

REAVERS ON THE SEAS OF FATE - SESSION SUMMARY 10/09/2011

The heroes stand inside the Cypher Lodge just outside Thorgrim's basement living chambers. Inside the room there is an unconscious Salvadora Beckett (Riddleport gendarme who exterminates fringe doomsday cults) hanging by chains from the ceiling over Thorgrim's battle circle. The shadowy environment reminds everyone of our visit to the hellscape in the shadow realm that lies beyond the bounds of our reality.

Our heroes are:

- Wogan, the pistol-packin' celibate cleric of Gozreh (Patrick)
- Tommy Blacktoes, the staff-slingin' sneaky halfling rogue (back on the *Teeth of Araska*, ensuring the loyal and professionalism of our crew)
- Sindawe H'kilata Narr, the fist-punchin' Mwangi monk (Chris)
- Ref "Serpent" Jorensen, the staff-bashin' Ulfen druid/ranger and his snake Saluthra (Paul)

Accompanying our heroes is Pirro (ex-slave porter, now a pirate on the *Araska*).

THORGRIM'S BEDROOM ANTICS

Thorgrim steps out from the darkness, but remains strangely veiled by shadows, and says, "Salvadora has been putting her nose into Cypher Lodge affairs. She's being punished. And you lot let Fenella die on that damn island." Shadowy phantoms with stylized white porcelain HAPPY FACE masks step into the light around the room, including a larger one with a SAD FACE mask. That last one says,

"Our master wants you to join us." Our heroes are not "joiners"; a fight starts. Luckily, we have our orichalcum weapons ready. Serpent announces, "Let's get Salvadora and run. These things will kill us if we stand."

The battle circle is so large that precious seconds are spent closing with Salvadora. Sindawe notes that she is manacled to the ceiling as he punches Sad Face. Wogan drinks from his orichalcum flask, spits out a spray of rum, and summons a positive energy burst upon a large group of the shadows; they sizzle in a satisfying manner. Serpent enhances his armor.

Sad Face attacks but misses. Sindawe leaps up and with a crushing blow breaks Salvadora's left hand, freeing her from being manacled to the ceiling – the broken hand slips through one cuff and the chain buzzes over the rafter as she falls to the sand; the pain also wakes her up. The Happy Face shadows attack. One scores a hit on Serpent for 2 Str damage. Salvadora casts Battle Rage (+2 to damage) on Sindawe saying, "Kill these things. I'll be OK." Thorgrim casts a spell that causes the sands of the battle circle to shift continuously; the sand sucks at feet and our standing becomes uncertain. Sindawe yells at Salvadora, "Run!" and lands another punch on Sad Face causing a hairline fracture on his mask.

Sindawe gets hit for 3 Str damage. Wogan gets hit several times, losing 4 pts of Str. Serpent gets hit again for 2 more Str damage. Thorgrim casts another spell opening a pit beneath Salvadora and Sindawe. Salvadora falls into the pit and disappears; the phantoms hover over the pit easily.

Serpent kills one of the Happy Faces by beating it to death with an orichalcum staff. Wogan delivers his 3rd positive energy burst via spitting rum from his orichalcum flask – monsters sizzle and 3 more die. The good times are short-

lived as Sad Face pushes the weakened Sindawe into the pit – he falls lightly the 40 feet to the bottom but finds himself unable to climb out. Salvadora calls upon a judgement and is bathed in a healing light.

The remaining Happy Faces attack hitting only Pirro for 3 Str damage. Thorgrim strides into the battle circle and points a wand at Wogan who screams in pain (6 pts non-lethal damage and sickened). The pit begins to chew on Salvadora and Sindawe; the sand at the bottom grinds like a gemstone tumble polisher. Pirro is firing bolts at the phantoms from his crossbow to no effect. Salvadora tells Sindawe, "Get out!" and casts *expeditious retreat* on him. Serpent throws a rope down the pit (he's 15' away, the pit is 40', so the rope is within grasp). Wogan uses his last positive energy burst to kill his Happy Face attacker.

Sad Face laughs and floats over to Serpent hitting him for 4 Str damage. Sindawe grabs Salvadora and climbs them out of the pit using Serpent's rope and the *expeditious retreat*. He clears the top and both roll to safety. Despite that the hungry pit continues to chew and shake the sand at the top down into its maw. Thorgrim hits Serpent with the pain wand. Pirro runs away from the remaining Happy Face.

Salvadora, who is surprised to be alive (a broken hand, down to 4 STR, and 10 hp), casts a light spell and crawls so that its glow encompasses Sad Face who writhes unhappily. Wogan steps to Serpent, pulls a *restoration* scroll, and removes the damage from Serpent's abilities. Serpent swings wildly at Sad Face and hits once.

Sad Face withdraws toward Thorgrim (and out of the light), "Chmetugo wants you for his undead legion. Shed your flesh!" Sindawe jumps up and races toward Thorgrim. The remaining Happy Face attacks and misses Wogan. Thorgrim casts a spell that darkens the room; attackers without special vision now have a miss

chance when attacking. Pirro shoots his crossbow, misses, and takes a point of Con damage thanks to a fumble. Worst pirate ever! Salvadora stands and casts See Invisible under the theory it will negate Thorgrim's spell. Serpent charges Sad Face and sends it into the critically injured range. Sad Face hits back for 2 Str damage. Sindawe charges past Thorgrim and hits Sad Face from behind. Sad Face moans, "No!!!" Wogan laughs, "Take that, Hollow!" (The players indulge in a brief discussion about Bleach, Anime, and such.)

Wogan and the remaining Happy Face continue to face off but land no blows. Thorgrim moves up and lets go with a dragon breathe attack (frost), he hits Sindawe for none (Evasion!) and Serpent for 24pts (failed save). Salvadora slogs thru sucking sand to Pirro and demands, "Load that crossbow and give it to me." Serpent runs up to Thorgrim, fighting sucking sand the whole way. He and Sindawe are close enough to start hemming Thorgrim in. Serpent notices a strange magical rune on Thorgrim's forehead; it's not a Cypher glyph but instead an Ulfen rune meaning memory, history, or family. He notes it but, unsure of its purpose, shrugs it off. Wogan clears the sucking sand with the Happy Face in pursuit.

Sindawe rolls into a flanking position and misses Thorgrim thanks to that one's banded mail. Happy Face damages Wogan for 1 Str. Thorgrim runs clear of his attackers taking a hit from Serpent in the process. He casts *burning disarm* on Serpent's staff (it is coated in the orichalcum metal); Serpent's hands sear but he refuses to drop the staff.

Salvadora grabs the loaded crossbow from Pirro, banes it, and shoots the last Happy Face who dies screaming. Serpent runs after the last opposing member, Thorgrim. Wogan casts *silence* on that area. Sindawe, still fueled by *expeditious*

retreat, dashes up to Thorgrim and hits him once. Thorgrim runs away again, escaping the *silence*. He says, "Fools! The Cypher Lodge has ways of dealing with intruders!" He casts a spell and turns to mist. And doors start slamming in the distance and getting closer. And finally, circles appear beneath each intruder, teleporting us away. Not Calgon's "Take me away!", just away.

GRAND TOUR OF THE CYPHER LODGE

Fancy Meeting You Here!

Sindawe appears in a mist filled library and immediately spots Hatshepsut (the monk and high priestess of a lost civilization who doesn't savvy much Common and her cobra Naja). The two talk in Aklo and determine to their mutual assurance that neither is an impostor.

Sindawe, "What did we discuss when we last departed?"

Hatshepsut hesitates then replies, "You told me how much you appreciate me." Any other woman would have gone into greater detail, but not terse Hatshepsut. She passes the test.

Hatshepsut explains that she and Samaritha had arrived at the Cypher Lodge just moments ago then the teleport circles appeared beneath them. Sindawe pockets a hammered silver scroll case while glancing at book titles. He then spots a portrait of Thorgrim, pulls it down, flashes his junk at it, then turns it to face the wall. Hatshepsut looks on but does not comment. They then turn their attention to the door which is locked; much pounding occurs as the door slowly, slowly gives way. (They take twenty.)

Are You A Spellcaster, Or Not?

Serpent and Pirro appear in a magic workshop filled with mist. Serpent begins healing himself with a *cure light wounds* wand; it takes awhile. Pirro begs him for "healing" too because the phan-toms drained his strength. Serpent says he can't do anything for him, and the two enter into an argument about wounds vs. ability damage.

Serpent identifies Thorgrim's lock down spell as the dread enchantment *spooky rooms!* Pirro is suitably impressed. Serpent turns to the door and begins pounding away. (They take twenty too).

Lucky We Had An NPC Along!

Wogan and Salvadora appear in a mist-filled dormitory room already occupied by Samaritha (the wand-blastin' serpentfolk wizard in the guise of a pretty half-elf). The three talk politely; Samaritha story mirrors Hatshepsut's. Salvadora had found out something strange was going at the Cypher Lodge, spirited Hatshepsut and Samaritha away into hiding, and then came here to investigate. She met up with Thorgrim and his phan-toms. They discover that their door is not locked, but decide to get things in order before wandering about. Wogan hands out healing and gives his trident to Salvadora, who currently has nothing but an empty crossbow.

Salvadora asks Samaritha, "What happened to the man I sent with you?"

Sam replies, "We wanted to help you but your man refused to come with us; he doesn't like magic."

Salvadora asks, "So, Jimbo ran?"

Sam replies, "Yes."

Salvadora states, "Yeah - his name wasn't Jimbo. It was Beltius Kreun."

Not-Samaritha's hand elongates into a blade and stabs into Salvadora. Wogan isn't surprised as he had read Salvadora's body language earlier and knew her questions were important. His blunderbuss roars blowing a nice hole in Not-Samaritha. Salvadora attacks with Wogan's trident but bends it thanks to a poor attack. Wogan casts *cure light wounds* on Not-Samaritha; it sizzles and recoils. Not-Samaritha says, "Join us Wogan! Masks are fun!", and stabs him twice for wounds and Str damage. Further fighting ensues with Salvadora falling unconscious. Wogan looks at her fallen body and turns and runs for it.

Hello There OH GOD NO

Sindawe and Hatshepsut break out of the library. An alarm/acid ward on the door activates; Sindawe avoids the acid but Hatshepsut gets mildly melted. He comforts her as she writhes because he has no healing and remembers that water and acid don't mix. She stops smoking and staggers to her feet. They walk down hallways until another door busts open; Serpent and Pirro emerge and are immediately hit by an alarm/electricity ward; they jerk entertainingly in a nimbus of blue lightning for a moment. Pirro's smoking form does not stir. Serpent sits up, hair smoking. Not-Hatshepsut takes the opportunity to backstab a flat-footed Sindawe twice for 34 points and 2 Con; he falls with a gurgle. Serpent screams, "Ha! I always knew you were going to betray us!" He leaps to his feet and rushes Not-Hatshepsut, whose form is melting into that of a blade-armed, porcelain-masked phantom.

Serpent attacks Not-Hatshepsut successfully until a blade slash across the eyes blinds him (actually a fumble on his part). Not-Hatshepsut attacks and hits several

more times, taunting him. Serpent desperately swings and finally connects and destroys the impostor phantom. His vision returns while he digs out his *cure light wounds* wand to stabilize Sindawe and Pirro, then heals Sindawe up to full. He heals Pirro to consciousness, then announces, "Pirro, I have no more healing for you." He turns and heals himself with the last charges from the wand. Then he guzzles some healing potions. Then notices his Lesser Restoration potions at the bottom of his pack, and exclaims, "Oh hey!" He drinks those too. A large tear rolls down Pirro's cheek.

Be Vewy, Vewy Quiet

Wogan runs from Not-Samaritha into the hallway and barely downs an *invisibility* potion just before she steps out of the room after him. She looks around the misty corridor, wondering where the corpulent cleric has gotten to. Another door opens down the hall and a Cypher Lodge mage runs out yelling, "Intruders!" He flees down the corridor and out of sight. Wogan sneaks softly into that room to get away from the impostor only to find another Samaritha and Hatshepsut staring blankly at each other. Wogan craps himself, freezes, and then begins watching them carefully with a *detect magic*; the two women wander out into the hallway. A Not-Wogan (was Not-Samaritha a moment before) is walking down the hall and is greeted by Samaritha; both radiate a strange aura under the *detect magic*, which Wogan identifies as "shapeshifting". Hatshepsut does not, so he concludes she's the only human in the place. Wogan wants to warn Hatshepsut and settles on, "I will whisper to her when she is slightly apart from the other two." But all three are vigilant and hear his whisper, so he whips out his pistol and shoots his doppelganger in the face. Not-

Wogan is unimpressed by the damage (DR 10/ orichalcum!) but all are surprised by his sudden appearance and the noise.

Wogan and Hatshepsut square off against Not-Wogan and Not-Samaritha. A surprised Not-Wogan is downed in short order by the other three. Wogan eyes Samaritha wearily guessing that her "shapeshifting" aura is from her "disguise myself as a human" trick. He declares, "We need to help Salvadora." They find her unconscious in the dorm room. Wogan heals her conscious and catches her up on current events.

The women correct his pronunciation of "Chmetugo" and begin to tell their side of the story. Samaritha and Hatshepsut explain they returned safely to Riddle Port aboard Clegg Zincher's ship. Thorgrim was quickly elected Cypher Lodge leader and just as quickly started behaving weirdly (e.g. putting his "I can spy on you" portraits everywhere).

Together Again

Sindawe, Serpent, and Pirro begin searching for Samaritha's room. All of them know little to nothing of the Cypher Lodge's layout. They clear spider webs with fire from a stairwell. Eventually, Serpent gets his bearings. As they walk past an observatory they hear music. Inside are Samaritha, Wogan, Salvadora, and Hatshepsut. They spend a fair amount of time making sure no one is a doppelganger; eventually non-lethal, non-orichalcum weapon "tests" do the trick. Outside the sky is full of purple lights. Samaritha peers out the window with a telescope and says, "Thorgrim is on the roof; that light show is his." The men discuss running while pocketing various valuables. Samaritha ventures, "I don't think

we can get out of the building with this lock-down spell in effect." The men bitch and moan about not being able to run. The women all roll their eyes, used to this level of valor in their menfolk.

Healing is passed around. They stop at a magic supply room for salt (salt water bypasses the phantoms' DR and burns them like acid). Samaritha describes the rooftop to us (a giant X). Wogan asks Samaritha about Thorgrim's abilities and equipment - mithral breastplate, mithral axes, a platinum amulet of office, 200 years petrified by a gorgon, undying gratitude to the Cypher Lodge for freeing him, transmuter, Ulfen (from 300yrs ago), lots of silver items, hates shapeshifters, and he likes the cold.

CYPHER LODGE ROYAL RUMBLE

The group walks up the stairs to the roof top door. Samaritha turns off the runic ward above it. The door opens onto the roof, which is bathed in the shadow realm's HELLSCAPE. Thorgrim spots us immediately and growls, "You cannot stop the Cypher Lodge!" He then casts *enlarge* upon himself. Six phantoms drift into view. We all groan.

Samaritha runs out on to the roof and yells "Thorgrim, stop what you are doing! We are here to help!" She blasts Thorgrim with a *ray of enfeeblement*. Salvadora begins shooting creatures with her bane crossbow (worthwhile but it faces DR 10). Pirro throws salt water bombs. Serpent finishes off a salt water burned shadow. Thorgrim casts *baleful polymorph* on Serpent, who fights it off (Paul spends a hoarded gold coin to avoid the ill effects altogether). Sindawe and Hatshepsut attack separate

phantoms. Wogan releases his *call lightning* on Thorgrim, who smokes but still stands.

The phantoms close with Serpent, Sindawe and Hatshepsut, because they are closest. One crits her for 10pts of Str damage and switches positions with her. The phantoms attacking Serpent score 2pts of Str damage.

Samaritha screams, "Stop it, Thorgrim! I command you, 'Surrender Now'." Her racial *dominate person* power fails to dominate Thorgrim. Thorgrim throws his enlarged axes (one dwarven, the other throwing) using Sliding Axe Throw, getting 6 attacks which include trip. Both axes are attached to chains which allow him to retrieve the axes between every throw. Sindawe is hit and tripped once. Hatshepsut is hit twice and tripped once. Serpent is hit and tripped. The monks stand up, taking attacks from doing so, and flurry of blows two phantoms to death.

Wogan hits Thorgrim with lightning again; he is hurting. Samaritha shoots Thorgrim with *daze monster* which has no effect. Pirro hits with a salt water bomb. Serpent decides to avoid AoO's by attacking from the ground. Thorgrim does his sliding axe attacks again, hitting Sindawe and Hatshepsut (she is tripped), Salvadora gets hit and tripped, and Pirro is knocked unconscious. Hatshepsut attacks from a prone position and hurts another phantom. Sindawe drops a wounded phantom.

Status: Four phantoms down, 2 standing, Pirro is unconscious, 3 more good guys recently tripped or still prone. Thorgrim has been hit by 3-4 *call lightnings*.

Wogan takes 1 pt of Str damage from a phantom hit. Samaritha *enlarges* the prone Serpent. "This isn't like Thorgrim, I don't know what's gotten into him!" she tells the woozy barbarian. Salvadora hits with a salt water bomb taken from Pirro. The enlarged Serpent stands up and kills a phantom. And then gets pummeled for

21 pts of damage by Thorgrim's machine-gun axes. He kills Sindawe with a hit then the players remember that Sindawe has deflect arrows (which Chris always forgets despite 99% of the ranged attacks being a total screw job for him, so go figure). Sindawe spends the gold fate coin meant to save his life to instead deflect Thorgrim's dwarven axe and wrap its trailing chain around a lightning rod on the roof.

Sindawe steps forward and downs the last phantom. Hatshepsut rushes Thorgrim invoking an AoO; his throwing axe knocks her unconscious. Wogan hits Thorgrim with another *call lightning* thru his hung-up axe. Samaritha casts *magic missile* which fails against Thorgrim's *shield* spell. Serpent closes with Thorgrim, two giant Ulfen warriors face off in the middle of the X formed by the tower's roof. Thorgrim hits Serpent with his throwing axe but Serpent spends a gold fate coin to avoid the damage and weaken Thorgrim's AC for his next attack. Serpent sees that the Ulfen rune on his forehead is glowing magically. Sindawe attempts to trip Thorgrim via jumping up and down on the pinned axe chain; it fails. Samaritha moves up behind Serpent but tells him she has no spells left. Salvadora moves closer, awaiting some kind of opening. Serpent swings twice and hits once thanks to his gold fate coin (spent earlier). He whispers something to Samaritha in the tongue of serpents. Thorgrim swings his axe and wrecks Serpent for 29 hp on two hits. Blood runs down his limbs; he is only barely standing. Thorgrim appears to be going strong despite his wounds and being down an axe. We prepare to die.

Until Samaritha, who had been carefully sneaking forward, uses *erase* (via her bonded object) on the rune on Thorgrim's brow. Thorgrim's blank, dead-eyed Ulfen features are replaced by angry, dead-eyed Ulfen features. He screams into the wind,

"I am Thorgrim, son of Halgrim, the Bloody, the berserker! We do not bend our knees to spirits! Demon, show yourself!"

Serpent doesn't attack Thorgrim and decides to stand his ground. Sindawe drags Hatshepsut's fallen form away from the fight to relative safety. "What's going on?" he demands.

Serpent says, "It's a rune of memory, it was probably being used to control him."

Sindawe sputters, "What? When did we find that out?"

"Earlier, in Thorgrim's chambers, I noticed the rune, but I didn't put two and two together till just now. I asked Samaritha to move in and get rid of it while I held him off."

Wogan casts *cure light wounds* on Hatshepsut.

The demon Chmetugo appears at a far end of the roof and complainingly says, "You picked a poor time to find your courage!" Samaritha shoots him with magic missiles (they work). Salvadora mines her knowledge of extraplanar threats for anything that might help. Sindawe notes her expression and decides Chmetugo's only weakness is lactose intolerance. Salvadora swipes Serpent's silver scimitar off his belt and yells, "I'm not going to run! And by the way we are screwed!"

Thorgrim locks eyes with Serpent and uses a Cypher Lodge trick to do a sudden data dump; Serpent's head hurts. Thorgrim then moves closer to Chmetugo who attempts but fails to throw Thorgrim off the roof with *telekinesis*. Sindawe misses with an alchemist's fire. Wogan hits with a salt water bomb, then remembers back to their previous encounter with Chmetugo in the undersea cavern on Devil's Elbow. "Oh yeah, salt water didn't bother him the last time I threw it at him either."

Serpent moves up tries to strike the shadowy demon with his staff, but it easily shifts out of the way.

Thorgrim changes into a dire wolf, leaps at Chmetugo (who is hovering just off the roof), and latches his jaws onto him. They fall out of sight. Sindawe rushes over to see the two fall entwined together into the shadow realm, until Chmetugo teleports away, leaving Thorgrim to slam into the earth. Ulfen blood pools out from his unmoving body. Samaritha drifts down via levitate and grabs the Cypher Lodge command amulet. She levitates back up and turns off the alarms, locks, and wards.

Samaritha says, "There's just one more thing we have to do!" Everyone stares expectantly until she kisses Serpent. Wogan says, "We all have to do that?" Sindawe wipes his mouth and declares, "I hope not."

Dénouement

The PCs level up to 6th! Paul settles on Druid 6 for Serpent. It's Monk 6 for Sindawe and Cleric 6 for Wogan. They barely know what to do, it's been so long since they leveled.