

REAVERS ON THE SEAS OF FATE - SESSION SUMMARY 4/08/2012

TODAY'S EPISODE: REINDEER GAMES

Our heroes pirate ship, the *Teeth of Araska*, is anchored off Fire Watch Island near the Azlanti Islands. The heroes are ashore investigating the monastery, which suffered a recent attack.

They are:

- ♣ Captain Sindawe H'kilata Narr, the fist-punchin' Mwangi monk (Chris).
- ♣ First Mate Ref "Serpent" Jorensen, the staff-bashin' Ulfen druid/ranger and his snake Saluthra (Paul).
- ♣ Gunnery Mate Wogan, the pistol-packin' celibate cleric of Gozreh (Patrick).
- ♣ Hatshepsut, monk and high priestess of a lost civilization who doesn't savvy much Common and her cobra Naja.
- ♣ Samaritha, the wand-blastin' serpentfolk wizard in the guise of a pretty half-elf, and now Serpent's wife!
- ♣ Bosun Tommy Blacktoes, the staff-slingin' sneaky halfling rogue (was Kevin, now an NPC).
- ♣ Lavender Lil, a buxom tiefling ex-prostitute, and Tommy's girlfriend.
- ♣ With them are the pirates of the *Teeth of Araska*, some 20+ souls consisting of:
 - ♣ Survivors from the ship's previous pirate crew
 - ♣ Ex-slaves escaped from their Chelish owner (Martino Marcellano) and recruited from their castaway island home
 - ♣ Various other recruits, some willing, some not.

WHERE DID THE MONKS GO?

Captain Sindawe, First Mate Serpent, Gunnery Mate Wogan, Samaritha, and Daphne (currently Dominated by Samaritha) are in the monastery's interior. Thus far, they have found no monks, bodies, or loot. Only bloodstains and battered down doors. And Serpent has just spotted salt-encrusted humanoid footprints in the gatehouse. The outer doors were recently smashed open,

then barricaded shut. The arrow slits facing in on from the west side are bricked up, but still functional on the east wall. The nervous pirates exit the gatehouse.

They move around the functional guard room looking for an entrance. This takes them into the main room and the banquet hall. They find only bloodstains and broken furniture and crockery. Wogan guesses, "The entrance must be one next floor up."

The pirates move into the ground floor kitchen and larder. There is stale bread on a cutting board and cold vegetable soup in a kettle over a cold fire place. Serpent and Sindawe eat soup and bread, while Samaritha asks, "What if it has been poisoned?" Serpent says, "Tastes OK so far." Sindawe nods, "Why waste poison when you got guys who can knock down doors?"

The larders shelves have been ransacked, yet none of the food appears to have been eaten or looted. Wogan eats one of the hanging sausages, again causing Samaritha to wince with concern. Something must be poisoned. Wogan notices that the potato larder is strangely positioned against a wall. Closer examination reveals a camouflaged hole at its back into the wall, where a ladder down awaits. Sindawe climbs down the rickety ladder. Wogan casts Light on Sindawe just before he disappears.

The ladder ends in a cellar. Sindawe immediately spots a desiccated corpse and quickly dismisses it as "not dangerous". He senses several people hiding further back in the dark. He calls out, "We just got here and mean you no harm. Please come out and talk to me. Or stay back there and talk to me."

Slowly, three humans in plain homespun clothing come forward. The woman, Janore, appears tired yet healthy. Morley appears to have a severe skin disease. And Barret is even worse; his skin features the same sores as Morley but much worse. In fact, at first and second glance he looks like a zombie. Janore asks, "Who are you?"

Sindawe replies, "Captain Sindawe. I am not judging, but your friends appear to be sick and a zombie."

Janore, "Oh yes, they have a disease which I have been tending with Lesser Restoration. Their wounds are rotting. Can you help?"

The other pirates descend as Janore relates recent events, "Gozreh warned me of the attack last night just before the front doors were knocked in. Erin and I hid in the larder. Later, Morley and Barret came in; they were wounded and revealed this hiding place. A short time later a soggy walking corpse came into the larder obviously searching for us; I watched from the ladder thru the slates. We think the undead left just before dawn. Erin went out to look for survivors. Then we heard the bell. Erin never came back."

Sindawe nods, "Yes, the flying reindeer, a peryton, got him. We heard the bell as we approached. The bell attracted the peryton; it flew into the belfry and the ringing stopped. We fought the creature later but only managed to drive it off. Is there an island nearby that it might have come from?"

Janore answers, "There is a nearby pillar that had a peryton on it. Supposedly. Perhaps the scent of death attracted it."

Serpent asks, "Samaritha, do you recognize the undead that Janore described?"

Samaritha asks Janore additional questions but is unable to identify it, even with the additions of "it carried a weapon, had blue skin, and stank of rot and the ocean". She explains, "There are many undead, but none stand out right now. The blue skin reminds me of the dog creatures from Devil's Elbow."

Serpent says, "That's bad. Those things were damaged by the sea. That weakness was the only thing that saved us then."

Wogan examines the sick men, starting with Barret, the worse looking of the two. Barret complains that he is tired and weak. His skin is a pale blue, like that of a drowned man. Wogan thinks it is a magical disease rather than a curse. He casts Lesser Restoration to retard the disease for awhile.

THE CELLAR'S OTHER FEATURES

The cellar's back wall has several cracks in it showing that it is above the island's surface. The monastery is actually built into/onto the rocky ridge formed between the two peaks. The cellar looks out over a grotto, a path leading from there up to the postern gate, and a row boat on the beach.

Janore says, "We also found this chest in that crumbling wall section. It's locked. We would have broken it open but were afraid the noise would reveal us." Samaritha casts Knock to open the chest. It contains a divine scroll and a large number of potions. None are Remove Disease.

Wogan examines the desiccated corpse. The corpse has been down here for decades, perhaps longer. He probably didn't die from wounds. Wogan removes a silver holy symbol of Gozreh from the out stretched hand. The dead man also wears a magical breast plate with a Chelioxian symbol dating from before that country's association with Asmodeus. That would make it over a hundred years old.

MORE INFO AND MORE DOCTORING

Wogan asks, "How many monks lived here?"

Janore corrects him, "Fifteen hermits."

Wogan continues, "Any recent weirdness to explain the attacks? Any recent visitors?"

Janore shakes her head, "Nothing weird. We did have a ship visit a week ago. Captain Baumann and the Black Bunyip. We deal with her type very cautiously; we never let them in. We let them have fresh water from the cistern out back. Their landing party talked to us from the base of the wall. They were tense. They left after they loaded the water.

Barret, who has been very quiet until now, grabs Wogan demanding, "You have to help me. I'm dying!"

Wogan very calmly and with some compassion explains, "If you remain calm, you will make it through to the dawn when I will have a Remove Disease for you. But I have nothing I can give you now." Then he remembers Samaritha's explanation that the undead might be connected to the other world creatures of Devil's Elbow. He digs out his orichalcum statue of Sarenrae. He hands it to Barret, saying, "Hold this and pray. It will help." He is disappointed that Barret is both unimpressed and does not burn when he touches the precious metal.

Barret drops the statue and grabs Wogan again, "You have to help me!" Sindawe tells the man, "Calm down. Or you can die now. Your choice." Morley and Janore restrain Barret until he relaxes.

Serpent says, "Wogan. We can use the healing kits to give them an edge in the coming hours." The two pull out poultices and potions and begin work. Wogan, with aid from Serpent and Samaritha, manages a 40+ roll for Morley. Janore is impressed, "Gozreh truly guides your hand."

Sindawe declares, "OK. Let's get cracking."

Morley and Barret both decide to stay put in the cellar. The others exit and cover the secret passage back up.

Sindawe asks to no one in particular, "Should we tie them up? To prevent collateral damage if one of them turns?"

Janore says, "Do you think that will happen?" It is clear she believes the worst is over.

Sindawe shakes his head, "Never mind. Not my problem."

Janore takes the pirates to the dormitory, a large room divided into cells by wood panels and hanging cloth. Janore yells out several names, but no one answers. A quick search turns up only meager possessions and blood stains. But no bodies.

Sindawe says, "Take us to the bell tower. We need to signal our ship."

Janore corrects him, "It's a belfry."

THE BELFRY

Janore takes them to the tower's ground floor, which used to be an armory. It now contains tools and a large variety of odds and ends gathered from the ocean's flotsam. The pirates climb the stairs upward. The next floor up is a room with a bed, desk, pot belly stove, and a bird cage. A large hole in the wall has allowed weather and seagulls entrance to the room for a long time. Above is a trap door reachable by the spiral stair case. The desk is heavy with bird droppings.

Janore explains, "No one has lived here for a long time. The hole in the wall has been there since before I arrived. The shutters that once covered it were torn down for fire wood."

The group halfheartedly searches the room; none are eager to tackle the mounds of droppings. Sindawe says to Serpent and Wogan, "I think the weird recent events aboard our ship are due to Tommy and Lil's lady demon friend, Seyanna."

Serpent, as if this thought is obvious to everyone, replies, "Well, of course!"

Sindawe shakes his head in annoyance, then continues, "We'll have to talk to them when we get back aboard. I'd like to know what's going on and why Seyanna is even bothering to teleport to our ships for trysts."

Serpent offers, "She's a demon. It's probably entertaining."

Sindawe blinks, "Really? She can have sex with just about anyone in the world. She can teleport to any place you would ever want to visit. Heck, in hell she can probably ski down mountains made of souls. Why would she hang out on my... our ship?"

Serpent, "She's probably bored with all of those other things."

Sindawe, "God damn, I hate female demons; they're all lazy. She should be doing something that doesn't involve us. Like world domination."

Janore whispers to Wogan, "Are your friends crazy?"

Wogan, "No. We just lead rich and interesting lives."

They climb the stairs and out onto the top of the tower. Battlements line each side. An overhead wooden arch supports a large bell covered in peace and serenity symbols. Erin lies dead in a depression below the bell - his heart is missing, torn from his rib cage. Nearby is a message written in chalk: "Beware the sea!" There is no roof.

Sindawe cautiously checks the bell's underside for monsters. Then they examine the body. Oddly, it appears the heart was a specific target of the peryton as there are few other wounds on the body. And suddenly the peryton flies by the belfry, gouging Sindawe's back open with its stag horns. It hurts Sindawe, but it hurts more knowing that the peryton "snuck up on them" despite several reasons that should have prepared them for the creature's attack.

The peryton turns back and hits Sindawe again. Samaritha casts Fly on Sindawe. Serpent drinks a Fly potion. The pair close with the peryton. Daphne casts Summon Monster for a dire bat. Janore tries her sling.

The peryton attacks Sindawe again hitting with a hoof and critically hitting with its horn. The damage is enough to knock Sindawe unconscious, which in turn triggers its "heart ripper" special attack. Sindawe spends his last Infamy Point to avoid instant death. An odd wind moves the Janore's sling stone into the peryton's face distracting it from its heart ripper attack. The unconscious Sindawe floats to the beach below, saddened by his misfortune.

Serpent hits with his staff. The summoned dire bat scratches futilely at the peryton. Bad luck hounds the parties' ranged attacks; they are happy that Jaren the Jinx is nowhere nearby to make it worse. The peryton critically hits Serpent (33pts) with its horns, but does not get its "heart ripper" attack. Samaritha tries a spell but the peryton shrugs it off.

Serpent manages to critically hit (Thinky Bits) the creature with his staff, crushing its skull. The monster plunges to the beach below. The dire bat scoops Sindawe out of the way and deposits him on the belfry. Janore and Wogan cast cure spells on Sindawe. Serpent flies down and cuts off the creature's horns. Wogan says, "Hey, cut off some steaks. I want to know what that thing tastes like: it has wolf, stag, and bird parts."

Sindawe, now awake, says to Serpent and Wogan, "Well, that does it for me. I'm ready to leave."

Serpent, "You don't want to stay for the undead attack?"

Sindawe, "No. They're unlikely to have treasure. They handily overran fifteen clerics of Gozreh. And their attacks cause disease. It's going to suck."

Serpent and Wogan are unwilling to say, "Yes, let's go." But are also unwilling to say, "Suck it, monks!" Sindawe starts to signal their ship.

Janore eagerly declares, "I can help you find the Black Bunyip! We steal bits of hull from suspicious ships whenever we can. We use those bits to fuel a spell that can find the vessel. And I'll give you the spell and wood if you defend the monastery."

Sindawe replies, "I don't believe you. If you're lying, I want you to know we'll torture you to death. Some of my crew are real experts."

Janore speaks to Wogan, "You wouldn't let them do that would you? To another priest of Gozreh?"

Wogan replies, "Well... probably... yeah."

Janore says, "But that's evil!"

Serpent tells her, "No. Real evil would be us torturing you for the spell and materials, then leaving you to the undead."

The three question the female cleric for a short while until they are somewhat satisfied that she is telling them the truth. They don't actually agree to defend the monastery.

WARNING THE SHIP

Wogan points at the horizon, "There's a storm approaching."

Serpent squints, then says, "It will miss the island."

Wogan replies, "Uh. I think its going to hit us."

Serpent, "Nope. Never. Going. To. Happen."

Meanwhile, Sindawe signals the ship. Tommy brings out a ship's boat. Sindawe fills Tommy in while the peryton corpse and its rack are loaded. Sindawe concludes with, "We'll need the orichalcum spears for tonight. Then you'll take the ship further out to avoid undead attacks tonight."

Tommy looks at Sindawe thoughtfully, then at Janore. Then he seems to come to a realization, winks at Sindawe and says, "Aye, aye, captain." And then they're off.

The next boat back has the spears and an extra large crew. The pirates are dressed somewhat convincingly like zombies. Sindawe sighs, takes the spears and tells them, "Go back to the ship. I'm not planning on murdering the monks tonight. And watch out for undead coming out of water. This area's lousy with them."

Wogan adds, "Double the watch."

The disappointed pirates return to their ship, pausing to moan for brains from time to time.

An orichalcum spear is loaned to Janore. The other is handed to Daphne. Samaritha explains to the dubious duo, "That metal is special. It can injure other world creatures where most weapons fail. I hope we don't need them."

ZOMBIE CHECK

Sindawe decides that their next step is to search likely areas for hiding zombies, then zombie proof the place for the coming night which is many hours away. Wogan points out that the storm isn't very far off and will be there before night... but his words don't register with the others.

Sindawe has Janore lead them to the south side of the monastery, explaining, "If I were commanding disease carrying zombies, I would have a couple hide out in the cistern during the day, hoping to score a free recruit or two from the ranks of the thirsty survivors. Bites or diseased laden water; either will do. If not, well, we'll need clean water for tonight."

The cistern has been dug into the island's stone. Its upper lip is several feet above ground level. Recent rains have filled it to near capacity. It has no cover. Janore explains, "The wooden cover went into the fire place last winter. We just leave it uncovered. If it gets too low or salty, we use Create Water and Purify Water to build it back up."

As they approach the cistern for a closer look Sindawe feels a vague sense of dread, but fights it off. Then a figure steps out from behind a clump of scrub brush. Its hair is like rotting seaweed. Its skin is algae colored and hangs loosely on its bones. Long, horrific breasts reveal the figure to be female. Her visage is so terrible that Wogan is overcome by the horror (6pts Str damage). The hag laughs manically.

The gang is ready though! Samaritha hits the hag with a Ray of Enfeeblement (4pts Str penalty). Sindawe connects with a fist. Wogan successfully casts Blindness on it. Janore holds an orichalcum spear at ready and asks Wogan again, "You're not really going to let them kill me are you?" Wogan answers, "Probably not."

Then another hag jumps out of the cistern, screaming, "Leave my sister alone!" Daphne fails her save versus the Horrific Visage. Serpent switches from prodding the cistern bottom with his staff to beating on the new hag, while Samaritha blasts it with her Magic Missile wand. Wogan then hits it with a blunderbuss blast. Janore stabs it dead with her orichalcum spear. Sindawe beats on the blind hag, allowing Daphne to kill it with a thrown orichalcum spear.

Wogan searches the bodies, finding wands and rings. Serpent pokes around the cistern looking for the third hag. He doesn't find her but he does find a bag of items (50gp) looted from the monastery. Sindawe asks Serpent to backtrack the hag that was hiding amongst the scrub brush.

He doesn't find those tracks but he does find a bloody trail leading from the rear of the monastery (the dormitory) to the beach.

Sindawe eyes Janore, then says to her, "Janore, why are your sisters trying to kill you?"

Everyone looks at Janore with varying degrees of suspicion while Janore looks incredulous. She defends herself by saying, "I'm not a hag. I cast a Cure spell earlier. Remember? And you rescued me from the cellar."

Sindawe and Serpent refuse to believe her and the arguing continues. Wogan manages to convince them of Janore's innocence or at least that the hag wants to work with them. Sindawe finally relents, "I'll kill you when you betray us."

A light rain reminds them that the storm is almost upon them.

THE SEARCH CONTINUES

Janore leads the group to rooms not yet investigated. One is a store room at the base of the belfry. She says, "The prior had the only key. We don't actually use it as a store room." All of the pirates are immediately suspicious that the prior has been running secret experiments in the room that attracted or caused the undead.

Serpent easily forces the door open. And the pirates are immediately convinced that the only thing evil about this room is its mold content. It smells of mildew. Sea water pools stand here and there. Items and walls have crumbled into debris piles. The pirates spread out to search. Wogan looks up and narrowly avoids the dripping green slime. The pirates quickly exit, leaving the green slime to its kingdom.

Sindawe says, "Let's hole up on the second floor. Janore, how many ways are there up?"

Janore replies, "The stairs in the main room. The trap door in the distillery tower. And there are rooms we haven't checked out on both floors too." Much later she remembers that the hole in the belfry tower allows easy access to the outside portions of the second floor. And there are some ridiculously easy to climb sections along the outer wall. The place is pretty much a sieve.

Wogan asks Janore, "Do you know what ingredients went into that wine? I haven't seen any grapes. I tried some; it was pretty terrible."

Janore looks at Wogan with a mixture of horror and pity. "Dwight, the Druid, was our wine maker. He was using berries from the assassin vine."

All of the pirates look queasy. Serpent asks, "Where's that vine?"

Janore tells them, "The westernmost alcove on the north side of the monastery's exterior." Sindawe wonders at their fortune in avoiding the assassin vine; sheer stupid luck.

The pirates check the prior's room, which has been broken into and wrecked. No body and nothing of value in evidence.

The next room is actually over the gatehouse's entryway with access to the guard rooms on side of the gatehouse. One guard room, the one with the arrow slits bricked up, has been repurposed as a midden. Samaritha starts to ask, "What's a midden..." when the smell hits her... "Never mind." There is a large pot near the murder holes, clearly for boiling oil. But there is no oil in the entire monastery and little fuel to keep it boiling for long anyway.

The next room is a scriptorium. It has several arrow slits facing the belfry tower. Again the room has been ransacked by rampaging undead. Spilled ink and blood stain many surfaces.

ZOMBIE PROOFING THE PLACE

The pirates do their best to make the second floor defensible. They raid the store room for supplies: crowbar (bent), saw (rusty), hammer, a pound of nails, ropes, and spare planks. The assassin vine wine is poured into the pot in the murder hole room. A fire of broken furniture is used to heat the contents. The wine turns out to have a boiling point closer to oil than water.

Planks are tied and nailed into place to cover the stair's second floor landing from missile fire. A barricade of broken furniture is placed at the top of the stairs. The trap door to the winery is nailed shut. Doors leading to the belfry and the second floor's exterior are locked.

Several pirates make a run to the kitchen for snacks.

Janore invites Wogan up to the roof to embrace the storm, a common practice amongst Gozreh's followers. Sindawe knows she's luring him up there to work her hag powers on him. The two clerics yell a conversation, then drop into prayer and mediation.

After a short while Janore yells, "Gozreh's going to help us! I had a vision of a seagull. Does that mean anything to you?"

Wogan yells back, "The seagull poop room?" The pirates one floor down are oblivious to the conversation.

The clerics investigate the seagull poop room, located below the belfry. Their search reveals a leather backpack glued to the underside of the stove. The pack can't be dislodged so they wrestle its contents out: a wizard's spell book ruined by the elements and a barely legible journal. It is written in Chelioxian, by Arcayus the garrison wizard, maybe a hundred years ago. Janore skims several sections:

A fell wind blows this evening. I must venture out to inspect the wreckage. Earlier entries mention: Wars! Potential attacks by sea! Ulfen longboats approaching! The flagship sails a flag with scarlet mantis claws. A furious storm blew in from the Arcadian ocean and smashed the Ulfen fleet completely. Our prayers were answered.

At about this time, the sigils shared by the pirates begin to burn signaling that the other world's creatures are near. Sindawe moves to keep watch thru the northern arrow slits, Daphne and Samaritha keep watch from the guard room atop the winery using arrow slits facing east and south.

Wogan watches to the south, and Janore watches the arrow slits facing the belfry tower to the west. Light spells are placed on objects and thrown into the night to improve vision.

Zombie Gram

The zombies arrive during the height of the storm. They are blue skinned, sea water drenched corpses of Ulfen raiders. They are universally armed with axes. A squad of six jogs slowly up to the barricaded front doors and begin chopping with their axes. Wogan spots another three approaching from the south. He begins hammering them with a Call Lightning spell (3rd level during storms), dropping one immediately.

Several approach from the east heading for the distillery tower. Daphne casts Summon Monster and drops a Celestial Bear onto them, dropping one. Several more come rushing in to fight the bear. The bear is unimpressed by their attacks and kills two more. Then the zombies overwhelm the bear with their great axes; it winks out. The duo shot Magic Missiles and Grease at the zombies.

The zombies break thru the front doors and stumble into the gatehouse, where they are hit by boiling wine. They stagger forward despite their burns. Serpent uses this time to cast Bull Strength, Bark Skin, Snake Totem, and other buffs upon himself.

Wogan keeps hitting the zombies with lightning, killing several more, while counting another six that rush toward various ground floor entrances. And then he notices that the door to the belfry tower that Janore was supposed to watch is open. He runs out the door to find Janore fighting two zombies climbing over the battlements. He zaps one with lightning before he staggers back from their decaying stink.

Sindawe and Serpent wait at the top of the stairs behind their barricade. The zombies stagger up. Both pirates shrug off the stink. Serpent kills the first one up to the barricade. Those

behind swing great axes at Serpent; one hits (14pts). Sindawe stabs Shock Tooth (a spear) into another burned one, dropping it.

Janore channels Positive Energy damaging the zombies climbing the wall. The zombies fall over each other attacking the clerics (two natural 1's). Janore and Wogan end them with another Positive Energy Burst and a Call Lightning strike. Janore yells, "I think I have the solution! I found a scroll in the scriptorium. We need to be as high as possible before casting it."

Wogan yells back, "What does it do?"

Janore yells what sounds like, "It summons a storm!" She runs to the belfry.

Wogan looks at the storm overhead and shrugs. He follows Janore.

Samaritha and Daphne drops another zombie with Magic Missiles. Samaritha yells back, "They're climbing! We can't hold them off."

Sindawe yells out, "Ladies! Cross back over the balcony, then summon something heavy to crash the balcony!" He stabs another zombie down. Eight zombies are on the stairs, but only two can chop at the defenders. Yet the zombies behind them chop at the barricade without care for their front line brethren. Serpent bashes apart another zombie.

Daphne and Samaritha follow the order, using a summoned pony to wreck the balcony. The ladies run out to where Serpent and Sindawe are defending the stairs.

Sindawe tells no one in particular, "This is bullshit. They're hitting us all over. Zombies are not this smart. They're either following the plan from one hundred years ago or someone has been scrying us and is directing them right now."

Sindawe almost misses the zombie that drops silently behind him from the ceiling. He spins noticing its red mantis helmet, then dodges away from its twin sawtooth sabers. He is hemmed in between mantis helmet, the barricade, and Serpent. A Flurry of Blows produces no noticeable effect on mantis helmet.

CLIFF HANGER

A fast stealthy zombie? Wearing a red mantis helmet? Will the pirates live to torture Janore on the morrow? And most importantly, do any of the undead have loot?