

Legends of Steel Session Summary 08/30/2009

Attendance

Paul (Oka and Kura) offers, “I made some friendship bread from the starter you gave me. Two loaves! I ate one, and gave the other to the gamers. They loved it!”

Chris (Singh) asks, “How could you tell? Did the tenor of their howling and crunching change?”

Ernest (Manoj) breaks into song, “Guaaaa-ca-mo-le! The Coahuila treat!”

Everyone moves a few inches further away from him. Except *Chuck*. Nobody asks why.

Bruce (Baba Ali) tries to calm the situation by telling the others, “Hey, I brought a whole pile of old *Military History Quarterly* issues! Grab some, they’re free! And here are some *Fig Newtons* too!” He shudders to realize that the others took his offering as more “snack” than “reading material.”

Chris stares at the new, frustrating *Fig Newtons* package Bruce brought. He prods at it, trying to dislodge a cookie. Bruce stares in eager curiosity. He comments, “I tried to find a good way to get those things out, but it just didn’t work out.” Chris takes the package over to the kitchen counter. He rummages in a drawer, then turns triumphant, a Fig Newton speared on the end of a fork. The others give him appropriate honors for his victory.

| <i>Character</i> | <i>Player</i> | <i>Concept and Notes</i> |
|------------------|---------------|---|
| Oka | Paul | Tarzan-like native, accompanied by his panther Kura. He’s so brutish! |
| Singh | Chris | Thuggee assassin |
| Manoj | Ernest | Sikh warrior, “Rabid Cub” |
| Kaitamo | Tim | Mongol archer who loves My Little Pony |
| Max Harkness | Matt | Escaped pleasure slave, along with his love slave Yanto |
| Baba Ali | Bruce | The bumbling Sufi monk |

Over the Sea!

Baba Ali tells *Manoj*, “You know, there’s nothing I like better than the idea of a long sea voyage. The fresh sea air, the calls of the ocean birds, the rustle of the rigging, how could you ask for more?”

Manoj looks curiously at the monk. “Are you sure about that? Weren’t you saying how much you hated the sea only ten minutes ago?”

Baba Ali replies, “Yes, but that was then. I’m a completely different person now! I have walked into another chapter in the journey of my life.”

Manoj is dubious, “Yes, you’re in a new place where no metaphor is too powerful to not be mixed.”

It is at this point that *Chuck* announces that nobody is on a boat, but everyone *does* get an extra *Bennie*.

Trouble in Paradise, Or Belsa. Whichever

The characters are all actually waiting in *Belsa* while the Elders work to prepare a ship for their journey to *Tiros*. *Singh* is not waiting peacefully: he is tormented by horrible dreams. Every creature he has ever killed, back to the chickens he killed for dinner when he was still living on the farm, appears to him moaning, “Why! Why!”

Seeking surcease, he goes to visit the temple of *Obra-Irca*, the god of travelers, messengers and dreams. He asks after a priest who can clean up his dreams a bit. The priest gives him a sachet of foul-smelling herbs and instructs him to hang it over his head at night. He assures *Singh*, “This will scare away all the evil dreams.”

Singh reflects that it will also scare away whatever strumpets he manages to lure back into his room. To improve his mood, he stops by the hidden temple to *Hala* for some light prayer and a bit of strangling-cloth practice.

Manoj Needs to Work on Those Social Skills

Manoj wakes to find his obsessive-compulsive girlfriend hovering over him. She tells him, “I made you breakfast! Eat it! We’re going to be together forever!” He demurs, so she force-feeds him. He discovers that she poisoned the meal, heavily. He also notes that she has already eaten her own breakfast, as she drops to the floor and starts

convulsing only moments after feeding him. He vomits twice, convulses, and staggers out to find *Baba Ali*.

He finds Baba Ali in the marketplace, negotiating for the purchase of some opiates with *Lefty Jimba*, a trader from the far South. He sprays bloody sputum all over the monk, who immediately misdiagnoses his ailment as *jungle shivers*. Baba Ali proceeds to feed him henbane tea, and then to bleed him when that doesn't work. Manoj just continues to deteriorate.

Singh Starts His Eventful Day

Singh decides that he is hungry, so he goes over to Manoj's room because he knows the warrior has a wife who can cook. He finds the girl dead on the floor, but lukewarm breakfast on the table. He digs in, then once the pangs of poisoning start to hit heads out to find the mystic too.

Oka Breaks the Trend and Doesn't Get Poisoned

Oka points out, "I make my own breakfast." He is out of money, so he is living on the outskirts of town, digging up roots and trapping local herbivores. While he is out checking his rabbach-snares he spots some smoke trails to the north. He sneaks up to investigate.

As he approaches the smoke, two ruffians in leather armor step out of the underbrush and point crossbows at him. They order him, "Don't move!"

He puts on his innocent face and responds, "Why? I'm just walking through the woods. What are you doing here?"

One of them makes guttural noises and spits back, "We're camping! You should leave here – it's dangerous. There are natives and things."

Oka explains, "The natives are not nearly as dangerous as you think. Worst case is they give you a silly name and force you to marry their daughters."

The other ruffian spits out some tobacco juice. He rasps out, "We're NPC mooks too, so they might be more dangerous to us than you think."

"So, are you going to put those crossbows down?"

The squint-eyed goon asks, "Are you going to put your... loincloth down?"

Oka becomes curious, “Depends on what kind of games you want to play.” Oka reaches for his banjo.

It doesn’t take more than a couple bars of banjo picking to break the ruffians. “Just move along, please! Just don’t molest us!”

Oka vanishes into the forest.

We Don’t Want No Universal Health Care Here in Belsa!

Back in the marketplace, the city guards are giving Baba Ali trouble for brewing tea in an alley in the marketplace. The guard’s major objection is that if Baba Ali gives away health care then soon he’ll have a line of beggars leading out into the square. Baba Ali agrees to move to the other side of the market, during which time Oka shows up to see how things are going. And the guard proves to be right: soon enough Baba Ali is treating various hideous sores and wounds on one beggar after another. He stays running his free clinic until sundown, handing out (poisonous) henbane tea to anyone who asks.

Even though they remain rather incapacitated, both Manoj and Singh arrange for burial for Manoj’s girlfriend through the Hala Temple. It costs them a gold piece because Manoj wants a marked grave in spite of the fact that he doesn’t even know her name. He proposes marking the grave “Padme.”

The Belsa Elders’ Private Mercenary Force

Oka observes that Manoj, Singh and Baba Ali are turning Baba Ali’s place into a plague house, so he leaves to sneak up on the mysterious forest camp again. He creeps up to within 25 yards of the camp, inside the outer sentry ring. A female soldier with a greatsword spots him and raises the alarm. It is to his surprise that the soldier is *Sienna*, the girl the characters saved back in the beginning of the campaign. She’s grown up quite a bit since then, and lost an eye.

It turns out that she has also gone into her father’s line of work and become a mercenary captain. She is leading a hundred men on behalf of the Separatist Elders. Her mission is the overthrow of the Baron of Belsa and the subsequent imposition of public order after the initial period of inevitable riot and chaos.

Oka breaks bread with her, because for days he has eaten only what he can scavenge from the woods and steal from local farmhouses. She is concerned, “Don’t you have Survival skill?”

Oka answers, “I hope so.”

Everyone Recovers, But Manoj Makes a Terrible Discovery

The next morning, Baba Ali manages to finally purge the remaining poison out of Manoj’s and Singh’s systems. Manoj groans, “I’ve had diarrhea so badly I feel like my backside has been replaced with a fire hose.”

Singh howls, “Now that my guts are no longer contaminated by fever-ridden cockroaches I am once again tormented by dreams of the dead! Let’s go get a beer.”

It is at this point that Manoj’s old childhood friend *Diya*, who abandoned him to marry *Haji* years ago, shows up and proclaims, “I have realized that I made a horrible mistake when I refused to marry you! You must be mine!”

Manoj is confused. “What’s going on? Am I wearing Axe-fuckin-body-spray this morning or something? Anyway, you were over in Jandahar. How did you even get here?”

She flutters her eyelashes seductively and explains, “I stowed away on a boat. Of course, we have no divorce in Jandahar so I had to murder my husband. I just want to be with you!”

It is at this point that Manoj realizes that the *Witch Queen* has placed a curse upon him. He goes to Baba Ali for help. Baba Ali offers that he has never been much for curses, but his herbalism knowledge does provide an answer. He mixes some opiates into a bit of tea and urges Manoj to give it to Diya. This is effective: it sends her off into the land of dreams. Singh hears this and howls in agony: he recognizes that he has been cursed as well, but his curse doesn’t involve murderous women trying to get into his pants.

Oka arrives from his trip to Captain Sienna’s camp to report her arrival. This suggests a plan to Baba Ali. He proposes that the secret to destroying the Yarites is to send Manoj into their city of Radu, then wait for the curse to affect Sienna. Once the call takes her she will destroy earth and sky to be with Manoj, so it should be no trouble for her to destroy the Yarite capital.

Oka points out, “But what if the curse doesn’t affect her right away?”

Baba Ali is ready with an answer: “Then we just deal with whoever it affects until it lights on the right girl.”

Oka is incredulous, “So you’re proposing that we just kill women until we randomly get the right one? You’re a monster.”

Baba Ali shrugs, “I can’t help what I am. I was sold to monks when I was a child!”

Oka walks off, grumbling about the corrupting effects of city life.

The conversation turns to the defense of the city. Singh speaks for everyone when he notes that the best way to protect Belsa against the armies of Yar is to not have an internal struggle just as the city comes under siege. Oka notes that Captain Sienna serves *Elder Bekka*, who wishes to overthrow the Baron and take direct control of Belsa. Manoj mentions that most of Yar’s military successes to date have been through subversion, so it is quite likely that Elder Bekka is in the pay of Yar.

Singh grips his strangling cords and mumbles, “Then we definitely need to strangle him. But we really should get some proof first. Let’s go talk to Captain Sienna.”

The Mercenary Captain

The characters venture out of the walls to talk to Captain Sienna. She tells Manoj that she has 150 men under arms, paid for by unknown persons among the Separatist faction. Her job is to keep order in Belsa when the Separatist takeover is done.

The characters point out that the Armies of Yar are on the way and that she is probably being snookered into fighting them. Captain Sienna expresses great confidence in her troops’ ability to engage and defeat the (small) Armies of Yar. The characters point out that the Yarite forces are sure to include werewolves and wyverns. Oka tells her, “If your men don’t have silver weapons, then you’re not going to be able to stop *one* werewolf.” The characters find that they are unable to shake the Captain’s confidence.

Curse Relief from the Grand Poobah of Hala

Manoj and Singh head back to the Temple of Hala to ask about breaking the Witch Queen’s curse. The *Grand Poobah* is taken aback by Manoj’s claim that this all

can be dealt with by a sufficient quantity of strangling. He is rendered visibly pale when Manoj removes his shirt to show the Mark of the Queen burned into his skin.

It is at this moment that the air ripples with squirrels and the *Messenger* of the Witch Queen appears. Manoj offers, “Hi, Honey! Would it help if we were to apologize for our temerity? I just thought that you were pretty hot.”

Her words are torn from the shrieking souls of the tortured dead. “If by apologize you mean personally beg for forgiveness, then maybe. But it would have to be done in person.”

Manoj suppresses a shiver and asks, “Can we use the squirrels?” The others do not seek clarification on whether the shiver is one of lustful anticipation or mortal dread.

The Messenger does not bother to respond. She allows as how the characters are wasting their time trying to lift the curse, but the Witch Queen might consider removing it if the characters were to do some impressive damage to the Yarites.

Manoj proposes that the characters’ new battle cry will be, “For the Entertainment of the Witch Queen!”

Strangling Elder Bekka

Singh and Manoj decide that their first step in the defense of Belsa is to strangle Elder Bekka. They sneak into his bedchamber, where they find him sleeping next to a much younger woman. Manoj restrains the woman while Singh strangles the Elder.

Before Singh finishes strangling Elder Bekka he is able to get the old man to admit that he is in the pay of the Yarites and that his grand plan was to throw the doors of the city for the Yarites when they show up. Then Singh finishes the job.

Manoj is obsessed with dealing with the girl, so Singh is left to search the room alone. He picks up about 100 gold in various gems and coins.

Manoj asks Singh, “Does the Elder secrete anything? Like money?”

Singh falls over in horrified laughter. He briefly wishes that he hadn’t killed the Elder so quickly: he would have liked to milk the fellow for gold. He does manage to find a book that seems to be surrounded with unspeakable evil and a set of three magical flares. He tears Manoj away from the girl and they leave the building.

Later That Night

Singh hands the book to Baba Ali to see if he can understand it. Baba Ali squints at it and reports, "It's a little bit like furry porn. Lots of werewolves and squirrels." Singh rolls his eyes.

Manoj explains, "I think we're being besieged by the armies of yif." Nobody else understands what he's talking about. They suspect that he might have been getting involved in the wrong sorts of discussion groups.

The characters venture into the marketplace to get silver weapons and red cloth. Captain Sienna has warned them that when everything goes nuts the Separatists will be wearing red armbands.

The Day of the Revolution

The characters know that this will be a historic day from the moment of dawn. Manoj wakes and sings selections from *Les Miserables*: "To the barricades!" The main walls divide the mercenaries because loyalists hold some gates and separatists hold some gates. There are also riots and looting.

Baba Ali responds to the chaos by setting up a field hospital on the first floor of the characters' boarding house. He treats all comers, whether they are Separatist or Loyalists. The characters all trade quadriplegic jokes while helping Baba Ali remove mangled limbs and stitch up wounds.

"What do you call a man with no arms and no legs in a pile of leaves?"

"Russell."

There is laughter and merriment. Until another platoon of mangled soldiers and townspeople arrives and Baba Ali turns back to the amputations table.

Manoj at the Gate

Manoj, Singh and Oka head to a nearby gate and determines that it is mostly held by Loyalists. There are about a dozen mercenaries outside. They fire the occasional arrow up at the gate-house to keep the men inside.

Singh tells the Loyalists inside, "You need to open this gate. Can't you tell the Separatists have won?"

The Loyalist in charge curses, “Get away from the walls, civilian! Besides, there’s a curfew tax to pay for the war effort.” Singh points out that he’s heavily armed and armored, so the Loyalist refrains from pushing the issue.

Nightfall

The others return from the gate to find Baba Ali still working on the casualties. He and Singh stay up all night treating the wounded.

Flight of the Dawn Patrol

The Yarite attack begins with a wyvern flyby at dawn. Three of the beasts wheel and dive over the city, mocking the defenders. Singh and Manoj resolve to set off Elder Bekka’s flares and decoy in some Yarite troops, then slaughter them in the gate-house. They gather the others and muster at a Separatist-held gate. Singh sets off one of the flares to draw the Yarites, then helps Manoj to open the gates and prepare the killing zone. Baba Ali stands up on the gate-house wall, armed with fire-bombs and a ballista.

The Yarite force approaches with three werewolves in the lead. The four wyverns are joined by the greater wyvern *Blackwing* and its rider *Lord Eska*, a Knight of Yar. Manoj surveys the approaching troops and warns the others, “This is going to be bloody. Is Captain Sienna going to back us up?”

Singh explains, “She says her primary responsibility is to maintain order in the streets, so no.”

It is at this point that Baba Ali shrieks out, “A werewolf just ran up the wall! Up the wall! It’s standing right next to me!” He flings himself off the wall to avoid its claws.

Singh reflects that the citizens of Belsa, already wildly ill-equipped to deal with the Yarite threat, are surely in for a beating. Manoj simply decides that he is doomed. But they follow through with the plan, opening the gate and preparing to attack the Yarite troops.

The werewolves lead the assault. Two of them storm the wall directly while the third lands inside the city directly by wyvern air-drop. Manoj, Singh and Oka grip their weapons and fight with grim determination. The wyverns follow up, either dropping straight down upon luckless Belsan militia to crush and claw them to gibbets or raining

fire-bombs upon them, sending them fleeing in terror. The mundane Yarite soldiery follow up only after the supernatural forces have cleared the way.

The characters fight hard, clawing their way through the werewolves and wreaking bloody havoc upon the regular Yarites, but the wyverns prove too much. When Lord Eska and Blackwing land to join the fight the characters' resistance breaks. First Kura and Oka fall to wyvern claw and Lord Eska's blade. Singh stands a while longer, blocking the door until he is overwhelmed by Yarite troops from one direction and the Knight of Yar from the other. Manoj puts his back to the wall and stands against Blackwing, aided only by the badly-wounded Baba Ali. He lasts until the wicked iron claws close upon his ribs and tear him down.

Baba Ali finds himself the last one standing, though only barely. As Lord Eska and Blackwing close in on him and the remaining Belsan militia scatter in panic he tries to plead to be allowed to tend to his fallen comrades. His words are muffled by blood and broken teeth and he is not heard. The great wyvern bites down and devours him.

The End of the Session

The session and the campaign come to an end with the characters all fallen in the defense of the city of Belsa against the Yarite hordes.