

REAVERS ON THE SEAS OF FATE - SESSION SUMMARY 09/08/2012

TODAY'S EPISODE: FAT GHOUL BRINGS BAD LUCK

The *Teeth of Araska* (TOA) is docked at Nisroch, a coastal city in Nidal. Tommy Blacktoes has set up shop in the Witch Markets to sell their pirating loot, thanks to the Nisroch government's "We Heart Pirate's" program. Meanwhile, Sindawe, Wogan, and Serpent will visit Wogan's sister, Anya, in Karpad. And later capture a swamp-dwelling froghemoth for their momentary patron, a necromancer. The pirate crew huddle aboard the TOA, seeking to avoid Nisroch's gloomy alleys and infamous 'death laws'.

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 is also Serpent's wife.
- ^ Ship's Surgeon Hatshepsut, monk and high priestess of a lost civilization 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 their pirate crew, formed from previous pirate crews, escaped slaves, and recruits both willing and unwilling.

WHO WILL WATCH THE CHILDREN?

Wogan, Sindawe, Hatshepsut, Serpent, and Samaritha will travel to Karpad to visit Wogan's sister, Anya. After that they will travel to the Nidalese swamps to capture a froghemoth for

Thartane the Necromancer. All of this may take several weeks. Several weeks during which the TOA pirate crew must be kept busy.

Most of the TOA crew will sail under acting captain Mase Venjum, seeking fat merchants. Tommy Blacktoes and Lavender Lil will remain behind to sell 24 tons of loot in Nisroch's Witch Markets. The Nisrochi government has thrown open its doors to pirates, pirate vessels, and as much loot as they care to sell. Tommy has requested a few crewmen for "security". Mase needs the junior officers to run the ship, so Tommy is left to pick from the less responsible, less experienced, and less well-known crewmen. He selects Slasher Jim, Kahina, Olgvik, and Dum-dum. Sindawe mentally notes the names for the future.

Sindawe requests that Samaritha memorize prestidigitation for their county trip, explaining, "We'll need a quick clean-up for the murders we will undoubtedly commit."

Wogan says, "Oh that's much better than dipping our clothes in blood every morning."

Hatshepsut replies, "Yes. There are many problems with blood soaking clothes."

SARTORIAL CHALLENGES

With the children put away Wogan, Sindawe, and Lavender Lil return to Nathalia's *Boutique Zeleve* to pick up their fae-skin leather bondage gear purchases. They meet Nathalia's boat and servant riverside, then cross to Nisroch's west side where the well-to-do live. The escort uses a large black leather umbrella to keep the rain off the small group. Wogan refuses the cover, choosing to bask in Gozreh's glory.

From beneath the cover Lil says, "We will be trying on leather clothes. Are you sure being *damp* is a good idea?"

Wogan joins Lil beneath the cover.

At the boutique the proprietor greets them, then insists that they try on their purchases. Lil and Nathalia disappear into the back first. Nathalia's servant follows carrying a huge talc container. A long while later they return.

Lavender Lil's outfit transforms her beauty to goddess levels. Her figure (and breathing) are confined and enhanced by a black corset with a separate blouse and dress set. The garment is constructed of leathered fey skin. The corsets bones are perhaps from a sturdy fey breed.

Lil parades back and forth several times, then begins to swoon from the constriction. Even celibate Wogan drools in appreciation.

Nathalia dresses Wogan quickly in the waiting room; he gets redcap boots and a leash. She invites him back if in the future he decides to dress a bit more daringly.

Sindawe is next. He is stripped down, talced, and dressed. They return to the waiting room.

Wogan tries not laugh, then says, "Very fetching, captain."

Nathalia's servant presents a large box to Sindawe. He opens it find a pair of large red, clawed hands.

Nathalia explains, "They are fey. As you requested. They won't hold up to a fight, so treat them well."

Sindawe eagerly dons the gloves, then crows, "Have you ever seen anything so awesomely cool and creepy!" He proudly waves his faeskin-gloved hands about.

Lil declares, "Well, that's a matter of perspective. They are definitely creepy." Sindawe responds by chasing Lil around the room with his new gloves.

Nathalia watches for a while, then says, "I know we have settled on cost. But... I will take pain in place of coin."

The pirates take a moment to absorb that, then pay fully from their wallets.

Wogan asks Nathalia for a business card; he is presented with one printed on black leather. She also hands a different business card to Lil. She explains, "It is for a club named *Dusk*. They appreciate tiefling women of your caliber. The location changes all of the time and the invitations are rare. But the clientele appreciates... Women of your type.

Lil accepts the card.

The pirates return to the east side of Nisroch. Sindawe changes back into his pirate clothes during the boat trip.

Lil, having enjoyed extra ogling down to the river, decides, "I'm going to wear this back to the ship." She stumbles several times on the walk back, thanks to the oxygen depriving corset.

ONE MORE DEAL

Wogan asks Sindawe, "Hey, Captain Clap is getting a letter of marque. Should we see if he's open to having Mase and the *Teeth of Araska* team up with him?"

Sindawe says, "That's a good idea. Let's ask."

They walk over to Clap's ship, the *Wandering Dagger*. Clap is in and willing to meet. A short time later they are in the captain's quarters drinking rum.

Clap asks, "What are ye lads up to?"

Wogan explains the deal.

Clap considers for awhile, then replies, "Arr, we could sail together, I reckon."

Uncertain about Clap's honesty, Wogan and Sindawe decide to put Clap in their debt. They slowly tell Clap about White Estrid's raid on Nisroch, which will happen soon.

Claps considers, then says, "I could give this to the high priestess and thereby buy the Nidal letter of marque that I want. But this place needs burning down. It is dark and evil and full of scumbags. I would be happy to raid with your boys."

They make arrangements for Mase and Clap to meet aboard the *Teeth of Araska* for an officer's dinner and strategizing. They also agree that the *Wandering Dagger* and *Teeth of Araska* will return in ten days to pick up the TOA's senior officers.

THEY TRAVEL

The next morning the senior officers purchase a weapons box, a lock, shovels, and pick-axes. The first two are needed to observe a Nidalese law stating that foreigners allowed to carry weapons must keep them in a locked box. The last two are for body disposal; the pirates have decided to try burying the evidence.

The shop proprietor asks, "Who will carry these? My cousin sells carts and draft animals."

The officers discuss their destinations. Wogan remembers that Karpad is in the middle of horse country. Back in the old days before death crazy Nidal, that area of the land belonged to horse tribes. Now the horse tribe descendants are ranchers. They decide to delay transportation until they get to 'horse country'.

Following Fritch's instructions, they journey thru Nisroch's silent streets to arrive at the docks. They board a barge that will be propelled by tethered slave labor.

There are two persons of note aboard the barge:

- A small, elegant, pale skinned woman in clothes with colors. Clearly a foreigner. She is the Chelixian diplomat.
- The second is a woman or an effeminate man. She is an albino with a big nose attired in drab grays and blacks. Clearly a local. Wogan notices her grass and twigs necklace; it appears to have been dipped in blood.

The diplomat introduces herself, “I am Velenne. I understand you are to be our security for the first leg of the trip.”

Velenne gestures toward the albino, “And my bodyguard and our local escort is Alviana.”

The introductions continue.

Velenne asks, “Why are you traveling inland?”

Wogan replies, “To see my sister in Karpad.”

Serpent merely glowers.

Velenne replies, “We are lucky. Outsiders are only allowed into Pangolais with approval from the Black Triune. Unless they get a special escort like Alviana here.”

The albino woman says nothing. Again. She glowers at Serpent. Samaritha notices the chemistry and elbows Serpent.

The five pirates stow their gear and Saluthra, Serpent’s very large snake. The slaves pull the barge up river thru the city. The pirates marvel at Nisroch’s very metal architecture.

Until they pass through a large shanty town on the city’s far end. They watch Nisrochi special enforcers move amongst the hovels. They drag people out and throw them into large caged wagons. The victims seem to be largely sick, old, or crippled.

Sindawe asks Velenne, “Who are they rounding up and why?”

Velenne replies without judgment, “That is a culling. The Nisrochi round up the undesirables. They will be burned in the *crematorium* or used for torture practice or as raw material for the *Cathedral of Bone*.”

The countryside becomes normal once the barge clears the city. There are the occasional pockets of oppressed people. And the weather is dark and gloomy. Yet, the surroundings appear to be normal river plain.

Velenne is clearly Chelixian and of noble stock. Her clothes are high quality. Her manners proper. She makes small talk easily with all of the pirates.

Wogan asks her, “Do you know a Baron Stepan?”

Velenne thinks for awhile, then shakes her head, “No. No one by that name. He would have to be a Nidalese to inherit lands here in Nidal. Even lands owned by Chelixians during the occupation reverted. He might be a Nidalese claiming Chelixian blood. Many consider such heritage more prestigious, naturally.”

She turns her attention to Samaritha. Soon the two are discussing the ‘arcane arts’. This also proves to the rest of the group that all Chelixians are devil worshipping necromancers bent on world domination.

THE USK RIVER

It will take several days for the barge to travel up the Usk River to a fork. The south branch becomes the Southern Usk River and leads to Gebron, a town just outside the Usk Wood.

The Usk Wood is a large hardwood forest, wherein resides the capital, Pangala. It is rumored that the woods are so dense one cannot tell day from night. The Nidalese resent and resist inquiries about the Usk Wood and Panagala. Knowledge of such is punishable by death.

During the trip Alviana remains weird, quiet, and stoic.

Velenne talks at great length with everyone about anything without sharing details of her own mission.

Sindawe asks Velenne about the Ulfen pirate attack on Nisroch. He is surprised to find that the attack was six years ago. Velenne explains that the Nisrochi are very proud of their city, so spared no effort to rebuild.

Wogan asks Velenne about Karpad. She is surprisingly familiar with basic knowledge of the place and has even been through it once. She declares it a pleasant place, by Nidalese standards. It is a village of several hundred people located along a river. The valley it resides in is also named Karpad.

The House of Boroi has ruled Karpad for several hundred years. Its sigil is a red bear against a star filled sky. Fetchlings (a type of shadow-tainted human) are common in the area; they are treated as second class citizens. For a brief time, they mounted a rebellion and rose to first class. Then they were crushed.

Sindawe asks about the sickness Anya wrote of in her letter. Velenne replies, “Instances of sickness are likely to draw the *culling*. They would target those who become and stay sickly too long.”

Wogan remembers from Anya’s letter that a Riddleport gendarme named, Ansar, set up residence in Karpad. That gendarme was with the pirates at the battle inside the Riddleport Light House. He suspects Ansar might be behind the troubles in Karpad but only to lure the other members of that battle into an ambush.

FAT GHOUL AT NIGHT, RIVER TRAVELER TAKES FLIGHT

Each evening the barge lands and is tied up for the night. A camp is struck. Torches light the perimeter. Vellenne uses *summon shelter* to summon a hut to spend the night in by herself. Each morning Wogan sneaks off for morning prayers.

The second night proves more interesting. After dark, Serpent and Sindawe spot a fat man... a very fat man fishing on the far bank. Sindawe points the man out to Alviana.

She declares, "I don't believe he's human. I think he's a ghoul."

Wogan squints into the darkness, "I guess so. Maybe. Are fat ghoul fishermen common in Nidal?"

Alviana refuses to answer, having used her daily word allotment, so Sindawe replies, "Why yes! In Nidal, the *fat ghoul* is a sign of prosperity and good luck. A sure sign that there will be a bumper crop of zombies and the crematorium will burn day and night."

Wogan grins, then notes, "It might be an ambush. He fishes, draws our attention, while his buddies sneak up on us. Or walk across the bottom of the river. Aqua ghouls!"

Sindawe asks, "Ghouls don't have to breathe, what makes one an aqua ghoul?"

Wogan nods, "Right. They don't have to. And here's a list of undead that don't have to breathe oxygen."

Wogan then shouts across the river, "What are you fishing for? Corpses?"

The corpulent ghoul lifts an arm and points downriver. The pirates look down river toward a figure in plate mail riding a skeletal horse. Both are on fire; the horse gallops across the river's surface.

Alviana declares, "Oh shit!" Her next words are lost as a magical silence descends.

The skeletal horse gallops slowly against the current and comes to halt in the middle of the river. It stands about 100' away from the camp. The rider's armor has a skull motif, reminiscent of the Hellknights, or Warhammer 40k.

Samaritha runs, attempting to escape the *silence*. The fat ghouls fall into the river, probably to swim across and attack. And a large number of aqua-ghouls (lacedons) come springing out of the water by the camp.

Wogan fires at the armored man. His bullet ricochets off the rider's armor. The Hellknight casually fits an arrow to his bow and shoots it into Wogan (18pts).

Velenne also attempts to run clear of the *silence*, but seems upset when she stops and spins. Serpent silently seeks guidance from Alviana, "Can I use my staff?" Alviana silently and frantically gestures along the lines of, "Hit something! Now!"

Alviana runs at a right angle to both Samaritha and Velenne. And it is clear that she clears the *silence*, because she casts a spell. Samaritha hits a line of lacedons with a blast from a *wand of lightning bolts*, killing one and injuring many. Sindawe and Hatshepsut punch several unwounded lacedons to death. Wogan runs clear of the *silence* and casts *fireball* (out of a spell storing gem called the *Rain Tiger*). He mercilessly targets the biggest group of lacedons, which is the lump surrounding the two monks. Eight more lacedons die in flames as the monks hit the deck (and avoid all damage).

Three of the surviving lacedons swarm Wogan and Samaritha, but cannot connect. More attack the monks; one scratches Hatshepsut lightly. In response, Hatshepsut catches the lacedon's claw and spins it into another lacedon's eye (dead).

Five lacedons swarm Velenne, who falls beneath their claws. Serpent runs to her rescue (or to avenge her) and kills a lacedon with his orichalcum staff. Alviana summons three giant spiders, which web several of the lacedons attacking Velenne. Samaritha wounds an unwebbed lacedon with

a *magic missile* as it slashes futilely at Serpent. A webbed lacedon attempts to coup de grace Velenne, but instead dies under Serpent's staff strike.

The fat ghouls emerge from river reeds and run silently up to Wogan and Samaritha. He flanks with an attacking lacedon to rake Samaritha with a claw (25pts) and bites Wogan (25pts). Wogan channels *positive energy* injuring the four attacking ghouls. The lacedons claw and paralyze Samaritha, while Wogan's mithral armor deflects their claws and bites.

Serpent kills one more lacedon then rushes to his wife's aid. Alviana's giant spiders attack Velenne's attackers. Alviana rushes up, grabs Velenne and begins dragging her toward the *secure shelter*. She switches to a scimitar when a lacedon closes with her. She cuts one, then is slashed and paralyzed. Velenne shakes off her paralysis, rolls clear and quaffs a potion; she disappears.

Hatshepsut dodges past a lacedon then rushes to aid Samaritha and Wogan. She is too late; the fat ghouls slashes Wogan to the ground (Wogan spends a *fate point* to avoid instant death from the 30pts of damage). Then the fat ghouls lightly slashes and paralyzes Hatshepsut. Sindawe joins the melee. Wogan casts *remove paralysis* on the sly, freeing Samaritha and Hatshepsut. The four lacedons swarm Sindawe, who dodges madly. Serpent swings at a lacedon, then staggers as his sigil (metal shrapnel from the Riddleport Cyphergate) burns and his staff begins to emit a strange shadowy aura. The sigils in Wogan and Sindawe also burn.

Samaritha, laying flat on the ground from the fat ghouls' paralysis, shoots the fat ghouls with a *scorching ray*; he burns. Fat ghouls angles for a sneak attack on Hatshepsut; he fails then delivers a critical hit to her face (33pts). Wogan crawls clear of melee, then unleashes a *positive energy burst* (14pts), healing his friends.

Serpent steps up to the fat ghoul and hits repeatedly with his staff (35pts) as shadows coil about him. Hatshepsut steps in flanking with Serpent and pummels the fat ghoul (14pts). The fat ghoul stretches a hand out to the flaming man on the river, beseeching him for help. The flaming man replies by shooting a flaming arrow through the fat ghoul, who rolls on the ground burning and screaming. Sindawe uses a kama to slash the fat ghoul to death. Burning fat sprays the monk (6pts).

Wogan pops up and shoots the last lacedon dead. He sees the door to the *secure shelter* open, then slam shut. Despite the distance and *silence* zones, he thinks he even heard the lock snap shut.

The Hellknight turns and gallops down the river at an incredible speed, leaving a fiery trail behind it.

Wogan dispenses cure spells. Alviana recovers from her paralysis, looks about, then turns into an owl and flies away. The tongueless slaves are found huddled on the barge. Velenne remains in her *secure shelter* overnight. Wogan checks the ghouls for loot and finds only a *wand of silence* that the fat ghoul was using as a fake fishing pole.

Wogan checks the wounded for ghoul fever and other ailments. Hatshepsut is the only victim.

The shadows on Serpent's staff finally diminish and disappear. Wogan examines the staff before the shadows disappear altogether. He thinks the shadows similar to those that engulfed Serpent and staff back in Riddleport when he killed the Raven Shadow messenger.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

After dawn arrives, Velenne emerges from the hut. Her wounds are healed, but she is flushed – Wogan thinks from ghoulish fever. Alviana steps out from behind the hut. Wogan is able to cure Hatshepsut's ghoulish fever that morning.

The barge is launched and moves up river again. Velenne explains why she thinks they were attacked. "During the Chelish civil war, one Hellknight order, the Order of the Crux, failed to disband as ordered. They were trapped inside their keep, Citadel Gheisteno, on the South Usk River, then set afire. That was a hundred years ago. It was rumored that a trio arose from the ashes. Perhaps that one sought my death because I am Chelixian."

Wogan offers to heal Velenne's ghoulish fever, but can only use his heal skill. Velenne demands Alviana's help; Alviana grudgingly casts *remove disease* upon her employer.

Serpent spits, then says, "In my homeland the undead of note would have killed us. Your undead are weak indeed."