

## Carrion Crown Session Summary 12/08/2013

### *Attendance*

*Bruce* calls in to report that he survived the Great Ice Storm of 2013 up in Dallas, even though the snows were piled up to the eaves and the polar bears were scratching around at the doors. Granted, the polar bears had large, bushy tails and were more interested in scratching around for seeds and nuts than usually expected, but they were still certainly polar bears.

*Paul* explains that he enjoys fried chicken, but he is never sure what to do with all the grease afterwards. *Matt* offers that the traditional route is to pour it into an old coffee can and then throw it out later on. *Chris* notes that there is a fine culinary tradition of re-using the grease, for example to cook eggs because putting only butter into the pan isn't nearly enough.

*Ernest* arrives with a grand shout of "Ice cream cake!" All rejoice! Then he brings out lunch, an eclectic combination of hoagie and egg rolls. Very tasty!

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

### *What Are These Pipes?*

The characters look carefully at the pipes recovered from Undiomedes House. One of them is carved in the shape of a frog-fish-woman hybrid. *Sredni Vashtar's Girl*

indicates that the pipe may be carved in the shape of a *skum*. The skum are a servitor race of the mysterious and obscene *abboleth* deep under the ocean. The strange thing is that there are no female skum – so perhaps the pipe represents the fond hopes of a skum talented in carving and eager for companionship.

The characters search the library for anything else of value. *Nigel Snodgrass* points out the painting of *Cassius Undiomedes's* ship *Conqueror*, hanging over the fireplace. The others mark it as a “maybe”.

*Xurak Darkfire* sends his former tax-collector specter through the house to scout. The specter returns to report that there is a giant down in the main hall. The characters speculate that this must be the marsh giant that they have been tracking.

*Sredni Vashtar* goes to scout the upper sections of the house. He comes back chittering that there is something large and flying circling above the house. He didn't spend much time watching it (weasels are traditionally nervous about flying things) and did not recognize it.

### **Distributing the Goodies**

The characters hand out some of the nice items they have picked from the bodies of their foes. *Nigel Snodgrass* gains an *Amulet of Natural Armor +1* and a *Dagger +2*. *Sredni Vashtar's* Girl gets the *Ring of Force Shield*. *Oswald Bainbridge* picks up the *Ring of Swimming*, *Albor's* tentacle-themed *Trident of Warning*, a masterwork silver dagger, and a *potion of Barkskin +4*. *Icobus Basilisk* gains a *Ring of Protection +1*, a *potion of cure moderate wounds*, and the other *potion of Barkskin +4*. *Xurak Darkfire* gets a *cloak of resistance +1* and three vials of scorpion venom.

### ***The Central Hall***

The characters move into the central hall from above, entering on the balcony. The room is circular, with curving staircases around the walls to either side of the hall. From the center of the room a large flat stone rises up, its surface scorched. The upper dome of the chamber is supported by seven massive standing stones. It is very clear that the old masters of Undiomedes House very much made the old Kellid ritual site the centerpiece of their stronghold.

The massive marsh giant the characters had previously dealt with stands in the center of the chamber. She glowers at the characters and hrumphs out, “I know you! You gave me rotten meat! Rotten meat that made belly hurt! You are not followers of Dagon!”

Icobus offers, “But we *are* worshippers of Dagon! See this beautiful trident my friend has? And this wonderful tiara?”

The marsh giantess is unconvinced. Clearly most Dagon worshippers do not signal their allegiance with fancy jewelry.

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl tells her, “We have this beautiful baby! I think it was for you. Was it for you?”

The marsh giantess looks at the baby hungrily but eventually admits that the others would be upset if she took one of the Neighbors’ brides. She is a guard for the priests, but the Neighbors have not shown up yet.

At this point the characters (principally Xurak) decide that the time for talking is done, and that the time for violence has arrived. He leads by casting *Glitterdust* at the giantess. Oswald follows up with three solid crossbow shots. The marsh giantess is lightly wounded! The others are both unimpressed by Oswald’s shooting and impressed by the giantess’ endurance: most things Oswald shoots at simply fold up in pieces after three shots.

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl rises into the air, chanting a mantra! She places a misfortune hex upon the giantess, but the giantess resists it! The giantess responds by casting a *Fog Cloud* so everyone has trouble seeing. Oswald sends a couple of bolts into the cloud, hitting nothing. This is fortunate, because a couple of other characters had charged headlong into the cloud, turning themselves into accidental targets of opportunity.

Xurak decides that he’s had enough of the fog – he casts *Dispel Magic* and sends it away, just in time to see the giantess clobber Icobus in the head with her club. Icobus reels but does not lose his footing. Instead, he steps in and smashes her ankle with his adamantite war hammer. She howls!

Oswald can see again, so he shoots her three times in the guts, leaving the giantess critically wounded. Sredni Vashtar’s Girl intones mysterious syllables as her *Spectral Hand* dashes forward and delivers a curse to the giantess. The giantess becomes

*Confused*: the weasels darting in the periphery of her vision render her unable to focus upon anything else.

Xurak sends his specter to drain the giantess, dropping her to her knees. Then he delivers the final strike with a single *Acid Arrow*. She falls. The only sound in the room is the sound of sizzling flesh.

### **Do Marsh Giantesses Carry Loot?**

The giantess was wearing a large fish-gold armband that turns out to be worth 500 gold pieces. It depicts scenes of eels and humans living together in a way that has questionable artistic value.

### **A Path to Ancient and Horrible Mystery**

While casting *Detect Magic* in the area the characters see a spell upon one of the stone menhirs. Sredni Vashtar's Girl and Nigel determine that it is a *Phase Door*, and that there is a depression in the stone. The characters guess that the Dagon priest's key will fit into the depression, and might activate the *Phase Door*.

### **Shall We Rest the Night? Perhaps Not.**

By this time it is quite late in the night and several of the characters are completely out of spells, so the characters quickly investigate the rest of the property. Satisfied with their findings, they relocate to the carriage house outside. A single horse is tied up. It clearly has not been fed for several days. The characters deduce that this is the horse of the dark rider: it bears the mark of a stable in Thrushmoore. They spend a few minutes feeding and watering the poor creature.

Oswald is able to find tracks leading to the storeroom. There have not been many other humans passing by, so he guesses that they were made by the dark rider. Nigel casts *Detect Secret Doors* and finds nothing, but Oswald sees clear signs of a struggle inside. There are no signs of anyone leaving.

### ***Back to Searching Undiomedede House***

The characters return to searching Undiomedede House, reasoning that if they are tired and almost out of spells everything else in the house must be in similar straits. They

find a sitting room with a settee in the center. Characters investigate, because nothing bad has ever come out of a settee. But against all expectation, a swarm of voracious ticks surges forward! Sredni Vashtar's Girl flies up out of the way as Icobus Basilisk summons a *Wall of Fire* and roasts them all. Everyone snacks on quick-roasted tick. Tasty!

The nursery contains the rotting remains of a cradle with a mobile made of seashells hanging over it. The window is broken. The shells in the mobile are quite rare, normally found only at the bottoms of deep lakes. Sredni Vashtar's Girl packs it up for later sale: it might be worth as much as 75 gold.

The office features a very nice hickory desk. Sredni Vashtar's Girl is goaded into checking out the contents of the desk. It's full of yellow mold! Aieeee! Nigel and Xurak both inhale an unhealthful dose, losing a couple of CON points each.

The characters continue through the house to find a large bedroom. There is a dark stain upon the rotting bedclothes. The headboard depicted nautical scenes when it was whole, but has been viciously chopped and hacked with a blade. The characters deduce that this was probably where the last Lord of Undiomedes House was killed in his sleep, probably by his son. On closer examination, there is a message on the headboard: "The Pact ends here, Father!"

A spiral staircase goes up from the bedroom. Above is a widow's walk with a mangled corpse upon it. And there is something the size of an elephant flying above the house.

### *Hounds of Tindalos!*

The baying of hounds comes from the corners of the bedroom. Sredni Vashtar's Girl starts to wail, "The Hounds of Tindalos are coming! They come through the sharp angles!" Moments later, the hounds emerge. They look almost nothing like actual hounds, with their fierce jaws, spindly legs and large, soulful eyes.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl cautions the others, "They are immune to poison and mind-affecting spells! Use magic!"



The hounds' gazes tear reality. Oswald suffers horrible rending injuries as they look at him. He responds with two eviscerating crossbow hits to the lead Hound, leaving the creature critically wounded, exhausted, and with a severed tendon (-1 DEX). Sredni Vashtar's Girl dashes forward and applies a *Vampiric Touch* to the creature, leaving only a desiccated husk sagging to the floor. The beast's carcass starts to crumble like old newspaper.

Xurak falls afoul of the ripping gaze of the second hound. He bolsters his specter and sends it to the attack. The specter lunges at the Hound. The Hound disregards the undead in favor of attacking Sredni Vashtar's Girl. She is grateful for all of her magical vitality: it prevents her from taking damage from the creature's fangs.

Nigel Snodgrass starts an inspiring dirge and heals himself.

Icobus evades the Hound's ripping gaze then clobbers it with his adamantine war hammer. The Hound falls, stunned. Icobus crushes its head. Nigel takes a canine tooth. And Sredni Vashtar's Girl hands out *healing hexes* for everyone.

## **Now That the Hounds Are Done, We Loot!**

There is an attic storage area underneath the stairs up to the widow's walk. It is mostly full of boxes of letters and whatnot. Sredni Vashtar's Girl is quite excited by the prospect of ancient books and letters. She searches through them, finding the *Book of Abstruse Geometries*, bound in cracked whale-hide and written in archaic Azlanti. She is saddened by the fact that she cannot actually read Azlanti, at least until she casts *Comprehend Languages*. It appears to detail secrets of dimensions and spaces beyond reality, and the creatures that dwell within. It also includes details of several arcane spells:

- *Contact other Plane*
- *Dimension Door*
- *Ethereal Jaunt*
- *Phase Door*
- *Planar Binding*
- *Symbol of Insanity*

The book also provides details and methods for calling dimensional shamblers, including equations for over 100 specific dimensional shamblers.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl tells the others, "You cannot read my precious!" She clutches it protectively to her chest. At least until she realizes she needs Xurak's help to learn the spells.

### ***The Widow's Walk***

Xurak sneaks out onto the widow's walk, evading the gaze of the flying creature above. He is able to find the crushed body of a man in red and green robes. Xurak easily determines that the man was killed recently by falling from a great height. It is quite clear that this is the body of the Whispering Way rider the characters were tracking. Apparently he shouldn't have tried sneaking out at night for a quick smoke break.

A series of strange mystical symbols have been inscribed on the bricks of the widow's walk in charcoal. Xurak thinks that someone summoned something, probably from the *Dark Tapestry of Abstruse Geometries*. The most likely explanation is that the

cultist summoned something that he shouldn't have, then lost control of it and was killed. It happens all the time.

### *Finally We Rest*

The characters make camp in the carriage house with the horse, on the grounds that it is the least creepy area in the whole property. Sredni Vashtar's Girl prepares a great stock of *Remove Disease* spells to help remove the slugspawn from her companions' heads.

The next morning there is a great wave of *Remove Disease* casting and all those characters that had been infested are made clean. Xurak's negative level (from the early part of his experience with specters) persists, so he is at risk of losing control of his specter. He sends it away, and tells it to stay wherever it goes.

### *Through the Phase Door*

The characters touch the medallion to the trigger depression and trigger the *Phase Door*. They find themselves in a narrow stone tunnel. The stairs are smoothed by the passage of time. The walls are damp and the ceilings are covered with small stalactites.

Oswald checks for aquatic predators. He finds none.

The characters move down the stairs. The passage opens into a large stone cavern. The perfectly preserved corpse of a man hangs in a large glass tank. A bell carved with strange runes hangs upon the north wall. The bell has no clapper. It is magical, the focus of an *Alarm* spell. Sredni Vashtar's Girl thinks that it is linked to the *Phase Door*.

The characters examine the man in the tank. It is clear that the man is *Cassius Undiomedede*, founder of Illmarsh. A small book bound in sharkskin stands upon a small lectern next to the tank. Nigel reads it and finds that it is Cassius Undiomedede's journal, describing (among other things) his first meeting with the Neighbors. He claims that their home is in tunnels underneath the bay, near the Turn Rocks. Further entries include the establishment of the Fostering Pact in which he agreed to turn over the daughters of the family and the town to the Neighbors. He seems to have had some reservations, but was convinced that this was the only way to assure the prosperity of the town.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl tries tapping upon the glass of Cassius Undiomedede's tank. He does not respond. The tank is not magical.

At this point, a fish-frog-like creature, probably a guard, pokes his head in to see what is going on. When it sees the characters, its googly eyes bug out even farther and it lets out an alarm.

### The Guards Respond

Six skum and a *skum chieftain* come running up the tunnels. *Iq'lothatuaa* is a massive creature, far larger than his minions, and he has human skulls covering his genitals. The creatures are hunchbacked with green skins and the heads of toothy fish. The *Trident of Warning* does not respond to them at all, because they're monstrous humanoids and not aquatic predators. Oswald starts to suspect that he might have been sold a bill of goods on his new trident.



Iq'lothatuaa calls out, "There must be theme music!" One of his minions queues up "I Am Murloc!" on his iPod.

The skum are rocking out and preparing to assault the characters when Xurak unleashes his *Lightning Bolt* upon them to light effect.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl chirps, "Silly necromancer, this is how you roast skum!" She sends a second *Lightning Bolt* at the skum. The area is filled with the satisfying sounds of roasting and the disgusting smells of burnt fish scales.

The corridor is clear of everything except the leader. Oswald shoots him three times, leaving him looking pale and crippled (-2 STR damage, -1 DEX damage), but Oswald's shooting doesn't manage to stop the creature before he clobbers Nigel with a greataxe.

Icobus Basilisk casts *Enlarge* and hammers the skum leader with his warhammer. He hits him once upon the head to stagger him, and a second time in the chest to send him to the ground. The characters swiftly loot the body, finding:

- Large masterwork heavy steel shield
- *Defending Great Axe +1*
- Magic amulet shaped like a nautilus shell

Iq'lothatuaa's axe has a really funky design, covered with barnacles and interesting fillips. It looks like it was partially made from an old anchor. It looks like it was made a long time ago.

### *The Skum Are All Already Dead?*

The characters move down the corridor into a large cavern with several natural stone columns and several shallow pools. The corpses of two fish-like humanoids, clearly the victims of awful violence, lie upon the ground. Ichor stains all around the walls and the columns.

The characters find a lot of random personal items from the skum, foodstuffs and whatnot. They also find:

- A brooch and two bracelets made from red gold worth a total of 450 gold
- A dozen gemstones worth 50 gold each

The two dead skum have been dead for several days at least. The characters decide that this is a mystery well worth exploring further.

### *The Chamber of Children*

The characters continue deeper into the cave complex. They find a chamber lit by glowing violent fungus. The characters can hear the sound of a woman singing. The chamber includes bedrolls, evidence of habitation, and some child-sized dressmaker dummies. Nigel starts countersinging as the characters enter very carefully.

Oswald, Icobus and Sredni Vashtar's Girl hear the songs and become overwhelmed with listlessness and ennui (-4 penalty to Will saves). Sredni Vashtar's Girl says, "I feel like cutting myself." The characters also get the impression that they are home: there is no need to escape.

Icobus investigates the bedrolls. They are all small.

The kitchen (such as it is) is located on a ledge above the main cavern. It includes a table, a cauldron and some knives and other tools. Sredni Vashtar's Girl flies up to check it out. Perhaps this is where the children are prepared for eating? She finds no evidence of this.

Xurak touches one of the dressmaker dummies. It starts to crumble. He realizes that it isn't so much a dressmaker dummy as a person whose skin became dry and rigid, almost as if all the hope has been drained away. There is a pit at the farther end of the cavern. He picks one up and prepares to toss one into the pit. Before he does, he sees a woman and a dead infant down in the pit. She looks up. Her skin is entirely bleached. Her eyes are dull and colorless. She glows with an eerie radiance. She speaks, but she speaks a strange, gabbling form of Common.

There is a ladder going down to the pit, so the woman could climb out if she wanted. She babbles, seems completely insane, and doesn't really want to leave the pit. She does accept some food. The characters leave her there and continue on.

Deeper in the cave the characters find a row of small cradles.

### *The Color from Space*

The characters find a curving tunnel that goes far, far underground. They follow it for at least a quarter mile, find nothing, and turn back.

The other tunnel goes about 250 feet and opens into a chamber. There are various desiccated corpses of skum in the chamber. The area is filled with an eerie glow that is in a color the characters cannot recognize or describe. It suffuses the area. A strange device made of lustrous, greasy metal is attached to the floor in unknown fashion. It is creating a stream of energy that flows into the color.

Icobus moves forward to the device. It starts to feed upon him. Sredni Vashtar's Girl moves in to look at it and it does feed upon her! Oswald shoots some crossbow bolts at it, to little effect.

Nigel casts *Ghostbane Dirge* upon the color and senses that the spell should work, if he could overcome the color's defenses. Icobus manages to cancel the effects of the magical artifact with a *Dispel Magic*, freeing the color from the grey force-lash that was holding it in this room. It ascends through the ceiling, leaving the room completely dark.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl and Nigel cast *Light*. The characters suffering from ennui find themselves recovered.

Icobus uses his adamantine hammer to break the magical artifact free of the cavern floor. The characters put it on an impromptu stretcher to bring back to the surface. On the way back they pick up the insane woman, who is also freed of the compulsion from the color. Sredni Vashtar's Girl uses a *Charm Person* to make her a bit more tractable. And because she is still insane, she ends up restrained on another stretcher as well. She is a level 1 Commoner with the Color-Blighted template.

The *Force Lash* device reawakens a few moments after the color vanishes. The characters examine it carefully. It seems to be more than just a magical device: it includes some mechanical parts. Perhaps the inventor in town will be able to use it.

### *Final Fate of the Undiomedede Founder*

Icobus breaks the glass of Cassius Undiomedede's cylinder. It is full of alcohol. He is well and truly dead. The characters put him on another stretcher as Xurak thinks about turning him into a zombie. Oswald gathers up the head of Iq'lothatuaa to help convince the townsfolk that the Fostering Pact is ended. He is horrified by Xurak's plan to turn Cassius Undiomedede into a zombie and use him to horrify (convince) the townsfolk instead.

### *Back in Town*

The characters visit the alchemist *Jayleen Halrush*. She reports that the baby is well, but wants to know when the characters will take her away. Sredni Vashtar's Girl explains that there is some bad news, as all the other fostered daughters are dead, killed by a color. Jayleen does not recognize the crazy color-leached woman at all.

*Horace Croon* is next – the characters go visit the inventor at his house/workshop. He is pleased, for he has just completed his Subaqueous Exploration Vessel. Sredni Vashtar’s Girl drops the *force leash* on his table and asks, “What do you think of this?”

Croon is amazed, “I’ve never seen anything like it! Is it Azlanti? No skum could build anything like this, it’s far beyond even human knowledge!”

Croon does know where the Turn Rocks are. He will allow the characters to use his device (it seats four), but he must know why they need it.

He explains that he did grow up in Illmarsh, though he left when he was young. His own sister was Fostered when he was a boy – perhaps the recovered woman is her? Or perhaps not, she doesn’t look familiar. And she is still glowing (even though the color is gone).

Croon had long suspected that aquatic creatures dwelt at the base of the Turn Rocks, but had not previously known that they were the same as the Neighbors. He describes the Fostering as a travesty that must be ended. The characters caution that if no more daughters are Fostered the town might be attacked by a large lake monster – it might be necessary to kill it first. It will also be necessary to kill *Vicar Caleb* at the *Hall of the Recondite Order*. Horace Croon doesn’t have a problem with any of this.

### *The End of the Session*

The session ends with the characters at Horace Croon’s house. Next time – the attack upon the Recondite Order! There will be no session on December 22<sup>nd</sup> as several folks will be off traveling, so the next session will be in the first week of January. Happy New Year!