

## Curse of the Crimson Throne Session Summary 12/07/2008

### Attendance

*Chris* (Malcolm Zirkus) offers, “Did you know that one of my coworker’s friends is having a personality breakdown. He’s writing a lot of things online. Strange, scary things...”

*Ernest* (Annata Vieri) points out, “That’s not so bad. At least they’re only writing these things. And besides, who are we to judge how much time spent writing... things... is normal.”

*Bruce* (Valash Not-Gurelle) says nothing at all. He’s too busy... writing... things.

*Georgina* shudders and rolls her eyes, desperately hoping that the conversation will swiftly move to some other subject. Even something involving frothing at the mouth would be preferable.

*Patrick* (Thorndyke) complains, “Why were you people so late in coming back from lunch? I was waiting outside for whole *minutes!* You monsters!”

*Paul* offers, “Well, we were off getting Ethiopian food. You should try it – it’s really good, but it turns out that Ethiopia is really far away.”

Ernest bursts out, “I’m going to steal your free will and drain away all your precious bodily fluids!” Nobody else wants to know why.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class &amp; Level</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Valash Not-Gurelle	Bruce	Half-Elf	Sorcerer 6 (Air Elemental)	Half-blooded Chelaxian bastard
Annata Vieri	Ernest	Human	Cleric 6 (Holy Warrior)	Cleric of Sarenrae.
Malcolm Zirkus	Chris	Human	Fighter 6	Chelaxian, and proud of it!
Thorndyke	Patrick	Human	Ranger 6	Chelaxian, but not nearly so proud.

### Hospice of the Blessed Maiden

The characters wait up a bit for *Valash Not-Gurelle* to finish painting his latest disturbing masterwork. He tells them, “I call this one *Lunch and the Luscious Maiden*.

You can see where the maiden is, right?” The others just shudder, except for *Thorndyke* who has long since learned to never look at the things Valash paints.

*Annata Vieri* offers, “We should try to sneak in through the secret underground passages. The wererats should know the way!” The others like this idea, but she is unable to find a wererat willing to admit knowing about any so-called “secret passages.”

Thorndyke mourns, “Well, I guess this means we just have to go with the frontal assault. Again.” The characters realize that the Hospice of the Blessed Maiden is right nearby the *Bailer’s Retreat*, a rather rough tavern. As soon as Annata indicates she has no objections, the characters make a beeline to the place.

Annata looks at the crowd of jail guards and released prisoners and asks, “What’s the political atmosphere in this place?”

*Malcolm Zirkus* looks up from a mug of greasy-looking ale and offers, “They all voted for Obama.”

Valash walks up, “Barkeep! Two flagons of your greasiest ale, and your best rumors!”

The barkeep yells back, “Stella! Two ales, and leave the rat in!” Everyone else shudders. Then he turns about to tell Valash that the Hospice was once a semi-used warehouse owned by *House Arkona*, a family well described by the words “rich” and “cruel”. Before the *Queen’s Physicians* took the place over, there were stories that the Arkona were shipping rock and dirt out of the place secretly.

Thorndyke reflects, “Well, that lends credence to the idea that there might be smuggler’s tunnels around.”

### **The Secrets of the Warehouse**

The characters ask around for former House Arkona employees who might know something about the warehouse. Valash Not-Gurette and Malcolm Zirkus learn that House Arkona sold the warehouse some time before the Queen’s Physicians even appeared on the scene, and that it seems like the former warehouse employees were almost deliberately hunted down and killed, albeit before the Physicians took the structure over. There are a few rumors that the *Red Mantis* were responsible for the

killings, but that is hard to confirm: every time someone dies, someone else claims that the Red Mantis were responsible.

### **Scoping out the Scene**

The characters take a look at the structure. It is definitely a warehouse, with one door in front and a thirty-foot high frontage. Sick people do enter the front, and do not emerge: they just go up, knock, and are let inside. Sometimes, stretcher-bearers bring in very sick people. The stretcher-bearers *do* come back out.

The characters are somewhat happy to see that a supply cart does show up ever so often.

The next thought is how the characters should infiltrate. The early plan is the standard one: send one character in to scout the place. Malcolm offers, “The problem with that is that there’s a good chance that our scout will get caught and interrogated.”

Valash Not-Gurelle points out, “You are correct, so that’s why we’ll cut the ranger’s tongue out. Don’t worry, I know *Lesser Acid Orb* so I can cauterize the wound.” Thorndyke rolls his eyes.

The eventual plan is much more sensible. Annata Vieri puts on the *Glamered Studded Leather +1* armor and takes on the appearance of a *Gray Maiden*. Malcolm Zirkus takes the role of a plague victim, with a preventive *Cure Disease* cast upon him. Thorndyke is *Invisible*. And, over the objections of just about everyone who is afraid of the things he might say, Valash Not-Gurelle gets to play the physician.

### ***Inside the Hospice***

Valash Not-Gurelle gets into character and hails down a stretcher team to carry Malcolm Zirkus in to the Hospice. Then everyone enters the place. The whole place smells of alcohol and sickness. A meaty-looking nurse wearing three scarves over her mouth and heavy leather gloves waits for the characters at a long, stained bench. The moans of the stricken emerge from behind a bloody leather curtain.

Valash orders Malcolm into the ward. The whole warehouse has been converted into a horrific convalescence ward for dozens of stricken patients. Four dark-masked Queen’s Physicians creep from bed to bed, resembling nothing so much as awful crows waiting to feed. Two *Gray Maidens* patrol the floor; two more patrol the catwalks above.

Another leather curtain blocks a passage in the back. The invisible Thorndyke sneaks back and verifies that it just leads to the loading bay.

There are two doors in the back: one single and one double. The characters simply march directly towards the double doors with a sense of purpose. This proves to be more than enough to win the cooperation of the Gray Maidens.

The doors lead to an otherwise deserted workroom. The characters notice a cargo lift. Annata Vieri takes hold of the control lever and controls it! The characters go up to another room decorated with white paint, beige tile, and double doors decorated with paintings of gazelles that have seen “rough use”, whatever that might mean.

The characters quickly figure out that the other door downstairs just leads to a stairwell.

Thorndyke listens at the gazelle-painted doors. He reports, “There are people through there!”

Suddenly, the characters realize that there are two Gray Maidens in the room. One Gray Maiden challenges, “What are you doing here?”

### **The Vivarium**

Valash barks out, “Where is the doctor! We have an interesting specimen!” The Gray Maiden unlocks the door, revealing a laboratory with three Queen’s Physicians working at a series of alchemical apparatus. Over a dozen patients lie in beds, strapped down and restrained. All of them appear to be drugged into a state of oblivious bliss by the fumes emanating from the censer in the center of the room. None of them appear to be stricken by bloodveil, and all of them are Varisian. They have, however, been operated upon and mutilated in spite of their lack of disease.

### **Confrontation with Doctor Davalus!**

Valash simply walks through the room with a sense of purpose. Annata Vieri drags Malcolm along afterwards. Valash opens the far door and steps into what looks like the formal office of an anatomist. *Doctor Davalus* sits at a fine desk decorated with carvings of antelopes and disfigured by strange chemical burns.

Doctor Davalus demands, “What are you doing here?”

Valash produces one of the disease-producing boxes and explains, “We have an interesting specimen! This man claims that he found this object upon the beach!”

Doctor Davalus yells out, “Guards!” Annata rolls her eyes: Doctor Davalus is responsible for the disease boxes, so of course he knows what is going on.

Malcolm roars like Chewbacca and grabs his heavy flail. Annata screams, “The wookie! He’s loose!” And then all heck breaks loose.

Thorndyke (still invisible) decides to keep the situation more in hand by barring the doors of Davalus’ office.

Annata brings down Sarenrae’s judgment upon Doctor Davalus, placing the *Mark of Doom* upon him. Valash simply casts *Haste*.

Doctor Davalus draws out a rapier. Annata comments, “What, he’s a wererat?” The doctor ignores the jibe and casts *Hideous Laughter* upon Malcolm Zirkus. Malcolm shrugs off the spell and responds by swinging his flail at the Doctor. The weapon glances off the Doctor’s mithril shirt.

Malcolm wonders, “Who on earth wears a mithril shirt when they’re sitting in the office?”

Thorndyke refuses to answer: he is too busy holding the door against the Gray Maidens. Valash helps out by casting *Enlarge Person* upon him.

Annata demands, “Surrender and face judgment!”

Davalus responds, “Never! Your foolish quest to save the city is doomed! Bitch!”

Annata answers his arrogance by slashing him twice with her scimitar.

“Disease is the world’s way to bring back balance! In order to allow progress those portions of society that hold us back must be pruned!” Even while Davalus preaches, he slashes at Annata with his rapier.

Malcolm decides that he’s had enough of this. He crushes Davalus’ ribs with one flail strike and his collarbone with the second. Davalus falls.

Thorndyke resolves that he’s not going to leave the battlefield without killing something. He steps back to allow the Queen’s Physicians and Gray Maidens in. He stabs the leading Gray Maiden twice in the abdomen, dropping her.

Valash launches an *Electric Burning Hands* into the mass, roasting one Queen's Physician and badly burning a Gray Maiden. He is frankly surprised to see one of the Queen's Physicians evade away from all the damage. The Gray Maidens pile in to murder Valash. Malcolm steps in and pulls him to safety. The surviving Queen's Physician throws a vial of something unpleasant at Malcolm, but misses. Valash answers with a *Lesser Orb of Acid* that burns a Gray Maiden to a horrible hissing death.

The surviving Gray Maiden drives in hard and slashes Thorndyke across the abdomen, leaving the enlarged ranger gasping and bleeding. He howls out, "My... my vitals! They're devitalized!" Malcolm is almost so distracted by this comment that he misses his turn, but he comes to his senses in time to crush the Gray Maiden.

The Queen's Physician attempts to throw another vial at Malcolm, but he is shaking so badly that he misses again.

Annata channels some positive energy to heal up Thorndyke, then fortifies herself with a *Divine Favor*. Thorndyke slashes a Gray Maiden, but does so little damage that he prefers to avoid talking about it with the others.

Malcolm watches as Gray Maidens come storming into the laboratory. He yells out, "If nothing else convinces the Queen that we are against her, then this will!" He and Thorndyke stand shoulder to shoulder against the onrushing Maidens. Another one falls, her helm cloven through. The other storms up and then falls screaming as Valash hits her with another *Lesser Acid Orb*.

Annata sees that one of the Queen's Physicians is running for safety. She pursues, ignoring three attacks of opportunity from Gray Maidens along the way. One Gray Maiden turns to try and stop her. She dodges an attack from the Physician, then rounds and cuts the man down.

The single surviving Gray Maiden cuts at Annata, delivering a serious cut to the cleric. Annata challenges the woman, "Your feeble attacks cannot stop the judgment of Sarenrae! I am her instrument of vengeance! I leave no survivors!" None of this seems to impress the Gray Maiden. Annata's mighty scimitar strikes impress her more. And Thorndyke arrives on scene in time to take her out.

The others return to find Valash doing his level best to keep Doctor Davalus alive. They search the office and find Doctor Davalus' notes on the Varisians' apparent

immunity to bloodveil. It appears that he was doing his level best to overcome that resistance. He had determined that the immunity runs by family: one in ten of them are immune, but he does not know any more than that. Doctor Davalus was carrying:

- *An Elixir of True Healing.*
- *A Potion of Cure Disease.*
- *A Human-Bane Rapier +1.*
- *A Mithril Shirt +1.*
- *An Amulet of Natural Armor +1.*
- Keys for all the doors.
- A strange handle with a button.

While the others loot the Doctor, Valash and Malcolm put out the narcotic censer in the vivisection lab and free the Varisian experimental subjects. The characters also loot the fallen Gray Maidens, finding:

- 6 masterwork (but distinctive) full plate.
- 6 masterwork steel shields.
- 6 masterwork longswords.
- 6 composite longbows.

The characters immediately understand that even though the full plate is fantastically valuable, it will be extremely hard to sell in Korvosa. The characters looting the Gray Maidens find that the Maidens' faces are all horribly scarred.

Annata decides that looking like a Gray Maiden would be handy, so she puts on one of the suits. Thorndyke takes the *Human-Bane Rapier +1* and the *Mithril Chain Shirt +1* (that Annata had been wearing). Valash takes the *Amulet of Natural Armor +1*.

### *The Varisian Experimental Subjects*

The characters quickly figure out that even with healing the Varisians are far too mistreated to be able to move far on their own. While Malcolm goes off to find a wagon, Annata and Valash shuttle the Varisians down to the loading dock.

While Annata waits, she examines some of the actual plague victims. She quickly concludes that the Queen's Physicians had simply left them to perish without even the most rudimentary of care.

The characters take the Varisians to Valash's shop, which turns out to be fairly close by. They drop the heavily restrained Doctor Davalus in the back room.

### *The Secret Temple of Disease*

While the others wait for Malcolm to return, Thorndyke examines the lift. He discovers that there is a separate connection on the lift handle, a connection that would nicely fit the device taken from Doctor Davalus. They give Thorndyke the honors. He presses the button. The characters take the lift down about forty feet. There is a door at the bottom of the shaft.

Beyond the door is a chamber featuring a huge mural of skeletons cavorting through the ruins of a Korvosa completely depopulated by bloodveil. There are three additional doors out of the chamber, each of them decorated with a scythe-wielding skeleton. Thorndyke comments, "I think we're entering some kind of disease temple complex now."

Annata offers, "I need to contemplate the religious implications of these murals."

Malcolm points out, "They're going to kill everyone. You think too much. I never think about things, that's why I'm such a good fighter." Malcolm grabs one door handle and opens it. This triggers the trap: the skeletons breathe out poisonous gas, then animate. The creature's arms and weapon spring from the door and cut through him. Malcolm gasps and falls as his lifeblood sprays out against the wall. Annata and Valash quickly launch various healing magic at Malcolm.

The door beyond appears to just be a cloakroom for the Queen's Physicians. Valash offers, "Gad. If they protect their cloakroom this well I'd hate to see what they do to protect something they really care about." The characters find:

- Four healer's kits.
- 23 black onyx gems.
- 3 potions of *Cure Moderate Wounds*.
- 1 vial labeled "poison".
- 4 plague masks
- Sufficient cloaks and accoutrements to equip 20 Queen's Physicians.

Everyone except for Annata disguises themselves as a Queen's Physician.



## **The Barracks**

The characters walk into the next chamber. The place technically looks like a barracks, albeit one decorated by Goths. Three Queen's Physicians and four Priests of Ergathoa are taking their ease among the black satin cots and human skull accessories. Four skeletons stand guard.

Annata recognizes that the fact that she glows with the *Light of Mercuria* rather destroys her ability to masquerade as a real Gray Maiden. She yells out, "This is a bust! Everyone here is under arrest!" The Physicians and Priests move to the attack instead. Annata sighs wearily.

Thorndyke observes, "I guess they're just going to attack us."

Annata doesn't answer. She is too busy calling down the power of Sarenrae upon the skeletons. "The power of Sarenrae take you all!" Three skeletons collapse into dust. Then she engages one of the Ergathoan priests. He blocks with his scythe. The others swarm all over her, but are unable to cut through her new strong armor.

Valash yells out, "Everyone drink up! You're all *fast!*" He casts *Haste*.

Thorndyke steps up and cuts down one of the priests. His blades move too fast for the eye to see. He doesn't know that the priest's name was *Sigmund*, and that he was an affable, cheerful fellow well liked by his co-workers and comrades. He has no interest in understanding that with Sigmund's death his wife is widowed and his two young children will grow up without a father. All he cares is that a priest of Ergathoa has been killed.

Annata yells out, "All I want to do is kill, and kill, and kill!" She severely injures a physician. Thorndyke executes another physician, without making any morally questionable statements at all. But everyone understands that Thorndyke no longer ascribes to any sense of morality understandable on a human scale.

Malcolm hammers his way through one priest and one physician in two horrible hammer-strikes. And then the battlefield is quiet.

## **The Artwork of the Damned**

Annata cuts through another priest, then realizes that one of the priests has fled into the next room. She yells out, "Thorndyke! Get the runner!" He runs into the next

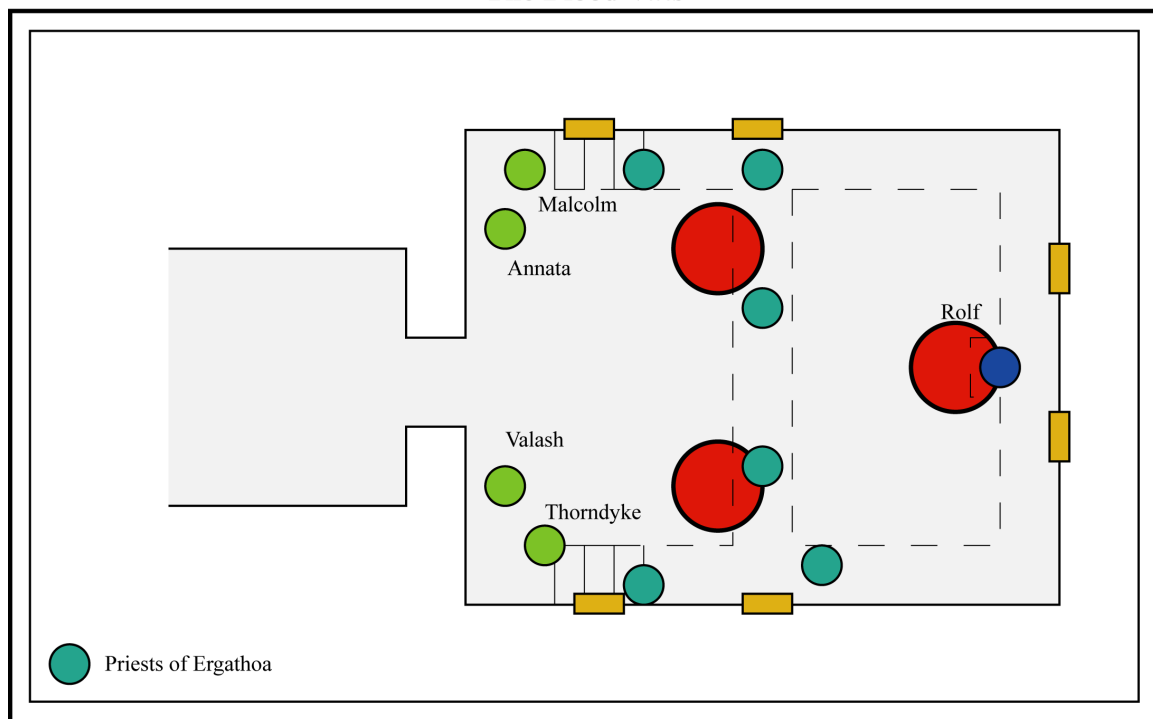
corridor, finding a chamber of horrors. Dozens of mangled living dead are strapped to the walls and trapped behind thick layers of glass. As he screams and tears as his eyes, some small portion of his mind suggests that this was a horrific attempt at artwork.

The others follow Thorndyke into the room, averting their eyes as they move through to follow the priest.

### *The Blood Vats*

The characters are met by the stinging scent of harsh chemicals as they enter. Three huge metal vats, each more than six feet tall, bubble and churn in the center of the chamber. A catwalk above the characters' head allows the attendants to monitor the mixture inside. A massive green-stone carving of a half-corpsed woman presiding over a world of the damned decorates one wall.

**The Blood Vats**



Seven priests of Ergathoa monitor the progression of the ghastly mixture in the vats. Supervising them is a gaunt, tall man in a cloak hung with hooks and claws of various types. Thorndyke and Malcolm move in to start slaughtering priests. The tall man calls down, “I know you! You are the ones who attacked my lair!”

Malcolm yells back, “Yes we are! And your girlfriend is totally in jail!”

The gaunt man responds by shooting an *Enervation* ray at Malcolm that inflicts three negative levels upon him. Malcolm howls in agony.

Annata casts a *Spiritual Weapon* to attack the gaunt man. Rolf the necromancer (for that is the *true* identity of the mysterious gaunt man) responds by striking Annata and Malcolm with a *Lightning Bolt*.

Valash starts up a rapid-fire barrage of *Haste* spells. Thorndyke takes advantage of this and his new *Human Bane Rapier* to execute one priest after another and then engage Rolf directly. Malcolm slogs his way up the opposite catwalk, chopping through one priest after another with grim determination.

Rolf grimaces at Thorndyke and hits him with a *Ray of Exhaustion*. Thorndyke casts off part of the effect, grateful that he is only fatigued and not fully exhausted. Annata responds by launching two *Rays of Mercuria* at him. One flies true and burns the hateful necromancer. She trills at him, “Sarenrae strike you down!” in a tone of voice that leaves the characters debating just how seriously she is taking the situation.

Malcolm cuts down the last priest between him and Rolf then rushes forward. Rolf notices that he is now surrounded. He tells the characters, “Gentlemen, I regret to leave you but I must.” He casts a *Dimension Door* and vanishes.

The characters chop the one surviving priest down like the dog he is.

Annata very prettily stamps her foot down and exclaims, “Darnit! He got away!” Her upset is not so great as to prevent anyone from searching the dead priests. They find only:

- Seven scythes
- Seven breastplates

The vats turn out to contain about a thousand gallons of a vile, phlegm-like fluid. In her insane desire to identify the stuff, Annata casts *Resistance* on herself and touches some of the stuff. She immediately starts to break out with the symptoms of bloodveil, losing 1 CON and 2 CHA. Fortunately, the characters have a *Cure Disease* potion, which she drinks.

The characters try some of the adjoining doors. They find a storeroom with some stirring poles, random other things, and four zombies. Annata obliterates the zombies

with a quick burst of positive energy. They also find an unfinished storeroom with nothing of great interest inside.

### *The Leucodemon Distillery*

And then the characters find a chamber reeking of rancid wax. Several oddly-shaped candles provide poor light over several workstations scattered with stained papers, glass beakers and questionable runes. In the center of the chamber there are four glass spheres containing abominations, creatures that are combinations of man, horse and horror. Annata reports, “Those are leucodemons, harbingers of plague. They serve their awful master Apollyon. I think they’re being boiled to get their juices out.” One of them twitches a bit.

Annata responds by turning outsiders and inflicting the wrath of Sarenrae upon them. Three turn attempts are not sufficient to finally destroy the creatures.

### *The End of the Session*

The characters decide that the leucodemons are really enough for them. They pause in their efforts to explore the horrible caverns underneath the Hospice of the Blessed Lady.