

Curse of the Crimson Throne Session Summary – June 28, 2009

Attendance

- *Paul* - the DM
- *Chris* - Malcolm Zirkus, the self-proclaimed “straight fighter” and Korvosan military veteran
- *Ernest* - Annata Vieri, the wise and beautiful priestess of Sarenrae
- *Patrick* - Thorndyke, the urban ranger and Sable Company Marine
- *Ed* - Cayen the Magnificent, bard of renown; also representing his barbarian girlfriend Snu-Snu and his even newer Red Mantis assassin girlfriend Kayltana

No screwing around and pre-game humor this time. We know this session is the campaign finale and either death or glory await us. In the finale of Rise of the Runelords, we got time stopped and meteor swarmed and otherwise unloaded on with everything D&D has to offer, so we’re serious as a fucking heart attack as we gear up.

The Story Thus Far

The Queen of Korvosa, *Ileosa Arabasti*, got hold of some ancient relics – teeth of the blue dragon *Kazavon*, who was the herald of the dark god of pain and darkness Zon-Kuthon - that changed her from a standard gold-digging dumb whore into a magically enhanced killer bitch. She crafted the teeth into a new artifact called the Crown of Fangs, slew the King and (she thought) his seneschal, declared martial law, spread a plague in the city, killed the head of the illustrious Sable Company and dissolved it, and made the Korvosan Guard powerless. Her lesbian lover, *Sabine Merrin*, headed up a new corps of troops – brainwashed women who, their faces scarred with acid, became the heavily armored Grey Maidens. Our brave heroes stopped the plague, made peace with the Shoanti barbarians who threatened war on the city, and recovered the holy sword *Serith-Tial*, which is the only thing we know of that can stop Kazavon and the Queen. Now, we are in Korvosa fighting to overturn her despotic rule.

Hot Barely Legal Action!

When we start, our heroes are just departing via *word of recall* from our latest incursion into Castle Korvosa. It's been successful; we killed a number of big devils (twice in some cases), used a deck of many things, and had unsavory relations with a tongue-tentacled beast from beyond. We return to Resistance Central and tell everyone there about what we discovered – that the Queen has been dealing with devils (we have her infernal contract in hand) and plans to conduct a blood ritual that will kill everyone in the city to gain her eternal life and youth. The assembled leaders – *Field Marshal Cressida Croft* of the Korvosan Guard, (ex-)Seneschal *Neolandus Kalepopolis*, *Vencarlo Orisini* the gentleman and former masked vigilante, and Sabine Merrin, who has finally turned on the Queen as well - agree that this is bad and should be stopped.

Annata asks, “Shouldn’t we get the Queen declared incompetent or something, before we just bust in and kill her?” She’s a lifelong Korvosan and knows that there are laws for everything; you can’t kill a monarch just because they are planning the destruction of their realm in an orgy of devils and blood magic. You need some kind of warrant or writ or something. The resistance leaders agree and call an emergency meeting of the nobles in the Longacre building to do just that. In a complex operation, committees and electors and nobles and the like waste no time in crafting an official binding decision that Ileosa is Queen of Korvosa no more, and should vacate the premises of the Castle immediately.

While this is going on, a maid from one of the noble families in attendance runs up to *Annata*, with tears in her eyes. “It’s you! It’s you!” She reveals to the assembly that *Annata* was stolen from their family as a young girl. In reality, she’s a duchess of House Ornelos! *Annata*’s a bit overwhelmed; she asks after her real parents but there’s not much time for family history. (Careful readers will note that last session, *Annata* got a draw from the *deck of many things* that declared her a noble. This is Paul’s implementation of that!)

Also, *Cayen* interrogates Mistress Kayltana, his new Red Mantis girlfriend (the deck of many things has caused her to be obsessed with the bard), about goings-on at the castle. She says the Queen has been mostly staying in her chambers and seeing VIPs, writing her memoirs, et cetera. Quizzed on force disposition, she says mainly it's the Queen, her bloated seneschal *Togumor*, her pet hellhounds, and the disfigured and brainwashed Grey Maiden heavy infantry remaining.

A Time To Kill

We leave the nobles debating the finer points of who will be the next ruler and go to depose the Queen!

We sail in to the castle from above using *wind walk* and cast a mess of long duration buffs. We head towards the second floor, where lie the throne room and the Queen's chambers. As we exit the large spiral staircase onto the second floor, eight Grey Maidens stand in our way in heavy armor and faceless helms. Annata cries out, "Lay down your arms! The nobles have spoken, and the Queen no longer rules here!" The brainwashed women nevertheless faithfully move forward to the attack.

An enlarged *Malcolm* wades in and lays about among the Maidens. He hits one hard enough that her weapon is knocked from her grasp. They counterattack and cut Annata up a little bit. Thorndyke drops the first one with a rapier puncture.

A haunting melody comes drifting in from the nearby throne room and braces the courage of the Queen's guards. Annata's blades flash around and into some of the Maidens, and then Malcolm issues a mighty cleave against all the opponents surrounding him! He drops one and wounds a bunch. *Thorndyke* and *Kayltana* hack through the left flank of the guards.

Get In My Belly

We see more Grey Maidens mustering in the next room, joined by three armored hellhounds! Suddenly, Togumor the bloatmage teleports into the room. He is immensely corpulent and swollen with the blood that powers his sorcery. “Leave now or you will all die!” he booms. Annata quickly casts *mass spell resistance*, which protects everyone very well from magic (SR 30).

Malcolm beats down a Grey Maiden in his path and advances on the bloatmage. He swings down at him but his flail meets no resistance and passes through the mage; the result of some kind of illusion. Thorndyke comes at him from the side but has the same problem. Cayen casts *greater dispel magic* on the bloatmage. It doesn’t work, but a couple of the party figure out he’s an illusion and not just displaced or otherwise hard to hit.

As we fight our way into the entrance hall to the throne room, we see rows of marble busts of previous rulers and seneschals, defaced by some wiseacre into comical, deformed faces. The Queen begins to sing from back in the throne room about the futility of our quest. A *confusion* and *prismatic spray* unleash simultaneously upon our heroes! The spell resistance protects everyone but Malcolm, who despite making his save takes 5 CON damage from a green ray. Togumor follows that up with a quickened *magic missile* upon Malcolm but it fizzles. Annata casts a *restoration* on Malcolm and removes all that nasty CON damage. Malcolm eyeballs Togumor crazily, Hacksaw Jim Duggan style, and points at him with his flail, crying “YOOOUUUUU!!!!” The illusion looks nervous, inasmuch as illusions can look nervous.

Malcolm strides forward right into the area the bloatmage’s illusion occupies. Plump arms wave in protest as the fighter passes through him and engages the Grey Maidens on the other side. Thorndyke kills the last Grey Maiden in the first room, but Malcolm is filling the entire entryway leading to the next, preventing us from moving up

effectively. Cayen casts a *silence* down towards the throne room door to stop the Queen's bardic song from coming through. The hellhounds breathe fire upon Malcolm, but his fire resistance protects him. He cleaves them all in response.

A green cloud of poison appears, filling the room where the heroes are. We cough and choke from the *cloudkill*. Cayen dispels the cloud, and Annata casts *banishment*, sending two of the hell hounds back to the Pit. *Snu-Snu* pushes into the entry room and the next line of Grey Maidens starts to crumble. One cries, "Not in the face! Not... Oh wait, never mind." Malcolm destroys the rest of the second group of Maidens and faces the last hellhound. Cayen's *silence* is dispelled and a spell is lobbed in from the next room, trying to *slow* the party, but to no avail. Cayen *hastes* us all in response. Annata casts *dispel evil* and approaches the melee, *channeling energy* to heal the group and hurt the hellhound. Snu-Snu and Kaeltanya move in a pincer movement to also assault the wolf.

The Queen "uses her extravagant royal gown," says the DM. We're not sure what that means, but whatever it is, it doesn't work on us. Togumor tries to dispel Annata's mass spell resistance, but he is unable to overcome her magic. Thorndyke cuts down the next wave of Grey Maidens that charge us. Cayen paralyzes the rest of the Maidens.

Regicide

Annata strides into the throne room boldly and halts before the throne, raising up the noble's writ and addressing the Queen. "Queen Ileosa Arabasti! In the name of Seneschal Kalepopolis and the assembled noble houses of Korvosa, you are no longer monarch of Korvosa! Lay down your crown and yield to us and you will be spared!" The Queen replies, "I have no further need of your services. Leave Korvosa. Meee meee meee meee meee." Annata activates her ring of *fire shield*, and her hair bursts into flame in resemblance of the goddess Sarenrae as she glares at the despot. The Queen sings a sweet song at Annata, telling her that she should surrender... Annata pays it no mind. Then, a huge fiendish spider appears in front of her! She pays that some mind, as it

immediately attacks her. Her various shimmering holy protections fend off its bite. The giant Malcolm lumbers into the room, skirting around the spider to the left, attacking something only he can see thanks to his Red Mantis helmet – the invisible Togumor!

Thorndyke heads straight for the spider, and rips it into bits with Serith-Tial. It disappears, but the ichorous goo the sword is coated with doesn't. Thorndyke takes a moment to try to figure out the metaphysical implications of that.

Annata charges and slashes at the Queen with her scimitar, but the Queen displaces away. She tries to cast suggestion on Annata but it's easily resisted. Togumor's spell also fizzles on Malcolm. Annata is very, very pleased with her spell selection for today. Malcolm tears into Togumor, collapsing a lung and spraying gallons and gallons of blood around. He weeps in fear as he is bludgeoned to death. Malcolm roars in victory.

Thorndyke cries, "You can't avoid Serith-Tial's wrath!" as he stabs the Queen. Annata's scimitar flashes as she slashes the Queen across the eyes with a blinding critical. She staggers back and goes rigid. Her skin turns blood red and starts to melt. Then, she turns into a huge puddle of blood. The throne room stands empty except for our heroes. "Uh... Hooray?" ventures Annata.

Cayen says, "A simulacrum!" "Bless you!" says Malcolm. Cayen takes a sample. "So, what, that wasn't really her?" Annata stamps her pretty foot petulantly. Snu-Snu and Kayltana scamper up to the group from whatever reasonably useless activities they had been pursuing.

The False Ileosa had:

- +1 returning dagger
- Headband of charisma +2
- Belt of dexterity +2
- Ring of protection +2

- Royal gown
- Crown (nonmagical duplicate of the Crown of Fangs)

Togumor had:

- Staff of evocation (32)
- Bracers of armor +4
- Handy haversack
- Headband of intellect +4
- Necklace of adaptation
- Ring of protection +2
- Ring of keys (the practical and symbolic implement of the Korvosan Seneschal)

The City Is Ours

We march out the front door and present the seneschal with the keys to the castle. Apparently they had a lot of confidence in us because they're already there staging a ribbon-cutting ceremony to reopen the castle.

The city is freed! The people rejoice. Businesses reopen, trade flows, persons of interest come out of hiding, et cetera. Sabine Merrin, the Queen's ex-lover and ex-captain of her personal guard tries to deprogram the remaining Grey Maiden captives. Malcolm goes to Eel's End to get some lovin' from his favorite prostitute in the *Spider King's* domain, but apparently he got killed by one of his lieutenants and the place is all shut down. "WHY!?!?!?" cries Malcolm in the middle of the street. Then he realizes that as he is one of the liberators of Korvosa he may not have to pay for female companionship any more. "It's like a taking prestige class full of poontang!" he exclaims.

Regicide: It's Addictive

The next morning, the heroes gather to strike the final blow against the Queen. We know from our gathered intel that she is using some old Thassilonian site called the

Sunken Queen, located way out in some swamp hundreds of miles away, to conduct her ritual of eternal youth that will kill everyone in Korvosa that she took blood from. All the partying locals in the street could already be dead and not even know it, unless we intervene.

Vencarlo tells Annata to come back safe. She grabs him and kisses him just as Cayen's *shadow walk* spell kicks in and we all fade into the shadowlands. We travel through the plane of shadow out to the area of the blood pool in the Mush Fens. Thorndyke uses his elite ranger skills to guide us from where we alight to the Sunken Queen. It used to be a symbol of the Runelords' power in ages long ago, but now it stands abandoned among the mangrove trees.

The Sunken Queen is a pyramid tilted and sinking into the swamp, with horns atop it, one of which is broken off. A relief of a naked woman fills one side. Cayen uses *legend lore* to tell us: "In ancient times this served Sorshen, the Runelord of Lust, as a symbol of her power and the site of the Everdawn Pool, which gives you eternal life for selling your soul. A tribe of boggards (a race of frog-men) discovered the pyramid and worshipped a creature that lived in its lower levels, a huge devilfish named Bearwash." We are impressed with the specificity of his report.

Gig 'em

We buff up. Annata casts *find the path* and leads the group through an illusory wall in the side of the pyramid. Cayen uses *invisibility sphere* on the group. We head down a dank corridor where a boggard sentry stands on tasty-looking legs. He hears us clanking forward despite our invisibility and lets out a huge croak; we hear croaks responding from deeper in the pyramid. Malcolm becomes visible as he slices into the sentry with a scythe. The rest of us take him down quickly.

Thorndyke positions himself invisibly to fall upon the approaching reinforcements once they've reached us. Malcolm smacks the first boggard to arrive,

spinning him around. The party and boggards collide in the narrow passageway. Annata cries out, “The dawn brings new light!” and casts *prayer* on the group.

Thorndyke stabs the first attacking frog-man in a vulnerable spot, felling it, and pokes his rapier into the eye of another. It croaks and dies. Malcolm switches to his flail and whirrs the head around in an intimidating manner. “REDRUM!” he cries. This shakes the rest of the boggards. “Watch out, he’s a straight fighter!” adds Cayen, who then does a paralyzing show (of what, we’re not sure) and three of the four remaining frog-men freeze in place at our displays of violent prowess.

Is the Nuisance Encounter Done Yet?

Annata taps her foot impatiently as the party cuts the boggards to bits. Her guiding spell leads her into a room with a soft purple light and a tall shaft leading up. Snu-Snu flies up using the flight power of her celestial armor and drops a rope. Everyone else climbs up into a quite pleasant rosewood-planked floor. There are crystal tubes connecting the floor to the ceiling. A number of tunnels and shafts lead away. Cayen breaks some of the tubes out of a desire for vandalism. We go up another shaft at Annata’s direction.

Blood and Thunder

We emerge into a huge chamber illuminated by braziers and two very high oval windows, like eyes. A mural on the wall forms a map of an unknown land. At the center of the room, a huge amorphous blob of blood thirty feet wide floats and undulates in the air. Thin crystal tubes extend from the walls to just above the blob. It’s like a scene from “Blade IV: The Bloodening.” Cayen immediately says, “Snu-Snu! Go break those tubes!” She flies up above the huge blood blob and starts shattering glassware.

Ileosa’s beautiful but angry face appears across the blood and screams in rage. Three huge forms composed of blood split off from the blob and attack. Turns out they’re wraiths, and one drains seven points of CON from Snu-Snu!

Annata cries out, “For the Sun and the Fury!” and pulls a bead off her strand of prayer beads. A gate to the celestial realms opens and the Sunlord Thanachos flies through! He is a platinum-skinned, four-armed humanoid with silver wings and a halo of eleven doves; the herald of Sarenrae. His holy aura washes over the whole party, protecting them. Annata spreads her arms and the light of Sarenrae courses through the portal, burning two of the blood wraiths. One of them flees the surge of holy energy.

Cayen *inspires confidence* in himself and Kaeltanya and she assaults the fleeing wraith. Malcolm and Thorndyke swing at the blood wraiths; most of the time their weapons pass through harmlessly. But not every time, as Malcolm splashes one into inanimate blood. The Sunlord flies up to attack the last blood wraith that’s busy besetting Snu-Snu, and his flashing scimitar carves into it.

Then Queen Ileosa emerges from the blob of blood and floats to the ground. This happens time after time, until six sadistic Queens stand before us! Cayen yelps and hides behind Kaeltanya. He issues a *dirge of doom*. Kaeltanya moves forward and begins slashing at the Queens, although they all have *displacement* on and that thwarts some of her attacks. She kills one of them, which melts into another pool of blood on the floor. We all realize we should have worn galoshes.

The Queens all start singing, and spell effects fly. The aura the Sunlord put on the group snuffs out most of these, but a barrage of *slows* cause dozens of dice to be rolled; in the end, Cayen is slowed.

The Sunlord begins to glow like the sun and a burst of sunlight floods the apex of the chamber, burning the blood wraith completely away. Snu-Snu is slightly singed. Annata slices through one of the Queen simulacra, splooshing it, and crits another, causing it to leak blood badly.

Then, another Queen comes out of the blood blob! And now, she's wearing a new black dress and is hotter than ever. Malcolm and Thorndyke are impressed and consider asking her if there is a place for them in her organization. She is flying, and begins to sing. She dispels the Sunlord's holy aura, but his own innate protective aura still protects him from her charms.

Cayen yells up, "Snu-Snu! Stay next to her!" and casts silence on Snu-Snu. Quiet reigns and Snu-Snu attacks the Queen. "What's her Charisma?" asks Malcolm, who is interested in how hot the fight scene is becoming. The Sunlord drizzles honey over the two combatants.

Kaeltanya pulls out something new from her bag of tricks – she casts *fly* on Thorndyke, the wielder of the holy sword Serith-Tial. The three remaining Queen simulacra try to *slow* us all again in vain. Malcolm splatters one of them.

Annata tries to blind the Queen with her magic and the Sunlord tries to catch her in a *blade barrier*, but neither succeeds. The Queen tries to *inspire greatness*, but the *silence* on Snu-Snu prevents her. She flies out of the *silence* and casts a spell; a cloud of fog appears around the Sunlord, Thorndyke, and Snu-Snu and it fogs their minds. The power of the Harrow aligns the forces of destiny to render Thorndyke immune!

Snu-Snu flies at the Queen and despite taking a shot from her weapon, an innocuous-looking fan (which does a surprising amount of cold damage), and grapples her, but a moment later she slips easily from her grip. Thorndyke flies over and sticks Serith-Tial right into her! She screeches in pain. "It's not fair! I was supposed to be immortal!"

Annata charges one of the simulacra and takes it out. Cayen casts *greater dispel magic* on the Queen again – and gets rid of her *stoneskin* and *freedom of movement*. Snu-Snu grapples the Queen again, and keeps hold of her this time! Thorndyke jams Serith-Tial into the Queen, critting twice, dazing her, and then belting her with his mace and

rending! The Queen reels, badly wounded. The Sunlord knocks the fan out of her hand – but it animates and attacks Thorndyke anyway! The destiny of the Harrow (courtesy of Annata and Cayen) negate two crits on the ranger.

Cayen casts *haste*, which cancels his slowness and speeds up Annata and Kaeltanya; Kaeltanya casts *fly* on Annata (she cast it on herself last round). Snu-Snu tries to rip the crown off the Queen’s head to no avail. The last Queen simulacrum is reduced to dagger attacks on Kaeltanya, which is a losing proposition. Thorndyke stabs the real Ileosa again with Serith-Tial in rapier form and bops her in the head with his off-hand mace. “Not so pretty now, are you?” he mouths. She screams silently in rage.

Annata flies up and, thinking three-dimensionally, cuts the Queen clean in half from underneath! But then she joins back together as a *contingencied cure critical wounds* kicks in. Her fan beats on Thorndyke, nauseating him. Then she zaps him with *magic missiles*, but his SR saves him.

Cayen moves under the group, as the last non-flying member of the melee, and gyrates his hips wildly to *inspire courage* in us. Kaeltanya murders the last Queen simulacrum viciously. Snu-Snu manages to improve her purchase on the Queen into a full pin! Malcolm capitalizes on this by knocking her unconscious with his flail.

Annata flies back and unleashes a *heal* on Thorndyke, bringing him back to full ability; he had begun to wilt substantially from all the fan beating. The Sunlord whacks the unconscious Queen with his scimitars as she regenerates. Thorndyke coup de graces the Queen with the holy sword Serith-Tial. He drives it deep into her body and she expires. The Crown of Fangs tumbles from her head to the floor.

She Was A Load-Bearing Boss!

The building magic in the pool grows unstable. The backlash of magic reacts with Kazavon’s soul and it begins to rebuild the ancient blue dragon’s body from the

mass of blood! The room shakes and shudders as an immense draconic shape of blood and darkness rises from the puddle.

Annata casts *dispel evil* and unexpectedly, the dragon stops forming, and lashes around feebly, the mighty magic of Sarenrae keeping it in check. Thorndyke snatches the crown off the dead Queen's head and shatters it with Serith-Tial. "Where's your crown, King Nothing?!?" we cry. We contemplate the deformed, flopping dragon thing, and Thorndyke shrugs and flies down to strike it with Serith-Tial. It explodes! Kaeltanya is blinded by the blast, but everyone else is okay.

Things grow silent in the Sunken Queen. The Sunlord Thalachos bows to Annata, and congratulates her and the rest of our heroes on their salvation of Korvasa. "No, thank you, brave Sunlord, for aiding us in our time of need!" she replies humbly.

Ex-Queen Ileosa Arabasti had:

- +4 dancing icy burst adamantine rapier disguised as a fan
- A handful of dragon fangs from Kazavon, dead dragon herald of the evil god Zon-Kuthon, the remnants of her Crown of Fangs
- Amulet of natural armor +5
- Bracers of armor +8
- Cloak of flight
- Belt of Dexterity +6
- Ring of major spell storing
- Ring of splendid security (alter the appearance of her gear at will, +5 deflect, +5 resist, SR 22)

Annata uses a *word of recall* to take the victorious heroes back to Korvasa. Neolandus and the rebels have it all in hand and Cressida has the Korvosan Guard back in order. Cheering crowds greet us as we return. Korvasa is already beginning to heal from its ordeal under the psychotic Queen.

Dénouement

The fangs are divided up among the group. Annata suggests that we all hide one away and don't tell anyone, not even each other, where the fangs lie. Always finish things out so they'll make a good lead-in to an adventure a generation down the line!

The government gets a little unstable as the various political factions vie to determine a new monarch. We discuss amongst ourselves, and decide to propose Annata for the position, given her love for the people of Korvosa and newly discovered noble lineage. In our plan, Thorndyke would head up the newly reformed Sable Company; Malcolm and his new keep and lands would be a new branch of the Korvosan Guard keeping peace in the area (to reduce Korvosan dependence on the Hellknights), and Cayen will try to talk the nobles into making him the new seneschal! Long story short, the electors buy into that vision. Queen Annata Ornelos, Field Marshal Malcolm Zirkus, Commandant Thorndyke, and Seneschal Cayen usher in a new age of peace and prosperity to the city of Korvosa. As long as Sarenrae's light shines upon the land, their deeds of bravery and sacrifice for the kingdom will be remembered.

And in more personal news, Vencarlo Orisini finally passed on the mantle of the vigilante hero Blackjack to Thorndyke for good, and married Queen Annata!

A storybook ending. But is the Curse of the Crimson Throne broken? Or will the same misfortune that has haunted all the previous monarchs of Korvosa befall Annata as well? The rakshasa Lord Arkona probably would prefer that, as well as other evil powers in the city and beyond. All she can do is try her best, and comfort herself in the knowledge that few of Korvosa's kings have had such true and mighty boon companions helping them rule as Malcolm, Thorndyke, and Cayen.