

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

Date: July 22nd, 2021

Episode 6: Join the Show

Campaign Date: - Resplendence 16th - Hallow 22nd 931 (Summer into Fall)

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)

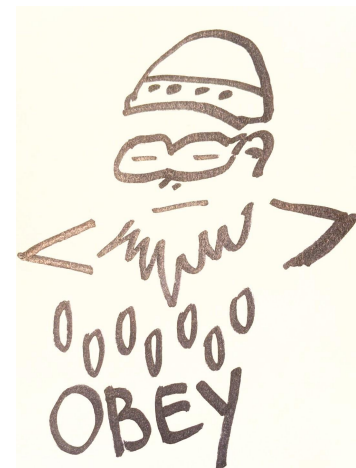
DM: Andrew

Log:

The most striking and immediate impression a visitor to the Upside-Down has is the lack of color and light. No sun, moon, or stars adorn the vault of the inky black sky. The color appears to have been leached out of all things leaving nothing but shades of black and white.

The party has lost track of time. It could be weeks or months since they came to the Upside-Down. They have constantly been on the run, chased by the secret police of the city of Whitedemon. These political soldiers are ruthless in their service of the shadowy "Lord Mayor."

As Pandora prepares to step outside the crumbling house the party has been hiding in, Yuvon stops her. Outside, three members of the Whitedemon secret police are questioning a bald halfling. Hugh immediately recognizes him as the grocer who has been feeding the Academicians. The heroes move to attack and free the poor halfling, who immediately hides.



Robynn advances and pulls out her staff designed like an oversized paint brush. She sketches a series of bars forming a cage around the three secret police. They are stuck, trapped only by their own poor thinking and confusion. Leif launches several volleys of magical darts, slamming into the hapless political soldiers as they approach to try to quell the uprising. Yuvon crushes one with his sword and then completely detonates another with a divine smite, causing a third to re-evaluate his career of serving oppression to the masses. Barenas has a tough going, taking some stab wounds from these jack-booted goons but giving as good as he gets with cutting words and his sharp rapier. Pandora's magic holds the goons at bay, giving cover to the other spellcasters as they finish off the remaining fascists leaving only two.

Following the conflict, Ulp thanks the party. He has been questioned, and warns the Academicians that the Lord Mayor's secret police now have descriptions of them and are looking to capture them for questioning. He has no knowledge of or interest in joining The Resistance against the powers that be in Whitedemon. After Ulp leaves, the heroes question the remaining two secret police. They are less than helpful. The party begins to suspect that perhaps the political oppression which is an everyday part of life in Whitedemon is a product of a mass brainwashing rather than an actual ruler. None of the secret police can even describe their ruler, much less name who is "Lord Mayor."

The heroes decide to sneak into the Tower District of Whitedemon in hopes of freeing any political prisoners there. They dress in the uniforms of the secret police and start toward the heart of the military might of the city-state.



Along the way, they encounter a puppet show in progress. Its unique style and content catches their eye, and they linger to watch for a moment. The first puppet, a scaled fellow named "Tower", discusses being trapped in a big black bag of pudding with another puppet called "Daring." They are very worried about this particular situation, and more so when they are joined by a puppet named "Grant" with horns and a stack of books as well as two obviously elven puppets named "Scion" and "Pinewoods." Once all puppets find themselves trapped in the black bag of pudding, a tiefling child appears behind them and gathers up the bag. The show is over, and the Academicians ask themselves whether this show described their very situation. Dantus, the puppeteer obliquely mentions "The Resistance" against the secret police of Whitedemon and invites them to a tavern by the docks later.

After a bit of discussion, the Academicians go to meet the puppeteer at the tavern along the docks with the sign of the anchor. There, they learn that he is in fact a ranking member of "The Resistance" sent to try to find them, and is in contact with Professor Finnbuckle of the Arcane Academy. Dantus tells the heroes that soon someone will be able to open a portal to get them out of the Upside-Down and back to Blackangel.

After a satisfying meal, members of the Raven's Rise cult attack led by a shirtless raving-mad satyr warlord and supported by a gigantic undead dreadnought in black cold-iron armor. Yuvon and Barenas hold the door, raining radiant strikes down on the large undead figure of the dreadnought. Hugh's cloud of daggers clog the main way, allowing the Academicians to fight on their terms. Pandora's magic supports the group and Robynn paints a wolf that fights alongside her comrades.

During the battle, Barenas catches a glimpse of one of the cultists. Even behind the mask, the woman looks exactly like his lost sister, Deena! She also pauses in her murderous rage, and takes a moment. The cultist immediately flees the battle, disappearing quickly and efficiently into

the inky shadow of the Upside-Down. As the adventurers grind down the remaining cultists, the cheeky satyr leading the group turns tail and flees as well.

The tavern has been compromised. Luckily, Yuvon has kept his eye out and leads the Academicians to a half-destroyed tower that would be an appropriate defensible position. There, the heroes take some time to rest and recuperate from their two battles.

During the downtime, the Academicians have a discussion. Should they leave and return to the Material Plane? Now that Barenas knows he can save his sister Deena and Hugh knows where Leif is probably being held the calculus has changed. Yuvon has dedicated his entire being to helping those in trouble and Robynn is sure her mother is also captured there. Pandora wants to go as well to prove her magical bona-fides. Perhaps when the time comes, everyone will just ask if they can stay longer?

After a long rest, the heroes on guard see it. Once more, the smokey and thoroughly evil monster that attacked when the Orb of Shadows was broken has found them, and it is looking for revenge for the wounds it still carries. The Predator of Nil attacks, biting and tearing up the party. Yuvon locks it into single combat, and takes many serious wounds, nearly swooning into unconsciousness if not for Pandora's healing magic. Robynn conjures a flock of carnivorous birds and attacks the shadowy murderous quadruped while Barenas clocks it with bare steel and poisonous insults.



As the battle rages, a portal to another plane of existence opens up nearby. A comely woman in grey with a covered head and too many rings steps through, holding the swirling entryway open behind her. "Academicians!" she cries out, "I'm here to get you all back. Come with me if you want to return! Wait. Where is the child?"

After a moment of joy, Robynn's demeanor changes once she fully recognizes the traveller as her aunt Moira. She knows that she is in danger of being punished for her behavior and hides. Using her illusion-making paintbrush wand, she once again colors around herself to look like a jolly old man. She looks back at the portal and flees the scene. Realizing that the flock of conjured birds are collectively strong enough to carry a child, she directs the gulls to scoop her up and carry her off toward the mountains away from Whitedemon. The Academicians see the illusory jolly old man interacting awkwardly with the flock slowly making their way from the portal. "Yeah, um the kid is right there," Pandora points to the sight.



The mysterious traveller curses. "I'm going to have to have words with Archibald about how he insists on allowing these untalented clowns to watch this child." The traveller steps back through the portal which promptly snaps shut. The struggle with the monster continues. Yuvon continues to wrestle with the predator, eventually rolling on top of it and stabbing it through the heart. It convulses and dies, leaving a putrid pool of ichor and blood.

The Academicians decide that they need to locate this mountain installation of the Raven's Rise cult and infiltrate it in hopes of recovering their loved ones and friends in hopes of escaping safely from the Upside-Down after their recovery. Since the Resistance has lost many of their own to the cult as well, they agree to help in the effort. As they travel into the mountains, they discuss their plan of attack.

Plot:

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

Hugh,

The Magic Council of Blackangel is composed of some of the most notable spellcasters in the city. It decides what uses of magical power are banned and punished within city limits. For example, there are punishments for charming or reading minds without consent as well as certain forms of base Necromancy. These punishments include being expelled from one of the many magical organizations to being banned from the city limits for a period of years to life.

Hugh,

Since you've been in the Upside-Down your job has been to get food and supplies. You've found a friendly grocery here in Whitedemon that offers bland fare and doesn't ask questions as long as your gold spends okay. Ulp the grocer worries that he will be trapped here forever. He often dreams of just giving up and attacking the secret police or risking the deadly wilderness outside the walls of the city to welcome death as a release.

Pandora,

You are constantly on the run, always chased by the secret police of the city of Whitedemon where you are hiding. Luckily, you've learned that there is a resistance against the oppressive regime of the city, and there is someone there who has the power to open portals to the mortal realm. If you can make a connection, perhaps you can find a way home.

Pandora,

Since you've been in the Upside-Down your job has been to keep watch. You've been seeing the same people at regular intervals toiling just to stay alive. Occasionally, a citizen will be stopped and harassed by the secret police. In one case, a young woman was stopped and magically paralyzed. You overheard the police discussing whether she could lead them to "the resistance" or not as they dragged her away.

Rae,

The Upside-Down is a dark and foreboding place, a physical metaphor for isolation and depression. Since time passes so oddly here, you aren't sure how long it has been since you arrived. Days? Weeks? You aren't sure anymore. Instead, there are "cycles," but these time periods seem arbitrary and confusing. You feel like you are losing touch with the person you once were.

Rae,

Since you've been in the Upside-Down your job has been to divine everything that is happening magically around you. You've learned that there is a rare arcane celestial event that is set to happen in a number of cycles where the entire Upside-Down experiences a brief flash of blinding light. This moment is known as the "Aurora of Hope," and like an eclipse in our world carries a powerful portent.

Robynn,

Since you've been in the Upside-Down your job has been to find out more about what got you all into this mess. Word is that Naelnine, the individual who had the Orb of Shadows is working for a cult that has recently arrived in Whitedemon named the "Raven's Rebirth." They are trying to recruit or kidnap spellcasters of all types for an unknown purpose.

Barenas,

Since you've been in the Upside-Down your job has been to collect information. You've learned that there is a resistance against the oppressive regime of the city, and there is someone there who has the power to open portals to the mortal realm. If you can make a connection, perhaps you can find a way home. You've heard a rumor that the resistance have a code-phrase to identify each other.

Yuvon,

During your time growing up your tower, you've done a whole lot of laying low. Since you've been in the Upside-Down your job has been to know the easiest way to defend and get out of wherever it is that you are all hiding at any time. You've found a half-collapsed building that has worked, but two other options are available - an old black tower with no door, and the abandoned cellar of a flattened tavern.