

## Carrion Crown Session Summary 01/05/2014

### *Attendance*

*Chris* notes that it is only noon, so there's no reason to expect that anyone might have already shown up for the traditional noon starting time of the game. He notes this in a voice made slightly hoarse because his first New Year's resolution was to catch the flu on New Year's Day. Resolution, Done!

*Bruce* is much chirpier, as he has been enjoying various cooking adventures over the last few days: a potato, onion and gruyere galette; and chicken stuffed with prosciutto and herbed cheese with a tarragon sauce.

*Paul* notes that he and Michael just made chili and corn bread. *Ernest* is still obsessed with the article Chris forwarded about the worst OKCupid profile ever. Even though it might cost him some of his teeth, he's still interested in responding to her ad.

*Patrick* shows up bearing a truly heroic turkey sandwich. There is much discussion on the age and status of the turkey, and how desperate the sandwich shop might have been to get rid of it.

*Matt* appears somewhat beyond the hour. He indicates that not only did he just get up, he also is being very fashionable. Alone of the group he expresses sympathy for Chris' flu-strained voice.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Level</i>
Oswald Bainbridge	Bruce	Grizzled Crossbowman	Fighter	9
Xurak Darkfire	Matt	Mysterious cloaked traveler	Half-Orc Necromancer	9
Nigel Snodgrass	Patrick	Emo-Gothic figure	Dirge Bard	9
Doctor Jegen Vaus	Tim	Elvish Eurotrash in leather pants	Alchemist	8
Sredni Vashtar's Girl	Ernest	Troubled Vudran Girl	Witch	9
Icobus Basilisk	Chris	Pale, poor nobleman, now become orcish!	Oracle	9

### *Everyone Becomes More Powerful!*

Everyone should have leveled to 9 last time! All take some time to pick out nice new powers. Huzzah for Greater Weapon Focus!

### *Showing the Recondite Order the What-for*

*Sredni Vashtar's Girl* notes, "It could be that there are some non-Evil people inside the Hall of the Recondite Order. Clearing that place out is going to be very VC-ish: hidden fanatics, strange narrow corridors, death traps, and all the rest."

*Icobus Basilisk* reassures her that he has the power to *Detect Evil*. *Oswald Bainbridge* further comments, "I can detect evil too. If they come at me with a tentacle trident, they're evil." He does not give any particular thought to the fact that he now carries a tentacle-themed trident himself.



The characters walk into the vestibule of the *Hall of the Recondite Order*. They take note of the statue of the mermaid with her octopus pet. Everyone is strapped and locked and loaded.

*Caleb* emerges into the vestibule, accompanied by five other cultists. *Nigel Snodgrass* starts with the innocent act, “We’ve come to get our scroll.”

“That’s just too bad. I don’t have it.”

*Xurak* asks, “Well, why not?”

“You’ve been stirring up trouble in town. Trouble that we don’t need.”

*Nigel* notes, “That may be so. We’ve been out to the Undiomed House and saw some disturbing things. Some of those things were your Dad, and the tentacles that exploded out of his neck-hole.”

*Caleb* is uncompromising. “I’m sorry, then. I just can’t let you leave here alive.” His five cultists advance upon the characters. *Fish-head* and *Monkey Brains* come up on the right, while *Egg-eyed*, *Burnt-tooth* and *Crooked Thumb* come in from the left.

*Sredni Vashtar’s Girl* starts out by casting *Black Tentacles*, covering half of the room and capturing all of the acolytes. *Fish-head* responds by blanketing the characters with *Silence*.

*Xurak* moves right up on *Monkey Brains* (who struggles in the grip of *Girl’s* tentacles) and launches a *Fireball* into the group. *Egg-eyed*, *Burnt-tooth* and *Fish-head* all catch the blast right in their faces. *Monkey Brains* and *Crooked Thumb* manage to dive into the tentacles to avoid damage.

*Icobus Basilisk* babbles in tongues as he stomps forward with his warhammer. He swings at *Caleb*, who dodges out of the way. *Oswald Bainbridge* takes a bead upon *Monkey Brains* and shoots him down. He feels a little bad about the poor guy’s fate: sure, he was a cultist of *Dagon*, but surely he had his own hopes and dreams, now all gone.

*Caleb* invokes an *Ice Storm*, enveloping all of the characters and *Fish-head*. The area is covered in ice and filled with snow, obscuring vision. *Fish-head* had previously been roasted by the *Fireball* and falls.

*Sredni Vashtar’s Girl* lays her hand upon her *Lesser Metamagic Rod of Silence* and casts a *Spectral Hand*. She places it near *Caleb’s* head, for next round.

Nigel moves forward, out of the silence and the snow. He sees something awful and gasps in horror. Nobody else knows why. Xurak sees him dodge out of the way of a massive, misshapen lobster claw.

Icobus hammers Caleb and then steps back out of the way. Xurak casts a *Cone of Cold*, engulfing the cultists! All of them but one are frozen solid. Their bodies are promptly shattered by the tentacles. Caleb falls! Burnt-tooth is the last, just until Oswald feathers his internal organs with crossbow bolts. Burnt-tooth collapses.

### **It's Not Just Cultists Anymore**

Sredni Vashtar's Girl looks past the tentacles and sees the awful *Scion of the Seas* menacing Nigel. The creature is a blasphemous combination of man, crab and undersea nightmare, covered in heavy chitin and malice. It scuttles on four legs and lashes out with claws. She sends her *Spectral Hand* to inflict a *Vampiric Touch*, but her spell crumbles against its spell resistance.

The Scion crashes through the tentacles. It grabs hold of Oswald and squeezes. The others can hear the sounds of bones straining and cracking. Oswald is just grateful that it didn't remember to use its *Smite Good* powers.

Icobus steps in and hammers it with his warhammer. He notes that it seems defended from his attack. Xurak aims his wand of *Acid Arrow* and burns it. Oswald struggles helplessly. Nigel stabs at the thing, piercing between armor plates to inflict 4 points of CON damage. The Scion appears badly wounded.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl casts *Poison* through the *Spectral Hand*. This time her magic is stronger than the Scion's resistance! But the creature seems to chuckle at her: it is immune to poison, part of its powers as a divine guardian chuul.

The Scion transfers Oswald from claw to tentacle. Oswald avoids being paralyzed by the venom on the tentacles, which may seem like nothing more than a cold comfort. Then it lashes out with claws to grab hold of Nigel. Nigel stabs with his longsword.

Xurak shoots the Scion with another *Acid Arrow*. It burns, but not enough to fall. The others notice that it is healing damage very swiftly, including the CON damage Nigel inflicted.

Oswald finally succumbs to the paralysis. The Scion continues crushing him in its mandibles, and crushing Nigel in its claws. Icobus howls and smashes at it with his hammer, inflicting a substantial dent in its armor plating.

Xurak steps behind Oswald and Nigel and casts *Dimension Door*. The three of them vanish away! Icobus notes, “Joke’s on them, they’re going to a room where the second one of these is out on its smoke break.”

Nigel celebrates his new freedom by casting healing spells upon himself.

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl casts an *Accursed Hex* upon the Scion. It succumbs to the curse! It isn’t immune to curses!

The Scion claws at Icobus, latching on to his shoulder and crunching down. Icobus howls, but nobody understands him anyway. He strikes back with his hammer.

From out on the threshold, Xurak strikes the Scion with another *Acid Arrow* while Nigel heals Oswald (who remains paralyzed).

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl places *Fortune* upon Icobus, who manages to wriggle out of the thing’s grasp. The *Acid Arrows* continue to burn away at it, but not nearly as quickly as it heals the damage it has already suffered. Xurak moves from *Acid Arrows* to *Scorching Rays*, piercing through its spell resistance and striking it directly. It’s resistance to fire is good, but not enough to protect it completely. It burns!

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl casts *Baleful Polymorph* upon the Scion, changing it into a very angry soft-shelled crab. The toughest soft-shelled crab in town! It still has 21 STR and a brutal claw attack, plus a much higher DEX! It attacks Icobus, grappling him by the ankle! Icobus yelps! And then howls as its *Smite Good* power burns him! Icobus collapses.

Xurak applies a *healing salve* to Oswald. He’s still paralyzed, but looks a lot healthier than he had. Sredni Vashtar’s Girl uses her *Spectral Hand* to heal Icobus because she doesn’t want to get any closer to the demonic soft-shelled crab than she has to.

Icobus steps quickly to avoid the Scion’s tiny angry stabbing claws, then slams it with his hammer again. Sredni Vashtar’s Girl zaps it with a *Ray of Enfeeblement*, helping to deal with the absurd strength problem a bit, and then a *Ray of Sickening* that causes it

to choke up some odd-looking sludge. Icobus continues hammering at it, temporarily blinding it with a hammer strike.

The creature finally collapses. Oswald recovers from paralysis just in time to shoot the unconscious creature four times, ending it.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl celebrates with *Healing Hexes* for everyone.

### **Loot from the Cultists**

Once the tentacles quiet down the characters take a few moments to search over the fallen cultists. For all that it is supposed to be difficult to recognize unholy symbols to Dagon, the characters all recognize that Caleb and his men are equipped with them. They are also carrying:

- *Potion of Barkskin +4*
- *Scale Mail +1*
- *Morningstar +1*
- *Ring of Protection +1*
- *Ring of Swimming*
- Gold-threaded chasuble (worth 50 gold)
- Silver ceremonial tiara (worth 150 gold)
- A gold unholy symbol to Dagon (worth 50 gold)

### **Looting the Hall**

Sredni Vashtar's Girl proposes that the characters engage in an ancient ritual of her people and loot the Hall of the Recondite Order down to the wiring.

The characters move through a door to the south to find a room that had clearly been used as quarters. There are some books, all of them fairly mundane (fishing, sea life, Gozreh's holy book). There is some good paper, appropriate to writing magical scrolls.

Another door leads to a small chapel, thick with the smell of rotting fish. The shrine features a statue that is a horrible combination of man, fish and crustacean. Xurak reports, "Such creatures are not normally venerated in Gozreh's temples!" Nobody else is surprised.

Beyond the main hall is a large, lavishly decorated chamber – clearly the quarters of a person of great importance (Oswald thinks, “Probably an evil sorcerer. They always like lavish furnishings and fancy beds.”). There is a coffer and a chest that look like they have been searched recently, and not with too much care. There is a locked sea chest nearby. Icobus smashes it open with his hammer and finds:

- Two blue glass bottles containing *Elixirs of Swimming*
- Two brass vials containing *Potions of Water Breathing*
- *A Fish Boat Feather Token*
- A statuette of a tentacled beast
- A statuette of a humanoid with ichthyoid features
- A statuette of a crouching humanoid figure with an octopoid head

All of the statuettes are disturbing to see. Xurak identifies them as effigies of blasphemous outer gods from between the stars. They are crafted from reddish fish-gold and are each worth 500 gold.

There are a variety of emptied bottles scattered around an open chest – Xurak identifies them as used potions of *Cure Light Wounds*.

### **The Hidden Chapel**

The north chapel includes a wall mosaic of a ship captain on deck. The characters recognize him as *Cassius Undiomedes*, Founder of Illmarsh. The bell from his ship *Conqueror* is displayed at the altar.

Nigel Snodgrass casts *Detect Secret Doors* and discovers that the entire back of the main hall is a concealed series of fold-out doors.

The small room at the northwest corner of the hall proves to contain seven bodies, all headless, and some of them withered and shrunken as if they had been drained of their life forces. There is a pool of water in the corner. Sredni Vashtar’s Girl examines the bodies and determines that their necks are so mangled that they were probably not decapitated: it was more like their heads exploded. All of the characters immediately think of slugspawn. The bodies are all dressed like normal Illmarsh fisherfolk, except for one dressed in the manner of a merchant from Caliphas.

The characters search *Caster Lucas's* body and find coins worth 22 gold, plus a small ceramic egg. The egg matches the egg taken from a Whispering Way assassin. Icobus finds a small, cryptic note in Lucas's pocket. It reads, "Rider on the way with effigy, meet at old house outside of town for exchange." Careful investigation suggests that this was a page torn from a ledger in a livery stable.

The characters go past the secret panels to find a hidden chapel featuring a series of frescoes of tentacle creatures and obscene illustrations of human women mating with abominable sea life. The entire far wall is carved into the likeness of a single gigantic eye. The characters conclude that the Dagon cultists probably just pulled the hidden panels aside when it was time for their religious rites.

### **The Tolbey Couple**

A room adjacent to the Dagon chapel contains two young humans, a man and a woman. They appear very apprehensive of the characters. They are *Rufus Tolbey* and *Imelba Tolbey*. They are the parents of the baby the characters rescued at the Undiomedea House. The characters spend some time explaining the lies of the Dagon cultists and the actual details of what happened to the girls sent to be brides of the Neighbors.

The couple is sealed up in the back of the church because the parents were supposed to spend time in prayer and contemplation. They are quite horrified to learn that the characters left their daughter in the care of the apothecary *Jayleen Halrush*. "The Swamp Witch? You left her with the Swamp Witch? We must get her back before she is eaten!" It almost seems like they are more horrified at the thought of their daughter with the Swamp Witch than with the demonic Neighbors.

Once reunited with their daughter, the Tolbeys appear to suffer an emotional breakdown. The mother cannot stop weeping, the father is just shocked, and both of them are clearly planning to pack up to move away to another town.

Icobus suspects, "They may be preparing to go drown their baby because she was not accepted by the fish-men. It takes a lot to screw yourself up enough to willingly give up your baby as something normal." Hoping for the best, he gives them a bag of coins. Sredni Vashtar's Girl advises that they tell others that they come from the town of Carrion Hill.

### *The Mayor Learns the Truth*

The characters describe everything they found to *Mayor Early Greedle*. He is relieved to learn that they have eliminated the Dagon cultists, so grateful that he finds a way to give them 3000 gold as a reward. Then he asks them to leave town and never return.

The Mayor does mention that the townsfolk were able to retrieve the body of the giant octopus that had attacked the town earlier. This is very exciting to Xurak until he realizes that it will actually be rather difficult for him to turn the thing into an undead.

The characters prevail upon the Mayor to let them stay in town until they can rest, and perhaps so they can talk to their friend *Horace Croon*. They want to borrow his steampunk submersible to travel out to visit the Neighbors. And that in turn may require a visit to Jayleen Halrush to get more potions of *Water Breathing*.

### *A Bit of Distribution*

The characters share out some of their treasure. Xurak and Sredni Vashtar's Girl both up an *Amulet of Natural Armor +1*. Oswald gets a *Ring of Protection +1*. Nigel gets a *Ring of Swimming*.

The characters identify the skum chieftain's amulet as an *Amulet of Natural Armor +2*. Xurak gets it in the roll-off and returns the +1 amulet to the party treasure box.

### **Undead Octopus Nights**

While Oswald sits in the inn drinking, Xurak and some of the others sneak out to the location where the dead octopus is lying. Xurak calculates that it has 15 HD and that he can just about transform it into a zombie, with an appropriate supply of black opals. If Xurak is going to be creating unnatural monstrosities, Oswald prefers not to know.

Thence follows a long night of dark work to create a giant octopus zombie.

### *To the Turn Rocks!*

The characters go to *Horace Croon's* house and tell him that they are ready to use the Subaqueous Exploration Vessel to explore the Turn Rocks and visit the Neighbors. His vessel seats four, so Xurak will be traveling with his octopus. His vessel the *Isinglass* has

been repaired, and he is ready to operate the Vessel from the surface – it can take its passengers in any direction, as long as it is either directly up or down. Plus, it has air inside!

The characters and Horace Croon set sail for the rocks. The weather turns to rain, but the waters remain calm. Icobus catches a momentary glimpse of a mass of tentacles, or perhaps matted hair, briefly emerge from under the waves. It disappears again before he can get a good impression of just how big it is (aside from “huge”).

As the characters approach, it is clear that the Turn Rocks are where the locals chain criminals to die. The body of one of them is still visible washing to and fro in the waves. Parts of his body are missing, food for the crabs and other things.

Horace Croon anchors the *Isinglass* a few dozen yards from the rocks and makes ready to deploy the Subaqueous Exploration Vessel. It depends upon the operation of a crank at the surface to refresh the air inside. Horace will do that while the characters travel inside. The underside of the bell is open, allowing the characters to depart from underneath. There is a line and bell arrangement to allow the characters to signal to Horace above. It will take about 10 minutes to descend, and an hour (with an air replenishment break in the middle) to bring it back to the surface.

Horace indicates that he believes the Neighbors live in a series of tunnels (at least some of them air-filled) near the base of the Turn Rocks, perhaps 400 feet under the surface. His idea for exploring is for the characters to hold their breaths as they make their way from the Subaqueous Exploration Vessel to the tunnel entrances. He provides a collection of waxed leather air tubes, each of which contains a single breath of air.

### *The Sparkling Dome in the Depths*

The characters pass into darkness, and then light again. Giant shimmering dome sprinkled with glowing lights at the bottom of the lake. Dome is perhaps 80 feet across.

Two odd sharks (red & black striped skin, glowing, smoldering eyes) attack the submersible. Nigel thinks they are summoned fiendish sharks. Sredni Vashtar’s Girl summons a celestial shark to counter them.

Icobus gets a quick glimpse of a huge tentacle creature spraying out a cloud of black ink just before the cloud engulfs the submersible. He quickly passes around a potion of

*Water Breathing* to everyone. He doesn't have a moment to spare, as a *Lightning Bolt* thunders out of the darkness to engulf the vessel.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl casts *Invisibility* and uses her *Flight hex* to launch down through the dark waters. Nigel casts *Invisibility* and dives after her. The touch of the black ink is horrifying upon their skins – they think it might be some kind of horrific black blood.

Oswald Bainbridge readies his trident and waits to see if the water clears.

Icobus Basilisk simply drops through the base of the vessel, expecting to drop down to the dome. A roiling sphere of water crashes into him, inflicting stunning damage and pushing him away from the Vessel.

Far above, Xurak hears the ringing of the bell and knows that it is time for him to intervene. He orders his zombie octopus to jet him down 200 feet into the water. He casts *Shield* as he approaches the ink cloud.

Oswald uses the *Trident of Warning* to sense the nearby aquatic predators. He is able to identify the presence of something big and scary with tentacles less than 20 feet from the vessel. The thing is about 10 feet long, perhaps 500 pounds and looks a bit like a 7-armed octopus with spines along its tentacles and cold blue eyes. And its favorite combat tactic is to fake pregnancy.

Suddenly, tentacles come into the bathysphere! Oswald manages to fend them off, guided by the insight gained from his trident. He stabs in return, but his attacks are deflected by a combination of thick skin and magical defenses. Oswald avoids them again as they latch onto a bag of supplies and tear it apart.

Xurak, hoping that his friends are all either out of the cloud (Icobus) or still in the bathysphere (Oswald), launches a *Fireball* at the tentacle monster. Sadly, he is unable to get the spell to work underwater. Then he tries a *Cone of Cold*. Inside the bathysphere everything suddenly gets very, very cold.

Icobus continues to sink. Sredni Vashtar's Girl casts *Light* on a copper piece and drops it after him, hoping that this will provide some additional distraction for the tentacular attacker.

Oswald shoots into the tentacles, scoring a direct hit upon something. The tentacles shudder from the impact. The water at the base of the bathysphere fills with hot monstrous ichor.

Xurak orders his zombie octopus, "Kill! Kill the living things!" He hopes that the zombie will find the tentacle monster before it finds Oswald. Oswald (for some reason)

thinks of watching an octopus figuring out how to unscrew a jar to get at the fish inside. Then he banishes such thoughts from his head and satisfies himself by shooting the tentacles three more times.

Suddenly the tentacles withdraw from the bathysphere as the bathysphere exits the ink cloud. A white flag comes up out of the water and waves back and forth. Oswald decides not to shoot it. He is pleased to see Sredni Vashtar's Girl emerge from the water.

From Oswald's description, the creature he was fighting was probably a devilfish. They aren't normally that intelligent, but there are stories of larger devilfish living in the deep waters that are intelligent – and this one was apparently a spellcaster (a sorcerer!).

### *Past the Threshold*

The submersible comes to rest about 400 feet away from the dome. Horace keeps it about five feet from the bottom. The characters are able to see a cloud of bubbles escaping from a nearby cleft in the rocks, perhaps 100 feet away. Sredni Vashtar's Girl and Xurak fly over to investigate. They find a sort of a membrane holding the water back, and an area with air beyond it.

Xurak and his undead octopus jet back to the bathysphere to pick up everyone else, and then jet them all back, clutching desperately to the thing's tentacles. It isn't a good experience for the passengers. The water is heavy and crushing, and the octopus travels at crazy speed.

The membrane is warm and jelly-like. The characters push their way through it. The characters find themselves in a cavern with strange carvings on the walls. Then two creatures with long, hooked fingers and overlong arms teleport into the chamber. Nothing about them suggests natural origin. They shamble around as if drunk, but at the same time in a way that implies an inhuman level of control.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl remembers that the *Secrets of Abstruse Geometry* she found in Undiomedes House included some information on conjuring dimensional shamblers. She regrets not paying enough attention to the book to know if it included any details on how to kill or banish them.

Icobus Basilisk is uninterested in metaphysical debates. He simply calls a *Wall of Fire* down upon the creatures. They burn, then shamble their way out of the wall. One of them claws at Xurak, drawing him close. Oswald decides that this is nothing but bad, so he shoots it four times. The shambler looks deeply wounded. Sredni Vashtar's Girl, still

*Invisible*, slips up behind the shambler and curses it. Xurak struggles, but is unable to escape from the wounded shambler's long, long fingers. He calls over his octopus to slam into the shambler. The creature looks critically wounded!



Nigel starts his dirge and attacks with his blade.

Icobus decides that the second dimensional shambler looks lonely, so he moves up to it and engages with his adamantine hammer. Wham! He hammers it! The shambler looks less impressed than Icobus hoped.

The dimensional shambler turns to Nigel and grabs him. It speaks to him in Aklo, "I will take you... Intruders must be killed, masters command it!" The badly wounded shambler squeezes Xurak, straining his ribs.

Oswald comments, "Xurak, I'm going to free you of that thing." He shoots the shambler through the head. It dies. Then, just to make certain, he shoots it three more times. Thud! Thud! Thud! Icobus mutters something about overkill.

Xurak sends his octopus to mangle the second dimensional shambler, following up with a spray of *Magic Missiles*. Icobus continues to hammer the thing as well. It starts to look fairly haggard, but continues to squeeze the life and juices out of Nigel. Oswald draws a bead on it and fires. Nigel is covered by shambler guts as the creature is pierced by three crossbow bolts.

*The End of the Session*

No new level this time. Next time, the group will continue picking its way through the under-lake warrens of the Neighbors.