

Curse of the Crimson Throne Session Summary 2/1/2009 - Super Bowl Edition!

Attendance

Bruce (Valash Not-Gurelle) appears for lunch only, as his dark masters command him to travel again to the Broken Lands (aka Minneapolis) this week. So Valash continues to huddle in his shop and leer at passersby like something out of Rear Window.

Chris (Malcolm Zirkus) bravely bears the brunt of Bruce's work-related stories with good grace, even when the term "sort floor" has been used enough to make everyone else twitch. His responses contain escalating sarcasm that goes unremarked, either due to Bruce's Yankee manners or just not noticing it.

Brandie (the groupie) takes offense at the characterization of Tennessee as "white slavery central," until we point out that at least that makes them more progressive than most of the rest of the Deep South.

Paul (the DM) quietly does arts & crafts and waits for all this to pass.

Patrick (Thorndyke) rappels in through the window just in time, sporting a balaclava and crossbow. He is practicing for a new career in the Disney trademark enforcement unit.

Ernest (Annata Vieri) has no time for shenanigans, as he is on session summary duty.

Class Warfare

The curtain pulls back upon our three characters sitting in the Sticky Mermaid, our new IRA bar, trying to make sense of current events. We know that the seneschal and possibly Vencarlo are being held at Palace Arkona.

We ask around on the streets for any local intel, and are only awarded with rumors of a forty-foot reefclaw named Meatclaw, besides the usual "Did you know there was a plague on?" stuff (no shit, Sherlock!).

We come up with a plan to go stay the night at Palace Arkona and, while comfortably ensconced in the belly of the beast, have *Thorndyke* gear up as Blackjack

and go out and look for the seneschal and Vencarlo. We estimate the chances that he too might be captured and subjected to genital-intensive torture methods to be within acceptable bounds.

When we arrive at the palace, the locals invite us to dinner with Lord Glorio Arkona, his cousin Melyia, and four other family members. There is a rich feast provided. The servants leave before the eating starts. *Annata* has cast *detect evil* before the banquet to help determine whether Lord Arkona is on the good or bad side of things (“Bad!” cry the other party members).

This is a painful idea, as she senses evil off all of them and the overwhelming aura of it stuns her! She coughs into her napkin to try to regain her composure. Lord Arkona inquires as to her health, and hopes that the local plague hasn’t gotten a hold of her. “The Goddess keeps me from such things,” she retorts, trying not to sound sassy.

Thorndyke slips out to go all Blackjack; he goes into the library and puts on Blackjack’s raiment and then begins looking for secret doors (it is a library, after all!). The black cape and boots of elvenkind turns him into a silent wraith that skulks through the garderobes of wickedness. So to speak. As he pokes around, it turns out that all of the servants have left the entire house. This gives him a not so fresh feeling. He also looks in the entrance hall, which is all Vudran (Indian) decorated, with four armed women riding tigers and that kind of thing.

Meanwhile, Lord Arkona asks leading questions about why we’re still here, and why we wouldn’t leave such work to traditional do-gooders like Blackjack. *Malcolm* tries to lead things in a direction of “We’re looking for employment busting heads around here!” but *Annata* can’t resist being a bit snottier, commenting that “If there’s one thing Blackjack teaches us, it’s that justice is the responsibility of everyone.” He continues to press us, “Have you ever met Blackjack? Do you know where he might be now, in fact?” This is a little puzzling as I figured he had him locked in a dungeon somewhere.

Thorndyke continues to search, and finds a huge canopy bed. This is an incontrovertible D&D sign of being a supervillain. After our previous encounter with the Red Mantis, he has to consider for some time whether to actually look under the bed or not.

Back at dinner, Annata asks Lord Arkona what he, as a prominent citizen, thinks of Blackjack. Criminal or hero? He replies that, “Oh, certainly anyone who champions the common man is good...” With a 31 on her Sense Motive check, Annata is pretty sure Lord Arkona is fucking with her.

Thorndyke finds a beautiful garden with a huge jade elephant statue, storerooms, statuary, hunting trophies, etc. but still no prisoners. He gives up and comes back to the dinner. We have a brief “D&D pedantry” check about whether he had the presence of mind to change back out of the Blackjack costume and if so, what into. We all agree that he changed back into a blue gingham dress, and upon entering claims that “I love to take a shit while wearing a dress,” and that the decadent Arkonas would probably not bat an eye at that.

Malcolm starts chatting up Maliya as soon as he hears that she is hot. Annata glares daggers at him as he puts his moves on the noble. Eventually we go back to the guest house, and Thorndyke tells us he found nothing. He sums up the many, many pages of flavor text about the opulent surroundings as “There’s a lot of expensive crap here but most of it won’t fit in our pockets.”

The Night Porter

There is a knock at the door, and it’s Lord Arkona. We nervously invite him in. He asks us why we’re really here, and Malcolm says we’re looking for Vencarlo. He tells us “Ah yes. He’s a guest of Maliya’s, in the Vivified Labyrinth under the castle.” Allegedly, his cousin is a major power player in the house and he can’t control her. He tells us he’ll let us know how to get in there, “as long as we’re not interested in finding anyone else.” Malcolm says “Yep, that’s it, that’s all we want.” He tells us the trick to getting into the dungeon is to turn the jade elephant statue in the garden a quarter turn and say “Chimidu is blind.” Apparently Chimidu is some Vudran deity.

Before Lord Arkona leaves, Annata is overcome with a fit of virtue. A little necessary deception is one thing, but she feels convicted that the Goddess wouldn’t want her to boldfaced lie even to someone as evil as Arkona is. She says, “Wait... We are looking for the old King’s seneschal as well. We know he’s alive and that he came here.”

He says, “Reeeeealllly.” Malcolm and Thorndyke start quietly wagering over whether we will, in fact, be committing murder in the next thirty seconds or so.

We spar verbally a bit. Annata knows he’s evil, but he declares that he wants our support in the picking-up-power follies that will result when the Queen is deposed. This proves an interesting dilemma for Annata. She thinks about the legends about how Sarenrae deals kindly and fairly with all the other gods, good and evil alike, in hopes that they will find redemption. So she agrees that as long as Lord Arkona acts in the best interests of Korvosa and its people, that she’ll support him, even though he admits his motivation is his own personal power.

Arkona says that the seneschal is also his cousin’s guest. We may take the seneschal and get him out of the city until it’s time to move against the Queen. Then he slips back out. “So what are we doing? All I could make out from what you two were saying was ‘Trap! Trap trap trap trap trap!’” asks Thorndyke. We all agree that’s about the size of it.

Chimidu Is Blind, And We Don’t Feel So Well Either

We sneak around to the garden. After manipulating the elephant statue, we descend an iron stair into the top of a cavern containing a grotto with a weird cultivated fungi garden. A spiral stone path, lit by guttering torches, heads down to some rope ladders. We pick our way down carefully until four fungal zombie things appear out of thin air around us and pour out spore clouds! Malcolm gets a lungful and starts coughing. Two of the plant-zombies hack and hack at Thorndyke, hurting him badly. Annata tries to cast a resurgence on Malcolm, and that works about as well as every single resurgence she’s ever cast, which is to say not at all. She also channels healing energy to help Thorndyke.

Malcolm cleaves two of the things, injuring them. Thorndyke also cuts into one. In return, they smack both the warriors around, hitting with all of their quite numerous attacks. “Sarenrae protect us in our time of need!” cries Annata as she casts *prayer*. Damage is doled out in both directions; the prayer helps balance it a bit but our warrior’s hit points are dropping more quickly than a quickened channel energy worth of healing each round can keep up with.

Malcolm keeps failing his Fort saves against the spores and is fatigued and taking CON damage. Annata tries *flame of faith* to turn her scimitar into a flaming burst weapon, but it turns out they're invulnerable to fire.

Gripe: Can I get some consistency here? Half of the plant creatures out there are vulnerable to fire, because they're plants and thus would burn like kindling, and half are immune to it, because they're plants and "damp". (People tend to be damp when you hack them with a sword too, come to think of it.) Same deal with fire and ice creatures. "Oh, it's made of ice, it's vulnerable to fire!" "Oh, it's made of ice, it's totally immune to fire!" Lame.

As our anti-plant spell loadout is nonexistent, we batter on each other for a number of rounds. Finally we fell them, and loads of healing are required to get Malcolm and Thorndyke back to fighting trim. Off the planty corpses we get:

- 4 suits of +1 chainmail
- 4 +1 small steel shields

Next, we find a door to a workroom full of carved animal figurines. We loot it of the three that look expensive, namely:

- Blue coral gecko
- Redwood firepelt cougar
- Gold firedrake

At the bottom of the cavern, there is an underwater sea cave and an escape barge tied to a pier. There are also some double doors, which open into a lovely statue hall with a bunch of statues of a guy with a tiger head holding House Arkona and Korvosan flags. And inhabiting it are two 18 foot long snakes and a guy with a snake head!

"Greetings, huge freak!" says Annata, trying to be friendly. "Get them, my pretties!" responds the snake -man. Annata calls upon Sarenrae to strike the freak blind! His cobras come forward and one sinks its fangs into Malcolm. The other's bite is caught upon Annata's shield.

The blinded snake-man turns invisible. We trade blows with the snakes. We hear the snake-man chant and the snakes get lots faster! Thorndyke and Malcolm hack both of the snakes apart. Somewhere close to us, we hear an invisible form mutter, "I hope I live through this so I can find out what it's like to take shit while wearing a dress!"

We spread out to look for the snake-man. Thorndyke starts tracking him out of the statue room. We see one of the rope bridges swaying, and clamber up after him. He's remarkably nimble for being blind. Annata gets her hands on him and wrestles him down. He bites and claws, but she pins and hogties him. "That would only have been better if it was in a tub of Jello!" remarks Thorndyke.

We drag him back into the room. He claims he's a "rakshasa" and that he's "tending the shrine." We work out a deal where he lives in exchange for showing us how to get into the Labyrinth. It's a place of torture and trial, he says. He claims Maliyah isn't a rakshasa-type. He says there's levers that rotate the dungeon parts, but he doesn't know how to get around in there. The entry tunnel is a secret door up on the second level.

Annata ties him to the bed in the carving-room. Once she leaves, Malcolm batters him into a coma with his sap.

Torture the Greek

We go into the secret door, and come to a set of bronze doors with tigers chasing tigers around a tiger head with tigers cavorting around that... "Y'all think there's a motif here?" asks Annata. At Malcom's urging she detects magic on the door. It's not magical, but a nearby part of the wall is, which turns out to be an illusion. We carefully don't touch the door, and go through the illusionary wall. There's yet another tunnel leading to another set of doors, but no magic this time. (Hooray for unlimited use cantrips!)

Through this door, we find a large torture chamber! A man on the rack is being tortured by a three-headed, tusked woman. "Get away from him!" demands Annata. She silently takes up her three weapons – a temple sword, a spear, and a kukri – and moves towards our heroes.

Thorndyke and Malcolm charge her. She responds with a huge number of attacks. Annata comes up behind and *blesses* and heals the group (including the torture victim). The channeled healing causes the woman to smoke a bit, indicating she's an evil outsider of some sort. In response, she hits Malcolm with sword, spear, and kukri. With concentrated effort, we fell her.

The torture victim is the missing seneschal, Neolandus Kalepopolis! Annata tells him that Salvatore Scream sent us to find him and Vencarlo. He says he can help us, but doesn't have his gear. We open a set of double doors to see the interior working of the Cube, with four huge undead elephants tied to huge posts with bells and lines and all sorts of engineering that we resolve not to think about too hard. We put the temple sword in the bag of holding; it's a spiffy piece of gear that works like a longsword but can make disarm or trip attempts or something. We take a brief nap and convince the seneschal to wait on the escape barge while we look for Vencarlo.

The Cube III: Electric Boogaloo

We go into the dungeon and there's a room – with a lever. Annata draws a line connecting the tunnel to the room with a piece of chalk and labels it “A” in Varisian. There's no other exit after a search, so we pull the prominent lever and sure enough, the entire area rotates to face a new passage. She marks this one “B” and we go in and find a lever and a door. We sweep through the door to reveal a *symbol of fear*! Malcolm runs and cowers in an alcove. Annata sighs and goes back to tend to him, and a *guidance+resistance+resurgence* brings him back.

We go into a room and there's three wooden chests in it. Annata wants to flee, but of course the other two will have nothing to do with it. They have Vudran writing on them, and there are gems carved like tiger heads set in the walls. Our desire for treasure does not overcome our desire not to take damage, and we move on.

We go through a passageway painted in a jungle scene, with predators devouring people in the wild. All three of us are painted as some of the victims. Malcolm wants to make a copy of it for some bizarre reason. And once we pass through that – *symbol of sleep*! Both Malcolm and Thorndyke fall asleep immediately. Annata sighs and drags them back to a safe place to sleep it off. They wake up in an hour and we move on to a dead end with a *symbol of stunning*! We all get stunned. Sigh. Full of dead ends, we go back and pull a lever. The lever sets off a *symbol of insanity*, which drives Thorndyke insane. A quick *resurgence* knocks that out.

The reconfiguration reveals a door outside the four swivel-disks. We go in, fearing the worst, as we all know the next symbol in line is “death.” The room has a

wasp mosaic, and across it, we see... Vencarlo! Annata goes to run to him but the others grab her, fearing he may be insane or whatnot. This is lucky, because he calls out “Look out for the floor! It’s trapped!” After some quick questioning to establish he’s not some shape-changed wildebeest, we give him his Blackjack gear. “Oh Vencarlo, I was so worried!” says Annata. He seems nonplussed, which makes her sad.

We decide discretion is the better part of valor and reverse our path through the dungeon. Malcolm and Thorndyke start to make a run at the three wooden chests, until Annata talks them out of it. Much lever-pulling ensues to get us back out.

Bad Batman, Bad!

When we’re almost out, on the next to last pull of a lever – a weird lamia sphinx woman is standing in the revealed passage, and she immediately attacks! She wields a pair of blood-red kukris, has the lower body of a beast, wings, boned tail, and demon horns. When Annata channels energy to repel her, “Vencarlo” also smokes and takes damage! He immediately steps back and casts a *scorching ray* at Annata. She calls upon the protection of the goddess with *mystic aegis* and the ray fizzles.

Annata casts *blessing of the righteous*, declaring “May the light of dawn come into this dark place!” All our weapons begin to glow with a holy light. “Vencarlo” continues to *scorching ray* Annata round after round. Malcolm hammers on Vencarlo/Melyia and Thorndyke hammers on the dark sphinx. Annata *dispels magic* on the rakshasa and brings her *shield* down. Malcolm beats on the rakshasa but has trouble hitting her and damaging her when he does.

Thorndyke takes down the dark sphinx with a massive crit! We all home in on the rakshasa, who steps back and crits Annata with *scorching rays* again – and she falls!

Malcolm pours a healing potion down her, and she awakens and heals herself some more. Thorndyke throws himself at the rakshasa, missing handily. Malcolm switches to his vicious scythe and drinks a growth potion. Thorndyke switches to aiding another, as he realizes he has a practically zero chance of hitting his foe. Malcolm steps forward and drives his scythe deep into the rakshasa. Annata hits her with a *dimensional anchor*, having had her fill of our foes dimension dooring away.

Desperate now, the rakshasa zaps some *scorching rays* into Malcolm. He steps forward and executes her with his large, vicious, holy scythe. The body changes from Vencarlo to a fox-woman, clearly Meliya Arkona, a rakshasa after all. Malcolm says, “Remind me to skin that snake when we get out.”

We retrieve Blackjack’s gear off the corpse, and discuss how we’re going to explain its disheveled and blood-soaked state when we find the real Vencarlo. The sphinx had:

- 2 kukris +1
- amulet of health +4
- ring of protection +2

The rakshasa had nothing! We kick her a couple times for her insolence. Then we turn, resigned to heading back into the disc-dungeon to find Vencarlo.

The End Of The Session

We level again to 9! Paul says “What, you’re all only level 8? Oh. I see why that fight there with the CR 12 and CR 10 at the same time was difficult.” Doh.