

## REAVERS ON THE SEAS OF FATE - SESSION SUMMARY I/1/2012

### TODAY'S EPISODE: MONSTER ISLAND

Our heroes are in Blackcove, a fishing village on the Sallow Coast in Cheliox. Off camera is another team of NPCs, charged by Captain Sindawe with "casing" the northern end of the Sallow Coast for a pirating target that is soft and rich. But most of the crew are at sea aboard the *Teeth of Araska*, though they might actually be at the bottom thanks to Blackcove's problem with the Deep Ones (tentacle masses that come out during storms).

Our heroes are:

- Captain **Sindawe H'kilata Narr**, the fist-punchin' Mwangi monk (Chris).
- First Mate **Ref "Serpent" Jorensen**, the staff-bashin' Ulfen druid/ranger and his snake Saluthra (Paul).
- Gunnery Mate **Wogan**, the pistol-packin' celibate cleric of Gozreh (Patrick).
- Bosun **Tommy Blacktoes**, the staff-slingin' sneaky halfling rogue (was Kevin, now NPC).
- **Hatshepsut**, monk and high priestess of a lost civilization who doesn't savvy much Common and her cobra Naja.
- **Samaritha**, the wand-blastin' serpentfolk wizard in the guise of a pretty half-elf.
- **Lavender Lil**, a buxom, tiefling ex-prostitute.
- The rest of the crew:
  - Survivors from the ship's previous pirate crew
  - Ex-slaves escaped from their Chelish owner and recruited from their castaway island home
  - **Mace Venjum**, former Chelish captain, former prisoner, thumbless, and forcibly recruited pirate
- The new hires:
  - **Del**, merchantman sailor, released from Riddleport's Shoreleave prison.

- **Spee**, a peg-legged, though speedy climbing, sailor. Killed by tentacle masses as Blackcove.
- **Rolf**, a big guy with lots of scars escaping a shady past in Riddleport.
- **Delmer**, a slow talking man with an impressive knowledge of knots.
- **Bojask**, male, human ranger and the sole shanghaied crew member. Previously he was the floor manager and animal wrangler for the Gold Goblin casino.

### ***WHAT TO DO NEXT?***

The weather is over cast and there is a slight rain, but no storm. Sindawe, Serpent, Wogan, and the surviving crewmen they brought ashore with them (Slasher Jim, Del, and Gareb) discuss what to do next. No one is eager to launch a search for the *Teeth of Araska* from a fishing boat, but that seems to be the only option available. Ocean sailing ships are a necessity for pirates; without them pirates are just bandits. Waiting in the village for the ship to return isn't an option, because the tentacles might return first.

Estan, a Blackcove fisherman, has offered to take the pirates to the nearby Isle of Nal-Kashel, home of Wedding Rock (south end) where the fisher folk newlyweds honeymoon and also home to the "ruins" which the fisherfolk avoid. Estan believes his missing family members will be found there but cannot or will not explain why he believes.

Sindawe, sickened by the lying, tentacles, and his missing ship decides to press for an answer. He demands of Estan, "Strip."

Estan decides the pirate is not joking and takes off running. Sindawe gives chase. A very short time latter Sindawe is beating Estan senseless. He orders his crew

to strip the man. Wogan and Serpent perform the medical examination. They find three gills on each side of Estan's neck. Everyone is amazed that Sindawe was right. "How did you know?"

Sindawe explains, "The village started off with 200 people. After two months they were down to 40 people. No one sticks around with that attrition level when there's a perfectly good and safe road out of here. My guess was that their leadership was lying to them while secretly working with the forces behind the tentacles. My other guess was that they couldn't leave, which would mean some sort of sea-folk tied to the ocean or this chunk of real estate."

The pirates revive Estan and convince him to spill the beans:

- Are all of you fish people? *Yes.*
- What about breeding with others? *Yes, some of us have loved outsiders. Their children are usually gifted.*
- What happened to the non-"townies"? *The outsiders all left when the trouble started.*
- Wogan asks, "What are your beliefs?" *The explanation, like most belief systems, is hard to grasp but seems to boil down to "THE SEA IS LIFE, MOTHER, FATHER, SECRET LOVER, AND DEATH".*
- When did the trouble start? *Everything was OK until Gerlock went and stirred things up on Nal-Kashel. The island is forbidden except for Wedding Rock.*
- Wogan, "And nothing weird happened on your wedding night?" *Nope. Best night of my life.*

- What about our friend, Jaren? *He married one the local girls. The village elders discouraged him from swimming out to Wedding Rock for his honeymoon. It is over two miles away, too far for those not of the ocean. But he went anyway.*
- What about the ruins? Why did you let Gerlock poke around out there? *Our village elders also discouraged Gerlock. The island is forbidden because of the ruins.*
- How long have your people lived here? *Our people have lived here since before Cheliox. We decide that this means the ruins would be ancient Azlanti.*
- What gifts do your folk get? *Most of us can breathe sea water. Some few cannot. Some are overly blessed and they go off to sea and never come back.*
- Sindawe, remembering the tentacles, asks, "Does anyone have silver weapons or the ability to coat some with silver?" *Not really. The alchemist, Gerlock, would have been the only one. Silver weapons are illegal in Cheliox, the devils don't appreciate them. But I will ask if you promise to come with me to Nal-Kasbel and find my relatives.*

Sindawe replies, "Sure. Get us silver weapons and we will accompany you to Monster Island."

Estan leaves and returns a short time later without silver weapons. He announces, "I took up a collection of silver!" He has a collection of silver coins, cutlery, and candle sticks, perhaps a 1000 silver coins in weight.

Del volunteers to do the silver work explaining, "I worked with a weaponsmith. Once."

Slasher Jim and Gareb volunteer to help. Sindawe is immediately suspicious and tells them, "Most of that silver needs to end up on the weapons." They put on hurt looks and try not to let their pockets jingle.

Serpent already has a silver scimitar and Wogan has his silver shot. The rest of the pirates lay out weapons. Del's work improves with each weapon, but even so the finished weapons look pretty crude.

Estan and the pirates launch the boat and begin rowing for Monster Island.

### *Nal-Kasbel*

Estan has a large rowboat. Wogan says, "We have to row two miles?!?"

Sindawe replies, "Not us. We are officers. The others get to row." The trip is choppy and takes two hours.

The island is finally spotted. It is surrounded by weed choked cliffs. The broken tops of several towers actually float through the air and circle the island in lazy ellipses, some going into the water and emerging later. Most of it is sheer cliffs, *Cliffs of Insanity* style.

Estan directs the boat toward Wedding Rock, where there is a place to land. Schools of jellyfish float below the surface. The trip is interrupted when Estan begins to act strangely. He becomes inattentive, then his body goes through a rapid transformation. Estan's new form is still bipedal and obviously "fish man". Wogan shoots him with a silver shot.

The boat had already been riding low in the water thanks to being overloaded with passengers. And it was already rocking due to Estan's dramatic transformation

and pirates scrambling to get away from him. And it continues to rock as Estan thrashes about with a belly full of silver.

The rocking boat sends Wogan, Del, and Serpent overboard where the jellyfish swarm. Sindawe and Slasher Jim move to grapple Estan; Slasher Jim goes overboard. Those in the water have to make a swim check to stay afloat, a Fort save vs. the jellyfish stings, and a climb check to get back in the boat. Gareb pulls Del from the water. Wogan stays afloat but fails the Fort save and climb check and begins to take STR damage from the jellyfish venom. Serpent transforms to his "serpent form" and swims after the rapidly sinking Slasher Jim (failed swim check).

Sindawe pins Estan in the boat. Wogan takes more damage from jellyfish stings and fails to climb out, but does remain afloat (good swim skill). Gareb tries to fish Wogan out with an oar but instead narrowly avoids braining him with it. Del tries to regain his feet but the jellyfish stings are working against him. Serpent swims thru the jellyfish, ignoring their stings, and encircles Slasher Jim, pulling him out and into the boat. The pirate duo exploding out of the water causes Gareb to scream in fear.

Wogan succeeds like a fish on his swim roll, like the Hulk on his Fort save, and like a deranged toddler on his climb check. He's back in boat.

Everyone stung by jellyfish continue to burn and writhe. Wogan fights through the pain, breaks out his Healer's Kit and goes to work "treating poison". (The jellyfish poison appears to be a DC 16 with two successes required to overcome it, but each failure increases the DC). Wogan's assist gives a +4. Slasher Jim helps Del by peeing on him (+2 to Fort save). Slasher Jim loses 3 STR, Del loses 5, and Wogan loses 2 by the time the jellyfish stings begin to subside.

## The Beach and the Approach

Estan continues to struggle and gurgle fish-like noises. Wogan determines that Estan is speaking rather than gurgling. He casts Comprehend Languages from a scroll to find that Estan is repeating several phrases, "He has come. The sea takes it due. The time has come."

Slasher Jim, covered in jelly fish stings, says, "I feel well enough to do this!" He plunges a knife into Estan, who ceases struggling. Or any movement at all. Sindawe orders Slasher back, leaving Wogan to stabilize the fish-man fisherman. Estan's unconscious fish-man form is pale and green, so who knows how badly he's been injured.

Sindawe orders Jim, "Leave Estan alone. We might need him later. No one dies unless I order it."

Jim sneers, "Yeah. Let's keep him safe and alive."

Wogan counters, "He can't run for it because he's in a boat! And if he goes overboard he's just swimming for it!" Then follows with maniacal laughter. Everyone stares at him.

The pirates return to rowing toward Wedding Rock. Everyone is unnerved by the circling towers. Serpent notes a lack of seagulls. Sindawe asks, "Is that because the towers are constantly smacking them out of the air?"

Serpent replies, "Maybe the magics in the area are missing up the magnetic field, which confuses the seagulls into suicide."

Gareb adds, "I knew a guy who was killed by a magnet."

Wogan, "A magnet? Don't you mean a magnus? Or a shipping magnate?"

They land on a black sand beach. There is a road of crumbling slate that runs along the sheer cliff face, ending somewhere at the top. There is a graffiti covered rock on the beach. Wogan walks over for a closer look. It is vibrating with some inner power and it appears to be an altar. He casts Detect Magic and looks it over. Then he touches it. A jumble of images (fish people) washes over him, making him sick, but leaving him with a sense that this rock is part of something larger.

As he pukes Sindawe asks, "What happened?"

Wogan replies, "The rock made me sick; it's magic."

Sindawe says, "So we should all lick it?"

Wogan, "Yeah, and then have sex on it."

The pirate crew, practically in unison, shouts, "Not it!"

Wogan finds, amongst the other graffiti, a fresh "Jaren + Sara" scratched on the rock.

The boat is drug farther up onto the beach, since it is low tide and they expect to be away for awhile. Estan is left to "guard" the boat because he is still unconscious.

Slasher Jim produces a knife and says, "We kill him now?"

Sindawe, "No. Leave him be."

Jim, "And then he'll come after us later."

Sindawe, "And we will kill him then." Jim doesn't appear satisfied with the answer, but does put his knife away.

## **The Road to Nal-Kashel**

The road is in bad shape. The pirates pull out ropes and start knotting them for an easier climb. Then they start slowly up. Serpent gets hit by some falling rocks, but otherwise they suffer no ill effect from the climb. They find the ruins of Nal-Kashel above.

The city blocks are oddly symmetrical with gently curving streets. At regular intervals ten foot tall urchin spine-like structures stand. Each has glowing glass globes gently floating around their spines though many of the globes are dull or shattered (but continue to float). It looks like something out of a World of Warcraft expansion. We try to not touch anything.

Del excitedly says, "Think of the loot!"

Sindawe replies, "Two man rule is in effect! Do not go it alone. We want to know what kills you!"

Wogan adds sarcastically, "Yeah, it helps with the reports." Then, "Shall we investigate the closest tower?" The pirates watch a tower float by overhead. Wogan points - "Uh, that non-floating one over there."

The tower is 100' in diameter and half collapsed. Some parts of it look melted or something akin to that, so the collapse is inward. Wogan locates a door in the northeast side. The west side is largely collapsed, leaving perhaps 30' of the east side untouched.

The inside is muddy, which is strange because outside is sandy (and wet). Regardless, movement is slowed. The pirates spread out and begin looking around. Serpent finds a hidden space behind a moveable rock in the wall. He is expecting loot.

Unfortunately, he finds a Gibbering Moulder! It pours out of the recess onto him. And then the gibbering starts. Slasher Jim falls victim to it immediately. The Moulder bites at Serpent, latching on with one of its mouths.

Wogan casts Silence on the ground near the creature, shutting down the confusing gibbering. Sindawe attacks it with his silver siangham to little effect despite several hits. Gareb slashes at it for some damage, as does Serpent with his silver scimitar.

The creature spits acid at Serpent, missing. Then it moves past several pirates to bite Wogan. It succeeds and then engulfs him. Wogan screams silently, then pulls the trigger on his blunderbuss. He doesn't "hit", so by that reasoning the creature takes no damage. Slasher Jim, still under the gibbering effects, begins cutting himself. Sindawe switches to his kama but delivers no damage despite hitting. Del delivers a bit more damage due to brute force and luck. Serpent's scimitar slashes are even less effective this time.

The creature bites Wogan for 14pts of damage and 2pts of Con. Then it bites several pirates attacking its "outsides". Wogan pulls himself half-way out, avoiding the engulfment for the time being. Sindawe decides on a flurry of blows old school (i.e. fists) and a Stunning Fist; the Fist fails but the flurry of blows delivers 27 pts of damage to the creature which bruises appropriately. Serpent ends the creature with savage staff swings. **BLUNT OBJECTS RULE!**

The celebration that follows surviving a vicious fight is short lived because several of the pirates notice "fish features" upon their fellow crew. Hasty self examines reveal that all of the pirates have such features. Sindawe has webbing between his fingers. Wogan is taking on a fish's complexion. Del has a wracking,

phlegmy cough and his guts are moving as if alive. Jim has clammy, wet skin that is oily to the touch. Serpent is happy with his eyes that are weeping black blood. Gareb has scales on his arms. Wogan speculates the fish features are an effect of the island's magic. Sindawe groans inwardly thinking, "I should have left when I had the chance."

Floating lights appear in the tower room. Six of them. Similar to the street lights. Wogan eyes them curiously, and then reaches out and grabs one of the floating lights and immediately lights up with electricity as he is shocked for 5pts. "OH SHIT!" yell all of the pirates at once. The lights wink out, heaving a much bushier Wogan in their wake.

## **The First Circle of Nal-Kashel**

The pirates quickly abandon the tower, then decide to head into the city center. If they're going to avoid turning into fish-men, then the cure probably lies there. Or at least the transformation will be quicker.

They climb a steep slope and head inward. Each circle section of the city is higher than the next. The pirates spot a number of structures, then decide on a nearby crystal tower. On the approach the GM calls out for a Fort save; only Del succumbs. He begins slashing the air screaming, "Get them off!" A short time later (and another round of Fort saves) Serpent begins to shrink, Gareb believes he is sinking, and Sindawe is covered by spiders.

Initiative is rolled and things get worse. Slasher Jim begins melting. Del and Sindawe fight crystal spiders. Serpent runs away on tiny little feet (because he

shrank). And so on. Only Wogan remains free of the insanity. He casts Invisibility Purge which does not reveal any creatures but he does note a haze in the air.

Sindawe, now noticing the spiders are crystalline, stops, drops and rolls in an attempt to crush them. Gareb panics. Wogan finally sees a lump of plant matter crawling across the yard toward the pirates. He throws an alchemist's fire at it but misses. The flames seem gigantic to tiny Serpent forcing him to duck beneath them.

Wogan blasts the plant with his blunderbuss (14pts). It continues dragging itself forward with tendrils and lashes several around Del (13pts), dragging him toward it. Wogan throws an alchemist fire for 2pts.

The GM calls for a 1d4 roll from the insane characters, then informs them that is how many more rounds of insane behavior they have to endure. Wogan shoots again (7pts). The plant drags Del into its bell shaped body; Del's anti-spider struggles continue. Another pistol shot, then another smacks into the plant.

Sindawe, somewhat recovered, staggers toward the plant creature and hits with a Flurry of Blows, then Serpent (grown large again) ends it. Of course Wogan dealt most of the damage already.

The pirates drag Del out of the plant to find that he is dead and his upper torso covered by spores that are already sprouting. The pirates have an ad hoc funeral; Del's corpse is burned while Wogan delivers a eulogy.

Afterwards, Wogan rescues Del's purse from the flames. As he counts out the coins he notices spores growing out of his hands. He quickly pours brandy over his hands. They disappear, taking only 1 Con point with them.

The floating lights appear again. This time there are only four. No one touches them. They eventually fade out.

## **The Crystal Structure**

The floor is tessellated, pierced by huge crystal shards from what used to be a massive crystal dome overhead. Copper plates float in the air by magic. Sindawe moves to look at a floating plates, then shouts, "Rust monsters!" He has noticed some of the buglike creatures scuttling among the crystal. The creatures are close due to the crystal shards distortion of their surroundings. The pirate crewmen run, leaving a rust monster for each officer. Gareb returns just before the fight is over with a makeshift club, having left his weapons outside with Slasher Jim.

The fight is over quickly with little damage done to the officers. Serpent's orichalcum staff takes a slight hit from the rusters. He begins Mending immediately.

The officers notice the hovering plates higher up are in better condition; they must have been out of reach of the rust monsters. They begin investigating, finding many "books" (copper plates), including one that when touched expands into multiple pieces that orbit around your head, then collapses when touched again. Sindawe is just glad that the book didn't slash someone's face off. They gather up copper plates, including another that seems to have the city's layout (pre-fall).

Floating lights appear and hover over the rust monsters.

## **The Next Circle**

Sindawe makes the climb up the next ridge, then lowers a knotted rope for the others. They immediately find a low wall with seven pools of silvery liquid. The stench of decay fills the air. Approximately 20 bodies, laid out in eternal rest poses,

are the source. Wogan sees little motes moving about in the liquid. We stay well away.

The rest of this elevation contains buildings, foliage, etc... A ziggurat is in the middle. Five or six roads emerge from it like gentle bending willows. The pirates walk around the pools and low wall, then head toward to the ziggurat.

One side of the ziggurat has a huge archway inward. Just inside are two large stagnant pools. Just past them is an inverted ziggurat that forms stairs to lower levels. In the past it probably feed water from above to below.

Wogan spots something shiny thru the algae in one of the pools. He begins rooting around with a stick and finally pulls out a suit of banded mail. It is fitted for a pre-historic fish-man. It is still in good condition. +1 pre-historic fish-man banded mail.

Sindawe suggests, "Down?" The unanimous response is, "No. That's where all the water would drain. And I don't see anything down there. You suck!"

The pirates walk to the east side of the ziggurat's interior, which is collapsed. Sindawe finds a pull lever on one wall.

Serpent says, "Pull it so we can go back to ancient fish land!"

"No, don't!!!" screams Gareb. Serpent assures him that there's a good 60% chance that he's kidding.

They return to the west side but do not find an identical lever despite the symmetrical building style of the city. The pirates spread out to continue the lever search.

Serpent finds a stack of rubble covering an alcove. He points it out and begins removing rubble. Wogan, meanwhile, finds a swarm of bats and has a good scare and several bites. He shoots one in a panic.

Serpent's alcove contains a cache of potions, which are of a recent manufacture (not Azlanti). He checks for tracks but finds none. He and Wogan examine the potions. There are six, probably levitate. Wogan examines the formula labels and speculates that Gerlock the alchemist created them.

## **The Lever**

Sindawe crawls back into the collapsed section, intent on pulling the lever. The others spread out in order to better spot what the lever does. Serpent guards the entry to the rubble. Slasher Jim is halfway between Serpent and the pools. Wogan and Gareb are at the pools, mostly because Gareb's guts are causing him so much pain.

Sindawe pulls the lever, and nothing happens. Wogan hears stone scraping, but is unable to locate the source.

Sindawe sees something small crawl out of the collapsed section and sneak westward. He yells out to Wogan in Aklo, "Something came out of the collapsed section heading to the west. Gather the others and get ready. I'm coming out now."

Wogan leaves the groaning Gareb at the pools and links up with Slasher Jim. Serpent spots one just before combat is joined with many creatures roughly the size of spider monkeys. They are gray skinned, black eyed, and have long, oddly, jointed limbs.

Wogan is attacked but missed. He spots his attacker and shoots it. Sindawe lights a sun rod surprising the creature stalking him. One successfully wraps itself around Gareb's neck and begins strangling him. Serpent pounds on the one that failed to sneak up on him. Slasher Jim hits another.

The creatures are clearly built for sneaking and strangling attacks, yet their luck runs poor during the fight. Wogan ends his attacker with a second musket shot. Sindawe kills his attacker and quickly escapes the rubble. Gareb continues strangling. Slasher gets slashed by a tentacle but avoids the strangle.

Wogan rushes to help Gareb, then decides his best bet is a Cure Light Wounds. Wogan notices Gareb's innards shifting weirdly. Serpent and Sindawe kill the strangler fighting Slasher Jim.

Gareb continues strangling. Wogan tries to pull his attacker off. Serpent rushes to help. Then Gareb rips it off. The others kill it. The fight is over.

## First Contact

Wogan casts a Positive Energy Burst healing the wounded. The floating lights appear again. Wogan takes a closer look, but doesn't touch. He believes they appear when creatures die (thank you Knowledge: Religion check). Wogan casts his last Comprehend Languages spell and hears the lights discussing him. Wogan speaks to the lights, "Can you understand me? Who are you?"

The light responds, "Who are we? We are the Watchers. We Watch."

- "Who do you work for?" *The masters long gone.*
- "Is there anyone else on the island?" *Yes, many. Fish-men.*

- "Where?" *Observatory, shiny pools, and growing tower. The one that went to the growing tower was slain by a creature living there. Wogan asks more questions and identifies which building is the observatory.*
- "Who are the fish-men's leaders?" *One who wears the necklace of Alivis. And another that comes from the land.*
- "Where is the necklace wearer?" *The ever growing tower. Why are you here?*
- "To stop the transformations." *Oh yes, the warping. An experiment of the master.*
- "Have you seen a three-masted ship?" *Yes, to the north-east.*
- "If one leaves the island does the warping stop?" *It is an experiment of the masters and cannot be stopped.*
- "Where did the master do this experiment?" *All places.*
- "What is the tentacle monster? Why did it attack?" *It came recently. Then it left. Strange.*
- "Why are the flying towers flying?" *The Orbital Current. To prevent air attacks. But it shrank and took apart the tall towers. It collapsed 2,160 years ago.*
- "What creatures live in the quicksilver pools?" *Former masters rest there.*
- "Why is it called the ever growing tower?" *Because it grows.*
- "What else resides there?" *A beast. It ate the fish man.*
- "What is necklace's significance?" *It is linked to the masters' device in the observatory.*
- "Who leads the fish people here?" *The land man.*
- "What is his name?" *Unknown.*

- "The beast in the tower. What does it look like?" *Reptilian. Quadrapedal. It comes out to hunt.*
- "Why are you following us?" *We are the Watchers. We appear where creatures cease functioning. Their passing feeds us just a little bit.*

Then we figure out they can speak Aklo and Sindawe joins the conversation. More questions are asked, but few specifics are learned. The Watchers wink out after the conversation ceases to entertain them.

### ***PIRATES HATE WARPING***

The pirates discuss where to go next while Wogan examines Gareb and determines, "He's converting to fish from the inside out." Everyone self-examines again for advancing fish features.