

### H3 – Rescue at Boko Gemme (22/04/2017)

It was Yule 696 and Grettir held a party in Telemark to celebrate a year of being King of Telemark. Around one in the morning, the runestick indicating “maximum alert, Sequalr is under attack” went off. Paradoxides and Ubaron teleported Grettir, Wilf and Gerindor to Sequalr – where they discovered the town was not under attack, but Grettir’s wife needed to speak to Grettir on a matter of life or death. They had mischievous twin daughters, about 19 years old, who had been billeted in Bazi and had stolen a ship and set sail with pirates. One of them, Signy, was a sorceress and was keeping contact with her mother, who had just received a message in the last 15 minutes:

Mother it is Signy (Fear, Anguish)  
They have us  
They are burning Geth to death (Image)  
Tomorrow one of us will be sacrificed to their God, and another will be eaten  
They are beasts, cannibals, inhuman (Image)  
We are in Boko Gemme, in the jungle at the end of the world  
It’s a dungeon, far underground  
Tell father! Save us!  
I love you. Help!  
They are coming.....

Grettir, Wilf and Ubaron consulted their Gods and Paradoxides went to speak to the Queen of Bazi.

At the temple of Isis Ubaron was told:  
There is a lost temple in the ruins of Boko Gemme  
It is said that the Gemmaens were some of the first women  
Those who would not bow to any man nor an emperor  
The sacred fire still burns in Boko Gemme  
None have passed the test of fire and returned

Grettir learnt that Boko Gemme was in the middle of the Black Continent.

Wilf was told that Boko meant gate, but that the location was unknown, although it was known to be a taboo site.

Paradoxides also discovered that Boko meant gate. Boko Gemme was in the interior where the natives did not go. Geth was one of the sons of the Queen of Bazi.

By half past two on the morning of the first of January 697, they reconvened. Using the swan was discussed, but Ubaron told them that he would be able to use the spell transport by flame to travel to the flame of the temple of Isis in Boko Gemme, although he would have to do this with no equipment or material possessions. Even though the temple had fallen, the flame still burnt. He would summon Paradoxides’ teleport fans and Paradoxides would be able to teleport the rest of the party along with Ubaron’s gear.

Ubaron transported by flame to Boko Gemme and immediately summoned his sword and dagger. One guard shouted and set his spear on fire; there were three other guards nearby.

Ubaron incapacitated the first guard, but was hit by a black magic spell from another. He stabbed and incapacitated the magician. Two women fled and Ubaron finished off the two guards. As he looked around he could see steps up which the women had fled, the flame of Isis between two pillars and a fallen statue of Isis.

He summoned and set out the fans and Paradoxides teleported with Grettir, Wilf, Gerindor and Gunnar along with Ubaron's gear. Ubaron put on his armour helped by Grettir. Wilf and Gunnar went ahead up the steps and as Ubaron completed his change the party could hear drums. Everyone set off up the stairs, which were worn, but well-made flagstones.

The party entered another room with a hole in middle, which smelt like a barbecue gone wrong. Wilf left a flare and they hurried on. They came to a T-junction, and came under attack by burning arrows from the right – there were at least ten archers. Wilf and Grettir ran up the corridor towards the archers and burst into a room full of tribesmen. A wall of fire appeared across the room and Wilf and Grettir were attacked by black magic spells, which Grettir reflected on the spell casters. Wilf burst through the fire and two rows of tribesmen and hit a priest as he cast a spell. Ubaron followed the two warriors into the room and he and Grettir also burst through the flames and the front row of tribesmen. They killed several of the enemy, but two or three escaped – one by shapeshifting into a snake. Wilf cast ray of Ra and blinded some tribesman but also staggered Grettir and Ubaron.

Behind the wall of fire, Gunnar, Paradoxides and Gerindor were attacked by more cannibals. They dealt with them harshly and Paradoxides dispersed the wall of fire. The drumming ahead started to diminish.

The adventurers immediately headed down some stairs to where the way seemed to dwindle to a small crack with light coming through; there were doors that were not quite closed. Grettir started to push them open and Paradoxides cast vorpal blade and used it to attack the doors. Arrows and black magic came through, but Paradoxides was protected. Grettir and Paradoxides, followed by Ubaron went through the gap the magician had created into a large room with pillared supports and some doorways. Inside was a large array of cannibals. There were two exits on the left hand side and some braziers burning just ahead of the warriors. It reeked of cannibalism. Some of the cannibals cast black magic and more archers fired burning arrows, but Grettir, Paradoxides and Ubaron were all protected against these attacks.

Two fire elementals were conjured and attacked Grettir and Paradoxides. The rest of the party followed the three men through the gap, apart from Wilf who stayed behind as the rear-guard. Ubaron stepped in front of Paradoxides and the cannibals attacked. Wilf looked through the gap in the doors and deployed his ray in a much better direction, with an excellent effect as the enemy tried to surge forward! The fire elemental did not want to attack Ubaron who had a protection device against elementals, but had no alternative target, so it attacked him weakly. Wilf's ray disrupted the surge of the cannibals. Ubaron and Grettir finished off the two elementals. Gerindor threw some fire acorns, which caused further disruption and the party dealt destruction to the natives.

There was chanting and tapping on wood from some of the natives, who turned into monkeys or snakes and tried to disperse. A couple of natives ran off and a couple of snakes and monkeys escaped, but the rest were slaughtered. Gerindor cast a spell to summon snakes and a 25-foot long anaconda arrived. The elf asked it to lead him to the prisoners.

The party followed the snake down some stairs, and past a door with a symbol. Ubaron thought it was Isis and her sister Nephthys. Nephthys was the dark half of Isis; she and Isis were lawful evil and lawful good, and she was the wife of Sett. The sisters were not necessarily at war. They could both be involved in weighing of souls. He thought that Nephthys might help to keep back the devourer of souls.

The anaconda led to a Y-junction with a guard alcove and turned left. It led down stairs that turned back on themselves, down a level below where they had started and into a passage only 3 feet high, which then led into a large room. It was still all paved with what were once well-made flagstones. They emerged into a room with several braziers and a figure suspended from the roof.

Grettir let the figure down and remove a gag. It was Geth. He was switching between a feline and human figure and was quite burnt and held by welded manacles. Ubaron removed the chain with his magic mace. After a short while the magicians realized they were in the middle of a very large and old pentagram. No spells were running and they were able to continue.

In the next room, there were some prisoners and one of Grettir's daughters – Catla. She told her father that her sister had been taken back the way they had come. There were nine other prisoners, all male pirates. Geth turned into a vorvalaka and started to follow Signy's scent.

The party followed the vorvalaka and had to run to keep up. Grettir left a dagger and freed the first pirate before running after everyone else.

They came to another room and heard rushing water below. Geth led everyone on and headed on to stairs up a level, then up two more levels into a room with an aperture on the left. Geth headed through this aperture and there were more stairs and then daylight at the end of the tunnel ahead.

The party emerged into a strange place – some sort of amphitheatre. On the far side was a set of stairs, which worked their way up the wall. Geth led the party up the stairs and as they climbed everyone could hear rushing water. They looked out and down onto a gorge with a large waterfall. Either side were ancient figures – 10-metre-high humanoid statues facing down the valley. There was a very large lake spilling over into the waterfall with the jungle beyond. The trail led past the two statues; one was of Isis and one was of her sister. They both had their hands up with palm forward in a gesture to stop. Geth lost the trail at the lake.

This was the gate – Boko-Gemme.

Nephthys, Ubaron knew, was a rarely encountered goddess; occasionally there would be a fane to her in temples to Isis or Osiris. She was the sister of Isis, and the girlfriend or wife of Sett. In the Hall of Judgment, she stood with Isis, behind Osiris and warding the eater of hearts, she was a protector of the dead and canopic jars of sacred remains. Sometimes she was shown as a hawk-headed woman. She was the dark side of Isis, but like her she stood for order, justice and vengeance.

Grettir thought of her as a black sheep of the family for being the girlfriend of Sett. She appeared during the ceremony of the weighing of hearts; harsher at dealing with people than her sister, she was a hanging judge with a colourful past.

Ubaron prayed for Isis to propitiate and to intercede with her sister Nephthys, using his token of Isis, and Grettir used his spear and joined in Ubaron's prayers. Ubaron received a travel card to the afterlife for one day: "the bearer's heart is righteous and worthy".

Gerindor thought that trail blinding had been used, but that their quarry had then left on a boat. Paradoxides tried to summon a carpet of Julius, but klutzed – he realized that magic might not work here, because they had crossed an astral boundary. Gerindor shape changed to an eagle and flew out over the lake.

While Gerindor was away Paradoxides had some tea, and Wilf prayed to Mitra. Grettir walked on the bottom of the lake; he saw some snappy looking fish, accumulating and returned to shore. Ubaron cast a scroll of cure critical on Gunnar. Geth had wandered off.

Gerindor returned and reported. He had found Signy and her captors. In the swampy jungle was a fumarole, way above the treeline was a man-sized totem. The fumarole erupted regularly he thought. There were about a dozen cultists approaching the totem with Signy. Gerindor said it was a good place for earth magic and suspected that this was what the cultists used. Gerindor cast windwalk and set off without Geth. Grettir gave Catla an anti-assassination gem amulet (protection from wounds, black magic level 4 and poison). He also gave her a muspel sword and buckler.

Gerindor took Catla, Grettir, Paradoxides, Wilf, Ubaron and Gunnar in his windwalk. As they came in to land they could hear bullroarers being whirled and could see Signy being dragged towards the totem. Gerindor and Ubaron came under black magic attack on the way in, but Gerindor landed safely and the party attacked the cultists. Grettir knocked over his opponent and Catla did the same to hers. Grettir threw his spear but the leader of the cultists caught it and threw it back, but missed. Paradoxides fly ring failed to work but with a lot of difficulty, he managed to jump towards a chanting cultist. Gerindor triggered his ring of lightning, but hit himself.

Grettir finished off an opponent and then pulled his spear back off the cultist who had picked it up. Paradoxides considered using his zard, but thought it might not work. Catla fought ferociously against a cultist. Ubaron's opponent didn't seem humanoid, but he still hit it. It turned into a large snake. One of the cultists chopped at the tree to which Signy was attached and it shot up with her tied to it. Paradoxides grappled the witch doctor with his demonic breastplate. Grettir leapt on to the tree as it was released and clung on as it swung up. Catla beheaded her opponent. Ubaron finished off the snake. Another cultist shape changed into a snake, but Ubaron dispatched it in a welter of critical blows.

Grettir was up the pole; Signy was screaming and covered in cuts. She was lashed to the pole. Grettir drew a dagger and started cutting the bonds. Wilf despatched his two opponents. Paradoxides' demon grappled the witch doctor and bound both of his arms. The witch doctor changed to a humanoid giant ape. Gunnar disembowelled his opponent. Catla continued to ferociously attack another cultist. Wilf tried to drag down the pole and called on Gunnar to help. Ubaron moved in to attack the witch doctor/giant ape, which was still being wrestled by the demon. Ubaron measured and awaited an opportunity to strike. Wilf dragged the tree/pole further down with Gunnar's help and Grettir continued to cut through the bonds holding Signy. The ape struck at Paradoxides and manage to free both of his arms, but Ubaron was able to hit him in the guts, which disabled him. There was a very loud and supernaturally scary roar from the jungle and Signy screamed. The ground shook slightly. The remaining

free cannibal backed shielding. The men holding the pole were not discommoded and Grettir climbed to the top and as the pole reached the ground Signy was held by one remaining bond. Ubaron finished off the great ape. Paradoxides resumed control of the demonic breastplate. Gerindor was unmanned by unnatural fear and unable to cast his spell. Grettir put an amulet on Gerindor and he saved and started to work up his spell of windwalk as the party with Signy gathered around him. The Eater of souls appeared from the jungle looking for a sacrifice on the pole and looked unhappy. It didn't seem to be able to cross the gulch towards the party. Gerindor was able to cast his spell successfully and they left as the eater of souls roared out in anger.

Gerindor landed the party back near the gate and waterfall and met up with Geth, who had been dealing with cannibals at the temple. Ubaron and Paradoxides led everyone back to the fane and Paradoxides used the fans to teleport himself and Signy back to Sequarl and then return on his own.

Ubaron recognised carvings of Isis, Osiris, Nephthys, and the Eater of Souls carved on the walls. The carvings were worn and a bit defaced around the archway. The flame of Isis was between two megaliths and there were the remains of a statue of a seated Isis with the baby Osiris. Magic worked as normal in there.

Paradoxides returned with some equipment for Catla. The party set out to deal with any remaining cannibals, search the corpses and secure the complex. They garnered some cannibal curios, from the bodies but nothing of value, then rested before exploring the rest of the complex.

Grettir led them up the grand stairway following the pirates. There was some natural light down all the stairways into the largest room. They came to a reception room with large archways to the outside. The view looked along the gorge to the left and up to the waterfall to the right. They headed down the gorge following the trail of the pirates. There were many caves or windows up to the left. Geth went into one or two on that level and there were screams. Ubaron had the feeling of being watched but not opposed. They came to a clearing and Geth sniffed and turned back in to a human figure and told them there had been a fight and he didn't think it had ended well for his companions. All the trails he could find led a few yards and then disappeared.

They returned and explored the complex, starting with the room with a hole in the centre of the floor – Gerindor could detect earth power down there and it looked like it had been excavated. About 50 feet down there was what looked like a natural chamber. Paradoxides cast wizard eye and looked around down the shaft. Below was a chamber, but there seemed to be something more below that. Ubaron and Paradoxides led them around the complex until they came to the chamber below the shaft and they could see a crack leading deeper. They could tell it was warm down there and Gerindor could feel the earth power.

They explored further; they found another room with carvings similar to one of the earlier rooms. This was a darker stone – maybe the carvings were of Nephthys. There was another room with a defaced statue, again there were alcoves but there was no flame here. There were the remains of a shrine to Nephthys, but no exits.

They moved on to another room with a pool in the floor. The pool was a couple of feet deep with steps in to it. There were similar steps on the other side – the pool was where pilgrims

would wash their feet when they arrived at the temple complex. There was only one place left to explore – the entrance with double doors with worn and damaged carvings of Isis and Nephthys, but first the party rested.

Gerindor dreamt of fire in the deep. Women priestesses long ago making things in metal, with robes in a very dark colour with white trim and white with a very dark trim. Some were forging, perhaps steel, more were pouring molten metal into moulds, there was some white metal maybe electrum, and there was no sign of any men. Ubaron told him that priestesses of Isis still wore a white robe with an inky blue/black trim.

Apart from Gerindor's dream the night passed uneventfully; the magicians recovered their mana and Gerindor greeted the dawn. At the door, Ubaron cast detect magic and there were multiple spells running. He tried to open the Isis door, but it wouldn't open. Catla tried and couldn't open it either. Paradoxides tried knock, and put in extra power and the door opened. Inside the room were the sounds of the jungle at night and there was darkness inside and it felt like the jungle was coming out. As they all stepped through Paradoxides had an iounstone running to check if they went through to another plane, but they did not.

As soon as they stepped through the door Grettir and Ubaron could just see each other and some starlight but no-one else. They headed forward and were nearly separated, but Grettir powered up his spear. It was a primeval jungle and not altogether nice. The two men concluded that it probably wasn't real, but they couldn't see through the illusion nor could they see the door; all they could see was jungle in each direction. Ubaron made out the door, but lost it and then refound it. He cast the spell compass, but this just gave random directions. Holding hands, with Grettir holding up his spear, the two warriors moved on – eventually they moved into a mundane room, with no danger.

Paradoxides and Gerindor arrived. Inside the room were six females and lots of paraphernalia related to the cannibal rites. The females bowed down and grovelled. There were all sorts of things hanging down from the ceiling and scattered around – much of which looked most unsavoury. Of the five females, five were black and one coffee coloured.

Wilf and Gunnar were asleep and Paradoxides detected life to find them and they awoke and waited in the corridor. Using southern trading argot and black speech gave some mutual understanding with the captives. They said they were Nganga's slave concubines – Nganga was the witch doctor. The paraphernalia related to cannibalistic rites were burnt and the room became very acrid and smoky and the illusion was dispersed. Paradoxides cast detect magic and investigated the thirteen hits.

There were armguards of leather with intricately patterned Celtic designs (bracers of defence - +2 armour class), a large heavy dark crystal sphere with a few chips, a healing potion, a cloak spun out of long, black, straight human hair, a mail shirt of northern manufacture, maybe dwarven, for 6'3" (belonging to Catla), a bone tube with holes on the end of a leather rope (a bullroarer), a bag of shapeless things, which felt like something was moving inside, a golden chain and cast figure of gold, face of a woman (the Queen of Bazi, belonging to Geth), a block of gold coloured metal (cast electrum) in the shape of woman in a throne holding a baby (Scrap value of 5,000gp), a holy object of Isis, two healing potions, another healing potion with a Bazi mark (Geth's), a battle-axe – blue tongue (belonging to Catla), magic sword and Elven chainmail, 6' (belonging to Signy), bucket of diamonds, uncut blue

white diamonds, 22 of them, 10 reasonable, 8 quite nice ones, 3, impressively nice and 1 even bigger. Grettir reckoned the diamonds were worth at least 40 talents.

The two magicians took co-ordinates in the pentagram room; Ubaron took the slaves to the temple of Isis in Chittagong and then went to Bazi to meet up with everyone, while Paradoxides took everyone else straight to Bazi.

Paradoxides investigated the crystal ball with detect magic, and detect power – there was a powerful and permanent divination spell. Paradoxides managed to look through it at the great bridge; he had to work hard to get it away from something flaming, but he could do this without casting a spell, but it took endurance. Whenever he picked it up again it was back in flame mode. Wilf was unable to bend it to his will.

The cloak was an alteration related to water and an abjuration also related to water; it was shamanic and of local manufacture, and was a poncho in style. Paradoxides took it to the Queen to see if it had anything to do with her. She thought it was made of monkey hair, but wasn't sure. It was woven, but in funny patterns, maybe it helped to breathe underwater. It was tested and did allow the wearer to breathe under water; there also some immunity – perhaps from the piranhas.

The bull roarer – made a lot of noise; it was very rhythmic. There was a conjuration – to summon something – maybe the Eater of Souls, but perhaps to extend the range of summoning. It cast a spell and was specific to a location, probably the jungle at Boko Gemme.

Next Paradoxides investigated the bag. There seemed to be lots of things inside that were strangely alive. Neither the bag nor the contents were sentient. Paradoxides persuaded Grettir to put a hand in to grab one and he pulled out a fuzzy thing and put it in a barrel – it ran round and round and became a mongoose. It looked expectantly at Grettir. He put it back in the bag and pulled out another – this time it was a parrot – it said “Boko Gemme” and then that it wanted a nut. Grettir put it back and pulled out a parrot again, and then the barrel burst as it tried to contain an orangutan. There were also snakes of various kinds, an ocelot, an eagle, lots of small monkeys, and a jaguar. He had no control of what came out. They were all lively animals, as if they were the essence of the creature. The druid was the only one who could get out whatever creature he wanted.

Bracers of defence gave +2 armour class, unless the user was already heavily armoured.

The Bracers of defence went to Grettir, the cloak to Wilf, the statuette and bullroarer to Ubaron, 2 healing potions to Gunnar, the bag to Gerindor, and the crystal ball to Paradoxides. The diamonds were sold in Kattlegrid for 40,000gp, which gave a share of 8,000gp each.