

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

**Date:** July 29nd, 2021

**Episode 7:** A Mother's Love

**Campaign Date:** - Hallow 22nd - Thanksgiving 12th 931 (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 Academicians decide they want to penetrate the defenses of the Raven's Rise installation with the help of Dantus and "The Resistance" of Whitedemon to do so. It is set within an underground complex beneath a hill topped with a dark tower. As the episode opens, a member of the resistance who is known as the Cap'n explains with the help of Feeps how the installation is set up. Cap'n explains that the complex is filled with mind-shattering horrors, of which Feeps can surely attest as exhibited by his skittish nature and incomprehensible words.



Rae and Barenas share what they learned about 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. Could this be part of the cultists' plan? They decide to stage their attack as soon as possible to make sure they free the spellcaster prisoners before that happens.

As the resistance moves into place to attack the tower, an evil demon-naga warlock appears on the top of the tower. The vicious monster throws fireballs at the resistance, instantly incinerating both the Cap'n and Feeps. Yuvon charges in the front, taking on the four cultists on the ground. Barenas and Pandora both move in to support the dragonborn, then make their way into the tower to join Robynn who flies up with the help of conjured birds. Rae bolsters his teammates who were harmed by the naga's magic, and finishes the naga with a killing spell.

The Academicians head down the winding stairs of the tower to the cultists' atrium. There they see an array of cultists milling about a raised altar and a statue of an altered image of the Raven Queen. Using a clever combination of illusions, the heroes manage to convince all the cultists that they are under attack and get them to take their weapons and exit the complex. As the cultists leave, Barenas glimpses Deena among the blasphemous faithful. He deftly yanks her

into the illusionary wall. Once the cultists leave, the Academicians bar the doors to the stairs and have the run of the complex.

After some investigation, they realize that the statue is not the mistress of the Upside-Down but rather a corruption to try to co-opt the power of the dead god Nerull. Robynn sees the statue as a portal of sorts to the abyss, and on the other side a flaming pit fiend stares hungrily back as though it is waiting to pass through. Hugh finds that the items on the altar are extremely dangerous and cautions Pandora against touching them. They find some valuables and magic items in a storeroom as well before proceeding through a magical dark portal into the throne room. Barenas instructs Deena to wait for them to return as they investigate it.

Luckily, Rae magically detects the arcane trap installed within the darkness of the portal. Only two adventurers can pass through the portal at a time, as it would attack a third person moving through. Two by two, the heroes enter. First Yuvon and Barenas, then Hugh and Robynn, and finally Pandora and Rae. Inside, a cadre of skeletal warriors protect the otherwise bare throne room for their master, the satyr Jodan. With the help of Rae's magical power over the undead, the heroes manage to defeat the skeletons and make their way down into the catacombs.

In those twisty, dark passages the Academicians encounter a small shrine with a series of paints and unguents on them. Robynn greedily grabs the arcane pigments. They also encounter two vindictive shadows who attack from surprise. Rae's radiant magic once again helps, but one of the shades escapes to warn the master of their arrival.

The heroes finally arrive at the pit above the area identified as the prison. They spring into action, dropping down into the dungeon on ropes, magical birds, and magic. Beneath the complex of the cult, the Academicians find four spellcasters strapped to black, stone chairs that consume their magical power. The villain Nailnine moves to attack while from the back the cult leader Jodan cajoles the heroes to give up, Nerull's demon has already been summoned in the atrium and is already on its way!



Robynn immediately spots her mother - exhausted and broken. She uses her conjured birds to magically fly down and run to her. As Robynn's mother Mae struggles to regain consciousness, the others make the cultists pay. Yuvon has a tough time with the undead that fight on behalf of the cult leaders at first, but Rae once again uses his divine power to sweep the skeletal defenders off the battlespace. Hugh's magic tears into Nailnine, and he frees Leif from his torture and is thanked wordlessly by the dwarf conjurer. The two then combine to strike at their enemies together.

Barenas inspires the Academicians, leading them to victory. First, he shuts down the armored Nailnine with a searing spell, then he engages Jodan in a duel that ends in the cult leader's death. The efforts of the Academicians are not enough, though. Behind them, the gates to the abyss have already opened and a massive fiend is already on its way. It calls out to the Academicians, lusting for their flesh.

Mae's eyes flutter open, focusing on Robynn. "My child! I'm so happy to see you again! You've gotten so big! I'm so proud of you!"

She straightens in fear. "You should not be here. This is a plane of danger. You are the hope that keeps me going. I would be lost without you." Robynn pleads with her mother to return to the material plane and leave the Upside-Down.



Mae wants nothing more than to be reunited with her daughter. Tears stream down her dust-covered face. Robynn realizes that Mae's absence means something more.

"I need to stay. I oppose a man who wishes to take advantage of spellcasters like us. To enslave and turn us against regular thoughtful folk. I want so much to return and just be your mother, but until I'm sure his plans are defeated my place is here keeping him from harvesting all this darkness." Mae continues, "Now I need you to focus. Can you get yourself and your friends back home?"

The towering fiend descends into the dungeon. The Academicians, beaten but not defeated, prepare to defend themselves to the last. Robynn nods. "I can do this Mum."

"Don't forget that I love you very much," Mae whispers "and I'll always be with you, even if I'm not at your side."

Robynn concentrates. There is a blinding flash of light. As Robynn calls on her magic, the promised Aurora of Hope hits the Upside-Down, burning away the darkness, even just for a little bit. It seems to be coming from the prodigy. Mae is amazed. The fiend is banished and the Academicians are returned home. Is Robynn herself the Aurora of Hope, or was the predicted magical celestial event just a fortuitous moment?

Months have passed on the material plane, and the heroes return is met with cheers and hugs from the other members of the Arcane Academy. Several artifacts created at the school are shared with the party. Ellie Finnbuckle is simultaneously relieved everyone is safe and angry with Robynn for her disobedience. In the aftermath, Robynn is grounded immediately. Her father returns that very night and strong words are shared. The Academicians' assault on the cult stronghold had other repercussions. Somewhere in the Plaguelands of Radavan, a wealthy casino owner looks into a crystal ball. He sees the scene through the demon's eyes until a brilliant flash ends his vision. William O'Donall is used to getting his way, but this outcome was more than he could have ever hoped for. He looks up and grins. "Most interesting," he says to himself.