

Carrion Crown Session Summary 03/16/2014

Attendance

Bruce is torn between taking the Bleeding Critical or Sickening Critical feat for Oswald. *Paul* observes that while at this level bleeding damage isn't going to do much, debuffs require that the referee remember them. *Chris* notes that his players generally have trouble remembering anything from session to session.

Ernest observes that he's never really gotten his NPR on, claiming that he hears enough boring white people talking at work. He even discounts the fascinating news articles on the Vermont Pickle Festival. *Chris* explains that in Vermont there's not much to do, so either you drink or you develop odd hobbies like pickling. Otherwise, you might flip out and murder your wife. *Bruce* points out that learning pickling is really quite handy when you finally do flip out, though you'll need a mighty large pickling jar to hold an entire body. *Patrick* sits back and pretends that this whole conversation just isn't happening.

Matt shows up in a very good mood. He had a paying gig earlier in the morning, so he's flush with cash! Eatin' money cash! *Tim* slips in silently, doffing his iron mask and taking his place just outside the camera view.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Level</i>
Oswald Bainbridge	Bruce	Grizzled Crossbowman	Fighter	11
Xurak Darkfire	Matt	Mysterious cloaked traveler	Half-Orc Necromancer	11
Nigel Snodgrass	Patrick	Emo-Gothic figure	Dirge Bard	11
Doctor Jegen Vaus / Ironface	Tim	Elvish Eurotrash in leather pants	Alchemist	11
Sredni Vashtar's Girl	Ernest	Troubled Vudran Girl	Witch	11
Icobus Basilisk	Chris	Pale, poor nobleman, now become orcish!	Oracle	11

The Key is in the Abbey

Last session the characters shot their way through the minions of the vampiric nobleman *Stitch*. Now it is time for them to deal with the witches. Why are we dealing with witches? Only *Stitch* knows.

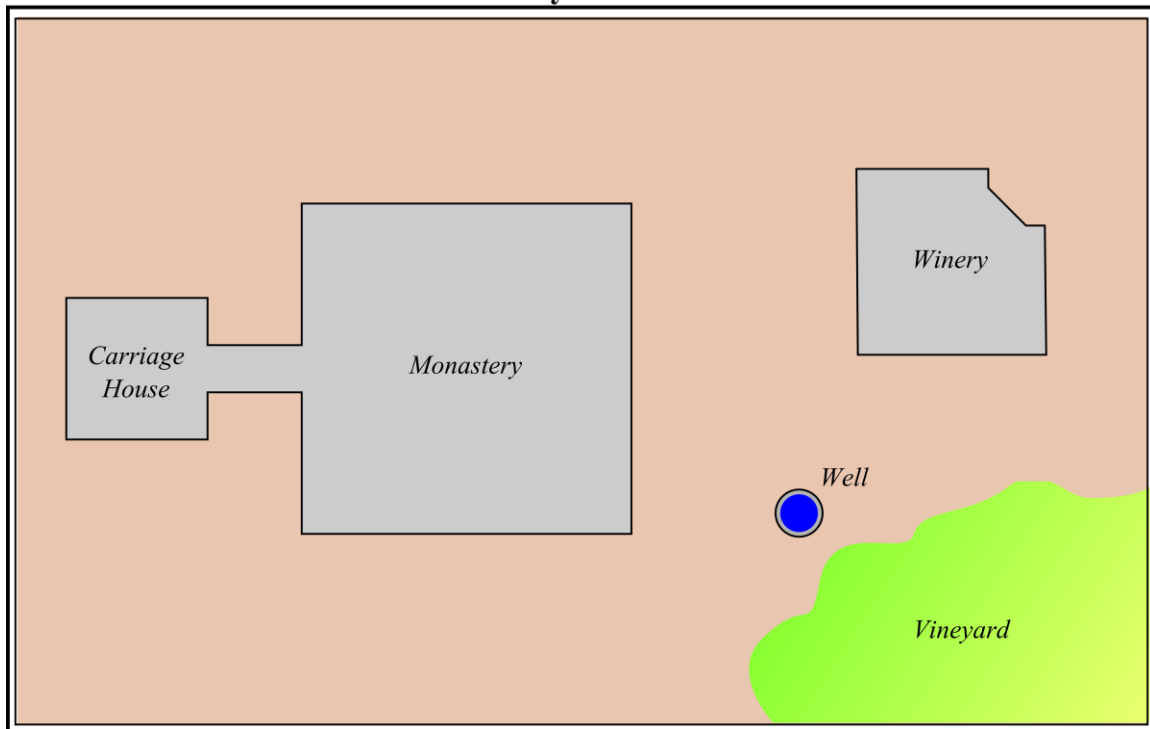
The witches are holed up at the remote Abbey of St. Lemiran outside of Caliphass. She is the author of the *Discourses of Lemiran*, a series of lectures based upon the 11 acts of contrition performed by his patron Iomedae, goddess of retribution and justice. St. Lemiran was once a princess and a priestess, but now she appears as an eagle-headed woman. *Zurak Darkfire* notes, “She’s the bald eagle of justice! Ca-caaw!”

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl offers, “I don’t think that’s the sound an eagle makes...”

The initial plan is to travel out to the monastery at night, because that is more convenient for the characters’ new vampiric ally. It isn’t that they trust him, it is that they aren’t sure what he will do if he isn’t constantly in their field of vision.

The Approach to the Abbey

The Monastery of Saint Lemiran



The path to the abbey is a simple dirt road winding up a hill that overlooks the entire town of Caliphass. As the characters near the abbey they are able to see the lights of

the city in the distance. The characters decide to approach the building with stealth, in spite of the fact that they are approaching with a wagon loaded with an undead giant octopus.

For reasons that make no sense except to him, *Icobus Basilisk* climbs up onto the cart and mounts a fencepost in the midst of the tarp concealing the giant undead octopus. He shouts out, “Giant staked monster!” The characters ignore him, as their *real* plan is to leave the cart behind and carefully sneak up to the abbey.

The characters sneak up through the vineyard around the abbey. The harvest is already taken in, so the fields contain only empty vines. Closer to the buildings there is a large, deep well lined with stone. *Icobus Basilisk* peers down with *Darkvision* and sees nothing but water and stones.

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl points out that she has *Passwall*. The characters decide to use this to enter the house directly through the back wall. They characters completely bypass the winery near the main monastery.

The Entry

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl’s *Passwall* brings the characters into a pantry that is unnaturally cold. *Nigel Snodgrass* thinks that the room is enchanted with a permanent *Freezing Solid Fog*, providing the residents with a magical refrigerator! They might have been justice monks, but at least they knew how to live.

Icobus Basilisk pushes through one door into the kitchen. Sredni Vashtar’s Girl searches for signs that anyone has been eating recently. She finds a variety of normal-looking foods, but also that there is no fire in the fireplace. *Oswald Basilisk* checks the ashes and tells the others, “It has been at least a couple of hours since anyone cooked anything! A couple of hours!”

Nobody understands why this needs to be announced so dramatically.

A Roomful of Guards!

Oswald listens through the next doorway. He hears some men arguing over who is better, *Eisa* or *Hetna*. It sounds like they are arguing over who is more in love with each of them – some of the men would be willing to die for her, and others would be willing to kill for her, and some would be willing to both kill *and* die for her. The characters deduce

that the witches have been enjoying a rather wild social life recently, a social life that has apparently encompassed all of the former monks.

Icobus turns *Invisible* and opens the door. The room turns out to be a massive hall, some eighty feet on a side! The six guards turn to see the door open itself. He responds by casting *Dispel Magic* on one of them. Unfortunately, the guards have not been charmed with a spell effect – so the dispel does not work!

Sredni Vashtar's Girl launches a *Confusion* into the center of the cluster of guards. Icobus Basilisk (now visible) casts *Enlarge* upon himself and moves to close with the guards. Zurak Darkfire shouts out, "Aha! A perfect opportunity to use my new *Contagious Flame* effect! It's like a *Scorching Ray*, but the rays can bounce from target to target to target! It can turn a pack of enemies into overcooked Hot Pockets!"

Oswald "*Silver Tits*" Bainbridge steps into the room and shoots one of the guards. He's already decided to not worry much about who is and who isn't charmed. The guard charges Oswald, completely ignoring both *Ironface* (recently Doctor Vaus) and Icobus Basilisk. Ironface shoots him with a longbow. Icobus strikes with his Warhammer. Neither of these has any noticeable impact upon the guard's fixated rush. The guard stabs through Oswald with his longsword, inflicting a terrible strike.

The other guards mainly behave in a lethally *confused* manner, babbling incoherently and striking each other. One of them does move in to attack the group. Sredni Vashtar's Girl responds by placing a *hex of retribution* upon him, ensuring that he will suffer half the damage he inflicts. So unfortunate for him!

Icobus steps up to the guard attacking Oswald and clocks him in the side of the head. The guard drops like a sack of unconscious potatoes. Then he steps over and slams the guard who had been mobbed by vampires, bard and wizards. "Hodor!"

Oswald notices that the mobbed guard is still alive. He shoots the man four times, including one bolt straight through the appendix. The guard dies, howling out, "My appendix!"

Then the characters step back and watch the remaining guards kill each other in a *confused* rage.

There are two staircases in the room, both of them going down. Icobus looks down one of them and sees massive swarms of spiders. All of them look back up at him. He puts a *Wall of Fire* on the stairs. They roast.

Oswald looks down the second staircase. He sees darkness. Then Nigel comes over with a torch to illuminate the area. With the torch, they can see an underground passage that divides four ways fifteen feet along.

Some Light Looting

The guards are equipped with the same kind of gear the charmed guards in the vampire tailor shop carried:

- Six *Breastplates* +2
- Six *Longswords* +1
- Six masterwork longbows

Beyond the Hall

Icobus Basilisk opens the main doors of the hall. He sees a large workroom. A crude hand-drawn map of the abbey lies upon a large table. It has many annotations, apparently indicating areas that have already been searched. The characters deduce that someone is looking for magical doo-dads. The searchers have already marked off the bell tower and the winery, but not the bulk of the monastery itself.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl examines the map and the room carefully, looking for any hint of what the object of the search might be. There is nothing – not even a poorly-written status update.

The Bell Tower

Zurak Darkfire leads the way up to the second floor of the monastery, including the bell tower. The second floor of the bell tower would be well-lit in daylight, thanks to large windows on each facing of the tower. Icobus notices that the ceiling above the second floor is teeming with thousands upon thousands of spiders. He decides to avoid remaining in the tower. Doctor Vaus and Oswald both observe that Icobus doesn't want to be in the tower. They decide to be wherever Icobus is.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl rather innocently asks, "There are spiders?" Icobus silently points up, at the tower ceiling...

Hetna's Chambers

The characters enter into a large laboratory on the second floor. The air smells of odd chemicals. Tables along the walls are covered with strange glass vessels and unusual liquids. Oh, and there is also a witch present. The characters are able to recognize her as such, even though she isn't currently riding a broom. Her hat is made out of spoons!

Ironface takes immediate action! With bombs!

The witch also takes immediate action! She was alerted to the characters' approach, perhaps by the sounds of roasting spiders or the shouting of the guards.

Sredni Vashtar's Girl leads with a *Quickened Ill Omen* followed by a *slumber hex*. Everyone is really impressed by the *Ill Omen* spell, especially what it can do when quickened. Meanwhile, Icobus Basilisk starts making plans on what he wants to do with the witch's spoon hat. She slumps to the ground.

Stitch is very pleased! "See, you have already taken out Hetna!"

Zurak points out, "We will need to interrogate her."

"You can get all the information you want after she is my minion!"

Doctor Vaus becomes Ironface and drinks an infusion of *Enlarge Person* just as a pack of guards burst out of a side room. The lead guard shouts, "Stay away from my girlfriend!" Ironface suspects that the guards will swiftly wake up the witch, and that things will become so much less tenable when they do.

Icobus Basilisk moves into a side room, finding that it is a guest room. He guesses that the witches might be Lawful Evil – lawful creatures always have guest rooms!

Sredni Vashtar's Girl decides to drop a *Stinking Cloud* on the guards... and the witch. Oswald notes that all of his targets have vanished into a cloud, so he drinks a potion of *Barkskin* while he waits for something to emerge as a target. Nigel blasts the cloud area (including the vampire Stitch) with a cone of *Crushing Despair*. Everyone imagines the guards in the crowd crying and puking all at once.

Ironface decides that he would prefer to not run into the cloud, so he runs to the edge of it and drinks a potion of *Dragon's Breath*. He sprays the entire area with lightning (hoping to avoid burning off the *Stinking Cloud*).

From within the cloud the witch *Hetna* screeches, "Why are they all here in force?"

The characters hear their vampire friend (so-called) Stitch explain, "I don't know! They must have tricked me!" Oswald decides that Stitch needs to get shot with a lot of crossbow bolts. Zurak is saddened: the *Charm* spell he had used to keep Stitch on the straight and narrow is clearly broken.

The guards (finally) decide to emerge from the *Stinking Cloud*.

Zurak exclaims, "This is a time for *Contagious Flame!*" He shoots three guards with *Scorching Ray* effects, striking three of them. He explains to the others, "And now just sit back and watch as the rays bounce from guard to guard! This spell is devilish in its simplicity!"

Icobus steps up to a guard and disarms him. "Check that out for simplicity!"

Sredni Vashtar's Girl pulls out her *Mi-Go Cold Projector*™ and blasts the guards. Oswald lines up his crossbow with the two worst-injured guards. He ends one of them, and completely misses the second.

Stitch comes storming out of the cloud, straight at Ironface, flinging his *conductive scarf*. Ironface is so surprised to be attacked by a scarf that he fails to dodge. He sustains two raking strikes across chest and face, compounded by bleeding and two levels of energy drain!

The vampire makes a high enough Bluff check that half the party starts to think, "Of course! Ironface was always an impostor!" The others understand that Occam's Razor should rule here.

Nigel decides that the combat needs to run up a bit faster. He casts *Haste*. Ironface takes advantage of this to slash at Stitch with his claws. Ironface has claws? Who knew!?! Stitch takes an amazing amount of damage!

The witch Hetna has not been wasting her time: she swoops out from the flank upon her *Broomstick of Flying* and casts *Baleful Polymorph* upon Sredni Vashtar's Girl. Sredni Vashtar's Girl shrugs off the spell.

Zurak giggles with arcane delight as his *Contagious Flame* bounces around to scorch additional targets, two guards and Hetna the witch. One of the guards had apparently been soaking himself in Everclear before the fight: the fiery ray sets him alight like a Roman candle. Then he sets to work re-*Charming* the vampire Stitch, explaining, “If you think that that red-clad, spoon-hatted hussy is a better friend than I am, then you’re even stupider than your dress sense makes you look!” To everyone’s surprise, the vampire seems to believe this.

Sredni Vashtar’s Girl floats up in a lotus position and unleashes a black ray of *Enervation* at Hetna. The beam leaves her stunned as it saps her vital energies. Then Oswald pins her to the wall with a barrage of crossbow bolts, leaving her shattered body dripping vital fluids down to the floor.

Oswald comments, “I hope we weren’t hoping to question her...”

Ironface howls at a guard... and the guard responds by surrendering. Then Ironface stakes Stitch to keep him nice and quiet.

The Aftermath of the Battle

The characters heal up a bit and loot the dead. Then they take a vote on Stitch’s fate. Much of the party is in favor of killing him, with the only voices of restraint being those who point out that *Luvik Siervage* the vampire elder demanded that Stitch (in his role as the vampire killer) should be delivered over to him. By a narrow margin, they decide to hand him over to Luvik, storing his staked body inside the zombie octopus in the meantime. Hetna and Stitch were carrying quite a bit of loot, including:

- 2 potions of *Bear’s Endurance*
- 2 potions of *Cure Moderate Wounds*
- *Dagger +1*
- *Amulet of Natural Armor +3*
- *Belt of Incredible Dexterity +4*
- *Broom of Flying*
- *Headband of Vast Intelligence +4* (also gives access to Knowledge (history) and Knowledge (planes))
- *Ring of Protection +3*

- *Witching Gown*
- Alchemist's Lab
- 723 gold pieces.
- Bloodbrew Elixir (4 doses)
- Potion of *Cat's Grace*
- Potion of *Haste*
- Potion of *Displacement*
- Wand of *Halt Undead* (12 charges)
- *Mithril chain shirt* +1
- *Conductive bladed scarf* +1
- 9 wooden stakes
- *Hat of Disguise*
- *Ring of Protection* +1
- Courtier's outfit
- 208 gold pieces

The characters divide up some of the more interesting objects. Oswald claims the *Belt of Incredible Dexterity* +4. Icobus claims the *Amulet of Natural Armor* +3. Sredni Vashtar's Girl takes the *Witching Gown*. Zurak claims the *Spoon Hat of Vast Intelligence* +4. Doctor Vaus gets a *Ring of Protection* +3. And after that everyone starts trading around various cast-off items that they are replacing with their newly-acquired items. Doctor Vaus thinks, "It's just like a swap meet. Or a fashion show..."

The Rest of the Laboratory

There are many interesting objects in the lab, including a polished wooden box containing seven glass vials labeled "youth tonic", a partially-completed potion bubbling in a *Cauldron of Brewing* over the fire, and a pile of research notes. Doctor Vaus claims all of these, finding among them:

- 4 scrolls of *Protection from Evil*

There are also notes written by R.A. (in a different hand) detailing the extension of life by magical means and a mysterious vial containing a few drops of what might be incredibly valuable *sun orchid elixir*, a draught that can extend a mortal's appointed lifespan.

All of the notes in the lab indicate that the witches were not working with the Whispering Way, as none of their efforts were directed towards undeath or transformation into lichdom. They were, however, apparently manufacturing the bloodbrew elixir that Stitch had been trading to the younger vampires of Caliphas.

Doctor Vaus directs his attention towards the so-called “youth elixir”. He thinks, “Perhaps I should drink this... I’ve never seen anything quite like it... yes, yes! I must drink it right now! Wait, no, that’s a terrible idea!” The others are able to see his face contort with inner conflict until he finally puts the vial down. He notes, “This stuff is so addictive it can catch you just by looking at it.”

Zurak Darkfire takes one of the “youth tonics” from Doctor Vaus and determines that it is probably poison, with a magical aura cast upon them to make them seem like elixirs.

The Upstairs Library

The characters continue to explore the second floor, finding the library. The place is decorated with the headless skeleton of a giant annis hag (at least based upon Zurak’s statement – Nigel was only able to tell that it was nonhuman, and Icobus could only tell that it was big). The bones are carefully strung together, with each piece labeled. Zurak thinks the hag died by being burned to death, an unfortunately common fate for witches and their ilk.

Zurak finds a libram on transformative blood magic that also contains several wizard spells: *Clone*, *Horrid Wilting*, *Insanity*, *Iron Body*, *Transformation*, and *Vision*. It would also be a great resource to learn to be a blood mage.

Most of the library is books on Iomedae and Saint Lemiran, presumably part of the original collection before the witches arrived. Icobus takes one book upon the goddess and one upon the saint, just to have something to read. He picks out the book with the chestiest cover illustration.

The Master Bedroom

The last area of real interest on the second level turns out to be the fancy master bedroom. Hetna clearly had some fairly extravagant tastes.

The Bell Tower!

Nobody is interested in seeing the top of the bell tower, except for Sredni Vashtar's Girl. She goes running up the stairs and onto the third floor... which promptly collapses under her. Everyone takes damage from the falling debris, except for the Girl (who uses *Feather Fall*) and Icobus (who was so freaked out by the idea of falling debris that he was out of the way the instant the ceiling started to creak).

Sredni Vashtar's Girl is not to be dissuaded. She flies up to the fourth level, observes that there is nothing there except an iron bell, and uses *Mending* to ensure that the bell stays are solid and stable.

The Remarkable Stablehand

With nothing left above ground, the characters head down the (former) spider-infested stairs. The characters return to the main hall to find an elderly gentleman dressed as a stablehand very casually seated at a table with his legs up. He seems unusually casual, considering that the rest of the room is littered with dead guards.

Zurak asks, "Who are you?"

The man responds, "I am just the stable hand. Did you do all this?"

"Yes...."

The man casually gestures and casts *Power Word Stun*. Sredni Vashtar's Girl staggers back, stunned. Nigel starts to *inspire courage* and moves up to melee range. He is taken aback when the man takes an attack of opportunity against him – somehow he has reach! Nigel doesn't even see the attack coming as a bloody slash appears across his chest.

Zurak attempts to blind him. The stablehand ignores the spell. Oswald shoots him three times, including a critical strike. The man is only minimally injured, but sickened and knocked prone. Doctor Vaus flings three bombs at him, tearing his skin away and leaving him moderately wounded. Zurak comments, "He is the Most Interesting Man in the Monastery, able to shrug off incredible volumes of damage and still come back to kick our asses. It's too bad we knocked over his bottle of beer."

Icobus charges him straight out! Yaaargh! He clocks the man in the side of the head with his adamantine war hammer. The man barely even notices the strike.

The stablehand casts *Mirror Image*. And stands up.

Nigel performs a few backflips to get some distance between him and the surprisingly tough stablehand, then casts *Haste*. This turns Oswald's pepper-spray of crossbow bolts into a continuous, awful ripping sound. Oswald's volley eliminates three images, with one bolt actually flying true.

Zurak launches a *Dispel Magic* at the stablehand. His spell isn't strong enough to eliminate either of the effects running on him. So he unleashes his undead octopus!

Doctor Vaus flings bombs, striking the stablehand three times, eliminating one image, and leaving the stablehand collapsed upon the ground. As he falls, the veil is lifted and the characters see the creature's true form. It is a glabrezu demon some eighteen feet tall and 6000 pounds in weight. It is clear that the characters spent enough time stomping around the upper floors of the monastery to allow the second witch to cast *Planar Ally* and bring something truly unpleasant to her side.

The End of the Session

The characters decide to spend some time recuperating in the great hall of the monastery: most of the spellcasters are feeling a bit tapped out, and Doctor Vaus is troubled by two negative levels from his run-in with the vampire Stitch.