

Carrion Crown Session Summary 09/29/2013

Attendance

Ernest is dazed from a week of movies at Fantastic Fest. *Chris* is pleased that he doesn't have to set up computers to arrange for Skyping this time since *Bruce* is in Massachusetts, where Skype, along with firearms and personal freedom, are illegal. It's just like the UAE, but whiter and not as affluent. *Paul* waits for *Matt* and *Patrick* to arrive to treat everyone to the "What Does The Fox Say" video. Ernest had already seen it a hundred times, as he has an eleven-year-old kid. It is a novel delight to everyone else. *Tim* arrives later, just in time for the spider fight.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Level</i>
Oswald Bainbridge	Bruce	Grizzled Crossbowman	Fighter	6
Xurac Darkfire	Matt	Hooded Half-orc	Necromancer	6
Nigel Snodgrass	Patrick	Emo-Goth Musician	Dirge Bard	6
Doctor Jegen Vaus	Tim	Elvish Eurotrash	Alchemist	6
Sredni Vashtar's Girl	Ernest	Troubled Vudran Girl	Witch	6
Icobus Basilisk	Chris	Poor pale nobleman, reincarnated as an orc	Oracle	6

Cast of Characters

The party is at Ascanor Lodge, which has the following freaks and geeks in residence:

Guests

- Duristan Areisir of Ardeal, resident noble who wants to hunt werewolves
- Cilas Graydon, Margrave of Sturnidae, former general
- Corvin Tegsvor, lazy rich kid and druggie
- Markiza Welgory, rich strumpet
- Ostavach, huntsman boy toy

Staff

- Belik of Courtaud, halfling porter
- Estovion Lozaroz, master of the house
- Ladimeur, chef
- Quiene Steymor, stablemistress
- Delgros Kroitzer, huntsmaster
- Madame Ivanja, witch-prostitute

The Great Northern

Last time, the party escorted Duristan out into the forest and had an irritated werewolf eat some retainers and yell plot points at them. Now, with run of the lodge, they seek infotainment.

The grand hall is adorned with many hunting trophies – fur rugs, heads, and stuffed animals abound. Banners with the sigils of noble houses, hunting groups, and secret societies hang from the rafters. Four sanded tree trunks serve as pillars. Nigel wanders into a trophy room with stuffed, posed creatures including a chimera, chuul, manticore, mantis, and a two-headed troll. A young man lounges here with his boots up and a quill pen and paper at hand (as well as a bottle of absinthe). Nigel approaches and asks what he's writing. He lays down a big ol' emo rap on Nigel about how being young, rich, and pretty is such a trial. Nigel just takes his insults and doesn't try to out-emo him. Even when he starts saying things like "I miss the fancy balls..."

Xurak, Icobus, and Sredni Vashtar's Girl head to the reference library. It's full of books on everything from botany to demonology. Up some spiral stairs is a trapdoor leading to the library office.

The local werewolf tribes are:

- Broken Ones – matriarchal, led by druid Cybrisa Dorzhanev
- Demon Wolves – worship Jezelda, demon mistress of the hungry moon, let by antipaladin named Adimares Ionacu
- Silverhides – led by Mathus Mordinacht
- Prices Wolves – led by Rhakis Szadro
- Primals – led by Kvalka Sain, overlord of all werewolves

They meet at the Stairs of the Moon, an ancient ruin in the Shudderwood.

Girl does some research on Jezelda, which can be summed up by “she’s into werewolves and werewolf related activities.” They find some collections of old travelers’ journals that includes a trip to the Stairs of the Moon and refers to a book called “Halo of Dreams,” kept up in the library office. Her colleagues debate how to get through the locked door for a minute until she knocks and is rewarded with Estovion Lozaroz opening the door.

“Good afternoon! We were looking for a copy of Halo of Dreams, and heard you might have one.”

“What? No, don’t have one. Sorry!” he says way too quickly.

“We found a reference to it... Can we look around?”

“Sure, but not now, I’m busy... How about tomorrow?”

“Uh, sounds good...”

<Slam>

The group eyes each other and goes over potential intrusion plans, but decides to wait on that.

As we leave the library, Duristan is waiting for us. He says, “You wanted to meet Madame Ivanja and get one of these scar wards against lycanthropy right? Come with me!”

“Okay, let’s get Nigel first!”

Nigel is talking to the Markiza and her huntsman. They are canoodling and talking about fox hunting. Since only Duristan and Estovion had been asked about those Whispering Way guys coming through, he asks them about anyone weird and robed coming through, but they say “no.”



The group hooks up and goes to Madame Ivanja’s. She is a stone cold fox and all the male PCs immediately sit up and take notice. She has four serious looking guards.

The PCs don’t think too much of her claims of “Varisian anti-lycanthropy scars” but inquire if she might be able to get us access to Estovion’s office.

She also does a Harrow reading for the group.



Sredni Vashtar's Girl gets the Owl. "In the shadow of a ruined tower you will fight the dead." Icobus got the Queen Mother; "A friend will turn against you." Nigel got the Midwife; "Those who fight against you may be controlled by another force you cannot fight." Xurak got the Mute Hag; "The one you seek is close, you will have your chance to catch him." The full Harrow reading tells us we're all crucial for something that's a danger to all of Ustalav.

When asked about weirdos coming through the lodge, she's evasive until the group ponies up 100 gold. "Two weeks ago, four odd men visited and engaged the services of one of the courtesans." Apparently they didn't even stay in the Lodge but just came and went. There's some haggling over getting in to see the courtesan; Girl talks Ivanja down to 100gp and Nigel's "services." Sredni Vashtar's Girl agrees to the deal before anyone can think it through.

We go see Niyama, A Vudran woman, who is reclining and smoking from a pipe. She sits up and blurts out, "Shalmali," Sredni Vashtar's Girl's childhood name! Girl recognizes her after a minute as a fellow orphan from the baladata in Jalmeray. Niyama (also not her real name) tells her about being kidnapped by pirates and then eventually ending up here. Girl inquires in Vudran whether she is being held here against her will – turns out not per se, but she is addicted to the drugs and doesn't have anywhere else to go. We ask her about the weirdos.

"Three nobles from Courtad hired me that evening, and one had an evil, implike pet. They only requested that I dance for them. Eventually a silver-haired woodsman arrived and they had me leave, but when I returned an hour later they had gone. They claimed to be from Courtad but... I come out here sometimes but usually I work at the Violet Widow in Courtad and their accents marked them as southerners, possibly from Kaliphas. One had a strange amulet depicting a gagged skull. I did hear them mention the "Stairs of the Moon" and the "Pack Lord's Heart."'" The others leave but Sredni

Vashtar's Girl stays behind to speak with her countrywoman. Nigel stays behind to please the Madam.

Spy-dorr

Icobus and Xurak head back to the lodge, but hear screaming! They rush inside and a giant tarantula is on a rampage inside the lodge. And by giant we mean Gargantuan! "Holy shit, no way I'm fighting that!" cries Icobus. It's got the guests cornered in the sitting room and is shooting barbed hairs from its back at them from the trophy room. Xurak tries a *blindness* spell to little effect. Icobus uses his staff to lay out an *insect plague* and puts three swarms of wasps on it. It gets agitated and runs out of the wasp swarms and fires bristles at them in vain. Xurak *magic missiles* it hard. Icobus summons a *spiritual weapon* and unloads on the spider.

The spider shoots barbed hairs at Xurak; it hits him but he manages to fight through the nausea to cast *mirror image*. Icobus lays down a *fog cloud*. The spider has tremorsense so it unerringly tracks down Xurak and bites him despite his images.

Then Ironface, Dr. Vaus' violent avatar, comes running on through the front door and charges the spider, taking a horrible bite for his effort and getting poisoned. He does smite it with his mace in return. The spider misses Icobus as the oracle *enlarges* Ironface to double size. Ironface head-butts the spider. Icobus gets bitten and poisoned. Xurak uses his harrow card to open up a channel to the negative energy plane and sucks life from the spider!

Meanwhile, Nigel is being ridden hard and put up wet by Madame Ivanja. "Is that korma I smell from somewhere?" he thinks between grunts.

Icobus decides to do the same thing – he pops his harrow card and unleashes negative energy on the spider, draining it the rest of the way!

Then, the party wallows around suffering from poison. Dr. Vaus uses his Lesser Restoration wand on everyone to get them back mobile. They summon Nigel and Sredni Vashtar's Girl to come help.

They find a blood trail leading back from the lodge to the beast pens inside the compound. There's an unlocked door to an underground set of beast cells. There's also a dire bear, dire boar, dire wolverine, and dire wolf plus an ettercap and some wolves. And

a giant tarantula cell. This makes Icobus spitting mad. Estovion comes out and dresses down Delgros, who claims his key is missing. Estovion concludes that it must be the idiot groundskeeper's fault. No one believes this. There's a search and the groundskeeper is produced, and he has the key on him. He's largely incoherent. Xurak and Vaus sneak off to break into Estovion's office.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl is trying to get more information from the groundskeeper but Estovion wants to just take him and lock him up. Icobus demands blood instead! And Nigel proposes we hunt him! Girl looks quizzically at her comrades trying to figure out what the play is here.

Meanwhile Vaus and Xurak break into the office and search for Halo of Dreams and find it! It talks about the "duskmoth" and Desna's priests disassembling and hiding it in a temple called the Stairs of the Moon, high atop the observatory during the twilight hour it can be used in a ritual to commune with the song of the spheres. They also find his notes and journals. There is some discussion about stealing his office chair, but it's judged to be impractical. They stash the books behind some normal books in the library.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl determines the groundskeeper's been drugged somehow. Icobus talks more about wanting to question him and Estovion has his guards execute the simpleton on the spot. Everyone goes back in and settles down.

The Margrave talks to Nigel about his missing friend, Draven, who was found dead with the ettercap in the ruined tower the group came across on the way here. He is concerned about his friend getting a good burial. Nigel asks him about the weird guys coming through two weeks ago but he was not at the lodge then.

We go back and look through our ransacked rooms and discover nothing's been taken but there's a note. It says, "Some secrets are best left covered. Leave before you also succumb to the curse of the Lodge!" Nigel remembers some talk about the duskmoth as a pre-Thassilonian artifact. He also knows that to become Pack Lord you have to eat the heart of the previous Pack Lord.

Xurak talks to Duristan and recommends we go on a werewolf hunting expedition "Now now now!" Nigel sees the house halfling spying on us and tries to distract him with requests for tea as the others go to the library to snoop in Estovion's journal.

The note handwriting doesn't match the journal (seems like halfling perhaps). The journal is quite illuminating. "My past has come back to haunt me..." He writes about Orrin Vrood and the Whispering Way showing up to collect a debt from him lest they narc him out to the Palatine Order. He set up a meeting between Mathus the werewolf chieftain and these guys. And since then, two days ago, agents of the Way attacked and taken Kvalka Sain's heart at the Stairs. He's worried that there will be massive werewolf civil war.

Murder Most Beastly

Xurak heads over to the brothel to talk to Madame Ivanja but on the way overhears a fight in the Margrave's room. He runs back to get everyone else but they get to the room and the door is ajar, and inside there's a ripped up Margrave. The killing was clearly done by a wolf. The group splits up and looks for people, they can't find Duristan or Corvin. Vaus picks the lock to Duristan's room and it's empty. He picks Corvin's door and find the kid scrubbing off blood. He slams the door and runs off shrieking about oysters.

This attracts the rest of the group, who kick in the door and talk to Corvin. He is bloody and confused. We examine him and it's odd, if he were an afflicted lycanthrope he should still be a wolf. The group rounds up all the locals for a Clue session. No one saw anything.

Estovion is nowhere to be found. They go to his office and the halfling and two guards are outside, and they say "Estovion said he's not to be disturbed!"

Girl says "Cilas Graydon has been killed, I'm sure that wasn't included in that order."

"No disturb means no disturb! I can take care of it!" retorts the halfling.

"Oh, okay. Come with us and we'll show you."

As soon as the halfling follows into the murder room, Sredni Vashtar's Girl drops him with a slumber hex. Icobus rolls him up in a carpet and we search him then slap him awake for an interrogation.

He fronts a while but the group's threats get to him. "It's the curse of the Lodge! Over the years three other people have gone crazy and killed people!" He also knows that the Whispering Way guys came here and had an invite from Adivion Adrisant in Kaliphas. He admits he searched our rooms at Estovion's behest.

Girl puts a *curse* on the halfling to blind and deafen him if he betrays us, and we send him in to Estovion with a note. He goes in and doesn't come out. We curse and attack the two guards outside the office.

The initial volley of *blindness* from Xurak blinds a guard; unfortunately the slumber hex from Girl doesn't work on the other one. The healthy one whacks Icobus with his flail, but his blind buddy gets confused and hits him! Vaus transforms into Ironface and tears into the other guard as well, he's critically wounded. Girl puts the blind one to sleep and Icobus beats the other one down. Girl *stabilizes* him as Ironface kicks down the door to the office, but Estovion and the halfling are gone. We quickly loot and move on. There's no secret doors or anything, they must have *dimension doored* or *teleported* away. A quick search reveals a blind and deaf halfling in the yard; Estovion has skedaddled. The group sighs and rests.

Girl reads through his journals more. He's very pro-aristocracy and tries to sow dissent with the Palatine folks to support that. He is allied with Mathus and worked with the Whispering Way. We think he's probably a wizard, but go to his bedroom to prove it. His bed is not a large four-poster job so we're not 100% sure.

Girl uses the spirit planchette to ask "who caused Corvin to kill Cilas?" The answer is "Vilkacis." Girl knows these are spectral undead spirits escaped from dead werewolves. They possess people and kill. They are tied to some kind of canopic stone.

Over The River And Through The Woods

The party decides to remain at Ascanor Lodge another day, because they have expended many spells during the long night of investigations, searches, and fights. Besides, they are pretty sure Estovion is heading for the *Stairs of the Moon* which will smack in the middle of werewolf country.

With Belik blind and deaf it is up to Chef Ladimeur to take over. The servants and guards clean-up the night's detritus and return to their usual duties. The party enjoys several excellent meals as they while away the day reading library books and searching futilely for the canopic stone. Their night also passes with event.

The next day the party plus Duristan and his hirelings set out for the *Stairs of the Moon*. Duristan explains that it is twenty miles away (less than a full day's travel). Some 5 miles from the location Duristan and his hirelings split off to "circle around from behind". The party marks "Duristan is dead" on their collective check list.

Several miles later the party spots a pair of gray furred wolves moving rapidly toward them. The wolves pour on the speed then shift into wolf-man hybrids, swinging great swords over their heads and howling insanely.

The fight is short and brutal. The werewolves attack with swords, bites, trips, and rage. Xurak counters with *magic missiles* and spectral hand delivered *vampiric touch* and *shocking grasp*. Icobus, Nigel, and Dr. Vaus fight with silver weapons. Xurak and Dr. Vaus are both wounded, Icobus falls unconscious from his wounds, and Nigel emerges unwounded.

After the fight, Nigel and later Icobus heal the wounded. Dr. Vaus and Icobus were both bitten during the battle and are dosed with wolfsbane sprigs. Dr. Vaus masters both Fortitude checks (poison, then vs. disease), while Icobus only succeeds on the poison save. No one is the wiser.

In death the werewolves revert into humans – dour features, coarse black hair - Kellids. Their gear consists of: loin clothes, masterwork great swords (2), and *bracers of defense* +2 (2).

The party is unsure of the dead's allegiance. Icobus hates werewolves. So, the dead are left to rot. The party journeys onward.

Three miles or so later they spot the *Stairs of the Moon*. It stands amongst the Shudderwood's tall trees. The base is a mighty mound of stones, sheer sided. At its top is a plateau whose edge is dotted with tall obelisks. A single stairway runs along one wall. On one edge of the plateau is a tower; its base starts at the plateau's base making it

a might structure. Stairs rise from the plateau to the tower, then continue around the tower's exterior. The tower top hosts its own *Stonehenge*.

The party is able to spot an indeterminate number of werewolves on the plateau level. Some clearly carry bows. Their fur color is gray, marking them as *Primals*.

Dr. Vaus advances under a white flag to attempt diplomacy. The werewolves yell at him to turn away. Dr. Vaus explains that agents of Whispering Way are working with Estovion Lozaroz and Mathus Mordinacht to usurp leadership of the werewolf tribes, steal away the spirit residing at the *Stairs of the Moon*, and generally litter the area with undead and random evil crap.

The werewolves yell back, "We are werewolves. We care nothing for your human politics!"

Dr. Vaus assures them, "I am an elf."

The werewolves again yell, "Same difference. Depart or be slain."

Dr. Vaus tries again, "Mathus will come with the *Whispering Way* and their undead. They will..."

The werewolves howl back, "Mathus is already here. Soon the other tribes will be here for the moot."

Dr. Vaus shrugs, turns away, and returns to the rest of the party. They depart to make camp, seeking a location that will offer them comfort and possibly be off the beaten path to this locale.