

Mini Scenario 11

Painter's Revenge

"So, my dear. Time for you to pay your dues."

Summary

- Painter has to force Flame to give her the book of her own free will because Shadow has put a spell on it that will inflict destruction on anyone who tries to take it by force (using the power of the Phoenix Queen, channelled through Flame). Painter could resist but only by shadow-walking.
- She will try to get Flame in a location where she is helpless – the bottom of a deep, dark well in the middle of a mountain.
- She creates a Trump Trap to capture her. It takes the form of a picture or a Fortune Card.
- *Slight* can detect the magic on the card/picture although he won't know what it does. Is Painter smart enough to lure him away? Yes – she sends a message purporting to be from Cunning.

Setting the Trap

Possibilities (do all of these!).

- *Best* – the heroes acquire a complete Fortune Deck (how?). The Phoenix Queen looks like Flame, but it's a trap. *However*, the rest of the cards work – which means that they can summon (or go to) any avatar, including the Bacchanal (to resolve Wishbone's plot) and the Hermeneutic (who can tell them how to stop the Walker). Is this too powerful? Alternative – a single card traps Flame, but while being rescued by Silly Me they come across and pilfer some of the other cards that Sharra was working on. *Or* Sharra round 3 – she tries to take the book by force (not realising what spell Shadow put on the book) and is forced to retreat when Flame goes nova, letting the heroes pick up the spoils, which could include the cards.
- One of the slaves rescued from Waving Flag's compound is a slightly crazed artist who brings pictures of the "Heroes of Strangerside" as presents. Only one of them has been changed...
- Smuggling: Someone asks them to pick up some Fortune Decks. One of them has an unusual card...
- Heroes are investigating Waving Flag's house? Another location? They find a picture of Flame on the wall... If Flame makes eye contact with it, it captures her.
- One of the heroes finds a card lying on the ground. It shows a picture of the pit. If Flame is in the vicinity, she is sucked through the card/picture.

Characters

Painter
Silly Me

Visions

- An oubliette. Deep underground in the middle of a mountain.
- A lantern and Painter's face leaning over the ledge.
- A girl with bright but ragged clothes, leggings and a traveller's pack on a pole over her shoulder. She offers Flame a key.

The Plot

Opening: Somehow, a picture of a pit is put into Flame's hands. It may be given to her by a trusted associate. It sucks her through and deposits her at the bottom of a pit of grey stone.

Interaction / Conflict: A light appears and Painter looks down on her. "So, my dear. Time for you

to pay your dues. Give me the book and I shall return you to your friends." She explains the situation – she is in a cave in the middle of a mountain "somewhere – I just found it. You can try to escape, but it will do you little good. This realm has none of the portals you people use. Only I can return you to your friends."

Decision: Does Flame give Painter the Book or not? Does she try to destroy it?

Progress: Regardless of what Flame does, Painter leaves her in the pit (either to consider her situation, or as a punishment for withholding the Book from her for so long). Flame can try to figure out something creative to do with her powers that might get her out of her predicament.

Rising Tension: Even if Flame can escape the oubliette, she is trapped in the middle of a mountain with no obvious way out. She can sense its weight bearing down on her. She is hungry and thirsty.

Interaction: As Flame despairs or runs out of things to try, a girl carrying a traveller's pack on a pole suddenly appears. "Hello, you look trapped," she says. "Do you want to leave?" Flame can talk to Silly Me, who is helping her because she helped the Nippers.

Climax and Resolution: Flame has little choice but to accept the help that Silly Me gives. Silly me gives her a key that opens a hidden door that definitely wasn't previously there. She emerges in the Cellars (or perhaps on the roof of the Walker's Ark, if Flame wants to talk more). If she gave away the Book, she may sense that she made a horrible mistake and betrayed her master. If she didn't, she realises that Painter will probably try again...

[Problem: This is very railroaded from the players' point of view. Are there ways to introduce agency?

- Flame can do a divination, which could attract Silly Me's attention.
 - Destroying the Book ought to be an option, but a) it's a bit obvious, b) the Book is too powerful to be destroyed by single-element magic or by simple physical force. Unfortunately Painter won't be fooled – she knows what the Book is and won't take Flame's threats to destroy it seriously.
 - Perhaps the mountain actually is in the Thousand Spheres (maybe because Painter fears that taking Flame outside them will unravel her and set off the trap on the Book?). If Flame can come up with a plausible way of getting out of the oubliette, she might be able to make her out of the cave and find a Gate. But then it would take at least a week for her to get back to Everway, which I don't want to do. Use this option if she refuses Silly Me's help.
 - Maybe the cave under the mountain contains something that Flame might want? It could certainly have a cave beast that Flame could kill.
 - Is there anything that Slight or Wishbone could do with the expired trump? They can see Flame in the pit, but neither has anything like the level of skill necessary to contact her. At best they can make the card go slightly cold. Wishbone can sense that the picture is linked to the place it portrays.
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Hooks

This could be tricky to initiate, particularly if the players remember Painter's warning about likenesses and are suspicious of pictures. The parameters:

- Painter has made trumps of Flame and of Slight, whom she senses could be an irritant. She has been using them regularly and knows what they say and where they are.
- She has also made location trumps for the pit, a quiet corner of the cellars and a back alley in Old Town. [Note this would be very difficult – Everway, like Amber, is hard for shadow walkers and trump users to get into or out of. Better for internal consistency if the trap can be delivered from another sphere by, say, smuggling.]
- For the trap to work, Flame must look at the front of the picture and be less than six feet

away.

- Painter is smart enough to lure Slight away with a fake note from Cunning before placing the picture. She does not know about Wishbone's abilities, so Wishbone could spot that the picture is magical and has a link to Flame.

Possible starting points

- One of the slaves rescued from Waving Flag's compound, **Trickling Brook**, is a slightly crazed artist who brings pictures of the "Heroes of Strangerside" as presents. Only one of them has been changed...
- Smuggling: Someone asks them to pick up some Fortune Decks (where from?). One of them has an unusual card... OR the heroes find the Fortune Deck in the Palace during the soiree or Waving Flag's compound, OR Immortal Light's office or home (if the heroes discuss what they are going to do when Flame or Slight is present)
- [This one I like.] If Flame is among the heroes trying to find the secret door in the **Platinum Chamber labyrinth**, she encounters something on the floor or on a wall. It is face-down / turned to the wall but when it is turned over...
- Perhaps least interesting, but most likely to be effective: One of the Black Daggers finds the picture lying on the floor in the Cellars, and brings it to the heroes as an Odd Thing.

What if the heroes spot the trap?

- Painter can disguise a trump trap as anything she likes, but it's harder. If Slight or Wishbone gets to see the trap, they could recognise it.
- Painter can paint other characters' likenesses and set traps for them.

The Trap

- It is a small oil painting, about 7 inches high by 5 inches across, in a plain wooden frame that is half an inch thick. Removing the back will show that the picture was painted on canvas.
- It depicts a shadowy mass of grey and blacks with a lighter grey circle in the centre. At first it appears to be an abstract design, but careful examination will reveal that it actually a picture of a 30' by 10' deep oubliette seen from below. Once you see it, the picture is astonishingly realistic. It will only be obvious to Flame, however.
- Slight and Wishbone may be able to detect that it is magical, but the type of magic is unfamiliar. On a lucky FC, Wishbone can spot that Flame's spirit is tied to it in some way [this could abort the whole scenario, so unlikely].
- The trigger conditions are: Flame within 3 feet; Flame is carrying the Book; Flame looking at the picture.
- If the trigger conditions are met, things happen very fast (in about a second).
 - Non-magical bystanders: Flame's body suddenly strobes in rainbow colours and vanishes. If she was holding it, the painting clatters to the floor.
 - Slight: The painting suddenly erupts in a tsunami of magic, quite similar to Gate magic. It reaches out to Flame and engulfs her, then vanishes back *through* the painting.
 - Wishbone: Flame's spirit is sucked into the painting down a path that was prepared for it and disappears.
- Assuming someone picks up the painting, they will see the back of Flame's head and her shoulders, looking up at the mouth of the pit.
- The picture changes when nobody is looking at it, reflecting what Flame is doing. Observers may also see Painter standing at the mouth of the pit (and Flame's probable attempt to skewer her with a fire knife.). Slight will sense that she is looking through the card straight at him.
- The heroes will want to magically examine the painting, but can find out little about it. Even experts at the Crookstaff covens will be stumped. The magic does not conform to any known type. It is certainly Gate magic of some sort, but transition between the two locations appears to be instantaneous, which everyone had thought was impossible. The security implications for Everway are alarming. If raised with the authorities, they will want to know who this

Painter is and what she wants.

- The painting resists all attempts to magically activate it again. If anyone with high Water score concentrates really hard on it, it becomes cool to the touch.
- The painting can be readily destroyed by any normal means.

The Pit

- Flame's experience is of a rapid but smooth transition from one location to another. The painting fills to expand her field of vision and comes to life around her. At the same time the air turns cold and damp, the smells of the cellar (or wherever she was) fade away and the ground turns rocky under her feet.
- She is in a 10' wide by 30' deep pit. She can sense that she is deep underground.
- The walls are smooth and unclimbable. They are made of grey granite, which Flame knows from experience is very hard to heat up. It will take hours of concentration to get it to red hot.
- There is a very faint light from the room above, which is clearly a cave.
- Flame has whatever she was carrying when the trap went off. This includes her fire blades, ensigiled coins, chalk, her three books, some oil flasks and anything else reasonable (rope seems unlikely unless the heroes were on a job).

Painter

- After a minute or two, Flame notices the circular entrance above begin to brighten. A young face framed by blond hair leans over the edge. It's Painter. She is carrying a lantern in one hand and a small flat object in the other.

"Oh good, you found my picture."

[She is fair-haired and very young, barely out of adolescence, but her expression and the confident way in which she carries herself suggest someone far older. Her dress is of rich silk and fashioned in an elaborate style that you have never seen before, with a tight-fitting bodice, cinched waist and billowing skirt that sweeps to the floor. The skirt has lots of pockets.]

- Flame will probably try to skewer her with a fire blade at this point. It's a challenging throw – 30' is long range and throwing it straight up is unusual. On a good FC she can manage it, however.
- Assuming she succeeds, the knife goes spinning towards Painter's face. She flips up the object in her hand and the knife vanishes, reappearing about 2 feet off the ground right where Flame is. On an unlucky FC, Flame gets wounded by her own blade (-1 Earth).
- Flame could also throw a fire coin up – lucky FC to catch Painter. "Ow! You little minx! Stop that at once, you annoying little shadow!" If Flame persists, Painter will withdraw – "Very well, you can starve to death and I'll just take the book from your lifeless corpse!"

"So, my dear. Time for you to pay your dues. Give me the book and I shall return you to your friends."

She explains the situation – Flame is in a cave in the middle of a mountain "somewhere – I just found it. You can try to escape, but it will do you little good. This realm has none of the portals you people use. Only I can return you to your friends. So just hand over the book and we can all be on our way."

[Why do you want the Book?] "That is none of your concern. Your master promised it to me and I want it."

[How do I get the Book to you?] "Here – use this." Another small painting lands on the floor. It shows a small, well-furnished study. "Put the book on the floor and point the painting at it."

- Flame can try to use the card herself, but Painter will point out that the picture only works for the book "just as the picture that brought you here only works for you."
- Flame can threaten to destroy the book. "No, I don't think so," says Painter. "The Book is far too powerful to be destroyed so easily." Flame will find this to be the case – the book is

merely slightly charred by her best efforts to burn it and the pages are untearable.

- If Flame refuses or pretends not to have the book, Painter's patience snaps.
"Foolish little shadow! Very well then – let us see if starvation and thirst will teach you wisdom."
- If Flame gives in and dispatches the book, Painter gives a sigh of satisfaction.
"Finally you show wisdom! Well, I said I'd let you out, but to be honest you have put me to a lot of inconvenience, and I'm feeling a little tired. I'll release you eventually. If I remember."
- Either way, the light recedes, leaving Flame in the dark.

Painter:

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A Hopeless Situation

- Flame can attempt to escape the pit by any reasonable method. If she does happen to have some rope on her or can make some, there is a nearby stalagmite that she could, on a lucky FC, manage to catch.
- The walls are too smooth for climbing, but there are tiny cracks. She could use her coins to blast out finger holes. However, she has a limited number of coins. FC to see if she can get to the top.
- She can also roughen the surface by heating it up and cooling it down. But this will take hours.
- Even if Flame does manage to get out, it doesn't help much. She is in a cave complex deep within a mountain. The passages wind to and fro but there is no obviously available surface exit. Coins and oil could be used as primitive explosives but on an unlucky FC cause a cave-in that traps her. Only a very lucky FC (such as the Fool – Freedom) will enable to reach the surface, which is a non-descript mountain region.
- There is water but no food.
- She could do a divination to seek advice [this may not work as someone has to pay her – *check with Alice*]. A question like "where is the nearest way out?" returns the answer "Here". "What must I do to escape?" returns the answer "It is done". "Where is Painter?" returns the answer "She is everywhere".

Silly Me

- At an appropriate point (Alice running out of ideas or deciding that her character has had enough or doing a divination), a sound echoes through the cave. It is someone humming a cheerful travelling song.
- A face looks over the edge (if Flame is still in the pit) or emerges out of the darkness. She is a young woman with mismatched blue and brown eyes and multi-coloured hair. She is dressed in colourful rags and has a travelling pack consisting of a red-spotted handkerchief tied to a stick. *She looks like the statue of the dancing woman in the Court of Fools.*

"Hello, you look lost," she says. "Do you want some help?"

- If Flame is still in the pit, SM lets down a rope which she can climb up. She goes wandering off.

["Who are you?"] "I'm me."

["What do you do?"] "I travel. Everywhere"

["What is your name?"] "Oh, Silly Me... [she looks around] It's very dark in here. Why is it always dark underground?"

["Have you seen Painter?"] "Painter? [bright smile] I'm a painter! I paint things. Would you like to see?" [She opens her pack and takes out a Fortune Deck.] "I painted this. Pictures of my friends. See? That's Mother Harvest. That's the Hooded Councillor. I haven't seen him recently. He's smelly. Why are cockatrices always smelly? I gave my pictures to the wanderers and the dragon people and they took them everywhere. And my friends became more real."

["How did you find me?"] "I sensed what you did... You're nice. You helped my friends. The ones in the ark who want to be free."

["Are you an avatar?"] "The Hermeneutic called me that once. He said we were all avatars. He's clever. I haven't seen him for ages. But he's hard to find."

Random Silly Me questions:

"Where does the water come from?"

"Why does the water go down rather than up?"

"Why is the rock grey?"

"Why is this cave on the inside rather than the outside?"

"Why can't you just go backwards to before you were in the pit?"

"Why isn't the floor soft and squidgy?"

"Why aren't there any animals here? I like animals. Except the Hooded Councillor, of course. Or Alurax. [whispers] She's really a dragon, you know."

Going Home

At an appropriate time (either when Flame asks about going home or when the conversation stops being interesting):

- They turn a corner and Silly Me stops. "Oh look, a door. You should go through. It will take you back to your friends."
- There is, indeed, a door, standing incongruously in the middle of a rock wall.

"Thank you for looking after my friends. Oh, and watch out for the Mist. It's coming and it will trap you if you're not careful."

[Should Flame think to ask what to do about the Mist:] "Run before it. [Assuming Flame did not give the book to Painter] Or use the Pearl and the Book."

- The door opens onto utter blackness. Stepping through will bring Flame out in the Cellars. There is no sign of a door behind her.

Aftermath

- Flame may have acquired a picture of Painter's study and could do a divination to find it. It's in Rath...
- After much careful study, Slight and Wishbone may find a way to use the card. They would need to send Flame's Book through and then follow it.
- If the heroes took the trap to the Crookstuffs, they may be called in for questioning about whether Painter is likely to be a significant threat to Everway. What are the limits of her powers?

If Flame gives away the Book

- If Flame gave the book to Painter, she feels a sense of loss. Did she do the right thing? *She has faced her fate (Duty/Blind Obedience). Get Alice to pick a new Fate card.*
- Fighting the Mist will be much harder. It can be done with the Pearl alone, but its protective effects will rapidly fade and will need constant renewal day and night. Slight and Wishbone would have to work together.
- If the Book leaves the 1000 Spheres, the Founders' efforts will never come to fruition.
- Painter could keep the book in her study while she goes off to do other things. This could give the heroes an opportunity to steal it back.

If Flame does not give away the Book

- Painter will be back for round 3. This could consist of
 - A direct attack on Flame through her trump.
 - An attempt to steal the book and deal with the consequences. Flame will lose a feather (and some of her powers) but Painter will be forced to leave the 1000 spheres.

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