

REAVERS ON THE SEAS OF FATE - SESSION SUMMARY 01/27/2012

TODAY'S EPISODE: ILL LUCK ON ARGAVIST ISLE

Our heroes are on Argavist Island to visit the Shrine of the Arm-Ripper for its little known regenerative properties. The landing party was ambushed by Ulfen warriors before they made it to the shrine. The Ulfen were slaughtered, except one shield maiden who fled with her fallen captain's body. She was captured by Sindawe after a long chase that ended on a bluff overlooking a large Ulfen fleet. That fleet flies the banner of the Linnorm King, White Estrid. Our heroes are:

- ⤴ Captain Sindawe H'kilata Narr of the *Teeth of Araska*, the fist-punchin' Mwangi monk (Chris).
- ⤴ Bosun Ref "Serpent" Jorensen, the staff-bashin' ulfen druid/ranger and his snake Saluthra (Paul).
- ⤴ Samaritha, the wand-blastin' serpentfolk wizard in the guise of a pretty half-elf, and now Serpent's wife!
- ⤴ Hatshepsut, monk and high priestess of a lost civilization who doesn't savvy much Common and her cobra Naja.
- ⤴ Captain Wogan of the *Black Bunyip*, the pistol-packin' celibate cleric of Gozreh (Patrick).
- ⤴ Bosun Tommy Blacktoes, the staff-slingin' sneaky halfling rogue.
- ⤴ Lavender Lil, a buxom tiefling ex-prostitute, and Tommy's girlfriend.
- ⤴ With them are the pirates of the *Teeth of Araska*, about 20 souls consisting of:
 - ⤴ Survivors from the ship's previous pirate crew
 - ⤴ Ex-slaves escaped from their Chelish owner (Martino Marcellano)
 - ⤴ Various other recruits, some willing, some not.
 - ⤴ JJ, an aquatic homunculus, whose master may be dead.
 - ⤴ Recruits from the Andoran Colony, rebel faction (not Nuruu'gal):
 - ⤴ Lefty (Narbus Smeet), self-inflicted amputee. He's escaping his mother, the sorceress Elder Adara Smeet, and guilt over being a traitor.
 - ⤴ Claxton, he's tried "rebel" now he'll try "sailor".
 - ⤴ Tegan, skilled house wife, and recently married to Stoke.

- ▲ 20 or so pirates captured along with the *Black Bunyip*. Their ex-captain, Morgan Baumann, languishes without her thumbs in the *Araska's* brig.

REUNITED AND IT FEELS SO GOOD

Sindawe returns to the ambush site to find his crew pacing nervously amongst the dead Ulfen. These men are the amputee members of his crew: Lefty, Mace Venjum (no thumbs), Orgon One-Ear, and Peg-Leg Pete. They are waiting only because Wogan and Serpent have commanded it. The Ulfen ambush and knowledge that many more shiploads of raiders lurk nearby have frightened them. They continually reiterate White Estrid's many exploits (taming a linnorm dragon, sacking Nisroch, running the Chelish blockade at the Arch of Aroden, cleaving men-folk in twain at the slightest provocation) interspersed with pleas of "We're leaving now, right?"

Wogan spots Sindawe, remembers that the island has at least some doppelgangers, then demands, "What's your wife's name?"

Sindawe drops the unconscious shield maiden, then replies, "I'm not married." A concerned look crosses his face. "Am I married?"

Wogan, "You are married. Hold it... aren't you married?"

Serpent offers, "I'm the one that's married. Wogan, you need to cut back on your rum rations."

A relieved Sindawe says, "I am betting that the doppelgangers are much less interested in eating our brains after witnessing that exchange."

Sindawe turns to the waiting crew, "Take the heads from those Ulfen. We might need to talk to them later." He then dumps the dead Ulfen chief out of his Bag of Holding. The crew goes about their work with little enthusiasm. He adds, "We will return to the ships when you finish."

Wogan checks the collected loot from the chieftain for magic. He finds magic on the battleaxe, chain mail, Feather Token, boots, and potions.

WOLVES CLOTHED AS PCS

Loot, heads, and prisoner are quickly gathered and the pirates begin walking back to the beach. A short time later their walk is interrupted by a whispered, "Hey you." The pirates look around and see some forms crouched in the bushes nearby.

The whispering voice continues, "There's an ettin hunting in this area. Quickly! Hide in here with us."

The pirates stare suspiciously into the bushes but do not approach. They see a dwarf, a half-orc with long black hair and longer greatsword, a mohawked monk with nunchaku, and a effete rapier wielding man with bouffant hair all concealed in the underbrush.

Wogan looks around cautiously for the giant.

Serpent is unimpressed and declares, "There are no ettin on these islands."

Wogan and Sindawe remind him in unison, "There's at least one. We saw it the last time we were here." Serpent mutters something about how he didn't have his magical smart-making headband back then so it's all a little fuzzy.

Sindawe orders his crew, "Keep your mouths shut and eyes sharp." He tells the hiding adventurers, "We are leaving. You are welcome to accompany us to the beach. Be quiet."

The pirates head out and the adventurers rush quickly to join them. Using the pretext of conversation, the adventurers work themselves close to the pirate officers just as a pair of dire wolves attack. Soon the pirates are fighting the dire wolves and the adventurers. To make matters worse the adventurers reveal themselves to be werewolves as they grow fur, claws and fangs.

Wogan is dragged down by a dire wolf. He forces his flask into the snapping maw, then chases it off with a blast of fear from his Terror Mace. Serpent fights the dwarf werewolf who attacks with battleaxe and a lion headed shield (that also bites). The dwarf falls to Saluthra's coils; he bites ineffectively while his ribs steadily crack under the pressure.

Sindawe stands alone against a dire wolf, the half-orc barbarian, and the effete rapier wielding man. That is, until Serpent rushes to his aid. They kill the dire wolf, then turn their silver weapons against the werewolves. The barbarian and swordsman stab and slash Sindawe several times, while taking minor wounds in return. Wogan rushes into the melee to heal some of Sindawe's wounds.

The last werewolf bravely attacks the remaining pirates all by himself, convinced that they possess no silver weaponry. Three of the pirates produce silver swords and cut the werewolf repeatedly. He howls out, "Beware brothers! They have silver weapons! Aaarrrrruueeee!"

The fight is ended by grasping vegetation, which holds several pirates fast and keeps the rest busy enough to allow most of the werewolves to withdraw. The dwarf werewolf remains in Saluthra's coils.

The werewolves run to a pair of dire wolves sitting nearby, spectators to the fight. The female dire wolf howls causing all of the werewolves to cower and whimper. The female then stands on her hind feet and transforms into Mythra, a druid known to the pirates from their last trip to Argavist Island. She dismisses her *entangle* spell after a truce is called. Wogan begins healing his wounded compatriots. Both sides face off across the small clearing. No one is happy or relaxed.

AN INDECENT PROPOSAL

Sindawe demands, "Why did they attack us?"

Mythra replies, "The werewolves are my children. I encourage them to use guile upon prey."

The pirates translate that as, "Shit happens." The pirates grumble unhappily. Orgon One-Ear winks at the effete werewolf over his silver sword.

Mythra continues, "I don't see Jaren. Is he well?"

Sindawe replies, "He's dead. Slain by a giant squid."

Mythra smiles, "Oh. That's good. Anyone who kills someone as cursed as Jaren would take on that curse."

Sindawe grinds his teeth. Why can't people just die without making things complicated? Not for the first time he hopes Jaren is burning in hell.

Serpent cheerily announces, "Everyone knows Jaren was cursed. And every sailor knows it would be bad luck to kill him. I can't think of anyone who would risk that." Sindawe attempts to stare holes through Serpent's torso.

Mythra continues, "Of course, if someone had killed Jaren they could remove their curse at the shrine. I could be convinced to help with that."

Sindawe replies, "Not interested. Thanks. No curses here. We're going to walk down to the beach now and leave."

Mythra says, "No. You should stay. Use the shrine. I have a favor to ask in return."

Sindawe ignores that, "We have to leave. There's a fleet of Ulfen parked in a cove two miles from here. I have to get my ships out of here before the Ulfen wise up that we're here."

Mythra replies, "There is no need to run. I can hide your ships from the Ulfen. I am after all the *Witch of the Dark pines*."

The pirates are unimpressed; none of them recognize the title. The awkward silence stretches.

Sindawe spits then replies, "Yeah, I don't care who you are. We are leaving."

Mythra says, "Hear me out first. A week ago a ship load of blackguards washed up on my island. I think the Ulfen sank them. They seized the shrine and now control most of that area. Some of them interfere with my powers, so I cannot take my revenge. And my children are too weak for the task."

Sindawe, "OK. Good luck with that."

Mythra ignores that and continues, "Those blackguards are upsetting the shrine, which is sensitive to strong emotions, and causing earthquakes. For what reason I don't know. But they might destroy the shrine. Or bury it. Or sink it into the ocean. And then you have no way to lift your curse or give your crew back their missing parts."

Sindawe grinds his teeth again in frustration. He thinks to himself, "Why won't she shut up about the curse? Right now, I would happily live with the curse if it meant Mythra, *Queen of Talky Bitches*, got raped to death by a bunch of Ulfen. A bunch of dead werewolves would be icing."

Sindawe relaxes his shoulders before saying, "We are going to the beach. We will interrogate our prisoner (he pauses to kick the prisoner in the head) just in case that Ulfen fleet is after someone or someplace we care about. I'll order my ships to sail to a safer location. And then we will return to deal with your blackguard problem. And you'll help us with our problems."

More negotiating takes place before everyone is happy.

ON THE SHORE

The pirates arrive safely on the beach and signal for a boat. A short time later, Samaritha and Tommy Blacktoes arrive along with Bel and some pirates. Serpent and the pregnant (though not showing) Samaritha hug happily.

The ship's officers explain the situation and ask for Samaritha's help with the prisoner. Several pirates search the prisoner again ("We're just looking for weapons!"), then hold her tight while Wogan revives her. Samaritha locks eyes with the shield maiden, who almost immediately relaxes thanks to her *Domination* power. The interrogation begins with Serpent acting as interpreter, because the shield maiden only speaks Ulfen and an archaic version at that.

Who are you? *Anga, daughter of Valgard.*

What are you doing here? *Wintering, so we can strike early before the navies are ready for us.*

Where are you striking? *Nisroch at Nidal. We will make the corpse men bleed.*

Do you know about a shrine or dungeon on this island? *No. White Estrid chose this island because she thought it abandoned and uninteresting.*

What do you know about the ship your people sank a week ago? *There was a vessel with inhuman creatures. We sank it. They were men with great jaws. They also had spider creatures with them.*

What was the name of the vessel? What flags did it show? *It was flying the Riddleport flag. I know not its name.* The pirates speculate that the vessel might also be from Roderic's Cove. And it was probably seized since there are no known communities of spider people or jaw creatures in either Riddleport or Roderic's Cove as of last they knew.

White Estrid will kill to protect her presence here? *Yes. All of our lives are forfeit if it keeps Estrid's secrets safe.*

What will be done when you and your party don't return? *They'll send out patrols to find us. But they're not expecting us back for a week. We were hunting... Well, mostly we were looking for something interesting to do. Then we heard your guns.* Everyone looks over at Wogan.

He shrugs, "Sorry boys. We didn't know the Ulfen were about when we had that fight with goblins. I'll be more careful." Then he takes a big swig out of his rum flask.

Who was your leader in the ambush? *Gunnar Gunnarsson.* Once again the pirates are unimpressed by name dropping.

The pirate officers discuss the merits of warning Nidal of the coming Ulfen raid. Their collective lore on Nidal and its capital Nisroch is:

Nidal is run by the sinister Umbral Court, the shadow touched aristocracy who have ruled Nidal almost since the Earthfall. In ancient times the rulers made a dark pact with a shadowy deity and ever since then the Umbral Court, the descendant of the ancient nobles who made the original pact have ruled Nidal using their powers of darkness and shadow to ensure their rule is unquestioned. Few have the courage to stand against the whims of even the most minor member of the Umbral Court for to do so normally means death in the most horrific manner.

Nisroch is the largest city in Nidal and also the most open. For most of the port's visitors though, that isn't saying much. The few ships that do dock here are closely inspected, and the streets are heavily patrolled. Finding little in the way of traditional port entertainment, most foreigners don't spend any more time in the company of the suspicious inhabitants than they have to. Recent reports, however, indicate that pirates from the Shackles moor at the city's docks with increasing frequency. The reason for this increased traffic isn't known, but is likely to strain Nidal's relations with Cheliax, which is in constant conflict with the pirates of western Garund.

The lesser aristocracy, known as the Umbral Court, holds sway here. Though the city has been kept immaculately clean and efficient through their rule, the cost has been a complete removal of art, revelry and music from society. Such frivolity has been replaced with military theory, dark poetry and mysticism.

Law in Nisroch is enforced by an organisation of brutal monks known as the Silent Shroud. These violent law-keepers are harvest their agents from the lower classes, typically from kidnapped children.

The pirate officers decide that warning Nidal isn't necessary, because a) "We don't know anyone there", b) "The country sounds like an evil shithole," and c) "I heard they fuck corpses even when there's live women nearby."

The ships are ordered to sail to nearby Roanoke Island, anchor there, keep a sharp eye, and return in five days, an hour before dawn. The landing party will show one torch for 'unsafe', two for 'pick us up', and three for 'we have been devoured by the locals; send more pirates'.

Bel asks permission to stay; apparently he was asleep when the away party departed and they had neglected to remember that his nickname “the Eunuch” might benefit from a visit to the shrine. The command staff agrees.

The away party watches the boat and its Ulfen prisoner return to the ships.

Wogan remembers the werewolves and asks, “Was anyone bitten by the werewolves?”

None of the pirates admit they were bitten.

Wogan continues, “If you were bitten, you will turn into a werewolf.”

Serpent finishes with, “And then we get to kill you.”

Still no one volunteers.

Sindawe adds, “Wogan can heal you gently. Or we can use my grandmother’s cure, where the wolfsbane is shoved up your urethra.”

Most of the crewmen look confused. Lefty asks, “What’s a urethra?” Mace Venjum cups his groin protectively.

Wogan shrugs and announces, “Let’s go then.”

RETURN TO WITCH MOUNTAIN

The pirates head back into the dark pines. They are shadowed by wolves. Eventually they rejoin Mythra at the battle site.

Wogan says to Mythra, “Tell us about these attackers.”

They come from Rivenrake Island’s Hollow Mountain to the north. They stole a ship to get here.

Why haven’t you cleared them out? What are their capabilities? *They seem immune to our lycanthropy. They are tough and able to injure my children. They have wolf sized spiders, but those are a twisted abomination against nature (they are not normal vermin) and I cannot control them. And they have poison.*

What are the big mouthed guys? How do they fight? *I don't know. They're humanoid. They're too powerful for my pack. And their presence destabilizes the shrine and therefore plays havoc with my shapechanging, which is tied to the shrine. They use axes.*

Can we have a map? With areas you know they are, where they might be, and safe areas where we can withdraw to? *Mythra draws a map in the dirt while explaining what dangers lurk in each area. Her information is hazy suggesting she has little interest in the 'other areas'. The minotaurs and trolls to the northwest are the only intelligent creatures remaining within.*

Serpent asks, "Is there a back door into the shrine proper? Or a thin wall where tunneling or spells might get us in quickly?" *No. The shrine is secure. Its walls are thick and it sits deep in the earth.*

More questions are asked but Mythra is unable to answer them. She seems bored and possibly high.

Mythra concludes with, "My people will watch for you. Just signal when all has been taken care of."

CLIFF-HANGER

The pirates walk several miles to the shrine complex. Serpent takes the lead on a steep hill to secure a climbing rope. Near the top he is beset by cocker spaniel sized spiders. Wogan guns one down with his Azlanti railgun, which is quieter than his regular black powder guns. Sindawe climbs quickly up and punches a spider to death. Serpent squashes a third with his staff.

The remaining spiders retreat into their hole, leaving the pirates to climb unmolested. The pirates continue onward until they spot the hillock that holds the place they affectionately call the Shrine of the Arm-Ripper.