

Chapter 11 A Second Trip to Smugglers' Cove

An Interesting Encounter with a "Beggar":

Thumper: Plans? Well, I plan to enjoy sharing the cottage with Clethara on cold stormy nights, relaxing a bit, keeping my ears open as I frequent various places in town, and look for opportunities.

Clethara and I alone are not a big enough party for anything serious, but I do remain interested in salvaging that ballista from the wreck of the Flame. It's a bit far from Daila, but a quick trip to Kalayport to see if there is a rentable boat available, then maybe back to Daila to see if I can hire a crew (maybe some fellows) and we can do something similar in Injuma Bay. Maybe Crackum would be interested, on his way South? It will need good weather, of course.

DM: A few days later, you are walking home from frequenting the taverns, Clethara decided not to accompany you tonight. She's still being "friendly." You are approached by a person. She is clad in a worn outfit made out of, it looks like, pieces of sack, and her hair is drawn back. When she sees you, she moves over to a gap between two buildings and beckons you over. (You go?)

When you go over, she says to you, "So, I've heard you've been investigating old Smuggler's Cove?"

Thumper: "Oh, hello? Why, 'smuggler's cove?' We did find some caves near Northwest Cape, and poked about there. Is that 'Smuggler's cove?' By the way, I'm Thumper. Pleased to meet you. Looks like you could use some help, maybe in exchange for a story? If you can tell me anything about this 'Smuggler's Cove,' I'd appreciate it. Maybe over in the tavern there?"

DM: She smiles a crooked grin, "Well now, I wasn't gonna give no information for free, that's not how we make money now, is it. I know your name. You're Captain Thumper of the Vigilance. Sure, I'll take you up on that offer." She heads for the tavern, you follow?

Once inside, you are shown to a table. She says to you, "Thank'ee, captain. It's been a while since these bones has felt warmth. Now then, Smuggler's Cove. To tell you the truth, all I can remember about it for the moment is the name. Hmm." She makes a small show of trying to remember.

Thumper: "I buy her a drink, and order some food for her, and same for me. I'll slip the 25gp gem to her, and say, "This came from there. Maybe you could use it. Does it remind you of anything?"

DM: She sees the gem, asks how much it's worth. When you tell her, she says "Well, someone knows how to pay for information. Yes, now that I give it some thought, I do remember. Smuggler's Cove. Originally found and expanded by smugglers looking for a place to hide contraband. After the navy drove out the smugglers, or at least they thought they did, the caves fell slightly into decay. A few years ago, a ship by the name of the Flame started using it as a base of operations." She gives you a knowing look, "but I think you've encountered the Flame before, haven't you, Captain. Yes, the Flame began using it. Recently, the Flame's gone missing, but from what I've heard. You discovered her up in the Injuma Bay, wrecked, and being emptied by Dwarves. Sounds like you got a good gem haul from the whole thing. A pity

the Earl got that pretty sword. Then, a new ship arrives, bearing the name, "The Return of Flame." Of course, you've met that ship too, from what I've heard. They've been using those caves recently, and occasionally they drop of boats full of loot from somewhere. Then they store it in those caves. Well, that's about all I know. Anything else you'd like to know?"

Thumper: I say, "You are very knowledgable! Yes, that all sounds consistent with what I know, and the caves do seem to be in current use. I have to admit some curiosity about the Earl's relationship to the smugglers, but that's probably dangerous information. I'm also curious about how "Return of the Flame" could be built so quickly. Where and by whom? But, that's a matter that's probably not local either. Say, I wonder if you know of any similar sort of place on Injuma Bay? The old Flame wrecked there, as we know, and another ship that tried to intercept the earl's spice shipment came out of there to attack the Return of the Flame on our voyage back. You probably know all about that, too. But it does seem an odd place for two different ships, obviously different folks, to be found. Yes, and by the way, here's an additional 10 gold pieces for all your trouble. You have been so very kind to let me know about this."

Does it look like she is in disguise? How old? Faked voice? What else can I tell about her? (Here's a d20 roll for I: 11. For W: 12 (over).)

DM: "Oh, the Return of the Flame, well, I'll tell you, but only because you are so generous. There were two identical ships named the Flame. Both of them were under the direct control of the Earl, who used the ships to privately control commerce in the North. He paid 'em through a private fund, and so forth, so the money couldn't be tracked back to him. No one ever figured out that there were two ships with the same name, that is, until you discovered the wrecked Flame before the Earl could either destroy it or come up with a cover up. So, the Earl quickly had the second Flame changed to the Return of the Flame, so no one would discover it's secret."

"I don't know anything about a similar set of caves in the Bay. I know that Earl has a certain connection with them, seems to have come to an understanding with them after your little mishap a while back in the mountains. So, I'd guess she wrecked dropping off or picking up those gems you found. That other ship, you saw coming out of it, well, let's just say that someone else knows about the Earl's secret ship, and is making plans to do away with it."

She doesn't look like she's disguised as poor. She is very thin, and her face is rather drawn. She looks maybe mid-twenties, and her voice sounds genuine enough. As far as you can tell, she is a genuine beggar from the street.

Thumper: "Aha! So that's it! I did figure the Earl had a connection, but trying to maintain the two identical ships! Imagine that! Odd that he would have one of them attack us, with a cargo bound for his own city, back last summer. I wonder which one that was. Well, you have been most generous with your information. Should you learn anything else that might be of particular interest, I do hope you will remember me. Here, this additional 15gp might be of help to you. And, if there is any other way I might be able to help you, do please let me know."

DM: "I will, I will. We always come back to those who pay well. But, do me a favor, don't spread around where you're getin' your information. We like to keep a low profile. I'll spread your name among my friends, and if you ever need information again, so make a good point of it, and someone'll find yeah, providing you can afford it."

Thumper: “Thank you, and I will keep all that in mind. I will be careful, and if there is anything I might be able to do for you sometime, well, do feel that you can ask.”

When I return home, I will tell Clethara about all this, including the request “not to spread it around.” The woman never did give me her name; I can only suppose she didn't want me to know it. I don't know whether she represents the thieves' guild locally, if there is one, or something less formal. But, she spoke of “we,” so clearly she's not acting alone. I don't know if the shabby clothes are an act, or not. Clearly, she got quite a bit of money from me, and should be able to afford to dress better after this, if she chooses, unless the money all goes to the organization. I'll try to keep an eye out for her in the future. It's not a big town; I should see her around. (Have I seen her in the past?)

DM: You've been in Daila long enough that you've seen her. She has been begging on the street for a while, and always manages to find herself in the bar whenever something exciting is going on. You can't remember a particular memory of when you had seen her.

Clethera's heard a rumor, having been in Daila longer than you, that there is some sort of group that has spread itself through the country, and have been rumored to sell some very private information. She's heard that if you need information, you can pay for information on almost anything.

Thumper: (to Clethera) “Well, that explains why she knew so much. It's not just her, she was speaking for the whole organization. She may be in charge of the local branch. Not surprising, really. Well, that was all quite interesting, and confirms many of my suspicions. And if we know about it, the king with his greater wealth to spend on acquiring information probably knows too. I'd guess relations between the king and the earl are not one hundred percent friendly, since it's the king's taxes that the smuggling will be evading. Smuggling to Oceana, no doubt. Where else? I sure wish we knew more about the area outside Lumeria, but all of my attempts to find information, and charts, have failed. You'd think we would have found some, of wherever the Flame went, in that stash we found.”

DM: (Clethera) “Well, Thumper, we never got into that last area. Maybe there's something there that We haven't found. If she was right, and they use that place for Contraband and the like, we might have only scratched the surface.”

“I don't think it's an organization exactly. I don't know what exactly it is, but something tells me that it would be more publicly known. I can't think of what it could be though. Although something tells me that the King would sleep more soundly if this ‘group’ didn't know half of what it knows. I have a feeling that they know more than quite a few of the King's top officials.”

We talk to the “Beggar Woman” again:

Thumper: “Well, unless we hear something from the Earl telling us to back off, seems to me those caves are a legitimate target. We'll need some, ah, ‘professional’ help. Say, I wonder if our friend would like to see ‘Smuggler's Cove’ for herself, and maybe have a stake in finding our way in deeper. She didn't suggest it. Not sure she or her associates do active ‘work’ like that.”

I guess I'll keep an eye out for her, and if opportunity permits, I'll have a word with her and make inquiry.

DM: Over the next few days you try to find people to go back out. You said you intend to try by land this time. You catch sight of the woman, and make for her. She sees you, and asks, "Care to help a poor beggar, I'm saving up for some shoes."

No one else you recognize has come into town recently. Crackum left after you got back, and you've heard no word about Darmet.

Thumper: I'll give her a gp. "This should help you with those shoes. And, by the way, I've been wondering if you would like to visit 'Smuggler's Cove' yourself. You see, we got in, but there is some sort of tricky business that I just didn't know how to open. A special door, you see. Maybe you'd have an interest in helping us with that, and seeing the place for yourself. Maybe you and a friend. Interested?"

DM: "Now what would a poor beggar know of hidden doors and the like. No I don't think I'll be goin'. I don't trust no boats, 'specially in winter. But thank'ee for the gold, I'll go buy me a pair of shoes now. She gets up, and as she passes, she passes close enough for you to smell her breath. You think you hear here say, "Expect me tonight at your place, we'll talk then."

Thumper: I hurry back to the cottage. Assuming I find Clethara, I tell her about it. We will prepare for a visitor, and I'll have some particularly good food prepared at the tavern for us. (Neither of us has "cooking," maybe we need to employ a cook.)

DM: you prepare the food and bring it back to your cottage. about dinner time, you look around, and you find she's sitting at the table. Neither you nor Clethara heard or saw her enter. She looks at the food. "I'd heard you had a good dinner planned for this evening. I haven't had a good meal since you treated me to the lovely one at the tavern a few nights ago." You eat. She eats as though she truly hasn't eaten in days.

"So, about this door. I've heard that there's a place in there that stumps people. Probably is used for the good loot they get. What you guys got last time isn't anything compared to what's in there. Now, I don't know anything about a partner. You make it sound like I'm in some sort of group. I fend for myself. I get and sell information, like the stuff you paid for a few nights ago. Normally no one pays as well as you do, and I thank you for that. I'd be willing to go out there with you. It's been a while since I left the town. Never gone on an adventure before. Don't even have a weapon." (Do you ask her anything?)

Thumper: I'll tell her, "What I had in mind was a trip like the last one, by boat to the caverns, with the aid of some sailors who I'd look for around town. I hope I'd find the ones who helped me before. They were well rewarded, I think, and so hopefully they'd come. And, I'm hoping Darmet returns and wants to go again. As you can see, neither Clethara or I are what you'd call 'muscle.' Darmet's a good fighter, if we should need one. The main point is to get through that door, if we can. I just thought you might have a friend who would, perhaps, be a specialist at this sort of thing. It'd be a shame to make the trip out there and then find we can't get in. Of course, you'd still get to see it all. You might enjoy seeing what you've been telling me about. Naturally, doing something like this requires cooperative weather. And arrangements. But, the sooner, the better."

DM: She thinks for a second, "I know someone. He's like me, a poor destitute soul who sells information, and he might be willing to help. I'll have to get back to you on that. Don't worry

about finding me when you guys decide to go, I'll hear about it when you're gathering up sailors."

After dinner, she gets up to go, and then she says, "Oh and by the way, rabbit ears, I'd prefer it if you didn't ask about such things in public. It makes me look like more than a simple beggar." You look at Clethera, and when you turn back, she's gone.

After she leaves you're talking to Clethera and she makes this comment: "No good, dirty rotten..." She descends into a language that sounds like orcish, but you'd guess it was goblin. "I don't trust her. She could very easily be selling your information to the wrong people, like maybe someone in league with the Flame. I'll go on this trip if you do, but if she makes one wrong move, she'll be asleep and overboard before she can say 'trap.'"

Thumper: "Oh my. I had not really thought of that. Given how much she told us about the Flame and those goings on, I didn't think she would be in league with them. But, she certainly is a bit, shall we say, slippery. We still don't even know her name. Did you see how she could just appear, and disappear? She could be listening to us even now from some spot conducive to bringing sound..."

I look around. I'll continue more quietly, "I didn't give her any information that isn't public, by way of the sailors, anyway. And if we prepare to go, in a manner like before, it will be public too. Except for her and her friend being involved, and that will be public afterwards. Assuming nothing very dirty happens, of course. Seems to me this makes it all the more important that we have Darmit along, and maybe another fighter or someone with similar skills. Or, perhaps it's not worth pursuing, we just don't go again. I'm still interested in an outing to recover Flame's ballista, while there is still something worth recovering. Maybe we should do that first. What do you think? I trust your judgement; you probably are a better judge of others than I am. Or, we could just lie low for a while."

Another trip to Smuggler's Cove:

DM: So, you make preparations to go. You manage to find the same sailors as before, plus two more. These last two have no weapons, one male and one woman. Filin is in town, as is Lifaen.

Thumper: Is Lifaen interested? Filin? (I'm trying to remember. Lifaen is a ranger, I think. Right? And Filin a dwarf thief? Or do I have that mixed up?) We will again take three days of supplies. Carefully wrapped and secured. I'll tell everyone to be prepared in the event of another capsizing; be sure your personal stuff is secure.

When the weather permits, we will set out. Assuming wind is favorable (not blowing hard from the North). Before we go, I will make a point of scanning the horizon with my spyglass; we don't want to be out there with a ship in view. I presumably have been introduced and know the names of the crew that were with me before (but aside from Sutch, you didn't mention them.) I'll ask the two new ones what they want to be called. On the way toward the point, I will let Clethara handle the tiller and manage the boat; I will be using the spyglass frequently to watch both at the cave entrance and to scan the horizon. I don't want us to be surprised. I'll try to make sure our entry to the cave is not going to coincide with a rogue wave. I want to be ready for possible action as we go in.

DM: Lifaen will go, and Filin won't. He's in town for a brief time before he goes back to the Dekator Plateau. He tells you this when you ask him if he's interested.

The wind is moderate, about 10mph, and it's blowing from the Southwest, meaning that you'll have a good spot under the lee of the Cliff to go into the fissure. You take off in the early morning heading for the cave. It's warmer than it has been recently, and so you pass a few fishing boats out in the bay, trying their luck. Just as you reach the end of the fishing boats, you notice someone sitting next to you. You turn and find it's the woman. She appears to have removed her sailor disguise, as has her friend. Clethara notices her, and puts a look of disgust on her face. None of the crew seem to notice anything either.

You arrive at the fissure without mishap after a while. You enter taking precautions. You make it in without flipping this time, no rogue waves, and enter into the first cavern. You notice that there are a few crates on the Eastern Pier that weren't there last time, and the door to the hallway is closed. Just as you are making your way over to the Western pier, roll for reaction.

Thumper: I'm not surprised by the woman and her friend; I had figured that's who the two new ones were. Recall that I asked what they wanted to be called. [No answer?] I'm assuming Clethara keeps a good eye on them. I need to be on the lookout. I assumed Clethara had also figured out who these two were; maybe she hadn't.

Nice to get in without a spill this time. Uh oh, looks like trouble. Reaction: d6=5.

DM: She'll reply "Name's Lucina, my friend here is Bruccius."

You see them before they see you. A boat enters the cavern through the southern entrance. There are ten people using oars to propel the craft and repel off the walls, another is sitting at the tiller, and the last person, a half orc, is sitting up at the bow. His back is turned to you, and he seems to be speaking to the crew. "Right now, the Cap'n said he'd be back by noon, and it looks like them nomads managed to clear out the two small treasure rooms back there. Good thing they didn't manage to make it into the Stash."

One of the crew pipes up, "Yeah, but we can't get into it either."

"Cap'n says we will when he gets back."

They continue on, but I assume you use your surprise to attack.

Thumper: We do just that. I cast "sleep" twice in rapid succession. If there's still any movement, I motion to Clethara to do likewise. Oh, by the way, Clethara would have A "knock" in place of one of the magic missiles she usually carries. Assuming motion ceases on the other boat, we will glide up to it, and tie up the snoozing pirates. If there's still motion, then Lifaen (and anyone else suitably armed) can shoot and I will cast magic missiles and so will Clethara. So: two or three sleeps, then up to two mm if needed. Some die rolls: Sleep #1(T): 4d4=4,1,2,4 Sleep#2(T) 4d4=2,1,1,2 Sleep#3(C) 4d4=4,3,2,3 MM#1(T) 2(d4+1)=6 MM#2(C) 2(d4+1)=9.

DM: By the time you, Thumper, have finished your two first spells, everyone in the other boat is asleep before they know what hit them. The momentum carries the boat into the cavern, and you manage to pull it up next to you. Everyone is tied up. They look like regular sailors, except for the half orc. He is wearing a blue coat, with gold epaulets, and a cocked hat. The sailors each have generic cutlasses, while the Orc, you'd guess an Officer, has a somewhat nicer one, with more decoration on the handle. None of them are special. You manage to secure the crew members, and tie up the boat to the pier.

Thumper: OK, so I have used two sleep spells and Clethara has not used any. Also, we know the ship isn't around because it wasn't visible to me as I scanned the horizon prior to us entering. So, we have some time. We'll pull the pirate boat (I'll call it that) over to the Western pier, tie it up, and drag the sleeping, tied-up pirates into one of the bunk rooms and the orc into one of the small bedrooms (the nearest one) then spike the doors shut. I'll supervise that with most of the crew doing so. Clethara, Lifaen, Sutch, Lucina and Bruccius (if they are willing) will take our boat over and check the crates on the Eastern pier. Then they will join us on the Western pier.

DM: You manage to tie up the crew and put them in their respective locations.

The crates aren't entirely all crates. There are barrels of salted meat, mostly pork and beef, crates of ship's bread, dried peas, and casks of water.

We Find the Treasure:

Thumper: We would have made sure no weapons were in the barracks room or bedroom with the tied-up pirates, and I made sure they were all well tied (rope use). After we spike the doors (and the far pier has been investigated, I say, "I think we have safely about half an hour before a ship could show up and send a boat in. Let's quickly see if we can get through that door.")

We will row to the third cavern, towing the other boat, and dock at the West door. We will secure the pirates' vessel, and everybody will be in ours, as I, Lucina, Bruccius, and Sutch go to investigate the door and see if we can get in. Clethara will keep a careful watch on us, and Lifaen too. Some of the sailors are designated to watch toward the entrance. We will use a minimum of light, primarily a bullseye lantern (I think someone has one) for the party checking out the door.

DM: The crew follows your orders, and you arrive in the last cavern. You quickly make your way into the room with the large metal door, and you set to work trying to find an entrance. Clethara and Lifaen are on watch, and are therefore are not looking for an entrance. You are searching for ten minutes, before you hear Sutch say, "It's no use sir."

He leans up against the wall, you hear a chink, and as he pushes himself off the wall, you see that where he leaned against, a rock has slid out of place, revealing a hidden niche. Inside is a lever, and when pulled, you hear the sounds of metallic clicks, bolts being withdrawn from somewhere beside the door, and the door grinding open. It doesn't open all the way, but with the combined force of the people present, you are able to push it all the way open.

You find yourself in a 10 ft. by 13 ft. room. The contents of this room are six chests, 2 large crates, about a dozen sacks, and a set of leather armor. This armor isn't your generic armor. It appears to have been specially made for a rather smaller person (call it Strength 10).

Thumper: Hot dog! Let's get this stuff into the boat pronto! I'll call on some of the sailors to help with the heavy lifting. Others stand by ready to go. While they are doing that, I'm going to leave Clethara in charge (she and Lifaen will keep an eye on things), and I will swim (as rapidly as I can, mostly underwater, without being too obvious) back to the entrance to see if anything is going on. I'll peek out to sea (taking care for the waves) once I'm sure nothing is going on in the first cavern. Then (one way or the other) I swim back to let everyone know what is going on. I will return stealthily just in case there is some funny business going on.

DM: Ok, you manage to load them into the ship, they are very heavy, and sounds of clinking coins are heard every time one gets jostled. Lifaen will grab the leather armor.

You swim out to the first cavern. You hear plenty of noise from the hallway. The sound of fists on door comes from the bunkroom. The Spikes are holding, but it's just a matter of time before the men get out. You look outside the cave, and sure enough, there's a ship. It is pretty far off, but it's drawing closer. You figure that by the time you get back here, and try to escape, the ship will be on you. As you're looking at the ship, roll for reaction.

Thumper: About what I expected. Reaction die roll: 3

DM: They see you before you are aware of what's happening. A door bursts open from behind you, and people charge out. Two of them go for the other spiked door, and wrench it open in one heave. One of them sees you, and the other nine jump into the water and make to grab you. What do you do?

Thumper: It sure is handy to have a "ring of swimming". I dive underwater and, swimming near the bottom very fast, easily evade them (I hope? Assume?) I'll get back to our boat in 3rd cavern ASAP.

"Time to go, folks. We have swimmers in the water in cavern 1, the pirates we slept earlier busted out. The ship is getting closer. We need to get back to cavern 1 and get this first lot taken care of before the others come in from the ship. They may be unarmed, but they can still be dangerous. It seems that an uncommonly large number of them can actually swim."

DM: You manage to evade them, and when you swim out, back into the cave, you hear a voice, orcish, yell, "Leave him! There's no other way out. He'll have to get back out through here, and then we'll get him.

You get back and discover, that with all of the chests and crates crammed in, including all the supplies you brought, the boat is very low in the water, and extremely slow.

What do you do with the second boat, the one you have designated "Pirate Boat?"

Thumper: We don't have time to sort out the treasure and take only what's worth taking. And the boat is too low to be seaworthy. So, we will leave "our" boat tied up, and quietly board the other one. We will come back later, after we deal with both boatloads (hopefully!). Here's the plan. I will swim out to the first cavern ahead of the boat, stealthily, underwater. I will put on invisibility ring (underwater as I go) and emerge unseen near the East pier, ready to cast "sleep." As our boat approaches from 2nd cave to first, I should hear the pirates say something. Lifaen will be in the bow, ready, and I will cast "sleep" first. Hopefully that gets them all, or most. Then, we attack, and Lifaen demands surrender or we will have to kill them all. The sailor who was in charge of the others is on tiller. Clethara is at the stern, keeping an eye on everything, ready to act. I expect she is especially interested to see whose side Lucina and Bruccius are on.

DM: So, you leave the boat with the treasure tied up, and move on with the captured one. You see them. They seem to be arguing on what to do, with the orc keeping order. They seem to have retreated into the hallway, and have left only a pair of lookouts. One is looking towards the outside one back towards the cave. They don't notice you approach, and you cast sleep. The two go down, and no one inside the cavern seems to notice. The boat enters the cavern behind you,

and Lifaen trains his bow on the entrance. As the boat approaches the pier, he will jump over, (dex roll: 19, over by one), he trips, but manages to land. As far as you can tell, no one in the hallway notices the noise of him tripping.

You manage to get up on the pier, and the boat arrives, and everyone piles out and surrounds the door. They still don't seem to notice you. (By the way, I just roll five zero's in a row to see if they notice anything.) Just as you manage to get into position, one of the sailors pulls out his cutlass, and promptly drops it. Roll for Reaction.

Thumper: I don't think I would have wasted the sleep on just two. I wanted them to react. I was waiting for them to see the boat, react, then I could hit the lot of them. Or most of them. But if you say that's what I did....

Roll for reaction: 5.

After casting my "sleep" I will go invisible, get up on East dock, and watch and wait unless I'm needed. Clethara stays with the boat. I do keep an eye on whole scene, as well as Lucina and Bruccius. Hopefully, Lifaen and crew handle the pirates on other dock OK.

DM: You said that you would sleep them, so you slept them.

You catch them off their guard. They run out, unarmed, and right into being surrounded by you. Clethara will cast sleeps, for 12 and for 9, and they all fall down, snoozing once more. The crew members set to work re-tying up the sleeping prisoners, and lock them up in a similar arrangement? Lucina and Braccius help with the tying up, and follow Lifaen's instructions. The rest of the crew turns more to Clethara for orders, as she has more sailing experience in their eyes than Lifaen, and as you are invisible. They seem to find her as a "second in command."

You manage to get them crew tied up, when you feel a strong need to roll for reaction.

Thumper: I must have gotten nervous. I was really hoping Clethara could save her sleep.

Yeah, sailors would move them into the back two rooms but not spike doors yet. They should be sleeping for 15 or 20 minutes, anyway. If nothing happens soon, we will make more permanent arrangements. But, until it looks like things are under control, I stay on the East pier. (Boat is tied up at the West pier.) I do point out we should be having company soon, and I'm watching for that. Lifaen, as soon as he's free of fighting, will be ready on West pier. Clethara in boat. Sailors dragging tied sleepers then back to boat. Reaction roll: 4.

More Company:

DM: Truthfully, it's another forty minutes before something happens. You see the ship from where you are, and you can see it lowering a boat. Actually, when you look again, it's lowering two. They shove off and make their way towards the cave. The pirates are awake by now, but are still contained by their ropes. The sailors spike the doors, just to make sure. The boats seem to be making no real effort to hurry, and so it's another twenty minutes before they reach the cave.

I need to know what exactly is your plan? Are you going to sleep then board the first boat, or wait until they are inside the cavern and attack them all at once, or something including you swinging in one a rope, with a dagger between your teeth, and waving your cutlass in your free hand?

Thumper: Clethara and I have enough time to try to relearn sleep spells. Clethara starts immediately. I'll post one of the sailors (who can swim) to the East pier to keep a watch and give warning. I swim to West pier, and with Clethara, we will relearn spells. Lifaen keeps watch, along with sailors, most of whom are in the boat. Three of them will keep watch on the doors and hammer in more spikes when needed. So, we wait.

Die rolls (20 min) for sleeps: T 8 (yes!) Clethara 18 (no), at 40 minutes: T10 yes, C 15 no. If we have that much time. I want as much time as I can, but before the boat enters, we all need to be ready.

Plan: Sleep as many as possible just as boat enters the cavern, before their eyes adjust and they see us at the pier clearly enough to react. Then, if any still up, magic missiles. I expect to concentrate magic missiles on the Captain. I have one (or two) sleeps, Clethara used her last one, so she will throw magic missiles, again focused on the Captain. Assuming we have warning, Clethara and I throw shield spells in preparation. After spells, boat attack, sailors with edged weapons, Lifaen with whatever he wants. Or he could stay on pier and shoot. I'm hoping Lucina and Bruccius participate in boat attack.

DM: You haven't seen much of Lucina and Braccius for a while now. In fact, you've been so busy studying spells, that you can't remember the last time you saw them. Clethara notices their absence, and says, "I told you so Thumper. Probably have gone off to tell them exactly how many we are." You don't see them right up until the attack.

Lifaen will be on the pier, bow in hand, while the crew will be under Sutch, ready in the boat to board the enemy and capture or kill them. You get the opportunity to try and learn both spells.

The boats enter, and before their eyes adjust, you sleep them. The boat is the same size as the one you've captured. There is an identical crew inside, except that the officer in the bow isn't half-orc. To make things simple, and save some time, I'll role for the sleeps: 13, they all go to sleep. I assume you save the second sleep. The sailors row forward in the boat, tie a line onto it, and pull it back. Then, a few of them set to work tying up sleepers, call it four, while the other seven prepare for a fight. The second boat enters, apparently unaware of the fate of the first one. Just as it enters, a rock, secured to a rope, swings down from the ceiling, and smashes into the boat. Everyone looks up, and you see that Braccius and Lucina had created a very shaky trap. In fact, as you watch, the rope and such fall away from the place where they were secured, as do the two of them. They land hard in the water, and don't reappear.

The boat in the entrance lost its bow, and is sinking. The crew members, about twenty, along with a man in a very fine blue coat with bright gold epaulets, abandon it and try to swim to the piers.

Thumper: That's a lot of action! Thanks for help moving it along. I think the others can handle the situation. I jump into the water, make sure both rings both on (invisible, swimming) and I'll try to locate Lucina, Bruccius. If both are swimming OK, I do nothing. If I find one of them is obviously in trouble, I grab them, swim to East pier (fast!) and pull them out. If both are in bad trouble, I'll get the smaller one out first, and go back immediately for other. There's a sailor on E pier to give warning, he can try to revive first one I get back. Sailors in boat can come over if need be, but they are also busy subduing the swimmers. Goal is everybody alive, prisoners tied up. Hope I didn't leave anything out.

DM: To make a long story short about the battle, the remaining half of the boat left sinks. Before they can really bring themselves into a fight, the enemy sailors find themselves surrounded. Unfortunately, the Captain, decides to fight on. Sutch jumps into fight him. After a few good hits from Sutch, magic missiles from Clethara, and a bow shot from Lifaen, he goes down.

You jump in. Braccius is unconscious. He's drifting to the bottom. Lucina is obviously in trouble, but is at least lucid. She is trying to make her way to the pier. You help Braccius, and get Lucina and help her. By the time that is accomplished, the fight is over. What you'd guess to be all but a small portion of the ship's crew is either asleep or tied up. Lifaen has bandaging the Captain, and everyone else is keeping the prisoners under control. Sutch is arranging for the wrecked remains of the Captian's gig to be pulled out of the entrance, and for the boat to be tied to the pier. No one died; all the prisoners are tied up.

Thumper: "Excellent! Good work all around! Now, let's be sure not to burden any of these prisoners with unnecessary weapons or coins and such. We will make sure they are all disarmed, then tied up, and put into the other bunkroom, and the captain in the one vacant single room.

Now, we need a crew to take one of these two boats back and get the other one to this cavern. (Five persons should be enough: all sailors with Sutch, and 4 others to row. Other boat is low in water, but it's calm in the caverns. We are not in a hurry. The rest of us want to stay here where we can keep an eye on these prisoners. (One person keeps lookout toward the ship from East pier, as before.) My plan is to leave the "pirates" here, with a boat (in cavern 3). We will take other two boats back to town. I don't think the ship can give us any trouble. They have too few men on board. We will go through the treasure and leave behind what is not worth the weight of taking.

I will check the weather. Is it good enough that each boat could manage with half crew? Clethara will take one, with sailors, Sutch, and half of loot. I will take other with Lifaen, Lucina, and Bruccius and the other half of the loot.

How far off shore was the ship? I'm wondering, before we leave, if we might be able to seize it. Maybe after dark. If it stays.

An Interesting Proposition:

DM: You look. The ship is maybe half a mile offshore, at anchor. You can't feel the breeze from where you are, but you can see that it's lightened, and has shifted to come from the south. The Captain is in no shape to do any escaping, and Lifaen has him laid on the bed and tied to it.

During the time it takes to get all three boats back and such, you have some trouble with the captured sailors. They are doing anything they can to just piss off your men. Whether it be to try and trip them, or shout insults through their gags. After a few well placed kicks, they quiet down though. Your men manage to get the loot back out into the cave. When you crack open the treasure, you discover that each of the crates is full of 100gp each, two crates have 350 silver each, and the 12 sacks have 30gp each. Lifaen will tell you that the armor is most likely magic. Do you leave anything behind?

You divide up the crews and treasure between the boats as stated. It's approaching early afternoon now. During the division of the treasure and loading of the boats, one of the sailors left on guard come up to you. "Umm, cap'n. One of them officers wants to talk to you sir."

You are taken to the private room that has both the half orc officer, and the officer from the first boat that was put to sleep. When you enter, the orc gives you a glare, but the other, a human male, stands, and tries to motion towards the hallway.

Thumper: Thumper: We will leave the silver. I'm wary. Lifaen goes with me. Clethara keeps eye on everything else. I ask what he has to say.

(Later) I get it. I will have one of the sailors help the officer into the hallway. We shut the door on the half orc. Lifaen stays, to guard, as I talk to him. "So, what do you have to say?" (Maybe the officer if he wants to be "liberated?")

We will surely take all the armor, the gold, and we will leave the silver. That ought to leave plenty of room, and the boats will not be heavily laden. We will have a total of 11 sailors plus Clethara, Lifaen, Lucina, Bruccius, and I. That's 8 per boat. Clethara and I will take the tiller of each, leaving at least 6 to row and one to be lookout in each boat. Clethara + Suchon + 6 sailors in one boat with the magic armor and some gold, the rest of us in the other. We will divide things up when we get back. You mentioned the special "leather" armor earlier. Is there additional (presumably magic) armor?

I figure we have 560gp, plus the magic armor, plus a variety of weapons taken from sleeping pirates (we won't search the bottom of the cavern) and whatever other personal items and cash we found on the pirates. We leave behind the food and the 700sp. (Somehow, after conversations with Lucina in town, I was expecting more. Like some gems. Oh well.)

Now, the issue is whether to go after the ship or not. We have daylight left, enough for such a venture. The trouble is, with the South wind, all they have to do is pull up the anchor and set a few sails, and they will drift too fast to catch them. I guess I'll make up my mind when we leave the cave. I wonder if "borrowing" the captain's outfit will help? I will make a point of doing so. He really doesn't need such a fancy outfit, after all, does he? And he's hurting after the fight; I doubt he can keep us from helping ourselves. With someone wearing that, the ship's remaining crew may be fooled. I tell Clethara and Lifaen about this possibility. What do they think? We could wait a bit while Clethara and I relearn a "sleep" each.

DM: (officer) "Look sir, I'm only a servant of the Earl. I work for him 'cause he gives me a job and he pays well. I'm not working for 'im because I like him, far from it. I don't wanna be caught up in your troubles of dethronin' 'im. If I guess right, you are plannin' to go after the ship out there. Don't leave me here. According to our cap'n, we aren't supposed to come into port to meet the Earl until after the winter. And he doesn't send anyone out here, so this place doesn't become known. O' course, he must not know that you are here then. But if you leave us without boats, and without our ship, then we might not make it through the rest of the winter. Now as I said, I'm not working for the Earl out of loyalty, and I don't wanna get caught up in his private wars with you people. There are some people among the crew who share my ideas, mostly the ones who have suffered at the hands of my fellow in there." He gestures to the door to the room with the orc inside. "I'm askin' you to take us with yeah."

Thumper: "I'll tell you what. I can take you out to the ship, if it's still there when we get to it. We'll put you aboard. Then let you do what you please. Or, we can take you back to Daila, and you can go see the Earl and explain to him that you have a problem. And collect your back pay that he owes you. Or, you can go back to Daila with us and find a way to leave town without seeing the Earl, if you think he will be unhappy. We are not at war with the Earl. There were no

signs here saying any of this was his. If he wants to tell the King and the Nomads that he claims it, and lets it be known, then we will leave it alone. Hey, I've been happy to cooperate with the Earl. But the Flame has been hostile to us before, and who knows what ship was visiting these caves. Pirates or Oceana spies, we supposed."

DM: He will ask if he and his crew, the ones from his boat, might be able, with your help, the take control of the ship. "If the Earl finds out we were taken prisoner like this, he'll be most displeased, sir. I figure that since my job with 'im is finished anyway, I may as well take as much as I can. See, sir, the Cap'n wasn't a loved man. He kept control by use of Gurz-gro-kash in there. Fear of his whip kept us in line. I figure, that if I can get control of the ship, then I can possibly bring the crew under me, then we all defect from the Earl. The problem is, we don't have any of your special spells or abilities, and after you leave, if another group of sailors come to investigate, they'll free the orc and the Cap'n, and then we'll be right back where we were. Can you help us? I can't offer you much, except for takin the Earl down a peg, and while you say you've been happy to serve the Earl before, if he finds out about you guys being here, you won't be happy with him soon enough. I think that's it in our best interest to take the ship."

Thumper: I say, "OK, here's what we can do. I can leave you free. Here, in the caves. You can untie whoever you wish. The crew members you can trust. After we are gone, so we don't have to worry about you and them attacking us. You will find a boat in the third cavern. I'll toss some weapons onto the far pier. So, once we leave, have men swim back and get the boat, get your weapons, then you can row out and take possession of the ship. It will all be your doing. You can blame us to the Earl if you want, or sail away and don't come back, if you want. Or whatever else you choose. It will be your ship. But, I hope you will remember that we did help you."

Return to Daila:

DM: He appears happy with this arrangement, and will wait for you to leave.

You toss the weapons onto the pier, and set up what you said. As you leave, you see a few, now free, sailors standing on the pier watching you. The officer waves.

You mentioned that you were taking the Captian's outfit. I assume you did. The wind is that same, and you set out for Daila. You get back without anything happening. Are you planning on keeping or selling the extra boat? What are you doing?

Thumper: No, with this change of plan, I'll leave the captain alone, but I will suggest that our new friend - what is his name? - he might want to appropriate it. And, here is the hammer and spikes to help organize things until he leaves.

The Vigilance boat is returned for storage. We will keep the other one out for future use (Injuma Bay expedition).

"Treasure division: There will be seven shares, with two shares' worth for the crew Lifaen gets the armor. Otherwise 84gp per share. Each sailor gets 14g and Sutch gets 28g.

DM: The Officer's name was Danver. You left twelve cutlasses?

Thumper: Yes, a dozen cutlasses left, that's fine. And, I throw in the Captain's sword, too. Danver might want it. Glad Lifaen can use the armor. "You did very well, and I expect you can

use it. Seems to be very good quality." Three extra gold pieces: I'll give it to Sutch, with thanks for doing a fine job. He's the one that found the lever, after all, that got us to the treasure. I'll make a point of thanking everyone, and will say to Lucia and Bruccius, "That was a fine trick you did! That boatload never had a chance, thanks to your good work!"

So ends the adventure, I guess. Any last comments from the party? I'll retire with Clethara to our cottage. "I recognize, that just because these 'guests' didn't give us any trouble this time, and even helped, that's no guarantee."

DM: Her opinion of them hasn't changed. Do you plan on doing anything at the moment?

Thumper: I think that's it for this adventure. I expect Danver to take possession of the Flame with his small crew, and sail away. The others left in the caves have food. They can try to repair the boat, or make a raft, or swim out, eventually. Thumper doesn't see much more to be accomplished there.

DM: Clethara will point out that "We won't exactly see the Return of the Flame simply drop anchor in the bay. Not only was the Earl trying to keep his affiliation with it secret, but if Danver is trying to stay away from him, it's unlikely he'll come back here for a while."

Thumper: "Yes. But, I'm sure the Earl will hear all about this pretty soon. Eleven sailors are not going to keep quiet. Then, there is our professional seller of information. Do you think, dear, that maybe we ought to consider a vacation in, say, Madra?"

DM: (Clethara) "I'll get the bags, you get the horses ready."
You depart the next day?

Thumper: "Why wait? Let's go now. We can get to Kalay. Spend the night there, then on to Madra the next day."

I write a note to be sent to the harbormaster; I'll drop it off on the way. "Please lay up the other small boat with the Vigilance. I will pay any necessary fee, with a bonus, upon my return. Thumper."