

Curse of the Crimson Throne Session Summary – April 5, 2009

Attendance

Chris (Malcolm Zirkus the Korvosan Guard) putters about, putting his house in order for the game. We don't really thank him enough for hosting every week; we descend, loot the snacks, and depart... So thanks to our gracious host!

Paul (the GM) comes in to tell us that our initial plan of running *Alternity* after this campaign may be threatened by how bad ass the first installment of the new *Legacy of Fire* adventure path is. Erik Mona outdoes himself again, apparently.

Ernest (Annata Vieri the priestess of Sarenrae) talks about his recent reading list – *The Last True Story I'll Ever Tell*, *Imperial Grunts*, and *Asimov's New Guide To Science*. People show interest in borrowing them, especially the excellent *Imperial Grunts* (written by a war journalist about his experiences with frontline troops around the world).

Patrick (Thorndyke the Sable Company Marine) explains his undying love for Bjork. He quickly breaks down into gibbering her name over and over. We begin to suspect that he's a replicant.

The Realm of Shadow

With our Brotherhood of the Bones retinue - *Shadow Count Sial*, *Laori*, and *Asyra* the chain devil - we use an elixir to *shadow walk* across the intervening hundreds of miles to the orc-infested Hold of Belkzen. The realm of shadow is a black and white, twisted version of the lands in between. As we walk, the landscape fast-forwards to the next landmark with terrifying speed. When we reach the nameless volcano where Scarwall sits, we shift back into the Prime Material.

Before us stands a huge black castle sitting in the lake in the bottom of the caldera. A long bridge covered with gargoyles leads from a ruined gatehouse to the castle proper. There's fog and gloom and black water and all the usual trappings of EEEEVIL.

Orcs? What are we, first level?

We approach the gatehouse, and a hail of arrows falls upon us. *Malcolm* is happy. “Orcs? We actually get to fight orcs? Let’s take a prisoner!”

Thorndyke asks, “Does anyone speak Orcish?”

“No, but I’m willing to learn. Or stab them until they speak something non-Orcish,” says *Malcolm*. “I bet they will, if properly motivated.”

Annata rolls her eyes. Boys.

The orcs have white-painted faces. They rain down arrows upon us as we press against the wall and work around towards where we figure a gatehouse door might be. *Malcolm* starts climbing up to the balcony. A particularly butch orc yells encouragement at him as they continue to shoot. *Annata* and *Thorndyke* fire back and leapfrog around the end of the wall, and see a crude wooden add-on structure with a door in it. *Thorndyke* casts *Wind Wall*, which provides nice protection from the arrows, as *Malcolm* discovers exactly how slow you move according to the climbing rules.

Annata gets to the door first, opens it, and finds the orc “barracks,” with a fire pit and ladder leading up to the parapet. *Thorndyke* and the Bone Crew file in and up the ladder, Rainbow Six style. *Malcolm* gets up to the balcony, and is immediately surrounded by greataxe-wielding orcs. He cleaves all three of them, slaying one of the lesser orcs. The orc boss, *Yuri Seven Skulls*, hacks him hard back. The rest of the group gets up the ladder and charges across the balcony into the melee, except for *Shadow Count Sial* and *Asyra*, who are approached by two orcs entering from another door on the ground floor. The Count immediately holds one of them.

Malcolm focuses his attacks on *Yuri Seven Skulls*, critically wounding him. *Thorndyke* digs his weapons into the other orc minion, killing him and tossing him over the balcony. *Yuri* unleashes a hellacious amount of damage into *Malcolm*, taking him to 20 of his 172 hit points! *Annata* holds her shield up; arrows thunk into it as she charges *Yuri*, cutting him. *Laori* lashes out with her spiked chain at him as well. *Malcolm* finally drives his scythe through *Yuri*’s chest.

Down below, *Asyra* coup de graces the held orc. *Sial* pulls out his spiked chain and attacks as well. Those Zon-Kuthon guys love their spiked chains.

Thorndyke casts *Jump* and leaps up to the orcish archers on the top parapet. Sadly, the crumbling parapet can't handle the weight of three people, and it comes crashing down, bringing the ranger and orcs with it! Thorndyke, with his skill at evasion, manages to tuck and roll and comes up unhurt. The orcs fall with a crunch at a surprised Annata's feet.

The fallen orcs jump up. Annata gets an attack of opportunity and then rains crits down upon one of them. Malcolm finishes that orc and Thorndyke starts in on the other. That one ignores Thorndyke and hacks deeply into Laori. Annata fells the last orc with her scimitar; she stops swinging as soon as he falls so that they'll have a prisoner.

Then, it's time for healing. Annata pours out charges from their cure wands, mostly into Malcolm. Everyone's good as new!

The orcs have:

- 6 +1 breastplates
- 6 +1 greataxes
- 6 masterwork composite shortbow, +5 STR (Thorndyke takes one)
- 24 opals (20 gp each)

Yuri has:

- +1 mithral shirt
- +1 dragonbane frost greatsword (Malcolm)
- Masterwork composite longbow, +5 STR (Malcolm, puts +1 light crossbow in the kitty)
- Amulet natural armor +1 (Annata)
- Belt of strength +2
- Necklace of 7 silver-plated red wyrmling skulls (orc, see below)

We search the gatehouse and find a lot of crap. In Yuri's room there's a leather chest with his clothes and stuff and a thirty foot long (poorly) stuffed snake. We eagerly take the snake, feeding it into our bag of holding, plotting to deposit it in the next inn we stay at; either next to some sleeping drunk guy or coiled up in the restroom.

Malcolm says, "I think this is very positive. These guys have been camping here without getting all their shit drained, so this is probably a safe place for us to camp when we need to."

“Eloquently put as always, and I agree,” replies Annata.

Thorndyke snickers because he knows Malcolm just got sassed by the cleric, but doesn’t realize it.

We wake up the orc and talk to him. He says they’re from the Deadwatcher tribe and they are tasked with making sure no one goes in or comes out. The last one who came out was their ancestor, many generations ago. “So, like twenty years?” asks Annata. (Badum bum!) He’s been guarding the place off and on for his whole life. The heroes tell him they are here to kill the undead and lift the curse on the place. We assure him we respect his tribe’s mission and their might. We let him go, give him the dragon skull necklace since it’s a relic of one of their heroes, and send him back to his tribe. Annata explains all this should hopefully encourage them to not ambush us when we reemerge or engage in other such meddling.

When we step onto the causeway to the keep, the wind whips up into a gale! Zellara, our Varisian spirit guide, suddenly materializes and the spirits of the keep appear, screaming and clawing at her! Annata makes the Will save for her to not be torn out and ghost-napped. We jump back off the bridge. After some communing with Zellara and debate, we hide the Harrow deck in the gatehouse to keep her safe.

During this, Annata keeps chatting with Laori, who actually comes on to her a bit. Annata is surprised at how much this actually intrigues her but she quickly tamps that down into her subconscious.

Skeletons? We’re definitely first level.

We cross the bridge. When we are halfway across, the gates part and sixteen armored skeletons march out, led by another skeleton on a flying skeletal nightmare! He calls for them to attack, and they begin to charge across the span. Annata prays to the Dawnflower and asks her to carry us through this battle. Malcolm drinks a potion and grows to double his size and lumbers forward. Thorndyke fells two of the skeletons with arrows. “You killed a skeleton with arrows!?” cries Malcolm. “Why did I bother to use a potion?” He discovers why when the skeleton on the nightmare charges him with its lance. It crits, which means 79 points of damage! Annata and Thorndyke run up to help

him, but Malcolm crushes the leader with two attacks from his power attacking undead bane heavy flail – for 104 points of damage! We all hoot in approval. The horde of skeletal mooks attack, as does the nightmare that the leader had previously been riding. Annata joins the front line and calls down the holy power of Sarenrae and channels holy energy, disintegrating all the skeletons in one shot. Thorndyke brings the nightmare down with his undead bane rapier. We all grab it to make sure it doesn't fall over the side of the bridge, as we've been admiring its shiny, shiny barding.

The skeletal cavalier and his mount have:

- Magical full plate
- Magical lance +2
- Belt of STR +2
- Magical mithril full plate barding (Thorndyke is extremely excited about fitting this to *Herbie*, his hippogriff!)

Johnny Blaze, Ghost... Stander!

We hustle across the bridge and get to the gatehouse. The front gate is open but the interior one is closed. Annata asks Sarenrae to blind the dead to their presence. Rather than go in through the inevitable murder holes, Malcolm climbs up to the battlement and lets down a knotted rope. We all clamber up, though Annata has some difficulty. We get to a balcony, which has a door leading into a minaret containing roosts of some sort. We pass through that into a long attic filled with junk and... A looming skeletal figure in platemail, with a blazing skull for a head! We recognize this as one of the undead bosses we heard about – Annata saw him in her Harrow reading vision.

Annata strides forward boldly, her ankh aloft. “The power of the Goddess compels you!” She *consecrates* the area; soft holy light limns the area.

Malcolm charges the figure and strikes him with his undead bane flail. It definitely hurts him, but the flames surrounding him burn Malcolm some. The flaming figure croaks “Protect... Castle...” and swings his battleaxe at Malcolm. Two shadow bodyguards appear and strike at him as well, but Malcolm's ghost touch armor protects him. Thorndyke runs up and stabs one of the shadows with his rapier. Annata joins them and channels holy energy; it only affects the shadows, and but slightly. The

overwhelming aura of evil in the castle is only being slightly retarded by the consecration.

Malcolm battles the burning skeletal commander. The two shadows mob Annata, but their claws are blocked by her ghost touch armor. She channels again, and the holy light burns them more deeply this time. One is dissolved; the other flees through the wall.

Malcolm crushes the commander with a perfect blow, but he is still standing, and hacks back with his battleaxe. The three Brotherhood of the Bones moo-rons finally decide to get into the fight and all three lash out with their spiked chains at the commander to little avail. Thorndyke leaps in and thrusts his rapier into an eyehole, felling him!

Scarwall emits an undead scream as one of the undead auras haunting the place is lifted.

Captain Castrothrane wields:

- Magic full plate armor +2
- Magic heavy steel shield
- Magic battleaxe
- Magic ring of fire shield (Annata) – 10 rounds/day CL10, free action, autoactivates when hit by cold

Annata identifies some of the magic items using detect magic and Appraise. She doesn't succeed on the ring, but puts it on and her head bursts into flame, and she's surrounded by the same fire shield effect the captain was using. She takes this as a very good omen (Sarenrae grants fire shield to her clerics and her aspect is of a woman with hair of flame). Annata prays over the ring to consecrate it to her goddess' service.

Door to Door

We go down into a long, twisty hallway that goes by many doors. It appears to be a main corridor for the entire second floor of the castle. There are some double doors right across from the stairwell, and we go straight in. It's just a training room. We go peek quietly into the room above the gatehouse, and sure enough, there's winches and murder holes, and four minotaur skeletons manning them. We huddle and discuss whether we

should sweep and clear or ignore them. Malcolm and Thorndyke say we should clear them in case we have to run out through the gatehouse. We try to convince the Brotherhood of the Bones crew to earn their keep by taking them on. Shadow Count Sial shakes his head “no” in that pussy way he always does. We sigh, and assault the room.

We do a hand countdown “3... 2... 1... go!” Malcolm charges in and snaps the spine of the first in one shot. Annata moves in next to him and sets for the charge of the next. It indeed charges, goring Malcolm as Annata slashes it with her scimitar. Thorndyke tumbles in through the door and pokes it also. Malcolm lays about with that huge flail of his and shatters two of them at once!

One remains; Annata charges it and scratches it; her scimitar isn’t doing a lot against the skeletal enemies. It tries to attack Malcolm to no effect and Thorndyke takes it down. We cheer! Malcolm thanks Annata for her healing and she commends him on his skeleton slaying skills.

- 4 masterwork Large greataxes

Paul says, “They never got to use their most powerful special ability!”

“What, their affinity for rape?”

“No, they’re immune to the maze spell!”

We decide to sweep and clear rather than bypass smaller rooms so that Paizo gets its money’s worth on the word count they paid Greg Vaughn for. We poke around. Malcolm decides to go down some stairs himself and finds a room with arrow slits and two more minotaur skeletons. He makes short work of them. He wanders back up the stairs with a fresh flesh wound and some loot.

- 2 masterwork Large greataxes
- 2 masterwork Large light crossbows

We look at the matching stairwell down on the other side of the room. “Want to take care of them too?” Annata asks Malcolm. “Don’t have to ask me twice!” He bounds down the stairs and returns with yet another wound and matching loot.

- 2 masterwork Large greataxes
- 2 masterwork Large light crossbows

Thorndyke sneaks down some other stairs and peers into some arrow slits showing a large room with loads of human and orc corpses in it, felled while locked in mortal

combat. We are sad that the corpses seem pretty fresh for having gone down centuries ago.

The Ghost Tamperers

We work through the second floor. There's a large dining hall with a closet in it. And a pantry. And a guardroom. Malcolm requests that when we get back to Korvosa, that we remind him to beat up an architect. Then we walk into the great hall.

The hall has huge wooden pillars over a dead firepit in the middle. There's a spirit with chains and skulls in the middle over a dead firepit, flanked by five translucent bodyguards. The lord and lady's chair loom upon a dais at the head of the hall.

We retreat and Annata buffs the crap out of the party. Thorndyke gets *Life's Grace*; Annata and Malcolm get *Death Ward*, everyone gets *Bless*, *Guidance*, and *Resistance*. She casts *protection from evil* on herself and Malcolm drinks a potion to that effect. She kicks in a *light of mercuria* and begins to glow. Then, we go in.

Our heroes charge the spirits. The chain spirit lashes out and strikes Thorndyke three times with its chains! He takes some damage, but the life's grace blocks the ability drain. All five spectres mob him but their attacks can't get through the spell either. Annata heads towards the head spirit and channels energy upon all and sundry.

Malcolm and Thorndyke take out four of the spectres and leave the last to give the Boner Squad something to do. Annata zaps her *light of mercuria* at the head ghost; that and a channeling hurt it some. The party surrounds the chain spirit and beats on it; its incorporeal nature and regeneration make the battle last a while. But once Annata moves to flanking with Malcolm, he gets in two massive flail shots and disincorporates the chain spirit! It dissolves, but curiously the aura of evil permeating the castle does not seem to lessen. Malcolm kicks in *see invisible* with his mantis helmet and Annata *detects magic*. There are three lines of magic leading right to where the spirit was from three other locations. Annata thinks. "I bet there was one coming from Captain Castrothrane too. We need to hustle and go get another one; I have this bad feeling that this guy's going to respawn if we haven't killed all the sub-bosses."

"Ah, you have detect plot!" says Paul. Yeah, I've only played this game 25 years...

And with that, we bring this session to a close, carefully noting our active buffs.