



a 5th Edition D&D campaign

SESSION #8

Escape from Feathergale Spire

Last Session...

The heroes and the Feathergale Knights slew the purple wyrm Shadowflame, after first listening to its derogatory spiel about their mortal unworthiness to worship something named “Yan-C-Bin”. Well, that was directed more toward Thurl and the Knights so much as the PCs who were new to the situation and just going along for the thrill ride, plus Hadrian’s goal of killing his old foe.

The dragon’s head was mounted on the wall and the Knights rejoiced and their merriment continued all day, and finally Thurl felt that it was time to introduce the PCs to a new concept. He led them to the roof and showed them through a telescope a cleft in the valley guarded by two crossbow soldiers in blue and white armor. He called it the entrance to the **Temple of the Howling Hatred** where he wanted to introduce them to their venerated **Queen Aelisi**. As honorary Feathergale Knights, the slightly drunk Thurl Merosska felt that they would make fine additions to their clan.



The PCs politely refused, citing that they still have ongoing missions from their factions to discover the missing delegation from Mirabar. At best, Thurl seems coolly receptive to their decision; at worst, he’s going to throw them off the goddamn roof.

The session ended with them in their room with the door locked about 8 o’clock at night, wondering what in the hell they are going to do next. They were SUPPOSED to leave with the Wyndweird musicians in the morning, but now they’re not sure what to do.

Thoughts of stealing the owl come up again, and that is possible but risky, they’ll have to get into the stables and charm it, and the other flying things would go berserk at their presence.

DM Note- PCs leveled to 5th this adventure.



Before they can decide on anything else they hear the spattering of rain outside the wooden shutters to their room, soon followed by the BOOM of lightning. But accompanying the lighting comes a strange red flicker through the slats. They all look at each other warily, and then Hadrian opens the outward swinging shutters.

[DM Note – I have to say that this session was two hours of pure tension that didn't let up until right at the end, and then set the stage for new tension immediately next time.]



A lightning storm of hot rain and red electricity rages over the Sumber Hills. Hadrian extends a hand and touches the water, very warm yes but not scalding. Not yet anyway. As far as they know this is not a natural

phenomenon, and there doesn't seem to be any volcano nearby that might contribute to the bizarre weather.

Hadrian quickly exits the room and sees Thurl standing in the Feast Hall, the windows there flung open as well as they witness the chaos outside. Thunder booms and his features are accentuated by blood red light.

“Beautiful,” he murmurs. “Wondrous. It is here, my brothers! A **fury storm** has come upon us at LAST!”

“But what is it?” asks Hadrian, both mesmerized and terrified by the crimson display of chaos.



Savra puts a hand on the paladin's shoulder.

“A display of Yan-C-Bin’s might. The gods are coming soon my friend, and YOU should be there for the show. With us.”



Well, Hadrian ain’t too sure about that. Brey comes out as well and Serena peeks out, but she’s not willing yet to step into the room of Knights, not if they’re plotting murder!

Many of the Knights are now rushing up to the rooftop level and Lord Commander Thurl gestures toward the door.

“Come friends, I insist, let us witness this miracle from the highest place!”

Serena hears that and quietly closes and locks the door to their room. HELL no.

The Wyndweirds also come shrieking out of their rooms, clad in fluffy night gowns.

“By the gods, what is happening out there? It’s terrifying!”



The Knights ignore them, most already trudging up the steps. Thurl extends a hand and offers Hadrian and Brey to follow them up. Unsure if this is the best decision, they both comply and Thurl and Savra fall into rank behind them. Moaning and flustered, the Wyndwierds return to their room and slam the door. TWO Knights have been left in the Feast Room to keep watch.



BOOM!

Thunder shakes Serena's room again and red light flickers through the slats. She didn't see the others head upstairs, and she's wringing her hands and about to creep out again when she hears something knocking on the wooden window.

Rap-Rap-Rap.

She slowly steps forward, unlatches the lock, flings it open and lurches back, ready to toss magic!

To her shock there is a sopping wet bird man clutching to the outside of the window.



“WAIT!” the creature croaks. “Do not fear me. I am not your enemy. My name is **Crowkakatak**, and you and your companions are in terrible danger. These Feathergale Knights are not what they seem!”

Serena stays her spell, just long enough to let the birdman speak, which she suspects is an aarakocra, to speak. Hot rain wets its feathers and it looks uncomfortable hanging there, but it does not enter the room.

“I have sent dream whispers at night, discerning the true intentions of you and the musicians here. Your nature is not those of the Knights. You are not the cruel, evil men they are that worship an evil beyond this world. You are in grave danger, especially tonight with this blighted storm upon us.”

“Why are you telling me this?” asks Serena, slightly more trusting of the creature now.

“I and my warriors are defenders of that which is true and noble. These worshipers of evil are a menace to all the land, but we know not what to do. But perhaps you can, if you can leave here alive. WARN the others somehow! Escape any way you can!”

And then it drops out of sight before being spotted by any vulture guards.

Serena messages the others who have reached the rooftop and are getting soaked in rain while red lightning crackles around them.

Hadrian and Brey are getting antsy as this seems like an excellent opportunity to have them thrown off the parapets. They both handle the *levitation* potions in their pockets, ready to quaff them in a heartbeat.

There are 6 Knights up here and they have congregated around the north telescope, gazing out over the Sumber Hills and the most concentrated point of chaos in the maelstrom.

“Oh, what a day,” murmurs Thurl. “What a lovely day!” ☺

Serena message spell alerts them to imminent danger, they've got to get out of there! She doesn't have time to explain any further. Someone is BANGING on the door this time, and she doubts it is Crowkatak. She's out of time, someone is going to bust in and drag her out, so she drops back to the open window, casts a levitate spell and drops down, trying to use wet handholds to pull herself around to the front of the tower where the drawbridge is.

On the roof in the rain, Brey quietly nudges Hadrian and slips away while the Knights are distracted. He immediately transforms into a giant spider and begins clambering down the side of the tower, also trying to escape.

Hadrian backs away slowly, thankful that the knights are so preoccupied, jiggles the knob on the door, finds it open, and quietly begins to head down...

...only to find the other two Knights coming up, and jostled between them are the three Wyndweirds, and two robed men behind THEM with feathers woven in their hair!

"Where are you going, *friend?*" asks one of the Knights.

Hadrian is trapped. He backs up the stairwell to the roof and soon finds himself surrounded 8 Knights and 2 cultists and 3 terrified musicians.



Back to Serena.

[DM Note – a huge part of this session was jumping back and forth between characters in quick succession and heightening tension]

She's still using levitation to move horizontal by clinging to wet stones, and she actually glimpses a BIG spider that has clambered down to a slightly open shutter on the main level of the tower, where the drawbridge WAS – but it has been raised. They can't get out the front of the tower without lowering it.

She follows the spider through the window, suspecting it is Brey shapeshifted, and they find themselves in a smallish room cluttered with extra weapons – the armory.



[DM –The spider is just unpainted, not glow in the dark white ☺]

Swords and shields and spears fill the room. Serena listens at the door and tries the knob, but it's locked from the outside. Trying to batter it down would make too much noise, and Brey can't pick locks in spider form, so he transforms back to an elf and pulls out his lockpick tools...

Topside, the rain and wind howls around the Knights and Hadrian and the Wyndwierds (and conveniently the Knights didn't notice that Brey was gone! They also didn't find Serena in her room)].

No matter, they've got some warm bodies to play with, and Thurl Merkossa stands in front of Hadrian the paladin and places both hands on his shoulders.

“Hadrian, you are a brave man. A WORTHY man. A man worthy to join the brotherhood and call yourself a Feathergale Knight. One worthy enough to follow our Queen Aerisi in the coming Age of Maelstroms. I ask you one more time my friend... WILL you join us?”

Hadrian stares into his eyes, knowing full well now the alternative of saying no is a long drop to the bottom of the tower, but he already has a plan to gobble the levitation potion, unless for some reason he's stopped. But he holds off, and slowly nods his agreement.

“I...will join, Lord Commander. What must I do?”

Grinning, Thurl steps back and points to the shortest Wyndweird, the gnome Bardo. “THAT one. Offer him as a sacrifice to our Queen. Throw him the tower in the holy name of Yan-C-Bin!”

The Knights unanimously lace their fingers and bow.

“What?” chokes Bardo. “WHAT? No! What did I do? No, let me go!”

Two Knights grab his arms and pull him closer to Hadrian. The cultists in robes watch on, smiling slightly.

Licking his lips, warm rain running down his face and soddening his clothes, he places both hands on Bardo's trembling face and leans in close.

"Forgive me, small one," he whispers.

Then he pulls out the featherfall potion in a smooth gesture and announces, "A draught to the life that must be offered!" And he quaffs it. *Fuck this falling off towers crap.*

He goes to the next Wyndweird, trying to buy time as he has no CLUE where his companions are or if they've had any success in escaping. Tears fill Lasko's and Tavist's eyes, streaming invisibly with the rain. He returns to the first sacrifice, Bardo. Hadrian nods firmly to the encroaching ring of Knights and Howling Hatred, he's sorely outnumbered up here. It would be a fight to the honorable death, there's no way around it...

...but then Hadrian abruptly BURSTS into motion and bullrushes straight at Thurl Merosska who was standing near the edge of the tower. Strength check vs. Strength check and Hadrian wins by a single point, shoving the Lord Commander off the edge with a fading shriek.

"THURRRRRRLLLLL!" screams Savra. Snarling, she whips out her sword and Hadrian does the same and six Knights pull blades from their scabbards and the cultists brandish knives and two vultures caw and flap their wet wings...

...as Brey unlocks the door to the weapons room.

"Ok," he whispers to Serena. The genasi cracks it to peek out and finds that they are in the initial entry chamber where the eagle battering ram hangs from the ceiling. But they're not alone. Two more cultists in robes with feathers braided in their hair were guarding the closed portcullis, and they immediately see the door open.

"Hey! YOU!" The charge forward, winning initiative and one critically strikes Serena with the dagger. The other one uses a spell on the dagger and it flies toward her as well with unerring accuracy.



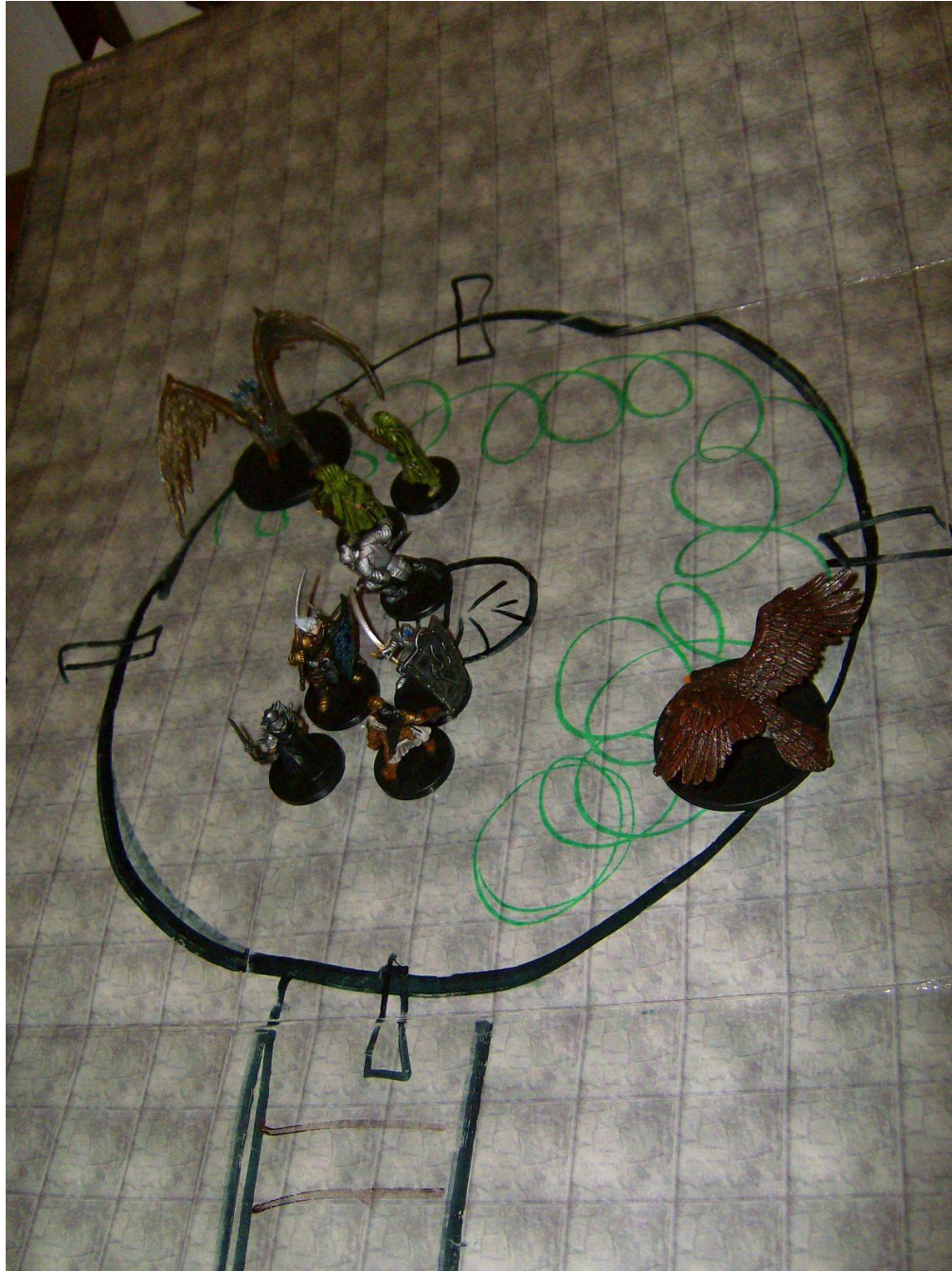
They fight the cultists through the doorway, managing to slay one while Brey darts out and crosses to a lever on the other side. Serena chills the last cultist with a freeze ray, his teeth chattering as he slowly spins to follow Brey - who slams down the lever.

Chains release and the heavy eagle ram swings down, SMASHING into the cultist's sternum, pushing his body across the room in a bloody spray until both ram and man crush into the wooden portcullis. Blood froths from his mouth and his eyes roll into his head, then the battering ram retreats on its trajectory, slowly swinging back and forth until the momentum stops. The man's body collapses to the floor.

"We've got find the mechanism to open the gate!" yells Brey.

On the roof, Savra loses initiative against Hadrian and he bullrushes her TOO and wins an opposed check AGAIN and the second victim of the parapets is tossed from the roof of Feathergale Spire.

More Knights curse his name and close in, but he deflects their steel and tries to maneuver away from the more open parts of the tower.



His sword weaves back and forth, steel clanging on steel as the terrified Wyndweirds flee the combat zone, but Selko takes a brutal opportunity attack from a Knight but manages to reach the door and all three sodden musicians still in their night robes stumble miserably to the next level.

The Hurricane cultist of the Howling Hatred (those are their titles, the tougher guys, *Hurricanes*) summons a funnel of wind to blow Hadrian off the roof, uncaring that it also catches four other Knights in the gale as well! All of them are suddenly pushing against a powerful rage of wind as the rain keeps falling hard and red lightning scorches the sky.

Downstairs, Serena the sorceress finds the gate mechanism and drops the portcullis and then tries to jam it so it would be harder to open. The gate makes a lot of noise as it begins to descend, enough noise that it can be heard on the roof. Hadrian hears it too and he disengages from combat, races to the edge, and with a curt wave “Goodbye, suckers” to the Knights and cultists, many of them completely uninjured, Hadrian steps off the tower....

...but not before he sees something he didn't want to see...Thurl Merosska levitating up from the spot where he'd fallen with none other than Savra clutching to his waist. Thurl sees the paladin drop off and shrieks “GET THEM!”

Downstairs Brey and Serena have already heard two knights charging down the central stairwell and they ready attacks...which in this case turns out to be Serena's newly acquired *LIGHTNING BOLT* spell. As soon as the Knights burst in she unleashes a blast, catching them both but rolling poorly. Brey follows with an entangle spell and they're both snared with vines choking their boots and legs.

The Wyndweirds stumble down right BEHIND the Knights but they're blocking the way out.

Hadrian is floating down from above and lands solidly on the portcullis he heard drop open.





AMAZINGLY, neither side in this chaotic battle is hardly hurt, save one of the Wyndweirds Lasko. But that won't last long. Thurl and the others will soon be down from the rooftop, or mounted on vultures and griffons, and there's no way in hell the PCs can outgun them all at once.

[DM Note – I'm sure some readers are going to guess what happens next. The players didn't see it coming, they were too busy trying not to die!]

They run out into the rain, all six of them, fleeing for the hills, but they've not gone far when they hear flapping wings and SIX humanoid shapes fly up from out of the ravine. The Wyndwierds don't see them coming and clawed talons grab their shoulders and wheel them back over the edge, dropping down into the chasm with horrified shrieks.



Crowkatak lands as Brey and Hadrian draw their weapons, prepared to skewer this new foe and die valiantly in battle

“Tell them!” the birdman croaks at Serena.

“No, stop, he’s a friend! I...I think,” says the genasi. “They’re trying to help!”

Well, this is just getting stranger and stranger, but whatever, combat out here in the open against foes riding flying beasts is a death sentence.

The aarakocra nods to the other two. “Dirtbeak! Whistlewing! Go!”

Crowkatak grabs her by the shoulders and hauls the genasi into the chasm as

well. Dirtbeat and Whistlewing grab Hadrian and Brey within seconds the whole group is soaring clumsily into the ravine as their weight is much more than the birdmen can carry.

Harsh, hot rain pounds down and their vision is blurred and the night black as pitch aside from the occasional burst of lightning. The Lost River is roiling, overflowing its banks, but the birdmen don't head more than a couple of hundred yards down, careening near the cliff to a copse of trees that jut out over a hidden ledge. It's narrow and they have to scramble on their hands and knees, but within seconds the whole group is under a relatively sheltered outcropping of rock completely obscured from above. Anyone searching would have to literally look into the crevice.

The river doesn't make it any easier to access either. It rises higher and higher until they fear it might sweep them out anyway, but it finally levels off. They soon hear cawing shrieks and know that is squadrons of vultures and griffons searching for them, but they don't think they were spotted. Even if they were, by the time the searchers followed them they were already hiding.

The storm eventually ends and the group quietly gets to know each other better once the terror of the past few hours has subsided. The birdmen are known as the Wings of Battle as they call themselves, and they are violently opposed to this cult of Air which has embedded itself in the Valley of Sighs. They've not been here too long, only two weeks, observing and waiting and trying not to let their presence be known. They're aware of the cleft in the wall that leads to the Temple of the Howling Hatred, but it is much too dangerous of a place for them to enter.



“These fiends must be thwarted,” growls Crowkakatak in his odd voice. “They pose a threat to everyone, calling forth abomination from another world. They are ruthless and insane, the lot of them.”

They continue talking into the night until they finally fall asleep to the roar of the Lost River as it savages its banks after the deluge. They wake early to a dim, misty dawn, shivering and cold in the cubbyhole but nonetheless alive. They continue talking and planning, and ultimately the PCs agree that YES they will help the Wings of Battle root out this evil presence, starting with the delusional Feathergale Knights in their Spire.

But how?

This takes more real time discussion, and during it they discover the meaning of the red cape they found in the lair of the purple wyrm last session. Serena used it to find warmth overnight, and by the time she wakes in the morning it has revealed its secrets! It is a **Cape of the Mountebank** and will allow the

Dimension Door spell to be cast once a day in the burst of brimstone smoke like Nightcrawler. This is how some of them might sneak in.

But they just aren't sure how to approach the tower. The guards are surely on high alert and there's no easy access unless they were invisible. Which no one can cast. The vultures and griffons would engage them at once. But later on in the morning something interesting happens – they spot three flying creatures depart the Spire toward the Temple of Howling Hatred, one of which is Thurl's snow white griffon. So three Knights at least have left the tower!

This might be their best chance at taking it, while their defenses are weakened. They ultimately come up with a BRASH plan –they're gonna pull a Han and Chewbacca by having the birdmen fly them close as the PCs are fake-manacled, claiming, "We have your escaped prisoners, sir."

And then BOOM. Fight time. Hell, by the time Thurl gets back there might be a new flag fluttering on the roof!

Each player was given a statblock for one aarakroca. The other three are not going and will stay with the Wyndweirds who are QUITE miserable about these events, save that they are somehow still alive and indebted to the heroes.

So that's the plan, they lick their lips, tighten their straps and oil their blades and prepare for one more daring assault....

Aarakocra #1 "Crowkakatak"

Medium humanoid (aarakocra), neutral good

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 20 (3d8)

Speed 20 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

10 (+0) 14 (+2) 10 (+0) 11 (+0) 12 (+1) 11 (+0)

Skills Perception +5

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Auran

Dive Attack. If the aarakocra is flying and dives at least 30 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a melee weapon attack, the attack deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage to the target.

Actions

Talon. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Parry. As a reaction the creature can raise its AC by 2 against an attack that would have hit it.



NARRAKOON
Bird Titan

Brey
Elf

GUARD
Armed Soldier

SPECIAL ATTACK
Lair/Other

FRIEND
Ally

HADRIAN
Aasimar Paladin

Brey
Elf

Serena
Genasi Sorcerer

Serena
Genasi Sorcerer

ALSO, we're still using the initiative card system, and we all LOVE it. The old d20 system has been replaced by a tense mini-game where anything can happen, and it doesn't really take much time to build the deck. I'm sure we'll get better at it. Lastly, the cards are fully laminated now so they should last forever. I introduced a wild "Power Card" so each round if it comes up, the next attacker does +2 damage if it hits. The neat thing about this system is that it can always be tweaked to add new rules as we deem necessary or fun. Although honestly it works pretty damn well as is and I don't foresee much changing.