appeared, the party concentrated its fire on Aeris, with Gwynnith delivering the killing blow.

They had believed that Isaf would disappear when Aeris went down. But, as Aeris's Guardian Spirit, Isaf actually continued to fight after Aeris went down.

At one point Kasskar scored near-maximum damage on a sneak attack on Isaf, which Scott described as "Distracted by a paladin in his face, and Modalye blasting him, Isaf looks back and forth and never sees Kasskar, who comes up right behind it and gets Isaf right in the jaw."

Gwynnith delivered the killing blow to Isaf, "seeing the opening in its jaw, go through the break in its jaw, straight to the brain."

They recovered from Aeris:

shirt of heroic effort

Once a day: +4 to any attack or save, which you can add after the roll.

Lore: Aeris took the shirt from the hell-town Bruegel on Hilde.

Orb of Contravention

Appearance: The orb is cloudy, almost metallic grey ball about the size of a crystal ball.

During an encounter, the orb glows with a warm orange and hums quietly, but crackles loudly when its properties are used.

Properties

+2 orb: +2 to spell attack rolls and their damage rolls.

Afterclap: once a day, turn an enemy's successful save into a failure as a free action.

Lore: Aeris took the Orb of Contravention from Krohn 17 years ago.

phylactery

Aeris's phylactery is a perfectly reflective, perfectly slippery silver ball about the size of a crystal ball. Since it's 100% slippery, you probably want to carry it in a bag.

DC 25 Nature check: the phylactery is (or is inside) a spacetime shell that nothing can enter, including any attack. Just like a black hole bends space time so that nothing

inside can exit, the phylactery's shell bends spacetime so that nothing outside can enter or impact the shell.

Kairos, the plane without time

We were pretty much out of time, so I just did a verbal summary of the party destroying Aeris's phylacter in Kairos, the plane without time. I said there's a usually unnoticed black carriage in the market square with a black horse but no driver; and Kasskar knows how to communicate with the horse. They all get in the carriage and it takes them to Kairos; once they arrive, the phylactery is destroyed just by virtue of being in a place without time (since the phylactery is a space-time shell, it can't exist in a place without time).

Since Kairos doesn't have time, there's no such thing as the ordering of events there. So, e.g., you can leave before you arrive, stuff like that. Getting out of the carriage in Kairos, they see several copies of themselves arriving and leaving in black carriages; and similarly copies of Kasskar and Aeris's party from 17 years ago arriving and leaving.

They got back in the carriage and returned to Hollin.

Modalye and Ishild

After the fight with Aeris, Modalye told the party "He tells teh party he knows all about liches and wants to get the sword of damocles" off of him.

Modalye went to the Gramercy Bookstore to confront his lich patron, Ishild. He did Disguise Self to look like Aeris, and took Aeris's bag and put one of the 20 fake phylacteries in it.

As usual he found the bookstore itself to be empty, but took the secret door down into the Hollin Grimoire, then went down the Grimoire's 10 brass-lined levels to the more primordial, dirt-floor summoning pit at the lowest level. There he found Ishild ruminating with a cigar. He falsely told Ishild that the mission was accomplished - that Aeris had defeated the party. Modalye tried to distract Ishild by pointing to a shelf, and when Ishild turned his back, Modalye attempted to pull out Firestorm and cast it in the Grimoire; we briefly discussed whether this would be suicide for Modalye and Modalye said he would try to survive it if possible. However, Ishild had +9 Perception and noticed what Modalye was doing; Ishild did Paralyzing Touch on Modalye and Modalye failed the save. Ishild said he would take Modalye captive to use for experiments. :O

after the campaign: Gwynnith

We discussed what the characters might do after the campaign. For G:

- Wants to become a grand adventurer - maybe Cotton can help her get on a ship to be a grand adventurer. If not will beg for her job back. Want to see if she can become a gun for hire for the ACC?
- Will go back to Winter Wolf and give some money.

Gwynnith wanted to travel the world, and Karen suggested maybe she could use the Cotton family trading ships to travel. I said she was technical AWOL from her job at the Winter Wolf, and Karen speculated that G. was probably fired by now. She asked how much her necrotic sword was worth, if she could possibly buy it from the Winter Wolf. But, when she returned to the Winter Wolf, she basically discovered that Pale Moon had given her that sword on purpose:

Seventeen years ago, Pale Moon's adopted son Beowolf and his party helped a young man Haas enter a portal to the restful plane, Hereward. They defeated two angelic portal guardians there, and Beowolf claimed one of the guardian's swords, named Aria, meaning "melody." Beowolf's comrade Ord Redding claimed the other guardian's sword, named Isra, meaning "night journey." Ord adopted Isra as his main weapon, and as Ord used Isra, it continually developed new powers, or maybe Ord just learned to unlock its power over time. ["Isra gained new bonuses and abilities as Ord used it, ending as a +3 sword with the powers Challenge to Single Combat and Immortal Slaying."]

About a year after that, another of Beowolf's comrades, Kasskar, discovered another three Hereward guardians standing watch over an ancient hoard under the City of the Dead. Gwynnith's sword is one of their swords, named Nadim, meaning "the drinker" or "drinking buddy."

Pale Moon says that she can teach Gwynnith some swordsmanship, but if she wants to learn to use Nadim specifically and maybe unlock more powers, she should travel to al-Watan in the Caliphate and find Ord Redding.

Karen said that could be a possibility.

after the campaign: Roland

Scott said after the campaign, Roland would go back to his rickety shop and re-hang his private detective sign, return to the life of a private detective. Roland continued his policy of not investigating why the witches hated him, saying it should stay a secret. The other players asked if I would tell them but I said I could keep it a secret. :)

after the campaign: Faile

Carissa said Faile found her revenge on Aeris to be empty:

“it’s not resolved, feeling emptiness of revenge. Want to deal with lich, would want to figure out if her parents become undead after the firestorm.”

after the campaign: Vesper

- After campaign: he takes over the Cotton family, due to shame that Christopher brought on the family. Runs the Cotton trade house and also keep up relationship with navy for trade purposes, and keep up trade with ACC, doing as good a job if not better than his brother.