

23 January 2010. Host and referee Rick Steeves. 1 to 6 PM. Lew 1C, Bill 1R, Lori 1MU, Jay 1Dr, Joe 1Barbar. Several new characters rolled, much time spent on character details such as proficiencies (more or less second edition). Actual play might have been two hours.

A brand new adventuring party meets in suspicious circumstances! As in, we wake up with a bunch of people, all strangers, in the hold of a pirate galley, having been cold-cocked and "press-ganged", but as slaves rather than seamen.

We had been stripped of everything but clothes, and were chained to the hull in the hold in such a way that no one could exert any leverage or cast any spell requiring a somatic component. Fed gruel by a stupendously-intimidated slave that wouldn't talk with us, we'd occasionally see a "walrus-ugly" half orc with a broadsword who seemed to be in charge. Our fellow prisoners seemed entirely useless, bar the PCs and two NPCs, a male halfling (Elgin) and a young woman who said she was daughter of a merchant.

After a day or two the weather got *really* bad. Walrus-ugly came and loosed some of the prisoners to serve on deck-twice. Evidently they were losing folks overboard. That left only we seven.

Before Walrus came to get us, the ship ran aground, broken in half. When we recovered consciousness it was still cold, rainy, and very windy. We could hear no sounds of other persons. The keys, which had stared at us for days, still hung out of reach. Pieces of wood floated around. We could see an island (mostly a cliff) through the breach in the hull.

Perhaps taking advantage of the wood, the young merchant lady managed to get one arm free, all the rest of us failing! She tossed a piece of wood to the barbarian, who freed himself and then gave the keys to another to free the rest while he went to scout "outside"(not that we were sheltered where we were, by this time). Someone tried the hatch to the deck, but it wouldn't budge (and we later found the mast had fallen on it). The halfling thought he'd probably fall if he tried to climb to the deck via the hull. So we waited for the scout, weaponless but for wooden "clubs" salvaged from the wreck, cold and wet.

He had spotted our old buddy Walrus-face marching back and forth, some distance up the beach, with sword on shoulder. No one else was in sight. We had already discovered there was no way to the deck except to go outside, where we were likely to be seen. My cleric Barclodiad y Gawres, being the typical church-militant Lawful Good Lew-cleric,

proposed the Direct Clerical Way (DCW), that is, we should all get out and try to overwhelm the fellow using unarmed combat, if he didn't run away (Rick's rules, not standard). (Btw, I have never used the term DCW before.) This would be a maximum of six against one, and I could try a *Command* spell (to die) on him with about 80% chance that he would be undone and have no chance against us. (The MU's useful spell in this context was *magic missile* rather than *sleep* or *charm*, neither of which she knows. The druid's *entangle* needs vegetation, and there wasn't much (volcanic island).)

After some discussion, DCW was elected. As we piled out, the barbar tried to climb to the deck to look for weapons, and fell into the water, taking damage. Several of the rest of us also fell coming out, so as Walrus charged, we scrambled to stand up, some helping others. Worse yet, he resisted my *Command*. Barbar was hit by the sword. So the next round Barclodiad cured him most efficiently (7 for 7) while he, assisted by the rest, overbore the half-orc, and ultimately pinned him to the ground. DCW triumphs despite the bad luck.

(I should say that the party, having no rogue other than Elgin, and no magic to speak of, no nothing really, wasn't in position to be doing anything clever or sneaky or "strategem"-ish. It was certainly the ideal situation for the Direct Clerical Way.)

Barclodiad is not too proud to speak with orcs (and has learned orcish), so we tried to interrogate the prisoner. He did not cooperate, so we "softened him up" a little, and that plus being drunk loosened his tongue. Not that he could tell us much, our slave-market destination had been far to the north, inland. Everyone else had been swept overboard, Walrus was the only survivor.

When we did attain the deck, the only useful objects we could find were canvas and wood and rope, lots of rope. And some stove-in wine casks (the wine being how the half-orc got drunk, but it was all gone). We tied the half-orc up.

We also found a small chest that contained two unlabeled books and some charts. But because of the weather we could not risk looking at them.

No one had any idea where we were in the world of Mystara, though we knew we couldn't be TOO far from the Minrothad isles where at least one of us lived.

The druid (or the ranger, not sure now) scouted the island a bit, but saw nothing of note, nor could he tell how large the island is. Given we were likely to die of hypothermia without shelter, the ship being no shelter and in danger of revisiting the sea for a last time, we all set off to look for a cave.

As we walked in the terrible weather, we heard the sound of metal on metal. It was over a hill. So the little halfling and the seven foot barbarian went ahead to scout. When they came to the crest of a hill, they saw six orcs and a dozen goblins fighting below. One orc was wearing unusual armor, and the orcs appeared to be protecting some kind of bundle. Only 5 goblins and 3 orcs were actually engaged hand to hand, some of the goblins using bows (though how a bow could function, or be used to hit anything in a rain-and-windstorm is beyond understanding...).

At this point we had to stop.

I don't see anything we club-armed folk can do except wait for the battle to play out. The goblins will win unless that orc (who was not engaged) has some levels to him, or is a spell-caster. We could then try to jump the survivors, depending heavily on the three magic-missile spells of our MU, (average damage 3.5, average goblin hit points 3.5) or we could backtrack the losers to try to find their shelter, assuming they came from any. Tracking would be difficult in the conditions, however.

We could choose to try to help one side after many of the combatants are out of it, but that's pretty chancy; and we might find that they all turned on us.

Our goal is to find shelter, and to look at the contents of the chest to help us figure out where we might be. Lost!

Next game Feb 13 1PM. LEP