

Empire of Ashes Session Summary - 02/07/2009

Attendance

Paul (Ardreth the Thul-Eth warlock) arrives early and laments the collapse of the American educational system.

Chris (Garret the Drolar investigator) chases his cat around for most of the pre-game time, shrieking epithets. Allow me to transcribe and translate.

Cat: Meow. (What's up?)

Chris: Why the hell do you keep meowing at me? Shoo!"

Cat: Meow. (OK man, chill out.)

Chris: WHY DO YOU MEOW ALL THE TIME SQUEE!

<starts chasing cat around>

Cat: Meow! (He's gone crazy, someone call a cop!)

Chris: STOP MEOWING STOP IT ARRGH!!!

<keeps chasing cat, gesticulating wildly>

Cat: Meow! (Get away from me you freak!)

Brandie (Gamer Groupie) has her first Rudy's BBQ experience. There's a misunderstanding when the order-taker calls out "extra moist and half a hottie!" and she pepper-sprays him, requiring us to hastily evacuate the restaurant and eat at home.

Ernest (Versane the Aemoni noble) arrives late, having eagerly waited outside Rogue's Gallery to buy things at their annual clearance sale. Strangely, the cat-oriented manga he got for his six-year-old garners more interest from the others than the large stack of RPG supplements.

Chuck (the GM) arrives even later, having eagerly strolled into Rogue's Gallery at some later point to also buy things. He unaccountably reminisces about the movie "Throw Momma From The Train."

Patrick (Umbutu the Groarg witch doctor) sits silently, trying to not say anything until the attendance section is completed. Well played.

Ed (Maurs the Aemoni archer) calls in sick, something about "his junk hurting." Everyone exchanges knowing looks, as that's what too much Second Life will get you.

Tim (Erf the Drolar retard) staggers in late with catnip on his breath.

Bruce (No one remembers his character name) is in the Great White North.

Everyone agrees that the new movie “Raptor Island” is a sure sign that the Sci-Fi network has completed its transition into an “ITT Tech” recruitment ad. For shame, Sci-Fi.

If You Haven't Got Your Health...

Since last session, Chuck has harassed the Pinnacle community about Savage Worlds’ “15 minute adventuring month” problem regarding natural healing. (When you’re wounded, you make a check every 5 days to remove one level of wounds, making for very, very slow recovery.) He invents some healing poultices (which with a successful Healing check give you a natural healing check per day instead of per 5 days) and painkilling herbs (Healing check to ignore 1 level of Wounds, 2 on a raise). Also, in a check cribbed from the upcoming property Winterweir, you can make a both a Vigor and Guts check and if you succeed on both you get to ignore your wound penalties for a scene.

More Killing

And we find ourselves back in the dungeon, suddenly a little more short-handed with *Maurs* and... *Bruce*, whoever he was playing – missing. We’re standing over the corpse of a giant bug-man. “They’re afraid!!!” yells *Versane*.

We continue to work through the dungeon in search of Valix Drogue and his pilfered jewelry. We come across a big complicated room with a bunch of cultists in it, chanting. *Ardreth* mulls over their ritual and concludes that they’re trying to transform something and appease something (else).

We attack, not having being impressed with the buffitude of the previous cultists we’ve met. *Ardreth* blasts the two nearest the door with magic. They surge to the attack – as they get closer we see they’re some kind of person/insect hybrids! And there’s many more than the five we saw initially; they come swarming out of all kinds of hidden alcoves. They don’t quite get to us, so *Versane* picks one off with an arrow as they approach.

Umbutu, his wolf, *Garret*, and *Erf* form a skirmish line. *Erf* is feeling his oats and tries a wild swing with a head shot at a bug-cultist. 31 points of damage explodes its head with a satisfying “splorch.”

A plumpy Aemoni in standard issue cultist leader robes comes into view. “Droque!” shouts Versane. Valix Droque casts a spell and shadows start swirling around him. The wave of cultists breaks against our front line. Ardreth zorches arcane energy into Droque and Versane quickly follows it up with an arrow to the face. Droque drops!

Moments later, every single remaining cultist drops dead. “Did you do that?” Garret asks Ardreth, who just shrugs. We’re briefly confused as to how to proceed. We figure a good start is stabbing all the fallen bug-men in case they are feigning death en masse or something. “Do bugs have pulses?” Versane asks. No one has an answer to that either.

Umbutu’s wolf bounds into the room proper (the fight was all in the foyer) and looks around, finding no one to immediately attack. Versane flies in and gets altitude and scans the area. “Clear!” he declares.

The cultists have no gear. Versane decapitates Droque for good measure. Umbutu searches him and finds:

- Shadow silk armor
- Argentium shortsword (Garret)
- Gold and emerald ring (5g)
- Silver ring (50s)
- Bronze bracers (2g)
- Silver chain (25s)
- Leather-bound book
- 25g
- 50s
- The MacGuffin (the Viscountess’ brooch)

Umbutu realizes he’s seen this exact brooch before in a painting of Princess Azulia. About this time we start hearing a rumbling from the rest of the dungeon. “It was a load-bearing boss! Run!” cries Versane. *Erf* crouches down and his skin thickens into leather. We run.

Big Bad Bug

As we get back outside, we see the fountain in the courtyard is destroyed and a huge insect-beast stands in the rubble! Ardreth hoses arcane missiles at it but they just bounce off. He fails his Guts roll but just gets a beneficial adrenaline surge in return.

Garret charges the beast. It runs right by him at the larger cluster of tasty people and breathes out a long cone of biting insects on the group! Umbutu and Erf don't get out of the way in time and shriek as the bugs infiltrate all their orifices. They are shaken but bennie spends keep them from dying.

Versane panics and flees back into the building. Erf staggers to the side, plaintively saying "Erf swallow one!" Umbutu sics his wolf on the thing. Garret comes at its back and stabs at it, but his weapons clang off its chitinous shell.

Versane shrieks, "Big bug! Big bug!" from inside the building. Umbutu attacks to no effect. The big-bug bites Garret in the head, blinding him in one eye and felling him. Erf charges the big-bug and smacks it hard, shaking it. He hits again and wounds it! Ardreth blasts it to wound it a little more. Versane's arrows bounce off it. Erf smites it again, and Ardeth terminates it! Everyone rushes to heal Garret.

Versane investigates the creature's burrow to prove he's not scared any more but there's nothing there. About this time, a guy with three toughs in tow shows up. They move like practiced soldiers. "Are you here to see Valix Drogue?" challenges Versane. "Yeah, he has something we want, and we refuse to tell you who we are!" is the summary of their reply. Versane looks around at his companions' wounded state and says "Sir, yes sir! Mr. Drogue's in there, just don't tell him we told you!" Persuasion is where he's a Viking, and so the four guys stalk past us into the building and our heroes scurry off into the city streets.

Big Bad Religion

On our way, four Aemoni in clerical garb step out to block us. "You guys just came from Valix Drogue's place! He may have stolen something someone wants!" "You'll have to narrow that shit down," replies Versane. "Empty your pockets!" commands the head priest. Erf starts pulling pieces of gore out of his pockets and handing them to one of the guys. Garret flips out and just attacks one of them.

Ignoring the fighting, Versane demands of the priest, “Who are you working for?” “Who do you think I’m working for?” he replies unhelpfully. “Well, that’s not one of the few answers to that question that will keep you alive,” says Versane sadly.

One of the clerics whacks Erf and he goes down, bleeding out! His left arm is crippled. The clerics press us and the priest steps up and casts a spell – and shakes himself with bad magical feedback!

Cold, cloying bolts of inky darkness shoot from Ardreth into the priest, wounding him badly. The priest recovers and swings wildly at Umbutu, wounding him. Garret fells one minion but another takes him out in turn. He falls, bleeding.

Then Erf dies from bleeding. A moment of silence is observed. Tim’s actually been rooting for himself to die for a couple rounds now, as two sessions is about the limit of how long any character concept entertains him.

A minion charges past Umbutu to attack Ardreth. Greasy shadow tentacles arise from the ground around him to protect him from attacks. Then the priest slays Umbutu with a single blow. With two dead and one down, we start looking for more clever options but not finding any.

Aldreth blasts the priest again, wounding him badly. Now it’s only Versane and Ardreth (and Umbutu’s wolf) against the priest (with three wounds!) and two goons. It’s tight, now if we can only get the drop on them. We pull two Jokers and the ace of spades for init! The best possible draw you can have!

The wolf misses.

Aldreth mostly misses and doesn’t hurt the priest.

Versane misses.

“SON OF A BITCH!!!” we cry.

One of the clerics heals his boss of 2 of his wounds. The boss tries to cast a spell and fails, and then kills the wolf with his firesteel longsword, clearing his path to our wizard.

Aldreth drains a point of mana from the Mius crystal to blast at the priest. Versane shoots him too. All to no effect. All three bad guys surround Ardreth, as Versane is flying overhead. Versane tries to convince them that “Those four soldier guys took the brooch!” but they don’t buy it. With three guys closing in, he makes a risky

tactical decision – his bow isn't hurting the priest, but those two sub-clerics are healing and helping a lot. He shoots and kills one of the clerics.

Aldreth uses the last bit of the mana in the Mius crystal, which ruins it permanently, to blast futilely at the priest. The priest intimidates Aldreth to shake him, which isn't too hard at this point. Versane shoots the other cleric down, hoping that without the minions in play we'll have more of a shot. Now it's just Aldreth and Versane on the priest. Aldreth stabs at him with his dagger. Versane swoops in, drawing his rapier and trying to distract him with an agility trick. That works, and next he stabs the priest in the vitals with his argentium rapier. He's hurt badly, but Versane and Aldreth batter at him to no avail for a while. The priest recovers after a couple rounds of us not doing anything to him and tries to heal himself. Versane throws his cloak over the guy's head and distracts and shakes him. Aldreth says, "I told you I had you outnumbered!" which shakes him even more.

Finally, Versane drives his rapier through the priest's chest, killing him. He then proceeds to ensure that the bastard's funeral will not be open casket.

No amount of party death will retard a quick looting.

Acolytes:

- Leather
- Shortsword
- Buckler

Priest:

- Chainmail
- Firesteel longsword
- Medium shield
- 25 gp

Aldreth does some first aid on Garret and gets him upright. "Garret! We have to get out of here! We have two dead bodies and a bunch of loot to carry! And by 'we' I mean you!" Garret groans.

We hustle back to the Viscountess and collect our 1500 silver. Versane tries to renegotiate the fee for this hideous kill-fest to "100 gold and we get to pull a train on you!" She doesn't think much of that offer. We take the money and run.

Luckily, only three people survive to share the loot, and it ends up totaling 6300 silver denarii apiece. We're not poor any more! We decide Erf would want us to sell all his parts to the Drolar fleshcrafters for his funeral rites.

Downtime and Recruiting

Patrick and Tim develop new characters to replace the fallen Umbutu and Erf. Enter:

- *Jarden* (Patrick), a brawny, one-eyed human assassin
- *Seth Avan* (Tim), an excommunicated Thul-Eth priest

Versane says, "What are we going to do? Two of our porters died!" "Let's get two new patsies!" proposes Ardreth. "I'm standing right here!!!" complains Garret when he hears this. "By virtue of having survived, you are now the head minion! You're like a sub-boss!" explains Versane to mollify him. They promote him to the rank of Captain and give him a very shiny medal, and task him with finding "two new minions." He takes this in good humor.

Garret goes out to get some healing. Real healing is expensive, so he goes the back alley route and meets a disenfranchised Thul-Eth priest, Seth Avan, who becomes our new party healer.

While out and about, Garret hears that "bad people" are looking for us. The Viscountess recommends we get out of town. Versane happily seduces her for her trouble. Versane says, "We need a new meat shield. Ideally one that's disposable, like a human or something." Seth says that he knows a guy who comes by for healing every once in a while. We look him up, and meet the human assassin Jarden. He looks beefy and easily manipulated, so Versane and Ardreth hire him on the spot.

Viscountess Shenya says someone may be willing to hire us, but they "don't like us." "Story of my life," says Versane. She recommends hiring some thugs. We tell her we're already on top of it. A public meeting is set up in a market. Our contact will be wearing a red cloak.

We tell the new guys to "work the crowd" and make sure we're safe. They interpret this as going and sitting at a café table and ordering cappuccinos while we head into the trap. We meet an Aemoni in a red cloak. He leads off with, "I thought you'd look more impressive." He threatens the group with interrogation and/or legal action about the dead

priest outside Drogue's place. The group is largely unimpressed by this threat. He wants relics or whatnot from Valix Drogue's other estates that are related to forbidden lore. We find out this guy's name is Archbishop Cartax. "Oh, I thought you were just some goon!" says Versane. We tell him we'll go find the stuff and then decide how much to charge him to return it. He doesn't like that, but as far as we're concerned, we just went and killed something in excess of fifty people just to recover a piece of jewelry. Threats don't impress mass murderers. He is told he can "suck it."

National Lampoon's Undead Vacation

Captain Garret hires a carriage for transport at our urging. Discussion of walking or riding horses is dismissed as "barbaric." The human rides shotgun with the hired driver while the rest of the group parties with dope and booze in the cabin. The carriage driver is a young Groarg. In the morning of the second day, the driver stops the carriage. He's freaked out that the trees lining the road are dead and twisted. "What are you, an eco-freak? Get this bitch underway!" yells Versane. Garret and Jordan pull out weapons and look around.

The stoned Versane and Ardreth don't immediately react to all this. They conclude the problem must be "tree vampires" that are sucking the sap out of the trees, and laugh hysterically.

Then the fast "Return of the Living Dead" type zombies attack! They run out of the woods and climb all over the carriage in the blink of an eye, clawing in through the windows. "Do you see those too?" asks Versane.

Garret and Versane cut two of them down. There's a roar from the woods as we fight. Jarden ultra-murders a zombie. The new priest cowers inside the carriage. "Is there anyone to heal? No? I hide under the seat!" Ardreth summons a hideous many-tentacled servant from beyond. Then zombie bears shamble out of the woods. "No, Boo-Boo, NO!!!" yells Versane, and shoots an arrow at one.

Seth casts "stun" on a zombie bear. To all of our surprise, that works. The summoned tentacle bodyguard moves toward the melee with the sound of a man walking through a field of grape jelly and pulls a zombie off the carriage. Ardreth fires arcane energy at a zombie bear, blasting it apart.

Seth climbs out of the carriage and goes to help Garret with the other zombie bear. Everyone else fights leisurely with the human zombies. Ardeth melts down the other zombie bear with his magic out the carriage window. He and Versane resume their seats and pour brandy. “My, that was bracing!” says Versane.

The rest of the party continues fighting with the zombies. Jarden finally kills one and runs by the carriage, calling in “are you guys OK in there?” “Capital!” says Ardeth as the two noblemen raise their glasses to him. Garret kills the other. He investigates the corpses and finds a nice silver/ivory button on one. He hypothesizes that it may have been one of the guys the church sent to check out this manor prior to us (they sent a couple waves of guys that never returned). He tosses the button to Versane. Versane looks at it briefly and pockets it. “Perhaps later the Viscountess and I will play ‘Button, button, who’s got the button?’” he says drily.

Garret goes and checks out the trees. Sadly, there are no bite marks on them. We proceed, and even though it’s noon it gets darker and fog rolls in. Garret has to navigate carefully for the driver. Eventually, we see a light up ahead. “There’s a liiiight...” sings Versane. The rest of the party chimes in, “Over at the Frankenstein place!!!” We ride in that direction, and soon from the mist we are surrounded by loping ghouls.

Ardeth blasts the two on his side to dust. Jarden climbs up on top of the coach and shoots one of them down. The remaining three clamber up on the coach’s left side. Garret chops one down. It takes longer than it probably should to hack the rest of them apart, and Seth gets a good clawing for his trouble. He finds it quite validating to finally have something to heal.

The End Of The Session

We bring this session to a close, and get two advances and become Seasoned!