

## Carrion Crown Session Summary 01/19/2014

### *Attendance*

*Bruce* and *Georgina* call in a touch late, explaining that they are all full of “French toast”. Everyone else immediately looks towards the Urban Dictionary on the assumption that they have missed some new piece of tasty slang. *Georgina* makes the situation worse when she notes the problems in buying “bath salts” these days, especially when you explain that they’re “for your Mom” and that she likes to use them “in the tub”.

*Chris* decides that he’s had just about enough of hard-to-understand new-generation drug use lingo and subtly turns down the volume on the speaker. *Ernest* decides that he hasn’t had enough and turns it back up.

*Paul* arrives late, explaining that he and *Michael* have had their new cat. She is a Balinese from Austin Siamese Rescue, originally named *Abigail* but now redubbed *Freya*. She is a very beautiful kitty:



*Patrick* remains deeply confused, both by the ongoing talk of cats and by the fact that both *Chris* and *Ernest* have internalized *James Franco*’s performance in the movie *Spring Breakers*. “Spring... Break... Spring... Break...”

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Level</i>
Oswald Bainbridge	Bruce	Grizzled Crossbowman	Fighter	9

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Level</i>
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

### *Under the Sea! Under the Sea!*

Last session the characters pushed themselves through a bizarre lens-like aperture into a chamber underneath Lake Encarthan, near the Turn Rocks. They immediately found a couple of dimensional shamblers who indicated (in Aklo) that the masters had told them that all intruders must be killed. The characters refused to cooperate, killing the shamblers instead.

The characters move very carefully into the compound, discussing what “aboletths” might be as they go. Soon enough they reach an intersection with a larger corridor. *Icobus Basilisk* admits that for all he knows, aboletth might be a monster, but it also might be a brand of tinned sardine. *Oswald Bainbridge* reminisces fondly, “Ah, I remember Aboleth Brand Sardines from when I was a child. They were so tasty, but Grandmother always said that people who made a habit of eating them always turned out evil...”

With that admission behind him, *Icobus* casts *Darkvision* and steps out into a main hallway and looks around. He can see several rooms, with skum in several of them. There are six of them in the chamber ahead of the party. He moves forward.

### **Skum – Useful for Forbidden Experiments**

The walls of the chamber are decorated with disturbing carvings of skum engaging in graphic and disturbing mating acts with humans, fish, and whatnot. Piles of seaweed have been pushed together into makeshift beds. The six skum inside are sitting

around listlessly. The tops of their skulls have been removed and their brains are engorged and slightly glowing. Odd metal implements protrude from some of their brains. The skum aren't doing anything, but they do still appear to be breathing.

Icobus shudders and moves back to warn the rest of the party of the sanity-stressing things he has seen.

*Sredni Vashtar's Girl* suggests trying to "activate" the modified skum one or two at a time, just because the characters don't know what kind of effect the brain modifications might have upon them.

*Nigel Snodgrass* rather hopefully offers that the skum might all be epileptic, and the skull-removal treatment might be allowing them to live normal, fulfilling lives. The others roundly ignore him.

### *Chamber of the Unworldly Plant Alonster*

The characters decide to sneak past the six skum very carefully. Most of the group uses magic to give themselves Darkvision. For those who don't have a potion or spell handy, *Sredni Vashtar's Girl* casts *Light* on a coin and hides it (mostly) under a cup to be less visible.

The characters enter a damp cavern. The walls are decorated with strange symbols and diagrams in bright pigments. *Xurak* recognizes some of the symbols as relating to the myriad gods of the Dark Tapestry. Icobus Basilisk (who worships one of those gods) agrees. A bizarre creature or perhaps plant lurks in the center of the chamber, five roopy legs supporting a strange torso and a chitinous mouth at the top.

Upon laying eyes on the otherworldly plant-thing the characters' minds are assaulted by a deranged array of visions and illusions drawn from their own pasts, and those of their companions. The characters hear a voice in their minds, a voice that makes no sense, "Why are three ears better than seven?"

To his surprise, Oswald Bainbridge answers in kind, "The colors of the sound, incipient in the forgotten well."

The creature moves closer. The voice asks again, "What is the orbital declension of the hierax star when sea snails cry beryllium tears?"

The characters roll initiative.

The images and voices pouring out of the creature directly into Sredni Vashtar's Girl's brain make it hard for her to see the plant monster. That does not stop her from placing a *misfortune hex* upon it.

Oswald aims and fires four times. He strikes the thing three times, shooting an image of his mother in preference to the creature on the fourth shot. It is seriously wounded. It shrieks in unearthly despair and rage, leaving him and *Nigel Snodgrass* both nauseated, unable to do anything but move-equivalent actions. It turns out that parting with the contents of one's stomach is a move-equivalent action – who knew?

Icobus Basilisk moves up into the creature's reach, hoping to pierce it with his glaive. Sredni Vashtar's Girl fires a *Ray of Sickening* at the creature. The thing shrugs off the spell, but not so much the glaive blade. Icobus reports to the others, "I've found its secret weakness! It hates being chopped into pieces!" He is, of course, speaking in tongues so the others do not understand what he is saying. All they can see is their maddened oracle chopping away like a deranged lumberjack from beyond space and time while emitting an eerie piping noise.

Oswald reels as his mind fragments under the stress of visions of the space between the stars. The creature makes a touch attack against Icobus Basilisk. The madness of the stars enters him as well! He resists, his mind inured to insanity by his regular visions of Azathoth. Then he swings back with his glaive! He manages to strike the plant entity once, quite solidly.

*Xurak Darkfire* moves aside, casts *Bolster Undead*, and orders his undead giant octopus to slam into the unworldly plant-chitin-thing. It staggers. Just then, Oswald recovers from his mental tailspin. He shoots the creature three times, dropping it.

The characters debate how to pick over the corpse. As they discuss the problem, *Xurak* simply steps in and picks up the *Dusty Rose Ioun Stone* that had been circling its head-stalk (+1 Insight bonus to AC). The body of the thing contains no animal-like parts – on the inside, it is entirely a plant.

### *Niche of the Buzzing Ali-Go*

Beyond the creature there are two lens portals similar to the one the characters originally came through. It is hard to see through them, but the characters can definitely

see a small octagonal chamber beyond one of them. Strange fungal webbing drapes the interior walls of the chamber. Pulsing lights provide dim, unnatural illumination. Three awful insect-like abominations lurk inside. Mercifully, they are completely absorbed by their own forbidden, perverted activities.

The characters decide to send Xurak's *Spectral Hand* through the portal. Oswald vows that if the creatures mess with the hand, he'll shoot them. For that matter, Oswald seems quite eager to shoot the creatures no matter what – he isn't working hard to come up with excuses for crossbow mayhem.

The *Spectral Hand* drifts up to the creatures. They buzz over their entire bodies, prompting the more depraved characters to reflect upon the possible personal uses such entities might be put to. Oswald waits for the signal to fire. Eagerly.

Xurak tries to touch one of the creatures with his *Spectral Hand*. The creature evades the hand. Then all three of them buzz and emerge from the room. Their coloration shifts as they move. Oswald doesn't care: he lands a crossbow bolt into one of the lead creature's organs. From the way the creature staggers, it was an important organ.

Icobus steps up and slashes the same creature with his halberd. It stays up, but looks unsteady. He slashes again, and the creature convulses and buzzes at the end of the blade before collapsing. Icobus flicks the body towards Nigel just to see him squirm.

Xurak yells out, "I recognize these! They are mi-go! They come from the dark places between the stars!" He latches on to one of them with his *Spectral Hand* and inflicts a *Vampiric Touch* upon it. Then his zombie octopus moves in with heavy tentacles and roughs it up.

Oswald lines up on the undamaged mi-go and shoots it twice. He notes that his bolts aren't hurting the creature quite as much as he would like – apparently they have a lack of distinct internal organs for the bolts to pierce. Xurak explains, "They don't have brains – they keep their thoughts in their memory-goo!"

Oswald replies, "As long as I can make all their memory-goo leak out around their skittery little legs I'll be happy."

Sredni Vashtar's Girl criticizes him, "Racist!"

The mi-go skitter up at the characters, brandishing their claws. One of them is offended by Nigel's drumming and attacks him. Nigel evades the creature. Another

moves past Icobus, unaware of the length of his glaive. Icobus slashes the thing as it passes, then again after it fails to hit Nigel. The creature collapses.

Xurak strikes the last mi-go right in the sensory cluster with an *Acid Arrow*. It dies as well.

Icobus speculates, “I wonder if we just murdered somebody’s house pets.” Oswald can’t bring himself to be too concerned about the possibility.

### *What Has Four Arms and a Vertical Jaw? Gug!*

The characters move into another chamber. The place smells of wet fur. Bones are scattered around the floor – Xurak thinks that the bones are a mixture of skum and human bones. There is a portal to the lake nearby. The characters theorize that whatever killed the humans and the skum is aquatic, and this is its dining room. Suddenly something appears from nowhere, as if it had been *Invisible*. It is a towering creature with a vertically-oriented mouth and bulbous eyes, one on either side of its blasphemous mouth. It has two forearms for each arm. It is covered with fur, which accounts for the wet fur smell. Its brain parts are exposed, suggesting that it has also been used for experiments.

Oswald looks at it clearly and screams, “It’s a gug!” Nobody else knows what he’s shouting about.

The gug bites Icobus. Ouch!

Then the gug easily casts off Sredni Vashtar’s Girl’s *misfortune hex*.

Xurak and the undead octopus move to engage the gug. They discover that the terrain has just become much more dangerous: camouflaged spiked stones impale them. Xurak yells, “It’s not just a gug! It’s a gug savant!”

His warning is no help for Icobus: the gug savant drops upon him and tears him apart. Icobus staggers but does not drop. Sredni Vashtar’s Girl rather desperately tries to hex the thing, but it against resists her magic. Xurak is more fortunate: he manages to cast *Suffocation* upon the gug. The creature staggers. Icobus carefully withdraws away from the creature, though he still takes damage from the stone teeth of the floor.

Nigel casts *Haste* as the gug struggles against both lack of air and the grip of the zombie octopus. The gug latches onto the octopus and starts tearing at it. But then the suffocation takes over and the gug collapses.

### *Ali-go Redux*

Even with the gug dead, the floor continues to eat people – the duration of *Spike Stones* is quite long. Noting that the zombie is pretty much immune to the spikes, the characters ride the creature out of the room. Icobus spends a fair amount of quality time working himself over with healing magic. Xurak does his best to reinforce the zombie octopus with *Bolster Undead* again. Then he sends the octopus along to deal with three more mi-go that had the poor taste to get in the characters' way.

Soon enough the mi-go in the chamber start to get the better of the octopus. It withdraws towards the rest of the characters. Sredni Vashtar's Girl places a *misfortune hex* upon the mi-go with the most juice. While the mi-go claw away at the zombie octopus, Oswald and Icobus shoot and chop one to pieces.

Xurak comments, "You know, I don't want to waste any more spells. I think I'll just use my wand on these things." He shoots one with an *Acid Arrow*.

Icobus offers, "It's not like we're really fighting anything serious. These things are more like lab techs than anything else." As he makes this confident pronouncement the two mi-go flank Nigel and claw at him with extra sneak attack damage. Ouch! Maybe they aren't just lab techs!

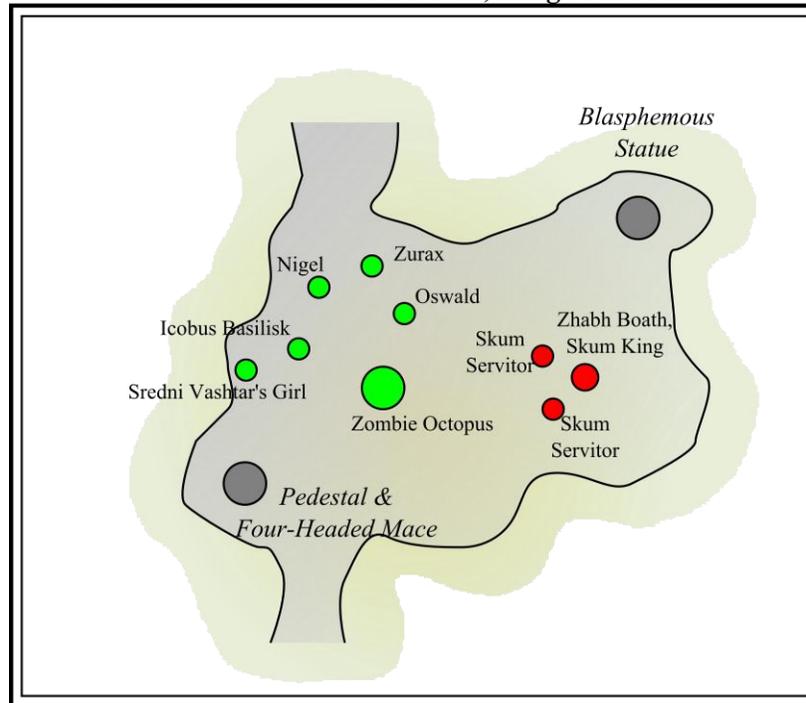
Oswald picks out the mi-go on the left and shoots it through the flurm three times. It might be resistant to piercing damage, but it's not *that* resistant. The mi-go collapses.

The badly-damaged zombie octopus grabs hold of the last mi-go and tears. The poor creature, for all that it is a blasphemy against all that is sane and good, is torn into fungus-like shreds.

### *Shrine-Room of the Skum King*

The characters backtrack a bit and then continue deeper into the compound. They enter a chamber. In the northeast corner stands a statue that is not fish, nor eel nor octopus but parts of each. The walls are decorated with shells in horrifying designs. A mace with four stone heads, each shaped like a raven's head, is placed upon a pedestal in the southwest corner of the room. Three skum, one of them grossly oversized and wearing a silver diadem, face the characters. And then they attack!

### Shrine Room of Zhabh Boath, King of the Skum



Oswald calmly draws a bead upon one of the skum minions and kills it. The creature sags down under the impact of four crossbow bolts.

Noting that most of the characters are clustered together, *Zhabh Boath* the king of the skum launches a *Flame Strike*. The characters burn! Oh how they burn under the weight of unholy flames!

The surviving skum servitor howls and charges Icobus with a trident. Oswald hits him with a crossbow bolt, and then Icobus takes him down with a mighty halberd sweep.

Zhabh Boath ducks behind the statue and starts casting a spell!

Nigel rushes over to the pedestal and grabs the mace! It is a holy mace, and he can feel the power in it! He's not a cleric, so he doesn't know how much power.

Xurak reasons, "Zhabh Boath must be summoning something! I must stop him!" He touches his zombie octopus and casts *Dimension Door*. The two of them appear behind the statue, right next to Zhabh Boath. The octopus clocks the unfortunate skum king in the head, ruining his spell.

Hard-pressed by a zombie octopus and an orc, Zhabh Boath invokes another spell! He unleashes his *Chaos Hammer*! Sredni Vashtar's Girl, Xurak and the zombie

octopus are all hurt, but Icobus is completely unaffected. The octopus responds by squashing Zhabh Boath like a bug.

### **A Sacred Artifact, Recovered!**

As Nigel approaches the statue he finds that the mace is giving him a really strong urge to just plant it into the undead octopus. He decides that he would prefer to not hammer the octopus of his friend. Xurak identifies the mace as a holy artifact, the onetime symbol of office of the Pharasman Bishop of Caliphas. It is a heavy mace, named *Raven's Head*. It was lost in the lake almost a hundred years ago. Oswald notes (in his role as a worshipper of Pharasma and possibly the only lawful member of the party) that the mace should be returned to the Bishop. Sredni Vashtar's Girl responds by suggesting that the characters should pass it around and each of them should add one item to the Laws of Pharasma. She volunteers to start by declaring today Holy Weasel Day. Oswald is not impressed.

For Nigel, the *Raven's Head* functions as a +3 *Undead Bane Heavy Mace*. In the hands of a cleric of Pharasma it would have many more powers.

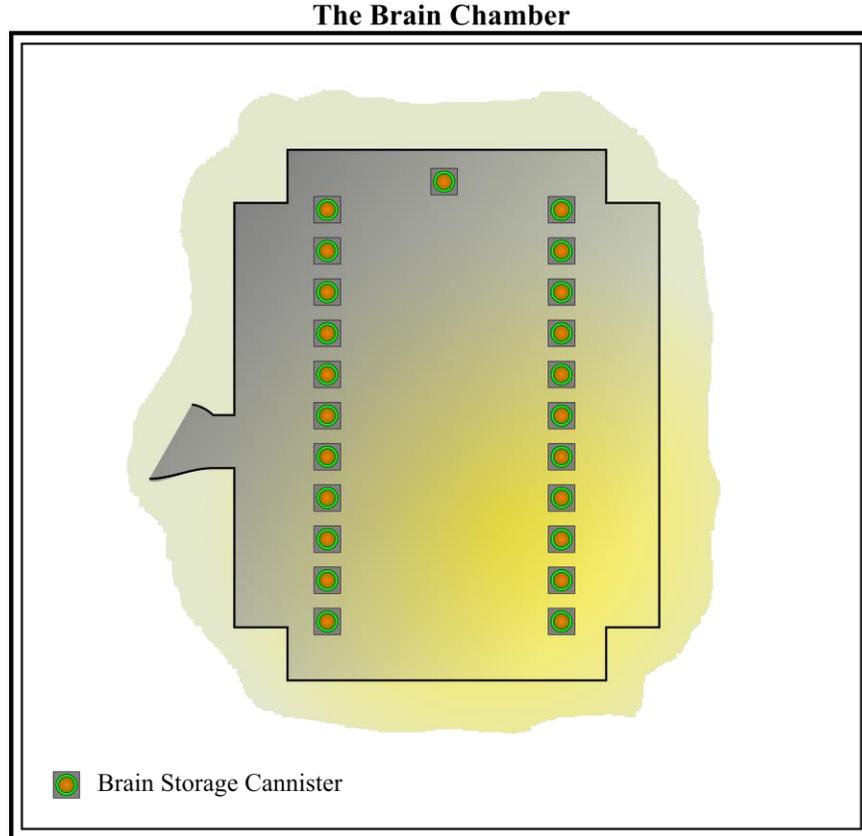
The characters also find a potion of *Cat's Grace*. It doesn't appear to be a sacred artifact of anything. Beyond that they also find:

- A masterwork dagger
- A masterwork trident
- Masterwork scale mail
- Fish-gold jewelry worth 700 gold
- An unholy symbol of Shub-Niggurath

### **Competition between Forbidden Cults**

On deeper examination, the walls include multiple layers of carvings. The deeper carvings are dedicated to Dagon, but they have been carved over with work dedicated to Shub-Niggurath.

## *The Mi-Go Brain Chamber*



The characters continue on down the hall. There is a turn to the right! And a turn to the left! Strange class canisters, half of them holding disembodied brains, line the walls of a room with angular walls that shows clear evidence of real workmanship. There are 23 cylinders.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl and Nigel try activating one of the cylinders. To their surprise, they find themselves conversing with the brain of the former Mayor of Illmarsh, *Early Greedle*. He claims that the mi-go are trying to accelerate the arrival of their dark god Shub-Niggurath. They captured him (and apparently took his brain, which he doesn't seem to get) shortly after the characters talked to him. They want to use their weird sciences to build a channel to their god. The slugspawn are somehow connected to their plan to summon Shub-Niggurath. The Mayor isn't quite sure where he is, except that everything is dark. He begs them, "Untie me!"

Xurak admits, "We can't do that right now..."

Sredni Vashtar's Girl offers, "It's wizardry. We'll try to free you, if we can."

The Mayor describes how the Neighbors (the fish-men) are now the slaves of the mi-go. They carved him up with their long claws. He describes the attacking fish-men as having opened skulls and strange metal implements in their heads. The characters nod knowingly, not that the Mayor can see them.

Nobody has a good idea on how to help him. Or the fairly large number of other folks who have been turned into disembodied brains.

### *Eliminating the Skum Brain-Collection Squad*

Now that the characters understand what the skum with the opened brains are being used for, they determine that the squad of six the characters bypassed need to be dealt with. They make some grim plans to club the creatures down while they're still inactive, but by the time they reach their chamber the skum are stirring and attacking.

Xurak leads off with *Burning Hands*, scorching the skum in front of him. The skum strikes back, demonstrating that it has both Power Attack and has Human as a favored enemy! Xurak takes a nasty scratching.

Another attacks Oswald, inflicting some very unpleasant wounds. Oswald responds by raking the creature with crossbow bolts. By the time the fourth bolt hits the skum it is already dead – the last bolt just drives the first deeper into the thing's exposed brain.

Xurak finds himself facing a collapsed skum. He holds the silver longsword Icobus handed him. He manages to stab the thing through the throat, causing it to expire in a puddle of foul-smelling amphibian blood.

Icobus faces a skum with a spiral metal piece protruding from its opened skull. He hammers it with his warhammer. Hammer, hammer, hammer away!

Nigel casts *Mirror Image* and dodges as a skum tears through three images, dissipating them but leaving him unharmed. Xurak evades his attacker as well, but Oswald is not so lucky – he suffers an awful gash across his face, leaving blood pouring down his face. Oswald responds by shredding the creature with a fusillade of crossbow bolts. He notes, “That was 85 damage, plus he's bleeding!”

Xurak notes, “He’s not bleeding – there’s no blood left in his body.” Xurak then turns to supervise his zombie octopus as it hammers a skum. To preserve himself, he casts *Mirror Image*.

Nigel swings his new holy heavy mace and crunches it hard with a raven’s head! Haha! So crunchy! Icobus follows up and kills the creature with a warhammer.

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl flings a *slumber hex* upon an undamaged skum. The creature collapses, but not before it manages to knock out Oswald!

### *Cleaning up the Skum*

The group stashes the unconscious Oswald and decides they can’t leave any of these skum behind them. They approach a cavern to attack another group of four skum. The group softens them up with a *Cone of Cold* first, and then Nigel casts *Haste*. Icobus casts a *Wall of Fire*, trapping the creatures in the cave. They burst through, catching on fire, and the first one gets dropped in a cloud of fish-scented smoke by Icobus’ halberd. “It’s like happy hour in Ireland!” he exclaims inexplicably. The heroes fend off their attacks, and then Zurak’s zombie octopus oozes into frenzied action and tears all the remaining skum but one to pieces. Girl uses a *Vampiric Touch* to suck all its remaining life-force out.

Nigel turns and scuttles towards the other cave of four skum, being brought up short by another *Wall of Fire* from Icobus. More flaming skum break through the flames to attack! They tear into Girl, Zurak, and the octopus.

Zurak cries, “Protect me, my minion!” And it does. It tears one down. Girl unleashes a chill touch on the skum that attacked her. Icobus, enlarged, charges over and fells a skum with his warhammer.

One of the remaining skum tears into Girl with claws and bite. Zurak sics the octopus on the skum, ripping both apart. It chews happily on one of the corpses as the group heals and retires to the brain room. Icobus heals 19 points on the unconscious Oswald.

### *The End of the Session*

The session probably ends with the characters rummaging through the belongings of the now-deceased skum collection squad, as Oswald moans and holds his aching head. Huzzah!