

REAVERS ON THE SEAS OF FATE - SESSION SUMMARY 08/25/2012

TODAY'S EPISODE: MAW OF SHADOWS

The *Teeth of Araska* (TOA) is sailing Nidalese waters, traveling from Albatross to the capital of Nidal, Nisroch. Their intent is to land at Nisroch and obtain proper pirating credentials from the Nidalese government. And make some forays into the Nidalese countryside to visit Wogan's sister (probably dead) and kidnap a frogemoth for their temporary patron, Thartane the Necromancer. Our heroes are:

- ▲ Captain Sindawe H'kilata Narr of the *Teeth of Araska*, the fist-punchin' Mwangi monk (Chris).
- ▲ Quartermaster 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!
- ▲ Ship's Surgeon Hatshepsut, monk and high priestess of a lost civilization who doesn't savvy much Common and her cobra Naja.
- ▲ Chief Gunner Wogan, 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 pirate crew *Teeth of Araska* pirates: Survivors from the ship's previous pirate crew, ex-slaves escaped from their Chelish owner (Martino Marcellano), recruits (now old hands) acquired during the 1st Azlanti Island voyage, 15 or so ex-pirates from ex-captain Morgan Baumann's, *Black Bunyip*, and new recruits, most with considerable sailing skill, found in Riddleport.

The Trip to Nisroch

Sindawe, Wogan, and Serpent discuss the trip to Karpad, where Wogan's sister Anya (married to one Baron Stepan) lives, and the follow-up journey to capture a froghemoth. Even assuming no real time is spent at these destinations they will be many days on the road. Which is too long to leave their ship and crew without its full compliment of officers. They decide that their best option is to put Mase Venjum in charge of the *Teeth of Araska* and send the ship in search of fat merchant vessels. The short trip to Nisroch is spent talking to the other officers about Mase and talking Mase up. It turns out Mase, an ex-Chelioxan captain, has integrated somewhat with the crew thanks to his fight in Clegg Zincher's arena and the mission to Arm-Ripper shrine; he and the other body part deficient pirates really bonded there.

The officers also review the loot taken from the traitor Sempronia's corpse. Her magic armor and glaive are earmarked for sale. Hatshepsut is given the +2 *belt of strength*. Samaritha claims the +2 *cloak of resistance*.

Greetings from Nisroch

The ship travels 40 miles to Nisroch, tacking thru the intermittent freezing rains that are common for this area and this time of year. Arriving at the Usk river, the pirates find that they must sail into the mouth of the river to reach the capital. They do so.

The city is split by the Usk river; both sides of the city have docks. The pirate vessel is stopped a few short miles outside by an oar-powered customs vessel. It draws up alongside. The pirates note gray garbed peasant looked types manning the oars. The railings are lined with heavily armored guardsmen lead by a cenobite looking priest. In the distance are several Nisrochi warships

at dock. The cenobite priest and several guardsmen board the ship, demanding, "What is your business here?"

Sindawe replies, "We are honest pirates seeking Nidalese hospitality." Wogan rolls his eyes. Serpent merely stares with quiet, uncomprehending hatred... of what no one knows. The rest of the crew wait for certain death. Or worse.

The cenobite replies, "Welcome. Docking fees are 10gp/day. My men will inspect your vessel then I will explain Nidal's many, many reasonable laws and customs."

More guardsmen are brought aboard, then spread out to search for contraband. They pursue their duty with quiet efficiency. Eventually the lead guardsman reports back to the cenobite priest, "All clear. They have prisoners."

The cenobite inquires about the prisoners. When he is informed that they are privateers, he 'requests' that they be handed over for questioning. Nidal has had trouble with foreign privateers and seeks to learn more from such. The pirates are compensated 300gp for the prisoners who quickly lose their shit when they realize that they have been sold to Nidal. They are pummeled unconscious and carted onto the customs boat.

The cenobite explains the laws and customs, in a manner reminiscent of *Manservant*, *servant to Baron Underbheit*:

- Religious trappings are legal on board your ship, but punishable on land. The punishment is public stoning, while a priest reads scriptures.
- <insert another four paragraphs of laws>
- No weapons longer than a fish knife are allowed. Non-state sanctioned violence is punishable by death. Congregating in groups of 6 or more is illegal.

- Traveling outside the city is illegal (without proper papers).
- There is a dusk to dawn curfew in Nisroch.
- All of these crimes and many more are punishable by enslavement, but usually by death, certain death, or worse.

The cenobite concludes with, “Enjoy your stay in Nidal. You will dock on the east side with the other... visitors. I understand the *timber wolf and stone soup* is particularly succulent this time of year.” The cenobite smiles, then returns to his ship.

After the cenobite has rowed out of shouting range, the pirates find their courage and complain bitterly. They were unhappy about being in Nidal. They are more so after listening to the long list of laws or “death laws” as the crew starts to call them.

Wogan is unhappy to hear that Gozreh is unwelcome here. He shakes his head, “Everyone needs a sea god. Otherwise, you’ll drown, get lost at sea, or have your head blown off by an angry drunk man.”

They Find Their Way

The pirates sail into a waiting space on the east side docks. The officers review the other vessels, spotting several obvious pirates including *The Wandering Dagger*, under Captain Clap. There are many other ships. The west side is holds Nidalese shipping, both military and private. The east side is foreign, mostly Chelixian. A dock master shows up to do paperwork and collect the docking fee. Even the docks and pilings have a “metal” look to them.

Wogan orders JJ, the sea homunculus, to gather hull wood from the neighboring ships, starting with *the Wandering Dagger*. JJ looks at the water dubiously, but brightens when Sindawe offers, "I'll buy you a prostitute." JJ leaps over the rail and into the water.

Wogan observes, "I don't want to see what passes for whores around here."

A silent messenger delivers a written message from *the Wandering Dagger*. It is a hurriedly written note from Thalios Dondrel (son of Mordekai), a sailor under Captain Clap that Sindawe, Wogan, and Serpent rescued from a ghost ship on their first voyage, inviting his friends to meet him at the Glutton Gallows in two hours for a report on "how things work around here".

The senior officers tell Mase Venjum that he will be in charge while the away team journey's inland, including taking the ship out for pirating. The senior officers quietly pass the word along to the junior officers.

The senior officers use a break in the freezing rain to journey to the Glutton Gallows. They note that many of the private structures are Chelixian in design. But they lack the energy of such places in other nations... The locals hurry about their business, talking little and keeping their eyes to the ground.

They spot several gray skinned men with iron bracers and a "three-chained" symbol carved in their foreheads. No one is sure what to make of them, except "more horrible type of cop." Finally, they met a foreigner who is able to direction them to the Glutton Gallows; the exchange is quick and furtive.

The officers are happy to see that the Glutton Gallows is a proper pub. Happy noises can be heard outside the establishment. Inside there are sailors for many nations drinking rum and other liquors. They quickly locate Thalios Dondrel and in a short time are seated, drinking, and swapping news. Thalios' news:

Captain Clap is trying to work a deal. The local high priestess wants to sponsor voyages of entrepreneurs (i.e. pirates). Her reasons are unknown to the general public, but the pirates are eager just to entertain the notion, because the high priestess has also made Nisroch an open city where they can buy and sell all goods, regardless of origin. Most pirate vessels are using Nisroch as a convenience, but some like Captain Clap are looking to set up shop. They hope to get a letter of marque or some such thing.

The south side of the city (the city south of the Usk river) is where the poor and commoners live. Just outside the west walls is the Witch Market where everyone, including foreigners, buy and sell. The north side of the city is called the Spires, reserved for the rich and the cenobites. Outside the walls is the country. Folks out there are more independent and less beaten down... but they're still wary.

Entertainment is pretty thin in this town. No brothels, though the folks in the country side are willing to exchange services for coin. The Chelixians might have some secret brothels, but they aren't telling. There is a S&M themed burlesque show run by a foreign dwarf named Red Rodamyre. And that's about it.

After more drinks, the senior officers are taken back to the ships with Thalios pointing out local establishments of interest, including the Pillars (public execution facilities). They see the occasional local charged with keeping the city presentable.

Wogan wisely guides the party back to *the Wandering Dagger*, because it's always good to scope out the competition. The guards attempt to turn Thalios and company back but are won over by Thalios' explanation of, "It's OK. They're with me." Thalios takes them below deck where he kicks folks out of the captain's mess so they can enjoy some more drinking. Another "don't" is shared: The Nidalese hate Desna so anything butterfly themed including stripper tattoos are illegal and immediately executable. He also tells them about the *Wandering Dagger's* voyages, which include piracy in the Chelixian southern waters and visits to the lands near there. The conversations turn to lower entertainments including how to make undead, especially stripper vampires, warm enough for 'relations'.

Serpent, Sindawe, and Wogan spend the night aboard the *Wandering Dagger*, because of the Nisroch night curfew. At night it is more obvious that the Spire side structures have been designed to funnel the wind into whispering sounds. Serpent's sleep is plagued with nightmares of a man tortured on a frame by gray clad priests.

Dire Warnings

The next morning, the officers return to their ship. The crew are happy to see them, except those who bet on "Disappeared or killed."

Wogan and Sindawe share Thalios' warnings with the crew. They direct extra warnings to Kahina because of her butterfly tattoo. Kahina remains bubbly and convinced that "covering it up" and her cuteness will protect her. Captain Sindawe shakes his head, "I have exhausted my parenting skills."

Wogan checks in with JJ on the collection of ship splinters. The sea homunculus presents several oversized fistfuls. Wogan catalogs them. Sindawe hands some coins over to JJ declaring, “That’s enough to buy any whore.”

Captain Sindawe hires stevedores to haul the ship’s loot to the Witch Markets. Serpent brightens noticeably at the prospect of buying and selling... His Ulfen greed gives him great talent with the math if not the sales. Tommy volunteers to help sell. A few hours later, Tommy and Serpent have determined that their best option for high returns would be to open a stall and sell their goods retail, rather than all at once for wholesale. This isn’t really news to these savvy pirates, but this is the first opportunity they have had to ‘set up shop’ for more than 48 hrs.

It is decided that Tommy and Lil and some guards will sell the loot of fin the Witch Markets while Mase captains the *Teeth of Araska* and the senior officers head off to Karpad. Four crewmen will be assigned to provide security. The loot to be sold includes: weapons and armor (lots of 10, 20 and 30), 20 tons of foodstuffs (mint, mustard, nuts, and coffee), and several dozen masterwork or magical items. At the end of 10 days, the foodstuffs fetch 10,000gp minus 1,000gp for ship’s provisions and refitting. In Riddleport, the same cargo would have sold for 30-55% (wholesale). A long forgotten crate of Mordant Spire elf masks (16) is found in the hold and sold (20gp/each) to a merchant departing for Magnimar, where he can off-load them to Pathfinders and other collectors.

It turns out that the weapons and armor are highly prized in Nisroch’s black market. There are many citizens that want (and need) such items. And because the state has declared them illegal, the cost is high. Tommy asks for 75% (book value). Of course, selling such things runs the risk of running afoul of the local constabulary so the actual worth might be zero. Several items

might sell for 100% because they fit the Nisrochi 'mind-set': sex gargoyle chain shirt, +1 whip, +1 omnious and cruel kukris.

NOTE: The GM decides that the various costs - booth set-up, friendly look-outs, taxes, etc... are built into the values listed earlier. In theory, the single share will be 393gp. Setting up takes several days. Sales will take 10 days.

Wogan spies a pale-skinned, wispy woman buying a sylph made cloak (a flying aid!). The woman seems more interesting in the embedded devices than the cloak itself. Her corset catsuit is a ebony fabric that is supple and shimmery. Wogan strikes up a conversation with her, discovering that she is a Nidal local who runs a boutique, Nathalia Zeleve. Her dress is fae skin, treated of course. The skin is transformed into leather then woven together into strands. Wogan asks for an invitation to her shop which is located across the river (another restricted area).

Lavender Lil strikes up a conversation with a sad, hollow-eyed little girl. "Who are you, little girl?"

"My name is Lucy."

"Why are you so sad?"

"My family is poor and cannot afford to keep the zombie pen far from the house."

"Oh. That is too bad."

"Yes. Their constant moans and chewing keep me up at night. The pen is right outside my window."

"Oh... that is really sad. Have you tried covering your ears?"

"No. But momma says it isn't safe to do that, because then you can't hear if the zombies have escaped their pen."

A dour woman grabs Lucy by the arm announcing, "Stop talking to strangers! And you've clearly used your word allotment for the week." The child squirms as her mother drags her to the Stitchman's stall, where her lips are sewn shut. Even Lil's diminished heart aches for the child.

Tommy helps Sindawe locate a wizard to magic up his spear. They find a Chelixian who runs a shop out of the Witch Markets. Sindawe pays 10,000gp to have the *transformative* quality added to his spear (+1 *ghost touch, shock, silver*).

The officers ask around about traveling outside the city. They are told that maps, travel planners, and postcards are illegal, punishable by lifetime slavery and death. Shipping does travel up the Usk River, but only to the Uskwood. And of course the countryside has its share of crazy, close-lipped, religious zealot Nidalese who may just not care about their traveling papers.

Thalios comes to rescue by introducing them to Fritch, a 'service provider and organizer' operating out of Glutton Gallows' back room. Sindawe offers 1000gp for "travel arrangements" and advice on best practices when diplomacy fails. Fritch agrees to make the travel arrangements. Then he explains:

Talking to countryside peasants is pretty safe. They can be reliable, helpful, and informative if none of their oppressors are around and the stranger seems able to keep a secret. City folk are on the other end of spectrum – they see spies and traps everywhere, which keeps them tight-lipped and bovine.

The countryside has less law, but the Nidalese law protects foreigners better than the locals, if they are following the rules. Special enforcers called *Shadowcallers* tour the country side looking for rebellion and teachable moments. Don't wrangle with them. The peasants will inform on you proactively if they believe they will be questioned at a later date. And many structures and homes have eyeless "Blair Witch" style dolls in them, which reportedly state officials can see through.

Sindawe, Wogan and Serpent promise to return in two days for the travel arrangements. They leave.

Fashion in Action

Most of the *Teeth of Araska* crew returns to the ship to wait out the night curfew. However, Tommy, Lil, Mase, and Big Mike attend Red Rodamyre's burlesque show. It starts after dark, so attendees have to show up early and stay overnight. They return safely the next morning. Mase and Big Mike share stories of whips and other tortures that seem more cruel than titillating. Lil behaves as if she saw an unwelcome side of Tommy last night.

That day Wogan, Serpent, and Sindawe make the 2 PM meet with Nathalia Zeleve, purveyor of feyskin products. At the last minute, Serpent opts out of the trip and Lil begs to go along. The trio meets a boat riverside, piloted by Nathalia's servants or hirelings. On the far shore a lone servant escorts them to the shop. They pass housing and business districts. The villas on the

north shore are plentiful. Many appear to be built upon the ruins of previous generations. An ex-embassy building has been re-purposed as a Chelixian restaurant called *Brimstone*; it seems very popular with the locals.

Their escort, a slow moving younger man, leads them to an upscale shopping district and eventually to Nathalia's boutique, named *Boutique Zeleve*. The store front has real glass, behind which stand mannequins wearing the unique garb offered by her establishment. Sindawe and Lil are introduced to Nathalia. After pleasantries are exchanged the servant serves tea, while Nathalia asks each pirate, "What are you interested in? How may I help dress you?"

The young servant entertains while Nathalia and Lil disappear into the dressing rooms. They return 30 minutes later, chatting happily. It is clear Lil has made a purchase.

Nathalia turns to Wogan and says, "You are next." She continues, "Tell me about yourself," as she leads him to the dressing rooms.

Wogan nods, "Well, I need some new boots. I'm a pirate and I need to move quickly and easily in a pinch."

Nathalia nods, "I see. Take off your clothes." Wogan argues briefly but complies. Nathalia tells him about the many constraining, tightening, restricting, and painful ways her clothes can be worn. Ignoring his feet, she tries a number of different 'looks' on Wogan. All of them are uncomfortable. Wogan politely refuses these on the grounds, "Uh, they hurt."

Nathalia demands, "Don't you want to be toughened up? The average Nirochi of quality can lie on a bed of nails for hours without complaint. Perhaps some genital binding?"

Wogan replies, "I'm pretty tough already." He eventually buys a tie (aka leash collar) and a pair of cast-off redcap shoes.

It is Sindawe's turn. He too is asked to strip down, then asked a series of questions about fashion. He decides to accelerate the process by requesting, "Something appropriate for a Nisrochi party." He ends up with a binding garment for the groin and thighs and a corset/wrap. He also demands faeskin gloves, "They must obviously be fae skin to impress pirates because most pirates can't tell."

Wogan is set back 50gp (the shoes are free, because everybody hates redcaps), Lil's costs are estimated to be 300-400gp, and Sindawe pays 250gp. The more complex clothing will be ready tomorrow.

Travel Plans

Fritch the underground travel agent has found a Chelaxian diplomat who is traveling up the Usk River to Pangolais, the capital city of Nidal. He has arranged for the officers to make the journey with that party as far as the border of the Uskwood. The group has VIP credentials, so the expectation is that they will be largely safe from predatory officials and religious zealots alike.

The travel party will use their necromancer-written six-person pass to move inland from Nisroch to Karpad. The 'gang' includes: Serpent, Samaritha, Wogan, Sindawe, and Hatshepsut. The sixth slot is kept open in case they need a local guide or expert.