

Carrion Crown Session Summary 11/24/2013

Attendance

Chris explains that he had lost all will to live, until he learned that Tyler Perry was going to make another *Medea* movie. He also notes that there will probably be a remake of *Old Boys*. *Georgina* is enthusiastic, but wants to see the original first. *Bruce* asks if this is his sort of movie, to which *Paul* answers, “It’s a horrible soul-destroying experience. You like those, I think.” *Bruce* is silent.

Then *Chris* reports that *47 Ronin* is coming out on 12/27. *Ernest* is deeply excited, describing the story as “Like *300* on crack!” *Patrick* seems dubious until he learns that Keanu Reeves is involved.

Matt admits that he would see anything Keanu Reeves is in, no matter how little sense it might make. Then he points out that yesterday he was at BoardGameGeek in Dallas and saw the amazingness that is *Cthulhu Wars*, a massive game with huge miniatures of Cthulhu monsters.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Level</i>
Oswald Bainbridge	Bruce	Grizzled Crossbowman	Fighter	8
Zurax Darkfire	Matt	Mysterious cloaked half-orc	Necromancer	8
Nigel Snodgrass	Patrick	Emo-Gothic musician	Dirge Bard	8
Doctor Jegen Vaus	Tim	Elvish Eurotrash	Alchemist	8
Sredni Vashtar’s Girl	Ernest	Troubled Vudran Girl	Witch	8
Icobus Basilisk	Chris	Pale, poor nobleman, reincarnated as an orc!	Oracle	8

Some New Tricks and Stunts

The characters compare notes on their new 8th level tricks. *Sredni Vashtar’s Girl* notes that she has learned a *Healing Hex*, useful once per person per day – but also useful on random undead, who often don’t react well to positive energy. *Oswald Bainbridge*

highlights his new Manyshot feat as a way for him to dramatically increase his ammo consumption. *Icobus Basilisk* asks, “But it will also help you do more damage, right?” Oswald reluctantly agrees that it would also do that.

For his part, *Icobus Basilisk* notes that he picked up *Wall of Fire* from his Battle Mystery. *Zurax Darkfire* exclaims, “Really! I got that too! We can work together to slow-cook our foes!” On a less excitable note, he also points out that he’s picking up *Dimensional Anchor*, to keep those pesky teleporters pinned down.

Who Has Ghoul Fever?

Several characters contracted *ghoul fever* during their latest encounter. Sredni Vashtar’s Girl examines them, reassures them that they will not actually turn into ghouls (they’re high enough level that they would turn into ghosts), and provides them with various curative teas and poultices. Oswald and *Icobus* are cured, but *Nigel Snodgrass* continues to languish – and his taste for human flesh becomes stronger.

The Ceramic Egg

The characters took a small ceramic egg from the ghoul handler. Sredni Vashtar’s Girl tries casting *Detect Magic* upon it (nothing) and then examines it carefully. All she is able to determine is that it is small, ceramic and egg-shaped. If it were a natural egg, it might have been laid by a flightless bird native to the Plane of Earth.

Icobus Basilisk looks and finds a hidden seam upon it. He determines that no further investigation is necessary. Nobody else asks if he was able to find a way to actually open the seam.

The Mayor’s Errand

Illmarsh is a town that sits upon the edge of a large, rotting swamp, and the town itself smells entirely of rot. The whole place has the odor of laundry allowed to sit wet. The characters have made a deal with the Mayor of the place, *Early Greedle*, to investigate the recent spate of disappearances. The Mayor (with good reason) suspects that the *Recondite Order of the Indomitable Sea* might have something to do with it. The Order technically worships *Gozreh*, but in a form not seen in other communities. The key public figures in the *Recondite Order* are:

- *Albor* – Vizier of the Order
- *Caleb* – Vicar of the Order, and Albor’s son

The characters’ reward will be that Mayor Greedle will tell them what he knows about the Black Rider from the North. The characters’ skills suggest that the Mayor is sincere and desperate. The characters’ players think that everything the Mayor said after “I am Mayor Greedle” sounded like a lie.

The Recondite Order in the Morning

The following morning, the characters head over to the Hall of the Recondite Order. Sredni Vashtar’s Girl notes, “Sredni Vashtar is unusually restless here.” The weasel cannot stop himself from scampering nervously up and down Sredni Vashtar’s Girl’s arms.

The Order holds its normal services before dawn, before the fishermen head out onto the lake. The characters arrive after services are over so they can avoid the tentacle goodness of the worshippers.

Icobus Basilisk asks one of the late-departing worshippers to summon Vicar Caleb. Caleb agrees to cure Nigel Snodgrass of his ghoulish fever for double normal rates. He indicates that his father the Vizier Albor is out visiting *Neighbor Bay*, a small outlying community. The people there are very close to nature and are considered to be a blessing to the town. They generally only come to town when they have business to conduct.

Overall, the characters get the idea that Caleb doesn’t want to tell them anything of any import. They do learn that there is a Caliphan trader named *Caster Lucas* in town. He arrived a few months ago.

Why Is a Trader in this Miserable Burgh?

Noting that there isn’t a lot about Illmarsh that would seem to attract a trader’s attention (except possibly for the chance to trade for various necromantic artifacts), the characters decide that they should go talk to Caster Lucas. Their working theory is that he is Up To No Good.

They go back to the Inn and ask the sullen innkeeper about Lucas’ whereabouts. The innkeeper comments, “I haven’t seen him for a couple days, but he paid for the week so I don’t care.”

While Oswald distracts the innkeeper by “threatening” him the others find a hole in the wall leading to Caster Lucas’ room and send Sredni Vashtar in to spy out the place. That plan doesn’t work so well, so the characters go to the backup plan of breaking the lock and then fixing it with the *Mending* spell. Unfortunately, all they find is a lack of any indication that Caster Lucas is a merchant, but plenty of indication that he hasn’t been present for several days.

Perhaps in the Tavern?

The characters head over to the *Wall-Eyed Kraken*, the town tavern. The place is completely empty of customers. The only person present is the young barmaid *Laurel Sills*. She seems just a bit tipsy. Icobus imagines that she may have been sampling her own wares. Icobus Basilisk exclaims, “It is so good to see that there is another normal person in this town! Bring me a beer and a straw!”

In exchange for a round of drinks, Laurel tells Nigel that the statue in the center of the square is of *Cassius Undiomedes*, the founder of the town. He was a noted smuggler, ship captain and (so it is said) pirate. He lived some 200 years ago, and was so notable (and successful) as a rogue and freebooter that the local Count’s only option was to make him a lord. The new Lord Undiomedes founded Baytown on the site of his old smuggler’s camp, then relocated the Undiomedes Family to a great house about two miles outside of town. She provides directions to Undiomedes House. It was built upon a ring of ancient Kellid standing stones, using the stones as the main supports of the house. The House has been empty for years, ever since the last lord was killed and his son disappeared. There are stories that the son might have killed the father.

The characters move the conversation along to the alleged Caliphan trader Caster Lucas. Laurel hasn’t seen him for several days. He brought news and stories of Caliphans and other faraway places, but she never talked to him too much and doesn’t know where he has gone.

Hoping to find any topic that she knows about, *Nigel Snodgrass* asks her about the recent spate of disappearances among the townsfolk. Laurel isn’t impressed by the situation in the least: she notes that people have been disappearing for years, if you count the daughters. The local practice is for the daughters of the town to be sold off in

marriage to the Neighbors for many years, though the first-born daughter of a family is always exempted. Those daughters sent to the Neighbors never return. As first born, she was safe from them, though her two younger sisters were not. With that, she tells Nigel, “I need a drink.” Nigel thinks she might know more, but is unwilling to talk about it.

Finally, Laurel tells the characters that the Apothecary is run by a half-elf named *Jayleen Halrush*. The half-elf doesn’t talk much to the people in town. She spends most of her time out in the swamps gathering rare herbs and plants. As is the way with many small communities, she isn’t treated like a local even though she has lived in the town for many years.

Eventually, Laurel (who appears to be a fairly even-tempered drunk) tells the characters, “If you want something to make you a really angry drunk, you should try this. It’s made from the local sump-weed.”

Zurax, Oswald and Icobus all take that as their cue to head off and talk to the apothecary. Oswald comments, “When the sump-weed hits the table, it’s time to leave.” As they leave, they notice that Sredni Vashtar is up on the table lapping at a bowl of sump-weed moonshine.

Gifts of the Swamp, To Be Sure

The Apothecary shop is called *Gifts of the Swamp*. The characters are taken a bit aback by that, though it does lead *Zurax Darkfire* to suggest, “Maybe she can guide us through the swamp”. There are various dried plants and alchemical items on the shelves and available for sale.

Jayleen Halrush is very willing to talk to Zurax and the other characters. She tells him that she is from the River Kingdoms. By way of confirmation, she also has a very prominent River Kingdoms accent. She explains that she came to Illmarsh because there are some herbs that grow nowhere except in the nearby swamps. She is willing to serve the characters as a swamp guide, but cannot guide the characters to the Neighbors settlement. Even though the locals talk about it, she has never found trails or paths that humans might use out in the swamps, and has certainly never found a human settlement out in the swamp. She is familiar with a ceremony the locals follow to foster girl children

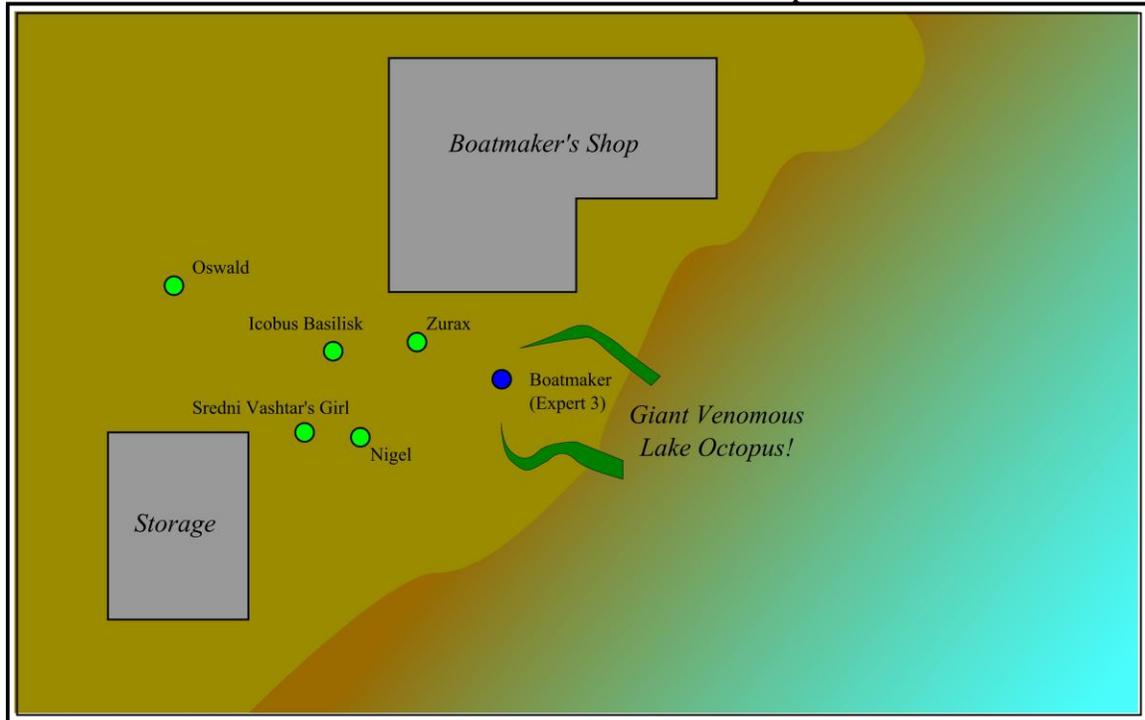
to the swamp, but that is a private ritual carried out by the priest and the parents of the child. It is normally done after the third month for healthy children.

The characters buy some alchemical items from her: antitoxins, antiplague, alchemist's comfort, and a *Protection from Good* scroll.

Kaiju Attack!

The characters hear screaming! From the steps of *Gifts of the Swamp* they can clearly hear the cries of a man coming from near the wharves, near the boatmaker's shop! The characters run towards the sound. They see a weatherbeaten man, probably the boatmaker, being attacked by a giant venomous lake octopus! The body of the thing is under the water, but its tentacles are able to reach out thirty feet to grab and capture!

Attack of the Giant Venomous Lake Octopus



As the characters rush to the scene the octopus grabs the boatmaker and drags him into the lake. Nigel casts *Haste* on the characters just before Icobus roars and charges the octopus. As the characters move in, it lashes out with tentacles. It swiftly grapples Zurax and Icobus, dragging them towards the lake as well.

Icobus swings at its tentacles with his adamantine war hammer! He makes three solid hits! The creature looks lightly wounded. Sredni Vashtar's Girl, wearing her dwarf

beard for some reason, emerges from the tavern and strikes the thing with a *Ray of Exhaustion*! The creature looks lightly wounded *and* a bit tired!

Zurax runs up and casts *Bestow Curse* upon the creature as Nigel starts drumming his dirge. He would have liked to try saving the boatmaker by casting *Grease* upon him, except that he cannot clearly see the man – so he casts *Grease* upon the octopus instead. It releases Icobus and the boatmaker and jets out into the water, releasing a cloud of ink as it does.

Icobus pulls the boatmaker to the shore, surreptitiously checking to see if the man has webbed hands (he does not). He does catch a glimpse of a large creature disappearing beneath the surface of the lake, hundreds of feet from the shore. It was long and dark, as if it was a large serpent or a massive tentacle.

Why Did the Octopus Attack?

The characters cure the boatmaker's wounds. His name is *Jasper Steane*. He explains that he doesn't understand why he was attacked, "I'm always careful to make a sacrifice to the Watcher in the Bay every time I put a new boat in the water."

"What's that?"

"That's our local sea monster!"

Icobus indicates that he saw it out in the bay.

Jasper isn't impressed, "You saw it? That's nothing. I've seen it plenty of times myself."

Zurax does his best to make a deal with Jasper Steane to not damage the octopus carcass too much (if he should find it dead) and to sell it to him. He justifies his interest because he's a wizard and wizards always need weird stuff. Everyone else wonders what real use Zurax will have for a zombie octopus.

The Swamp Road

The characters decide that now is the time to see what might be lurking out at the abandoned House Undiomedes. The road is muddy and wet, enough that the characters don't realize until too late that there are giant leeches all over the place. Sredni Vashtar's Girl, Oswald, Nigel, and Zurax all pick up leeches.

The creatures are crazy aggressive, moving right under their victims' skins. Neither Sredni Vashtar's Girl nor Nigel know of any natural animal that acts like this. Their efforts to cut the creatures out do not go well, mostly due to the fact that none of them have much of a Healing skill.

Zurax calls out, "I recognize these things! These aren't leeches! These are slugspawn! Bloated alien forms the length of a man's forearm! They burrow into your brain and are initially beneficial until they mature a week later and violently erupt from the skull of the victim!" He goes on to explain that cold and cutting damage will get rid of them, but requires good knowledge of human anatomy. *Remove Disease* will also work. According to the ancient Kellids, they are the children of the Black Goat with A Thousand Young. Zurax decides to try cold to get rid of his slugspawn: he casts *Chill Touch* and grabs himself, slowing the creature at the cost of damage (including STR damage) to himself.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl, with assistance from Icobus and the competence bonus from Nigel's drumming, finally manages to remove hers.

After a few minutes, Nigel, Oswald and Zurax all have the creatures in their skulls. They have no good way to remove them beyond *Remove Disease* or possibly *Lesser Wish*. But now that they are infested with slugspawn they have immunity to mind-affecting effects. This will last for 2d6 days, until the slugspawn hatches. At which point they will continue to be immune to mind-affecting effects.

Icobus tells Oswald, "Well, I guess you'll be entering most rooms first considering that you're a dead man." Oswald grumbles.

As the characters get further into the swamps, Oswald is able to identify several sets of humanoid tracks heading towards the House, including one very large set. They are fresh, made in the last several hours, made by at least three creatures but possibly four. Nigel is certain that the large prints are the tracks of a marsh giant. Oswald also sees the faint tracks of a single horse, made some time earlier. Neither the humanoid nor the horse tracks show a return path – perhaps they all died of slugspawn.

The Ancient House of the Undiomede

Undiomede House is constructed mostly of mortared stone, which appears to be the only thing keeping it intact after 200 years of damp weather and swamp rot. The wooden doors are mostly rotted, requiring a DC 5 STR check to break through. Icobus Basilisk hefts his adamantine hammer, eager to get to smashing things.

The characters start by investigating the small family cemetery. Nigel is very excited by the idea of doing some charcoal rubbings of the grave stone. He makes particular notice of two stones:

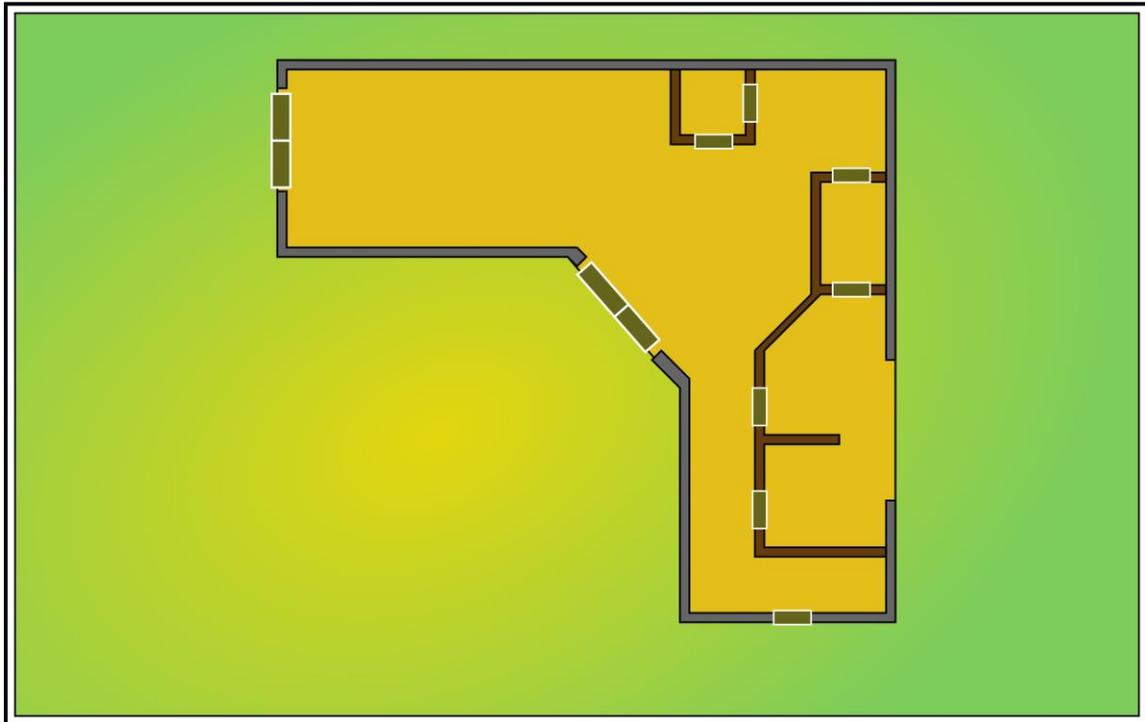
- The newest stone: Claudius Undiomede, who died 70 years ago at the age of 47
- The oldest Stone: Cassius Undiomede, who died 195 years ago at the age of 63

Cassius' grave appears to be somewhat sunken. Oswald makes a note in his appointment book to expect to speak to Cassius Undiomede sometime later.

There Are Cultists Here!

The characters creep into Undiomede House, entering through a collapsed wall into a bedroom. The old Kellid standing stones make very visible presence through the foundations of the House.

Undiomede House



Nigel notices that his slugspawn responds to the presence of the pillars.

Then everyone hears a baby's cry. The characters carefully enter the main dining hall of the House to see two men in the robes of the Recondite Order trying to quiet a baby. One of them seems to be near to Caleb in age, though with rounded, bulging, wide-set eyes. The characters guess that he might be Caleb's brother: there seems to be a family resemblance. He wears a tiara similar to the one Caleb sports.

One cultist spots the characters. He shouts, "Outsiders! They must not learn our horrible secret!" They ready weapons and drop the baby.

Oswald aims and shoots the bulging-eyed cultist three times. One crossbow bolt goes through the cultist's lungs, leaving him gurgling and gasping. The other cultist, apparently unwilling to draw Oswald's attention, shoots Zurax with *Touch of Cold*.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl quickly casts *Invisibility* and moves to rescue the baby. The baby seems to float up into the air without visible support. ("Oswald! The baby must be possessed! Shoot it!").

Icobus Basilisk moves in and knocks the mace from Caleb's brother's hand. And then Oswald shoots the man through each eye, through the mouth, and finally in the throat. He collapses.

The other cultist issues a *Greater Command*, "Fall down before the might of Dagon!" All of the characters with slugspawn are completely immune, leaving only Sredni Vashtar's Girl and Icobus as the only possible victims. And both of them resist the spell.

Zurax launches a pair of *Scorching Rays* at the surviving cultist, burning him severely. The cultist cries out, "Why? Why am I evil and unable to switch out my spells for healing!" He finally gets a grip upon himself and casts *Fog Cloud* to hide his presence.

Icobus comments, "We call this maneuver the Lighthouse – set a dude on fire and then surround him with fog."

Sredni Vashtar's Girl ignores Icobus. She moves out of the briny mist and casts *Cure Light Wounds* upon the baby.

Icobus starts looking for the surviving cultist. He doesn't find him, but his hammer does: Icobus crushes the cultist's skull. While Oswald keeps watch with his deadly, deadly crossbow the others search the bodies:

- Potion marked *Cure Moderate Wounds*
- Masterwork chain shirt
- Masterwork sickle
- Masterwork light crossbow
- *Amulet of Natural Armor +1*
- Badly-burned cleric's vestments
- Gold unholy symbol to Dagon
- 9 gold pieces
- Two potions of *Barkskin* (+4 AC each)
- *Scale Mail +1*
- *Morningstar +1*
- Sling with 10 bullets
- *Ring of Protection +1*
- *Ring of Swimming* (or maybe a *Ring of Fish Friendship*)
- Chasuble lined with gold thread
- Silver ceremonial tiara ("He was prettiest princess ever...")
- Unholy symbol to Dagon

What About Dagon?

Zurax turns out to know quite a bit about Dagon. He is the Demon Lord of the Sea and the monsters that dwell under the sea. He is the largest of the Demon Lords, commonly taking the shape of a massive kraken on those days he doesn't feel like his usual form of a castle-sized fish-man. He is one of the ancient Qlippoth who predate the current Demon Lords, and dwells in an underwater city in the Abyss. He is revered by some debased coastal societies, clearly including some of the folk of Illmarsh. Marsh giants are among his most fervent worshippers. Other land-dwellers are drawn to his faith by the promise of bountiful fishing or gold jewelry returned from the deeps.

Dropping off the Baby

The characters quickly head back to the Apothecary shop. They ask Jayleen Halrush to care for the baby until they are able to return. She isn't eager to accept the baby, because she isn't convinced that they will ever come back. She also doesn't know the locals well enough to know whose child it might be.

The characters eventually make several guarantees, including some money and the loan of *The Lopper's Hand Axe*. Jayleen is willing to watch the child in the meantime.

Recondite Order Redux

The characters carefully strip themselves of anything that might indicate that they just killed a couple of Dagon cultists before visiting the Hall of the Recondite Order and asking them for some *Remove Disease* spells. Icobus casts *Detect Evil* before he goes into the Hall. He quickly understands that all of the priests are evil. Every single one of them, including Caleb.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl leads out the negotiations for some *Remove Disease* scrolls. Caleb indicates that he doesn't have anything in stock, and is the only priest in the Hall able to write such a thing. The characters are not worshippers of Gozreh, so he refuses to write a scroll for them. He is willing to do additional castings if the characters should need additional disease curatives.

At this point, Zurax pulls out the Holy Symbol of Gozreh he picked up from *Father Charlatan* and tries to convince Caleb that he is a worshipper of Gozreh. Oswald notices that Caleb recoils and hides a look of disgust at the sight of the holy symbol.

Oswald tries to intimidate Caleb into cooperating on the basis that it would be awful if the Temple to Gozreh in Caliphas were to hear that the Illmarsh Hall was not supporting the faith. Caleb is cowed: he agrees to make the scroll.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl thanks Caleb and then quickly hustles everyone out of the Hall before violence breaks out.

Nigel, who hasn't made a single Sense Motive check through the whole conversation, is just pleased that that nice Caleb has agreed to make a scroll for the characters. These rural folks are just so friendly and helpful!

Again the Wall-Eyed Kraken

Sredni Vashtar's Girl (with everyone else in tow) heads back to the *Wall-Eyed Kraken*. There are a lot of fisherfolk drinking now, so Laurel Sills is quite busy. Icobus scans around to figure out how many of the locals are evil. The barmaid is not evil. Even many of the fisherfolk are not evil. But there are quite a few evil people in the room. The characters finish their drinks and head over to talk to the Mayor.

Telling the Mayor the News

The Mayor is not evil. However, he also doesn't know anything about Dagon and is not pleased to hear that the Recondite Order is packed full of Dagon worshippers. He is convinced that the practice of fostering daughters to the Neighbors is essential to the prosperity of the town. He does know that the *Tarbys* were the most recent family to foster a daughter to them.

Nigel explains to the Mayor and to the other characters that the first statue outside the Hall of the Recondite Order is clearly Gozreh, but the second statue with the tentacle hair, fishy facial features and the octopus is a desecrated statue honoring Dagon. Mayor Greedle says the second statue has been present for many, many years.

Icobus asks the Mayor, "Now, tell us what you know about the Black Rider."

Mayor Greedle protests, "But our deal was that I would tell you after you solved the disappearances!"

Icobus intones, "I am altering the deal. Pray that I do not alter it any further."

It turns out that all the Mayor knows is that the rider came into town and then headed north to Undiomedede House. The characters already knew this. He clearly did very well at bargaining when the characters first arrived in town.

Icobus tells the Mayor, "You need to think very carefully about whether you want to continue handing over babies to vile Dagon cultists. Can you trust the Sheriff?"

"The Sheriff is a good church-going man."

"So he's one of them then."

Back to the Undiomedede House

The characters decide that spending a night in a haunted mansion would be a lot of fun, so they head back to the Undiomedede House. The second floor is partially collapsed, but they are able to see a light up on the second floor. They send Zurax up to check it out because he's relatively stealthy and can see in the dark. He uses the *Rope of Climbing* to make it up the wall.

Zurax shinnies up and looks inside. He sees a ruined library. Parts of the ceiling and walls have already collapsed, with the rest looking unstable. The shelves are full of the moldering remnants of books.

Zurax sneaks across the room. Two spectral undead wearing uniforms and badges appear. They have lifesense so they are heedless of stealth attempts. He recognizes them as local tax collectors from Versex. They look like they are very interested in the warmth of the living. Zurax reaches out and tries to take control of them, but they resist his attempt.

With the specters heading towards him, Zurax goes to the rope and just drops down. Icobus is standing ready to heal him. And both of them see one specter float down through the ceiling to attack Nigel. Nigel howls as he loses two negative levels. The second specter claws at Zurax. Zurax's *Mage Armor* deflects the attack.

Nigel tries to strike one specter with *Ghostbane Dirge*, but the creature resists the spell. Icobus casts *Death Ward* and puts himself between the specter and the bard while Oswald discovers that magical crossbow attacks do have an effect upon insubstantial creatures.

Zurax invokes his powers against the undead and takes control of one specter. He orders the specter to move away and remain still. The other specter claws away two levels from him. Sredni Vashtar's Girl places a misfortune hex on the specter. Nigel starts drumming and casts a *Ghostbane Dirge*, rendering it vulnerable to most weapons. Icobus follows up by clobbering it right in the spectral skull, erasing 3 hours of its memory. Oswald ends it with three more crossbow bolts, now that it is fully vulnerable to him. He tells the specter, "Deduct this!"

Zurax asks the surviving specter, "Who killed you?"

The specter moans, “The villagers! We uncovered their secrets! The Order incited them, they chased us here and killed us in the library! I hate all living things, even more than when I was a tax collector. But I hate those guys most of all.”

And the Library?

The characters clamber up the *Rope of Climbing* to the library. They open the library door to a curved corridor lined with eight portraits of Undiomedes lords, men with bitter, stern faces. Cassius Undiomedes is the first in the list. The last lord, Claudius Diomedes is pictured with his son *Dennis*. Claudius is in a wheelchair, apparently crippled.

The Vizier in the Lounge

The characters continue into a lounge, a room in much better shape than most. The hearth is lit. And *Vizier Albor* is there, searching the room. He turns to face the characters. His complexion is horrible and pocked, with a scaly tinge to his skin. His eyes are wide-set and fishy. He wears a huge tiara of red gold.

Oswald doesn't lose any time: he shoots the Dagon priest twice in the shoulder. Nigel tries to follow up by filling him with despair, only to find that Albor is immune to mind-affecting effects. Perhaps he has a brain-slug! Sredni Vashtar's Girl steps in and announces, “I'm going to make the spectre jealous!” She strikes him with *Enervation*, hitting him with four negative levels.

Vizier Albor responds by channeling negative energy at the characters, burning them with dreadful black flames. Zurax sends the specter at Albor (who avoids it) and then launches a *Vampiric Touch*.

Icobus gets a normal hammer hit. Oswald gets a single crossbow hit to the sternum. Vizier Albor is critically wounded! He tries to cast a *Cone of Cold*, but the pain of his wounds causes the spell to fail. Then Zurax's specter takes him down.

Horror and Tentacles

Suddenly the Vizier's head explodes in a spray of gore as the tentacle horror that had been gestating inside him surges from the base of his neck. The characters are all horrified. A forest of unnatural tentacles whips around where Albor's head should be.

Icobus swallows his fear enough to step up and strike the thing with his hammer.

Oswald is shattered with fear. He fires a spray of crossbow bolts, completely missing the creature. He cannot stop shuddering, “It should not be! It should not be! It should not be!”

Nigel casts *Haste*. He is uncomfortably aware of the slugspawn in his head – it seems to have become more aware ever since he touched the ancient Kellid stone. “I shouldn’t have done that,” he thinks.

The *spawning canker* bashes at Icobus with unnatural strength while it lashes at him with tentacles. Icobus avoids the tentacles only to take a breastbone-cracking hit from the thing’s fist. It is clearly far stronger than the Vizier was.

Zurax sends his specter to the attack, draining away four negative levels from the spawning canker. Icobus steps into it, smashing tentacles and spraying aberrant blood across the walls. Oswald shoots it twice, dropping it... But only to allow it to enter its next stage of life! The tentacles swell and split, becoming the slugspawn the characters previously encountered. Eight slugspawn face the characters!

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl steps back and clears the area with a *Lightning Bolt*. Thunder rumbles across the swamp as the slugspawn are reduced to crisped ruins.

While Sredni Vashtar’s Girl heals folks (thank you, Healing Hex), Icobus Basilisk heads to the pipe rack and collects the pipes. He finds:

- A meerschaum pipe carved into the shape of a whaling vessel
- A scrimshawed pipe in the shape of an unidentifiable mass of tentacles
- A soapstone pipe carved into the shape of a bizarre fish-frog woman

The characters search Vizier Albor’s body very, very carefully. Among the shattered fragments they find:

- Wand of *Cure Light Wounds* (13 charges)
- Masterwork chainmail
- *Trident of Warning*
- Masterwork silver dagger
- *Cloak of Resistance +1*
- *Ring of Force Shield*
- Gold-threaded chasuble (worth 75 gold pieces)

- A key, perhaps to a chest
- A fish gold medallion of a hybrid Eel/fish/octopus (Dagon)
- A red gold ceremonial tiara
- A fish gold unholy symbol of Dagon

“Fish gold” is a metal identical to normal gold, except for its more reddish color. It is found only in the depths of Lake Encarthan.

The End of the Session

The session ends with the characters picking their way through the fragmented remains of the onetime Priest of Dagon, Vizier Albors. So many of them are infested with slugspawn that they’ll need to make it back to “civilization” quickly – or there will be many more shattered bodies around.