

WRATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS 04/12/2015

Attendance

Bruce calls his way through some technical difficulties on *Chris's* end of the connection. Against all understanding, even though *Chris* sounds normal, *Paul* and *Patrick* sound like they're making dolphin noises.

Bruce takes the opportunity to tell everyone about the latest installment of *Prince of Sartar*, in which *Harrek the Berserk* does what he does best against the *Kethaelan* navy. While the others hold their ears and make howling sounds, *Chris* observes, "I can actually hear *Georgina* in the room with you trying to set you on fire with her mind. CATCH ON FIRE! CATCH ON FIRE!"

Georgina chuckles nervously before going back to muttering, "...catch on fire... catch on fire..."

Paul mentions the new *Sims 4* supplement, which causes *Georgina* to mention that she read a *Buzzfeed* article about "The Ten Most Horrible Things People Have Done in the *Sims*." She claims that it made her laugh so hard she couldn't breathe.

Ernest shows up just in time to hear *Georgina* tell the world (through the internet), "NSA! Give me a job or I'm going off the grid!" She promises that she won't Snowden everyone because she's awesome.

By the time *Tim* shows up, the group is discussing transformer safety, the lack of ongoing maintenance at various *State of Texas* data center electrical parks, and whether or not there are "electricity yogis" in *India*.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Level</i>
Tabregon	Bruce	Male Half-elf Oracle of Iomedae, Touched by Divinity	10M5
Tsuguri Chiba	Chris	Male Cleric of Tsukiyo, Child of the Crusades	10M5
Antonius	Ernest	Male Tien Monk/Paladin of Irori, Stolen Fury	10M5
Trystan	Matt	Male Half-elf Paladin of Shelyn, Touched by Divinity	10M5

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Level</i>
Shawanda	Patrick	Female Mwangi Paladin of Iomedae, Exposed to Awfulness	10M5
Calanthe	Tim	Female aasimar Sorcerer of Shelyn, Riftwarden Orphan	10M5

On the Streets of Alushinyrra

The session starts with the characters in the massive city of Alushinyrra at the heart of *Nocticula's* Midnight Isles. *Calanthe* is passing herself off as a succubus, with the rest of the group as her slave-cult. She has only just declined the kind offer of the *thanadaemon Xugunfarishandoon* to act as a local guide in exchange for a suitably succulent soul.

The characters walk down the streets of Alushinyrra, humming the tune of the popular song, “On the Streets of Alushinyrra”. Alushinyrra is the Porphyry City, rolling out as far as the characters can see in every direction in its distinct purple hue. The characters are in the Plaza of the Moon, which *Tabregon* mishears as “Plaza of the Nude”, in part because there are a lot of nude people present as well.

The characters’ task is to build enough notoriety in the city to impress *Nocticula* and gain an audience with her in the House of Silken Mirrors. *Tabregon* consults with his succubus helpline and asks *Arueshalae* how she would recommend gaining notoriety, in a way that would not also render the characters suddenly dead. She suggests asking around the city for opportunities without going over the top, at least over the top so much that *Shamira*, the ruler of the city, decides to have them taken out. *Shamira* is somewhat mysterious, maybe even a fallen celestial. She has burning wings and floating crimson hair. There are stories that she won her position by seducing *Nocticula*. She is known for her ability to appear in others’ dreams and extract her vengeance by destroying their minds.

The Moon Plaza Arms

Lacking other direction, the characters walk into a bar off the Plaza of the Moon. The place has a varied clientele, including a pack of shadow demons off in a corner. The

characters aren't able to understand what the shadow demons are doing in a bar: they can't even pick up a mug, let alone drink. Maybe they're suppliers, there to offer hits of shadow demon sputum to slaving addicts (shudder). The characters disguise themselves as best they can. *Tsuguri* goes all Secret of Jade, with his shirt open to his navel, a cluster of gold chains, and a Fu Manchu moustache to top it off. *Antonius* claims, "I look questionable on the best of days!"

The characters sit down near a group of tieflings and ask about the scene. *Shawanda* claims, "We're bad, we're mean, and we're here to kick ass."

The tieflings suggest, "You could always fight in the arena. Battle Bliss is always looking for juicy new meat-stuffs, and their champion Gelderfang has challenged all takers." Tabregon mishears this as "Guilderfang;" the rest of the group decides not to ruin his day by explaining the difference.

The characters spend some time talking to the tieflings about the city's neighborhoods and their dominant personalities (an ever-changing cast of miscreants and demons). They find that drinks are really quite expensive here, if you're paying for them in gold. The rates offered for drinks in soul tokens are much more reasonable, as long as you're willing to engage in an explicit evil act. "But that's strange," says Tabregon, "How can trading in souls be an explicit evil act if the spiritual economies of the Good outer planes are also based upon the exchange of souls? Certainly, being a Good soul is a much better deal overall, but you still get treated as currency." The others write off his babbling to the fact that he is merely Chaotic Good, and as such a lower class of Good.

Of all the options available (not that there are many), fighting in the arena seems like the best choice. The characters head towards the arena in Battle Bliss. *Shawanda* buys a big cloak along the way, carefully avoiding any goods priced in "SG" (Soul Gold).

The Locals Can Be Pretty Aggressive

The characters are on the street, innocently heading towards the arena to engage in some blood sports, when an adult fiendish umbral dragon casts its shadow across *Shawanda*. The creature thunders, "How dare you step in my way?"

Calanthe tries to intimidate the creature, to no effect.

Tabregon tries a mix of obsequious pleading and subtle threat, also to no effect.

Calanthe decides that this situation has gone on more than long enough. She casts *dismissal* at the dragon, sending it back to its home plane an instant before it engulfs the party in negative energy. The others offer her a series of congratulatory backslaps, all the while congratulating themselves on having the foresight to bring some kind of arcane caster along on the expedition. Calanthe feels like she is being underappreciated somehow. After all, that *was* an adult fiendish umbral dragon. Tabregon thought it was an “umber dragon” and keeps asking the rest of the group if they were confused by its gaze.

Burnishing Reputation in the Arena

The Battle Bliss district is built around one of the smaller arenas in Alushinyrra, a place appropriately also named Battle Bliss. The characters find their way to the contestants’ entrance where the massively fat cambion *Irmangoleth* runs the show. He allows that groups are allowed to fight together. The only rule is that they put on a good show. Cue the “performance combat” rules, which allow the use of various skills as swift actions to entertain the crowd.

Because this is the Abyss, the challenges are all non-lethal only if that would be more entertaining than otherwise. The characters arrange a fight with six vlocks from the *Nokschniep Clan*. The fight will be in twelve hours. Irmangoleth explains that Gelderfang is the champion of the Arena, and that if the characters do really, really well against the vlocks they might get a chance to be eviscerated by him. They should be honored even by the opportunity! Gelderfang is a horned incubus and he is such a badass that he has had one of his arms replaced with a pizza cutter. “Me not all bad, me very popular at pizza parties! Now me always invited to pizza parties!”



1. Gelderfang

The Key to Success is How You Accessorize

The characters go shopping for arena clothing (the more outrageous and colorful the better) and an illusionist to cast spells to make deaths look extra-hideous (+2 on Performance Combat checks for 500 gold) during the time before their date with destiny. Tabregon buys leather clothing with floating colored strips hanging from it, enchanted to wave in an invisible (tortured) breeze (200 gold). His stage name is “Uncle Nasty.” Antonius gets a costume that says, “Mind Flayer!” with a traditionalist *Ming the Merciless* flavor. He contends this is extra evil because he’s violating trademark law as well as the tenets of human decency. Tsuguri goes with the traditional demon-fetishist rig with green crescent moons and a transparent helmet that looks like it has a brain inside. He goes all-out, spending 1500 gold.

Thoosday Matinee: The Newcomers vs. The Nokschniep Gnashers!

Twelve hours and a lot of shopping later the characters show up in the Battle Bliss arena to face the Nokschniep Clan. They notice that Shamira, the ruler of the city, has elected to show up to see the event. She is seated up near the Nokschniep Clan end of the arena with her entourage. With her burning wings and her fiery bow, she is very hard to miss.

The arena is long and narrow, with a raised platform at either end. The vrock are on one side and the characters are on the other. The vrock are also wearing arena costumes: one has dragonfly wings, another is disguised as a hut, and one has a mummified human strapped to each arm. Tabregon casts *mythic shield other* on Antonius and Tsuguri, and *magic circle against evil* on himself.

Calanthe (in her stage role of Stripperella) leads the event with *mythic haste*. So dull! The crowd practically yawns out loud.

Trystan takes careful aim and shoots a vrock cleanly through its feathered breast. He gestures flamboyantly to the crowd, drawing in cheers and adulation. A particularly knotty-looking *bebilith* high in the stands exposes itself to him. He shudders.

Antonius charges across the arena, launching himself across its full length in the blinking of a vulture's eye. He hammers a vrock dressed in a wide silver conical hat. Even though he rips the creature's brain out, the crowd isn't impressed. Simply executing an opponent like a cockroach doesn't do much to entertain the deeply decadent Alushinyrra arena-goers.

The surviving vrock chant out in unison, "Stunning... stunning... STUNNING SCREECH!" Three vrock unleash their screeches against Antonius, and then do their best to pummel him to death. Two more fly forward to screech at the rest of the group. Tabregon catches two of the demons facing Antonius in a very stylish *flame strike*. The crowd starts to cheer and chant the characters' names (or something similar): "Uncle Nasty! Uncle Nasty! Yaaaaaah!" (the group has scored one Arena Victory Point, plus some notoriety).

Tsuguri (fighting as Fu Manchu) flies over the nearest vrock, provoking an attack of opportunity that allows him to invoke a *painful gambit*. *Shawanda* (fighting as The Brick) follows up by using *Radiance* to slash the vrock. Tsuguri uses a megaphone to

announce, “All the chili is hot! All the women are jealous!” as he engulfs two vrock in an *aura of madness*.

Shawanda “The Brick” stabs a vrock once, twice and three times! With her free hand, she crushes a brick on her head, just to show how tough she is. The crowd is pleased, but they’re already as excited as they can possibly get (+1 Arena Victory Point, plus entirely too much demonic nudity in the stands).

Calanthe “Stripperella” flaps up into the sky and explodes a Macross-missile-explosion style *enhanced mythic magic missile* barrage down upon the two nearest vrock. She burns through one vrock’s spell resistance, but the other manages to neutralize its half of the spell.

Trystan, the “Elf With No Name”, steps backward away from a vrock bearing down upon him. He shoots a single arrow through the creature’s demonic heart and then out its back, sending a fire-hose geyser of demonic ichor spraying across the field. The vrock is so shattered by its injury that it grasps either side of the entry wound with its horrid claws and tears its own chest open, revealing shattered crystalline bones and ruptured demonic organs. The crowd goes nuts (1 more Arena Victory Point). They start throwing things into the ring that the characters don’t want to get hit by.

Antonius, “Mind Freak”, plays for time by devouring his fake brain in Cookie-Monster style. He wants the aura of madness to have full chance to run its course. He is fully rewarded: the huge vrock next to him starts to babble in Abyssal about how its relationship with its mother made it unable to have normal adult relationships. Antonius is grateful that he does not speak Abyssal and thus does not need to make Will saves. The vrock’s two friends turn upon each other and attack. Unfortunately, vrock aren’t good so they have trouble hurting each other (except emotionally).

Tsuguri utters a Vietnamese proverb, “Once the fish is caught, the net is cast aside!” He casts *boneshatter* against a vrock. Antonius “Mind Freak” rips apart the vrock dressed as a hut, gaining an Arena Victory Point but losing some of the crowd enthusiasm. Tsuguri intones, “Eat as small as a cat!”

Calanthe “Stripperella” obliterates one vrock with a wave of *mythic magic missiles*, but by now the crowd has seen that trick and isn’t impressed.

Trystan goes with a much simpler chant, “Gut the Birds! Cut the Vults!” The crowd loves this. Calanthe inflicts “jungle fever” upon a vrock with the *rod of wonder* – the creature erupts in leaves and vines. Everyone clusters up around the surviving vrock and pound it into juice, playing to the crowd (+2 Arena Victory Points).

Calanthe invokes the *rod of wonder* again. Much to her surprise, the magic hits a flask of antitoxin in her pouch. It grows little arms and legs and leaps away, shouting, “I’m free! I’m free!” Calanthe ushers the creature back into her pouch, her mind racing with the possibilities inherent in a diminutive animated object.

And Now the Challenge Round

Irmangoeth challenges the audience, “Arena fans! They say they want a tougher fight! Shall we give it to them?” The audience chants their approval.

Gelderfang flies out into the arena. He has four arms (one of them with the pizza cutter) and batlike wings. Calanthe intercepts him with the *rod of wonder*, doing precisely nothing.

Antonius leaps into the air and attempts to grapple the incubus, who flaps out of his grasp. He uses mythic bullshit and tries again, latching on to him like a tick on a stray dog. Gelderfang strikes back, shattering Antonius’ defenses and delivering a death-echoing strike. Antonius is slashed across the guts! He sustains an injury that would be crippling, save that Tabregon’s *shield other* absorbs half of the damage.

Shawanda strikes back at Gelderfang, discovering that even though he looks like he is bare-chested he has an invisible breastplate on, apparently so that the crowd is not denied the sight of his nipples. Tsuguri moves forward and casts *mythic deathless* on the group. Tabregon takes advantage of *air walk* to move up to Antonius. Trystan, aka “The Elf With No Name,” uses his cloak to flutter into the air. He casts *true strike* and fires *fortune’s arrow* at Gelderfang. The arrow sinks deeply into Gelderfang’s chest, ripping through organs and spilling demonic ichor (78 hit points, plus 3 CON damage). Gelderfang spits up blood, but does it in slow motion because Calanthe “Stripperella” hits him with a *slow* spell. And then she hits him with the *rod of wonder*. A hurricane wind gust emerges from the tip of the rod! Calanthe is blown back sixty feet, while Gelderfang and Antonius are blown forty feet forward, into a wall. Antonius tears at Gelderfang savagely. Gelderfang does the same to him!

Shawanda “The Brick” runs up and cuts chunks off Gelderfang, pleasing the crowd and leaving Gelderfang looking horribly maimed. Oh Gelderfang, he’s not pretty no more!

Trystan shoots Gelderfang again, skewering him again. Calanthe “Stripperella” flies in again and strikes Gelderfang with both *blindness* (which Gelderfang resists) and the *rod of wonder* (which causes dance music to start playing).

Antonius invokes his *titan’s stance* and grows to large size and starts dancing to the throbbing techno beat. He crushes Gelderfang’s skull and extracts his brain as the crowd roars its approval. “Mind Freak!!!!” he shrieks in his best mind flayer/Cobra Commander voice. The characters are swarmed with enthusiastic folks of all description from the audience.

Some Rumors from the Crowd

Tabregon meets some arena-goers who have heard rumors of a death-squad of paladins who have infiltrated the city. An eyeless horned demoness swears that it is true! She has excellent references, as she claims to be *Minagho*, the daughter of Baphomet. They are very concerned that the villainous good-doers might seek to strike a blow for their un-evil cause by slaughtering the new champions of the Arena. And they would be so unhappy if that were to happen... in a non-public setting with no audience.

Trystan hears that if you provide entertainment for the *Mistress Valexia* of the Rapture of Rupture you can gain great fame. An overwrought cambion with glistening skin enthuses, “You can gain great fame as long as your act is extreme and memorable! Please the mistress Valexia! If you could break her string of disappointments her word carries much weight with the city’s elites. Go to the flesh markets and follow the pointing doves!”

The Arena-Master Irmangoeth approaches Shawanda. He tells her that Shamira was very impressed with her, and would like to meet. Alone! Irmangoeth whispers, “Her power is second only to Nocticula’s, but if you wish anything from her the price may be more than you can bear.” Shawanda indicates that she will take the offer under consideration.

A Trip to the Flesh Market

In the Flesh Market, the characters find that there are actual living doves stapled to walls, their heads replaced with pointing arrows. The characters follow that trail through various turns and twists through winding alleyways to a dead-end cul-de-sac after three hours of travel. Through the wall is a plaza crowded with performers and beggars. They all stay clear of the characters. There is a main structure ahead, and a couple of tents in front. The one is labeled “Appointments” and is surrounded by succubi. The other seems to be run by a night hag, selling magical instruments and items appropriate to performances. Tsuguri casts *detect magic* and looks around at the merchandise. All of her wares seem to be drawn from the *Magic Item Compendium*. Truly in the Abyss does D&D 3.5 still reign supreme.

After some window shopping, the characters go to the Appointments tent and let Trystan tell the succubi about how the characters are the Champions of the Arena. He is extremely Diplomatic, and they agree to show the characters in to see the mistress. In the reception hall the characters are met by a *coloxus demon*, gruesome with its fly head. It rasps at them, “I am Oroon. What manner of entertainment do you bring to the Mistress of Ruptures?”

Trystan says “Extreme political satire!”

For some reason, this is enough to convince Oroon to let them through. Apparently observational humor is not popular at the moment in the Abyss.

An Audience with the Mistress of Ruptures

Valexia is beyond, seated upon a floating throne of ivory and sapphire. To either side of her throne sit cages, each containing a blood-soaked and battered *lillid* (a type of good celestial with the torso of a woman and the body of a snake, one beautiful and now battered and scarred). She is flatly bored by the characters’ introductions. She suggests that the characters find some more interesting things to do.

The characters rather desperately mine through their skills for anything that could qualify as entertainment. The skills are:

- Shawanda – fight the *lillids*
- Trystan – display eloquence (Diplomacy)

- Calanthe – tale telling (Bluff)
- Tabregon – unusual medical knowledge (Heal)
- Tsuguri – lying contest (against Calanthe) (Sense Motive)

Even the characters aren't sure why some of their acts are entertaining, but in the end they are.

For the final act, the *lilids* attack Shawanda, starting with *unending remorse*. Shawanda responds with impeccable swordswomanship. They answer with *suffering touch*, opening wounds upon her body to match the wounds they have suffered. One of them utters an *ear-splitting shriek* that only Shawanda can hear, but which does not wrack her with pain. She ends up cutting both of them down with barely a scratch.

Valexia is appropriately impressed. Her tone is silken and sophisticated, “Truly, this is the combat prowess of which I had heard. I shall extend you invitations to the Succubus Manor.”

The characters are overjoyed by this news. It is everything they had ever hoped for. Except that it isn't: they have other things to pay attention to. Plus their *medallions of faith* say that attending the Succubus Manor would be an evil act.

Valexia is disappointed, but indicates she has already spread word about them, telepathically. All of the characters hear a whispered voice in their ears, “Seek me at the Vault of Graves. My guardians within will try to take you, but you are what I hope then they will pose no threat.” The Vault of Graves is on an island off the shore of the Terrace of Favored Mistresses where Nocticula sometimes meets with visitors, away from the Palace. This is a Mythic Trial!

The End of the Session

The characters end the session with an invitation in hand (more or less) to speak to Nocticula, if they're able to survive an encounter with the guardians of the Vault of Graves. Everyone goes up a level (11th level) and gains a Mythic Tier (6th tier).