

Crabs!

Darnit inches forward, hammer out, and moves against the wall, toward the door that the crabs are coming out of. He loudly whispers to Izar, "We need to get to the others and try to avoid unnecessary death."

"Death? It'd be pretty hard for them to kill us, I think."

"I mean their death."

Carlos backs over to the door with the bones, opens the door, and tries to tempt the crabs with the masses of bones as help to their shells. A couple crabs are following along, watching with their sinewy eyes. [Carlos fumbled a roll for animal handling. For the next two rounds, disadvantage on rolls interacting with the crabs. Not good.]

Hrothulf puts a hand on his greatsword then stands perfectly still, awaiting the crabs' move.

Hiare blinks over to the back crab to try to snatch the key.

The crabs are continuing their probing. Hrothulf lets out a yelp of pain as one crab has taken hold of an ankle and seems content to stay there.

Darnit sees in the room four more crabs munching on rotting flesh. The crabs that have come out of the room are now a little away from the door. He sees in the room also a circular window, about 8 ft radius. Not as big as the 16-ft radius that we entered through, but still a bit circular window.

About 9 crabs have created a 7-ft radius horseshoe around Carlos.

Darnit gestures toward Izar, pointing in a direction. Izar... maybe gets it? Izar nods. [Darnit delays until Izar gets there.]

Carlos backs into the bone room, pushing some of the bones to one side with his feet as he backs in and moves toward the center of the room. Trying to get the crabs to follow. The horseshoe constricts, and the crabs do all they can to squeeze into the room with him.

Hrothulf tries to move toward the bone room slowly, measuredly. He is able to briefly release himself from the grasp of the crab, but after about 7 ft., the crab regains its grasp with renewed fervor.

Hiare is unable to grab the key off of the crab.

Izar follows Darnit's gesturing and comes over to the room with 4 crabs still in it. Darnit wants him to check out the window. Izar throws on his jetpack. Many of the crabs immediately look over to the jetpacking man. The jetpack sprays some of the gross, putrid water. Some of it goes into Darnit's mouth. Izar flies over to the window, with 8-9 crabs from the hall plus the 4 in the

room following him. Hiare is still holding onto the crab with the key as it's following Izar. Izar finds a sodium deposit sort of channel, like an inverted sideways stalagmite, and it looks like there's a place where something like a drop of ocean water a day is coming in.

Around the 8-ft radius window, there is more writing like at the entrance. Izar takes a picture of that and sends it Atchi's way.

Darnit asks Hrothulf how he's doing, whether he's alright. "Uh, uh, at this time everything is, how should I say?, uh, copacetic? At some point, ah, I'd like to get this here crustacean off my, ah, favorite ankle. I have tried to shake it off this ankle, but it has heretofore remained attached." Darnit grabs some remain--stubby parts of merfolk fin that are remaining--and throws it at the crab. It splats on the back of what would be the crab's head. Darnit then moves toward the bone room, at least near the point where he could see Carlos.

Carlos now realizes that one of the bones he initially picked up has slipped down his back and latched his belt, it has connected to another bone, and another in the pile, which pulls him down into pile of bones. Backing through the bones, he has fallen in. And the crabs pounce on him at once!

Carlos is now in a mosh pit of crabs, with some of the weight coming on him and some of the bones poking him. Carlos yells for help and balls up, so that as much as possible, grabbing crabs get lots of bones and not a lot of Carlos.

"Ah, hey y'all, ah, watch this. Back on my homeworld there was this creature, like a cat of a sort, and if you made this shape with your fingers and clicked them, they would all in the world come to you, and we called them tiddlywhiskers, so what I am going to do is wave this here piece of flesh in front of his left side [hoping it'll get the crab to release his left claw for this bait]." It works! Hrothulf is free from its clutches. Hrothulf goes toward the bone room, making it to the doorway, and with the recently-escaped crab coming at him.

Izar moves over to where Hiare is, and he also tries to pull the key off, but the key doesn't seem to budge. In doing this, Izar also accidentally dodges the lunges of crabs.

Darnit comes toward Carlos with merfolk part in hand, seeing not Carlos himself, but the jumble of crabs on a pile of bones. Darnit casts Earth Tremor, jumping into the fray and trying to knock over some crabs.

Carlos' world is shaking, the bones rattling all around him, and crabs flipping and flailing all around him. He has the chance to breathe finally, as a weight is remove from his chest. He feels something grab his crelbrow, then his opposite bicep, and there is a tug-of-war going on between two crabs, lifting him between them.

Meanwhile, in the decomposition room: crabs take note of Izar and Hiare and come for them.

Carlos flails his legs, kicking the soft, squishy mouth of bicep holder. The crab lets go, so now Carlos' left arm is held, but right is released.

Hrothulf charges in to try to save Carlos, but the bones trip him a little, so he comes in doing a Goldberg spear of Carlos, ripping Carlos' arm out of the crab's clutches, with Hrothulf and Carlos rolling up against the aquarium with octopus at the other end of the room.

Izar grabs a crossbow dart from his ammo kit and uses it to dig through some of the organic compound around the key. While doing this, the shell secretes a goo that starts to harden into more of this stuff. But Izar digs quickly enough to loose the key, which hits the ground. Then Izar tells Hiare to get away, out into the hall, and await his call. Hiare blinks into the hall.

Darnit doubles back to check on Izar. He sees Hiare, and also a crab barrelling down on him. He attempts to dodge it. He's upended by the crab, tells Hiare she didn't see that, then keeps moving.

Carlos bids a crab or two come at him[, bro], and readies the action to dodge at the last moment, hoping to get the crab to hit the wall.

Hrothulf: "Hey, Caros, my loyal companion and sweet engineer, how about we, uh, skeedaddle?"

"Yeah, but they're faster than us. So hopefully a couple of them can be disoriented by the wall before we run for the door."

Hrothulf readies an action to slap a crab with the flat of his greatsword, like you would to motivate a horse if you were a knight or something, ready to jet.

Izar casts sleep! Five of twelve crabs pass out. He hunts for the key amidst the sleeping crabs where he last saw the it. Izar asks Hiare to come back in, but carefully and to him. Hiare blinks onto Izar's shoulder. Hiare is helping look for the shiny key he saw before.

Darnit looks into the room with Izar and takes in the scene. He asks how/what they're doing. Asks why we want the key. Izar wants to know whether he wants to help move some of these sleeping crabs. Asks whether Carlos is ok. Darnit says yes, that the crabs are off of him. Darnit asks where Izar dropped the key, but then Hiare pops up with the key in her mouth. Darnit leaves.

Carlos has lured three charging crabs. One takes more interest in Hrothulf. Hrothulf swings with the flat of his greatsword slapping the crab coming at him and steering it away from him. Carlos has successfully convinced one crab to slam into the wall, which is stunned and just kind of freezes. Other raises its big claw, trying to bring it down on Carlos. Then the crab looks to disappear and a deluge of black water comes down on Carlos. And the octopus is now all over the crab. Other crabs are now coming over to help their comrade.

Carlos runs around the group of crabs on the outside of the room and heads for the door. Hrothulf does the same on the other side. And we make it to the hallway, where we meet the others, though a couple crabs are still chasing Izar and Darnit. "Hrothulf, you want to close this door behind us?" says Carlos. "Indubitably."

We close all doors.

The key is the old-timey classic key sort just like you'd expect.

We consider options -- the door across with a padlock where there may be more crabs? Move to the next colored set? Maybe at least see whether the key fits the padlock?

Izar calls Atchi about the writing on this window. He says it doesn't really make any sense. Asking the waves to stay at bay and the sea to stay fast. Basically it's like a plea to the ocean.

Hrothulf lifts Hiare, who has the key, so Hiare can put the key in the padlock on this door. As soon as the key goes in, there are four beams of light that shoot into the hallway. Materializing in that light are four knighted individuals wearing pinkish red capes and full armor. We recognize the signs on their foreheads as: the Vardum!