

## Carrion Crown Session Summary 04/28/2013

### *Attendance*

*Bruce* calls in to find the others discussing a recent *Penny Arcade* comic about characters with dramatically-enhanced secondary gender characteristics. He offers in response a lively origin tale drawn from New Guinean tribal mythology. *Chris* interprets this story as, “Smell my balls!”

*Matt* groans, mourning that this was the one week where he chose to show up early. Why couldn’t he show up at a time when folks are discussing something erudite? Something intellectual? Sigh.

*Tim* offers an explanation about how he’s gained the nickname “Crystal Banger”. His description why is immediately discarded in favor of discussion of various embarrassing nicknames that old characters have picked up...

*Ernest* shows up a touch late, stunned to discover that *Matt* has taken his normal space. *Patrick* shows up even later and is delighted to see that his normal spot is still available – perhaps people respect him more, or perhaps his normal seat is so much less desirable.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Level</i>
Oswald Bainbridge	Bruce	Grizzled Crossbowman	Fighter	1
Vladimir Vampijérovic	Matt	Pale-skinned Stranger	Hungry Ghost Monk	1
Nigel Snodgrass	Patrick	Emo-Gothic figure	Dirge Bard	1
Doctor Jegen Vaus	Tim	Elvish Eurotrash in leather pants	Alchemist	1
Sredni Vashtar’s Girl	Ernest	Troubled Vudran Girl	Witch	1
Icobus Basilisk	Chris	Pale, poor nobleman	Oracle	1

### *Ustalav, a Troubled Land*

The land of Ustalav has been ruled for a hundred years by a cruel undead tyrant. The lich *Tar-Baphon* resolved to replace all of the people of the land with his own

undead minions, starting with the government. His legacy remains a scourge upon the land, even after all the neighboring nations banded together and sealed him away in the county of Virlych, a place completely devoid of humans. He remains there to this day, walled in by two orders of knights dedicated to keeping him contained.

Ustalav's domestic problems are not confined to an excess of undead. Tar-Baphon was always fond of werewolves and other antisocial types. They had been a problem before his reign, and are even more of a problem now that he is deposed.

### *The Departed Professor*

*Professor Lorrिमor* had retired to the small town of Ravengro, a place about 100 miles south of the city of Lepidstadt along the Old Mountain Road. The characters all head to the town, having been invited by letter to attend the funeral and the reading of Lorrिमor's will. They know that the reading will be held at the home of *Kendra Lorrिमor*, the professor's daughter.



*Vladimir Vampijérovic* shows up first. He is pale-skinned with red eyes, short hair and a wide-brimmed hat. On his way into town he passes by the cemetery. He notices the large notice warning all nearby to leave the dead departed. He concludes that the locals are not fond of necromancers. He walks past the *Church of Pharasma* then

heads to the center of the town. He sees the *Unfurling Scroll*, a combination of school and scroll shop. Beyond it there is the town square with several small businesses, a central gazebo occupied only by an old dog, and the cleverly-named *Outward Inn*.

Vladimir finds the common room of the Outward Inn populated quite sparsely. The most visible inhabitant is an aged bard who offers to sing him a song. He ignores the bard and inquires after Kendra Lorremor with the barkeep, a Vudran woman. She tells him to head down the south road, and then sells him a couple of tankards of local ale.

### Three More Arrivals

*Icobus Basilisk*, *Sredni Vashtar's Girl* and *Oswald Bainbridge* meet on the road; they are all traveling with a group of wagons out of Lepidstadt. Icobus Basilisk notices that the teamsters seem weirdly reassured by the grim presence of Oswald Bainbridge and his crossbow. Icobus looks like a man-at-arms who has assembled his equipment from a variety of sources. There is a family crest of a rooster-type basilisk upon his shield, but it has clearly seen better days. Sredni Vashtar's Girl, a student from the University of Lepidstadt, is a Vudrani girl wearing simple clothing (at least for a Vudrani – it looks terribly colorful and over-embroidered to the locals). She carries her books wrapped in a cloth, and her weasel rides upon her shoulder.

Icobus decides to chat up the girl, noting “My great-great grandfather had a pet too. It was a rooster, and people were scared of it. He said it spoke to him. So, how old are you? Old enough that we should wonder where your parents are? Or so old that we should be concerned why you're not married yet?”

Sredni Vashtar's Girl answers in overly perfect Common, “You should meet my weasel, Sredni Vashtar.” The weasel stares at him balefully. Icobus decides not to pet it. The teamsters complain that it smells bad, like burning dog hair but muskier.

Oswald Bainbridge asks Icobus, “Do you know what the story is with the spook? You know, the one that took the shape of a weasel. Anyone can see it is unnatural.” Icobus notes that Oswald seems aged beyond his years. The man's crossbow is in flawless condition, the rest of his gear not so much. He also determines that Oswald is half-convinced that one of the horses is an unnatural creature. Oswald goes on, “That

thing is a spook taken animal form. I'd sooner eat my own foot than taste its flesh." Icobus remains bemused as to why the teamsters like the crossbowman so much.

As the wagons go past the graveyard all of the teamsters make a spiral sign over their hearts, the sign of Pharasma. Oswald does likewise.

The three characters go to the elaborate Temple of Pharasma, easily the town's most impressive building. Icobus asks one of the acolytes where the funeral will be. The acolyte indicates that the service will be tomorrow, delivered by *Father Grimborough*. The acolyte is also able to explain where to find Kendra Lorrimer's house.

### **The Alchemist's Wagon**

*Nigel Snodgrass* encounters a traveling alchemist's wagon on his way to Ravengro. He knows that it is an alchemist's wagon because there is a potion bottle hanging from the roof. He asks why the alchemist is heading to Ravengro. *Doctor Vaus* indicates that he is going to the funeral of one of his favorite professors, one of the few positive memories he has of his time at the University of Lepidstadt. By coincidence, Nigel is also bound for the same funeral.

Doctor Vaus invites Nigel to travel with him: half of his wagon is laboratory, and the other half is normal seating. He explains that traveling isn't worth it if you're not able to do it in a civilized manner.

They arrive in town much as the others did, heading to the city center. They get some drinks at the *Outward Inn* and head on to the Lorrimer place.

### ***The Lorrimer House***

Vladimir arrives first at the Lorrimer House. Kendra Lorrimer is dressed in severe, Victorian fashion with her hair up in a bun. She seems disturbed, but invites him in and offers him tea. They exchange small talk and eventually get around to the subject of how the Professor died. He had been investigating the old prison up above the town, particularly stories of dark figures lurking around the building. She thinks that he should never have been there on his own; when he was crushed by a falling gargoyle there was no one nearby to help (how much help a companion could have been is unclear). She asks that if he wants to investigate Lorrimer's death that he wait until after the funeral.

Icobus, Oswald and the Girl show up afterwards. Along the way, they take note of the Posting Pole, which includes a variety of public announcements (weddings, deaths, missing pets, etc.) and a copy of the *Weal-Day Parchment*, the local newspaper. The Girl offers to read the announcements to the other two, in case they cannot read. Both Icobus and Oswald note that they are lettered. “Oh, very good,” she replies, doubt clearly written on her face. They arrive to find Kendra Lorremor having tea with a vampyr, perhaps even interviewing him. The characters use the opportunity to compare notes on their individual experiences with the Professor. Sredni Vashtar’s Girl and Kendra apparently know each other already; the girl reiterates to Kendra how sorry she is for her loss and presses a long letter that she wrote on the trip upon her. And not too much after that, some Elven alchemical Eurotrash and a Goth show up. Doctor Vaus is smoking a clove cigarette. Nigel is carrying his drum. He and Icobus Basilisk trade stories of the great drumline battles of the Decade of Troubles.

By the end of the conversation, the characters have agreed to serve as pallbearers at the funeral. Kendra offers to allow them to stay at the house for the night. Icobus Basilisk indicates that there is a chance that Lorremor’s accident was not accidental, and that the characters should mount a watch. They divide up times and make arrangements. Kendra invites Sredni Vashtar’s Girl to share her bedroom. After a token “I won’t intrude on your grief, will I?” she accedes, especially given that Kendra is alone in a house with five men of obviously dubious character and/or breeding.

Doctor Vaus volunteers to make dinner, using his Craft (alchemy). The characters watch his creations as he tells them, “Don’t worry! This will wake you up!”

Icobus rather nervously enquires of a purplish, shuddering beverage, “Is that coffee?”

Vaus answers, “It *contains* coffee!”

Icobus decides to not enquire further. Or to sample the liquid.

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl proves to be quite a good cook, even if nobody understands what she has prepared (“It is called korma!”). Icobus notes that his family survived upon roots for several winters, so this is quite good. “That smell you have been making fun of as ‘ferret’, it is actually just cardamom.”

### *The Restlands Cemetery*

The characters go to the cemetery the next morning. Their role will be to carry the coffin to the graveside where Father Grimborough waits. Few others are attending the ceremony. Among the guests are some town Councilmen, the innkeep, and the local apothecary and his family. Most wear black, but Sredni Vashtar's Girl wears a simple white tunic and headscarf, with her long black hair in a heavy braid.

As the characters bear the coffin towards Restlands, they find the road barred by a dozen locals. The leader tells them, "We've been talking and we've decided we don't want Lorremor buried here. He was a necromancer, and we're not having one of them buried here. And you, woman – you'd better move on out of here. We don't want your type in this town."

As the ringleader talks and Vladimir tries to calm the situation, Oswald Bainbridge goes for his crossbow. This ends the negotiations right off. The locals heft their farm implements and advance upon the characters. Vladimir notes that the local who was doing the talking remains in the back of the pack. He is somewhat elderly, with impressive muttonchop sideburns.

Vladimir kicks the leading local in the head and knocks him down. Vaus howls out, "By Pharasma! Stop fighting! We have a funeral going on here!"

Sredni Vashtar's Girl tries casting *Charm Person* on the old leader and begs him to stop the violence. He resists the spell. Oswald shoots at him with his crossbow. He dodges the bolt. And then the locals fall upon the characters with farm implements. They aren't much as combatants and don't inflict much harm.

The Girl shapes her hands into odd mudras and applies a *misfortune hex* on the leader. Then Kendra Lorremor takes action. She grasps an amulet hanging around her neck, makes some arcane gestures and speaks in a strange language. Four villagers collapse, unconscious.

Oswald attempts to intimidate the older leader. The leader is steadfast and unfazed. Vladimir pummels another villager. One local attacks Oswald with a hammer. Oswald clips him and sends him to the ground.

The remaining villagers break and run, except for one villager who sustained a serious hit (Vladimir went for lethal damage on his first attack). Icobus heals the

villager, then asks what this was all about. The villager is adamant that Lorremor was a necromancer, because he was a weird old guy and disturbed the dead at the old prison. And now that he's dead, all sorts of evil things have been happening in town. Icobus tells him that if he accompanies them to the funeral, and behaves well, then afterwards they will listen to his problems. Icobus does an excellent job of intimidating him into compliance.

The characters check to see that Kendra Lorremor is okay. She is shaken, as she had never suspected that the locals harbored such feelings. She notes that *Gibbs Hephannous* has always been a horrible old man, but clearly his words have weight with some of the villagers. She is even more committed to carrying out the funeral.

The councilors who had accompanied the procession explain that Gibbs is a retired local farmer who has always been a hateful old man. His allies were farmhands and laborers of low character.

### *The Ceremony*

Father Grimborough, a sour-faced toothless old man with tremendous ears, comes huffing down the path. "What happened?" He glares at the one remaining farmhand, instructing him to stop by the church afterwards for his penance.

Icobus explains, "Some local ruffians tried to disrupt the ceremony."

The rest of the ceremony goes without interruption. Nigel plays his funeral dirge and Father Grimborough provides a short sermon. The dirge is good enough to give the characters a Trust Point with the villagers. Oswald Bainbridge describes how Lorremor was a good man willing to go to terrible places to find ways to bring back the light, a man who saved him from death across the Moutray River. Doctor Vaus describes Lorremor's tutelary skills and his understanding of secrets from beyond the stars. He closes with some elvish poetry. Icobus tells of how it was Lorremor's patronage that kept his family alive through many hard years. Sredni Vashtar's Girl describes how the professor sponsored her to the university – a man able to see the good in anyone, even foreigners. By the time the four of them are done there are few dry eyes left in the audience. And

Kendra Lorremor, fighting back tears, describes how her father was a good man and a man of knowledge.

### *The Reading of the Will*

Kendra Lorremor says goodbye to the other guests and asks for the characters to accompany her back for the reading of the will. Before the characters go with her, they ask the local farmhand about the strange events he had mentioned. He describes a strange figure stalking the fields at night, accompanied by the sound of a pipe and strange bat-winged things. He doesn't know much more than that. He was impressed by the various eulogies given of the professor – perhaps he was trying to stop the manifestations, not causing them.

The characters get back to the Lorremor House and its book-covered walls. Interior walls, that is. The lawyer (also one of the councilmen) displays the scroll with the Professor's seal still in place upon it. As he unrolls the scroll, a small iron key falls out upon the table.

The lawyer proceeds to read. The professor's personal effects go to his daughter Kendra. He asks the characters two things. First, he asks them to each spend a month in Ravengro to ensure that Kendra is safe and sound. Second, he asks them to bear a chest of forbidden tomes from Ravengro to the University of Lepidstadt where they can be held away from curious eyes. In return for their service, he has instructed his friend *Embreth Derrimed* in Lepidstadt to grant them 100 platinum coins each, upon delivery of the chest to the University.

The chest is fairly small. The iron key opens it. The top volume is small, with the words "Read me now" upon the cover. The characters find that it is Professor Lorremor's journal, a document that Vladimir was already interested in. Several entries are underlined. They describe the interests of a group called the Whispering Way who wish to follow the path of undeath to eternal life. He is convinced that they are interested in something in Ravengro, specifically in Harrowstone Prison. They seem to want someone who died in the fire there, but he was unable to determine who. His efforts to investigate Harrowstone were stymied by the local ghosts. He describes his intent to go

get some kind of talismans against spirits from a false grave in the Restlands and then go to Harrowstone to investigate. That is the last entry.

Vladimir is quite familiar with the Whispering Way. They have a history going back perhaps thousands of years. They are a society of necromancers who seek alliances with the undead; many of them are undead themselves. Their most famous member is Tar-Baphon, the Whispering Tyrant, though they are far older than he is. They never write down their secrets and beliefs – they maintain that such knowledge can only be transmitted by whisper.

The other books in the chest are on a variety of grim subjects, including a copy of the holy book of Zon-Kuthon translated into Common (unlike normal versions of the book, it is not written on human skin). The last book in the chest is *Serving Your Hunger*, a holy book of Urgathoa written by her first human knight champion. In addition to religious advice, it also includes several lavish recipes.

### *Investigating The Death of the Professor*

The characters learn that the professor's body was found by the local sheriff. They head into town to talk to the man. He's relatively short of speech, noting that the professor was killed by a falling gargoyle about two weeks ago. He is dismissive of the claims of ghostly "manifestations" – there have been a couple of houses burned down, but he thinks that's much more likely due to an arsonist than to spooks.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl turns out to know a lot about Harrowstone – she read about it extensively during her time at the University. The prison of Harrowstone was burned about 50 years ago, killing the Warden, his wife, many guards and all of the prisoners. The fire also destroyed much of the underground structure of the prison. Most criminals sent to Harrowstone spent only a limited time there, as that was also where all executions in the nation were carried out. The fire was actually a blessing in disguise, as the prisoners had rebelled and seized control of the dungeons. At the time the prison burned, five notorious serial killers had recently arrived. The Warden had already tripped a deadfall to seal the prisoners in the dungeon, but also trapping himself and 23 of his guards. The guards sacrificed themselves by setting the fire to prevent the prisoners from

breaking through the deadfall and escaping. She even knows about a statue south of town that was erected to commemorate the event.

### **To the Church!**

The characters head to the Church of Pharama. The characters talk to Father Grimsborough and find that they are making a good impression; he will sell them potions of *Cure Light Wounds* and *Lesser Restoration* and holy water at a 5% discount. Several characters take advantage of this deal. Grimsborough has heard of the fires, but hasn't attached much import to them. He thinks the people of the town are generally good people, but recently there has been a strange energy among the people. The townsfolk are on edge, as if something is pressing them.

### **The Warden's Statue**

The characters visit the statue commemorating the Warden of Harrowstone and the others who died in the fire. The statue is 25 feet high, bronze and moss-covered, depicting a strong man in boots carrying a truncheon. There is a plaque nearby listing the Warden's name, his wife, and the 23 guards who died. The group takes a rubbing of the names.

### **The Apothecary**

The characters stop by *Jorminda's* apothecary shop to browse her wares and ask about Professor Lorremor. She doesn't know much different from other townsfolk the characters have talked to, but she does sell flowers. The characters buy some and equip Nigel with them so he can disarm the (female) dwarfish blacksmith with tokens of love.

Seriously, they don't give the blacksmith flowers – they buy them for Professor Lorremor's grave.

### **The Blacksmith**

A variety of metal goods ranging from horseshoes to blades hang upon the walls of *Jorfa's* blacksmith shop, demonstrating the range of her skills. Nigel asks her about what she knew of Professor Lorremor. He explains that he'd heard that she was in the town when Harrowstone burned – and wants to know what she saw then.

Jorfa indicates that she has lived here since the town was built. She confirms that the prisoners and most of the guards all died, then gets to asking after whether Nigel intends to buy anything. Unfortunately, she doesn't know much beyond what the characters already learned from Sredni Vashtar's Girl. She does know that one of the new prisoners was a wizard, the *Splatter Man*. The others were:

- *Father Charlatan*: A heretic sent to prison by the Pharasman Inquisitors
- *The Lopper*: an axe murderer.
- *The Mosswater Marauder*: A dwarf who killed people with a hammer
- *The Piper of Illmarsh*: A piper who drugged his victims and fed them to his pet stirges.

Jorfa hasn't heard much of the stories of these folks, but the characters realize that the children's' songs they heard earlier included details of the deeds of all five murderers.

### *The False Crypt*

The characters head back to Restland Cemetery with some flowers for Lorrimer's grave. They find a caretaker and ask some casual questions to find the way to the false crypt they had heard was located at the intersection of two paths in the cemetery. During the day there are few people around, but enough that anyone lingering next to the false crypt would be spotted.

Vladimir volunteers to sneak over to the crypt and attempt to open it. He slips up to the door undetected and finds out that it has already been broken – the lock was broken with acid and then fiddled together to look like it is still intact by the clever Professor. He slips inside and finds a stone stairway down to a passage lined with crypts. There are no bodies here (obviously), but the professor's tracks are quite obvious in the dust. He follows them to a sarcophagus in the deepest part of the crypt. He opens it and finds some interesting items:

- A dozen arrows
- Four sunrods
- Six flasks of liquid
- A dozen silver crossbow bolts

- 10 *Crossbow Bolts +1*
- 5 *Ghost Touch Bolts +1*
- 2 *Undead Bane Bolts +1*
- 5 *potions of Cure Light Wounds*
- 2 *potions of Lesser Restoration*
- 1 scroll of *Detect Undead*
- 2 scrolls of *Hide from Undead*
- 1 scroll of *Protection from Evil*
- A darkwood case decorated with the image of a scarab with a single eye. It contains a *Brass Spirit Planchette* (allowing the user to communicate with the Other Side) and six strange glowing *Haunt Siphons*.

The *Brass Spirit Planchette* is used exactly like an Ouija board, usable once per day, for at most one question. It can be dangerous to use: the user must succeed at a Will save to avoid being temporarily possessed by a spirit. Failing the save causes the user to become Confused (and unable to answer a question). There is also no guarantee that the spirits will answer a question truthfully.

The case also contains six vials full of strange spectral essence, each held in an indentation in the case. They are made of glass, encased in cold iron. A mysterious white wisp swirls in the glowing green fluid inside. They are quite clearly magical. There are ten indentations, suggesting that Lorremor has used a fair number of them. The characters are unable to determine what they are later on, but Kenra Lorremor determines that they are *Haunt Siphons*, useful for capturing a haunt's energy. An unused *Haunt Siphon* inflicts 3d6 positive energy damage on a haunt. If this is enough to drop the haunt to zero hp, its energy will be captured inside the siphon. A siphon with a trapped haunt can be used as a grenade, inflicting a splash of negative energy damage when thrown.

Vladimir picks up his finds and heads for the door. That is when the centipedes drop from the ceiling – he faces two giant centipedes. He very deftly runs past them, rushes up to the door and slams it closed. The others see him run out carrying a big bag of loot.

Oswald asks him, “Why did you go into that tomb all on your own? You could have been killed! You could have become centipede food!”

### **The Scroll-Shop Master**

The characters decide to stop by the Unfurling Scroll to talk to the scroll-master. *Alendru Borovin* is a gruff old man, but he warms up to Sredni Vashtar’s Girl when he learns that she is a University student. He has a variety of scrolls available for sale, up to 3<sup>rd</sup> level spells.

### **The Outward Inn**

Next the group heads into the Outward Inn, owned by *Sariana Vai*, a Vudrani. Sredni Vashtar’s Girl is very happy to find another Vudrani to talk to. They arrange to do some traditional cooking. Nigel Snodgrass sings for the patrons, taking in an amazing 4 gold (most of it in silver coins). He spends half of it on wine: he’s emo, so he only drinks red wine.

### ***The Statue, Desecrated***

The next morning, the characters find a group of scared teenagers sneaking back into town. The kids report that the Warden’s statue is smeared with blood. The characters go to investigate and find that there is a bloody smear across the statue in the shape of a V. The Warden’s wife was *Vasoriana Hawkran*, so the mark might be linked to her, or to the Splatter Man who was known for making decorations in his victims’ blood.

Vladimir uses his *Detect Undead* powers to verify that there are no undead around. He does find some tracks that don’t belong to the teenagers, but isn’t able to figure out where they go...

### ***Some Closing Action***

Nigel Snodgrass, Dr Jegen Vaus, Vladimir Vampijerivoc, and Icobus Basilisk investigate the fire (arson, according to the local ruffians) at councilwoman Mitra

Straylos' house. A wardrobe caught fire, but apparently burned out before damaging her house. Investigating the wardrobe in its new location (the barn) revealed an unburned Harrow Card (The Uprising).

Mitra was wary, but willing to answer questions thru a cracked door. She knows some town folk are descendants of the prison guards/employees but not who. Her own father was a guard. Vladimir got Mitra's permission to research the Town Hall records.

En route to the second burn site, the group spotted a haunt - wagon wheel tracks inexplicably appeared on the road, heading toward the prison, but ceased well before the prison.

Investigating the second burn site revealed something (paperwork?!?) that immediately crumbled away.

### **The Research Mechanic for the Chapter**

Paul revealed the research mechanic of this chapter - this research might shape our investigation of the prison. There are several general approaches available:

1. Research bloodlines at the Town Hall records. Useful skills?
2. Research town history at the church. Useful skills?
3. Talk to people. #1 and #2 might feed #3. Useful skills include Diplomacy, and perhaps Bluff or Intimidation.
4. Read Professor Lorremor's books. Definitely this includes the evil books he had locked away. It might also include the rest of his library. Useful skill(s)?

Vladimir and Snodgrass managed a full day's research at the Town Hall and Church, but the results were slim.

### ***The End of the Session***

The session ends with the characters preparing to investigate the burned prison of Harrowstone.