

Empire of Ashes Session Summary - 01/11/2009

Welcome to our first session of “Empire of Ashes,” a Savage Worlds-based dark fantasy game Chuck is running in the place of Bruce’s GURPS game while he’s out of town.

Attendance

The Hangers On

Bruce appears only for lunch, before he is spirited away to the Great White North by the company which has enslaved his soul. “They’re being nice enough to delay my layoff for a extra couple months as long as I live out of a suitcase in undesirable places and perform incomprehensible tasks for them!” “Well, I guess you do what you have to for a paycheck,” I say. “Paycheck?” Bruce looks blankly at me. “I never thought to ask for more than the prestige of being abused by a multinational corporation!” And he breezes out the door to some frozen Hellscape in Minnesota.

Georgina declares her love for brunch, and Tool, and hooping, but most carnally for soup. She breezes out the door to wherever it is she breezes to when she’s done with us. A **true** gamer groupie would wait on us hand and foot for the duration of the game!

Brandie taunts the waitress at the 620 Café with confusing orders like a tea without lemon and a sandwich without tomato. As a result, she (the waitress, not Brandie (as far as I know)) spends the next two hours smoking pot in the kitchen rather than waiting on our table. As the game starts, she breezes... into the living room, mainly.

The Principals

Meet our new characters!

Chuck – our GM! Whatever the Very Special Savage Worlds name is for that. The “Savage Molester” or something. Why does every new game have to come up with its own clever name for GM?

Paul - Ardreth the arrogant, vengeful Thul-Eth warlock. Thul-Eth are green bald freaks that look like Greys and act like Atlanteans.

Ernest - Versane the arrogant, vengeful Aemoni noble. Aemoni are the elite of the Empire, and look like demons of the “dude from Legend” type.

Ed – Maurs the Aemoni underworld enforcer.

Chris – Garret Heftungen the extra-dirty Drolar investigator. Drolar are Frankenstein’s monsters.

Tim – Erf the retarded Drolar monster.

Patrick – Umbutu the unlucky, plumpy Grog witch doctor. Grog are savages from the hills. “So, do witches get sick often?” “More than you’d think.”

No one lowers themselves to playing a human, who are lower than dirt in the setting. We swap lively racist jokes about the pink little bastards. “What’s black and brown and looks good on a human? A DOBERMAN!!! Haw haw haw!”

Let’s Get This Party Started

The various PCs receive an invitation to the Shenya manor in Moleth-Sin, the capital of the Empire. Versane knows that they are a Vashaen family. The Vashaen are extra-sexxxxy grayish folks which can give intense pleasure (or pain) with but a touch. The PCs divide up into two general groups, “the clean people” and “the dirty cracked-out homeless looking people” and show up on time.

The provocatively-dressed Viscountess Shenya appears and greets the group. She has a “matter which will require a combination of brute force and discretion,” and she has heard that we are the people with that kind of skill set.

Valix Droge, aka “Sir Munchalot,” is a corpulent Aemoni who used to be a noble before he became too big for his britches. Now he lives in the gutter, but has managed to put together a batch of bandits. And he’s stolen a brooch that is of great importance to the Vicountess. She offers 1200 silver denarii for this deed. Versane says “Money... How pedestrian,” and intimates that he might find other compensation more worthwhile. She says “Perhaps a favor then... And make sure your Drolar friend bathes before you return next time.” No one bothers to ask “Which one?”

Garret springs into surprisingly coherent action for a Drolar, recommending we split up, gather what information we can, and meet back at a local watering hole. Everyone makes Streetwise or Investigation checks to get the ever-popular rumor cards.

Upon our return, Garret has found that Valix is lairing in the Fetid Reaches, a slum near a charnel house where people sell their parts to Drolar. His lair is trapped out the yin-yang. Ardreth says disbelievingly, “What kind of traps could some beggar thief have that would be a threat to us?”

Versane says, “The problem may be more complicated. I hear that not only are all his men dead, sacrificed to gain the favor of some Forgotten One, but that he himself is dead and a Forgotten nightmare has taken his form. And a black fog hangs over his slum lair.”

Garret says that he hears that the black fog surrounding the lair can kill a man – and that to get near, we should stay low and stay off the slate road. Ardreth theorizes that the cloud may be of some sort of insects. Garret served in the Army down in the Hanarr jungles, where they used certain substances to keep insects off, and arranges for us to all procure some insect-repelling grease-type substance.

“If a Forgotten nightmare is involved, what can thwart it?” asks Versane. Ardreth indicates that there are no surefire ways of repelling one, but priestly power, flaming steel weapons, and application of overwhelming force help.

“But what substance can we use to repel the poor people?” asks Versane. Theories on this vary.

First Blood!

We come up with the plan of approaching the place and pretend to hire on, because we hear Droge’s recruiting. And it’s off to the slums we go! Along the way, a thug steps out of an alleyway and tells us that “this is a toll road.” “We will pay you nothing!” says Ardreth. “Well said. Destroy them, my minions!” calls out Versane.

Confusion breaks out as everyone picks out minis for their new characters. We have a tiefling blademaker for Versane, a grimlock barbarian with hunting hyena for Umbutu, a Cormyrean war wizard for Ardreth, a Storm Archer for Maurs, a half-orc executioner for Erf, and a torturer for Garret. Chris has put way too much money into his D&D Minis collection.

We are introduced to the Savage Worlds initiative system, which is in the form of playing cards, highest goes first. I'm briefly put off by the non-poker ordering of the suites (spades, hearts, diamonds, clubs? What is this, bridge?).

Seven thugs charge to the attack, having drawn a King for initiative. One stabs Umbutu hard, and one scratches Maurs. Ardreth casts Fear, which sends one thug and Umbutu's wolf fleeing crying "Yipe, yipe, yipe..." Versane flaps into the air, crying "I will have your flesh flayed from your bones for your insolence!" at the two thugs facing him. They don't get intimidated, but they also miss him with their attacks. Erf tries to Boost his strength by activating some sewed-on linebacker muscle, but it blows out as his attempt fails and flaps wetly ("Ewwwww!" cries the party). He strikes one of the thugs, shaking him. In Savage Worlds, there's not hit points, there's a condition track – you get "shaken", then take wounds (3 for PCs, 1 for mooks), and then you're incapacitated/dying. Hence all the "shaken" talk in this summary.

Garret swings and thumped off a thug's armor. Umbutu gangs up on one with Ardreth and shakes him.

New round! Garret pulls a joker and goes first. He cracks open a skull with his flail. Maurs steps back from a shaken thug and plugs him with an arrow, ending his life. Versane flaps higher into the air and shoots a thug in the face (22 points of damage with exploding dice!) and he falls screaming. Erf also cleaves through one with a greatsword.

Seeing so many of their comrades suddenly explode in showers of gore, the thugs break and run. Ardreth shoots a bolt of cold shadows at one to little effect. Umbutu hacks him to death with his argentium battle axe a second later.

All the thugs are fleeing, but their insolence must be punished. Ardreth zorches the one running from his fear spell in the back. Erf pursues the other runner. The two Aemoni shoot at him, but their arrows stick in his armor. Erf trips him up with his flail and Versane descends, gutting him with his sword for a close up kill.

Upon being looted, the thugs kindly give up:

- 8 shortwords
- 8 leather armor
- 38 denarii

Erf begins harvesting muscles out of the burliest thugs. Maurs takes the shortsword off the one he killed. Turns out three of them are still alive. Umbutu heals one a little so we can interrogate him. He knows a little about Valix Droge, just that he's been stealing from the rich and divvying the loot with his men, which has been quite the economic stimulus hereabouts. He went to his place to hire on but they didn't want him. He hasn't seen any black flesh-eating cloud. "Do you have any family?" asks Versane. "Uh, yeah... Why?" "Well, you don't want to lie here and bleed all night." "Oh, yes, I have a sister who lives just a couple blocks from here..." "I WILL RAPE HER WHILE WEARING A NECKLACE OF YOUR EARS!!!" snarls Versane as he eviscerates the man. Ardreth nods sagely. "But... I thought we were going to carry him to his family..." says Umbutu. "And kill them!" offers Maurs. "I thought we'd sell them into slavery!" says Ardreth. Garret actually hauls one of the other live ones to his friend's sister's house. Versane notes the address for later depredation. Erf harvests the eyes from the other living thug, for extra freshness. And thus the tone is set for the campaign. For some reason, games that have a rich character flaw system bring out the homicidal mania in us.

How Much Is That Retard In The Window?

We go to Valix Droge's slum-base. It's a tenement block; we can see a courtyard through an iron gate with some guards loitering about. Versane tries to talk the guards into letting them in to hire on. They rebuff him thoroughly. Throughout the negotiation, however, Erf plaintively cries out "ERF NEED JOB!!!!" The guards say thoughtfully, "Hmmm... But we'll take the retard." They haggle over a price for Erf, agreeing on 10 denarii. "Dude, we'll get in trouble for this!" "Hey, we're getting a retard for 10 denarii, man!" Three guards approach the gate, and two hang back. They open the gate to let Erf in, and as soon as they do Maurs shoots one of the guards in back, killing him outright. Versane flaps into the air, shooting another of the back guards, shaking and wounding him. A cloud of black carrion flies comes buzzing out of the top of the block, enveloping Versane, who would have been wounded except for a bennie spend to soak it.

Maurs shoots another, shaking him, and Umbutu casts Slow on one, but the guard shrugs it off. Umbutu's wolf companion attacks and misses. The two Drolar lay about

into the guards at the gate, and Erf kills one crying “ERF NOT FOR SALE!!!” Maurs contemplates just selling Erf again and again over the course of the game and slaughtering the buyers, as a kind of sanguine Ponzi scheme.

Another three guards emerge and shoot their bows at the group, all missing. Versane drops to the ground to get out of the huge cyclone of biting flies, and shoots one of the newcomers, wounding him. Maurs also shoots one, but doesn’t get through his armor. “Go Garret, it’s your birthday, go Erf, it’s your Erfday!” cheers Versane. Erf contemplates holding an annual “Erfday” where hippie chicks turn out in force to sing his praises. He and Garret beat down another guard Drolar-style.

At this point the practice of everyone throwing their initiative cards back at Chuck on their turn went bad with a shot to his cheek. This increases everyone’s enthusiasm for throwing the cards back and deliberately aiming for his face.

Erf uses his newly liberated thug muscles along with his fleshcrafting powers to boost his power! With his newly heightened strength, he cleaves a guard in twain. Versane strides forward into the courtyard and drives an arrow through the lung of one of the guards, who dies, albeit slowly and with many gurgling cries. Maurs fires an arrow into space. Umbutu moves in, his wolf runs forward and grabs hold of one thug’s leg to prevent his escape. Ardreth moves in and tries to blast a guard, but his sorcery goes wrong and the arcane backlash causes him to cringe with a shrill screech only he can hear filling his skull.

The two remaining guards fart about ineffectually. Versane closes with one, with his mind on murder and murder on his mind. Erf bogarts the kill with his greatsword. The other goon stabs Umbutu’s dog! Garret cracks his flail on the last guard’s helm and Maurs plunks an arrow into him.

In the fallen men’s colons, we find:

- 8 shortswords
- 3 bows
- 8 leather armor
- 3 quivers w/10 arrows each
- 31 denarii

Chris blurts out something about “Dildo Baggins”. As Bruce is not our scribe today, this actually goes into the session summary. He’s from Massachusetts and is fragile, so he censors these summaries a good bit. Not me! I will spare you the rest of the barrage of dick jokes that led up to this. The group is feeling randy, as even a mocking discussion of D&D 4e’s practice of disenchanting magical items into high-value magic dust called “residuum” quickly converts into an observation “that would make the most expensive stripper dust ever!”

More Victims

We bust into the main part of the building, revealing a common room full of more gang members.

This time, everyone is dealt an initiative card and sticks it to their forehead to better clarify who’s next. This scheme is complicated somewhat by the card-owner not being able to read their own card. The group is quite punchy by this point, and Chris hasn’t even broken out the whiskey yet. Umbutu casts Slow on a guy and sics his wolf on him. Erf lumbers in and swings wildly, murdering a guard. He tries to boost his Vigor by activating his spare liver, but it doesn’t turn over. Versane plugs a bow-carrying guard, shaking him. All eight living thugs attack to their best ability, but that’s not enough to hurt any of us.

Garret batters a guard with his flail. “You poor fools! You have chosen the wrong side!” proclaims Ardreth as he flings an Icy Shadow Death Bolt into one of the hapless men, freezing him and then exploding him. Maurs wounds one with an arrow.

Two Groarg come bounding down the stairs to the attack. One chops into Erf bringing him 3 wounds, though a bennie spend soaks that down to 2 wounds. “Groarg bring pain!” yells Erf. The other strikes Garret, wounding him as well. He shakes off the stun as Umbutu magically heals his wound. The wolf bites at an archer. Versane shoots the Groarg menacing Erf, shaking him.

Ardreth calls upon extreme arcane power for three maximized bolts of icy shadow death upon the other Groarg, freezing him in place.

A huge Groarg captain comes down the stairs and charges Erf, smacking him mightily with an axe. A lot of math goes back and forth to determine if Erf dies or not;

by spending his last Bennie he lives but at 3 wounds. Maurs shoots the Groarg captain to no effect. Garret fells a guard. Erf tries to smite the Groarg captain but misses. Ardreth zaps three bolts at the captain's arm and he drops, roaring, with a charred arm. Versane shoots the remaining Groarg, wounding him. The Groarg shakes off his shakeness, but Erf slays him. "If only I hadn't drunk all those Jaeger-bombs!" he cries as he falls for the last time.

We clean up the rest of the goons, despite Tim trying hard to sidetrack anyone who'll listen to him into a discussion of Marvel Ultimates.

The goons have:

- 4 shortbows, quivers, 10 arrows
- 8 shortwords
- 8 leather armor
- 34 denarii
- The Groarg mercenaries:
 - 2 Chain hauberk
 - 2 Buckler
 - 2 Axes

The captain has:

- Plate corselet
- Chain limbs
- Medium shield
- Battleaxe

"Erf! Chop off all these heads and line them up on the bar for me!" commands Versane. A grotesque Muppaphone is constructed. Umbutu heals wounded PCs; he sprays explosive healing all over Erf, which generates chuckles from the group. Garret also helps with his healing skill. Garret saves one of the goons, allegedly for interrogation. Versane doesn't object as his Muppaphone only needs seven tones to make a complete musical scale. Erf puts on the heavy armor, and Garret and Maurs take the chain hauberks and three more leather armors go into the mix. We search the barracks,

and in the chimney in the captain's quarters, finding a bag with 135 bronze, 36 silver, and 1 gold.

Versane interrogates the remaining gang member. He indicates Valix' place is down at the end. He narcs out Arturo the fence over in the warehouse. And when asked about the other part of the building, he adds "That's where the crazy warlock bitch lives! With weird human guards dressed like gimps!"

As he was a very forthcoming captive, Versane just cuts off his right hand and lets him go. He is quite grateful for this, at least so Versane imagines.

Versane consults with Ardreth on who to slay first. The warlock wins!

We bust down the door of the warlock "Zebloth." Yes, "Ze-Blow-Tha." By this point we're giddy and those keeping count inform us we're at 22 cock jokes for the session. Anyway, Erf boosts and kicks down the door, revealing a bunch of gimps and the warlock, a crazed old Thul-Eth lady in a revealing gown with more gimp slaves on leashes. She pulls a Joker for initiative, to our regret. She casts Fear and declares "COME GIVE MOMMY HER KISSES!!!"

Nearly everyone is affected. Garret and Versane gain a minor phobia of old people. Erf runs and Ardreth is shaken. Umbutu runs, and gleefully notes that since he's morbidly obese he doesn't really get all that far away.

The gimps hit Erf and wound him before he can actually get away. Versane shoots the warlock but she spends a bennie to soak it. Maurs tries the same, but misses. Ardreth blazes three bolts at the warlock, zapping her well – shaken and two wounds!

Erf takes out one of the gimps flanking him near the door. Maurs shoots the warlock and she falls!

Four gimps surround Erf in the doorway. He bellows out "ERF NOT FOR SALE!!!" They reenact the movie "Deliverance" upon him. He falls, incapacitated and bleeding out. He has been hit in the guts and gets a permanent loss of 1 Vigor, as well as his lunch.

Aldreth gestures and a portal opens in the room. His foul tentacled masters look out, driving the gimps insane! Actually, being Zebloth's gimps indicates they've seen this and worse before, so only one of them panics. Garret and Versane shake two of them with their attacks. The gimps charge and one hits Ardreth. Everyone starts singing a

pretend Stryper song called “Glass Cannon.” He takes a ridiculous amount of damage that only a Bennie takes down to 3 wounds. The other one that can get through the door shakes Garret.

Garret fells one of the gimps. The other three are all shaken and spend their time recovering. Versane shoots one down, Maurs shoots another wounding him. Ardreth finishes him off with a huge icy death bolt. The last gimp (with a Joker) charges Garret in a crazed manner and gives him two wounds! We step back and sic the dog on him. Versane shoots him and lets the dog chew on him a while.

Upon investigation, the gimps are actually eunuchs. Between the lot of them, they have:

- 5 suits gimp armor
- 5 greatswords
- Shadow silk armor (sexy dress)
- Argentium dagger
- Muis power crystal
- 75 bronze
- 30 silver
- 5 gold

We tend to the party’s wounds, and gaze at the unconscious Erf. “Can you heal him?” we ask Umbutu? “Dude, I’m not high enough level to actually *heal* someone...” he replies. Perhaps a two week break will do the trick!