

Session 46: The Smallest Vessel Wins Big

Date: Mar 31st, 2026

Summary

The party departed from the Rose Theater, battered and weary, choosing to head directly back to Emberwood Village rather than risk a full sweep over the Cathedral of Saint Vitruvio. The lingering corruption of delirium had taken its toll, and Yazzy in particular showed visible signs of contamination — a sickly teal pallor creeping into her complexion as the group made their way out of the city. Despite the temptation to investigate further, the group agreed that discretion was the wiser course, though one member broke away briefly to conduct a quick aerial reconnaissance of the cathedral before rejoining the others.

From the air, the cathedral presented a sobering picture of consolidated power. Griffins circled and landed at the site, confirming that the Silver Order had firmly seized control of the church. The great beam of holy light still pierced the purple delirium haze above the city, creating a stable eye of the storm around it — though it no longer carried the same dramatic shock it once had, having settled into an eerie permanence rather than a blazing declaration. Silver Order troops had established a fortified corridor between the gates and the main road, and to the north of the cathedral, a squadron of knights was actively engaged in combat against a cluster of Haze Hulks lumbering through the streets. There was little else to glean from the sky, and the scout rejoined the party as they pressed on toward home.

Back in Emberwood Village, the absence of both the Silver Order and the Hooded Lanterns had left a curious vacuum of authority. The Caravan Court had grown cautiously lively in their absence, merchants and traders moving with a little more confidence than they had in weeks. It was here that Armin Gainsbury, a friendly dwarf merchant the party had contracted long ago, found them upon his return from a distant journey. He carried with him a letter and a deed from the family of Ludwig von Graff — the man whose body the party had once carefully preserved and arranged to be shipped home — granting the party ownership of property as a gesture of profound gratitude. The group also took a moment to reflect on past dealings, recalling that Syndle had once shared a private vision of the dragon Argonath with Lucretia Mathias, the enigmatic leader of the Falling Fire, and that she had confessed to sensing a deep connection between Syndle and the dragon from the very moment they had met.

Word had also spread through the Skull & Swords tavern of an open challenge posted for the following night — a chance for any bold soul to step into the fighting pits of Buckledown Row and face the stone giant Yormall, the reigning champion. Syndle's eyes went immediately to the notice, and the reason was personal: hanging above the pit among the trophies of defeated champions was the magical axe of his mentor, Bondor Brood Grind, known as the Flying Axe. Yormall had taken it from him in a previous bout, and Syndle had never forgotten. The party agreed — they would go, and they would take the night to rest and prepare before the fight.

Buckledown Row greeted them with its usual atmosphere of barely contained chaos — a block of rowdy taverns watched over by the Queen's Men, where tradition demanded every visitor drop a tithe into the central well before conducting any business. The party descended into the underground fighting pits to find the stands already packed with representatives of the city's most notorious factions: the Pins and Clubs, the Rose and Thorns, the Dogs, the Wounded Hearts, and the shadowy Catacomb Cobras all occupied their own corners of the arena. Notable faces dotted the crowd — Blackjack Mel sat ringside, Stubbs lurked nearby, and high in the upper stands, the Rat Prince watched with quiet interest. Above the ring, dozens of weapons hung from chains in the rafters, and among them, Syndle could feel the pull of his mentor's axe — one of only a handful of truly magical weapons on display.

The anti-magic shell surrounding the ring meant that no outside interference could reach a combatant once the fight began, but the party had been clever — Syndle entered the arena already bolstered by powerful enchantments, his speed heightened and a steady flow of protective energy renewing itself with each passing moment of the fight. The crowd recognized him from a previous victory, and cheers broke out as he was announced. Syndle played to it, performing acrobatic flourishes as he sized up his enormous opponent. Yormall, for his part, was unimpressed — the stone giant had held the championship for a long time and had no intention of surrendering it to a kobold.

The fight was fierce. Yormall's massive magical stone mace crackled with cosmic energy, and when it connected, the force of the blow sent a disorienting pulse through Syndle's body. But Syndle was relentless — he teleported across the arena in a burst of magical rage, closing the distance in an instant and landing a devastating critical strike that staggered the giant. The two traded blows across the ring, Yormall swinging wild with thunderous force while Syndle darted and weaved, his acrobatic instincts keeping him just ahead of destruction. In the end, it was Syndle who stood over the prone giant, delivering a precise and controlled finishing blow — non-lethal, deliberate, and punctuated by a spectacular backflip that sent the crowd into an uproar.

The Queen of Thieves herself rose to congratulate the new champion, praising his showmanship and his skill in equal measure. She invited him to claim any weapon from the rafters as his prize, and Syndle did not hesitate — he pointed to the axe of Bondor Brood Grind, and the chain mechanism slowly lowered it into his waiting hands. Somewhere in the stands, Knuckles watched with unmistakable pride, though the delirium contamination had clearly worsened since they had last spoken. He mentioned, quietly and with unusual confidence, that he had an appointment coming — one he believed would finally address his condition. The hint of the Falling Fire hung unspoken in the air between them as Syndle gripped his mentor's axe for the first time.

Memorable Moments

"Syndle 'Little Dragon' defeats Yormall the stone giant champion with a non-lethal finishing blow and a 17 acrobatics backflip, claiming his mentor's legendary axe from the rafters as the crowd erupts."

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The kobold barbarian reclaims a deeply personal trophy — his mentor's weapon — by becoming the new champion of the fighting pits

"The party jokes about casting Slow on Syndle to make the fight against the stone giant 'more fair', and someone suggests jumping the railing immediately without even announcing himself."

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Pre-fight banter as the party coordinates buffs for Syndle, devolving into suggestions to sabotage their own teammate

"Knuckles, visibly proud but deeply contaminated by delirium, cryptically mentions he has an upcoming appointment he believes will help cure his condition — hinting at the Falling Fire."

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After Syndle's victory, the party's attention turns to Knuckles' worsening delirium contamination and his mysterious plan to seek a cure

Scenes

Departure from the Rose Theater

The party prepares to leave the Rose Theater for Emberwood Village, dealing with the lingering effects of delirium contamination.

- The party decides to head directly back to Emberwood Village rather than performing a full flyover of St. Vitruvio's.
- Ned and Yazzy make constitution checks for delirium contamination, with Yazzy failing both rolls and gaining two levels of contamination.
- The group discusses the potential benefits of the Falling Fire faith in managing their growing contamination.

Aerial Reconnaissance of the Cathedral

A party member performs a quick flyby of the Cathedral of Saint Vitruvio to assess the current military situation.

- Griffins are seen landing at the cathedral, confirming the Silver Order has established firm control over the site.
- The holy beam of light remains in place, creating a stable eye of the storm within the purple haze, though it appears less dramatic than before as it has settled.
- Silver Order troops are observed securing a corridor between the gates and the main road.
- A squadron of Silver Order knights is spotted engaging Haze Hulks in the streets north of the cathedral.
- A perception check yields only a 10, revealing nothing beyond the obvious landmarks and troop movements.

Return to Emberwood Village and a Letter from the Past

The party returns to Emberwood Village, noting the shift in power dynamics, and receives a letter and deed from the family of Ludwig von Graff.

- The party arrives back at Emberwood Village, noting that the Silver Order and Hooded Lanterns are largely absent due to the ongoing conflict.
- The Caravan Court is described as being more active and less fearful with the Silver Order's presence diminished.
- Armin Gainsbury returns from a trip and delivers a letter to the party from the family of Ludwig von Graff, whose body the party had previously arranged to be shipped home.
- The party learns they have been granted a deed to property as a reward for returning Ludwig's body to his family.

- The characters discuss their current magical attunements, realizing most of them are at their limit of three attuned items.
- The party reflects on past conversations with Lucretia Mathias, recalling that Syndle had privately shared his vision of the dragon Argonath with her, and she revealed she had sensed a connection between them when they first met.
- The party considers their next moves, noting that Aldor the Immense has left and they have been relying on Academy connections for enchantments.

The Champion's Challenge

The party discovers a notice for an open challenge against the stone giant champion in the fighting pits and prepares for the bout.

- A poster at the Golden Swords announces an open challenge against Yormall, the stone giant champion of the fighting pits.
- Syndle expresses interest in fighting the champion to reclaim the magical axe of his mentor, Bondor Brood Grind, which hangs as a trophy above the pit.
- The party plans to support Syndle with spells like Haste and Heroism before the match, since outside interference is blocked by the anti-magic shell once inside.
- The group takes a long rest before heading to Buckledown Row for the fight.

Arrival at Buckledown Row and the Fighting Pits

The party arrives at the notorious Buckledown Row, navigating the local customs before descending to the underground fighting pits.

- The party discusses the tradition of paying a tithe into the well upon entering Buckledown Row as tribute to the Queensmen.
- They consider throwing items taken from slain Queensmen into the well as their offering.
- The party descends to the underground fighting pits, noting the presence of various criminal factions in the crowd: the Pins and Clubs, Rose and Thorns, the Dogs, the Wounded Hearts, and the Catacombs.
- Notable figures are spotted in the stands, including Blackjack Mel, Stubbs, and the Rat Prince.

- Syndle uses magical awareness to scan the weapons hanging above the pit, identifying a handful as magical, including the axe of his mentor Bondor Brood Grind.
- The party notes the anti-magic shell surrounding the ring, which prevents outside spellcasting from affecting combatants inside, though buffs applied before entering remain active.
- Syndle is recognized as a previous pit winner, granting him the right to challenge the current champion directly.

The Championship Bout at the Fighting Pits

Syndle 'Little Dragon' enters the arena to challenge Yormall, the stone giant champion, in a high-stakes duel within an anti-magic field.

- Syndle enters the arena with magical enhancements including Haste and Heroism active before crossing into the anti-magic zone.
- Syndle leaps into the arena, performing acrobatic maneuvers to win over the cheering crowd.
- Yormall the stone giant strikes Syndle with a magical mace that emits cosmic radiation, causing disadvantage on Syndle's next attack.
- Syndle enters a magical rage and teleports across the arena to close the distance with the giant.
- Syndle lands a critical blow against the stone giant, staggering him.
- The stone giant retaliates with heavy bludgeoning strikes, but Syndle's resilience keeps him in the fight.
- Syndle executes a final series of attacks, knocking the giant prone and delivering a non-lethal finishing blow with a tricky acrobatic maneuver, scoring a 17 on acrobatics.
- The crowd erupts as Syndle is declared the new champion of the pits.
- The Queen of Thieves congratulates Syndle and allows him to claim a weapon of champions from the rafters.
- Syndle points to the magical axe of his mentor Bondor Brood Grind; the mechanism lowers the chain and the axe is delivered to him.
- Knuckles expresses pride in Syndle's victory despite his own ongoing struggle with delirium contamination, and mentions he has an appointment soon that he believes will help his condition, hinting at the Falling Fire.

NPCs

Armin Gainsbury

A friendly dwarf merchant who returned from a trip to deliver a letter and a property deed to the party on behalf of the von Graff family, as thanks for returning Ludwig von Graff's body to his kin.

Lucretia Mathias

The leader of the Falling Fire who resides at the crater. It is recalled this session that she previously spoke privately with Syndle about his vision of the dragon Argonath, sensing a connection between them when they first met.

Blackjack Mel

A lieutenant of the Queen's Men who was present watching the championship match from the stands of the fighting pits.

Stubbs

A thuggish associate of the Queen's Men who was present at the fighting pits during the championship bout.

Yormall

The stone giant champion of the fighting pits who wields a massive magical stone mace capable of emitting cosmic radiation and causing disadvantage on those it strikes. He was defeated non-lethally by Syndle in the championship match.

Knuckles

Syndle's uncle who watched the championship fight with pride. He is heavily contaminated by delirium and mentions he has an upcoming appointment he believes will help treat his condition, hinting at the Falling Fire.

Bondor Brood Grind

Syndle's mentor, known as 'the Flying Axe', whose magical axe was held as a trophy in the fighting pits until Syndle reclaimed it by defeating the current champion.

Rat Prince

A notable figure observed watching the championship fight from the upper stands of the fighting pits.

Locations

Rose Theater

The starting point of the session where the party recovers and prepares to travel back to Emberwood Village.

Cathedral of Saint Vitruvio

Currently occupied by the Silver Order; it features a massive beam of light that parts the delirium haze like the eye of a storm, though it appears more settled and less dramatic than when first observed. Silver Order troops hold a corridor between the gates and the main road.

Emberwood Village

The party's home base, currently seeing a resurgence of activity in the Caravan Court while the Silver Order and Hooded Lanterns are drawn into the conflict in the city.

Buckledown Row

A lawless block filled with bars and overseen by the Queensmen, where visitors are expected to pay a tithe into a central well. Home to the underground fighting pits.

Fighting Pits

An underground arena beneath Buckledown Row featuring an anti-magic shell around the ring that prevents outside interference, with the weapons of fallen champions displayed high above. Site of Syndle's championship victory over Yormall.

Items

Deed to von Graff Estate

A legal document granting the party ownership of property, delivered by Armin Gainsbury on behalf of the family of Ludwig von Graff as gratitude for returning his remains to them.

Twilight

A magical sword once wielded by one of St. Brenna's paladins. It is recalled this session that Tark previously traded it to Lucretia Mathias in exchange for the Belt of the Slothful Hill Giant.

Belt of the Slothful Hill Giant

A magical belt obtained by Tark in exchange for the sword Twilight, as recalled during the party's discussion of past dealings with Lucretia Mathias.

Mace of Warning

A magical weapon held by one of the party members that prevents the party from being surprised, discussed during the group's conversation about their attuned magic items.

Yormall's Stone Mace

A massive magical weapon wielded by the stone giant champion of the fighting pits. It deals heavy bludgeoning damage and emits cosmic radiation, causing disadvantage on the next attack of those it strikes.

Bondor's Axe (The Flying Axe)

A magical axe formerly belonging to Syndle's mentor Bondor Brood Grind, known as 'the Flying Axe'. It had been hanging as a trophy in the fighting pits after Bondor was defeated by Yormall. Syndle claimed it as his prize for winning the championship bout, lowered from the rafters by a chain mechanism.

Spells

Haste

Cast on Syndle before he entered the anti-magic ring, granting him increased speed, a bonus to armor class, advantage on certain saving throws, and an additional weapon attack per turn. The party debated the exact rules for how many attacks the hasted action grants, settling on one extra weapon attack.

Heroism

Cast on Syndle to provide him with a continuous source of temporary hit points at the start of each of his turns during the championship duel, functioning as a minor regeneration effect throughou

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