

## Reavers on the Seas of Fate - Session Summary 12/12/2010

The heroes have been recruited by Salvadora Beckett to investigate the deaths of several townsfolk and some gendarmes by an invisible monster. Our heroes are:

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

With us are:

- *Hatshepsut*, high priestess of a lost civilization who doesn't savvy the Common (NPC)
- *Salvadora Beckett*, the half-orc member of the God Squad (NPC)

### *The Sunless Grove*

It is one day after the Cyphergate opened and the tsunami hit Riddleport. When we left off, we were standing in front of a strange altar in a cavern below a destroyed residence in Riddleport. The altar is surrounded by dead trees and a ghoul is atop the altar, crouched over a huge book and gnawing on a severed arm.

Tommy asks the ghoul, "Hey, what ya readin'?" The ghoul looks up at us curiously but does not speak. We stand in silence for a long minute.

Finally the ghoul speaks. "I have come for the book."

Sindawe asks, "Would that be the book you're reading?"

"Yes." it closes the book, "You are too late."

"Too late for what? Dinner?"

"It has already come and gone."

"What has, the monster?"

"Yes. You will all die. But my master can stop it."

"Who is your master?"

It looks at him slyly. “Oh, the master is secret. But don't worry. You will be dead and gone but the master will prevail!” It begins to limp away through the twisted trees.

Salvadora draws her composite short bow and shoots at the monster, missing it among the trees. Tommy also misses it with his sling.

The ghoul gibbers in its ghoulish tongue and many other ghouls suddenly spring out of the black water and come rushing toward us.

Sindawe plunges his hand into one of the ghouls as it closes and pulls out its dead and rotting heart. Wogan throws a positive energy burst, causing a refreshing salty breeze to wash over the ghouls. The ghouls seem badly hurt by it. Serpent takes one out with his staff and Saluthra grabs another, crushing it. Hatshepsut and Tommy each damage a ghoul. Salvadora whispers to her arrow and it glows, hungry for ghoul flesh; she fires it at the boss ghoul but the cover from the trees confounds her shot again.

The ghouls bite and claw at us, but we fend them off successfully. The boss ghoul runs to a barred passageway and begins squeezing through the bars.

Sindawe chases the head ghoul while Wogan shoots at it. The shot merely wings it across the back. Serpent takes out one of the remaining ghouls and Hatshepsut finishes off the last two with a split kick. Saluthra and Serpent follow Sindawe toward the head ghoul, and Salvadora shoots at it. Salvadora's shot flies true and her enchanted arrow slams into it. Tommy slings a shot and gets a solid hit as well.

The ghoul gets through the bars and Sindawe chases it. As Sindawe squeezes through the bars, he yells back, “Tommy, bring the lube!” Unfortunately the ghoul was waiting on the other side of the bars and bites Sindawe viciously with its sharp teeth. He feels a strange numbing sensation from the ghoul's saliva.

Wogan fires his black powder pistol through the bars and scores a massive hit, rocking the ghouls head back in pain. The rest of the characters rush up. Salvadora shoots the ghoul again as Saluthra wriggles between the bars and goes for the ghoul.

The ghoul rakes the snake and tries to run, but Saluthra whips out, grabs the ghoul at the base of the spine, and coils around it; black ichor bubbles from its lips as it is crushed.

Tommy slips between the bars and investigates the book the ghoul dropped as it expired. The cover bears a large inset crystal and a series of insect-like clasps around the

edges. Wogan investigates the altar and finds the man the arm which the ghoul was snacking on belonged to. Wogan pulls the body out of the slime and then asks Salvadora to look at it. The body is a goggle-eyed hunchbacked man. His body has been horribly mangled and is fairly bloodless. Sucker-like marks cover the body. Salvadora says the dead man's name was Baskerwell. He was on the God Squad's watch list for suspicious cult-like activity, and was a druid of some kind who lived outside town but sometimes came into Lubbertown to trade. The body has two magic rings – one on the severed arm, and one on the other still connected to the corpse.

Sindawe examines the dead ghoul. It has a ring as well, and Sindawe takes it. Upon inspection of all three magical rings, Wogan recognizes one of the rings as a *ring of swimming* and Serpent recognizes one of the rings as a *ring of protection +1*. Hatshepsut recognizes the last ring as a *ring of protection +2* and takes it for herself. Tommy expresses interest in it, and she says flatly, “Of course, let us conduct ritual combat for it.” Tommy generously gifts it to her.

Tommy jimmies open the complicated insect-looking clasps on the book. It's a big tome with a crystal set into the cover. The book is in Aklo but there is a recent inscription in the front in Common. It reads, “May we, the Keepers of the Oldest, prevail over the scourge of simplistic thought and lesser men.” It is signed by five men - Keeper Baskerwell, Keeper Marshan, Keeper Myre, Keeper Hyve, and Keeper Crooge. Tommy recalls that Hiram Crooge is the name of the man who tends the Riddleport Boneyard. Salvadora says that a man named Myre is a local businessman, a tanner in the River District. Hyve sells poison in town; Tommy's heard of him through his underworld contacts. Marshan, of course, was the name of the man who owned the ruined house above. It appears that there was a sixth signed name in the book but it has been ripped out. Wogan determines that the book is called the Pnakotic Manuscripts. Tommy looks through to find the page the ghoul had been looking at. This section has been heavily annotated in Aklo. Hatshepsut studies it and determines that it is a copy of a copy of a book about summoning some kind of magic gods called the Oldest from certain portals.

There is a hollow under the altar from which black sludge flows into the pool nearby. We assume that there might be some sort of portal there. Tommy tries to look under there but he doesn't want to get into the goo. He hangs upside down from the altar

and looks back into the place the black ooze is flowing from. The portal seems to be full of stars and he immediately has to make a sanity check. Tommy's hand begins to burn where the glyph from the Cyphergate is (after the adventure in the Riddleport Light, each character had glyphs from the Cyphergate appear on their bodies).

Exploring around the altar, Sindawe takes a bag of fetish bones as a souvenir, and then Wogan finds a ceremonial scimitar. Sindawe convinces Wogan to give him the scimitar and throws away the bones.

### *The Tannery Horror*

Rather than going forward, we decide to leave the cave complex and go look up Myre and Hyve. We decide that Hiram Crooge's place in the Boneyard was likely wiped out by the recent tsunami. We head into the rain-drenched and half-drowned city. The city is a morass of mud and filth.

Many displaced people from the flooded portion of the city are huddled under overhangs and makeshift shelters. As we push by a knot of newly homeless people, an unskilled pickpocket tries to grab Hatshepsut's coin purse. She immediately strikes him in the chest, sending him down in a spray of blood.

Wogan plays good Samaritan and stabilizes the man while Sindawe robs him. Hatshepsut looks down at the man impassively. Salvadora Beckett decides not to arrest anyone.

We get to Rupman Myre's business, the Stone Tannery. It is a tall stone building that drains its effluvia directly into the river. Tommy scouts around the building and looks for secret entrances. He notices a place where it looks like there might be some sort of hidden second floor. Serpent uses his serpent shaman powers to climb up the building like a tree snake and finds a hidden window. He tries to break open the camouflaged shutters but for some insane reason it is impossible to break. Tommy climbs up and unlocks the shutter.

It opens into a small office room with a single cot and a desk. We climb in. Salvadora shakes the rain off her broad-brimmed hat. We check out the journal and documents on the desk. The journal contains details about the underground tunnels and tells how the Keepers were planning to commune with the old gods beyond the portal.

We think that possibly they accidentally opened the portal during the confluence of events that almost opened the Cyphergate and caused the tsunami.

As Wogan sits on the bed, he finds that the bed is full of empty liquor bottles. Serpent complains bitterly about not being able to rip open the shutters to the room. Tommy takes the opportunity to mock the Ulfen by handing him one of the bottles and saying, “Can you open this for me? Oh, wait, never mind, probably not...” Sindawe finds a false bottom in the desk drawer. He opens it up and BOOM! we are all blasted by *explosive runes*. Apparently the drawer contained a spellbook, which is now destroyed. We take a couple of rounds to heal. It sounds like someone in the tannery has noticed the explosion; a voice from outside yells, “Who's in there?”

Sindawe throws open the door and boldly charges out. He quickly tumbles down a steep flight of stone stairs onto a catwalk above vats of boiling urine. He slides off the slick five-foot-wide walkways that crisscross the room above the vats and falls off down to the floor below, managing to avoid the tanning vat and roll with the impact enough to land on his back, disheveled but not injured. Seeing this, Hatshepsut springs out the door and sails down the same span, landing softly like a cat beside the prone Sindawe. The tannery workers turn and start lurching toward Sindawe. They appear to be not quite alive. Four zombies altogether are working the bottom level, and they shamble toward the pair of monks. One of them grabs a chunk of flesh out of Hatshepsut's upper arm. Sindawe gets to his feet and draws his kama, ripping a chunk out of a zombie. Hatshepsut unloads on the zombie that injured her and takes it down.

The room is filled with choking fumes, but the spell of protection from poison Wogan laid upon the group earlier prevents it from disabling them. They take in the situation; the long tannery has three levels – the bedroom where they are and a parallel observation deck on the north end, then ten feet down a network of catwalks stretching off down the long building, and then the ground ten feet below that. The observation deck lies up another staircase across the width of the building from the one leading down from the bedroom, and is blocked off by a big leather curtain. Tommy goes to check it out, but then shies away from two zombies feeding things into a furnace. He backs off as they moan and approach. The rest of the group moves carefully down the slick stairs. Serpent hits a zombie with his staff and Salvadora shoots it with an arrow. Tommy feints at a

zombie and then sneak attacks it, severing its spine. Two more zombies surge forward from down the catwalks, but one slips and falls into a tanning vat. A moan comes from the vat until it is suddenly cut off as if a mouth was filled with hot goo. One zombie manages to deal a blow to Serpent. A black ray of energy shoots from behind the curtain and narrowly misses the Ulfen.

Serpent cries out, “Spellcaster!” and rushes back to confront the source of the magic. Using his snake totem transformation, Serpent sinuously climbs up the wall and pokes his head through the leather curtain and confronts Keeper Myre. Keeper Myre is a robed man with an elaborate staff and dreadlocks. Keeper Myre yells semi-coherently, “You don't belong here!” He seems to be drunk. He casts a *hold person* spell on Serpent, causing him to lose control of his muscles and fall off the wall to the catwalk below.

Sindawe decapitates a zombie with his kama, and Hatshepsut finishes off yet another with her punishing blows. Salvadora finishes off the second nearby zombie upstairs with two more arrows; the thick shafts eventually disable even dead flesh. One of the remaining zombies lurches towards Wogan and Salvadora, the other continues to fight the monks. Tommy rushes up the stairs to confront Keeper Myre. Wogan summons a celestial eagle and sends it after the Keeper also. The eagle scratches him and he screams like a girl. Then Wogan blows away the zombie with his blunderbuss as it staggers towards him.

Sindawe slashes at the last zombie with his kama, creating a neat Y-shaped incision that spills its guts out; the accursed creature keeps on coming towards him until Hatshepsut rips its throat out with her serpent strike. She immediately begins climbing a nearby ladder to get back up on the catwalks. Sindawe considers climbing a parallel ladder but then decides he likes the view better over here and ascends up after her.

Tommy goes beyond the leather curtain and slings a stone at Keeper Myre, hitting him. Keeper Myre casts a spell and reaches out and sucks the life out of the celestial eagle, healing himself. He weeps in fear and inebriation and tells Tommy, “I can hear it coming. Kill me before it gets me!” Tommy puts his weapons away and tries to talk the drunk wizard down. This seems to be working but then Hatshepsut charges in and goes straight for the wizard.

Serpent finally regains control of his body just in time for Salvadora to come help him up and give him a *protection from evil* spell. She swats him on the butt and says, "Now get in there!" The wizard calls upon his dark gods and summons a mass of tentacles from the floor to attack. Serpent tries to go for the wizard but gets caught by the tentacles; they wrap around him and the cold of their touch makes his bones ache. Salvadora tries to help Serpent out of their grip but he is firmly grappled. Thinking fast, Wogan casts a *silence* spell on Sindawe as Sindawe dodges through the tentacles, slips past the leather curtain, and hits the wizard in the head, stunning him. Tommy and Hatshepsut also slip through the tentacles and hit the wizard. The Keeper is stunned and silenced.

Serpent is once again strangled and unable to escape the black tentacles, but Salvadora manages to drag him out. Wogan heals some of Serpent's damage. Sindawe pummels the hapless necromancer again and again. The Keeper falls, unconscious. Hatshepsut leaps up and lands hard with both feet on the downed wizard, killing him. The tentacles lose their strength and dissolve.

We loot the wizard, finding a bonded ring and a potion. The ring is useless to us. The potion seems to be a cure potion.

Exploring the room, Tommy finds writing on the bottom of a table. Sindawe flips it over for everyone to read. "He knows the gate, he is the gate, he knows the past present and future..." "What do you think?" we inquire of our cleric. "Sounds like generic crazy guy rambling to me," decides Wogan.

Sindawe talks to Hatshepsut about why she killed the Keeper. She tells him in a combination of broken Common and Aklo that she had to kill him. The men were trying to use the book to contact spawn of the dark tapestry. Near the end of the book it says forcing open portals draws forth the spiritual essence of the casters and an entity contacted by the portal can use the essence to force itself on your world. The short version of the metaphysical gibberish is that the summoned entity can feed on its summoners and become more powerful - we have to kill the Keepers in order to stop it. Everyone peruses the parts of the book she indicates and nods sagely, willing to believe that is what it says.

### *The Bug Zapper*

Most of us like this plan. We start trying to track down Keeper Hyve. Serpent goes with Tommy to try to find the location of this merchant of death, while Wogan and Sindawe head off to drink at the Dead Duck Inn in the Rotgut District.

At the Dead Duck, bartender Ball-less Bill is standing outside, peering into his bar. He tells Sindawe and Wogan that huge cockroaches have taken over his inn. Wogan and Sindawe peer in and when Wogan casts a light spell inside, they see dog-sized cockroaches scuttle for cover. Sindawe tries to interrogate the crippled bartender about where the roaches came from but has little success. They must have been flushed out by the tsunami; he came downstairs and there they were, hissing and snapping at him. He ran outside and slammed the door and now they seem to be in charge of his tavern. Bill offers Wogan and Sindawe an evening of free drinks if they kill the roaches. “Free drinks” is the magic word, and Wogan says, “We’re on the case!” Wogan and Sindawe bust into the Dead Duck. Wogan uses a *call lightning* spell to destroy cockroaches in large numbers; as survivors flee out into the street unerring bolts of lightning from the heavens strike them down, greatly impressing the local displaced tsunami survivors who are watching from wherever they can get a modicum of protection from the rain. Victorious, they sit and drink rag-squeezings and hit on bar wenches for some time. Sindawe teaches Hatshepsut some drinking games; after a few drinks she allows that they had some drinking games back in her time as well.

Eventually Tommy and Serpent arrive, walking in as they are trying to pass an orange held under the chin from one participant to another. They determine the three are lightly toasted from a couple hours of recreational drinking while they were out doing real work. Salvadora comes out of a back room (no one saw her come in earlier) and says, “So, what did you find out?” Tommy “heard from a guy” that Hyve is holed up in a derelict building called Elm Way Church. Hyve is selling his poisons from this building.

### *The Poisoner’s Handbook*

We head off to Elm Way Church. This building used to be a church to something many years ago, but has been used for all sorts of purposes since then. We walk in. It is cold and damp. Two man-sized statues are here, draped with sheets, and a stone altar has



been converted into a table. As we begin to stealthily explore, Sindawe is suddenly overcome with illness. He runs outside and has a bout of diarrhea. Wogan and Serpent examine him. Wogan thinks he can't hold his liquor, while Serpent thinks he has a case of miasma and needs clean air. "Maybe it's ghoulish fever!" "Ghoulish fever's a myth." Sindawe's newly reinforced monkish constitution fends off whatever the disease is and he gets better quickly.

Hatshepsut approaches Sindawe separately and tells him she doesn't think the gendarme has the stomach to do what is needed. The Keepers need to be killed. Sindawe takes it under consideration. "We do need to talk to them first, though," he reminds her.

We go back in and stealthily try to open the side doors of the main room. On the right side we find a room with a cot and a reading lamp. On the left hand side is a storage room containing supplies. There is another door there leading to a small room with a broken roof.

Before proceeding, we take the sheet off of one of the statues. It is a statue of a woman wearing platemail. The other statue is a man, and Wogan believes it is a statue of Aroden. This church must have been abandoned 100 years ago when Aroden died. The other statue is probably of Iomedae, another goddess that used to serve Aroden. We have a mostly confused religious discussion about all that.

Behind some bookcases, we find a secret door that leads to a trap door in the floor which seems to be of a more recent vintage than the rest of the place. We examine then open the door. It sets off a set of jangling bells attached to the door. We quickly go down a ladder into what looks like part of a basement. A sunken area contains a pool of stagnant water around a pillar. There is an alchemical lab here for brewing poisons. There is also a small tunnel across the room. Wogan suddenly remembers that this is a poisoner's lair and draws his wand of *delay poison*. He hits himself with it, just in time to get shot in the chest by the concealed poisoner. The crossbow bolt does not penetrate his armor, however.

Salvadora casts *see invisibility* on herself. The poisoner is not invisible, but she does spot him. "He's in the water!" she says.

Keeper Hyve pops out of the water. He has some sort of strip tied across his mouth. He throws a jar at us. The jar splashes on Tommy, Salvadora, Hatshepsut, and

Wogan. Luckily Wogan just cast *delay poison* on himself and is unaffected and the two women dodge out of the way, but the violet substance that sprays out onto Tommy causes his flesh to rot. He screams and rolls around. Wogan hits him with a *delay poison* as well to mitigate any further effects.

Sindawe goes after Keeper Hyve, nimbly avoiding the spear trap that springs out of the water directly in front of him. Sindawe delivers a quick jab followed by a stunning face blow. Serpent, Saluthra, and Hatshepsut run forward to help, but Hatshepsut hits a spear trap and is impaled.

The characters beat on the overmatched Keeper; he turns and tries to stagger away from them but Hatshepsut comes around the other side of the column and delivers a final blow to his stomach with her serpent strike, wounding him terribly and rupturing his intestines. He starts to bleed to death. Serpent feeds him a healing potion to keep him alive, and then ties him up.

Keeper Hyve refuses to speak. Apparently he thinks that if he speaks he will be heard by something and it will come. “Nothing weird’s gonna come out of your mouth if we take it off, is it?” Wogan asks him nervously. We remove the leather strip from his mouth and Serpent realizes it is the missing part of the inside cover from the Pnakotic Manuscript. It has the name of the final keeper on it, Keeper Crove. Tommy says, “I’ll make him talk! Let me at his nipples!” The rest of the party physically restrains the angry halfling. Sindawe asks Hyve if he’ll write down answers for them, and the man nods fearfully.

We interrogate him and he writes his responses. We believe Keeper Crove is the head of a local asylum, Crove Asylum. Keeper Hyve claims that Crove is their leader. Sindawe asks him what they summoned. He says it is the Lurker at the Threshold. Wogan strips a *ring of protection +2* off the man and goes to give it to Tommy, who is rifling through the poisoner’s workbench.

Just then the ground begins to rumble. We believe that the Lurker at the Threshold is probably coming to kill Hyve. Sindawe asks if we should “lighten our load,” but Salvadora replies, “I can’t condone just killing the man. If we make it to Maskyr Island they can surely repel whatever it is.”

Sindawe agrees to this. Hatshepsut is shaking her head in an exaggerated “No!” from behind Salvadora, and Sindawe nods at her. We quickly get out of there, the prisoner hefted over Sindawe’s shoulder. After we flee the church, behind us we witness the steeple of the church toppling. Then the church explodes outward. We don't see the invisible monster, but we see the rain splashing off the top of something huge pursuing us.

Being pragmatic and evil, Sindawe stops and drops Keeper Crove down into a reverse headlock to break the prisoner's neck. He finally opens his mouth and says, “Thank you!” right before it happens. The shaking soon stops as the entity pauses. We watch back down the street in trepidation. The invisible monster diverts down an alleyway, breaking buildings as it goes.

“After it!” says Serpent. Everyone stands there and looks at him. “You’ve gotta be fucking kidding me,” Tommy concludes. We all nod our heads sagely in agreement.

### *Next Time*

We track down Keepers Crooge and Crove to get to the bottom of this occult threat!