

Campaign/Game: Winter's Splendor: D&D 5e
One Shot: Winter's Splendor
Campaign Date: Jubilee 1st-2nd, 932 (Winter)

Date: December 23rd, 2021

Characters

Vincent Cinderblood, Human Rogue - 3 (Brandon)
Al'tria Elisnore, Gold Elf Paladin - 3 (Brittany)
Zom Redbend, Human Life Cleric of the Nine - 3 (Caleb)
Lord Aloysius MacDucanshire, Halfling Sorcerer - 3 (Josh)
Fennek Ringgold, Halfling Artificer (Luke)
Orpheus, Assimar Bard - 3 (Quinton)

DM: Andrew

Log:

Highport is a scenic former pirate shelter along the cliffs of the Serene Expanse Ocean. It is one of the largest and prosperous ports outside that of the High Elven naval empire. The lower areas of the city are perpetually covered in a thick, dry fog. As such, most who wander the streets do so at their own peril as cutthroats and pickpockets are brazen in the ramshackle lower districts.

The gentry of this naturally scenic but dirty and foggy city are the descendants of the very pirate lords who settled the town. As such, the Highport city guard is a ragtag bunch who is generally more interested in lining their own pockets than in actually keeping the peace. It is only when corruption actually sees the light of day that they are actually forced to step in and punish wrongdoing.

Every year, on the very first day of the month of Jubilee the noble Cassalanter family celebrates the occasion with an elaborate street fair and winter celebration. As chunky flakes of snow lazily drift from the heavens, children play and old people stand by a warm bonfire overlooking the sun setting on the Serene Expanse ocean to the west from the vantage of the Cassalanter's villa. The Generous Crone, the expression of the season of family and sharing, spends time with each child, offering sweets and hugs beaming in her fur-trimmed bright red outfit. Kids play games located in several booths. There is a snowball toss, face painting, and even some ornaments are being created for a tall pine tree erected just for the season. Five booths sell their wares on the closed street. A pair of lovers neck on a bench while a drunken dock worker sings carols to himself just a little too loudly.



Newlywed Katerina Evensun has brought her troubled spouse Vincent Cinderblood to the celebration to relax. The two had forged an unbreakable bond following an unexplainable week they spent in an alien plane. Vincent had saved Katerina, but at the cost of losing an eye and hand.

Fennek Ringgold joins the celebration as well. He meets Vincent's gaze, and the two have a quick chat. They know one another because Fennek was the artificer who provided Vincent's cleverly engineered prosthetics. Fennek is annoyed. He is at the party hoping to find investors in his failing printing concern, but he spots his Snyder Foxfallow giving Ammalia Casalanter a gift of a finely printed copy of "Codex of the Nine," the holy book of the Old Daeva.

Lord Aloysius MacDucanshire joins the celebration as well, heading right toward the man of the house. Victorio is taking more investors for his new venture because he needs more money than originally thought. The money is for an exciting new trade route he is opening up between the west and east coasts of the continent of Radavan passing to the north. Victorio is flanked by his assistant/bodyguard, the high elf Al'tria Elisnore. Al'tria and Aloysius make eye contact and hold a brief but cordial discussion about the celebration and the beautiful weather.

On the balcony of the villa overlooking the celebration in the Cassalanter's courtyard, Orpheus the bard begins to tune his harp. An aging half-elf admiral winks at the Assimar as he makes his way home from the celebration early before nightfall. Zom Redbend visits the carnival last, just wrapping up his shift patrolling the city and helping those in medical need. Zom waves up to Orpheus who had just played at the priest's temple that morning.

Finally, the main event happens. Everyone quiets as the famed opera singer Aria Cavatina emerges and starts singing from the balcony of the ballroom. Orpheus accompanies her with his rich harp music. Her first song is somber, a ballad commemorating those who may be lost but never forgotten.

Orpheus and Aria are attacked on the balcony by a flaming devil. The devils also threaten members of the crowd. Zom saves the Generous Crone. Vincent shoots toward the balcony with his hand crossbow. Al'tria defends Lord Cassalanter. Lord MacDucanshire defends himself, taking on a devil that chased a pesky child named Chungus. Aria is burned badly, and the stench of seared flesh and cindered hair is everywhere. Zom spends some time healing the singer before the Cassalanter's offer the singer a retreat into the villa.

The six partygoers unite looking for answers to who or what triggered the attack. They find a curious book left by Elizerina Cassalanter named *The Wooden Girl*. A page is suspiciously missing from the back. This clue describes how certain child's toys were used or arrayed in some way.

The Highport City Guard roll into the situation and lock the villa down. No one is to enter or leave. This development is interesting because the guards are usually so corrupt they wouldn't do much of anything unless there is a bribe involved. When the six pass Captain Hystus Staget as he threatens Victorio Cassalanter, they suspect something is afoot.

The nobleman from Littleton, Occam McDonnial makes a scene. The six go to Victorio's office. They investigate his ledgers and discover he is awash in red ink. His new venture seems to be cursed to fail, and he needs new cash desperately or else the Cassalanter's banking concern will collapse. They also find an old spellbook amongst some of the Cassalanter's family library things. It seems to be an old tome aimed at summoning devils from hell.

As the partygoers emerge from the office, they meet a pushy kid, a drunk, and the two lovers. The scoundrel Snyder Foxfallow arrives to mock them despite the ruinous state of his trousers following the attack. All these guests follow the heroes to the villa. There, the six decide to split up for a bit. Some head to the ballroom to question the other guests, while others decide to question the Cassalanter's youngest Elizerina about the book.

They meet the other nobles. They realize that Lady Olian Ilast has saucy slogans on her dress written in stylized Infernal. They also reveal that a secret cultist of Asmodeus named Ammalia Ilast once worked to cripple the Highport Navy during the war eighty years ago. This noblewoman disappeared once she was found out. When they put together that Lady Cassalanter's maiden name was Ilast they are very suspicious. They ask more questions and find that she was named for her great-grandmother Ammalia Ilast - the very one who was a secret cultist.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Guise is charmed by Aloysius. The six learn that he "worked over" Lord Cassalanter trying to get back a monetary investment by an unnamed noble. Orpheus questions Elizerina but she's incorrigible. Additionally, her severe and arrogant caretaker "Nana" Rosse does her best to frustrate the Assimar. All that can be determined is that the book was an early midwinter gift given by an unknown benefactor.

Fennek begins to question some more of the nobles, starting with Lord Aught. He learns that he's just a rival banker but that Lord Drum Yarrow was the one who bribed the watch to close everything down in an attempt to recover the invested monies.



A strange summoning circle is found in the Cassalanter childrens' room. The party realizes that this portal must be opened all the way in order for it to be closed, much like a revolving door. As they discuss the merits of that action they are attacked by another cadre of flaming devils. One escapes the room, and the six are spurred to action.

Aloysius threatens the Cassalanter parents, believing that Ammalia or Victoro are complicit. He orders everyone to the ballroom for questioning. In a series of revelations, it comes out that the Cassalanter family is actually very loving and thoughtful, but are suffering under a curse. The Ilast family curse from Asmodeus was inflicted for not continuing the ways of great grandmother Ammalia Ilast. Lady Cassalanter's brother, the former spouse of Lady Olian Ilast paid for the curse with his life. The partygoers realize that the half-opened portal is the result of this curse, and to defeat it they must complete the ritual described in *The Wooden Girl*, defeat the devil within, and close the portal.

The next morning, following a much needed long rest the partygoers visit the Graveyard of the Drowned to try and close the portal and perhaps end the Ilast curse. The Graveyard of the Drowned is a small cemetery dedicated to those lost at sea in a dark corner of Highport.



The portal is configured, and in a blast of ice and cold a huge shadow fiend is summoned. Vincent is shocked, as this is the very monster that kidnapped Katerina and took his hand and eye, but he keeps it together somehow. He engages the monster with his enchanted crossbow, damaging the towering black, void of a devil. Zom strikes at the monster with radiant energy, cutting through the cold and darkness. Al'tria strikes with holy light, and becomes the abomination's main target. Zom manages to heal Al'tria when some of the cold and slashing blows land, knocking the high elf to the ground of the graveyard. Aloysius peppers the monster with fire and lightning, creating a localized rainstorm with a carefully chosen scroll he had tucked away. Orpheus limited the monster's actions with magic, toying with its emotions and harming it with magical insults. Fennek's turret continued to support the group with magic while he landed several arcane pistol attacks as well. As the

battle reached a crescendo, Al'tria raised her greatsword for one final magical strike. The radiant weapon cut through the monster, leaving a cold, dry husk that withered away into dust as the portal was closed forever and the curse lifted.



Following the battle, the partygoers limp back to the Cassalanter estate just in time to see the family made whole in a group hug as Aria Cavatina begins singing once more. This time the anthem is hopeful and upbeat, and the spirits of all the people of Highport are raised for this precious winter time celebration.

Following the events of the midwinter festival, the six partygoers find themselves closer in many ways. Aloysius invests in Fennek's printing operation, keeping the artificer's business afloat. Fennek improves on Vincent's bionics, perhaps creating an integrated lens for the eye to see in the dark. Zom continues being the ambulance travelling healing services for The Nine. He sees Orpheus and Aria off as they leave Highport for their next destination to perform. Al'tria continues serving the Cassalanter family, now as a junior partner rather than just a bodyguard. Aloysius becomes a full partner in Vitorio's plan, finding the investment quite profitable now that the curse has lifted. Similarly, Vincent's nightmares cease but questions remain. Who gave him the lantern with his hand cursed as the candle? What is the artifact's purpose?