

The chronicles of *Wild Hollow*

HIGHERION DAY

PART ONE

A **Shouting Is Funny** production.

Written by Harvey Badger and Christian Powlesland

Sound design and composition by Christian Powlesland

Artwork by Harvey Badger

Sound effects sourced from ZapSplat.com

www.shoutingisfunny.com

shoutingisfunny@gmail.com

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SCENE 1 - LAMORBEY FOREST. EXT. DUSK.

SFX: Forest sounds. Birds tweeting, wind in the trees. Approaching footsteps of Pervis Brittle.

NARRATOR A rosy sky glowed above the treetops of Lamorbey Forest, drawing long shadows through the summer grass. Pervis Brittle strolled the dusty path towards his manor house, a copy of the day's Hollow Herald newspaper folded under his arm. The grey-haired rabbit was eager to see the headlines, with the Highperion Day election fast approaching.

VOLE You seen the polls today, Senator? Oooh, not looking so good!

PERVIS Nothing's decided until Highperion Day, my good man!

VOLE 2 We can always count on you for optimism, Senator!

VOLE Whether we want it or not!

SFX: The voles laugh together.

NARRATOR The rabbit's well-practised smile dropped as he turned his back. He itched his fur as a familiar anxious sweat began to take hold.

PERVIS Just keep smiling, Pervis old boy, that's the name of the game.

NARRATOR He continued through the woods. Daylight was almost gone. It was a quiet evening. He arrived at the manor gates. They were open.

PERVIS Figgis? Are you there? You've left the gates open.

SFX: Gate shutting.

NARRATOR The rabbit headed up the drive, looking around for any signs of the staff.

PERVIS Where is everyone? They haven't lit the lanterns.

SFX: Crack of twigs. Pervis gasping, and turning towards the noise.

NARRATOR He heard a crunch. It was now almost night. The rabbit peered into the growing dark.

PERVIS Who's there? Figgis, I hope you aren't playing some kind of practical joke...

THE PLAGUE I'm afraid it's no joking matter.

NARRATOR The voice came from the shadows, passing through the rabbit's bones like a cold wind.

PERVIS Who are you? Show yourself. Do you know who I am?

THE PLAGUE Who you were, Senator. Who you were...

SFX: A whistling blow dart through the air, colliding with Pervis, who cries out and lands hard on the dirt. A final breath from his lungs.

NARRATOR From the darkness, a feather dart flew through the air, striking the squinting rabbit in the chest. He was propelled across the porch, landing in a crumpled heap in the dirt.

SFX: The birdsong becomes echoing and ghostly.

NARRATOR The moon was shining now, its milky glow reflecting back in the Senator's lifeless eyes.

TITLE SEQUENCE

MUSIC: 'The Chronicles of Wild Hollow: Highperion Day (Main Theme)'

SCENE 2 - HIGH TOWER STREETS. ETX. DAYTIME.

SFX: Bustling city streets. Passing traffic.

NARRATOR High Tower throbbed with an unmistakable energy. Creatures moved en masse through the streets, everyone discussing the same thing. Three days until Highperion Day. And now... Another murder.

SFX: Bert and Gracie's footsteps.

BERT We won't have anyone left in the running at this rate.

GRACIE Nasty business all this dying, murdering and such.

BERT I liked Pervis, and all.

GRACIE He was old hat, Bert. Rest his soul.

BERT That being said, The Four Tunas deserve the position more than anyone.

GRACIE Don't be stupid, we've all seen the polls. Even before this mess, PDP had it in the bag.

ARTHUR 'Scuse me!

BERT Nah, that's all just big talk. Mark my words. Four Tunas.

ARTHUR Hello!

GRACIE Well, there's no way Vandersplat will be voting for them, that's for sure!

ARTHUR Sorry, can I just squee-

BERT Well yeah, that goes without saying.

NARRATOR As the ferret and the zebra debated furiously, a momentary gap appeared in the crowd. Through it slipped a rather

flustered owl. He carried a stack of papers under his wing, his eyes darting back and forth as he battled towards his destination.

ARTHUR Sorry, but I really need to just... Nyah!

SFX: A scuffle of footsteps as Arthur rushes forwards.

NARRATOR With a final grunt of effort, he forced his way past a hippopotamus, who was busy pinning her umpteenth poster to the nearest lamppost.

SFX: The tapping of a hammer on nails.

NARRATOR In a strong but sensible font, it read: “PDP - Skies, Land and Sea.” The owl glanced at the poster, before approaching the double doors ahead, a grandiose mural of a stork mid-flight emblazoned above.

CYRIL Flooding! Endless flooding. Water everywhere. Crops. Homes. Destroyed! And they do nothing! Nothing!

NARRATOR A quivering squirrel wailed from the top of the steps. The owl smiled towards the squirrel in what he hoped was an encouraging and supportive way. Then, with a quick straightening of his tie, he entered the office of the Hollow Herald.

MUSIC: Transition, Hollow Herald theme.

SFX: An elevator ding. Doors grinding open. Whispering voices from across the room. Traffic drifting in from an open window.

NARRATOR He emerged into the bullpen. An excitable crowd was gathered at the far end of the room. The owl hurried across to his desk in the corner, setting down his papers, his attention fixed on the huddle of reporters.

PEARL You got the coffees in yet, Arthur?

ARTHUR Good morning to you too. And no, Pearl, I do more around here than just fetch coffee for people. Listen, what’s going on?

NARRATOR Pearl was a rather vacant tabby cat who wrote the monthly horoscopes for the paper. She opened her mouth to reply, but was cut off as the crowd burst into commotion.

SONG: 'The Last Thing We Need'

(REPORTERS)

PERVIS BRITTLE, SENATOR OF
LAMORBEY FOREST WAS FOUND
DEAD OUTSIDE HIS MANOR HOME
THIS MORNING

JUST A LITTLE OMINOUS, WHAT
WITH ALL THE TALK AROUND
A LINK BETWEEN THESE DEATHS
QUITE CONCERNING

DO YOU THINK IT'S TRUE
COULD THE ACTS OF RECENT WEEKS BE
PREMEDITATED
ALL WE KNOW FOR SURE
IS WE NEED TO KEEP OUR READERS
APPETITES SATISFIED

WHILST GIVING AN
ACCURATE REPRESENTATION
OF THE FACTS

THIS IS THE LAST THING WE NEED
WE'VE BEEN WORKING TIRELESSLY TO
BE READY FOR HIGHPERION DAY
WHICH IS JUST THREE DAYS AWAY

IT'S NOT HIS FAULT OBVIOUSLY
BUT IT'S COMMON DECENCY
DID THIS CANDIDATE EVEN TRY
TO NOT DIE
JUST THREE DAYS AWAY
FROM HIGHPERION DAY

PERVIS BRITTLE, SENATOR OF
LAMORBEY FOREST, WHO WAS
THERE TO LEAD THE STORY
OF COURSE, THE ONE AND ONLY
RUFFIAN O'TOOLE!

NARRATOR From amidst the crowd emerged a tiger, dressed smartly in a green tweed blazer, his tie slackened around his neck.

RUSTY Now, now, enough of that.

(RUSTY)
I ONLY DID MY JOB
I WAS JUST LUCKY TO BE CLOSE BY
TO BRING YOU ALL THE LATEST

(REPORTERS)
OH, ISN'T HE THE GREATEST!

(RUSTY)
WHAT'S OF IMPORTANCE NOW
IS ENSURING HOW WE
TAKE THIS TO THE PUBLIC
WITHOUT CAUSING MASS HYSTERIA

(REPORTERS)
THIS IS THE LAST THING WE NEED
WE'VE BEEN WORKING TIRELESSLY TO
BE READY FOR HIGHPERION DAY
WHICH IS JUST THREE DAYS AWAY

IT'S NOT THEIR FAULT OBVIOUSLY
BUT IT'S COMMON DECENCY
COULD THESE CANDIDATES AT LEAST TRY
TO NOT DIE
JUST THREE DAYS AWAY
FROM HIGHPERION DAY

FROM HIGHPERION DAY

SFX: Lively chatter and dispersing footsteps.

NARRATOR With that, the reporters returned to their work.

SFX: Post trolley wheels squeaking past, and the soft thud of a letter being thrown onto Arthur's desk.

NARRATOR The post trolley clattered past Arthur's desk, and an envelope was flung on top of his most recent cartoon draft.

ARTHUR Oh no...

NARRATOR Arthur recognised the spiky handwriting immediately. Rolling his eyes, he slipped it open.

SFX: Rustling envelope, the letter being unfolded.

PHINEAS (V.O.) Arthur. I really must insist you return to the house at your earliest opportunity. I have been studying the broadcasts closer than ever and there is something coming. I am sure of it! This is my third letter with no reply. If you continue to avoid my efforts, I shall be sending Samson to collect you personally. Sincerely, Phineas R. Hoot.

ARTHUR How many times, dad. You don't need to sign your full name when contacting your son...

NARRATOR Arthur swiftly returned the letter to its envelope, before throwing it into a drawer, directly on top of two similar correspondences.

SFX: A drawer opening and shutting.

ARTHUR I don't have time for your loopy conspiracy theories today.

BORSTON Oy, Hoot!

ARTHUR Yes! Borston, how can I help?

BORSTON Coffee run, stat!

ARTHUR Oh. Yep, errr, sure thing.

BORSTON Nine! No, make it ten, Digby's not got in yet.

NARRATOR Borston winked at Pearl and turned back into the crowd of clamouring journalists.

PEARL Eugh, gross. I did warn you, though.

ARTHUR Yeah. Cheers, Pearl.

SFX: Scraping chair legs.

NARRATOR Arthur got back up from his chair, moving dejectedly towards the elevator. He gazed longingly across the bullpen at the reporters desks, before the doors slid closed.

SFX: Elevator closing.

SCENE 3 - HIGH TOWER STREETS. EXT. DAYTIME.

SFX: Bustling activity, crowds walking by.

CYRIL ...and they do nothing about it! FACT, Animal Union, even the Herald! My family haven't eaten in three days!

NARRATOR Squeezing past the babbling squirrel, Arthur plunged headfirst back into the sea of commuting creatures.

DAINTY I reckon they'll retain leadership, you know. People like consistency.

STAMP You're joking. Ey, Mung! Dainty reckons it'll be Kelly Fluff again!

MUNG Yeah, and Scumwarter will be starting a community badminton league!

SFX: Stamp and Mung laugh heartily. Their footsteps die away.

NARRATOR Arthur made a beeline for Toffee's Coffees.

SFX: Door opening, tinkling bell. Soft music from a nearby radio.

TOFFEE Arthur! Morning, chum. Normal order? Nine lattes?

ARTHUR Ten today, please, Toffee.

SFX: Sounds of coffee being prepared, milk frothing, beans grinding.

NARRATOR The gold-haired labrador set to work. She shouted over the grinding of fresh coffee beans.

TOFFEE You've not got round to telling them where to shove it yet then, ey?

ARTHUR Umm... No, not just yet.

TOFFEE No offence, mate. But they've got you wrapped around their little finger.

SFX: The grinding stops. Toffee returns to a normal volume.

TOFFEE You're the cartoonist, Arthur. Not their lapdog. Pardon the pun.

ARTHUR You're right. I know you are. It's just... If I keep on everyone's good side-

TOFFEE -You reckon they'll help you climb the ladder? Come on, chum.

NARRATOR Toffee stacked the coffees into a holding tray, then slid the order across the counter.

ARTHUR I hear you, Toff. Hey, you never know. Maybe my chance is just around the corner.

NARRATOR Arthur pulled a twenty Hollow-dollar note from within his feathers, placing it into Toffee's waiting paw.

ARTHUR But until then, I imagine I'll be seeing you more often than ever. We've got some long shifts coming up this week.

TOFFEE Blimey, of course you do! Ey, three days to go!

ARTHUR So I've heard. Cheers, Toffee.

NARRATOR Awkwardly balancing the towering stack of coffees in his arms, Arthur made his way back out into the fray.

SFX: The bell rings again as the door opens and closes. Crowd chatter and footsteps return.

NARRATOR He staggered through the crowd, his cargo wobbling dangerously as creatures squeezed their way past. Spotting a clearing, he dashed forwards, arriving at the foot of the Herald's stairs. The cups teetered for a second, before Arthur steadied them with his beak.

SFX: Arthur breathing a sigh of relief.

CYRIL WHERE'S IT ALL COMING FROM?!

SFX: Arthur crying in shock, the coffees falling to the ground with a splash.

NARRATOR The lamenting squirrel seized hold of Arthur.

CYRIL The sky? Who knows! Have you seen a cloud? I haven't! So where the hell is it all coming from??

ARTHUR I'm sorry, what?

CYRIL Floods! Massive great torrents of water in the Frosted Peaks! Some crazy weather phenomenon? Not a clue! But nobody's helping us!

ARTHUR Okay, just... umm...

CYRIL You work at the Herald, right? I saw you go in earlier!

ARTHUR Yes, I do. I-

CYRIL Are you a reporter?!

ARTHUR ...Yes. Yes, I am.

CYRIL Well then, you need to report on THIS! Our village has been hit by constant floods for almost two weeks now! We wrote to the Animal Union straight away, thought Fluff might send someone to look into it all, but we've heard nothing! We've tried FACT, nothing. We even sent letters to you lot! NOTHING!

ARTHUR You contacted the Herald about this?

CYRIL That's what I just said, isn't it? Nobody is willing to help us and we're losing everything! Our crops have perished, our houses are falling apart, we can't work because our families are suffering! Somebody needs to help us!

ARTHUR Listen, I hear you. I'm going back inside right now, and... and I will do everything I can. I promise.

CYRIL Please! This is my last resort, it took over a day for me to get here.

ARTHUR My name is Arthur J. Hoot. And I'm going to help you. I am.

NARRATOR With a final determined look, Arthur set off up the stairs, the squirrel calling after him.

CYRIL Thank you. Thank you! Oh, thank you! This means everything. Oh, bless you. Bless you. Thank you, thank you!

SFX: The Herald door opening and shutting.

SCENE 4 - HOLLOW HERALD BULLPEN. INT. DAYTIME.

SFX: Elevator dings. Office noises return.

NARRATOR Arthur stepped back into the bullpen. The energy had shifted. Glances were being thrown towards the Editor's corner office, whose blinds had been drawn shut. Arthur walked back to his desk.

BORSTON Oy, Hoot! Where's the coffees?

ARTHUR (Mumbled) Spilled. Sorry.

NARRATOR Borston swore loudly, but Arthur wasn't listening. He sat at his desk and muttered to the tabby cat opposite him.

ARTHUR Pearl...

PEARL Not now, Arthur.

ARTHUR But Pearl, listen-

PEARL Shut up!

NARRATOR Pearl, along with the rest of the room, was focused on the Editor's office door. And then, as if on cue, it opened.

SFX: Office door opening. Footsteps as Obsidian emerges.

OBSIDIAN Pleasure as always, Enid. I'm sure I'll be seeing you again soon.

NARRATOR A statuesque pigeon walked out of the office, and strode across the bullpen. His pinstripe suit was immaculate; his wings clasped firmly behind his back as he made his way to the elevator. It was Obsidian Vandersplat.

ARTHUR What the-

NARRATOR Pearl kicked Arthur under the desk.

ARTHUR Ow!

NARRATOR Enid Scrupe had appeared in her doorframe. She stood silently, watching with everybody else as Obsidian departed the Hollow Herald. The pigeon's eyes glinted, and a smile crept across his beak, before the lift's doors concealed him from view. Then, her expression indistinguishable, the Editor returned to her office, closing the door behind her. An audible breath was released around the room.

SFX: A soft release of held breath, then quiet chatter begins to return to the office.

ARTHUR What was Obsidian Vandersplat doing here?!

PEARL Not a clue.

NARRATOR Pearl returned to her horoscopes.

SFX: Clicking of a typewriter.

PEARL He only arrived a few moments after you left. Couldn't have been in there longer than five minutes. What's another way of saying 'your future looks bleak'?

ARTHUR Five minutes? What could the leader of the PDP have to say to the Editor in five minutes?

PEARL 'Desolate existence'...? No, no, let's keep it light.

NARRATOR Arthur's thoughts returned to the matter at hand.

ARTHUR Did you notice the squirrel on your way in this morning?

PEARL How could I not? Right chatty Larry, wasn't he.

ARTHUR Pearl, his home's been wrecked.

PEARL Oh, I doubt it. Just another loopy fella who's had a few too many during the festivities.

SFX: More typewriter clicking.

ARTHUR I don't know... It sounded serious. Something about a weather phenomenon?

PEARL Arthur, it's been sunny for weeks. He can shout about flooding all he likes, but until Biff starts talking about freak tsunamis or killer hurricanes, I'm not paying it any notice. Ooh! 'Be prepared for intermittent periods of misery!'

NARRATOR Arthur sat there, staring down at his doodle pad. A roughly sketched caricature of the Four Tunas beamed up at him.

SFX: Arthur's chair scraping back, and footsteps as he walks away.

PEARL Oy, where are you off to now?

ARTHUR To talk to Biff! Thanks for the idea.

SFX: Confident footsteps.

PEARL Biff's the other way, Arthur.

ARTHUR Oh. Yup. Thank you.

SFX: Less confident footsteps.

PEARL On your way back, could you-

ARTHUR Get your own coffee, Pearl.

SCENE 5 - HOLLOW HERALD, FLOOR NINE: WEATHER. INT. DAYTIME.

SFX: The ding of the elevator and the grinding of doors opening. A lively radio underscore from a speaker across the hall.

NARRATOR Two floors above, Arthur arrived outside the Herald FM recording studio. He was met by a glowing red sign on the opposite wall that read: ON AIR. From beyond the door, Arthur could hear the live broadcast.

BIFF ...and you can look forward to that sun seeing us all the way through to Friday, so expect a glorious warm afternoon as we gather beneath the Highperion! Gentle breeze coming in from the south off the Crispian Sea, and temperatures dropping ever so slightly as we approach the weekend. It's looking like clear skies through until next week, which you'll all be pleased to hear means excellent viewing conditions for the Eclipse! That's all from me. Three days to go! Back to George and Michael.

GEORGE Thanks Biff! Looking forward to this weather continuing, right Michael?

MICHAEL Absolutely, George. If you've just tuned in, you're listening to Herald FM with George and Michael. It's 9:17am, and coming up, it's The Furry Murphies with their latest single, 'I Malt When You Stroke Me'.

SONG: 'I Malt When You Stroke Me'

(THE FURRY MURPHIES)

I MALT WHEN YOU STROKE ME

NARRATOR The red sign was switched off, and the door opened.

SFX: A door opens and Biff enters the room.

NARRATOR Biff the Weather Toucan emerged from the recording booth, sporting one of his trademark floral shirts and a straw trilby.

ARTHUR Biff! Hi, great report!

BIFF Oh, sorry. No autographs today, please. I need to get going.

ARTHUR No, umm... I work here! I'm Arthur J. Hoot. Cartoonist on floor seven.

SFX: Footsteps as Biff gathers his belongings from around the room. The rustle of a coat, the click of a briefcase.

BIFF Oh, crikey, yes of course! Phineas's kid!

ARTHUR Yes, exactly! Look, Biff, I don't want to keep you, I just wanted to ask you a quick question?

BIFF Fire away, young man.

ARTHUR Well, I met a Hollownian this morning, terribly distressed. He says his village in the Frosted Peaks has been hit by flooding over the last few weeks. I was wondering if maybe-

BIFF -Flooding in the Frosted Peaks? I don't think so, nope.

A brief pause.

ARTHUR Nope? What do you mean-

BIFF -I mean absolutely not! Weather on a scale to cause noticeable damage to an entire village? Believe me, dear boy, I would know about it! Biff's my name, and weather's my game!

ARTHUR Well, yes of course, but-

BIFF -I'm sorry, Archie-

ARTHUR -Arthur-

BIFF -But it's absolutely out of the question. I'd be inclined to think this creature was telling fibs. But on the off-chance there has been flooding in that area... Well, it certainly didn't come from the sky. Now, Arnold-

ARTHUR -it's Arthur-

BIFF -I've got to be getting on. I've got a special broadcast on preparing for the Eclipse at 2 o'clock. My advice would be - drop this. Far more exciting things going on this week than some mystery puddles. Three days!

SFX: Biff exits. Door opens and shuts.

NARRATOR Arthur stood still for a moment, his brain whirring. Then, having had his fill of elevators for one morning, he headed for the staircase back to floor seven.

(THE FURRY MURPHIES)

I MALT WHEN YOU STROKE ME

SCENE 6 - HOLLOW HERALD STAIRWELL. INT. DAYTIME.

SFX: A humming room tone, echoing footsteps as Arthur descend the stairwell.

NARRATOR Arthur hopped the steps two at a time, turning his notebook over in his hands.

ARTHUR It doesn't add up. How can they say there has been no adverse weather?

NARRATOR As he turned the corner, he bumped straight into a large mass of orange fur. His notebook clattered on the stairs.

ARTHUR Ooh, I'm so sorry!

SFX: Arthur dashing forwards, then stopping.

ARTHUR It's, it's you...

NARRATOR The tiger smiled. He knelt, handing the notebook back to Arthur.

RUSTY You seem to be in quite a rush.

ARTHUR Oh thank you. I'm sorry, stupid, wasn't looking.

RUSTY You're Phineas Hoot's lad, aren't you?

NARRATOR Arthur nodded, avoiding eye contact. His heart was racing.

ARTHUR Yes, yes, I am. Arthur. Arthur J. Hoot. And again, I'm sorry for bumping into you, Mr O'Toole.

RUSTY Please, call me Rusty. I've been enjoying your cartoons lately. Light-hearted and poignant – a hard balance to strike.

ARTHUR Oh, thank you, Mr. O- I mean, Rusty. Not a patch on what you do though.

RUSTY Ah now, come on.

ARTHUR I'd love to spend even a day doing what you do! I'd trade a pencil for a typewriter in a heartbeat.

RUSTY Is that so? It's a tough game to play. Especially when your name is Hoot. Your old man pretty much wrote the rulebook.

ARTHUR Yes, sometimes his legacy is... inescapable.

RUSTY Well look, if you need any advice, just ask!

ARTHUR Oh wow, that's... Thank you! Actually, there is a lead I've been chasing, it's rather odd-

RUSTY -Ah, rule number one, Hooty, if you have a good lead, keep it close to your chest! That way, nobody's stealing your glory. We're a sly breed, us journalists. I may be your friend, but I wouldn't be able to help myself.

NARRATOR The tiger winked at Arthur and gave him a friendly slap on the shoulder. Arthur beamed.

RUSTY Keep digging and I'm sure you'll find your story. Right, I'm off. Those front pages won't write themselves!

ARTHUR Thanks for... Well, just, thanks!

RUSTY Anytime Hooty, anytime.

SFX: Rusty's footsteps fading away.

SCENE 7 - THE DOUBTER'S LIGHTHOUSE. EXT. NIGHT.

SFX: Thunderous crashing of waves against rock.

NARRATOR Waves crashed against the walls of the Doubter's Lighthouse. The moon shone down on the lonely structure protruding from the churning Crispian Sea. The door was wide open, and standing in the frame was a mouse, hunched on a crutch, his leather duster billowing in the wind.

FANDANGO You're a hard fox to find, Artemis Gray.

NARRATOR Artemis Gray stared back, her dagger clenched tightly in her hand.

ARTEMIS Who sent you?

NARRATOR The mouse moved to take a step forward, but Artemis caught a glimpse of the revolvers holstered under his coat. She raised her blade.

ARTEMIS Don't even think about making another move until I get an answer to my question.

FANDANGO Can't a mouse introduce himself without a dagger to the heart?

ARTEMIS I know who you are. Your reputation precedes you, Fandango Boursin.

FANDANGO Just relax.

NARRATOR Fandango slowly moved his paw and unclipped his holsters, sending his weapons dropping to the ground with a thud.

SFX: Weapons hitting the ground.

NARRATOR He kicked them across the floorboards, then stepped forward, closing the door behind him.

SFX: Door clicking closed. The exterior crashing waves lessen.

FANDANGO I'm not here to hurt you. A friend told me to find you.

ARTEMIS What friend?

FANDANGO Martha. She worked in the Lilypad Lounge.

NARRATOR Artemis paused. She lowered her dagger and gestured to an old armchair. Fandango limped over and sank into the tired cushions.

SFX: Limping footsteps, then the creak of the sofa.

ARTEMIS So, this is about that Sludge stuff, then?

FANDANGO Well, that's one piece of the puzzle.

ARTEMIS I'm not a fan of games.

FANDANGO I'm not playing.

SFX: Stool scrape on wood as Artemis sits down.

ARTEMIS How did you find me?

FANDANGO It took a while, but people get pretty talkative when they're speaking to a loaded gun. I'm trying to follow the breadcrumbs but they stop with you.

ARTEMIS I didn't have anything to do with those frogs. I just made their deliveries. I'm no gangster.

FANDANGO Whether you like it or not, you're part of this.

Pause.

ARTEMIS I remember her. You said her name was Martha? We met... Briefly. I'd hoped she'd gotten out before... Well, before you burnt the place to high heaven.

FANDANGO She did, she got out. Artemis, I need to find whoever is behind it all. They took someone from me.

ARTEMIS And left you with a souvenir.

NARRATOR She motioned to the bandage wrapped tightly around his leg. She stood, slowly making her way across to the fireplace and returning her dagger to the mantelpiece.

SFX: Footsteps. The scrape of Artemis' dagger on the stone mantelpiece.

FANDANGO Justice needs to be served.

ARTEMIS You sound like some pulp detective.

FANDANGO Yeah. I get that a lot.

ARTEMIS (Sighs) It was a slick operation. I never met the suppliers, I just collected the Sludge and brought it down river.

FANDANGO Then take me there.

ARTEMIS And jump back into the frying pan? I'm fine here, out of the way, thank you.

SFX: The rustle of Fandango's jacket.

NARRATOR Fandango pulled a copy of the Hollow Herald from his pocket and dropped it at her feet. The headline stared up, and next to it, a picture of the late Pervis Brittle in ghostly black and white.

ARTEMIS Another dead politician. So what?

FANDANGO Soon, there'll be more of them in the ground than in the Highperion. Something's coming. Building. Nowhere is safe.

ARTEMIS And this concerns me how?

FANDANGO It's all connected. The Lilypad, Sludge, the murders, even the authorities are in on it, the FACT...

ARTEMIS Now you're starting to sound a little doolally.

SFX: Fandango chuckles dryly.

FANDANGO Why are you hiding out here anyhow? Not much work for a smuggler on a rock like this.

ARTEMIS I don't do that anymore.

FANDANGO Change of heart?

ARTEMIS Something like that.

FANDANGO So what, you're just out here for a holiday, or-?

ARTEMIS -I don't think my life is any of your business.

FANDANGO Look, I get it. Hiding from your past at the edge of the world? It kinda appeals to me too-

ARTEMIS -I'm not hiding from anything-

FANDANGO -But right now, I need your help. Artemis, if you have been waiting for a sign, this is it.

NARRATOR Artemis looked out at the daybreak through the small grubby windows. Her eyes glazed. The words of Primus's prophecy echoed in her mind.

PRIMUS (Distant) Look for the creature whose past is their foe...

NARRATOR She turned to face Fandango.

ARTEMIS Where do we start?

SCENE 8 - PDP HQ. INT. EVENING.

SFX: Footsteps down a corridor. A deep breath, and a cough. Then a door opening.

NARRATOR Merlin cleared his throat as he stepped into the office. He could see his breath swirl in front of him. Harsh lighting cast everything in a ghostly white glow. A thin red carpet cut through the middle of the room. The falcon moved stiffly, shuffling papers as he approached a sprawling drawing table. Sat on the other side was Obsidian Vandersplat. The pigeon was half in shadow, the silhouette of his feathers bristling.

OBSIDIAN Some good news, I hope.

MERLIN Sir, I'm afraid the mouse has dropped off the grid. We've heard nothing for several days. However, there have been sightings of the other target, that prickly whistleblower, on the outskirts of High Tower-

OBSIDIAN -So the two targets I explicitly requested to be eliminated are both still at large.

MERLIN Apologies, sir, but-

OBSIDIAN -Are you enjoying your new position, Merlin?

MERLIN Sir?

NARRATOR Obsidian leaned over the table, the cold lights dancing in his yellow eyes.

SFX: The creak of Obsidian's chair.

OBSIDIAN Head of FACT, is that a job title you would like to keep? Or do you want to join your predecessor in the dark hole that I had him buried in?

NARRATOR A glimmer of terror rippled across Merlin's face.

MERLIN No, sir. I can deploy roadblocks for the whistleblower. Have him taken care of within-

OBSIDIAN -I rather think you've proven your incompetence in this issue more than enough already. Bertrand!

SFX: The office door opening at the other end of the room.

NARRATOR The door creaked open, and a slender pigeon stepped in. His silk tie matched his oily blue feathers.

BERTRAND Yes master?

OBSIDIAN Ready The Plague. If our spiky friend has a story he wants to share, there's only one place he's heading...

SCENE 9 - HOLLOW HERALD BULLPEN. INT. EVENING.

SFX: Footsteps of Herald employees leaving the office. Doors opening, the elevator rumbling.

NARRATOR The Hollow Herald bullpen was starting to empty. Briefcases clicked shut as swathes of reporters filed out of the doors. Arthur sat at his desk, chewing on the end of his pencil. He sifted through a stack of letters he'd signed out of the postmaster's room earlier that evening.

SFX: Rifling through papers.

ARTHUR Nope. And, nope. Nothing. (Sighs)

NARRATOR The owl sat back in his chair. The office was now quiet, empty. At the end of the room a door clicked open and out stepped Ruffian O'Toole, coat and hat folded over his arm.

SFX: Rusty's approaching footsteps.

RUSTY What are you still doing here, my boy? Don't you have a home to get back to?

ARTHUR I will soon, Rusty.

RUSTY Case still getting the better of you?

ARTHUR I'm digging deeper, like you said.

RUSTY I respect the hustle. I myself will be heading off for a gin and a Cuban.

ARTHUR I'm not giving up on this one, Rusty.

NARRATOR The tiger chuckled and made his way to the lift. He winked at Arthur.

RUSTY Don't work yourself too hard, Hooty.

SFX: Elevator doors opening and closing.

NARRATOR Arthur smiled and nodded to Rusty as the elevator doors closed. He turned back to the letters piled on his desk.

ARTHUR There must be something. That squirrel said they wrote to the Herald. So, where are they?

NARRATOR As he gazed over the heap, his eyelids started to hang heavy.

ARTHUR Rusty's right, best come back to it tomorrow.

SCENE 10 - HOLLOW HERALD CARPARK. EXT. EVENING.

SFX: The opening and shutting of the Hollow Herald door. Quiet nighttime city sounds. Gentle rain. Footsteps as Arthur makes his way across the street.

NARRATOR Arthur stepped out into the company carpark. The sun had set hours ago, while the owl had had his nose buried in dusty envelopes. He turned to begin the short walk back to his apartment.

SFX: A distant crash of an upturned trash can. Approaching running footsteps.

ARTHUR What was...?

NARRATOR Arthur froze, his legs refusing to move as his head spun towards the sudden disturbance. He gazed down a dark alleyway, his eyes squinting to make out any movements.

SFX: The footsteps getting closer.

NARRATOR Whoever it was, they were getting closer, and closer. A shadow appeared at the end of the alley, and began to approach Arthur at an alarming speed.

NEIL Arthur?? Arthur! ARTHUR!

ARTHUR Neil...?

NARRATOR The figure burst out of the alley, panting as he launched his way towards Arthur across the deserted car park. A hedgehog, tiny and quivering with fear, his legs powering beneath him as fast as they could.

NEIL I need to tell you something! They're coming! It's the-

SFX: A small yelp from Neil, then a thud and a splash.

NARRATOR Arthur wasn't sure what had happened. Then he noticed the dart protruding from Neil's back. Almost completely concealed in darkness, a figure stirred at the far end of the alleyway. A shifting shadow. Then, they were gone.

ARTHUR Neil!

SFX: Arthur's running footsteps. Neil's body shifting on the ground. Rain falling round them.

NARRATOR The owl rushed to the hedgehog's side. The tiny creature had already begun to convulse on the floor, his body

spasming. Arthur took hold of the dart and wrenched it from Neil's back, in time to see some of its contents ooze from the needle-sharp tip. Neil's body fell still. He was breathing, but only just.

ARTHUR No! No, Neil, stay with me. Please, Neil! Help! Please, somebody help! Please! HELP!

SFX: Arthur's final words echo across the deserted street.



CREDITS

You have been listening to a **Shouting Is Funny** production.

Sound design and music by Christian Powlesland.

Artwork by Harvey Badger.

NARRATOR	Joshua Riley
ARTHUR J. HOOT	Khai Shaw
ARTEMIS GRAY	Heather Gourdie
FANDANGO BOURSIN	Christian Powlesland
OBSIDIAN VANDERSPLAT	Damien James
RUFFIAN O'TOOLE	Saikat Ahamed
PEARL	Elizabeth Chadwick
CYRIL THE SQUIRREL	Ally Ilsley
THE PLAGUE	Eve de Leon Allen
PHINEAS R. HOOT	Richard Hough
BIFF	Loris Scarpa
TOFFE	Bethan Barke
MERLIN	Aedan Day
BERTRAND	Alice E. Mayer
PERVIS BRITTLE / NEIL	Harvey Badger

Additional voices by Daniel Briggs, Alice E. Mayer, Ally Ilsley, Roddy Lynch, Christian Powlesland and Harvey Badger.

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