

REAVERS ON THE SEAS OF FATE - SESSION SUMMARY 09/22/2013

TODAY'S EPISODE: HEART OF DARKNESS

Today is the fourth anniversary of the Reavers campaign. In celebration the GM serves Sharknados (an alcoholic beverage devised by Robin Laws – one part spiced rum, one part sloe gin, and orange juice, garnished with a gummy shark if available) and several players bring pirate themed items: an eye patch, a handkerchief, and a rubber nose (no one questions the pirate nature of this item).

The Teeth of Araska (TOA) is docked at Nisroch, a coastal city in Nidal. Tommy Blacktoes and Lil are selling loot in that city's market, thanks to a Nidal government initiative "We Love Pirates!" Meanwhile, Wogan, Sindawe, Hatshepsut, Serpent, Samaritha and Saluthra have started a trip inland to visit Wogan's sister, Anya, in Karpad. With them on the slave driven river barge are Velenne, the Chelixian diplomat, and Alviana, an albino druid.

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.

GEBRON – A STRANGE LUMBER TOWN

The slave driven barge docks at Gebron, a small lumber town outside the Uskwood.

Velenne says to the departing group, “Thank you. Your presence on this trip was greatly appreciated. Especially in preventing my demise during the lacedon fight.”

Velenne gifts Samaritha with a scroll of *dispel magic*. The pair say good bye in the lengthy and time honored way that perky women have – smiles, hugs, and piercing exclamations. Alviana and Serpent pass the time by staring at each other with uncomprehending anger. Sensing their chemistry, Serpent and Wogan move off to look upon Gebron.

The pirates and barge part ways. A pair of porters are paid to lug the pirate luggage (i.e. chest of weapons). Wogan stops at several shops to inquire about locally crafted items that cannot be acquired elsewhere. He hears about Gebron’s many lumber based products.

Wogan says, “I would like some wood.” Sindawe and Serpent giggle for several minutes.

Gebron is famous their lumber and wood craftsmen. Their most notable lumbers are darkwood and strangle tree, both originating from the Screaming Hills.

Wogan remembers a horrible encounter with strangle vine wine and deadly encounters with various plants. He decides to pass on the local wood crafts. He does purchase a medium-sized wagon for the trip to Karpad, then asks, “Who’s going to buy the draft horses?”

Sindawe tells Serpent, who is busy glowering at passing locals, “It is your turn to buy the horses.”

Serpent complains, “I’m poor. I only have 95 gold pieces.” Then he brightens, “But my wife is rich!”

Sindawe replies, "That's good. And women are gay for horses."

Wogan nods sagely at that statement.

Samaritha buys several draft horses.

Wogan explains, "Gozreh is also 'God of Horses'."

A discussion starts about Gozreh and if horses are something that he cares about. Wogan insists that horses are definitely one of Gozreh's sacred animals.

Samaritha asks Serpent, "Don't you mean sea horses?"

The pirates ignore the locals giving them the stink eye over their religious conversation.

Soon they are driving their wagon thru Gebron's streets, admiring its many wonders... Well, its strangeness. They notice Blair Witch style twig effigies hanging from the eaves of private residences. There is also a Zon-Kuthon temple; its exterior spikes are festooned with weathered corpses. They stop for lunch at the *Hungry Zombie*.

Wogan asks the local serving their lunch, "What can you tell me about those tiny dolls?"

The man looks around furtively and then leans close to whisper, "They watch."

A cenobite looking man arrives during their meal to hiss, "Papers!"

This is the second such request since arriving in town. They hand over the papers.

The cenobite examines the papers then announces, "Outsiders can stay at the *Ancient Ram Inn*." He hands back the papers, then stomps off to give babies nightmares.

Wogan yells after him, "Thank you."

The Ancient Ram

After lunch they locate the Ram Inn, which is an ancient cottage with an old timber roof and stone walls. A stuffed crow hangs over the door. The common room is on the first floor. Everything else is below ground. The locals gawk at the “weird” outsiders.

The innkeeper, who bears a passing resemblance to the earlier cenobite, welcomes the strangers to his establishment. They demand rooms. He offers the *Bishop's Room* first. The pirates refuse on the grounds that ‘it sounds scary’.

Wogan asks Serpent, “Do you married folk want a separate room?”

The question startles Serpent who is busy staring with uncomprehending hatred at a local. The local attempts to faint and wet himself all at once.

Serpent replies, “No. Why? Oh, you mean from you guys? Yeah.”

It is Sindawe's turn to pay. He shells out a princely rogp. Despite being underground in Nidal, the rooms aren't too bad. The beds are basically hardwood boards with regular protrusions. There is a lack of torture paraphernalia and undead; no one complains.

Samaritha orders a bath for herself and Serpent. They relax. Using magic, she tries to lock the tub's integral manacles onto Serpent while he stares with uncomprehending hatred at the ceiling. He escapes the manacles and leaps out of the water like a scalded cat.

Wogan drinks heavily to get some sleep, then bangs on the wall to Samaritha and Serpent's room. He yells, “Get to the sex! I want to go to sleep.”

Sindawe and Hatshepsut meditate.

THE FUGITIVES

The next day, the pirates start the second leg of their journey to Karpad. The weapon chest is loaded onto the wagon.

Sindawe reminds everyone, “If we have to kill anyone we will clean up by removing the lower jaw, burying the corpse, and removing blood stains with prestidigitation.”

The morning goes by quietly. The woods thin then end altogether. The landscape gives over to plains of tall grass. They travel on into the afternoon.

Wogan rides in the open wagon, keeping an eye out with his spyglass. He spots several riders chasing men through the grass. The riders wear gray robes, breast plates, and chain necklaces. He guesses that they might be shadowcallers, who are a well-trained Nidalese secret police with both arcane and divine powers. Wogan relates all of this to his companions. The pirates decide they should leave the area quickly; the wagon speeds up.

The fugitives split up. The shadowcallers do the same. One set speeds toward the wagon. A tiefling male leaps between the wagon wheels and clings to the undercarriage. His pursuer zigs and zags his *summoned mount* behind the wagon, attempting to keep the tiefling in view.

The rider demands, “Come out from beneath there!” The fugitive does not comply.

The rider continues, “Very well then. I’ll drive you out. No one escapes shadowcaller justice!”

He casts a spell; several constrictor snakes appear and slither under the moving wagon. Snakes die. Horses panic. The wagon lurches forward with new found speed. The tiefling stowaway maintains a superhuman grip on the undercarriage (his second natural 20 for the encounter).

Hatshepsut leans over the side in an attempt to spot the clinging tiefling, but is forced to give up that pursuit as the ride becomes very bumpy. Serpent manages to slow the cart.

The shadowcaller demands, "Give him to me."

Wogan replies, "He's all yours! We don't want him!"

The other pirates manage to hold onto the wagon. The horses panic into greater speed when a barbed hand crossbow bolt hits one in the rump. Serpent notes that the missile came from beneath the wagon. The other pirates hold onto their seats, while Sindawe shouts, "We're not breaking any laws. Serpent, keep up the good work."

Samaritha casts *slow* on the horses, causing their frantic flight to be much more manageable. Hatshepsut leans over the side again and is able to put eyes on the fugitive tiefling.

The shadowcaller casts another spell; a summoned choker appears on the wagon. It scuttles over the side and underneath. In response, a darkness centered on the wagon appears. Wogan uses a wand of *cure light wounds* on the wounded horse.

Sindawe and Samaritha shout out to the rider, "Let us stop the wagon. You can have your fugitive." The shadowcaller nods and refrains from further interference.

Hatshepsut notes the darkness, the tiefling and the choker, then pops back up to report what she saw.

The tiefling hits the choker with his rapier using feint and a sneak attack. The choker dies easily since it is made of shadow. Sindawe fingers the key to the weapon chest. Samaritha casts *daze* on a panicked horse. Serpent driving efforts finally succeed in slowing the horses.

Sindawe spots the tiefling roll out from under the wagon and into the tall grass on the side furthest from the rider.

Sindawe leaps after the tiefling, shouting "He went this way."

The shadowcaller rides after the tiefling whispering back to Sindawe, "This better not be a trick."

Sindawe notices the tiefling sneaking away with great stealth while the rider heads in the opposite direction. "Screw you," he thinks, and returns to the wagon.

The shadowcaller gives up the search and returns to the wagon. He demands, "What are you doing here? Where are you going? Where are your papers? Who are you?"

The second shadowcaller with the other tiefling prisoner in tow joins the gathering. This rider is a woman. She teases the first rider, "Did your tiefling give you the slip?"

This causes the first rider to give the wagon and its occupants the full treatment. He summons a shadow choker to search the wagon. The pirates discuss the pros and cons of relying on aberrations to look for anything amiss - "Well, they had a collection of human heads, but so do I. Yup, nothing amiss here." The creature eventually gives the wagon the all clear.

Unsatisfied, the male shadowcaller opens the weapon box and dumps its contents on the ground. Serpent's shadowy staff catches his eye.

He demands, "Whose is this?"

Serpent replies, "It is mine. It caught a shadow STD from your lovely country."

The angry man declares, "This shouldn't be in the hands of an unbeliever. Perhaps I should take it."

Serpent argues against that. Poorly.

Samaritha, at Sindawe's urging, attempts to convince the shadowcaller that the escaped tiefling is the baddest dude in the world and should be caught... by the best cop in the world. It actually comes across as, "Man, that tiefling sure owned your ass."

Sindawe announces, “Well yes, many of our weapons are infused with shadow power. Like these pistols.” He picks up a pair of pistols, waves them without menace toward the shadowcaller, and then hands them casually to Wogan saying, “Right, Wogan?”

Sindawe delivers a spinning kick to the male shadowcaller’s knee. The man howls and drops (critical - tripped, broken leg, 25pts, 3 Con damage, and 4 Dex damage). Sindawe follows with a stunning fist. Serpent snatches his staff from the prone cop, then brings it down in a mighty two handed slam on the broken limb (17pts).

The other shadowcaller is still mounted and twenty feet away; the tiefling is tied at the hands and being led by a neck rope from her pommel. The other pirates immediately target her. Samaritha uses her serpentfolk power, *dominate person*, to no avail. Wogan advances toward the rider, shooting twice (8pts). His second shot also delivers a *stinking cloud* alchemical charge. The tiefling prisoner tries to pull the rider from her horse. Hatshepsut sucks in a lungful of air; she runs up to the rider, ignores the *stinking cloud*, leaps up and kicks (trip!) her out of the saddle. The rider lands heavily on the grass.

The female shadowcaller stands up and summons *black tentacles* within the main melee. She doesn’t seem to pay much mind to the fact that her brother in arms is within the radius. Tentacles rip through the ground and grab at everyone except the lady shadowcaller. Serpent, the tiefling prisoner, and the male shadowcaller (10pts) are grabbed up by tentacles. Sindawe lashes out at the grappled shadowcaller (26pts). Grappled, Serpent smashes at the male shadowcaller with his staff (28pts). The man dies.

Serpent’s second blow is also a botch. It is unclear if the man’s death or the botch caused the staff’s shadows to perk up. Shadows flow out of Serpent’s orichalcum staff with newfound vigor.

Samaritha and Wogan flee the tentacle radius. Wogan moves again to get a line of sight on the female shadowcaller. Said woman casts a spell and disappears. Hatshepsut rolls under the summoned mount and out of the tentacles.

The tentacles squeeze the wagon's draft animals. Wogan casts *invisibility purge*, revealing the shadowcaller in mid-scuttle, then moves closer to her. Hatshepsut closes with the woman and lands a punch (7pts and stunned). Serpent rips his way of the tentacles, then moves clear of their reach. The tiefling continues his escape attempts against the tentacles in vain. Samaritha casts *dispel magic* (from her gifted scroll) on the *black tentacles* but fails to get rid of them. Wogan tries the same trick with similar results.

Sindawe joins Hatshepsut on shadowcaller bashing detail. The monks flank the stunned woman and hammer her (13pts and 32pts). Serpent joins in too (17pts); shadows from his staff make the monks feel sickly but do not impact their combat effectiveness. The female shadowcaller attempts to cast *dimension door* to escape but is too closely harried by her three attackers. A final series of blows take her out.

The *black tentacles* knock one of the draft horses out, but are unable to deliver more damage to the tiefling prisoner. Wogan uses a pearl of power to recall his *dispel magic* but is unable to kill the tentacles. Wogan then uses *healing burst* to keep the horses and tiefling alive until the *black tentacle* spell ends.

They Feed the Holes

The pirates tend to their wounds and police their area. Sindawe keeps watch over the still tied tiefling.

The tied tiefling babbles, “Oh, man you killed them. More shadowcallers will be here soon. We got to go. You murdered them.”

Sindawe waits patiently, hoping the escaped tiefling will make an appearance. He waits until the healing and clean-up have been completed. The escaped tiefling does not show.

Sindawe kills the tiefling, while whispering in his ear, “No witnesses!”

The new corpse is thrown onto the wagon and covered with a tarp.

The pirates have policed the area for evidence; it is a DC 28 difficulty for a ‘cop’ to notice something happened there. They then travel another hour and make camp.

Sindawe and Serpent dig a deep hole for the bodies. The pair start singing *The Hole*.

Wogan joins them. Hatshepsut and Samaritha ignore them.

*Maybe it was just his imagination, but whenever he dug a hole
He'd hear a sucking sound. It started out small; just a few coins.
Then it got bigger. Pretty soon it was the only thing he heard.
Pretty soon, all he could think about was feeding the hole.
He didn't think about when he was a kid.
He didn't think about the guys he grew up with
Who were still on the up-and-up.
He didn't think about the dreams he had with Faith.
He didn't think about the dead men lying there.
Most of all he didn't think about his kills. The way he saw it, they were done.
Just another fortune for the hole.
He feed the hole and he made the hole happy.
It was the only thing he knew how to make happy.*

Jaws and hands are removed from the corpses. The bodies go in the hole. The turf is replanted. The wagon is parked over the site.

Meanwhile, Wogan summons an eagle to scout the area for watchers. The eagle notes nothing amiss. Samaritha uses *prestidigitation* to clean bloodstains from clothes, weapons, and the wagon. Hatshepsut puts the weapons away and tidies up the wagon.

The loot is examined then bagged. Just after dark, Sindawe and Serpent ride a summoned mount in the plain's edge, where they bury the bag. The plain offered too few landmarks. The severed jaws and hands are thrown randomly into the tall grass on the way back.

The loot hole contains:

- +1 *heavy mace* * 2
- +1 *mithral chain mail* * 2
- an *amulet of natural armor* +2. It has a Kuthite theme.
- a *hat of disguise*. It is made from fey skin leather, potentially from Boutique Zeleve.
- a *ring of protection* +2
- a *headband of mental prowess* +2. The band is barbed wire.
- a *cloak of resistance* +3
- 1,167.6 gp in various coins
- a 20gp zircon gemstone from the tiefling's hidden pocket.

WE'RE IN CROP CIRCLE COUNTRY

That night they camp as normal. Samaritha asks Serpent, "Are you OK? What did those shadows do to you?" He grunts and glowers at the fire.

The pirates sit around the campfire enjoying quiet conversation, trail rations, and pulls from Wogan's brandy flask.

Sindawe takes his turn at guard later that night. He hears clinking metal in the distance. Then whispering followed by an old man's laugh (phlegmy then coughing). He wakes the others up. A whisking sound like grass being cut by scythes surrounds the group. The pirates ready for an attack.