

REAVERS ON THE SEAS OF FATE - SESSION SUMMARY 10/23/2011

TODAY'S EPISODE: "PRESS GANG"

The heroes exit the Cypher Lodge's front door. They are bruised, bloody, drained, tired, hungry, and otherwise scarred by a wild night of mayhem. At the foot of the building rests Thorgrim's wolf-form corpse, which shifts slowly back into the shape of a human. Our heroes 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)
- Bosun **Tommy Blacktoes**, the staff-slingin' sneaky halfling rogue (back on the *Teeth of Araska*, ensuring the loyal and professionalism of our crew)
- **Hatshepsut**, monk and high priestess of a lost civilization who doesn't savvy much Common and her cobra Naja (NPC)
- **Samaritha**, the wand-blastin' serpentfolk wizard in the guise of a pretty half-elf (NPC)
- **Salvadora Beckett**, the half-orc member of the God Squad (NPC)
- **Pirro**, ex-slave porter, now a pirate on the *Araska* (NPC)

*EXPLANATIONS, OR "2 * 2 = THE YELLOW SIGN!!!!"*

As Thorgrim's body shifts back into his human form, the group hears a distinct metallic "ding." They examine the corpse. Sindawe finds a shiny metal fragment with a cypher glyph inscribed on it nearby, which originated from the serpentman posing as Elias Tammerhawk's orichalcum plaque at the top of the Riddleport Light many weeks back. When we foiled his plan to open the Cypher Gate, that glyph-plaque blew up shooting broken pieces of it into everyone present – we all have a cypher rune on our bodies where a shard is embedded.

Serpent relates Thorgrim's thought blast that he sent right before his fatal encounter with Chmetugo the shadow demon, which includes information on orichalcum and portals. As Serpent unpacks the knowledge gained and we combine it with the events of the last months, we piece together a little more of the technical details of the matter. Fake Tammerhawk's (a male serpent folk) Portal Control Device, pre-breakup, was an orichalcum plaque with, we think, eleven glyphs on its surface (there are eleven visible matching runes on the Cyphergate). The PCs and NPCs near the explosion each have one (or more?) shrapnel bits, each a specific glyph from the plaque, embedded in their flesh. This causes a strange matching tattoo-like rune to appear on our flesh above the embedded piece. Basically, Tammerhawk's orichalcum plaque was an artifact that serves as a portal (e.g. the Hellmouth) control device, but now that it has broken into fragments, those

fragments make nearby portals unstable (e.g. meth for black holes). The portal control device can be rebuilt by collecting all the glyph pieces from that day. We realize that a glyph is probably inside everyone who was there at the ritual that day. Wogan, Serpent, Samaritha, and Hatshepsut go down the list of individuals near Tammerhawk's plaque went it blew: Tommy, Serpent, Wogan, Sindawe, Thorgrim (dead), Samaritha, Hatshepsut, two gendarmes (Ansar and Kurush), fake Tammerhawk (who escaped), and Riddleport crime lord Clegg Zincher. Everyone is ill at ease upon the realization that Salvadora is taking notes. It is not outside the realm of possibilities that Salvadora would disappear all of us if meant removing a real threat from the Overlord's city. (Damn cops!)

Tammerhawk was using the glyph-plaque to open the Cyphergate to let in a shadow army of serpentmen to the world; when we disrupted that with the *Jade Serpent of Tdersius* it closed the Cyphergate but released a massive bolt of energy towards the hidden Dark Gate that shattered its arcane orichalcum seal. The Cyphergate itself is not made from orichalcum, the metal's properties seem to lie in closing crossover between the planes. The PCs' weapons are coated in orichalcum from items we now call orichalcum plates that were found on Devil's Elbow. Those plates had glyphs matching the glyphs on the plaque and were part of the much larger but otherwise matching orichalcum plug originally sealing the Dark Gate on the island. When we approached the plate matching our embedded glyph, there was a harmonic resonance that guided us to it specifically, and then upon touching them they turned into weapons suited to us. There was also some worked orichalcum lining the room the Dark Gate was in; we obtained some of this which we call "orichalcum sheets" – just a raw form of the metal without a specific arcane use, it was coating the room in a kind of defense-in-depth strategy, like a lead-lined box or something.

Sindawe picks up Thorgrim's glyph piece, and unexpectedly it melts and merges into the orichalcum already on Sindawe's spiked fighting gloves. Both runes appear on their surface. (Note: this gives Sindawe's weapon an extra +1 effect.) Sindawe's initial reaction of "Get it off of me!" is replaced with "This is pretty cool!".

LOOT

Loot from last game found while invading the Cypher Lodge:

- Lute, pocketed by Wogan
- Silver scroll case, pocketed by Sindawe: arcane scroll of dispel magic. The scroll is gifted to Samaritha
- Telescope, pocketed by Sindawe

Wogan finds the following magic items on Thorgrim's corpse: mithral breastplate (+1), mirthral throwing axe (+1 returning with chain), mithral dwarven war-axe (+1 throwing, returning with chain), ring (protection +2), and wand (Pain Strike with 10 charges). The women ignore the

looting as best as possible.

Everyone is discussing who will take over leadership of the Cypher Lodge as a group of gendarme approach being lead by the Splithog Pauper (real name Beltius Kreun, an undercover God Squad agent). Eli, the Cypher Lodge's resident boy sorcerer, is also tagging along. Samaritha and Hatshepsut decided to mother Eli after the Devil's Elbow and took him with them into hiding when they fled the Lodge. Kreun and Salvadora discuss what has happened to each other since last they met.

Salvadora states, "I'm going to send my men inside to look around." The gendarmes stand expectantly at the door, having had to drag off intruders with partially melted faces from the grounds from time to time.

Samaritha quickly says, "Yes, of course. I will turn off the runes." She manipulates the badge of office taken from Thorgrim and deactivates the wards on the doors of the Lodge.

Sindawe asks Pirro to go in and release the Cypher Lodge mage Elril from the cupboard where he was being stored by us for safe keeping. "You mean... 'release' him?" He and the gendarmes eye each other with mutual distrust as he scurries into the Lodge.

Salvadora takes her leave with some troops to find a medic on Maskyr's Island, home of the gendarme HQ; she is still wounded, drained, and has a broken hand. Our heroes fail to lure the Splithog Pauper to his death behind the building; he makes a "I am keeping my eyes on you" gesture which is reciprocated with "I am going to kill you" gestures.

Our heroes head off to the Gold Goblin for a drink and breakfast. It's very early and way before opening but Iesha and several other staffers are there cleaning up. Iesha ignores Sindawe's request for breakfast and drinks. The ladies disappear to the bathroom for half an hour. Wogan and Serpent begin their morning prayers to Gozreh in the middle of the casino floor.

Meanwhile, Sindawe goes to the kitchen and starts breakfast. He is heating up a pan when he hears a gruff, faked adult voice from the pantry: "Whose messing around in my kitchen? Pig Fuckers!!!" (A decent impersonation of Wendt the cook's bouts of Tourette's Syndrome.)

Sindawe calls out, "Durt? Come on out of there. That pantry is where Iesha likes to corner unwary men with unimaginative and painful blow jobs!"

Durt, emerging from the pantry, says "Don't I know it!" He is sent for beers by Sindawe. He finds Pirro behind the bar pouring a bit from many bottles into a large glass, resulting in a drink with many layers.

Sindawe cooks a truly horrible breakfast (natural 1 on an untrained Cooking check). Most of gang troop thru the meal by applying salt and ketchup liberally. However, Samaritha looks more and more green as the meal proceeds (thanks to a failed Fort save). From her doubled over position beneath the table she leads a vote declaring "Sindawe is not allowed to cook for us ever, ever again."

Saul, the owner, comes down, inquires about our well being and invites us to the upstairs office for a drink. We accept. Saul passes up on the breakfast repast despite a friendly invitation

to dine.

Upstairs Saul asks us what we have been up to. Sindawe spins a tale about how a power hungry Samaritha lured the men to the Cypher Lodge and tricked them into killing Thorgrim who was hatching a plan of hideous portions against Riddleport. Saul nods, "Good girl, that one."

Saul tells us he has been buying up property on the cheap recently thanks to the tsunami (lots of leveled properties, dead owners, folks eager to sale, etc...). He reminds us that our being pirates and him being a Riddleport merchant/gangster is a synergy. We bring him cargoes to sell, he sells them, we kill off his competition, etc... He offers to take care of the boring and semi-dangerous work of routine buying and selling so that our shore leave can consist of more entertaining activities like wenching and murder. The group dives into the details and then branches off into getting supplies and additional crew for the *Teeth of Araska's* next trip out.

Saul tells us that Clegg Zincher has been lying low, so his organization has not been as quick as usual in offering "protection" to new businesses. Which is good because we can offer that protection; Saul claims to have access to muscle beyond the PCs. One of the businesses needing protection would be the new popular bar, the *Vile Fish*, housed in a ship stranded ashore by the tsunami. More discussion ensues, but slowly the gang breaks off to grab some Z's in their old rooms at the Gold Goblin.

Many hours later our heroes are awakened by casino operations. They spend time applying magical healing. A lot. They find Thorgrim's mithral dwarven war-axe missing. A little while later they find Pirro betting at Lixy Parmenter's ghoul table which is strange since he was penniless when we hit the hay.

Lixy is still slim waisted and cute; her ghoulish head, Dungo, is still foul mouthed and smelly. We quickly establish that Pirro took the missing axe and used it to open a line of credit at the Gold Goblin's cashier cage, and is quickly losing his initial stake of 2000 gp. We find this out because Pirro tells us the details without shame or reservation; he seems oblivious to angry looks from Sindawe and disbelieving "you did what?" looks from Serpent and Wogan. "Hey, four items, four of us, I get a share, I didn't sell the thing I'm just getting credit off it! And you know I'm lucky..."

Pirro is already down 1000 when he realizes that his credit might be taken away by an angry sea captain. His response is to go "all in" on his next bet while explaining, "Yeah, Bojask showed me the ropes of acquiring credit. He even suggested using the big axe we got last night." The PCs remember that Bojask, Saul's henchman, is an axe man and immediately suspect him of being a d-bag.

The others can't resist betting on the next spin with him – the way it works is that a big roulette-style wheel with the decapitated ghoulish head Dungo on it is spun; whatever topic the head ends up facing, it spits an insult at the bettor along that theme – the topics are things like "Courage, Race, Personal Hygiene..." Pirro loses his bet, while Wogan and Serpent win when

Dungo insults their hygiene by way of asking "Is that smell you or have you been rolling around in dead sheep?" Serpent is relieved to find out that he can reclaim the axe simply by paying the 2000 gp taken out on credit. He forks over Thorgrim's +2 ring of protection (valued at the 2000 gp). "There's your share, crewman!" Pirro tries to wheedle out more line of credit based on the ring, and Bojask agrees to another 500 gp credit for Pirro. The PCs leave them with some lame threats from Sindawe. Pirro proceeds to lose his 500 to Lixy while hitting on her. "Hey baby, you know who used to be a body slave? Moi!"

Serpent asks Saul to sell our remaining equipment. He agrees but asks us to be patient; it takes more than a couple hours to get the best prices on high value and magical goods. Serpent promises to be very impatient. We head off to squeeze Papa Barnacle. Crewman Gareb is spotted arriving as we leave; he is happy and healthy. At least one of our crew isn't screwing things up.

RELATIONSHIP ADVICE - DON'T ASK A GUY

En route Serpent asks, "Hey guys I need your advice. Samaritha talks a lot and I don't know what to do about it."

Sindawe offers, "Yeah, that's the worst. My parents used to talk a lot. Then my dad went off to sea. And stayed there. A lot."

Wogan says, "You could get her pregnant." Oddly, no one sees the flaw in this plan, they all seem to accept that a pregnant woman will certainly not talk as much.

Serpent, "I don't know if that would work. She's a serpent folk and I'm human." He begins to ponder it from a naturalist point of view. "I could shape change at the moment of conception! But I think lady snakes have their egg receiving parts on the outside."

Sindawe, "Or we could catch the bad guy serpent man, put a bag over his head, you wear a bag over your head, and at the moment of conception we pull you off and drop him into place. You would get the credit of course." Wogan and Sindawe begin discussing the specifics of this plan while Serpent reddens.

Serpent says, "No! No! I meant that she's talking a lot and I don't know what to say. That much talking makes me nervous. I am really only comfortable expressing myself stoically or with a lot of screaming and anger, just like traditional Ulfen men!"

Sindawe and Wogan ignore Serpent's pleas for advice in favor of razing him with additional randy suggestions. Serpent reddens further.

THE VILE FISH - DRINKS, REINFORCEMENTS, AND INFORMATION

We arrive at the bar. The *Vile Fish* is a large deep water fishing boat that was thrown several blocks into the city onto a narrow street, which avoided crushing existing structures (largely) but is now causing numerous traffic problems. The ship rests right side up and level thanks to a large bed of debris. Ex-captain Papa Barnacle is running the bar solo. He tells the crowd filthy joke after filthy joke while filling orders. "I'M THE CAPTAIN OF THIS BOOZE

SHIP! I LOVE DRINKING SO MUCH THAT THEY SAY WHEN MY HANDS CAME OUT OF MY MOTHER'S HOO-HAH, THEY HAD AN ALE MUG IN THEM! THAT'S A JOKE! BUT IT REALLY HAPPENED! LET'S GET YOU SOME DRINKS!"

We find crewmen Orgon One-Ear and Big Mike at the bar. Big Mike brags, "I'm a business man. I purchased a share of this bar from Papa." He buys Orgon another drink; Orgon is happy for it because he lost the last of his money several hours ago.

Wogan sets up a recruiting table and interviews some possible crewmembers. We get some likely candidates...

- Del: "I just got out of Shoreleave. I've been to sea on a merchantman before. And I've killed a guy. That's why I was in prison. But I just got out on a technicality." We are all deeply confused in "Who's on First" fashion for a while by "Shoreleave" being the name of the local prison. It gets worse when someone mentions "Shore Leave" the sailor. We hire him more out of confusion than anything else.
- Speg, a peg-legged man: "I got my leg bit off by a bunyip. No, my name is Speeeg! Not Speed!" Sindawe challenges him to some physical feats fearing a one-legged sailor is too slow. Speg climbs the net up the side of the ship/bar with amazing speed. Sindawe yells up to him, "You are hired!"
- Rolf, a big guy with lots of scars: "I killed an owlbear in the arena. I killed it with a lurpa! And no, I am not just trying to get out of city by pretending to know about sailing." We hire him as we think at least the owlbear killing part of his story is true, and that's good enough for a pirate.
- Delmer, a slow talking man. He *Forrest Gumps* his way thru the list of knots he knows how to tie. "I can tie the clove hitch, the sheet bend, the bowline, the square knot, the timber hitch, the pile hitch, the double pile hitch..." We hire him to make him stop.
- Jewell. Serpent says, "Hey, that's my grandmothers name!" Jewell replies, "I've only been teased once about my name." "What do you do?" "Stuff!" "What stuff?" "Things. I get things done." "What things? And be specific." "Things...that need to be done." He is dragged outside by Sindawe and beaten unconscious. The bar patrons ignore the beating.

All the applicants but Jewell are hired.

We start asking questions about Morgan Baumann of the *Black Bunyip*. Only we know that

she attacked and wiped out the crew and passengers of the *All Due Restraint*, a ship in the employ of Riddleport's Overlord. The Overlord placed a bounty on her head and agreed to keep that bounty quiet for 72 hours so the PCs could get a head start.

"Who worked for her? Who are her associates? What are her habits? Etc..." Sindawe attempts to sweeten the deal by buying a round of drinks and asking the bar on Serpent's behalf if the best way to settle a woman's wagging tongue is to get her pregnant. The bar eventually agrees after offering a short list of filthier and/or more violent means for shutting a woman up.

Serpent gets congratulated on becoming a father by many of the sailors. He counters by asking questions about Captain Morgan Baumann. Several sailors put two and two together and remark on his bravery for bedding Morgan. A rumor quickly spreads through the dock that Baumann is pregnant with Serpent's child and he is in pursuit to make an honest woman of her. The information this novel tale manages to elicit is:

- She ignores the Riddleport rule of "No piracy in the Varisian Gulf."
- She has a scar on the face and dresses like a man. Though dressing like a pirate captain man is still pretty effeminate in objective terms.
- Her first mate is an elf named Shantar Froese.
- Baumann and Shantar might be lovers. Or not.
- There are no known regular spell-casters in the crew, so they rely on straight up butchery.
- She has a large crew, several of which have their own reputations: Peg-leg Pete, Hack'em Harriet, and Slasher Jim. "Slasher Jim!?"

THE BUNNY RANCH SELLS MAGIC ITEMS

Several hours later, the gang heads off to Madam Pamodae's House of the Silken Veil. The scent of sex and incense waft out of the door. We are greeted by a filthy mouthed gnomish woman who is running the door: she offers us a large menu of sex acts. "Monkey Snatches the Purple Fruit, the Reverse Cabin Boy, the Dirty Andoren, and the Boulders Roll are all at standard rates. The premiums are the Rusty Venture, the Bolivian Hat Trick, Pirate's Delight, Blood in your Eye..."

Sindawe starts asking about fertility drugs or magic or rituals or whatnot to help out his good buddy Serpent. The gnome eventually barter Sindawe into a private room with promises of a real Mwangi woman skilled in the Mwangi fertility dance. Sindawe's encounter goes poorly as the woman is not Mwangi nor a dancer nor even black. She appears to be a Garundi woman dressed up in some racist's idea of what a Mwangi savage would be like. "Come and please Inzinga!" she demands as she removes her totem mask to reveal a visage even more frightening than the carved wood face. He leaves quickly, happy that she was at least a she.

Meanwhile Wogan and Serpent ignore the gnomish woman's sexual offers while demanding, "Magic item sales! Now!" The gnome sends someone to inquire about sales. Said individual returns with bad news. They are informed that the madame is at a religious retreat and

therefore there can be no magic item sales. Sindawe returns about this time.

A red-haired whore lures Sindawe to her room with promises of information. She says she's a friend of Tommy's. They converse via whispers (the "girls" are monitored via peep holes) while she gives him a hand job against the wall (also necessary because of the peep holes). She relates that the madame is angry at the PCs because they killed Captain Grudge who was her close, personal ally. Sindawe attempts to explain, "Yeah, that wasn't us" but fails miserably. The red-head points out, "You have his ship. No one will believe you are innocent in Grudge's death." Her whispered, "And there's more..." is cut short as Sindawe forces her head down and lets nature take its course. Afterwards, Sindawe is struck by just good that felt. Too good, in fact. He suspects charm magic or other supernatural influence. (Much, much later in the game session the GM admits, "Yeah, that cost Sindawe a temporary negative level." The player feels like there's a lesson to learn here, but decides it is easier to grab a beer.)

Sindawe returns to the lobby to find the gnomish woman giving a lap dance to Serpent while Wogan watches from a safe distance. She is hanging upside down from Serpent's shoulders, aggressively grinding her crotch. Serpent's muffled explanation, "We paid her 5gp to shut up. She offered to dance for us for the 5gp. At the time it seemed like a harmless thing to accept."

A SLIGHT DETOUR FOR MAGIC ITEMS

The PCs leave to follow up on Wogan's suggestion that they see Armando Rolf, high priest of the Publican House, which is dedicated to Cayden Cailean (god of wine, ale, and freedom; not Kato Kaelin, though the confusion is understandable). En route Sindawe tells them, "Madame now hates our guts because we killed her friend, Captain Grudge." Serpent and Wogan accept this information stoically; we are used to being hated. In fact, it makes us nervous as hell when people are friendly and helpful.

The Publican House is open and going strong despite the late hour. It typically stays busy until 4am when exhaustion finally takes its toll on the revelers. High Priest Armando is strolling about talking to the party-goers about liquor, its wondrous effects, and how drinking more just makes it even better. Armando agrees to sell us magic. We buy one Wand of Cure Light Wounds and peruse the potions he has on hand: Protection from Acid, Cure Moderate Wounds, Blur, Hold Portal, Hide from Undead, and Protection from Law. Sindawe gets the CMW. We have to return tomorrow for the wand. We ask if we can pay for it on credit, and Armando has the assembled revelers boom out the policy of the house; "CASH ON THE BARRELHEAD!!!"

WE DISCOVER ALCOHOL AND EXHAUSTION ARE A BAD COMBINATION

Briefly, the gang returns to the *Vile Fish* for "protection" talk with Big Mike. The talk goes nowhere fast because all of the participants are drunk and/or exhausted. Mostly drunk though. Last call gets us heading home.

(Everyone is asked for a Will roll to determine if they return home safely.) Sindawe rolls

super high and meets up with Hatshepsut for athletic sex in someone else's suite at the Gold Goblin. Wogan ends up in his own bed, snoring happily. Serpent awakens beneath the roulette table. Pirro ends up 500gp in debt but taps Lixy Parmenter's fine ass. She took pity on him despite her hard-bitten ways, and he is pretty cute.

NEXT DAY - LET'S TRY AGAIN

We return to talk to Big Mike, a newly minted partner in the *Vile Fish*, about protection for his business. He agrees to our 10% weekly rate for "friends".

Then we return to the ship to talk to our crewman Slasher Jim, who we hope served with Captain Morgan (as opposed to "Oh no, that's The Original Slasher Jim..."). Tommy says he just got in and is below deck. He's cleaning blood off of one his daggers when we find him. He tells us that he did indeed work for her and owes her nothing. He speculates that she would sell her recent cargo in the island continent of lost Azlant. He knows that they used one distinctive twin-peaked island (Firewatch) as a landmark to navigate there. Captain Morgan is a crack shot with a pistol and has a beef with Riddleport. She started out as a pirate's daughter, apprenticed on another pirate ship, returned years later, killed her paw and took his ship. Typical crew size is 30-40. Her 1st mate is as mean as she is and been with her for many years. The *Black Bunyip* mounts maybe a dozen cannon, a figure that concerns us as it's about double our own armament. She hates being called "ugly". The elves of the Mordant Spire are known to patrol Azlant and turn back or sink all outsiders they find. That's OK, we hate elves.

We also get an update on some of our crew's shore leave shenanigans.

- Orgon One-Ear and Dum-dum lost all of their money.
- Big Mike became a partner in the Vile Fish.
- Mano made some money.
- Slasher Jim spent all of his money.
- Goat is MIA.
- Sevgi broke even.
- Kahina seems pleased with herself and sports some new finery.
- Karomander donated most of his money to St. Casperian's Mission.
- Ori, with Saul's help, has re-provisioned the ship.

Sindawe issues orders, "Crew need to be back by midnight tonight if they mean to sail with us. We sail at dawn." Tommy oils up his whip.

A LAST FEW ERRANDS BEFORE WE SAIL

We pick up our Cure Light Wounds wand from the Publican House. Its activation word is

"Armando is Great!" Armando is pleased by this. We can tell, because he says "Armando is pleased by this!"

Then it is off to see the forge works dwarf, Garin Delar, about our orichalcum and what the dwarves are willing to pay for it. The dwarves, at our request, forge 7 lbs. of it into bullets for Wogan and two spears; they charge us 3 more lbs. of the metal for this. Which leaves us with 30 lbs. to sell; the dwarves give us 15,000gp cash money for the lot. That gets split 5 ways (Hatshepsut and Samaritha are included). Sindawe's plan to sell Captain Baumann to the dwarves for vengeance (she tortured their kin to death sometime back) is sunk with Garin's declaration, "We are dwarves. The overlord's price on Morgan Baumann's head is good enough for us. That's why we pay taxes. We are lawful." We have a nice friendly conversation about which of the short races is chaotic and therefore willing to pay for "murder for hire".

And finally, we're off to the Gold Goblin! Saul was able to purchase an astrolabe, compass, and sextant as per Wogan's request. The three items together add +8 to navigation rolls. Saul found them for 600gp, which is paid for equally by Wogan, Sindawe, and Serpent.

Serpent is hot to buy better armor with his new found wealth, but gets no leads: "Magic armor? Nope, never heard of it!" He stomps around the bazaar gnashing his teeth and leading his ten foot long snake behind him, but he just can't find anyone open for business. Aggravated beyond reason Serpent declares, "I should throw this useless wealth into the street", but ultimately decides to put in an armor order with Saul. He asks Tommy for some leads on magic for sale in the city, but only nets non-armor items: for sale are a Rust Bag of Tricks, Ring of Mind Shield, Ring +1, Bead of Force, and Horseshoes of the Zephyr (sorry, they can't be nailed to a snake... well they could be nailed to a snake but it wouldn't help the snake).

Sindawe and Serpent both also put in an order with Saul for a Belt of Strength. He promises to take care of everything for them.

OUR HEROES INVITE PEOPLE TO SAIL WITH THEM

Serpent invites Samaritha to his room for an important talk. He starts out stiffly but warms quickly to his task. "You are a loyal, dedicated member of the Cypher Lodge. Have been for as long as I have known you. Given all that is happened I expect that you will soon be very busy restoring the lodge's reputation, cleaning bodies out of the kill rooms, and electing a new leader. That will take a long time."

In the back of his mind he adds, "And then you will be busy unraveling the demented plots of your newly elected lodge leader, who will either be mind-controlled or have been replaced by a shape-changer."

Out loud Serpent continues, "Despite all of that I still want to ask you to sail with me aboard the *Teeth of Araska*. It would make me happy. You too, I think. Will you come with me?" Both realize that a "no" at this point means spending the winter season apart, perhaps much longer if the Riddleport harbor ices over heavily. Samaritha is overjoyed (girlish shrieks of "YES!")

at being asked and agrees immediately, "Yes, I would love to. What are we going to do?" Samaritha's enthusiasm does not diminish when Serpent explains, "We are going to hunt down Captain Morgan Baumann for the bounty issued by the Overlord." Yes, she is that in love with him. Serpent is just relieved that he doesn't have to play his "I love you" trump card.

She announces that there is shopping to do and Serpent says hopefully, "Will there be magic items?" She says "Definitely. Plus we can buy furniture for our room. We'll need a couch, a mirror stand, an armoire, and then we can talk about our feelings!" Serpent misses the "talk about our feelings" part as visions of magic items dance in his head. Samaritha and Serpent head off hand in hand to the market.

Sindawe in a nearby room takes Samaritha's shrieks of "YES" for a positive sign, and stalks off to find Hatshepsut. He solemnly invites Hatshepsut along for the voyage, "We need a skilled warrior such as you. Your company would please me." She solemnly accepts, especially once she hears Samaritha is going along.

Later, Sindawe and Wogan leave the apartments for a drink in the Gold Goblin's casino. Sindawe describes his latest scheme to Wogan. "Wogan, you ask Lixy Parmenter to seduce Bojask into Iesha's sex pantry. They'll go in there but I'll be waiting. I'll knock Bojask out and we'll cart him to the ship where he gets to spend all winter with us. I call it operation 'Pantry Press Gang!'"

Wogan replies, "Ok." Then adds, "Why is Lixy going to help us?"

Sindawe, "Because you're going to ask her, she likes you, and Bojask has forced himself on her at least once. It seems like a safe bet she hates him." The two pirates sagely agree that women don't appreciate that sort of behavior.

Wogan finishes his drink, grabs another, and walks over to the ghoulette table where Lixy is running her game. Sindawe goes to the kitchen and checks the pantry for a good hiding spot. He settles on "ninjaing" from the ceiling. He chuckles evilly as he wedges himself between two roof beams.

Wogan says to Lixy, "Hi. Would you invite Bojask back to Iesha's sex pantry?"

Lixy stares at him uncertainly. "Uh... why?"

Wogan, with manic enthusiasm, "It will be fun!" Then quickly reconsiders, "Sindawe wants to jump him. That's the fun part."

Lixy understands that the PCs' definition of "fun" usually involves murder and mayhem. And she does hate Bojask. She quickly agrees to do her part. After handing her game over to another employee she walks over to Bojask, whispers in his ear, and then disappears into the kitchen. He watches her walk away but doesn't see her go past the pantry and out the other side of the kitchen, where she hides in a remote hallway alcove.

Bojask spots his girlfriend, Iesha, thinks for a moment, then walks over and talks to her for a bit. He sends her upstairs with a playful slap on the behind to clean up a high roller's room. This should keep her busy for 20-30 minutes.

A short time later the pantry door opens. Bojask steps in, "Lixy? Where are you my little

sticky bun?" Sindawe drops down from above... like a ninja. He kicks the door closed and starts swinging. Bojask gets his axes out but still ends up on the floor unconscious.

Sindawe peeks out the door to see who has noticed. Wendt the cook is oblivious thanks to a busy dinner rush and random Tourettes Syndrome induced shouting (e.g. "Fig Puckers!!!"). However, Durt is perched nearby watching the pantry door. He says, "Sir?"

Sindawe, "Get me a big bag. Or an empty barrel. Or a big box with air holes. I need to sneak Bojask out of here."

Durt, "Oh thank the gods! You had me worried, sir."

"What? No! I was beating him unconscious. No hanky panky!"

Durt returns with a large barrel only partially filled with pickled eels. Bojask is loaded up and rolled out side to a waiting cart. Durt drives the cart while Sindawe walks along side.

Sindawe, "So the Gold Goblin staff uses that pantry for hooking up?"

Durt, "Yes, sir. A lot."

Sindawe, "We really need to get a pantry that's just for food storage. You know, for health reasons."

Durt, "Good idea, sir. I get queasy thinking about food coming out of room where Iesha was giving out Rusty Ventures."

They stop several times, so that Sindawe can beat Bojask back into unconsciousness. The barrel is delivered to the *Teeth of Araska*, where several crewmen are tasked with placing it into the lock-up. Said crew dutifully ignore the groaning contents; they're just happy it isn't full of dead dwarf slurry like the last time. Durt is sent home with a handful of coins and an interesting story.

MISSING CREW

Around midnight we realize Goat is still MIA. Interviewing the crew gets us Slasher Jim being the last one to see the Goat. "He was at the Dead Duck being hassled by some locals. I got bored and left. What did they look like? You know... They were land lubbers." We arrive at the DD where Ball-less Bill, the owner, tells us much the same story with a few more details: "Goat was drinking. Some locals started bothering him for being a freak show ("tiefling" equals "freak show" in many, many places). He beat them up. A lot. They beat him up a little. They left. Or he left. Or both. Anyway, later that day several of those men returned saying that their friend was stabbed to death in a nearby alley and it must have been Goat that did it. The gendarmes showed up and arrested Goat." He also remembers which precinct's gendarmes did the arresting.

We head over to the 29th Precinct, where we are greeted by a perky female desk officer (picture Caity Lotz from Death Valley), "Welcome, citizens! How may I help you?" We immediately suspect a trap because cops are never helpful, never happy, and never conveniently located for our needs. But we bravely continue on. We explain who we are after. She directs us

to see Captain Ben at the Shore Leave jail; Goat was transferred there earlier. En route Sindawe buys the Riddleport equivalent of donuts and has them delivered to the nice lady cop remarking, "She was really helpful. She deserves a donut." Captain Ben allows us to interview Goat. We get leads on the yahoos he fisticuffed earlier and determine via Sense Motive that he has not stabbed anyone to death recently. Then Serpent has the brilliant idea to ask Captain Ben if we can pay a fine for Goat's release. They agree on 200gp.

Once outside, Captain Sindawe starts to hatch a plan to waylay the other two guys who victimized Goat earlier. Goat resists the plan, because he just got out of jail. Sindawe sulks while Serpent and Wogan point out, "We have enough enemies without adding random yahoos to the list."

WHORE BREAK OUT

We then head off to the Silken Veil to bust out Tommy's girlfriend, Lavender Lil. In theory, her life is in more danger from Clegg Zincher with us out of town for the winter and in less danger if she sails with us. (Yes, we are demented enough to believe that a pirate ship is safer than a large city with a largely honest police force!)

The gang assembles in a nearby alley to go over the plan: Tommy and Sindawe head in to visit Lavender and her friend Lexi (the red-headed whore from earlier). Lavender can magically disguise herself, so she will leave with Tommy while disguised as Sindawe. A little later, Sindawe will leave as himself.

Goat is happy to hear that the nearby building is a brothel, declaring, "I'm going to spend my last few coins in there!" He reaches into pocket after pocket but pulls out nothing. The gendarmes took his money. He turns to Sindawe, "Give me some money. Please!" Sindawe replies, "No. And you remember this the next time your captain wants to launch a half baked idea to punish landlubbers on behalf of his crew. We could have worn bags over our heads as disguises. It would have been awesome!" We come to realize that Sindawe's idea of an awesome party is very similar to the events of any home invasion genre horror movie.

Tommy and Sindawe go inside. Tommy, being a regular, tells the gnome lady at the door, "We're here to see Lil and Lexi" and walks on by. A bit later in Lil's chambers, Lavender warmly greets Tommy with her patented "breast" hug while Lexi (the redhead from before) and Sindawe stand nearby and stare with different types of envy.

Tommy whispers to Lavender, "We have to leave now." Lavender replies loudly, "Ok boys. Let's have some fun." She casts a spell that shows the four fornicating extremely loudly, "Oh yeah! Let's Rusty Venture it!" Meanwhile the real four sneak off behind a dressing screen that separates us from the spy holes in a large portrait of some *Little Lord Fauntleroy* looking kid. Tommy and Lavender begin talking about the escape and why it has to happen. Meanwhile, Lexi the red-head nibbles on Sindawe's neck, but he's too worried about being caught to respond. It takes awhile for Tommy to convince Lavender to run away with him, because she would rather Tommy kill Clegg

Zincher so she can have the run of Riddleport. After all, tieflings are welcome in Riddleport and largely nowhere else. But in the end she agrees.

With the deal closed Tommy and Lexi then step behind a hanging curtain to converse. As he moves away he whispers to a confused Sindawe, "Lexi is going to cover Lavender's disappearance for as long as possible but we need to work out the details." Sindawe glances at Lil wondering what her take on this is. However, Lil has already magicked her disguise into place, so Sindawe sees himself sitting in a cute "I'm a girl" pose. He shudders. Lavender attempts small talk with Sindawe but finds it more difficult than normal now that she looks like a completely ordinary dude and not a hot, stacked chick.

After many minutes Sindawe realizes Tommy has been gone quite awhile. He tunes Lavender out, tunes the illusion orgy out, listens closely, and hears Tommy and Lexi enjoying sexual congress (Yup, politics is pretty neat!). He leans back a bit further past the curtain to see Tommy being serviced by a gnome-sized Seyanna the Succubus, not the red-haired whore. He watches long enough to make sure Tommy is not being killed, then leans away.

Tommy and Lexi emerge many minutes later, sweaty but utterly free of guilty looks. Lil still seems unconcerned. Lil, disguised as Sindawe, and Tommy leave the brothel. Lil's strange manly/effeminate walk draws many glances ("Was that Black John Wayne?").

Lexi begins working on Sindawe who eventually says, "Ok, Seyanna. Turn it off. What are you doing to Tommy?" She refuses to explain unless she can get something out of it (wink, wink). Eventually the two settle on a quick card game to settle the matter. Sindawe gets information if he wins; Seyanna gets serviced if she wins.

Weirdly, Sindawe is able to draw Seyanna into conversation before the card game begins. She explains:

- She and Tommy are working together (wink, wink).
- She and Madame Pamodae are natural enemies thanks to their differences. They worship different gods and Seyanna thinks Pamodae is a bitch!
- Luckily, Seyanna has remained under Madame's radar thanks to disguise magicks and just keeping a low profile. "I haven't killed anyone!"
- An attentive girl can hear a lot of interesting stuff at a place like this. And she can pick up a bite or two every night if she's careful.

Sindawe offers an alliance; the PCs kill the Madame, Seyanna takes over, and starts feeding client information to the PC's. Seyanna declines, "Leadership is SO time consuming. I just like to play and nibble." Seyanna torments Sindawe during the final minutes of waiting by undressing and pleasuring herself in front of him. A wave of supernatural lust washes over Sindawe but he fights it off and limps hurriedly away muttering, "Crazy bitches!"

In a hallway just short of the exit, a guard steps in front of Sindawe. "I thought you already left. In fact, I know you left and this is the only way in or out. So how did you sneak back in without me seeing you? I notice things!"

Sindawe shocks the guard into a brief retreat by launching into a rant, "What? Do all black guys look alike to you? Are you a bigot? Is that why I get charged more than my WHITE, short buddy? WELL?" Sindawe quickly scoots past the cowed guard. He heads outside, rounds a corner, and dashes into the night with his comrades and Lil. Shortly we are safely on board the *Teeth of Araska*, and as soon as Samaritha and Hatshepsut show up with a startling array of furnishings, we make sail.

TO SEA

The game ends with a navigation roll of 25 by Serpent, which means we won't get lost en route to the Azlanti islands.