

Curse of the Crimson Throne Session Summary – March 22, 2009

Attendance

Chris (Malcolm Zirkus the Korvosan guardsman) worries about his rusting teakettle. “It’s getting old. What if it’s leaky? Or if it tastes weird?” His girlfriend wanders in to hear the end of this and starts participating in the discussion in a way that makes us all uncomfortable.

Brandie (Amiri the iconic barbarian) is leveled up against her will. “I am not a gamer!” she protests. “And I’ll never eat fish sauce again!” She begins plotting her escape.

Ernest (Annata Vieri the priestess of Sarenrae) complains about children’s sleepovers, kid’s movies, kid-pet interactions, and other similar things. The rest of the group looks at him like he’s some kind of dangerous mutant from a foreign world. They look down on him for his weird and potentially dangerous hobbies like “childrearing.”

Patrick (Thorndyke the Sable Company Marine) holds forth on the official etiquette of soda-slurping. You are only allowed one slurp, so if you start to run dry you should go as long as your oxygen supply lasts ya! He proceeds to demonstrate in what seems to be a scene from “Dumb and Dumber 3.”

Paul (the GM) lays out the potential choices for a next campaign once we finish this AP. The options are an Alternity Star*Drive science fiction adventure, the older Savage Tide AP (which several of us have read), the newer Second Darkness AP (which has gotten poor reviews and Paul reports sucks), and the newest Legacy of Fire AP (the first installation of which hasn’t arrived yet). Initial reaction is to take a D&D (slash Pathfinder) break and do some Alternity. The next AP will be pure Pathfinder, anyway.

Candygram!

The bulettes have been hovering in mid-pounce for three weeks, eagerly awaiting their delicious attack upon our three heroes. Coincidentally, as the bulettes stop circling and close in, *Thorndyke* comes flying in on his hippogriff *Herbie*. He was just returning from his errand in Janderhoff, and sees his buddies in distress!

As we roll initiative, Chris is still coaching Brandie on mechanics. When she questions why he gets a +2 on his initiative roll and she doesn't, he explains it's "because I'm a man." She takes exception to this on several different grounds.

The three heroes cheer as they see their friend come swooping in, leap from his mount, and slash at one of the approaching bulettes. Two leap over him and claw at *Annata* and *Amiri*, and a third attacks him. Thorndyke calls out his battle cry, "Not in the face!"

Annata, grown large and strong from her *prayer*, *bull's strength*, and *righteous might*, cracks her scimitar down three times upon the land shark attacking her. *Amiri* hits one hard, but it doesn't bother the huge critter much. Thorndyke goes nuts with his two-weapon style and triple-crits one, critically wounding it.

The land sharks bite into *Annata*, *Amiri*, and Thorndyke. *Malcolm* is stuck in the back rank holding two totem poles upright. *Amiri* hacks one in two with her giant sword as *Annata* invokes Sarenrae's healing upon everyone. Thorndyke unleashes all six (!) of his attacks, and slaughters the one attacking him. Two down, four to go!

The next couple rounds go fairly prosaically; *Amiri* kills bulettes, Thorndyke and *Annata* do proportionally less damage, and *Malcolm* finds more and more obscene ways to say he's doing nothing but holding two poles up each time it's his turn. *Annata* has to do a channeled healing every round to (somewhat) counter the immense amount of damage the barbarian's taking.

Finally, the tide turns. The last one damages *Annata*'s totem before she fells it. After healing her comrades, she turns the chipped side of the totem to face away from the path. "Nothing wrong here! Perfectly good totem!" she chirps.

Aren't We Supposed To Call A Doctor Or Something?

The third and final morning of the test comes, and the Shoanti show up. They cheer upon seeing our still-erect totems. The *Sun Shaman* welcomes *Amiri*, *Malcolm*, and *Annata* as Sun Clan members! And Thorndyke gets a nod as our blood brother, though he won't get to play all the Shoanti games and hear their clan secrets. "It's like we're in the Order of the Arrow and you're not!" we tell Thorndyke.

The chief and the Sun Shaman go off somewhere to commune with the dirt spirits while the heroes party with the Shoanti, eating, drinking, carrying on, and playing random tough-man games. The two women decide this clan must be the “Mardi-Quah” because of the number of offers they get to show their chests in exchange for beads. Annata talks *Krojin Eats-What-He-Kills* into wooing Amiri by telling him tales of her might and hotness. He brings her gifts of local native crafts; you know; dreamcatchers, cheap turquoise earrings, et cetera. She is into it.

Midnight Madness

That night, we awaken to hear shrieks and roars from outside the yurt. As we snatch up weapons, four creatures made of wind-blasted stone come in through the front flap! Malcolm, Amiri, and Thorndyke start in on the gargoyles as Annata calls down the anger of Sarenrae against those who skulk in the darkness in the form of *righteous wrath of the faithful*. They chop them apart in short order. Annata casts *light* on her scimitar, snatches up her scimitar, and runs outside in her nightclothes. Chaos reigns, and we can hear someone panicking the corral of horses with thunderstones. As she looks around, she sees two Red Mantis assassins!

We are briefly distracted by trying to figure out the proper plural of “Mantis.” Both “Mentos” and “Manatee” are highly regarded options.

Amiri comes running out of the yurt next. Annata realizes she’s never seen a Red Mantis before, so she points at them and yells, “Assassins!” Amiri charges right up to one of them and swats him hard. The two assassins immediately flank her and try to kill her, but the mighty barbarian is too wily to be flanked. (Improved uncanny dodge FTW!) More gargoyles fly down and further surround Amiri and Annata. Annata unloads four attacks on one of them, but her nonmagical scimitar doesn’t hurt the creature at all.

Thorndyke comes running out and goes to help Amiri with the Red Mantis. Malcolm, also unarmored, helps Annata with her gargoyle problem. Amiri does a whirlwind attack the hard way (just four attacks spread across her four assailants), and slays both Red Manti and a gargoyle in the bargain! The remaining two gargoyles are slain quickly.

Then, we hear Krojin screaming at someone. Malcolm quickly translates something to the effect of “You have killed many Shoanti braves but now I kill you!” We run over there to find Krojin fighting a scraggly guy with a screaming crossbow and four more Red Manatees. *The Cinderlander* (scraggly guy) shoots two screaming crossbow bolts into Krojin, for an unusual-for-a-crossbow amount of hurt.

Malcolm charges the crossbow guy and issues a devastating blow upon him. All four Mentos immediately surround him and lay into him with their serrated sabres for an ungodly amount of damage. He’s still standing!

Annta finally gets to use her Divine Ward feat. “You’ve been keeping up your ten minute morning devotions with me right, Malcolm?” she says sweetly. “I have I have!” he replies. She cast heal at range on him, removing all of his hundred-odd points of damage. He cries in triumph and slaughters two of the Red Mantles around him. The remaining two get full attacks in, doing an even 100 points of damage to Malcolm again. “Easy come, easy go,” he shrugs.

The Cinderlander shoots Krojin again, who steps forward and pounds the guy’s head down flush into his chest cavity with his earthbreaker. Annata lets out a thundering *sound lance* at one of the two Red Manticores flanking Malcolm, critically wounding him. Thorndyke finishes them both off.

The heroes and Krojin pant for a moment and look around. All the Shoanti and gargoyles have paused in their battle to watch the bosses fight it out. Then, we hear mocking female laughter. A woman, pale and dressed like a Red Mantis boss, steps from behind the fire. She calls us out by name, and says we’ve doomed these poor Shoanti to death! But if they turn us over to her, they’ll be spared.

As we expected, Krojin has two intact balls and doesn’t even consider the offer, and just snarls his rage at her. Malcolm drinks a growth potion and gets big. The woman and four more elite Red Mantises (we can tell they’re elite because they’re chicks!) run to surround Malcolm – one doesn’t move quickly enough and Malcolm pulverizes her as she tries to move behind him. Two also flank Krojin, but his barbarian prowess keeps him largely safe. The boss, *Cinnabar*, grows a huge mantis claw out of her hand and strikes Malcolm!

Krojin attacks Cinnabar. Malcolm's on his last legs; Annata channels healing to the good guys and then points her finger at Cinnabar. "May Sarenrae strike you blind, sinner!" And Sarenrae does. Cinnabar gasps as the blazing visage of the Dawnflower appears to her, searing away her eyesight permanently. Thorndyke slays the Red Mantis behind Malcolm and Malcolm kills one of the ones around Krojin.

Malcolm steps back stealthily out of melee with Cinnabar but she hears him, leaps forward, and... hits Malcolm four times! And the 50% miss chance from the blindness doesn't kick in once. He only has thirty hit points; we all wait breathlessly to see if he's a goner. But when it's all reckoned up, she leaves him with three hit points! Without flanking, she's just a slight cut above "some bitch with a knife." Krojin closes in and pounds her head into her body cavity as well. She falls right next to the Cinderlander. Thorndyke kills off the last Red Mantis.

Annata turns to the assembled masses and raises Krojin's hand in the universal gesture of victory! The gargoyles all flee. The Shoanti cheer in acclamation! Annata helps heal the wounded, but the hardy Shoanti came through the attack pretty well.

We search Cinnabar and find:

- Potion of cure serious wounds (Malcolm)
- Potion of haste (Thorndyke)
- Wand of hold person (19) (Annata)
- Large scorpion venom (4 doses) (Thorndyke)
- Magic studded leather +2 (Amiri, exchanged for her hide +2)
- 2 magic sawtooth sabres +1 (longsword, but if exotic prof, treat as light) (sell)
- Headband of Charisma +2 (Thorndyke)
- Belt Physical Might (Dex, Con) +2 (Annata)
- Ring Prot +1 (Malcolm)
- Mantis Mask 3 charges/day – darkvision 60", see invis, death watch, or +5 on Perception (30 mins) (Malcolm)
- 3 elixirs in skull bottles – shadewalking, drinker + 11 others go into the shadow plane and shadowwalk for 11 hours

Then the Cinderlander:

- Potion of haste (Malcolm)
- Wand cure moderate (22) (Annata)
- Mithril shirt +2 (Thorndyke trades in his +1 mithril)
- Repeating heavy crossbow w/14 screaming bolts, +1 humanbane (Krojin)
- 2 masterwork hand axes (non-magical) (sell)
- Belt Physical Might (Dex, Con) +2 (sell)
- 80 pp

Spring Break, Shoanti Style

After some healing of the locals, we party hardy! After a friendly match of sredna with Malcolm, Krojin goes off to show Amiri his earthbreaker. “And by his earthbreaker, I mean his penis,” says Paul. (Name the reference for bonus points!)

Malcolm and Annata get special Sun Clan tattoos. Thorndyke has to settle for a general Shoanti armband tattoo kind of thing.

The chief and Sun Shaman arrive back the next day to find the camp in shambles. Annata raises her mug of fermented horse urine and greets them with a hearty “Wooooo!” Our deeds have shown that shamech can become good Shoanti! This reduces their desire to go war on the shamech, so Korvosa is safe from war. “How many people did we save?” asks Malcolm. “All of them!” declares Annata.

And with that, we complete A History of Ashes! Now we enter...

The Skeletons of Scarwall

We take a break to look for all the titty pics of Seoni in the beta PHB. There’s a lot of them. The GM is reasonably tolerant of this.

The Sun Shaman calls us to his tent. He congratulates us and has us (where us means Annata and Malcolm) sit around his fire and tells us about the time from before the rise of Korvosa, a tale handed down from shaman to shaman over the years.

Mandravus, a hero from a distant nature, was gathering heroes to fight against the evil dragon *Kazavon*. The Sun Shaman of the time went with. When he returned he was

a broken man. He said that the fortress which was the lair of the dragon will “remain impotent as long as the hero keeps his hold on it.” Annata has to ask him to repeat that part because her giggling made her miss some of the details.

Mandravus had his seven followers take one part of the dragon’s body and go hide it somewhere and not tell anyone where. The Sun Shaman had the fangs, Midnight’s Fangs, and hid it inside a pyramid, which worked until Cheliox attacked and took over the pyramid and grew the city of Korvosa around it.

The shaman knew that the fangs had a fragment of Kazavon’s spirit in it. It could mess with people’s dreams. The shamans of course were too mentally tough for that to work on them, but apparently the Queen was a little more vulnerable.

One who has been taken over by the fangs would have two souls – hers and another grown by the dragon. Without the fangs being destroyed, she probably can’t be killed by normal means. And the fangs can’t be easily destroyed – though we can do the Blessing of the Ancestors and call a Shoanti ancestor spirit to get some advice along those lines.

He asks which spirit we’d like to call. We immediately think of Zellara, the Varisian lady whose spirit still inhabits our harrow deck. He tells us to meet him the next morning at daybreak on the top of Bolt Rock.

The group takes the rest of the day to identify and divvy up loot, and then party more! Annata has never really had a chance to “party” before and finds that she’s enjoying the whole Spring Break vibe of Shoanti life.

Speak With Dead, Greater

The whole tribe comes to watch our heroes go through the ritual. First the shaman drones on for like two hours. Then he goes on about the tribe’s history, and then to more meaningless droned chanting. Then Zellara appears. She says, “First, I’d like to perform a Harrow reading for you.”

- Malcolm draws The Midwife. He sees a draconic figure made entirely out of shadow.
- Thorndyke draws The Lost. He has a vision of a “hideous monster full of murder holes and ribbons and cobwebs and things” in his words.

- Annata draws The Publican. She sees a skeleton clad entirely in platemail, with a flaming skull for a head.

Four Wisdom Harrow points! They can be used to:

- Reroll any Wis check or Will save
- Greater Tuning – infuse a turn and increase cleric level by 2 (spend up to 3 at once).
- Divine Wrath – increase +2 save DC, +4 CL vs SR, +2 on attack rolls on a divine spell.

Card Interpretations

- The Betrayal - One of our allies plans to betray us. But you can't just abandon him; that'll lead to greater peril. We all totally know this is about the Shadow Count.
- The Dance – Represents Zellara and the help she has given us in the past, but it's opposed by the cyclone and she may have to leave us. (Annata senses that Zellara seems disturbed by the card, and it could mean something bad will happen to her.)
- The Keep – We must go to Scarwall. And it represents the castle's haunted state and dire spirits.
- The Wanderer – Is a collector and appreciates what others consider junk. We will have to find an item of great value.
- The Publican – Represents friendship and camaraderie, and if the castle can be cleansed of its taint it will once more become safe.
- The Lost – Emptiness and loss of identity. A creature, once a paladin, is lost in a world of madness and killing. Mandravus will oppose us now, and those who were good have been turned to evil.

Now, she has a tale to tell us (in song). We agree it was about “undead, chained people, shit like that.” We have Paul repeat it again, slowly.

Fate of steel, Serath-teel (Annata knows: Serath-teel is a holy bastard sword crafted by Iomedae that Mandravus carried)

*Her cage for years sustained
Four enthralled in lost Scarwall
Undead to keep her chained
A spirit first, red war his thirst
Still stands at post of old
A second foe, infernal soul
waits high in tower cold
In kennels grime a third bides his time
then vents his killing breath
And on a stone mid ash and bone
the final dreams of death
The spirits worn and battle-torn
and locked in their damnation
The chained one's hold
at last grows old
and ushers in salvation
Yet hope remains amid the chains
when blade's stone cage has crumbled
Friends to dread and the death of the dead
Keys to Kazavon humbled*

She smiles sadly and the spirits of the dead infuse us with energy to aid us. Zellara fades into darkness.

The Sun Shaman says we're blessed by the spirits. "Go forth with the power of Father Sun in your hands!"

We gain the following benefits:

1. One of our items is infused – undead bane weapon, or ghost touch armor. Thorndyke opts for the weapon, Malcolm and I for the armor.
2. Next time you fail a save vs a death effect it succeeds but you're stunned for 1 round. We resolve to avoid really minor death effects for a while.

Scarwall stands about 300 miles away in the Hold of Belzen, land of the orcs. But first, we go to the boner tower and get the Shadow Count. And Laori is there now! We catch up on current events.

“And we met a thousand year old Mammoth Lords barbarian chick! But we married her off to one of the Shoanti.”

“Yeah? I cocooned up Valash! He’s over there.”

“Mmmph!”

“Cool! So how do you get your hair that shade of blue?”

The boys are a little dismayed at how well Annata and Laori get along. “The undead in Scarwall no longer belong to Zon-Kuthon,” she tells us. “Did they use to?” we ask. Laori has the Shadow Count give us the long history lesson while she pricks herself over and over with a needle because she “doesn’t like history.” The executive summary is:

Back in the day, Ustalav had trouble with orcs. They turned to Zon-Kuthon for help and some merc named Kazavon showed up to help and kick ass. He cleared the orcs and made a fortress at Scarwall to watch over the lowlands. And then he took over the rest of the Hold of Belkzen. And on to Ustalav. He didn’t take it over but took a good chunk. And had vampiric orgies and did all kinds of crazy depraved crap. But Mandravus and some heroes went in and turned one of his minions, a chamberlain named Kleestad, they snuck in and kicked his ass adventurer style. But then he went all dragon on them. He whacked a bunch of them but Mandravus with his uber sword took him down. They sent off the dragon bits but then the orcs came again and took over Scarwall. But Mandravus and his forces turned all undead after dying and killed all but one of the orcs. Now it’s taboo to the orcs.

“Can I borrow your needle?” Annata asks Laori quietly.

We detour to Kaer Maga to sell loot. Malcolm gets undead bane on his flail and Annata gets her scimitar +1’ed and undead baned. We are so poor. And we level again, to L12!