

**Campaign/Game:** The Academicians: D&D 5e

**Date:** July 15th, 2021

**Episode 5:** Into the Dark

**Campaign Date:** Resplendence 15th-16th 931 (Summer)

## Characters

**Barenas**, Half-Elf Lore Bard - 3 (Ethan)

**Hugh Evansley**, Satyr Wizard Conjurer - 3 (Jamin)

**Lady Pandora Gladwyne**, Gold Elf Sorcerer of the Divine Soul - 3 (Camille)

**Rae Softwood**, Cleric - 3 (Jay)

**Robynn Cooney**, Human Sorcerer - 3 (Chel)

**Yuvon Yol fin Dein**, Dragonborn Devotion Paladin - 3 (Ben)

**DM:** Andrew

## Prolog:

Ellie Finnbuckle has arrayed a new team of Academicians to find magic items that have gone missing from the Arcane Academy when it was attacked almost ten years ago. Through divination magic, Ellie has learned that the Orb of Shadows has returned to Blackangel. This artifact has the ability to cross over to other realms, specifically that of the Shadowfell.

Ellie addresses the assembled team. As Ellie speaks, a child of no more than ten peeks into the room. She eagerly looks around at the assembled Academicians. She listens intently with the others, but is clearly much too young to participate in the search for this artifact.

As a matter of fact, the search could be dangerous indeed. Hugh Evansley, most recently of the Feywild, has returned to Blackangel because he has lost contact with his good friend Leif over the past few months. Once Ellie confirmed that the dwarf conjurer was missing, Hugh packed his things and came immediately. After some research, Hugh has learned that a lizardfolk servant named Sisthak might have some more information about the Orb of Shadow that is related to Leif going missing.

A traveller from afar has also joined the Academicians. Rae has shabby nobleman-style robes flowing over light armor. With a cheeky smile and grand attitude, the cleric is very much a vision of piety and clever quips. Rae has arrived in Blackangel at Professor Finnbuckle's request to help out finding the artifacts missing from the Arcane Academy.



Barenas is here looking for his sister Deena. He studiously takes notes on the details of the orb in a personal book that also contains a number of his own poems, stories, and songs. His elven father is distant, and doesn't care much about him and his family anymore. His human mother has been very understanding and helps out from her family business in the nearby village of Palmdale where they are less of outsiders than a curiosity. He traveled to the big city of Blackangel to help out magical folks as they do their research to find lost magical artifacts. Barenas has also been looking for his sister Doora who traveled to the area a few years ago. He and his mother haven't heard from her in almost three years. Barenas would very much like to learn what happened to her.

Finally, the dragonborn Yuvon has joined the group. He grew up isolated in a tower in the north of Radavan until he was welcomed into his paladin oaths by a thoughtful mentor. Yuvon rounds out the cadre of spellcasters with his logical thought and clear sight of the truth.

### Log:

The scene shifts to the Academicians as they approach Sisthak's home in "The Empire," the slums famous for their population of lizardfolk. They see Sisthak at the place chosen for their meeting. Above them on a nearby roof, they hear a shriek warning the adventurers. Robyn, the ten-year old child who eavesdropped on their meeting, barely manages to alert them to a dozen depraved cultists wearing masks of raven feathers who attack from the alleys. "Death to the

The fight goes hard at first, but as the Academicians wear down the thugs' defenses the fight goes better for the Academicians. Robyn slides down the drainage pipe. She is almost caught and held by one of these raven-masked thugs before she darts away and conjures swabs of arcane paint that stick on their targets doing elemental damage of curious types such as thunder or lightning. Hugh conjures magical darts of force that slam into his targets. Barenas tells magical jokes, inspires his comrades, and joins the melee directly with his rapier nearly as sharp as his wit. Rae calls on divine power to conjure a spiritual weapon of force and attacks with bolts of radiant fire that falls from the heavens. Pandora repeatedly slaps the cultists into the walls of the tenement buildings with a wave of thunderous magic and Yuvon engages the cultists, striking with the authority and might of the tower he grew up in. The final cultists try to take Sisthak hostage, spitting venom about the party being "snake lovers" because they were sympathetic to the lizardfolk. Yuvon's magic protects Sisthak and the Academicians end the cultists' threat.



After the battle, Sisthak explains how at work she saw a “curiously quiet” dwarven spellcaster who sounds very much like Leif jumped by thugs similar to the cultists and dragged into another realm using an artifact that sounds very much like the Orb of Shadow. Sisthak reveals that she works for the tacky, mustachioed nobleman Boslio.



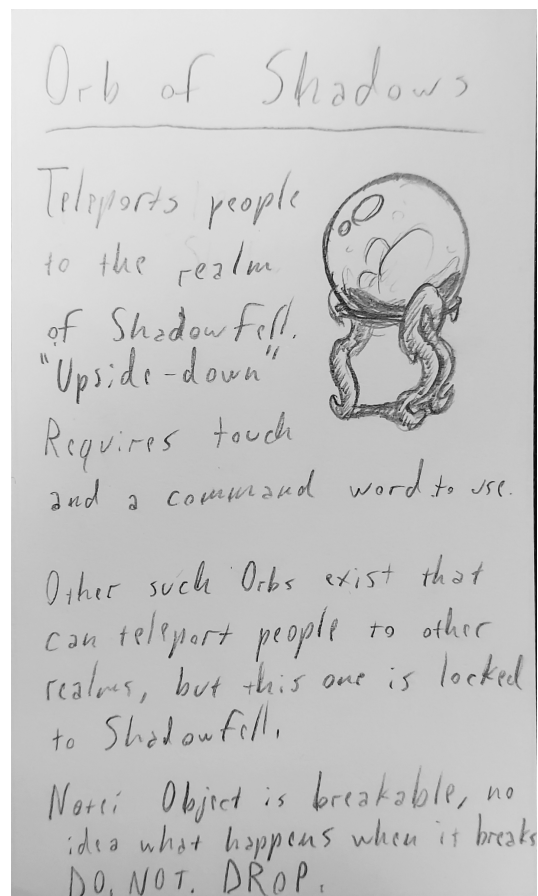
The Academicians decide to split up and do some research throughout Blackangel. Barenas and Rae Meet Dorothy at the Osculatory Club. Dorothy tells that Nailnine is the one who has the orb. Not sure who they are working for.

Pandora spends some time in the tower district. This district is the base of operations of the town guard as well as administrative and judicial center for the city. It is dominated by the imposing Tower of Justice which serves as military and constabulary headquarters as well as the political and judicial center for the entire city-state. Every two weeks, one of seven judges oversees a public trial held to resolve any outstanding complaints or crimes.

Robynn and Hugh return to the Arcane Academy to research the Orb of Shadows. Robynn, worried about being caught away from the Academy as she is underaged and not supposed to be wandering off, changes her look to that of a middle-aged man. The two are briefly challenged by Rosie, the busybody administrator of the Academy. She seems truly interested in Hugh’s adventures and background, but couldn’t care much less about the strange, cheerfully balding man that Robynn is disguised as.

They retire to the library where Robynn immediately locates the appropriate texts. As Professor Finnbuckle mentioned, this artifact’s main purpose is to open pathways between the Upside-Down (or Shadowfell as some call it) and the mortal plane. It requires a command word to open and close the portal. There are other similar orbs to open portals to other realms such as the Plane of Fire or the Feywild.

One particular detail is that if this fragile artifact breaks the results are volatile and powerful. Hugh takes care to note not to drop the Orb of Shadows at all costs.



## Orb of Shadows

Teleports people to the Realm of Shadowfell. "Upside-down"



Requires touch and a command word to use.

Other such Orbs exist that can teleport people to other realms, but this one is locked to Shadowfell.

Note: Object is breakable, no idea what happens when it breaks  
DO, NOT. DROP.

Yuvon heads for the mansion of Bosilo. He approaches the villa, and finds it a disused wreck. The doors are hanging open, and he investigates inside where he finds stained curtains and furniture, half-eaten food, and odd pools of blood. He is attacked by a mysterious, shadowy predator and is forced to flee.

The party reunites at The Rendezvous, a fancy place in College Hill. A fancy entertainer there offers to read the party's future in tarot cards. The first card, the wisdom-draining Eclipse reveals a black hole of nothingness and despair drawing in all hope of escape. Next, the card of the Theater is drawn wherein the Academicians are portrayed by puppets on a dark stage menaced by a mysterious predatory monster that looks very much like a lanternfish with thick, stubby legs. Finally, their future is represented by the Queen Mother, a card describing that the party members will discover a relative or mentor who has the wisdom to offer comfort or advice to aid the Academicians in their quest. After a fancy repast they decide to return to the mansion in force to question the noble Bosilo.

They are attacked as they approach the tacky mansion by the predator. None see the monster's approach, and it attacks with force and vigor. The Academicians are surprised by just how much punishment the shadow-cloaked razor-covered lizard dog can take.

An individual who matches the description of Nailnine emerges unexpectedly from the mansion. Nailnine carries the Orb of Shadows, and looks up in surprise. After one last attack, the predator darts directly at the non-binary armored Nailnine. It begins to attack. Rae takes out a crossbow and fires, aiming right for the orb in Nailnine's hand seeking to disarm it. The cleric does just that, and the orb tumbles to the ground shattering. In a blast of dark energy, the predator, Nailnine, and the entire party are swallowed up into a sucking hole of negative energy to deposit them into the Upside-Down, where they must fight to stay alive and perhaps find a way back home.



## Leif's Note:

MY DEAR COLLEAGUES,

THE TIME HAS COME FOR ME TO LEAVE THE ARCANIC ACADEMY. DURING OUR PRIOR MISSION TO VANILLA CREST, I HAD PERFORMED A FORM OF MAGIC WHICH, ACCORDING TO THE BYLAWS SET IN PLACE BY THE MAGIC COUNSEL OF BLACKANGEL, IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN TO BE PRACTICED. WHILE THE NECROMANCY SPELL WAS USED TO PROTECT US FROM HARM, THE MERE CASTING OF IT GOES AGAINST THE MAGIC CODE THAT I HAD SWORN TO ADHERE TO. AS A RESULT, I HAVE BEEN FORBIDDEN FROM CASTING MAGIC IN BLACKANGEL FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

I HAVE SUBMITTED MY RESIGNATION TO PROFESSOR FINNBUCKLE AND HAVE ALREADY ARRANGED FOR AND CONTACTED MY REPLACEMENT. I WILL BE TAKING SOME TIME TO TRAVEL THE WORLD, EXPAND MY KNOWLEDGE, AND FURTHER MY MAGICAL STUDIES.

I WISH YOU ALL THE BEST. I WILL MISS YOU ALL AND HOPE THAT WE WILL ALL MEET AGAIN IN THE FUTURE.

BROTHERHOOD AND PEACE,

LEIF REDBEARD

P.S. IF YOU HAPPEN UPON A TABAXI WATLOCK IN YOUR TRAVELS, I AM MOST INTERESTED IN A TONGUE THAT HE POSSESSES.

## Plot:

These entries comprised the brief plot bits given to particular player characters before the game.

Barenas,

You've traveled to the big city of Blackangel to help out magical folks as they do their research to find lost magical artifacts. You have been looking for your sister Doorra who traveled to the area a few years ago. You and your parents haven't heard from her in almost three years. You would very much like to learn what happened to her.

Barenas,

When you first arrived in Blackangel you met a tiefling named Dorothy who was magically connected to a lot of the underworld goings-on. For a price, she helped you out of a jam. She may be able to shed some light on any sorts of activity among the shadier parts of town for you, but bring your coin purse. It will cost you.



Barenas

The city of Blackangel where you are now working for the Arcane Academy got its name from a legend that the original settlers of this area were saved from an attack by a giant sea squid by a holy angel with wings as dark as coal.

Pandora,

A new cult has appeared in Blackangel. They have already pulled many reasonable citizens of the city into their control. These poor victims have given over all their worldly possessions and renounced their former lives and families in hopes of an afterlife of blessings. They call themselves members of the "Raven's Rebirth." These fanatical cult members refuse to name their leader saying only that they are true to "the cause of magic."

Pandora,

The Wormbly royal line rules with the help and advice of a city council made of elected people across the spectrum of race, creed, and station. This council is a newer body, only coming into being in the past century or so as a concession to get in the continent-wide war against the fascist sorcerer Corvax.

Pandora,

You've come to the big city to make a name for yourself as a mage away from your famous and powerful family. The Gladwyne (pronounced "glad-win") dynasty is one of the more powerful houses within the entire Elven empire. Your great grandparents still live in eternal youth commanding a barony of the Feywild. Your grandparents were conquerors, sailing the waves of Kyor and fighting astride mighty griffons to build a terrestrial empire. You want to reclaim that greatness because your parents were degenerate slackers who squandered the Gladwyne family power and died ignominious deaths. You believe your studies at the Arcane Academy is your path toward that goal.

Hugh,

Your old friend Leif has disappeared! He hadn't written in almost a month. Once Professor Finnbuckle confirmed that he had gone missing, you took the first portal that mistress Anet Lovelle could create from your home in the Feywild back to Blackangel where the two of you met. Your friendship started as a dare, then grew because you shared similar interests. You commiserated with him when his voice was stolen by that catfolk warlock. You worry that perhaps Leif has done something foolhardy in his pursuit of recovering his voice.

Hugh,

From your research, you've learned that a lizardfolk named Sisthak has seen a kidnapping of a dwarf that could have been Leif in broad daylight using a magical device that resembles Professor Finnbuckle's description of the Orb of Shadows. If your team can find her and ask her about the incident, perhaps you can learn more about where your friend is and how you can recover him.

Robynn,

Your Mum missed the message window last night. Every new moon, you count on one brief but lovely magical message. You always respond in kind, taking the time to craft a thought that conveys your feelings while staying under the magical word limit. Over the years, you've even taken to writing your innermost thoughts in twenty-five word haikus to share. You have missed her for so long. All you have is your father's stories and your mother's messages. When you overheard something about a magic item that could reach other realms like your mothers' you broke curfew and followed those charged with bringing the item back.

Yuvon,

In the fantasy world of Kyor monstrous humanoids are all demonic forces made flesh rather than races of their own.

For example, orcs may be created through a sinister ritual in which a large tusked boar is slaughtered and its corpse prepared in a humanoid shaped hole in the ground to gestate and grow into an orc over a period of thirteen days.

Yuvon,

There are stories of gloomy interplanar "holes" that have been opening up in and around the big city of Blackangel recently. These tears in the fabric of the universe appear to lead to an alternate but grim and dark city that parallels that of your own.

You've even heard whispers of those who have been sucked through such a hole and lived to tell the tale. What is causing these dangerous ruptures to appear? What happens when someone or something from the other side manages to make it through to our side?

Rae,

You've got a contact in Blackangel who could help. Wheat is a young member of the Black Hound Fellowship, an inquisitorial order dedicated to the search for the missing, the punishment of murderers, and the exorcism of undead that is all too often resultant of such tragedy. Wheat is young and perhaps a bit naive, but he is very "in touch" with the state of missing persons in the area.

Rae,

Lord Mayor Wormbly is the aging leader of the city-state of Blackangel. His children are always causing trouble for one another struggling to become the one named the true heir when he passes his sixtieth winter.