

Carrion Crown Session Summary 09/01/2013

Attendance

Ernest and *Chris* are busy reconstructing themselves from an attempt to match Simon Pegg and Nick Frost beer for beer in *World's End*. Even with that, they speak quite highly of the film... or at least their disorganized memories of it. *Paul* clarifies to *Matt* that everyone really is fifth level these days, causing Ernest to note that he's forgotten to pick out any third level spells – had he done that, last time's fight against the erinyes might have gone so much better. *Bruce* notes that it could have gone so much worse – after all, nobody ended up falling to an untimely death. *Patrick* just listens as *Chris* describes the various rope-bridge-related adventure disasters that have speckled the long history of D&D and Pathfinder.

Then Paul goes over the line by talking about people dressed in sexy Scooby Doo outfits. Which is just wrong... so very, very wrong...

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Level</i>
Oswald Bainbridge	Bruce	Grizzled Crossbowman	Fighter	5
Vladimir Vampijérovic	Matt	Pale-skinned Stranger	Hungry Ghost Monk	5
Nigel Snodgrass	Patrick	Emo-Gothic figure	Dirge Bard	5
Doctor Jegen Vaus	Tim	Elvish Eurotrash in leather pants	Alchemist	5
Sredni Vashtar's Girl	Ernest	Troubled Vudran Girl	Witch	5
Icobus Basilisk	Chris	Pale, poor nobleman, now become orcish!	Oracle	5

A Restful Evening

The characters spend some time recovering in the taxidermy room. With not too much else to do, *Icobus Basilisk* carefully examines the taxidermied bulette for the possibility that its skin might be converted into armor.

It Burns! It Burns! Oh, How it Burns!

The next morning the characters head up the stairwell into the tower. They come into a room of specimens: three harpies, stored in bell jars; four bats, preserved in fluid, and all manner of other oddities. There is a trap door on the ceiling, with a ladder leading up to it. Icobus heads up carefully, but not carefully enough: he triggers a trap that releases an *acid fog* that engulfs the entire room. Everyone complains. Visibility is also deeply reduced (“My eyes are burning!”).

The characters waste no time in getting out of the fog. Half of them flee downstairs, the other half run to a door leading to another room in the tower. Icobus leads the way blindly charging into the next room; he finds that it is full of boxes, curios and stuffed birds. *Sredni Vashtar’s Girl* follows him in, allowing him to heal her. Icobus does so, and then closes the door to the storeroom to keep out the fog. The others similarly close the trap door at the top of the stairs and wait for the fog to dissipate.

Icobus investigates the crates. He finds a big one that’s making noises. *Sredni Vashtar’s Girl* tells him, “Oh! Absolutely open that one!” Icobus decides to listen first. Whatever is inside, it likes to bump and rustle. He’s never had a bad experience with a crate before, and likes the sound of “bump and rustle,” so he finds a crowbar and sets to open it up.

Icobus opens the crate. The crate screams in horrifying, bone-chilling style! Will saves all around! *Sredni Vashtar’s Girl* is *shaken* but not stirred! The whole crate is full of medusa heads. Icobus decides to close the crate up, in spite of the fact that there are snaky hair locks trying to bite him.

Once the acid fog disperses the others join Icobus and the Girl. They take a vote on whether or not to continue messing with the medusa heads. The vote is one-sided: stop messing with them. The characters do inspect some of the other items in the storeroom: “Hey look! It’s a taxidermied cobra fighting a taxidermied mongoose!”

Does the Trap Reset?

Vladimir very carefully heads back to the trap door to find out if the acid fog trap resets. He is happy to discover that it doesn’t. The others emerge from the storeroom to continue exploring. *Sredni Vashtar’s Girl* uses *Detect Magic* to see the remains of the

trap. It seems similar to the erinyes summoning trap and therefore there must be a powerful conjurer about.

What Was Being Protected?

The area beyond the trap door turns out to just be the belfry, with nothing of real interest there at all. Nobody is able to come up with a really good explanation of why having an acid fog trap on the belfry door was a good idea. The placement of these all traps doesn't make sense from a home defense perspective; we puzzle over what perspective it might make sense from for some time.

Downstairs to the Basement

The way downstairs takes the characters down an exposed iron staircase to a small exposed balcony and a wooden door. The view is intimidating, as the whole structure hangs out over the river gorge. The characters make it through the door to find another storeroom containing three crates and a large opaque jar. *Nigel* volunteers to open the jar, at least until he notices that both *Oswald Bainbridge* and *Sredni Vashtar's Girl* are pointing crossbows at him. He negotiates with them on the subject of who will be shot when the jar is opened, eventually coming to a point where he is willing to continue.

Nigel opens the jar and finds that it is completely full of *yellow mold*! It puffs out, enveloping the room! *Nigel*, *Sredni Vashtar's Girl*, and *Oswald* are all stricken by the poisonous spores and everyone flees yet another room. *Oswald* in particular ends up wheezing badly until *Icobus* casts *Lesser Restoration* on him to reverse most of the damage. They decide to not look into anything anymore. "Nobody touch nothing!" commands *Icobus*.

Up the Cliff Face

The characters next contemplate heading up the cliff face to the tower. The climb is quite difficult, and requires that the characters remove armor and most of their gear to complete it. They pull their gear up in bags afterwards.

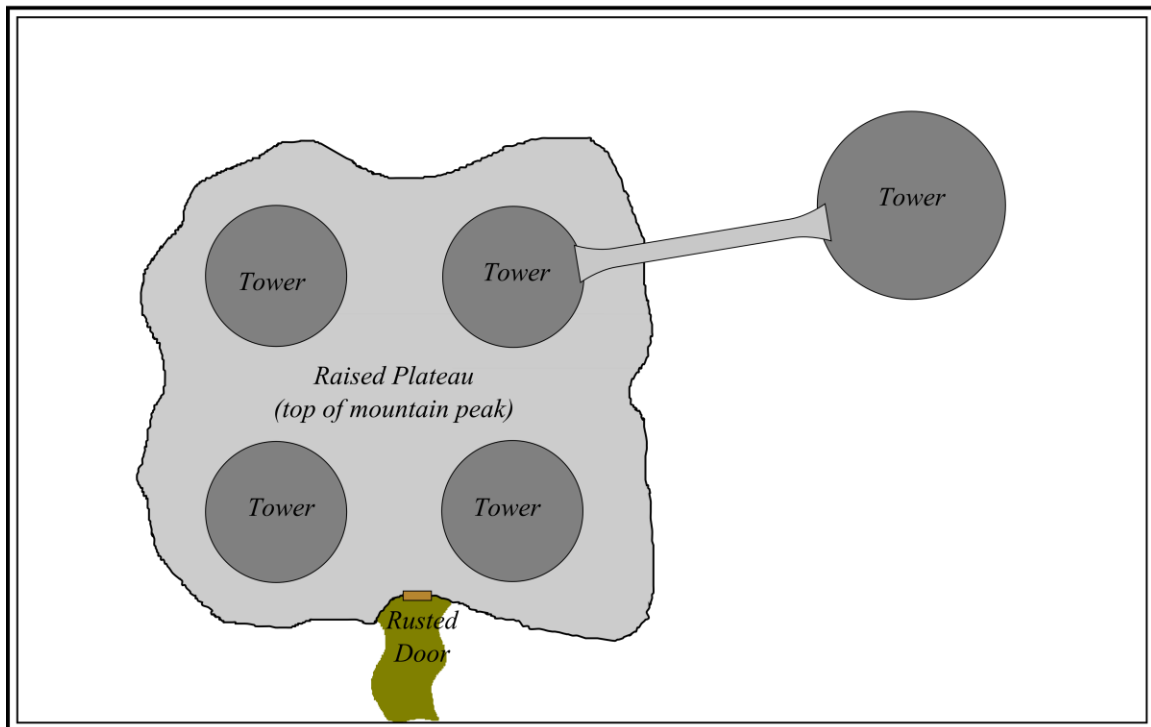
The high tower is some 200 feet above the ground, and is actually a complex of four towers. The path ends in a door against a stone wall. From there, the characters can

see that there is a bridge from one tower over to another, even higher tower. The peak of that tower is capped with a very strange apparatus that Vladimir immediately identifies as “The Frankenstein Machine”.

The door is rusted shut, set slightly below ground level at the base of a short staircase. This concerns Sredni Vashtar’s Girl, as this door cannot be the way that people are entering the towers.

Vladimir doesn’t concern himself with these issues. He uses acid to burn away the rust. As he starts to succeed, water starts to flow out from the cracks in the door. He retreats back up the stairs. Everyone else agrees that this does explain why the door is rusted, though it still doesn’t make sense.

High Towers of Schloss Caromarc



Vladimir climbs up to stare into one of the barred tower windows. He sees that the tower has an empty interior full of several feet of water. Headless ape-creatures are in cages inside the water. There is evidence of a collapsed catwalk that once passed above the reservoir.

The characters force their way through the door and into the corridors around the towers. They find that the stairs are collapsed, so they move through one of the towers. Icobus goes first, so he is the first to discover that the floor is unstable. He finds himself

suddenly in twenty-foot deep water. He congratulates himself upon his soft landing when the leeches attack! He finds himself covered in poisonous leeches!

Icobus moves with surprising speed, putting as much distance between him and the leeches as he can manage in spite of the fact that he is nauseated. The leeches move on to Nigel, Oswald, and Sredni Vashtar's Girl. Everyone agrees that the leech swarm is the worst monster ever, as it inflicts Strength and Constitution damage, plus poison for Dexterity drain, plus hit points, plus distraction. Sredni Vashtar's Girl makes it out of the water, but Oswald and Nigel remain both nauseated and distracted. The others can see the surface of Oswald's heavy armor writhe as the leeches crawl underneath it. Nigel slips through the door. Oswald only barely makes it, dragged out by Vladimir. The characters throw alchemist's fire at those leeches that make it out of the water.

Vladimir agrees to scout the area, making sure to quietly pick up several leeches full of Oswald's blood before he goes. When he gets to the top of the cliff he surreptitiously squeezes himself a leech or two, buffing himself using his new Blooddrinker feat. He quickly determines that it is possible to cross over the plateau around the towers and thus get to the bridge tower.

We Are All Near Death

The characters, recognizing that they have all suffered amazing amounts of ability damage, retreat back to the taxidermy room, and spend a full day recovering and casting *Lesser Restoration* on each other. There is lengthy discussion about the utter retardedness of the design of this castle. There's also some argument when Girl burns up one of her arcane scrolls and mixes the ashes with meat for Sredni Vashtar to eat. "Sredni Vashtar requires sacrifice!" is her only response to her concerned party members.

The Mysterious Lightning Tower

Suitably recovered, the characters very carefully pick their way back up the pinnacle and across to the lone, mysterious tower with the lightning rods at the peak. They find that there is an *Arcane Lock* upon the door. They bypass that and find themselves looking into yet another alchemical laboratory, this one ruined by the awful composite monstrosity standing in the center of the room. It grimaces with misshapen

features and stretches muscles originally taken from all manner of beasts. A large, shattered cage nearby was clearly insufficient to keep it restrained.



Vladimir moves up on the tower monster quickly. It casually clocks him on the cranium, demonstrating that it has excellent reach and a killer instinct. Vladimir strikes it in return, inflicting less damage than he might have hoped. Icobus moves in to assist with his halberd, as there is no problem that cannot be solved with a halberd, but he is too late: it grabs hold of Vladimir with four hands and rends him into

pieces. He falls in a pool of his own (and, to be fair, other people's that he's been drinking) blood.

Nigel casts *Grease* underneath the creature, causing it to fall down. Icobus starts making weird shrilling and gurgling noises and casts *Obscuring Mist* around the guardian, and then pulls Vladimir's body away. Oswald moves forward to try and cover Icobus' retreat. The creature moves forward, grabs hold of him, and rends him four times. Oswald falls, stricken but not quite dead. Everyone else retreats in somewhat good order out onto the narrow bridge.

The guardian moves out onto the bridge to follow the others. Nigel casts *Grease* underneath it again. The combination of a slender bridge, a large creature and a very tiny brain works very nicely. The guardian slips, tries to grab hold, slips again, and falls from the bridge, vanishing into the river far below. Sredni Vashtar's Girl and Icobus move carefully into the room and heal Oswald enough to bring him around. The characters very carefully wrap up Vladimir's body for transport. Among his effects, they find four diamonds each worth 300 gold and four vials of antitoxin, plus a holy symbol of

Norgorber and a variety of letters written in Infernal. Nigel asks, “Why do the letters on the page look like tortured puppies?” Sredni Vashtar’s Girl is unwilling to answer him.

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl notes that the fact that Vladimir is writing letters in Infernal doesn’t necessarily prompt a lot of confidence in him. However, only Nigel actually knows how to read Infernal (except presumably Vladimir) and he is reluctant to read though his private correspondence while there’s a chance he could be brought back, so there’s no telling what the contents might be.

Icobus places his *Stone of Alarm* on the door just in case the tower guardian is still alive and climbing its way back up the cliff. The characters look around the various books and objects in the room. They find a variety of notes pinned to the back of the door, including some diagrams. Someone has made notations on them in red ink, but the whole collection is so torn and aged that it is difficult to interpret the meaning. Nigel starts using *Mending* upon them to see if he can reconstruct enough to be able to read.

After a few castings, it comes clear that the diagrams are for a device to control golems. Who could have thought that there could ever be such a device? On further study, it looks like a device intended to control the *Beast of Lepidstadt*. It is called... the Bond Slave Thrall! Nigel the bard thinks to himself, “That’s a good name for a band...”

There is a shiny black metal trapdoor in the ceiling of the chamber. The characters investigate and determine that it is actually made of adamantine! The door alone is worth at least 3000 gold. The characters spend some time figuring out how to remove the door from the hinges, eventually deciding to leave the disassembly job until later. Nigel pushes through the door. The chamber above is web-choked, with another trap door visible on the ceiling above. Nigel and Sredni Vashtar’s Girl both agree that the webs are not magical. There is a spell in the room, but not on the webs. Icobus flings alchemist’s fire and burns away a few of the webs.

Mysterious Floating Chalks!

While Nigel and Icobus use torches to burn away the remaining webs, Oswald and Girl maintain overwatch for angry giant spiders. Icobus spots some chalk marks on one of the walls. Girl examines them. She brings out her witch’s case. One piece of chalk rises up from the case and retraces a diagram of two devices in the tower, with an

arrow pointing to the larger of the two and a note saying, “The Storm Caller must be activated to energize the Bond Slave Thrall”. It is clear that the lightning spire must be zapped to allow the Beast-controlling device to work.

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl interrogates the chalk, determining that it is being manipulated by an entity named *Waxwood* who may be the invisible servant responsible for keeping the place clean and the fires lit. *Waxwood* further indicates that the Baron is imprisoned in a doll by the *Promethean*, and that the best way to fight the *Promethean* is to summon the Beast with the Bond Slave Thrall. Also, there are not many ways to get up into the tower other than by flying.

Reaching the Storm Caller

The characters are able to persuade *Waxwood* to take a knotted rope up to the tower and fasten it securely. *Icobus* is able to clamber up, with the plan of turning on the Storm Caller before the *Promethean* can notice. Girl sacrifices a measure of her blood to her weasel *Sredni Vashtar* to pray for *Icobus*’ safety. He looks at all the equipment and quickly determines that he has no idea how any of it is supposed to work – it really calls for someone with Knowledge (arcana) or Use Magic Device. He calls down to *Sredni Vashtar*’s Girl to get her to climb up as well. The others follow after her, very carefully.

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl is able to interpret the Storm Caller and get it running. It starts making a deep thrumming sound. Soon enough, storm clouds gather and lightning bolts tear through the sky. Only a few of them touch near the characters, and of those only *Oswald* gets struck. Sadly, he gets struck twice. The characters note that the lightning bolts don’t seem to strike near the Storm Caller, so they take cover near it except for *Sredni Vashtar*’s Girl, who manages to activate the Bond Slave Thrall. She becomes aware of the location of the Beast of *Lepidstadt* and can call it to her. It is quite close – in the castle proper.

She determines that multiple people can join into a gestalt using the Bond Slave Thrall, allowing all of the participants to use their own skills to help the Beast. Arcane casters can give it a deflection bonus, divine casters can give it fast healing, warriors can loan it a feat, and... The bard can control it. The characters also instruct it to pick up the adamantine trap door to use as a shield (using *Oswald*’s Shield Proficiency feat). Beyond

that, the Beast has the choice of fighting with slams or with an ogre hook. The Beast seems to have equipped himself quite well in the interim – breastplate, ogre hook, double crossbow, some magic – he’s loaded for bear.

Liberation of the Baron

Through the Beast’s eyes, the characters are able to see a chamber within the tower. Inside, a human woman is suspended within a fluid-filled tank. Next to her is an iron maiden, two terrified human eyes gazing out from the metal mask. The characters understand that these two unfortunates are the Baron and his wife. They are watched over by the horrific Promethean, an aberrant golem stitched together from various aberrations: ettercap, chuul, cloaker, and choker. Its paralyzing tentacles lash back and forth, eager to squeeze the (paralyzed) life out of any who approach. “I could see combining a cloaker and a choker, but he’s just going overboard!” comments Sredni Vashtar’s Girl.

The Beast fires its crossbow and then closes with the Promethean. The Promethean wraps a tentacle around the Beast’s neck, but constructs are immune to paralysis and do not need to breathe, so the effect is less than the Promethean might have hoped. The Beast slams the Promethean with ogre hook and adamantine door. The characters note with satisfaction that the adamantine door has good effect against the Promethean, bypassing its damage resistance. The Beast progressively pounds the Promethean into paste, abandoning the ogre hook and relying completely upon the adamantine trap-door after a while. They exchange mighty blows, but the protection and healing from the Bond Slave Thrall protect the Beast enough that its tireless blows with the big chunk of adamantine fell, and then partially liquefy, the Promethean.

The characters let the Beast free of the machine’s control but stay connected to watch. It immediately moves over to the iron maiden and opens it, revealing the filthy, malnourished and exhausted form of Count Caromarc. The Count barely manages to utter, “My son!” and then collapses. After making sure everyone has disconnected from the Bond Slave Thrall, Sredni Vashtar’s Girl takes her mithril dagger to it, breaking the device and tossing detaches parts off the tower. “No good can come of controlling him,

he deserves his freedom!” she tells the others. The others mull over plausible sounding excuses should the Count discover and become irate at the destruction of his gizmo.

By the time the characters arrive on the scene the Beast has Count Caromarc cradled in his arms, rocking him like a small child. It cries out, “Help him! Help him!” They heal him and try to get some nourishment into him. He’s stable, so the characters move the unconscious count down to the trophy room, assembling rope bridges with Waxwood’s help to improve their ability to move from one section of the castle to another.

The Recovery of the Count

After a couple of days of rest, Count Caromarc is recovered enough to answer questions. *Orrin Vrude*, a necromancer of the Whispering Way, and his agents became aware of the Count’s experiments to create life. The Count agreed to meet with them at midnight at the Spiral Cromlech – but in his place he sent the Beast to teach these whippersnappers a lesson. The Whispering Way expected this, used the opportunity to launch a treacherous attack upon Schloss Caromarc. They subdued him and his various lesser creations, and took control of the Bond Slave Thrall to force the Beast to do their bidding. They used him to steal an artifact from the Lepidstadt Museum. From what the Count knows, after they got their artifact they fled into the Shudderwood.

The characters prevail upon the Count to help preserve the corpse of their friend Vladimir. And possibly to bring him back to life as well. (“A vampire Frankenstein would be AWESOME!” opines everyone but Vladimir’s player.) They also ask him what he can do to assist should they pursue the Whispering Way cultists into the Shudderwood. He indicates that he can provide some resources, amounting to some 3000 gold. Beyond that, Waxwood overheard the cultists saying that they were going to head to the *Ascanor Lodge*. Count Caromarc thinks that the best way to get there would be the Silent Way, an old hunting path. He also notes (as several characters know) that the forest is well-known for the werewolf tribes that live there.

And the Count’s Wife?

The Count explains that his wife died in childbirth. Clerical magic has been of no use to bring her back (Nigel thinks: “She just doesn’t want to come back...”). The child

died, and Otto the Beast has become his surrogate son. The group makes some vague noises of sympathy, tempered by the fact that he's crazy as a bedbug and his house is a deathtrap.

Preparations for Shudderwood

The characters will spend some time at Schloss Caromarc, repairing their equipment and healing. Oswald makes some alchemical silver crossbow bolts with the Count (effective 50% discount). Once the characters have their equipment in shape, they will take a trip back to Lepidstadt for specialized healing and a bit of additional shopping.

The End of the Session

Everyone goes to 6th level. HP roll for Oswald is 9. Woohoo!