

Curse of the Crimson Throne Session Summary – May 17, 2009

Attendance

Patrick (Thorndyke the Sable Company marine) is in London for a month! So he's not here.

Bruce (Valash Not-Gurelle the insane sorcerer) attends for lunch, but punks out for the game, which leaves us dangerously undermanned. We had been planning on him as our third PC.

Chris (Malcolm Zirkus the Korvosan Guard) trades more war and cop books back and forth with Ernest. Then in rapid succession he dissos P.F. Chang's, the Olsen Twins, the Saw movies, and Asian drivers. Is no one safe from his rage!?! Is nothing sacred?

Paul (the GM) shuffles his new critical hit deck and cackles maniacally. Georgina starts to (successfully) compose heavy metal songs with lyrics derived from random draws from the deck.

Georgina (gamer groupie) talks about her Make magazine-augmented herb garden and how to provide love and attention to the plants. Many a tongue is lashed about in her direction at this. She giggles.

Ed (Cayen the Magnificent, a bard) comes in from the other campaign! Paul was running two Curse of the Crimson Throne campaigns in parallel and the other group has completed it already and killed the Queen. However, Ed missed the last chapter of that campaign, and since we're undermanned we called him up.

Ernest (Annata Vieri the priestess of Sarenrae) explains that last night he got drunk on vodka and then watched Naked Lunch for the first time, leading him to experience the fullness of the phrase "tripping balls." Today, he is feeling fragile.

The Setup

When we last left our heroes, they were shopping for gear in the free city of Kaer Maga, and preparing to go back to Korvosa and take down the evil possessed *Queen Ileosa*. Malcolm gets a cool weapon enchantment on his flail that, once it hits an enemy,

gains the properties needed to bypass that foe's damage resistance. Annata gets a periapt that boosts her channeling and a holy scimitar.

Annata wants to go see the Sun Clan Shoanti and share the tale of what happened at Scarwall. She doesn't want to just have joined the clan just to get adventure-specific info from their shaman; she grew to respect them and wants to be a good clan member. *Malcolm* has been teaching her to speak Shoanti, even. Since *Thorndyke* isn't full Sun Clan, we ask him to ride his hippogriff *Herbie* to Korvosa and scout out the situation. He agrees, and hands Annata the magical sword Serath-Teel for safekeeping.

While spending hundreds of thousands of gold on magical gear in Kaer Maga, we run across someone else from Korvosa who wants to dethrone the Queen - *Cayen the Magnificent*, a bard, and his Shoanti barbarian henchwoman *Snu-Snu*. (In a bizarre twist, Snu-Snu died, was reincarnated as a Halfling, and has a permanent enlarge cast on her. And she's wearing celestial plate, wielding a klar and earthbreaker.)

Vencarlo Orisini, our gentleman friend from Korvosa, sends us a dream message, which is brief. He's in Janderhoff. Korvosa is under martial law. *Field Marshal Cressida Croft* has left the Guard and is leading a resistance effort. Vencarlo and the old Korvosan seneschal, *Neolandus Kalepopolis*, will slip into the city and meet Croft under the Cathedral of Pharama. We should come meet them!

The Harrowing

Our Harrow desk twitches. *Zellara*, the Varisian spirit lady who lives in the deck, appears and does a Harrow reading for us. First, we each draw a card.

Annata draws the Empty Throne. She will get +2 on all CHA-modified checks and +1 CL on turns and spell-like abilities during the combat in the throne room.

Malcolm draws The Marriage. He gets the above bonuses in the combat against the Queen's Seneschal, Togomor the blood mage.

Cayen draws The Courtesan. He gets the above bonuses in the combat against the Queen's Captain of the Guard, Sabine.

Then she does a full reading. We get two Harrow Points each, which can be spent on:

- CHA Rerolls: Reroll any one CHA-based skill check or turn undead attempt

- Inner Strength: Draw a Harrow card and get a +4 bonus to the associated stat for the encounter, +6 if the card matches your alignment
- Destiny Shall Not Be Denied: Force any one d20 roll by the GM to be rerolled

The cards from the past show how we've fought against the sickness, both the plague and moral corruption. The Marriage warns about the combo of the queen and the demon spirit in the crown. The Queen is no longer in control of her own destiny. The Avalanche shows the destruction we bring to the Queen's plans. Devils and dragons infest Korvosa. Flames and destruction threaten the city if we fail. The Carnival (in true alignment) shows that we have to cut through the smoke and mirrors and illusions set in our path. What we see will not be what is. If we succeed, then The Paladin shows the defense of good that will come. Then, Zellara fades away. "Thank you ghost lady!" we say.

The Horse Clans

We go to the Flameford Gathering where the Sun Clan Shoanti hang out. *Amiri*, our one-time comrade, is already pregnant by her new husband *Krojin Eats-What-He-Kills*. Annata uses her Rod of Splendor to throw a hundred-person feast and party for the clan. They tell the *Sun Shaman* all that transpired in Scarwall. She shows them the holy sword Serith-Teal and tells them about their plan to go dethrone the Queen, and asks them to raise a totem for them if they fail.

The party proceeds. Cayen drums up a storm, that's his specialty. Annata gets her Shoanti tattoos extended with their latest deeds. A good time is had by all, and next day we plan our insertion into Korvosa.

The plan is for Annata to Word of Recall the party into the Pantheon of Many. Cayen will make us invisible and we'll land and air walk to fly over the wall separating Southshore from the Gray District, and thence into the Grand Cathedral of Pharasma. We say our farewells to the clan and then, that night, off we go.

Back to Korvosa

We teleport into the shrine of Sarenrae inside the Pantheon of Many at midnight. Some of Annata's friends are there, and mob her happily. They say that the Guard has lost all power and the Grey Maidens control the city. Merchants are taxed heavily. The Hellknights are gone, though. The Queen keeps passing more and more laws. And she's started some new projects – like dismantling the Great Tower and building four big statues of the Queen with the stones. The church of Abadar has backed the Queen and is helping with this (the bastards). Also, the Temple of Asmodeus is collecting blood from every citizen. This sounds bad.

The Church of Sarenrae is staying quiet and helping out the resistance. House Arkona is all locked up. The mages of the Academe still haven't come back out either.

We turn invisible and slip into the Cathedral. They're doing their usual nightly business of caring for the dead of the city. We sneak up to the bishop, an old crone, and Annata whispers “We're here to see Vencarlo.”

“And you are?”

“Annata and friends!”

“You've been expected.” She leads us under the cathedral into a tunnel.

The bishop leads us out into a subterranean chamber where Field Marshal Croft, Vencarlo Orisini, Seneschal Neolandus Kalepopolis, and Vencarlo's old student *Amin Galento* are hiding out.

Annata casts *Zone of Truth* covertly from the sword; she's been doing this enough to know to check for moles. She asks Vencarlo how he's been. He and the seneschal went to Janderhoff, keeping sharp watch for the agents of the Queen. Annata subtly quizzes Amin, and he waxes poetic about the need for heroes to liberate Korvosa. Croft tells us that since the Guard was largely dissolved she couldn't help the people any more in that role, so has joined the resistance. No one seems to be lying about anything.

Croft says she hears the Grey Maidens are mind controlled, and the Queen has transformed herself into a monster, and devils and a dragon live in the castle. And many Red Mantis assassins. All the usual suspects.

Annata and the boys tell the assembled revolutionaries about their adventures among the Shoanti and the sacking of the undead-haunted Scarwall. They are impressed and set out a list of things they think we need to accomplish in order to unseat the queen.

Target List

There is a “hero of the people” taking on the mantle of Blackjack, and he has been fighting “rebels” in the streets. But the rebels aren’t real rebels, so they figure he’s not on the up and up either. His nom de guerre is *Trifaccia*, and he wears a three-faced mask. Mainly in Midland, but they don’t know a base or anything that would draw him.

The false seneschal, the bloated wizard *Togumor*, also needs killin’. He’d be in the seneschal chamber most of the time, in the castle.

Ashani Datri, the one Abadarian priest who fought against his order’s alignment with the Queen, has disappeared and is probably held in the castle. He’d be in the prison there if he was.

Sabine Merrin, leader of the Grey Maidens and the Queen’s lover, needs to be removed. Grau and Vencarlo think she can be reasoned with. She was honorable to a fault before, they say. Annta frowns at all this non-killing Sabine talk. She suspects Vencarlo and Grau are thinking with their lower-brains. Perhaps going and fighting a bunch of Grey Maidens would draw her out.

Prove the Queen’s been trafficking with devils. This seems hard, as we can bring back devil heads from the castle but without a videocamera or a love letter to Asmodeus from the Queen we’re not sure how to “prove” that really.

Annata says “this sounds complicated... How about we just roll up in the castle and kill everyone?” They generally say, “No no, the plot says to do all this other stuff first.” We sigh.

Malcolm sums up their tactical points for clarity. And the seneschal provides a map of the castle. Vencarlo adds in some secret doors he knows about. We list potential bolt-holes and rally points for the party if things go bad – Valash’s scribe shop, the tunnels under the Grey District, and even less secure locations like the wererat warrens.

We decide to do the “outside the castle” work first; hunt down Three-Face and try to entrap Sabine. We go to the Gold Market, the last place he was seen, and start asking around.

Three Faces Are Not Enough

Cayen the Magnificent and Annata ask around and find out that Trifaccia has been around, but seems to fight with “rebels” that were suspected Sczarni. We start planting rumors to draw him out. Malcolm and Snu-Snu work security. Sure enough, after a while a bunch of Varisians show up and start pushing merchants around, calling them the Queen’s lackeys and stealing their stuff.

Cayen starts a drum performance to *fascinate* five of the thugs, even though Trifaccia hasn’t showed up yet. Malcolm chides him for his low impulse control. Malcolm kicks in *see invisible* from his helmet, and Annata casts *detect evil* to scan the area.

Some of the thugs are fascinated. The others come over and tell the bard his music sucks and he should drop dead. He seems quite taken aback by this and, oddly, considers dropping dead. Annata detects an overwhelmingly evil presence somewhere near. Malcolm whispers, “Can I start killing people yet?” “No, not yet!” replies Annata. The thugs continue to say things like “You should go blind!” and “You should teabag me!” and for some reason we find ourselves making saving throws. We make them all, so don’t find out what the deal is with that.

Annata leads Malcolm around a building to where the evil aura is; the aura heads out invisibly over a nearby building. She fears that he’s fleeing for a moment, but then Trifaccia steps out from behind a building by the mob and bard and lays down a long rap about how he’s the real protector of the city and not you pretender heroes. He challenges the bard to a duel. The bard stutters for a bit, as he suspects this would end with him squealing on the end of a sword, but then says, “I have a better opponent for you. Perhaps you haven’t heard of... Malcolm the Destroyer!!” He shoots off pyrotechnics as Malcolm charges from the alley at Trifaccia.

“I’ll take you up on that duel!” Malcolm charges him and smites him hard with a devastating blow with his heavy flail. Heat unaccountably blasts out from the wound, and he’s wounded a lot less than an 86-point flail hit would normally call for.

Trifaccia swings at Malcolm four times with his flaming scimitar, only hitting him twice. Annata appears on the edge of a nearby building. She decries Trifaccia as an impostor, stating that “the real Blackjack will liberate the people from the queen and false heroes like him.” The crowd in the marketplace cheers. She casts *mark of the outcast* on him, but to no avail. Malcolm critically wounds Trifaccia with a wave of attacks, and activates a blurring effect. Trifaccia strikes Malcolm a couple times. Malcolm beats him down. As he dies, flame and smoke pour out of his body. Annata identifies the body as that of an efreet!

Cayen, Annata, and Malcolm disarm the still-immobile gang. Cayen suggests to them they go call the Grey Maidens, especially Sabine, to come contain this situation. They flee.

Trifaccia’s gear includes:

- +1 flaming scimitar
- Belt of Health +4 (Snu-Snu swaps for a +2, Cayden takes that one)
- Bracers of Armor +4
- Ring of Protection +2
- Ring of Cold Resistance (Minor)
- Dust of disappearance (3 doses)

When Did This Turn Into Dragonlance?

Then, Sabine comes flying in atop a black dragon! Annata hurriedly casts *resist energy (acid)* upon herself, as she’s the only one flying. Malcolm drinks an *enlarge* potion. Sabine seems to be forcing the dragon to land, even though it doesn’t want to. Cayen inspires courage in the group.

The dragon bites at Malcolm. Annata leaps through the air towards them and calls down a *flame strike* on dragon and rider. Malcolm strikes at the dragon with his flail. Sabine uses her riding skill to make the dragon flat-footed to his attack! The dragon

looks pissed. Snu-Snu charges the dragon but gets bitten on her way in. Cayen casts *haste* on the group.

The dragon turns on Sabine as she vaults off its back. It wounds her badly with a full attack routine, but it takes damage and gets sickened when it does! Annata flies up and uses a *flashing sun* maneuver to rain attacks on the dragon with Serath-Teel. She crits three times, significantly overkilling the dragon. She lands in a martial pose as acidic blood geysers into the air behind her.

Sabine drops her shield and sword and kneels, revealing her scarred face. She says, “I throw myself on your mercy.”

Annata kicks in a *zone of truth* with the sword. “Do you yield to us truly?”

“Yes.”

“And do you have any enchantments that would allow your mistress to find you or scry upon us?”

“No.”

“All righty then, you’re coming with us.”

Annata Word of Recalls the group to the Resistance warren under the Cathedral of Pharasma.

No Waterboarding Required

Annata interrogates Sabine under a *zone of truth* with the rest of the resistance looking on.

“Why do you betray your mistress now?”

“I knew things were going bad with the attempted execution of *Trinia Sabor* and the torture and brainwashing of the Grey Maidens. I have tried to lessen her depredations when I could, but couldn’t act much. But she got so crazy I had to do something, and I now realize she never loved me.”

“That is a tale well told. Sarenrae teaches us to redeem all who truly repent. If you will swear to fight against the Queen, and accept my *geas* to that effect, you can join us.” She accedes. Annata has her kiss the holy symbol of Sarenrae and enchants her.

Sabina gives us all kinds of intel. She tells us a bunch of not-fanatically-loyal-enough Grey Maidens are imprisoned under the Longacre building in North Point. She doesn't want to come into the castle with us, but wants to go free the Grey Maidens.

She does fill us in on the castle's current disposition, however. Ileosa has been recruiting devils somehow. She's not sure how, maybe with the Academe's help. She has some large hell hound guards in the throne room. A horned devil named *Mavrocharis* guards the towers. Three barbed devils hang out around the first floor. The Red Mantis hang out on the third floor. Some more devils guard the ground floor.

The Queen almost never leaves her chambers now. She hasn't made whoopiee with Sabine for a while. The seneschal may be in his quarters or the kitchen, though he may be so fat he can't actually walk now, and his imp familiar *Pudgyknuckles* may be fetching him food.

Into the Castle

We hatch a plan. We disguise Cayen, Snu-Snu, and Annata as Grey Maidens and Malcolm as a Red Mantis assassin. Cayen's slight half-elven build and high Disguise skill means that drag is no obstacle to him. We invisibly climb up to the secret door on the outside of the castle. It's locked, but an adamantite blade cuts the lock out quickly. We sneak into the armory, which holds weapons and a ladder.

We stride boldly in our disguises into the main barracks. There are four Grey Maidens there. Annata waves casually at them and we march through to the mess hall.

Kinda Like Joe's Crab Shack

This place is messed up. Three barbed devils are roasting a hippogriff among a partly-illusory hellscape they've created. They sing a lovely song in Infernal that Cayen can understand, and translates it for us despite our insistence that we really don't want to know.

Malcolm whispers to Annata, "Let's kill them now!"

Annata responds, "No, later! The mission comes first!"

Malcolm insists, "No, now!!!" His bloodlust is obviously unchecked.

Annata sighs and casts *true seeing* in preparation for the fight.

As we march through the room, Annata fiddles with her prayer bead of karma. Cayen starts a fascinating dance, but the devils make their saves. They are entertained anyway, and start the catcalls. “Dance for us, armored bitch!” Cayen wiggles more vigorously. They leer and approach.

Annata tries to cast *dismissal* on one but the devil’s spell resistance blocks it. Malcolm cracks another one in the face with his flail, stunning it. One of the devils summons two bearded devils as reinforcements. They poke at Malcolm with their glaives but they clang harmlessly against his armor. Cayen inspires courage in the group.

Annata tries *dismissal* again, using a harrow point to force it to reroll its save, and one of the barbed devils poofs off to the nearest convenient parallel dimension. Snu-Snu assaults one of the bearded devils and Cayen casts *haste*. Malcolm brings his flail (which has adapted to be good-aligned now) up into the blinded devil’s crotch, sickening it. He pounds it into paste with another two shots. He follows up with a shot to one of the bearded devils that kills it and blanks a couple hours of its memory, so when it wakes up in Hell it’ll wonder what has been going on.

The last barbed devil decides this is BS and teleports out. Annata leaps up on the table, runs down it, and leaps down with a *divine surge*, and Serath-Teel lops the last bearded devil’s head off.

Fat Bastard

We chop off a hippogriff steak and go to the seneschal’s room. We knock and say “The Queen has sent a special meal for His Corpulent Master, Togomor!” He says “Come in!” Annata casts *mass spell resistance* on the party and we go in.

“Where would you like it, sir? It’s hippogriff.”

“Ooo, bring it here!”

Annata says “Okay!” and starts to cast *silence*. The mage acts fast when he sees spellcasting; he *dimension doors* out!

At Least They’re Hot

Disappointed, we hustle out and pass through a secret door and down to the ground floor. We pass into a guard room inhabited by three beautiful women with feathery wings. “Have you brought us something?” they ask. Cayen holds up the

hippogriff chunk and says “Your friends upstairs sent this, and said there’s more where they came from if you come visit them.” They are nonplussed; one says “They are intruders, sisters.”

The three erinyes try to *charm* Malcolm, Cayen, and Snu-Snu. Only Snu-Snu succumbs. Malcolm charges one and misses terribly. Annata casts *holy smite* and channels energy on all three devils and deals out a bunch of holy damage. Cayen dispels the *charm* off Snu-Snu. Then, three more erinyes teleport in. The original three start shooting flaming bows at all and sundry, all missing.

Malcolm chops one down and Annata channels, disincorporating the other two original ones. Snu-Snu charges the new three and hits one. Cayen starts a dirge of doom. The erinyes are thrown off by his drumming; their arrow attacks miss again.

Malcolm brings his flail into the nearest erinyes’ ear and down she goes. He yells at the other two, “Surrender and make out with each other!” Annata critically wounds another with Serath-Teel. Snu-Snu goes apeshit and opens up with seven attacks (four with the earthbreaker and three with the klar). She fells the wounded erinyes, leaving one. Cayen shoots crossbow bolts at her. She lashes out with her longsword at Snu-Snu but misses. Malcolm flails her and Annata ends her with Serath-Teel.

They have:

- 6 +1 flaming composite longbows, +5 STR
- 6 x 50’ of stout rope

Having A Bad Day

We move on into the “Justice” chamber. It has a rack and an iron maiden (“Excellent!” <air guitar>). And the Abadarian priest, Ashani Datri, is crucified on a bizarre construct that looks like a huge demon. It hovers in the air. We briefly fret over how to approach this. We *detect magic* and try to figure out if there’s a way to get the guy off it. Cayen tries to *break enchantment* to no effect. Annata channels a *divine shield*. We step forward and the construct animates. Ashani begins to scream.

Annata casts *silence* over the construct and advances, adamantite scimitar at the ready. Cayen inspires courage and Snu-Snu and Malcolm charge, missing it. It releases

a blast of soul essence to drain our energy, but we resist it. Annata swings three times, also missing. Constructs are so hard to hit!

Cayen casts *haste*. Snu-Snu fails to scratch it. Finally Malcolm hits the thing; he doesn't hurt it much but his weapon starts to change. The demonic-looking construct opens up on Malcolm with claws, wings, and a body slam. Annata cuts deeply into it with her scimitar. Cayen uses a wand of *slow* on it and it's actually slowed! Snu-Snu and Malcolm chop at it; the barbarian can't get through its DR but Malcolm puts some good damage on it. A ghostly form manifests behind Malcolm that looks like Dhatri. It hits Malcolm but doesn't hurt him much. Annata smites the big demon statue with a *divine surge* and it falls.

Dhatri's long dead. Annata says a quick prayer over him. We bundle him up and put him in the bag of holding. We move into the other prison cells looking for political prisoners. We only find one dead guy, and Cayen IDs him as the castle jailer.

We try to sneak back to the first floor, but there's Grey Maidens all over the place. Annata uses *word of recall* to extract the party back to the catacombs.

Viva la revolucion!

Annata chats up Vencarlo. She's been pining over him for a long time and he's been ignoring her. She's determined to figure out what the problem is (the rest of the party speculates that he's gay, or pining for Sabine, or is just old and dried up). He demurs, but says he has been putting his feelings aside until he feels like the city has hope again. Annata's getting a little sick of that and she starts putting some pressure on him. She thinks, am I not a hot and righteous freedom fighter? What's this guy's damage?

Sabine has liberated her non-loyalist Grey Maidens while we were in the castle. Open rebellion has begun! Riots fill the streets as the rebels try to take back the streets neighborhood by neighborhood. The Queen and her forces in the castle are forced into a defensive position as the rebels gain control; we can walk the streets again without fear of assassination!