

## REAYERS ON THE SEAS OF FATE - SESSION SUMMARY 04/03/2016

### TODAY'S EPISODE: BRIMSTONE FALLS

Our heroes have sailed into the Shackles on their way further south. The *Teeth of Araska* is berthed at Rickety's Squibs for repairs and improvements. Meanwhile our heroes went to Bloodcove where Mitabu has promised a "big score". This involves yet another trip, this time up the Vanji River and through a series of trading stations owned by the Aspis Consortium. However, the first trading station, White Bridge, is occupied by Ekujae elves who lie in ambush.

#### PCs:

- ▲ Captain Sindawe H'kilata Narr of the *Teeth of Araska*, the fist-punchin' Mwangi monk (Chris).
- ▲ Chief Gunner Wogan, the pistol-packin' celibate cleric of Gozreh (Patrick).
- ▲ Quartermaster Ref "Serpent" Jorensen, the staff-bashin' Ulfen druid/ranger and his snake Saluthra (Paul).

#### NPCs:

- ▲ Mitabu, a trap-loving Mwangi rogue.

### *Survivors*

Mitabu, Wogan, Serpent, Saluthra, and Sindawe are on board the Aspis Consortium vessel, *River Queen*. Five days of travel up the Vanji River finds them at White Bridge station, which appears to have been abandoned by the Aspis Consortium or over-run by Ekujae elves. They decide to investigate what happened after killing or chasing off the Ekujae.

#### The *River Queen's* crew:

- Captain Kelim Esteban
- First Mate Faruq, a half-orc
- Hurg the dwarf mechanic

- Crewmen Danner, Houghman and Speraggo



Serpent demands, “Pay me! I bet on the elves and they are clearly the culprits.” (As you may recall, many bets were placed on the cause of the station’s distress last session.)

Sindawe disagrees, “Nope. I think something else chased the Aspis guys off and the elves took over because it was convenient.”

Wogan checks the well, “I think there’s a dead guy in here.”

Sindawe descends and ties a rope around the body. It is a throat cut, Aspis employee who has been thoroughly robbed so that his identity is unknown. The body is taken back to the *River Queen* where crewman Danner identifies him as an Aspis mercenary. Wogan determines time of death was two days ago.

Wogan asks, "I want to know what they did with the other corpses."

A quick conversation establishes that corpses thrown into the river would have been noticed by the *River Queen* on its approach.

Sindawe asks Captain Esteban, "Do you want to secure the station? I think we can hold and guard the gates, then investigate the station."

Esteban replies, "No, I don't want to leave the boat unguarded."

Sindawe replies, "OK. I'm telling you that if we do the entire sweep and clear job that any portable wealth will go into our pockets."

Esteban nods, "Well, that won't hurt me. But the Aspis Consortium doesn't put up with its funds disappearing. Take Hurg, we need more fuel for the *River Queen*."

Serpent puts Saluthra on guard at the western gate. Then the pirates proceed to investigate with Hurg in tow.

In the Collection House, all the paperwork has been looted.

In the Officers' Quarters, the armory door is still intact. Movement is heard on the other side. From the other side of the armory door comes, "Identify yourselves."

Sindawe replies, "We are mercenaries for the Aspis Consortium. Captain Esteban of the *River Queen* is in command."

A key is shoved under the door, "Let us out."

Serpent unlocks the door. A collection of Aspis employees is within, dehydrated from spending 48 hours in a 10'x10' room.

Serpent asks, "What happened?"

An Aspis officer replies, “The elves attacked in force two evenings ago. They got an advance party inside the gate, then the main force overran us. We were locked in here by the station manager for our safety.”

Wogan says, “We found his backpack. He’s dead. Sorry.”

Serpent asks more questions about the elves.

The officer replies, “Yeah, the elves don’t get along with us. They usually don’t come this far south in such numbers.”

Hurg, the boat’s engineer, declares, “We need fuel for the *River Queen*.”

Sindawe agrees, “Let’s get that done now in case we have to run for it.”

The store house has been ransacked and sabotaged by the Ekujae. There is a reinforced room inside the house with iron shackles and plant litter. Hurg pokes around the litter then declares, “There are some spores left, but no active fuel.” He jars the spores and hands them over to the Aspis officer for replanting. This alarms the PCs.

Sindawe points at the shackles, “Are we going to encounter humans covered in plants?”

“Maybe...” Hurg clearly considers the motivating force behind the *River Queen* to be confidential information.

“Give over the information we need or I’ll throw you into the river with some weights.”

“The fuel we use for the *River Queen* is called an arcophage, which is a kind of fungus that grows on swamp things.”

“Do we need to capture one alive?”

“Yes.”

“Are there any unusual risks in dealing with these things?”

Eventually it is shared that fire and impacts might cause an explosion.

Sindawe demands a non-disclosure document and the full story, or they'll walk.

Sindawe also demands a medical examination of the Aspis employees to identify spore infections.

A single shambling mound forearm is found on the floor.

The pirates find the station stripped of valuables with the exception of some weapons. The Aspis employees begin closing gates and cleaning up. Sindawe checks under the bridge but quickly comes running back chased by really aggressive mosquitos.

### *That Night*

The pirates stay in the barracks. The Aspis employees stand guard, continue clean-up and house themselves in the officer's building.

Wogan points out, "They took your paperwork."

The Aspis officer replies, "Just to despoil things. No jungle elf can read or write."

Sindawe agrees, "Yes, the mongoloid features of the jungle elf, especially the dense, thick skull prevent higher brain functions. They are incapable of reading, let alone understanding it."

The Aspis officer produces a small handbook titled *The Jungle Peril*, which contains all the science proving Sindawe and the Aspis officers' racist statements.

A shriek is heard at the west gate. Armed men rush to investigate. Wall lanterns reveal someone or someones in the jungle. Sindawe demands they show themselves.

Several Mwangi appear from the brush, pointing at Saluthra, "Giant snake!"

The Aspis officer recognizes them as caravan employees and orders them in. The wall lanterns guide approximately twenty more caravaneers. The Mwangi are given caravan quarters

outside the east gate, despite Sindawe's twenty second protest about their safety. "Yes, but... They steal," explains the Aspis officer.

### *Into the Swamp*

The next morning, the Aspis station officer gives over letters to Captain Esteban before the *River Queen* sails up river and into a jungle so thick it appears to be a green fortress. A day later the boat turns off the main river and onto a tributary that winds thru a marshy labyrinth.

The engine is stopped and the crew switches to pulling the boat. The stagnant water is 4' deep – Faruq and Sindawe take the first 2 hour shift and achieve a speed of 1 mile/hour. Serpent and Danner take the next shift, then Mitabu and Houghman, and finally Wogan and Speraggo.

Water spiders skate across the river surface to swarm Mitabu and Houghman. Mitabu heads for the boat immediately, followed by Houghman and the swarm. They climb aboard. Wogan casts *rain storm* to drive the spiders off. The spiders run for it. Wogan then uses a positive energy burst to heal the wounded.

Everyone returns to work.

That evening the boat is anchored. A swamp boar wanders too close and becomes dinner. Captain Esteban awards the crew a cask of grog for their day's labor.

A will-o-wisp attempts to lure drunken crewmen into the marsh. But the sober sailors are having none of that and keep everyone in line.

The crewmen take turns bragging about the weirdest things seen on the Vanji River:

- There was this thing we thought was dragon and turned men to stone.
- A skeeter the size of your head.

This drifts off into speculation on how river gargoyles are created. This ends when the will-o-wisp tries again to lure the unwary. Wogan and a trio of sailors give chase; they are physically stopped by Mitabu, Serpent, and Sindawe. Speraggo makes it to an oily patch of swamp, which rises up, seizes him, melts him, and pulls him under.

Wogan snaps out of the mesmerism. The other sailors take longer. Wogan casts *obscuring mist* on the will-o-wisp.

An avalanche of oily, swamp slug surfaces, then rolls up the hillock where the pirates are located. It washes over the closest victims: Mitabu and Danner. Danner is held fast.

Sindawe finally realizes there is nowhere to retreat since the *River Queen* has been dragged up onto the hillock they are currently standing on. He pulls his temple sword and attacks – the creature seems unhurt. Mitabu shoots his gun. Wogan puts a resist energy (acid, 20pts) on Sindawe. The ooze kills Danner, then oozes toward Sindawe who cuts it with his electrified sword... the ooze remains unimpressed.

Captain Esteban, Faruq, and Houghman fire at it with crossbows. Serpent bludgeons it with his staff; the monster recoils with every blow. Wogan casts resist energy (acid, 20pts) on Serpent. It hits Serpent and Sindawe, sucking Sindawe inside its body. The monk punches the monster as his shirt of immolation sets fire to it. Mitabu continues work on a scroll of *burning gaze*. Serpent continues striking with his staff; it retreats leaving Sindawe behind. Wogan casts *magic missile* from his *rain tiger emerald* (spell storing grm).

The ooze merges with the water then goes still. Faruq throws a cask of oil onto it, which Mitabu lights. The will-o-wisp turns a yellow color and flies away, sated with souls for the evening.

The tarry remains of the ooze burns off over a 2-hour period. The sailors stow their gear on board and wait. The next morning Wogan and Serpent perform Gozreh funeral rituals for Danner and Speraggo. Captain Esteban says a few words.

### *Looking for Fuel*

The sailors continue pulling the boat forward. Captain Esteban tells everyone to be on the lookout for shambling mounds. After some badgering he shares, “Don’t set fire to it, because we need it. Shocking is a no-no. Don’t hack it apart.”

Later that day a dark, muscled form drops from the trees onto Sindawe. The leopard claws and bites but doesn’t connect... he kills it with a series of blows then flings it into a second leopard. The second leopard runs for it. Serpent skins the leopard, which produces a pelt large enough for a halfling or a slutty human woman.

They do not find an arcophage-infested shambling mound that day. At camp that night, Captain Esteban ruins dinner by stating, “Don’t worry boys. I know one other place we can check.”

### *Brimstone Falls*

The next day is another day of pulling the boat. Everyone complains of swamp dick until Wogan casts his second *endure elements* on Sindawe and Serpent prays for the same spell. ^

Houghman complains, “Why aren’t you guys sweating?”

Sindawe replies, “Well, according to chapter eight of the *Jungle Peril*, the further away in blood you are from the mongoloid races the better one adapts to such problems.”



Houghman replies, “Throw that thing away. I hate elves as much as the next guy but that book is ridiculous.”

Brimstone Falls is an 80’ water fall over a cataract. The cliff is not steep and nearby trails show how the locals navigate the area.

Captain Esteban explains, “We’ll find superior sized shambling mounds here. And various jungle races who want to leverage the magic powers in this location... they won’t like us being here.”

Everyone groans.

Sindawe reads from chapter 9 of the *Jungle Peril* regarding the mongoloid races’ gods and their inferiority to the civilized gods.

Everyone groans, even the Wogan the cleric.

The *River Queen* drops anchor at a finger of land. Multiple trails head out from here and switch back up the cliff face. A crudely made stone statue stands nearby. Wogan examines the hippopotamus headed woman, which is a member of the Loa family of spirits. They leave an offering of limes and grass.

Captain Esteban orders the pirates and Houghmann to retrieve a shambling mound. Everyone groans again. Sindawe orders Houghmann to stay behind, fearing for his life.

The climb up is dangerous due to slickness and a waterfall. The pirates decide to send the best climber, Serpent, up and then have him lower a *rope of climbing*. Then the GM explains, “The shambling mound is somewhere on the cliff face.” So, the trail climbing continues... they encounter a switchback with another Loa statue, this time of a man with a gorilla head.

The group’s pools their religious knowledge to identify this loa’s domains – leadership, strength, and sexual prowess. Sindawe leaves an offering of limes and bags (because gorillas hate

luggage). They spot a secret path going up. They take it. Everything goes well until they pass under another waterfall that makes the climb very dangerous.

They find crudely carved hand holds in the cliff face. Serpent goes up first and establishes the *rope of climbing*. Once they are all up they find a tunnel mouth and another loa statue – crocodile head – frequently represent knowledge and warn of hidden danger. Wogan sacrifices a cat from his *bag of tricks*.

They bring up magic lights and let Mitabu take the lead to search for traps. Roots grow into the tunnel from above and the sides. Mitabu leads, then halts and backs the group up.

Mitabu whispers, “Lizard people up ahead.”

Wogan asks, “Should we try talking?”

Sindawe shouts down the tunnel, “Greetings crocodile brothers! Care to parlay?”

They answer back in draconic, which the pirates do not speak. Serpent uses a serpent totem power to communicate with serpents. This works...

Crocodile shaman says, “Soft skins are not welcome here.”

Serpent, “If we leave will you come talk to us?”

“Yes.”

The pirates back up to the loa statue. The crocodile men follow a short time later. They are led by a shaman; most are armed with javelins.

Serpent explains, “We are after a giant plant man. Can you help?”

The shaman begins to respond, stops to stare at the loa statue and the offerings the PCs have left it, then offers, “Yes. It slumbers inside the cave. Best not to awaken it.”

“Is it part of your religion? Surely not? We can remove it!”

“Yes, but do not disturb the shrine.”

It's 60' down to the water, 20' further to the top of the falls. Luring it out gets it out of the crocodile men territory. Mitabu lays a net on the trail with a manual pull on it. Sindawe will lure it out. Once in the net they will bludgeon it unconscious.

The shaman demands, "Be respectful of the cave!"

Sindawe answers through Serpent, "Of course."

Mitabu lays the net trap, Wogan casts *bless*, then Sindawe follows the tunnel to the cave, where he yells, "Respectfully loud!!!" He sees a giant mass of rotting vegetation and stuff stagger toward him. He flees, navigates the trail and crosses over the net. The shambling mound slowly extrudes from the cave mouth, then follows. It grows roots instantly as it steps, the roots making it sure footed.

It is entangled by Mitabu's net. A *blessed* Serpent beats on it with his orichalcum staff. Sindawe uses aid another for Serpent. Mitabu sneak attacks from the opposite side where he was hidden. Then Serpent unleashes a full attack suite, then kills it with a barbarian bite.

Wogan uses a *stabilize* spell to save it. On its back is a large, semi-translucent tumor.

The crocodile people come over to say goodbye, then depart peacefully back to their cave.

Mitabu and Wogan come up with a plan to lower the monster by rope, tie it to floating jungle logs (not the shitty sinking jungle logs), then paddle it over to the boat. It works too. The shambling mound is shackled below. Hurg harvests the tumor for fuel.

### *Back to the River*

The *River Queen* uses its motor to escape Brimstone Falls. Sindawe sees a vision of Mama Watanna standing in the waterfall as they depart. They escape the marsh and return to the

Vanji River. They quietly pass Nantambu which the Aspis Consortium does not have a treaty with and steam northward.