

## REAVERS ON THE SEAS OF FATE SESSION SUMMARY 11/01/2009

### ATTENDANCE

*Ernest* starts handing out plastic gold coins. He announces, “You are all infamous! So I’m handing out Infamy Points! Huzzah!”

*Kevin* (Blacktoes) points out, “I don’t feel infamous, I just feel sniffly.”

*Patrick* (Wogan) shudders, “It sounds to me like swine flu! H1N1! Flee for the hills! The swine-free hills!”

*Bruce* (Ox) criticizes him, “Just because you’ve got American-style health care is no reason to act all irrational. You should act irrational because you aspire to Republican political candidacy.”

*Paul* (Serpent) reminds Bruce, “Seriously, from what we’ve recently seen only convicted sex offenders seek office under the GOP banner. Are you suggesting that about Patrick? If you are, then he should certainly seek satisfaction!”

*Chris* (Sindawe) mumbles something about how he’s constantly seeking his own personal satisfaction. In ways that make the others less than eager to sit next to him at the table.

<i>Player</i>	<i>Character</i>	<i>Class / Level</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Bruce	Melako “Ox” Chaalu	Barbarian 2	Formerly-enslaved ship crew from Rahadoum
Kevin	Tommy “Blacktoes” Burrowbank	Rogue 2	Riddleport halfling
Paul	“Serpent” Ref Jorenson	Druid 1 Ranger 1	Northerner human with a southerner snake pet
Chris	Sindawe H’Kilata Narr	Monk 2	Mwangi-Bonuwat (human) monk
Patrick	Wogan	Cleric 2	Human priest of Gozreh

## LET'S SEE ABOUT THIS WAND, NOW?

*Serpent* announces his intent to visit the *Cypher Lodge* to get his wand identified. *Ox*, who is apparently not that clear on the difference between wizards and priests, asks to come along so he can see the place. Then *Blacktoes* intervenes with vague promises about, “opening his eyes to a lot of things” and hauls him off to *Abbess Maria* at the *House of the Silken Veil*. His none-too-subtle intent is to get *Ox* to embrace the old time religion of *Calistria*, the charmingly fickle goddess of lust, trickery and revenge.

The *Cypher Lodge* is perched upon a lonely crag looking out over the mysterious *Cyphergate*. The three-wing structure smells of money. The functionary who intercepts *Serpent* at the door very clearly has him pegged as an unsuitably low-rent vagabond. *Serpent* is swiftly hustled back outside with advice to “seek one of those hedge wizards you find in a bar.”

Just outside, a charming half-elf wizardess with Varisian tattoos named *Samaritha Beldusk* calls him aside, “Hey, buddy! You have business with the order?” She explains that she came to join the Lodge but was rudely tossed out with the comment that they’re not currently accepting applications from half-trained sewer monkeys, especially those with provincial accents. *Serpent* tells her his business and she agrees to help. She asks him, “So, should we go into the alley to do this thing?” *Serpent* is briefly not entirely certain what service she is offering.

Fortunately, it turns out that she is true to her word. She identifies his wand as a *Wand of Summon Monster I* (10 charges, caster level 1). She refuses his money, instead suggesting that he should just buy her a drink. He takes her to the *Gold Goblin Gambling Hall* while telling her that he is from the far-off lands of the Linnorm Kings.

In return, *Samaritha* tells him that she is from *Magnimar* and traveled to *Riddleport* to join the Order of the *Cypher*. Now that they have refused her, she finds that she is broke and needs a job. But her trip to *Riddleport* hasn’t been for naught: she has learned that the runes carved upon the *Cyphergate* are not *Thassilonian*. She has heard that the *Cypher* mages have some theories, but are unwilling to share them with non-members. There is supposed to be an odd fiend-summoning wizard living up in the lighthouse who might be able to help, but senses that this is a “No Solicitors Welcome” sort of situation.

## WATCH OUT FOR THOSE RIDDLEPORT MOSQUITOES

*Sindawe* travels to the local temple to *Gozreh*. Then he remembers that *Gozreh* actually has no temples in Riddleport, so he resorts to asking locals for directions until he finds a small, almost unmarked shrine near the docks. He buys himself some candles, lights them as a measure of observance, and settles down for a night of meditation and prayer. He recently killed a man whom he hadn't wanted to kill and he wants to atone for the deed.

This lasts until someone flings something at his back. He grabs at the thing and is surprised to find that it is a stirge (Wogan: "Heh heh. You got stirged."). Unable to get a good hold on it, he simply falls onto it. When that fails to kill the wretched thing, he leaps off the end of the pier into the fetid water. This works rather better: the creature chokes and lets go after a moment or two. Then he swims for the bank with all due speed to avoid the swamp barracudas and the bunyips. Sadly, he doesn't swim quickly enough: one loathsome specimen does take an interest in him, but he manages to outrun the creature.

Later, Serpent asks, "Where did you go? You smell like both dirty diapers and the beach!"

*Sindawe* answers, "Sex Criminal Island. Now make yourself useful and clean this up." He retches with enthusiasm and energy.

## MIXING BUSINESS WITH GUNPOWDER

*Wogan* decides that he wants to buy some gunpowder. He manages to track down an almost deaf gnome alchemist who doesn't seem to understand very clearly that *Wogan* wishes to do business with him. With great patience *Wogan* manages to purchase some powder and lead shot from him.

Then he goes to the *Publican House*, a noted drinking establishment that also serves as a temple to Cayden Cailean, the god of alcohol, bravery and freedom.

## YOU NEVER KNOW WHO YOU'LL RUN INTO

Blacktoes and Ox head over to the House of the Silken Veil, where they find a lot of women in various states of undress hidden behind the three delicate silken hangings covering the building entrances. *Shorafá Pamodae* is the very distinctive lady in charge. A pair of very respectable backswept goat's horns adorn her head, but it takes a moment for the two characters to recognize this because she possesses many

other remarkable personal attributes. Blacktoes hands Ox off to her, explaining that he is looking for faith. Ox rumbles something about, “I think I’m looking for ten to fifteen gold worth of faith here.”

On his way out, Blacktoes gets a glance at the mysterious *Lavender Lill*, a tiefling with cute little horns and pointed tail. He has heard that after some unfortunate business with a local crimelord she never leaves the House. He knows that she is quite a catch and takes the challenge. Given that he is armed with plenty of gold, he is successful. During the course of their evening, she tells him about *Saul* the gambling impresario: he is holding a big tournament soon and has hired many girls to dress as succubi and “perform” at the event. She also tells him that the uprising crimeboss *Tammerhawk* has the allegiance of *Avery Slyeg* and has been speaking badly of some more prominent local leaders including *Cromarty*.

Meanwhile, Ox finds himself taken out back for a bath. The bath-girls humor him as he relates tales of washing with dry Ajax when he was growing up as an impoverished ragamuffin in the desert. Then they send in a working girl who starts massaging him. It turns out that *Selene* has found herself a new job. Her experience with the Consortium was that thought they appreciated her previous services, they had no current need for her. Ox asks where she plans to go afterwards, as the House doesn’t seem “Like a good home for a woman of your talents.” She indicates that she has found a taste for the sea.

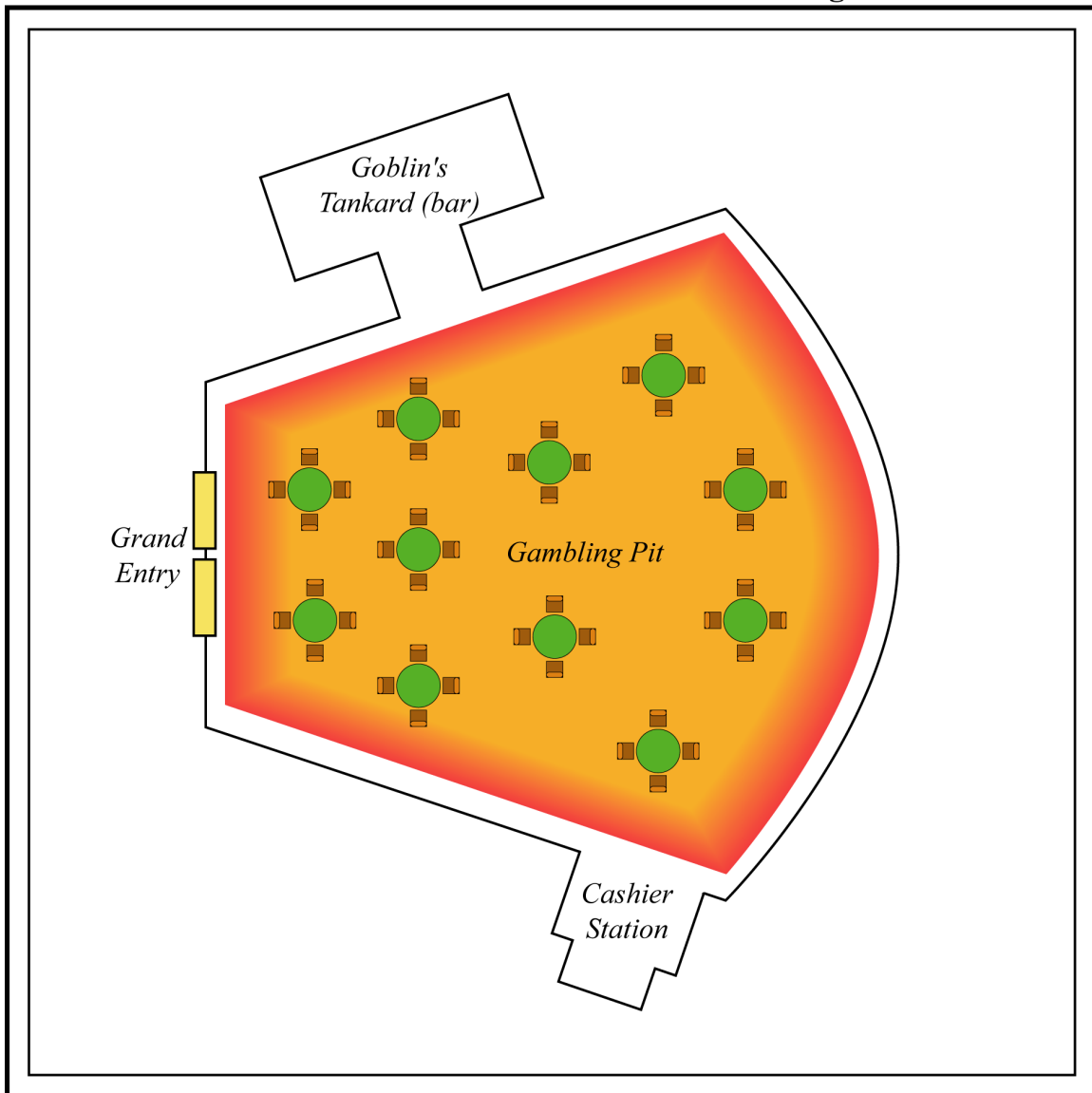
Ox tells her, “If I were to introduce you to my family in Rahadoum they would be so furious it would shatter the Heavens. How do you feel about dry climates?”

When Blacktoes picks him up, Ox offers, “You’ll never believe who I just ran into.” The two of them head to the Publican House where they join a table with Wogan.

### **THE GOLD GOBLIN GAMBLING HOUSE**

The Gold Goblin is an impressive structure, but one that has clearly seen better days. The golden half-dome no longer shines, but is instead covered in a greenish-brown patina. A larger-than-life goblin statue in shining gold is set over the entry, grinning down at all who enter. Careful observers can tell that the statue is not actually gold, but brass.

## The Great Hall of the Golden Goblin Gambling House



Directly inside the entry is the great hall, a massive gambling pit with a patched crimson carpet and tables for a wide variety of games of chance and skill. The whole place is decorated with a hellish theme, including waitresses dressed as succubi. The entrance fee is a gold piece and (optionally) a document indicating that the entrant is pledging his soul as part of the stakes. Ox takes particular exception to this, proclaiming loudly, "I have seen the slave-pits of Cheliax. I have seen slaves bought and immediately flung to their new masters' devilish servants, torn to bloody gibbets and ruin." He concerns the no-longer-flirty hostess enough that she ushers over a pair of bouncers who betray a more than passing resemblance to Fahfrd and the

Gray Mouser. Ox apologizes and simmers down, though he still refuses to sign the papers.

After a while, the assembled staff folk hush the contestants as *Saul Vancaskerkin* ascends the stage, flanked by two gorgeous (but false) succubi. He is richly dressed, but one of his hands is just a stump capped with an unusual key-like hook. He offers the crowd the opportunity to cheat the devil. He takes a moment to thank *Old Scratch* (the club's resident trapped devil in his bird cage) for coming up with the money for the event. On cue, Old Scratch flies into a vicious rage, rattling the bars of his cage.

Vancaskerkin points out that all of the contestants are currently Old Scratch's prisoners and must win to earn their freedom. Winning games earns players golden eyes, silver teeth and copper hearts. Win enough of these tokens and a player can advance to the next circle of Hell, earning the devil's mark (which Vancaskerkin demonstrates is a kiss from one of the succubus staffers). The eye, tooth and heart tokens are also used as currency for the game, and may be purchased at the rate of 1 gold per eye, 1 silver per tooth and 1 copper per heart. The grand prize (in addition to the winner's soul) is 10,000 silver coins.

With that announcement, everyone spreads out and starts gambling. Serpent examines the choices. He sees games of skill, games of intelligence and games of chance. He decides that games of chance are his best bet, which leads him to *Lixy Parmenter* and the Ghoulette Wheel.

It doesn't take much for Serpent to bust out of the contest. He heads over to the Goblin's Tankard to drink. He is soon joined by Samaritha Beldusk, who is more successful than he is but not by much. The fact that he keeps on plying her with drinks doesn't help either of them. Both Blacktoes and (oddly) Ox manage to do pretty well, in spite of the fact that Ox continues to have suspension-of-disbelief issues. He makes a point of asking quite loudly, "In a world where magic works and claims upon souls can be effective, why would anyone willingly play games in a setting like this? Even if Vancaskerkin thinks he's just fooling, his every action could have *mythic resonance!*" Blacktoes is eventually convinced that Ox spent enough time under the sun of Rahadoum to completely poach his brains.

## The Troubles Start

Of a sudden, Wogan and Sindawe see a one-eyed girl stumble and dump a tray full of chips. While Wogan goes for the chips, Sindawe assumes that she's acting as a diversion and checks around for the real action. He doesn't have to wait long. A brazier on the other side of the room explodes in a blinding array of fireworks! Boom!

Blacktoes and Ox are both blinded by the flash. The others see *Angvar Thestlecrit* emerge from the restroom to announce, "Everyone relax! This is a robbery!"

The girl who dropped the chips produces a blunderbuss from under her gown and screams, "Any of you fucking pricks give a move I'm going to ventilate every motherfucking one of you!" She turns out to be *Thuvalia Barrabio* and her screaming serves nicely as a bardic *Inspire Courage* action. Four big men near her draw blades. Wogan is just impressed that she managed to sneak in a blunderbuss underneath her dress.

While Blacktoes and Ox do their best to recover from blindness, two of the unblinded guards move towards Thuvalia. Her guards club one of them down with a sap. Thuvalia raises her hand and stuns another guard. Angvar makes a gesture and shrinks the giant chest of silver down into a convenient pocket size.

Wogan takes careful aim with his wheellock pistol and shoots Angvar square in the chest. Angvar falls. Thuvalia screams incoherently and levels the blunderbuss at him. Wogan flings himself behind the bar and covers his head as her shot shatters all the bottles up on the wall.

Sindawe moves in and kicks one of the armed thieves, then rabbit punches him on the back of the head. The man spins and falls like a sack of unconscious potatoes.

Ox suddenly realizes that he is not blind and that there is a thief in front of him. He goes into a rage, roars at the man, then buries his cutlass two inches into the man's neck. The very surprised thief falls in a heap of dead.

Serpent orders his snake pet to grapple another thief. The man screams like a frightened child as he is wrapped in scaly coils. The screaming doesn't last long.

Thuvalia fights her way to Angvar and works to drag him towards the front door. Sindawe leaps across a table (much to the upset of the gamblers hiding underneath it) and kicks her in the jaw. She is staggered, and falls.

## Who Were Those Masked Men?

With the thieves subdued the Golden Goblin staff start to take control of the situation. Sindawe takes advantage of the confusion to take Thuvalia's blunderbuss and Angvar's wand. Serpent grabs Angvar's sickle. Blacktoes simply steals chips from the table near him, pulling away 17 gold worth. Wogan slips two bottles of wine into his pantaloons and walks off looking like a satyr. Ox cleans and sheathes his cutlass to allay the fears of the two rather nervous guards watching him. One of the chief bodyguards gestures to make it clear that he's watching him. Ox does his best to act like the center of attention, to draw eyes away from his companions' looting activity.

The dwarf floor manager and the rough looking dwarf *Bojask* rush over to the fallen goons to recover the shrunken chest of silver. The guards tell everyone to sit down and calm down. After a while, they are successful: most of the guests are either bickering with each other or yelling at the casino officials.

Saul Vancaskerkin eventually shows up and announces that the contest is over, but everyone will be cashed out at 10% over their chip value. Bojask and the floor manager are off looking at the strange shrunken chest. Both Serpent and Samaritha Beldusk identify the magic used as *Sbrink Item* and explain that the magic can be broken with a sharp blow. Bojask puts it back on its dais and hits it to make it return to normal. While they restore order, most of the rest of the staff quits and walks off the premises.

It is at this point that *Hans* and *Beyar* (the two bodyguards who previously threatened the characters) approach and indicate that Mr. Vancaskerkin wants to talk to them.

## MEETING MISTER VANCASKERKIN

The characters note that Vancaskerkin has a grim sense of style. His office walls are painted flat black, and all of the chairs except for his have manacles built into the armrests. Serpent comments, "I haven't seen chairs like this since I left the lands of the Linnorm Kings. We need these chairs to feed children their vegetables, and for when someone is taken by... The Madness..."

Vancaskerkin thanks the characters for helping out in the recent unpleasantness. It is clear that he already knows Blacktoes from somewhere. He cashes the characters out at 150% of their chip values, rather than just 110%, then takes them to his second-floor plush lounge. The furniture is dilapidated, but still plenty



nice. Serpent makes a point of ensuring that Samaritha Beldusk is included in the group.

Vancaskerkin indicates that Angvar and Thuvalia are known local troublemakers. Their previous history indicates that they are certainly acting at the behest of one of the local crimelords, though he doesn't know which one. He isn't currently paying protection to any of them, and doesn't want to. Accordingly, he offers to bring the characters in as junior partners in his operations with the idea that they will act as troubleshooters for him. He is currently cash-poor, so his offer is for room, board and the nominal salary of 10 gold per week plus profit sharing. Everyone agrees to this deal.

Vancaskerkin celebrates by giving them all the tenpenny tour. And after the tour he offers the others a chance to visit the House of the Silken Veil on his dime. Only Sindawe and Blacktoes pick up his offer. Ox, Wogan and Serpent all decide that they would prefer to deal with their post-traumatic stress issues with alcohol. They head off to the Publican House to get plastered on cheap booze. Samaritha Beldusk joins them.

The evening is not entirely successful: Wogan returns from the alley he ducked into to relieve himself rather shaken, reporting that he encountered a "small" centipede, a creature the size of a small dog. Fortunately, he had been drinking enough through the day that his urine poisoned it.

### **ARE WE EVEN QUALIFIED TO DO THIS?**

The characters divide up some responsibilities for running the Golden Goblin, though in some cases they are none too well fitted for operating a casino. Ox, for example, is poorly suited for most tasks except "bouncer". Wogan finds that his talents lie mostly in drinking up the liquor. Their job performance matches this: Ox manages to do a nice job keeping order on the floor, while Wogan actually encourages some gamblers to cheat.

The first night the Golden Goblin is really able to reopen, Sindawe and Wogan spot a cluster of four drunk and belligerent customers. They were among those who failed to cash out their chips in the aftermath of the tournament, and they look like they would like to bring themselves to commit some drunken violence. Sindawe tries to reason with them, but they are beyond reason. So he stuns one of them. Ox steps in and goes into a rage. Two of the angry customers attempt to grapple him. He ignores them, pummeling another of the louts into the floor.

Sindawe moves in to help out Ox. He hammers one of the guys hanging on to the big barbarian twice in the kidney. The erstwhile customer slides down Ox's leg, unconscious. Serpent orders his snake to immobilize the fourth lout, then he pulls the last one off Ox and kicks him in the head.

With the troublemakers no longer causing trouble, Saul steps up to the podium and makes an announcement about how there's a new sheriff in town, there will be no more trouble, and the Golden Goblin will now have a no-weapons policy. There are some hoots and jeers, but also some applause from the customers. Saul puts Sindawe in charge of handling weapons. Serpent suggests that *Durt* would be a good choice as a runner to work in the weapons checkroom.

### **The Crimeboss Makes an Appearance**

Towards the end of the characters' first week on the job, Saul comes up to the catwalk to point out a big, mean guy at one of the tables. Other customers are giving him a wide berth. He tells them, "Hey, that's Clegg *Zincher*, one of the big crimelords. He's checking the place out. He's not really known as a gambler, so he's not here for the tables. Watch him, but don't mess with him."

Serpent replies, "Check. Don't hassle him, don't bother him, don't interfere with him sexually."

Clegg examines some tables, sneers at the Ghoulette Wheel, then eventually settles at the Golem table. When Sindawe joins him at the table the other patrons gratefully step away. Clegg demonstrates that even though he isn't much of a gambler, he's a much better gambler than Sindawe. After he wins, he cautions Sindawe on the wisdom of taking certain jobs in Riddleport. He gives Sindawe twenty gold in chips. Sindawe gives one to the dealer, then splits the others among the characters.

A bit later, the cook comes running for Sindawe. He claims that there's a big snake in the scullery. He says it's already bit a guy. Sindawe tells the others, "Come along! Snake stew in the kitchen!" Ox grabs his boarding pike from behind a curtain.

When the characters arrive, they find an unconscious maid and a big (medium-sized) viper. It looks like it was hiding underneath a washtub, all quite innocently. It attacked the maid when she picked up the tub. Sindawe tries to pull its attention away from the maid while Wogan launches a healing burst to help her out.

Serpent arrives just in time to unleash his wild empathy upon the creature. He is able to calm the viper enough that it doesn't attack the maid again when she suddenly sits up. He tells the characters, "That's a beauty! It's a cindersnake, bright red because it comes from the Cinderlands."

It takes Serpent quite a bit of effort (considering that he has neither good Charisma or the Handle Animal skill), but he is able to persuade the creature to slither away out the back of the building.

Wogan checks over the scullery maid *Aicha* using his Heal skill (which he has). He reports that she did not succumb to the snake's poison and should make a complete recovery. She is quite smitten with him, and suggests that he might walk her home. He is forced to admit to the others (and to her) that priests of Gozreh are actually supposed to be celibate, though they are known to writhe erotically in the sea and tie seaweed in their hair from time to time. Afterwards, Sindawe suggests that it's just as well: he thought that she had sort of a stalker vibe to her.

Over the next week, Ox notices that Aicha is still paying way too much attention to Wogan. He tries to shut this down by paying attention to her, reasoning that he looks threatening enough that she should pull back. For good or ill, she actually responds positively. As Serpent puts it, some people just like that sort of thing. He speculates on how long it will take for Aicha to develop an "attachment" to Ox.

Then Serpent goes off to identify Angvar's wand as a *Wand of Shocking Grasp* (9 charges). Unable to use either of the wands the characters have found, he gives the *Wand of Shocking Grasp* to Samaritha Beldusk. She appreciates the gift, and lets drop that she is particularly skilled at transmutation magic.

## **THE END OF THE SESSION**

The characters are now the minority partners in the Golden Goblin, with a clear notion of the troubles they will face in keeping the place going.